Essays on the History of Mankind in Rude and Cultivated Ages

James Dunbar

1781

The Second Edition, with additions. London, Printed for W. Strahan; T. Cadell in the Strand; and J. Balfour, Edinburgh, MDCCLXXXI.

Preface

To solve some appearance in civil life, and, by an appeal to the annals of mankind, to vindicate the character of the species from vulgar prejudices, and those of philosophic theory, is the aim of the Volume now delivered to the Public. Its contents are digested on a regular plan; though the looser form of Essays has been preferred to a more systematical arrangement.

He who attempts to reform the world is actuated by a wild enthusiasm, or by a divine impulse. to stop the career of Vice, is the ultimate end of well-directed ambition. That ambition was felt by the great writers of antiquity. They erected a temple to Virtue, and exhausted on the opposite character all the thunder of eloquence.

Animated with the views, not with the genius of the antients, I occupy the same ground; for on that ground the efforts of inferior men may be of use.

Every Author is a candidate for the public favour, and the public alone is the arbiter of his fate. With such a sanction he will not need, and without it he ought to decline, even the patronage of kings.

The voice of the Public, like the voice of an oracle, it becomes an Author to hear with respectful silence. Even while it mortifies, it instructs; while it refuses approbation, it teaches wisdom. It checks ambition in its wild career; and reminds the candidate for fame to return into that deceiving path of life, from which he ought not to have deviated, and which, how mortifying soever to the Author, is perhaps the happiest for the Man.

Essay I.

On the Primeval Form of Society

Human Nature, in some respects is so various and fluctuating; so altered, or so disguised a by external things, that its independent character has become dark and problematical. The

history of its exertions in their primeval form, would reflect a light upon moral and political science, which we endeavour in vain to collect in the annals of polished nations. What pity is it, that, the transactions of this early period being consigned to eternal oblivion, history is necessarily defective in opening the scene of man.

Consistently, however, with present appearances, and with the memorials of antiquity, the following changes, it is pretended, may have arisen successively to the species.

First, Man may have subsisted, in some sort, like other animals, in a separate and individual state, before the date of language, or the commencement of any regular intercourse.

Secondly, He may be contemplated in a higher stage; a proficient in language, and a member of that artless community which consists with equality, with freedom, and independence.

Last of all, by slow and imperceptible transitions, he subsists and flourishes under the protection and discipline of civil government.

It is the design of this Essay to enquire into the principles which either superseded the first, or hastened the second state; and led to a harmonious and social correspondence, antecedently to the aera of subordination, to the grand enterprises of art, to the institution of laws, or any of the arrangement of nations. But it is the order of improvement merely, not the chronological order of the world, that belongs to this enquiry. Degeneracy, as well as improvement, is incident to man: and we are not here concerned with the original perfection of his nature, nor with the circumstances in which he was placed at the beginning by his Creator.

There is one general observation strongly applicable, in all ages, to human nature: the appearance of proper objects is essential to the exertion of its powers. As therefore talents belong to individuals, which, for want of their objects, have lain for ever dormant; so perhaps there are talents inherent in the species which at no time have been called forth into action, and which may yet appear conspicuous in some succeeding period. Any alteration in the human fabric would seem to affect the identity of our being; but from the novelty and variety of the objects with which it is conversant, the Soul of man may become progressive; and, without undergoing any actual transformation in its powers, may open and expand itself in energy through the successive periods of duration. The celebrated distinctions of Aristotle will then appear to have an ample foundation in nature. Thus much is certain, a mutual intercourse gradually opens latent powers; and the extension of this intercourse is generally attended with new exertions of intellect. Withdraw this intercourse, and what is man! "Let all the powers and elements of nature (says an illustrious philosopher) conspire to serve and obey one man: let the sun rise and set at his command: the sea and rivers roll as he pleases, and the earth furnish spontaneously whatever may be useful or agreeable to him: he will still be miserable till you give him some one person at least, with whom he may share his happiness, and whose esteem and friendship he may enjoy."

Society then is the theatre on which our genius expands with freedom. It is essential to the origin of all our ideas of natural and of moral beauty. It is the prime mover of all our inventive powers. Every effort, beyond what is merely animal, has reference to a community; and the solitary savage, who traverses the desert, is scarce raised so far by nature above other animals, as he is sunk by fortune beneath the standard of his own race.

The destitute condition of man, as an animal, has been a usual topic of declamation among the learned; and this alone, according

to some theories, is the foundation both of social union and of civil combinations.

After the population of the world, and the growth of arts, mutual alliances and mutual support became indeed essential in our divided system: and it is no wonder if certain appearances in the civil aera have been transferred, in imagination, to all preceding times. At first, however, it may be questioned, whether there reigned not such an independence in our oeconomy, as is observable in other parts of the creation.

It is the arts of life which, by enervating our corporeal powers, and multiplying the objects of desire, have annihilated personal independence, and formed an immense chain of connexions among collective bodies. Nor is it perhaps so much the call of necessity, or mutual wants, as a certain delight in their kind, congenial with all natures, which constitutes the fundamental principle of association and harmony throughout the whole circle of being. But man, it is pretended, by nature timid, runs to society for relief; and finds an asylum there. Nor is he singular in this: all animals in the hour of danger crowd together, and derive confidence and security from mutual aid.

Danger, however, it may be answered, far from suggesting a confederacy, tends in most cases to dissolve rather than to confirm the union. Secure from danger, animals herd together, and seem to discover a complacency towards their kind. Let but a single animal of more rapacious form present himself to view, they instantly disperse; they derive no security from mutual aid, and rarely attempt to supply their weakness in detail, by their collective strength. This single animal is a match for thousands of a milder race. The law of dominion in the scale of life is the strength of the individual merely, not the number of the tribe; and of all animals, man almost alone becomes considerable by the combination of his species.

In society, animals are rather more prone to timidity from the prevalence of the softer instincts. Those of the ravenous class, generally the most solitary, are accordingly the most courageous; and man himself declines in courage in proportion to the extent of his alliances: not indeed in that species of it which is the genuine offspring of magnanimity and heroic sentiment; but in that constitutional boldness and temerity which resides, if I may say so, in our animal nature. Hence intrepidity is a predominant feature in the savage character: hence the savage himself, separately bold and undaunted, when he acts in concert with his fellows, is found liable to panic from this public sympathy, this reciprocal collision of minds. And it is hence, perhaps, according to the observation of a distinguished writer [A], that the most signal victories recorded in the annals of nations have been uniformly obtained by the army of inferior number.

But to return to the analogy of animals: I am not ignorant that some are gregarious from necessity, are formed for offensive or defensive wars, and require joint labour for their subsistence or accommodation. Yet in such examples the common functions are directed by instinct rather than by art; and evidence less the policy of the animal, than, if I may call it so, the policy of nature. When these provinces [B] are well defined, many of the appearances we so much admire will no longer be regarded as marks of invention, or concerted plan. Where no option is, there is no agency; and within a contracted sphere, while separate acts of sagacity in various tribes are so often observable, their concurring efforts are comparatively rare. Each creature below us is constituted the sole guardian of its own privileges, seems, as it were, a separate system, and the resources of its own

constitution its natural and its only support. Even the union of the sexes, formed for the continuance of the kind, is a temporary union, and dissolves at the instant when its operations are no longer necessary. As for larger conventions, they are often purely casual; and the invitation of the same pasture will at times solve such appearances, without resorting to the ties either of dependence or of love. It is thus the fowls of the air alight so often on the same field. Thus the ravens and other creatures of prey convene around the body of a dead animal. And thus the insect tribes are wont to assemble on the same putrefaction in such amazing swarms, that naturalists have been seduced, by the appearance, into the belief of an equivocal generation, as if these insects were actually produced from the mass of corruption on which they feed.

An opinion of intercourse in the lower ranks of being is often suggested or favoured by a propensity there is in man, to confer on every creature a portion of his own nature. Suitable to this propensity, in observing a concourse of animals, however fortuitous, he magnifies every appearance in favour of the social principle, and presumes a concert and government where none in reality subsist. It is the same propensity which gives life to inanimate objects, and leads us so irresistibly, on some occasions, to consider them as active and percipient beings. Withdraw the aid of imagination, and the embellishments of fiction, and much of that intercourse is destroyed, which we presume to reign in many departments of the animal world.

Yet if urgent necessity did not produce a separation, it is probable that the love of herding would be universal. Animals, accordingly, that are solitary in one country, are gregarious in another. Even the antipathies among different tribes necessity often creates. For in some regions of the globe, where that necessity does not subsist, animals of prey suspend their hostilities; and tribes, usually accounted the most implacable by nature, fulfil, in harmony, their peculiar destinations, without encroaching on each other's happiness or security[C].

Upon the whole, we may pronounce that interested intercourse in the animal kingdom, is greater in appearance than in reality; that the concourse of a tribe is often accidental; that all regular oeconomy is under the direction of instinct; and that in all the freer combinations, the society is held together by the tie of affection or conscious delight, more than by fear, or mutual wants, or any necessary call of nature.

Such is the constitution of the inferior creation. Is the same analogy observed in man? Was he ever in this independent and individual state? Or wherein does his pre-eminence consist? Not, surely, in the mechanism of those instincts which direct him to procure subsistence. The senses of other animals are as acute as his. Not in atchievements by bodily strength. For, in that particular, many of them far surpass him. Not in performing jointly, what so many creatures can perform apart. Manifestly, that would be no perfection. But in this his pre-eminence consists, that being as independent as they in all the corporeal functions, impelled by no necessity, but by generous passions, he rises to improvements which flow from the union of his kind.

In some parts of our constitution, it cannot be denied, we resemble the other animals. If therefore a time was when those parts chiefly or alone were exercised, our objects, and pursuits, and habits of living must have been nearly similar. I am far from affirming that ever there was no distinction. At all times, in our walk, there is some nobler aim. There is some inward consciousness, some decisive mark of superiority in every condition of men. But

the line which measures that superiority is of very variable extent. Let us allow but equal advantages from culture to the mind and body; and it is consequential to infer, that savages, in some of the wilder forms, must be as inferior to civilized man in intellectual abilities, and in the peculiar graces of the mind, as they surpass him in the activity of their limbs, in the command of their bodies, and in the exertion of all the meaner functions. Nor is this merely specious in theory. Some striking instances of savage tribes with so limited an understanding, as is scarce capable of forming any arrangement for futurity, are produced by a Historian who traces the progress of human reason through various stages of improvement, and unites truth with eloquence in his descriptions of mankind.{William Robertson, History of America, v. i., p. 309, London, 1777}

In some corners of the globe, if we may credit report, man and beast lead in the forest a sort of promiscuous life; and the boundary is scarce discernable which divides the rational from the animal world. This fact, no doubt magnified by travellers and historians, and tortured in the theories of philosophy, has however some foundation, and is in part consonant to our own experience. The progress of nations and of men, though not exactly parallel, is found in several respects to correspond: and in the interval from infancy to manhood, we may remark this gradual opening of the human faculties. First of all, those of sense appear, grow up spontaneously, or require but little culture. Next in order, the propensities of the heart display their force; a fellow-feeling with others unfolds itself gradually on the appearance of proper objects; for man becomes sociable long before he is a rational being. Last in the train, the powers of intellect begin to blossom, are reared up by culture, and demand an intercourse of minds.

When we observe, then, this analogy between the individual and the species; when we observe the gradation of improvement, and the slow departure of man from the confines of animal life; is there no intimation here concerning his original state, or rather concerning that state which human nature uninformed, and unenlightened by Providence, must have at first assumed? When arts and dependence grow together, and subsist so nearly in the same proportion, ought we not to regard them in the relation of cause and effect, and consequently allow of little or no dependence before the birth of arts? But the arts are formed in the bosom of society. Society therefore had another origin than mutual dependence and mutual wants. It is not, if I may say so, the sickly daughter of calamity, nor even the production of an aspiring understanding, but the free and legitimate offspring of the human heart.

Yet the attempt were vain to refer the origin of large communities to domestic relation and the ties of blood.

That natural affection which belongs to man belongs also to the inferior classes, and subsists among them with equal vigour. In both, the mechanism is the same, and calculated with the same design. At first therefore, perhaps, it was proportioned to the exigency of things, and as in them, so in us likewise, of limited duration. The period of gestation, in animals, is so contrived as to prevent all possibility of incumbrance from a second brood. But the period of pregnancy, it is allowed, were by far too short to dispense, in the human species, with the parental cares. The connexion, therefore, is necessarily more durable, its functions more various and progressive, and suited to the different ages and circumstances of a connected and rising progeny. Yet the improvements of social life, by the introduction of order, and by refining on all the passions and feelings of our frame, have given to this instinct a perpetuity unknown in the primeval state.

Prior to single marriages, and the more accurate ascertainment of families, an uncertainty with regard to the progeny must have often suppressed the instinct in the breast of one parent; and in the breast of the other parent, the equal licence of both tended ultimately to its extinction or decay. It is observable, even in our own times, that the affections of a woman, mother to several distinct families, are exceedingly liable to be estranged from the children of a former bed.[D] This remark o the female character is at least as ancient as Homer.

Even Ulysses's queen was not presumed exempt from a frailty so natural to her sex. The young prince of Ithaca is accordingly warned by Minerva to return home, before absence and new engagements had estranged the heart of Penelope from the son of Ulysses.

Thou know'st the practice of the female train.
Lost in the children of the present spouse,
They slight the pledges of their former vows;
Their love is always with the lover past,
Still the succeeding flame expels the last.

Odyssey, B. xv. v. 24.

Is love then at first devoted to a single object? Is such absolute confinement of appetite a maxim of uninstructed nature? The supposition, though it were not repugnant to every mode of appetite, and to the wilder range of life, is irreconcileable with the history of the ruder ages. Some latitude, in this respect, is almost universal after society has received a form; and by degrees only is established that stricter rule which is so often violated, when connected with the moral harmony of the world, and guarded by the sanctions of divine and human laws. [E] The interest of a family, the order of society, justifies the restraint. Even the amorous passion, when associated with moral sentiment, leads to an exclusive and indissoluble union; and the sweets of domestic life make ample amends for its most severe engagements. But this adjustment of things seems to be an improvement, or refinement on the first oeconomy; owing its original either directly to divine command, or to the wisdom of human policy.

In some rude countries, according to the information of modern travellers, rendered credible by several passages of antiquity, the women are not only at the head of domestic government, but possess a voice and ascendency in public councils and deliberations.[F]

Here then is probably displayed a peculiar and striking effect of gratitude and natural authority; and the weaker sex, though destined in the intermediate ages of barbarism to the most deplorable subjection, have derived from the love and reverence of children, who know no other parent, a rank and consideration superior to what rules of gallantry or generosity prescribe among the most refined nations.

On the commencement of domestic order, filial reverence, one of the strongest sentiments that can touch the heart, fails not to recognize its object, and acts with redoubled vigour when accumulated in one direction. A variety of circumstances augments its force; and that natural love which seems not, in any other species, to ascend from the youth to the parent, ascends in ours with the first dawnings of reason and morality, and forms a distinguishing characteristic of human kind.

But as, in such instances, the paternal instincts are of more precarious exertion, at an aera farther back, the maternal instincts likewise may have been constituted in circumstances which

render them fluctuating and temporary.

It is not then such partial principles which could have formed or embodied the larger communities of mankind. It is not a parent, a child, or a brother, but the species itself, that is the object embraced by humanity. In some cases, perhaps, the patriarchal government may have furnished the model of a larger plan; but mankind were before in possession of the sweets of an independent society. The members of a family become members of this society, before they became members of a state. A thousand circumstances in the range of being, convening numbers of the species on the same stage, must have presented the opportunities of social life. The only question is, how regular intercourse was formed, how strangers were converted into acquaintance, and how those who came together at first by accident, came afterwards to assemble by appointment.

With similar appetites and congenial passions, the excursions of individuals will often coincide. They will be found occasionally on the banks of the same river, or in the same corner of the grove. The reiterated appearance of the objects slowly and imperceptibly calls forth new desires. Each interview has its effect. The brutality of the savage begins to vanish. Some refinement appears. An appetite for society ripens, which afterwards must be gratified as well as other appetites. Little plans are carried on in concert; and at a time when no discordant interests, or various pursuits, had diversified the seene, a small community might be kept together by the tie of sociability and reciprocal love.

In these days of envy, and of interest, we are little able to conceive its force; nor, if the feelings remained, could artificial language, in this respect, supply the language of nature. When similar functions and occupations in civil society prove so often a bond of union among those of the same order, how immense must have been the effect of an exact conformity of life! That resemblance of disposition and of character, which is the cement of little associations, and is the principle of private friendship, was the original basis of public union. The history of the Soldurii in Gaul, of the ancient Germans, and of other public bodies, of which there are so many examples in the simple ages, evidences the stability of those sacred bonds and confederacies that originate in the heart. The history too of some of the South Sea isles, which the late voyages of discovery have tended to disclose, enables us to glance at society in some of its earlier forms, and to mark, in some striking examples, the inviolable fidelity of social love.

The principles of union are, in the order of things, prior to the principles of hostility. the former are, in truth, productive of the latter, which, in a more advanced period, bursting forth, like a torrent, against other tribes, disfigure the character of uncivilized nations.

The affections of the heart are of limited exertion; and that mutual love, which is confined within a narrow sphere, triumphs, as it were, over the sentiment which gave it birth, and creates, in a competition of interests, such fierce animosity among contending tribes.

As emigrants in rude ages usually pass their own frontiers with hostile minds, they are regarded by others with a jealous eye; and in the penury of language, a stranger and an enemy may receive one common name. It was thus the ancient Romans, addicted to piracy and war, and consequently jealous of the designs of others, used the same term in both these senses; for this is far more probable, according to the observation of an ingenious modern, that the solution of Tully, who takes occasion, from this coincidence, to extol the humanity of his ancestors. But such criticisms affect not the general history of rude nations. When there is no ground of

variance, the original sentiment revives in all its force, the rights of hospitality are peculiarly revered, and an unsuspected stranger is embraced with a fondness and cordiality which redeems the character of the species.

Thus have we reached that universal principle which reigns, in some degree, in every district of nature. The most rapacious of animals confess its power; and while at war with the rest of the creation, sympathize with each other, and refuse to taste the blood of any of their own kind. This harmony of things, so conspicuous in the inferior orders of like, seems to affront the conduct of the rational species. Moralists and poets have availed themselves of this topic, and inveigh with indignant spirit against that prostitution of sentiment which, forming an exception to a law almost universal, requires the effusion of human blood. Thus the Roman poet expostulates with a degenerate age in these admirable lines:

------ Quando leoni
Fortior eripuit vitam leo? quo nemore unquam
Expiravit aper majoris dentibus apri?
Indica tigris agit rbida cum tigride pacem
Perpetuam: faevis inter se convenit ursis.
Ast homini ------
Juv. Sat. xv. lib. 5.

Such reproaches indeed are chargeable on mankind; but touch not the clear dictates of morality, nor the primeval rectitude of the heart. "Nature," says an animated writer,[Sterne's Letters] "never made an unkind creature. Ill usage and bad habits have deformed a fair and lovely creation."

The great lines of humanity are legible in all communities; and it is the description of every country under heaven,

----- Sunt hic etiam sua praemia laudi;
Sunt lachrymae rerum, et mentem mortalia tangunt.

The love of the species is the grand principle of attraction, as essential to the rational, and, in some degree, to the animal, as gravitation to the material world: nor wilder were the attempt to expound the harmony of the solar system from the limited attraction of magnetism, than to expound the combination of tribes, and the moral harmony of nations, from the operation of partial instincts. Even pride, the passion which divides mankind, was originally a principle of union. It was a sense of the dignity of the species, not an opinion of superiority among individuals; and, with exalted notions of their own rank, they reserved for the inferior creatures that sovereign contempt which they can now bestow so liberally on their fellowmen.

In such circumstances it was impossible for mankind not to meditate, from the beginning, a separation from the life of brutes. They must have conceived the plan of holding the dominion of the world; and, actuated with a decent pride, the consciousness of their own pre-eminence, they became daily more and more susceptible of reason, of morality, and of religion. Thus are the foundations laid, upon which were afterwards reared, by slow advances, the superstructure of policy and arts. In society the faculties have an object. The springs of ingenuity are put into motion; and the language of nature gradually participates of art. The efforts of genius excite admiration. The acquisitions of industry, or invention, confer a right which suggests the idea of property; and the distinctions of natural talents lay a foundation for

corresponding distinctions in society.

But these inventions and improvements, which do honour to our nature, tended at the same time to divide mankind. On this account it may be questioned, whether the enlargement of our faculties, and all the advantages from arts, counterbalance the feuds and animosities which they soon introduced into the world. The serene and joyous interval between the rudeness of mere animal life, and the dissensions of civil society, constituted, perhaps, that short but happy period, to which antiquity refers in her descriptions of the golden age.

No theory, indeed, in morals, or in government, was then devised. Yet moral rules were seldom broken, when an equal and generous commerce was the rule of government. And it is amusing to observe into what absurdities speculative men have been so often carried upon these subjects by presumption, by affection, or by the love of paradox.

Hence a variety of theories, ancient and modern, concerning the origin of moral sentiment; hence the absurdities of the Epicurean school.

Epicurus, observing the external advantages resulting to the individual from moral conduct, pursued the idea so far as to allow superior advantages, and pleasures of a higher relish, altogether to escape his notice. It is indeed strange, that any observer should omit this obvious comment on human life, That to be the object of love, of esteem, and of respect, is in itself far more desirable than all the consequences with regard to external ease and security that can be derived from that fountain. But Epicurus could contemplate beauty neither in nature nor in man. And what better could be expected from the philosopher who had ascribed the origin of worlds to a fortuitous concourse of atoms? Yet the life of Epicurus himself formed a contradiction to his system; and whoever attempts to vindicate his humanity, will be led to question his candor.

A Writer of the last age, in the composition of a philosophical romance, is still more extravagant.

All virtue, according to him, consists in obedience to the public magistrate; and all moral obligations are the offspring of civil government.

But has government, it may be asked, any creative power? Or whence the duty of allegiance, if there was no primeval law? Would not Amphion and Orpheus have strung their lyres in vain?

It is no wonder that the same Writer should arraign the genius of the ancient republics, and condemn to the flames all Greek and Roman learning as a sovereign expedient for strengthening the hands of government.[G]

But I am not called upon, by my subject, to explain or to refute such systems. And I shall content myself with observing, that a late publication, much read and admired in our fashionable world, is more dangerous than any speculative theory to the morals of the rising generation. As patrons of licentiousness, Epicurus and Hobbes, and even Machiavel and Mandeville, must bow to the noble author.

It is in the spirit of his performance to separate the bonestum from the decorum of life; to insult whatever is venerable in domestic alliance; to substitute artificial manners in the room of the natural; to raise superficial above solid accomplishment, and to hold up dissimulation and imposture as the essentials of character.

This is a species of refinement avowed in no former age. It contains a solecism in education, and in the oeconomy of civil affairs.

To exalt the Graces above Virtue, is, if I may say so, to exalt creatures above their Creator. The Graces are chiefly amiable as emblems of Virtue. Break this alliance, and they are no more. Unite them with the opposite character, and this fantastical conjunction renders a monster still more deformed. For my own part, I had as soon behold the monster itself in all the horrors of its native deformity, as in such insolent attire.

The Graces are the handmaids of Virtue, not the sovereigns; and all their honours are derived. But Virtue, though naked and unadorned, were Virtue still.

Quam ardentes amores no excitaret sui, si videretur!

How different was the conduct of a Roman statesman, when, in the person of a father, he delivered instructions to youth! The instructions of the Roman fill the young with rapture. Those of the Briton excite indignation in the aged. But I ask pardon of the reader, when I name the British author in the same breath with Cicero. And if the system of the noble lord was designed merely for the courtier, with the courtier let it rest. Without the formality of system, the strict observance of moral rules is dispensed with in the negociations of courts.

Let if be numbered then among courtly privileges to patronize deceit. When perfidy and dissimulation are declared by patent to belong to the members of the diplomatic body, they will become, perhaps, more emphatically, the representatives of kings.

But while things are thus adjusted to the meridian of courts; while the civil code, in many countries, is no more than the breath of kings; and, in all countries, may be dissolved by legislative power; the moral code, which is paramount to all civil authority, and from which all civil obligations arise, remains eternally in force.

It was delivered from heaven to the people, and to maintain its authority is the jus divinum of nations.

With these sentiments I close the Essay: and such sentiments are addressed more particularly to the British youth by one of their public guardians, who then only feels the full importance of his station when he animates the rising generation in the pursuits of honour.

NOTES.

NOTE [A], p. 9.

Sir William Temple, in an Essay on Heroic Virtue, descends into the following detail, which, on account of its importance, I lay before my Readers, in the words of that intelligent and agreeable writer.

"The second observation I shall make upon the subject of victory and conquest is, that they have in general been made by the smaller numbers over the greater; against which I do not remember any exception in all the famous battles registered in story, excepting that of Tamerland and Bajazet, whereof the first is said to have exceeded about a fourth part in number, though they were so vast on both sides that they were not very easy to be well accounted. For the rest, the numbers of the Persians with Cyrus were small to those of the Assyrians: those of the Macedonians were in no battle against the Persians above forty thousand men, though sometimes against three, four, or six hundred thousand.

"The Athenian army exceeded ten thousand, and, fighting for

the liberties of their country, beat about six score thousand Persians at Marathon.

"The Lacedemonians, in all the famous exploits of that state, never had above twelve thousand Spartans in the field at a time, and seldom above twenty thousand men with their allies.

"The Romans ever fought with smaller against greater numbers, unless in the battles of Cannae and Thrasymene, which were the only famous ones they lost against foreign enemies; and Caesar's army at Pharsalia, as well as in Gaul and Germany, were in not proportion to those he conquered. That of Marius was not above forty thousand against three hundred thousand Cimbers. The famous victories of AEtius and Belifarius against the barbarous northern nations were with mighty disproportion of numbers, as likewise the first victories of the Turks upon the Persian kingdom; of the Tartars upon the Chinese: and Scanderbeg never saw together above sixteen thousand men in all the renowned victories he atchieved against the Turks, though in number sometimes above a hundred thousand.

"To descend to later times, the English victories so renowned at Cressy, and Poictiers, and Agincourt, were gained with disadvantages of numbers out of all proportion. The great atchievements of Charles VIII in Italy, of Henry IV in France, and of Gustavus Adolphus in Germany, were ever performed with smaller against greater numbers; and among all the exploits which have so justly raised the reputation and honour of Mons. Turenne for the greatest Captain in his time, I do not remember any of them were atchieved without disadvantage of number; and the late defeat of the Turks at the siege of Vienna, which saved Christendom, and has eternized the memory of the duke of Lorrain, was too fresh and great an example of this assertion to need any more, or leave it in dispute."

Upon these incontestible facts the argument proceeds thus:

"If it be true, which I think will not be denied, that the battle is lost where the fright first enters, then the reason will appear why victory has generally followed the smaller numbers; because, in a body composed of more parts, it may sooner enter upon one than in that which consists of fewer, as likelier to find ten wise men together than an hundred, and an hundred fearless men than a thousand. And those who have the smaller forces endeavour most to supply that defect by the choice discipline and bravery of their troops; and where the fright once enters an army, the greater the number the greater the disorder, and thereby the loss of the battle more certain and sudden."

The truth of the above might be illustrated by more recent examples, and a more copious induction. The observation, since our author's time, is confirmed by the experience of another century. In the memorable battle of Plassy, the English army under Lord Clive defeated an enemy which outnumbered them ten to one.

The king of Prussia's battles in the last war would form a series of splendid examples in support of the same conclusion, if the superior abilities of that great Prince were not alone sufficient to account for his superiority in arms.

But the facts above specified are fully sufficient for the ascertainment of so curious a phaenomenon, on the causes of which our Author had descanted with so much ability.

NOTE [B], p. 9

There are certain principles in the constitution both of men and animals, which lead blindly and irresistibly to unknown edns. To these we give the name of instinct; and to define its exertions in all their variety and extent, forms one of the nicest questions

in philosophy. The province of reason having been confined to abstract conclusions, it has been doubted whether it belongs at all to animals; and habits and instincts have been deemed sufficient to account for their whole oeconomy. Jealous of our prerogative, we would not have inferior creatures to claim, in this particular, any kindred with the human mind.

It is however certain, that animals are capable of recollection, and of foresight; and by consequence possess the faculty which infers the future from the past. Many of them too discover an inventive faculty; and when drawn into artificial circumstances beyond their usual tract of life, extricate themselves with an address and sagacity that would be deemed rational in man. Admitting then to animals some degree of reason, as well as instinct, it is of importance to define their respective functions.

It is one criterion of instinct to be uniform in its proceedings: reason is various, and supposes a choice. The one principle, as far as it extends, is infallible in its determinations; but the other principle is liable to error. The one acquires maturity at once, and supersedes experience, and is incapable of culture. The other is guided by experience, and stands in need of culture, and arrives gradually at different stages of perfection.

Instinct is fixed and immutable, not in the fabric only of a single animal; the same exertions of it are common to the species. But reason, which becomes more or less perfect in the same individual, is dealt out in various measure and proportion to the several individuals of the kind.

These principles seem counterparts to each other in the system of creation. In proportion as the one is denied, the other comes in aid of the defect.

The perfection of reason would supersede the necessity of instinct; but its imperfection calls aloud for this auxiliary.

Instinct accordingly is, in the human species, more conspicuous in infancy than in manhood; and reigns most absolutely in all the meaner departments of animal life. The fowls of the air, the fishes of the sea, and the insect tribes, seem wiser, in this respect, than he who styles himself Lord of the Creation.

But is this the wisdom of the animal? It is rather the wisdom of nature.

> ---- Hinc ille avium concentus in agris,
> Et laetae pecudes, & ovantes gutture corvi.

Nature has drawn a veil over this part of her proceedings, and that veil what mortal can remove? At least sure I am, I may apply to my own speculations on this mysterious theme what the poet Simonides, when revolving on the nature of the gods, observed to the King of Syracuse,

> Quanto diutius considero, tanto mihi res videtur obscurior.

NOTE [C], p. 12.

A Navigator, whose present voyage, we hope, for the honour of civilized nations, will not be disturbed by the present hostilities, thus describes, in a former voyage, the condition of animals on a sequestered island, near Statenland in the South Sea.

"It is amazing to see how the different animals which inhabit this little spot are mutually reconciled. They seem to have entered into a league not to disturb each others tranquillity. The sea-lions occupy most of the sea-coast; the sea-bears take up their abode on the isle; the shags have post in the highest cliffs; the penguins fix their quarters where is the most easy communication to and from the sea; and the other birds chuse more retired places. We have seen all these animals mix together, like domestic cattle and poultry in a farm-yard, without any one attempting to molest the other. Nay, I have often observed the eagles and vultures sitting in the hillocks among the shags, without the latter, either young or old, being disturbed at their presence. It may be asked how these birds of prey live? I suppose on the carcases of the seals, and birds which die by various causes; and probably not a few, as they are so numerous."

A Voyage towards the South Pole, &c.
by James Cook. vol. ii. p. 206.

NOTE [D], p. 19.

It is the tendency of a second marriage to weaken the ties of filial, as of parental love: and this effect is by far more conspicuous in the second marriage of a mother than of a father; a circumstance which suggests a curious question in the theory of moral sentiment, an ingenious solution of which may be seen in the philosophy of Hume.

Treatise of Hum. Nat. v. ii. p. 140.

NOTE [E], p. 21.

The plan of domestic society is various in different ages and nations. In different climates and situations it becomes more or less expedient to controul the love of variety, and the natural licentiousness of desire.

A community of wives was allowed in Spatra. A latitude of the same kind was indulged at Rome. such communities were found established among the ancient Britons, and take place among various tribes of Barbarians. In other cases, the irksome situation of fathers under an impression of a dubious progeny, has led to a system of restraint, and prevention, no less barbarous than inhuman. Some nations, distrustful of all the moral guardians of female virtue, prevent, by physical expedients, the possibility of transgression. The modern Arabians in particular, among whom jealousy is the reigning passion, are guilty of a species of violence too shocking for description.

Polygamy however, in some form or other, appears to have been almost universal. The moderation indeed of the ancient Germans is mentioned by Tacitus; yet among them a plurality of wives was not without example. Even a plurality of husbands, according to Strabo, took place in certain provinces of the Median empire: and such plurality is recognized in the Gentoo code.

The abolition therefore of polygamy has been represented by some writers as a sort of sumptuary law, founded on the exigencies of civil society.

But against one species of polygamy the want of the ascertainment of the father forms an insuperable objection. Nor is it by any means clear that polygamy, in its more admissible form, and how ell soever regulated, is conducive to population or public prosperity; and the near equality in the number of each sex, sufficiently arraigns the justice of this establishment. Where that

proportion subsists, a community of wives, though deservedly exploded as tending to relax or to annihilate the paternal tie, is, perhaps, more defensible than the exclusive possession of a plurality. But should the proportion be interrupted or broken by pestilence, by war, of other signal calamity, a well-ordered polygamy might possibly serve as a temporary expedient for repairing the depopulation of mankind.

On such emergency it was allowed at Athens; and from a conviction, no doubt, of its propriety, Socrates and Euripides availed themselves of the indulgence. But such conjunctures are rare; and an exclusive polygamy must, in general. be regarded in a less favourable light, as the most dangerous monopoly that ever claimed the protection of government, and in its origin and progress as an usurpation of the powerful and opulent on the equal pretensions of mankind.

Perhaps the liberty of divorce tended, at least in the more temperate climates, to reconcile all ranks to a more equal plan.

The institution of single marriage accordingly was in Greece as ancient as Cecrops, and was adopted by the Romans as the most perfect plan of domestic life. Yet even under this institution, the perpetuity of the marriage-union may be vindicated on solid grounds: and a rising progeny, the offspring of mutual love, tends to consolidate the alliance, as well as to render its obligations indissoluble. It is accordingly remarkable, that divorces, though permitted by law, were, during a period of five hundred years, unprecedented in the annals of Rome.

It is no less remarkable, according to the observation of a learned prelate, [The Bishop of Llandaff] that the number of divorces in the present reign equals the accumulated number upon record, in all preceding reigns, in the annals of England.

The decline of public manners is surely alarming, and calls perhaps, for the interpotion of legislative power. But it is seldom in the power of government to mend the morals of a people, while ill-digested attempts may serve rather to hasten corruption.

Whether it is possible for the wisdom of a British Parliament, to recal, in our age, the dignity of domestic life, I pretend not to decide. Let is suffice to observe, that, in the dissolute ages of antiquity, this liberty of divorce, authorized on so slight pretences by the legislation of Greece and Rome, and even tolerated under the Jewish oeconomy, became a source of the most odious corruption. The circumstances of the world called aloud for reformation. A latitude in this article was found alarming to the peace and order of society, and was finally reprobated and abolished by the maxims of our holy religion.

Upon the whole, it may be affirmed, that the institution of marriage, more or less perfect in different countries, is regulated in the best manner possible, under the Christian system. Chastity is a dictate of morality; celibacy is repugnant to nature. The liberty of divorce is dangerous, a community barbarous, and polygamy unjust.

It may farther be observed, that the laws of most countries, relative to incest, though not the immediate suggestions of instinct, are founded on obvious views of expediency and public order. Incest in the ascending and descending lines is so uniformly odious and shocking, that the prohibition may be regarded as the unalterable and declared sense of mankind, wherever these relations are known. The incestuous marriages of the Assyrians, Persians, and some others, which seem to militate against this conclusion, are rightly imputed to dictates of a false religion, which is found, in so many instances, to triumph over the clearest maxims of reasons and morality

There is no ground then to accuse such salutary regulations, or envying the unlimited indulgence of other times, to exclaim, in the intemperate language of the Poet,

> -------- Felices quibus ista licent!
> ---- human malignas
> Cura dedit leges: & quod natura remittit
> Invida jura negant.
> Ovid. L. 10

NOTE [F], p. 22.

Tacitus, Plutarch, and others, bear testimony to the honourable rank of the other sex among the ancient Gauls. -- They are even said to have conferred the supreme judicature on their wives, supplanted, however, in that function by an artful priesthood. The women were no less honoured among the ancient Britons. They were not only suffered to vote in public assemblies, but raised occasionally to the sovereignty of provinces, and even to the command of armies. Their importance among the ancient Germans, and in general under the Gothic constitutions, is established by a Writer who has illustrated the liberal genius of feudal associations, and vindicated, in some material points, the character of our remote ancestors. [See a View of Society in Europe, by G. Stewart, LL.D.]

The provinces of each sex in civil life, which seem to be defined by nature, were, in some measure, interchanged in antient Egypt. The more active occupations were allotted to the women; to the men, the more sedentary. And it was, accordingly, by law incumbent on the daughters, not the sons, to maintain their parents in declining age.

In several countries of Africa the women are still permitted to vote in public; and a multitude of similar examples might be drawn from the annals of uncivilized nations. but the Author of the Essay on the History of Civil Society, [Dr Adam Ferguson] in delineating the character of rude nations, prior to the establishment of property, explains the facts alluded to somewhat differently.

He admits, that children are considered as pertaining to the mother, with little regard to descent on the father's side. He admits, that domestic functions are committed to the women, that the property of the household is vested in them, and even that the hunter and the warrior are numbered as a part of their treasure; but contends, "at this species of property is in reality a mark of subjection; not, says he, as some writers allege, of their having acquired the ascendant."

But should we admit to this ingenious Author, that the occupations allotted for the women are accounted more inglorious than the toils of war, and would even be thought to sully and debase the character of the warrior or hero; yet such arrangements, without derogating from the prerogative of the superior sex, must render the condition of the inferior more eligible far than in several of the succeeding stages in civil society. "And if," to use the language of our Author, "in this tender, though unequal alliance, the affections of the heart prevent the severities practised on slaves; we have in the custom itself, as, perhaps, in many other instances, reason to prefer the first suggestions of nature to many of her after-refinements."

In such circumstances too, the matrons, as the only ascertained parents of the rising generation, could not fail to command exclusively that respect and reverence which is the usual

tribute of filial love. The due balance of domestic authority being maintained by the equal ascertainment of both parents, where the descent is dubious on one side, the balance must incline strongly to the other; and though it is scarcely credible that mankind ever carried their jealousy of this authority so far, as to undermine its foundations, by changing the children as soon as born; [Diod. Sicul.] we may believe that uncertainty of descent on the father's side contributed to the importance at which the women arrived in Britain, in Gaul, in Sparta, and other states.

When it was observed by one of another country to the wife of Leonidas, that at Sparta alone the women ruled the men, she replied, with becoming spirit, "We are the only women who bring forth men."

The love of war and of women is combined, according to Aristotle, in the character of nations. And it must be admitted, that a spirit of gallantry, and a generous protection of the weaker sex, which form distinguishing features of the heroic age, are by no means unexercised in the earliest arrangements of the human species.

The fair sex commanded more veneration among the ancient Celtic nations of Europe than among the Greeks and Romans, whom we are accustomed to regard as the most civilized nations of antiquity. And their condition, though not to be envied, was less unhappy among the rude tribes in North America, than in the cultivated empires of Peru and Mexico, in other respects the most enlightened governments of the new hemisphere.

NOTE [G], p. 35.

In this judgment Mr Hobbes was certainly consistent with himself. For the dignity of human nature, which resists the establishment of civil tyranny, will be asserted by every people, conversant in the immortal productions of Greece and Rome.

"Quae natio," says Cicero, in the generous triumph of humanity, "Quae natio non comitatem, non benignitatem, non gratum animum, et beneficii memorem diligit? Quae superbos, quae malificos, quae crudeles, quae ingratos non aspernatur, non odit?"

De Leg. lib. I.

Cicero, in the same Treatise, in which he opens the source of all law and government, has animated distant ages with the spirit of his own times, and with that enthusiasm of public virtue,

Et maribus Curiis, et decantata Camillis.

The example of the Roman Orator is peculiarly instructive, in this free country, to aspiring youth. He formed himself to eloquence on the Grecian model; and Plato was his favourite among the philosophers. On his entrance into public life, he was called the Greek, and the Scholar. But he acquired and merited a superior title: a title, which exalts him above conquerors and heroes, and which, while yet unprostituted by the adulatio of slaves, implied the consummation of human glory. He was saluted Father of his Country by a free people:

-------- Roma parentum,
Roma, patrem patriae, Ciceronem libera duxit.

To vindicate the honours of man, nothing more is necessary than to transcribe the antients. But there are, it must be owned, anomalous productions in the moral, as in the natural world. The

Leviathan was born in the last age. A more singular phaenomenon has appeared in ours. A Stanhope has appeared among our contemporaries, who, in an attempt to delineate and embellish human nature, has only descanted on his own deformity.

Essay II - On Language, as an Universal Accomplishment

In tracing the origin of arts and sciences, it is not uncommon to ascribe to the genius of a few superior minds, what arises necessarily out of the system of man. The efforts of an individual are familiar to the eye. The efforts of the species are more remote from sight, and often too deep for our researches.

The connexion, therefore, of events with an individual, is a more popular idea, while it gratifies an admiration and enthusiasm natural to the human mind. Hence the conduct of historians, who describe the origin of nations. Hence are celebrated among every people, the first inventors of arts, the founders of society, and the institutors of laws and government.

Such revolutions, however, in the condition of the world, are more justly reputed the slow result of situations than of regular design, and have, perhaps, less exercised the talents of superior genius, than those of mankind at large. Usages there surely are of mere arbitrary institution; inventions there surely are which originate with one only, or with a few authors. But other usages and inventions as necessarily refer themselves to the multitude; nor ought the casual exertions of the former to be confounded with the infallible attainments of the species.

Under this precaution, then, let us introduce the question concerning language. Is language, it may be asked, derived to us at first from the happy invention of a few, or to be regarded as an original accomplishment and investiture of nature, or to be attributed to some succeeding effort of the human mind.

The supposed transition of the species from silence to the free exercise of speech, were a transition indeed astonishing, and might well seem disproportioned to our intellectual abilities. Neither history nor philosophy are decisive upon this point; and religion, with peculiar wisdom, refers the attainment to a divine original. Suitable to this idea, language may be accounted in part natural, in part artificial: in one view it is the work of Providence, in another it is the work of man. And this dispensation of things is exactly conformable to the whole analogy of the divine government. With respect to the organs of speech, what is there peculiar to boast? The same external apparatus is common to us and to other animals. In both the workmanship is the same. In both are displayed the same mechanical laws. And in order to confer on them similar endowments of speech, nothing more seems necessary than the enlargement of their ideas, without any alteration of anatomical texture. In like manner, to divest, or to abridge mankind of these endowments, seems to imply only the degradation of the mental faculties, without any variation of external form.

It is not then supposed that the organs of man alone are capable of forming speech. The voice of some animals is louder, and the voice of other animals is more melodious than his. Nor is the human ear alone susceptible of such impressions. Animals are often conscious of the import, and even recognize the harmony of sound. thus far there subsists a near equality. Visible signs are likewise possessed in common; and language, in every species, is the power of maintaining social intercourse among creatures of the same

order.

By the same medium man is able to converse, in some sort, with the brute creation; and there the various tribes with each other. But besides some general signs constituted to preserve harmony and correspondence among connected systems, there are others of a more mysterious kind, destined for the use and accommodation of each particular class. In this science the sagacity of the philosopher has hitherto made no discoveries. The mystery of animal correspondence will, probably, be always hid; and it is often no more possible to descend into the recesses of their intercourse, than to open a communication with a higher system.

In the great scale of life, the intelligence of some beings soars, perhaps, as high above man, as the objects of his understanding soar above animal life. Let us then imagine a man in some other planet, to reside among a people of this exalted character.

Instructed in the sounds of their language, as the more docile animals are instructed to articulate ours, he might articulate too, but could acquire no more. He might admire the magnificence of sounds louder or more melodious than he had heard before. But, by reason of a dissimilarity and disposition of ideas, these sounds could never conduct him to the sense; and the secrets of such a people would be as safe in his ears, as ours in the ears of any of our domestic animals.

For the same reasons, if one of superior race were to drop into our world, our language might be, in some respects, impenetrable even to his understanding, because destitute perhaps of some perceptions essential to our meaner system.

Thus each order possesses something peculiar, which is denied to every other; and it belongs to the Author of the universe alone to exhaust that immensity of knowledge which he has diffused in various kind and proportion through the whole circle of being.

Here is an arrangement of Providence coeval with the birth of things; and, considering the similarity of organical texture, the taciturnity of the other animals is a problem to be accounted for, as well as the loquacity of man.

Whence comes it that he alone so far extends the original grant as almost to consider it as his peculiar and exclusive privilege? Between the lower classes and him there subsists one important distinction. They are formed stationary; he progressive. Had the exact measure of his ideas, as of theirs, been at first assigned, his language must have stood for ever as fixed and immutable as theirs. But time and mutual intercourse presenting new ideas, and the scenes of life perpetually varying, the expression of language must vary in the same proportion; and in order to trace out its original, we must go back to the ruder ages, and, beginning with the early dawn, follow the gradual illuminations of the human mind.

Man, we observe, is at first possessed of few ideas, and of fewer desires. Absorbed in the present object of sense, he seldom indulges any train of reflection on the past; and cares not, by anxious anticipation, to antedate futurity.

All his competitions with his fellows are rather exertions of body than trials of mind. He values himself on the command of the former, and is dextrous in the performance of its various functions. too impatient for flow enterprise; too bold and impetuous for intrigue, he uses the resources of instinct, rather than the lights of the understanding; is scarce capable of abstraction, and a stranger to all the combinations and connexions of systematic thought.

In this situation of the world there is no need for the

details of language. The feelings of the heart break forth in visible form: sensations glow in the countenance, and passions flash in the eye. Nor are these silent movements the only vehicles of social intercourse.

Prior to the contexture of language, and the use of arbitrary sign, there is established a mechanical connexion between the feelings of the soul and the enunciation of sound. The emotions of pleasure and pain, hope and fear, commiseration, sorrow, despair, indignation, contempt, joy, exultation, triumph, assume their tones; and independently of art, by an inexplicable mechanism of nature, declare the purposes of man to man. These associations are neither accidental nor equivocal; not formed by compact, or the effect of choice, but are parts of an original establishment, calculated, in the first oeconomy, for all the occasions of social life. And happy surely, in one respect, was this constitution of things, when men were not only devoid of the inclination, but unfurnished with the means of deceit; and sentiment and expression were thus conjoined, by the indissoluble ties of nature.

Such accents and exclamations compose the first elements of a rising language. And in these distant times, when artificial signs have so far supplanted the natural, interjection is a part of speech which retains its primeval character, is scarce articulated in any tongue, and is exempted from arbitrary rule.

After the introduction of artificial signs, the tone and cadence of the natural were long retained; but these fell afterwards into disuse; and it became then the province of art to recal the accents of nature.

The perfection of eloquence is allowed to consist in superadding to sentiment and diction, all the emphasis of voice and gesture. And enunciation, or action, as it is called, is extolled by the most approved judges of antiquity as the capital excellence.

The decisive judgment of Demonsthenes is well known: and the Roman orator, who records that judgment, expatiates himself in almost every page, on that comprehensive language, which, independently of arbitrary appointment, addresses itself to all nations, and to every understanding. [Vide Cic. de Orat. L. w. et passim.]

In a certain period of society, there reigns a natural elocution, which the greatest masters afterwards are proud to imitate, and which art can so seldom supply. At first, the talent of the orator, as of the poet, is an inborn talent. Nor has Demonstheses, or Tully, or Roscius, or Garrick, in their most animated and admired performances, reached, perhaps, that vivacity and force which accompany the rude accents of mankind.

In the same original connexion of things resides the expression of music, or the irresistible tendency of the modulations of sound to stir and agitate the different passions. [A] Hence the astonishing effect ascribed to music in antient times, and the empire it still maintains, in a peculiar manner, over rude and unpolished nations.

A Writer, [Dr Burney's Gen. Hist. of Music] who exhausts on his favourite science so much ingenuity and learning, has assigned indeed other causes for the empire of music among the antients, besides its intrinsic excellence. [B]

I oppose not such respectable authority. But though the science of harmony is progressive; though simultaneous harmony, or music in parts, is entirely modern, yet the union of sound and sense is an original union; and the most wonderful effects of that union are prior to the age of refinement.

"The recitative in music, according to the observation of an exquisite judge, [Congreve] is only a more tuneable speaking: it is

a kind of prose in music; its beauty consists in coming nearer nature, and improving the natural accents of words by more pathetic and emphatical tones." The scale of music in different countries is the same; and all the variety of its expression throughout the earth forms but so many dialects of one universal language as unalterable as the human passions.

Such causes then, in the infancy of mankind, operating alone, or with little aid, seemed to supersede all motives to invention; while affairs, however, were gradually approaching towards a different stage.

Next to the impulses of appetite, and the social passions, the talent of imitation displays its force. Nor is this talent the gift of heaven to man alone. He shares it in common with the creatures below him, some of whom avail themselves of its exertions in the pursuit of their prey. That even the musical notes of birds are not altogether innate, but rather acquired by imitation, is a proposition supported by late observations. Yet, in consequence of a predilection, not easily explained, similar or kindred notes appear to be universally characteristic of the same species, varying only in different regions of the globe, like different dialects of the same tongue. One species of birds excels in imitation, and in a variety of note; another in the perfection of musical organs; and hence, by combining the peculiar excellencies of different species, an ingenious naturalist has suggested a method of improving upon the music of the grove. [C]

Among animals, however, the talent of imitation occurs more rarely, or is limited to a few performances, and these resorted to as expedient, rather than as an ultimate end.

But the performances of man are conspicuous, and various, and almost without bounds. He is prompted to imitation from a love of the effect, and, exclusive of all reference to farther end, enters it into the list of his pleasures. Often this secondary pleasure exceeds the primary. And there are few, I imagine, who would reject an entertainment of this sort, on the same principle with Agesilaus of Sparta. When invited to hear a performer who mimicked the nightingale to great perfection, the fasticious king replied "I have heard the nightingale herself." The entertainment might be unworthy of a king; but it was declined, on a principle that forms an exception to the general taste. And imitation may be justly called the first intellectual amusement congenial with our being: in confirmation of which we might appeal to the first essays of infancy, to the taste for the imitative arts so predominant in youth, and to the earliest compositions of antiquity. [D]

Man alone is capable of imitating every creature, while he is, if I may say so, himself a creature which no other can pretend to imitate. In the indulgence then of this talent, he adopts, as it were, every mode of instinct, and re-echoes every voice in the forest. Even still life attracts his attention; and the application of the same talent to every subject, renders him a master in expression, and ripens his genius while it exercises his mechanical powers.

Thus is he occupied in borrowing not only from his own species, but in transcribing, for his amusement, the appearances of the natural and of the animal world; in collecting materials, without knowing their importance, and in laying, with an active, though undesigned hand, the foundations of all arts and sciences.

This imitative faculty, which, in the school of Aristotle, entered into the definition of man, operates so vigorously on the organs of speech, that, in some cases, sound in general seems to become an object of imitation, without any particular archetype. Hence the mechanical trials of children in the easier expressions,

when their organs are incapable of other articulation. And hence the same sounds run uniformly through all languages, to denote either parent, to whom the earliest expressions are presumed to be addressed.

By such exertions are we rendered capable of indicating, by intelligible signs, the more striking and familiar objects. But to give an additional compass to the powers of speech was reserved for another principle allied to the former, and often undistinguished in its operation, which may be denominated in analogical faculty. A faculty which has vast power in binding the associations of thoughts, and in all the mental arrangements; but with whose influence on language alone we are at present concerned.

Hitherto language consisted in the voice of instinct, or was drawn by imitation from an actual similarity in the nature of things. Now analogical connexions supply the place of real resemblance. Now instinct borrows aid from imagination; and it is the weakness of this principle which imposes the law of silence, and excludes all possibility of improvement in the animal world. Here commences the reign of invention, and here perhaps we should stop, and draw the boundary of art and nature.

There is not an object that can present itself to the senses, or to the imagination, which the mind, by its analogical faculty, cannot assimilate to something antecedently in its possession. By consequence, a term already appropriated, and in use, will, by no violent transition, be shaped and adjusted to the new idea. And thus the division and composition of the primary signs will constitute relations in sound, correspondent with those relations, real or imaginary, which subsist among the objects of human knowledge. Thus the language of the Chinese consists of a few words only, which, merely by a variation of tone, become the representatives of all the ideas of that enlightened people.

This mode of proceeding is so conspicuous in our first attempts, that it is with reluctance children adopt a word altogether new, so long as they can assimilate the object to any of their former acquaintance. And it is wonderful to observe with what promptitude, facility, and apparent ingenuity, they can draw such various expression out of their little store. It is accordingly no illiberal entertainment in presenting strange objects to their sight, to wait, by way of experiment, for their own conclusions, and to cause them to distinguish each by names of their own inventions. [E] This would be, perhaps, no improper exercise in training their infant faculties; and it seems to have been upon the same principle that the first of mankind, at the desire and with the approbation of is Creator, was able to name so readily all the beasts of the field, and the fowls of heaven.

Many subsequent innovations in language may be traced up to the same source; and signs apparently the most arbitrary are either the result of some more refined connexion, or are separated from their primitives by a longer chain of analogy.

By this power the same natural sign, besides its primary, admits of a secondary, and even of various import; and what originally denoted an outward object, is, by a certain subtlety of apprehension, transferred to the qualities of the mind.[F] Thus language becomes figurative; and, without any extension of the vocabulary, takes in the compass of our intellectual ideas. It is this principle likewise which conducts the same sign from the individual to the species, and by the frequent application of it, on similar occasions, confers on it a larger and a larger import, till at last it acquires a general acceptation, without any painful or laborious effort.

This process of the mind accounts for the generation of all

the different parts of speech, as might be shewn more particularly in the rise of that essential constituent of language, which by reason of its importance is denominated the verb.

Not only are emotions of different kinds excited by the objects of sense, but the same kind of emotion is wonderfully modified, according to the circumstances of its birth. How various, even in the savage breast, are the modes of love! how various the emotion of fear!

Let us then suppose that the lion and the serpent are considered by the savage as the most hostile and formidable among animals. A certain species of terror would be excited by the approach of the one; a different modification of the same emotion would be excited by the approach of the other.

Now, in the first stage of language, the natural signs of these kindred emotions, it is presumed, would be employed to indicate, and to distinguish the approach of these animals. In the mean while, let it be supposed that the other inhabitants of the forest have received their names. In these circumstances it is abundantly natural for the savage to join the term, indicating the dread of the lion or serpent, with a proper name, in order to notify the approach of any other offensive creature. This term, by an easy extension, will be transferred from offensive to other creatures; and hence, by a gradual transition, even to inanimate objects, till it is charged at length with a general affirmation, and possesses all the power of the verb.[G]

Such steps as these, we may believe, have led to the more regular combinations of sound; and, under this aspect of things, we may conceive language strong indeed, and animated, but probably remaining long without much compass, or coherence, or order. It consisted chiefly of detached phrase. And though every sound formed not a complete sentence, as at the beginning, yet the more artificial arrangements were unknown. Those connective particles which intimate the relations of thought were not yet brought into existence; and the relations themselves were rather insinuated to the understanding than expressed in form. Nor is this abrupt mode of expression unsuitable to the circumstances of the simple ages. Sentiment, as well as its dress, hung then extremely loose; and men were not accustomed to a chain of reasoning, or to any complex system of thought. Nor is it less comfortable to the experience of our early life, the truest perspective, perhaps, in which to contemplate the rising genius of mankind. In the first dialects of children, the particles are but little attended to, if not totally disregarded. They reject the texture of artificial language, even while they adopt its words, presenting the capital objects in immediate succession, without the intervention of terms which are of a more obscure and abstract original. It is the same mode of proceeding which is so often observable in vehement speakers, who, in the hurry of declamation, or of passion, have no leisure to attend to the rules of grammar, or logic. The language of passion accordingly, which consists of broken periods, has been happily imitated by the poets, and might be here illustrated, were it necessary, by examples from the greatest masters, whose prerogative it is to dispense in favour of nature with the established rules of art.

It is also remarkable in all the antient tongues, that the most important distinctions and relations of objects are indicated by an inflection of the voice, or a slight variation of the same sound, without resorting so often to the little engines which support the modern systems.

Even this inflexion of voice is not always indispensable; and in the oriental tongues no inconveniency is perceived from the want

of the genitive case; though there is neither an inflexion, nor any intervening particle to suggest the relation.

Let it not then be imagined, that abstract considerations have entered far into the first formation of speech. Such laborious effort had been ill suited to the genius and circumstances of the first inventors; and even the particles themselves, though of more doubtful origin, have crept into existence, without any severe application of metaphysical force.

Those talents alone exercised by every human creature, in acquiring his first language, have been exercised by the original institutors. In both cases the love of imitation is often the prime mover, without any farther design. Taught by parents, children learn to utter sound, to which afterwards they affix a meaning. Taught by instinct, men utter sound at the beginning, which the understanding afterwards renders more significant. In both cases, the act of the understanding is posterior to a sort of organical impulse; and in both cases there seems to be less abstraction than is contended for in the schools of philosophy.

Is a man, for example, to be reputed ignorant of the force of particles, because he is incapable to give a metaphysical account of their origin? And if, without metaphysics, he apprehends these particles, why not invent them too?

If we suppose but one of the most obvious relations to be distinctly marked by any particle, that particle will, as it were spontaneously, offer itself upon all similar occasions; and from the law of analogy will be gradually extended in its signification, until it includes under it a vast variety of relation: for it is transferred from object to object in the concrete, without any abstract consideration of its powers.

It is easier for the mind to perceive resemblance, than to specify the minute differences of things. Hence the same particles are used to denote various relations, without our attending to their specific differences. And hence these terms, in all languages, are so liable to be confounded, and carry often a sort of vicarious import, mutually participating of the same powers.

When the analogy loses itself in refinement, new particles are devised, and invested with a different office. And were an ordinary man called upon to define the prepositions, or other little constituents of any modern tongue, without a certain preparation of his faculties, the answer with regard to the greater number would be indefinite, or evasive, or merely negative. This particle, might he say, differs in its import from that other: that other from a third. They severally denote relations altogether dissimilar. It is easier to say what they are not, than what they are.

Should a more explicit answer be required, he refers to others more learned than himself, or involves himself in a labyrinth, in which the primary constructors of language never were involved, and from which the logician or the philologist can hardly extricate him. "The particle says a Writer [Dr S. Johnson] in whom these characters are united, are all nations applied with so great latitude, that they are not easily reducible under any regular scheme of application. This difficulty is not less, nor, perhaps, greater in English than in any other language. I have laboured them with diligence, I hope with success; such at least as can be expected in a task,which no man however learned or sagacious has yet been able to perform." [H]

He must be born then with a texture of brain as strong as that of Johnson: he must be a Hercules in metaphysics, who can declare, in their metaphysical character, the full import of these elements of speech.

Yet the relations of its own thoughts the mind clearly

apprehends. The signs of these relations, when once instituted, it apprehends with equal ease. But these relations, clear as the light in the presence of particular objects, in their absence are involved in obscurity.

The vulgar find little difficulty to apprehend the should itself in an embodied state; but it is reserved for the philosopher to apprehend its separate and abstract existence. And as well might it be contended that this sublime apprehension had, in every age, entered into the imagination of our forefathers, as that the nicer relations of thought had exhibited themselves naked to the understanding, and received names in artificial language, disjoined from the other members which compose the body of this complex machine.

With reason therefore we conclude, that the laws of analogy, by one gentle and uniform effect, superseding or alleviating the efforts of abstraction, permit language to advance towards its perfection free from the embarrassments which seemed to obstruct its progress.

In most speculations upon this subject, there reigns a fundamental error. It consists in referring the rise of ideas and the invention of language to a different aera, as if a time had ever been when mankind laboured for utterance, yet sought in vain to open intellectual treasures, and to be exonerated from the load of their own conceptions. Under this impression we are apt to imagine some great projectors in an early age, balancing a regular plan for the conveyance of sentiment, and the establishment of general intercourse. In such circumstances, indeed, they must have revolved in imagination all the subtleties of logic, and entered far into the science of grammar, before its objects had any existence. Profound abstraction and generalization must have been constantly exercised; all the relations of thought canvassed with care, compared with accuracy, and arranged with propriety and with order: a design competent, perhaps, to superior beings, but by no means compatible with the limited capacity of the human mind. Now these difficulties and incumbrances, in a great measure, disappear, by contemplating ideas and language as uniformly in close conjunction; and the changes in the former, and the innovations in the latter, of the same chronological date.

A few ideas, in the ruder ages, are subjected to expression with the same facility, as a greater number in succeeding periods. And hence speech, in all its different parts, is already formed, when the vocabulary is exceeding scanty, and there is no variety or abundance in any one class. Thus a Grammar even of the Lapland tongue contains all the grammatical parts of speech. [See a Laplandish Grammar, lately published by Mr Leem, Professor of the Lapland tongue] Hence too the ease with which a language is attained in infancy, or early youth, and the difficulty attaining it in maturer age. When the idea and the sign are contemporary attainments, and coincided in their first impressions, they take root together, and serve reciprocally the one to suggest the other. But where this coincidence is wanting, it becomes more difficult, if not impossible, for the mind to collect its naked thoughts, and subject them afterwards in all their variety to the arbitrary impositions of language.

A more equal oeconomy, therefore, has been maintained by the direction of that principle of analogy to which we so often refer; and the connexion is more easily established, when, from the simplicity and uniformity of savage life, the same signs return so often; when the whole compass of the vocabulary is exhausted upon familiar objects, and almost comprized in the history of a day's adventures. Thus a vocabulary, consisting of about twenty words, is

said to be sufficient, in all their ordinary transactions, for the purposes of some savage nations.

Language then, constructed with such scanty materials, increases with the experience and discernment of mankind. "Uncultivated people, says a Writer [Burke, on the Sublime and Beautiful] of genius and refinement, are but ordinary observers of things, and not critical in distinguishing them; but, for that reason, they admire more, and are more affected with what they see, and therefore express themselves in a warmer and more passionate manner." On a more exact survey, the mind discriminates its objects, and breaks the system of analogy by attending to the minute differences of things. As therefore the analogical faculty enlarges the sense of words, the discriminating faculty augments them in number. It breaks speech into smaller divisions, and bestows a copiousness on language by a more precise arrangement of the objects. Thus, by the distribution of our ideas, as well as by the enlargement of the fund, language is constantly enriched; and its barrenness or fertility among a rising people may be always estimated by the number of the objects, and the accuracy with which they are classed.

At a time when utility was almost regarded as the whole of beauty, and perspicuity was the sole aim of speech, nothing superfluous would ever be admitted there. Afterwards the coalition and interferences of different tribes confounded the simplicity of the institution, by the admission of foreign, identical, and supernumerary terms. The love of novelty and variety established their currency: a species of luxury is indulged in the commerce of words. Each simple institution sustained a shock from the collision of contending systems, and out of these jarrings there arose more copious and mixed establishments.

By such causes is language diversified by degrees, in its words, in its texture, and in its idiom. What is at first only a variety of dialects, produces distinct languages in succeeding generations. And, after separation from the fountain, the differences among them become more considerable in proportion to the length of their course. Thus the English, the French, and Italian tongues have borrowed their vocabulary from the Greeks and Romans, while, in their texture, and idiom they are allied to the Celtic and to the Hebrew, or claim a very distant original.

But the consideration of these differences would carry us beyond the limit of the present design, which permits us only to touch on the gradations of a simple institution, referring to those faculties of the mind which appear principally concerned in conducting its successive improvements. In the execution of the enterprise, the mind, no doubt, has exerted collectively, at all times, various powers; but these are exerted in unequal proportion; according to the circumstances of the world; and the order here assigned appeared to our judgement most consonant to the probability of things, to the experience of early life, and to the genius and complexion of the ruder ages.

By such efforts, or at least by efforts competent to the abilities of every society of mankind, some rude system is constructed on the foundations of nature. The superstructure becomes vast and magnificent, like the conceptions of the human mind; but that superstructure is the work of ages, and is as complicated and various, in the different regions of the globe, as the modes of civil life, as the aspect of nature, and as the genius of arts and sciences.

Having therefore considered speech in its lower forms, we proceed to enquire into those superior marks of refinement and art which constitute the criterion of a polished tongue.

NOTES.

Note [A], p. 73

Though the modulations of sound declare in general the feelings of the heart, music imitates the social passion with the happiest success. A distinction which intimates the sociability and generosity of man, and is well illustrated by Dr Smith in the Theory of Moral Sentiment.

"When music imitates the modulations of grief, or joy, it either actually inspires us with those passions, or at least puts us in the mood which disposes us to conceive them. But when it imitates the notes of anger, it inspires us with fear. Joy, grief, love, admiration, devotion, are all of the passions which are naturally musical. Their natural tones are all soft, clear, and melodious; and they naturally express themselves in periods which are distinguished by regular pauses, and which upon that account are easily adapted to the regular returns of their corresponding airs of a tune. The voice of anger, on the contrary, and of all the passions which are akin to it, is harsh and discordant. Its period too are irregular, sometimes very long, sometimes very short, and distinguished by no regular pauses. It is with difficulty therefore, that music can imitate any of those passions, and the music which does imitate them is not the most agreeable. A whole entertainment may consist, without any impropriety, in the imitation of the social and agreeable passions. It would be a strange entertainment which consisted altogether of the imitations of hatred and resentment."

Part I. sect. ii, ch. 3

Note [B]

Perhaps the simplicity of antient music contributed to its effect. Perhaps from its union with poetry, it derived its most alluring charms. Yet these arts may, on some occasions, encumber each other, and ought, in the opinion of some good judges, to hold a divided empire. This is a problem in the history of music which an adept in the science is alone capable to decide, and I am ready to adopt that opinion and language of Dr Burney, that "music and poetry, like man and wife, or other associates, are best asunder, if they cannot agree; and, on many occasions, it were to be wished, that the partnership were amicably dissolved."

The danger at present seems to be, that music in preference to poetry, and instrumental music in preference to vocal, to which it is so far inferior, should usurp an improper dominion in all the politer circles. An observation of Mr Gay to Dr Swift, in the year 1723, relative to the fashionable taste of the metropolis, is now applicable in a much larger extent. "As for the reigning amusements of the town," says he, "it is entirely music; real fiddles, bass viols, and hautboys; not poetical harps, lyres and reeds. There is nobody allowed to say, I sing, but an Eunuch, or an Italian woman. Every body is grown now as great a judge of music as they were in your time of poetry; and folks that could not distinguish one tune from another, now daily dispute about the different styles of Handel, Bononcini, and Attilio. People have now forgot Homer, and Virgil, and Caesar, or, at least, they have lost their ranks; for in London and Westminster, in all polite conversations, Senefino is daily voted the greatest man that ever lived." The history of the Vestris, at this day, would serve to finish up the picture. They

have actually attracted, in the fashionable circles, a degree of admiration and applause, which no orator, in either house of parliament, can hope to command. But this mode of amusement is not the object of our criticism; and, without sufficient to observe, that music is not the only imitative art, which, in the progress of refinement, ceases to be so significant.

N'est il pas singulier, says Mons. l'Abbe Reynal, que dans les premiers ages du monde, & chez les sauvages, la danse soit un art d'imitation, & qu'elle ait perdu ce caractere dans les pays polices, ou elle sembe reduite a une certain nombre de pas executes sans action, sans subjet, sans conduite? Mais il en est es danse comme des langues: elles deviennent abstraites, ainsi que les idees dont elles sont composees.

Tom. vi. p. 27.

Note [C], p. 75.

I Refer the reader to Experiments and Observations on the singing of the Birds, by the Hon. Daines Barrington, inserted in the Philosophical Transactions of the year 1773.

"These experiments", says Mr Barrington, "may be said to be useful to all those who happen to be pleased with singing birds. Because, it is clear, that, by educating a bird under several sorts, we may often make such a mixture as to improve the notes which they would have learned in a wild state.

"It results also from the experiment of the linnet being educated under the vengolina, that we may introduce the notes of Asia, Africa, and American into our woods; because, if that linnet had been set at liberty, the nestlings of the next season would have adhered to the vengolina song, who would again transmit it to their descendants."

The musical notes of birds, if we believe Lucretius, a naturalist as well as a poet, first suggested to man the elements of a science in which he afterwards so far excels them. For the notes of birds, however melodious, are not only destitute of harmony, but deficient in expression, which in music is the capital excellence.

Note [D], p. 77

It is perhaps, not foreign from the subject to observe, that men of genius, though no poets or painters by profession, so often discover, in early life, a proneness to the imitative arts, which yield to more serious occupation in maturer years. Even the masters themselves, in the decline of life, no longer court the muses with equal assiduity. It is then the poet, transformed into the philosopher, abandons his former walk --

Hinc itaque & versus & caetera ludicra pono.

Plato, who looks down on poetry as a dangerous, or as a frivolous art, had been a favourite with the muses, when he treats with ingratitude, and had composed dithyrambics in his younger days.

The Biography of the English Poets, to which a writer of the first rank in literature now calls the attention of the Public, affords a variety of examples of this predilection in early life. Cowley and Milton, as well as Pope, "lisped in numbers." Cowley had read all Spenser, while under twelve, had commenced a poet at thirteen, and an author at fifteen, when his poetical blossoms appeared. In the Comus of Milton, a juvenile production, we behold

the dawn of an immortal day.

The author of Gondibert composed a poem on the death of Shakespeare, at the age of ten.

Dr Jortin was a poet in youth, and a critic in maturer age.

Lord Lansdown composed most of his poetical pieces when a perfect child, the correction of which afforded employment to his riper years.

Congreve had made an eminent figure as a dramatic poet before he had passed his twenty-fifth year. "And, among all the efforts of early genius," says Dr Johnson, "which literary history records, I doubt whether any one can be produced that more surpasses the common limits of nature than the plays of Congreve."

Voltaire commenced poet at twelve, composed the Henriade while under twenty-four, and his Brutus, which he regarded "comme sa tragedie la plus fortement ecrite," at thirty-six.

The present Imperial Laureat, [Metastasio] an appellation which his merit alone might almost extort from his contemporaries, is an astonishing instance of the premature inspiration of the muses. And not to multiply instances among foreign nations, the Poems ascribed to Thomas Rowley, a secular priest of Bristol, who flourished in the fifteenth century, are probably the production of a youth who died Anno 1770, at the age of eighteen, a prodigy of genius; and who, in the opinion of no contemptible judge, would have proved the first of English poets, had he reached the full manhood of his days. "From his childhood', says Mr Warton, "he was fond of reading and writing verses, and some of this early compositions, which he wrote without any design to deceive, have been judged to be most astonishing productions by the first critic of the present age."

Waller indeed is recorded a singular instance of a poet, who began late the exercise of a poetic talent. "At an age," says Lord Clarendon, "when other men used to give over writing verses (for he was near thirty years of age when he first engaged himself in that exercise, at least that he was known to do so), he surprised the town with two or three pieces of that kind, as if a tenth muse had been newly born to cherish drooping poetry."

But this evidence is not conclusive; nor is the noble historian perfectly correct in point of fact. For the muse of Waller had even acquired a name in the twenty-fourth year of his age. It is reasonable, however, to expect that the more perfect performances of a great master will be of later date. A correct judgement is a quality so essential to great execution in the imitative arts, that, according to the Abbe du Bos, it is about the age of thirty that the greatest geniuses, whether in poetry or painting, have produced their masterpieces.

But to this Dryden and Milton form eminent exceptions. Dryden's latest performances are the best. His fire, says Pope, like the sun's, shone clearest towards its setting. Addison adorns him with similar praise; and he merited the following encomium from the illustrious patron of his declining age:

> Not all the blasts of time can do you wrong,
> Young spite of age, is spite of weakness strong;
> Time, like Alcides, strikes you to the ground;
> You, like Antaeus, from each fall rebound.

The example of Milton is still more astonishing. "It was," says the historian, "during a state of poverty, disgrace, and old age, that Milton composed his wonderful Poem, which not only surpassed all the performances of his contemporaries, but all the compositions which had flowed from his pen, during the vigour of

his age, and the height of his prosperity. The circumstance is not the least remarkable of all those which attend that great genius."

Hist. of Eng. vol. vii. p. 345.

Note [E], p. 81.

Omiah, the Otaheitean, circumscribed as a child in the number of his ideas, though in understanding and in years a man, proceeded on similar principles in the acquisition of the English tongue.

The butler he called the king of the bottles, Captain Furneaux was king of the ship, Lord Sandwich was king of all the ships. The whole language of his own country exceeds not a thousand words.

Note [F], p. 82.

Such is the natural order of analogy in the generation of speech. But the reverse order, where words expressive of ideas purely intellectual, are transferred to corporeal objects, is sometimes observable in a cultivated language; instances of which are produced in Melange de Literature par Mons. d'Alembert.

"It has been ingeniously observed," says a late Author, "that the Metaphor took its rise from the poverty of language. Men, not finding, upon every occasion, words ready made for their ideas, were compelled to have recourse to words analogous, and transfer them from their original meaning to the meaning then required. But though the Metaphor began in poverty, it did not end there. When the analogy was just (and this often happened), there was something peculiarly pleasing in what was both new, and yet familiar; so that the metaphor was then cultivated, not out of necessity, but for ornament. It is thus that clothes were first assumed to defend us against the cold, but came afterwards to be worn for distinction and decoration."

Harris's Philological Inquiries, p. 188.

This Writer, who, in matters of taste and criticism, pays an implicit deference to the authority of the Peripatetic School, has commented, in the above passage, on the text of Aristotle, who extols the metaphor as an effort of genius, not to be taught, and in which men of ordinary discernment cannot hope to excel. It is, however, a figure of speech intelligible to all, and which, in the infancy of language, must have been, in some degree, universal.

Swift has been represented as a writer of such perfect simplicity as to reject the metaphor altogether in his compositions. "This is not true," says his Biographer; "but his few metaphors seem to be received rather by necessity than choice."

Note [G], p. 84.

"In elucidating this part of speech, it has been well observed by Dr Smith, that "impersonal verbs, which express in one word a complete event, which preserve in the expression that perfect simplicity and unity which there always are in the object and in the idea, and which suppose no abstraction or metaphysical division of the event into its several constituent members of subject and attribute, would, in all probability, be the species of verbs first invented."

But afterwards, in the progress of language, by the division of every event into its metaphysical elements, impersonal verbs disappear. In modern tongues, accordingly, they are unknown. Yet

they make a figure in the languages of antiquity, and especially in the Hebrew, where the radical words, from which all others are derived, are traced up by grammarians to that original.

See Considerations concerning the first Formation of Language, etc.

Note [H], p. 91.

The ill success of all former grammarians antient and modern, has not intimidated a writer in the gloom and solitude of a prison, from undertaking so arduous a task.

See a letter to John Dunning, Esq; by Mr Horne. In this letter the conjunctions of the English tongue are traced up to a source unobserved or unacknowledged by any grammarian. The same analogy is presumed to be universal; and conjunctions, according to this plan, no longer rank among the grammatical elements, but are derived in one uniform manner, in all languages, from the other parts of speech.

Essay III - Of the Criterion of a Polished Tongue

The connexion of language and manners is an obvious connexion. They run parallel with each other, through different periods of their progress. Yet language, from various causes, may arrive at a pitch of refinement, unauthorised by the tone of public manners. And, on the other hand, public manners may acquire a superior cast of refinement, which the language alone would not authorise us to expect.

So various and equivocal are the marks either of rudeness or refinement in the language and manners of a people, that to form, on such subjects, a consistent theory, is no easy talk. In both cases, however, a man of taste and observation must feel and recognize distinctions, though he were unable to specify them, or to assign with precision the laws by which they are governed.

We have attempted to approach the common fountain of all languages, but pretend not to pursue the meanders of their course.

Articulation, if not an universal attribute of human speech, is an excellence at which it soon arrives.[A] Of rudeness, therefore, or refinement, this particular can form no criterion. Language too, in both extremes may be subjected to rules of syntax nearly similar; and by consequence the principles of grammar will not carry us far into the origin of these distinctions. Is there an appeal to the ear? some distinction is perceived, and a rougher tone and cadence are found to correspond best with the temper and manners of Barbarians.

At first perspicuity is chiefly or alone regarded. Nothing conducive to that end is offensive to the organ; but afterwards perspicuity is in part sacrificed to ornament. Some indulgence is shewn to the ear; and its perceptions acquire refinement, as well as all our other perceptions. Hence arises, by insensible gradations, a new system of sounds.

Words fluctuate with the modes of life. They are varied, or exterminated as harsh and dissonant, upon the same principle that any mode or fashion is varied or exterminated as rude and vulgar. And the prevalence of this principle ultimately tends to establishment of a general distinction. Hence the smoothness of the Ionic dialect, rather than the roughness of the Doric, recommends itself to a polished age.

Peter the Great considered the German as a smooth and harmonious tongue, and ordered it as such to be used at court. In proportion as the court of Petersburgh became more polished, the German was discarded, and the French substituted in its room.

In general the superior refinement of the French established its currency in all the politer circles of the North of Europe. And upon the same principle the Greek, which had no charms for the Romans in the ruder ages of the republic, ravished the ears of imperial Rome.

> Hoc sermone pavent; hoc iram, gaudia, curas,
> Hoc cuncta essundunt anime secreta.
> Juv. Sat. vi.

In the production of the sounds of language, climate [B] is concerned, as well as the degrees of civilization. But this natural cause operating upon manners also, and through that medium upon speech, its direct and simple influence upon the organs ought not to be confounded with its reflex and more complicated operations.

Climate, in both ways, may favour or obstruct refinement in sounds, or derive to them a peculiar character.

If the language of the Malais, a people barbarous and fierce, is however rightly celebrated as the softest in Asia, [Voyez Les Voyages d'un Philosopher, par M. Le Poivre.] the climate, in such instances, by an irresistible application to the organs, acts in opposition to manners and controuls their natural tendency. If the jargon of the Hottentots is, on the other hand, the harshest jargon in the world, it seems an effect rather chargeable on manners, with which the climate is not immediately concerned. But the smoothness of the Russian tongue, under such barbarity of manners, and in climates so various and unpromising, forms, it must be owned, and exception to all general theory.

In periods, however, of equal refinement, the articulation and accents of the North, are, in our hemisphere, distinguishable from the articulation and accents of the southern regions. Inarticulate sound is governed by similar rules, and a different style and composition in music are found best accommodated to the genius of different nations.

The French music accordingly, as well as the Italian, is universally exploded among the Turks; and whether from the texture of their organs, or from climate, or from certain habitudes of life, possesses no power to ravish their ears with harmony, or to interest the passions.

In general, European music is disrelished, or exploded in the East. "Your music," said a native of Egypt to M. Niebuhr, "is a wild and offensive noise which a serious man can hardly endure." Nor is this an anomalous example. When Ismenias, the greatest master of music at the court of Macedon, was commanded to perform before the king of Scythia; the king [C] having heard the performance, far from acquiescing in the public admiration, swore that to him the neighing of a horse was more agreeable: so little acceptable to Scythian ears, and to a barbarous monarch, were the most admired compositions of the Greeks.

Even among nations of equal refinement there is to each appropriated a style in music resulting from local circumstances, or from certain peculiarities of character; and national music, because more intelligible, will ever be more acceptable than foreign, [D] to the inhabitants of every country. Thus the same sounds though in some respects intelligible to all, excite perceptions which are merely relative, and therefore variable with the mechanism of our organs, with the associations of fancy, and

with the cultivation of taste. It is the same with words. Words adopted into language, in the age of barbarism, and whose harshness then is either not discernible and cultivated period. And by consequence, sentences constructed with such different materials, though the vehicle of the same ideas to the understanding, will impress our organs with characteristical and distinct perceptions.

It is a remark of Voltaire, in celebrating the illustrious founders of Helvetian library, that the difficulty of pronouncing such names had injured their fame with posterity.

A similar remark might be formed with regard to certain sciences and arts, where technical terms abound, and a discouragement arises from the coarseness of the language in which they are delivered. Not to mention the useless jargon of the schools, grown so justly offensive to the public ear, the barbarism of its scientific terms proves in the present age, at least in the fashionable world, rather unfriendly to the Linnaean system. This naturalists confess. The late Mr Gray, whose musical parts were so delicate and correct, was so struck with this deformity in a system in other respects so worthy of admiration, as to have attempted to make a German Latin of Linnaeus purely classical: [See Gray's Works by Mason] a talk which perhaps Gray alone was able to perform. But though this species of deformity may be an object of regret, fastidious surely, or rather to the last degree fantastical, is the taste which can be diverted, by such frivolous considerations, from the study of nature.

The sense of harmony in a well-constituted mind, dispenses with its objects, in favour of more liberal and manly indulgence. And in the expression of sound, in the intimation it brings, in the sentiments and feelings, which, independently of arbitrary appointment, it calls up in the human understanding, or impresses on the human heart, consists the chief importance of those modulations which prevail in different systems of language.

When the Emperor Charles the Fifth [E] so pleasantly characterised the several languages of Europe, this general effect of sound alone exhausted the criticism. He insinuated no other comparison, nor enquired into their artificial fabric. The criterion, however, of a polished tongue seems principally to reside there.

Idiom and analogical texture present considerations of far greater importance than can be drawn from any general theory of sound. In the Greek, in the Latin, in the Eastern tongues, is eminently displayed the connexion of language with the genius and character of nations. And, perhaps, it is no paradox to affirm, that the most intelligent and enlightened people will be found, in their peculiar idioms, and modes of speech, to have approached the nearest to the standard of perfection.

After a language has arrived at considerable refinement, there may be remarked in provincial phrase, or in the variety of its dialects, the characteristics of primitive barbarism. In this variety, its alliance with manners cannot escape the most superficial observer. For, in the progress of a state, the lower ranks often fall back; or at least not moving forward in exact proportion with their superiors, their language, like their manners, remains long nearly stationary. The vulgar, accordingly, of the same country, almost as widely differ in their vocabulary from the more polished, as the more barbarous differ in theirs from the more polished nations; or as the same language differs from itself in its successive stages. And hence a presumption arises, that the distinction in question lies not so much in sound, or in grammatical texture, as in the analogy of terms which, in different periods of society, are engrafted on a different stock. At one

period there is a coarseness and rusticity which govern the idioms, run through the etymology, and adhere to all the allusions. At another period the allusions carry more immediately and directly to the arts of life. In circumstances so dissimilar, the vocabulary is extended in opposite lines, and pursues its progress through a different series of analogy.

Suitable to this tendency of things, the rough, the boisterous, and the loud, the true representatives of barbarians in a cultivated age, are peculiarly averse from refinement in speech, and discover an aptitude and predilection for vulgar allusions.

Even when the accidents of birth and fortune lead to its more polished forms, it is difficult for art to file off, in this respect, the roughness of nature; and they relapse into barbarisms better adapted to their mode of thinking, and to the constitutional indelicacy of their moral frame. To persons of an opposite description, the gross allusions of the vulgar are peculiarly offensive. A reformation in this point is more or less the aim of the civilising part of society; till at length the reigning propensities of one become reigning antipathies in another age.

The system of allusions, therefore, the course of etymology, or the filiation of words, must be variable, in every tongue, with the manners, with the arts, with the turn of thinking among mankind. And besides these intrinsic differences, which rise up systematically out of the prevailing scheme of thought, words acquire dignity or meanness from accidental combinations, and even from the organs through which they pass. They are sanctified, if one may say so, by venerable lips, or contract a sort of ideal debasement in the mouths of the vulgar. And hence the poets of all nations, the first refiners of the elements of speech, depart the farthest from vulgar phrase, and even affect a dialect of their own, consecrated, in a peculiar manner, to the Muses.[F]

Such causes directly tend to discriminate languages, and to fix the degrees of their refinement.

But refinement in language, as in manners, may be excessive, or ill governed. And comparative excellence is by no means included in comparative refinement.[G]

Language, in its earliest forms, has been taxed with an obscurity, from which it is afterwards exempt. This obscurity, which reigns in some degree in all the languages of antiquity, has been more particularly objected to those of the East. It seems principally to arise from the want of those connected particles whose introduction is of a later date. And from hence it should seem that perspicuity is a growing virtue. But the criticism, if not destitute of foundation, must be confined, in a great degree, to written composition. For, in the act of speaking, the superior vivacity, which accompanies a rude tongue, often supersedes the occasion of particles, or scorns their aid. If then particles, in the fulness of their dominion, give only to perspicuity what a inferior animation takes away, there is upon the whole no absolute gain: and, according as you fix the proportion, you refer the virtue to rude or cultivated speech.

Without instituting a minute comparison, it may in general be maintained, that the great excellence of a rude tongue consists, if not in perspicuity, at least in vivacity and strength. In these modes of excellence our most remote progenitors far surpassed us. And the advantages of a cultivated tongue, when opposed to these, will consist chiefly in copiousness of expression, in the grace of allusion, and in the combination of more melodious sound.

An entire union of these qualities, with those others, would constitute the utmost perfection. But the existence of the former, in an eminent degree, is rather incompatible with the latter; and

consequently there is a certain point of refinement from which all languages begin to decline.[H]

In forming a particular estimate, the inherent advantages and disadvantages of grammatical texture would also deserve attention. It is the genius of some to admit of inflexion, and consequently of transposition, and a vast latitude of arrangement. Others, circumscribed by particles, admit of no variety of order.

The one system is more fertile of harmony and elegance, and even of strength; and, by operating more successfully on the imagination, seems better adapted to the purposes of eloquence and polite literature. The other system, more allied to perspicuity and precision, is, on that account, more approved by the understanding, as a commodious vehicle for philosophy and the sciences. Any greater latitude of arrangement, than that permitted in the Greek and Latin, might probably be destructive of perspicuity. Any closer confinement, than that required in the French and Italian, might be destructive of elegance and force. In perspicuity, the English tongue is perhaps superior both to the Greek and Latin, while it falls considerably short of the French. In elegance and force it is more perfect than the French, while infinitely inferior to the Greek and Latin.

The German is an example of a language which admits of large transposition, while custom exacts much uniformity in the arrangement of words. Should the Germans then ever arrive at that elegance and taste which distinguished the politer ages of Greece and Rome, their writers would indulge in a variety of arrangement hitherto unprecedented, and which, though not repugnant to the fundamentals of their grammar, must wait the slow variation of idiom, the sanction of custom and established use.

Quem penes arbitrium est, & jus, & norma loquendi.

Such innovations, however, would be justly numbered among the ornaments of speech, and the refinements of a polished age. And other languages, more melodiously constructed, equally adorned, and susceptible, perhaps, in other respects, of superior refinements, may be debarred, by the fundamental laws and constitution of their grammar, from such eventual transitions.

But the critical examination of such particulars, or of the comparative excellence of antient and modern tongues, belongs to the grammarian, or philologist, not to a writer who looks through their province into the progress of manners, and the vicissitudes of civil life.

NOTES.

Note [A], p. 116

The language of the Hottentots, though not absolutely destitute of articulation is, however, defective in this quality. And, the language of the Trogoldytes, a savage people, who subsisted in antient Egypt, resembled, according to Herodotus, the shrieking of bats, and consisted of no articulate sounds. But in this instance, as in that of the Hottentots, and other savage nations, it is probable there is not a total absence of the quality, but only a more imperfect articulation, which requires some acquaintance with the language to render it palpable to sense.

Note [B], p. 118

The celebrated Signora Gabrieli, whose power of voice is so

various and bewitching, is conscious of the irresistible influence of physical causes on her exertions. They disarm her occasionally of the power to excel, and account for that reluctance to perform, which is generally ascribed to caprice alone.

See Brydone's Tour.

Note [C] p. 121.

The anecdote of Atheas king of Scythia is thus related by Plutarch:

'Ateas --- isminian de, ton apiston aulitin, laxon, dichmaloton, exeleuson aulnsai. Phaumaxonton ce ton allon, autos omosen idion axgein to ippa Chremetixontos.

Plut. in Apophth.

It may be even questioned, whether the accomplished king of Macedon himself, though susceptible of musical gratification beyond the reach of a Scythian, had a full relish of the performances of the great master he affected to admire. But it was the policy of Philip to countenance, at his court, a degree of refinement in the elegant and polite arts, which was little adapted to the circumstances of Macedon, though highly worthy of a prince who had annexed his kingdom to the Hellenic body, and aspired to the sovereignty of nations highly civilized.

The Macedonians held a sort of middle station between the Grecian and Barbarian world. Rude, when compared with the Greeks; cultivated and refined, when compared with the Scythian nations.

NOTE [D], p. 121.

Though musical expression is certainly relative to the peculiar ideas of a people, it cannot hence be inferred, that there is no ground of absolute preference in judging of the music of nations. All languages, in their peculiar idioms, have such a reference, yet a judgment may be formed concerning their comparative perfection. But to institute such comparison belongs not to the crowd.

"The admiration," says a late popular Writer, "pretended to be given to foreign music in Britain is, in general, despicable affectation. In Italy we see the natives transported at the opera with all that variety of delight and passion which the composer intended to produce. The same opera in England is seen with the most remarkable listlessness and inattention. It can raise no passion in the audience, because they do not understand the language in which it is written."

The same Writer, after enumerating several causes which conferred pre-eminence on the music of the antients, proceeds to observe, "That if we were to recover the music which once had so much power in the early periods of the Greek states, it might have no such charms for modern ears as some great admirers of antiquity imagine."

Gregory's Comparative View

The extent of these charms, we will presume to add, even for the ears of Greeks, is magnified beyond the truth. It can hardly be imagined, that their musical education was essential to public morals, or to the frame of their governments; though it might contribute, in some degree, to sway the genius of the youth, to counterbalance the tendency of their gymnastic exercises, and to

heighten the sensibilities of that refined and ingenious people.

NOTE [E], p. 124.

Francese ad un amico -- Tudesco al suo cavallo -- Italiano all sua signora -- Spagnuolo a Dio -- Inglese a gli uccelli.

This apothegm, like an imperial edit, has been rung, for above two centuries, in the ears of Europe. Though rather pleasant than serious, it intimates from high authority the general effects of sound. Serious criticism, on the structure of the European languages, leads to more important distinctions, founded in the diversity of national character.

"It is certain," says Addison, "that the light talkative genius of the French has not a little infected their tongue, which might be shewn by many instances; as the genius of the Italians, which is so much addicted to music and ceremony, has moulded all their words and phrases to those particular uses. The stateliness and gravity of the Spaniards shews itself to perfection, in the solemnity of their language; and the blunt, honest humour of the Germans sounds better in the roughness of the high Dutch, than it would in a politer tongue."

Spectator, No. 135.

NOTE [F], p. 128.

The embellishment of a poetic dialect is eminently conspicuous in the Greek and Italian; the languages antient and modern most eminent for every species of refinement.

Whatever theory is embraced concerning the origin of this dialect among the Greeks, the advantages hence derived to the Greek muse are universally acknowledged. And the advantages derived to the Italian muse, from the same fountain, are thus described by Mr Addison in his Remarks on Italy.

"The Italian poets, besides the celebrated smoothness of their tongue, have a particular advantage above the writers of other nations, in the difference of their poetic and prose language. There are indeed sets of phrases that in all countries are peculiar to the poets; but, among the Italians, there are not only sentences, but a multitude of particular words that never enter into common discourse. They have such a different turn and polishing for poetical use, that they drop several of their letters, and appear in another form when they come to be arranged in verse. For this reason, the Italian opera seldom sinks into a poorness of language, but, amidst all the meanness and familiarity of the thoughts, has something beautiful and sonorous in the expression. Without this natural advantage of the tongue, their present poetry would appear wretchedly low and vulgar, notwithstanding the many strained allegories that are so much in use amongst the writers of this nation."

Thus far Mr Addison. Suitable to the design of this note, it may farther be observed, that the Provencal tongue, embellished by the happy genius of the Troubadours, was, during a period of two centuries, the most approved of any in Europe. It was the forming hand of Dante, that first gave so fine a polish to the Italian as rendered it superior to the Provencal, at a time when the Spanish and French were emerging more slowly from barbarism.

See Millot's History of the Troubadours.

The English tongue cannot indeed boast of a poetic dialect of equal advantage with that of the Greek or Italian, yet it is not unacquainted with a similar species of refinement. The merit of

such refinement is eminently Dryden's, who selected, with peculiar delicacy, so many flowing and sonorous words, and appropriated them exclusively to the Muses.

"There was," says his Biographer and Critic, "before the time of Dryden, no poetical diction, no system of words at once refined from the grossness of domestic use, and free from the harshness of terms appropriated to particular arts. Words too familiar or too remote, defeat the purpose of a poet. From those sounds which we hear on small or coarse occasions, we do not easily receive strong impressions or delightful images; and words to which we are nearly strangers, whenever they occur, draw that attention on themselves, which they should convey to things.

Those happy combinations of words, which distinguish poetry from prose, had been rarely attempted; we had few elegancies or flowers of speech; the roses had not yet been plucked from the bramble, or different colours had not been joined to enliven one another."

Waller and Denham, it will readily be owned by every cultivator of English literature, claim, on the same account, a due proportion of praise. But Dryden, certainly, has eclipsed their fame.

> Waller was smooth; but Dryden taught to join
> The varying verse, the full resounding line,
> The long majestic march, and energy divine.

NOTE [G], p. 129.

The simple and original qualities of style, considered as an object to the understanding, the imagination, the passions, and the ear, are reduced by Dr Campbel, in the Philosophy of Rhetoric, to five, perspicuity, vivacity, elegance, animation and music.

If of these qualities perspicuity be, as it surely is, the most essential, the aptitude of a language to promote perspicuity, would seem to constitute its chief perfection. But we may apply, perhaps, to perspicuity, which is the first end of speech, what is applicable to some of the moral virtues. The absence of the virtue implies the most palpable defect; its presence is no capital excellence.

Besides, the cases of style and of a language are not exactly parallel. In judging of the one, we pronounce on the execution; in judging of the other, rather on the materials. The architect may not always be responsible for the materials with which he builds. A language full of perspicuity, within a narrow province, may, from the scantiness of the vocabulary, be without variety, or compass, or extent.

As to the analysis of style, it is foreign to this discussion. But, if so curious a subject should appear interesting to the reader, we can refer him with pleasure to the work above mentioned, which enters into minute as well as important distinctions, and which entitles its author to no inferior rank among the critics and metaphysicians of the present age.

NOTE [H], p. 131.

When a language has touched the highest point of attainable perfection, it is open to corruption from various sources, which no human sagacity is able fully to explore.

It can be shown from the doctrine of combinations, that it is possible, in the nature of things, for a language to exhaust itself, so as to be utterly incapable of presenting any new idea to

the human understanding.

In any system of words, the various combinations, and combination of combinations, cannot be infinite. But though not infinite, they are, it must be owned, indefinite; and therefore, the supposition we had made, is barely possible in the conception of the mind. Something, however, actually approaching to this, takes place, to a certain degree, in a highly cultivated tongue, and is a principal cause of its decline.

Modes of speech, the most elegant and adorned, by returning often upon the ear, are liable to be anticipated, or cease to afford their wonted gratification. To aim therefore at new, though inferior forms of excellence, becomes an object in an age of refinement. Words of singular fabric, foreign idioms, and combinations less familiar to the public ear, are sought after with avidity. The genius of the language is tortured; and the love of novelty and variety produces a constant deviation from the purest models.

The corruption arising from this principle, was realized among the Romans after the Augustan age, and begins perhaps to be realized in the present period of English literature.

ESSAY IV - Of the Criterion of Civilized Manners.

The epithets barbarous and civilized occur so frequently in conversation and in books, that whoever employs his thoughts in contemplation of the manners and history of mankind, will have occasion to consider, with some attention, both what ideas these words are commonly meant to convey, and in what sense they ought to be employed by the historian, and moral philosopher.

It is of some importance surely, in every discussion relative to human affairs, to have ascertained before-hand what are those qualities in the manners and characters of different nations, which, according to the estimation of reason, after an impartial survey of mankind, as they are and have been, may justify the imposition of names implying almost unlimited censure or applause,

Perhaps, on examination, it will not appear that any simple criterion, of civilization and barbarity, taken either from laws, or manners, or any other circumstance in human affairs, can be fixed upon, as corresponding to the general use which is made of these terms, and fitted to explain their application in particular cases.

That civilization, so highly extolled, is plainly understood, by its admirers, to be somewhat of a mixed and complicated nature, comprehending various constituent parts, some essential to its very existence, some only accessory and ornamental. In the total absence of the former of these, Barbarity, according to the general acceptation of the word, seems to be understood to consist.

Warm and steady affections in private life, an honourable fidelity to engagements, whether express or implied, the order of internal laws, equity and humanity in their conduct towards strangers, and foreign nations, will be insisted upon by all as essential to the character of a civilized people. The sciences, and fine arts, though not indispensably essential, must be esteemed very requisite: yet is not their influence exempted from some uncertainty and suspicion. The cultivation of real science, the love and study of the fine arts, while uncorrupted, add, no doubt, to the politeness, and improve the enjoyments, of civilized nations; but an attachment to false sciences (several of which, like astrology and magic, unsuspected while they flourish, have prevailed, and perhaps prevail), or a passion for spurious and grotesque imitations of the fine arts, as pantomimes, puppet-shows, masquerades, or the laboured decoration of gardens and parterres, cannot improve, and may degrade, in a certain degree, the character of those nations by whom they are cherished.

The vulgar and commercial arts, subservient to the plenty, accommodation, and elegance of ordinary life, seem almost of an indifferent nature.

Although by these the manners of civilized nations may be embellished, yet the highest degrees of generous virtue, and the truest politeness of mind, may be found among nations to whom these arts are almost totally unknown.

If this be a full enumeration of the qualities which, in the general sense of mankind, are understood to constitute civilized manners, and a just account of their respective importance; it deserves to be adverted to, that not nation has ever possessed them all in their highest excellence, nor has any subsisted as a people (short periods of convulsion and anarchy excepted), without a very considerable degree of one or more of those which are to be accounted most essential.

Were it not then better to set aside from correct reasoning the too general terms of barbarous and civilized, substituting in their room expressions of more definite censure and approbation?

Indeed the common acceptation of these words is founded upon a very general, but very false and partial opinion of the state of mankind. It supposes that the difference between one nation and another may be prodigiously great; and some happy and distinguished tribes of men are, in all respects, generous, liberal, refined, and humane; while others, from their hard fate, or their perverseness, remain in all respects illiberal, mischievous, and rude.

The general supposition with regard to the condition of human nature, is implied in that opinion of their own superiority over other nations, which Europeans are prone to entertain: a superiority which, like that assumed by the Greeks, the Romans, and the Chinese, is supposed by those who claim it to be absolute and immense; yet, if brought to the standard of virtue and felicity, it may appear very inconsiderable in respect of the populous Asiatic nations, who have flourished long under extensive monarchies, and not very great in respect even of the simplest and rudest race of men inhabiting the frozen shores of Greenland, or placed beneath the fervour of a vertical sun, along the Guinea coast, or on the Banks of the Orinoco.

It ought to be supposed that, if other nations were as far inferior to us, as we are willing to imagine, their condition would evidently tend to decay and extermination. With regard to the inferior orders of being, both animal and vegetable, it seems to be a law of nature, that, wherever they cannot attain, in some very considerable degree, the honours, if I may so speak, and the emoluments of their existence, there they gradually decline, and at last cease to exist at all. Is man an exception from the general law? or may it not rather be believed, that, wherever any tribes of mankind subsist, and do not manifestly decay and hasten to extermination, there, though appearances belie it, they must have attained a measure of worth and of felicity not much inferior to that which the most admired nations have actually attained?

The opinions of the vulgar suggested by instinctive propensities, not formed by reasoning, always ascribe to the progress of science and of art, wherever they have once apprehended the idea of this progress, a superiority of the most decisive kind, in all that is fortunate and desirable in the lot of man. But speculative reasoners are not wholly agreed on this head.

The greater number indeed have embraced, and by their eloquence they illustrate and enforce, this opinion so natural to the crowd, and, with them, they extol this progress as essential to the very existence of the human character.

But of late, a few [Rousseau, and those who have embraced his opinions] not inferior in sagacity to any, and more inquisitive perhaps, in this research, than those who have followed the generally received opinion, have found reason to decry this progress as the fertile source of corruption, debasement, and infelicity.

Between these opposite opinions the truth, as in many other cases, will probably be found. The beneficial influence of this progress is real, yet far inferior to what the panegyrists of science and art have represented it to be, and just barely enough to reward that continual pursuit which it solicits from every nation once engaged in this career.

It will not however follow, if the condition of the most improved and refined nations be admitted very little to excel in felicity or worth the simplest and rudest tribes of men, that the inducements to further progress in pursuit of improvement are taken away, or indeed diminished.

To nations of men, as to individuals, it happens often, that they are allured by the splendor of a distant object, to pursue it with more ardour than it appears on attainment to have deserved. They are then apt to complain of fallacious appearances, and to wonder that the system, of which they are a part, should expose them to such delusions. But though their industry may have been roused and excited by a certain degree of delusive splendor, without the charms of which it might not have been awakened at all, they are never cheated of its proper reward. Some real good, however inferior to that expected, or different from it, is generally obtained at the close of every pursuit; and whatever may appear deficient then, has been before enjoyed in detail, as it accompanied the progress of their endeavours.

Were indeed both the progressive reward of well-directed industry, and that which is obtained at the termination of its endeavours, much inferior to their usual amount, one powerful reason would still remain to impel mankind to the pursuit of every attainable object, and to make them aspire after every apparent improvement of their actual condition, whatever it may be.

------- Omnia fatis
In pejus ruere, ac retro sublapsa referri,
Ni vis humana --------

The first course of time is continually taking away from that which we possess, and from the high perfection of whatever we have cultivated and refined. Nothing ever stands still. If progress is not made, we must decline from the good state already attained, and as it is scarcely ever in our power to replace the waste of time and of chance in those very respects in which they have impaired our condition, we ought to endeavour to compensate these inevitable losses, by the acquisition of other advantages and augmentations of good; especially of those which the same course of things brings forward to our view, and seems to present to us as the object of reasonable desire.

Essay V - Of the Rank of Nations, and the Revolutions of Fortune

The philosopher, who studies human nature in the closet, will be astonished when he looks abroad into life, and examines, by his theory, the conduct of mankind.

Yet to him who, in the course of observation, and in the commerce of active life, has learned to make no serious appeals to his own constitution, the history of the world will be no less dark and mysterious.

The one is deficient in experience, the other in reflexion; both alike unqualified to judge consistently of the human character.

Had there reigned from the beginning an exact similarity among men, laws had been unnecessary, and government without all foundation. A wide dissimilarity, on the other hand, must have indisposed them for society, and rendered them incongruous parts of the same system.

Distinctions then there are, and ought to be. But these, at first few and inconsiderable, have grown immense in the revolutions of time; and the natural history of the species is scarce able to solve the appearances in civil life.

The operation of climate, in the production of these appearances, seems to have been magnified by the Greeks and Romans.

The genius of the Asiatics was supposed to disappear in the climates of Europe, and the genius of Europe to evaporate in the climates of Asia. Thus the genius of the human mind seemed to fluctuate with every migration, and to gravitate to the soil.[A]

Mechanical and local causes, which, in some respects, so visibly predominate, the imagination invests with a dominion that reaches the very essence of our frame. Hence the mutual contempt of nations. Hence the rank which Europe, at this day, usurps over all the communities of mankind.

She affects to move in another orbit from the rest of the species. She is even offended with the idea of a common descent; and, rather than acknowledge her ancestors to have been co-ordinate only to other races of Barbarians, and in parallel circumstances, she breaks the unity of the system, and, by imagining specific differences among men, precludes or abrogates their common claims.

According to this theory, the oppression or extermination of a meaner race, will no longer be so shocking to humanity. Their distresses will not call upon us so loudly for relief. And public morality, and the laws of nations, will be confined to a few regions peopled with this more exalted species of mankind.

Upon the discovery of America, doubts were entertained whether the natives of that country ought not to be accounted a race of the Orang Outangs. Bu the infallible edict of a Roman pontiff soon established their doubtful pedigree;[B] and our right of dominion, in both hemispheres, was asserted, on other pretences, by the casuists of those days.

The investiture of America was conferred on Ferdinand and Isabella by Pope Alexander the Sixth.

In general, all countries discovered to the west of a meridian line, were by this pope assigned to the Spaniards, as all discovered to the east of this line were declared, by the same authority, to be vested in the Portuguese.

In became accordingly a question between the two crowns of Spain and Portugal, to which of them the Molucca Islands should belong. For it had not occurred to this arbiter of the rights of kings, that the grants were as nonsensical as unjust, and that the eastern and western navigators might possibly interfere in taking possession of their respective allotments. But the court of Rome, which authorised so absurd a partition of empire, vindicated, during another pontificate, the honours of the Indian race. The thunder of the Vatican was heard, for once, on the side of humanity; and Europe, in the sixteenth century, was permitted only to usurp the sovereignty, not to insult the pedigree, of nations.

The theory, then, we have mentioned, is, in its utmost extent, of more modern invention. But the opinions which lead to it are of high antiquity; and, being congenial with the passions of a divided world, have resisted the experience of ages. There is scarce any folly or vice, says a late author, [Henry Bolingbroke, Letters on the Study of History, p. 29] more epidemical among the sons of men, than that ridiculous and hurtful vanity, by which the people of each country are apt to prefer themselves to those of every other; and to make their own customs, and manners, and opinions, the standards of right and wrong, of true and false. The same propensity, says another author, [Adam Ferguson, History of Civil Society, p. 145] is the most remarkable in the whole description of mankind.

National vanity is indeed confined to no aera in civil life. If the epithets Greek and Barbarian are opposed to each other in the Greek tongue, epithets, exactly equivalent, are opposed to each other in an Indian tongue, spoken on the coast of Labrador; and, in general, the names by which the rude American tribes wish to be

distinguished, are assumed from an idea of their own pre-eminence.[History of America, vol. i. p. 412] If the learned Chinese were mortified with the figure their empire made in the general map of the world, the poor natives of Congo pronounced themselves highly favoured among mortals: and the most wretched of African tribes solace themselves, under all their misfortunes, with the fond persuasion that, whithersoever they go, they shall, one day, return, in life or in death, to their native shores.

Such partiality, when not carried to an extreme, answers a noble end: and the purest patriotism is often founded on local circumstances, and a predilection for established forms. But that preference of affection to our own country, which is the true definition of patriotism, is compatible, surely, with suitable regard and allowances for the various aspects of humanity.

Profound ignorance, and a contrariety, or repugnancy of customs and manners, account for that aversion, or contempt for strangers and foreigners, implied in the partial sentiments of savage and untutored tribes. No information, no experience, no conviction, can always conquer early prejudice: and the Hottentot, who returned from Europe, relapsed, we may believe, with all imaginable ease, perhaps with additional satisfaction, into the established habits of his country.

But such examples are balanced by others of an opposite nature, no less remarkable which history presents to our view: examples of docility, of emulation, of magnanimous preference. Some of these it will be proper to recite, if we would not belie the character of the ruder ages.

The Romans, while yet a rude people, disdained not to appoint an embassy to enquire into the jurisprudence of the Greeks, and to supply, from that fountain, the deficiencies in their civil code.

This embassy seems to have been suggested by Hermodorus, an exiled citizen of Ephesus, who afterwards eminently assisted in interpreting the collection of laws brought from Greece. His public services met with a public reward. A statute was erected to him in the Comitia at the public expence: an honour which the jealousy of Rome would have denied to a stranger in a less generous age. But, at this period she acted from a nobler impulse; and the statue erected to Hermodorus was erected in reality, to her own honour. Yet the name of this Ephesian, which casts a lustre upon Rome, seemed to cast a shade upon his native city; and that people, according to Heraclitus, deserved to have been extirpated to a man, who condemned such a citizen to exile.[C]

The Romans, in other instances, were capable of acting with the same humble dignity.

They disdained not to refer to the court of Areopagus at Athens, the decision of such questions as were too complex or intricate for their own tribunals. This reference, that embassy, may seem worthy of a people who were destined, one day, to be the rulers of mankind. But the policy of rude nations, though seldom called into view unless by that fortune which renders their posterity illustrious, is often, we may believe, conducted with the same spirit.

In the reign of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius, references, from the fiercest barbarians, to Rome, were not uncommon. And there occurs an example of policy, in modern ages, less celebrated indeed, but more liberal, perhaps, and magnanimous, than any recorded in Roman annals. It relates to religion, an object certainly the most sublime and interesting that can enter into public councils and deliberations.

A duke of Russia, while his subjects were yet pagans, sent abroad commissioners to inform themselves, on the spot, concerning

the religion of Rome, the religion of the Greek church, and the religion of Mohamet, that he might determine, upon the report of those commissioners, which of these several religions it became him to embrace and establish, as a guardian of his people. So much modesty in acknowledging domestic insufficiency; so much candour in weighing the pretensions of foreign institutions, are rarely to be met with in the proceedings of nations reputed civilized. And if we compare the sentiments which those under a different state of the arts are disposed to entertain, we shall find that undistinguished contempt, though mutual in some respects, subsists between them by no means in an equal degree. It is commonly mitigated, on the one side, by credulity and admiration, to which the ruder nations are peculiarly prone;[D] while it is heightened, on the other, by antipathies, which the pageantry of rank, and the exterior of polished life, are apt to inspire.

The congress of mankind, at Constantinople, during the period of the crusades, opened perhaps a fairer field for this comparison, than any other occurrence in the annals of the world. Various people, in different stages of civil culture, convened, as it were, at a general rendezvous, and passing in review before each other, must have impressed the mind with emotions and sentiments corresponding to the variety of their conditions. Historians, spectators of the scene, and animated with the passions of their contemporaries, have describe the impression of this singular interview; and from the descriptions of these historians we may collect the judgment of nations.

The Greeks, exulting in their unrivalled superiority in arts, looked down on all the strangers assembled in their capital, with supercilious contempt, and, on some, even with detestation. The Latins, on the other hand, and in general the ruder strangers of the West, with more modest ideas of their own accomplishments, recognized a degree of refinement in manners and in arts, so far superior to their own, and regarded, with an admiration approaching to enthusiasm, the splendor and magnificence of the Greek empire.

The leaders of the crusades, accordingly, on their return from the Holy Land, abandoned in some sort the rusticity of their manners, and aimed at some reformation in the taste and sciences of Europe. And to these wild expeditions, says an admired historian, [History of Charles V, vol. I.] the effect of superstition or folly, we owe the first gleams of light, which tended to dispel barbarity and ignorance.

In general it may be affirmed, that rude nations are touched with some degree of reverence or admiration at the sight of dignified appearances; that they honour, at some distance, that state of the arts towards which they are tending; and that it is only in cases where the distance is too immense for their prospect or conception, that they acquiesce in their condition with an apparent insensibility, and allow their superiors to possess unenvied greatness.

The rude nations of the North, who subverted the empire of the Romans, after the first efforts of their violence, became converts to the religion of the vanquished, and were even capable of admiring the monuments of ancient learning. þThe immortal productions of Virgil, Cicero, and Livy,þ says the Historian of the Roman Empire, [History Roman Empire, vol. iii. p. 523] þwhich were accessible to the Christian Barbarians, maintained a silent intercourse between the reign of Augustus and the times of Clovis and Charlemagne. The emulation of mankind was encouraged by the remembrance of a more perfect state; and the flame of science was secretly kept alive, to warm and enlighten the mature age of the western world.þ

The Saracens, notwithstanding the desolation of literature at Alexandria, which marked their first conquests, soon appeared in the scene, as its most zealous champions. Eager to preserve, as before active to destroy, they cultivated its precious remains with unexampled ardour. A novelty was even to appear in public negotiations: a people contending for erudition as for empire, and actually demanding the works of the antients, by express articles, in treaties with the Greek emperors.

There is but one occurrence on the records of antiquity more splendid than this conduct of the Saracens; the conduct of that king of Syracuse, who made it an express condition in a treaty with the Carthaginians, That they should abstain from human sacrifices. It is noble in a people to demand science from their enemies. It is nobler to demand of enemies not to be to themselves inhuman. And of such heroism in politics there is a recent example, if it be authenticated in history, that the court of Russia, in the last treaty of peace with the Grand Segnior, expressly stipulated, That the tribute of slaves, so cruelly exacted from the oppressed provinces of Georgia, Circassia, and Mengrelia, should be remitted and abolished in all future times. The Russian court is certainly attentive to great objects; and pursues, with magnanimous discernment, whatever is most valuable in the arts and policy of more enlightened states.

Modesty is consistent with the most aspiring views. It is the actual possession of refinement and civil arts, not the efforts made towards acquiring them, which engenders extravagance and conceit. A few frivolous, or at best ornamental distinctions, are mistaken for real differences: and if we survey the circle of human things, the illusions of vanity, and the insolence of pride, will be found most inherent to nations and to ages intoxicated with propensity and affluence.

Commerce, the boast of modern policy, by enlarging the sphere of observation and experience, promised to undeceive the world, and to diffuse more liberal and equal sentiments through the several parts of an extended system. But commerce, it is to be feared, has, in some instances, been productive of the very contrary effects; and by exposing, if I may say so, the nakedness of society, and uniting, in one prospect, its most distant extremes, has heightened the insolence of nations, and rendered their original and natural equality, to a superficial observer, more incredible.

In judging of nations, as well as of individuals, our observations are more frequently directed to circumstances of pomp and outward splendor, than to intrinsic excellence. And countries, accordingly, where no such appearances are to be found, we too hastily conclude to be the mansions of people, who, from a natural inferiority of talent, are incapable of producing them.

This conclusion was drawn first by the Egyptians, and afterwards by the Greeks. The Greeks, more especially, regarded their own country as the seat of every perfection; and policy, and refinement, and arts, as their exclusive privilege.

Extravagant as the opinion now appears, it was the opinion of free and of polished states, in the meridian of their course. It was supported by a comparison with the neighbouring nations; nor then, perhaps, directly contradicted or disapproved by any authentic memorials.

Such presumption, therefore, was more excusable in the antients; but having been, long since, reprobated by the fullest experience, ought to afford a lesson of wisdom and moderation to all succeeding ages.

When it is observed that, in proportion to the age of the world, the known regions of civility are of larger extent; it is

not being too sanguine to expect, that, in the lapse of time, the whole habitable globe shall be found compatible with the same improvements.

What avails it that experience refutes so amply the errors of past times, if it corrects not our judgment of the future, nor disengages the mind from the dominion of its former prejudices?

Could the perpetual greatness of one people be set in opposition to the perpetual meanness of another, the plea of natural pre-eminence were exceedingly specious. But it is great conjunctures only which form great men; and there are certain periods in the annals of the most distinguished nations, wherein they appear in no degree superior to their contemporaries.

In that long interval, which elapsed from the age of Alexander to the conquest of Greece by the Romans, there is scarcely an Athenian of eminence upon record. And the observation, with a few exceptions, is applicable, perhaps, to the whole of Greece, from the above age as far down as the Archaean league, when Agis, and Cleomenes of Sparta, and Aratus, and Philopaemen give us some idea of their illustrious ancestors.

When we resolve, therefore, the rise and decline of nations, and the fluctuating character of the same people at different aeras, we must necessarily allow to mankind in those countries at least which have been the principle scene of civil history, and equal rank and importance in the scale of being.

Let us then examine the plea of humble and unaspiring nations, not hitherto supposed to have emerged into distinction, or to have touched the nearest verge of science and the liberal arts. Constituted so long in circumstances so far beneath the standard of our ideas, it may be deemed not unreasonable to impute to them an original inferiority of nature, or a degradation of rank, occasioned by the infallible operation of physical laws.

Were the facts fully ascertained, and otherwise inexplicable, such conclusions might be embraced and warranted upon the principles of sound philosophy. But the facts are destitute of evidence; and, even if we admitted their reality, none of these hypotheses would be necessary to solve the history of the world.

Let us carry our imagination back to an aera more antient than the birth of arts. Let us the suppose an observer, of profound discernment, to predict, from a series of calculation, the eventual fortune of the world, exclusively of all regard to soil or climate, or at least to the supposed influence of the heavens on the human mind. His sagacity, perhaps, might not determine where civil arts should first arise, or shine forth with the fullest lustre: yet far, surely, from expecting them, in all countries, to be coincident in their origin, or to flourish, at once, in the same degree, he would expect considerable intervals between the arrival of different people at points of equal advancement.

So various are the causes which concur to the full establishment of regular and well-constituted government; that no evidence decisive of the relative capacity of any people could be derived from the commencement of their civil aera. Even after the first movements have been successfully made, there are a thousand disasters, which may annoy a political constitution, in its infancy or early youth, and not suffer its principles to ripen into perfection. Circumstances in no degree affecting the genius of a people, are often sufficient to circumscribe their progress; and consistently with the full strength and vigour of the human powers, the reign of ignorance and simplicity may endure for ages.

Although great attainments indeed imply great talents, the want of talent is not implied in disappointment. In the researches, for instance, of science and philosophy, the moderns have not only

equalled, but surpassed the antients: yet who, upon this foundation, will arraign the genius of antiquity?

Fortune governs events: and the magnitude of genius or capacity, in individuals or in tribes, cannot be fully estimated by the success of its exertions. Even the actual promoters of the most important interests of mankind have seldom anticipated, in idea, the progressive consequences of their own plans. In estimating human attainments, their origin, progress, and perfection, must not be totally ascribed to human wisdom. And, with all due honour to the memory of our forefathers, this judgment may be pronounced on all the arts, sciences, and governments they have delivered down to posterity;

> ----- Quod divum promittere nemo
> Auderet, volvenda dies en attulit ultro!

But, if the approaches to civility are easily made, whence then, it may be asked, have we so many embarrassing theories concerning the origin of language, the rise of political union, and the essential arrangements of social life? While such proceedings, in the judgment of the learned, seem to exhaust all human wisdom and ingenuity, is it not, in reality, more wonderful to find so many nations already emerged from obscurity, within the compass of a few thousand years, than to find so many others still hovering on the confines of a state of nature?

But, in further illustration of this point, let us indulge a few arbitrary suppositions.

Let us suppose, that the number of men, born with the high prerogative of conducting a people eventually within the line of civilized life, is to the rest of the species in a certain fixed proportion.

Let the chance of such men being placed in circumstances favourable to the enterprize, form another proportion. And in circumstances thus favourable, let the chance against disappointment by natural or violent death, or other contingency, form likewise an element in the problem. Then, by compounding these proportions, it follows that one only, out of a determinate number of men, is born to execute this great design.

Now let us imagine the earth already peopled before civilization began, and that the number upon earth, at any one time, is equal or inferior to the number which results from the above proportions; then, judging from the probability of things, one or more generations must pass away, after the earth is fully peopled, before civilization is any where introduced. And, after its introduction into one corner, the numbers in the uncivilized part of the earth, being then less than the whole species, still more generations, commencing from the former aera, must pass away, before the aera of civility to any other people.

In proportion, therefore, to the nations already emerged, the chance for the emergence of any new people must constantly decrease.

The computation indeed supposes no intercourse between the civilized and the barbarous nations. By reason of that intercourse the chance of extending civility rises, no doubt, in an eminent degree. Hence, with regard to countries possessing intercourse, the progress may be exceedingly rapid. But in the other, and sequestered corners of the globe, calculation determines that there is a growing chance against the appearance of a cultivated or polished nation. And, if we reason from actual experience, it is far more probable that, in any barbarous land, the civil arts will owe their original to foreign operations, either hostile or

commercial, than to interior efforts.

The Romans were no less the legislators, than the conquerors of the world. While spreading desolation with their arms, and trampling on the liberties of mankind, they were actually anticipating, in every country, the progress of legislation, and the arts of government: and the same people, in their fall, left to their barbarous conquerers the traces of a jurisprudence, to which Europe was principally indebted for its future progress.

Nor are we to regard the Romans as inventors of arts, or as the founders of their own policy. The elements of both were drawn from a foreign source. Even the Greeks, in forming their plans, copied more distant originals. Pythagoras and Plato, Lycurgus and Solon, had read the Pillars of Egypt: and the maxims of the Greeks were drawn from the philosophy, if not the legislation of the East.

Similar observations are applicable to all the freer states: and if, according to Mr Hume, pure despotism, once established, cannot possibly, by its own native force and energy, refine and polish itself, and republican and free governments are the only proper nursery of arts and sciences, we have hence an additional principle to account for their late appearance or stagnation in so many parts of the earth. Perhaps then, since the world began, there are a few only, perhaps but a single people, who owe their rise and illustration to bold and original efforts of the human mind.

If, therefore, a concurrence of such various causes is found requisite, if not to produce, at least to accelerate, the progress of refinement and the arts; that progress must be proportionably retarded by a different contexture of events. But the habitations of barbarism, at any one period, must, in speculation, appear immense, when we farther reflect, that the transition from barbarism to civility is not more incident to mankind than the contrary transition.[E]

How many nations have certainly fallen from that importance, which they had formerly borne among the societies of mankind, let the annals of the world declare! How many more have probably experienced as fatal a reverse, we assume not the province of determining. But revolutions, to us unknown, various nations may have undergone; while, being exposed to our view only in their decline, a judgment has been formed of their general character, from what is peculiar to a certain age.

In examining into the antient state of a country, our opinions may be guided by tradition, or by history, by the genius of language, or of arts, or by the declaration of external monuments. In dubious cases, rational conjecture may rest on one of these modes of evidence, or may be balanced nicely on them all.

Let us imagine a modern traveller to perform the tour of the East. He finds there a country, under the gloom of barbarism, presenting no traces of erudition or civil arts, and, without all tradition or memorial of ancestors, superior to the rude inhabitants. Yet history might inform him, that the natives of this country had once been as conspicuous and flourishing, as their posterity are now obscure. Such, perhaps, is the condition of Babylon, once the wonder of the world. Such is the condition of the antient Colchis, which once, if we believe the writings of Pliny or of Strabo, abounded in riches and in people, and formed the centre of a great commercial system.

Let us next imagine our traveller to arrive in a land as barbarously peopled, and unmentioned, or undescribed, in the writings of any historian. There, however, we will suppose, are preserved some monuments of art and grandeur, far disproportioned to the general aspect of things, and to the actual posture of affairs. Might he not hence distinguish a state of depression from

a state of nature, and the last from the first movement of civil society?

Nor is the supposition purely imaginary. Within the present century, discoveries have been made in the wilds of Tartary, which seem to declare that country to have been the mansion of a great people; or, at least, to indicate a fall from some of the more elevated forms of society. The scene of these discoveries, lying between Siberia and the Caspian Sea, is now filled with a nation of Calmucs subject to the Russian empire: and on such evidence the Czar Peter founded his opinion, that the arts had made the tour of the globe.[F]

On principles exactly similar, more recent discoveries serve to confirm the large advance of the antient Etrurians, in elegant and polite attainments, before the settlement of any Grecian colony within the limits of Italy.

Nor are such indications confined to any latitude or climate.

The country of Cambodia, [Les Voyages dþun Philosophe, par M. De Poivre, p. 102] in the torrid zone, uncultivated as the natives now are, presents appearances to the traveller, which, unsupported by history or tradition, may be regarded as memorials of former greatness.

Even in the new continent, though, in all probability, more recently peopled than the old, there are indications of a similar import.

The account, published by Mr Kalm, of an expedition across North America, contains some curious information. The expedition was undertaken by a French party from Canada, under the protection of the French government. After traversing immense deserts, a country of a more promising appearance, retaining vestiges of agriculture and civil life, opened to their view. Amidst the wildness of nature, they perceived an artificial face, and recognised the relics of a former age.[G]

The testimony of other travellers is no less decisive. On the shores of the Mississippi, and in other parts of the new continent, there have been found works of great antiquity, which evidence an acquaintance with military science, far above the capacity of rude and untutored tribes.[See Carverþs Travels through North America.]

Well then may it be inferred, that there are large chasms in the annals of many countries; and that we have obtained but an imperfect acquaintance with the fortune of governments, and the vicissitudes of the species.

There are certain corresponding points in the rise and decline of nations, which are liable to be confounded. And apparent motion may be as different from the real, in the political, as in the natural world.

Unacquainted therefore as we are with the stated returns of the civil period, we may mistake the evening for the morning twilight; and imagine a people to be just emerging from the shade, who have, long before, passed their meridian, and are hastening back within the limit of darkness.

The clear testimony of profane history reaches no higher than the Greeks and Romans. There is no piercing through the gloom of remoter ages. And even the contemporary situation of other governments is faintly described, or misrepresented, or passed over in contemptuous silence.

Such facts as the above, it is not pretended, can supply the defect. They may rectify some errors; they may shed some feeble rays of light on nations of dubious existence, but cannot redeem their memory from oblivion. They furnish however new matter to the antiquarian, and a new topic in the circle of the learned.

They do more. They serve to vindicate the prerogatives of the

species, and to suggest considerations of some weight in the deductions of philosophy.

Other sources of information unopened by the Greeks remain still to be explored. The grand annals of China, the books of the Bramins, and other immense collections of Oriental records, may form a valuable supplement to the general history of the world. Yet, amidst the darkness and uncertainty in which history and chronology are involved, it appears that the wide differences which have subsisted, or subsist at present, in the actual condition of tribes and nations, are such as, without prejudice to our nature, and exclusive of the unequal influence of the heavens, might, in part, be apprehended from the nice contexture of events, and the complicated operation of moral causes.

But if the honours of nations were, in reality, to be estimated by riches, by population, by the antiquity of arts, or by the stability and duration of civil government, it is not any of the European nations, it is the Chinese, and the Indians, who must be placed at the head of the species.

Let the lovers of paradox [LþHistoire de Astronomie ancienne, par M. Bailly.] contend that these antient people are merely the depositaries of sciences delivered to them, in greater perfection, by a people who flourished in the North of Asia, but have long since disappeared in the political scene.

Let others contend that China was colonized by Egypt, and inherited the sciences from the parent state, who diffused them over the eastern as over the western world. Fix the original mansion in the high latitude of Siberia, or in the torrid zone, it is certain that they devolved on the Chinese and the Indians in an early age; and the uninterrupted possession of so noble an inheritance is their distinguishing privilege.

But the consequences of this privilege are, it must be owned, of a ambiguous nature. And, if the criterion of civility has been rightly defined, [Essay IV] many an obscure people which the proudest nations in Asia, or in Europe, could not boast in the days of their splendor.

If the picture of manners delineated in a performance, which is now read and admired in almost all the languages of Europe, be a faithful copy of an original, it is no paradox to affirm, that the court of Fingal was as highly civilized as the court of Lewis XIV.

In the one the arts were totally unknown; in the other they were at the height of their splendor. But the want of those graces with the arts confer, was more than compensated at the one court, by virtues in which the other was deficient. And if fidelity, generosity, true dignity of mind, are preferable to disingenuity, perfidy, servile adulation; if the former qualities are to be numbered among polite accomplishments, and the latter to be placed in the opposite column; who would not prefer the civilization of Fingalþs court to that of the other, though embellished by all arts and sciences.[H]

Without presuming then to decide the dubious pretensions of mankind, it is our design, in prosecuting these general views, to enquire in what manner the progress of society is connected with local circumstances which do not immediately affect genius, or capacity. And from hence a more accurate judgment will be formed concerning their direct and original influence on the human species.

Such discussion will lead us to enquire how far local circumstances, which, in a variety of ways, may prove beneficial or malignant, are rendered subject to our dominion and controul. And, having thus contemplated man as, in some sort, the arbiter of his

own fortune, a question will arise, no less curious than important, whether the perfections and imperfections of his character in one age, may not act, with a direct influence, on the original fabric of posterity.

This is the field of speculation, which, in the order here stated, it is proposed to touch in the following pages.

NOTES.

NOTE [A]

Livy, in the person of a Roman Consul, has described in strong colours the degeneracy of the antient Gauls settled in Asia, and of the Macedonians dispersed over various climates of the world.

Galli, says he, jam degeneres sunt; mixti et Gallograeci vere, quod appellantur. Sicut in frugibus pecudibusque, non tantum semina ad servandam indolem valent, quantum terrae proprietas coelique, sub quo aluntur, mutat. Macedones, qui Alexandriam in Aegypto, qui Seleuciam ac Babyloniam, quique alias sparsas per orbem terrarum colonias habent, in Syros, Parthos, Aegyptios degenerarunt.

Liv. lib. 38. cap. 17.

These are perhaps the exaggerations of Roman eloquence. But if the degeneracy existed in the full extent of the description, it may probably be ascribed not more to physical than moral causes: and it is not climate, but rather a communication of manners, that assimilates the different races of mankind.

If the antient Gauls, who emigrated into Asia, enervated by the reigning manners of Bithynia, degenerated, according to Livy, from the character of their hardy ancestors; the modern French, who have occupied the Isle of Bourbon for a full century, are described, by a well-informed writer, as equal to the most athletic of the European nations.

Ormþs Military Transactions, vol. i. p. 95.

NOTE [B]

This memorable edict was issued by Paul the Third, in the year 1537. But, if the doctrine of some late publications had made its appearance in the sixteenth century, it might have superseded the necessity of this edict, by shewing that Orang-outangs are, in reality, the aborigines of all nations. Such is the illustrious pedigree of mankind!

Unfortunately, indeed, for this hypothesis, it has been demonstrated by an able anatomist, that the Orang-outangs are, from the texture of their organs, incapable of forming speech. Yet, might not the organ change with the exigencies of civil society? And is there not the more reason to admire this temporizing harmony of things!

See Mr Camperþs Account of the Orang-outang in the Philosophical Transactions for 1779.

NOTE [C]

Although there is no mention of Hermodorus in Livy, it is clear, from the testimony of other writers, that this citizen of Ephesus was very instrumental in directing the attention of the Romans to the Grecian jurisprudence.

Whatever relates to this celebrated embassy is an object of

learned curiosity. The selection therefore of a few passages from antient authors, tending to authenticate the particulars mentioned in the text, may not prove unacceptable to some of my readers.

The pretentions of Hermodorus are acknowledged, in the Pandects of Justinian, in the following passage:

Alias duas ad easdem tabulas adjecerunt: Et ita ex accidentia appellatae sunt leges duodecim tabularum: quarum serendarum auctorem suisse Decemviris Hermodorum quemdam Ephesium exulantem in Italia quidam retulerunt.

Digest. lib. i. tit. 2. sect. 4.

The erection of the statue is mentioned by Pliny:

Fuit et Hermodori Ephesii in comitio legum quas Decemviri scribebant, interpretis, publici dicata (viz. statua).

Pliny. Nat. Hist. lib. 34. cap. 11.

Cicero quotes Heraclitus thus:

Est apud Heracitum physicum de principe Ephesiorum Hermodor; universos ait Ephesios esse morte multandos, quod, cum civitate expellerent Hermodorum, ita locuti sunt: Nemo de nobis unus excellat: sin quis extiterit, alio in loco et apud alios sit.

Tusc. Disput. lib. 5. cap. 36

The same quotation from Heraclitus, I find in Strabo, lib. 14. with only this difference, that the Ephesians under age are not involved in the condemnation.

The same anecdote is likewise related by Diogenes Laertius, in the life of Heraclitus.

NOTE [D]

In ages of ignorance and simplicity, mankind are so prone to credulity and admiration, that these propensities, prior to reasoning, seem to lead savages into the acknowledgment and adoration of invisible powers, and to introduce, in every country, the rude element of popular superstition.

From hence, therefore, a cultivated people derives an importance, which has often been abused, though so capable of being directed to the best interest of society.

The natives of the West Indies regarded Columbus and his companions as superior beings, sprung from heaven, who had descended to visit the earth, and were worthy of divine honours.

--- Nova progenies coelo dimittitur alto.

How honourable then would it have been for the European nations, had they extended their authority in the new hemisphere by persuasion, not by arms, and had a reverence for their religion, their virtue, and superior wisdom, conducted them to empire?

NOTE [E]

Our physical and moral systems, says a Writer whose eloquence is not always sufficient to support his philosophy, are carried round, in one perpetual revolution, from generation to corruption, and from corruption to generation; from ignorance to knowledge, and from knowledge to ignorance; fro barbarity to civility, and from civility to barbarity. Arts and sciences grow up, flourish, decay,

die, and return again, under the same or other forms, after periods which appear long to us, however short they may be, compared with the immense duration of the systems of created being. These periods are so disproportionate to all human means of preserving the memory of things, that, when the same things return, we take frequently for a new discovery, the revival of an art or science long before known.

Bolingbrokeþs Phil. Works, vol. ii. P. 224.

The moderns, however, may frequently be considered as original in discoveries and inventions anticipated by the genius of a former age.

The true solar system was taught probably by Pythagorus, above two thousand years ago; yet Copernicus was not indebted for his knowledge of to the Pythagorean schools. Nor would it necessarily derogate from the merit of modern discoveries, should we admit a proposition maintained in a late performance, which abounds in curious erudition. Quþil nþest presque pas une des descouvertes attribuees aux modernes, qui nþait ete, nonseulement connue, mais meme appuyee par de solides raisonnemens des anciens.

Recherces par M. Dutens.

It is well observed by a Writer, who illustrates the nature of genius with the happy precision of a philosopher, that more of it is often exerted in perfecting an art, than in the first invention. On this account he ranks the Greeks above the Egyptians in the scale of genius; and seems to question the frequency of its appearance among the Chinese, who have not hitherto been able to advance the arts beyond that mediocrity to which they had attained in ages the most remote.

See Dr Gerardþs Essay on Genius, p. 19, 25.

But this Author has not affirmed, that all genius is confined to the Greeks, or denied to the Chinese. It was reserved for a Writer, fond of paradox, to maintain, that the other races of mankind can only reach the perfection of their nature by the imitation of the Greeks, and of a few favourite tribes of men, whom heaven has delighted to honour.

Antient Metaphysics, p. 494.

NOTE [F]

Mr Voltaire, in his description of the country of the Calmucs, gives the following account of these discoveries. Cþest-la quþon a trouve en 1720, un maison souteraine de pierres, des urnes, des lampes, des pendans dþoreilles, une statue equestre dþun prince Oriental portant un diademe sur sa tete, deux femmes assises sur des trones, un rouleau de manuscrits, envoye par Pierre le Grand a lþAcademie des Inscriptions de Paris, et reconnu pour etre en langue du Tibet: tous temoignages singuliers que les arts ont habite ce pays aujourdþhui barbare, et preuves subsistantes de ce quþa dit Pierre le Grand plus dþune fois, que les arts avoient fait le tour du monde.

Hist. de lþEmpire du Russi, tom. i.

The subterraneous house, mentioned in this passage by Mr Voltaire, is described more particularly, by our English traveller Mr Bell, as a regular edifice, situated in the midst of a desert, on the banks of the river Irtish, and distinguished by the name of the Seven Palaces.

According to the tradition of some Tartars, it was built by Tamerlane the Great: according to that of others, By Gengischan. But certain countries of Tartary, of a more northern situation, which, according to Mr Bellþs information, the arms of Tamerlane had in vain attempted to subdue, appear to have been once the scene of great transactions; and contain the spoils of nations of high antiquity, and no stranger to the arts.

Some Calmuc manuscripts were purchased by Mr Bell at Tobolsky; and, having been presented by him to Sir Hans Sloan, are now deposited in the British Museum.

See Bellþs Travels, vol. i. p. 209.

There is another species of evidence, which, in the opinion of some writers, is still more conclusive.

The existence of a great nation in the north of Asia, long before the dates of our most antient memorials, has been lately contended for, on astronomical principles, by M. Balli, a writer of great learning and ingenuity. He contends, that the original feat of mankind was situated in the high latitude of 49 or 50 degrees; that the primitive migrations were from North to South; and that we find in the East the fragments only of sciences which were carried thither by the primitive emigrants, but which were never generally known to the Indians or other Orientals.

I cannot attempt in a note to examine the foundations of this theory. It is sufficient to observe, that it has not as yet been able to shake the established conviction of the learned.

M. Balli, in a series of letters addressed to the late M. Voltaire, labours to convert that author to his opinions; and from a sympathy, no doubt, which reigns among congenial spirits, he espouses an hypothesis of Mons. Buffon, concerning the earth and the whole planetary system, still more fanciful than his own concerning the origin of nations, and the progress of arts and sciences.

NOTE [G]

These intelligent travellers, having sojourned in the country for some time, had an opportunity of examining it with attention.

The country is situated at the distance of nine hundred French miles west of Montreal. And, besides other monuments of antient cultivation, there were found in it pillars of stone, of great magnificence, manifestly erected by human hands, but of which there remained no tradition among the Indian tribes. Unfortunately, these pillars contained no inscriptions, whence any conjecture could be formed concerning their original. At length, however, a large stone, in the form of a pillar, was discovered, and fixed in it a smaller stone covered with unknown characters. This stone, severed from the larger mass, being carried to Canada, and from thence to France, was delivered into the custody of M. Maurepas, at the time secretary of state.

NOTE [H]

A well-known Writer in politics affects to have ideas of the state of mankind so mathematically precise, that he divides the Indians of America into three classes, mere savages, half savages, and almost civilized.

The savages he describes, in all respects, as a blood-thirsty, unfeeling race, destitute of every human virtue. The missionaries of Paraguay, we are told, can transform these infernal savages into the most benevolent race under heaven. A metamorphosis which,

though celebrated by a dignitary of the church, will hardly command belief in this sceptical age: yet it serves to support a new theory of government, which is founded on the total debasement of human nature, and is now opposed to a theory that asserts its honours, and derives from a happier origin the image of a free people.

See a Work by Dean Tucker, Part II containing, as the Writer modestly declares, the true basis of civil government, in opposition to the system of Mr Locke and his followers.

When the benevolence of this writer is exalted into charity, when the spirit of his religion corrects the rancour of his philosophy, he will learn a little more reverence for the system to which he belongs, and acknowledge, in the most untutored tribes, some glimmerings of humanity, and some decisive indications of a moral nature.

The above note has had the singular fortune of being dissected, in a late Performance, by the hand of the great master to whom it relates. This act of violence I might have endured in silence, and bowed, with reverence, to the Priest of God. But when he endeavours to impress on the Public a conviction that affects my honour, I am bound by no law, human or divine, to acquiesce to his chastisement.

He charges me with detecting him in manuscript, and exposing him, in that naked and defenceless state, to the eye of the world. I never saw him but in the full armour of print.

He supposes me to have made that detection by a communication of papers from Dr Campbell, against all the rules of honourable war. That conjecture, unfortunately for my accuser, is destitute of all foundation.

But he charges me with dragging him, prematurely and reluctantly, before the tribunal of the Pubic, and with making him responsible to the world for a performance, which was declared, by an advertisement prefixed, to be designed only for experiment, in a select circle of the learned. I was not possible to divine its contents; and, instructed as I now am, I venture to affirm, that the fragment of the Deanþs book, above quoted, will be found, in the construction both of law and of common sense, to possess all the requisites of a publication. It was dispersed, by his own acknowledgement, into many hands; it had appeared in a public shop; and, when stripped of the advertisement, bore not even an equivocal character. I examined, indeed, but one limb of a monster, and enquired not into the history of its birth.

What then is the amount of my offence? It is that I collected not the fragments of the Dean, like the leaves of the Sybil, with pious industry; and that, in judging of so singular a production, I suppressed not the sentiments natural to a Briton, nor the indignation that became a man.

The case, it is alleged, is rather new. Then review the case, Mr Dean, and make some allowances for human frailties. But whatever vengeance you denounce against so atrocious an offender, you will not, for the conduct of one individual, condemn a system. You will not, to use your own incomparable language, banish the system of Locke from the society of men, and say of all its partizans,

--- Crimine ab uno disce omnes.

In your admirable plan of government there are other ideas of distributive justice. And, unworthy as I am, I may look for some indulgence, as a member of that learned body you profess to have admired during a full revolution of Saturn. [I have admired, says

the Dean, the literati of Scotland for upwards of thirty years.]
But I owe you even personal acknowledgments; and, in return to your polite insinuation, that I seem capable of becoming an useful writer, I am bound to observe, that there was a time when Dean Tucker might have aspired to that distinction.

That time, I fear, is no more. Of a younger candidate there is hope. But reformation seldom visits us in our decline. And should there exist a man, in church or state, sunk in malevolence as in years; crafty in politics, jesuitical by system; declining public preferment with the solemnity of an oath, yet expecting, in secret, a courtierþs reward; profaning the tombs of the dead -- a reviler of his fellow-citizens -- the calumniator of one-half the globe; -- it is, surely by a miracle, if such a man re-assert his primaeval honours, put forth, in the winter of his days, the fair blossoms of the spring, and, recanting all the errors of this life when on the verge of another descend, at last, unspotted to the grave.

I now hasten to inform my Readers, that the Fragment in question, which I attempted in vain to redeem from obscurity, has been succeeded by a more luminous performance, enlightened and adorned by rays of learning and ingenuity from different corners of the land.

þAll historians agree,þ says the Dean in his more perfect work, þwithout one exception, that the savages, in general, are very cruel, and vindictive, full of spite and malice; and that they have little or no fellow-feeling for the distress even of a brother of the same tribe -- and none at all, no not a spark of benevolence towards the distressed members of an hostile tribe.þ

Who, that avows such sentiments, will usurp the name of an historian? The original of this picture is to be found only in the registers of the damned. All historians agree, that the character of rude tribes is various and dissimilar, like that of more enlightened nations. The Indians of the new hemisphere, though of various description, are, in general, supposed, on good grounds, to have resembled, in genius and modes of life, the character of the antient Germans. Dr Robertsonþs description of savage life, though not indulgent, is credible and consistent; and he allows the Indians to possess, in an eminent degree, the benevolent instincts of nature. The Indians of Paraguay are a timid race; and the Jesuits, heightening, perhaps, the imbecilities of their character by the dictates of superstition, have been able to reduce them under some regular scheme of government. But the natives of Brazil, untutored by Jesuits, are described, by well-informed historians, as an innocent and happy people, flourishing in the virtues of peace and of humanity.

On this subject I might refer our learned Divine to the first reception of Columbus in the New World, to the more recent voyages of discovery in both hemispheres, and to the indelible character of the human species, which has fitted them for society and for government in every country under heaven. I might almost refer him to an authority he reveres; the authority of those Fathers who conduct their missions on the principles of deceit, who belie the Saviour of the world, and number submissions to the domination of tyrants among the evangelical virtues. But, of the Deanþs last Treatise on Government, I would neither be the encomiast, nor the detractor. It can only deserve an answer, when it excites the attention of the Public. I opened it merely to vindicate my own character; and, unless provoked by future injuries, am now ready to close it for ever. -- Salve aeternum, aeternumque vale.

Essay VI - Of the General Influence of Climate on National Objects

The influence of climate on the policy, if not on the character of nations, is acknowledged by every observer of human affairs.

To estimate this influence, in the various regions of the globe, were an arduous problem. But, by attending to the distinct modes of its operation, we may be able, perhaps, to set bounds to its empire.

Climate then may be regarded either as a natural principle, acting with powerful energy, or with irresistible impulse, on the fabric of our being; or it may be regarded merely as a local circumstance leading to a variety of action in the oeconomy of civil life. Viewed in this secondary light alone, it will appear eminently to affect the progress of arts and government.

The means of subsistence, the subject of art, the incitements to industry, the scene of its operations, so diversified in the several districts of the earth, must affect proportionably the course of affairs. And in circumstances so dissimilar, it would be strange, if the conduct of the actors were governed precisely by the same laws, or every where attended with the same success.

The genius of mankind, far from being equal, must have been as various as the situations in which they are placed, did we observe all nations exalted to an equal pitch of civility, or of eminence in arts and sciences.

To a peculiarity of situation, and often to the urgency of occasions, nations as well as individuals owe their greatness. Pressed with no difficulties, and not conscious of wants, mankind in general love repose. The calls must be loud and frequent, which animate their exertions, and urge them forward in active or laborious pursuits.

In countries therefore of original affluence, supplying spontaneously, or with little culture, the necessaries of life; arts will remain long neglected, or will be cultivated slowly, and with inferior ardour. But in countries, more penurious by nature, the deficiency is supplied by the resources of industry and invention.

If the former situation the genius of mankind lies dormant, or is feebly exercised, or evaporates upon subjects which make but little figure in the history of civil society. Of consequence, many characteristics of primitive simplicity will be long preserved: and a people may increase and flourish, to a high degree, before they have recourse to the partition of land, the division of labour, and the distinctions of private property; circumstances which first open domestic commerce, diversify and embellish the ranks of life, and furnish out the objects of a regular oeconomy.

Unacquainted with these objects, men soothed by indolence, or immersed in the gratifications of sense, are surely in no condition to establish a plan of government upon rational or just foundations. Yet the habits formed among them, in the infancy of society, gradually break the mind for political servitude. The desire of equality is balanced by a regard to exterior accommodations; and the love of safety, of pleasure, or of ease, triumphs, in every competition, over the passions which are the natural guardians of law and liberty.

Such, in some climates of the world, is the real description of mankind. Habits, chiefly incident to polished ages, vitiate and enfeeble the savage life. And the usual effects of refined and commercial arts in the decline of civilized government, are causes, in those climates, which, operating from the beginning, supersede their origin, or obstruct their growth.

To be unassisted then by arts, yet obnoxious to the evils with which they are commonly associated, is, considered in a moral or in a political light, one of the hardest dispensations of fortune.

In other countries, the imbecility of government derives often a temporary support from the very arts which tend to its destruction. Thus the commercial opulence of Carthage prolonged her existence for half a century, by satiating the avarice of Rome. Thus Rome herself, when no longer able to defend her empire by arms, was able by subsidies to postpone her fate.

Rome indeed, in her better days, could resist the most desperate onsets of barbarians: for to equal enthusiasm in arms, the added superior skill in the art of war. When the Cimbri and Teutones, in the career of glory and of victory, were preparing to cross the Alps, Marius, by one decisive blow, crushed that formidable invasion. Yet the destroyers of the Roman name were one day to come from the same quarter. The nations of Scythia, situate between the Euxine and Caspian seas, having been exterminated by Pompey, directed their course, under the conduct of Odin, towards the north and west of Europe. They established themselves in the almost evacuated settlements of the Cimbri and Teutones, where, incorporating with the feeble remnant of the species, they repaired the strength and population of the North. And it was their descendants, now confounded with the northern nations, who, returning some ages after, retaliated on the Romans the calamities inflicted on their forefathers, and on mankind.

A people, however, so long progressive as the Romans, could fall only by degrees. The resources of the Roman government were not exhausted with Roman virtue.

The Goths, who, by the memorable defeat of the Emperor Decius, had become masters of the Illyrian provinces, were induced, by the pecuniary concessions of the succeeding emperors, to abandon their conquests. Concessions so pusillanimous, I am not ignorant, have been supposed to hasten the fall of Rome: but they seem, at this conjuncture, to have been as necessary as they were inglorious, and the feeble expedients of a declining empire in the crisis of its fate.

A variety of such expedients, in calamitous periods, policy and arts afford. But the communities of mankind, in the climates above described, by a cruel fatality, are destitute of the ordinary resources of government, whether in a rude or cultivated age.

Their peculiar circumstances, then, with regard to foreign powers, deserve attention. The same original and luxuriant profusion which so long exempts them from labour, and dispenses with arts, and postpones the assignation of property, exposes them the more to the envy and hostile designs of other states. In proportion to the fertility of their settlement, the possession of it is the more precarious. To defend that settlement, is almost the sole end of public union: nor will the apprehension of danger from abroad allow their attention to fix upon the objects of interior government. Implicit submission to the command of a superior, an idea so requisite in the conduct of armies, and in the science of war, insinuates itself into the frame of their political constitution. In supporting political existence, they part with all the ideas of natural liberty: and the rigour of despotism alone, controuling the tendency of their manners, can secure that command of the national force which, in times of public danger, is necessary for the protection of their country. To avoid, therefore, the condition of a conquered people, they acquiesce in a constitutional tyranny, perhaps not less oppressive.

Thus danger from abroad concurs with their domestic circumstances in the subversion of their natural rights; and neither the operations of peace nor of war supply the occasions which animate a rising people.

The spirit of liberty, in its full strength, is not always superior to the sense of public danger.

When thirty cities of Latium, confederated with the Sabines, threatened to crush in its infancy the Roman commonwealth, consternation and terror seized all ranks of men. And the dictatorship, a sort of temporary despotism, and a solecism in a free government, owed its original establishment to this alarming conjuncture. The confederacy, indeed, was quickly dissolved: the battle at the lake Regillus was of a decisive nature; and the men who had expelled the Tarquins were able to rule the storm. But has such perils, which were transient and accidental, been inherent in the soil; had the Romans been more liable to suffer, than prone to commence hostilities; had the possession of a more productive or extensive settlement drawn upon them at first the envy of mankind, instead of animating their own ambition, the necessity of public

affairs must have soon rendered that magistracy perpetual, which was at first of so limited a duration, resorted to only in great emergencies, and during the flourishing ages of the commonwealth altogether discontinued.

Let us imagine, then, the spirit of liberty already languishing, menaced with danger like that which made the Romans tremble, but arising from fixed and permanent causes, and we imagine the circumstances of mankind, in climates which establish and perpetuate a despotism more absolute, more formidable, and mor degrading, than the dictatorship of Rome.[A]

A nation determined by external situation to embark in schemes of dominion possesses immense advantages in war over any other nation who arms merely for defence. The principles of interest, of ambition, of glory, embolden the designs of the former, and give to their efforts irresistible impetuosity. The efforts of the latter are more constrained and reluctant; and the most prosperous success, ultimately terminating in a temporary security, rather than in positive acquisitions, produces not the martial ardour and enthusiasm which actuate heroic minds.

Hence the formidable incursions of the antient Scythians, and the unequal opposition of the Asiatic states. Hence the difficulties encountered by the Romans in extending their conquests in Europe, and their more easy triumphs on the theatre of Asia. Hence we may observe, on the one hand, the astonishing career of the northern conquerors, who overturned all the governments of Europe, and on the other, the feeble resistance made to their progress by more opulent and luxurious nations.

The Spartans are almost the only instance of a warlike people who, by system, abstained from conquest. Yet was it consonant with the maxims of Spartan policy to transfer every war to a distance from the seat of government. And during a period of six hundred years, which elapsed from the first establishment of the Dorians in Lacedaemon to the reign of Agesilaus, no foreign enemy had dared to set foot in Laconia. To render that country the theatre of war, was reserved for Epaminondas.

"Many of you," said an Argive to a Spartan, "sleep on the plains of Argos." -- "Not one of you," replied the Spartan, "sleeps on the plains of Lacedaemon."

Sparta, though great in war, was singularly formed for peace, for virtue, and for harmony. The rigour of domestic discipline rendered war a relaxation from toil. And the duration of its civil government was owing, in a great degree, to the confinement of territory, to the love of justice, to the exclusion of luxury, of money, of commerce, and of arts and sciences.

There is a nation too, described by Tacitus, who seem to have been distinguished among the antient Germans, as the Spartans were distinguished among the antient Greeks; and, though their territory was more extensive, to have resembled the Spartans in the maxims of their policy, and in some features of their national character.[B] But though such examples of wisdom and moderation sometimes occur, and adorn historical annals, the rules of distributive justice are commonly little regarded by nations in the career of military glory.

The nature of climates, the comparative fertility of countries, by determining the course of offensive war, and by affecting the measure of subordination in civil society, must be allowed no inconsiderable sway over the general fortune of the world: and circumstances apparently the most favourable prove often, in their consequences, the most adverse to the great proceedings of nations.

Nature, in some climates, like an over-indulgent parent, enervates the genius of her children, by gratifying at once their most extravagant demands. In other climates she dispenses her bounty with a more frugal hand, and, by imposing harder conditions, impels them to industry, trains them up to enterprize, and instructs them in the advantages of arts and regular government.

But the extremes of munificence and rigour, by withholding the motives to industry, or by rendering the ends desperate, often produce similar effects. A middle situation between those extremes is perhaps the most

eligible in a moral light, as well as the most auspicious for civil progress.

Mankind, however, in the various climates where they have fixed their habitations, will long preserve a genius and character wonderfully corresponding with the various discipline of nature. One people, enured to difficulties, become addicted to hardy enterprize. Another people, blessed with ease, exert their talents in refined speculation, rather than in active pursuits.

The speculative sciences accordingly can be traced back to infancy in Chaldaea, in India, in Egypt, and countries that verge to the torrid zone; while we observe them attain to full growth and perfection only in the higher latitudes.

In these latitudes their connexion with arts is recognized, their importance to society more steadily kept in view, and a rank and estimation assigned them, regulated in part by the standard. But in those lower latitudes, cultivated from other considerations, they retain long their primeval form, and with little reference to mechanical or vulgar arts, command, on their own account alone, the veneration of the people. Yet rendered subservient perhaps to the ends of superstition, or an engine of despotic power, they may have contributed more to sink and debase, than to improve and dignify the species.

Religious sentiments and opinions, which are co-eval with the beginnings of refinement, and which, when duly regulated, are so beneficial and ornamental to society, may thus, by false associations, assume a form, and instil passions, which disgrace reason and humanity. Accordingly, in the countries first enlightened by science, the religious passions have ever fermented with the greatest violence, and produced the most astonishing effects.

Under their impression, a wild race from Arabia proved an overmatch for valiant and hardy nations. For, by this spirit, the Saracens arose; and turning the tide of conquest, which had run so generally from north to south, into an almost opposite direction, threatened, by the progress of their arms, to reverse the history of the world.[C]

In the same climates have reigned, at different periods, the most abject superstition, the wildest fanaticism, the most sublime theology: and, exclusive of the pure and divine institutions of the true religion, many of the rites and observances propagated over various and distant regions have originally centered there.

But to account for so striking an effect in any latitude or climate, there is no need to recur to the positive and direct influence of the outward elements on the human mind. The series of events, once begun, is governed more perhaps by moral than by physical causes: and this propensity of genius and temper may owe its original to the primary direction of the sciences, and their early alliance with theology and civil government.

The sciences corrupted in their source, or perverted in their application, were early instrumental, among the nations of the East, in consecrating absurdity, and giving consistency to error. Dressed up in the solemn airs of mystery, they abated religious imposture; and served, in the hands of priests and civil rulers, as a charm to allure and fascinate the crowd. Augury, divination, and such wretched literature as tended rather to corrupt than to improve the understanding, were, above all other learning, admired and cultivated. The motions of the heavens were studied, in order to discover the imaginary influences of stars: and a science which opens the noblest view of the universe, and is so capable of being directed to valuable ends in civil life, was connected in its origin with the credulity and superstition of mankind.

In Chaldaea, the most antient seat of astronomical observation and discovery, judicial astrology was held in supreme and universal esteem. Pythagoras, the most accomplished master that ever flourished in Greece or Italy, borrowed his ideas from the Magi of Chaldaea, from the Gymnosophists of India, or from Egyptian priests, was admitted into their colleges, initiated into the mysteries of their religion, and by them instructed in the true

system of the world.

But the mysterious sciences of Pythagoras were soon forgotten in the Italic school. The Romans, occupied, from the institution of their commonwealth, in scenes of action, had no taste or leisure for such pursuits. With invincible prejudices against the Chaldaeans, and other Orientals, and with no turn towards astrology, they regarded their character and erudition with equal and undistinguished contempt. From the reign of Numa there had elapsed a period of above five hundred years, when Julius Caesar, aided by the superior learning of the East, adjusted the civil year, with some accuracy, to the true annual period, and established, on astronomical principles, the reformation of the Roman calendar.

Yet the Romans as far excelled those other nations of antiquity in the fabric of their jurisprudence, and in the application of the true principles of government, as they were excelled by them in astronomy, in geometry, in physics, in theological refinements, and in all the abstract deductions of philosophy.

In general, fertile and luxuriant countries seem peculiarly fitted to be the nursery of refinement: because leisure awakens curiosity; and curiosity leads to pursuits that fill up the vacancies in human life. Every new situation presents to man new objects of solicitude and care. The demands of animal nature no longer bound his desires. The scene now opens to the intellectual eye. He marks the relations and dependencies of things; and learns to contemplate the world and himself.

Constituted in such circumstances, what more natural to a mind, somewhat elevated above common life, than this soliloquy:

"Where am I! Whence my original! What my destiny! -- Is all around me discord, confusion, chaos! Or is there not some principle of union, consistency, and order? -- Am I accountable to any superior? connected with any great system of being? -- Is this contracted span of life the whole of man? or was he born with higher expectations; and for nobler ends? Is there a Power above to justify that hope!" --

Various opinions will afterwards arise, in the course of philosophical generations, concerning the oeconomy of invisible powers. Various rites will be instituted to render the Divinity propitious, and, since fear predominates in most religions, more to aver his wrath. But those questions are the suggestions of nature, and, in the more productive regions of Asia and Africa, gave a beginning to the philosophic age. Yet, in such regions, from the want of the chief incentives to action, the improvements of civil life will seldom arrive at a high pitch of eminence or perfection.

Countries of a different description will be slower in their first improvements; because an attention to the necessary functions of life allows not sufficient leisure for observation, or the sublimer culture of the understanding. But sciences and arts transplanted hither in a maturer form, take root and flourish; and, alleviating the toils, or enlarging the accomodations of society, grow up to an extraordinary height, gradually removing the obstacles which prevented their more early establishment.

Here, too, the mechanical arts, which owe their maturity, if not their birth, to the more pressing occasions, or increasing demands of mankind, become subsidiary to the sublimer sciences, and advance them beyond the limit assigned them in their antient seats. To this fortunate alliance, the labours of the learned in modern Europe have been indebted for one half of their success: and, this alliance broken, the sciences, in our climates, would sink down to the level at which they have stood so long in the climates of Asia.

The genius of nations is more or less turned to peace or war, to speculation or action. The more speculative begin improvements, and the active conquer; yet improve often upon the improvements of the vanquished.

Thus the situation of the species in one country is more advantageous to the first openings of refinement, from circumstances which allow a freedom to genius, and an exemption from animal toil: while their circumstances, in another country, conduce more effectually to the farther extension and cultivation of the liberal arts. And these effects, frequently resulting from

soil and climate, whose temper depends so often upon the position of the globe, mark a fundamental and fixed distinction between the communities of mankind in the lower and higher latitudes.

The temperament indeed of countries is diversified by a variety of causes, natural and artificial, which we shall not attempt to enumerate. Elevation above the level of the sea has sometimes a decisive influence, and confers many of the advantages of the temperate zone on countries that approach almost the equator. But, notwithstanding a number of exceptions, the more general character of climates corresponds with the astronomical divisions of the earth. And, suitably to this course of nature, the same civil order of things, which we have remarked in the antient continent, seemed to have been preparing in the new.

The sun of science arose there, as on our side of the globe, on the confines, or within the limit of the torrid zone. Civilization had begun, and even made some progress, in the empires of Peru and Mexico, while mankind in all the upper latitudes were utter strangers to refinement, in the lowest stage of political union, and, like the antient Germans, scarce acquainted with subordination in civil or domestic government.

The aera of civility has not yet arrived. The system to which they belonged was unhinged by violence. But had the Peruvian and Mexican arts been transplanted into those regions of the new hemisphere, they would, in all probability, have flourished there, from the same combination of causes as in Europe, with a degree of vigour and success unknown in the more productive climates which gave them birth.

The New World, from its connexion with the Old, opens to the arts and sciences an opposite career. And, in contradiction to the first arrangements, and the apparent order of physical laws, they will be carried by a more impetuous current, along the stream of political events, from the northern to the southern climates.

It becomes, not, perhaps, a Briton, a private citizen, at such a crisis, to anticipate this order of things; to predict the revolutions of government, or the eventual glory of a future age.

This chapter of accidents should be read in the cabinets of Europe.

It is local circumstances alone whose tendency we are contemplating in both hemispheres: and to open the extent of that influence in the general system, it is necessary, as in the following Essay, to descend into some farther detail.

NOTE [A]

I have mentioned the office of Roman Dictator, as being the most extraordinary concession which the exigency of public affairs ever extorted from a free people.

Had such an accumulated jurisdiction been transferred to one man, by a solemn act of the whole legislature, it might be vindicated, perhaps, on the principles of state necessity. But when the right of nomination was vested in a single consul, without the consent, against the will of the people; and without even a decree of the senate, though that sanction was indeed necessary to confirm the consul's nomination; we observe, with astonishment, among a people jealous of their rights, an engine of government one of the most tremendous, in appearance, that ever hung over the liberties of mankind.

It deserves however to be remembered, that the authority of Dictator, while it annihilated in a moment every other authority in the state, left the tribunitial power untouched, whose influence formed a sort of constitution controul on the proceedings of that formidable magistrate. Yet more admirable far is the policy of the British government, in such extremities as called for a Dictator under the Roman.

In England, to borrow the language of a late noble Author, well read in the constitution of his country, "In England, where a mixed constitution of government unites the powers of monarchy, aristocracy, and democracy, much

more happily than that of Rome ever did, even in its best state, if extraordinary dangers require that the Habeas Corpus law (the great security of our freedom) should, for a time, be suspended, it can only be done by the joint advice and authority of the whole legislature. And if, in any case where delay would be fatal, the safety of the public apparently obliges the king, in whom alone executive power resides, to act against this or any other law, without having been previously impowered so to do by both houses of parliament, his ministers are responsible for it to their country, and can no otherwise be secured than by a bill of indemnity, which if the necessity pleaded for their justification is found to have been real, the Lords and Commons will not refuse to pass. But, in Rome, a single consul, agreeing with the senate to name a Dictator, without the concurrence, and against the will of the people, might subject, at any time, the liberty and the life of every Roman citizen to the arbitrary power of one man, set above all the laws, and in no way responsible, for the exercise of his sovereignty, to the justice of the State. Indeed, after the end of the second Punic war, the senate itself grew so jealous of the danger of this office, that, for an hundred and twenty years before Sylla took it up, no Dictator was appointed."

Lord Lyttleton's Works, p. 36.

In one instance, perhaps the only one to be met with in the Roman annals, the senate referred the choice of a Dictator to the people; and the consul Marcellus named Quintus Fulvius in obedience to their order.

Liv. l. 27. c. 5.

On another occasion, the influence of the people was no less predominant. For, by their interposition, the authority of Minutius was declared equal to that of the Dictator Fabius Maximus.

NOTE [B]

The Spartans are not degraded by a comparison with this virtuous people, whose character is thus delineated by the Roman historian:

Tam immensum terrarum spatium non tenent tantum Chauci, sed et implent: populus inter Germanos nobilissimus, quique magnitudinem suam malit justitia tueri. Sine cupiditate, sine impotentia, quieti secretique, nulla provocant bella, nullis raptibus aut latrociniis populantur. Idque praecipuum virtutis ac virium argumentum est, quod ut superiores agant, non per injurias assequuntur. Pompta tamen omnibus arma, ac si res poscat, exercitus: plurimum virorum equorumque: et quiescentibus eadem fama.

Tacit. De Morbi. Germ. c. 35.

NOTE [C]

Had the Saracens, actuated by the same fanatical spirit, begun their career some centuries sooner, they might have met, with equal force, the barbarians of the North, and contended with them for the spoils of the western empire. Or, perhaps, the encounter of such armies might have prolonged its date.

When the Saracens, in the eighth century, after the conquest of Africa, appeared in Spain, the Goths settled there, degenerated from the valour of their ancestors, were in no condition to make head against such invaders. The contest would have been very differently maintained by those Goths, who, in the fifth century, passed the Pyrenees, and bid defiance to the masters of the world. But now the empire of the Caliphs was soon established in Spain. And the Saracens, after the reduction of that country, meditated the conquest of all Europe. They became masters of that part of Landuedoc which had been subject to the Goths; and were marching on, in confidence and triumph, to complete their designs, when, fortunately for the Christian world, in the year 731, they were defeated in a pitched battle by Charles Martel, the champion of

the faith, and the most renowned general of the age.

To establish the Mahometan religion all over the earth by the sword, was conformable with its avowed maxims. Predestination too was an article of faith that served to heighten the constitutional valour of the Saracens, which was still farther enflamed by an opinion inculcated by their leaders, that to die in battle secured infallibly to every Mussulman an immediate entrance into paradise, and an introduction to the beatific vision.

Their valour, indeed, had be signalized before the age of Mahomet. Along with hospitality and eloquence, it formed their antient character: and some resemblance may be traced between the genius of the Arabians and that of the Greeks in the age of Homer. It is not therefore pretended, that religious enthusiasm acted alone, without the co-operation of other causes, in the establishment of the Moslem yoke.

"Pour expliquer, says Montesquieu, cet evenement fameux de la conquete de tant de pays par les Arabes, il ne faut pas avoir recours au seul enthousisme. Les Sarrasins etoient, depuis long temps, distingues parmi les auxiliaires des Romains, et des Perses: les Osroeniens, et eux etoient les meilleurs hommes de trait qu'il y eut au monde: Severe, Alexandre, et Maximin en avoient engage a leur service autant qu'ils avoient pu, et s'en etoient servis, avec un grand succes, contre les Germains, qu'ils desoloient de loin: sous Valens, les Goths ne pouvoient leur resister; enfin, ils etoient, dans ces temps-la, la meilleure cavalerie du monde."

Grandeur et Decadence des Romains, ch. 22.

Essay VII - Of the Farther Tendency of Local Circumstances to Affect the Proceedings of Nations

Besides the comparative fertility of soils, the nature of their productions, and the position of the globe, there is a variety of local circumstances, which, by affecting the series of public events, are intimately connected with the civil order of the world.

The division of a country by mountains by lakes, or rivers, the vicinity or distance of the sea, insular or continental situation, and the relative condition of the surrounding nations, are causes which affect, in an eminent degree, the nature and success of public enterprize.

A fixed settlement is, in the order of things, an indispensable preliminary to the improvements of civil life. Men unattached to any soil, but accustomed to perpetual migration, are in no condition to cultivate arts, and seem incapable of conducting, for a length of time, any well-ordered system of operations. Such loose and disjointed members compose no regular body. Individuals, incorporated into no steady form, nor kept together by any local ties, can maintain only a temporary and precarious union, and deserve not the name of a nation. The progress then of mankind, in every climate, is considerably affected by the form and extent of their original settlement: and the occupants of an immense tract of country, where nature has set no bounds to dispersion, nor erected barriers against the incursions of other tribes, seem to be most inauspiciously constituted for the maintenance of civil liberty, or the growth of civil arts.

Unhappily, the genius of man, in the ruder ages, is peculiarly turned for war. The internal dissentions among the same people, or the hostile designs of different tribes, gave occasion, we may believe, to the first arrangements of political society.

The ideas of property ripen by slow degrees; and the maxims of jurisprudence are regulated by the fortune of arms.

In a country, therefor, affording no retreat to the vanquished, it is scarce possible, in the ruder ages, long to preserve the freedom of mankind. And while servitude is the only alternative compatible with subsistence, in this extremity, the most reluctant spirits will finally bend under the yoke of dominion.

Such causes operating at first within a narrow sphere, will afterwards prevail with a more diffusive influence. In proportion to the number of the vanquished tribes, the subjection of other tribes will be accomplished with greater ease: till at length various and distant nations, whose possessions were separated only by imaginary lines, falling successively under one dominion, the mansion of a little commonwealth becomes the capital of a vast empire.

Thus reluctant nations coalesce into a system. The same causes which proved destructive of their rights, in the first struggles of political life, will render future attempts for the recovery of them extremely hazardous; and the enlargement of territory beyond the antient limit, will more effectually prevent that union and concert, in the operations of subjects, which lead to the introduction of the more liberal plans of government.

The voice of liberty will be heard no more. She can no longer arm her associates in the cause of humanity. The monarch of a great empire sits secure upon the throne, and sets at defiance the murmuring of the people, and the revolt of provinces.

In this posture of things, the reign of despotism may long endure. The rivalship and jealousy, which animate independent states, cease to animate this larger system: nor can the sciences and arts, which raise and adorn society, be presumed to flourish under the malignant influence of a constitution tending so manifestly to the debasement of the human species.

Such consequences then may be traced up to a geographical source. Nor will the evils hence resulting, exhaust their forces in the open tracts of country where they began to flow. The torrent which covered the plains rolls on with increasing violence, and the best fenced territories are no longer able to resist its progress. Nations, accordingly, situated with many advantages for interior policy, and whose frontiers seem little exposed to external annoyance, may have these advantages more than balanced by a dangerous vicinity to a growing empire.

We observe the nations of Tartary not only destitute of arts, but, notwithstanding barrenness of soil, and the possession of a climate accounted favourable to the independency of man, condemned to all the rigour and tyranny of despotic power.[A] A country, the nurse of heroes, that has so often sent forth tribes to be the conquerors of Asia, sees herself involved in the general servitude; and an accession to empires subdued by her own arms.

The Arabians, perhaps, are the only people under heaven who have remained, in all ages, exempt from a foreign yoke. Confident against the world on Arabian ground, they resisted the successive attempts of the Assyrian, Persian, Grecian, and Roman arms. Yet the vicinity of these empires was not regarded with indifference. It filled them with continual alarms, it circumscribed their projects, confined their genius to defensive war, and retarded the cultivation of the liberal arts. But when, in the decline of the Roman power, other nations presumed to be ambitious, the Arabians were capable of forming extensive plans of military and civil enterprize. Yet, in their own deserts alone, they are invincible, and there the race of Ishmael maintain to this day an independence on the Ottoman empire. There the human mind is still capable of bold and liberal efforts. A new sect of religion has, of late,

appeared in those regions, of a genius uncommonly elevated.[Description de lþArabie, par M. Niebuhr.] It explodes every species of idolatry. It enjoins the belief and worship of one eternal Being, the Sovereign of the world, and establishes the doctrines of pure theism on the sole foundation of reason and nature. It considers Moses and a number of his successors in the East, as sublime teachers of wisdom, and, as such, worthy of respect and reverence. But it rejects all revelations, and denies that any book was ever penned by the angel Gabriel. How far this religion may diffuse itself is yet uncertain. But, though it may breathe a while in the free air of Arabia, it never can be cherished or tolerated in the Ottoman empire, where superstition is so necessary to conduct the machine of government.

Thus the fortune of the Arabians corresponds with the description of their country, which secures them from foreign conquest, and determines the measure of their obedience to civil power. And whether the history of this extraordinary people is accounted for by natural causes, or by a special interposition of Providence, the prediction concerning them is equally fulfilled: nor can it derogate from the authority of holy writ, that we observe the determinations of heaven to coincide with a regular and established order of second causes.

But the connexion of a settlement with the more general fortune of mankind, is chiefly discernible in the production of extended government.

As the political divisions of territory though fluctuating and precarious, have, however, at all times, some necessary dependence on the natural and permanent divisions of the terraqueous globe, the consequences arising from the magnitude of states and empires may often be referred ultimately to a geographical source. Local circumstances alone have set bounds to the devastation of conquest, and to the rage of war; have checked the tyranny of governments, and prevented the establishment of an universal empire: an establishment of such alarming tendency, that we can scarce resist supposing it to have been one design of Providence, in the natural divisions of the earth, to supersede the possibility of an event that would have proved so fatal to the improvement and liberties of mankind. Instead of those happy distinctions which furnish incentives to genius; instead of that variety of arts and sciences, which owe their existence to bold and original efforts of divided nations, there must have subsisted, throughout the earth, an uniformity of conduct and manners subversive of all liberal enterprize.

The different ages of society, like the different ages of man, require different discipline and culture. The maxims of policy applicable to one part of the world, are not always applicable to another; nor are the full advantages of any local oeconomy reconcileable, perhaps, with subordination to a general system. If, therefore, the best instituted government falls short of perfection, in order to improve its advantages it is necessary to circumscribe its dominion. To fix indeed mathematically the proportion of territory or of people, which is most consistent with public prosperity, and with the benefits of civil life, is an impossible problem in the science of government. But it is certain there are limits with regard to both; and all the inconveniences of universal dominion will be felt, in an inferior degree, throughout an extended empire.

Public affairs there sink into a quiescent form, genius is fettered by authority, or borne down by the weight of the prevailing system.

In small states men of wisdom have arisen, whose credit with

the community has enabled them to patronize arts, and to conduct plans of public utility to the most successive issue. Legislators and politicians, acting at some favourable crisis, have been known, with a narrow circle, to controul established customs and manners, to reform civil institutions, and to innovate in all the essentials of government. But the reformation of a wide domain is an immense and laborious work, that needs a long preparation of time, and presupposes an intercourse with regions enlightened by philosophy and learning.

The reformation by Peter the Great is one of the most memorable in the annals of extended government. The flourishing condition of the arts in the system of nations, with which he connected his empire, was peculiarly favourable to the grandeur of his views.

The Czar availed himself of the conjuncture. Like the founders of antient states, he travelled into foreign nations to study mechanical and commercial arts, and legislative wisdom, and the whole science of government. By inviting artists and manufacturers from those nations to reside in his empire, he tried, by their example, to allure his people into the occupations of civil life. To a profound discernment of his true interests, and to consummate sagacity in forming commercial and civil plans, he added all the qualifications most conducive to their success. Boldness, vigour, perseverance, he possessed in an eminent degree. And the example of a sovereign, who was himself a proficient in the detail of the arts, must have produced a wonderful effect on a people over whom his authority was unlimited. The establishment too of a standing army, which confirmed that authority, and carried his commands with irresistible force through the remotest provinces, tended to strengthen and maintain all his other establishments. And at last his triumphs in arms, which, at the treaty of Newstadt, rendered him the arbiter of the North, and secured the tranquility of his empire, favoured all the plans of his interior policy.

Yet so glorious a reign could animate a few parts only, without infusing life or vigour into so vast a body. The maxims of his policy have been pursued with ability by some of his successors on the throne of the Russias; and, above all, the present Empress, by the protection of arts, by the establishments of her police, and by a well-digested code of internal laws, emulates the honours of her illustrious predecessor; perhaps, in some instances, eclipses his fame. But it is the misfortune of Catharine, as of Peter, to execute plans on too large a scale: and, with so rare advantages, it is by the courtesy of Europe, if the Russians, at this day, are permitted to rank among civilized nations. The limits of the empire must be contracted, to give rapidity to its movements. And the late accession of territory, how greatly soever it may augment the revenue, or the splendor of the sovereign, tends in reality to encumber, in those regions, the efforts of the human species. So repugnant is the genius of extended government to refinement and liberal arts.

The history of the Chinese alone seems to form an exception to the general theory. And it must be owned, that, if a few nations have touched a higher stage of civility and refinement than that people, there is none on the records of the world, who have enjoyed, for so extended a period, along with a large proportion of public felicity, a mediocrity in arts and sciences.

Yet if the sciences in that empire are not on the decline, they seem for ages to have been stationary, or slowly progressive, and certainly have not arrived at such maturity and perfection as might be expected from the length of their course. Authority is there decisive of public opinion, and abridges the liberty of

private judgment. Error is consecrated by antiquity. No spirit of philosophical enquiry animates the learned; and the freer excursions of genius are unknown.

In antient times, when the Greater and the Lesser Asia were divided among a number of states; when Assyria, Phoenicia, and Egypt, formed independent governments, science seems to have dawned upon the world with considerable lustre. But these appearances gradually vanished. The first empire of the Assyrians was not auspicious to mankind. Their second empire, by the union of Niniveh and Babylon, was still more alarming. Yet the Assyrians, the Medes, and the Egyptians, maintained a sort of balance of power, and seem to have flourished as rival and contending nations. But no sooner the Persians arose, and the world beheld at Persepolis a government more oppressive, more formidable, and more extended than had ever been erected at Niniveh, or at Babylon, that human nature was degraded in the East. And during a period of above two hundred years, while all things went forward in the West in little states, all things went backward throughout the immense provinces under the Persian sway.

Prior to this revolution, our acquaintance indeed with historical annals is imperfect. It is impossible to descend into the detail of more antient government. Yet, on authorities sacred and profane, it may be affirmed, that, long before the Persian greatness, the Egyptians, and other Eastern nations, were in possession of useful and ingenious arts, and not unacquainted with maxims of policy conducive to public felicity and order.

Egypt was divided early into distinct kingdoms; and the dynasties which fill her annals consisted, it is probable, of contemporary, not of successive monarchs. The reigns of her kings, before Sefostris, are celebrated as the reigns of the gods: and, if any credit is due to the history of that conqueror, it was perhaps the power of his arms which shook the foundations of antient governments, and brought on the first general catastrophe of nations.

If, however, the empire of Sefostris, like that of Alexander, devolved not entire upon his successors, human affairs might have returned into their former course, or at least some nations might have recovered their antient freedom and prosperity.

What may have happened in a period so remote, cannot now be determined with certainty. But, in periods well illustrated, great monarchies arose in the East: and the continent of Asia, so rarely intersected by mountains or rivers, seems to be the natural seat of extended dominion.

While European governments so often fluctuate, enlarge or contract their limits, are torn asunder by intestine commotions, or are overwhelmed with foreign irruptions, the great contests for dominion on the theatre of Asia have seldom diversified the form of Asiatic establishments. General revolutions by conquest, more frequent in that quarter of Europe, have not been productive of similar effects. The Asiatic governments are soon re-established nearly on the same foundations; and one spirit predominates amidst all the vissicitudes of power.

The stability of the Chinese government, amidst the shocks and revolutions of conquest, is commonly alleged as a proof of the wisdom with which it is framed. But in a country of such extent and population, the disproportion of numbers between the conquerors and the vanquished, and the character of those conquerors, who have no fixed usages, manners, or institutions of their own to come into competition with the established system, sufficiently account for its immutability, without regard to the degree of its perfection. And if the system of manners, laws, and religion, established in

China, is not shaken or subverted by internal causes, it promises to withstand the most furious innundations of the Tartars, and may go down triumphant to the latest posterity. Thus China forms an illustrious example of the connexion of human affairs with geographical limits. Secure on the east and south by the ocean, and on the west by inaccessible deserts, she is vulnerable on the side of Tartary alone. All her military operations are exhausted in one direction, and with one view. And by the efforts of an industrious and active policy, she erected, many ages ago, an artificial barrier for defence, unequalled for extent or magnificence in any other age or country. But that barrier, the work of men, could not defeat the intention of nature; and, in defiance of their wall, it was necessary for the Chinese to submit to conquerors, who should incorporate with them into one body, subject to the same head.

Next in magnificence to that of China is the wall of Caucasus, called by the Orientals the wall of Gog and Magog. It extended from the Caspian to the Black Sea, and is supposed, by some antiquarians, to have been built by Alexander the Great, in order to cover the frontiers of his empire from the incursions of the Scythians. But it is probably a more antient fabric. The lofty spirit of Alexander would hardly have stooped to such a dastardly policy; nor does it appear from the course of Alexanderþs victories, that he ever approached the Caspian gates.

Such stupendous monuments of art declare the sense of Asia concerning the magnitude of impending dangers; and equally indicate talents for pacific enterprize, and an incapacity for war. Yet, if Asia were divided and subdivided like Europe, climate alone would not give rise to, and perpetuate, such general servitude. And if the description of Europe resembled that of Asia, our climates would not be productive of freedom. The extended government of the Romans came to be as violent and tyrannical as Eastern despotism. To maintain, therefore, a due balance of power, and to prevent the rapacity of sovereigns from transgressing those geographical limits which nature seems to have affixed to dominion, is an object of the first importance to the general liberties of Europe.

It ought also to be remembered by sovereigns grasping at dominion, that if, by the connivance or supineness of other powers, they are suffered to attain the ends of their ambition, they assume a dangerous pre-eminence; they exchange, for precarious greatness, the most solid advantages; and, by the magnitude of dominion, in a country like Europe, are likely to precipitate its fall. Let them remember the counsel of Augustus Caesar to his successors, þnever to enlarge the territories of the Romans;þ and learn, from the example of that great people, to avoid the paths which lead first indeed to the subversion of civil liberty, but finally to the dissolution of empire.

The discovery of America has opened an immense field to the ambition of the states of Europe. Instead of augmenting their territorial possessions at home, they began, from that aera, to form distant establishments by conquest or by colonization, and to erect, in another hemisphere, a new species of empire. But between countries so widely separated, a political union subsists with difficulty: and when discontents arise, distance from the seat of government affords singular advantages to provinces that mediate revolt.

Local preference can never be rendered consistent with the best ends of government. The relation of a colony to the antient country, rightly understood, is a relation of perfect equality. The terms which denote parental and filial relation, when descriptive of local ties, and intended to distinguish the cultivators of the antient soil from the cultivators of territory more recently

acquired, are metaphors extremely liable to abuse. The one country is no more the mother, than it is the daughter. They are both the children of the same political parent, and that parent is the government to which they owe equal allegiance.

But, when colonies are regarded in the light of subordinate provinces, as appendages to government, and not entitled to the same privileges and immunities with the parent-state, the lovers of civil liberty will acquiesce with reluctance in such invidious distinctions. Jealousies ripen into disaffection. Political independency figures in the imagination, and is aspired after as an elevation of rank.

The fabric of colonial subordination in all the governments of Europe seems to stand in need of repair. And, unhappily, the freest of those governments was the first to be made sensible of its defects.[B]

When the passions of a divided public were wound up to the highest pitch, when the charges of injustice, oppression, tyranny, on one side, were retorted on the other by those of sedition, ingratitude, rebellion, argument and sound reasoning were little regarded in the contest. And at the instance when the wisdom of the British councils resolved, by the fullest communication of privilege, and the most liberal construction of provincial claims, to remove every ground of jealousy and distrust, the insidious interposition of a common enemy defeated the generous plan.

The Rubicon was already passed; and the colonies had dared to commit their cause to the events of war.

Perhaps there is room to hope that a sense of common interest may still prevail; that mutual affection and regard may yet revive in people of the same manners, the same religion, and the same blood; and that some medium may yet be found to disjoin the American councils and arms from those of France, and re-unite them, by more natural and indissoluble ties, to the British monarchy. To the state of pupillage and dependence, which seems indeed to be at an end, may succeed a connexion of a more equal and dignified nature, favourable to the happiness and grandeur of both countries, and in which both countries may acquiesce with honour. But if mutual attachment fail, to recal American allegiance by the power of our arms, if not an impracticable, is certainly a most hazardous attempt. It is to contend, is some degree, with that course of nature, which so often emancipates colonies at the age of manhood, and with all those local circumstances which threaten the disruption of empire.

The geographical divisions of the American continent are certainly auspicious to civil liberty; and seem to oppose the establishment of such extended governments as have proved, in the antient hemisphere, a source of the most destructive and debasing servitude.

The local circumstances under review, whose operations, in so many instances, are fully discernible, solve, we may believe, in part, the histories of other countries, where appearances are more equivocal; and aided or opposed by other causes, have been, and will be, attended with consequences proportionably serious and important all over the globe. By their immediate connexion with interior policy, they are, to a state considered apart from every other, of no small account. But, in the mutual relations of a number of states, the territory of each, and the nature of its frontiers, by affecting political independency and the balance of power, present considerations of still superior moment.

To stand sequestered and alone, is as fatal to the genius of governments as to that of men; and the noblest enterprizes of art, or exertions of policy, may often be referred to situations which

have excited the rivalship, the jealousy, and even the antipathy of nations. The antipathy, which so long subsisted between Rome and Carthage, contributed, in no small degree, to render both states illustrious. But the maxim, þdelenda est Carthago,þ was neither dictated by honour, by justice, nor by sound policy. And the catastrophe of Carthage, instead of advancing the prosperity, hastened the decline of the Roman name. Far different was the conduct of the Lacedaemonians, in the plenitude of dominion. For when, by the fortune of arms, it was in their power to have annihilated the rival state, þHeaven forbid,þ said the Lacedaemonians, þthat we should put out one of the eyes of Greece!þ This was the language of a discerning people, capable of moderation in victory, and conscious of those political relations which give life and energy to national enterprize.

Happy, in this respect, were the governments of antient Greece. Happy, on a larger scale, the governments of modern Europe. Posterity may perhaps contemplate the blessings of an equal and liberal intercourse, more widely disseminated. They may contemplate, from a concurrence of various causes and events, some of which are hastening into light, the greater part, or even the whole habitable globe, divided among nations free and independent in all the interior functions of government, forming one political and commercial system. Or, perhaps, while every people is capable of progress, there is an incompatibility in the contemporary civilization of different regions: nor ought we to expect that perfection, which seems to be denied to every work of man, in the regulations of commerce, in the science of politics, or in the arts of civil government.

But I launch not on the immense ocean of possibility, and of future contingency. To compare past events, to estimate the actual attainments of men, and to point out their connexion with mechanical and local causes, is my immediate province.

NOTES.

NOTE [A]

The political servitude of the Tartars is thus accounted for in the theory of Montesquieu.

In Asia there is properly no temperate zone. Without that gradation in the races of mankind which obtain in Europe, the strong nations are immediately opposed to the weak. The Tartars accordingly make conquests in the south of Asia, the region of pure despotism. But the despotism, congenial with those climates, is embraced by the conquerors, and fixing its roots in a great empire, extends its branches in all directions, till they finally over-shadow the plains of Tartary, and stretch a far way to the North. Thus the part of Tartary, which bred the conquerors of China, is now annexed to the Chinese empire. And even among the independent tribes, despotism, by the contagion of example, is equally predominant.

In parts of Tartary, colonized by the Chinese, the people are become mortal enemies to the parent state; yet, transferring to their new mansions the servile spirit of the Chinese government, they remain, under a separate establishment, subject to despotic sway.

LþEsprit des Loix, l. 17, ch. 5.

NOTE [B]

Mr Hume, in the first volume of his Essays, delivers an observation which ought, he contends, to be fixed as an universal axiom in politics, þthat though free governments have been commonly the most happy for those who partake of their freedom; yet are they the most ruinous and oppressive to their provinces.þ But the maxim, though plausible in theory, and illustrated by the examples of Rome and Carthage, ought not to be established without limitation and reserve.

The system of colonizing among the Greeks was the most splendid that can well be imagined. Their colonies were considered from the beginning, as rising states flourishing under the guardianship and patronage of the antient governments; and were suffered, without jealousy or distrust, to rise to equal eminence and distinction. On the most amicable and generous footing, an intercourse was long maintained between the colony and the antient government, tending to their mutual prosperity.

But as a colony, thus established, evidences rather a generous dereliction of sovereignty in the parent state, than the moderate exercise of its dominion, the example of the Greeks will hardly be considered as forming an exception from the above maxim concerning the peculiar severity of provincial government, as exercised in free states. Yet, if we pass from antient to modern times, it may be affirmed that, before the date of the present contest, the conduct of the English towards colonies, was less exceptionable than that of any other European state. Spain and Portugal, not content with the advantages of an exclusive commerce, derive a direct revenue from their American settlements: and the first attempt of England to imitate the example of those imperious and arbitrary states, created discontents which were the immediate forerunners of revolt. Though the government of Spain had scarce any merit either in projecting, or in effectuating settlements upon the continent of America, the jealousy of that government with regard to those settlements knew no bounds. Of late, indeed, a more enlightened policy in the court of Madrid has somewhat relaxed the rigour of oppression. England treated its colonies for a long time with neglect, and urged the highest pretensions to dominion, at that period when they were the most capable of resistance.

That provincial government, as it has been generally conducted, has been a system of preference or restraint, is consonant to the experience of ages. And the Author of Observations on the Nature and Value of Civil Liberty, has rightly numbered all such governments among those which deserve to be accounted tyrannical and oppressive. England can only claim the equivocal praise of being less tyrannical and oppressive than the rest of Europe.

þIn what way, then,þ says a Writer of sound political discernment, þhas the policy of Europe contributed to the first establishment, or to the present grandeur of the colonies of America? In one way, and in one way only, it has contributed a good deal. Magna virum Mater! It bred and formed the men who were capable of atchieving such great actions, and of laying the foundation of so great an empire; and there is no other quarter of the world of which the policy is capable of forming, or has ever actually and in fact formed, such men. The colonies owe to the policy of Europe the education and great views of their active and enterprizing founders; and some of the greatest and most important of them owe to it scarce any thing else.þ

Dr Smithþs Enquiry, etc. vol. ii. p. 189.

Essay VIII - The Same Subject Continued

The fate of nations often depends on circumstances apparently the most trivial. The genius, the life, perhaps the temporary humour of a single man may, on some occasions, fix the political arrangements that affect the essential interests of one half the globe.

Local circumstances are so blended in their operations with a variety of other causes, that it is difficult to define them with such precision as were necessary to form an estimate of their comparative importance. Hence the confusion, on this subject, which fills the volumes of the learned. A Writer [Montesquieu] of the first rank, who illustrates and adorns the history of mankind with plausible and ingenious theory, has assigned to physical causes an almost unlimited empire. Another Writer, [Hume] no less illustrious, contracts into a point the sphere of their dominion. Their priority in the order of things, and their supposed permanency, have been urged by other writers, as decisive of superior sway. But it deserves to be remembered, that causes physical in their nature, are often moral only in their operations; that these operations are limited and precarious, and relative to the conjuncture; that a people may be long incapable to avail themselves of external advantages; that circumstances ultimately beneficial, may have proved for a long while incommodious or destructive; and, consequently, that the importance of local station, far from being permanent, varies not only with the contingencies of the natural world, but with the course of political events, and the general state of human improvement.

A settlement, conducing at one period to render the natives fierce, treacherous, and inhospitable, may be instrumental at another period, in rendering them civil and humane.

Before the aera of navigation, a settlement on an island, or the command of an extensive and commodious coast, might have conferred no advantages on the possessors; or rather circumstances, of such inestimable account in a commercial age, might, by cutting off all communication with the rest of the species, have proved, in every former aera, invincible obstacles to the civil arts. Our insular situation, so fertile a source of national security, opulence, and grandeur, rendered us long an uncultivated and sequestered people:

> -- Penitus toto divisos orbe Britannos

And the neglect with which Britons were once treated in the society of nations, is compensated only by that attention which their posterity command. While nations on the continent of Europe maintain their barriers with difficulty, and at an enormous expence, and, if they will consult their security, must often court alliances, and observe, with jealous attention, the minutest variations in the balance of power, Great Britain is exempted from such anxious solicitude. By collecting her forces within herself, by avoiding continental wars, which exhaust, to little purpose, her treasure and her blood, and by rendering the improvement of her maritime strength the fixed and steady object of her policy, she may maintain, in defiance of powerful confederacies, that post of honour and distinction, which seems to have drawn upon her the envy of nations, who now take advantage of internal calamities to insult her fortune.

The aera of navigation opened a new species of correspondence

among men: and, in the infancy of the art, a civil settlement might be attended with peculiar advantages, which there could be no possibility of transmitting, in their full extent, to future generations. In the territory of the Phoenicians, neither large nor fertile, yet lying along a commodious coast, we observe sources of opulence and renown. That country, oppressed at first by the violence of the Assyrians, but afterwards so well adapted to the commercial circumstances of the antient world, called forth in its people corresponding exertions, and both invited them to undertake, and favoured the execution of early enterprizes as a maritime power. While the Egyptians, in the fullness of riches and of pride, and in the spirit of an unsocial form of superstition, had shut their ports against mankind, and renounced all foreign correspondence; it was the glory of the Phoenicians to venture beyond the boundaries of antient navigation, and by commercial enterprize, to diffuse arts and civility over the western regions. Bred up in habits of frugality and domestic industry, the consequence of scanty and penurious possessions, they pursued an oeconomical, not a luxurious commerce. The commodities of every country were embarked on Phoenician bottoms; and, as merchants, or factors, or navigators, they created a sort of universal dependence, and conducted, almost exclusively, the traffic of the world.

What the Phoenicians were, in early times, relatively to the nations on the Mediterranean coast; what the Hanse Towns and the Dutch lately were, relatively to the other European states; the commercial towns all over Europe are, at this day, relatively to the rest of the earth. The maritime efforts of the Greeks lessened the importance of Phoenicia. The maritime efforts of the English, and of other powers, have sunk the importance of the Dutch commonwealth. The fall of Europe will mark, perhaps, at some future aera, the enterprize of the species at large; or Europe may only seem to fall, while she advances to more absolute greatness, and superior opulence, though of less relative importance in the political scale.

But to return to early times: Carthage, a colony planted by the Phoenicians, and inheriting the commercial genius of the parent state, flourished by the same arts, and grew superior to all nations in naval power. Content with the empire of the sea alone, she might have bid defiance, on that element, to the arms of Rome. But the neglect of her marine, the consequence of a long struggle for dominion on the continent of Europe, rendered her vulnerable on her own coasts. More attentive to the levying of armies, composed chiefly of foreign mercenaries, than to the equipment of fleets, in which alone her genius was peculiarly formed to excel, she allowed a maritime ascendency to a powerful rival. And, in these circumstances, the jealousy of other states, and intestine divisions, co-operated with the Roman vengeance and ambition in the extinction of the Carthaginian name.

Corinth, situated on an isthmus, in the centre of Greece, and equally connected with the Aegean and Ionian shores, is an example of a city which united with signal advantages for navigation those of inland trade. It derived, accordingly, from so fortunate a coincidence, wealth, splendor, and magnificence. As a mart of trade, it was no less resorted to than Carthage itself. They have been called, emphatically, the two eyes of the Mediterranean coast, and were destroyed in one year by the Romans. The city of Corinth was restored by Julius Caesar; the city of Carthage, by Augustus. But it was not possible to restore, under the Roman yoke, that combination of circumstances which had rendered illustrious the antient possessors of the same settlements. Corinth was no longer

the capital of a little monarchy, surrounded by free states, eminent for arts and sciences. And the new city of Carthage, in the form of a Roman colony, gives us no idea of that city which had been the pride of Africa, and the envy of Rome.

The aspiring genius of the Roman people was not formed for commercial arts. During the first ages of the commonwealth they remained totally unacquainted with maritime affairs. A Carthaginian galley, driven by accident on the coasts of Italy, presented them with the first model of a ship of war. But when naval armaments appeared to be essential to that plan of universal dominion after which they aspired, they became intent upon those objects, and pursued them with unremitting ardor and astonishing success. The mercantile spirit, and the love of ingenious arts, conducted the Pheonicians, the Carthaginians, and the Greeks, to distinction and eminence as maritime powers. Among these nations, trade was the principal aim in navigation; war only a collateral object. But this natural order of things was reversed at Rome. The martial spirit alone led to the establishment of a marine, which triumphed over the efforts of all the commercial states known in the antient world, and rendered the Romans themselves in some degree commercial, when no longer a war-like people. It was the same spirit which raised up suddenly for Mithridates (for he disclaimed all regard to commercial objects, as beneath his dignity) such formidable fleets, as insulted the Romans on their own coasts, when, by the annihilation of rival powers, they seemed to be in full possession of maritime empire.

Sometimes local situation suggests correspondent designs of great magnitude and importance. Sometimes designs suggested by other consideration are hence only conducted to a more brilliant or more successful issue. In both these ways, in the remote ages of antiquity, the Cretans, the Rhodians, and other states, availed themselves of happy situations in the pursuits of commercial and civil greatness.

But local advantages, fluctuating and precarious, often derive their sole account from the temporary condition of the world. It was hence that, long before the fall of Carthage and of Corinth, in consequence of the discovery of the Indian sea, Alexandria began to flourish, and became destined, from that discovery alone, to be the great emporium of trade between the east and west. Its situation between Tyre and Carthage was convenient for commanding some share of the lucrative trade of which these cities had been so long possessed. Tyre was already no more: and Carthage regarded with a jealous eye the erection of a port, which, under the protection of the king of Macedon, might supplant here in no small degree. To produce this effect, as well as to secure his conquest of Egypt, seems to have been the view of Alexander in laying the foundations of his new city. But he perceived not then the source of its importance. It was his expedition into the Indies alone which could have opened his eyes on the prospect of its future grandeur. This forms a memorial epoch. The boundaries of commerce being enlarged, and a maritime correspondence opened between the Indies and the western nations, the commodities of the East, which had been usually carried down the Oxus, and along the Caspian sea, began to be diverted into the channel of Egypt. The Indian trade indeed remained long inconsiderable; nor did it abandon of a sudden its antient course. But in proportion as this change took place under the Ptolemies, and under the Romans, the resort to Alexandria became conspicuous. In one month, says Josephus, it supplied the treasury of Rome with more riches than all the rest of Egypt supplied in a year. And from the reduction of Egypt into a Roman province by Augustus, to the conquest of that country by the

Saracens, a period of above seven hundred years, the port of Alexandria was the most noted mart in the world. Nor was it less renowned as the seat of philosophy and the liberal arts. In the fall of this city we bewail that of learning itself, which underwent, upon that spot, the most fatal catastrophes recorded in the annals of time.

Such settlements then, as have been mentioned, combined with the peculiar circumstances of antiquity, had a discernible connexion with commercial and civil arts. As commerce, therefore, in the ordinary course of things, seems to make a people flourish; a settlement conducive to that end is numbered among the causes of public prosperity. But commerce itself, as ministering to luxury, was discountenanced by the maxims of antient policy; and, on the exclusion of it, Rome, and Sparta, and other antient states, seem to have proposed to found their greatness. This policy, violent indeed and unnatural, suited only the genius of martial and heroic times. Yet from hence it appears, that the complexion and temper of an age, by diversifying national objects, will diversify proportionably the inherent advantages of any local establishment.

The spirit of commerce, which actuates modern ages, has opened a new path of ambition. And though there are disadvantages inseparable from this spirit; though the detail of modern governments affords a less splendid theme to the historian than that presented in the transactions of antiquity; yet the civil and moral order of the world is certainly advanced by this great revolution in the view and proceedings of states.

But if the policy of the antients had been more generally directed to commercial objects, yet their maritime operations, we may observe, were necessarily circumscribed: and local advantages, once of high estimation, became afterwards comparatively of small importance, and almost disappear in an age when the general use of the compass, and the various improvements in navigation, so far enlarge the sphere of enterprize, and maintain an intercourse between regions the most remote.

In the progress of arts, the local advantages of mankind all over the globe seem to approach nearer to an equality. There arise more incentives to rouze the industry of nations. And a passage being opened in every country for the collective treasures of the earth, general competition and demand secure emoluments and rewards to every people, more accurately proportioned to the measure of active exertions, and the wisdom by which they are directed. Riches or poverty must no longer be estimated by the position of a people on the globe. Art, if I may say so, alters the dispensation of nature, and maintains a sort of distributive justice in the division of opulence among mankind. Such at least would be the tendency of things, if all restrictions on trade were abolished by a concert among nations, calculated for the common benefit of all. But mutual jealousies derange and encumber their mutual efforts. If, in order to keep in view of the coast, it was often necessary for antient navigators to prefer the more tedious to the shorter voyage, a similar necessity is superinduced upon the modern, by the absurdity of commercial regulations. It is merely the relative prosperity of mankind which enters into the views of sovereigns. And no regulation, however beneficial to nations, will ever be established by their unanimous consent, if, by an unequal augmentation of opulence or power, it tends to break the rules of proportion, and affects the order in which these nations stand arranged on the general scale. But if national monopolies, founded on the jealousy of sovereigns, may sometimes, as connected with public security, be vindicated on the maxims of sound policy; yet, surely, no such jealousy can reasonably subsist among communities

under the same government. On that government, at least, in reason and in justice, they have an equal claim. Yet regulations partial and oppressive we have seen in our days, and are too likely to see, dissolved by violence, which ought to have been dissolved in part by the mature wisdom of enlightened councils. Ireland, with arms in her hand, seemed to dictate the late resolutions of the British cabinet: resolutions which, if free and unconstrained, had formed the glory of the present reign.

Public reformation, indeed, must be gradual, and such as the times will bear. What is best in theory, is not always attainable in practice; and a wise government will proceed with caution in authorizing changes, however just, reasonable, and beneficial to the community at large, that are opposed to prejudices grown inveterate by age. But every approach towards an equal legislation, that can be made without disturbing the public tranquillity, obviates the danger of rising discontents, and tends ultimately to the harmony and stability of civil societies.

Concessions, well-timed, to our American provinces, might have prevented the fatal rupture, and even secured their allegiance for ages. Yet those concessions, when at length extorted from us by an apparent necessity, merit but little praise; and Britons will long remember the language of that Great Man, who thus expostulated with the Rulers of his Country, while our empire was yet entire: þAvoid this humiliating, disgraceful necessity. -- With a dignity becoming your exalted situation, make the first advances to concord, to peace, and happiness: for that is your true dignity, to act with prudence and with justice. -- That you should first concede, is obvious from sound and rational policy. -- Concession comes with better grace, and more salutary effect, from the superior power; it reconciles superiority of power with the feelings of men; and establishes solid confidence on the foundation of affection and gratitude.þ

But on these maxims of legislative wisdom I make no comment. And with regard to those more complicated and nice discussions, the tendency of national monopolies, and the genius of exclusive companies, I will beg leave to refer my readers, for the fullest information, to an Enquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations: a work which will, probably, in future times, be referred to in political science, as the first just and systematical account that has appeared in any language, of the principles of public oeconomy, and the phoenomena of commercial states.

Besides the influence of commerce, there are other causes, in the progress of general improvement, by which the importance of civil settlements is materially affected. The increase of a people in a barren soil led formerly, by a species of necessity, to plans of migration, of rapine, or of conquest. And civilized nations in the antient world were able, with difficulty, to defend their frontiers, when assailed by hungry and desperate barbarians. But when arts and industries began to be excited in those countries, which, for want of tillage and cultivation, had remained desolate and barren, one cause began to be removed, which disturbed the repose of nations.

Thus the Danes, and other people in the high northern latitudes, subsisting less precariously on the fruits of their own industry, than their forefathers subsisted by piracy and war, ceased to press with their incumbent weight the neighbouring states, and permitted government to advance throughout the rest of Europe. But if rude armies, as hostile and fierce as ever issued from the storehouse of nations, were again to appear on the frontiers of any European state, the contest would not be dubious;

the assailants only would feel the blow. By the invention of fire-arms, which has changed by degrees the whole system of war, there resides a power of resistance in every flourishing state, to which the most furious efforts of rude and desparate heroism were opposed in vain. War is now conducted at an expence which the exertions of industry can only supply; and the superiority in arms, which once resided with rude and poor nations, is transferred in modern ages to the nations advanced in opulence and credit. Yet the diffusion of knowledge gradually tends to reduce mankind more nearly to a level in the enterprizes of peace and war. And that singular invention, which seemed calculated for the destruction of mankind, and which actually enabled a few adventurers from Europe to annex a hemisphere to its dominion, tends in the issue to render battles less bloody, conquests less rapid, and governments more secure than in any former period.

Upon the whole, we observe local advantages, which fluctuate in every age, and often owe their existence and duration to a train of independent events, to be of the least relative movement in the most flourishing stage of the arts and sciences. But that intercourse, which navigation opens, though abundantly sufficient for the purposes of mercantile traffic and exchange, can seldom form between distant nations so intimate connexions as arise from vicinity of settlement. Geographical relation, therefore, will always be, in some degree, instrumental in retarding or accelerating, in every country, the progress of civil life. Communities, as well as private persons, are formed by example. And the character of a people must bear resemblance in manners, in genius, and in arts, to that which predominates in the system with which they are more immediately connected. Civility and rudeness being distributed like light and darkness in the natural world, contiguous nations are often contemporary in their progress and decline: and the more enlightened regions, though always shifting, form at any one time a complete and undivided whole, situated around a common centre. But the various circumstances hitherto under review, ought to be considered rather as occasions of prosperous or adverse fortune, than as direct causes of human perfection or debasement. The former ought, by no means, to be confounded with the latter; nor the local circumstances we have mentioned, with that more mysterious influence which, reaching the principles of our nature, is supposed to produce original and constitutional differences in the human species.

Essay IX - Of the Relation of Man to the Surrounding Elements

Local circumstances have been pointed out as of various import; as dissuasives from, or as incentives to, action, as occasions of success or disappointment to national enterprize, and as more or less auspicious to the origin and progress of arts and sciences. But there is, in the opinion both of the origin and progress of arts and sciences. But there is, in the opinion both of the vulgar and the learned, another and more immediate dependence of the species on external things; which, presiding with various effect over human nature itself, antecedently determines its character.

Our external frame, like every system of matter, is subject to mechanical laws. It is liable, accordingly, to annoyance from all the elements; and changes introduced into the body cannot, consistently with the law of their union, be indifferent to the

mind. That state of the medium, that temperature of heat and cold, those productions of soil, and species of aliment, which correspond best with our corporeal fabric, tend to the freer and more vigorous exercise of all the mental powers. Yet natural historians, who describe man as an animal merely allow him in that capacity some distinguishing prerogatives. While the elements swarm with life; while earth, sea, and air are peopled with their proper inhabitants; while different tribes have habitations assigned to them in particular corners of the globe, where alone they can find subsistence; man erects for himself a mansion in every country, subsists on a variety of aliment prepared or unprepared by art, and breathes with equal freedom in the frozen or in the burning zone. Races of animals that existed in past times seem now to be totally extinct. The largest and strongest of quadrupeds, according to M. Buffon, has disappeared from the animal world; [Hist. Nat. tom. xviii, p. 178] nor does he think it impossible that, consistently with the order of nature, animals of one common stock may have been so diversified and transformed by the vicissitudes of the globe, as to constitute distinct species. The animals of the new and of the old continent may have had one common original; and perhaps of man alone can be said in the strictest sense,

Genus immortale manet ----

The human frame at least is more fixed and immutable than any other; and more exempted from that influence which prevails through the gradations of animal and vegetable life.[A]

There is no one country on the face of the earth which is declared, by general consent, to be the fittest residence for man. That influence of the heavens seems to be relatively the best, which habit has rendered the most familiar. And to exchange of a sudden one climate for another, is always hazardous for any tribe or people. Yet the positive malignancy of no climate of the world can be inferred from the dangers which ae so often consequent on the migrations of mankind. Our physical habits are established or dissolved by slow degrees; violent transitions seem repugnant to nature, and often threaten our constitution with destruction. But if it can resist the impetuosity of the shock, the body accommodates itself by degrees to its new condition. Things offensive become indifferent, or even agreeable; things noxious innocent or salutary, and in time perhaps so essential, that no danger were more to be apprehended than a return to antient habits. Emigrants can learn only from experience the peculiarities of other climates; and, in the course of that experience, they struggle with a series of calamity, from which the natives of those climates are exempt, and from which the posterity of those emigrants will be exempt in all succeeding generations. If we may judge then from the first impressions on our animal oeconomy, the external constitution of nature in the different climates of the earth tends rather to discourage than to promote the distant migrations of mankind. Yet, in another view, it is this diversity of climate which accounts for the dispersion of nations, and the general revolutions of conquest. In a flourishing period indeed of civil and commercial arts, a nation can hardly be encumbered with excessive population. But the more simple ages are unacquainted with such variety of resources. Bold adventure is ever more welcome to Barbarians, than the flow proceedings of art; and they even scorn to accomplish by industry what valour alone may effect. In this spirit was the answer of Brennus to the Romans when questioned, at the siege of Clusium, concerning his pretensions on Tuscany, [Tit. Liv. l.v. c. 36] þThat his pretensions lay in his sword; and all things belonged to the

brave.þ He added also on more plausible foundations, after reminding the Romans of some passages in their own story, that lands which remained neglected, and which the natives were in no condition to cultivate, could not be said to be exclusively pre-occupied or appropriated by any people.

In an exigency then, like that of the Transalpine Gauls, it is natural for rude states to send forth colonies to people, or armies to subdue the earth. And the incumbrance from population, which forms such an exigency, will be chiefly felt in the severer climates, and in the most ungrateful soil. Hence, in later times, the irruption of the northern Barbarians who desolated an subdued Europe. Their numbers, encreasing faster than their industry or the productions of the soil could keep pace with, created a species of necessity which, superior to all other considerations, authorized their first movements. And the fortune of the first adventurers, by raising expectation, instigated others to run a similar career. It deserves however to be remarked, that the first hostile incursions into a foreign country, have been usually made for the sake of plunder merely, without any design of abandoning antient possessions, or of forming new establishments. The first inroads of the Barbarians into the Roman empire were conducted with this view alone. But the desolation of one territory led to the desolation of another more remote; till at length a long absence from home reconciled these soldiers of fortune to other climes; or the difficulties and dangers of a return, or the temptations of superior affluence, retained them in countries more fertile than their own, better cultivated, and more adorned. No longer content with plunder, they seized upon the domains of the people subdued by their victorious arms; and erected governments on new foundations, with little regard to the policy of the vanquished. Free in their own country, they maintained their freedom in the settlements they acquired; armies were transformed into nations; and feudal systems began to arise out of the arrangement of war. The connexions with the parent state were gradually dissolved. And the posterity of those emigrants, regardless of the country of their fore-fathers, adhered to the governments whose protection they enjoyed, and to the climates which gave them birth.

Such migrations and establishments resulted from a condition of society, to which no European state is likely to return for ages. Switzerland perhaps alone is constituted in such circumstances as seem to require a regular discharge of citizens. Yet, without arts, without manufactures, without money, she has established a species of commerce peculiar to herself, and actually derives from the numbers of her people the means of subsistence. She resorts not, like antient states, to migrations, to plunder, or to conquest. While she cultivates peace, she subsists by war; whose demands she so readily supplies by hiring out troops indiscriminately to the neighbouring states; and this strange policy of government is both the cause and the effect of a flourishing population. Nor does here prosperity consist merely in the abundance of people, or in an exemption from the miseries of war. In the uninterrupted possession of internal harmony and content, she rivals the most favoured nations. But if the general circumstances of the modern resembled those of the antient world, the Helvetic body, destitute of such resources, could disencumber itself by no other expedients than migrations and offensive war.

Upon the whole then we may observe, that the changes of situation on the surface of the globe, so incident to tribes and nations, far from authorizing any plea of local pre-eminence, serve only to demonstrate the latitude allowed to the human constitution in respect of the variety of climate and of ailment which

corresponds so happily with its texture.

The power of the human body to redress itself, when annoyed by the elements, is often astonishing. Under alterations of the medium more violent, more sudden, more opposite, than climate ever presents, it maintains an almost incredible equality in its own temperature. From a series of late experiments, [See Experiments by Charles Blagden, M.D. F.R.S. inserted in Phil. Trans. for 1775.] conducted by a society of gentlemen every way qualified to inform the Public, it appears that, when surrounded with air heated to 244 degrees on the scale of Fahrenheit, the heat of the animal body deviates but little from its natural standard. In the conduct too of these curious experiments, as well as in the unsolicited experience of ordinary life, is displayed the tendency of habit to correct and mitigate the effects of external annoyance.

If it is not then intenseness alone, but rather vicissitude of temperature, which is most apt to annoy our frame; it would seem even reasonable to infer, that nations commonly reputed the most subject to impressions from the external elements, are, in reality, the most exempt from their dominion; and that it is not in our variable and inconstant climates, but under a more permanent and equal sky, that we ought to look for the freer and more uninfluenced condition of the species.

On the other hand, it might be contended that vicissitude itself, when regular and progressive, like the return of the seasons, becoming familiar to the body, shocks or incommodes it in an inferior degree; and that no one state of the atmosphere, in our temperate zones, has such intenseness and duration as to produce sensible effects on the human frame. Without entering at present into so nice a problem, let it be sufficient to observe, that habit and violent transition, exclusively of other influence, account for a number of appearances. But it is not pretended they account for all; and how nicely soever advantages and disadvantages may be balanced upon the whole, there are at least some distinctions among mankind infallibly regulated by a local standard.

In some climates of the world, the body arrives soon at maturity, and hastens to a dissolution with proportionable celerity. In other climates, a longer period is allowed both for its progress and decline. In the ages of antiquity, the Britons were remarkable for the longest, the Egyptians for the least extended life; while the ordinary standard in other countries deviated, as was supposed, more or less from these opposite extremes. Consistently with the same order of second causes, modern history informs us of a variety of people among whom the natural term of life exceeds not, or even falls below, the standard of Egypt; and the Britons yield, perhaps, in longevity to the more northern nations. The balance of numbers, indeed, may not be affected by such distinctions. If climates the most prolific are also the most destructive to the human species, the rules of proportion are not broken; and the encrease of mankind in one country may be as effectually advanced by the prolongation of life, as in another by a more abundant progeny. But, whether the law of mortality be so adjusted or not to the law of generation, the stated period of life is somewhat variable among nations. And, if the facts were doubtful or equivocal in general history, the influence in this respect of local situations, and of air of different temper, might be ascertained from the public registers of mortality in contiguous settlements, and under the same civil oeconomy. The air of the Hague is reputed the best in Holland; the air of Amsterdam the most malignant: and the duration of life, in those two places, seems to correspond with this natural cause. To correct such influences, there is, perhaps, some sovereign

antidote, some controuling regimen laid up, for future generations, in the stores of philosophy. But from fact to possibility there lies no appeal; and, in all ages of the world, the term of our existence, though dependent on a multiplicity of causes, seems to have had some reference to climate; and, in general, to have increased with the latitude. Strength and vigour of body, till we arrive at the limit of the Polar circle, are found to increase in a similar progression.

Stature and magnitude, on the other hand, are at least as considerable in the warmer as in the colder regions. And the most diminutive and dwarfish of the human race are perhaps the natives of the frigid zone.

The Patagonian stature, after exercising so long the curiosity, the scepticism, the credulity of the Public, is at last sufficiently ascertained, and seems not to violate, in any marvellous degree, the usual description of man. But, as a contrast to this, the world has been lately amused with an account of a nation, in the island of Madagascar, where the ordinary stature rises not above three feet and a half. It is not, however, pretended that the Patagonians are eminent for intellectual abilities above other tribes of Barbarians; and the little people of Madagascar seem to have nothing dwarfish in the constitution of their minds. They are described, by an intelligent Writer, [Eloge de M. Commerson, par M. de la Lande.] as a warlike people, and a match in genius, in conduct, and in enterprize, for the other natives of the island. Yet, without impeaching so respectable authority, we may be permitted to observe, that probably the same illusion of imagination which magnified the dimensions of the human figure in Patagonia, has diminished them in Madagascar. And the only admissible conclusion is, that in the one country, as in the other, there prevails a remarkable deviation from the usual standard towards opposite extremes.

The existence of such varieties in the description of man is conformable to history, and to experience, and is in part deducible from analogy and philosophic theory. But such varieties, though resulting from the general and regular tenour of mechanical laws, afford no criterion by which to ascertain the endowments of the understanding among tribes or nations. Among the natives of the same spot, similar distinctions abound, exclusive of all apparent connexion with temper, with genius, or with capacity. No historian has described that measure of animal strength, that symmetry of outward form, or the natural term of existence which, in the course of human life, is found most connected with the largest endowments and accomplishments of the species. In every age and country these combinations and assemblages are too dissimilar and various to form the basis of any theory: or rather, such dissimilarity and variety demonstrate the indifference of nature with regard to such co-incidences in the system of man. Yet the history of human reason is liable to be confounded with the history of mere animal distinctions; as if national genius or capacity could be calculated from the bills of mortality, from the gradations of colour in different tribes, or from certain varieties in organical texture, which, being either foreign to the mind, or corresponding equally with all its perfections and infirmities, touch not the essentials of human greatness.

The Tartars and Chinese, between whom there is observed by travellers, an exact resemblence in all the lineaments and proportions of the body, discover little affinity in the genius or complexion of the mind; or rather the resemblance, in the one respect, is, not more conspicuous than the contrast in the other. The former people are described as bold, warlike, independent,

lovers of toil, and of a ferocity approaching to brutality. The latter, as an indolent and pacific race, prone to supperstition, and to servile dependence; addicted to compliment, and extravagant in all the ceremonials of behaviour. Thus the extremes of national character may be combined with exterior appearances nearly similar.

It is also worthy of observation, that palpable defects in the animal constitution co-incide so often with the perfection of the understanding; and palpable defects in the intellectual, with the utmost perfection in all the animal powers. Some illustrious examples of such coincidences occur among the characters of the last age: an age, perhaps, as fertile of the intellectual talents as the world has ever seen. One of these is Lord Falkland, whose disadvantages in person are contrasted with excellence of mind, by the noble Historian who has delivered his name down to posterity as a model of perfection. Another is Sir Charles Cavendish, whose character, as delineated by the same masterly hand, conveys a moral lesson to posterity.[B]

The Graces, according to the fine allusion of antiquity, are often to be contemplated under the form of the Satyrs. Such coincidences, which abound in every country, seem to announce the peculiar character of the human mind, its independence on the laws of mechanism, and its alliance with a nobler system.

A disregard of this high prerogative has contaminated, in some instances, the conduct of nations. Hence the policy of Sparta authorised an institution the most shocking in the proceedings of mankind; that institution of Lycurgus, by which children of a delicate frame were condemned to instant death, from a supposed connexion between intellectual and corporael infirmity. How different is the wisdom of nature, which usually renders such children the darling objects of parental care!

Had the Spartan rule been adopted in our age, England had not reared up a Lyttelton, nor Europe bred a Voltaire. But, in the eye of reason and philosophy, this connexion disappears; and a policy so repugnant to the first dictates of morality, derives no countenance or apology from the history of individuals or of tribes. If there subsists then no inseparable connexion, no necessary or established harmony between the perfections of body and mind, the inferences from analogy are destitute of solid foundation; and the changes introduced into the former by external impulse, will imply no corresponding changes in our moral frame.

Soil and climate seem to act with a gradation of influence on vegetable, animal, and intellectual nature. There are varieties of configuration, equally commodious for the animal functions; and varieties in our animal powers, equally consistent with the exertion of all the nobler faculties. Man, therefore, by his rank in the creation, is more exempted from mechanical dominion than the classes below him; and even the beauty of his person derives its arbitrary estimation from the variety of which the body is susceptible, without detriment to its functions. An exalted mind in a well-organized body, is like a fine picture in a good light. Yet the exterior mechanism may be regarded, in some respects, as the mere drapery of nature, wherein is displayed all the wantonness of art; and which is usually no more decisive of the absolute perfections of mankind, than the modes of artificial attire. But the attire of nature, like the fashions of art, may prove cumbersome and incommodious, not only for animal, but for intellectual exertions; and certain consequences will arise from that mysterious union which enters into so complicated an existence, and connects it with the vegetable and with the animal world.

It deserves also to be observed, that the rank of man, which,

in so many respects, renders his constitution superior to dangerous annoyance, renders it in one respect more vulnerable. An animal feels only what disturbs the animal oeconomy. The scenery of creation it regards with total indifference; but that scenery acts on a human being in a peculiar manner, and, without annoying his person, affects the sensibility and delicacy of his moral frame. The organs of sound and sight are susceptible of impressions or convention, interest, in an eminent degree, the imagination and the passions. Hence the elements of natural language. Hence a moral expression in music. Hence certain graces of proportion, figure, motion; and all the fine connexions which form the foundations of criticism in the elegant and polite arts.

The objects with which the senses are conversant, become emblematical to the imagination, and call forth a train of corresponding emotions, that are never excited in the inferior orders of animal life.

Some predominant qualities in rude and savage tribes are to be ascribed, in the opinion of ingenious writers, to the face of the country they inhabit. The emotions in the breast of the savage derive, it seems, a degree of wildness and ferocity from the chaos which surrounds him; and a certain adjustment and embellishment of the outward objects is requisite to dispel the gloom of life, to enliven and exhilarate the spirits, to mollify the temper, and to render it humane.

> ------- The attentive mind,
> By this harmonious action on her powþrs,
> Becomes herself harmonious.

But this adjustment is not equally indispensable throughout the habitable globe. For, independently of culture, the scene from the and of nature is more or less magnificent, more or less adorned. Here are immense deserts; there delicious plains. This the region of clouds and storms; that of a more placid and benignant sky. Here predominates the beautiful; the sublime. The emotions hence generated correspond; and the tone of temper and of manners is, if I may say so, in unison with the natural world. This species of energy, which rises out of external things, exerts itself in its full effect on man alone; and seems to be attended with consequences in rude and savage life, analogous to those which result, in the progress of society, from various style and composition in the imitative and designing arts.

Having thus stated the relations of man to the elements around him, which appear to be various and complicated, it will be proper to contemplate his resources, and to mark those distinguishing prerogatives by which he endeavours to maintain or to restore his independence, to re-act upon external things, and to become, in some degree, the arbiter of his own happiness and perfection.

NOTES.

NOTE [A]

The privileges of man as an animal are incontestible, and wonderfully adapted to his superior rank in the creation. Nous trouverons, says Mons. Buffon with equal truth and elegance, nous trouverons que lþhomme est le seul des etres vivant dont la nature soit assez forte, assez entendu, assez flexible pour pouvoir subsister, se multiplier par-tout, et se preter aux influences de tous les climats de la terre; nous verrons evidemment, quþaucun des animaux nþa obtenu ce grand privilege; que loin de pouvoir se

multiplier par-tout, la plupart son bornes et confines dans des certains climats, et meme dans des contrees particulieres. Lþhomme est en tout lþouvrage du ciel; les animaux ne sont a beaucoup dþegards que des productions de la terre.

Hist. Nat. tome xviii. p. 177.

Other distinctions might be mentioned no less conspicuous. Nature has fixed certain seasons at which the greater part of the animal kind propagate their several species: while a similar prerogative is vested in man at all seasons, and in all climates of the world.

Vide Aristot. de Hist. Animal. l. v. c. 8.

This distinction, in the school of Socrates, was insisted on as an argument for a superintending Providence. To de, said that master of wisdom,

Xenoph. Mem. l. i. c. 4. þIt is not well ordered, that, while the courtships of the grove are confined to one period of the year, the period of our loves is not thus interrupted, and is prolonged to declining age?þ

NOTE [B]

I will beg leave to lay before the reader the eminent and worthy character mentioned in the text, as it is drawn by the most instructive, and perhaps the most faithful, historian of the last age. þThe conversation says Clarendon, speaking of himself, the Chancellor took most delight in, was that of Sir Charles Cavendish, brother to the Marquis, who was one of the most extraordinary persons of that age, in all the noble endowments of the mind. He had all the disadvantages imaginable in his person, which was not only of so small a size, that it drew the eyes of men upon him; but with such deformity in his little person, and an aspect in his countenance, that was apter to raise contempt than application: but in this unhandsome or homely habitation, there was very lovely and beautiful; cultivated and polished by all the knowledge and wisdom that arts and sciences could supply it with. He was a great philosopher in the extent of it, and an excellent mathematician, whose correspondence was very dear to Gassendus and Descartes, the last of whom dedicated some of his works to him. He had a very notable courage, and the vigour of his mind so adorned his body, that, being with his brother the Marquis in all the war, he usually went out in all parties, and was present, and charged the enemy in all battles with as keen a courage as could dwell in the heart of man. But then the goodness of his disposition, the humility and meekness of his nature, and the vivacity of his wit, was admirable. He was so modest, that he could hardly be prevailed with to enlarge himself on subjects he understood better than other men, except he was pressed by his very familiar friends, as if he thought it presumption to know more than handsomer men use to do. Above all, his virtue and piety was such, that no temptation could work upon him to consent to any thing that swerved in the least degree from the precise rules of honour, or the most severe rules of conscience.þ

Life of Clarendon, Vol. III.

Thus far the noble historian, who, in the last feature of the character, seems to have drawn, by anticipation, the Cavendishes of our days; whose inflexible integrity and patriotism appear in the

British senate; and whose hereditary virtues are worthy of the house of Cavendish, and of the former age.

Essay X - Of Man, As the Arbiter of his Own Fortune

Natural and moral ills are essential to our system. It is in vain to enquire into their origin. An exemption from the former, would imply physical independence; an exemption from the latter, all moral perfection. Such attributes are divine. Yet man is neither chained down by necessity, nor impelled by fate. And resignation to the unalterable order of things, a sentiment so becoming his condition, ought not to arrest the hand of industry, or to contract the sphere of active enterprize. After all the efforts he can boast, after exhausting the accumulated exertions of ages, there remains, and will remain, abundant scope for all the passive virtues in the life of man. Let him then sustain with dignity the weight of his condition; yet not meanly acquiesce in grievances within his province to redress.

The actions of the elements on his frame is not more conspicuous, than his reciprocal action on those very elements which are permitted to annoy his being. He has a range allowed him in the creation peculiar to himself alone; and he seems to have had delegated to him a certain portion of the government of the natural world. Revolutions, indeed, are brought about in various regions by the universal laws of motion, uncontrouled, and uncontroulable by any human power. But, under certain limitations, soil and climate are subject to his dominion; and the natural history of the terraqueous globe varies with the civil history of nations.

In the descriptions of antient and modern Europe, the same countries appear to be essentially different. The climates beyond the Atlantic, are altered since the days of Columbus. But such differences and alterations are more rightly imputed to the conduct and operations of men, than to any mutability in the course of nature. Nor are such alterations confined to those settlements on which the additional culture has been bestowed. The arts of tillage and agriculture have a more diffusive and general effect. The country of Italy, though not better cultivated than in the days of the Romans, has undergone since those days a vicissitude of temperature, which has arisen, in all probability, from the more improved state of German and France.

The temperature of climates throughout America, so different from that which predominates under the same parallels of latitude in the antient world, is not entirely to be ascribed to fixed and permanent causes, but rather to the more recent existence of nations in the new hemisphere, and the inferior cultivation it has consequently received from the hand of man. Thus much is certain: by opening the soil, by clearing the forests, by cutting out passages for the stagnant waters, the new hemisphere becomes auspicious, like the old, for the growth and population of mankind.

Let us learn then to wage war with the elements, not with our own kind; to recover, if one may say so, our patrimony from chaos, and not to add to his empire.

The history of the colonies, and commercial establishments of the European nations, testifies that, in almost every corner, a healthful and salubrious climate is the sure effect of persevering and well-conducted labour. Nor is the opposite effect changeably merely on the neglect of culture, and the atmosphere that overhangs the desert alone malignant. The malignancy is often directly

chargeable on manners, on police, and on civil establishments. In some of the most malignant climates on the Guinea coast, the impure habits of the natives have been assigned as the efficient cause. The exhalations of a negro village, negroes only can endure.

þThe plague, says Dr Chandler in his Travels into the East, might be wholly averted from these countries, or at least prevented from spreading, if lazarettos were erected, and salutary regulations enforced, as in some cities of Europe. Smyrna would be affected as little perhaps as Marseilles, if the police were as well modelled. But this is the wisdom of a sensible and enlightened people.þ

A species of necessity, however, in some countries, conducts mankind to certain decorums in life and manners, which wait, in other countries, the ages of taste and refinement. The Dutch certainly are not the most polite among the European nations; yet the nature of their civil settlement, as if anticipating the dictates of refinement, introduced among them, from the beginning, a degree of order in their police, and of cleanliness in their household oeconomy, not surpassed, perhaps unequalled, by any other people. On a principle of health, an attention to cleanliness is more or less incumbent on all communities. It presents an emblem of inward purity, and is dignified, perhaps not improperly, in some systems of ethics, with the appellation of a moral virtue. But with all imaginable precaution of this score, the confluence of numbers in a crowded scene is generally productive of disease. Hence pestilential distempers are so often bred in the camp, and usually march in the train of war. And hence the establishment of great cities, under the best regulated police, can be demonstrated, from the bills of mortality, to be destructive in a high degree of population and public health. [See Dr Priceþs Observations on Reversionary Payments] But all these examples relate to artificial, not to natural, climate; and there seems to be little ground, in the history of the terraqueous globe, to associate with any fixed and immutable constitution of the atmosphere, the happiness or perfections of the human species.[A]

Yet local prejudices every where abound: the most accomplished citizens, in nations and ages the most accomplished, have not been exempted from their sway. Plato returned thanks to the immortal Gods, that he was an Athenian, not a Theban, born; that he breathed on the southern, not on the northern side of the Asopus. But if Athens was eminent for refinement, there were other causes than the climate. And if the Boeotians were dull to a proverb, it was a temporary calamity, and Pindar, and Pelopidas, and Epaminondas shall vindicate that soil. Thus much we may with certainly affirm, that soil and climate, if not altogether foreign to the mind, are, like the mind, susceptible of improvement, and variable, in a high degree, with the progress of civil arts. Settlements abandoned by one colony, have been repeopled with success by another. Projects, thought desperate in days of ignorance, have been resumed and conducted to a prosperous issue in more enlightened times. Individuals have often failed in their attempts for want of public encouragement. Public enterprizes have failed for want of concurrence among nations. Establish then concert and union among mankind; all regions become habitable, and the elements almost cease to rebel.

Nor is this command over the elements the only effect of progressive industry and labour. The changes introduced into clothing, subsistence, modes of life, present considerations of equal moment. In consequence of these changes, our animal situation is as fluctuating as our moral; and the same people, in the ages of rudeness and civility, will retain fewer marks of resemblance in

their organical structure, than will be found among the most distant nations when contemplated in corresponding points of their progress. A people emerged above the wilder states, who subsist by the culture of the soil, not by its spontaneous provision; who farther superadd the use of foreign commodities to the domestic articles of consumption, have undergone transitions, gradual perhaps and insensible, but which have affected their whole animal oeconomy. Thus the commercial arts, by concentring in one corner of the world the divided treasures of the earth, confound the primeval distribution and arrangement of things, and diversify, in the same climate, the condition of tribes and nations. There seems to be a certain regimen of life suited to the local circumstances of mankind, which is suggested to them at first by instinct, or is the slow result of experience. A different regimen, recommended in a similar manner, is best adapted to their circumstances in another region; and sudden or injudicious alterations in the modes of life, are among the fatal consequences that attend the commerce of nations. The transference too of epidemical distemper from region to region is another consequence of that commerce no less destructive. Distempers, local in their origin, being thus diffused over the globe, become, when transplanted, more formidable than in their native seats. The plague, so desolating when it invades Europe, commits not equal havoc in the East. The malady imported by Columbus, was less virulent in the American climates. On the other hand, the small-pox, introduced into those climates by the Europeans, threatened the depopulation of the new hemisphere.

Time, however, which corrects the tendency of migrations, seems also to correct the virulence of transplanted distemper. Either the human constitution opposes it with new vigour, or the art of medicine combats it with more success; or the poison, by being long blended with surrounding elements, ceases to be so destructive. It may also be observed, that some disorders leave impressions in the constitution which prevent, in future, the possibility of similar annoyance. Hence the expediency of inoculation, a practice first introduced into Europe from the East, which solicits disease through a safer channel, as a preservative against its eventual attack in all the circumstances of its natural malignity. But to return from this digression, let us survey the farther tendency of the commercial arts.

The natural productions of one corner, supply the demands of luxury in another; and the most distant tribes may approximate each other in their animal temperament by mutual traffic. Even the natives of the most penurious soil may exchange the rude simplicity of their ancestors for the extravagance of the most pampered nations. As national affluence, however, is not distributed equally among the several members of the community (for under an equal division of property no government can long subsist), we often observe at once, in the distinction of ranks, such effects of various temperament as arise in succession to the public from the general vicissitudes of society. Penury and wealth, simplicity and prodigality, indolence and toil, create constitutional distinctions among the different orders of citizens. For the impression of the commercial arts is often conspicuous in the upper departments of life, before it reaches those of inferior condition; but the circle gradually widens. The exclusive possession of opulence cannot be long maintained; and the fluctuation, so natural to commercial states, must disseminate the effects over the public at large.

In the last period of the Roman government, the different provinces of the empire became contaminated with the luxury of the East, whose influence on the bodily temperament may have contributed, along with moral and political distemper, to the

success of the northern armies.

> --------- Saevior armis
> Luxuria incubuit, victumque ulciscitur orbem.

But these symptoms of decay, which spread at last over the provinces, and tainted the mass of the people, had originated among the nobles, and in the seat of government. It was the legions, not the senate, the provincials, not the Romans, who acted, during the several generations, as the masters of mankind. Aurelian, and Probus, and Dioclesian, the restorers of the Roman world, were not of Roman blood. And Rome, more debauched than the distant provinces, had been some of them, ages before here fall, erected into distinct and independent states, no longer acknowledging here sovereign authority, or the laws of the empire.

Such consequences, however, imply no imputation on the arts of civil life. The food, the raiment, the occupations of the polished citizen may be as innocent as those of the savage. The latter is even guilty of excesses which disappear in the age of refinement. The immoderate use of intoxicating liquors is generally most predominant in the ruder forms of society. It is relinquished in the progress of refinement, and seems to be scarce compatible with the elegant luxuries of a highly cultivated people.

A propensity indeed to vicious excess, may be accidentally combined in the same character with a high relish for the luxuries of life. But the passions themselves are totally distinct. A proneness to luxury, with an aversion to all riot or excess, is no uncommon character; and a proneness to excess, with an aversion to luxury, though more rare, is by no means without example.

A striking example occurs in the character of the famous Irish rebel, who, in the reign of Elizabeth, assumed the rank and appellation of King of Ulster. þHe was a man, says the historian, equally noted for his pride, his violence, his debaucheries, and his hatred of the English nation. He is said to have put some of his followers to death, because they endeavoured to introduce the use of bread after the English fashion. Though so violent an enemy to luxury, he was extremely addicted to riot, and was accustomed, after his intemperance had thrown him into a fever, to plunge his body into mire, that he might allay the flame which he had raised by former excesses.þ[History of England, vol. v. p. 399.]

Luxury, according to its species and direction, may be pronounced to be either salutary or destructive. By its connexion with industry and active exertion, it is productive of the noblest effects. It is the parent of ingenious arts, and conducts a people to honour and distinction. Yet objects which are not only innocent, but beneficial in the pursuit, may prove dangerous in the possession; and the acquisitions of natural virtue may become the occasion of its fall. Habits there surely are, incident to different periods of society, which tend to enervate the body, and to vitiate the blood. The mechanical springs of life rest not on the energy of one cause, but on the combination of many, possessing often opposite and qualifying powers. It were improper, therefore, to expatiate on the tendency of one principle, without attending to others which serve to heighten or to mitigate its force. One writer magnifies the power of climate; another, the effects of aliment; a third, the efficacy of labour or rest, and the peculiar influence of certain modes of life. But these circumstances are relative to each other, and it is the result of the combination with which we are alone concerned. It was well answered by the Spartan to the King of Syracuse, who found fault with the coarseness of the

Spartan fare. þIn order, says he, to make these victuals relish, it is necessary to bathe in the Eurotas.þ

By the progress of agriculture and rural oeconomy in our climates, that mode of subsistence has become the most easy, which was formerly the most difficult. And it were well, perhaps, for mankind, in most countries of Europe at this day, if the great and opulent exchanged with those of inferior condition many of the daily articles of consumption. Vegetable aliment seems to be better adapted to the more indolent class of citizens. The labouring part of society require a larger proportion of animal food. But it is often difficult for the meaner sort to procure for themselves suitable subsistence, and more difficult for the superiors to abstain from improper gratifications.

If I were not Alexander, said the Prince of Macedon, I would chuse to be Diogenes. Yet the generality of people would rather imitate the conduct of Aristippus, who, for the pageantry of a court, and the pleasures of a luxurious table, could forego independence, and descent from the dignity of philosophy to the adulation of Kings.[B] The conduct however of mankind, in uncorrupted times, was more conformable to nature; and their reason taught them to form such habits and combinations as were most congruous with their external condition. Different systems of policy grow out of these combinations; and usages and laws relative to climate make a capital figure in antient legislation. Even superstition, on some occasions, has proved a guardian of public manners, and a useful auxiliary to legislative power. Abstinence from the flesh of animals, abstinence from wine, frequent purifications, and other external observances among the Indians, the Persians, the Arabians, how absurd soever if transferred to other countries, formed on the occasions, and in the countries where they were instituted, important branches of political oeconomy. The Egyptians prescribed by a law a regimen for their Kings. In some instances, certain rules of proportion were established; and suitable to the different classes of citizens, there was a special allotment of aliment prescribed by the religion of Brama. The Christian dispensation alone, divine in its origin, and designed to be universal, descends not to local institutions; but, leaving the details of policy to the rulers of nations, inculcates only those pure and essential doctrines which are adapted to all climates and governments. Yet the Vedam, the Shaster, the Koran, and other antient codes, which afford, in one view, so striking examples of credulity and fanaticism, may be regarded, in another, as monuments of human sagacity. Happy had it been for the world, if the founders of religion and government has separated, in such cases, the pure gold from the dross, and connived only at illusions connected with public felicity. It were often happy for rude tribes, if they were taught a local superstition, how absurd soever in its details, that tended to preserve the simplicity of their morals, and debarred them in many instances from adopting foreign customs and manners. How fortunate would it have been for the Indian tribes, throughout the continent of North America, if they had been debarred, by the solemn sanctions of a religion as absurd as that of Mahomet, from the use of intoxicating liquors! a practice derived to them from European commerce, and which contributes, in the new hemisphere, more, perhaps, than any other cause, to the destruction, and what is worse, to the debasement of the species.

Our voyages of discovery, which, in some respects, are so honourable, and calculated for noble ends, have never yet been happy for any of the tribes of mankind visited by us. The vices of Europe have already contaminated the Otaheitean blood. Whether the

English or French navigators have been the first authors of the dreadful calamity which now afflicts that race, it is of little importance to decide. While so odious a charge is retorted on each other by those nations, the natives of the happy island, so cruelly abused, will have cause to lament for ages, that any European vessel ever touched their shores.

Felix, heu nimium felix! si littora tantum---

The introduction of certain vegetables and animals, however useful to human life, make a poor recompence to the natives for the communication of disease, and the corruption of manners.

Moral depravity is a fertile source of physical ills to individuals, to families, and to nations. Nor are the ills inherent only in the race which bred the disorder. They spread from race to race, and are often entailed, in all their malignity, on posterity. Thus hereditary distemper has a foundation in the natural, as in the moral world. Nor does this reflect upon eternal justice, or breed confusion in the universe, or derogate from the sum of its perfections. If we are punished for the vices, we are rewarded too for the virtues, of our fathers. These opposite principles of exaltation and debasement tend to the equilibrium of the system. They serve also to a farther end; they serve to draw closer the ties of humanity, to remind us of our duty, by reminding us of the relations of our being; and of those indissoluble connexions and dependencies which unite us with the past, and will unite us with all succeeding ages.

NOTES.

NOTE [A]

Of the efficacy of sound regimen in preserving health, under all the variety of climate to which mankind are apt to be exposed, there occurs a memorable example in the late voyage round the world by Capt. Cook, so justly represented to the Royal Society, by his elegant and learned encomiast. That navigator, whose melancholy fate is, at the moment I am writing, lamented by all Europe, þwith a company of 118 men, performed a voyage of three years and eighteen days, throughout all the climates from 52 degrees north to 71 degrees south latitude, with the loss of a single man only by disease:þ a proportion so moderate, that the bills of mortality, in no climate or condition of society, can furnish such another example.

It is well observed, by the Abbe Fontana, that nature is not so partial as we commonly believe; that, though it is of importance to ascertain the qualities of the atmospherical air, and the changes it undergoes, yet the air in general is good in all countries; and that the small differences, which in reality subsist, are by no means so formidable as some people are apt to suppose. These conclusion, founded on a series of well-digested observations, are communicated in a Letter to Dr Priestley, whose own experiments on this subject are equally splendid in science, and of importance to human life.

See Phil. Trans. for 1779.

NOTE [B]

Horace, indeed, in the spirit of the courtier, the poet, and the man of pleasure, approves the temporizing system of Aristippus, rather than the austere rigour of Diogenes. The pedantry of the

latter was surely excessive. But is was the excess of that free, manly, and independent spirit, which is allied to true glory, and formed the heroism of antiquity.

> Si pranderet olus patienter, regibus uti
> Nollet Artistippus;

was the judgment of the cynic; and the reply of Aristippus is rather smart than solid:

> --- Si sciret regibus uti,
> Fastidiret olus, que me notat. ----
> Hor. l. i. ep. 17.

Essay XI - Of Fashions that Predominate Among Various Tribes of Mankind.

The magnitude of external annoyance being variable with the maxims of political oeconomy, and the rules of civil life, it is the prerogative of every people to hold the balance of good and evil, and to raise or to depress the scale of their own felicity. To the abuse of this prerogative, not to any unalterable constitution of things, may be ascribed whatever is more wretched or humiliating in the condition of human society. Absurdities of various description in artificial manners, are often destructive of health and vigour, and even tend to divest the natural form of its symmetry and perfection.

The custom of painting the body with such rude materials as the savage life affords, is a practice which, in the infancy of society, appears to have been almost universal. It is resorted to at first as an obvious preservative against the inclemency of the seasons, the impression of the sun, molestation from insects, or other external annoyance. But this invention, like every other, was susceptible of refinement. No longer adjusted to the standard of conveniency alone, it became subject to the caprice and vicissitude of fashion; and the embellishment of the outward person, which was at first little attended to, or regarded as a collateral consideration, came in time to be the principal object. Such fantastical decoration are worn as ensigns of dignity, and serve as so many badges of distinction among savage tribes. This invention may be traced up to remote antiquity in the customs of the European nations. It was reduced to an art among the antient Britons; and the Caledonians, the most antient inhabitants of the Northern parts of the island, were, from their being peculiarly addicted to this art, denominated Picts by the Romans. Not content with such representations as were practicable by the colouring of paint alone, those rude nations often inscribed their designs with a weightier hand, and by actual incisions into the body rendered the impressions indelible. Thus a practice, at first innocent or salutary, became, by degrees, pernicious; and while it aimed at farther decoration, or at emblematical expression, tended in reality to deform the species.

By the progress of society, such fashions have long since disappeared in Europe. But, if we survey the condition of rude nations in various corners of the world, we find the human frame degraded by customs still more violent and unnatural. Nor is it in the option of individuals to embrace, or to resist, such customs. The violence is frequently, by the imposition of parents, rendered almost coeval with existence. The body, in its infant state, more

pliant and ductile, is more easily divested of its just proportions, and the limbs and members are then capable of being moulded into a variety of unnatural and artificial forms, impracticable in maturer years. If distortions, then, of feature and person, are thus early introduced, more serious and extensive consequences may possibly arise from the same source.

When the violence is directed, as among the Chinese and some other nations, to the extremities of the body, situated at a distance from the principal organ of sensation, the effect on the animal oeconomy is more supportable, and the vitals of the constitution probably elude the injury; but, unfortunately, the impression is often made where the constitution is most vulnerable, and the more sensible parts sustain a shock annoying to the whole nervous system. Among one people, to flatten the dimensions of the head; among another, to render it more convex, parents have recourse to the most shocking expedients, and the natural guardians of infancy become its chief tormentors. The names by which certain Indian tribes in North America have been distinguished, are expressive of such unnatural characteristics. The Caribbees of the West Indies, by contrivances and applications of art nearly similar, have acquired a cast of physiognomy altogether peculiar. The Indians of Asia are not entirely exempted from the same odious abuses; but the principal seat of the enormity is certain regions of Africa, where the art of disfiguring the human person, is almost the only art which has made such progress among the rude inhabitants, as to mark their departure from a state of nature.

In such deplorable fashions, which stifle the voice of nature, the sufferers, and the authors of the sufferings, almost distort the natural form with an avowed purpose of deranging the intellectuals of man, is a conduct so flagitious and enormous as has never stained the manners of savage and untutored tribes; yet, not many ages ago, even this enormity existed in the manners of Europe, where, in various instances, the forming of fools for the entertainment of the great, was the ultimate end proposed in mutilating the human figure.

The recital of such examples fills humanity with horror; and the possibility of their existence would hardly be admitted in a cultivated period, did not history establish the facts upon incontestible authority, and number them among the corruptions which are found in so many societies of men, to degrade the dignity of our species.

There is a variety of other customs among rude tribes, which take their rise from the illusions of imagination. In observing the gradations of colour among the races of mankind, our ideas of beauty are often entirely governed, or greatly influenced, by a regard to the most general form of nature we are accustomed to contemplate. Among a nation of Blacks, the White; among a nation of Whites, the Black was never the approved complexion. The Hottentots, an ambiguous race, equally allied to either extreme, are at pains to deepen the shade of black, as if to maintain a conformity with the prevailing complexion of Africa. On the other hand, the Moors of Barbary, the counterpart of the Hottentots in the northern hemisphere, who possess, like them, the medium of complexion, discover little predilection for either extreme, which is owing probably to an almost equal correspondence with African and European nations. Upon the same principle, the copper colour of the Americans is regarded among them as a criterion of beauty; and it seems to be the object of art, by painting the face with vermilion, to maintain, in all its perfection, the predominant complexion of the Indian race.

Even the universal principles of taste, when not duly

regulated may lead to egregious abuse. Unequal degrees of beauty, of elegance, and of strength, enter into the various contexture of the human body; and all attempts are vain to superinduce, by violence or art, that perfection which is denied by nature. Constitutional blemishes or defects may be heightened by too eager a desire to abolish them; and by the violent substitution of other proportions and lineaments than are consistent with the primeval configuration of the parts, though more conformable, perhaps, to some ideal standard of perfection. But some of the more flagrant examples of violence done the person, to be met with in the customs of rude tribes, are neither authorised nor suggested by any perception of beauty. They are designed, in reality, to create opposite emotions, and are dictated by the ferocity of warlike people, on purpose to confound their enemies by appearances scarcely human. The gentler sex, whose constant aim is to improve the beauty of the outward form, and who subdue mankind only by their charms, even in the African climates, never deviate so far from nature. In the island of Bissao, near to the river Gambia, the matrons are dressed in decent attire; and persons of the young, though without all sort of apparel, are not unadorned. The degrees of embellishment indicate rank and condition; and the eldest daughter of the reigning monarch is distinguished from the other ladies of the court by elegance of painting, and the richness of her bracelets. But all the happier refinements of fancy are disregarded in the apparatus of war.

The Giagas, those bloody cannibals of Africa, who are regardless of natural as of moral beauty, assume the most infernal aspect to render themselves more formidable to other tribes. The same principle authorises the abuse of person among various Indian tribes in North America; and authorised it, according to the Roman Historian, [Tacit. de Mor. Ger.] among the tribe of the antient Germans. But an aspect so tremendous to a foreign enemy, may become venerable among people of the same tribe. The dignity of the expression is more considered than the deformity of the picture. The beautiful is absorbed in the sublime; and the spectacle, how odious soever in itself, is endured as descriptive of the degrees of heroism and martial valour; virtues chiefly respected in a rude age.

Religious fanaticism, it may also be observed, is frequently another source of the most wretched debasement. Penances, mortifications, Monkish severities, and a number of flagrant observances, in the ritual of superstition, that annoy our frame, hae, to the disgrace of the world, been deemed meritorious in the sight of Heaven; as if one species of guild could be expiated by another; or, as if to deform and abuse our nature, could ever be acceptable to the Author of all beauty and excellence.

But it is not necessary to carry our researches anxiously into the principles which have concurred to the introduction and establishment of so many absurd customs among mankind. It is sufficient to observe, that the customs themselves, from what fountain soever they flow, are often attended with consequences no less destructive than odious. Thus what arises from human folly may become undistinguishable from the original workmanship; or rather, certain distinctions, at first adventitious, may become the characteristics of a tribe, and even be in part transmissible and hereditary to future generations. The customs indeed under review belong chiefly to an unpolished state of society; but they are often succeeded by others of a tendency somewhat similar. The swarthing of infants, the confinement of dress, and other absurd practices in our oeconomy, unprecedented among Barbarians, might be mentioned as counterparts of the same violence among polished

nations. In general, perhaps, the hardy discipline of early times is more auspicious to health, vigour, and symmetry of form, than the more refined culture and softer habits of a luxurious age. But without running the parallel of public manners in different periods of civil progress, it may be affirmed, that some of the grosser and more heinous abuses we have here remarked, are irrecoverably destructive of the human figure, and perhaps remotely touch the springs of our intellectual frame. There being then such a variety of effects, immediately of physical production, which can be traced up to a moral original; it is proper to distinguish and separate that order of second causes which is regulated by the resolutions and conduct of men, from the independent and immutable influence of external things.

But moral sentiment, exclusive of its breaking forth into action, by its silent and internal movements in the human breast, affects, in no small degree, the beauty, health, and perfection of our organized system; and this connection of things, though more rarely the object of attention, ought not to be overlooked in explaining the diversity of appearances in the various tribes of mankind.

Essay XII - Of the Tendency of Moral Character to Diversify the Human Form

The mind itself is often the original seat of disorder which is transferred to the animal system. In the history of individuals, it is obvious to observe, that a distempered imagination, and irregular passions, frequently prey upon the body, waste its vigour, and even hasten its dissolution. Judging then from analogy, it seems not unreasonable to expect, that the passions, to which society is occasionally obnoxious, may be productive of similar effects upon the multitude, appear in exterior symptoms, impair the soundness of public health, and enervate the principle of animal life. What form of society is most open to this annoyance, is a problem which, perhaps, the history of the species is not able to resolve. But, in general, it may be pronounced of human life, that the vindictive, the envious, and unsocial passions are hostile to the possessor, while all the opposite emotions diffuse a kindlier influence over our animal frame. "How miserable are the damned! said Saint Catherine of Genoa, "they are no longer capable of love." So close is the social union, that if the fiercest tyrant that ever existed in human form was doomed to be himself the executioner of his bloody edicts, the victims of his tyranny would become the instruments of his punishment, and the torture inflicted would be more than he could endure. The little tyrant of Greece, whom the Hecuba of Euripides chased from the public theatre, all bathed in tears, retained, in defiance of himself, the sensibility of nature. And if the heart is thus liable to be subdued by fiction, how should it sustain, in similar circumstances, the actual presence of woe? To be callous to such impressions, is to be more or less than man; and, even where virtue is extinct, our organized system is liable to be affected by this powerful sympathy of minds.

Varieties of national character we observe imprinted on the physiognomy of nations. The several qualities of levity or vanity, dignity or pride, pusillanimity, fortitude, dulness, vivacity, ferocity, meekness, and a thousand nicer gradations of moral character, rise up in the visage, and mark the exterior of man. Individuals, it is allowed, are often found devoid of the characteristics that predominate in the family, in the tribe, or in the nation to which they belong, while they retain, nevertheless, all the usual marks of those characteristics. Hence, physiognomy is a delusive art; men are belied by appearances, till at last the genuine expression of the individual is interpreted, and declares the fallacy of more equivocal and general signs. These general signs, the accumulated effect, perhaps, of prevailing habit for generations, may become congenial to a race; and, being wrought into the organization, cannot be effaced at once by the absence of the causes which contribute to their formation. To correct, and to establish mental habit, is the prerogative of a moral agent; but the lineaments and proportions of the body are not variable with the gradations of intellectual improvement; and hence the mind is of often at variance with the forms which the countenance assumes, in consequence of its primaeval cast. When the most exalted genius of antiquity, by the exertion of this prerogative, had reformed and ennobled all

the features of his character, a physiognomist, by the rules of art, judged of him from his constitutional propensities.

Some latitude, however, is allowed to man in this adjustment of things. He can often conceal or disguise his sentiments by the suppression of the natural sign; he can assume appearances, without the feelings to which they belong. In the exercise of this talent he displays consummate address; and artificial language, more at command, favours the deceit, and countervails the language of nature. Such artifices confer, if I may say so, a false and temporary physiognomy, that violated the connection of things, and belies the system of the mind. But so difficult and laborious is this effort of art, that the most dextrous dissemblers, aided by all the powers of words, often fail in the attempt. A Writer, profoundly versed in the human character, yet more disposed to heighten its blemishes than its perfections, has remarked, in one of the greatest statesmen of his time, this struggle between art and nature. "It is, indeed, true," says Dean Swift of my Lord Somers, "that no man is more apt to take fire upon the least appearance of provocation, which temper he strives to subdue with the utmost violence upon himself; so that his breast has been seen to heave, and his eyes to sparkle with rage, in those very moments when his words, and the cadence of his voice, were in the humblest and softest manner. Perhaps that force upon his nature may cause that insatiable love of revenge which his detractors lay to his charge, who consequently reckon dissimulation among his chief perfections." [History of the Four last Years of the Queen.]

"In order to know people's real sentiments," says an adept [Chesterfield's Letters, vol. i. p. 357] in the science of deceit, "I trust much more to my eyes than to my ears; for they say whatever they have a mind I should hear; but they can seldom help looking, what they have no intention that I should know."

To form false combinations is not only difficult, but the execution probably is always imperfect; and hence the great master in expression, whether orators, or actors on the stage, must endeavour to feel all the emotions they would display to advantage. That becoming attitude, that arrangement of feature they would assume, is found attainable only by the medium of corresponding sentiment. Thus the connections of things is maintained, and we are not deceived unless by attributing a solidity and permanency to sentiments which have so unsubstantial and perishing an existence. This illusion of imagination, practised on themselves, and by which alone they compass their ends, may even sway the moral character. In often personating the hero, there is acquired a cast of heroism; and in personating mean wretches, there is danger of actual debasement; for sentiments find an easy ingress through the imagination into the heart, and the occasional sentiments of the actor may become the habitual principles of the man. Thus, the profligate or libertine, long acted, abates the love of decorum; and he who can sustain the enthusiasm of any virtue, though in a borrowed character, has probably appropriated to himself some share of its real energy. It is this mode of proceeding which discriminates the actor of genius from the inferior mimic, whose talents are exhausted in the transcript of visible signs, regardless of their foundation in the human mind. In the one case, the representation is just and natural; in the other, aukward and inanimated; and, by such criterion, a sagacious observer will distinguish real excellence from mechanical imitation in the fictitious drama, as in the drama of the world, candour from affectation, and the truth of character from dissimulation and imposture.

In the interpretation of natural signs, there is an obvious distinction to be made between such as imply immediate feeling, and the moral general, which, without reference to the present state of the mind, intimate its habitual and predominant temper. As, for instance, an occasional start of good-humour differs from the propensity which constitutes a good-humoured man, so differ their respective signs. But as frequent returns of the emotion declare the propensity, so frequent returns of the corresponding sign tend ultimately to the establishment of a fixed and permanent criterion in the corporeal texture. The particular signs, where no artifice is used, are never equivocal; and compose the first elements of language. But, as has been before observed, between the general signs and the temper, a repugnancy may often subsist. In the one case, the evidence is explicit; in the other, it is only presumptive. The former constitution was expedient or necessary for the purposes of social intercourse; but it was neither necessary nor expedient, that the character of the mind should be legible in the countenance, and in the full view of every beholder.

Upon the whole, it may be concluded, that the mental qualities and the corresponding signs are not necessarily coincident, or the result of one physical arrangement, but stand rather in the relation of cause and effect; the latter growing out of the former, in consequence of those mysterious laws which pervade the system of man. Thus moral sentiment diversifies the outward form; and though the varieties which indicate national character, may often be equally consistent

with health and vigour; yet, in certain circumstances of society, there is reason to believe, that the predominant feelings of our nature become highly injurious to the animal oeconomy.

Let us suppose a tribe of mankind reduced to a situation the most humiliating and calamitous; cramped in their intellectual exertions by an illiberal discipline; prone to the sentiments they must learn to dissemble, and averse from other sentiments they are obliged to counterfeit; at perpetual variance with fortune; and led, by the rigour of its persecutions, to cherish the odious, the rancorous, the vindictive, to the exclusion of all the gentler passions. Under such circumstances, it were contrary to the whole analogy of nature, if the bodily constitution remained sound and untouched. Nor is the picture we have drawn copied from imagination, and assumed merely on the prerogative of hypothesis. The original is, perhaps, to be contemplated in the history of the antient world; among the bondmen of Judea, the helots of Sparta, the subjects of domestic tyranny among the Romans. The condition of those tribes was indeed sufficiently wretched: yet such as, in some respects, might almost excite envy, when compared with that severer destiny, to which the maxims of modern policy have condemned, in another hemisphere, a large proportion of the species.

Of all the nations of antiquity, the Athenians treated slaves with most humanity; the Spartans with the least. If, in the treatment of women, the Spartans have appeared worthy of such superior praise; in this other branch of public manners, they are far inferior to the rival state. The most wanton debasement of slaves entered into the avowed plan of their civil discipline. The helots were even compelled to commit vice, in order to inspire an abhorrence of it in the Spartan youth; to besot themselves with intoxicating liquors, in order to afford a lesson of moderation to the free citizen. But how shocking is that policy which sported with humanity in one form, to give it dignity in another; and authorised a breach of morality, with a view to enforce its precepts! It is equalled perhaps only by the policy of some modern states, who are said to encourage or connive at the corruption of their priests, with a view to check the influence which superstition is apt to give to that order of men over the minds of people.

The Cryptia, or ambuscade, by which the dark and insidious murder of the helots was authorised by law, casts a dismal shade on the whole fabric of Spartan jurisprudence. It implies a degree of barbarity to which, it must be owned, there is no parallel, even in the black code, or in the present regulations of any European state. There is, however, ground to believe, that so shocking an institution was suggested on a general revolt of the slaves, by the apprehension of public danger, but disgraced not the system of Lycurgus, nor the purer ages of the Spartan commonwealth. In general, the condition of antient slaves was less unhappy. The Chronia of the Greeks, the Saturnalia of the Romans, could even invert the distinction of ranks. Slaves, on these festivals, were served by their masters; and all ranks of men were reminded, by an admirable establishment, of that primitive equality which was supposed to have subsisted in the reign of Saturn, and the golden age. Some intervals of freedom were thus permitted; some short respite to the wretched. But the negro tribes are unacquainted with any such indulgences. And, without taxing their American masters with an inhumanity beyond the nations of antiquity, we may observe peculiar circumstances in their destiny that enhance its rigour. Their masters, without being more inhuman by nature, are in practice more unjust. Antient slaves found a refuge in the sympathy of their masters, which the negroes do not so easily excite. Their features and complexion, regarded as natural badges of inferiority, seem to mark them out for servitude; and, furnished an occasion for unreasonable contempt, or antipathy approaching to hatred, extinguish that fellow-feeling with their sufferings, by which their grievances would often be lightened, and the hand of the oppressor disarmed.

Hatred, envy, and revenge grow up naturally under such sufferings. But the love of liberty, the most stubborn principle of the heart, is at length eradicated. Self-reverence is gone; and emancipation itself cannot restore them to the honours of human nature. In time, they view themselves almost in the light in which they are viewed by their rulers; and it is thus they finally acquiesce in their destiny, and cease even to think like free men, after having long ceased to be free.

If then the unfortunate natives of Africa, the subjects of our dishonourable and odious commerce, do, in reality, degenerate in the various regions to which they are transferred, and, far from multiplying, cannot even keep up the number of the stock without perpetual recruits, it is not improbable that the insolence of tyranny, and the violence offered to the stubborn passions and feelings of nature, contribute as largely to that degeneracy in their frame, as the smart of the rod, or malignity of climate, or the labours they are forced to endure.

The reduction of the negro tribes to perpetual servitude was contended for in the fifteenth century, on this notable ground, "that they had the colour of the damned." This ground can only be occupied in an ignorant and superstitious age. But the arguments, by which the same conduct

is still attempted to be vindicated, though more subtle and refined, are equally repugnant to reason, to humanity, and to sound policy. Those arguments have accordingly been refuted, from all these considerations, by some of the most respectable writers in our own and other nations; by Hume, by Smith, by Montesquieu; and, in a manner the most decisive and animated, by an Author, [Hist. Phil. et Polit. tome iv. p. 161, et suiv.] who unites, to the warmest zeal for the rights of mankind, a comprehensive knowledge of their interests; and who has adorned a work, abounding in various and useful information for all nations, with all the lights of philosophy, and all the splendor of eloquence. But the conviction of men of science is not the conviction of the crowd, and has often but little weight with the rulers of nations; to whom alone it belongs, by prohibiting the importation of slaves under the severest penalties, to annihilate for ever a traffic which throws so great a stain on the political oeconomy of modern ages.

The late resolution of the Quakers in Pennsylvania to emancipate their negro slaves, seems to evidence a degree of pure and disinterested virtue in that people, beyond the example of the most virtuous communities of antient times.

The love of civil liberty is surely a generous passion; yet it is capable of being combined with the love of domination: and it may perhaps be affirmed, that the toleration of domestic slavery, among the Greeks and Romans, tended to inspire an additional ardour in the cause of freedom. The severities inflicted on their slaves heightened the dread of their own eventual sufferings. Tyrants at home, they became more jealous of tyranny in their civil rulers, and even impatient under the controul of legal dominion. They contemplated political through the medium of domestic servitude, and because in reality more tenacious of civil liberty, by persisting in a conduct that rendered them more unworthy of it. Perhaps the same cause has been productive of similar effects in some of the colonies of America. Yet the noblest passion in the human breast is more naturally cherished by the love of justice and humanity. And t is reserved for some happier age to abolish, throughout the new hemisphere, an institution, which has polluted the history of the freest governments in the antient world.

In some of the Spanish provinces, where the negroes are less employed in field work than in domestic service, their condition is somewhat elevated; but it is by the depression of another part of our species still more wretched. Submission is more or less humiliating, from the consideration of the persons to whom it is paid. A child is not degraded by submission to a parent; nor a subject, by allegiance to his lawful prince. But to be exposed to the insults of a race of slaves, is the lowest form of debasement. Yet such has been the fortune of the native Indians in those very countries where their ancestors sustained the character of flourishing and happy nations. Among the inhabitants of the Spanish colonies, they rank below the negroes; who, elevated by this distinction, treat them with insolence and scorn. And it is the insidious policy of the Spaniards, to sow the seeds of discord and animosity between the two races, who will one day perhaps lay aside their mutual rancour, in order to retaliate their common miseries on their imperious masters.

The American features and complexion, scarce less offensive to the Europeans than the African, allowed equal scope to their antipathies; while these antipathies were heightened and inflamed by the jealousy entertained of the vanquished. And though the condition of the Indians is improved by the more recent regulations of the Spanish policy, had it been possible for their ancestors at the conquest to have predicted so long a series of calamity, it might well have inspired, throughout the empires of Peru and Mexico, such a desperate resolution, as was actually executed at that aera by an Indian tribe in the island of Saint Domingo, who unanimously interdicted themselves the commerce of sex, that they might not entail their miseries on a posterity. Thus the Indians in those regions has suffered extinction, not degradation: and who would hesitate to prefer the first, when such alternatives alone are presented by fortune?

But the pen drops from my hand, in reciting the enormities acted by European in the new hemisphere. Nor should I have entered so far into the detail, were I not called upon by my subject to contemplate life from its highest to its lowest gradation, and to illustrate those moral situations, which are so capable of producing degeneracy in the human frame. And such consequences may be allowed to follow from the intimate union of mind and body, without favouring those systems of materialism, which, however fashionable in the philosophy of the present age, seem to confound the most important distinctions of our being. The body, as has been observed, may prosper while the mind is debased. The mind may flourish, while the body is losing its perfection. Yet the shocks which are felt in the transition from a free and happy state to that of slavery and dejection, may prove, to the last degree, injurious to the organization of man. It is not so much any debasement or elevation of the mental powers, that we have supposed destructive, as unnatural restraint, as the revolt of the spirit, and the intenseness of inward

emotion. The limit of this influence over a people, we pretend not to fix with precision; yet that the contagion of the mind, in a variety of ways, affects the whole animal oeconomy, is established by the history of individuals, of tribes, and of nations. And as the condition of a slave is by far the most wretched in the lot of man, so its tendency is apparently the most destructive. Of this, the history of the negro tribes furnishes an immense variety of the most melancholy examples. And it is sufficiently attested, that great numbers of the native Indians of America, when thy found they were treated as slaves by the Spaniards, have died of vexation, or destroyed themselves in the frenzy of despair. Under the rigour then of such discipline, we may expect the decline of the animal system, if not the total extinction of the degraded race.

But the perfection of the animal is not the perfection of the man; neither do their infirmities necessarily correspond. It is, therefore, of more importance to enquire how far moral and civil culture affect the system of the mind, and consequently create original and essential differences in the temper and genius of posterity: a question which, promising some farther openings into the theory of the human character, deserves to be considered in a separate Essay.

Essay XIII - Of the Hereditary Genius of Nations

The empire of the imagination and the passions, by diversifying the natural form, and reaching the organization of man, has appeared to be extensive. But, without invigorating or enervating the principle of mere animal life, perhaps his genius and character in one age may, by the more direct laws of the intellectual oeconomy, affect the original genius and character of succeeding generations. The mode of this oeconomy we pretend not to unfold. It is the order of things; it is the relation of appearances alone, which is the foundation of all just theory with regard to the natural or to the moral world. The connection of cause and effect is, in all cases, a mysterious connection, which no mortal can unveil. Prior then to all theory, let us contemplate some of the appearances in civil life.

The separation of families, and the distinction of ranks, are essential to all political establishments. No division of property, no rules of patrimonial succession, no sumptuary, no agrarian laws can long preserve a parity of rank or fortune among any people. The greater number, indeed, in every state, are rendered subservient to the few; are confounded together in one class, and compose the rude vulgar of mankind. Thus, in the plan of the Comita of Rome, the people were distributed into six classes, and every Roman was allowed some share of political power; but the lowest class gradually sunk into neglect. The whole power of the comitia was transferred to their superiors, and those of each class, though equal in their collective capacity, were, as men and as citizens, of very unequal consideration.

Theseus instituted at Athens an order of nobility, and debarred the people at large from all the honourable functions of civil government. And if Solon, by permitting every citizen to vote in the public assembly, seemed to confer on the meanest of them a sort of political existence; yet, even by Solon's plan, the Athenians were divided into three classes, according to the extent of their fortunes, while the mass of the people, distinct from these, were legally excluded from all offices of trust or honour.

In Sparta alone an equality of fortune was the aim of the legislator, and an avowed maxim of government. But the expedients of Lycurgus were not effectual for that purpose; and, even in the purest ages of the Commonwealth, the distinction of riches and poverty was not totally unknown.

Such is the condition of men in the most democratical states. The forms of society require subordination; the details of affairs calls for different occupations; and mankind are distributed into classes, to which belong unequal degrees of importance.

That the subdivision of arts, which is so conducive to their perfection, degrades the character of the common artizan, is a proposition consonant to the uniform experience of civilized nations. The most simple manufacture is executed by the joint labour of a number of people, each of whom, being expert

only in his own peculiar branch, perceives neither the connection of design, nor the result of the combination. That systematic knowledge belongs only to the master-artist; and the detail of the execution seems to resemble, in some sort, the proceedings of instinct in animal life; where we so often observe, by the wisdom of nature, a regular, though blind, co-operation of numbers towards an unknown end.

The manufacture of a pin is a trite example, serving well to illustrate this subdivision of labour. That business is subdivided into about eighteen distinct operations, which are sometimes all performed by distinct hands. In manufactures of a more complicated fabric, and often tend, among the various orders of artizans, to debilitate the body, and to engender disease. But exclusively of this consequence, the life of such an artizan is filled up with a series of actions, which, returning with an insipid uniformity, affords no exercise to genius or capacity. And if the tendency of his occupation is not counteracted by some expedient of government, he is suffered to fall into a torpor of intellect, which implies the absence or annihilation of every manly virtue. Such occupations, in the antient republics of Greece and Rome, were considered as beneath the dignity of free citizens, and were commonly exercised by slaves.

In the present state of the arts among the European nations, perhaps the most respectable character among the inferior ranks is bred by the possession of arms. Its functions, which have more compass and variety, are more animated and more interesting than those of a mechanical trade. The whole detail of military exercise polishes and fashions the body, and even confers graces which elevate the mind. In the breast of a private soldier, there often reigns a sense of personal dignity and honour, which scarce ever enters into the mass of the people, and is but rarely to be met with in men of superior affluence and figure. A certain cast of genius and character adheres to every condition. Different degrees of refinement and civility characterise the various orders of citizens; and the dignity or meanness annexed to the sphere in which they move, is, by no violent transition of imagination, transferred to their immediate, and even to remote descendants, and regarded as appendages of posterity.

Thus families are formed, where men become destined, from birth alone, to occupy, in civil society, more or less exalted stations. Antiquity of family then implies a descent from a series of ancestors long separated from the crowd, and exalted to some eminence in the ranks of life. Now, it will not be denied, that, in the first generation, the resemblance of children to parents is often conspicuous in the features, both of body and mind. The one species of resemblance is sometimes conspicuous where the other is scarce discernible; and the other species is sometimes no less predominant where the former subsists in an inferior, or perhaps in no degree. These principles, though blended occasionally in their operations, seem to be distinct and independent. Various causes, to us unknown, may interrupt the law of resemblance in the outward form. Various causes, alike unknown, may interrupt the law of resemblance in the moral oeconomy. These connections and dependencies we attempt not to explore. We know not how far the character of parents touches, if we may say so, the elements of the amorous passion, or diversifies the mode of instinct, so as to affect the progeny of love. It is sufficient, if general experience declare such connections to have a foundation in nature.

Admit then, that certain qualities of mind, as well as body, are transmissible in the first generation, and do not terminate there; is there not reason to expect, from the accumulated efforts of the same causes, that some general inheritance may be derived in a course of ages, and, consequently, that a greater or less propensity to refinement, to civility, and to the politer arts, may be connected with an illustrious, or more obscure original?

But this species of influence, which is strictly moral, ought to be variable in every country, with the order, the policy, and the arrangements of civil society. It is the genius of popular and free governments to annihilate,

in some sort, family distinctions. Citizens, born to equal privileges, and constituted in similar points of exterior rank, will transmit to posterity more equal proportions of the gifts of nature. Under a more unequal government, where distinctions abound, where reigns the strongest contrast of condition has been cherished and preserved for ages, the more diversity will be more conspicuous; and civil distinctions long maintained, will open a source of natural distinctions in succeeding times. Hereditary characteristics accordingly attracted the attention of mankind, in some degree, under all the antient governments. A regard to descent, which amounted to a species of idolatry among some nations, has not been altogether exploded in free and popular states. In the Gentoo government of Indostan, the distinction of casts or tribes was never violated by promiscuous commerce. And such was the public solicitude of the Indians, about the future generation, that physical education might be said to commence antecedently to birth. A guardian was appointed for an infant yet unborn; and it was his province to lay down a regimen for the mother during the months of pregnancy.[Gentoo Code, p. 283]

The improvement of the race of citizens was a favourite object of Spartan policy. And while, with this view, the laws authorised, under certain regulations, a community of wives, and even approved of crossing the breed, they permitted no alliances or intermarriages among the different orders of citizens. Such alliances and intermarriages were also expressly interdicted by the laws of Rome, for upwards of three hundred years. The free spirit of the Romans, indeed, as last rebelled against such odious distinctions, and opened to every citizen the way to civil honours. Yet the Romans themselves, after so glorious a struggle for privilege, against the usurpations of a proud nobility, testified, in the very moment of victory, their reverence for Patrician blood.[Tit. Liv. cap. 6. lib. iv] Imagination surely, in all such cases, influences the judgment of the people; and while it inclines them so often to bestow unmerited preference, it sometimes elevates the character of the individuals to whom that preference is given. Men nobly born are animated with the idea, and think themselves called upon, in a peculiar manner, to emulate the virtues, and to sustain the honours of their name.

Et pater AEneas, & avunculus excitat Hector.

They feel, not what they are, but what they ought to be; till at last, by feeling what they ought to be, they become what they are not: and thus, by reverencing the dignity of ancestors, they learn to assert their own. But, independently of such sentiments, as well as of all the peculiar incentives to true glory, there is often an invisible preparation of natural causes, which concurs with the civil order of things in prolonging the honours or even the infamy of a race; and hereditary characteristics are interwoven into the genius and essence of the mind. Hence the milder glories of the Valerii; hence the unfeeling obstinacy and insolence of the Appian blood. And, perhaps, it will be found that the judgment of the crowd, in these, as in many instances, though swayed by imagination, has however a foundation in experience, and is, in part, conformable to general laws.

To vindicate the principle on which this judgment proceeds, let us review the condition of a family emerging from rudeness into the dignity of civil life. Let us suppose the founders constituted in a state of independence, and of decent affluence; graced with every circumstance that can command respect; improved by all the advantages of moral and of civil culture, and exalted to a mode of thinking, and of acting, superior to vulgar minds. Some traces of this spirit, we may affirm, without being charged with excessive refinement, are likely to adhere to their immediate progeny. But, how scanty or latent soever this inheritance at first, if the causes are not discontinued, the constitutional effect will be more conspicuous in the second generation. If the former impressions are not effaced, the third generation will have their constitution more strongly impregnated with the same elements; till at last, by happy alliances, and by preserving the line on one side long unbroken, there shall result an association of qualities, which, being

consolidated into the constitution, form the characteristics of a race.

The same reasoning is easily transferred to a family of an ignoble line. Instead of competence, independence, culture, substitute indigence, servility, rudeness. Extend this allotment over an equal series of posterity, and you will probably reverse all the propensities of nature. A thousand circumstances indeed may warp a constitution from any line of character, and be destructive of all hereditary symptoms; but if these symptoms are often found to be concomitants of birth, and are visible in the extremes, they will subsist, though less apparently, in other situations; and our reasoning, how fallacious soever, if applied to individuals, justifies the general conclusion. If that turn of imagination, those infirmities of intellect, which mark insanity, or delirium, or folly, are so often confessed hereditary, shall we not allow to all the noble endowments and talents of the mind the same prerogative? But there is no need to infer from analogy what might be established by the most copious induction, were it not tedious to enumerate particulars, where the experience of common life is so decisive.

These communicable qualities are subject to many contingencies: some are obliterated; others, checked in their growth, lie dormant for generations, yet again revive: it is only an assemblage of great talents, or the long predominance of some one striking quality, that attracts the observation of the world. The great qualities of the last Athenian king flourished in the Archons for above three hundred years. The Incas of Peru, during a far longer period, were eminent for every princely virtue. The daughter of Scipio was mother of the Gracchi. The heroism of the younger Brutus was the heroism of his remote progenitor. The houses of the Publicolae, the Messalae, and Valerii, were illustrious for six hundred years. The Decii, retaining, equally long, their primeval character, attempted the revival of Roman virtue in the decline of the empire. And, if expectation might be raised upon such foundations, a Briton might almost anticipate some of the actors on the public stage at some future aera. We have seen a patron of freedom in our days, inferior to no Roman name, commanding the applause of senates, sustaining the vigour of public councils, and leading on a nation to glory. We have seen another, or congenial spirit, presiding in the assembly of the nobles, and dispensing, from the highest tribunal, justice to the people;

--- His dantem Jura Catonem.

I dare not mention a name among the living -- but that the most illustrious statesman of the present age has left posterity, is matter of general satisfaction to the English nation.

The genius of that Great Man, surviving in his race, and cherished by the fond predilection of a generous Pubic, may still be useful to his country. And, if we may judge from some late appearances, the prayer of his contemporaries is already heard by indulgent Heaven;

Stet fortuna domus, & avi nimerentur avorum.

Yet we are far from considering birth as the criterion of any one perfection of the mind or body. Neither do we suppose, in general, that an exalted station calls forth the greatest talents, or is most favourable to the growth, or communication, of moral or intellectual endowments. Those in the middle ranks of life, in a flourishing and cultivated nation, promise to transmit as fair an inheritance to posterity. The access to refinement, to culture, and to civil honours, which is opened to them in the progress of government, allows them almost every advantage; while they are often exempted from corruptions which are fostered by superior rank. Without drawing invidious parallels, it may be affirmed, that the fluctuation of things, in our age and country, the rotation of employments, the mutual intercourses, intermarriages, and alliances, so often formed, are sufficient to blend and unite different tempers and capacities, so as to prevent hereditary endowments from becoming characteristical of any one order of citizens. Yet the same

causes, whose influence in particular families is still sufficient to draw attention, might, in other circumstances of society, have affected the departments of civil life, and the more general divisions of mankind. In antient times, when possessions were hereditary; when intermarriages among different classes were not permitted, or were held dishonourable; when conjugal love was rarely violated, and genealogy was a fashionable science; hereditary talents would be more observable, and their influence in society more strongly defined.

On the whole, it must be admitted, that the character of ancestors has influence on the line of posterity; and that a long series of causes, antecedent to birth, has affected, in each individual, not only the mechanical and vital springs, but, in some degree also, the constitutional arrangements of his intellectual nature. The circumstance therefore of birth alone, may be regarded as more or less auspicious; and may be allowed, on some occasions, to heighten or to depress expectation; but cannot, without palpable and egregious absurdity, enter farther into the account, or be rendered a topic of exultation or reproach in the estimation of personal merit. Iphicrates, an upstart Athenian, replied with becoming spirit to a person of noble birth, who had dared to arraign his pedigree, "The honours of my family begin with myself; the honours of yours end in you." How often might those in a humbler sphere, exchange places with men who sit in the cabinet of kings? how often, as in the Roman government, might we call a Dictator from the plough? The distinction here opened, far from flattering the arrogance, or justifying the usurpations of men, if extended from individuals, and families, to the larger associations of mankind, will help to explain the history of the world with the least possible violence to the common prerogatives of the species.

A cultivated and polished nation may, in some respects, be regarded as a standing family. The one is, relatively to the greater number of the communities of mankind, what the other is, relatively to the greater number of citizens under the same civil oeconomy. The conduct of the one, and of the other, towards their supposed inferiors, is often exactly similar. Both carry themselves with equal insolence, and seem alike to forget or to deny the inherent and unalienable rights of the species. Nations, however, as well as families, may have some inheritance to boast; and the progeny of savages or barbarians may be distinguishable, both in outward and inward form, from the progeny of a cultivated people. A long series of civilization may exalt and refine certain principles congenial with our frame. A long series of ages spent in rudeness or barbarity, may blunt and disfigure, though it can never obliterate, in any tribe, the great outlines of human nature. While one series of causes tends more effectually to the perfection of the animal powers, another series may prove more auspicious to some parts of the intellectual oeconomy. Many savage tribes are remarkable for abilities in one line, while no less deficient in another. Some discover singular, and almost incredible propensities to manners approaching to brutality. The indolicility of others is perfectly astonishing. And in general, as if reluctant to divest themselves of the habits of their ancestors, they shew an unfitness to receive the graces and refinements of polished life. Such appearances are ascribed by some writers to a fixed and immutable diversity in the races of mankind; and the regions that by accident have been the scene of rudeness and barbarity, are pointed out as the permanent and natural habitations of inferior mortals. But these innate and constitutional differences have been shewn, in the preceding pages, to be fluctuating and contingent; and therefore consistent with parity of rank, and one common origin of nations.

Allow to the most unpromising tribes such advantages in the political scene, as belong occasionally to the rudest vulgar, under any civil establishment; and as the latter emerge into dignity among their fellow-citizens, so shall the former among the society of nations. The inheritances of all the families with a state, reckoning from its first foundation, are, perhaps, nearly balanced in the revolution of the great year of government. The inheritances of tribes and nations, in all countries of the globe, may be also balanced in the revolution of that greater year which completes the

destiny of man.

Illustrious rank is no more to be regarded as a criterion of perfection in forming the general estimate of nations, than in forming the particular estimate of the several families or members of the same community. The greatest nation is not always blessed with the most equal government, nor adorned with the most accomplished citizens. The collective wisdom of a people is not to be estimated by that proportion of it which actuates their public councils, or even by the detail of their civil government. Yet that government is certainly, in one respect, well constituted, that calls abilities and distinguished worth into public view. Sir William Temple has pronounced this eulogium on the constitution of the United Provinces of Holland, though rather at the expence of the national character: "Though perhaps the nation," says that Writer, "generally be not wise, yet the government is, because it is composed of the wisest of the nation, which may give it an advantage over many others, where ability is of more common growth, but of less use to the public, if it happens that neither wisdom nor honesty are the qualities which bring men to the management of state affairs, as they usually do in this commonwealth." It is, however, no small point of wisdom to distinguish superior worth; and the men who are disposed to regard with just admiration noble talents, are inferior only to the men who possess them.

But it may be questioned, whether the happiest periods, even of free governments, are the periods most conducive to the perfections of mankind. Perhaps the highest national, as well as private virtue, is bred in the school of adversity. A nation certainly may derive splendour from those very circumstances which sink the character of its citizens. The science of mechanics, which is the glory of human reason, has enlarged the abilities, and dignified the aspect of nations. Yet the lower classes of artizans and manufacturers, in most of the civilized governments of modern Europe, who are so instrumental in promoting public opulence and commercial prosperity, may be pronounced to be themselves in a state of intellectual debasement, to which there is scarce any parallel in the history of rude barbarians. It is active and progressive virtue; it is refinement of manners, or vigour of sentiment, and the habits of intellectual exertion, which confer real honour on families; it is the more general and diffusive influence of similar habits, that exalts a people in a moral light, and enriches their genius for generations to come.

But the genius of man is so flexible, so open to impressions from without, so susceptible of early culture, that between hereditary, innate, and acquired propensities, it is hard to draw the line of distinction. It were necessary that the natives of one country should be bred up and educated, from their earliest infancy, among the natives of another, in order to make fair experiments with regard to original talents. Under such circumstances, individuals are occasionally presented to view. A Theban may be bred at Athens, an Athenian in Boeotia. And, if the whole tribes of mankind could be placed in similar situations, we might then indeed contemplate them in their innate, as well as in their acquired characteristics; observe the one mingling with, or checked by the other, and mark, in a variety of combinations, their accumulated influence. Qualities, however, that resist for ages the change of government and of climate, must be allowed to be congenial and hereditary to the tribes among whom they are found to predominate.

Perhaps the history of the Jews furnishes an example of a race, whose peculiar qualities, thus circumstanced, have descended through a long course of generations. No people, it may be affirmed, have ever figured on the theatre of nations with a destiny as singular as theirs. Their history, whether drawn from sacred or profane records, whether regarded as miraculous, or in the order of nature, affords matter of abundant speculation. The maxims of their religion and policy preserved them in all the revolutions of fortune, as a distinct people. After the final dissolution of their government, and dispersion all over the habitable globe, a system of prejudices peculiar to themselves, but directed, in its operations, to fulfil the ends of Providence, has preserved their genealogy, and prevented alliances or inter-marriages with any other race. Certain marks of uniformity are accordingly discernible among

them in every period. The same spirit which was so untractable under their own governors, disposed them to mutiny and rebellion when a Roman province; and that perverseness of temper, which left them so often to apostasy and to idolatry, when in possession of the true faith, has rendered then tenacious of a false religion. As numerous, perhaps, at this day, as when a settled nation, the relation of consanguinity, under all the various governments and climates where their lot is cast, marks their character. Yet, had this insociable people remained in their antient possessions, and, without foreign connections or inter-marriages, had subsisted under the same political establishment, the most singular, surely, that ever was formed, the lineaments of their character, both of inward and outward form, had, we may well believe, been still more strongly defined. In general it may be observed, that the confined intercourse of the species tends ultimately to the formation of a peculiar genius and temper. Thus, in the antient Germans, the uniformity of individuals was as astonishing as the diversity of all from every other people; and, from the singularity of these appearances, the Roman Historian supposes them a pure and distinct race, not derived from Asia, from Africa, from Italy, or from any other region. [Tact. de Mor. Germ.]

The new hemisphere presented appearances exactly similar. The astonishing resemblance which was there observed among mankind, seems to evidence that it was peopled originally by the same race, and at an eara of no high antiquity. The branches, though widely spread, had probably not been long separated from the common stock; or perhaps a similarity in the modes of life contributed, more than any other cause, throughout that immense continent, to exclude variety in the human species.

The modern Athenians are distinguished, at this day, amidst the wretched subjects of a barbarous and despotic government, for some of those qualities that illustrated and adorned their ancestors.

The history of Indostan, where the Aborigines are so clearly defined from the other natives of the same regions, might be mentioned as another striking example of a genius and constitution which consanguinity has in part contributed to cherish and preserve for ages.

When emigrants from different countries, fixed in one settlement, and under one political oeconomy, preserve, however, for a length of time, distinguished characteristics, the diversity cannot be altogether ascribed to circumstances posterior to birth. The temper of the British nation, which is attributed by some writers to local situation, flourishes with equal vigour in another hemisphere. The spirit which now animates American councils, was the spirit of Britons in a former age; and the Britons, in the same province, are distinguished from every other tribe. The concourse of so many tribes proved, in the British colonies, a fertile source of animosity and dissension; and unfortunate, surely, was that policy in the parent state, which could so far subdue the antipathies, and reconcile the prejudices of so mixed a people, as to unite them in one general confederacy against her government. Yet perhaps this temporary and precarious union may dissolve apace; the seeds of internal discord may revive; and their mutual jealousies, if not controuled by superior wisdom, may one day shake the foundations of this rising empire, or reunite it to the British government.

But were all memorials of these settlements rescinded from modern annals, there might be observed, for ages to come, constitutional distinctions in the same province, where the greater number, from contributional resemblances, might boast of one lineage with Britons. Yet, these resemblances, and those distinctions, time must annihilate. And, from a new order of things, there must finally arise that peculiar association of qualities, which is properly called national, as distinguishing a people long under the same physical and moral oeconomy, from the rest of the world.

Much latitude, however, is allowed in the genius and character of every people, without violation of the general law. What variety among children of the same parents, do we observe to consist with a family resemblance? Consistent, in the same manner, with family characteristics, is a certain national uniformity; and consistent with national characteristics, are the

essentials of a common nature, and a common descent. Such varieties ought not to create antipathies, or unhinge, or even relax the social ties. On the contrary, if it hold in man, that crossing the brood tends occasionally to improvement, this consideration, which forms a natural argument against incest, so justly prohibited on political and moral grounds by all civilized and enlightened governments, authorises and invites all nations to form mutual connexions and alliances.

Thus we may observe mankind essentially the same, yet, in different regions of the globe, varying continuity from a fixed standard; breathing at first, if I may use the expression, unequal proportions of the aetherial spirit; excelling in the rational, in the moral, or in the animal powers; born with a superior fitness for refinement, for arts, for civil culture; or cast in a rougher mould, and by native temper more indocible and wild. Yet all the capital distinctions in individuals, families, or tribes, flow from causes subsequent to birth; from education, example, forms of government; from the order of internal laws, from the maxims and genius of religion, from the lights of science and philosophy; in some degree, from the infallible operations of the external elements; but above all, from the free determinations of the will. To run the parallel of nations, and decide on their comparative perfections, were a design too aspiring for the Author of these Essays; yet the appearances in civil life we may pronounce to be often delusive. The manners, the crimes of illiterate savage tribes, are apt enough to appear to us in their full dimension and deformity; but the violations of natural law among civilized nations have a solemn varnish of policy, which disguises the enormity of guilt. The greatness too of a community dazzles the eye, and confers an imaginary value on its members. It eclipses the milder lustre of more humble tribes. Yet the virtue of nations, as of individuals, frequently courts the shade, and the beautiful figure of the poet is equally applicable to both:

> Full many a flower is born to blush unseen,
> And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

History, which ought to be the mistress of human life, affects magnificence, and seems to descend from her dignity in recording the transactions of little States. She forgets that men may grow less by elevation, and permits the honours of nations to be distributed by the hands of fortune. It is hence the Greeks and Romans are regarded by us, with a veneration so far above all the nations of antiquity. Hence Europe, in modern times, boasts a pre-eminence that seems to insult the rest of the world.

It belongs to reason and philosophy to rejudge mankind; and, under an endless variety of appearances, more or less equivocal, to observe and fix the principles which affect, in every age and country, the proportion of human happiness, and of human perfection. Let not nations then, or individuals, regard themselves as single in the creation; let them view their interests on the largest scale; let them feel the importance of their station to themselves and to the system; to their contemporaries, and to future generations; and learn, from the established order of second causes, to respect, to adorn, and to exalt the species.

Nor is the detail of the meanest tribes unimportant in philosophy. If human nature is liable to degenerate, it is capable of proportionable improvement from the collected wisdom of ages. It is pleasant to infer, from the actual progress of society, the glorious possibilities of human excellence. And, if the principles can be assembled into view, which most directly tend to diversify the genius and character of nations, some theory may be raised on these foundations, that shall account more systematically for past occurrences, and afford some openings and anticipations into the eventual history of the world.

THE END

Livros Grátis

(http://www.livrosgratis.com.br)

Milhares de Livros para Download:

Baixar livros de Literatura
Baixar livros de Literatura de Cordel
Baixar livros de Literatura Infantil
Baixar livros de Matemática
Baixar livros de Medicina
Baixar livros de Medicina Veterinária
Baixar livros de Meio Ambiente
Baixar livros de Meteorologia
Baixar Monografias e TCC
Baixar livros Multidisciplinar
Baixar livros de Música
Baixar livros de Psicologia
Baixar livros de Química
Baixar livros de Saúde Coletiva
Baixar livros de Serviço Social
Baixar livros de Sociologia
Baixar livros de Teologia
Baixar livros de Trabalho
Baixar livros de Turismo