

## LETTER IV.

*Stuttgart, May 20, 1780.*

MY excursions in the neighbouring states of the circle of Suabia, did not produce the rich booty I had promised to myself. I visited a dozen free imperial towns, in which, notwithstanding the republican form of government, not a spark of liberty or patriotism was to be seen. The inhabitants of these have, through the oppression of more powerful neighbours, long since lost all sense of the value of independence; but though ashamed to mention the name of their native country out of their own walls, within them they mimic the forms of old Rome, and after the manner of those governors of the world, inscribe their public buildings of state with *Senatus Populusque Hallensis, Bopfingensis, Nordlingensis, &c.*

In the fifteenth century, the imperial cities of Suabia acted a very different part. They were then united in leagues, not only with each other, but with the cities of Franconia and the Rhine. Even the emperor had sometimes cause to be alarmed at their increasing power, which indeed made Charles V, disunite them. From the time of the association of the Hanse towns, the gold had flowed from all the country into the cities. These were the exclusive seats of industry, and their wealth drew into their dependance the neighbouring princes, who at that time lived by robberies.

If the spirit of trade which then prevailed, had suffered them to place more value on the possession of landed property, they would to this day have preserved somewhat of their former splendour, as with their power they might have made many conquests, and with their wealth many purchases.

All hopes are now vanished of their ever becoming again conspicuous. As soon as the princes discovered the value of industry, and gave it free encouragement in their dominions, it fled into their protection, and abandoned the dark walls of cities in which a system of monopolies, little policy, and narrow-minded envy of the successful, laid it under so many restraints. In consequence, the towns are so reduced, as to be obliged to sell the little landed property they have, to discharge their debts. This has lately been the case with Ulm; the largest town in Suabia, next to Augsburg. Of the imperial towns which I have visited, I can say nothing particular, but that Heilbron is beautifully situated, and Halle has a salt manufactory, which brings in three hundred thousand florins, or thirty thousand pounds per annum.

Having left these states, I ran over in a very short time, about a dozen principalities, and prelacies, with the names of which I shall not trouble you. Almost the whole country consists of well-wooded mountains and hills, and fertile vales, all in high cultivation. The great population which prevails here is wonderful, when you consider the untoward circumstances of the country. By untoward circumstances, I mean the extortions of petty masters, who all keep their mistresses, their stag-hounds, their French cooks, and English horses; the perpetual quarrels amongst neighbours, which arise from the various perplexed governments of the empire; the small profits attendant on industry within such a confined spot; and lastly the constant decrease of coin, owing to the sums of money expended by the governors of the country in search of foreign luxuries. As religion, manners, attachment to the native spot, temperance, and frugality, all of which I am willing to allow that these people possess, do not appear to me sufficient of themselves to counterbalance these evils, I have but one way of accounting for the prosperity I see; which is this: