

asures, which are often either misunderstood or not properly appreciated by their contemporaries ; and while men individually, and from their own observation, can see great events as it were but in part, history embraces the whole in all its various details. Thus, for example, we can see but imperfectly all the bearings of that mighty revolution which is now 1793, passing before our eyes ; and it will remain for posterity to perceive all its influence and effects, and to judge of its different actors without feelings of irritation or party spirit.

It is a fact universally admitted, that all ranks and professions of men, find in history appropriate instruction, and rules of conduct suited to their respective conditions. In occupying the mind agreeably with such a vast diversity of subjects, it serves to form the judgment, to inspire us with the ambition of glory, and the love of virtue. Those especially who devote themselves to the study of politics, or who are destined to the management of public affairs, will discover in history the structure and constitution of governments, their faults, and their advantages, their strength and their weakness ; they will find there the origin and progress of empires, the principles that have raised them to greatness, and the causes which have prepared their fall. The philosopher, and the man of letters, will there trace the progress of the human mind, the errors and illusions that have led it astray ; the connexion of causes and effects ; the origin of arts and sciences, their changes, and their influence on society ; as well as the innumerable evils that have sprung from ignorance, superstition and tyranny.

History, in short, avails more than all precepts to cure us of those mistakes originating in self-love, and national partiality. He who knows no other country than his own, easily persuades himself, that the government, manners, and opinions of the little corner of the earth which he inhabits, are the only ones consistent with reason and propriety. Self-love, so natural to man, cherishes this prejudice, and makes him disdain all other nations. It is only by an extensive acquaintance with history, and by familiarizing ourselves with the institutions, customs, and habits of different ages, and of different countries, that we learn to esteem wisdom and virtue, and to acknowledge talents wherever they exist. Besides, when we observe, that though revolutions are continually changing the face of kingdoms, nothing essentially new ever happens in the world, we cease to be longer the slaves of that extravagant admiration, and that credulous astonishment which is generally the characteristic of ignorance, or the mark of a feeble mind.

The most important attribute of history is truth, and in order