

agreeable to the grotesque appearance of his visage ; so that from head to foot, he was a kind of monster, who by his deformity, and the hair with which he was covered, had a greater resemblance to a bear half licked into form, than to a human creature.

But though nature had treated him so ill with respect to his body, she had recompensed him by the subtilty, the agreeableness, and the solidity of the mind, she had united to it. This advantage, infinitely more precious than all others, raised him from being a simple and mean peasant, to be the favourite of a great prince, and happily extricated him out of all the snares and dangers that had been laid for him.

Bertholde was born of poor parents, in a village near Bertagnona, at some miles distant from Verona. The small fortune of his father, and his having ten children, would not permit the good man to give them the least education. But as for Bartholde, he had a fund of wit, which sufficiently made him amends for the poverty of his parents, and the deformity of his person, which was more fit to affright children, than to raise his fortune ; and therefore, the nurses and mothers of the village had nothing more to do, but to mention his name to make their children quiet when crying, or to make them cry when they were quiet.

But the pleasure he gave to the other peasants, was equal to the terror his figure caused in the little innocents. Bartholde diverted them on Sundays, and every festival, with the sallies of his wit : He instructed them by excellent sentences, which he uttered from time to time ; so that, next to the priest and the lord of the manor, no person in the village was treated with greater respect. His poverty, contrary to custom, was not considered as a vice ; and, what is very strange, it did not render him the object of aversion and contempt. So far was this from being the case, the honest country people, in order to keep him amongst them, would have contributed to his support ; but he not being willing to be a burthen to them, chose rather to leave the village, and to seek a living elsewhere.

With this view he went to Verona, where Albion, the first King of the Lombards, after having conquered the greatest part of Italy, kept his court. Chance conducted Bertholde to the palace of this prince, and while he was gazing and wondering at the beauty of the building, his attention was drawn aside, to observe two women at a small distance, who had neither nails nor fingers enough to scratch with, nor a volubility of tongue sufficient

to give vent to the torrent of abuse they seemed willing to cast out at each other.

Bertholde was so much diverted with this scene, that he had no inclination to put an end to it ; but a stop was put to his satisfaction by one of the king's officers, who came with his orders for parting the combatants ; he commanded them to lay their complaints before his majesty, who had promised to do them justice. Upon this their fury ceased, each picked up her cap, and finding her cloaths torn, and her person something discomposed, they both begged leave to retire for a while, that they might appear with greater decency before the king.

Bertholde hearing this, conceived some idea of the goodness of his sovereign, and as he had never seen him, resolved to pay him a visit. In this age, the gates of palaces were not yet blocked up with guards, every one had free access to lay their grievances before the throne.

Though a peasant, though a clown, though disgraced by nature, reason dictated to him, that all men were formed by the same hand, and created in a perfect equality ; he therefore thought there was no person on earth with whom he might not be allowed to converse familiarly.

In consequence of this principle, he entered the palace without any conductor, marched up stairs, traversed the apartments, and entered into that in which the king was surrounded by his courtiers, who were conversing with him in a respectful posture, and laughing at the two women, who had just been quarrelling before the window : But how great was their astonishment to see Bertholde walk in with his hat on his head, and, without speaking a word, come boldly up to them, and seat himself by the side of the king, in a chair which they, out of respect, had left empty ! Surprized at this rusticity, and more still, at his grotesque appearance, they stood immoveable at the view of this second Æsop, whose mean dress was very suitable to his deformity. From this rustic behaviour, the king easily guessed, that he was one whom curiosity had brought to his court. And as he had learnt from experience, that nature sometimes hides her treasures under the most unpromising form, he resolved to have a familiar conversation with him, and for a few minutes, in complaisance to the clown, to forget his own grandeur and dignity. Who are you ? cried the prince to Bertholde : How did you come into the world ? What is your country ? — I am a man, replied the peasant ; I came into the world in the manner Providence sent me, and the world itself is my country.