

some below the ordinary level of society, must be proportioned to the elevation of others. Hence, arts and manufactures, and the establishments of wealthy families, require a number of individuals, consigned to celibacy almost from the necessity of their condition. The same remark may extend to sailors, soldiers, servants, and others, whose dependant situation is almost incompatible with marriage. The effects produced by misery on the poor, luxury and profligacy produce on the wealthy. The licentiousness and dissipation to which they are accustomed, give them a distaste for the sober restraints of matrimony; and this distaste becomes confirmed and inveterate by the daily examples of mutual infidelity in exalted life. These causes are attended with pernicious effects; and thus we behold how frequently noble families become extinct, while those of the poor multiply to a degree no less unfavourable to the interests of society. Now experience attests, that the influence of the monastic orders lessened those powerful causes—the extreme dependance of the poor, and the corruption of the wealthy: and hence, instead of checking, it contributed to forward the growth of a vigorous, useful, and moral population.

“By the labours and industry of the monks, woods were cleared, morasses drained, and unprofitable wastes reclaimed to the purposes of tillage: The profits of those lands, instead of being dissipated in luxury, returned again to the hands that were employed in their cultivation. The people become naturally attached to individuals from whom they derived such important benefits, and we know that the feelings of the heart are the best conductors in bringing persuasion to the understanding. Contentment, affluence, and morality, were generally found among the peasantry who inhabited the neighborhood of monasteries; and princes finding the benefits of which they were productive, were induced by fresh endowments to augment their numbers. Besides the blessing which they diffused among the surrounding inhabitants, the monasteries became nurseries of virtue, and asylums of innocence to numbers, who sought shelter from the vices or disappointments of the world. At present the army and navy are open to the younger branches of distinguished families, that they may establish a new, or repair a broken fortune. Hospitals are erected to afford medical assistance to the sick and infirm. But where are the establishments for repairing a broken heart, or giving consolation to those diseases of the mind, which all the aid of medicine cannot allay? They are no more! and their destroyers, not content with the ruin of those institutions, have calumniated their saintly tenants, in order to justify their own plunder; and the tales which originated in malevolence, have been circulated through

every medium which a varied and even fantastic literature could afford.

“The ponderous folio, the light pamphlet, the amusing travels, and the flippant novel, have been indiscriminately employed as the conductors of these calumnies; and poets, historians, jurists, and moralists, have equally contributed to their propagation. But the observation of Cicero is here verified; and time, which dissipates the phantoms of opinion, confirms the verdict of truth and nature. The calumnies which had hitherto shrouded the remains of the inmates of those monasteries are gradually falling away: and on finding that they were not the monsters which they were represented, the public are beginning to feel some reverence for their relics. Yes, in the shifting vicissitudes of human affairs, the flow of false and vicious literature that prevailed for three hundred years has already reached its extreme limit; the tide has already begun to return, and its retreating current is carrying off much of the light and impure productions with which it had so long inundated these countries.

“If the ancient philosophers are justly admired by our modern historians, for having contributed so much to the progress of learning, the monastic orders cannot consistently be excluded from a share in their gratitude. In preserving the precious monuments of sacred and profane knowledge, they have laid mankind under lasting obligations. The influence of a single mind, that improves its own age, and bequeaths to posterity the rich legacy of its virtue and its wisdom, is of more benefit to society than the existence of thousands whose importance is scarcely felt. He, then, who hands down the immortal productions of genius and virtue, which will instruct and improve posterity to the latest period, may be considered to have fulfilled the most important duties of society. Now it surely cannot be denied, that the virtue of celibacy has been instrumental in transmitting these moral advantages.

“It is this virtue that contributes most to purify the heart from selfish affections, and to exalt the social virtues to a degree of heroism. By the detachment from the world which accompanies it, zeal for religion becomes more strong and active. The energies, which would be divided by the ordinary occupations of life, are pointed to one exclusive object, and derive irresistible strength from the singleness of their direction. Is it to be imagined, that the apostles of infidel nations, or the founders of religious orders, or those who consecrated their lives to attendance on the sick, or the redemption of captives, would have attempted such mighty things, had they been bound by the cares of domestic life? They exemplified the observation of St. Paul—‘thinking on the