

the court of Spain during the reigns of Philip III. and Philip IV. From these I have learned many curious particulars with respect to the interior state of the Spanish colonies, and the various schemes formed for their improvement. As this Collection of Memorials formerly belonged to the Colbert Library, I have quoted them by that title.

ALL those books and manuscripts I have consulted with that attention, which the respect due from an Author to the Public required ; and by minute references to them, I have endeavoured to authenticate whatever I relate. The longer I reflect on the nature of historical composition, the more I am convinced that this scrupulous accuracy is necessary. The historian who records the events of his own time, is credited in proportion to the opinion which the Public entertains with respect to his means of information and his veracity. He who delineates the transactions of a remote period, has no title to claim assent, unless he produces evidence in proof of his assertions. Without this, he may write an amusing tale, but cannot be said to have composed an authentic history. In those sentiments I have been confirmed by the opinion of an author *, whom his industry, erudition, and dis-

* Mr. Gibbon.