

than the ruder Germans and Spaniards, whom they opposed. This monarch, the patron of polite learning, like Augustus, riveted, it is true, the fetters of slavery on the nation; yet, at the same period, amidst the flourishing growth of science and elegant learning, the English fixed on a firm basis, their admirable constitution.

How little the destiny of ancient governments ought, at present, to excite our alarm, every reflecting mind will easily perceive. Extent of territory and power are more equally distributed; envy and fear, the centinels of the strong, prove the guardians of the weak: restrained by finance, war is less calculated for conquest than for defence; knowledge is applied to the advantage of society. Without opposing the moderate claims of the human passions, their excess only is consigned to punishment; the demands of liberty seek an equality in natural, rather than in acquired privileges; rather private security, than political pre-eminence. An uniformity of conduct will then secure modern governments against all those calamities which flow not from foreign and external causes. But, perhaps, I have examined, too minutely, an argument which the more intelligent adversaries of literature will not very strenuously defend.

“To enforce our reasoning, we need not, they will alledge, have recourse to history, nor exhibit instances of extreme danger to shew the necessity of condemning the effects of elegant learning. It is enough, if mankind be more effeminate, more criminal, than in former times. If, from our degeneracy, we have reason to expect a progeny still more corrupt than ourselves; is our improvement in knowledge to be considered as advantageous? By giving new play to affections, have not the pursuits of elegant learning materially contributed to produce the evils of which we now complain?”

Prevented, as I am, by a want of leisure, not by a dread of the weight of my opponent's arguments, from replying at large to objections, on the minds of many very deeply impressed by the deluding colours of eloquence; yet a concise view of the progress of society will evince, that no comparison has been made between the advantages and evils; that, if a change of manners be a calamity, it is an unavoidable one; and that a mere effect has been preposterously mistaken for a cause.

Amidst the variety of human conditions, there is none which can boast advantages, unconnected with disadvantages. These, on the contrary, will seldom be found unalleviated, if we set aside the unnatural situations of despotism on the one hand, and of slavery and oppression on the other. The state of savages, their gradual progress in civilization, I forbear mentioning. It will not be necessary to refute those, who delight in declaiming on the felicity of barbarism, if it be considered with what difficulty savages provide for their sustenance, what ceaseless hostility they exercise against each other, and that langour clouds, and frequently shortens their monotonous lives.

Taught to depend no longer for subsistence on the destruction of animals, or on the spontaneous productions of the earth, but obliged to cultivate the ground, mankind fixed on a determined spot, though not without danger of being expelled by invaders more powerful than themselves. Such a situation the dawn of society presents to our view; but how gloomy is yet the prospect!—Turning our eyes from states destroyed in their infancy; from