

Nevertheless, history has long been considered as affording examples for the construction of forms of government. Athens, Carthage, and Rome are objects of enquiry in France, England and Sweden. Elevating their voice, philosophers have at length ventured to ask, if France be Athens, England Carthage, or Sweden Rome. Is it not, however, often asserted, that after having lost her simplicity, frugality, and poverty, Sparta was no more; that Athens, by encouraging public spectacles, ceased to conquer; instead of a Miltiades, an Aristides, a Themistocles, she had a Menander, a Plato, a Demosthenes? Charmed with the eloquence of Cicero, the poetry of Virgil and Horace, the Romans supinely neglected their country's freedom. Alarming examples these! But other causes sufficiently account for the destruction of liberty.

By the frantic rage of conquest, every small community must fall a victim to its own weakness, every extensive monarchy a prey to its own grandeur. The love of peace will not shield the former from the attacks of an ambitious neighbour, unavoidable necessity compels them to combat, to conquer, or to perish. A political truth this, which will throw some light on the ruins of ancient governments.

The Lacedemonians, designed by Lycurgus to be protected by valour, from equality and poverty to derive peace and contentment, to possess independence by ruling only over themselves; these people lost their strength; when, instead of preserving a system of self-defence, they committed hostilities upon others; engaged in war with a superior force, they soon ceased to be independent; their happiness was alike destroyed by the consequences of victory or of adverse fortune. Athens found it impossible to support undiminished that vigour of mind, that heroic valour, which, on the field of Marathon, and on the shore of Salamis, enabled a handful of men to vanquish armies numerous beyond the experience or the belief of modern times.

That the decline and fall of the Roman Empire, was the inevitable consequence of its extravagant ambition, who can question? But why have not those acute reasoners, who pretend to trace events to their causes, shewn, whence proceeded the destruction of those states, on whose ruin Rome raised her Collossean greatness? Was it luxury and elegant learning which destroyed the Sabines, the citizens of Veji, the Volscians, and the Latins: or did not their own weakness abandon their destiny to the chance of war? Imperious Rome herself had, more than once, nearly seen falsified her real, or pretended dreams of eternity.

With these events literature had not any, or at most a very slight connection. To elegant occupations Sparta paid little attention; nay, if destitute of poets and orators, Athens would have fallen like Sybaris, Capua, and unlettered Carthage. Had Rome erected her vast monarchy, without subjugating Greece; in all probability Rome would have been little acquainted with polite learning; but, most certainly, her power, like that of Persia and Macedon, must have declined.

But should the influence of elegant learning be allowed to have been injurious to ancient states; at present, however, it cannot be considered in that light. This, the history and constitution of modern governments will sufficiently evince.

The polite subjects of Lewis XIV. were warriors not less courageous than