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*Vindication of the Study of Polite Literature; by M. DE ROSENSTEIN.*  
[From Select Oration's and Papers relative to the Swedish Academy.]

FROM the four following sources are derived those arguments, the grounds of which I venture to deny:—the examples recorded in history; a comparison between those periods in which polite learning has flourished, and in which it was unknown; the very nature of elegant learning; and the dispositions and conduct of those who are devoted to its pursuits:

Examples deduced from history I mention first, well persuaded that they have long and powerfully supported the cause of error. There is not any thing of which mankind have been more ignorant, than of the science of social life. The imperfections incident to every form of government I do not arraign. How indeed could perfection be attained, without mature consideration in works produced by the fortuitous course of events, by the tyranny of circumstances? Among the ancient states, Sparta alone could boast a legislation connected in all its parts: yet, by militating against the strongest propensities of human nature, the Spartan laws excited a perpetual conflict, that ended in the destruction of that country. The governments at present subsisting may be aptly compared to Gothic edifices improved by the hand of taste.

It may be observed, that a prudent extent of territory, a comprehensive experience, and an industrious pursuit of happiness, have contributed more to the public and private advantage of mankind than the most admired laws of the ancient legislators. There still, however, subsist so many fundamental defects and errors, so much opposition between different parts of the same system, that no modern form of government can be considered as a just model for imitation. Venice will perhaps be pointed out as an exception; a republic of which the constitution has survived its greatness, and a material change in the sentiments of the people. But what a constitution! Equally unshaken, Oriental despotism has a higher claim to antiquity.