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Chap. VII. The Author's Love of his Country. He makes a Proposal of much Advantage to the King, which is rejected. The King's great Ignorance in Politicks. The Learning of that Country very imperfect ...

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CHAP. VII.

*The Author's Love of his Country. He makes a Proposal of much Advantage to the King, which is rejected. The King's great Ignorance in Politicks. The Learning of that Country very imperfect and confined. Their Laws, and military Affairs, and Parties in the State.*

 OTHING but an extreme Love of Truth could have hinder'd me from concealing this part of my Story. It was in vain to discover my Resentments, which were always turned into Ridicule; and I was forced to rest with Patience while my noble and most beloved Country was so injuriously treated. I am heartily sorry as any of my Readers can possibly be, that such an Occasion was given: But this Prince happened to be so curious and inquisitive

quisitive upon every Particular, that it could not consist either with Gratitude or good Manners to refuse giving him what Satisfaction I was able. Yet thus much I may be allowed to say in my own Vindication, that I artfully eluded many of his Questions, and gave to every Point a more favourable Turn by many Degrees than the strictness of Truth would allow. For I have always borne that laudable Partiality to my own Country, which *Dionysius Halicarnassensis* with so much Justice recommends to an Historian: I would hide the Fraulties and Deformities of my political Mother, and place her Virtues and Beauties in the most advantageous Light. This was my sincere Endeavour in those many Discourses I had with that Monarch, although it unfortunately failed of Success.

BUT great Allowances should be given to a King who lives wholly secluded from the rest of the World, and must therefore be altogether unacquainted with  
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the Manners and Customs that most prevail in other Nations: The want of which Knowledge will ever produce many *Prejudices*, and a certain *narrowness of Thinking*, from which we and the politer Countries of *Europe* are wholly exempted. And it would be hard, indeed, if so remote a Prince's notions of Virtue and Vice were to be offered as a Standard for all Mankind.

To confirm what I have now said, and further, to shew the miserable effects of a *confined Education*, I shall here insert a passage which will hardly obtain Belief. In hopes to ingratiate my self farther into his Majesty's Favour, I told him of an Invention discovered between three and four hundred Years ago, to make a certain Powder, into an heap of which the smallest Spark of Fire falling, would kindle the whole in a moment, although it were as big as a Mountain, and make it all fly up in the Air together, with a Noise and Agitation greater

greater than Thunder. That a proper quantity of this Powder rammed into an hollow Tube of Brass or Iron, according to its Bigness, would drive a Ball of Iron or Lead with such Violence and Speed, as nothing was able to sustain its Force. That the largest Balls thus discharged, would not only destroy whole Ranks of an Army at once, but batter the strongest Walls to the Ground, sink down Ships, with a thousand Men in each, to the bottom of the Sea ; and, when linked together by a Chain , would cut through Masts and Rigging, divide hundreds of Bodies in the middle , and lay all waste before them. That we often put this Powder into large hollow Balls of Iron, and discharged them by an Engine into some City we were besieging, which would rip up the Pavements, tear the Houses to pieces, burst and throw Splinters on every side, dashing out the Brains of all who came near. That I knew the Ingredients very well, which were cheap, and common ; I understood the

the manner of compounding them, and could direct his Workmen how to make those Tubes of a size proportionable to all other things in his Majesty's Kingdom, and the largest need not be above an hundred foot long; twenty or thirty of which Tubes, charged with the proper quantity of Powder and Balls, would batter down the Walls of the strongest Town in his Dominions in a few Hours, or destroy the whole Metropolis, if ever it should pretend to dispute his absolute Commands. This I humbly offered to his Majesty as a small Tribute of Acknowledgment in Return of so many Marks that I had received of his Royal Favour and Protection.

THE King was struck with Horror at the Description I had given of those terrible Engines, and the Proposal I had made. He was amazed how so impotent and groveling an Insect as I (these were his Expressions) could entertain such inhuman Ideas, and in so familiar

a manner as to appear wholly unmoved at all the Scenes of Blood and Desolation, which I had painted as the common effects of those destructive Machines, whereof he said, some evil Genius, Enemy to Mankind, must have been the first Contriver. As for himself, he protested, that although few things delighted him so much as new Discoveries in Art or in Nature, yet he would rather lose half his Kingdom than be privy to such a Secret, which he commanded me, as I valued my Life, never to mention any more.

A STRANGE effect of *narrow Principles* and *short Views*! that a Prince possessed of every Quality which procures Veneration, Love, and Esteem; of strong Parts, great Wisdom, and profound Learning, endued with admirable Talents for Government, and almost adored by his Subjects, should from a *nice unnecessary Scruple*, whereof in *Europe* we can have no Conception, let slip an Opportunity put

put into his hands, that would have made him absolute Master of the Lives, the Liberties, and the Fortunes of his People. Neither do I say this with the least intention to detract from the many Virtues of that excellent King, whose Character I am sensible, will, on this account, be very much lessened in the Opinion of an English Reader: But I take this Defect among them to have risen from their Ignorance, they not having hitherto reduced Politicks into a Science, as the more acute Wits of *Europe* have done. For I remember very well, in a Discourse one day with the King, when I happened to say there were several thousand Books among us written upon the *Art of Government*, it gave him (directly contrary to my Intention) a very mean Opinion of our Understandings. He professed both to abominate and despise all *Mystery*, *Refinement*, and *Intrigue*, either in a Prince or a Minister. He could not tell what I meant by *Secrets of State*, where an Enemy or some Rival

rival Nation were not in the Case. He confined the Knowledge of Governing within very *narrow Bounds*, to common Sense and Reason, to Justice and Lenity, to the speedy Determination of civil and criminal Causes; with some other obvious Topicks which are not worth considering. And, he gave it for his Opinion, that whoever could make two Ears of Corn, or two Blades of Grass, to grow upon a Spot of Ground where only one grew before, would deserve better of Mankind, and do more essential Service to his Country than the whole race of Politicians put together.

THE Learning of this People is very defective, consisting only in Morality, History, Poetry, and Mathematicks, wherein they must be allowed to excel. But, the last of these is wholly applied to what may be useful in Life, to the Improvement of Agriculture and all mechanical Arts; so that among us it would be little esteemed. And as to Ideas, Entities, Abstractions

straction and Transcendentals, I could never drive the least Conception into their Heads.

No Law of that Country must exceed in words the number of Letters in their Alphabet, which consists only in two and twenty. But, indeed, few of them extend even to that Length. They are expressed in the most plain and simple Terms, wherein those People are not mercurial enough to discover above one Interpretation: And to write a Comment upon any Law is a capital Crime. As to the Decision of civil Causes, or Proceedings against Criminals, their Precedents are so few, that they have little Reason to boast of any extraordinary Skill in either,

THEY have had the Art of Printing, as well as the *Chinese*, time out of mind: But their Libraries are not very large; for that of the King's, which is reckoned the biggest, doth not amount to above a thousand Volumes, placed in a Gallery of twelve hundred Foot long

VOL. I. U from

from whence I had Liberty to borrow what Books I pleased. The Queen's Joiner had contrived in one of *Glumdalclitch's* Rooms a kind of wooden Machine five and twenty foot high, formed like a standing Ladder, the Steps were each fifty foot long: It was indeed a moveable pair of Stairs, the lowest end placed at ten foot distance from the Wall of the Chamber. The Book I had a mind to read was put up leaning against the Wall: I first mounted to the upper Step of the Ladder, and turning my Face towards the Book, began at the top of the Page, and so walking to the right and left about eight or ten Paces, according to the length of the Lines, till I had gotten a little below the Level of mine Eyes, and then descending gradually till I came to the bottom: After which I mounted again, and began the other Page in the same manner; and so turned over the Leaf, which I could easily do with both my Hands, for it was as thick and stiff as a Paste-board, and in

the largest Folio's not above eighteen or twenty foot long.

THEIR Stile is clear, masculine, and smooth, but not florid; for they avoid nothing more than multiplying unnecessary Words, or using various Expressions. I have perused many of their Books, especially those in History and Morality. Among the rest I was much diverted with a little old Treatise, which always lay in *Glumdalclitch's* Bed-Chamber, and belonged to her Governess, a grave elderly Gentlewoman, who dealt in Writings of Morality and Devotion. The Book treats of the Weakness of Human Kind, and is in little Esteem, except among the Women and the Vulgar. However, I was curious to see what an Author of that Country could say upon such a Subject. This Writer went through all the usual Topicks of European Moralists, shewing how diminutive, contemptible, and helpless an Animal was Man in his own Nature;

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how unable to defend himself from Inclemencies of the Air, or the Fury of wild Beasts: How much he was excelled by one Creature in Strength, by another in Speed, by a third in Foresight, by a fourth in Industry. He added, that Nature was degenerated in these latter declining Ages of the World, and could now produce only small abortive Births in comparison of those in ancient Times. He said, it was very reasonable to think, not only that the Species of Man were originally much larger, but also, that there must have been Giants in former Ages, which, as it is asserted by History and Tradition, so it hath been confirmed by huge Bones and Skulls casually dug up in several Parts of the Kingdom, far exceeding the common dwindled race of Man in our Days. He argued, that the very Laws of Nature absolutely required we should have been made in the beginning, of a size more large and robust, not so liable to Destruction from every little accident of a

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Tile falling from an House, or a Stone cast from the Hand of a Boy, or of being drowned in a little Brook. From this way of Reasoning, the Author drew several moral Applications useful in the Conduct of Life, but needless here to repeat. For my own part, I could not avoid reflecting how universally this Talent was spread, of drawing Lectures in Morality, or, indeed, rather Matter of Discontent and Repining, from the Quarrels we raise with Nature. And, I believe, upon a strict Enquiry, those Quarrels might be shewn as ill grounded among us, as they are among that People.

As to their Military Affairs, they boast that the King's Army consists of an hundred and seventy six thousand Foot, and thirty two thousand Horse: If that may be called an Army which is made up of Tradesmen in the several Cities, and Farmers in the Country, whose Commanders are only the Nobility and Gentry, without Pay or Reward. They are,

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indeed, perfect enough in their Exercises, and under very good Discipline, wherein I saw no great Merit; for how should it be otherwise, where every Farmer is under the Command of his own Landlord, and every Citizen under that of the principal Men in his own City; chosen after the manner of *Venice* by *Ballot*? *above  
in several Universit. to bestow the  
m. 1600. 1601. 1602.*

I have often seen the Militia of *Lor  
brugrud* drawn out to exercise in a great Field near the City, of twenty Miles square. They were, in all, not above twenty five thousand Foot, and six thousand Horse; but it was impossible for me to compute their Number, considering the space of Ground they took up. A Cavalier mounted on a large Steed might be about an hundred foot high. I have seen this whole Body of Horse, upon a Word of Command, draw their Swords at once, and brandish them in the Air. Imagination can figure nothing so grand, so surprising, and so astonishing! It looked as if ten thousand Flashes of Lightning

ning were darting at the same Time from every Quarter of the Sky.

I WAS curious to know how this Prince, to whose Dominions there is no Access from any other Country, came to think of Armies, or to teach his People the Practice of military Discipline. But I was soon informed, both by Conversation, and reading their Histories: For, in the Course of many Ages they have been troubled with the same Disease to which so many other Governments are subject; the Nobility often contending for Power, the People for Liberty, and the King for absolute Dominion. All which, however happily tempered by the Laws of the Kingdom, have been sometimes violated by each of the three Parties, and have once or more occasioned Civil Wars, the last whereof was happily put an End to by this Prince's Grandfather by a general Composition; and the Militia, then settled with common Consent, hath been ever since kept in the strictest Duty.