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Letters On The Study And Use Of History

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London, 1752

Letter II. Concerning the true use and advantages of it.

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51142](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-51142)

[II]

OF THE

STUDY of HISTORY.

LETTER II.

Concerning the true use and advantages
of it.

LET me say something of history in general, before I descend into the consideration of particular parts of it, or of the various methods of study, or of the different views of those that apply themselves to it, as I had begun to do in my former letter.

THE love of history seems inseparable from human nature, because it seems inseparable

parable from self-love. The same principle in this instance carries us forward and backward, to future and to past ages. We imagine that the things, which affect us, must affect posterity: this sentiment runs through mankind, from CAESAR down to the parish clerk in POPE'S miscellany. We are fond of preserving, as far as it is in our frail power, the memory of our own adventures, of those of our own time, and of those that preceded it. Rude heaps of stones have been raised, and ruder hymns have been composed, for this purpose, by nations who had not yet the use of arts and letters. To go no further back, the triumphs of ODIN were celebrated in runic songs, and the feats of our British ancestors were recorded in those of their bards. The savages of America have the same custom at this day: and long historical ballads of their huntings and their wars are sung at all their festivals. There is no need of saying how this passion grows among civilized nations,

in proportion to the means of gratifying it: but let us observe that the same principle of nature directs us as strongly, and more generally as well as more early, to indulge our own curiosity, instead of preparing to gratify that of others. The child harkens with delight to the tales of his nurse, he learns to read, and he devours with eagerness fabulous legends and novels. In riper years he applies himself to history, or to that which he takes for history, to authorized romance: and even in age, the desire, of knowing what has happened to other men, yields to the desire alone, of relating what has happened to ourselves. Thus history, true or false, speaks to our passions always. What pity is it, my lord, that even the best should speak to our understandings so seldom? That it does so, we have none to blame but our selves. Nature has done her part. She has opened this study to every man who can read and think: and what she has made the most agreeable, reason can make the most useful, application of our minds. But if
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we consult our reason, we shall be far from following the examples of our fellow-creatures, in this as in most other cases, who are so proud of being rational. We shall neither read to soothe our indolence, nor to gratify our vanity: as little shall we content ourselves to drudge like grammarians and critics, that others may be able to study, with greater ease and profit, like philosophers and statesmen: as little shall we affect the slender merit of becoming great scholars at the expence of groping all our lives in the dark mazes of antiquity. All these mistake the true drift of study, and the true use of history. Nature gave us curiosity to excite the industry of our minds; but she never intended it should be made the principal, much less the sole, object of their application. The true and proper object of this application, is a constant improvement in private and in public virtue. An application to any study, that tends neither directly nor indirectly to make us better men and better citizens,

is at best but a specious and ingenious sort of idleness to use an expression of TILLOTSON: and the knowledge we acquire by it is a creditable kind of ignorance, nothing more. This creditable kind of ignorance is, in my opinion, the whole benefit which the generality of men, even of the most learned, reap from the study of history: and yet the study of history seems to me, of all other, the most proper to train us up to private and public virtue.

YOUR lordship may very well be ready by this time, and after so much bold censure on my part, to ask me what then is the true use of history? in what respects it may serve to make us better and wiser? and what method is to be pursued in the study of it, for attaining these great ends? I will answer you by quoting what I have read some where or other, in DIONYSIUS HALICARN. I think, that history is philosophy teaching by examples. We need but to cast our eyes on the world, and we shall
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see the daily force of example: we need but to turn them inward, and we shall soon discover why example has this force. "Pauci prudentiâ," says TACITUS, "honestâ ab deterioribus, utilia ab noxiis discernunt: plures aliorum eventis docentur." Such is the imperfection of human understanding, such the frail temper of our minds, that abstract or general propositions, tho never so true, appear obscure or doubtful to us very often, till they are explained by examples; and that the wisest lessons in favour of virtue go but a little way to convince the judgment, and determine the will, unless they are enforced by the same means, and we are obliged to apply to ourselves what we see happen to other men. Instructions by precept have the further disadvantage of coming on the authority of others, and frequently require a long deduction of reasoning. "Homines amplius oculis quam auribus credunt: longum iter est per praecepta, breve & efficax per exempla." The reason of this judgment,

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ment, which I quote from one of *SENECA*'s epistles in confirmation of my own opinion, rests I think on this; that when examples are pointed out to us, there is a kind of appeal, with which we are flattered, made to our senses, as well as our understandings. The instruction comes then upon our own authority: we frame the precept after our own experience, and yield to fact when we resist speculation. But this is not the only advantage of instruction by example; for example appeals not to our understanding alone, but to our passions likewise. Example asswages these, or animates them; sets passion on the side of judgment, and makes the whole man of a piece, which is more than the strongest reasoning and the clearest demonstration can do: and thus forming habits by repetition, example secures the observance of those precepts which example insinuated. Is it not *PLINY*, my lord, who says, that the gentlest, he should have added the most effectual, way of commanding, is by example? "*Mitiùs jubetur*
 VOL. I. C "exemplo.

“exemplo.” The harshest orders are softened by example, and tyranny itself becomes persuasive. What pity it is that so few princes have learned this way of commanding? But again; the force of examples is not confined to those alone that pass immediately under our sight: the examples that memory suggests have the same effect in their degree, and an habit of recalling them will soon produce the habit of imitating them. In the same epistle, from whence I cited a passage just now, *SENECA* says that *CLEANTHES* had never become so perfect a copy of *ZENO*, if he had not passed his life with him; that *PLATO*, *ARISTOTLE*, and the other philosophers of that school, profited more by the example, than by the discourse of *SOCRATES*. [But here by the way *SENECA* mistook; for *SOCRATES* died two years according to some, and four years according to others, before the birth of *ARISTOTLE*: and his mistake might come from the inaccuracy of those who collected for him; as *ERASMUS* observes

ferves, after QUINTILIAN, in his judgment on SENECA.] But be this, which was scarce worth a parenthesis, as it will; he adds that METRODORUS, HERMACHUS, and POLYAENUS, men of great note, were formed by living under the same roof with EPICURUS, not by frequenting his school. These are instances of the force of immediate example. But your lordship knows that the citizens of Rome placed the images of their ancestors in the vestibules of their houses; so that whenever they went in or out, these venerable bustoes met their eyes, and recalled the glorious actions of the dead, to fire the living, to excite them to imitate and even to emulate their great forefathers. The success answered the design. The virtue of one generation was transfused by the magic of example into several: and a spirit of heroism was maintained through many ages of that commonwealth. Now these are so many instances of the force of remote example, and from

all these instances we may conclude that examples of both kinds are necessary.

The school of example, my lord, is the world: and the masters of this school are history and experience. I am far from contending that the former is preferable to the latter. I think upon the whole otherwise: but this I say, that the former is absolutely necessary to prepare us for the latter, and to accompany us whilst we are under the discipline of the latter, that is, through the whole course of our lives. No doubt some few men may be quoted, to whom nature gave what art and industry can give to no man. But such examples will prove nothing against me, because I admit that the study of history without experience is insufficient, but assert that experience itself is so without genius. Genius is preferable to the other two, but I would wish to find the three together: for how great soever a genius may be, and how much soever he may acquire

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quire new light and heat as he proceeds in his rapid course, certain it is that he will never shine with the full lustre, nor shed the full influence he is capable of, unless to his own experience he adds the experience of other men and other ages. Genius, without the improvement at least of experience, is what comets once were thought to be, a blazing meteor, irregular in his course, and dangerous in his approach; of no use to any system, and able to destroy any. Mere sons of earth, if they have experience without any knowledge of the history of the world, are but half scholars in the science of mankind. And if they are conversant in history without experience, they are worse than ignorant; they are pedants, always incapable, sometimes meddling and presuming. The man, who has all three, is an honor to his country, and a public blessing: and such I trust your lordship will be in this century, as your great-grand-father * was in the last.

* Earl of CLARENDON.

I have insisted a little the longer on this head, and have made these distinctions the rather, because tho I attribute a great deal more, than many will be ready to allow, to the study of history; yet I would not willingly even seem to fall into the ridicule of ascribing to it such extravagant effects, as several have done, from TULLY down to CASAUBON, LA MOTHE LE VAYER, and other modern pedants. When TULLY informs us in the second book of his Tusculan disputations, that the first SCIPIO AFRICANUS had always in his hands the works of XENOPHON, he advances nothing but what is probable and reasonable. To say nothing of the retreat of the ten thousand, nor of other parts of XENOPHON'S writings; the images of virtue, represented in that admirable picture the Cyropaedia, were proper to entertain a soul that was fraught with virtue, and CYRUS was worthy to be imitated by SCIPIO. So SELIM emulated CAESAR, whose commentaries were translated for his use against the customs of the Turks:

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so CAESAR emulated ALEXANDER, and ALEXANDER ACHILLES. There is nothing ridiculous here, except the use that is made of this passage by those who quote it. But what the same TULLY says in the fourth book of his academical disputations, concerning LUCULLUS, seems to me very extraordinary. "In Asiam factus imperator venit; cum esset Româ profectus rei militaris rudis;" (one would be ready to ascribe so sudden a change, and so vast an improvement, to nothing less than knowledge infused by inspiration, if we were not assured in the same place that they were effected by very natural means, by such as it is in every man's power to employ) "partim percontando à peritis, partim in rebus gestis legendis." LUCULLUS, according to this account, verified the reproach on the Roman nobility, which SALUST puts into the mouth of MARIUS. But as I discover the passion of MARIUS, and his prejudices to the Patricians in one case; so I discover, methinks, the cunning of TULLY, and his partiality

partiality to himself in the other. LUCUL-
 LUS, after he had been chosen consul, ob-
 tained by intrigue the government of Cili-
 cia, and so put himself into a situation of
 commanding the Roman army against MI-
 THRIDATES: TULLY had the same govern-
 ment afterwards, and tho he had no MI-
 THRIDATES nor any other enemy of con-
 sequence opposed to him, tho all his mili-
 tary feats consisted in surprizing and pillaging
 a parcel of highlanders and wild Cilicians,
 yet he assumed the airs of a conqueror,
 and described his actions in so pompous a
 stile, that the account becomes burlesque:
 He laughs indeed in one of his letters to
 ATTICUS at his generalship; but if we turn
 to those he writ to COELIUS RUFUS and to
 CATO upon this occasion, or to those wherein
 he expresses to ATTICUS his resentment
 against CATO, for not proposing in his fa-
 vour the honors usually decreed to conquer-
 ors we may see how vanity turned his head,
 and how impudently he insisted on obtain-
 ing a triumph. Is it any strain now to sup-
 pose,

pose, that he meant to insinuate in the passage I have quoted about LUCULLUS, that the difference between him and the former governor of Cilicia, even in military merit, arose from the different conjuncture alone? and that LUCULLUS could not have done in Cilicia at that time more than he himself did? CICERO had read and questioned at least as much as LUCULLUS, and would therefore have appeared as great a captain, if he had had as great a prince as MITHRIDATES to encounter. But the truth is, that LUCULLUS was made a great captain by theory or the study of history alone, no more than FERDINAND of Spain and ALPHONSUS of Naples were cured of desperate distempers by reading LIVY and QUINTUS CURTIUS; a silly tale which BODIN, AMYOT, and others have picked up and propagated. LUCULLUS had served in his youth against the Marfi, probably in other wars, and SYLLA took early notice of him: he went into the east with this general, and had a great share in his confidence.

fidence. He commanded in several expeditions: It was he who restored the Colophonians to their liberty, and who punished the revolt of the people of Mytelene. Thus we see that LUCULLUS was formed by experience as well as study, and by an experience gained in those very countries, where he gathered so many laurels afterwards in fighting against the same enemy. The late duke of MARLBOROUGH never read XENOPHON most certainly, nor the relation perhaps of any modern wars; but he served in his youth under monsieur de TURENNE, and I have heard that he was taken notice of in those early days by that great man. He afterwards commanded in an expedition to Ireland, served a campaign or two, if I mistake not, under king WILLIAM in Flanders: and, besides these occasions, had none of gaining experience in war, till he came to the head of our armies in one thousand seven hundred and two, and triumphed, not over Asiatic troops, but over the veteran armies of France.

France. The Roman had on his side genius and experience cultivated by study: the Briton had genius improved by experience, and no more. The first therefore is not an example of what study can do alone; but the latter is an example of what genius and experience can do without study. They can do much to be sure, when the first is given in a superior degree. But such examples are very rare: and when they happen, it will be still true, that they would have had fewer blemishes, and would have come nearer to the perfection of private and public virtue, in all the arts of peace and achievements of war; if the views of such men had been enlarged, and their sentiments ennobled, by acquiring that cast of thought and that temper of mind, which will grow up and become habitual in every man who applies himself early to the study of history as the study of philosophy, with the intention of being wiser and better, without the affectation of being more learned.

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THE temper of the mind is formed, and a certain turn given to our ways of thinking; in a word, the seeds of that moral character which cannot wholly alter the natural character, but may correct the evil and improve the good that is in it, or do the very contrary, or sow betimes, much sooner than is commonly supposed. It is equally certain, that we shall gather or not gather experience, be the better or the worse for this experience, when we come into the world and mingle amongst mankind, according to the temper of mind, and the turn of thought, that we have acquired beforehand, and bring along with us. They will tincture all our future acquisitions, so that the very same experience, which secures the judgment of one man or excites him to virtue, shall lead another into error, or plunge him into vice. From hence it follows, that the study of history has in this respect a double advantage. If experience alone can make us perfect in our parts, experience

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ence cannot begin to teach them till we are actually on the stage: whereas by a previous application to this study, we conn them over at least before we appear there: we are not quite unprepared, we learn our parts sooner, and we learn them better.

LET me explain what I mean by an example. There is scarce any folly or vice more epidemical among the sons of men, than that ridiculous and hurtful vanity, by which the people of each country are apt to prefer themselves to those of every other; and to make their own customs and manners and opinions the standards of right and wrong, of true and false. The Chinese mandarions were strangely surpris'd, and almost incredulous, when the Jesuits shewed them how small a figure their empire made in the general map of the world. The Samojedes wondered much at the Czar of Muscovy for not living among them: and the Hottentott, who returned from Europe, stripped himself naked as soon as he came home, put on
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his bracelets of guts and garbage, and grew stinking and lowfy as fast as he could. Now nothing can contribute more to prevent us from being tainted with this vanity, than to accustom ourselves early to contemplate the different nations of the earth in that vast map which history spreads before us, in their rise and their fall, in their barbarous and civilized states, in the likeness and unlikeness of them all to one another, and of each to itself. By frequently renewing this prospect to the mind, the Mexican with his cap and coat of feathers, sacrificing a human victim to his god, will not appear more savage to our eyes, than the Spaniard with an hat on his head, and a gonilla round his neck, sacrificing whole nations to his ambition, his avarice, and even the wantonness of his cruelty. I might shew, by a multitude of other examples, how history prepares us for experience, and guides us in it: and many of these would be both curious and
important.

important. I might likewise bring several other instances, wherein history serves to purge the mind of those national partialities and prejudices that we are apt to contract in our education, and that experience for the most part rather confirms than removes; because it is for the most part confined, like our education. But I apprehend growing too prolix, and shall therefore conclude this head by observing, that tho an early and proper application to the study of history will contribute extremely to keep our minds free from a ridiculous partiality in favour of our own country, and a vicious prejudice against others; yet the same study will create in us a preference of affection to our own country. There is a story told of ABGARUS. He brought several beasts taken in different places to Rome, they say, and let them loose before AUGUSTUS: every beast ran immediately to that part of the Circus, where a parcel of earth taken

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from his native soil had been laid. "Credat Judaeus Apella". This tale might pass on JOSEPHUS; for in him I believe I read it: but surely the love of our country is a lesson of reason, not an institution of nature. Education and habit, obligation and interest, attach us to it, not instinct. It is however so necessary to be cultivated, and the prosperity of all societies, as well as the grandeur of some, depends upon it so much, that orators by their eloquence, and poets by their enthusiasm, have endeavoured to work up this precept of morality into a principle of passion. But the examples which we find in history, improved by the lively descriptions and the just applauses or censures of historians, will have a much better and more permanent effect than declamation, or song, or the dry ethics of mere philosophy. In fine, to converse with historians is to keep good company: many of them were excellent men, and those who were not such have taken care however to appear such in their writings.

It must be therefore of great use to prepare our selves by this conversation for that of the world; and to receive our first impressions, and to acquire our first habits, in a scene where images of virtue and vice are continually represented to us in the colors that belong properly to them, before we enter on another scene, where virtue and vice are too often confounded, and what belongs to one is ascribed to the other.

BESIDES the advantage of beginning our acquaintance with mankind sooner, and of bringing with us into the world, and the business of it, such a cast of thought and such a temper of mind, as will enable us to make a better use of our experience; there is this farther advantage in the study of history, that the improvement we make by it extends to more objects, and is made at the expence of other men: whereas that improvement, which is the effect of our own experience, is confined to fewer objects, and is made at

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our own expence. To state the account fairly therefore between these two improvements; tho the latter be the more valuable, yet allowance being made on one side for the much greater number of examples that history presents to us, and deduction being made on the other of the price we often pay for our experience, the value of the former will rise in proportion. “ I have recorded these things, says POLYBIUS, after giving an account of the defeat of REGULUS “ that they who
 “ read these commentaries may be rendered better by them; for all men have two
 “ ways of improvement, one arising from
 “ their own experience, and one from the
 “ experience of others.” “ Evidentior
 “ quidem illa est, quae per propria ducit
 “ infortunia; at tutior illa quae per aliena.” I use CASAUBON’S translation. POLYBIUS goes on, and concludes, “ that since
 “ the first of these ways exposes us to
 “ great labor and peril, whilst the second works the same good effect, and
 “ is

“ is attended by no evil circumstance,
“ every one ought to take for grant-
“ ed, that the study of history is the
“ best school where he can learn how to
“ conduct himself in all the situations of
“ life.” REGULUS had seen at Rome
many examples of magnanimity, of fru-
gality, of the contempt of riches and
of other virtues; and these virtues he
practised. But he had not learned, nor
had opportunity of learning another lesson,
which the examples recorded in history
inculcate frequently, the lesson of mode-
ration. An insatiable thirst of military
fame, an unconfined ambition of extend-
ing their empire, an extravagant con-
fidence in their own courage and force,
an insolent contempt of their enemies, and
an impetuous over-bearing spirit with
which they pursued all their enterprizes,
composed in his days the distinguishing
character of a Roman. Whatever the
senate and people resolved, appeared to
the members of that commonwealth both

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practi-

practicable and just. Neither difficulties nor dangers could check them; and their sages had not yet discovered, that virtues in excess degenerate into vices. Notwithstanding the beautiful rant which HORACE puts into his mouth, I make no doubt that REGULUS learned at Carthage those lessons of moderation which he had not learned at Rome: but he learned them by experience, and the fruits of this experience came too late, and cost too dear; for they cost the total defeat of the Roman army, the prolongation of a calamitous war which might have been finished by a glorious peace, the loss of liberty to thousands of Roman citizens, and to REGULUS himself the loss of life in the midst of torments, if we are entirely to credit what is perhaps exaggeration in the Roman authors.

THERE is another advantage worthy our observation that belongs to the study of history; and that I shall mention here,
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not only because of the importance of it, but because it leads me immediately to speak of the nature of the improvement we ought to have in our view, and of the method in which it seems to me that this improvement ought to be pursued: two particulars from which your lordship may think perhaps that I digress too long. The advantage I mean consists in this, that the examples which history presents to us, both of men and of events, are generally complete: the whole example is before us, and consequently the whole lesson, or sometimes the various lessons which philosophy proposes to teach us by this example. For first, as to men; we see them at their whole length in history, and we see them generally there through a medium less partial at least than that of experience: for I imagine, that a whig or a tory, whilst those parties subsisted, would have condemned in SATURNINUS the spirit of faction which he applauded in his own

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tribunes,

tribunes, and would have applauded in DRUSUS the spirit of moderation which he despised in those of the contrary party, and which he suspected and hated in those of his own party. The villain who has imposed on mankind by his power or cunning, and whom experience could not unmask for a time, is unmasked at length: and the honest man, who has been misunderstood or defamed, is justified before his story ends. Or if this does not happen, if the villain dies with his mask on, in the midst of applause and honor and wealth and power, and if the honest man dies under the same load of calumny and disgrace under which he lived, driven perhaps into exile and exposed to want; yet we see historical justice executed, the name of one branded with infamy, and that of the other celebrated with panygeric to succeeding ages. “ Praecipuum munus annalium
 “ reor, ne virtutes fileantur; utque pra-
 “ vis dictis factisque ex posteritate et in-
 “ famiâ

“famiâ metus fit.” Thus according to TACITUS, and according to truth, from which his judgments seldom deviate, the principal duty of history is to erect a tribunal, like that among the Egyptians, mentioned by DIODORUS SICULUS, where men and princes themselves were tried, and condemned or acquitted, after their deaths: where those who had not been punished for their crimes, and those who had not been honored for their virtues, received a just retribution. The sentence is pronounced in one case, as it was in the other, too late to correct or recompence; but it is pronounced in time to render these examples of general instruction to mankind. Thus CICERO, that I may quote one instance out of thousands, and that I may do justice to the general character of that great man whose particular failing I have censured so freely; CICERO, I say, was abandoned by OCTAVIUS, and massacred by ANTHONY. But let any man read this fragment of ARELLIUS FUSCUS, and

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chuse which he would wish to have been, the orator, or the triumvir? "Quoad
" humanum genus incolume manserit,
" quamdiu usus litteris, honor summae
" eloquentiae pretium erit, quamdiu rerum
" natura aut fortuna steterit, aut memoria
" duraverit, admirabile posteris vigebis in-
" genium, et uno proscripsum seculo, pro-
" scribes Antonium omnibus."

Thus again as to events that stand recorded in history: we see them all, we see them as they followed one another, or as they produced one another, causes or effects, immediate or remote. We are cast back, as it were, into former ages: we live with the men who lived before us, and we inhabit countries that we never saw. Place is enlarged, and time prolonged, in this manner; so that the man who applies himself early to the study of history, may acquire in a few years, and before he sets his foot abroad in the world, not only a more extended knowledge of
mankind,

mankind, but the experience of more centuries than any of the patriarchs saw. The events we are witnesses of, in the course of the longest life, appear to us very often original, unprepared, single, and un-relative, if I may use such an expression for want of a better in English; in French I would say *isoléz*: they appear such very often, are called accidents, and looked upon as the effects of chance; a word, by the way, which is in constant use, and has no determinate meaning. We get over the present difficulty, we improve the momentary advantage, as well as we can, and we look no farther. Experience can carry us no farther; for experience can go a very little way back in discovering causes: and effects are not the objects of experience till they happen. From hence many errors in judgment, and by consequence in conduct, necessarily arise. And here too lyes the difference we are speaking of between history and experience. The advantage on the

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side of the former is double. In ancient history, as we have said already, the examples are complete, which are incomplete in the course of experience. The beginning, the progression, and the end appear, not of particular reigns, much less of particular enterprizes, or systems of policy alone, but of governments, of nations, of empires, and of all the various systems that have succeeded one another in the course of their duration. In modern history, the examples may be, and sometimes are, incomplete; but they have this advantage when they are so, that they serve to render complete the examples of our own time. Experience is doubly defective; we are born too late to see the beginning, and we die too soon to see the end of many things. History supplies both these defects. Modern history shews the causes, when experience presents the effects alone: and ancient history enables us to guess at the effects, when experience presents the causes alone. Let
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me explain my meaning by two examples of these kinds; one past, the other actually present,

WHEN the revolution of one thousand six hundred eighty eight happened, few men then alive, I suppose, went farther in their search after the causes of it, than the extravagant attempt of king JAMES against the religion and liberty of his people. His former conduct and the passages of king CHARLES II's reign might rankle still at the hearts of some men, but could not be set to account among the causes of his deposition; since he had succeeded, notwithstanding them, peaceably to the throne, and the nation in general, even many of those who would have excluded him from it, were desirous, or at least willing, that he should continue in it. Now this example thus stated affords, no doubt, much good instruction to the kings, and people of Britain. But this instruction is not entire, because the example thus stated, and confined

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to the experience of that age, is imperfect. King JAMES's mal-administration rendered a revolution necessary and practicable; but his mal-administration, as well as all his preceding conduct, was caused by his bigot attachment to popery, and to the principles of arbitrary government, from which no warning could divert him. His bigot attachment to these was caused by the exile of the royal family; this exile was caused by the usurpation of CROMWEL: and CROMWEL's usurpation was the effect of a former rebellion, begun not without reason on account of liberty, but without any valid pretence on account of religion. During this exile, our princes caught the taint of popery and foreign politics. We made them unfit to govern us, and after that were forced to recal them that they might rescue us out of anarchy. It was necessary therefore, your lordship sees, at the revolution, and it is more so now, to go back in history, at least as far as I have mentioned, and perhaps farther,

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ther, even to the beginning of king JAMES the first's reign, to render this event a complete example, and to develope all the wise, honest, and salutary precepts, with which it is pregnant, both to king and subject.

THE other example shall be taken from what has succeeded the revolution. Few men at that time looked forward enough, to foresee the necessary consequences of the new constitution of the revenue that was soon afterwards formed, nor of the method of funding that immediately took place; which, absurd as they are, have continued ever since, till it is become scarce possible to alter them. Few people, I say, foresaw how the creation of funds, and the multiplication of taxes, would encrease yearly the power of the crown, and bring our liberties, by a natural and necessary progression, into more real, tho less apparent danger, than they were in before the revolution. The excessive ill husbandry practised from the very beginning of king

WILLIAM'S

WILLIAM'S reign, and which laid the foundations of all we feel and all we fear, was not the effect of ignorance, mistake, or what we call chance, but of design and scheme in those who had the sway at that time. I am not so uncharitable however as to believe that they intended to bring upon their country all the mischiefs that we, who came after them, experience, and apprehend. No, they saw the measures they took singly, and unrelatively, or relatively alone to some immediate object. The notion of attaching men to the new government, by tempting them to embark their fortunes on the same bottom, was a reason of state to some: the notion of creating a new, that is, a monied interest, in opposition to the landed interest or as a balance to it, and of acquiring a superior influence in the city of London at least by the establishment of great corporations, was a reason of party to others: and I make no doubt that the opportunity of amassing immense estates by the management

ment of funds, by trafficking in paper, and by all the arts of jobbing, was a reason of private interest to those who supported and improved this scheme of iniquity, if not to those who devised it. They looked no farther. Nay we who came after them, and have long tasted the bitter fruits of the corruption they planted, were far from taking such an alarm at our distress, and our danger, as they deserved; till the most remote and fatal effect of causes, laid by the last generation, was very near becoming an object of experience in this. Your lordship, I am sure, sees at once how much a due reflection on the passages of former times, as they stand recorded in the history of our own, and of other countries, would have deterred a free people from trusting the sole management of so great a revenue, and the sole nomination of those legions of officers employed in it, to their chief magistrate. There remained indeed no pretence for doing so, when once a salary was settled on
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the prince, and the public revenue was no longer in any sense his revenue, nor the public expence his expence. Give me leave to add, that it would have been, and would be still, more decent with regard to the prince, and less repugnant if not more conformable to the principles and practice too of our government, to take this power and influence from the prince, or to share it with him; than to exclude men from the privilege of representing their fellow subjects who would chuse them in parliament, purely because they are employed and trusted by the prince.

Your lordship sees not only, how much a due reflection upon the experience of other ages and countries would have pointed out national corruption as the natural and necessary consequence of investing the crown with the management of so great a revenue, but also the loss of
Liberty

liberty as the natural and necessary consequence of national corruption.

These two examples explain sufficiently what they are intended to explain. It only remains therefore upon this head, to observe the difference between the two manners in which history supplies the defects of our own experience. It shews us causes as in fact they were laid, with their immediate effects: and it enables us to guess at future events. It can do no more in the nature of things. My lord BACON, in his second book of the advancement of learning, having in his mind I suppose what PHILO and JOSEPHUS asserted of MOSES, affirms divine history to have this prerogative, that the narration may be before the fact as well as after. But since the ages of prophecy, as well as miracles, are past, we must content ourselves to guess at what will be, by what has been: we have no other means in our power, and history furnishes us with these. How

we are to improve, and apply these means, as well as how we are to acquire them, shall be deduced more particularly in another letter.

OF

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