

epoch tends only to a confused reference of them all to one date, although, between them, there was almost a century of difference of time.

Besides, in every method of classification, there ought to be a relation between the objects classified, which the mind at once perceives, so that the idea of the one naturally leads to or suggests that of the other. Now such connexion it is evident there cannot be in such an arrangement, where the events happening in a certain period of time over the whole globe, are all referred to one event that happened in the first year of that period, in one particular nation.

The division of Universal History into epochs, goes upon this idea, that a comprehensive picture is to be presented to the view of all the remarkable events and actions which were going forward upon the face of the earth at the same period of time. Now, a picture of this kind, if equal justice is done to every part of it, would present a most confused and uninstrucive composition. In order to preserve the strict chronological order, many of the most important public events which are progressive, and of considerable duration, must be interrupted, almost in their commencement, or in the middle of their progress; and the attention carried off to an infinite variety of different objects and scenes, totally unconnected with each other. Thus, M. Bossuet makes no scruple to transport his reader in a single sentence from Jerusalem to Lacedæmon; from the atrocities of Jehu in exterminating the royal house of Judah, and the criminal usurpation of Athaliah, to the foundation of the Spartan republic, and the politic plans of

Lycurgus; and, with equal impropriety, he hurries back the reader in the next sentence to the conclusion of the history of Athaliah, the punishment of her crimes, and the restoration of Joas, king of Judah, to the throne of his ancestors.

But what are the advantages of this strict chronological order, that we must sacrifice so much to it? Order is beautiful, but it is no otherwise so than as subservient to utility; and a whimsical order confounds, instead of elucidating. We certainly make a bad exchange, if we lose all ideas of a connected history of any single nation, and all the important lessons which arise from remarking the progress of events, and the chain which links them with their causes, for the sake of a forced association of events happening in distant nations, which have no other connexion than that of time.

I shall now briefly lay down that plan which I propose to follow in these commentaries on Universal History.

When the world is viewed at any period, either of ancient or of modern history, we generally observe one Nation or Empire predominant, to whom all the rest bear, as it were, an underpart, and to whose history we find, in general, that the principal events in other nations may be referred from some natural connexion.

This predominant Nation I propose to exhibit to view as the principal object, whose history, as being in reality the most important, is therefore to be more fully delineated; while the rest, as subordinate, are brought into view only when they come to have an obvious connection with the principal. The antecedent history of such subordinate

nations will then be traced in a short retrospect of their own annals. Such collateral views, which figure only as episodes, I shall endeavour so to regulate, as that they shall have no hurtful effect in violating the unity of the principal piece.

For the earliest periods of the history of the world, we have no records of equal authority with the Sacred Scriptures. They ascend to a period antecedent to the formation of regular states or communities, they are long prior to the authentic annals of the profane nations*, and they are, therefore our only lights on those distant and dark ages of the infancy of the human race.

Among the profane nations of antiquity, that which first makes a remarkable figure, and whose history at the same time has a claim to be regarded as authentic, is the states of Greece. They therefore demand a peculiar attention, and it is of importance to trace their history to its origin. But the Greeks were indebted for the greatest part of their knowledge to the Egyptians and Phœnicians.

* Moses conducted the Israelites out of Egypt 1491 years before the birth of Christ, according to the Chronology of Usher. Sanchoniatho, supposed the most ancient of the profane writers, lived several years after the Trojan war (B. C. 1184); and the fragments which pass under his name are of the most doubtful authority. They were compiled, as Philo of Biblos informs us, from certain ancient Ammonian records, which, amidst a great mass of fabulous and allegorical matter, contained, as was supposed, some historical facts, which Sanchoniatho has extracted. Homer lived, as is believed, about a century later than Sanchoniatho. Cadmus of Miletus, the first prose historian among the profane writers, flourished under Cyrus, about 540 years before Christ.

These, therefore, as relative to the leading nation demand a portion of our attention, and naturally precede, or pave the way to, the history of the Greeks. For a similar reason, the Assyrians, a rival nation, conquered by the Egyptians at one time, and conquerors of them afterwards in their turn, (though their early history is extremely dark and uncertain,) require likewise a share in our observation.

The Greeks then come to fill up the whole of the picture, and we endeavour to present an accurate delineation of their independent states, the singular constitution of the two great republics of Sparta and Athens, and the outlines of their history, down to the period of the Persian war, commenced by Darius, the son of Hystaspes, and prosecuted under his successors Xerxes and Artaxerxes. This connection naturally induces a short retrospect to the preceding periods of the Persian history; the rise of that monarchy, the nature of its government, the manners of the people, and the singular religion of the ancient Persians, which subsisted without much adulteration for some thousands of years, and is still kept alive among a particular sect at this day.

The conclusion of the Persian war brings us back to the internal history of the states of Greece. We observe the subjection of Athens to the ambitious Pericles, and the seeds sown of the decline of that illustrious republic. The divisions of Greece engage our attention; the war of Peloponnesus; the corruption of the Spartan constitution introduced by Lysander; the glory of Thebes, under Pelopidas and Epaminondas. We

consider now the ambitious schemes of Philip of Macedon, the renewal of the war with Persia, and the immense conquests of Alexander the Great. We see, in fine, the total corruption of the Greeks; the extinction of all public virtue; the last feeble remains of patriotism in the union of the Achæan states; and the final reduction and submission of Greece to the arms of the Romans.

The history of this illustrious people, the Greeks, furnishes a most ample field of reflection. The policy and constitution of the different states, particularly the two great and rival republics of Athens and Lacedæmon, demand our attention, as singularly illustrative of ancient manners, and the wonderful effects of habit and discipline on the nature of man. The causes which contributed to the rise and decline of those commonwealths are pregnant with political instruction. The change which the national character of the Greeks in general underwent, is a striking circumstance in the history of human nature, and will illustrate the influence of morals on political prosperity. The literary genius of this people, their progress in philosophy, their eminence in the fine arts—in all of which departments they became the models of imitation and the instructors of the ancient world,—these subjects, furnishing much matter of useful speculation, will be treated in separate short disquisitions at the conclusion of the historical detail.

Hitherto the leading object of attention is the history of Greece, to which, as may be observed, may be referred, by a natural connection, that of

all the other nations whose history is in those periods deserving of our acquaintance.

The conquest of Greece by the Romans entitles this latter nation to rank as the principal object in the subsequent delineation of ancient history. Without regard to the offence against chronology, we now return back above four hundred years, to observe the origin and rise of this remarkable people. We contemplate them in their infancy; we observe the military character which they derived from their incessant wars with the neighbouring states of Italy; the nature of their government and internal policy under the kings; the easy revolution effected by the substitution of the consular for the regal dignity, without any substantial change in the constitution. We next remark the causes of the subsequent change; the people uniting themselves to resist the tyranny and oppression of the patrician order; the advantages they gain by the creation of the popular magistrates; the continual encroachments they make on the powers and privileges of the higher order, till they obtain an equal capacity of enjoying all the offices and dignities of the commonwealth.

We now view the gradual extension of the Roman arms; the conquest of all Italy; the origin of the wars with foreign nations; the rise with the Punic wars, which opened a collateral view of the history of Carthage and of Sicily; we trace the success of the Roman arms in Asia, Macedonia, and Greece, the opulence of the republic, from her conquests; and the corruption of her manners. In fine, we behold the extinction of patriotism; the

endless discords between the orders, loosening all the bands of public virtue! the progress of faction and inordinate ambition, terminating in the civil wars and ruin of the commonwealth.

At this remarkable period, which naturally allows a pause in the historical detail, I shall devote some time to the examination of those particulars which are characteristic of the genius and national spirit of the Romans; their system of education; their laws; their literary character; their art of war; their knowledge in the arts and sciences; their private and public manners; and their predominant tastes and passions. I shall close the remarks on the Roman history during the commonwealth, with some political reflections naturally arising from the subject, and illustrated by examples drawn both from that history, and from the preceding account of the states of Greece.

We then resume the outlines of the Roman history under the emperors. We observe the specious policy under which they disguise an absolute authority, till it is no longer necessary to keep on the mask. We remark the decline of the ambitious character of the Romans, and their easy submission to the entire loss of civil liberty; the progress of corruption; the venality of the imperial dignity; the mischievous though necessary policy of the emperors, who, to secure their own power, industriously abased the military spirit of the people; the effect of this ruinous policy in inviting the barbarous nations to attack the frontiers of those extensive dominions, which were now a languid and unwieldy body without internal vigour; the weakness of the empire still further increased

by its partition under Dioclesian, and subdivision under his successors; the triumph of Christianity, and the extinction of paganism in the age of Theodosius.

We mark now the progress of the barbarian nations, who attack the provinces on every quarter, till the Western empire becomes entirely their prey; Africa seized by the Vandals, Spain by the Visigoths, Gaul by the Franks, Britain by the Saxons; Rome and Italy itself by the Herulians, and afterwards by the Ostrogoths. We shall then observe, as the last flashes of an expiring lamp, a short but vigorous exertion from the East, by the generals of Justinian; the temporary recovery of Italy; and its final reduction by the Lombards.

At this period of the fall of the Western empire, we are naturally invited to enter into some short inquiries regarding the manners, the genius, the laws, and government of the Gothic nations; and the distinguishing characteristics of those northern invaders, both before and after their establishment in the provinces of the empire.

Thus, ancient history will admit of a perspicuous delineation, by making our principal object of attention the predominant states of Greece and Rome, and incidentally touching on the most remarkable parts of the history of the subordinate nations of antiquity, when connected with, or relative to, the principal object.

In the delineation of Modern History, a similar plan will be pursued. The leading objects will be more various, and will more frequently change their place: a nation at one time the principal, may become for a while subordinate, and after-

wards reassume its rank as principal ; but uniformity of design will still characterise this moving picture ; the attention will always be directed to the history of a predominant people ; and other nations will be only incidentally noticed, when there is a natural connexion with the principal object.

After the fall of the Western Empire, the nation which first distinguishes itself by its conquests, and the splendour of its dominion, is that of the Saracens. The progress of the arms and of the religion of Mahomet, the rise and extent of the empire of the caliphs, are singular and interesting objects of attention. The Franks though settled in the Gauls before this period, do not attract our notice till afterwards—when the foundation of the new empire of the west by Charlemagne naturally engages us to look back to the origin of their monarchy. Thus we have briefly before us in one connected view, the progress of this remarkable people from their infancy under Clovis, to their highest elevation under Charlemagne ; and thence to the reduction and demembration of their dominions under his weak posterity.

The age of Charlemagne furnishes some interesting matters of inquiry with regard to laws, literature, manners, and government ; and we shall endeavour to trace the origin of that remarkable policy, the source (as has been justly said) both of the stability and of the disorders of the kingdoms of Europe,—the feudal system.

The collateral objects of attention during this period are, the still venerable remains of the Roman empire in the East ; the beginning of the

conquests and establishments of the Normans; the foundation and progress of the temporal dominion of the church of Rome; the separation of the Greek and Latin churches; the affairs of Italy, and the conquest of Spain by the Saracens.

We now direct our attention for the first time to the history of Britain, postponed to this period, that we may consider it in one connected view, from its rudest stage to the end of the Anglo-Saxon government.

As the history of our own country is of more importance to us than that of any other, the British history, as often as it is resumed, will be treated with greater amplitude than the limits of our plan allow to other nations; and while we note the progress of manners, literature, and the arts, it shall be our endeavour, without prejudice, to mark those circumstances which indicate the progress of the constitution, its successive changes, and its advancement to that system of equal liberty under which we have the happiness of living. We shall see in the Saxon *Wittenagemot* the rude model of a parliament; and in the institutions of the English Alfred, we shall admire, in an age of barbarism, the genius of a great politician and legislator.

While the history of Britain to the conquest is the primary object of attention, a collateral view is taken of the state of the continental kingdoms of Europe. France, under the first sovereigns of the Capetian race, presents us with very little that is worthy of observation. The Normans carry their arms into Italy, and achieve the conquest of Sicily; while the maritime states of Venice and

Genoa, rising into consequence, become the commercial agents of most of the European kingdoms. The dissensions between the German emperors and the popes, and the gradual increase of the temporal authority of the see of Rome, are not unworthy of a particular attention.

The British history is again resumed as a principal object; and we pursue its great outlines from the Norman conquest to the death of king John. In the tyranny of William the Conqueror, and in the exorbitant weight of the crown during the reigns immediately succeeding, we shall observe the causes of that spirit of union among the people, in their efforts to resist it, which procured for them those valuable charters, the foundation of our civil liberty. Under the reign of the second Henry, we shall observe a most important accession of territory to the English crown, in the acquisition of the ancient and early civilised kingdom of Ireland.

At this period, the whole of the nations of Europe, as if actuated by one spirit, join in the Crusades, a series of fatal and desperate enterprises, but which form an important object of attention, from their effects in the formation of new kingdoms, new political arrangements, and a new system of manners. We shall trace with some care those effects in the changes of territorial property in the feudal governments—in the immunities acquired by towns and boroughs, which had hitherto been tied down by a species of vassalage to the nobles—and in the aggrandisement of the maritime cities. The moral as well as the political effect of those enterprises must be particularly

noticed ; and we shall find a subject of entertaining disquisition in tracing the origin of chivalry and its consequences in the introduction of romantic fiction.

A short connected sketch of the European kingdoms after the crusades naturally follows ; in which a variety of interesting subjects solicit our attention :—the rise of the House of Austria ; the decline of the feudal government in France by the introduction of the *Third Estate* to the national assemblies ; the establishment of the Swiss republics ; the disorders in the papedom ; and the memorable transactions in the council of Constance.

These shortly considered, Britain again resumes her place as the leading object of attention. We remark the progress of the English constitution under Henry III., when the deputies of the boroughs were first admitted into parliament, the real date of the origin of the House of Commons : the strengthening of the liberties of the people under Edward I., whose military enterprises, the conquest of Wales, and the temporary reduction of Scotland, lead us, by an easy connexion, to the history of the latter kingdom. We shall here behold the many noble and successful struggles made by that ancient nation for her freedom and independence, against the power of the three first Edwards. We consider the claim of right preferred by Edward III. to the crown of France, equally ill-founded, but more ably and gloriously sustained ; and the multiplied triumphs of the arms of England, till the kingdom of France itself is won by Henry V.

We now turn our attention to the East, to remark an interesting spectacle : the progress of the

Ottoman arms retarded for awhile by the conquests of Tamerlane and Scanderbeg; but prosecuted under Mahomet the Great, to the total extinction of the Greek or Constantinopolitan empire. The manners, laws, and government of the Turks, merit a share of our consideration.

Returning westward, we see France in this age emancipating herself from the feudal bondage; and the consequences of the pretensions made by her sovereigns to a part of Italy. These pretensions, traversed by Ferdinand of Spain, naturally call our attention to that quarter, where a most important political change had been operated in the union of the sovereignties of Aragon and Castile, and the fall of the Moorish kingdom of Granada.

Returning to Britain, while England is embroiled with the civil wars of York and Lancaster, we pursue the great outlines of her history down to the reign of Henry VIII., and the cotemporary history of Scotland, during the reigns of the five Jameses. At this period, presenting a short delineation of the ancient constitution of the Scottish government, I shall endeavour to point out those political principles which regulated the conduct of the Scots with respect to their neighbours of England, and to foreign nations.

The close of the fifteenth century is a most important era in modern history. The signal improvement of navigation by the Portuguese, who opened to Europe the commerce of the Indies—the rapid advancement of literature from the discovery of the art of printing—and the revival of the fine arts—present a most extensive field of

pleasing and instructive speculation. We shall mark the effect of the Portuguese discoveries in awakening the spirit of enterprise, together with the industry, of all the European nations; and shall here introduce a progressive account of the *commerce of Europe* down to this era, when it was vigorously and extensively promoted. We shall in like manner exhibit a view of the progress of *European literature* through the preceding ages of comparative barbarism, to the splendour it attained at this remarkable period. The consideration of the progress of the *fine arts* we postpone to the succeeding age of Leo X., when they attained to their utmost perfection.

After a short survey of the northern states of Europe, which is necessary for preserving the unity of the picture, the capital object of attention is the aggrandisement of the House of Austria, under Charles V. ; intimately connected with the history of France under Francis I.; and incidentally with that of England, under Henry VIII. : a period meriting particular and attentive consideration from two events of the utmost moral and political importance — the reformation of religion in Germany and England, and the discovery of America. On this period is likewise thrown an additional lustre from the splendour of the fine arts in Italy.

After bestowing on these varied and interesting subjects the attention which they merit, the state of Asia, which, from the period of ancient history had attracted occasionally only a slight degree of notice, becomes for awhile a principal object of attention. The empire of India, highly important

in modern times, the singularity of its political arrangements and national character, which have suffered no change since the age of Alexander; the political and moral history of the Persians; the revolutions operated on that immense continent by the Tartar successors of Gengiskan, are all worthy of a particular share of our consideration. The establishment of the Tartar princes on the throne of China calls our attention to that extraordinary monarchy, which, till this period, was almost unknown to the nations of Europe. We shall here examine at some length the ground of those opinions which it has of late become customary to entertain, with regard to the prodigious antiquity of this people; their wonderful attainments in the arts and sciences; their alleged early acquaintance with the chief modern discoveries of the Europeans; and the boasted excellence of their laws, their government, and political economy.

Returning to Europe, the object which, in the close of the sixteenth century, first demands our notice, is the reign of Philip II. of Spain, distinguished by the revolt of the Netherlands, and the establishment of the republic of Holland. The constitution and government of the United Provinces merit here a brief delineation.

France now takes her turn, and holds the principal place in the picture during the turbulent and distracted reigns of Francis II., Charles IX., and Henry III., till we witness her happiness, tranquillity, and splendour under the great Henry IV.

The transition thence is easy to the era of England's grandeur and prosperity under his cotem-

porary Elizabeth. The affairs of Scotland, too much connected at this period with those of the sister country, call our attention to the interesting reign of Mary, Queen of Scots, and the progress of the Reformation in that kingdom. Hence we pursue, without interruption, the outlines of the English history during the reigns of James I., of Charles I.—during the Commonwealth—and the subsequent reigns of Charles II. and James II.—to the important period of the Revolution.

Here, after a connected sketch of the progress of the English constitution, and a particular examination of its nature at this great era, when it became fixed and determined, we close our delineation of the British History.

But the affairs of the continent of Europe, at this time in a most active and progressive state, admit not of the same termination. We look back to France, which, under the splendid and politic administration of Richelieu, yet embroiled with faction and civil war, presents a striking object of attention. We remark the declension of the power of Spain under Philip III. and Philip IV., and Portugal in the latter reign shaking off its yoke, and establishing an independent monarchy. We see the Austrian power attacked by the Swedes under Gustavus Adolphus, declining under Ferdinand II. and III., and humiliated by the peace of Westphalia, in which the French and Swedes gave laws to the empire; a treaty, however, salutary in the main, as settling the ruinous quarrels between her contending princes.

We see France, in the minority of Louis XIV., harassed with the disorders of the Fronde, originating in the unpopular administration of Mazarin. After his death, we remark the genius of Louis displaying itself in a variety of splendid enterprises; his views seconded by the abilities of his ministers and generals; while the excellent order of the finances enables him easily to execute the most important designs. The opening to the succession of the Spanish crown, while it increases for a while the glory of his arms, leads finally to the mortifying reverse of his fortune; and we behold the latter years of this memorable reign as unfortunate as the former had been marked with splendour and success.

Meantime, two rival powers of high celebrity call our attention to a variety of interesting scenes in the North of Europe. Russia, till now in absolute barbarism, becomes at once, by the abilities of a single man, a powerful and polished empire. Sweden, under the minority of its prince, ready to be torn in pieces by the powers of Russia, Denmark, and Poland, becomes, in a single campaign, the terror of the surrounding kingdoms. We see this prince, a second Alexander, in a career as short and as impetuous, carry those heroic virtues which he possessed to an extreme as dangerous as their opposite vices.

At this period we close our delineation of modern history, with a view of the progress of the sciences, and of the state of literature in Europe, during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

Such is the plan to be pursued in the following Commentaries. Of the merits or defects of the

arrangement those who possess an extensive knowledge of history, and who have prosecuted that study to its best purposes,—instruction in political and moral science,—are best fitted to form a judgment. To the general reader, I trust it will at least be found to possess the qualities of simplicity and perspicuity.

With regard to chronology, it is necessary to remark that, without entering into any discussion of the merits of the different systems I have chosen to follow the chronology of Archbishop Usher, or that which is founded on the Hebrew text of the Sacred Writings; and this for the sole reason, that it has been most generally adopted by the writers both of our own and of foreign nations.

A chronological table is subjoined to the work, because a frequent reference to dates gives a disagreeable interruption to the chain of narration; and the succession of events in the mere order of time, as well as the cotemporary history of the different nations of the world, is better understood from a single glance on the page of a table of chronology than from repeated notices in the course of the narrative.