

MARYLAND GAZETTE.

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To the Publisher of the Maryland GAZETTE.

SIR,

HAVE often thought, that there is no Kind of Learning or Study which is more worthy our Application, or proves more instructive and entertaining to the Student, than that of History. Besides the Addition it makes to our Knowledge, it has also a Tendency, if we have any Regard for honest Fame and Reputation, to inspire us with a noble Esteem of Virtue, and a just Contempt of Vice; hence naturally will arise an Ambition to imitate the first, and shun the latter. This will particularly hold true in high Characters, who, by their Station and Sphere of Action, ingross the greatest Part of History to themselves: The Conduct and Behaviour of their Ancestors is here justly delineated, and exposed to their View, be it good or bad: If a noble Set of Actions shine conspicuous in the Characters of their immediate Predecessors, these must animate them to behave worthy of their Origin, that they may not prove degenerate Branches of so excellent a Stock. For the higher the Station of the Person, the more conspicuous are his Virtues and Vices; the Lustre of a *Star* or *Crown* is so far from concealing a wicked, mean, or servile Part, that it places it in the clearest and most open Point of View. The most profligate Wretch in Being, will tacitly admire a great and virtuous Character; and even the Villain, who sees his Villainy detected, and pictured out in History, cannot forbear condemning, in the Portraiture, his own base Actions and Conduct: The Love of *Good Fame*, so natural to Mankind, will make such a Person desire, at least, to reform his Life, if he has any Sparks of Virtue left in him; whatever specious Arguments he may use to persuade himself; *That it is nothing to him what Men say or write of him, after he is dead, and beyond the Reach of Malice and Envy.*

HISTORY answers these two Purposes of Instruction and Amusement, as it displays an agreeable, and almost infinite, Variety of Incidents; describes the various Changes and Vicissitudes of Fortune, with the causes from which they flow; and exhibits the several Characters and Scenes of human Life. It is, in short, a great Step, by which we may attain to a competent Knowledge of Mankind; a Knowledge so necessary and useful in Life, that all Science and Learning without it, appears pedantic, insignificant, and vain.

IN History we are presented with a View of most of those parallel Circumstances, in which we can possibly be engaged; and as it exhibits Patterns for our Imitation, so it delivers Di-

rections for our Conduct. Probably a Man is more or less fond of Historical Reading, according to the Degrees of Virtue or Vice he possesses. It is most certain, that a Villain can never be pleased to see himself upbraided, and put to the Blush, in every Page; every Sketch of his own deformed Character, in the Person of another, such as he, must give an Alarm to his Conscience, and excite monstrous Ideas of his own Baseness and Depravity. On the contrary, what a noble and rational Feast must it be to a good Man, to find himself classed with the Friends of *Liberty, Honour, and Truth!* Can he, without Emotion and Transport, regard those ancient *Heroes*, who sought all Opportunities to promote the public Good, whose whole Life was a Train of great and benevolent Actions, and whose generous and noble Sentiments made them even give up their Lives for their Country? Who can hear of *Codrus* making a voluntary Sacrifice of himself, without Wonder and Surprize? Can the *Deici*, those hereditary Deliverers of their Country, be sufficiently admired? Is not the Character of *Timoleon* an admirable and engaging Picture? Is not the Life and glorious Actions of the undaunted *Leonidas*, an unparallel'd Instance of public Virtue? How little, when compared with these, appear the Characters of a *Cataline* and *Cæsar*, basely endeavouring to satisfy their boundless and wicked Ambition, by infringing and destroying the *Liberties* of a *free People*? How surprizing then is it to find so many following the same Course of Villainy, which has ruined Thousands before them? Since we must approve a good Character or Action, is it not much more natural to act upon that Character, or that Set of Actions; than to be guilty of what we condemn in others?

I IMAGINE that if young People were put upon a right Method of reading History, it might be of singular Advantage to them, in the Conduct of their future Actions: The Knowledge of History does not at all consist in charging one's Memory with a Rabble of *Errors, Names, and Events*; a young Man who hears himself applauded for these, and can by the Force of Memory, bear a share in the Historical Part of any Conversation, may possibly think himself an able and expert Historian: But to know History truly, is to *know Mankind*, which is indeed the Subject-Matter of it; it is to *study the Motives, Opinions, and Passions of Mankind*; and carefully to observe how they operate upon their various Tempers and Dispositions; and to draw useful and instructive Conclusions from these Observations. Young and tender Minds should be taught to fall in Love with amiable Character, and habitually trained to act a parallel Part themselves, if ever they shall happen to be placed in the same Circumstances. This alone renders History instructing and diverting at the same Time.

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