THE public advantages which must attend a disinterested principle in historians is acknowledged by all parties, and by all parties it is equally hated and equally persecuted. The man of genius, who is capable of writing a plausible tale to pamper the vanities of the great, to serve the purposes of power, or to humour the prejudices of a prevailing faction, is certain of meeting with all those emoluments and that popularity which forms the wish of the honest man, and is the sole object of the ambitious; but should an historian arise, whose abilities as a statesman, politician, legislator, moralist, and philosopher, rendered him capable of attaining the highest degree of perfection in the sublime and comprehensive walk of history; should he be capable of giving such animation to his representation of facts as to command attention; should his narrative be sufficiently elegant to gratify taste; should his sagacity be sufficiently profound to ascertain those leading and often opposite principles and inclinations, which form the different characters of men; should he be capable of making use of every opportunity which incidents and events afford to instruct the reader on the subject of morals, religion, policy, and good government; should his integrity and his resolution be sufficient to decide upon every fact, and every character, without regard even to the nearest tie of relationship, as equity should prompt and truth should authorize, instead of gaining admirers by the honest exercise of his talents, he would raise an innumerable host of enemies: he would never meet in the breast of his reader with that impartiality, of which he had set the illustrious example, and all the imperfect sons of earth among the living would clamour in behalf of the guilty dead. It is perhaps the difficulty of these circumstances, which must take place in all countries, and which are greatly aggravated in England by the venomous rancour of contending factions, which has occasioned the subject of history to have been so long neglected in this country:

and
and whilst England has been renowned for producing the best authors in every other species of writing, she was obliged to a foreigner for the best and the most faithful narrative of the civil and military achievements of her gallant sons. Rapin long maintained an unrivalled popularity in this country, but it was more from the circumstance of his having no competitor than from the intrinsic merit of his work: he is, indeed, infinitely less partial in his account of the civil wars in the reign of Charles the First than almost any other writer of that period of our annals, but he is very prolix, and his narrative is destitute of all those animating graces and just reflections which are necessary to form an agreeable and instructive history. Guthrie and Ralph, who wrote after Rapin, may be classed among the few faithful historians*, and their several narratives abound with very just remarks and pertinent reflections. Guthrie's style often rises even to the sublime, and Ralph's is not wanting in animation; but these authors are too careless writers to arrive at that elegance and correctness necessary to satisfy the nicety of modern taste; they are also very prolix to a degree of tediousness. In this state of general history Mr. Hume, blessed with that genius and profound sagacity necessary to form a complete historian, had reason to flatter himself with the prospect of enjoying, without a rival, all that extensive fame and popularity which is justly due to the instructors of mankind; but whether he conceived, from the reasons above mentioned, that a candid relation of our domestic broils, as it must necessarily displease all factions, would deprive him of the reward of his abilities and his industry; or whether, as I am more inclined to believe, that he had entertained prejudices inimical to that candour which must have placed him at the head of all our historians, his history, whilst it serves as an elegant pastime for the hours of leisure or idleness, leaves the reader perfectly ignorant as to characters, motives, and often facts: but as Mr. Hume's prejudices have fallen in with the prejudices of the prevailing faction in this country, and as his admirable genius is fully equal to the inspiring every unlearned, inquisitive and negligent reader with the prejudices of the author, he has for a long time maintained an unrivalled popularity in the walk of English history, and has been regarded by the few discerning friends of Revolution principles, and the admirers of those pa-

* The author has confined her observations to the writers of general history.
triumpts who have spilt their blood in the public cause, as the having helped to forward, with other concurring circumstances, the declension of Whig sentiments, and the wonderful increase of those opinions and principles which were so justly decried by the nation towards the middle of this century.

Animated with the love of liberty, and an enthusiastic regard to English patriotism, I ventured to take the pen in hand, with the intention of vindicating the insulted memories of our illustrious ancestors, and of exposing to the public the evils which this country has suffered from the intrigues of faction and the rage of party; and I vainly hoped that the conviction of uncontroversial argument, founded on fact, would, in a series of time, extinguish the baneful influence of party spirit; would gradually and almost imperceptibly incline the people to consider the objects of their proper interest, and that all ranks would unite in the laudable and generous attempt of "fixing dominion's limits to its proper end" of realizing all those advantages in our mixed form of government, which experience has found to be only theoretical; of restraining the oppressions of the great, by the cutting off a few noxious privileges, which are equally mischievous to themselves as to the community; and of curbing the licentiousness of the common people by the coercion of wholesome laws, and a well-regulated police. This, without any unconstitutional design, or any wild enthusiastic hope of being able to influence the minds of a nation in favour of a democratic form of government, who from the beginning of time have been under the rule of regal sway, and whose laws, manners, customs, and prejudices are ill adapted to a republic, is the grand aim of my writings: and this I cannot help regarding as a patriotic and pious design, because, in my opinion, religious and moral turpitude, in a great measure, flow from political error; and that the miseries of natural evil are from the same cause highly aggravated.

As republican principles and notions have always been too unpopular in this country to found on them any rational scheme of interest or ambition, it was obvious to me, that, however erroneous might be the opinions of the few republicans whom opportunity enabled to take an active part in the af-
fairs of England, that their conduct was founded on principle, because diametrically opposite to their interest, and even their safety; accordingly the fate of every one of this party, who did not change with the changing times, was banishment, an ignominious death, or the entire ruin of their fortunes: whilst, on the contrary, the men whose conduct was governed either by Whig or Tory principles, were, as the different factions prevailed, in their turn triumphant; and it is from the conviction only of the integrity of their motives that I appear in my history to be partial to the leaders of the republican party.

In Mr. Hume's very artful narration of facts, he represents Charles the First as a prince whose government had in no degree exceeded the arbitrary precedents which had been set by his predecessors; and as the English had formerly submitted, without a murmur, to the despotic sway of these monarchs, he argues, that the crown had acquired a kind of right by the peaceable possession of a long usurped tyranny; and that consequently Charles fell a victim to the malignancy of the times, rather than to any faults in his administration, which urged the necessity of taking up arms against him. That the government of the greater number of our princes, particularly that of Henry the Eighth, and even many parts of Elizabeth's administration, was directly contrary to Magna Charta, and to the rule of all free governments, cannot be disputed with Mr. Hume; but as that servility and implicit obedience to the unjust commands of the sovereign, which accompanied the times of political ignorance in this country, after the power of the Barons was broken by Henry the Seventh, and the religious factions which took their rise in the reign of Henry the Eighth, occasioned the parliaments to acquiesce with the lawless pretensions of their monarchs, the form of a free government was in some measure preserved, and by that means a remedy yet remained in the constitution to correct those evils which time, ignorance, and opportunity had occasioned. The knowledge of ancient literature, and consequently the knowledge of Roman and Greek policy, had made no inconceivable progress in this country during the reigns of Henry the Eighth, Edward, Mary, and Elizabeth; and on the accession of James, the more civilized part of the nation began to entertain very large and very comprehensive notions on the subject of civil liberty: they beheld with regret that large portion of undivided
vided power which the crown had acquired by the arbitrary courts of justice, which had been erected during the administration of the Tudor race; and they determined to seize the first favourable occasion to reduce the regal prerogative to its ancient limits, left a long and undisputed possession, with accidental circumstances favourable to the strengthening these usurpations by a military force, should for ever put it out of the power of the people to regain that authority which is necessary to the existence of a free government. The ill policy of Charles the First in the wars with Spain and France, which he entered into in the beginning of his reign, afforded to the friends of liberty a full opportunity to make their own terms with the court. The king's necessities were pressing, and the constitution allowed of no impositions on the people which were not authorised by the voice of their representatives. The question in dispute between the king and the commons immediately became critical: it was necessary for the sovereign to relinquish the encroachments of his predecessors, or to assume the essential authority of a despotic monarch, by levying arbitrary taxes on the people, without the consent of parliament. The prejudices of Charles induced him to chuse the latter of these expedients: taxes were levied by the king's authority only, the use of parliaments was altogether laid aside, and the form and spirit of the government became entirely despotic. By the corrupt decision of the judges, in the case brought before them by the famous Hamden, the king, for twelve years, enjoyed in tranquility the triumph he had gained over the liberties of his country, and might, perhaps, have fixed the constitution on the basis of despotism, had he been possessed of the temporizing spirit of Elizabeth; or had he employed ministers equally subtle and equally able to those confoundmate politicians who directed the councils of this princes. It was indeed more owing to the furious and bigotted conduct of Laud, than to the spirit and resolution of the people, that the smallest vestige of freedom at this time remains in England: his absurd and impolitic persecution of the Presbyterians, whose religious principles were somewhat more favourable to civil liberty than were those of the Church of England, threw that whole party into the scale of opposition; and when united to the partizans of civil liberty, the balance of popular opinion became greatly in disfavour of the king's pretensions and administration. However, though the large majority of the nation
felt very sensibly the yoke of tyranny, their discontent was expressed in
unavailing murmurs, 'till the influence of Laud prevailed over the ill-
ominated Charles to excite the resentment of his Scotch subjects, by impositions
and novelties in matters of religion. The necessity which this produced
of calling a parliament, and the union of the Scotch and English male-con-
tents, soon brought matters to that point of civil contention, in which the
success of parties can only be decided by the sword. After a long and bloody
contest, victory declared itself on the side of the male-contents, and the power
of displacing the king, and forming the government, fell entirely into
the hands of the English parliament.

In this situation of affairs it is certain that the popular leaders might
have cut off all the dangerous prerogatives of the crown, without any inno-
vation in the form of the government; and the natural good sense and virtue
of the king might have inclined him to have kept within the limits of those
narrow bounds, which the male-contents must have found necessary, for the se-
curity of public liberty and the preservation of the party, to have prescribed:
but besides the danger which was to be expected from the king's matrimo-
nial connection, and the rancour of his partizans, a very unfortunate differ-
ence subsisted between the king and the parliament on the subject of reli-
gious government; and the men who at this time had the prevailing influ-
ence in the councils of the nation, had a predilection for those popular go-
 vernments which had raised the glory of Pagan societies to the acme of hu-
man greatness: they also recollected the tranquility with which Charles
was suffered for twelve years to trample on the laws and liberties of the land;
that England was at last indebted for her deliverance to the vigour of Scotch
opposition, rather than to the determined spirit of her own sons; and they
conceived that there was a malignity in this form of government produc-
tive of a servility which secured its permanence. They thought that victory gave
them a right to inflict on the conquered party that punishment, which, on mo-
tives of policy and motives of revenge, themselves must have sustained in the
same situation; and they regarded it as a duty incumbent on them to make
use of the opportunity which the fortune of war, or a peculiar providence, had
put in their hands, to bar every avenue thro' which tyranny could possibly
again slide into the administration of the government. Thus reasoned
every
every honest individual in that party, who were the chief instruments in the
death of the king; and they reasoned as human beings blind to the events
of futurity, events which often foil the wisdom of the deepest politician,
and render the boasted sagacity of the intelligent a subject of derision to the
vulgar and the ignorant. Could these generous patriots, who had ventured
life and fortune in the vindication of the rights of nature, and the liber-
ties of the land, have fathomed the depth of Cromwell's hypocrisy;
could they possibly have foreseen that a nation who had undergone such
hardships and dangers for the attainment of freedom, who had dethron-
ed a sovereign, descended from a long line of princes, for having en-
croached on their native rights, would submit to a state of slavery to a
private individual, no ways exalted above his brethren in any of those
endowments which constitute the true greatness of character, or excelling
in any quality, but in the measure of a vain and wicked ambition, and in
a dissimulation calculated to deceive those who are too honest to suspet
the concealed vices which lay hidden under a well asked hypocrisy; could
they possibly have foreseen, that a party who had sacrificed a man of virtue
to secure the permanence of freedom in their civil and religious government,
should be so far instigated by the principles of envy and revenge, as to give
up all their dear-bought rights to a prince, whose character, in point of
morals and probity, was at best very questionable, and sacrifice their religious
security to the prejudices and rancour of an opposite faction; they would
undoubtedly have taken the lead in all pacific counsels, and have cloathed with
the subdued monarch on as safe and secure terms as the circumstances of
the time and the nature of things would admit. Had the form of govern-
ment intended by the popular leaders taken place, and had Englishmen
at this day lived under the sway of a well regulated democracy, we should
have looked up to these execrated characters with all that respectful venera-
tion which was paid by the Greeks and Romans to the illustrious found-
ers of their republics. It may be very agreeable to the barbarity of
vulgar ignorance to entertain prejudices against men, whose conduct has
not been attended with that success which grace endeavours of a similar
nature in more fortunate individuals; but surely it is incompatible with
the wisdom of an historian to judge of actions by consequences, and with-
out any regard to motives; to deal out panegyric or invective accord-
ing to the measure of success or ill fortune which attend those persons who figure in the walk of public life.

As the Jacobites have carried their panegyricks of the first Charles to a height which induced the utter condemnation of all those who opposed this monarch on public grounds, it was impossible to do justice to the patriotic characters which figured in this age, without examining into the conduct and administration of this prince with a degree of rigorous justice and vigilant enquiry which his unhappy fate would otherwise have rendered ungenerous and inhuman: but in this inquiry I was so far from feeling myself the bloody-minded Republican, as I have been termed by the butcherly writers of these days, and so far even from polluting the stoicism of the first Brutus, that I shed many tears whilst I was writing his catastrophe, and I have endeavoured to do justice to that part of his conduct which I thought truly great, and worthy the imitation of posterity.

I have also been accused of the want of humanity and sympathy, because I have in my writings appeared insensible to the rigour of that fate which fell on some very culpable state delinquents, and in particular on the earl of Strafford: but in this case I shall appeal to the judgment of the candid, whether the sympathizing, according to the fanciful distinctions of power, birth, office, or fortune, with a few individuals who possess these advantages, and the beholding without pain, and even with triumph, the happiness of the community at large sacrificed to the rapacious lusts of interested governors, is more rational than that generous and extensive sympathy which regards, with an equal eye of compassion, the infirmities and the afflictions of all men, and who cenures in proportion to the magnitude and the extent of the mischiefs which attend the selfish conduct of the powerful; and whether there is either reason, good sense, or rational humanity, in exclaiming against all those who brought the earl of Strafford to justice for advising the king to levy arms against his subjects, and consequently, if victorious, of subduing the free principles of the constitution, and thus entail on present and future generations the misery of perpetual slavery; and at the same time acknowledging the justice of inflicting a similar punishment for crimes of a very inferior nature, which perhaps arise from motives of necessity, and which only militate against the peace of individuals.
I well knew what personal disadvantage I set out with, from that impartiality which I had determined to observe on the conduct of the different factions, which have harassed the internal peace of this empire; and when I gave up the emoluments of favour, the countenance of the great, and the gratification of popular applause, on a principle of public utility, I had some reason to expect esteem for my integrity and industry, and especially as I have never thrown any personal abuse on any individual, in or out of power; nor have ever filled my pen with those anonymous writings calculated to anguish the feeling heart, to fix an indelible stain on the manners of Englishmen, and to inflict the poignancy of mental sufferings not only on the defamed persons, but on all those who are attached to them, either by the ties of blood, or the yet stronger ties of affection. I have endeavoured, with the most indefatigable pains, to make my History useful to men of all conditions; and I am persuaded that no moderate churchman, or honest lawyer, can, on cool reflection, be offended with the historian's free observations on the conduct of men who have been the authors of much public and private mischief, and whose violent counsels, and dishonest practices, have frequently disturbed the peace, and endangered the liberties of the empire. If I have been severe on misguided princes, and bad ministers, it is with a view only to the interests of the people; and if all historians would preserve the same honest rule, instead of varnishing, with false colours, the vices of the powerful, it would, from that general desire which all men have of preserving some degree of reputation after death, form a kind of literary tribunal, productive of a very useful reformation in the conduct of those favoured sons of fortune on whose good or bad qualities the happiness and welfare of societies depend. The candid and generous will, undoubtedly, from these considerations, behold, without malice or resentment, the wicked or weak conduct of their ancestors represented in its proper light; and especially when they reflect that it would be very unbecoming the character, and contrary to the duty of an historian, to spare even the memory of a parent, if he was found defective in those patriotic virtues which eminently affect the welfare of society.

If the warmth of my temper has occasioned me to be guilty of any petulancies in my first productions, they arose from the inexperience of the historian, and the early period of life in which he began to write history; but though I have been pursued with virulent invectives, I have never yet been made acquainted
quainted with my literary faults. Criticisms formed with judgment and temper command attention; but when personal invective supplies the place of argument, and the reputation of authors are attacked in order to decry their writings, it is a very strong symptom in favour of those productions against which the battery of abuse is levelled; and in this case an individual, in the full enjoyment of that internal satisfaction which a faithful exertion of mental abilities affords the rational mind, must look down with contempt on the angry crowd, nor suffer their fierce and loud clamours, in any respect, to divert him from pursuing the grand object of his honest ambition.

Jan. 1781,
Laurence-Street, Chelsea,
Middlesex.