A DISSERTATION, MORAL AND POLITICAL ON THE INFLUENCE OF LUXURY AND REFINEMENT ON NATIONS, WITH REFLECTIONS ON THE MANNERS OF THE AGE AT THE CLOSE OF THE 18TH CENTURY

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ADAM SIBBIT

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WITH

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AT THE CLOSE OF THE 18TH CENTURY.

BY ADAM SIBBIT, A.B.

RECTOR OF CLARENDON, IN THE ISLAND OF JAMAICA.

Il y a de mauvais examples qui sont pires que les crimes; & plus d'etats on peri parce qu'on violè les meurs, que parce qu'on a violè les loix.

MONTESQUIEU, GRANDEUR ET DECADENCE DES ROMAINES.

Quid leges sine moribus
Vanæ proficiunt.

HOR.

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1800.

IN TESTIMONY

OF A HIGH AND UNFEIGNED VENERATION,

FOR DISTINGUISHED TALENTS,

AND

FOR GREAT PUBLIC AND PRIVATE VIRTUE,

THIS DISSERTATION

IS MOST RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED,

TO

THE RIGHT HON. JOHN LORD ELDON,

LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF HIS MAJESTY'S COURT OF COMMON PLEAS,

&c. &c. &c.

BY HIS LORDSHIP'S

VERY OBEDIENT AND HUMBLE SERVANT,

THE AUTHOR.

DISSERTATION, &c.

CHAPTER I.

WHEN we contemplate the extent and populousness of ancient nations, as they are described to us by the most celebrated historians, and at the same time reflect, that so few monuments of their former greatness are now remaining, we cannot refrain from being considerably affected at the transient and fleeting nature of the noblest works and possessions of man. Every object by

 which

which we are ſurrounded, the events of the day, when duly conſidered, are ſufficient to admoniſh us of the uncertainty of human affairs, and of the frailty of our condition; but there is ſomething ſo uncommonly awful in the revolutions and viciſsitudes of great and powerful nations, that it comes home to every breaſt, and ſtrikes with peculiar force. The hiſtory of the mighty empires of antiquity is alſo extremely intereſting to poſterity, as well by the vaſt importance of the ſubject, as the ſuperior talents of the writers who have recorded, with ſo much dignity and elegance of compoſition, the grand ſeries of their achievements; we peruſe their inſtructive and poliſhed pages with peculiar delight, and we are endeared, by our claſsical ſtudies, from an early period of our life, to

every

every ſcene which has been ſo ſtrongly and happily painted by the great maſters of eloquence and poetry. Yet, while the mind is informed, and the imagination is enriched and enlarged, by the noble view of ſublime objects and great events, which ancient hiſtory ſo abundantly preſents to our attention, we are, at the ſame time, filled with ſolicitude and regret, as often as we call to our remembrance, that ſo many countries, which were once ſo populous and ſo magnificent, have long been diveſted of all their ſplendour and their beauty, and now only exhibit to the penſive moraliſt the gloomy picture of ruins and decay. We then contemplate with painful ſenſations, and with reflections tinged with gloom, the cruel viciſsitudes of fortune, and the heavy devaſtations of all-conſuming time.