volume, and in the art of vituperation he greatly excelled his coadjutors. It is scarcely to be supposed that any of the disparaging expressions were attributable to Smellie. This attack on the learned judge gave great offence to him and his friends, and indeed it had a visible effect in preci­pitating the failure of the work. Of Lord Karnes’s Sketches of the History of Man the editor had prepared a very se­vere review ; but when it was sent to the printer, he “ coun­teracted the intentions of his colleague, by altering the whole into a totally opposite tendency, converting the far greater part from harsh invective into reasonable and merited pa­negyric.” On discovering that the venom had thus been extracted, the writer was moved with violent anger ; but he speedily moderated his feelings so far as to admit that his friend had acted rightly. Smellie, though he generally exercised a sounder discretion, could himself display a strong vein of satire. This remark was sufficiently verified in his controversy with Dr Nisbet, then minister of Mon­trose, and afterwards president of Dickinson College at Carlisle in Pennsylvania.@@1 The controversy was occasioned by the mode of reporting a certain debate in the General Assembly. Nisbet printed two letters in a newspaper, and Smellie replied in the magazine. This publication was continued till the month of August 1776, when it termi­nated with tb.e fifth volume. A closing notice informed the “ numerous and respectable encouragera of this work,” that its publication was only interrupted for some months, and that it would afterwards appear in an improved form. But the promise was never fulfilled, nor is it very probable that many readers expected its fulfilment.

Notwithstanding the failure of this project, Dr Stuart had displayed so much talent in his principal articles, that his reputation as a man of letters suffered no diminution. He however felt a very painful mortification at the unsuccess­ful result of his labours; and his mind was so badly regu­lated that, instead of reflecting on the natural tendency of his own conduct, he continued to cherish a most bitter and indiscriminate resentment. In a letter, dated on the 17th of June 1774, and probably addressed to his London pub­lisher, he expresses himself in these unseemly terms : “ It is an infinite disappointment to me, that the Magazine does not grow in London ; I thought the soil had been richer. But it is my constant fate to be disappointed in every thing I attempt ; I do not think I ever had a wish that was gra­tified, and never dreaded an event that did not come. With this felicity of fate, I wonder how the devil I could turn projector. I am now sorry that I left London ; and the moment that I have money enough to carry me back to it, 1 shall get off. I mortally detest and abhor this place, and every body in it. Never was there a city where there was so much pretension to knowledge, and that had so little of it. The solemn foppery, and the gross stupidity of the Scottish literati, are perfectly insupportable. I shall drop my idea of a Scots newspaper. Nothing will do in this country that has common sense in it ; only cant, hypo­crisy, and superstition, will flourish here. A curse on the country, and all the men, women, and children of it.... The publication is too good for the country. There are very few men of taste or erudition on this side the Tweed ; yet every idiot one meets with lays claim to both. Yet the success of the Magazine is in reality greater than we could expect, considering that we have every clergyman in the kingdom to oppose it ; and that the magistracy of the place are every moment threatening its destruction.” All this exhibits a melancholy picture of a man of superior talents and attainments, deriving no wisdom from expe­rience, but still indulging those very passions to which his want of success was chiefly to be attributed, and which al­ways bear along with them their own punishment. Before he vented his spleen in terms of such unseemly import, he ought to have recollected, “ It is a foul *corby* that bewrays its own nest.” The fault that he here commits, is not one with which his countrymen are commonly chargeable; and the period which he thus describes as so barren in taste and erudition, was perhaps remarkable for its intellectual eminence beyond any former or succeeding period in the literary annals of Scotland.

Dr Stuart was still in the early vigour of manhood, and he speedily roused himself to new and greater exertions. After an interval of less than two years, he produced what we are disposed to regard as the best of his works, “ A View of Society in Europe, in its Progress from Rudeness to Refinement: or, Inquiries concerning the History of Law, Government, and Manners.” Edinb. 1778, 4to. This work, of which there are several other editions, excited much attention on its first appearance. Hayley, who was then a popular writer, described the author as possessing “ all the energy of genius.”@@5 His researches are conducted with judgment and sagacity ; he grasps his subject with much vigour, and always expresses himself with boldness and force. In the progress of his discussions, he points out various mistakes of recent writers. One of these was Blackstone, who silently rectified the errors which he de­tected.@@3 The style of this work, though never languid or feeble, may however be considered as deficient in fluency and variety. His periods are too uniformly short, to be altogether pleasing to the ear. Long sentences he has elsewhere denounced in set terms. “ This brevity,” he avers, “ is a conspicuous part of oratory, and is consistent with the greatest elevation and dignity. Where Cicero himself is most eloquent, and where the tide of his language is most rapid and powerful, his sentences are concise ; and he avoids with care the periodic swell, as cold, artificial, and unnatural. And indeed it is to be laid down as a ge­neral rule, that where sentences are uniformly long, as in Milton and in Clarendon, there is no eloquence in the com­position, and little connection in the argument.”@@\*

The chief value of the work consists in the vivid and striking picture which it exhibits of chivalry and the feudal system. In this respect it possesses some advantages over Dr Robertson’s View of the Progress of Society in Europe, though it is not written with the same degree of classical elegance. “ In the courtly and agreeable introduction to the History of Charles the Fifth,” says Dr Stuart, “ of which the scheme is so comprehensive, it is remarkable that, amidst a wide variety of other omissions, there is not even the slightest consideration of knight-service, and the knight’s fee. Yet these circumstances were of a most powerful operation, both with respect to government and manners. I make not this remark to detract from the dili­gence of an author whose laboriousness is acknowledged, and whose total abstinence from all ideas and inventions of his own, permitted him to carry an undivided attention to other men’s thoughts and speculations ; but that, resting on these peculiarities, I may draw from them this general and humiliating, yet, I hope, not unuseful conclusion, that the study and knowledge of the dark ages are still in their in­fancy.” This contemptuous mention of the great historian could scarcely fail to excite resentment, and of this resent­ment he speedily had occasion to prove the bitter effects.

The professorship of the law of nature and nations was at that period held by James Balfour; and in 1779, being then advanced in years, it was ascertained that he was will­ing to resign it for a valuable consideration. Here it is necessary to explain the very remarkable fact, that, under the sanction of the secretary of state, this professorship was

@@@, See Dr Allen's American Biographical and Historical Dictionary, p. 449.

@@@5 Hayley's Essay on History, p. 157. Lond. 1780, 4to.

@@@\* English Review, vol. ii. p. 169.

@@@\* Edinburgh Magazine and Review, vol. v. p. 250.