neighbours the Athenians, we behold in their hiſtory the natural progreſs of opinions, arts, and manners. The uſeful arts are firſt cultivated with ſuch ſteady induſtry, as to raiſe the community to opulence, and to furniſh them with articles for commerce with foreign nations. The uſeful arts cannot be raiſed to this height of improvement without leading men to the purſuit of ſcience. Commerce with foreign nations, ſkill in the uſeful arts, and a taſte for ſcience, mutually aid each other, and conſpire to promote the improvement of the fine arts. Hence magnificent buildings, noble ſtatues, paintings expreſſive of life, action, and paſſion ; and poems in which imagination adds new grace and ſublimity to nature, and gives the appearances of ſocial life more irreſistible power over the affections of the heart. Hence are moral diſtinctions more carefully ſtudied, and the rights of every individual and every order in ſociety better underſtood and more accurately defined. Moral ſcience is generally the firſt ſcientiſic purſuit which strongly attracts the attention of men. Lawgivers ap­pear before geometricians and aſtronomers. Some par­ticular circumſtances may cauſe theſe ſciences to be cul­tivated at a very early period. In Egypt the overflow­ing of the Nile cauſed geometry to be early cultivated. Cauſes no leſs favourable to the ſtudy of aſtronomy; concurred to recommend that ſcience to the attention of the Chaldeans long before they had attained the height of refinement. But, in general, we find, that the laws of morality are underſtood, and the principles of morals inquired into, before men make any conſiderable progreſs in phyſical ſcience, or even proſecute it with any degree of keenneſs. Accordingly, when we view the ſtate of literature in this period (for it is now become an object of ſo much importance as to force itſelf on our atten­tion), we perceive that poetry, hiſtory, and morals, are the branches chiefly cultivated. Arts are generally caſual inventions, and long practiſed before rules and principles on which they are founded assume the form of ſcience. But morality, if considered as an art, is that art which men have ſooneſt and moſt conſtantly oc­caſion to practiſe. Beſides, we are ſo conſtituted by the wiſdom of nature, that human actions, and the events which befal human beings, have more powerful influ­ence than any other object to engage and fix our at­tention. Hence we are enabled to explain why mora­lity, and thoſe branches of literature more immediately connected with it, are almoſt always cultivated in prefe­rence to phyſical ſcience. Though poetry, hiſtory, and morals, be puiſued with no ſmall eagerneſs and ſucceſs in that period of fociety which we now conſider, we need not therefore be greatly ſurpriſed that natu­ral philoſophy is neither very generally nor very ſucceſsfully cultivated. Were we to conſider each particular in that happy change which is now produced on the circumſtances of mankind, we ſhould be led into a too minute and perhaps unimportant detail. This is the period when human virtue and human abilities ſhine with moſt ſplendour. Rudeneſs, ferocity, and barbariſm, are now banished. Luxury has made her appearance ; but as yet ſhe is the friend and the benefactreſs of ſociety. Commerce has ſtimulated and rewarded induſtry, but has not yet contracted the heart and debaſed the cha­racter. Wealth is not yet become the ſole object of pursuit. The charms of ſocial intercourſe are known and reliſhed ; but domeſtic duties are not yet deſerted

for public amuſements. The female ſex acquire new influence, and contribute much to refine and poliſh the manners of their lords. Religion now affumes a milder and more pleaſing form ; ſplendid rites, magnificent temples, pompous ſacriſices, and gay feſtivals, give even ſuperſtition an influence favourable to the happineſs of mankind. The gloomy notions and barbarous rites of former periods fall into diſuſe. The ſyſtem of theology produced in formel ages ſtill remains : but only the mild and amiable qualities of the deities are celebrated ; and none but the gay, humane, and laughing divinities, are worſhipped. Philoſophy alſo teaches men to diſcard ſuch parts of their religion as are unfriendly to good morals, and have any tendency to call forth or cheriſh unſocial ſentiments in the heart. War (for in this pe­riod of ſociety enough of cauſes will ariſe to arm one nation againſt another)—war, however, no longer retains its former ferocity ; nations no longer ſtrive to extirpate one another ; to procure redress for real or imaginary injuries ; to humble, not to deſtroy, is now its object. Priſoners are no longer murdered in cold blood, ſubjected to horrid and excruciating tortures, or condemn­ed to hopeleſs ſlavery. They are ranſomed or exchan­ged ; they return to their country, and again ſight un­der its banners. In this period the arts of government are likewiſe better underſtood, and practiſed ſo as to contribute moſt to the intereſts of ſociety. Whether monarchy, or democracy, or ariſtocracy, be the eſta­bliſhed form, the rights of individuals and of ſocie­ty are in general reſpected. The intereſts of ſociety are ſo well underſtood, that the few, in order to pre­ſerve their influence over the many, find it necessary to act rather as the faithful ſervants than the imperious lords of the public. Though the liberties of a nation in this ſtate be not accurately defined by law, nor their property guaranteed to them by any legal inſtitutions, yet their governors dare not violate their liberties, nor deprive them wantonly of their properties. This is tru­ly the golden age of ſociety : every trace of barbariſm is entirely effaced ; and vicious luxury has not yet be­gun to ſap the virtue and the happineſs of the commu­nity. Men live not in liſtleſs indolence ; but the induſtry in which they are engaged is not of ſuch a nature as to overpower their ſtrength or exhauſt their ſpirits. The ſocial affections have now the ſtrongeſt influence on mens ſentiments and conduct.

But human affairs are ſcarce ever ſtationary. The circumstances of mankind are almoſt always changing, either growing better or worſe. Their manners are ever in the ſame fluctuating ſtate. They either advance to­wards perfection or degenerate. Scarce have they at­tained that happy period in which we have juſt contem­plated them, when they begin to decline till they per­haps fall back into a ſtate nearly as low as that from which we suppoſe them to have emerged. Inſtances of this unhappy degeneracy occur more than once in the hiſtory of mankind ; and we may finiſh this ſhort ſketch of the hiſtory of ſociety by mentioning in what manner this degeneracy takes place. Perhaps, ſtrictly ſpeaking, every thing but the simple neceſſaries of life may be denominated luxury : For a long time, how­ever, the welfare of ſociety is beſt promoted, while its members aspire after ſomething more than the mere necessaries of life. As long as theſe ſuperfluitſes are to be obtained only by active and honeſt exertion ; as long