

Discourses on Davila.

No. XXIII.—CONTINUED.

Utrumque regem, sua multitudo contulaverat.

THIS assembly was holden at Paris, in the beginning of the year 1562. The Queen, according to her ordinary maxims, employed herself in holding the balance between the two parties, and to hinder one from prevailing over the other, for fear she should be the victim of the strongest. The greatest part of the magistrates concurred in her views; some persuaded that it was impossible to restrain so great a multitude, animated by a furious zeal for religion, and others seeing with regret so much blood shed to no good purpose. They prepared that famous Edict of January, which granted to the Hugonots, the liberty of conscience, and the liberty of holding their assemblies and preaching their sermons, upon condition that they should meet without arms, without the cities, in the fields, and in presence of the judges of the places. The parliaments and other tribunals opposed, at first, the execution of this Edict; but it was finally registered, upon repeated letters of justice, (sealed commands to do a thing which they had refused to do) of the King and council. This was a thunderbolt to the chiefs of the Catholic party. To bring on a crisis, to force all the Catholics to join them, and to hinder the execution of the Edict, the Duke of Guise, the Constable, all the Cardinals, except de Fournon, who was lately dead, the Marshals de Brissac and Saint Andre quitted the court, to oppose themselves with all their forces to the Calvinistical party. So near was liberty of conscience at that time, to a compleat and final establishment in France, that nothing but this violent measure could have prevented it; even this retreat of all the Catholics would not have succeeded, without another artifice. They sufficiently foresaw, that as long as the good intelligence subsisted between the Queen-mother and the King of Navarre, they should have no power to intermeddle in the government of the kingdom, and that all their efforts would be in vain: they proposed therefore to break it. Convinced that the Queen-mother would never change her plan or her conduct, at least until the majority of her son; they thought it would be more easy to gain upon the understanding of the king of Navarre. Their reefs enabled them to conduct with more secrecy this negotiation, which required time and address. D'Est, legate of the Pope, and Manriquez ambassador of Spain, let into the secret and entrusted with the conduct of it, easily commenced the conferences, by the interposition of the confidants of the King of Navarre. This weak Prince, had, or pretended to have, no longer the same inclination for the Hugonots, since the colloquy at Poissy, where he had remarked their variations upon the contested points of faith, and not having found in Theodore Beza, nor in Peter Martyr, the same confidence as he thought, as they affected when they dogmatized without contradictors, he had consulted Doctor Baudouin, equally versed in scriptures and in controversy. This theologian had decided the King of Navarre, to re unite himself to the faith of the church, and to adopt neither the profession of faith of the Swiss Protestants, nor the confession of Augsburg. His acquiescence in the Edict of January was less from any inclination to the Hugonots, than from an opinion the consciences ought not to be restrained, and that toleration was an infallible means of extinguishing the troubles of the kingdom. As soon as his confidants, already disposed to serve the Catholic party, had informed the legate and ambassador, that he was in this temper, these last failed not to take advantage of it, to open the negotiation. In order to unite to motives of conscience, personal advantages and temporal interests, they proposed to him to divorce his Queen Jane, with a dispensation from the Pope, because she was an Heretic, and to marry Mary, Queen of Scots, the niece of the Guises, and widow of Francis II, a Princess who united to the charms of youth and beauty, the actual possession of a great kingdom. The King of Navarre, attached to his children, rejected firmly this proposition. They then brought upon the carpet, once more, the exchange of Sardinia, so often proposed in vain. This was the delicate point, which touched him the most sensibly. His hopes indeed, were not very strong; but this negotiation not having been wholly broken off, Manriquez, the Spanish ambassador, by his ordinary artifice, renewed it with so much apparent seriousness, as to re-animate the desires and the confidence of the King of Navarre. Not content with giving him the strongest assurances of the good dispositions of the Catholic King, he proceeded so far as to treat of the means of exchange, and of the quality of the rents and services, which the King of Navarre should render the crown of Spain, as acknowledgments of its sovereignty. They debated these clauses and conditions as seriously, as if they were upon the point of signing the treaty. The character of the King of Navarre, and his inclination to embrace always the most honorable and plausible measures, favored the designs of the Catholics. (To be continued.)

From WEBSTER'S DISSERTATIONS on the ENGLISH LANGUAGE.

OF MODERN CORRUPTIONS in the ENGLISH PRONUNCIATION.

(CONCLUDED.)

BUT whatever may be the practice in England or Ireland, there are few in America who have embraced it, as it is explained in Sheridan's Dictionary. In the middle and southern States, there are a few, and those well bred people, who have gone far in attempting to imitate the fashion of the day.\* Yet the body of the people, even in these States, remain as unfashionable as ever; and the eastern States generally adhere to their ancient custom of speaking, however vulgar it may be thought by their neighbors.† Suppose custom therefore to be the *ius et norma*, the rule of correct speaking, and in this country, it is directly opposed to the plan now under consideration.

As a nation, we have a very great interest in opposing the introduction of any plan of uniformity with the British language, even were the plan proposed perfectly unexceptionable. This point will be afterwards discussed more particularly; but I would observe here, that the author who has the most admirers and imitators in this country, has been censured in London, where his character is highly esteemed, and that too by men who are confessedly partial to his general plan. In the critical review of Sheridan's Dictionary, 1781, there are the following exceptions to his standard.

“ Nevertheless our author must not be surprized if, in a matter, in its nature so delicate and difficult, as that concerning which he treats, a doubt should here and there arise, in the minds of the most candid critics, with regard to the propriety of his determinations. For instance, we would wish him to reconsider, whether in the words which begin with *super*, such as *superstition*, *superfede*, he is right in directing them to be pronounced *shoo-per*. Whatever might be the case in Queen Ann's time, it doth not occur to us, that any one at present, above the lower ranks, speaks these words with the sound of *sh*; or that a good reason can be given, for their being thus founded. Nay their being thus spoken is contrary to Mr. Sheridan's own rule; for he says that the letter *s* always preserves its own proper sound at the beginning of words.”

Here we are informed by this gentleman's admirers, that, in some instances, he has imposed upon the world, as the standard of purity, a pronunciation which is not heard, except among the lower ranks of people, and directly opposed to his own rule. The reviewers might have extended their remarks to many other instances, in which he has deviated from general practice and from every rule of the language. Yet at the voice of this gentleman, many of the Americans are quitting their former practice, and running into errors with an eagerness bordering on insatiation.

Customs of the court and stage, it is confessed, rule without resistance in monarchies. But what have we to do with the customs of a foreign nation? Detached as we are from all the world, is it not possible to circumscribe the power of custom, and lay it, in some degree, under the influence of propriety? We are sensible that in foreign courts, a man's reputation may depend on a general bow, and his fortune may be lost by wearing an unfashionable coat. But have we advanced to that stage of corruption, that our highest ambition is to be as particular in fashions as other nations? In matters merely indifferent, like modes of dress, some degree of conformity to local custom is necessary;‡ but when this conformity requires a sacrifice of any principle of propriety or moral rectitude, singularity becomes an honorable testimony of an independent mind. A man of a great soul would sooner imitate the virtues of a cottage, than the vices of a court; and would deem it more honorable to gain one useful idea from the humble laborer, than to copy the vicious pronunciation of a splendid court, or become an adept in the licentious principles of a Rochester and a Littleton.

It will not be disputed that Sheridan and Scott have very faithfully published the present pronunciation of the English court and theatre. But if we may consult the rules of our language and consider them as of any authority; if we may rely on the opinions of Kenrick and the reviewers; if we may credit the best informed people who have travelled in Great-Britain, this practice is modern and local, and considered, by the judicious and impartial, even of the English nation, as a gross corruption of the pure pronunciation.

Such errors and innovations should not be imitated, because they are found in authors of reputation. The works of such authors should rather be considered as lights to prevent our falling upon the rocks of error. There is no more propriety in our imitating the practice of the English theatre, because it is described by the celebrated Sheridan, than there is in introducing the manners of Rochester or the principles of Bolingbroke, because these were eminent characters; or than there is in copying the vices of a Shylock, a Lovelace, or a Richard III. because they are well described by the masterly pens of Shakespeare and Richardson. So far as the correctness and propriety of speech are considered as important, it is of as much consequence to oppose the introduction of that practice in this country, as it is to resist the corruption of morals, which ever attends the wealthy and luxurious stage of national refinements.

Had Sheridan adhered to his own rules and to the principle of analogy; had he given the world a consistent scheme of pronunciation, which would not have had, for its unstable basis, the fickle practice of a changeable court, he would have done infinite service to the language: Men of science, who wish to preserve the regular construction of the language, would have rejoiced to find such a respectable authority on the side of propriety; and the illiterate copiers of fashion must have rejected faults in speaking, which they could not defend.

The corruption however has taken such deep root in England, that there is little probability it will ever be eradicated. The practice must there prevail, and gradually change the whole structure of the Latin derivatives. Such is the force of custom, in a nation where all fashionable people are drawn to a point, that the current of opinion is irresistible; individuals must fall into the stream and be borne away by its violence; except perhaps a few philosophers, whose fortitude may enable them to hold their station, and whose sense of propriety may remain, when their power of opposition has ceased.

But our detached situation, local and political, gives us the power, while pride, policy, and a regard for propriety and uniformity amongst ourselves, should inspire us with a disposition, to oppose innovations, which have not utility for their object.

We shall find it difficult to convince Englishmen that a corrupt taste prevails in the British nation. Foreigners view the Americans with a degree of contempt; they laugh at our manners, pity our ignorance, and as far as example and derision can go, obtrude upon us the customs of their native countries. But in borrowing from other nations, we should be exceedingly cautious to separate their virtues from their vices; their useful improvements from their false refinements. Style and taste, in all nations, undergo the same revolutions, the same progress from purity to corruption, as manners and government; and in England the pronunciation of the language has shared the same fate. The Augustan era is past, and whether the nation perceive and acknowledge the truth or not, the world, as impartial spectators, observe and lament the declension of taste and science.

The nation can do little more than read the works and admire the beauties of the original authors, who have adorned the preceding ages. A few, ambitious of fame, or driven by necessity, crowd their names into the catalogue of writers, by imitating some celebrated model, or by compiling from the productions of genius. Nothing marks more strongly the declension of genius in England, than the multitude of plays, farces, novels and other catchpenny pieces, which swell the list of modern publications.

and that host of compilers, who, in the rage for selecting beauties and abridging the labor of reading, disfigure the works of the purest writers in the nation. Cicero did not waste his talents in barely reading and selecting the beauties of Demosthenes; and in the days of Addison, the beauties of Milton, Locke and Shakespeare were to be found only in their works. But taste is corrupted by luxury; utility is forgotten in pleasure; genius is buried in dissipation; or prostituted to exalt and to damn contending factions, and to amuse the idle debauchees that surround a licentious stage.¶

These are the reasons why we should not adopt promiscuously their taste, their opinions, their manners. Customs, habits, and language, as well as government should be national. America should have her own distinct from all the world. Such is the policy of other nations, and such must be our policy, before the States can be either independent or respectable. To copy foreign manners implicitly, is to reverse the order of things, and begin our political existence with the corruptions and vices which have marked the declining glories of other republics.

\* There are many people, and perhaps the most of them in the capital towns, that have learnt a few common place words, such as *forchin*, *nachur*, *virchue* and half a dozen others, which they repeat on all occasions; but being ignorant of the extent of the practice, they are, in pronouncing most words, as vulgar as ever.

† It should be remarked that the late President of Pennsylvania, the Governor of New-Jersey, and the President of New-York college, who are distinguished for erudition and accuracy, have not adopted the English pronunciation.

‡ Not between different nations, but in the same nation. The manners and fashions of each nation should arise out of their circumstances, their age, their improvements in commerce and agriculture.

§ Sheridan, as an improver of the language, stands among the first writers of the British nation, and deservedly. His lectures on elocution and on reading, his treatises on education, and for the most part his rhetorical grammar, are excellent and almost unexceptionable performances. In these, he encountered practice and prejudices, when they were found repugnant to obvious rules of propriety. But in this Dictionary he seems to have left his only defensible ground, propriety, in pursuit of that phantom, fashion. He deserted his own principles, as the reviewers observe; and where he has done this, every rational man should desert his standard.

¶ From this description must be excepted some arts which have for their object, the pleasures of sense and imagination; as music and painting; and sciences which depend on fixed principles, and not opinion, as mathematics and philosophy. The former flourish in the last stages of national refinement, and the latter are always proceeding towards perfection by discoveries and experiment. Criticism also flourishes in Great-Britain: Men read and judge accurately, when original writers cease to adorn the sciences. Correct writers precede just criticism.

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1	10000	10000	is	10000
2	3000	3000	are	6000
3	2000	2000		6000
6	1000	1000		6000
10	500	500		5000
30	200	200		6000
80	100	100		8000
90	50	50		4500
100	40	40		4000
120	30	30		3600
161	29	29		3200
203	10	10		2000
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Boston, July 28, 1790.

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Invoice of Loan-Office Certificates destroyed in the house of John Holker on the 2d day of January 1780.

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