

where it gathers strength insensibly. Mankind generally oppose, with resolution, the assaults of barefaced and open tyranny; but disregard the little insect that gnaws through the dike, and opens a sure, though secret, passage to inundation.

C H A P. XXI.

Of the Punishment of the Nobles.

WHAT punishments shall be ordained for the nobles, whose privileges make so great a part of the laws of nations? I do not mean to inquire whether the hereditary distinction between nobles and commoners be useful in any government, or necessary in a monarchy; or whether it be true, that they form an intermediate power, of use in moderating the excesses of both extremes; or whether they be not rather slaves to their own body, and to others, confining within a very small circle the natural effects and hopes of industry, like those little fruitful spots, scattered here and there in the sandy deserts of Arabia; or whether it be true, that a subordina-
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