

42 *The RISE and FALL of the*

the different situation of things, we should believe, in perusing antient history, that we view a sett of men different from ourselves.

Experience has shewn perpetually, that an European prince, who has a million of subjects, cannot, without destroying himself, keep up and maintain above ten thousand soldiers; consequently, great nations only are possessed of armies.

But the case was different antiently with regard to commonwealths: for this proportion between the soldiers and the rest of the people, which is now as one to an hundred, might, in those times, be pretty near as one is to eight.

The founders of antient commonwealths had made an equal distribution of the lands; this circumstance alone raised a nation to power; that is to say, made it a well regulated society: this also gave strength to its armies; it being equally the interest (and this too was very great) of every individual, to exert himself in defence of his country.

When laws were not executed in their full rigour, affairs returned back to the same point in which we now see them: the avarice of some particular persons, and the lavish profuseness of others, occasioned the lands to become the property of a few; immediately arts were introduced to supply the reciprocal wants of the rich and poor; by which means there were but very few soldiers or citizens seen; for the revenues of the lands, that had before been employed to support the latter, were now bestowed wholly on slaves and artificers, who administered to the luxury of the new proprietors; for otherwise the government, which, how licentious soever it be, must exist, would have been destroyed: