

Parthians, though these reigned over but part of the provinces which formed the dominions of those two powers. Had Cyrus not conquered the kingdom of Lydia; had Seleucus continued in Babylon, and let the successors of Antigonus possess the maritime provinces, the Greeks would never have conquered the Persian empire, nor the Romans that of Seleucus. Nature has prescribed certain limits to states, purposely to mortify the ambition of mortals: when the Romans stepped beyond those limits, the greatest part of them were destroyed by the Parthians (a); when the Parthians presumed to pass them, they were forced immediately to retire back; and in our days, such Turks, as advanced beyond those boundaries, were obliged to return whence they came.

The kings of Syria and Egypt had, in their respective dominions, two kinds of subjects, victorious nations, and nations vanquished; the former, still puffed up with the idea of their origin, were ruled with very great difficulty; they were not fired with that spirit of independence which animates us to shake off the yoke, but with that impatience which makes us wish to change our sovereign.

But the chief weakness of the kingdom of Syria sprung from that of the court, where such monarchs presided as were successors to Darius, not to Alexander. Luxury, vanity, and effeminacy, which have prevailed through all ages in the Asiatic courts, triumphed more particularly in that of Syria: the evil

(a) I have given the reason of this in the xvii. chapter, borrowed partly from the geographical disposition of the two empires.