

oaths, in his time, could not induce any person to place confidence in a Greek, whereas they were considered by a Roman as inviolable obligations upon his conscience.

There is a passage in one of Cicero's letters to (a) Atticus, which manifestly discovers how much the Romans had degenerated in this particular, since the time of Polybius.

Memmius, says he, imparted to the senate the agreement he and his fellow candidate had made with the consuls, by which the latter stipulated to favour them in their solicitations for the consulship the ensuing year; and they obliged themselves to pay four hundred thousand sesterces to the consuls, if they did not furnish them with three augurs, who should declare they themselves were present when the people made the Curatian law (b), though in reality it had not been enacted; and two former consuls, who should affirm they had assisted at signing the edict of the senate which regulated the state of the provinces assigned to the present consuls, notwithstanding no such edict was in being. What an admirable set of people do we discover in a single contract!

As religion always furnishes the best security for the rectitude of human actions, so there was this peculiarity among the Romans, that the love they expressed for their country, was blended with some

(a) Lib. iv. Let. 18.

(b) The Curatian law disposed of the military power, and the edict of the senate regulated the troops, the money, and officers, that were to be allotted to the governors: now the consuls in order to accomplish these particulars, to their own satisfaction, contrived a false law and a false edict of the senate.