

their protection. Such princes have a natural antipathy to people of merit and virtue, because they are sensible their actions are disapproved by such persons. The contradiction (*a*) and even the silence of an austere citizen were insupportable to them; and as they grew intoxicated with popular applause, they at last imagined their government constituted the public felicity, and consequently that it could be censured by none but disaffected and ill-disposed persons.

When an emperor at any time discovered his strength and activity, as when Commodus (*b*) for instance, in the presence of a vast assembly of the people, slew several wild beasts with a facility peculiar to him, he naturally raised the admiration of the soldiers as well as the populace, because strength, and pliancy of limbs, were at that time considered as necessary qualifications in the military art.

We have no longer a just idea of bodily exercises, and a man who practises them with any ex-

(*a*) As the antient austerity of manners could not suffer the licentiousness of theatrical representations, the minds of virtuous men continued to be filled with contempt for those who exercised that profession.

(*b*) Though the gladiators were selected from the dregs of the people, and followed the most infamous profession that was ever tolerated; for none but slaves or malefactors were compelled to devote themselves to death in combats at the funerals of the grandees; yet the fondness of the people for these exercises which had such a resemblance to those of war, became so immoderate, that we cannot help calling it a species of madness. Emperors, senators, men of distinguished birth, and even women appeared upon the arena in the amphitheatre; *nec virorum modo pugnas, sed et foeminarum*, says Suetonius in the life of Domitian. The Romans were as much delighted too with wrestlers.