

MEMOIRS

OF THE

House of Brandenburg

BY

FREDERIC III. the present
King of Prussia.

MEMOIRS

OF THE

House of Brandenburg

From the Earliest Accounts, to the Death
of FREDERIC I. King of Prussia.

To which are added

FOUR DISSERTATIONS

- I. On SUPERSTITION and RELIGION.
- II. On MANNERS, CUSTOMS, INDUSTRY,
and the Progress of the HUMAN UNDER-
STANDING in the Arts and Sciences.
- III. On the antient and modern Government
of BRANDENBURG.
- IV. On the REASONS for the Enacting and
Repealing of LAWS.

The whole written

By the present KING of PRUSSIA.

L O N D O N,

Printed for J. N O U R S E at the Lamb opposite
Katherine-Street in the Strand.

MDCCLVIII.





U 45389-71

T O T H E
P R I N C E R O Y A L
O F *ct/d*
P R U S S I A.

Dear Brother,

HA V I N G lately employed
some leisure hours in draw-
ing up an abridgment of
the history of the house of Bran-
denburg, I thought proper to ad-
dress this work to you, who are
one day to be the ornament of this
history ; to you who are next heir
to the crown ; and to whom I
have consecrated all my toils and
perils. It is true you were ac-
quainted with the actions of your
A 3 ancestors,

ancestors, before I undertook to commit them to writing: therefore the pains I have taken in making this extract, can be of no other use to you, than to recal them to your memory. I have treated the subject with freedom and impartiality, so as to exhibit the princes of your house in their real colours. The same pen which has drawn the civil and military virtues of the great Elector, has glanced at the foibles of the first King of Prussia, and those passions which in the order of providence contributed afterwards to raise this house to its present pitch of grandeur. I have divested myself of all manner of prejudice, and considered princes
and

and relations only as other men. Far from being biaſſed by the weight of power, or from idolizing my anceſtors, I have freely condemned their vices, becauſe vice ſhould find no patronage on the throne: I have commended virtue in thoſe whom it adorned; but guarded againſt the enthufiaſm which it naturally inſpires; to the end that nothing but truth in her plain and native dreſs ſhould reign throughout this hiſtory. If mortals may be allowed to dive into the ſecrets of futurity, and after an inveſtigation of principles to reaſon on the conſequences; I may venture to predict, from the knowledge I have of your character, a laſting proſperity

to this empire. It is not the suggestion of a blind and passionate affection, nor the base language of flattery, which both of us equally detest, but it is truth itself that obliges me to tell you with an inward satisfaction, that you have rendered yourself worthy of the rank to which your birth has called you ; and of the title of *Defender of your country*, by bravely venturing your life in her cause. If you did not think it beneath you to pass through the different degrees of military subordination, it is because you judged, that to be worthy of command you ought first to learn to obey ; it is because your moderation forbad you to plume yourself

with

with that empty glory which vulgar princes are apt to assume, upon the experience of veteran captains. Your chief and constant aim is the good of your country ; hence you have silenced every passion, and set every view of private interest aside, whenever it was your duty to appear in her defence. It was from this same principle that BOUFFLERS offered himself to the King of France in the campaign of 1709, and served under VILLARS ; who received him with the following compliment : *Such a colleague, Sir, as you, I shall always consider as my master.* It is not only on that coolness and presence of mind which no perils can discom-

pose ; nor on that bravery and prudent resolution, which you have always exerted in decisive moments, and by which the troops have often distinguished you as one of the chief instruments of their victory ; it is not, I say, on these virtues only that I ground my hopes and those of the public : the bravest kings have often made their subjects unhappy, witness the military ardour of FRANCIS I. and CHARLES XII. and so many other princes, who have been upon the brink of ruin themselves, or ruined their country, by excess of ambition. Permit me to tell you, it is the gentleness and humanity of your disposition ; it is the sincere, the unfeigned

unfeigned tears which you shed, when a sudden accident had like to have ended my days; that I look upon as the sure marks of your virtue, and as pledges of the happiness of those whom heaven has destined to be one day under your government. A heart susceptible of friendship is superior to base ambition; for your part, you know no other rule of conduct than justice, and have no other desire than that of preserving the esteem of wise and virtuous men. Thus thought the ANTONINUS's, the TITUS's, the TRAJANS, those best of princes, who have been justly called the delight of human kind. How happy am I, Dear Brother, to behold my

nearest, and most beloved, relation possessed of so many virtues ! Heaven has given me a soul sensible to the impressions of merit, and a heart capable of gratitude ; ties, which joined to those of nature, will bind me for ever to you. With these sentiments you have been long indeed acquainted ; but I am glad I have the opportunity of repeating them to you at the head of this work, and, as it were, in the presence of the whole universe. I am with friendship and esteem,

Dear Brother,

Your faithful Brother

and Servant,

FREDERIC.

THE

Preliminary Discourse.

HISTORY is looked upon as the school of princes : It exhibits to their memory the reigns of those sovereigns, who were fathers of their country, and of those tyrants, who laid it waste : It points out the causes of the increase and decline of empires : It displays such a multitude of characters, that some of them cannot help bearing a resemblance to those of the princes in our days ; and while it decides the reputation of the dead, it pronounces a tacit sentence on the living. Thus the censure, which history passes on those wicked men who are no more, is a moral lesson to the present generation, by which they are given to understand what kind of judgment posterity will form of their conduct.

Tho'

THO' the study of history is of all others the most proper for princes, yet it is not less useful to private persons: It is the chain of the several events of past ages, transmitted down to our days. Here the civilian, the politician, and the soldier learn the connexion of things present with the past: Here they find encomiums bestowed on those who faithfully served their country; and universal odium intailed on the names of such as abused the confidence of their fellow citizens: Here, in fine, they are made wise by the experience of others.

To contract the sphere of our ideas to the spot we live on, or to confine our knowledge to our private duties, is grovelling in the most stupid ignorance. But to penetrate into the remote recesses of antiquity; to comprehend the whole universe within the extent of the mind; is really triumphing over ignorance and error, is co-existing with all ages, and becoming, indeed, a citizen of all places and countries.

As general histories prevent our being perplexed or confounded in regard to that great multiplicity of events, which have happened in all countries; as they conduct us regularly from the remotest antiquity down through the succession of times, by fixing certain epocha's, which
serve

serve as resting-places to the memory : so particular histories have this advantage, that they enter into a detail of the several events, which have occurred in an empire, by confining themselves entirely to this single branch. General histories present us, as it were, with a large picture, filled with a variety of figures ; some of which are covered with such strong shades, as render them too indistinct to be discerned. Particular histories select a single figure out of this piece ; they represent it to the life ; and giving it every advantage of light and colours, they enable the public to view it with that attention which it deserves.

A man that does not really think he dropt from the clouds, or 'does not date the origin of the world from the day of his nativity, ought naturally to be curious of being acquainted with the transactions of different ages and countries. If he is indifferent with regard to the fate of so many other nations, that have been the sport of fortune ; he will be pleased, at least, with the history of the country he lives in, and with the relation of the events in which his ancestors were concerned. If an Englishman, for example, has no knowledge of the history of those kings, who filled the throne of Persia ;
if

if his memory is embarrassed with that infinite number of popes, who ruled the church, we are ready to excuse him : but we shall hardly have the same indulgence for him, if he is a stranger to the original of parliaments, to the customs of his country, and to the different lines of kings, who have reigned in England.

PRUSSIA is the only civilized country in Europe, whose history was wanting. I do not rank among the number of historians, a Hartknoch, or a Puffendorff; laborious writers, indeed, but who compiled only facts, and whose works may be looked upon rather as historical dictionaries, than real histories. Nor do I reckon a *Lockelius*, who wrote a tedious chronicle, where, for the pleasure of finding only a single event of importance, we must be at the trouble of reading a hundred tiresome pages. This sort of writers may be compared to labourers, who carefully, but injudiciously, collect a quantity of materials, which lie quite useless, till the architect has given them their proper form. It is as impossible that those complements should constitute a history, as that a printer's types should make a book, unless they are distributed in the order requisite for the composition of words and sentences.

YOUNG