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| Adam Ferguson, <i>An Essay on the History of Civil Society</i> . Part Second: "Of the History of Rude Nations". Section III: "Of Rude Nations under the Impressions of Property and Interest". Cambridge University Press, 2007, p.95-96 | Code Sujet | CCV |
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5 The indolence of mankind, or rather their aversion to any application in which they are not engaged by immediate instinct and passion, retards their progress in extending the notion of property. It has been found, however, even while the means of subsistence are left in common, and the stock of the public is yet undivided, that this notion is already applied to different subjects; that the fur and the bow pertain to the individual, the cottage, with its furniture, are appropriated to the family.

10 When the parent begins to desire a better provision for his children than is found under the promiscuous management of many copartners, when he has applied his labour and his skill apart, he aims at an exclusive possession, and seeks the property of the soil, as well as the use of its fruits.

15 When the individual no longer finds among his associates the same inclination to commit every subject to public use, he is seized with concern for his personal fortune; and is alarmed by the cares which every person entertains for himself. He is urged as much by emulation and jealousy, as by the sense of necessity. He suffers considerations of interest to rest on his mind, and when every present appetite is sufficiently gratified, he can act with a view to futurity, or, rather finds an object of vanity in having amassed what is become a subject of competition, and a matter of universal esteem. Upon this motive, where violence is restrained, he can apply his hand to lucrative arts, confine himself to a tedious task, and wait with patience for the distant returns of his labour.

25 Thus mankind acquire industry by many and by slow degrees. They are taught to regard their interest; they are taught to abstain from unlawful profits; and they are secured in the possession of what they fairly obtain; and by these methods the habits of the labourer, the mechanic, and the trader, are gradually formed. A hoard, collected from the simple productions of nature, or a herd of cattle, are, in every rude nation, the first species of wealth. The circumstances of the soil, and the climate, determine whether the inhabitant shall apply himself chiefly to agriculture or pasture; whether he shall fix his residence, or be moving continually about with all his possessions.

35 In the west of Europe; in America, from south to north, with a few exceptions; in the torrid zone, and every where within the warmer climates; mankind have generally applied themselves to some species of agriculture, and have been disposed to settlement. In the east and the north of Asia, they depended entirely on their herds, and were perpetually shifting their ground in search of new pasture. The arts which pertain to settlement have been practised, and variously cultivated, by the inhabitants of Europe. Those which are consistent with perpetual migration, have, from the earliest accounts of history, remained nearly the same, with the Scythian or Tartar. The tent pitched on a moveable carriage, the horse applied to every purpose of labour, and of war, of the dairy, and of the butcher's stall, from the earliest to the latest accounts, have made up the riches and equipage of this wandering people.

But in whatever way rude nations subsist, there are certain points in which, under the first impressions of property, they nearly agree. Homer either lived
45 with a people in this stage of their progress, or found himself engaged to exhibit their character. Tacitus had made them the subject of a particular treatise; and if this be an aspect under which mankind deserve to be viewed, it must be confessed, that we have singular advantages in collecting their features. The
50 portrait has already been drawn by the ablest hands, and gives, at one view, in the writings of these celebrated authors, whatever has been scattered in the relations of historians, or whatever we have opportunities to observe in the actual manners of men, who still remain in a similar state.

In passing from the condition we have described, to this we have at present in view, mankind still retain many parts of their earliest character. They are still
55 averse to labour, addicted to war, admirers of fortitude, and in the language of Tacitus, more lavish of their blood than of their sweat.