

*The Ancients and Moderns*

FREQUENT and violent disputes have arisen on the subject of the preference to be given to the ancients, or the moderns. The controversy of Perrault and Boileau makes a considerable figure in French literature; the last of whom said that the ancients had been moderns, but that it was by no means clear the moderns would become ancients. The dispute extended to England; Sir William Temple raised even his gentle indolence against the bold attacks of the rough Wotton. The literary world was pestered and tired with this dispute, which at length got into the hands of insolence and ignorance. Swift's "Battle of the Books," by his irresistible vein of keen satire, seems to have laid this "perturbed spirit." Yet, surely, it had been better if these acrid and absurd controversies had never disgraced the republic of letters. The advice of Sidonius Apollinaris is excellent; he says, that we should read the ancients with respect, and the moderns without envy.