

### *The Arabic Chronicle*

THE Arabic chronicle of Jerusalem is only valuable from the time of Mahomet. For such is the stupid superstition of the Arabs, that they pride themselves on being ignorant of whatever has passed before the mission of their Prophet. The most curious information it contains is concerning the crusades: according to Longueue, who said he had translated several portions of it, whoever would be versed in the history of the crusades should attend to this chronicle, which appears to have been written with impartiality. It renders justice to the Christian heroes, and particularly dwells on the gallant actions of the Count de St. Gilles.

Our historians chiefly write concerning *Godfrey de Bouillon*; only the learned know that the Count *de St. Gilles* acted there so important a character. The stories of the *Saracens* are just the reverse: they speak little concerning Godfrey, and eminently distinguish Saint Gilles.

Tasso has given into the more vulgar accounts, by making the former so eminent, at the cost of the other heroes, in his *Jerusalem Delivered*. Thus Virgil transformed by his magical power the chaste Dido into a distracted lover; and Homer the meretricious Pene-

lope into a moaning matron. It is not requisite for poets to be historians, but historians should not be so frequently poets. The same charge, I have been told, must be made to the Grecian historians. The Persians are viewed to great disadvantage in Grecian history. It would form a curious inquiry and the result might be unexpected to some, were the Oriental student to comment on the Grecian historians. The Grecians were not the demigods they paint themselves to have been, nor those they attacked the contemptible multitudes they describe. These boasted victories might be diminished. The same observation attaches to Cæsar's account of his British expedition. He never records the defeats he frequently experienced. The national prejudices of the Roman historians have undoubtedly occasioned us to have a very erroneous conception of the Carthaginians, whose discoveries in navigation and commercial enterprises were the most considerable among the ancients. We must indeed think highly of that people, whose works on agriculture, which they had raised into a science, the senate of Rome ordered to be translated into Latin. They must indeed have been a wise and grave people.—Yet they are stigmatized by the Romans for

faction, cruelty, and cowardice; and their bad faith has come down to us in a proverb: but Livy was a Roman! and there is a patriotic malignity!