

the husband alone possesses the key. But why quote barbarous nations, when we have similar examples so much nearer home? What is the delicacy on which some of our neighbours pique themselves, with respect to the chastity of their wives, but a jealousy, equally barbarous and criminal?

How various are the dispositions, manners, and opinions of different nations? After what has been here related of the high estimation in which virginity is held by the bulk of mankind, and of the precautions and ignominious methods they employ, in order to secure it, could it be imagined there were other nations who despise it, and who consider the trouble of removing it as a servile office?

Prompted by superstition, the inhabitants of certain countries resign the first fruits of virginity to their priests, and sometimes to their very idols. This privilege is enjoyed by the priests of Cochin and Calicut; and in Goa, virgins are prostituted, either voluntarily or forcibly, by their nearest relations to an idol of iron. Of these vile excesses, gross superstition and a blind sense of the duties of religion, have been the sources, while motives more earthly have induced people of other countries eagerly

to