

LETTER VII.

THOUGH the king of Denmark be an absolute monarch, yet the Norwegians appear to enjoy all the blessings of freedom. Norway may be termed a sister kingdom; but the people have no viceroy to lord it over them, and fatten his dependants with the fruit of their labour.

There are only two counts in the whole country who have estates, and exact some feudal observances from their tenantry. All the rest of the country is divided into small farms, which belong to the cultivator. It is true some few, appertaining to the Church, are let, but always on a lease for life, generally renewed in favour of the eldest son, who has this advantage as well as a right to a double portion of the property. But the value of the farm is estimated, and after his portion is assigned to him he must be answerable for the residue to the remaining part of the family.

Every farmer for ten years is obliged to attend annually about twelve days to learn the military exercise, but it is always at a small distance from his dwelling, and does not lead him into any new habits of life.

There are about six thousand regulars also in garrison at Christiania and Fredericshall, who are equally reserved, with the militia, for the defence of their own country. So that when the Prince Royal passed into Sweden in 1788, he was obliged to request, not command, them to accompany him on this expedition.