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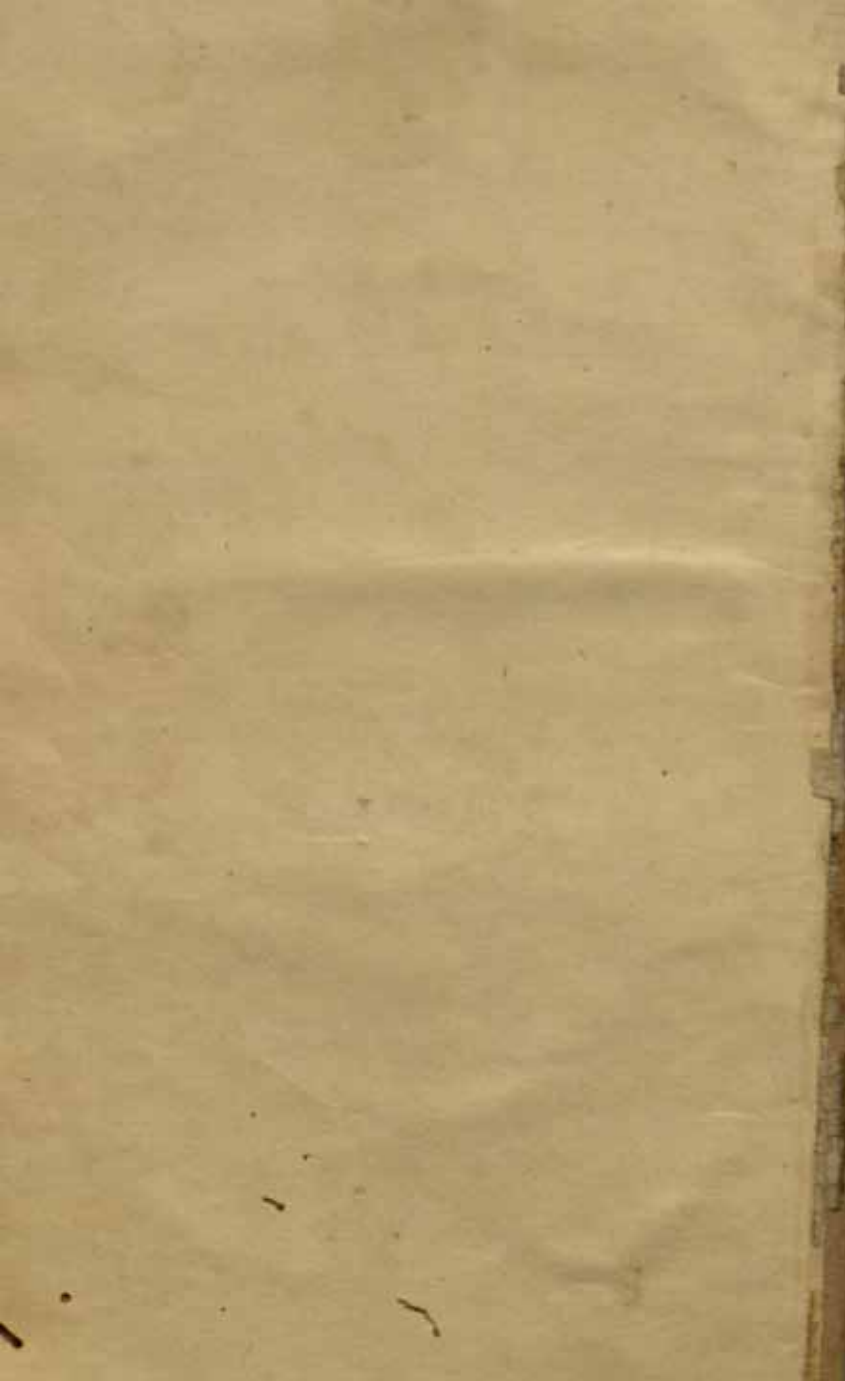
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E. GIBBON ESQth

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THE

HISTORY

OF THE

DECLINE AND FALL

OF THE

ROMAN EMPIRE.

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By EDWARD GIBBON, Esq.



IN TWELVE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

WITH A LIFE OF THE AUTHOR:

WRITTEN FOR THIS EDITION.

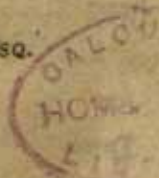
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OF
EDWARD GIBBON, Esq.

THIS great historian was born at Putney, in the county of Surrey, on the 27th April 1737. His paternal ancestors were persons of some distinction. His grandfather, Edward, was first a commissioner of customs, and afterwards a director of the South Sea Company. In this last capacity, he lost the greatest part of his fortune, and no small share of his reputation, though his grandson has endeavoured to justify him from the severe charges brought against that body. He contrived to retrieve his fortune; but, displeased with his son, who was also named Edward, on account of a matrimonial connection, he left him only a small share of the estate. Edward, however, received a liberal education, was twice member of Parliament, and distinguished himself by a persevering opposition to Sir Robert Walpole. He was married to Judith Porten, daughter of a citizen of London, by whom he had six sons and a daughter, all of whom died in their infancy except the subject of the present memoir. His own constitution was so extremely weak, that he was scarcely expected to reach the age of manhood; and his father, that the patronymic name of Edward might not fail from the family, repeated it at the baptism of every successive son. His infancy was nursed in the most tender manner by his aunt, Mrs. Catherine Porten, to

whom he declares those to be indebted who were rejoiced at his having lived.

As soon as young Gibbon became capable of imbibing the rudiments of learning, he was placed under the domestic tuition of a Mr. Kirkby, a learned and unfortunate man, for whom, almost alone of his early instructors, he seems to entertain respect and gratitude. He received from him the rudiments of English and Latin; but poor Kirkby, having one day unfortunately forgot to mention King George in his prayer, the zealous loyalty of old Gibbon prompted his immediate dismissal. Edward was then sent to the school of Kingston upon Thames. Here he made some progress in Latin, though his studies were frequently interrupted by ill health. At the end of two years, however, his mother died; and this circumstance, it does not exactly appear how, occasioned his return to the parental roof. Here he again found himself under the care of his aunt, who now bestowed the same care in the cultivation of his mind, which she had formerly devoted to the strengthening of his constitution. Here he seems to have first imbibed that passion for study which continued ever after to be his ruling propensity. He indulged in a course of desultory reading, as inclination or curiosity prompted. The following account, given by himself, of his early studies, cannot fail to be interesting.

“I should, perhaps, be astonished, were it possible to ascertain the date at which a favourite tale was engraved, by frequent repetition, in my memory: the Cavern of the Winds, the Palace of Felicity, and the fatal moment, at the end of three months or centuries, when Prince Adolphus is overtaken by Time, who had worn out so many pair of wings in the pursuit. Before I left Kingston school, I was well acquainted with Pope's Homer, and the Arabian Nights Entertainments, two books which will always please, by the moving picture of human manners and specious mi-

rales: nor was I then capable of discerning that Pope's translation is a portrait endowed with every merit, except that of likeness to the original. The verses of Pope accustomed my ear to the sound of poetic harmony. In the death of Hector, and the shipwreck of Ulysses, I tasted the new emotions of terror and pity; and seriously disputed with my aunt on the vices and virtues of the heroes of the Trojan war. From Pope's Homer to Dryden's Virgil was an easy transition; but I know not how, from some fault in the author, the translator, or the reader, the pious Æneas did not so forcibly seize on my imagination; and I derived more pleasure from Ovid's Metamorphoses, especially in the fall of Phaeton, and the speeches of Ajax and Ulysses. My grandfather's ~~flight unlocked~~ the door of a tolerable library; and I turned over many English pages of poetry and romance, of history and travels. Where a title attracted my eye, without fear or awe I snatched the volume from the shelf, and Mrs. Porten, who indulged herself in moral and religious speculations, was more prone to encourage than to check a curiosity above the strength of a boy. This year, (1748) the twelfth of my age, I shall note as the most propitious to the growth of my intellectual stature."

Another change took place in the state of the family by the bankruptcy of his grandfather, who absconded in consequence. His aunt then, with a becoming pride, resolved not to be dependent on the bounty of her friends. She submitted to the humble employment of keeping a boarding house for Westminster school, and thus earned a competence for her old age. This circumstance led to the plan of sending Edward to that seminary. His attendance, however, was interrupted by frequent intervals of ill health, and his disorder at length became so violent, that it was necessary to remove him from school, and send him to Bath. For two years succeeding, his scholastic instruction was

very irregular, and even, in a great measure, neglected. His real education was carried on at home, where he still continued his course of desultory studies. He resumes his account of them in the following terms :

“ The curiosity which had been implanted in my infant mind, was still alive and active ; but my reason was not sufficiently informed to understand the value, or to lament the loss, of three precious years, from my entrance at Westminster to my admission at Oxford. Instead of repining at my long and frequent confinement to the chamber or the couch, I secretly rejoiced in those infirmities, which delivered me from the exercises of the school, and the society of my equals. As often as I was tolerably exempt from danger and pain, reading, free desultory reading, was the employment and comfort of my solitary hours. At Westminster my aunt sought only to amuse and indulge me ; in my stations at Bath and Winchester, at Buriton and Putney, a false compassion respected my sufferings ; and I was allowed, without controul or advice, to gratify the wanderings of an unripe taste. My indiscriminate appetite subsided by degrees in the *historic* line ; and since philosophy has exploded all innate ideas and natural propensities, I must ascribe this choice to the assiduous perusal of the Universal History, as the octavo volumes successively appeared. This unequal work, and a treatise of Hearn, the *Ductus Historicus*, referred and introduced me to the Greek and Roman historians ; to as many at least as were accessible to an English reader. All that I could find were greedily devoured, from Littlebury's lame Herodotus, and Spelman's valuable Xenophon, to the pompous folios of Gordon's Tacitus, and a ragged Procopius of the beginning of the last century. The cheap acquisition of so much knowledge confirmed my dislike to the study of languages ; and I argued with Mrs. Porten, that, were I master of Greek and Latin, I must interpret to myself in Eng-

lish the thoughts of the original, and that such extemporary versions must be inferior to the elaborate translations of professed scholars; a silly sophism, which could not easily be confuted by a person ignorant of any other language than her own. From the ancient I leaped to the modern world; many crude lumps of Speed, Rapin, Mezeray, Davila, Machiavel, Father Paul, Bower, &c. I devoured like so many novels; and I swallowed with the same voracious appetite the descriptions of India and China, of Mexico and Peru.

“ My first introduction to the historic scenes, which have since engaged so many years of my life, must be ascribed to an accident. In the summer of 1751, I accompanied my father on a visit to Mr. Hoare’s, in Wiltshire; but I was less delighted with the beauties of Stourhead, than with discovering in the library a common book, the Continuation of Edward’s Roman History, which is indeed executed with more skill and taste than the previous work. To me the reigns of the successors of Constantine were absolutely new; and I was immersed in the passage of the Goths over the Danube, when the summons of the dinner-bell reluctantly dragged me from my intellectual feast. This transient glance served rather to irritate than to appease my curiosity; and as soon as I returned to Bath, I procured the second and third volumes of Howel’s History of the World, which exhibited the Byzantine period on a larger scale. Mahomet and his Saracens soon fixed my attention; and some instinct of criticism directed me to the genuine sources. Simon Ockley, an original in every sense, first opened my eyes; and I was led from one book to another, till I had ranged round the circle of Oriental history. Before I was sixteen, I had exhausted all that could be learned in English of the Arabs and Persians, the Tartars and Turks; and the same ardour urged me to guess at the French of d’Herbelot, and to construe the barbarous Latin of Pocock’s Abulfaragius. Such vague and multifarious reading

could not teach me to think, to write, or to act; and the only principle that darted a ray of light into the indigested chaos, was an early and rational application to the order of time and place. The maps of Cellarius and Wells imprinted in my mind the picture of ancient geography; from Strachius I imbibed the elements of chronology; the Tables of Helvicus and Andemon, the Annals of Usher and Prideaux, distinguished the connection of events, and engraved the multitude of names and dates in a clear and indelible series. But, in the discussion of the first ages, I overleaped the bounds of modesty and use. In my childish balance I presumed to weigh the systems of Scaliger and Petavius, of Marsham and Newton, which I could seldom study in the originals; and my sleep has been disturbed by the difficulty of reconciling the septuagint with the Hebrew computation. I arrived at Oxford with a stock of erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and a degree of ignorance of which a school-boy would have been ashamed."

To his residence at Oxford Mr. Gibbon looks back with no satisfaction. Instead of improving by the opportunities there afforded, he seems even to have lost that taste for reading which he had previously acquired. He fell into habits of idleness and dissipation, frequently absented himself, and settled to no plan of study. In short, he declares the fourteen months which he spent in Magdalen College to be the most idle and unprofitable of his whole life. Unwilling to take upon himself the whole blame of this lost period, he endeavours to throw it partly upon the institutions of the university. No controul or superintendence, he says, were exercised over him: he was allowed to attend or not as inclination prompted. "During the first weeks," says he, "I constantly attended these lessons in my tutor's room; but as they appeared equally devoid of profit and pleasure, I was once tempted to try the experiment of a formal apology. The apology was accepted with

a smile. I repeated the offence with less ceremony; the excuse was admitted with the same indulgence: the slightest motive of laziness or indisposition, the most trifling avocation at home or abroad, was allowed as a worthy impediment; nor did my tutor appear conscious of my absence or neglect. Had the hour of lecture been constantly filled, a single hour was a small portion of my academic leisure. No plan of study was recommended for my use; no exercises were prescribed for his inspection; and, at the most precious season of youth, whole days and weeks were suffered to elapse, without labour or amusement, without advice or account."

About this time, however, his constitution strengthened, without any visible cause, and he was delivered from those complaints under which he had laboured. At the end of fourteen months, a long recess enabled him to spend two months at his father's house in Hampshire. It is remarkable, that the moment he arrived there his taste for books began to revive. He now wrote his first composition, marked by that taste for research and exotic history, which strongly predominated in his mind. It was entitled "The Age of Sesostris;" and the object was to prove that monarch to have been contemporary with Solomon.

On Gibbon's return to college, he entered upon the same round of dissipation as before. He made, in one winter, a visit to Bath, an excursion into Buckinghamshire, and four to London. He still retained, however, his old turn for research and controversy; but it took a most singular direction. By reading the works of Roman Catholic divines, he became a convert to that religion. Two works of Bossuet were, he asserts, those which completed his conversion. His resolution was completely made up from books, before he saw or conversed with any priest of that persuasion. He was then, however, introduced to one in London, in whose presence he solemnly abjured the errors of heresy. He then wrote an elaborate letter to his father, announcing

and justifying this extraordinary step. His father, in the first paroxysm of anger, published what would have been more wisely concealed, and the gates of the university were shut against the young apostate.

It became now a very serious consideration for old Gibbon, in what manner this extraordinary malady might be banished from the mind of his son. After much deliberation, it was determined to send him to reside for some years at Lausanne, in Switzerland. Thither he was accordingly dispatched, and lodged in the house of M. Pavilliard, a calvinist minister. He has described in a lively manner his feelings on first arriving in this exile.

“ When I was thus suddenly cast on a foreign land, I found myself deprived of the use of speech and of hearing ; and, during some weeks, incapable not only of enjoying the pleasures of conversation, but even of asking or answering a question in the common intercourse of life. To a home-bred Englishman every object, every custom was offensive ; but the native of any country might have been disgusted with the general aspect of his lodging and entertainment. I had now exchanged my elegant apartment in Magdalen College, for a narrow gloomy street, the most unfrequented of an unhandsome town, for an old inconvenient house, and for a small chamber, ill contrived, and ill furnished, which, on the approach of winter, instead of a companionable fire, must be warmed by the dull invisible heat of a stove. From a man, I was again degraded to the dependence of a schoolboy. M. Pavilliard managed my expences, which had been reduced to a diminutive state. I received a small monthly allowance for my pocket-money ; and helpless and awkward as I have ever been, I no longer enjoyed the indispensable comfort of a servant. My condition seemed as destitute of hope, as it was devoid of pleasure. I was separated* for an indefinite, which appeared an infinite, term from my native country ; and I had

lost all connection with my catholic friends. I have since reflected with surprise, that as the Romish clergy of every part of Europe maintain a close correspondence with each other, they never attempted, by letters or messages, to rescue me from the hands of the heretics, or at least to confirm my zeal and constancy in the profession of the faith. Such was my first introduction to Lausanne; a place where I spent nearly five years with pleasure and profit, which I afterwards revisited without compulsion, and which I have finally selected as the most grateful retreat for the decline of my life."

He soon, however, became reconciled to his situation, and derived great benefits from the residence of Lausanne. He here entered upon a course of intense study. He went nearly through a complete round of the Latin classics, and their most celebrated commentators. He acquired also some acquaintance, though not very extensive, with Grecian literature. Grotius, Puffendorf, Locke, Crousaz, and Pascal, entered also into his round of study. He opened a correspondence with Crevier, the successor of Rollin, professor Breitingier of Zurich, and Matthew Gesner of Gottingen. He made also a journey through Switzerland. At this time too he became acquainted with Mademoiselle Curchod; but the nature of their connection will best be related in his own words, though somewhat more pompous than the subject requires.

"I hesitate, from the apprehension of ridicule, when I approach the delicate subject of my early love. By this word I do not mean the polite attention, the gallantry, without hope or design, which has originated in the spirit of chivalry, and is interwoven with the texture of French manners. I understand by this passion, the union of desire, friendship, and tenderness, which is inflamed by a single female, which prefers her to the rest of her sex, and which seeks her possession as the supreme or the sole happiness of our being. I need not blush at recollecting the object of my choice; and

though my love was disappointed of success, I am rather proud that I was once capable of feeling such a pure and exalted sentiment. The personal attractions of Mademoiselle Curchod were embellished by the virtues and talents of the mind. Her fortune was humble, but her family was respectable. Her mother, a native of France, had preferred her religion to her country. The profession of her father did not extinguish the moderation and philosophy of his temper, and he lived content with a small salary and laborious duty, in the obscure lot of minister of Crassy, in the mountains that separate the Pays de Vaud from the county of Burgundy. In the solitude of a sequestered village, he bestowed a liberal, and even learned, education on his only daughter. She surpassed his hopes by her proficiency in the sciences and languages; and in her short visits to some relations at Lausanne, the wit, the beauty, and erudition of Mademoiselle Curchod were the theme of universal applause. The report of such a prodigy awakened my curiosity; I saw and loved. I found her learned without pedantry, lively in conversation, pure in sentiment, and elegant in manners; and the first sudden emotion was fortified by the habits and knowledge of a more familiar acquaintance. She permitted me to make her two or three visits at her father's house. I passed some happy days there in the mountains of Burgundy, and her parents honourably encouraged the connection. In a calm retirement the gay vanity of youth no longer fluttered in her bosom; she listened to the voice of truth and passion, and I might presume to hope that I had made some impression on a virtuous heart. At Crassy and Lausanne I indulged my dream of felicity; but, on my return to England, I soon discovered that my father would not hear of this strange alliance, and that without his consent I was myself destitute and helpless. After a painful struggle, I yielded to my fate; I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son; my wound was insensibly healed by time, absence, and the habits

of a new life. My cure was accelerated by a faithful report of the tranquillity and cheerfulness of the lady herself, and my love subsided in friendship and esteem. The minister of Crassy soon afterwards died ; his stipend died with him ; his daughter retired to Geneva, where, by teaching young ladies, she earned a hard subsistence for herself and her mother ; but in her lowest distress she maintained a spotless reputation, and a dignified behaviour. A rich banker of Paris, a citizen of Geneva, had the good fortune and good sense to discover and possess this inestimable treasure ; and in the capital of taste and luxury she resisted the temptations of wealth, as she had sustained the hardships of indigence. The genius of her husband has exalted him to the most conspicuous station in Europe. In every change of prosperity and disgrace he has reclined on the bosom of a faithful friend ; and Mademoiselle Carclod is now the wife of M. Necker, the minister, and perhaps the legislator, of the French monarchy."

In the course of this residence at Lausanne, Gibbon was converted again to the religion of his parents. On Christmas 1754, after, as he states, a full conviction, he received the sacrament in the church of Lausanne. His father, hearing of his conversion, progress in learning, and propriety of conduct, determined to recall him ; a summons which he obeyed, though not apparently without some reluctance, so completely, during his absence, had his habits become those of a foreigner. His father had married again during his absence ; and Gibbon seems to have come over with considerable prejudices against his stepmother. These, however, were soon dissipated by acquaintance ; and they even became intimate friends. His residence was now divided between the town and the country ; and we shall describe, in his own words, the manner in which he spent his time in both. First, of his town life he says :

"The metropolis affords many amusements, which are open to all. It is itself an astonishing and perpe-

tual spectacle to the curious eye ; and each taste, each sense may be gratified by the variety of objects which will occur in the long circuit of a morning walk. I assiduously frequented the theatres at a very propitious era of the stage, when a constellation of excellent actors, both in tragedy and comedy, was eclipsed by the meridian brightness of Garrick, in the maturity of his judgment, and vigour of his performance. The pleasures of a town life are within the reach of every man who is regardless of his health, his money, and his company. By the contagion of example I was sometimes seduced ; but the better habits, which I had formed at Lausanne, induced me to seek a more elegant and rational society ; and if my search was less easy and successful than I might have hoped, I shall at present impute the failure to the disadvantages of my situation and character. Had the rank and fortune of my parents given them an annual establishment in London, their own house would have introduced me to a numerous and polite circle of acquaintance. But my father's taste had always preferred the highest and the lowest company, for which he was equally qualified ; and, after a twelve years retirement, he was no longer in the memory of the great with whom he had associated. I found myself a stranger in the midst of a vast and unknown city ; and at my entrance into life I was reduced to some dull family parties, and some scattered connections, which were not such as I should have chosen for myself.* The most useful friends of my father were the Mallets : they received me with civility and kindness, at first on his account, and afterwards on my own ; and (if I may use Lord Chesterfield's words) I was soon *domesticated* in their house. Mr. Mallet, a name among the English poets, is praised by an unforgiving enemy for the ease and elegance of his conversation, and his wife was not destitute of wit or learning. By his assistance I was introduced to Lady Hervey, the mother of the present Earl of Bristol.

Her age and infirmities confined her at home ; her dinners were select ; in the evening her house was open to the best company of both sexes and all nations ; nor was I displeased at her preference and affectation of the manners, the language, and the literature of France. But my progress in the English world was in general left to my own efforts, and those efforts were languid and slow. I had not been endowed by art or nature with those happy gifts of confidence and address which unlock every door and every bosom ; nor would it be reasonable to complain of the just consequences of my sickly childhood, foreign education, and reserved temper. While coaches were rattling through Bond Street, I have passed many a solitary evening in my lodging with my books. My studies were sometimes interrupted by a sigh which I breathed towards Lausanne ; and on the approach of spring I withdrew without reluctance from the noisy and extensive scene of crowds without company, and dissipation without pleasure. In each of the twenty-five years of my acquaintance with London (1758-1783) the prospect gradually brightened ; and this unfavourable picture most properly belongs to the first period after my return from Switzerland."

His country life seems to have been little more to his taste :

"As my stay at Buriton was always voluntary, I was received and dismissed with smiles ; but the comforts of my retirement did not depend on the ordinary pleasures of the country. My father could never inspire me with his love and knowledge of farming. I never handled a gun, I seldom mounted an horse ; and my philosophic walks were soon terminated by a shady bench, where I was long detained by the sedentary amusement of reading or meditation. At home I occupied a pleasant and spacious apartment ; the library on the same floor was soon considered as my peculiar domain ; and I might say with truth, that I was never less alone than when by myself. My sole complaint

which I piously suppressed, arose from the kind restraint imposed on the freedom of my time. By the habit of early rising I always secured a sacred portion of the day, and many scattered moments were stolen and employed by my studious industry. But the family hours of breakfast, of dinner, of tea, and of supper, were regular and long : after breakfast Mrs. Gibbon expected my company in her dressing-room ; after tea my father claimed my conversation and the perusal of the newspapers ; and in the midst of an interesting work I was often called down to receive the visit of some idle neighbours. Their dinners and visits required in due season a similar return, and I dreaded the period of the full moon, which was usually reserved for our more distant excursions. I could not refuse attending my father, in the summer of 1759, to the races at Stockbridge, Reading, and Odiam, where he had entered a horse for the hunter's plate ; and I was not displeased with the sight of our Olympic games, the beauty of the spot, the fleetness of the horses, and the gay tumult of the numerous spectators."

During this period, however, he wrote his "*Essai sur l'Etude de la Litterature*," which was received with great applause in France, and neglected in England, perhaps chiefly from the study of the French language being then less common. He never would suffer this work to be reprinted ; and, though originally published at three shillings, it afterwards, as his fame advanced, was frequently sold for a guinea or thirty shillings.

Mr. Gibbon now entered on a mode of life uncongenial to all his former habits. A regiment of Hampshire militia being raised, he was persuaded to accept the office of captain. Although the time spent on this service was far from agreeable, he admits it to have been useful to him in several respects. The habits," says he, "of a sedentary life were usefully broken by the duties of an active profession : in the healthful exercise of the field, I hunted with a battalion, instead of a pack ;

and at that time I was ready, at any hour of the day or night, to fly from quarters to London, from London to quarters, on the slightest call [of private or regimental business. But my principal obligation to the militia, was the making me an Englishman and a soldier. After my foreign education, with my reserved temper, I should long have continued a stranger in my native country, had I not been shaken in this various scene of new faces and new friends; had not experience forced me to feel the characters of our leading men, the state of parties, the forms of office, and the operation of our civil and military system. In this peaceful service, I imbibed the rudiments of the language, and science of tactics, which opened a new field of study and observation. I diligently read, and meditated, the *Memoires Militaires* of Quintus Icilius (Mr. Guichardt), the only writer who has united the merits of a professor and a veteran. The discipline and evolutions of a modern battalion gave me a clearer notion of the phalanx and the legion; and the captain of the Hampshire grenadiers, the reader may smile, has not been useless to the historian of the Roman empire."

After spending in this manner two years and a half, he went to make the tour of Europe. He began by spending three months and a half at Paris; and a much longer time, he conceives, might have been agreeably filled. The account which he gives, in letters to Mrs. Gibbon and his father, of the societies of that capital, though short, will be found interesting. To Mrs. Gibbon he says:

"Paris, in most respects, has fully answered my expectations. I have a number of very good acquaintance, which increase every day; for nothing is so easy as the making them here. Instead of complaining of the want of them, I begin already to think of making a choice. Next Sunday, for instance, I have only three invitations to dinner. Either in the houses you are already acquainted, you meet with people who ask you to come

and see them, or some of your friends offer themselves to introduce you. When I speak of these connections, I mean chiefly for dinner and the evening. Suppers as yet I am pretty much a stranger to, and I fancy shall continue so; for Paris is divided into two species, who have but little communication with each other. The one, who is chiefly connected with the men of letters, dine very much at home, are glad to see their friends, and pass the evenings till about nine in agreeable and rational conversation. The others are the most fashionable, sup in numerous parties, and always play, or rather game, both before and after supper. You may easily guess which sort suits me best. Indeed, madam, we may say what we please of the frivolity of the French, but I do assure you, that in a fortnight passed at Paris, I have heard more conversation worth remembering, and seen more men of letters among the people of fashion, than I had done in two or three winters in London. Amongst my acquaintance, I cannot help mentioning M. Helvetius, the author of the famous book *de l'Esprit*. I met him at dinner at Madame Geoffrin's, where he took great notice of me, made me a visit next day, has ever since treated me, not in a polite but in a friendly manner. Besides being a sensible man, an agreeable companion, and the worthiest creature in the world, he has a very pretty wife, an hundred thousand livres a year, and one of the best tables in Paris."

To his father he adds:

"I have now passed nearly a month in this place, and I can say with truth, that it has answered my most sanguine expectations. The buildings of every kind, the libraries, the public diversions, take up a great part of my time; and I have already found several houses where it is both very easy and very agreeable to be acquainted. Lady Harvey's recommendation to Madam Geoffrin was a most excellent one. Her house is a very good one; regular dinners there every Wednesday,

and the best company of Paris, in men of letters and people of fashion. It was at her house I connected myself with M. Helvetius, who, from his heart his head, and his fortune, is a most valuable man.

“ At his house I was introduced to the Baron d’Olbach, who is a man of parts and fortune, and has two dinners every week. The other houses I am known in are the Duchess d’Aiguillon’s, Madame la Comtesse de Froulay’s, Madame du Bocage, Madame Boyer, M. le Marquis de Mirabeau, and M. de Foucemagn. All these people have their different merit; in some I meet with good dinners; in others, societies for the evening; and in all, good sense, entertainment, and civility, which, as I have no favours to ask, or business to transact with them, is sufficient for me. Their men of letters are as affable and communicative as I expected. My letters to them did me no harm, but were very little necessary. My book had been of great service to me, and the compliments I have received upon it would make me insufferably vain, if I laid any stress on them. When I take notice of the civilities I have received, I must take notice too of what I have seen of a contrary behaviour. You know how much I always built upon the Count de Caylus: he has not been of the least use to me. With great difficulty I have seen him, and that is all. I do not, however, attribute his behaviour to pride, or dislike to me, but solely to the man’s general character, which seems to be a very odd one.”

After spending some time at Lausanne, he made the tour of Italy, with high gratification, though he has given a very succinct notice of it. The view of Rome and its illustrious monuments kindled an enthusiasm in which he seldom indulged. “ At the distance of twenty-five years,” says he, “ I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the *eternal city*. After a sleepless night, I trode with a lofty step the

ruins of the forum; each memorable spot where *Romulus stood*, or *Tully spoke*, or *Cæsar fell*, was at once present to my eye, and several days of intoxication were lost or enjoyed before I could descend to a cool and minute investigation." After spending six weeks at Naples, he then returned to his native country, and to his former mode of life. The five years which now followed were, as he states, passed with the least enjoyment, and remembered with the least satisfaction, of any of his life. He was again doomed to the noise, turbulence, and hurry of a military life, which allowed him only a few occasional intervals of study. He had never made choice of any profession, but had declined that of the law, which Mrs. Gibbon proposed. He felt now the want of independent income, and professional importance. His fortune could only be increased by the death of his father, an event which he sincerely deprecated; and the embarrassments of the family led to the apprehension of his old age being left entirely destitute. He found leisure, however, for various excursions into the fields of literature. He entered into a controversy with Warburton, which he carried on with equal learning and acrimony. In conjunction with M. Deyverdun, an intimate friend, whom he had formed at Lausanne, he undertook a journal, entitled "*Mémoires Littéraires de la Grande Bretagne*," which, however, met with little success. He had now decidedly turned his ambition to the production of a historical work, and had for many years been revolving various subjects in his mind. The expedition of Charles VIII of France into Italy; the crusade of Richard I; the wars of the barons against John and Henry III of England; the history of Edward the Black Prince; the lives, with comparisons, of Henry V, with the emperor Titus; the life of Sir Philip Sidney, that of the Marquis of Montrose, and of Sir Walter Raleigh, were successively planned and rejected. The history of the revolutions of Switzerland took deeper possession of his mind. He entered into a long course of research on

the subject, and even wrote the first book, which, by a singular choice, he composed in the French language. It was disapproved of, however, by a literary society of foreigners in London, to whom he read it; and though Hume approved, it was coldly, and with an exception to the language in which it was written. He therefore abandoned this design, and finally fixed upon his grand scheme of illustrating the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.

In 1770, his father died. Gibbon appears to have been a dutiful son, and to have sincerely lamented this event, though it bestowed on him independence and an increase of fortune. He began immediately to release himself from all the fetters which had detained him from his favourite pursuits, and was soon enabled to devote himself entirely to literature. He was now introduced into parliament; but never could acquire courage to open his lips. He devoted himself almost wholly to the composition of his history, which proceeded with rapid steps. The following is his own account of the wide range of preparatory study to which he submitted:

"The classics, as low as Tacitus, the younger Pliny, and Juvenal were my old and familiar companions. I insensibly plunged into the ocean of the Augustan History; and in the descending series I investigated, with my pen always in my hand, the original records, both Greek and Latin, from Dion Cassius to Ammianus Marcellinus, from the reign of Trajan to the last age of the Western Caesars. The subsidiary rays of medals and inscriptions, of geography and chronology, were thrown on their proper objects; and I applied the collections of Tillemont, whose inimitable accuracy almost assumes the character of genius, to fix and arrange within my reach the loose and scattered atoms of historical information. Through the darkness of the middle ages I explored my way in the annals and antiquities of Italy of the learned Muratori; and diligent-

ly compared them with the parallel or transverse lines of Sigonius and Maffei, Baronius and Pagi, till I almost grasped the ruins of Rome in the fourteenth century, without suspecting that this final chapter must be attained by the labour of six quartos and twenty years. Among the books which I purchased, the Theodocian Code, with the commentary of James Godefroy, must be gratefully remembered. I used it (and much I used it) as a work of history, rather than of jurisprudence; but in every light it may be considered as a full and capacious repository of the political state of the empire in the fourth and fifth centuries. As I believed, and as I still believe, that the propagation of the gospel, and the triumph of the church, are inseparably connected with the decline of the Roman monarchy, I weighed the causes and effects of the revolution, and contrasted the narratives and apologies of the christians themselves, with the glances of candour or enmity which the pagans have cast on the rising sects. The Jewish and heathen testimonies, as they are collected and illustrated by Dr. Lardner, directed, without superseding, my search of the originals; and in an ample dissertation on the miraculous darkness of the passion, I privately drew my conclusions from the silence of an unbelieving age. I have assembled the preparatory studies, directly or indirectly relative to my history; but, in strict equity, they must be spread beyond this period of my life, over the two summers (1771 and 1772) that elapsed between my father's death and my settlement in London."

At length, in February 1776, this great work was presented to the public. It was received with an enthusiasm of admiration; three editions, rapidly succeeded, scarcely satisfied the curiosity of the public: the book, as he expresses it, was on every table, and almost on every toilette. The following letters from his great contemporaries must have gratified him still more highly. The first we shall give is from Hume.

"As I ran through your volume of history with great avidity and impatience, I cannot forbear discovering somewhat of the same impatience in returning you thanks for your agreeable present, and expressing the satisfaction which the performance has given me. Whether I consider the dignity of your style, the depth of your matter, or the extensiveness of your learning, I must regard the work as equally the object of esteem; and I own, that if I had not previously had the happiness of your personal acquaintance, such a performance from an Englishman in our age would have given me some surprise. You may smile at this sentiment; but as it seems to me that your countrymen, for almost a whole generation, have given themselves up to barbarous and absurd faction, and have totally neglected all polite letters, I no longer expected any valuable production ever to come from them. I know it will give you pleasure (as it did me) to find that all men of letters in this place, concur in their admiration of your work, and in their anxious desire of your continuing it."

The next from Dr. Robertson to Mr. Strachan.

"Since my last, I have read Mr. Gibbon's history with much attention, and great pleasure. It is a work of very high merit indeed. He possesses that industry of research, without which no man deserves the name of an historian. His narrative is perspicuous and interesting; his style is elegant and forcible, though in some passages I think rather too laboured, and in others too quaint. But these defects are amply compensated by the beauty of the general flow of language, and a very peculiar happiness in many of his expressions. I have traced him in many of his quotations (for experience has taught me to suspect the accuracy of my brother penmen), and I find he refers to no passage but what he has seen with his own eyes. I hope the book will be as successful as it deserves to be. I have not yet read the two last chapters, but am sorry;

from what I have heard of them, that he has taken such a tone in them as will give great offence, and hurt the sale of the book."

The last from Mr. Ferguson to Mr. Gibbon himself.

"I received, about eight days ago, after I had been reading your history, the copy which you have been so good as to send me, and for which I now trouble you with my thanks. But even if I had not been thus called upon to offer you my respects, I could not have refrained from congratulating you on the merit, and undoubted success, of this valuable performance. The persons of this place whose judgment you will value most, agree in opinion, that you have made a great addition to the classical literature of England, and given us what Thucydides proposed leaving with his own countrymen, a *possession in perpetuity*. Men of a certain modesty and merit always exceed the expectations of their friends; and it is with very great pleasure I tell you, that although you must have observed in me every mark of consideration and regard, that this is, nevertheless, the case, I receive your instruction, and study your model, with great deference, and join with every one else, in applauding the extent of your plan, in hands so well able to execute it. Some of your readers, I find, were impatient to get at the fifteenth chapter, and began at that place. I have not heard much of their criticism, but am told that many doubt of your orthodoxy. I wish to be always on the charitable side, while I own you have proved that the clearest stream may become foul when it comes to run over the muddy bottom of human nature. I have not stayed to make any particular remarks. If any should occur on the second reading, I shall not fail to lay in my claim to a more needed, and more useful admonition from you, in case I ever produce any thing that merits your attention."

Gibbon, however, was soon assailed in a different manner. His work bore strongly the stamp of scepti-

cal opinions, which he had unfortunately imbibed, though at what period of his life does not precisely appear. This roused the pens of a multitude of adversaries, many doubtless prompted by the best motives, though the intemperance of some did little honour to the cause which they defended. The following sentiments of Mr. Gibbon, and his estimate of the merit of his opponents, is curious from the mixture of candour and irritability which it exhibits.

“ Had I believed that the majority of English readers were so fondly attached even to the name and shadow of christianity; had I foreseen that the pious, the timid, and the prudent, would feel, or affect to feel, with such exquisite sensibility; I might, perhaps, have softened the two invidious chapters, which would create many enemies, and conciliate few friends. But the shaft was shot, the alarm was sounded, and I could only rejoice, that if the voice of our priests was clamorous and bitter, their hands were disarmed from the powers of persecution. I adhered to the wise resolution of trusting myself and my writings to the candour of the public, till Mr. Davies of Oxford presumed to attack, not the faith, but the fidelity, of the historian. *My vindication*, expressive of less anger than contempt, amused for a moment the busy and idle metropolis; and the most rational part of the laity, and even of the clergy, appear to have been satisfied of my innocence and accuracy. I would not print this vindication in quarto, lest it would be bound and preserved with the history itself. At the distance of twelve years, I calmly affirm my judgment of Davies, Chelsum, &c. A victory over such antagonists was a sufficient humiliation. They, however, were rewarded in this world. Poor Chelsum was indeed neglected; and I dare not boast the making Dr. Watson a bishop; he is a prelate of a large mind and liberal spirit; but I enjoyed the pleasure of giving a royal pension to Mr. Davies, and of collating Dr. Apthorpe to an archiepiscopal living. Their suc-

ess encouraged the zeal of Taylor the Arian,* and Milner the methodist,† with many others, whom it would be difficult to remember, and tedious to rehearse. The list of my adversaries, however, was graced with the more respectable names of Dr. Priestley, Sir David Dalrymple, and Dr. White; and every polemic, of either university, discharged his sermon or pamphlet against the impenetrable silence of the Roman historian. In his *History of the Corruptions of Christianity*, Dr. Priestley throw down his two gauntlets to Bishop Hurd and Mr. Gibbon. I declined the challenge in a letter, exhorting my opponent to enlighten the world by his philosophical discoveries, and to remember that the merit of his predecessor Servetus is now reduced to a single passage, which indicates the smaller circulation of the blood through the lungs, from and to the heart. Instead of listening to this friendly advice, the dauntless philosopher of Birmingham continued to fire away his double battery against those who believed too little, and those who believed too much. From my replies he has nothing to hope or fear; but his Socinian shield has repeatedly been pierced by the spear of Horsley, and his trumpet of sedition may at length awaken the magistrates of a free country.

“The profession and rank of Sir David Dalrymple (now a lord of session) has given a more decent colour

* The stupendous title, *Thoughts on the Causes of the grand Apostacy*, at first agitated my nerves, till I discovered that it was the apostacy of the whole church, since the Council of Nice, from Mr. Taylor's private religion. His book is a thorough mixture of high enthusiasm and low buffoonery, and the Millenium is a fundamental article of his creed.

† From his grammar-school at Kingston upon Hull, Mr. Joseph Milner pronounces an anathema against all rational religion. His faith is a divine taste, a spiritual inspiration; his church is a mystic and inviolable body; the *natural* christians, such as Mr. Locke, who believe and interpret the scriptures, are, in his judgment, no better than profane infidels.

to his style. But he scrutinized each separate passage of the two chapters with the dry minuteness of a special pleader; and as he was always solicitous to make, he may have succeeded sometimes in finding, a flaw. In his *Annals of Scotland*, he has shewn himself a diligent collector and an accurate critic.

"I have praised, and I still praise, the eloquent sermons which were preached in St. Mary's pulpit at Oxford by Dr. White. If he assaulted me with some degree of illiberal acrimony, in such a place, and before such an audience, he was obliged to speak the language of the country. I smiled at a passage in one of his private letters to Mr. Badcock: "The part where we encounter Gibbon must be brilliant and striking."

Mr. Gibbon was soon after employed by ministers to draw up a *manifesto* against France, on the breaking out of war with that country. In reward for this service, he was appointed one of the Lords of Trade, with a salary of 7 or L.800 a-year. His connection with ministers, however, lost him his seat in parliament; and in three years the Board of Trade was abolished by Mr. Burke's reform bill, the operation of which, he has the candour to acknowledge, was in this instance salutary. He was thus, however, deprived of the means of supporting the style of expence to which he had become accustomed; which, with a variety of other considerations, determined him to extricate himself, and fix his residence again at Lausanne. Before his departure, in April 1781, he had published the second and third volumes of his history, which were received with attention, though somewhat more coldly than the first. This, it is probable, was the mere natural consequence of the gloss of novelty being worn off.

Our readers will probably be desirous of seeing Mr. Gibbon's own account of his mode of life, and the attractions which fixed him at Lausanne.

“ I discovered three solid and permanent benefits of my new situation. 1. My personal freedom had been somewhat impaired by the House of Commons and the Board of Trade; but I was now delivered from the chain of duty and dependence, from the hopes and fears of political adventure: my sober mind was no longer intoxicated by the fumes of party, and I rejoiced in my escape, as often as I read of the midnight debates which preceded the dissolution of parliament. 2. My English economy had been that of a solitary bachelor, who might afford some occasional dinners. In Switzerland I enjoyed at every meal, at every hour, the free and pleasant conversation of the friend of my youth; and my daily table was always provided for the reception of one or two extraordinary guests. Our importance in society is less a positive than a relative weight: in London I was lost in the crowd; I ranked with the first families of Lausanne, and my style of prudent expence enabled me to maintain a fair balance of reciprocal civilities. 3. Instead of a small house between a street and a stable-yard, I began to occupy a spacious and convenient mansion, connected on the north side with the city, and open on the south to a beautiful and boundless horizon. A garden of four acres had been laid out by the taste of Mr. Deyverdun: from the garden a rich scenery of meadows and vineyards descends to the Lemane lake, and the prospect far beyond the lake is crowned by the stupendous mountains of Savoy. My books and my acquaintance had been first united in London; but this happy position of my library in town and country was finally reserved for Lausanne. Possessed of every comfort in this triple alliance, I could not be tempted to change my habitation with the changes of the seasons.

“ My friends had been kindly apprehensive that I should not be able to exist in a Swiss town at the foot of the Alps, after having so long conversed with the first men of the first cities of the world. Such lofty

connections may attract the curious, and gratify the vain; but I am too modest, or too proud, to rate my own value by that of my associates; and whatsoever may be the fame of learning or genius, experience has shewn me, that the cheaper qualifications of politeness and good sense are of more useful currency in the commerce of life. By many, conversation is esteemed as a theatre or a school; but, after the morning has been occupied by the labours of the library, I wish to unbend rather than to exercise my mind; and in the interval between tea and supper I am far from disdaining the innocent amusement of a game at cards. Lausanne is peopled by a numerous gentry, whose companionable idleness is seldom disturbed by the pursuits of avarice or ambition: the women, though confined to a domestic education, are endowed for the most part with more taste and knowledge than their husbands and brothers; but the decent freedom of both sexes is equally remote from the extremes of simplicity and refinement. I shall add as a misfortune rather than a merit, that the situation and beauty of the Pays de Vaud, the long habits of the English, the medical reputation of Dr. Tissot, and the fashion of viewing the mountains and *Glaciers*, have opened us on all sides to the incursions of foreigners. The visits of Mr. and Madame Necker, of Prince Henry of Prussia, and of Mr. Fox, may form some pleasing exceptions; but, in general, Lausanne has appeared most agreeable in my eyes, when we have been abandoned to our own society. I had frequently seen Mr. Necker, in the summer of 1784, at a country house near Lausanne, where he composed his Treatise on the Administration of the Finances. I have since, in October 1790, visited him in his present residence, the castle and barony of Copet, near Geneva. Of the merits and measures of that statesman various opinions may be entertained; but all impartial-men must agree in their esteem of his integrity and patriotism.

" In the month of August 1784, Prince Henry of Prussia, in his way to Paris, passed three days at Laussane. His military conduct has been praised by professional men; his character has been vilified by the wit and malice of a daemon;* but I was flattered by his affability, and entertained by his conversation.

" In his tour of Switzerland (September 1783) Mr. Fox gave me two days of free and private society. He seemed to feel, and even to envy, the happiness of my situation; while I admired the powers of a superior man, as they are blended in his attractive character with the softness and simplicity of a child. Perhaps no human being was ever more perfectly exempt from the taint of malevolence, vanity, or falsehood."

His labour, in this retirement, proceeded with great activity; and on the 27th June 1787 he put the last hand to this celebrated work. The description which he gives of his feelings on the occasion, is very striking and memorable. " It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a *berceau*, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and, perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious. I will add two facts, which have seldom occurred in the composition

* *Memoires Secretes de la Cour de Berlin.*

of six, or at least of five, quartos. 1. My first rough manuscript, without any intermediate copy, has been sent to the press. 2. Not a sheet has been seen by any human eyes, excepting those of the author and the printer: the faults and the merits are exclusively my own."^a

In order to superintend the publication of the three last volumes, he visited England, where he was received with enthusiasm by a numerous circle of friends. Nothing, however, could dissuade him from returning, and again fixing his residence in his favourite retirement. Before following him thither, however, we cannot forbear inserting two letters received at the close of his historical career, from two most competent judges, Dr. Robertson and Dr. Adam Smith. Dr. Robertson's is as follows:

"Dear Sir,—Long before this I could have acknowledged the receipt of your most acceptable present; but for several weeks I have been afflicted with a violent fit of deafness, and that unsocial malady is always accompanied with such a degree of languor, as renders even the writing of a letter an effort. During my solitude the perusal of your book has been my chief amusement and consolation. I have gone through it once with great attention, and am now advanced to the last volume in my second reading. I ventured to predict the superior excellence of the volumes lately published, and I have not been a false prophet. Indeed, when I consider the extent of your undertaking,

** Extract from Mr. Gibbon's Common-place Book.*

The IVth Volume of the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,	}	begun March 1st, 1782—ended June 1782.
The Vth Volume,	}	begun July 1784—ended May 1st, 1786.
The VIth Volume,	}	begun May 18th, 1786—ended June 27th, 1787.

These three volumes were sent to press August 15th, 1787, and the whole impression was concluded April following.

and the immense labour of historical and philosophic research requisite towards executing every part of it, I am astonished that all this should have been accomplished by one man. I know no example, in any age or nation, of such a vast body of valuable and elegant information communicated by any individual. I feel, however, some degree of mortification mingled with my astonishment. Before you began your historic career, I used to pride myself in being at least the most industrious historian of the age; but now, alas! I can pretend no longer even to that praise, and must say, as Pliny did of his uncle, *Si comparer illi sum desidiosissimus*. Your style appears to me improved in these new volumes; by the habit of writing, you write with greater ease. I am sorry to find that our ideas on the effects of the crusades do not altogether coincide. I considered that point with great care, and cannot help thinking still that my opinion was well founded. I shall consult the authorities to which I refer; for when my sentiments differ from yours, I have some reason to distrust them, and I may possibly trouble you with a letter on the subject. I am much flattered with the manner in which you have so often mentioned my name. *Latus sum laudari a te laudato viro*. I feel much satisfaction in having been distinguished by the two historians of my own times, whose favourable opinion I was most ambitious of obtaining."

The praise of Dr. Smith is still more unqualified.

"I have ten thousand apologies to make, for not having long ago returned you my best thanks for the very agreeable present you made me of the three last volumes of your history. I cannot express to you the pleasure it gives me to find, that by the universal assent of every man of taste and learning, whom I either know or correspond with, it sets you at the very head of the whole literary tribe at present existing in Europe."

Mr. Gibbon, on his return, found Lausanne very different from the place he had left it. His friend Deyverdun, who had long lived under the same roof with him, was in a state of decay; and, after a year of anxious attendance, he had the affliction of losing him. The French revolution, an event which he viewed from the first with deep alarm and reprobation, cruelly interrupted the tranquillity of his retreat. The gay and easy society, in which he delighted, was transformed into an assemblage of noisy politicians; the crowds of emigrants who sought refuge at Lausanne did not enliven that residence; and at length the flames of war began to rage in his immediate vicinity. During this period, therefore, he did not proceed with any great plan, but merely amused himself with a variety of literary pursuits. He composed, however, those memoirs of himself, which were published after his death; and he formed the plan of a very extensive work, combining history and biography. He proposed to write the lives of the distinguished military and political characters in Britain, from the reign of Henry VIII. to the present age. This, he conceived, would be rather an amusement than a labour; the materials were accessible, the subject agreeable, and so attractive to English readers, that it could scarcely fail of success. It was doubtless in part with a view to this undertaking, that he determined to spend a year in England, and his visit was delayed only by the difficulties of the journey through revolutionized France. A circumstance, however, occurred, which induced him to set these at defiance. Lord Sheffield, with whom he had been long united by ties of the most intimate friendship, had the misfortune of losing his lady, to whom he was tenderly attached. Gibbon set out, without a moment's delay, to console his friend under this affliction. He accomplished his journey, through Germany and the Netherlands, with greater ease than he had expected; and, landing in England in June 1793,

proceeded immediately to Lord Sheffield's house. He, himself, however, was now in a situation deeply afflicting to his friends. A dropsy, which had long lurked in his constitution, assumed the most alarming symptoms. Repeated tappings produced only a temporary relief; and at length his constitution became no longer able to struggle against the violence of the disease. There was nothing particularly memorable in his last moments; but as it must always be interesting to view the behaviour of so great a man, in circumstances so trying, we shall present our readers with Lord Sheffield's narrative.

"After I left him, on Tuesday afternoon (Jan. 14, 1794) he saw some company, Lady Lucan and Lady Spencer, and thought himself well enough at night to omit the opium draught, which he had been used to take for some time. He slept very indifferently: before nine the next morning he rose, but could not eat his breakfast. However, he appeared tolerably well, yet complained at times of a pain in his stomach. At one o'clock he received a visit of an hour from Madame de Sylva, and at three, his friend Mr. Crauford, of Auchinames (whom he always mentioned with particular regard), called, and staid with him till past five o'clock. They talked, as usual, on various subjects; and twenty hours before his death, Mr. Gibbon happened to fall into a conversation not uncommon with him, on the probable duration of his life. He said, that he thought himself a good life for ten, twelve, or perhaps twenty years. About six, he ate the wing of a chicken, and drank three glasses of Madeira. After dinner he became very uneasy and impatient; complained a good deal, and appeared so weak, that his servant was alarmed. Mr. Gibbon had sent to his friend and relation, Mr. Robert Darell, whose house was not far distant, desiring to see him, and adding, that he had something particular to say. But, unfortunately, this desired interview never took place;

“ During the evening he complained much of his stomach, and of a disposition to vomit. Soon after nine, he took his opium draught, and went to bed. About ten he complained of much pain, and desired that warm napkins might be applied to his stomach. He almost incessantly expressed a sense of pain till about four o'clock in the morning, when he said he found his stomach much easier. About seven, the servant asked, whether he should send for Mr. Farquhar? He answered, No; that he was as well as he had been the day before. About half past eight, he got out of bed, and said that he was “*plus adroit*” than he had been for three months past, and got into bed again, without assistance, better than usual. About nine, he said that he would rise. The servant, however, persuaded him to remain in bed till Mr. Farquhar, who was expected at eleven, should come. Till about that hour he spoke with great facility. Mr. Farquhar came at the time appointed, and he was then visibly dying. When the *valet de chambre* returned, after attending Mr. Farquhar out of the room, Mr. Gibbon said, *Pourquoi est ce que vous me quittez?* This was about half past eleven. At twelve he drank some brandy and water from a tea-pot, and desired his favourite servant to stay with him. These were the last words he pronounced articulately. To the last he preserved his senses; and when he could no longer speak, his servant having asked a question, he made a sign, to shew that he understood him. He was quite tranquil, and did not stir; his eyes half shut. About a quarter before one he ceased to breathe. The *valet de chambre* observed, that Mr. Gibbon did not at any time shew the least sign of alarm, or apprehension of death; and it does not appear that he ever thought himself in danger, unless his desire to speak to Mr. Darell may be considered in that light.”

Our readers will probably by this time have formed a pretty correct estimate of the character of Mr. Gib-

hon. The desire of knowledge, and the ambition of literary fame, formed evidently his ruling passions; and an indefatigable application enabled him to accomplish labours, from which most men would have shrunk. An easy and philosophic good humour seems after this to have formed the most prominent feature in his character. His temper was not peculiarly marked with warmth or enthusiasm; yet he performed with fidelity all the relative and social duties. If we cannot avoid lamenting the errors of his religious opinions, and the zeal with which he propagated them, some apology may be found in the neglect of his education, and the character of the literary societies into which he was early introduced.

In regard to the literary talents of Mr. Gibbon, after having successively exhibited the sentiments of the most illustrious of his contemporaries, it can scarcely be necessary to interpose our own. The public voice has long since enrolled him among the standard writers in the English language; nor is any library accounted complete, till it has been enriched with the "History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire."

PREFACE.

It is not my intention to detain the reader by expatiating on the variety, or the importance of the subject, which I have undertaken to treat; since the merit of the choice would serve to render the weakness of the execution still more apparent, and still less excusable. But as I have presumed to lay before the public a *first* volume only* of the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, it will perhaps be expected that I should explain, in a few words, the nature and limits of my general plan.

The memorable series of revolutions, which, in the course of about thirteen centuries, gradually undermined, and at length destroyed, the solid fabric of human greatness, may, with some propriety, be divided into the three following periods:

* The first volume of the quarto, which is now contained in the two first volumes of the octavo edition.

I. The first of these periods may be traced from the age of Trajan and the Antonines, when the Roman monarchy, having attained its full strength and maturity, began to verge towards its decline; and will extend to the subversion of the Western Empire, by the barbarians of Germany and Scythia, the rude ancestors of the most polished nations of modern Europe. This extraordinary revolution, which subjected Rome to the power of a Gothic conqueror, was completed about the beginning of the sixth century.

II. The second period of the Decline and Fall of Rome, may be supposed to commence with the reign of Justinian, who by his laws, as well as by his victories, restored a transient splendour to the Eastern Empire. It will comprehend the invasion of Italy by the Lombards; the conquest of the Asiatic and African provinces by the Arabs, who embraced the religion of Mahomet; the revolt of the Roman people against the feeble princes of Constantinople; and the elevation of Charlemagne, who, in the year eight hundred, established the second, or German empire of the West.

III. The last and longest of these periods includes about six centuries and a half;

from the revival of the Western Empire, till the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, and the extinction of a degenerate race of princes, who continued to assume the titles of Cæsar and Augustus, after their dominions were contracted to the limits of a single city; in which the language, as well as manners, of the ancient Romans, had been long since forgotten. The writer who should undertake to relate the events of this period, would find himself obliged to enter into the general history of the crusades, as far as they contributed to the ruin of the Greek empire; and he would scarcely be able to restrain his curiosity from making some inquiry into the state of the city of Rome during the darkness and confusion of the middle ages.

As I have ventured, perhaps too hastily, to commit to the press a work, which, in every sense of the word, deserves the epithet of imperfect, I consider myself as contracting an engagement to finish, most probably in a second volume,* the first of

* The author, as it frequently happens, took an inadequate measure of his growing work. The remainder of the first period has filled *two* volumes in quarto, being the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth volumes of the octavo edition.

these memorable periods ; and to deliver to the public the complete History of the Decline and Fall of Rome, from the age of the Antonines to the subversion of the Western Empire. With regard to the subsequent periods, though I may entertain some hopes, I dare not presume to give any assurances. The execution of the extensive plan which I have described would connect the ancient and modern history of the world ; but it would require many years of health, of leisure, and of perseverance.

Bentinck Street, February 1, 1776.

P. S. The entire History, which is now published, of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire in the West, abundantly discharges my engagements with the public. Perhaps their favourable opinion may encourage me to prosecute a work, which, however laborious it may seem, is the most agreeable occupation of my leisure hours.

Bentinck Street, March 1, 1781.

An author easily persuades himself that the public opinion is still favourable to his labours; and I have now embraced the serious resolution of proceeding to the last period of my original design, and of the Roman Empire, the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, in the year one thousand four hundred and fifty-three. The most patient reader, who computes that three ponderous volumes* have been already employed on the events of four centuries, may, perhaps, be alarmed at the long prospect of nine hundred years. But it is not my intention to expatiate with the same minuteness on the whole series of the Byzantine history. At our entrance into this period, the reign of Justinian, and the conquests of the Mahometans, will deserve and detain our attention; and the last age of Constantinople (the crusades and the Turks) is connected with the revolutions of modern Europe. From the seventh to the eleventh century, the obscure interval will be supplied by a concise narrative of such facts as may still appear either interesting or important.

Bentlnck Street, March 1, 1782.

* The first six volumes of the octavo edition.

ADVERTISEMENT

TO THE

FIRST OCTAVO EDITION.

THE History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire is now delivered to the public in a more convenient form. Some alterations and improvements had presented themselves to my mind ; but I was unwilling to injure or offend the purchasers of the preceding editions. The accuracy of the corrector of the press has been already tried and approved ; and, perhaps, I may stand excused, if, amidst the avocations of a busy winter, I have preferred the pleasures of composition and study to the minute diligence of revising a former publication.

Bentlinck Street, April 20, 1783.

DILIGENCE and accuracy are the only merits which an historical writer may ascribe to himself; if any merit, indeed, can be assumed from the performance of an indispensable duty. I may, therefore, be allowed to say, that I have carefully examined all the original materials that could illustrate the subject which I had undertaken to treat. Should I ever complete the extensive design which has been sketched out in the preface, I might perhaps conclude it with a critical account of the authors consulted during the progress of the whole work; and however such an attempt might incur the censure of ostentation, I am persuaded, that it would be susceptible of entertainment, as well as information.

At present I shall content myself with a single observation. The biographers who, under the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, composed, or rather compiled, the lives of the emperors, from Hadrian to the sons of Carus, are usually mentioned, under the names of *Ælius Spartianus*, *Julius Capitolinus*, *Ælius Lampridius*, *Vulcatius Gallicanus*, *Trebellius Pollio*, and *Flavius Vopiscus*. But there is so much perplexity in the titles of the MSS.; and so many disputes have arisen among the critics (see Fa-

bricius, Biblioth. Latin. l. iii, c. 6) concerning their number, their names, and their respective property, that for the most part I have quoted them without distinction, under the general and well-known title of the *Augustan History*.

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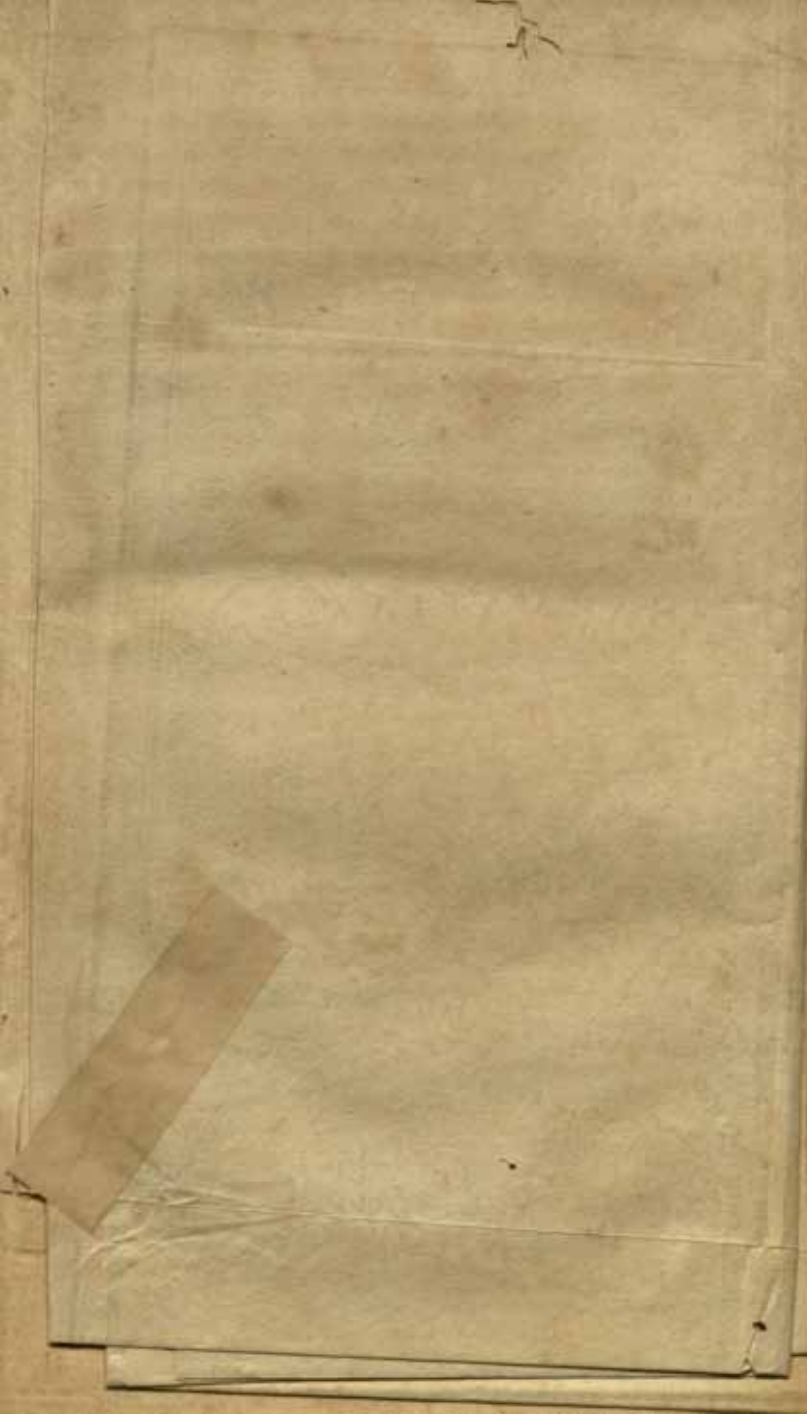
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A MAP
of the
WESTERN PART
of the
ROMAN EMPIRE

By Tho: Kitchin, Senr.
Hydrographer to His Majesty

Scale of Miles, or 10 to a Degree

Scale of Miles, or 10 to a Degree

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THE
HISTORY
OF THE
DECLINE AND FALL
OF THE
ROMAN EMPIRE

CHAP. I.

*The extent and military force of the empire in the
age of the Antonines.*

IN the second century of the christian aera, the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valour. The gentle, but powerful influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantages of wealth and luxury. The image of a free constitution was preserved with decent reverence: the Roman senate appeared to possess the sovereign authority, and devolved on the emperors all the executive powers of government. During a happy period of more than

CHAP. I. fourscore years, the public administration was conducted by the virtues and abilities of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines. It is the design of this, and of the two succeeding chapters, to describe the prosperous condition of their empire; and afterwards, from the death of Marcus Antoninus, to deduce the most important circumstances of its decline and fall; a revolution which will ever be remembered, and is still felt by the nations of the earth.

Moderation of Augustus.

The principal conquests of the Romans were achieved under the republic; and the emperors, for the most part, were satisfied with preserving those dominions which had been acquired by the policy of the senate, the active emulation of the consuls, and the martial enthusiasm of the people. The seven first centuries were filled with a rapid succession of triumphs; but it was reserved for Augustus, to relinquish the ambitious design of subduing the whole earth, and to introduce a spirit of moderation into the public councils. Inclined to peace by his temper and situation, it was easy for him to discover, that Rome, in her present exalted situation, had much less to hope than to fear from the chance of arms; and that, in the prosecution of remote wars, the undertaking became every day more difficult, the event more doubtful, and the possession more precarious, and less beneficial. The experience of Augustus added weight to these salutary reflections, and effectually convinced him that, by the prudent vigour of his counsels, it

would be easy to secure every concession, which the safety or the dignity of Rome might require from the most formidable barbarians. Instead of exposing his person and his legions to the arrows of the Parthians, he obtained, by an honourable treaty, the restitution of the standards and prisoners which had been taken in the defeat of Crassus.^a

His generals, in the early part of his reign, attempted the reduction of Ethiopia and Arabia Felix. They marched near a thousand miles to the south of the tropic; but the heat of the climate soon repelled the invaders, and protected the unwarlike natives of those sequestered regions.^b The northern countries of Europe scarcely deserved the expence and labour of conquest. The forests and morasses of Germany were filled with a hardy race of barbarians, who despised life when it was separated from freedom; and though, on the first attack, they seemed to yield to the weight of the Roman power, they soon, by a signal act of despair, regained their independence, and reminded Augustus of the vicissitude of for-

^a Dion Cassius (l. liv, p. 736), with the annotations of Heymar, who has collected all that Roman vanity has left upon the subject. The marble of Ancyra, on which Augustus recorded his own exploits, asserts that he *compelled* the Parthians to restore the ensigns of Crassus.

^b Strabo (l. xvi, p. 780), Pliny the elder (Hist. Natur. l. vi, c. 32-35), and Dion Cassius (l. lili, p. 723, and l. liv, p. 734), have left us very curious details concerning these wars. The Romans made themselves masters of Mariaba, or Metab, a city of Arabia Felix, well known to the Orientals (see Abulfeda and the Nubian geography, p. 52). They were arrived within three days journey of the spice country, the rich object of their invasion.

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tune.* On the death of that emperor, his testament was publicly read in the senate. He bequeathed, as a valuable legacy to his successors, the advice of confining the empire within those limits, which nature seemed to have placed as its permanent bulwarks and boundaries; on the west the Atlantic ocean; the Rhine and Danube on the north; the Euphrates on the east; and towards the south, the sandy deserts of Arabia and Africa.^d

Imitated
by his suc-
cessors.

Happily for the repose of mankind, the moderate system recommended by the wisdom of Augustus was adopted by the fears and vices of his immediate successors. Engaged in the pursuit of pleasure, or in the exercise of tyranny, the first Cæsars seldom shewed themselves to the armies, or to the provinces; nor were they disposed to suffer, that those triumphs which *their* indolence neglected, should be usurped by the conduct and valour of their lieutenants. The military fame of a subject was considered as an insolent invasion of the imperial prerogative; and it became the duty, as well as interest, of every Roman general, to guard the frontiers entrusted to his care, without aspiring to conquests which

* By the slaughter of Varus and his three legions. See the first book of the *Annals* of Tacitus. Sueton. in August. c. 23. and Velleius Paterculus, l. ii. c. 119. &c. Augustus did not receive the melancholy news with all the temper and firmness that might have been expected from his character.

^d Tacit. *Annal.* l. ii. Dion. Cassius, l. lvi. p. 833, and the speech of Augustus himself, in Julian's *Cæsars*. It receives great light from the learned notes of his French translator, M. Spanheim.

might have proved no less fatal to himself than to the vanquished barbarians." CHAP. I.

The only accession which the Roman empire received, during the first century of the christian era, was the province of Britain. In this single instance, the successors of Cæsar and Augustus were persuaded to follow the example of the former, rather than the precept of the latter. The proximity of its situation to the coast of Gaul seemed to invite their arms; the pleasing, though doubtful intelligence of a pearl fishery, attracted their avarice;^e and as Britain was viewed in the light of a distinct and insulated world, the conquest scarcely formed any exception to the general system of continental measures. After a war of about forty years, undertaken by the most stupid,^f maintained by the most dissolute, and terminated by the most timid of all the emperors, the far greater part of the island submitted to

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Conquest  
of Britain  
was the  
first excep-  
tion to it.

<sup>e</sup> Germanicus, Suetonius Paulinus, and Agricola, were checked and recalled in the course of their victories. Corbulo was put to death. Military merit, as it is admirably expressed by Tacitus, was, in the strictest sense of the word, *imperatoria virtus*.

<sup>f</sup> Cæsar himself conceals that ignoble motive; but it is mentioned by Suetonius, c. 47. The British pearls proved, however, of little value, on account of their dark and livid colour. Tacitus observes, with reason (in Agricola, c. 12), that it was an inherent defect. "Ego facilius crediderim, naturam margaritis decesse quam nobis avaritiam."

<sup>g</sup> Claudius, Nero, and Domitian. A hope is expressed by Pomponius Mela, l. iii, c. 6, (he wrote under Claudius) that, by the success of the Roman arms, the island and its savage inhabitants would soon be better known. It is amusing enough to peruse such passages in the midst of London.



## CHAP.

## I.

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the Roman yoke.^b The various tribes of Britons possessed valour without conduct, and the love of freedom without the spirit of union. They took up arms with savage fierceness; they laid them down, or turned them against each other, with wild inconstancy; and while they fought singly, they were successively subdued. Neither the fortitude of Caractacus, nor the despair of Boadicea, nor the fanaticism of the druids, could avert the slavery of their country, or resist the steady progress of the imperial generals, who maintained the national glory, when the throne was disgraced by the weakest, or the most vicious of mankind. At the very time when Domitian, confined to his palace, felt the terrors which he inspired; his legions, under the command of the virtuous Agricola, defeated the collected force of the Caledonians at the foot of the Grampian hills; and his fleets, venturing to explore an unknown and dangerous navigation, displayed the Roman arms round every part of the island. The conquest of Britain was considered as already achieved; and it was the design of Agricola to complete and ensure his success by the easy reduction of Ireland, for which, in his opinion, one legion and a few auxiliaries were sufficient.^c The western isle might be improved into a valuable possession, and the Britons would

^b See the admirable abridgment given by Tacitus, in the *Life of Agricola*, and, especially, though perhaps not completely, illustrated by our own antiquarians, Camden and Horsley.

^c The Irish writers, jealous of their national honour, are extremely provoked on this occasion, both with Tacitus and with Agricola.

wear their chains with the less reluctance, if the prospect and example of freedom were on every side removed from before their eyes. CHAP. I.

But the superior merit of Agricola soon occasioned his removal from the government of Britain; and for ever disappointed this rational, though extensive scheme of conquest. Before his departure, the prudent general had provided for security as well as for dominion. He had observed, that the island is almost divided into two unequal parts by the opposite gulfs, or, as they are now called, the Friths of Scotland. Across the narrow interval of about forty miles, he had drawn a line of military stations, which was afterwards fortified in the reign of Antoninus Pius, by a turf rampart erected on foundations of stone.^a This wall of Antoninus, at a small distance beyond the modern cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, was fixed as the limit of the Roman province. The native Caledonians preserved in the northern extremity of the island their wild independence, for which they were not less indebted to their poverty than to their valour. Their incursions were frequently repelled and chastised; but their country was never subdued.^b The masters of the fairest and most wealthy climates of the globe turned with contempt from

^a See Horsley's *Britannia Romana*, L. i. c. 10.

^b The poet Buchanan celebrates, with elegance and spirit (see his *Syllab.*), the unviolated independence of his native country. But if the single testimony of Richard of Cirencester was sufficient to create a Roman province of Vespasianato, the north of the wall, that independence would be reduced within very narrow limits.

CHAP. gloomy hills assailed by the winter tempest, from
 L. lakes concealed in a blue mist, and from cold and
 lonely heaths, over which the deer of the forest
 were chased by a troop of naked barbarians.^m

Conquest
 of Dacia ;
 the second
 exception.

Such was the state of the Roman frontiers, and such the maxims of imperial policy from the death of Augustus to the accession of Trajan. That virtuous and active prince had received the education of a soldier, and possessed the talents of a general.ⁿ The peaceful system of his predecessors was interrupted by scenes of war and conquest; and the legions, after a long interval, beheld a military emperor at their head. The first exploits of Trajan were against the Dacians, the most warlike of men, who dwelt beyond the Danube, and who, during the reign of Domitian, had insulted with impunity the majesty of Rome.^o To the strength and fierceness of barbarians, they added a contempt for life, which was derived from a warm persuasion of the immortality and transmigration of the soul.^p Decebalus, the Dacian king, approved himself a rival not unworthy of Trajan; nor did he despair of his own and the public fortune, till, by the confession of his enemies, he had exhausted every resource both of valour and policy.^q This

^m See Appian (in *Proem*), and the uniform imagery of Ovid's *Poems*, which, according to every hypothesis, were composed by a native Caledonian.

ⁿ See Pliny's *Panegyric*, which seems founded on facts.

^o Dion Cassius, l. lxxvii.

^p Herodotus, l. iv. c. 94. Julian in the *Cæsars*, with Spanheim's observations.

^q Plin. *Epist.* viii, 3.

mémorable war, with a very short suspension of hostilities, lasted five years; and as the emperor could exert, without controul, the whole force of the state, it was terminated by an absolute submission of the barbarians.* The new province of Dacia, which formed a second exception to the precept of Augustus, was about thirteen hundred miles in circumference. Its natural boundaries were the Niester, the Teyss, or Tibiscus, the Lower Danube, and the Euxine sea. The vestiges of a military road may still be traced from the banks of the Danube to the neighbourhood of Bender, a place famous in modern history, and the actual frontier of the Turkish and Russian empires.†

Trajan was ambitious of fame; and as long as mankind shall continue to bestow more liberal applause on their destroyers than on their benefactors, the thirst of military glory will ever be the vice of the most exalted characters. The praises of Alexander, transmitted by a succession of poets and historians, had kindled a dangerous emulation in the mind of Trajan. Like him, the Roman emperor undertook an expedition against the nations of the East; but he lamented, with a sigh, that his advanced age scarcely left him any hopes of equalling the renown of the son of Philip.‡ Yet the success of Trajan, however tran-

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Conquests
of Trajan
in the East.

* Dion Cassius, l. lxxviii, p. 1122-1131. Julian in *Caesariis*. Eudopius, viii, 3-6. Aurelius Victor in *Epitome*.

† See a *Memoir* of M. d'Anville, on the province of Dacia, in the *Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xxviii, p. 444-468.

‡ Trajan's sentiments are represented in a very just and lively manner in the *Cæsars* of Julian.

CHAP. I. sient, was rapid and specious. The degenerate Parthians, broken by intestine discord, fled before his arms. He descended the river Tigris in triumph, from the mountains of Armenia to the Persian gulf. He enjoyed the honour of being the first, as he was the last, of the Roman generals who ever navigated that remote sea. His fleets ravaged the coasts of Arabia; and Trajan vainly flattered himself that he was approaching towards the confines of India.* Every day the astonished senate received the intelligence of new names and new nations, that acknowledged his sway. They were informed that the kings of Bosphorus, Colchos, Iberia, Albania, Osrhoene, and even the Parthian monarch himself, had accepted their diadems from the hands of the emperor; that the independent tribes of the Median and Carducian hills had implored his protection; and that the rich countries of Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria, were reduced into the state of provinces.† But the death of Trajan soon clouded the splendid prospect; and it was justly to be dreaded, that so many distant nations would throw off the unaccustomed yoke, when they were no longer restrained by the powerful hand which had imposed it.

Resigned
by his suc-
cessor Ha-
drian.

It was an ancient tradition, that when the capitol was founded by one of the Roman kings, the god Terminus (who presided over bound-

* Eutropius and Sextus Rufus have endeavoured to perpetuate the illusion. See a very sensible dissertation of M. Freret, in the *Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xxi, p. 53.

† Dion Cassius, l. lxxviii; and the Abbreviators.

aries, and was represented according to the fashion of that age, by a large stone) alone, among all the inferior deities, refused to yield his place to Jupiter himself. A favourable inference was drawn from his obstinacy, which was interpreted by the augurs as a sure presage that the boundaries of the Roman power would never recede.³ During many ages, the prediction, as it is usual, contributed to its own accomplishment. But though Terminus had resisted the majesty of Jupiter, he submitted to the authority of the emperor Hadrian.⁴ The resignation of all the eastern conquests of Trajan was the first measure of his reign. He restored to the Parthians the election of an independent sovereign, withdrew the Roman garrisons from the provinces of Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria, and in compliance with the precept of Augustus, once more established the Euphrates as the frontier of the empire.⁵ Censure, which arraigns the public actions and the private motives of princes, has ascribed to envy, a conduct, which might be attributed to the prudence and moderation of Hadrian. The various character of that emperor, capable, by turns, of the meanest and the most generous sentiments, may afford some colour to

³ Ovid. *Fast.* l. ii, ver. 667. See Livy, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, under the reign of Tarquin.

⁴ St. Augustin is highly delighted with the proof of the weakness of Terminus, and the vanity of the augurs. See *De Civitate Dei*, iv, 29.

⁵ See the Augustan History, p. 5. Jerome's Chronicle, and all the Epitomisers. It is somewhat surprising, that this memorable event should be omitted by Dion, or rather by Xiphilin.

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the suspicion. It was, however, scarcely in his power to place the superiority of his predecessor in a more conspicuous light, than by thus confessing himself unequal to the task of defending the conquests of Trajan.

Contrast of
Hadrian
and Antoninus Pius.

The martial and ambitious spirit of Trajan formed a very singular contrast with the moderation of his successor. The restless activity of Hadrian was not less remarkable, when compared with the gentle repose of Antoninus Pius. The life of the former was almost a perpetual journey; and as he possessed the various talents of the soldier, the statesman, and the scholar, he gratified his curiosity in the discharge of his duty. Careless of the difference of seasons and of climates, he marched on foot, and bareheaded, over the snows of Caledonia, and the sultry plains of the Upper Egypt; nor was there a province of the empire, which, in the course of his reign, was not honoured with the presence of the monarch.^b But the tranquil life of Antoninus Pius was spent in the bosom of Italy; and, during the twenty-three years that he directed the public administration, the longest journeys of that amiable prince extended no further than from his palace in Rome, to the retirement of his Lanuvian villa.^c

Peace system of Hadrian and the two Antonines.

Notwithstanding this difference in their personal conduct, the general system of Augustus

^b Dion, l. lxx, p. 1158. Hist. August. p. 3. 8. If all our historians were lost, medals, inscriptions, and other monuments would be sufficient to record the travels of Hadrian.

^c See the Augustan History and the Epitomes.

was equally adopted and uniformly pursued by CHAP.
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Hadrian and by the two Antonines. They persisted in the design of maintaining the dignity of the empire, without attempting to enlarge its limits. By every honourable expedient they invited the friendship of the barbarians; and endeavoured to convince mankind, that the Roman power, raised above the temptation of conquest, was actuated only by the love of order and justice. During a long period of forty-three years, their virtuous labours were crowned with success; and if we except a few slight hostilities that served to exercise the legions of the frontier, the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius offer the fair prospect of universal peace.^d The Roman name was revered among the most remote nations of the earth. The fiercest barbarians frequently submitted their differences to the arbitration of the emperor; and we are informed by a contemporary historian, that he had seen ambassadors who were refused the honour which they came to solicit, of being admitted into the rank of subjects.^e

The terror of the Roman arms added weight Defensive
wars of
Marcus
Antoninus.
and dignity to the moderation of the emperors.

^d We must, however, remember, that, in the time of Hadrian, a rebellion of the Jews raged with religious fury, though only in a single province: Pausanias (l. viii, c. 43), mentions two necessary and successful wars, conducted by the generals of Pius. 1st, Against the wandering Moors, who were driven into the solitudes of Atlas. 2d, Against the brigantines of Britain, who had invaded the Roman province. Both these wars (with several other hostilities) are mentioned in the Augustan History, p. 19.

^e Appian of Alexandria, in the preface to his History of the Roman wars.

CHAP. I. They preserved peace by a constant preparation for war; and while justice regulated their conduct, they announced to the nations on their confines, that they were as little disposed to endure, as to offer an injury. The military strength, which it had been sufficient for Hadrian and the elder Antoninus to display, was exerted against the Parthians and the Germans by the emperor Marcus. The hostilities of the barbarians provoked the resentment of that philosophic monarch, and, in the prosecution of a just defence, Marcus and his generals obtained many signal victories, both on the Euphrates, and on the Danube.¹ The military establishment of the Roman empire, which thus assured either its tranquillity or its success, will now become the proper and important object of our attention.

Military
establish-
ment of
the Roman
emperors

In the purer ages of the commonwealth, the use of arms was reserved for those ranks of citizens who had a country to love, a property to defend, and some share in enacting those laws, which it was their interest, as well as duty, to maintain. But in proportion as the public freedom was lost in extent of conquest, war was gradually improved into an art, and degraded into a trade.² The legions themselves, even at the

¹ Dion. l. lxxi, Hist. August. in Marco. The Parthian victories gave birth to a crowd of contemptible historians, whose memory has been rescued from oblivion, and exposed to ridicule, in a very lively piece of criticism of Lucian.

² The poorest rank of soldiers possessed above forty pounds sterling (Dionys. Halicarn. iv, 17), a very high qualification, at a time when money was so scarce, that an ounce of silver was equivalent

time when they were recruited in the most distant provinces, were supposed to consist of Roman citizens. That distinction was generally considered, either as a legal qualification, or as a proper recompence for the soldier; but a more serious regard was paid to the essential merit of age, strength, and military stature.^b In all levies, a just preference was given to the climates of the north over those of the south: the race of men born to the exercise of arms was sought for in the country rather than in cities; and it was very reasonably presumed, that the hardy occupations of smiths, carpenters, and huntsmen, would supply more vigour and resolution, than the sedentary trades which are employed in the service of luxury.^c After every qualification of property had been laid aside, the armies of the Roman emperors were still commanded, for the most part, by officers of a liberal birth and education; but the common soldiers, like the mercenary troops of modern Europe, were drawn from the meanest, and very frequently from the most profligate, of mankind.

That public virtue which, among the ancients, Discipline. was denominated patriotism, is derived from a strong sense of our own interest in the preservation and prosperity of the free government of which we are members. Such a sentiment,

to seventy pound weight of brass. The populace, excluded by the ancient constitution, were indiscriminately admitted by Marius. See Sallust. de Bell. Jugurth. c. 91.

^b Caesar formed his legion Alauda of Gauls and strangers; but it was during the licence of civil war; and after the victory, he gave them the freedom of the city for their reward.

^c See Vegetius de Re Militari, l. i, c. 2-7.

CHAP. I. which had rendered the legions of the republic almost invincible, could make but a very feeble impression on the mercenary servants of a despotic prince; and it became necessary to supply that defect by other motives, of a different, but not less forcible nature; honour and religion. The peasant, or mechanic, imbibed the useful prejudice that he was advanced to the more dignified profession of arms, in which his rank and reputation would depend on his own valour; and that, although the prowess of a private soldier must often escape the notice of fame, his own behaviour might sometimes confer glory or disgrace on the company, the legion, or even the army, to whose honours he was associated. On his first entrance into the service, an oath was administered to him, with every circumstance of solemnity. He promised never to desert his standard, to submit his own will to the commands of his leaders, and to sacrifice his life for the safety of the emperor and the empire.* The attachment of the Roman troops to their standards was inspired by the united influence of religion and of honour. The golden eagle, which glittered in the front of the legion, was the object of their fondest devotion; nor was it esteemed less impious than it was ignominious, to abandon that sacred ensign in the hour of danger.¹ These motives, which derived their

* The oath of service and fidelity to the emperor was annually renewed by the troops on the first of January.

Tacitus calls the Roman eagles, *Bellorum Deos*. They were placed in a chapel in the camp, and with the other deities received the religious worship of the troops.

strength from the imagination, were enforced by fears and hopes of a more substantial kind. Regular pay, occasional donatives, and a stated recompense after the appointed time of service, alleviated the hardships of the military life,^m whilst, on the other hand, it was impossible for cowardice or disobedience to escape the severest punishment. The centurions were authorized to chastise with blows, the generals had a right to punish with death; and it was an inflexible maxim of Roman discipline, that a good soldier should dread his officers far more than the enemy. From such laudable arts did the valour of the imperial troops receive a degree of firmness and docility, unattainable by the impetuous and irregular passions of barbarians.

And yet so sensible were the Romans of the Exercises, imperfection of valour without skill and practice, that, in their language, the name of an army was borrowed from the word which signified exercise.ⁿ Military exercises were the important

^m See *Grævius de Pecunia vetero*, l. iii, p. 120, &c. The emperor Domitian raised the annual stipend of the legionaries to twelve pieces of gold, which, in his time, was equivalent to about ten of our guineas. This pay, somewhat higher than our own, had been, and was afterwards, gradually increased, according to the progress of wealth and military government. After twenty years service, the veteran received three thousand denarii (about one hundred pounds sterling), or a proportionable allowance of land. The pay and advantages of the guards were, in general, about double those of the legions.

ⁿ *Exercitus ab exercitudo*, Varro de *Lingua Latina*, l. iv. Cicero in *Tusculan*, l. ii, 37. There is room for a very interesting work, which should lay open the connection between the languages and manners of nations.

CHAP. and unremitted object of their discipline. The
 L recruits and young soldiers were constantly trained
 both in the morning and in the evening, nor was
 age or knowledge allowed to excuse the veterans
 from the daily repetition of what they had completely learnt. Large sheds were erected in the winter-quarters of the troops, that their useful labours might not receive any interruption from the most tempestuous weather; and it was carefully observed, that the arms destined to this imitation of war, should be of double the weight which was required in real action.* It is not the purpose of this work to enter into any minute description of the Roman exercises. We shall only remark, that they comprehended whatever could add strength to the body, activity to the limbs, or grace to the motions. The soldiers were diligently instructed to march, to run, to leap, to swim, to carry heavy burdens, to handle every species of arms that was used either for offence or for defence, either in distant engagement, or in a closer onset; to form a variety of evolutions; and to move to the sound of flutes, in the Pyrrhic or martial dance.† In the midst of peace, the Roman troops familiarized themselves with the practice of war; and it is prettily remarked by an ancient historian who had fought against them, that the effusion of blood was the

* Vegetius, l. ii. and the rest of his first book.

† The Pyrrhic dance is extremely well illustrated by M. le Beau, in the *Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xxi. p. 262, &c. That learned academician, in a series of memoirs, has collected all the passages of the ancients that relate to the Roman legion.

only circumstance which distinguished a field of battle from a field of exercise.³ It was the policy of the ablest generals, and even of the emperors themselves, to encourage these military studies by their presence and example; and we are informed that Hadrian, as well as Trajan, frequently condescended to instruct the unexperienced soldiers, to reward the diligent, and sometimes to dispute with them the prize of superior strength or dexterity.⁴ Under the reigns of those princes, the science of tactics was cultivated with success; and as long as the empire retained any vigour, their military instructions were respected as the most perfect model of Roman discipline.

Nine centuries of war had gradually introduced into the service many alterations and improvements. The legions, as they are described by Polybius;⁵ in the time of the Punic wars, differed very materially from those which achieved the victories of Cæsar, or defended the monarchy of Hadrian and the Antonines. The constitution of the imperial legion may be described in a few words.⁶ The heavy-armed in-

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I.
The legions
under the
emperors.

³ Joseph. de Bell. Judaico, l. iii. c. 5. We are indebted to this Jew for some very curious details of Roman discipline.

⁴ Plin. Panegy. c. 13, Life of Hadrian, in the Augustine History.

⁵ See an admirable digression on the Roman discipline, in the sixth book of his history.

⁶ Vegetius de Re Militari, l. ii. c. 4, &c. Considerable part of his very perplexed abridgment was taken from the regulations of Trajan and Hadrian: and the legion, as he describes it, "cannot suit any other age of the Roman empire."

CHAP. I. fantry, which composed its principal strength,*
 was divided into ten cohorts, and fifty-five companies, under the orders of a correspondent number of tribunes and centurions. The first cohort, which always claimed the post of honour and the custody of the eagle, was formed of eleven hundred and five soldiers, the most approved for valour and fidelity. The remaining nine cohorts consisted each of five hundred and fifty-five; and the whole body of legionary infantry amounted to six thousand one hundred men. Their arms were uniform, and admirably adapted to the nature of their service: an open helmet, with a lofty crest; a breast-plate, or coat of mail; greaves on their legs, and an ample buckler on their left arm. The buckler was of an oblong and concave figure, four feet in length, and two and a half in breadth, framed of a light wood, covered with a bull's hide, and strongly guarded with plates of brass. Besides a lighter spear, the legionary soldier grasped in his right hand the formidable *pilum*, a ponderous javelin, whose utmost length was about six feet, and which was terminated by a massy triangular point of steel of eighteen inches.² This instrument was indeed much inferior to our modern fire-

ARMS.

* Vegetius de Re Militari, l. ii, c. 1. In the purer age of Caesar and Cicero, the word *miles* was almost confined to the infantry. Under the lower empire, and in the times of chivalry, it was appropriated almost as exclusively to the men at arms, who fought on horseback.

² In the time of Polybius and Dionysius of Halicarnassus (l. v. c. 45), the steel point of the *pilum* seems to have been much longer. In the time of Vegetius, it was reduced to a foot, or even nine inches. I have chosen a medium.

arms; since it was exhausted by a single discharge, at the distance of only ten or twelve paces. Yet when it was launched by a firm and skilful hand, there was not any cavalry that durst venture within its reach, nor any shield or corslet that could sustain the impetuosity of its weight. As soon as the Roman had darted his *pilum*, he drew his sword, and rushed forwards to close with the enemy. His sword was a short well-tempered Spanish blade, that carried a double edge, and was alike suited to the purpose of striking or of pushing; but the soldier was always instructed to prefer the latter use of his weapon, as his own body remained less exposed, whilst he inflicted a more dangerous wound on his adversary.⁷ The legion was usually drawn up eight deep; and the regular distance of three feet was left between the files as well as ranks.⁸ A body of troops habituated to preserve this open order, in a long front and a rapid charge, found themselves prepared to execute every disposition which the circumstances of war, or the skill of their leader, might suggest. The soldier possessed a free space for his arms and motions, and sufficient intervals were allowed, through which seasonable reinforcements might be introduced to the relief of the exhausted combatants.⁹ The tactics of the Greeks and Ma-

⁷ For the legionary arms, see Lipsius de Militiâ Romanâ, l. iii, c. 2-7.

⁸ See the beautiful comparison of Virgil, Georgic. ii, v. 279.

⁹ M. Guichard, Mémoires Militaires, tom. i, c. 4, and Nouveaux Mémoires, tom. i, p. 293-311, has treated the subject like a scholar and an officer.

CHAP. I. cedonians were formed on very different principles. The strength of the phalanx depended on sixteen ranks of long pikes, wedged together in the closest array.^b But it was soon discovered by reflection, as well as by the event, that the strength of the phalanx was unable to contend with the activity of the legion.^c

Cavalry.

The cavalry, without which the force of the legion would have remained imperfect, was divided into ten troops or squadrons; the first, as the companion of the first cohort, consisted of an hundred and thirty-two men; whilst each of the other nine amounted only to sixty-six. The entire establishment formed a regiment, if we may use the modern expression, of seven hundred and twenty-six horse, naturally connected with its respective legion, but occasionally separated to act in the line, and to compose a part of the wings of the army.^d The cavalry of the emperors was no longer composed, like that of the ancient republic, of the noblest youths of Rome and Italy, who, by performing their military service on horseback, prepared themselves for the offices of senator and consul; and solicited, by deeds of valour, the future suffrages of their countrymen.^e Since the alteration of manners

^b See Arrian's *Tactics*. With the true partiality of a Greek, Arrian rather chose to describe the phalanx, of which he had read, than the legions which he had commanded.

^c Polyb. l. xvii.

^d Veget. *de Re Militari*, l. ii, c. 6. His positive testimony, which might be supported by circumstantial evidence, ought surely to silence those critics who refuse the imperial legion its proper body of cavalry.

^e See Livy almost throughout, particularly xlii, 61.

and government, the most wealthy of the eque-
trian order were engaged in the administration
of justice, and of the revenue;^f and whenever
they embraced the profession of arms, they were
immediately entrusted with a troop of horse, or a
cohort of foot.^g Trajan and Hadrian formed
their cavalry from the same provinces, and the
same class of their subjects, which recruited the
ranks of the legion. The horses were bred, for
the most part, in Spain or Cappadocia. The
Roman troopers despised the complete armour
with which the cavalry of the East was encum-
bered. *Their* more useful arms consisted in a hel-
met, an oblong shield, light boots, and a coat of
mail. A javelin, and a long broad-sword, were
their principal weapons of offence. The use of
lances, and of iron maces, they seem to have bor-
rowed from the barbarians.^h

The safety and honour of the empire were prin-
cipally entrusted to the legions; but the policy of
Rome condescended to adopt every useful instru-
ment of war. Considerable levies were regularly
made among the provincials, who had not yet
deserved the honourable distinction of Romans.
Many dependant princes and communities dis-
persed round the frontiers, were permitted, for
a while, to hold their freedom and security by the

^f Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiii, 2. The true sense of that very curious passage was first discovered and illustrated by M. de Beaufort, *Republique Romaine*, l. ii, c. 2.

^g As in the instance of Horace and Agricola. This appears to have been a defect in the Roman discipline, which Hadrian endeavoured to remedy, by ascertaining the legal age of a tribune.

^h See Arrian's *Tactics*.

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I.

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tenure of military service.<sup>1</sup> Even select troops of hostile barbarians were frequently compelled or persuaded to consume their dangerous valour in remote climates, and for the benefit of the state.<sup>2</sup> All these were included under the general name of auxiliaries; and howsoever they might vary according to the difference of times and circumstances, their numbers were seldom much inferior to those of the legions themselves.<sup>3</sup> Among the auxiliaries, the bravest and most faithful bands were placed under the command of præfects and centurions, and severely trained in the arts of Roman discipline; but the far greater part retained those arms, to which the nature of their country, or their early habits of life, more peculiarly adapted them. By this institution, each legion, to whom a certain proportion of auxiliaries was allotted, contained within itself every species of lighter troops, and of missile weapons; and was capable of encountering every nation, with the advantages of its respective arms and discipline.<sup>4</sup> Nor was the legion destitute of what, in modern language, would be styled a train of artillery. It consisted in ten military engines of the largest, and fifty-five of

Artillery.

<sup>1</sup> Such, in particular, was the state of the Batavians. Tacit. Germania, c. 29.

<sup>2</sup> Marcus Antoninus obliged the vanquished Quadi and Marcomanni to supply him with a large body of troops, which he immediately sent into Britain. Dion Cassius, l. lxxi.

<sup>3</sup> Tacit. Annal. iv, 5. Those who fix a regular proportion of as many foot, and twice as many horse, confound the auxiliaries of the emperors with the Italian allies of the republic.

<sup>4</sup> Vegetius, ii, 2. Arrian, in his order of march and battle against the Alani.

a smaller size; but all of which, either in an oblique or horizontal manner, discharged stones and darts with irresistible violence.\*

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The camp of a Roman legion presented the appearance of a fortified city.<sup>a</sup> As soon as the space was marked out, the pioneers carefully levelled the ground, and removed every impediment that might interrupt its perfect regularity. Its form was an exact quadrangle; and we may calculate, that a square of about seven hundred yards was sufficient for the encampment of twenty thousand Romans; though a similar number of our own troops would expose to the enemy a front of more than treble that extent. In the midst of the camp, the prætorium, or general's quarters, rose above the others; the cavalry, the infantry, and the auxiliaries, occupied their respective stations; the streets were broad, and perfectly straight, and a vacant space of two hundred feet was left on all sides, between the tents and the rampart. The rampart itself was usually twelve feet high, armed with a line of

Encamp-  
ment.

\* The subject of the ancient machines is treated with great knowledge and ingenuity by the chevalier Folard (Polybe, tom. II, p. 233-296). He prefers them, in many respects, to our modern cannon and mortars. We may observe, that the use of them in the field gradually became more prevalent, in proportion as personal valour and military skill declined with the Roman empire. When men were no longer found, their place was supplied by machines. See Vegetius, II, 25, Arrian.

<sup>a</sup> Vegetius finishes his second book, and the description of the legion, with the following emphatic words: "Universa quæ in quovis belli genere necessaria esse creduntur, verum legio debet ubique portare, ut in quovis loco fixerit castra, armatum faciat civitatem."

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strong and intricate palisades, and defended by a ditch of twelve feet in depth as well as in breadth. This important labour was performed by the hands of the legionaries themselves; to whom the use of the spade and the pick-axe was no less familiar than that of the sword or *pilum*. Active valour may often be the present of nature; but such patient diligence can be the fruit only of habit and discipline.<sup>f</sup>

## March.

Whenever the trumpet gave the signal of departure, the camp was almost instantly broke up, and the troops fell into their ranks without delay or confusion. Besides their arms, which the legionaries scarcely considered as an incumbrance, they were laden with their kitchen furniture, the instruments of fortification, and the provision of many days.<sup>g</sup> Under this weight, which would oppress the delicacy of a modern soldier, they were trained by a regular step to advance, in about six hours, near twenty miles.<sup>h</sup> On the appearance of an enemy, they threw aside their baggage, and by easy and rapid evolutions converted the column of march into an order of battle.<sup>i</sup> The slingers and archers skirmished in the front; the auxiliaries formed the first line, and were seconded or sustained by the strength of the

<sup>f</sup> For the Roman Cassemetation, see Polybius, l. vi. with Lipsius de Militiæ Romanæ; Josephus de Bell. Jud. l. iii. c. 5. Vegetius, l. i. §1-25; iii. 9; and Mémoires de Guichard, tom. i. c. 1.

<sup>g</sup> Cicero in Tusculano, ii. 37. Joseph. de Bell. Jud. l. iii. 5. Frontinus, iv. 1.

<sup>h</sup> Vegetius, l. i. 9. See Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. xxv, p. 187.

<sup>i</sup> See those evolutions admirably well explained by M. Guichard, Nouveaux Mémoires, tom. i, p. 141-231.



legions; the cavalry covered the flanks, and the military engines were placed in the rear.

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Such were the arts of war, by which the Roman emperors defended their extensive conquests, and preserved a military spirit, at a time when every other virtue was oppressed by luxury and despotism. If, in the consideration of their armies, we pass from their discipline to their numbers, we shall not find it easy to define them with any tolerable accuracy. We may compute, however, that the legion, which was itself a body of six thousand eight hundred and thirty-one Romans, might, with its attendant auxiliaries, amount to about twelve thousand five hundred men. The peace establishment of Hadrian and his successors was composed of no less than thirty of these formidable brigades; and most probably formed a standing force of three hundred and seventy-five thousand men. Instead of being confined within the walls of fortified cities, which the Romans considered as the refuge of weakness or pusillanimity, the legions were encamped on the banks of the great rivers, and along the frontiers of the barbarians. As their stations, for the most part, remained fixed and permanent, we may venture to describe the distribution of the troops. Three legions were sufficient for Britain. The principal strength lay upon the Rhine and Danube, and consisted of sixteen legions, in the following proportions; two in the Lower, and three in the Upper Germany; one in Rhaetia, one in Noricum, four in Pannonia, three in Mæsia, and two in Dacia. The defence of the Euphrates was

Number  
and dispo-  
sition of  
the legions.

CHAP. I. entrusted to eight legions, six of whom were planted in Syria, and the other two in Cappadocia. With regard to Egypt, Africa, and Spain, as they were far removed from any important scene of war, a single legion maintained the domestic tranquillity of each of those great provinces. Even Italy was not left destitute of a military force. Above twenty thousand chosen soldiers, distinguished by the titles of city cohorts and prætorian guards, watched over the safety of the monarch and the capital. As the authors of almost every revolution that distracted the empire, the prætorians will, very soon, and very loudly, demand our attention; but in their arms and institutions we cannot find any circumstance which discriminated them from the legions, unless it were a more splendid appearance, and a less rigid discipline.<sup>1</sup>

Navy.

The navy maintained by the emperors might seem inadequate to their greatness; but it was fully sufficient for every useful purpose of government. The ambition of the Romans was confined to the land; nor was that warlike people ever actuated by the enterprising spirit which had prompted the navigators of Tyre, of Carthage, and even of Marseilles, to enlarge the bounds of the world, and to explore the most remote coasts of the ocean. To the Romans the ocean remained

<sup>1</sup> Tacitus (*Annal.* iv. 5) has given us a state of the legions under Tiberius; and Dion Cassius (*l. iv.* p. 794) under Alexander Severus. I have endeavoured to fix on the proper medium between these two periods. See likewise Lipsius de *Magnitudine Romanæ*, l. i. c. 4, 5.

an object of terror rather than of curiosity,<sup>a</sup> the whole extent of the Mediterranean, after the destruction of Carthage, and the extirpation of the pirates, was included within their provinces. The policy of the emperors was directed only to preserve the peaceful dominion of that sea, and to protect the commerce of their subjects. With these moderate views, Augustus stationed two permanent fleets in the most convenient ports of Italy, the one at Ravenna, on the Adriatic, the other at Misenum, in the bay of Naples. Experience seems at length to have convinced the ancients, that as soon as their galleys exceeded two, or at the most three ranks of oars, they were suited rather for vain pomp than for real service. Augustus himself, in the victory of Actium, had seen the superiority of his own light frigates (they were called *liburnians*) over the lofty but unwieldy castles of his rival.<sup>b</sup> Of these *liburnians* he composed the two fleets of Ravenna and Misenum, destined to command, the one the eastern, the other the western division of the Mediterranean; and to each of the squadrons he attached a body of several thousand mariners. Besides these two ports, which may be considered as the principal seats of the Roman navy, a very considerable force was stationed at Frejus, on the coast of Provence, and the Euxine was guarded

<sup>a</sup> The Romans tried to disguise, by the pretence of religious awe, their ignorance and terror. See Tacit. *Germania*, c. 34.

<sup>b</sup> Plutarch. in *Marc. Anton.* And yet, if we may credit Orosius, these monstrous castles were no more than ten feet above the water. vi, 12.



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L

by forty ships, and three thousand soldiers. To all these we add the fleet which preserved the communication between Gaul and Britain, and a great number of vessels constantly maintained on the Rhine and Danube, to harass the country, or to intercept the passage of the barbarians.<sup>1</sup> If we review this general state of the imperial forces; of the cavalry as well as infantry; of the legions, the auxiliaries, the guards, and the navy; the most liberal computation will not allow us to fix the entire establishment by sea and by land at more than four hundred and fifty thousand men; a military power, which, however formidable it may seem, was equalled by a monarch of the last century, whose kingdom was confined within a single province of the Roman empire.<sup>2</sup>

Amount of the whole establishment.

View of the provinces of the Roman empire.

We have attempted to explain the spirit which moderated, and the strength which supported, the power of Hadrian and the Antonines. We shall now endeavour, with clearness and precision, to describe the provinces once united under their sway, but at present divided into so many independent and hostile states.

Spain.

Spain, the western extremity of the empire, of Europe, and of the ancient world, has, in every age, invariably preserved the same natural limits; the Pyrenean mountains, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic ocean. That great peninsula, at present so unequally divided be-

<sup>1</sup> See Lipsius, de Magnitud. Rom. l. 1, c. 5. The sixteen last chapters of Vegetius relate to naval affairs.

<sup>2</sup> Voltaire, Siècle de Louis XIV, c. 29. It must, however, be remembered, that France still feels that extraordinary effort.

tween two sovereigns, was distributed by Au-  
 gustus into three provinces, Lusitania, Bætica,  
 and Tarraconensis. The kingdom of Portugal  
 now fills the place of the warlike country of the  
 Lusitanians; and the loss sustained by the for-  
 mer, on the side of the east, is compensated by  
 an accession of territory towards the north. The  
 confines of Grenada and Andalusia correspond  
 with those of ancient Bætica. The remainder  
 of Spain, Galicia, and the Asturias, Biscay and  
 Navarre, Leon, and the two Castiles, Murcia,  
 Valencia, Catalonia, and Arragon, all contri-  
 buted to form the third and most considerable of  
 the Roman governments, which, from the name  
 of its capital, was styled the province of Tar-  
 ragona.<sup>a</sup> Of the native barbarians, the Celti-  
 berians were the most powerful, as the Canta-  
 brians and Asturians proved the most obstinate.  
 Confident in the strength of their mountains, they  
 were the last who submitted to the arms of Rome,  
 and the first who threw off the yoke of the Arabs.

Ancient Gaul, as it contained the whole coun-  
 try between the Pyrenees, the Alps, the Rhine,  
 and the ocean, was of greater extent than mo-  
 dern France. To the dominions of that power-  
 ful monarchy, with its recent acquisitions of Al-  
 sace and Lorraine, we must add the duchy of

<sup>a</sup> See Strabo, l. ii. It is natural enough to suppose that Arragon is derived from Tarraconensis; and several moderns who have written in Latin, use those words as synonymous. It is, however, certain, that the Arragon, a little stream which falls from the Pyrenees into the Ebro, first gave its name to a country, and gradually to a kingdom. See d'Anville, *Géographie du Moyen Âge*, p. 181.

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Savoy, the cantons of Switzerland, the four electorates of the Rhine, and the territories of Liege, Luxemburg, Hainault, Flanders, and Brabant. When Augustus gave laws to the conquests of his father, he introduced a division of Gaul, equally adapted to the progress of the legions, to the course of the rivers, and to the principal national distinctions, which had comprehended above an hundred independent states.<sup>b</sup> The sea-coast of the Mediterranean, Languedoc, Provence, and Dauphiné, received their provincial appellation from the colony of Narbonne. The government of Aquitaine was extended from the Pyrenees to the Loire. The country between the Loire and the Seine was styled the Celtic Gaul, and soon borrowed a new denomination from the celebrated colony of Lugdunum, or Lyons. The Belgic lay beyond the Seine, and in more ancient times had been bounded only by the Rhine; but a little before the age of Cæsar, the Germans, abusing their superiority of valour, had occupied a considerable portion of the Belgic territory. The Roman conquerors very eagerly embraced so flattering a circumstance, and the Gallic frontier of the Rhine, from Basil to Leyden, received the pompous names of the Upper and the Lower Germany.<sup>c</sup> Such, under the reign of the Antonines, were the six

<sup>b</sup> One hundred and fifteen cities appear in the *Notitia* of Gaul; and it is well known that this appellation was applied not only to the capital town, but to the whole territory of each state. But Ptolemy and Appian increase the number of tribes to three or four hundred.

<sup>c</sup> D'Anville. *Notice de l'Ancienne Gaul.*



provinces of Gaul; the Narbonnese, Aquitaine, the Celtic, or Lyonnese, the Belgic, and the two Germanys. CHAP. I.

We have already had occasion to mention the conquest of Britain, and to fix the boundary of the Roman province in this island. It comprehended all England, Wales, and the lowlands of Scotland, as far as the friths of Dunbarton and Edinburgh. Before Britain lost her freedom, the country was irregularly divided between thirty tribes of barbarians, of whom the most considerable were the Belgæ in the west, the Brigantes in the north, the Silures in South Wales, and the Iceni in Norfolk and Suffolk.<sup>a</sup> As far as we can either trace or credit the resemblance of manners and language, Spain, Gaul, and Britain were peopled by the same hardy race of savages. Before they yielded to the Roman arms, they often disputed the field, and often renewed the contest. After their submission, they constituted the western division of the European provinces, which extended from the columns of Hercules to the wall of Antoninus, and from the mouth of the Tagus to the sources of the Rhine and Danube.

Before the Roman conquest, the country which is now called Lombardy was not considered as a part of Italy. It had been occupied by a powerful colony of Gauls, who, settling themselves along the banks of the Po, from Piedmont to Romagna, carried their arms and diffused their name from the Alps to the Appenine. The

<sup>a</sup> Whitaker's History of Manchester, vol. i, c. 3.

## CHAP.

## I.

Ligurians dwelt on the rocky coast, which now forms the republic of Genoa. Venice was yet unborn: but the territories of that state which lie to the east of the Adige, were inhabited by the Venetians.\* The middle part of the peninsula that now composes the duchy of Tuscany and the ecclesiastical state, was the ancient seat of the Etruscans and Umbrians; to the former of whom Italy was indebted for the first rudiments of civilized life.<sup>†</sup> The Tyber rolled at the foot of the seven hills of Rome, and the country of the Sabines, the Latins, and the Volsci, from that river to the frontiers of Naples, was the theatre of her infant victories. On that celebrated ground the first consuls deserved triumphs, their successors adorned villas, and *their* posterity have erected convents.<sup>‡</sup> Capua and Campania possessed the immediate territory of Naples; and therest of the kingdom was inhabited by many warlike nations, the Marsi, the Samnites, the Apulians, and the Lucanians; and the sea-coasts had been covered by the flourishing colonies of the Greeks. We may remark, that when Augustus divided Italy into eleven regions, the little province of Istria was annexed to that seat of Roman sovereignty.<sup>§</sup>

\* The Italian Veneti, though often confounded with the Gauls, were more probably of Illyrian origin. See M. Freret, *Memoires de l'Academi des Inscriptions*, tom. xviii.

† See Maffei *Verona illustrata*, l. i.

‡ The first contract was observed by the ancients. See Florus, l. ii. The second must strike every modern traveller.

§ Pliny (*Hist. Natur.* l. iii) follows the division of Italy by Augustus.

The European provinces of Rome were protected by the course of the Rhine and the Danube. The latter of those mighty streams, which rises at the distance of only thirty miles from the former, flows above thirteen hundred miles, for the most part to the south east, collects the tribute of sixty navigable rivers, and is at length, through six mouths, received into the Euxine, which appears scarcely equal to such an accession of waters.<sup>1</sup> The provinces of the Danube soon acquired the general appellation of Illyricum, or the Illyrian frontier;<sup>2</sup> and were esteemed the most warlike of the empire; but they deserve to be more particularly considered under the names of Rætia, Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia, Dacia, Mesia, Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece.

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I.

The Danube and Illyrian frontier.

The province of Rætia, which soon extinguished the name of the Vindelicians, extended from the summit of the Alps to the banks of the Danube; from its source, as far as its conflux with the Inn. The greatest part of the flat country is subject to the elector of Bavaria; the city of Augsburg is protected by the constitution of the German empire; the Grisons are safe in their mountains, and the country of Tyrol is ranked among the numerous provinces of the house of Austria.

The wide extent of territory which is included between the Inn, the Danube, and the Save;

Rætia.  
Noricum and Pannonia.

<sup>1</sup> Tournefort, *Voyages en Grèce et Asia Mineure*, lettre xviii.

<sup>2</sup> The name of Illyricum originally belonged to the sea-coast of the Adriatic, and was gradually extended by the Romans from the Alps to the Euxine sea. See Severini *Pannonia*, l. i, c. 3.



CHAP. I. Austria, Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, the Lower Hungary, and Slavonia, was known to the ancients under the names of Noricum and Pannonia. In their original state of independence, their fierce inhabitants were intimately connected. Under the Roman government they were frequently united, and they still remain the patrimony of a single family. They now contain the residence of a German prince, who styles himself emperor of the Romans, and form the centre, as well as strength, of the Austrian power. It may not be improper to observe, that if we except Bohemia, Moravia, the northern skirts of Austria, and a part of Hungary between the Teyss and the Danube, all the other dominions of the house of Austria were comprised within the limits of the Roman empire.

Dalmatia.

Dalmatia, to which the name of Illyricum more properly belonged, was a long but narrow tract, between the Save and the Adriatic. The best part of the sea-coast, which still retains its ancient appellation, is a province of the Venetian state, and the seat of the little republic of Ragusa. The inland parts have assumed the Slavonian names of Croatia and Bosnia; the former obeys an Austrian governor, the latter a Turkish pasha; but the whole country is still infested by tribes of barbarians, whose savage independence irregularly marks the doubtful limit of the christian and mahometan power.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> A Venetian traveller, the Abbate Portis, has lately given us some account of those very obscure countries. But the geography and antiquities of the western Illyricum can be expected only from the munificence of the emperor, its sovereign.

After the Danube had received the waters of the Teyss and the Save, it acquired, at least among the Greeks, the name of Ister.<sup>13</sup> It formerly divided Mæsia and Dacia, the latter of which, as we have already seen, was a conquest of Trajan, and the only province beyond the river. If we inquire into the present state of those countries, we shall find that, on the left hand of the Danube, Temeswar and Transylvania have been annexed, after many revolutions, to the crown of Hungary; whilst the principalities of Moldavia and Walachia acknowledge the supremacy of the Ottoman Porte. On the right hand of the Danube, Mæsia, which, during the middle ages, was broken into the barbarian kingdoms of Servia and Bulgaria, is again united in Turkish slavery.

The appellation of Roumelia, which is still bestowed by the Turks on the extensive countries of Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece, preserves the memory of their ancient state under the Roman empire. In the time of the Antonines, the martial regions of Thrace, from the mountains of Hæmus and Rhodope, to the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, had assumed the form of a province. Notwithstanding the change of masters and of religion, the new city of Rome, founded by Constantine on the banks of the Bosphorus, has ever since remained the capital of a great monarchy. The kingdom of Macedonia, which,

CHAP.  
I.  
.....  
Mæsia and  
Dacia.

Thrace,  
Macedo-  
nia, and  
Greece.

<sup>13</sup> The Save rises near the confines of Istria, and was considered by the more early Greeks as the principal stream of the Danube.

CHAP. under the reign of Alexander, gave laws to Asia,  
 I. derived more solid advantages from the policy  
 ----- of the two Philips: and, with its dependencies of  
 Epirus and Thessaly, extended from the Ægean  
 to the Ionian sea. When we reflect on the fame  
 of Thebes and Argos, of Sparta and Athens, we  
 can scarcely persuade ourselves, that so many  
 immortal republics of ancient Greece were lost in  
 a single province of the Roman empire, which,  
 from the superior influence of the Achaean league,  
 was usually denominated the province of Achaia.

Asia Mi-  
 nor.

Such was the state of Europe under the Roman  
 emperors. The provinces of Asia, without ex-  
 cepting the transient conquests of Trajan, are all  
 comprehended within the limits of the Turkish  
 power. But, instead of following the arbitrary  
 divisions of despotism and ignorance, it will be  
 safer for us, as well as more agreeable, to observe  
 the indelible characters of nature. The name of  
 Asia Minor is attributed, with some propriety, to  
 the peninsula, which, confined betwixt the Eux-  
 ine and the Mediterranean, advances from the  
 Euphrates towards Europe. The most extensive  
 and flourishing district, westward of mount Tau-  
 rus and the river Halys, was dignified by the  
 Romans with the exclusive title of Asia. The  
 jurisdiction of that province extended over the  
 ancient monarchies of Troy, Lydia, and Phrygia,  
 the maritime countries of the Pamphylians,  
 Lycians, and Carians, and the Grecian colonies  
 of Ionia, which equalled in arts, though not in  
 arms, the glory of their parent. The kingdoms  
 of Bithynia and Pontus possessed the northern



side of the peninsula from Constantinople to Trebizond. On the opposite side, the province of Cilicia was terminated by the mountains of Syria: the inland country, separated from the Roman Asia by the river Halys, and from Armenia by the Euphrates, had once formed the independent kingdom of Cappadocia. In this place we may observe, that the northern shores of the Euxine, beyond Trebizond in Asia, and beyond the Danube in Europe, acknowledged the sovereignty of the emperors, and received at their hands either tributary princes or Roman garrisons. Budzak, Crim Tartary, Circassia, and Mingrelia, are the modern appellations of those savage countries."

Under the successors of Alexander, Syria was the seat of the Seleucidæ, who reigned over Upper Asia, till the successful revolt of the Parthians confined their dominions between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean. When Syria became subject to the Romans, it formed the eastern frontier of their empire; nor did that province, in its utmost latitude, know any other bounds than the mountains of Cappadocia to the north, and towards the south, the confines of Egypt, and the Red sea. Phœnicia and Palestine were sometimes annexed to, and sometimes separated from, the jurisdiction of Syria. The former of these was a narrow and rocky coast; the latter was a territory scarcely superior to

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I.

Syria,  
Phœnicia,  
and Palestine.

\* See the *Périplus* of Arrian. He examined the coasts of the Euxine, when he was governor of Cappadocia.

CHAP. I. Wales, either in fertility or extent. Yet Phœnicia and Palestine will for ever live in the memory of mankind, since America, as well as Europe, has received letters from the one, and religion from the other.\* A sandy desert, alike destitute of wood and water, skirts along the doubtful confine of Syria, from the Euphrates to the Red sea. The wandering life of the Arabs was inseparably connected with their independence; and wherever, on some spots less barren than the rest, they ventured to form any settled habitation, they soon became subjects to the Roman empire.†

Egypt.

The geographers of antiquity have frequently hesitated to what portion of the globe they should ascribe Egypt.‡ By its situation, that celebrated kingdom is included within the immense peninsula of Africa; but it is accessible only on the side of Asia, whose revolutions, in almost every period of history, Egypt has humbly obeyed. A Roman præfect was seated on the splendid throne of the Ptolemys; and the iron sceptre of the

\* The progress of religion is well known. The use of letters was introduced among the savages of Europe about fifteen hundred years before Christ; and the Europeans carried them to America about fifteen centuries after the christian æra. But in a period of three thousand years, the Phœnician alphabet received considerable alterations, as it passed through the hands of the Greeks and Romans.

† Dion Cassius, lib. lxxviii, p. 1131.

‡ Ptolemy and Strabo, with the modern geographers, fix the isthmus of Suez as the boundary of Asia and Africa. Dionysius, Mela, Pliny, Sallust, Hirtius, and Solinus, have preferred for that purpose the western branch of the Nile, or even the great Catabathmus, or descent, which last would assign to Asia, not only Egypt, but part of Libya.

Mamelukes is now in the hands of a Turkish CHAP.  
 pasha. The Nile flows down the country above I.  
 five hundred miles, from the tropic of Cancer to  
 the Mediterranean, and marks, on either side, the  
 extent of fertility by the measure of its inunda-  
 tions. Cyrene, situate towards the west, and along  
 the sea-coast, was first a Greek colony, afterwards  
 a province of Egypt, and is now lost in the de-  
 sert of Barca.

From Cyrene to the ocean, the coast of Africa Africa.  
 extends above fifteen hundred miles; yet so  
 closely is it pressed between the Mediterranean  
 and the Sahara, or sandy desert, that its breadth  
 seldom exceeds fourscore or an hundred miles.  
 The eastern division was considered by the Ro-  
 mans as the more peculiar and proper province  
 of Africa. Till the arrival of the Phœnician  
 colonies, that fertile country was inhabited by  
 the Libyans, the most savage of mankind. Un-  
 der the immediate jurisdiction of Carthage, it  
 became the centre of commerce and empire;  
 but the republic of Carthage is now degenerat-  
 ed into the feeble and disorderly states of Tripoli  
 and Tunis. The military government of Algiers  
 oppresses the wide extent of Numidia, as it was  
 once united under Massinissa and Jugurtha: but  
 in the time of Augustus, the limits of Numidia  
 were contracted; and, at least, two thirds of the  
 country acquiesced in the name of Mauritania,  
 with the epithet of Cæsariensis. The genuine  
 Mauritania, or country of the Moors, which,  
 from the ancient city of Tingi, or Tangier,



CHAP. I.  
 was distinguished by the appellation of Tingitana, is represented by the modern kingdom of Fez. Sallé, on the ocean, so infamous at present for its piratical depredations, was noticed by the Romans, as the extreme object of their power, and almost of their geography. A city of their foundation may still be discovered near Mequinez, the residence of the barbarian whom we condescend to style the emperor of Morocco; but it does not appear that his more southern dominions, Morocco itself, and Segelmessa, were ever comprehended within the Roman province. The western parts of Africa are intersected by the branches of mount Atlas, a name so idly celebrated by the fancy of poets;<sup>1</sup> but which is now diffused over the immense ocean that rolls between the ancient and the new continent.<sup>2</sup>

The Mediterranean, with its islands.

Having now finished the circuit of the Roman empire, we may observe that Africa is divided from Spain by a narrow strait of about twelve miles, through which the Atlantic flows into the Mediterranean. The columns of Hercules, so famous among the ancients, were two mountains

<sup>1</sup> The long range, moderate height, and gentle declivity of mount Atlas (see Shaw's Travels, p. 5) are very unlike a solitary mountain which rears its head into the clouds, and seems to support the heavens. The peak of Teneriff, on the contrary, rises a league and a half above the surface of the sea, and as it was frequently visited by the Phenicians, might engage the notice of the Greek poets. See Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle*, tom. i, p. 312. *Histoire des Voyages*, tom. ii.

<sup>2</sup> M. de Voltaire, tom. xiv, p. 297, unsupported by either fact or probability, has generously bestowed the Canary islands on the Roman empire.

which seemed to have been torn asunder by some convulsion of the elements; and at the foot of the European mountain, the fortress of Gibraltar is now seated. The whole extent of the Mediterranean sea, its coasts, and its islands, were comprised within the Roman dominion. Of the larger islands, the two Baleares, which derive their name of Majorca and Minorca from their respective size, are subject at present, the former to Spain, the latter to Great Britain. It is easier to deplore the fate, than to describe the actual condition of Corsica. Two Italian sovereigns assume a regal title from Sardinia and Sicily. Crete, or Candia, with Cyprus, and most of the smaller islands of Greece and Asia, have been subdued by the Turkish arms, whilst the little rock of Malta defies their power, and has emerged, under the government of its military order, into fame and opulence.

This long enumeration of provinces, whose broken fragments have formed so many powerful kingdoms, might almost induce us to forgive the vanity or ignorance of the ancients. Dazzled with the extensive sway, the irresistible strength, and the real or affected moderation of the emperors, they permitted themselves to despise, and sometimes to forget, the outlying countries, which had been left in the enjoyment of a barbarous independence; and they gradually usurped the licence of confounding the Roman monarchy with the globe of the earth.\* But the

CHAP.  
I.

General  
idea of the  
Roman em-  
pire.

\* Bergier, *Hist. des Grands Chemins*, L. III. c. 1, 2, 3, 4: a very useful collection.

CHAP.

I.

temper, as well as knowledge, of a modern historian require a more sober and accurate language. He may impress a juster image of the greatness of Rome, by observing that the empire was above two thousand miles in breadth, from the wall of Antoninus and the northern limits of Dacia, to mount Atlas and the tropic of Cancer; that it extended, in length, more than three thousand miles, from the western ocean to the Euphrates; that it was situated in the finest part of the temperate zone, between the twenty-fourth and fifty-sixth degrees of northern latitude; and that it was supposed to contain above sixteen hundred thousand square miles, for the most part of fertile and well cultivated land.\*

\* See Templeman's Survey of the Globe; but I distrust both the Doctor's learning and his maps.



## CHAP. II.

*Of the union and internal prosperity of the Roman empire, in the age of the Antonines.*

IT is not alone by the rapidity, or extent of conquest, that we should estimate the greatness of Rome. The sovereign of the Russian deserts commands a larger portion of the globe. In the seventh summer after his passage of the Hellespont, Alexander erected the Macedonian trophies on the banks of the Hyphasis.<sup>a</sup> Within less than a century, the irresistible Zingis, and the Mogul princes of his race, spread their cruel devastations and transient empire from the sea of China to the confines of Egypt and Germany.<sup>b</sup> But the firm edifice of Roman power was raised and preserved by the wisdom of ages. The obedient provinces of Trajan and the Antonines were united by laws, and adorned by arts. They might occasionally suffer from the partial abuse of delegated authority; but the general principle of government was wise, simple, and beneficent. They enjoyed the religion of their ancestors, whilst in civil honours and advantages they were exalted, by just degrees, to an equality with their conquerors.

CHAP.  
II.Principles  
of govern-  
ment.

<sup>a</sup> They were erected about the midway between Labor and Delhi. The conquests of Alexander in Hindostan were confined to the Punjab, a country watered by the five great streams of the Indus.

<sup>b</sup> See M. de Guignes, *Histoire des Huns*, l. xv, xvi, and xvii.

CHAP.  
II.

Universal  
spirit of  
toleration.

I. The policy of the emperors and the senate, as far as it concerned religion, was happily seconded by the reflections of the enlightened, and by the habits of the superstitious, part of their subjects. The various modes of worship, which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people as equally true; by the philosopher as equally false; and by the magistrate as equally useful. And thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord.

Of the  
people.

The superstition of the people was not embittered by any mixture of theological rancour; nor was it confined by the chains of any speculative system. The devout polytheist, though fondly attached to his national rites, admitted, with implicit faith, the different religions of the earth.\* Fear, gratitude, and curiosity, a dream or an omen, a singular disorder, or a distant journey, perpetually disposed him to multiply the articles of his belief, and to enlarge the list of his protectors. The thin texture of the pagan mythology was interwoven with various, but not discordant, materials. As soon as it was allowed that sages and heroes, who had lived, or

\* There is not any writer who describes, in so lively a manner as Herodotus, the true genius of polytheism. The best commentary may be found in Mr. Hume's *Natural History of Religion*; and the best contrast in Bossuet's *Universal History*. Some obscure traces of an intolerant spirit appear in the conduct of the Egyptians (see Juvenal, sat. xi); and the christians, as well as Jews, who lived under the Roman empire, formed a very important exception; so important indeed, that the discussion will require a distinct chapter of this work.

who had died for the benefit of their country, were exalted to a state of power and immortality, it was universally confessed, that they deserved, if not the adoration, at least the reverence, of all mankind. The deities of a thousand groves and a thousand streams possessed, in peace, their local and respective influence; nor could the Roman who deprecated the wrath of the Tiber, deride the Egyptian who presented his offering to the beneficent genius of the Nile. The visible powers of nature, the planets, and the elements, were the same throughout the universe. The invisible governors of the moral world were inevitably cast in a similar mould of fiction and allegory. Every virtue, and even vice, acquired its divine representative; every art and profession its patron, whose attributes, in the most distant ages and countries, were uniformly derived from the character of their peculiar votaries. A republic of gods of such opposite tempers and interest required, in every system, the moderating hand of a supreme magistrate, who, by the progress of knowledge and flattery, was gradually invested with the sublime perfections of an eternal parent, and an omnipotent monarch.<sup>a</sup> Such was the mild spirit of antiquity, that the nations were less attentive to the difference, than to the resemblance of their religious worship. The Greek, the Roman, and the barbarian, as

<sup>a</sup> The rights, powers, and pretensions of the sovereign of Olympus are very clearly described in the fifteenth book of the *Iliad*; in the Greek original, I mean; for Mr. Pope, without perceiving it, has improved the theology of Homer.



CHAP. II. they met before their respective altars, easily persuaded themselves, that under various names, and with various ceremonies, they adored the same deities. The elegant mythology of Homer gave a beautiful, and almost a regular form, to the polytheism of the ancient world.

Of philosophers.

The philosophers of Greece deduced their morals from the nature of man, rather than from that of God. They meditated, however, on the divine nature, as a very curious and important speculation; and in the profound inquiry, they displayed the strength and weakness of the human understanding.<sup>f</sup> Of the four most celebrated schools, the stoics and the platonists endeavoured to reconcile the jarring interests of reason and piety. They have left us the most sublime proofs of the existence and perfections of the first cause; but as it was impossible for them to conceive the creation of matter, the workman in the stoic philosophy was not sufficiently distinguished from the work; whilst, on the contrary, the spiritual god of Plato and his disciples, resembled an idea, rather than a substance. The opinions of the academics and epicureans were of a less religious cast; but whilst the modest science of the former induced them to doubt, the positive ig-

\* See, for instance, *Cæsar de Bell. Gall.* vi, 17. Within a century or two, the Gauls themselves applied to their gods the names of Mercury, Mars, Apollo, &c.

<sup>f</sup> The admirable work of Cicero *de Naturâ Deorum*, is the best clue we have to guide us through the dark and profound abyss. He represents with candour, and confutes with subtlety, the opinions of the philosophers.

norance of the latter urged them to deny, the providence of a supreme ruler. The spirit of inquiry, prompted by emulation, and supported by freedom, had divided the public teachers of philosophy into a variety of contending sects; but the ingenious youth, who, from every part, resorted to Athens, and the other seats of learning in the Roman empire, were alike instructed, in every school, to reject and despise the religion of the multitude. How, indeed, was it possible that a philosopher should accept, as divine truths, the idle tales of the poets, and the incoherent traditions of antiquity; or, that he should adore, as gods, those imperfect beings whom he must have despised as men! Against such unworthy adversaries, Cicero condescended to employ the arms of reason and eloquence; but the satire of Lucian was a much more adequate, as well as more efficacious, weapon. We may be well assured, that a writer conversant with the world, would never have ventured to expose the gods of his country to public ridicule, had they not already been the objects of secret contempt among the polished and enlightened orders of society.\*

Notwithstanding the fashionable irreligion which prevailed in the age of the Antonines, both the interests of the priests, and the credulity of the people, were sufficiently respected. In their writings and conversation, the philosophers of

\* I do not pretend to assert, that, in this irreligious age, the natural terrors of superstition, dreams, omens, apparitions, &c. had lost their efficacy.

CHAP.  
II.

antiquity asserted the independent dignity of reason; but they resigned their actions to the commands of law and of custom. Viewing, with a smile of pity and indulgence, the various errors of the vulgar, they diligently practised the ceremonies of their fathers, devoutly frequented the temples of the gods, and sometimes condescending to act a part on the theatre of superstition, they concealed the sentiments of an atheist under the sacerdotal robes. Reasoners of such a temper were scarcely inclined to wrangle about their respective modes of faith, or of worship. It was indifferent to them what shape the folly of the multitude might choose to assume; and they approached, with the same inward contempt, and the same external reverence, the altars of the Lybian, the Olympian, or the Capitoline Jupiter.<sup>a</sup>

Of the magistrates.

It is not easy to conceive from what motives a spirit of persecution could introduce itself into the Roman councils. The magistrates could not be actuated by a blind, though honest bigotry, since the magistrates were themselves philosophers; and the school of Athens had given laws to the senate. They could not be impelled by ambition or avarice, as the temporal and ecclesiastical powers were united in the same hands. The pontiffs were chosen among the most illustrious of the senators; and the office of supreme

<sup>a</sup> Socrates, Epicurus, Cicero, and Plutarch, always inculcated a decent reverence for the religion of their own country, and of mankind. The devotion of Epicurus was assiduous and exemplary. Diogen. Laërt. x. 10.



pontiff was constantly exercised by the emperors themselves. They knew and valued the advantages of religion, as it is connected with civil government. They encouraged the public festivals, which humanize the manners of the people. They managed the arts of divination, as a convenient instrument of policy; and they respected, as the firmest bond of society, the useful persuasion, that, either in this, or in a future life, the crime of perjury is most assuredly punished by the avenging gods.<sup>1</sup> But whilst they acknowledged the general advantages of religion, they were convinced, that the various modes of worship contributed alike to the same salutary purposes: and that, in every country, the form of superstition, which had received the sanction of time and experience, was the best adapted to the climate, and to its inhabitants. Avarice and taste very frequently despoiled the vanquished nations of the elegant statues of their gods, and the rich ornaments of their temples;<sup>2</sup> but, in the exercise of the religion which they derived from their ancestors, they uniformly experienced the indulgence, and even protection, of the Roman conquerors. The province of Gaul seems, and indeed only seems, an exception to this universal toleration. Under the specious pretext of abolishing human sacrifices, the emperors Tibe-

In the provinces.

<sup>1</sup> Polybius, l. vi, c. 53, 54. Juvenal, Sat. xiii, laments, that in his time this apprehension had lost much of its effect.

<sup>2</sup> See the fate of Syracuse, Tarentum, Ambracia, Corinth, &c. the conduct of Verrus, in Cicero (Actio ii, Orat. 4), and the usual practice of governors, in the eighth Satire of Juvenal.

CHAP. rius and Claudius suppressed the dangerous power  
II. of the druids:<sup>1</sup> but the priests themselves, their  
~~~~~ gods, and their altars, subsisted in peaceful obscurity till the final destruction of paganism.<sup>m</sup>

At Rome. Rome, the capital of a great monarchy, was incessantly filled with subjects and strangers from every part of the world,ⁿ who all introduced and enjoyed the favourite superstitions of their native country.^o Every city in the empire was justified in maintaining the purity of its ancient ceremonies; and, the Roman senate using the common privilege, sometimes interposed to check this inundation of foreign rites. The Egyptian superstition, of all the most contemptible and abject, was frequently prohibited; the temples of Serapis and Isis demolished, and their worshippers banished from Rome and Italy.^p But the zeal of fanaticism prevailed over the cold and feeble efforts of policy. The exiles returned, the proselytes multiplied, the temples were restored with increasing splendour, and Isis and

¹ Sueton. in Claud.—Plin. Hist. Nat. xxx, 1.

^m Pelloutier Histoire des Celtes, tom. vi, p. 230-252.

ⁿ Seneca Consolat. ad Helvium, p. 74. Edit. Lips.

^o Dionysius Halicarn. Antiquitat. Roman. l. ii.

^p In the year of Rome 701, the temple of Isis and Serapis was demolished by the order of the senate (Dion Cassius, l. xi, p. 252), and even by the hands of the consul (Valerius Maximus, l. 3). After the death of Caesar, it was restored, at the public expence (Dion, l. xlvii, p. 301). When Augustus was in Egypt, he revered the majesty of Serapis (Dion, l. li, p. 647); but in the Pomarium of Rome, and a mile round it, he prohibited the worship of the Egyptian gods (Dion, l. liii, p. 679, l. liv, p. 735). They remained, however, very fashionable under his reign, (Ovid. de Art. Amand. l. i), and that of his successor, till the justice of Tiberius was provoked to some acts of severity. (See Tacit. Annal. ii, 85, Joseph. Antiquit. l. xviii, c. 3).

Serapis at length assumed their place among the Roman deities.¹ Nor was this indulgence a departure from the old maxims of government. In the purest ages of the commonwealth, Cybele and Æsculapius had been invited by solemn embassies;² and it was customary to tempt the protectors of besieged cities, by the promise of more distinguished honours than they possessed in their native country.³ Rome gradually became the common temple of her subjects; and the freedom of the city was bestowed on all the gods of mankind.⁴

II. The narrow policy of preserving, without any foreign mixture, the pure blood of the ancient citizens, had checked the fortune, and hastened the ruin of Athens and Sparta. The aspiring genius of Rome sacrificed vanity to ambition, and deemed it more prudent, as well as honourable, to adopt virtue and merit for her own, wheresoever they were found, among slaves or strangers, enemies or barbarians.⁵ During the most flourishing era of the Athenian commonwealth, the number of citizens gradually decreased from about thirty^{*} to twenty-one thou-

Freedom
of Rome.

¹ Tertullian in Apologetic. c. 6, p. 74, edit. Havercamp. I am inclined to attribute their establishment to the devotion of the Flavian family.

² See Livy, l. xi. and xxix.

³ Macrobi. Saturnalia, l. iii, c. 9. He gives us a form of evocation.

⁴ Minutius Felix in Octavio, p. 54. Arnobius, l. vi, p. 115.

⁵ Tacit. Annal. xi, 24. The *Orbis Romanus* of the learned Spanheim is a complete history of the progressive admission of Latium, Italy, and the provinces, to the freedom of Rome.

^{*} Herodotus, v. 97. It should seem, however, that he followed a large and popular estimation.

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II.

sand.⁷ If, on the contrary, we study the growth of the Roman republic, we may discover, that, notwithstanding the incessant demands of wars and colonies, the citizens, who, in the first census of Servius Tullius, amounted to no more than eighty-three thousand, were multiplied, before the commencement of the social war, to the number of four hundred and sixty-three thousand men, able to bear arms in the service of their country.* When the allies of Rome claimed an equal share of honours and privileges, the senate, indeed, preferred the chance of arms to an ignominious concession. The Samnites and the Lucanians paid the severe penalty of their rashness; but the rest of the Italian states, as they successively returned to their duty, were admitted into the bosom of the republic,⁸ and soon contributed to the ruin of public freedom. Under a democratical government, the citizens exercise the powers of sovereignty; and those powers will be first abused, and afterwards lost, if they are committed to an unwieldy multitude. But when the popular assemblies had been suppressed by the administration of the emperors, the conquerors were distinguished from the vanquished nations, only as the first and most honourable order of subjects; and their increase, however rapid, was no longer exposed to the same dangers.

⁷ Athenæus, *Dulphonosiphist.* l. vi, p. 272, edit. Casaubon. — *Moursins de Fortunâ Attica*, c. 4.

⁸ See a very accurate collection of the numbers of each *Iustrum* in M. de Beaufort, *Republique Romaine*, l. iv, c. 4.

⁹ Appian, *de Bell. Civil.* l. i. — Velleius Paterculus, l. ii, c. 15, 16, 17.

Yet the wisest princes, who adopted the maxims of Augustus, guarded with the strictest care the dignity of the Roman name, and diffused the freedom of the city with a prudent liberality.^b

Till the privileges of Romans had been progressively extended to all the inhabitants of the empire, an important distinction was preserved between Italy and the provinces. The former was esteemed the centre of public unity, and the firm basis of the constitution. Italy claimed the birth, or at least the residence, of the emperors and the senate.^c The estates of the Italians were exempt from taxes; their persons from the arbitrary jurisdiction of governors. Their municipal corporations, formed after the perfect model of the capital, were intrusted, under the immediate eye of the supreme power, with the execution of the laws. From the foot of the Alps to the extremity of Calabria, all the natives of Italy were born citizens of Rome. Their partial distinctions were obliterated, and they insensibly coalesced into one great nation, united by language, manners, and civil institutions, and equal to the weight of a powerful empire. The republic gloried in her generous policy, and was frequently rewarded by the merit and services of

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II.

Italy.

^b Maccenas had advised him to declare, by one edict, all his subjects citizens. But we may justly suspect that the historian Dion was the author of a counsel so much adapted to the practice of his own age, and so little to that of Augustus.

^c The senators were obliged to have one third of their own landed property in Italy. See Plin. l. vi. ep. 19. The qualification was reduced by Marcus to one fourth. Since the reign of Trajan, Italy had sunk nearer to the level of the provinces.

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II.

her adopted sons. Had she always confined the distinction of Romans to the ancient families within the walls of the city, that immortal name would have been deprived of some of its noblest ornaments. Virgil was a native of Mantua; Horace was inclined to doubt whether he should call himself an Apulian or a Lucanian; it was in Padua that an historian was found worthy to record the majestic series of Roman victories. The patriot family of the Catos emerged from Tusculum; and the little town of Arpinum claimed the double honour of producing Marius and Cicero, the former of whom deserved, after Romulus and Camillus, to be styled the third founder of Rome; and the latter, after saving his country from the designs of Catiline, enabled her to contend with Athens for the palm of eloquence.^a

The provinces.

The provinces of the empire (as they have been described in the preceding chapter) were destitute of any public force, or constitutional freedom. In Etruria, in Greece,^b and in Gaul,^c it was the first care of the senate to dissolve those dangerous confederacies, which taught mankind, that as the Roman arms prevailed by division,

^a The first part of the *Verona Illustrata* of the Marquis Maffei gives the clearest and most comprehensive view of the state of Italy under the Cæsars.

^b See Pausanias, l. vii. The Romans condescended to restore the names of those assemblies, when they could no longer be dangerous.

^c They are frequently mentioned by Cæsar. The Abbé Dubos attempts, with very little success, to prove that the assemblies of Gaul were continued under the emperors. *Histoire de l'Établissement de la Monarchie Française*, l. i, c. 4.

they might be resisted by union. Those princes, CHAP.
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whom the ostentation of gratitude or generosity permitted for a while to hold a precarious sceptre, were dismissed from their thrones, as soon as they had performed their appointed task of fashioning to the yoke the vanquished nations. The free states and cities which had embraced the cause of Rome, were rewarded with a nominal alliance, and insensibly sunk into real servitude. The public authority was everywhere exercised by the ministers of the senate and of the emperors, and that authority was absolute, and without controul. But the same salutary maxims of government, which had secured the peace and obedience of Italy, were extended to the most distant conquests. A nation of Romans was gradually formed in the provinces, by the double expedient of introducing colonies, and of admitting the most faithful and deserving of the provincials to the freedom of Rome.

“Wheresoever the Roman conquers, he in-
“habits,” is a very just observation of Seneca,^{Colonies and municipal towns.} confirmed by history and experience. The natives of Italy, allured by pleasure or by interest, hastened to enjoy the advantages of victory; and we may remark, that about forty years after the reduction of Asia, eighty thousand Romans were massacred in one day, by the cruel orders of Mithridates.^b These voluntary exiles were en-

^a Seneca in Consolat. ad Helviam, c. 6.

^b Memnon apud Photium, c. 33. Valer. Maxim. ix, 2. Plutarch and Dion Cassius swell the massacre to 150,000 citizens. But I should esteem the smaller number to be more than sufficient.

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gaged, for the most part, in the occupations of commerce, agriculture, and the farm of the revenue. But after the legions were rendered permanent by the emperors, the provinces were peopled by a race of soldiers; and the veterans, whether they received the reward of their service in land or in money, usually settled, with their families, in the country where they had honourably spent their youth. Throughout the empire, but more particularly in the western parts, the most fertile districts, and the most convenient situations, were reserved for the establishment of colonies; some of which were of a civil, and others of a military nature. In their manners and internal policy, the colonies formed a perfect representation of their great parent; and they were soon endeared to the natives by the ties of friendship and alliance; they effectually diffused a reverence for the Roman name, and a desire, which was seldom disappointed, of sharing, in due time, its honours and advantages.¹ The municipal cities insensibly equalled the rank and splendour of the colonies; and, in the reign of Hadrian, it was disputed which was the preferable condition, of those societies which had issued from, or those which had been received into, the bosom of Rome.² The right of *Latium*,

¹ Twenty-five colonies were settled in Spain (see *Plin. Hist. Natur.* lib. 3. 4. iv. 35); and nine in Britain, of which London, Colchester, Lincoln, Chester, Gloucester, and Bath, still remain considerable cities (see *Richard of Cirencester*, p. 36, and *Whitaker's History of Manchester*, l. 4. c. 3).

² *Ant. Gell. Noctes Atticæ*, xvi. 13. The emperor Hadrian expressed his surprise, that the cities of Utica, Gades, and Italica, which

as it was called, conferred on the cities to which it had been granted, a more partial favour. The magistrates only, at the expiration of their office, assumed the quality of Roman citizens; but as those offices were annual, in a few years they circulated round the principal families.¹ Those of the provincials who were permitted to bear arms in the legions;^m those who exercised any civil employment; all, in a word, who performed any public service, or displayed any personal talents, were rewarded with a present, whose value was continually diminished by the increasing liberality of the emperors. Yet, even in the age of the Antonines, when the freedom of the city had been bestowed on the greater number of their subjects, it was still accompanied with very solid advantages. The bulk of the people acquired, with that title, the benefit of the Roman laws, particularly in the interesting articles of marriage, testaments, and inheritances; and the road of fortune was open to those whose pretensions were seconded by favour or merit. The grandsons of the Gauls, who had besieged Julius Caesar in Alesia, commanded legions, governed provinces, and were admitted into the senate of Rome.ⁿ Their ambition, instead of disturbing the tranquillity of the state, was intimately connected with its safety and greatness.

which already enjoyed the rights of *Municipia*, should solicit the title of *coloniae*. Their example, however, became fashionable, and the empire was filled with honorary colonies. See Spanheim, de Usu Numismatum, Dissert. xiii.

¹ Spanheim, *Ordo Roman.* c. 8, p. 62.

^m Aristid. in *Romae Konomio*, tom. i, p. 218, edit. Jebb.

ⁿ Tacit. *Annal.* xj, 23, 24, *Hist.* iv, 74.

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Division of
the Latin
and the
Greek pro-
vinces.

So sensible were the Romans of the influence of language over national manners, that it was their most serious care to extend, with the progress of their arms, the use of the Latin tongue.* The ancient dialects of Italy, the Sabine, the Etruscan, and the Venetian, sunk into oblivion; but in the provinces, the East was less docile than the West, to the voice of its victorious preceptors. This obvious difference marked the two portions of the empire with a distinction of colours, which, though it was in some degree concealed during the meridian splendour of prosperity, became gradually more visible, as the shades of night descended upon the Roman world. The western countries were civilized by the same hands which subdued them. As soon as the barbarians were reconciled to obedience, their minds were opened to any new impressions of knowledge and politeness. The language of Virgil and Cicero, though with some inevitable mixture of corruption, was so universally adopted in Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Pannonia,† that the faint traces of the Punic or Celtic idioms were preserved only in the mountains, or among the peasants.‡ Education and study in-

* See Plin. Hist. Natur. iii, 5. Augustin. de Civitate Dei, xix, 7. Lipsius de pronuntiacione Lingue Latine, c. 3.

† Apuleius and Augustin will answer for Africa; Strabo for Spain and Gaul; Tacitus, in the life of Agricola, for Britain; and Velleius Paterculus for Pannonia. To them we may add the language of the Inscriptum.

‡ The Celtic was preserved in the mountains of Wales, Cornwall, and Armorica. We may observe, that Apuleius reproaches an African

sensibly inspired the natives of those countries with the sentiments of Romans; and Italy gave fashions, as well as laws, to her Latin provincials. They solicited with more ardour, and obtained with more facility, the freedom and honours of the state; supported the national dignity in letters^{*} and in arms; and, at length, in the person of Trajan, produced an emperor whom the Scipios would not have disowned for their countryman. The situation of the Greeks was very different from that of the barbarians. The former had been long since civilized and corrupted. They had too much taste to relinquish their language, and too much vanity to adopt any foreign institutions. Still preserving the prejudices, after they had lost the virtues, of their ancestors, they affected to despise the unpolished manners of the Roman conquerors, whilst they were compelled to respect their superior wisdom and power.^{*} Nor was the influence of the Grecian language and sentiments confined to the narrow limits of that once celebrated country. Their empire, by the progress of colonies and conquest, had been diffused from the Hadriatic to the Euphrates and the Nile. Asia

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African youth, who lived among the populace, with the use of the Punic; whilst he had almost forgot Greek, and neither could nor would speak Latin (Apolog. p. 596). The greater part of St. Austin's congregations were strangers to the Punic.

^{*} Spain alone produced Columella, the Seneca, Lucan, Martial, and Quintilian.

^{*} There is not, I believe, from Dionysius to Lilius, a single Greek critic who mentions Virgil or Horace. They seem ignorant that the Romans had any good writers.

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was covered with Greek cities; and the long reign of the Macedonian kings had introduced a silent revolution into Syria and Egypt. In their pompous courts those princes united the elegance of Athens with the luxury of the East, and the example of the court was imitated, at an humble distance, by the higher ranks of their subjects. Such was the general division of the Roman empire into the Latin and Greek languages. To these we may add a third distinction for the body of the natives in Syria, and especially in Egypt. The use of their ancient dialects, by secluding them from the commerce of mankind, checked the improvements of those barbarians.¹ The slothful effeminacy of the former exposed them to the contempt; the sullen ferociousness of the latter excited the aversion of the conquerors.² Those nations had submitted to the Roman power, but they seldom desired or deserved the freedom of the city; and it was remarked, that more than two hundred and thirty years elapsed, after the ruin of the Ptolemys, before an Egyptian was admitted into the senate of Rome.³

General
use of both
languages.

It is a just, though trite observation, that victorious Rome was herself subdued by the arts of Greece. Those immortal writers who still command the admiration of modern Europe, soon became the favourite object of study and imita-

¹ The curious reader may see in Dupin (*Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique*, tom. xix, p. L. c, 8), how much the use of the Syriac and Egyptian languages was still preserved.

² See Juvenal, Sat. iii and xv, Ammian. Marcellin. xxii, 16.

³ Dion Cassius, l. lxxvii, p. 1775. The first instance happened under the reign of Septimius Severus.

tion in Italy and the western provinces. But the elegant amusements of the Romans were not suffered to interfere with their sound maxims of policy. Whilst they acknowledged the charms of the Greek, they asserted the dignity of the Latin tongue, and the exclusive use of the latter was inflexibly maintained in the administration of civil as well as military government.⁷ The two languages exercised, at the same time, their separate jurisdiction throughout the empire: the former, as the natural idiom of science; the latter, as the legal dialect of public transactions. Those who united letters with business, were equally conversant with both; and it was almost impossible, in any province, to find a Roman subject, of a liberal education, who was at once a stranger to the Greek and to the Latin language.

It was by such institutions that the nations of the empire insensibly melted away into the Roman name and people. But there still remained, in the centre of every province, and of every family, an unhappy condition of men, who endured the weight, without sharing the benefits, of society. In the free states of antiquity, the domestic slaves were exposed to the wanton rigour of despotism. The perfect settlement of the Roman empire was preceded by ages of violence and rapine. The slaves consisted, for the most part, of barbarian captives, taken in thousands

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II.
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Slaves.  
Their  
treatment.

<sup>7</sup> See Valerius Maximus, l. ii. c. 2, n. 2. The emperor Claudius disfranchised an eminent Grecian for not understanding Latin. He was probably in some public office. Suetonius in Claud. c. 16.

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by the chance of war, purchased at a vile price,<sup>a</sup> accustomed to a life of independence, and impatient to break and to revenge their fetters. Against such internal enemies, whose desperate insurrections had more than once reduced the republic to the brink of destruction,<sup>b</sup> the most severe regulations,<sup>c</sup> and the most cruel treatment, seemed almost justified by the great law of self-preservation. But when the principal nations of Europe, Asia, and Africa, were united under the laws of one sovereign, the source of foreign supplies flowed with much less abundance, and the Romans were reduced to the milder, but more tedious, method of propagation. In their numerous families, and particularly in their country estates, they encouraged the marriage of their slaves. The sentiments of nature, the habits of education, and the possession of a dependent species of property, contributed to alleviate the hardships of servitude.<sup>d</sup> The existence of a slave became an object of greater value; and though his happiness still depended on the temper and circumstances of the master, the humanity of the latter, instead of being restrained by

<sup>a</sup> In the camp of Lucullus, an ox sold for a drachma, and a slave for four drachmæ, or about three shillings. Plutarch in Lucull. p. 580.

<sup>b</sup> Diodorus Siculus in Eclog. Hist. l. xxxiv and xxxvi. Florus, li. 19, 20.

<sup>c</sup> See a remarkable instance of severity in Cicero in Verrem, v. 31.

<sup>d</sup> See in Gruter, and the other collectors, a great number of inscriptions addressed by slaves to their wives, children, fellow-servants, masters, &c. They are all, most probably, of the imperial age.

fear, was encouraged by the sense of his own interest. The progress of manners was accelerated by the virtue or policy of the emperors; and by the edicts of Hadrian and the Antonines, the protection of the laws was extended to the most abject part of mankind. The jurisdiction of life and death over the slaves, a power long exercised and often abused, was taken out of private hands, and reserved to the magistrates alone. The subterraneous prisons were abolished; and, upon a just complaint of intolerable treatment, the injured slave obtained either his deliverance, or a less cruel master.<sup>d</sup>

Hope, the best comfort of our imperfect condition, was not denied to the Roman slave; and if he had any opportunity of rendering himself either useful or agreeable, he might very naturally expect that the diligence and fidelity of a few years would be rewarded with the inestimable gift of freedom. The benevolence of the master was so frequently prompted by the meaner suggestions of vanity and avarice, that the laws found it more necessary to restrain than to encourage a profuse and undistinguishing liberality, which might degenerate into a very dangerous abuse.<sup>e</sup> It was a maxim of ancient jurisprudence, that a slave had not any country of his own; he acquired with his liberty an admission into the political society of which his patron was a member. The

<sup>d</sup> See the Augustan History, and a Dissertation of M. de Burigny, in the 35th volume of the Academy of Inscriptions, upon the Roman slaves.

<sup>e</sup> See another Dissertation of M. de Burigny, in the 37th volume, on the Roman freedmen.



CHAP. consequences of this maxim would have prostituted the privileges of the Roman city to a mean and promiscuous multitude. Some seasonable exceptions were therefore provided; and the honourable distinction was confined to such slaves only, as, for just causes, and with the approbation of the magistrate, should receive a solemn and legal manumission. Even these chosen freedmen obtained no more than the private rights of citizens, and were rigorously excluded from civil or military honours. Whatever might be the merit or fortune of their sons, *they* likewise were esteemed unworthy of a seat in the senate; nor were the traces of a servile origin allowed to be completely obliterated till the third or fourth generation.<sup>f</sup> Without destroying the distinction of ranks, a distant prospect of freedom and honours was presented, even to those whom pride and prejudice almost disdained to number among the human species.

Numbers. It was once proposed to discriminate the slaves by a peculiar habit; but it was justly apprehended that there might be some danger in acquainting them with their own numbers.<sup>g</sup> Without interpreting, in their utmost strictness, the liberal appellations of legions and myriads,<sup>h</sup> we may

<sup>f</sup> Spanheim, *Orbis Romanus*, l. i, c. 16, p. 124, &c.

<sup>g</sup> Seneca de Clementiâ, l. i, c. 24. The original is much stronger.

<sup>h</sup> Quantum periculum immineret si servi nostri numerare nos censerent.

<sup>k</sup> See Pliny (*Hist. Natur.* l. xxxiii) and Athenæus (*Deipnosophist.* l. vi, p. 212). The latter boldly asserts, that he knew very many (*καταλλοι*) Romans who possessed, not for use, but ostentation, ten and even twenty thousand slaves.

venture to pronounce, that the proportion of CHAP. II.  
 slaves, who were valued as property, was more  
 considerable than that of servants, who can be  
 computed only as an expence.<sup>1</sup> The youths of  
 a promising genius were instructed in the arts  
 and sciences, and their price was ascertained by  
 the degree of their skill and talents.<sup>2</sup> Almost  
 every profession, either liberal<sup>3</sup> or mechanical,  
 might be found in the household of an opulent  
 senator. The ministers of pomp and sensuality  
 were multiplied beyond the conception of mo-  
 dern luxury.<sup>4</sup> It was more for the interest of  
 the merchant or manufacturer to purchase, than  
 to hire his workmen; and in the country, slaves  
 were employed as the cheapest and most labori-  
 ous instruments of agriculture. To confirm the  
 general observation, and to display the multitude  
 of slaves, we might allege a variety of particular  
 instances. It was discovered, on a very me-  
 lancholy occasion, that four hundred slaves were  
 maintained in a single palace of Rome.<sup>5</sup> The  
 same number of four hundred belonged to an  
 estate which an African widow, of a very private

<sup>1</sup> In Paris there are not more than 43,700 domestics of every sort, and not a twelfth part of the inhabitants. *Messange Recherches sur la Population*, p. 186.

<sup>2</sup> A learned slave sold for many hundred pounds sterling: Atticus always bred and taught them himself. *Cornel. Nepos* in *Vit.* c. 13.

<sup>3</sup> Many of the Roman physicians were slaves. See *Dr. Middleton's Dissertation and Defence*.

<sup>4</sup> Their ranks and offices are very copiously enumerated by *Pignoratius de Servis*.

<sup>5</sup> *Tacit. Annal.* xiv, 43. They were all executed for not preventing their master's murder.

CHAP. condition, resigned to her son, whilst she reserved  
 II. for herself a much larger share of her property.\*

A freedman, under the reign of Augustus, though his fortune had suffered great losses in the civil wars, left behind him three thousand six hundred yoke of oxen, two hundred and fifty thousand head of smaller cattle, and, what was almost included in the description of cattle, four thousand one hundred and sixteen slaves.<sup>p</sup>

Populous-  
 ness of the  
 Roman  
 empire.

The number of subjects who acknowledged the laws of Rome, of citizens, of provincials, and of slaves, cannot now be fixed with such a degree of accuracy as the importance of the object would deserve. We are informed, that when the emperor Claudius exercised the office of censor, he took an account of six millions nine hundred and forty-five thousand Roman citizens, who, with the proportion of women and children, must have amounted to about twenty millions of souls. The multitude of subjects of an inferior rank, was uncertain and fluctuating. But, after weighing with attention every circumstance which could influence the balance, it seems probable, that there existed, in the time of Claudius, about twice as many provincials as there were citizens, of either sex, and of every age; and that the slaves were at least equal in number to the free inhabitants of the Roman world. The total amount of this imperfect calculation would rise to about one hundred and twenty millions of persons: a degree of popu-

\* Apuleius in Apolog. p. 548. Edit. Delphin.

<sup>p</sup> Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xxxiii, 47.



lation which possibly exceeds that of modern Europe,<sup>3</sup> and forms the most numerous society that has ever been united under the same system of government. CHAP. II.

Domestic peace and union were the natural consequences of the moderate and comprehensive policy embraced by the Romans. If we turn our eyes towards the monarchies of Asia, we shall behold despotism in the centre, and weakness in the extremities; the collection of the revenue, or the administration of justice, enforced by the presence of an army; hostile barbarians established in the heart of the country, hereditary satraps usurping the dominion of the provinces, and subjects inclined to rebellion, though incapable of freedom. But the obedience of the Roman world was uniform, voluntary, and permanent. The vanquished nations, blended into one great people, resigned the hope, nay even the wish, of resuming their independence, and scarcely considered their own existence as distinct from the existence of Rome. The established authority of the emperors pervaded without an effort the wide extent of their dominions, and was exercised with the same facility on the banks of the Thames, or of the Nile, as on those of the Tyber. The \* Obedience and union.

\* Compute twenty millions in France, twenty-two in Germany, four in Hungary, ten in Italy, with its islands, eight in Great Britain and Ireland, eight in Spain and Portugal, ten or twelve in the European Russia, six in Poland, six in Greece and Turkey, four in Sweden, three in Denmark and Norway, four in the Low Countries. The whole would amount to one hundred and five, or one hundred and seven millions. See Voltaire, de l'Histoire Generale.

CHAP. II. legions were destined to serve against the public enemy, and the civil magistrate seldom required the aid of a military force.\* In this state of general security, the leisure as well as opulence, both of the prince and people, were devoted to improve and to adorn the Roman empire.

Roman  
monu-  
ments.

Among the innumerable monuments of architecture constructed by the Romans, how many have escaped the notice of history, how few have resisted the ravages of time and barbarism! And yet even the majestic ruins that are still scattered over Italy and the provinces, would be sufficient to prove, that those countries were once the seat of a polite and powerful empire. Their greatness alone, or their beauty, might deserve our attention; but they are rendered more interesting, by two important circumstances, which connect the agreeable history of the arts with the more useful history of human manners. Many of those works were erected at private expence, and almost all were intended for public benefit.

Many of  
them erect-  
ed at pri-  
vate ex-  
pence.

It is natural to suppose, that the greatest number, as well as the most considerable of the Roman edifices, were raised by the emperors, who possessed so unbounded a command both of men and money. Augustus was accustomed to boast that he had found his capital of brick, and that he had left it of marble.† The strict economy

\* Joseph. de Bell. Judaico, l. ii, c. 16. The oration of Agrippa, or rather of the historian, is a fine picture of the Roman empire.

† Sueton. in August. c. 28. Augustus built in Rome the temple and forum of Mars the Avenger; the temple of Jupiter Tonans in the Capital;

of Vespasian was the source of his magnificence. CHAP.  
 The works of Trajan bear the stamp of his ge- II.  
 nius. The public monuments with which Hadrian adorned every province of the empire, were executed not only by his orders, but under his immediate inspection. He was himself an artist, and he loved the arts, as they conduced to the glory of the monarch. They were encouraged by the Antonines, as they contributed to the happiness of the people. But if the emperors were the first, they were not the only architects of their dominions. Their example was universally imitated by their principal subjects, who were not afraid of declaring to the world, that they had spirit to conceive, and wealth to accomplish, the noblest undertakings. Scarcely had the proud structure of the Coliseum been dedicated at Rome, before the edifices, of a smaller scale indeed, but of the same design and materials, were erected for the use, and at the expence, of the cities of Capua and Verona.<sup>1</sup> The inscription of the stupendous bridge of Alcantara, attests that it was thrown over the Tagus by the contribution of a few Lusitanian communities. When Pliny was entrusted with the government of Bithynia and Pontus, provinces by no means the richest or most considerable of the empire, he found the cities within his jurisdiction striving with each

Capitol; that of Apollo Palatine, with public libraries; the portico and basilica of Caius and Lucius; the porticos of Livia and Octavia; and the theatre of Marcellus. The example of the sovereign was imitated by his ministers and generals; and his friend Agrippa left behind him the immortal monument of the Pantheon.

<sup>1</sup> See Maffei, Verona illustrata, l. iv, p. 63.



CHAP. II, other in every useful and ornamental work, that might deserve the curiosity of strangers, or the gratitude of their citizens. It was the duty of the proconsul to supply their deficiencies, to direct their taste, and sometimes to moderate their emulation.\* The opulent senators of Rome and the provinces esteemed it an honour, and almost an obligation, to adorn the splendour of their age and country; and the influence of fashion very frequently supplied the want of taste or generosity. Among a crowd of these private benefactors, we may select Herodes Atticus, an Athenian citizen, who lived in the age of the Antonines. Whatever might be the motive of his conduct, his magnificence would have been worthy of the greatest kings.

Example  
of Herodes  
Atticus.

The family of Herod, at least after it had been favoured by fortune, was lineally descended from Cimon and Miltiades, Theseus and Cecrops, Æacus and Jupiter. But the posterity of so many gods and heroes was fallen into the most abject state. His grandfather had suffered by the hands of justice, and Julius Atticus, his father, must have ended his life in poverty and contempt, had he not discovered an immense treasure buried under an old house, the last remains of his patrimony. According to the rigour of law, the emperor might have asserted his claim, and the

\* See the tenth book of Pliny's Epistles. He mentions the following works, carried on at the expence of the cities. - At Nicomedia, a new forum, an aqueduct, and a canal, left unfinished by a king; at Nice, a gymnasium, and a theatre, which had already cost near ninety thousand pounds; baths at Prusa and Claudiopolis; and an aqueduct of sixteen miles in length for the use of Sinope.

prudent Atticus prevented, by a frank confession, the officiousness of informers. But the equitable Nerva, who then filled the throne, refused to accept any part of it, and commanded him to use, without scruple, the present of fortune. The cautious Athenian still insisted, that the treasure was too considerable for a subject, and that he knew not how to *use it*. *Abuse it, then*, replied the monarch, with a good-natured peevishness; for it is your own.\* Many will be of opinion, that Atticus literally obeyed the emperor's last instructions, since he expended the greatest part of his fortune, which was much increased by an advantageous marriage, in the service of the public. He had obtained for his son Herod, the prefecture of the free cities of Asia; and the young magistrate, observing that the town of Troas was indifferently supplied with water, obtained from the munificence of Hadrian, three hundred myriads of drachms (about a hundred thousand pounds) for the construction of a new aqueduct. But in the execution of the work, the charge amounted to more than double the estimate, and the officers of the revenue began to murmur, till the generous Atticus silenced their complaints, by requesting that he might be permitted to take upon himself the whole additional expence.†

\* Hadrian afterwards made a very equitable regulation, which divided all treasure-trove between the right of property and that of discovery. Hist. August. p. 9.

† Philostrat. in Vit. Sophist. l. ii. p. 548.

CHAP.  
II.His repu-  
tation.

The ablest preceptors of Greece and Asia had been invited by liberal rewards to direct the education of young Herod. Their pupil soon became a celebrated orator, according to the useless rhetoric of that age, which, confining itself to the schools, disdained to visit either the forum or the senate. He was honoured with the consulship at Rome; but the greatest part of his life was spent in a philosophic retirement at Athens, and his adjacent villas, perpetually surrounded by sophists, who acknowledged, without reluctance, the superiority of a rich and generous rival.\* The monuments of his genius have perished; some considerable ruins still preserve the fame of his taste and munificence: modern travellers have measured the remains of the stadium which he constructed at Athens. It was six hundred feet in length, built entirely of white marble, capable of admitting the whole body of the people, and finished in four years, whilst Herod was president of the Athenian games. To the memory of his wife Regilla, he dedicated a theatre, scarcely to be paralleled in the empire: no wood except cedar, very curiously carved, was employed in any part of the building. The odeum, designed by Pericles for musical performances, and the rehearsal of new tragedies, had been a trophy of the victory of the arts over barbaric greatness, as the timbers employed in the construction consisted chiefly of the masts of the Persian vessels. Notwithstand-

\* Aulus Gellius, in Noct. Attic. i, 2, ix, 2, xviii, 10, xix, 12. Philostrat. p. 564.



ing the repairs bestowed on that ancient edifice by a king of Cappadocia, it was again fallen to decay. Herod restored its ancient beauty and magnificence. Nor was the liberality of that illustrious citizen confined to the walls of Athens. The most splendid ornaments bestowed on the temple of Neptune in the isthmus, a theatre at Corinth, a stadium at Delphi, a bath at Thermopylae, and an aqueduct at Canusium in Italy, were insufficient to exhaust his treasures. The people of Epirus, Thessaly, Euboea, Boeotia, and Peloponnesus, experienced his favours; and many inscriptions of the cities of Greece and Asia gratefully style Herodes Atticus their patron and benefactor.<sup>a</sup>

In the commonwealths of Athens and Rome, the modest simplicity of private houses announced the equal condition of freedom: whilst the sovereignty of the people was represented in the majestic edifices designed to the public use;<sup>b</sup> nor was this republican spirit totally extinguished by the introduction of wealth and monarchy. It was in works of national honour and benefit, that the most virtuous of the emperors affected to display their magnificence. The golden palace of Nero excited a just indignation, but the vast extent of ground which had been usurped by his selfish luxury, was more nobly filled under the

CHAP.  
II.  
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Most of the Roman monuments for public use; temples, theatres, aqueducts, &c.

<sup>a</sup> See Philostratus, l. ii, p. 548, 560. Pausanias, l. i and vii, 10. The life of Herodes, in the thirtieth volume of the *Memoires of the Academy of Inscriptions*.

<sup>b</sup> It is particularly remarked of Athens by Dicaearchus, *de Situ Graeciae*, p. 8, inter *Geographos Minores*, edit. Hudson.

CHAP.  
II.

succeeding reigns by the Coliseum, the baths of Titus, the Claudian portico, and the temples dedicated to the goddess of peace, and to the genius of Rome.\* These monuments of architecture, the property of the Roman people, were adorned with the most beautiful productions of Grecian painting and sculpture; and in the temple of peace, a very curious library was open to the curiosity of the learned. At a small distance from thence was situated the forum of Trajan. It was surrounded with a lofty portico, in the form of a quadrangle, into which four triumphal arches opened a noble and spacious entrance: in the centre arose a column of marble, whose height, of one hundred and ten feet, denoted the elevation of the hill that had been cut away. This column, which still subsists in its ancient beauty, exhibited an exact representation of the Dacian victories of its founder. The veteran soldier contemplated the story of his own campaigns, and by an easy illusion of national vanity, the peaceful citizen associated himself to the honours of the triumph. All the other quarters of the capital, and all the provinces of the empire, were embellished by the same liberal spirit of public magnificence, and were filled with amphitheatres, theatres, temples, porticos, tri-

\* Donatus de Roma Vetere, l. iii, c. 4, 5, 6. Nardini Roma Antica, l. iii, 11, 12, 13, and a MS. description of ancient Rome, by Bernardus Oricellarius, or Rocellai, of which I obtained a copy from the library of the Canon Riccardi at Florence. Two celebrated pictures of Timanthes and of Protogenes are mentioned by Pliny, as in the temple of peace; and the Laocoon was found in the baths of Titus.

umphal arches, baths, and aqueducts, all variously conducive to the health, the devotion, and the pleasures of the meanest citizen. The last-mentioned of those edifices deserve our peculiar attention. The boldness of the enterprise, the solidity of the execution, and the uses to which they were subservient, rank the aqueducts among the noblest monuments of Roman genius and power. The aqueducts of the capital claim a just pre-eminence; but the curious traveller, who, without the light of history, should examine those of Spoleto, of Metz, or of Segovia, would very naturally conclude, that those provincial towns had formerly been the residence of some potent monarch. The solitudes of Asia and Africa were once covered with flourishing cities, whose populousness, and even whose existence, was derived from such artificial supplies of a perennial stream of fresh water.<sup>d</sup>

We have computed the inhabitants, and contemplated the public works of the Roman empire. The observation of the number and greatness of its cities will serve to confirm the former, and to multiply the latter. It may not be unpleasing to collect a few scattered instances relative to that subject, without forgetting, however, that, from the vanity of nations, and the poverty of language, the vague appellation of city has been indifferently bestowed on Rome and upon Laurentum. 1, *Ancient Italy* is said to have con-

Number  
and great-  
ness of the  
cities of  
the empire.

In Italy.

<sup>d</sup> Montfaucon *l'Antiquité Expliquée*, tom. iv. p. 2. l. i. c. 2. Fabretil has composed a very learned treatise on the aqueducts of Rome.



CHAP.  
II.

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Gaul and
Spain.

tained eleven hundred and ninety-seven cities; and for whatsoever era of antiquity the expression might be intended,* there is not any reason to believe the country less populous in the age of the Antonines, than in that of Romulus. The petty states of Latium were contained within the metropolis of the empire, by whose superior influence they had been attracted. Those parts of Italy which have so long languished under the lazy tyranny of priests and viceroys, had been afflicted only by the more tolerable calamities of war; and the first symptoms of decay which *they* experienced were amply compensated by the rapid improvements of the Cisalpine Gaul. The splendour of Verona may be traced in its remains; yet Verona was less celebrated than Aquileia or Padua, Milan, or Ravenna. 11. The spirit of improvement had passed the Alps, and been felt even in the woods of Britain, which were gradually cleared away, to open a free space for convenient and elegant habitations. York was the seat of government; London was already enriched by commerce; and Bath was celebrated for the salutary effects of its medicinal waters. Gaul could boast of her twelve hundred cities;† and though, in the northern parts, many of them, without excepting Paris itself, were little more than the rude and imperfect townships of a rising people, the southern provinces imitated the

* *Ellan. Hist. Var. l. ix. c. 16.* He lived in the time of Alexander Severus. See Fabricius, *Biblioth. Græca, l. iv. c. 21.*

† *Joseph. de Bell. Jud. l. 10.* The number, however, is mentioned, and should be received with a degree of latitude.

wealth and elegance of Italy.^a Many were the cities of Gaul, Marseilles, Arles, Nismes, Narbonne, Thoulouse, Bourdeaux, Autun, Vienna, Lyons, Langres, and Treves, whose ancient condition might sustain an equal, and perhaps advantageous comparison with their present state. With regard to Spain, that country flourished as a province, and has declined as a kingdom. Exhausted by the abuse of her strength, by America, and by superstition, her pride might possibly be confounded, if we required such a list of three hundred and sixty cities, as Pliny has exhibited under the reign of Vespasian.^b

iii. Three hundred African cities had once acknowledged the authority of Carthage,^c nor is it likely that their numbers diminished under the administration of the emperors: Carthage itself rose with new splendour from its ashes; and that capital, as well as Capua and Corinth, soon recovered all the advantages which can be separated from independent sovereignty. iv. The provinces of the East present the contrast of Roman magnificence with Turkish barbarism. The ruins of antiquity, scattered over uncultivated fields, and ascribed, by ignorance, to the power of magic, scarcely afford a shelter to the oppressed peasant or wandering Arab. Under the reign of the Cæsars, the proper Asia alone con-

Africa.

Asia.

^a Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 5.

^b Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 3, 4; iv. 35. The list seems authentic and accurate: the division of the provinces, and the different condition of the cities, are minutely distinguished.

^c Strabon. Geograph. l. xvii. p. 1189.

CHAP.
II.

tained five hundred populous cities,^k enriched with all the gifts of nature, and adorned with all the refinements of art. Eleven cities of Asia had once disputed the honour of dedicating a temple to Tiberius, and their respective merits were examined by the senate.^l Four of them were immediately rejected, as unequal to the burden; and among these was Laodicea, whose splendour is still displayed in its ruins.^m Laodicea collected a very considerable revenue from its flocks of sheep, celebrated for the fineness of their wool, and had received, a little before the contest, a legacy of above four hundred thousand pounds, by the testament of a generous citizen.ⁿ If such was the poverty of Laodicea, what must have been the wealth of those cities, whose claim appeared preferable, and particularly of Pergamus, of Smyrna, and of Ephesus, who so long disputed with each other the titular primacy of

^k Joseph. de Bell. Jud. ii, 16. Philostrat. in Vit. Sophist. l. ii. p. 548, edit. Olear.

^l Tacit. Annal. iv, 55. I have taken some pains in consulting and comparing modern travellers, with regard to the fate of those eleven cities of Asia. Seven or eight are totally destroyed—Hypæpe, Tralles, Laodicea, Ilium, Halicarnassus, Miletus, Ephesus, and we may add Sardes. Of the remaining three, Pergamus is a straggling village of two or three thousand inhabitants; Magnesia, under the name of Guzel-hissar, a town of some consequence; and Smyrna, a great city, peopled by an hundred thousand souls. But even at Smyrna, while the Franks have maintained commerce, the Turks have ruined the arts.

^m See a very exact and pleasing description of the ruins of Laodicea, in Chandler's Travels through Asia Minor, p. 225, &c.

ⁿ Strabo, l. xii, p. 566. He had studied at Tralles.

Asia?° The capitals of Syria and Egypt held a CHAP.
II.
still superior rank in the empire: Antioch and Alexandria looked down with disdain on a crowd of dependent cities,^p and yielded, with reluctance, to the majesty of Rome itself.

All these cities were connected with each other, Roman roads.
and with the capital, by the public highways, which, issuing from the forum of Rome, traversed Italy, pervaded the provinces, and were terminated only by the frontiers of the empire. If we carefully trace the distance from the wall of Antoninus to Rome, and from thence to Jerusalem, it will be found that the great chain of communication from the north-west to the south-east point of the empire, was drawn out to the length of four thousand and eighty Roman miles.^q The public roads were accurately divided by mile-stones, and ran in a direct line from one

* See a Dissertation of M. de Beze, *Mém. de l'Académie*, tom. xviii. Aristides pronounced an oration, which is still extant, to recommend concord to the rival cities.

^p The inhabitants of Egypt, exclusive of Alexandria, amounted to seven millions and a half (Joseph. de Bell. Jud. ii. 16). Under the military government of the Mamelukes, Syria was supposed to contain sixty thousand villages (*Histoire de Timur Ber.* l. v. c. 20.)

^q The following Itinerary may serve to convey some idea of the direction of the road, and of the distance between the principal towns. i. From the wall of Antoninus to York, 222 Roman miles. ii. London 227. iii. Rhutupiæ or Sandwich 67. iv. The navigation to Boulogne 45. v. Rheims 174. vi. Lyons 330. vii. Milan 324. viii. Rome 426. ix. Brundisium 380. x. The navigation to Dyrrachium 40. xi. Byzantium 711. xii. Ancyra 283. xiii. Tarsus 361. xiv. Antioch 141. xv. Tyre 257. xvi. Jerusalem 168. In all 4080 Roman, or 3740 English miles. See the Itineraries published by Wesseling, his annotations; Gale and Stukely for Britain, and M. d'Anville for Gaul and Italy.

CHAP.
II.

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Posts.

city to another, with very little respect for the obstacles either of nature or private property. Mountains were perforated, and bold arches thrown over the broadest and most rapid streams.<sup>1</sup> The middle part of the road was raised into a terrace, which commanded the adjacent country, consisted of several strata of sand, gravel, and cement, and was paved with large stones, or, in some places near the capital, with granite.<sup>2</sup> Such was the solid construction of the Roman highways, whose firmness has not entirely yielded to the effort of fifteen centuries. They united the subjects of the most distant provinces by an easy and familiar intercourse; but their primary object had been to facilitate the marches of the legions; nor was any country considered as completely subdued, till it had been rendered, in all its parts, pervious to the arms and authority of the conqueror. The advantage of receiving the earliest intelligence, and of conveying their orders with celerity, induced the emperors to establish, throughout their extensive dominions, the regular institution of posts.<sup>3</sup> Houses were everywhere erected at the distance only of five or six miles; each of them was constantly provided with forty horses, and, by the help of these relays, it was easy to travel an hundred

<sup>1</sup> Montfaucon, *l'Antiquité Expliquée* (tom. iv, p. 2, l. i, c. 5), has described the bridges of Narni, Alcantara, Nîmes, &c.

<sup>2</sup> Bergier *Histoire des grands Chemins de l'Empire Romain*, l. ii, c. 1-28.

<sup>3</sup> Procopius in *Hist. Arcanâ*, c. 30. Bergier *Hist. des grands Chemins*, l. iv. *Codex Theodosian*, l. viii, tit. 7, vol. ii, p. 306-363, with Godefroy's learned commentary.

miles in a day along the Roman roads.\* The use of the posts was allowed to those who claimed it by an imperial mandate; but though originally intended for the public service, it was sometimes indulged to the business or convenience of private citizens.<sup>2</sup> Nor was the communication of the Roman empire less free and open by sea than it was by land. The provinces surrounded and inclosed the Mediterranean; and Italy, in the shape of an immense promontory, advanced into the midst of that great lake. The coasts of Italy are, in general, destitute of safe harbours; but human industry had corrected the deficiencies of nature; and the artificial port of Ostia, in particular, situate at the mouth of the Tyber, and formed by the emperor Claudius, was an useful monument of Roman greatness.<sup>3</sup> From this port, which was only sixteen miles from the capital, a favourable breeze frequently carried vessels in seven days to the columns of Hercules, and, in nine or ten, to Alexandria in Egypt.<sup>4</sup>

CHAP.  
II.

Navigation.

Improvement of agriculture.

Whatever evils either reason or declamation have imputed to extensive empire, the power of

\* In the time of Theodosius, Cæsarius, a magistrate of high rank, went post from Antioch to Constantinople. He began his journey at night, was in Cappadocia (165 miles from Antioch) the ensuing evening, and arrived at Constantinople the sixth day about noon. The whole distance was 725 Roman, or 665 English miles. See Libanius Orat. xxii, and the Itineraria, p. 372-581.

<sup>2</sup> Pliny, though a favourite and a minister, made an apology for granting post-horses to his wife on the most urgent business, Epist. x, 191, 192.

<sup>3</sup> Bergier Hist. des grands Chemins, l. iv, c. 49.

<sup>4</sup> Plin. Hist. Natur. xix, l.



CHAP.  
II.

In the west-  
ern coun-  
tries of the  
empire.

Introduc-  
tion of  
fruits, &c.

Rome was attended with some beneficial consequences to mankind; and the same freedom of intercourse which extended the vices, diffused likewise the improvements, of social life. In the more remote ages of antiquity, the world was unequally divided. The East was in the immemorial possession of arts and luxury; whilst the West was inhabited by rude and warlike barbarians, who either disdained agriculture, or to whom it was totally unknown. Under the protection of an established government, the productions of happier climates, and the industry of more civilized nations, were gradually introduced into the western countries of Europe; and the natives were encouraged, by an open and profitable commerce, to multiply the former, as well as to improve the latter. It would be almost impossible to enumerate all the articles, either of the animal or the vegetable reign, which were successively imported into Europe, from Asia and Egypt;\* but it will not be unworthy of the dignity, and much less of the utility, of an historical work, slightly to touch on a few of the principal heads. 1. Almost all the flowers, the herbs, and the fruits, that grow in our European gardens, are of foreign extraction, which, in many cases, is betrayed even by their names: the apple was a native of Italy, and when the Romans had tasted the richer flavour of the apricot, the peach, the pomegranate, the citron, and the orange,

\* It is not improbable that the Greeks and Phœnicians introduced some new arts and productions into the neighbourhood of Marcellæ and Gades.

they contented themselves with applying to all CHAP. II. these new fruits the common denomination of apple, discriminating them from each other by the additional epithet of their country. 2. In The vine. the time of Homer, the vine grew wild in the island of Sicily, and most probably in the adjacent continent; but it was not improved by the skill, nor did it afford a liquor grateful to the taste of the savage inhabitants.<sup>a</sup> A thousand years afterwards, Italy could boast, that of the fourscore most generous and celebrated wines, more than two thirds were produced from her soil.<sup>b</sup> The blessing was soon communicated to the Narbonnese province of Gaul; but so intense was the cold to the north of the Cevennes, that, in the time of Strabo, it was thought impossible to ripen the grapes in those parts of Gaul.<sup>c</sup> This difficulty, however, was gradually vanquished; and there is some reason to believe, that the vineyards of Burgundy are as old as the age of the Antonines.<sup>d</sup> 3. The olive, in the western The olive. world, followed the progress of peace, of which it was considered as the symbol. Two centuries after the foundation of Rome, both Italy and Africa were strangers to that useful plant; it was

<sup>a</sup> See Homer *Odyss.* l. ix, v. 358.

<sup>b</sup> Plin. *Hist. Natur.* l. xiv.

<sup>c</sup> Strab. *Geograph.* l. iv, p. 223. The intense cold of a Gallic winter was almost proverbial among the ancients.

<sup>d</sup> In the beginning of the fourth century, the orator Rumenius (*Patergic. Veter.* viii, 6, edit. Delphin.) speaks of the vines in the territory of Autun, which were decayed through age, and the first plantation of which was totally unknown. The *Pagus Aledrigus* is supposed by M. d'Anville to be the district of Beaune, celebrated, even at present, for one of the first growths of Burgundy.

CHAP.  
II.

Flax.

Artificial  
grass.General  
plenty.

naturalized in those countries; and at length carried into the heart of Spain and Gaul. The timid errors of the ancients, that it required a certain degree of heat, and could only flourish in the neighbourhood of the sea, were insensibly exploded by industry and experience.<sup>f</sup> 4. The cultivation of flax was transported from Egypt to Gaul, and enriched the whole country, however it might impoverish the particular lands on which it was sown.<sup>g</sup> 5. The use of artificial grasses became familiar to the farmers both of Italy and the provinces, particularly the Lucerne, which derived its name and origin from Media.<sup>h</sup> The assured supply of wholesome and plentiful food for the cattle during winter, multiplied the number of the flocks and herds, which, in their turn, contributed to the fertility of the soil. To all these improvements may be added, an assiduous attention to mines and fisheries, which, by employing a multitude of laborious hands, serve to increase the pleasures of the rich, and the subsistence of the poor. The elegant treatise of Columella describes the advanced state of the Spanish husbandry, under the reign of Tiberius; and it may be observed, that those famines, which so frequently afflicted the infant republic, were seldom or never experienced by the extensive empire of Rome. The accidental scarcity, in any single province, was immediately relieved by the plenty of its more fortunate neighbours..

<sup>f</sup> Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xv.<sup>g</sup> Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xix.<sup>h</sup> See the agreeable Essays on Agriculture, by Mr. Harie, in which he has collected all that the ancients and moderns have said of Lucerne.



Agriculture is the foundation of manufactures, CHAP. II.  
 since the productions of nature are the materials of art. Under the Roman empire, the labour of an industrious and ingenious people was variously, but incessantly employed in the service of the rich. In their dress, their table, their houses, and their furniture, the favourites of fortune united every refinement of conveniency, of elegance, and of splendour, whatever could soothe their pride, or gratify their sensuality. Such refinements, under the odious name of luxury, have been severely arraigned by the moralists of every age; and it might perhaps be more conducive to the virtue, as well as happiness, of mankind, if all possessed the necessities, and none the superfluities of life. But in the present imperfect condition of society, luxury, though it may proceed from vice or folly, seems to be the only means that can correct the unequal distribution of property. The diligent mechanic, and the skilful artist, who have obtained no share in the division of the earth, receive a voluntary tax from the possessors of land; and the latter are prompted, by a sense of interest, to improve those estates, with whose produce they may purchase additional pleasures. This operation, the particular effects of which are felt in every society, acted with much more diffusive energy in the Roman world. The provinces would soon have been exhausted of their wealth, if the manufactures and commerce of luxury had not insensibly restored to the industrious subjects the sums which were exacted from them by the arms and autho-

Arts of  
luxury.

CHAP.  
II.

rity of Rome. As long as the circulation was confined within the bounds of the empire, it impressed the political machine with a new degree of activity, and its consequences, sometimes beneficial, could never become pernicious.

Foreign  
trade.

But it is no easy task to confine luxury within the limits of an empire. The most remote countries of the ancient world were ransacked to supply the pomp and delicacy of Rome. The forest of Scythia afforded some valuable furs. Amber was brought over land from the shores of the Baltic to the Danube; and the barbarians were astonished at the price which they received in exchange for so useless a commodity.<sup>1</sup> There was a considerable demand for Babylonian carpets and other manufactures of the East; but the most important and unpopular branch of foreign trade was carried on with Arabia and India. Every year, about the time of the summer solstice, a fleet of an hundred and twenty vessels sailed from Myos-hormos, a port of Egypt on the Red sea. By the periodical assistance of the monsoons, they traversed the ocean in about forty days. The coast of Malabar, or the island of Ceylon,<sup>2</sup> was the usual term of their navigation, and it was in those markets that the

<sup>1</sup> Tacit. *Germania*, c. 45. *Plin. Hist. Nat.* lxxviii, 11. The latter observed, with some humour, that even fashion had not yet found out the use of amber. Nero sent a Roman knight to purchase great quantities fix the spot where it was produced—the coast of modern Prussia.

<sup>2</sup> Called Taprobana by the Romans, and Serendib by the Arabs. It was discovered under the reign of Claudius, and gradually became the principal mart of the East.

merchants from the more remote countries of Asia expected their arrival. The return of the fleet of Egypt was fixed to the months of December or January; and as soon as their rich cargo had been transported, on the backs of camels, from the Red sea to the Nile, and had descended that river as far as Alexandria, it was poured, without delay, into the capital of the empire.<sup>1</sup> The objects of oriental traffic were splendid and trifling: silk, a pound of which was esteemed not inferior in value to a pound of gold;<sup>2</sup> precious stones, among which the pearl claimed the first rank after the diamond;<sup>3</sup> and a variety of aromatics, that were consumed in religious worship and the pomp of funerals. The labour and risk of the voyage was rewarded with almost incredible profit; but the profit was made upon Roman subjects, and a few individuals were enriched at the expence of the public. As the natives of Arabia and India were contented with the productions and manufactures of their own country, silver, on the side of the Romans, was the principal, if not the only instrument of commerce. It was a complaint worthy of the gravity of the senate, that in the pursuit of female ornaments the wealth of the state

CHAP.  
II.

Gold and  
silver.

<sup>1</sup> Plin. Hist. Natur. l. vi. Strabo, l. xvii.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. August. p. 224. A silk garment was considered as an ornament to a woman, but as a disgrace to a man.

<sup>3</sup> The two great pearl fisheries were the same as at present—Ormirz and Cape Comorin. As well as we can compare ancient with modern geography, Rome was supplied with diamonds from the mine of Juchelpur, in Bengal, which is described in the *Voyages de Tavernier*, tom. ii, p. 281.



CHAP.  
II

was irrecoverably given away to foreign and hostile nations.\* The annual loss is computed, by a writer of an inquisitive, but censorious temper, at upwards of eight hundred thousand pounds sterling.<sup>†</sup> Such was the style of discontent, brooding over the dark prospect of approaching poverty. And yet if we compare the proportion between gold and silver as it stood in the time of Pliny, and as it was fixed in the reign of Constantine, we shall discover within that period a very considerable increase.<sup>‡</sup> There is not the least reason to suppose that gold was become more scarce; it is therefore evident that silver was grown more common; that whatever might be the amount of the Indian and Arabian exports, they were far from exhausting the wealth of the Roman world; and that the produce of the mines abundantly supplied the demands of commerce.

General  
felicity.

Notwithstanding the propensity of mankind to exalt the past, and to depreciate the present, the tranquil and prosperous state of the empire was warmly felt, and honestly confessed, by the provincials as well as Romans. "They acknowledged that the true principles of social life, laws, agriculture, and science, which had been first invented by the wisdom of Athens, were now firmly established by the power of Rome,

\* Tacit. Annal. iii, 52. In a speech of Tiberius.

† Plin. Hist. Natur. xii, 18. In another place he computes half that sum; Quingenties H. S. for India, exclusive of Arabia.

‡ The proportion, which was 1 to 10, and 12½, rose to 14 2-3ths, the legal regulation of Constantine. See Arbutnot's Tables of ancient Coins, c, 3.

" under whose auspicious influence the fiercest  
 " barbarians were united by an equal govern-  
 " ment and common language. They affirm,  
 " that, with the improvement of arts, the human  
 " species was visibly multiplied. They cele-  
 " brate the increasing splendour of the cities,  
 " the beautiful face of the country, cultivated  
 " and adorned like an immense garden, and the  
 " long festival of peace, which was enjoyed by  
 " so many nations, forgetful of their ancient  
 " animosities, and delivered from the apprehen-  
 " sion of future danger."\* Whatever suspicions  
 may be suggested by the air of rhetoric and de-  
 clamation, which seems to prevail in these pas-  
 sages, the substance of them is perfectly agree-  
 able to historic truth.

It was scarcely possible that the eyes of contem-  
 poraries should discover in the public felicity the  
 latent causes of decay and corruption. This long  
 peace, and the uniform government of the Ro-  
 mans, introduced a slow and secret poison into the  
 vitals of the empire. The minds of men were  
 gradually reduced to the same level, the fire  
 of genius was extinguished, and even the mili-  
 tary spirit evaporated. The natives of Europe  
 were brave and robust. Spain, Gaul, Britain,  
 and Illyricum, supplied the legions with excel-  
 lent soldiers, and constituted the real strength  
 of the monarchy. Their personal valour remained;  
 but they no longer possessed that public cou-  
 rage which is nourished by the love of independ-

CHAP.  
 II.  
 Decline of  
 courage.

\* Among many other passages, see Pliny (*Hist. Natur.* iii, 5),  
 Aristides (*de Urbe Româ*), and Tertullian (*de Animâ*, c. 30).

CHAP.  
II.

ence, the sense of national honour, the presence of danger, and the habit of command. They received laws and governors from the will of their sovereign, and trusted for their defence to a mercenary army. The posterity of their boldest leaders was contented with the rank of citizens and subjects. The most aspiring spirits resorted to the court or standard of the emperors; and the deserted provinces, deprived of political strength or union, insensibly sunk into the languid indifference of private life.

Of genius.

The love of letters, almost inseparable from peace and refinement, was fashionable among the subjects of Hadrian and the Antonines, who were themselves men of learning and curiosity. It was diffused over the whole extent of their empire; the most northern tribes of Britons had acquired a taste for rhetoric; Homer, as well as Virgil, were transcribed and studied on the banks of the Rhine and Danube; and the most liberal rewards sought out the faintest glimmerings of literary merit.\* The sciences of physic and astronomy

\* Herodes Atticus gave the sophist Polemo above eight thousand pounds for three declamations. See Philostrat. l. i. p. 558. The Antonines founded a school at Athens, in which professors of grammar, rhetoric, politics, and the four great sects of philosophy, were maintained at the public expence, for the instruction of youth. The salary of a philosopher was ten thousand drachmæ, between three and four hundred pounds a-year. Similar establishments were formed in the other great cities of the empire. See Lucian in Eunuch, tom. ii. p. 363, edit. Reitz. Philostrat. l. ii. p. 566. Hist. August. p. 21. Dion Cassius, l. lxxi. p. 1195. Juvenal himself, in a moral satire, which, in every line, betrays his own disappointment and envy, is obliged, however, to say,

—O Juvenec, circumspicit et agitat vos,  
Materiamque sibi Ducis indulgentia querit.



were successfully cultivated by the Greeks; the observations of Ptolemy, and the writings of Galen, are studied by those who have improved their discoveries, and corrected their errors; but if we except the inimitable Lucian, this age of indolence passed away without having produced a single writer of original genius, or who excelled in the arts of elegant composition. The authority of Plato and Aristotle, of Zeno and Epicurus, still reigned in the schools; and their systems, transmitted, with blind deference, from one generation of disciples to another, precluded every generous attempt to exercise the powers, or enlarge the limits, of the human mind. The beauties of the poets and orators, instead of kindling a fire like their own, inspired only cold and servile imitations; or, if any ventured to deviate from those models, they deviated, at the same time, from good sense and propriety. On the revival of letters, the youthful vigour of the imagination, after a long repose, national emulation, a new religion, new languages, and a new world, called forth the genius of Europe. But the provincials of Rome, trained by an uniform artificial foreign education, were engaged in a very unequal competition with those bold ancients, who, by expressing their genuine feelings in their native tongue, had already occupied every place of honour. The name of poet was almost forgotten; that of orator was usurped by the sophists. A cloud of critics, of compilers, of commentators, darkened the face of learning; and the decline of genius was soon followed by the corruption of taste.

## CHAP.

## II.

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 Degene-
 racy.

The sublime Longinus, who, in somewhat a later period, and in the court of a Syrian queen, preserved the spirit of ancient Athens, observes and laments this degeneracy of his contemporaries, which debased their sentiments, enervated their courage, and depressed their talents. “In the same manner,” says he, “as some children always remain pigmies, whose infant limbs have been too closely confined; thus our tender minds, fettered by the prejudices and habits of a just servitude, are unable to expand themselves, or to attain that well-proportioned greatness which we admire in the ancients; who, living under a popular government, wrote with the same freedom as they acted.”¹ This diminutive stature of mankind, if we pursue the metaphor, was daily sinking below the old standard, and the Roman world was indeed peopled by a race of pigmies, when the fierce giants of the north broke in, and mended the puny breed. They restored a manly spirit of freedom; and after the revolution of ten centuries, freedom became the happy parent of taste and science.

¹ Longin. de Sublim. c. 43, p. 229, edit. Toll. Here, too, we may say of Longinus,—“His own example strengthens all his laws.” Instead of proposing his sentiments with a manly boldness, he insinuates them with the most guarded caution, puts them into the mouth of a friend, and, as far as we can collect from a corrupted text, makes a shew of refuting them himself.

CHAP. III.

Of the constitution of the Roman empire, in the age of the Antonines.

THE obvious definition of a monarchy seems to be that of a state, in which a single person, by whatsoever name he may be distinguished, is entrusted with the execution of the laws, the management of the revenue, and the command of the army. But, unless public liberty is protected by intrepid and vigilant guardians, the authority of so formidable a magistrate will soon degenerate into despotism. The influence of the clergy, in an age of superstition, might be usefully employed to assert the rights of mankind; but so intimate is the connection between the throne and the altar, that the banner of the church has very seldom been seen on the side of the people. A martial nobility and stubborn commons, possessed of arms, tenacious of property, and collected into constitutional assemblies, form the only balance capable of preserving a free constitution against enterprizes of an aspiring prince.

CHAP.
III.Idea of a
monarchy.

Every barrier of the Roman constitution had been levelled by the vast ambition of the dictator; every fence had been extirpated by the cruel hand of the triumvir. After the victory of Actium, the fate of the Roman world depended on the will of Octavianus, surnamed Caesar, by his uncle's adoption, and afterwards

Situation
of Augustus.

CHAP.
III.

Augustus, by the flattery of the senate. The conqueror was at the head of forty-four veteran legions,* conscious of their own strength, and of the weakness of the constitution, habituated, during twenty years civil war, to every act of blood and violence, and passionately devoted to the house of Cæsar, from whence alone they had received, and expected, the most lavish rewards. The provinces, long oppressed by the ministers of the republic, sighed for the government of a single person, who would be the master, not the accomplice, of those petty tyrants. The people of Rome, viewing, with a secret pleasure, the humiliation of the aristocracy, demanded only bread and public shows, and were supplied with both by the liberal hand of Augustus. The rich and polite Italians, who had almost universally embraced the philosophy of Epicurus, enjoyed the present blessings of ease and tranquillity, and suffered not the pleasing dream to be interrupted by the memory of their old tumultuous freedom. With its power, the senate had lost its dignity; many of the most noble families were extinct. The republicans of spirit and ability had perished in the field of battle, or in the proscription. The door of the assembly had been designedly left open for a mixed multitude of more than a thousand persons, who reflected disgrace upon their rank, instead of deriving honour from it.

* Orosius, vi, 18.

† Julius Cæsar introduced soldiers, strangers, and half barbarians, into the senate (Sueton. in Cæsar, c. 77, 80). The abuse became still more scandalous after his death.

The reformation of the senate was one of the first steps in which Augustus laid aside the tyrant, and professed himself the father of his country. He was elected censor; and, in concert with his faithful Agrippa, he examined the list of the senators, expelled a few members, whose vices or whose obstinacy required a public example, persuaded near two hundred to prevent the shame of an expulsion by a voluntary retreat, raised the qualification of a senator to about ten thousand pounds, created a sufficient number of patrician families, and accepted for himself the honourable title of prince of the senate, which had always been bestowed, by the censors, on the citizen the most eminent for his honours and services.^c But whilst he thus restored the dignity, he destroyed the independence of the senate. The principles of a free constitution are irrecoverably lost, when the legislative power is nominated by the executive,

CHAP.
III.

He reforms
the senate.

Before an assembly thus modelled and prepared, Augustus pronounced a studied oration, which displayed his patriotism, and disguised his ambition. "He lamented, yet excused, his past conduct. Filial piety had required at his hands the revenge of his father's murder; the humanity of his own nature had sometimes given way to the stern laws of necessity, and to a forced connection with two unworthy col-leagues: as long as Antony lived, the republic

Resigns his
usurped
power.

^c Dion Cassius, l. liii, p. 693. Suetonius in August. c. 55.

CHAP. III. "forbad him to abandon her to a degenerate Roman, and a barbarian queen. He was now at liberty to satisfy his duty and his inclination. He solemnly restored the senate and people to all their ancient rights; and wished only to mingle with the crowd of his fellow citizens, and to share the blessings which he had obtained for his country."^d

Is prevailed upon to resume it, under the title of emperor or general.

It would require the pen of Tacitus (if Tacitus had assisted at this assembly) to describe the various emotions of the senate; those that were suppressed, and those that were affected. It was dangerous to trust the sincerity of Augustus; to seem to distrust it, was still more dangerous. The respective advantages of monarchy and a republic have often divided speculative inquirers; the present greatness of the Roman state, the corruption of manners, and the licence of the soldiers, supplied new arguments to the advocates of monarchy; and these general views of government were again warped by the hopes and fears of each individual. Amidst this confusion of sentiments, the answer of the senate was unanimous and decisive. They refused to accept the resignation of Augustus; they conjured him not to desert the republic which he had saved. After a decent resistance, the crafty tyrant submitted to the orders of the senate, and consented to receive the government of the provinces,

^d Dion G. l. iii. p. 698) gives us a prolix and bombast speech on this great occasion. I have borrowed from Suetonius and Tacitus the general language of Augustus.

and the general command of the Roman armies, under the well-known names of *Proconsul* and *Imperator*.^{*} But he would receive them only for ten years. Even before the expiration of that period, he hoped that the wounds of civil discord would be completely healed, and that the republic, restored to its pristine health and vigour, would no longer require the dangerous interposition of so extraordinary a magistrate. The memory of this comedy, repeated several times during the life of Augustus, was preserved to the last ages of the empire, by the peculiar pomp with which the perpetual monarchs of Rome always solemnized the tenth years of their reign.[†]

Without any violation of the principles of the constitution, the general of the Roman armies might receive and exercise an authority almost despotic over the soldiers, the enemies, and the subjects of the republic. With regard to the soldiers, the jealousy of freedom had, even from the earliest ages of Rome, given way to the hopes of conquest, and a just sense of military discipline. The dictator, or consul, had a right to command the service of the Roman youth; and to punish an obstinate or cowardly disobedience by the most severe and ignominious pe-

Power of
the Roman
generals.

^{*} *Imperator* (from which we have derived emperor) signified, under the republic, no more than *general*, and was emphatically bestowed by the soldiers, when on the field of battle they proclaimed their victorious leader worthy of that title. When the Roman emperors assumed it in that sense, they placed it after their name, and marked how often they had taken it.

[†] Dion; l. lili, p. 703; &c.

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.....

nalties, by striking the offender out of the list of citizens, by confiscating his property, and by selling his person into slavery.^a The most sacred rights of freedom, confirmed by the Porcian and Sempronian laws, were suspended by the military engagement. In his camp the general exercised an absolute power of life and death; his jurisdiction was not confined by any forms of trial, or rules of proceeding, and the execution of the sentence was immediate, and without appeal.^b The choice of the enemies of Rome was regularly decided by the legislative authority. The most important resolutions of peace and war were seriously debated in the senate, and solemnly ratified by the people. But when the arms of the legions were carried to a great distance from Italy, the generals assumed the liberty of directing them against whatever people, and in whatever manner they judged most advantageous for the public service. It was from the success, not from the justice, of their enterprises, that they expected the honours of a triumph. In the use of victory, especially after they were no longer controlled by the commissioners of the senate, they exercised the most unbounded despotism. When Pompey commanded in the East, he rewarded his soldiers and allies, dethroned princes,

^a Livy Epitom. l. xiv. Valer. Maxim. vi. 3.

^b See in the eighth book of Livy, the conduct of Manlius Torquatus and Papirius Cursor. They violated the laws of nature and humanity, but they asserted those of military discipline; and the people, who abhorred this action, was obliged to respect the principle.

divided kingdoms, founded colonies, and distributed the treasures of Mithridates. On his return to Rome, he obtained, by a single act of the senate and people, the universal ratification of all his proceedings.¹ Such was the power over the soldiers, and over the enemies of Rome, which was either granted to, or assumed by, the generals of the republic. They were, at the same time, the governors, or rather monarchs, of the conquered provinces, united the civil with the military character, administered justice as well as the finances, and exercised both the executive and legislative power of the state.

From what has been already observed in the first chapter in this work, some notion may be formed of the armies and provinces thus intrusted to the ruling hand of Augustus. But as it was impossible that he could personally command the legions of so many distant frontiers, he was indulged by the senate, as Pompey had already been, in the permission of devolving the execution of his great office on a sufficient number of lieutenants. In rank and authority these officers seemed not inferior to the ancient proconsuls; but their station was dependent and precarious. They received and held their commissions at

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Lieutenants of
the emperor.

¹ By the lavish, but unconstrained, suffrages of the people, Pompey had obtained a military command scarcely inferior to that of Augustus. Among the extraordinary acts of power executed by the former, we may remark the foundation of twenty-nine cities, and the distribution of three or four millions sterling to his troops. The ratification of his acts met with some opposition and delays in the senate. See Plutarch, Appian, Dion Cassius, and the first book of the epistles to Atticus.

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the will of a superior, to whose *auspicious* influence the merit of their actions was legally attributed.* They were the representatives of the emperor. The emperor alone was the general of the republic, and his jurisdiction, civil as well as military, extended over all the conquests of Rome. It was some satisfaction, however, to the senate, that he always delegated his power to the members of their body. The imperial lieutenants were of consular or prætorian dignity; the legions were commanded by senators; and the prefecture of Egypt was the only important trust committed to a Roman knight.

Division of
the pro-
vinces be-
tween the
emperor
and the se-
nate.

Within six days after Augustus had been compelled to accept so very liberal a grant, he resolved to gratify the pride of the senate by an easy sacrifice. He represented to them, that they had enlarged his powers, even beyond that degree which might be required by the melancholy condition of the times. They had not permitted him to refuse the laborious command of the armies and the frontiers; but he must insist on being allowed to restore the more peaceful and secure provinces to the mild administration of the civil magistrate. In the division of the provinces, Augustus provided for his own power,

* Under the commonwealth, a triumph could only be claimed by the general, who was authorized to take the auspices in the name of the people. By an exact consequence, drawn from this principle of policy and religion, the triumph was reserved to the emperor; and his most successful lieutenants were satisfied with some marks of distinction, which, under the name of triumphal honours, were invented in their favour.

and for the dignity of the republic. The pro-
 consuls of the senate, particularly those of Asia, Greece, and Africa, enjoyed a more honourable
 character than the lieutenants of the emperor,
 who commanded in Gaul or Syria. The former
 were attended by lictors, the latter by soldiers.
 A law was passed, that wherever the emperor was
 present, his extraordinary commission should su-
 persede the ordinary jurisdiction of the governor;
 a custom was introduced, that the new conquests
 belonged to the imperial portion; and it was
 soon discovered, that the authority of the prince,
 the favourite epithet of Augustus, was the same
 in every part of the empire.

In return for this imaginary concession, Au-
 gustus obtained an important privilege, which
 rendered him master of Rome and Italy. By a
 dangerous exception to the ancient maxims, he
 was authorized to preserve his military command,
 supported by a numerous body of guards, even
 in time of peace, and in the heart of the capital.
 His command, indeed, was confined to those
 citizens who were engaged in the service by the
 military oath; but such was the propensity of the
 Romans to servitude, that the oath was volunta-
 rily taken by the magistrates, the senators, and the
 equestrian order, till the homage of flattery was
 insensibly converted into an annual and solemn
 protestation of fidelity.

Although Augustus considered a military force
 as the firmest foundation, he wisely rejected it, as
 a very odious instrument of government. It was
 more agreeable to his temper, as well as to his

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III.The former
preserves
his mili-
tary com-
mand and
guards in
Rome it-
self.Consular
and tribu-
nitian
powers,

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policy, to reign under the venerable names of ancient magistracy, and artfully to collect, in his own person, all the scattered rays of civil jurisdiction. With this view, he permitted the senate to confer upon him, for his life, the powers of the consular¹ and tribunitian offices,^m which were, in the same manner, continued to all his successors. The consuls had succeeded to the kings of Rome, and represented the dignity of the state. They superintended the ceremonies of religion, levied and commanded the legions, gave audience to foreign ambassadors, and presided in the assemblies both of the senate and people. The general controul of the finances was intrusted to their care; and though they seldom had leisure to administer justice in person, they were considered as the supreme guardians of law, equity, and the public peace. Such was their ordinary jurisdiction: but whenever the senate empowered the first magistrate to consult the safety of the commonwealth, he was raised by that degree above the laws, and exercised, in the defence of liberty, a temporary despotism.ⁿ

¹ Cicero (*de Legibus*, iii. 3) gives the consular office the name of *regia potestas*; and Polybius (*l. vi. c. 3*) observes three powers in the Roman constitution. The monarchical was represented and exercised by the consuls.

^m As the tribunitian power (distinct from the annual office) was first invented for the dictator Cæsar, (*Dion. l. xlv. p. 384*), we may easily conceive that it was given as a reward for having so nobly asserted, by arms, the sacred rights of the tribunes and people. See his own commentaries, *de Bell. Civil. l. i.*

ⁿ Augustus exercised nine annual consulships without interruption. He then most artfully refused that magistracy, as well as the dictatorship,

The character of the tribunes was, in every respect, different from that of the consuls. The appearance of the former was modest and humble; but their persons were sacred and inviolable. Their force was suited rather for opposition than for action. They were instituted to defend the oppressed, to pardon offences, to arraign the enemies of the people, and, when they judged it necessary, to stop, by a single word, the whole machine of government. As long as the republic subsisted, the dangerous influence, which either the consul or the tribune might derive from their respective jurisdiction, was diminished by several important restrictions. Their authority expired with the year in which they were elected; the former office was divided between two, the latter among ten persons; and, as both in their private and public interest they were averse to each other, their mutual conflicts contributed, for the most part, to strengthen rather than to destroy the balance of the constitution. But when the consular and tribunitian powers were united, when they were vested for life in a single person, when the general of the army was, at the same time, the minister of the senate and the representative of the Roman people, it was impossible to resist the exercise, nor was it easy to define the limits, of his imperial prerogative.

torship; absented himself from Rome, and waited till the fatal effects of tumult and faction forced the senate to invest him with a perpetual consulship. Augustus, as well as his successors, affected, however, to conceal so invidious a title.

CHAP.
III.Imperial
preroga-
tives.

To these accumulated honours, the policy of Augustus soon added the splendid as well as important dignities of supreme pontiff, and of censor. By the former he acquired the management of the religion, and by the latter a legal inspection over the manners and fortunes of the Roman people. If so many distinct and independent powers did not exactly unite with each other, the complaisance of the senate was prepared to supply every deficiency, by the most ample and extraordinary concessions. The emperors, as the first ministers of the republic, were exempted from the obligation and penalty of many inconvenient laws; they were authorized to convoke the senate, to make several motions in the same day, to recommend candidates for the honours of the state, to enlarge the bounds of the city, to employ the revenue at their discretion, to declare peace and war, to ratify treaties; and by a most comprehensive clause, they were empowered to execute whatsoever they should judge advantageous to the empire, and agreeable to the majesty of things, private or public, human or divine.*

The magistrates.

When all the various powers of executive government were committed to the *imperial magistrate*, the ordinary magistrates of the commonwealth languished in obscurity, without vigour, and almost without business. The names and

* See a fragment of a decree of the senate, conferring on the emperor Vespasian all the powers granted to his predecessors, Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius. This curious and important monument is published in Gruter's Inscriptions, No. ccxlii.

forms of the ancient administration were preserved, by Augustus, with the most anxious care. The usual number of consuls, prætors, and tribunes,^p were annually invested with their respective ensigns of office, and continued to discharge some of their least important functions. Those honours still attracted the vain ambition of the Romans; and the emperors themselves, though invested for life with the powers of the consulship, frequently aspired to the title of that annual dignity, which they condescended to share with the most illustrious of their fellow-citizens.^q In the election of these magistrates, the people, during the reign of Augustus, were permitted to expose all the inconveniencies of a wild democracy. That artful prince, instead of discovering the least symptom of impatience, humbly solicited their suffrages for himself or his friends, and scrupulously practised all the duties

^p Two consuls were created on the calends of January; but, in the course of the year, others were substituted in their places, till the annual number seems to have amounted to no less than twelve. The prætors were usually sixteen or eighteen (Lipsius in Excurs. D. ad Tacit. Annal. l. 1). I have not mentioned the ædiles or quæstors. Officers of the police or revenue easily adapt themselves to any form of government. In the time of Nero, the tribunes legally possessed the right of *intercessio*, though it might be dangerous to exercise it (Tacit. Annal. xvi, 26). In the time of Trajan, it was doubtful whether the tribuneship was an office or a name (Plin. Epist. 1, 23).

^q The tyrants themselves were ambitious of the consulship. The virtuous princes were moderate in the pursuit, and exact in the discharge of it. Trajan revived the ancient oath, and swore before the consul's tribunal, that he would observe the laws (Plin. Panegyric, c. 64).

CHAP. of an ordinary candidate.⁵ But we may ven-
 III. ture to ascribe to his councils, the first measure
 of the succeeding reign, by which the elections
 were transferred to the senate.⁶ The assemblies
 of the people were for ever abolished, and the
 emperors were delivered from a dangerous mul-
 titude, who, without restoring liberty, might
 have disturbed, and perhaps endangered, the
 established government.

The senate. By declaring themselves the protectors of the
 people, Marius and Cæsar had subverted the
 constitution of their country. But as soon as
 the senate had been humbled and disarmed, such
 an assembly, consisting of five or six hundred per-
 sons, was found a much more tractable and use-
 ful instrument of dominion. It was on the dig-
 nity of the senate, that Augustus and his suc-
 cessors founded their new empire; and they af-
 fected, on every occasion, to adopt the language
 and principles of patricians. In the administra-
 tion of their own powers, they frequently con-
 sulted the great national council, and *seemed* to
 refer to its decision the most important concerns
 of peace and war. Rome, Italy, and the inter-
 nal provinces, were subject to the immediate juris-
 diction of the senate. With regard to civil ob-

⁵ Quoties Magistratum Comitibus interesset. Tribus cum candi-
 datis suis circumibat: supplicabatque more solemnî. Ferebat et ipse
 suffragium in tribubus, ut unus e populo. Suetonius in August.
 c. 56.

⁶ Tum primum Comitibus e campo ad patres translata sunt. Tacit.
 Annal. i. 15. The word *primum* seems to allude to some faint and
 unsuccessful efforts, which were made towards restoring them to the
 people.

jects, it was the supreme court of appeal; with regard to criminal matters, a tribunal, constituted for the trial of all offences that were committed by men in any public station, or that affected the peace and majesty of the Roman people. The exercise of the judicial power became the most frequent and serious occupation of the senate; and the important causes that were pleaded before them, afforded a last refuge to the spirit of ancient eloquence. As a council of state, and as a court of justice, the senate possessed very considerable prerogatives; but in its legislative capacity, in which it was supposed virtually to represent the people, the rights of sovereignty were acknowledged to reside in that assembly. Every power was derived from their authority, every law was ratified by their sanction. Their regular meetings were held on three stated days in every month, the calends, the nones, and the ides. The debates were conducted with decent freedom; and the emperors themselves, who gloried in the name of senators, sat, voted, and divided with their equals.

To resume, in a few words, the system of the imperial government, as it was instituted by Augustus, and maintained by those princes who understood their own interest and that of the people, it may be defined an absolute monarchy disguised by the forms of a commonwealth. The masters of the Roman world surrounded their throne with darkness, concealed their irresistible strength, and humbly professed themselves

General
idea of the
imperial
system.

CHAP. the accountable ministers of the senate, whose
III. supreme decrees they dictated and obeyed.¹

Court of
the emper-
ors.

The face of the court corresponded with the forms of the administration. The emperors, if we except those tyrants whose capricious folly violated every law of nature and decency, disdained that pomp and ceremony which might offend their countrymen, but could add nothing to their real power. In all the offices of life, they affected to confound themselves with their subjects, and maintained with them an equal intercourse of visits and entertainments. Their habit, their palace, their table, were suited only to the rank of an opulent senator. Their family, however numerous or splendid, was composed entirely of their domestic slaves and freedmen.* Augustus or Trajan would have blushed at employing the meanest of the Romans in those menial offices, which, in the household and bed-chamber of a limited monarch, are so eagerly solicited by the proudest nobles of Britain.

¹ Dion Cassius (l. lili, p. 703-714) has given a very loose and partial sketch of the imperial system. To illustrate, and often to correct, him, I have meditated Tacitus, examined Suetonius, and consulted the following moderns: The Abbé de la Bletterie, in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xix, xxi, xxiv, xxv, xxvii. Beaufort, *Republique Romaine*, tom. i, p. 255-275. The *Dissertations of Noodt and Gronovius, de lege Regia*, printed at Leyden, in the year 1731. Gravina de *Imperio Romano*, p. 479-544 of his *Opuscula*. Maffei *Verona Illustrata*, p. i, p. 245, &c.

* A weak prince will always be governed by his domestics. The power of slaves aggravated the shame of the Romans; and the senate paid court to a Pallas or a Narcissus. There is a chance that a modern favourite may be a gentleman.

The deification of the emperors² is the only instance in which they departed from their accustomed prudence and modesty. The Asiatic Greeks were the first inventors, the successors of Alexander the first objects, of this servile and impious mode of adulation. It was easily transferred from the kings to the governors of Asia; and the Roman magistrates very frequently were adored as provincial deities, with the pomp of altars and temples, of festivals and sacrifices.³ It was natural that the emperors should not refuse what the proconsuls had accepted; and the divine honours which both the one and the other received from the provinces, attested rather the despotism than the servitude of Rome. But the conquerors soon imitated the vanquished nations in the arts of flattery; and the imperious spirit of the first Cæsar too easily consented to assume, during his lifetime, a place among the tutelar deities of Rome. The milder temper of his successor declined so dangerous an ambition, which was never afterwards revived, except by the madness of Caligula and Domitian. Augustus permitted indeed some of the provincial cities to erect temples to his honour, on condition that they should associate the worship of Rome with that of the sovereign; he tolerated private super-

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III.
.....
Deifica-
tion.

² See a treatise of Vandale de Consecratione Principum. It would be easier for me to copy, than it has been to verify, the quotations of that learned Dutchman.

³ See a dissertation of the Abbé Mongault, in the first volume of the Academy of Inscriptions.

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stition, of which he might be the object;^a but he contented himself with being revered by the senate and people in his human character, and wisely left to his successor, the care of his public deification. A regular custom was introduced, that on the decease of every emperor who had neither lived nor died like a tyrant, the senate by a solemn decree should place him in the number of the gods; and the ceremonies of his apotheosis were blended with those of his funeral. This legal, and, as it should seem, injudicious profanation, so abhorrent to our stricter principles, was received with a very faint murmur,^b by the easy nature of polytheism; but it was received as an institution, not of religion but of policy. We should disgrace the virtues of the Antonines, by comparing them with the vices of Hercules or Jupiter. Even the characters of Cæsar or Augustus were far superior to those of the popular deities. But it was the misfortune of the former to live in an enlightened age, and their actions were too faithfully recorded to admit of such a mixture of fable and mystery, as the devotion of the vulgar requires. As soon as their divinity was established by law, it sunk into oblivion, without contributing either to their own fame, or to the dignity of succeeding princes.

^a *Jurandasque tuum per nomen ponimus aras*, says Horace to the emperor himself; and Horace was well acquainted with the court of Augustus.

^b See Cicero in *Philippic*, l. 6. Julian in *Cæsaribus*. *Inque Deorum templis jurabit Roma per umbras*, is the indignant expression of Lucan; but it is a patriotic, rather than a devout, indignation.

In the consideration of the imperial government, we have frequently mentioned the artful founder, under his well-known title of Augustus, which was not, however, conferred upon him till the edifice was almost completed. The obscure name of Octavianus he derived from a mean family in the little town of Aricia. It was stained with the blood of the proscription; and he was desirous, had it been possible, to erase all memory of his former life. The illustrious surname of Cæsar, he had assumed, as the adopted son of the dictator; but he had too much good sense, either to hope to be confounded, or to wish to be compared, with that extraordinary man. It was proposed in the senate, to dignify their minister with a new appellation; and after a very serious discussion, that of Augustus was chosen, among several others, as being the most expressive of the character of peace and sanctity, which he uniformly affected.^b *Augustus* was therefore a personal, *Cæsar* a family distinction. The former should naturally have expired with the prince on whom it was bestowed; and however the latter was diffused by adoption and female alliance, Nero was the last prince who could allege any hereditary claim to the honours of the Julian line. But, at the time of his death, the practice of a century had inseparably connected those appellations with the imperial dignity, and they have been preserved by a long succession of

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 Titles of  
*Augustus*  
 and *Cæsar*.

<sup>b</sup> Dion Cassius, l. liii, p. 710, with the curious annotations of Reymar.



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emperors, Romans, Greeks, Franks, and Germans, from the fall of the republic to the present time. A distinction was, however, soon introduced. The sacred title of Augustus was always reserved for the monarch, whilst the name of Cæsar was more freely communicated to his relations; and, from the reign of Hadrian at least, was appropriated to the second person in the state, who was considered as the presumptive heir of the empire.

Character
and policy
of Augustus.

The tender respect of Augustus for a free constitution which he had destroyed, can only be explained by an attentive consideration of the character of that subtle tyrant. A cool head, an unfeeling heart, and a cowardly disposition, prompted him, at the age of nineteen, to assume the mask of hypocrisy, which he never afterwards laid aside. With the same hand, and probably with the same temper, he signed the proscription of Cicero, and the pardon of Cinna. His virtues, and even his vices, were artificial; and according to the various dictates of his interest, he was at first the enemy, and at last the father, of the Roman world.* When he framed the artful system of the imperial authority, his moderation was inspired by his fears. He wished to

* As Octavianus advanced to the banquet of the Cæsars, his colour changed like that of the camellion; pale at first, then red, afterwards black; he at last assumed the mild livery of Venus and the graces (Cæsar, p. 309). This image, employed by Julian, in his ingenious fiction, is just and elegant; but when he considers this change of character as real, and ascribes it to the power of philosophy, he does too much honour to philosophy, and to Octavianus.

deceive the people by an image of civil liberty, and the armies by an image of civil government. CHAR.
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1. The death of Cæsar was ever before his eyes. He had lavished wealth and honours on his adherents; but the most favoured friends of his uncle were in the number of the conspirators. The fidelity of the legions might defend his authority against open rebellion; but their vigilance could not secure his person from the dagger of a determined republican; and the Romans, who revered the memory of Brutus,* would applaud the imitation of his virtue. Cæsar had provoked his fate, as much by the ostentation of his power, as by his power itself. The consul or the tribune might have reigned in peace. The title of king had armed the Romans against his life. Augustus was sensible that mankind is governed by names; nor was he deceived in his expectation, that the senate and people would submit to slavery, provided they were respectfully assured that they still enjoyed their ancient freedom. A feeble senate and enervated people cheerfully acquiesced in the pleasing illusion, as long as it was supported by the virtue, or even by the prudence, of the successors of Augustus. It was a motive of self-preservation, not a principle of liberty, that animated the conspirators against Caligula, Nero, and Domitian. They attacked

* Two centuries after the establishment of monarchy, the emperor Marcus Antoninus recommends the character of Brutus as a perfect model of Roman virtue.

CHAP. the person of the tyrant, without aiming their
III. blow at the authority of the emperor.

Attempt of
the senate
after the
death of
Caligula.

There appears, indeed, *one* memorable occasion, in which the senate, after seventy years of patience, made an ineffectual attempt to reassume its long-forgotten rights. When the throne was vacant by the murder of Caligula, the consuls convoked that assembly in the capitol, condemned the memory of the Cæsars, gave the watch-word *liberty* to the few cohorts who faintly adhered to their standard, and during eight-and-forty hours, acted as the independent chiefs of a free commonwealth. But while they deliberated, the prætorian guards had resolved. The stupid Claudius, brother of Germanicus, was already in their camp, invested with the imperial purple, and prepared to support his election by arms. The dream of liberty was at an end; and the senate awoke to all the horrors of inevitable servitude. Deserted by the people, and threatened by a military force, that feeble assembly was compelled to ratify the choice of the prætorians, and to embrace the benefit of an amnesty, which Claudius had the prudence to offer, and the generosity to observe.*

Image of
government for
the armies.

II. The insolence of the armies inspired Augustus with fears of a still more alarming nature. The despair of the citizens could only attempt, what the power of the soldiers was, at any time

* It is much to be regretted, that we have lost the part of Tacitus which treated of that transaction. We are forced to content ourselves with the popular rumours of Josephus, and the imperfect hints of Dion and Suetonius.

able to execute. How precarious was his own authority over men whom he had taught to violate every social duty! He had heard their seditious clamours; he dreaded their calmer moments of reflection. One revolution had been purchased by immense rewards; but a second revolution might double those rewards. The troops professed the fondest attachment to the house of Cæsar; but the attachments of the multitude are capricious and inconstant. Augustus summoned to his aid whatever remained in those fierce minds of Roman prejudices; enforced the rigour of discipline by the sanction of law; and, interposing the majesty of the senate between the emperor and the army, boldly claimed their allegiance, as the first magistrate of the republic.¹

During a long period of two hundred and twenty years, from the establishment of this artificial system to the death of Commodus, the dangers inherent to a military government were, in a great measure, suspended. The soldiers were seldom roused to that fatal sense of their own strength, and of the weakness of the civil authority, which was, before and afterwards, productive of such dreadful calamities. Caligula and Domitian were assassinated in their palace by their own domestics: the convulsions which agitated Rome on the death of the former, were confined to the walls of the city. But Nero involved the

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Their absence.

¹ Augustus restored the ancient severity of discipline. After the civil wars, he dropped the endearing name of fellow-soldiers, and called them only soldiers (Sueton. in August. c. 25). See the use Tiberius made of the senate, in the mutiny of the Pannonian legions (Tacit. Annal. i.).

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whole empire in his ruin. In the space of eighteen months, four princes perished by the sword; and the Roman world was shaken by the fury of the contending armies. Excepting only this short, though violent, eruption of military licence, the two centuries from Augustus to Commodus passed away unstained with civil blood, and undisturbed by revolutions. The emperor was elected by *the authority of the senate, and the consent of the soldiers*.<sup>a</sup> The legions respected their oath of fidelity; and it requires a minute inspection of the Roman annals, to discover three inconsiderable rebellions, which were all suppressed in a few months, and without even the hazard of a battle.<sup>b</sup>

Designa-  
tion of a  
successor.

In the elective monarchies, the vacancy of the throne is a moment big with danger and mischief. The Roman emperors, desirous to spare the legions that interval of suspense, and the temptation of an irregular choice, invested their designed successor with so large a share of present power, as should enable him, after their decease, to assume the remainder, without suffering the empire to perceive the change of masters. Thus

<sup>a</sup> These words seem to have been the constitutional language. See Tacit. Annal. xiii, 4.

<sup>b</sup> The first was Camillus Scribonianus, who took up arms in Dalmatia against Claudius, and was deserted by his own troops in five days. The second, L. Antonius, in Germany, who rebelled against Domitian; and the third, Avidius Cassius, in the reign of M. Antoninus. The two last reigned but a few months, and were cut off by their own adherents. We may observe, that both Camillus and Cassius coloured their ambition with the design of restoring the republic; a tale, said Cassius, peculiarly reserved for his name and family.

Augustus, after all his fairer prospects had been snatched from him by untimely deaths, rested his last hopes on Tiberius, obtained for his adopted son the censorial and tribunitian powers, and dictated a law, by which the future prince was invested with an authority equal to his own, over the provinces and the armies.<sup>1</sup> Thus Vespasian subdued the generous mind of his eldest son. Titus was adored by the eastern legions, which, under his command, had recently achieved the conquest of Judea. His power was dreaded, and, as his virtues were clouded by the intemperance of youth, his designs were suspected. Instead of listening to such unworthy suspicions, the prudent monarch associated Titus to the full powers of the imperial dignity; and the grateful son ever approved himself the humble and faithful minister of so indulgent a father.<sup>2</sup>

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III.

Of Tiberius.

Of Titus.

The good sense of Vespasian engaged him indeed to embrace every measure that might confirm his recent and precarious elevation. The military oath, and the fidelity of the troops, had been consecrated, by the habits of an hundred years, to the name and family of the Cæsars; and although that family had been continued only by the fictitious rite of adoption, the Romans still revered, in the person of Nero, the grandson of Germanicus, and the lineal successor of Augustus. It was not without reluctance and remorse, that the prætorian guards had been

The race of  
the Cæsars  
and the  
Flavian family.<sup>1</sup> Velleius Paterculus, l. ii, c. 121. Sueton. in Tiber. c. 20.<sup>2</sup> Sueton. in Tit. c. 6. Plin. in Præfat. Hist. Natur.



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persuaded to abandon the cause of the tyrant.<sup>1</sup> The rapid downfall of Galba, Otho, and Vitellius, taught the armies to consider the emperors as the creatures of *their* will, and the instruments of *their* licence. The birth of Vespasian was mean; his grandfather had been a private soldier, his father a petty officer of the revenue;<sup>2</sup> his own merit had raised him, in an advanced age, to the empire; but his merit was rather useful than shining, and his virtues were disgraced by a strict and even sordid parsimony. Such a prince consulted his true interest by the association of a son, whose more splendid and amiable character might turn the public attention, from the obscure origin, to the future glories, of the Flavian house. Under the mild administration of Titus, the Roman world enjoyed a transient felicity, and his beloved memory served to protect, above fifteen years, the vices of his brother Domitian.

*A. n. 96.  
Adoption  
and character of  
Trajan.*

Nerva had scarcely accepted the purple from the assassins of Domitian, before he discovered that his feeble age was unable to stem the torrent of public disorders, which had multiplied under the long tyranny of his predecessor. His mild disposition was respected by the good; but the degenerate Romans required a more vigorous character, whose justice should strike terror into the guilty. Though he had several relations, he

<sup>1</sup> This idea is frequently and strongly inculcated by Tacitus. See Hist. i. 3, 16, ii. 76.

<sup>2</sup> The emperor Vespasian, with his usual good sense, laughed at the genealogists, who deduced his family from Flavins, the founder of Reate (his native country), and one of the companions of Hercules. Suet. in Vespasian. c. 12.

fixed his choice on a stranger. He adopted Tra-  
 jan, then about forty years of age, and who com-  
 manded a powerful army in the lower Germany;  
 and immediately, by a decree of the senate, de-  
 clared him his colleague and successor in the  
 empire.<sup>2</sup> It is sincerely to be lamented, that  
 whilst we are fatigued with the disgusting relation  
 of Nero's crimes and follies, we are reduced to  
 collect the actions of Trajan from the glimmer-  
 ings of an abridgement, or the doubtful light of  
 a panegyric. There remains, however, one pa-  
 negyric far removed beyond the suspicion of flat-  
 tery. Above two hundred and fifty years after  
 the death of Trajan, the senate, in pouring out  
 the customary acclamations on the accession of  
 a new emperor, wished that he might surpass  
 the felicity of Augustus, and the virtue of Tra-  
 jan.<sup>3</sup>

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A. D. 98.

We may readily believe, that the father of his  
 country hesitated whether he ought to entrust the  
 various and doubtful character of his kinsman  
 Hadrian with sovereign power. In his last mo-  
 ments, the arts of the empress Plotina either  
 fixed the irresolution of Trajan, or boldly sup-  
 posed a fictitious adoption;<sup>4</sup> the truth of which  
 could not be safely disputed, and Hadrian was

A. D. 117.  
Of Ha-  
drian.

<sup>1</sup> Dion, l. lxxviii, p. 1121. Plin. Secund. in Panegyric.

<sup>2</sup> Felicio Augusto, *VELLON TRAJANO*. Eutrop. viii, 5.

<sup>3</sup> Dion (l. lxxix, p. 1249) affirms the whole to have been a fiction, on the authority of his father, who being governor of the province where Trajan died, had very good opportunities of seeing this mysterious transaction. Yet Doxwell (*Prælect. Camden*, xvii) has maintained that Hadrian was called to the certain hope of the empire during the lifetime of Trajan.

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peaceably acknowledged as his lawful successor. Under his reign, as has been already mentioned, the empire flourished in peace and prosperity. He encouraged the arts, reformed the laws, asserted military discipline, and visited all his provinces in person. His vast and active genius was equally suited to the most enlarged views, and the minute details of civil policy. But the ruling passions of his soul were curiosity and vanity. As they prevailed, and as they were attracted by different objects, Hadrian was, by turns, an excellent prince, a ridiculous sophist, and a jealous tyrant. The general tenor of his conduct deserved praise for its equity and moderation. Yet in the first days of his reign, he put to death four consular senators, his personal enemies, and men who had been judged worthy of empire; and the tediousness of a painful illness rendered him, at last, peevish and cruel. The senate doubted whether they should pronounce him a god or a tyrant; and the honours decreed to his memory were granted to the prayers of the pious Antoninus.\*

Adoption  
of the el-  
der and  
younger  
Verns.

The caprice of Hadrian influenced his choice of a successor. After revolving in his mind several men of distinguished merit, whom he esteemed and hated, he adopted Ælius Verus, a gay and voluptuous nobleman, recommended by uncommon beauty to the lover of Antinous.†

\* Dion (lxx. p. 1171). Aurel. Victor.

† The dedication of Antinous, his medals, statues, temples, city, cruces, and constellation, are well known, and still dishonour the memory of Hadrian. Yet we may remark, that of the first fifteen emperors,



But while Hadrian was delighting himself with his own applause, and the acclamations of the soldiers, whose consent had been secured by an immense donative, the new *Cæsar*<sup>1</sup> was ravished from his embraces by an untimely death. He left only one son. Hadrian commended the boy to the gratitude of the Antonines. He was adopted by Pius; and, on the accession of Marcus, was invested with an equal share of sovereign power. Among the many vices of this younger Verus, he possessed one virtue; a dutiful reverence for his wiser colleague, to whom he willingly abandoned the ruder cares of empire. The philosophic emperor dissembled his follies, lamented his early death, and cast a decent veil over his memory.

As soon as Hadrian's passion was either gratified or disappointed, he resolved to deserve the thanks of posterity, by placing the most exalted merit on the Roman throne. His discerning eye easily discovered a senator about fifty years of age, blameless in all the offices of life; and a youth of about seventeen, whose ripper years opened a fair prospect of every virtue; the elder of these was declared the son and successor of Hadrian, on condition, however, that he himself should immediately adopt the younger. The two Antonines (for it is of them that we are now speaking) governed the Roman world forty-two

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III.

Adoption  
of the two  
Antonines.

a. d. 138—  
180.

emperors, Glandius was the only one whose taste in love was entirely correct. For the honours of Antinous, see Spanheim *Commentaire sur les Césars de Julien*, p. 80.

<sup>1</sup> Hist. August. p. 13. Aurelius Victor in Epitom.

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\*\*\*\*\*

years, with the same invariable spirit of wisdom and virtue. Although Pius had two sons,<sup>1</sup> he preferred the welfare of Rome to the interest of his family, gave his daughter Faustina in marriage to young Marcus, obtained from the senate the tribunitian and proconsular powers, and with a noble disdain, or rather ignorance of jealousy, associated him to all the labours of government. Marcus, on the other hand, revered the character of his benefactor, loved him as a parent, obeyed him as his sovereign,<sup>2</sup> and, after he was no more, regulated his own administration by the example and maxims of his predecessor. Their united reigns are possibly the only period of history in which the happiness of a great people was the sole object of government.

Character  
and reign  
of Pius.

Titus Antoninus Pius has been justly denominated a second Numa. The same love of religion, justice, and peace, was the distinguishing characteristic of both princes. But the situation of the latter opened a much larger field for the exercise of those virtues. Numa could only prevent a few neighbouring villages from plundering each other's harvests. Antoninus diffused order and tranquillity over the greatest part of the earth. His reign is marked by the rare advantage of furnishing very few materials for history; which is, indeed, little more than the

<sup>1</sup> Without the help of medals and inscriptions, we should be ignorant of this fact, so honourable to the memory of Pius.

<sup>2</sup> During the twenty-three years of Pius's reign, Marcus was only two nights absent from the palace, and even those were at different times. Hist. August. p. 25.

register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind. In private life, he was an amiable, as well as a good man. The native simplicity of his virtue was a stranger to vanity or affectation. He enjoyed, with moderation, the conveniencies of his fortune, and the innocent pleasures of society;\* and the benevolence of his soul displayed itself in a cheerful serenity of temper.

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The virtue of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus was of a severer and more laborious kind.<sup>†</sup> It was the well-earned harvest of many a learned conference, of many a patient lecture, and many a midnight lucubration. At the age of twelve years, he embraced the rigid system of the stoics, which taught him to submit his body to his mind, his passions to his reason; to consider virtue as the only good, vice as the only evil, all things external, as things indifferent.<sup>‡</sup> His

\* He was fond of the theatre, and not insensible to the charms of the fair sex. Marcus Antoninus, i, 16. Hist. August. p. 20, 21. Julian in Caesar.

† The enemies of Marcus charged him with hypocrisy, and with a want of that simplicity which distinguished Pius, and even Verus (Hist. August. 6-34). This suspicion, unjust as it was, may serve to account for the superior applause bestowed upon personal qualifications, in preference to the social virtues. Even Marcus Antoninus has been called a hypocrite, but the wildest scepticism never insinuated that Caesar might possibly be a coward, or Tully a fool. Wit and valour are qualifications more easily ascertained than humanity or the love of justice.

‡ Tacitus has characterized, in a few words, the principles of the portico: *Doctores sapientie secutus est, qui sola bona quae honesta, mala tantum quae turpia; potentiam, nobilitatem, ceteraque extra animum, neque bonis neque malis adnumerant.* Tacit. Hist. iv, 5.



CHAP. III. meditations, composed in the tumult of a camp, are still extant; and he even condescended to give lessons of philosophy, in a more public manner than was perhaps consistent with the modesty of a sage, or the dignity of an emperor.<sup>a</sup> But his life was the noblest commentary on the precepts of Zeno. He was severe to himself, indulgent to the imperfection of others, just and beneficent to all mankind. He regretted that Avidius Cassius, who excited a rebellion in Syria, had disappointed him, by a voluntary death, of the pleasure of converting an enemy into a friend; and he justified the sincerity of that sentiment, by moderating the zeal of the senate against the adherents of the traitor.<sup>b</sup> War he detested, as the disgrace and calamity of human nature; but when the necessity of a just defence called upon him to take up arms, he readily exposed his person to eight winter campaigns on the frozen banks of the Danube, the severity of which was at last fatal to the weakness of his constitution. His memory was revered by a grateful posterity; and above a century after his death, many persons preserved the image of Marcus Antoninus among those of their household gods.<sup>c</sup>

Happiness  
of the Ro-  
mans.

If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosper-

<sup>a</sup> Before he went on the second expedition against the Germans, he read lectures of philosophy to the Roman people during three days. He had already done the same in the cities of Greece and Asia. Hist. August. in Cassio, c. 3.

<sup>b</sup> Dion, l. lxxi, p. 1190. Hist. August. in Avid. Cassio.

<sup>c</sup> Hist. August. in Marc. Antonin. c. 19.

ous, he would without hesitation, name that  
 which elapsed from the death of Domitian to  
 the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of  
 the Roman empire was governed by absolute  
 power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom.  
 The armies were restrained by the firm but gentle  
 hand of four successive emperors, whose cha-  
 racters and authority commanded involuntary  
 respect. The forms of the civil administration  
 were carefully preserved by Nerva, Trajan, Ha-  
 drian, and the Antonines, who delighted in the  
 image of liberty, and were pleased with consider-  
 ing themselves as the accountable ministers of the  
 laws. Such princes deserved the honour of re-  
 storing the republic, had the Romans of their  
 days been capable of enjoying a rational free-  
 dom.

The labours of these monarchs were overpaid  
 by the immense reward that inseparably waited  
 on their success; by the honest pride of virtue,  
 and by the exquisite delight of beholding the ge-  
 neral happiness of which they were the authors.  
 A just, but melancholy reflection embittered,  
 however, the noblest of human enjoyments.  
 They must often have recollected the instability  
 of a happiness which depended on the character  
 of a single man. The fatal moment was perhaps  
 approaching, when some licentious youth, or some  
 jealous tyrant, would abuse, to the destruction,  
 that absolute power, which they had exerted  
 for the benefit of their people. The ideal re-  
 straints of the senate and the laws might serve  
 to display the virtues, but could never correct

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 III.

Its preca-  
 rious na-  
 ture.

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III.

the vices, of the emperor. The military force was a blind and irresistible instrument of oppression; and the corruption of Roman manners would always supply flatterers eager to applaud, and ministers prepared to serve, the fear or the avarice, the lust or the cruelty, of their masters.

Memory of  
Tiberius,  
Caligula,  
Nero, and  
Domitian.

These gloomy apprehensions had been already justified by the experience of the Romans. The annals of the emperors exhibit a strong and various picture of human nature, which we should vainly seek among the mixed and doubtful characters of modern history. In the conduct of those monarchs we may trace the utmost lines of vice and virtue; the most exalted perfection, and the meanest degeneracy of our own species. The golden age of Trajan and the Antonines had been preceded by an age of iron. It is almost superfluous to enumerate the unworthy successors of Augustus. Their unparalleled vices, and the splendid theatre on which they were acted, have saved them from oblivion. The dark unrelenting Tiberius, the furious Caligula, the feeble Claudius, the profligate and cruel Nero, the beastly Vitellius,\* and the timid inhuman Domitian, are condemned to everlasting infamy.

\* Vitellius consumed in mere eating, at least six millions of our money in about seven months. It is not easy to express his vices with dignity, or even decency. Tacitus fairly calls him a hog, but it is by substituting to a coarse word a very fine image. "At Vitellius, umbraculis hortorum abilitus, ut *ignava animalia*, quibus si cibum suggeras jacent torpentque, præterita, instantia, futura, pari oblivione dimiserat. Atque illum nemove Arcino deridem et marcentem," &c. Tacit. Hist. iii, 36, ii, 95. Sueton. in Vitell. c. 13. Dion Cassius, l. lxx, p. 1062.



During fourscore years (excepting only the short and doubtful respite of Vespasian's reign\*) Rome groaned beneath an unrelenting tyranny, which exterminated the ancient families of the republic, and was fatal to almost every virtue, and every talent, that arose in that unhappy period.

Under the reign of these monsters, the slavery of the Romans was accompanied with two peculiar circumstances, the one occasioned by their former liberty, the other by their extensive conquests, which rendered their condition more completely wretched than that of the victims of tyranny in any other age or country. From these causes were derived, 1. The exquisite sensibility of the sufferers; and, 2. The impossibility of escaping from the hand of the oppressor.

1. When Persia was governed by the descendants of Sefi, a race of princes, whose wanton cruelty often stained their divan, their table, and their bed, with the blood of their favourites, there is a saying recorded of a young nobleman, that he never departed from the sultan's presence, without satisfying himself whether his head was still on his shoulders. The experience of every day might almost justify the scepticism of Rustan.<sup>†</sup> Yet the fatal sword, suspended above him by a single thread, seems not to have disturbed the slumbers, or interrupted the tranquillity, of the Persian. The monarch's frown,

\* The execution of Helvidius Priscus, and of the virtuous Epitima, disgraced the reign of Vespasian.

† Voyage de Chardin en Perse, vol. iii, p. 293.

CHAP. he well knew, could level him with the dust;  
 III. but the stroke of lightning or apoplexy might be  
 ..... equally fatal; and it was the part of a wise man,  
 to forget the inevitable calamities of human life  
 in the enjoyment of the fleeting hour. He was  
 dignified with the appellation of the king's slave;  
 had, perhaps, been purchased from obscure pa-  
 rents, in a country which he had never known;  
 and was trained up from his infancy in the severe  
 discipline of the seraglio.\* His name, his wealth,  
 his honours, were the gift of a master, who might,  
 without injustice, resume what he had bestowed.  
 Rustan's knowledge, if he possessed any, could  
 only serve to confirm his habits by prejudices.  
 His language afforded not words for any form of  
 government, except absolute monarchy. The  
 history of the East informed him, that such had  
 ever been the condition of mankind.<sup>b</sup> The  
 Koran, and the interpreters of that divine book,  
 inculcated to him, that the sultan was the descend-  
 ant of the prophet, and the vicegerent of heaven;  
 that patience was the first virtue of a mussulman,  
 and unlimited obedience the great duty of a subject.

Knowledge  
 and free  
 spirit of the  
 Romans.

The minds of the Romans were very differ-  
 ently prepared for slavery. Oppressed beneath  
 the weight of their own corruption and of mili-  
 tary violence, they for a long while preserved the

\* The practice of raising slaves to the great offices of state is still more common among the Turks than among the Persians. The miserable countries of Georgia and Circassia supply rulers to the greatest part of the east.

<sup>b</sup> Chardin says, that European travellers have diffused among the Persians some ideas of the freedom and mildness of our governments. They have done them a very ill office.

sentiments, or at least the ideas, of their free-born ancestors. The education of Helvidius and Thræsea, of Tacitus and Pliny, was the same as that of Cato and Cicero. From Grecian philosophy, they had imbibed the justest and most liberal notions of the dignity of human nature, and the origin of civil society. The history of their own country had taught them to revere a free, a virtuous, and a victorious commonwealth; to abhor the successful crimes of Cæsar and Augustus; and inwardly to despise those tyrants whom they adored with the most abject flattery. As magistrates and senators, they were admitted into the great council, which had once dictated laws to the earth, whose name still gave a sanction to the acts of the monarch, and whose authority was so often prostituted to the vilest purposes of tyranny. Tiberius, and those emperors who adopted his maxims, attempted to disguise their murders by the formalities of justice, and perhaps enjoyed a secret pleasure in rendering the senate their accomplice as well as their victim. By this assembly, the last of the Romans were condemned for imaginary crimes and real virtues. Their infamous accusers assumed the language of independent patriots, who arraigned a dangerous citizen before the tribunal of his country; and the public service was rewarded by riches and honours.<sup>1</sup> The servile judges pro-

<sup>1</sup> They alleged the example of Scipio and Cato (Tacit. Annal. iii, 66). Marcellus Epirus and Crispus Vibius had acquired two

millions.



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III.

Extent of  
their em-  
pire left  
them no  
place of  
refuge.

fessed to assert the majesty of the commonwealth, violated in the person of its first magistrate,<sup>1</sup> whose clemency they most applauded when they trembled the most at his inexorable and impending cruelty.<sup>2</sup> The tyrant beheld their baseness with just contempt, and encountered their secret sentiments of detestation with sincere and avowed hatred for the whole body of the senate.

II. The division of Europe into a number of independent states, connected, however, with each other by the general resemblance of religion, language, and manners, is productive of the most beneficial consequences to the liberty of mankind. A modern tyrant, who should find no resistance either in his own breast, or in his people, would soon experience a gentle restraint from the example of his equals, the dread of present censure, the advice of his allies, and the apprehension of his enemies. The object of his displeasure, escaping from the narrow limits of

millions and a half under Nero. Their wealth, which aggravated their crimes, protected them under Vespasian. See Tacit. Hist. iv, 43. Dialog. de Orator. c. 8. For one accusation, Regulus, the just object of Pliny's satire, received from the senate the consular ornaments, and a present of sixty thousand pounds.

<sup>1</sup> The crime of *majesty* was formerly a treasonable offence against the Roman people. As tribunes of the people, Augustus and Tiberius applied it to their own persons, and extended it to an infinite latitude.

<sup>2</sup> After the virtuous and unfortunate widow of Germanicus had been put to death, Tiberius received the thanks of the senate for his clemency. She had not been publicly strangled; nor was the body drawn with a hook to the *Gemoniæ*, where those of common malefactors were exposed. See Tacit. Annal. vi, 25. Sueton. in Tiberio, c. 53.

his dominions, would easily obtain, in a happier climate, a secure refuge, a new fortune adequate to his merit, the freedom of complaint, and perhaps the means of revenge. But the empire of the Romans filled the world, and when that empire fell into the hands of a single person, the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. The slave of imperial despotism, whether he was condemned to drag his gilded chain in Rome and the senate, or to wear out a life of exile on the barren rock of Seriphus, or the frozen banks of the Danube, expected his fate in silent despair.<sup>m</sup> To resist was fatal, and it was impossible to fly. On every side he was encompassed with a vast extent of sea and land, which he could never hope to traverse without being discovered, seized, and restored to his irritated master. Beyond the frontiers, his anxious view could discover nothing, except the ocean, inhospitable deserts, hostile tribes of barbarians, of fierce manners and unknown language, or dependent kings, who would gladly purchase the emperor's protection by the sacrifice of an obnoxious fugitive." "Wherever you are," said

<sup>m</sup> Seriphus was a small rocky island in the Ægean sea, the inhabitants of which were despised for their ignorance and obscurity. The place of Ovid's exile is well known, by his just, but unmanly lamentations. It should seem, that he only received an order to leave Rome in so many days, and to transport himself to Temi. Guards and gaolers were unnecessary.

<sup>n</sup> Under Tiberius, a Roman knight attempted to fly to the Parthians. He was stopt in the straits of Sicily; but so little danger

CHAP. Cicero to the exiled Marcellus, "remember that  
III. "you are equally within the power of the con-  
queror."

did there appear in the example, that the most jealous of tyrants  
disdained to punish it. Tacit. Annal. vi, 14.

\* Cicero ad Familiares, iv, 7.



## CHAP. IV.

*The cruelty, follies, and murder of Commodus.—Election of Pertinax.—His attempts to reform the state.—His assassination of the prætorian guards.*

THE mildness of Marcus, which the rigid discipline of the stoics was unable to eradicate, formed, at the same time, the most amiable, and the only defective, part of his character. His excellent understanding was often deceived by the unsuspecting goodness of his heart. Artful men, who study the passions of princes, and conceal their own, approached his person in the disguise of philosophic sanctity, and acquired riches and honours by affecting to despise them.\* His excessive indulgence to his brother, his wife, and his son, exceeded the bounds of private virtue, and became a public injury, by the example and consequences of their vices.

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IV.

Indulgence  
of Marcus

Faustina, the daughter of Pius, and the wife of Marcus, had been as much celebrated for her gallantries as for her beauty. The grave simplicity of the philosopher was ill calculated to engage her wanton levity, or to fix that unbounded passion for variety, which often discovered personal merit in the meanest of man-

to his wife  
Faustina;

\* See the complaints of Avidius Cassius, Hist. August. p. 45. These are, it is true, the complaints of faction; but even faction exaggerates, rather than invents.

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kind.<sup>b</sup> The Cupid of the ancients, was, in general, a very sensual deity; and the amours of an empress, as they exact on her side the plainest advances, are seldom susceptible of much sentimental delicacy. Marcus was the only man in the empire who seemed ignorant or insensible of the irregularities of Faustina; which, according to the prejudices of every age, reflected some disgrace on the injured husband. He promoted several of her lovers to posts of honour and profit,<sup>c</sup> and during a connection for thirty years, invariably gave her proofs of the most tender confidence, and of a respect which ended not with her life. In his meditations, he thanks the gods, who had bestowed on him a wife, so faithful, so gentle, and of such a wonderful simplicity of manners.<sup>d</sup> The obsequious senate, at his earnest request, declared her a goddess. She was represented, in her temples, with the attributes of Juno, Venus, and Ceres; and it was decreed that, on the day of their nuptials, the youth of either sex should pay their vows before the altar of their chaste patroness.<sup>e</sup>

<sup>b</sup> *Faustinam satis constat apud Cayetam, conditiones, sibi et militum et gladiatorum, elegisse.* Hist. August. p. 30. Lampridius explains the sort of merit which Faustina chose, and the conditions which she exacted. Hist. August. p. 102.

<sup>c</sup> Hist. August. p. 34.

<sup>d</sup> *Meditat. l. l.* The world has laughed at the credulity of Marcus; but Madam Dacier assures us (and we may credit a lady), that the husband will always be deceived, if the wife condescends to dissimble.

<sup>e</sup> *Dion. Cassius, l. lxxi, p. 1193.* Hist. August. p. 33. *Commentaire de Spanheim sur les Césars de Julien, p. 289.* The deification of Faustina is the only defect which Julian's criticism is able to discover in the all-accomplished character of Marcus.

The monstrous vices of the son have cast a CHAP. IV. shade on the purity of the father's virtues. It has been objected to Marcus, that he sacrificed the happiness of millions to a fond partiality for a worthless boy; and that he chose a successor in his own family, rather than in the republic. Nothing, however, was neglected by the anxious father, and by the men of virtue and learning whom he summoned to his assistance, to expand the narrow mind of young Commodus, to correct his growing vices, and to render him worthy of the throne, for which he was designed. But the power of instruction is seldom of much efficacy, except in those happy dispositions where it is almost superfluous. The distasteful lesson of a grave philosopher was, in a moment, obliterated by the whisper of a profligate favourite; and Marcus himself blasted the fruits of this laboured education, by admitting his son, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, to a full participation of the imperial power. He lived but four years afterwards; but he lived long enough to repent a rash measure, which raised the impetuous youth above the restraint of reason and authority.

Most of the crimes which disturb the internal peace of society, are produced by the restraints which the necessary, but unequal laws of property have imposed on the appetites of mankind, by confining to a few the possession of those objects that are coveted by many. Of all our passions and appetites, the love of power is of the most imperious and unsociable nature, since the pride of one man requires the submission of

Accession of the emperor Commodus.



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IV.

the multitude. In the tumult of civil discord, the laws of society lose their force, and their place is seldom supplied by those of humanity. The ardour of contention, the pride of victory, the despair of success, the memory of past injuries, and the fear of future dangers, all contribute to inflame the mind, and to silence the voice of pity. From such motives almost every page of history has been stained with civil blood; but these motives will not account for the unprovoked cruelties of Commodus, who had nothing to wish, and every thing to enjoy. The beloved son of Marcus succeeded to his father, amidst the acclamations of the senate and armies,<sup>f</sup> and when he ascended the throne, the happy youth saw round him neither competitor to remove, nor enemies to punish. In this calm elevated station, it was surely natural, that he should prefer the love of mankind to their detestation, the mild glories of his five predecessors, to the ignominious fate of Nero, and Domitian.

A. D. 180.

Character  
of Com-  
modus.

Yet Commodus was not, as he has been represented, a tyger born with an insatiate thirst of human blood, and capable, from his infancy, of the most inhuman actions.<sup>g</sup> Nature had formed him of a weak, rather than a wicked disposition. His simplicity and timidity rendered him the slave of his attendants, who gradually corrupted his

<sup>f</sup> Commodus was the first *Porphyrogenitus* (born since his father's accession to the throne). By a new strain of flattery, the Egyptian medals date by the years of his life, as if they were synonymous to those of his reign. Tillamont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. ii, p. 752.

<sup>g</sup> *Hist. August.* p. 48.

mind. His cruelty, which at first obeyed the dictates of others, degenerated into habit, and at length became the ruling passion of his soul.<sup>a</sup>

Upon the death of his father, Commodus found himself embarrassed with the command of a great army, and the conduct of a difficult war against the Quadi and Marcomanni.<sup>b</sup> The servile and profligate youths whom Marcus had banished, soon regained their station and influence about the new emperor. They exaggerated the hardships and dangers of a campaign in the wild countries beyond the Danube; and they assured the indolent prince, that the terror of his name, and the arms of his lieutenants, would be sufficient to complete the conquest of the dismayed barbarians, or to impose such conditions, as were more advantageous than any conquest. By a dexterous application to his sensual appetites, they compared the tranquillity, the splendour, the refined pleasures of Rome, with the tumult of a Pannonian camp, which afforded neither leisure nor materials for luxury.<sup>c</sup> Commodus listened to the pleasing advice; but whilst he hesitated between his own inclination, and the awe which he still retained for his father's counsellors, the summer insensibly elapsed, and his triumphal entry into the capital was deferred till the autumn. His graceful person,<sup>d</sup> popular address, and imagined

<sup>a</sup> Dion Cassius, l. lxxii, p. 1203.

<sup>b</sup> According to Tertullian (*Apolog.* c. 25), he died at Sirmium. But the situation of Vindobona, or Vienna, where both the Victors place his death, is better adapted to the operations of the war against the Marcomanni and Quadi.

<sup>c</sup> Herodian, l. i, p. 12.

<sup>d</sup> Herodian, l. i, p. 16.

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IV.

virtues, attracted the public favour; the honourable peace which he had recently granted to the barbarians, diffused an universal joy;<sup>a</sup> his impatience to revisit Rome was fondly ascribed to the love of his country; and his dissolute course of amusements was faintly condemned in a prince of nineteen years of age.

During the three first years of his reign, the forms, and even the spirit of the old administration were maintained by those faithful counselors, to whom Marcus had recommended his son, and for whose wisdom and integrity Commodus still entertained a reluctant esteem. The young prince and his profligate favourites revelled in all the licence of sovereign power; but his hands were yet unstained with blood, and he had even displayed a generosity of sentiment, which might, perhaps, have ripened into solid virtue.<sup>b</sup> A fatal incident decided his fluctuating character.

Is wounded  
by an assassin,  
A. D. 183.

One evening, as the emperor was returning to the palace, through a dark and narrow portico in the amphitheatre,<sup>c</sup> an assassin, who waited his passage, rushed upon him with a drawn sword, loudly exclaiming, "*The senate sends you this.*" The menace prevented the deed; the assassin was seized by the guards, and immediately revealed the authors of the conspiracy. It had been formed

<sup>a</sup> This universal joy is well described (from the medals as well as historians) by Mr. Wotton, *Hist. of Rome*, p. 192, 193.

<sup>b</sup> Manilius, the confidential secretary of Avidius Cassius, was discovered after he had lain concealed several years. The emperor nobly relieved the public anxiety, by refusing to see him, and burning his papers without opening them. *Dion. Cassius*, l. lxxii, p. 1309.

<sup>c</sup> See *Massi degli Amphitheatra*, p. 176.



not in the state, but within the walls of the palace. Lucilla, the emperor's sister, and widow of Lucius Verus, impatient of the second rank, and jealous of the reigning empress, had armed the murderer against her brother's life. She had not ventured to communicate the black design to her second husband Claudius Pompeianus, a senator of distinguished merit and unshaken loyalty; but among the crowd of her lovers (for she imitated the manners of Faustina) she found men of desperate fortunes and wild ambition, who were prepared to serve her more violent, as well as her tender passions. The conspirators experienced the rigour of justice, and the abandoned princess was punished, first with exile, and afterwards with death.<sup>p</sup>

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.....

But the words of the assassin sunk deep into the mind of Commodus, and left an indelible impression of fear and hatred against the whole body of the senate. Those whom he had dreaded as importunate ministers, he now suspected as secret enemies. The delators, a race of men discouraged, and almost extinguished, under the former reigns, again became formidable, as soon as they discovered that the emperor was desirous of finding disaffection and treason in the senate. That assembly, whom Marcus had ever considered as the great council of the nation, was composed of the most distinguished of the Romans; and distinction of every kind soon became criminal.

Hatred and  
cruelty of  
Commodus  
towards the  
senate.

<sup>p</sup> Dion, l. lxxii, p. 1205. Herodian, l. i, p. 16. Hist. August.  
p. 46.

CHAP. The possession of wealth stimulated the diligence  
 IV. of the informers; rigid virtue implied a tacit  
 ~~~~~ censure of the irregularities of Commodus; important services implied a dangerous superiority of merit; and the friendship of the father always ensured the aversion of the son. Suspicion was equivalent to proof; trial to condemnation. The execution of a considerable senator was attended with the death of all who might lament or revenge his fate; and when Commodus had once tasted human blood, he became incapable of pity or remorse.

The Quintilian brothers.

Of these innocent victims of tyranny, none died more lamented than the two brothers of the Quintilian family, Maximus and Cnidianus; whose fraternal love has saved their names from oblivion, and endeared their memory to posterity. Their studies and their occupations, their pursuits and their pleasures, were still the same. In the enjoyment of a great estate, they never admitted the idea of a separate interest; some fragments are now extant of a treatise which they composed in common; and in every action of life it was observed, that their two bodies were animated by one soul. The Antonines, who valued their virtues, and delighted in their union, raised them, in the same year, to the consulship; and Marcus afterwards entrusted to their joint care the civil administration of Greece, and a great military command, in which they obtained a signal victory over the Germans. The

kind cruelty of Commodus united them in death.¹ CHAP. IV.

The tyrant's rage, after having shed the noblest blood of the senate, at length recoiled on the principal instrument of his cruelty. Whilst Commodus was immersed in blood and luxury, he devolved the detail of the public business on Perennis, a servile and ambitious minister, who had obtained his post by the murder of his predecessor, but who possessed a considerable share of vigour and ability. By acts of extortion, and the forfeited estates of the nobles sacrificed to his avarice, he had accumulated an immense treasure. The prætorian guards were under his immediate command; and his son, who already discovered a military genius, was at the head of the Illyrian legions. Perennis aspired to the empire; or what, in the eyes of Commodus, amounted to the same crime, he was capable of aspiring to it, had he not been prevented, surprised, and put to death. The fall of a minister is a very trifling incident in the general history of the empire; but it was hastened by an extraordinary circumstance, which proved how much the nerves of discipline were already relaxed. The legions of Britain, discontented with the administration of Perennis, formed a deputation of fifteen hundred select men, with instructions to march to Rome, and lay their complaints before the emperor. These military petitioners,

¹ In a note upon the Augustan History, Cædemon has collected a number of particulars concerning these celebrated brothers. See p. 99 of his learned commentary.

CHAP. by their own determined behaviour, by inflam-
 IV. ing the divisions of the guards, by exaggerating
 the strength of the British army, and by alarm-
 ing the fears of Commodus, exacted and obtain-
 ed the minister's death, as the only redress of
 their grievances.* This presumption of a dis-
 tant army, and their discovery of the weakness
 of government, was a sure presage of the most
 dreadful convulsions.

Revolt of
 Maternus.

The negligence of the public administration
 was betrayed soon afterwards, by a new disorder,
 which arose from the smallest beginnings. A
 spirit of desertion began to prevail among the
 troops; and the deserters, instead of seeking
 their safety in flight or concealment, infested the
 highways. Maternus, a private soldier, of a
 daring boldness above his station, collected these
 bands of robbers into a little army, set open the
 prisons, invited the slaves to assert their freedom,
 and plundered with impunity the rich and de-
 fenceless cities of Gaul and Spain. The gover-
 nors of the provinces, who had long been the
 spectators, and perhaps the partners, of his de-
 predations, were at length roused from their
 supine indolence by the threatening commands
 of the emperor. Maternus found that he was
 encompassed, and foresaw that he must be over-
 powered. A great effort of despair was his last
 resource. He ordered his followers to disperse,

* Dion, l. lxxii, p. 1210; Herodian, l. i, p. 22; Hist. August.
 p. 48. Dion gives a much less odious character of Perennis, than
 the other historians. His moderation is almost a pledge of his va-
 racity.

to pass the Alps in small parties and various disguises, and to assemble at Rome, during the licentious tumult of the festival of Cybele.* To murder Commodus, and to ascend the vacant throne, was the ambition of no vulgar robber. His measures were so ably concerted, that his concealed troops already filled the streets of Rome. The envy of an accomplice discovered and ruined this singular enterprise, in the moment when it was ripe for execution.†

Suspicious princes often promote the lowest of mankind, from a vain persuasion that those who have no dependence, except on their favour, will have no attachment, except to the person of their benefactor. Cleander, the successor of Perennis, was a Phrygian by birth; of a nation, over whose stubborn, but servile temper, blows only could prevail.‡ He had been sent from his native country to Rome, in the capacity of a slave. As a slave he entered the imperial palace, rendered himself useful to his master's passions, and rapidly ascended to the most exalted station which a subject could enjoy. His influence over the mind of Commodus was much greater than that of his predecessor; for Cleander was devoid of

The minister
Cleans-
der.

* During the second punic war, the Romans imported from Asia the worship of the mother of the gods. Her festival, the *Megalesia*, began on the fourth of April, and lasted six days. The streets were crowded with mad processions, the theatres with spectators, and the public tables with unbidden guests. Order and police were suspended, and pleasure was the only serious business of the city. See Ovid. de Fastis, l. iv, 189, &c.

† Herodian, l. i, p. 23, 28.

‡ Cicero pro Flacco, c. 27.

CHAP.
IV.His avarice and
cruelty.

any ability or virtue which could inspire the emperor with envy or distrust. Avarice was the reigning passion of his soul, and the great principle of his administration. The rank of consul, of patrician, of senator, was exposed to public sale; and it would have been considered as disaffection, if any one had refused to purchase these empty and disgraceful honours with the greatest part of his fortune.² In the lucrative provincial employments, the minister shared with the governor the spoils of the people. The execution of the laws was venal and arbitrary. A wealthy criminal might obtain, not only the reversal of the sentence by which he was justly condemned, but might likewise inflict whatever punishment he pleased on the accuser, the witnesses, and the judge.

By these means, Cleander, in the space of three years, had accumulated more wealth than had ever yet been possessed by any freedman.³ Commodus was perfectly satisfied with the magnificent presents which the artful courtier laid at his feet in the most seasonable moments. To divert the public envy, Cleander, under the emperor's name, erected baths, porticos, and places of exercise, for the use of the people.⁴ He

² One of these dear-bought promotions occasioned a current bon mot, that *Julius Solon* was banished into the senate.

³ Dion (l. lxxii, p. 12, 13) observes, that no freedman had possessed riches equal to those of Cleander. The fortune of Pallas amounted, however, to upwards of five and twenty hundred thousand pounds; *ter millia*.

⁴ Dion, l. lxxii, p. 12, 13; Herodian, l. i, p. 29; Hist. August. p. 52. These baths were situated near the *Porta Capena*. See Nardini *Roma Antica*, p. 79.

flattered himself that the Romans, dazzled and amused by this apparent liberality, would be less affected by the bloody scenes which were daily exhibited; that they would forget the death of Byrrhus, a senator to whose superior merit the late emperor had granted one of his daughters; and that they would forgive the execution of Arius Antoninus, the last representative of the name and virtues of the Antonines. The former, with more integrity than prudence, had attempted to disclose, to his brother-in-law, the true character of Cleander. An equitable sentence pronounced by the latter, when proconsul of Asia, against a worthless creature of the favourite, proved fatal to him.* After the fall of Perennis, the terrors of Commodus had, for a short time, assumed the appearance of a return to virtue. He repealed the most odious of his acts, loaded his memory with the public execration, and ascribed to the pernicious counsels of that wicked minister, all the errors of his inexperienced youth. But his repentance lasted only thirty days; and, under Cleander's tyranny, the administration of Perennis was often regretted.

Pestilence and famine contributed to fill up the measure of the calamities of Rome.† The first Sedition and death of Cleander. A. D. 192. could be only imputed to the just indignation of the gods; but a monopoly of corn, supported by the riches and power of the minister, was con-

* Hist. August. p. 43.

† Herodian, l. i, p. 28; Dion, l. lxxii, p. 1215. The latter says, that two thousand persons died every day at Rome, during a considerable length of time.

CHAP. sidered as the immediate cause of the second.
 IV. The popular discontent, after it had long circulated in whispers, broke out in the assembled circus. The people quitted their favourite amusements, for the more delicious pleasure of revenge, rushed in crowds towards a palace in the suburbs, one of the emperor's retirements, and demanded, with angry clamours, the head of the public enemy. Cleander, who commanded the prætorian guards,* ordered a body of cavalry to sally forth and disperse the seditious multitude. The multitude fled with precipitation towards the city; several were slain, and many more were trampled to death: but when the cavalry entered the streets, their pursuit was checked by a shower of stones and darts from the roofs and windows of the houses. The foot guards,^a who had been long jealous of the prerogatives and insolence of the prætorian cavalry, embraced the party of the people. The tumult became a regular engagement, and threatened a general massacre. The prætorians at length gave way, oppressed with numbers; and the tide of popular fury re-

* *Tuncque primum tres præfecti prætorio fuere: inter quos libertinus.* From some remains of modesty, Cleander declined the title, whilst he assumed the powers of prætorian prefect. As the other freedmen were styled, from their several departments, *a rauribus ab æstolis*, Cleander called himself a *pugione*, as intrusted with the defence of his master's person. Salmasius and Casaubon seem to have talked very idly upon this passage.

^a *Οἱ ἐν πόλει εἰς τὰ στρατώρια.* Herodian, l. i, p. 31. It is doubtful whether he means the prætorian infantry, or the *cohortes urbanæ*, a body of six thousand men, but whose rank and discipline were not equal to their numbers. Neither Tillamont nor Weston choose to decide this question.

turned with redoubled violence against the gates of the palace, where Commodus lay, dissolved in luxury, and alone unconscious of the civil war. It was death to approach his person with the unwelcome news. He would have perished in this supine security, had not two women, his elder sister Fadilla, and Marcia, the most favoured of his concubines, ventured to break into his presence. Bathed in tears, and with dishevelled hair, they threw themselves at his feet; and with all the pressing eloquence of fear, discovered to the affrighted emperor the crimes of the minister, the rage of the people, and the impending ruin which, in a few minutes, would burst over his palace and person. Commodus started from his dream of pleasure, and commanded that the head of Cleander should be thrown out to the people. The desired spectacle instantly appeased the tumult; and the son of Marcus might even yet have regained the affection and confidence of his subjects.*

But every sentiment of virtue and humanity was extinct in the mind of Commodus. Whilst he thus abandoned the reins of empire to these unworthy favourites, he valued nothing in sovereign power, except the unbounded licence of indulging his sensual appetites. His hours were spent in a seraglio of three hundred beautiful women, and as many boys, of every rank, and of every province; and, wherever the arts of seduction proved ineffectual, the brutal lover had

*Disolute
pleasures
of Com-
modus.*

* Dion Cassius, l. lxxii, p. 1215; Herodian, l. i, p. 32; Hist. August. p. 48.

CHAP. recourse to violence. The ancient^f historians
IV. have expatiated on these abandoned scenes of

prostitution, which scorned every restraint of nature or modesty; but it would not be easy to translate their too faithful descriptions into the decency of modern language. The intervals of lust were filled up with the basest amusements.

His ignorance and low sports. The influence of a polite age, and the labour of an attentive education, had never been able to infuse into his rude and brutish mind the least tincture of learning; and he was the first of the Roman emperors totally devoid of taste for the pleasures of the understanding. Nero himself excelled, or affected to excel, in the elegant arts of music and poetry; nor should we despise his pursuits, had he not converted the pleasing relaxation of a leisure hour into the serious business and ambition of his life. But Commodus, from his earliest infancy, discovered an aversion to whatever was rational or liberal, and a fond attachment to the amusements of the populace; the sports of the circus and amphitheatre, the combats of gladiators, and the hunting of wild beasts. The masters in every branch of learning, whom Marcus provided for his son, were heard with inattention and disgust; whilst the Moors and Parthians, who taught him to dart the javelin and to shoot with the bow, found a disciple who delighted in his application, and soon equalled

^f *Scribibus suis constipatis. Ipsas concubinas suas sub oculis suis stuprari jubebat. Nec irascendum in se juvenum crebat infantil, omni parte corporis atque ore in sexum utrunque pollutus. Hist. Ang. p. 47.*

the most skilful of his instructors, in the steadiness of the eye, and the dexterity of the hand.

CHAP.
IV.

The servile crowd, whose fortune depended on their master's vices, applauded these ignoble pursuits. The perfidious voice of flattery reminded him, that by exploits of the same nature, by the defeat of the Nemean lion, and the slaughter of the wild boar of Erymanthus, the Grecian Hercules had acquired a place among the gods, and an immortal memory among men. They only forgot to observe, that, in the first ages of society, when the fiercer animals often dispute with man the possession of an unsettled country, a successful war against those savages is one of the most innocent and beneficial labours of heroism. In the civilized state of the Roman empire, the wild beasts had long since retired from the face of man, and the neighbourhood of populous cities. To surprise them in their solitary haunts, and to transport them to Rome, that they might be slain in pomp by the hand of an emperor, was an enterprise equally ridiculous for the prince, and oppressive for the people.* Ignorant of these distinctions, Commodus eagerly embraced the glorious resemblance, and styled himself (as we

Hunting
of wild
beasts.

* The African lions, when pressed by hunger, infested the open villages and cultivated country; and they infested them with impunity. The royal beast was reserved for the pleasures of the emperor and the capital; and the unfortunate peasant who killed one of them, though in his own defence, incurred a very heavy penalty. This extraordinary game-law was mitigated by Honorius, and finally repealed by Justinian. *Codex Theodos.* tom. v. p. 92, et Comment. Gothofred.

CHAP. still read on his medals^b) the *Roman Hercules*.
 IV. The club and the lion's hide were placed by the
 ~~~~~ side of the throne, amongst the ensigns of so-  
 vereignty; and statues were erected, in which  
 Commodus was represented in the character, and  
 with the attributes of the god, whose valour and  
 dexterity he endeavoured to emulate in the daily  
 course of his ferocious amusements.<sup>c</sup>

Commodus  
 displays  
 his skill in  
 the amphitheatre.

Elated with these praises, which gradually extinguished the innate sense of shame, Commodus resolved to exhibit, before the eyes of the Roman people, those exercises, which till then he had decently confined within the walls of his palace, and to the presence of a few favourites. On the appointed day, the various motives of flattery, fear, and curiosity, attracted to the amphitheatre an innumerable multitude of spectators; and some degree of applause was deservedly bestowed on the uncommon skill of the imperial performer. Whether he aimed at the head or heart of the animal, the wound was alike certain and mortal. With arrows whose point was shaped into the form of a crescent, Commodus often intercepted the rapid career, and cut asunder the long bony neck of the ostrich.<sup>d</sup> A panther was let loose; and the archer waited till he had leaped upon a trembling malefactor. In the same instant the shaft flew, the beast dropt dead, and the man remained unhurt. The dens of the

<sup>a</sup> Spanheim de Numismat. Dissertat. xii, tom. ii, p. 493.

<sup>b</sup> Dion, l. lxxii, p. 1216. Hist. August. p. 49.

<sup>c</sup> The ostrich's neck is three feet long, and composed of seventeen vertebrae. See Buffon, Hist. Naturelle.



amphitheatre disgorged at once a hundred lions; a hundred darts from the unerring hand of Commodus laid them dead as they ran raging round the arena. Neither the huge bulk of the elephant, nor the scaly hide of the rhinoceros, could defend them from his stroke. Ethiopia and India yielded their most extraordinary productions; and several animals were slain in the amphitheatre, which had been seen only in the representations of art, or perhaps of fancy.<sup>1</sup> In all these exhibitions, the securest precautions were used to protect the person of the Roman Hercules from the desperate spring of any savage, who might possibly disregard the dignity of the emperor, and the sanctity of the god.<sup>m</sup>

But the meanest of the populace were affected with shame and indignation when they beheld their sovereign enter the lists as a gladiator, and glory in a profession which the laws and manners of the Romans had branded with the justest note of infamy.<sup>n</sup> He chose the habit and arms of

CHAP.  
IV.  
Acts as a  
gladiator.

<sup>1</sup> Commodus killed a camelopardalis or giraffe (Dion, l. lxxii, p. 1211), the tallest, the most gentle, and the most useless of the large quadrupeds. This singular animal, a native only of the interior parts of Africa, has not been seen in Europe since the revival of letters; and though M. de Buffon (Hist. Naturelle, tom. xiii) has endeavoured to describe, he has not ventured to delineate, the giraffe.

<sup>m</sup> Herodian, l. i, p. 37. Hist. August. p. 50.

<sup>n</sup> The virtuous, and even the wise, princes forbade the senators and knights to embrace this scandalous profession, under pain of infamy, or, what was more dreaded by those prodigate wretches, of exile. The tyrants allured them to dishonour by threats and rewards. Nero once produced, in the arena, forty senators and sixty knights. See Lipsius, Saturnalia, l. ii, c. 2. He has happily corrected a passage of Suetonius, in Nerone, c. 12.

CHAP.  
IV.

the *secutor*, whose combat with the *retiararius* formed one of the most lively scenes in the bloody sports of the amphitheatre. The *secutor* was armed with an helmet, sword, and buckler; his naked antagonist had only a large net and a trident; with the one he endeavoured to entangle, with the other to dispatch, his enemy. If he missed the first throw, he was obliged to fly from the pursuit of the *secutor*, till he had prepared his net for a second cast.\* The emperor fought in this character seven hundred and thirty-five several times. These glorious achievements were carefully recorded in the public acts of the empire; and that he might omit no circumstance of infamy, he received from the common fund of gladiators, a stipend so exorbitant, that it became a new and most ignominious tax upon the Roman people.† It may be easily supposed, that in these engagements the master of the world was always successful: in the amphitheatre his victories were not often sanguinary; but when he exercised his skill in the school of gladiators, or his own palace, his wretched antagonists were frequently honoured with a mortal wound from the hand of Commodus, and obliged to seal their flattery with their blood.‡ He now disdained the appellation of Hercules. The name of Paulus, a celebrated *secutor*, was the only one which

His infamy  
and extravagance.

\* Lipinus, l. ii, c. 7, 8. Juvenal, in the eighth satire, gives a picturesque description of this combat.

† Hist. August. p. 50. Dion. l. lxxii, p. 1220. He received for each time, *decies*, about £8000 sterling.

‡ Victor tells us, that Commodus only allowed his antagonists a leaden weapon, dreading most probably the consequences of their despair.

delighted his ear. It was inscribed on his colossal statues, and repeated in the redoubled acclamations<sup>1</sup> of the mournful and applauding senate.<sup>2</sup> Claudius Pompeianus, the virtuous husband of Lucilla, was the only senator who asserted the honour of his rank. As a father, he permitted his sons to consult their safety by attending the amphitheatre. As a Roman, he declared, that his own life was in the emperor's hands, but that he would never behold the son of Marcus prostituting his person and dignity. Notwithstanding his manly resolution, Pompeianus escaped the resentment of the tyrant, and with his honour, had the good fortune to preserve his life.<sup>3</sup>

Commodus had now attained the summit of vice and infamy. Amidst the acclamations of a flattering court, he was unable to disguise, from himself, that he had deserved the contempt and hatred of every man of sense and virtue in his empire. His ferocious spirit was irritated by the consciousness of that hatred, by the envy of every kind of merit, by the just apprehension of danger, and by the habit of slaughter, which he contracted in his daily amusements. History

<sup>1</sup> They were obliged to repeat six hundred and twenty-six times, *Paulus, first of the servitors, &c.*

<sup>2</sup> Dion, l. lxxii, p. 1221. He speaks of his own baseness and danger.

<sup>3</sup> He mixed, however, some prudence with his courage, and passed the greatest part of his time in a country retirement; alleging his advanced age, and the weakness of his eyes. "I never saw him in the senate," says Dion, "except during the short reign of Pertinax." All his infirmities had suddenly left him, and they returned as suddenly upon the murder of that excellent prince. Dion, l. lxxii, p. 1227.



CHAP. has preserved a long list of consular senators sa-  
IV. crificed to his wanton suspicion, which sought

Conspiracy  
of his do-  
mestics.

out, with peculiar anxiety, those unfortunate persons, connected, however remotely, with the family of the Antonines, without sparing even the ministers of his crimes or pleasures.\* His cruelty proved at last fatal to himself. He had shed with impunity the noblest blood of Rome: he perished as soon as he was dreaded by his own domestics. Marcia his favourite concubine, Eclectus his chamberlain, and Lætus his prætorian prefect, alarmed by the fate of their companions and predecessors, resolved to prevent the destruction which every hour hung over their heads, either from the mad caprice of the tyrant, or the sudden indignation of the people. Marcia seized the occasion of presenting a draught of wine to her lover, after he had fatigued himself with hunting some wild beasts. Commodus retired to sleep; but whilst he was labouring with the effects of poison and drunkenness, a robust youth, by profession a wrestler, entered his chamber, and strangled him without resistance. The body was secretly conveyed out of the palace, before the least suspicion was entertained in the city, or even in the court, of the emperor's death. Such was the fate of the son of Marcus, and so easy was it to destroy a hated tyrant, who, by the artificial powers of government, had oppressed, during thirteen years, so many millions of subjects,

Death of  
Commo-  
dus,  
A. D. 192,  
31st De-  
cember.

\* The prefects were changed almost hourly or daily; and the caprice of Commodus was often fatal to his most favourite chamberlains. Hist. August. p. 46, 51.

each of whom was equal to their master in personal strength and personal abilities.\*

The measures of the conspirators were conducted with the deliberate coolness and celerity which the greatness of the occasion required. They resolved instantly to fill the vacant throne with an emperor whose character would justify and maintain the action that had been committed. They fixed on Pertinax, prefect of the city, an ancient senator of consular rank, whose conspicuous merit had broke through the obscurity of his birth, and raised him to the first honours of the state. He had successively governed most of the provinces of the empire; and in all his great employments, military as well as civil, he had uniformly distinguished himself by the firmness, the prudence, and the integrity of his conduct.† He now remained almost alone of

CHAP.  
IV.

Choice of  
Pertinax  
for emperor.

\* Dion, l. lxxii, p. 1222. Herodian, l. i, p. 43. Hist. August. p. 52.

† Pertinax was a native of Alba Pompeia, in Piedmont, and son of a timber-merchant. The order of his employments (it is marked by Capitolinus) well deserves to be set down, as expressive of the form of government and manners of the age. 1. He was a centurion. 2. Prefect of a cohort in Syria, in the Parthian war, and in Britain. 3. He obtained an ala, or squadron of horse, in Mesia. 4. He was commissary of provisions on the Æmilian way. 5. He commanded the fleet upon the Rhine. 6. He was procurator of Dacia, with a salary of about £1600 a-year. 7. He commanded the veterans of a legion. 8. He obtained the rank of senator. 9. Of prætor. 10. With the command of the first legion in Rhætia and Noricum. 11. He was consul about the year 175. 12. He attended Marcus into the east. 13. He commanded an army on the Danube. 14. He was consular legate of Mesia. 15. Of Dacia. 16. Of Syria. 17. Of Britain. 18. He had the care of the public provisions

CHAP. the friends and ministers of Marcus; and when,  
 IV.  
 at a late hour of the night, he was awakened with the news that the chamberlain and the prefect were at his door, he received them with intrepid resignation, and desired they would execute their master's orders. Instead of death, they offered him the throne of the Roman world. During some moments he distrusted their intentions and assurances. Convinced at length of the death of Commodus, he accepted the purple with a sincere reluctance, the natural effect of his knowledge both of the duties and of the dangers of the supreme rank.\*

He is acknowledged by the prætorian guards;

Lætus conducted without delay his new emperor to the camp of the prætorians, diffusing at the same time through the city a seasonable report that Commodus died suddenly of an apoplexy, and that the virtuous Pertinax had *already* succeeded to the throne. The guards were rather surprised than pleased with the suspicious death of a prince, whose indulgence and liberality they alone had experienced; but the emergency of the occasion, the authority of their prefect, the reputation of Pertinax, and the clamours of the people, obliged them to stifle their secret discontents, to accept the donative promised of the new emperor, to swear allegiance to him, and with joyful acclamations and laurels in their hands to

at Rome. 19. He was proconsul of Africa. 20. Prefect of the city. Herodian (l. i. p. 48) does justice to his disinterested spirit; but Capitolinus, who collected every popular rumour, charges him with a great fortune, acquired by flattery and corruption.

\* Julian, in the *Cæsars*, taxes him with being accessory to the death of Commodus.



conduct him to the senate-house, that the military consent might be ratified by the civil authority.

CHAP.  
IV.

This important night was now far spent; with the dawn of day, and the commencement of the new year, the senators expected a summons to attend an ignominious ceremony. In spite of all remonstrances, even of those of his creatures, who yet preserved any regard for prudence or decency, Commodus had resolved to pass the night in the gladiator's school, and from thence to take possession of the consulship, in the habit and with the attendance of that infamous crew.

and by the  
senate.  
A. D. 193,  
1st Janu-  
ary.

On a sudden, before the break of day, the senate was called together in the temple of Concord, to meet the guards, and to ratify the election of a new emperor. For a few minutes they sat in silent suspense, doubtful of their unexpected deliverance, and suspicious of the cruel artifices of Commodus; but when at length they were assured that the tyrant was no more, they resigned themselves to all the transports of joy and indignation. Pertinax, who modestly represented the meanness of his extraction, and pointed out several noble senators more deserving than himself of the empire, was constrained by their dutiful violence to ascend the throne, and received all the titles of imperial power, confirmed by the most sincere vows of fidelity. The memory of Commodus was branded with eternal infamy. The names of tyrant, of gladiator, of public enemy, resounded in every corner of the house. They decreed, in tumultuous votes, that his honours

The me-  
mory of  
Commodus  
declared  
infamous.

CHAP.  
IV.

should be reversed, his titles erased from the public monuments, his statues thrown down, his body dragged with a hook into the stripping-room of the gladiators, to satiate the public fury; and they expressed some indignation against those officious servants who had already presumed to screen his remains from the justice of the senate. But Pertinax could not refuse those last rites to the memory of Marcus, and the tears of his first protector Claudius Pompeianus, who lamented the cruel fate of his brother-in-law, and lamented still more that he had deserved it.\*

Legal jurisdiction  
of the senate  
over the emperors.

These effusions of impotent rage against a dead emperor, whom the senate had flattered when alive with the most abject servility, betrayed a just but ungenerous spirit of revenge. The legality of these decrees was however supported by the principles of the imperial constitution. To censure, to depose, or to punish with death, the first magistrate of the republic, who had abused his delegated trust, was the ancient and undoubted prerogative of the Roman senate;<sup>b</sup> but that feeble assembly was obliged to content itself with inflicting on a fallen tyrant that public justice, from which, during his life and reign, he had been shielded by the strong arm of military despotism.

\* Capitolinus gives us the particulars of these tumultuary votes, which were moved by one senator, and repeated, or rather chanted, by the whole body. Hist. August. p. 52.

<sup>b</sup> The senate condemned Nero to be put to death *more majestatis*; Scuton, c. 49.

Pertinax found a nobler way of condemning his predecessor's memory, by the contrast of his own virtues with the vices of Commodus. On the day of his accession, he resigned over to his wife and son his whole private fortune, that they might have no pretence to solicit favours at the expence of the state. He refused to flatter the vanity of the former with the title of Augusta; or to corrupt the inexperienced youth of the latter by the rank of Cæsar. Accurately distinguishing between the duties of a parent and those of a sovereign, he educated his son with a severe simplicity, which, while it gave him no assured prospect of the throne, might in time have rendered him worthy of it. In public, the behaviour of Pertinax was grave and affable. He lived with the virtuous part of the senate (and, in a private station, he had been acquainted with the true character of each individual), without either pride or jealousy; considered them as friends and companions, with whom he had shared the dangers of the tyranny, and with whom he wished to enjoy the security of the present time. He very frequently invited them to familiar entertainments, the frugality of which was ridiculed by those who remembered and regretted the luxurious prodigality of Commodus.\*

\* Dion (l. lxxiii, p. 1223) speaks of these entertainments, as a senator who had supped with the emperor. Capitolinus (Hist. August, p. 58), like a slave, who had received his intelligence from one of the scullions.



CHAP.  
IV.

He endeavours to reform the state.

To heal, as far as it was possible, the wounds inflicted by the hand of tyranny, was the pleasing, but melancholy, task of Pertinax. The innocent victims, who yet survived, were recalled from exile, released from prison, and restored to the full possession of their honours and fortunes. The unburied bodies of murdered senators (for the cruelty of Commodus endeavoured to extend itself beyond death) were deposited in the sepulchres of their ancestors; their memory was justified; and every consolation was bestowed on their ruined and afflicted families. Among these consolations, one of the most grateful was the punishment of the delators; the common enemies of their master, of virtue, and of their country. Yet even in the inquisition of these legal assassins, Pertinax proceeded with a steady temper, which gave every thing to justice, and nothing to popular prejudice and resentment.

His regulations,

The finances of the state demanded the most vigilant care of the emperor. Though every measure of injustice and extortion had been adopted, which could collect the property of the subject into the coffers of the prince, the rapaciousness of Commodus had been so very inadequate to his extravagance, that, upon his death, no more than eight thousand pounds were found in the exhausted treasury,<sup>d</sup> to defray the current expences of government, and to discharge the pressing demand of a liberal donative, which

<sup>d</sup> *Decies.* The blameless economy of Pius left his successors a treasure of *vicies septies milles*, above two-and-twenty millions sterling. Dion, l. lxxiii, p. 1231.

the new emperor had been obliged to promise to the prætorian guards. Yet, under these distressed circumstances, Pertinax had the generous firmness to remit all the oppressive taxes invented by Commodus, and to cancel all the unjust claims of the treasury; declaring, in a decree of the senate, "that he was better satisfied to administer a poor republic with innocence, than to acquire riches by the ways of tyranny and dishonour." Economy and industry he considered as the pure and genuine sources of wealth; and from them he soon derived a copious supply for the public necessities. The expence of the household was immediately reduced to one half. All the instruments of luxury, Pertinax exposed to public auction,\* gold and silver plate, chariots of a singular construction, a superfluous wardrobe of silk and embroidery, and a great number of beautiful slaves of both sexes; excepting only, with attentive humanity, those who were born in a state of freedom, and had been ravished from the arms of their weeping parents. At the same time that he obliged the worthless favourites of the tyrant to resign a part of their ill-gotten wealth, he satisfied the just creditors of the state, and unexpectedly discharged the long arrears of honest services. He removed the oppressive restrictions which had been laid upon commerce, and granted all the uncultivated

\* Besides the design of converting these useless ornaments into money, Dion (l. lxxiii, p. 1279) assigns two secret motives of Pertinax. He wished to expose the vices of Commodus, and to discover by the purchasers those who most resembled him.

CHAP.  
IV.and popu-  
larity.Discontent  
of the præ-  
torians.

lands in Italy and the provinces, to those who would improve them; with an exemption from tribute, during the term of ten years.<sup>f</sup>

Such an uniform conduct had already secured to Pertinax the noblest reward of a sovereign, the love and esteem of his people. Those who remembered the virtues of Marcus, were happy to contemplate, in their new emperor, the features of that bright original, and flattered themselves, that they should long enjoy the benign influence of his administration. A hasty zeal to reform the corrupted state, accompanied with less prudence than might have been expected from the years and experience of Pertinax, proved fatal to himself and to his country. His honest indiscretion united against him the servile crowd, who found their private benefit in the public disorders, and who preferred the favour of a tyrant to the inexorable equality of the laws.<sup>g</sup>

Amidst the general joy, the sullen and angry countenance of the prætorian guards betrayed their inward dissatisfaction. They had reluctantly submitted to Pertinax, they dreaded the strictness of the ancient discipline, which he was preparing to restore, and they regretted the licence of the former reign. Their discontents were secretly fomented by Lætus their prefect, who found, when it was too late, that his new emperor would reward a servant, but would not

<sup>f</sup> Though Capitolinus has picked up many idle tales of the private life of Pertinax, he joins with Dion and Herodian in admiring his public conduct.

<sup>g</sup> *Leges rem surdum, inexorabilem esse.* T. Liv. ii. 3.



CHAP.  
IV.

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A conspi-
racy pre-
vented.Murder of
Pertinax
by the
prætori-
ans,
A. D. 193,
March
28th.

be ruled by a favourite. On the third day of his reign, the soldiers seized on a noble senator, with a design to carry him to the camp, and to invest him with the imperial purple. Instead of being dazzled by the dangerous honour, the affrighted victim escaped from their violence, and took refuge at the feet of Pertinax. A short time afterwards, Sosius Falco, one of the consuls of the year, a rash youth,^b but of an ancient and opulent family, listened to the voice of ambition; and a conspiracy was formed during a short absence of Pertinax, which was crushed by his sudden return to Rome, and his resolute behaviour. Falco was on the point of being justly condemned to death as a public enemy, had he not been saved by the earnest and sincere entreaties of the injured emperor, who conjured the senate, that the purity of his reign might not be stained by the blood even of a guilty senator.

These disappointments served only to irritate the rage of the prætorian guards. On the twenty-eighth of March, eighty-six days only after the death of Commodus, a general sedition broke out in the camp, which the officers wanted either power or inclination to suppress. Two or three hundred of the most desperate soldiers marched at noon-day with arms in their hands and fury in their looks, towards the imperial palace. The gates were thrown open by their companions

^b If we credit Capitolinus (which is rather difficult), Falco behaved with the most petulant indecency to Pertinax, on the day of his accession. The wise emperor only admonished him of his youth and inexperience. Hist. August. p. 55.

CHAP.
IV.

upon guard; and by the domestics of the old court, who had already formed a secret conspiracy against the life of the too virtuous emperor. On the news of their approach, Pertinax, disdaining either flight or concealment, advanced to meet his assassins; and recalled to their minds his own innocence, and the sanctity of their recent oath. For a few moments they stood in silent suspense, ashamed of their atrocious design, and awed by the venerable aspect and majestic firmness of their sovereign, till at length the despair of pardon reviving their fury, a barbarian of the country of Tongres¹ levelled the first blow against Pertinax, who was instantly dispatched with a multitude of wounds. His head, separated from his body, and placed on a lance, was carried in triumph to the prætorian camp, in the sight of a mournful and indignant people, who lamented the unworthy fate of that excellent prince, and the transient blessings of a reign, the memory of which could serve only to aggravate their approaching misfortunes.²

¹ The modern bishopric of Liège. This soldier probably belonged to the Batavian horse-guards, who were mostly raised in the duchy of Gueldres, and the neighbourhood, and were distinguished by their valour, and by the boldness with which they swam their horses across the broadest and most rapid rivers. Tacit. Hist. iv, 12. Dion. l. iv, p. 797. Lælius de magnitudine Romanæ, l. i, c. 4.

² Dion, l. lxxiii, p. 1232. Herodian, l. ii, p. 60. Hist. August. p. 58. Victor in Epitom. et in Cæsariis. Eutropius, viii, 16.

CHAP. V.

Public sale of the empire to Didius Julianus by the prætorian guards.—Clodius Albinus in Britain, Pescennius Niger in Syria, and Septimius Severus in Pannonia, declare against the murderers of Pertinax.—Civil wars and victory of Severus over his three rivals.—Relaxation of discipline.—New maxims of government.

THE power of the sword is more sensibly felt in an extensive monarchy, than in a small community. It has been calculated by the ablest politicians, that no state, without being soon exhausted, can maintain above the hundredth part of its members in arms and idleness. But although this relative proportion may be uniform, the influence of the army over the rest of the society will vary according to the degree of its positive strength. The advantages of military science and discipline cannot be exerted, unless a proper number of soldiers are united into one body, and actuated by one soul. With a handful of men, such an union would be ineffectual; with an unwieldy host, it would be impracticable; and the powers of the machine would be alike destroyed by the extreme minuteness, or the excessive weight, of its springs. To illustrate this observation, we need only reflect, that there is no superiority of natural strength, artificial weapons, or acquired skill, which could

CHAP.
V.

Proportion
of the mili-
tary force,
to the num-
ber of the
people.

CHAP.
V.

enable one man to keep in constant subjection one hundred of his fellow-creatures: the tyrant of a single town, or a small district, would soon discover that an hundred armed followers were a weak defence against ten thousand peasants or citizens; but an hundred thousand well-disciplined soldiers will command, with despotic sway, ten millions of subjects; and a body of ten or fifteen thousand guards will strike terror into the most numerous populace that ever crowded the streets of an immense capital.

The præ-
torian
guards.

Their in-
stitution.

The prætorian bands, whose licentious fury was the first symptom and cause of the decline of the Roman empire, scarcely amounted to the last-mentioned number.* They derived their institution from Augustus. That crafty tyrant, sensible that laws might colour, but that arms alone could maintain, his usurped dominion, had gradually formed this powerful body of guards, in constant readiness to protect his person, to awe the senate, and either to prevent or to crush the first motions of rebellion. He distinguished these favoured troops by a double pay, and superior privileges; but, as their formidable aspect would at once have alarmed and irritated the Roman people, three cohorts only were stationed in the capital; whilst the remainder was dis-

* They were originally nine or ten thousand men (for Tacitus and Dion are not agreed upon the subject), divided into as many cohorts. Vitellius increased them to sixteen thousand, and, as far as we can learn from inscriptions, they never afterwards sunk much below that number. See Lipsius de magnitudine Romanâ, i. 4.

persed in the adjacent towns of Italy.^b But CHAP.
 after fifty years of peace and servitude, Tiberius V.
 ventured on a decisive measure, which for ever
 rivetted the fetters of his country. Under the
 fair pretences of relieving Italy from the heavy
 burthen of military quarters, and of introducing
 a stricter discipline among the guards, he as-
 sembled them at Rome, in a permanent camp,^c
 which was fortified with skilful care,^d and placed
 on a commanding situation.^e

Such formidable servants are always necessary, ^{Their}
 but often fatal, to the throne of despotism. By ^{strength}
 thus introducing the prætorian guards as it were ^{and con-}
 into the palace and the senate, the emperors ^{fidence.}
 taught them to perceive their own strength, and
 the weakness of the civil government; to view
 the vices of their masters with familiar contempt,
 and to lay aside that reverential awe, which dis-
 tance only, and mystery, can preserve, towards
 an imaginary power. In the luxurious idleness
 of an opulent city, their pride was nourished by
 the sense of their irresistible weight; nor was it
 possible to conceal from them, that the person of
 the sovereign, the authority of the senate, the
 public treasure, and the seat of empire, were all

^b Sueton. in August. c. 49.

^c Tacit. Annal. iv, 2. Sueton. in Tiber. c. 37. Dion Cassius, l. lvi, p. 867.

^d In the civil war between Vitellius and Vespasian, the prætorian camp was attacked and defended with all the machines used in the siege of the best fortified cities. Tacit. Hist. iii, 84.

^e Close to the walls of the city, on the broad summit of the Quirinal and Viminal hills. See Nardini Roma Antica, p. 174. Donatus de Roma Antica, p. 46.



CHAP.
V.
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in their hands. To divert the prætorian bands from these dangerous reflections, the firmest and best-established princes were obliged to mix blandishments with commands, rewards with punishments, to flatter their pride, indulge their pleasures, connive at their irregularities, and to purchase their precarious faith by a liberal donative: which, since the elevation of Claudius, was exacted as a legal claim, on the accession of every new emperor.^f

Their
specious
claims, g

The advocates of the guards endeavoured to justify by arguments, the power which they asserted by arms; and to maintain that, according to the purest principles of the constitution, *their* consent was essentially necessary in the appointment of an emperor. The election of consuls, of generals, and of magistrates, however it had been recently usurped by the senate, was the ancient and undoubted right of the Roman people.^g But where was the Roman people to be found? Not surely amongst the mixed multitude of slaves and strangers that filled the streets of Rome; a servile populace, as devoid of spirit as destitute of property. The defenders of the state,

^f Claudius, raised by the soldiers to the empire, was the first who gave a donative. He gave *quina dena*, £120 (Sueton. in Claud. c. 10): when Marcus, with his colleague Lucius Verus, took quiet possession of the throne, he gave *vicena*, £160, to each of the guards. Hist. August. p. 25. (Dion, l. lxxiii, p. 1231). We may form some idea of the amount of these sums, by Hadrian's complaint, that the promotion of a Caesar had cost him *ter milles*, two millions and a half sterling.

^g Cicero de Legibus, iii, 3. The first book of Livy, and the second of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, shew the authority of the people, even in the election of the kings.

selected from the flower of the Italian youth,^a CHAP.
 and trained in the exercise of arms and virtue, V.
 were the genuine representatives of the people,
 and the best entitled to elect the military chief of
 the republic. These assertions, however defective
 in reason, became unanswerable, when the fierce
 prætorians increased their weight, by throwing,
 like the barbarian conqueror of Rome, their
 swords into the scale.¹

The prætorians had violated the sanctity of
 the throne, by the atrocious murder of Pertinax;
 they dishonoured the majesty of it, by their sub-
 sequent conduct. The camp was without a leader,
 for even the præfect Lætus, who had excited the
 tempest, prudently declined the public indigna-
 tion. Amidst the wild disorder Sulpicianus, the
 emperor's father-in-law, and governor of the
 city, who had been sent to the camp on the first
 alarm of mutiny, was endeavouring to calm the
 fury of the multitude, when he was silenced by
 the clamorous return of the murderers, bearing
 on a lance the head of Pertinax. Though his-
 tory has accustomed us to observe every principle
 and every passion yielding to the imperious dic-
 tates of ambition, it is scarcely credible that in
 these moments of horror, Sulpicianus should
 have aspired to ascend a throne polluted with the

^a They were originally recruited in Latium, Etruria, and the old colonies (Tacit. Annal. iv. 5). The emperor Otho compliments their vanity, with the flattering titles of *Italiae Alumni*, *Romani vere juvenes*. Tacit. Hist. i. 84.

¹ In the siege of Rome by the Gauls. See Livy, v. 48. Plutarch, in Camill. p. 143.

CHAP. V.
recent blood of so near a relation, and so excellent a prince. He had already begun to use the only effectual argument, and to treat for the imperial dignity; but the more prudent of the prætorians, apprehensive that, in this private contract, they should not obtain a just price for so valuable a commodity, ran out upon the ramparts, and, with a loud voice, proclaimed that the Roman world was to be disposed of to the best bidder by public auction.³

It is purchased by Julian, A. D. 193, March 28.

This infamous offer, the most insolent excess of military licence, diffused an universal grief, shame, and indignation throughout the city. It reached at length the ears of Didius Julianus, a wealthy senator, who, regardless of the public calamities, was indulging himself in the luxury of the table.⁴ His wife and his daughter, his freedmen and his parasites, easily convinced him that he deserved the throne, and earnestly conjured him to embrace so fortunate an opportunity. The vain old man hastened to the prætorian camp, where Sulpicianus was still in treaty with the guards; and began to bid against him from the foot of the rampart. The unworthy negotiation was transacted by faithful emissaries, who passed alternately from one candidate to the other, and acquainted each of them with the

³ Dion, l. lxxiii. p. 1234. Herodian, l. ii. p. 63. Hist. August. p. 60. Though the three historians agree that it was in fact an auction, Herodian alone affirms that it was proclaimed as such by the soldiers.

⁴ Spartianus softens the most odious parts of the character and elevation of Julian.

offers of his rival. Sulpicianus had already pro-
 mised a donative of five thousand drachms (above
 one hundred and sixty pounds) to each soldier;
 when Julian, eager for the prize, rose at once
 to the sum of six thousand two hundred and fifty
 drachms, or upwards of two hundred pounds
 sterling. The gates of the camp were instantly
 thrown open to the purchaser; he was declared
 emperor, and received an oath of allegiance from
 the soldiers, who retained humanity enough to
 stipulate that he should pardon and forget the
 competition of Sulpicianus.

It was now incumbent on the prætorians to
 fulfil the conditions of the sale. They placed
 their new sovereign, whom they served and de-
 spised, in the centre of their ranks, surrounded
 him on every side with their shields, and con-
 ducted him in close order of battle through the
 deserted streets of the city. The senate was com-
 manded to assemble; and those who had been
 the distinguished friends of Pertinax, or the per-
 sonal enemies of Julian, found it necessary to
 affect a more than common share of satisfaction
 at this happy revolution.^m After Julian had
 filled the senate-house with armed soldiers, he
 expatiated on the freedom of his election, his
 own eminent virtues, and his full assurance of the
 affections of the senate. The obsequious assem-
 bly congratulated their own and the public feli-
 city; engaged their allegiance, and conferred
 on him all the several branches of the imperial

CHAP.
V.

Julian is
acknow-
ledged by
the senate.

^m Dion Cassius, at that time prætor, had been a personal enemy to Julian, l. lxxii, p. 1135.

CHAP.

V.

Takes possession of the palace.

power.* From the senate Julian was conducted, by the same military procession, to take possession of the palace. The first objects that struck his eyes, were the abandoned trunk of Pertinax, and the frugal entertainment prepared for his supper. The one he viewed with indifference; the other with contempt. A magnificent feast was prepared by his order, and he amused himself till a very late hour, with dice, and the performances of Pylades, a celebrated dancer. Yet it was observed, that after the crowd of flatterers dispersed, and left him to darkness, solitude, and terrible reflection, he passed a sleepless night; revolving most probably in his mind his own rash folly, the fate of his virtuous predecessor, and the doubtful and dangerous tenure of an empire, which had not been acquired by merit, but purchased by money.^o

he public
discontent.

He had reason to tremble. On the throne of the world he found himself without a friend, and even without an adherent. The guards themselves were ashamed of the prince whom their avarice had persuaded them to accept; nor was there a citizen who did not consider his elevation with horror, as the last insult on the Roman name. The nobility, whose conspicuous station and ample possessions exacted the strictest caution, dissembled their sentiments, and met the affected

* Hist. August. p. 61. We learn from thence one curious circumstance, that the new emperor, whatever had been his birth, was immediately aggregated to the number of patrician families.

^o Dion, l. lxxiii. p. 1235. Hist. August. p. 61. I have endeavoured to blend into one consistent story the seeming contradictions of the two writers.

civility of the emperor with smiles of complacency, and professions of duty. But the people, secure in their numbers and obscurity, gave a free vent to their passions. The streets and public places of Rome resounded with clamours and imprecations. The enraged multitude affronted the person of Julian, rejected his liberality, and, conscious of the impotence of their own resentment, they called aloud on the legions of the frontiers to assert the violated majesty of the Roman empire.

The public discontent was soon diffused from the centre to the frontiers of the empire. The armies of Britain, of Syria, and of Illyricum, lamented the death of Pertinax, in whose company, or under whose command, they had so often fought and conquered. They received with surprise, with indignation, and perhaps with envy, the extraordinary intelligence, that the prætorians had disposed of the empire by public auction; and they sternly refused to ratify the ignominious bargain. Their immediate and unanimous revolt was fatal to Julian, but it was fatal, at the same time, to the public peace; as the generals of the respective armies, Clodius Albinus, Pescennius Niger, and Septimius Severus, were still more anxious to succeed than to revenge the murdered Pertinax. Their forces were exactly balanced. Each of them was at the head of three legions,^p with a numerous train of auxiliaries; and, however different in their

CHAP.
V.
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The armies  
of Britain,  
Syria, and  
Pannonia,  
declare  
against  
Julian.

CHAP. characters, they were all soldiers of experience  
V. and capacity.

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Clodius
Albinus in
Britain.

Clodius Albinus, governor of Britain, surpassed both his competitors in the nobility of his extraction, which he derived from some of the most illustrious names of the old republic.^a But the branch from whence he claimed his descent, was sunk into mean circumstances, and transplanted into a remote province. It is difficult to form a just idea of his true character. Under the philosophic cloak of austerity, he stands accused of concealing most of the vices which degrade human nature.^b But his accusers are those venal writers who adored the fortune of Severus, and trampled on the ashes of an unsuccessful rival. Virtue, or the appearances of virtue, recommended Albinus to the confidence and good opinion of Marcus; and his preserving with the son the same interest which he had acquired with the father, is a proof at least that he was possessed of a very flexible disposition. The favour of a tyrant does not always suppose a want of merit in the object of it; he may, without intending it, reward a man of worth and ability, or he may find such a man useful to his own service. It does not appear that Albinus served the son of Marcus, either as the minister of his cruelties, or even as the associate of his pleasures.

^a The Posthumian and the Cæjonian, the former of whom was raised to the consulship in the fifth year after its institution.

^b Spartianus, in his undigested collections, mixes up all the virtues and all the vices that enter into the human composition, and bestows them on the same object. Such, indeed, are many of the characters in the Augustan history.

He was employed in a distant honourable command, when he received a confidential letter from the emperor, acquainting him of the treasonable designs of some discontented generals, and authorising him to declare himself the guardian and successor of the throne, by assuming the title and ensigns of Cæsar.* The governor of Britain wisely declined the dangerous honour, which would have marked him for the jealousy, or involved him in the approaching ruin, of Commodus. He courted power by nobler, or, at least, by more specious arts. On a premature report of the death of the emperor, he assembled his troops; and, in an eloquent discourse, deplored the inevitable mischiefs of despotism, described the happiness and glory which their ancestors had enjoyed under the consular government, and declared his firm resolution to reinstate the senate and people in their legal authority. This popular harangue was answered by the loud acclamations of the British legions, and received at Rome with a secret murmur of applause. Safe in the possession of this little world, and in the command of an army less distinguished indeed for discipline than for numbers and valour,† Albinus braved the menaces of Commodus, maintained towards Pertinax a stately ambiguous reserve, and instantly declared against

* Hist. August. p. 80, 84.

† Pertinax, who governed Britain a few years before, had been left for dead, in a mutiny of the soldiers. Hist. August. p. 54. Yet they loved and regretted him; *admirantibus eam virtutem cui irascuntur.*

CHAP. V. the usurpation of Julian. The convulsions of the capital added new weight to his sentiments, or rather to his professions of patriotism. A regard to decency induced him to decline the lofty titles of Augustus and emperor; and he imitated perhaps the example of Galba, who, on a similar occasion, had styled himself the lieutenant of the senate and people."

Pescennius
Niger in
Syria.

Personal merit alone had raised Pescennius Niger, from an obscure birth and station, to the government of Syria; a lucrative and important command, which, in times of civil confusion, gave him a near prospect of the throne. Yet his parts seem to have been better suited to the second than to the first rank; he was an unequal rival, though he might have approved himself an excellent lieutenant, to Severus, who afterwards displayed the greatness of his mind by adopting several useful institutions from a vanquished enemy.* In his government, Niger acquired the esteem of the soldiers, and the love of the provincials. His rigid discipline fortified the valour, and confirmed the obedience of the former, whilst the voluptuous Syrians were less delighted with the mild firmness of his administration, than with the affability of his manners, and the apparent pleasure with which he attended their frequent and pompous festivals.† As soon as the intel-

* Sueton. in Galb. c. 10.

† Hist. August. p. 76.

‡ Herod. l. ii, p. 68. The chronicle of John Malala, of Antioch, shews the zealous attachment of his countrymen to these festivals, which at once gratified their superstition, and their love of pleasure.

ligence of the atrocious murder of Pertinax had reached Antioch, the wishes of Asia invited Niger to assume the imperial purple, and revenge his death. The legions of the eastern frontier embraced his cause; the opulent but unarmed provinces from the frontiers of Ethiopia* to the Hadriatic, cheerfully submitted to his power; and the kings beyond the Tygris and the Euphrates congratulated his election, and offered him their homage and services. The mind of Niger was not capable of receiving this sudden tide of fortune; he flattered himself that his accession would be undisturbed by competition, and unstained by civil blood; and whilst he enjoyed the vain pomp of triumph, he neglected to secure the means of victory. Instead of entering into an effectual negotiation with the powerful armies of the West, whose resolution might decide, or at least must balance, the mighty contest; instead of advancing without delay towards Rome and Italy, where his presence was impatiently expected,^a Niger trifled away, in the luxury of Antioch, those irretrievable moments which were diligently improved by the decisive activity of Severus.^b

* A king of Thebes, in Egypt, is mentioned in the Augustan history as an ally, and, indeed, as a personal friend, of Niger. If Spartianus is not, as I strongly suspect, mistaken, he has brought to light a dynasty of tributary princes totally unknown to history.

^a Dion, l. lxxiii, p. 1238. Herod. l. ii, p. 67. A verse in every one's mouth at that time, seems to express the general opinion of the three rivals: *Optimus est Niger, bonus Afer, penissimus Allex*. Hist. August. p. 75.

^b Herodian, l. ii, p. 71.

CHAP.
V.Pannonia
and Dal-
matia.

The country of Pannonia and Dalmatia, which occupied the space between the Danube and the Hadriatic, was one of the last and most difficult conquests of the Romans. In the defence of national freedom, two hundred thousand of these barbarians had once appeared in the field, alarmed the declining age of Augustus, and exercised the vigilant prudence of Tiberius at the head of the collected force of the empire.* The Pannonians yielded at length to the arms and institutions of Rome. Their recent subjection, however, the neighbourhood, and even the mixture of the unconquered tribes, and perhaps the climate, adapted, as it has been observed, to the production of great bodies and slow minds,^d all contributed to preserve some remains of their original ferocity, and under the tame and uniform countenance of Roman provincials, the hardy features of the natives were still to be discerned. Their warlike youth afforded an inexhaustible supply of recruits to the legions stationed on the banks of the Danube, and which, from a perpetual warfare against the Germans and Sarmatians, were deservedly esteemed the best troops in the service.

Septimius
severus.

The Pannonian army was at this time commanded by Septimius Severus, a native of Africa, who, in the gradual ascent of private honours, had concealed his daring ambition, which was

* See an account of that memorable war in Velleius Paterculus, ii. 110, &c. who served in the army of Tiberius.

^d Such is the reflection of Herodian, l. ii. p. 74. Will the modern Austrians allow the influence?

never diverted from its steady course by the allurements of pleasure, the apprehension of danger, or the feelings of humanity.* On the first news of the murder of Pertinax, he assembled his troops, painted in the most lively colours the crime, the insolence, and the weakness of the prætorian guards, and animated the legions to arms and to revenge. He concluded (and the peroration was thought extremely eloquent) with promising every soldier about four hundred pounds; an honourable donative, double in value to the infamous bribe with which Julian had purchased the empire.^f The acclamations of the army immediately saluted Severus with the names of Augustus, Pertinax, and emperor; and he thus attained the lofty station to which he was invited, by conscious merit and a long train of dreams and omens, the fruitful offspring either of his superstition or policy.^g

CHAP.
V.

Declared
emperor by
the Panno-
nian leg-
ions,
A. D. 193.
April 13.

The new candidate for empire saw and improved the peculiar advantage of his situation. His province extended to the Julian Alps, which

* In the letter to Albinus, already mentioned, Commodus accuses Severus, as one of the ambitious generals who censured his conduct, and wished to occupy his place. Hist. August. p. 80.

^f Pannonia was too poor to supply such a sum. It was probably promised in the camp, and paid at Rome, after the victory. In fixing the sum, I have adopted the conjecture of Cassaubon. See Hist. August. p. 66. Comment. p. 113.

^g Herodian, l. ii. p. 78. Severus was declared emperor on the banks of the Danube, either at Carnuntum, according to Spartianus (Hist. August. p. 63), or else at Sabaria, according to Victor. Mr. Hume, in supposing that the birth and dignity of Severus were too much inferior to the imperial crown, and that he marched into Italy as general only, has not considered this transaction with his usual accuracy (Essay on the original contract).

CHAP. V. gave an easy access into Italy; and he remembered the saying of Augustus, that a Pannonian army might in ten days appear in sight of Rome.^b

Marches into Italy. By a celerity proportioned to the greatness of the occasion, he might reasonably hope to revenge Pertinax, punish Julian, and receive the homage of the senate and people, as their lawful emperor, before his competitors, separated from Italy by an immense tract of sea and land, were apprised of his success, or even of his election. During the whole expedition he scarcely allowed himself any moments for sleep or food; marching on foot, and in complete armour, at the head of his columns, he insinuated himself into the confidence and affection of his troops, pressed their diligence, revived their spirits, animated their hopes, and was well satisfied to share the hardships of the meanest soldier, whilst he kept in view the infinite superiority of his reward.

Advances towards Rome.

The wretched Julian had expected, and thought himself prepared to dispute the empire with the governor of Syria; but in the invincible and rapid approach of the Pannonian legions, he saw his inevitable ruin. The hasty arrival of every messenger increased his just apprehensions. He was successively informed, that Severus had passed the Alps; that the Italian cities, unwilling or unable to oppose his progress, had received him with the warmest professions of joy and duty; that the

^b Velleius Paterculus, l. II, c. 3. We must reckon the march from the nearest verge of Pannonia, and extend the sight of the city as far as two hundred miles.

important place of Ravenna had surrendered without resistance, and that the Hadriatic fleet was in the hands of the conqueror. The enemy was now within two hundred and fifty miles of Rome; and every moment diminished the narrow span of life and empire allotted to Julian.

He attempted, however, to prevent, or at least to protract, his ruin. He implored the venal faith of the prætorians, filled the city with unavailing preparations for war, drew lines round the suburbs, and even strengthened the fortifications of the palace; as if those last entrenchments could be defended without hope of relief against a victorious invader. Fear and shame prevented the guards from deserting his standard; but they trembled at the name of the Pannonian legions, commanded by an experienced general, and accustomed to vanquish the barbarians on the frozen Danube.¹ They quitted, with a sigh, the pleasures of the baths and theatres, to put on arms, whose use they had almost forgotten, and beneath the weight of which they were oppressed. The unpractised elephants, whose uncouth appearance, it was hoped, would strike terror into the army of the North, threw their unskilful riders; and the awkward evolutions of the marines, drawn from the fleet of Misenum, were an object of ridicule to the populace; whilst the senate enjoyed,

¹ This is not a puerile figure of rhetoric, but an allusion to a real fact, recorded by Dio, l. lxxi, p. 1181. It probably happened more than once.

CHAP. with secret pleasure, the distress and weakness
V. of the usurper.²

His uncertain conduct.

Every motion of Julian betrayed his trembling perplexity. He insisted that Severus should be declared a public enemy by the senate. He entreated that the Pannonian general might be associated to the empire. He sent public ambassadors of consular rank to negotiate with his rival; he dispatched private assassins to take away his life. He designed that the vestal virgins, and all the colleges of priests, in their sacerdotal habits, and bearing before them the sacred pledges of the Roman religion, should advance, in solemn procession, to meet the Pannonian legions; and, at the same time, he vainly tried to interrogate, or to appease, the fates, by magic ceremonies, and unlawful sacrifices.¹

Is deserted by the praetorians.

Severus, who dreaded neither his arms nor his enchantments, guarded himself from the only danger of secret conspiracy, by the faithful attendance of six hundred chosen men, who never quitted his person or their cuirasses, either by night or by day, during the whole march. Advancing with a steady and rapid course, he passed, without difficulty, the defiles of the Appenines, received into his party the troops and ambassadors, sent to retard his progress, and made a short halt at Interamnina, about seventy miles from

² Dion, l. lxxiii. p. 1233. Herodian, l. ii. p. 81. There is no stronger proof of the military skill of the Romans, than their first surmounting the idle terror, and afterwards disdaining the dangerous use, of elephants in war.

¹ Hist. August. p. 62, 63.

Rome. His victory was already secure; but the despair of the prætorians might have rendered it bloody; and Severus had the laudable ambition of ascending the throne without drawing the sword.^a His emissaries, dispersed in the capital, assured the guards, that provided they would abandon their worthless prince, and the perpetrators of the murder of Pertinax, to the justice of the conqueror, he would no longer consider that melancholy event as the act of the whole body. The faithless prætorians, whose resistance was supported only by sullen obstinacy, gladly complied with the easy conditions, seized the greatest part of the assassins, and signified to the senate, that they no longer defended the cause of Julian. That assembly, convoked by the consul, unanimously acknowledged Severus as lawful emperor, decreed divine honours to Pertinax, and pronounced a sentence of deposition and death against his unfortunate successor. Julian was conducted into a private apartment of the baths of the palace, and beheaded as a common criminal, after having purchased, with an immense treasure, an anxious and precarious reign of only sixty-six days.^b The almost incredible expedition of Severus, who, in so short a space of time, conducted a numerous army from the banks of the Danube to those of the Tyber,

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V.

and condemned and executed by order of the senate, A. D. 193. June 2.

^a Viegur and Eutropius, viii, 17, mention a combat near the Milvian bridge, the *Ponte Molle*, unknown to the better and more ancient writers.

^b Dion, l. lxxiii, p. 1249. Herodian, l. ii, p. 83. Hist. August. p. 63.

CHAP.
V.

proves at once the plenty of provisions produced by agriculture and commerce, the goodness of the roads, the discipline of the legions, and the indolent subdued temper of the provinces.*

Disgrace of
the præ-
torian
guards.

The first cares of Severus were bestowed on two measures, the one dictated by policy, the other by decency; the revenge, and the honours, due to the memory of Pertinax. Before the new emperor entered Rome, he issued his commands to the prætorian guards, directing them to wait his arrival on a large plain near the city, without arms, but in the habits of ceremony in which they were accustomed to attend their sovereign. He was obeyed by those haughty troops, whose contrition was the effect of their just terrors. A chosen part of the Illyrian army encompassed them with levelled spears. Incapable of flight or resistance, they expected their fate in silent consternation. Severus mounted the tribunal, sternly reproached them with peridy and cowardice, dismissed them with ignominy from the trust which they had betrayed, despoiled them of their splendid ornaments, and banished them, on pain of death, to the distance of an hundred miles from the capital. During the transaction,

* From these sixty-six days we must first deduct sixteen, as Pertinax was murdered on the 28th of March, and Severus most probably elected on the 13th of April (see Hist. August. p. 65, and Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. III, p. 323, note 7). We cannot allow less than ten days after his election, to put a numerous army in motion. Forty days remain for this rapid march; and as we may compute about eight hundred miles from Rome to the neighbourhood of Vienna, the army of Severus marched twenty miles every day, without halt or intermission.

another detachment had been sent to seize their arms, occupy their camp, and prevent the hasty consequences of their despair.⁶ CHAP.
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The funeral and consecration of Pertinax was next solemnized with every circumstance of sad magnificence.⁷ The senate, with a melancholy pleasure, performed the last rites to that excellent prince, whom they had loved, and still regretted. The concern of his successor was probably less sincere. He esteemed the virtues of Pertinax, but those virtues would for ever have confined his ambition to a private station. Severus pronounced his funeral oration with studied eloquence, inward satisfaction, and well-acted sorrow; and, by this pious regard to his memory, convinced the credulous multitude that *he alone* was worthy to supply his place. Sensible, however, that arms, not ceremonies, must assert his claim to the empire, he left Rome at the end of thirty days, and without suffering himself to be elated by this easy victory, prepared to encounter his more formidable rivals.

The uncommon abilities and fortune of Severus, have induced an elegant historian to compare him with the first and greatest of the Cæsars.⁸ The parallel is, at least, imperfect. Where shall we find, in the character of Severus, the commanding superiority of soul, the generous clemency, and the various genius, which could

⁶ Dion, l. lxxiv, p. 1241. Herodian, l. ii, p. 84.

⁷ Dion, l. lxxiv, p. 1244; who assisted at the ceremony as a spectator, gives a most pompous description of it.

Herodian, l. iii, p. 112.

⁸ Success of Severus against Niger, and against Albinus.

CHAP. V. reconcile and unite the love of pleasure, the thirst
 of knowledge, and the fire of ambition? In
 one instance only, they may be compared, with
 some degree of propriety, in the celerity of their
 motions, and their civil victories. In less than
 four years,* Severus subdued the riches of the
 east, and the valour of the west. He vanquished
 two competitors of reputation and ability, and
 defeated numerous armies, provided with weapons
 and discipline equal to his own. In that age,
 the art of fortification, and the principles of tactics,
 were well understood by all the Roman generals;
 and the constant superiority of Severus was that
 of an artist, who uses the same instruments with
 more skill and industry than his rivals. I shall
 not, however, enter into a minute narrative of
 these military operations; but as the two civil wars
 against Niger and against Albinus, were almost the
 same in their conduct, event, and consequences,
 I shall collect into one point of view, the most
 striking circumstances, tending to develop the
 character of the conqueror, and the state of the
 empire.

Conduct of the two civil wars. Falsehood and insincerity, unsuitable as they
 seem to the dignity of public transactions, offend

* Though it is not, most assuredly, the intention of Lucan, to exalt the character of Cæsar, yet the idea he gives of that hero, in the tenth book of the *Pharsalia*, where he describes him, at the same time, making love to Cleopatra, sustaining a siege against the power of Egypt, and conversing with the sages of the country, is, in reality, the noblest panegyric.

* Beckoning from his election, April 13, 193, to the death of Albinus, February 19, 197. See Tillamont's *Chronology*.

us with a less degrading idea of meanness, than when they are found in the intercourse of private life. In the latter, they discover a want of courage; in the other, only a defect of power; and as it is impossible for the most able statesman to subdue millions of followers and enemies by their own personal strength, the world, under the name of policy, seems to have granted them a very liberal indulgence of craft and dissimulation. Yet the arts of Severus cannot be justified by the most ample privileges of state reason. He promised, only to betray; he flattered, only to ruin; and however he might occasionally bind himself by oaths and treaties, his conscience, obsequious to his interest, always released him from the inconvenient obligation."

CHAP.

V.

Arts of
Severus

If his two competitors, reconciled by their common danger, had advanced upon him without delay, perhaps Severus would have sunk under their united effort. Had they even attacked him, at the same time, with separate views and separate armies, the contest might have been long and doubtful. But they fell, singly and successively, an easy prey to the arts as well as arms of their subtle enemy, lulled into security by the moderation of his professions, and overwhelmed by the rapidity of his action. He first marched against Niger, whose reputation and power he the most dreaded; but he declined any hostile declarations, suppressed the name of his antagonist, and only signified to the senate and people,

towards
Niger;

CHAP.

V.

.....

his intention of regulating the eastern provinces. In private he spoke of Niger, his old friend and intended successor,² with the most affectionate regard, and highly applauded his generous design of revenging the murder of Pertinax. To punish the vile usurper of the throne, was the duty of every Roman general. To persevere in arms, and to resist a lawful emperor, acknowledged by the senate, would alone render him criminal.³ The sons of Niger had fallen into his hands among the children of the provincial governors, detained at Rome as pledges for the loyalty of their parents.⁴ As long as the power of Niger inspired terror, or even respect, they were educated with the most tender care, with the children of Severus himself; but they were soon involved in their father's ruin, and removed, first by exile, and afterwards by death, from the eye of public compassion.⁵

towards
Albinus.

While Severus was engaged in his eastern war, he had reason to apprehend that the governor of Britain might pass the sea and the Alps, occupy the vacant seat of empire, and oppose his return

² Whilst Severus was very dangerously ill, it was industriously given out, that he intended to appoint Niger and Albinus his successors. As he could not be sincere with respect to both, he might not be so with regard to either. Yet Severus carried his hypocrisy as far, as to profess that intention in the memoirs of his own life.

³ Hist. August. p. 65.

⁴ This practice, invented by Commodus, proved very useful to Severus. He found at Rome the children of many of the principal adherents of his rivals; and he employed them more than once to intimidate, or seduce, the parents.

⁵ Herodian, l. iii. p. 96. Hist. August. p. 67, 68.

with the authority of the senate and the forces of the west. The ambiguous conduct of Albinus, in not assuming the imperial title, left room for negotiation. Forgetting, at once, his professions of patriotism, and the jealousy of sovereign power, he accepted the precarious rank of Caesar, as a reward for his fatal neutrality. Till the first contest was decided, Severus treated the man, whom he had doomed to destruction, with every mark of esteem and regard. Even in the letter, in which he announced his victory over Niger, he styles Albinus the brother of his soul and empire, sends him the affectionate salutations of his wife Julia, and his young family, and entreats him to preserve the armies and the republic faithful to their common interest. The messengers charged with this letter, were instructed to accost the Caesar with respect, to desire a private audience, and to plange their daggers into his heart.* The conspiracy was discovered, and the too credulous Albinus at length passed over to the continent, and prepared for an unequal contest with his rival, who rushed upon him at the head of a veteran and victorious army.

The military labours of Severus seem inadequate to the importance of his conquests. Two engagements, the one near the Hellespont, the other in the narrow defiles of Cilicia, decided the fate of his Syrian competitor; and the troops of Europe asserted their usual ascendant over the ef-

CHAP.
V.

Event of
the civil
war.

* Hist. August. p. 84. Spartianus has inserted this curious letter at full length.

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V.

feminate natives of Asia.^c The battle of Lyons, where one hundred and fifty thousand^d Romans were engaged, was equally fatal to Albinus. The valour of the British army maintained, indeed, a sharp and doubtful contest with the hardy discipline of the Illyrian legions. The fame and person of Severus appeared, during a few moments, irrecoverably lost, till that war-like prince rallied his fainting troops, and led them on to a decisive victory.^e The war was finished by that memorable day.

decided by
one or two
battles.

The civil wars of modern Europe have been distinguished, not only by the fierce animosity, but likewise by the obstinate perseverance, of the contending factions. They have generally been justified by some principle, or, at least, coloured by some pretext, of religion, freedom, or loyalty. The leaders were nobles of independent property and hereditary influence. The troops fought like men interested in the decision of the quarrel; and as military spirit and party zeal were strongly diffused throughout the whole community, a vanquished chief was immediately supplied with new adherents, eager to shed their blood in the same cause. But the Romans, after the fall of the republic, combated only for the choice of masters.

^c Consult the third book of Herodian, and the seventy-fourth book of Dion Cassius.

^d Dion, l. lxxv, p. 1260.

^e Dion, l. lxxv, p. 1261. Herodian, l. iii, p. 110. Hist. August. p. 68. The battle was fought in the plain of Trevoux, three or four leagues from Lyons. See Tillemont, tom. iii, p. 406. Note 18.

Under the standard of a popular candidate for empire, a few enlisted from affection, some from fear, many from interest, none from principle. The legions, uninflamed by party zeal, were allured into civil war by liberal donatives, and still more liberal promises. A defeat, by disabling the chief from the performance of his engagements, dissolved the mercenary allegiance of his followers, and left them to consult their own safety, by a timely desertion of an unsuccessful cause. It was of little moment to the provinces under whose name they were oppressed or governed; they were driven by the impulsion of the present power, and as soon as that power yielded to a superior force, they hastened to implore the clemency of the conqueror, who, as he had an immense debt to discharge, was obliged to sacrifice the most guilty countries to the avarice of his soldiers. In the vast extent of the Roman empire, there were few fortified cities capable of protecting a routed army; nor was there any person, or family, or order of men, whose natural interest, unsupported by the powers of government, was capable of restoring the cause of a sinking party.^f

Yet, in the contest between Niger and Severus, a single city deserves an honourable exception. As Byzantium was one of the greatest passages from Europe into Asia, it had been provided with a strong garrison, and a fleet of five

Siege of
Byzan-
tium.

^f Montesquieu, *Considérations sur la Grandeur et la Décadence des Romains*, c. xii.

CHAP.

V.

hundred vessels was anchored in the harbour.^{*} The impetuosity of Severus disappointed this prudent scheme of defence; he left to his generals the siege of Byzantium, forced the less guarded passage of the Hellespont, and, impatient of a meaner enemy, pressed forward to encounter his rival. Byzantium, attacked by a numerous and increasing army, and afterwards by the whole naval power of the empire, sustained a siege of three years, and remained faithful to the name and memory of Niger. The citizens and soldiers (we know not from what cause) were animated with equal fury; several of the principal officers of Niger, who despaired of, or who disdained a pardon, had thrown themselves into this last refuge: the fortifications were esteemed impregnable, and, in the defence of the place, a celebrated engineer displayed all the mechanic powers known to the ancients.^b Byzantium, at length, surrendered to famine. The magistrates and soldiers were put to the sword, the walls demolished, the privileges suppressed, and the destined capital of the East subsisted only as an open village, subject to the insulting jurisdiction of Perinthus. The historian Dion, who had admired the flourishing, and lamented the desolate,

^{*} Most of these, as may be supposed, were small open vessels: some, however, were galleys of two, and a few of three ranks of oars.

^b The engineer's name was Priscus. His skill saved his life, and he was taken into the service of the conqueror. For the particulars of the siege, consult Dion Cassius (l. lxxv, p. 1251), and Herodian (l. iii, p. 95). For the theory of it, the fanciful chevalier de Palard may be looked into. See Polybe, tom. i, p. 76.

state of Byzantium, accused the revenge of Se-
 verus, for depriving the Roman people of the
 strongest bulwark against the barbarians of Pon-
 tus and Asia.¹ The truth of this observation was
 but too well justified in the succeeding age, when
 the Gothic fleets covered the Euxine, and passed
 through the undefended Bosphorus into the centre
 of the Mediterranean.

Both Niger and Albinus were discovered and
 put to death in their flight from the field of
 battle. Their fate excited neither surprise nor
 compassion. They had staked their lives against
 the chance of empire, and suffered what they
 would have inflicted; nor did Severus claim the
 arrogant superiority of suffering his rivals to live
 in a private station. But his unforgiving temper,
 stimulated by avarice, indulged a spirit of re-
 venge, where there was no room for apprehen-
 sion. The most considerable of the provincials,
 who, without any dislike to the fortunate candi-
 date, had obeyed the governor under whose au-
 thority they were accidentally placed, were pu-
 nished by death, exile, and especially by the
 confiscation of their estates. Many cities of the
 East were stript of their ancient honours, and
 obliged to pay, into the treasury of Severus, four
 times the amount of the sums contributed by
 them for the service of Niger.²

CHAP.
V.

Deaths of
Niger and
Albinus.
Cruel con-
sequences
of the civil
war.

¹ Notwithstanding the authority of Spartianus, and some modern
 Greeks, we may be assured from Dion and Herodian, that Byzantium,
 many years after the death of Severus, lay in ruins.

² Dion, l. lxxiv, p. 1250.

CHAP.
V.

Animosity
of Severus
against the
senate.

Till the final decision of the war, the cruelty of Severus was, in some measure, restrained by the uncertainty of the event, and his pretended reverence for the senate. The head of Albinus, accompanied with a menacing letter, announced to the Romans, that he was resolved to spare none of the adherents of his unfortunate competitors. He was irritated by the just suspicion, that he had never possessed the affections of the senate, and he concealed his old malevolence under the recent discovery of some treasonable correspondences. Thirty-five senators, however, accused of having favoured the party of Albinus, he freely pardoned; and, by his subsequent behaviour, endeavoured to convince them, that he had forgotten, as well as forgiven, their supposed offences. But, at the same time, he condemned forty-one¹ other senators, whose names history has recorded; their wives, children, and clients, attended them in death, and the noblest provincials of Spain and Gaul were involved in the same ruin. Such rigid justice, for so he termed it, was, in the opinion of Severus, the only conduct capable of ensuring peace to the people, or stability to the prince; and he condescended slightly to lament, that, to be mild, it was necessary that he should first be cruel.²

¹ Dion (l. lxxv, p. 1264); only twenty-nine senators are mentioned by him, but forty-one are named in the Augustan History, p. 69, among whom were six of the name of Pescennius. Herodian (l. iii, p. 115), speaks in general of the cruelties of Severus.

² Aurelius Victor.

The true interest of an absolute monarch generally coincides with that of his people. Their numbers, their wealth, their order, and their security, are the best and only foundations of his real greatness; and were he totally devoid of virtue, prudence might supply its place, and would dictate the same rule of conduct. Severus considered the Roman empire as his property, and had no sooner secured the possession, than he bestowed his care on the cultivation and improvement of so valuable an acquisition. Salutary laws, executed with inflexible firmness, soon corrected most of the abuses with which, since the death of Marcus, every part of the government had been infected. In the administration of justice, the judgments of the emperor were characterised by attention, discernment, and impartiality; and whenever he deviated from the strict line of equity, it was generally in favour of the poor and oppressed; not so much indeed from any sense of humanity, as from the natural propensity of a despot, to humble the pride of greatness, and to sink all his subjects to the same common level of absolute dependence. His expensive taste for building, magnificent shows, and above all a constant and liberal distribution of corn and provisions, were the surest means of captivating the affection of the Roman people.

CHAP.
V.

The wisdom and justice of his government.

* Dion, l. lxxvi, p. 1272. Hist. August. p. 67. Severus celebrated the secular games with extraordinary magnificence, and he left in the public granaries a provision of corn for seven years, at the rate of 75,000 modii, or about 2500 quarters per day. I am persuaded,

CHAP.

V.

General
peace and
prosperity.

The misfortunes of civil discord were obliterated. The calm of peace and prosperity was once more experienced in the provinces; and many cities, restored by the munificence of Severus, assumed the title of his colonies, and attested by public monuments their gratitude and felicity.^a The fame of the Roman arms was revived by that warlike and successful emperor,^b and he boasted, with a just pride, that having received the empire oppressed with foreign and domestic wars, he left it established in profound, universal, and honourable peace.^c

Relaxation
of military
discipline.

Although the wounds of civil war appeared completely healed, its mortal poison still lurked in the vitals of the constitution. Severus possessed a considerable share of vigour and ability; but the daring soul of the first Caesar, or the deep policy of Augustus, were scarcely equal to the task of curbing the insolence of the victorious legions. By gratitude, by misguided policy, by seeming necessity, Severus was induced to relax the nerves of discipline.^d The vanity of his

persuaded, that the granaries of Severus were supplied for a long term; but I am not less persuaded, that policy on the one hand, and admiration on the other, magnified the hoard far beyond its true contents.

^a See Spanheim's treatise on ancient medals, the inscriptions, and our learned travellers Spon and Wheeler, Shaw, Pocock, &c. who, in Africa, Greece, and Asia, have found more monuments of Severus, than of any other Roman emperor whatsoever.

^b He carried his victorious arms to Selencia and Ctesiphon, the capitals of the Parthian monarchy. I shall have occasion to mention this war in its proper place.

^c *Eodem in Britannia*, was his own just and emphatic expression, Hist. August. 73.

^d Herodian, l. iii. p. 115. Hist. August. p. 68.

soldiers was flattered with the honour of wearing gold rings; their ease was indulged in the permission of living with their wives in the idleness of quarters. He increased their pay beyond the example of former times, and taught them to expect, and soon to claim, extraordinary donatives on every public occasion of danger or festivity. Elated by success, enervated by luxury, and raised above the level of subjects by their dangerous privileges,* they soon became incapable of military fatigue, oppressive to the country, and impatient of a just subordination. Their officers asserted the superiority of rank by a more profuse and elegant luxury. There is still extant a letter of Severus, lamenting the licentious state of the army, and exhorting one of his generals to begin the necessary reformation from the tribunes themselves; since, as he justly observes, the officer who has forfeited the esteem, will never command the obedience, of his soldiers.[†] Had the emperor pursued the train of reflection, he would have discovered, that the primary cause of this general corruption, might be ascribed, not indeed to the example, but to the pernicious indulgence, however, of the commander in chief.

The prætorians, who murdered their emperor and sold the empire, had received the just punishment of their treason; but the necessary,

New establishment of the prætorian guards.

* Upon the insolence and privileges of the soldiers, the 16th satire, falsely ascribed to Juvenal, may be consulted; the style and circumstances of it would induce me to believe, that it was composed under the reign of Severus, or that of his son.

† Hist. August. p. 73.

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though dangerous, institution of guards, was soon restored on a new model by Severus, and increased to four times the ancient number.* Formerly these troops had been recruited in Italy; and as the adjacent provinces gradually imbibed the softer manners of Rome, the levies were extended to Macedonia, Noricum, and Spain. In the room of these elegant troops, better adapted to the pomp of courts than to the uses of war, it was established by Severus, that from all the legions of the frontiers, the soldiers most distinguished for strength, valour, and fidelity, should be occasionally draughted; and promoted, as an honour and reward, into the more eligible service of the guards.† By this new institution, the Italian youth were diverted from the exercise of arms, and the capital was terrified by the strange aspect and manners of a multitude of barbarians. But Severus flattered himself, that the legions would consider these chosen prætorians as the representatives of the whole military order; and that the present aid of fifty thousand men, superior in arms and appointments to any force that could be brought into the field against them, would for ever crush the hopes of rebellion, and secure the empire to himself and his posterity.

The office
of præ-
torian præ-
fect.

The command of these favoured and formidable troops soon became the first office of the empire. As the government degenerated into military despotism, the prætorian præfect, who

* Herodian, l. iii, p. 131.

† Dion, l. lxxiv, p. 1243.

in his origin had been a simple captain of the guards, was placed, not only at the head of the army, but of the finances, and even of the law. In every department of administration, he represented the person, and exercised the authority, of the emperor. The first prefect who enjoyed and abused this immense power was Plautianus, the favourite minister of Severus. His reign lasted above ten years, till the marriage of his daughter with the eldest son of the emperor, which seemed to assure his fortune, proved the occasion of his ruin.⁷ The animosities of the palace, by irritating the ambition and alarming the fears of Plautianus, threatened to produce a revolution, and obliged the emperor, who still loved him, to consent with reluctance to his death.⁸ After the fall of Plautianus, an eminent lawyer, the celebrated Papinian, was appointed to execute the motely office of praetorian prefect.

Till the reign of Severus, the virtue, and even the good sense of the emperors had been distinguished by their zeal or affected reverence for the senate, and by a tender regard to the nice frame of civil policy instituted by Augustus. But the youth of Severus had been trained in the implicit obedience of camps, and his riper years spent in

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⁷ One of his most daring and wanton acts of power, was the castration of an hundred free Romans, some of them married men, and even fathers of families, merely that his daughter, on her marriage with the young emperor, might be attended by a train of eunuchs worthy of an eastern queen. Dion, l. lxxvi, p. 1271.

⁸ Dion, l. lxxvi, p. 1274. Herodian, l. iii, p. 122-129. The grammarian of Alexandria seems, as it is not unusual, much better acquainted with this mysterious transaction, and more assured of the guilt of Plautianus, than the Roman senator ventures to be.

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the despotism of military command. His haughty and inflexible spirit could not discover, or would not acknowledge, the advantage of preserving an intermediate power, however imaginary, between the emperor and the army. He disdained to profess himself the servant of an assembly that detested his person, and trembled at his frown; he issued his commands, where his request would have proved as effectual; assumed the conduct and style of a sovereign and a conqueror, and exercised, without disguise, the whole legislative as well as the executive power.

New maxims of the imperial prerogative.

The victory over the senate was easy and inglorious. Every eye and every passion were directed to the supreme magistrate, who possessed the arms and treasure of the state; whilst the senate, neither elected by the people, nor guarded by military force, nor animated by public spirit, rested its declining authority on the frail and crumbling basis of ancient opinion. The fine theory of a republic insensibly vanished, and made way for the more natural and substantial feelings of monarchy. As the freedom and honours of Rome were successively communicated to the provinces, in which the old government had been either unknown, or was remembered with abhorrence, the tradition of republican maxims was gradually obliterated. The Greek historians of the age of the Antonines,* observe with a malicious pleasure, that although the sovereign of Rome, in compliance with an obsolete prejudice, abstained from the name of king, he possessed the

* Applan in Prætor.

full measure of regal power. In the reign of Severus, the senate was filled with polished and eloquent slaves from the eastern provinces, who justified personal flattery by speculative principles of servitude. These new advocates of prerogative were heard with pleasure by the court, and with patience by the people, when they inculcated the duty of passive obedience, and descanted on the inevitable mischiefs of freedom. The lawyers and the historians concurred in teaching, that the imperial authority was held, not by the delegated commission, but by the irrevocable resignation of the senate; that the emperor was freed from the restraint of civil laws, could command by his arbitrary will the lives and fortunes of his subjects, and might dispose of the empire as of his private patrimony.* The most eminent of the civil lawyers, and particularly Papinian, Paulus, and Ulpian, flourished under the house of Severus; and the Roman jurisprudence having closely united itself with the system of monarchy, was supposed to have attained its full maturity and perfection.

The contemporaries of Severus, in the enjoyment of the pence and glory of his reign, forgave the cruelties by which it had been introduced. Posterity, who experienced the fatal effects of his maxims and example, justly considered him as the principal author of the decline of the Roman empire.

* Dion Cassius seems to have written with no other view, than to form these opinions into an historical system. The pandects will shew how assiduously the lawyers, on their side, laboured in the cause of prerogative.

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*The death of Severus.—Tyranny of Caracalla.—
Usurpation of Macrinus.—Follies of Elagabalus.
—Virtues of Alexander Severus.—Licentiousness
of the army.—General state of the Roman fi-
nances.*

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VI.

Greatness
and dis-
content of
Severus.

THE ascent to greatness, however steep and dangerous, may entertain an active spirit with the consciousness and exercise of its own powers; but the possession of a throne could never yet afford a lasting satisfaction to an ambitious mind. This melancholy truth was felt and acknowledged by Severus. Fortune and merit had, from an humble station, elevated him to the first place among mankind. "He had been all things," as he said himself, "and all was of little value."^a Distracted with the care, not of acquiring, but of preserving an empire, oppressed with age and infirmities, careless of fame,^b and satiated with power, all his prospects of life were closed. The desire of perpetuating the greatness of his family, was the only remaining wish of his ambition and paternal tenderness.

His wife
the em-
press Julia.

Like most of the Africans, Severus was passionately addicted to the vain studies of magic and divination, deeply versed in the interpreta-

^a Hist. August. p. 71. "Omnia fui et nihil expedit."

^b Dion Cassius, l. lxxvii, p. 1284.

tion of dreams and omens, and perfectly acquainted with the science of judicial astrology, which, in almost every age except the present, has maintained its dominion over the mind of man. He had lost his first wife whilst he was governor of the *Lionese Gaul*.^c In the choice of a second, he sought only to connect himself with some favourite of fortune; and as soon as he had discovered that a young lady of *Emesa* in *Syria* had a *royal nativity*, he solicited, and obtained her hand.^d *Julia Domna* (for that was her name) deserved all that the stars could promise her. She possessed, even in an advanced age, the attractions of beauty;^e and united to a lively imagination a firmness of mind, and strength of judgment, seldom bestowed on her sex. Her amiable qualities never made any deep impression on the dark and jealous temper of her husband; but in her son's reign, she administered the principal affairs of the empire, with a prudence that supported his authority, and with a moderation that sometimes corrected his wild extravagancies.^f *Julia* applied herself to letters and philosophy, with some success, and with the most splendid

* About the year 186, M. de Tillemont is miserably embarrassed with a passage of *Dion*, in which the empress *Faustina*, who died in the year 175, is introduced as having contributed to the marriage of *Severus* and *Julia* (l. lxxiv, p. 1243). The learned compiler forgot, that *Dion* is relating, not a real fact, but a dream of *Severus*; and dreams are circumscribed to no limits of time or space. Did M. de Tillemont imagine that marriages were consummated in the temple of *Venus* at *Rome*? *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. III, p. 389, note 6.

^d *Hist. August.* p. 65.

^e *Hist. August.* p. 55.

^f *Dion Cassius*, l. lxxvii, p. 1304, 1314.

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reputation. She was the patroness of every art, and the friend of every man of genius.^c The grateful flattery of the learned has celebrated her virtue; but, if we may credit the scandal of ancient history, chastity was very far from being the most conspicuous virtue of the empress Julia.^d

Their two sons, Caracalla and Geta.

Two sons, Caracalla^e and Geta, were the fruit of this marriage, and the destined heirs of the empire. The fond hopes of the father, and of the Roman world, were soon disappointed by these vain youths, who displayed the indolent security of hereditary princes, and a presumption that fortune would supply the place of merit and application. Without any emulation of virtue or talents, they discovered, almost from their infancy, a fixed and implacable antipathy for each other. Their aversion, confirmed by years, and fomented by the arts of their interested favourites, broke out in childish, and gradually in more serious competitions, and, at length, divided the theatre, the circus, and the court, into two factions, actuated by the hopes and fears of their respective leaders. The prudent emperor endeavoured, by every expedient of advice and

Their mutual aversion to each other.

^c See a dissertation of Menage, at the end of his edition of *Dion-genes Laertius, de Fœminis Philosophis*.

^d Dion, l. lxxvi, p. 1285. Aurelius Victor.

^e Bassianus was his first name, as it had been that of his maternal grandfather. During his reign, he assumed the appellation of Antoninus, which is employed by lawyers and ancient historians. After his death, the public indignation loaded him with the nick-names of Tarrinius and Caracalla. The first was borrowed from a celebrated gladiator, the second from a long Gallic gown which he distributed to the people of Rome.

authority, to allay this growing animosity. The unhappy discord of his sons clouded all his prospects, and threatened to overturn a throne, raised with so much labour, cemented with so much blood, and guarded with every defence of arms and treasure. With an impartial hand, he maintained between them an exact balance of favour, conferred on both the rank of Augustus, with the revered name of Antoninus; and, for the first time, the Roman world beheld three emperors.^k Yet even this equal conduct served only to inflame the contest, whilst the fierce Caracalla asserted the right of primogeniture, and the milder Geta courted the affections of the people and the soldiers. In the anguish of a disappointed father, Severus foretold, that the weaker of his sons would fall a sacrifice to the stronger, who, in his turn, would be ruined by his own vices.^l

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^k Three emperors.

In these circumstances, the intelligence of a war in Britain, and of an invasion of the province by the barbarians of the north, was received with pleasure by Severus. Though the vigilance of his lieutenants might have been sufficient to repel the distant enemy, he resolved to embrace the honourable pretext of withdrawing his sons from the luxury of Rome, which enervated their minds, and irritated their passions, and of inuring their youth to the toils of war and government. Notwithstanding his advanced age (for

^l The Caledonian war, A. D. 208.

^k The elevation of Caracalla is fixed by the accurate M. de Tillemont to the year 198; the association of Geta to the year 208.

^l Herodian, L. iii, p. 130. The lives of Caracalla and Geta in the Augustan History.

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he was above three-score), and his gout, which obliged him to be carried in a litter, he transported himself in person into that remote island, attended by his two sons, his whole court, and a formidable army. He immediately passed the walls of Hadrian and Antoninus, and entered the enemy's country, with the design of completing the long-attempted conquest of Britain. He penetrated to the northern extremity of the island, without meeting an enemy. But the concealed ambuscades of the Caledonians, who hung unseen on the rear and flanks of his army, the coldness of the climate, and the severity of a winter march across the hills and morasses of Scotland, are reported to have cost the Romans above fifty thousand men. The Caledonians at length yielded to the powerful and obstinate attack, sued for peace, and surrendered a part of their arms, and a large track of territory. But their apparent submission lasted no longer than the present terror. As soon as the Roman legions had retired, they resumed their hostile independence. Their restless spirit provoked Severus to send a new army into Caledonia, with the most bloody orders, not to subdue, but to extirpate the natives. They were saved by the death of their haughty enemy.^m

Fingal and
his heroes.

This Caledonian war, neither marked by decisive events, nor attended with any important consequences, would ill deserve our attention; but it is supposed, not without a considerable

^m Dion, l. lxxvi, p. 1280, &c. Herodian, l. iii, p. 132, &c.

degree of probability, that the invasion of Severus is connected with the most shining period of the British history or fable. Fingal, whose fame, with that of his heroes and bards, has been revived in our language by a recent publication, is said to have commanded the Caledonians in that memorable juncture, to have eluded the power of Severus, and to have obtained a signal victory on the banks of the Carun, in which the son of *the king of the world*, Caracul, fled from his arms along the fields of his pride.* Something of a doubtful mist still hangs over these highland traditions; nor can it be entirely dispelled by the most ingenious researches of modern criticism:† but if we could, with safety, indulge the pleasing supposition, that Fingal lived, and that Ossian sung, the striking contrast of the situation and manners of the contending nations might amuse a philosophic mind. The parallel would be little to the advantage of the more civilized people, if we compared the unrelenting revenge of Severus with the generous clemency of Fingal; the timid and brutal cruelty of Cara-

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VIContrast of
the Caledo-
nians and
the Ro-
mans.

* Ossian's Poems, vol. 1, p. 175.

† That the Caracul of Ossian is the Caracalla of the Roman history, is, perhaps, the only point of British antiquity in which Mr. Macpherson and Mr. Whitaker are of the same opinion; and yet the opinion is not without difficulty. In the Caledonian war, the son of Severus was known only by the appellation of Antoninus; and it may seem strange that the Highland bard should describe him by a nick-name, invented four years afterwards, scarcely used by the Romans till after the death of that emperor, and seldom employed by the most ancient historians. See Dion, l. lxxvii, p. 1317. Hist. August. p. 89. Aurel. Victor. Euseb. in Chron. ad ann. 214.

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calla, with the bravery, the tenderness, the elegant genius of Ossian; the mercenary chiefs who, from motives of fear or interest, served under the imperial standard, with the freeborn warriors who started to arms at the voice of the king of Morven; if, in a word, we contemplated the untutored Caledonians, glowing with the warm virtues of nature, and the degenerate Romans, polluted with the mean vices of wealth and slavery.

Ambition
of Caracalla. §

The declining health and last illness of Severus inflamed the wild ambition and black passions of Caracalla's soul. Impatient of any delay or division of empire, he attempted, more than once, to shorten the small remainder of his father's days, and endeavoured, but without success, to excite a mutiny among the troops.^b The old emperor had often censured the misguided lenity of Marcus, who, by a single act of justice, might have saved the Romans from the tyranny of his worthless son. Placed in the same situation, he experienced how easily the rigour of a judge dissolves away in the tenderness of a parent. He deliberated, he threatened, but he could not punish; and this last and only instance of mercy was more fatal to the empire than a long series of cruelty.^c

Death of
Severus,
and accession
of his
two sons,
A. D. 211,
4th February.

The disorder of his mind irritated the pains of his body; he wished impatiently for death, and hastened the instant of it by his impatience. He expired at York in

^b Dion, l. lxxvi, p. 1282. Hist. August. p. 71. Aurel. Victor.

^c Dion, l. lxxvi, p. 1283. Hist. August. p. 89.

the sixty-fifth year of his life, and in the eighteenth of a glorious and successful reign. In his last moments he recommended concord to his sons, and his sons to the army. The salutary advice never reached the heart, or even the understanding, of the impetuous youths; but the more obedient troops, mindful of their oath of allegiance, and of the authority of their deceased master, resisted the solicitations of Caracalla, and proclaimed both brothers emperors of Rome. The new princes soon left the Caledonians in peace, returned to the capital, celebrated their father's funeral with divine honours, and were cheerfully acknowledged as lawful sovereigns, by the senate, the people, and the provinces. Some pre-eminence of rank seems to have been allowed to the elder brother; but they both administered the empire with equal and independent power.*

Such a divided form of government would have proved a source of discord between the most affectionate brothers. It was impossible that it could long subsist between two implacable enemies, who neither desired nor could trust a reconciliation. It was visible that one only could reign, and that the other must fall; and each of them judging of his rival's designs by his own, guarded his life with the most jealous vigilance from the repeated attacks of poison or the sword. Their rapid journey through Gaul and Italy,

Jealousy
and hatred
of the two
emperors.

* Dion, l. lxxvi, p. 1294. Herodian, l. iii, p. 135.

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during which they never eat at the same table, or slept in the same house, displayed to the provinces the odious spectacle of fraternal discord. On their arrival at Rome, they immediately divided the vast extent of the imperial palace.^{*} No communication was allowed between their apartments; the doors and passages were diligently fortified, and guards posted and relieved with the same strictness as in a besieged place. The emperors met only in public, in the presence of their afflicted mother; and each surrounded by a numerous train of armed followers. Even on these occasions of ceremony, the dissimulation of courts could ill disguise the rancour of their hearts.[†]

Fruitless
negotiation
for dividing
the empire
between
them.

This latent civil war already distracted the whole government, when a scheme was suggested that seemed of mutual benefit to the hostile bro-

^{*} Mr. Hume is justly surprised at a passage of Herodian (l. iv, p. 139), who, on this occasion, represents the imperial palace as equal in extent to the rest of Rome. The whole region of the Palatine mount, on which it was built, occupied, at most, a circumference of eleven or twelve thousand feet (see the *Notitia* and *Victor*, in *Nardini's Roma Antica*). But we should recollect that the opulent senators had almost surrounded the city with their extensive gardens and superb palaces, the greatest part of which had been gradually confiscated by the emperors. If Geta resided in the gardens that bore his name on the Janiculum, and if Caracalla inhabited the gardens of Maecenas on the Esqueline, the rival brothers were separated from each other by the distance of several miles; and yet the intermediate space was filled by the imperial gardens of Sallust, of Lucullus, of Agrippa, of Domitian, of Caius, &c. all skirting round the city, and all connected with each other, and with the palace, by bridges thrown over the Tiber and the streets. But this explanation of Herodian would require, though it ill deserves, a particular dissertation, illustrated by a map of ancient Rome.

[†] Herodian, l. iv, p. 139.

thers. It was proposed, that since it was im-possible to reconcile their minds, they should separate their interest, and divide the empire between them. The conditions of the treaty were already drawn with some accuracy. It was agreed, that Caracalla, as the elder brother, should remain in possession of Europe and the western Africa, and that he should relinquish the sovereignty of Asia and Egypt to Geta, who might fix his residence at Alexandria or Antioch, cities little inferior to Rome itself in wealth and greatness; that numerous armies should be constantly encamped on either side of the Thracian Bosphorus, to guard the frontiers of the rival monarchies; and that the senators of European extraction should acknowledge the sovereign of Rome, whilst the natives of Asia followed the emperor of the East. The tears of the empress Julia interrupted the negociation, the first idea of which had filled every Roman breast with surprise and indignation. The mighty mass of conquest was so intimately united by the hand of time and policy, that it required the most forcible violence to rend it asunder. The Romans had reason to dread, that the disjointed members would soon be reduced by a civil war under the dominion of one master; but if the separation was permanent, the division of the provinces must terminate in the dissolution of an empire whose unity had hitherto remained inviolate.*

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\* Herodian, l. iv, p. 144.

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Murder of  
Geta,  
A. D. 212,  
27th Fe-  
bruary.

Had the treaty been carried into execution, the sovereign of Europe might soon have been the conqueror of Asia; but Caracalla obtained an easier though a more guilty victory. He artfully listened to his mother's entreaties, and consented to meet his brother in her apartment, on terms of peace and reconciliation. In the midst of their conversation, some centurions, who had contrived to conceal themselves, rushed with drawn swords upon the unfortunate Geta. His distracted mother strove to protect him in her arms; but, in the unavailing struggle, she was wounded in the hand, and covered with the blood of her younger son, while she saw the elder animating and assisting<sup>6</sup> the fury of the assassins. As soon as the deed was perpetrated, Caracalla, with hasty steps, and horror in his countenance, ran towards the prætorian camp as his only refuge, and threw himself on the ground before the statues of the tutelar deities.<sup>7</sup> The soldiers attempted to raise and comfort him. In broken and disordered words he informed them of his imminent danger and fortunate escape; insinuating that he had prevented the designs of his enemy, and declared his resolution to live and die with his faith-

<sup>6</sup> Caracalla consecrated, in the temple of Serapis, the sword, with which, as he boasted, he had slain his brother Geta. Dion, l. lxxvii, p. 1307.

<sup>7</sup> Herodian, l. iv, p. 147. In every Roman camp there was a small chapel near the head-quarters, in which the statues of the tutelar deities were preserved and adored; and we may remark, that the eagles, and other military ensigns, were in the first rank of these deities; an excellent institution, which confirmed discipline by the sanction of religion. See Lipsius de Militiâ Romanâ, iv, 5, v, 2.

ful troops. Geta had been the favourite of the soldiers; but complaint was useless, revenge was dangerous, and they still revered the son of Severus. Their discontent died away in idle murmurs, and Caracalla soon convinced them of the justice of his cause, by distributing in one lavish donative the accumulated treasures of his father's reign.\* The real *sentiments* of the soldiers alone were of importance to his power or safety. Their declaration in his favour commanded the dutiful *professions* of the senate. The obsequious assembly was always prepared to ratify the decision of fortune; but as Caracalla wished to assuage the first emotions of public indignation, the name of Geta was mentioned with decency, and he received the funeral honours of a Roman emperor.† Posterity, in pity to his misfortune, has cast a veil over his vices. We consider that young prince as the innocent victim of his brother's ambition, without recollecting that he himself wanted power, rather than inclination, to consummate the same attempts of revenge and murder.

The crime went not unpunished. Neither business, nor pleasure, nor flattery, could defend Caracalla from the stings of a guilty conscience; and he confessed, in the anguish of a tortured mind, that his disordered fancy often beheld the angry forms of his father and his brother, rising

\* Hieronim, l. iv, p. 148. Dion, l. lxxvii, p. 1289.

† Geta was placed among the gods. *Sit deus, dum non sit virus*, said his brother. Hist. August. p. 91. Some marks of Geta's con- veneration are still found upon medals.



CHAP. into life, to threaten and upbraid him.<sup>b</sup> The  
 VI. consciousness of his crime should have induced  
 him to convince mankind, by the virtues of his  
 reign, that the bloody deed had been the involuntary effect of fatal necessity. But the repentance of Caracalla only prompted him to remove from the world whatever could remind him of his guilt, or recal the memory of his murdered brother. On his return from the senate to the palace, he found his mother in the company of several noble matrons, weeping over the untimely fate of her younger son. The jealous emperor threatened them with instant death; the sentence was executed against Fadilla, the last remaining daughter of the emperor Marcus; and even the afflicted Julia was obliged to silence her lamentations, to suppress her sighs, and to receive the assassin with smiles of joy and approbation. It was computed that, under the vague appellation of the friends of Geta, above twenty thousand persons of both sexes suffered death. His guards and freedmen, the ministers of his serious business, and the companions of his looser hours, those who by his interest had been promoted to any commands in the army or provinces, with the long-connected chain of their dependents, were included in the proscription; which endeavoured to reach every one who had maintained the smallest correspondence with Geta, who lamented his death, or who even mentioned his name.<sup>c</sup>

<sup>b</sup> Dion, l. lxxvii, p. 1307.

<sup>c</sup> Dion, l. lxxvii, p. 1290. Herodian, l. iv, p. 150. Dion (p. 1298) says, that the comic poets no longer durst employ the name of Geta in

Helvius Pertinax, son to the prince of that name, lost his life by an unseasonable witticism.<sup>d</sup> It was a sufficient crime of Thrasea Priscus to be descended from a family in which the love of liberty seemed an hereditary quality.<sup>e</sup> The particular causes of calumny and suspicion were at length exhausted; and when a senator was accused of being a secret enemy to the government, the emperor was satisfied with the general proof that he was a man of property and virtue. From this well-grounded principle he frequently drew the most bloody inferences.

The execution of so many innocent citizens was bewailed by the secret tears of their friends and families. The death of Papinian, the prætorian prefect, was lamented as a public calamity. During the last seven years of Severus, he had exercised the most important offices of the state, and, by his salutary influence, guided the emperor's steps in the paths of justice and moderation. In full assurance of his virtues and abilities, Severus, on his death-bed, had conjured him to watch over the prosperity and union

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Death of
Papinian.

in their plays, and that the estates of those who mentioned it in their testaments, were confiscated.

^d Caracalla had assumed the names of several conquered nations; Pertinax observed, that the name of *Geticus* (he had obtained some advantage of the Goths or Geta) would be a proper addition to *Parthicus*, *Alemannicus*, &c. *Hist. August.* p. 89.

^e *Dion*, l. lxxvii, p. 1291. He was probably descended from Helvidius Priscus, and Thrasea Patus, those patriots, whose firm, but useless and unseasonable virtue, has been immortalised by Tacitus.

CHAP. of the imperial family.^f The honest labours of
 VI. Papinian served only to inflame the hatred which
 ----- Caracalla had already conceived against his father's minister. After the murder of Geta, the prefect was commanded to exert the powers of his skill and eloquence in a studied apology for that atrocious deed. The philosophic Seneca had condescended to compose a similar epistle to the senate, in the name of the son and assassin of Agrippina.^g "That it was easier to commit than to justify a parricide," was the glorious reply of Papinian,^h who did not hesitate between the loss of life and that of honour. Such intrepid virtue, which had escaped pure and unsullied from the intrigues of courts, the habits of business, and the arts of his profession, reflects more lustre on the memory of Papinian, than all his great employments, his numerous writings, and the superior reputation as a lawyer, which he has preserved through every age of the Roman jurisprudence.ⁱ

His tyranny extended over the whole empire.

It had hitherto been the peculiar felicity of the Romans, and in the worst of times their consolation, that the virtue of the emperors was active, and their vice indolent. Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus, visited their extensive dominions in person, and their progress was marked by acts of wisdom and beneficence.

^f It is said that Papinian was himself a relation of the empress Julia.

^g Tacit. Annal. xiv. 2.

^h Hist. August. p. 88.

ⁱ With regard to Papinian, see Heineccius's *Historia Juris Romani*, l. 330, &c.

The tyranny of Tiberius, Nero, and Domitian, CHAP. VI.
 who resided almost constantly at Rome, or in
 the adjacent villas, was confined to the senatorial
 and equestrian orders.³ But Caracalla was the
 common enemy of mankind. He left the capi-
 tal (and he never returned to it) about a year a. d. 213.
 after the murder of Geta. The rest of his
 reign was spent in the several provinces of
 the empire, particularly those of the East, and
 every province was, by turns, the scene of his
 rapine and cruelty. The senators, compelled by
 fear to attend his capricious motions, were
 obliged to provide daily entertainments, at an
 immense expence, which he abandoned with con-
 tempt to his guards; and to erect, in every city,
 magnificent palaces and theatres, which he either
 disdained to visit, or ordered to be immediately
 thrown down. The most wealthy families were
 ruined by partial fines and confiscations, and the
 great body of his subjects oppressed by ingenious
 and aggravated taxes.⁴ In the midst of peace,
 and upon the slightest provocation, he issued his
 commands, at Alexandria in Egypt, for a general
 massacre. From a secure post in the temple of
 Serapis, he viewed and directed the slaughter of
 many thousand citizens, as well as strangers, with-
 out distinguishing either the number or the crime
 of the sufferers; since, as he coolly informed

³ Tiberius and Domitian never moved from the neighbourhood of Rome. Nero made a short journey into Greece. "Et landatorum principum unus ex aequo quamvis procul agentibus. Savi prealms ingruunt." Tacit. Hist. iv. 75.

⁴ Dion, l. lxxvii, p. 1294.

CHAP. VI. the senate, *all* the Alexandrians, those who had
 ~~~~~~ perished, and those who had escaped, were alike  
 guilty.<sup>1</sup>

Relaxation  
 of disci-  
 pline.

The wise instructions of Severus never made any lasting impression on the mind of his son, who, although not destitute of imagination and eloquence, was equally devoid of judgment and humanity.<sup>m</sup> One dangerous maxim, worthy of a tyrant, was remembered and abused by Caracalla, "To secure the affections of the army, and to esteem the rest of his subjects as of a little moment."<sup>n</sup> But the liberality of the father had been restrained by prudence, and his indulgence to the troops was tempered by firmness and authority. The careless profusion of the son was the policy of one reign, and the inevitable ruin both of the army and of the empire. The vigour of the soldiers, instead of being confirmed by the severe discipline of camps, melted away in the luxury of cities. The excessive increase of their pay and donatives,<sup>o</sup> exhausted

<sup>1</sup> Dion, l. lxxvii, p. 1307. Herodian, l. iv, p. 158. The former represents it as a cruel massacre, the latter as a perfidious one too. It seems probable, that the Alexandrians had irritated the tyrant by their raileries, and perhaps by their tumults.

<sup>m</sup> Dion, l. lxxvii, p. 1296.

<sup>n</sup> Dion, l. lxxvi, p. 1284. Mr. Wotton (*Hist. of Rome*, p. 330) suspects that this maxim was invented by Caracalla himself, and attributed to his father.

<sup>o</sup> Dion (l. lxxviii, p. 1343) informs us, that the extraordinary gifts of Caracalla to the army amounted annually to seventy millions of drachmæ (about two millions three hundred and fifty thousand pounds). There is another passage in Dion, concerning the military pay, infinitely curious; were it not obscure, imperfect, and probably corrupt. The best sense seems to be, that the prætorian guards

the state to enrich the military order, whose modesty in peace, and service in war, are best secured by an honourable poverty. The demeanour of Caracalla was haughty and full of pride; but with the troops he forgot even the proper dignity of his rank, encouraged their insolent familiarity, and, neglecting the essential duties of a general, affected to imitate the dress and manners of a common soldier.

It was impossible that such a character, and such conduct as that of Caracalla, could inspire either love or esteem; but as long as his vices were beneficial to the armies, he was secure from the danger of rebellion. A secret conspiracy, provoked by his own jealousy, was fatal to the tyrant. The prætorian prefecture was divided between two ministers. The military department was intrusted to Adventus, an experienced rather than an able soldier; and the civil affairs were transacted by Opilius Macrinus, who, by his dexterity in business, had raised himself, with a fair character, to that high office. But his favour varied with the caprice of the emperor, and his life might depend on the slightest suspicion, or the most casual circumstance. Malice or fanaticism had suggested to an African, deeply

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VI.  
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Murder of
Caracalla.
A. D. 217,
8th March.

guards received twelve hundred and fifty drachmæ (forty pounds) a year (Dion. l. lxxvii, p. 1307). Under the reign of Augustus, they were paid at the rate of two drachmæ, or denarii, per day, 720 a year (Tacit. Annal. i. 17). Domitian, who increased the soldiers pay one fourth, must have raised the prætorians to 960 drachmæ (Gronovius de Pecuniâ Veteri, l. iii, c. 2). These successive augmentations ruined the empire, for, with the soldiers pay, their numbers too were increased. We have seen the prætorians alone increased from 10,000 to 50,000 men.

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skilled in the knowledge of futurity, a very dangerous prediction, that Macrinus and his son were destined to reign over the empire. The report was soon diffused through the province; and when the man was sent in chains to Rome, he still asserted, in the presence of the prefect of the city, the faith of his prophecy. That magistrate, who had received the most pressing instructions to inform himself of the *successors* of Caracalla, immediately communicated the examination of the African to the imperial court, which at that time resided in Syria. But, notwithstanding the diligence of the public messengers, a friend of Macrinus found means to apprise him of the approaching danger. The emperor received the letters from Rome; and as he was then engaged in the conduct of a chariot race, he delivered them unopened to the prætorian prefect, directing him to dispatch the ordinary affairs, and to report the more important business that might be contained in them. Macrinus read his fate, and resolved to prevent it. He inflamed the discontents of some inferior officers, and employed the hand of Martialis, a desperate soldier, who had been refused the rank of centurion. The devotion of Caracalla prompted him to make a pilgrimage from Edessa to the celebrated temple of the moon at Carrhæ. He was attended by a body of cavalry; but having stopped on the road for some necessary occasion, his guards preserved a respectful distance, and Martialis approaching his person under a pretence of duty, stabbed him with a dagger. The bold

assassin was instantly killed by a Scythian archer of the imperial guard. Such was the end of a monster whose life disgraced human nature, and whose reign accused the patience of the Romans.<sup>p</sup> The grateful soldiers forgot his vices, remembered only his partial liberality, and obliged the senate to prostitute their own dignity and that of religion, by granting him a place among the gods. Whilst he was upon earth, Alexander the Great was the only hero whom this god deemed worthy his admiration. He assumed the name and ensigns of Alexander, formed a Macedonian phalanx of guards, persecuted the disciples of Aristotle, and displayed with a puerile enthusiasm the only sentiment by which he discovered any regard for virtue or glory. We can easily conceive, that after the battle of Narva, and the conquest of Poland, Charles the Twelfth (though he still wanted the more elegant accomplishments of the son of Philip) might boast of having rivalled his valour and magnanimity; but in no one action of his life did Caracalla express the faintest resemblance of the Macedonian hero, except in the murder of a great number of his own and of his father's friends.<sup>q</sup>

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VI.

Imitation  
of Alexander.

Election  
and character  
of Macrinus.

After the extinction of the house of Severus, the Roman world remained three days without a

<sup>p</sup> Dion, l. lxxviii. p. 1312. Herodian, l. iv. p. 168.

<sup>q</sup> The fondness of Caracalla for the name and ensigns of Alexander, is still preserved on the medals of that emperor. See Spanheim, de Uso Numismatum, Dissertat. xii. Herodian (l. iv. p. 164) had seen very ridiculous pictures, in which a figure was drawn, with one side of the face like Alexander, and the other like Caracalla.

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master. The choice of the army (for the authority of a distant and feeble senate was little regarded) hung in anxious suspense; as no candidate presented himself whose distinguished birth and merit could engage their attachment, and unite their suffrages. The decisive weight of the prætorian guards elevated the hopes of their prefects, and these powerful ministers began to assert their *legal* claim to fill the vacancy of the imperial throne. Adventus, however, the senior prefect, conscious of his age and infirmities, of his small reputation, and his smaller abilities, resigned the dangerous honour to the crafty ambition of his colleague Macrinus, whose well dissembled grief removed all suspicion of his being accessory to his master's death.\* The troops neither loved nor esteemed his character. They cast their eyes around in search of a competitor, and at last yielded with reluctance to his promises of unbounded liberality and indulgence. A short time after his accession, he conferred on his son Diadumenianus, at the age of only ten years, the imperial title and the popular name of Antoninus. The beautiful figure of the youth, assisted by an additional donative, for which the ceremony furnished a pretext, might attract, it was hoped, the favour of the army, and secure the doubtful throne of Macrinus.

A. D. 217.  
March 11.

Discontent  
of the se-  
nate,

The authority of the new sovereign had been ratified by the cheerful submission of the senate and provinces. They exulted in their unexpected

\* Herodian, l. iv, p. 169. Hist. August. p. 94.



deliverance from a hated tyrant, and it seemed of little consequence to examine into the virtues of the successor of Caracalla. But as soon as the first transports of joy and surprise had subsided, they began to scrutinize the merits of Macrinus with a critical severity, and to arraign the hasty choice of the army. It had hitherto been considered as a fundamental maxim of the constitution, that the emperor must be always chosen in the senate, and the sovereign power, no longer exercised by the whole body, was always delegated to one of its members. But Macrinus was not a senator. The sudden elevation of the prætorian prefects betrayed the meanness of their origin; and the equestrian order was still in possession of that great office, which commanded with arbitrary sway the lives and fortunes of the senate. A murmur of indignation was heard, that a man whose obscure<sup>1</sup> extraction had never been illustrated by any signal service, should dare to invest himself with the purple, instead of bestowing it on some distinguished senator, equal

<sup>1</sup> *Dion*, l. lxxxviii, p. 1350. Elagabalus reproached his predecessor, with daring to seat himself on the throne; though, as prætorian prefect, he could not have been admitted into the senate after the voice of the cries had cleared the house. The personal favour of Plautianus and Sejanus had broke through the established rule. They rose indeed from the equestrian order, but they preserved the prefecture with the rank of senator, and even with the consulship.

<sup>2</sup> He was a native of Cesarea, in Numidia, and began his fortune by serving in the household of Plautian, from whose ruin he narrowly escaped. His enemies asserted that he was born a slave, and had exercised, amongst other infamous professions, that of gladiator. The fashion of aspersing the birth and condition of an adversary, seems to have lasted from the time of the Greek orators, to the learned grammarians of the last age.

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in birth and dignity to the splendour of the imperial station. As soon as the character of Macrinus was surveyed by the sharp eye of discontent, some vices, and many defects, were easily discovered. The choice of his ministers was in many instances justly censured, and the dissatisfied people, with their usual candour, accused at once his indolent tameness and his excessive severity.\*

and the  
army.

His rash ambition had climbed a height where it was difficult to stand with firmness, and impossible to fall without instant destruction. Trained in the arts of courts and the forms of civil business, he trembled in the presence of the fierce and undisciplined multitude over whom he had assumed the command; his military talents were despised, and his personal courage suspected; a whisper that circulated in the camp, disclosed the fatal secret of the conspiracy against the late emperor, aggravated the guilt of murder by the baseness of hypocrisy, and heightened contempt by detestation. To alienate the soldiers, and to provoke inevitable ruin, the character of a reformer was only wanting; and such was the peculiar hardship of his fate, that Macrinus was compelled to exercise that invidious office. The prodigality of Caracalla had left behind it a long train of ruin and disorder; and if that worthless

\* Both Dion and Herodian speak of the virtues and vices of Macrinus, with candour and impartiality; but the author of his life, in the Augustan history, seems to have implicitly copied some of the venal writers, employed by Elagabalus, to blacken the memory of his predecessor.

tyrant had been capable of reflecting on the sure consequences of his own conduct, he would perhaps have enjoyed the dark prospect of the distress and calamities which he bequeathed to his successors.

In the management of this necessary reformation, Macrinus proceeded with a cautious prudence, which would have restored health and vigour to the Roman army, in an easy and almost imperceptible manner. To the soldiers already engaged in the service, he was constrained to leave the dangerous privileges and extravagant pay given by Caracalla; but the new recruits were received on the more moderate, though liberal, establishment of Severus, and gradually formed to modesty and obedience.\* One fatal error destroyed the salutary effects of this judicious plan. The numerous army, assembled in the east by the late emperor, instead of being immediately dispersed by Macrinus through the several provinces, was suffered to remain united in Syria, during the winter that followed his elevation. In the luxurious idleness of their quarters, the troops viewed their strength and numbers, communicated their complaints, and revolved in their minds the advantages of another revolution. The veterans, instead of being flattered by the advantageous distinction, were alarmed by the first steps of the emperor, which they

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Macrinus attempts a reformation of the army.

* Dion, l. lxxxiii, p. 1336. The sense of the author is as clear as the intention of the emperor; but M. Wotton has mistaken both, by understanding the distinction, not of veterans and recruits, but of old and new legions. History of Rome, p. 347.



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considered as the presage of his future intentions. The recruits, with sullen reluctance, entered on a service, whose labours were increased, while its rewards were diminished by a covetous and unwarlike sovereign. The murmurs of the army swelled with impunity into seditious clamours; and the partial mutinies betrayed a spirit of discontent and disaffection, that waited only for the slightest occasion to break out on every side, into a general rebellion. To minds thus disposed, the occasion soon presented itself.

Death of
the em-
press Julia.
Education,
pretensions,
and revolt of
Elagabalus,
called
at first Bas-
sianus and
Antoninus.

The empress Julia had experienced all the vicissitudes of fortune. From an humble station she had been raised to greatness, only to taste the superior bitterness of an exalted rank. She was doomed to weep over the death of one of her sons, and over the life of the other. The cruel fate of Caracalla, though her good sense must have long taught her to expect it, awakened the feelings of a mother and of an empress. Notwithstanding the respectful civility expressed by the usurper towards the widow of Severus, she descended with a painful struggle into the condition of a subject, and soon withdrew herself, by a voluntary death, from the anxious and humiliating dependence.² Julia Mæsa, her sister, was ordered to leave the court and Antioch. She retired to Emesa with an immense fortune, the fruit of twenty years favour, accompanied by her two daughters, Soæmias and Mamaea, each of

² Dion, l. lxxviii, p. 1330. The abridgement of Xiphilin, though less particular, is in this place clearer than the original.

whom was a widow, and each had an only son. CHAP.
 Bassianus, for that was the name of the son of VL
 Soæmias, was consecrated to the honourable mi-
 nistry of high priest of the sun; and this holy
 vocation, embraced either from prudence or su-
 perstition, contributed to raise the Syrian youth
 to the empire of Rome. A numerous body of
 troops was stationed at Emesa; and, as the se-
 vere discipline of Macrinus had constrained them
 to pass the winter encamped, they were eager to
 revenge the cruelty of such unaccustomed hard-
 ships. The soldiers, who resorted in crowds to
 the temple of the sun, beheld with veneration
 and delight the elegant dress and figure of the
 young pontiff; they recognised, or they thought
 that they recognised, the features of Caracalla,
 whose memory they now adored. The artful
 Mæsa saw and cherished their rising partiality,
 and readily sacrificing her daughter's reputation
 to the fortune of her grandson, she insinuated that
 Bassianus was the natural son of their murdered
 sovereign. The sums distributed by her emis-
 saries with a lavish hand, silenced every objection,
 and the profusion sufficiently proved the affinity,
 or at least the resemblance, of Bassianus with the
 great original. The young Antoninus (for he
 had assumed and polluted that respectable name)
 was declared emperor by the troops of Emesa,
 asserted his hereditary right, and called aloud on
 the armies to follow the standard of a young and
 liberal prince, who had taken up arms to revenge

*Æ. n. 219,
May 16.*

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Defeat and
death of
Macrinus.

his father's death and the oppression of the military order.*

Whilst a conspiracy of women and eunuchs was concerted with prudence, and conducted with rapid vigour, Macrinus, who, by a decisive motion, might have crushed his infant enemy, floated between the opposite extremes of terror and security, which alike fixed him inactive at Antioch. A spirit of rebellion diffused itself through all the camps and garrisons of Syria, successive detachments murdered their officers,^a and joined the party of the rebels; and the tardy restitution of military pay and privileges was imputed to the acknowledged weakness of Macrinus. At length he marched out of Antioch, to meet the increasing and zealous army of the young pretender. His own troops seemed to take the field with faintness and reluctance; but, in the heat of the battle,^b the prætorian guards, almost by an involuntary impulse, asserted the

a. p. 216,
7th June.

* According to Lampadius (*Hist. August.* p. 135), Alexander Severus lived twenty-nine years, three months, and seven days. As he was killed March 19, 235, he was born December 12, 205, and was consequently about this time thirteen years old, as his elder cousin might be about seventeen. This computation suits much better the history of the young princes, than that of Herodian (*l. v.* p. 181), who represents him as three years younger; whilst, by an opposite error of chronology, he lengthens the reign of Elagabalus two years beyond its real duration. For the particulars of the conspiracy, see Dion, *l. lxxviii.* p. 1339. Herodian, *l. v.* p. 184.

^a By a most dangerous proclamation of the pretended Antoninus, every soldier who brought in his officer's head, became entitled to his private estate, as well as to his military commission.

^b Dion, *l. lxxviii.* p. 1345. Herodian, *l. v.* p. 186. The battle was fought near the village of Inune, about two-and-twenty miles from Antioch.

superiority of their valour and discipline. The rebel ranks were broken; when the mother and grandmother of the Syrian prince, who, according to their eastern custom, had attended the army, threw themselves from their covered chariots, and, by exciting the compassion of the soldiers, endeavoured to animate their drooping courage. Antoninus himself, who, in the rest of his life, never acted like a man, in this important crisis of his fate approved himself a hero, mounted his horse; and, at the head of his rallied troops, charged sword in hand among the thickest of the enemy; whilst the eunuch Gannys, whose occupations had been confined to female cares and the soft luxury of Asia, displayed the talents of an able and experienced general. The battle still raged with doubtful violence, and Macrinus might have obtained the victory, had he not betrayed his own cause by a shameful and precipitate flight. His cowardice served only to protract his life a few days, and to stamp deserved ignominy on his misfortunes. It is scarcely necessary to add, that his son Diadumenianus was involved in the same fate. As soon as the stubborn prætorians could be convinced that they fought for a prince who had basely deserted them, they surrendered to the conqueror; the contending parties of the Roman army, mingling tears of joy and tenderness, united under the banners of the imagined son of Caracalla, and the East acknowledged with pleasure the first emperor of Asiatic extraction.

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Elagabalus
writes to
the senate.

The letters of Macrinus had condescended to inform the senate of the slight disturbance occasioned by an impostor in Syria, and a decree immediately passed, declaring the rebel and his family public enemies; with a promise of pardon, however, to such of his deluded adherents as should merit it by an immediate return to their duty. During the twenty days that elapsed from the declaration to the victory of Antoninus (for in so short an interval was the fate of the Roman world decided), the capital and the provinces, more especially those of the East, were distracted with hopes and fears, agitated with tumult, and stained with a useless effusion of civil blood, since whosoever of the rivals prevailed in Syria, must reign over the empire. The specious letters in which the young conqueror announced his victory to the obedient senate, were filled with professions of virtue and moderation; the shining examples of Marcus and Augustus, he should ever consider as the great rule of his administration; and he affected to dwell with pride on the striking resemblance of his own age and fortunes with those of Augustus, who in the earliest youth had revenged by a successful war the murder of his father. By adopting the style of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, son of Antoninus, and grandson of Severus, he tacitly asserted his hereditary claim to the empire; but, by assuming the tribunitian and proconsular powers before they had been conferred on him by a decree of the senate, he offended the delicacy of Roman prejudice. This new and injudicious violation of the constitution

was probably dictated either by the ignorance of his Syrian courtiers, or the fierce disdain of his military followers.^a

As the attention of the new emperor was diverted by the most trifling amusements, he wasted many months in his luxurious progress from Syria to Italy, passed at Nicomedia his first winter after his victory, and deferred till the ensuing summer his triumphal entry into the capital. A faithful picture, however, which preceded his arrival, and was placed by his immediate order over the altar of victory in the senate-house, conveyed to the Romans the just but unworthy resemblance of his person and manners. He was drawn in his sacerdotal robes of silk and gold, after the loose flowing fashion of the Medes and Phœnicians; his head was covered with a lofty tiara, his numerous collars and bracelets were adorned with gems of an inestimable value. His eyebrows were tinged with black, and his cheeks painted with an artificial red and white.^d The grave senators confessed with a sigh, that, after having long experienced the stern tyranny of their own countrymen, Rome was at length humbled beneath the effeminate luxury of oriental despotism.

The sun was worshipped at Emesa, under the name of Elagabalus,^e and under the form of a

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Picture of
Elagabalus,
A. D. 219.

His superstition.

^a Dion, l. lxxix, p. 1353.

^b Dion, l. lxxix, p. 1363. Herodian, l. v, p. 169.

^c This name is derived by the learned from two Syriac words, *Els*, a god, and *Gabal*, to form, the forming, or plastic god, a proper, and even happy epithet for the sun. Wotton's History of Rome, p. 378.

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black conical stone, which, as it was universally believed, had fallen from heaven on that sacred place. To this protecting deity, Antoninus, not without some reason, ascribed his elevation to the throne. The display of superstitious gratitude, was the only serious business of his reign. The triumph of the god of Emesa over all the religions of the earth, was the great object of his zeal and vanity; and the appellation of Elagabalus (for he presumed as pontiff and favourite to adopt that sacred name) was dearer to him than all the titles of imperial greatness. In a solemn procession through the streets of Rome, the way was strewn with gold dust; the black stone, set in precious gems, was placed on a chariot drawn by six milk-white horses richly caparisoned. The pious emperor held the reins, and, supported by his ministers, moved slowly backwards, that he might perpetually enjoy the felicity of the divine presence. In a magnificent temple raised on the Palatine mount, the sacrifices of the god Elagabalus were celebrated with every circumstance of cost and solemnity. The richest wines, the most extraordinary victims, and the rarest aromatics, were profusely consumed on his altar. Around the altar a chorus of Syrian damsels performed their lascivious dances to the sound of barbarian music, whilst the gravest personages of the state and army, clothed in long Phœnician tunics, officiated in the meanest functions with affected zeal and secret indignation.^f

^f Herodian, l. v. p. 190.

To this temple, as to the common centre of religious worship, the imperial fanatic attempted to remove the ancilia, the palladium,* and all the sacred pledges of the faith of Numa. A crowd of inferior deities attended in various stations the majesty of the god of Emesa; but his court was still imperfect, till a female of distinguished rank was admitted to his bed. Pallas had been first chosen for his consort; but as it was dreaded lest her warlike terrors might affright the soft delicacy of a Syrian deity, the moon, adored by the Africans under the name of Astarte, was deemed a more suitable companion for the sun. Her image, with the rich offerings of her temple as a marriage portion, was transported with solemn pomp from Carthage to Rome, and the day of these mystic nuptials was a general festival in the capital and throughout the empire.^b

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A rational voluptuary adheres with invariable respect to the temperate dictates of nature, and improves the gratifications of sense by social intercourse, endearing connections, and the soft colouring of taste and the imagination. But Elagabalus (I speak of the emperor of that name),

His profligate and effeminate luxury.

\* He broke into the sanctuary of Vesta, and carried away a statue, which he supposed to be the palladium; but the vestals boasted, that, by a pious fraud, they had imposed a counterfeit image on the profane intruder. Hist. August. p. 103.

<sup>b</sup> Dion, l. lxxix. p. 1360. Herodian, l. v. p. 193. The subjects of the empire were obliged to make liberal presents to the new-married couple; and whatever they had promised during the life of Elagabalus, was carefully exacted under the administration of Maximus.

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corrupted by his youth, his country, and his fortune, abandoned himself to the grossest pleasures with ungoverned fury, and soon found disgust and satiety in the midst of his enjoyments. The inflammatory powers of art were summoned to his aid: the confused multitude of women, of wines, and of dishes, and the studied variety of attitudes and sauces, served to revive his languid appetites. New terms and new inventions in these sciences, the only ones cultivated and patronised by the monarch,<sup>1</sup> signalized his reign, and transmitted his infamy to succeeding times. A capricious prodigality supplied the want of taste and elegance; and whilst Elagabalus<sup>2</sup> lavished away the treasures of his people in the wildest extravagance, his own voice and that of his flatterers applauded a spirit and magnificence unknown to the tameness of his predecessors. To confound the order of seasons and climates,<sup>3</sup> to sport with the passions and prejudices of his subjects, and to subvert every law of nature and decency, were in the number of his most delicious amusements. A long train of concubines, and a rapid succession of wives, among whom was a vestal virgin, ravished by force from her

<sup>1</sup> The invention of a new sauce was liberally rewarded; but if it was not relished, the inventor was confined to eat of nothing else, till he had discovered another, more agreeable to the imperial palate. Hist. August. p. 111.

<sup>2</sup> He never would eat sea-fish, except at a great distance from the sea; he then would distribute vast quantities of the rarest sorts, brought at an immense expence, to the peasants of the inland country. Hist. August. p. 109.



sacred asylum,<sup>1</sup> were insufficient to satisfy the impotence of his passions. The master of the Roman world affected to copy the dress and manners of the female sex, preferred the distaff to the sceptre, and dishonoured the principal dignities of the empire by distributing them among his numerous lovers; one of whom was publicly invested with the title and authority of the emperor's, or as he more properly styled himself, of the empress's husband.<sup>2</sup>

It may seem probable, the vices and follies of Elagabalus have been adorned by fancy, and blackened by prejudice.<sup>3</sup> Yet confining ourselves to the public scenes displayed before the Roman people, and attested by grave and contemporary historians, their inexpressible infamy surpasses that of any other age or country. The licence of an eastern monarch is secluded from the eye of curiosity by the inaccessible walls of his scraglio. The sentiments of honour and gallantry have introduced a refinement of pleasure, a regard for decency, and a respect for the public opinion, into the modern courts of Europe; but the corrupt and opulent nobles of Rome gratified

Contempt  
of decency  
which distinguished  
the Roman  
tyrants.

<sup>1</sup> Dion, l. lxxix, p. 1358. Herodina, l. v, p. 192.

<sup>2</sup> Hierocles enjoyed that honour; but he would have been supplanted by one Zoticus, had he not contrived, by a poison, to enervate the powers of his rival, who being found, on trial, unequal to his reputation, was driven with ignominy from the palace. Dion, l. lxxix, p. 1363, 1364. A dancer was made prefect of the city, a charioteer prefect of the watch, a barber prefect of the provisions. These three ministers, with many inferior officers, were all recommended, *encomitate membrorum*. Hist. August. p. 105.

<sup>3</sup> Even the credulous compiler of his life, in the Augustine history (p. 111), is inclined to suspect that his vices may have been exaggerated.

CHAP. every vice that could be collected from the  
 VI. mighty conflux of nations and manners. Secure  
 of impunity, careless of censure, they lived without restraint in the patient and humble society of their slaves and parasites. The emperor, in his turn, viewing every rank of his subjects with the same contemptuous indifference, asserted without controul his sovereign privilege of lust and luxury.

Discontent of the  
 army.

The most worthless of mankind are not afraid to condemn in others the same disorders which they allow in themselves; and can readily discover some nice difference of age, character, or station, to justify the partial distinction. The licentious soldiers, who had raised to the throne the dissolute son of Caracalla, blushed at their ignominious choice, and turned with disgust from that monster, to contemplate with pleasure the opening virtues of his cousin Alexander the son of Mamaea. The crafty Mæsa, sensible that her grandson Elagabalus must inevitably destroy himself by his own vices, had provided another and surer support of her family. Embracing a favourable moment of fondness and devotion, she had persuaded the young emperor to adopt Alexander, and to invest him with the title of Cæsar, that his own divine occupations might be no longer interrupted by the care of the earth. In the second rank that amiable prince soon acquired the affections of the public, and excited the tyrant's jealousy, who resolved to terminate the dangerous competition, either by corrupting the manners, or by taking away the life, of his rival.

Alexander  
 Severus  
 declared  
 Cæsar,  
 A. D. 211.

His arts proved unsuccessful; his vain designs were constantly discovered by his own loquacious folly, and disappointed by those virtuous and faithful servants whom the prudence of Mamaea had placed about the person of her son. In a hasty sally of passion, Elagabalus resolved to execute by force what he had been unable to compass by fraud, and by a despotic sentence degraded his cousin from the rank and honours of Caesar. The message was received in the senate with silence, and in the camp with fury. The prætorian guards swore to protect Alexander, and to revenge the dishonoured majesty of the throne. The tears and promises of the trembling Elagabalus, who only begged them to spare his life, and to leave him in the possession of his beloved Hierocles, diverted their just indignation; and they contented themselves with empowering their prefects to watch over the safety of Alexander, and the conduct of the emperor.<sup>o</sup>

It was impossible that such a reconciliation should last, or that even the mean soul of Elagabalus could hold an empire on such humiliating terms of dependence. He soon attempted, by a dangerous experiment, to try the temper of the soldiers. The report of the death of Alexander, and the natural suspicion that he had been murdered, inflamed their passions into fury, and the tempest of the camp could only be appeased by

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Sedition of  
the guards,  
and murder  
of Elaga-  
balus,  
A. D. 218,  
March 10.

<sup>o</sup> Dion, l. lxxix, p. 1365. Herodian, l. v, p. 195-201. Hist. August. p. 105. The last of the three historians seems to have followed the best authors in his account of the revolution.



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the presence and authority of the popular youth. Provoked at this new instance of their affection for his cousin, and their contempt for his person, the emperor ventured to punish some of the leaders of the mutiny. His unseasonable severity proved instantly fatal to his minions, his mother, and himself. Elagabalus was massacred by the indignant prætorians, his mutilated corpse dragged through the streets of the city and thrown into the Tyber. His memory was branded with eternal infamy by the senate; the justice of whose decree has been ratified by posterity.\*

Accession  
of Alexan-  
der Seve-  
rus.

In the room of Elagabalus, his cousin Alexander was raised to the throne by the prætorian guards. His relation to the family of Severus, whose name he assumed, was the same as that of his predecessor; his virtue and his danger had already endeared him to the Romans, and the eager liberality of the senate conferred upon him, in one day, the various titles and powers of the

\* The era of the death of Elagabalus, and of the accession of Alexander, has employed the learning and ingenuity of Pagl. Tillemont, Valsecchi, Vignoli, and Torre, bishop of Adria. The question is most assuredly intricate; but I still adhere to the authority of Dion, the truth of whose calculations is undeniable, and the purity of whose text is justified by the agreement of Xiphilin, Zonares, and Cedreno. Elagabalus reigned three years, nine months, and four days, from his victory over Macrinus, and was killed March 10, 212. But what shall we reply to the medals, undoubtedly genuine, which reckon the fifth year of his tribunitial power? We shall reply, with the learned Valsecchi, that the usurpation of Macrinus was annihilated, and that the son of Caracalla dated his reign from his father's death. After resolving this great difficulty, the smaller knots of this question may be easily untied, or cut asunder.

imperial dignity.<sup>3</sup> But as Alexander was a CHAP.  
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modest and dutiful youth, of only seventeen years of age, the reins of government were in the hands of two women, of his mother Mamæa, and of Mæsa, his grandmother. After the death of the latter, who survived but a short time the elevation of Alexander, Mamæa remained the sole regent of her son and of the empire.

In every age and country, the wiser, or at least Power of  
his mother  
Mamæa;  
the stronger, of the two sexes, has usurped the powers of the state, and confined the other to the cares and pleasures of domestic life. In hereditary monarchies, however, and especially in those of modern Europe, the gallant spirit of chivalry, and the law of succession, have accustomed us to allow a singular exception; and a woman is often acknowledged the absolute sovereign of a great kingdom, in which she would be deemed incapable of exercising the smallest employment, civil or military. But as the Roman emperors were still considered as the generals and magistrates of the republic, their wives and mothers, although distinguished by the name of Augusta, were never associated to their personal honours; and a female reign would have appeared an inexpiable prodigy in the eyes of those primitive Romans, who married without love, or loved without delicacy and respect.<sup>4</sup> The haughty

<sup>3</sup> Hist. August. p. 114. By this unusual precipitation, the senate meant to confound the hopes of pretenders, and prevent the factions of the armies.

<sup>4</sup> Metellus Numidicus, the censor, acknowledged to the Roman people, in a public oration, that had kind nature allowed us to exist without

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Agrippina aspired, indeed, to share the honours of the empire, which she had conferred on her son; but her mad ambition, detested by every citizen who felt for the dignity of Rome, was disappointed by the artful firmness of Seneca and Burrhus.<sup>1</sup> The good sense, or the indifference, of succeeding princes, restrained them from offending the prejudices of their subjects; and it was reserved for the profligate Elagabalus, to discharge the acts of the senate, with the name of his mother Soemias, who was placed by the side of the consuls, and subscribed, as a regular member, the decrees of the legislative assembly. Her more prudent sister, Mamaea, declined the useless and odious prerogative, and a solemn law was enacted, excluding women for ever from the senate, and devoting to the infernal gods, the head of the wretch by whom this sanction should be violated.<sup>2</sup> The substance, not the pageantry of power was the object of Mamaea's manly ambition. She maintained an absolute and lasting empire over the mind of her son, and in his affection the mother could not brook a rival. Alexander, with her consent, married the daughter of a patrician; but his respect for his father-in-law, and love for the empress, were inconsistent with the tenderness or interest of Mamaea. The patrician was executed on the ready accu-

without the help of women, we should be delivered from a very troublesome companion; and he could recommend matrimony only as the sacrifice of private pleasure to public duty. Aulus Gellius, 1, 6.

<sup>1</sup> Tacit. *Annal.* xiii, 5.

<sup>2</sup> Hist. August. p. 102, 107.



sation of treason, and the wife of Alexander driven with ignominy from the palace, and banished into Africa.\*

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Notwithstanding this act of jealous cruelty, as well as some instances of avarice, with which Mamæa is charged, the general tenor of her administration was equally for the benefit of her son and of the empire. With the approbation of the senate, she chose sixteen of the wisest and most virtuous senators, as a perpetual council of state, before whom every public business of moment was debated and determined. The celebrated Ulpian, equally distinguished by his knowledge of, and his respect for, the laws of Rome, was at their head; and the prudent firmness of this aristocracy restored order and authority to the government. As soon as they had purged the city from foreign superstition and luxury, the remains of the capricious tyranny of Elagabalus, they applied themselves to remove his worthless creatures from every department of public administration, and to supply their places with men of virtue and ability. Learning, and the love of justice, became the only recommendations for civil offices. Valour, and the love of discipline,

Wise and  
moderate  
admini-  
stration.

\* Dion, l. lxxx, p. 1369. Herodian, l. vi, p. 206. Hist. August. p. 131. Herodian represents the patrician as innocent. The Augustan history, on the authority of Dexippus, condemns him, as guilty of a conspiracy against the life of Alexander. It is impossible to pronounce between them; but Dion is an irreproachable witness of the jealousy and cruelty of Mamæa toward the young empress, whose hard fate Alexander lamented, but durst not oppose.

CHAP. the only qualifications for military employ-  
 VI ments.<sup>5</sup>

Education  
 and virtu-  
 ous temper  
 of Alexan-  
 der.

But the most important care of Mamaea and her wise counsellors, was to form the character of the young emperor, on whose personal qualities the happiness or misery of the Roman world must ultimately depend. The fortunate soil assisted, and even prevented, the hand of cultivation. An excellent understanding soon convinced Alexander of the advantages of virtue, the pleasure of knowledge, and the necessity of labour. A natural mildness and moderation of temper preserved him from the assaults of passion and the allurements of vice. His unalterable regard for his mother, and his esteem for the wise Ulpian, guarded his unexperienced youth from the poison of flattery.

Journal of  
 his ordi-  
 nary life.

The simple journal of his ordinary occupations exhibits a pleasing picture of an accomplished emperor,<sup>7</sup> and with some allowance for the difference of manners, might well deserve the imitation of modern princes. Alexander rose early; the first moments of the day were consecrated to private devotion, and his domestic chapel was filled with the images of those heroes, who, by improving or reforming human life, had deserved

<sup>5</sup> Herodian, l. vi, p. 203. Hist. August. p. 119. The latter insinuates, that when any law was to be passed, the council was assisted by a number of able lawyers and experienced senators, whose opinions were separately given, and taken down in writing.

<sup>7</sup> See his life, in the Augustan history. The undistinguishing compiler has buried these interesting anecdotes under a load of trivial and unmeaning circumstances.

the grateful reverence of posterity. But, as he deemed the service of mankind the most acceptable worship of the gods, the greatest part of his morning hours was employed in his council, where he discussed public affairs, and determined private causes, with a patience and discretion above his years. The dryness of business was relieved by the charms of literature; and a portion of time was always set apart for his favourite studies of poetry, history, and philosophy. The works of Virgil and Horace, the republics of Plato and Cicero, formed his taste, enlarged his understanding, and gave him the noblest ideas of man and government. The exercises of the body succeeded to those of the mind; and Alexander, who was tall, active, and robust, surpassed most of his equals in the gymnastic arts. Refreshed by the use of the bath and a slight dinner, he resumed, with new vigour, the business of the day; and, till the hour of supper, the principal meal of the Romans, he was attended by his secretaries, with whom he read and answered the multitude of letters, memorials, and petitions, that must have been addressed to the master of the greatest part of the world. His table was served with the most frugal simplicity; and whenever he was at liberty to consult his own inclination, the company consisted of a few select friends, men of learning and virtue, amongst whom Ulpian was constantly invited. Their conversation was familiar and instructive; and the pauses were occasionally enlivened by the recital of some pleasing composition, which supplied the



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place of the dancers, comedians, and even gladiators, so frequently summoned to the tables of the rich and luxurious Romans.\* The dress of Alexander was plain and modest, his demeanour courteous and affable: at the proper hours his palace was open to all his subjects, but the voice of a crier was heard, as in the Eleusinian mysteries, pronouncing the same salutary admonition; "Let none enter those holy walls, unless he is conscious of a pure and innocent mind."†

General  
happiness  
of the Ro-  
man world,  
s. v. 222-  
233.

Such an uniform tenour of life, which left not a moment for vice or folly, is a better proof of the wisdom and justice of Alexander's government, than all the trifling details preserved in the compilation of Lampridius. Since the accession of Commodus, the Roman world had experienced, during a term of forty years, the successive and various vices of four tyrants. From the death of Elagabalus, it enjoyed an auspicious calm of thirteen years. The provinces, relieved from the oppressive taxes invented by Caracalla and his pretended son, flourished in peace and prosperity, under the administration of magistrates, who were convinced by experience, that to deserve the love of the subjects, was their best and only method of obtaining the favour of their sovereign. While some gentle restraints were imposed on the innocent luxury of the Roman people, the price of provisions, and the interest of money, were reduced

\* See the thirteenth satire of Juvenal.

† Hist. August. p. 119.

by the paternal care of Alexander, whose prudent liberality, without distressing the industrious, supplied the wants and amusements of the populace. The dignity, the freedom, the authority of the senate were restored; and every virtuous senator might approach the person of the emperor, without fear, and without a blush.

The name of Antoninus, ennobled by the virtues of Pius and Marcus, had been communicated by adoption to the dissolute Verus, and by descent to the cruel Commodus. It became the honourable appellation of the sons of Severus, was bestowed on young Diadumenianus, and at length prostituted to the infamy of the high priest of Emesa. Alexander, though pressed by the studied, and perhaps sincere importunity of the senate, nobly refused the borrowed lustre of a name; whilst in his whole conduct he laboured to restore the glories and felicity of the age of the genuine Antonines.<sup>a</sup>

In the civil administration of Alexander, wisdom was enforced by power, and the people, sensible of the public felicity, repaid their benefactor with their love and gratitude. There still remained a greater, a more necessary, but a more difficult enterprise; the reformation of the military order, whose interest and temper, con-

Alexander  
refuses the  
name of  
Antoninus.

He at-  
tempts to  
reform the  
army.

<sup>a</sup> See in the Hist. August. p. 116, 117, the whole contest between Alexander and the senate, extracted from the journals of that assembly. It happened on the sixth of March, probably of the year 223, when the Romans had enjoyed, almost a twelvemonth, the blessings of his reign. Before the appellation of Antoninus was offered him as a title of honour, the senate waited to see whether Alexander would not assume it as a family name.

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firmed by long impunity, rendered them impatient of the restraints of discipline, and careless of the blessings of public tranquillity. In the execution of his design the emperor affected to display his love, and to conceal his fear, of the army. The most rigid economy in every other branch of the administration, supplied a fund of gold and silver for the ordinary pay and the extraordinary rewards of the troops. In their marches he relaxed the severe obligation of carrying seventeen days provision on their shoulders. Ample magazines were formed along the public roads, and as soon as they entered the enemy's country, a numerous train of mules and camels waited on their haughty laziness. As Alexander despaired of correcting the luxury of his soldiers, he attempted at least to direct it to objects of martial pomp and ornament, fine horses, splendid armour, and shields enriched with silver and gold. He shared whatever fatigues he was obliged to impose, visited in person the sick and wounded, preserved an exact register of their services and his own gratitude, and expressed, on every occasion, the warmest regard for a body of men, whose welfare, as he affected to declare, was so closely connected with that of the state.\* By the most gentle arts he laboured to inspire the fierce multitude with a sense of duty, and to restore at least a faint image of that discipline to which the Romans owed their empire over so

\* It was a favourite saying of the emperor's, *Se milites magis servare, quam seipsum; quod salus publica in his esset.* Hist. August. p. 130.



many other nations, as warlike and more powerful than themselves. But his prudence was vain, his courage fatal, and the attempt towards a reformation served only to inflame the ills it was meant to cure.

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The prætorian guards were attached to the youth of Alexander. They loved him as a tender pupil, whom they had saved from a tyrant's fury, and placed on the imperial throne. That amiable prince was sensible of the obligation; but as his gratitude was restrained within the limits of reason and justice, they soon were more dissatisfied with the virtues of Alexander, than they had ever been with the vices of Elagabalus. Their prefect, the wise Ulpian, was the friend of the laws and of the people; he was considered as the enemy of the soldiers, and to his pernicious counsels every scheme of reformation was imputed. Some trifling accident blew up their discontent into a furious mutiny; and a civil war raged, during three days, in Rome, whilst the life of that excellent minister was defended by the grateful people. Terrified, at length, by the sight of some houses in flames, and by the threats of a general conflagration, the people yielded with a sigh, and left the virtuous but unfortunate Ulpian to his fate. He was pursued into the imperial palace, and massacred at the feet of his master, who vainly strove to cover him with the purple, and to obtain his pardon from the inexorable soldiers. Such was the deplorable weakness of government, that the emperor was unable to revenge his murdered

Seditions  
of the  
prætorian  
guards,  
and murder  
of Ulpian.

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friend and his insulted dignity, without stooping to the arts of patience and dissimulation. Epagathus, the principal leader of the mutiny, was removed from Rome, by the honourable employment of prefect of Egypt; from that high rank he was gently degraded to the government of Crete; and when, at length, his popularity among the guards was effaced by time and absence, Alexander ventured to inflict the tardy, but deserved punishment of his crimes.<sup>4</sup> Under the reign of a just and virtuous prince, the tyranny of the army threatened with instant death his most faithful ministers, who were suspected of an intention to correct their intolerable disorders.

Danger of  
Dion Cas-  
sius.

The historian Dion Cassius had commanded the Pannonian legions with the spirit of ancient discipline. Their brethren of Rome, embracing the common cause of military licence, demanded the head of the reformer. Alexander, however, instead of yielding to their seditious clamours, shewed a just sense of his merit and services, by appointing him his colleague in the consulship, and defraying from his own treasury the expence of that vain dignity: but as it was justly apprehended, that if the soldiers beheld him with the ensigns of his office, they would revenge the insult in his blood, the nominal first magistrate of the state retired, by the emperor's advice, from

<sup>4</sup> Though the author of the life of Alexander (Hist. August. p. 132) mentions the sedition raised against Ulpian by the soldiers, he conceals the catastrophe, as it might discover a weakness in the administration of his hero. From this designed omission, we may judge of the weight and candour of that author.

the city, and spent the greatest part of his consulship at his villas in Campania.\*

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The lenity of the emperor confirmed the insolence of the troops: the legions imitated the example of the guards, and defended their prerogative of licentiousness with the same furious obstinacy. The administration of Alexander was an unavailing struggle against the corruption of his age. In Illyricum, in Mauritania, in Armenia, in Mesopotamia, in Germany, fresh mutinies perpetually broke out; his officers were murdered, his authority was insulted, and his life at last sacrificed to the fierce discontents of the army.<sup>f</sup> One particular fact well deserves to be recorded, as it illustrates the manners of the troops, and exhibits a singular instance of their return to a sense of duty and obedience. Whilst the emperor lay at Antioch, in his Persian expedition, the particulars of which we shall hereafter relate, the punishment of some soldiers, who had been discovered in the baths of women, excited a sedition in the legion to which they belonged. Alexander ascended his tribunal, and, with a modest firmness, represented to the armed multitude the absolute necessity, as well as his inflexible resolution, of correcting the vices introduced by his impure predecessor, and of maintaining the discipline, which could not be relaxed without the ruin of the Roman name and empire. Their clamours interrupted his mild ex-

Tumults of  
the legions.

Firmness  
of the em-  
peror.

\* For an account of Ulpian's fate, and his own danger, see the mutilated conclusion of Dion's history, l. lxxx, p. 1371.

<sup>f</sup> Annot. Reimar. ad Dion Cassius, l. lxxx, p. 1369.



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postulation. "Reserve your shouts," said the undaunted emperor, "till you take the field against the Persians, the Germans, and the Sarmatians. Be silent in the presence of your sovereign and benefactor, who bestows upon you the corn, the clothing, and the money of the provinces. Be silent, or I shall no longer style you soldiers, but *citizens*," if those, indeed, who disclaim the laws of Rome, deserve to be ranked among the meanest of the people." His menaces inflamed the fury of the legion, and their brandished arms already threatened his person. "Your courage," resumed the intrepid Alexander, "would be more nobly displayed in the field of battle; *me* you may destroy, you cannot intimidate; and the severe justice of the republic would punish your crime, and revenge my death." The legion still persisted in clamorous sedition, when the emperor pronounced, with a loud voice, the decisive sentence, "*Citizens!* lay down your arms, and depart in peace to your respective habitations." The tempest was instantly appeased; the soldiers, filled with grief and shame, silently confessed the justice of their punishment, and the power of discipline, yielded up their arms and military ensigns, and retired in confusion, not to their camp, but to the several inns of the city. Alexander enjoyed, during thirty days, the edifying spec-

\* Julius Cæsar had appeased a sedition with the same word *quiritis*, which, thus opposed to *soldiers*, was used in a sense of contempt, and reduced the offenders to the less honourable condition of mere *citizens*. Tacit. Annal. 1, 43.

tacle of their repentance; nor did he restore; CHAP. VI.  
 them to their former rank in the army, till he  
 had punished with death those tribunes whose  
 connivance had occasioned the mutiny. The  
 grateful legion served the emperor whilst living,  
 and revenged him when dead.<sup>b</sup>

The resolutions of the multitude generally de- Defects of  
 pend on a moment; and the caprice of passion his reign  
 might equally determine the seditious legion to and charac-  
 lay down their arms at the emperor's feet, or to ter.  
 plunge them into his breast. Perhaps, if the  
 singular transaction had been investigated by the  
 penetration of a philosopher, we should discover  
 the secret causes which, on that occasion, autho-  
 rized the boldness of the prince, and command-  
 ed the obedience of the troops; and perhaps, if  
 it had been related by a judicious historian, we  
 should find this action, worthy of Cæsar himself,  
 reduced nearer to the level of probability, and the  
 common standard of the character of Alexander  
 Severus. The abilities of that amiable prince  
 seem to have been inadequate to the difficulties  
 of his situation, the firmness of his conduct in-  
 ferior to the purity of his intentions. His vir-  
 tues, as well as the vices of Elagabalus, con-  
 tracted a tincture of weakness and effeminacy  
 from the soft climate of Syria, of which he was  
 a native, though he blushed at his foreign origin,  
 and listened with a vain complacency to the flat-  
 tering genealogists, who derived his race from

<sup>b</sup> Hist. August. p. 132.

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the ancient stock of Roman nobility.<sup>1</sup> The pride and avarice of his mother cast a shade on the glories of his reign, and, by exacting from his riper years the same dutiful obedience which she had justly claimed from his unexperienced youth, Mamaea exposed to public ridicule both her son's character and her own.<sup>2</sup> The fatigues of the Persian war irritated the military discontent; the unsuccessful event degraded the reputation of the emperor as a general, and even as a soldier. Every cause prepared, and every circumstance hastened, a revolution, which distracted the Roman empire with a long series of intestine calamities.

Digression  
on the fi-  
nances of  
the empire.

The dissolute tyranny of Commodus, the civil wars occasioned by his death, and the new maxims of policy introduced by the house of Severus, had all contributed to increase the dangerous power of the army, and to obliterate the faint image of laws and liberty that was still impressed

<sup>1</sup> From the Metelli. Hist. August. p. 119. The choice was judicious. In one short period of twelve years, the Metelli could reckon seven consulships and five triumphs. See Velleius Paterculus, li, 11, and the Fasti.

<sup>2</sup> The life of Alexander, in the Augustan history, is the mere idea of a perfect prince, an awkward imitation of the Cyropædia. The account of his reign, as given by Herodian, is rational and moderate, consistent with the general history of the age, and, in some of the most invidious particulars, confirmed by the decisive fragments of Dion. Yet, from a very paltry prejudice, the greater number of our modern writers abuse Herodian, and copy the Augustan history. See Messrs. de Tillemont and Wotton. From the opposite prejudice, the emperor Julian (in Casaubon, p. 315) dwells with a sensible satisfaction on the effeminate weakness of the Syrian, and the ridiculous avarice of his mother.



on the minds of the Romans. This internal change, which undermined the foundations of the empire, we have endeavoured to explain with some degree of order and perspicuity. The personal characters of the emperors, their victories, laws, follies, and fortunes, can interest us no farther than as they are connected with the general history of the decline and fall of the monarchy. Our constant attention to that great object will not suffer us to overlook a most important edict of Antoninus Caracalla, which communicated to all the free inhabitants of the empire the name and privileges of Roman citizens. His unbounded liberality flowed not, however, from the sentiments of a generous mind; it was the sordid result of avarice, and will naturally be illustrated by some observations on the finances of that state, from the victorious ages of the commonwealth to the reign of Alexander Severus.

The siege of Veii in Tuscany, the first considerable enterprize of the Romans, was protracted to the tenth year, much less by the strength of the place than by the unskilfulness of the besiegers. The unaccustomed hardships of so many winter campaigns, at the distance of near twenty miles from home,<sup>1</sup> required more than common encouragements; and the senate wisely prevented

<sup>1</sup> According to the more accurate Dionysius, the city itself was only an hundred stadia, or twelve miles and a half from Rome, though some out-posts might be advanced farther on the side of Etruria. Nardin, in a professed treatise, has combated the popular opinion, and the authority of two popes, and has removed Veii from Clivis Castellana to a little spot called Isola, in the middle of the lake Bracciano.

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and abolition  
of the  
tribute on  
Roman ci-  
tizens.

the clamours of the people, by the institution of a regular pay for the soldiers, which was levied by a general tribute, assessed according to an equitable proportion on the property of the citizens.<sup>m</sup> During more than two hundred years after the conquest of Veii, the victories of the republic added less to the wealth than to the power of Rome. The states of Italy paid their tribute in military service only, and the vast force, both by sea and land, which was exerted in the Punic wars, was maintained at the expence of the Romans themselves. That high-spirited people (such is often the generous enthusiasm of freedom) cheerfully submitted to the most excessive but voluntary burdens, in the just confidence that they should speedily enjoy the rich harvest of their labours. Their expectations were not disappointed. In the course of a few years, the riches of Syracuse, of Carthage, of Macedonia, and of Asia, were brought in triumph to Rome. The treasures of Perseus alone amounted to near two millions sterling, and the Roman people, the sovereign of so many nations, was for ever delivered from the weight of taxes.<sup>n</sup> The increasing revenue of the provinces was found sufficient to defray the ordinary establishment of war and government, and the superfluous mass of gold and silver was deposited in the temple of

<sup>m</sup> See the fourth and fifth books of Livy. In the Roman Census, property, power, and taxation, were commensurate with each other.

<sup>n</sup> Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xxii, c. 3. Cicero de Offic. ii, 22. Flor. tarch. in P. Emil. p. 275.

Saturn, and reserved for any unforeseen emergency of the state.<sup>a</sup>

History has never perhaps suffered a greater or more irreparable injury, than in the loss of the curious register bequeathed by Augustus to the senate, in which that experienced prince so accurately balanced the revenues and expences of the Roman empire.<sup>b</sup> Deprived of this clear and comprehensive estimate, we are reduced to collect a few imperfect hints from such of the ancients as have accidentally turned aside from the splendid to the more useful parts of history. We are informed that, by the conquests of Pompey, the tributes of Asia were raised from fifty to one hundred and thirty-five millions of drachms; or about four millions and a half sterling.<sup>c</sup> Under the last and most indolent of the Ptolemies, the revenue of Egypt is said to have amounted to twelve thousand five hundred talents; a sum equivalent to more than two millions and a half of our money, but which was afterwards considerably improved by the more exact economy of the Romans, and the increase of the trade of Ethiopia and India.<sup>d</sup> Gaul was enriched by rapine, as Egypt was by commerce, and the tributes of those two great provinces have been compared as nearly equal to each

<sup>a</sup> See a fine description of this accumulated wealth of ages, in Lucan's Phars. l. iii. v. 155, &c.

<sup>b</sup> Tacit. in Annal. i. 41. It seems to have existed in the time of Appian.

<sup>c</sup> Plutarch. in Pompeio, p. 642.

<sup>d</sup> Strabo, l. xvii. p. 791.



CHAP. other in value.<sup>1</sup> The ten thousand Euboic or  
 VI. Phœnician talents, about four millions ster-  
 of Africa, ling,<sup>2</sup> which vanquished Carthage was condemn-  
 ed to pay within the term of fifty years, were  
 a slight acknowledgment of the superiority of  
 Rome,<sup>3</sup> and cannot bear the least proportion  
 with the taxes afterwards raised both on the lands  
 and on the persons of the inhabitants, when the  
 fertile coast of Africa was reduced into a pro-  
 vince.<sup>4</sup>

of Spain, Spain, by a very singular fatality, was the Peru  
 and Mexico of the old world. The discovery of  
 the rich western continent by the Phœnicians,  
 and the oppression of the simple natives, who  
 were compelled to labour in their own mines for  
 the benefit of strangers, form an exact type of  
 the more recent history of Spanish America.<sup>5</sup>  
 The Phœnicians were acquainted only with the  
 sea-coast of Spain; avarice, as well as ambition,  
 carried the arms of Rome and Carthage into the  
 heart of the country, and almost every part of  
 the soil was found pregnant with copper, silver,  
 and gold. Mention is made of a mine near Car-  
 thagena, which yielded every day twenty-five

<sup>1</sup> Velleius Paterculus, l. ii, c. 39. He seems to give the prefer-  
 ence to the revenue of Gaul.

<sup>2</sup> The Euboic, the Phœnician, and the Alexandrian talents were  
 double in weight to the Attic. See Hooper on ancient weights and  
 measures, p. iv, c. 5. It is very probable that the same talent was  
 carried from Tyre to Carthage.

<sup>3</sup> Polyb. l. xv, c. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Appian in Punicis, p. 84.

<sup>5</sup> Diodorus Siculus, l. v. Cadix was built by the Phœnicians, a  
 little more than a thousand years before Christ. See Vell. Paterc.  
 i, 2.

thousand drachms of silver, or about three hundred thousand pounds a-year.\* Twenty thousand pound weight of gold was annually received from the provinces of Austria, Gallicia, and Lusitania.\*

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We want both leisure and materials to pursue this curious inquiry through the many potent states that were annihilated in the Roman empire. Some notion, however, may be formed of the revenue of the provinces where considerable wealth had been deposited by nature, or collected by man, if we observe the severe attention that was directed to the abodes of solitude and sterility. Augustus once received a petition from the inhabitants of Gyarus, humbly praying that they might be relieved from one-third of their excessive impositions. Their whole tax amounted indeed to no more than one hundred and fifty drachms, or about five pounds: but Gyarus was a little island, or rather a rock of the Ægean sea, destitute of fresh water and every necessary of life, and inhabited only by a few wretched fishermen.^b

of the isle
of Gyarus.

From the faint glimmerings of such doubtful and scattered lights we should be inclined to believe, 1st, That (with every fair allowance for

Amount of
the reve-
nue.

* Strabo. l. iii, p. 148.

* Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xxviii, c. 3. He mentions likewise a silver mine in Dalmatia, that yielded every day fifty pounds to the state.

^b Strabo, l. x, p. 485. Tacit. Annal. iii, 69, and iv, 30. See in Tournefort (Voyages au Levant, lettre viii), a very lively picture of the actual misery of Gyarus.



CHAP. VI. the difference of times and circumstances) the general income of the Roman provinces could seldom amount to less than fifteen or twenty millions of our money;* and, 2dly, That so ample a revenue must have been fully adequate to all the expences of the moderate government instituted by Augustus, whose court was the modest family of a private senator, and whose military establishment was calculated for the defence of the frontiers, without any aspiring views of conquest, or any serious apprehension of a foreign invasion.

Taxes on Roman citizens instituted by Augustus.

Notwithstanding the seeming probability of both these conclusions, the latter of them at least is positively disowned by the language and conduct of Augustus. It is not easy to determine whether, on this occasion, he acted as the common father of the Roman world, or as the oppressor of liberty; whether he wished to relieve the provinces, or to impoverish the senate and the equestrian order. But no sooner had he assumed the reins of government, than he frequently intimated the insufficiency of the tributes, and the necessity of throwing an equitable proportion of the public burden upon Rome and Italy. In the prosecution of this unpopular design, he advanced, however, by cautious and well-weighed steps. The introduction of customs was followed by the establishment of an excise,

* Lipsius de magnitudine Romanâ (l. 2, c. 3) computes the revenue at one hundred and fifty millions of gold crowns; but his whole book, though learned and ingenious, betrays a very heated imagination.

and the scheme of taxation was completed by an artful assessment on the real and personal property of the Roman citizens, who had been exempted from any kind of contribution above a century and a half.

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1. In a great empire like that of Rome, a natural balance of money must have gradually established itself. It has been already observed, that as the wealth of the provinces was attracted to the capital by the strong hand of conquest and power; so a considerable part of it was restored to the industrious provinces by the gentle influence of commerce and arts. In the reign of Augustus and his successors, duties were imposed on every kind of merchandise, which through a thousand channels flowed to the great centre of opulence and luxury; and in whatever manner the law was expressed, it was the Roman purchaser, and not the provincial merchant, who paid the tax.^a The rate of the customs varied from the eighth to the fortieth part of the value of the commodity; and we have a right to suppose that the variation was directed by the unalterable maxims of policy; that a higher duty was fixed on the articles of luxury than on those of necessity, and that the productions raised or manufactured by the labour of the subjects of the empire, were treated with more indulgence than was shewn to the pernicious, or at least the unpopular commerce of Arabia and

The customs.

^a Tacit. *Annal.* xiii. 31.

CHAP. India.* There is still extant a long but im-
 VI. perfect catalogue of eastern commodities, which
 about the time of Alexander Severus were subject
 to the payment of duties; cinnamon, myrrh,
 pepper, ginger, and the whole tribe of aromatics,
 a great variety of precious stones, among which
 the diamond was the most remarkable for its
 price, and the emerald for its beauty.^f Parthian
 and Babylonian leather, cottons, silks, both raw
 and manufactured, ebony, ivory, and eunuchs.^g
 We may observe that the use and value of those
 effeminate slaves gradually rose with the decline
 of the empire.

The excise. II. The excise, introduced by Augustus after
 the civil wars, was extremely moderate, but it
 was general. It seldom exceeded *one per cent.*;
 but it comprehended whatever was sold in the
 markets or by public auction, from the most con-
 siderable purchase of lands and houses, to those
 minute objects which can only derive a value
 from their infinite multitude, and daily consump-
 tion. Such a tax, as it affects the body of the
 people, has ever been the occasion of clamour
 and discontent. An emperor well acquainted

* See Pliny (Hist. Natur. l. vi, c. 23, l. xii, c. 18). His observa-
 tion, that the Indian commodities were sold at Rome at a hundred
 times their original price, may give us some notion of the produce
 of the customs, since that original price amounted to more than
 eight hundred thousand pounds.

^f The ancients were unacquainted with the art of cutting dia-
 monds.

^g M. Bouchaud, in his treatise de l'Impôt chez les Romains, has
 transcribed this catalogue from the Digest, and attempts to illustrate
 it by a very prolix commentary.

with the wants and resources of the state, was CHAP. VI.
 obliged to declare by a public edict, that the
 support of the army depended in a great measure
 on the produce of the excise.^b

III. When Augustus resolved to establish a Tax on legacies and inheritances.
 permanent military force for the defence of his
 government against foreign and domestic ene-
 mies, he instituted a peculiar treasury for the pay
 of the soldiers, the rewards of the veterans, and
 the extraordinary expences of war. The ample
 revenue of the excise, though peculiarly appro-
 priated to those uses, was found inadequate.
 To supply the deficiency, the emperor suggested
 a new tax of five *per cent.* on all legacies and
 inheritances. But the nobles of Rome were
 more tenacious of property than of freedom.
 Their indignant murmurs were received by Au-
 gustus with his usual temper. He candidly re-
 ferred the whole business to the senate, and ex-
 horted them to provide for the public service by
 some other expedient of a less odious nature.
 They were divided and perplexed. He insinu-
 ated to them, that their obstinacy would oblige
 him to *propose* a general land-tax and capitation.
 They acquiesced in silence.¹ The new imposi-
 tion on legacies and inheritances was, however,
 mitigated by some restrictions. It did not take
 place unless the object was of a certain value,

^b Tacit. Annal. i, 78. Two years afterwards, the reduction of the poor kingdom of Cappadocia gave Tiberius a pretence for diminishing the excise to one half; but the relief was of very short duration.

¹ Dion Cassius, l. iv, p. 794, l. lvi, p. 825.

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most probably of fifty or an hundred pieces of gold;² nor could it be exacted from the nearest of kin on the father's side.¹ When the rights of nature and poverty were thus secured, it seemed reasonable, that a stranger, or a distant relation, who acquired an unexpected accession of fortune, should cheerfully resign a twentieth part of it, for the benefit of the state.³

Suited to
the laws
and man-
ners.

Such a tax, plentiful as it must prove in every wealthy community, was most happily suited to the situation of the Romans, who could frame their arbitrary wills, according to the dictates of reason or caprice, without any restraint from the modern fetters of entails and settlements. From various causes the partiality of paternal affection often lost its influence over the stern patriots of the commonwealth, and the dissolute nobles of the empire; and if the father bequeathed to his son the fourth part of his estate, he removed all ground of legal complaint.⁴ But a rich childless old man was a domestic tyrant, and his power increased with his years and infirmities. A servile crowd, in which he frequently reckoned prætors and consuls, courted his smiles, pampered his avarice, applauded his follies, served his passions, and waited with impatience for his

¹ The sum is only fixed by conjecture.

² As the Roman law subsisted for many ages, the *cognati*, or relations on the mother's side, were not called to the succession. This harsh institution was gradually undermined by humanity, and finally abolished by Justinian.

³ Plin. Pan. *yr. c. c. 37.*

⁴ See He garricus in the *Antiquit. Juris Romani*, l. II.

death. The arts of attendance and flattery were formed into a most lucrative science; those who professed it acquired a peculiar appellation; and the whole city, according to the lively descriptions of satire, was divided between two parties, the hunters and their game.* Yet, while so many unjust and extravagant wills were every day dictated by cunning, and subscribed by folly, a few were the result of rational esteem and virtuous gratitude. Cicero, who had so often defended the lives and fortunes of his fellow-citizens, was rewarded with legacies to the amount of an hundred and seventy thousand pounds;† nor do the friends of the younger Pliny seem to have been less generous to that amiable orator.‡ Whatever was the motive of the testator, the treasury claimed, without distinction, the twentieth part of his estate; and in the course of two or three generations, the whole property of the subject must have gradually passed through the coffers of the state.

In the first and golden years of the reign of Nero, that prince, from a desire of popularity, and perhaps from a blind impulse of benevolence, conceived a wish of abolishing the oppression of the customs and excise. The wisest senators applauded his magnanimity; but they diverted him

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Regulations of the
emperors.

* Horat. l. ii, sat. v. Petron. c. 116, &c. Plin. l. ii, epist. 20.

† Cicero in Philipp. ii, c. 16.

‡ See his epistles. Every such will give him an occasion of displaying his reverence to the dead, and his justice to the living. He reconciled both, in his behaviour to a son who had been disinherited by his mother (v. 1).

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from the execution of a design, which would have dissolved the strength and resources of the republic.* Had it indeed been possible to realize this dream of fancy, such princes as Trajan and the Antonines would surely have embraced with ardour the glorious opportunity of conferring so signal an obligation on mankind. Satisfied, however, with alleviating the public burden, they attempted not to remove it. The mildness and precision of their laws ascertained the rule and measure of taxation, and protected the subject of every rank against arbitrary interpretations, antiquated claims, and the insolent vexation of the farmers of the revenue.² For it is somewhat singular that, in every age, the best and wisest of the Roman governors persevered in this pernicious method of collecting the principal branches at least of the excise and customs.³

Edict of
Caracalla.

The sentiments, and, indeed, the situation of Caracalla, were very different from those of the Antonines. Inattentive, or rather averse to the welfare of his people, he found himself under the necessity of gratifying the insatiate avarice, which he had excited in the army. Of the several impositions introduced by Augustus, the twentieth on inheritances and legacies was the most fruitful, as well as the most comprehensive. As its

* Tacit. Annal. xiii. 50. *Esprit des Loix*, l. xii. c. 19.

² See Pline's Panegyric, the Augustan history, and Barman de Vectigal. passim.

³ The tributes (properly so called) were not furmed, since the good princes often remitted many millions of arrears.

influence was not confined to Rome or Italy, the produce continually increased with the gradual extension of the *Roman City*. The new citizens, though charged, on equal terms,* with the payment of new taxes, which had not affected them as subjects, derived an ample compensation from the rank they obtained, the privileges they acquired, and the fair prospect of honours and fortune that was thrown open to their ambition. But the favour which implied a distinction was lost in the prodigality of Caracalla, and the reluctant provincials were compelled to assume the vain title, and the real obligations, of Roman citizens. Nor was the rapacious son of Severus contented with such a measure of taxation as had appeared sufficient to his moderate predecessors. Instead of a twentieth, he exacted a tenth of all legacies and inheritances; and during his reign (for the ancient proportion was restored after his death) he crushed alike every part of the empire under the weight of his iron sceptre.[†]

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The freedom of the city given to all the provincials, for the purpose of taxation.

When all the provincials became liable to the peculiar impositions of Roman citizens, they seemed to acquire a legal exemption from the tributes which they had paid in their former condition of subjects. Such were not the maxims of government adopted by Caracalla and his pretended son. The old as well as the new taxes were, at the same time, levied in the provinces.

Temporary reduction of the tribute.

* The situation of the new citizens is minutely described by Pliney (Panegyric. c. 37, 38, 39). Trajan published a law very much in their favour.

† Dion, l. lxxvii, p. 1395.

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It was reserved for the virtue of Alexander to relieve them, in a great measure, from this intolerable grievance, by reducing the tributes to a thirtieth part of the sum exacted at the time of his accession.³ It is impossible to conjecture the motive that engaged him to spare so trifling a remnant of the public evil; but the noxious weed, which had not been totally eradicated, again sprang up with the most luxuriant growth, and, in the succeeding age, darkened the Roman world with its deadly shade. In the course of this history, we shall be too often summoned to explain the land-tax, the capitation, and the heavy contributions of corn, wine, oil, and meat, which were exacted from the provinces for the use of the court, the army, and the capital.

Consequences of the universal freedom of Rome.

As long as Rome and Italy were respected as the centre of government, a national spirit was preserved by the ancient, and insensibly imbibed by the adopted, citizens. The principal commands of the army were filled by men who had received a liberal education, were well instructed in the advantages of laws and letters, and who had risen, by equal steps, through the regular succession of civil and military honours.⁴ To their influence and example we may partly ascribe the modest obedience of the legions during the two first centuries of the imperial history.

³ He who paid ten aurei, the usual tribute, was charged with no more than the third part of an aureus, and proportional pieces of gold were coined by Alexander's order. Hist. August. p. 127, with the commentary of Salmastius.

⁴ See the lives of Agricola, Vespasian, Trajan, Severus, and his three competitors, and indeed of all the eminent men of those times.

But when the last enclosure of the Roman constitution was trampled down by Caracalla, the separation of professions gradually succeeded to the distinction of ranks. The more polished citizens of the internal provinces were alone qualified to act as lawyers and magistrates. The rougher trade of arms was abandoned to the peasants and barbarians of the frontiers, who knew no country but their camp, no science but that of war, no civil laws, and scarcely those of military discipline. With bloody hands, savage manners, and desperate resolutions, they sometimes guarded, but much oftener subverted, the throne of the emperors.

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The elevation and tyranny of Maximin.—Rebellion in Africa and Italy, under the authority of the senate.—Civil wars and seditions.—Violent deaths of Maximin and his son, of Maximus and Balbinus, and of the three Gordians.—Usurpation and secular games of Philip.

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The apparent
ridicule

OF the various forms of government, which have prevailed in the world, an hereditary monarchy seems to present the fairest scope for ridicule. Is it possible to relate, without an indignant smile, that on the father's decease, the property of a nation, like that of a drove of oxen, descends to his infant son, as yet unknown to mankind and to himself; and that the bravest warriors and the wisest statesmen, relinquishing their natural right to empire, approach the royal cradle with bended knees and protestations of inviolable fidelity? Satire and declamation may paint these obvious topics in the most dazzling colours, but our more serious thoughts will respect a useful prejudice, that establishes a rule of succession, independent of the passions of mankind; and we shall cheerfully acquiesce in any expedient which deprives the multitude of the dangerous, and indeed the ideal, power of giving themselves a master.

and solid
advantages
of heredi-
tary suc-
cession.

In the cool shade of retirement, we may easily devise imaginary forms of government, in which

the sceptre shall be constantly bestowed on the most worthy, by the free and incorrupt suffrage of the whole community. Experience overturns these airy fabrics, and teaches us, that in a large society, the election of a monarch can never devolve to the wisest, or to the most numerous, part of the people. The army is the only order of men sufficiently united to concur in the same sentiments, and powerful enough to impose them on the rest of their fellow-citizens; but the temper of soldiers, habituated at once to violence and to slavery, renders them very unfit guardians of a legal, or even a civil, constitution. Justice, humanity, or political wisdom, are qualities they are too little acquainted with in themselves, to appreciate them in others. Valour will acquire their esteem, and liberality will purchase their suffrage; but the first of these merits is often lodged in the most savage breasts; the latter can only exert itself at the expence of the public; and both may be turned against the possessor of the throne, by the ambition of a daring rival.

The superior prerogative of birth, when it has obtained the sanction of time and popular opinion, is the plainest and least invidious of all distinctions among mankind. The acknowledged right extinguishes the hopes of faction, and the conscious security disarms the cruelty of the monarch. To the firm establishment of this idea, we owe the peaceful succession and mild administration of European monarchies. To the defect of it, we must attribute the frequent civil

Want of it
in the Ro-
man em-
pire pro-
ductive of
the greatest
calamities.

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wars, through which an Asiatic despot is obliged to cut his way to the throne of his fathers. Yet even in the East, the sphere of contention is usually limited to the princes of the reigning house; and as soon as the more fortunate competitor has removed his brethren, by the sword and the bow-string, he no longer entertains any jealousy of his meaner subjects. But the Roman empire, after the authority of the senate had sunk into contempt, was a vast scene of confusion. The royal, and even noble, families of the provinces, had long since been led in triumph before the car of the haughty republicans. The ancient families of Rome had successively fallen beneath the tyranny of the Cæsars; and whilst those princes were shackled by the forms of a commonwealth, and disappointed by the repeated failure of their posterity,\* it was impossible that any idea of hereditary succession should have taken root in the minds of their subjects. The right to the throne, which none could claim from birth, every one assumed from merit. The daring hopes of ambition were set loose from the salutary restraints of law and prejudice, and the meanest of mankind might, without folly, entertain a hope of being raised, by valour and fortune, to a rank in the army, in which a single crime would enable him to wrest the sceptre of the world from his feeble and unpopular master. After the mur-

\* There had been no example of three successive generations on the throne; only three instances of sons who succeeded their fathers. The marriages of the Cæsars (notwithstanding the permission, and the frequent practice of divorces) were generally unfruitful.



der of Alexander Severus, and the elevation of Maximin, no emperor could think himself safe upon the throne, and every barbarian peasant of the frontier might aspire to that august, but dangerous station.

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About thirty-two years before that event, the emperor Severus, returning from an eastern expedition, halted in Thrace, to celebrate, with military games, the birth-day of his younger son, Geta. The country flocked in crowds to behold their sovereign, and a young barbarian of gigantic stature, earnestly solicited, in his rude dialect, that he might be allowed to contend for the prize of wrestling. As the pride of discipline would have been disgraced in the overthrow of a Roman soldier by a Thracian peasant, he was matched with the stoutest followers of the camp, sixteen of whom he successively laid on the ground. His victory was rewarded by some trifling gifts, and a permission to enlist in the troops. The next day, the happy barbarian was distinguished above a crowd of recruits, dancing and exulting after the fashion of his country. As soon as he perceived that he had attracted the emperor's notice, he instantly ran up to his horse, and followed him on foot, without the least appearance of fatigue, in a long and rapid career. "Thracian," said Severus with astonishment, "art thou disposed to wrestle after thy race?" Most willingly, sir, replied the unwearied youth; and, almost in a breath, overthrew seven of the strongest soldiers in the army. A gold collar was

Birth and  
fortunes of  
Maximin.

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VII.His mili-  
tary service  
and ho-  
nours.

the prize of his matchless vigour and activity, and he was immediately appointed to serve in the horse-guards who always attended on the person of the sovereign.<sup>b</sup>

Maximin, for that was his name, though born on the territories of the empire, descended from a mixed race of barbarians. His father was a Goth, and his mother of the nation of the Alani. He displayed, on every occasion, a valour equal to his strength; and his native fierceness was soon tempered or disguised by the knowledge of the world. Under the reign of Severus and his son, he obtained the rank of centurion, with the favour and esteem of both those princes, the former of whom was an excellent judge of merit. Gratitude forbade Maximin to serve under the assassin of Caracalla. Honour taught him to decline the effeminate insults of Elagabalus. On the accession of Alexander he returned to court, and was placed by that prince in a station useful to the service, and honourable to himself. The fourth legion, to which he was appointed tribune, soon became, under his care, the best disciplined of the whole army. With the general applause of the soldiers, who bestowed on their favourite hero the names of Ajax and Hercules, he was successively promoted to the first military command;<sup>c</sup> and had not he still retained too much

<sup>b</sup> Hist. August. p. 138.

<sup>c</sup> Hist. August. p. 140. Herodian, l. vi, p. 223. Aurelius Victor. By comparing these authors, it should seem that Maximin had the particular command of the Triballian horse, with the general

of his savage origin, the emperor might perhaps have given his own sister in marriage to the son of Maximin.<sup>4</sup>

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Instead of securing his fidelity, these favours served only to inflame the ambition of the Thracian peasant, who deemed his fortune inadequate to his merit, as long as he was constrained to acknowledge a superior. Though a stranger to real wisdom, he was not devoid of a selfish cunning, which shewed him that the emperor had lost the affection of the army, and taught him to improve their discontent to his own advantage. It is easy for faction and calumny to shed their poison on the administration of the best of princes, and to accuse even their virtues, by artfully confounding them with those vices to which they bear the nearest affinity. The troops listened with pleasure to the emissaries of Maximin. They blushed at their own ignominious patience, which, during thirteen years, had supported the vexatious discipline imposed by an effeminate Syrian, the timid slave of his mother and of the senate. It was time, they cried, to cast away that useless phantom of the civil power, and to elect for their prince and general a real soldier, educated in camps, exercised in war, who would assert the glory, and distribute among his companions the treasures of the empire. A great

Conspiracy  
of Maxi-  
min.

general commission of disciplining the recruits of the whole army. His biographer ought to have marked, with more care, his exploits, and the successive steps of his military promotions.

<sup>4</sup> See the original letter of Alexander Severus, Hist. August. p. 149.



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army was at that time assembled on the banks of the Rhine, under the command of the emperor himself, who, almost immediately after his return from the Persian war, had been obliged to march against the barbarians of Germany. The important care of training and reviewing the new levies was intrusted to Maximin. One day, as he entered the field of exercise, the troops, either from a sudden impulse, or a formed conspiracy, saluted him emperor, silenced by their loud acclamations his obstinate refusal, and hastened to consummate their rebellion by the murder of Alexander Severus.

A. D. 235,  
March 19.

Murder of  
Alexander  
Severus.

The circumstances of his death are variously related. The writers, who supposed that he died in ignorance of the ingratitude and ambition of Maximin, affirm that, after taking a frugal repast in the sight of the army, he retired to sleep, and that, about the seventh hour of the day, a part of his own guards broke into the imperial tent, and, with many wounds, assassinated their virtuous and unsuspecting prince.\* If we credit another, and indeed a more probable account, Maximin was invested with the purple by a numerous detachment, at the distance of several miles from the head-quarters; and he trusted for success rather to the secret wishes, than to the

\* Hist. August. p. 135. I have softened some of the most improbable circumstances of this wretched biographer. From this ill-worded narration, it should seem, that the prince's buffoon having accidentally entered the tent, and awakened the slumbering monarch, the fear of punishment urged him to persuade the dissipated soldiers to commit the murder.

public declarations of the great army. Alexander had sufficient time to awaken a faint sense of loyalty among his troops; but their reluctant professions of fidelity quickly vanished on the appearance of Maximin, who declared himself the friend and advocate of the military order, and was unanimously acknowledged emperor of the Romans by the applauding legions. The son of Mamaea, betrayed and deserted, withdrew into his tent, desirous at least to conceal his approaching fate from the insults of the multitude. He was soon followed by a tribune and some centurions, the ministers of death; but instead of receiving with manly resolution the inevitable stroke, his unavailing cries and entreaties disgraced the last moments of his life, and converted into contempt some portion of the just pity which his innocence and misfortunes must inspire. His mother Mamaea, whose pride and avarice he loudly accused as the cause of his ruin, perished with her son. The most faithful of his friends were sacrificed to the first fury of the soldiers. Others were reserved for the more deliberate cruelty of the usurper; and those who experienced the mildest treatment, were stripped of their employments, and ignominiously driven from the court and army.<sup>†</sup>

The former tyrants, Caligula and Nero, Commodus and Caracalla, were all dissolute and un-<sup>Tyranny of Maximin,</sup> experienced youths,<sup>‡</sup> educated in the purple, and

<sup>†</sup> Herodian, l. vi, p. 223-227.

<sup>‡</sup> Caligula, the eldest of the four, was only twenty-five years of age when he ascended the throne; Caracalla was twenty-three, Commodus nineteen, and Nero no more than seventeen.

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corrupted by the pride of empire, the luxury of Rome, and the perfidious voice of flattery. The cruelty of Maximin was derived from a different source, the fear of contempt. Though he depended on the attachment of the soldiers, who loved him for virtues like their own, he was conscious that his mean and barbarian origin, his savage appearance, and his total ignorance of the arts and institutions of civil life,<sup>a</sup> formed a very unfavourable contrast with the amiable manners of the unhappy Alexander. He remembered, that, in his humbler fortune, he had often waited before the door of the haughty nobles of Rome, and had been denied admittance by the insolence of their slaves. He recollected too the friendship of a few who had relieved his poverty, and assisted his rising hopes. But those who had spurned, and those who had protected the Thracian, were guilty of the same crime, the knowledge of his original obscurity. For this crime many were put to death; and by the execution of several of his benefactors, Maximin published, in characters of blood, the indelible history of his baseness and ingratitude.<sup>1</sup>

The dark and sanguinary soul of the tyrant, was open to every suspicion against those among his subjects who were the most distinguished by their birth or merit. Whenever he was alarmed

<sup>a</sup> It appears that he was totally ignorant of the Greek language, which, from its universal use in conversation and letters, was an essential part of every liberal education.

<sup>1</sup> Hist. August. p. 141. Herodian, l. vii, p. 237. The latter of these historians has been most unjustly censured for sparing the vices of Maximin.



with the sound of treason, his cruelty was unbounded and unrelenting. A conspiracy against his life was either discovered or imagined, and Magnus, a consular senator, was named as the principal author of it. Without a witness, without a trial, and without an opportunity of defence, Magnus, with four thousand of his supposed accomplices, were put to death. Italy and the whole empire were infested with innumerable spies and informers. On the slightest accusation, the first of the Roman nobles, who had governed provinces, commanded armies, and been adorned with the consular and triumphal ornaments, were chained on the public carriages, and hurried away to the emperor's presence. Confiscation, exile, or simple death, were esteemed uncommon instances of his lenity. Some of the unfortunate sufferers he ordered to be sewed up in the hides of slaughtered animals, others to be exposed to wild beasts, others again to be beaten to death with clubs. During the three years of his reign, he disdained to visit either Rome or Italy. His camp, occasionally removed from the banks of the Rhine to those of the Danube, was the seat of his stern despotism, which trampled on every principle of law and justice, and was supported by the avowed power of the sword.<sup>3</sup> No man

<sup>3</sup> The wife of Maximin, by insinuating wise counsels with female gentleness, sometimes brought back the tyrant to the way of truth and humanity. See Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xiv, c. 1, where he alludes to the fact, which he had more fully related under the reign of the Gordians. We may collect from the medals, that Pauline was the name of this benevolent empress; and from the title of *Divæ*, that she died before Maximin. (Valesius ad loc. cit, Ammian.) Spanheim de U. et P. N. tom. ii, p. 300.

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of noble birth, elegant accomplishments, or knowledge of civil business, was suffered near his person; and the court of a Roman emperor revived the idea of those ancient chiefs of slaves and gladiators, whose savage power had left a deep impression of terror and detestation.<sup>1</sup>

Oppression  
of the pro-  
vinces.

As long as the cruelty of Maximin was confined to the illustrious senators, or even to the bold adventurers, who in the court or army expose themselves to the caprice of fortune, the body of the people viewed their sufferings with indifference, or perhaps with pleasure. But the tyrant's avarice, stimulated by the insatiate desires of the soldiers, at length attacked the public property. Every city of the empire was possessed of an independent revenue, destined to purchase corn for the multitude, and to supply the expences of the games and entertainments. By a single act of authority, the whole mass of wealth was at once confiscated for the use of the imperial treasury. The temples were stripped of their most valuable offerings of gold and silver, and the statues of gods, heroes, and emperors, were melted down and coined into money. These impious orders could not be executed without tumults and massacres, as in many places the people chose rather to die in the defence of their altars, than to behold in the midst of peace their cities exposed to the rapine and cruelty of war. The soldiers themselves, among whom this sacrilegious plunder was distributed, received it with a

<sup>1</sup> He was compared to Spartacus and Athenio. Hist. August. p. 144.

blush; and, hardened as they were in acts of violence, they dreaded the just reproaches of their friends and relations. Throughout the Roman world a general cry of indignation was heard, imploring vengeance on the common enemy of human kind; and at length, by an act of private oppression, a peaceful and unarmed province was driven into rebellion against him.<sup>m</sup>

The procurator of Africa was a servant worthy of such a master, who considered the fines and confiscations of the rich as one of the most fruitful branches of the imperial revenue. An iniquitous sentence had been pronounced against some opulent youths of that country, the execution of which would have stripped them of far the greater part of their patrimony. In this extremity, a resolution that must either complete or prevent their ruin, was dictated by despair. A respite of three days, obtained with difficulty from the rapacious treasurer, was employed in collecting from their estates a great number of slaves and peasants, blindly devoted to the commands of their lords, and armed with the rustic weapons of clubs and axes. The leaders of the conspiracy, as they were admitted to the audience of the procurator, stabbed him with the daggers concealed under their garments, and, by the assistance of their tumultuary train, seized on the little town of Thysdrus,<sup>n</sup> and erected the stand-

Revolt in  
Africa,  
A. D. 237,  
April.

Thysdrus  
was the  
same as  
Tysdrus  
in the  
ancient  
maps.

<sup>m</sup> Herodian, l. vii. p. 238. Zosim. l. i. p. 13.

<sup>n</sup> In the fertile territory of Byzacium, one hundred and fifty miles to the south of Carthage. This city was decorated, probably



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ard of rebellion against the sovereign of the Roman empire. They rested their hopes on the hatred of mankind against Maximin, and they judiciously resolved to oppose to that detested tyrant, an emperor whose mild virtues had already acquired the love and esteem of the Romans, and whose authority over the province would give weight and stability to the enterprize. Gordianus, their proconsul, and the object of their choice, refused, with unfeigned reluctance, the dangerous honour, and begged, with tears, that they would suffer him to terminate in peace a long and innocent life, without staining his feeble age with civil blood. Their menaces compelled him to accept the imperial purple, his only refuge, indeed, against the jealous cruelty of Maximin, since, according to the reasoning of tyrants, those who have been esteemed worthy of the throne deserve death, and those who deliberate have already rebelled.\*

Character  
and elevation  
of the  
two Gordians.

The family of Gordianus was one of the most illustrious of the Roman senate. On the father's side, he was descended from the Gracchi; on his mother's, from the emperor Trajan. A great estate enabled him to support the dignity of his birth; and, in the enjoyment of it, he displayed an elegant taste, and beneficent disposition. The palace in Rome, formerly inhabited by the great Pompey, had been, during

by the Gordians, with the title of colony, and with a fine amphitheatre, which is still in a very perfect state. See *Itinerar. Wesseling*, p. 59, and *Shaw's Travels*, p. 117.

\* Herodian, l. vii, p. 239. Hist. August. p. 153.

several generations, in the possession of Gordian's family.<sup>6</sup> It was distinguished by ancient trophies of naval victories, and decorated with the works of modern painting. His villa on the road to Præneste was celebrated for baths of singular beauty and extent, for three stately rooms of an hundred feet in length, and for a magnificent portico, supported by two hundred columns of the four most curious and costly sorts of marble.<sup>7</sup> The public shews exhibited at his expence, and in which the people were entertained with many hundreds of wild beasts and gladiators,<sup>8</sup> seem to surpass the fortune of a subject; and whilst the liberality of other magistrates was confined to a few solemn festivals in Rome, the magnificence of Gordian was repeated, when he was ædile, every month in the year, and extended, during his consulship, to the principal

<sup>6</sup> Hist. August. p. 152. The celebrated house of Pompey is *carinis* was usurped by Marc Antony, and consequently became, after the triumvir's death, a part of the imperial domain. The emperor Trajan allowed, and even encouraged, the rich senators to purchase those magnificent and useless places (Plin. Panegyric. c. 50); and it may seem probable that, on this occasion, Pompey's house came into the possession of Gordian's great-grandfather.

<sup>7</sup> The Claudian, the Numidian, the Carystian, and the Synnadian. The colours of Roman marbles have been faintly described, and imperfectly distinguished. It appears, however, that the Carystian was a sea-green, and that the marble of Synnada was white, mixed with oval spots of purple. See Salmastus ad Hist. August. p. 164.

<sup>8</sup> Hist. August. p. 151, 152. He sometimes gave five hundred pair of gladiators, never less than one hundred and fifty. He once gave, for the use of the circus, one hundred Sicilian, and as many Cappadocian horses. The animals designed for hunting were chiefly bears, boars, bulls, stags, elks, wild asses, &c. Elephants and lions seem to have been appropriated to imperial magnificence.

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cities of Italy. He was twice elevated to the last-mentioned dignity, by Caracalla and by Alexander; for he possessed the uncommon talent of acquiring the esteem of virtuous princes, without alarming the jealousy of tyrants. His long life was innocently spent in the study of letters and the peaceful honours of Rome; and, till he was named proconsul of Africa by the voice of the senate and the approbation of Alexander,\* he appears prudently to have declined the command of armies and the government of provinces. As long as that emperor lived, Africa was happy under the administration of his worthy representative; after the barbarous Maximin had usurped the throne, Gordianus alleviated the miseries which he was unable to prevent. When he reluctantly accepted the purple, he was above fourscore years old; a last and valuable remains of the happy age of the Antonines, whose virtues he revived in his own conduct, and celebrated in an elegant poem of thirty books. With the venerable proconsul, his son, who had accompanied him into Africa as his lieutenant, was likewise declared emperor. His manners were less pure, but his character was equally amiable with that of his father. Twenty-two acknowledged concubines, and a library of sixty-two thousand volumes, attested the variety of his inclinations; and from the productions which he left behind

\* See the original letter, in the *Augustan History*, p. 152, which at once shews Alexander's respect for the authority of the senate, and his esteem for the proconsul appointed by that assembly.



him, it appears that the former as well as the latter were designed for use rather than for ostentation.<sup>1</sup> The Roman people acknowledged in the features of the younger Gordian the resemblance of Scipio Africanus, recollected with pleasure that his mother was the grand-daughter of Antoninus Pius, and rested the public hope on those latent virtues which had hitherto, as they fondly imagined, lain concealed in the luxurious indolence of a private life.

As soon as the Gordians had appeased the first tumult of a popular election, they removed their court to Carthage. They were received with the acclamations of the Africans, who honoured their virtues, and who, since the visit of Hadrian, had never beheld the majesty of a Roman emperor. But these vain acclamations neither strengthened nor confirmed the title of the Gordians. They were induced by principle, as well as interest, to solicit the approbation of the senate; and a deputation of the noblest provincials was sent, without delay, to Rome, to relate and justify the conduct of their countrymen, who, having long suffered with patience, were at length resolved to act with vigour. The letters of the new princes were modest and respectful, excusing the necessity which had obliged them to accept the imperial title; but submitting their election

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They solicit the confirmation of their authority.

<sup>1</sup> By each of his concubines, the younger Gordian left three or four children. His literary productions, though less numerous, were by no means contemptible.

CHAP. and their fate to the supreme judgment of the  
VII. senate.<sup>a</sup>

The senate  
ratifies the  
election  
of the  
Gordians;

The inclinations of the senate were neither doubtful nor divided. The birth and noble alliances of the Gordians had intimately connected them with the most illustrious houses of Rome. Their fortune had created many dependents in that assembly, their merit had acquired many friends. Their mild administration opened the flattering prospect of the restoration, not only of the civil but even of the republican government. The terror of military violence, which had first obliged the senate to forget the murder of Alexander, and to ratify the election of a barbarian peasant,<sup>b</sup> now produced a contrary effect, and provoked them to assert the injured rights of freedom and humanity. The hatred of Maximin towards the senate was declared and implacable; the tamest submission had not appeased his fury; the most cautious innocence would not remove his suspicions; and even the care of their own safety urged them to share the fortune of an enterprise, of which (if unsuccessful) they were sure to be the first victims. These considerations, and perhaps others of a more private nature, were debated in a previous conference of the consuls and the magistrates. As soon as their resolution was decided, they convoked in the temple of Castor the whole body of the senate,

<sup>a</sup> Herodian, l. vii, p. 243. Hist. August. p. 144.

<sup>b</sup> Quod tamen patres dum periculosum existimant; inerimes armatis resistere approbaverunt. Aurelius Victor.

according to an ancient form of secrecy,<sup>†</sup> calculated to awaken their attention, and to conceal their decrees. "Conscript fathers," said the consul Syllanus, "the two Gordians, both of consular dignity, the one your proconsul, the other your lieutenant, have been declared emperors by the general consent of Africa. Let us return thanks," he boldly continued, "to the youth of Thysdrus; let us return thanks to the faithful people of Carthage, our generous deliverers from an horrid monster.—Why do you hear me thus coolly, thus timidly? Why do you cast those anxious looks on each other? why hesitate? Maximin is a public enemy! may his enmity soon expire with him, and may we long enjoy the prudence and felicity of Gordian the father, the valour and constancy of Gordian the son!"<sup>‡</sup> The noble ardour of the consul revived the languid spirit of the senate. By an unanimous decree the election of the Gordians was ratified; Maximin, his son, and his adherents were pronounced enemies of their country, and liberal rewards were offered to whosoever had the courage and good fortune to destroy them.

and declares  
Maximin  
a public  
enemy.

During the emperor's absence, a detachment of the prætorian guards remained at Rome, to

Assumes  
the command of  
Rome and  
Italy.

<sup>†</sup> Even the servants of the house, the scribes, &c. were excluded, and their office was filled by the senators themselves. We are obliged to the Augustine History, p. 159, for preserving this curious example of the old discipline of the commonwealth.

<sup>‡</sup> This spirited speech, translated from the Augustine historian, p. 156, seems transcribed by him from the original registers of the senate.



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protect, or rather to command the capital. The prefect Vitalianus had signalized his fidelity to Maximin, by the alacrity with which he had obeyed, and even prevented, the cruel mandates of the tyrant. His death alone could rescue the authority of the senate and the lives of the senators, from a state of danger and suspence. Before their resolves had transpired, a quæstor and some tribunes were commissioned to take his devoted life. They executed the order with equal boldness and success; and, with their bloody daggers in their hands, ran through the streets, proclaiming to the people and the soldiers, the news of the happy revolution. The enthusiasm of liberty was seconded by the promise of a large donative, in lands and money; the statues of Maximin were thrown down; the capital of the empire acknowledged, with transport, the authority of the two Gordians and the senate;\* and the example of Rome was followed by the rest of Italy.

and pre-  
pares for a  
civil war.

A new spirit had arisen in that assembly, whose long patience had been insulted by wanton despotism and military licence. The senate assumed the reins of government, and, with a calm intrepidity, prepared to vindicate by arms the cause of freedom. Among the consular senators recommended by their merit and services to the favour of the emperor Alexander, it was easy to select twenty, not unequal to the command of an army, and the conduct of a war. To these

\* Herodian, l. vii, p. 244.

was the defence of Italy entrusted. Each was appointed to act in his respective department; authorized to enrol and discipline the Italian youth; and instructed to fortify the ports and highways, against the impending invasion of Maximin. A number of deputies, chosen from the most illustrious of the senatorian and equestrian orders, were dispatched at the same time to the governors of the several provinces, earnestly conjuring them to fly to the assistance of their country, and to remind the nations of their ancient ties of friendship with the Roman senate and people. The general respect with which these deputies were received, and the zeal of Italy and the provinces in favour of the senate, sufficiently prove that the subjects of Maximin were reduced to that uncommon distress, in which the body of the people has more to fear from oppression than from resistance. The consciousness of that melancholy truth, inspires a degree of persevering fury, seldom to be found in those civil wars which are artificially supported for the benefit of a few factious and designing leaders.<sup>b</sup>

For while the cause of the Gordians was embraced with such diffusive ardour, the Gordians themselves were no more. The feeble court of Carthage was alarmed with the rapid approach of Capelianus, governor of Mauritania, who, with a small band of veterans, and a fierce host of bar-

Defeat and  
death of  
the two  
Gordians,  
A. D. 237,  
3d July.

<sup>b</sup> Herodian, l. vii, p. 247, l. viii, p. 277. Hist. August. p. 156-158.

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 barians, attacked a faithful, but unwarlike province. The younger Gordian sallied out to meet the enemy at the head of a few guards, and a numerous undisciplined multitude, educated in the peaceful luxury of Carthage. His useless valour served only to procure him an honourable death in the field of battle. His aged father, whose reign had not exceeded thirty-six days, put an end to his life on the first news of the defeat. Carthage, destitute of defence, opened her gates to the conqueror, and Africa was exposed to the rapacious cruelty of a slave, obliged to satisfy his unrelenting master with a large account of blood and treasure.\*

Election of  
 Maximus  
 and Balbi-  
 nus by the  
 senate,  
 9th July.

The fate of the Gordians filled Rome with just, but unexpected terror. The senate convoked in the temple of Concord; affected to transact the common business of the day; and seemed to decline, with trembling anxiety, the consideration of their own, and the public danger. A silent consternation prevailed on the assembly, till a senator, of the name and family of Trajan, awakened his brethren from their fatal lethargy. He represented to them, that the choice of cautious dilatory measures had been long since out of their power; that Maximin, implacable by nature,

\* Herodian, l. vii. p. 254. Hist. August. p. 150-160. We may observe, that one month and six days, for the reign of Gordian, is a just correction of Casaubon and Panvinus, instead of the absurd reading of one year and six months. See Commentar. p. 193. Zosimus relates, l. i. p. 17, that the two Gordians perished by a tempest in the midst of their navigation; a strange ignorance of history, or a strange abuse of metaphors!



and exasperated by injuries, was advancing towards Italy, at the head of the military force of the empire; and that their only remaining alternative, was either to meet him bravely in the field, or tamely to expect the tortures and ignominious death reserved for unsuccessful rebellion. "We have lost," continued he, "two excellent princes; but unless we desert ourselves, the hopes of the republic have not perished with the Gordians. Many are the senators, whose virtues have deserved, and whose abilities would sustain, the imperial dignity. Let us elect two emperors, one of whom may conduct the war against the public enemy, whilst his colleague remains at Rome to direct the civil administration. I cheerfully expose myself to the danger and envy of the nomination, and give my vote in favour of Maximus and Balbinus. Ratify my choice, conscript fathers, or appoint, in their place, others more worthy of the empire." The general apprehension silenced the whispers of jealousy; the merit of the candidates was universally acknowledged; and the house resounded with the sincere acclamations, of "long life and victory to the emperors Maximus and Balbinus. You are happy in the judgment of the senate; may the republic be happy under your administration!"

<sup>4</sup> See the Augustan history, p. 166, from the registers of the senate; the date is confessedly faulty, but the coincidence of the Apollinarian games enables us to correct it.

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Their characters.

The virtues and the reputation of the new emperors justified the most sanguine hopes of the Romans. The various nature of their talents seemed to appropriate to each his peculiar department of peace and war, without leaving room for jealous emulation. Balbinus was an admired orator, a poet of distinguished fame, and a wise magistrate, who had exercised with innocence and applause the civil jurisdiction in almost all the interior provinces of the empire. His birth was noble,\* his fortune affluent, his manners liberal and affable. In him the love of pleasure was corrected by a sense of dignity, nor had the habits of ease deprived him of a capacity for business. The mind of Maximus was formed in a rougher mould. By his valour and abilities he had raised himself from the meanest origin to the first employments of the state and army. His victories over the Sarmatians and the Germans, the austerity of his life, and the rigid impartiality of his justice, whilst he was prefect of the city, commanded the esteem of a people, whose affections were engaged in favour of the more amiable Balbinus. The two colleagues had both been

\* He was descended from Cornelius Balbus, a noble Spaniard, and the adopted son of Theophrastus, the Greek historian. Balbus obtained the freedom of Rome by the favour of Pompey, and preserved it by the eloquence of Cicero (see *Orat. pro Cornel. Balbo*). The friendship of Caesar (to whom he rendered the most important secret services in the civil war) raised him to the consulship and the pontificate, honours never yet possessed by a stranger. The nephew of this Balbus triumphed over the Garamantes. See *Dictionnaire de Bayle*, an mot *Balbus*, where he distinguishes the several persons of that name, and rectifies, with his usual accuracy, the mistakes of former writers concerning them.

consuls (Balbinus had twice enjoyed that honour-  
able office), both had been named among the  
twenty lieutenants of the senate; and since the one  
was sixty, and the other seventy-four years old,<sup>f</sup>  
they had both attained the full maturity of age  
and experience.

After the senate had conferred on Maximus and Balbinus an equal portion of the consular and tribunitian power, the title of fathers of their country, and the joint office of supreme pontiff, they ascended to the capitol, to return thanks to the gods, protectors of Rome.<sup>g</sup> The solemn rites of sacrifice were disturbed by a sedition of the people. The licentious multitude neither loved the rigid Maximus, nor did they sufficiently fear the mild and humane Balbinus. Their increasing numbers surrounded the temple of Jupiter; with obstinate clamours they asserted their inherent right of consenting to the election of their sovereign; and demanded, with an apparent moderation, that, besides the two emperors chosen by the senate, a third should be added of the family of the Gordians, as a just return of gratitude to those princes who had sacrificed their lives for the republic. At the head of the city-guards, and the youth of the equestrian

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Tamult at  
Rome.  
The young  
Gordian  
is declared  
Caesar.

<sup>f</sup> Zonaras, l. xii. p. 522. But little dependence is to be had on the authority of a modern Greek, so grossly ignorant of the history of the third century, that he creates several imaginary emperors, and confounds those who really existed.

<sup>g</sup> Herodian, l. vii. p. 236, supposes that the senate was at first convoked in the capitol, and is very eloquent on the occasion. The Augustan history, p. 116, seems much more authentic.



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order, Maximus and Balbinus attempted to cut their way through the seditious multitude. The multitude, armed with sticks and stones, drove them back into the capitol. It is prudent to yield when the contest, whatever may be the issue of it, must be fatal to both parties. A boy, only thirteen years of age, the grandson of the elder, and nephew of the younger, Gordian, was produced to the people, invested with the ornaments and title of Cæsar. The tumult was appeased by this easy condescension; and the two emperors, as soon as they had been peaceably acknowledged in Rome, prepared to defend Italy against the common enemy.

Maximin
prepares to
attack the
senate and
their em-
perors.

Whilst in Rome and Africa revolutions succeeded each other with such amazing rapidity, the mind of Maximin was agitated by the most furious passions. He is said to have received the news of the rebellion of the Gordians, and of the decree of the senate against him, not with the temper of a man, but the rage of a wild beast; which, as it could not discharge itself on the distant senate, threatened the life of his son, of his friends, and of all who ventured to approach his person. The grateful intelligence of the death of the Gordians was quickly followed by the assurance that the senate, laying aside all hopes of pardon or accommodation, had substituted in their room two emperors, with whose merit he could not be unacquainted. Revenge was the only consolation left to Maximin, and revenge could only be obtained by arms. The strength of the legions had been assembled by Alexander

from all parts of the empire. Three successful campaigns against the Germans, and the Sarmatians, had raised their fame, confirmed their discipline, and even increased their numbers, by filling the ranks with the flower of the barbarian youth. The life of Maximin had been spent in war, and the candid severity of history cannot refuse him the valour of a soldier, or even the abilities of an experienced general.^b It might naturally be expected, that a prince of such a character, instead of suffering the rebellion to gain stability by delay, should immediately have marched from the banks of the Danube to those of the Tyber, and that his victorious army, instigated by contempt for the senate, and eager to gather the spoils of Italy, should have burned with impatience to finish the easy and lucrative conquest. Yet as far as we can trust to the obscure chronology of that period,^c it appears that

^b In Herodian, l. vii, p. 249, and in the Augustan history, we have three several orations of Maximin to his army, on the rebellion of Africa and Rome. M. de Tillemont has very justly observed, that they neither agree with each other, nor with truth. *Histoire des Empereurs*, tom. iii, p. 799.

^c The carelessness of the writers of that age leaves us in a singular perplexity. 1. We know that Maximus and Balbinus were killed during the Capitoline games. Herodian, l. viii, p. 285. The authority of Censorinus (*de Die Natali*, c. 18) enables us to fix those games, with certainty, to the year 238, but leaves us in ignorance of the month or day. 2. The election of Gordian by the senate is fixed, with equal certainty, to the 27th of May; but we are at a loss to discover, whether it was in the same or the preceding year. Tillemont and Muratori, who maintain the two opposite opinions, bring into the field a desultory troop of authorities, conjectures, and probabilities. The one seems to draw out, the other to contract, the series of events between those periods, more than can be well reconciled to reason and history. Yet it is necessary to choose between them.

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the operations of some foreign war deferred the Italian expedition till the ensuing spring. From the prudent conduct of Maximin, we may learn that the savage features of his character have been exaggerated by the pencil of party, that his passions, however impetuous, submitted to the force of reason, and that the barbarian possessed something of the generous spirit of Sylla, who subdued the enemies of Rome, before he suffered himself to revenge his private injuries.¹

Marches
into Italy,
A. D. 238,
February.

When the troops of Maximin, advancing in excellent order, arrived at the foot of the Julian Alps, they were terrified by the silence and desolation that reigned on the frontiers of Italy. The villages and open towns had been abandoned on their approach by the inhabitants, the cattle was driven away, the provisions removed, or destroyed, the bridges broke down, nor was any thing left which could afford either shelter or subsistence to an invader. Such had been the wise orders of the generals of the senate; whose design was to protract the war, to ruin the army of Maximin by the slow operation of famine, and to consume his strength in the sieges of the principal cities of Italy, which they had plentifully stored with men and provisions from the deserted country. Aquileia received and withstood the first shock of the invasion. The streams that issue from the head of the Adriatic gulf, swelled

Siege of
Aquileia.

¹ Velleius Paterculus, l. ii, c. 24. The president de Montesquieu (in his dialogue between Sylla and Eocrates) expresses the sentiments of the dictator, in a spirited, and even a sublime manner.

by the melting of the winter snows,¹ opposed an unexpected obstacle to the arms of Maximin. At length, on a singular bridge, constructed, with art and difficulty, of large hogsheads, he transported his army to the opposite bank, rooted up the beautiful vineyards in the neighbourhood of Aquileia, demolished the suburbs, and employed the timber of the buildings in the engines and towers, with which, on every side, he attacked the city. The walls, fallen to decay during the security of a long peace, had been hastily repaired on this sudden emergency; but the firmest defence of Aquileia consisted in the constancy of the citizens; all ranks of whom, instead of being dismayed, were animated, by the extreme danger, and their knowledge of the tyrant's unrelenting temper. Their courage was supported and directed by Crispinus and Menophilus, two of the twenty lieutenants of the senate, who, with a small body of regular troops, had thrown themselves into the besieged place. The army of Maximin was repulsed on repeated attacks, his machines

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¹ Muratori (*Annali d'Italia*, tom. II, p. 294) thinks the melting of the snow suits better with the months of June or July, than with that of February. The opinion of a man who passed his life between the Alps and the Appennines, is undoubtedly of great weight; yet I observe, 1. That the long winter, of which Muratori takes advantage, is to be found only in the Latin version, and not in the Greek text of Herodian. 2. That the vicissitude of suns and rains, to which the soldiers of Maximin were exposed (*Herodian*, l. viii, p. 277) denotes the spring rather than the summer. We may observe likewise, that these several streams, as they melted into one, composed the Tanavon, so poetically (in every sense of the word) described by Virgil. They are about twelve miles to the east of Aquileia. See Cluver. *Italia*, tom. I, p. 126, &c.

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destroyed by showers of artificial fire, and the generous enthusiasm of the Aquileians was exalted into a confidence of success, by the opinion, that Belenus, their tutelar deity, combated in person in the defence of his distressed worshippers.^m

Conduct of
Maximus.

The emperor Maximus, who had advanced as far as Ravenna, to secure that important place, and to hasten the military preparations, beheld the event of the war in the more faithful mirror of reason and policy. He was too sensible, that a single town could not resist the persevering efforts of a great army; and he dreaded, lest the enemy, tired with the obstinate resistance of Aquileia, should on a sudden relinquish the fruitless siege, and march directly towards Rome. The fate of the empire, and the cause of freedom, must then be committed to the chance of a battle; and what arms could he oppose to the veteran legions of the Rhine and Danube? Some troops newly levied among the generous, but enervated, youth of Italy, and a body of German auxiliaries, on whose firmness, in the hour of trial, it was dangerous to depend. In the midst of these just alarms, the stroke of domestic conspiracy punished the crimes of Maximin, and delivered Rome and the senate from the calamities that would surely have attended the victory of an enraged barbarian.

^m Herodian, l. viii. p. 272. The Celtic deity was supposed to be Apollo, and received, under that name, the thanks of the senate. A temple was likewise built to Venus the Bald, in honour of the women of Aquileia, who had given up their hair to make ropes for the military engines.

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VII.~~~~~
Murder of
Maximin
and his son,
A. D. 238,
April.

The people of Aquileia had scarcely experienced any of the common miseries of a siege; their magazines were plentifully supplied, and several fountains within the walls assured them of an inexhaustible resource of fresh water. The soldiers of Maximin were, on the contrary, exposed to the inclemency of the season, the contagion of disease, and the horrors of famine. The open country was ruined, the rivers filled with the slain, and polluted with blood. A spirit of despair and disaffection began to diffuse itself among the troops; and as they were cut off from all intelligence, they easily believed that the whole empire had embraced the cause of the senate, and that they were left as devoted victims to perish under the impregnable walls of Aquileia. The fierce temper of the tyrant was exasperated by disappointments, which he imputed to the cowardice of his army; and his wanton and ill-timed cruelty, instead of striking terror, inspired hatred, and a just desire of revenge. A party of prætorian guards, who trembled for their wives and children in the camp of Alba, near Rome, executed the sentence of the senate. Maximin, abandoned by his guards, was slain in his tent, with his son (whom he had associated to the honours of the purple), Anullinus the prefect, and the principal ministers of his tyranny.* The sight of their heads, borne

* Herodian, l. viii, p. 279. Hist. August. p. 146. The duration of Maximin's reign has not been defined with much accuracy, except by Eutropius, who allows him three years and a few days

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VII.

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His por-  
trait.

on the point of spears, convinced the citizens of Aquileia, that the siege was at an end; the gates of the city were thrown open, a liberal market was provided for the hungry troops of Maximin, and the whole army joined in solemn protestations of fidelity to the senate and the people of Rome, and to their lawful emperors Maximus and Balbinus. Such was the deserved fate of a brutal savage, destitute, as he has generally been represented, of every sentiment that distinguishes a civilized, or even a human being. The body was suited to the soul. The stature of Maximin exceeded the measure of eight feet, and circumstances almost incredible are related of his matchless strength and appetite.\* Had he lived in a less enlightened age, tradition and poetry might well have described him as one of those monstrous giants, whose supernatural power was constantly exerted for the destruction of mankind.

Joy of the  
Roman  
world.

It is easier to conceive than to describe the universal joy of the Roman world on the fall of the tyrant, the news of which is said to have been carried in four days from Aquileia to Rome. The return of Maximus was a triumphal process-

O. ix. 1) : we may depend on the integrity of the text, as the Latin original is checked by the Greek version of Pausanias.

\* Eight Roman feet and one third, which are equal to above eight English feet, as the two measures are to each other in the proportion to 967 to 1000. See Graven's discourse on the Roman foot. We are told that Maximin could drink in a day an amphora (or about seven gallons of wine), and eat thirty or forty pounds of meat. He could move a loaded waggon, break a horse's leg with his fist, crumble stones in his hand, and tear up small trees by the roots. See his life in the Augustan History.

sion; his colleague and young Gordian went out to meet him, and the three princes made their entry into the capital, attended by the ambassadors of almost all the cities of Italy, saluted with the splendid offerings of gratitude and superstition, and received with the unfeigned acclamations of the senate and people, who persuaded themselves that a golden age would succeed to an age of iron.\* The conduct of the two emperors corresponded with these expectations. They administered justice in person; and the rigour of the one was tempered by the other's clemency. The oppressive taxes with which Maximin had loaded the rights of inheritance and succession, were repealed, or at least moderated. Discipline was revived, and with the advice of the senate many wise laws were enacted by their imperial ministers, who endeavoured to restore a civil constitution on the ruins of military tyranny. "What reward may we expect for delivering Rome from a monster?" was the question asked by Maximus, in a moment of freedom and confidence. Balbinus answered it without hesitation, "The love of the senate, of the people, and of all mankind." "Alas!" replied his more penetrating colleague, "Alas! I dread the hatred of the soldiers; and the fatal effects of their resentment."† His apprehensions were but too well justified by the event.

\* See the congratulatory letter of Claudius Julianus the consul, to the two emperors, in the Augustan History.

† Hist. August. p. 171.

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VII.Sedition at  
Rome.

Whilst Maximus was preparing to defend Italy against the common foe, Balbinus, who remained at Rome, had been engaged in scenes of blood and intestine discord. Distrust and jealousy reigned in the senate; and even in the temples where they assembled, every senator carried either open or concealed arms. In the midst of their deliberations, two veterans of the guards, actuated either by curiosity or a sinister motive, audaciously thrust themselves into the house, and advanced by degrees beyond the altar of Victory. Gallicanus, a consular, and Mæcenus, a prætorian senator, viewed with indignation their insolent intrusion: drawing their daggers, they laid the spies, for such they deemed them, dead at the foot of the altar, and then advancing to the door of the senate, imprudently exhorted the multitude to massacre the prætorians, as the secret adherents of the tyrant. Those who escaped the first fury of the tumult took refuge in the camp, which they defended with superior advantage against the reiterated attacks of the people, assisted by the numerous bands of gladiators, the property of opulent nobles. The civil war lasted many days, with infinite loss and confusion on both sides. When the pipes were broken that supplied the camp with water, the prætorians were reduced to intolerable distress; but in their turn they made desperate sallies into the city, set fire to a great number of houses, and filled the streets with the blood of the inhabitants. The emperor Balbinus attempted, by ineffectual edicts and precarious truces, to recon-



cile the factions at Rome. But their animosity, CHAP. VII.  
 though smothered for a while, burnt with re-  
 doubled violence. The soldiers, detesting the  
 senate and the people, despised the weakness of a  
 prince, who wanted either the spirit or the power  
 to command the obedience of his subjects.<sup>f</sup>

After the tyrant's death, his formidable army  
 had acknowledged, from necessity rather than  
 from choice, the authority of Maximus, who  
 transported himself without delay to the camp  
 before Aquileia. As soon as he had received  
 their oath of fidelity, he addressed them in terms  
 full of mildness and moderation; lamented, ra-  
 ther than arraigned, the wild disorders of the  
 times, and assured the soldiers, that of all their  
 past conduct, the senate would remember only  
 their generous desertion of the tyrant, and their  
 voluntary return to their duty. Maximus en-  
 forced his exhortations by a liberal donative,  
 purified the camp by a solemn sacrifice of ex-  
 piation, and then dismissed the legions to their  
 several provinces, impressed, as he hoped, with  
 a lively sense of gratitude and obedience.<sup>g</sup> But  
 nothing could reconcile the haughty spirit of the  
 prætorians. They attended the emperors on the  
 memorable day of their public entry into Rome;  
 but amidst the general acclamations, the sullen  
 dejected countenance of the guards sufficiently  
 declared that they considered themselves as the  
 object, rather than the partners, of the triumph.  
 When the whole body was united in their camp,  
 those who had served under Maximin, and those

Discontent  
 of the præ-  
 torian  
 guards.

<sup>f</sup> Herodian, l. viii, p. 258.

<sup>g</sup> Herodian, l. viii, p. 213.

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who had remained at Rome, insensibly communicated to each other their complaints and apprehensions. The emperors chosen by the army had perished with ignominy; those elected by the senate were seated on the throne.\* The long discord between the civil and military powers was decided by a war, in which the former had obtained a complete victory. The soldiers must now learn a new doctrine of submission to the senate; and whatever clemency was affected by that politic assembly, they dreaded a slow revenge, coloured by the name of discipline, and justified by fair pretences of the public good. But their fate was still in their own hands; and if they had courage to despise the vain terrors of an impotent republic, it was easy to convince the world, that those who were masters of the arms, were masters of the authority, of the state.

Massacre  
of Maxi-  
mus and  
Balbinus.

When the senate elected two princes, it is probable that, besides the declared reason of providing for the various emergencies of peace and war, they were actuated by the secret desire of weakening by division the despotism of the supreme magistrate. Their policy was effectual, but it proved fatal both to their emperors and to themselves. The jealousy of power was soon exasperated by the difference of character. Maximus despised Balbinus as a luxurious noble, and was in his turn disdained by his colleague as an

\* The observation had been made imprudently enough in the acclamations of the senate, and with regard to the soldiers it carried the appearance of a wanton insult. Hist. August. p. 150.

obscure soldier. Their silent discord was understood rather than seen;<sup>a</sup> but the mutual consciousness prevented them from uniting in any vigorous measures of defence against their common enemies of the prætorian camp. The whole city was employed in the capitoline games, and the emperors were left almost alone in the palace. On a sudden they were alarmed<sup>A. D. 238, July 15.</sup> by the approach of a troop of desperate assassins. Ignorant of each other's situation or designs, for they already occupied very distant apartments, afraid to give or to receive assistance, they wasted the important moments in idle debates and fruitless recriminations. The arrival of the guards put an end to the vain strife. They seized on these emperors of the senate, for such they called them with malicious contempt, stripped them of their garments, and dragged them in insolent triumph through the streets of Rome, with a design of inflicting a slow and cruel death on these unfortunate princes. The fear of a rescue from the faithful Germans of the imperial guards, shortened their tortures; and their bodies, mangled with a thousand wounds, were left exposed to the insults or to the pity of the populace.<sup>b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> *Discordiz tacitæ, et quæ intelligerentur potius quam viderentur.* Hist. August. p. 170. This well-chosen expression is probably stolen from some better writer.

<sup>b</sup> Herodian, l. viii, p. 287, 288.



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VII.

The third  
Gordian  
remains  
sole empe-  
ror.

In the space of a few months, six princes had been cut off by the sword. Gordian, who had already received the title of Caesar, was the only person that occurred to the soldiers as proper to fill the vacant throne.<sup>2</sup> They carried him to the camp, and unanimously saluted him Augustus and emperor. His name was dear to the senate and people; his tender age promised a long impunity of military licence; and the submission of Rome and the provinces to the choice of the praetorian guards, saved the republic, at the expence indeed of its freedom and dignity, from the horrors of a new civil war in the heart of the capital.<sup>3</sup>

Innocence  
and virtues  
of Gordian.

As the third Gordian was only nineteen years of age at the time of his death, the history of his life, were it known to us with greater accuracy than it really is, would contain little more than the account of his education, and the conduct of the ministers, who by turns abused or guided the simplicity of his unexperienced youth. Immediately after his accession, he fell into the hands of

<sup>2</sup> *Quia non alius erat in presenti*, is the expression of the Augustan history.

<sup>3</sup> Quintus Curtius (l. x. c. 9) pays an elegant compliment to the emperor of the day, for having, by his happy accession, extinguished so many firebrands, sheathed so many swords, and put an end to the evils of a divided government. After weighing with attention every word of the passage, I am of opinion, that it suits better with the elevation of Gordian, than with any other period of the Roman history. In that case, it may serve to decide the age of Quintus Curtius. Those who place him under the first Caesars, argue from the purity of his style, but are embarrassed by the silence of Quintilian, in his accurate list of Roman historians.

his mother's eunuchs, that pernicious vermin of CHAP.  
the East, who, since the days of Elagabalus, had VII.  
infested the Roman palace. By the artful conspi-  
racy of these wretches, an impenetrable veil was  
drawn between an innocent prince and his op-  
pressed subjects; the virtuous disposition of Gor-  
dian was deceived, and the honours of the empire  
sold without his knowledge, though in a very  
public manner, to the most worthless of man-  
kind. We are ignorant by what fortunate acci-  
dent the emperor escaped from this ignominious  
slavery, and devolved his confidence on a mi-  
nister, whose wise councils had no object except  
the glory of his sovereign, and the happiness of  
the people. It should seem that love and learning  
introduced Misiheus to the favour of Gor-  
dian. The young prince married the daughter  
of his master of rhetoric, and promoted his fa-  
ther-in-law to the first offices of the empire.  
Two admirable letters that passed between them  
are still extant. The minister, with the conscious  
dignity of virtue, congratulates Gordian that he  
is delivered from the tyranny of the eunuchs,\*  
and still more that he is sensible of his deliver-  
ance. The emperor acknowledges, with an ami-  
able confusion, the errors of his past conduct;  
and laments, with singular propriety, the misfor-  
tune of a monarch, from whom a venal tribe of

A. D. 240.  
Administration of  
Misiheus.

\* Hist. August. p. 161. From some hints in the two letters, I should expect that the eunuchs were not expelled the palace, without some degree of gentle violence, and that the young Gordian rather approved of, than consented to, their disgrace.

CHAP. VII. courtiers perpetually labour to conceal the truth.<sup>a</sup>

The Persian War,  
A. D. 242.

The life of Misitheus had been spent in the profession of letters, not of arms; yet such was the versatile genius of that great man, that, when he was appointed prætorian prefect, he discharged the military duties of his place with vigour and ability. The Persians had invaded Mesopotamia, and threatened Antioch. By the persuasion of his father-in-law, the young emperor quitted the luxury of Rome, opened, for the last time recorded in history, the temple of Janus, and marched in person into the East. On his approach with a great army, the Persians withdrew their garrisons from the cities which they had already taken, and retired from the Euphrates to the Tigris. Gordian enjoyed the pleasure of announcing to the senate the first success of his arms, which he ascribed with a becoming modesty and gratitude to the wisdom of his father and prefect. During the whole expedition, Misitheus watched over the safety and discipline of the army; whilst he prevented their dangerous murmurs by maintaining a regular plenty in the camp, and by establishing ample magazines of vinegar, bacon, straw, barley, and wheat, in all the cities of the frontier.<sup>b</sup> But the prosperity

<sup>a</sup> Duxit uxorem filiam Misithæ, quem causâ eloquentiæ dignum parentela suâ putavit; et præfectum statim fecit; post quod, non puerile jam et contemptibile videbatur imperium.

<sup>b</sup> Hist. August. p. 162. Aurelius Victor. Porphyrius in Vit. Plotin. ap. Fabricium. Biblioth. Græc. l. iv. c. 36. The philosopher Plotinus accompanied the army, prompted by the love of knowledge, and by the hope of penetrating as far as India.



of Gordian expired with Misiitheus, who died of a flux, not without very strong suspicions of poison. Philip, his successor in the prefecture, was an Arab by birth, and consequently, in the earlier part of his life, a robber by profession. His rise from so obscure a station to the first dignities of the empire, seems to prove that he was a bold and able leader. But his boldness prompted him to aspire to the throne, and his abilities were employed to supplant, not to serve, his indulgent master. The minds of the soldiers were irritated by an artificial scarcity, created by his contrivance in the camp; and the distress of the army was attributed to the youth and incapacity of the prince. It is not in our power to trace the successive steps of the secret conspiracy and open sedition, which were at length fatal to Gordian. A sepulchral monument was erected to his memory on the spot where he was killed, near the conflux of the Euphrates with the little river Aboras.<sup>a</sup> The fortunate Philip, raised to the empire by the votes of the soldiers, found a ready obedience from the senate and the provinces.<sup>b</sup>

CHAP.  
VII.

A. D. 243.  
Arts of  
Philip.

Murder of  
Gordian,  
A. D. 244,  
March.

We cannot forbear transcribing the ingenious, though somewhat fanciful description, which a

Form of a  
military  
republic.

<sup>a</sup> About twenty miles from the little town of Circesium, on the frontier of the two empires.

<sup>b</sup> The inscription (which contained a very singular pun) was erased by the order of Licinius, who claimed some degree of relationship to Philip (Hist. August. p. 165); but the *samulus*, or mound of earth, which formed the sepulchre, still subsisted in the time of Julian. See Ammian. Marcellin. xxiii, 5.

<sup>c</sup> Aurelius Victor, Eutrop. ix, 2. Orosius, vii, 20. Ammianus Marcellinus, xxiii, 5. Zosimus, i, i, p. 19. Philip, who was a native of Bostra, was about sixty years of age.

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celebrated writer of our own times has traced of the military government of the Roman empire. "What in that age was called the Roman empire, was only an irregular republic, not unlike the aristocracy<sup>1</sup> of Algiers,<sup>2</sup> where the militia, possessed of the sovereignty, creates and deposes a magistrate, who is styled a dey. Perhaps, indeed, it may be laid down as a general rule, that a military government is, in some respects, more republican than monarchical. Nor can it be said that the soldiers only partook of the government by their disobedience and rebellions. The speeches made to them by the emperors, were they not at length of the same nature as those formerly pronounced to the people by the consuls and the tribunes? And although the armies had no regular place or forms of assembly; though their debates were short, their action sudden, and their resolves seldom the result of cool reflection, did they not dispose, with absolute sway, of the public fortune? What was the emperor, except the minister of a violent government, elected for the private benefit of the soldiers.

"When the army had elected Philip, who was prætorian prefect to the third Gordian,

<sup>1</sup> Can the epithet of *aristocracy* be applied, with any propriety, to the government of Algiers? Every military government floats between the extremes of absolute monarchy and wild democracy.

<sup>2</sup> The military republic of the mamalukes in Egypt, would have afforded M. de Montesquieu (see *Considerations sur la Grandeur et la Decadence des Romains*, c. 16), a juster and more noble parallel.

“ the latter demanded, that he might remain  
 “ sole emperor; he was unable to obtain it. He  
 “ requested, that the power might be equally  
 “ divided between them; the army would not  
 “ listen to his speech. He consented to be de-  
 “ graded to the rank of Cæsar; the favour was  
 “ refused him. He desired, at least, he might  
 “ be appointed prætorian prefect; his prayer  
 “ was rejected. Finally, he pleaded for his life.  
 “ The army, in these several judgments, exer-  
 “ cised the supreme magistracy.” According to  
 the historian, whose doubtful narrative the pre-  
 sident De Montesquieu has adopted, Philip, who,  
 during the whole transaction, had preserved a  
 sullen silence, was inclined to spare the innocent  
 life of his benefactor; till, recollecting that his  
 innocence might excite a dangerous compassion  
 in the Roman world, he commanded, without  
 regard to his suppliant cries, that he should be  
 seized, stript, and led away to instant death.  
 After a moment's pause, the inhuman sentence  
 was executed.<sup>a</sup>

CHAP.  
VII.

On his return from the East to Rome, Philip, Reign of Philip.  
 desirous of obliterating the memory of his crimes,  
 and of captivating the affections of the people,

<sup>a</sup> The Augustan history (p. 163, 164), cannot, in this instance, be reconciled with itself or with probability. How could Philip condemn his predecessor, and yet consecrate his memory? How could he order his public execution, and yet, in his letters to the senate, exculpate himself from the guilt of his death? Philip, though an ambitious usurper, was by no means a mad tyrant. Some chronological difficulties have likewise been discovered by the nice eyes of Tillemont and Muratori, in this supposed association of Philip to the empire.



CHAP.  
VII.

Secular  
games,  
A. D. 248,  
April 21.

solemnized the secular games with infinite pomp and magnificence. Since their institution or revival by Augustus,<sup>1</sup> they had been celebrated by Claudius, by Domitian, and by Severus, and were now renewed the fifth time, on the accomplishment of the full period of a thousand years from the foundation of Rome. Every circumstance of the secular games was skilfully adapted to inspire the superstitious mind with deep and solemn reverence. The long interval between them<sup>2</sup> exceeded the term of human life; and as none of the spectators had already seen them, none could flatter themselves with the expectation of beholding them a second time. The mystic sacrifices were performed, during three nights, on the banks of the Tyber; and the Campus Martius resounded with music and dances, and was illuminated with innumerable lamps and torches. Slaves and strangers were excluded from any participation in these national ceremonies. A chorus of twenty-seven youths, and as many virgins, of noble families, and whose parents were both alive, implored the propitious gods in favour of the present, and for the hope

<sup>1</sup> The account of the last supposed celebration, though in an enlightened period of history, was so very doubtful and obscure, that the alternative seems not doubtful. When the popish jubilees, the copy of the secular games, were invented by Boniface VIII. the crafty pope pretended that he only revived an ancient institution. See M. le Chais *Lettres sur les Jubilés*.

<sup>2</sup> Either of a hundred, or a hundred and ten years. Varro and Livy adopted the former opinion, but the infallible authority of the Sibyl consecrated the latter (*Censorinus de Die Natali* c. 17). The emperors Claudius and Philip, however, did not treat the oracle with implicit respect.

of the rising generation; requesting, in religious hymns, that, according to the faith of their ancient oracles, they would still maintain the virtue, the felicity, and the empire of the Roman people.<sup>1</sup> The magnificence of Philip's shows and entertainments dazzled the eyes of the multitude. The devout were employed in the rites of superstition, whilst the reflecting few revolved in their anxious minds the past history and the future fate of the empire.

Since Romulus, with a small band of shepherds and outlaws, fortified himself on the hills near the Tyber, ten centuries had already elapsed.<sup>2</sup> During the four first ages, the Romans, in the laborious school of poverty, had acquired the virtues of war and government: by the vigorous exertion of those virtues, and by the assistance of fortune, they had obtained, in the course of the three succeeding centuries, an absolute empire over many countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The last three hundred years had been consumed in apparent prosperity and internal decline. The nation of soldiers, magistrates, and legislators, who composed the thirty-five tribes of the Roman people, was dissolved into the common mass of mankind, and confounded with the millions of servile provincials, who had received the name,

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Decline of  
the Roman  
empire.

<sup>1</sup> The idea of the secular games is best understood from the poem of Horace, and the description of Zostratus, I. II. p. 167, &c.

<sup>2</sup> The received calculation of Varro assigns to the foundation of Rome, an era that corresponds with the 754th year before Christ. But so little is the chronology of Rome to be depended on, in the more early ages, that Sir Isaac Newton has brought the same event as low as the year 687.

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without adopting the spirit of Romans. A mercenary army, levied among the subjects and barbarians of the frontier, was the only order of men who preserved and abused their independence. By their tumultuary election, a Syrian, a Goth, or an Arab, was exalted to the throne of Rome, and invested with despotic power over the conquests and over the country of the Scipios.

The limits of the Roman empire still extended from the Western ocean to the Tigris, and from Mount Atlas to the Rhine and the Danube. To the undiscerning eye of the vulgar, Philip appeared a monarch no less powerful than Hadrian or Augustus had formerly been. The form was still the same, but the animating health and vigour were fled. The industry of the people was discouraged and exhausted by a long series of oppression. The discipline of the legions, which alone, after the extinction of every other virtue, had propped the greatness of the state, was corrupted by the ambition, or relaxed by the weakness, of the emperors. The strength of the frontiers, which had always consisted in arms rather than in fortifications, was insensibly undermined; and the fairest provinces were left exposed to the rapaciousness or ambition of the barbarians, who soon discovered the decline of the Roman empire.



## CHAP. VIII.

*Of the state of Persia after the restoration of the monarchy by Artaxerxes.*

WHENEVER Tacitus indulges himself in those beautiful episodes, in which he relates some domestic transaction of the Germans or of the Parthians, his principal object is to relieve the attention of the reader from a uniform scene of vice and misery. From the reign of Augustus to the time of Alexander Severus, the enemies of Rome were in her bosom; the tyrants, and the soldiers; and her prosperity had a very distant and feeble interest in the revolutions that might happen beyond the Rhine and the Euphrates. But when the military order had levelled, in wild anarchy, the power of the prince, the laws of the senate, and even the discipline of the camp, the barbarians of the north and of the east, who had long hovered on the frontier, boldly attacked the provinces of a declining monarchy. Their vexatious inroads were changed into formidable irruptions, and, after a long vicissitude of mutual calamities, many tribes of the victorious invaders established themselves in the provinces of the Roman empire. To obtain a clearer knowledge of these great events, we shall endeavour to form a previous idea of the character, forces, and designs of those nations who avenged the cause of Hannibal and Mithridates.

CHAP.  
VIII.

.....  
The barba-  
rians of  
the east  
and of the  
north.

CHAP.  
VIII.Revolu-  
tions of  
Asia.

In the more early ages of the world, whilst the forest that covered Europe afforded a retreat to a few wandering savages, the inhabitants of Asia were already collected into populous cities, and reduced under extensive empires, the seat of the arts, of luxury, and of despotism. The Assyrians reigned over the East,\* till the sceptre of Ninus and Semiramis dropt from the hands of their enervated successors. The Medes and the Babylonians divided their power, and were themselves swallowed up in the monarchy of the Persians, whose arms could not be confined within the narrow limits of Asia. Followed, as it is said, by two millions of *men*, Xerxes, the descendant of Cyrus, invaded Greece. Thirty thousand *soldiers*, under the command of Alexander, the son of Philip, who was intrusted by the Greeks with their glory and revenge, were sufficient to subdue Persia. The princes of the house of Seleucus usurped and lost the Macedonian command over the East. About the same time that, by an ignominious treaty, they resigned to the Romans the country on this side Mount Taurus, they were driven by the Parthians, an obscure horde of Scythian origin, from all the provinces of Upper Asia. The formidable power of the Par-

\* An ancient chronologist, quoted by Velleius Paterculus G. l. c. 6) observes, that the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, and the Macedonians, reigned over Asia one thousand nine hundred and ninety-five years, from the accession of Ninus to the defeat of Antiochus by the Romans. As the latter of these great events happened 259 years before Christ, the former may be placed 2154 years before the same era. The astronomical observations, found at Babylon by Alexander, went fifty years higher.

thians, which spread from India to the frontiers of Syria, was in its turn subverted by Ardshir, or Artaxerxes, the founder of a new dynasty, which, under the name of Sassanides, governed Persia till the invasion of the Arabs. This great revolution, whose fatal influence was soon experienced by the Romans, happened in the fourth year of Alexander Severus, two hundred and twenty-six years after the christian era.<sup>b</sup>

Artaxerxes had served with great reputation in the armies of Artaban, the last king of the Parthians, and it appears that he was driven into exile and rebellion by royal ingratitude, the customary reward for superior merit. His birth was obscure, and the obscurity equally gave room to the aspersions of his enemies, and the flattery of his adherents. If we credit the scandal of the former, Artaxerxes sprang from the illegitimate commerce of a tanner's wife with a common soldier.<sup>c</sup> The latter represent him as descended from a branch of the ancient kings of Persia, though time and misfortune had gradually reduced his ancestors to the humble station of pri-

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The Persian monarchy restored by Artaxerxes.

<sup>b</sup> In the five hundred and thirty-eighth year of the era of Seleucus. See Agathias, l. ii. p. 63. This great event (such is the carelessness of the Orientals) is placed by Eutychius as high as the tenth year of Commodus; and by Moses of Chorene, as low as the reign of Philip. Ammianus Marcellinus has so servilely copied (xviii. 6) his ancient materials, which are indeed very good, that he describes the family of the Arsacides as still seated on the Persian throne in the middle of the fourth century.

<sup>c</sup> The tanner's name was Babes, the soldier's Sassan; from the former Artaxerxes obtained the surname of Babegan, from the latter all his descendants have been styled Sassanides.





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vate citizens.<sup>d</sup> As the lineal heir of the monarchy, he asserted his right to the throne, and challenged the noble task of delivering the Persians from the oppression under which they groaned above five centuries since the death of Darius. The Parthians were defeated in three great battles. In the last of these their king Artaban was slain, and the spirit of the nation was for ever broken.<sup>e</sup> The authority of Artaxerxes was solemnly acknowledged in a great assembly held at Balch in Khorsan. Two younger branches of the royal house of Arsaces were confounded among the prostrate satraps. A third, more mindful of ancient grandeur than of present necessity, attempted to retire, with a numerous train of vassals, towards their kinsman the king of Armenia; but this little army of deserters was intercepted, and cut off, by the vigilance of the conqueror,<sup>f</sup> who boldly assumed the double diadem, and the title of king of kings, which had been enjoyed by his predecessor. But these pompous titles, instead of gratifying the vanity of the Persian, served only to admonish him of his duty, and to inflame in his soul the ambition of restoring, in their full splendour, the religion and empire of Cyrus.

Reformation  
of the  
Magian  
religion.

1. During the long servitude of Persia under the Macedonian and the Parthian yoke, the nations of Europe and Asia had mutually adopted

<sup>d</sup> D'Herbelot. *Bibliothèque Orientale*. *Ardshir*.

<sup>e</sup> Dion-Cassius, l. lxxx. Herodian, l. vi, p. 207. Abulpharagus *Dynast.* p. 80.

<sup>f</sup> See Moses Chorenensis, l. ii, c. 65-71.

and corrupted each other's superstitions. The Arsacides, indeed, practised the worship of the Magi; but they disgraced and polluted it with a various mixture of foreign idolatry. The memory of Zoroaster, the ancient prophet and philosopher of the Persians,<sup>a</sup> was still revered in the East; but the obsolete and mysterious language in which the Zendavesta was composed,<sup>b</sup> opened a field of dispute to seventy sects, who variously explained the fundamental doctrines of their religion, and were all indifferently derided by a crowd of infidels, who rejected the divine mission and miracles of the prophet. To suppress the idolaters, reunite the schismatics, and confute the unbelievers, by the infallible decision of a general council, the pious Artaxerxes summoned the Magi from all parts of his dominions. These priests, who had so long sighed in contempt and obscurity, obeyed the welcome summons; and on the appointed day appeared, to the number of about eighty thousand. But as the debates of

<sup>a</sup> Hyde and Prideaux, working up the Persian legends, and their own conjectures, into a very agreeable story, represent Zoroaster as a contemporary of Darius Hystaspes. But it is sufficient to observe, that the Greek writers, who lived almost in the age of Darius, agree in placing the era of Zoroaster many hundred, or even thousand, years before their own time. The judicious criticism of Mr. Moyle perceived, and maintained against his uncle, Dr. Prideaux, the antiquity of the Persian prophet. See his work, vol. ii.

<sup>b</sup> That ancient idiom was called the *Zend*. The language of the commentary, the *Pehlvi*, though much more modern, has ceased many ages ago to be a living tongue. This fact alone (if it is allowed as authentic) sufficiently warrants the antiquity of those writings, which M. d'Anquetil has brought into Europe, and translated into French.

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SO tumultuous an assembly could not have been directed by the authority of reason, or influenced by the art of policy, the Persian synod was reduced, by successive operations, to forty thousand, to four thousand, to four hundred, to forty, and at last to seven Magi, the most respected for their learning and piety. One of these, Erdaviraph, a young but holy prelate, received from the hands of his brethren three cups of soporiferous wine. He drank them off, and instantly fell into a long and profound sleep. As soon as he waked, he related to the king and to the believing multitude, his journey to heaven, and his intimate conferences with the Deity. Every doubt was silenced by this supernatural evidence; and the articles of the faith of Zoroaster were fixed with equal authority and precision.<sup>1</sup> A short delineation of that celebrated system will be found useful, not only to display the character of the Persian nation, but to illustrate many of their most important transactions, both in peace and war, with the Roman empire.<sup>2</sup>

Persian  
theology;  
two prin-  
ciples.

The great and fundamental article of the system, was the celebrated doctrine of the two principles; a bold and injudicious attempt of eastern philosophy to reconcile the existence of moral

<sup>1</sup> Hyde de Religione veterum Pers. c. 21.

<sup>2</sup> I have principally drawn this account from the Zendavesta of M. d'Anquetil, and the Sadder, subjoined to Dr. Hyde's treatise. It must, however, be confessed, that the studied obscurity of a prophet, the figurative style of the East, and the deceitful medium of a French or Latin version, may have betrayed us unto error and heresy. In this abridgement of Persian theology.



and physical evil, with the attributes of a beneficent Creator and Governor of the world. The first and original Being, in whom, or by whom, the universe exists, is denominated in the writings of Zoroaster, *time without bounds*; but it must be confessed, that this infinite substance seems rather a metaphysical abstraction of the mind, than a real object endowed with self-consciousness, or possessed of moral perfections. From either the blind, or the intelligent operation of this infinite time, which bears but too near an affinity with the chaos of the Greeks, the two secondary but active principles of the universe, were from all eternity produced, Ormusd and Ahriman, each of them possessed of the powers of creation, but each disposed, by his invariable nature, to exercise them with different designs. The principle of good is eternally absorbed in light; the principle of evil eternally buried in darkness. The wise benevolence of Ormusd formed man capable of virtue, and abundantly provided his fair habitation with the materials of happiness. By his vigilant providence, the motion of the planets, the order of the seasons, and the temperate mixture of the elements, are preserved. But the malice of Ahriman has long since pierced *Ormusd's egg*; or, in other words, has violated the harmony of his works. Since that fatal irruption, the most minute articles of good and evil are intimately intermingled and agitated together; the rankest poisons spring up amidst the most salutary plants; deluges, earthquakes, and

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conflagrations, attest the conflict of nature, and the little world of man is perpetually shaken by vice and misfortune. While the rest of human kind are led away captives in the chains of their infernal enemy, the faithful Persian alone reserves his religious adoration for his friend and protector Ormusd, and fights under his banner of light, in the full confidence that he shall, in the last day, share the glory of his triumph. At that decisive period, the enlightened wisdom of goodness will render the power of Ormusd superior to the furious malice of his rival. Ahriman and his followers, disarmed and subdued, will sink into their native darkness; and virtue will maintain the eternal peace and harmony of the universe.<sup>1</sup>

Religious  
worship.

The theology of Zoroaster was darkly comprehended by foreigners, and even by the far greater number of his disciples; but the most careless observers were struck with the philosophic simplicity of the Persian worship. "That people," says Herodotus,<sup>m</sup> "rejects the use of temples, of altars, and of statues, and smiles at the folly of those nations, who imagine that the gods are sprung from, or bear any affinity with, the human nature. The tops of the highest moun-

<sup>1</sup> The modern Persians (and in some degree the Sudders) exalt Ormusd into the first and omnipotent cause, while they degrade Ahriman into an inferior but rebellious spirit. Their desire of pleasing the mahometans may have contributed to refine their theological system.

<sup>m</sup> Herodotus, l. i, c. 131. But Dr. Prideaux thinks, with reason, that the use of temples was afterwards permitted in the magian religion.

“ tains are the places chosen for sacrifices. Hymns  
 “ and prayers are the principal worship; the su-  
 “ preme God who fills the wide circle of hea-  
 “ ven, is the object to whom they are addressed.”

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Yet, at the same time, in the true spirit of a polytheist, he accuses them of adoring earth, water, fire, the winds, and the sun and moon. But the Persians of every age have denied the charge, and explained the equivocal conduct, which might appear to give a colour to it. The elements, and more particularly fire, light, and the sun, whom they called Mithra, were the objects of their religious reverence, because they considered them as the purest symbols, the noblest productions, and the most powerful agents of the divine power and nature.”

Every mode of religion, to make a deep and lasting impression on the human mind, must exercise our obedience, by enjoining practices of devotion, for which we can assign no reason; and must acquire our esteem, by inculcating moral duties analogous to the dictates of our own hearts. The religion of Zoroaster was abundantly provided with the former, and possessed a sufficient portion of the latter. At the age of puberty, the faithful Persian was invested with a mysterious girdle, the badge of the divine protection; and from that moment, all the actions of his life, even the most indifferent, or the most necessary,

Ceremonies  
and moral  
precepts.

\* Hyde de Relig. Pers. c. 8. Notwithstanding all their distinctions and protestations, which seem sincere enough, their tyrants, the mahometans, have constantly stigmatised them as idolatrous worshippers of the fire.



CHAP. were sanctified by their peculiar prayers, ejaculations, or genuflexions; the omission of which, under any circumstances, was a grievous sin, not inferior in guilt to the violation of the moral duties. The moral duties, however, of justice, mercy, liberality, &c. were in their turn required of the disciple of Zoroaster, who wished to escape the persecution of Ahriman, and to live with Ormusd in a blissful eternity, where the degree of felicity will be exactly proportioned to the degree of virtue and piety.\*

Encourage-  
ment of  
agricul-  
ture.

But there are some remarkable instances, in which Zoroaster lays aside the prophet, assumes the legislator, and discovers a liberal concern for private and public happiness, seldom to be found among the groveling or visionary schemes of superstition. Fasting and celibacy, the common means of purchasing the divine favour, he condemns with abhorrence, as a criminal rejection of the best gifts of providence. The saint, in the magian religion, is obliged to beget children, to plant useful trees, to destroy noxious animals, to convey water to the dry lands of Persia, and to work out his salvation by pursuing all the labours of agriculture. We may quote from the Zandavesta a wise and benevolent maxim, which compensates for many an absurdity. "He who sows the ground with

\* See the Sadder, the smallest part of which consists of moral precepts. The ceremonies enjoined are infinite and trifling. Fifteen genuflexions, prayers, &c. were required whenever the devout Persian cut his nails, or made water, or as often as he put on the sacred girdle. Sadder, Art. 14, 50, 60.

“care and diligence, acquires a greater stock  
 “of religious merit, than he could gain by the  
 “repetition of ten thousand prayers.”<sup>p</sup> In the  
 spring of every year a festival was celebrated, des-  
 tined to represent the primitive equality, and  
 the present connection, of mankind. The stately  
 kings of Persia, exchanging their vain pomp for  
 more genuine greatness, freely mingled with the  
 humblest but most useful of their subjects. On  
 that day the husbandmen were admitted, with-  
 out distinction, to the table of the king and his  
 satraps. The monarch accepted their petitions,  
 inquired into their grievances, and conversed  
 with them on the most equal terms. “From  
 “your labours, was he accustomed to say (and  
 “to say with truth, if not with sincerity), from  
 “your labours, we receive our subsistence; you  
 “derive your tranquillity from our vigilance;  
 “since, therefore, we are mutually necessary to  
 “each other, let us live together like brothers  
 “in concord and love.”<sup>q</sup> Such a festival must  
 indeed have degenerated, in a wealthy and des-  
 potic empire, into a theatrical representation;  
 but it was at least a comedy well worthy of a  
 royal audience, and which might sometimes im-  
 print a salutary lesson on the mind of a young  
 prince.

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Power of  
the magi.

Had Zoroaster, in all his institutions, invari-  
 ably supported this exalted character, his name  
 would deserve a place with those of Numa and

<sup>p</sup> Zendavesta, tom. i, p. 224, and *Precis du Systeme de Zoroastre*,  
 tom. III.

<sup>q</sup> *Hyde de Religione Persarum*, c. 19.

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Confucius, and his system would be justly entitled to all the applause, which it has pleased some of our divines, and even some of our philosophers, to bestow on it. But in that motely composition, dictated by reason and passion, by enthusiasm and by selfish motives, some useful and sublime truths were disgraced by a mixture of the most abject and dangerous superstition. The magi, or sacerdotal order, were extremely numerous, since, as we have already seen, fourscore thousand of them were convened in a general council. Their forces were multiplied by discipline. A regular hierarchy was diffused through all the provinces of Persia; and the Archimagus, who resided at Balch, was respected as the visible head of the church, and the lawful successor of Zoroaster.<sup>1</sup> The property of the magi was very considerable. Besides the less invidious possession of a large tract of the most fertile lands of Media,<sup>2</sup> they levied a general tax on the fortunes and the industry of the Persians.<sup>3</sup> "Though your good works," says the interested prophet, "exceed in number the leaves of the

<sup>1</sup> Hyde de Religione Persarum, c. 28. Both Hyde and Prideaux affect to apply to the magian, the terms consecrated to the christian hierarchy.

<sup>2</sup> Ammian. Marcellin. xlii. 6. He informs us (as far as we may credit him) of two curious particulars: 1. That the magi derived some of their most secret doctrines from the Indian brachmans; and, 2. That they were a tribe or family, as well as order.

<sup>3</sup> The divine institution of tythes exhibits a singular instance of conformity between the law of Zoroaster and that of Moses. Those who cannot otherwise account for it, may suppose, if they please, that the magi of the latter times inserted so useful an interpolation into the writings of their prophet.



“ trees, the drops of rain, the stars in the hea-  
 “ ven, or the sands on the sea-shore, they will  
 “ all be unprofitable to you, unless they are  
 “ accepted by the *destour*, or priest. To obtain  
 “ the acceptation of this guide to salvation, you  
 “ must faithfully pay him *tythes* of all you pos-  
 “ sess, of your goods, of your lands, and of your  
 “ money. If the *destour* be satisfied, your soul  
 “ will escape hell tortures; you will secure praise  
 “ in this world, and happiness in the next. For  
 “ the *destours* are the teachers of religion; they  
 “ know all things, and they deliver all men.”

These convenient maxims of reverence and implicit faith were doubtless imprinted with care on the tender minds of youth, since the magi were the masters of education in Persia, and to their hands the children even of the royal family were intrusted.\* The Persian priests, who were of a speculative genius, preserved and investigated the secrets of oriental philosophy, and acquired, either by superior knowledge or superior art, the reputation of being well versed in some occult sciences, which have derived their appellation from the magi.† Those of more active dispositions mixed with the world in courts and cities; and it is observed, that the administration of Artaxerxes was in a great measure directed by the counsels of the sacerdotal order, whose dignity, either from policy or devotion, that prince restored‡ to its ancient splendour.

\* Sadder, Art. 8.

† Plato in *Alcibiad*.

‡ Pliny (*Hist. Natur.* l. xxx, c. 1) observes, that magic held mankind by the triple chain of religion, of physic, and of astronomy.

§ Agathias, l. iv, p. 134.

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VIII.Spirit of  
persecu-  
tion.

The first counsel of the magi was agreeable to the unsociable genius of their faith,<sup>a</sup> to the practice of ancient kings,<sup>b</sup> and even to the example of their legislator, who had fallen a victim to a religious war, excited by his own intolerant zeal.<sup>c</sup> By an edict of Artaxerxes, the exercise of every worship, except that of Zoroaster, was severely prohibited. The temples of the Parthians, and the statues of their deified monarchs, were thrown down with ignominy.<sup>d</sup> The sword of Aristotle (such was the name given by the orientals to the polytheism and philosophy of the Greeks) was easily broken;<sup>e</sup> the flames of persecution soon reached the more stubborn Jews and christians;<sup>f</sup> nor did they spare the heretics of their own nation and religion. The majesty of Ormusd, who was jealous of a rival, was seconded by the despotism of Artaxerxes, who could not suffer a rebel; and the schismatics within his vast empire were soon reduced to the inconsiderable number of eighty thousand.<sup>g</sup> This spirit

\* Mr. Hume, in the *Natural History of Religion*, sagaciously remarks, that the most refined and philosophic sects are constantly the most intolerant.

<sup>b</sup> Cicero de Legibus, li. 10. Xerxes, by the advice of the magi, destroyed the temples of Greece.

\* Hyde de Relig. Persar. c. 23, 24. D'Herbelot Bibliothèque Orientale Zerdasht. Life of Zoroaster, in tom. ii of the Zendavesta.

<sup>c</sup> Compare Moses of Chörene, l. ii, c. 74, with Ammian. Marcellin. xxiii, 6. Hereafter I shall make use of these passages.

\* Rabbi Abraham in the Tarikh Schickard, p. 108, 109.

<sup>e</sup> Baunage Histoire des Juifs, l. viii, c. 3. Sozomen, l. ii, c. 1. Manes, who suffered an ignominious death, may be deemed a magian, as well as a christian heretic.

\* Hyde de Religione Persar. c. 21.

of persecution reflects dishonour on the religion of Zoroaster; but as it was not productive of any civil commotion, it served to strengthen the new monarchy, by uniting all the various inhabitants of Persia in the bands of religious zeal.

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II. Artaxerxes, by his valour and conduct, had wrested the sceptre of the East from the ancient royal family of Parthia. There still remained the more difficult task of establishing, throughout the vast extent of Persia, a uniform and vigorous administration. The weak indulgence of the Arsacides had resigned to their sons and brothers the principal provinces, and the greatest offices of the kingdom, in the nature of hereditary possessions. The *vitææ*, or eighteen most powerful satraps, were permitted to assume the regal title; and the vain pride of the monarch was delighted with a nominal dominion over so many vassal kings. Even tribes of barbarians in their mountains, and the Greek cities of Upper Asia,<sup>b</sup> within their walls, scarcely acknowledged, or seldom obeyed, any superior; and the Parthian empire exhibited, under other names, a lively image of the feudal system<sup>c</sup> which has since prevailed in Europe. But the active vic-

Establishment of the royal authority in the provinces.

<sup>a</sup> These colonies were extremely numerous. Seleucus Nicator founded thirty-nine cities, all named from himself, or some of his relations (see Appian in Syriae. p. 124). The era of Seleucus (still in use among the eastern christians) appears as late as the year 506, of Christ 196, on the medals of the Greek cities within the Parthian empire. See Moyle's works, vol. i, p. 273, &c. and M. Freret. *Mém. de l'Académie*, tom. xix.

<sup>b</sup> The modern Persians distinguish that period as the dynasty of the kings of the nations. See *Pers. Hist. Nat.* vi, 25.



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VIII.Extent and  
population  
of Persia.

tor, at the head of a numerous and disciplined army, visited in person every province of Persia. The defeat of the boldest rebels, and the reduction of the strongest fortifications,<sup>a</sup> diffused the terror of his arms, and prepared the way for the peaceful reception of his authority. An obstinate resistance was fatal to the chiefs; but their followers were treated with lenity.<sup>b</sup> A cheerful submission was rewarded with honours and riches; but the prudent Artaxerxes, suffering no person except himself to assume the title of king, abolished every intermediate power between the throne and the people. His kingdom, nearly equal in extent to modern Persia, was, on every side, bounded by the sea, or by great rivers; by the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Araxes, the Oxus, and the Indus, by the Caspian sea, and the gulph of Persia.<sup>m</sup> That country was computed

<sup>a</sup> Eutychius (tom. i. p. 367, 371, 375) relates the siege of the island of Mene in the Tigris, with some circumstances not unlike the story of Ninus and Scylla.

<sup>b</sup> Agathias, ii, 164. The princes of Segestan defended their independence during many years. As romances generally transport to an ancient period the events of their own time, it is not impossible that the fabulous exploits of Rustan, prince of Segestan, may have been grafted on this real history.

<sup>m</sup> We can scarcely attribute to the Persian monarchy the sea-coast of Gedrosia or Macran, which extends along the Indian ocean from Cape Jank (the promontory Capella) to Cape Goadel. In the time of Alexander, and probably many years afterwards, it was thinly inhabited by a savage people of Ichthyophagi, or fishermen, who knew no arts, who acknowledged no master, and who were divided by inhospitable deserts from the rest of the world. (See *Strabo de Reb. Indica*). In the twelfth century, the little town of Taiz (supposed by M. d'Anville to be the Tefa of Ptolemy) was peopled and enriched

to contain, in the last century, five hundred and fifty-four cities, sixty thousand villages, and about forty millions of souls.\* If we compare the administration of the house of Sassan with that of the house of Sefi, the political influence of the magian with that of the mahometan religion, we shall probably infer, that the kingdom of Artaxerxes contained at least as great a number of cities, villages, and inhabitants. But it must likewise be confessed, that in every age the want of harbours on the sea-coast, and the scarcity of fresh water in the inland provinces, have been very unfavourable to the commerce and agriculture of the Persians; who, in the calculation of their numbers, seem to have indulged one of the meanest, though most common, articles of national vanity.

As soon as the ambitious mind of Artaxerxes had triumphed over the resistance of his vassals, he began to threaten the neighbouring states, who, during the long slumber of his predecessors, had insulted Persia with impunity. He obtained some easy victories over the wild Scythians and the effeminate Indians; but the Romans were an enemy, who, by their past injuries and present power, deserved the utmost efforts of his arms. A forty years tranquillity, the fruit of valour and

*Recapitulation of the war between the Parthian and Roman empire.*

enriched by the resort of the Arabian merchants. (See *Géographie Nubiens*, p. 38, and *d'Anville Géographie Ancienne*, tom. ii, p. 283). In the last age, the whole country was divided between three princes, one mahometan and two idolaters, who maintained their independence against the successors of Shaw Abbas. (*Voyages de Tavernier*, part i, l. v, p. 635).

\* Chardin, tom. iii, c. 1, 2, 3.

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Cities of  
Seleucia  
and Ctesiphon.

Seleucia, on the western bank of the Tigris, about forty-five miles to the north of ancient Babylon, was the capital of the Macedonian conquests in Upper Asia.<sup>b</sup> Many ages after the fall of their empire, Seleucia retained the genuine characters of a Grecian colony, arts, military virtue, and the love of freedom. The independent republic was governed by a senate of three hundred nobles; the people consisted of

<sup>a</sup> Dion, l. xxviii, p. 1335.

<sup>b</sup> For the precise situation of Babylon, Seleucia, Ctesiphon, Me-dain, and Bagdad, cities often confounded with each other, see an excellent Geographical Tract of M. d'Anville, in *Mém. de l'Académie*, tom. xxx.



six hundred thousand citizens; the walls were strong, and as long as concord prevailed among the several orders of the state, they viewed with contempt the power of the Parthian; but the madness of faction was sometimes provoked to implore the dangerous aid of the common enemy, who was posted almost at the gates of the colony.<sup>3</sup> The Parthian monarchs, like the Mogul sovereigns of Hindostan, delighted in the pastoral life of their Scythian ancestors; and the imperial camp was frequently pitched in the plain of Ctesiphon, on the eastern bank of the Tigris, at the distance of only three miles from Seleucia.<sup>4</sup> The innumerable attendants on luxury and despotism resorted to the court, and the little village of Ctesiphon insensibly swelled into a great city.<sup>5</sup> Under the reign of Marcus, the Roman generals penetrated as far as Ctesiphon and Seleucia. They were received as friends by the Greek colony; they attacked as enemies the seat of the Parthian kings; yet both cities experienced the same treatment. The sack and conflagration of Seleucia, with the massacre of three hundred thousand of the inhabitants, tar-

A. D. 165.

\* Tacit. Annal. xi, 42. Plin. Hist. Nat. vi, 26.

\* This may be inferred from Strabo, l. xvi, p. 743.

\* That most curious traveller Bernier, who followed the camp of Aurengzebe from Dehli to Cashmir, describes, with great accuracy, the immense moving city. The guard of cavalry consisted of 33,000 men, that of infantry of 10,000. It was computed that the camp contained 150,000 horses, mules, and elephants; 50,000 camels, 80,000 oxen, and between 300,000 and 400,000 persons. Almost all Dehli followed the court, whose magnificence supported its industry.

CHAP. nished the glory of the Roman triumph.<sup>1</sup> Seleucia, already exhausted by the neighbourhood of a too powerful rival, sunk under the fatal blow; but Ctesiphon, in about thirty-three years, had sufficiently recovered its strength to maintain an obstinate siege against the emperor Severus. The city was, however, taken by assault; the king, who defended it in person, escaped with precipitation; an hundred thousand captives, and a rich booty, rewarded the fatigues of the Roman soldiers.<sup>2</sup> Notwithstanding these misfortunes, Ctesiphon succeeded to Babylon and to Seleucia, as one of the great capitals of the East. In summer, the monarch of Persia enjoyed at Ecbatana the cool breezes of the mountains of Media; but the mildness of the climate engaged him to prefer Ctesiphon for his winter residence.

Conquest  
of Osrhoene  
by the  
Romans.

From these successful inroads the Romans derived no real or lasting benefit; nor did they attempt to preserve such distant conquests, separated from the provinces of the empire by a large tract of intermediate desert. The reduction of the kingdom of Osrhoene was an acquisition of less splendour indeed, but of a far more solid advantage. That little state occupied the northern and most fertile part of Mesopotamia, between the Euphrates and the Tigris. Edessa,

<sup>1</sup> Dion, l. lxxi, p. 1178. Hist. August. p. 38. Eutrop. viii, 16. Euseb. in Chronic. Quadratus (quoted in the Augustan history) attempted to vindicate the Romans, by alleging, that the citizens of Seleucia had first violated their faith.

<sup>2</sup> Dion, l. lxxv, p. 1263. Herodian l. iii, p. 120. Hist. August. p. 70.

its capital, was situated about twenty miles beyond the former of those rivers; and the inhabitants, since the time of Alexander, were a mixed race of Greeks, Arabs, Syrians, and Armenians.<sup>1</sup> The feeble sovereigns of Osrhoene, placed on the dangerous verge of two contending empires, were attached from inclination to the Parthian cause; but the superior power of Rome exacted from them a reluctant homage, which is still attested by their medals. After the conclusion of the Parthian war under Marcus, it was judged prudent to secure some substantial pledges of their doubtful fidelity. Forts were constructed in several parts of the country, and a Roman garrison was fixed in the strong town of Nisibis. During the troubles that followed the death of Commodus, the princes of Osrhoene attempted to shake off the yoke; but the stern policy of Severus confirmed their dependence,<sup>2</sup> and the perfidy of Caracalla completed the easy conquest. Abgarus, the last king of Edessa, was sent in chains to Rome, his dominions reduced into a province, and his capital dignified with the rank of colony; and thus the Romans, about ten years before the fall of the Parthian monarchy,

A. D. 216.

<sup>1</sup> The polished citizens of Antioch called those of Edessa mixed barbarians. It was, however, some praise, that of the three dialects of the Syriac, the purest and most elegant (the Aramæan) was spoke at Edessa. This remark M. Bayer (*Hist. Edess.* p. 5), has borrowed from George of Malatris, a Syrian writer.

<sup>2</sup> *Dion.* l. lxxv. p. 1248, 1249, 1250. M. Bayer has neglected to use this most important passage.



CHAP. obtained a firm and permanent establishment  
VIII. beyond the Euphrates.\*

Artaxerxes  
claims the  
provinces  
of Asia, and  
declares  
war against  
the Ro-  
mans,  
A. D. 220.

Prudence as well as glory might have justified a war on the side of Artaxerxes, had his views been confined to the defence or the acquisition of a useful frontier. But the ambitious Persian openly avowed a far more extensive design of conquest; and he thought himself able to support his lofty pretensions by the arms of reason as well as by those of power. Cyrus, he alleged, had first subdued, and his successors had for a long time possessed, the whole extent of Asia, as far as the Propontis and the Ægean sea; the provinces of Caria and Ionia, under their empire, had been governed by Persian satraps, and all Egypt, to the confines of Æthiopia, had acknowledged their sovereignty.<sup>a</sup> Their rights had been suspended, though not destroyed, by a long usurpation; and as soon as he received the Persian diadem, which birth and successful valour had placed upon his head, the first great duty of his station called upon him to restore the ancient limits and splendour of the monarchy. The great king, therefore (such was the haughty style of his embassies to the emperor Alexander), commanded the Romans instantly to depart from

\* This kingdom, from Orchoes, who gave a new name to the country, to the last Abgarus, had lasted 353 years. See the learned work of M. Bayer, *Historia Orchoena et Edessena*.

<sup>a</sup> Xenophon, in the preface to the *Cyropædia*, gives a clear and magnificent idea of the extent of the empire of Cyrus. Herodotus (l. iii, c. 79, &c.) enters into a curious and particular description of the twenty great satrapies into which the Persian empire was divided by Darius Hystaspes.

all the provinces of his ancestors, and yielding to the Persians the empire of Asia, to content themselves with the undisturbed possession of Europe. This haughty mandate was delivered by four hundred of the tallest and most beautiful of the Persians; who, by their fine horses, splendid arms, and rich apparel, displayed the pride and greatness of their master.<sup>b</sup> Such an embassy was much less an offer of negotiation than a declaration of war. Both Alexander Severus and Artaxerxes, collecting the military force of the Roman and Persian monarchies, resolved in this important contest to lead their armies in person.

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If we credit what should seem the most authentic of all records, an oration, still extant, and delivered by the emperor himself to the senate, we must allow that the victory of Alexander Severus was not inferior to any of those formerly obtained over the Persians by the son of Philip. The army of the great king consisted of one hundred and twenty thousand horse, clothed in complete armour of steel; of seven hundred elephants, with towers filled with archers on their backs, and of eighteen hundred chariots, armed with scythes. This formidable host, the like of which is not to be found in eastern history, and has scarcely been imagined in eastern romance,<sup>c</sup>

Pretended  
victory of  
Alexander  
Severus,  
A. D. 233.

<sup>b</sup> Herodian, vi, 209, 212.

<sup>c</sup> There were two hundred scythed chariots at the battle of Arbela, in the host of Darius. In the vast army of Tigranes, which was vanquished by Lucullus, seventeen thousand horse only were

cut-

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was discomfited in a great battle, in which the Roman Alexander approved himself an intrepid soldier and a skilful general. The great king fled before his valour; an immense booty, and the conquest of Mesopotamia, were the immediate fruits of this signal victory. Such are the circumstances of this ostentatious and improbable relation, dictated, as it too plainly appears, by the vanity of the monarch, adorned by the unblushing servility of his flatterers, and received without contradiction by a distant and obsequious senate.<sup>4</sup> Far from being inclined to believe that the arms of Alexander obtained any memorable advantage over the Persians, we are induced to suspect, that all this blaze of imaginary glory was designed to conceal some real disgrace.

completely armed. Antiochus brought fifty-four elephants into the field against the Romans. By his frequent wars and negotiations with the princes of India, he had once collected an hundred and fifty of these great animals; but it may be questioned, whether the most powerful monarch of Hindostan ever formed a line of battle of seven hundred elephants. Instead of three or four thousand elephants, which the great Mogul was supposed to possess, Tavernier (*Voyages*, part II, l. i, p. 198) discovered, by a more accurate inquiry, that he had only five hundred for his baggage, and eighty or ninety for the service of war. The Greeks have varied with regard to the number which Porus brought into the field; but Quintus Curtius (viii, 15), in this instance judicious and moderate, is contented with eighty-six elephants, distinguished by their size and strength. In Siam, where these animals are the most numerous, and the most esteemed, eighteen elephants are allowed as a sufficient proportion for each of the nine brigades into which a just army is divided. The whole number, of one hundred and sixty-two elephants of war, may sometimes be doubled. *Hist. des Voyages*, tom. ix, p. 260.

<sup>4</sup> *Hist. August.* p. 133.



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More probable account of the war.

Our suspicions are confirmed by the authority of a contemporary historian, who mentions the virtues of Alexander with respect, and his faults with candour. He describes the judicious plan which had been formed for the conduct of the war. Three Roman armies were destined to invade Persia at the same time, and by different roads. But the operations of the campaign, though wisely concerted, were not executed either with ability or success. The first of these armies, as soon as it had entered the marshy plains of Babylon, towards the artificial conflux of the Euphrates and the Tigris,\* was encompassed by the superior numbers, and destroyed by the arrows, of the enemy. The alliance of Chosroes, king of Armenia,<sup>f</sup> and the long tract of mountainous country, in which the Persian cavalry was of little service, opened a secure entrance into the heart of Media, to the second of the Roman armies. These brave troops laid waste the adjacent provinces, and by several successful actions against Artaxerxes, gave a faint colour to the emperor's vanity. But the retreat of this victorious army was imprudent, or at least unfortunate. In repassing the mountains, great numbers of soldiers perished by the badness of the roads, and

\* M. de Tillemont has already observed, that Herodian's geography is somewhat confused.

<sup>f</sup> Moses of Chorene (Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 71) illustrates this invasion of Media, by asserting that Chosroes, king of Armenia, defeated Artaxerxes, and pursued him to the confines of India. The exploits of Chosroes have been magnified; and he acted as a dependent ally to the Romans.

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.....

the severity of the winter season. It had been resolved, that whilst these two great detachments penetrated into the opposite extremes of the Persian dominions, the main body, under the command of Alexander himself, should support their attack, by invading the centre of the kingdom. But the unexperienced youth, influenced by his mother's counsels, and perhaps by his own fears, deserted the bravest troops, and the fairest prospect of victory; and after consuming in Mesopotamia an inactive and inglorious summer, he led back to Antioch an army diminished by sickness, and provoked by disappointment. The behaviour of Artaxerxes had been very different. Flying with rapidity from the hills of Media to the marshes of the Euphrates, he had everywhere opposed the invaders in person; and in either fortune, had united with the ablest conduct the most undaunted resolution. But in several obstinate engagements against the veteran legions of Rome, the Persian monarch had lost the flower of his troops. Even his victories had weakened his power. The favourable opportunities of the absence of Alexander, and of the confusion that followed that emperor's death, presented themselves in vain to his ambition. Instead of expelling the Romans, as he pretended, from the continent of Asia, he found himself unable to wrest from their hands the little province of Mesopotamia.\*

\* For the account of this war, see Herodian, l. vi, p. 209, 212. The old abbreviators and modern compilers have blindly followed the Augustan history.

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Character  
and max-  
ims of Ar-  
taxerxes.  
A. D. 240.

The reign of Artaxerxes, which from the last defeat of the Parthians lasted only fourteen years, forms a memorable era in the history of the East, and even in that of Rome. His character seems to have been marked by those bold and commanding features, that generally distinguish the princes who conquer, from those who inherit, an empire. Till the last period of the Persian monarchy, his code of laws was respected as the ground-work of their civil and religious policy.<sup>\*</sup> Several of his sayings are preserved. One of them in particular discovers a deep insight into the constitution of government. "The authority of the prince," said Artaxerxes, "must be defended by a military force; that force can only be maintained by taxes; all taxes must, at last, fall upon agriculture; and agriculture can never flourish except under the protection of justice and moderation."<sup>†</sup> Artaxerxes bequeathed his new empire, and his ambitious designs against the Romans, to Sapor, a son not unworthy of his great father; but those designs were too extensive for the power of Persia, and served only to involve both nations in a long series of destructive wars and reciprocal calamities.

<sup>\*</sup> Eutychius, tom. ii, p. 180, vers. Pocock. The great Chosroes Noushirwan sent the code of Artaxerxes to all his satraps, as the invariable rule of their conduct.

<sup>†</sup> D'Herbelot Bibliothèque Orientale, au mot *Artakir*. We may observe, that after an ancient period of fables, and a long interval of darkness, the modern histories of Persia begin to assume an air of truth with the dynasty of the Sassanides.



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VIII.Military  
power of  
the Per-  
sians.Their in-  
fantry con-  
temptible.Their ca-  
valry ex-  
cellent.

The Persians, long since civilized and corrupted, were very far from possessing the martial independence, and the intrepid hardiness, both of mind and body, which have rendered the northern barbarians masters of the world. The science of war, that constituted the more rational force of Greece and Rome, as it now does of Europe, never made any considerable progress in the East. Those disciplined evolutions which harmonize and animate a confused multitude, were unknown to the Persians. They were equally unskilled in the arts of constructing, besieging, or defending regular fortifications. They trusted more to their numbers than to their courage; more to their courage than to their discipline. The infantry was a half-armed spiritless crowd of peasants, levied in haste by the allurements of plunder, and as easily dispersed by a victory as by a defeat. The monarch and his nobles transported into the camp the pride and luxury of the seraglio. Their military operations were impeded by a useless train of women, eunuchs, horses, and camels; and in the midst of a successful campaign, the Persian host was often separated or destroyed by an unexpected famine.\*

But the nobles of Persia, in the bosom of luxury and despotism, preserved a strong sense of personal gallantry and national honour. From

\* Herodian, l. vi, p. 214. Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xxiii, c. 6. Some differences may be observed between the two historians, the natural effects of the changes produced by a century and a half.

the age of seven years they were taught to speak truth, to shoot with the bow, and to ride; and it was universally confessed, that in the two last of these arts, they had made a more than common proficiency.<sup>1</sup> The most distinguished youth were educated under the monarch's eye, practised their exercises in the gate of his palace, and were severely trained up to the habits of temperance and obedience, in their long and laborious parties of hunting. In every province, the satrap maintained a like school of military virtue. The Persian nobles (so natural is the idea of feudal tenures) received from the king's bounty lands and houses, on the condition of their service in war. They were ready on the first summons to mount on horseback, with a martial and splendid train of followers, and to join the numerous bodies of guards, who were carefully selected from amongst the most robust slaves, and the bravest adventurers of Asia. These armies, both of light and of heavy cavalry, equally formidable by the impetuosity of their charge, and the rapidity of their motions, threatened, as an impending cloud, the eastern provinces of the declining empire of Rome.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The Persians are still the most skilful horsemen, and their horses the finest in the East.

<sup>2</sup> From Herodotus, Xenophon, Herodian, Ammianus, Charlin, &c. I have extracted such probable accounts of the Persian nobility, as seem either common to every age, or particular to that of the Sassanides.

## CHAP. IX.

*The state of Germany till the invasion of the barbarians, in the time of the emperor Decius.*

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THE government and religion of Persia have deserved some notice, from their connection with the decline and fall of the Roman empire. We shall occasionally mention the Scythian, or Sarmatian tribes, which, with their arms and horses, their flocks and herds, their wives and families, wandered over the immense plains which spread themselves from the Caspian sea to the Vistula, from the confines of Persia to those of Germany. But the warlike Germans, who first resisted, then invaded, and at length overturned, the western monarchy of Rome, will occupy a much more important place in this history, and possess a stronger, and, if we may use the expression, a more domestic, claim to our attention and regard. The most civilized nations of modern Europe issued from the woods of Germany; and in the rude institutions of those barbarians we may still distinguish the original principles of our present laws and manners. In their primitive state of simplicity and independence, the Germans were surveyed by the discerning eye, and delineated by the masterly pencil, of Tacitus, the first of historians who applied the science of philosophy to the study of facts. The expressive conciseness of his descriptions has deserved to ex-



ercise the diligence of innumerable antiquarians, and to excite the genius and penetration of the philosophic historians of our own times. The subject, however various and important, has already been so frequently, so ably, and so successfully discussed, that it is now grown familiar to the reader, and difficult to the writer. We shall therefore content ourselves with observing, and indeed with repeating, some of the most important circumstances of climate, of manners, and of institutions, which rendered the wild barbarians of Germany such formidable enemies to the Roman power.

Ancient Germany, excluding from its independent limits the province westward of the Rhine, which had submitted to the Roman yoke, extended itself over a third part of Europe. Almost the whole of modern Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Livonia, Prussia, and the greater part of Poland, were peopled by the various tribes of one great nation, whose complexion, manners, and language denoted a common origin, and preserved a striking resemblance. On the west, ancient Germany was divided by the Rhine from the Gallic, and on the south, by the Danube, from the Illyrian provinces of the empire. A ridge of hills, rising from the Danube, and called the Carpathian mountains, covered Germany on the side of Dacia or Hungary. The eastern frontier was faintly marked by the mutual fears of the Germans and the Sarmatians, and was often confounded by the mixture of warring and confederating tribes of the two nations.

CHAP. IX. In the remote darkness of the north, the ancients imperfectly descried a frozen ocean that lay beyond the Baltic sea, and beyond the peninsula, or islands<sup>a</sup> of Scandinavia.

Climate. Some ingenious writers<sup>b</sup> have suspected that Europe was much colder formerly than it is at present; and the most ancient descriptions of the climate of Germany tend exceedingly to confirm their theory. The general complaints of intense frost, and eternal winter, are perhaps little to be regarded, since we have no method of reducing to the accurate standard of the thermometer, the feelings, or the expressions of an orator, born in the happier regions of Greece or Asia. But I shall select two remarkable circumstances of a less equivocal nature. 1. The great rivers which covered the Roman provinces, the Rhine and the Danube, were frequently frozen over, and capable of supporting the most enormous weights. The barbarians, who often chose that severe season for their inroads, transported, without apprehension or danger, their numerous armies, their

<sup>a</sup> The modern philosophers of Sweden seem agreed that the waters of the Baltic gradually sink in a regular proportion, which they have ventured to estimate at half an inch every year. Twenty centuries ago, the flat country of Scandinavia must have been covered by the sea; while the high lands rose above the waters, as so many islands of various forms and dimensions. Such, indeed, is the notion given us by Meis, Pliny, and Tacitus, of the vast countries round the Baltic. See in the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*, tom. xi and xiv, a large abstract of Dalin's History of Sweden, composed in the Swedish language.

<sup>b</sup> In particular, Mr. Hume, the Abbé du Bos, and M. Pelloutier, *Hist. des Celtes*, tom. i.

navalry, and their heavy waggons, over a vast and solid bridge of ice.<sup>2</sup> Modern ages have not presented an instance of a like phenomenon.

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2. The rein-deer, that useful animal, from whom the savage of the north derives the best comforts of his dreary life, is of a constitution that supports, and even requires, the most intense cold. He is found on the rock of Spitzberg, within ten degrees of the pole; he seems to delight in the snows of Lapland and Siberia; but at present he cannot subsist, much less multiply, in any country to the south of the Baltic.<sup>3</sup> In the time of Cæsar, the rein-deer, as well as the elk, and the wild bull, was a native of the Hercynian forest, which then overshadowed a great part of Germany and Poland.<sup>4</sup> The modern improvements sufficiently explain the causes of the diminution of the cold. These immense woods have been gradually cleared, which intercepted from the earth the rays of the sun.<sup>5</sup> The morasses have been drained, and, in proportion as the soil has been cultivated, the air has become more temperate. Canada, at this

<sup>2</sup> Diadorus Siculus, l. v, p. 340, edit. Wessel. Herodian, l. vi, p. 221. Jornandes, c. 55. On the banks of the Danube, the wine, when brought to table, was frequently frozen into great lumps, *frusta viæ*. Ovid Epist. ex Ponto, l. iv, 7, 9, 10. Virgil, Georgic. l. iii, 355. The fact is confirmed by a soldier and a philosopher, who had experienced the intense cold of Thrace. See Xenophon, Anabasis, l. vii, p. 560, edit. Hutchinson.

<sup>3</sup> Buffon Histoire Naturelle, tom. xii, p. 79, 116.

<sup>4</sup> Cæsar de Bell. Gallic. vi, 23, &c. The most inquisitive of the Germans were ignorant of its utmost limits, although some of them had travelled in it more than sixty days journey.

<sup>5</sup> Cluverius (Germania Antiqua, l. iii, c. 47) investigates the small and scattered remains of the Hercynian wood.



CHAP. day, is an exact picture of ancient Germany.<sup>1</sup>  
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Although situated in the same parallel with the finest provinces of France and England, that country experiences the most rigorous cold. The rein-deer are very numerous, the ground is covered with deep and lasting snow, and the great river of St. Lawrence is regularly frozen, in a season when the waters of the Seine and the Thames are usually free from ice.<sup>2</sup>

Its effects  
on the na-  
tives.

It is difficult to ascertain, and easy to exaggerate, the influence of the climate of ancient Germany over the minds and bodies of the natives. Many writers have supposed, and most have allowed, though, as it should seem, without any adequate proof, that the rigorous cold of the north was favourable to long life and generative vigour, that the women were more fruitful, and the human species more prolific, than in warmer or more temperate climes.<sup>3</sup> We may assert, with greater confidence, that the keen air of Germany formed the large and masculine limbs of the natives, who were, in general, of a more lofty stature than the people of the south,<sup>4</sup> gave them a kind of strength better adapted to violent exertions than to patient labour, and inspired them with constitutional bravery, which is the result of nerves and spirits. The severity of a

<sup>1</sup> Charlevoix *Histoire du Canada*.

<sup>2</sup> Olaus Rudbeck asserts, that the Swedish women often bear ten or twelve children, and not uncommonly twenty or thirty: but the authority of Rudbeck is much to be suspected.

<sup>3</sup> *In hos artus, in hæc corpora, quæ miramur, excrescunt.* Tacit. *Germania*, 3, 20. Cluver. l. i, c. 14.

winter campaign, that chilled the courage of the Roman troops, was scarcely felt by these hardy children of the north,<sup>1</sup> who in their turn were unable to resist the summer heats, and dissolved away in languor and sickness under the beams of an Italian sun.<sup>1</sup>

There is not anywhere upon the globe, a large tract of country, which we have discovered destitute of inhabitants, or whose first population can be fixed with any degree of historical certainty. And yet, as the most philosophic minds can seldom refrain from investigating the infancy of great nations, our curiosity consumes itself in toilsome and disappointed efforts. When Tacitus considered the purity of the German blood, and the forbidding aspect of the country, he was disposed to pronounce those barbarians *indigene*, or natives of the soil. We may allow with safety, and perhaps with truth, that ancient Germany was not originally peopled by any foreign colonies already formed into a political society;<sup>m</sup> but that the name and nation received their existence from the gradual union of some wander-

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Origin of  
the Ger-  
mans.

<sup>1</sup> Plutarch. in Mario. The Cimbri, by way of amusement, often slid down mountains of snow on their broad shields.

<sup>1</sup> The Romans made war in all climates, and by their excellent discipline were, in a great measure, preserved in health and vigour. It may be remarked, that man is the only animal which can live and multiply in every country from the equator to the poles. The hog seems to approach the nearest to our species in that privilege.

<sup>m</sup> Tacit. German. c. 3. The emigration of the Gauls followed the course of the Danube, and discharged itself on Greece and Asia. Tacitus could discover only one inconsiderable tribe that retained any traces of a Gallic origin.

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ing savages of the Hercynian woods. To assert those savages to have been the spontaneous production of the earth which they inhabited, would be a rash inference, condemned by religion, and unwarranted by reason.

Fables and
conjectures.

Such rational doubt is but ill-suited with the genius of popular vanity.* Among the nations who have adopted the Mosaic history of the world, the ark of Noah has been of the same use, as was formerly to the Greeks and Romans the siege of Troy. On a narrow basis of acknowledged truth, an immense but rude superstructure of fable has been erected; and the wild Irishman,* as well as the wild Tartar,* could point out the individual son of Japhet, from whose loins his ancestors were lineally descended. The last century abounded with antiquarians of profound learning and easy faith, who, by the dim light of legends and traditions, of conjectures and etymologies, conducted the great grandchildren of Noah from the tower of Babel to the extremities of the globe. Of these judicious cri-

* According to Dr. Keating (*History of Ireland*, p. 13, 14), the giant Partholannus, who was the son of Senra, the son of Esra, the son of Sen, the son of Framant, the son of Fathacian, the son of Magog, the son of Japhet, the son of Noah, landed on the coast of Munster, the 14th day of May, in the year of the world one thousand nine hundred and seventy-eight. Though he succeeded in his great enterprise, the loose behaviour of his wife rendered his domestic life very unhappy, and provoked him to such a degree, that he killed her favourite greyhound. This, as the learned historian very properly observes, was the first instance of female falsehood and infidelity ever known in Ireland.

* *Genealogical History of the Tartars*, by Abulghazi Bahadur Khan.

ties, one of the most entertaining was Olaus CHAP. IX.
 Rudbeck, professor in the university of Upsal.^p
 Whatever is celebrated either in history or fable, this zealous patriot ascribes to his country. From Sweden (which formed so considerable a part of ancient Germany) the Greeks themselves derived their alphabetical characters, their astronomy, and their religion. Of that delightful region (for such it appeared to the eyes of a native) the Atlantis of Plato, the country of the Hyperboreans, the gardens of the Hesperides, the Fortunate islands, and even the Elysian fields, were all but faint and imperfect transcripts. A clime so profusely favoured by nature, could not long remain desert after the flood. The learned Rudbeck allows the family of Noah a few years to multiply from eight to about twenty thousand persons. He then disperses them into small colonies to replenish the earth, and to propagate the human species. The German or Swedish detachment (which marched, if I am not mistaken, under the command of Askenaz, the son of Gomer, the son of Japhet) distinguished itself by a more than common diligence in the prosecution of this great work. The northern hive cast its swarms over the greatest part of Europe, Africa, and Asia; and (to use the author's metaphor) the blood circulated from the extremities to the heart.

But all this well-laboured system of German antiquities is annihilated by a single fact, too well
The Germans ignorant of letters ;

^p His work, entitled *Atlantica*, is uncommonly scarce. Bayle has given two most curious extracts from it. *Republique des Lettres* Janvier et Fevrier, 1683.

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attested to admit of any doubt, and of too decisive a nature to leave room for any reply. The Germans, in the age of Tacitus, were unacquainted with the use of letters;³ and the use of letters is the principal circumstance that distinguishes a civilized people from a herd of savages incapable of knowledge or reflection. Without that artificial help, the human memory soon dissipates or corrupts the ideas intrusted to her charge; and the nobler faculties of the mind, no longer supplied with models or with materials, gradually forget their powers; the judgment becomes feeble and lethargic, the imagination languid or irregular. Fully to apprehend this important truth, let us attempt, in an improved society, to calculate the immense distance between the man of learning and the *illiterate* peasant. The former, by reading and reflection, multiplies his own experience, and lives in distant ages and remote countries; whilst the latter, rooted to a single spot, and confined to a few years of existence, surpasses, but very little, his fellow-

³ Tacit. Germ. ii, 19. *Litterarum secreta viri pariter ac femine ignorant.* We may rest contented with this decisive authority, without entering into the obscure disputes concerning the antiquity of the Runic characters. The learned Celsius, a Swede, a scholar, and a philosopher, was of opinion, that they were nothing more than the Roman letters, with the curves changed into straight lines for the ease of engraving. See Pelloutier, *Histoire des Celtes*, l. ii. c. 11. *Dictionnaire Diplomatique*, tom. i. p. 223. We may add, that the oldest Runic inscriptions are supposed to be of the third century, and the most ancient writer who mentions the Runic characters is Venantius Fortunatus (*Carm.* vii, 18), who lived towards the end of the sixth century.

Barbara fraxineis pingatur Runa tabellis.

labourer the ox in the exercise of his mental faculties. The same, and even a greater, difference will be found between nations than between individuals; and we may safely pronounce, that without some species of writing, no people has ever preserved the faithful annals of their history, ever made any considerable progress in the abstract sciences, or ever possessed, in any tolerable degree of perfection, the useful and agreeable arts of life.

Of these arts, the ancient Germans were wretchedly destitute. They passed their lives in a state of ignorance and poverty, which it has pleased some declaimers to dignify with the appellation of virtuous simplicity. Modern Germany is said to contain about two thousand three hundred walled towns.¹ In a much wider extent of country, the geographer Ptolemy could discover no more than ninety places, which he decorates with the name of cities;² though, according to our ideas, they would but ill deserve that splendid title. We can only suppose them to have been rude fortifications, constructed in the centre of the woods, and designed to secure the women, children, and cattle, whilst the warriors of the tribe marched out to repel a sudden invasion.³

¹ *Recherches Philosophiques sur les Americains*, tom. iii. p. 228. The author of that very curious work is, if I am not misinformed, a German by birth.

² The Alexandrian geographer is often criticised by the accurate Cluvierus.

³ See Casar, and the learned Mr. Whitaker, in his *History of Manchester*, vol. i.

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But Tacitus asserts, as a well-known fact, that the Germans, in his time, had *no* cities;¹ and that they affected to despise the works of Roman industry, as places of confinement rather than of security.² Their edifices were not even contiguous, or formed into regular villas;³ each barbarian fixed his independent dwelling on the spot to which a plain, a wood, or a stream of fresh water, had induced him to give the preference. Neither stone, nor brick, nor tiles, were employed in these slight habitations.⁴ They were indeed no more than low huts of a circular figure, built of rough timber, thatched with straw, and pierced at the top to leave a free passage for the smoke. In the most inclement winter, the hardy German was satisfied with a scanty garment made of the skin of some animal. The nations who dwelt towards the north, clothed themselves in furs; and the women manufactured for their own use a coarse kind of linen.⁵ The game of various sorts, with which the forests of Germany were plentifully stocked, supplied its inhabitants

¹ Tacit. Germ. 15.

² When the Germans commanded the Ulm of Cologne to cast off the Roman yoke, and with their new freedom to resume their ancient manners, they insisted on the immediate demolition of the walls of the colony. "*Postulamus a vobis, nunc coloniam, munimenta seruitutis detrahatis; etiam fera animalia, si clausa teneas, virtutis obliuiscuntur.*" Tacit. Hist. iv, 64.

³ The straggling villages of Silesia are several miles in length. See Cluver. l. i, c. 13.

⁴ One hundred and forty years after Tacitus, a few more regular structures were erected near the Rhine and Danube. Herodian. l. vii, p. 234.

⁵ Tacit. Germ. 17.

with food and exercise.^b Their monstrous herds of cattle, less remarkable indeed for their beauty than for their utility,^c formed the principal object of their wealth. A small quantity of corn was the only produce exacted from the earth; the use of orchards or artificial meadows was unknown to the Germans; nor can we expect any improvements in agriculture from a people, whose property every year experienced a general change by a new division of the arable lands, and who, in that strange operation, avoided disputes, by suffering a great part of their territory to lie waste and without tillage.^d

Gold, silver, and iron, were extremely scarce in Germany. Its barbarous inhabitants wanted both skill and patience to investigate those rich veins of silver, which have so liberally rewarded the attention of the princes of Brunswick and Saxony. Sweden, which now supplies Europe with iron, was equally ignorant of its own riches; and the appearance of the arms of the Germans furnished a sufficient proof how little iron they were able to bestow on what they must have deemed the noblest use of that metal. The various transactions of peace and war had introduced some Roman coins (chiefly silver) among the borderers of the Rhine and Danube; but the more distant tribes were absolutely unacquainted with the use of money, carried on their confined traffic by the exchange of commodities, and

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^b Tacit. Germ. 5.

^c Cæsar. de Bell. Gall. vi, 21.

^d Tacit. Germ. 26. Cæsar, vi, 22.

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prized their rude earthen vessels as of equal value with the silver vases, the presents of Rome to their princes and ambassadors.* To a mind capable of reflection, such leading facts convey more instruction, than a tedious detail of subordinate circumstances. The value of money has been settled by general consent to express our wants and our property, as letters were invented to express our ideas; and both these institutions, by giving a more active energy to the powers and passions of human nature, have contributed to multiply the objects they were designed to represent. The use of gold and silver is in a great measure factitious; but it would be impossible to enumerate the important and various services which agriculture, and all the arts, have received from iron, when tempered and fashioned by the operation of fire, and the dexterous hand of man. Money, in a word, is the most universal incitement, iron the most powerful instrument, of human industry; and it is very difficult to conceive by what means a people, neither actuated by the one, nor seconded by the other, could emerge from the grossest barbarism.^f

Their indolence.

If we contemplate a savage nation in any part of the globe, a supine indolence and a carelessness of futurity will be found to constitute their general character. In a civilized state, every faculty

* Tacit. Germ. 6.

^f It is said that the Mexicans and Peruvians, without the use of either money or iron, had made a very great progress in the arts. Those arts, and the monuments they produced, have been strongly magnified. See *Recherches sur les Américains*, tom. ii, p. 153, &c.

of man is expanded and exercised, and the great chain of mutual dependence connects and embraces the several members of society. The most numerous portion of it is employed in constant and useful labour. The select few, placed by fortune above that necessity, can, however, fill up their time by the pursuits of interest or glory, by the improvement of their estate or of their understanding, by the duties, the pleasures, and even the follies of social life. The Germans were not possessed of these varied resources. The care of the house and family, the management of the land and cattle, were delegated to the old and the infirm, to women and slaves. The lazy warrior, destitute of every art that might employ his leisure hours, consumed his days and nights in the animal gratifications of sleep and food. And yet, by a wonderful diversity of nature (according to the remark of a writer who had pierced into its darkest recesses), the same barbarians are by turns the most indolent and the most restless of mankind. They delight in sloth, they detest tranquillity.* The languid soul, oppressed with its own weight, anxiously required some new and powerful sensation; and war and danger were the only amusements adequate to its fierce temper. The sound that summoned the German to arms was grateful to his ear. It roused him from his uncomfortable lethargy, gave him an active pursuit, and, by strong exercise of the body, and violent emotions of the mind, restored him to a

* Tacit. Germ. 15.

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more lively sense of his existence. In the dull intervals of peace, these barbarians were immoderately addicted to deep gaming and excessive drinking; both of which, by different means, the one by inflaming their passions, the other by extinguishing their reason, alike relieved them from the pain of thinking. They gloried in passing whole days and nights at table; and the blood of friends and relations often stained their numerous and drunken assemblies.^b Their debts of honour (for in that light they have transmitted to us those of play) they discharged with the most romantic fidelity. The desperate gamester, who had staked his person and liberty on a last throw of the dice, patiently submitted to the decision of fortune, and suffered himself to be bound, chastised, and sold into remote slavery, by his weaker but more lucky antagonist.^c

Their taste
for strong
liquors.

Strong beer, a liquor extracted with very little art from wheat or barley, and *corrupted* (as it is strongly expressed by Tacitus) into a certain semblance of wine, was sufficient for the gross purposes of German debauchery. But those who had tasted the rich wines of Italy, and afterwards of Gaul, sighed for that more delicious species of intoxication. They attempted not, however (as has since been executed with so much success), to naturalize the vine on the banks of the Rhine and Danube; nor did they endeavour to procure

^b Tacit. Germ. 22, 23.

^c Id. 24. The Germans might borrow the *arts* of play from the Romans, but the *passion* is wonderfully inherent in the human species.

by industry the materials of an advantageous commerce. To solicit by labour what might be ravished by arms, was esteemed unworthy of the German spirit.¹ The intemperate thirst of strong liquors often urged the barbarians to invade the provinces on which art or nature had bestowed those much envied presents. The Tuscan who betrayed his country to the Celtic nations, attracted them into Italy by the prospect of the rich fruits and delicious wines, the productions of a happier climate.² And in the same manner the German auxiliaries, invited into France during the civil wars of the sixteenth century, were allured by the promise of plenteous quarters in the provinces of Champagne and Burgundy.³ Drunkenness, the most illiberal, but not the most dangerous of *our* vices, was sometimes capable, in a less civilized state of mankind, of occasioning a battle, a war, or a revolution.

The climate of ancient Germany has been multiplied, and the soil fertilized, by the labour of ^{State of population.} ten centuries from the time of Charlemagne. The same extent of ground which at present maintains, in ease and plenty, a million of husbandmen and artificers, was unable to supply an hundred thousand lazy warriors with the simple necessities of life.⁴ The Germans abandoned their

¹ Tacit. Germ. 14.

² Plutarch. in Camillo. T. Liv. v. 53.

³ Dubos. Hist. de la Monarchie Française, tom. 1. p. 195.

⁴ The Helvetian nation, which issued from the country called Switzerland, contained, of every age and sex, 368,000 persons (César

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immense forests to the exercise of hunting, employed in pasturage the most considerable part of their lands, bestowed on the small remainder a rude and careless cultivation, and then accused the scantiness and sterility of a country that refused to maintain the multitude of its inhabitants. When the return of famine severely admonished them of the importance of the arts, the national distress was sometimes alleviated by the emigration of a third, perhaps, or a fourth part of their youth.* The possession and the enjoyment of property are the pledges which bind a civilized people to an improved country. But the Germans, who carried with them what they most valued, their arms, their cattle, and their women, cheerfully abandoned the vast silence of their woods for the unbounded hopes of plunder and conquest. The innumerable swarms that issued, or seemed to issue, from the great storehouse of nations, were multiplied by the fears of the vanquished, and by the credulity of succeeding ages. And from facts thus exaggerated, an opinion was gradually established, and has been supported by writers of distinguished reputation, that in the age of Cæsar and Tacitus, the inhabitants of the north were far more numerous than they are in

(Cæsar de Bell. Gall. i. 29). At present, the number of people in the Pays de Vaud (a small district on the banks of the Leman lake, much more distinguished for politeness than for industry) amounts to 112,591. See an excellent tract of M. Muret, in the *Memoires de la Societ  de Bern*.

* Paul Disconus, c. 1, 2, 3. Machiavel, Davila, and the rest of Paul's followers, represent these emigrations too much as regular and concerted measures.

our days.^f A more serious inquiry into the causes of population seems to have convinced modern philosophers of the falsehood, and indeed the impossibility, of the supposition. To the names of Mariana and of Machiavel,^g we can oppose the equal names of Robertson and Hume.^h

A warlike nation like the Germans, without either cities, letters, arts, or money, found some compensation for this savage state in the enjoyment of liberty. Their poverty secured their freedom, since our desires and our possessions are the strongest fetters of despotism. “Among the Suiones (says Tacitus), riches are held in honour. They are *therefore* subject to an absolute monarch, who, instead of entrusting his people with the free use of arms, as is practised in the rest of Germany, commits them to the safe custody, not of a citizen, or even of a freed man, but of a slave. The neighbours of the Suiones, the Sitones, are sunk even below servitude; they obey a woman.” In the mention of these exceptions, the great historian sufficiently acknowledges the general theory of government. We are only at a loss to conceive by what means riches and despotism could pene-

German
freedom.

^f Sir William Temple and Montesquieu have indulged, on this subject, the usual liveliness of their fancy.

^g Machiavel Hist. de Firenze, l. i. Mariana Hist. Hispan. l. v, c. 1.

^h Robertson's Charles V. Hume's Political Essays.

ⁱ Tacit. German. 44, 45. Prenshenius (who dedicated his supplement to Livy, to Christina of Sweden) thinks proper to be very angry with the Roman who expressed so very little reverence for northern queens.

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trate into a remote corner of the north, and extinguish the generous flame that blazed with such fierceness on the frontier of the Roman provinces; or how the ancestors of those Danes and Norwegians, so distinguished in latter ages by their unconquered spirit, could thus tamely resign the great character of German liberty.¹ Some tribes, however, on the coast of the Baltic, acknowledged the authority of kings, though without relinquishing the rights of men;² but in the far greater part of Germany, the form of government was a democracy, tempered indeed, and controuled, not so much by general and positive laws, as by the occasional ascendant of birth or valour, of eloquence or superstition.³

Assemblies
of the
people.

Civil governments, in their first institutions, are voluntary associations for mutual defence. To obtain the desired end, it is absolutely necessary that each individual should conceive himself obliged to submit his private opinion and actions to the judgment of the greater number of his associates. The German tribes were contented with this rude, but liberal, outline of political society. As soon as a youth, born of free parents, had attained the age of manhood, he was intro-

¹ May we not suspect that superstition was the parent of despotism? The descendants of Odin (whose race was not extinct till the year 1060) are said to have reigned in Sweden above a thousand years. The temple of Upsal was the ancient seat of religion and empire. In the year 1163, I find a singular law, prohibiting the use and profession of arms to any except the king's guards. Is it not probable that it was coloured by the pretence of reviving an old institution? See Dallin's History of Sweden, in the Bibliothèque Raisonnée, tom. xl and xlv.

² Tacit. Germ. c. 43.

³ Id. c. 11, 12, 13, &c.

duced into the general council of his countrymen, solemnly invested with a shield and spear, and adopted as an equal and worthy member of the military commonwealth. The assembly of the warriors of the tribe was convened at stated seasons, or on sudden emergencies. The trial of public offences, the election of magistrates, and the great business of peace and war, were determined by its independent voice. Sometimes, indeed, these important questions were previously considered, and prepared in a more select council of the principal chieftains.* The magistrates might deliberate and persuade, the people only could resolve and execute; and the resolutions of the Germans were for the most part hasty and violent. Barbarians accustomed to place their freedom in gratifying the present passion, and their courage in overlooking all future consequences, turned away with indignant contempt from the remonstrances of justice and policy, and it was the practice to signify by a hollow murmur their dislike of such timid counsels. But whenever a more popular orator proposed to vindicate the meanest citizen from either foreign or domestic injury, whenever he called upon his fellow countrymen to assert the national honour, or to pursue some enterprise full of danger and glory, a loud clashing of shields and spears expressed the eager applause of the assembly. For the Germans always met

* Grotius changes an expression of Tacitus, *pertractantur* into *pertractantur*. The correction is equally just and ingenious.

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in arms, and it was constantly to be dreaded, lest an irregular multitude, inflamed with faction and strong liquors, should use those arms to enforce, as well as to declare, their furious resolves. We may recollect how often the diets of Poland have been polluted with blood, and the more numerous party has been compelled to yield to the more violent and seditious.*

Authority
of the
princes
and magis-
trates

A general of the tribe was elected on occasions of danger; and, if the danger was pressing and extensive, several tribes concurred in the choice of the same general. The bravest warrior was named to lead his countrymen into the field, by his example rather than by his commands. But this power, however limited, was still inviolable. It expired with the war, and in time of peace the German tribes acknowledged not any supreme chief.^a *Princes* were, however, appointed in the general assembly, to administer justice, or rather to compose differences,^b in their respective districts. In the choice of these magistrates, as much regard was shewn to birth as to merit.^c To each was assigned, by the public, a guard, and a council of an hundred persons; and the first of the princes appears to have enjoyed a pre-eminence of rank and honour.

* Even in our ancient parliament, the barons often carried a question, not so much by the number of votes, as by that of their armed followers.

^a Caesar de Bell. Gall. vi. 23.

^b Minuunt controversias, is a very happy expression of Caesar's.

^c Reges ex nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt. Tacit. Germ. 7.

which sometimes tempted the Romans to compliment him with the regal title.⁴

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The comparative view of the powers of the magistrates, in two remarkable instances, is alone sufficient to represent the whole system of German manners. The disposal of the landed property within their district was absolutely vested in their hands, and they distributed it every year according to a new division.⁵ At the same time they were not authorised to punish with death, to imprison, or even to strike, a private citizen.⁶ A people thus jealous of their persons, and careless of their possessions, must have been totally destitute of industry and the arts, but animated with a high sense of honour and independence.

more also-
lute over
the pro-
perty than
over the
persons
of the
Germans.

The Germans respected only those duties which they imposed on themselves. The most obscure soldier resisted with disdain the authority of the magistrates. "The noblest youths blushed not to be numbered among the faithful companions of some renowned chief, to whom they devoted their arms and service. A noble emulation prevailed among the companions, to obtain the first place in the esteem of their chief; amongst the chiefs, to acquire the greatest number of valiant companions. To be ever surrounded by a band of select youths, was the pride and strength of the chiefs, their ornament in peace, their defence

Voluntary
engage-
ments.

⁴ Cluver. Germ. Ant. l. i. c. 38.

⁵ Caesar, vi, 22. Tacit. Germ. 26.

⁶ Tacit. Germ. 7.

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“ in war. The glory of such distinguished
“ heroes diffused itself beyond the narrow limits
“ of their own tribe. Presents and embassies
“ solicited their friendship, and the fame of
“ their arms often ensured victory to the party
“ which they espoused. In the hour of danger
“ it was shameful for the chief to be surpassed
“ in valour by his companions; shameful for the
“ companions not to equal the valour of their
“ chief. To survive his fall in battle, was in-
“ delible infamy. To protect his person, and to
“ adorn his glory with the trophies of their own
“ exploits, were the most sacred of their duties.
“ The chiefs combated for victory, the compa-
“ nions for the chief. The noblest warriors,
“ whenever their native country was sunk in the
“ laziness of peace, maintained their numerous
“ hands in some distant scene of action, to ex-
“ ercise their restless spirit, and to acquire re-
“ nown by voluntary dangers. Gifts worthy of
“ soldiers, the warlike steed, the bloody and
“ ever victorious lance, were the rewards which
“ the companions claimed from the liberality of
“ their chief. The rude plenty of his hospitable
“ board was the only pay that *he* could bestow,
“ or *they* would accept. War, rapine, and the
“ freewill offerings of his friends, supplied the
“ materials of this munificence.”* This institu-
“ tion, however it might accidentally weaken the
“ several republics, invigorated the general charac-
“ ter of the Germans, and even ripened amongst

* Tacit. Germ. 13, 14.

them all the virtues of which barbarians are susceptible; the faith and valour, the hospitality and the courtesy, so conspicuous long afterwards in the ages of chivalry. The honourable gifts, bestowed by the chief on his brave companions, have been supposed, by an ingenious writer, to contain the first rudiments of the fiefs, distributed, after the conquest of the Roman provinces, by the barbarian lords among their vassals, with a similar duty of homage and military service.³ These conditions are, however, very repugnant to the maxims of the ancient Germans, who delighted in mutual presents; but without either imposing, or accepting, the weight of obligations.⁴

“ In the days of chivalry, or more properly ^{German} of romance, all the men were brave, and all ^{chastity.} the women were chaste;” and notwithstanding the latter of these virtues is acquired and preserved with much more difficulty than the former, it is ascribed, almost without exception, to the wives of the ancient Germans. Polygamy was not in use, except among the princes, and among them only for the sake of multiplying their alliances. Divorces were prohibited by manners rather than by laws. Adulteries were punished as rare and inexpressible crimes; nor

³ *Esprit des Loix*, l. xxx, c. 3. The brilliant imagination of Montesquieu is corrected, however, by the dry cold reason of the Abbé de Mably. *Observations sur l'Histoire de France*, tom. i, p. 336.

⁴ *Gaudent muneribus, sed nec data imputant, nec acceptis obligantur.* Tacit. Germ. c. 21.

CHAP. was seduction justified by example and fashion.^{*}
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We may easily discover, that Tacitus indulges an honest pleasure in the contrast of barbarian virtue with the dissolute conduct of the Roman ladies; yet there are some striking circumstances that give an air of truth, or at least of probability, to the conjugal faith and chastity of the Germans.

Its probable causes.

Although the progress of civilization has undoubtedly contributed to assuage the fiercer passions of human nature, it seems to have been less favourable to the virtue of chastity, whose most dangerous enemy is the softness of the mind. The refinements of life corrupt while they polish the intercourse of the sexes. The gross appetite of love becomes most dangerous when it is elevated, or rather, indeed, disguised by sentimental passion. The elegance of dress, of motion, and of manners, gives a lustre to beauty, and inflames the senses through the imagination. Luxurious entertainments, midnight dances, and licentious spectacles, present at once temptation and opportunity to female frailty.[†] From such dangers the unpolished wives of the barbarians were secured by poverty, solitude, and the painful cares of a domestic life. The German huts, open, on every side, to the eye of indiscretion or

^{*} The adulteress was whipped through the villages. Neither wealth nor beauty could inspire compassion, or procure her a second husband. 18, 19.

[†] Ovid employs two hundred lines in the research of places the most favourable to love. Above all, he considers the theatre as the best adapted to collect the beauties of Rome, and to melt them into tenderness and sensuality.

jealousy, were a better safeguard of conjugal fidelity, than the walls, the bolts, and the eunuchs of a Persian haram. To this reason, another may be added, of a more honourable nature. The Germans treated their women with esteem and confidence, consulted them on every occasion of importance, and fondly believed, that in their breasts resided a sanctity and wisdom more than human. Some of these interpreters of fate, such as Velleda, in the Batavian war, governed, in the name of the deity, the fiercest nations of Germany.^m The rest of the sex, without being adored as goddesses, were respected as the free and equal companions of soldiers; associated, even by the marriage ceremony, to a life of toil, of danger, and of glory.ⁿ In their great invasions, the camps of the barbarians were filled with a multitude of women, who remained firm and undaunted amidst the sound of arms, the various forms of destruction, and the honourable wounds of their sons and husbands.^o Fainting armies of Germans have more than once been driven back upon the enemy, by the generous despair of the women, who dreaded death much less than servitude. If the day was irrecoverably lost, they well knew how to deliver themselves and their children, with their own hands, from

^m Tacit. Annal. iv, 61, 65.

ⁿ The marriage present was a yoke of oxen, horses, and arms. See Germ. c. 18. Tacit is somewhat too florid on the subject.

^o The change of *exigere* into *erugere* is a most excellent correction.

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an insulting victor.² Heroines of such a cast may claim our admiration; but they were most assuredly neither lovely, nor very susceptible of love. Whilst they affected to emulate the stern virtues of *man*, they must have resigned that attractive softness in which principally consists the charm and weakness of *woman*. Conscious pride taught the German females to suppress every tender emotion that stood in competition with honour, and the first honour of the sex has ever been that of chastity. The sentiments and conduct of these high-spirited matrons may, at once, be considered as a cause, as an effect, and as a proof of the general character of the nation. Female courage, however it may be raised by fanaticism, or confirmed by habit, can be only a faint and imperfect imitation of the manly valour that distinguishes the age or country in which it may be found.

Religion.

The religious system of the Germans (if the wild opinions of savages can deserve that name) was dictated by their wants, their fears, and their ignorance.³ They adored the great visible objects and agents of nature, the sun and the

² Tacit. Germ. c. 7. Plutarch, in Mario. Before the wives of the Teutones destroyed themselves and their children, they had offered to surrender, on condition that they should be received as the slaves of the vestal virgins.

³ Tacitus has employed a few lines, and Cluverius one hundred and twenty-four pages, on this obscure subject. The former discovers in Germany the gods of Greece and Rome. The latter is positive, that under the emblems of the sun, the moon, and the fire, his pious ancestors worshipped the Trinity in unity.

moon, the fire and the earth; together with those imaginary deities, who were supposed to preside over the most important occupations of human life. They were persuaded, that, by some ridiculous arts of divination, they could discover the will of the superior beings, and that human sacrifices were the most precious and acceptable offering to their altars. Some applause has been hastily bestowed on the sublime notion, entertained by that people, of the Deity, whom they neither confined within the walls of a temple, nor represented by any human figure; but when we recollect, that the Germans were unskilled in architecture, and totally unacquainted with the art of sculpture, we shall readily assign the true reason of a scruple, which arose not so much from a superiority of reason, as from a want of ingenuity. The only temples in Germany were dark and ancient groves, consecrated by the reverence of succeeding generations. Their secret gloom, the imagined residence of an invisible power, by presenting no distinct object of fear or worship, impressed the mind with a still deeper sense of religious horror; and the priests, rude and illiterate as they were, had been taught by experience the use of every artifice that could preserve and fortify impressions so well suited to their own interest.

* The sacred wood, described with such sublime horror by Lucan, was in the neighbourhood of Marseilles; but there were many of the same kind in Germany.

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Its effects
in peace;

The same ignorance which renders barbarians incapable of conceiving or embracing the useful restraints of laws, exposes them naked and unarmed to the blind terrors of superstition. The German priests, improving this favourable temper of their countrymen, had assumed a jurisdiction, even in temporal concerns, which the magistrate could not venture to exercise; and the haughty warrior patiently submitted to the lash of correction, when it was inflicted, not by any human power, but by the immediate order of the god of war.^a The defects of civil policy were sometimes supplied by the interposition of ecclesiastical authority. The latter was constantly exerted to maintain silence and decency in the popular assemblies; and was sometimes extended to a more enlarged concern for the national welfare. A solemn procession was occasionally celebrated in the present countries of Mecklenburgh and Pomerania. The unknown symbol of the *earth*, covered with a thick veil, was placed on a carriage drawn by cows; and in this manner the goddess, whose common residence was in the isle of Rugen, visited several adjacent tribes of her worshippers. During her progress, the sound of war was hushed, quarrels were suspended, arms laid aside, and the restless Germans had an opportunity of tasting the blessings of peace and harmony.^b The *truce of God*, so often and so ineffectually proclaimed by the

^a Tacit. Germania, c. 7.

^b Tacit. Germania, c. 40.

clergy of the eleventh century, was an obvious imitation of this ancient custom."

But the influence of religion was far more powerful to inflame, than to moderate, the fierce passions of the Germans. Interest and fanaticism often prompted its ministers to sanctify the most daring and the most unjust enterprises, by the approbation of heaven, and full assurances of success. The consecrated standards, long revered in the groves of superstition, were placed in the front of the battle;² and the hostile army was devoted with dire execrations to the gods of war and of thunder.³ In the faith of soldiers (and such were the Germans) cowardice is the most unpardonable of sins. A brave man was the worthy favourite of their martial deities; the wretch who had lost his shield, was alike banished from the religious and the civil assemblies of his countrymen. Some tribes of the north seem to have embraced the doctrine of transmigration,⁴ others imagined a gross paradise of immortal drunkenness.⁵ All agreed, that a life spent in arms, and a glorious death in battle, were the best preparations for a happy futurity, either in this or in another world.

¹ See Dr. Robertson's *History of Charles V.* vol. i. note 10.

² Tacit. *German.* c. 7. These standards were only the heads of wild beasts.

³ See an instance of this custom, Tacit. *Annal.* xiii. 57.

⁴ Caesar, Diodorus, and Lucan, seem to ascribe this doctrine to the Gauls; but M. Pelloutier (*Histoire des Celtes*, l. iii. c. 18), labours to reduce their expressions to a more orthodox sense.

⁵ Concerning this gross but alluring doctrine of the Edda, see fable xx. in the curious version of that book, published by M. Maljet, in his *Introduction to the History of Denmark*.

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The bards.

The immortality so vainly promised by the priests, was in some degree conferred by the bards. That singular order of men has most deservedly attracted the notice of all who have attempted to investigate the antiquities of the Celts, the Scandinavians, and the Germans. Their genius and character, as well as the reverence paid to that important office, have been sufficiently illustrated. But we cannot so easily express, or even conceive, the enthusiasm of arms and glory which they kindled in the breast of their audience. Among a polished people, a taste for poetry is rather an amusement of the fancy, than a passion of the soul. And yet, when in calm retirement we peruse the combats described by Homer or Tasso, we are insensibly seduced by the fiction, and feel a momentary glow of martial ardour. But how faint, how cold is the sensation which a peaceful mind can receive from solitary study! It was in the hour of battle, or in the feast of victory, that the bards celebrated the glory of heroes of ancient days, the ancestors of those warlike chieftains who listened with transport to their artless but animated strains. The view of arms and of danger heightened the effect of the military song; and the passions which it tended to excite, the desire of fame, and the contempt of death, were the habitual sentiments of a German mind.^b

^b See Tacit. Germ. c. 3. Diodor. Sicul. l. v. Strabo, l. iv, p. 197. The classical reader may remember the rank of Demodocus in the Phœnician

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Such was the situation, and such were the manners, of the ancient Germans. Their climate, their want of learning, of arts, and of laws, their notions of honour, of gallantry, and of religion, their sense of freedom, impatience of peace, and thirst of enterprise, all contributed to form a people of military heroes. And yet we find, that during more than two hundred and fifty years that elapsed from the defeat of Varus to the reign of Decius, these formidable barbarians made few considerable attempts, and not any material impression, on the luxurious and enslaved provinces of the empire. Their progress was checked by their want of arms and discipline, and their fury was diverted by the intestine divisions of ancient Germany.

1. It has been observed, with ingenuity, and not without truth, that the command of iron soon gives a nation the command of gold. But the rude tribes of Germany, alike destitute of both those valuable metals, were reduced slowly to acquire, by their unassisted strength, the possession of the one, as well as the other. The face of a German army displayed their poverty of iron. Swords, and the longer kind of lances, they could seldom use. Their *francæ* (as they called them in their own language) were long spears, headed with a sharp but narrow iron point,

Phœacian court, and the ardour infused by Tyrtæus into the fainting Spartans. Yet there is little probability that the Greeks and the Germans were the same people. Much learned trifling might be spared, if our antiquarians would condescend to reflect, that similar manners will naturally be produced by similar situations.

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and of discipline.

and which, as occasion required, they either darted from a distance, or pushed in close onset. With this spear, and with a shield, their cavalry was contented. A multitude of darts, scattered* with incredible force, were an additional resource of the infantry. Their military dress, when they wore any, was nothing more than a loose mantle. A variety of colours was the only ornament of their wooden or osier shields. Few of the chiefs were distinguished by cuirasses, scarce any by helmets. Though the horses of Germany were neither beautiful, swift, nor practised in the skilful evolutions of the Roman manege, several of the nations obtained renown by their cavalry; but, in general, the principal strength of the Germans consisted in their infantry,^d which was drawn up in several deep columns, according to the distinction of tribes and families. Impatient of fatigue or delay, these half-armed warriors rushed to battle with dissonant shouts, and disordered ranks; and sometimes, by the effort of native valour, prevailed over the constrained and more artificial bravery of the Roman mercenaries. But as the barbarians poured forth their whole souls on the first onset, they knew not how to rally, or to retire. A repulse was a sure defeat; and a defeat was most commonly total destruction. When we

* *Misilia spargunt.* Tacit. Germ. c. 6. Either that historian used a vague expression, or he meant that they were thrown at random.

^d It was their principal distinction from the Sarmatians, who generally fought on horseback.

recollect the complete armour of the Roman soldiers, their discipline, exercises, evolutions, fortified camps, and military engines, it appears a just matter of surprise, how the naked and unassisted valour of the barbarians could dare to encounter in the field the strength of the legions, and the various troops of the auxiliaries, which seconded their operations. The contest was too unequal, till the introduction of luxury had enervated the vigour, and a spirit of disobedience and sedition had relaxed the discipline, of the Roman armies. The introduction of barbarian auxiliaries into those armies, was a measure attended with very obvious dangers, as it might gradually instruct the Germans in the arts of war and of policy. Although they were admitted in small numbers, and with the strictest precaution, the example of Civilis was proper to convince the Romans, that the danger was not imaginary, and that their precautions were not always sufficient.* During the civil wars that followed the death of Nero, that artful and intrepid Batavian, whom his enemies condescended to compare with Hannibal and Sertorius,† formed a great design of freedom and ambition. Eight Batavian cohorts, renowned in the wars of Britain and Italy, repaired to his standard. He introduced an army of Germans into Gaul, prevailed

* The relation of this enterprise occupies a great part of the fourth and fifth books of the History of Tacitus, and is more remarkable for its eloquence than perspicuity. Sir Henry Saville has observed several inaccuracies.

† Tacit. Hist. iv, 13. Like them he had lost an eye.

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on the powerful cities of Treves and Langres to embrace his cause, defeated the legions, destroyed their fortified camps, and employed against the Romans the military knowledge which he had acquired in their service. When at length, after an obstinate struggle, he yielded to the power of the empire, Civilis secured himself and his country by an honourable treaty. The Batavians still continued to occupy the islands of the Rhine,* the allies, not the servants, of the Roman monarchy.

Civil dis-
sentions of
Germany

II. The strength of ancient Germany appears formidable, when we consider the effects that might have been produced by its united effort. The wide extent of country might very possibly contain a million of warriors, as all who were of age to bear arms were of a temper to use them. But this fierce multitude, incapable of concerting or executing any plan of national greatness, was agitated by various and often hostile intentions. Germany was divided into more than forty independent states; and, even in each state, the union of the several tribes was extremely loose and precarious. The barbarians were easily provoked; they knew not how to forgive an injury, much less an insult; their resentments were bloody and implacable. The casual disputes that so frequently happened in their tumultuous parties of hunting or drinking, were sufficient to

* It was contained between the two branches of the old Rhine, as they subsisted before the face of the country was changed by art and nature. See Cluver. *German. Antiq.* l. iii, c. 30, 37.

inflame the minds of whole nations; the private feud of any considerable chieftains diffused itself among their followers and allies. To chastise the insolent, or to plunder the defenceless, were alike causes of war. The most formidable states of Germany affected to encompass their territories with a wide frontier of solitude and devastation. The awful distance preserved by their neighbours, attested the terror of their arms, and in some measure defended them from the danger of unexpected incursions.^h

“ The Bructeri (it is Tacitus who now speaks) lamented by the policy of Rome.
 “ were totally exterminated by the neighbouring
 “ tribes,ⁱ provoked by their insolence, allured
 “ by the hopes of spoil, and perhaps inspired by
 “ the tutelary deities of the empire. Above sixty
 “ thousand barbarians were destroyed; not by
 “ the Roman arms, but in our sight, and for
 “ our entertainment. May the nations, enemies
 “ of Rome, ever preserve this enmity to each
 “ other! We have now attained the utmost
 “ verge of prosperity,^k and have nothing left
 “ to demand of fortune, except the discord of
 “ these barbarians.”^l These sentiments, less

^h Caesar de Bell. Gall. l. vi, 23.

ⁱ They are mentioned, however, in the fourth and fifth centuries, by Nazarius, Ammianus, Claudian, &c. as a tribe of Franks. See Cluver. Germ. Antiq. l. iii, c. 13.

^k *Urgentibus* is the common reading, but good sense, Lipsius, and some MSS. declare for *Vergentibus*.

^l Tacit. Germania, c. 33. The plous Albe de la Bieterie is very angry with Tacitus, talks of the devil who was a murderer from the beginning, &c. &c.

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worthy of the humanity than of the patriotism of Tacitus, express the invariable maxims of the policy of his countrymen. They deemed it a much safer expedient to divide than to combat the barbarians, from whose defeat they could derive neither honour nor advantage. The money and negotiations of Rome insinuated themselves into the heart of Germany; and every art of seduction was used with dignity, to conciliate those nations whom their proximity to the Rhine or Danube might render the most useful friends, as well as the most troublesome enemies. Chiefs of renown and power were flattered by the most trifling presents, which they received either as marks of distinction, or as the instruments of luxury. In civil dissensions, the weaker faction endeavoured to strengthen its interest by entering into secret connexions with the governors of the frontier provinces. Every quarrel among the Germans was fomented by the intrigues of Rome; and every plan of union and public good was defeated by the stronger bias of private jealousy and interest.^m

Transient
union
against
Marcus
Antoninus.

The general conspiracy which terrified the Romans under the reign of Marcus Antoninus comprehended almost all the nations of Germany, and even Sarmatia, from the mouth of the Rhine

^m Many traces of this policy may be discovered in Tacitus and Dion; and many more may be inferred from the principles of human nature.

to that of the Danube.* It is impossible for us to determine whether this hasty confederation was formed by necessity, by reason, or by passion; but we may rest assured, that the barbarians were neither allured by the indolence, or provoked by the ambition, of the Roman monarch. This dangerous invasion required all the firmness and vigilance of Marcus. He fixed generals of ability in the several stations of attack, and assumed in person the conduct of the most important province on the Upper Danube. After a long and doubtful conflict, the spirit of the barbarians was subdued. The Quadi and the Marcomanni,[†] who had taken the lead in the war, were the most severely punished in its catastrophe. They were commanded to retire five miles[‡] from their own banks of the Danube, and to deliver up the flower of the youth, who were immediately sent into Britain, a remote island, where they might be secure as hostages, and useful as soldiers.[§] On the frequent rebellions of the Quadi and Marcomanni, the irritated emperor resolved to reduce their country

* Hist. August. p. 31. Ammian. Marcellin. l. xxxi. c. 5. Aurel. Victor. The emperor Marcus was reduced to sell the rich furniture of the palace, and to enlist slaves and robbers.

† The Marcomanni, a colony, who, from the banks of the Rhine, occupied Bohemia and Moravia, had once erected a great and formidable monarchy under their king Maroboduus. See Strabo, l. vii. Vell. Pat. ii. 104. Tacit. Annal. ii. 63.

‡ Mr. Wotton (History of Rome, p. 166) intercedes the prohibition to ten times the distance. His reasoning is specious, but not conclusive. Five miles were sufficient for a fortified barrier.

§ Dion, l. lxxi and lxxii.

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into the form of a province. His designs were disappointed by death. This formidable league, however, the only one that appears in the two first centuries of the imperial history, was entirely dissipated, without leaving any traces behind in Germany.

Distinction
of the Ger-
man tribes.

In the course of this introductory chapter, we have confined ourselves to the general outlines of the manners of Germany, without attempting to describe or to distinguish the various tribes which filled that great country in the time of Caesar, of Tacitus, or of Ptolemy. As the ancient, or as new tribes successively present themselves in the series of this history, we shall concisely mention their origin, their situation, and their particular character. Modern nations are fixed and permanent societies, connected among themselves by laws and government, bound to their native soil by arts and agriculture. The German tribes were voluntary and fluctuating associations of soldiers, almost of savages. The same territory often changed its inhabitants in the tide of conquest and emigration. The same communities, uniting in a plan of defence or invasion, bestowed a new title on their new confederacy. The dissolution of an ancient confederacy, restored to the independent tribes their peculiar but long forgotten appellation. A victorious state often communicated its own name to a vanquished people. Sometimes crowds of volunteers flocked from all parts to the standard of a favourite leader; his camp became their country, and some circumstance of the enterprise soon gave a com-

mon denomination to the mixed multitude. The distinctions of the ferocious invaders were perpetually varied by themselves, and confounded by the astonished subjects of the Roman empire.¹

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Wars, and the administration of public affairs, Numbers, are the principal subjects of history; but the number of persons interested in these busy scenes, is very different, according to the different condition of mankind. In great monarchies, millions of obedient subjects pursue their useful occupations in peace and obscurity. The attention of the writer, as well as of the reader, is solely confined to a court, a capital, a regular army, and the districts which happen to be the occasional scene of military operations. But a state of freedom and barbarism, the season of civil commotions, or the situation of petty republics,² raises almost every member of the community into action, and consequently into notice. The irregular divisions, and the restless motions, of the people of Germany, dazzle our imagination, and seem to multiply their numbers. The profuse enumeration of kings and warriors, of armies and nations, inclines us to forget that the same objects are continually repeated under a variety of appellations, and that the most splendid appellations have been frequently lavished on the most inconsiderable objects.

¹ See an excellent dissertation on the origin and migrations of nations; in the *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xviii, p. 48-71. It is seldom that the antiquarian and the philosopher are so happily blended.

² Should we suspect that Athens contained only 21,000 citizens, and Sparta no more than 39,000? See Hume and Wallace on the number of mankind in ancient and modern times.

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The emperors Decius, Gallus, Emilianus, Valerian, and Gallienus.—The general irruption of the barbarians.—The thirty tyrants.

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X.

.....
The nature
of the sub-
ject.
A. D. 249-
268.

FROM the great secular games celebrated by Philip to the death of the emperor Gallienus, there elapsed twenty years of shame and misfortune. During that calamitous period, every instant of time was marked, every province of the Roman world was afflicted, by barbarous invaders and military tyrants, and the ruined empire seemed to approach the last and fatal moment of its dissolution. The confusion of the times, and the scarcity of authentic memorials, oppose equal difficulties to the historian, who attempts to preserve a clear and unbroken thread of narration. Surrounded with imperfect fragments, always concise, often obscure, and sometimes contradictory, he is reduced to collect, to compare, and to conjecture: and though he ought never to place his conjectures in the rank of facts, yet the knowledge of human nature, and of the sure operation of its fierce and unrestrained passions, might, on some occasions, supply the want of historical materials.

The emperor Philip.

There is not, for instance, any difficulty in conceiving, that the successive murders of so many emperors had loosened all the ties of allegiance between the prince and people; that all

the generals of Philip were disposed to imitate the example of their master; and that the caprice of armies, long since habituated to frequent and violent revolutions, might every day raise to the throne the most obscure of their fellow-soldiers. History can only add, that the rebellion against the emperor Philip broke out in the summer of the year two hundred and forty-nine, among the legions of *Mæsia*; and that a subaltern officer* named *Marinus*, was the object of their seditious choice. Philip was alarmed. He dreaded lest the treason of the *Mæsiæ*n army should prove the first spark of a general conflagration. Distracted with the consciousness of his guilt and of his danger, he communicated the intelligence to the senate. A gloomy silence prevailed, the effect of fear, and perhaps of disaffection: till at length *Decius*, one of the assembly, assuming a spirit worthy of his noble extraction, ventured to discover more intrepidity than the emperor seemed to possess. He treated the whole business with contempt, as a hasty and inconsiderate tumult, and Philip's rival as a phantom of royalty, who in a very few days would be destroyed by the same inconstancy that had created him. The speedy completion of the prophecy inspired Philip with a just esteem for so able a counsellor; and *Decius* appeared to him the only person capable of restoring peace and discipline to an army, whose tumultuous spirit did not immedi-

Services, revolt, victory, and reign of the emperor Decius, A. D. 249.

* The expression used by *Zosimus* and *Zonaras* may signify that *Marinus* commanded a century, a cohort, or a legion.

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ately subside after the murder of Marinus. Decius, who long resisted his own nomination, seems to have insinuated the danger of presenting a leader of merit, to the angry and apprehensive minds of the soldiers; and his prediction was again confirmed by the event. The legions of Mæsia forced their judge to become their accomplice. They left him only the alternative of death or the purple. His subsequent conduct, after that decisive measure, was unavoidable. He conducted or followed his army to the confines of Italy, whither Philip, collecting all his force to repel the formidable competitor whom he had raised up, advanced to meet him. The imperial troops were superior in number;^b but the rebels formed an army of veterans, commanded by an able and experienced leader. Philip was either killed in the battle, or put to death a few days afterwards at Verona. His son and associate in the empire was massacred at Rome by the prætorian guards; and the victorious Decius, with more favourable circumstances than the ambition of that age can usually plead, was universally acknowledged by the senate and provinces. It is reported, that, immediately after his reluctant acceptance of the title

^b His birth at Buthala, a little village in Pannonia (Eutrop. ix. Victor in Caesarib. epitom.), seems to contradict, unless it was merely accidental, his supposed descent from the Decii. Six hundred years had bestowed nobility on the Decii; but at the commencement of that period, they were only plebeians of merit, and among the first who shared the consulship with the haughty patricians. *Plebeius Deciorum animas*, &c. Juvenal, Sat. viii, 254. See the spirited speech of Decius, in Livy, x, 9, 10.

of Augustus, he had assured Philip by a private message, of his innocence and loyalty, solemnly protesting, that on his arrival in Italy, he would resign the imperial ornaments, and return to the condition of an obedient subject. His professions might be sincere; but in the situation where fortune had placed him, it was scarcely possible that he could either forgive or be forgiven.*

The emperor Decius had employed a few months in the works of peace and the administration of justice, when he was summoned to the banks of the Danube by the invasion of the *Goths*. This is the first considerable occasion in which history mentions that great people, who afterwards broke the Roman power, sacked the capitol, and reigned in Gaul, Spain, and Italy. So memorable was the part which they acted in the subversion of the Western empire, that the name of *Goths* is frequently, but improperly, used as a general appellation of rude and war-like barbarism.

In the beginning of the sixth century, and after the conquest of Italy, the *Goths*, in possession of present greatness, very naturally indulged themselves in the prospect of past and of future glory. They wished to preserve the memory of their ancestors, and to transmit to posterity their own achievements. The principal minister of the court of Ravenna, the learned Cassiodorus, gratified the inclination of the conquerors in a Gothic history, which consisted of twelve books, now reduced to

He marches against the *Goths*, A. D. 250.

Origin of the *Goths* from Scandinavia.

* Zosimus, l. i, p. 20. Zonaras, l. xii, p. 624. Edit. Louvre.

CHAP. the imperfect abridgment of Jornandes.^d These
 X. writers passed with the most artful conciseness
 over the misfortunes of the nation, celebrated its
 successful valour, and adorned the triumph with
 many Asiatic trophies, that more properly be-
 longed to the people of Scythia. On the faith of
 ancient songs, the uncertain, but the only me-
 morials of barbarians, they deduced the first
 origin of the Goths from the vast island, or pe-
 ninsula, of Scandinavia.^e That extreme country
 of the north was not unknown to the conquerors
 of Italy: the ties of ancient consanguinity had
 been strengthened by recent offices of friendship;
 and a Scandinavian king had cheerfully abdicated
 his savage greatness, that he might pass the re-
 mainder of his days in the peaceful and polished
 court of Ravenna.^f Many vestiges, which can-
 not be ascribed to the arts of popular vanity,
 attest the ancient residence of the Goths in the
 countries beyond the Baltic. From the time
 of the geographer Ptolemy, the southern part of
 Sweden seems to have continued in the possession
 of the less enterprising remnant of the nation, and
 a large territory is even at present divided into
 east and west Gothland. During the middle ages
 (from the ninth to the twelfth century), whilst
 christianity was advancing with a slow progress
 into the north, the Goths and the Swedes com-

^d See the prefaces of Cassiodorus and Jornandes. It is surprising that the latter should be omitted in the excellent edition published by Grotius, of the Gothic writers.

^e On the authority of Aethelwulf, Jornandes quotes some old Gothic chronicles in verse. *De Reb. Geticis*, c. 4.

^f Jornandes, c. 3.

posed two distinct and sometimes hostile members of the same monarchy.^a The latter of these two names has prevailed without extinguishing the former. The Swedes, who might well be satisfied with their own fame in arms, have in every age claimed the kindred glory of the Goths. In a moment of discontent against the court of Rome, Charles the Twelfth insinuated, that his victorious troops were not degenerated from their brave ancestors, who had already subdued the mistress of the world.^b

Till the end of the eleventh century, a celebrated temple subsisted at Upsal, the most considerable town of the Swedes and Goths. It was enriched with the gold which the Scandinavians had acquired in their piratical adventures, and sanctified by the uncouth representations of the three principal deities, the god of war, the goddess of generation, and the god of thunder. In the general festival, that was solemnized every ninth year, nine animals of every species (without excepting the human) were sacrificed, and their bleeding bodies suspended in the sacred grove adjacent to the temple.^c The only traces

Religion of
the Goths.

^a See in the Prolegomena of Grotius some large extracts from Adam of Bremen, and Saxo-Græmaticus. The former wrote in the year 1077, the latter flourished about the year 1200.

^b Voltaire, *Histoire de Charles XII.* l. iii. When the Austrians desired the aid of the court of Rome against Gustavus Adolphus, they always represented that conqueror as the lineal successor of Alaric. Harle's *History of Gustavus*, vol. ii, p. 123.

^c See Adam of Bremen in Grotii Prolegomenis, p. li. The temple of Upsal was destroyed by Ingo king of Sweden, who began his reign

CHAP. that now subsist of this barbaric superstition are
X. contained in the Edda, a system of mythology,
compiled in Iceland about the thirteenth century,
and studied by the learned of Denmark and Sweden, as the most valuable remains of their ancient traditions.

Institutions and death of Odin.

Notwithstanding the mysterious obscurity of the Edda, we can easily distinguish two persons confounded under the name of Odin; the god of war, and the great legislator of Scandinavia. The latter, the Mahomet of the north, instituted a religion adapted to the climate and to the people. Numerous tribes on either side of the Baltic were subdued by the invincible valour of Odin, by his persuasive eloquence, and by the fame, which he acquired, of a most skilful magician. The faith that he had propagated during a long and prosperous life, he confirmed by a voluntary death. Apprehensive of the ignominious approach of disease and infirmity, he resolved to expire as became a warrior. In a solemn assembly of the Swedes and Goths, he wounded himself in nine mortal places, hastening away (as he asserted with his dying voice) to prepare the feast of heroes in the palace of the god of war.*

Agreeable but uncertain hypothesis concerning Odin.

The native and proper habitation of Odin is distinguished by the appellation of As-gard. The happy resemblance of that name with As-burg,

in the year 1073, and about fourscore years afterwards a christian cathedral was erected on its ruins. See Dalin's History of Sweden, in the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*.

* Mallet, *Introduction à l'Histoire du Danemarque*.

or As-of,¹ words of a singular signification, has CHAR.
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.....
given rise to an historical system of so pleasing a
contexture, that we could almost wish to persuade
ourselves of its truth. It is supposed that Odin
was the chief of a tribe of barbarians which dwelt
on the banks of the lake Mæotis, till the fall of
Mithridates and the arms of Pompey menaced
the north with servitude. That Odin, yielding
with indignant fury to a power which he was un-
able to resist, conducted his tribe from the fron-
tiers of the Asiatic Sarmatia into Sweden, with
the great design of forming, in that inaccessible re-
treat of freedom, a religion and a people, which,
in some remote age, might be subservient to his
immortal revenge; when his invincible Goths,
armed with martial fanaticism, should issue in
numerous swarms from the neighbourhood of the
polar circle, to chastise the oppressors of man-
kind.²

If so many successive generations of Goths were
capable of preserving a faint tradition of their
Scandinavian origin, we must not expect, from Emigra-
tion of the
Goths from
Scandina-
via into
Prussia.

¹ Mallet, c. iv, p. 65, has collected from Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy, and Stephanus Byzantinus, the vestiges of such a city and people.

² This wonderful expedition of Odin, which, by deducing the enmity of the Goths and Romans from so memorable a cause, might supply the noble groundwork of an epic poem, cannot safely be received as authentic history. According to the obvious sense of the Edda, and the interpretation of the most skilful critics, As-gard, instead of denoting a real city of the Asiatic Sarmatia, is the fictitious appellation of the mystic abode of the gods, the *Olympus* of Scandinavia, from whence the prophet was supposed to descend, when he announced his new religion to the Gothic nations, who were already seated in the southern parts of Sweden.

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such unlettered barbarians, any distinct account of the time and circumstances of their emigration. To cross the Baltic was an easy and natural attempt. The inhabitants of Sweden were masters of a sufficient number of large vessels, with oars,^a and the distance is little more than one hundred miles from Carlscroon to the nearest ports of Pomerania and Prussia. Here, at length, we land on firm and historic ground. At least as early as the christian era,^b and as late as the age of the Antonines,^c the Goths were established towards the mouth of the Vistula, and in that fertile province where the commercial cities of Thorn, Elbing, Koningsberg, and Dantzick, were long afterwards founded.^d Westward of the Goths, the numerous tribes of the Vandals were spread along the banks of the Oder, and the sea-coast of Pomerania and Mecklenburg. A striking resemblance of manners, complexion, religion, and language, seemed to indicate that the Vandals and the Goths were originally one great people.^e The latter appear to have been sub-

^a Tacit. Germania, c. 44.

^b Tacit. Annal. ii, 62. If we could yield a firm assent to the navigations of Pytheas of Marseilles, we must allow that the Goths had passed the Baltic at least three hundred years before Christ.

^c Ptolemy, l. ii.

^d By the German colonies, who followed the arms of the Teutonic knights. The conquest and conversion of Prussia were completed by those adventurers in the thirteenth century.

^e Pliny (Hist. Natur. iv, 14) and Procopius (in Bell. Vandal. l. i, c. 1) agree in this opinion. They lived in distant ages, and possessed different means of investigating the truth.

divided into Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Gepidæ.¹ CHAP.
 The distinction among the Vandals was more
 strongly marked by the independent names of
 Heruli, Burgundians, Lombards, and a variety
 of other petty states, many of which, in a future
 age, expanded themselves into powerful monar-
 chies.

In the age of the Antonines, the Goths were
 still seated in Prussia. About the reign of Alex-
 ander Severus, the Roman province of Dacia had
 already experienced their proximity by frequent
 and destructive inroads.¹ In this interval, there-
 fore, of about seventy years, we must place the
 second migration of the Goths from the Baltic to
 the Euxine; but the cause that produced it lies
 concealed among the various motives which ac-
 tuate the conduct of unsettled barbarians. Either
 a pestilence, or a famine, a victory, or a defeat,
 an oracle of the gods, or the eloquence of a
 daring leader, were sufficient to impel the Gothic
 arms on the milder climates of the south. Be-
 sides the influence of a martial religion, the
 numbers and spirit of the Goths were equal to

¹ The *Ostro* and *Frisi*, the eastern and western Goths, obtained those denominations from their original seats in Scandinavia. In all their future marches and settlements, they preserved, with their names, the same relative situation. When they first departed from Sweden, the infant colony was contained in three vessels. The third being a heavy sailer, lagged behind, and the crew, which afterwards swelled into a nation, received, from that circumstance, the appellation of Gepidæ, or *loiterers*. Jornandes, c. 17.

² See a fragment of Peter Patricius in the *Excerpta Legationum*; and with regard to its probable date, see Tillemont, *Hist. des Emperours*, tom. iii, p. 346.

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X.

THE GOTHIC NATION

the most dangerous adventures. The use of round bucklers and short swords rendered them formidable in a close engagement; the manly obedience which they yielded to hereditary kings, gave uncommon union and stability to their councils;¹ and the renowned Amala, the hero of that age, and the tenth ancestor of Theodoric, king of Italy, enforced, by the ascendant of personal merit, the prerogative of his birth, which he derived from the *ases*, or demi-gods of the Gothic nation.²

The Gothic nation increases in its march.

The fame of a great enterprise excited the bravest warriors from all the Vandalic states of Germany, many of whom are seen a few years afterwards combating under the common standard of the Goths.³ The first motions of the emigrants carried them to the banks of the Prypce, a river universally conceived by the ancients to be the southern branch of the Borysthenes.⁴ The windings of that great stream through the plains of Poland and Russia gave a direction to their line of march, and a constant supply of fresh water and pasturage to their numerous herds of

¹ *Omnia harum gentium insigne, rotunda scuta, breves gladii, et erga reges obsequium.* Tacit. Germania, c. 43. The Goths probably acquired their iron by the commerce of amber.

² Jornandes, c. 13, 24.

³ The Heruli, and the Uregundi or Burgundi, are particularly mentioned. See Mascon's History of the Germans, l. v. A passage in the Augustan history, p. 28, seems to allude to this great emigration. The Marcomannic war was partly occasioned by the pressure of barbarous tribes, who fled before the arms of more northern barbarians.

⁴ D'Anville, *Géographie Ancienne*, and the third part of his incomparable map of Europe.

cattle. - They followed the unknown course of the river, confident in their valour, and careless of whatever power might oppose their progress. The Bastarnæ and the Venedi were the first who presented themselves; and the flower of their youth, either from choice or compulsion, increased the Gothic army. The Bastarnæ dwelt on the northern side of the Carpathian mountains: the immense tract of land that separated the Bastarnæ from the savages of Finland was possessed, or rather wasted, by the Venedi:^a we have some reason to believe that the first of these nations, which distinguished itself in the Macedonian war,^b and was afterwards divided into the formidable tribes of the Peucini, the Borani, the Carpi, &c. derived its origin from the Germans. With better authority, a Sarmatian extraction may be assigned to the Venedi, who rendered themselves so famous in the middle ages.^c But the confusion of blood and manners on that doubtful frontier often perplexed the most accurate observers.^d As the Goths advanced near the Euxine sea, they encountered a purer race of Sarmatians, the Jazyges, the Alani, and the Roxolani; and they were probably the first Germans who saw the mouths of the Borysthenes, and of the Tanais. If we inquire into the cha-

Distinction
of Germans
and Sarmatians.

^a Tacit. Germania, c. 46.

^b Cluver. Germ. Antiqua, l. iii, c. 43.

^c The Venedi, the Slavi, and the Antes, were the three great tribes of the same people. Jornandes, c. 24.

^d Tacitus most assuredly deserves that title, and even his cautious suspense is a proof of his diligent inquiries.

CHAP. racteristic marks of the people of Germany and of
 X. Sarmatia, we shall discover that those two great
 portions of human kind were principally distinguished by fixed huts or moveable tents, by a close dress, or flowing garments, by the marriage of one or of several wives, by a military force, consisting, for the most part, either of infantry or cavalry; and, above all, by the use of the Teutonic, or of the Slavonian language, the last of which has been diffused, by conquest, from the confines of Italy to the neighbourhood of Japan.

Description of the
 Ukraine.

The Goths were now in possession of the Ukraine, a country of considerable extent and uncommon fertility, intersected with navigable rivers, which from either side discharge themselves into the Borysthenes, and interspersed with large and lofty forests of oaks. The plenty of game and fish, the innumerable bee-hives deposited in the hollow of old trees, and in the cavities of rocks, and forming, even in that rude age, a valuable branch of commerce, the size of the cattle, the temperature of the air, the aptness of the soil for every species of grain, and the luxuriance of the vegetation, all displayed the liberality of nature, and tempted the industry of man.* But the Goths withstood all these temptations, and still adhered to a life of idleness, of poverty, and of rapine.

* *Genealogical History of the Tartars*, p. 593. Mr. Bell (vol. ii, p. 379) traverses the Ukraine in his journey from Petersburg to Constantinople. The modern face of the country is a just representation of the ancient, since, in the hands of the Cossacks, it still remains in a state of nature.

The Scythian hordes, which, towards the east, CHAP. IX.
bordered on the new settlements of the Goths, The Goths invade the Roman provinces.
presented nothing to their arms, except the doubtful chance of an unprofitable victory. But the prospect of the Roman territories was far more alluring; and the fields of Dacia were covered with rich harvests, sown by the hands of an industrious, and exposed to be gathered by those of a warlike, people. It is probable, that the conquests of Trajan, maintained by his successors, less for any real advantage, than for ideal dignity, had contributed to weaken the empire on that side. The new and unsettled province of Dacia was neither strong enough to resist, nor rich enough to satiate, the rapaciousness of the barbarians. As long as the remote banks of the Niester were considered as the boundary of the Roman power, the fortifications of the Lower Danube were more carelessly guarded, and the inhabitants of *Mæsia* lived in supine security, fondly conceiving themselves at an inaccessible distance from any barbarian invaders. The irruptions of the Goths, under the reign of Philip, fatally convinced them of their mistake. The king, or leader of that fierce nation, traversed with contempt the province of Dacia, and passed both the Niester and the Danube without encountering any opposition capable of retarding his progress. The relaxed discipline of the Roman troops betrayed the most important posts, where they were stationed, and the fear of deserved punishment induced great numbers of them to enlist

CHAP. under the Gothic standard. The various multi-
 N. tude of barbarians appeared, at length, under the
 walls of Marcianopolis, a city built by Trajan in
 honour of his sister, and at that time the capital
 of the second *Mæsia*.⁴ The inhabitants consent-
 ed to ransom their lives and property, by the
 payment of a large sum of money, and the inva-
 ders retreated back into their deserts, animated
 rather than satisfied, with the first success of their
 arms against an opulent but feeble country. In-
 telligence was soon transmitted to the emperor
 Decius, that Cniva, king of the Goths, had pass-
 ed the Danube a second time, with more consi-
 derable forces; that his numerous detachments
 scattered devastation over the province of *Mæsia*,
 whilst the main body of the army, consisting of
 seventy thousand Germans and Sarmatians, a
 force equal to the most daring achievements, re-
 quired the presence of the Roman monarch, and
 the exertion of his military power.

Various
 events of
 the Gothic
 war
 a. n. 250.

Decius found the Goths engaged before Ni-
 copolis, on the Jatrus, one of the many monu-
 ments of Trajan's victories.⁵ On his approach
 they raised the siege, but with a design only of
 marching away to a conquest of greater import-

⁴ In the sixteenth chapter of Jornandes, instead of *secundo Mæ-
 sianum*, we may venture to substitute *secundam*, the second *Mæsia*, of
 which Marcianopolis was certainly the capital (see Hierocles de
 Provinciis, and Wesseling ad locum, p. 636, Itinerar.). It is sur-
 prising how this palpable error of the scribe could escape the judicious
 correction of Grotius.

⁵ The place is still called Nicop. The little stream, on whose
 banks it stood, falls into the Danube. D'Anville, *Géographie An-
 cienne*, tom. I, p. 307.

ance, the siege of Philippopolis, a city of Thrace, CHAP. X.
 founded by the father of Alexander, near the foot
 of mount Hæmus.^a Decius followed them through
 a difficult country, and by forced marches; but
 when he imagined himself at a considerable distance
 from the rear of the Goths, Cniva turned
 with rapid fury on his pursuers. The camp of
 the Romans was surprised and pillaged, and, for
 the first time, their emperor fled in disorder
 before a troop of half armed barbarians. After a
 long resistance, Philippopolis, destitute of succour,
 was taken by storm. A hundred thousand
 persons are reported to have been massacred in
 the sack of that great city.^b Many prisoners of
 consequence became a valuable accession to the
 spoil; and Priscus, a brother of the late emperor
 Philip, blushed not to assume the purple under
 the protection of the barbarous enemies of
 Rome.^c The time, however, consumed in
 that tedious siege, enabled Decius to revive the
 courage, restore the discipline, and recruit the
 numbers of his troops. He intercepted several
 parties of Carpi, and other Germans, who were
 hastening to share the victory of their country-
 men,^d intrusted the passes of the mountains to
 officers of approved valour and fidelity,^e repaired

^a Stephan. Byzant. de Urbibus, p. 740. Wesseling Itinerar. p. 136. Zonares, by an odd mistake, ascribes the foundation of Philippopolis to the immediate predecessor of Decius.

^b Ammian. xxxi, 5.

^c Aurel. Victor, c. 15.

^d Victorius carpiæ, on some medals of Decius, insinuate these advantages.

^e Claudius (who afterwards reigned with so much glory) was posted in the pass of Thermopylæ with 200 Dardaniæ, 200 heavy and



CHAP. and strengthened the fortifications of the Danube,
 X. and exerted his utmost vigilance to oppose either the progress or the retreat of the Goths. Encouraged by the return of fortune, he anxiously waited for an opportunity to retrieve, by a great and decisive blow, his own glory, and that of the Roman arms."

Decius receives the office of censor in the person of Valerian.

At the same time when Decius was struggling with the violence of the tempest, his mind, calm and deliberate amidst the tumult of war, investigated the more general causes, that, since the age of the Antonines, had so impetuously urged the decline of the Roman greatness. He soon discovered that it was impossible to replace that greatness on a permanent basis, without restoring public virtue, ancient principles and manners, and the oppressed majesty of the laws. To execute this noble but arduous design, he first resolved to revive the obsolete office of censor; an office, which, as long as it had subsisted in its pristine integrity, had so much contributed to the perpetuity of the state,* till it was usurped and gradually neglected

and 160 light horse, 60 Cretan archers, and 1000 well armed recruits. See an original letter from the emperor to his officer, in the Augustan history, p. 200.

* Jornandes, c. 16-18. Zosimus, l. 1, p. 22. In the general account of this war, it is easy to discover the opposite prejudices of the Gothic and the Grecian writer. In carelessness alone they are alike.

* Montesquieu, *Grandeur et Decadence des Romains*, c. viii. He illustrates the nature and use of the censorship with his usual ingenuity, and with uncommon precision.

by the Cæsars.^p Conscious that the favour of CHAP.
X.
~~~~~  
the sovereign may confer power, but that the  
esteem of the people can alone bestow authority,  
he submitted the choice of the censor to the un-  
biassed voice of the senate. By their unanimous A. D. 251.  
27th Octo-  
ber.  
votes, or rather acclamations, Valerian, who  
was afterwards emperor, and who then served  
with distinction in the army of Decius, was de-  
clared the most worthy of that exalted honour.  
As soon as the decree of the senate was trans-  
mitted to the emperor, he assembled a great  
council in his camp, and, before the investiture  
of the censor elect, he apprised him of the  
difficulty and importance of his great office.  
“Happy Valerian,” said the prince to his dis-  
tinguished subject, “happy in the general ap-  
probation of the senate and of the Roman re-  
public! Accept the censorship of mankind;  
and judge of our manners. You will select  
those who deserve to continue members of the  
senate; you will restore the equestrian order  
to its ancient splendour; you will improve the  
revenue, yet moderate the public burdens.  
You will distinguish into regular classes the  
various and infinite multitude of citizens, and  
accurately review the military strength, the  
wealth, the virtue, and the resources of Rome.  
Your decisions shall obtain the force of laws.  
The army, the palace, the ministers of justice,

<sup>p</sup> Vespasian and Titus were the last censors (Pliny Hist. Natur. vii. 49. Censorinus de Die Natali). The modesty of Trajan refused an honour which he deserved, and his example became a law to the Antonines. See Pliny's Panegyric, c. 45 and 60.



CHAP.  
X.

“ and the great officers of the empire are all  
“ subject to your tribunal. None are exempt-  
“ ed, excepting only the ordinary consuls,<sup>3</sup> the  
“ prefect of the city, the king of the sacrifices,  
“ and (as long as she preserves her chastity in-  
“ violate) the eldest of the vestal virgins. Even  
“ these few, who may not dread the severity,  
“ will anxiously solicit the esteem, of the Ro-  
“ man censor.”

The design  
impracti-  
cable and  
without  
effect.

A magistrate, invested with such extensive powers, would have appeared not so much the minister as the colleague of his sovereign.<sup>4</sup> Valerian justly dreaded an elevation so full of envy and of suspicion. He modestly urged the alarming greatness of the trust, his own insufficiency, and the incurable corruption of the times. He artfully insinuated, that the office of censor was inseparable from the imperial dignity, and that the feeble hands of a subject were unequal to the support of such an immense weight of cares and of power.<sup>5</sup> The approaching event of war soon put an end to the prosecution of a project so specious but so impracticable; and whilst it preserved Valerian from the danger, saved the emperor Decius from the disappointment which would most probably have attended

<sup>3</sup> Yet, in spite of this exemption, Pompey appeared before that tribunal during his consulship. The occasion indeed was equally singular and honourable. Plutarch in Pomp. p. 630.

<sup>4</sup> See the original speech, in the Augustan Hist. p. 173, 174.

<sup>5</sup> This transaction might deceive Zonaras, who supposes that Valerian was actually declared the colleague of Decius, l. xii, p. 625.

<sup>6</sup> Hist. August. p. 174. The emperor's reply is omitted.

it. A censor may maintain, he can never restore, CHAP.  
X.  
the morals of a state. It is impossible for such  
a magistrate to exert his authority with benefit,  
or even with effect, unless he is supported by a  
quick sense of honour and virtue in the minds of  
the people; by a decent reverence for the public  
opinion, and by a train of useful prejudices com-  
bating on the side of national manners. In a  
period when these principles are annihilated, the  
censorial jurisdiction must either sink into empty  
pageantry, or be converted into a partial instru-  
ment of vexatious oppression.\* It was easier to  
vanquish the Goths, than to eradicate the public  
vices; yet, even in the first of these enterprises,  
Decius lost his army and his life.

The Goths were now on every side surrounded  
and pursued by the Roman arms. The flower  
of their troops had perished in the long siege of  
Philippopolis, and the exhausted country could  
no longer afford subsistence for the remaining  
multitude of licentious barbarians. Reduced to  
this extremity, the Goths would gladly have  
purchased, by the surrender of all their booty  
and prisoners, the permission of an undisturbed  
retreat. But the emperor, confident of victory,  
and resolving, by the chastisement of these in-  
vaders, to strike a salutary terror into the na-  
tions of the north, refused to listen to any  
terms of accommodation. The high spirited bar-  
barians preferred death to slavery. An obscure

Defeat and  
death of  
Decius and  
his son.

\* Such as the attempts of Augustus towards a reformation of man-  
ners. Tacit. Annal. iii, 24.

CHAP.  
X.

town of Mæsia, called Forum Terebronii,\* was the scene of the battle. The Gothic army was drawn up in three lines, and, either from choice or accident, the front of the third line was covered by a morass. In the beginning of the action, the son of Decius, a youth of the fairest hopes, and already associated to the honours of the purple, was slain by an arrow, in the sight of his afflicted father; who, summoning all his fortitude, admonished the dismayed troops, that the loss of a single soldier was of little importance to the republic.† The conflict was terrible; it was the combat of despair against grief and rage. The first line of the Goths at length gave way in disorder; the second, advancing to sustain it, shared its fate; and the third only remained entire, prepared to dispute the passage of the morass, which was imprudently attempted by the presumption of the enemy. “Here the  
 “fortune of the day turned, and all things be-  
 “came adverse to the Romans: the place deep  
 “with ooze, sinking under those who stood, slip-  
 “pery to such as advanced; their armour heavy,  
 “the waters deep; nor could they wield, in that  
 “uneasy situation, their weighty javelins. The  
 “barbarians, on the contrary, were enured to  
 “encounters in the bogs, their persons tall,  
 “their spears long, such as could wound at a

\* Tillemont, *Histoire des Empereurs*, tom. iii. p. 598. As Zosimus and some of his followers mistake the Danube for the Tanais, they place the field of battle in the plains of Scythia.

† Aurelius Victor allows two distinct actions for the deaths of the two Decii; but I have preferred the account of Jornandes.



"distance."<sup>a</sup> In this morass the Roman army, after an ineffectual struggle, was irrecoverably lost; nor could the body of the emperor ever be found.<sup>a</sup> Such was the fate of Decius, in the fiftieth year of his age; an accomplished prince, active in war, and affable in peace;<sup>b</sup> who, together with his son, has deserved to be compared, both in life and death, with the brightest examples of ancient virtue.<sup>c</sup>

This fatal blow humbled, for a very little time, the insolence of the legions. They appear to have patiently expected, and submissively obeyed, the decree of the senate which regulated the succession to the throne. From a just regard for the memory of Decius, the imperial title was conferred on Hostilianus, his only surviving son; but an equal rank, with more effectual power, was granted to Gallus, whose experience and ability seemed equal to the great trust of guardian to the young prince and the distressed empire.<sup>d</sup> The first care of the new emperor was to deliver the Illyrian provinces

CHAP.  
X.

Election of  
Gallus,  
A. D. 251.  
December.

<sup>a</sup> I have ventured to copy from Tacitus (*Annal.* i, 64) the picture of a similar engagement between a Roman army and a German tribe.

<sup>b</sup> Jornandes, c. 18. Zosimus, l. i, p. 22. Zonaras, l. xii, p. 627. Aurelius Victor.

<sup>c</sup> The Decii were killed before the end of the year two hundred and fifty-one, since the new princes took possession of the consulship on the ensuing calends of January.

<sup>d</sup> Hist. August. p. 293, gives them a very honourable place among the small number of good emperors who reigned between Augustus and Diocletian.

<sup>e</sup> Hæc ubi patres comperere . . . . . decernunt. Victor in Cæsaribus.

CHAP. from the intolerable weight of the victorious  
 X. Goths. He consented to leave in their hands  
 A. D. 252. the rich fruits of their invasion, an immense  
 booty, and, what was still more disgraceful, a  
 great number of prisoners of the highest merit  
 and quality. He plentifully supplied their camp  
 with every conveniency that could assuage their  
 angry spirits, or facilitate their so much wished-  
 for departure; and he even promised to pay them  
 annually a large sum of gold, on condition they  
 should never afterwards infest the Roman terri-  
 tories by their incursions.\*

Retreat of  
 the Goths.

Gallus  
 purchases  
 peace by  
 the pay-  
 ment of an  
 annual tri-  
 bute.

In the age of the Scipios, the most opulent  
 kings of the earth, who courted the protection  
 of the victorious commonwealth, were gratified  
 with such trifling presents as could only derive a  
 value from the hand that bestowed them; an  
 ivory chair, a coarse garment of purple, an in-  
 considerable piece of plate, or a quantity of cop-  
 per coin. When the wealth of nations had cen-  
 tered in Rome, the emperors displayed their great-  
 ness, and even their policy, by the regular exer-  
 cise of a steady and moderate liberality towards  
 the allies of the state. They relieved the poverty  
 of the barbarians, honoured their merit, and  
 recompensed their fidelity. These voluntary  
 marks of bounty were understood to flow, not  
 from the fears, but merely from the generosity

\* Zonaras, l. xii. p. 628.

\* A *sella*, a toga, and a golden *petra* of five pounds weight, were  
 accepted with joy and gratitude by the wealthy king of Egypt. (Livy,  
 xxvii. 4). Qui *millia aëria*, a weight of copper, in value about  
 eighteen pounds sterling, was the usual present made to foreign am-  
 bassadors (Liv. xxxi. 9).

for the gratitude of the Romans; and whilst presents and subsidies were liberally distributed among friends and suppliants, they were sternly refused to such as claimed them as a debt.\* But this stipulation of an annual payment to a victorious enemy, appeared without disguise in the light of an ignominious tribute; the minds of the Romans were not yet accustomed to accept such unequal laws from a tribe of barbarians; and the prince, who by a necessary concession had probably saved his country, became the object of the general contempt and aversion. The death of Hostilianus, though it happened in the midst of a raging pestilence, was interpreted as the personal crime of Gallus;† and even the defeat of the late emperor was ascribed by the voice of suspicion to the perfidious counsels of his hated successor.‡ The tranquillity which the empire enjoyed during the first year of his administration§ served rather to inflame than to appease the public discontent; and, as soon as the apprehensions of war were removed, the infamy of the peace was more deeply and more sensibly felt.

\* See the firmness of a Roman general so late as the time of Alexander Severus, in the *Excerpta Legationum*, p. 25, edit. Louvre.

† For the plague, see Jornandes, c. 19, and Victor in Caesari-  
bus.

‡ These improbable accusations are alleged by Zosimus, l. 1, p. 23, 24.

§ Jornandes, c. 19. The Gothic writer at least observed the peace which his victorious countrymen had sworn to Gallus.



## CHAP.

## X.

~~~~~  
 Victory
 and revolt
 of Æmilian-
 us,
 A. D. 253.

But the Romans were irritated to a still higher degree, when they discovered that they had not even secured their repose, though at the expence of their honour. The dangerous secret of the wealth and weakness of the empire had been revealed to the world. New swarms of barbarians, encouraged by the success, and not conceiving themselves bound by the obligation, of their brethren, spread devastation through the Illyrian provinces, and terror as far as the gates of Rome. The defence of the monarchy, which seemed abandoned by the pusillanimous emperor, was assumed by Æmilianus, governor of Pannonia and Mæsia; who rallied the scattered forces, and revived the fainting spirits of the troops. The barbarians were unexpectedly attacked, routed, chased, and pursued beyond the Danube. The victorious leader distributed as a donative the money collected for the tribute, and the acclamations of the soldiers proclaimed him emperor on the field of battle.¹ Gallus, who, careless of the general welfare, indulged himself in the pleasures of Italy, was almost in the same instant informed of the success, of the revolt, and of the rapid approach of his aspiring lieutenant. He advanced to meet him as far as the plains of Spoleto. When the armies came in sight of each other, the soldiers of Gallus compared the ignominious conduct of their sovereign with the glory of his rival. They admired the valour of Æmilianus; they were attracted by his liberality,

¹ Zosimus, l. i, p. 25, 26.

for he offered a considerable increase of pay to all deserters.^m The murder of Gallus, and of his son Volusianus, put an end to the civil war; and the senate gave a legal sanction to the rights of conquest. The letters of Æmilianus to that assembly displayed a mixture of moderation and vanity. He assured them, that he should resign to their wisdom the civil administration; and, contenting himself with the quality of their general, would in a short time assert the glory of Rome, and deliver the empire from all the barbarians both of the north and of the east.ⁿ His pride was flattered by the applause of the senate; and medals are still extant, representing him with the name and attributes of Hercules the victor, and Mars the avenger.^o

If the new monarch possessed the abilities, he wanted the time necessary to fulfil these splendid promises. Less than four months intervened between his victory and his fall.^p He had vanquished Gallus; he sunk under the weight of a competitor more formidable than Gallus. That unfortunate prince had sent Valerian, already distinguished by the honourable title of censor, to bring the legions of Gaul and Germany^q to his aid. Valerian executed that commission with zeal and fidelity; and as he arrived too late to

CHAP.
X.

Gallus abandoned and slain.
A. D. 253.
May.

Valerian revenges the death of Gallus, and is acknowledged emperor.

^m Victor in Cæsariibus.

ⁿ Zonaras, l. xii, p. 678.

^o Banduri Numismata, p. 54.

^p Eutropius, l. ix, c. 6, says tertio mense. Eusebius omits this emperor.

^q Zosimus, l. i, p. 28. Eutropius and Victor station Valerian's army in Rætia.

CHAP. save his sovereign, he resolved to revenge him.

X.

The troops of Æmilianus, who still lay encamped in the plains of Spoleto, were awed by the sanctity of his character, but much more by the superior strength of his army; and as they were now become as incapable of personal attachment as they had always been of constitutional principle, they readily imbrued their hands in the blood of a prince who so lately had been the object of their partial choice. The guilt was theirs, but the advantage of it was Valerian's; who obtained the possession of the throne by the means indeed of a civil war, but with a degree of innocence singular in that age of revolutions; since he owed neither gratitude nor allegiance to his predecessor, whom he dethroned.

A. D. 253.
August.

Character
of Valerian.

Valerian was about sixty years of age^{*} when he was invested with the purple, not by the caprice of the populace, or the clamours of the army, but by the unanimous voice of the Roman world. In his gradual ascent through the honours of the state, he had deserved the favour of virtuous princes, and had declared himself the enemy of tyrants.[†] His noble birth, his mild but unblemished manners, his learning, prudence, and experience, were revered by the senate and people; and if mankind (according to the observation of an ancient writer) had been

^{*} He was about seventy at the time of his accession, or, as it is more probable, of his death. Hist. August. p. 173. Tillemont, Hist. de Empereurs, tom. iii, p. 893, note 1.

[†] *Inimicus Tyrannorum.* Hist. August. p. 173. In the glorious struggle of the senate against Maximian, Valerian acted a very spirited part. Hist. August. p. 156.

left at liberty to choose a master, their choice CHAP. X. would most assuredly have fallen on Valerian.^{*} Perhaps the merit of this emperor was inadequate to his reputation; perhaps his abilities, or at least his spirit, were affected by the languor and coldness of old age. The consciousness of his decline engaged him to share the throne with a younger and more active associate;[†] the emergency of the times demanded a general no less than a prince; and the experience of the Roman censor might have directed him where to bestow the imperial purple, as the reward of military merit. But instead of making a judicious choice, which would have confirmed his reign, and endeared his memory, Valerian, consulting only the dictates of affection or vanity, immediately invested with the supreme honours his son Gallienus, a youth whose effeminate vices had been hitherto concealed by the obscurity of a private station. The joint government of the father and the son subsisted about seven, and the sole administration of Gallienus continued about eight years. But the whole period was one uninterrupted series of confusion and calamity. As the Roman empire was at the same time, and on every side, attacked by the blind fury of foreign invaders, and the wild ambition of do-

General misfortunes of the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus. A. D. 253-268.

^{*} According to the distinction of Victor, he seems to have received the title of *imperator* from the army, and that of *Augustus* from the senate.

[†] From Victor, and from the medals, Tillemont (tom. iii. p. 710) very justly infers, that Gallienus was associated to the empire about the month of August of the year 253.

CHAP.

X.

Inroads of
the barba-
rians.

Origin and
confedera-
cy of the
Franks.

mestic usurpers, we shall consult order and perspicuity, by pursuing, not so much the doubtful arrangement of dates, as the more natural distribution of subjects. The most dangerous enemies of Rome, during the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, were, 1. The Franks. 2. The Alemanni. 3. The Goths; and, 4. The Persians. Under these general appellations, we may comprehend the adventurers of less considerable tribes, whose obscure and uncouth names would only serve to oppress the memory, and perplex the attention of the reader.

1. As the posterity of the Franks compose one of the greatest and most enlightened nations of Europe, the powers of learning and ingenuity have been exhausted in the discovery of their unlettered ancestors. To the tales of credulity have succeeded the systems of fancy. Every passage has been sifted; every spot has been surveyed, that might possibly reveal some faint traces of their origin. It has been supposed that Pannonia,^{*} that Gaul, that the northern parts of Germany,[†] gave birth to that celebrated colony of warriors. At length the most rational critics, rejecting the fictitious emigrations of ideal conquerors, have acquiesced in a sentiment whose simplicity persuades us of its

^{*} Various systems have been formed to explain a difficult passage in Gregory of Tours, l. ii, c. 9.

[†] The Geographer of Ravenna, i, 11, by mentioning *Mœringonia* on the confines of Denmark, as the ancient seat of the Franks, gave birth to an ingenious system of Leibnitz.

truth.* They suppose that about the year two hundred and forty,^a a new confederacy was formed under the name of Franks, by the old inhabitants of the Lower Rhine and the Weser. The present circle of Westphalia, the landgraviate of Hesse, and the duchies of Brunswick and Lunenburg, were the ancient seat of the Chauci, who, in their inaccessible morasses, defied the Roman arms;^b of the Cherusci, proud of the fame of Arminius; of the Catti, formidable by their firm and intrepid infantry; and of several other tribes of inferior power and renown.^c The love of liberty was the ruling passion of these Germans; the enjoyment of it their best treasure; the word that expressed that enjoyment, the most pleasing to their ear. They deserved, they assumed, they maintained the honourable epithet of Franks or freemen; which concealed, though it did not extinguish, the peculiar names of the several states of the confederacy.^d Tacit consent, and mutual advantage, dictated the first laws of the union; it was gradually cemented by habit and experience. The league of the Franks may admit of some

CHAP.
X.

* See Cluver. *Germania Antiqua*, l. iii, c. 20. M. Freret, in the *Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. xviii.

^a Most probably under the reign of Gordian, from an accidental circumstance, fully canvassed by Tillemont, tom. iii, p. 710, 1181.

^b Plin. *Hist. Natur.* xvi, l. The panegyrista frequently allude to the morasses of the Franks.

^c Tacit. *Germania*, c. 30, 37.

^d In a subsequent period, most of these old names are occasionally mentioned. See some vestiges of them in Cluver. *German. Antiq.* l. iii.

CHAP. comparison with the Helvetic body; in which
 X. every canton, retaining its independent sovereignty, consults with its brethren in the common cause, without acknowledging the authority of any supreme head, or representative assembly.* But the principle of the two confederacies was extremely different. A peace of two hundred years has rewarded the wise and honest policy of the Swiss. An inconstant spirit, the thirst of rapine, and a disregard to the most solemn treaties, disgraced the character of the Franks.

They invade Gaul,

The Romans had long experienced the daring valour of the people of Lower Germany. The union of their strength threatened Gaul with a more formidable invasion, and required the presence of Gallienus, the heir and colleague of imperial power.† Whilst that prince, and his infant son Salonius, displayed, in the court of Treves, the majesty of the empire, its armies were ably conducted by their general Posthumus, who, though he afterwards betrayed the family of Valerian, was ever faithful to the great interest of the monarchy. The treacherous language of panegyrics and medals darkly announces a long series of victories. Trophies and titles attest (if such evidence can attest) the fame of Posthumus, who is repeatedly styled the conqueror of the Germans, and the saviour of Gaul.‡

* Simler de Republica Helvet. cum notis Fuselin.

† Zonimus, l. i. p. 27.

‡ M. de Brequigny (in the *Memoires de l'Academie*, tom. lxx) has given us a very curious life of Posthumus. A series of the Augustan history, from medals and inscriptions, has been more than once planned, and is still much wanted.

But a single fact, the only one indeed of which we have any distinct knowledge, erases, in a great measure, these monuments of vanity and adulation. The Rhine, though dignified with the title of safeguard of the provinces, was an imperfect barrier against the daring spirit of enterprise with which the Franks were actuated. Their rapid devastations stretched from the river to the foot of the Pyrenees: nor were they stopped by those mountains. Spain, which had never dreaded, was unable to resist, the inroads of the Germans. During twelve years, the greatest part of the reign of Gallienus, that opulent country was the theatre of unequal and destructive hostilities. Tarragona, the flourishing capital of a peaceful province, was sacked and almost destroyed; and so late as the days of Orosius, who wrote in the fifth century, wretched cottages, scattered amidst the ruins of magnificent cities, still recorded the rage of the barbarians.¹ When the exhausted country no longer supplied a variety of plunder, the Franks seized on some vessels in the ports of Spain,² and transported themselves into Mauritania. The distant province was astonished with the fury of these barbarians, who seemed to

* Aurel. Victor, c. 33. Instead of *Pene directe*, both the sense and the expression require *defecto*, though indeed, for different reasons, it is alike difficult to correct the text of the best, and of the worst, writers.

¹ In the time of Ausonius (the end of the fourth century) Herda, or Lerida, was in a very ruinous state (Auson. Epist. xxy, 38), which probably was the consequence of this invasion.

* Valesius is therefore mistaken in supposing that the Franks had invaded Spain by sea.

CHAP. fall from a new world, as their name, manners,
 X. and complexion, were equally unknown on the
 coast of Africa.¹

Origin and
 renown of
 the Suevi.

II. In that part of Upper Saxony beyond the Elbe, which is at present called the marquisate of Lusace, there existed, in ancient times, a sacred wood, the awful seat of the superstition of the Suevi. None were permitted to enter the holy precincts, without confessing, by their servile bonds and suppliant posture, the immediate presence of the sovereign Deity.^m Patriotism contributed as well as devotion to consecrate the Sonnenwald, or wood of the Semnones.ⁿ It was universally believed, that the nation had received its first existence on that sacred spot. At stated periods, the numerous tribes who gloried in the Suevic blood, resorted thither by their ambassadors; and the memory of their common extraction was perpetuated by barbaric rites and human sacrifices. The wide extended name of Suevi filled the interior countries of Germany, from the banks of the Oder to those of the Danube. They were distinguished from the other Germans by their peculiar mode of dressing their long hair, which they gathered into a rude knot on the crown of the head; and they delighted in an ornament that shewed their ranks more lofty and terrible in the eyes of the enemy.^o Jealous as the Germans were of military renown, they

¹ Aurel. Victor. Eutrop. ix, 6.

^m Tacit. Germania, 38.

ⁿ Cluver. Germ. Antiq. iii, 25.

^o Sic Suevi a ceteris Germanis, sic Seuorum ingenui a seruis separantur. A proud separation!

all confessed the superior valour of the Suevi; and the tribes of the Usipetes and Tencteri, who, with a vast army, encountered the dictator Cæsar, declared that they esteemed it not a disgrace to have fled before a people, to whose arms the immortal gods themselves were unequal.*

In the reign of the emperor Caracalla, an innumerable swarm of Suevi appeared on the banks of the Mein, and in the neighbourhood of the Roman provinces, in quest either of food, of plunder, or of glory.^b The hasty army of volunteers gradually coalesced into a great and permanent nation; and as it was composed from so many different tribes, assumed the name of Alemanni, or *All-men*; to denote at once their various lineage, and their common bravery.^c The latter was soon felt by the Romans in many a hostile inroad. The Alemanni fought chiefly on horseback; but their cavalry was rendered still more formidable by a mixture of light infantry, selected from the bravest and most active of the youth, whom frequent exercise had enured to accompany the horseman in the longest march, the most rapid charge, or the most precipitate retreat.^d

* Cæsar in Bello Gallico, iv, 7.

^b Victor in Caracal. Dion Cassius, lxxii, p. 1330.

^c This etymology (far different from those which amuse the fancy of the learned) is preserved by Asinius Quadratus, an original historian, quoted by Agathias, i, c. 5.

^d The Suevi engaged Cæsar in this manner, and the manœuvre deserved the approbation of the conqueror (in Bello Gallico, i, 48).

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X.

Invade
Gaul and
Italy,

This warlike people of Germans had been astonished by the immense preparations of Alexander Severus; they were dismayed by the arms of his successor, a barbarian equal in valour and fierceness to themselves. But still hovering on the frontiers of the empire, they increased the general disorder that ensued after the death of Decius. They inflicted severe wounds on the rich provinces of Gaul; they were the first who removed the veil that covered the feeble majesty of Italy. A numerous body of the Alemanni penetrated across the Danube, and through the Rhaetian Alps, into the plains of Lombardy, advanced as far as Ravenna, and displayed the victorious banners of barbarians almost in sight of Rome.* The insult and the danger rekindled in the senate some

are repulsed from
Rome by
the senate
and people.

sparks of their ancient virtue. Both the emperors were engaged in far distant wars; Valerian in the East, and Gallienus on the Rhine. All the hopes and resources of the Romans were in themselves. In this emergency, the senators resumed the defence of the republic, drew out the praetorian guards, who had been left to garrison the capital, and filled up their numbers, by inlisting into the public service the stoutest and most willing of the plebeians. The Alemanni, astonished with the sudden appearance of an army more numerous than their own, retired into Germany, laden with spoil; and their retreat was esteemed as a victory by the unwarlike Romans.†

* Hist. August. p. 215. 216. Dexippus in the *Excerpta Legationum*, p. 8. Hieronym. Chron. Orosius, vii, 22.

† Zosimus, i. 1, p. 34.

When Gallienus received the intelligence that his capital was delivered from the barbarians, he was much less delighted, than alarmed, with the courage of the senate, since it might one day prompt them to rescue the public from domestic tyranny, as well as from foreign invasion. His timid ingratitude was published to his subjects, in an edict which prohibited the senators from exercising any military employment, and even from approaching the camps of the legions. But his fears were groundless. The rich and luxurious nobles, sinking into their natural character, accepted, as a favour, this disgraceful exemption from military service; and as long as they were indulged in the enjoyment of their baths, their theatres, and their villas, they cheerfully resigned the more dangerous cares of empire, to the rough hands of peasants and soldiers." CHAP.
X.
The senators excluded by Gallienus from the military service.

Another invasion of the Alemanni, of a more formidable aspect, but more glorious event, is mentioned by a writer of the lower empire. Three hundred thousand of that warlike people are said to have been vanquished, in a battle near Milan, by Gallienus in person, at the head of only ten thousand Romans.* We may, however, with great probability, ascribe this incredible victory, either to the credulity of the historian, or to some exaggerated exploits of one of the emperor's lieutenants. It was by arms of a very Gallienus contracts an Alliance with the Alemanni.

* Aurel. Victor, in Gallieno et Probo. His complaints breathe an uncommon spirit of freedom.

* Zonaras, l. xii, p. 931.

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X.

different nature, that Gallienus endeavoured to protect Italy from the fury of the Germans. He espoused Pipa, the daughter of a king of the Marcomanni, a Suevic tribe, which was often confounded with the Alemanni in their wars and conquests.² To the father, as the price of his alliance, he granted an ample settlement in Pannonia. The native charms of unpolished beauty, seem to have fixed the daughter in the affections of the inconstant emperor, and the bands of policy were more firmly connected by those of love. But the haughty prejudice of Rome still refused the name of marriage, to the profane mixture of a citizen and a barbarian; and has stigmatized the German princess with the opprobrious title of concubine of Gallienus.³

Inroads of
the Goths.

III. We have already traced the emigration of the Goths from Scandinavia, or at least from Prussia, to the mouth of the Borysthenes, and have followed their victorious arms from the Borysthenes to the Danube. Under the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, the frontier of the last-mentioned river was perpetually infested by the inroads of Germans and Sarmatians; but it was defended by the Romans with more than usual firmness and success. The provinces that were the seat of war recruited the armies of Rome with an inexhaustible supply of hardy soldiers; and more than one of these Illyrian peasants

² One of the Victors calls him king of the Marcomanni; the other, of the Germans.

³ See Tillemont. *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. III, p. 398, &c.

attained the station, and displayed the abilities, of a general. Though flying parties of the barbarians, who incessantly hovered on the banks of the Danube, penetrated sometimes to the confines of Italy and Macedonia, their progress was commonly checked, or their return intercepted, by the imperial lieutenants.^a But the great stream of the Gothic hostilities was diverted into a very different channel. The Goths, in their new settlement of the Ukraine, soon became masters of the northern coast of the Euxine: to the south of that inland sea, were situated the soft and wealthy provinces of Asia Minor, which possessed all that could attract, and nothing that could resist, a barbarian conqueror.

The banks of the Borysthenes are only sixty miles distant from the narrow entrance^b of the peninsula of Crim Tartary, known to the ancients under the name of Chersonesus Taurica.^c On that hospitable shore, Euripides, embellishing with exquisite art the tales of antiquity, has placed the scene of one of his most affecting tragedies.^d The bloody sacrifices of Diana, the arrival of Orestes and Pylades, and the triumph of virtue and religion over savage fierceness, serve to represent an historical truth, that the Tauri,

Conquest
of the Bos-
phorus by
the Goths;

^a See the lives of Claudius, Aurelian, and Probus, in the Augustan History.

^b It is about half a league in breadth. Genealogical History of the Tartars, p. 395.

^c M. de Peyssonel, who had been French consul at Caffa, in his *Observations sur les Peuples Barbares, qui ont habité les bords du Danube*.

^d Euripides in *Iphigenia in Taurid*.

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the original inhabitants of the peninsula, were, in some degree, reclaimed from their brutal manners, by a gradual intercourse with the Grecian colonies, which settled along the maritime coast. The little kingdom of Bosphorus, whose capital was situated on the straits, through which the Mæotis communicates itself to the Euxine, was composed of degenerate Greeks, and half civilized barbarians. It subsisted, as an independent state, from the time of the Peloponnesian war,* was at last swallowed up by the ambition of Mithridates,[†] and, with the rest of his dominions, sunk under the weight of the Roman arms. From the reign of Augustus,[‡] the kings of Bosphorus were the humble, but not useless, allies of the empire. By presents, by arms, and by a slight fortification drawn across the isthmus, they effectually guarded against the roving plunderers of Sarmatia, the access of a country, which, from its peculiar situation and convenient harbours, commanded the Euxine sea and Asia Minor.[§] As long as the sceptre was possessed by a lineal succession of kings, they acquitted themselves of their important charge with vigilance and success. Domestic factions, and the fears, or private in-

* Strabo, l. vii, p. 309. The first kings of Bosphorus were the allies of Athens.

† Appian in Mithridat.

‡ It was reduced by the arms of Agrippa. Orosius, vi, 21. Eutropius, vii, 9. The Romans once advanced within three days march of the Tanais. Tacit. Annal. xii, 17.

§ See the Toxaris of Lucian, if we credit the sincerity and the virtues of the Scythians, who relates a great war of his nation against the kings of Bosphorus.

terest, of obscure usurpers, who seized on the vacant throne, admitted the Goths into the heart of Bosphorus. With the acquisition of a superfluous waste of fertile soil, the conquerors obtained the command of a naval force, sufficient to transport their armies to the coast of Asia.¹ The ships used in the navigation of the Euxine were of a very singular construction. They were slight flat-bottomed barks framed of timber only, without the least mixture of iron, and occasionally covered with a shelving roof, on the appearance of a tempest.² In these floating houses, the Goths carelessly trusted themselves to the mercy of an unknown sea, under the conduct of sailors pressed into the service, and whose skill and fidelity were equally suspicious. But the hopes of plunder had banished every idea of danger, and a natural fearlessness of temper supplied in their minds the more rational confidence, which is the just result of knowledge and experience. Warriors of such a daring spirit must have often murmured against the cowardice of their guides, who required the strongest assurances of a settled calm before they would venture to embark, and would scarcely ever be tempted to lose sight of the land. Such, at least, is the practice of the modern Turks;³ and they are probably not inferior, in the art of navigation, to the ancient inhabitants of Bosphorus.

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who acquire a naval force.

¹ Zosimus, l. i, p. 28.

² Strab. l. xi. Tacit. Hist. iii, 47. They were called *Comara*.

³ See a very natural picture of the Euxine navigation, in the sixteenth letter of Tournefort.

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First naval
expedition
of the
Goths.

The fleet of the Goths, leaving the coast of Circassia on the left hand, first appeared before Pityus,^m the utmost limits of the Roman provinces; a city provided with a convenient port, and fortified with a strong wall. Here they met with a resistance more obstinate than they had reason to expect from the feeble garrison of a distant fortress. They were repulsed; and their disappointment seemed to diminish the terror of the Gothic name. As long as Successianus, an officer of superior rank and merit, defended that frontier, all their efforts were ineffectual; but as soon as he was removed by Valerian to a more honourable but less important station, they resumed the attack of Pityus; and, by the destruction of that city, obliterated the memory of their former disgrace.ⁿ

The Goths
besiege and
take Trebi-
zond.

Circling round the eastern extremity of the Euxine sea, the navigation from Pityus to Trebizond is about three hundred miles.^o The course of the Goths carried them in sight of the country of Colchis, so famous by the expedition of the Argonauts; and they even attempted, though without success, to pillage a rich temple at the mouth of the river Phasis. Trebizond, celebrated in the retreat of the ten thousand as an ancient colony of Greeks,^p derived its wealth

^m Arrian places the frontier garrison at Dioscurias, or Sebastopolis, forty-four miles to the east of Pityus. The garrison of Phasis consisted in his time of only four hundred foot. See the *Periplus* of the Euxine.

ⁿ Zosimus, l. i. p. 30.

^o Arrian (in *Periplus Maris Euxini*. p. 130) calls the distance 2610 stadia.

^p Xenophon. *Anabasis*, l. ix, p. 348. Edit. Hutchinson.

and splendour from the munificence of the emperor Hadrian, who had constructed an artificial port on a coast left destitute by nature of secure harbours.⁴ The city was large and populous; a double inclosure of walls seemed to defy the fury of the Goths, and the usual garrison had been strengthened by a reinforcement of ten thousand men. But there are not any advantages capable of supplying the absence of discipline and vigilance. The numerous garrison of Trebizond, dissolved in riot and luxury, disdained to guard their impregnable fortifications. The Goths soon discovered the supine negligence of the besieged, erected a lofty pile of fascines, ascended the walls in the silence of the night, and entered the defenceless city, sword in hand. A general massacre of the people ensued, whilst the affrighted soldiers escaped through the opposite gates of the town. The most holy temples, and the most splendid edifices, were involved in a common destruction. The booty that fell into the hands of the Goths was immense; the wealth of the adjacent countries had been deposited in Trebizond, as in a secure place of refuge. The number of captives was incredible, as the victorious barbarians ranged without opposition through the extensive province of Pontus.⁵ The rich spoils of Trebizond filled a great fleet of ships that had been found in the port. The robust youth of the

⁴ Arrian, p. 129. The general observation is Tournefort's.

⁵ See an epistle of Gregory Thaumaturgus, bishop of Neo-Cæsarea, quoted by Mascou, v. 37.

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sea-coast were chained to the oar; and the Goths, satisfied with the success of their first naval expedition, returned in triumph to their new establishments in the kingdom of Bosphorus.*

The second
expedition
of the
Goths.

The second expedition of the Goths was undertaken with greater powers of men and ships; but they steered a different course, and, disdaining the exhausted provinces of Pontus, followed the western coast of the Euxine, passed before the wide mouths of the Borysthenes, the Niester, and the Danube, and increasing their fleet by the capture of a great number of fishing barks, they approached the narrow outlet through which the Euxine sea pours its waters into the Mediterranean, and divides the continents of Europe and Asia. The garrison of Chalcedon was encamped near the temple* of Jupiter Urius, on a promontory that commanded the entrance of the strait; and so inconsiderable were the dreaded invasions of the barbarians, that this body of troops sur-

They plun-
der the ci-
ties of Bi-
thynia.

passed in number the Gothic army. But it was in numbers alone that they surpassed it. They deserted with precipitation their advantageous post, and abandoned the town of Chalcedon, most plentifully stored with arms and money, to the discretion of the conquerors. Whilst they hesitated whether they should prefer the sea or land, Europe or Asia, for the scene of their hostilities, a perfidious fugitive pointed out Nicomedia, once the capital of the kings of Bithynia, as a rich and easy conquest. He guided the march, which

* Zosimus, l. i, p. 32, 33.

was only sixty miles from the camp of Chalcedon,¹ directed the resistless attack, and partook of the booty; for the Goths had learned sufficient policy to reward the traitor, whom they detested. Nice, Prusa, Apamea, Cius, cities that had sometimes rivalled, or imitated, the splendour of Nicomedia, were involved in the same calamity, which, in a few weeks, raged without controul through the whole province of Bithynia. Three hundred years of peace, enjoyed by the soft inhabitants of Asia, had abolished the exercise of arms, and removed the apprehension of danger. The ancient walls were suffered to moulder away, and all the revenue of the most opulent cities was reserved for the construction of baths, temples, and theatres.²

When the city of Cyzicus withstood the utmost effort of Mithridates,³ it was distinguished by wise laws, a naval power of two hundred galleys, and three arsenals, of arms, of military engines, and of corn.⁴ It was still the seat of wealth and luxury; but of its ancient strength nothing remained except the situation, in a little island of the Propontis, connected with the continent of Asia only by two bridges. From the recent sack of Prusa, the Goths advanced within eighteen miles⁵ of the city, which they had de-

Retreat of
the Goths.

¹ Itiner. Hierosolym. p. 572. Wesseling.

² Zosimus, l. i. p. 32, 33.

³ He besieged the place with 400 galleys, 150,000 foot, and a numerous cavalry. See Plutarch in Lucul. Appian in Mithridat. Cicero pro Lege Maniliæ, c. 8.

⁴ Strab. l. xii. p. 573.

⁵ Pocock's description of the East, l. ii. c. 23, 24.

CHAP. voted to destruction; but the ruin of Cyzicus was delayed by a fortunate accident. The season was rainy, and the lake Apolloniates, the reservoir of all the springs of Mount Olympus, rose to an uncommon height. The little river of Rhyndacus, which issues from the lake, swelled into a broad and rapid stream, and stopped the progress of the Goths. Their retreat to the maritime city of Heraclea, where the fleet had probably been stationed, was attended by a long train of waggons, laden with the spoils of Bithynia, and was marked by the flames of Nice and Nicomedia, which they wantonly burnt.^a Some obscure hints are mentioned of a doubtful combat that secured their retreat.^b But even a complete victory would have been of little moment, as the approach of the autumnal equinox summoned them to hasten their return. To navigate the Euxine before the month of May, or after that of September, is esteemed by the modern Turks the most unquestionable instance of rashness and folly.^c

Third naval expedition of the Goths.

When we are informed that the third fleet equipped by the Goths in the ports of Bosphorus, consisted of five hundred sail of ships,^d our ready imagination instantly computes and multiplies the formidable armament; but, as we are assured

^a Zosimus, l. i. p. 33.

^b Syncellus tells an unintelligible story of Prince *Odenathus*, who defeated the Goths, and who was killed by Prince *Odenathus*.

^c Voyages de Chardin, tom. i, p. 45. He sailed with the Turks from Constantinople to Caffa.

^d Syncellus (p. 383) speaks of this expedition as undertaken by the Heruli.

by the judicious Strabo,* that the piratical vessels used by the barbarians of Pontus and the Lesser Scythia, were not capable of containing more than twenty-five or thirty men, we may safely affirm, that fifteen thousand warriors, at the most, embarked in this great expedition. Impatient of the limits of the Euxine, they steered their destructive course from the Cimmerian to the Thracian Bosphorus. When they had almost gained the middle of the straits, they were suddenly driven back to the entrance of them; till a favourable wind, springing up the next day, carried them in a few hours into the placid sea, or rather lake, of the Propontis. Their landing on the little island of Cyzicus was attended with the ruin of that ancient and noble city. From thence issuing again through the narrow passage of the Hellespont, they pursued their winding navigation amidst the numerous islands scattered over the Archipelago, or the Ægean sea. The assistance of captives and deserters must have been very necessary to pilot their vessels, and to direct their various incursions, as well on the coast of Greece as on that of Asia. At length the Gothic fleet anchored in the port of Piræus, five miles distant from Athens,† which had attempted to make some preparations for a vigorous defence. Cleodamus, one of the engineers employed by the emperor's orders to fortify the maritime cities against the Goths, had already begun to repair the ancient walls, fallen to decay since the time of

They pass
the Bos-
phorus and
the Helles-
pont,

* Strabo, l. xi, p. 493.

† Plin. Hist. Natur. lib. 7.

-CHAP. Sylla. The efforts of his skill were ineffectual,
 X.
 and the barbarians became masters of the native
 seat of the muses and the arts. But while the
 conquerors abandoned themselves to the licence
 of plunder and intemperance, their fleet, that lay
 with a slender guard in the harbour of Piræus,
 was unexpectedly attacked by the brave Dexip-
 pus, who flying with the engineer Cleodamus
 from the sack of Athens, collected a hasty band
 of volunteers, peasants as well as soldiers, and in
 some measure avenged the calamities of his coun-
 try.*

Savage
 Greece, and
 threaten
 Italy.

But this exploit, whatever lustre it might shed
 on the declining age of Athens, served rather to
 irritate than to subdue the undaunted spirit of
 the northern invaders. A general conflagration
 blazed out at the same time in every district of
 Greece. Thebes and Argos, Corinth and Sparta,
 which had formerly waged such memorable wars
 against each other, were now unable to bring an
 army into the field, or even to defend their ruined
 fortifications. The rage of war, both by land
 and by sea, spread from the eastern point of
 Sunium to the western coast of Epirus. The
 Goths had already advanced within sight of Italy
 when the approach of such imminent danger
 awakened the indolent Gallienus from his dream
 of pleasure. The emperor appeared in arms;

* Hist. August. p. 181. Victor, c. 33. Orosius, vii. 42. Zo-
 simus, l. i. p. 35. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 635. Syncellus, p. 382. It
 is not without some attention, that we can explain and reconcile their
 imperfect hints. We can still discover some traces of the partiality
 of Dexippus, in the relation of his own and his countrymen's ex-
 ploits.

and his presence seems to have checked the CHAP. X.
ardour, and to have divided the strength, of the
enemy. Naulobatus, a chief of the Heruli, ac- Their divi-
cepted an honourable capitulation, entered with sions and
a large body of his countrymen into the service retreat.
of Rome, and was invested with the ornaments
of the consular dignity, which had never before
been profaned by the hands of a barbarian.¹
Great numbers of the Goths, disgusted with the
perils and hardships of a tedious voyage, broke
into Mæsia, with a design of forcing their way
over the Danube to their settlements in the
Ukraine. The wild attempt would have proved
inevitable destruction, if the discord of the Roman
generals had not opened to the barbarians the
means of an escape.¹ The small remainder of
this destroying host returned on board their ves-
sels; and measuring back their way through the
Hellespont and the Bosphorus, ravaged in their
passage the shores of Troy, whose fame, immor-
talized by Homer, will probably survive the me-
mory of the Gothic conquests. As soon as they
found themselves in safety within the basin of the
Euxine, they landed at Anchialus in Thrace, near
the foot of Mount Hæmus; and, after all their
toils, indulged themselves in the use of those
pleasant and salutary hot baths. What remained

¹ Synecius, p. 382. This body of Heruli was for a long time faithful and famous.

¹ Claudius, who commanded on the Danube, thought with propriety, and acted with spirit. His colleague was jealous of his fame, Hist. August. p. 181.

CHAP. of the voyage was a short and easy navigation.¹

X.

Such was the various fate of this third and greatest of their naval enterprises. It may seem difficult to conceive, how the original body of fifteen thousand warriors could sustain the losses and divisions of so bold an adventure. But as their numbers were gradually wasted by the sword, by shipwrecks, and by the influence of a warm climate, they were perpetually renewed by troops of banditti and deserters, who flocked to the standard of plunder, and by a crowd of fugitive slaves, often of German or Sarmatian extraction, who eagerly seized the glorious opportunity of freedom and revenge. In these expeditions, the Gothic nation claimed a superior share of honour and danger; but the tribes that fought under the Gothic banners are sometimes distinguished and sometimes confounded in the imperfect histories of that age; and as the barbarian fleets seemed to issue from the mouth of the Tanais, the vague but familiar appellation of Scythians was frequently bestowed on the mixed multitude.¹

Ruin of the
temple of
Ephesus.

In the general calamities of mankind, the death of an individual, however exalted, the ruin of an edifice, however famous, are passed over with careless inattention. Yet we cannot forget that the temple of Diana at Ephesus, after having risen with increasing splendour from seven re-

¹ Jornandes, c. 20.

² Zosimus and the Greeks (as the author of the *Philopatri*) give the name of Scythians to those whom Jornandes, and the Latin writers, constantly represent as Goths.

peated misfortunes,^m was finally burnt by the Goths in their third naval invasion. The arts of Greece, and the wealth of Asia, had conspired to erect that sacred and magnificent structure. It was supported by an hundred and twenty-seven marble columns of the Ionic order. They were the gifts of devout monarchs, and each was sixty feet high. The altar was adorned with the masterly sculptures of Praxiteles, who had, perhaps, selected from the favourite legends of the place, the birth of the divine children of Latona, the concealment of Apollo after the slaughter of the Cyclops, and the clemency of Bacchus to the vanquished Amazons.ⁿ Yet the length of the temple of Ephesus was only four hundred and twenty-five feet, about two-thirds of the measure of the church of St. Peter's at Rome.^o In the other dimensions, it was still more inferior to that sublime production of modern architecture. The spreading arms of a christian cross require a much greater breadth than the oblong temples of the pagans; and the boldest artists of antiquity would have been startled at the proposal of raising in the air a dome of the size and proportions of the pantheon. The temple of Diana was, however, admired as one of the wonders of the world.

^m Hist. August. p. 178. Jornandes, c. 20.

ⁿ Strabo, l. xiv. p. 640. Vitruvius, l. i. c. 1, præfat. l. vii. Tacit. Annal. iii. 61. Plin. Hist. Nat. xxvi. 14.

^o The length of St. Peter's is 840 Roman palms; each palm is very little short of nine English inches. See Greaves's Miscellanies, vol. i. p. 233; On the Roman foot.

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Successive empires, the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman, had revered its sanctity, and enriched its splendour.³ But the rude savages of the Baltic were destitute of a taste for the elegant arts, and they despised the ideal terrors of a foreign superstition.⁴

Conduct of
the Goths
at Athens.

Another circumstance is related of these invasions, which might deserve our notice, were it not justly to be suspected as the fanciful conceit of a recent sophist. We are told, that, in the sack of Athens, the Goths had collected all the libraries, and were on the point of setting fire to this funeral pile of Grecian learning, had not one of their chiefs, of more refined policy than his brethren, dissuaded them from the design; by the profound observation, that as long as the Greeks were addicted to the study of books, they would never apply themselves to the exercise of arms.⁵ The sagacious counsellor (should the truth of the fact be admitted) reasoned like an ignorant barbarian. In the most polite and powerful nations, genius of every kind has displayed itself about the same period; and the age of science has generally been the age of military virtue and success.

³ The policy, however, of the Romans induced them to abridge the extent of the sanctuary or asylum, which, by successive privileges, had spread itself two stadia round the temple. Strabo, l. xiv, p. 641. Tacit. Annal. iii, 60, &c.

⁴ They offered no sacrifices to the Grecian gods. See Epistol. Gregor. Thaumaz.

⁵ Zonaras, l. xii, p. 635. Such an anecdote was perfectly suited to the taste of Montaigne. He makes use of it in his agreeable Essay on Pedantry, l. i, c. 24.

iv. The new sovereigns of Persia, Artaxerxes CHAP. X.
 and his son Sapor, had triumphed (as we have
 already seen) over the house of Arsaces. Of
 the many princes of that ancient race, Chosroes, Conquest of Armenia by the Persians.
 king of Armenia, had alone preserved both his
 life and his independence. He defended him-
 self by the natural strength of his country; by
 the perpetual resort of fugitives and malecon-
 tents; by the alliance of the Romans, and,
 above all, by his own courage. Invincible in
 arms, during a thirty years war, he was at
 length assassinated by the emissaries of Sapor,
 king of Persia. The patriotic satraps of Ar-
 menia, who asserted the freedom and dignity
 of the crown, implored the protection of Rome
 in favour of Tiridates the lawful heir. But the
 son of Chosroes was an infant, the allies were
 at a distance, and the Persian monarch ad-
 vanced towards the frontier at the head of an
 irresistible force. Young Tiridates, the future
 hope of his country, was saved by the fidelity
 of a servant, and Armenia continued above
 twenty-seven years a reluctant province of the
 great monarchy of Persia.* Elated with this
 easy conquest, and presuming on the distresses
 or the degeneracy of the Romans, Sapor obliged
 the strong garrisons of Carrhæ and Nisibis to
 surrender, and spread devastation and terror on
 either side of the Euphrates.

* Moses Chorenensis, l. ii, c. 71, 73, 74. Zonaras, l. xii, p. 628.
 The authentic relation of the Armenian historian serves to rectify
 the confused account of the Greek. The latter talks of the children
 of Tiridates, who at that time was himself an infant.

CHAP.
X.

Valerian
marches
into the
East.

Is defeated
and taken
prisoner by
Sapor, king
of Persia,
A. D. 260.

The loss of an important frontier, the ruin of a faithful and natural ally, and the rapid success of Sapor's ambition, affected Rome with a deep sense of the insult as well as of the danger. Valerian flattered himself, that the vigilance of his lieutenants would sufficiently provide for the safety of the Rhine and of the Danube; but he resolved, notwithstanding his advanced age, to march in person to the defence of the Euphrates. During his progress through Asia Minor, the naval enterprises of the Goths were suspended, and the afflicted province enjoyed a transient and fallacious calm. He passed the Euphrates, encountered the Persian monarch near the walls of Edessa, was vanquished, and taken prisoner by Sapor. The particulars of this great event are darkly and imperfectly represented; yet, by the glimmering light which is afforded us, we may discover a long series of imprudence, of error, and of deserved misfortune on the side of the Roman emperor. He reposed an implicit confidence in Macrianus, his prætorian prefect.¹ That worthless minister rendered his master formidable only to the oppressed subjects, and contemptible to the enemies of Rome." By his weak or wicked counsels, the imperial army was betrayed into a situation, where valour and military skill were equally unavailing.² The vigorous attempt of the Romans to cut their way through the Persian host, was repulsed with great

¹ Hist. August. p. 191. As Macrianus was an enemy to the christians, they charged him with being a magician.

² Zosimus, l. i, p. 33.

³ Hist. August. p. 174.

slaughter;¹ and Sapor, who encompassed the camp with superior numbers, patiently waited till the increasing rage of famine and pestilence had ensured his victory. The licentious murmurs of the legions soon accused Valerian as the cause of their calamities; their seditious clamours demanded an instant capitulation. An immense sum of gold was offered to purchase the permission of a disgraceful retreat. But the Persian, conscious of his superiority, refused the money with disdain; and detaining the deputies, advanced in order of battle to the foot of the Roman rampart, and insisted on a personal conference with the emperor. Valerian was reduced to the necessity of intrusting his life and dignity to the faith of an enemy. The interview ended as it was natural to expect. The emperor was made a prisoner, and his astonished troops laid down their arms.² In such a moment of triumph, the pride and policy of Sapor prompted him to fill the vacant throne with a successor entirely dependent on his pleasure. Cyriades, an obscure fugitive of Antioch, stained with every vice, was chosen to dishonour the Roman purple; and the will of the Persian victor could not fail of being ratified by the acclamations, however reluctant, of the captive army.³

¹ Victor in Caesar. Eutropius, ix, 7.

² Zosimus, l. i, p. 33. Zonaras, l. xii, p. 630. Peter Patricius, in the *Excerpta Legat.* p. 29.

³ Hist. August. p. 185. The reign of Cyriades appears in that collection prior to the death of Valerian; but I have preferred a probable series of events to the doubtful chronology of a most inaccurate writer.

CHAP.
X.

Sapor
overruns
Syria, Ci-
licia, and
Cappado-
cia.

The imperial slave was eager to secure the favour of his master by an act of treason to his native country. He conducted Sapor over the Euphrates, and, by the way of Chalcis, to the metropolis of the East. So rapid were the motions of the Persian cavalry, that, if we may credit a very judicious historian,^b the city of Antioch was surprised when the idle multitude was fondly gazing on the amusements of the theatre. The splendid buildings of Antioch, private as well as public, were either pillaged or destroyed; and the numerous inhabitants were put to the sword, or led away into captivity.^c The tide of devastation was stopped for a moment by the resolution of the high priest of Emesa. Arrayed in his sacerdotal robes, he appeared at the head of a great body of fanatic peasants, armed only with slings, and defended his god and his property from the sacrilegious hands of the followers of Zoroaster.^d But the ruin of Tarsus, and of many other cities, furnishes a melancholy proof, that, except in this singular instance, the conquest of Syria and Cilicia scarcely interrupted the progress of the Persian arms. The advantages of the narrow passes of mount Taurus were abandoned, in which an invader, whose principal force consisted in his cavalry, would have been engaged in a very unequal combat:

^b The sack of Antioch, anticipated by some historians, is assigned, by the decisive testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus, to the reign of Gallienus, xliii. 5.

^c Zosimus, l. i. p. 35.

^d John Malala, tom. i. p. 391. He corrupts this probable event by some fabulous circumstances.

and Sapor was permitted to form the siege of ^{CHAP.} ~~Caesarea~~ ^{X.} the capital of Cappadocia; a city, though of the second rank, which was supposed to contain four hundred thousand inhabitants. Demosthenes commanded in the place, not so much by the commission of the emperor, as in the voluntary defence of his country. For a long time he deferred its fate; and, when at last Caesarea was betrayed by the perfidy of a physician, he cut his way through the Persians, who had been ordered to exert their utmost diligence to take him alive. This heroic chief escaped the power of a foe, who might either have honoured or punished his obstinate valour; but many thousands of his fellow-citizens were involved in a general massacre, and Sapor is accused of treating his prisoners with wanton and unrelenting cruelty.* Much should undoubtedly be allowed for national animosity, much for humbled pride and impotent revenge; yet, upon the whole, it is certain that the same prince, who in Armenia had displayed the mild aspect of a legislator, shewed himself to the Romans under the stern features of a conqueror. He despaired of making any permanent establishment in the empire, and sought only to leave behind him a wasted desert, whilst he transported into Persia the people and the treasures of the provinces.^f

* Zonaras, l. xii, p. 630. Deep vallies were filled up with the slain. Crowds of prisoners were driven to water like beasts, and many perished for want of food.

^f Zosimus, l. i, p. 25, asserts, that Sapor, had he not preferred spoil to conquest, might have remained master of Asia.

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X.

Boldness
and success
of Odena-
thus
against Sa-
por.

At the time when the East trembled at the name of Sapor, he received a present not unworthy of the greatest kings; a long train of camels laden with the most rare and valuable merchandises. The rich offering was accompanied with an epistle, respectful but not servile, from Odenathus, one of the noblest and most opulent senators of Palmyra. "Who is this Odenathus," (said the haughty victor, and he commanded that the presents should be cast into the Euphrates) "that he thus insolently presumes to write to his lord? If he entertains a hope of mitigating his punishments, let him fall prostrate before the foot of our throne with his hands bound behind his back. Should he hesitate, swift destruction shall be poured on his head, on his whole race, and on his country." The desperate extremity to which the Palmyrenian was reduced, called into action all the latent powers of his soul. He met Sapor; but he met him in arms. Infusing his own spirit into a little army collected from the villages of Syria,^b and the tents of the desert,^c he hovered round the Persian host, harassed their retreat, carried off part of the treasure, and what was dearer than any treasure, several of the

^a Peter Patricius in Excerpt. Leg. p. 20.

^b Syrorum agrestium manu. Sextus Rufus, c. 23. Rufus Victor, the Augustan History (p. 192), and several inscriptions agree in making Odenathus a citizen of Palmyra.

^c He possessed so powerful an interest among the wandering tribes, that Procopius (Bell. Persic. l. ii. c. 5), and John Malala (tom. i. p. 391), style him prince of the Saracens.

women of the great king; who was at last CHAP. X. obliged to repass the Euphrates with some marks of haste and confusion.^k By this exploit, Odenathus laid the foundations of his future fame and fortunes. The majesty of Rome, oppressed by a Persian, was protected by a Syrian or Arab of Palmyra.

The voice of history, which is often little Treatment of Valerian. more than the organ of hatred or flattery, reproaches Sapor with a proud abuse of the rights of conquest. We are told that Valerian, in chains, but invested with the imperial purple, was exposed to the multitude, a constant spectacle of fallen greatness; and that whenever the Persian monarch mounted on horseback, he placed his foot on the neck of a Roman emperor. Notwithstanding all the remonstrances of his allies, who repeatedly advised him to remember the vicissitude of fortune, to dread the returning power of Rome, and to make his illustrious captive the pledge of peace, not the object of insult, Sapor still remained inflexible. When Valerian sunk under the weight of shame and grief, his skin, stuffed with straw, and formed into the likeness of a human figure, was preserved for ages in the most celebrated temple of Persia; a more real monument of triumph, than the fancied trophies of brass and marble so often erected by Roman vanity.^l The tale is moral and pa-

^k Peter Patricius, p. 25.

^l The pagan writers lament, the christians insult, the misfortunes of Valerian. Their various testimonies are accurately collected by Tillemont,

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thetic, but the truth of it may very fairly be called in question. The letters still extant from the princes of the East to Sapor, are manifest forgeries;^m nor is it natural to suppose that a jealous monarch should, even in the person of a rival, thus publicly degrade the majesty of kings. Whatever treatment the unfortunate Valerian might experience in Persia, it is at least certain, that the only emperor of Rome who had ever fallen into the hands of the enemy, languished away his life in hopeless captivity.

Character
and admin-
istration
of Gallie-
nus.

The emperor Gallienus, who had long supported with impatience the censorial severity of his father and colleague, received the intelligence of his misfortunes with secret pleasure and avowed indifference. "I knew that my father was a mortal," said he; "and since he has acted as a brave man, I am satisfied." Whilst Rome lamented the fate of her sovereign, the savage coldness of his son was extolled by the servile courtiers, as the perfect firmness of a hero and a stoic.ⁿ It is difficult to paint the light, the various, the inconstant character of Gallienus, which he displayed without constraint, as soon as he became sole possessor of the empire. In every art that he attempted, his lively genius

Tillemont, tom. iii. p. 739, &c. So little has been preserved of eastern history before Mahomet, that the modern Persians are totally ignorant of the victory of Sapor, an event so glorious to their nation. See *Bibliothèque Orientale*.

^m One of these epistles is from Artavases, king of Armenia. Since Armenia was then a province in Persia, the king, the kingdom, and the epistle, must be fictitious.

ⁿ See his life in the Augustan History.

enabled him to succeed; and as his genius was CHAN
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destitute of judgment, he attempted every art, except the important ones of war and government. He was a master of several curious but useless sciences, a ready orator, and elegant poet,^o a skilful gardener, an excellent cook, and most contemptible prince. When the great emergencies of the state required his presence and attention, he was engaged in conversation with the philosopher Plotinus,^p wasting his time in trifling or licentious pleasures, preparing his initiation to the Grecian mysteries, or soliciting a place in the Areopagus of Athens. His profuse magnificence insulted the general poverty; the solemn ridicule of his triumphs impressed a deeper sense of the public disgrace.^q The

^o There is still extant a very pretty epithalamium, composed by Gallienus for the nuptials of his nephews.

Ite alt, O Juvenes, pariter sudate medullis
Omnibus, inter vos: non murmura vestra columbæ,
Brachia non Hederæ, non vincant oscula Couchæ.

^p He was on the point of giving Plotinus a ruined city of Campania, to try the experiment of realising Plato's republic. See the life of Plotinus, by Porphyry, in Fabricius's Biblioth. Græc. L. iv.

^q A medal which bears the head of Gallienus has perplexed the antiquarians by its legend and reverse; the former *Gallienæ Augustæ*, the latter *Ubique Pax*. M. Spanheim supposes that the coin was struck by some of the enemies of Gallienus, and was designed as a severe satire on that effeminate prince. But as the use of irony may seem unworthy of the gravity of the Roman mind, M. de Vallemont has deduced from a passage of Trebellius Pollio (Hist. August. p. 198) an ingenious and natural solution. *Galliena* was first cousin to the emperor. By delivering Africa from the usurper Celsus, she deserved the title of *Augusta*. On a medal in the French king's collection, we read a similar inscription of *Faustina Augusta* round the head of Marcus Aurelius. With regard to the *Ubique Pax*, it is easily explained by the vanity of Gallienus, who, seized, perhaps,

the

CHAP. repeated intelligence of invasions, defeats, and
 X. rebellions, he received with a careless smile;
 and singling out, with affected contempt, some particular production of the lost province, he carelessly asked, whether Rome must be ruined, unless it was supplied with linen from Egypt, and Arras cloth from Gaul? There were, however, a few short moments in the life of Gallienus, when, exasperated by some recent injury, he suddenly appeared the intrepid soldier and the cruel tyrant; till, satiated with blood, or fatigued by resistance, he insensibly sunk into the natural mildness and indolence of his character.*

The thirty
 tyrants.

At a time when the reins of government were held with so loose a hand, it is not surprising, that a crowd of usurpers should start up in every province of the empire against the son of Valerian. It was probably some ingenious fancy, of comparing the thirty tyrants of Rome with the thirty tyrants of Athens, that induced the writers of the Augustan history to select that celebrated number, which has been gradually received into a popular appellation.* But in every light the parallel is idle and defective. What resemblance can we discover between a council

the occasion of some momentary calm. See *Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres*, Janvier 1700, p. 21-34.

* This singular character has, I believe, been fairly transmitted to us. The reign of his immediate successor was short and busy; and the historians who wrote before the elevation of the family of Constantine could not have the most remote interest to misrepresent the character of Gallienus.

* Pollio expresses the most minute anxiety to complete the number.

of thirty persons, the united oppressors of a single city, and an uncertain list of independent rivals, who rose and fell in irregular succession through the extent of a vast empire? Nor can the number of thirty be completed, unless we include in the account the women and children who were honoured with the imperial title. The reign of Gallienus, distracted as it was, produced only nineteen pretenders to the throne; Cyriades, Macrianus, Balista, Odenathus, and Zenobia, in the East; in Gaul, and the western provinces, Posthumus, Lollianus, Victorinus, and his mother Victoria, Marius, and Tetricus. In Illyricum and the confines of the Danube, Ingenuus, Regillianus, and Aureolus; in Pontus,* Saturninus; in Isauria, Trebellianus; Piso in Thessaly; Valens in Achaia; Æmilianus in Egypt; and Celsus in Africa. To illustrate the obscure monuments of the life and death of each individual, would prove a laborious task, alike barren of instruction and of amusement. We may content ourselves with investigating some general characters, that most strongly mark the condition of the times, and the manners of the men, their pretensions, their motives, their fate, and the destructive consequences of their usurpation."

It is sufficiently known, that the odious appellation of *tyrant* was often employed by the ancients to express the illegal seizure of supreme

Character
and merit
of the ty-
rants.

* The place of his reign is somewhat doubtful; but there was a tyrant in Pontus, and we are acquainted with the seat of all the others.

* Tillemont, *scor.* iii, p. 1163, reckons them somewhat differently.

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power, without any reference to the abuse of it. Several of the pretenders, who raised the standard of rebellion against the emperor Gallienus, were shining models of virtue, and almost all possessed a considerable share of vigour and ability. Their merit had recommended them to the favour of Valerian, and gradually promoted them to the most important commands of the empire. The generals, who assumed the title of Augustus, were either respected by their troops for their able conduct and severe discipline, or admired for valour and success in war, or beloved for frankness and generosity. The field of victory was often the scene of their election; and even the armourer Maurius, the most contemptible of all the candidates for the purple, was distinguished however by intrepid courage, matchless strength, and blunt honesty.* His mean and recent trade cast indeed an air of ridicule on his elevation; but his birth could not be more obscure than was that of the greater part of his rivals, who were born of peasants, and enlisted in the army as private soldiers. In times of confusion, every active genius finds the place assigned him by nature: in a general state of war, military merit is the road to glory and to greatness. Of the nineteen tyrants, Tetricus only was a senator; Piso alone was a noble. The blood of Numa, through twenty-eight successive generations, ran in the veins of Calphur-

Their obscure birth.

* See the speech of Marius, in the Augustan History, p. 197. The accidental identity of names was the only circumstance that could tempt Pollio to imitate Sallust.

nus Piso,² who, by female alliances, claimed a right of exhibiting, in his house, the images of Crassus and of the great Pompey.³ His ancestors had been repeatedly dignified with all the honours which the commonwealth could bestow; and of all the ancient families of Rome, the Calphurnian alone had survived the tyranny of the Cæsars. The personal qualities of Piso added new lustre to his race. The usurper Valens, by whose order he was killed, confessed, with deep remorse, that even an enemy ought to have respected the sanctity of Piso; and although he died in arms against Gallienus, the senate, with the emperor's generous permission, decreed the triumphal ornaments to the memory of so virtuous a rebel.⁴

The lieutenants of Valerian were grateful to the father whom they esteemed. They disdained to serve the luxurious indolence of his unworthy son. The throne of the Roman world was unsupported by any principle of loyalty; and treason against such a prince might easily be considered as patriotism to the state. Yet if we examine with candour the conduct of these

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The causes  
of their re-  
bellion.

<sup>2</sup> *Ves, O Pomptius sanguis!* is Horace's address to the Pisos. See *Art. Poet.* v. 292, with Dacier's and Sanadon's notes.

<sup>3</sup> *Tacit. Annal.* xv. 48. *Hist.* i. 15. In the former of these passages we may venture to change *paterna* into *materna*. In every generation from Augustus to Alexander Severus, one or more Pisos appear as consuls. A Piso was deemed worthy of the throne by Augustus (*Tacit. Annal.* i. 13). A second headed a formidable conspiracy against Nero; and a third was adopted, and declared Cæsar by Galba.

<sup>4</sup> *Hist. August.* p. 195. The senate, in a moment of enthusiasm, seems to have presumed on the approbation of Gallienus.

CHAP. X. usurpers, it will appear, that they were much oftener driven into rebellion by their fears, than urged to it by their ambition. They dreaded the cruel suspicions of Gallienus; they equally dreaded the capricious violence of their troops. If the dangerous favour of the army had imprudently declared them deserving of the purple, they were marked for sure destruction; and even prudence would counsel them, to secure a short enjoyment of empire, and rather to try the fortune of war, than to expect the hand of an executioner. When the clamour of the soldiers invested the reluctant victims with the ensigns of sovereign authority, they sometimes mourned in secret their approaching fate. "You have lost," said Saturninus, on the day of his elevation, "you have lost a useful commander, and you have made a very wretched emperor."<sup>b</sup>

Their violent deaths.

The apprehensions of Saturninus were justified by the repeated experience of revolutions. Of the nineteen tyrants who started up under the reign of Gallienus, there was not one who enjoyed a life of peace, or a natural death. As soon as they were invested with the bloody purple, they inspired their adherents with the same fears and ambition which had occasioned their own revolt. Encompassed with domestic conspiracy, military sedition, and civil war, they trembled on the edge of precipices, in which, after a longer or shorter term of anxiety, they were inevitably lost. These precarious monarchs

<sup>b</sup> Hist. August. p. 196.

received, however, such honours, as the flattery of their respective armies and provinces could bestow: but their claim, founded on rebellion, could never obtain the sanction of law or history. Italy, Rome, and the senate, constantly adhered to the cause of Gallienus, and he alone was considered as the sovereign of the empire. That prince condescended, indeed, to acknowledge the victorious arms of Odenathus, who deserved the honourable distinction, by the respectful conduct which he always maintained towards the son of Valerian. With the general applause of the Romans, and the consent of Gallienus, the senate conferred the title of Augustus on the brave Palmyrenian; and seemed to intrust him with the government of the East, which he already possessed, in so independent a manner, that, like a private succession, he bequeathed it to his illustrious widow Zenobia.\*

The rapid and perpetual transitions from the cottage to the throne, and from the throne to the grave, might have amused an indifferent philosopher; were it possible for a philosopher to remain indifferent amidst the general calamities of human kind. The election of these precarious emperors, their power, and their death, were equally destructive to their subjects and adherents. The price of their fatal elevation was instantly discharged to the troops, by an immense donative, drawn from the bowels of the exhausted

Fatal consequences of these usurpations.

\* The association of the brave Palmyrenian was the most popular act of the whole reign of Gallienus. Hist. August. p. 180.



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people. However virtuous was their character, however pure their intentions, they found themselves reduced to the hard necessity of supporting their usurpation by frequent acts of rapine and cruelty. When they fell, they involved armies and provinces in their fall. There is still extant a most savage mandate from Gallienus to one of his ministers, after the suppression of Ingenuus, who had assumed the purple in Illyricum. "It is not enough," says that soft but inhuman prince, "that you exterminate such as have appeared in arms: the chance of battle might have served me as effectually. The male sex of every age must be extirpated; provided that, in the execution of the children and old men, you can contrive means to save our reputation. Let every one die who has dropt an expression, who has entertained a thought against me, against me, the son of Valerian, the father and brother of so many princes." "Remember that Ingenuus was made emperor; tear, kill, hew in pieces. I write to you with my own hand, and would inspire you with my own feelings." Whilst the public forces of the state were dissipated in private quarrels,

\* Gallienus had given the titles of Cæsar and Augustus to his son Saloninus, slain at Cologne by the usurper Posthumus. A second son of Gallienus succeeded to the name and rank of his elder brother. Valerian, the brother of Gallienus, was also associated to the empire: several other brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces, of the emperor, formed a very numerous royal family. See Tillemont, tom. iii. and M. de Brequigny in the *Memoires de l'Academie*, tom. xxiii, p. 262.

\* Hist. August. p. 59.

the defenceless provinces lay exposed to every invader. The bravest usurpers were compelled, by the perplexity of their situation, to conclude ignominious treaties with the common enemy, to purchase with oppressive tributes the neutrality or services of the barbarians, and to introduce hostile and independent nations into the heart of the Roman monarchy.<sup>1</sup>

Such were the barbarians, and such the tyrants, who, under the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, dismembered the provinces, and reduced the empire to the lowest pitch of disgrace and ruin, from whence it seemed impossible that it should ever emerge. As far as the barrenness of materials would permit, we have attempted to trace, with order and perspicuity, the general events of that calamitous period. There still remain some particular facts; 1. The disorders of Sicily; 11. The tumults of Alexandria; and, 111. The rebellion of the Isaurians, which may serve to reflect a strong light on the horrid picture.

1. Whenever numerous troops of banditti, multiplied by success and impunity, publicly defy, instead of eluding, the justice of their country, we may safely infer, that the excessive weakness of the government is felt and abused by the lowest ranks of the community. The situation of Sicily preserved it from the barbarians; nor could the disarmed province have supported an usurper. The sufferings of that

Disorders  
of Sicily.

<sup>1</sup> Regillianus had some bands of Roxolani in his service. Posthumus a body of Franks. It was perhaps in the character of auxiliaries that the latter introduced themselves into Spain.

CHAP. X. once flourishing and still fertile island, were inflicted by baser hands. A licentious crowd of slaves and peasants reigned for a while over the plundered country, and renewed the memory of the servile wars of more ancient times.<sup>5</sup> Devastations of which the husbandman was either the victim or the accomplice, must have ruined the agriculture of Sicily; and as the principal estates were the property of the opulent senators of Rome, who often enclosed within a farm, the territory of an old republic, it is not improbable, that this private injury might affect the capital more deeply than all the conquests of the Goths or the Persians.

Tumults  
of Alex-  
andria.

11. The foundation of Alexandria was a noble design, at once conceived and executed by the son of Philip. The beautiful and regular form of that great city, second only to Rome itself, comprehended a circumference of fifteen miles;<sup>6</sup> it was peopled by three hundred thousand free inhabitants, besides at least an equal number of slaves.<sup>7</sup> The lucrative trade of Arabia and India flowed through the port of Alexandria to the capital and provinces of the empire. Idleness was unknown. Some were employed in blowing of glass, others in weaving of linen, others again manufacturing the papyrus. Either sex, and every age, was engaged in the pursuits of industry; nor did even the blind or the lame want

<sup>5</sup> The Augustan History, p. 177, calls it *servile bellum*. See Diodor. Sicul. l. xxxiv.

<sup>6</sup> Plin. Hist. Natur. v, 10.

<sup>7</sup> Diodor. Sicul. l. xvii, p. 590. Edit. Wesseling.



occupations suited to their condition.<sup>\*</sup> But the people of Alexandria, a various mixture of nations, united the vanity and inconstancy of the Greeks, with the superstition and obstinacy of the Egyptians. The most trifling occasion, a transient scarcity of flesh or lentils, the neglect of an accustomed salutation, a mistake of precedency in the public baths, or even a religious dispute,<sup>†</sup> were at any time sufficient to kindle a sedition among that vast multitude, whose resentments were furious and implacable.<sup>‡</sup> After the captivity of Valerian and the insolence of his son had relaxed the authority of the laws, the Alexandrians abandoned themselves to the ungoverned rage of their passions, and their unhappy country was the theatre of a civil war, which continued (with a few short and suspicious truces) above twelve years.<sup>§</sup> All intercourse was cut off between the several quarters of the afflicted city, every street was polluted with blood, every building of strength converted into a citadel; nor did the tumults subside, till a considerable part of Alexandria was irretrievably ruined. The spacious and magnificent district of Bruchion, with its palaces and museum, the residence of the

<sup>\*</sup> See a very curious letter of Hadrian in the Augustan History, p. 245.

<sup>†</sup> Such as the sacrilegious murder of a divine cat. See Diodor. Sicul. l. i.

<sup>‡</sup> Hist. August. p. 195. This long and terrible sedition was first occasioned by a dispute between a soldier and a townsman about a pair of shoes.

<sup>§</sup> Dionysius apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles. vol. vii, p. 41. Ammian. xlii, 16.

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kings and philosophers of Egypt, is described above a century afterwards, as already reduced to its present state of dreary solitude.\*

Rebellion  
of the  
Isaurians.

III. The obscure rebellion of Trebellianus, who assumed the purple in Isauria, a petty province of Asia Minor, was attended with strange and memorable consequences. The pageant of royalty was soon destroyed by an officer of Gallienus; but his followers, despairing of mercy, resolved to shake off their allegiance, not only to the emperor, but to the empire, and suddenly returned to the savage manners, from which they had never perfectly been reclaimed. Their craggy rocks, a branch of the wide extended Taurus, protected their inaccessible retreat. The tillage of some fertile vallies<sup>b</sup> supplied them with necessaries, and a habit of rapine with the luxuries of life. In the heart of the Roman monarchy, the Isaurians long continued a nation of wild barbarians. Succeeding princes, unable to reduce them to obedience either by arms or policy, were compelled to acknowledge their weakness, by surrounding the hostile and independent spot, with a strong chain of fortifications,<sup>c</sup> which often proved insufficient to restrain the incursions of these domestic foes. The Isaurians, gradually extending their territory to the sea coast, subdued the western and mountainous part of Cilicia, formerly the nest of those daring

\* Scaliger, *Animadver. ad Euseb. Chron.* p. 258. Three dissertations of M. Bonamy, in the *Mém. de l'Académie*, tom. ix.

<sup>b</sup> Strabo, l. xii, p. 569.

*Hist. August.* p. 197.

pirates, against whom the republic had once been obliged to exert its utmost force, under the conduct of the great Pompey.<sup>2</sup>

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X.

Our habits of thinking so fondly connect the order of the universe with the fate of man, that this gloomy period of history has been decorated with inundations, earthquakes, uncommon meteors, preternatural darkness, and a crowd of prodigies, fictitious or exaggerated.<sup>3</sup> But a long and general famine was a calamity of a more serious kind. It was the inevitable consequence of rapine and oppression, which extirpated the produce of the present, and the hope of future harvests. Famine is almost always followed by epidemical diseases, the effect of scanty and unwholesome food. Other causes must, however, have contributed to the furious plague, which, from the year two hundred and fifty to the year two hundred and sixty-five, raged without interruption in every province, every city, and almost every family, of the Roman empire. During some time five thousand persons died daily in Rome; and many towns, that had escaped the hands of the barbarians, were entirely depopulated.<sup>4</sup>

Famine  
and pesti-  
lence.

We have the knowledge of a very curious circumstance, of some use perhaps in the melan-

Diminution of the  
human  
species.

<sup>2</sup> See Cellarius, Geogr. Antiq. tom. ii, p. 137, upon the Limits of Isauria.

<sup>3</sup> Hist. August. p. 177.

<sup>4</sup> Hist. August. p. 177. Zosimus, l. i, p. 24. Zonaras, l. xii, p. 623. Euseb. Chronicon. Victor in Epitom. Victor in Caesar. Eutropius, ix, 2. Orosius, vii, 21.



## CHAP.

## X.

choly calculation of human calamities. An exact register was kept at Alexandria of all the citizens entitled to receive the distribution of corn. It was found, that the ancient number of those comprised between the ages of forty and seventy, had been equal to the whole sum of claimants, from fourteen to fourscore years of age, who remained alive after the reign of Gallienus.\* Applying this authentic fact to the most correct tables of mortality, it evidently proves, that above half the people of Alexandria had perished ; and could we venture to extend the analogy to the other provinces, we might suspect, that war, pestilence, and famine, had consumed, in a few years, the moiety of the human species.†

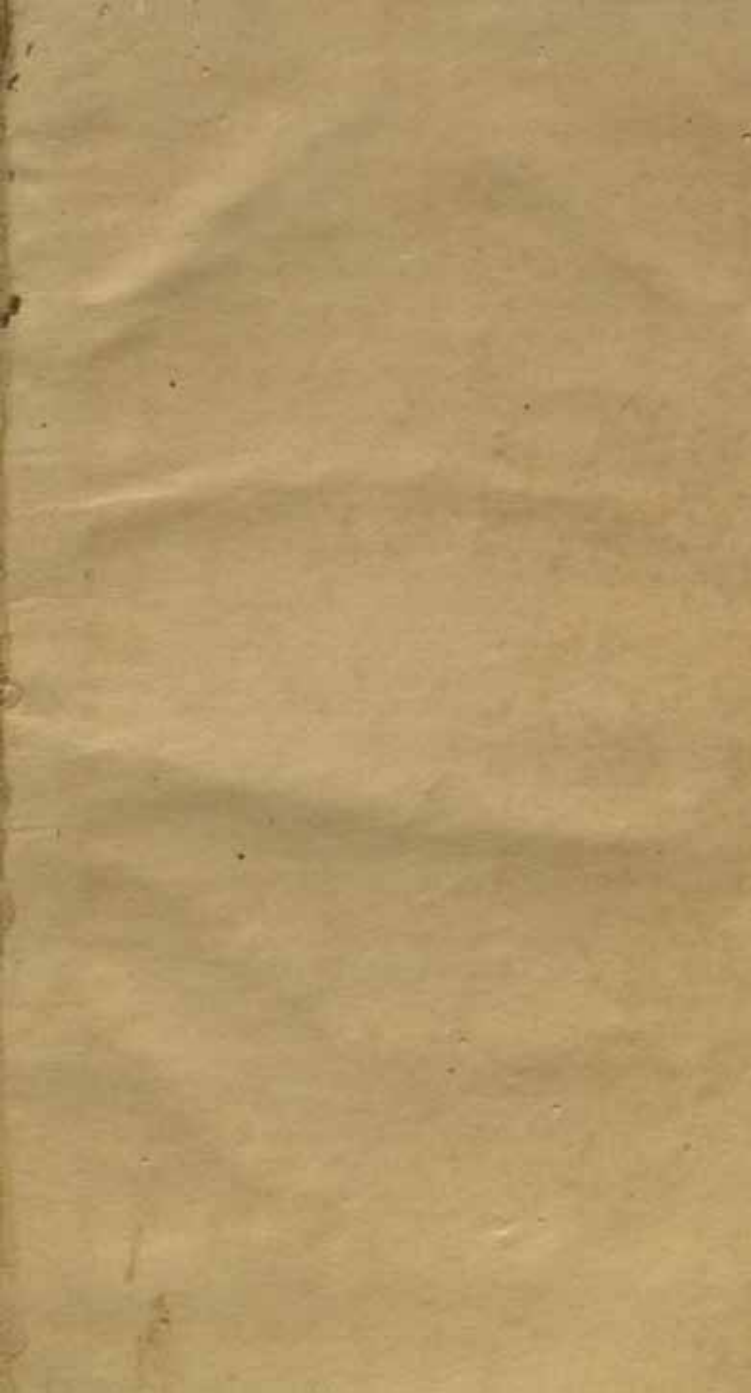
\* Euseb. Hist. Eccles. vii, 21. The fact is taken from the Letters of Dionysius, who, in the time of those troubles, was bishop of Alexandria.

† In a great number of parishes 11,000 persons were found between fourteen and eighty : 5365 between forty and seventy. See Buffon, Histoire Naturelle, tom. ii, p. 390.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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