

History Of The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire

Edward Gibbon, Esq.

With notes by the Rev. H. H. Milman

Complete Contents

1782 (Written), 1845 (Revised)

There are two Project Gutenberg sets produced by David Reed of the complete “History Of The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire” by Edward Gibbon: the 1996 edition (PG #731-736) has the advantage of including all the footnotes by Gibbon and others; the 1997 edition (PG #890-895) was provided at that time only in html format and footnotes were not included in the first five volumes of this set.

Project Gutenberg files #731-736 in the utf-8 charset are the basis of the present complete edition, #25717.

David Reed’s note in the original Project Gutenberg 1997 edition:

I want to make this the best etext edition possible for both scholars and the general public and would like to thank those who have helped in making this text better. Especially Dale R. Fredrickson who has hand entered the Greek characters in the footnotes and who has suggested retaining the conjoined ae character in the text.

A set in my library of the first original First American Edition of 1836 was used as a reference for the many questions which came up during the re-proofing and renovation of the 1996 and 1997 Project Gutenberg editions. Images of spines, front-leaf, frontispiece, and the titlepage of the 1836 set are inserted below along with the two large fold out maps.

DAVID WIDGER
For Project Gutenberg

MAPS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Western Empire

[Full Size](#) [Original Archive](#) [Full Size](#) [Original Archive](#)

[Full Size](#) [Original Archive](#) [Full Size](#) [Original Archive](#)

Eastern Empire

[Full Size](#) [Original Archive](#) [Full Size](#) [Original Archive](#)

[Full Size](#) [Original Archive](#) [Full Size](#) [Original Archive](#)

1996 Project Gutenberg Edition

Table of Contents for Ebooks 731-736

VOLUME ONE

[Introduction](#)

[Preface By The Editor.](#)

[Preface Of The Author.](#)

[Preface To The First Volume.](#)

[Preface To The Fourth Volume Of The Original Quarto Edition.](#)

[Chapter I: The Extent Of The Empire In The Age Of The Antonines—Part I.](#)

The Extent And Military Force Of The Empire In The Age Of
The Antonines.

[Chapter I: The Extent Of The Empire In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter I: The Extent Of The Empire In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter II: The Internal Prosperity In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part I.](#)

Of The Union And Internal Prosperity Of The Roman Empire,
In The Age Of The Antonines.

[Chapter II: The Internal Prosperity In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part II.](#)
[Chapter II: The Internal Prosperity In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part III.](#)
[Chapter II: The Internal Prosperity In The Age Of The Antonines. Part IV.](#)
[Chapter III: The Constitution In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part I.](#)

Of The Constitution Of The Roman Empire, In The Age Of The Antonines.

[Chapter III: The Constitution In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part II.](#)
[Chapter IV: The Cruelty, Follies And Murder Of Commodus.—Part I.](#)

The Cruelty, Follies, And Murder Of Commodus—Election Of Pertinax—His Attempts To Reform The State—His Assassination By The Prætorian Guards.

[Chapter IV: The Cruelty, Follies And Murder Of Commodus.—Part II.](#)
[Chapter V: Sale Of The Empire To Didius Julianus.—Part I.](#)

Public Sale Of The Empire To Didius Julianus By The Prætorian Guards—Clodius Albinus In Britain, Pescennius Niger In Syria, And Septimius Severus In Pannonia, Declare Against The Murderers Of Pertinax—Civil Wars And Victory Of Severus Over His Three Rivals—Relaxation Of Discipline—New Maxims Of Government.

[Chapter V: Sale Of The Empire To Didius Julianus.—Part II.](#)
[Chapter VI: Death Of Severus, Tyranny Of Caracalla, Usurpation Of Macrinus.—Part I.](#)

The Death Of Severus.—Tyranny Of Caracalla.—Usurpation Of Macrinus.—Follies Of Elagabalus.—Virtues Of Alexander Severus.—Licentiousness Of The Army.—General State Of The Roman Finances.

[Chapter VI: Death Of Severus, Tyranny Of Caracalla, Usurpation Of Macrinus.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter VI: Death Of Severus, Tyranny Of Caracalla, Usurpation Of Macrinus.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter VI: Death Of Severus, Tyranny Of Caracalla, Usurpation Of Macrinus.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter VII: Tyranny Of Maximin, Rebellion, Civil Wars, Death Of Maximin.—Part I.](#)

The Elevation And Tyranny Of Maximin.—Rebellion In Africa And Italy, Under The Authority Of The Senate.—Civil Wars And Seditions.—Violent Deaths Of Maximin And His Son, Of Maximus And Balbinus, And Of The Three Gordians.—Usurpation And Secular Games Of Philip.

[Chapter VII: Tyranny Of Maximin, Rebellion, Civil Wars, Death Of Maximin.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter VII: Tyranny Of Maximin, Rebellion, Civil Wars, Death Of Maximin.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter VIII: State Of Persion And Restoration Of The Monarchy.—Part I.](#)

Of The State Of Persia After The Restoration Of The Monarchy By Artaxerxes.

[Chapter VIII: State Of Persion And Restoration Of The Monarchy.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter IX: State Of Germany Until The Barbarians.—Part I.](#)

The State Of Germany Till The Invasion Of The Barbarians In The Time Of The Emperor Decius.

[Chapter IX: State Of Germany Until The Barbarians.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter IX: State Of Germany Until The Barbarians.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter X: Emperors Decius, Gallus, Æmilianus, Valerian And Gallienus—Part I.](#)

The Emperors Decius, Gallus, Æmilianus, Valerian, And Gallienus.—The General Irruption Of The Barbarians.—The Thirty Tyrants.

[Chapter X: Emperors Decius, Gallus, Æmilianus, Valerian And Gallienus.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter X: Emperors Decius, Gallus, Æmilianus, Valerian And Gallienus.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter X: Emperors Decius, Gallus, Æmilianus, Valerian And Gallienus.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XI: Reign Of Claudius, Defeat Of The Goths.—Part I.](#)

Reign Of Claudius.—Defeat Of The Goths.—Victories, Triumph, And Death Of Aurelian.

[Chapter XI: Reign Of Claudius, Defeat Of The Goths.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XI: Reign Of Claudius, Defeat Of The Goths.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XII: Reigns Of Tacitus, Probus, Carus And His Sons.—Part I.](#)

Conduct Of The Army And Senate After The Death Of Aurelian.
—Reigns Of Tacitus, Probus, Carus, And His Sons.

[Chapter XII: Reigns Of Tacitus, Probus, Carus And His Sons.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XII: Reigns Of Tacitus, Probus, Carus And His Sons.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XIII: Reign Of Diocletian And His Three Associates.—Part I.](#)

The Reign Of Diocletian And His Three Associates, Maximian, Galerius, And Constantius.—General Reestablishment Of Order And Tranquillity.—The Persian War, Victory, And Triumph.—The New Form Of Administration.—Abdication And Retirement Of Diocletian And Maximian.

[Chapter XIII: Reign Of Diocletian And His Three Associates.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XIII: Reign Of Diocletian And His Three Associates.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XIII: Reign Of Diocletian And His Three Associates.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XIV: Six Emperors At The Same Time, Reunion Of The Empire.—Part I.](#)

Troubles After The Abdication Of Diocletian.—Death Of Constantius.—Elevation Of Constantine And Maxentius.— Six Emperors At The Same Time.—Death Of Maximian And Galerius.—Victories Of Constantine Over Maxentius And Licinus.—Reunion Of The Empire Under The Authority Of Constantine.

[Chapter XIV: Six Emperors At The Same Time, Reunion Of The Empire.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XIV: Six Emperors At The Same Time, Reunion Of The Empire.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XIV: Six Emperors At The Same Time, Reunion Of The Empire.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part I.](#)

The Progress Of The Christian Religion, And The Sentiments, Manners, Numbers, And Condition Of The Primitive Christians.

[Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part VI.](#)

[Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part VII.](#)

[Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part VIII.](#)

[Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part IX.](#)

[VOLUME TWO](#)

[Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part I.](#)

The Conduct Of The Roman Government Towards The
Christians, From The Reign Of Nero To That Of Constantine.

[Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part
II.](#)

[Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part
III.](#)

[Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part
IV.](#)

[Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part
V.](#)

[Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part
VI.](#)

[Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part
VII.](#)

[Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part
VIII.](#)

[Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part I.](#)

Foundation Of Constantinople.—Political System Constantine,
And His Successors.—Military Discipline.—The Palace.—The
Finances.

[Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part VI.](#)

[Chapter XVIII: Character Of Constantine And His Sons.—Part I.](#)

Character Of Constantine.—Gothic War.—Death Of
Constantine.—Division Of The Empire Among His Three
Sons.— Persian War.—Tragic Deaths Of Constantine The

Younger And Constans.—Usurpation Of Magnentius.—Civil War.—Victory Of Constantius.

[Chapter XVIII: Character Of Constantine And His Sons.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XVIII: Character Of Constantine And His Sons.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XVIII: Character Of Constantine And His Sons.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XIX: Constantius Sole Emperor.—Part I.](#)

Constantius Sole Emperor.—Elevation And Death Of Gallus.—Danger And Elevation Of Julian.—Sarmatian And Persian Wars.—Victories Of Julian In Gaul.

[Chapter XIX: Constantius Sole Emperor.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XIX: Constantius Sole Emperor.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XIX: Constantius Sole Emperor.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XX: Conversion Of Constantine.—Part I.](#)

The Motives, Progress, And Effects Of The Conversion Of Constantine.—Legal Establishment And Constitution Of The Christian Or Catholic Church.

[Chapter XX: Conversion Of Constantine.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XX: Conversion Of Constantine.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XX: Conversion Of Constantine.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.—Part I.](#)

Persecution Of Heresy.—The Schism Of The Donatists.—The Arian Controversy.—Athanasius.—Distracted State Of The Church And Empire Under Constantine And His Sons.—Toleration Of Paganism.

[Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.—Part VI.](#)

[Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.—Part VII.](#)

[Chapter XXII: Julian Declared Emperor.—Part I.](#)

Julian Is Declared Emperor By The Legions Of Gaul.—His March And Success.—The Death Of Constantius.—Civil Administration Of Julian.

[Chapter XXII: Julian Declared Emperor.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXII: Julian Declared Emperor.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXII: Julian Declared Emperor.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXIII: Reign Of Julian.—Part I.](#)

The Religion Of Julian.—Universal Toleration.—He Attempts To Restore And Reform The Pagan Worship—To Rebuild The Temple Of Jerusalem—His Artful Persecution Of The Christians.—Mutual Zeal And Injustice.

[Chapter XXIII: Reign Of Julian.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXIII: Reign Of Julian.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXIII: Reign Of Julian.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXIII: Reign Of Julian.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XXIV: The Retreat And Death Of Julian.—Part I.](#)

Residence Of Julian At Antioch.—His Successful Expedition Against The Persians.—Passage Of The Tigris—The Retreat And Death Of Julian.—Election Of Jovian.—He Saves The Roman Army By A Disgraceful Treaty.

[Chapter XXIV: The Retreat And Death Of Julian.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXIV: The Retreat And Death Of Julian.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXIV: The Retreat And Death Of Julian.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXIV: The Retreat And Death Of Julian.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part I.](#)

The Government And Death Of Jovian.—Election Of Valentinian, Who Associates His Brother Valens, And Makes The Final Division Of The Eastern And Western Empires.—Revolt Of Procopius.—Civil And Ecclesiastical Administration.—Germany.—Britain.—Africa.—The East.—The Danube.—Death Of Valentinian.—His Two Sons, Gratian And Valentinian II., Succeed To The Western Empire.

[Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part VI.](#)

[Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part VII.](#)

[Chapter XXVI: Progress of The Huns.—Part I.](#)

Manners Of The Pastoral Nations.—Progress Of The Huns, From China To Europe.—Flight Of The Goths.—They Pass The Danube.—Gothic War.—Defeat And Death Of Valens.—Gratian Invests Theodosius With The Eastern Empire.—His Character And Success.—Peace And Settlement Of The Goths.

[Chapter XXVI: Progress of The Huns.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXVI: Progress of The Huns.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXVI: Progress of The Huns.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXVI: Progress of The Huns.—Part V.](#)

[VOLUME THREE](#)

[Chapter XXVII: Civil Wars, Reign Of Theodosius.—Part I.](#)

Death Of Gratian.—Ruin Of Arianism.—St. Ambrose.—First Civil War, Against Maximus.—Character, Administration, And Penance Of Theodosius.—Death Of Valentinian II.—Second Civil War, Against Eugenius.—Death Of Theodosius.

[Chapter XXVII: Civil Wars, Reign Of Theodosius.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXVII: Civil Wars, Reign Of Theodosius.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXVII: Civil Wars, Reign Of Theodosius.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXVII: Civil Wars, Reign Of Theodosius.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XXVIII: Destruction Of Paganism.—Part I.](#)

Final Destruction Of Paganism.—Introduction Of The Worship Of Saints, And Relics, Among The Christians.

[Chapter XXVIII: Destruction Of Paganism.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXVIII: Destruction Of Paganism.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXIX: Division Of Roman Empire Between Sons Of Theodosius.—Part I.](#)

Final Division Of The Roman Empire Between The Sons Of Theodosius.—Reign Of Arcadius And Honorius—Administration Of Rufinus And Stilicho.—Revolt And Defeat Of Gildo In Africa.

[Chapter XXIX: Division Of Roman Empire Between Sons Of Theodosius.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXX: Revolt Of The Goths.—Part I.](#)

Revolt Of The Goths.—They Plunder Greece.—Two Great Invasions Of Italy By Alaric And Radagaisus.—They Are Repulsed By Stilicho.—The Germans Overrun Gaul.—Usurpation Of Constantine In The West.—Disgrace And Death Of Stilicho.

[Chapter XXX: Revolt Of The Goths.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXX: Revolt Of The Goths.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXX: Revolt Of The Goths.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXX: Revolt Of The Goths.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part I.](#)

Invasion Of Italy By Alaric.—Manners Of The Roman Senate And People.—Rome Is Thrice Besieged, And At Length Pillaged, By The Goths.—Death Of Alaric.—The Goths Evacuate Italy.—Fall Of Constantine.—Gaul And Spain Are Occupied By The Barbarians. —Independence Of Britain.

[Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part VI.](#)

[Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part VII.](#)

[Chapter XXXII: Emperors Arcadius, Eutropius, Theodosius II.—Part I.](#)

Arcadius Emperor Of The East.—Administration And Disgrace Of Eutropius.—Revolt Of Gainas.—Persecution Of St. John Chrysostom.—Theodosius II. Emperor Of The East.—His Sister Pulcheria.—His Wife Eudocia.—The Persian War, And Division Of Armenia.

[Chapter XXXII: Emperors Arcadius, Eutropius, Theodosius II.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXXII: Emperors Arcadius, Eutropius, Theodosius II.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXXIII: Conquest Of Africa By The Vandals.—Part I.](#)

Death Of Honorius.—Valentinian III.—Emperor Of The East.—Administration Of His Mother Placidia—Aetius And Boniface.—Conquest Of Africa By The Vandals.

[Chapter XXXIII: Conquest Of Africa By The Vandals.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXXIV: Attila.—Part I.](#)

The Character, Conquests, And Court Of Attila, King Of The Huns.—Death Of Theodosius The Younger.—Elevation Of Marcian To The Empire Of The East.

[Chapter XXXIV: Attila.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXXIV: Attila.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXXV: Invasion By Attila.—Part I.](#)

Invasion Of Gaul By Attila.—He Is Repulsed By Aetius And The Visigoths.—Attila Invades And Evacuates Italy.—The Deaths Of Attila, Aetius, And Valentinian The Third.

[Chapter XXXV: Invasion By Attila.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXXV: Invasion By Attila.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXXVI: Total Extinction Of The Western Empire.—Part I.](#)

Sack Of Rome By Genseric, King Of The Vandals.—His Naval Depredations.—Succession Of The Last Emperors Of The West, Maximus, Avitus, Majorian, Severus, Anthemius, Olybrius, Glycerius, Nepos, Augustulus.—Total Extinction Of The

Western Empire.—Reign Of Odoacer, The First Barbarian King Of Italy.

[Chapter XXXVI: Total Extinction Of The Western Empire.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXXVI: Total Extinction Of The Western Empire.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXXVI: Total Extinction Of The Western Empire.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXXVI: Total Extinction Of The Western Empire.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XXXVII: Conversion Of The Barbarians To Christianity.—Part I.](#)

Origin Progress, And Effects Of The Monastic Life.—
Conversion Of The Barbarians To Christianity And Arianism.—
Persecution Of The Vandals In Africa.—Extinction Of Arianism
Among The Barbarians.

[Chapter XXXVII: Conversion Of The Barbarians To Christianity.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXXVII: Conversion Of The Barbarians To Christianity.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXXVII: Conversion Of The Barbarians To Christianity.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part I.](#)

Reign And Conversion Of Clovis.—His Victories Over The
Alemanni, Burgundians, And Visigoths.—Establishment Of The
French Monarchy In Gaul.—Laws Of The Barbarians.—State Of
The Romans.—The Visigoths Of Spain.—Conquest Of Britain
By The Saxons.

[Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part VI.](#)

VOLUME FOUR

[Chapter XXXIX: Gothic Kingdom Of Italy.—Part I.](#)

Zeno And Anastasius, Emperors Of The East.—Birth,
Education, And First Exploits Of Theodoric The Ostrogoth.—
His Invasion And Conquest Of Italy.—The Gothic Kingdom Of
Italy.—State Of The West.—Military And Civil Government.—
The Senator Boethius.—Last Acts And Death Of Theodoric.

[Chapter XXXIX: Gothic Kingdom Of Italy.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XXXIX: Gothic Kingdom Of Italy.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XL: Reign Of Justinian.—Part I.](#)

Elevation Of Justin The Elder.—Reign Of Justinian.—I. The Empress Theodora.—II. Factions Of The Circus, And Sedition Of Constantinople.—III. Trade And Manufacture Of Silk.—IV. Finances And Taxes.—V. Edifices Of Justinian.—Church Of St. Sophia.—Fortifications And Frontiers Of The Eastern Empire.—Abolition Of The Schools Of Athens, And The Consulship Of Rome.

[Chapter XL: Reign Of Justinian.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XL: Reign Of Justinian.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XL: Reign Of Justinian.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XL: Reign Of Justinian.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XLI: Conquests Of Justinian, Character Of Belisarius.—Part I.](#)

Conquests Of Justinian In The West.—Character And First Campaigns Of Belisarius—He Invades And Subdues The Vandal Kingdom Of Africa—His Triumph.—The Gothic War.—He Recovers Sicily, Naples, And Rome.—Siege Of Rome By The Goths.—Their Retreat And Losses.—Surrender Of Ravenna.—Glory Of Belisarius.—His Domestic Shame And Misfortunes.

[Chapter XLI: Conquests Of Justinian, Character Of Belisarius.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XLI: Conquests Of Justinian, Character Of Belisarius.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XLI: Conquests Of Justinian, Character Of Belisarius.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XLI: Conquests Of Justinian, Character Of Belisarius.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XLII: State Of The Barbaric World.—Part I.](#)

State Of The Barbaric World.—Establishment Of The Lombards On the Danube.—Tribes And Inroads Of The Slavonians.—Origin, Empire, And Embassies Of The Turks.—The Flight Of The Avars.—Chosroes I, Or Nushirvan, King Of Persia.—His Prosperous Reign And Wars With The Romans.—The Colchian Or Lazic War.—The Æthiopians.

[Chapter XLII: State Of The Barbaric World.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XLII: State Of The Barbaric World.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XLII: State Of The Barbaric World.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XLIII: Last Victory And Death Of Belisarius, Death Of Justinian.—Part I.](#)

Rebellions Of Africa.—Restoration Of The Gothic Kingdom By Totila.—Loss And Recovery Of Rome.—Final Conquest Of Italy By Narses.—Extinction Of The Ostrogoths.—Defeat Of The Franks And Alemanni.—Last Victory, Disgrace, And Death Of Belisarius.—Death And Character Of Justinian.—Comet, Earthquakes, And Plague.

[Chapter XLIII: Last Victory And Death Of Belisarius, Death Of Justinian.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XLIII: Last Victory And Death Of Belisarius, Death Of Justinian.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XLIII: Last Victory And Death Of Belisarius, Death Of Justinian.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part I.](#)

Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—The Laws Of The Kings—The Twelve Of The Decemvirs.—The Laws Of The People.—The Decrees Of The Senate.—The Edicts Of The Magistrates And Emperors—Authority Of The Civilians.—Code, Pandects, Novels, And Institutes Of Justinian:—I. Rights Of Persons.—II. Rights Of Things.—III. Private Injuries And Actions.—IV. Crimes And Punishments.

[Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part VI.](#)

[Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part VII.](#)

[Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part VIII.](#)

[Chapter XLV: State Of Italy Under The Lombards.—Part I.](#)

Reign Of The Younger Justin.—Embassy Of The Avars.—Their Settlement On The Danube.—Conquest Of Italy By The Lombards.—Adoption And Reign Of Tiberius.—Of Maurice.—State Of Italy Under The Lombards And The Exarchs.—Of Ravenna.—Distress Of Rome.—Character And Pontificate Of Gregory The First.

[Chapter XLV: State Of Italy Under The Lombards.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XLV: State Of Italy Under The Lombards.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XLVI: Troubles In Persia.—Part I.](#)

Revolutions On Persia After The Death Of Chosroes On Nushirvan.—His Son Hormouz, A Tyrant, Is Deposed.—Usurpation Of Baharam.—Flight And Restoration Of Chosroes II.—His Gratitude To The Romans.—The Chagan Of The Avars.—Revolt Of The Army Against Maurice.—His Death.—Tyranny Of Phocas.—Elevation Of Heraclius.—The Persian War.—Chosroes Subdues Syria, Egypt, And Asia Minor.—Siege Of Constantinople By The Persians And Avars.—Persian Expeditions.—Victories And Triumph Of Heraclius.

[Chapter XLVI: Troubles In Persia.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XLVI: Troubles In Persia.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XLVI: Troubles In Persia.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XLVII: Ecclesiastical Discord.—Part I.](#)

Theological History Of The Doctrine Of The Incarnation.—The Human And Divine Nature Of Christ.—Enmity Of The Patriarchs Of Alexandria And Constantinople.—St. Cyril And Nestorius. —Third General Council Of Ephesus.—Heresy Of Eutyches.—Fourth General Council Of Chalcedon.—Civil And Ecclesiastical Discord.—Intolerance Of Justinian.—The Three Chapters.—The Monothelite Controversy.—State Of The Oriental Sects:—I. The Nestorians.—II. The Jacobites.—III. The Maronites.—IV. The Armenians.—V. The Copts And Abyssinians.

[Chapter XLVII: Ecclesiastical Discord.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XLVII: Ecclesiastical Discord.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XLVII: Ecclesiastical Discord.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XLVII: Ecclesiastical Discord.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XLVII: Ecclesiastical Discord.—Part VI.](#)

[Chapter XLVIII: Succession And Characters Of The Greek Emperors.—Part I.](#)

Plan Of The Two Last Volumes.—Succession And Characters Of The Greek Emperors Of Constantinople, From The Time Of Heraclius To The Latin Conquest.

[Chapter XLVIII: Succession And Characters Of The Greek Emperors.—Part II.](#)
[Chapter XLVIII: Succession And Characters Of The Greek Emperors.—Part III.](#)
[Chapter XLVIII: Succession And Characters Of The Greek Emperors.—Part IV.](#)
[Chapter XLVIII: Succession And Characters Of The Greek Emperors.—Part V.](#)

[VOLUME FIVE](#)

[Chapter XLIX: Conquest Of Italy By The Franks.—Part I.](#)

Introduction, Worship, And Persecution Of Images.—Revolt Of Italy And Rome.—Temporal Dominion Of The Popes.—Conquest Of Italy By The Franks.—Establishment Of Images.—Character And Coronation Of Charlemagne.—Restoration And Decay Of The Roman Empire In The West.—Independence Of Italy.— Constitution Of The Germanic Body.

[Chapter XLIX: Conquest Of Italy By The Franks.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter XLIX: Conquest Of Italy By The Franks.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter XLIX: Conquest Of Italy By The Franks.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter XLIX: Conquest Of Italy By The Franks.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter XLIX: Conquest Of Italy By The Franks.—Part VI.](#)

[Chapter L: Description Of Arabia And Its Inhabitants.—Part I.](#)

Description Of Arabia And Its Inhabitants.—Birth, Character, And Doctrine Of Mahomet.—He Preaches At Mecca.— Flies To Medina.—Propagates His Religion By The Sword.— Voluntary Or Reluctant Submission Of The Arabs.—His Death And Successors.—The Claims And Fortunes Of Ali And His Descendants.

[Chapter L: Description Of Arabia And Its Inhabitants.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter L: Description Of Arabia And Its Inhabitants.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter L: Description Of Arabia And Its Inhabitants.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter L: Description Of Arabia And Its Inhabitants.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter L: Description Of Arabia And Its Inhabitants.—Part VI.](#)

[Chapter L: Description Of Arabia And Its Inhabitants.—Part VII.](#)

[Chapter L: Description Of Arabia And Its Inhabitants.—Part VIII.](#)

[Chapter LI: Conquests By The Arabs.—Part I.](#)

The Conquest Of Persia, Syria, Egypt, Africa, And Spain, By The Arabs Or Saracens.—Empire Of The Caliphs, Or Successors Of Mahomet.—State Of The Christians, &c., Under Their Government.

[Chapter LI: Conquests By The Arabs.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LI: Conquests By The Arabs.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LI: Conquests By The Arabs.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter LI: Conquests By The Arabs.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter LI: Conquests By The Arabs.—Part VI.](#)

[Chapter LI: Conquests By The Arabs.—Part VII.](#)

[Chapter LII: More Conquests By The Arabs.—Part I.](#)

The Two Sieges Of Constantinople By The Arabs.—Their Invasion Of France, And Defeat By Charles Martel.—Civil War Of The Ommiades And Abbassides.—Learning Of The Arabs.—Luxury Of The Caliphs.—Naval Enterprises On Crete, Sicily, And Rome.—Decay And Division Of The Empire Of The Caliphs. —Defeats And Victories Of The Greek Emperors.

[Chapter LII: More Conquests By The Arabs.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LII: More Conquests By The Arabs.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LII: More Conquests By The Arabs.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter LII: More Conquests By The Arabs.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter LIII: Fate Of The Eastern Empire.—Part I.](#)

Fate Of The Eastern Empire In The Tenth Century.—Extent And Division.—Wealth And Revenue.—Palace Of Constantinople.—Titles And Offices.—Pride And Power Of The Emperors.—Tactics Of The Greeks, Arabs, And Franks.—Loss Of The Latin Tongue.—Studies And Solitude Of The Greeks.

[Chapter LIII: Fate Of The Eastern Empire.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LIII: Fate Of The Eastern Empire.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LIII: Fate Of The Eastern Empire.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter LIV: Origin And Doctrine Of The Paulicians.—Part I.](#)

Origin And Doctrine Of The Paulicians.—Their Persecution By The Greek Emperors.—Revolt In Armenia &c.—

Transplantation Into Thrace.—Propagation In The West.—The Seeds, Character, And Consequences Of The Reformation.

[Chapter LIV: Origin And Doctrine Of The Paulicians.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LV: The Bulgarians, The Hungarians And The Russians.—Part I.](#)

The Bulgarians.—Origin, Migrations, And Settlement Of The Hungarians.—Their Inroads In The East And West.—The Monarchy Of Russia.—Geography And Trade.—Wars Of The Russians Against The Greek Empire.—Conversion Of The Barbarians.

[Chapter LV: The Bulgarians, The Hungarians And The Russians.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LV: The Bulgarians, The Hungarians And The Russians.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LVI: The Saracens, The Franks And The Normans.—Part I.](#)

The Saracens, Franks, And Greeks, In Italy.—First Adventures And Settlement Of The Normans.—Character And Conquest Of Robert Guiscard, Duke Of Apulia—Deliverance Of Sicily By His Brother Roger.—Victories Of Robert Over The Emperors Of The East And West.—Roger, King Of Sicily, Invades Africa And Greece.—The Emperor Manuel Comnenus.—Wars Of The Greeks And Normans.—Extinction Of The Normans.

[Chapter LVI: The Saracens, The Franks And The Normans.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LVI: The Saracens, The Franks And The Normans.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LVI: The Saracens, The Franks And The Normans.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter LVI: The Saracens, The Franks And The Normans.—Part V.](#)

[Chapter LVII: The Turks.—Part I.](#)

The Turks Of The House Of Seljuk.—Their Revolt Against Mahmud Conqueror Of Hindostan.—Togrul Subdues Persia, And Protects The Caliphs.—Defeat And Captivity Of The Emperor Romanus Diogenes By Alp Arslan.—Power And Magnificence Of Malek Shah.—Conquest Of Asia Minor And Syria.—State And Oppression Of Jerusalem.—Pilgrimages To The Holy Sepulchre.

[Chapter LVII: The Turks.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LVII: The Turks.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LVIII: The First Crusade.—Part I.](#)

Origin And Numbers Of The First Crusade.—Characters Of The Latin Princes.—Their March To Constantinople.—Policy Of The Greek Emperor Alexius.—Conquest Of Nice, Antioch, And Jerusalem, By The Franks.—Deliverance Of The Holy Sepulchre.—Godfrey Of Bouillon, First King Of Jerusalem.—Institutions Of The French Or Latin Kingdom.

[Chapter LVIII: The First Crusade.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LVIII: The First Crusade.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LVIII: The First Crusade.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter LVIII: The First Crusade.—Part V.](#)

[VOLUME SIX](#)

[Chapter LIX: The Crusades.—Part I.](#)

[Chapter LIX: The Crusades.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LIX: The Crusades.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LX: The Fourth Crusade.—Part I.](#)

[Chapter LX: The Fourth Crusade.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LX: The Fourth Crusade.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LXI: Partition Of The Empire By The French And Venetians.—Part I.](#)

[Chapter LXI: Partition Of The Empire By The French And Venetians.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LXI: Partition Of The Empire By The French And Venetians.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LXI: Partition Of The Empire By The French And Venetians.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter LXII: Greek Emperors Of Nice And Constantinople.—Part I.](#)

[Chapter LXII: Greek Emperors Of Nice And Constantinople.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LXII: Greek Emperors Of Nice And Constantinople.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LXIII: Civil Wars And The Ruin Of The Greek Empire.—Part I.](#)

[Chapter LXIII: Civil Wars And The Ruin Of The Greek Empire.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LXIV: Moguls, Ottoman Turks.—Part I.](#)

[Chapter LXIV: Moguls, Ottoman Turks.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LXIV: Moguls, Ottoman Turks.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LXIV: Moguls, Ottoman Turks.—Part IV.](#)

[Chapter LXV: Elevation Of Timour Or Tamerlane, And His Death.—Part I.](#)

[Chapter LXV: Elevation Of Timour Or Tamerlane, And His Death.—Part II.](#)

[Chapter LXV: Elevation Of Timour Or Tamerlane, And His Death.—Part III.](#)

[Chapter LXVI: Union Of The Greek And Latin Churches.—Part I.](#)

[Chapter LXVI: Union Of The Greek And Latin Churches.—Part II.](#)
[Chapter LXVI: Union Of The Greek And Latin Churches.—Part III.](#)
[Chapter LXVI: Union Of The Greek And Latin Churches.—Part IV.](#)
[Chapter LXVII: Schism Of The Greeks And Latins.—Part I.](#)
[Chapter LXVII: Schism Of The Greeks And Latins.—Part II.](#)
[Chapter LXVIII: Reign Of Mahomet The Second, Extinction Of Eastern Empire.—Part I.](#)
[Chapter LXVIII: Reign Of Mahomet The Second, Extinction Of Eastern Empire.—Part II.](#)
[Chapter LXVIII: Reign Of Mahomet The Second, Extinction Of Eastern Empire.—Part III.](#)
[Chapter LXVIII: Reign Of Mahomet The Second, Extinction Of Eastern Empire.—Part IV.](#)
[Chapter LXIX: State Of Rome From The Twelfth Century.—Part I.](#)
[Chapter LXIX: State Of Rome From The Twelfth Century.—Part II.](#)
[Chapter LXIX: State Of Rome From The Twelfth Century.—Part III.](#)
[Chapter LXIX: State Of Rome From The Twelfth Century.—Part IV.](#)
[Chapter LXX: Final Settlement Of The Ecclesiastical State.—Part I.](#)
[Chapter LXX: Final Settlement Of The Ecclesiastical State.—Part II.](#)
[Chapter LXX: Final Settlement Of The Ecclesiastical State.—Part III.](#)
[Chapter LXX: Final Settlement Of The Ecclesiastical State.—Part IV.](#)
[Chapter LXXI: Prospect Of The Ruins Of Rome In The Fifteenth Century.—Part I.](#)
[Chapter LXXI: Prospect Of The Ruins Of Rome In The Fifteenth Century.—Part II.](#)

HISTORY OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Edward Gibbon, Esq.

With notes by the Rev. H. H. Milman

Introduction

Preface By The Editor.

The great work of Gibbon is indispensable to the student of history. The literature of Europe offers no substitute for “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.” It has obtained undisputed possession, as rightful occupant, of the vast period which it comprehends. However some subjects, which it embraces, may have undergone more complete investigation, on the general view of the whole period, this history is the sole undisputed authority to which all defer, and from which few appeal to the original writers, or to more modern compilers. The inherent interest of the subject, the inexhaustible labor employed upon it; the immense condensation of matter; the luminous arrangement; the general accuracy; the style, which, however monotonous from its uniform stateliness, and sometimes wearisome from its elaborate art, is throughout vigorous, animated, often picturesque, always commands attention, always conveys its meaning with emphatic energy, describes with singular breadth and fidelity, and generalizes with unrivalled felicity of expression; all these high qualifications have secured, and seem likely to secure, its permanent place in historic literature.

This vast design of Gibbon, the magnificent whole into which he has cast the decay and ruin of the ancient civilization, the formation and birth of the new order of things, will of itself, independent of the laborious execution of his immense plan, render “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire” an unapproachable subject to the future historian: [101](#) in the eloquent language of his recent French editor, M. Guizot:—

101

[\(return\)](#)

[A considerable portion of this preface has already
appeared before us public in the Quarterly Review.]

“The gradual decline of the most extraordinary dominion which has ever invaded and oppressed the world; the fall of that immense empire, erected on the ruins of so many kingdoms, republics, and states both barbarous and civilized; and forming in its turn, by its dismemberment, a multitude of states, republics, and kingdoms; the annihilation of the religion of Greece and Rome; the birth and the progress of the two new religions which have shared the most beautiful regions of the earth; the decrepitude of the ancient world, the spectacle of its expiring glory and degenerate manners; the infancy of the

modern world, the picture of its first progress, of the new direction given to the mind and character of man—such a subject must necessarily fix the attention and excite the interest of men, who cannot behold with indifference those memorable epochs, during which, in the fine language of Corneille—

‘Un grand destin commence, un grand destin s’achève.’”

This extent and harmony of design is unquestionably that which distinguishes the work of Gibbon from all other great historical compositions. He has first bridged the abyss between ancient and modern times, and connected together the two great worlds of history. The great advantage which the classical historians possess over those of modern times is in unity of plan, of course greatly facilitated by the narrower sphere to which their researches were confined. Except Herodotus, the great historians of Greece—we exclude the more modern compilers, like Diodorus Siculus—limited themselves to a single period, or at ‘east to the contracted sphere of Grecian affairs. As far as the Barbarians trespassed within the Grecian boundary, or were necessarily mingled up with Grecian politics, they were admitted into the pale of Grecian history; but to Thucydides and to Xenophon, excepting in the Persian inroad of the latter, Greece was the world. Natural unity confined their narrative almost to chronological order, the episodes were of rare occurrence and extremely brief. To the Roman historians the course was equally clear and defined. Rome was their centre of unity; and the uniformity with which the circle of the Roman dominion spread around, the regularity with which their civil polity expanded, forced, as it were, upon the Roman historian that plan which Polybius announces as the subject of his history, the means and the manner by which the whole world became subject to the Roman sway. How different the complicated politics of the European kingdoms! Every national history, to be complete, must, in a certain sense, be the history of Europe; there is no knowing to how remote a quarter it may be necessary to trace our most domestic events; from a country, how apparently disconnected, may originate the impulse which gives its direction to the whole course of affairs.

In imitation of his classical models, Gibbon places *Rome* as the cardinal point from which his inquiries diverge, and to which they bear constant reference; yet how immeasurable the space over which those inquiries range! how complicated, how confused, how apparently inextricable the causes which tend to the decline of the Roman empire! how countless the nations which swarm forth, in mingling and indistinct hordes, constantly changing the geographical limits—incessantly confounding the natural boundaries! At first sight, the whole period, the whole state of the world, seems to offer no more secure footing to an historical adventurer than the chaos of Milton—to be in a state of irreclaimable disorder, best described in the language of the poet:—

—“A
Illimitable

ocean,

without

dark
bound,

Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height,
And time, and place, are lost: where eldest Night
And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold
Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise
Of endless wars, and by confusion stand.”

We feel that the unity and harmony of narrative, which shall comprehend this period of social disorganization, must be ascribed entirely to the skill and luminous disposition of the historian. It is in this sublime Gothic architecture of his work, in which the boundless range, the infinite variety, the, at first sight, incongruous gorgeousness of the separate parts, nevertheless are all subordinate to one main and predominant idea, that Gibbon is unrivalled. We cannot but admire the manner in which he masses his materials, and arranges his facts in successive groups, not according to chronological order, but to their moral or political connection; the distinctness with which he marks his periods of gradually increasing decay; and the skill with which, though advancing on separate parallels of history, he shows the common tendency of the slower or more rapid religious or civil innovations. However these principles of composition may demand more than ordinary attention on the part of the reader, they can alone impress upon the memory the real course, and the relative importance of the events. Whoever would justly appreciate the superiority of Gibbon’s lucid arrangement, should attempt to make his way through the regular but wearisome annals of Tillemont, or even the less ponderous volumes of Le Beau. Both these writers adhere, almost entirely, to chronological order; the consequence is, that we are twenty times called upon to break off, and resume the thread of six or eight wars in different parts of the empire; to suspend the operations of a military expedition for a court intrigue; to hurry away from a siege to a council; and the same page places us in the middle of a campaign against the barbarians, and in the depths of the Monophysite controversy. In Gibbon it is not always easy to bear in mind the exact dates but the course of events is ever clear and distinct; like a skilful general, though his troops advance from the most remote and opposite quarters, they are constantly bearing down and concentrating themselves on one point—that which is still occupied by the name, and by the waning power of Rome. Whether he traces the progress of hostile religions, or leads from the shores of the Baltic, or the verge of the Chinese empire, the successive hosts of barbarians—though one wave has hardly burst and discharged itself, before another swells up and approaches—all is made to flow in the same direction, and the impression which each makes upon the tottering fabric of the Roman greatness, connects their distant movements, and measures the relative importance assigned to them in the panoramic history. The more peaceful and didactic episodes on the development of the Roman law, or even on the details of ecclesiastical history, interpose themselves as resting-places or divisions between the periods of barbaric invasion. In short, though distracted first by the two capitals, and afterwards by the formal partition of the empire, the extraordinary felicity of arrangement maintains an order and a regular progression. As our horizon expands to

reveal to us the gathering tempests which are forming far beyond the boundaries of the civilized world—as we follow their successive approach to the trembling frontier—the compressed and receding line is still distinctly visible; though gradually dismembered and the broken fragments assuming the form of regular states and kingdoms, the real relation of those kingdoms to the empire is maintained and defined; and even when the Roman dominion has shrunk into little more than the province of Thrace—when the name of Rome, confined, in Italy, to the walls of the city—yet it is still the memory, the shade of the Roman greatness, which extends over the wide sphere into which the historian expands his later narrative; the whole blends into the unity, and is manifestly essential to the double catastrophe of his tragic drama.

But the amplitude, the magnificence, or the harmony of design, are, though imposing, yet unworthy claims on our admiration, unless the details are filled up with correctness and accuracy. No writer has been more severely tried on this point than Gibbon. He has undergone the triple scrutiny of theological zeal quickened by just resentment, of literary emulation, and of that mean and invidious vanity which delights in detecting errors in writers of established fame. On the result of the trial, we may be permitted to summon competent witnesses before we deliver our own judgment.

M. Guizot, in his preface, after stating that in France and Germany, as well as in England, in the most enlightened countries of Europe, Gibbon is constantly cited as an authority, thus proceeds:—

“I have had occasion, during my labors, to consult the writings of philosophers, who have treated on the finances of the Roman empire; of scholars, who have investigated the chronology; of theologians, who have searched the depths of ecclesiastical history; of writers on law, who have studied with care the Roman jurisprudence; of Orientalists, who have occupied themselves with the Arabians and the Koran; of modern historians, who have entered upon extensive researches touching the crusades and their influence; each of these writers has remarked and pointed out, in the ‘History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire,’ some negligences, some false or imperfect views, some omissions, which it is impossible not to suppose voluntary; they have rectified some facts, combated with advantage some assertions; but in general they have taken the researches and the ideas of Gibbon, as points of departure, or as proofs of the researches or of the new opinions which they have advanced.”

M. Guizot goes on to state his own impressions on reading Gibbon’s history, and no authority will have greater weight with those to whom the extent and accuracy of his historical researches are known:—

“After a first rapid perusal, which allowed me to feel nothing but the interest of a narrative, always animated, and, notwithstanding its extent and the variety of objects which it makes to pass before the view, always perspicuous, I entered upon a minute examination of the details of which it was composed; and the opinion which I then formed was, I confess, singularly severe. I discovered, in certain chapters, errors which

appeared to me sufficiently important and numerous to make me believe that they had been written with extreme negligence; in others, I was struck with a certain tinge of partiality and prejudice, which imparted to the exposition of the facts that want of truth and justice, which the English express by their happy term *misrepresentation*. Some imperfect (*tronquées*) quotations; some passages, omitted unintentionally or designedly cast a suspicion on the honesty (*bonne foi*) of the author; and his violation of the first law of history—increased to my eye by the prolonged attention with which I occupied myself with every phrase, every note, every reflection—caused me to form upon the whole work, a judgment far too rigorous. After having finished my labors, I allowed some time to elapse before I reviewed the whole. A second attentive and regular perusal of the entire work, of the notes of the author, and of those which I had thought it right to subjoin, showed me how much I had exaggerated the importance of the reproaches which Gibbon really deserved; I was struck with the same errors, the same partiality on certain subjects; but I had been far from doing adequate justice to the immensity of his researches, the variety of his knowledge, and above all, to that truly philosophical discrimination (*justesse d'esprit*) which judges the past as it would judge the present; which does not permit itself to be blinded by the clouds which time gathers around the dead, and which prevent us from seeing that, under the toga, as under the modern dress, in the senate as in our councils, men were what they still are, and that events took place eighteen centuries ago, as they take place in our days. I then felt that his book, in spite of its faults, will always be a noble work—and that we may correct his errors and combat his prejudices, without ceasing to admit that few men have combined, if we are not to say in so high a degree, at least in a manner so complete, and so well regulated, the necessary qualifications for a writer of history.”

The present editor has followed the track of Gibbon through many parts of his work; he has read his authorities with constant reference to his pages, and must pronounce his deliberate judgment, in terms of the highest admiration as to his general accuracy. Many of his seeming errors are almost inevitable from the close condensation of his matter. From the immense range of his history, it was sometimes necessary to compress into a single sentence, a whole vague and diffuse page of a Byzantine chronicler. Perhaps something of importance may have thus escaped, and his expressions may not quite contain the whole substance of the passage from which they are taken. His limits, at times, compel him to sketch; where that is the case, it is not fair to expect the full details of the finished picture. At times he can only deal with important results; and in his account of a war, it sometimes requires great attention to discover that the events which seem to be comprehended in a single campaign, occupy several years. But this admirable skill in selecting and giving prominence to the points which are of real weight and importance—this distribution of light and shade—though perhaps it may occasionally betray him into vague and imperfect statements, is one of the highest excellencies of Gibbon’s historic manner. It is the more striking, when we pass from the works of his chief authorities, where, after laboring through long, minute, and

wearisome descriptions of the accessory and subordinate circumstances, a single unmarked and undistinguished sentence, which we may overlook from the inattention of fatigue, contains the great moral and political result.

Gibbon's method of arrangement, though on the whole most favorable to the clear comprehension of the events, leads likewise to apparent inaccuracy. That which we expect to find in one part is reserved for another. The estimate which we are to form, depends on the accurate balance of statements in remote parts of the work; and we have sometimes to correct and modify opinions, formed from one chapter by those of another. Yet, on the other hand, it is astonishing how rarely we detect contradiction; the mind of the author has already harmonized the whole result to truth and probability; the general impression is almost invariably the same. The quotations of Gibbon have likewise been called in question;—I have, *in general*, been more inclined to admire their exactitude, than to complain of their indistinctness, or incompleteness. Where they are imperfect, it is commonly from the study of brevity, and rather from the desire of compressing the substance of his notes into pointed and emphatic sentences, than from dishonesty, or uncandid suppression of truth.

These observations apply more particularly to the accuracy and fidelity of the historian as to his facts; his inferences, of course, are more liable to exception. It is almost impossible to trace the line between unfairness and unfaithfulness; between intentional misrepresentation and undesigned false coloring. The relative magnitude and importance of events must, in some respect, depend upon the mind before which they are presented; the estimate of character, on the habits and feelings of the reader. Christians, like M. Guizot and ourselves, will see some things, and some persons, in a different light from the historian of the Decline and Fall. We may deplore the bias of his mind; we may ourselves be on our guard against the danger of being misled, and be anxious to warn less wary readers against the same perils; but we must not confound this secret and unconscious departure from truth, with the deliberate violation of that veracity which is the only title of an historian to our confidence. Gibbon, it may be fearlessly asserted, is rarely chargeable even with the suppression of any material fact, which bears upon individual character; he may, with apparently invidious hostility, enhance the errors and crimes, and disparage the virtues of certain persons; yet, in general, he leaves us the materials for forming a fairer judgment; and if he is not exempt from his own prejudices, perhaps we might write *passions*, yet it must be candidly acknowledged, that his philosophical bigotry is not more unjust than the theological partialities of those ecclesiastical writers who were before in undisputed possession of this province of history.

We are thus naturally led to that great misrepresentation which pervades his history—his false estimate of the nature and influence of Christianity.

But on this subject some preliminary caution is necessary, lest that should be expected from a new edition, which it is impossible that it should completely accomplish. We

must first be prepared with the only sound preservative against the false impression likely to be produced by the perusal of Gibbon; and we must see clearly the real cause of that false impression. The former of these cautions will be briefly suggested in its proper place, but it may be as well to state it, here, somewhat more at length. The art of Gibbon, or at least the unfair impression produced by his two memorable chapters, consists in his confounding together, in one indistinguishable mass, the *origin* and *apostolic* propagation of the new religion, with its *later* progress. No argument for the divine authority of Christianity has been urged with greater force, or traced with higher eloquence, than that deduced from its primary development, explicable on no other hypothesis than a heavenly origin, and from its rapid extension through great part of the Roman empire. But this argument—one, when confined within reasonable limits, of unanswerable force—becomes more feeble and disputable in proportion as it recedes from the birthplace, as it were, of the religion. The further Christianity advanced, the more causes purely human were enlisted in its favor; nor can it be doubted that those developed with such artful exclusiveness by Gibbon did concur most essentially to its establishment. It is in the Christian dispensation, as in the material world. In both it is as the great First Cause, that the Deity is most undeniably manifest. When once launched in regular motion upon the bosom of space, and endowed with all their properties and relations of weight and mutual attraction, the heavenly bodies appear to pursue their courses according to secondary laws, which account for all their sublime regularity. So Christianity proclaims its Divine Author chiefly in its first origin and development. When it had once received its impulse from above—when it had once been infused into the minds of its first teachers—when it had gained full possession of the reason and affections of the favored few—it *might be*—and to the Protestant, the rational Christian, it is impossible to define *when* it really *was*—left to make its way by its native force, under the ordinary secret agencies of all-ruling Providence. The main question, the *divine origin of the religion*, was dexterously eluded, or speciously conceded by Gibbon; his plan enabled him to commence his account, in most parts, *below the apostolic times*; and it was only by the strength of the dark coloring with which he brought out the failings and the follies of the succeeding ages, that a shadow of doubt and suspicion was thrown back upon the primitive period of Christianity.

“The theologian,” says Gibbon, “may indulge the pleasing task of describing religion as she descended from heaven, arrayed in her native purity; a more melancholy duty is imposed upon the historian:—he must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption which she contracted in a long residence upon earth among a weak and degenerate race of beings.” Divest this passage of the latent sarcasm betrayed by the subsequent tone of the whole disquisition, and it might commence a Christian history written in the most Christian spirit of candor. But as the historian, by seeming to respect, yet by dexterously confounding the limits of the sacred land, contrived to insinuate that it was an Utopia which had no existence but in the imagination of the theologian—as

he *suggested* rather than affirmed that the days of Christian purity were a kind of poetic golden age;—so the theologian, by venturing too far into the domain of the historian, has been perpetually obliged to contest points on which he had little chance of victory—to deny facts established on unshaken evidence—and thence, to retire, if not with the shame of defeat, yet with but doubtful and imperfect success. Paley, with his intuitive sagacity, saw through the difficulty of answering Gibbon by the ordinary arts of controversy; his emphatic sentence, “Who can refute a sneer?” contains as much truth as point. But full and pregnant as this phrase is, it is not quite the whole truth; it is the tone in which the progress of Christianity is traced, in *comparison* with the rest of the splendid and prodigally ornamented work, which is the radical defect in the “Decline and Fall.” Christianity alone receives no embellishment from the magic of Gibbon’s language; his imagination is dead to its moral dignity; it is kept down by a general zone of jealous disparagement, or neutralized by a painfully elaborate exposition of its darker and degenerate periods. There are occasions, indeed, when its pure and exalted humanity, when its manifestly beneficial influence, can compel even him, as it were, to fairness, and kindle his unguarded eloquence to its usual fervor; but, in general, he soon relapses into a frigid apathy; *affects* an ostentatiously severe impartiality; notes all the faults of Christians in every age with bitter and almost malignant sarcasm; reluctantly, and with exception and reservation, admits their claim to admiration. This inextricable bias appears even to influence his manner of composition. While all the other assailants of the Roman empire, whether warlike or religious, the Goth, the Hun, the Arab, the Tartar, Alaric and Attila, Mahomet, and Zengis, and Tamerlane, are each introduced upon the scene almost with dramatic animation—their progress related in a full, complete, and unbroken narrative—the triumph of Christianity alone takes the form of a cold and critical disquisition. The successes of barbarous energy and brute force call forth all the consummate skill of composition; while the moral triumphs of Christian benevolence—the tranquil heroism of endurance, the blameless purity, the contempt of guilty fame and of honors destructive to the human race, which, had they assumed the proud name of philosophy, would have been blazoned in his brightest words, because they own religion as their principle—sink into narrow asceticism. The *glories* of Christianity, in short, touch on no chord in the heart of the writer; his imagination remains unkindled; his words, though they maintain their stately and measured march, have become cool, argumentative, and inanimate. Who would obscure one hue of that gorgeous coloring in which Gibbon has invested the dying forms of Paganism, or darken one paragraph in his splendid view of the rise and progress of Mahometanism? But who would not have wished that the same equal justice had been done to Christianity; that its real character and deeply penetrating influence had been traced with the same philosophical sagacity, and represented with more sober, as would become its quiet course, and perhaps less picturesque, but still with lively and attractive, descriptiveness? He might have thrown aside, with the same scorn, the mass of ecclesiastical fiction which envelops the early history of the church, stripped off the

legendary romance, and brought out the facts in their primitive nakedness and simplicity—if he had but allowed those facts the benefit of the glowing eloquence which he denied to them alone. He might have annihilated the whole fabric of post-apostolic miracles, if he had left uninjured by sarcastic insinuation those of the New Testament; he might have cashiered, with Dodwell, the whole host of martyrs, which owe their existence to the prodigal invention of later days, had he but bestowed fair room, and dwelt with his ordinary energy on the sufferings of the genuine witnesses to the truth of Christianity, the Polycarps, or the martyrs of Vienne. And indeed, if, after all, the view of the early progress of Christianity be melancholy and humiliating we must beware lest we charge the whole of this on the infidelity of the historian. It is idle, it is disingenuous, to deny or to dissemble the early depravations of Christianity, its gradual but rapid departure from its primitive simplicity and purity, still more, from its spirit of universal love. It may be no unsalutary lesson to the Christian world, that this silent, this unavoidable, perhaps, yet fatal change shall have been drawn by an impartial, or even an hostile hand. The Christianity of every age may take warning, lest by its own narrow views, its want of wisdom, and its want of charity, it give the same advantage to the future unfriendly historian, and disparage the cause of true religion.

The design of the present edition is partly corrective, partly supplementary: corrective, by notes, which point out (it is hoped, in a perfectly candid and dispassionate spirit with no desire but to establish the truth) such inaccuracies or misstatements as may have been detected, particularly with regard to Christianity; and which thus, with the previous caution, may counteract to a considerable extent the unfair and unfavorable impression created against rational religion: supplementary, by adding such additional information as the editor's reading may have been able to furnish, from original documents or books, not accessible at the time when Gibbon wrote.

The work originated in the editor's habit of noting on the margin of his copy of Gibbon references to such authors as had discovered errors, or thrown new light on the subjects treated by Gibbon. These had grown to some extent, and seemed to him likely to be of use to others. The annotations of M. Guizot also appeared to him worthy of being better known to the English public than they were likely to be, as appended to the French translation.

The chief works from which the editor has derived his materials are, I. The French translation, with notes by M. Guizot; 2d edition, Paris, 1828. The editor has translated almost all the notes of M. Guizot. Where he has not altogether agreed with him, his respect for the learning and judgment of that writer has, in general, induced him to retain the statement from which he has ventured to differ, with the grounds on which he formed his own opinion. In the notes on Christianity, he has retained all those of M. Guizot, with his own, from the conviction, that on such a subject, to many, the authority of a French statesman, a Protestant, and a rational and sincere Christian, would appear more independent and unbiassed, and therefore be more commanding, than that of an English clergyman.

The editor has not scrupled to transfer the notes of M. Guizot to the present work. The well-known zeal for knowledge, displayed in all the writings of that distinguished historian, has led to the natural inference, that he would not be displeased at the attempt to make them of use to the English readers of Gibbon. The notes of M. Guizot are signed with the letter G.

II. The German translation, with the notes of Wenck. Unfortunately this learned translator died, after having completed only the first volume; the rest of the work was executed by a very inferior hand.

The notes of Wenck are extremely valuable; many of them have been adopted by M. Guizot; they are distinguished by the letter W. [102](#)

102

[\(return\)](#)

[The editor regrets that he has not been able to find the Italian translation, mentioned by Gibbon himself with some respect. It is not in our great libraries, the Museum or the Bodleian; and he has never found any bookseller in London who has seen it.]

III. The new edition of Le Beau's "Histoire du Bas Empire, with notes by M. St. Martin, and M. Brosset." That distinguished Armenian scholar, M. St. Martin (now, unhappily, deceased) had added much information from Oriental writers, particularly from those of Armenia, as well as from more general sources. Many of his observations have been found as applicable to the work of Gibbon as to that of Le Beau.

IV. The editor has consulted the various answers made to Gibbon on the first appearance of his work; he must confess, with little profit. They were, in general, hastily compiled by inferior and now forgotten writers, with the exception of Bishop Watson, whose able apology is rather a general argument, than an examination of misstatements. The name of Milner stands higher with a certain class of readers, but will not carry much weight with the severe investigator of history.

V. Some few classical works and fragments have come to light, since the appearance of Gibbon's History, and have been noticed in their respective places; and much use has been made, in the latter volumes particularly, of the increase to our stores of Oriental literature. The editor cannot, indeed, pretend to have followed his author, in these gleanings, over the whole vast field of his inquiries; he may have overlooked or may not have been able to command some works, which might have thrown still further light on these subjects; but he trusts that what he has adduced will be of use to the student of historic truth.

The editor would further observe, that with regard to some other objectionable passages, which do not involve misstatement or inaccuracy, he has intentionally abstained from directing particular attention towards them by any special protest.

The editor's notes are marked M.

A considerable part of the quotations (some of which in the later editions had fallen into great confusion) have been verified, and have been corrected by the latest and best editions of the authors.

June, 1845.

In this new edition, the text and the notes have been carefully revised, the latter by the editor.

Some additional notes have been subjoined, distinguished by the signature M. 1845.

Preface Of The Author.

It is not my intention to detain the reader by expatiating on the variety or the importance of the subject, which I have undertaken to treat; since the merit of the choice would serve to render the weakness of the execution still more apparent, and still less excusable. But as I have presumed to lay before the public a *first* volume only 1 of the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, it will, perhaps, be expected that I should explain, in a few words, the nature and limits of my general plan.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[The first volume of the quarto, which contained the sixteen first chapters.]

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

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

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

III. The last and longest of these periods includes about six centuries and a half; from the revival of the Western Empire, till the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, and the extinction of a degenerate race of princes, who continued to assume the titles of Cæsar and Augustus, after their dominions were contracted to the limits of a single city; in which the language, as well as manners, of the ancient Romans, had been long since

forgotten. The writer who should undertake to relate the events of this period, would find himself obliged to enter into the general history of the Crusades, as far as they contributed to the ruin of the Greek Empire; and he would scarcely be able to restrain his curiosity from making some inquiry into the state of the city of Rome, during the darkness and confusion of the middle ages.

As I have ventured, perhaps too hastily, to commit to the press a work which in every sense of the word, deserves the epithet of imperfect. I consider myself as contracting an engagement to finish, most probably in a second volume, [2a](#) the first of these memorable periods; and to deliver to the Public the complete History of the Decline and Fall of Rome, from the age of the Antonines to the subversion of the Western Empire. With regard to the subsequent periods, though I may entertain some hopes, I dare not presume to give any assurances. The execution of the extensive plan which I have described, would connect the ancient and modern history of the world; but it would require many years of health, of leisure, and of perseverance.

2a

[\(return\)](#)

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

BENTINCK STREET, *February* 1, 1776.

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

BENTINCK STREET, *March* 1, 1781.

An Author easily persuades himself that the public opinion is still favorable to his labors; and I have now embraced the serious resolution of proceeding to the last period of my original design, and of the Roman Empire, the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, in the year one thousand four hundred and fifty-three. The most patient Reader, who computes that three ponderous [3](#) volumes have been already employed on the events of four centuries, may, perhaps, be alarmed at the long prospect of nine hundred years. But it is not my intention to expatiate with the same minuteness on the whole series of the Byzantine history. At our entrance into this period, the reign of Justinian, and the conquests of the Mahometans, will deserve and detain our attention, and the last age of Constantinople (the Crusades and the Turks) is connected with the revolutions of Modern Europe. From the seventh to the eleventh century, the obscure interval will be supplied by a concise narrative of such facts as may still appear either interesting or important.

BENTINCK STREET, *March* 1, 1782.

Preface To The First Volume.

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

At present I shall content myself with a single observation.

The biographers, who, under the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, composed, or rather compiled, the lives of the Emperors, from Hadrian to the sons of Carus, are usually mentioned under the names of Ælius Spartianus, Julius Capitolinus, Ælius Lampridius, Vulcatius Gallicanus, Trebellius Pollio and Flavius Vopiscus. But there is so much perplexity in the titles of the MSS., and so many disputes have arisen among the critics (see Fabricius, *Biblioth. Latin.* 1. iii. c. 6) concerning their number, their names, and their respective property, that for the most part I have quoted them without distinction, under the general and well-known title of the *Augustan History*.

Preface To The Fourth Volume Of The Original Quarto Edition.

I now discharge my promise, and complete my design, of writing the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, both in the West and the East. The whole period extends from the age of Trajan and the Antonines, to the taking of Constantinople by Mahomet the Second; and includes a review of the Crusades, and the state of Rome during the middle ages. Since the publication of the first volume, twelve years have elapsed; twelve years, according to my wish, “of health, of leisure, and of perseverance.” I may now congratulate my deliverance from a long and laborious service, and my satisfaction will be pure and perfect, if the public favor should be extended to the conclusion of my work.

It was my first intention to have collected, under one view, the numerous authors, of every age and language, from whom I have derived the materials of this history; and I am still convinced that the apparent ostentation would be more than compensated by real use. If I have renounced this idea, if I have declined an undertaking which had obtained the approbation of a master-artist,⁴ my excuse may be found in the extreme difficulty of assigning a proper measure to such a catalogue. A naked list of names and

editions would not be satisfactory either to myself or my readers: the characters of the principal Authors of the Roman and Byzantine History have been occasionally connected with the events which they describe; a more copious and critical inquiry might indeed deserve, but it would demand, an elaborate volume, which might swell by degrees into a general library of historical writers. For the present, I shall content myself with renewing my serious protestation, that I have always endeavored to draw from the fountain-head; that my curiosity, as well as a sense of duty, has always urged me to study the originals; and that, if they have sometimes eluded my search, I have carefully marked the secondary evidence, on whose faith a passage or a fact were reduced to depend.

I shall soon revisit the banks of the Lake of Lausanne, a country which I have known and loved from my early youth. Under a mild government, amidst a beautiful landscape, in a life of leisure and independence, and among a people of easy and elegant manners, I have enjoyed, and may again hope to enjoy, the varied pleasures of retirement and society. But I shall ever glory in the name and character of an Englishman: I am proud of my birth in a free and enlightened country; and the approbation of that country is the best and most honorable reward of my labors. Were I ambitious of any other Patron than the Public, I would inscribe this work to a Statesman, who, in a long, a stormy, and at length an unfortunate administration, had many political opponents, almost without a personal enemy; who has retained, in his fall from power, many faithful and disinterested friends; and who, under the pressure of severe infirmity, enjoys the lively vigor of his mind, and the felicity of his incomparable temper. Lord North will permit me to express the feelings of friendship in the language of truth: but even truth and friendship should be silent, if he still dispensed the favors of the crown.

In a remote solitude, vanity may still whisper in my ear, that my readers, perhaps, may inquire whether, in the conclusion of the present work, I am now taking an everlasting farewell. They shall hear all that I know myself, and all that I could reveal to the most intimate friend. The motives of action or silence are now equally balanced; nor can I pronounce, in my most secret thoughts, on which side the scale will preponderate. I cannot dissemble that six quartos must have tried, and may have exhausted, the indulgence of the Public; that, in the repetition of similar attempts, a successful Author has much more to lose than he can hope to gain; that I am now descending into the vale of years; and that the most respectable of my countrymen, the men whom I aspire to imitate, have resigned the pen of history about the same period of their lives. Yet I consider that the annals of ancient and modern times may afford many rich and interesting subjects; that I am still possessed of health and leisure; that by the practice of writing, some skill and facility must be acquired; and that, in the

ardent pursuit of truth and knowledge, I am not conscious of decay. To an active mind, indolence is more painful than labor; and the first months of my liberty will be occupied and amused in the excursions of curiosity and taste. By such temptations, I have been sometimes seduced from the rigid duty even of a pleasing and voluntary task: but my time will now be my own; and in the use or abuse of independence, I shall no longer fear my own reproaches or those of my friends. I am fairly entitled to a year of jubilee: next summer and the following winter will rapidly pass away; and experience only can determine whether I shall still prefer the freedom and variety of study to the design and composition of a regular work, which animates, while it confines, the daily application of the Author.

Caprice and accident may influence my choice; but the dexterity of self-love will contrive to applaud either active industry or philosophic repose.

DOWNING STREET, *May 1, 1788.*

P. S. I shall embrace this opportunity of introducing two *verbal* remarks, which have not conveniently offered themselves to my notice. 1. As often as I use the definitions of *beyond* the Alps, the Rhine, the Danube, &c., I generally suppose myself at Rome, and afterwards at Constantinople; without observing whether this relative geography may agree with the local, but variable, situation of the reader, or the historian. 2. In proper names of foreign, and especially of Oriental origin, it should be always our aim to express, in our English version, a faithful copy of the original. But this rule, which is founded on a just regard to uniformity and truth, must often be relaxed; and the exceptions will be limited or enlarged by the custom of the language and the taste of the interpreter. Our alphabets may be often defective; a harsh sound, an uncouth spelling, might offend the ear or the eye of our countrymen; and some words, notoriously corrupt, are fixed, and, as it were, naturalized in the vulgar tongue. The prophet *Mohammed* can no longer be stripped of the famous, though improper, appellation of Mahomet: the well-known cities of Aleppo, Damascus, and Cairo, would almost be lost in the strange descriptions of *Haleb*, *Demashk*, and *Al Cahira*: the titles and offices of the Ottoman empire are fashioned by the practice of three hundred years; and we are pleased to blend the three Chinese monosyllables, *Con-fû-tzee*, in the respectable name of Confucius, or even to adopt the Portuguese corruption of Mandarin. But I would vary the use of Zoroaster and *Zerdusht*, as I drew my information from Greece or Persia: since our connection with India, the genuine *Timour* is restored to the throne of Tamerlane: our most correct writers have retrenched the *Al*, the superfluous article, from the Koran; and we escape an ambiguous termination, by adopting *Moslem* instead of Musulman, in the plural number. In these, and in a thousand examples, the shades of distinction are often minute; and I can feel, where I cannot explain, the motives of my choice.

Chapter I: The Extent Of The Empire In The Age Of The Antonines—Part I.

Introduction.

The Extent And Military Force Of The Empire In The Age Of The Antonines.

In the second century of the Christian Æra, the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valor. The gentle but powerful influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantages of wealth and luxury. The image of a free constitution was preserved with decent reverence: the Roman senate appeared to possess the sovereign authority, and devolved on the emperors all the executive powers of government. During a happy period of more than fourscore years, the public administration was conducted by the virtue and abilities of Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines. It is the design of this, and of the two succeeding chapters, to describe the prosperous condition of their empire; and afterwards, from the death of Marcus Antoninus, to deduce the most important circumstances of its decline and fall; a revolution which will ever be remembered, and is still felt by the nations of the earth.

The principal conquests of the Romans were achieved under the republic; and the emperors, for the most part, were satisfied with preserving those dominions which had been acquired by the policy of the senate, the active emulations of the consuls, and the martial enthusiasm of the people. The seven first centuries were filled with a rapid succession of triumphs; but it was reserved for Augustus to relinquish the ambitious design of subduing the whole earth, and to introduce a spirit of moderation into the public councils. Inclined to peace by his temper and situation, it was easy for him to discover that Rome, in her present exalted situation, had much less to hope than to fear from the chance of arms; and that, in the prosecution of remote wars, the undertaking became every day more difficult, the event more doubtful, and the possession more precarious, and less beneficial. The experience of Augustus added weight to these salutary reflections, and effectually convinced him that, by the prudent vigor of his counsels, it would be easy to secure every concession which the safety or the dignity of Rome might require from the most formidable barbarians. Instead of exposing his person and his legions to the arrows of the Parthians, he obtained, by an honorable treaty, the restitution of the standards and prisoners which had been taken in the defeat of Crassus. [1a](#)

of Reimar, who has collected all that Roman vanity has left upon the subject. The marble of Ancyra, on which Augustus recorded his own exploits, asserted that *he compelled* the Parthians to restore the ensigns of Crassus.]

His generals, in the early part of his reign, attempted the reduction of Ethiopia and Arabia Felix. They marched near a thousand miles to the south of the tropic; but the heat of the climate soon repelled the invaders, and protected the un-warlike natives of those sequestered regions. [2c](#) The northern countries of Europe scarcely deserved the expense and labor of conquest. The forests and morasses of Germany were filled with a hardy race of barbarians, who despised life when it was separated from freedom; and though, on the first attack, they seemed to yield to the weight of the Roman power, they soon, by a signal act of despair, regained their independence, and reminded Augustus of the vicissitude of fortune. [3a](#) On the death of that emperor, his testament was publicly read in the senate. He bequeathed, as a valuable legacy to his successors, the advice of confining the empire within those limits which nature seemed to have placed as its permanent bulwarks and boundaries: on the west, the Atlantic Ocean; the Rhine and Danube on the north; the Euphrates on the east; and towards the south, the sandy deserts of Arabia and Africa. [4a](#)

2c

[\(return\)](#)

[Strabo, (l. xvi. p. 780,) Pliny the elder, (Hist. Natur. l. vi. c. 32, 35, [28, 29,]) and Dion Cassius, (l. liii. p. 723, and l. liv. p. 734,) have left us very curious details concerning these wars. The Romans made themselves masters of Mariaba, or Merab, a city of Arabia Felix, well known to the Orientals. (See Abulfeda and the Nubian geography, p. 52) They were arrived within three days' journey of the spice country, the rich object of their invasion.

Note: It is this city of Merab that the Arabs say was the residence of Belkis, queen of Saba, who desired to see Solomon. A dam, by which the waters collected in its neighborhood were kept back, having been swept away, the sudden inundation destroyed this city, of which, nevertheless, vestiges remain. It bordered on a country called Adramout, where a particular aromatic plant grows: it is for this reason that we read in the history of the Roman expedition, that they were arrived within three days' journey of the spice country.—G. Compare *Malte-Brun*, *Geogr.* Eng. trans. vol. ii. p. 215. The period of this flood has been copiously discussed by Reiske, (*Program. de vetustâ Epochâ Arabum, rupturâ cataractæ Merabensis.*) Add. Johannsen, *Hist. Yemanae*, p. 282. Bonn, 1828; and see Gibbon, note 16. to Chap. L.—M.

Note: Two, according to Strabo. The detailed account of Strabo makes the invaders fail before Marsuabæ this cannot be the same place as Mariaba. Ukert observes, that Ælius Gallus would not have failed for want of water before Mariaba. (See M. Guizot's note above.) "Either, therefore, they were different places, or Strabo is mistaken." (Ukert, *Geographie der Griechen und Römer*, vol. i. p. 181.) Strabo, indeed, mentions Mariaba distinct from Marsuabæ. Gibbon has followed Pliny in reckoning Mariaba among the conquests of Gallus. There can be little doubt that he is wrong, as Gallus did not approach the capital of Sabæa. Compare the note of the Oxford editor of Strabo.—M.]

3a [\(return\)](#)
[By the slaughter of Varus and his three legions. See the first book of the Annals of Tacitus. Sueton. in August. c. 23, and Velleius Paterculus, l. ii. c. 117, &c. Augustus did not receive the melancholy news with all the temper and firmness that might have been expected from his character.]

4a [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Annal. l. ii. Dion Cassius, l. lvi. p. 833, and the speech of Augustus himself, in Julian's Cæsars. It receives great light from the learned notes of his French translator, M. Spanheim.]

Happily for the repose of mankind, the moderate system recommended by the wisdom of Augustus, was adopted by the fears and vices of his immediate successors. Engaged in the pursuit of pleasure, or in the exercise of tyranny, the first Cæsars seldom showed themselves to the armies, or to the provinces; nor were they disposed to suffer, that those triumphs which *their* indolence neglected, should be usurped by the conduct and valor of their lieutenants. The military fame of a subject was considered as an insolent invasion of the Imperial prerogative; and it became the duty, as well as interest, of every Roman general, to guard the frontiers intrusted to his care, without aspiring to conquests which might have proved no less fatal to himself than to the vanquished barbarians. [5](#)

5 [\(return\)](#)
[Germanicus, Suetonius Paulinus, and Agricola were checked and recalled in the course of their victories. Corbulo was put to death. Military merit, as it is admirably expressed by Tacitus, was, in the strictest sense of the word, *imperatoria virtus*.]

The only accession which the Roman empire received, during the first century of the Christian Æra, was the province of Britain. In this single instance, the successors of Cæsar and Augustus were persuaded to follow the example of the former, rather than the precept of the latter. The proximity of its situation to the coast of Gaul seemed to

invite their arms; the pleasing though doubtful intelligence of a pearl fishery attracted their avarice; [6](#) and as Britain was viewed in the light of a distinct and insulated world, the conquest scarcely formed any exception to the general system of continental measures. After a war of about forty years, undertaken by the most stupid, [7](#) maintained by the most dissolute, and terminated by the most timid of all the emperors, the far greater part of the island submitted to the Roman yoke. [8](#) The various tribes of Britain possessed valor without conduct, and the love of freedom without the spirit of union. They took up arms with savage fierceness; they laid them down, or turned them against each other, with wild inconsistency; and while they fought singly, they were successively subdued. Neither the fortitude of Caractacus, nor the despair of Boadicea, nor the fanaticism of the Druids, could avert the slavery of their country, or resist the steady progress of the Imperial generals, who maintained the national glory, when the throne was disgraced by the weakest, or the most vicious of mankind. At the very time when Domitian, confined to his palace, felt the terrors which he inspired, his legions, under the command of the virtuous Agricola, defeated the collected force of the Caledonians, at the foot of the Grampian Hills; and his fleets, venturing to explore an unknown and dangerous navigation, displayed the Roman arms round every part of the island. The conquest of Britain was considered as already achieved; and it was the design of Agricola to complete and insure his success, by the easy reduction of Ireland, for which, in his opinion, one legion and a few auxiliaries were sufficient. [9](#) The western isle might be improved into a valuable possession, and the Britons would wear their chains with the less reluctance, if the prospect and example of freedom were on every side removed from before their eyes.

6 [\(return\)](#)

[Cæsar himself conceals that ignoble motive; but it is mentioned by Suetonius, c. 47. The British pearls proved, however, of little value, on account of their dark and livid color. Tacitus observes, with reason, (in Agricola, c. 12,) that it was an inherent defect. “Ego facilius crediderim, naturam margaritis deesse quam nobis avaritiam.”]

7 [\(return\)](#)

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

8 [\(return\)](#)

[See the admirable abridgment given by Tacitus, in the life of Agricola, and copiously, though perhaps not completely, illustrated by our own antiquarians, Camden and Horsley.]

9 [\(return\)](#)

[The Irish writers, jealous of their national honor,

are extremely provoked on this occasion, both with Tacitus and with Agricola.]

But the superior merit of Agricola soon occasioned his removal from the government of Britain; and forever disappointed this rational, though extensive scheme of conquest. Before his departure, the prudent general had provided for security as well as for dominion. He had observed, that the island is almost divided into two unequal parts by the opposite gulfs, or, as they are now called, the Friths of Scotland. Across the narrow interval of about forty miles, he had drawn a line of military stations, which was afterwards fortified, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, by a turf rampart, erected on foundations of stone. [10](#) This wall of Antoninus, at a small distance beyond the modern cities of Edinburgh and Glasgow, was fixed as the limit of the Roman province. The native Caledonians preserved, in the northern extremity of the island, their wild independence, for which they were not less indebted to their poverty than to their valor. Their incursions were frequently repelled and chastised; but their country was never subdued. [11](#) The masters of the fairest and most wealthy climates of the globe turned with contempt from gloomy hills, assailed by the winter tempest, from lakes concealed in a blue mist, and from cold and lonely heaths, over which the deer of the forest were chased by a troop of naked barbarians. [12](#)

10

[\(return\)](#)

[See Horsley's *Britannia Romana*, l. i. c. 10. Note: Agricola fortified the line from Dumbarton to Edinburgh, consequently within Scotland. The emperor Hadrian, during his residence in Britain, about the year 121, caused a rampart of earth to be raised between Newcastle and Carlisle. Antoninus Pius, having gained new victories over the Caledonians, by the ability of his general, Lollius Urbicus, caused a new rampart of earth to be constructed between Edinburgh and Dumbarton. Lastly, Septimius Severus caused a wall of stone to be built parallel to the rampart of Hadrian, and on the same locality. See John Warburton's *Vallum Romanum, or the History and Antiquities of the Roman Wall*. London, 1754, 4to.—W. See likewise a good note on the Roman wall in Lingard's *History of England*, vol. i. p. 40, 4to edit—M.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

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

12

[\(return\)](#)

[See Appian (in *Procem.*) and the uniform imagery

of Ossian's Poems, which, according to every hypothesis, were composed by a native Caledonian.]

Such was the state of the Roman frontiers, and such the maxims of Imperial policy, from the death of Augustus to the accession of Trajan. That virtuous and active prince had received the education of a soldier, and possessed the talents of a general. [13](#) The peaceful system of his predecessors was interrupted by scenes of war and conquest; and the legions, after a long interval, beheld a military emperor at their head. The first exploits of Trajan were against the Dacians, the most warlike of men, who dwelt beyond the Danube, and who, during the reign of Domitian, had insulted, with impunity, the Majesty of Rome. [14](#) To the strength and fierceness of barbarians they added a contempt for life, which was derived from a warm persuasion of the immortality and transmigration of the soul. [15](#) Decebalus, the Dacian king, approved himself a rival not unworthy of Trajan; nor did he despair of his own and the public fortune, till, by the confession of his enemies, he had exhausted every resource both of valor and policy. [16](#) This memorable war, with a very short suspension of hostilities, lasted five years; and as the emperor could exert, without control, the whole force of the state, it was terminated by an absolute submission of the barbarians. [17](#) The new province of Dacia, which formed a second exception to the precept of Augustus, was about thirteen hundred miles in circumference. Its natural boundaries were the Niester, the Teyss or Tibiscus, the Lower Danube, and the Euxine Sea. The vestiges of a military road may still be traced from the banks of the Danube to the neighborhood of Bender, a place famous in modern history, and the actual frontier of the Turkish and Russian empires. [18](#)

13 [\(return\)](#)

[See Pliny's Panegyric, which seems founded on facts.]

14 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius, l. lxvii.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[Herodotus, l. iv. c. 94. Julian in the Cæsars, with Spanheims observations.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Epist. viii. 9.]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius, l. lxxviii. p. 1123, 1131. Julian in Cæsaribus Eutropius, viii. 2, 6. Aurelius Victor in Epitome.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[See a Memoir of M. d'Anville, on the Province of Dacia, in the Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii. p. 444—468.]

Trajan was ambitious of fame; and as long as mankind shall continue to bestow more liberal applause on their destroyers than on their benefactors, the thirst of military glory

will ever be the vice of the most exalted characters. The praises of Alexander, transmitted by a succession of poets and historians, had kindled a dangerous emulation in the mind of Trajan. Like him, the Roman emperor undertook an expedition against the nations of the East; but he lamented with a sigh, that his advanced age scarcely left him any hopes of equalling the renown of the son of Philip. [19](#) Yet the success of Trajan, however transient, was rapid and specious. The degenerate Parthians, broken by intestine discord, fled before his arms. He descended the River Tigris in triumph, from the mountains of Armenia to the Persian Gulf. He enjoyed the honor of being the first, as he was the last, of the Roman generals, who ever navigated that remote sea. His fleets ravaged the coast of Arabia; and Trajan vainly flattered himself that he was approaching towards the confines of India. [20](#) Every day the astonished senate received the intelligence of new names and new nations, that acknowledged his sway. They were informed that the kings of Bosphorus, Colchos, Iberia, Albania, Osrhoene, and even the Parthian monarch himself, had accepted their diadems from the hands of the emperor; that the independent tribes of the Median and Carduchian hills had implored his protection; and that the rich countries of Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria, were reduced into the state of provinces. [21](#) But the death of Trajan soon clouded the splendid prospect; and it was justly to be dreaded, that so many distant nations would throw off the unaccustomed yoke, when they were no longer restrained by the powerful hand which had imposed it.

19 [\(return\)](#)
[Trajan's sentiments are represented in a very just and lively manner in the Cæsars of Julian.]

20 [\(return\)](#)
[Eutropius and Sextus Rufus have endeavored to perpetuate the illusion. See a very sensible dissertation of M. Freret in the Académie des Inscriptions, tom. xxi. p. 55.]

21 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion Cassius, l. lxxviii.; and the Abbreviators.]

Chapter I: The Extent Of The Empire In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part II.

It was an ancient tradition, that when the Capitol was founded by one of the Roman kings, the god Terminus (who presided over boundaries, and was represented, according to the fashion of that age, by a large stone) alone, among all the inferior deities, refused to yield his place to Jupiter himself. A favorable inference was drawn from his obstinacy, which was interpreted by the augurs as a sure presage that the boundaries of the Roman power would never recede. [22](#) During many ages, the prediction, as it is usual, contributed to its own accomplishment. But though Terminus had resisted the Majesty of Jupiter, he submitted to the authority of the emperor

Hadrian. [23](#) The resignation of all the eastern conquests of Trajan was the first measure of his reign. He restored to the Parthians the election of an independent sovereign; withdrew the Roman garrisons from the provinces of Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria; and, in compliance with the precept of Augustus, once more established the Euphrates as the frontier of the empire. [24](#) Censure, which arraigns the public actions and the private motives of princes, has ascribed to envy, a conduct which might be attributed to the prudence and moderation of Hadrian. The various character of that emperor, capable, by turns, of the meanest and the most generous sentiments, may afford some color to the suspicion. It was, however, scarcely in his power to place the superiority of his predecessor in a more conspicuous light, than by thus confessing himself unequal to the task of defending the conquests of Trajan.

22 [\(return\)](#)
[Ovid. Fast. l. ii. ver. 667. See Livy, and Dionysius of Halicarnassus, under the reign of Tarquin.]

23 [\(return\)](#)
[St. Augustin is highly delighted with the proof of the weakness of Terminus, and the vanity of the Augurs. See De Civitate Dei, iv. 29. * Note: The turn of Gibbon's sentence is Augustin's: "Plus Hadrianum regem hominum, quam regem Deorum timuisse videatur."—M]

24 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Augustan History, p. 5, Jerome's Chronicle, and all the Epitomizers. It is somewhat surprising, that this memorable event should be omitted by Dion, or rather by Xiphilin.]

The martial and ambitious spirit of Trajan formed a very singular contrast with the moderation of his successor. The restless activity of Hadrian was not less remarkable when compared with the gentle repose of Antoninus Pius. The life of the former was almost a perpetual journey; and as he possessed the various talents of the soldier, the statesman, and the scholar, he gratified his curiosity in the discharge of his duty.

Careless of the difference of seasons and of climates, he marched on foot, and bare-headed, over the snows of Caledonia, and the sultry plains of the Upper Egypt; nor was there a province of the empire which, in the course of his reign, was not honored with the presence of the monarch. [25](#) But the tranquil life of Antoninus Pius was spent in the bosom of Italy, and, during the twenty-three years that he directed the public administration, the longest journeys of that amiable prince extended no farther than from his palace in Rome to the retirement of his Lanuvian villa. [26](#)

25 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion, l. lxix. p. 1158. Hist. August. p. 5, 8. If all our historians were lost, medals, inscriptions, and other monuments, would be sufficient to record the travels of Hadrian. Note: The journeys of Hadrian are traced in a note on Solvet's translation of

Hegewisch, Essai sur l'Epoque de Histoire
Romaine la plus heureuse pour Genre Humain
Paris, 1834, p. 123.—M.]

26

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Augustan History and the Epitomes.]

Notwithstanding this difference in their personal conduct, the general system of Augustus was equally adopted and uniformly pursued by Hadrian and by the two Antonines. They persisted in the design of maintaining the dignity of the empire, without attempting to enlarge its limits. By every honorable expedient they invited the friendship of the barbarians; and endeavored to convince mankind that the Roman power, raised above the temptation of conquest, was actuated only by the love of order and justice. During a long period of forty-three years, their virtuous labors were crowned with success; and if we except a few slight hostilities, that served to exercise the legions of the frontier, the reigns of Hadrian and Antoninus Pius offer the fair prospect of universal peace. [27](#) The Roman name was revered among the most remote nations of the earth. The fiercest barbarians frequently submitted their differences to the arbitration of the emperor; and we are informed by a contemporary historian that he had seen ambassadors who were refused the honor which they came to solicit of being admitted into the rank of subjects. [28](#)

27

[\(return\)](#)

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

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Appian of Alexandria, in the preface to his History of the Roman Wars.]

The terror of the Roman arms added weight and dignity to the moderation of the emperors. They preserved peace by a constant preparation for war; and while justice regulated their conduct, they announced to the nations on their confines, that they were as little disposed to endure, as to offer an injury. The military strength, which it had been sufficient for Hadrian and the elder Antoninus to display, was exerted against the Parthians and the Germans by the emperor Marcus. The hostilities of the barbarians provoked the resentment of that philosophic monarch, and, in the prosecution of a just defence, Marcus and his generals obtained many signal victories, both on the Euphrates and on the Danube. [29](#) The military establishment of the Roman empire, which thus assured either its tranquillity or success, will now become the proper and important object of our attention.

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

In the purer ages of the commonwealth, the use of arms was reserved for those ranks of citizens who had a country to love, a property to defend, and some share in enacting those laws, which it was their interest as well as duty to maintain. But in proportion as the public freedom was lost in extent of conquest, war was gradually improved into an art, and degraded into a trade. [30](#) The legions themselves, even at the time when they were recruited in the most distant provinces, were supposed to consist of Roman citizens. That distinction was generally considered, either as a legal qualification or as a proper recompense for the soldier; but a more serious regard was paid to the essential merit of age, strength, and military stature. [31](#) In all levies, a just preference was given to the climates of the North over those of the South: the race of men born to the exercise of arms was sought for in the country rather than in cities; and it was very reasonably presumed, that the hardy occupations of smiths, carpenters, and huntsmen, would supply more vigor and resolution than the sedentary trades which are employed in the service of luxury. [32](#) After every qualification of property had been laid aside, the armies of the Roman emperors were still commanded, for the most part, by officers of liberal birth and education; but the common soldiers, like the mercenary troops of modern Europe, were drawn from the meanest, and very frequently from the most profligate, of mankind.

[The poorest rank of soldiers possessed above forty pounds sterling, (Dionys. Halicarn. iv. 17,) a very high qualification at a time when money was so scarce, that an ounce of silver was equivalent to seventy pounds weight of brass. The populace, excluded by the ancient constitution, were indiscriminately admitted by Marius. See Sallust. de Bell. Jugurth. c. 91. * Note: On the uncertainty of all these estimates, and the difficulty of fixing the relative value of brass and silver, compare Niebuhr, vol. i. p. 473, &c. Eng. trans. p. 452. According to Niebuhr, the relative disproportion in value, between the two metals, arose, in a great degree from the abundance of brass or copper.—M. Compare also Dureau ‘de la Malle Economie Politique des Romains especially L. l. c. ix.—M. 1845.]

[Cæsar formed his legion Alauda of Gauls and strangers; but it was during the license of civil war;

and after the victory, he gave them the freedom of the city for their reward.]

32

[\(return\)](#)

[See Vegetius, de Re Militari, l. i. c. 2—7.]

That public virtue, which among the ancients was denominated patriotism, is derived from a strong sense of our own interest in the preservation and prosperity of the free government of which we are members. Such a sentiment, which had rendered the legions of the republic almost invincible, could make but a very feeble impression on the mercenary servants of a despotic prince; and it became necessary to supply that defect by other motives, of a different, but not less forcible nature—honor and religion. The peasant, or mechanic, imbibed the useful prejudice that he was advanced to the more dignified profession of arms, in which his rank and reputation would depend on his own valor; and that, although the prowess of a private soldier must often escape the notice of fame, his own behavior might sometimes confer glory or disgrace on the company, the legion, or even the army, to whose honors he was associated. On his first entrance into the service, an oath was administered to him with every circumstance of solemnity. He promised never to desert his standard, to submit his own will to the commands of his leaders, and to sacrifice his life for the safety of the emperor and the empire. [33](#) The attachment of the Roman troops to their standards was inspired by the united influence of religion and of honor. The golden eagle, which glittered in the front of the legion, was the object of their fondest devotion; nor was it esteemed less impious than it was ignominious, to abandon that sacred ensign in the hour of danger. [34](#) These motives, which derived their strength from the imagination, were enforced by fears and hopes of a more substantial kind. Regular pay, occasional donatives, and a stated recompense, after the appointed time of service, alleviated the hardships of the military life, [35](#) whilst, on the other hand, it was impossible for cowardice or disobedience to escape the severest punishment. The centurions were authorized to chastise with blows, the generals had a right to punish with death; and it was an inflexible maxim of Roman discipline, that a good soldier should dread his officers far more than the enemy. From such laudable arts did the valor of the Imperial troops receive a degree of firmness and docility unattainable by the impetuous and irregular passions of barbarians.

33

[\(return\)](#)

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

34

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacitus calls the Roman eagles, Bellorum Deos. They were placed in a chapel in the camp, and with the other deities received the religious worship of the troops. * Note: See also Dio. Cass. xl. c. 18. — M.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[See Gronovius de Pecunia vetere, l. iii. p. 120, &c.

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

And yet so sensible were the Romans of the imperfection of valor without skill and practice, that, in their language, the name of an army was borrowed from the word which signified exercise. [36](#) Military exercises were the important and unremitted object of their discipline. The recruits and young soldiers were constantly trained, both in the morning and in the evening, nor was age or knowledge allowed to excuse the veterans from the daily repetition of what they had completely learnt. Large sheds were erected in the winter-quarters of the troops, that their useful labors might not receive any interruption from the most tempestuous weather; and it was carefully observed, that the arms destined to this imitation of war, should be of double the weight which was required in real action. [37](#) It is not the purpose of this work to enter into any minute description of the Roman exercises. We shall only remark, that they comprehended whatever could add strength to the body, activity to the limbs, or grace to the motions. The soldiers were diligently instructed to march, to run, to leap, to swim, to carry heavy burdens, to handle every species of arms that was used either for offence or for defence, either in distant engagement or in a closer onset; to form a variety of evolutions; and to move to the sound of flutes in the Pyrrhic or martial dance. [38](#) In the midst of peace, the Roman troops familiarized themselves with the practice of war; and it is prettily remarked by an ancient historian who had fought against them, that the effusion of blood was the only circumstance which distinguished a field of battle from a field of exercise. [39](#) It was the policy of the ablest generals, and even of the emperors themselves, to encourage these military studies by their presence and example; and we are informed that Hadrian, as well as Trajan, frequently condescended to instruct the unexperienced soldiers, to reward the diligent, and sometimes to dispute with them the prize of superior strength or dexterity. [40](#) Under the reigns of those princes, the science of tactics was cultivated with success; and as long as the empire retained any vigor, their military instructions were respected as the most perfect model of Roman discipline.

at present, of such a work; but the profound observations of the late William von Humboldt, in the introduction to his posthumously published Essay on the Language of the Island of Java, (uber die Kawi-sprache, Berlin, 1836,) may cause regret that this task was not completed by that accomplished and universal scholar.—M.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[Vegatius, l. ii. and the rest of his first book.]

38 [\(return\)](#)

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

39 [\(return\)](#)

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

40 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Panegy. c. 13. Life of Hadrian, in the Augustan History.]

Nine centuries of war had gradually introduced into the service many alterations and improvements. The legions, as they are described by Polybius, [41](#) in the time of the Punic wars, differed very materially from those which achieved the victories of Cæsar, or defended the monarchy of Hadrian and the Antonines. The constitution of the Imperial legion may be described in a few words. [42](#) The heavy-armed infantry, which composed its principal strength, [43](#) was divided into ten cohorts, and fifty-five companies, under the orders of a correspondent number of tribunes and centurions. The first cohort, which always claimed the post of honor and the custody of the eagle, was formed of eleven hundred and five soldiers, the most approved for valor and fidelity. The remaining nine cohorts consisted each of five hundred and fifty-five; and the whole body of legionary infantry amounted to six thousand one hundred men. Their arms were uniform, and admirably adapted to the nature of their service: an open helmet, with a lofty crest; a breastplate, or coat of mail; greaves on their legs, and an ample buckler on their left arm. The buckler was of an oblong and concave figure, four feet in length, and two and a half in breadth, framed of a light wood, covered with a bull's hide, and strongly guarded with plates of brass. Besides a lighter spear, the legionary soldier grasped in his right hand the formidable *pilum*, a ponderous javelin, whose utmost length was about six feet, and which was terminated by a massy triangular point of steel of eighteen inches. [44](#) This instrument was indeed much inferior to our modern fire-arms; since it was exhausted by a single discharge, at the distance of only ten or twelve paces. Yet when it was launched by a firm and skilful hand, there was not any cavalry that durst venture within its reach, nor any shield or corselet that could sustain the

impetuosity of its weight. As soon as the Roman had darted his *pilum*, he drew his sword, and rushed forwards to close with the enemy. His sword was a short well-tempered Spanish blade, that carried a double edge, and was alike suited to the purpose of striking or of pushing; but the soldier was always instructed to prefer the latter use of his weapon, as his own body remained less exposed, whilst he inflicted a more dangerous wound on his adversary. [45](#) The legion was usually drawn up eight deep; and the regular distance of three feet was left between the files as well as ranks. [46](#) A body of troops, habituated to preserve this open order, in a long front and a rapid charge, found themselves prepared to execute every disposition which the circumstances of war, or the skill of their leader, might suggest. The soldier possessed a free space for his arms and motions, and sufficient intervals were allowed, through which seasonable reinforcements might be introduced to the relief of the exhausted combatants. [47](#) The tactics of the Greeks and Macedonians were formed on very different principles. The strength of the phalanx depended on sixteen ranks of long pikes, wedged together in the closest array. [48](#) But it was soon discovered by reflection, as well as by the event, that the strength of the phalanx was unable to contend with the activity of the legion. [49](#)

41 [\(return\)](#)
[See an admirable digression on the Roman discipline, in the sixth book of his History.]

42 [\(return\)](#)
[Vegetius de Re Militari, l. ii. c. 4, &c. Considerable part of his very perplexed abridgment was taken from the regulations of Trajan and Hadrian; and the legion, as he describes it, cannot suit any other age of the Roman empire.]

43 [\(return\)](#)
[Vegetius de Re Militari, l. ii. c. 1. In the purer age of Cæsar and Cicero, the word miles was almost confined to the infantry. Under the lower empire, and the times of chivalry, it was appropriated almost as exclusively to the men at arms, who fought on horseback.]

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

45 [\(return\)](#)
[For the legionary arms, see Lipsius de Militia Romana, l. iii. c. 2—7.]

46 [\(return\)](#)
[See the beautiful comparison of Virgil, Georgic ii. v. 279.]

- 47 [\(return\)](#)
[M. Guichard, *Memoires Militaires*, tom. i. c. 4, and *Nouveaux Memoires*, tom. i. p. 293—311, has treated the subject like a scholar and an officer.]
- 48 [\(return\)](#)
[See Arrian's *Tactics*. With the true partiality of a Greek, Arrian rather chose to describe the phalanx, of which he had read, than the legions which he had commanded.]
- 49 [\(return\)](#)
[Polyb. l. xvii. (xviii. 9.)]

The cavalry, without which the force of the legion would have remained imperfect, was divided into ten troops or squadrons; the first, as the companion of the first cohort, consisted of a hundred and thirty-two men; whilst each of the other nine amounted only to sixty-six. The entire establishment formed a regiment, if we may use the modern expression, of seven hundred and twenty-six horse, naturally connected with its respective legion, but occasionally separated to act in the line, and to compose a part of the wings of the army. [50](#) The cavalry of the emperors was no longer composed, like that of the ancient republic, of the noblest youths of Rome and Italy, who, by performing their military service on horseback, prepared themselves for the offices of senator and consul; and solicited, by deeds of valor, the future suffrages of their countrymen. [51](#) Since the alteration of manners and government, the most wealthy of the equestrian order were engaged in the administration of justice, and of the revenue; [52](#) and whenever they embraced the profession of arms, they were immediately intrusted with a troop of horse, or a cohort of foot. [53](#) Trajan and Hadrian formed their cavalry from the same provinces, and the same class of their subjects, which recruited the ranks of the legion. The horses were bred, for the most part, in Spain or Cappadocia. The Roman troopers despised the complete armor with which the cavalry of the East was encumbered. *Their* more useful arms consisted in a helmet, an oblong shield, light boots, and a coat of mail. A javelin, and a long broad sword, were their principal weapons of offence. The use of lances and of iron maces they seem to have borrowed from the barbarians. [54](#)

- 50 [\(return\)](#)
[Veget. de Re Militari, l. ii. c. 6. His positive testimony, which might be supported by circumstantial evidence, ought surely to silence those critics who refuse the Imperial legion its proper body of cavalry. Note: See also Joseph. B. J. iii. vi. 2.—M.]
- 51 [\(return\)](#)
[See Livy almost throughout, particularly xlii. 61.]
- 52 [\(return\)](#)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiii. 2. The true sense of that very curious passage was first discovered and

illustrated by M. de Beaufort, Republique Romaine,
l. ii. c. 2.]

53

[\(return\)](#)

[As in the instance of Horace and Agricola. This appears to have been a defect in the Roman discipline; which Hadrian endeavored to remedy by ascertaining the legal age of a tribune. * Note: These details are not altogether accurate. Although, in the latter days of the republic, and under the first emperors, the young Roman nobles obtained the command of a squadron or a cohort with greater facility than in the former times, they never obtained it without passing through a tolerably long military service. Usually they served first in the prætorian cohort, which was intrusted with the guard of the general: they were received into the companionship (contubernium) of some superior officer, and were there formed for duty. Thus Julius Cæsar, though sprung from a great family, served first as contubernalis under the prætor, M. Thermus, and later under Servilius the Isaurian. (Suet. Jul. 2, 5. Plut. in Par. p. 516. Ed. Froben.) The example of Horace, which Gibbon adduces to prove that young knights were made tribunes immediately on entering the service, proves nothing. In the first place, Horace was not a knight; he was the son of a freedman of Venusia, in Apulia, who exercised the humble office of coactor exactionum, (collector of payments at auctions.) (Sat. i. vi. 45, or 86.) Moreover, when the poet was made tribune, Brutus, whose army was nearly entirely composed of Orientals, gave this title to all the Romans of consideration who joined him. The emperors were still less difficult in their choice; the number of tribunes was augmented; the title and honors were conferred on persons whom they wished to attach to the court. Augustus conferred on the sons of senators, sometimes the tribunate, sometimes the command of a squadron. Claudius gave to the knights who entered into the service, first the command of a cohort of auxiliaries, later that of a squadron, and at length, for the first time, the tribunate. (Suet in Claud. with the notes of Ernesti.) The abuses that arose caused by the edict of Hadrian, which fixed the age at which that honor could be attained. (Spart. in Had. &c.) This edict was subsequently obeyed; for the emperor Valerian, in a letter addressed to Mulvius Gallinnus, prætorian præfect, excuses himself for having violated it in favor of the young Probus

afterwards emperor, on whom he had conferred the tribunate at an earlier age on account of his rare talents. (Vopisc. in Prob. iv.)—W. and G. Agricola, though already invested with the title of tribune, was contubernalis in Britain with Suetonius Paulinus. Tac. Agr. v.—M.]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[See Arrian's Tactics.]

The safety and honor of the empire was principally intrusted to the legions, but the policy of Rome condescended to adopt every useful instrument of war. Considerable levies were regularly made among the provincials, who had not yet deserved the honorable distinction of Romans. Many dependent princes and communities, dispersed round the frontiers, were permitted, for a while, to hold their freedom and security by the tenure of military service. [55](#) Even select troops of hostile barbarians were frequently compelled or persuaded to consume their dangerous valor in remote climates, and for the benefit of the state. [56](#) All these were included under the general name of auxiliaries; and howsoever they might vary according to the difference of times and circumstances, their numbers were seldom much inferior to those of the legions themselves. [57](#) Among the auxiliaries, the bravest and most faithful bands were placed under the command of præfects and centurions, and severely trained in the arts of Roman discipline; but the far greater part retained those arms, to which the nature of their country, or their early habits of life, more peculiarly adapted them. By this institution, each legion, to whom a certain proportion of auxiliaries was allotted, contained within itself every species of lighter troops, and of missile weapons; and was capable of encountering every nation, with the advantages of its respective arms and discipline. [58](#) Nor was the legion destitute of what, in modern language, would be styled a train of artillery. It consisted in ten military engines of the largest, and fifty-five of a smaller size; but all of which, either in an oblique or horizontal manner, discharged stones and darts with irresistible violence. [59](#)

55

[\(return\)](#)

[Such, in particular, was the state of the Batavians. Tacit. Germania, c. 29.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[Marcus Antoninus obliged the vanquished Quadi and Marcomanni to supply him with a large body of troops, which he immediately sent into Britain. Dion Cassius, l. lxxi. (c. 16.)]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. iv. 5. Those who fix a regular proportion of as many foot, and twice as many horse, confound the auxiliaries of the emperors with the Italian allies of the republic.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[Vegetius, ii. 2. Arrian, in his order of march and battle against the Alani.]

[The subject of the ancient machines is treated with great knowledge and ingenuity by the Chevalier Folard, (Polybe, tom. ii. p. 233-290.) He prefers them in many respects to our modern cannon and mortars. We may observe, that the use of them in the field gradually became more prevalent, in proportion as personal valor and military skill declined with the Roman empire. When men were no longer found, their place was supplied by machines. See Vegetius, ii. 25. Arrian.]

Chapter I: The Extent Of The Empire In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part III.

The camp of a Roman legion presented the appearance of a fortified city. [60](#) As soon as the space was marked out, the pioneers carefully levelled the ground, and removed every impediment that might interrupt its perfect regularity. Its form was an exact quadrangle; and we may calculate, that a square of about seven hundred yards was sufficient for the encampment of twenty thousand Romans; though a similar number of our own troops would expose to the enemy a front of more than treble that extent. In the midst of the camp, the prætorium, or general's quarters, rose above the others; the cavalry, the infantry, and the auxiliaries occupied their respective stations; the streets were broad and perfectly straight, and a vacant space of two hundred feet was left on all sides between the tents and the rampart. The rampart itself was usually twelve feet high, armed with a line of strong and intricate palisades, and defended by a ditch of twelve feet in depth as well as in breadth. This important labor was performed by the hands of the legionaries themselves; to whom the use of the spade and the pickaxe was no less familiar than that of the sword or *pilum*. Active valor may often be the present of nature; but such patient diligence can be the fruit only of habit and discipline. [61](#)

60

[\(return\)](#)

[Vegetius finishes his second book, and the description of the legion, with the following emphatic words:—"Universa quæ in quoque belli genere necessaria esse creduntur, secum legio debet ubique portare, ut in quovis loco fixerit castra, armatam faciat civitatem."]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[For the Roman Castrametation, see Polybius, l. vi. with Lipsius de Militia Romana, Joseph. de Bell. Jud. l. iii. c. 5. Vegetius, i. 21—25, iii. 9, and Memoires de Guichard, tom. i. c. 1.]

Whenever the trumpet gave the signal of departure, the camp was almost instantly broke up, and the troops fell into their ranks without delay or confusion. Besides their

arms, which the legionaries scarcely considered as an encumbrance, they were laden with their kitchen furniture, the instruments of fortification, and the provision of many days. [62](#) Under this weight, which would oppress the delicacy of a modern soldier, they were trained by a regular step to advance, in about six hours, near twenty miles. [63](#) On the appearance of an enemy, they threw aside their baggage, and by easy and rapid evolutions converted the column of march into an order of battle. [64](#) The slingers and archers skirmished in the front; the auxiliaries formed the first line, and were seconded or sustained by the strength of the legions; the cavalry covered the flanks, and the military engines were placed in the rear.

[62](#) [\(return\)](#)
[Cicero in Tusculan. ii. 37, [15.]—Joseph. de Bell.
Jud. l. iii. 5, Frontinus, iv. 1.]

[63](#) [\(return\)](#)
[Vegetius, i. 9. See Memoires de l'Academie des
Inscriptions, tom. xxv. p. 187.]

[64](#) [\(return\)](#)
[See those evolutions admirably well explained by
M. Guichard Nouveaux Memoires, tom. i. p. 141—
234.]

Such were the arts of war, by which the Roman emperors defended their extensive conquests, and preserved a military spirit, at a time when every other virtue was oppressed by luxury and despotism. If, in the consideration of their armies, we pass from their discipline to their numbers, we shall not find it easy to define them with any tolerable accuracy. We may compute, however, that the legion, which was itself a body of six thousand eight hundred and thirty-one Romans, might, with its attendant auxiliaries, amount to about twelve thousand five hundred men. The peace establishment of Hadrian and his successors was composed of no less than thirty of these formidable brigades; and most probably formed a standing force of three hundred and seventy-five thousand men. Instead of being confined within the walls of fortified cities, which the Romans considered as the refuge of weakness or pusillanimity, the legions were encamped on the banks of the great rivers, and along the frontiers of the barbarians. As their stations, for the most part, remained fixed and permanent, we may venture to describe the distribution of the troops. Three legions were sufficient for Britain. The principal strength lay upon the Rhine and Danube, and consisted of sixteen legions, in the following proportions: two in the Lower, and three in the Upper Germany; one in Rhætia, one in Noricum, four in Pannonia, three in Mæsia, and two in Dacia. The defence of the Euphrates was intrusted to eight legions, six of whom were planted in Syria, and the other two in Cappadocia. With regard to Egypt, Africa, and Spain, as they were far removed from any important scene of war, a single legion maintained the domestic tranquillity of each of those great provinces. Even Italy was not left destitute of a military force. Above twenty thousand chosen soldiers, distinguished by the titles of City Cohorts and Prætorian Guards, watched over the

safety of the monarch and the capital. As the authors of almost every revolution that distracted the empire, the Prætorians will, very soon, and very loudly, demand our attention; but, in their arms and institutions, we cannot find any circumstance which discriminated them from the legions, unless it were a more splendid appearance, and a less rigid discipline. [65](#)

65

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacitus (Annal. iv. 5) has given us a state of the legions under Tiberius; and Dion Cassius (l. lv. p. 794) under Alexander Severus. I have endeavored to fix on the proper medium between these two periods. See likewise Lipsius de Magnitudine Romana, l. i. c. 4, 5.]

The navy maintained by the emperors might seem inadequate to their greatness; but it was fully sufficient for every useful purpose of government. The ambition of the Romans was confined to the land; nor was that warlike people ever actuated by the enterprising spirit which had prompted the navigators of Tyre, of Carthage, and even of Marseilles, to enlarge the bounds of the world, and to explore the most remote coasts of the ocean. To the Romans the ocean remained an object of terror rather than of curiosity; [66](#) the whole extent of the Mediterranean, after the destruction of Carthage, and the extirpation of the pirates, was included within their provinces. The policy of the emperors was directed only to preserve the peaceful dominion of that sea, and to protect the commerce of their subjects. With these moderate views, Augustus stationed two permanent fleets in the most convenient ports of Italy, the one at Ravenna, on the Adriatic, the other at Misenum, in the Bay of Naples. Experience seems at length to have convinced the ancients, that as soon as their galleys exceeded two, or at the most three ranks of oars, they were suited rather for vain pomp than for real service. Augustus himself, in the victory of Actium, had seen the superiority of his own light frigates (they were called Liburnians) over the lofty but unwieldy castles of his rival. [67](#) Of these Liburnians he composed the two fleets of Ravenna and Misenum, destined to command, the one the eastern, the other the western division of the Mediterranean; and to each of the squadrons he attached a body of several thousand marines. Besides these two ports, which may be considered as the principal seats of the Roman navy, a very considerable force was stationed at Frejus, on the coast of Provence, and the Euxine was guarded by forty ships, and three thousand soldiers. To all these we add the fleet which preserved the communication between Gaul and Britain, and a great number of vessels constantly maintained on the Rhine and Danube, to harass the country, or to intercept the passage of the barbarians. [68](#) If we review this general state of the Imperial forces; of the cavalry as well as infantry; of the legions, the auxiliaries, the guards, and the navy; the most liberal computation will not allow us to fix the entire establishment by sea and by land at more than four hundred and fifty thousand men: a military power, which, however formidable it may seem, was equalled by a monarch of the last century, whose kingdom was confined within a single province of the Roman empire. [69](#)

- 66 [\(return\)](#)
[The Romans tried to disguise, by the pretence of religious awe their ignorance and terror. See Tacit. Germania, c. 34.]
- 67 [\(return\)](#)
[Plutarch, in Marc. Anton. [c. 67.] And yet, if we may credit Orosius, these monstrous castles were no more than ten feet above the water, vi. 19.]
- 68 [\(return\)](#)
[See Lipsius, de Magnitud. Rom. l. i. c. 5. The sixteen last chapters of Vegetius relate to naval affairs.]
- 69 [\(return\)](#)
[Voltaire, Siecle de Louis XIV. c. 29. It must, however, be remembered, that France still feels that extraordinary effort.]

We have attempted to explain the spirit which moderated, and the strength which supported, the power of Hadrian and the Antonines. We shall now endeavor, with clearness and precision, to describe the provinces once united under their sway, but, at present, divided into so many independent and hostile states. Spain, the western extremity of the empire, of Europe, and of the ancient world, has, in every age, invariably preserved the same natural limits; the Pyrenæan Mountains, the Mediterranean, and the Atlantic Ocean. That great peninsula, at present so unequally divided between two sovereigns, was distributed by Augustus into three provinces, Lusitania, Bætica, and Tarraconensis. The kingdom of Portugal now fills the place of the warlike country of the Lusitanians; and the loss sustained by the former on the side of the East, is compensated by an accession of territory towards the North. The confines of Grenada and Andalusia correspond with those of ancient Bætica. The remainder of Spain, Galicia, and the Asturias, Biscay, and Navarre, Leon, and the two Castiles, Murcia, Valencia, Catalonia, and Arragon, all contributed to form the third and most considerable of the Roman governments, which, from the name of its capital, was styled the province of Tarragona. [70](#) Of the native barbarians, the Celtiberians were the most powerful, as the Cantabrians and Asturians proved the most obstinate. Confident in the strength of their mountains, they were the last who submitted to the arms of Rome, and the first who threw off the yoke of the Arabs.

- 70 [\(return\)](#)
[See Strabo, l. ii. It is natural enough to suppose, that Arragon is derived from Tarraconensis, and several moderns who have written in Latin use those words as synonymous. It is, however, certain, that the Arragon, a little stream which falls from the Pyrenees into the Ebro, first gave its name to a country, and gradually to a kingdom. See d'Anville, Geographie du Moyen Age, p. 181.]

Ancient Gaul, as it contained the whole country between the Pyrenees, the Alps, the Rhine, and the Ocean, was of greater extent than modern France. To the dominions of that powerful monarchy, with its recent acquisitions of Alsace and Lorraine, we must add the duchy of Savoy, the cantons of Switzerland, the four electorates of the Rhine, and the territories of Liege, Luxemburgh, Hainault, Flanders, and Brabant. When Augustus gave laws to the conquests of his father, he introduced a division of Gaul, equally adapted to the progress of the legions, to the course of the rivers, and to the principal national distinctions, which had comprehended above a hundred independent states. [71](#) The sea-coast of the Mediterranean, Languedoc, Provence, and Dauphiné, received their provincial appellation from the colony of Narbonne. The government of Aquitaine was extended from the Pyrenees to the Loire. The country between the Loire and the Seine was styled the Celtic Gaul, and soon borrowed a new denomination from the celebrated colony of Lugdunum, or Lyons. The Belgic lay beyond the Seine, and in more ancient times had been bounded only by the Rhine; but a little before the age of Cæsar, the Germans, abusing their superiority of valor, had occupied a considerable portion of the Belgic territory. The Roman conquerors very eagerly embraced so flattering a circumstance, and the Gallic frontier of the Rhine, from Basil to Leyden, received the pompous names of the Upper and the Lower Germany. [72](#) Such, under the reign of the Antonines, were the six provinces of Gaul; the Narbonnese, Aquitaine, the Celtic, or Lyonnese, the Belgic, and the two Germanies.

71

[\(return\)](#)

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

72

[\(return\)](#)

[D’Anville. Notice de l’Ancienne Gaule.]

We have already had occasion to mention the conquest of Britain, and to fix the boundary of the Roman Province in this island. It comprehended all England, Wales, and the Lowlands of Scotland, as far as the Friths of Dumbarton and Edinburgh. Before Britain lost her freedom, the country was irregularly divided between thirty tribes of barbarians, of whom the most considerable were the Belgæ in the West, the Brigantes in the North, the Silures in South Wales, and the Iceni in Norfolk and Suffolk. [73](#) As far as we can either trace or credit the resemblance of manners and language, Spain, Gaul, and Britain were peopled by the same hardy race of savages. Before they yielded to the Roman arms, they often disputed the field, and often renewed the contest. After their submission, they constituted the western division of the European provinces, which extended from the columns of Hercules to the wall of Antoninus, and from the mouth of the Tagus to the sources of the Rhine and Danube.

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Whittaker’s History of Manchester, vol. i. c. 3.]

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

The Ligurians dwelt on the rocky coast which now forms the republic of Genoa. Venice was yet unborn; but the territories of that state, which lie to the east of the Adige, were inhabited by the Venetians. [74](#) The middle part of the peninsula, that now composes the duchy of Tuscany and the ecclesiastical state, was the ancient seat of the Etruscans and Umbrians; to the former of whom Italy was indebted for the first rudiments of civilized life. [75](#) The Tyber rolled at the foot of the seven hills of Rome, and the country of the Sabines, the Latins, and the Volsci, from that river to the frontiers of Naples, was the theatre of her infant victories. On that celebrated ground the first consuls deserved triumphs, their successors adorned villas, and *their* posterity have erected convents. [76](#) Capua and Campania possessed the immediate territory of Naples; the rest of the kingdom was inhabited by many warlike nations, the Marsi, the Samnites, the Apulians, and the Lucanians; and the sea-coasts had been covered by the flourishing colonies of the Greeks. We may remark, that when Augustus divided Italy into eleven regions, the little province of Istria was annexed to that seat of Roman sovereignty. [77](#)

74

[\(return\)](#)

[The Italian Veneti, though often confounded with the Gauls, were more probably of Illyrian origin. See M. Freret, *Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xviii. * Note: Or Liburnian, according to Niebuhr. Vol. i. p. 172.—M.]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[See Maffei *Verona illustrata*, l. i. * Note: Add Niebuhr, vol. i., and Otfried Müller, *die Etrusker*, which contains much that is known, and much that is conjectured, about this remarkable people. Also Micali, *Storia degli antichi popoli Italiani*. Florence, 1832—M.]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[The first contrast was observed by the ancients. See Florus, i. 11. The second must strike every modern traveller.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

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

The European provinces of Rome were protected by the course of the Rhine and the Danube. The latter of those mighty streams, which rises at the distance of only thirty miles from the former, flows above thirteen hundred miles, for the most part to the south-east, collects the tribute of sixty navigable rivers, and is, at length, through six

mouths, received into the Euxine, which appears scarcely equal to such an accession of waters. [78](#) The provinces of the Danube soon acquired the general appellation of Illyricum, or the Illyrian frontier, [79](#) and were esteemed the most warlike of the empire; but they deserve to be more particularly considered under the names of Rhætia, Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia, Dacia, Mæsia, Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece.

78

[\(return\)](#)

[Tournefort, Voyages en Grece et Asie Mineure, lettre xviii.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[The name of Illyricum originally belonged to the sea-coast of the Adriatic, and was gradually extended by the Romans from the Alps to the Euxine Sea. See Severini Pannonia, l. i. c. 3.]

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

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

Dalmatia, to which the name of Illyricum more properly belonged, was a long, but narrow tract, between the Save and the Adriatic. The best part of the sea-coast, which still retains its ancient appellation, is a province of the Venetian state, and the seat of the little republic of Ragusa. The inland parts have assumed the Sclavonian names of Croatia and Bosnia; the former obeys an Austrian governor, the latter a Turkish pacha; but the whole country is still infested by tribes of barbarians, whose savage independence irregularly marks the doubtful limit of the Christian and Mahometan power. [80](#)

80

[\(return\)](#)

[A Venetian traveller, the Abbate Fortis, has lately given us some account of those very obscure countries. But the geography and antiquities of the

western Illyricum can be expected only from the
munificence of the emperor, its sovereign.]

After the Danube had received the waters of the Teyss and the Save, it acquired, at least among the Greeks, the name of Ister. [81](#) It formerly divided Mæsia and Dacia, the latter of which, as we have already seen, was a conquest of Trajan, and the only province beyond the river. If we inquire into the present state of those countries, we shall find that, on the left hand of the Danube, Temeswar and Transylvania have been annexed, after many revolutions, to the crown of Hungary; whilst the principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia acknowledge the supremacy of the Ottoman Porte. On the right hand of the Danube, Mæsia, which, during the middle ages, was broken into the barbarian kingdoms of Servia and Bulgaria, is again united in Turkish slavery.

81

[\(return\)](#)

[The Save rises near the confines of *Istria*, and was considered by the more early Greeks as the principal stream of the Danube.]

The appellation of Roumelia, which is still bestowed by the Turks on the extensive countries of Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece, preserves the memory of their ancient state under the Roman empire. In the time of the Antonines, the martial regions of Thrace, from the mountains of Hæmus and Rhodope, to the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, had assumed the form of a province. Notwithstanding the change of masters and of religion, the new city of Rome, founded by Constantine on the banks of the Bosphorus, has ever since remained the capital of a great monarchy. The kingdom of Macedonia, which, under the reign of Alexander, gave laws to Asia, derived more solid advantages from the policy of the two Philips; and with its dependencies of Epirus and Thessaly, extended from the Ægean to the Ionian Sea. When we reflect on the fame of Thebes and Argos, of Sparta and Athens, we can scarcely persuade ourselves, that so many immortal republics of ancient Greece were lost in a single province of the Roman empire, which, from the superior influence of the Achæan league, was usually denominated the province of Achaia.

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

On the opposite side, the province of Cilicia was terminated by the mountains of Syria: the inland country, separated from the Roman Asia by the River Halys, and from Armenia by the Euphrates, had once formed the independent kingdom of Cappadocia. In this place we may observe, that the northern shores of the Euxine, beyond Trebizond in Asia, and beyond the Danube in Europe, acknowledged the sovereignty of the emperors, and received at their hands either tributary princes or Roman garrisons. Budzak, Crim Tartary, Circassia, and Mingrelia, are the modern appellations of those savage countries. [82](#)

82

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Periplus of Arrian. He examined the coasts of the Euxine, when he was governor of Cappadocia.]

Under the successors of Alexander, Syria was the seat of the Seleucidæ, who reigned over Upper Asia, till the successful revolt of the Parthians confined their dominions between the Euphrates and the Mediterranean. When Syria became subject to the Romans, it formed the eastern frontier of their empire: nor did that province, in its utmost latitude, know any other bounds than the mountains of Cappadocia to the north, and towards the south, the confines of Egypt, and the Red Sea. Phœnicia and Palestine were sometimes annexed to, and sometimes separated from, the jurisdiction of Syria. The former of these was a narrow and rocky coast; the latter was a territory scarcely superior to Wales, either in fertility or extent. [821](#) Yet Phœnicia and Palestine will forever live in the memory of mankind; since America, as well as Europe, has received letters from the one, and religion from the other. [83](#) A sandy desert, alike destitute of wood and water, skirts along the doubtful confine of Syria, from the Euphrates to the Red Sea. The wandering life of the Arabs was inseparably connected with their independence; and wherever, on some spots less barren than the rest, they ventured to for many settled habitations, they soon became subjects to the Roman empire. [84](#)

821

[\(return\)](#)

[This comparison is exaggerated, with the intention, no doubt, of attacking the authority of the Bible, which boasts of the fertility of Palestine. Gibbon's only authorities were that of Strabo (l. xvi. 1104) and the present state of the country. But Strabo only speaks of the neighborhood of Jerusalem, which he calls barren and arid to the extent of sixty stadia round the city: in other parts he gives a favorable testimony to the fertility of many parts of Palestine: thus he says, "Near Jericho there is a grove of palms, and a country of a hundred stadia, full of springs, and well peopled." Moreover, Strabo had never seen Palestine; he spoke only after reports, which may be as inaccurate as those according to which he has composed that description of Germany, in which Gluverius has detected so many errors. (Gluverius.)

Germ. iii. 1.) Finally, his testimony is contradicted and refuted by that of other ancient authors, and by medals. Tacitus says, in speaking of Palestine, "The inhabitants are healthy and robust; the rains moderate; the soil fertile." (Hist. v. 6.) Ammianus Macellinus says also, "The last of the Syrias is Palestine, a country of considerable extent, abounding in clean and well-cultivated land, and containing some fine cities, none of which yields to the other; but, as it were, being on a parallel, are rivals."—xiv. 8. See also the historian Josephus, Hist. vi. 1. Procopius of Cæsarea, who lived in the sixth century, says that Chosroes, king of Persia, had a great desire to make himself master of Palestine, *on account of its extraordinary fertility, its opulence, and the great number of its inhabitants.* The Saracens thought the same, and were afraid that Omar. when he went to Jerusalem, charmed with the fertility of the soil and the purity of the air, would never return to Medina. (Ockley, Hist. of Sarac. i. 232.) The importance attached by the Romans to the conquest of Palestine, and the obstacles they encountered, prove also the richness and population of the country. Vespasian and Titus caused medals to be struck with trophies, in which Palestine is represented by a female under a palm-tree, to signify the richness of the country, with this legend: *Judæa capta.* Other medals also indicate this fertility; for instance, that of Herod holding a bunch of grapes, and that of the young Agrippa displaying fruit. As to the present state of the country, one perceives that it is not fair to draw any inference against its ancient fertility: the disasters through which it has passed, the government to which it is subject, the disposition of the inhabitants, explain sufficiently the wild and uncultivated appearance of the land, where, nevertheless, fertile and cultivated districts are still found, according to the testimony of travellers; among others, of Shaw, Maundrel, La Rocque, &c.—G. The Abbé Guénée, in his *Lettres de quelques Juifs à Mons. de Voltaire*, has exhausted the subject of the fertility of Palestine; for Voltaire had likewise indulged in sarcasm on this subject. Gibbon was assailed on this point, not, indeed, by Mr. Davis, who, he slyly insinuates, was prevented by his patriotism as a Welshman from resenting the comparison with Wales, but by other writers. In his Vindication, he first established the correctness of his measurement of Palestine, which he estimates as 7600 square English miles, while Wales is about

7011. As to fertility, he proceeds in the following dexterously composed and splendid passage: "The emperor Frederick II., the enemy and the victim of the clergy, is accused of saying, after his return from his crusade, that the God of the Jews would have despised his promised land, if he had once seen the fruitful realms of Sicily and Naples." (See Giannone, *Istor. Civ. del R. di Napoli*, ii. 245.) This raillery, which malice has, perhaps, falsely imputed to Frederick, is inconsistent with truth and piety; yet it must be confessed that the soil of Palestine does not contain that inexhaustible, and, as it were, spontaneous principle of fertility, which, under the most unfavorable circumstances, has covered with rich harvests the banks of the Nile, the fields of Sicily, or the plains of Poland. The Jordan is the only navigable river of Palestine: a considerable part of the narrow space is occupied, or rather lost, in the *Dead Sea* whose horrid aspect inspires every sensation of disgust, and countenances every tale of horror. The districts which border on Arabia partake of the sandy quality of the adjacent desert. The face of the country, except the sea-coast, and the valley of the Jordan, is covered with mountains, which appear, for the most part, as naked and barren rocks; and in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, there is a real scarcity of the two elements of earth and water. (See Maundrel's *Travels*, p. 65, and Reland's *Palestin.* i. 238, 395.) These disadvantages, which now operate in their fullest extent, were formerly corrected by the labors of a numerous people, and the active protection of a wise government. The hills were clothed with rich beds of artificial mould, the rain was collected in vast cisterns, a supply of fresh water was conveyed by pipes and aqueducts to the dry lands. The breed of cattle was encouraged in those parts which were not adapted for tillage, and almost every spot was compelled to yield some production for the use of the inhabitants.

Pater ispe colendi Haud facilem esse viam voluit, primusque
par artem Movit agros; curis acuens mortalia corda,
Nec torpere gravi passus sua Regna verno.
Gibbon, *Misc. Works*, iv. 540.

But Gibbon has here eluded the question about the land "flowing with milk and honey." He is describing Judæa only, without comprehending Galilee, or the rich pastures beyond the Jordan, even now proverbial for their flocks and herds. (See Burckhardt's *Travels*, and *Hist of Jews*, i. 178.) The following is believed to be a fair statement: "The

extraordinary fertility of the whole country must be taken into the account. No part was waste; very little was occupied by unprofitable wood; the more fertile hills were cultivated in artificial terraces, others were hung with orchards of fruit trees the more rocky and barren districts were covered with vineyards.” Even in the present day, the wars and misgovernment of ages have not exhausted the natural richness of the soil. “Galilee,” says Malte Brun, “would be a paradise were it inhabited by an industrious people under an enlightened government. No land could be less dependent on foreign importation; it bore within itself every thing that could be necessary for the subsistence and comfort of a simple agricultural people. The climate was healthy, the seasons regular; the former rains, which fell about October, after the vintage, prepared the ground for the seed; that latter, which prevailed during March and the beginning of April, made it grow rapidly. Directly the rains ceased, the grain ripened with still greater rapidity, and was gathered in before the end of May. The summer months were dry and very hot, but the nights cool and refreshed by copious dews. In September, the vintage was gathered. Grain of all kinds, wheat, barley, millet, zea, and other sorts, grew in abundance; the wheat commonly yielded thirty for one. Besides the vine and the olive, the almond, the date, figs of many kinds, the orange, the pomegranate, and many other fruit trees, flourished in the greatest luxuriance. Great quantity of honey was collected. The balm-tree, which produced the opobalsamum, a great object of trade, was probably introduced from Arabia, in the time of Solomon. It flourished about Jericho and in Gilead.”—Milman’s Hist. of Jews. i. 177.—M.]

83

[\(return\)](#)

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

84

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius, lib. lxxviii. p. 1131.]

The geographers of antiquity have frequently hesitated to what portion of the globe they should ascribe Egypt. [85](#) By its situation that celebrated kingdom is included

within the immense peninsula of Africa; but it is accessible only on the side of Asia, whose revolutions, in almost every period of history, Egypt has humbly obeyed. A Roman præfect was seated on the splendid throne of the Ptolemies; and the iron sceptre of the Mamelukes is now in the hands of a Turkish pacha. The Nile flows down the country, above five hundred miles from the tropic of Cancer to the Mediterranean, and marks on either side the extent of fertility by the measure of its inundations. Cyrene, situate towards the west, and along the sea-coast, was first a Greek colony, afterwards a province of Egypt, and is now lost in the desert of Barca. [851](#)

85

[\(return\)](#)

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

851

[\(return\)](#)

[The French editor has a long and unnecessary note on the History of Cyrene. For the present state of that coast and country, the volume of Captain Beechey is full of interesting details. Egypt, now an independent and improving kingdom, appears, under the enterprising rule of Mahommed Ali, likely to revenge its former oppression upon the decrepit power of the Turkish empire.—M.—This note was written in 1838. The future destiny of Egypt is an important problem, only to be solved by time. This observation will also apply to the new French colony in Algiers.—M. 1845.]

From Cyrene to the ocean, the coast of Africa extends above fifteen hundred miles; yet so closely is it pressed between the Mediterranean and the Sahara, or sandy desert, that its breadth seldom exceeds fourscore or a hundred miles. The eastern division was considered by the Romans as the more peculiar and proper province of Africa. Till the arrival of the Phœnician colonies, that fertile country was inhabited by the Libyans, the most savage of mankind. Under the immediate jurisdiction of Carthage, it became the centre of commerce and empire; but the republic of Carthage is now degenerated into the feeble and disorderly states of Tripoli and Tunis. The military government of Algiers oppresses the wide extent of Numidia, as it was once united under Massinissa and Jugurtha; but in the time of Augustus, the limits of Numidia were contracted; and, at least, two thirds of the country acquiesced in the name of Mauritania, with the epithet of Cæsariensis. The genuine Mauritania, or country of the Moors, which, from the ancient city of Tingi, or Tangier, was distinguished by the appellation of Tingitana, is represented by the modern kingdom of Fez. Salle, on the Ocean, so infamous at present for its piratical depredations, was noticed by the Romans, as the extreme object of their

power, and almost of their geography. A city of their foundation may still be discovered near Mequinez, the residence of the barbarian whom we condescend to style the Emperor of Morocco; but it does not appear, that his more southern dominions, Morocco itself, and Segelmessa, were ever comprehended within the Roman province. The western parts of Africa are intersected by the branches of Mount Atlas, a name so idly celebrated by the fancy of poets; [86](#) but which is now diffused over the immense ocean that rolls between the ancient and the new continent. [87](#)

86

[\(return\)](#)

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

87

[\(return\)](#)

[M. de Voltaire, tom. xiv. p. 297, unsupported by either fact or probability, has generously bestowed the Canary Islands on the Roman empire.]

Having now finished the circuit of the Roman empire, we may observe, that Africa is divided from Spain by a narrow strait of about twelve miles, through which the Atlantic flows into the Mediterranean. The columns of Hercules, so famous among the ancients, were two mountains which seemed to have been torn asunder by some convulsion of the elements; and at the foot of the European mountain, the fortress of Gibraltar is now seated. The whole extent of the Mediterranean Sea, its coasts and its islands, were comprised within the Roman dominion. Of the larger islands, the two Baleares, which derive their name of Majorca and Minorca from their respective size, are subject at present, the former to Spain, the latter to Great Britain. [871](#) It is easier to deplore the fate, than to describe the actual condition, of Corsica. [872](#) Two Italian sovereigns assume a regal title from Sardinia and Sicily. Crete, or Candia, with Cyprus, and most of the smaller islands of Greece and Asia, have been subdued by the Turkish arms, whilst the little rock of Malta defies their power, and has emerged, under the government of its military Order, into fame and opulence. [873](#)

871

[\(return\)](#)

[Minorca was lost to Great Britain in 1782. *Ann. Register* for that year.—M.]

872

[\(return\)](#)

[The gallant struggles of the Corsicans for their independence, under Paoli, were brought to a close in the year 1769. This volume was published in 1776. See Botta, *Storia d'Italia*, vol. xiv.—M.]

[Malta, it need scarcely be said, is now in the possession of the English. We have not, however, thought it necessary to notice every change in the political state of the world, since the time of Gibbon.—M]

This long enumeration of provinces, whose broken fragments have formed so many powerful kingdoms, might almost induce us to forgive the vanity or ignorance of the ancients. Dazzled with the extensive sway, the irresistible strength, and the real or affected moderation of the emperors, they permitted themselves to despise, and sometimes to forget, the outlying countries which had been left in the enjoyment of a barbarous independence; and they gradually usurped the license of confounding the Roman monarchy with the globe of the earth. [88](#) But the temper, as well as knowledge, of a modern historian, require a more sober and accurate language. He may impress a juster image of the greatness of Rome, by observing that the empire was above two thousand miles in breadth, from the wall of Antoninus and the northern limits of Dacia, to Mount Atlas and the tropic of Cancer; that it extended in length more than three thousand miles from the Western Ocean to the Euphrates; that it was situated in the finest part of the Temperate Zone, between the twenty-fourth and fifty-sixth degrees of northern latitude; and that it was supposed to contain above sixteen hundred thousand square miles, for the most part of fertile and well-cultivated land. [89](#)

88

[\(return\)](#)

[Bergier, Hist. des Grands Chemins, l. iii. c. 1, 2, 3, 4, a very useful collection.]

89

[\(return\)](#)

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

Chapter II: The Internal Prosperity In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part I.

Of The Union And Internal Prosperity Of The Roman Empire,
In The Age Of The Antonines.

It is not alone by the rapidity, or extent of conquest, that we should estimate the greatness of Rome. The sovereign of the Russian deserts commands a larger portion of the globe. In the seventh summer after his passage of the Hellespont, Alexander erected the Macedonian trophies on the banks of the Hyphasis. [1](#) Within less than a century, the irresistible Zingis, and the Mogul princes of his race, spread their cruel devastations and transient empire from the Sea of China, to the confines of Egypt and Germany. [2](#) But the firm edifice of Roman power was raised and preserved by the wisdom of ages. The obedient provinces of Trajan and the Antonines were united by laws, and adorned by

arts. They might occasionally suffer from the partial abuse of delegated authority; but the general principle of government was wise, simple, and beneficent. They enjoyed the religion of their ancestors, whilst in civil honors and advantages they were exalted, by just degrees, to an equality with their conquerors.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[They were erected about the midway between Lahor and Delhi. The conquests of Alexander in Hindostan were confined to the Punjab, a country watered by the five great streams of the Indus. * Note: The Hyphasis is one of the five rivers which join the Indus or the Sind, after having traversed the province of the Pendj-ab—a name which in Persian, signifies *five rivers*. * * * G. The five rivers were, 1. The Hydaspes, now the Chelum, Behni, or Bedusta, (*Sanscrit*, Vitashà, Arrow-swift.) 2. The Acesines, the Chenab, (*Sanscrit*, Chandrabhágâ, Moon-gift.) 3. Hydraotes, the Ravey, or Iraoty, (*Sanscrit*, Irâvatî.) 4. Hyphasis, the Beyah, (*Sanscrit*, Vepâsà, Fetterless.) 5. The Satadru, (*Sanscrit*, the Hundred Streamed,) the Sutledj, known first to the Greeks in the time of Ptolemy. Rennel. Vincent, Commerce of Anc. book 2. Lassen, Pentapotam. Ind. Wilson's Sanscrit Dict., and the valuable memoir of Lieut. Burnes, Journal of London Geogr. Society, vol. iii. p. 2, with the travels of that very able writer. Compare Gibbon's own note, c. lxxv. note 25.—M substit. for G.]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[See M. de Guignes, Histoire des Huns, l. xv. xvi. and xvii.]

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

The superstition of the people was not embittered by any mixture of theological rancor; nor was it confined by the chains of any speculative system. The devout polytheist, though fondly attached to his national rites, admitted with implicit faith the different religions of the earth. [3](#) Fear, gratitude, and curiosity, a dream or an omen, a singular disorder, or a distant journey, perpetually disposed him to multiply the articles of his belief, and to enlarge the list of his protectors. The thin texture of the Pagan mythology was interwoven with various but not discordant materials. As soon as it was allowed that sages and heroes, who had lived or who had died for the benefit of their country, were exalted to a state of power and immortality, it was universally confessed,

that they deserved, if not the adoration, at least the reverence, of all mankind. The deities of a thousand groves and a thousand streams possessed, in peace, their local and respective influence; nor could the Romans who deprecated the wrath of the Tiber, deride the Egyptian who presented his offering to the beneficent genius of the Nile. The visible powers of nature, the planets, and the elements were the same throughout the universe. The invisible governors of the moral world were inevitably cast in a similar mould of fiction and allegory. Every virtue, and even vice, acquired its divine representative; every art and profession its patron, whose attributes, in the most distant ages and countries, were uniformly derived from the character of their peculiar votaries. A republic of gods of such opposite tempers and interests required, in every system, the moderating hand of a supreme magistrate, who, by the progress of knowledge and flattery, was gradually invested with the sublime perfections of an Eternal Parent, and an Omnipotent Monarch. [4](#) Such was the mild spirit of antiquity, that the nations were less attentive to the difference, than to the resemblance, of their religious worship. The Greek, the Roman, and the Barbarian, as they met before their respective altars, easily persuaded themselves, that under various names, and with various ceremonies, they adored the same deities. [5](#) The elegant mythology of Homer gave a beautiful, and almost a regular form, to the polytheism of the ancient world.

[There is not any writer who describes in so lively a manner as Herodotus the true genius of polytheism. The best commentary may be found in Mr. Hume's Natural History of Religion; and the best contrast in Bossuet's Universal History. Some obscure traces of an intolerant spirit appear in the conduct of the Egyptians, (see Juvenal, Sat. xv. ;) and the Christians, as well as Jews, who lived under the Roman empire, formed a very important exception; so important indeed, that the discussion will require a distinct chapter of this work. * Note: M. Constant, in his very learned and eloquent work, "Sur la Religion," with the two additional volumes, "Du Polytheisme Romain," has considered the whole history of polytheism in a tone of philosophy, which, without subscribing to all his opinions, we may be permitted to admire. "The boasted tolerance of polytheism did not rest upon the respect due from society to the freedom of individual opinion. The polytheistic nations, tolerant as they were towards each other, as separate states, were not the less ignorant of the eternal principle, the only basis of enlightened toleration, that every one has a right to worship God in the manner which seems to him the best. Citizens, on the contrary, were bound to conform to the religion of the state; they had not the liberty to adopt a foreign religion, though that

religion might be legally recognized in their own city, for the strangers who were its votaries.” —*Sur la Religion*, v. 184. *Du. Polyth. Rom.* ii. 308. At this time, the growing religious indifference, and the general administration of the empire by Romans, who, being strangers, would do no more than protect, not enlist themselves in the cause of the local superstitions, had introduced great laxity. But intolerance was clearly the theory both of the Greek and Roman law. The subject is more fully considered in another place.—M.]

4

[\(return\)](#)

[The rights, powers, and pretensions of the sovereign of Olympus are very clearly described in the xvth book of the *Iliad*; in the Greek original, I mean; for Mr. Pope, without perceiving it, has improved the theology of Homer. * Note: There is a curious coincidence between Gibbon’s expressions and those of the newly-recovered “*De Republica*” of Cicero, though the argument is rather the converse, lib. i. c. 36. “*Sive hæc ad utilitatem vitæ constitute sint a principibus rerum publicarum, ut rex putaretur unus esse in cælo, qui nutu, ut ait Homerus, totum Olympum converteret, idemque et rex et patos haberetur omnium.*”—M.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

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

The philosophers of Greece deduced their morals from the nature of man, rather than from that of God. They meditated, however, on the Divine Nature, as a very curious and important speculation; and in the profound inquiry, they displayed the strength and weakness of the human understanding. [6](#) Of the four most celebrated schools, the Stoics and the Platonists endeavored to reconcile the jarring interests of reason and piety. They have left us the most sublime proofs of the existence and perfections of the first cause; but, as it was impossible for them to conceive the creation of matter, the workman in the Stoic philosophy was not sufficiently distinguished from the work; whilst, on the contrary, the spiritual God of Plato and his disciples resembled an idea, rather than a substance. The opinions of the Academics and Epicureans were of a less religious cast; but whilst the modest science of the former induced them to doubt, the positive ignorance of the latter urged them to deny, the providence of a Supreme Ruler. The spirit of inquiry, prompted by emulation, and supported by freedom, had divided the public teachers of philosophy into a variety of contending sects; but the ingenious youth, who, from every part, resorted to Athens, and the other seats of learning in the Roman empire, were alike instructed in every school to reject and to despise the religion

of the multitude. How, indeed, was it possible that a philosopher should accept, as divine truths, the idle tales of the poets, and the incoherent traditions of antiquity; or that he should adore, as gods, those imperfect beings whom he must have despised, as men? Against such unworthy adversaries, Cicero condescended to employ the arms of reason and eloquence; but the satire of Lucian was a much more adequate, as well as more efficacious, weapon. We may be well assured, that a writer, conversant with the world, would never have ventured to expose the gods of his country to public ridicule, had they not already been the objects of secret contempt among the polished and enlightened orders of society. [7](#)

6

[\(return\)](#)

[The admirable work of Cicero de Natura Deorum is the best clew we have to guide us through the dark and profound abyss. He represents with candor, and confutes with subtlety, the opinions of the philosophers.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

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

Notwithstanding the fashionable irreligion which prevailed in the age of the Antonines, both the interest of the priests and the credulity of the people were sufficiently respected. In their writings and conversation, the philosophers of antiquity asserted the independent dignity of reason; but they resigned their actions to the commands of law and of custom. Viewing, with a smile of pity and indulgence, the various errors of the vulgar, they diligently practised the ceremonies of their fathers, devoutly frequented the temples of the gods; and sometimes condescending to act a part on the theatre of superstition, they concealed the sentiments of an atheist under the sacerdotal robes. Reasoners of such a temper were scarcely inclined to wrangle about their respective modes of faith, or of worship. It was indifferent to them what shape the folly of the multitude might choose to assume; and they approached with the same inward contempt, and the same external reverence, the altars of the Libyan, the Olympian, or the Capitoline Jupiter. [8](#)

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Socrates, Epicurus, Cicero, and Plutarch always inculcated a decent reverence for the religion of their own country, and of mankind. The devotion of Epicurus was assiduous and exemplary. Diogen. Lært. x. 10.]

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

were chosen among the most illustrious of the senators; and the office of Supreme Pontiff was constantly exercised by the emperors themselves. They knew and valued the advantages of religion, as it is connected with civil government. They encouraged the public festivals which humanize the manners of the people. They managed the arts of divination as a convenient instrument of policy; and they respected, as the firmest bond of society, the useful persuasion, that, either in this or in a future life, the crime of perjury is most assuredly punished by the avenging gods. [9](#) But whilst they acknowledged the general advantages of religion, they were convinced that the various modes of worship contributed alike to the same salutary purposes; and that, in every country, the form of superstition, which had received the sanction of time and experience, was the best adapted to the climate, and to its inhabitants. Avarice and taste very frequently despoiled the vanquished nations of the elegant statues of their gods, and the rich ornaments of their temples; [10](#) but, in the exercise of the religion which they derived from their ancestors, they uniformly experienced the indulgence, and even protection, of the Roman conquerors. The province of Gaul seems, and indeed only seems, an exception to this universal toleration. Under the specious pretext of abolishing human sacrifices, the emperors Tiberius and Claudius suppressed the dangerous power of the Druids: [11](#) but the priests themselves, their gods and their altars, subsisted in peaceful obscurity till the final destruction of Paganism. [12](#)

9 [\(return\)](#)

[Polybius, l. vi. c. 53, 54. Juvenal, Sat. xiii. laments that in his time this apprehension had lost much of its effect.]

10 [\(return\)](#)

[See the fate of Syracuse, Tarentum, Ambracia, Corinth, &c., the conduct of Verres, in Cicero, (Actio ii. Orat. 4,) and the usual practice of governors, in the viiith Satire of Juvenal.]

11 [\(return\)](#)

[Seuton. in Claud.—Plin. Hist. Nat. xxx. 1.]

12 [\(return\)](#)

[Pelloutier, Histoire des Celtes, tom. vi. p. 230—252.]

Rome, the capital of a great monarchy, was incessantly filled with subjects and strangers from every part of the world, [13](#) who all introduced and enjoyed the favorite superstitions of their native country. [14](#) Every city in the empire was justified in maintaining the purity of its ancient ceremonies; and the Roman senate, using the common privilege, sometimes interposed, to check this inundation of foreign rites. [141](#) The Egyptian superstition, of all the most contemptible and abject, was frequently prohibited: the temples of Serapis and Isis demolished, and their worshippers banished from Rome and Italy. [15](#) But the zeal of fanaticism prevailed over the cold and feeble efforts of policy. The exiles returned, the proselytes multiplied, the temples were restored with increasing splendor, and Isis and Serapis at length assumed their

place among the Roman Deities. [15](#) [16](#) Nor was this indulgence a departure from the old maxims of government. In the purest ages of the commonwealth, Cybele and Æsculapius had been invited by solemn embassies; [17](#) and it was customary to tempt the protectors of besieged cities, by the promise of more distinguished honors than they possessed in their native country. [18](#) Rome gradually became the common temple of her subjects; and the freedom of the city was bestowed on all the gods of mankind. [19](#)

13 [\(return\)](#)
[Seneca, Consolat. ad Helviam, p. 74. Edit., Lips.]

14 [\(return\)](#)
[Dionysius Halicarn. Antiquitat. Roman. l. ii. (vol. i. p. 275, edit. Reiske.)]

141 [\(return\)](#)
[Yet the worship of foreign gods at Rome was only guarantied to the natives of those countries from whence they came. The Romans administered the priestly offices only to the gods of their fathers. Gibbon, throughout the whole preceding sketch of the opinions of the Romans and their subjects, has shown through what causes they were free from religious hatred and its consequences. But, on the other hand the internal state of these religions, the infidelity and hypocrisy of the upper orders, the indifference towards all religion, in even the better part of the common people, during the last days of the republic, and under the Cæsars, and the corrupting principles of the philosophers, had exercised a very pernicious influence on the manners, and even on the constitution.—W.]

15 [\(return\)](#)
[In the year of Rome 701, the temple of Isis and Serapis was demolished by the order of the Senate, (Dion Cassius, l. xl. p. 252,) and even by the hands of the consul, (Valerius Maximus, l. 3.) After the death of Cæsar it was restored at the public expense, (Dion. l. xlvii. p. 501.) When Augustus was in Egypt, he revered the majesty of Serapis, (Dion, l. li. p. 647;) but in the Pomærium of Rome, and a mile round it, he prohibited the worship of the Egyptian gods, (Dion, l. liii. p. 679; l. liv. p. 735.) They remained, however, very fashionable under his reign (Ovid. de Art. Amand. l. i.) and that of his successor, till the justice of Tiberius was provoked to some acts of severity. (See Tacit. Annal. ii. 85. Joseph. Antiquit. l. xviii. c. 3.) * Note: See, in the pictures from the walls of Pompeii, the representation of an Isiac temple and worship. Vestiges of Egyptian worship have been traced in

Gaul, and, I am informed, recently in Britain, in excavations at York.— M.]

151 [\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon here blends into one, two events, distant a hundred and sixty-six years from each other. It was in the year of Rome 535, that the senate having ordered the destruction of the temples of Isis and Serapis, the workman would lend his hand; and the consul, L. Paulus himself (Valer. Max. 1, 3) seized the axe, to give the first blow. Gibbon attribute this circumstance to the second demolition, which took place in the year 701 and which he considers as the first.—W.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

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

17 [\(return\)](#)

[See Livy, l. xi. [Suppl.] and xxix.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Macrob. Saturnalia, l. iii. c. 9. He gives us a form of evocation.]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[Minutius Fælix in Octavio, p. 54. Arnobius, l. vi. p. 115.]

II. The narrow policy of preserving, without any foreign mixture, the pure blood of the ancient citizens, had checked the fortune, and hastened the ruin, of Athens and Sparta. The aspiring genius of Rome sacrificed vanity to ambition, and deemed it more prudent, as well as honorable, to adopt virtue and merit for her own wheresoever they were found, among slaves or strangers, enemies or barbarians. [20](#) During the most flourishing æra of the Athenian commonwealth, the number of citizens gradually decreased from about thirty [21](#) to twenty-one thousand. [22](#) If, on the contrary, we study the growth of the Roman republic, we may discover, that, notwithstanding the incessant demands of wars and colonies, the citizens, who, in the first census of Servius Tullius, amounted to no more than eighty-three thousand, were multiplied, before the commencement of the social war, to the number of four hundred and sixty-three thousand men, able to bear arms in the service of their country. [23](#) When the allies of Rome claimed an equal share of honors and privileges, the senate indeed preferred the chance of arms to an ignominious concession. The Samnites and the Lucanians paid the severe penalty of their rashness; but the rest of the Italian states, as they successively returned to their duty, were admitted into the bosom of the republic, [24](#) and soon contributed to the ruin of public freedom. Under a democratical government, the citizens exercise the powers of sovereignty; and those powers will be first abused, and afterwards lost, if they are committed to an unwieldy multitude. But when the popular

assemblies had been suppressed by the administration of the emperors, the conquerors were distinguished from the vanquished nations, only as the first and most honorable order of subjects; and their increase, however rapid, was no longer exposed to the same dangers. Yet the wisest princes, who adopted the maxims of Augustus, guarded with the strictest care the dignity of the Roman name, and diffused the freedom of the city with a prudent liberality. [25](#)

20

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. xi. 24. The Orbis Romanus of the learned Spanheim is a complete history of the progressive admission of Latium, Italy, and the provinces, to the freedom of Rome. * Note: Democratic states, observes Denina, (delle Revoluz. d' Italia, l. ii. c. l.), are most jealous of communication the privileges of citizenship; monarchies or oligarchies willingly multiply the numbers of their free subjects. The most remarkable accessions to the strength of Rome, by the aggregation of conquered and foreign nations, took place under the regal and patrician—we may add, the Imperial government.—M.]

21

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodotus, v. 97. It should seem, however, that he followed a large and popular estimation.]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[Athenæus, Deipnosophist. l. vi. p. 272. Edit. Casaubon. Meursius de Fortunâ Atticâ, c. 4. * Note: On the number of citizens in Athens, compare Bœckh, Public Economy of Athens, (English Tr.,) p. 45, et seq. Fynes Clinton, Essay in Fasti Hel lenici, vol. i. 381.—M.]

23

[\(return\)](#)

[See a very accurate collection of the numbers of each Lustrum in M. de Beaufort, Republique Romaine, l. iv. c. 4. Note: All these questions are placed in an entirely new point of view by Niebuhr, (Römische Geschichte, vol. i. p. 464.) He rejects the census of Servius fullius as unhistoric, (vol. ii. p. 78, et seq.,) and he establishes the principle that the census comprehended all the confederate cities which had the right of Isopolity.—M.]

24

[\(return\)](#)

[Appian. de Bell. Civil. l. i. Velleius Paterculus, l. ii. c. 15, 16, 17.]

25

[\(return\)](#)

[Mæcenâs had advised him to declare, by one edict, all his subjects citizens. But we may justly suspect that the historian Dion was the author of a counsel

so much adapted to the practice of his own age, and
so little to that of Augustus.]

Chapter II: The Internal Prosperity In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part II.

Till the privileges of Romans had been progressively extended to all the inhabitants of the empire, an important distinction was preserved between Italy and the provinces. The former was esteemed the centre of public unity, and the firm basis of the constitution. Italy claimed the birth, or at least the residence, of the emperors and the senate. [26](#) The estates of the Italians were exempt from taxes, their persons from the arbitrary jurisdiction of governors. Their municipal corporations, formed after the perfect model of the capital, [261](#) were intrusted, under the immediate eye of the supreme power, with the execution of the laws. From the foot of the Alps to the extremity of Calabria, all the natives of Italy were born citizens of Rome. Their partial distinctions were obliterated, and they insensibly coalesced into one great nation, united by language, manners, and civil institutions, and equal to the weight of a powerful empire. The republic gloried in her generous policy, and was frequently rewarded by the merit and services of her adopted sons. Had she always confined the distinction of Romans to the ancient families within the walls of the city, that immortal name would have been deprived of some of its noblest ornaments. Virgil was a native of Mantua; Horace was inclined to doubt whether he should call himself an Apulian or a Lucanian; it was in Padua that an historian was found worthy to record the majestic series of Roman victories. The patriot family of the Catos emerged from Tusculum; and the little town of Arpinum claimed the double honor of producing Marius and Cicero, the former of whom deserved, after Romulus and Camillus, to be styled the Third Founder of Rome; and the latter, after saving his country from the designs of Catiline, enabled her to contend with Athens for the palm of eloquence. [27](#)

26

[\(return\)](#)

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

261

[\(return\)](#)

[It may be doubted whether the municipal government of the cities was not the old Italian constitution rather than a transcript from that of Rome. The free government of the cities, observes Savigny, was the leading characteristic of Italy. Geschichte des Römischen Rechts, i. p. G.—M.]

27

[\(return\)](#)

[The first part of the Verona Illustrata of the

Marquis Maffei gives the clearest and most comprehensive view of the state of Italy under the Cæsars. * Note: Compare Denina, *Revol. d' Italia*, l. ii. c. 6, p. 100, 4 to edit.]

The provinces of the empire (as they have been described in the preceding chapter) were destitute of any public force, or constitutional freedom. In Etruria, in Greece, [28](#) and in Gaul, [29](#) it was the first care of the senate to dissolve those dangerous confederacies, which taught mankind that, as the Roman arms prevailed by division, they might be resisted by union. Those princes, whom the ostentation of gratitude or generosity permitted for a while to hold a precarious sceptre, were dismissed from their thrones, as soon as they had performed their appointed task of fashioning to the yoke the vanquished nations. The free states and cities which had embraced the cause of Rome were rewarded with a nominal alliance, and insensibly sunk into real servitude. The public authority was everywhere exercised by the ministers of the senate and of the emperors, and that authority was absolute, and without control. [291](#) But the same salutary maxims of government, which had secured the peace and obedience of Italy were extended to the most distant conquests. A nation of Romans was gradually formed in the provinces, by the double expedient of introducing colonies, and of admitting the most faithful and deserving of the provincials to the freedom of Rome.

28 [\(return\)](#)

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

29 [\(return\)](#)

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

291 [\(return\)](#)

[This is, perhaps, rather overstated. Most cities retained the choice of their municipal officers: some retained valuable privileges; Athens, for instance, in form was still a confederate city. (Tac. Ann. ii. 53.) These privileges, indeed, depended entirely on the arbitrary will of the emperor, who revoked or restored them according to his caprice. See Walther *Geschichte des Römischen Rechts*, i. 324—an admirable summary of the Roman constitutional history.—M.]

“Wheresoever the Roman conquers, he inhabits,” is a very just observation of Seneca, [30](#) confirmed by history and experience. The natives of Italy, allured by pleasure or by interest, hastened to enjoy the advantages of victory; and we may remark, that, about forty years after the reduction of Asia, eighty thousand Romans were massacred in one day, by the cruel orders of Mithridates. [31](#) These voluntary exiles

were engaged, for the most part, in the occupations of commerce, agriculture, and the farm of the revenue. But after the legions were rendered permanent by the emperors, the provinces were peopled by a race of soldiers; and the veterans, whether they received the reward of their service in land or in money, usually settled with their families in the country, where they had honorably spent their youth. Throughout the empire, but more particularly in the western parts, the most fertile districts, and the most convenient situations, were reserved for the establishment of colonies; some of which were of a civil, and others of a military nature. In their manners and internal policy, the colonies formed a perfect representation of their great parent; and they were soon endeared to the natives by the ties of friendship and alliance, they effectually diffused a reverence for the Roman name, and a desire, which was seldom disappointed, of sharing, in due time, its honors and advantages. [32](#) The municipal cities insensibly equalled the rank and splendor of the colonies; and in the reign of Hadrian, it was disputed which was the preferable condition, of those societies which had issued from, or those which had been received into, the bosom of Rome. [33](#) The right of Latium, as it was called, [331](#) conferred on the cities to which it had been granted, a more partial favor. The magistrates only, at the expiration of their office, assumed the quality of Roman citizens; but as those offices were annual, in a few years they circulated round the principal families. [34](#) Those of the provincials who were permitted to bear arms in the legions; [35](#) those who exercised any civil employment; all, in a word, who performed any public service, or displayed any personal talents, were rewarded with a present, whose value was continually diminished by the increasing liberality of the emperors. Yet even, in the age of the Antonines, when the freedom of the city had been bestowed on the greater number of their subjects, it was still accompanied with very solid advantages. The bulk of the people acquired, with that title, the benefit of the Roman laws, particularly in the interesting articles of marriage, testaments, and inheritances; and the road of fortune was open to those whose pretensions were seconded by favor or merit. The grandsons of the Gauls, who had besieged Julius Cæsar in Alesia, commanded legions, governed provinces, and were admitted into the senate of Rome. [36](#) Their ambition, instead of disturbing the tranquillity of the state, was intimately connected with its safety and greatness.

30 [\(return\)](#)
[Seneca in Consolat. ad Helviam, c. 6.]

31 [\(return\)](#)
[Memnon apud Photium, (c. 33,) [c. 224, p. 231, ed Bekker.] Valer. Maxim. ix. 2. Plutarch and Dion Cassius swell the massacre to 150,000 citizens; but I should esteem the smaller number to be more than sufficient.]

32 [\(return\)](#)
[Twenty-five colonies were settled in Spain, (see Plin. Hist. Nat. iii. 3, 4; iv. 35;) and nine in Britain, of which London, Colchester, Lincoln, Chester,

Gloucester, and Bath still remain considerable cities. (See Richard of Cirencester, p. 36, and Whittaker's History of Manchester, l. i. c. 3.)]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[Aul. Gel. Noctes Atticæ, xvi 13. The Emperor Hadrian expressed his surprise, that the cities of Utica, Gades, and Italica, which already enjoyed the rights of *Municipia*, should solicit the title of *colonies*. Their example, however, became fashionable, and the empire was filled with honorary colonies. See Spanheim, de Usu Numismatum Dissertat. xiii.]

331 [\(return\)](#)

[The right of Latium conferred an exemption from the government of the Roman præfect. Strabo states this distinctly, l. iv. p. 295, edit. Cæsar's. See also Walther, p. 233.—M]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[Spanheim, Orbis Roman. c. 8, p. 62.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[Aristid. in Romæ Encomio. tom. i. p. 218, edit. Jebb.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. xi. 23, 24. Hist. iv. 74.]

So sensible were the Romans of the influence of language over national manners, that it was their most serious care to extend, with the progress of their arms, the use of the Latin tongue. [37](#) The ancient dialects of Italy, the Sabine, the Etruscan, and the Venetian, sunk into oblivion; but in the provinces, the east was less docile than the west to the voice of its victorious preceptors. This obvious difference marked the two portions of the empire with a distinction of colors, which, though it was in some degree concealed during the meridian splendor of prosperity, became gradually more visible, as the shades of night descended upon the Roman world. The western countries were civilized by the same hands which subdued them. As soon as the barbarians were reconciled to obedience, their minds were open to any new impressions of knowledge and politeness. The language of Virgil and Cicero, though with some inevitable mixture of corruption, was so universally adopted in Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Pannonia, [38](#) that the faint traces of the Punic or Celtic idioms were preserved only in the mountains, or among the peasants. [39](#) Education and study insensibly inspired the natives of those countries with the sentiments of Romans; and Italy gave fashions, as well as laws, to her Latin provincials. They solicited with more ardor, and obtained with more facility, the freedom and honors of the state; supported the national dignity in letters [40](#) and in arms; and at length, in the person of Trajan, produced an emperor whom the Scipios would not have disowned for their countryman. The situation of the Greeks was very different from that of the barbarians. The former had been long since civilized and corrupted. They had too much taste to relinquish their language, and too

much vanity to adopt any foreign institutions. Still preserving the prejudices, after they had lost the virtues, of their ancestors, they affected to despise the unpolished manners of the Roman conquerors, whilst they were compelled to respect their superior wisdom and power. [41](#) Nor was the influence of the Grecian language and sentiments confined to the narrow limits of that once celebrated country. Their empire, by the progress of colonies and conquest, had been diffused from the Adriatic to the Euphrates and the Nile. Asia was covered with Greek cities, and the long reign of the Macedonian kings had introduced a silent revolution into Syria and Egypt. In their pompous courts, those princes united the elegance of Athens with the luxury of the East, and the example of the court was imitated, at an humble distance, by the higher ranks of their subjects. Such was the general division of the Roman empire into the Latin and Greek languages. To these we may add a third distinction for the body of the natives in Syria, and especially in Egypt, the use of their ancient dialects, by secluding them from the commerce of mankind, checked the improvements of those barbarians. [42](#) The slothful effeminacy of the former exposed them to the contempt, the sullen ferociousness of the latter excited the aversion, of the conquerors. [43](#) Those nations had submitted to the Roman power, but they seldom desired or deserved the freedom of the city: and it was remarked, that more than two hundred and thirty years elapsed after the ruin of the Ptolemies, before an Egyptian was admitted into the senate of Rome. [44](#)

37

[\(return\)](#)

[See Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 5. Augustin. de Civitate Dei, xix 7 Lipsius de Pronunciatione Linguæ Latinæ, c. 3.]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[Apuleius and Augustin will answer for Africa; Strabo for Spain and Gaul; Tacitus, in the life of Agricola, for Britain; and Velleius Paterculus, for Pannonia. To them we may add the language of the Inscriptions. * Note: Mr. Hallam contests this assertion as regards Britain. "Nor did the Romans ever establish their language—I know not whether they wished to do so—in this island, as we perceive by that stubborn British tongue which has survived two conquests." In his note, Mr. Hallam examines the passage from Tacitus (Agric. xxi.) to which Gibbon refers. It merely asserts the progress of Latin studies among the higher orders. (Midd. Ages, iii. 314.) Probably it was a kind of court language, and that of public affairs and prevailed in the Roman colonies.—M.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[The Celtic was preserved in the mountains of Wales, Cornwall, and Armorica. We may observe, that Apuleius reproaches an African youth, who lived among the populace, with the use of the Punic; whilst he had almost forgot Greek, and neither

could nor would speak Latin, (Apolog. p. 596.) The greater part of St. Austin's congregations were strangers to the Punic.]

40 [\(return\)](#)

[Spain alone produced Columella, the Senecas, Lucan, Martial, and Quintilian.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[There is not, I believe, from Dionysius to Libanus, a single Greek critic who mentions Virgil or Horace. They seem ignorant that the Romans had any good writers.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

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

43 [\(return\)](#)

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

44 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius, l. lxxvii. p. 1275. The first instance happened under the reign of Septimius Severus.]

It is a just though trite observation, that victorious Rome was herself subdued by the arts of Greece. Those immortal writers who still command the admiration of modern Europe, soon became the favorite object of study and imitation in Italy and the western provinces. But the elegant amusements of the Romans were not suffered to interfere with their sound maxims of policy. Whilst they acknowledged the charms of the Greek, they asserted the dignity of the Latin tongue, and the exclusive use of the latter was inflexibly maintained in the administration of civil as well as military government. [45](#) The two languages exercised at the same time their separate jurisdiction throughout the empire: the former, as the natural idiom of science; the latter, as the legal dialect of public transactions. Those who united letters with business were equally conversant with both; and it was almost impossible, in any province, to find a Roman subject, of a liberal education, who was at once a stranger to the Greek and to the Latin language.

45 [\(return\)](#)

[See Valerius Maximus, l. ii. c. 2, n. 2. The emperor Claudius disfranchised an eminent Grecian for not understanding Latin. He was probably in some public office. Suetonius in Claud. c. 16. * Note: Causes seem to have been pleaded, even in the senate, in both languages. Val. Max. *loc. cit.* Dion. l. lvii. c. 15.—M]

It was by such institutions that the nations of the empire insensibly melted away into the Roman name and people. But there still remained, in the centre of every province

and of every family, an unhappy condition of men who endured the weight, without sharing the benefits, of society. In the free states of antiquity, the domestic slaves were exposed to the wanton rigor of despotism. The perfect settlement of the Roman empire was preceded by ages of violence and rapine. The slaves consisted, for the most part, of barbarian captives, [451](#) taken in thousands by the chance of war, purchased at a vile price, [46](#) accustomed to a life of independence, and impatient to break and to revenge their fetters. Against such internal enemies, whose desperate insurrections had more than once reduced the republic to the brink of destruction, [47](#) the most severe [471](#) regulations, [48](#) and the most cruel treatment, seemed almost justified by the great law of self-preservation. But when the principal nations of Europe, Asia, and Africa were united under the laws of one sovereign, the source of foreign supplies flowed with much less abundance, and the Romans were reduced to the milder but more tedious method of propagation. [481](#) In their numerous families, and particularly in their country estates, they encouraged the marriage of their slaves. [482](#) The sentiments of nature, the habits of education, and the possession of a dependent species of property, contributed to alleviate the hardships of servitude. [49](#) The existence of a slave became an object of greater value, and though his happiness still depended on the temper and circumstances of the master, the humanity of the latter, instead of being restrained by fear, was encouraged by the sense of his own interest. The progress of manners was accelerated by the virtue or policy of the emperors; and by the edicts of Hadrian and the Antonines, the protection of the laws was extended to the most abject part of mankind. The jurisdiction of life and death over the slaves, a power long exercised and often abused, was taken out of private hands, and reserved to the magistrates alone. The subterraneous prisons were abolished; and, upon a just complaint of intolerable treatment, the injured slave obtained either his deliverance, or a less cruel master. [50](#)

451

[\(return\)](#)

[It was this which rendered the wars so sanguinary, and the battles so obstinate. The immortal Robertson, in an excellent discourse on the state of the world at the period of the establishment of Christianity, has traced a picture of the melancholy effects of slavery, in which we find all the depth of his views and the strength of his mind. I shall oppose successively some passages to the reflections of Gibbon. The reader will see, not without interest, the truths which Gibbon appears to have mistaken or voluntarily neglected, developed by one of the best of modern historians. It is important to call them to mind here, in order to establish the facts and their consequences with accuracy. I shall more than once have occasion to employ, for this purpose, the discourse of Robertson. "Captives taken in war were, in all probability, the first persons subjected to perpetual servitude; and, when the necessities or luxury of

mankind increased the demand for slaves, every new war recruited their number, by reducing the vanquished to that wretched condition. Hence proceeded the fierce and desperate spirit with which wars were carried on among ancient nations. While chains and slavery were the certain lot of the conquered, battles were fought, and towns defended with a rage and obstinacy which nothing but horror at such a fate could have inspired; but, putting an end to the cruel institution of slavery, Christianity extended its mild influences to the practice of war, and that barbarous art, softened by its humane spirit, ceased to be so destructive. Secure, in every event, of personal liberty, the resistance of the vanquished became less obstinate, and the triumph of the victor less cruel. Thus humanity was introduced into the exercise of war, with which it appears to be almost incompatible; and it is to the merciful maxims of Christianity, much more than to any other cause, that we must ascribe the little ferocity and bloodshed which accompany modern victories.”—G.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[In the camp of Lucullus, an ox sold for a drachma, and a slave for four drachmæ, or about three shillings. Plutarch. in Lucull. p. 580. * Note: Above 100,000 prisoners were taken in the Jewish war.—G. Hist. of Jews, iii. 71. According to a tradition preserved by S. Jerom, after the insurrection in the time of Hadrian, they were sold as cheap as horse. Ibid. 124. Compare Blair on Roman Slavery, p. 19.—M., and Dureau de la blalle, Economie Politique des Romains, l. i. c. 15. But I cannot think that this writer has made out his case as to the common price of an agricultural slave being from 2000 to 2500 francs, (80l. to 100l.) He has overlooked the passages which show the ordinary prices, (i. e. Hor. Sat. ii. vii. 45,) and argued from extraordinary and exceptional cases.—M. 1845.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[Diodorus Siculus in Eclog. Hist. l. xxxiv. and xxxvi. Florus, iii. 19, 20.]

471

[\(return\)](#)

[The following is the example: we shall see whether the word “severe” is here in its place. “At the time in which L. Domitius was prætor in Sicily, a slave killed a wild boar of extraordinary size. The prætor, struck by the dexterity and courage of the man, desired to see him. The poor wretch, highly gratified with the distinction, came to present

himself before the prætor, in hopes, no doubt, of praise and reward; but Domitius, on learning that he had only a javelin to attack and kill the boar, ordered him to be instantly crucified, under the barbarous pretext that the law prohibited the use of this weapon, as of all others, to slaves." Perhaps the cruelty of Domitius is less astonishing than the indifference with which the Roman orator relates this circumstance, which affects him so little that he thus expresses himself: "*Durum hoc fortasse videatur, neque ego in ullam partem disputo.*" "This may appear harsh, nor do I give any opinion on the subject." And it is the same orator who exclaims in the same oration, "*Facinus est cruciare civem Romanum; scelus verberare; prope parricidium necare: quid dicam in crucem tollere?*" "It is a crime to imprison a Roman citizen; wickedness to scourge; next to parricide to put to death, what shall I call it to crucify?"

In general, this passage of Gibbon on slavery, is full, not only of blamable indifference, but of an exaggeration of impartiality which resembles dishonesty. He endeavors to extenuate all that is appalling in the condition and treatment of the slaves; he would make us consider those cruelties as possibly "justified by necessity." He then describes, with minute accuracy, the slightest mitigations of their deplorable condition; he attributes to the virtue or the policy of the emperors the progressive amelioration in the lot of the slaves; and he passes over in silence the most influential cause, that which, after rendering the slaves less miserable, has contributed at length entirely to enfranchise them from their sufferings and their chains,—Christianity. It would be easy to accumulate the most frightful, the most agonizing details, of the manner in which the Romans treated their slaves; whole works have been devoted to the description. I content myself with referring to them. Some reflections of Robertson, taken from the discourse already quoted, will make us feel that Gibbon, in tracing the mitigation of the condition of the slaves, up to a period little later than that which witnessed the establishment of Christianity in the world, could not have avoided the acknowledgment of the influence of that beneficent cause, if he had not already determined not to speak of it.

"Upon establishing despotic government in the Roman empire, domestic tyranny rose, in a short time, to an astonishing height. In that rank soil, every vice, which power nourishes in the great, or oppression engenders in the mean, thrived and grew up apace. * * * It is not the authority of any single detached precept in the gospel, but the spirit and genius of the Christian religion, more powerful than any particular command, which hath abolished the practice of slavery throughout the world. The temper which Christianity inspired was mild and gentle; and the doctrines it taught added such dignity

and lustre to human nature, as rescued it from the dishonorable servitude into which it was sunk.”

It is in vain, then, that Gibbon pretends to attribute solely to the desire of keeping up the number of slaves, the milder conduct which the Romans began to adopt in their favor at the time of the emperors. This cause had hitherto acted in an opposite direction; how came it on a sudden to have a different influence? “The masters,” he says, “encouraged the marriage of their slaves; * * * the sentiments of nature, the habits of education, contributed to alleviate the hardships of servitude.” The children of slaves were the property of their master, who could dispose of or alienate them like the rest of his property. Is it in such a situation, with such notions, that the sentiments of nature unfold themselves, or habits of education become mild and peaceful? We must not attribute to causes inadequate or altogether without force, effects which require to explain them a reference to more influential causes; and even if these slighter causes had in effect a manifest influence, we must not forget that they are themselves the effect of a primary, a higher, and more extensive cause, which, in giving to the mind and to the character a more disinterested and more humane bias, disposed men to second or themselves to advance, by their conduct, and by the change of manners, the happy results which it tended to produce.—G.

I have retained the whole of M. Guizot’s note, though, in his zeal for the invaluable blessings of freedom and Christianity, he has done Gibbon injustice. The condition of the slaves was undoubtedly improved under the emperors. What a great authority has said, “The condition of a slave is better under an arbitrary than under a free government,” (Smith’s *Wealth of Nations*, iv. 7,) is, I believe, supported by the history of all ages and nations. The protecting edicts of Hadrian and the Antonines are historical facts, and can as little be attributed to the influence of Christianity, as the milder language of heathen writers, of Seneca, (particularly Ep. 47,) of Pliny, and of Plutarch. The latter influence of Christianity is admitted by Gibbon himself. The subject of Roman slavery has recently been investigated with great diligence in a very modest but valuable volume, by Wm. Blair, Esq., Edin. 1833. May we be permitted, while on the subject, to refer to the most splendid passage extant of Mr. Pitt’s eloquence, the description of the Roman slave-dealer. on the shores of Britain, condemning the island to irreclaimable barbarism, as a perpetual and prolific nursery of slaves? *Speeches*, vol. ii. p. 80.

Gibbon, it should be added, was one of the first and most consistent opponents of the African slave-trade. (See *Hist.* ch. xxv. and *Letters to Lor Sheffield*, *Misc. Works*)—M.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[See a remarkable instance of severity in Cicero in *Verrem*, v. 3.]

481

[\(return\)](#)

[An active slave-trade, which was carried on in

many quarters, particularly the Euxine, the eastern provinces, the coast of Africa, and British must be taken into the account. Blair, 23—32.—M.]

482

[\(return\)](#)

[The Romans, as well in the first ages of the republic as later, allowed to their slaves a kind of marriage, (contubernium:) notwithstanding this, luxury made a greater number of slaves in demand. The increase in their population was not sufficient, and recourse was had to the purchase of slaves, which was made even in the provinces of the East subject to the Romans. It is, moreover, known that slavery is a state little favorable to population. (See Hume's Essay, and Malthus on population, i. 334.—G.) The testimony of Appian (B.C. l. i. c. 7) is decisive in favor of the rapid multiplication of the agricultural slaves; it is confirmed by the numbers engaged in the servile wars. Compare also Blair, p. 119; likewise Columella l. viii.—M.]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[See in Gruter, and the other collectors, a great number of inscriptions addressed by slaves to their wives, children, fellow-servants, masters, &c. They are all most probably of the Imperial age.]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Augustan History, and a Dissertation of M. de Burigny, in the xxxvth volume of the Academy of Inscriptions, upon the Roman slaves.]

Hope, the best comfort of our imperfect condition, was not denied to the Roman slave; and if he had any opportunity of rendering himself either useful or agreeable, he might very naturally expect that the diligence and fidelity of a few years would be rewarded with the inestimable gift of freedom. The benevolence of the master was so frequently prompted by the meaner suggestions of vanity and avarice, that the laws found it more necessary to restrain than to encourage a profuse and undistinguishing liberality, which might degenerate into a very dangerous abuse. [51](#) It was a maxim of ancient jurisprudence, that a slave had not any country of his own; he acquired with his liberty an admission into the political society of which his patron was a member. The consequences of this maxim would have prostituted the privileges of the Roman city to a mean and promiscuous multitude. Some seasonable exceptions were therefore provided; and the honorable distinction was confined to such slaves only as, for just causes, and with the approbation of the magistrate, should receive a solemn and legal manumission. Even these chosen freedmen obtained no more than the private rights of citizens, and were rigorously excluded from civil or military honors. Whatever might be the merit or fortune of their sons, *they* likewise were esteemed unworthy of a seat in the senate; nor were the traces of a servile origin allowed to be completely obliterated till the third or fourth generation. [52](#) Without destroying the distinction of ranks, a

distant prospect of freedom and honors was presented, even to those whom pride and prejudice almost disdained to number among the human species.

51 [\(return\)](#)
[See another Dissertation of M. de Burigny, in the xxxviith volume, on the Roman freedmen.]

52 [\(return\)](#)
[Spanheim, Orbis Roman. l. i. c. 16, p. 124, &c.] It was once proposed to discriminate the slaves by a peculiar habit; but it was justly apprehended that there might be some danger in acquainting them with their own numbers. [53](#) Without interpreting, in their utmost strictness, the liberal appellations of legions and myriads, [54](#) we may venture to pronounce, that the proportion of slaves, who were valued as property, was more considerable than that of servants, who can be computed only as an expense. [55](#) The youths of a promising genius were instructed in the arts and sciences, and their price was ascertained by the degree of their skill and talents. [56](#) Almost every profession, either liberal [57](#) or mechanical, might be found in the household of an opulent senator. The ministers of pomp and sensuality were multiplied beyond the conception of modern luxury. [58](#) It was more for the interest of the merchant or manufacturer to purchase, than to hire his workmen; and in the country, slaves were employed as the cheapest and most laborious instruments of agriculture. To confirm the general observation, and to display the multitude of slaves, we might allege a variety of particular instances. It was discovered, on a very melancholy occasion, that four hundred slaves were maintained in a single palace of Rome. [59](#) The same number of four hundred belonged to an estate which an African widow, of a very private condition, resigned to her son, whilst she reserved for herself a much larger share of her property. [60](#) A freedman, under the name of Augustus, though his fortune had suffered great losses in the civil wars, left behind him three thousand six hundred yoke of oxen, two hundred and fifty thousand head of smaller cattle, and what was almost included in the description of cattle, four thousand one hundred and sixteen slaves. [61](#)

53 [\(return\)](#)
[Seneca de Clementia, l. i. c. 24. The original is much stronger, “Quantum periculum immineret si servi nostri numerare nos cœpissent.”]

- 54 [\(return\)](#)
[See Pliny (Hist. Natur. l. xxxiii.) and Athenæus (Deipnosophist. l. vi. p. 272.) The latter boldly asserts, that he knew very many Romans who possessed, not for use, but ostentation, ten and even twenty thousand slaves.]
- 55 [\(return\)](#)
[In Paris there are not more than 43,000 domestics of every sort, and not a twelfth part of the inhabitants. Messange, Recherches sui la Population, p. 186.]
- 56 [\(return\)](#)
[A learned slave sold for many hundred pounds sterling: Atticus always bred and taught them himself. Cornel. Nepos in Vit. c. 13, [on the prices of slaves. Blair, 149.]—M.]
- 57 [\(return\)](#)
[Many of the Roman physicians were slaves. See Dr. Middleton's Dissertation and Defence.]
- 58 [\(return\)](#)
[Their ranks and offices are very copiously enumerated by Pignorius de Servis.]
- 59 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Annal. xiv. 43. They were all executed for not preventing their master's murder. * Note: The remarkable speech of Cassius shows the proud feelings of the Roman aristocracy on this subject.—M]
- 60 [\(return\)](#)
[Apuleius in Apolog. p. 548. edit. Delphin]
- 61 [\(return\)](#)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xxxiii. 47.]

The number of subjects who acknowledged the laws of Rome, of citizens, of provincials, and of slaves, cannot now be fixed with such a degree of accuracy, as the importance of the object would deserve. We are informed, that when the Emperor Claudius exercised the office of censor, he took an account of six millions nine hundred and forty-five thousand Roman citizens, who, with the proportion of women and children, must have amounted to about twenty millions of souls. The multitude of subjects of an inferior rank was uncertain and fluctuating. But, after weighing with attention every circumstance which could influence the balance, it seems probable that there existed, in the time of Claudius, about twice as many provincials as there were citizens, of either sex, and of every age; and that the slaves were at least equal in number to the free inhabitants of the Roman world.[611](#) The total amount of this imperfect calculation would rise to about one hundred and twenty millions of persons; a degree of population which possibly exceeds that of modern Europe, [62](#) and forms the most numerous society that has ever been united under the same system of government.

[According to Robertson, there were twice as many slaves as free citizens.—G. Mr. Blair (p. 15) estimates three slaves to one freeman, between the conquest of Greece, B.C. 146, and the reign of Alexander Severus, A. D. 222, 235. The proportion was probably larger in Italy than in the provinces.—M. On the other hand, Zumpt, in his Dissertation quoted below, (p. 86,) asserts it to be a gross error in Gibbon to reckon the number of slaves equal to that of the free population. The luxury and magnificence of the great, (he observes,) at the commencement of the empire, must not be taken as the groundwork of calculations for the whole Roman world. “The agricultural laborer, and the artisan, in Spain, Gaul, Britain, Syria, and Egypt, maintained himself, as in the present day, by his own labor and that of his household, without possessing a single slave.” The latter part of my note was intended to suggest this consideration. Yet so completely was slavery rooted in the social system, both in the east and the west, that in the great diffusion of wealth at this time, every one, I doubt not, who could afford a domestic slave, kept one; and generally, the number of slaves was in proportion to the wealth. I do not believe that the cultivation of the soil by slaves was confined to Italy; the holders of large estates in the provinces would probably, either from choice or necessity, adopt the same mode of cultivation. The latifundia, says Pliny, had ruined Italy, and had begun to ruin the provinces. Slaves were no doubt employed in agricultural labor to a great extent in Sicily, and were the estates of those six enormous landholders who were said to have possessed the whole province of Africa, cultivated altogether by free coloni? Whatever may have been the case in the rural districts, in the towns and cities the household duties were almost entirely discharged by slaves, and vast numbers belonged to the public establishments. I do not, however, differ so far from Zumpt, and from M. Dureau de la Malle, as to adopt the higher and bolder estimate of Robertson and Mr. Blair, rather than the more cautious suggestions of Gibbon. I would reduce rather than increase the proportion of the slave population. The very ingenious and elaborate calculations of the French writer, by which he deduces the amount of the population from the produce and consumption of corn in Italy, appear to me neither precise nor satisfactory bases for such complicated political

arithmetic. I am least satisfied with his views as to the population of the city of Rome; but this point will be more fitly reserved for a note on the thirty-first chapter of Gibbon. The work, however, of M. Dureau de la Malle is very curious and full on some of the minuter points of Roman statistics.—M. 1845.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[Compute twenty millions in France, twenty-two in Germany, four in Hungary, ten in Italy with its islands, eight in Great Britain and Ireland, eight in Spain and Portugal, ten or twelve in the European Russia, six in Poland, six in Greece and Turkey, four in Sweden, three in Denmark and Norway, four in the Low Countries. The whole would amount to one hundred and five, or one hundred and seven millions. See Voltaire, de l'Histoire Generale. * Note: The present population of Europe is estimated at 227,700,000. Malts Bran, Geogr. Trans edit. 1832 See details in the different volumes Another authority, (Almanach de Gotha,) quoted in a recent English publication, gives the following details:—

France, 32,897,521 Germany, (including Hungary, Prussian and Austrian Poland,) 56,136,213 Italy, 20,548,616 Great Britain and Ireland, 24,062,947 Spain and Portugal, 13,953,959. 3,144,000 Russia, including Poland, 44,220,600 Cracow, 128,480 Turkey, (including Pachalic of Dschesair,) 9,545,300 Greece, 637,700 Ionian Islands, 208,100 Sweden and Norway, 3,914,963 Denmark, 2,012,998 Belgium, 3,533,538 Holland, 2,444,550 Switzerland, 985,000. Total, 219,344,116

Since the publication of my first annotated edition of Gibbon, the subject of the population of the Roman empire has been investigated by two writers of great industry and learning; Mons. Dureau de la Malle, in his *Economie Politique des Romains*, liv. ii. c. 1. to 8, and M. Zumpt, in a dissertation printed in the *Transactions of the Berlin Academy*, 1840. M. Dureau de la Malle confines his inquiry almost entirely to the city of Rome, and Roman Italy. Zumpt examines at greater length the axiom, which he supposes to have been assumed by Gibbon as unquestionable, “that Italy and the Roman world was never so populous as in the time of the Antonines.” Though this probably was Gibbon’s opinion, he has not stated it so peremptorily as asserted by Mr. Zumpt. It had before been expressly laid down by Hume, and his statement was

controverted by Wallace and by Malthus. Gibbon says (p. 84) that there is no reason to believe the country (of Italy) less populous in the age of the Antonines, than in that of Romulus; and Zumpt acknowledges that we have no satisfactory knowledge of the state of Italy at that early age. Zumpt, in my opinion with some reason, takes the period just before the first Punic war, as that in which Roman Italy (all south of the Rubicon) was most populous. From that time, the numbers began to diminish, at first from the enormous waste of life out of the free population in the foreign, and afterwards in the civil wars; from the cultivation of the soil by slaves; towards the close of the republic, from the repugnance to marriage, which resisted alike the dread of legal punishment and the offer of legal immunity and privilege; and from the depravity of manners, which interfered with the procreation, the birth, and the rearing of children. The arguments and the authorities of Zumpt are equally conclusive as to the decline of population in Greece. Still the details, which he himself adduces as to the prosperity and populousness of Asia Minor, and the whole of the Roman East, with the advancement of the European provinces, especially Gaul, Spain, and Britain, in civilization, and therefore in populousness, (for I have no confidence in the vast numbers sometimes assigned to the barbarous inhabitants of these countries,) may, I think, fairly compensate for any deduction to be made from Gibbon's general estimate on account of Greece and Italy. Gibbon himself acknowledges his own estimate to be vague and conjectural; and I may venture to recommend the dissertation of Zumpt as deserving respectful consideration.—M 1815.]

Chapter II: The Internal Prosperity In The Age Of The Antonines.—Part III.

Domestic peace and union were the natural consequences of the moderate and comprehensive policy embraced by the Romans. If we turn our eyes towards the monarchies of Asia, we shall behold despotism in the centre, and weakness in the extremities; the collection of the revenue, or the administration of justice, enforced by the presence of an army; hostile barbarians established in the heart of the country, hereditary satraps usurping the dominion of the provinces, and subjects inclined to rebellion, though incapable of freedom. But the obedience of the Roman world was

uniform, voluntary, and permanent. The vanquished nations, blended into one great people, resigned the hope, nay, even the wish, of resuming their independence, and scarcely considered their own existence as distinct from the existence of Rome. The established authority of the emperors pervaded without an effort the wide extent of their dominions, and was exercised with the same facility on the banks of the Thames, or of the Nile, as on those of the Tyber. The legions were destined to serve against the public enemy, and the civil magistrate seldom required the aid of a military force. [63](#) In this state of general security, the leisure, as well as opulence, both of the prince and people, were devoted to improve and to adorn the Roman empire.

63

[\(return\)](#)

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

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

It is natural to suppose that the greatest number, as well as the most considerable of the Roman edifices, were raised by the emperors, who possessed so unbounded a command both of men and money. Augustus was accustomed to boast that he had found his capital of brick, and that he had left it of marble. [64](#) The strict economy of Vespasian was the source of his magnificence. The works of Trajan bear the stamp of his genius. The public monuments with which Hadrian adorned every province of the empire, were executed not only by his orders, but under his immediate inspection. He was himself an artist; and he loved the arts, as they conduced to the glory of the monarch. They were encouraged by the Antonines, as they contributed to the happiness of the people. But if the emperors were the first, they were not the only architects of their dominions. Their example was universally imitated by their principal subjects, who were not afraid of declaring to the world that they had spirit to conceive, and wealth to accomplish, the noblest undertakings. Scarcely had the proud structure of the Coliseum been dedicated at Rome, before the edifices, of a smaller scale indeed, but of the same design and materials, were erected for the use, and at the expense, of the cities of Capua and Verona. [65](#) The inscription of the stupendous bridge of Alcantara attests that it was thrown over the Tagus by the contribution of a few Lusitanian communities. When Pliny was intrusted with the government of Bithynia and Pontus, provinces by no means the richest or most considerable of the empire, he found the cities within his jurisdiction

striving with each other in every useful and ornamental work, that might deserve the curiosity of strangers, or the gratitude of their citizens. It was the duty of the proconsul to supply their deficiencies, to direct their taste, and sometimes to moderate their emulation. [66](#) The opulent senators of Rome and the provinces esteemed it an honor, and almost an obligation, to adorn the splendor of their age and country; and the influence of fashion very frequently supplied the want of taste or generosity. Among a crowd of these private benefactors, we may select Herodes Atticus, an Athenian citizen, who lived in the age of the Antonines. Whatever might be the motive of his conduct, his magnificence would have been worthy of the greatest kings.

64

[\(return\)](#)

[Sueton. in August. c. 28. Augustus built in Rome the temple and forum of Mars the Avenger; the temple of Jupiter Tonans in the Capitol; that of Apollo Palatine, with public libraries; the portico and basilica of Caius and Lucius; the porticos of Livia and Octavia; and the theatre of Marcellus. The example of the sovereign was imitated by his ministers and generals; and his friend Agrippa left behind him the immortal monument of the Pantheon.]

65

[\(return\)](#)

[See Maffei, Veroni Illustrata, l. iv. p. 68.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[Footnote 66: See the xth book of Pliny's Epistles. He mentions the following works carried on at the expense of the cities. At Nicomedia, a new forum, an aqueduct, and a canal, left unfinished by a king; at Nice, a gymnasium, and a theatre, which had already cost near ninety thousand pounds; baths at Prusa and Claudiopolis, and an aqueduct of sixteen miles in length for the use of Sinope.]

The family of Herod, at least after it had been favored by fortune, was lineally descended from Cimon and Miltiades, Theseus and Cecrops, Æacus and Jupiter. But the posterity of so many gods and heroes was fallen into the most abject state. His grandfather had suffered by the hands of justice, and Julius Atticus, his father, must have ended his life in poverty and contempt, had he not discovered an immense treasure buried under an old house, the last remains of his patrimony. According to the rigor of the law, the emperor might have asserted his claim, and the prudent Atticus prevented, by a frank confession, the officiousness of informers. But the equitable Nerva, who then filled the throne, refused to accept any part of it, and commanded him to use, without scruple, the present of fortune. The cautious Athenian still insisted, that the treasure was too considerable for a subject, and that he knew not how to *use it*. *Abuse it then*, replied the monarch, with a good-natured peevishness; for it is your own. [67](#) Many will be of opinion, that Atticus literally obeyed the emperor's last instructions; since he expended the greatest part of his fortune, which was much increased by an advantageous marriage,

in the service of the public. He had obtained for his son Herod the prefecture of the free cities of Asia; and the young magistrate, observing that the town of Troas was indifferently supplied with water, obtained from the munificence of Hadrian three hundred myriads of drachms, (about a hundred thousand pounds,) for the construction of a new aqueduct. But in the execution of the work, the charge amounted to more than double the estimate, and the officers of the revenue began to murmur, till the generous Atticus silenced their complaints, by requesting that he might be permitted to take upon himself the whole additional expense. [68](#)

67

[\(return\)](#)

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

68

[\(return\)](#)

[Philostrat. in Vit. Sophist. l. ii. p. 548.]

The ablest preceptors of Greece and Asia had been invited by liberal rewards to direct the education of young Herod. Their pupil soon became a celebrated orator, according to the useless rhetoric of that age, which, confining itself to the schools, disdained to visit either the Forum or the Senate.

He was honored with the consulship at Rome: but the greatest part of his life was spent in a philosophic retirement at Athens, and his adjacent villas; perpetually surrounded by sophists, who acknowledged, without reluctance, the superiority of a rich and generous rival. [69](#) The monuments of his genius have perished; some considerable ruins still preserve the fame of his taste and munificence: modern travellers have measured the remains of the stadium which he constructed at Athens. It was six hundred feet in length, built entirely of white marble, capable of admitting the whole body of the people, and finished in four years, whilst Herod was president of the Athenian games. To the memory of his wife Regilla he dedicated a theatre, scarcely to be paralleled in the empire: no wood except cedar, very curiously carved, was employed in any part of the building. The Odeum, [691](#) designed by Pericles for musical performances, and the rehearsal of new tragedies, had been a trophy of the victory of the arts over barbaric greatness; as the timbers employed in the construction consisted chiefly of the masts of the Persian vessels. Notwithstanding the repairs bestowed on that ancient edifice by a king of Cappadocia, it was again fallen to decay. Herod restored its ancient beauty and magnificence. Nor was the liberality of that illustrious citizen confined to the walls of Athens. The most splendid ornaments bestowed on the temple of Neptune in the Isthmus, a theatre at Corinth, a stadium at Delphi, a bath at Thermopylæ, and an aqueduct at Canusium in Italy, were insufficient to exhaust his treasures. The people of Epirus, Thessaly, Eubœa, Bœotia, and Peloponnesus, experienced his favors; and many inscriptions of the cities of Greece and Asia gratefully style Herodes Atticus their patron and benefactor. [70](#)

- 69 [\(return\)](#)
[Aulus Gellius, in Noct. Attic. i. 2, ix. 2, xviii. 10, xix. 12. Phil ostrat. p. 564.]
- 691 [\(return\)](#)
[The Odeum served for the rehearsal of new comedies as well as tragedies; they were read or repeated, before representation, without music or decorations, &c. No piece could be represented in the theatre if it had not been previously approved by judges for this purpose. The king of Cappadocia who restored the Odeum, which had been burnt by Sylla, was Araobarzanes. See Martini, Dissertation on the Odeons of the Ancients, Leipsic. 1767, p. 10—91.—W.]
- 70 [\(return\)](#)
[See Philostrat. l. ii. p. 548, 560. Pausanias, l. i. and vii. 10. The life of Herodes, in the xxxth volume of the Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions.]

In the commonwealths of Athens and Rome, the modest simplicity of private houses announced the equal condition of freedom; whilst the sovereignty of the people was represented in the majestic edifices designed to the public use; [71](#) nor was this republican spirit totally extinguished by the introduction of wealth and monarchy. It was in works of national honor and benefit, that the most virtuous of the emperors affected to display their magnificence. The golden palace of Nero excited a just indignation, but the vast extent of ground which had been usurped by his selfish luxury was more nobly filled under the succeeding reigns by the Coliseum, the baths of Titus, the Claudian portico, and the temples dedicated to the goddess of Peace, and to the genius of Rome. [72](#) These monuments of architecture, the property of the Roman people, were adorned with the most beautiful productions of Grecian painting and sculpture; and in the temple of Peace, a very curious library was open to the curiosity of the learned. [721](#) At a small distance from thence was situated the Forum of Trajan. It was surrounded by a lofty portico, in the form of a quadrangle, into which four triumphal arches opened a noble and spacious entrance: in the centre arose a column of marble, whose height, of one hundred and ten feet, denoted the elevation of the hill that had been cut away. This column, which still subsists in its ancient beauty, exhibited an exact representation of the Dacian victories of its founder. The veteran soldier contemplated the story of his own campaigns, and by an easy illusion of national vanity, the peaceful citizen associated himself to the honors of the triumph. All the other quarters of the capital, and all the provinces of the empire, were embellished by the same liberal spirit of public magnificence, and were filled with amphitheatres, theatres, temples, porticoes, triumphal arches, baths and aqueducts, all variously conducive to the health, the devotion, and the pleasures of the meanest citizen. The last mentioned of those edifices deserve our peculiar attention. The boldness of the enterprise, the solidity of the execution, and the uses to which they were subservient, rank the aqueducts among

the noblest monuments of Roman genius and power. The aqueducts of the capital claim a just preeminence; but the curious traveller, who, without the light of history, should examine those of Spoleto, of Metz, or of Segovia, would very naturally conclude that those provincial towns had formerly been the residence of some potent monarch. The solitudes of Asia and Africa were once covered with flourishing cities, whose populousness, and even whose existence, was derived from such artificial supplies of a perennial stream of fresh water. [73](#)

71 [\(return\)](#)

[It is particularly remarked of Athens by Dicæarchus, de Statu Græciæ, p. 8, inter Geographos Minores, edit. Hudson.]

72 [\(return\)](#)

[Donatus de Roma Vetere, l. iii. c. 4, 5, 6. Nardini Roma Antica, l. iii. 11, 12, 13, and a Ms. description of ancient Rome, by Bernardus Oricellarius, or Rucellai, of which I obtained a copy from the library of the Canon Ricardi at Florence. Two celebrated pictures of Timanthes and of Protogenes are mentioned by Pliny, as in the Temple of Peace; and the Laocoon was found in the baths of Titus.]

721 [\(return\)](#)

[The Emperor Vespasian, who had caused the Temple of Peace to be built, transported to it the greatest part of the pictures, statues, and other works of art which had escaped the civil tumults. It was there that every day the artists and the learned of Rome assembled; and it is on the site of this temple that a multitude of antiques have been dug up. See notes of Reimar on Dion Cassius, lxvi. c. 15, p. 1083.—W.]

73 [\(return\)](#)

[Montfaucon l'Antiquite Expliquee, tom. iv. p. 2, l. i. c. 9. Fabretti has composed a very learned treatise on the aqueducts of Rome.]

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

I. *Ancient Italy* is said to have contained eleven hundred and ninety-seven cities; and for whatsoever æra of antiquity the expression might be intended, [74](#) there is not any reason to believe the country less populous in the age of the Antonines, than in that of Romulus. The petty states of Latium were contained within the metropolis of the empire, by whose superior influence they had been attracted. [741](#) Those parts of Italy

which have so long languished under the lazy tyranny of priests and viceroys, had been afflicted only by the more tolerable calamities of war; and the first symptoms of decay which *they* experienced, were amply compensated by the rapid improvements of the Cisalpine Gaul. The splendor of Verona may be traced in its remains: yet Verona was less celebrated than Aquileia or Padua, Milan or Ravenna. II. The spirit of improvement had passed the Alps, and been felt even in the woods of Britain, which were gradually cleared away to open a free space for convenient and elegant habitations. York was the seat of government; London was already enriched by commerce; and Bath was celebrated for the salutary effects of its medicinal waters. Gaul could boast of her twelve hundred cities; [75](#) and though, in the northern parts, many of them, without excepting Paris itself, were little more than the rude and imperfect townships of a rising people, the southern provinces imitated the wealth and elegance of Italy. [76](#) Many were the cities of Gaul, Marseilles, Arles, Nismes, Narbonne, Thoulouse, Bourdeaux, Autun, Vienna, Lyons, Langres, and Treves, whose ancient condition might sustain an equal, and perhaps advantageous comparison with their present state. With regard to Spain, that country flourished as a province, and has declined as a kingdom. Exhausted by the abuse of her strength, by America, and by superstition, her pride might possibly be confounded, if we required such a list of three hundred and sixty cities, as Pliny has exhibited under the reign of Vespasian. [77](#) III. Three hundred African cities had once acknowledged the authority of Carthage, [78](#) nor is it likely that their numbers diminished under the administration of the emperors: Carthage itself rose with new splendor from its ashes; and that capital, as well as Capua and Corinth, soon recovered all the advantages which can be separated from independent sovereignty. IV. The provinces of the East present the contrast of Roman magnificence with Turkish barbarism. The ruins of antiquity scattered over uncultivated fields, and ascribed, by ignorance, to the power of magic, scarcely afford a shelter to the oppressed peasant or wandering Arab. Under the reign of the Cæsars, the proper Asia alone contained five hundred populous cities, [79](#) enriched with all the gifts of nature, and adorned with all the refinements of art. Eleven cities of Asia had once disputed the honor of dedicating a temple of Tiberius, and their respective merits were examined by the senate. [80](#) Four of them were immediately rejected as unequal to the burden; and among these was Laodicea, whose splendor is still displayed in its ruins. [81](#) Laodicea collected a very considerable revenue from its flocks of sheep, celebrated for the fineness of their wool, and had received, a little before the contest, a legacy of above four hundred thousand pounds by the testament of a generous citizen. [82](#) If such was the poverty of Laodicea, what must have been the wealth of those cities, whose claim appeared preferable, and particularly of Pergamus, of Smyrna, and of Ephesus, who so long disputed with each other the titular primacy of Asia? [83](#) The capitals of Syria and Egypt held a still superior rank in the empire; Antioch and Alexandria looked down with disdain on a crowd of dependent cities, [84](#) and yielded, with reluctance, to the majesty of Rome itself.

- 74 [\(return\)](#)
[Ælian. Hist. Var. lib. ix. c. 16. He lived in the time of Alexander Severus. See Fabricius, Biblioth. Græca, l. iv. c. 21.]
- 741 [\(return\)](#)
[This may in some degree account for the difficulty started by Livy, as to the incredibly numerous armies raised by the small states around Rome where, in his time, a scanty stock of free soldiers among a larger population of Roman slaves broke the solitude. *Vix seminario exiguo militum relicto servitia Romana ab solitudine vindicant*, Liv. vi. vii. Compare Appian Bel Civ. i. 7.—M. subst. for G.]
- 75 [\(return\)](#)
[Joseph. de Bell. Jud. ii. 16. The number, however, is mentioned, and should be received with a degree of latitude. Note: Without doubt no reliance can be placed on this passage of Josephus. The historian makes Agrippa give advice to the Jews, as to the power of the Romans; and the speech is full of declamation which can furnish no conclusions to history. While enumerating the nations subject to the Romans, he speaks of the Gauls as submitting to 1200 soldiers, (which is false, as there were eight legions in Gaul, Tac. iv. 5,) while there are nearly twelve hundred cities.—G. Josephus (*infra*) places these eight legions on the Rhine, as Tacitus does.—M.]
- 76 [\(return\)](#)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 5.]
- 77 [\(return\)](#)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 3, 4, iv. 35. The list seems authentic and accurate; the division of the provinces, and the different condition of the cities, are minutely distinguished.]
- 78 [\(return\)](#)
[Strabon. Geograph. l. xvii. p. 1189.]
- 79 [\(return\)](#)
[Joseph. de Bell. Jud. ii. 16. Philostrat. in Vit. Sophist. l. ii. p. 548, edit. Olear.]
- 80 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Annal. iv. 55. I have taken some pains in consulting and comparing modern travellers, with regard to the fate of those eleven cities of Asia. Seven or eight are totally destroyed: Hypæpe, Tralles, Laodicea, Hium, Halicarnassus, Miletus, Ephesus, and we may add Sardes. Of the remaining three, Pergamus is a straggling village of two or three thousand inhabitants; Magnesia, under the

name of Guzelhissar, a town of some consequence; and Smyrna, a great city, peopled by a hundred thousand souls. But even at Smyrna, while the Franks have maintained a commerce, the Turks have ruined the arts.]

81 [\(return\)](#)

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

82 [\(return\)](#)

[Strabo, l. xii. p. 866. He had studied at Tralles.]

83 [\(return\)](#)

[See a Dissertation of M. de Boze, Mem. de l'Academie, tom. xviii. Aristides pronounced an oration, which is still extant, to recommend concord to the rival cities.]

84 [\(return\)](#)

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

Chapter II: The Internal Prosperity In The Age Of The Antonines. Part IV.

All these cities were connected with each other, and with the capital, by the public highways, which, issuing from the Forum of Rome, traversed Italy, pervaded the provinces, and were terminated only by the frontiers of the empire. If we carefully trace the distance from the wall of Antoninus to Rome, and from thence to Jerusalem, it will be found that the great chain of communication, from the north-west to the south-east point of the empire, was drawn out to the length of four thousand and eighty Roman miles. [85](#) The public roads were accurately divided by mile-stones, and ran in a direct line from one city to another, with very little respect for the obstacles either of nature or private property. Mountains were perforated, and bold arches thrown over the broadest and most rapid streams. [86](#) The middle part of the road was raised into a terrace which commanded the adjacent country, consisted of several strata of sand, gravel, and cement, and was paved with large stones, or, in some places near the capital, with granite. [87](#) Such was the solid construction of the Roman highways, whose firmness has not entirely yielded to the effort of fifteen centuries. They united the subjects of the most distant provinces by an easy and familiar intercourse; but their primary object had been to facilitate the marches of the legions; nor was any country considered as completely subdued, till it had been rendered, in all its parts, pervious to the arms and

authority of the conqueror. The advantage of receiving the earliest intelligence, and of conveying their orders with celerity, induced the emperors to establish, throughout their extensive dominions, the regular institution of posts. [88](#) Houses were everywhere erected at the distance only of five or six miles; each of them was constantly provided with forty horses, and by the help of these relays, it was easy to travel a hundred miles in a day along the Roman roads. [89](#) [891](#) The use of posts was allowed to those who claimed it by an Imperial mandate; but though originally intended for the public service, it was sometimes indulged to the business or conveniency of private citizens. [90](#) Nor was the communication of the Roman empire less free and open by sea than it was by land. The provinces surrounded and enclosed the Mediterranean: and Italy, in the shape of an immense promontory, advanced into the midst of that great lake. The coasts of Italy are, in general, destitute of safe harbors; but human industry had corrected the deficiencies of nature; and the artificial port of Ostia, in particular, situate at the mouth of the Tyber, and formed by the emperor Claudius, was a useful monument of Roman greatness. [91](#) From this port, which was only sixteen miles from the capital, a favorable breeze frequently carried vessels in seven days to the columns of Hercules, and in nine or ten, to Alexandria in Egypt. [92](#)

85

[\(return\)](#)

[The following Itinerary may serve to convey some idea of the direction of the road, and of the distance between the principal towns. I. From the wall of Antoninus to York, 222 Roman miles. II. London, 227. III. Rhutupiæ or Sandwich, 67. IV. The navigation to Boulogne, 45. V. Rheims, 174. VI. Lyons, 330. VII. Milan, 324. VIII. Rome, 426. IX. Brundisium, 360. X. The navigation to Dyrrachium, 40. XI. Byzantium, 711. XII. Ancyra, 283. XIII. Tarsus, 301. XIV. Antioch, 141. XV. Tyre, 252. XVI. Jerusalem, 168. In all 4080 Roman, or 3740 English miles. See the Itineraries published by Wesseling, his annotations; Gale and Stukeley for Britain, and M. d'Anville for Gaul and Italy.]

86

[\(return\)](#)

[Montfaucon, *l'Antiquite Expliquee*, (tom. 4, p. 2, l. i. c. 5,) has described the bridges of Narni, Alcantara, Nismes, &c.]

87

[\(return\)](#)

[Bergier, *Histoire des grands Chemins de l'Empire Romain*, l. ii. c. l. l—28.]

88

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius in *Hist. Arcana*, c. 30. Bergier, *Hist. des grands Chemins*, l. iv. Codex Theodosian. l. viii. tit. v. vol. ii. p. 506—563 with Godefroy's learned commentary.]

89

[\(return\)](#)

[In the time of Theodosius, Cæsarius, a magistrate

of high rank, went post from Antioch to Constantinople. He began his journey at night, was in Cappadocia (165 miles from Antioch) the ensuing evening, and arrived at Constantinople the sixth day about noon. The whole distance was 725 Roman, or 665 English miles. See Libanius, *Orat.* xxii., and the *Itineria*, p. 572—581. Note: A courier is mentioned in Walpole's *Travels*, ii. 335, who was to travel from Aleppo to Constantinople, more than 700 miles, in eight days, an unusually short journey.—M.]

891

[\(return\)](#)

[Posts for the conveyance of intelligence were established by Augustus. *Suet. Aug.* 49. The couriers travelled with amazing speed. Blair on Roman Slavery, note, p. 261. It is probable that the posts, from the time of Augustus, were confined to the public service, and supplied by impressment Nerva, as it appears from a coin of his reign, made an important change; "he established posts upon all the public roads of Italy, and made the service chargeable upon his own exchequer. Hadrian, perceiving the advantage of this improvement, extended it to all the provinces of the empire." Cardwell on Coins, p. 220.—M.]

90

[\(return\)](#)

[Pliny, though a favorite and a minister, made an apology for granting post-horses to his wife on the most urgent business. *Epist.* x. 121, 122.]

91

[\(return\)](#)

[Bergier, *Hist. des grands Chemins*, l. iv. c. 49.]

92

[\(return\)](#)

[*Plin. Hist. Natur.* xix. i. [In *Procœm.*] * Note: Pliny says Puteoli, which seems to have been the usual landing place from the East. See the voyages of St. Paul, *Acts* xxviii. 13, and of Josephus, *Vita*, c. 3—M.]

Whatever evils either reason or declamation have imputed to extensive empire, the power of Rome was attended with some beneficial consequences to mankind; and the same freedom of intercourse which extended the vices, diffused likewise the improvements, of social life. In the more remote ages of antiquity, the world was unequally divided. The East was in the immemorial possession of arts and luxury; whilst the West was inhabited by rude and warlike barbarians, who either disdained agriculture, or to whom it was totally unknown. Under the protection of an established government, the productions of happier climates, and the industry of more civilized nations, were gradually introduced into the western countries of Europe; and the natives were encouraged, by an open and profitable commerce, to multiply the former, as well

as to improve the latter. It would be almost impossible to enumerate all the articles, either of the animal or the vegetable reign, which were successively imported into Europe from Asia and Egypt: [93](#) but it will not be unworthy of the dignity, and much less of the utility, of an historical work, slightly to touch on a few of the principal heads.

1. Almost all the flowers, the herbs, and the fruits, that grow in our European gardens, are of foreign extraction, which, in many cases, is betrayed even by their names: the apple was a native of Italy, and when the Romans had tasted the richer flavor of the apricot, the peach, the pomegranate, the citron, and the orange, they contented themselves with applying to all these new fruits the common denomination of apple, discriminating them from each other by the additional epithet of their country.

2. In the time of Homer, the vine grew wild in the island of Sicily, and most probably in the adjacent continent; but it was not improved by the skill, nor did it afford a liquor grateful to the taste, of the savage inhabitants. [94](#) A thousand years afterwards, Italy could boast, that of the fourscore most generous and celebrated wines, more than two thirds were produced from her soil. [95](#) The blessing was soon communicated to the Narbonnese province of Gaul; but so intense was the cold to the north of the Cevennes, that, in the time of Strabo, it was thought impossible to ripen the grapes in those parts of Gaul. [96](#) This difficulty, however, was gradually vanquished; and there is some reason to believe, that the vineyards of Burgundy are as old as the age of the Antonines. [97](#)

3. The olive, in the western world, followed the progress of peace, of which it was considered as the symbol. Two centuries after the foundation of Rome, both Italy and Africa were strangers to that useful plant: it was naturalized in those countries; and at length carried into the heart of Spain and Gaul. The timid errors of the ancients, that it required a certain degree of heat, and could only flourish in the neighborhood of the sea, were insensibly exploded by industry and experience.

4. The cultivation of flax was transported from Egypt to Gaul, and enriched the whole country, however it might impoverish the particular lands on which it was sown. [99](#)

5. The use of artificial grasses became familiar to the farmers both of Italy and the provinces, particularly the Lucerne, which derived its name and origin from Media. [100](#) The assured supply of wholesome and plentiful food for the cattle during winter, multiplied the number of the docks and herds, which in their turn contributed to the fertility of the soil. To all these improvements may be added an assiduous attention to mines and fisheries, which, by employing a multitude of laborious hands, serve to increase the pleasures of the rich and the subsistence of the poor. The elegant treatise of Columella describes the advanced state of the Spanish husbandry under the reign of Tiberius; and it may be observed, that those famines, which so frequently afflicted the infant republic, were seldom or never experienced by the extensive empire of Rome. The accidental scarcity, in any single province, was immediately relieved by the plenty of its more fortunate neighbors.

productions into the neighborhood of Marseilles and Gades.]

94 [\(return\)](#)

[See Homer, Odyss. l. ix. v. 358.]

95 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xiv.]

96 [\(return\)](#)

[Strab. Geograph. l. iv. p. 269. The intense cold of a Gallic winter was almost proverbial among the ancients. * Note: Strabo only says that the grape does not ripen. Attempts had been made in the time of Augustus to naturalize the vine in the north of Gaul; but the cold was too great. Diod. Sic. edit. Rhodom. p. 304.—W. Diodorus (lib. v. 26) gives a curious picture of the Italian traders bartering, with the savages of Gaul, a cask of wine for a slave.—M. —It appears from the newly discovered treatise of Cicero de Republica, that there was a law of the republic prohibiting the culture of the vine and olive beyond the Alps, in order to keep up the value of those in Italy. *Nos justissimi homines, qui transalpinas gentes oleam et vitem serere non sinimus, quo pluris sint nostra oliveta nostræque vineæ.* Lib. iii. 9. The restrictive law of Domitian was veiled under the decent pretext of encouraging the cultivation of grain. Suet. Dom. vii. It was repealed by Probus Vopis Strobis, 18.—M.]

97 [\(return\)](#)

[In the beginning of the fourth century, the orator Eumenius (Panegyr. Veter. viii. 6, edit. Delphin.) speaks of the vines in the territory of Autun, which were decayed through age, and the first plantation of which was totally unknown. The Pagus Arebrignus is supposed by M. d'Anville to be the district of Beaune, celebrated, even at present for one of the first growths of Burgundy. * Note: This is proved by a passage of Pliny the Elder, where he speaks of a certain kind of grape (*vitis picata. vinum picatum*) which grows naturally to the district of Vienne, and had recently been transplanted into the country of the Arverni, (Auvergne,) of the Helvii, (the Vivarias.) and the Burgundy and Franche Comte. Pliny wrote A.D. 77. Hist. Nat. xiv. 1.—W.]

99 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xix.]

100 [\(return\)](#)

[See the agreeable Essays on Agriculture by Mr.

Harte, in which he has collected all that the ancients
and moderns have said of Lucerne.]

Agriculture is the foundation of manufactures; since the productions of nature are the materials of art. Under the Roman empire, the labor of an industrious and ingenious people was variously, but incessantly, employed in the service of the rich. In their dress, their table, their houses, and their furniture, the favorites of fortune united every refinement of conveniency, of elegance, and of splendor, whatever could soothe their pride or gratify their sensuality. Such refinements, under the odious name of luxury, have been severely arraigned by the moralists of every age; and it might perhaps be more conducive to the virtue, as well as happiness, of mankind, if all possessed the necessaries, and none the superfluities, of life. But in the present imperfect condition of society, luxury, though it may proceed from vice or folly, seems to be the only means that can correct the unequal distribution of property. The diligent mechanic, and the skilful artist, who have obtained no share in the division of the earth, receive a voluntary tax from the possessors of land; and the latter are prompted, by a sense of interest, to improve those estates, with whose produce they may purchase additional pleasures. This operation, the particular effects of which are felt in every society, acted with much more diffusive energy in the Roman world. The provinces would soon have been exhausted of their wealth, if the manufactures and commerce of luxury had not insensibly restored to the industrious subjects the sums which were exacted from them by the arms and authority of Rome. As long as the circulation was confined within the bounds of the empire, it impressed the political machine with a new degree of activity, and its consequences, sometimes beneficial, could never become pernicious.

But it is no easy task to confine luxury within the limits of an empire. The most remote countries of the ancient world were ransacked to supply the pomp and delicacy of Rome. The forests of Scythia afforded some valuable furs. Amber was brought over land from the shores of the Baltic to the Danube; and the barbarians were astonished at the price which they received in exchange for so useless a commodity. [101](#) There was a considerable demand for Babylonian carpets, and other manufactures of the East; but the most important and unpopular branch of foreign trade was carried on with Arabia and India. Every year, about the time of the summer solstice, a fleet of a hundred and twenty vessels sailed from Myos-hormos, a port of Egypt, on the Red Sea. By the periodical assistance of the monsoons, they traversed the ocean in about forty days. The coast of Malabar, or the island of Ceylon, [102](#) was the usual term of their navigation, and it was in those markets that the merchants from the more remote countries of Asia expected their arrival. The return of the fleet of Egypt was fixed to the months of December or January; and as soon as their rich cargo had been transported on the backs of camels, from the Red Sea to the Nile, and had descended that river as far as Alexandria, it was poured, without delay, into the capital of the empire. [103](#) The objects of oriental traffic were splendid and trifling; silk, a pound of which was esteemed not inferior in value to a pound of gold; [104](#) precious stones, among which the pearl

claimed the first rank after the diamond; [105](#) and a variety of aromatics, that were consumed in religious worship and the pomp of funerals. The labor and risk of the voyage was rewarded with almost incredible profit; but the profit was made upon Roman subjects, and a few individuals were enriched at the expense of the public. As the natives of Arabia and India were contented with the productions and manufactures of their own country, silver, on the side of the Romans, was the principal, if not the only [1051](#) instrument of commerce. It was a complaint worthy of the gravity of the senate, that, in the purchase of female ornaments, the wealth of the state was irrecoverably given away to foreign and hostile nations. [106](#) The annual loss is computed, by a writer of an inquisitive but censorious temper, at upwards of eight hundred thousand pounds sterling. [107](#) Such was the style of discontent, brooding over the dark prospect of approaching poverty. And yet, if we compare the proportion between gold and silver, as it stood in the time of Pliny, and as it was fixed in the reign of Constantine, we shall discover within that period a very considerable increase. [108](#) There is not the least reason to suppose that gold was become more scarce; it is therefore evident that silver was grown more common; that whatever might be the amount of the Indian and Arabian exports, they were far from exhausting the wealth of the Roman world; and that the produce of the mines abundantly supplied the demands of commerce.

101 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germania, c. 45. Plin. Hist. Nat. xxxvii. 13. The latter observed, with some humor, that even fashion had not yet found out the use of amber. Nero sent a Roman knight to purchase great quantities on the spot where it was produced, the coast of modern Prussia.]

102 [\(return\)](#)

[Called Taprobana by the Romans, and Serindib by the Arabs. It was discovered under the reign of Claudius, and gradually became the principal mart of the East.]

103 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Hist. Natur. l. vi. Strabo, l. xvii.]

104 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 224. A silk garment was considered as an ornament to a woman, but as a disgrace to a man.]

105 [\(return\)](#)

[The two great pearl fisheries were the same as at present, Ormuz and Cape Comorin. As well as we can compare ancient with modern geography, Rome was supplied with diamonds from the mine of Jumelpur, in Bengal, which is described in the Voyages de Tavernier, tom. ii. p. 281.]

1051

[\(return\)](#)

[Certainly not the only one. The Indians were not so contented with regard to foreign productions. Arrian has a long list of European wares, which they received in exchange for their own; Italian and other wines, brass, tin, lead, coral, chrysolith, storax, glass, dresses of one or many colors, zones, &c. See *Periplus Maris Erythræi* in Hudson, *Geogr. Min.* i. p. 27.—W. The German translator observes that Gibbon has confined the use of aromatics to religious worship and funerals. His error seems the omission of other spices, of which the Romans must have consumed great quantities in their cookery. Wenck, however, admits that silver was the chief article of exchange.—M. In 1787, a peasant (near Nellore in the Carnatic) struck, in digging, on the remains of a Hindu temple; he found, also, a pot which contained Roman coins and medals of the second century, mostly Trajans, Adrians, and Faustinas, all of gold, many of them fresh and beautiful, others defaced or perforated, as if they had been worn as ornaments. (*Asiatic Researches*, ii. 19.)—M.]

106

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. *Annal.* iii. 53. In a speech of Tiberius.]

107

[\(return\)](#)

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

108

[\(return\)](#)

[The proportion, which was 1 to 10, and 12 $\frac{1}{2}$, rose to 14 $\frac{2}{5}$, the legal regulation of Constantine. See Arbuthnot's *Tables of ancient Coins*, c. 5.]

Notwithstanding the propensity of mankind to exalt the past, and to depreciate the present, the tranquil and prosperous state of the empire was warmly felt, and honestly confessed, by the provincials as well as Romans. “They acknowledged that the true principles of social life, laws, agriculture, and science, which had been first invented by the wisdom of Athens, were now firmly established by the power of Rome, under whose auspicious influence the fiercest barbarians were united by an equal government and common language. They affirm, that with the improvement of arts, the human species were visibly multiplied. They celebrate the increasing splendor of the cities, the beautiful face of the country, cultivated and adorned like an immense garden; and the long festival of peace which was enjoyed by so many nations, forgetful of the ancient animosities, and delivered from the apprehension of future danger.” [109](#) Whatever suspicions may be suggested by the air of rhetoric and declamation, which seems to prevail in these passages, the substance of them is perfectly agreeable to historic truth.

[Among many other passages, see Pliny, (Hist. Natur. iii. 5.) Aristides, (de Urbe Roma,) and Tertullian, (de Anima, c. 30.)]

It was scarcely possible that the eyes of contemporaries should discover in the public felicity the latent causes of decay and corruption. This long peace, and the uniform government of the Romans, introduced a slow and secret poison into the vitals of the empire. The minds of men were gradually reduced to the same level, the fire of genius was extinguished, and even the military spirit evaporated. The natives of Europe were brave and robust. Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Illyricum supplied the legions with excellent soldiers, and constituted the real strength of the monarchy. Their personal valor remained, but they no longer possessed that public courage which is nourished by the love of independence, the sense of national honor, the presence of danger, and the habit of command. They received laws and governors from the will of their sovereign, and trusted for their defence to a mercenary army. The posterity of their boldest leaders was contented with the rank of citizens and subjects. The most aspiring spirits resorted to the court or standard of the emperors; and the deserted provinces, deprived of political strength or union, insensibly sunk into the languid indifference of private life.

The love of letters, almost inseparable from peace and refinement, was fashionable among the subjects of Hadrian and the Antonines, who were themselves men of learning and curiosity. It was diffused over the whole extent of their empire; the most northern tribes of Britons had acquired a taste for rhetoric; Homer as well as Virgil were transcribed and studied on the banks of the Rhine and Danube; and the most liberal rewards sought out the faintest glimmerings of literary merit. [110](#) The sciences of physic and astronomy were successfully cultivated by the Greeks; the observations of Ptolemy and the writings of Galen are studied by those who have improved their discoveries and corrected their errors; but if we except the inimitable Lucian, this age of indolence passed away without having produced a single writer of original genius, or who excelled in the arts of elegant composition. [1101](#) The authority of Plato and Aristotle, of Zeno and Epicurus, still reigned in the schools; and their systems, transmitted with blind deference from one generation of disciples to another, precluded every generous attempt to exercise the powers, or enlarge the limits, of the human mind. The beauties of the poets and orators, instead of kindling a fire like their own, inspired only cold and servile imitations: or if any ventured to deviate from those models, they deviated at the same time from good sense and propriety. On the revival of letters, the youthful vigor of the imagination, after a long repose, national emulation, a new religion, new languages, and a new world, called forth the genius of Europe. But the provincials of Rome, trained by a uniform artificial foreign education, were engaged in a very unequal competition with those bold ancients, who, by expressing their genuine feelings in their native tongue, had already occupied every place of honor. The name of Poet was almost forgotten; that of Orator was usurped by the sophists. A cloud of critics,

of compilers, of commentators, darkened the face of learning, and the decline of genius was soon followed by the corruption of taste.

110

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodes Atticus gave the sophist Polemo above eight thousand pounds for three declamations. See Philostrat. l. i. p. 538. The Antonines founded a school at Athens, in which professors of grammar, rhetoric, politics, and the four great sects of philosophy were maintained at the public expense for the instruction of youth. The salary of a philosopher was ten thousand drachmæ, between three and four hundred pounds a year. Similar establishments were formed in the other great cities of the empire. See Lucian in Eunuch. tom. ii. p. 352, edit. Reitz. Philostrat. l. ii. p. 566. Hist. August. p. 21. Dion Cassius, l. lxxi. p. 1195. Juvenal himself, in a morose satire, which in every line betrays his own disappointment and envy, is obliged, however, to say,—“—O Juvenes, circumspicit et stimulat vos. Materiamque sibi Ducis indulgentia quærit.”—Satir. vii. 20. Note: Vespasian first gave a salary to professors: he assigned to each professor of rhetoric, Greek and Roman, centena sestertia. (Sueton. in Vesp. 18). Hadrian and the Antonines, though still liberal, were less profuse.—G. from W. Suetonius wrote annua centena L. 807, 5, 10.—M.]

1101

[\(return\)](#)

[This judgment is rather severe: besides the physicians, astronomers, and grammarians, among whom there were some very distinguished men, there were still, under Hadrian, Suetonius, Florus, Plutarch; under the Antonines, Arrian, Pausanias, Appian, Marcus Aurelius himself, Sextus Empiricus, &c. Jurisprudence gained much by the labors of Salvius Julianus, Julius Celsus, Sex. Pomponius, Caius, and others.—G. from W. Yet where, among these, is the writer of original genius, unless, perhaps Plutarch? or even of a style really elegant?— M.]

The sublime Longinus, who, in somewhat a later period, and in the court of a Syrian queen, preserved the spirit of ancient Athens, observes and laments this degeneracy of his contemporaries, which debased their sentiments, enervated their courage, and depressed their talents. “In the same manner,” says he, “as some children always remain pygmies, whose infant limbs have been too closely confined, thus our tender minds, fettered by the prejudices and habits of a just servitude, are unable to expand themselves, or to attain that well-proportioned greatness which we admire in the ancients; who, living under a popular government, wrote with the same freedom as they acted.” [111](#) This diminutive stature of mankind, if we pursue the metaphor, was daily

sinking below the old standard, and the Roman world was indeed peopled by a race of pygmies; when the fierce giants of the north broke in, and mended the puny breed. They restored a manly spirit of freedom; and after the revolution of ten centuries, freedom became the happy parent of taste and science.

111

[\(return\)](#)

[Longin. de Sublim. c. 44, p. 229, edit. Toll. Here, too, we may say of Longinus, “his own example strengthens all his laws.” Instead of proposing his sentiments with a manly boldness, he insinuates them with the most guarded caution; puts them into the mouth of a friend, and as far as we can collect from a corrupted text, makes a show of refuting them himself.]

Chapter III: The Constitution In The Age Of The Antonines.— Part I.

Of The Constitution Of The Roman Empire, In The Age Of The Antonines.

The obvious definition of a monarchy seems to be that of a state, in which a single person, by whatsoever name he may be distinguished, is intrusted with the execution of the laws, the management of the revenue, and the command of the army. But, unless public liberty is protected by intrepid and vigilant guardians, the authority of so formidable a magistrate will soon degenerate into despotism. The influence of the clergy, in an age of superstition, might be usefully employed to assert the rights of mankind; but so intimate is the connection between the throne and the altar, that the banner of the church has very seldom been seen on the side of the people. [101](#) A martial nobility and stubborn commons, possessed of arms, tenacious of property, and collected into constitutional assemblies, form the only balance capable of preserving a free constitution against enterprises of an aspiring prince.

101

[\(return\)](#)

[Often enough in the ages of superstition, but not in the interest of the people or the state, but in that of the church to which all others were subordinate. Yet the power of the pope has often been of great service in repressing the excesses of sovereigns, and in softening manners.—W. The history of the Italian republics proves the error of Gibbon, and the justice of his German translator’s comment.—M.]

Every barrier of the Roman constitution had been levelled by the vast ambition of the dictator; every fence had been extirpated by the cruel hand of the triumvir. After the victory of Actium, the fate of the Roman world depended on the will of Octavianus,

surnamed Cæsar, by his uncle's adoption, and afterwards Augustus, by the flattery of the senate. The conqueror was at the head of forty-four veteran legions, [1](#) conscious of their own strength, and of the weakness of the constitution, habituated, during twenty years' civil war, to every act of blood and violence, and passionately devoted to the house of Cæsar, from whence alone they had received, and expected the most lavish rewards. The provinces, long oppressed by the ministers of the republic, sighed for the government of a single person, who would be the master, not the accomplice, of those petty tyrants. The people of Rome, viewing, with a secret pleasure, the humiliation of the aristocracy, demanded only bread and public shows; and were supplied with both by the liberal hand of Augustus. The rich and polite Italians, who had almost universally embraced the philosophy of Epicurus, enjoyed the present blessings of ease and tranquillity, and suffered not the pleasing dream to be interrupted by the memory of their old tumultuous freedom. With its power, the senate had lost its dignity; many of the most noble families were extinct. The republicans of spirit and ability had perished in the field of battle, or in the proscription. The door of the assembly had been designedly left open, for a mixed multitude of more than a thousand persons, who reflected disgrace upon their rank, instead of deriving honor from it. [2](#)

1 [\(return\)](#)

[Orosius, vi. 18. * Note: Dion says twenty-five, (or three,) (lv. 23.) The united triumvirs had but forty-three. (Appian. Bell. Civ. iv. 3.) The testimony of Orosius is of little value when more certain may be had.—W. But all the legions, doubtless, submitted to Augustus after the battle of Actium.—M.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

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

The reformation of the senate was one of the first steps in which Augustus laid aside the tyrant, and professed himself the father of his country. He was elected censor; and, in concert with his faithful Agrippa, he examined the list of the senators, expelled a few members, [201](#) whose vices or whose obstinacy required a public example, persuaded near two hundred to prevent the shame of an expulsion by a voluntary retreat, raised the qualification of a senator to about ten thousand pounds, created a sufficient number of patrician families, and accepted for himself the honorable title of Prince of the Senate, [202](#) which had always been bestowed, by the censors, on the citizen the most eminent for his honors and services. [3](#) But whilst he thus restored the dignity, he destroyed the independence, of the senate. The principles of a free constitution are irrecoverably lost, when the legislative power is nominated by the executive.

201 [\(return\)](#)

[Of these Dion and Suetonius knew nothing.—W. Dion says the contrary.—M.]

[But Augustus, then Octavius, was censor, and in virtue of that office, even according to the constitution of the free republic, could reform the senate, expel unworthy members, name the Princeps Senatus, &c. That was called, as is well known, *Senatum legere*. It was customary, during the free republic, for the censor to be named Princeps Senatus, (S. Liv. l. xxvii. c. 11, l. xl. c. 51;) and Dion expressly says, that this was done according to ancient usage. He was empowered by a decree of the senate to admit a number of families among the patricians. Finally, the senate was not the legislative power.—W]

[Dion Cassius, l. liii. p. 693. Suetonius in August. c. 35.]

Before an assembly thus modelled and prepared, Augustus pronounced a studied oration, which displayed his patriotism, and disguised his ambition. “He lamented, yet excused, his past conduct. Filial piety had required at his hands the revenge of his father’s murder; the humanity of his own nature had sometimes given way to the stern laws of necessity, and to a forced connection with two unworthy colleagues: as long as Antony lived, the republic forbade him to abandon her to a degenerate Roman, and a barbarian queen. He was now at liberty to satisfy his duty and his inclination. He solemnly restored the senate and people to all their ancient rights; and wished only to mingle with the crowd of his fellow-citizens, and to share the blessings which he had obtained for his country.” [4](#)

[Dion (l. liii. p. 698) gives us a prolix and bombast speech on this great occasion. I have borrowed from Suetonius and Tacitus the general language of Augustus.]

It would require the pen of Tacitus (if Tacitus had assisted at this assembly) to describe the various emotions of the senate, those that were suppressed, and those that were affected. It was dangerous to trust the sincerity of Augustus; to seem to distrust it was still more dangerous. The respective advantages of monarchy and a republic have often divided speculative inquirers; the present greatness of the Roman state, the corruption of manners, and the license of the soldiers, supplied new arguments to the advocates of monarchy; and these general views of government were again warped by the hopes and fears of each individual. Amidst this confusion of sentiments, the answer of the senate was unanimous and decisive. They refused to accept the resignation of Augustus; they conjured him not to desert the republic, which he had saved. After a decent resistance, the crafty tyrant submitted to the orders of the senate; and consented to receive the government of the provinces, and the general command of the Roman armies, under the well-known names of PROCONSUL and IMPERATOR. [5](#) But he would

receive them only for ten years. Even before the expiration of that period, he hope that the wounds of civil discord would be completely healed, and that the republic, restored to its pristine health and vigor, would no longer require the dangerous interposition of so extraordinary a magistrate. The memory of this comedy, repeated several times during the life of Augustus, was preserved to the last ages of the empire, by the peculiar pomp with which the perpetual monarchs of Rome always solemnized the tenth years of their reign. [6](#)

5

[\(return\)](#)

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

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion. l. liii. p. 703, &c.]

Without any violation of the principles of the constitution, the general of the Roman armies might receive and exercise an authority almost despotic over the soldiers, the enemies, and the subjects of the republic. With regard to the soldiers, the jealousy of freedom had, even from the earliest ages of Rome, given way to the hopes of conquest, and a just sense of military discipline. The dictator, or consul, had a right to command the service of the Roman youth; and to punish an obstinate or cowardly disobedience by the most severe and ignominious penalties, by striking the offender out of the list of citizens, by confiscating his property, and by selling his person into slavery. [7](#) The most sacred rights of freedom, confirmed by the Porcian and Sempronian laws, were suspended by the military engagement. In his camp the general exercised an absolute power of life and death; his jurisdiction was not confined by any forms of trial, or rules of proceeding, and the execution of the sentence was immediate and without appeal. [8](#) The choice of the enemies of Rome was regularly decided by the legislative authority. The most important resolutions of peace and war were seriously debated in the senate, and solemnly ratified by the people. But when the arms of the legions were carried to a great distance from Italy, the general assumed the liberty of directing them against whatever people, and in whatever manner, they judged most advantageous for the public service. It was from the success, not from the justice, of their enterprises, that they expected the honors of a triumph. In the use of victory, especially after they were no longer controlled by the commissioners of the senate, they exercised the most unbounded despotism. When Pompey commanded in the East, he rewarded his soldiers and allies, dethroned princes, divided kingdoms, founded colonies, and distributed the treasures of Mithridates. On his return to Rome, he obtained, by a single act of the senate and people, the universal ratification of all his proceedings. [9](#) Such was the power over the soldiers, and over the enemies of Rome, which was either granted to, or

assumed by, the generals of the republic. They were, at the same time, the governors, or rather monarchs, of the conquered provinces, united the civil with the military character, administered justice as well as the finances, and exercised both the executive and legislative power of the state.

7 [\(return\)](#)

[Livy Epitom. l. xiv. [c. 27.] Valer. Maxim. vi. 3.]

8 [\(return\)](#)

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

9 [\(return\)](#)

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

From what has already been observed in the first chapter of this work, some notion may be formed of the armies and provinces thus intrusted to the ruling hand of Augustus. But as it was impossible that he could personally command the regions of so many distant frontiers, he was indulged by the senate, as Pompey had already been, in the permission of devolving the execution of his great office on a sufficient number of lieutenants. In rank and authority these officers seemed not inferior to the ancient proconsuls; but their station was dependent and precarious. They received and held their commissions at the will of a superior, to whose auspicious influence the merit of their action was legally attributed. [10](#) They were the representatives of the emperor. The emperor alone was the general of the republic, and his jurisdiction, civil as well as military, extended over all the conquests of Rome. It was some satisfaction, however, to the senate, that he always delegated his power to the members of their body. The imperial lieutenants were of consular or prætorian dignity; the legions were commanded by senators, and the præfecture of Egypt was the only important trust committed to a Roman knight.

10 [\(return\)](#)

[Under the commonwealth, a triumph could only be claimed by the general, who was authorized to take the Auspices in the name of the people. By an exact consequence, drawn from this principle of policy and religion, the triumph was reserved to the

emperor; and his most successful lieutenants were satisfied with some marks of distinction, which, under the name of triumphal honors, were invented in their favor.]

Within six days after Augustus had been compelled to accept so very liberal a grant, he resolved to gratify the pride of the senate by an easy sacrifice. He represented to them, that they had enlarged his powers, even beyond that degree which might be required by the melancholy condition of the times. They had not permitted him to refuse the laborious command of the armies and the frontiers; but he must insist on being allowed to restore the more peaceful and secure provinces to the mild administration of the civil magistrate. In the division of the provinces, Augustus provided for his own power and for the dignity of the republic. The proconsuls of the senate, particularly those of Asia, Greece, and Africa, enjoyed a more honorable character than the lieutenants of the emperor, who commanded in Gaul or Syria. The former were attended by lictors, the latter by soldiers. [105](#) A law was passed, that wherever the emperor was present, his extraordinary commission should supersede the ordinary jurisdiction of the governor; a custom was introduced, that the new conquests belonged to the imperial portion; and it was soon discovered that the authority of the *Prince*, the favorite epithet of Augustus, was the same in every part of the empire.

105

[\(return\)](#)

[This distinction is without foundation. The lieutenants of the emperor, who were called Proprætors, whether they had been prætors or consuls, were attended by six lictors; those who had the right of the sword, (of life and death over the soldiers.—M.) bore the military habit (paludamentum) and the sword. The provincial governors commissioned by the senate, who, whether they had been consuls or not, were called Pronconsuls, had twelve lictors when they had been consuls, and six only when they had but been prætors. The provinces of Africa and Asia were only given to ex-consuls. See, on the Organization of the Provinces, Dion, liii. 12, 16 Strabo, xvii 840.—W]

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

Although Augustus considered a military force as the firmest foundation, he wisely rejected it, as a very odious instrument of government. It was more agreeable to his temper, as well as to his policy, to reign under the venerable names of ancient magistracy, and artfully to collect, in his own person, all the scattered rays of civil jurisdiction. With this view, he permitted the senate to confer upon him, for his life, the powers of the consular [11](#) and tribunitian offices, [12](#) which were, in the same manner, continued to all his successors. The consuls had succeeded to the kings of Rome, and represented the dignity of the state. They superintended the ceremonies of religion, levied and commanded the legions, gave audience to foreign ambassadors, and presided in the assemblies both of the senate and people. The general control of the finances was intrusted to their care; and though they seldom had leisure to administer justice in person, they were considered as the supreme guardians of law, equity, and the public peace. Such was their ordinary jurisdiction; but whenever the senate empowered the first magistrate to consult the safety of the commonwealth, he was raised by that decree above the laws, and exercised, in the defence of liberty, a temporary despotism. [13](#) The character of the tribunes was, in every respect, different from that of the consuls. The appearance of the former was modest and humble; but their persons were sacred and inviolable. Their force was suited rather for opposition than for action. They were instituted to defend the oppressed, to pardon offences, to arraign the enemies of the people, and, when they judged it necessary, to stop, by a single word, the whole machine of government. As long as the republic subsisted, the dangerous influence, which either the consul or the tribune might derive from their respective jurisdiction, was diminished by several important restrictions. Their authority expired with the year in which they were elected; the former office was divided between two, the latter among ten persons; and, as both in their private and public interest they were averse to each other, their mutual conflicts contributed, for the most part, to strengthen rather than to destroy the balance of the constitution. [131](#) But when the consular and tribunitian powers were united, when they were vested for life in a single person, when the general of the army was, at the same time, the minister of the senate and the representative of the Roman people, it was impossible to resist the exercise, nor was it easy to define the limits, of his imperial prerogative.

11

[\(return\)](#)

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

12

[\(return\)](#)

[As the tribunitian power (distinct from the annual office) was first invented by the dictator Cæsar, (Dion, l. xliv. p. 384,) we may easily conceive, that it was given as a reward for having so nobly asserted, by arms, the sacred rights of the tribunes

and people. See his own Commentaries, de Bell. Civil. l. i.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Augustus exercised nine annual consulships without interruption. He then most artfully refused the magistracy, as well as the dictatorship, absented himself from Rome, and waited till the fatal effects of tumult and faction forced the senate to invest him with a perpetual consulship. Augustus, as well as his successors, affected, however, to conceal so invidious a title.]

131

[\(return\)](#)

[The note of M. Guizot on the tribunitian power applies to the French translation rather than to the original. The former has, maintenir la balance toujours egale, which implies much more than Gibbon's general expression. The note belongs rather to the history of the Republic than that of the Empire.—M]

To these accumulated honors, the policy of Augustus soon added the splendid as well as important dignities of supreme pontiff, and of censor. By the former he acquired the management of the religion, and by the latter a legal inspection over the manners and fortunes, of the Roman people. If so many distinct and independent powers did not exactly unite with each other, the complaisance of the senate was prepared to supply every deficiency by the most ample and extraordinary concessions. The emperors, as the first ministers of the republic, were exempted from the obligation and penalty of many inconvenient laws: they were authorized to convoke the senate, to make several motions in the same day, to recommend candidates for the honors of the state, to enlarge the bounds of the city, to employ the revenue at their discretion, to declare peace and war, to ratify treaties; and by a most comprehensive clause, they were empowered to execute whatsoever they should judge advantageous to the empire, and agreeable to the majesty of things private or public, human or divine. [14](#)

14

[\(return\)](#)

[See a fragment of a Decree of the Senate, conferring on the emperor Vespasian all the powers granted to his predecessors, Augustus, Tiberius, and Claudius. This curious and important monument is published in Gruter's Inscriptions, No. ccxlii. * Note: It is also in the editions of Tacitus by Ryck, (Annal. p. 420, 421,) and Ernesti, (Excurs. ad lib. iv. 6;) but this fragment contains so many inconsistencies, both in matter and form, that its authenticity may be doubted—W.]

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

ancient administration were preserved by Augustus with the most anxious care. The usual number of consuls, prætors, and tribunes, [15](#) were annually invested with their respective ensigns of office, and continued to discharge some of their least important functions. Those honors still attracted the vain ambition of the Romans; and the emperors themselves, though invested for life with the powers of the consulship, frequently aspired to the title of that annual dignity, which they condescended to share with the most illustrious of their fellow-citizens. [16](#) In the election of these magistrates, the people, during the reign of Augustus, were permitted to expose all the inconveniences of a wild democracy. That artful prince, instead of discovering the least symptom of impatience, humbly solicited their suffrages for himself or his friends, and scrupulously practised all the duties of an ordinary candidate. [17](#) But we may venture to ascribe to his councils the first measure of the succeeding reign, by which the elections were transferred to the senate. [18](#) The assemblies of the people were forever abolished, and the emperors were delivered from a dangerous multitude, who, without restoring liberty, might have disturbed, and perhaps endangered, the established government.

15 [\(return\)](#)

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

16 [\(return\)](#)

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

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Quoties Magistratum Comitii interesset. Tribus cum candidatis suis circunbat: supplicabatque more solemn. Ferebat et ipse suffragium in tribubus, ut unus e populo. Suetonius in August c. 56.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Tum primum Comitia e campo ad patres translata sunt. Tacit. Annal. i. 15. The word primum seems

to allude to some faint and unsuccessful efforts which were made towards restoring them to the people. Note: The emperor Caligula made the attempt: he restored the Comitia to the people, but, in a short time, took them away again. Suet. in Caio. c. 16. Dion. lix. 9, 20. Nevertheless, at the time of Dion, they preserved still the form of the Comitia. Dion. lvi. 20.—W.]

By declaring themselves the protectors of the people, Marius and Cæsar had subverted the constitution of their country. But as soon as the senate had been humbled and disarmed, such an assembly, consisting of five or six hundred persons, was found a much more tractable and useful instrument of dominion. It was on the dignity of the senate that Augustus and his successors founded their new empire; and they affected, on every occasion, to adopt the language and principles of Patricians. In the administration of their own powers, they frequently consulted the great national council, and *seemed* to refer to its decision the most important concerns of peace and war. Rome, Italy, and the internal provinces, were subject to the immediate jurisdiction of the senate. With regard to civil objects, it was the supreme court of appeal; with regard to criminal matters, a tribunal, constituted for the trial of all offences that were committed by men in any public station, or that affected the peace and majesty of the Roman people. The exercise of the judicial power became the most frequent and serious occupation of the senate; and the important causes that were pleaded before them afforded a last refuge to the spirit of ancient eloquence. As a council of state, and as a court of justice, the senate possessed very considerable prerogatives; but in its legislative capacity, in which it was supposed virtually to represent the people, the rights of sovereignty were acknowledged to reside in that assembly. Every power was derived from their authority, every law was ratified by their sanction. Their regular meetings were held on three stated days in every month, the Calends, the Nones, and the Ides. The debates were conducted with decent freedom; and the emperors themselves, who gloried in the name of senators, sat, voted, and divided with their equals. To resume, in a few words, the system of the Imperial government; as it was instituted by Augustus, and maintained by those princes who understood their own interest and that of the people, it may be defined an absolute monarchy disguised by the forms of a commonwealth. The masters of the Roman world surrounded their throne with darkness, concealed their irresistible strength, and humbly professed themselves the accountable ministers of the senate, whose supreme decrees they dictated and obeyed. [19](#)

xxi. xxiv. xxv. xxvii. Beaufort *Republique Romaine*, tom. i. p. 255—275. The Dissertations of Noodt and Gronovius de lege Regia, printed at Leyden, in the year 1731 *Gravina de Imperio Romano*, p. 479—544 of his *Opuscula*. Maffei, *Verona Illustrata*, p. i. p. 245, &c.]

The face of the court corresponded with the forms of the administration. The emperors, if we except those tyrants whose capricious folly violated every law of nature and decency, disdained that pomp and ceremony which might offend their countrymen, but could add nothing to their real power. In all the offices of life, they affected to confound themselves with their subjects, and maintained with them an equal intercourse of visits and entertainments. Their habit, their palace, their table, were suited only to the rank of an opulent senator. Their family, however numerous or splendid, was composed entirely of their domestic slaves and freedmen. [20](#) Augustus or Trajan would have blushed at employing the meanest of the Romans in those menial offices, which, in the household and bedchamber of a limited monarch, are so eagerly solicited by the proudest nobles of Britain.

20

[\(return\)](#)

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

The deification of the emperors [21](#) is the only instance in which they departed from their accustomed prudence and modesty. The Asiatic Greeks were the first inventors, the successors of Alexander the first objects, of this servile and impious mode of adulation. [211](#) It was easily transferred from the kings to the governors of Asia; and the Roman magistrates very frequently were adored as provincial deities, with the pomp of altars and temples, of festivals and sacrifices. [22](#) It was natural that the emperors should not refuse what the proconsuls had accepted; and the divine honors which both the one and the other received from the provinces, attested rather the despotism than the servitude of Rome. But the conquerors soon imitated the vanquished nations in the arts of flattery; and the imperious spirit of the first Cæsar too easily consented to assume, during his lifetime, a place among the tutelar deities of Rome. The milder temper of his successor declined so dangerous an ambition, which was never afterwards revived, except by the madness of Caligula and Domitian. Augustus permitted indeed some of the provincial cities to erect temples to his honor, on condition that they should associate the worship of Rome with that of the sovereign; he tolerated private superstition, of which he might be the object; [23](#) but he contented himself with being revered by the senate and the people in his human character, and wisely left to his successor the care of his public deification. A regular custom was introduced, that on the decease of every emperor who had neither lived nor died like a tyrant, the senate by a solemn decree should place him in the number of the gods: and the ceremonies of his apotheosis were

blended with those of his funeral. [231](#) This legal, and, as it should seem, injudicious profanation, so abhorrent to our stricter principles, was received with a very faint murmur, [24](#) by the easy nature of Polytheism; but it was received as an institution, not of religion, but of policy. We should disgrace the virtues of the Antonines by comparing them with the vices of Hercules or Jupiter. Even the characters of Cæsar or Augustus were far superior to those of the popular deities. But it was the misfortune of the former to live in an enlightened age, and their actions were too faithfully recorded to admit of such a mixture of fable and mystery, as the devotion of the vulgar requires. As soon as their divinity was established by law, it sunk into oblivion, without contributing either to their own fame, or to the dignity of succeeding princes.

21 [\(return\)](#)

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

211 [\(return\)](#)

[This is inaccurate. The successors of Alexander were not the first deified sovereigns; the Egyptians had deified and worshipped many of their kings; the Olympus of the Greeks was peopled with divinities who had reigned on earth; finally, Romulus himself had received the honors of an apotheosis (Tit. Liv. i. 16) a long time before Alexander and his successors. It is also an inaccuracy to confound the honors offered in the provinces to the Roman governors, by temples and altars, with the true apotheosis of the emperors; it was not a religious worship, for it had neither priests nor sacrifices. Augustus was severely blamed for having permitted himself to be worshipped as a god in the provinces, (Tac. Ann. i. 10:) he would not have incurred that blame if he had only done what the governors were accustomed to do.—G. from W. M. Guizot has been guilty of a still greater inaccuracy in confounding the deification of the living with the apotheosis of the dead emperors. The nature of the king-worship of Egypt is still very obscure; the hero-worship of the Greeks very different from the adoration of the “præsens numen” in the reigning sovereign.—M.]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[See a dissertation of the Abbé Mongault in the first volume of the Academy of Inscriptions.]

23 [\(return\)](#)

[Jurandasque tuum per nomen ponimus aras, says Horace to the emperor himself, and Horace was well acquainted with the court of Augustus. Note: The good princes were not those who alone obtained the honors of an apotheosis: it was

conferred on many tyrants. See an excellent treatise of Schæpflin, de Consecratione Imperatorum Romanorum, in his Commentationes historicæ et criticæ. Bale, 1741, p. 184.—W.]

231 [\(return\)](#)

[The curious satire in the works of Seneca, is the strongest remonstrance of profaned religion.—M.]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[See Cicero in Philippic. i. 6. Julian in Cæsaribus. Inque Deum templis jurabit Roma per umbras, is the indignant expression of Lucan; but it is a patriotic rather than a devout indignation.]

In the consideration of the Imperial government, we have frequently mentioned the artful founder, under his well-known title of Augustus, which was not, however, conferred upon him till the edifice was almost completed. The obscure name of Octavianus he derived from a mean family, in the little town of Aricia. [241](#) It was stained with the blood of the proscription; and he was desirous, had it been possible, to erase all memory of his former life. The illustrious surname of Cæsar he had assumed, as the adopted son of the dictator: but he had too much good sense, either to hope to be confounded, or to wish to be compared with that extraordinary man. It was proposed in the senate to dignify their minister with a new appellation; and after a serious discussion, that of Augustus was chosen, among several others, as being the most expressive of the character of peace and sanctity, which he uniformly affected. [25](#) *Augustus* was therefore a personal, *Cæsar* a family distinction. The former should naturally have expired with the prince on whom it was bestowed; and however the latter was diffused by adoption and female alliance, Nero was the last prince who could allege any hereditary claim to the honors of the Julian line. But, at the time of his death, the practice of a century had inseparably connected those appellations with the Imperial dignity, and they have been preserved by a long succession of emperors, Romans, Greeks, Franks, and Germans, from the fall of the republic to the present time. A distinction was, however, soon introduced. The sacred title of Augustus was always reserved for the monarch, whilst the name of Cæsar was more freely communicated to his relations; and, from the reign of Hadrian, at least, was appropriated to the second person in the state, who was considered as the presumptive heir of the empire. [251](#)

241 [\(return\)](#)

[Octavius was not of an obscure family, but of a considerable one of the equestrian order. His father, C. Octavius, who possessed great property, had been prætor, governor of Macedonia, adorned with the title of Imperator, and was on the point of becoming consul when he died. His mother Attia, was daughter of M. Attius Balbus, who had also been prætor. M. Anthony reproached Octavius with having been born in Aricia, which, nevertheless, was a considerable municipal city: he was

vigorously refuted by Cicero. Philip. iii. c. 6.—W. Gibbon probably meant that the family had but recently emerged into notice.—M.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion. Cassius, l. liii. p. 710, with the curious Annotations of Reimar.]

251 [\(return\)](#)

[The princes who by their birth or their adoption belonged to the family of the Cæsars, took the name of Cæsar. After the death of Nero, this name designated the Imperial dignity itself, and afterwards the appointed successor. The time at which it was employed in the latter sense, cannot be fixed with certainty. Bach (Hist. Jurisprud. Rom. 304) affirms from Tacitus, H. i. 15, and Suetonius, Galba, 17, that Galba conferred on Piso Lucinianus the title of Cæsar, and from that time the term had this meaning: but these two historians simply say that he appointed Piso his successor, and do not mention the word Cæsar. Aurelius Victor (in Traj. 348, ed. Artzen) says that Hadrian first received this title on his adoption; but as the adoption of Hadrian is still doubtful, and besides this, as Trajan, on his death-bed, was not likely to have created a new title for his successor, it is more probable that Ælius Verus was the first who was called Cæsar when adopted by Hadrian. Spart. in Ælio Vero, 102.—W.]

Chapter III: The Constitution In The Age Of The Antonines.— Part II.

The tender respect of Augustus for a free constitution which he had destroyed, can only be explained by an attentive consideration of the character of that subtle tyrant. A cool head, an unfeeling heart, and a cowardly disposition, prompted him at the age of nineteen to assume the mask of hypocrisy, which he never afterwards laid aside. With the same hand, and probably with the same temper, he signed the proscription of Cicero, and the pardon of Cinna. His virtues, and even his vices, were artificial; and according to the various dictates of his interest, he was at first the enemy, and at last the father, of the Roman world. [26](#) When he framed the artful system of the Imperial authority, his moderation was inspired by his fears. He wished to deceive the people by an image of civil liberty, and the armies by an image of civil government.

26 [\(return\)](#)

[As Octavianus advanced to the banquet of the Cæsars, his color changed like that of the chameleon; pale at first, then red, afterwards black,

he at last assumed the mild livery of Venus and the Graces, (Cæsars, p. 309.) This image, employed by Julian in his ingenious fiction, is just and elegant; but when he considers this change of character as real and ascribes it to the power of philosophy, he does too much honor to philosophy and to Octavianus.]

I. The death of Cæsar was ever before his eyes. He had lavished wealth and honors on his adherents; but the most favored friends of his uncle were in the number of the conspirators. The fidelity of the legions might defend his authority against open rebellion; but their vigilance could not secure his person from the dagger of a determined republican; and the Romans, who revered the memory of Brutus, [27](#) would applaud the imitation of his virtue. Cæsar had provoked his fate, as much as by the ostentation of his power, as by his power itself. The consul or the tribune might have reigned in peace. The title of king had armed the Romans against his life. Augustus was sensible that mankind is governed by names; nor was he deceived in his expectation, that the senate and people would submit to slavery, provided they were respectfully assured that they still enjoyed their ancient freedom. A feeble senate and enervated people cheerfully acquiesced in the pleasing illusion, as long as it was supported by the virtue, or even by the prudence, of the successors of Augustus. It was a motive of self-preservation, not a principle of liberty, that animated the conspirators against Caligula, Nero, and Domitian. They attacked the person of the tyrant, without aiming their blow at the authority of the emperor.

27

[\(return\)](#)

[Two centuries after the establishment of monarchy, the emperor Marcus Antoninus recommends the character of Brutus as a perfect model of Roman virtue. * Note: In a very ingenious essay, Gibbon has ventured to call in question the preeminent virtue of Brutus. Misc Works, iv. 95.—M.]

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

of the prætorians, and to embrace the benefit of an amnesty, which Claudius had the prudence to offer, and the generosity to observe. [28](#)

28

[\(return\)](#)

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

II. The insolence of the armies inspired Augustus with fears of a still more alarming nature. The despair of the citizens could only attempt, what the power of the soldiers was, at any time, able to execute. How precarious was his own authority over men whom he had taught to violate every social duty! He had heard their seditious clamors; he dreaded their calmer moments of reflection. One revolution had been purchased by immense rewards; but a second revolution might double those rewards. The troops professed the fondest attachment to the house of Cæsar; but the attachments of the multitude are capricious and inconstant. Augustus summoned to his aid whatever remained in those fierce minds of Roman prejudices; enforced the rigor of discipline by the sanction of law; and, interposing the majesty of the senate between the emperor and the army, boldly claimed their allegiance, as the first magistrate of the republic.

During a long period of two hundred and twenty years from the establishment of this artful system to the death of Commodus, the dangers inherent to a military government were, in a great measure, suspended. The soldiers were seldom roused to that fatal sense of their own strength, and of the weakness of the civil authority, which was, before and afterwards, productive of such dreadful calamities. Caligula and Domitian were assassinated in their palace by their own domestics: [281](#) the convulsions which agitated Rome on the death of the former, were confined to the walls of the city. But Nero involved the whole empire in his ruin. In the space of eighteen months, four princes perished by the sword; and the Roman world was shaken by the fury of the contending armies. Excepting only this short, though violent eruption of military license, the two centuries from Augustus [29](#) to Commodus passed away unstained with civil blood, and undisturbed by revolutions. The emperor was elected by *the authority of the senate*, and *the consent of the soldiers*. [30](#) The legions respected their oath of fidelity; and it requires a minute inspection of the Roman annals to discover three inconsiderable rebellions, which were all suppressed in a few months, and without even the hazard of a battle. [31](#)

281

[\(return\)](#)

[Caligula perished by a conspiracy formed by the officers of the prætorian troops, and Domitian would not, perhaps, have been assassinated without the participation of the two chiefs of that guard in his death.—W.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[Augustus restored the ancient severity of

discipline. After the civil wars, he dropped the endearing name of Fellow-Soldiers, and called them only Soldiers, (Sueton. in August. c. 25.) See the use Tiberius made of the Senate in the mutiny of the Pannonian legions, (Tacit. Annal. i.)]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[These words seem to have been the constitutional language. See Tacit. Annal. xiii. 4. * Note: This panegyric on the soldiery is rather too liberal. Claudius was obliged to purchase their consent to his coronation: the presents which he made, and those which the prætorians received on other occasions, considerably embarrassed the finances. Moreover, this formidable guard favored, in general, the cruelties of the tyrants. The distant revolts were more frequent than Gibbon thinks: already, under Tiberius, the legions of Germany would have seditiously constrained Germanicus to assume the Imperial purple. On the revolt of Claudius Civilis, under Vespasian, the legions of Gaul murdered their general, and offered their assistance to the Gauls who were in insurrection. Julius Sabinus made himself be proclaimed emperor, &c. The wars, the merit, and the severe discipline of Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines, established, for some time, a greater degree of subordination.—W]

31

[\(return\)](#)

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

In elective monarchies, the vacancy of the throne is a moment big with danger and mischief. The Roman emperors, desirous to spare the legions that interval of suspense, and the temptation of an irregular choice, invested their designed successor with so large a share of present power, as should enable him, after their decease, to assume the remainder, without suffering the empire to perceive the change of masters. Thus Augustus, after all his fairer prospects had been snatched from him by untimely deaths, rested his last hopes on Tiberius, obtained for his adopted son the censorial and tribunitian powers, and dictated a law, by which the future prince was invested with an authority equal to his own, over the provinces and the armies. [32](#) Thus Vespasian

subdued the generous mind of his eldest son. Titus was adored by the eastern legions, which, under his command, had recently achieved the conquest of Judæa. His power was dreaded, and, as his virtues were clouded by the intemperance of youth, his designs were suspected. Instead of listening to such unworthy suspicions, the prudent monarch associated Titus to the full powers of the Imperial dignity; and the grateful son ever approved himself the humble and faithful minister of so indulgent a father. [33](#)

32

[\(return\)](#)

[Velleius Paterculus, l. ii. c. 121. Sueton. in Tiber. c. 26.]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[Sueton. in Tit. c. 6. Plin. in Præfat. Hist. Natur.]

The good sense of Vespasian engaged him indeed to embrace every measure that might confirm his recent and precarious elevation. The military oath, and the fidelity of the troops, had been consecrated, by the habits of a hundred years, to the name and family of the Cæsars; and although that family had been continued only by the fictitious rite of adoption, the Romans still revered, in the person of Nero, the grandson of Germanicus, and the lineal successor of Augustus. It was not without reluctance and remorse, that the prætorian guards had been persuaded to abandon the cause of the tyrant. [34](#) The rapid downfall of Galba, Otho, and Vitellus, taught the armies to consider the emperors as the creatures of *their* will, and the instruments of *their* license. The birth of Vespasian was mean: his grandfather had been a private soldier, his father a petty officer of the revenue; [35](#) his own merit had raised him, in an advanced age, to the empire; but his merit was rather useful than shining, and his virtues were disgraced by a strict and even sordid parsimony. Such a prince consulted his true interest by the association of a son, whose more splendid and amiable character might turn the public attention from the obscure origin, to the future glories, of the Flavian house. Under the mild administration of Titus, the Roman world enjoyed a transient felicity, and his beloved memory served to protect, above fifteen years, the vices of his brother Domitian.

34

[\(return\)](#)

[This idea is frequently and strongly inculcated by Tacitus. See Hist. i. 5, 16, ii. 76.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[The emperor Vespasian, with his usual good sense, laughed at the genealogists, who deduced his family from Flavius, the founder of Reate, (his native country,) and one of the companions of Hercules Suet in Vespasian, c. 12.]

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

fixed his choice on a stranger. He adopted Trajan, then about forty years of age, and who commanded a powerful army in the Lower Germany; and immediately, by a decree of the senate, declared him his colleague and successor in the empire. [36](#) It is sincerely to be lamented, that whilst we are fatigued with the disgusting relation of Nero's crimes and follies, we are reduced to collect the actions of Trajan from the glimmerings of an abridgment, or the doubtful light of a panegyric. There remains, however, one panegyric far removed beyond the suspicion of flattery. Above two hundred and fifty years after the death of Trajan, the senate, in pouring out the customary acclamations on the accession of a new emperor, wished that he might surpass the felicity of Augustus, and the virtue of Trajan. [37](#)

36

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxviii. p. 1121. Plin. Secund. in Panegyric.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[Felicior Augusto, Melior Trajano. Eutrop. viii. 5.]

We may readily believe, that the father of his country hesitated whether he ought to intrust the various and doubtful character of his kinsman Hadrian with sovereign power. In his last moments the arts of the empress Plotina either fixed the irresolution of Trajan, or boldly supposed a fictitious adoption; [38](#) the truth of which could not be safely disputed, and Hadrian was peaceably acknowledged as his lawful successor. Under his reign, as has been already mentioned, the empire flourished in peace and prosperity. He encouraged the arts, reformed the laws, asserted military discipline, and visited all his provinces in person. His vast and active genius was equally suited to the most enlarged views, and the minute details of civil policy. But the ruling passions of his soul were curiosity and vanity. As they prevailed, and as they were attracted by different objects, Hadrian was, by turns, an excellent prince, a ridiculous sophist, and a jealous tyrant. The general tenor of his conduct deserved praise for its equity and moderation. Yet in the first days of his reign, he put to death four consular senators, his personal enemies, and men who had been judged worthy of empire; and the tediousness of a painful illness rendered him, at last, peevish and cruel. The senate doubted whether they should pronounce him a god or a tyrant; and the honors decreed to his memory were granted to the prayers of the pious Antoninus. [39](#)

38

[\(return\)](#)

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

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, (l. lxx. p. 1171.) Aurel. Victor.]

The caprice of Hadrian influenced his choice of a successor.

After revolving in his mind several men of distinguished merit, whom he esteemed and hated, he adopted Ælius Verus a gay and voluptuous nobleman, recommended by uncommon beauty to the lover of Antinous. [40](#) But whilst Hadrian was delighting himself with his own applause, and the acclamations of the soldiers, whose consent had been secured by an immense donative, the new Cæsar [41](#) was ravished from his embraces by an untimely death. He left only one son. Hadrian commended the boy to the gratitude of the Antonines. He was adopted by Pius; and, on the accession of Marcus, was invested with an equal share of sovereign power. Among the many vices of this younger Verus, he possessed one virtue; a dutiful reverence for his wiser colleague, to whom he willingly abandoned the ruder cares of empire. The philosophic emperor dissembled his follies, lamented his early death, and cast a decent veil over his memory.

40

[\(return\)](#)

[The deification of Antinous, his medals, his statues, temples, city, oracles, and constellation, are well known, and still dishonor the memory of Hadrian. Yet we may remark, that of the first fifteen emperors, Claudius was the only one whose taste in love was entirely correct. For the honors of Antinous, see Spanheim, *Commentaire sui les Cæsars de Julien*, p. 80.]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 13. Aurelius Victor in Epitom.]

As soon as Hadrian's passion was either gratified or disappointed, he resolved to deserve the thanks of posterity, by placing the most exalted merit on the Roman throne. His discerning eye easily discovered a senator about fifty years of age, blameless in all the offices of life; and a youth of about seventeen, whose ripper years opened a fair prospect of every virtue: the elder of these was declared the son and successor of Hadrian, on condition, however, that he himself should immediately adopt the younger. The two Antonines (for it is of them that we are now speaking,) governed the Roman world forty-two years, with the same invariable spirit of wisdom and virtue. Although Pius had two sons, [42](#) he preferred the welfare of Rome to the interest of his family, gave his daughter Faustina, in marriage to young Marcus, obtained from the senate the tribunitian and proconsular powers, and, with a noble disdain, or rather ignorance of jealousy, associated him to all the labors of government. Marcus, on the other hand, revered the character of his benefactor, loved him as a parent, obeyed him as his sovereign, [43](#) and, after he was no more, regulated his own administration by the example and maxims of his predecessor. Their united reigns are possibly the only period of history in which the happiness of a great people was the sole object of government.

42

[\(return\)](#)

[Without the help of medals and inscriptions, we should be ignorant of this fact, so honorable to the

memory of Pius. Note: Gibbon attributes to Antoninus Pius a merit which he either did not possess, or was not in a situation to display.

1. He was adopted only on the condition that he would adopt, in his turn, Marcus Aurelius and L. Verus.

2. His two sons died children, and one of them, M. Galerius, alone, appears to have survived, for a few years, his father's coronation. Gibbon is also mistaken when he says (note 42) that "without the help of medals and inscriptions, we should be ignorant that Antoninus had two sons." Capitolinus says expressly, (c. 1,) *Filii mares duo, duæ-fœminæ*; we only owe their names to the medals. Pagi. Cont. Baron, i. 33, edit Paris.—W.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

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

Titus Antoninus Pius has been justly denominated a second Numa. The same love of religion, justice, and peace, was the distinguishing characteristic of both princes. But the situation of the latter opened a much larger field for the exercise of those virtues. Numa could only prevent a few neighboring villages from plundering each other's harvests. Antoninus diffused order and tranquillity over the greatest part of the earth. His reign is marked by the rare advantage of furnishing very few materials for history; which is, indeed, little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind. In private life, he was an amiable, as well as a good man. The native simplicity of his virtue was a stranger to vanity or affectation. He enjoyed with moderation the conveniences of his fortune, and the innocent pleasures of society; [44](#) and the benevolence of his soul displayed itself in a cheerful serenity of temper.

44

[\(return\)](#)

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

The virtue of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus was of severer and more laborious kind. [45](#) It was the well-earned harvest of many a learned conference, of many a patient lecture, and many a midnight lucubration. At the age of twelve years he embraced the rigid system of the Stoics, which taught him to submit his body to his mind, his passions to his reason; to consider virtue as the only good, vice as the only evil, all things external as things indifferent. [46](#) His meditations, composed in the tumult of the camp, are still extant; and he even condescended to give lessons of philosophy, in a more public manner than was perhaps consistent with the modesty of sage, or the dignity of an emperor. [47](#) But his life was the noblest commentary on the precepts of Zeno. He was severe to himself, indulgent to the imperfections of others, just and beneficent to all mankind. He regretted that Avidius Cassius, who excited a rebellion in Syria, had

disappointed him, by a voluntary death, [471](#) of the pleasure of converting an enemy into a friend;; and he justified the sincerity of that sentiment, by moderating the zeal of the senate against the adherents of the traitor. [48](#) War he detested, as the disgrace and calamity of human nature; [481](#) but when the necessity of a just defence called upon him to take up arms, he readily exposed his person to eight winter campaigns, on the frozen banks of the Danube, the severity of which was at last fatal to the weakness of his constitution. His memory was revered by a grateful posterity, and above a century after his death, many persons preserved the image of Marcus Antoninus among those of their household gods. [49](#)

45

[\(return\)](#)

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

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacitus has characterized, in a few words, the principles of the portico: Doctores sapientiæ secutus est, qui sola bona quæ honesta, main tantum quæ turpia; potentiam, nobilitatem, æteraque extra... bonis neque malis adnumerant. Tacit. Hist. iv. 5.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

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

471

[\(return\)](#)

[Cassius was murdered by his own partisans. Vulcat. Gallic. in Cassio, c. 7. Dion, lxxi. c. 27.—W.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxi. p. 1190. Hist. August. in Avid. Cassio. Note: See one of the newly discovered passages of Dion Cassius. Marcus wrote to the senate, who urged the execution of the partisans of Cassius, in these words: “I entreat and beseech you to preserve my reign unstained by senatorial blood. None of your order must perish either by your

desire or mine.” Mai. Fragm. Vatican. ii. p. 224.—
M.]

481

[\(return\)](#)

[Marcus would not accept the services of any of the barbarian allies who crowded to his standard in the war against Avidius Cassius. “Barbarians,” he said, with wise but vain sagacity, “must not become acquainted with the dissensions of the Roman people.” Mai. Fragm Vatican l. 224.—M.]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. in Marc. Antonin. c. 18.]

If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom. The armies were restrained by the firm but gentle hand of four successive emperors, whose characters and authority commanded involuntary respect. The forms of the civil administration were carefully preserved by Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, who delighted in the image of liberty, and were pleased with considering themselves as the accountable ministers of the laws. Such princes deserved the honor of restoring the republic, had the Romans of their days been capable of enjoying a rational freedom.

The labors of these monarchs were overpaid by the immense reward that inseparably waited on their success; by the honest pride of virtue, and by the exquisite delight of beholding the general happiness of which they were the authors. A just but melancholy reflection imbibed, however, the noblest of human enjoyments. They must often have recollected the instability of a happiness which depended on the character of single man. The fatal moment was perhaps approaching, when some licentious youth, or some jealous tyrant, would abuse, to the destruction, that absolute power, which they had exerted for the benefit of their people. The ideal restraints of the senate and the laws might serve to display the virtues, but could never correct the vices, of the emperor. The military force was a blind and irresistible instrument of oppression; and the corruption of Roman manners would always supply flatterers eager to applaud, and ministers prepared to serve, the fear or the avarice, the lust or the cruelty, of their master. These gloomy apprehensions had been already justified by the experience of the Romans. The annals of the emperors exhibit a strong and various picture of human nature, which we should vainly seek among the mixed and doubtful characters of modern history. In the conduct of those monarchs we may trace the utmost lines of vice and virtue; the most exalted perfection, and the meanest degeneracy of our own species. The golden age of Trajan and the Antonines had been preceded by an age of iron. It is almost superfluous to enumerate the unworthy successors of Augustus. Their unparalleled vices, and the splendid theatre on which they were acted, have saved them from oblivion. The dark, unrelenting Tiberius, the furious Caligula, the feeble Claudius, the profligate and cruel

Nero, the beastly Vitellius, [50](#) and the timid, inhuman Domitian, are condemned to everlasting infamy. During fourscore years (excepting only the short and doubtful respite of Vespasian's reign) [51](#) Rome groaned beneath an unrelenting tyranny, which exterminated the ancient families of the republic, and was fatal to almost every virtue and every talent that arose in that unhappy period.

50

[\(return\)](#)

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

51

[\(return\)](#)

[The execution of Helvidius Priscus, and of the virtuous Eponina, disgraced the reign of Vespasian.]

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

I. When Persia was governed by the descendants of Sefi, a race of princes whose wanton cruelty often stained their divan, their table, and their bed, with the blood of their favorites, there is a saying recorded of a young nobleman, that he never departed from the sultan's presence, without satisfying himself whether his head was still on his shoulders. The experience of every day might almost justify the scepticism of Rustan. [52](#) Yet the fatal sword, suspended above him by a single thread, seems not to have disturbed the slumbers, or interrupted the tranquillity, of the Persian. The monarch's frown, he well knew, could level him with the dust; but the stroke of lightning or apoplexy might be equally fatal; and it was the part of a wise man to forget the inevitable calamities of human life in the enjoyment of the fleeting hour. He was dignified with the appellation of the king's slave; had, perhaps, been purchased from obscure parents, in a country which he had never known; and was trained up from his infancy in the severe discipline of the seraglio. [53](#) His name, his wealth, his honors, were the gift of a master, who might, without injustice, resume what he had bestowed. Rustan's knowledge, if he possessed any, could only serve to confirm his habits by prejudices. His language afforded not words for any form of government, except

absolute monarchy. The history of the East informed him, that such had ever been the condition of mankind. [54](#) The Koran, and the interpreters of that divine book, inculcated to him, that the sultan was the descendant of the prophet, and the vicegerent of heaven; that patience was the first virtue of a Mussulman, and unlimited obedience the great duty of a subject.

52 [\(return\)](#)
[Voyage de Chardin en Perse, vol. iii. p. 293.]

53 [\(return\)](#)
[The practice of raising slaves to the great offices of state is still more common among the Turks than among the Persians. The miserable countries of Georgia and Circassia supply rulers to the greatest part of the East.]

54 [\(return\)](#)
[Chardin says, that European travellers have diffused among the Persians some ideas of the freedom and mildness of our governments. They have done them a very ill office.]

The minds of the Romans were very differently prepared for slavery. Oppressed beneath the weight of their own corruption and of military violence, they for a long while preserved the sentiments, or at least the ideas, of their free-born ancestors. The education of Helvidius and Thrasea, of Tacitus and Pliny, was the same as that of Cato and Cicero. From Grecian philosophy, they had imbibed the justest and most liberal notions of the dignity of human nature, and the origin of civil society. The history of their own country had taught them to revere a free, a virtuous, and a victorious commonwealth; to abhor the successful crimes of Cæsar and Augustus; and inwardly to despise those tyrants whom they adored with the most abject flattery. As magistrates and senators they were admitted into the great council, which had once dictated laws to the earth, whose authority was so often prostituted to the vilest purposes of tyranny. Tiberius, and those emperors who adopted his maxims, attempted to disguise their murders by the formalities of justice, and perhaps enjoyed a secret pleasure in rendering the senate their accomplice as well as their victim. By this assembly, the last of the Romans were condemned for imaginary crimes and real virtues. Their infamous accusers assumed the language of independent patriots, who arraigned a dangerous citizen before the tribunal of his country; and the public service was rewarded by riches and honors. [55](#) The servile judges professed to assert the majesty of the commonwealth, violated in the person of its first magistrate, [56](#) whose clemency they most applauded when they trembled the most at his inexorable and impending cruelty. [57](#) The tyrant beheld their baseness with just contempt, and encountered their secret sentiments of detestation with sincere and avowed hatred for the whole body of the senate.

55 [\(return\)](#)
[They alleged the example of Scipio and Cato, (Tacit. Annal. iii. 66.) Marcellus Epirus and Crispus

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

56

[\(return\)](#)

[The crime of majesty was formerly a treasonable offence against the Roman people. As tribunes of the people, Augustus and Tiberius applied tit to their own persons, and extended it to an infinite latitude. Note: It was Tiberius, not Augustus, who first took in this sense the words crimen læsæ majestatis. Bachii Trajanus, 27. —W.]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[After the virtuous and unfortunate widow of Germanicus had been put to death, Tiberius received the thanks of the senate for his clemency. she had not been publicly strangled; nor was the body drawn with a hook to the Gemoniæ, where those of common male factors were exposed. See Tacit. Annal. vi. 25. Sueton. in Tiberio c. 53.]

II. The division of Europe into a number of independent states, connected, however, with each other by the general resemblance of religion, language, and manners, is productive of the most beneficial consequences to the liberty of mankind. A modern tyrant, who should find no resistance either in his own breast, or in his people, would soon experience a gentle restraint from the example of his equals, the dread of present censure, the advice of his allies, and the apprehension of his enemies. The object of his displeasure, escaping from the narrow limits of his dominions, would easily obtain, in a happier climate, a secure refuge, a new fortune adequate to his merit, the freedom of complaint, and perhaps the means of revenge. But the empire of the Romans filled the world, and when the empire fell into the hands of a single person, the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. The slave of Imperial despotism, whether he was condemned to drag his gilded chain in rome and the senate, or to were out a life of exile on the barren rock of Seriphus, or the frozen bank of the Danube, expected his fate in silent despair. [58](#) To resist was fatal, and it was impossible to fly. On every side he was encompassed with a vast extent of sea and land, which he could never hope to traverse without being discovered, seized, and restored to his irritated master. Beyond the frontiers, his anxious view could discover nothing, except the ocean, inhospitable deserts, hostile tribes of barbarians, of fierce manners and unknown language, or dependent kings, who would gladly purchase the emperor's protection by the sacrifice of an obnoxious fugitive. [59](#) "Wherever you are," said Cicero to the exiled Marcellus, "remember that you are equally within the power of the conqueror." [60](#)

- 58 [\(return\)](#)
[Seriphus was a small rocky island in the Ægean Sea, the inhabitants of which were despised for their ignorance and obscurity. The place of Ovid's exile is well known, by his just, but unmanly lamentations. It should seem, that he only received an order to leave rome in so many days, and to transport himself to Tomi. Guards and jailers were unnecessary.]
- 59 [\(return\)](#)
[Under Tiberius, a Roman knight attempted to fly to the Parthians. He was stopped in the straits of Sicily; but so little danger did there appear in the example, that the most jealous of tyrants disdained to punish it. Tacit. Annal. vi. 14.]
- 60 [\(return\)](#)
[Cicero ad Familiares, iv. 7.]

Chapter IV: The Cruelty, Follies And Murder Of Commodus.— Part I.

The Cruelty, Follies, And Murder Of Commodus—Election Of Pertinax—His Attempts To Reform The State—His Assassination By The Prætorian Guards.

The mildness of Marcus, which the rigid discipline of the Stoics was unable to eradicate, formed, at the same time, the most amiable, and the only defective part of his character. His excellent understanding was often deceived by the unsuspecting goodness of his heart. Artful men, who study the passions of princes, and conceal their own, approached his person in the disguise of philosophic sanctity, and acquired riches and honors by affecting to despise them. [1](#) His excessive indulgence to his brother, [105](#) his wife, and his son, exceeded the bounds of private virtue, and became a public injury, by the example and consequences of their vices.

- 1 [\(return\)](#)
[See the complaints of Avidius Cassius, Hist. August. p. 45. These are, it is true, the complaints of faction; but even faction exaggerates, rather than invents.]
- 105 [\(return\)](#)
[His brother by adoption, and his colleague, L. Verus. Marcus Aurelius had no other brother.—W.]

Faustina, the daughter of Pius and the wife of Marcus, has been as much celebrated for her gallantries as for her beauty. The grave simplicity of the philosopher was ill calculated to engage her wanton levity, or to fix that unbounded passion for variety,

which often discovered personal merit in the meanest of mankind. [2](#) The Cupid of the ancients was, in general, a very sensual deity; and the amours of an empress, as they exact on her side the plainest advances, are seldom susceptible of much sentimental delicacy. Marcus was the only man in the empire who seemed ignorant or insensible of the irregularities of Faustina; which, according to the prejudices of every age, reflected some disgrace on the injured husband. He promoted several of her lovers to posts of honor and profit, [3](#) and during a connection of thirty years, invariably gave her proofs of the most tender confidence, and of a respect which ended not with her life. In his Meditations, he thanks the gods, who had bestowed on him a wife so faithful, so gentle, and of such a wonderful simplicity of manners. [4](#) The obsequious senate, at his earnest request, declared her a goddess. She was represented in her temples, with the attributes of Juno, Venus, and Ceres; and it was decreed, that, on the day of their nuptials, the youth of either sex should pay their vows before the altar of their chaste patroness. [5](#)

[2](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Faustinam satis constat apud Cajetam conditiones sibi et nauticas et gladiatorias, elegisse. Hist. August. p. 30. Lampridius explains the sort of merit which Faustina chose, and the conditions which she exacted. Hist. August. p. 102.]

[3](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 34.]

[4](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Meditat. l. i. The world has laughed at the credulity of Marcus but Madam Dacier assures us, (and we may credit a lady,) that the husband will always be deceived, if the wife condescends to dissemble.]

[5](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Footnote 5: Dion Cassius, l. lxxi. [c. 31,] p. 1195. Hist. August. p. 33. Commentaire de Spanheim sur les Cæsars de Julien, p. 289. The deification of Faustina is the only defect which Julian's criticism is able to discover in the all-accomplished character of Marcus.]

The monstrous vices of the son have cast a shade on the purity of the father's virtues. It has been objected to Marcus, that he sacrificed the happiness of millions to a fond partiality for a worthless boy; and that he chose a successor in his own family, rather than in the republic. Nothing however, was neglected by the anxious father, and by the men of virtue and learning whom he summoned to his assistance, to expand the narrow mind of young Commodus, to correct his growing vices, and to render him worthy of the throne for which he was designed. But the power of instruction is seldom of much efficacy, except in those happy dispositions where it is almost superfluous. The distasteful lesson of a grave philosopher was, in a moment, obliterated by the whisper of a profligate favorite; and Marcus himself blasted the fruits of this labored education,

by admitting his son, at the age of fourteen or fifteen, to a full participation of the Imperial power. He lived but four years afterwards: but he lived long enough to repent a rash measure, which raised the impetuous youth above the restraint of reason and authority.

Most of the crimes which disturb the internal peace of society, are produced by the restraints which the necessary but unequal laws of property have imposed on the appetites of mankind, by confining to a few the possession of those objects that are coveted by many. Of all our passions and appetites, the love of power is of the most imperious and unsociable nature, since the pride of one man requires the submission of the multitude. In the tumult of civil discord, the laws of society lose their force, and their place is seldom supplied by those of humanity. The ardor of contention, the pride of victory, the despair of success, the memory of past injuries, and the fear of future dangers, all contribute to inflame the mind, and to silence the voice of pity. From such motives almost every page of history has been stained with civil blood; but these motives will not account for the unprovoked cruelties of Commodus, who had nothing to wish and every thing to enjoy. The beloved son of Marcus succeeded to his father, amidst the acclamations of the senate and armies; [6](#) and when he ascended the throne, the happy youth saw round him neither competitor to remove, nor enemies to punish. In this calm, elevated station, it was surely natural that he should prefer the love of mankind to their detestation, the mild glories of his five predecessors to the ignominious fate of Nero and Domitian.

6

[\(return\)](#)

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

Yet Commodus was not, as he has been represented, a tiger born with an insatiate thirst of human blood, and capable, from his infancy, of the most inhuman actions. [7](#) Nature had formed him of a weak rather than a wicked disposition. His simplicity and timidity rendered him the slave of his attendants, who gradually corrupted his mind. His cruelty, which at first obeyed the dictates of others, degenerated into habit, and at length became the ruling passion of his soul. [8](#)

7

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 46.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius, l. lxxii. p. 1203.]

Upon the death of his father, Commodus found himself embarrassed with the command of a great army, and the conduct of a difficult war against the Quadi and Marcomanni. [9](#) The servile and profligate youths whom Marcus had banished, soon regained their station and influence about the new emperor. They exaggerated the

hardships and dangers of a campaign in the wild countries beyond the Danube; and they assured the indolent prince that the terror of his name, and the arms of his lieutenants, would be sufficient to complete the conquest of the dismayed barbarians, or to impose such conditions as were more advantageous than any conquest. By a dexterous application to his sensual appetites, they compared the tranquillity, the splendor, the refined pleasures of Rome, with the tumult of a Pannonian camp, which afforded neither leisure nor materials for luxury. [10](#) Commodus listened to the pleasing advice; but whilst he hesitated between his own inclination and the awe which he still retained for his father's counsellors, the summer insensibly elapsed, and his triumphal entry into the capital was deferred till the autumn. His graceful person, [11](#) popular address, and imagined virtues, attracted the public favor; the honorable peace which he had recently granted to the barbarians, diffused a universal joy; [12](#) his impatience to revisit Rome was fondly ascribed to the love of his country; and his dissolute course of amusements was faintly condemned in a prince of nineteen years of age.

9 [\(return\)](#)

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

10 [\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. i. p. 12.]

11 [\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. i. p. 16.]

12 [\(return\)](#)

[This universal joy is well described (from the medals as well as historians) by Mr. Wotton, Hist. of Rome, p. 192, 193.] During the three first years of his reign, the forms, and even the spirit, of the old administration, were maintained by those faithful counsellors, to whom Marcus had recommended his son, and for whose wisdom and integrity Commodus still entertained a reluctant esteem. The young prince and his profligate favorites revelled in all the license of sovereign power; but his hands were yet unstained with blood; and he had even displayed a generosity of sentiment, which might perhaps have ripened into solid virtue. [13](#) A fatal incident decided his fluctuating character.

13 [\(return\)](#)

[Manilius, the confidential secretary of Avidius Cassius, was discovered after he had lain concealed several years. The emperor nobly relieved the public anxiety by refusing to see him, and burning

his papers without opening them. Dion Cassius, l. lxxii. p. 1209.]

One evening, as the emperor was returning to the palace, through a dark and narrow portico in the amphitheatre, [14](#) an assassin, who waited his passage, rushed upon him with a drawn sword, loudly exclaiming, “*The senate sends you this.*” The menace prevented the deed; the assassin was seized by the guards, and immediately revealed the authors of the conspiracy. It had been formed, not in the state, but within the walls of the palace. Lucilla, the emperor’s sister, and widow of Lucius Verus, impatient of the second rank, and jealous of the reigning empress, had armed the murderer against her brother’s life. She had not ventured to communicate the black design to her second husband, Claudius Pompeianus, a senator of distinguished merit and unshaken loyalty; but among the crowd of her lovers (for she imitated the manners of Faustina) she found men of desperate fortunes and wild ambition, who were prepared to serve her more violent, as well as her tender passions. The conspirators experienced the rigor of justice, and the abandoned princess was punished, first with exile, and afterwards with death. [15](#)

14 [\(return\)](#)

[See Maffei degli Amphitheatra, p. 126.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxi. p. 1205 Herodian, l. i. p. 16 Hist. August p. 46.]

But the words of the assassin sunk deep into the mind of Commodus, and left an indelible impression of fear and hatred against the whole body of the senate. [151](#) Those whom he had dreaded as importunate ministers, he now suspected as secret enemies. The Delators, a race of men discouraged, and almost extinguished, under the former reigns, again became formidable, as soon as they discovered that the emperor was desirous of finding disaffection and treason in the senate. That assembly, whom Marcus had ever considered as the great council of the nation, was composed of the most distinguished of the Romans; and distinction of every kind soon became criminal. The possession of wealth stimulated the diligence of the informers; rigid virtue implied a tacit censure of the irregularities of Commodus; important services implied a dangerous superiority of merit; and the friendship of the father always insured the aversion of the son. Suspicion was equivalent to proof; trial to condemnation. The execution of a considerable senator was attended with the death of all who might lament or revenge his fate; and when Commodus had once tasted human blood, he became incapable of pity or remorse.

151 [\(return\)](#)

[The conspirators were senators, even the assassin himself. Herod. 81.—G.]

Of these innocent victims of tyranny, none died more lamented than the two brothers of the Quintilian family, Maximus and Condianus; whose fraternal love has saved their names from oblivion, and endeared their memory to posterity. Their studies and their occupations, their pursuits and their pleasures, were still the same. In the enjoyment of

a great estate, they never admitted the idea of a separate interest: some fragments are now extant of a treatise which they composed in common; [152](#) and in every action of life it was observed that their two bodies were animated by one soul. The Antonines, who valued their virtues, and delighted in their union, raised them, in the same year, to the consulship; and Marcus afterwards intrusted to their joint care the civil administration of Greece, and a great military command, in which they obtained a signal victory over the Germans. The kind cruelty of Commodus united them in death. [16](#)

152

[\(return\)](#)

[This work was on agriculture, and is often quoted by later writers. See P. Needham, *Proleg. ad Geoponic.* Camb. 1704.—W.]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[In a note upon the Augustan History, Casaubon has collected a number of particulars concerning these celebrated brothers. See p. 96 of his learned commentary.]

The tyrant's rage, after having shed the noblest blood of the senate, at length recoiled on the principal instrument of his cruelty. Whilst Commodus was immersed in blood and luxury, he devolved the detail of the public business on Perennis, a servile and ambitious minister, who had obtained his post by the murder of his predecessor, but who possessed a considerable share of vigor and ability. By acts of extortion, and the forfeited estates of the nobles sacrificed to his avarice, he had accumulated an immense treasure. The Prætorian guards were under his immediate command; and his son, who already discovered a military genius, was at the head of the Illyrian legions. Perennis aspired to the empire; or what, in the eyes of Commodus, amounted to the same crime, he was capable of aspiring to it, had he not been prevented, surprised, and put to death. The fall of a minister is a very trifling incident in the general history of the empire; but it was hastened by an extraordinary circumstance, which proved how much the nerves of discipline were already relaxed. The legions of Britain, discontented with the administration of Perennis, formed a deputation of fifteen hundred select men, with instructions to march to Rome, and lay their complaints before the emperor. These military petitioners, by their own determined behaviour, by inflaming the divisions of the guards, by exaggerating the strength of the British army, and by alarming the fears of Commodus, exacted and obtained the minister's death, as the only redress of their grievances. [17](#) This presumption of a distant army, and their discovery of the weakness of government, was a sure presage of the most dreadful convulsions.

17

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1210. Herodian, l. i. p. 22. Hist. August. p. 48. Dion gives a much less odious character of Perennis, than the other historians. His moderation is almost a pledge of his veracity. Note: Gibbon praises Dion for the moderation with which he speaks of Perennis: he follows, nevertheless, in his own narrative, Herodian and Lampridius. Dion

speaks of Perennis not only with moderation, but with admiration; he represents him as a great man, virtuous in his life, and blameless in his death: perhaps he may be suspected of partiality; but it is singular that Gibbon, having adopted, from Herodian and Lampridius, their judgment on this minister, follows Dion's improbable account of his death. What likelihood, in fact, that fifteen hundred men should have traversed Gaul and Italy, and have arrived at Rome without any understanding with the Prætorians, or without detection or opposition from Perennis, the Prætorian præfect? Gibbon, foreseeing, perhaps, this difficulty, has added, that the military deputation inflamed the divisions of the guards; but Dion says expressly that they did not reach Rome, but that the emperor went out to meet them: he even reproaches him for not having opposed them with the guards, who were superior in number. Herodian relates that Commodus, having learned, from a soldier, the ambitious designs of Perennis and his son, caused them to be attacked and massacred by night.—G. from W. Dion's narrative is remarkably circumstantial, and his authority higher than either of the other writers. He hints that Cleander, a new favorite, had already undermined the influence of Perennis.—M.]

The negligence of the public administration was betrayed, soon afterwards, by a new disorder, which arose from the smallest beginnings. A spirit of desertion began to prevail among the troops: and the deserters, instead of seeking their safety in flight or concealment, infested the highways. Maternus, a private soldier, of a daring boldness above his station, collected these bands of robbers into a little army, set open the prisons, invited the slaves to assert their freedom, and plundered with impunity the rich and defenceless cities of Gaul and Spain. The governors of the provinces, who had long been the spectators, and perhaps the partners, of his depredations, were, at length, roused from their supine indolence by the threatening commands of the emperor. Maternus found that he was encompassed, and foresaw that he must be overpowered. A great effort of despair was his last resource. He ordered his followers to disperse, to pass the Alps in small parties and various disguises, and to assemble at Rome, during the licentious tumult of the festival of Cybele. [18](#) To murder Commodus, and to ascend the vacant throne, was the ambition of no vulgar robber. His measures were so ably concerted that his concealed troops already filled the streets of Rome. The envy of an accomplice discovered and ruined this singular enterprise, in a moment when it was ripe for execution. [19](#)

the gods. Her festival, the Megalesia, began on the fourth of April, and lasted six days. The streets were crowded with mad processions, the theatres with spectators, and the public tables with unbidden guests. Order and police were suspended, and pleasure was the only serious business of the city. See Ovid. de Fastis, l. iv. 189, &c.]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. i. p. 23, 23.]

Suspicious princes often promote the last of mankind, from a vain persuasion, that those who have no dependence, except on their favor, will have no attachment, except to the person of their benefactor. Cleander, the successor of Perennis, was a Phrygian by birth; of a nation over whose stubborn, but servile temper, blows only could prevail. [20](#) He had been sent from his native country to Rome, in the capacity of a slave. As a slave he entered the Imperial palace, rendered himself useful to his master's passions, and rapidly ascended to the most exalted station which a subject could enjoy. His influence over the mind of Commodus was much greater than that of his predecessor; for Cleander was devoid of any ability or virtue which could inspire the emperor with envy or distrust. Avarice was the reigning passion of his soul, and the great principle of his administration. The rank of Consul, of Patrician, of Senator, was exposed to public sale; and it would have been considered as disaffection, if any one had refused to purchase these empty and disgraceful honors with the greatest part of his fortune. [21](#) In the lucrative provincial employments, the minister shared with the governor the spoils of the people. The execution of the laws was penal and arbitrary. A wealthy criminal might obtain, not only the reversal of the sentence by which he was justly condemned, but might likewise inflict whatever punishment he pleased on the accuser, the witnesses, and the judge.

20

[\(return\)](#)

[Cicero pro Flacco, c. 27.]

21

[\(return\)](#)

[One of these dear-bought promotions occasioned a current... that Julius Solon was banished into the senate.]

By these means, Cleander, in the space of three years, had accumulated more wealth than had ever yet been possessed by any freedman. [22](#) Commodus was perfectly satisfied with the magnificent presents which the artful courtier laid at his feet in the most seasonable moments. To divert the public envy, Cleander, under the emperor's name, erected baths, porticos, and places of exercise, for the use of the people. [23](#) He flattered himself that the Romans, dazzled and amused by this apparent liberality, would be less affected by the bloody scenes which were daily exhibited; that they would forget the death of Byrrhus, a senator to whose superior merit the late emperor had granted one of his daughters; and that they would forgive the execution of Arrius Antoninus, the last representative of the name and virtues of the Antonines. The former, with more

integrity than prudence, had attempted to disclose, to his brother-in-law, the true character of Cleander. An equitable sentence pronounced by the latter, when proconsul of Asia, against a worthless creature of the favorite, proved fatal to him. [24](#) After the fall of Perennis, the terrors of Commodus had, for a short time, assumed the appearance of a return to virtue. He repealed the most odious of his acts; loaded his memory with the public execration, and ascribed to the pernicious counsels of that wicked minister all the errors of his inexperienced youth. But his repentance lasted only thirty days; and, under Cleander's tyranny, the administration of Perennis was often regretted.

- 22 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion (l. lxxii. p. 12, 13) observes, that no freedman had possessed riches equal to those of Cleander. The fortune of Pallas amounted, however, to upwards of five and twenty hundred thousand pounds; Ter millies.]
- 23 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion, l. lxxii. p. 12, 13. Herodian, l. i. p. 29. Hist. August. p. 52. These baths were situated near the Porta Capena. See Nardini Roma Antica, p. 79.]
- 24 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 79.]

Chapter IV: The Cruelty, Follies And Murder Of Commodus.— Part II.

Pestilence and famine contributed to fill up the measure of the calamities of Rome. [25](#) The first could be only imputed to the just indignation of the gods; but a monopoly of corn, supported by the riches and power of the minister, was considered as the immediate cause of the second. The popular discontent, after it had long circulated in whispers, broke out in the assembled circus. The people quitted their favorite amusements for the more delicious pleasure of revenge, rushed in crowds towards a palace in the suburbs, one of the emperor's retirements, and demanded, with angry clamors, the head of the public enemy. Cleander, who commanded the Prætorian guards, [26](#) ordered a body of cavalry to sally forth, and disperse the seditious multitude. The multitude fled with precipitation towards the city; several were slain, and many more were trampled to death; but when the cavalry entered the streets, their pursuit was checked by a shower of stones and darts from the roofs and windows of the houses. The foot guards, [27](#) who had been long jealous of the prerogatives and insolence of the Prætorian cavalry, embraced the party of the people. The tumult became a regular engagement, and threatened a general massacre. The Prætorians, at length, gave way, oppressed with numbers; and the tide of popular fury returned with redoubled violence against the gates of the palace, where Commodus lay, dissolved in luxury, and alone unconscious of the civil war. It was death to approach his person with the unwelcome

news. He would have perished in this supine security, had not two women, his eldest sister Fadilla, and Marcia, the most favored of his concubines, ventured to break into his presence. Bathed in tears, and with dishevelled hair, they threw themselves at his feet; and with all the pressing eloquence of fear, discovered to the affrighted emperor the crimes of the minister, the rage of the people, and the impending ruin, which, in a few minutes, would burst over his palace and person. Commodus started from his dream of pleasure, and commanded that the head of Cleander should be thrown out to the people. The desired spectacle instantly appeased the tumult; and the son of Marcus might even yet have regained the affection and confidence of his subjects. [28](#)

25 [\(return\)](#)

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

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Tuneque primum tres præfecti prætorio fuere: inter quos libertinus. From some remains of modesty, Cleander declined the title, whilst he assumed the powers, of Prætorian præfect. As the other freedmen were styled, from their several departments, a rationibus, ab epistolis, Cleander called himself a pugione, as intrusted with the defence of his master's person. Salmasius and Casaubon seem to have talked very idly upon this passage. * Note: M. Guizot denies that Lampridius means Cleander as præfect a pugione. The Libertinus seems to me to mean him.—M.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. i. p. 31. It is doubtful whether he means the Prætorian infantry, or the cohortes urbanæ, a body of six thousand men, but whose rank and discipline were not equal to their numbers. Neither Tillemont nor Wotton choose to decide this question.]

28 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius, l. lxxii. p. 1215. Herodian, l. i. p. 32. Hist. August. p. 48.]

But every sentiment of virtue and humanity was extinct in the mind of Commodus. Whilst he thus abandoned the reins of empire to these unworthy favorites, he valued nothing in sovereign power, except the unbounded license of indulging his sensual appetites. His hours were spent in a seraglio of three hundred beautiful women, and as many boys, of every rank, and of every province; and, wherever the arts of seduction proved ineffectual, the brutal lover had recourse to violence. The ancient historians [29](#) have expatiated on these abandoned scenes of prostitution, which scorned every restraint of nature or modesty; but it would not be easy to translate their too faithful descriptions into the decency of modern language. The intervals of lust were

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

29

[\(return\)](#)

[Sororibus suis constupratis. Ipsas concubinas suas sub oculis...stuprari jubebat. Nec irruentium in se juvenum carebat infamia, omni parte corporis atque ore in sexum utrumque pollutus. Hist. Aug. p. 47.]

The servile crowd, whose fortune depended on their master's vices, applauded these ignoble pursuits. The perfidious voice of flattery reminded him, that by exploits of the same nature, by the defeat of the Nemæan lion, and the slaughter of the wild boar of Erymanthus, the Grecian Hercules had acquired a place among the gods, and an immortal memory among men. They only forgot to observe, that, in the first ages of society, when the fiercer animals often dispute with man the possession of an unsettled country, a successful war against those savages is one of the most innocent and beneficial labors of heroism. In the civilized state of the Roman empire, the wild beasts had long since retired from the face of man, and the neighborhood of populous cities. To surprise them in their solitary haunts, and to transport them to Rome, that they might be slain in pomp by the hand of an emperor, was an enterprise equally ridiculous for the prince and oppressive for the people. [30](#) Ignorant of these distinctions, Commodus eagerly embraced the glorious resemblance, and styled himself (as we still read on his medals[31](#)) the *Roman Hercules*. [311](#) The club and the lion's hide were placed by the side of the throne, amongst the ensigns of sovereignty; and statues were erected, in which Commodus was represented in the character, and with the attributes, of the god, whose valor and dexterity he endeavored to emulate in the daily course of his ferocious amusements. [32](#)

30

[\(return\)](#)

[The African lions, when pressed by hunger, infested the open villages and cultivated country; and they infested them with impunity. The royal beast was reserved for the pleasures of the emperor and the capital; and the unfortunate peasant who

killed one of them though in his own defence, incurred a very heavy penalty. This extraordinary game-law was mitigated by Honorius, and finally repealed by Justinian. Codex Theodos. tom. v. p. 92, et Comment Gothofred.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[Spanheim de Numismat. Dissertat. xii. tom. ii. p. 493.]

311 [\(return\)](#)

[Commodus placed his own head on the colossal statue of Hercules with the inscription, Lucius Commodus Hercules. The wits of Rome, according to a new fragment of Dion, published an epigram, of which, like many other ancient jests, the point is not very clear. It seems to be a protest of the god against being confounded with the emperor. Mai Fragm. Vatican. ii. 225.—M.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1216. Hist. August. p. 49.]

Elated with these praises, which gradually extinguished the innate sense of shame, Commodus resolved to exhibit before the eyes of the Roman people those exercises, which till then he had decently confined within the walls of his palace, and to the presence of a few favorites. On the appointed day, the various motives of flattery, fear, and curiosity, attracted to the amphitheatre an innumerable multitude of spectators; and some degree of applause was deservedly bestowed on the uncommon skill of the Imperial performer. Whether he aimed at the head or heart of the animal, the wound was alike certain and mortal. With arrows whose point was shaped into the form of crescent, Commodus often intercepted the rapid career, and cut asunder the long, bony neck of the ostrich. [33](#) A panther was let loose; and the archer waited till he had leaped upon a trembling malefactor. In the same instant the shaft flew, the beast dropped dead, and the man remained unhurt. The dens of the amphitheatre disgorged at once a hundred lions: a hundred darts from the unerring hand of Commodus laid them dead as they run raging round the *Arena*. Neither the huge bulk of the elephant, nor the scaly hide of the rhinoceros, could defend them from his stroke. Æthiopia and India yielded their most extraordinary productions; and several animals were slain in the amphitheatre, which had been seen only in the representations of art, or perhaps of fancy. [34](#) In all these exhibitions, the securest precautions were used to protect the person of the Roman Hercules from the desperate spring of any savage, who might possibly disregard the dignity of the emperor and the sanctity of the god. [35](#)

33 [\(return\)](#)

[The ostrich's neck is three feet long, and composed of seventeen vertebræ. See Buffon, Hist. Naturelle.]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[Commodus killed a camelopardalis or Giraffe,

(Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1211,) the tallest, the most gentle, and the most useless of the large quadrupeds. This singular animal, a native only of the interior parts of Africa, has not been seen in Europe since the revival of letters; and though M. de Buffon (Hist. Naturelle, tom. xiii.) has endeavored to describe, he has not ventured to delineate, the Giraffe. * Note: The naturalists of our days have been more fortunate. London probably now contains more specimens of this animal than have been seen in Europe since the fall of the Roman empire, unless in the pleasure gardens of the emperor Frederic II., in Sicily, which possessed several. Frederic's collections of wild beasts were exhibited, for the popular amusement, in many parts of Italy. Raumer, Geschichte der Hohenstaufen, v. iii. p. 571. Gibbon, moreover, is mistaken; as a giraffe was presented to Lorenzo de Medici, either by the sultan of Egypt or the king of Tunis. Contemporary authorities are quoted in the old work, Gesner de Quadrupedibus p. 162.—M.]

But the meanest of the populace were affected with shame and indignation when they beheld their sovereign enter the lists as a gladiator, and glory in a profession which the laws and manners of the Romans had branded with the justest note of infamy. [36](#) He chose the habit and arms of the *Secutor*, whose combat with the *Retiarius* formed one of the most lively scenes in the bloody sports of the amphitheatre. The *Secutor* was armed with a helmet, sword, and buckler; his naked antagonist had only a large net and a trident; with the one he endeavored to entangle, with the other to despatch his enemy. If he missed the first throw, he was obliged to fly from the pursuit of the *Secutor*, till he had prepared his net for a second cast. [37](#) The emperor fought in this character seven hundred and thirty-five several times. These glorious achievements were carefully recorded in the public acts of the empire; and that he might omit no circumstance of infamy, he received from the common fund of gladiators a stipend so exorbitant that it became a new and most ignominious tax upon the Roman people. [38](#) It may be easily supposed, that in these engagements the master of the world was always successful; in the amphitheatre, his victories were not often sanguinary; but when he exercised his skill in the school of gladiators, or his own palace, his wretched antagonists were frequently honored with a mortal wound from the hand of Commodus, and obliged to seal their flattery with their blood. [39](#) He now disdained the appellation of Hercules. The name of Paulus, a celebrated *Secutor*, was the only one which delighted his ear. It was inscribed on his colossal statues, and repeated in the redoubled acclamations [40](#) of the mournful and applauding senate. [41](#) Claudius Pompeianus, the virtuous husband of Lucilla, was the only senator who asserted the honor of his rank. As a father, he

permitted his sons to consult their safety by attending the amphitheatre. As a Roman, he declared, that his own life was in the emperor's hands, but that he would never behold the son of Marcus prostituting his person and dignity. Notwithstanding his manly resolution Pompeianus escaped the resentment of the tyrant, and, with his honor, had the good fortune to preserve his life. [42](#)

- 36 [\(return\)](#)
[The virtuous and even the wise princes forbade the senators and knights to embrace this scandalous profession, under pain of infamy, or, what was more dreaded by those profligate wretches, of exile. The tyrants allured them to dishonor by threats and rewards. Nero once produced in the arena forty senators and sixty knights. See Lipsius, Saturnalia, l. ii. c. 2. He has happily corrected a passage of Suetonius in Nerone, c. 12.]
- 37 [\(return\)](#)
[Lipsius, l. ii. c. 7, 8. Juvenal, in the eighth satire, gives a picturesque description of this combat.]
- 38 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 50. Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1220. He received, for each time, decies, about 8000l. sterling.]
- 39 [\(return\)](#)
[Victor tells us, that Commodus only allowed his antagonists a...weapon, dreading most probably the consequences of their despair.]
- 40 [\(return\)](#)
[Footnote 40: They were obliged to repeat, six hundred and twenty-six times, Paolus first of the Secutors, &c.]
- 41 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1221. He speaks of his own baseness and danger.]
- 42 [\(return\)](#)
[He mixed, however, some prudence with his courage, and passed the greatest part of his time in a country retirement; alleging his advanced age, and the weakness of his eyes. "I never saw him in the senate," says Dion, "except during the short reign of Pertinax." All his infirmities had suddenly left him, and they returned as suddenly upon the murder of that excellent prince. Dion, l. lxxiii. p. 1227.]

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

he contracted in his daily amusements. History has preserved a long list of consular senators sacrificed to his wanton suspicion, which sought out, with peculiar anxiety, those unfortunate persons connected, however remotely, with the family of the Antonines, without sparing even the ministers of his crimes or pleasures. [43](#) His cruelty proved at last fatal to himself. He had shed with impunity the noblest blood of Rome: he perished as soon as he was dreaded by his own domestics. Marcia, his favorite concubine, Eclectus, his chamberlain, and Lætus, his Prætorian præfect, alarmed by the fate of their companions and predecessors, resolved to prevent the destruction which every hour hung over their heads, either from the mad caprice of the tyrant, [431](#) or the sudden indignation of the people. Marcia seized the occasion of presenting a draught of wine to her lover, after he had fatigued himself with hunting some wild beasts. Commodus retired to sleep; but whilst he was laboring with the effects of poison and drunkenness, a robust youth, by profession a wrestler, entered his chamber, and strangled him without resistance. The body was secretly conveyed out of the palace, before the least suspicion was entertained in the city, or even in the court, of the emperor's death. Such was the fate of the son of Marcus, and so easy was it to destroy a hated tyrant, who, by the artificial powers of government, had oppressed, during thirteen years, so many millions of subjects, each of whom was equal to their master in personal strength and personal abilities. [44](#)

43

[\(return\)](#)

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

431

[\(return\)](#)

[Commodus had already resolved to massacre them the following night they determined to anticipate his design. Herod. i. 17.—W.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1222. Herodian, l. i. p. 43. Hist. August. p. 52.]

The measures of the conspirators were conducted with the deliberate coolness and celerity which the greatness of the occasion required. They resolved instantly to fill the vacant throne with an emperor whose character would justify and maintain the action that had been committed. They fixed on Pertinax, præfect of the city, an ancient senator of consular rank, whose conspicuous merit had broke through the obscurity of his birth, and raised him to the first honors of the state. He had successively governed most of the provinces of the empire; and in all his great employments, military as well as civil, he had uniformly distinguished himself by the firmness, the prudence, and the integrity of his conduct. [45](#) He now remained almost alone of the friends and ministers of Marcus; and when, at a late hour of the night, he was awakened with the news, that the chamberlain and the præfect were at his door, he received them with intrepid resignation, and desired they would execute their master's orders. Instead of death, they

offered him the throne of the Roman world. During some moments he distrusted their intentions and assurances. Convinced at length of the death of Commodus, he accepted the purple with a sincere reluctance, the natural effect of his knowledge both of the duties and of the dangers of the supreme rank. [46](#)

45

[\(return\)](#)

[Pertinax was a native of Alba Pompeia, in Piedmont, and son of a timber merchant. The order of his employments (it is marked by Capitolinus) well deserves to be set down, as expressive of the form of government and manners of the age. 1. He was a centurion. 2. Præfect of a cohort in Syria, in the Parthian war, and in Britain. 3. He obtained an Ala, or squadron of horse, in Mæsia. 4. He was commissary of provisions on the Æmilian way. 5. He commanded the fleet upon the Rhine. 6. He was procurator of Dacia, with a salary of about 1600l. a year. 7. He commanded the veterans of a legion. 8. He obtained the rank of senator. 9. Of prætor. 10. With the command of the first legion in Rhætia and Noricum. 11. He was consul about the year 175. 12. He attended Marcus into the East. 13. He commanded an army on the Danube. 14. He was consular legate of Mæsia. 15. Of Dacia. 16. Of Syria. 17. Of Britain. 18. He had the care of the public provisions at Rome. 19. He was proconsul of Africa. 20. Præfect of the city. Herodian (l. i. p. 48) does justice to his disinterested spirit; but Capitolinus, who collected every popular rumor, charges him with a great fortune acquired by bribery and corruption.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian, in the Cæsars, taxes him with being accessory to the death of Commodus.]

Lætus conducted without delay his new emperor to the camp of the Prætorians, diffusing at the same time through the city a seasonable report that Commodus died suddenly of an apoplexy; and that the virtuous Pertinax had *already* succeeded to the throne. The guards were rather surprised than pleased with the suspicious death of a prince, whose indulgence and liberality they alone had experienced; but the emergency of the occasion, the authority of their præfect, the reputation of Pertinax, and the clamors of the people, obliged them to stifle their secret discontents, to accept the donative promised by the new emperor, to swear allegiance to him, and with joyful acclamations and laurels in their hands to conduct him to the senate house, that the military consent might be ratified by the civil authority. This important night was now far spent; with the dawn of day, and the commencement of the new year, the senators expected a summons to attend an ignominious ceremony. [461](#) In spite of all remonstrances, even of those of his creatures who yet preserved any regard for prudence

or decency, Commodus had resolved to pass the night in the gladiators' school, and from thence to take possession of the consulship, in the habit and with the attendance of that infamous crew. On a sudden, before the break of day, the senate was called together in the temple of Concord, to meet the guards, and to ratify the election of a new emperor. For a few minutes they sat in silent suspense, doubtful of their unexpected deliverance, and suspicious of the cruel artifices of Commodus: but when at length they were assured that the tyrant was no more, they resigned themselves to all the transports of joy and indignation. Pertinax, who modestly represented the meanness of his extraction, and pointed out several noble senators more deserving than himself of the empire, was constrained by their dutiful violence to ascend the throne, and received all the titles of Imperial power, confirmed by the most sincere vows of fidelity. The memory of Commodus was branded with eternal infamy. The names of tyrant, of gladiator, of public enemy resounded in every corner of the house. They decreed in tumultuous votes, [462](#) that his honors should be reversed, his titles erased from the public monuments, his statues thrown down, his body dragged with a hook into the stripping room of the gladiators, to satiate the public fury; and they expressed some indignation against those officious servants who had already presumed to screen his remains from the justice of the senate. But Pertinax could not refuse those last rites to the memory of Marcus, and the tears of his first protector Claudius Pompeianus, who lamented the cruel fate of his brother-in-law, and lamented still more that he had deserved it. [47](#)

461

[\(return\)](#)

[The senate always assembled at the beginning of the year, on the night of the 1st January, (see Savaron on Sid. Apoll. viii. 6,) and this happened the present year, as usual, without any particular order.—G from W.]

462

[\(return\)](#)

[What Gibbon improperly calls, both here and in the note, tumultuous decrees, were no more than the applauses and acclamations which recur so often in the history of the emperors. The custom passed from the theatre to the forum, from the forum to the senate. Applauses on the adoption of the Imperial decrees were first introduced under Trajan. (Plin. jun. Panegyr. 75.) One senator read the form of the decree, and all the rest answered by acclamations, accompanied with a kind of chant or rhythm. These were some of the acclamations addressed to Pertinax, and against the memory of Commodus. *Hosti patriæ honores detrahantur. Parricidæ honores detrahantur. Ut salvi simus, Jupiter, optime, maxime, serva nobis Pertinacem.* This custom prevailed not only in the councils of state, but in all the meetings of the senate. However

inconsistent it may appear with the solemnity of a religious assembly, the early Christians adopted and introduced it into their synods, notwithstanding the opposition of some of the Fathers, particularly of St. Chrysostom. See the Coll. of Franc. Bern. Ferrarius de veterum acclamatione in Grævii Thesaur. Antiq. Rom. i. 6.—W. This note is rather hypercritical, as regards Gibbon, but appears to be worthy of preservation.—M.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

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

These effusions of impotent rage against a dead emperor, whom the senate had flattered when alive with the most abject servility, betrayed a just but ungenerous spirit of revenge.

The legality of these decrees was, however, supported by the principles of the Imperial constitution. To censure, to depose, or to punish with death, the first magistrate of the republic, who had abused his delegated trust, was the ancient and undoubted prerogative of the Roman senate; [48](#) but the feeble assembly was obliged to content itself with inflicting on a fallen tyrant that public justice, from which, during his life and reign, he had been shielded by the strong arm of military despotism. [481](#)

48

[\(return\)](#)

[The senate condemned Nero to be put to death more majorum. Sueton. c. 49.]

481

[\(return\)](#)

[No particular law assigned this right to the senate: it was deduced from the ancient principles of the republic. Gibbon appears to infer, from the passage of Suetonius, that the senate, according to its ancient right, punished Nero with death. The words, however, more majerum refer not to the decree of the senate, but to the kind of death, which was taken from an old law of Romulus. (See Victor. Epit. Ed. Artzen p. 484, n. 7.)—W.]

Pertinax found a nobler way of condemning his predecessor's memory; by the contrast of his own virtues with the vices of Commodus. On the day of his accession, he resigned over to his wife and son his whole private fortune; that they might have no pretence to solicit favors at the expense of the state. He refused to flatter the vanity of the former with the title of Augusta; or to corrupt the inexperienced youth of the latter by the rank of Cæsar. Accurately distinguishing between the duties of a parent and those of a sovereign, he educated his son with a severe simplicity, which, while it gave him no assured prospect of the throne, might in time have rendered him worthy of it. In public, the behavior of Pertinax was grave and affable. He lived with the virtuous part

of the senate, (and, in a private station, he had been acquainted with the true character of each individual,) without either pride or jealousy; considered them as friends and companions, with whom he had shared the danger of the tyranny, and with whom he wished to enjoy the security of the present time. He very frequently invited them to familiar entertainments, the frugality of which was ridiculed by those who remembered and regretted the luxurious prodigality of Commodus. [49](#)

49

[\(return\)](#)

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

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

The finances of the state demanded the most vigilant care of the emperor. Though every measure of injustice and extortion had been adopted, which could collect the property of the subject into the coffers of the prince, the rapaciousness of Commodus had been so very inadequate to his extravagance, that, upon his death, no more than eight thousand pounds were found in the exhausted treasury, [50](#) to defray the current expenses of government, and to discharge the pressing demand of a liberal donative, which the new emperor had been obliged to promise to the Prætorian guards. Yet under these distressed circumstances, Pertinax had the generous firmness to remit all the oppressive taxes invented by Commodus, and to cancel all the unjust claims of the treasury; declaring, in a decree of the senate, “that he was better satisfied to administer a poor republic with innocence, than to acquire riches by the ways of tyranny and dishonor.” Economy and industry he considered as the pure and genuine sources of wealth; and from them he soon derived a copious supply for the public necessities. The expense of the household was immediately reduced to one half. All the instruments of luxury Pertinax exposed to public auction, [51](#) gold and silver plate, chariots of a singular construction, a superfluous wardrobe of silk and embroidery, and a great number of beautiful slaves of both sexes; excepting only, with attentive humanity, those who were born in a state of freedom, and had been ravished from the arms of their weeping parents. At the same time that he obliged the worthless favorites of the tyrant

to resign a part of their ill-gotten wealth, he satisfied the just creditors of the state, and unexpectedly discharged the long arrears of honest services. He removed the oppressive restrictions which had been laid upon commerce, and granted all the uncultivated lands in Italy and the provinces to those who would improve them; with an exemption from tribute during the term of ten years. [52](#)

50

[\(return\)](#)

[Decies. The blameless economy of Pius left his successors a treasure of vices septies millies, above two and twenty millions sterling. Dion, l. lxxiii. p. 1231.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Besides the design of converting these useless ornaments into money, Dion (l. lxxiii. p. 1229) assigns two secret motives of Pertinax. He wished to expose the vices of Commodus, and to discover by the purchasers those who most resembled him.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Though Capitolinus has picked up many idle tales of the private life of Pertinax, he joins with Dion and Herodian in admiring his public conduct.]

Such a uniform conduct had already secured to Pertinax the noblest reward of a sovereign, the love and esteem of his people.

Those who remembered the virtues of Marcus were happy to contemplate in their new emperor the features of that bright original; and flattered themselves, that they should long enjoy the benign influence of his administration. A hasty zeal to reform the corrupted state, accompanied with less prudence than might have been expected from the years and experience of Pertinax, proved fatal to himself and to his country. His honest indiscretion united against him the servile crowd, who found their private benefit in the public disorders, and who preferred the favor of a tyrant to the inexorable equality of the laws. [53](#)

53

[\(return\)](#)

[Leges, rem surdam, inexorabilem esse. T. Liv. ii. 3.]

Amidst the general joy, the sullen and angry countenance of the Prætorian guards betrayed their inward dissatisfaction. They had reluctantly submitted to Pertinax; they dreaded the strictness of the ancient discipline, which he was preparing to restore; and they regretted the license of the former reign. Their discontents were secretly fomented by Lætus, their præfect, who found, when it was too late, that his new emperor would reward a servant, but would not be ruled by a favorite. On the third day of his reign, the soldiers seized on a noble senator, with a design to carry him to the camp, and to invest him with the Imperial purple. Instead of being dazzled by the dangerous honor, the affrighted victim escaped from their violence, and took refuge at the feet of Pertinax. A short time afterwards, Sosius Falco, one of the consuls of the year, a rash youth, [54](#) but

of an ancient and opulent family, listened to the voice of ambition; and a conspiracy was formed during a short absence of Pertinax, which was crushed by his sudden return to Rome, and his resolute behavior. Falco was on the point of being justly condemned to death as a public enemy had he not been saved by the earnest and sincere entreaties of the injured emperor, who conjured the senate, that the purity of his reign might not be stained by the blood even of a guilty senator.

54

[\(return\)](#)

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

These disappointments served only to irritate the rage of the Prætorian guards. On the twenty-eighth of March, eighty-six days only after the death of Commodus, a general sedition broke out in the camp, which the officers wanted either power or inclination to suppress. Two or three hundred of the most desperate soldiers marched at noonday, with arms in their hands and fury in their looks, towards the Imperial palace. The gates were thrown open by their companions upon guard, and by the domestics of the old court, who had already formed a secret conspiracy against the life of the too virtuous emperor. On the news of their approach, Pertinax, disdaining either flight or concealment, advanced to meet his assassins; and recalled to their minds his own innocence, and the sanctity of their recent oath. For a few moments they stood in silent suspense, ashamed of their atrocious design, and awed by the venerable aspect and majestic firmness of their sovereign, till at length, the despair of pardon reviving their fury, a barbarian of the country of Tongress [55](#) levelled the first blow against Pertinax, who was instantly despatched with a multitude of wounds. His head, separated from his body, and placed on a lance, was carried in triumph to the Prætorian camp, in the sight of a mournful and indignant people, who lamented the unworthy fate of that excellent prince, and the transient blessings of a reign, the memory of which could serve only to aggravate their approaching misfortunes. [56](#)

55

[\(return\)](#)

[The modern bishopric of Liege. This soldier probably belonged to the Batavian horse-guards, who were mostly raised in the duchy of Gueldres and the neighborhood, and were distinguished by their valor, and by the boldness with which they swam their horses across the broadest and most rapid rivers. Tacit. Hist. iv. 12 Dion, l. iv p. 797 Lipsius de magnitudine Romana, l. i. c. 4.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

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

Chapter V: Sale Of The Empire To Didius Julianus.—Part I.

Public Sale Of The Empire To Didius Julianus By The Prætorian Guards—Clodius Albinus In Britain, Pescennius Niger In Syria, And Septimius Severus In Pannonia, Declare Against The Murderers Of Pertinax—Civil Wars And Victory Of Severus Over His Three Rivals—Relaxation Of Discipline—New Maxims Of Government.

The power of the sword is more sensibly felt in an extensive monarchy, than in a small community. It has been calculated by the ablest politicians, that no state, without being soon exhausted, can maintain above the hundredth part of its members in arms and idleness. But although this relative proportion may be uniform, the influence of the army over the rest of the society will vary according to the degree of its positive strength. The advantages of military science and discipline cannot be exerted, unless a proper number of soldiers are united into one body, and actuated by one soul. With a handful of men, such a union would be ineffectual; with an unwieldy host, it would be impracticable; and the powers of the machine would be alike destroyed by the extreme minuteness or the excessive weight of its springs. To illustrate this observation, we need only reflect, that there is no superiority of natural strength, artificial weapons, or acquired skill, which could enable one man to keep in constant subjection one hundred of his fellow-creatures: the tyrant of a single town, or a small district, would soon discover that a hundred armed followers were a weak defence against ten thousand peasants or citizens; but a hundred thousand well-disciplined soldiers will command, with despotic sway, ten millions of subjects; and a body of ten or fifteen thousand guards will strike terror into the most numerous populace that ever crowded the streets of an immense capital.

The Prætorian bands, whose licentious fury was the first symptom and cause of the decline of the Roman empire, scarcely amounted to the last-mentioned number. [1](#) They derived their institution from Augustus. That crafty tyrant, sensible that laws might color, but that arms alone could maintain, his usurped dominion, had gradually formed this powerful body of guards, in constant readiness to protect his person, to awe the senate, and either to prevent or to crush the first motions of rebellion. He distinguished these favored troops by a double pay and superior privileges; but, as their formidable aspect would at once have alarmed and irritated the Roman people, three cohorts only were stationed in the capital, whilst the remainder was dispersed in the adjacent towns of Italy. [2](#) But after fifty years of peace and servitude, Tiberius ventured on a decisive measure, which forever rivetted the fetters of his country. Under the fair pretences of relieving Italy from the heavy burden of military quarters, and of introducing a stricter discipline among the guards, he assembled them at Rome, in a permanent

camp, [3](#) which was fortified with skilful care, [4](#) and placed on a commanding situation. [5](#)

- 1 [\(return\)](#)
[They were originally nine or ten thousand men, (for Tacitus and son are not agreed upon the subject,) divided into as many cohorts. Vitellius increased them to sixteen thousand, and as far as we can learn from inscriptions, they never afterwards sunk much below that number. See Lipsius de magnitudine Romana, i. 4.]
- 2 [\(return\)](#)
[Sueton. in August. c. 49.]
- 3 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Annal. iv. 2. Sueton. in Tiber. c. 37. Dion Cassius, l. lvii. p. 867.]
- 4 [\(return\)](#)
[In the civil war between Vitellius and Vespasian, the Prætorian camp was attacked and defended with all the machines used in the siege of the best fortified cities. Tacit. Hist. iii. 84.]
- 5 [\(return\)](#)
[Close to the walls of the city, on the broad summit of the Quirinal and Viminal hills. See Nardini Roma Antica, p. 174. Donatus de Roma Antiqua, p. 46. * Note: Not on both these hills: neither Donatus nor Nardini justify this position. (Whitaker's Review. p. 13.) At the northern extremity of this hill (the Viminal) are some considerable remains of a walled enclosure which bears all the appearance of a Roman camp, and therefore is generally thought to correspond with the Castra Prætoria. Cramer's Italy 390.—M.]

Such formidable servants are always necessary, but often fatal to the throne of despotism. By thus introducing the Prætorian guards as it were into the palace and the senate, the emperors taught them to perceive their own strength, and the weakness of the civil government; to view the vices of their masters with familiar contempt, and to lay aside that reverential awe, which distance only, and mystery, can preserve towards an imaginary power. In the luxurious idleness of an opulent city, their pride was nourished by the sense of their irresistible weight; nor was it possible to conceal from them, that the person of the sovereign, the authority of the senate, the public treasure, and the seat of empire, were all in their hands. To divert the Prætorian bands from these dangerous reflections, the firmest and best established princes were obliged to mix blandishments with commands, rewards with punishments, to flatter their pride, indulge their pleasures, connive at their irregularities, and to purchase their precarious faith by a liberal donative; which, since the elevation of Claudius, was enacted as a legal claim, on the accession of every new emperor. [6](#)

6

[\(return\)](#)

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

The advocate of the guards endeavored to justify by arguments the power which they asserted by arms; and to maintain that, according to the purest principles of the constitution, *their* consent was essentially necessary in the appointment of an emperor. The election of consuls, of generals, and of magistrates, however it had been recently usurped by the senate, was the ancient and undoubted right of the Roman people. [7](#) But where was the Roman people to be found? Not surely amongst the mixed multitude of slaves and strangers that filled the streets of Rome; a servile populace, as devoid of spirit as destitute of property. The defenders of the state, selected from the flower of the Italian youth, [8](#) and trained in the exercise of arms and virtue, were the genuine representatives of the people, and the best entitled to elect the military chief of the republic. These assertions, however defective in reason, became unanswerable when the fierce Prætorians increased their weight, by throwing, like the barbarian conqueror of Rome, their swords into the scale. [9](#)

7

[\(return\)](#)

[Cicero de Legibus, iii. 3. The first book of Livy, and the second of Dionysius of Halicarnassus, show the authority of the people, even in the election of the kings.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[They were originally recruited in Latium, Etruria, and the old colonies, (Tacit. Annal. iv. 5.) The emperor Otho compliments their vanity with the flattering titles of Italiae, Alumni, Romana were juvenus. Tacit. Hist. i. 84.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

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

The Prætorians had violated the sanctity of the throne by the atrocious murder of Pertinax; they dishonored the majesty of it by their subsequent conduct. The camp was without a leader, for even the præfect Lætus, who had excited the tempest, prudently declined the public indignation. Amidst the wild disorder, Sulpicianus, the emperor's father-in-law, and governor of the city, who had been sent to the camp on the first alarm of mutiny, was endeavoring to calm the fury of the multitude, when he was silenced by the clamorous return of the murderers, bearing on a lance the head of Pertinax. Though

history has accustomed us to observe every principle and every passion yielding to the imperious dictates of ambition, it is scarcely credible that, in these moments of horror, Sulpicianus should have aspired to ascend a throne polluted with the recent blood of so near a relation and so excellent a prince. He had already begun to use the only effectual argument, and to treat for the Imperial dignity; but the more prudent of the Prætorians, apprehensive that, in this private contract, they should not obtain a just price for so valuable a commodity, ran out upon the ramparts; and, with a loud voice, proclaimed that the Roman world was to be disposed of to the best bidder by public auction. [10](#)

10

[\(return\)](#)

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

This infamous offer, the most insolent excess of military license, diffused a universal grief, shame, and indignation throughout the city. It reached at length the ears of Didius Julianus, a wealthy senator, who, regardless of the public calamities, was indulging himself in the luxury of the table. [11](#) His wife and his daughter, his freedmen and his parasites, easily convinced him that he deserved the throne, and earnestly conjured him to embrace so fortunate an opportunity. The vain old man hastened to the Prætorian camp, where Sulpicianus was still in treaty with the guards, and began to bid against him from the foot of the rampart. The unworthy negotiation was transacted by faithful emissaries, who passed alternately from one candidate to the other, and acquainted each of them with the offers of his rival. Sulpicianus had already promised a donative of five thousand drachms (above one hundred and sixty pounds) to each soldier; when Julian, eager for the prize, rose at once to the sum of six thousand two hundred and fifty drachms, or upwards of two hundred pounds sterling. The gates of the camp were instantly thrown open to the purchaser; he was declared emperor, and received an oath of allegiance from the soldiers, who retained humanity enough to stipulate that he should pardon and forget the competition of Sulpicianus. [111](#)

11

[\(return\)](#)

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

111

[\(return\)](#)

[One of the principal causes of the preference of Julianus by the soldiers, was the dexterty dexterity with which he reminded them that Sulpicianus would not fail to revenge on them the death of his son-in-law. (See Dion, p. 1234, 1234. c. 11. Herod. ii. 6.)—W.]

It was now incumbent on the Prætorians to fulfil the conditions of the sale. They placed their new sovereign, whom they served and despised, in the centre of their ranks, surrounded him on every side with their shields, and conducted him in close order of battle through the deserted streets of the city. The senate was commanded to assemble;

and those who had been the distinguished friends of Pertinax, or the personal enemies of Julian, found it necessary to affect a more than common share of satisfaction at this happy revolution. [12](#) After Julian had filled the senate house with armed soldiers, he expatiated on the freedom of his election, his own eminent virtues, and his full assurance of the affections of the senate. The obsequious assembly congratulated their own and the public felicity; engaged their allegiance, and conferred on him all the several branches of the Imperial power. [13](#) From the senate Julian was conducted, by the same military procession, to take possession of the palace. The first objects that struck his eyes, were the abandoned trunk of Pertinax, and the frugal entertainment prepared for his supper. The one he viewed with indifference, the other with contempt. A magnificent feast was prepared by his order, and he amused himself, till a very late hour, with dice, and the performances of Pylades, a celebrated dancer. Yet it was observed, that after the crowd of flatterers dispersed, and left him to darkness, solitude, and terrible reflection, he passed a sleepless night; revolving most probably in his mind his own rash folly, the fate of his virtuous predecessor, and the doubtful and dangerous tenure of an empire which had not been acquired by merit, but purchased by money. [14](#)

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius, at that time prætor, had been a personal enemy to Julian, i. lxxiii. p. 1235.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 61. We learn from thence one curious circumstance, that the new emperor, whatever had been his birth, was immediately aggregated to the number of patrician families. Note: A new fragment of Dion shows some shrewdness in the character of Julian. When the senate voted him a golden statue, he preferred one of brass, as more lasting. He “had always observed,” he said, “that the statues of former emperors were soon destroyed. Those of brass alone remained.” The indignant historian adds that he was wrong. The virtue of sovereigns alone preserves their images: the brazen statue of Julian was broken to pieces at his death. Mai. Fragm. Vatican. p. 226.—M.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxiii. p. 1235. Hist. August. p. 61. I have endeavored to blend into one consistent story the seeming contradictions of the two writers. * Note: The contradiction as M. Guizot observed, is irreconcilable. He quotes both passages: in one Julianus is represented as a miser, in the other as a voluptuary. In the one he refuses to eat till the body of Pertinax has been buried; in the other he gluts himself with every luxury almost in the sight of his headless remains.—M.]

He had reason to tremble. On the throne of the world he found himself without a friend, and even without an adherent. The guards themselves were ashamed of the prince whom their avarice had persuaded them to accept; nor was there a citizen who did not consider his elevation with horror, as the last insult on the Roman name. The nobility, whose conspicuous station, and ample possessions, exacted the strictest caution, dissembled their sentiments, and met the affected civility of the emperor with smiles of complacency and professions of duty. But the people, secure in their numbers and obscurity, gave a free vent to their passions. The streets and public places of Rome resounded with clamors and imprecations. The enraged multitude affronted the person of Julian, rejected his liberality, and, conscious of the impotence of their own resentment, they called aloud on the legions of the frontiers to assert the violated majesty of the Roman empire. The public discontent was soon diffused from the centre to the frontiers of the empire. The armies of Britain, of Syria, and of Illyricum, lamented the death of Pertinax, in whose company, or under whose command, they had so often fought and conquered. They received with surprise, with indignation, and perhaps with envy, the extraordinary intelligence, that the Prætorians had disposed of the empire by public auction; and they sternly refused to ratify the ignominious bargain. Their immediate and unanimous revolt was fatal to Julian, but it was fatal at the same time to the public peace, as the generals of the respective armies, Clodius Albinus, Pescennius Niger, and Septimius Severus, were still more anxious to succeed than to revenge the murdered Pertinax. Their forces were exactly balanced. Each of them was at the head of three legions, [15](#) with a numerous train of auxiliaries; and however different in their characters, they were all soldiers of experience and capacity.

Clodius Albinus, governor of Britain, surpassed both his competitors in the nobility of his extraction, which he derived from some of the most illustrious names of the old republic. [16](#) But the branch from which he claimed his descent was sunk into mean circumstances, and transplanted into a remote province. It is difficult to form a just idea of his true character. Under the philosophic cloak of austerity, he stands accused of concealing most of the vices which degrade human nature. [17](#) But his accusers are those venal writers who adored the fortune of Severus, and trampled on the ashes of an unsuccessful rival. Virtue, or the appearances of virtue, recommended Albinus to the confidence and good opinion of Marcus; and his preserving with the son the same interest which he had acquired with the father, is a proof at least that he was possessed of a very flexible disposition. The favor of a tyrant does not always suppose a want of merit in the object of it; he may, without intending it, reward a man of worth and ability, or he may find such a man useful to his own service. It does not appear that Albinus served the son of Marcus, either as the minister of his cruelties, or even as the associate of his pleasures. He was employed in a distant honorable command, when he received a confidential letter from the emperor, acquainting him of the treasonable designs of

some discontented generals, and authorizing him to declare himself the guardian and successor of the throne, by assuming the title and ensigns of Cæsar. [18](#) The governor of Britain wisely declined the dangerous honor, which would have marked him for the jealousy, or involved him in the approaching ruin, of Commodus. He courted power by nobler, or, at least, by more specious arts. On a premature report of the death of the emperor, he assembled his troops; and, in an eloquent discourse, deplored the inevitable mischiefs of despotism, described the happiness and glory which their ancestors had enjoyed under the consular government, and declared his firm resolution to reinstate the senate and people in their legal authority. This popular harangue was answered by the loud acclamations of the British legions, and received at Rome with a secret murmur of applause. Safe in the possession of his little world, and in the command of an army less distinguished indeed for discipline than for numbers and valor, [19](#) Albinus braved the menaces of Commodus, maintained towards Pertinax a stately ambiguous reserve, and instantly declared against the usurpation of Julian. The convulsions of the capital added new weight to his sentiments, or rather to his professions of patriotism. A regard to decency induced him to decline the lofty titles of Augustus and Emperor; and he imitated perhaps the example of Galba, who, on a similar occasion, had styled himself the Lieutenant of the senate and people. [20](#)

- 16 [\(return\)](#)
[The Posthumian and the Ce'onian; the former of whom was raised to the consulship in the fifth year after its institution.]
- 17 [\(return\)](#)
[Spartianus, in his undigested collections, mixes up all the virtues and all the vices that enter into the human composition, and bestows them on the same object. Such, indeed are many of the characters in the Augustan History.]
- 18 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 80, 84.]
- 19 [\(return\)](#)
[Pertinax, who governed Britain a few years before, had been left for dead, in a mutiny of the soldiers. Hist. August. p 54. Yet they loved and regretted him; admirantibus eam virtutem cui irascebantur.]
- 20 [\(return\)](#)
[Sueton. in Galb. c. 10.]

Personal merit alone had raised Pescennius Niger, from an obscure birth and station, to the government of Syria; a lucrative and important command, which in times of civil confusion gave him a near prospect of the throne. Yet his parts seem to have been better suited to the second than to the first rank; he was an unequal rival, though he might have approved himself an excellent lieutenant, to Severus, who afterwards displayed the greatness of his mind by adopting several useful institutions from a vanquished

enemy. [21](#) In his government Niger acquired the esteem of the soldiers and the love of the provincials. His rigid discipline fortified the valor and confirmed the obedience of the former, whilst the voluptuous Syrians were less delighted with the mild firmness of his administration, than with the affability of his manners, and the apparent pleasure with which he attended their frequent and pompous festivals. [22](#) As soon as the intelligence of the atrocious murder of Pertinax had reached Antioch, the wishes of Asia invited Niger to assume the Imperial purple and revenge his death. The legions of the eastern frontier embraced his cause; the opulent but unarmed provinces, from the frontiers of Æthiopia [23](#) to the Hadriatic, cheerfully submitted to his power; and the kings beyond the Tigris and the Euphrates congratulated his election, and offered him their homage and services. The mind of Niger was not capable of receiving this sudden tide of fortune: he flattered himself that his accession would be undisturbed by competition and unstained by civil blood; and whilst he enjoyed the vain pomp of triumph, he neglected to secure the means of victory. Instead of entering into an effectual negotiation with the powerful armies of the West, whose resolution might decide, or at least must balance, the mighty contest; instead of advancing without delay towards Rome and Italy, where his presence was impatiently expected, [24](#) Niger trifled away in the luxury of Antioch those irretrievable moments which were diligently improved by the decisive activity of Severus. [25](#)

21 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 76.]

22 [\(return\)](#)

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

23 [\(return\)](#)

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

24 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxiii. p. 1238. Herod. l. ii. p. 67. A verse in every one's mouth at that time, seems to express the general opinion of the three rivals; Optimus est *Niger*, [*Fuscus*, which preserves the quantity.—M.] bonus *Afer*, pessimus *Albus*. Hist. August. p. 75.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. ii. p. 71.]

The country of Pannonia and Dalmatia, which occupied the space between the Danube and the Hadriatic, was one of the last and most difficult conquests of the

Romans. In the defence of national freedom, two hundred thousand of these barbarians had once appeared in the field, alarmed the declining age of Augustus, and exercised the vigilant prudence of Tiberius at the head of the collected force of the empire. [26](#) The Pannonians yielded at length to the arms and institutions of Rome. Their recent subjection, however, the neighborhood, and even the mixture, of the unconquered tribes, and perhaps the climate, adapted, as it has been observed, to the production of great bodies and slow minds, [27](#) all contributed to preserve some remains of their original ferocity, and under the tame and uniform countenance of Roman provincials, the hardy features of the natives were still to be discerned. Their warlike youth afforded an inexhaustible supply of recruits to the legions stationed on the banks of the Danube, and which, from a perpetual warfare against the Germans and Sarmazans, were deservedly esteemed the best troops in the service.

26

[\(return\)](#)

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

27

[\(return\)](#)

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

The Pannonian army was at this time commanded by Septimius Severus, a native of Africa, who, in the gradual ascent of private honors, had concealed his daring ambition, which was never diverted from its steady course by the allurements of pleasure, the apprehension of danger, or the feelings of humanity. [28](#) On the first news of the murder of Pertinax, he assembled his troops, painted in the most lively colors the crime, the insolence, and the weakness of the Prætorian guards, and animated the legions to arms and to revenge. He concluded (and the peroration was thought extremely eloquent) with promising every soldier about four hundred pounds; an honorable donative, double in value to the infamous bribe with which Julian had purchased the empire. [29](#) The acclamations of the army immediately saluted Severus with the names of Augustus, Pertinax, and Emperor; and he thus attained the lofty station to which he was invited, by conscious merit and a long train of dreams and omens, the fruitful offsprings either of his superstition or policy. [30](#)

28

[\(return\)](#)

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

29

[\(return\)](#)

[Pannonia was too poor to supply such a sum. It was probably promised in the camp, and paid at Rome, after the victory. In fixing the sum, I have adopted the conjecture of Casaubon. See Hist. August. p. 66. Comment. p. 115.]

[Herodian, l. ii. p. 78. Severus was declared emperor on the banks of the Danube, either at Carnuntum, according to Spartianus, (Hist. August. p. 65,) or else at Sabaria, according to Victor. Mr. Hume, in supposing that the birth and dignity of Severus were too much inferior to the Imperial crown, and that he marched into Italy as general only, has not considered this transaction with his usual accuracy, (Essay on the original contract.) * Note: Carnuntum, opposite to the mouth of the Morava: its position is doubtful, either Petronel or Haimburg. A little intermediate village seems to indicate by its name (Altenburg) the site of an old town. D'Anville Geogr. Anc. Sabaria, now Sarvar.—G. Compare note 37.—M.]

The new candidate for empire saw and improved the peculiar advantage of his situation. His province extended to the Julian Alps, which gave an easy access into Italy; and he remembered the saying of Augustus, that a Pannonian army might in ten days appear in sight of Rome. [31](#) By a celerity proportioned to the greatness of the occasion, he might reasonably hope to revenge Pertinax, punish Julian, and receive the homage of the senate and people, as their lawful emperor, before his competitors, separated from Italy by an immense tract of sea and land, were apprised of his success, or even of his election. During the whole expedition, he scarcely allowed himself any moments for sleep or food; marching on foot, and in complete armor, at the head of his columns, he insinuated himself into the confidence and affection of his troops, pressed their diligence, revived their spirits, animated their hopes, and was well satisfied to share the hardships of the meanest soldier, whilst he kept in view the infinite superiority of his reward.

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

The wretched Julian had expected, and thought himself prepared, to dispute the empire with the governor of Syria; but in the invincible and rapid approach of the Pannonian legions, he saw his inevitable ruin. The hasty arrival of every messenger increased his just apprehensions. He was successively informed, that Severus had passed the Alps; that the Italian cities, unwilling or unable to oppose his progress, had received him with the warmest professions of joy and duty; that the important place of Ravenna had surrendered without resistance, and that the Hadriatic fleet was in the hands of the conqueror. The enemy was now within two hundred and fifty miles of Rome; and every moment diminished the narrow span of life and empire allotted to Julian.

He attempted, however, to prevent, or at least to protract, his ruin. He implored the venal faith of the Prætorians, filled the city with unavailing preparations for war, drew lines round the suburbs, and even strengthened the fortifications of the palace; as if those last intrenchments could be defended, without hope of relief, against a victorious invader. Fear and shame prevented the guards from deserting his standard; but they trembled at the name of the Pannonian legions, commanded by an experienced general, and accustomed to vanquish the barbarians on the frozen Danube. [32](#) They quitted, with a sigh, the pleasures of the baths and theatres, to put on arms, whose use they had almost forgotten, and beneath the weight of which they were oppressed. The unpractised elephants, whose uncouth appearance, it was hoped, would strike terror into the army of the north, threw their unskilful riders; and the awkward evolutions of the marines, drawn from the fleet of Misenum, were an object of ridicule to the populace; whilst the senate enjoyed, with secret pleasure, the distress and weakness of the usurper. [33](#)

32 [\(return\)](#)
[This is not a puerile figure of rhetoric, but an allusion to a real fact recorded by Dion, l. lxxi. p. 1181. It probably happened more than once.]

33 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion, l. lxxiii. p. 1233. Herodian, l. ii. p. 81. There is no surer proof of the military skill of the Romans, than their first surmounting the idle terror, and afterwards disdaining the dangerous use, of elephants in war. Note: These elephants were kept for processions, perhaps for the games. Se Herod. in loc.—M.]

Every motion of Julian betrayed his trembling perplexity. He insisted that Severus should be declared a public enemy by the senate. He entreated that the Pannonian general might be associated to the empire. He sent public ambassadors of consular rank to negotiate with his rival; he despatched private assassins to take away his life. He designed that the Vestal virgins, and all the colleges of priests, in their sacerdotal habits, and bearing before them the sacred pledges of the Roman religion, should advance in solemn procession to meet the Pannonian legions; and, at the same time, he vainly tried to interrogate, or to appease, the fates, by magic ceremonies and unlawful sacrifices. [34](#)

34 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 62, 63. * Note: Quæ ad speculum dicunt fieri in quo pueri præligatis oculis, incantate..., respicere dicuntur. * * * Tuncque puer vidisse dicitur et adventum Severi et Juliani decessionem. This seems to have been a practice somewhat similar to that of which our recent Egyptian travellers relate such extraordinary circumstances. See also Apulius, Orat. de Magia.—M.]

Chapter V: Sale Of The Empire To Didius Julianus.—Part II.

Severus, who dreaded neither his arms nor his enchantments, guarded himself from the only danger of secret conspiracy, by the faithful attendance of six hundred chosen men, who never quitted his person or their cuirasses, either by night or by day, during the whole march. Advancing with a steady and rapid course, he passed, without difficulty, the defiles of the Apennine, received into his party the troops and ambassadors sent to retard his progress, and made a short halt at Interamnina, about seventy miles from Rome. His victory was already secure, but the despair of the Prætorians might have rendered it bloody; and Severus had the laudable ambition of ascending the throne without drawing the sword. [35](#) His emissaries, dispersed in the capital, assured the guards, that provided they would abandon their worthless prince, and the perpetrators of the murder of Pertinax, to the justice of the conqueror, he would no longer consider that melancholy event as the act of the whole body. The faithless Prætorians, whose resistance was supported only by sullen obstinacy, gladly complied with the easy conditions, seized the greatest part of the assassins, and signified to the senate, that they no longer defended the cause of Julian. That assembly, convoked by the consul, unanimously acknowledged Severus as lawful emperor, decreed divine honors to Pertinax, and pronounced a sentence of deposition and death against his unfortunate successor. Julian was conducted into a private apartment of the baths of the palace, and beheaded as a common criminal, after having purchased, with an immense treasure, an anxious and precarious reign of only sixty-six days. [36](#) The almost incredible expedition of Severus, who, in so short a space of time, conducted a numerous army from the banks of the Danube to those of the Tyber, proves at once the plenty of provisions produced by agriculture and commerce, the goodness of the roads, the discipline of the legions, and the indolent, subdued temper of the provinces. [37](#)

35 [\(return\)](#)

[Victor and Eutropius, viii. 17, mention a combat near the Milvian bridge, the Ponte Molle, unknown to the better and more ancient writers.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxiii. p. 1240. Herodian, l. ii. p. 83. Hist. August. p. 63.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[From these sixty-six days, we must first deduct sixteen, as Pertinax was murdered on the 28th of March, and Severus most probably elected on the 13th of April, (see Hist. August. p. 65, and Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iii. p. 393, note 7.) We cannot allow less than ten days after his election, to put a numerous army in motion. Forty days remain for this rapid march; and as we may compute about eight hundred miles from Rome to the neighborhood of Vienna, the army of Severus

marched twenty miles every day, without halt or intermission.]

The first cares of Severus were bestowed on two measures, the one dictated by policy, the other by decency; the revenge, and the honors, due to the memory of Pertinax. Before the new emperor entered Rome, he issued his commands to the Prætorian guards, directing them to wait his arrival on a large plain near the city, without arms, but in the habits of ceremony, in which they were accustomed to attend their sovereign. He was obeyed by those haughty troops, whose contrition was the effect of their just terrors. A chosen part of the Illyrian army encompassed them with levelled spears. Incapable of flight or resistance, they expected their fate in silent consternation. Severus mounted the tribunal, sternly reproached them with perfidy and cowardice, dismissed them with ignominy from the trust which they had betrayed, despoiled them of their splendid ornaments, and banished them, on pain of death, to the distance of a hundred miles from the capital. During the transaction, another detachment had been sent to seize their arms, occupy their camp, and prevent the hasty consequences of their despair. [38](#)

38

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxiv. p. 1241. Herodian, l. ii. p. 84.] The funeral and consecration of Pertinax was next solemnized with every circumstance of sad magnificence. [39](#) The senate, with a melancholy pleasure, performed the last rites to that excellent prince, whom they had loved, and still regretted. The concern of his successor was probably less sincere; he esteemed the virtues of Pertinax, but those virtues would forever have confined his ambition to a private station. Severus pronounced his funeral oration with studied eloquence, inward satisfaction, and well-acted sorrow; and by this pious regard to his memory, convinced the credulous multitude, that *he alone* was worthy to supply his place. Sensible, however, that arms, not ceremonies, must assert his claim to the empire, he left Rome at the end of thirty days, and without suffering himself to be elated by this easy victory, prepared to encounter his more formidable rivals.

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, (l. lxxiv. p. 1244,) who assisted at the ceremony as a senator, gives a most pompous description of it.]

The uncommon abilities and fortune of Severus have induced an elegant historian to compare him with the first and greatest of the Cæsars. [40](#) The parallel is, at least, imperfect. Where shall we find, in the character of Severus, the commanding superiority of soul, the generous clemency, and the various genius, which could reconcile and unite the love of pleasure, the thirst of knowledge, and the fire of ambition? [41](#) In one

instance only, they may be compared, with some degree of propriety, in the celerity of their motions, and their civil victories. In less than four years, [42](#) Severus subdued the riches of the East, and the valor of the West. He vanquished two competitors of reputation and ability, and defeated numerous armies, provided with weapons and discipline equal to his own. In that age, the art of fortification, and the principles of tactics, were well understood by all the Roman generals; and the constant superiority of Severus was that of an artist, who uses the same instruments with more skill and industry than his rivals. I shall not, however, enter into a minute narrative of these military operations; but as the two civil wars against Niger and against Albinus were almost the same in their conduct, event, and consequences, I shall collect into one point of view the most striking circumstances, tending to develop the character of the conqueror and the state of the empire.

40

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. iii. p. 112]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[Though it is not, most assuredly, the intention of Lucan to exalt the character of Cæsar, yet the idea he gives of that hero, in the tenth book of the Pharsalia, where he describes him, at the same time, making love to Cleopatra, sustaining a siege against the power of Egypt, and conversing with the sages of the country, is, in reality, the noblest panegyric. * Note: Lord Byron wrote, no doubt, from a reminiscence of that passage—"It is possible to be a very great man, and to be still very inferior to Julius Cæsar, the most complete character, so Lord Bacon thought, of all antiquity. Nature seems incapable of such extraordinary combinations as composed his versatile capacity, which was the wonder even of the Romans themselves. The first general; the only triumphant politician; inferior to none in point of eloquence; comparable to any in the attainments of wisdom, in an age made up of the greatest commanders, statesmen, orators, and philosophers, that ever appeared in the world; an author who composed a perfect specimen of military annals in his travelling carriage; at one time in a controversy with Cato, at another writing a treatise on punning, and collecting a set of good sayings; fighting and making love at the same moment, and willing to abandon both his empire and his mistress for a sight of the fountains of the Nile. Such did Julius Cæsar appear to his contemporaries, and to those of the subsequent ages who were the most inclined to deplore and execrate his fatal genius." Note 47 to Canto iv. of Childe Harold.—M.]

[Reckoning from his election, April 13, 193, to the death of Albinus, February 19, 197. See Tillemont's Chronology.]

Falsehood and insincerity, unsuitable as they seem to the dignity of public transactions, offend us with a less degrading idea of meanness, than when they are found in the intercourse of private life. In the latter, they discover a want of courage; in the other, only a defect of power: and, as it is impossible for the most able statesmen to subdue millions of followers and enemies by their own personal strength, the world, under the name of policy, seems to have granted them a very liberal indulgence of craft and dissimulation. Yet the arts of Severus cannot be justified by the most ample privileges of state reason. He promised only to betray, he flattered only to ruin; and however he might occasionally bind himself by oaths and treaties, his conscience, obsequious to his interest, always released him from the inconvenient obligation. [43](#)

[Herodian, l. ii. p. 85.]

If his two competitors, reconciled by their common danger, had advanced upon him without delay, perhaps Severus would have sunk under their united effort. Had they even attacked him, at the same time, with separate views and separate armies, the contest might have been long and doubtful. But they fell, singly and successively, an easy prey to the arts as well as arms of their subtle enemy, lulled into security by the moderation of his professions, and overwhelmed by the rapidity of his action. He first marched against Niger, whose reputation and power he the most dreaded: but he declined any hostile declarations, suppressed the name of his antagonist, and only signified to the senate and people his intention of regulating the eastern provinces. In private, he spoke of Niger, his old friend and intended successor, [44](#) with the most affectionate regard, and highly applauded his generous design of revenging the murder of Pertinax. To punish the vile usurper of the throne, was the duty of every Roman general. To persevere in arms, and to resist a lawful emperor, acknowledged by the senate, would alone render him criminal. [45](#) The sons of Niger had fallen into his hands among the children of the provincial governors, detained at Rome as pledges for the loyalty of their parents. [46](#) As long as the power of Niger inspired terror, or even respect, they were educated with the most tender care, with the children of Severus himself; but they were soon involved in their father's ruin, and removed first by exile, and afterwards by death, from the eye of public compassion. [47](#)

[Whilst Severus was very dangerously ill, it was industriously given out, that he intended to appoint Niger and Albinus his successors. As he could not be sincere with respect to both, he might not be so with regard to either. Yet Severus carried his hypocrisy so far, as to profess that intention in the memoirs of his own life.]

45 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 65.]

46 [\(return\)](#)
[This practice, invented by Commodus, proved very useful to Severus. He found at Rome the children of many of the principal adherents of his rivals; and he employed them more than once to intimidate, or seduce, the parents.]

47 [\(return\)](#)
[Herodian, l. iii. p. 95. Hist. August. p. 67, 68.]

Whilst Severus was engaged in his eastern war, he had reason to apprehend that the governor of Britain might pass the sea and the Alps, occupy the vacant seat of empire, and oppose his return with the authority of the senate and the forces of the West. The ambiguous conduct of Albinus, in not assuming the Imperial title, left room for negotiation. Forgetting, at once, his professions of patriotism, and the jealousy of sovereign power, he accepted the precarious rank of Cæsar, as a reward for his fatal neutrality. Till the first contest was decided, Severus treated the man, whom he had doomed to destruction, with every mark of esteem and regard. Even in the letter, in which he announced his victory over Niger, he styles Albinus the brother of his soul and empire, sends him the affectionate salutations of his wife Julia, and his young family, and entreats him to preserve the armies and the republic faithful to their common interest. The messengers charged with this letter were instructed to accost the Cæsar with respect, to desire a private audience, and to plunge their daggers into his heart. [48](#) The conspiracy was discovered, and the too credulous Albinus, at length, passed over to the continent, and prepared for an unequal contest with his rival, who rushed upon him at the head of a veteran and victorious army.

48 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 84. Spartianus has inserted this curious letter at full length.]

The military labors of Severus seem inadequate to the importance of his conquests. Two engagements, [481](#) the one near the Hellespont, the other in the narrow defiles of Cilicia, decided the fate of his Syrian competitor; and the troops of Europe asserted their usual ascendant over the effeminate natives of Asia. [49](#) The battle of Lyons, where one hundred and fifty thousand Romans [50](#) were engaged, was equally fatal to Albinus. The valor of the British army maintained, indeed, a sharp and doubtful contest, with the hardy discipline of the Illyrian legions. The fame and person of Severus appeared, during a few moments, irrecoverably lost, till that warlike prince rallied his fainting troops, and led them on to a decisive victory. [51](#) The war was finished by that memorable day. [511](#)

481 [\(return\)](#)
[There were three actions; one near Cyzicus, on the Hellespont, one near Nice, in Bithynia, the third near the Issus, in Cilicia, where Alexander

conquered Darius. (Dion, lxiv. c. 6. Herodian, iii. 2, 4.)—W Herodian represents the second battle as of less importance than Dion—M.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[Consult the third book of Herodian, and the seventy-fourth book of Dion Cassius.]

50 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxv. p. 1260.]

51 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxv. p. 1261. Herodian, l. iii. p. 110. Hist. August. p. 68. The battle was fought in the plain of Trevoux, three or four leagues from Lyons. See Tillemont, tom. iii. p. 406, note 18.]

511 [\(return\)](#)

[According to Herodian, it was his lieutenant Lætus who led back the troops to the battle, and gained the day, which Severus had almost lost. Dion also attributes to Lætus a great share in the victory. Severus afterwards put him to death, either from fear or jealousy.—W. and G. Wenck and M. Guizot have not given the real statement of Herodian or of Dion. According to the former, Lætus appeared with his own army entire, which he was suspected of having designedly kept disengaged when the battle was still doubtful, or rather after the rout of severus. Dion says that he did not move till Severus had won the victory.—M.]

The civil wars of modern Europe have been distinguished, not only by the fierce animosity, but likewise by the obstinate perseverance, of the contending factions. They have generally been justified by some principle, or, at least, colored by some pretext, of religion, freedom, or loyalty. The leaders were nobles of independent property and hereditary influence. The troops fought like men interested in the decision of the quarrel; and as military spirit and party zeal were strongly diffused throughout the whole community, a vanquished chief was immediately supplied with new adherents, eager to shed their blood in the same cause. But the Romans, after the fall of the republic, combated only for the choice of masters. Under the standard of a popular candidate for empire, a few enlisted from affection, some from fear, many from interest, none from principle. The legions, uninflamed by party zeal, were allured into civil war by liberal donatives, and still more liberal promises. A defeat, by disabling the chief from the performance of his engagements, dissolved the mercenary allegiance of his followers, and left them to consult their own safety by a timely desertion of an unsuccessful cause. It was of little moment to the provinces, under whose name they were oppressed or governed; they were driven by the impulsion of the present power, and as soon as that power yielded to a superior force, they hastened to implore the clemency of the conqueror, who, as he had an immense debt to discharge, was obliged

to sacrifice the most guilty countries to the avarice of his soldiers. In the vast extent of the Roman empire, there were few fortified cities capable of protecting a routed army; nor was there any person, or family, or order of men, whose natural interest, unsupported by the powers of government, was capable of restoring the cause of a sinking party. [52](#)

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu, Considerations sur la Grandeur et la
Decadence des Romains, c. xiii.]

Yet, in the contest between Niger and Severus, a single city deserves an honorable exception. As Byzantium was one of the greatest passages from Europe into Asia, it had been provided with a strong garrison, and a fleet of five hundred vessels was anchored in the harbor. [53](#) The impetuosity of Severus disappointed this prudent scheme of defence; he left to his generals the siege of Byzantium, forced the less guarded passage of the Hellespont, and, impatient of a meaner enemy, pressed forward to encounter his rival. Byzantium, attacked by a numerous and increasing army, and afterwards by the whole naval power of the empire, sustained a siege of three years, and remained faithful to the name and memory of Niger. The citizens and soldiers (we know not from what cause) were animated with equal fury; several of the principal officers of Niger, who despaired of, or who disdained, a pardon, had thrown themselves into this last refuge: the fortifications were esteemed impregnable, and, in the defence of the place, a celebrated engineer displayed all the mechanic powers known to the ancients. [54](#) Byzantium, at length, surrendered to famine. The magistrates and soldiers were put to the sword, the walls demolished, the privileges suppressed, and the destined capital of the East subsisted only as an open village, subject to the insulting jurisdiction of Perinthus. The historian Dion, who had admired the flourishing, and lamented the desolate, state of Byzantium, accused the revenge of Severus, for depriving the Roman people of the strongest bulwark against the barbarians of Pontus and Asia [55](#) The truth of this observation was but too well justified in the succeeding age, when the Gothic fleets covered the Euxine, and passed through the undefined Bosphorus into the centre of the Mediterranean.

53

[\(return\)](#)

[Most of these, as may be supposed, were small
open vessels; some, however, were galleys of two,
and a few of three ranks of oars.]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[The engineer's name was Priscus. His skill saved
his life, and he was taken into the service of the
conqueror. For the particular facts of the siege,
consult Dion Cassius (l. lxxv. p. 1251) and
Herodian, (l. iii. p. 95;) for the theory of it, the
fanciful chevalier de Folard may be looked into. See
Polybe, tom. i. p. 76.]

[Notwithstanding the authority of Spartianus, and some modern Greeks, we may be assured, from Dion and Herodian, that Byzantium, many years after the death of Severus, lay in ruins. There is no contradiction between the relation of Dion and that of Spartianus and the modern Greeks. Dion does not say that Severus destroyed Byzantium, but that he deprived it of its franchises and privileges, stripped the inhabitants of their property, razed the fortifications, and subjected the city to the jurisdiction of Perinthus. Therefore, when Spartian, Suidas, Cedrenus, say that Severus and his son Antoninus restored to Byzantium its rights and franchises, ordered temples to be built, &c., this is easily reconciled with the relation of Dion. Perhaps the latter mentioned it in some of the fragments of his history which have been lost. As to Herodian, his expressions are evidently exaggerated, and he has been guilty of so many inaccuracies in the history of Severus, that we have a right to suppose one in this passage.—G. from W Wenck and M. Guizot have omitted to cite Zosimus, who mentions a particular portico built by Severus, and called, apparently, by his name. Zosim. Hist. ii. c. xxx. p. 151, 153, edit Heyne.—M.]

Both Niger and Albinus were discovered and put to death in their flight from the field of battle. Their fate excited neither surprise nor compassion. They had staked their lives against the chance of empire, and suffered what they would have inflicted; nor did Severus claim the arrogant superiority of suffering his rivals to live in a private station. But his unforgiving temper, stimulated by avarice, indulged a spirit of revenge, where there was no room for apprehension. The most considerable of the provincials, who, without any dislike to the fortunate candidate, had obeyed the governor under whose authority they were accidentally placed, were punished by death, exile, and especially by the confiscation of their estates. Many cities of the East were stripped of their ancient honors, and obliged to pay, into the treasury of Severus, four times the amount of the sums contributed by them for the service of Niger. [56](#)

[Dion, l. lxxiv. p. 1250.]

Till the final decision of the war, the cruelty of Severus was, in some measure, restrained by the uncertainty of the event, and his pretended reverence for the senate. The head of Albinus, accompanied with a menacing letter, announced to the Romans that he was resolved to spare none of the adherents of his unfortunate competitors. He was irritated by the just auspicion that he had never possessed the affections of the senate, and he concealed his old malevolence under the recent discovery of some treasonable correspondences. Thirty-five senators, however, accused of having favored

the party of Albinus, he freely pardoned, and, by his subsequent behavior, endeavored to convince them, that he had forgotten, as well as forgiven, their supposed offences. But, at the same time, he condemned forty-one [57](#) other senators, whose names history has recorded; their wives, children, and clients attended them in death, [571](#) and the noblest provincials of Spain and Gaul were involved in the same ruin. [572](#) Such rigid justice—for so he termed it—was, in the opinion of Severus, the only conduct capable of insuring peace to the people or stability to the prince; and he condescended slightly to lament, that to be mild, it was necessary that he should first be cruel. [58](#)

57

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, (l. lxxv. p. 1264;) only twenty-nine senators are mentioned by him, but forty-one are named in the Augustan History, p. 69, among whom were six of the name of Pescennius. Herodian (l. iii. p. 115) speaks in general of the cruelties of Severus.]

571

[\(return\)](#)

[Wenck denies that there is any authority for this massacre of the wives of the senators. He adds, that only the children and relatives of Niger and Albinus were put to death. This is true of the family of Albinus, whose bodies were thrown into the Rhone; those of Niger, according to Lampridius, were sent into exile, but afterwards put to death. Among the partisans of Albinus who were put to death were many women of rank, *multæ fœminæ illustres*. Lamprid. in Sever.—M.]

572

[\(return\)](#)

[A new fragment of Dion describes the state of Rome during this contest. All pretended to be on the side of Severus; but their secret sentiments were often betrayed by a change of countenance on the arrival of some sudden report. Some were detected by overacting their loyalty, Mai. Fragm. Vatican. p. 227 Severus told the senate he would rather have their hearts than their votes.—Ibid.—M.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor.]

The true interest of an absolute monarch generally coincides with that of his people. Their numbers, their wealth, their order, and their security, are the best and only foundations of his real greatness; and were he totally devoid of virtue, prudence might supply its place, and would dictate the same rule of conduct. Severus considered the Roman empire as his property, and had no sooner secured the possession, than he bestowed his care on the cultivation and improvement of so valuable an acquisition. Salutary laws, executed with inflexible firmness, soon corrected most of the abuses with which, since the death of Marcus, every part of the government had been infected. In the administration of justice, the judgments of the emperor were characterized by

attention, discernment, and impartiality; and whenever he deviated from the strict line of equity, it was generally in favor of the poor and oppressed; not so much indeed from any sense of humanity, as from the natural propensity of a despot to humble the pride of greatness, and to sink all his subjects to the same common level of absolute dependence. His expensive taste for building, magnificent shows, and above all a constant and liberal distribution of corn and provisions, were the surest means of captivating the affection of the Roman people. [59](#) The misfortunes of civil discord were obliterated. The calm of peace and prosperity was once more experienced in the provinces; and many cities, restored by the munificence of Severus, assumed the title of his colonies, and attested by public monuments their gratitude and felicity. [60](#) The fame of the Roman arms was revived by that warlike and successful emperor, [61](#) and he boasted, with a just pride, that, having received the empire oppressed with foreign and domestic wars, he left it established in profound, universal, and honorable peace. [62](#)

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxvi. p. 1272. Hist. August. p. 67. Severus celebrated the secular games with extraordinary magnificence, and he left in the public granaries a provision of corn for seven years, at the rate of 75,000 modii, or about 2500 quarters per day. I am persuaded that the granaries of Severus were supplied for a long term, but I am not less persuaded, that policy on one hand, and admiration on the other, magnified the hoard far beyond its true contents.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[See Spanheim's treatise of ancient medals, the inscriptions, and our learned travellers Spon and Wheeler, Shaw, Pocock, &c, who, in Africa, Greece, and Asia, have found more monuments of Severus than of any other Roman emperor whatsoever.]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[He carried his victorious arms to Seleucia and Ctesiphon, the capitals of the Parthian monarchy. I shall have occasion to mention this war in its proper place.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[Etiam in Britannis, was his own just and emphatic expression Hist. August. 73.]

Although the wounds of civil war appeared completely healed, its mortal poison still lurked in the vitals of the constitution. Severus possessed a considerable share of vigor and ability; but the daring soul of the first Cæsar, or the deep policy of Augustus, were scarcely equal to the task of curbing the insolence of the victorious legions. By gratitude, by misguided policy, by seeming necessity, Severus was reduced to relax the nerves of discipline. [63](#) The vanity of his soldiers was flattered with the honor of

wearing gold rings; their ease was indulged in the permission of living with their wives in the idleness of quarters. He increased their pay beyond the example of former times, and taught them to expect, and soon to claim, extraordinary donatives on every public occasion of danger or festivity. Elated by success, enervated by luxury, and raised above the level of subjects by their dangerous privileges, [64](#) they soon became incapable of military fatigue, oppressive to the country, and impatient of a just subordination. Their officers asserted the superiority of rank by a more profuse and elegant luxury. There is still extant a letter of Severus, lamenting the licentious stage of the army, [641](#) and exhorting one of his generals to begin the necessary reformation from the tribunes themselves; since, as he justly observes, the officer who has forfeited the esteem, will never command the obedience, of his soldiers. [65](#) Had the emperor pursued the train of reflection, he would have discovered, that the primary cause of this general corruption might be ascribed, not indeed to the example, but to the pernicious indulgence, however, of the commander-in-chief.

63 [\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. iii. p. 115. Hist. August. p. 68.]

64 [\(return\)](#)

[Upon the insolence and privileges of the soldier, the 16th satire, falsely ascribed to Juvenal, may be consulted; the style and circumstances of it would induce me to believe, that it was composed under the reign of Severus, or that of his son.]

641 [\(return\)](#)

[Not of the army, but of the troops in Gaul. The contents of this letter seem to prove that Severus was really anxious to restore discipline Herodian is the only historian who accuses him of being the first cause of its relaxation.—G. from W Spartian mentions his increase of the pays.—M.]

65 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 73.]

The Prætorians, who murdered their emperor and sold the empire, had received the just punishment of their treason; but the necessary, though dangerous, institution of guards was soon restored on a new model by Severus, and increased to four times the ancient number. [66](#) Formerly these troops had been recruited in Italy; and as the adjacent provinces gradually imbibed the softer manners of Rome, the levies were extended to Macedonia, Noricum, and Spain. In the room of these elegant troops, better adapted to the pomp of courts than to the uses of war, it was established by Severus, that from all the legions of the frontiers, the soldiers most distinguished for strength, valor, and fidelity, should be occasionally draughted; and promoted, as an honor and reward, into the more eligible service of the guards. [67](#) By this new institution, the Italian youth were diverted from the exercise of arms, and the capital was terrified by the strange aspect and manners of a multitude of barbarians. But Severus flattered

himself, that the legions would consider these chosen Prætorians as the representatives of the whole military order; and that the present aid of fifty thousand men, superior in arms and appointments to any force that could be brought into the field against them, would forever crush the hopes of rebellion, and secure the empire to himself and his posterity.

66

[Herodian, l. iii. p. 131.]

[\(return\)](#)

67

[Dion, l. lxxiv. p. 1243.]

[\(return\)](#)

The command of these favored and formidable troops soon became the first office of the empire. As the government degenerated into military despotism, the Prætorian Præfect, who in his origin had been a simple captain of the guards, [671](#) was placed not only at the head of the army, but of the finances, and even of the law. In every department of administration, he represented the person, and exercised the authority, of the emperor. The first præfect who enjoyed and abused this immense power was Plautianus, the favorite minister of Severus. His reign lasted above ten years, till the marriage of his daughter with the eldest son of the emperor, which seemed to assure his fortune, proved the occasion of his ruin. [68](#) The animosities of the palace, by irritating the ambition and alarming the fears of Plautianus, [681](#) threatened to produce a revolution, and obliged the emperor, who still loved him, to consent with reluctance to his death. [69](#) After the fall of Plautianus, an eminent lawyer, the celebrated Papinian, was appointed to execute the motley office of Prætorian Præfect.

671

[\(return\)](#)

[The Prætorian Præfect had never been a simple captain of the guards; from the first creation of this office, under Augustus, it possessed great power. That emperor, therefore, decreed that there should be always two Prætorian Præfects, who could only be taken from the equestrian order Tiberius first departed from the former clause of this edict; Alexander Severus violated the second by naming senators præfects. It appears that it was under Commodus that the Prætorian Præfects obtained the province of civil jurisdiction. It extended only to Italy, with the exception of Rome and its district, which was governed by the Præfectus urbi. As to the control of the finances, and the levying of taxes, it was not intrusted to them till after the great change that Constantine I. made in the organization of the empire at least, I know no passage which assigns it to them before that time; and Drakenborch, who has treated this question in his Dissertation de official præfectorum prætorio, vi., does not quote one.—W.]

- 68 [\(return\)](#)
[One of his most daring and wanton acts of power, was the castration of a hundred free Romans, some of them married men, and even fathers of families; merely that his daughter, on her marriage with the young emperor, might be attended by a train of eunuchs worthy of an eastern queen. Dion, l. lxxvi. p. 1271.]
- 681 [\(return\)](#)
[Plautianus was compatriot, relative, and the old friend, of Severus; he had so completely shut up all access to the emperor, that the latter was ignorant how far he abused his powers: at length, being informed of it, he began to limit his authority. The marriage of Plautilla with Caracalla was unfortunate; and the prince who had been forced to consent to it, menaced the father and the daughter with death when he should come to the throne. It was feared, after that, that Plautianus would avail himself of the power which he still possessed, against the Imperial family; and Severus caused him to be assassinated in his presence, upon the pretext of a conspiracy, which Dion considers fictitious.—W. This note is not, perhaps, very necessary and does not contain the whole facts. Dion considers the conspiracy the invention of Caracalla, by whose command, almost by whose hand, Plautianus was slain in the presence of Severus.—M.]
- 69 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion, l. lxxvi. p. 1274. Herodian, l. iii. p. 122, 129. The grammarian of Alexander seems, as is not unusual, much better acquainted with this mysterious transaction, and more assured of the guilt of Plautianus than the Roman senator ventures to be.]

Till the reign of Severus, the virtue and even the good sense of the emperors had been distinguished by their zeal or affected reverence for the senate, and by a tender regard to the nice frame of civil policy instituted by Augustus. But the youth of Severus had been trained in the implicit obedience of camps, and his riper years spent in the despotism of military command. His haughty and inflexible spirit could not discover, or would not acknowledge, the advantage of preserving an intermediate power, however imaginary, between the emperor and the army. He disdained to profess himself the servant of an assembly that detested his person and trembled at his frown; he issued his commands, where his requests would have proved as effectual; assumed the conduct and style of a sovereign and a conqueror, and exercised, without disguise, the whole legislative, as well as the executive power.

The victory over the senate was easy and inglorious. Every eye and every passion were directed to the supreme magistrate, who possessed the arms and treasure of the state; whilst the senate, neither elected by the people, nor guarded by military force, nor animated by public spirit, rested its declining authority on the frail and crumbling basis of ancient opinion. The fine theory of a republic insensibly vanished, and made way for the more natural and substantial feelings of monarchy. As the freedom and honors of Rome were successively communicated to the provinces, in which the old government had been either unknown, or was remembered with abhorrence, the tradition of republican maxims was gradually obliterated. The Greek historians of the age of the Antonines [70](#) observe, with a malicious pleasure, that although the sovereign of Rome, in compliance with an obsolete prejudice, abstained from the name of king, he possessed the full measure of regal power. In the reign of Severus, the senate was filled with polished and eloquent slaves from the eastern provinces, who justified personal flattery by speculative principles of servitude. These new advocates of prerogative were heard with pleasure by the court, and with patience by the people, when they inculcated the duty of passive obedience, and descanted on the inevitable mischiefs of freedom. The lawyers and historians concurred in teaching, that the Imperial authority was held, not by the delegated commission, but by the irrevocable resignation of the senate; that the emperor was freed from the restraint of civil laws, could command by his arbitrary will the lives and fortunes of his subjects, and might dispose of the empire as of his private patrimony. [71](#) The most eminent of the civil lawyers, and particularly Papinian, Paulus, and Ulpian, flourished under the house of Severus; and the Roman jurisprudence, having closely united itself with the system of monarchy, was supposed to have attained its full majority and perfection.

70

[\(return\)](#)

[Appian in Procem.]

71

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius seems to have written with no other view than to form these opinions into an historical system. The Pandæa's will how how assiduously the lawyers, on their side, labored in the cause of prerogative.]

The contemporaries of Severus in the enjoyment of the peace and glory of his reign, forgave the cruelties by which it had been introduced. Posterity, who experienced the fatal effects of his maxims and example, justly considered him as the principal author of the decline of the Roman empire.

Chapter VI: Death Of Severus, Tyranny Of Caracalla, Usurpation Of Marcinus.—Part I.

The Death Of Severus.—Tyranny Of Caracalla.—Usurpation Of
Macrinus.—Follies Of Elagabalus.—Virtues Of Alexander
Severus.—Licentiousness Of The Army.—General State Of The
Roman Finances.

The ascent to greatness, however steep and dangerous, may entertain an active spirit with the consciousness and exercise of its own powers: but the possession of a throne could never yet afford a lasting satisfaction to an ambitious mind. This melancholy truth was felt and acknowledged by Severus. Fortune and merit had, from an humble station, elevated him to the first place among mankind. “He had been all things,” as he said himself, “and all was of little value.” [1](#) Distracted with the care, not of acquiring, but of preserving an empire, oppressed with age and infirmities, careless of fame, [2](#) and satiated with power, all his prospects of life were closed. The desire of perpetuating the greatness of his family was the only remaining wish of his ambition and paternal tenderness.

[1](#) [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 71. “Omnia fui, et nihil expedit.”]

[2](#) [\(return\)](#)
[Dion Cassius, l. lxxvi. p. 1284.]

Like most of the Africans, Severus was passionately addicted to the vain studies of magic and divination, deeply versed in the interpretation of dreams and omens, and perfectly acquainted with the science of judicial astrology; which, in almost every age except the present, has maintained its dominion over the mind of man. He had lost his first wife, while he was governor of the Lionesse Gaul. [3](#) In the choice of a second, he sought only to connect himself with some favorite of fortune; and as soon as he had discovered that the young lady of Emesa in Syria had *a royal nativity*, he solicited and obtained her hand. [4](#) Julia Domna (for that was her name) deserved all that the stars could promise her.

She possessed, even in advanced age, the attractions of beauty, [5](#) and united to a lively imagination a firmness of mind, and strength of judgment, seldom bestowed on her sex. Her amiable qualities never made any deep impression on the dark and jealous temper of her husband; but in her son’s reign, she administered the principal affairs of the empire, with a prudence that supported his authority, and with a moderation that sometimes corrected his wild extravagancies. [6](#) Julia applied herself to letters and philosophy, with some success, and with the most splendid reputation. She was the patroness of every art, and the friend of every man of genius. [7](#) The grateful flattery of the learned has celebrated her virtues; but, if we may credit the scandal of ancient history, chastity was very far from being the most conspicuous virtue of the empress Julia. [8](#)

[3](#) [\(return\)](#)
[About the year 186. M. de Tillemont is miserably embarrassed with a passage of Dion, in which the

empress Faustina, who died in the year 175, is introduced as having contributed to the marriage of Severus and Julia, (l. lxxiv. p. 1243.) The learned compiler forgot that Dion is relating not a real fact, but a dream of Severus; and dreams are circumscribed to no limits of time or space. Did M. de Tillemont imagine that marriages were consummated in the temple of Venus at Rome? Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iii. p. 389. Note 6.]

4 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 65.]

5 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 5.]

6 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius, l. lxxvii. p. 1304, 1314.]

7 [\(return\)](#)

[See a dissertation of Menage, at the end of his edition of Diogenes Lærtius, de Fœminis Philosophis.]

8 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxvi. p. 1285. Aurelius Victor.]

Two sons, Caracalla [9](#) and Geta, were the fruit of this marriage, and the destined heirs of the empire. The fond hopes of the father, and of the Roman world, were soon disappointed by these vain youths, who displayed the indolent security of hereditary princes; and a presumption that fortune would supply the place of merit and application. Without any emulation of virtue or talents, they discovered, almost from their infancy, a fixed and implacable antipathy for each other.

9 [\(return\)](#)

[Bassianus was his first name, as it had been that of his maternal grandfather. During his reign, he assumed the appellation of Antoninus, which is employed by lawyers and ancient historians. After his death, the public indignation loaded him with the nicknames of Tarantus and Caracalla. The first was borrowed from a celebrated Gladiator, the second from a long Gallic gown which he distributed to the people of Rome.]

Their aversion, confirmed by years, and fomented by the arts of their interested favorites, broke out in childish, and gradually in more serious competitions; and, at length, divided the theatre, the circus, and the court, into two factions, actuated by the hopes and fears of their respective leaders. The prudent emperor endeavored, by every expedient of advice and authority, to allay this growing animosity. The unhappy discord of his sons clouded all his prospects, and threatened to overturn a throne raised with so much labor, cemented with so much blood, and guarded with every defence of arms and treasure. With an impartial hand he maintained between them an exact balance of

favor, conferred on both the rank of Augustus, with the revered name of Antoninus; and for the first time the Roman world beheld three emperors. [10](#) Yet even this equal conduct served only to inflame the contest, whilst the fierce Caracalla asserted the right of primogeniture, and the milder Geta courted the affections of the people and the soldiers. In the anguish of a disappointed father, Severus foretold that the weaker of his sons would fall a sacrifice to the stronger; who, in his turn, would be ruined by his own vices. [11](#)

10

[\(return\)](#)

[The elevation of Caracalla is fixed by the accurate M. de Tillemont to the year 198; the association of Geta to the year 208.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. iii. p. 130. The lives of Caracalla and Geta, in the Augustan History.]

In these circumstances the intelligence of a war in Britain, and of an invasion of the province by the barbarians of the North, was received with pleasure by Severus. Though the vigilance of his lieutenants might have been sufficient to repel the distant enemy, he resolved to embrace the honorable pretext of withdrawing his sons from the luxury of Rome, which enervated their minds and irritated their passions; and of inuring their youth to the toils of war and government. Notwithstanding his advanced age, (for he was above threescore,) and his gout, which obliged him to be carried in a litter, he transported himself in person into that remote island, attended by his two sons, his whole court, and a formidable army. He immediately passed the walls of Hadrian and Antoninus, and entered the enemy's country, with a design of completing the long attempted conquest of Britain. He penetrated to the northern extremity of the island, without meeting an enemy. But the concealed ambuscades of the Caledonians, who hung unseen on the rear and flanks of his army, the coldness of the climate and the severity of a winter march across the hills and morasses of Scotland, are reported to have cost the Romans above fifty thousand men. The Caledonians at length yielded to the powerful and obstinate attack, sued for peace, and surrendered a part of their arms, and a large tract of territory. But their apparent submission lasted no longer than the present terror. As soon as the Roman legions had retired, they resumed their hostile independence. Their restless spirit provoked Severus to send a new army into Caledonia, with the most bloody orders, not to subdue, but to extirpate the natives. They were saved by the death of their haughty enemy. [12](#)

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxvi. p. 1280, &c. Herodian, l. iii. p. 132, &c.]

This Caledonian war, neither marked by decisive events, nor attended with any important consequences, would ill deserve our attention; but it is supposed, not without a considerable degree of probability, that the invasion of Severus is connected with the most shining period of the British history or fable. Fingal, whose fame, with that of his

heroes and bards, has been revived in our language by a recent publication, is said to have commanded the Caledonians in that memorable juncture, to have eluded the power of Severus, and to have obtained a signal victory on the banks of the Carun, in which the son of *the King of the World*, Caracul, fled from his arms along the fields of his pride. [13](#) Something of a doubtful mist still hangs over these Highland traditions; nor can it be entirely dispelled by the most ingenious researches of modern criticism; [14](#) but if we could, with safety, indulge the pleasing supposition, that Fingal lived, and that Ossian sung, the striking contrast of the situation and manners of the contending nations might amuse a philosophic mind.

The parallel would be little to the advantage of the more civilized people, if we compared the unrelenting revenge of Severus with the generous clemency of Fingal; the timid and brutal cruelty of Caracalla with the bravery, the tenderness, the elegant genius of Ossian; the mercenary chiefs, who, from motives of fear or interest, served under the imperial standard, with the free-born warriors who started to arms at the voice of the king of Morven; if, in a word, we contemplated the untutored Caledonians, glowing with the warm virtues of nature, and the degenerate Romans, polluted with the mean vices of wealth and slavery.

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Ossian's Poems, vol. i. p. 175.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[That the Caracul of Ossian is the Caracalla of the Roman History, is, perhaps, the only point of British antiquity in which Mr. Macpherson and Mr. Whitaker are of the same opinion; and yet the opinion is not without difficulty. In the Caledonian war, the son of Severus was known only by the appellation of Antoninus, and it may seem strange that the Highland bard should describe him by a nickname, invented four years afterwards, scarcely used by the Romans till after the death of that emperor, and seldom employed by the most ancient historians. See Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1317. Hist. August. p. 89 Aurel. Victor. Euseb. in Chron. ad ann. 214. Note: The historical authority of Macpherson's Ossian has not increased since Gibbon wrote. We may, indeed, consider it exploded. Mr. Whitaker, in a letter to Gibbon (Misc. Works, vol. ii. p. 100,) attempts, not very successfully, to weaken this objection of the historian.—M.]

The declining health and last illness of Severus inflamed the wild ambition and black passions of Caracalla's soul. Impatient of any delay or division of empire, he attempted, more than once, to shorten the small remainder of his father's days, and endeavored, but without success, to excite a mutiny among the troops. [15](#) The old emperor had often censured the misguided lenity of Marcus, who, by a single act of justice, might have

saved the Romans from the tyranny of his worthless son. Placed in the same situation, he experienced how easily the rigor of a judge dissolves away in the tenderness of a parent. He deliberated, he threatened, but he could not punish; and this last and only instance of mercy was more fatal to the empire than a long series of cruelty. [16](#) The disorder of his mind irritated the pains of his body; he wished impatiently for death, and hastened the instant of it by his impatience. He expired at York in the sixty-fifth year of his life, and in the eighteenth of a glorious and successful reign. In his last moments he recommended concord to his sons, and his sons to the army. The salutary advice never reached the heart, or even the understanding, of the impetuous youths; but the more obedient troops, mindful of their oath of allegiance, and of the authority of their deceased master, resisted the solicitations of Caracalla, and proclaimed both brothers emperors of Rome. The new princes soon left the Caledonians in peace, returned to the capital, celebrated their father's funeral with divine honors, and were cheerfully acknowledged as lawful sovereigns, by the senate, the people, and the provinces. Some preeminence of rank seems to have been allowed to the elder brother; but they both administered the empire with equal and independent power. [17](#)

15 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion, l. lxxvi. p. 1282. Hist. August. p. 71. Aurel. Victor.]

16 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion, l. lxxvi. p. 1283. Hist. August. p. 89]

17 [\(return\)](#)
[Footnote 17: Dion, l. lxxvi. p. 1284. Herodian, l. iii. p. 135.]

Such a divided form of government would have proved a source of discord between the most affectionate brothers. It was impossible that it could long subsist between two implacable enemies, who neither desired nor could trust a reconciliation. It was visible that one only could reign, and that the other must fall; and each of them, judging of his rival's designs by his own, guarded his life with the most jealous vigilance from the repeated attacks of poison or the sword. Their rapid journey through Gaul and Italy, during which they never ate at the same table, or slept in the same house, displayed to the provinces the odious spectacle of fraternal discord. On their arrival at Rome, they immediately divided the vast extent of the imperial palace. [18](#) No communication was allowed between their apartments; the doors and passages were diligently fortified, and guards posted and relieved with the same strictness as in a besieged place. The emperors met only in public, in the presence of their afflicted mother; and each surrounded by a numerous train of armed followers. Even on these occasions of ceremony, the dissimulation of courts could ill disguise the rancor of their hearts. [19](#)

18 [\(return\)](#)
[Mr. Hume is justly surprised at a passage of Herodian, (l. iv. p. 139,) who, on this occasion, represents the Imperial palace as equal in extent to the rest of Rome. The whole region of the Palatine

Mount, on which it was built, occupied, at most, a circumference of eleven or twelve thousand feet, (see the *Notitia* and *Victor*, in *Nardini's Roma Antica*.) But we should recollect that the opulent senators had almost surrounded the city with their extensive gardens and suburb palaces, the greatest part of which had been gradually confiscated by the emperors. If Geta resided in the gardens that bore his name on the Janiculum, and if Caracalla inhabited the gardens of Mæcenas on the Esquiline, the rival brothers were separated from each other by the distance of several miles; and yet the intermediate space was filled by the Imperial gardens of Sallust, of Lucullus, of Agrippa, of Domitian, of Caius, &c., all skirting round the city, and all connected with each other, and with the palace, by bridges thrown over the Tiber and the streets. But this explanation of Herodian would require, though it ill deserves, a particular dissertation, illustrated by a map of ancient Rome. (Hume, *Essay on Populousness of Ancient Nations*.—M.)]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. iv. p. 139]

This latent civil war already distracted the whole government, when a scheme was suggested that seemed of mutual benefit to the hostile brothers. It was proposed, that since it was impossible to reconcile their minds, they should separate their interest, and divide the empire between them. The conditions of the treaty were already drawn with some accuracy. It was agreed that Caracalla, as the elder brother should remain in possession of Europe and the western Africa; and that he should relinquish the sovereignty of Asia and Egypt to Geta, who might fix his residence at Alexandria or Antioch, cities little inferior to Rome itself in wealth and greatness; that numerous armies should be constantly encamped on either side of the Thracian Bosphorus, to guard the frontiers of the rival monarchies; and that the senators of European extraction should acknowledge the sovereign of Rome, whilst the natives of Asia followed the emperor of the East. The tears of the empress Julia interrupted the negotiation, the first idea of which had filled every Roman breast with surprise and indignation. The mighty mass of conquest was so intimately united by the hand of time and policy, that it required the most forcible violence to rend it asunder. The Romans had reason to dread, that the disjointed members would soon be reduced by a civil war under the dominion of one master; but if the separation was permanent, the division of the provinces must terminate in the dissolution of an empire whose unity had hitherto remained inviolate. [20](#)

20

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. iv. p. 144.]

Had the treaty been carried into execution, the sovereign of Europe might soon have been the conqueror of Asia; but Caracalla obtained an easier, though a more guilty, victory. He artfully listened to his mother's entreaties, and consented to meet his brother in her apartment, on terms of peace and reconciliation. In the midst of their conversation, some centurions, who had contrived to conceal themselves, rushed with drawn swords upon the unfortunate Geta. His distracted mother strove to protect him in her arms; but, in the unavailing struggle, she was wounded in the hand, and covered with the blood of her younger son, while she saw the elder animating and assisting [21](#) the fury of the assassins. As soon as the deed was perpetrated, Caracalla, with hasty steps, and horror in his countenance, ran towards the Prætorian camp, as his only refuge, and threw himself on the ground before the statues of the tutelar deities. [22](#) The soldiers attempted to raise and comfort him. In broken and disordered words he informed them of his imminent danger, and fortunate escape; insinuating that he had prevented the designs of his enemy, and declared his resolution to live and die with his faithful troops. Geta had been the favorite of the soldiers; but complaint was useless, revenge was dangerous, and they still revered the son of Severus. Their discontent died away in idle murmurs, and Caracalla soon convinced them of the justice of his cause, by distributing in one lavish donative the accumulated treasures of his father's reign. [23](#) The real *sentiments* of the soldiers alone were of importance to his power or safety. Their declaration in his favor commanded the dutiful *professions* of the senate. The obsequious assembly was always prepared to ratify the decision of fortune; [231](#) but as Caracalla wished to assuage the first emotions of public indignation, the name of Geta was mentioned with decency, and he received the funeral honors of a Roman emperor. [24](#) Posterity, in pity to his misfortune, has cast a veil over his vices. We consider that young prince as the innocent victim of his brother's ambition, without recollecting that he himself wanted power, rather than inclination, to consummate the same attempts of revenge and murder. [241](#)

[21](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Caracalla consecrated, in the temple of Serapis, the sword with which, as he boasted, he had slain his brother Geta. Dion, l. lxxvii p. 1307.]

[22](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. iv. p. 147. In every Roman camp there was a small chapel near the head-quarters, in which the statues of the tutelar deities were preserved and adored; and we may remark that the eagles, and other military ensigns, were in the first rank of these deities; an excellent institution, which confirmed discipline by the sanction of religion. See Lipsius de Militia Romana, iv. 5, v. 2.]

[23](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. iv. p. 148. Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1289.]

[231](#) [\(return\)](#)

[The account of this transaction, in a new passage

of Dion, varies in some degree from this statement. It adds that the next morning, in the senate, Antoninus requested their indulgence, not because he had killed his brother, but because he was hoarse, and could not address them. Mai. Fragm. p. 228.—M.]

24

[\(return\)](#)

[Geta was placed among the gods. Sit divus, dum non sit vivus said his brother. Hist. August. p. 91. Some marks of Geta's consecration are still found upon medals.]

241

[\(return\)](#)

[The favorable judgment which history has given of Geta is not founded solely on a feeling of pity; it is supported by the testimony of contemporary historians: he was too fond of the pleasures of the table, and showed great mistrust of his brother; but he was humane, well instructed; he often endeavored to mitigate the rigorous decrees of Severus and Caracalla. Herod iv. 3. Spartian in Geta.—W.]

The crime went not unpunished. Neither business, nor pleasure, nor flattery, could defend Caracalla from the stings of a guilty conscience; and he confessed, in the anguish of a tortured mind, that his disordered fancy often beheld the angry forms of his father and his brother rising into life, to threaten and upbraid him. [25](#) The consciousness of his crime should have induced him to convince mankind, by the virtues of his reign, that the bloody deed had been the involuntary effect of fatal necessity. But the repentance of Caracalla only prompted him to remove from the world whatever could remind him of his guilt, or recall the memory of his murdered brother. On his return from the senate to the palace, he found his mother in the company of several noble matrons, weeping over the untimely fate of her younger son. The jealous emperor threatened them with instant death; the sentence was executed against Fadilla, the last remaining daughter of the emperor Marcus; [251](#) and even the afflicted Julia was obliged to silence her lamentations, to suppress her sighs, and to receive the assassin with smiles of joy and approbation. It was computed that, under the vague appellation of the friends of Geta, above twenty thousand persons of both sexes suffered death. His guards and freedmen, the ministers of his serious business, and the companions of his looser hours, those who by his interest had been promoted to any commands in the army or provinces, with the long connected chain of their dependants, were included in the proscription; which endeavored to reach every one who had maintained the smallest correspondence with Geta, who lamented his death, or who even mentioned his name. [26](#) Helvius Pertinax, son to the prince of that name, lost his life by an unseasonable witticism. [27](#) It was a sufficient crime of Thræsea Priscus to be descended from a family in which the love of liberty seemed an hereditary quality. [28](#) The particular causes of calumny and suspicion were at length exhausted; and when a senator was accused of being a secret

enemy to the government, the emperor was satisfied with the general proof that he was a man of property and virtue. From this well-grounded principle he frequently drew the most bloody inferences. [281](#)

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1307]

251 [\(return\)](#)

[The most valuable paragraph of dion, which the industry of M. Manas recovered, relates to this daughter of Marcus, executed by Caracalla. Her name, as appears from Fronto, as well as from Dion, was Cornificia. When commanded to choose the kind of death she was to suffer, she burst into womanish tears; but remembering her father Marcus, she thus spoke:—"O my hapless soul, (... animula,) now imprisoned in the body, burst forth! be free! show them, however reluctant to believe it, that thou art the daughter of Marcus." She then laid aside all her ornaments, and preparing herself for death, ordered her veins to be opened. Mai. Fragm. Vatican ii p. 220.—M.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1290. Herodian, l. iv. p. 150. Dion (p. 2298) says, that the comic poets no longer durst employ the name of Geta in their plays, and that the estates of those who mentioned it in their testaments were confiscated.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[Caracalla had assumed the names of several conquered nations; Pertinax observed, that the name of Geticus (he had obtained some advantage over the Goths, or Getæ) would be a proper addition to Parthicus, Alemannicus, &c. Hist. August. p. 89.]

28 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1291. He was probably descended from Helvidius Priscus, and Thræsea Pætus, those patriots, whose firm, but useless and unseasonable, virtue has been immortalized by Tacitus. Note: M. Guizot is indignant at this "cold" observation of Gibbon on the noble character of Thræsea; but he admits that his virtue was useless to the public, and unseasonable amidst the vices of his age.—M.]

281 [\(return\)](#)

[Caracalla reproached all those who demanded no favors of him. "It is clear that if you make me no requests, you do not trust me; if you do not trust me, you suspect me; if you suspect me, you fear me; if you fear me, you hate me." And forthwith he condemned them as conspirators, a good specimen

of the sorites in a tyrant's logic. See *Fragm. Vatican*
p.—M.]

Chapter VI: Death Of Severus, Tyranny Of Caracalla, Usurpation Of Marcinus.—Part II.

The execution of so many innocent citizens was bewailed by the secret tears of their friends and families. The death of Papinian, the Prætorian Præfect, was lamented as a public calamity. [282](#) During the last seven years of Severus, he had exercised the most important offices of the state, and, by his salutary influence, guided the emperor's steps in the paths of justice and moderation. In full assurance of his virtue and abilities, Severus, on his death-bed, had conjured him to watch over the prosperity and union of the Imperial family. [29](#) The honest labors of Papinian served only to inflame the hatred which Caracalla had already conceived against his father's minister. After the murder of Geta, the Præfect was commanded to exert the powers of his skill and eloquence in a studied apology for that atrocious deed. The philosophic Seneca had condescended to compose a similar epistle to the senate, in the name of the son and assassin of Agrippina. [30](#) "That it was easier to commit than to justify a parricide," was the glorious reply of Papinian; [31](#) who did not hesitate between the loss of life and that of honor. Such intrepid virtue, which had escaped pure and unsullied from the intrigues of courts, the habits of business, and the arts of his profession, reflects more lustre on the memory of Papinian, than all his great employments, his numerous writings, and the superior reputation as a lawyer, which he has preserved through every age of the Roman jurisprudence. [32](#)

[282](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Papinian was no longer Prætorian Præfect. Caracalla had deprived him of that office immediately after the death of Severus. Such is the statement of Dion; and the testimony of Spartian, who gives Papinian the Prætorian præfecture till his death, is of little weight opposed to that of a senator then living at Rome.—W.]

[29](#) [\(return\)](#)

[It is said that Papinian was himself a relation of the empress Julia.]

[30](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. xiv. 2.]

[31](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 88.]

[32](#) [\(return\)](#)

[With regard to Papinian, see Heineccius's *Historia Juris Roma ni*, l. 330, &c.]

It had hitherto been the peculiar felicity of the Romans, and in the worst of times the consolation, that the virtue of the emperors was active, and their vice indolent. Augustus, Trajan, Hadrian, and Marcus visited their extensive dominions in person, and their progress was marked by acts of wisdom and beneficence. The tyranny of Tiberius, Nero, and Domitian, who resided almost constantly at Rome, or in the adjacent was confined to the senatorial and equestrian orders. [33](#) But Caracalla was the common enemy of mankind. He left the capital (and he never returned to it) about a year after the murder of Geta. The rest of his reign was spent in the several provinces of the empire, particularly those of the East, and every province was by turns the scene of his rapine and cruelty. The senators, compelled by fear to attend his capricious motions, were obliged to provide daily entertainments at an immense expense, which he abandoned with contempt to his guards; and to erect, in every city, magnificent palaces and theatres, which he either disdained to visit, or ordered immediately thrown down. The most wealthy families were ruined by partial fines and confiscations, and the great body of his subjects oppressed by ingenious and aggravated taxes. [34](#) In the midst of peace, and upon the slightest provocation, he issued his commands, at Alexandria, in Egypt for a general massacre. From a secure post in the temple of Serapis, he viewed and directed the slaughter of many thousand citizens, as well as strangers, without distinguishing the number or the crime of the sufferers; since as he coolly informed the senate, *all* the Alexandrians, those who had perished, and those who had escaped, were alike guilty. [35](#)

33

[\(return\)](#)

[Tiberius and Domitian never moved from the neighborhood of Rome. Nero made a short journey into Greece. “Et laudatorum Principum usus ex æquo, quamvis procul agentibus. Sævi proximis ingruunt.” Tacit. Hist. iv. 74.]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1294.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1307. Herodian, l. iv. p. 158. The former represents it as a cruel massacre, the latter as a perfidious one too. It seems probable that the Alexandrians has irritated the tyrant by their railleries, and perhaps by their tumults. * Note: After these massacres, Caracalla also deprived the Alexandrians of their spectacles and public feasts; he divided the city into two parts by a wall with towers at intervals, to prevent the peaceful communications of the citizens. Thus was treated the unhappy Alexandria, says Dion, by the savage beast of Ausonia. This, in fact, was the epithet which the oracle had applied to him; it is said, indeed, that he was much pleased with the name and often boasted of it. Dion, lxxvii. p. 1307.—G.]

The wise instructions of Severus never made any lasting impression on the mind of his son, who, although not destitute of imagination and eloquence, was equally devoid of judgment and humanity. [36](#) One dangerous maxim, worthy of a tyrant, was remembered and abused by Caracalla. “To secure the affections of the army, and to esteem the rest of his subjects as of little moment.” [37](#) But the liberality of the father had been restrained by prudence, and his indulgence to the troops was tempered by firmness and authority. The careless profusion of the son was the policy of one reign, and the inevitable ruin both of the army and of the empire. The vigor of the soldiers, instead of being confirmed by the severe discipline of camps, melted away in the luxury of cities. The excessive increase of their pay and donatives [38](#) exhausted the state to enrich the military order, whose modesty in peace, and service in war, is best secured by an honorable poverty. The demeanor of Caracalla was haughty and full of pride; but with the troops he forgot even the proper dignity of his rank, encouraged their insolent familiarity, and, neglecting the essential duties of a general, affected to imitate the dress and manners of a common soldier.

36 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1296.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxvi. p. 1284. Mr. Wotton (Hist. of Rome, p. 330) suspects that this maxim was invented by Caracalla himself, and attributed to his father.]

38 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion (l. lxxviii. p. 1343) informs us that the extraordinary gifts of Caracalla to the army amounted annually to seventy millions of drachmæ (about two millions three hundred and fifty thousand pounds.) There is another passage in Dion, concerning the military pay, infinitely curious, were it not obscure, imperfect, and probably corrupt. The best sense seems to be, that the Prætorian guards received twelve hundred and fifty drachmæ, (forty pounds a year,) (Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1307.) Under the reign of Augustus, they were paid at the rate of two drachmæ, or denarii, per day, 720 a year, (Tacit. Annal. i. 17.) Domitian, who increased the soldiers’ pay one fourth, must have raised the Prætorians to 960 drachmæ, (Gronovius de Pecunia Veteri, l. iii. c. 2.) These successive augmentations ruined the empire; for, with the soldiers’ pay, their numbers too were increased. We have seen the Prætorians alone increased from 10,000 to 50,000 men. Note: Valois and Reimar have explained in a very simple and probable manner this passage of Dion, which Gibbon seems to me not to have understood. He ordered that the soldiers should receive, as the

reward of their services the Prætorians 1250 drachms, the other 5000 drachms. Valois thinks that the numbers have been transposed, and that Caracalla added 5000 drachms to the donations made to the Prætorians, 1250 to those of the legionaries. The Prætorians, in fact, always received more than the others. The error of Gibbon arose from his considering that this referred to the annual pay of the soldiers, while it relates to the sum they received as a reward for their services on their discharge: donatives means recompense for service. Augustus had settled that the Prætorians, after sixteen campaigns, should receive 5000 drachms: the legionaries received only 3000 after twenty years. Caracalla added 5000 drachms to the donative of the Prætorians, 1250 to that of the legionaries. Gibbon appears to have been mistaken both in confounding this donative on discharge with the annual pay, and in not paying attention to the remark of Valois on the transposition of the numbers in the text.—G]

It was impossible that such a character, and such conduct as that of Caracalla, could inspire either love or esteem; but as long as his vices were beneficial to the armies, he was secure from the danger of rebellion. A secret conspiracy, provoked by his own jealousy, was fatal to the tyrant. The Prætorian præfecture was divided between two ministers. The military department was intrusted to Adventus, an experienced rather than able soldier; and the civil affairs were transacted by Opilius Macrinus, who, by his dexterity in business, had raised himself, with a fair character, to that high office. But his favor varied with the caprice of the emperor, and his life might depend on the slightest suspicion, or the most casual circumstance. Malice or fanaticism had suggested to an African, deeply skilled in the knowledge of futurity, a very dangerous prediction, that Macrinus and his son were destined to reign over the empire. The report was soon diffused through the province; and when the man was sent in chains to Rome, he still asserted, in the presence of the præfect of the city, the faith of his prophecy. That magistrate, who had received the most pressing instructions to inform himself of the *successors* of Caracalla, immediately communicated the examination of the African to the Imperial court, which at that time resided in Syria. But, notwithstanding the diligence of the public messengers, a friend of Macrinus found means to apprise him of the approaching danger. The emperor received the letters from Rome; and as he was then engaged in the conduct of a chariot race, he delivered them unopened to the Prætorian Præfect, directing him to despatch the ordinary affairs, and to report the more important business that might be contained in them. Macrinus read his fate, and resolved to prevent it. He inflamed the discontents of some inferior officers, and employed the hand of Martialis, a desperate soldier, who had been refused the rank of centurion. The devotion of Caracalla prompted him to make a pilgrimage from Edessa to the celebrated

temple of the Moon at Carrhæ. [381](#) He was attended by a body of cavalry: but having stopped on the road for some necessary occasion, his guards preserved a respectful distance, and Martialis, approaching his person under a presence of duty, stabbed him with a dagger. The bold assassin was instantly killed by a Scythian archer of the Imperial guard. Such was the end of a monster whose life disgraced human nature, and whose reign accused the patience of the Romans. [39](#) The grateful soldiers forgot his vices, remembered only his partial liberality, and obliged the senate to prostitute their own dignity and that of religion, by granting him a place among the gods. Whilst he was upon earth, Alexander the Great was the only hero whom this god deemed worthy his admiration. He assumed the name and ensigns of Alexander, formed a Macedonian phalanx of guards, persecuted the disciples of Aristotle, and displayed, with a puerile enthusiasm, the only sentiment by which he discovered any regard for virtue or glory. We can easily conceive, that after the battle of Narva, and the conquest of Poland, Charles XII. (though he still wanted the more elegant accomplishments of the son of Philip) might boast of having rivalled his valor and magnanimity; but in no one action of his life did Caracalla express the faintest resemblance of the Macedonian hero, except in the murder of a great number of his own and of his father's friends. [40](#)

381

[\(return\)](#)

[Carrhæ, now Harran, between Edessan and Nisibis, famous for the defeat of Crassus—the Haran from whence Abraham set out for the land of Canaan. This city has always been remarkable for its attachment to Sabaism—G]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxviii. p. 1312. Herodian, l. iv. p. 168.]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[The fondness of Caracalla for the name and ensigns of Alexander is still preserved on the medals of that emperor. See Spanheim, de Usu Numismatum, Dissertat. xii. Herodian (l. iv. p. 154) had seen very ridiculous pictures, in which a figure was drawn with one side of the face like Alexander, and the other like Caracalla.]

After the extinction of the house of Severus, the Roman world remained three days without a master. The choice of the army (for the authority of a distant and feeble senate was little regarded) hung in anxious suspense, as no candidate presented himself whose distinguished birth and merit could engage their attachment and unite their suffrages. The decisive weight of the Prætorian guards elevated the hopes of their præfects, and these powerful ministers began to assert their *legal* claim to fill the vacancy of the Imperial throne. Adventus, however, the senior præfect, conscious of his age and infirmities, of his small reputation, and his smaller abilities, resigned the dangerous honor to the crafty ambition of his colleague Macrinus, whose well-dissembled grief removed all suspicion of his being accessory to his master's death. [41](#) The troops neither

loved nor esteemed his character. They cast their eyes around in search of a competitor, and at last yielded with reluctance to his promises of unbounded liberality and indulgence. A short time after his accession, he conferred on his son Diadumenianus, at the age of only ten years, the Imperial title, and the popular name of Antoninus. The beautiful figure of the youth, assisted by an additional donative, for which the ceremony furnished a pretext, might attract, it was hoped, the favor of the army, and secure the doubtful throne of Macrinus.

41

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. iv. p. 169. Hist. August. p. 94.]

The authority of the new sovereign had been ratified by the cheerful submission of the senate and provinces. They exulted in their unexpected deliverance from a hated tyrant, and it seemed of little consequence to examine into the virtues of the successor of Caracalla. But as soon as the first transports of joy and surprise had subsided, they began to scrutinize the merits of Macrinus with a critical severity, and to arraign the nasty choice of the army. It had hitherto been considered as a fundamental maxim of the constitution, that the emperor must be always chosen in the senate, and the sovereign power, no longer exercised by the whole body, was always delegated to one of its members. But Macrinus was not a senator. [42](#) The sudden elevation of the Prætorian præfects betrayed the meanness of their origin; and the equestrian order was still in possession of that great office, which commanded with arbitrary sway the lives and fortunes of the senate. A murmur of indignation was heard, that a man, whose obscure [43](#) extraction had never been illustrated by any signal service, should dare to invest himself with the purple, instead of bestowing it on some distinguished senator, equal in birth and dignity to the splendor of the Imperial station. As soon as the character of Macrinus was surveyed by the sharp eye of discontent, some vices, and many defects, were easily discovered. The choice of his ministers was in many instances justly censured, and the dissatisfied people, with their usual candor, accused at once his indolent tameness and his excessive severity. [44](#)

42

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxxviii. p. 1350. Elagabalus reproached his predecessor with daring to seat himself on the throne; though, as Prætorian præfect, he could not have been admitted into the senate after the voice of the crier had cleared the house. The personal favor of Plautianus and Sejanus had broke through the established rule. They rose, indeed, from the equestrian order; but they preserved the præfecture, with the rank of senator and even with the annulship.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[He was a native of Cæsarea, in Numidia, and began his fortune by serving in the household of Plautian, from whose ruin he narrowly escaped. His enemies asserted that he was born a slave, and had

exercised, among other infamous professions, that of Gladiator. The fashion of aspersing the birth and condition of an adversary seems to have lasted from the time of the Greek orators to the learned grammarians of the last age.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[Both Dion and Herodian speak of the virtues and vices of Macrinus with candor and impartiality; but the author of his life, in the Augustan History, seems to have implicitly copied some of the venal writers, employed by Elagabalus, to blacken the memory of his predecessor.]

His rash ambition had climbed a height where it was difficult to stand with firmness, and impossible to fall without instant destruction. Trained in the arts of courts and the forms of civil business, he trembled in the presence of the fierce and undisciplined multitude, over whom he had assumed the command; his military talents were despised, and his personal courage suspected; a whisper that circulated in the camp, disclosed the fatal secret of the conspiracy against the late emperor, aggravated the guilt of murder by the baseness of hypocrisy, and heightened contempt by detestation. To alienate the soldiers, and to provoke inevitable ruin, the character of a reformer was only wanting; and such was the peculiar hardship of his fate, that Macrinus was compelled to exercise that invidious office. The prodigality of Caracalla had left behind it a long train of ruin and disorder; and if that worthless tyrant had been capable of reflecting on the sure consequences of his own conduct, he would perhaps have enjoyed the dark prospect of the distress and calamities which he bequeathed to his successors.

In the management of this necessary reformation, Macrinus proceeded with a cautious prudence, which would have restored health and vigor to the Roman army in an easy and almost imperceptible manner. To the soldiers already engaged in the service, he was constrained to leave the dangerous privileges and extravagant pay given by Caracalla; but the new recruits were received on the more moderate though liberal establishment of Severus, and gradually formed to modesty and obedience. [45](#) One fatal error destroyed the salutary effects of this judicious plan. The numerous army, assembled in the East by the late emperor, instead of being immediately dispersed by Macrinus through the several provinces, was suffered to remain united in Syria, during the winter that followed his elevation. In the luxurious idleness of their quarters, the troops viewed their strength and numbers, communicated their complaints, and revolved in their minds the advantages of another revolution. The veterans, instead of being flattered by the advantageous distinction, were alarmed by the first steps of the emperor, which they considered as the presage of his future intentions. The recruits, with sullen reluctance, entered on a service, whose labors were increased while its rewards were diminished by a covetous and unwarlike sovereign. The murmurs of the army swelled with impunity into seditious clamors; and the partial mutinies betrayed a spirit of discontent and disaffection that waited only for the slightest occasion to break

out on every side into a general rebellion. To minds thus disposed, the occasion soon presented itself.

45

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxxiii. p. 1336. The sense of the author is as the intention of the emperor; but Mr. Wotton has mistaken both, by understanding the distinction, not of veterans and recruits, but of old and new legions. History of Rome, p. 347.]

The empress Julia had experienced all the vicissitudes of fortune. From an humble station she had been raised to greatness, only to taste the superior bitterness of an exalted rank. She was doomed to weep over the death of one of her sons, and over the life of the other. The cruel fate of Caracalla, though her good sense must have long taught her to expect it, awakened the feelings of a mother and of an empress. Notwithstanding the respectful civility expressed by the usurper towards the widow of Severus, she descended with a painful struggle into the condition of a subject, and soon withdrew herself, by a voluntary death, from the anxious and humiliating dependence. [46](#) [461](#) Julia Mæsa, her sister, was ordered to leave the court and Antioch. She retired to Emesa with an immense fortune, the fruit of twenty years' favor accompanied by her two daughters, Soæmias and Mamæ, each of whom was a widow, and each had an only son. Bassianus, [462](#) for that was the name of the son of Soæmias, was consecrated to the honorable ministry of high priest of the Sun; and this holy vocation, embraced either from prudence or superstition, contributed to raise the Syrian youth to the empire of Rome. A numerous body of troops was stationed at Emesa; and as the severe discipline of Macrinus had constrained them to pass the winter encamped, they were eager to revenge the cruelty of such unaccustomed hardships. The soldiers, who resorted in crowds to the temple of the Sun, beheld with veneration and delight the elegant dress and figure of the young pontiff; they recognized, or they thought that they recognized, the features of Caracalla, whose memory they now adored. The artful Mæsa saw and cherished their rising partiality, and readily sacrificing her daughter's reputation to the fortune of her grandson, she insinuated that Bassianus was the natural son of their murdered sovereign. The sums distributed by her emissaries with a lavish hand silenced every objection, and the profusion sufficiently proved the affinity, or at least the resemblance, of Bassianus with the great original. The young Antoninus (for he had assumed and polluted that respectable name) was declared emperor by the troops of Emesa, asserted his hereditary right, and called aloud on the armies to follow the standard of a young and liberal prince, who had taken up arms to revenge his father's death and the oppression of the military order. [47](#)

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxviii. p. 1330. The abridgment of Xiphilin, though less particular, is in this place clearer than the original.]

461

[\(return\)](#)

[As soon as this princess heard of the death of

Caracalla, she wished to starve herself to death: the respect shown to her by Macrinus, in making no change in her attendants or her court, induced her to prolong her life. But it appears, as far as the mutilated text of Dion and the imperfect epitome of Xiphilin permit us to judge, that she conceived projects of ambition, and endeavored to raise herself to the empire. She wished to tread in the steps of Semiramis and Nitocris, whose country bordered on her own. Macrinus sent her an order immediately to leave Antioch, and to retire wherever she chose. She returned to her former purpose, and starved herself to death.—G.]

462

[\(return\)](#)

[He inherited this name from his great-grandfather of the mother's side, Bassianus, father of Julia Mæsa, his grandmother, and of Julia Domna, wife of Severus. Victor (in his epitome) is perhaps the only historian who has given the key to this genealogy, when speaking of Caracalla. His Bassianus ex avi materni nomine dictus. Caracalla, Elagabalus, and Alexander Seyerus, bore successively this name.—G.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[According to Lampridius, (Hist. August. p. 135,) Alexander Severus lived twenty-nine years three months and seven days. As he was killed March 19, 235, he was born December 12, 205 and was consequently about this time thirteen years old, as his elder cousin might be about seventeen. This computation suits much better the history of the young princes than that of Herodian, (l. v. p. 181,) who represents them as three years younger; whilst, by an opposite error of chronology, he lengthens the reign of Elagabalus two years beyond its real duration. For the particulars of the conspiracy, see Dion, l. lxxviii. p. 1339. Herodian, l. v. p. 184.]

Whilst a conspiracy of women and eunuchs was concerted with prudence, and conducted with rapid vigor, Macrinus, who, by a decisive motion, might have crushed his infant enemy, floated between the opposite extremes of terror and security, which alike fixed him inactive at Antioch. A spirit of rebellion diffused itself through all the camps and garrisons of Syria, successive detachments murdered their officers, [48](#) and joined the party of the rebels; and the tardy restitution of military pay and privileges was imputed to the acknowledged weakness of Macrinus. At length he marched out of Antioch, to meet the increasing and zealous army of the young pretender. His own troops seemed to take the field with faintness and reluctance; but, in the heat of the battle, [49](#) the Prætorian guards, almost by an involuntary impulse, asserted the superiority of their valor and discipline. The rebel ranks were broken; when the mother

and grandmother of the Syrian prince, who, according to their eastern custom, had attended the army, threw themselves from their covered chariots, and, by exciting the compassion of the soldiers, endeavored to animate their drooping courage. Antoninus himself, who, in the rest of his life, never acted like a man, in this important crisis of his fate, approved himself a hero, mounted his horse, and, at the head of his rallied troops, charged sword in hand among the thickest of the enemy; whilst the eunuch Gannys, [491](#) whose occupations had been confined to female cares and the soft luxury of Asia, displayed the talents of an able and experienced general. The battle still raged with doubtful violence, and Macrinus might have obtained the victory, had he not betrayed his own cause by a shameful and precipitate flight. His cowardice served only to protract his life a few days, and to stamp deserved ignominy on his misfortunes. It is scarcely necessary to add, that his son Diadumenianus was involved in the same fate.

As soon as the stubborn Prætorians could be convinced that they fought for a prince who had basely deserted them, they surrendered to the conqueror: the contending parties of the Roman army, mingling tears of joy and tenderness, united under the banners of the imagined son of Caracalla, and the East acknowledged with pleasure the first emperor of Asiatic extraction.

48 [\(return\)](#)

[By a most dangerous proclamation of the pretended Antoninus, every soldier who brought in his officer's head became entitled to his private estate, as well as to his military commission.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxviii. p. 1345. Herodian, l. v. p. 186. The battle was fought near the village of Immæ, about two-and-twenty miles from Antioch.]

491 [\(return\)](#)

[Gannys was not a eunuch. Dion, p. 1355.—W]

The letters of Macrinus had condescended to inform the senate of the slight disturbance occasioned by an impostor in Syria, and a decree immediately passed, declaring the rebel and his family public enemies; with a promise of pardon, however, to such of his deluded adherents as should merit it by an immediate return to their duty. During the twenty days that elapsed from the declaration of the victory of Antoninus (for in so short an interval was the fate of the Roman world decided,) the capital and the provinces, more especially those of the East, were distracted with hopes and fears, agitated with tumult, and stained with a useless effusion of civil blood, since whosoever of the rivals prevailed in Syria must reign over the empire. The specious letters in which the young conqueror announced his victory to the obedient senate were filled with professions of virtue and moderation; the shining examples of Marcus and Augustus, he should ever consider as the great rule of his administration; and he affected to dwell with pride on the striking resemblance of his own age and fortunes with those of Augustus, who in the earliest youth had revenged, by a successful war, the murder of

his father. By adopting the style of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, son of Antoninus and grandson of Severus, he tacitly asserted his hereditary claim to the empire; but, by assuming the tribunitian and proconsular powers before they had been conferred on him by a decree of the senate, he offended the delicacy of Roman prejudice. This new and injudicious violation of the constitution was probably dictated either by the ignorance of his Syrian courtiers, or the fierce disdain of his military followers. [50](#)

50

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxix. p. 1353.]

As the attention of the new emperor was diverted by the most trifling amusements, he wasted many months in his luxurious progress from Syria to Italy, passed at Nicomedia his first winter after his victory, and deferred till the ensuing summer his triumphal entry into the capital. A faithful picture, however, which preceded his arrival, and was placed by his immediate order over the altar of Victory in the senate house, conveyed to the Romans the just but unworthy resemblance of his person and manners. He was drawn in his sacerdotal robes of silk and gold, after the loose flowing fashion of the Medes and Phœnicians; his head was covered with a lofty tiara, his numerous collars and bracelets were adorned with gems of an inestimable value. His eyebrows were tinged with black, and his cheeks painted with an artificial red and white. [51](#) The grave senators confessed with a sigh, that, after having long experienced the stern tyranny of their own countrymen, Rome was at length humbled beneath the effeminate luxury of Oriental despotism.

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxix. p. 1363. Herodian, l. v. p. 189.]

The Sun was worshipped at Emesa, under the name of Elagabalus, [52](#) and under the form of a black conical stone, which, as it was universally believed, had fallen from heaven on that sacred place. To this protecting deity, Antoninus, not without some reason, ascribed his elevation to the throne. The display of superstitious gratitude was the only serious business of his reign. The triumph of the god of Emesa over all the religions of the earth, was the great object of his zeal and vanity; and the appellation of Elagabalus (for he presumed as pontiff and favorite to adopt that sacred name) was dearer to him than all the titles of Imperial greatness. In a solemn procession through the streets of Rome, the way was strewed with gold dust; the black stone, set in precious gems, was placed on a chariot drawn by six milk-white horses richly caparisoned. The pious emperor held the reins, and, supported by his ministers, moved slowly backwards, that he might perpetually enjoy the felicity of the divine presence. In a magnificent temple raised on the Palatine Mount, the sacrifices of the god Elagabalus were celebrated with every circumstance of cost and solemnity. The richest wines, the most extraordinary victims, and the rarest aromatics, were profusely consumed on his altar. Around the altar, a chorus of Syrian damsels performed their lascivious dances to the sound of barbarian music, whilst the gravest personages of the state and army, clothed

in long Phœnician tunics, officiated in the meanest functions, with affected zeal and secret indignation. [53](#)

52

[\(return\)](#)

[This name is derived by the learned from two Syrian words, Ela a God, and Gabal, to form, the forming or plastic god, a proper, and even happy epithet for the sun. Wotton's History of Rome, p. 378 Note: The name of Elagabalus has been disfigured in various ways. Herodian calls him; Lampridius, and the more modern writers, make him Heliogabalus. Dion calls him Elegabalus; but Elegabalus was the true name, as it appears on the medals. (Eckhel. de Doct. num. vet. t. vii. p. 250.) As to its etymology, that which Gibbon adduces is given by Bochart, Chan. ii. 5; but Salmasius, on better grounds. (not. in Lamprid. in Elagab.,) derives the name of Elagabalus from the idol of that god, represented by Herodian and the medals in the form of a mountain, (gibel in Hebrew,) or great stone cut to a point, with marks which represent the sun. As it was not permitted, at Hierapolis, in Syria, to make statues of the sun and moon, because, it was said, they are themselves sufficiently visible, the sun was represented at Emesa in the form of a great stone, which, as it appeared, had fallen from heaven. Spanheim, Cæsar. notes, p. 46.—G. The name of Elagabalus, in "nummis rarius legetur." Rasche, Lex. Univ. Ref. Numm. Rasche quotes two.—M]

53

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. v. p. 190.]

Chapter VI: Death Of Severus, Tyranny Of Caracalla, Usurpation Of Marcinus.—Part III.

To this temple, as to the common centre of religious worship, the Imperial fanatic attempted to remove the Ancilia, the Palladium, [54](#) and all the sacred pledges of the faith of Numa. A crowd of inferior deities attended in various stations the majesty of the god of Emesa; but his court was still imperfect, till a female of distinguished rank was admitted to his bed. Pallas had been first chosen for his consort; but as it was dreaded lest her warlike terrors might affright the soft delicacy of a Syrian deity, the Moon, adored by the Africans under the name of Astarte, was deemed a more suitable companion for the Sun. Her image, with the rich offerings of her temple as a marriage portion, was transported with solemn pomp from Carthage to Rome, and the day of these mystic nuptials was a general festival in the capital and throughout the empire. [55](#)

54 [\(return\)](#)

[He broke into the sanctuary of Vesta, and carried away a statue, which he supposed to be the palladium; but the vestals boasted that, by a pious fraud, they had imposed a counterfeit image on the profane intruder. Hist. August., p. 103.]

55 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxix. p. 1360. Herodian, l. v. p. 193. The subjects of the empire were obliged to make liberal presents to the new married couple; and whatever they had promised during the life of Elagabalus was carefully exacted under the administration of Mamæa.]

A rational voluptuary adheres with invariable respect to the temperate dictates of nature, and improves the gratifications of sense by social intercourse, endearing connections, and the soft coloring of taste and the imagination. But Elagabalus, (I speak of the emperor of that name,) corrupted by his youth, his country, and his fortune, abandoned himself to the grossest pleasures with ungoverned fury, and soon found disgust and satiety in the midst of his enjoyments. The inflammatory powers of art were summoned to his aid: the confused multitude of women, of wines, and of dishes, and the studied variety of attitude and sauces, served to revive his languid appetites. New terms and new inventions in these sciences, the only ones cultivated and patronized by the monarch, [56](#) signalized his reign, and transmitted his infamy to succeeding times. A capricious prodigality supplied the want of taste and elegance; and whilst Elagabalus lavished away the treasures of his people in the wildest extravagance, his own voice and that of his flatterers applauded a spirit of magnificence unknown to the tameness of his predecessors. To confound the order of seasons and climates, [57](#) to sport with the passions and prejudices of his subjects, and to subvert every law of nature and decency, were in the number of his most delicious amusements. A long train of concubines, and a rapid succession of wives, among whom was a vestal virgin, ravished by force from her sacred asylum, [58](#) were insufficient to satisfy the impotence of his passions. The master of the Roman world affected to copy the dress and manners of the female sex, preferred the distaff to the sceptre, and dishonored the principal dignities of the empire by distributing them among his numerous lovers; one of whom was publicly invested with the title and authority of the emperor's, or, as he more properly styled himself, of the empress's husband. [59](#)

56 [\(return\)](#)

[The invention of a new sauce was liberally rewarded; but if it was not relished, the inventor was confined to eat of nothing else till he had discovered another more agreeable to the Imperial palate Hist. August. p. 111.]

57 [\(return\)](#)

[He never would eat sea-fish except at a great distance from the sea; he then would distribute vast

quantities of the rarest sorts, brought at an immense expense, to the peasants of the inland country. Hist. August. p. 109.]

58 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion, l. lxxix. p. 1358. Herodian, l. v. p. 192.]

59 [\(return\)](#)
[Hierocles enjoyed that honor; but he would have been supplanted by one Zoticus, had he not contrived, by a potion, to enervate the powers of his rival, who, being found on trial unequal to his reputation, was driven with ignominy from the palace. Dion, l. lxxix. p. 1363, 1364. A dancer was made præfect of the city, a charioteer præfect of the watch, a barber præfect of the provisions. These three ministers, with many inferior officers, were all recommended enormitate membrorum. Hist. August. p. 105.]

It may seem probable, the vices and follies of Elagabalus have been adorned by fancy, and blackened by prejudice. [60](#) Yet, confining ourselves to the public scenes displayed before the Roman people, and attested by grave and contemporary historians, their inexpressible infamy surpasses that of any other age or country. The license of an eastern monarch is secluded from the eye of curiosity by the inaccessible walls of his seraglio. The sentiments of honor and gallantry have introduced a refinement of pleasure, a regard for decency, and a respect for the public opinion, into the modern courts of Europe; [601](#) but the corrupt and opulent nobles of Rome gratified every vice that could be collected from the mighty conflux of nations and manners. Secure of impunity, careless of censure, they lived without restraint in the patient and humble society of their slaves and parasites. The emperor, in his turn, viewing every rank of his subjects with the same contemptuous indifference, asserted without control his sovereign privilege of lust and luxury.

60 [\(return\)](#)
[Even the credulous compiler of his life, in the Augustan History (p. 111) is inclined to suspect that his vices may have been exaggerated.]

601 [\(return\)](#)
[Wenck has justly observed that Gibbon should have reckoned the influence of Christianity in this great change. In the most savage times, and the most corrupt courts, since the introduction of Christianity there have been no Neros or Domitians, no Commodus or Elagabalus.—M.]

The most worthless of mankind are not afraid to condemn in others the same disorders which they allow in themselves; and can readily discover some nice difference of age, character, or station, to justify the partial distinction. The licentious soldiers, who had raised to the throne the dissolute son of Caracalla, blushed at their ignominious choice,

and turned with disgust from that monster, to contemplate with pleasure the opening virtues of his cousin Alexander, the son of Mamæa. The crafty Mæsa, sensible that her grandson Elagabalus must inevitably destroy himself by his own vices, had provided another and surer support of her family. Embracing a favorable moment of fondness and devotion, she had persuaded the young emperor to adopt Alexander, and to invest him with the title of Cæsar, that his own divine occupations might be no longer interrupted by the care of the earth. In the second rank that amiable prince soon acquired the affections of the public, and excited the tyrant's jealousy, who resolved to terminate the dangerous competition, either by corrupting the manners, or by taking away the life, of his rival. His arts proved unsuccessful; his vain designs were constantly discovered by his own loquacious folly, and disappointed by those virtuous and faithful servants whom the prudence of Mamæa had placed about the person of her son. In a hasty sally of passion, Elagabalus resolved to execute by force what he had been unable to compass by fraud, and by a despotic sentence degraded his cousin from the rank and honors of Cæsar. The message was received in the senate with silence, and in the camp with fury. The Prætorian guards swore to protect Alexander, and to revenge the dishonored majesty of the throne. The tears and promises of the trembling Elagabalus, who only begged them to spare his life, and to leave him in the possession of his beloved Hierocles, diverted their just indignation; and they contented themselves with empowering their præfects to watch over the safety of Alexander, and the conduct of the emperor. [61](#)

61

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxix. p. 1365. Herodian, l. v. p. 195—
201. Hist. August. p. 105. The last of the three
historians seems to have followed the best authors
in his account of the revolution.]

It was impossible that such a reconciliation should last, or that even the mean soul of Elagabalus could hold an empire on such humiliating terms of dependence. He soon attempted, by a dangerous experiment, to try the temper of the soldiers. The report of the death of Alexander, and the natural suspicion that he had been murdered, inflamed their passions into fury, and the tempest of the camp could only be appeased by the presence and authority of the popular youth. Provoked at this new instance of their affection for his cousin, and their contempt for his person, the emperor ventured to punish some of the leaders of the mutiny. His unseasonable severity proved instantly fatal to his minions, his mother, and himself. Elagabalus was massacred by the indignant Prætorians, his mutilated corpse dragged through the streets of the city, and thrown into the Tiber. His memory was branded with eternal infamy by the senate; the justice of whose decree has been ratified by posterity. [62](#)

62

[\(return\)](#)

[The æra of the death of Elagabalus, and of the
accession of Alexander, has employed the learning
and ingenuity of Pagi, Tillemont, Valsecchi,
Vignoli, and Torre, bishop of Adria. The question

is most assuredly intricate; but I still adhere to the authority of Dion, the truth of whose calculations is undeniable, and the purity of whose text is justified by the agreement of Xiphilin, Zonaras, and Cedrenus. Elagabalus reigned three years nine months and four days, from his victory over Macrinus, and was killed March 10, 222. But what shall we reply to the medals, undoubtedly genuine, which reckon the fifth year of his tribunitian power? We shall reply, with the learned Valsecchi, that the usurpation of Macrinus was annihilated, and that the son of Caracalla dated his reign from his father's death? After resolving this great difficulty, the smaller knots of this question may be easily untied, or cut asunder. Note: This opinion of Valsecchi has been triumphantly contested by Eckhel, who has shown the impossibility of reconciling it with the medals of Elagabalus, and has given the most satisfactory explanation of the five tribunes of that emperor. He ascended the throne and received the tribunitian power the 16th of May, in the year of Rome 971; and on the 1st January of the next year, 972, he began a new tribunate, according to the custom established by preceding emperors. During the years 972, 973, 974, he enjoyed the tribunate, and commenced his fifth in the year 975, during which he was killed on the 10th March. Eckhel de Doct. Num. viii. 430 &c.—G.]

In the room of Elagabalus, his cousin Alexander was raised to the throne by the Prætorian guards. His relation to the family of Severus, whose name he assumed, was the same as that of his predecessor; his virtue and his danger had already endeared him to the Romans, and the eager liberality of the senate conferred upon him, in one day, the various titles and powers of the Imperial dignity. [63](#) But as Alexander was a modest and dutiful youth, of only seventeen years of age, the reins of government were in the hands of two women, of his mother, Mamæa, and of Mæsa, his grandmother. After the death of the latter, who survived but a short time the elevation of Alexander, Mamæa remained the sole regent of her son and of the empire.

63

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 114. By this unusual precipitation, the senate meant to confound the hopes of pretenders, and prevent the factions of the armies.]

In every age and country, the wiser, or at least the stronger, of the two sexes, has usurped the powers of the state, and confined the other to the cares and pleasures of domestic life. In hereditary monarchies, however, and especially in those of modern Europe, the gallant spirit of chivalry, and the law of succession, have accustomed us to allow a singular exception; and a woman is often acknowledged the absolute sovereign of a great kingdom, in which she would be deemed incapable of exercising the smallest

employment, civil or military. But as the Roman emperors were still considered as the generals and magistrates of the republic, their wives and mothers, although distinguished by the name of Augusta, were never associated to their personal honors; and a female reign would have appeared an inexpiable prodigy in the eyes of those primitive Romans, who married without love, or loved without delicacy and respect. [64](#) The haughty Agrippina aspired, indeed, to share the honors of the empire which she had conferred on her son; but her mad ambition, detested by every citizen who felt for the dignity of Rome, was disappointed by the artful firmness of Seneca and Burrhus. [65](#) The good sense, or the indifference, of succeeding princes, restrained them from offending the prejudices of their subjects; and it was reserved for the profligate Elagabalus to discharge the acts of the senate with the name of his mother Soæmias, who was placed by the side of the consuls, and subscribed, as a regular member, the decrees of the legislative assembly. Her more prudent sister, Mamæa, declined the useless and odious prerogative, and a solemn law was enacted, excluding women forever from the senate, and devoting to the infernal gods the head of the wretch by whom this sanction should be violated. [66](#) The substance, not the pageantry, of power was the object of Mamæa's manly ambition. She maintained an absolute and lasting empire over the mind of her son, and in his affection the mother could not brook a rival. Alexander, with her consent, married the daughter of a patrician; but his respect for his father-in-law, and love for the empress, were inconsistent with the tenderness of interest of Mamæa. The patrician was executed on the ready accusation of treason, and the wife of Alexander driven with ignominy from the palace, and banished into Africa. [67](#)

64

[\(return\)](#)

[Metellus Numidicus, the censor, acknowledged to the Roman people, in a public oration, that had kind nature allowed us to exist without the help of women, we should be delivered from a very troublesome companion; and he could recommend matrimony only as the sacrifice of private pleasure to public duty. Aulus Gellius, i. 6.]

65

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. xiii. 5.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 102, 107.]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxx. p. 1369. Herodian, l. vi. p. 206. Hist. August. p. 131. Herodian represents the patrician as innocent. The Augustian History, on the authority of Dexippus, condemns him, as guilty of a conspiracy against the life of Alexander. It is impossible to pronounce between them; but Dion is an irreproachable witness of the jealousy and cruelty of Mamæa towards the young empress, whose hard fate Alexander lamented, but durst not oppose.]

Notwithstanding this act of jealous cruelty, as well as some instances of avarice, with which Mamæa is charged, the general tenor of her administration was equally for the benefit of her son and of the empire. With the approbation of the senate, she chose sixteen of the wisest and most virtuous senators as a perpetual council of state, before whom every public business of moment was debated and determined. The celebrated Ulpian, equally distinguished by his knowledge of, and his respect for, the laws of Rome, was at their head; and the prudent firmness of this aristocracy restored order and authority to the government. As soon as they had purged the city from foreign superstition and luxury, the remains of the capricious tyranny of Elagabalus, they applied themselves to remove his worthless creatures from every department of the public administration, and to supply their places with men of virtue and ability. Learning, and the love of justice, became the only recommendations for civil offices; valor, and the love of discipline, the only qualifications for military employments. [68](#)

68

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. vi. p. 203. Hist. August. p. 119. The latter insinuates, that when any law was to be passed, the council was assisted by a number of able lawyers and experienced senators, whose opinions were separately given, and taken down in writing.]

But the most important care of Mamæa and her wise counsellors, was to form the character of the young emperor, on whose personal qualities the happiness or misery of the Roman world must ultimately depend. The fortunate soil assisted, and even prevented, the hand of cultivation. An excellent understanding soon convinced Alexander of the advantages of virtue, the pleasure of knowledge, and the necessity of labor. A natural mildness and moderation of temper preserved him from the assaults of passion, and the allurements of vice. His unalterable regard for his mother, and his esteem for the wise Ulpian, guarded his unexperienced youth from the poison of flattery. [581](#)

581

[\(return\)](#)

[Alexander received into his chapel all the religions which prevailed in the empire; he admitted Jesus Christ, Abraham, Orpheus, Apollonius of Tyana, &c. It was almost certain that his mother Mamæa had instructed him in the morality of Christianity. Historians in general agree in calling her a Christian; there is reason to believe that she had begun to have a taste for the principles of Christianity. (See Tillemont, Alexander Severus) Gibbon has not noticed this circumstance; he appears to have wished to lower the character of this empress; he has throughout followed the narrative of Herodian, who, by the acknowledgment of Capitolinus himself, detested Alexander. Without believing the exaggerated praises of Lampridius, he ought not to have followed the unjust severity of

Herodian, and, above all, not to have forgotten to say that the virtuous Alexander Severus had insured to the Jews the preservation of their privileges, and permitted the exercise of Christianity. Hist. Aug. p. 121. The Christians had established their worship in a public place, of which the victuallers (cauponarii) claimed, not the property, but possession by custom. Alexander answered, that it was better that the place should be used for the service of God, in any form, than for victuallers.—G. I have scrupled to omit this note, as it contains some points worthy of notice; but it is very unjust to Gibbon, who mentions almost all the circumstances, which he is accused of omitting, in another, and, according to his plan, a better place, and, perhaps, in stronger terms than M. Guizot. See Chap. xvi.—M.]

The simple journal of his ordinary occupations exhibits a pleasing picture of an accomplished emperor, [69](#) and, with some allowance for the difference of manners, might well deserve the imitation of modern princes. Alexander rose early: the first moments of the day were consecrated to private devotion, and his domestic chapel was filled with the images of those heroes, who, by improving or reforming human life, had deserved the grateful reverence of posterity. But as he deemed the service of mankind the most acceptable worship of the gods, the greatest part of his morning hours was employed in his council, where he discussed public affairs, and determined private causes, with a patience and discretion above his years. The dryness of business was relieved by the charms of literature; and a portion of time was always set apart for his favorite studies of poetry, history, and philosophy. The works of Virgil and Horace, the republics of Plato and Cicero, formed his taste, enlarged his understanding, and gave him the noblest ideas of man and government. The exercises of the body succeeded to those of the mind; and Alexander, who was tall, active, and robust, surpassed most of his equals in the gymnastic arts. Refreshed by the use of the bath and a slight dinner, he resumed, with new vigor, the business of the day; and, till the hour of supper, the principal meal of the Romans, he was attended by his secretaries, with whom he read and answered the multitude of letters, memorials, and petitions, that must have been addressed to the master of the greatest part of the world. His table was served with the most frugal simplicity, and whenever he was at liberty to consult his own inclination, the company consisted of a few select friends, men of learning and virtue, amongst whom Ulpian was constantly invited. Their conversation was familiar and instructive; and the pauses were occasionally enlivened by the recital of some pleasing composition, which supplied the place of the dancers, comedians, and even gladiators, so frequently summoned to the tables of the rich and luxurious Romans. [70](#) The dress of Alexander was plain and modest, his demeanor courteous and affable: at the proper hours his palace was open to all his subjects, but the voice of a crier was heard, as in the

Eleusinian mysteries, pronouncing the same salutary admonition: “Let none enter these holy walls, unless he is conscious of a pure and innocent mind.” [71](#)

69 [\(return\)](#)

[See his life in the Augustan History. The undistinguishing compiler has buried these interesting anecdotes under a load of trivial unmeaning circumstances.]

70 [\(return\)](#)

[See the 13th Satire of Juvenal.]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 119.]

Such a uniform tenor of life, which left not a moment for vice or folly, is a better proof of the wisdom and justice of Alexander’s government, than all the trifling details preserved in the compilation of Lampridius. Since the accession of Commodus, the Roman world had experienced, during the term of forty years, the successive and various vices of four tyrants. From the death of Elagabalus, it enjoyed an auspicious calm of thirteen years. [711](#) The provinces, relieved from the oppressive taxes invented by Caracalla and his pretended son, flourished in peace and prosperity, under the administration of magistrates who were convinced by experience that to deserve the love of the subjects was their best and only method of obtaining the favor of their sovereign. While some gentle restraints were imposed on the innocent luxury of the Roman people, the price of provisions and the interest of money, were reduced by the paternal care of Alexander, whose prudent liberality, without distressing the industrious, supplied the wants and amusements of the populace. The dignity, the freedom, the authority of the senate was restored; and every virtuous senator might approach the person of the emperor without a fear and without a blush.

711 [\(return\)](#)

[Wenck observes that Gibbon, enchanted with the virtue of Alexander has heightened, particularly in this sentence, its effect on the state of the world. His own account, which follows, of the insurrections and foreign wars, is not in harmony with this beautiful picture.—M.]

The name of Antoninus, ennobled by the virtues of Pius and Marcus, had been communicated by adoption to the dissolute Verus, and by descent to the cruel Commodus. It became the honorable appellation of the sons of Severus, was bestowed on young Diadumenianus, and at length prostituted to the infamy of the high priest of Emesa. Alexander, though pressed by the studied, and, perhaps, sincere importunity of the senate, nobly refused the borrowed lustre of a name; whilst in his whole conduct he labored to restore the glories and felicity of the age of the genuine Antonines. [72](#)

72 [\(return\)](#)

[See, in the Hist. August. p. 116, 117, the whole contest between Alexander and the senate, extracted from the journals of that assembly. It

happened on the sixth of March, probably of the year 223, when the Romans had enjoyed, almost a twelvemonth, the blessings of his reign. Before the appellation of Antoninus was offered him as a title of honor, the senate waited to see whether Alexander would not assume it as a family name.]

In the civil administration of Alexander, wisdom was enforced by power, and the people, sensible of the public felicity, repaid their benefactor with their love and gratitude. There still remained a greater, a more necessary, but a more difficult enterprise; the reformation of the military order, whose interest and temper, confirmed by long impunity, rendered them impatient of the restraints of discipline, and careless of the blessings of public tranquillity. In the execution of his design, the emperor affected to display his love, and to conceal his fear of the army. The most rigid economy in every other branch of the administration supplied a fund of gold and silver for the ordinary pay and the extraordinary rewards of the troops. In their marches he relaxed the severe obligation of carrying seventeen days' provision on their shoulders. Ample magazines were formed along the public roads, and as soon as they entered the enemy's country, a numerous train of mules and camels waited on their haughty laziness. As Alexander despaired of correcting the luxury of his soldiers, he attempted, at least, to direct it to objects of martial pomp and ornament, fine horses, splendid armor, and shields enriched with silver and gold. He shared whatever fatigues he was obliged to impose, visited, in person, the sick and wounded, preserved an exact register of their services and his own gratitude, and expressed on every occasion, the warmest regard for a body of men, whose welfare, as he affected to declare, was so closely connected with that of the state. [73](#) By the most gentle arts he labored to inspire the fierce multitude with a sense of duty, and to restore at least a faint image of that discipline to which the Romans owed their empire over so many other nations, as warlike and more powerful than themselves. But his prudence was vain, his courage fatal, and the attempt towards a reformation served only to inflame the ills it was meant to cure.

73

[\(return\)](#)

[It was a favorite saying of the emperor's *Se milites magis servare, quam seipsum, quod salus publica in his esset.* Hist. Aug. p. 130.]

The Prætorian guards were attached to the youth of Alexander. They loved him as a tender pupil, whom they had saved from a tyrant's fury, and placed on the Imperial throne. That amiable prince was sensible of the obligation; but as his gratitude was restrained within the limits of reason and justice, they soon were more dissatisfied with the virtues of Alexander, than they had ever been with the vices of Elagabalus. Their præfect, the wise Ulpian, was the friend of the laws and of the people; he was considered as the enemy of the soldiers, and to his pernicious counsels every scheme of reformation was imputed. Some trifling accident blew up their discontent into a furious mutiny; and the civil war raged, during three days, in Rome, whilst the life of that excellent minister was defended by the grateful people. Terrified, at length, by the sight of some houses

in flames, and by the threats of a general conflagration, the people yielded with a sigh, and left the virtuous but unfortunate Ulpian to his fate. He was pursued into the Imperial palace, and massacred at the feet of his master, who vainly strove to cover him with the purple, and to obtain his pardon from the inexorable soldiers. [731](#) Such was the deplorable weakness of government, that the emperor was unable to revenge his murdered friend and his insulted dignity, without stooping to the arts of patience and dissimulation. Epagathus, the principal leader of the mutiny, was removed from Rome, by the honorable employment of præfect of Egypt: from that high rank he was gently degraded to the government of Crete; and when at length, his popularity among the guards was effaced by time and absence, Alexander ventured to inflict the tardy but deserved punishment of his crimes. [74](#) Under the reign of a just and virtuous prince, the tyranny of the army threatened with instant death his most faithful ministers, who were suspected of an intention to correct their intolerable disorders. The historian Dion Cassius had commanded the Pannonian legions with the spirit of ancient discipline. Their brethren of Rome, embracing the common cause of military license, demanded the head of the reformer. Alexander, however, instead of yielding to their seditious clamors, showed a just sense of his merit and services, by appointing him his colleague in the consulship, and defraying from his own treasury the expense of that vain dignity: but as was justly apprehended, that if the soldiers beheld him with the ensigns of his office, they would revenge the insult in his blood, the nominal first magistrate of the state retired, by the emperor's advice, from the city, and spent the greatest part of his consulship at his villas in Campania. [75](#) [751](#)

731

[\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon has confounded two events altogether different— the quarrel of the people with the Prætorians, which lasted three days, and the assassination of Ulpian by the latter. Dion relates first the death of Ulpian, afterwards, reverting back according to a manner which is usual with him, he says that during the life of Ulpian, there had been a war of three days between the Prætorians and the people. But Ulpian was not the cause. Dion says, on the contrary, that it was occasioned by some unimportant circumstance; whilst he assigns a weighty reason for the murder of Ulpian, the judgment by which that Prætorian præfect had condemned his predecessors, Chrestus and Flavian, to death, whom the soldiers wished to revenge. Zosimus (l. 1, c. xi.) attributes this sentence to Mamæra; but, even then, the troops might have imputed it to Ulpian, who had reaped all the advantage and was otherwise odious to them.—W.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[Though the author of the life of Alexander (Hist. August. p. 182) mentions the sedition raised against

Ulpian by the soldiers, he conceals the catastrophe, as it might discover a weakness in the administration of his hero. From this designed omission, we may judge of the weight and candor of that author.]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[For an account of Ulpian's fate and his own danger, see the mutilated conclusion of Dion's History, l. lxxx. p. 1371.]

751

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion possessed no estates in Campania, and was not rich. He only says that the emperor advised him to reside, during his consulate, in some place out of Rome; that he returned to Rome after the end of his consulate, and had an interview with the emperor in Campania. He asked and obtained leave to pass the rest of his life in his native city, (Nice, in Bithynia:) it was there that he finished his history, which closes with his second consulship.—W.]

Chapter VI: Death Of Severus, Tyranny Of Caracalla, Usurpation Of Marcinus.—Part IV.

The lenity of the emperor confirmed the insolence of the troops; the legions imitated the example of the guards, and defended their prerogative of licentiousness with the same furious obstinacy. The administration of Alexander was an unavailing struggle against the corruption of his age. In Illyricum, in Mauritania, in Armenia, in Mesopotamia, in Germany, fresh mutinies perpetually broke out; his officers were murdered, his authority was insulted, and his life at last sacrificed to the fierce discontents of the army. [76](#) One particular fact well deserves to be recorded, as it illustrates the manners of the troops, and exhibits a singular instance of their return to a sense of duty and obedience. Whilst the emperor lay at Antioch, in his Persian expedition, the particulars of which we shall hereafter relate, the punishment of some soldiers, who had been discovered in the baths of women, excited a sedition in the legion to which they belonged. Alexander ascended his tribunal, and with a modest firmness represented to the armed multitude the absolute necessity, as well as his inflexible resolution, of correcting the vices introduced by his impure predecessor, and of maintaining the discipline, which could not be relaxed without the ruin of the Roman name and empire. Their clamors interrupted his mild expostulation. “Reserve your shout,” said the undaunted emperor, “till you take the field against the Persians, the Germans, and the Sarmatians. Be silent in the presence of your sovereign and benefactor, who bestows upon you the corn, the clothing, and the money of the provinces. Be silent, or I shall no longer style you soldiers, but *citizens*, [77](#) if those

indeed who disclaim the laws of Rome deserve to be ranked among the meanest of the people.” His menaces inflamed the fury of the legion, and their brandished arms already threatened his person. “Your courage,” resumed the intrepid Alexander, “would be more nobly displayed in the field of battle; *me* you may destroy, you cannot intimidate; and the severe justice of the republic would punish your crime and revenge my death.” The legion still persisted in clamorous sedition, when the emperor pronounced, with a loud voice, the decisive sentence, “*Citizens!* lay down your arms, and depart in peace to your respective habitations.” The tempest was instantly appeased: the soldiers, filled with grief and shame, silently confessed the justice of their punishment, and the power of discipline, yielded up their arms and military ensigns, and retired in confusion, not to their camp, but to the several inns of the city. Alexander enjoyed, during thirty days, the edifying spectacle of their repentance; nor did he restore them to their former rank in the army, till he had punished with death those tribunes whose connivance had occasioned the mutiny. The grateful legion served the emperor whilst living, and revenged him when dead. [78](#)

76 [\(return\)](#)

[Annot. Reimar. ad Dion Cassius, l. lxxx. p. 1369.]

77 [\(return\)](#)

[Julius Cæsar had appeased a sedition with the same word, Quirites; which, thus opposed to soldiers, was used in a sense of contempt, and reduced the offenders to the less honorable condition of mere citizens. Tacit. Annal. i. 43.]

78 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 132.]

The resolutions of the multitude generally depend on a moment; and the caprice of passion might equally determine the seditious legion to lay down their arms at the emperor’s feet, or to plunge them into his breast. Perhaps, if this singular transaction had been investigated by the penetration of a philosopher, we should discover the secret causes which on that occasion authorized the boldness of the prince, and commanded the obedience of the troops; and perhaps, if it had been related by a judicious historian, we should find this action, worthy of Cæsar himself, reduced nearer to the level of probability and the common standard of the character of Alexander Severus. The abilities of that amiable prince seem to have been inadequate to the difficulties of his situation, the firmness of his conduct inferior to the purity of his intentions. His virtues, as well as the vices of Elagabalus, contracted a tincture of weakness and effeminacy from the soft climate of Syria, of which he was a native; though he blushed at his foreign origin, and listened with a vain complacency to the flattering genealogists, who derived his race from the ancient stock of Roman nobility. [79](#) The pride and avarice of his mother cast a shade on the glories of his reign; and by exacting from his riper years the same dutiful obedience which she had justly claimed from his unexperienced youth, Mamæa exposed to public ridicule both her son’s character and her own. [80](#) The

fatigues of the Persian war irritated the military discontent; the unsuccessful event [801](#) degraded the reputation of the emperor as a general, and even as a soldier. Every cause prepared, and every circumstance hastened, a revolution, which distracted the Roman empire with a long series of intestine calamities.

79

[\(return\)](#)

[From the Metelli. Hist. August. p. 119. The choice was judicious. In one short period of twelve years, the Metelli could reckon seven consulships and five triumphs. See Velleius Paterculus, ii. 11, and the Fasti.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[The life of Alexander, in the Augustan History, is the mere idea of a perfect prince, an awkward imitation of the Cyropædia. The account of his reign, as given by Herodian, is rational and moderate, consistent with the general history of the age; and, in some of the most invidious particulars, confirmed by the decisive fragments of Dion. Yet from a very paltry prejudice, the greater number of our modern writers abuse Herodian, and copy the Augustan History. See Mess de Tillemont and Wotton. From the opposite prejudice, the emperor Julian (in Cæsarib. p. 315) dwells with a visible satisfaction on the effeminate weakness of the Syrian, and the ridiculous avarice of his mother.]

801

[\(return\)](#)

[Historians are divided as to the success of the campaign against the Persians; Herodian alone speaks of defeat. Lampridius, Eutropius, Victor, and others, say that it was very glorious to Alexander; that he beat Artaxerxes in a great battle, and repelled him from the frontiers of the empire. This much is certain, that Alexander, on his return to Rome, (Lamp. Hist. Aug. c. 56, 133, 134,) received the honors of a triumph, and that he said, in his oration to the people. Quirites, vicimus Persas, milites divites reduximus, vobis congiarium pollicemur, cras ludos circenses Persicos donabimus. Alexander, says Eckhel, had too much modesty and wisdom to permit himself to receive honors which ought only to be the reward of victory, if he had not deserved them; he would have contented himself with dissembling his losses. Eckhel, Doct. Num. vet. vii. 276. The medals represent him as in triumph; one, among others, displays him crowned by Victory between two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. P. M. TR. P. xii. Cos. iii. PP. Imperator paludatus D. hastam. S. parazonium, stat inter duos fluvios humi jacentes,

et ab accedente retro Victoria coronatur. Æ. max.
mod. (Mus. Reg. Gall.) Although Gibbon treats this
question more in detail when he speaks of the
Persian monarchy, I have thought fit to place here
what contradicts his opinion.—G]

The dissolute tyranny of Commodus, the civil wars occasioned by his death, and the new maxims of policy introduced by the house of Severus, had all contributed to increase the dangerous power of the army, and to obliterate the faint image of laws and liberty that was still impressed on the minds of the Romans. The internal change, which undermined the foundations of the empire, we have endeavored to explain with some degree of order and perspicuity. The personal characters of the emperors, their victories, laws, follies, and fortunes, can interest us no farther than as they are connected with the general history of the Decline and Fall of the monarchy. Our constant attention to that great object will not suffer us to overlook a most important edict of Antoninus Caracalla, which communicated to all the free inhabitants of the empire the name and privileges of Roman citizens. His unbounded liberality flowed not, however, from the sentiments of a generous mind; it was the sordid result of avarice, and will naturally be illustrated by some observations on the finances of that state, from the victorious ages of the commonwealth to the reign of Alexander Severus.

The siege of Veii in Tuscany, the first considerable enterprise of the Romans, was protracted to the tenth year, much less by the strength of the place than by the unskilfulness of the besiegers. The unaccustomed hardships of so many winter campaigns, at the distance of near twenty miles from home, [81](#) required more than common encouragements; and the senate wisely prevented the clamors of the people, by the institution of a regular pay for the soldiers, which was levied by a general tribute, assessed according to an equitable proportion on the property of the citizens. [82](#) During more than two hundred years after the conquest of Veii, the victories of the republic added less to the wealth than to the power of Rome. The states of Italy paid their tribute in military service only, and the vast force, both by sea and land, which was exerted in the Punic wars, was maintained at the expense of the Romans themselves. That high-spirited people (such is often the generous enthusiasm of freedom) cheerfully submitted to the most excessive but voluntary burdens, in the just confidence that they should speedily enjoy the rich harvest of their labors. Their expectations were not disappointed. In the course of a few years, the riches of Syracuse, of Carthage, of Macedonia, and of Asia, were brought in triumph to Rome. The treasures of Perseus alone amounted to near two millions sterling, and the Roman people, the sovereign of so many nations, was forever delivered from the weight of taxes. [83](#) The increasing revenue of the provinces was found sufficient to defray the ordinary establishment of war and government, and the superfluous mass of gold and silver was deposited in the temple of Saturn, and reserved for any unforeseen emergency of the state. [84](#)

itself was only a hundred stadia, or twelve miles and a half, from Rome, though some out-posts might be advanced farther on the side of Etruria. Nardini, in a professed treatise, has combated the popular opinion and the authority of two popes, and has removed Veii from Civita Castellana, to a little spot called Isola, in the midway between Rome and the Lake Bracianno. * Note: See the interesting account of the site and ruins of Veii in Sir W Gell's topography of Rome and its Vicinity. v. ii. p. 303.—M.]

82 [\(return\)](#)

[See the 4th and 5th books of Livy. In the Roman census, property, power, and taxation were commensurate with each other.]

83 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xxxiii. c. 3. Cicero de Offic. ii. 22. Plutarch, P. Æmil. p. 275.]

84 [\(return\)](#)

[See a fine description of this accumulated wealth of ages in Phars. l. iii. v. 155, &c.]

History has never, perhaps, suffered a greater or more irreparable injury than in the loss of the curious register [841](#) bequeathed by Augustus to the senate, in which that experienced prince so accurately balanced the revenues and expenses of the Roman empire. [85](#) Deprived of this clear and comprehensive estimate, we are reduced to collect a few imperfect hints from such of the ancients as have accidentally turned aside from the splendid to the more useful parts of history. We are informed that, by the conquests of Pompey, the tributes of Asia were raised from fifty to one hundred and thirty-five millions of drachms; or about four millions and a half sterling. [86](#) [861](#) Under the last and most indolent of the Ptolemies, the revenue of Egypt is said to have amounted to twelve thousand five hundred talents; a sum equivalent to more than two millions and a half of our money, but which was afterwards considerably improved by the more exact economy of the Romans, and the increase of the trade of Æthiopia and India. [87](#) Gaul was enriched by rapine, as Egypt was by commerce, and the tributes of those two great provinces have been compared as nearly equal to each other in value. [88](#) The ten thousand Euboic or Phœnician talents, about four millions sterling, [89](#) which vanquished Carthage was condemned to pay within the term of fifty years, were a slight acknowledgment of the superiority of Rome, [90](#) and cannot bear the least proportion with the taxes afterwards raised both on the lands and on the persons of the inhabitants, when the fertile coast of Africa was reduced into a province. [91](#)

841 [\(return\)](#)

[See Rationarium imperii. Compare besides Tacitus, Suet. Aug. c. ult. Dion, p. 832. Other emperors kept and published similar registers. See a dissertation of Dr. Wolle, de Rationario imperii

Rom. Leipsig, 1773. The last book of Appian also contained the statistics of the Roman empire, but it is lost.—W.]

85 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. in Annal. i. ll. It seems to have existed in the time of Appian.]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[Plutarch, in Pompeio, p. 642.]

861 [\(return\)](#)

[Wenck contests the accuracy of Gibbon's version of Plutarch, and supposes that Pompey only raised the revenue from 50,000,000 to 85,000,000 of drachms; but the text of Plutarch seems clearly to mean that his conquests added 85,000,000 to the ordinary revenue. Wenck adds, "Plutarch says in another part, that Antony made Asia pay, at one time, 200,000 talents, that is to say, 38,875,000 L. sterling." But Appian explains this by saying that it was the revenue of ten years, which brings the annual revenue, at the time of Antony, to 3,875,000 L. sterling.—M.]

87 [\(return\)](#)

[Strabo, l. xvii. p. 798.]

88 [\(return\)](#)

[Velleius Paterculus, l. ii. c. 39. He seems to give the preference to the revenue of Gaul.]

89 [\(return\)](#)

[The Euboic, the Phœnician, and the Alexandrian talents were double in weight to the Attic. See Hooper on ancient weights and measures, p. iv. c. 5. It is very probable that the same talent was carried from Tyre to Carthage.]

90 [\(return\)](#)

[Polyb. l. xv. c. 2.]

91 [\(return\)](#)

[Appian in Punicis, p. 84.]

Spain, by a very singular fatality, was the Peru and Mexico of the old world. The discovery of the rich western continent by the Phœnicians, and the oppression of the simple natives, who were compelled to labor in their own mines for the benefit of strangers, form an exact type of the more recent history of Spanish America. [92](#) The Phœnicians were acquainted only with the sea-coast of Spain; avarice, as well as ambition, carried the arms of Rome and Carthage into the heart of the country, and almost every part of the soil was found pregnant with copper, silver, and gold. [921](#) Mention is made of a mine near Carthage which yielded every day twenty-five thousand drachms of silver, or about three hundred thousand pounds a

year. [93](#) Twenty thousand pound weight of gold was annually received from the provinces of Asturia, Gallicia, and Lusitania. [94](#)

92 [\(return\)](#)

[Diodorus Siculus, l. 5. Oadiz was built by the Phœnicians a little more than a thousand years before Christ. See Vell. Pa ter. i.2.]

921 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare Heeren's Researches vol. i. part ii. p.]

93 [\(return\)](#)

[Strabo, l. iii. p. 148.]

94 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xxxiii. c. 3. He mentions likewise a silver mine in Dalmatia, that yielded every day fifty pounds to the state.] We want both leisure and materials to pursue this curious inquiry through the many potent states that were annihilated in the Roman empire. Some notion, however, may be formed of the revenue of the provinces where considerable wealth had been deposited by nature, or collected by man, if we observe the severe attention that was directed to the abodes of solitude and sterility. Augustus once received a petition from the inhabitants of Gyarus, humbly praying that they might be relieved from one third of their excessive impositions. Their whole tax amounted indeed to no more than one hundred and fifty drachms, or about five pounds: but Gyarus was a little island, or rather a rock, of the Ægean Sea, destitute of fresh water and every necessary of life, and inhabited only by a few wretched fishermen. [95](#)

95 [\(return\)](#)

[Strabo, l. x. p. 485. Tacit. Annal. iu. 69, and iv. 30. See Tournefort (Voyages au Levant, Lettre viii.) a very lively picture of the actual misery of Gyarus.]

From the faint glimmerings of such doubtful and scattered lights, we should be inclined to believe, 1st, That (with every fair allowance for the differences of times and circumstances) the general income of the Roman provinces could seldom amount to less than fifteen or twenty millions of our money; [96](#) and, 2dly, That so ample a revenue must have been fully adequate to all the expenses of the moderate government instituted by Augustus, whose court was the modest family of a private senator, and whose military establishment was calculated for the defence of the frontiers, without any aspiring views of conquest, or any serious apprehension of a foreign invasion.

96 [\(return\)](#)

[Lipsius de magnitudine Romana (l. ii. c. 3) computes the revenue at one hundred and fifty millions of gold crowns; but his whole book, though

learned and ingenious, betrays a very heated imagination. Note: If Justus Lipsius has exaggerated the revenue of the Roman empire Gibbon, on the other hand, has underrated it. He fixes it at fifteen or twenty millions of our money. But if we take only, on a moderate calculation, the taxes in the provinces which he has already cited, they will amount, considering the augmentations made by Augustus, to nearly that sum. There remain also the provinces of Italy, of Rhætia, of Noricum, Pannonia, and Greece, &c., &c. Let us pay attention, besides, to the prodigious expenditure of some emperors, (Suet. Vesp. 16;) we shall see that such a revenue could not be sufficient. The authors of the Universal History, part xii., assign forty millions sterling as the sum to about which the public revenue might amount.—G. from W.]

Notwithstanding the seeming probability of both these conclusions, the latter of them at least is positively disowned by the language and conduct of Augustus. It is not easy to determine whether, on this occasion, he acted as the common father of the Roman world, or as the oppressor of liberty; whether he wished to relieve the provinces, or to impoverish the senate and the equestrian order. But no sooner had he assumed the reins of government, than he frequently intimated the insufficiency of the tributes, and the necessity of throwing an equitable proportion of the public burden upon Rome and Italy. [961](#) In the prosecution of this unpopular design, he advanced, however, by cautious and well-weighed steps. The introduction of customs was followed by the establishment of an excise, and the scheme of taxation was completed by an artful assessment on the real and personal property of the Roman citizens, who had been exempted from any kind of contribution above a century and a half.

961

[\(return\)](#)

[It is not astonishing that Augustus held this language. The senate declared also under Nero, that the state could not exist without the imposts as well augmented as founded by Augustus. Tac. Ann. xiii. 50. After the abolition of the different tributes paid by Italy, an abolition which took place A. U. 646, 694, and 695, the state derived no revenues from that great country, but the twentieth part of the manumissions, (*vicesima manumissionum*,) and Ciero laments this in many places, particularly in his epistles to ii. 15.—G. from W.]

I. In a great empire like that of Rome, a natural balance of money must have gradually established itself. It has been already observed, that as the wealth of the provinces was attracted to the capital by the strong hand of conquest and power, so a considerable part of it was restored to the industrious provinces by the gentle influence of commerce and

arts. In the reign of Augustus and his successors, duties were imposed on every kind of merchandise, which through a thousand channels flowed to the great centre of opulence and luxury; and in whatsoever manner the law was expressed, it was the Roman purchaser, and not the provincial merchant, who paid the tax. [97](#) The rate of the customs varied from the eighth to the fortieth part of the value of the commodity; and we have a right to suppose that the variation was directed by the unalterable maxims of policy; that a higher duty was fixed on the articles of luxury than on those of necessity, and that the productions raised or manufactured by the labor of the subjects of the empire were treated with more indulgence than was shown to the pernicious, or at least the unpopular, commerce of Arabia and India. [98](#) There is still extant a long but imperfect catalogue of eastern commodities, which about the time of Alexander Severus were subject to the payment of duties; cinnamon, myrrh, pepper, ginger, and the whole tribe of aromatics; a great variety of precious stones, among which the diamond was the most remarkable for its price, and the emerald for its beauty; [99](#) Parthian and Babylonian leather, cottons, silks, both raw and manufactured, ebony ivory, and eunuchs. [100](#) We may observe that the use and value of those effeminate slaves gradually rose with the decline of the empire.

97

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. xiii. 31. * Note: The customs (portoria) existed in the times of the ancient kings of Rome. They were suppressed in Italy, A. U. 694, by the Prætor, Cecilius Matellus Nepos. Augustus only reestablished them. See note above.—W.]

98

[\(return\)](#)

[See Pliny, (Hist. Natur. l. vi. c. 23, lxii. c. 18.) His observation that the Indian commodities were sold at Rome at a hundred times their original price, may give us some notion of the produce of the customs, since that original price amounted to more than eight hundred thousand pounds.]

99

[\(return\)](#)

[The ancients were unacquainted with the art of cutting diamonds.]

100

[\(return\)](#)

[M. Bouchaud, in his treatise de l'Impot chez les Romains, has transcribed this catalogue from the Digest, and attempts to illustrate it by a very prolix commentary. * Note: In the Pandects, l. 39, t. 14, de Publican. Compare Cicero in Verrem. c. 72—74.—W.]

II. The excise, introduced by Augustus after the civil wars, was extremely moderate, but it was general. It seldom exceeded one *per cent.*; but it comprehended whatever was sold in the markets or by public auction, from the most considerable purchases of lands and houses, to those minute objects which can only derive a value from their infinite multitude and daily consumption. Such a tax, as it affects the body of the people, has

ever been the occasion of clamor and discontent. An emperor well acquainted with the wants and resources of the state was obliged to declare, by a public edict, that the support of the army depended in a great measure on the produce of the excise. [101](#)

101

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. i. 78. Two years afterwards, the reduction of the poor kingdom of Cappadocia gave Tiberius a pretence for diminishing the excise of one half, but the relief was of very short duration.]

III. When Augustus resolved to establish a permanent military force for the defence of his government against foreign and domestic enemies, he instituted a peculiar treasury for the pay of the soldiers, the rewards of the veterans, and the extra-ordinary expenses of war. The ample revenue of the excise, though peculiarly appropriated to those uses, was found inadequate. To supply the deficiency, the emperor suggested a new tax of five per cent. on all legacies and inheritances. But the nobles of Rome were more tenacious of property than of freedom. Their indignant murmurs were received by Augustus with his usual temper. He candidly referred the whole business to the senate, and exhorted them to provide for the public service by some other expedient of a less odious nature. They were divided and perplexed. He insinuated to them, that their obstinacy would oblige him to *propose* a general land tax and capitation. They acquiesced in silence. [102](#) The new imposition on legacies and inheritances was, however, mitigated by some restrictions. It did not take place unless the object was of a certain value, most probably of fifty or a hundred pieces of gold; [103](#) nor could it be exacted from the nearest of kin on the father's side. [104](#) When the rights of nature and poverty were thus secured, it seemed reasonable, that a stranger, or a distant relation, who acquired an unexpected accession of fortune, should cheerfully resign a twentieth part of it, for the benefit of the state. [105](#)

102

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius, l. lv. p. 794, l. lvi. p. 825. Note: Dion neither mentions this proposition nor the capitation. He only says that the emperor imposed a tax upon landed property, and sent every where men employed to make a survey, without fixing how much, and for how much each was to pay. The senators then preferred giving the tax on legacies and inheritances.—W.]

103

[\(return\)](#)

[The sum is only fixed by conjecture.]

104

[\(return\)](#)

[As the Roman law subsisted for many ages, the Cognati, or relations on the mother's side, were not called to the succession. This harsh institution was gradually undermined by humanity, and finally abolished by Justinian.]

105

[\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Panegyric. c. 37.]

Such a tax, plentiful as it must prove in every wealthy community, was most happily suited to the situation of the Romans, who could frame their arbitrary wills, according to the dictates of reason or caprice, without any restraint from the modern fetters of entails and settlements. From various causes, the partiality of paternal affection often lost its influence over the stern patriots of the commonwealth, and the dissolute nobles of the empire; and if the father bequeathed to his son the fourth part of his estate, he removed all ground of legal complaint. [106](#) But a rich childish old man was a domestic tyrant, and his power increased with his years and infirmities. A servile crowd, in which he frequently reckoned prætors and consuls, courted his smiles, pampered his avarice, applauded his follies, served his passions, and waited with impatience for his death. The arts of attendance and flattery were formed into a most lucrative science; those who professed it acquired a peculiar appellation; and the whole city, according to the lively descriptions of satire, was divided between two parties, the hunters and their game. [107](#) Yet, while so many unjust and extravagant wills were every day dictated by cunning and subscribed by folly, a few were the result of rational esteem and virtuous gratitude. Cicero, who had so often defended the lives and fortunes of his fellow-citizens, was rewarded with legacies to the amount of a hundred and seventy thousand pounds; [108](#) nor do the friends of the younger Pliny seem to have been less generous to that amiable orator. [109](#) Whatever was the motive of the testator, the treasury claimed, without distinction, the twentieth part of his estate: and in the course of two or three generations, the whole property of the subject must have gradually passed through the coffers of the state.

106 [\(return\)](#)
[See Heineccius in the Antiquit. Juris Romani, l. ii.]

107 [\(return\)](#)
[Horat. l. ii. Sat. v. Potron. c. 116, &c. Plin. l. ii. Epist. 20.]

108 [\(return\)](#)
[Cicero in Philip. ii. c. 16.]

109 [\(return\)](#)
[See his epistles. Every such will gave him an occasion of displaying his reverence to the dead, and his justice to the living. He reconciled both in his behavior to a son who had been disinherited by his mother, (v.l.)]

In the first and golden years of the reign of Nero, that prince, from a desire of popularity, and perhaps from a blind impulse of benevolence, conceived a wish of abolishing the oppression of the customs and excise. The wisest senators applauded his magnanimity: but they diverted him from the execution of a design which would have dissolved the strength and resources of the republic. [110](#) Had it indeed been possible to realize this dream of fancy, such princes as Trajan and the Antonines would surely have embraced with ardor the glorious opportunity of conferring so signal an obligation on

mankind. Satisfied, however, with alleviating the public burden, they attempted not to remove it. The mildness and precision of their laws ascertained the rule and measure of taxation, and protected the subject of every rank against arbitrary interpretations, antiquated claims, and the insolent vexation of the farmers of the revenue. [111](#) For it is somewhat singular, that, in every age, the best and wisest of the Roman governors persevered in this pernicious method of collecting the principal branches at least of the excise and customs. [112](#)

110 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Annal. xiii. 50. Esprit des Loix, l. xii. c. 19.]

111 [\(return\)](#)
[See Pliny's Panegyric, the Augustan History, and Burman de Vectigal. passim.]

112 [\(return\)](#)
[The tributes (properly so called) were not farmed; since the good princes often remitted many millions of arrears.]

The sentiments, and, indeed, the situation, of Caracalla were very different from those of the Antonines. Inattentive, or rather averse, to the welfare of his people, he found himself under the necessity of gratifying the insatiate avarice which he had excited in the army. Of the several impositions introduced by Augustus, the twentieth on inheritances and legacies was the most fruitful, as well as the most comprehensive. As its influence was not confined to Rome or Italy, the produce continually increased with the gradual extension of the Roman City. The new citizens, though charged, on equal terms, [113](#) with the payment of new taxes, which had not affected them as subjects, derived an ample compensation from the rank they obtained, the privileges they acquired, and the fair prospect of honors and fortune that was thrown open to their ambition. But the favor which implied a distinction was lost in the prodigality of Caracalla, and the reluctant provincials were compelled to assume the vain title, and the real obligations, of Roman citizens. [1131](#) Nor was the rapacious son of Severus contented with such a measure of taxation as had appeared sufficient to his moderate predecessors. Instead of a twentieth, he exacted a tenth of all legacies and inheritances; and during his reign (for the ancient proportion was restored after his death) he crushed alike every part of the empire under the weight of his iron sceptre. [114](#)

113 [\(return\)](#)
[The situation of the new citizens is minutely described by Pliny, (Panegyric, c. 37, 38, 39). Trajan published a law very much in their favor.]

1131 [\(return\)](#)
[Gibbon has adopted the opinion of Spanheim and of Burman, which attributes to Caracalla this edict, which gave the right of the city to all the inhabitants of the provinces. This opinion may be disputed. Several passages of Spartianus, of Aurelius Victor, and of Aristides, attribute this edict to Marc.

Aurelius. See a learned essay, entitled Joh. P. Mahneri Comm. de Marc. Aur. Antonino Constitutionis de Civitate Universo Orbi Romano data auctore. Halæ, 1772, 8vo. It appears that Marc. Aurelius made some modifications of this edict, which released the provincials from some of the charges imposed by the right of the city, and deprived them of some of the advantages which it conferred. Caracalla annulled these modifications.—W.]

114

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1295.]

When all the provincials became liable to the peculiar impositions of Roman citizens, they seemed to acquire a legal exemption from the tributes which they had paid in their former condition of subjects. Such were not the maxims of government adopted by Caracalla and his pretended son. The old as well as the new taxes were, at the same time, levied in the provinces. It was reserved for the virtue of Alexander to relieve them in a great measure from this intolerable grievance, by reducing the tributes to a thirteenth part of the sum exacted at the time of his accession. [115](#) It is impossible to conjecture the motive that engaged him to spare so trifling a remnant of the public evil; but the noxious weed, which had not been totally eradicated, again sprang up with the most luxuriant growth, and in the succeeding age darkened the Roman world with its deadly shade. In the course of this history, we shall be too often summoned to explain the land tax, the capitation, and the heavy contributions of corn, wine, oil, and meat, which were exacted from the provinces for the use of the court, the army, and the capital.

115

[\(return\)](#)

[He who paid ten aurei, the usual tribute, was charged with no more than the third part of an aureus, and proportional pieces of gold were coined by Alexander's order. Hist. August. p. 127, with the commentary of Salmasius.]

As long as Rome and Italy were respected as the centre of government, a national spirit was preserved by the ancient, and insensibly imbibed by the adopted, citizens. The principal commands of the army were filled by men who had received a liberal education, were well instructed in the advantages of laws and letters, and who had risen, by equal steps, through the regular succession of civil and military honors. [116](#) To their influence and example we may partly ascribe the modest obedience of the legions during the two first centuries of the Imperial history.

116

[\(return\)](#)

[See the lives of Agricola, Vespasian, Trajan, Severus, and his three competitors; and indeed of all the eminent men of those times.]

But when the last enclosure of the Roman constitution was trampled down by Caracalla, the separation of professions gradually succeeded to the distinction of ranks. The more polished citizens of the internal provinces were alone qualified to act as lawyers and magistrates. The rougher trade of arms was abandoned to the peasants and barbarians of the frontiers, who knew no country but their camp, no science but that of war, no civil laws, and scarcely those of military discipline. With bloody hands, savage manners, and desperate resolutions, they sometimes guarded, but much oftener subverted, the throne of the emperors.

Chapter VII: Tyranny Of Maximin, Rebellion, Civil Wars, Death Of Maximin.—Part I.

The Elevation And Tyranny Of Maximin.—Rebellion In Africa
And Italy, Under The Authority Of The Senate.—Civil Wars
And Seditions.—Violent Deaths Of Maximin And His Son, Of
Maximus And Balbinus, And Of The Three Gordians.—
Usurpation And Secular Games Of Philip.

Of the various forms of government which have prevailed in the world, an hereditary monarchy seems to present the fairest scope for ridicule. Is it possible to relate without an indignant smile, that, on the father's decease, the property of a nation, like that of a drove of oxen, descends to his infant son, as yet unknown to mankind and to himself; and that the bravest warriors and the wisest statesmen, relinquishing their natural right to empire, approach the royal cradle with bended knees and protestations of inviolable fidelity? Satire and declamation may paint these obvious topics in the most dazzling colors, but our more serious thoughts will respect a useful prejudice, that establishes a rule of succession, independent of the passions of mankind; and we shall cheerfully acquiesce in any expedient which deprives the multitude of the dangerous, and indeed the ideal, power of giving themselves a master.

In the cool shade of retirement, we may easily devise imaginary forms of government, in which the sceptre shall be constantly bestowed on the most worthy, by the free and incorrupt suffrage of the whole community. Experience overturns these airy fabrics, and teaches us, that in a large society, the election of a monarch can never devolve to the wisest, or to the most numerous part of the people. The army is the only order of men sufficiently united to concur in the same sentiments, and powerful enough to impose them on the rest of their fellow-citizens; but the temper of soldiers, habituated at once to violence and to slavery, renders them very unfit guardians of a legal, or even a civil constitution. Justice, humanity, or political wisdom, are qualities they are too little acquainted with in themselves, to appreciate them in others. Valor will acquire their esteem, and liberality will purchase their suffrage; but the first of these merits is

often lodged in the most savage breasts; the latter can only exert itself at the expense of the public; and both may be turned against the possessor of the throne, by the ambition of a daring rival.

The superior prerogative of birth, when it has obtained the sanction of time and popular opinion, is the plainest and least invidious of all distinctions among mankind. The acknowledged right extinguishes the hopes of faction, and the conscious security disarms the cruelty of the monarch. To the firm establishment of this idea we owe the peaceful succession and mild administration of European monarchies. To the defect of it we must attribute the frequent civil wars, through which an Asiatic despot is obliged to cut his way to the throne of his fathers. Yet, even in the East, the sphere of contention is usually limited to the princes of the reigning house, and as soon as the more fortunate competitor has removed his brethren by the sword and the bowstring, he no longer entertains any jealousy of his meaner subjects. But the Roman empire, after the authority of the senate had sunk into contempt, was a vast scene of confusion. The royal, and even noble, families of the provinces had long since been led in triumph before the car of the haughty republicans. The ancient families of Rome had successively fallen beneath the tyranny of the Cæsars; and whilst those princes were shackled by the forms of a commonwealth, and disappointed by the repeated failure of their posterity, ¹ it was impossible that any idea of hereditary succession should have taken root in the minds of their subjects. The right to the throne, which none could claim from birth, every one assumed from merit. The daring hopes of ambition were set loose from the salutary restraints of law and prejudice; and the meanest of mankind might, without folly, entertain a hope of being raised by valor and fortune to a rank in the army, in which a single crime would enable him to wrest the sceptre of the world from his feeble and unpopular master. After the murder of Alexander Severus, and the elevation of Maximin, no emperor could think himself safe upon the throne, and every barbarian peasant of the frontier might aspire to that august, but dangerous station.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[There had been no example of three successive generations on the throne; only three instances of sons who succeeded their fathers. The marriages of the Cæsars (notwithstanding the permission, and the frequent practice of divorces) were generally unfruitful.]

About thirty-two years before that event, the emperor Severus, returning from an eastern expedition, halted in Thrace, to celebrate, with military games, the birthday of his younger son, Geta. The country flocked in crowds to behold their sovereign, and a young barbarian of gigantic stature earnestly solicited, in his rude dialect, that he might be allowed to contend for the prize of wrestling. As the pride of discipline would have been disgraced in the overthrow of a Roman soldier by a Thracian peasant, he was matched with the stoutest followers of the camp, sixteen of whom he successively laid on the ground. His victory was rewarded by some trifling gifts, and a permission to

enlist in the troops. The next day, the happy barbarian was distinguished above a crowd of recruits, dancing and exulting after the fashion of his country. As soon as he perceived that he had attracted the emperor's notice, he instantly ran up to his horse, and followed him on foot, without the least appearance of fatigue, in a long and rapid career. "Thracian," said Severus with astonishment, "art thou disposed to wrestle after thy race?" "Most willingly, sir," replied the unwearied youth; and, almost in a breath, overthrew seven of the strongest soldiers in the army. A gold collar was the prize of his matchless vigor and activity, and he was immediately appointed to serve in the horseguards who always attended on the person of the sovereign. [2](#)

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August p. 138.]

Maximin, for that was his name, though born on the territories of the empire, descended from a mixed race of barbarians. His father was a Goth, and his mother of the nation of the Alani. He displayed on every occasion a valor equal to his strength; and his native fierceness was soon tempered or disguised by the knowledge of the world. Under the reign of Severus and his son, he obtained the rank of centurion, with the favor and esteem of both those princes, the former of whom was an excellent judge of merit. Gratitude forbade Maximin to serve under the assassin of Caracalla. Honor taught him to decline the effeminate insults of Elagabalus. On the accession of Alexander he returned to court, and was placed by that prince in a station useful to the service, and honorable to himself. The fourth legion, to which he was appointed tribune, soon became, under his care, the best disciplined of the whole army. With the general applause of the soldiers, who bestowed on their favorite hero the names of Ajax and Hercules, he was successively promoted to the first military command; [3](#) and had not he still retained too much of his savage origin, the emperor might perhaps have given his own sister in marriage to the son of Maximin. [4](#)

3

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 140. Herodian, l. vi. p. 223. Aurelius Victor. By comparing these authors, it should seem that Maximin had the particular command of the Tribellian horse, with the general commission of disciplining the recruits of the whole army. His biographer ought to have marked, with more care, his exploits, and the successive steps of his military promotions.]

4

[\(return\)](#)

[See the original letter of Alexander Severus, Hist. August. p. 149.]

Instead of securing his fidelity, these favors served only to inflame the ambition of the Thracian peasant, who deemed his fortune inadequate to his merit, as long as he was constrained to acknowledge a superior. Though a stranger to real wisdom, he was not devoid of a selfish cunning, which showed him that the emperor had lost the affection of the army, and taught him to improve their discontent to his own advantage. It is easy

for faction and calumny to shed their poison on the administration of the best of princes, and to accuse even their virtues by artfully confounding them with those vices to which they bear the nearest affinity. The troops listened with pleasure to the emissaries of Maximin. They blushed at their own ignominious patience, which, during thirteen years, had supported the vexatious discipline imposed by an effeminate Syrian, the timid slave of his mother and of the senate. It was time, they cried, to cast away that useless phantom of the civil power, and to elect for their prince and general a real soldier, educated in camps, exercised in war, who would assert the glory, and distribute among his companions the treasures, of the empire. A great army was at that time assembled on the banks of the Rhine, under the command of the emperor himself, who, almost immediately after his return from the Persian war, had been obliged to march against the barbarians of Germany. The important care of training and reviewing the new levies was intrusted to Maximin. One day, as he entered the field of exercise, the troops, either from a sudden impulse, or a formed conspiracy, saluted him emperor, silenced by their loud acclamations his obstinate refusal, and hastened to consummate their rebellion by the murder of Alexander Severus.

The circumstances of his death are variously related. The writers, who suppose that he died in ignorance of the ingratitude and ambition of Maximin affirm that, after taking a frugal repast in the sight of the army, he retired to sleep, and that, about the seventh hour of the day, a part of his own guards broke into the imperial tent, and, with many wounds, assassinated their virtuous and unsuspecting prince. [5](#) If we credit another, and indeed a more probable account, Maximin was invested with the purple by a numerous detachment, at the distance of several miles from the head-quarters; and he trusted for success rather to the secret wishes than to the public declarations of the great army. Alexander had sufficient time to awaken a faint sense of loyalty among the troops; but their reluctant professions of fidelity quickly vanished on the appearance of Maximin, who declared himself the friend and advocate of the military order, and was unanimously acknowledged emperor of the Romans by the applauding legions. The son of Mamæa, betrayed and deserted, withdrew into his tent, desirous at least to conceal his approaching fate from the insults of the multitude. He was soon followed by a tribune and some centurions, the ministers of death; but instead of receiving with manly resolution the inevitable stroke, his unavailing cries and entreaties disgraced the last moments of his life, and converted into contempt some portion of the just pity which his innocence and misfortunes must inspire. His mother, Mamæa, whose pride and avarice he loudly accused as the cause of his ruin, perished with her son. The most faithful of his friends were sacrificed to the first fury of the soldiers. Others were reserved for the more deliberate cruelty of the usurper; and those who experienced the mildest treatment, were stripped of their employments, and ignominiously driven from the court and army. [6](#)

most improbable circumstances of this wretched biographer. From his ill-worded narration, it should seem that the prince's buffoon having accidentally entered the tent, and awakened the slumbering monarch, the fear of punishment urged him to persuade the disaffected soldiers to commit the murder.]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. vi. 223-227.]

The former tyrants, Caligula and Nero, Commodus, and Caracalla, were all dissolute and unexperienced youths, [7](#) educated in the purple, and corrupted by the pride of empire, the luxury of Rome, and the perfidious voice of flattery. The cruelty of Maximin was derived from a different source, the fear of contempt. Though he depended on the attachment of the soldiers, who loved him for virtues like their own, he was conscious that his mean and barbarian origin, his savage appearance, and his total ignorance of the arts and institutions of civil life, [8](#) formed a very unfavorable contrast with the amiable manners of the unhappy Alexander. He remembered, that, in his humbler fortune, he had often waited before the door of the haughty nobles of Rome, and had been denied admittance by the insolence of their slaves. He recollected too the friendship of a few who had relieved his poverty, and assisted his rising hopes. But those who had spurned, and those who had protected, the Thracian, were guilty of the same crime, the knowledge of his original obscurity. For this crime many were put to death; and by the execution of several of his benefactors, Maximin published, in characters of blood, the indelible history of his baseness and ingratitude. [9](#)

7

[\(return\)](#)

[Caligula, the eldest of the four, was only twenty-five years of age when he ascended the throne; Caracalla was twenty-three, Commodus nineteen, and Nero no more than seventeen.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[It appears that he was totally ignorant of the Greek language; which, from its universal use in conversation and letters, was an essential part of every liberal education.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 141. Herodian, l. vii. p. 237. The latter of these historians has been most unjustly censured for sparing the vices of Maximin.]

The dark and sanguinary soul of the tyrant was open to every suspicion against those among his subjects who were the most distinguished by their birth or merit. Whenever he was alarmed with the sound of treason, his cruelty was unbounded and unrelenting. A conspiracy against his life was either discovered or imagined, and Magnus, a consular senator, was named as the principal author of it. Without a witness, without a trial, and without an opportunity of defence, Magnus, with four thousand of his supposed

accomplices, was put to death. Italy and the whole empire were infested with innumerable spies and informers. On the slightest accusation, the first of the Roman nobles, who had governed provinces, commanded armies, and been adorned with the consular and triumphal ornaments, were chained on the public carriages, and hurried away to the emperor's presence. Confiscation, exile, or simple death, were esteemed uncommon instances of his lenity. Some of the unfortunate sufferers he ordered to be sewed up in the hides of slaughtered animals, others to be exposed to wild beasts, others again to be beaten to death with clubs. During the three years of his reign, he disdained to visit either Rome or Italy. His camp, occasionally removed from the banks of the Rhine to those of the Danube, was the seat of his stern despotism, which trampled on every principle of law and justice, and was supported by the avowed power of the sword. [10](#) No man of noble birth, elegant accomplishments, or knowledge of civil business, was suffered near his person; and the court of a Roman emperor revived the idea of those ancient chiefs of slaves and gladiators, whose savage power had left a deep impression of terror and detestation. [11](#)

10

[\(return\)](#)

[The wife of Maximin, by insinuating wise counsels with female gentleness, sometimes brought back the tyrant to the way of truth and humanity. See Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xiv. c. l, where he alludes to the fact which he had more fully related under the reign of the Gordians. We may collect from the medals, that Paullina was the name of this benevolent empress; and from the title of Diva, that she died before Maximin. (Valesius ad loc. cit. Ammian.) Spanheim de U. et P. N. tom. ii. p. 300. Note: If we may believe Syrcellus and Zonaras, in was Maximin himself who ordered her death—G]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[He was compared to Spartacus and Athenio. Hist. August p. 141.]

As long as the cruelty of Maximin was confined to the illustrious senators, or even to the bold adventurers, who in the court or army expose themselves to the caprice of fortune, the body of the people viewed their sufferings with indifference, or perhaps with pleasure. But the tyrant's avarice, stimulated by the insatiate desires of the soldiers, at length attacked the public property. Every city of the empire was possessed of an independent revenue, destined to purchase corn for the multitude, and to supply the expenses of the games and entertainments. By a single act of authority, the whole mass of wealth was at once confiscated for the use of the Imperial treasury. The temples were stripped of their most valuable offerings of gold and silver, and the statues of gods, heroes, and emperors, were melted down and coined into money. These impious orders could not be executed without tumults and massacres, as in many places the people chose rather to die in the defence of their altars, than to behold in the midst of peace

their cities exposed to the rapine and cruelty of war. The soldiers themselves, among whom this sacrilegious plunder was distributed, received it with a blush; and hardened as they were in acts of violence, they dreaded the just reproaches of their friends and relations. Throughout the Roman world a general cry of indignation was heard, imploring vengeance on the common enemy of human kind; and at length, by an act of private oppression, a peaceful and unarmed province was driven into rebellion against him. [12](#)

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. vii. p. 238. Zosim. l. i. p. 15.]

The procurator of Africa was a servant worthy of such a master, who considered the fines and confiscations of the rich as one of the most fruitful branches of the Imperial revenue. An iniquitous sentence had been pronounced against some opulent youths of that country, the execution of which would have stripped them of far the greater part of their patrimony. In this extremity, a resolution that must either complete or prevent their ruin, was dictated by despair. A respite of three days, obtained with difficulty from the rapacious treasurer, was employed in collecting from their estates a great number of slaves and peasants blindly devoted to the commands of their lords, and armed with the rustic weapons of clubs and axes. The leaders of the conspiracy, as they were admitted to the audience of the procurator, stabbed him with the daggers concealed under their garments, and, by the assistance of their tumultuary train, seized on the little town of Thysdrus, [13](#) and erected the standard of rebellion against the sovereign of the Roman empire. They rested their hopes on the hatred of mankind against Maximin, and they judiciously resolved to oppose to that detested tyrant an emperor whose mild virtues had already acquired the love and esteem of the Romans, and whose authority over the province would give weight and stability to the enterprise. Gordianus, their proconsul, and the object of their choice, refused, with unfeigned reluctance, the dangerous honor, and begged with tears, that they would suffer him to terminate in peace a long and innocent life, without staining his feeble age with civil blood. Their menaces compelled him to accept the Imperial purple, his only refuge, indeed, against the jealous cruelty of Maximin; since, according to the reasoning of tyrants, those who have been esteemed worthy of the throne deserve death, and those who deliberate have already rebelled. [14](#)

13

[\(return\)](#)

[In the fertile territory of Byzacium, one hundred and fifty miles to the south of Carthage. This city was decorated, probably by the Gordians, with the title of colony, and with a fine amphitheatre, which is still in a very perfect state. See *Intinerar.* Wesseling, p. 59; and *Shaw's Travels*, p. 117.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. vii. p. 239. *Hist. August.* p. 153.]

The family of Gordianus was one of the most illustrious of the Roman senate. On the father's side he was descended from the Gracchi; on his mother's, from the emperor

Trajan. A great estate enabled him to support the dignity of his birth, and in the enjoyment of it, he displayed an elegant taste and beneficent disposition. The palace in Rome, formerly inhabited by the great Pompey, had been, during several generations, in the possession of Gordian's family. [15](#) It was distinguished by ancient trophies of naval victories, and decorated with the works of modern painting. His villa on the road to Præneste was celebrated for baths of singular beauty and extent, for three stately rooms of a hundred feet in length, and for a magnificent portico, supported by two hundred columns of the four most curious and costly sorts of marble. [16](#) The public shows exhibited at his expense, and in which the people were entertained with many hundreds of wild beasts and gladiators, [17](#) seem to surpass the fortune of a subject; and whilst the liberality of other magistrates was confined to a few solemn festivals at Rome, the magnificence of Gordian was repeated, when he was ædile, every month in the year, and extended, during his consulship, to the principal cities of Italy. He was twice elevated to the last-mentioned dignity, by Caracalla and by Alexander; for he possessed the uncommon talent of acquiring the esteem of virtuous princes, without alarming the jealousy of tyrants. His long life was innocently spent in the study of letters and the peaceful honors of Rome; and, till he was named proconsul of Africa by the voice of the senate and the approbation of Alexander, [18](#) he appears prudently to have declined the command of armies and the government of provinces. [181](#) As long as that emperor lived, Africa was happy under the administration of his worthy representative: after the barbarous Maximin had usurped the throne, Gordianus alleviated the miseries which he was unable to prevent. When he reluctantly accepted the purple, he was above fourscore years old; a last and valuable remains of the happy age of the Antonines, whose virtues he revived in his own conduct, and celebrated in an elegant poem of thirty books. With the venerable proconsul, his son, who had accompanied him into Africa as his lieutenant, was likewise declared emperor. His manners were less pure, but his character was equally amiable with that of his father. Twenty-two acknowledged concubines, and a library of sixty-two thousand volumes, attested the variety of his inclinations; and from the productions which he left behind him, it appears that the former as well as the latter were designed for use rather than for ostentation. [19](#) The Roman people acknowledged in the features of the younger Gordian the resemblance of Scipio Africanus, [191](#) recollected with pleasure that his mother was the granddaughter of Antoninus Pius, and rested the public hope on those latent virtues which had hitherto, as they fondly imagined, lain concealed in the luxurious indolence of private life.

[Hist. Aug. p. 152. The celebrated house of Pompey in carinis was usurped by Marc Antony, and consequently became, after the Triumvir's death, a part of the Imperial domain. The emperor Trajan allowed, and even encouraged, the rich senators to purchase those magnificent and useless places, (Plin. Panegyric. c. 50;) and it may seem

probable, that, on this occasion, Pompey's house came into the possession of Gordian's great-grandfather.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[The Claudian, the Numidian, the Carystian, and the Synnadian. The colors of Roman marbles have been faintly described and imperfectly distinguished. It appears, however, that the Carystian was a sea-green, and that the marble of Synnada was white mixed with oval spots of purple. See Salmasius ad Hist. August. p. 164.]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 151, 152. He sometimes gave five hundred pair of gladiators, never less than one hundred and fifty. He once gave for the use of the circus one hundred Sicilian, and as many Cappæcian Cappadecian horses. The animals designed for hunting were chiefly bears, boars, bulls, stags, elks, wild asses, &c. Elephants and lions seem to have been appropriated to Imperial magnificence.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[See the original letter, in the Augustan History, p. 152, which at once shows Alexander's respect for the authority of the senate, and his esteem for the proconsul appointed by that assembly.]

181 [\(return\)](#)

[Herodian expressly says that he had administered many provinces, lib. vii. 10.—W.]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[By each of his concubines, the younger Gordian left three or four children. His literary productions, though less numerous, were by no means contemptible.]

191 [\(return\)](#)

[Not the personal likeness, but the family descent from the Scipiod.—W.]

As soon as the Gordians had appeased the first tumult of a popular election, they removed their court to Carthage. They were received with the acclamations of the Africans, who honored their virtues, and who, since the visit of Hadrian, had never beheld the majesty of a Roman emperor. But these vain acclamations neither strengthened nor confirmed the title of the Gordians. They were induced by principle, as well as interest, to solicit the approbation of the senate; and a deputation of the noblest provincials was sent, without delay, to Rome, to relate and justify the conduct of their countrymen, who, having long suffered with patience, were at length resolved to act with vigor. The letters of the new princes were modest and respectful, excusing

the necessity which had obliged them to accept the Imperial title; but submitting their election and their fate to the supreme judgment of the senate. [20](#)

20

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. vii. p. 243. Hist. August. p. 144.]

The inclinations of the senate were neither doubtful nor divided. The birth and noble alliances of the Gordians had intimately connected them with the most illustrious houses of Rome. Their fortune had created many dependants in that assembly, their merit had acquired many friends. Their mild administration opened the flattering prospect of the restoration, not only of the civil but even of the republican government. The terror of military violence, which had first obliged the senate to forget the murder of Alexander, and to ratify the election of a barbarian peasant, [21](#) now produced a contrary effect, and provoked them to assert the injured rights of freedom and humanity. The hatred of Maximin towards the senate was declared and implacable; the tamest submission had not appeased his fury, the most cautious innocence would not remove his suspicions; and even the care of their own safety urged them to share the fortune of an enterprise, of which (if unsuccessful) they were sure to be the first victims. These considerations, and perhaps others of a more private nature, were debated in a previous conference of the consuls and the magistrates. As soon as their resolution was decided, they convoked in the temple of Castor the whole body of the senate, according to an ancient form of secrecy, [22](#) calculated to awaken their attention, and to conceal their decrees. “Conscript fathers,” said the consul Syllanus, “the two Gordians, both of consular dignity, the one your proconsul, the other your lieutenant, have been declared emperors by the general consent of Africa. Let us return thanks,” he boldly continued, “to the youth of Thysdrus; let us return thanks to the faithful people of Carthage, our generous deliverers from a horrid monster—Why do you hear me thus coolly, thus timidly? Why do you cast those anxious looks on each other? Why hesitate? Maximin is a public enemy! may his enmity soon expire with him, and may we long enjoy the prudence and felicity of Gordian the father, the valor and constancy of Gordian the son!” [23](#) The noble ardor of the consul revived the languid spirit of the senate. By a unanimous decree, the election of the Gordians was ratified, Maximin, his son, and his adherents, were pronounced enemies of their country, and liberal rewards were offered to whomsoever had the courage and good fortune to destroy them.

21

[\(return\)](#)

[Quod. tamen patres dum periculosum existimant; inermes armato esistere approbaverunt.—Aurelius Victor.]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[Even the servants of the house, the scribes, &c., were excluded, and their office was filled by the senators themselves. We are obliged to the Augustan History. p. 159, for preserving this curious example of the old discipline of the commonwealth.]

[This spirited speech, translated from the Augustan historian, p. 156, seems transcribed by him from the original registers of the senate]

During the emperor's absence, a detachment of the Prætorian guards remained at Rome, to protect, or rather to command, the capital. The præfect Vitalianus had signalized his fidelity to Maximin, by the alacrity with which he had obeyed, and even prevented the cruel mandates of the tyrant. His death alone could rescue the authority of the senate, and the lives of the senators from a state of danger and suspense. Before their resolves had transpired, a quæstor and some tribunes were commissioned to take his devoted life. They executed the order with equal boldness and success; and, with their bloody daggers in their hands, ran through the streets, proclaiming to the people and the soldiers the news of the happy revolution. The enthusiasm of liberty was seconded by the promise of a large donative, in lands and money; the statues of Maximin were thrown down; the capital of the empire acknowledged, with transport, the authority of the two Gordians and the senate; [24](#) and the example of Rome was followed by the rest of Italy.

[Herodian, l. vii. p. 244]

A new spirit had arisen in that assembly, whose long patience had been insulted by wanton despotism and military license. The senate assumed the reins of government, and, with a calm intrepidity, prepared to vindicate by arms the cause of freedom. Among the consular senators recommended by their merit and services to the favor of the emperor Alexander, it was easy to select twenty, not unequal to the command of an army, and the conduct of a war. To these was the defence of Italy intrusted. Each was appointed to act in his respective department, authorized to enroll and discipline the Italian youth; and instructed to fortify the ports and highways, against the impending invasion of Maximin. A number of deputies, chosen from the most illustrious of the senatorian and equestrian orders, were despatched at the same time to the governors of the several provinces, earnestly conjuring them to fly to the assistance of their country, and to remind the nations of their ancient ties of friendship with the Roman senate and people. The general respect with which these deputies were received, and the zeal of Italy and the provinces in favor of the senate, sufficiently prove that the subjects of Maximin were reduced to that uncommon distress, in which the body of the people has more to fear from oppression than from resistance. The consciousness of that melancholy truth, inspires a degree of persevering fury, seldom to be found in those civil wars which are artificially supported for the benefit of a few factious and designing leaders. [25](#)

[Herodian, l. vii. p. 247, l. viii. p. 277. Hist. August. p 156-158.]

For while the cause of the Gordians was embraced with such diffusive ardor, the Gordians themselves were no more. The feeble court of Carthage was alarmed by the rapid approach of Capelianus, governor of Mauritania, who, with a small band of veterans, and a fierce host of barbarians, attacked a faithful, but unwarlike province. The younger Gordian sallied out to meet the enemy at the head of a few guards, and a numerous undisciplined multitude, educated in the peaceful luxury of Carthage. His useless valor served only to procure him an honorable death on the field of battle. His aged father, whose reign had not exceeded thirty-six days, put an end to his life on the first news of the defeat. Carthage, destitute of defence, opened her gates to the conqueror, and Africa was exposed to the rapacious cruelty of a slave, obliged to satisfy his unrelenting master with a large account of blood and treasure. [26](#)

26

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. vii. p. 254. Hist. August. p. 150-160. We may observe, that one month and six days, for the reign of Gordian, is a just correction of Casaubon and Panvinus, instead of the absurd reading of one year and six months. See Commentar. p. 193. Zosimus relates, l. i. p. 17, that the two Gordians perished by a tempest in the midst of their navigation. A strange ignorance of history, or a strange abuse of metaphors!]

The fate of the Gordians filled Rome with just but unexpected terror. The senate, convoked in the temple of Concord, affected to transact the common business of the day; and seemed to decline, with trembling anxiety, the consideration of their own and the public danger. A silent consternation prevailed in the assembly, till a senator, of the name and family of Trajan, awakened his brethren from their fatal lethargy. He represented to them that the choice of cautious, dilatory measures had been long since out of their power; that Maximin, implacable by nature, and exasperated by injuries, was advancing towards Italy, at the head of the military force of the empire; and that their only remaining alternative was either to meet him bravely in the field, or tamely to expect the tortures and ignominious death reserved for unsuccessful rebellion. “We have lost,” continued he, “two excellent princes; but unless we desert ourselves, the hopes of the republic have not perished with the Gordians. Many are the senators whose virtues have deserved, and whose abilities would sustain, the Imperial dignity. Let us elect two emperors, one of whom may conduct the war against the public enemy, whilst his colleague remains at Rome to direct the civil administration. I cheerfully expose myself to the danger and envy of the nomination, and give my vote in favor of Maximus and Balbinus. Ratify my choice, conscript fathers, or appoint in their place, others more worthy of the empire.” The general apprehension silenced the whispers of jealousy; the merit of the candidates was universally acknowledged; and the house resounded with the sincere acclamations of “Long life and victory to the emperors Maximus and Balbinus. You are happy in the judgment of the senate; may the republic be happy under your administration!” [27](#)

[See the Augustan History, p. 166, from the registers of the senate; the date is confessedly faulty but the coincidence of the Apollinarian games enables us to correct it.]

Chapter VII: Tyranny Of Maximin, Rebellion, Civil Wars, Death Of Maximin.—Part II.

The virtues and the reputation of the new emperors justified the most sanguine hopes of the Romans. The various nature of their talents seemed to appropriate to each his peculiar department of peace and war, without leaving room for jealous emulation. Balbinus was an admired orator, a poet of distinguished fame, and a wise magistrate, who had exercised with innocence and applause the civil jurisdiction in almost all the interior provinces of the empire. His birth was noble, [28](#) his fortune affluent, his manners liberal and affable. In him the love of pleasure was corrected by a sense of dignity, nor had the habits of ease deprived him of a capacity for business. The mind of Maximus was formed in a rougher mould. By his valor and abilities he had raised himself from the meanest origin to the first employments of the state and army. His victories over the Sarmatians and the Germans, the austerity of his life, and the rigid impartiality of his justice, while he was a Præfect of the city, commanded the esteem of a people whose affections were engaged in favor of the more amiable Balbinus. The two colleagues had both been consuls, (Balbinus had twice enjoyed that honorable office,) both had been named among the twenty lieutenants of the senate; and since the one was sixty and the other seventy-four years old, [29](#) they had both attained the full maturity of age and experience.

[He was descended from Cornelius Balbus, a noble Spaniard, and the adopted son of Theophanes, the Greek historian. Balbus obtained the freedom of Rome by the favor of Pompey, and preserved it by the eloquence of Cicero. (See Orat. pro Cornel. Balbo.) The friendship of Cæsar, (to whom he rendered the most important secret services in the civil war) raised him to the consulship and the pontificate, honors never yet possessed by a stranger. The nephew of this Balbus triumphed over the Garamantes. See Dictionnaire de Bayle, au mot Balbus, where he distinguishes the several persons of that name, and rectifies, with his usual accuracy, the mistakes of former writers concerning them.]

[Zonaras, l. xii. p. 622. But little dependence is to be had on the authority of a modern Greek, so

grossly ignorant of the history of the third century,
that he creates several imaginary emperors, and
confounds those who really existed.]

After the senate had conferred on Maximus and Balbinus an equal portion of the consular and tribunitian powers, the title of Fathers of their country, and the joint office of Supreme Pontiff, they ascended to the Capitol to return thanks to the gods, protectors of Rome. [30](#) The solemn rites of sacrifice were disturbed by a sedition of the people. The licentious multitude neither loved the rigid Maximus, nor did they sufficiently fear the mild and humane Balbinus. Their increasing numbers surrounded the temple of Jupiter; with obstinate clamors they asserted their inherent right of consenting to the election of their sovereign; and demanded, with an apparent moderation, that, besides the two emperors, chosen by the senate, a third should be added of the family of the Gordians, as a just return of gratitude to those princes who had sacrificed their lives for the republic. At the head of the city-guards, and the youth of the equestrian order, Maximus and Balbinus attempted to cut their way through the seditious multitude. The multitude, armed with sticks and stones, drove them back into the Capitol. It is prudent to yield when the contest, whatever may be the issue of it, must be fatal to both parties. A boy, only thirteen years of age, the grandson of the elder, and nephew [301](#) of the younger Gordian, was produced to the people, invested with the ornaments and title of Cæsar. The tumult was appeased by this easy condescension; and the two emperors, as soon as they had been peaceably acknowledged in Rome, prepared to defend Italy against the common enemy.

30

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. vii. p. 256, supposes that the senate was at first convoked in the Capitol, and is very eloquent on the occasion. The Augustar History p. 116, seems much more authentic.]

301

[\(return\)](#)

[According to some, the son.—G.]

Whilst in Rome and Africa, revolutions succeeded each other with such amazing rapidity, that the mind of Maximin was agitated by the most furious passions. He is said to have received the news of the rebellion of the Gordians, and of the decree of the senate against him, not with the temper of a man, but the rage of a wild beast; which, as it could not discharge itself on the distant senate, threatened the life of his son, of his friends, and of all who ventured to approach his person. The grateful intelligence of the death of the Gordians was quickly followed by the assurance that the senate, laying aside all hopes of pardon or accommodation, had substituted in their room two emperors, with whose merit he could not be unacquainted. Revenge was the only consolation left to Maximin, and revenge could only be obtained by arms. The strength of the legions had been assembled by Alexander from all parts of the empire. Three successful campaigns against the Germans and the Sarmatians, had raised their fame, confirmed their discipline, and even increased their numbers, by filling the ranks with

the flower of the barbarian youth. The life of Maximin had been spent in war, and the candid severity of history cannot refuse him the valor of a soldier, or even the abilities of an experienced general. [31](#) It might naturally be expected, that a prince of such a character, instead of suffering the rebellion to gain stability by delay, should immediately have marched from the banks of the Danube to those of the Tyber, and that his victorious army, instigated by contempt for the senate, and eager to gather the spoils of Italy, should have burned with impatience to finish the easy and lucrative conquest. Yet as far as we can trust to the obscure chronology of that period, [32](#) it appears that the operations of some foreign war deferred the Italian expedition till the ensuing spring. From the prudent conduct of Maximin, we may learn that the savage features of his character have been exaggerated by the pencil of party, that his passions, however impetuous, submitted to the force of reason, and that the barbarian possessed something of the generous spirit of Sylla, who subdued the enemies of Rome before he suffered himself to revenge his private injuries. [33](#)

31

[\(return\)](#)

[In Herodian, l. vii. p. 249, and in the Augustan History, we have three several orations of Maximin to his army, on the rebellion of Africa and Rome: M. de Tillemont has very justly observed that they neither agree with each other nor with truth. *Histoire des Empereurs*, tom. iii. p. 799.]

32

[\(return\)](#)

[The carelessness of the writers of that age, leaves us in a singular perplexity. 1. We know that Maximus and Balbinus were killed during the Capitoline games. Herodian, l. viii. p. 285. The authority of Censorinus (*de Die Natali*, c. 18) enables us to fix those games with certainty to the year 238, but leaves us in ignorance of the month or day. 2. The election of Gordian by the senate is fixed with equal certainty to the 27th of May; but we are at a loss to discover whether it was in the same or the preceding year. Tillemont and Muratori, who maintain the two opposite opinions, bring into the field a desultory troop of authorities, conjectures and probabilities. The one seems to draw out, the other to contract the series of events between those periods, more than can be well reconciled to reason and history. Yet it is necessary to choose between them. Note: Eckhel has more recently treated these chronological questions with a perspicuity which gives great probability to his conclusions. Setting aside all the historians, whose contradictions are irreconcilable, he has only consulted the medals, and has arranged the events before us in the following order:— Maximin, A. U. 990, after having conquered the Germans, reenters

Pannonia, establishes his winter quarters at Sirmium, and prepares himself to make war against the people of the North. In the year 991, in the calends of January, commences his fourth tribunate. The Gordians are chosen emperors in Africa, probably at the beginning of the month of March. The senate confirms this election with joy, and declares Maximin the enemy of Rome. Five days after he had heard of this revolt, Maximin sets out from Sirmium on his march to Italy. These events took place about the beginning of April; a little after, the Gordians are slain in Africa by Capellianus, procurator of Mauritania. The senate, in its alarm, names as emperors Balbus and Maximus Pupianus, and intrusts the latter with the war against Maximin. Maximin is stopped on his road near Aquileia, by the want of provisions, and by the melting of the snows: he begins the siege of Aquileia at the end of April. Pupianus assembles his army at Ravenna. Maximin and his son are assassinated by the soldiers enraged at the resistance of Aquileia: and this was probably in the middle of May. Pupianus returns to Rome, and assumes the government with Balbinus; they are assassinated towards the end of July Gordian the younger ascends the throne. Eckhel de Doct. Vol vii 295.—G.]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[Velleius Paterculus, l. ii. c. 24. The president de Montesquieu (in his dialogue between Sylla and Eucrates) expresses the sentiments of the dictator in a spirited, and even a sublime manner.]

When the troops of Maximin, advancing in excellent order, arrived at the foot of the Julian Alps, they were terrified by the silence and desolation that reigned on the frontiers of Italy. The villages and open towns had been abandoned on their approach by the inhabitants, the cattle was driven away, the provisions removed or destroyed, the bridges broken down, nor was any thing left which could afford either shelter or subsistence to an invader. Such had been the wise orders of the generals of the senate: whose design was to protract the war, to ruin the army of Maximin by the slow operation of famine, and to consume his strength in the sieges of the principal cities of Italy, which they had plentifully stored with men and provisions from the deserted country. Aquileia received and withstood the first shock of the invasion. The streams that issue from the head of the Hadriatic Gulf, swelled by the melting of the winter snows, [34](#) opposed an unexpected obstacle to the arms of Maximin. At length, on a singular bridge, constructed with art and difficulty, of large hogsheads, he transported his army to the opposite bank, rooted up the beautiful vineyards in the neighborhood of Aquileia, demolished the suburbs, and employed the timber of the buildings in the engines and

towers, with which on every side he attacked the city. The walls, fallen to decay during the security of a long peace, had been hastily repaired on this sudden emergency: but the firmest defence of Aquileia consisted in the constancy of the citizens; all ranks of whom, instead of being dismayed, were animated by the extreme danger, and their knowledge of the tyrant's unrelenting temper. Their courage was supported and directed by Crispinus and Menophilus, two of the twenty lieutenants of the senate, who, with a small body of regular troops, had thrown themselves into the besieged place. The army of Maximin was repulsed in repeated attacks, his machines destroyed by showers of artificial fire; and the generous enthusiasm of the Aquileians was exalted into a confidence of success, by the opinion that Belenus, their tutelar deity, combated in person in the defence of his distressed worshippers. [35](#)

34

[\(return\)](#)

[Muratori (Annali d' Italia, tom. ii. p. 294) thinks the melting of the snows suits better with the months of June or July, than with those of February. The opinion of a man who passed his life between the Alps and the Apennines, is undoubtedly of great weight; yet I observe, 1. That the long winter, of which Muratori takes advantage, is to be found only in the Latin version, and not in the Greek text of Herodian. 2. That the vicissitudes of suns and rains, to which the soldiers of Maximin were exposed, (Herodian, l. viii. p. 277,) denote the spring rather than the summer. We may observe, likewise, that these several streams, as they melted into one, composed the Timavus, so poetically (in every sense of the word) described by Virgil. They are about twelve miles to the east of Aquileia. See Cluver. Italia Antiqua, tom. i. p. 189, &c.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. viii. p. 272. The Celtic deity was supposed to be Apollo, and received under that name the thanks of the senate. A temple was likewise built to Venus the Bald, in honor of the women of Aquileia, who had given up their hair to make ropes for the military engines.]

The emperor Maximus, who had advanced as far as Ravenna, to secure that important place, and to hasten the military preparations, beheld the event of the war in the more faithful mirror of reason and policy. He was too sensible, that a single town could not resist the persevering efforts of a great army; and he dreaded, lest the enemy, tired with the obstinate resistance of Aquileia, should on a sudden relinquish the fruitless siege, and march directly towards Rome. The fate of the empire and the cause of freedom must then be committed to the chance of a battle; and what arms could he oppose to the veteran legions of the Rhine and Danube? Some troops newly levied among the generous but enervated youth of Italy; and a body of German auxiliaries, on whose

firmness, in the hour of trial, it was dangerous to depend. In the midst of these just alarms, the stroke of domestic conspiracy punished the crimes of Maximin, and delivered Rome and the senate from the calamities that would surely have attended the victory of an enraged barbarian.

The people of Aquileia had scarcely experienced any of the common miseries of a siege; their magazines were plentifully supplied, and several fountains within the walls assured them of an inexhaustible resource of fresh water. The soldiers of Maximin were, on the contrary, exposed to the inclemency of the season, the contagion of disease, and the horrors of famine. The open country was ruined, the rivers filled with the slain, and polluted with blood. A spirit of despair and disaffection began to diffuse itself among the troops; and as they were cut off from all intelligence, they easily believed that the whole empire had embraced the cause of the senate, and that they were left as devoted victims to perish under the impregnable walls of Aquileia. The fierce temper of the tyrant was exasperated by disappointments, which he imputed to the cowardice of his army; and his wanton and ill-timed cruelty, instead of striking terror, inspired hatred, and a just desire of revenge. A party of Prætorian guards, who trembled for their wives and children in the camp of Alba, near Rome, executed the sentence of the senate. Maximin, abandoned by his guards, was slain in his tent, with his son (whom he had associated to the honors of the purple), Anulinus the præfect, and the principal ministers of his tyranny. [36](#) The sight of their heads, borne on the point of spears, convinced the citizens of Aquileia that the siege was at an end; the gates of the city were thrown open, a liberal market was provided for the hungry troops of Maximin, and the whole army joined in solemn protestations of fidelity to the senate and the people of Rome, and to their lawful emperors Maximus and Balbinus. Such was the deserved fate of a brutal savage, destitute, as he has generally been represented, of every sentiment that distinguishes a civilized, or even a human being. The body was suited to the soul. The stature of Maximin exceeded the measure of eight feet, and circumstances almost incredible are related of his matchless strength and appetite. [37](#) Had he lived in a less enlightened age, tradition and poetry might well have described him as one of those monstrous giants, whose supernatural power was constantly exerted for the destruction of mankind.

36

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. viii. p. 279. Hist. August. p. 146. The duration of Maximin's reign has not been defined with much accuracy, except by Eutropius, who allows him three years and a few days, (l. ix. 1;) we may depend on the integrity of the text, as the Latin original is checked by the Greek version of Pænius.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[Eight Roman feet and one third, which are equal to above eight English feet, as the two measures are to each other in the proportion of 967 to 1000. See

Graves's discourse on the Roman foot. We are told that Maximin could drink in a day an amphora (or about seven gallons) of wine, and eat thirty or forty pounds of meat. He could move a loaded wagon, break a horse's leg with his fist, crumble stones in his hand, and tear up small trees by the roots. See his life in the Augustan History.]

It is easier to conceive than to describe the universal joy of the Roman world on the fall of the tyrant, the news of which is said to have been carried in four days from Aquileia to Rome. The return of Maximus was a triumphal procession; his colleague and young Gordian went out to meet him, and the three princes made their entry into the capital, attended by the ambassadors of almost all the cities of Italy, saluted with the splendid offerings of gratitude and superstition, and received with the unfeigned acclamations of the senate and people, who persuaded themselves that a golden age would succeed to an age of iron. [38](#) The conduct of the two emperors corresponded with these expectations. They administered justice in person; and the rigor of the one was tempered by the other's clemency. The oppressive taxes with which Maximin had loaded the rights of inheritance and succession, were repealed, or at least moderated. Discipline was revived, and with the advice of the senate many wise laws were enacted by their imperial ministers, who endeavored to restore a civil constitution on the ruins of military tyranny. "What reward may we expect for delivering Rome from a monster?" was the question asked by Maximus, in a moment of freedom and confidence.

Balbinus answered it without hesitation—"The love of the senate, of the people, and of all mankind." "Alas!" replied his more penetrating colleague—"alas! I dread the hatred of the soldiers, and the fatal effects of their resentment." [39](#) His apprehensions were but too well justified by the event.

38

[\(return\)](#)

[See the congratulatory letter of Claudius Julianus, the consul to the two emperors, in the Augustan History.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 171.]

Whilst Maximus was preparing to defend Italy against the common foe, Balbinus, who remained at Rome, had been engaged in scenes of blood and intestine discord. Distrust and jealousy reigned in the senate; and even in the temples where they assembled, every senator carried either open or concealed arms. In the midst of their deliberations, two veterans of the guards, actuated either by curiosity or a sinister motive, audaciously thrust themselves into the house, and advanced by degrees beyond the altar of Victory. Gallicanus, a consular, and Mæcenus, a Prætorian senator, viewed with indignation their insolent intrusion: drawing their daggers, they laid the spies (for such they deemed them) dead at the foot of the altar, and then, advancing to the door of the senate, imprudently exhorted the multitude to massacre the Prætorians, as the secret

adherents of the tyrant. Those who escaped the first fury of the tumult took refuge in the camp, which they defended with superior advantage against the reiterated attacks of the people, assisted by the numerous bands of gladiators, the property of opulent nobles. The civil war lasted many days, with infinite loss and confusion on both sides. When the pipes were broken that supplied the camp with water, the Prætorians were reduced to intolerable distress; but in their turn they made desperate sallies into the city, set fire to a great number of houses, and filled the streets with the blood of the inhabitants. The emperor Balbinus attempted, by ineffectual edicts and precarious truces, to reconcile the factions at Rome. But their animosity, though smothered for a while, burnt with redoubled violence. The soldiers, detesting the senate and the people, despised the weakness of a prince, who wanted either the spirit or the power to command the obedience of his subjects. [40](#)

40

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. viii. p. 258.]

After the tyrant's death, his formidable army had acknowledged, from necessity rather than from choice, the authority of Maximus, who transported himself without delay to the camp before Aquileia. As soon as he had received their oath of fidelity, he addressed them in terms full of mildness and moderation; lamented, rather than arraigned the wild disorders of the times, and assured the soldiers, that of all their past conduct the senate would remember only their generous desertion of the tyrant, and their voluntary return to their duty. Maximus enforced his exhortations by a liberal donative, purified the camp by a solemn sacrifice of expiation, and then dismissed the legions to their several provinces, impressed, as he hoped, with a lively sense of gratitude and obedience. [41](#) But nothing could reconcile the haughty spirit of the Prætorians. They attended the emperors on the memorable day of their public entry into Rome; but amidst the general acclamations, the sullen, dejected countenance of the guards sufficiently declared that they considered themselves as the object, rather than the partners, of the triumph. When the whole body was united in their camp, those who had served under Maximin, and those who had remained at Rome, insensibly communicated to each other their complaints and apprehensions. The emperors chosen by the army had perished with ignominy; those elected by the senate were seated on the throne. [42](#) The long discord between the civil and military powers was decided by a war, in which the former had obtained a complete victory. The soldiers must now learn a new doctrine of submission to the senate; and whatever clemency was affected by that politic assembly, they dreaded a slow revenge, colored by the name of discipline, and justified by fair pretences of the public good. But their fate was still in their own hands; and if they had courage to despise the vain terrors of an impotent republic, it was easy to convince the world, that those who were masters of the arms, were masters of the authority, of the state.

41

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. viii. p. 213.]

[The observation had been made imprudently enough in the acclamations of the senate, and with regard to the soldiers it carried the appearance of a wanton insult. *Hist. August.* p. 170.]

When the senate elected two princes, it is probable that, besides the declared reason of providing for the various emergencies of peace and war, they were actuated by the secret desire of weakening by division the despotism of the supreme magistrate. Their policy was effectual, but it proved fatal both to their emperors and to themselves. The jealousy of power was soon exasperated by the difference of character. Maximus despised Balbinus as a luxurious noble, and was in his turn disdained by his colleague as an obscure soldier. Their silent discord was understood rather than seen; [43](#) but the mutual consciousness prevented them from uniting in any vigorous measures of defence against their common enemies of the Prætorian camp. The whole city was employed in the Capitoline games, and the emperors were left almost alone in the palace. On a sudden, they were alarmed by the approach of a troop of desperate assassins. Ignorant of each other's situation or designs (for they already occupied very distant apartments), afraid to give or to receive assistance, they wasted the important moments in idle debates and fruitless recriminations. The arrival of the guards put an end to the vain strife. They seized on these emperors of the senate, for such they called them with malicious contempt, stripped them of their garments, and dragged them in insolent triumph through the streets of Rome, with the design of inflicting a slow and cruel death on these unfortunate princes. The fear of a rescue from the faithful Germans of the Imperial guards shortened their tortures; and their bodies, mangled with a thousand wounds, were left exposed to the insults or to the pity of the populace. [44](#)

[*Discordiæ tacitæ, et quæ intelligerentur potius quam viderentur. Hist. August.* p. 170. This well-chosen expression is probably stolen from some better writer.]

[*Herodian*, l. viii. p. 287, 288.]

In the space of a few months, six princes had been cut off by the sword. Gordian, who had already received the title of Cæsar, was the only person that occurred to the soldiers as proper to fill the vacant throne. [45](#) They carried him to the camp, and unanimously saluted him Augustus and Emperor. His name was dear to the senate and people; his tender age promised a long impunity of military license; and the submission of Rome and the provinces to the choice of the Prætorian guards saved the republic, at the expense indeed of its freedom and dignity, from the horrors of a new civil war in the heart of the capital. [46](#)

[*Quia non alius erat in præsentī*, is the expression of the Augustan History.]

[Quintus Curtius (l. x. c. 9,) pays an elegant compliment to the emperor of the day, for having, by his happy accession, extinguished so many firebrands, sheathed so many swords, and put an end to the evils of a divided government. After weighing with attention every word of the passage, I am of opinion, that it suits better with the elevation of Gordian, than with any other period of the Roman history. In that case, it may serve to decide the age of Quintus Curtius. Those who place him under the first Cæsars, argue from the purity of his style but are embarrassed by the silence of Quintilian, in his accurate list of Roman historians.

* Note: This conjecture of Gibbon is without foundation. Many passages in the work of Quintus Curtius clearly place him at an earlier period. Thus, in speaking of the Parthians, he says, *Hinc in Parthicum perventum est, tunc ignobilem gentem: nunc caput omnium qui post Euphratem et Tigrim amnes siti Rubro mari terminantur.* The Parthian empire had this extent only in the first age of the vulgar æra: to that age, therefore, must be assigned the date of Quintus Curtius. Although the critics (says M. de Sainte Croix) have multiplied conjectures on this subject, most of them have ended by adopting the opinion which places Quintus Curtius under the reign of Claudius. See Just. Lips. ad Ann. Tac. ii. 20. Michel le Tellier Præf. in Curt. Tillemont Hist. des Emp. i. p. 251. Du Bos Reflections sur la Poesie, 2d Partie. Tiraboschi Storia della, Lett. Ital. ii. 149. Examen. crit. des Historiens d'Alexandre, 2d ed. p. 104, 849, 850.—G. —This interminable question seems as much perplexed as ever. The first argument of M. Guizot is a strong one, except that Parthian is often used by later writers for Persian. Cunzius, in his preface to an edition published at Helmstadt, (1802,) maintains the opinion of Bagnolo, which assigns Q. Curtius to the time of Constantine the Great. Schmieder, in his edit. Gotting. 1803, sums up in this sentence, *ætatem Curtii ignorari palam est.*—M.]

As the third Gordian was only nineteen years of age at the time of his death, the history of his life, were it known to us with greater accuracy than it really is, would contain little more than the account of his education, and the conduct of the ministers, who by turns abused or guided the simplicity of his unexperienced youth. Immediately after his accession, he fell into the hands of his mother's eunuchs, that pernicious vermin of the East, who, since the days of Elagabalus, had infested the Roman palace.

By the artful conspiracy of these wretches, an impenetrable veil was drawn between an innocent prince and his oppressed subjects, the virtuous disposition of Gordian was deceived, and the honors of the empire sold without his knowledge, though in a very public manner, to the most worthless of mankind. We are ignorant by what fortunate accident the emperor escaped from this ignominious slavery, and devolved his confidence on a minister, whose wise counsels had no object except the glory of his sovereign and the happiness of the people. It should seem that love and learning introduced Misiheus to the favor of Gordian. The young prince married the daughter of his master of rhetoric, and promoted his father-in-law to the first offices of the empire. Two admirable letters that passed between them are still extant. The minister, with the conscious dignity of virtue, congratulates Gordian that he is delivered from the tyranny of the eunuchs, [47](#) and still more that he is sensible of his deliverance. The emperor acknowledges, with an amiable confusion, the errors of his past conduct; and laments, with singular propriety, the misfortune of a monarch from whom a venal tribe of courtiers perpetually labor to conceal the truth. [48](#)

47

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 161. From some hints in the two letters, I should expect that the eunuchs were not expelled the palace without some degree of gentle violence, and that the young Gordian rather approved of, than consented to, their disgrace.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[Duxit uxorem filiam Misihei, quem causa eloquentiæ dignum parentela sua putavit; et præfectum statim fecit; post quod, non puerile jam et contemptibile videbatur imperium.]

The life of Misiheus had been spent in the profession of letters, not of arms; yet such was the versatile genius of that great man, that, when he was appointed Prætorian Præfect, he discharged the military duties of his place with vigor and ability. The Persians had invaded Mesopotamia, and threatened Antioch. By the persuasion of his father-in-law, the young emperor quitted the luxury of Rome, opened, for the last time recorded in history, the temple of Janus, and marched in person into the East. On his approach, with a great army, the Persians withdrew their garrisons from the cities which they had already taken, and retired from the Euphrates to the Tigris. Gordian enjoyed the pleasure of announcing to the senate the first success of his arms, which he ascribed, with a becoming modesty and gratitude, to the wisdom of his father and Præfect. During the whole expedition, Misiheus watched over the safety and discipline of the army; whilst he prevented their dangerous murmurs by maintaining a regular plenty in the camp, and by establishing ample magazines of vinegar, bacon, straw, barley, and wheat in all the cities of the frontier. [49](#) But the prosperity of Gordian expired with Misiheus, who died of a flux, not without very strong suspicions of poison. Philip, his successor in the præfecture, was an Arab by birth, and consequently, in the earlier part of his life, a robber by profession. His rise from so obscure a station to the first dignities of the

empire, seems to prove that he was a bold and able leader. But his boldness prompted him to aspire to the throne, and his abilities were employed to supplant, not to serve, his indulgent master. The minds of the soldiers were irritated by an artificial scarcity, created by his contrivance in the camp; and the distress of the army was attributed to the youth and incapacity of the prince. It is not in our power to trace the successive steps of the secret conspiracy and open sedition, which were at length fatal to Gordian. A sepulchral monument was erected to his memory on the spot [50](#) where he was killed, near the conflux of the Euphrates with the little river Aboras. [51](#) The fortunate Philip, raised to the empire by the votes of the soldiers, found a ready obedience from the senate and the provinces. [52](#)

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 162. Aurelius Victor. Porphyrius in Vit Plotin. ap. Fabricium, Biblioth. Græc. l. iv. c. 36. The philosopher Plotinus accompanied the army, prompted by the love of knowledge, and by the hope of penetrating as far as India.]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[About twenty miles from the little town of Circesium, on the frontier of the two empires. * Note: Now Kerkesia; placed in the angle formed by the juncture of the Chaboras, or al Khabour, with the Euphrates. This situation appeared advantageous to Diocletian, that he raised fortifications to make it the but wark of the empire on the side of Mesopotamia. D'Anville. Geog. Anc. ii. 196.—G. It is the Carchemish of the Old Testament, 2 Chron. xxxv. 20. 1er. xlv. 2.—M.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[The inscription (which contained a very singular pun) was erased by the order of Licinius, who claimed some degree of relationship to Philip, (Hist. August. p. 166;) but the tumulus, or mound of earth which formed the sepulchre, still subsisted in the time of Julian. See Ammian Marcellin. xxiii. 5.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor. Eutrop. ix. 2. Orosius, vii. 20. Ammianus Marcellinus, xxiii. 5. Zosimus, l. i. p. 19. Philip, who was a native of Bostra, was about forty years of age. * Note: Now Bosra. It was once the metropolis of a province named Arabia, and the chief city of Auranitis, of which the name is preserved in Beled Hauran, the limits of which meet the desert. D'Anville. Geog. Anc. ii. 188. According to Victor, (in Cæsar,) Philip was a native of Tracbonitis another province of Arabia.—G.]

We cannot forbear transcribing the ingenious, though somewhat fanciful description, which a celebrated writer of our own times has traced of the military government of the Roman empire. What in that age was called the Roman empire, was only an irregular republic, not unlike the aristocracy [53](#) of Algiers, [54](#) where the militia, possessed of the sovereignty, creates and deposes a magistrate, who is styled a Dey. Perhaps, indeed, it may be laid down as a general rule, that a military government is, in some respects, more republican than monarchical. Nor can it be said that the soldiers only partook of the government by their disobedience and rebellions. The speeches made to them by the emperors, were they not at length of the same nature as those formerly pronounced to the people by the consuls and the tribunes? And although the armies had no regular place or forms of assembly; though their debates were short, their action sudden, and their resolves seldom the result of cool reflection, did they not dispose, with absolute sway, of the public fortune? What was the emperor, except the minister of a violent government, elected for the private benefit of the soldiers?

53 [\(return\)](#)

[Can the epithet of Aristocracy be applied, with any propriety, to the government of Algiers? Every military government floats between two extremes of absolute monarchy and wild democracy.]

54 [\(return\)](#)

[The military republic of the Mamelukes in Egypt would have afforded M. de Montesquieu (see *Considerations sur la Grandeur et la Decadence des Romains*, c. 16) a juster and more noble parallel.]

“When the army had elected Philip, who was Prætorian præfect to the third Gordian, the latter demanded that he might remain sole emperor; he was unable to obtain it. He requested that the power might be equally divided between them; the army would not listen to his speech. He consented to be degraded to the rank of Cæsar; the favor was refused him. He desired, at least, he might be appointed Prætorian præfect; his prayer was rejected. Finally, he pleaded for his life. The army, in these several judgments, exercised the supreme magistracy.” According to the historian, whose doubtful narrative the President De Montesquieu has adopted, Philip, who, during the whole transaction, had preserved a sullen silence, was inclined to spare the innocent life of his benefactor; till, recollecting that his innocence might excite a dangerous compassion in the Roman world, he commanded, without regard to his suppliant cries, that he should be seized, stripped, and led away to instant death. After a moment’s pause, the inhuman sentence was executed. [55](#)

55 [\(return\)](#)

[The Augustan History (p. 163, 164) cannot, in this instance, be reconciled with itself or with probability. How could Philip condemn his predecessor, and yet consecrate his memory? How could he order his public execution, and yet, in his letters to the senate, exculpate himself from the

guilt of his death? Philip, though an ambitious usurper, was by no means a mad tyrant. Some chronological difficulties have likewise been discovered by the nice eyes of Tillemont and Muratori, in this supposed association of Philip to the empire. * Note: Wenck endeavors to reconcile these discrepancies. He supposes that Gordian was led away, and died a natural death in prison. This is directly contrary to the statement of Capitolinus and of Zosimus, whom he adduces in support of his theory. He is more successful in his precedents of usurpers deifying the victims of their ambition. *Sit divus, dummodo non sit vivus.*—M.]

Chapter VII: Tyranny Of Maximin, Rebellion, Civil Wars, Death Of Maximin.—Part III.

On his return from the East to Rome, Philip, desirous of obliterating the memory of his crimes, and of captivating the affections of the people, solemnized the secular games with infinite pomp and magnificence. Since their institution or revival by Augustus, [56](#) they had been celebrated by Claudius, by Domitian, and by Severus, and were now renewed the fifth time, on the accomplishment of the full period of a thousand years from the foundation of Rome. Every circumstance of the secular games was skillfully adapted to inspire the superstitious mind with deep and solemn reverence. The long interval between them [57](#) exceeded the term of human life; and as none of the spectators had already seen them, none could flatter themselves with the expectation of beholding them a second time. The mystic sacrifices were performed, during three nights, on the banks of the Tyber; and the Campus Martius resounded with music and dances, and was illuminated with innumerable lamps and torches. Slaves and strangers were excluded from any participation in these national ceremonies. A chorus of twenty-seven youths, and as many virgins, of noble families, and whose parents were both alive, implored the propitious gods in favor of the present, and for the hope of the rising generation; requesting, in religious hymns, that according to the faith of their ancient oracles, they would still maintain the virtue, the felicity, and the empire of the Roman people. The magnificence of Philip's shows and entertainments dazzled the eyes of the multitude. The devout were employed in the rites of superstition, whilst the reflecting few revolved in their anxious minds the past history and the future fate of the empire.[58](#)

[The account of the last supposed celebration, though in an enlightened period of history, was so very doubtful and obscure, that the alternative seems not doubtful. When the popish jubilees, the copy of the secular games, were invented by Boniface VII., the crafty pope pretended that he

only revived an ancient institution. See M. le Chais, *Lettres sur les Jubiles.*]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[Either of a hundred or a hundred and ten years. Varro and Livy adopted the former opinion, but the infallible authority of the Sybil consecrated the latter, (*Censorinus de Die Natal.* c. 17.) The emperors Claudius and Philip, however, did not treat the oracle with implicit respect.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[The idea of the secular games is best understood from the poem of Horace, and the description of Zosimus, 1. l. ii. p. 167, &c.] Since Romulus, with a small band of shepherds and outlaws, fortified himself on the hills near the Tyber, ten centuries had already elapsed. [59](#) During the four first ages, the Romans, in the laborious school of poverty, had acquired the virtues of war and government: by the vigorous exertion of those virtues, and by the assistance of fortune, they had obtained, in the course of the three succeeding centuries, an absolute empire over many countries of Europe, Asia, and Africa. The last three hundred years had been consumed in apparent prosperity and internal decline. The nation of soldiers, magistrates, and legislators, who composed the thirty-five tribes of the Roman people, were dissolved into the common mass of mankind, and confounded with the millions of servile provincials, who had received the name, without adopting the spirit, of Romans. A mercenary army, levied among the subjects and barbarians of the frontier, was the only order of men who preserved and abused their independence. By their tumultuary election, a Syrian, a Goth, or an Arab, was exalted to the throne of Rome, and invested with despotic power over the conquests and over the country of the Scipios.

59

[\(return\)](#)

[The received calculation of Varro assigns to the foundation of Rome an æra that corresponds with the 754th year before Christ. But so little is the chronology of Rome to be depended on, in the more early ages, that Sir Isaac Newton has brought the same event as low as the year 627 (*Compare Niebuhr vol. i. p. 271.—M.*)]

The limits of the Roman empire still extended from the Western Ocean to the Tigris, and from Mount Atlas to the Rhine and the Danube. To the undiscerning eye of the vulgar, Philip appeared a monarch no less powerful than Hadrian or Augustus had formerly been. The form was still the same, but the animating health and vigor were

fled. The industry of the people was discouraged and exhausted by a long series of oppression. The discipline of the legions, which alone, after the extinction of every other virtue, had propped the greatness of the state, was corrupted by the ambition, or relaxed by the weakness, of the emperors. The strength of the frontiers, which had always consisted in arms rather than in fortifications, was insensibly undermined; and the fairest provinces were left exposed to the rapaciousness or ambition of the barbarians, who soon discovered the decline of the Roman empire.

Chapter VIII: State Of Persia And Restoration Of The Monarchy.—Part I.

Of The State Of Persia After The Restoration Of The Monarchy
By Artaxerxes.

Whenever Tacitus indulges himself in those beautiful episodes, in which he relates some domestic transaction of the Germans or of the Parthians, his principal object is to relieve the attention of the reader from a uniform scene of vice and misery. From the reign of Augustus to the time of Alexander Severus, the enemies of Rome were in her bosom—the tyrants and the soldiers; and her prosperity had a very distant and feeble interest in the revolutions that might happen beyond the Rhine and the Euphrates. But when the military order had levelled, in wild anarchy, the power of the prince, the laws of the senate, and even the discipline of the camp, the barbarians of the North and of the East, who had long hovered on the frontier, boldly attacked the provinces of a declining monarchy. Their vexatious inroads were changed into formidable irruptions, and, after a long vicissitude of mutual calamities, many tribes of the victorious invaders established themselves in the provinces of the Roman Empire. To obtain a clearer knowledge of these great events, we shall endeavor to form a previous idea of the character, forces, and designs of those nations who avenged the cause of Hannibal and Mithridates.

In the more early ages of the world, whilst the forest that covered Europe afforded a retreat to a few wandering savages, the inhabitants of Asia were already collected into populous cities, and reduced under extensive empires the seat of the arts, of luxury, and of despotism. The Assyrians reigned over the East, [1](#) till the sceptre of Ninus and Semiramis dropped from the hands of their enervated successors. The Medes and the Babylonians divided their power, and were themselves swallowed up in the monarchy of the Persians, whose arms could not be confined within the narrow limits of Asia. Followed, as it is said, by two millions of *men*, Xerxes, the descendant of Cyrus, invaded Greece.

Thirty thousand *soldiers*, under the command of Alexander, the son of Philip, who was intrusted by the Greeks with their glory and revenge, were sufficient to subdue

Persia. The princes of the house of Seleucus usurped and lost the Macedonian command over the East. About the same time, that, by an ignominious treaty, they resigned to the Romans the country on this side Mount Tarus, they were driven by the Parthians, [1001](#) an obscure horde of Scythian origin, from all the provinces of Upper Asia. The formidable power of the Parthians, which spread from India to the frontiers of Syria, was in its turn subverted by Ardshir, or Artaxerxes; the founder of a new dynasty, which, under the name of Sassanides, governed Persia till the invasion of the Arabs. This great revolution, whose fatal influence was soon experienced by the Romans, happened in the fourth year of Alexander Severus, two hundred and twenty-six years after the Christian era. [2](#) [201](#)

1 [\(return\)](#)

[An ancient chronologist, quoted by Valleius Paterculus, (l. i. c. 6,) observes, that the Assyrians, the Medes, the Persians, and the Macedonians, reigned over Asia one thousand nine hundred and ninety-five years, from the accession of Ninus to the defeat of Antiochus by the Romans. As the latter of these great events happened 289 years before Christ, the former may be placed 2184 years before the same æra. The Astronomical Observations, found at Babylon, by Alexander, went fifty years higher.]

1001 [\(return\)](#)

[The Parthians were a tribe of the Indo-Germanic branch which dwelt on the south-east of the Caspian, and belonged to the same race as the Getæ, the Massagetæ, and other nations, confounded by the ancients under the vague denomination of Scythians. Klaproth, Tableaux Hist. d l'Asie, p. 40. Strabo (p. 747) calls the Parthians Carduchi, i.e., the inhabitants of Curdistan.—M.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[In the five hundred and thirty-eighth year of the æra of Seleucus. See Agathias, l. ii. p. 63. This great event (such is the carelessness of the Orientals) is placed by Eutychius as high as the tenth year of Commodus, and by Moses of Chorene as low as the reign of Philip. Ammianus Marcellinus has so servilely copied (xxiii. 6) his ancient materials, which are indeed very good, that he describes the family of the Arsacides as still seated on the Persian throne in the middle of the fourth century.]

201 [\(return\)](#)

[The Persian History, if the poetry of the Shah Nameh, the Book of Kings, may deserve that name mentions four dynasties from the earliest ages to the invasion of the Saracens. The Shah Nameh was composed with the view of perpetuating the

remains of the original Persian records or traditions which had survived the Saracenic invasion. The task was undertaken by the poet Dukiki, and afterwards, under the patronage of Mahmood of Ghazni, completed by Ferdusi. The first of these dynasties is that of Kaiomors, as Sir W. Jones observes, the dark and fabulous period; the second, that of the Kaianian, the heroic and poetical, in which the learned have discovered some curious, and imagined some fanciful, analogies with the Jewish, the Greek, and the Roman accounts of the eastern world. See, on the Shah Nameh, Translation by Goerres, with Von Hammer's Review, Vienna Jahrbuch von Lit. 17, 75, 77. Malcolm's Persia, 8vo. ed. i. 503. Macan's Preface to his Critical Edition of the Shah Nameh. On the early Persian History, a very sensible abstract of various opinions in Malcolm's Hist. of Persian.—M.]

Artaxerxes had served with great reputation in the armies of Artaban, the last king of the Parthians, and it appears that he was driven into exile and rebellion by royal ingratitude, the customary reward for superior merit. His birth was obscure, and the obscurity equally gave room to the aspersions of his enemies, and the flattery of his adherents. If we credit the scandal of the former, Artaxerxes sprang from the illegitimate commerce of a tanner's wife with a common soldier. [3](#) The latter represent him as descended from a branch of the ancient kings of Persia, though time and misfortune had gradually reduced his ancestors to the humble station of private citizens. [4](#) As the lineal heir of the monarchy, he asserted his right to the throne, and challenged the noble task of delivering the Persians from the oppression under which they groaned above five centuries since the death of Darius. The Parthians were defeated in three great battles. [401](#) In the last of these their king Artaban was slain, and the spirit of the nation was forever broken. [5](#) The authority of Artaxerxes was solemnly acknowledged in a great assembly held at Balch in Khorasan. [501](#) Two younger branches of the royal house of Arsaces were confounded among the prostrate satraps. A third, more mindful of ancient grandeur than of present necessity, attempted to retire, with a numerous train of vessels, towards their kinsman, the king of Armenia; but this little army of deserters was intercepted, and cut off, by the vigilance of the conqueror, [6](#) who boldly assumed the double diadem, and the title of King of Kings, which had been enjoyed by his predecessor. But these pompous titles, instead of gratifying the vanity of the Persian, served only to admonish him of his duty, and to inflame in his soul the ambition of restoring in their full splendor, the religion and empire of Cyrus.

[The tanner's name was Babec; the soldier's, Sassan: from the former Artaxerxes obtained the surname of Babegan, from the latter all his descendants have been styled Sassanides.]

- 4 [\(return\)](#)
[D'Herbelot, Bibliotheque Orientale, Ardshir.]
- 401 [\(return\)](#)
[In the plain of Hoormuz, the son of Babek was hailed in the field with the proud title of Shahan Shah, king of kings—a name ever since assumed by the sovereigns of Persia. Malcolm, i. 71.—M.]
- 5 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion Cassius, l. lxxx. Herodian, l. vi. p. 207. Abulpharagins Dynast. p. 80.]
- 501 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Persian account of the rise of Ardeschir Babegan in Malcolm l 69.—M.]
- 6 [\(return\)](#)
[See Moses Chorenensis, l. ii. c. 65—71.]

I. During the long servitude of Persia under the Macedonian and the Parthian yoke, the nations of Europe and Asia had mutually adopted and corrupted each other's superstitions. The Arsacides, indeed, practised the worship of the Magi; but they disgraced and polluted it with a various mixture of foreign idolatry. [601](#) The memory of Zoroaster, the ancient prophet and philosopher of the Persians, [7](#) was still revered in the East; but the obsolete and mysterious language, in which the Zendavesta was composed, [8](#) opened a field of dispute to seventy sects, who variously explained the fundamental doctrines of their religion, and were all indifferently devided by a crowd of infidels, who rejected the divine mission and miracles of the prophet. To suppress the idolaters, reunite the schismatics, and confute the unbelievers, by the infallible decision of a general council, the pious Artaxerxes summoned the Magi from all parts of his dominions. These priests, who had so long sighed in contempt and obscurity obeyed the welcome summons; and, on the appointed day, appeared, to the number of about eighty thousand. But as the debates of so tumultuous an assembly could not have been directed by the authority of reason, or influenced by the art of policy, the Persian synod was reduced, by successive operations, to forty thousand, to four thousand, to four hundred, to forty, and at last to seven Magi, the most respected for their learning and piety. One of these, Erdaviraph, a young but holy prelate, received from the hands of his brethren three cups of soporiferous wine. He drank them off, and instantly fell into a long and profound sleep. As soon as he waked, he related to the king and to the believing multitude, his journey to heaven, and his intimate conferences with the Deity. Every doubt was silenced by this supernatural evidence; and the articles of the faith of Zoroaster were fixed with equal authority and precision. [9](#) A short delineation of that celebrated system will be found useful, not only to display the character of the Persian nation, but to illustrate many of their most important transactions, both in peace and war, with the Roman empire. [10](#)

- 601 [\(return\)](#)
[Silvestre de Sacy (Antiquites de la Perse) had

proved the neglect of the Zoroastrian religion under the Parthian kings.—M.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[Hyde and Prideaux, working up the Persian legends and their own conjectures into a very agreeable story, represent Zoroaster as a contemporary of Darius Hystaspes. But it is sufficient to observe, that the Greek writers, who lived almost in the age of Darius, agree in placing the æra of Zoroaster many hundred, or even thousand, years before their own time. The judicious criticisms of Mr. Moyle perceived, and maintained against his uncle, Dr. Prideaux, the antiquity of the Persian prophet. See his work, vol. ii. * Note: There are three leading theories concerning the age of Zoroaster: 1. That which assigns him to an age of great and almost indefinite antiquity—it is that of Moyle, adopted by Gibbon, Volney, *Recherches sur l'Histoire*, ii. 2. Rhode, also, (*die Heilige Sage*, &c.,) in a very ingenious and ably-developed theory, throws the Bactrian prophet far back into antiquity 2. Foucher, (*Mem. de l'Acad.* xxvii. 253,) Tychsen, (*in Com. Soc. Gott.* ii. 112), Heeren, (*Ideen.* i. 459,) and recently Holty, identify the Gushtasp of the Persian mythological history with Cyaxares the First, the king of the Medes, and consider the religion to be Median in its origin. M. Guizot considers this opinion most probable, note in loc. 3. Hyde, Prideaux, Anquetil du Perron, Kleuker, Herder, Goerres, (*Mythen-Geschichte*,) Von Hammer. (*Wien. Jahrbuch*, vol. ix.,) Malcolm, (i. 528,) De Guigniaut, (*Relig. de l'Antiq.* 2d part, vol. iii.,) Klaproth, (*Tableaux de l'Asie*, p. 21,) make Gushtasp Darius Hystaspes, and Zoroaster his contemporary. The silence of Herodotus appears the great objection to this theory. Some writers, as M. Foucher (resting, as M. Guizot observes, on the doubtful authority of Pliny,) make more than one Zoroaster, and so attempt to reconcile the conflicting theories.— M.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[That ancient idiom was called the Zend. The language of the commentary, the Pehlvi, though much more modern, has ceased many ages ago to be a living tongue. This fact alone (if it is allowed as authentic) sufficiently warrants the antiquity of those writings which M d' Anquetil has brought into Europe, and translated into French. * Note: Zend signifies life, living. The word means, either the

collection of the canonical books of the followers of Zoroaster, or the language itself in which they are written. They are the books that contain the word of life whether the language was originally called Zend, or whether it was so called from the contents of the books. Avesta means word, oracle, revelation: this term is not the title of a particular work, but of the collection of the books of Zoroaster, as the revelation of Ormuzd. This collection is sometimes called Zendavesta, sometimes briefly Zend. The Zend was the ancient language of Media, as is proved by its affinity with the dialects of Armenia and Georgia; it was already a dead language under the Arsacides in the country which was the scene of the events recorded in the Zendavesta. Some critics, among others Richardson and Sir W. Jones, have called in question the antiquity of these books. The former pretended that Zend had never been a written or spoken language, but had been invented in the later times by the Magi, for the purposes of their art; but Kleuker, in the dissertations which he added to those of Anquetil and the Abbé Foucher, has proved that the Zend was a living and spoken language.—G. Sir W. Jones appears to have abandoned his doubts, on discovering the affinity between the Zend and the Sanskrit. Since the time of Kleuker, this question has been investigated by many learned scholars. Sir W. Jones, Leyden, (*Asiat. Research.* x. 283,) and Mr. Erskine, (*Bombay Trans.* ii. 299,) consider it a derivative from the Sanskrit. The antiquity of the Zendavesta has likewise been asserted by Rask, the great Danish linguist, who, according to Malcolm, brought back from the East fresh transcripts and additions to those published by Anquetil. According to Rask, the Zend and Sanskrit are sister dialects; the one the parent of the Persian, the other of the Indian family of languages.—G. and M.—But the subject is more satisfactorily illustrated in Bopp's comparative Grammar of the Sanscrit, Zend, Greek, Latin, Lithuanian, Gothic, and German languages. Berlin. 1833-5. According to Bopp, the Zend is, in some respects, of a more remarkable structure than the Sanskrit. Parts of the Zendavesta have been published in the original, by M. Bournouf, at Paris, and M. Ol. shausen, in Hamburg.—M.—The Pehlvi was the language of the countries bordering on Assyria, and probably of Assyria itself. Pehlvi signifies valor, heroism; the Pehlvi, therefore, was the language of the ancient heroes and kings of Persia, the valiant. (Mr. Erskine

prefers the derivation from Pehla, a border.—M.) It contains a number of Aramaic roots. Anquetil considered it formed from the Zend. Kleuker does not adopt this opinion. The Pehlvi, he says, is much more flowing, and less overcharged with vowels, than the Zend. The books of Zoroaster, first written in Zend, were afterwards translated into Pehlvi and Parsi. The Pehlvi had fallen into disuse under the dynasty of the Sassanides, but the learned still wrote it. The Parsi, the dialect of Pars or Farristan, was then prevailing dialect. Kleuker, *Anhang zum Zend Avesta*, 2, ii. part i. p. 158, part ii. 31.—G.—Mr. Erskine (*Bombay Transactions*) considers the existing *Zendavesta* to have been compiled in the time of Ardeschir Babegan.—M.]

9 [\(return\)](#)
[Hyde de Religione veterum Pers. c. 21.]

10 [\(return\)](#)
[I have principally drawn this account from the *Zendavesta* of M. d'Anquetil, and the *Sadder*, subjoined to Dr. Hyde's treatise. It must, however, be confessed, that the studied obscurity of a prophet, the figurative style of the East, and the deceitful medium of a French or Latin version may have betrayed us into error and heresy, in this abridgment of Persian theology. * Note: It is to be regretted that Gibbon followed the post-Mahometan *Sadder* of Hyde.—M.]

The great and fundamental article of the system was the celebrated doctrine of the two principles; a bold and injudicious attempt of Eastern philosophy to reconcile the existence of moral and physical evil with the attributes of a beneficent Creator and Governor of the world. The first and original Being, in whom, or by whom, the universe exists, is denominated in the writings of Zoroaster, *Time without bounds*; [1001a](#) but it must be confessed, that this infinite substance seems rather a metaphysical abstraction of the mind than a real object endowed with self-consciousness, or possessed of moral perfections. From either the blind or the intelligent operation of this infinite Time, which bears but too near an affinity with the chaos of the Greeks, the two secondary but active principles of the universe were from all eternity produced, Ormusd and Ahriman, each of them possessed of the powers of creation, but each disposed, by his invariable nature, to exercise them with different designs. [1002](#) The principle of good is eternally absorbed in light; the principle of evil eternally buried in darkness. The wise benevolence of Ormusd formed man capable of virtue, and abundantly provided his fair habitation with the materials of happiness. By his vigilant providence, the motion of the planets, the order of the seasons, and the temperate mixture of the elements, are preserved. But the malice of Ahriman has long since pierced *Ormusd's egg*; or, in other words, has violated the harmony of his works. Since that fatal eruption, the most minute articles of

good and evil are intimately intermingled and agitated together; the rankest poisons spring up amidst the most salutary plants; deluges, earthquakes, and conflagrations attest the conflict of Nature, and the little world of man is perpetually shaken by vice and misfortune. Whilst the rest of human kind are led away captives in the chains of their infernal enemy, the faithful Persian alone reserves his religious adoration for his friend and protector Ormusd, and fights under his banner of light, in the full confidence that he shall, in the last day, share the glory of his triumph. At that decisive period, the enlightened wisdom of goodness will render the power of Ormusd superior to the furious malice of his rival. Ahriman and his followers, disarmed and subdued, will sink into their native darkness; and virtue will maintain the eternal peace and harmony of the universe. [11](#) [1101](#)

1001a

[\(return\)](#)

[Zeruane Akerene, so translated by Anquetil and Kleuker. There is a dissertation of Foucher on this subject, Mem. de l'Acad. des Inscr. t. xxix. According to Bohlen (das alte Indien) it is the Sanskrit Sarvan Akaranam, the Uncreated Whole; or, according to Fred. Schlegel, Sarvan Akharyam the Uncreate Indivisible.—M.]

1002

[\(return\)](#)

[This is an error. Ahriman was not forced by his invariable nature to do evil; the Zendavesta expressly recognizes (see the Izeschne) that he was born good, that in his origin he was light; envy rendered him evil; he became jealous of the power and attributes of Ormuzd; then light was changed into darkness, and Ahriman was precipitated into the abyss. See the Abridgment of the Doctrine of the Ancient Persians, by Anquetil, c. ii Section 2.—G.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[The modern Parsees (and in some degree the Sadder) exalt Ormusd into the first and omnipotent cause, whilst they degrade Ahriman into an inferior but rebellious spirit. Their desire of pleasing the Mahometans may have contributed to refine their theological systems.]

1101

[\(return\)](#)

[According to the Zendavesta, Ahriman will not be annihilated or precipitated forever into darkness: at the resurrection of the dead he will be entirely defeated by Ormuzd, his power will be destroyed, his kingdom overthrown to its foundations, he will himself be purified in torrents of melting metal; he will change his heart and his will, become holy, heavenly establish in his dominions the law and word of Ormuzd, unite himself with him in

everlasting friendship, and both will sing hymns in honor of the Great Eternal. See Anquetil's Abridgment. Kleuker, Anhang part iii. p 85, 36; and the Izeschne, one of the books of the Zendavesta. According to the Sadder Bun-Dehesch, a more modern work, Ahriman is to be annihilated: but this is contrary to the text itself of the Zendavesta, and to the idea its author gives of the kingdom of Eternity, after the twelve thousand years assigned to the contest between Good and Evil.—G.]

Chapter VIII: State Of Persia And Restoration Of The Monarchy.—Part II.

The theology of Zoroaster was darkly comprehended by foreigners, and even by the far greater number of his disciples; but the most careless observers were struck with the philosophic simplicity of the Persian worship. “That people,” said Herodotus, [12](#) “rejects the use of temples, of altars, and of statues, and smiles at the folly of those nations who imagine that the gods are sprung from, or bear any affinity with, the human nature. The tops of the highest mountains are the places chosen for sacrifices. Hymns and prayers are the principal worship; the Supreme God, who fills the wide circle of heaven, is the object to whom they are addressed.” Yet, at the same time, in the true spirit of a polytheist, he accuseth them of adoring Earth, Water, Fire, the Winds, and the Sun and Moon. But the Persians of every age have denied the charge, and explained the equivocal conduct, which might appear to give a color to it. The elements, and more particularly Fire, Light, and the Sun, whom they called Mithra, [1201](#) were the objects of their religious reverence because they considered them as the purest symbols, the noblest productions, and the most powerful agents of the Divine Power and Nature. [13](#)

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodotus, l. i. c. 131. But Dr. Prideaux thinks, with reason, that the use of temples was afterwards permitted in the Magian religion. Note: The Pyræa, or fire temples of the Zoroastrians, (observes Kleuker, Persica, p. 16,) were only to be found in Media or Aderbidjan, provinces into which Herodotus did not penetrate.—M.]

1201

[\(return\)](#)

[Among the Persians Mithra is not the Sun: Anquetil has contested and triumphantly refuted the opinion of those who confound them, and it is evidently contrary to the text of the Zendavesta. Mithra is the first of the genii, or jzeds, created by Ormuzd; it is he who watches over all nature. Hence arose the misapprehension of some of the Greeks,

who have said that Mithra was the *summus deus* of the Persians: he has a thousand ears and ten thousand eyes. The Chaldeans appear to have assigned him a higher rank than the Persians. It is he who bestows upon the earth the light of the sun. The sun, named Khor, (brightness,) is thus an inferior genius, who, with many other genii, bears a part in the functions of Mithra. These assistant genii to another genius are called his *kamkars*; but in the *Zendavesta* they are never confounded. On the days sacred to a particular genius, the Persian ought to recite, not only the prayers addressed to him, but those also which are addressed to his *kamkars*; thus the hymn or *iescht* of Mithra is recited on the day of the sun, (Khor,) and vice versa. It is probably this which has sometimes caused them to be confounded; but Anquetil had himself exposed this error, which Kleuker, and all who have studied the *Zendavesta*, have noticed. See viii. Diss. of Anquetil. Kleuker's *Anhang*, part iii. p. 132.—G. M. Guizot is unquestionably right, according to the pure and original doctrine of the Zend. The Mithriac worship, which was so extensively propagated in the West, and in which Mithra and the sun were perpetually confounded, seems to have been formed from a fusion of Zoroastrianism and Chaldaism, or the Syrian worship of the sun. An excellent abstract of the question, with references to the works of the chief modern writers on his curious subject, De Sacy, Kleuker, Von Hammer, &c., may be found in De Guigniaut's translation of Kreuzer. *Relig. d'Antiquite*, notes viii. ix. to book ii. vol. i. 2d part, page 728.—M.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Hyde de *Relig. Pers.* c. 8. Notwithstanding all their distinctions and protestations, which seem sincere enough, their tyrants, the Mahometans, have constantly stigmatized them as idolatrous worshippers of the fire.]

Every mode of religion, to make a deep and lasting impression on the human mind, must exercise our obedience, by enjoining practices of devotion, for which we can assign no reason; and must acquire our esteem, by inculcating moral duties analogous to the dictates of our own hearts. The religion of Zoroaster was abundantly provided with the former and possessed a sufficient portion of the latter. At the age of puberty, the faithful Persian was invested with a mysterious girdle, the badge of the divine protection; and from that moment all the actions of his life, even the most indifferent, or the most necessary, were sanctified by their peculiar prayers, ejaculations, or genuflections; the omission of which, under any circumstances, was a grievous sin, not

inferior in guilt to the violation of the moral duties. The moral duties, however, of justice, mercy, liberality, &c., were in their turn required of the disciple of Zoroaster, who wished to escape the persecution of Ahriman, and to live with Ormusd in a blissful eternity, where the degree of felicity will be exactly proportioned to the degree of virtue and piety. [14](#)

14

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Sadder, the smallest part of which consists of moral precepts. The ceremonies enjoined are infinite and trifling. Fifteen genuflections, prayers, &c., were required whenever the devout Persian cut his nails or made water; or as often as he put on the sacred girdle Sadder, Art. 14, 50, 60. * Note: Zoroaster exacted much less ceremonial observance, than at a later period, the priests of his doctrines. This is the progress of all religions the worship, simple in its origin, is gradually overloaded with minute superstitions. The maxim of the Zendavesta, on the relative merit of sowing the earth and of prayers, quoted below by Gibbon, proves that Zoroaster did not attach too much importance to these observances. Thus it is not from the Zendavesta that Gibbon derives the proof of his allegation, but from the Sadder, a much later work.—G]

But there are some remarkable instances in which Zoroaster lays aside the prophet, assumes the legislator, and discovers a liberal concern for private and public happiness, seldom to be found among the grovelling or visionary schemes of superstition. Fasting and celibacy, the common means of purchasing the divine favor, he condemns with abhorrence as a criminal rejection of the best gifts of Providence. The saint, in the Magian religion, is obliged to beget children, to plant useful trees, to destroy noxious animals, to convey water to the dry lands of Persia, and to work out his salvation by pursuing all the labors of agriculture. [1401](#) We may quote from the Zendavesta a wise and benevolent maxim, which compensates for many an absurdity. “He who sows the ground with care and diligence acquires a greater stock of religious merit than he could gain by the repetition of ten thousand prayers.” [15](#) In the spring of every year a festival was celebrated, destined to represent the primitive equality, and the present connection, of mankind. The stately kings of Persia, exchanging their vain pomp for more genuine greatness, freely mingled with the humblest but most useful of their subjects. On that day the husbandmen were admitted, without distinction, to the table of the king and his satraps. The monarch accepted their petitions, inquired into their grievances, and conversed with them on the most equal terms. “From your labors,” was he accustomed to say, (and to say with truth, if not with sincerity,) “from your labors we receive our subsistence; you derive your tranquillity from our vigilance: since, therefore, we are mutually necessary to each other, let us live together like brothers in concord and

love.” [16](#) Such a festival must indeed have degenerated, in a wealthy and despotic empire, into a theatrical representation; but it was at least a comedy well worthy of a royal audience, and which might sometimes imprint a salutary lesson on the mind of a young prince.

1401 [\(return\)](#)

[See, on Zoroaster’s encouragement of agriculture, the ingenious remarks of Heeren, *Ideen*, vol. i. p. 449, &c., and Rhode, *Heilige Sage*, p. 517—M.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[*Zendavesta*, tom. i. p. 224, and *Precis du Systeme de Zoroastre*, tom. iii.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[Hyde de *Religione Persarum*, c. 19.]

Had Zoroaster, in all his institutions, invariably supported this exalted character, his name would deserve a place with those of Numa and Confucius, and his system would be justly entitled to all the applause, which it has pleased some of our divines, and even some of our philosophers, to bestow on it. But in that motley composition, dictated by reason and passion, by enthusiasm and by selfish motives, some useful and sublime truths were disgraced by a mixture of the most abject and dangerous superstition. The Magi, or sacerdotal order, were extremely numerous, since, as we have already seen, fourscore thousand of them were convened in a general council. Their forces were multiplied by discipline. A regular hierarchy was diffused through all the provinces of Persia; and the Archimagus, who resided at Balch, was respected as the visible head of the church, and the lawful successor of Zoroaster. [17](#) The property of the Magi was very considerable. Besides the less invidious possession of a large tract of the most fertile lands of Media, [18](#) they levied a general tax on the fortunes and the industry of the Persians. [19](#) “Though your good works,” says the interested prophet, “exceed in number the leaves of the trees, the drops of rain, the stars in the heaven, or the sands on the sea-shore, they will all be unprofitable to you, unless they are accepted by the *destour*, or priest. To obtain the acceptation of this guide to salvation, you must faithfully pay him *tithes* of all you possess, of your goods, of your lands, and of your money. If the *destour* be satisfied, your soul will escape hell tortures; you will secure praise in this world and happiness in the next. For the *destours* are the teachers of religion; they know all things, and they deliver all men.” [20](#) [201a](#)

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Hyde de *Religione Persarum*, c. 28. Both Hyde and Prideaux affect to apply to the Magian the terms consecrated to the Christian hierarchy.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. Marcellin. xxiii. 6. He informs us (as far as we may credit him) of two curious particulars: 1. That the Magi derived some of their most secret doctrines from the Indian Brachmans; and 2. That they were a tribe, or family, as well as order.]

- 19 [\(return\)](#)
[The divine institution of tithes exhibits a singular instance of conformity between the law of Zoroaster and that of Moses. Those who cannot otherwise account for it, may suppose, if they please that the Magi of the latter times inserted so useful an interpolation into the writings of their prophet.]
- 20 [\(return\)](#)
[Sadder, Art. viii.]
- 201a [\(return\)](#)
[The passage quoted by Gibbon is not taken from the writings of Zoroaster, but from the Sadder, a work, as has been before said, much later than the books which form the Zendavesta. and written by a Magus for popular use; what it contains, therefore, cannot be attributed to Zoroaster. It is remarkable that Gibbon should fall into this error, for Hyde himself does not ascribe the Sadder to Zoroaster; he remarks that it is written inverse, while Zoroaster always wrote in prose. Hyde, i. p. 27. Whatever may be the case as to the latter assertion, for which there appears little foundation, it is unquestionable that the Sadder is of much later date. The Abbé Foucher does not even believe it to be an extract from the works of Zoroaster. See his Diss. before quoted. Mem. de l'Acad. des Ins. t. xxvii.—G. Perhaps it is rash to speak of any part of the Zendavesta as the writing of Zoroaster, though it may be a genuine representation of his. As to the Sadder, Hyde (in Præf.) considered it not above 200 years old. It is manifestly post-Mahometan. See Art. xxv. on fasting.—M.]

These convenient maxims of reverence and implicit faith were doubtless imprinted with care on the tender minds of youth; since the Magi were the masters of education in Persia, and to their hands the children even of the royal family were intrusted. [21](#) The Persian priests, who were of a speculative genius, preserved and investigated the secrets of Oriental philosophy; and acquired, either by superior knowledge, or superior art, the reputation of being well versed in some occult sciences, which have derived their appellation from the Magi. [22](#) Those of more active dispositions mixed with the world in courts and cities; and it is observed, that the administration of Artaxerxes was in a great measure directed by the counsels of the sacerdotal order, whose dignity, either from policy or devotion, that prince restored to its ancient splendor. [23](#)

- 21 [\(return\)](#)
[Plato in Alcibiad.]
- 22 [\(return\)](#)
[Pliny (Hist. Natur. l. xxx. c. 1) observes, that

magic held mankind by the triple chain of religion,
of physic, and of astronomy.]

23

[\(return\)](#)

[Agathias, l. iv. p. 134.]

The first counsel of the Magi was agreeable to the unsociable genius of their faith, [24](#) to the practice of ancient kings, [25](#) and even to the example of their legislator, who had fallen a victim to a religious war, excited by his own intolerant zeal. [26](#) By an edict of Artaxerxes, the exercise of every worship, except that of Zoroaster, was severely prohibited. The temples of the Parthians, and the statues of their deified monarchs, were thrown down with ignominy. [27](#) The sword of Aristotle (such was the name given by the Orientals to the polytheism and philosophy of the Greeks) was easily broken; [28](#) the flames of persecution soon reached the more stubborn Jews and Christians; [29](#) nor did they spare the heretics of their own nation and religion. The majesty of Ormusd, who was jealous of a rival, was seconded by the despotism of Artaxerxes, who could not suffer a rebel; and the schismatics within his vast empire were soon reduced to the inconsiderable number of eighty thousand. [30](#) [301](#) This spirit of persecution reflects dishonor on the religion of Zoroaster; but as it was not productive of any civil commotion, it served to strengthen the new monarchy, by uniting all the various inhabitants of Persia in the bands of religious zeal. [302](#)

24

[\(return\)](#)

[Mr. Hume, in the Natural History of Religion, sagaciously remarks, that the most refined and philosophic sects are constantly the most intolerant.
* Note: Hume's comparison is rather between theism and polytheism. In India, in Greece, and in modern Europe, philosophic religion has looked down with contemptuous toleration on the superstitions of the vulgar.—M.]

25

[\(return\)](#)

[Cicero de Legibus, ii. 10. Xerxes, by the advice of the Magi, destroyed the temples of Greece.]

26

[\(return\)](#)

[Hyde de Relig. Persar. c. 23, 24. D'Herbelot, Bibliotheque Orientale, Zurdusht. Life of Zoroaster in tom. ii. of the Zendavesta.]

27

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare Moses of Chorene, l. ii. c. 74, with Ammian. Marcel lin. xxiii. 6. Hereafter I shall make use of these passages.]

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Rabbi Abraham, in the Tarikh Schickard, p. 108, 109.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. viii. c. 3. Sozomen, l. ii. c. 1 Manes, who suffered an ignominious

death, may be deemed a Magian as well as a Christian heretic.]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[Hyde de Religione Persar. c. 21.]

301 [\(return\)](#)

[It is incorrect to attribute these persecutions to Artaxerxes. The Jews were held in honor by him, and their schools flourished during his reign. Compare Jost, *Geschichte der Israheliter*, b. xv. 5, with Basnage. Sapor was forced by the people to temporary severities; but their real persecution did not begin till the reigns of Yezdigerd and Kobad. *Hist. of Jews*, iii. 236. According to Sozomen, i. viii., Sapor first persecuted the Christians. Manes was put to death by Varanes the First, A. D. 277. Beausobre, *Hist. de Man.* i. 209.—M.]

302 [\(return\)](#)

[In the testament of Ardischer in Ferdusi, the poet assigns these sentiments to the dying king, as he addresses his son: Never forget that as a king, you are at once the protector of religion and of your country. Consider the altar and the throne as inseparable; they must always sustain each other. *Malcolm's Persia.* i. 74—M]

II. Artaxerxes, by his valor and conduct, had wrested the sceptre of the East from the ancient royal family of Parthia. There still remained the more difficult task of establishing, throughout the vast extent of Persia, a uniform and vigorous administration. The weak indulgence of the Arsacides had resigned to their sons and brothers the principal provinces, and the greatest offices of the kingdom in the nature of hereditary possessions. The *vitaxæ*, or eighteen most powerful satraps, were permitted to assume the regal title; and the vain pride of the monarch was delighted with a nominal dominion over so many vassal kings. Even tribes of barbarians in their mountains, and the Greek cities of Upper Asia, [31](#) within their walls, scarcely acknowledged, or seldom obeyed. any superior; and the Parthian empire exhibited, under other names, a lively image of the feudal system [32](#) which has since prevailed in Europe. But the active victor, at the head of a numerous and disciplined army, visited in person every province of Persia. The defeat of the boldest rebels, and the reduction of the strongest fortifications, [33](#) diffused the terror of his arms, and prepared the way for the peaceful reception of his authority. An obstinate resistance was fatal to the chiefs; but their followers were treated with lenity. [34](#) A cheerful submission was rewarded with honors and riches, but the prudent Artaxerxes, suffering no person except himself to assume the title of king, abolished every intermediate power between the throne and the people. His kingdom, nearly equal in extent to modern Persia, was, on every side, bounded by the sea, or by great rivers; by the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Araxes, the Oxus, and the Indus, by the Caspian Sea, and the Gulf of Persia. [35](#) That

country was computed to contain, in the last century, five hundred and fifty-four cities, sixty thousand villages, and about forty millions of souls. [36](#) If we compare the administration of the house of Sassan with that of the house of Sefi, the political influence of the Magian with that of the Mahometan religion, we shall probably infer, that the kingdom of Artaxerxes contained at least as great a number of cities, villages, and inhabitants. But it must likewise be confessed, that in every age the want of harbors on the sea-coast, and the scarcity of fresh water in the inland provinces, have been very unfavorable to the commerce and agriculture of the Persians; who, in the calculation of their numbers, seem to have indulged one of the meanest, though most common, artifices of national vanity.

31 [\(return\)](#)

[These colonies were extremely numerous. Seleucus Nicator founded thirty-nine cities, all named from himself, or some of his relations, (see Appian in Syriac. p. 124.) The æra of Seleucus (still in use among the eastern Christians) appears as late as the year 508, of Christ 196, on the medals of the Greek cities within the Parthian empire. See Moyle's works, vol. i. p. 273, &c., and M. Freret, Mem. de l'Academie, tom. xix.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[The modern Persians distinguish that period as the dynasty of the kings of the nations. See Plin. Hist. Nat. vi. 25.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[Eutychius (tom. i. p. 367, 371, 375) relates the siege of the island of Mesene in the Tigris, with some circumstances not unlike the story of Nysus and Scylla.]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[Agathias, ii. 64, [and iv. p. 260.] The princes of Segestan defended their independence during many years. As romances generally transport to an ancient period the events of their own time, it is not impossible that the fabulous exploits of Rustan, Prince of Segestan, many have been grafted on this real history.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[We can scarcely attribute to the Persian monarchy the sea-coast of Gedrosia or Macran, which extends along the Indian Ocean from Cape Jask (the promontory Capella) to Cape Goadel. In the time of Alexander, and probably many ages afterwards, it was thinly inhabited by a savage people of Ichthyophagi, or Fishermen, who knew no arts, who acknowledged no master, and who were divided by in-hospitable deserts from the rest of the world.

(See Arrian de Reb. Indicis.) In the twelfth century, the little town of Taiz (supposed by M. d'Anville to be the Teza of Ptolemy) was peopled and enriched by the resort of the Arabian merchants. (See Geographia Nubiens, p. 58, and d'Anville, Geographie Ancienne, tom. ii. p. 283.) In the last age, the whole country was divided between three princes, one Mahometan and two Idolaters, who maintained their independence against the successors of Shah Abbas. (Voyages de Tavernier, part i. l. v. p. 635.)]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[Chardin, tom. iii c 1 2, 3.]

As soon as the ambitious mind of Artaxerxes had triumphed over the resistance of his vassals, he began to threaten the neighboring states, who, during the long slumber of his predecessors, had insulted Persia with impunity. He obtained some easy victories over the wild Scythians and the effeminate Indians; but the Romans were an enemy, who, by their past injuries and present power, deserved the utmost efforts of his arms. A forty years' tranquillity, the fruit of valor and moderation, had succeeded the victories of Trajan. During the period that elapsed from the accession of Marcus to the reign of Alexander, the Roman and the Parthian empires were twice engaged in war; and although the whole strength of the Arsacides contended with a part only of the forces of Rome, the event was most commonly in favor of the latter. Macrinus, indeed, prompted by his precarious situation and pusillanimous temper, purchased a peace at the expense of near two millions of our money; [37](#) but the generals of Marcus, the emperor Severus, and his son, erected many trophies in Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria. Among their exploits, the imperfect relation of which would have unseasonably interrupted the more important series of domestic revolutions, we shall only mention the repeated calamities of the two great cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon.

37

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. xxviii. p. 1335.]

Seleucia, on the western bank of the Tigris, about forty-five miles to the north of ancient Babylon, was the capital of the Macedonian conquests in Upper Asia. [38](#) Many ages after the fall of their empire, Seleucia retained the genuine characters of a Grecian colony, arts, military virtue, and the love of freedom. The independent republic was governed by a senate of three hundred nobles; the people consisted of six hundred thousand citizens; the walls were strong, and as long as concord prevailed among the several orders of the state, they viewed with contempt the power of the Parthian: but the madness of faction was sometimes provoked to implore the dangerous aid of the common enemy, who was posted almost at the gates of the colony. [39](#) The Parthian monarchs, like the Mogul sovereigns of Hindostan, delighted in the pastoral life of their Scythian ancestors; and the Imperial camp was frequently pitched in the plain of Ctesiphon, on the eastern bank of the Tigris, at the distance of only three miles from

Seleucia. [40](#) The innumerable attendants on luxury and despotism resorted to the court, and the little village of Ctesiphon insensibly swelled into a great city. [41](#) Under the reign of Marcus, the Roman generals penetrated as far as Ctesiphon and Seleucia. They were received as friends by the Greek colony; they attacked as enemies the seat of the Parthian kings; yet both cities experienced the same treatment. The sack and conflagration of Seleucia, with the massacre of three hundred thousand of the inhabitants, tarnished the glory of the Roman triumph. [42](#) Seleucia, already exhausted by the neighborhood of a too powerful rival, sunk under the fatal blow; but Ctesiphon, in about thirty-three years, had sufficiently recovered its strength to maintain an obstinate siege against the emperor Severus. The city was, however, taken by assault; the king, who defended it in person, escaped with precipitation; a hundred thousand captives, and a rich booty, rewarded the fatigues of the Roman soldiers. [43](#) Notwithstanding these misfortunes, Ctesiphon succeeded to Babylon and to Seleucia, as one of the great capitals of the East. In summer, the monarch of Persia enjoyed at Ecbatana the cool breezes of the mountains of Media; but the mildness of the climate engaged him to prefer Ctesiphon for his winter residence.

38 [\(return\)](#)

[For the precise situation of Babylon, Seleucia, Ctesiphon, Moian, and Bagdad, cities often confounded with each other, see an excellent Geographical Tract of M. d'Anville, in Mem. de l'Academie, tom. xxx.]

39 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. xi. 42. Plin. Hist. Nat. vi. 26.]

40 [\(return\)](#)

[This may be inferred from Strabo, l. xvi. p. 743.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[That most curious traveller, Bernier, who followed the camp of Aurengzebe from Delhi to Cashmir, describes with great accuracy the immense moving city. The guard of cavalry consisted of 35,000 men, that of infantry of 10,000. It was computed that the camp contained 150,000 horses, mules, and elephants; 50,000 camels, 50,000 oxen, and between 300,000 and 400,000 persons. Almost all Delhi followed the court, whose magnificence supported its industry.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxi. p. 1178. Hist. August. p. 38. Eutrop. viii. 10 Euseb. in Chronic. Quadratus (quoted in the Augustan History) attempted to vindicate the Romans by alleging that the citizens of Seleucia had first violated their faith.]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxv. p. 1263. Herodian, l. iii. p. 120. Hist. August. p. 70.]

From these successful inroads the Romans derived no real or lasting benefit; nor did they attempt to preserve such distant conquests, separated from the provinces of the empire by a large tract of intermediate desert. The reduction of the kingdom of Osrhoene was an acquisition of less splendor indeed, but of a far more solid advantage. That little state occupied the northern and most fertile part of Mesopotamia, between the Euphrates and the Tigris. Edessa, its capital, was situated about twenty miles beyond the former of those rivers; and the inhabitants, since the time of Alexander, were a mixed race of Greeks, Arabs, Syrians, and Armenians. [44](#) The feeble sovereigns of Osrhoene, placed on the dangerous verge of two contending empires, were attached from inclination to the Parthian cause; but the superior power of Rome exacted from them a reluctant homage, which is still attested by their medals. After the conclusion of the Parthian war under Marcus, it was judged prudent to secure some substantial pledges of their doubtful fidelity. Forts were constructed in several parts of the country, and a Roman garrison was fixed in the strong town of Nisibis. During the troubles that followed the death of Commodus, the princes of Osrhoene attempted to shake off the yoke; but the stern policy of Severus confirmed their dependence, [45](#) and the perfidy of Caracalla completed the easy conquest. Abgarus, the last king of Edessa, was sent in chains to Rome, his dominions reduced into a province, and his capital dignified with the rank of colony; and thus the Romans, about ten years before the fall of the Parthian monarchy, obtained a firm and permanent establishment beyond the Euphrates. [46](#)

44 [\(return\)](#)

[The polished citizens of Antioch called those of Edessa mixed barbarians. It was, however, some praise, that of the three dialects of the Syriac, the purest and most elegant (the Aramæan) was spoken at Edessa. This remark M. Bayer (Hist. Edess. p 5) has borrowed from George of Malatia, a Syrian writer.]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxv. p. 1248, 1249, 1250. M. Bayer has neglected to use this most important passage.]

46 [\(return\)](#)

[This kingdom, from Osrhoes, who gave a new name to the country, to the last Abgarus, had lasted 353 years. See the learned work of M. Bayer, *Historia Osrhoena et Edessena*.]

Prudence as well as glory might have justified a war on the side of Artaxerxes, had his views been confined to the defence or acquisition of a useful frontier. but the ambitious Persian openly avowed a far more extensive design of conquest; and he thought himself able to support his lofty pretensions by the arms of reason as well as by those of power. Cyrus, he alleged, had first subdued, and his successors had for a long time possessed, the whole extent of Asia, as far as the Propontis and the Ægean Sea; the provinces of Caria and Ionia, under their empire, had been governed by Persian

satraps, and all Egypt, to the confines of Æthiopia, had acknowledged their sovereignty. [47](#) Their rights had been suspended, but not destroyed, by a long usurpation; and as soon as he received the Persian diadem, which birth and successful valor had placed upon his head, the first great duty of his station called upon him to restore the ancient limits and splendor of the monarchy. The Great King, therefore, (such was the haughty style of his embassies to the emperor Alexander,) commanded the Romans instantly to depart from all the provinces of his ancestors, and, yielding to the Persians the empire of Asia, to content themselves with the undisturbed possession of Europe. This haughty mandate was delivered by four hundred of the tallest and most beautiful of the Persians; who, by their fine horses, splendid arms, and rich apparel, displayed the pride and greatness of their master. [48](#) Such an embassy was much less an offer of negotiation than a declaration of war. Both Alexander Severus and Artaxerxes, collecting the military force of the Roman and Persian monarchies, resolved in this important contest to lead their armies in person.

47

[\(return\)](#)

[Xenophon, in the preface to the Cyropædia, gives a clear and magnificent idea of the extent of the empire of Cyrus. Herodotus (l. iii. c. 79, &c.) enters into a curious and particular description of the twenty great Satrapies into which the Persian empire was divided by Darius Hystaspes.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, vi. 209, 212.]

If we credit what should seem the most authentic of all records, an oration, still extant, and delivered by the emperor himself to the senate, we must allow that the victory of Alexander Severus was not inferior to any of those formerly obtained over the Persians by the son of Philip. The army of the Great King consisted of one hundred and twenty thousand horse, clothed in complete armor of steel; of seven hundred elephants, with towers filled with archers on their backs, and of eighteen hundred chariots armed with scythes. This formidable host, the like of which is not to be found in eastern history, and has scarcely been imagined in eastern romance, [49](#) was discomfited in a great battle, in which the Roman Alexander proved himself an intrepid soldier and a skilful general. The Great King fled before his valor; an immense booty, and the conquest of Mesopotamia, were the immediate fruits of this signal victory. Such are the circumstances of this ostentatious and improbable relation, dictated, as it too plainly appears, by the vanity of the monarch, adorned by the unblushing servility of his flatterers, and received without contradiction by a distant and obsequious senate. [50](#) Far from being inclined to believe that the arms of Alexander obtained any memorable advantage over the Persians, we are induced to suspect that all this blaze of imaginary glory was designed to conceal some real disgrace.

49

[\(return\)](#)

[There were two hundred scythed chariots at the battle of Arbela, in the host of Darius. In the vast

army of Tigranes, which was vanquished by Lucullus, seventeen thousand horse only were completely armed. Antiochus brought fifty-four elephants into the field against the Romans: by his frequent wars and negotiations with the princes of India, he had once collected a hundred and fifty of those great animals; but it may be questioned whether the most powerful monarch of Hindostan evci formed a line of battle of seven hundred elephants. Instead of three or four thousand elephants, which the Great Mogul was supposed to possess, Tavernier (*Voyages*, part ii. l. i. p. 198) discovered, by a more accurate inquiry, that he had only five hundred for his baggage, and eighty or ninety for the service of war. The Greeks have varied with regard to the number which Porus brought into the field; but Quintus Curtius, (viii. 13,) in this instance judicious and moderate, is contented with eighty-five elephants, distinguished by their size and strength. In Siam, where these animals are the most numerous and the most esteemed, eighteen elephants are allowed as a sufficient proportion for each of the nine brigades into which a just army is divided. The whole number, of one hundred and sixty-two elephants of war, may sometimes be doubled. *Hist. des Voyages*, tom. ix. p. 260. * Note: Compare Gibbon's note 10 to ch. lvii—M.]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[*Hist.* August. p. 133. * Note: See M. Guizot's note, p. 267. According to the Persian authorities Ardeschir extended his conquests to the Euphrates. *Malcolm* i. 71.—M.]

Our suspicions are confirmed by the authority of a contemporary historian, who mentions the virtues of Alexander with respect, and his faults with candor. He describes the judicious plan which had been formed for the conduct of the war. Three Roman armies were destined to invade Persia at the same time, and by different roads. But the operations of the campaign, though wisely concerted, were not executed either with ability or success. The first of these armies, as soon as it had entered the marshy plains of Babylon, towards the artificial conflux of the Euphrates and the Tigris, [51](#) was encompassed by the superior numbers, and destroyed by the arrows of the enemy. The alliance of Chosroes, king of Armenia, [52](#) and the long tract of mountainous country, in which the Persian cavalry was of little service, opened a secure entrance into the heart of Media, to the second of the Roman armies. These brave troops laid waste the adjacent provinces, and by several successful actions against Artaxerxes, gave a faint color to the emperor's vanity. But the retreat of this victorious army was imprudent, or at least unfortunate. In repassing the mountains, great numbers of soldiers perished by the

badness of the roads, and the severity of the winter season. It had been resolved, that whilst these two great detachments penetrated into the opposite extremes of the Persian dominions, the main body, under the command of Alexander himself, should support their attack, by invading the centre of the kingdom. But the unexperienced youth, influenced by his mother's counsels, and perhaps by his own fears, deserted the bravest troops, and the fairest prospect of victory; and after consuming in Mesopotamia an inactive and inglorious summer, he led back to Antioch an army diminished by sickness, and provoked by disappointment. The behavior of Artaxerxes had been very different. Flying with rapidity from the hills of Media to the marshes of the Euphrates, he had everywhere opposed the invaders in person; and in either fortune had united with the ablest conduct the most undaunted resolution. But in several obstinate engagements against the veteran legions of Rome, the Persian monarch had lost the flower of his troops. Even his victories had weakened his power. The favorable opportunities of the absence of Alexander, and of the confusions that followed that emperor's death, presented themselves in vain to his ambition. Instead of expelling the Romans, as he pretended, from the continent of Asia, he found himself unable to wrest from their hands the little province of Mesopotamia. [53](#)

51 [\(return\)](#)

[M. de Tillemont has already observed, that Herodian's geography is somewhat confused.]

52 [\(return\)](#)

[Moses of Chorene (Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 71) illustrates this invasion of Media, by asserting that Chosroes, king of Armenia, defeated Artaxerxes, and pursued him to the confines of India. The exploits of Chosroes have been magnified; and he acted as a dependent ally to the Romans.]

53 [\(return\)](#)

[For the account of this war, see Herodian, l. vi. p. 209, 212. The old abbreviators and modern compilers have blindly followed the Augustan History.]

The reign of Artaxerxes, which, from the last defeat of the Parthians, lasted only fourteen years, forms a memorable æra in the history of the East, and even in that of Rome. His character seems to have been marked by those bold and commanding features, that generally distinguish the princes who conquer, from those who inherit, an empire. Till the last period of the Persian monarchy, his code of laws was respected as the groundwork of their civil and religious policy. [54](#) Several of his sayings are preserved. One of them in particular discovers a deep insight into the constitution of government. "The authority of the prince," said Artaxerxes, "must be defended by a military force; that force can only be maintained by taxes; all taxes must, at last, fall upon agriculture; and agriculture can never flourish except under the protection of justice and moderation." [55](#) Artaxerxes bequeathed his new empire, and his ambitious

designs against the Romans, to Sapor, a son not unworthy of his great father; but those designs were too extensive for the power of Persia, and served only to involve both nations in a long series of destructive wars and reciprocal calamities.

54

[\(return\)](#)

[Eutychius, tom. ii. p. 180, vers. Pocock. The great Chosroes Noushirwan sent the code of Artaxerxes to all his satraps, as the invariable rule of their conduct.]

55

[\(return\)](#)

[D'Herbelot, Bibliotheque Orientale, au mot Ardshir. We may observe, that after an ancient period of fables, and a long interval of darkness, the modern histories of Persia begin to assume an air of truth with the dynasty of Sassanides. Compare Malcolm, i. 79.—M.]

The Persians, long since civilized and corrupted, were very far from possessing the martial independence, and the intrepid hardiness, both of mind and body, which have rendered the northern barbarians masters of the world. The science of war, that constituted the more rational force of Greece and Rome, as it now does of Europe, never made any considerable progress in the East. Those disciplined evolutions which harmonize and animate a confused multitude, were unknown to the Persians. They were equally unskilled in the arts of constructing, besieging, or defending regular fortifications. They trusted more to their numbers than to their courage; more to their courage than to their discipline. The infantry was a half-armed, spiritless crowd of peasants, levied in haste by the allurements of plunder, and as easily dispersed by a victory as by a defeat. The monarch and his nobles transported into the camp the pride and luxury of the seraglio. Their military operations were impeded by a useless train of women, eunuchs, horses, and camels; and in the midst of a successful campaign, the Persian host was often separated or destroyed by an unexpected famine. [56](#)

56

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodian, l. vi. p. 214. Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xxiii. c. 6. Some differences may be observed between the two historians, the natural effects of the changes produced by a century and a half.]

But the nobles of Persia, in the bosom of luxury and despotism, preserved a strong sense of personal gallantry and national honor. From the age of seven years they were taught to speak truth, to shoot with the bow, and to ride; and it was universally confessed that in the two last of these arts they had made a more than common proficiency. [57](#) The most distinguished youth were educated under the monarch's eye, practised their exercises in the gate of his palace, and were severely trained up to the habits of temperance and obedience, in their long and laborious parties of hunting. In every province, the satrap maintained a like school of military virtue. The Persian nobles (so natural is the idea of feudal tenures) received from the king's bounty lands and houses,

on the condition of their service in war. They were ready on the first summons to mount on horseback, with a martial and splendid train of followers, and to join the numerous bodies of guards, who were carefully selected from among the most robust slaves, and the bravest adventurers of Asia. These armies, both of light and of heavy cavalry, equally formidable by the impetuosity of their charge and the rapidity of their motions, threatened, as an impending cloud, the eastern provinces of the declining empire of Rome. [58](#)

57

[\(return\)](#)

[The Persians are still the most skilful horsemen, and their horses the finest in the East.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[From Herodotus, Xenophon, Herodian, Ammianus, Chardin, &c., I have extracted such probable accounts of the Persian nobility, as seem either common to every age, or particular to that of the Sassanides.]

Chapter IX: State Of Germany Until The Barbarians.—Part I.

The State Of Germany Till The Invasion Of The Barbarians In
The Time Of The Emperor Decius.

The government and religion of Persia have deserved some notice, from their connection with the decline and fall of the Roman empire. We shall occasionally mention the Scythian or Sarmatian tribes, [1001](#) which, with their arms and horses, their flocks and herds, their wives and families, wandered over the immense plains which spread themselves from the Caspian Sea to the Vistula, from the confines of Persia to those of Germany. But the warlike Germans, who first resisted, then invaded, and at length overturned the Western monarchy of Rome, will occupy a much more important place in this history, and possess a stronger, and, if we may use the expression, a more domestic, claim to our attention and regard. The most civilized nations of modern Europe issued from the woods of Germany; and in the rude institutions of those barbarians we may still distinguish the original principles of our present laws and manners. In their primitive state of simplicity and independence, the Germans were surveyed by the discerning eye, and delineated by the masterly pencil, of Tacitus, [1002](#) the first of historians who applied the science of philosophy to the study of facts. The expressive conciseness of his descriptions has served to exercise the diligence of innumerable antiquarians, and to excite the genius and penetration of the philosophic historians of our own times. The subject, however various and important, has already been so frequently, so ably, and so successfully discussed, that it is now grown familiar to the reader, and difficult to the writer. We shall therefore content ourselves with observing, and indeed with repeating, some of the most important

circumstances of climate, of manners, and of institutions, which rendered the wild barbarians of Germany such formidable enemies to the Roman power.

1001

[\(return\)](#)

[The Scythians, even according to the ancients, are not Sarmatians. It may be doubted whether Gibbon intended to confound them.—M. —The Greeks, after having divided the world into Greeks and barbarians. divided the barbarians into four great classes, the Celts, the Scythians, the Indians, and the Ethiopians. They called Celts all the inhabitants of Gaul. Scythia extended from the Baltic Sea to the Lake Aral: the people enclosed in the angle to the north-east, between Celtica and Scythia, were called Celto-Scythians, and the Sarmatians were placed in the southern part of that angle. But these names of Celts, of Scythians, of Celto-Scythians, and Sarmatians, were invented, says Schlozer, by the profound cosmographical ignorance of the Greeks, and have no real ground; they are purely geographical divisions, without any relation to the true affiliation of the different races. Thus all the inhabitants of Gaul are called Celts by most of the ancient writers; yet Gaul contained three totally distinct nations, the Belgæ, the Aquitani, and the Gauls, properly so called. *Hi omnes lingua institutis, legibusque inter se differunt. Cæsar. Com. c. i.* It is thus the Turks call all Europeans Franks. Schlozer, *Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte*, p. 289. 1771. Bayer (de Origine et priscis Sedibus Scytharum, in *Opusc.* p. 64) says, *Primus eorum, de quibus constat, Ephorus, in quarto historiarum libro, orbem terrarum inter Scythas, Indos, Æthiopas et Celtas divisit. Fragmentum ejus loci Cosmas Indicopleustes in topographia Christiana, f. 148, conservavit. Video igitur Ephorum, cum locorum positus per certa capita distribuere et explicare constitueret, insigniorum nomina gentium vastioribus spatiis adhibuisse, nulla mala fraude et successu infelici. Nam Ephoro quoquomodo dicta pro exploratis habebant Græci plerique et Romani: ita gliscebatur error posteritati. Igitur tot tamque diversæ stirpis gentes non modo intra communem quandam regionem definitæ, unum omnes Scytharum nomen his auctoribus subierunt, sed etiam ab illa regionis adpellatione in eandem nationem sunt conflatae. Sic Cimmericorum res cum Scythicis, Scytharum cum Sarmaticis, Russicis, Hunnicis, Tataricis commiscentur.—G.]*

[The Germania of Tacitus has been a fruitful source of hypothesis to the ingenuity of modern writers, who have endeavored to account for the form of the work and the views of the author. According to Luden, (*Geschichte des T. V. i. 432*, and note,) it contains the unfinished and disarranged for a larger work. An anonymous writer, supposed by Luden to be M. Becker, conceives that it was intended as an episode in his larger history. According to M. Guizot, “*Tacite a peint les Germains comme Montaigne et Rousseau les sauvages, dans un acces d’humeur contre sa patrie: son livre est une satire des mœurs Romaines, l’éloquente boutade d’un patriote philosophe qui veut voir la vertu la, ou il ne rencontre pas la mollesse honteuse et la depravation savante d’une vieille societe.*” *Hist. de la Civilisation Moderne*, i. 258.—M.]

Ancient Germany, excluding from its independent limits the province westward of the Rhine, which had submitted to the Roman yoke, extended itself over a third part of Europe. [1](#) Almost the whole of modern Germany, Denmark, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Livonia, Prussia, and the greater part of Poland, were peopled by the various tribes of one great nation, whose complexion, manners, and language denoted a common origin, and preserved a striking resemblance. On the west, ancient Germany was divided by the Rhine from the Gallic, and on the south, by the Danube, from the Illyrian, provinces of the empire. A ridge of hills, rising from the Danube, and called the Carpathian Mountains, covered Germany on the side of Dacia or Hungary. The eastern frontier was faintly marked by the mutual fears of the Germans and the Sarmatians, and was often confounded by the mixture of warring and confederating tribes of the two nations. In the remote darkness of the north, the ancients imperfectly descried a frozen ocean that lay beyond the Baltic Sea, and beyond the Peninsula, or islands [1001a](#) of Scandinavia.

[Germany was not of such vast extent. It is from Cæsar, and more particularly from Ptolemy, (says Gatterer,) that we can know what was the state of ancient Germany before the wars with the Romans had changed the positions of the tribes. Germany, as changed by these wars, has been described by Strabo, Pliny, and Tacitus. Germany, properly so called, was bounded on the west by the Rhine, on the east by the Vistula, on the north by the southern point of Norway, by Sweden, and Esthonia. On the south, the Maine and the mountains to the north of Bohemia formed the limits. Before the time of Cæsar, the country between the Maine and the Danube was partly occupied by the Helvetians and other Gauls, partly by the Hercynian forest but,

from the time of Cæsar to the great migration, these boundaries were advanced as far as the Danube, or, what is the same thing, to the Suabian Alps, although the Hercynian forest still occupied, from north to south, a space of nine days' journey on both banks of the Danube. "Gatterer, Versuch einer allgemeinen Welt-Geschichte," p. 424, edit. de 1792. This vast country was far from being inhabited by a single nation divided into different tribes of the same origin. We may reckon three principal races, very distinct in their language, their origin, and their customs. 1. To the east, the Slaves or Vandals. 2. To the west, the Cimmerians or Cimbri. 3. Between the Slaves and Cimbrians, the Germans, properly so called, the Suevi of Tacitus. The South was inhabited, before Julius Cæsar, by nations of Gaulish origin, afterwards by the Suevi.—G. On the position of these nations, the German antiquaries differ. I. The Slaves, or Sclavonians, or Wendish tribes, according to Schlozer, were originally settled in parts of Germany unknown to the Romans, Mecklenburgh, Pomerania, Brandenburg, Upper Saxony; and Lusatia. According to Gatterer, they remained to the east of the Theiss, the Niemen, and the Vistula, till the third century. The Slaves, according to Procopius and Jornandes, formed three great divisions. 1. The Venedi or Vandals, who took the latter name, (the Wenden,) having expelled the Vandals, properly so called, (a Suevian race, the conquerors of Africa,) from the country between the Memel and the Vistula. 2. The Antes, who inhabited between the Dneister and the Dnieper. 3. The Sclavonians, properly so called, in the north of Dacia. During the great migration, these races advanced into Germany as far as the Saal and the Elbe. The Sclavonian language is the stem from which have issued the Russian, the Polish, the Bohemian, and the dialects of Lusatia, of some parts of the duchy of Luneburgh, of Carniola, Carinthia, and Styria, &c.; those of Croatia, Bosnia, and Bulgaria. Schlozer, *Nordische Geschichte*, p. 323, 335. II. The Cimbric race. Adelung calls by this name all who were not Suevi. This race had passed the Rhine, before the time of Cæsar, occupied Belgium, and are the Belgæ of Cæsar and Pliny. The Cimbrians also occupied the Isle of Jutland. The Cymri of Wales and of Britain are of this race. Many tribes on the right bank of the Rhine, the Guthini in Jutland, the Usipeti in Westphalia, the Sigambri in the duchy of Berg, were German Cimbrians. III. The Suevi,

known in very early times by the Romans, for they are mentioned by L. Corn. Sisenna, who lived 123 years before Christ, (Nonius v. Lancea.) This race, the real Germans, extended to the Vistula, and from the Baltic to the Hercynian forest. The name of Suevi was sometimes confined to a single tribe, as by Cæsar to the Catti. The name of the Suevi has been preserved in Suabia. These three were the principal races which inhabited Germany; they moved from east to west, and are the parent stem of the modern natives. But northern Europe, according to Schlozer, was not peopled by them alone; other races, of different origin, and speaking different languages, have inhabited and left descendants in these countries. The German tribes called themselves, from very remote times, by the generic name of Teutons, (Teuten, Deutschen,) which Tacitus derives from that of one of their gods, Tuisco. It appears more probable that it means merely men, people. Many savage nations have given themselves no other name. Thus the Laplanders call themselves Almag, people; the Samoiedes Nilletz, Nissetsch, men, &c. As to the name of Germans, (Germani,) Cæsar found it in use in Gaul, and adopted it as a word already known to the Romans. Many of the learned (from a passage of Tacitus, de Mor Germ. c. 2) have supposed that it was only applied to the Teutons after Cæsar's time; but Adelung has triumphantly refuted this opinion. The name of Germans is found in the Fasti Capitolini. See Gruter, Iscrip. 2899, in which the consul Marcellus, in the year of Rome 531, is said to have defeated the Gauls, the Insubrians, and the Germans, commanded by Virdomar. See Adelung, Ælt. Geschichte der Deutsch, p. 102.—Compressed from G.]

1001a

[\(return\)](#)

[The modern philosophers of Sweden seem agreed that the waters of the Baltic gradually sink in a regular proportion, which they have ventured to estimate at half an inch every year. Twenty centuries ago the flat country of Scandinavia must have been covered by the sea; while the high lands rose above the waters, as so many islands of various forms and dimensions. Such, indeed, is the notion given us by Mela, Pliny, and Tacitus, of the vast countries round the Baltic. See in the Bibliotheque Raisonnee, tom. xl. and xlv. a large abstract of Dalin's History of Sweden, composed in the Swedish language. * Note: Modern geologists have

rejected this theory of the depression of the Baltic, as inconsistent with recent observation. The considerable changes which have taken place on its shores, Mr. Lyell, from actual observation now decidedly attributes to the regular and uniform elevation of the land.—Lyell's Geology, b. ii. c. 17—M.]

Some ingenious writers [2](#) have suspected that Europe was much colder formerly than it is at present; and the most ancient descriptions of the climate of Germany tend exceedingly to confirm their theory. The general complaints of intense frost and eternal winter are perhaps little to be regarded, since we have no method of reducing to the accurate standard of the thermometer, the feelings, or the expressions, of an orator born in the happier regions of Greece or Asia. But I shall select two remarkable circumstances of a less equivocal nature. 1. The great rivers which covered the Roman provinces, the Rhine and the Danube, were frequently frozen over, and capable of supporting the most enormous weights. The barbarians, who often chose that severe season for their inroads, transported, without apprehension or danger, their numerous armies, their cavalry, and their heavy wagons, over a vast and solid bridge of ice. [3](#) Modern ages have not presented an instance of a like phenomenon. 2. The reindeer, that useful animal, from whom the savage of the North derives the best comforts of his dreary life, is of a constitution that supports, and even requires, the most intense cold. He is found on the rock of Spitzberg, within ten degrees of the Pole; he seems to delight in the snows of Lapland and Siberia: but at present he cannot subsist, much less multiply, in any country to the south of the Baltic. [4](#) In the time of Cæsar the reindeer, as well as the elk and the wild bull, was a native of the Hercynian forest, which then overshadowed a great part of Germany and Poland. [5](#) The modern improvements sufficiently explain the causes of the diminution of the cold. These immense woods have been gradually cleared, which intercepted from the earth the rays of the sun. [6](#) The morasses have been drained, and, in proportion as the soil has been cultivated, the air has become more temperate. Canada, at this day, is an exact picture of ancient Germany. Although situated in the same parallel with the finest provinces of France and England, that country experiences the most rigorous cold. The reindeer are very numerous, the ground is covered with deep and lasting snow, and the great river of St. Lawrence is regularly frozen, in a season when the waters of the Seine and the Thames are usually free from ice. [7](#)

2

[\(return\)](#)

[In particular, Mr. Hume, the Abbé du Bos, and M. Pelloutier. Hist. des Celtes, tom. i.]

3

[\(return\)](#)

[Diodorus Siculus, l. v. p. 340, edit. Wessel. Herodian, l. vi. p. 221. Jornandes, c. 55. On the banks of the Danube, the wine, when brought to table, was frequently frozen into great lumps, frusta vini. Ovid. Epist. ex Ponto, l. iv. 7, 9, 10. Virgil.

Georgic. 1. iii. 355. The fact is confirmed by a soldier and a philosopher, who had experienced the intense cold of Thrace. See Xenophon, *Anabasis*, 1. vii. p. 560, edit. Hutchinson. Note: The Danube is constantly frozen over. At Pesth the bridge is usually taken up, and the traffic and communication between the two banks carried on over the ice. The Rhine is likewise in many parts passable at least two years out of five. Winter campaigns are so unusual, in modern warfare, that I recollect but one instance of an army crossing either river on the ice. In the thirty years' war, (1635,) Jan van Werth, an Imperialist partisan, crossed the Rhine from Heidelberg on the ice with 5000 men, and surprised Spiers. Pichegru's memorable campaign, (1794-5,) when the freezing of the Meuse and Waal opened Holland to his conquests, and his cavalry and artillery attacked the ships frozen in, on the Zuyder Zee, was in a winter of unprecedented severity.—M. 1845.]

4 [\(return\)](#)
[Buffon, *Histoire Naturelle*, tom. xii. p. 79, 116.]

5 [\(return\)](#)
[Cæsar de Bell. Gallic. vi. 23, &c. The most inquisitive of the Germans were ignorant of its utmost limits, although some of them had travelled in it more than sixty days' journey. * Note: The passage of Cæsar, "parvis renonum tegumentis utuntur," is obscure, observes Luden, (*Geschichte des Teutschen Volkes*,) and insufficient to prove the reindeer to have existed in Germany. It is supported however, by a fragment of Sallust. *Germani intectum rhenonibus corpus tegunt*.—M. It has been suggested to me that Cæsar (as old Gesner supposed) meant the reindeer in the following description. *Est bos cervi figura cujus a media fronte inter aures unum cornu existit, excelsius magisque directum (divaricatum, qu?) his quæ nobis nota sunt cornibus. At ejus summo, sicut palmæ, rami quam late diffunduntur*. Bell. vi.—M. 1845.]

6 [\(return\)](#)
[Cluverius (*Germania Antiqua*, 1. iii. c. 47) investigates the small and scattered remains of the Hercynian wood.]

7 [\(return\)](#)
[Charlevoix, *Histoire du Canada*.]

It is difficult to ascertain, and easy to exaggerate, the influence of the climate of ancient Germany over the minds and bodies of the natives. Many writers have supposed,

and most have allowed, though, as it should seem, without any adequate proof, that the rigorous cold of the North was favorable to long life and generative vigor, that the women were more fruitful, and the human species more prolific, than in warmer or more temperate climates. [8](#) We may assert, with greater confidence, that the keen air of Germany formed the large and masculine limbs of the natives, who were, in general, of a more lofty stature than the people of the South, [9](#) gave them a kind of strength better adapted to violent exertions than to patient labor, and inspired them with constitutional bravery, which is the result of nerves and spirits. The severity of a winter campaign, that chilled the courage of the Roman troops, was scarcely felt by these hardy children of the North, [10](#) who, in their turn, were unable to resist the summer heats, and dissolved away in languor and sickness under the beams of an Italian sun. [11](#)

8 [\(return\)](#)

[Olaus Rudbeck asserts that the Swedish women often bear ten or twelve children, and not uncommonly twenty or thirty; but the authority of Rudbeck is much to be suspected.]

9 [\(return\)](#)

[In hos artus, in hæc corpora, quæ miramur, excrescunt. Tæit Germania, 3, 20. Cluver. l. i. c. 14.]

10 [\(return\)](#)

[Plutarch. in Mario. The Cimbri, by way of amusement, often did down mountains of snow on their broad shields.]

11 [\(return\)](#)

[The Romans made war in all climates, and by their excellent discipline were in a great measure preserved in health and vigor. It may be remarked, that man is the only animal which can live and multiply in every country from the equator to the poles. The hog seems to approach the nearest to our species in that privilege.]

Chapter IX: State Of Germany Until The Barbarians.—Part II.

There is not anywhere upon the globe a large tract of country, which we have discovered destitute of inhabitants, or whose first population can be fixed with any degree of historical certainty. And yet, as the most philosophic minds can seldom refrain from investigating the infancy of great nations, our curiosity consumes itself in toilsome and disappointed efforts. When Tacitus considered the purity of the German blood, and the forbidding aspect of the country, he was disposed to pronounce those barbarians *Indigenæ*, or natives of the soil. We may allow with safety, and perhaps with truth, that ancient Germany was not originally peopled by any foreign colonies already formed into a political society; [12](#) but that the name and nation received their existence

from the gradual union of some wandering savages of the Hercynian woods. To assert those savages to have been the spontaneous production of the earth which they inhabited would be a rash inference, condemned by religion, and unwarranted by reason.

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Facit. Germ. c. 3. The emigration of the Gauls followed the course of the Danube, and discharged itself on Greece and Asia. Tacitus could discover only one inconsiderable tribe that retained any traces of a Gallic origin. * Note: The Gothini, who must not be confounded with the Gothi, a Suevian tribe. In the time of Cæsar many other tribes of Gaulish origin dwelt along the course of the Danube, who could not long resist the attacks of the Suevi. The Helvetians, who dwelt on the borders of the Black Forest, between the Maine and the Danube, had been expelled long before the time of Cæsar. He mentions also the Volci Tectosagi, who came from Languedoc and settled round the Black Forest. The Boii, who had penetrated into that forest, and also have left traces of their name in Bohemia, were subdued in the first century by the Marcomanni. The Boii settled in Noricum, were mingled afterwards with the Lombards, and received the name of Boio Aarii (Bavaria) or Boiovarii: var, in some German dialects, appearing to mean remains, descendants. Compare Malte B-m, Geography, vol. i. p. 410, edit 1832—M.]

Such rational doubt is but ill suited with the genius of popular vanity. Among the nations who have adopted the Mosaic history of the world, the ark of Noah has been of the same use, as was formerly to the Greeks and Romans the siege of Troy. On a narrow basis of acknowledged truth, an immense but rude superstructure of fable has been erected; and the wild Irishman, [13](#) as well as the wild Tartar, [14](#) could point out the individual son of Japhet, from whose loins his ancestors were lineally descended. The last century abounded with antiquarians of profound learning and easy faith, who, by the dim light of legends and traditions, of conjectures and etymologies, conducted the great grandchildren of Noah from the Tower of Babel to the extremities of the globe. Of these judicious critics, one of the most entertaining was Olaus Rudbeck, professor in the university of Upsal. [15](#) Whatever is celebrated either in history or fable this zealous patriot ascribes to his country. From Sweden (which formed so considerable a part of ancient Germany) the Greeks themselves derived their alphabetical characters, their astronomy, and their religion. Of that delightful region (for such it appeared to the eyes of a native) the Atlantis of Plato, the country of the Hyperboreans, the gardens of the Hesperides, the Fortunate Islands, and even the Elysian Fields, were all but faint and imperfect transcripts. A clime so profusely favored by Nature could not long remain desert after the flood. The learned Rudbeck allows the family of Noah a few years to

multiply from eight to about twenty thousand persons. He then disperses them into small colonies to replenish the earth, and to propagate the human species. The German or Swedish detachment (which marched, if I am not mistaken, under the command of Askenaz, the son of Gomer, the son of Japhet) distinguished itself by a more than common diligence in the prosecution of this great work. The northern hive cast its swarms over the greatest part of Europe, Africa, and Asia; and (to use the author's metaphor) the blood circulated from the extremities to the heart.

13

[\(return\)](#)

[According to Dr. Keating, (History of Ireland, p. 13, 14,) the giant Portholanus, who was the son of Seara, the son of Esra, the son of Sru, the son of Framant, the son of Fathaclan, the son of Magog, the son of Japhet, the son of Noah, landed on the coast of Munster the 14th day of May, in the year of the world one thousand nine hundred and seventy-eight. Though he succeeded in his great enterprise, the loose behavior of his wife rendered his domestic life very unhappy, and provoked him to such a degree, that he killed—her favorite greyhound. This, as the learned historian very properly observes, was the first instance of female falsehood and infidelity ever known in Ireland.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[Genealogical History of the Tartars, by Abulghazi Bahadur Khan.]

15

[\(return\)](#)

[His work, entitled Atlantica, is uncommonly scarce. Bayle has given two most curious extracts from it. Republique des Lettres Janvier et Fevrier, 1685.]

But all this well-labored system of German antiquities is annihilated by a single fact, too well attested to admit of any doubt, and of too decisive a nature to leave room for any reply. The Germans, in the age of Tacitus, were unacquainted with the use of letters; [16](#) and the use of letters is the principal circumstance that distinguishes a civilized people from a herd of savages incapable of knowledge or reflection. Without that artificial help, the human memory soon dissipates or corrupts the ideas intrusted to her charge; and the nobler faculties of the mind, no longer supplied with models or with materials, gradually forget their powers; the judgment becomes feeble and lethargic, the imagination languid or irregular. Fully to apprehend this important truth, let us attempt, in an improved society, to calculate the immense distance between the man of learning and the *illiterate* peasant. The former, by reading and reflection, multiplies his own experience, and lives in distant ages and remote countries; whilst the latter, rooted to a single spot, and confined to a few years of existence, surpasses but very little his fellow-laborer, the ox, in the exercise of his mental faculties. The same, and even a greater, difference will be found between nations than between individuals; and we may safely

pronounce, that without some species of writing, no people has ever preserved the faithful annals of their history, ever made any considerable progress in the abstract sciences, or ever possessed, in any tolerable degree of perfection, the useful and agreeable arts of life.

16

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germ. ii. 19. *Literarum secreta viri pariter ac fœminæ ignorant*. We may rest contented with this decisive authority, without entering into the obscure disputes concerning the antiquity of the Runic characters. The learned Celsius, a Swede, a scholar, and a philosopher, was of opinion, that they were nothing more than the Roman letters, with the curves changed into straight lines for the ease of engraving. See Pelloutier, *Histoire des Celtes*, l. ii. c. 11. *Dictionnaire Diplomatique*, tom. i. p. 223. We may add, that the oldest Runic inscriptions are supposed to be of the third century, and the most ancient writer who mentions the Runic characters is Venantius Fortunatus, (*Carm. vii. 18.*) who lived towards the end of the sixth century. *Barbara fraxineis pingatur Runa tabellis*. * Note: The obscure subject of the Runic characters has exercised the industry and ingenuity of the modern scholars of the north. There are three distinct theories; one, maintained by Schlozer, (*Nordische Geschichte*, p. 481, &c.,) who considers their sixteen letters to be a corruption of the Roman alphabet, post-Christian in their date, and Schlozer would attribute their introduction into the north to the Alemanni. The second, that of Frederick Schlegel, (*Vorlesungen über alte und neue Literatur*,) supposes that these characters were left on the coasts of the Mediterranean and Northern Seas by the Phœnicians, preserved by the priestly castes, and employed for purposes of magic. Their common origin from the Phœnician would account for their similarity to the Roman letters. The last, to which we incline, claims much higher and more venerable antiquity for the Runic, and supposes them to have been the original characters of the Indo-Teutonic tribes, brought from the East, and preserved among the different races of that stock. See *Ueber Deutsche Runen* von W. C. Grimm, 1821. A Memoir by Dr. Legis. *Fundgruben des alten Nordens*. *Foreign Quarterly Review* vol. ix. p. 438.—M.]

Of these arts, the ancient Germans were wretchedly destitute. [1601](#) They passed their lives in a state of ignorance and poverty, which it has pleased some declaimers to dignify with the appellation of virtuous simplicity. Modern Germany is said to contain

about two thousand three hundred walled towns. [17](#) In a much wider extent of country, the geographer Ptolemy could discover no more than ninety places which he decorates with the name of cities; [18](#) though, according to our ideas, they would but ill deserve that splendid title. We can only suppose them to have been rude fortifications, constructed in the centre of the woods, and designed to secure the women, children, and cattle, whilst the warriors of the tribe marched out to repel a sudden invasion. [19](#) But Tacitus asserts, as a well-known fact, that the Germans, in his time, had *no* cities; [20](#) and that they affected to despise the works of Roman industry, as places of confinement rather than of security. [21](#) Their edifices were not even contiguous, or formed into regular villas; [22](#) each barbarian fixed his independent dwelling on the spot to which a plain, a wood, or a stream of fresh water, had induced him to give the preference. Neither stone, nor brick, nor tiles, were employed in these slight habitations. [23](#) They were indeed no more than low huts, of a circular figure, built of rough timber, thatched with straw, and pierced at the top to leave a free passage for the smoke. In the most inclement winter, the hardy German was satisfied with a scanty garment made of the skin of some animal. The nations who dwelt towards the North clothed themselves in furs; and the women manufactured for their own use a coarse kind of linen. [24](#) The game of various sorts, with which the forests of Germany were plentifully stocked, supplied its inhabitants with food and exercise. [25](#) Their monstrous herds of cattle, less remarkable indeed for their beauty than for their utility, [26](#) formed the principal object of their wealth. A small quantity of corn was the only produce exacted from the earth; the use of orchards or artificial meadows was unknown to the Germans; nor can we expect any improvements in agriculture from a people, whose prosperity every year experienced a general change by a new division of the arable lands, and who, in that strange operation, avoided disputes, by suffering a great part of their territory to lie waste and without tillage. [27](#)

1601

[\(return\)](#)

[Luden (the author of the *Geschichte des Teutschen Volkes*) has surpassed most writers in his patriotic enthusiasm for the virtues and noble manners of his ancestors. Even the cold of the climate, and the want of vines and fruit trees, as well as the barbarism of the inhabitants, are calumnies of the luxurious Italians. M. Guizot, on the other side, (in his *Histoire de la Civilisation*, vol. i. p. 272, &c.,) has drawn a curious parallel between the Germans of Tacitus and the North American Indians.—M.]

17

[\(return\)](#)

[*Recherches Philosophiques sur les Americains*, tom. iii. p. 228. The author of that very curious work is, if I am not misinformed, a German by birth. (De Pauw.)]

- 18 [\(return\)](#)
[The Alexandrian Geographer is often criticized by the accurate Cluverius.]
- 19 [\(return\)](#)
[See Cæsar, and the learned Mr. Whitaker in his History of Manchester, vol. i.]
- 20 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Germ. 15.]
- 21 [\(return\)](#)
[When the Germans commanded the Ubii of Cologne to cast off the Roman yoke, and with their new freedom to resume their ancient manners, they insisted on the immediate demolition of the walls of the colony. "Postulamus a vobis, muros coloniæ, munimenta servitii, detrahatis; etiam fera animalia, si clausa teneas, virtutis obliviscuntur." Tacit. Hist. iv. 64.]
- 22 [\(return\)](#)
[The straggling villages of Silesia are several miles in length. See Cluver. l. i. c. 13.]
- 23 [\(return\)](#)
[One hundred and forty years after Tacitus, a few more regular structures were erected near the Rhine and Danube. Herodian, l. vii. p. 234.]
- 24 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Germ. 17.]
- 25 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Germ. 5.]
- 26 [\(return\)](#)
[Cæsar de Bell. Gall. vi. 21.]
- 27 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Germ. 26. Cæsar, vi. 22.]

Gold, silver, and iron, were extremely scarce in Germany. Its barbarous inhabitants wanted both skill and patience to investigate those rich veins of silver, which have so liberally rewarded the attention of the princes of Brunswick and Saxony. Sweden, which now supplies Europe with iron, was equally ignorant of its own riches; and the appearance of the arms of the Germans furnished a sufficient proof how little iron they were able to bestow on what they must have deemed the noblest use of that metal. The various transactions of peace and war had introduced some Roman coins (chiefly silver) among the borderers of the Rhine and Danube; but the more distant tribes were absolutely unacquainted with the use of money, carried on their confined traffic by the exchange of commodities, and prized their rude earthen vessels as of equal value with the silver vases, the presents of Rome to their princes and ambassadors. [28](#) To a mind capable of reflection, such leading facts convey more instruction, than a tedious detail of subordinate circumstances. The value of money has been settled by general consent

to express our wants and our property, as letters were invented to express our ideas; and both these institutions, by giving a more active energy to the powers and passions of human nature, have contributed to multiply the objects they were designed to represent. The use of gold and silver is in a great measure factitious; but it would be impossible to enumerate the important and various services which agriculture, and all the arts, have received from iron, when tempered and fashioned by the operation of fire and the dexterous hand of man. Money, in a word, is the most universal incitement, iron the most powerful instrument, of human industry; and it is very difficult to conceive by what means a people, neither actuated by the one, nor seconded by the other, could emerge from the grossest barbarism. [29](#)

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germ. 6.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[It is said that the Mexicans and Peruvians, without the use of either money or iron, had made a very great progress in the arts. Those arts, and the monuments they produced, have been strangely magnified. See Recherches sur les Americains, tom. ii. p. 153, &c]

If we contemplate a savage nation in any part of the globe, a supine indolence and a carelessness of futurity will be found to constitute their general character. In a civilized state every faculty of man is expanded and exercised; and the great chain of mutual dependence connects and embraces the several members of society. The most numerous portion of it is employed in constant and useful labor. The select few, placed by fortune above that necessity, can, however, fill up their time by the pursuits of interest or glory, by the improvement of their estate or of their understanding, by the duties, the pleasures, and even the follies of social life. The Germans were not possessed of these varied resources. The care of the house and family, the management of the land and cattle, were delegated to the old and the infirm, to women and slaves. The lazy warrior, destitute of every art that might employ his leisure hours, consumed his days and nights in the animal gratifications of sleep and food. And yet, by a wonderful diversity of nature, (according to the remark of a writer who had pierced into its darkest recesses,) the same barbarians are by turns the most indolent and the most restless of mankind. They delight in sloth, they detest tranquility. [30](#) The languid soul, oppressed with its own weight, anxiously required some new and powerful sensation; and war and danger were the only amusements adequate to its fierce temper. The sound that summoned the German to arms was grateful to his ear. It roused him from his uncomfortable lethargy, gave him an active pursuit, and, by strong exercise of the body, and violent emotions of the mind, restored him to a more lively sense of his existence. In the dull intervals of peace, these barbarians were immoderately addicted to deep gaming and excessive drinking; both of which, by different means, the one by inflaming their passions, the other by extinguishing their reason, alike relieved them from the pain of thinking. They

gloried in passing whole days and nights at table; and the blood of friends and relations often stained their numerous and drunken assemblies. [31](#) Their debts of honor (for in that light they have transmitted to us those of play) they discharged with the most romantic fidelity. The desperate gamester, who had staked his person and liberty on a last throw of the dice, patiently submitted to the decision of fortune, and suffered himself to be bound, chastised, and sold into remote slavery, by his weaker but more lucky antagonist. [32](#)

30 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germ. 15.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germ. 22, 23.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[Id. 24. The Germans might borrow the arts of play from the Romans, but the passion is wonderfully inherent in the human species.]

Strong beer, a liquor extracted with very little art from wheat or barley, and *corrupted* (as it is strongly expressed by Tacitus) into a certain semblance of wine, was sufficient for the gross purposes of German debauchery. But those who had tasted the rich wines of Italy, and afterwards of Gaul, sighed for that more delicious species of intoxication. They attempted not, however, (as has since been executed with so much success,) to naturalize the vine on the banks of the Rhine and Danube; nor did they endeavor to procure by industry the materials of an advantageous commerce. To solicit by labor what might be ravished by arms, was esteemed unworthy of the German spirit. [33](#) The intemperate thirst of strong liquors often urged the barbarians to invade the provinces on which art or nature had bestowed those much envied presents. The Tuscan who betrayed his country to the Celtic nations, attracted them into Italy by the prospect of the rich fruits and delicious wines, the productions of a happier climate. [34](#) And in the same manner the German auxiliaries, invited into France during the civil wars of the sixteenth century, were allured by the promise of plenteous quarters in the provinces of Champagne and Burgundy. [35](#) Drunkenness, the most illiberal, but not the most dangerous of *our* vices, was sometimes capable, in a less civilized state of mankind, of occasioning a battle, a war, or a revolution.

33 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germ. 14.]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[Plutarch. in Camillo. T. Liv. v. 33.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[Dubos. Hist. de la Monarchie Francoise, tom. i. p. 193.]

The climate of ancient Germany has been modified, and the soil fertilized, by the labor of ten centuries from the time of Charlemagne. The same extent of ground which at present maintains, in ease and plenty, a million of husbandmen and artificers, was

unable to supply a hundred thousand lazy warriors with the simple necessities of life. [36](#) The Germans abandoned their immense forests to the exercise of hunting, employed in pasturage the most considerable part of their lands, bestowed on the small remainder a rude and careless cultivation, and then accused the scantiness and sterility of a country that refused to maintain the multitude of its inhabitants. When the return of famine severely admonished them of the importance of the arts, the national distress was sometimes alleviated by the emigration of a third, perhaps, or a fourth part of their youth. [37](#) The possession and the enjoyment of property are the pledges which bind a civilized people to an improved country. But the Germans, who carried with them what they most valued, their arms, their cattle, and their women, cheerfully abandoned the vast silence of their woods for the unbounded hopes of plunder and conquest. The innumerable swarms that issued, or seemed to issue, from the great storehouse of nations, were multiplied by the fears of the vanquished, and by the credulity of succeeding ages. And from facts thus exaggerated, an opinion was gradually established, and has been supported by writers of distinguished reputation, that, in the age of Cæsar and Tacitus, the inhabitants of the North were far more numerous than they are in our days. [38](#) A more serious inquiry into the causes of population seems to have convinced modern philosophers of the falsehood, and indeed the impossibility, of the supposition. To the names of Mariana and of Machiavel, [39](#) we can oppose the equal names of Robertson and Hume. [40](#)

36 [\(return\)](#)

[The Helvetian nation, which issued from a country called Switzerland, contained, of every age and sex, 368,000 persons, (Cæsar de Bell. Gal. i. 29.) At present, the number of people in the Pays de Vaud (a small district on the banks of the Lemane Lake, much more distinguished for politeness than for industry) amounts to 112,591. See an excellent tract of M. Muret, in the Memoires de la Societe de Born.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[Paul Diaconus, c. 1, 2, 3. Machiavel, Davila, and the rest of Paul's followers, represent these emigrations too much as regular and concerted measures.]

38 [\(return\)](#)

[Sir William Temple and Montesquieu have indulged, on this subject, the usual liveliness of their fancy.]

39 [\(return\)](#)

[Machiavel, Hist. di Firenze, l. i. Mariana, Hist. Hispan. l. v. c. 1]

40 [\(return\)](#)

[Robertson's Charles V. Hume's Political Essays. Note: It is a wise observation of Malthus, that these

nations “were not populous in proportion to the land they occupied, but to the food they produced.” They were prolific from their pure morals and constitutions, but their institutions were not calculated to produce food for those whom they brought into being.—M—1845.]

A warlike nation like the Germans, without either cities, letters, arts, or money, found some compensation for this savage state in the enjoyment of liberty. Their poverty secured their freedom, since our desires and our possessions are the strongest fetters of despotism. “Among the Suiones (says Tacitus) riches are held in honor. They are *therefore* subject to an absolute monarch, who, instead of intrusting his people with the free use of arms, as is practised in the rest of Germany, commits them to the safe custody, not of a citizen, or even of a freedman, but of a slave. The neighbors of the Suiones, the Sitones, are sunk even below servitude; they obey a woman.” [41](#) In the mention of these exceptions, the great historian sufficiently acknowledges the general theory of government. We are only at a loss to conceive by what means riches and despotism could penetrate into a remote corner of the North, and extinguish the generous flame that blazed with such fierceness on the frontier of the Roman provinces, or how the ancestors of those Danes and Norwegians, so distinguished in latter ages by their unconquered spirit, could thus tamely resign the great character of German liberty. [42](#) Some tribes, however, on the coast of the Baltic, acknowledged the authority of kings, though without relinquishing the rights of men, [43](#) but in the far greater part of Germany, the form of government was a democracy, tempered, indeed, and controlled, not so much by general and positive laws, as by the occasional ascendant of birth or valor, of eloquence or superstition. [44](#)

41

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. German. 44, 45. Freinshemius (who dedicated his supplement to Livy to Christina of Sweden) thinks proper to be very angry with the Roman who expressed so very little reverence for Northern queens. Note: The Suiones and the Sitones are the ancient inhabitants of Scandinavia, their name may be traced in that of Sweden; they did not belong to the race of the Suevi, but that of the non-Suevi or Cimbri, whom the Suevi, in very remote times, drove back part to the west, part to the north; they were afterwards mingled with Suevian tribes, among others the Goths, who have traces of their name and power in the isle of Gothland.—G]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[May we not suspect that superstition was the parent of despotism? The descendants of Odin, (whose race was not extinct till the year 1060) are said to have reigned in Sweden above a thousand years. The temple of Upsal was the ancient seat of

religion and empire. In the year 1153 I find a singular law, prohibiting the use and profession of arms to any except the king's guards. Is it not probable that it was colored by the pretence of reviving an old institution? See Dalin's History of Sweden in the *Bibliothèque Raisonnée* tom. xl. and xlv.]

43 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Germ. c. 43.]

44 [\(return\)](#)
[Id. c. 11, 12, 13, & c.]

Civil governments, in their first institution, are voluntary associations for mutual defence. To obtain the desired end, it is absolutely necessary that each individual should conceive himself obliged to submit his private opinions and actions to the judgment of the greater number of his associates. The German tribes were contented with this rude but liberal outline of political society. As soon as a youth, born of free parents, had attained the age of manhood, he was introduced into the general council of his countrymen, solemnly invested with a shield and spear, and adopted as an equal and worthy member of the military commonwealth. The assembly of the warriors of the tribe was convened at stated seasons, or on sudden emergencies. The trial of public offences, the election of magistrates, and the great business of peace and war, were determined by its independent voice. Sometimes indeed, these important questions were previously considered and prepared in a more select council of the principal chieftains. [45](#) The magistrates might deliberate and persuade, the people only could resolve and execute; and the resolutions of the Germans were for the most part hasty and violent. Barbarians accustomed to place their freedom in gratifying the present passion, and their courage in overlooking all future consequences, turned away with indignant contempt from the remonstrances of justice and policy, and it was the practice to signify by a hollow murmur their dislike of such timid counsels. But whenever a more popular orator proposed to vindicate the meanest citizen from either foreign or domestic injury, whenever he called upon his fellow-countrymen to assert the national honor, or to pursue some enterprise full of danger and glory, a loud clashing of shields and spears expressed the eager applause of the assembly. For the Germans always met in arms, and it was constantly to be dreaded, lest an irregular multitude, inflamed with faction and strong liquors, should use those arms to enforce, as well as to declare, their furious resolves. We may recollect how often the diets of Poland have been polluted with blood, and the more numerous party has been compelled to yield to the more violent and seditious. [46](#)

45 [\(return\)](#)
[Grotius changes an expression of Tacitus, *pertractantur* into *Prætractantur*. The correction is equally just and ingenious.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Even in our ancient parliament, the barons often carried a question, not so much by the number of votes, as by that of their armed followers.]

A general of the tribe was elected on occasions of danger; and, if the danger was pressing and extensive, several tribes concurred in the choice of the same general. The bravest warrior was named to lead his countrymen into the field, by his example rather than by his commands. But this power, however limited, was still invidious. It expired with the war, and in time of peace the German tribes acknowledged not any supreme chief. [47](#) *Princes* were, however, appointed, in the general assembly, to administer justice, or rather to compose differences, [48](#) in their respective districts. In the choice of these magistrates, as much regard was shown to birth as to merit. [49](#) To each was assigned, by the public, a guard, and a council of a hundred persons, and the first of the princes appears to have enjoyed a preeminence of rank and honor which sometimes tempted the Romans to compliment him with the regal title. [50](#)

47

[\(return\)](#)

[Cæsar de Bell. Gal. vi. 23.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[Minuunt controversias, is a very happy expression of Cæsar's.]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Reges ex nobilitate, duces ex virtute sumunt. Tacit Germ. 7]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[Cluver. Germ. Ant. l. i. c. 38.]

The comparative view of the powers of the magistrates, in two remarkable instances, is alone sufficient to represent the whole system of German manners. The disposal of the landed property within their district was absolutely vested in their hands, and they distributed it every year according to a new division. [51](#) At the same time they were not authorized to punish with death, to imprison, or even to strike a private citizen. [52](#) A people thus jealous of their persons, and careless of their possessions, must have been totally destitute of industry and the arts, but animated with a high sense of honor and independence.

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Cæsar, vi. 22. Tacit Germ. 26.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germ. 7.]

Chapter IX: State Of Germany Until The Barbarians.—Part III.

The Germans respected only those duties which they imposed on themselves. The most obscure soldier resisted with disdain the authority of the magistrates. “The noblest

youths blushed not to be numbered among the faithful companions of some renowned chief, to whom they devoted their arms and service. A noble emulation prevailed among the companions to obtain the first place in the esteem of their chief; amongst the chiefs, to acquire the greatest number of valiant companions. To be ever surrounded by a band of select youths was the pride and strength of the chiefs, their ornament in peace, their defence in war. The glory of such distinguished heroes diffused itself beyond the narrow limits of their own tribe. Presents and embassies solicited their friendship, and the fame of their arms often insured victory to the party which they espoused. In the hour of danger it was shameful for the chief to be surpassed in valor by his companions; shameful for the companions not to equal the valor of their chief. To survive his fall in battle was indelible infamy. To protect his person, and to adorn his glory with the trophies of their own exploits, were the most sacred of their duties. The chiefs combated for victory, the companions for the chief. The noblest warriors, whenever their native country was sunk into the laziness of peace, maintained their numerous bands in some distant scene of action, to exercise their restless spirit, and to acquire renown by voluntary dangers. Gifts worthy of soldiers—the warlike steed, the bloody and ever victorious lance—were the rewards which the companions claimed from the liberality of their chief. The rude plenty of his hospitable board was the only pay that *he* could bestow, or *they* would accept. War, rapine, and the free-will offerings of his friends, supplied the materials of this munificence.” [53](#) This institution, however it might accidentally weaken the several republics, invigorated the general character of the Germans, and even ripened amongst them all the virtues of which barbarians are susceptible; the faith and valor, the hospitality and the courtesy, so conspicuous long afterwards in the ages of chivalry.

The honorable gifts, bestowed by the chief on his brave companions, have been supposed, by an ingenious writer, to contain the first rudiments of the fiefs, distributed after the conquest of the Roman provinces, by the barbarian lords among their vassals, with a similar duty of homage and military service. [54](#) These conditions are, however, very repugnant to the maxims of the ancient Germans, who delighted in mutual presents, but without either imposing, or accepting, the weight of obligations. [55](#)

53 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Germ. 13, 14.]

54 [\(return\)](#)
[Esprit des Loix, l. xxx. c. 3. The brilliant imagination of Montesquieu is corrected, however, by the dry, cold reason of the Abbé de Mably. Observations sur l’Histoire de France, tom. i. p. 356.]

55 [\(return\)](#)
[Gaudent muneribus, sed nec data imputant, nec acceptis obligantur. Tacit. Germ. c. 21.]

“In the days of chivalry, or more properly of romance, all the men were brave and all the women were chaste;” and notwithstanding the latter of these virtues is acquired and preserved with much more difficulty than the former, it is ascribed, almost without exception, to the wives of the ancient Germans. Polygamy was not in use, except among the princes, and among them only for the sake of multiplying their alliances. Divorces were prohibited by manners rather than by laws. Adulteries were punished as rare and inexcusable crimes; nor was seduction justified by example and fashion. [56](#) We may easily discover that Tacitus indulges an honest pleasure in the contrast of barbarian virtue with the dissolute conduct of the Roman ladies; yet there are some striking circumstances that give an air of truth, or at least probability, to the conjugal faith and chastity of the Germans.

56

[\(return\)](#)

[The adulteress was whipped through the village. Neither wealth nor beauty could inspire compassion, or procure her a second husband. 18, 19.]

Although the progress of civilization has undoubtedly contributed to assuage the fiercer passions of human nature, it seems to have been less favorable to the virtue of chastity, whose most dangerous enemy is the softness of the mind. The refinements of life corrupt while they polish the intercourse of the sexes. The gross appetite of love becomes most dangerous when it is elevated, or rather, indeed, disguised by sentimental passion. The elegance of dress, of motion, and of manners, gives a lustre to beauty, and inflames the senses through the imagination. Luxurious entertainments, midnight dances, and licentious spectacles, present at once temptation and opportunity to female frailty. [57](#) From such dangers the unpolished wives of the barbarians were secured by poverty, solitude, and the painful cares of a domestic life. The German huts, open, on every side, to the eye of indiscretion or jealousy, were a better safeguard of conjugal fidelity than the walls, the bolts, and the eunuchs of a Persian harem. To this reason another may be added of a more honorable nature. The Germans treated their women with esteem and confidence, consulted them on every occasion of importance, and fondly believed, that in their breasts resided a sanctity and wisdom more than human. Some of the interpreters of fate, such as Velleda, in the Batavian war, governed, in the name of the deity, the fiercest nations of Germany. [58](#) The rest of the sex, without being adored as goddesses, were respected as the free and equal companions of soldiers; associated even by the marriage ceremony to a life of toil, of danger, and of glory. [59](#) In their great invasions, the camps of the barbarians were filled with a multitude of women, who remained firm and undaunted amidst the sound of arms, the various forms of destruction, and the honorable wounds of their sons and husbands. [60](#) Fainting armies of Germans have, more than once, been driven back upon the enemy by the generous despair of the women, who dreaded death much less than servitude. If the day was irrecoverably lost, they well knew how to deliver themselves and their children, with their own hands, from an insulting victor. [61](#) Heroines of such a cast may claim our

admiration; but they were most assuredly neither lovely nor very susceptible of love. Whilst they affected to emulate the stern virtues of *man*, they must have resigned that attractive softness in which principally consist the charm and weakness of *woman*. Conscious pride taught the German females to suppress every tender emotion that stood in competition with honor, and the first honor of the sex has ever been that of chastity. The sentiments and conduct of these high-spirited matrons may, at once, be considered as a cause, as an effect, and as a proof of the general character of the nation. Female courage, however it may be raised by fanaticism, or confirmed by habit, can be only a faint and imperfect imitation of the manly valor that distinguishes the age or country in which it may be found.

- 57 [\(return\)](#)
[Ovid employs two hundred lines in the research of places the most favorable to love. Above all, he considers the theatre as the best adapted to collect the beauties of Rome, and to melt them into tenderness and sensuality,]
- 58 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Germ. iv. 61, 65.]
- 59 [\(return\)](#)
[The marriage present was a yoke of oxen, horses, and arms. See Germ. c. 18. Tacitus is somewhat too florid on the subject.]
- 60 [\(return\)](#)
[The change of exigere into exugere is a most excellent correction.]
- 61 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Germ. c. 7. Plutarch in Mario. Before the wives of the Teutones destroyed themselves and their children, they had offered to surrender, on condition that they should be received as the slaves of the vestal virgins.]

The religious system of the Germans (if the wild opinions of savages can deserve that name) was dictated by their wants, their fears, and their ignorance. [62](#) They adored the great visible objects and agents of nature, the Sun and the Moon, the Fire and the Earth; together with those imaginary deities, who were supposed to preside over the most important occupations of human life. They were persuaded, that, by some ridiculous arts of divination, they could discover the will of the superior beings, and that human sacrifices were the most precious and acceptable offering to their altars. Some applause has been hastily bestowed on the sublime notion, entertained by that people, of the Deity, whom they neither confined within the walls of the temple, nor represented by any human figure; but when we recollect, that the Germans were unskilled in architecture, and totally unacquainted with the art of sculpture, we shall readily assign the true reason of a scruple, which arose not so much from a superiority of reason, as from a want of ingenuity. The only temples in Germany were dark and ancient groves,

consecrated by the reverence of succeeding generations. Their secret gloom, the imagined residence of an invisible power, by presenting no distinct object of fear or worship, impressed the mind with a still deeper sense of religious horror; [63](#) and the priests, rude and illiterate as they were, had been taught by experience the use of every artifice that could preserve and fortify impressions so well suited to their own interest.

62

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacitus has employed a few lines, and Cluverius one hundred and twenty-four pages, on this obscure subject. The former discovers in Germany the gods of Greece and Rome. The latter is positive, that, under the emblems of the sun, the moon, and the fire, his pious ancestors worshipped the Trinity in unity]

63

[\(return\)](#)

[The sacred wood, described with such sublime horror by Lucan, was in the neighborhood of Marseilles; but there were many of the same kind in Germany. * Note: The ancient Germans had shapeless idols, and, when they began to build more settled habitations, they raised also temples, such as that to the goddess Teufana, who presided over divination. See Adelung, Hist. of Ane Germans, p 296—G]

The same ignorance, which renders barbarians incapable of conceiving or embracing the useful restraints of laws, exposes them naked and unarmed to the blind terrors of superstition. The German priests, improving this favorable temper of their countrymen, had assumed a jurisdiction even in temporal concerns, which the magistrate could not venture to exercise; and the haughty warrior patiently submitted to the lash of correction, when it was inflicted, not by any human power, but by the immediate order of the god of war. [64](#) The defects of civil policy were sometimes supplied by the interposition of ecclesiastical authority. The latter was constantly exerted to maintain silence and decency in the popular assemblies; and was sometimes extended to a more enlarged concern for the national welfare. A solemn procession was occasionally celebrated in the present countries of Mecklenburgh and Pomerania. The unknown symbol of the *Earth*, covered with a thick veil, was placed on a carriage drawn by cows; and in this manner the goddess, whose common residence was in the Isles of Rugen, visited several adjacent tribes of her worshippers. During her progress the sound of war was hushed, quarrels were suspended, arms laid aside, and the restless Germans had an opportunity of tasting the blessings of peace and harmony. [65](#) The *truce of God*, so often and so ineffectually proclaimed by the clergy of the eleventh century, was an obvious imitation of this ancient custom. [66](#)

64

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germania, c. 7.]

65 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Germania, c. 40.]

66 [\(return\)](#)
[See Dr. Robertson's History of Charles V. vol. i.
note 10.]

But the influence of religion was far more powerful to inflame, than to moderate, the fierce passions of the Germans. Interest and fanaticism often prompted its ministers to sanctify the most daring and the most unjust enterprises, by the approbation of Heaven, and full assurances of success. The consecrated standards, long revered in the groves of superstition, were placed in the front of the battle; [67](#) and the hostile army was devoted with dire execrations to the gods of war and of thunder. [68](#) In the faith of soldiers (and such were the Germans) cowardice is the most unpardonable of sins. A brave man was the worthy favorite of their martial deities; the wretch who had lost his shield was alike banished from the religious and civil assemblies of his countrymen. Some tribes of the north seem to have embraced the doctrine of transmigration, [69](#) others imagined a gross paradise of immortal drunkenness. [70](#) All agreed that a life spent in arms, and a glorious death in battle, were the best preparations for a happy futurity, either in this or in another world.

67 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Germania, c. 7. These standards were only
the heads of wild beasts.]

68 [\(return\)](#)
[See an instance of this custom, Tacit. Annal. xiii.
57.]

69 [\(return\)](#)
[Cæsar Diodorus, and Lucan, seem to ascribe this
doctrine to the Gauls, but M. Pelloutier (Histoire
des Celtes, l. iii. c. 18) labors to reduce their
expressions to a more orthodox sense.]

70 [\(return\)](#)
[Concerning this gross but alluring doctrine of the
Edda, see Fable xx. in the curious version of that
book, published by M. Mallet, in his Introduction to
the History of Denmark.]

The immortality so vainly promised by the priests, was, in some degree, conferred by the bards. That singular order of men has most deservedly attracted the notice of all who have attempted to investigate the antiquities of the Celts, the Scandinavians, and the Germans. Their genius and character, as well as the reverence paid to that important office, have been sufficiently illustrated. But we cannot so easily express, or even conceive, the enthusiasm of arms and glory which they kindled in the breast of their audience. Among a polished people a taste for poetry is rather an amusement of the fancy than a passion of the soul. And yet, when in calm retirement we peruse the combats described by Homer or Tasso, we are insensibly seduced by the fiction, and feel a momentary glow of martial ardor. But how faint, how cold is the sensation which

a peaceful mind can receive from solitary study! It was in the hour of battle, or in the feast of victory, that the bards celebrated the glory of the heroes of ancient days, the ancestors of those warlike chieftains, who listened with transport to their artless but animated strains. The view of arms and of danger heightened the effect of the military song; and the passions which it tended to excite, the desire of fame, and the contempt of death, were the habitual sentiments of a German mind. [71](#) [711](#)

71

[\(return\)](#)

[See Tacit. Germ. c. 3. Diod. Sicul. l. v. Strabo, l. iv. p. 197. The classical reader may remember the rank of Demodocus in the Phæacian court, and the ardor infused by Tyrtæus into the fainting Spartans. Yet there is little probability that the Greeks and the Germans were the same people. Much learned trifling might be spared, if our antiquarians would condescend to reflect, that similar manners will naturally be produced by similar situations.]

711

[\(return\)](#)

[Besides these battle songs, the Germans sang at their festival banquets, (Tac. Ann. i. 65,) and around the bodies of their slain heroes. King Theodoric, of the tribe of the Goths, killed in a battle against Attila, was honored by songs while he was borne from the field of battle. Jornandes, c. 41. The same honor was paid to the remains of Attila. Ibid. c. 49. According to some historians, the Germans had songs also at their weddings; but this appears to me inconsistent with their customs, in which marriage was no more than the purchase of a wife. Besides, there is but one instance of this, that of the Gothic king, Ataulph, who sang himself the nuptial hymn when he espoused Placidia, sister of the emperors Arcadius and Honorius, (Olympiodor. p. 8.) But this marriage was celebrated according to the Roman rites, of which the nuptial songs formed a part. Adelung, p. 382.—G. Charlemagne is said to have collected the national songs of the ancient Germans. Eginhard, Vit. Car. Mag.—M.]

Such was the situation, and such were the manners of the ancient Germans. Their climate, their want of learning, of arts, and of laws, their notions of honor, of gallantry, and of religion, their sense of freedom, impatience of peace, and thirst of enterprise, all contributed to form a people of military heroes. And yet we find, that during more than two hundred and fifty years that elapsed from the defeat of Varus to the reign of Decius, these formidable barbarians made few considerable attempts, and not any material impression on the luxurious, and enslaved provinces of the empire. Their progress was checked by their want of arms and discipline, and their fury was diverted by the intestine divisions of ancient Germany. I. It has been observed, with ingenuity, and not without

truth, that the command of iron soon gives a nation the command of gold. But the rude tribes of Germany, alike destitute of both those valuable metals, were reduced slowly to acquire, by their unassisted strength, the possession of the one as well as the other. The face of a German army displayed their poverty of iron. Swords, and the longer kind of lances, they could seldom use. Their *frameæ* (as they called them in their own language) were long spears headed with a sharp but narrow iron point, and which, as occasion required, they either darted from a distance, or pushed in close onset. With this spear, and with a shield, their cavalry was contented. A multitude of darts, scattered [72](#) with incredible force, were an additional resource of the infantry. Their military dress, when they wore any, was nothing more than a loose mantle. A variety of colors was the only ornament of their wooden or osier shields. Few of the chiefs were distinguished by cuirasses, scarcely any by helmets. Though the horses of Germany were neither beautiful, swift, nor practised in the skilful evolutions of the Roman manege, several of the nations obtained renown by their cavalry; but, in general, the principal strength of the Germans consisted in their infantry, [73](#) which was drawn up in several deep columns, according to the distinction of tribes and families. Impatient of fatigue and delay, these half-armed warriors rushed to battle with dissonant shouts and disordered ranks; and sometimes, by the effort of native valor, prevailed over the constrained and more artificial bravery of the Roman mercenaries. But as the barbarians poured forth their whole souls on the first onset, they knew not how to rally or to retire. A repulse was a sure defeat; and a defeat was most commonly total destruction. When we recollect the complete armor of the Roman soldiers, their discipline, exercises, evolutions, fortified camps, and military engines, it appears a just matter of surprise, how the naked and unassisted valor of the barbarians could dare to encounter, in the field, the strength of the legions, and the various troops of the auxiliaries, which seconded their operations. The contest was too unequal, till the introduction of luxury had enervated the vigor, and a spirit of disobedience and sedition had relaxed the discipline, of the Roman armies. The introduction of barbarian auxiliaries into those armies, was a measure attended with very obvious dangers, as it might gradually instruct the Germans in the arts of war and of policy. Although they were admitted in small numbers and with the strictest precaution, the example of Civilis was proper to convince the Romans, that the danger was not imaginary, and that their precautions were not always sufficient. [74](#) During the civil wars that followed the death of Nero, that artful and intrepid Batavian, whom his enemies condescended to compare with Hannibal and Sertorius, [75](#) formed a great design of freedom and ambition. Eight Batavian cohorts renowned in the wars of Britain and Italy, repaired to his standard. He introduced an army of Germans into Gaul, prevailed on the powerful cities of Treves and Langres to embrace his cause, defeated the legions, destroyed their fortified camps, and employed against the Romans the military knowledge which he had acquired in their service. When at length, after an obstinate struggle, he yielded to the power of the empire, Civilis secured himself and his country by an honorable treaty. The Batavians still continued

to occupy the islands of the Rhine, [76](#) the allies, not the servants, of the Roman monarchy.

- 72 [\(return\)](#)
[Missilia spargunt, Tacit. Germ. c. 6. Either that historian used a vague expression, or he meant that they were thrown at random.]
- 73 [\(return\)](#)
[It was their principal distinction from the Sarmatians, who generally fought on horseback.]
- 74 [\(return\)](#)
[The relation of this enterprise occupies a great part of the fourth and fifth books of the History of Tacitus, and is more remarkable for its eloquence than perspicuity. Sir Henry Saville has observed several inaccuracies.]
- 75 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Hist. iv. 13. Like them he had lost an eye.]
- 76 [\(return\)](#)
[It was contained between the two branches of the old Rhine, as they subsisted before the face of the country was changed by art and nature. See Cluver German. Antiq. l. iii. c. 30, 37.]

II. The strength of ancient Germany appears formidable, when we consider the effects that might have been produced by its united effort. The wide extent of country might very possibly contain a million of warriors, as all who were of age to bear arms were of a temper to use them. But this fierce multitude, incapable of concerting or executing any plan of national greatness, was agitated by various and often hostile intentions. Germany was divided into more than forty independent states; and, even in each state, the union of the several tribes was extremely loose and precarious. The barbarians were easily provoked; they knew not how to forgive an injury, much less an insult; their resentments were bloody and implacable. The casual disputes that so frequently happened in their tumultuous parties of hunting or drinking were sufficient to inflame the minds of whole nations; the private feuds of any considerable chieftains diffused itself among their followers and allies. To chastise the insolent, or to plunder the defenceless, were alike causes of war. The most formidable states of Germany affected to encompass their territories with a wide frontier of solitude and devastation. The awful distance preserved by their neighbors attested the terror of their arms, and in some measure defended them from the danger of unexpected incursions. [77](#)

- 77 [\(return\)](#)
[Cæsar de Bell. Gal. l. vi. 23.]

“The Bructeri [771](#) (it is Tacitus who now speaks) were totally exterminated by the neighboring tribes, [78](#) provoked by their insolence, allured by the hopes of spoil, and perhaps inspired by the tutelar deities of the empire. Above sixty thousand barbarians were destroyed; not by the Roman arms, but in our sight, and for our entertainment.

May the nations, enemies of Rome, ever preserve this enmity to each other! We have now attained the utmost verge of prosperity, [79](#) and have nothing left to demand of fortune, except the discord of the barbarians.” [80](#)—These sentiments, less worthy of the humanity than of the patriotism of Tacitus, express the invariable maxims of the policy of his countrymen. They deemed it a much safer expedient to divide than to combat the barbarians, from whose defeat they could derive neither honor nor advantage. The money and negotiations of Rome insinuated themselves into the heart of Germany; and every art of seduction was used with dignity, to conciliate those nations whom their proximity to the Rhine or Danube might render the most useful friends as well as the most troublesome enemies. Chiefs of renown and power were flattered by the most trifling presents, which they received either as marks of distinction, or as the instruments of luxury. In civil dissensions the weaker faction endeavored to strengthen its interest by entering into secret connections with the governors of the frontier provinces. Every quarrel among the Germans was fomented by the intrigues of Rome; and every plan of union and public good was defeated by the stronger bias of private jealousy and interest. [81](#)

771

[\(return\)](#)

[The Bructeri were a non-Suevian tribe, who dwelt below the duchies of Oldenburgh, and Lauenburgh, on the borders of the Lippe, and in the Hartz Mountains. It was among them that the priestess Velleda obtained her renown.—G.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[They are mentioned, however, in the ivth and vth centuries by Nazarius, Ammianus, Claudian, &c., as a tribe of Franks. See Cluver. Germ. Antiq. l. iii. c. 13.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[Urgentibus is the common reading; but good sense, Lipsius, and some Mss. declare for Vergentibus.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit Germania, c. 33. The pious Abbé de la Bleterie is very angry with Tacitus, talks of the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning, &c., &c.]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[Many traces of this policy may be discovered in Tacitus and Dion: and many more may be inferred from the principles of human nature.]

The general conspiracy which terrified the Romans under the reign of Marcus Antoninus, comprehended almost all the nations of Germany, and even Sarmatia, from the mouth of the Rhine to that of the Danube. [82](#) It is impossible for us to determine whether this hasty confederation was formed by necessity, by reason, or by passion; but we may rest assured, that the barbarians were neither allured by the indolence, nor

provoked by the ambition, of the Roman monarch. This dangerous invasion required all the firmness and vigilance of Marcus. He fixed generals of ability in the several stations of attack, and assumed in person the conduct of the most important province on the Upper Danube. After a long and doubtful conflict, the spirit of the barbarians was subdued. The Quadi and the Marcomanni, [83](#) who had taken the lead in the war, were the most severely punished in its catastrophe. They were commanded to retire five miles [84](#) from their own banks of the Danube, and to deliver up the flower of the youth, who were immediately sent into Britain, a remote island, where they might be secure as hostages, and useful as soldiers. [85](#) On the frequent rebellions of the Quadi and Marcomanni, the irritated emperor resolved to reduce their country into the form of a province. His designs were disappointed by death. This formidable league, however, the only one that appears in the two first centuries of the Imperial history, was entirely dissipated, without leaving any traces behind in Germany.

82 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. Aug. p. 31. Ammian. Marcellin. l. xxxi. c. 5. Aurel. Victor. The emperor Marcus was reduced to sell the rich furniture of the palace, and to enlist slaves and robbers.]

83 [\(return\)](#)

[The Marcomanni, a colony, who, from the banks of the Rhine occupied Bohemia and Moravia, had once erected a great and formidable monarchy under their king Maroboduus. See Strabo, l. vii. [p. 290.] Vell. Pat. ii. 108. Tacit. Annal. ii. 63. * Note: The Mark-manæn, the March-men or borderers. There seems little doubt that this was an appellation, rather than a proper name of a part of the great Suevian or Teutonic race.—M.]

84 [\(return\)](#)

[Mr. Wotton (History of Rome, p. 166) increases the prohibition to ten times the distance. His reasoning is specious, but not conclusive. Five miles were sufficient for a fortified barrier.]

85 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion, l. lxxi. and lxxii.]

In the course of this introductory chapter, we have confined ourselves to the general outlines of the manners of Germany, without attempting to describe or to distinguish the various tribes which filled that great country in the time of Cæsar, of Tacitus, or of Ptolemy. As the ancient, or as new tribes successively present themselves in the series of this history, we shall concisely mention their origin, their situation, and their particular character. Modern nations are fixed and permanent societies, connected among themselves by laws and government, bound to their native soil by art and agriculture. The German tribes were voluntary and fluctuating associations of soldiers, almost of savages. The same territory often changed its inhabitants in the tide of

conquest and emigration. The same communities, uniting in a plan of defence or invasion, bestowed a new title on their new confederacy. The dissolution of an ancient confederacy restored to the independent tribes their peculiar but long-forgotten appellation. A victorious state often communicated its own name to a vanquished people. Sometimes crowds of volunteers flocked from all parts to the standard of a favorite leader; his camp became their country, and some circumstance of the enterprise soon gave a common denomination to the mixed multitude. The distinctions of the ferocious invaders were perpetually varied by themselves, and confounded by the astonished subjects of the Roman empire. [86](#)

86

[\(return\)](#)

[See an excellent dissertation on the origin and migrations of nations, in the *Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. xviii. p. 48—71. It is seldom that the antiquarian and the philosopher are so happily blended.]

Wars, and the administration of public affairs, are the principal subjects of history; but the number of persons interested in these busy scenes is very different, according to the different condition of mankind. In great monarchies, millions of obedient subjects pursue their useful occupations in peace and obscurity. The attention of the writer, as well as of the reader, is solely confined to a court, a capital, a regular army, and the districts which happen to be the occasional scene of military operations. But a state of freedom and barbarism, the season of civil commotions, or the situation of petty republics, [87](#) raises almost every member of the community into action, and consequently into notice. The irregular divisions, and the restless motions, of the people of Germany, dazzle our imagination, and seem to multiply their numbers. The profuse enumeration of kings, of warriors, of armies and nations, inclines us to forget that the same objects are continually repeated under a variety of appellations, and that the most splendid appellations have been frequently lavished on the most inconsiderable objects.

87

[\(return\)](#)

[Should we suspect that Athens contained only 21,000 citizens, and Sparta no more than 39,000? See Hume and Wallace on the number of mankind in ancient and modern times. * Note: This number, though too positively stated, is probably not far wrong, as an average estimate. On the subject of Athenian population, see St. Croix, *Acad. des Inscript.* xlvi. Bœckh, *Public Economy of Athens*, i. 47. Eng Trans, Fynes Clinton, *Fasti Hellenici*, vol. i. p. 381. The latter author estimates the citizens of Sparta at 33,000—M.]

Chapter X: Emperors Decius, Gallus, Æmilianus, Valerian And Gallienus—Part I.

The Emperors Decius, Gallus, Æmilianus, Valerian, And
Gallienus.—The General Irruption Of The Barbari Ans.—The
Thirty Tyrants.

From the great secular games celebrated by Philip, to the death of the emperor Gallienus, there elapsed twenty years of shame and misfortune. During that calamitous period, every instant of time was marked, every province of the Roman world was afflicted, by barbarous invaders, and military tyrants, and the ruined empire seemed to approach the last and fatal moment of its dissolution. The confusion of the times, and the scarcity of authentic memorials, oppose equal difficulties to the historian, who attempts to preserve a clear and unbroken thread of narration. Surrounded with imperfect fragments, always concise, often obscure, and sometimes contradictory, he is reduced to collect, to compare, and to conjecture: and though he ought never to place his conjectures in the rank of facts, yet the knowledge of human nature, and of the sure operation of its fierce and unrestrained passions, might, on some occasions, supply the want of historical materials.

There is not, for instance, any difficulty in conceiving, that the successive murders of so many emperors had loosened all the ties of allegiance between the prince and people; that all the generals of Philip were disposed to imitate the example of their master; and that the caprice of armies, long since habituated to frequent and violent revolutions, might every day raise to the throne the most obscure of their fellow-soldiers. History can only add, that the rebellion against the emperor Philip broke out in the summer of the year two hundred and forty-nine, among the legions of Mæsia; and that a subaltern officer, [1](#) named Marinus, was the object of their seditious choice. Philip was alarmed. He dreaded lest the treason of the Mæsiar army should prove the first spark of a general conflagration. Distracted with the consciousness of his guilt and of his danger, he communicated the intelligence to the senate. A gloomy silence prevailed, the effect of fear, and perhaps of disaffection; till at length Decius, one of the assembly, assuming a spirit worthy of his noble extraction, ventured to discover more intrepidity than the emperor seemed to possess. He treated the whole business with contempt, as a hasty and inconsiderate tumult, and Philip's rival as a phantom of royalty, who in a very few days would be destroyed by the same inconstancy that had created him. The speedy completion of the prophecy inspired Philip with a just esteem for so able a counsellor; and Decius appeared to him the only person capable of restoring peace and discipline to an army whose tumultuous spirit did not immediately subside after the murder of Marinus. Decius, [2](#) who long resisted his own nomination, seems to have insinuated the danger of presenting a leader of merit to the angry and apprehensive minds of the soldiers; and his prediction was again confirmed by the event. The legions of Mæsia forced their judge to become their accomplice. They left him only the alternative of death or the purple. His subsequent conduct, after that decisive measure, was unavoidable. He conducted, or followed, his army to the confines of Italy, whither

Philip, collecting all his force to repel the formidable competitor whom he had raised up, advanced to meet him. The Imperial troops were superior in number; but the rebels formed an army of veterans, commanded by an able and experienced leader. Philip was either killed in the battle, or put to death a few days afterwards at Verona. His son and associate in the empire was massacred at Rome by the Prætorian guards; and the victorious Decius, with more favorable circumstances than the ambition of that age can usually plead, was universally acknowledged by the senate and provinces. It is reported, that, immediately after his reluctant acceptance of the title of Augustus, he had assured Philip, by a private message, of his innocence and loyalty, solemnly protesting, that, on his arrival on Italy, he would resign the Imperial ornaments, and return to the condition of an obedient subject. His professions might be sincere; but in the situation where fortune had placed him, it was scarcely possible that he could either forgive or be forgiven. [3](#)

1 [\(return\)](#)

[The expression used by Zosimus and Zonaras may signify that Marinus commanded a century, a cohort, or a legion.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[His birth at Bubalia, a little village in Pannonia, (Eutrop. ix. Victor. in Cæsarib. et Epitom.,) seems to contradict, unless it was merely accidental, his supposed descent from the Decii. Six hundred years had bestowed nobility on the Decii: but at the commencement of that period, they were only plebeians of merit, and among the first who shared the consulship with the haughty patricians. Plebeine Deciorum animæ, &c. Juvenal, Sat. viii. 254. See the spirited speech of Decius, in Livy. x. 9, 10.]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 20, c. 22. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 624, edit. Louvre.]

The emperor Decius had employed a few months in the works of peace and the administration of justice, when he was summoned to the banks of the Danube by the invasion of the Goths. This is the first considerable occasion in which history mentions that great people, who afterwards broke the Roman power, sacked the Capitol, and reigned in Gaul, Spain, and Italy. So memorable was the part which they acted in the subversion of the Western empire, that the name of Goths is frequently but improperly used as a general appellation of rude and warlike barbarism.

In the beginning of the sixth century, and after the conquest of Italy, the Goths, in possession of present greatness, very naturally indulged themselves in the prospect of past and of future glory. They wished to preserve the memory of their ancestors, and to transmit to posterity their own achievements. The principal minister of the court of Ravenna, the learned Cassiodorus, gratified the inclination of the conquerors in a Gothic history, which consisted of twelve books, now reduced to the imperfect abridgment of

Jornandes. [4](#) These writers passed with the most artful conciseness over the misfortunes of the nation, celebrated its successful valor, and adorned the triumph with many Asiatic trophies, that more properly belonged to the people of Scythia. On the faith of ancient songs, the uncertain, but the only memorials of barbarians, they deduced the first origin of the Goths from the vast island, or peninsula, of Scandinavia. [5](#) [501](#) That extreme country of the North was not unknown to the conquerors of Italy: the ties of ancient consanguinity had been strengthened by recent offices of friendship; and a Scandinavian king had cheerfully abdicated his savage greatness, that he might pass the remainder of his days in the peaceful and polished court of Ravenna. [6](#) Many vestiges, which cannot be ascribed to the arts of popular vanity, attest the ancient residence of the Goths in the countries beyond the Rhine. From the time of the geographer Ptolemy, the southern part of Sweden seems to have continued in the possession of the less enterprising remnant of the nation, and a large territory is even at present divided into east and west Gothland. During the middle ages, (from the ninth to the twelfth century,) whilst Christianity was advancing with a slow progress into the North, the Goths and the Swedes composed two distinct and sometimes hostile members of the same monarchy. [7](#) The latter of these two names has prevailed without extinguishing the former. The Swedes, who might well be satisfied with their own fame in arms, have, in every age, claimed the kindred glory of the Goths. In a moment of discontent against the court of Rome, Charles the Twelfth insinuated, that his victorious troops were not degenerated from their brave ancestors, who had already subdued the mistress of the world. [8](#)

[4](#) [\(return\)](#)

[See the prefaces of Cassiodorus and Jornandes; it is surprising that the latter should be omitted in the excellent edition, published by Grotius, of the Gothic writers.]

[5](#) [\(return\)](#)

[On the authority of Ablavius, Jornandes quotes some old Gothic chronicles in verse. De Reb. Geticis, c. 4.]

[501](#) [\(return\)](#)

[The Goths have inhabited Scandinavia, but it was not their original habitation. This great nation was anciently of the Suevian race; it occupied, in the time of Tacitus, and long before, Mecklenburgh, Pomerania Southern Prussia and the north-west of Poland. A little before the birth of J. C., and in the first years of that century, they belonged to the kingdom of Marbod, king of the Marcomanni: but Cotwalda, a young Gothic prince, delivered them from that tyranny, and established his own power over the kingdom of the Marcomanni, already much weakened by the victories of Tiberius. The power of the Goths at that time must have been great: it

was probably from them that the Sinus Codanus (the Baltic) took this name, as it was afterwards called Mare Suevicum, and Mare Venedicum, during the superiority of the proper Suevi and the Venedi. The epoch in which the Goths passed into Scandinavia is unknown. See Adelung, *Hist. of Anc. Germany*, p. 200. Gatterer, *Hist. Univ.* 458.—G. ———M. St. Martin observes, that the Scandinavian descent of the Goths rests on the authority of Jornandes, who professed to derive it from the traditions of the Goths. He is supported by Procopius and Paulus Diaconus. Yet the Goths are unquestionably the same with the Getæ of the earlier historians. St. Martin, note on Le Beau, *Hist. du bas Empire*, iii. 324. The identity of the Getæ and Goths is by no means generally admitted. On the whole, they seem to be one vast branch of the Indo-Teutonic race, who spread irregularly towards the north of Europe, and at different periods, and in different regions, came in contact with the more civilized nations of the south. At this period, there seems to have been a reflux of these Gothic tribes from the North. Malte Brun considers that there are strong grounds for receiving the Islandic traditions commented by the Danish Varro, M. Suhm. From these, and the voyage of Pytheas, which Malte Brun considers genuine, the Goths were in possession of Scandinavia, Ey-Gothland, 250 years before J. C., and of a tract on the continent (Reid-Gothland) between the mouths of the Vistula and the Oder. In their southern migration, they followed the course of the Vistula; afterwards, of the Dnieper. Malte Brun, *Geogr.* i. p. 387, edit. 1832. Geijer, the historian of Sweden, ably maintains the Scandinavian origin of the Goths. The Gothic language, according to Bopp, is the link between the Sanscrit and the modern Teutonic dialects: “I think that I am reading Sanscrit when I am reading Olphilas.” Bopp, *Conjugations System der Sanscrit Sprache*, preface, p. x—M.]

6 [\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes, c. 3.]

7 [\(return\)](#)

[See in the Prolegomena of Grotius some large extracts from Adam of Bremen, and Saxo-Grammaticus. The former wrote in the year 1077, the latter flourished about the year 1200.]

8 [\(return\)](#)

[Voltaire, *Histoire de Charles XII.* l. iii. When the Austrians desired the aid of the court of Rome

against Gustavus Adolphus, they always represented that conqueror as the lineal successor of Alaric. Harte's History of Gustavus, vol. ii. p. 123.]

Till the end of the eleventh century, a celebrated temple subsisted at Upsal, the most considerable town of the Swedes and Goths. It was enriched with the gold which the Scandinavians had acquired in their piratical adventures, and sanctified by the uncouth representations of the three principal deities, the god of war, the goddess of generation, and the god of thunder. In the general festival, that was solemnized every ninth year, nine animals of every species (without excepting the human) were sacrificed, and their bleeding bodies suspended in the sacred grove adjacent to the temple. [9](#) The only traces that now subsist of this barbaric superstition are contained in the Edda, [901](#) a system of mythology, compiled in Iceland about the thirteenth century, and studied by the learned of Denmark and Sweden, as the most valuable remains of their ancient traditions.

9

[\(return\)](#)

[See Adam of Bremen in Grotii Prolegomenis, p. 105. The temple of Upsal was destroyed by Ingo, king of Sweden, who began his reign in the year 1075, and about fourscore years afterwards, a Christian cathedral was erected on its ruins. See Dalin's History of Sweden, in the Bibliotheque Raisonnee.]

901

[\(return\)](#)

[The Eddas have at length been made accessible to European scholars by the completion of the publication of the Sæmundine Edda by the Arna Magnæan Commission, in 3 vols. 4to., with a copious lexicon of northern mythology.—M.]

Notwithstanding the mysterious obscurity of the Edda, we can easily distinguish two persons confounded under the name of Odin; the god of war, and the great legislator of Scandinavia. The latter, the Mahomet of the North, instituted a religion adapted to the climate and to the people. Numerous tribes on either side of the Baltic were subdued by the invincible valor of Odin, by his persuasive eloquence, and by the fame which he acquired of a most skilful magician. The faith that he had propagated, during a long and prosperous life, he confirmed by a voluntary death. Apprehensive of the ignominious approach of disease and infirmity, he resolved to expire as became a warrior. In a solemn assembly of the Swedes and Goths, he wounded himself in nine mortal places, hastening away (as he asserted with his dying voice) to prepare the feast of heroes in the palace of the God of war. [10](#)

10

[\(return\)](#)

[Mallet, Introduction a l'Histoire du Dannemarc.]

The native and proper habitation of Odin is distinguished by the appellation of Asgard. The happy resemblance of that name with As-burg, or As-of, [11](#) words of a similar signification, has given rise to an historical system of so pleasing a contexture, that we could almost wish to persuade ourselves of its truth. It is supposed that Odin was the

chief of a tribe of barbarians which dwelt on the banks of the Lake Mæotis, till the fall of Mithridates and the arms of Pompey menaced the North with servitude. That Odin, yielding with indignant fury to a power he was unable to resist, conducted his tribe from the frontiers of the Asiatic Sarmatia into Sweden, with the great design of forming, in that inaccessible retreat of freedom, a religion and a people which, in some remote age, might be subservient to his immortal revenge; when his invincible Goths, armed with martial fanaticism, should issue in numerous swarms from the neighborhood of the Polar circle, to chastise the oppressors of mankind. [12](#)

11

[\(return\)](#)

[Mallet, c. iv. p. 55, has collected from Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy, and Stephanus Byzantinus, the vestiges of such a city and people.]

12

[\(return\)](#)

[This wonderful expedition of Odin, which, by deducting the enmity of the Goths and Romans from so memorable a cause, might supply the noble groundwork of an epic poem, cannot safely be received as authentic history. According to the obvious sense of the Edda, and the interpretation of the most skilful critics, As-gard, instead of denoting a real city of the Asiatic Sarmatia, is the fictitious appellation of the mystic abode of the gods, the Olympus of Scandinavia; from whence the prophet was supposed to descend, when he announced his new religion to the Gothic nations, who were already seated in the southern parts of Sweden. * Note: A curious letter may be consulted on this subject from the Swede, Ihre counsellor in the Chancery of Upsal, printed at Upsal by Edman, in 1772 and translated into German by M. Schlozer. Gottingen, printed for Dietericht, 1779.—G. ——— Gibbon, at a later period of his work, recanted his opinion of the truth of this expedition of Odin. The Asiatic origin of the Goths is almost certain from the affinity of their language to the Sanscrit and Persian; but their northern writers, when all mythology was reduced to hero worship.—M.]

If so many successive generations of Goths were capable of preserving a faint tradition of their Scandinavian origin, we must not expect, from such unlettered barbarians, any distinct account of the time and circumstances of their emigration. To cross the Baltic was an easy and natural attempt. The inhabitants of Sweden were masters of a sufficient number of large vessels, with oars, [13](#) and the distance is little more than one hundred miles from Carlscoon to the nearest ports of Pomerania and Prussia. Here, at length, we land on firm and historic ground. At least as early as the Christian æra, [14](#) and as late as the age of the Antonines, [15](#) the Goths were established towards the mouth of the Vistula, and in that fertile province where the commercial

cities of Thorn, Elbing, Königsberg, and Dantzick, were long afterwards founded. [16](#) Westward of the Goths, the numerous tribes of the Vandals were spread along the banks of the Oder, and the sea-coast of Pomerania and Mecklenburgh. A striking resemblance of manners, complexion, religion, and language, seemed to indicate that the Vandals and the Goths were originally one great people. [17](#) The latter appear to have been subdivided into Ostrogoths, Visigoths, and Gepidæ. [18](#) The distinction among the Vandals was more strongly marked by the independent names of Heruli, Burgundians, Lombards, and a variety of other petty states, many of which, in a future age, expanded themselves into powerful monarchies. [181](#)

13 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germania, c. 44.]

14 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. ii. 62. If we could yield a firm assent to the navigations of Pytheas of Marseilles, we must allow that the Goths had passed the Baltic at least three hundred years before Christ.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[Ptolemy, l. ii.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[By the German colonies who followed the arms of the Teutonic knights. The conquest and conversion of Prussia were completed by those adventurers in the thirteenth century.]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Pliny (Hist. Natur. iv. 14) and Procopius (in Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 1) agree in this opinion. They lived in distant ages, and possessed different means of investigating the truth.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[The Ostro and Visi, the eastern and western Goths, obtained those denominations from their original seats in Scandinavia. In all their future marches and settlements they preserved, with their names, the same relative situation. When they first departed from Sweden, the infant colony was contained in three vessels. The third, being a heavy sailer, lagged behind, and the crew, which afterwards swelled into a nation, received from that circumstance the appellation of Gepidæ or Loiterers. Jornandes, c. 17. * Note: It was not in Scandinavia that the Goths were divided into Ostrogoths and Visigoths; that division took place after their irruption into Dacia in the third century: those who came from Mecklenburgh and Pomerania were called Visigoths; those who came from the south of Prussia, and the northwest of Poland, called

themselves Ostrogoths. Adelung, Hist. All. p. 202
Gatterer, Hist. Univ. 431.—G.]

181

[\(return\)](#)

[This opinion is by no means probable. The Vandals and the Goths equally belonged to the great division of the Suevi, but the two tribes were very different. Those who have treated on this part of history, appear to me to have neglected to remark that the ancients almost always gave the name of the dominant and conquering people to all the weaker and conquered races. So Pliny calls Vindeli, Vandals, all the people of the north-east of Europe, because at that epoch the Vandals were doubtless the conquering tribe. Cæsar, on the contrary, ranges under the name of Suevi, many of the tribes whom Pliny reckons as Vandals, because the Suevi, properly so called, were then the most powerful tribe in Germany. When the Goths, become in their turn conquerors, had subjugated the nations whom they encountered on their way, these nations lost their name with their liberty, and became of Gothic origin. The Vandals themselves were then considered as Goths; the Heruli, the Gepidæ, &c., suffered the same fate. A common origin was thus attributed to tribes who had only been united by the conquests of some dominant nation, and this confusion has given rise to a number of historical errors.—G. —M. St. Martin has a learned note (to Le Beau, v. 261) on the origin of the Vandals. The difficulty appears to be in rejecting the close analogy of the name with the Vend or Wendish race, who were of Sclavonian, not of Suevian or German, origin. M. St. Martin supposes that the different races spread from the head of the Adriatic to the Baltic, and even the Veneti, on the shores of the Adriatic, the Vindelici, the tribes which gave their name to Vindobena, Vindoduna, Vindonissa, were branches of the same stock with the Sclavonian Venedi, who at one time gave their name to the Baltic; that they all spoke dialects of the Wendish language, which still prevails in Carinthia, Carniola, part of Bohemia, and Lusatia, and is hardly extinct in Mecklenburgh and Pomerania. The Vandal race, once so fearfully celebrated in the annals of mankind, has so utterly perished from the face of the earth, that we are not aware that any vestiges of their language can be traced, so as to throw light on the disputed question of their German, their Sclavonian, or independent origin. The weight of ancient authority seems against M.

St. Martin's opinion. Compare, on the Vandals,
Malte Brun. 394. Also Gibbon's note, c. xli. n.
38.—M.]

In the age of the Antonines, the Goths were still seated in Prussia. About the reign of Alexander Severus, the Roman province of Dacia had already experienced their proximity by frequent and destructive inroads. [19](#) In this interval, therefore, of about seventy years we must place the second migration of the Goths from the Baltic to the Euxine; but the cause that produced it lies concealed among the various motives which actuate the conduct of unsettled barbarians. Either a pestilence or a famine, a victory or a defeat, an oracle of the gods or the eloquence of a daring leader, were sufficient to impel the Gothic arms on the milder climates of the south. Besides the influence of a martial religion, the numbers and spirit of the Goths were equal to the most dangerous adventures. The use of round bucklers and short swords rendered them formidable in a close engagement; the manly obedience which they yielded to hereditary kings, gave uncommon union and stability to their councils; [20](#) and the renowned Amala, the hero of that age, and the tenth ancestor of Theodoric, king of Italy, enforced, by the ascendant of personal merit, the prerogative of his birth, which he derived from the *Anses*, or demigods of the Gothic nation. [21](#)

19 [\(return\)](#)

[See a fragment of Peter Patricius in the Excerpta Legationum and with regard to its probable date, see Tillemont, Hist, des Empereurs, tom. iii. p. 346.]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[Omnium harum gentium insigne, rotunda scuta, breves gladii, et erga reges obsequium. Tacit. Germania, c. 43. The Goths probably acquired their iron by the commerce of amber.]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes, c. 13, 14.]

The fame of a great enterprise excited the bravest warriors from all the Vandalic states of Germany, many of whom are seen a few years afterwards combating under the common standard of the Goths. [22](#) The first motions of the emigrants carried them to the banks of the Prypec, a river universally conceived by the ancients to be the southern branch of the Borysthenes. [23](#) The windings of that great stream through the plains of Poland and Russia gave a direction to their line of march, and a constant supply of fresh water and pasturage to their numerous herds of cattle. They followed the unknown course of the river, confident in their valor, and careless of whatever power might oppose their progress. The Bastarnæ and the Venedi were the first who presented themselves; and the flower of their youth, either from choice or compulsion, increased the Gothic army. The Bastarnæ dwelt on the northern side of the Carpathian Mountains: the immense tract of land that separated the Bastarnæ from the savages of Finland was possessed, or rather wasted, by the Venedi; [24](#) we have some reason to believe that the

first of these nations, which distinguished itself in the Macedonian war, [25](#) and was afterwards divided into the formidable tribes of the Peucini, the Borani, the Carpi, &c., derived its origin from the Germans. [251](#) With better authority, a Sarmatian extraction may be assigned to the Venedi, who rendered themselves so famous in the middle ages. [26](#) But the confusion of blood and manners on that doubtful frontier often perplexed the most accurate observers. [27](#) As the Goths advanced near the Euxine Sea, they encountered a purer race of Sarmatians, the Jazyges, the Alani, [271](#) and the Roxolani; and they were probably the first Germans who saw the mouths of the Borysthenes, and of the Tanais. If we inquire into the characteristic marks of the people of Germany and of Sarmatia, we shall discover that those two great portions of human kind were principally distinguished by fixed huts or movable tents, by a close dress or flowing garments, by the marriage of one or of several wives, by a military force, consisting, for the most part, either of infantry or cavalry; and above all, by the use of the Teutonic, or of the Sclavonian language; the last of which has been diffused by conquest, from the confines of Italy to the neighborhood of Japan.

22 [\(return\)](#)

[The Heruli, and the Uregundi or Burgundi, are particularly mentioned. See Mascou's History of the Germans, l. v. A passage in the Augustan History, p. 28, seems to allude to this great emigration. The Marcomannic war was partly occasioned by the pressure of barbarous tribes, who fled before the arms of more northern barbarians.]

23 [\(return\)](#)

[D'Anville, Geographie Ancienne, and the third part of his incomparable map of Europe.]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germania, c. 46.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Cluver. Germ. Antiqua, l. iii. c. 43.]

251 [\(return\)](#)

[The Bastarnæ cannot be considered original inhabitants of Germany Strabo and Tacitus appear to doubt it; Pliny alone calls them Germans: Ptolemy and Dion treat them as Scythians, a vague appellation at this period of history; Livy, Plutarch, and Diodorus Siculus, call them Gauls, and this is the most probable opinion. They descended from the Gauls who entered Germany under Signoesus. They are always found associated with other Gaulish tribes, such as the Boll, the Taurisci, &c., and not to the German tribes. The names of their chiefs or princes, Chlonix, Chlondicus. Deldon, are not German names. Those who were settled in the island of Peuce in the Danube, took the name of Peucini. The Carpi appear in 237 as a Suevian tribe

who had made an irruption into Mæsia. Afterwards they reappear under the Ostrogoths, with whom they were probably blended. Adelung, p. 236, 278.—G.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[The Venedi, the Slavi, and the Antes, were the three great tribes of the same people. Jornandes, 24. * Note Dagger: They formed the great Slavonian nation.—G.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacitus most assuredly deserves that title, and even his cautious suspense is a proof of his diligent inquiries.]

271 [\(return\)](#)

[Jac. Reineggs supposed that he had found, in the mountains of Caucasus, some descendants of the Alani. The Tartars call them Edeki-Alan: they speak a peculiar dialect of the ancient language of the Tartars of Caucasus. See J. Reineggs' Descr. of Caucasus, p. 11, 13.—G. According to Klaproth, they are the Ossetes of the present day in Mount Caucasus and were the same with the Albanians of antiquity. Klaproth, Hist. de l'Asie, p. 180.—M.]

Chapter X: Emperors Decius, Gallus, Æmilianus, Valerian And Gallienus.—Part II.

The Goths were now in possession of the Ukraine, a country of considerable extent and uncommon fertility, intersected with navigable rivers, which, from either side, discharge themselves into the Borysthenes; and interspersed with large and lofty forests of oaks. The plenty of game and fish, the innumerable bee-hives deposited in the hollow of old trees, and in the cavities of rocks, and forming, even in that rude age, a valuable branch of commerce, the size of the cattle, the temperature of the air, the aptness of the soil for every species of grain, and the luxuriance of the vegetation, all displayed the liberality of Nature, and tempted the industry of man. [28](#) But the Goths withstood all these temptations, and still adhered to a life of idleness, of poverty, and of rapine.

28 [\(return\)](#)

[Genealogical History of the Tartars, p. 593. Mr. Bell (vol. ii. p 379) traversed the Ukraine, in his journey from Petersburg to Constantinople. The modern face of the country is a just representation of the ancient, since, in the hands of the Cossacks, it still remains in a state of nature.]

The Scythian hordes, which, towards the east, bordered on the new settlements of the Goths, presented nothing to their arms, except the doubtful chance of an unprofitable

victory. But the prospect of the Roman territories was far more alluring; and the fields of Dacia were covered with rich harvests, sown by the hands of an industrious, and exposed to be gathered by those of a warlike, people. It is probable that the conquests of Trajan, maintained by his successors, less for any real advantage than for ideal dignity, had contributed to weaken the empire on that side. The new and unsettled province of Dacia was neither strong enough to resist, nor rich enough to satiate, the rapaciousness of the barbarians. As long as the remote banks of the Niester were considered as the boundary of the Roman power, the fortifications of the Lower Danube were more carelessly guarded, and the inhabitants of Mæsia lived in supine security, fondly conceiving themselves at an inaccessible distance from any barbarian invaders. The irruptions of the Goths, under the reign of Philip, fatally convinced them of their mistake. The king, or leader, of that fierce nation, traversed with contempt the province of Dacia, and passed both the Niester and the Danube without encountering any opposition capable of retarding his progress. The relaxed discipline of the Roman troops betrayed the most important posts, where they were stationed, and the fear of deserved punishment induced great numbers of them to enlist under the Gothic standard. The various multitude of barbarians appeared, at length, under the walls of Marcianopolis, a city built by Trajan in honor of his sister, and at that time the capital of the second Mæsia. [29](#) The inhabitants consented to ransom their lives and property by the payment of a large sum of money, and the invaders retreated back into their deserts, animated, rather than satisfied, with the first success of their arms against an opulent but feeble country. Intelligence was soon transmitted to the emperor Decius, that Cniva, king of the Goths, had passed the Danube a second time, with more considerable forces; that his numerous detachments scattered devastation over the province of Mæsia, whilst the main body of the army, consisting of seventy thousand Germans and Sarmatians, a force equal to the most daring achievements, required the presence of the Roman monarch, and the exertion of his military power.

29

[\(return\)](#)

[In the sixteenth chapter of Jornandes, instead of secundo Mæsiam we may venture to substitute secundam, the second Mæsia, of which Marcianopolis was certainly the capital. (See Hierocles de Provinciis, and Wesseling ad locum, p. 636. Itinerar.) It is surprising how this palpable error of the scribe should escape the judicious correction of Grotius. Note: Luden has observed that Jornandes mentions two passages over the Danube; this relates to the second irruption into Mæsia. Geschichte des T V. ii. p. 448.—M.]

Decius found the Goths engaged before Nicopolis, one of the many monuments of Trajan's victories. [30](#) On his approach they raised the siege, but with a design only of marching away to a conquest of greater importance, the siege of Philippopolis, a city of Thrace, founded by the father of Alexander, near the foot of Mount Hæmus. [31](#) Decius

followed them through a difficult country, and by forced marches; but when he imagined himself at a considerable distance from the rear of the Goths, Cniva turned with rapid fury on his pursuers. The camp of the Romans was surprised and pillaged, and, for the first time, their emperor fled in disorder before a troop of half-armed barbarians. After a long resistance, Philoppopolis, destitute of succor, was taken by storm. A hundred thousand persons are reported to have been massacred in the sack of that great city. [32](#) Many prisoners of consequence became a valuable accession to the spoil; and Priscus, a brother of the late emperor Philip, blushed not to assume the purple, under the protection of the barbarous enemies of Rome. [33](#) The time, however, consumed in that tedious siege, enabled Decius to revive the courage, restore the discipline, and recruit the numbers of his troops. He intercepted several parties of Carpi, and other Germans, who were hastening to share the victory of their countrymen, [34](#) intrusted the passes of the mountains to officers of approved valor and fidelity, [35](#) repaired and strengthened the fortifications of the Danube, and exerted his utmost vigilance to oppose either the progress or the retreat of the Goths. Encouraged by the return of fortune, he anxiously waited for an opportunity to retrieve, by a great and decisive blow, his own glory, and that of the Roman arms. [36](#)

30 [\(return\)](#)

[The place is still called Nicop. D’Anville, *Geographie Ancienne*, tom. i. p. 307. The little stream, on whose banks it stood, falls into the Danube.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[Stephan. Byzant. *de Urbibus*, p. 740. Wesseling, *Itinerar.* p. 136. Zonaras, by an odd mistake, ascribes the foundation of Philippopolis to the immediate predecessor of Decius. * Note: Now Philippopolis or Philiba; its situation among the hills caused it to be also called Trimontium. D’Anville, *Geog. Anc.* i. 295.—G.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxxi. 5.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[Aurel. Victor. c. 29.]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[*Victoriae Carpicae*, on some medals of Decius, insinuate these advantages.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[Claudius (who afterwards reigned with so much glory) was posted in the pass of Thermopylae with 200 Dardanians, 100 heavy and 160 light horse, 60 Cretan archers, and 1000 well-armed recruits. See an original letter from the emperor to his officer, in the *Augustan History*, p. 200.]

[Jornandes, c. 16—18. Zosimus, l. i. p. 22. In the general account of this war, it is easy to discover the opposite prejudices of the Gothic and the Grecian writer. In carelessness alone they are alike.]

At the same time when Decius was struggling with the violence of the tempest, his mind, calm and deliberate amidst the tumult of war, investigated the more general causes that, since the age of the Antonines, had so impetuously urged the decline of the Roman greatness. He soon discovered that it was impossible to replace that greatness on a permanent basis without restoring public virtue, ancient principles and manners, and the oppressed majesty of the laws. To execute this noble but arduous design, he first resolved to revive the obsolete office of censor; an office which, as long as it had subsisted in its pristine integrity, had so much contributed to the perpetuity of the state, [37](#) till it was usurped and gradually neglected by the Cæsars. [38](#) Conscious that the favor of the sovereign may confer power, but that the esteem of the people can alone bestow authority, he submitted the choice of the censor to the unbiased voice of the senate. By their unanimous votes, or rather acclamations, Valerian, who was afterwards emperor, and who then served with distinction in the army of Decius, was declared the most worthy of that exalted honor. As soon as the decree of the senate was transmitted to the emperor, he assembled a great council in his camp, and before the investiture of the censor elect, he apprised him of the difficulty and importance of his great office. “Happy Valerian,” said the prince to his distinguished subject, “happy in the general approbation of the senate and of the Roman republic! Accept the censorship of mankind; and judge of our manners. You will select those who deserve to continue members of the senate; you will restore the equestrian order to its ancient splendor; you will improve the revenue, yet moderate the public burdens. You will distinguish into regular classes the various and infinite multitude of citizens, and accurately view the military strength, the wealth, the virtue, and the resources of Rome. Your decisions shall obtain the force of laws. The army, the palace, the ministers of justice, and the great officers of the empire, are all subject to your tribunal. None are exempted, excepting only the ordinary consuls, [39](#) the præfect of the city, the king of the sacrifices, and (as long as she preserves her chastity inviolate) the eldest of the vestal virgins. Even these few, who may not dread the severity, will anxiously solicit the esteem, of the Roman censor.” [40](#)

[Montesquieu, *Grandeur et Decadence des Romains*, c. viii. He illustrates the nature and use of the censorship with his usual ingenuity, and with uncommon precision.]

[Vespasian and Titus were the last censors, (Pliny, *Hist. Natur* vii. 49. Censorinus *de Die Natali*.) The modesty of Trajan refused an honor which he

deserved, and his example became a law to the Antonines. See Pliny's Panegyric, c. 45 and 60.]

39 [\(return\)](#)

[Yet in spite of his exemption, Pompey appeared before that tribunal during his consulship. The occasion, indeed, was equally singular and honorable. Plutarch in Pomp. p. 630.]

40 [\(return\)](#)

[See the original speech in the Augustan Hist. p. 173-174.]

A magistrate, invested with such extensive powers, would have appeared not so much the minister, as the colleague of his sovereign. [41](#) Valerian justly dreaded an elevation so full of envy and of suspicion. He modestly argued the alarming greatness of the trust, his own insufficiency, and the incurable corruption of the times. He artfully insinuated, that the office of censor was inseparable from the Imperial dignity, and that the feeble hands of a subject were unequal to the support of such an immense weight of cares and of power. [42](#) The approaching event of war soon put an end to the prosecution of a project so specious, but so impracticable; and whilst it preserved Valerian from the danger, saved the emperor Decius from the disappointment, which would most probably have attended it. A censor may maintain, he can never restore, the morals of a state. It is impossible for such a magistrate to exert his authority with benefit, or even with effect, unless he is supported by a quick sense of honor and virtue in the minds of the people, by a decent reverence for the public opinion, and by a train of useful prejudices combating on the side of national manners. In a period when these principles are annihilated, the censorial jurisdiction must either sink into empty pageantry, or be converted into a partial instrument of vexatious oppression. [43](#) It was easier to vanquish the Goths than to eradicate the public vices; yet even in the first of these enterprises, Decius lost his army and his life.

41 [\(return\)](#)

[This transaction might deceive Zonaras, who supposes that Valerian was actually declared the colleague of Decius, l. xii. p. 625.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 174. The emperor's reply is omitted.]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[Such as the attempts of Augustus towards a reformation of manness. Tacit. Annal. iii. 24.]

The Goths were now, on every side, surrounded and pursued by the Roman arms. The flower of their troops had perished in the long siege of Philippopolis, and the exhausted country could no longer afford subsistence for the remaining multitude of licentious barbarians. Reduced to this extremity, the Goths would gladly have purchased, by the surrender of all their booty and prisoners, the permission of an undisturbed retreat. But the emperor, confident of victory, and resolving, by the chastisement of these invaders,

to strike a salutary terror into the nations of the North, refused to listen to any terms of accommodation. The high-spirited barbarians preferred death to slavery. An obscure town of Mæsia, called Forum Terebronii, [44](#) was the scene of the battle. The Gothic army was drawn up in three lines, and either from choice or accident, the front of the third line was covered by a morass. In the beginning of the action, the son of Decius, a youth of the fairest hopes, and already associated to the honors of the purple, was slain by an arrow, in the sight of his afflicted father; who, summoning all his fortitude, admonished the dismayed troops, that the loss of a single soldier was of little importance to the republic. [45](#) The conflict was terrible; it was the combat of despair against grief and rage. The first line of the Goths at length gave way in disorder; the second, advancing to sustain it, shared its fate; and the third only remained entire, prepared to dispute the passage of the morass, which was imprudently attempted by the presumption of the enemy. “Here the fortune of the day turned, and all things became adverse to the Romans; the place deep with ooze, sinking under those who stood, slippery to such as advanced; their armor heavy, the waters deep; nor could they wield, in that uneasy situation, their weighty javelins. The barbarians, on the contrary, were inured to encounter in the bogs, their persons tall, their spears long, such as could wound at a distance.” [46](#) In this morass the Roman army, after an ineffectual struggle, was irrecoverably lost; nor could the body of the emperor ever be found. [47](#) Such was the fate of Decius, in the fiftieth year of his age; an accomplished prince, active in war and affable in peace; [48](#) who, together with his son, has deserved to be compared, both in life and death, with the brightest examples of ancient virtue. [49](#)

[44](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont, *Histoire des Empereurs*, tom. iii. p. 598. As Zosimus and some of his followers mistake the Danube for the Tanais, they place the field of battle in the plains of Scythia.]

[45](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor allows two distinct actions for the deaths of the two Decii; but I have preferred the account of Jornandes.]

[46](#) [\(return\)](#)

[I have ventured to copy from Tacitus (*Annal.* i. 64) the picture of a similar engagement between a Roman army and a German tribe.]

[47](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes, c. 18. Zosimus, l. i. p. 22, [c. 23.] Zonaras, l. xii. p. 627. Aurelius Victor.]

[48](#) [\(return\)](#)

[The Decii were killed before the end of the year two hundred and fifty-one, since the new princes took possession of the consulship on the ensuing calends of January.]

[Hist. August. p. 223, gives them a very honorable place among the small number of good emperors who reigned between Augustus and Diocletian.]

This fatal blow humbled, for a very little time, the insolence of the legions. They appeared to have patiently expected, and submissively obeyed, the decree of the senate which regulated the succession to the throne. From a just regard for the memory of Decius, the Imperial title was conferred on Hostilianus, his only surviving son; but an equal rank, with more effectual power, was granted to Gallus, whose experience and ability seemed equal to the great trust of guardian to the young prince and the distressed empire. [50](#) The first care of the new emperor was to deliver the Illyrian provinces from the intolerable weight of the victorious Goths. He consented to leave in their hands the rich fruits of their invasion, an immense booty, and what was still more disgraceful, a great number of prisoners of the highest merit and quality. He plentifully supplied their camp with every conveniency that could assuage their angry spirits or facilitate their so much wished-for departure; and he even promised to pay them annually a large sum of gold, on condition they should never afterwards infest the Roman territories by their incursions. [51](#)

[Hæc ubi Patres comperere... decernunt. Victor in Cæsaribus.]

[Zonaras, l. xii. p. 628.]

In the age of the Scipios, the most opulent kings of the earth, who courted the protection of the victorious commonwealth, were gratified with such trifling presents as could only derive a value from the hand that bestowed them; an ivory chair, a coarse garment of purple, an inconsiderable piece of plate, or a quantity of copper coin. [52](#) After the wealth of nations had centred in Rome, the emperors displayed their greatness, and even their policy, by the regular exercise of a steady and moderate liberality towards the allies of the state. They relieved the poverty of the barbarians, honored their merit, and recompensed their fidelity. These voluntary marks of bounty were understood to flow, not from the fears, but merely from the generosity or the gratitude of the Romans; and whilst presents and subsidies were liberally distributed among friends and suppliants, they were sternly refused to such as claimed them as a debt. [53](#) But this stipulation, of an annual payment to a victorious enemy, appeared without disguise in the light of an ignominious tribute; the minds of the Romans were not yet accustomed to accept such unequal laws from a tribe of barbarians; and the prince, who by a necessary concession had probably saved his country, became the object of the general contempt and aversion. The death of Hostilianus, though it happened in the midst of a raging pestilence, was interpreted as the personal crime of Gallus; [54](#) and even the defeat of the later emperor was ascribed by the voice of suspicion to the perfidious counsels of his hated successor. [55](#) The tranquillity which

the empire enjoyed during the first year of his administration, [56](#) served rather to inflame than to appease the public discontent; and as soon as the apprehensions of war were removed, the infamy of the peace was more deeply and more sensibly felt.

52 [\(return\)](#)

[A *Sella*, a *Toga*, and a golden *Patera* of five pounds weight, were accepted with joy and gratitude by the wealthy king of Egypt. (Livy, xxvii. 4.) *Quina millia Æris*, a weight of copper, in value about eighteen pounds sterling, was the usual present made to foreign are ambassadors. (Livy, xxxi. 9.)]

53 [\(return\)](#)

[See the firmness of a Roman general so late as the time of Alexander Severus, in the *Excerpta Legationum*, p. 25, edit. Louvre.]

54 [\(return\)](#)

[For the plague, see Jornandes, c. 19, and Victor in *Cæsaribus*.]

55 [\(return\)](#)

[These improbable accusations are alleged by Zosimus, l. i. p. 28, 24.]

56 [\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes, c. 19. The Gothic writer at least observed the peace which his victorious countrymen had sworn to Gallus.]

But the Romans were irritated to a still higher degree, when they discovered that they had not even secured their repose, though at the expense of their honor. The dangerous secret of the wealth and weakness of the empire had been revealed to the world. New swarms of barbarians, encouraged by the success, and not conceiving themselves bound by the obligation of their brethren, spread devastation though the Illyrian provinces, and terror as far as the gates of Rome. The defence of the monarchy, which seemed abandoned by the pusillanimous emperor, was assumed by Æmilianus, governor of Pannonia and Mæsia; who rallied the scattered forces, and revived the fainting spirits of the troops. The barbarians were unexpectedly attacked, routed, chased, and pursued beyond the Danube. The victorious leader distributed as a donative the money collected for the tribute, and the acclamations of the soldiers proclaimed him emperor on the field of battle. [57](#) Gallus, who, careless of the general welfare, indulged himself in the pleasures of Italy, was almost in the same instant informed of the success, of the revolt, and of the rapid approach of his aspiring lieutenant. He advanced to meet him as far as the plains of Spoleto. When the armies came in sight of each other, the soldiers of Gallus compared the ignominious conduct of their sovereign with the glory of his rival. They admired the valor of Æmilianus; they were attracted by his liberality, for he offered a considerable increase of pay to all deserters. [58](#) The murder of Gallus, and of his son Volusianus, put an end to the civil war; and the senate gave a legal sanction to the rights

of conquest. The letters of Æmilianus to that assembly displayed a mixture of moderation and vanity. He assured them, that he should resign to their wisdom the civil administration; and, contenting himself with the quality of their general, would in a short time assert the glory of Rome, and deliver the empire from all the barbarians both of the North and of the East. [59](#) His pride was flattered by the applause of the senate; and medals are still extant, representing him with the name and attributes of Hercules the Victor, and Mars the Avenger. [60](#)

57 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 25, 26.]

58 [\(return\)](#)

[Victor in Cæsaribus.]

59 [\(return\)](#)

[Zonaras, l. xii. p. 628.]

60 [\(return\)](#)

[Banduri Numismata, p. 94.]

If the new monarch possessed the abilities, he wanted the time, necessary to fulfil these splendid promises. Less than four months intervened between his victory and his fall. [61](#) He had vanquished Gallus: he sunk under the weight of a competitor more formidable than Gallus. That unfortunate prince had sent Valerian, already distinguished by the honorable title of censor, to bring the legions of Gaul and Germany [62](#) to his aid. Valerian executed that commission with zeal and fidelity; and as he arrived too late to save his sovereign, he resolved to revenge him. The troops of Æmilianus, who still lay encamped in the plains of Spoleto, were awed by the sanctity of his character, but much more by the superior strength of his army; and as they were now become as incapable of personal attachment as they had always been of constitutional principle, they readily imbrued their hands in the blood of a prince who so lately had been the object of their partial choice. The guilt was theirs, [621](#) but the advantage of it was Valerian's; who obtained the possession of the throne by the means indeed of a civil war, but with a degree of innocence singular in that age of revolutions; since he owed neither gratitude nor allegiance to his predecessor, whom he dethroned.

61 [\(return\)](#)

[Eutropius, l. ix. c. 6, says tertio mense. Eusebio this emperor.]

62 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 28. Eutropius and Victor station Valerian's army in Rhætia.]

621 [\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor says that Æmilianus died of a natural disorder. Tropius, in speaking of his death, does not say that he was assassinated—G.]

Valerian was about sixty years of age [63](#) when he was invested with the purple, not by the caprice of the populace, or the clamors of the army, but by the unanimous voice of the Roman world. In his gradual ascent through the honors of the state, he had

deserved the favor of virtuous princes, and had declared himself the enemy of tyrants. [64](#) His noble birth, his mild but unblemished manners, his learning, prudence, and experience, were revered by the senate and people; and if mankind (according to the observation of an ancient writer) had been left at liberty to choose a master, their choice would most assuredly have fallen on Valerian. [65](#) Perhaps the merit of this emperor was inadequate to his reputation; perhaps his abilities, or at least his spirit, were affected by the languor and coldness of old age. The consciousness of his decline engaged him to share the throne with a younger and more active associate; [66](#) the emergency of the times demanded a general no less than a prince; and the experience of the Roman censor might have directed him where to bestow the Imperial purple, as the reward of military merit. But instead of making a judicious choice, which would have confirmed his reign and endeared his memory, Valerian, consulting only the dictates of affection or vanity, immediately invested with the supreme honors his son Gallienus, a youth whose effeminate vices had been hitherto concealed by the obscurity of a private station. The joint government of the father and the son subsisted about seven, and the sole administration of Gallienus continued about eight, years. But the whole period was one uninterrupted series of confusion and calamity. As the Roman empire was at the same time, and on every side, attacked by the blind fury of foreign invaders, and the wild ambition of domestic usurpers, we shall consult order and perspicuity, by pursuing, not so much the doubtful arrangement of dates, as the more natural distribution of subjects. The most dangerous enemies of Rome, during the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, were, 1. The Franks; 2. The Alemanni; 3. The Goths; and, 4. The Persians. Under these general appellations, we may comprehend the adventures of less considerable tribes, whose obscure and uncouth names would only serve to oppress the memory and perplex the attention of the reader.

63 [\(return\)](#)
[He was about seventy at the time of his accession, or, as it is more probable, of his death. Hist. August. p. 173. Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iii. p. 893, note 1.]

64 [\(return\)](#)
[Inimicus tyrannorum. Hist. August. p. 173. In the glorious struggle of the senate against Maximin, Valerian acted a very spirited part. Hist. August. p. 156.]

65 [\(return\)](#)
[According to the distinction of Victor, he seems to have received the title of Imperator from the army, and that of Augustus from the senate.]

66 [\(return\)](#)
[From Victor and from the medals, Tillemont (tom. iii. p. 710) very justly infers, that Gallienus was associated to the empire about the month of August of the year 253.]

I. As the posterity of the Franks compose one of the greatest and most enlightened nations of Europe, the powers of learning and ingenuity have been exhausted in the discovery of their unlettered ancestors. To the tales of credulity have succeeded the systems of fancy. Every passage has been sifted, every spot has been surveyed, that might possibly reveal some faint traces of their origin. It has been supposed that Pannonia, [67](#) that Gaul, that the northern parts of Germany, [68](#) gave birth to that celebrated colony of warriors. At length the most rational critics, rejecting the fictitious emigrations of ideal conquerors, have acquiesced in a sentiment whose simplicity persuades us of its truth. [69](#) They suppose, that about the year two hundred and forty, [70](#) a new confederacy was formed under the name of Franks, by the old inhabitants of the Lower Rhine and the Weser. [701](#) The present circle of Westphalia, the Landgraviate of Hesse, and the duchies of Brunswick and Luneburg, were the ancient seat of the Chauci who, in their inaccessible morasses, defied the Roman arms; [71](#) of the Cherusci, proud of the fame of Arminius; of the Catti, formidable by their firm and intrepid infantry; and of several other tribes of inferior power and renown. [72](#) The love of liberty was the ruling passion of these Germans; the enjoyment of it their best treasure; the word that expressed that enjoyment the most pleasing to their ear. They deserved, they assumed, they maintained the honorable epithet of Franks, or Freeman; which concealed, though it did not extinguish, the peculiar names of the several states of the confederacy. [73](#) Tacit consent, and mutual advantage, dictated the first laws of the union; it was gradually cemented by habit and experience. The league of the Franks may admit of some comparison with the Helvetic body; in which every canton, retaining its independent sovereignty, consults with its brethren in the common cause, without acknowledging the authority of any supreme head or representative assembly. [74](#) But the principle of the two confederacies was extremely different. A peace of two hundred years has rewarded the wise and honest policy of the Swiss. An inconstant spirit, the thirst of rapine, and a disregard to the most solemn treaties, disgraced the character of the Franks.

[67](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Various systems have been formed to explain a difficult passage in Gregory of Tours, l. ii. c. 9.]

[68](#) [\(return\)](#)

[The Geographer of Ravenna, i. 11, by mentioning Mauringania, on the confines of Denmark, as the ancient seat of the Franks, gave birth to an ingenious system of Leibnitz.]

[69](#) [\(return\)](#)

[See Cluver. Germania Antiqua, l. iii. c. 20. M. Freret, in the Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xviii.]

[70](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Most probably under the reign of Gordian, from

an accidental circumstance fully canvassed by Tillemont, tom. iii. p. 710, 1181.]

701 [\(return\)](#)

[The confederation of the Franks appears to have been formed, 1. Of the Chauci. 2. Of the Sicambri, the inhabitants of the duchy of Berg. 3. Of the Attuarii, to the north of the Sicambri, in the principality of Waldeck, between the Dimel and the Eder. 4. Of the Bructeri, on the banks of the Lippe, and in the Hartz. 5. Of the Chamavii, the Gambrivii of Tacitua, who were established, at the time of the Frankish confederation, in the country of the Bructeri. 6. Of the Catti, in Hessa.—G. The Salii and Cherasci are added. Greenwood's Hist. of Germans, i 193.—M.]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Hist. Natur. xvi. l. The Panegyrist frequently allude to the morasses of the Franks.]

72 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germania, c. 30, 37.]

73 [\(return\)](#)

[In a subsequent period, most of those old names are occasionally mentioned. See some vestiges of them in Cluver. Germ. Antiq. l. iii.]

74 [\(return\)](#)

[Simler de Republica Helvet. cum notis Fuselin.]

Chapter X: Emperors Decius, Gallus, Æmilianus, Valerian And Gallienus.—Part III.

The Romans had long experienced the daring valor of the people of Lower Germany. The union of their strength threatened Gaul with a more formidable invasion, and required the presence of Gallienus, the heir and colleague of Imperial power. [75](#) Whilst that prince, and his infant son Salonius, displayed, in the court of Treves, the majesty of the empire, its armies were ably conducted by their general, Posthumus, who, though he afterwards betrayed the family of Valerian, was ever faithful to the great interests of the monarchy. The treacherous language of panegyrics and medals darkly announces a long series of victories. Trophies and titles attest (if such evidence can attest) the fame of Posthumus, who is repeatedly styled the Conqueror of the Germans, and the Savior of Gaul. [76](#)

75 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 27.]

76 [\(return\)](#)

[M. de Brequigny (in the Memoires de l'Academie, tom. xxx.) has given us a very curious life of

Posthumus. A series of the Augustan History from Medals and Inscriptions has been more than once planned, and is still much wanted. * Note: M. Eckhel, Keeper of the Cabinet of Medals, and Professor of Antiquities at Vienna, lately deceased, has supplied this want by his excellent work, *Doctrina veterum Nummorum*, conscripta a Jos. Eckhel, 8 vol. in 4to Vindobona, 1797.—G. Captain Smyth has likewise printed (privately) a valuable Descriptive Catalogue of a series of Large Brass Medals of this period Bedford, 1834.—M. 1845.]

But a single fact, the only one indeed of which we have any distinct knowledge, erases, in a great measure, these monuments of vanity and adulation. The Rhine, though dignified with the title of Safeguard of the provinces, was an imperfect barrier against the daring spirit of enterprise with which the Franks were actuated. Their rapid devastations stretched from the river to the foot of the Pyrenees; nor were they stopped by those mountains. Spain, which had never dreaded, was unable to resist, the inroads of the Germans. During twelve years, the greatest part of the reign of Gallienus, that opulent country was the theatre of unequal and destructive hostilities. Tarragona, the flourishing capital of a peaceful province, was sacked and almost destroyed; [77](#) and so late as the days of Orosius, who wrote in the fifth century, wretched cottages, scattered amidst the ruins of magnificent cities, still recorded the rage of the barbarians. [78](#) When the exhausted country no longer supplied a variety of plunder, the Franks seized on some vessels in the ports of Spain, [79](#) and transported themselves into Mauritania. The distant province was astonished with the fury of these barbarians, who seemed to fall from a new world, as their name, manners, and complexion, were equally unknown on the coast of Africa. [80](#)

[77](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Aurel. Victor, c. 33. Instead of Pœne direpto, both the sense and the expression require deleteo; though indeed, for different reasons, it is alike difficult to correct the text of the best, and of the worst, writers.]

[78](#) [\(return\)](#)

[In the time of Ausonius (the end of the fourth century) Ilerda or Lerida was in a very ruinous state, (Auson. Epist. xxv. 58,) which probably was the consequence of this invasion.]

[79](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Valesius is therefore mistaken in supposing that the Franks had invaded Spain by sea.]

[80](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Aurel. Victor. Eutrop. ix. 6.]

II. In that part of Upper Saxony, beyond the Elbe, which is at present called the Marquisate of Lusace, there existed, in ancient times, a sacred wood, the awful seat of

the superstition of the Suevi. None were permitted to enter the holy precincts, without confessing, by their servile bonds and suppliant posture, the immediate presence of the sovereign Deity. [81](#) Patriotism contributed, as well as devotion, to consecrate the Sonnenwald, or wood of the Semnones. [82](#) It was universally believed, that the nation had received its first existence on that sacred spot. At stated periods, the numerous tribes who gloried in the Suevic blood, resorted thither by their ambassadors; and the memory of their common extraction was perpetrated by barbaric rites and human sacrifices. The wide-extended name of Suevi filled the interior countries of Germany, from the banks of the Oder to those of the Danube. They were distinguished from the other Germans by their peculiar mode of dressing their long hair, which they gathered into a rude knot on the crown of the head; and they delighted in an ornament that showed their ranks more lofty and terrible in the eyes of the enemy. [83](#) Jealous as the Germans were of military renown, they all confessed the superior valor of the Suevi; and the tribes of the Usipetes and Tencteri, who, with a vast army, encountered the dictator Cæsar, declared that they esteemed it not a disgrace to have fled before a people to whose arms the immortal gods themselves were unequal. [84](#)

81 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit.Germania, 38.]

82 [\(return\)](#)

[Cluver. Germ. Antiq. iii. 25.]

83 [\(return\)](#)

[Sic Suevi a ceteris Germanis, sic Suerorum ingenui a servis separantur. A proud separation!]

84 [\(return\)](#)

[Cæsar in Bello Gallico, iv. 7.]

In the reign of the emperor Caracalla, an innumerable swarm of Suevi appeared on the banks of the Main, and in the neighborhood of the Roman provinces, in quest either of food, of plunder, or of glory. [85](#) The hasty army of volunteers gradually coalesced into a great and permanent nation, and, as it was composed from so many different tribes, assumed the name of Alemanni, [851](#) or *Allmen*, to denote at once their various lineage and their common bravery. [86](#) The latter was soon felt by the Romans in many a hostile inroad. The Alemanni fought chiefly on horseback; but their cavalry was rendered still more formidable by a mixture of light infantry, selected from the bravest and most active of the youth, whom frequent exercise had inured to accompany the horsemen in the longest march, the most rapid charge, or the most precipitate retreat. [87](#)

85 [\(return\)](#)

[Victor in Caracal. Dion Cassius, lxxvii. p. 1350.]

851 [\(return\)](#)

[The nation of the Alemanni was not originally formed by the Suavi properly so called; these have always preserved their own name. Shortly afterwards they made (A. D. 357) an irruption into Rhætia, and it was not long after that they were

reunited with the Alemanni. Still they have always been a distinct people; at the present day, the people who inhabit the north-west of the Black Forest call themselves Schwaben, Suabians, Sueves, while those who inhabit near the Rhine, in Ortenau, the Brisgaw, the Margraviate of Baden, do not consider themselves Suabians, and are by origin Alemanni. The Teucteri and the Usipetæ, inhabitants of the interior and of the north of Westphalia, formed, says Gatterer, the nucleus of the Alemannic nation; they occupied the country where the name of the Alemanni first appears, as conquered in 213, by Caracalla. They were well trained to fight on horseback, (according to Tacitus, Germ. c. 32;) and Aurelius Victor gives the same praise to the Alemanni: finally, they never made part of the Frankish league. The Alemanni became subsequently a centre round which gathered a multitude of German tribes, See Eumen. Panegy. c. 2. Amm. Marc. xviii. 2, xxix. 4.—G. —The question whether the Suevi was a generic name comprehending the clans which peopled central Germany, is rather hastily decided by M. Guizot Mr. Greenwood, who has studied the modern German writers on their own origin, supposes the Suevi, Alemanni, and Marcomanni, one people, under different appellations. History of Germany, vol i.—M.]

86

[\(return\)](#)

[This etymology (far different from those which amuse the fancy of the learned) is preserved by Asinius Quadratus, an original historian, quoted by Agathias, i. c. 5.]

87

[\(return\)](#)

[The Suevi engaged Cæsar in this manner, and the manœuvre deserved the approbation of the conqueror, (in Bello Gallico, i. 48.)]

This warlike people of Germans had been astonished by the immense preparations of Alexander Severus; they were dismayed by the arms of his successor, a barbarian equal in valor and fierceness to themselves. But still hovering on the frontiers of the empire, they increased the general disorder that ensued after the death of Decius. They inflicted severe wounds on the rich provinces of Gaul; they were the first who removed the veil that covered the feeble majesty of Italy. A numerous body of the Alemanni penetrated across the Danube and through the Rhætian Alps into the plains of Lombardy, advanced as far as Ravenna, and displayed the victorious banners of barbarians almost in sight of Rome. [88](#)

88

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 215, 216. Dexippus in the

The insult and the danger rekindled in the senate some sparks of their ancient virtue. Both the emperors were engaged in far distant wars, Valerian in the East, and Gallienus on the Rhine. All the hopes and resources of the Romans were in themselves. In this emergency, the senators resumed the defence of the republic, drew out the Prætorian guards, who had been left to garrison the capital, and filled up their numbers, by enlisting into the public service the stoutest and most willing of the Plebeians. The Alemanni, astonished with the sudden appearance of an army more numerous than their own, retired into Germany, laden with spoil; and their retreat was esteemed as a victory by the unwarlike Romans. [89](#)

89

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 34.]

When Gallienus received the intelligence that his capital was delivered from the barbarians, he was much less delighted than alarmed with the courage of the senate, since it might one day prompt them to rescue the public from domestic tyranny as well as from foreign invasion. His timid ingratitude was published to his subjects, in an edict which prohibited the senators from exercising any military employment, and even from approaching the camps of the legions. But his fears were groundless. The rich and luxurious nobles, sinking into their natural character, accepted, as a favor, this disgraceful exemption from military service; and as long as they were indulged in the enjoyment of their baths, their theatres, and their villas, they cheerfully resigned the more dangerous cares of empire to the rough hands of peasants and soldiers. [90](#)

90

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurel. Victor, in Gallieno et Probo. His complaints breathe as uncommon spirit of freedom.]

Another invasion of the Alemanni, of a more formidable aspect, but more glorious event, is mentioned by a writer of the lower empire. Three hundred thousand are said to have been vanquished, in a battle near Milan, by Gallienus in person, at the head of only ten thousand Romans. [91](#) We may, however, with great probability, ascribe this incredible victory either to the credulity of the historian, or to some exaggerated exploits of one of the emperor's lieutenants. It was by arms of a very different nature, that Gallienus endeavored to protect Italy from the fury of the Germans. He espoused Pipa, the daughter of a king of the Marcomanni, a Suevic tribe, which was often confounded with the Alemanni in their wars and conquests. [92](#) To the father, as the price of his alliance, he granted an ample settlement in Pannonia. The native charms of unpolished beauty seem to have fixed the daughter in the affections of the inconstant emperor, and the bands of policy were more firmly connected by those of love. But the haughty prejudice of Rome still refused the name of marriage to the profane mixture of a citizen and a barbarian; and has stigmatized the German princess with the opprobrious title of concubine of Gallienus. [93](#)

91 [\(return\)](#)

[Zonaras, l. xii. p. 631.]

92 [\(return\)](#)

[One of the Victors calls him king of the Marcomanni; the other of the Germans.]

93 [\(return\)](#)

[See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iii. p. 398, &c.]

III. We have already traced the emigration of the Goths from Scandinavia, or at least from Prussia, to the mouth of the Borysthenes, and have followed their victorious arms from the Borysthenes to the Danube. Under the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, the frontier of the last-mentioned river was perpetually infested by the inroads of Germans and Sarmatians; but it was defended by the Romans with more than usual firmness and success. The provinces that were the seat of war, recruited the armies of Rome with an inexhaustible supply of hardy soldiers; and more than one of these Illyrian peasants attained the station, and displayed the abilities, of a general. Though flying parties of the barbarians, who incessantly hovered on the banks of the Danube, penetrated sometimes to the confines of Italy and Macedonia, their progress was commonly checked, or their return intercepted, by the Imperial lieutenants. [94](#) But the great stream of the Gothic hostilities was diverted into a very different channel. The Goths, in their new settlement of the Ukraine, soon became masters of the northern coast of the Euxine: to the south of that inland sea were situated the soft and wealthy provinces of Asia Minor, which possessed all that could attract, and nothing that could resist, a barbarian conqueror.

94 [\(return\)](#)

[See the lives of Claudius, Aurelian, and Probus, in the Augustan History.]

The banks of the Borysthenes are only sixty miles distant from the narrow entrance [95](#) of the peninsula of Crim Tartary, known to the ancients under the name of Chersonesus Taurica. [96](#) On that inhospitable shore, Euripides, embellishing with exquisite art the tales of antiquity, has placed the scene of one of his most affecting tragedies. [97](#) The bloody sacrifices of Diana, the arrival of Orestes and Pylades, and the triumph of virtue and religion over savage fierceness, serve to represent an historical truth, that the Tauri, the original inhabitants of the peninsula, were, in some degree, reclaimed from their brutal manners by a gradual intercourse with the Grecian colonies, which settled along the maritime coast. The little kingdom of Bosphorus, whose capital was situated on the Straits, through which the Mæotis communicates itself to the Euxine, was composed of degenerate Greeks and half-civilized barbarians. It subsisted, as an independent state, from the time of the Peloponnesian war, [98](#) was at last swallowed up by the ambition of Mithridates, [99](#) and, with the rest of his dominions, sunk under the weight of the Roman arms. From the reign of Augustus, [100](#) the kings of Bosphorus were the humble, but not useless, allies of the empire. By presents, by

arms, and by a slight fortification drawn across the Isthmus, they effectually guarded, against the roving plunderers of Sarmatia, the access of a country which, from its peculiar situation and convenient harbors, commanded the Euxine Sea and Asia Minor. [101](#) As long as the sceptre was possessed by a lineal succession of kings, they acquitted themselves of their important charge with vigilance and success. Domestic factions, and the fears, or private interest, of obscure usurpers, who seized on the vacant throne, admitted the Goths into the heart of Bosphorus. With the acquisition of a superfluous waste of fertile soil, the conquerors obtained the command of a naval force, sufficient to transport their armies to the coast of Asia. [102](#) These ships used in the navigation of the Euxine were of a very singular construction. They were slight flat-bottomed barks framed of timber only, without the least mixture of iron, and occasionally covered with a shelving roof, on the appearance of a tempest. [103](#) In these floating houses, the Goths carelessly trusted themselves to the mercy of an unknown sea, under the conduct of sailors pressed into the service, and whose skill and fidelity were equally suspicious. But the hopes of plunder had banished every idea of danger, and a natural fearlessness of temper supplied in their minds the more rational confidence, which is the just result of knowledge and experience. Warriors of such a daring spirit must have often murmured against the cowardice of their guides, who required the strongest assurances of a settled calm before they would venture to embark; and would scarcely ever be tempted to lose sight of the land. Such, at least, is the practice of the modern Turks; [104](#) and they are probably not inferior, in the art of navigation, to the ancient inhabitants of Bosphorus.

95 [\(return\)](#)
[It is about half a league in breadth. Genealogical History of the Tartars, p 598.]

96 [\(return\)](#)
[M. de Peyssonel, who had been French Consul at Caffa, in his Observations sur les Peuples Barbares, que ont habite les bords du Danube]

97 [\(return\)](#)
[Eeripides in Iphigenia in Taurid.]

98 [\(return\)](#)
[Strabo, l. vii. p. 309. The first kings of Bosphorus were the allies of Athens.]

99 [\(return\)](#)
[Appian in Mithridat.]

100 [\(return\)](#)
[It was reduced by the arms of Agrippa. Orosius, vi. 21. Eu tropius, vii. 9. The Romans once advanced within three days' march of the Tanais. Tacit. Annal. xii. 17.]

101 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Toxaris of Lucian, if we credit the sincerity and the virtues of the Scythian, who relates

a great war of his nation against the kings of Bosphorus.]

102 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 28.]

103 [\(return\)](#)

[Strabo, l. xi. Tacit. Hist. iii. 47. They were called Camarœ.]

104 [\(return\)](#)

[See a very natural picture of the Euxine navigation, in the xvth letter of Tournefort.]

The fleet of the Goths, leaving the coast of Circassia on the left hand, first appeared before Pityus, [105](#) the utmost limits of the Roman provinces; a city provided with a convenient port, and fortified with a strong wall. Here they met with a resistance more obstinate than they had reason to expect from the feeble garrison of a distant fortress. They were repulsed; and their disappointment seemed to diminish the terror of the Gothic name. As long as Successianus, an officer of superior rank and merit, defended that frontier, all their efforts were ineffectual; but as soon as he was removed by Valerian to a more honorable but less important station, they resumed the attack of Pityus; and by the destruction of that city, obliterated the memory of their former disgrace. [106](#)

105 [\(return\)](#)

[Arrian places the frontier garrison at Dioscurias, or Sebastopolis, forty-four miles to the east of Pityus. The garrison of Phasis consisted in his time of only four hundred foot. See the Periplus of the Euxine. * Note: Pityus is Pitchinda, according to D'Anville, ii. 115.—G. Rather Boukoun.—M. Dioscurias is Iskuriyah.—G.]

106 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 30.]

Circling round the eastern extremity of the Euxine Sea, the navigation from Pityus to Trebizond is about three hundred miles. [107](#) The course of the Goths carried them in sight of the country of Colchis, so famous by the expedition of the Argonauts; and they even attempted, though without success, to pillage a rich temple at the mouth of the River Phasis. Trebizond, celebrated in the retreat of the ten thousand as an ancient colony of Greeks, [108](#) derived its wealth and splendor from the magnificence of the emperor Hadrian, who had constructed an artificial port on a coast left destitute by nature of secure harbors. [109](#) The city was large and populous; a double enclosure of walls seemed to defy the fury of the Goths, and the usual garrison had been strengthened by a reënforcement of ten thousand men. But there are not any advantages capable of supplying the absence of discipline and vigilance. The numerous garrison of Trebizond, dissolved in riot and luxury, disdained to guard their impregnable fortifications. The Goths soon discovered the supine negligence of the besieged, erected a lofty pile of fascines, ascended the walls in the silence of the night, and entered the defenceless city

sword in hand. A general massacre of the people ensued, whilst the affrighted soldiers escaped through the opposite gates of the town. The most holy temples, and the most splendid edifices, were involved in a common destruction. The booty that fell into the hands of the Goths was immense: the wealth of the adjacent countries had been deposited in Trebizond, as in a secure place of refuge. The number of captives was incredible, as the victorious barbarians ranged without opposition through the extensive province of Pontus. [110](#) The rich spoils of Trebizond filled a great fleet of ships that had been found in the port. The robust youth of the sea-coast were chained to the oar; and the Goths, satisfied with the success of their first naval expedition, returned in triumph to their new establishment in the kingdom of Bosphorus. [111](#)

107 [\(return\)](#)
[Arrian (in Periplo Maris Euxine, p. 130) calls the distance 2610 stadia.]

108 [\(return\)](#)
[Xenophon, Anabasis, l. iv. p. 348, edit. Hutchinson. Note: Fallmerayer (Geschichte des Kaiserthums von Trapezunt, p. 6, &c) assigns a very ancient date to the first (Pelagic) foundation of Trapezun (Trebizond)—M.]

109 [\(return\)](#)
[Arrian, p. 129. The general observation is Tournefort's.]

110 [\(return\)](#)
[See an epistle of Gregory Thaumaturgus, bishop of Neo-Cæoarea, quoted by Mascou, v. 37.]

111 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. i. p. 32, 33.]

The second expedition of the Goths was undertaken with greater powers of men and ships; but they steered a different course, and, disdaining the exhausted provinces of Pontus, followed the western coast of the Euxine, passed before the wide mouths of the Borysthenes, the Niester, and the Danube, and increasing their fleet by the capture of a great number of fishing barks, they approached the narrow outlet through which the Euxine Sea pours its waters into the Mediterranean, and divides the continents of Europe and Asia. The garrison of Chalcedon was encamped near the temple of Jupiter Urius, on a promontory that commanded the entrance of the Strait; and so inconsiderable were the dreaded invasions of the barbarians that this body of troops surpassed in number the Gothic army. But it was in numbers alone that they surpassed it. They deserted with precipitation their advantageous post, and abandoned the town of Chalcedon, most plentifully stored with arms and money, to the discretion of the conquerors. Whilst they hesitated whether they should prefer the sea or land, Europe or Asia, for the scene of their hostilities, a perfidious fugitive pointed out Nicomedia, [1111](#) once the capital of the kings of Bithynia, as a rich and easy conquest. He guided the march, which was only sixty miles from the camp of

Chalcedon, [112](#) directed the resistless attack, and partook of the booty; for the Goths had learned sufficient policy to reward the traitor whom they detested. Nice, Prusa, Apamæa, Cius, [1121](#) cities that had sometimes rivalled, or imitated, the splendor of Nicomedia, were involved in the same calamity, which, in a few weeks, raged without control through the whole province of Bithynia. Three hundred years of peace, enjoyed by the soft inhabitants of Asia, had abolished the exercise of arms, and removed the apprehension of danger. The ancient walls were suffered to moulder away, and all the revenue of the most opulent cities was reserved for the construction of baths, temples, and theatres. [113](#)

- 1111 [\(return\)](#)
 [It has preserved its name, joined to the preposition
 of place in that of Nikmid. D'Anv. Geog. Anc. ii.
 28.—G.]
- 112 [\(return\)](#)
 [Itiner. Hierosolym. p. 572. Wesseling.]
- 1121 [\(return\)](#)
 [Now Isnik, Bursa, Mondania Ghio or Kemlik
 D'Anv. ii. 23.—G.]
- 113 [\(return\)](#)
 [Zosimus, l. p. 32, 33.]

When the city of Cyzicus withstood the utmost effort of Mithridates, [114](#) it was distinguished by wise laws, a naval power of two hundred galleys, and three arsenals, of arms, of military engines, and of corn. [115](#) It was still the seat of wealth and luxury; but of its ancient strength, nothing remained except the situation, in a little island of the Propontis, connected with the continent of Asia only by two bridges. From the recent sack of Prusa, the Goths advanced within eighteen miles [116](#) of the city, which they had devoted to destruction; but the ruin of Cyzicus was delayed by a fortunate accident. The season was rainy, and the Lake Apolloniates, the reservoir of all the springs of Mount Olympus, rose to an uncommon height. The little river of Rhyndacus, which issues from the lake, swelled into a broad and rapid stream, and stopped the progress of the Goths. Their retreat to the maritime city of Heraclea, where the fleet had probably been stationed, was attended by a long train of wagons, laden with the spoils of Bithynia, and was marked by the flames of Nico and Nicomedia, which they wantonly burnt. [117](#) Some obscure hints are mentioned of a doubtful combat that secured their retreat. [118](#) But even a complete victory would have been of little moment, as the approach of the autumnal equinox summoned them to hasten their return. To navigate the Euxine before the month of May, or after that of September, is esteemed by the modern Turks the most unquestionable instance of rashness and folly. [119](#)

- 114 [\(return\)](#)
 [He besieged the place with 400 galleys, 150,000
 foot, and a numerous cavalry. See Plutarch in
 Lucul. Appian in Mithridat Cicero pro Lege
 Manilia, c. 8.]

- 115 [\(return\)](#)
[Strabo, l. xii. p. 573.]
- 116 [\(return\)](#)
[Pocock's Description of the East, l. ii. c. 23, 24.]
- 117 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. i. p. 33.]
- 118 [\(return\)](#)
[Syncellus tells an unintelligible story of Prince Odenathus, who defeated the Goths, and who was killed by Prince Odenathus.]
- 119 [\(return\)](#)
[Footnote 119: Voyages de Chardin, tom. i. p. 45. He sailed with the Turks from Constantinople to Caffa.]

When we are informed that the third fleet, equipped by the Goths in the ports of Bosphorus, consisted of five hundred sails of ships, [120](#) our ready imagination instantly computes and multiplies the formidable armament; but, as we are assured by the judicious Strabo, [121](#) that the piratical vessels used by the barbarians of Pontus and the Lesser Scythia, were not capable of containing more than twenty-five or thirty men we may safely affirm, that fifteen thousand warriors, at the most, embarked in this great expedition. Impatient of the limits of the Euxine, they steered their destructive course from the Cimmerian to the Thracian Bosphorus. When they had almost gained the middle of the Straits, they were suddenly driven back to the entrance of them; till a favorable wind, springing up the next day, carried them in a few hours into the placid sea, or rather lake, of the Propontis. Their landing on the little island of Cyzicus was attended with the ruin of that ancient and noble city. From thence issuing again through the narrow passage of the Hellespont, they pursued their winding navigation amidst the numerous islands scattered over the Archipelago, or the Ægean Sea. The assistance of captives and deserters must have been very necessary to pilot their vessels, and to direct their various incursions, as well on the coast of Greece as on that of Asia. At length the Gothic fleet anchored in the port of Piræus, five miles distant from Athens, [122](#) which had attempted to make some preparations for a vigorous defence. Cleodamus, one of the engineers employed by the emperor's orders to fortify the maritime cities against the Goths, had already begun to repair the ancient walls, fallen to decay since the time of Scylla. The efforts of his skill were ineffectual, and the barbarians became masters of the native seat of the muses and the arts. But while the conquerors abandoned themselves to the license of plunder and intemperance, their fleet, that lay with a slender guard in the harbor of Piræus, was unexpectedly attacked by the brave Dexippus, who, flying with the engineer Cleodamus from the sack of Athens, collected a hasty band of volunteers, peasants as well as soldiers, and in some measure avenged the calamities of his country. [123](#)

- 120 [\(return\)](#)
[Syncellus (p. 382) speaks of this expedition, as undertaken by the Heruli.]
- 121 [\(return\)](#)
[Strabo, l. xi. p. 495.]
- 122 [\(return\)](#)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 7.]
- 123 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 181. Victor, c. 33. Orosius, vii. 42. Zosimus, l. i. p. 35. Zonaras, l. xii. 635. Syncellus, p. 382. It is not without some attention, that we can explain and conciliate their imperfect hints. We can still discover some traces of the partiality of Dexippus, in the relation of his own and his countrymen's exploits. * Note: According to a new fragment of Dexippus, published by Mai, the 2000 men took up a strong position in a mountainous and woods district, and kept up a harassing warfare. He expresses a hope of being speedily joined by the Imperial fleet. Dexippus in rov. Byzantinorum Collect a Niebuhr, p. 26, 8—M.]

But this exploit, whatever lustre it might shed on the declining age of Athens, served rather to irritate than to subdue the undaunted spirit of the northern invaders. A general conflagration blazed out at the same time in every district of Greece. Thebes and Argos, Corinth and Sparta, which had formerly waged such memorable wars against each other, were now unable to bring an army into the field, or even to defend their ruined fortifications. The rage of war, both by land and by sea, spread from the eastern point of Sunium to the western coast of Epirus. The Goths had already advanced within sight of Italy, when the approach of such imminent danger awakened the indolent Gallienus from his dream of pleasure. The emperor appeared in arms; and his presence seems to have checked the ardor, and to have divided the strength, of the enemy. Naulobatus, a chief of the Heruli, accepted an honorable capitulation, entered with a large body of his countrymen into the service of Rome, and was invested with the ornaments of the consular dignity, which had never before been profaned by the hands of a barbarian. [124](#) Great numbers of the Goths, disgusted with the perils and hardships of a tedious voyage, broke into Mæsia, with a design of forcing their way over the Danube to their settlements in the Ukraine. The wild attempt would have proved inevitable destruction, if the discord of the Roman generals had not opened to the barbarians the means of an escape. [125](#) The small remainder of this destroying host returned on board their vessels; and measuring back their way through the Hellespont and the Bosphorus, ravaged in their passage the shores of Troy, whose fame, immortalized by Homer, will probably survive the memory of the Gothic conquests. As soon as they found themselves in safety within the basin of the Euxine, they landed at Anchialus in Thrace, near the foot of Mount Hæmus; and, after all their toils, indulged themselves in the use

of those pleasant and salutary hot baths. What remained of the voyage was a short and easy navigation. [126](#) Such was the various fate of this third and greatest of their naval enterprises. It may seem difficult to conceive how the original body of fifteen thousand warriors could sustain the losses and divisions of so bold an adventure. But as their numbers were gradually wasted by the sword, by shipwrecks, and by the influence of a warm climate, they were perpetually renewed by troops of banditti and deserters, who flocked to the standard of plunder, and by a crowd of fugitive slaves, often of German or Sarmatian extraction, who eagerly seized the glorious opportunity of freedom and revenge. In these expeditions, the Gothic nation claimed a superior share of honor and danger; but the tribes that fought under the Gothic banners are sometimes distinguished and sometimes confounded in the imperfect histories of that age; and as the barbarian fleets seemed to issue from the mouth of the Tanais, the vague but familiar appellation of Scythians was frequently bestowed on the mixed multitude. [127](#)

124 [\(return\)](#)

[Syncellus, p. 382. This body of Heruli was for a long time faithful and famous.]

125 [\(return\)](#)

[Claudius, who commanded on the Danube, thought with propriety and acted with spirit. His colleague was jealous of his fame Hist. August. p. 181.]

126 [\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes, c. 20.]

127 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus and the Greeks (as the author of the Philopatri) give the name of Scythians to those whom Jornandes, and the Latin writers, constantly represent as Goths.]

Chapter X: Emperors Decius, Gallus, Æmilianus, Valerian And Gallienus.—Part IV.

In the general calamities of mankind, the death of an individual, however exalted, the ruin of an edifice, however famous, are passed over with careless inattention. Yet we cannot forget that the temple of Diana at Ephesus, after having risen with increasing splendor from seven repeated misfortunes, [128](#) was finally burnt by the Goths in their third naval invasion. The arts of Greece, and the wealth of Asia, had conspired to erect that sacred and magnificent structure. It was supported by a hundred and twenty-seven marble columns of the Ionic order. They were the gifts of devout monarchs, and each was sixty feet high. The altar was adorned with the masterly sculptures of Praxiteles, who had, perhaps, selected from the favorite legends of the place the birth of the divine children of Latona, the concealment of Apollo after the slaughter of the Cyclops, and

the clemency of Bacchus to the vanquished Amazons. [129](#) Yet the length of the temple of Ephesus was only four hundred and twenty-five feet, about two thirds of the measure of the church of St. Peter's at Rome. [130](#) In the other dimensions, it was still more inferior to that sublime production of modern architecture. The spreading arms of a Christian cross require a much greater breadth than the oblong temples of the Pagans; and the boldest artists of antiquity would have been startled at the proposal of raising in the air a dome of the size and proportions of the Pantheon. The temple of Diana was, however, admired as one of the wonders of the world. Successive empires, the Persian, the Macedonian, and the Roman, had revered its sanctity and enriched its splendor. [131](#) But the rude savages of the Baltic were destitute of a taste for the elegant arts, and they despised the ideal terrors of a foreign superstition. [132](#)

128 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. Aug. p. 178. Jornandes, c. 20.]

129 [\(return\)](#)

[Strabo, l. xiv. p. 640. Vitruvius, l. i. c. i. præfat l vii. Tacit Annal. iii. 61. Plin. Hist. Nat. xxxvi. 14.]

130 [\(return\)](#)

[The length of St. Peter's is 840 Roman palms; each palm is very little short of nine English inches. See Greaves's Miscellanies vol. i. p. 233; on the Roman Foot. * Note: St. Paul's Cathedral is 500 feet. Dallaway on Architecture—M.]

131 [\(return\)](#)

[The policy, however, of the Romans induced them to abridge the extent of the sanctuary or asylum, which by successive privileges had spread itself two stadia round the temple. Strabo, l. xiv. p. 641. Tacit. Annal. iii. 60, &c.]

132 [\(return\)](#)

[They offered no sacrifices to the Grecian gods. See Epistol Gregor. Thaummat.]

Another circumstance is related of these invasions, which might deserve our notice, were it not justly to be suspected as the fanciful conceit of a recent sophist. We are told that in the sack of Athens the Goths had collected all the libraries, and were on the point of setting fire to this funeral pile of Grecian learning, had not one of their chiefs, of more refined policy than his brethren, dissuaded them from the design; by the profound observation, that as long as the Greeks were addicted to the study of books, they would never apply themselves to the exercise of arms. [133](#) The sagacious counsellor (should the truth of the fact be admitted) reasoned like an ignorant barbarian. In the most polite and powerful nations, genius of every kind has displayed itself about the same period; and the age of science has generally been the age of military virtue and success.

133 [\(return\)](#)

[Zonaras, l. xii. p. 635. Such an anecdote was perfectly suited to the taste of Montaigne. He makes

use of it in his agreeable Essay on Pedantry, l. i. c.
24.]

IV. The new sovereign of Persia, Artaxerxes and his son Sapor, had triumphed (as we have already seen) over the house of Arsaces. Of the many princes of that ancient race. Chosroes, king of Armenia, had alone preserved both his life and his independence. He defended himself by the natural strength of his country; by the perpetual resort of fugitives and malecontents; by the alliance of the Romans, and above all, by his own courage.

Invincible in arms, during a thirty years' war, he was at length assassinated by the emissaries of Sapor, king of Persia. The patriotic satraps of Armenia, who asserted the freedom and dignity of the crown, implored the protection of Rome in favor of Tiridates, the lawful heir. But the son of Chosroes was an infant, the allies were at a distance, and the Persian monarch advanced towards the frontier at the head of an irresistible force. Young Tiridates, the future hope of his country, was saved by the fidelity of a servant, and Armenia continued above twenty-seven years a reluctant province of the great monarchy of Persia. [134](#) Elated with this easy conquest, and presuming on the distresses or the degeneracy of the Romans, Sapor obliged the strong garrisons of Carrhæ and Nisibis [1341](#) to surrender, and spread devastation and terror on either side of the Euphrates.

134

[\(return\)](#)

[Moses Chorenensis, l. ii. c. 71, 73, 74. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 628. The authentic relation of the Armenian historian serves to rectify the confused account of the Greek. The latter talks of the children of Tiridates, who at that time was himself an infant. (Compare St Martin Memoires sur l'Armenie, i. p. 301.—M.)]

1341

[\(return\)](#)

[Nisibis, according to Persian authors, was taken by a miracle, the wall fell, in compliance with the prayers of the army. Malcolm's Persia, l. 76.—M]

The loss of an important frontier, the ruin of a faithful and natural ally, and the rapid success of Sapor's ambition, affected Rome with a deep sense of the insult as well as of the danger. Valerian flattered himself, that the vigilance of his lieutenants would sufficiently provide for the safety of the Rhine and of the Danube; but he resolved, notwithstanding his advanced age, to march in person to the defence of the Euphrates.

During his progress through Asia Minor, the naval enterprises of the Goths were suspended, and the afflicted province enjoyed a transient and fallacious calm. He passed the Euphrates, encountered the Persian monarch near the walls of Edessa, was vanquished, and taken prisoner by Sapor. The particulars of this great event are darkly and imperfectly represented; yet, by the glimmering light which is afforded us, we may discover a long series of imprudence, of error, and of deserved misfortunes on the side of the Roman emperor. He reposed an implicit confidence in Macrianus, his Prætorian

præfect. [135](#) That worthless minister rendered his master formidable only to the oppressed subjects, and contemptible to the enemies of Rome. [136](#) By his weak or wicked counsels, the Imperial army was betrayed into a situation where valor and military skill were equally unavailing. [137](#) The vigorous attempt of the Romans to cut their way through the Persian host was repulsed with great slaughter; [138](#) and Sapor, who encompassed the camp with superior numbers, patiently waited till the increasing rage of famine and pestilence had insured his victory. The licentious murmurs of the legions soon accused Valerian as the cause of their calamities; their seditious clamors demanded an instant capitulation. An immense sum of gold was offered to purchase the permission of a disgraceful retreat. But the Persian, conscious of his superiority, refused the money with disdain; and detaining the deputies, advanced in order of battle to the foot of the Roman rampart, and insisted on a personal conference with the emperor. Valerian was reduced to the necessity of intrusting his life and dignity to the faith of an enemy. The interview ended as it was natural to expect. The emperor was made a prisoner, and his astonished troops laid down their arms. [139](#) In such a moment of triumph, the pride and policy of Sapor prompted him to fill the vacant throne with a successor entirely dependent on his pleasure. Cyriades, an obscure fugitive of Antioch, stained with every vice, was chosen to dishonor the Roman purple; and the will of the Persian victor could not fail of being ratified by the acclamations, however reluctant, of the captive army. [140](#)

- 135
([return](#))
- [Hist. Aug. p. 191. As Macrianus was an enemy to the Christians, they charged him with being a magician.]
- 136
([return](#))
- [Zosimus, l. i. p. 33.]
- 137
([return](#))
- [Hist. Aug. p. 174.]
- 138
([return](#))
- [Victor in Cæsar. Eutropius, ix. 7.]
- 139
([return](#))
- [Zosimus, l. i. p. 33. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 630. Peter Patricius, in the Excerpta Legat. p. 29.]
- 140
([return](#))
- [Hist. August. p. 185. The reign of Cyriades appears in that collection prior to the death of Valerian; but I have preferred a probable series of events to the doubtful chronology of a most inaccurate writer]

The Imperial slave was eager to secure the favor of his master by an act of treason to his native country. He conducted Sapor over the Euphrates, and, by the way of Chalcis, to the metropolis of the East. So rapid were the motions of the Persian cavalry, that, if we may credit a very judicious historian, [141](#) the city of Antioch was surprised when

the idle multitude was fondly gazing on the amusements of the theatre. The splendid buildings of Antioch, private as well as public, were either pillaged or destroyed; and the numerous inhabitants were put to the sword, or led away into captivity. [142](#) The tide of devastation was stopped for a moment by the resolution of the high priest of Emesa. Arrayed in his sacerdotal robes, he appeared at the head of a great body of fanatic peasants, armed only with slings, and defended his god and his property from the sacrilegious hands of the followers of Zoroaster. [143](#) But the ruin of Tarsus, and of many other cities, furnishes a melancholy proof that, except in this singular instance, the conquest of Syria and Cilicia scarcely interrupted the progress of the Persian arms. The advantages of the narrow passes of Mount Taurus were abandoned, in which an invader, whose principal force consisted in his cavalry, would have been engaged in a very unequal combat: and Sapor was permitted to form the siege of Cæsarea, the capital of Cappadocia; a city, though of the second rank, which was supposed to contain four hundred thousand inhabitants. Demosthenes commanded in the place, not so much by the commission of the emperor, as in the voluntary defence of his country. For a long time he deferred its fate; and when at last Cæsarea was betrayed by the perfidy of a physician, he cut his way through the Persians, who had been ordered to exert their utmost diligence to take him alive. This heroic chief escaped the power of a foe who might either have honored or punished his obstinate valor; but many thousands of his fellow-citizens were involved in a general massacre, and Sapor is accused of treating his prisoners with wanton and unrelenting cruelty. [144](#) Much should undoubtedly be allowed for national animosity, much for humbled pride and impotent revenge; yet, upon the whole, it is certain, that the same prince, who, in Armenia, had displayed the mild aspect of a legislator, showed himself to the Romans under the stern features of a conqueror. He despaired of making any permanent establishment in the empire, and sought only to leave behind him a wasted desert, whilst he transported into Persia the people and the treasures of the provinces. [145](#)

141 [\(return\)](#)

[The sack of Antioch, anticipated by some historians, is assigned, by the decisive testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus, to the reign of Gallienus, xxiii. 5. * Note: Heyne, in his note on Zosimus, contests this opinion of Gibbon and observes, that the testimony of Ammianus is in fact by no means clear, decisive. Gallienus and Valerian reigned together. Zosimus, in a passage, l. iiii. 32, 8, distinctly places this event before the capture of Valerian.—M.]

142 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 35.]

143 [\(return\)](#)

[John Malala, tom. i. p. 391. He corrupts this probable event by some fabulous circumstances.]

144 [\(return\)](#)
[Zonaras, l. xii. p. 630. Deep valleys were filled up with the slain. Crowds of prisoners were driven to water like beasts, and many perished for want of food.]

145 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. i. p. 25 asserts, that Sapor, had he not preferred spoil to conquest, might have remained master of Asia.]

At the time when the East trembled at the name of Sapor, he received a present not unworthy of the greatest kings; a long train of camels, laden with the most rare and valuable merchandises. The rich offering was accompanied with an epistle, respectful, but not servile, from Odenathus, one of the noblest and most opulent senators of Palmyra. “Who is this Odenathus,” (said the haughty victor, and he commanded that the present should be cast into the Euphrates,) “that he thus insolently presumes to write to his lord? If he entertains a hope of mitigating his punishment, let him fall prostrate before the foot of our throne, with his hands bound behind his back. Should he hesitate, swift destruction shall be poured on his head, on his whole race, and on his country.” [146](#) The desperate extremity to which the Palmyrenian was reduced, called into action all the latent powers of his soul. He met Sapor; but he met him in arms.

Infusing his own spirit into a little army collected from the villages of Syria [147](#) and the tents of the desert, [148](#) he hovered round the Persian host, harassed their retreat, carried off part of the treasure, and, what was dearer than any treasure, several of the women of the great king; who was at last obliged to repass the Euphrates with some marks of haste and confusion. [149](#) By this exploit, Odenathus laid the foundations of his future fame and fortunes. The majesty of Rome, oppressed by a Persian, was protected by a Syrian or Arab of Palmyra.

146 [\(return\)](#)
[Peter Patricius in Excerpt. Leg. p. 29.]

147 [\(return\)](#)
[Syrorum agrestium manu. Sextus Rufus, c. 23. Rufus Victor the Augustan History, (p. 192,) and several inscriptions, agree in making Odenathus a citizen of Palmyra.]

148 [\(return\)](#)
[He possessed so powerful an interest among the wandering tribes, that Procopius (Bell. Persic. l. ii. c. 5) and John Malala, (tom. i. p. 391) style him Prince of the Saracens.]

149 [\(return\)](#)
[Peter Patricius, p. 25.]

The voice of history, which is often little more than the organ of hatred or flattery, reproaches Sapor with a proud abuse of the rights of conquest. We are told that Valerian, in chains, but invested with the Imperial purple, was exposed to the multitude, a

constant spectacle of fallen greatness; and that whenever the Persian monarch mounted on horseback, he placed his foot on the neck of a Roman emperor. Notwithstanding all the remonstrances of his allies, who repeatedly advised him to remember the vicissitudes of fortune, to dread the returning power of Rome, and to make his illustrious captive the pledge of peace, not the object of insult, Sapor still remained inflexible. When Valerian sunk under the weight of shame and grief, his skin, stuffed with straw, and formed into the likeness of a human figure, was preserved for ages in the most celebrated temple of Persia; a more real monument of triumph, than the fancied trophies of brass and marble so often erected by Roman vanity. [150](#) The tale is moral and pathetic, but the truth [1501](#) of it may very fairly be called in question. The letters still extant from the princes of the East to Sapor are manifest forgeries; [151](#) nor is it natural to suppose that a jealous monarch should, even in the person of a rival, thus publicly degrade the majesty of kings. Whatever treatment the unfortunate Valerian might experience in Persia, it is at least certain that the only emperor of Rome who had ever fallen into the hands of the enemy, languished away his life in hopeless captivity.

150

[\(return\)](#)

[The Pagan writers lament, the Christian insult, the misfortunes of Valerian. Their various testimonies are accurately collected by Tillemont, tom. iii. p. 739, &c. So little has been preserved of eastern history before Mahomet, that the modern Persians are totally ignorant of the victory Sapor, an event so glorious to their nation. See *Bibliothèque Orientale*.
* Note: Malcolm appears to write from Persian authorities, i. 76.—M.]

1501

[\(return\)](#)

[Yet Gibbon himself records a speech of the emperor Galerius, which alludes to the cruelties exercised against the living, and the indignities to which they exposed the dead Valerian, vol. ii. ch. 13. Respect for the kingly character would by no means prevent an eastern monarch from ratifying his pride and his vengeance on a fallen foe.—M.]

151

[\(return\)](#)

[One of these epistles is from Artavasdes, king of Armenia; since Armenia was then a province of Persia, the king, the kingdom, and the epistle must be fictitious.]

The emperor Gallienus, who had long supported with impatience the censorial severity of his father and colleague, received the intelligence of his misfortunes with secret pleasure and avowed indifference. “I knew that my father was a mortal,” said he; “and since he has acted as it becomes a brave man, I am satisfied.” Whilst Rome lamented the fate of her sovereign, the savage coldness of his son was extolled by the servile courtiers as the perfect firmness of a hero and a stoic. [152](#) It is difficult to paint the light, the various, the inconstant character of Gallienus, which he displayed without

constraint, as soon as he became sole possessor of the empire. In every art that he attempted, his lively genius enabled him to succeed; and as his genius was destitute of judgment, he attempted every art, except the important ones of war and government. He was a master of several curious, but useless sciences, a ready orator, an elegant poet, [153](#) a skilful gardener, an excellent cook, and most contemptible prince. When the great emergencies of the state required his presence and attention, he was engaged in conversation with the philosopher Plotinus, [154](#) wasting his time in trifling or licentious pleasures, preparing his initiation to the Grecian mysteries, or soliciting a place in the Areopagus of Athens. His profuse magnificence insulted the general poverty; the solemn ridicule of his triumphs impressed a deeper sense of the public disgrace. [155](#) The repeated intelligence of invasions, defeats, and rebellions, he received with a careless smile; and singling out, with affected contempt, some particular production of the lost province, he carelessly asked, whether Rome must be ruined, unless it was supplied with linen from Egypt, and arras cloth from Gaul. There were, however, a few short moments in the life of Gallienus, when, exasperated by some recent injury, he suddenly appeared the intrepid soldier and the cruel tyrant; till, satiated with blood, or fatigued by resistance, he insensibly sunk into the natural mildness and indolence of his character. [156](#)

152 [\(return\)](#)

[See his life in the Augustan History.]

153 [\(return\)](#)

[There is still extant a very pretty Epithalamium, composed by Gallienus for the nuptials of his nephews:—"Ite ait, O juvenes, pariter sudate medullis Omnibus, inter vos: non murmura vestra columbæ, Brachia non hederæ, non vincant oscula conchæ."]

154 [\(return\)](#)

[He was on the point of giving Plotinus a ruined city of Campania to try the experiment of realizing Plato's Republic. See the Life of Plotinus, by Porphyry, in Fabricius's Biblioth. Græc. l. iv.]

155 [\(return\)](#)

[A medal which bears the head of Gallienus has perplexed the antiquarians by its legend and reverse; the former Gallienæ Augustæ, the latter Ubique Pax. M. Spanheim supposes that the coin was struck by some of the enemies of Gallienus, and was designed as a severe satire on that effeminate prince. But as the use of irony may seem unworthy of the gravity of the Roman mint, M. de Vallemont has deduced from a passage of Trebellius Pollio (Hist. Aug. p. 198) an ingenious and natural solution. Galliena was first cousin to the emperor. By delivering Africa from the usurper Celsus, she deserved the title of Augusta. On a

medal in the French king's collection, we read a similar inscription of Faustina Augusta round the head of Marcus Aurelius. With regard to the Ubique Pax, it is easily explained by the vanity of Gallienus, who seized, perhaps, the occasion of some momentary calm. See *Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres*, Janvier, 1700, p. 21—34.]

156

[\(return\)](#)

[This singular character has, I believe, been fairly transmitted to us. The reign of his immediate successor was short and busy; and the historians who wrote before the elevation of the family of Constantine could not have the most remote interest to misrepresent the character of Gallienus.]

At the time when the reins of government were held with so loose a hand, it is not surprising that a crowd of usurpers should start up in every province of the empire against the son of Valerian. It was probably some ingenious fancy, of comparing the thirty tyrants of Rome with the thirty tyrants of Athens, that induced the writers of the Augustan History to select that celebrated number, which has been gradually received into a popular appellation. [157](#) But in every light the parallel is idle and defective. What resemblance can we discover between a council of thirty persons, the united oppressors of a single city, and an uncertain list of independent rivals, who rose and fell in irregular succession through the extent of a vast empire? Nor can the number of thirty be completed, unless we include in the account the women and children who were honored with the Imperial title. The reign of Gallienus, distracted as it was, produced only nineteen pretenders to the throne: Cyriades, Macrianus, Balista, Odenathus, and Zenobia, in the East; in Gaul, and the western provinces, Posthumus, Lollianus, Victorinus, and his mother Victoria, Marius, and Tetricus; in Illyricum and the confines of the Danube, Ingenuus, Regillianus, and Aureolus; in Pontus, [158](#) Saturninus; in Isauria, Trebellianus; Piso in Thessaly; Valens in Achaia; Æmilianus in Egypt; and Celsus in Africa. [1581](#) To illustrate the obscure monuments of the life and death of each individual, would prove a laborious task, alike barren of instruction and of amusement. We may content ourselves with investigating some general characters, that most strongly mark the condition of the times, and the manners of the men, their pretensions, their motives, their fate, and the destructive consequences of their usurpation. [159](#)

157

[\(return\)](#)

[Pollio expresses the most minute anxiety to complete the number. * Note: Compare a dissertation of Manso on the thirty tyrants at the end of his *Leben Constantius des Grossen*. Breslau, 1817.—M.]

158

[\(return\)](#)

[The place of his reign is somewhat doubtful; but there was a tyrant in Pontus, and we are acquainted with the seat of all the others.]

1581

[\(return\)](#)

[Captain Smyth, in his "Catalogue of Medals," p. 307, substitutes two new names to make up the number of nineteen, for those of Odenathus and Zenobia. He subjoins this list:—1. 2. 3. Of those whose coins Those whose coins Those of whom no are undoubtedly true. are suspected. coins are known. Posthumus. Cyriades. Valens. Lælianus, (Lollianus, G.) Ingenuus. Balista Victorinus Celsus. Saturninus. Marius. Piso Frugi. Trebellianus. Tetricus. —M. 1815 Macrianus. Quietus. Regalianus (Regillianus, G.) Alex. Æmilianus. Aureolus. Sulpicius Antoninus]

159

[\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont, tom. iii. p. 1163, reckons them somewhat differently.]

It is sufficiently known, that the odious appellation of *Tyrant* was often employed by the ancients to express the illegal seizure of supreme power, without any reference to the abuse of it. Several of the pretenders, who raised the standard of rebellion against the emperor Gallienus, were shining models of virtue, and almost all possessed a considerable share of vigor and ability. Their merit had recommended them to the favor of Valerian, and gradually promoted them to the most important commands of the empire. The generals, who assumed the title of Augustus, were either respected by their troops for their able conduct and severe discipline, or admired for valor and success in war, or beloved for frankness and generosity. The field of victory was often the scene of their election; and even the armorer Marius, the most contemptible of all the candidates for the purple, was distinguished, however, by intrepid courage, matchless strength, and blunt honesty. [160](#) His mean and recent trade cast, indeed, an air of ridicule on his elevation; [1601](#) but his birth could not be more obscure than was that of the greater part of his rivals, who were born of peasants, and enlisted in the army as private soldiers. In times of confusion every active genius finds the place assigned him by nature: in a general state of war military merit is the road to glory and to greatness. Of the nineteen tyrants Tetricus only was a senator; Piso alone was a noble. The blood of Numa, through twenty-eight successive generations, ran in the veins of Calphurnius Piso, [161](#) who, by female alliances, claimed a right of exhibiting, in his house, the images of Crassus and of the great Pompey. [162](#) His ancestors had been repeatedly dignified with all the honors which the commonwealth could bestow; and of all the ancient families of Rome, the Calphurnian alone had survived the tyranny of the Cæsars. The personal qualities of Piso added new lustre to his race. The usurper Valens, by whose order he was killed, confessed, with deep remorse, that even an enemy ought to have respected the sanctity of Piso; and although he died in arms against Gallienus, the senate, with the emperor's generous permission, decreed the triumphal ornaments to the memory of so virtuous a rebel. [163](#)

- 160 [\(return\)](#)
[See the speech of Marius in the Augustan History, p. 197. The accidental identity of names was the only circumstance that could tempt Pollio to imitate Sallust.]
- 1601 [\(return\)](#)
[Marius was killed by a soldier, who had formerly served as a workman in his shop, and who exclaimed, as he struck, "Behold the sword which thyself hast forged." Trob vita.—G.]
- 161 [\(return\)](#)
["Vos, O Pompilius sanguis!" is Horace's address to the Pisos See Art. Poet. v. 292, with Dacier's and Sanadon's notes.]
- 162 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. Annal. xv. 48. Hist. i. 15. In the former of these passages we may venture to change paterna into materna. In every generation from Augustus to Alexander Severus, one or more Pisos appear as consuls. A Piso was deemed worthy of the throne by Augustus, (Tacit. Annal. i. 13;) a second headed a formidable conspiracy against Nero; and a third was adopted, and declared Cæsar, by Galba.]
- 163 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 195. The senate, in a moment of enthusiasm, seems to have presumed on the approbation of Gallienus.]

The lieutenants of Valerian were grateful to the father, whom they esteemed. They disdained to serve the luxurious indolence of his unworthy son. The throne of the Roman world was unsupported by any principle of loyalty; and treason against such a prince might easily be considered as patriotism to the state. Yet if we examine with candor the conduct of these usurpers, it will appear, that they were much oftener driven into rebellion by their fears, than urged to it by their ambition. They dreaded the cruel suspicions of Gallienus; they equally dreaded the capricious violence of their troops. If the dangerous favor of the army had imprudently declared them deserving of the purple, they were marked for sure destruction; and even prudence would counsel them to secure a short enjoyment of empire, and rather to try the fortune of war than to expect the hand of an executioner.

When the clamor of the soldiers invested the reluctant victims with the ensigns of sovereign authority, they sometimes mourned in secret their approaching fate. "You have lost," said Saturninus, on the day of his elevation, "you have lost a useful commander, and you have made a very wretched emperor." [164](#)

- 164 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August p. 196.]

The apprehensions of Saturninus were justified by the repeated experience of revolutions. Of the nineteen tyrants who started up under the reign of Gallienus, there was not one who enjoyed a life of peace, or a natural death. As soon as they were invested with the bloody purple, they inspired their adherents with the same fears and ambition which had occasioned their own revolt. Encompassed with domestic conspiracy, military sedition, and civil war, they trembled on the edge of precipices, in which, after a longer or shorter term of anxiety, they were inevitably lost. These precarious monarchs received, however, such honors as the flattery of their respective armies and provinces could bestow; but their claim, founded on rebellion, could never obtain the sanction of law or history. Italy, Rome, and the senate, constantly adhered to the cause of Gallienus, and he alone was considered as the sovereign of the empire. That prince condescended, indeed, to acknowledge the victorious arms of Odenathus, who deserved the honorable distinction, by the respectful conduct which he always maintained towards the son of Valerian. With the general applause of the Romans, and the consent of Gallienus, the senate conferred the title of Augustus on the brave Palmyrenian; and seemed to intrust him with the government of the East, which he already possessed, in so independent a manner, that, like a private succession, he bequeathed it to his illustrious widow, Zenobia. [165](#)

165

[\(return\)](#)

[The association of the brave Palmyrenian was the most popular act of the whole reign of Gallienus. Hist. August. p. 180.]

The rapid and perpetual transitions from the cottage to the throne, and from the throne to the grave, might have amused an indifferent philosopher; were it possible for a philosopher to remain indifferent amidst the general calamities of human kind. The election of these precarious emperors, their power and their death, were equally destructive to their subjects and adherents. The price of their fatal elevation was instantly discharged to the troops by an immense donative, drawn from the bowels of the exhausted people. However virtuous was their character, however pure their intentions, they found themselves reduced to the hard necessity of supporting their usurpation by frequent acts of rapine and cruelty. When they fell, they involved armies and provinces in their fall. There is still extant a most savage mandate from Gallienus to one of his ministers, after the suppression of Ingenuus, who had assumed the purple in Illyricum.

“It is not enough,” says that soft but inhuman prince, “that you exterminate such as have appeared in arms; the chance of battle might have served me as effectually. The male sex of every age must be extirpated; provided that, in the execution of the children and old men, you can contrive means to save our reputation. Let every one die who has dropped an expression, who has entertained a thought against me, against *me*, the son of Valerian, the father and brother of so many princes. [166](#) Remember that Ingenuus was made emperor: tear, kill, hew in pieces. I write to you with my own hand, and

would inspire you with my own feelings.” [167](#) Whilst the public forces of the state were dissipated in private quarrels, the defenceless provinces lay exposed to every invader. The bravest usurpers were compelled, by the perplexity of their situation, to conclude ignominious treaties with the common enemy, to purchase with oppressive tributes the neutrality or services of the Barbarians, and to introduce hostile and independent nations into the heart of the Roman monarchy. [168](#)

166

[\(return\)](#)

[Gallienus had given the titles of Cæsar and Augustus to his son Saloninus, slain at Cologne by the usurper Posthumus. A second son of Gallienus succeeded to the name and rank of his elder brother Valerian, the brother of Gallienus, was also associated to the empire: several other brothers, sisters, nephews, and nieces of the emperor formed a very numerous royal family. See Tillemont, tom iii, and M. de Brequigny in the Memoires de l'Academie, tom xxxii p. 262.]

167

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 188.]

168

[\(return\)](#)

[Regillianus had some bands of Roxolani in his service; Posthumus a body of Franks. It was, perhaps, in the character of auxiliaries that the latter introduced themselves into Spain.]

Such were the barbarians, and such the tyrants, who, under the reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, dismembered the provinces, and reduced the empire to the lowest pitch of disgrace and ruin, from whence it seemed impossible that it should ever emerge. As far as the barrenness of materials would permit, we have attempted to trace, with order and perspicuity, the general events of that calamitous period. There still remain some particular facts; I. The disorders of Sicily; II. The tumults of Alexandria; and, III. The rebellion of the Isaurians, which may serve to reflect a strong light on the horrid picture.

I. Whenever numerous troops of banditti, multiplied by success and impunity, publicly defy, instead of eluding, the justice of their country, we may safely infer that the excessive weakness of the country is felt and abused by the lowest ranks of the community. The situation of Sicily preserved it from the Barbarians; nor could the disarmed province have supported a usurper. The sufferings of that once flourishing and still fertile island were inflicted by baser hands. A licentious crowd of slaves and peasants reigned for a while over the plundered country, and renewed the memory of the servile wars of more ancient times. [169](#) Devastations, of which the husbandman was either the victim or the accomplice, must have ruined the agriculture of Sicily; and as the principal estates were the property of the opulent senators of Rome, who often enclosed within a farm the territory of an old republic, it is not improbable, that this private injury might affect the capital more deeply, than all the conquests of the Goths or the Persians.

[The Augustan History, p. 177. See Diodor. Sicul.
l. xxxiv.]

II. The foundation of Alexandria was a noble design, at once conceived and executed by the son of Philip. The beautiful and regular form of that great city, second only to Rome itself, comprehended a circumference of fifteen miles; [170](#) it was peopled by three hundred thousand free inhabitants, besides at least an equal number of slaves. [171](#) The lucrative trade of Arabia and India flowed through the port of Alexandria, to the capital and provinces of the empire. [1711](#) Idleness was unknown. Some were employed in blowing of glass, others in weaving of linen, others again manufacturing the papyrus. Either sex, and every age, was engaged in the pursuits of industry, nor did even the blind or the lame want occupations suited to their condition. [172](#) But the people of Alexandria, a various mixture of nations, united the vanity and inconstancy of the Greeks with the superstition and obstinacy of the Egyptians. The most trifling occasion, a transient scarcity of flesh or lentils, the neglect of an accustomed salutation, a mistake of precedence in the public baths, or even a religious dispute, [173](#) were at any time sufficient to kindle a sedition among that vast multitude, whose resentments were furious and implacable. [174](#) After the captivity of Valerian and the insolence of his son had relaxed the authority of the laws, the Alexandrians abandoned themselves to the ungoverned rage of their passions, and their unhappy country was the theatre of a civil war, which continued (with a few short and suspicious truces) above twelve years. [175](#) All intercourse was cut off between the several quarters of the afflicted city, every street was polluted with blood, every building of strength converted into a citadel; nor did the tumults subside till a considerable part of Alexandria was irretrievably ruined. The spacious and magnificent district of Bruchion, [1751](#) with its palaces and musæum, the residence of the kings and philosophers of Egypt, is described above a century afterwards, as already reduced to its present state of dreary solitude. [176](#)

170

[\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Hist. Natur. v. 10.]

171

[\(return\)](#)

[Diodor. Sicul. l. xvii. p. 590, edit. Wesseling.]

1711

[\(return\)](#)

[Berenice, or Myos-Hormos, on the Red Sea, received the eastern commodities. From thence they were transported to the Nile, and down the Nile to Alexandria.—M.]

172

[\(return\)](#)

[See a very curious letter of Hadrian, in the Augustan History, p. 245.]

173

[\(return\)](#)

[Such as the sacrilegious murder of a divine cat. See Diodor. Sicul. l. i. * Note: The hostility between the Jewish and Grecian part of the population

afterwards between the two former and the Christian, were unfailing causes of tumult, sedition, and massacre. In no place were the religious disputes, after the establishment of Christianity, more frequent or more sanguinary. See Philo. de Legat. Hist. of Jews, ii. 171, iii. 111, 198. Gibbon, iii c. xxi. viii. c. xlvii.—M.]

174 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 195. This long and terrible sedition was first occasioned by a dispute between a soldier and a townsman about a pair of shoes.]

175 [\(return\)](#)
[Dionysius apud. Euses. Hist. Eccles. vii. p. 21. Ammian xxii. 16.]

1751 [\(return\)](#)
[The Bruchion was a quarter of Alexandria which extended along the largest of the two ports, and contained many palaces, inhabited by the Ptolemies. D'Anv. Geogr. Anc. iii. 10.—G.]

176 [\(return\)](#)
[Scaliger. Animadver. ad Euseb. Chron. p. 258. Three dissertations of M. Bonamy, in the Mem. de l'Academie, tom. ix.]

III. The obscure rebellion of Trebellianus, who assumed the purple in Isauria, a petty province of Asia Minor, was attended with strange and memorable consequences. The pageant of royalty was soon destroyed by an officer of Gallienus; but his followers, despairing of mercy, resolved to shake off their allegiance, not only to the emperor, but to the empire, and suddenly returned to the savage manners from which they had never perfectly been reclaimed. Their craggy rocks, a branch of the wide-extended Taurus, protected their inaccessible retreat. The tillage of some fertile valleys [177](#) supplied them with necessaries, and a habit of rapine with the luxuries of life. In the heart of the Roman monarchy, the Isaurians long continued a nation of wild barbarians. Succeeding princes, unable to reduce them to obedience, either by arms or policy, were compelled to acknowledge their weakness, by surrounding the hostile and independent spot with a strong chain of fortifications, [178](#) which often proved insufficient to restrain the incursions of these domestic foes. The Isaurians, gradually extending their territory to the sea-coast, subdued the western and mountainous part of Cilicia, formerly the nest of those daring pirates, against whom the republic had once been obliged to exert its utmost force, under the conduct of the great Pompey. [179](#)

177 [\(return\)](#)
[Strabo, l. xiii. p. 569.]

178 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 197.]

[See Cellarius, Geogr Antiq. tom. ii. p. 137, upon the limits of Isauria.]

Our habits of thinking so fondly connect the order of the universe with the fate of man, that this gloomy period of history has been decorated with inundations, earthquakes, uncommon meteors, preternatural darkness, and a crowd of prodigies fictitious or exaggerated. [180](#) But a long and general famine was a calamity of a more serious kind. It was the inevitable consequence of rapine and oppression, which extirpated the produce of the present and the hope of future harvests. Famine is almost always followed by epidemical diseases, the effect of scanty and unwholesome food. Other causes must, however, have contributed to the furious plague, which, from the year two hundred and fifty to the year two hundred and sixty-five, raged without interruption in every province, every city, and almost every family, of the Roman empire. During some time five thousand persons died daily in Rome; and many towns, that had escaped the hands of the Barbarians, were entirely depopulated. [181b](#)

180

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist August p 177.]

181b

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 177. Zosimus, l. i. p. 24. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 623. Euseb. Chronicon. Victor in Epitom. Victor in Cæsar. Eutropius, ix. 5. Orosius, vii. 21.]

We have the knowledge of a very curious circumstance, of some use perhaps in the melancholy calculation of human calamities. An exact register was kept at Alexandria of all the citizens entitled to receive the distribution of corn. It was found, that the ancient number of those comprised between the ages of forty and seventy, had been equal to the whole sum of claimants, from fourteen to fourscore years of age, who remained alive after the reign of Gallienus. [182](#) Applying this authentic fact to the most correct tables of mortality, it evidently proves, that above half the people of Alexandria had perished; and could we venture to extend the analogy to the other provinces, we might suspect, that war, pestilence, and famine, had consumed, in a few years, the moiety of the human species. [183](#)

182

[\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. Hist. Eccles. vii. 21. The fact is taken from the Letters of Dionysius, who, in the time of those troubles, was bishop of Alexandria.]

183

[\(return\)](#)

[In a great number of parishes, 11,000 persons were found between fourteen and eighty; 5365 between forty and seventy. See Buffon, Histoire Naturelle, tom. ii. p. 590.]

Chapter XI: Reign Of Claudius, Defeat Of The Goths.—Part I.

Reign Of Claudius.—Defeat Of The Goths.—Victories,
Triumph, And Death Of Aurelian.

Under the deplorable reigns of Valerian and Gallienus, the empire was oppressed and almost destroyed by the soldiers, the tyrants, and the barbarians. It was saved by a series of great princes, who derived their obscure origin from the martial provinces of Illyricum. Within a period of about thirty years, Claudius, Aurelian, Probus, Diocletian and his colleagues, triumphed over the foreign and domestic enemies of the state, reëstablished, with the military discipline, the strength of the frontiers, and deserved the glorious title of Restorers of the Roman world.

The removal of an effeminate tyrant made way for a succession of heroes. The indignation of the people imputed all their calamities to Gallienus, and the far greater part were, indeed, the consequence of his dissolute manners and careless administration. He was even destitute of a sense of honor, which so frequently supplies the absence of public virtue; and as long as he was permitted to enjoy the possession of Italy, a victory of the barbarians, the loss of a province, or the rebellion of a general, seldom disturbed the tranquil course of his pleasures. At length, a considerable army, stationed on the Upper Danube, invested with the Imperial purple their leader Aureolus; who, disdainingly a confined and barren reign over the mountains of Rhætia, passed the Alps, occupied Milan, threatened Rome, and challenged Gallienus to dispute in the field the sovereignty of Italy. The emperor, provoked by the insult, and alarmed by the instant danger, suddenly exerted that latent vigor which sometimes broke through the indolence of his temper. Forcing himself from the luxury of the palace, he appeared in arms at the head of his legions, and advanced beyond the Po to encounter his competitor. The corrupted name of Pontirolo ¹ still preserves the memory of a bridge over the Adda, which, during the action, must have proved an object of the utmost importance to both armies. The Rhætian usurper, after receiving a total defeat and a dangerous wound, retired into Milan. The siege of that great city was immediately formed; the walls were battered with every engine in use among the ancients; and Aureolus, doubtful of his internal strength, and hopeless of foreign succors already anticipated the fatal consequences of unsuccessful rebellion.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[Pons Aureoli, thirteen miles from Bergamo, and thirty-two from Milan. See Cluver. Italia, Antiq. tom. i. p. 245. Near this place, in the year 1703, the obstinate battle of Cassano was fought between the French and Austrians. The excellent relation of the Chevalier de Folard, who was present, gives a very distinct idea of the ground. See Polybe de Folard, tom. iii. p. 233-248.]

His last resource was an attempt to seduce the loyalty of the besiegers. He scattered libels through the camp, inviting the troops to desert an unworthy master, who sacrificed the public happiness to his luxury, and the lives of his most valuable subjects to the

slightest suspicions. The arts of Aureolus diffused fears and discontent among the principal officers of his rival. A conspiracy was formed by Heraclianus, the Prætorian præfect, by Marcian, a general of rank and reputation, and by Cecrops, who commanded a numerous body of Dalmatian guards. The death of Gallienus was resolved; and notwithstanding their desire of first terminating the siege of Milan, the extreme danger which accompanied every moment's delay obliged them to hasten the execution of their daring purpose. At a late hour of the night, but while the emperor still protracted the pleasures of the table, an alarm was suddenly given, that Aureolus, at the head of all his forces, had made a desperate sally from the town; Gallienus, who was never deficient in personal bravery, started from his silken couch, and without allowing himself time either to put on his armor, or to assemble his guards, he mounted on horseback, and rode full speed towards the supposed place of the attack. Encompassed by his declared or concealed enemies, he soon, amidst the nocturnal tumult, received a mortal dart from an uncertain hand. Before he expired, a patriotic sentiment rising in the mind of Gallienus, induced him to name a deserving successor; and it was his last request, that the Imperial ornaments should be delivered to Claudius, who then commanded a detached army in the neighborhood of Pavia. The report at least was diligently propagated, and the order cheerfully obeyed by the conspirators, who had already agreed to place Claudius on the throne. On the first news of the emperor's death, the troops expressed some suspicion and resentment, till the one was removed, and the other assuaged, by a donative of twenty pieces of gold to each soldier. They then ratified the election, and acknowledged the merit of their new sovereign. [2](#)

2

[\(return\)](#)

[On the death of Gallienus, see Trebellius Pollio in Hist. August. p. 181. Zosimus, l. i. p. 37. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 634. Eutrop. ix. ll. Aurelius Victor in Epitom. Victor in Cæsar. I have compared and blended them all, but have chiefly followed Aurelius Victor, who seems to have had the best memoirs.]

The obscurity which covered the origin of Claudius, though it was afterwards embellished by some flattering fictions, [3](#) sufficiently betrays the meanness of his birth. We can only discover that he was a native of one of the provinces bordering on the Danube; that his youth was spent in arms, and that his modest valor attracted the favor and confidence of Decius. The senate and people already considered him as an excellent officer, equal to the most important trusts; and censured the inattention of Valerian, who suffered him to remain in the subordinate station of a tribune. But it was not long before that emperor distinguished the merit of Claudius, by declaring him general and chief of the Illyrian frontier, with the command of all the troops in Thrace, Mæsia, Dacia, Pannonia, and Dalmatia, the appointments of the præfect of Egypt, the establishment of the proconsul of Africa, and the sure prospect of the consulship. By his victories over the Goths, he deserved from the senate the honor of a statue, and excited the jealous

apprehensions of Gallienus. It was impossible that a soldier could esteem so dissolute a sovereign, nor is it easy to conceal a just contempt. Some unguarded expressions which dropped from Claudius were officiously transmitted to the royal ear. The emperor's answer to an officer of confidence describes in very lively colors his own character, and that of the times. "There is not any thing capable of giving me more serious concern, than the intelligence contained in your last despatch; ⁴ that some malicious suggestions have indisposed towards us the mind of our friend and *parent* Claudius. As you regard your allegiance, use every means to appease his resentment, but conduct your negotiation with secrecy; let it not reach the knowledge of the Dacian troops; they are already provoked, and it might inflame their fury. I myself have sent him some presents: be it your care that he accept them with pleasure. Above all, let him not suspect that I am made acquainted with his imprudence. The fear of my anger might urge him to desperate counsels." ⁵ The presents which accompanied this humble epistle, in which the monarch solicited a reconciliation with his discontented subject, consisted of a considerable sum of money, a splendid wardrobe, and a valuable service of silver and gold plate. By such arts Gallienus softened the indignation and dispelled the fears of his Illyrian general; and during the remainder of that reign, the formidable sword of Claudius was always drawn in the cause of a master whom he despised. At last, indeed, he received from the conspirators the bloody purple of Gallienus: but he had been absent from their camp and counsels; and however he might applaud the deed, we may candidly presume that he was innocent of the knowledge of it. ⁶ When Claudius ascended the throne, he was about fifty-four years of age.

3

[\(return\)](#)

[Some supposed him, oddly enough, to be a bastard of the younger Gordian. Others took advantage of the province of Dardania, to deduce his origin from Dardanus, and the ancient kings of Troy.]

4

[\(return\)](#)

[Notoria, a periodical and official despatch which the emperor received from the *frumentarii*, or agents dispersed through the provinces. Of these we may speak hereafter.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 208. Gallienus describes the plate, vestments, etc., like a man who loved and understood those splendid trifles.]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian (Orat. i. p. 6) affirms that Claudius acquired the empire in a just and even holy manner. But we may distrust the partiality of a kinsman.]

The siege of Milan was still continued, and Aureolus soon discovered that the success of his artifices had only raised up a more determined adversary. He attempted to negotiate with Claudius a treaty of alliance and partition. "Tell him," replied the intrepid emperor, "that such proposals should have been made to Gallienus; *he*, perhaps, might

have listened to them with patience, and accepted a colleague as despicable as himself.” [7](#) This stern refusal, and a last unsuccessful effort, obliged Aureolus to yield the city and himself to the discretion of the conqueror. The judgment of the army pronounced him worthy of death; and Claudius, after a feeble resistance, consented to the execution of the sentence. Nor was the zeal of the senate less ardent in the cause of their new sovereign. They ratified, perhaps with a sincere transport of zeal, the election of Claudius; and, as his predecessor had shown himself the personal enemy of their order, they exercised, under the name of justice, a severe revenge against his friends and family. The senate was permitted to discharge the ungrateful office of punishment, and the emperor reserved for himself the pleasure and merit of obtaining by his intercession a general act of indemnity. [8](#)

7

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 203. There are some trifling differences concerning the circumstances of the last defeat and death of Aureolus]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor in Gallien. The people loudly prayed for the damnation of Gallienus. The senate decreed that his relations and servants should be thrown down headlong from the Gemonian stairs. An obnoxious officer of the revenue had his eyes torn out whilst under examination. Note: The expression is curious, “*terram matrem deosque inferos impias uti Gallieno darent.*”—M.]

Such ostentatious clemency discovers less of the real character of Claudius, than a trifling circumstance in which he seems to have consulted only the dictates of his heart. The frequent rebellions of the provinces had involved almost every person in the guilt of treason, almost every estate in the case of confiscation; and Gallienus often displayed his liberality by distributing among his officers the property of his subjects. On the accession of Claudius, an old woman threw herself at his feet, and complained that a general of the late emperor had obtained an arbitrary grant of her patrimony. This general was Claudius himself, who had not entirely escaped the contagion of the times. The emperor blushed at the reproach, but deserved the confidence which she had reposed in his equity. The confession of his fault was accompanied with immediate and ample restitution. [9](#)

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Zonaras, l. xii. p. 137.]

In the arduous task which Claudius had undertaken, of restoring the empire to its ancient splendor, it was first necessary to revive among his troops a sense of order and obedience. With the authority of a veteran commander, he represented to them that the relaxation of discipline had introduced a long train of disorders, the effects of which were at length experienced by the soldiers themselves; that a people ruined by oppression, and indolent from despair, could no longer supply a numerous army with

the means of luxury, or even of subsistence; that the danger of each individual had increased with the despotism of the military order, since princes who tremble on the throne will guard their safety by the instant sacrifice of every obnoxious subject. The emperor expiated on the mischiefs of a lawless caprice, which the soldiers could only gratify at the expense of their own blood; as their seditious elections had so frequently been followed by civil wars, which consumed the flower of the legions either in the field of battle, or in the cruel abuse of victory. He painted in the most lively colors the exhausted state of the treasury, the desolation of the provinces, the disgrace of the Roman name, and the insolent triumph of rapacious barbarians. It was against those barbarians, he declared, that he intended to point the first effort of their arms. Tetricus might reign for a while over the West, and even Zenobia might preserve the dominion of the East. [10](#) These usurpers were his personal adversaries; nor could he think of indulging any private resentment till he had saved an empire, whose impending ruin would, unless it was timely prevented, crush both the army and the people.

10

[\(return\)](#)

[Zonaras on this occasion mentions Posthumus but the registers of the senate (Hist. August. p. 203) prove that Tetricus was already emperor of the western provinces.]

The various nations of Germany and Sarmatia, who fought under the Gothic standard, had already collected an armament more formidable than any which had yet issued from the Euxine. On the banks of the Niester, one of the great rivers that discharge themselves into that sea, they constructed a fleet of two thousand, or even of six thousand vessels; [11](#) numbers which, however incredible they may seem, would have been insufficient to transport their pretended army of three hundred and twenty thousand barbarians. Whatever might be the real strength of the Goths, the vigor and success of the expedition were not adequate to the greatness of the preparations. In their passage through the Bosphorus, the unskilful pilots were overpowered by the violence of the current; and while the multitude of their ships were crowded in a narrow channel, many were dashed against each other, or against the shore. The barbarians made several descents on the coasts both of Europe and Asia; but the open country was already plundered, and they were repulsed with shame and loss from the fortified cities which they assaulted. A spirit of discouragement and division arose in the fleet, and some of their chiefs sailed away towards the islands of Crete and Cyprus; but the main body, pursuing a more steady course, anchored at length near the foot of Mount Athos, and assaulted the city of Thessalonica, the wealthy capital of all the Macedonian provinces. Their attacks, in which they displayed a fierce but artless bravery, were soon interrupted by the rapid approach of Claudius, hastening to a scene of action that deserved the presence of a warlike prince at the head of the remaining powers of the empire. Impatient for battle, the Goths immediately broke up their camp, relinquished the siege of Thessalonica, left their navy at the foot of Mount Athos, traversed the hills of Macedonia, and pressed forwards to engage the last defence of Italy.

[The Augustan History mentions the smaller, Zonaras the larger number; the lively fancy of Montesquieu induced him to prefer the latter.]

We still possess an original letter addressed by Claudius to the senate and people on this memorable occasion. "Conscript fathers," says the emperor, "know that three hundred and twenty thousand Goths have invaded the Roman territory. If I vanquish them, your gratitude will reward my services. Should I fall, remember that I am the successor of Gallienus. The whole republic is fatigued and exhausted. We shall fight after Valerian, after Ingenuus, Regillianus, Lollianus, Posthumus, Celsus, and a thousand others, whom a just contempt for Gallienus provoked into rebellion. We are in want of darts, of spears, and of shields. The strength of the empire, Gaul, and Spain, are usurped by Tetricus, and we blush to acknowledge that the archers of the East serve under the banners of Zenobia. Whatever we shall perform will be sufficiently great." [12](#) The melancholy firmness of this epistle announces a hero careless of his fate, conscious of his danger, but still deriving a well-grounded hope from the resources of his own mind.

[Trebell. Pollio in Hist. August. p. 204.]

The event surpassed his own expectations and those of the world. By the most signal victories he delivered the empire from this host of barbarians, and was distinguished by posterity under the glorious appellation of the Gothic Claudius. The imperfect historians of an irregular war [13](#) do not enable us to describe the order and circumstances of his exploits; but, if we could be indulged in the allusion, we might distribute into three acts this memorable tragedy. I. The decisive battle was fought near Naissus, a city of Dardania. The legions at first gave way, oppressed by numbers, and dismayed by misfortunes. Their ruin was inevitable, had not the abilities of their emperor prepared a seasonable relief. A large detachment, rising out of the secret and difficult passes of the mountains, which, by his order, they had occupied, suddenly assailed the rear of the victorious Goths.

The favorable instant was improved by the activity of Claudius. He revived the courage of his troops, restored their ranks, and pressed the barbarians on every side. Fifty thousand men are reported to have been slain in the battle of Naissus. Several large bodies of barbarians, covering their retreat with a movable fortification of wagons, retired, or rather escaped, from the field of slaughter.

II. We may presume that some insurmountable difficulty, the fatigue, perhaps, or the disobedience, of the conquerors, prevented Claudius from completing in one day the destruction of the Goths. The war was diffused over the province of Mæsia, Thrace, and Macedonia, and its operations drawn out into a variety of marches, surprises, and tumultuary engagements, as well by sea as by land. When the Romans suffered any loss, it was commonly occasioned by their own cowardice or rashness; but the superior

talents of the emperor, his perfect knowledge of the country, and his judicious choice of measures as well as officers, assured on most occasions the success of his arms. The immense booty, the fruit of so many victories, consisted for the greater part of cattle and slaves. A select body of the Gothic youth was received among the Imperial troops; the remainder was sold into servitude; and so considerable was the number of female captives that every soldier obtained to his share two or three women. A circumstance from which we may conclude, that the invaders entertained some designs of settlement as well as of plunder; since even in a naval expedition, they were accompanied by their families.

III. The loss of their fleet, which was either taken or sunk, had intercepted the retreat of the Goths. A vast circle of Roman posts, distributed with skill, supported with firmness, and gradually closing towards a common centre, forced the barbarians into the most inaccessible parts of Mount Hæmus, where they found a safe refuge, but a very scanty subsistence. During the course of a rigorous winter in which they were besieged by the emperor's troops, famine and pestilence, desertion and the sword, continually diminished the imprisoned multitude. On the return of spring, nothing appeared in arms except a hardy and desperate band, the remnant of that mighty host which had embarked at the mouth of the Niester.

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. in Claud. Aurelian. et Prob.
Zosimus, l. i. p. 38-42. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 638. Aurel.
Victor in Epitom. Victor Junior in Cæsar. Eutrop.
ix ll. Euseb. in Chron.]

The pestilence which swept away such numbers of the barbarians, at length proved fatal to their conqueror. After a short but glorious reign of two years, Claudius expired at Sirmium, amidst the tears and acclamations of his subjects. In his last illness, he convened the principal officers of the state and army, and in their presence recommended Aurelian, [14](#) one of his generals, as the most deserving of the throne, and the best qualified to execute the great design which he himself had been permitted only to undertake. The virtues of Claudius, his valor, affability, justice, and temperance, his love of fame and of his country, place him in that short list of emperors who added lustre to the Roman purple. Those virtues, however, were celebrated with peculiar zeal and complacency by the courtly writers of the age of Constantine, who was the great-grandson of Crispus, the elder brother of Claudius. The voice of flattery was soon taught to repeat, that gods, who so hastily had snatched Claudius from the earth, rewarded his merit and piety by the perpetual establishment of the empire in his family. [15](#)

14

[\(return\)](#)

[According to Zonaras, (l. xii. p. 638,) Claudius,
before his death, invested him with the purple; but
this singular fact is rather contradicted than
confirmed by other writers.]

[See the Life of Claudius by Pollio, and the Orations of Mamertinus, Eumenius, and Julian. See likewise the Cæsars of Julian p. 318. In Julian it was not adulation, but superstition and vanity.]

Notwithstanding these oracles, the greatness of the Flavian family (a name which it had pleased them to assume) was deferred above twenty years, and the elevation of Claudius occasioned the immediate ruin of his brother Quintilius, who possessed not sufficient moderation or courage to descend into the private station to which the patriotism of the late emperor had condemned him. Without delay or reflection, he assumed the purple at Aquileia, where he commanded a considerable force; and though his reign lasted only seventeen days, [151](#) he had time to obtain the sanction of the senate, and to experience a mutiny of the troops.

As soon as he was informed that the great army of the Danube had invested the well-known valor of Aurelian with Imperial power, he sunk under the fame and merit of his rival; and ordering his veins to be opened, prudently withdrew himself from the unequal contest. [16](#)

[Such is the narrative of the greater part of the older historians; but the number and the variety of his medals seem to require more time, and give probability to the report of Zosimus, who makes him reign some months.—G.]

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 42. Pollio (Hist. August. p. 107) allows him virtues, and says, that, like Pertinax, he was killed by the licentious soldiers. According to Dexippus, he died of a disease.]

The general design of this work will not permit us minutely to relate the actions of every emperor after he ascended the throne, much less to deduce the various fortunes of his private life. We shall only observe, that the father of Aurelian was a peasant of the territory of Sirmium, who occupied a small farm, the property of Aurelius, a rich senator. His warlike son enlisted in the troops as a common soldier, successively rose to the rank of a centurion, a tribune, the præfect of a legion, the inspector of the camp, the general, or, as it was then called, the duke, of a frontier; and at length, during the Gothic war, exercised the important office of commander-in-chief of the cavalry. In every station he distinguished himself by matchless valor, [17](#) rigid discipline, and successful conduct. He was invested with the consulship by the emperor Valerian, who styles him, in the pompous language of that age, the deliverer of Illyricum, the restorer of Gaul, and the rival of the Scipios. At the recommendation of Valerian, a senator of the highest rank and merit, Ulpius Crinitus, whose blood was derived from the same source as that of Trajan, adopted the Pannonian peasant, gave him his daughter in

marriage, and relieved with his ample fortune the honorable poverty which Aurelian had preserved inviolate. [18](#)

17

[\(return\)](#)

[Theoclius (as quoted in the Augustan History, p. 211) affirms that in one day he killed with his own hand forty-eight Sarmatians, and in several subsequent engagements nine hundred and fifty. This heroic valor was admired by the soldiers, and celebrated in their rude songs, the burden of which was, mille, mile, mille, occidit.]

18

[\(return\)](#)

[Acholius (ap. Hist. August. p. 213) describes the ceremony of the adoption, as it was performed at Byzantium, in the presence of the emperor and his great officers.]

The reign of Aurelian lasted only four years and about nine months; but every instant of that short period was filled by some memorable achievement. He put an end to the Gothic war, chastised the Germans who invaded Italy, recovered Gaul, Spain, and Britain out of the hands of Tetricus, and destroyed the proud monarchy which Zenobia had erected in the East on the ruins of the afflicted empire.

It was the rigid attention of Aurelian, even to the minutest articles of discipline, which bestowed such uninterrupted success on his arms. His military regulations are contained in a very concise epistle to one of his inferior officers, who is commanded to enforce them, as he wishes to become a tribune, or as he is desirous to live. Gaming, drinking, and the arts of divination, were severely prohibited. Aurelian expected that his soldiers should be modest, frugal, and laborious; that their armor should be constantly kept bright, their weapons sharp, their clothing and horses ready for immediate service; that they should live in their quarters with chastity and sobriety, without damaging the cornfields, without stealing even a sheep, a fowl, or a bunch of grapes, without exacting from their landlords either salt, or oil, or wood. “The public allowance,” continues the emperor, “is sufficient for their support; their wealth should be collected from the spoils of the enemy, not from the tears of the provincials.” [19](#) A single instance will serve to display the rigor, and even cruelty, of Aurelian. One of the soldiers had seduced the wife of his host. The guilty wretch was fastened to two trees forcibly drawn towards each other, and his limbs were torn asunder by their sudden separation. A few such examples impressed a salutary consternation. The punishments of Aurelian were terrible; but he had seldom occasion to punish more than once the same offence. His own conduct gave a sanction to his laws, and the seditious legions dreaded a chief who had learned to obey, and who was worthy to command.

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August, p. 211 This laconic epistle is truly the work of a soldier; it abounds with military phrases and words, some of which cannot be understood without difficulty. Ferramenta samiatu

is well explained by Salmasius. The former of the words means all weapons of offence, and is contrasted with Arma, defensive armor The latter signifies keen and well sharpened.]

Chapter XI: Reign Of Claudius, Defeat Of The Goths.—Part II.

The death of Claudius had revived the fainting spirit of the Goths. The troops which guarded the passes of Mount Hæmus, and the banks of the Danube, had been drawn away by the apprehension of a civil war; and it seems probable that the remaining body of the Gothic and Vandalic tribes embraced the favorable opportunity, abandoned their settlements of the Ukraine, traversed the rivers, and swelled with new multitudes the destroying host of their countrymen. Their united numbers were at length encountered by Aurelian, and the bloody and doubtful conflict ended only with the approach of night. [20](#) Exhausted by so many calamities, which they had mutually endured and inflicted during a twenty years' war, the Goths and the Romans consented to a lasting and beneficial treaty. It was earnestly solicited by the barbarians, and cheerfully ratified by the legions, to whose suffrage the prudence of Aurelian referred the decision of that important question. The Gothic nation engaged to supply the armies of Rome with a body of two thousand auxiliaries, consisting entirely of cavalry, and stipulated in return an undisturbed retreat, with a regular market as far as the Danube, provided by the emperor's care, but at their own expense. The treaty was observed with such religious fidelity, that when a party of five hundred men straggled from the camp in quest of plunder, the king or general of the barbarians commanded that the guilty leader should be apprehended and shot to death with darts, as a victim devoted to the sanctity of their engagements. [201](#) It is, however, not unlikely, that the precaution of Aurelian, who had exacted as hostages the sons and daughters of the Gothic chiefs, contributed something to this pacific temper. The youths he trained in the exercise of arms, and near his own person: to the damsels he gave a liberal and Roman education, and by bestowing them in marriage on some of his principal officers, gradually introduced between the two nations the closest and most endearing connections. [21](#)

20 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 45.]

201 [\(return\)](#)

[The five hundred stragglers were all slain.—M.]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[Dexipphus (ap. Excerpta Legat. p. 12) relates the whole transaction under the name of Vandals. Aurelian married one of the Gothic ladies to his general Bonosus, who was able to drink with the Goths and discover their secrets. Hist. August. p. 247.]

But the most important condition of peace was understood rather than expressed in the treaty. Aurelian withdrew the Roman forces from Dacia, and tacitly relinquished that great province to the Goths and Vandals. [22](#) His manly judgment convinced him of the solid advantages, and taught him to despise the seeming disgrace, of thus contracting the frontiers of the monarchy. The Dacian subjects, removed from those distant possessions which they were unable to cultivate or defend, added strength and populousness to the southern side of the Danube. A fertile territory, which the repetition of barbarous inroads had changed into a desert, was yielded to their industry, and a new province of Dacia still preserved the memory of Trajan's conquests. The old country of that name detained, however, a considerable number of its inhabitants, who dreaded exile more than a Gothic master. [23](#) These degenerate Romans continued to serve the empire, whose allegiance they had renounced, by introducing among their conquerors the first notions of agriculture, the useful arts, and the conveniences of civilized life. An intercourse of commerce and language was gradually established between the opposite banks of the Danube; and after Dacia became an independent state, it often proved the firmest barrier of the empire against the invasions of the savages of the North. A sense of interest attached these more settled barbarians to the alliance of Rome, and a permanent interest very frequently ripens into sincere and useful friendship. This various colony, which filled the ancient province, and was insensibly blended into one great people, still acknowledged the superior renown and authority of the Gothic tribe, and claimed the fancied honor of a Scandinavian origin. At the same time, the lucky though accidental resemblance of the name of Getæ, [231](#) infused among the credulous Goths a vain persuasion, that in a remote age, their own ancestors, already seated in the Dacian provinces, had received the instructions of Zamolxis, and checked the victorious arms of Sesostris and Darius. [24](#)

[22](#) [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 222. Eutrop. ix. 15. Sextus Rufus, c. 9. de Mortibus Persecutorum, c. 9.]

[23](#) [\(return\)](#)
[The Walachians still preserve many traces of the Latin language and have boasted, in every age, of their Roman descent. They are surrounded by, but not mixed with, the barbarians. See a Memoir of M. d'Anville on ancient Dacia, in the Academy of Inscriptions, tom. xxx.]

[231](#) [\(return\)](#)
[The connection between the Getæ and the Goths is still in my opinion incorrectly maintained by some learned writers—M.]

[24](#) [\(return\)](#)
[See the first chapter of Jornandes. The Vandals, however, (c. 22,) maintained a short independence between the Rivers Marisia and Crissia, (Maros and Keres,) which fell into the Teiss.]

While the vigorous and moderate conduct of Aurelian restored the Illyrian frontier, the nation of the Alemanni [25](#) violated the conditions of peace, which either Gallienus had purchased, or Claudius had imposed, and, inflamed by their impatient youth, suddenly flew to arms. Forty thousand horse appeared in the field, [26](#) and the numbers of the infantry doubled those of the cavalry. [27](#) The first objects of their avarice were a few cities of the Rhætian frontier; but their hopes soon rising with success, the rapid march of the Alemanni traced a line of devastation from the Danube to the Po. [28](#)

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Dexippus, p. 7—12. Zosimus, l. i. p. 43. Vopiscus in Aurelian in Hist. August. However these historians differ in names, (Alemanni Juthungi, and Marcomanni,) it is evident that they mean the same people, and the same war; but it requires some care to conciliate and explain them.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Cantoclarus, with his usual accuracy, chooses to translate three hundred thousand: his version is equally repugnant to sense and to grammar.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[We may remark, as an instance of bad taste, that Dexippus applies to the light infantry of the Alemanni the technical terms proper only to the Grecian phalanx.]

28 [\(return\)](#)

[In Dexippus, we at present read Rhodanus: M. de Valois very judiciously alters the word to Eridanus.]

The emperor was almost at the same time informed of the irruption, and of the retreat, of the barbarians. Collecting an active body of troops, he marched with silence and celerity along the skirts of the Hercynian forest; and the Alemanni, laden with the spoils of Italy, arrived at the Danube, without suspecting, that on the opposite bank, and in an advantageous post, a Roman army lay concealed and prepared to intercept their return. Aurelian indulged the fatal security of the barbarians, and permitted about half their forces to pass the river without disturbance and without precaution. Their situation and astonishment gave him an easy victory; his skilful conduct improved the advantage. Disposing the legions in a semicircular form, he advanced the two horns of the crescent across the Danube, and wheeling them on a sudden towards the centre, enclosed the rear of the German host. The dismayed barbarians, on whatsoever side they cast their eyes, beheld, with despair, a wasted country, a deep and rapid stream, a victorious and implacable enemy.

Reduced to this distressed condition, the Alemanni no longer disdained to sue for peace. Aurelian received their ambassadors at the head of his camp, and with every circumstance of martial pomp that could display the greatness and discipline of Rome. The legions stood to their arms in well-ordered ranks and awful silence. The principal

commanders, distinguished by the ensigns of their rank, appeared on horseback on either side of the Imperial throne. Behind the throne the consecrated images of the emperor, and his predecessors, [29](#) the golden eagles, and the various titles of the legions, engraved in letters of gold, were exalted in the air on lofty pikes covered with silver. When Aurelian assumed his seat, his manly grace and majestic figure [30](#) taught the barbarians to revere the person as well as the purple of their conqueror. The ambassadors fell prostrate on the ground in silence. They were commanded to rise, and permitted to speak. By the assistance of interpreters they extenuated their perfidy, magnified their exploits, expatiated on the vicissitudes of fortune and the advantages of peace, and, with an ill-timed confidence, demanded a large subsidy, as the price of the alliance which they offered to the Romans. The answer of the emperor was stern and imperious. He treated their offer with contempt, and their demand with indignation, reproached the barbarians, that they were as ignorant of the arts of war as of the laws of peace, and finally dismissed them with the choice only of submitting to this unconditional mercy, or awaiting the utmost severity of his resentment. [31](#) Aurelian had resigned a distant province to the Goths; but it was dangerous to trust or to pardon these perfidious barbarians, whose formidable power kept Italy itself in perpetual alarms.

29

[\(return\)](#)

[The emperor Claudius was certainly of the number; but we are ignorant how far this mark of respect was extended; if to Cæsar and Augustus, it must have produced a very awful spectacle; a long line of the masters of the world.]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 210.]

31

[\(return\)](#)

[Dexippus gives them a subtle and prolix oration, worthy of a Grecian sophist.]

Immediately after this conference, it should seem that some unexpected emergency required the emperor's presence in Pannonia.

He devolved on his lieutenants the care of finishing the destruction of the Alemanni, either by the sword, or by the surer operation of famine. But an active despair has often triumphed over the indolent assurance of success. The barbarians, finding it impossible to traverse the Danube and the Roman camp, broke through the posts in their rear, which were more feebly or less carefully guarded; and with incredible diligence, but by a different road, returned towards the mountains of Italy. [32](#) Aurelian, who considered the war as totally extinguished, received the mortifying intelligence of the escape of the Alemanni, and of the ravage which they already committed in the territory of Milan. The legions were commanded to follow, with as much expedition as those heavy bodies were capable of exerting, the rapid flight of an enemy whose infantry and cavalry moved with almost equal swiftness. A few days afterwards, the emperor himself marched to the relief of Italy, at the head of a chosen body of auxiliaries, (among whom

were the hostages and cavalry of the Vandals,) and of all the Prætorian guards who had served in the wars on the Danube. [33](#)

32

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 215.]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[Dexippus, p. 12.]

As the light troops of the Alemanni had spread themselves from the Alps to the Apennine, the incessant vigilance of Aurelian and his officers was exercised in the discovery, the attack, and the pursuit of the numerous detachments. Notwithstanding this desultory war, three considerable battles are mentioned, in which the principal force of both armies was obstinately engaged. [34](#) The success was various. In the first, fought near Placentia, the Romans received so severe a blow, that, according to the expression of a writer extremely partial to Aurelian, the immediate dissolution of the empire was apprehended. [35](#) The crafty barbarians, who had lined the woods, suddenly attacked the legions in the dusk of the evening, and, it is most probable, after the fatigue and disorder of a long march.

The fury of their charge was irresistible; but, at length, after a dreadful slaughter, the patient firmness of the emperor rallied his troops, and restored, in some degree, the honor of his arms. The second battle was fought near Fano in Umbria; on the spot which, five hundred years before, had been fatal to the brother of Hannibal. [36](#) Thus far the successful Germans had advanced along the Æmilian and Flaminian way, with a design of sacking the defenceless mistress of the world. But Aurelian, who, watchful for the safety of Rome, still hung on their rear, found in this place the decisive moment of giving them a total and irretrievable defeat. [37](#) The flying remnant of their host was exterminated in a third and last battle near Pavia; and Italy was delivered from the inroads of the Alemanni.

34

[\(return\)](#)

[Victor Junior in Aurelian.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216.]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[The little river, or rather torrent, of, Metaurus, near Fano, has been immortalized, by finding such an historian as Livy, and such a poet as Horace.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[It is recorded by an inscription found at Pesaro. See Gruter cclxxvi. 3.]

Fear has been the original parent of superstition, and every new calamity urges trembling mortals to deprecate the wrath of their invisible enemies. Though the best hope of the republic was in the valor and conduct of Aurelian, yet such was the public consternation, when the barbarians were hourly expected at the gates of Rome, that, by a decree of the senate the Sibylline books were consulted. Even the emperor himself,

from a motive either of religion or of policy, recommended this salutary measure, chided the tardiness of the senate, [38](#) and offered to supply whatever expense, whatever animals, whatever captives of any nation, the gods should require. Notwithstanding this liberal offer, it does not appear, that any human victims expiated with their blood the sins of the Roman people. The Sibylline books enjoined ceremonies of a more harmless nature, processions of priests in white robes, attended by a chorus of youths and virgins; lustrations of the city and adjacent country; and sacrifices, whose powerful influence disabled the barbarians from passing the mystic ground on which they had been celebrated. However puerile in themselves, these superstitious arts were subservient to the success of the war; and if, in the decisive battle of Fano, the Alemanni fancied they saw an army of spectres combating on the side of Aurelian, he received a real and effectual aid from this imaginary reënforcement. [39](#)

38

[\(return\)](#)

[One should imagine, he said, that you were assembled in a Christian church, not in the temple of all the gods.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus, in Hist. August. p. 215, 216, gives a long account of these ceremonies from the Registers of the senate.]

But whatever confidence might be placed in ideal ramparts, the experience of the past, and the dread of the future, induced the Romans to construct fortifications of a grosser and more substantial kind. The seven hills of Rome had been surrounded by the successors of Romulus with an ancient wall of more than thirteen miles. [40](#) The vast enclosure may seem disproportioned to the strength and numbers of the infant-state. But it was necessary to secure an ample extent of pasture and arable land against the frequent and sudden incursions of the tribes of Latium, the perpetual enemies of the republic. With the progress of Roman greatness, the city and its inhabitants gradually increased, filled up the vacant space, pierced through the useless walls, covered the field of Mars, and, on every side, followed the public highways in long and beautiful suburbs. [41](#) The extent of the new walls, erected by Aurelian, and finished in the reign of Probus, was magnified by popular estimation to near fifty, [42](#) but is reduced by accurate measurement to about twenty-one miles. [43](#) It was a great but a melancholy labor, since the defence of the capital betrayed the decline of monarchy. The Romans of a more prosperous age, who trusted to the arms of the legions the safety of the frontier camps, [44](#) were very far from entertaining a suspicion that it would ever become necessary to fortify the seat of empire against the inroads of the barbarians. [45](#)

40

[\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 5. To confirm our idea, we may observe, that for a long time Mount Cælius was a grove of oaks, and Mount Viminal was overrun with osiers; that, in the fourth century, the Aventine was a vacant and solitary retirement; that, till the

time of Augustus, the Esquiline was an unwholesome burying-ground; and that the numerous inequalities, remarked by the ancients in the Quirinal, sufficiently prove that it was not covered with buildings. Of the seven hills, the Capitoline and Palatine only, with the adjacent valleys, were the primitive habitations of the Roman people. But this subject would require a dissertation.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[Exspatiantia tecta multas addidere urbes, is the expression of Pliny.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 222. Both Lipsius and Isaac Vossius have eagerly embraced this measure.]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[See Nardini, Roman Antica, l. i. c. 8. * Note: But compare Gibbon, ch. xli. note 77.—M.]

44 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Hist. iv. 23.]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[For Aurelian's walls, see Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216, 222. Zosimus, l. i. p. 43. Eutropius, ix. 15. Aurel. Victor in Aurelian Victor Junior in Aurelian. Euseb. Hieronym. et Idatius in Chronic]

The victory of Claudius over the Goths, and the success of Aurelian against the Alemanni, had already restored to the arms of Rome their ancient superiority over the barbarous nations of the North. To chastise domestic tyrants, and to reunite the dismembered parts of the empire, was a task reserved for the second of those warlike emperors. Though he was acknowledged by the senate and people, the frontiers of Italy, Africa, Illyricum, and Thrace, confined the limits of his reign. Gaul, Spain, and Britain, Egypt, Syria, and Asia Minor, were still possessed by two rebels, who alone, out of so numerous a list, had hitherto escaped the dangers of their situation; and to complete the ignominy of Rome, these rival thrones had been usurped by women.

A rapid succession of monarchs had arisen and fallen in the provinces of Gaul. The rigid virtues of Posthumus served only to hasten his destruction. After suppressing a competitor, who had assumed the purple at Mentz, he refused to gratify his troops with the plunder of the rebellious city; and in the seventh year of his reign, became the victim of their disappointed avarice. [46](#) The death of Victorinus, his friend and associate, was occasioned by a less worthy cause. The shining accomplishments [47](#) of that prince were stained by a licentious passion, which he indulged in acts of violence, with too little regard to the laws of society, or even to those of love. [48](#) He was slain at Cologne, by a conspiracy of jealous husbands, whose revenge would have appeared more justifiable, had they spared the innocence of his son. After the murder of so many valiant princes, it is somewhat remarkable, that a female for a long time controlled the fierce legions of

Gaul, and still more singular, that she was the mother of the unfortunate Victorinus. The arts and treasures of Victoria enabled her successively to place Marius and Tetricus on the throne, and to reign with a manly vigor under the name of those dependent emperors. Money of copper, of silver, and of gold, was coined in her name; she assumed the titles of Augusta and Mother of the Camps: her power ended only with her life; but her life was perhaps shortened by the ingratitude of Tetricus. [49](#)

46 [\(return\)](#)

[His competitor was Lollianus, or Ælianus, if, indeed, these names mean the same person. See Tillemont, tom. iii. p. 1177. Note: The medals which bear the name of Lollianus are considered forgeries except one in the museum of the Prince of Waldeck there are many extent bearing the name of Lælianus, which appears to have been that of the competitor of Posthumus. Eckhel. Doct. Num. t. vi. 149—G.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[The character of this prince by Julius Aterianus (ap. Hist. August. p. 187) is worth transcribing, as it seems fair and impartial Victorino qui Post Junium Posthumium Gallias rexit neminem existemo præferendum; non in virtute Trajanum; non Antoninum in clementia; non in gravitate Nervam; non in gubernando ærario Vespasianum; non in Censura totius vitæ ac severitate militari Pertinacem vel Severum. Sed omnia hæc libido et cupiditas voluptatis mulierriæ sic perdidit, ut nemo audeat virtutes ejus in literas mittere quem constat omnium judicio meruisse puniri.]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[He ravished the wife of Attitianus, an actuary, or army agent, Hist. August. p. 186. Aurel. Victor in Aurelian.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[Pollio assigns her an article among the thirty tyrants. Hist. August. p. 200.]

When, at the instigation of his ambitious patroness, Tetricus assumed the ensigns of royalty, he was governor of the peaceful province of Aquitaine, an employment suited to his character and education. He reigned four or five years over Gaul, Spain, and Britain, the slave and sovereign of a licentious army, whom he dreaded, and by whom he was despised. The valor and fortune of Aurelian at length opened the prospect of a deliverance. He ventured to disclose his melancholy situation, and conjured the emperor to hasten to the relief of his unhappy rival. Had this secret correspondence reached the ears of the soldiers, it would most probably have cost Tetricus his life; nor could he resign the sceptre of the West without committing an act of treason against himself. He affected the appearances of a civil war, led his forces into the field, against Aurelian,

posted them in the most disadvantageous manner, betrayed his own counsels to his enemy, and with a few chosen friends deserted in the beginning of the action. The rebel legions, though disordered and dismayed by the unexpected treachery of their chief, defended themselves with desperate valor, till they were cut in pieces almost to a man, in this bloody and memorable battle, which was fought near Chalons in Champagne. [50](#) The retreat of the irregular auxiliaries, Franks and Batavians, [51](#) whom the conqueror soon compelled or persuaded to repass the Rhine, restored the general tranquillity, and the power of Aurelian was acknowledged from the wall of Antoninus to the columns of Hercules.

50

[\(return\)](#)

[Pollio in Hist. August. p. 196. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 220. The two Victors, in the lives of Gallienus and Aurelian. Eutrop. ix. 13. Euseb. in Chron. Of all these writers, only the two last (but with strong probability) place the fall of Tetricus before that of Zenobia. M. de Boze (in the Academy of Inscriptions, tom. xxx.) does not wish, and Tillemont (tom. iii. p. 1189) does not dare to follow them. I have been fairer than the one, and bolder than the other.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Victor Junior in Aurelian. Eumenius mentions Batavicæ; some critics, without any reason, would fain alter the word to Bagandicæ.] As early as the reign of Claudius, the city of Autun, alone and unassisted, had ventured to declare against the legions of Gaul. After a siege of seven months, they stormed and plundered that unfortunate city, already wasted by famine. [52](#) Lyons, on the contrary, had resisted with obstinate disaffection the arms of Aurelian. We read of the punishment of Lyons, [53](#) but there is not any mention of the rewards of Autun. Such, indeed, is the policy of civil war: severely to remember injuries, and to forget the most important services. Revenge is profitable, gratitude is expensive.

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Eumen. in Vet. Panegy. iv. 8.]

53

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 246. Autun was not restored till the reign of Diocletian. See Eumenius de restaurandis scholis.]

Aurelian had no sooner secured the person and provinces of Tetricus, than he turned his arms against Zenobia, the celebrated queen of Palmyra and the East. Modern Europe has produced several illustrious women who have sustained with glory the weight of empire; nor is our own age destitute of such distinguished characters. But if we except

the doubtful achievements of Semiramis, Zenobia is perhaps the only female whose superior genius broke through the servile indolence imposed on her sex by the climate and manners of Asia. [54](#) She claimed her descent from the Macedonian kings of Egypt, [541](#) equalled in beauty her ancestor Cleopatra, and far surpassed that princess in chastity [55](#) and valor. Zenobia was esteemed the most lovely as well as the most heroic of her sex. She was of a dark complexion (for in speaking of a lady these trifles become important). Her teeth were of a pearly whiteness, and her large black eyes sparkled with uncommon fire, tempered by the most attractive sweetness. Her voice was strong and harmonious. Her manly understanding was strengthened and adorned by study. She was not ignorant of the Latin tongue, but possessed in equal perfection the Greek, the Syriac, and the Egyptian languages. She had drawn up for her own use an epitome of oriental history, and familiarly compared the beauties of Homer and Plato under the tuition of the sublime Longinus.

54 [\(return\)](#)

[Almost everything that is said of the manners of Odenathus and Zenobia is taken from their lives in the Augustan History, by Trebeljus Pollio; see p. 192, 198.]

541 [\(return\)](#)

[According to some Christian writers, Zenobia was a Jewess. (Jost Geschichte der Israel. iv. 16. Hist. of Jews, iii. 175.)—M.]

55 [\(return\)](#)

[She never admitted her husband's embraces but for the sake of posterity. If her hopes were baffled, in the ensuing month she reiterated the experiment.]

This accomplished woman gave her hand to Odenathus, [551](#) who, from a private station, raised himself to the dominion of the East. She soon became the friend and companion of a hero. In the intervals of war, Odenathus passionately delighted in the exercise of hunting; he pursued with ardor the wild beasts of the desert, lions, panthers, and bears; and the ardor of Zenobia in that dangerous amusement was not inferior to his own. She had inured her constitution to fatigue, disdained the use of a covered carriage, generally appeared on horseback in a military habit, and sometimes marched several miles on foot at the head of the troops. The success of Odenathus was in a great measure ascribed to her incomparable prudence and fortitude. Their splendid victories over the Great King, whom they twice pursued as far as the gates of Ctesiphon, laid the foundations of their united fame and power. The armies which they commanded, and the provinces which they had saved, acknowledged not any other sovereigns than their invincible chiefs. The senate and people of Rome revered a stranger who had avenged their captive emperor, and even the insensible son of Valerian accepted Odenathus for his legitimate colleague.

551 [\(return\)](#)

[According to Zosimus, Odenathus was of a noble

family in Palmyra and according to Procopius, he was prince of the Saracens, who inhabit the ranks of the Euphrates. Echhel. Doct. Num. vii. 489.—G.]

Chapter XI: Reign Of Claudius, Defeat Of The Goths.—Part III.

After a successful expedition against the Gothic plunderers of Asia, the Palmyrenian prince returned to the city of Emesa in Syria. Invincible in war, he was there cut off by domestic treason, and his favorite amusement of hunting was the cause, or at least the occasion, of his death. [56](#) His nephew Mæonius presumed to dart his javelin before that of his uncle; and though admonished of his error, repeated the same insolence. As a monarch, and as a sportsman, Odenathus was provoked, took away his horse, a mark of ignominy among the barbarians, and chastised the rash youth by a short confinement. The offence was soon forgot, but the punishment was remembered; and Mæonius, with a few daring associates, assassinated his uncle in the midst of a great entertainment. Herod, the son of Odenathus, though not of Zenobia, a young man of a soft and effeminate temper, [57](#) was killed with his father. But Mæonius obtained only the pleasure of revenge by this bloody deed. He had scarcely time to assume the title of Augustus, before he was sacrificed by Zenobia to the memory of her husband. [58](#)

- 56 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 192, 193. Zosimus, l. i. p. 36. Zonaras, l. xii p. 633. The last is clear and probable, the others confused and inconsistent. The text of Syncellus, if not corrupt, is absolute nonsense.]
- 57 [\(return\)](#)
[Odenathus and Zenobia often sent him, from the spoils of the enemy, presents of gems and toys, which he received with infinite delight.]
- 58 [\(return\)](#)
[Some very unjust suspicions have been cast on Zenobia, as if she was accessory to her husband's death.]

With the assistance of his most faithful friends, she immediately filled the vacant throne, and governed with manly counsels Palmyra, Syria, and the East, above five years. By the death of Odenathus, that authority was at an end which the senate had granted him only as a personal distinction; but his martial widow, disdaining both the senate and Gallienus, obliged one of the Roman generals, who was sent against her, to retreat into Europe, with the loss of his army and his reputation. [59](#) Instead of the little passions which so frequently perplex a female reign, the steady administration of Zenobia was guided by the most judicious maxims of policy. If it was expedient to pardon, she could calm her resentment; if it was necessary to punish, she could impose silence on the voice of pity. Her strict economy was accused of avarice; yet on every proper occasion she appeared magnificent and liberal. The neighboring states of Arabia,

Armenia, and Persia, dreaded her enmity, and solicited her alliance. To the dominions of Odenathus, which extended from the Euphrates to the frontiers of Bithynia, his widow added the inheritance of her ancestors, the populous and fertile kingdom of Egypt. [60](#) The emperor Claudius acknowledged her merit, and was content, that, while *he* pursued the Gothic war, *she* should assert the dignity of the empire in the East. The conduct, however, of Zenobia was attended with some ambiguity; not is it unlikely that she had conceived the design of erecting an independent and hostile monarchy. She blended with the popular manners of Roman princes the stately pomp of the courts of Asia, and exacted from her subjects the same adoration that was paid to the successor of Cyrus. She bestowed on her three sons [61](#) a Latin education, and often showed them to the troops adorned with the Imperial purple. For herself she reserved the diadem, with the splendid but doubtful title of Queen of the East.

59 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 180, 181.]

60 [\(return\)](#)

[See, in Hist. August. p. 198, Aurelian's testimony to her merit; and for the conquest of Egypt, Zosimus, l. i. p. 39, 40.] This seems very doubtful. Claudius, during all his reign, is represented as emperor on the medals of Alexandria, which are very numerous. If Zenobia possessed any power in Egypt, it could only have been at the beginning of the reign of Aurelian. The same circumstance throws great improbability on her conquests in Galatia. Perhaps Zenobia administered Egypt in the name of Claudius, and emboldened by the death of that prince, subjected it to her own power.—G.]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[Timolaus, Herennianus, and Vaballathus. It is supposed that the two former were already dead before the war. On the last, Aurelian bestowed a small province of Armenia, with the title of King; several of his medals are still extant. See Tillemont, tom. 3, p. 1190.]

When Aurelian passed over into Asia, against an adversary whose sex alone could render her an object of contempt, his presence restored obedience to the province of Bithynia, already shaken by the arms and intrigues of Zenobia. [62](#) Advancing at the head of his legions, he accepted the submission of Ancyra, and was admitted into Tyana, after an obstinate siege, by the help of a perfidious citizen. The generous though fierce temper of Aurelian abandoned the traitor to the rage of the soldiers; a superstitious reverence induced him to treat with lenity the countrymen of Apollonius the philosopher. [63](#) Antioch was deserted on his approach, till the emperor, by his salutary edicts, recalled the fugitives, and granted a general pardon to all who, from necessity rather than choice, had been engaged in the service of the Palmyrenian Queen. The

unexpected mildness of such a conduct reconciled the minds of the Syrians, and as far as the gates of Emesa, the wishes of the people seconded the terror of his arms. [64](#)

62 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. i. p. 44.]

63 [\(return\)](#)
[Vopiscus (in Hist. August. p. 217) gives us an authentic letter and a doubtful vision, of Aurelian. Apollonius of Tyana was born about the same time as Jesus Christ. His life (that of the former) is related in so fabulous a manner by his disciples, that we are at a loss to discover whether he was a sage, an impostor, or a fanatic.]

64 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. i. p. 46.]

Zenobia would have ill deserved her reputation, had she indolently permitted the emperor of the West to approach within a hundred miles of her capital. The fate of the East was decided in two great battles; so similar in almost every circumstance, that we can scarcely distinguish them from each other, except by observing that the first was fought near Antioch, [65](#) and the second near Emesa. [66](#) In both the queen of Palmyra animated the armies by her presence, and devolved the execution of her orders on Zabdas, who had already signalized his military talents by the conquest of Egypt. The numerous forces of Zenobia consisted for the most part of light archers, and of heavy cavalry clothed in complete steel. The Moorish and Illyrian horse of Aurelian were unable to sustain the ponderous charge of their antagonists. They fled in real or affected disorder, engaged the Palmyrenians in a laborious pursuit, harassed them by a desultory combat, and at length discomfited this impenetrable but unwieldy body of cavalry. The light infantry, in the mean time, when they had exhausted their quivers, remaining without protection against a closer onset, exposed their naked sides to the swords of the legions. Aurelian had chosen these veteran troops, who were usually stationed on the Upper Danube, and whose valor had been severely tried in the Alemannic war. [67](#) After the defeat of Emesa, Zenobia found it impossible to collect a third army. As far as the frontier of Egypt, the nations subject to her empire had joined the standard of the conqueror, who detached Probus, the bravest of his generals, to possess himself of the Egyptian provinces. Palmyra was the last resource of the widow of Odenathus. She retired within the walls of her capital, made every preparation for a vigorous resistance, and declared, with the intrepidity of a heroine, that the last moment of her reign and of her life should be the same.

65 [\(return\)](#)
[At a place called Immæ. Eutropius, Sextus Rufus, and Jerome, mention only this first battle.]

66 [\(return\)](#)
[Vopiscus (in Hist. August. p. 217) mentions only the second.]

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 44—48. His account of the two battles is clear and circumstantial.]

Amid the barren deserts of Arabia, a few cultivated spots rise like islands out of the sandy ocean. Even the name of Tadmor, or Palmyra, by its signification in the Syriac as well as in the Latin language, denoted the multitude of palm-trees which afforded shade and verdure to that temperate region. The air was pure, and the soil, watered by some invaluable springs, was capable of producing fruits as well as corn. A place possessed of such singular advantages, and situated at a convenient distance [68](#) between the Gulf of Persia and the Mediterranean, was soon frequented by the caravans which conveyed to the nations of Europe a considerable part of the rich commodities of India. Palmyra insensibly increased into an opulent and independent city, and connecting the Roman and the Parthian monarchies by the mutual benefits of commerce, was suffered to observe an humble neutrality, till at length, after the victories of Trajan, the little republic sunk into the bosom of Rome, and flourished more than one hundred and fifty years in the subordinate though honorable rank of a colony. It was during that peaceful period, if we may judge from a few remaining inscriptions, that the wealthy Palmyrenians constructed those temples, palaces, and porticos of Grecian architecture, whose ruins, scattered over an extent of several miles, have deserved the curiosity of our travellers. The elevation of Odenathus and Zenobia appeared to reflect new splendor on their country, and Palmyra, for a while, stood forth the rival of Rome: but the competition was fatal, and ages of prosperity were sacrificed to a moment of glory. [69](#)

68

[\(return\)](#)

[It was five hundred and thirty-seven miles from Seleucia, and two hundred and three from the nearest coast of Syria, according to the reckoning of Pliny, who, in a few words, (Hist. Natur. v. 21,) gives an excellent description of Palmyra. * Note: Talmor, or Palmyra, was probably at a very early period the connecting link between the commerce of Tyre and Babylon. Heeren, Ideen, v. i. p. ii. p. 125. Tadmor was probably built by Solomon as a commercial station. Hist. of Jews, v. p. 271—M.]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[Some English travellers from Aleppo discovered the ruins of Palmyra about the end of the last century. Our curiosity has since been gratified in a more splendid manner by Messieurs Wood and Dawkins. For the history of Palmyra, we may consult the masterly dissertation of Dr. Halley in the Philosophical Transactions: Lowthorp's Abridgment, vol. iii. p. 518.]

In his march over the sandy desert between Emesa and Palmyra, the emperor Aurelian was perpetually harassed by the Arabs; nor could he always defend his army, and especially his baggage, from those flying troops of active and daring robbers, who

watched the moment of surprise, and eluded the slow pursuit of the legions. The siege of Palmyra was an object far more difficult and important, and the emperor, who, with incessant vigor, pressed the attacks in person, was himself wounded with a dart. "The Roman people," says Aurelian, in an original letter, "speak with contempt of the war which I am waging against a woman. They are ignorant both of the character and of the power of Zenobia. It is impossible to enumerate her warlike preparations, of stones, of arrows, and of every species of missile weapons. Every part of the walls is provided with two or three *balistæ* and artificial fires are thrown from her military engines. The fear of punishment has armed her with a desperate courage. Yet still I trust in the protecting deities of Rome, who have hitherto been favorable to all my undertakings." [70](#) Doubtful, however, of the protection of the gods, and of the event of the siege, Aurelian judged it more prudent to offer terms of an advantageous capitulation; to the queen, a splendid retreat; to the citizens, their ancient privileges. His proposals were obstinately rejected, and the refusal was accompanied with insult.

70

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 218.]

The firmness of Zenobia was supported by the hope, that in a very short time famine would compel the Roman army to repass the desert; and by the reasonable expectation that the kings of the East, and particularly the Persian monarch, would arm in the defence of their most natural ally. But fortune, and the perseverance of Aurelian, overcame every obstacle. The death of Sapor, which happened about this time, [71](#) distracted the councils of Persia, and the inconsiderable succors that attempted to relieve Palmyra were easily intercepted either by the arms or the liberality of the emperor. From every part of Syria, a regular succession of convoys safely arrived in the camp, which was increased by the return of Probus with his victorious troops from the conquest of Egypt. It was then that Zenobia resolved to fly. She mounted the fleetest of her dromedaries, [72](#) and had already reached the banks of the Euphrates, about sixty miles from Palmyra, when she was overtaken by the pursuit of Aurelian's light horse, seized, and brought back a captive to the feet of the emperor. Her capital soon afterwards surrendered, and was treated with unexpected lenity. The arms, horses, and camels, with an immense treasure of gold, silver, silk, and precious stones, were all delivered to the conqueror, who, leaving only a garrison of six hundred archers, returned to Emesa, and employed some time in the distribution of rewards and punishments at the end of so memorable a war, which restored to the obedience of Rome those provinces that had renounced their allegiance since the captivity of Valerian.

71

[\(return\)](#)

[From a very doubtful chronology I have endeavored to extract the most probable date.]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 218. Zosimus, l. i. p. 50. Though the camel is a heavy beast of burden, the dromedary, which is either of the same or of a

kindred species, is used by the natives of Asia and Africa on all occasions which require celerity. The Arabs affirm, that he will run over as much ground in one day as their fleetest horses can perform in eight or ten. See Buffon, Hist. Naturelle, tom. xi. p. 222, and Shaw's Travels p. 167]

When the Syrian queen was brought into the presence of Aurelian, he sternly asked her, How she had presumed to rise in arms against the emperors of Rome! The answer of Zenobia was a prudent mixture of respect and firmness. "Because I disdained to consider as Roman emperors an Aureolus or a Gallienus. You alone I acknowledge as my conqueror and my sovereign." [73](#) But as female fortitude is commonly artificial, so it is seldom steady or consistent. The courage of Zenobia deserted her in the hour of trial; she trembled at the angry clamors of the soldiers, who called aloud for her immediate execution, forgot the generous despair of Cleopatra, which she had proposed as her model, and ignominiously purchased life by the sacrifice of her fame and her friends. It was to their counsels, which governed the weakness of her sex, that she imputed the guilt of her obstinate resistance; it was on their heads that she directed the vengeance of the cruel Aurelian. The fame of Longinus, who was included among the numerous and perhaps innocent victims of her fear, will survive that of the queen who betrayed, or the tyrant who condemned him. Genius and learning were incapable of moving a fierce unlettered soldier, but they had served to elevate and harmonize the soul of Longinus. Without uttering a complaint, he calmly followed the executioner, pitying his unhappy mistress, and bestowing comfort on his afflicted friends. [74](#)

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Pollio in Hist. August. p. 199.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 219. Zosimus, l. i. p. 51.]

Returning from the conquest of the East, Aurelian had already crossed the Straits which divided Europe from Asia, when he was provoked by the intelligence that the Palmyrenians had massacred the governor and garrison which he had left among them, and again erected the standard of revolt. Without a moment's deliberation, he once more turned his face towards Syria. Antioch was alarmed by his rapid approach, and the helpless city of Palmyra felt the irresistible weight of his resentment. We have a letter of Aurelian himself, in which he acknowledges, [75](#) that old men, women, children, and peasants, had been involved in that dreadful execution, which should have been confined to armed rebellion; and although his principal concern seems directed to the reëstablishment of a temple of the Sun, he discovers some pity for the remnant of the Palmyrenians, to whom he grants the permission of rebuilding and inhabiting their city. But it is easier to destroy than to restore. The seat of commerce, of arts, and of Zenobia, gradually sunk into an obscure town, a trifling fortress, and at length a miserable village. The present citizens of Palmyra, consisting of thirty or forty families, have erected their mud cottages within the spacious court of a magnificent temple.

[Hist. August. p. 219.]

Another and a last labor still awaited the indefatigable Aurelian; to suppress a dangerous though obscure rebel, who, during the revolt of Palmyra, had arisen on the banks of the Nile. Firmus, the friend and ally, as he proudly styled himself, of Odenathus and Zenobia, was no more than a wealthy merchant of Egypt. In the course of his trade to India, he had formed very intimate connections with the Saracens and the Blemmyes, whose situation on either coast of the Red Sea gave them an easy introduction into the Upper Egypt. The Egyptians he inflamed with the hope of freedom, and, at the head of their furious multitude, broke into the city of Alexandria, where he assumed the Imperial purple, coined money, published edicts, and raised an army, which, as he vainly boasted, he was capable of maintaining from the sole profits of his paper trade. Such troops were a feeble defence against the approach of Aurelian; and it seems almost unnecessary to relate, that Firmus was routed, taken, tortured, and put to death. [76](#) Aurelian might now congratulate the senate, the people, and himself, that in little more than three years, he had restored universal peace and order to the Roman world.

[See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 220, 242. As an instance of luxury, it is observed, that he had glass windows. He was remarkable for his strength and appetite, his courage and dexterity. From the letter of Aurelian, we may justly infer, that Firmus was the last of the rebels, and consequently that Tetricus was already suppressed.]

Since the foundation of Rome, no general had more nobly deserved a triumph than Aurelian; nor was a triumph ever celebrated with superior pride and magnificence. [77](#) The pomp was opened by twenty elephants, four royal tigers, and above two hundred of the most curious animals from every climate of the North, the East, and the South. They were followed by sixteen hundred gladiators, devoted to the cruel amusement of the amphitheatre. The wealth of Asia, the arms and ensigns of so many conquered nations, and the magnificent plate and wardrobe of the Syrian queen, were disposed in exact symmetry or artful disorder. The ambassadors of the most remote parts of the earth, of Æthiopia, Arabia, Persia, Bactriana, India, and China, all remarkable by their rich or singular dresses, displayed the fame and power of the Roman emperor, who exposed likewise to the public view the presents that he had received, and particularly a great number of crowns of gold, the offerings of grateful cities.

The victories of Aurelian were attested by the long train of captives who reluctantly attended his triumph, Goths, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alemanni, Franks, Gauls, Syrians, and Egyptians. Each people was distinguished by its peculiar inscription, and the title of Amazons was bestowed on ten martial heroines of the Gothic nation who had been taken in arms. [78](#) But every eye, disregarding the crowd of captives, was fixed on the

emperor Tetricus and the queen of the East. The former, as well as his son, whom he had created Augustus, was dressed in Gallic trousers, [79](#) a saffron tunic, and a robe of purple. The beauteous figure of Zenobia was confined by fetters of gold; a slave supported the gold chain which encircled her neck, and she almost fainted under the intolerable weight of jewels. She preceded on foot the magnificent chariot, in which she once hoped to enter the gates of Rome. It was followed by two other chariots, still more sumptuous, of Odenathus and of the Persian monarch. The triumphal car of Aurelian (it had formerly been used by a Gothic king) was drawn, on this memorable occasion, either by four stags or by four elephants. [80](#) The most illustrious of the senate, the people, and the army, closed the solemn procession. Unfeigned joy, wonder, and gratitude, swelled the acclamations of the multitude; but the satisfaction of the senate was clouded by the appearance of Tetricus; nor could they suppress a rising murmur, that the haughty emperor should thus expose to public ignominy the person of a Roman and a magistrate. [81](#)

77

[\(return\)](#)

[See the triumph of Aurelian, described by Vopiscus. He relates the particulars with his usual minuteness; and, on this occasion, they happen to be interesting. Hist. August. p. 220.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[Among barbarous nations, women have often combated by the side of their husbands. But it is almost impossible that a society of Amazons should ever have existed either in the old or new world. * Note: Klaproth's theory on the origin of such traditions is at least recommended by its ingenuity. The males of a tribe having gone out on a marauding expedition, and having been cut off to a man, the females may have endeavored, for a time, to maintain their independence in their camp village, till their children grew up. Travels, ch. xxx. Eng. Trans—M.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[The use of braccæ, breeches, or trousers, was still considered in Italy as a Gallic and barbarian fashion. The Romans, however, had made great advances towards it. To encircle the legs and thighs with fasciæ, or bands, was understood, in the time of Pompey and Horace, to be a proof of ill health or effeminacy. In the age of Trajan, the custom was confined to the rich and luxurious. It gradually was adopted by the meanest of the people. See a very curious note of Casaubon, ad Sueton. in August. c. 82.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[Most probably the former; the latter seen on the

medals of Aurelian, only denote (according to the learned Cardinal Norris) an oriental victory.]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[The expression of Calphurnius, (Eclog. i. 50) *Nullos decet captiva triumphos*, as applied to Rome, contains a very manifest allusion and censure.]

But however, in the treatment of his unfortunate rivals, Aurelian might indulge his pride, he behaved towards them with a generous clemency, which was seldom exercised by the ancient conquerors. Princes who, without success, had defended their throne or freedom, were frequently strangled in prison, as soon as the triumphal pomp ascended the Capitol. These usurpers, whom their defeat had convicted of the crime of treason, were permitted to spend their lives in affluence and honorable repose.

The emperor presented Zenobia with an elegant villa at Tibur, or Tivoli, about twenty miles from the capital; the Syrian queen insensibly sunk into a Roman matron, her daughters married into noble families, and her race was not yet extinct in the fifth century. [82](#) Tetricus and his son were reinstated in their rank and fortunes. They erected on the Cælian hill a magnificent palace, and as soon as it was finished, invited Aurelian to supper. On his entrance, he was agreeably surprised with a picture which represented their singular history. They were delineated offering to the emperor a civic crown and the sceptre of Gaul, and again receiving at his hands the ornaments of the senatorial dignity. The father was afterwards invested with the government of Lucania, [83](#) and Aurelian, who soon admitted the abdicated monarch to his friendship and conversation, familiarly asked him, Whether it were not more desirable to administer a province of Italy, than to reign beyond the Alps. The son long continued a respectable member of the senate; nor was there any one of the Roman nobility more esteemed by Aurelian, as well as by his successors. [84](#)

82

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 199. Hieronym. in Chron. Prosper in Chron. Baronius supposes that Zenobius, bishop of Florence in the time of St. Ambrose, was of her family.]

83

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopisc. in Hist. August. p. 222. Eutropius, ix. 13. Victor Junior. But Pollio, in Hist. August. p. 196, says, that Tetricus was made corrector of all Italy.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 197.]

So long and so various was the pomp of Aurelian's triumph, that although it opened with the dawn of day, the slow majesty of the procession ascended not the Capitol before the ninth hour; and it was already dark when the emperor returned to the palace. The festival was protracted by theatrical representations, the games of the circus, the hunting of wild beasts, combats of gladiators, and naval engagements. Liberal donatives

were distributed to the army and people, and several institutions, agreeable or beneficial to the city, contributed to perpetuate the glory of Aurelian. A considerable portion of his oriental spoils was consecrated to the gods of Rome; the Capitol, and every other temple, glittered with the offerings of his ostentatious piety; and the temple of the Sun alone received above fifteen thousand pounds of gold. [85](#) This last was a magnificent structure, erected by the emperor on the side of the Quirinal hill, and dedicated, soon after the triumph, to that deity whom Aurelian adored as the parent of his life and fortunes. His mother had been an inferior priestess in a chapel of the Sun; a peculiar devotion to the god of Light was a sentiment which the fortunate peasant imbibed in his infancy; and every step of his elevation, every victory of his reign, fortified superstition by gratitude. [86](#)

85

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. 222. Zosimus, l. i. p. 56. He placed in it the images of Belus and of the Sun, which he had brought from Palmyra. It was dedicated in the fourth year of his reign, (Euseb in Chron.,) but was most assuredly begun immediately on his accession.]

86

[\(return\)](#)

[See, in the Augustan History, p. 210, the omens of his fortune. His devotion to the Sun appears in his letters, on his medals, and is mentioned in the Cæsars of Julian. Commentaire de Spanheim, p. 109.]

The arms of Aurelian had vanquished the foreign and domestic foes of the republic. We are assured, that, by his salutary rigor, crimes and factions, mischievous arts and pernicious connivance, the luxurious growth of a feeble and oppressive government, were eradicated throughout the Roman world. [87](#) But if we attentively reflect how much swifter is the progress of corruption than its cure, and if we remember that the years abandoned to public disorders exceeded the months allotted to the martial reign of Aurelian, we must confess that a few short intervals of peace were insufficient for the arduous work of reformation. Even his attempt to restore the integrity of the coin was opposed by a formidable insurrection. The emperor's vexation breaks out in one of his private letters. "Surely," says he, "the gods have decreed that my life should be a perpetual warfare. A sedition within the walls has just now given birth to a very serious civil war. The workmen of the mint, at the instigation of Felicissimus, a slave to whom I had intrusted an employment in the finances, have risen in rebellion. They are at length suppressed; but seven thousand of my soldiers have been slain in the contest, of those troops whose ordinary station is in Dacia, and the camps along the Danube." [88](#) Other writers, who confirm the same fact, add likewise, that it happened soon after Aurelian's triumph; that the decisive engagement was fought on the Cælian hill; that the workmen of the mint had adulterated the coin; and that the emperor restored the public credit, by

delivering out good money in exchange for the bad, which the people was commanded to bring into the treasury. [89](#)

87 [\(return\)](#)
[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 221.]

88 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 222. Aurelian calls these soldiers
Hiberi Riporientes Castriani, and Dacisci.]

89 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. i. p. 56. Eutropius, ix. 14. Aurel
Victor.]

We might content ourselves with relating this extraordinary transaction, but we cannot dissemble how much in its present form it appears to us inconsistent and incredible. The debasement of the coin is indeed well suited to the administration of Gallienus; nor is it unlikely that the instruments of the corruption might dread the inflexible justice of Aurelian. But the guilt, as well as the profit, must have been confined to a very few; nor is it easy to conceive by what arts they could arm a people whom they had injured, against a monarch whom they had betrayed. We might naturally expect that such miscreants should have shared the public detestation with the informers and the other ministers of oppression; and that the reformation of the coin should have been an action equally popular with the destruction of those obsolete accounts, which by the emperor's order were burnt in the forum of Trajan. [90](#) In an age when the principles of commerce were so imperfectly understood, the most desirable end might perhaps be effected by harsh and injudicious means; but a temporary grievance of such a nature can scarcely excite and support a serious civil war. The repetition of intolerable taxes, imposed either on the land or on the necessities of life, may at last provoke those who will not, or who cannot, relinquish their country. But the case is far otherwise in every operation which, by whatsoever expedients, restores the just value of money. The transient evil is soon obliterated by the permanent benefit, the loss is divided among multitudes; and if a few wealthy individuals experience a sensible diminution of treasure, with their riches, they at the same time lose the degree of weight and importance which they derived from the possession of them. However Aurelian might choose to disguise the real cause of the insurrection, his reformation of the coin could furnish only a faint pretence to a party already powerful and discontented. Rome, though deprived of freedom, was distracted by faction. The people, towards whom the emperor, himself a plebeian, always expressed a peculiar fondness, lived in perpetual dissension with the senate, the equestrian order, and the Prætorian guards. [91](#) Nothing less than the firm though secret conspiracy of those orders, of the authority of the first, the wealth of the second, and the arms of the third, could have displayed a strength capable of contending in battle with the veteran legions of the Danube, which, under the conduct of a martial sovereign, had achieved the conquest of the West and of the East.

90 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 222. Aurel Victor.]

91 [\(return\)](#)
[It already raged before Aurelian's return from Egypt. See Vipiscus, who quotes an original letter. Hist. August. p. 244.]

Whatever was the cause or the object of this rebellion, imputed with so little probability to the workmen of the mint, Aurelian used his victory with unrelenting rigor. [92](#) He was naturally of a severe disposition. A peasant and a soldier, his nerves yielded not easily to the impressions of sympathy, and he could sustain without emotion the sight of tortures and death. Trained from his earliest youth in the exercise of arms, he set too small a value on the life of a citizen, chastised by military execution the slightest offences, and transferred the stern discipline of the camp into the civil administration of the laws. His love of justice often became a blind and furious passion; and whenever he deemed his own or the public safety endangered, he disregarded the rules of evidence, and the proportion of punishments. The unprovoked rebellion with which the Romans rewarded his services, exasperated his haughty spirit. The noblest families of the capital were involved in the guilt or suspicion of this dark conspiracy. A nasty spirit of revenge urged the bloody prosecution, and it proved fatal to one of the nephews of the emperor. The executioners (if we may use the expression of a contemporary poet) were fatigued, the prisons were crowded, and the unhappy senate lamented the death or absence of its most illustrious members. [93](#) Nor was the pride of Aurelian less offensive to that assembly than his cruelty. Ignorant or impatient of the restraints of civil institutions, he disdained to hold his power by any other title than that of the sword, and governed by right of conquest an empire which he had saved and subdued. [94](#)

92 [\(return\)](#)
[Vopiscus in Hist. August p. 222. The two Victors. Eutropius ix. 14. Zosimus (l. i. p. 43) mentions only three senators, and placed their death before the eastern war.]

93 [\(return\)](#)
[Nulla catenati feralis pompa senatus Carnificum lassabit opus; nec carcere pleno Infelix raros numerabit curia Patres. Calphurn. Eclog. i. 60.]

94 [\(return\)](#)
[According to the younger Victor, he sometimes wore the diadem, Deus and Dominus appear on his medals.]

It was observed by one of the most sagacious of the Roman princes, that the talents of his predecessor Aurelian were better suited to the command of an army, than to the government of an empire. [95](#) Conscious of the character in which nature and experience had enabled him to excel, he again took the field a few months after his triumph. It was expedient to exercise the restless temper of the legions in some foreign war, and the

Persian monarch, exulting in the shame of Valerian, still braved with impunity the offended majesty of Rome. At the head of an army, less formidable by its numbers than by its discipline and valor, the emperor advanced as far as the Straits which divide Europe from Asia. He there experienced that the most absolute power is a weak defence against the effects of despair. He had threatened one of his secretaries who was accused of extortion; and it was known that he seldom threatened in vain. The last hope which remained for the criminal was to involve some of the principal officers of the army in his danger, or at least in his fears. Artfully counterfeiting his master's hand, he showed them, in a long and bloody list, their own names devoted to death. Without suspecting or examining the fraud, they resolved to secure their lives by the murder of the emperor. On his march, between Byzantium and Heraclea, Aurelian was suddenly attacked by the conspirators, whose stations gave them a right to surround his person, and after a short resistance, fell by the hand of Mucapor, a general whom he had always loved and trusted. He died regretted by the army, detested by the senate, but universally acknowledged as a warlike and fortunate prince, the useful, though severe reformer of a degenerate state. [96](#)

95

[\(return\)](#)

[It was the observation of Dioclatian. See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 224.]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 221. Zosimus, l. i. p. 57. Eutrop ix. 15. The two Victors.]

Chapter XII: Reigns Of Tacitus, Probus, Carus And His Sons.— Part I.

Conduct Of The Army And Senate After The Death Of Aurelian.—Reigns Of Tacitus, Probus, Carus, And His Sons.

Such was the unhappy condition of the Roman emperors, that, whatever might be their conduct, their fate was commonly the same. A life of pleasure or virtue, of severity or mildness, of indolence or glory, alike led to an untimely grave; and almost every reign is closed by the same disgusting repetition of treason and murder. The death of Aurelian, however, is remarkable by its extraordinary consequences. The legions admired, lamented, and revenged their victorious chief. The artifice of his perfidious secretary was discovered and punished.

The deluded conspirators attended the funeral of their injured sovereign, with sincere or well-feigned contrition, and submitted to the unanimous resolution of the military order, which was signified by the following epistle: “The brave and fortunate armies to the senate and people of Rome.—The crime of one man, and the error of many, have deprived us of the late emperor Aurelian. May it please you, venerable lords and fathers!

to place him in the number of the gods, and to appoint a successor whom your judgment shall declare worthy of the Imperial purple! None of those whose guilt or misfortune have contributed to our loss, shall ever reign over us.” [1](#) The Roman senators heard, without surprise, that another emperor had been assassinated in his camp; they secretly rejoiced in the fall of Aurelian; but the modest and dutiful address of the legions, when it was communicated in full assembly by the consul, diffused the most pleasing astonishment. Such honors as fear and perhaps esteem could extort, they liberally poured forth on the memory of their deceased sovereign. Such acknowledgments as gratitude could inspire, they returned to the faithful armies of the republic, who entertained so just a sense of the legal authority of the senate in the choice of an emperor. Yet, notwithstanding this flattering appeal, the most prudent of the assembly declined exposing their safety and dignity to the caprice of an armed multitude. The strength of the legions was, indeed, a pledge of their sincerity, since those who may command are seldom reduced to the necessity of dissembling; but could it naturally be expected, that a hasty repentance would correct the inveterate habits of fourscore years? Should the soldiers relapse into their accustomed seditions, their insolence might disgrace the majesty of the senate, and prove fatal to the object of its choice. Motives like these dictated a decree, by which the election of a new emperor was referred to the suffrage of the military order.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 222. Aurelius Victor mentions a formal deputation from the troops to the senate.]

The contention that ensued is one of the best attested, but most improbable events in the history of mankind. [2](#) The troops, as if satiated with the exercise of power, again conjured the senate to invest one of its own body with the Imperial purple. The senate still persisted in its refusal; the army in its request. The reciprocal offer was pressed and rejected at least three times, and, whilst the obstinate modesty of either party was resolved to receive a master from the hands of the other, eight months insensibly elapsed; an amazing period of tranquil anarchy, during which the Roman world remained without a sovereign, without a usurper, and without a sedition. [201](#) The generals and magistrates appointed by Aurelian continued to execute their ordinary functions; and it is observed, that a proconsul of Asia was the only considerable person removed from his office in the whole course of the interregnum.

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus, our principal authority, wrote at Rome, sixteen years only after the death of Aurelian; and, besides the recent notoriety of the facts, constantly draws his materials from the Journals of the Senate, and the original papers of the Ulpian library. Zosimus and Zonaras appear as ignorant of this transaction as they were in general of the Roman constitution.]

[The interregnum could not be more than seven months; Aurelian was assassinated in the middle of March, the year of Rome 1028. Tacitus was elected the 25th September in the same year.—G.]

An event somewhat similar, but much less authentic, is supposed to have happened after the death of Romulus, who, in his life and character, bore some affinity with Aurelian. The throne was vacant during twelve months, till the election of a Sabine philosopher, and the public peace was guarded in the same manner, by the union of the several orders of the state. But, in the time of Numa and Romulus, the arms of the people were controlled by the authority of the Patricians; and the balance of freedom was easily preserved in a small and virtuous community. [3](#) The decline of the Roman state, far different from its infancy, was attended with every circumstance that could banish from an interregnum the prospect of obedience and harmony: an immense and tumultuous capital, a wide extent of empire, the servile equality of despotism, an army of four hundred thousand mercenaries, and the experience of frequent revolutions. Yet, notwithstanding all these temptations, the discipline and memory of Aurelian still restrained the seditious temper of the troops, as well as the fatal ambition of their leaders. The flower of the legions maintained their stations on the banks of the Bosphorus, and the Imperial standard awed the less powerful camps of Rome and of the provinces. A generous though transient enthusiasm seemed to animate the military order; and we may hope that a few real patriots cultivated the returning friendship of the army and the senate as the only expedient capable of restoring the republic to its ancient beauty and vigor.

[Liv. i. 17 Dionys. Halicarn. l. ii. p. 115. Plutarch in Numa, p. 60. The first of these writers relates the story like an orator, the second like a lawyer, and the third like a moralist, and none of them probably without some intermixture of fable.]

On the twenty-fifth of September, near eight months after the murder of Aurelian, the consul convoked an assembly of the senate, and reported the doubtful and dangerous situation of the empire. He slightly insinuated, that the precarious loyalty of the soldiers depended on the chance of every hour, and of every accident; but he represented, with the most convincing eloquence, the various dangers that might attend any further delay in the choice of an emperor. Intelligence, he said, was already received, that the Germans had passed the Rhine, and occupied some of the strongest and most opulent cities of Gaul. The ambition of the Persian king kept the East in perpetual alarms; Egypt, Africa, and Illyricum, were exposed to foreign and domestic arms, and the levity of Syria would prefer even a female sceptre to the sanctity of the Roman laws. The consul, then addressing himself to Tacitus, the first of the senators, [4](#) required his opinion on the important subject of a proper candidate for the vacant throne.

4

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus (in Hist. August p. 227) calls him “primæ sententia consularis;” and soon afterwards Princeps senatus. It is natural to suppose, that the monarchs of Rome, disdaining that humble title, resigned it to the most ancient of the senators.]

If we can prefer personal merit to accidental greatness, we shall esteem the birth of Tacitus more truly noble than that of kings. He claimed his descent from the philosophic historian whose writings will instruct the last generations of mankind. [5](#) The senator Tacitus was then seventy-five years of age. [6](#) The long period of his innocent life was adorned with wealth and honors. He had twice been invested with the consular dignity, [7](#) and enjoyed with elegance and sobriety his ample patrimony of between two and three millions sterling. [8](#) The experience of so many princes, whom he had esteemed or endured, from the vain follies of Elagabalus to the useful rigor of Aurelian, taught him to form a just estimate of the duties, the dangers, and the temptations of their sublime station. From the assiduous study of his immortal ancestor, he derived the knowledge of the Roman constitution, and of human nature. [9](#) The voice of the people had already named Tacitus as the citizen the most worthy of empire. The ungrateful rumor reached his ears, and induced him to seek the retirement of one of his villas in Campania. He had passed two months in the delightful privacy of Baiæ, when he reluctantly obeyed the summons of the consul to resume his honorable place in the senate, and to assist the republic with his counsels on this important occasion.

5

[\(return\)](#)

[The only objection to this genealogy is, that the historian was named Cornelius, the emperor, Claudius. But under the lower empire, surnames were extremely various and uncertain.]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Zonaras, l. xii. p. 637. The Alexandrian Chronicle, by an obvious mistake, transfers that age to Aurelian.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[In the year 273, he was ordinary consul. But he must have been Suffectus many years before, and most probably under Valerian.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Bis millies octingenties. Vopiscus in Hist. August p. 229. This sum, according to the old standard, was equivalent to eight hundred and forty thousand Roman pounds of silver, each of the value of three pounds sterling. But in the age of Tacitus, the coin had lost much of its weight and purity.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[After his accession, he gave orders that ten copies of the historian should be annually transcribed and placed in the public libraries. The Roman libraries

have long since perished, and the most valuable part of Tacitus was preserved in a single Ms., and discovered in a monastery of Westphalia. See Bayle, Dictionnaire, Art. Tacite, and Lipsius ad Annal. ii. 9.]

He arose to speak, when from every quarter of the house, he was saluted with the names of Augustus and emperor. “Tacitus Augustus, the gods preserve thee! we choose thee for our sovereign; to thy care we intrust the republic and the world. Accept the empire from the authority of the senate. It is due to thy rank, to thy conduct, to thy manners.” As soon as the tumult of acclamations subsided, Tacitus attempted to decline the dangerous honor, and to express his wonder, that they should elect his age and infirmities to succeed the martial vigor of Aurelian. “Are these limbs, conscript fathers! fitted to sustain the weight of armor, or to practise the exercises of the camp? The variety of climates, and the hardships of a military life, would soon oppress a feeble constitution, which subsists only by the most tender management. My exhausted strength scarcely enables me to discharge the duty of a senator; how insufficient would it prove to the arduous labors of war and government! Can you hope, that the legions will respect a weak old man, whose days have been spent in the shade of peace and retirement? Can you desire that I should ever find reason to regret the favorable opinion of the senate?” [10](#)

10

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 227.]

The reluctance of Tacitus (and it might possibly be sincere) was encountered by the affectionate obstinacy of the senate. Five hundred voices repeated at once, in eloquent confusion, that the greatest of the Roman princes, Numa, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, had ascended the throne in a very advanced season of life; that the mind, not the body, a sovereign, not a soldier, was the object of their choice; and that they expected from him no more than to guide by his wisdom the valor of the legions. These pressing though tumultuary instances were seconded by a more regular oration of Metius Falconius, the next on the consular bench to Tacitus himself. He reminded the assembly of the evils which Rome had endured from the vices of headstrong and capricious youths, congratulated them on the election of a virtuous and experienced senator, and, with a manly, though perhaps a selfish, freedom, exhorted Tacitus to remember the reasons of his elevation, and to seek a successor, not in his own family, but in the republic. The speech of Falconius was enforced by a general acclamation. The emperor elect submitted to the authority of his country, and received the voluntary homage of his equals. The judgment of the senate was confirmed by the consent of the Roman people and of the Prætorian guards. [11](#)

11

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 228. Tacitus addressed the Prætorians by the appellation of sanctissimi milites, and the people by that of sacratissim. Quirites.]

The administration of Tacitus was not unworthy of his life and principles. A grateful servant of the senate, he considered that national council as the author, and himself as the subject, of the laws. [12](#) He studied to heal the wounds which Imperial pride, civil discord, and military violence, had inflicted on the constitution, and to restore, at least, the image of the ancient republic, as it had been preserved by the policy of Augustus, and the virtues of Trajan and the Antonines. It may not be useless to recapitulate some of the most important prerogatives which the senate appeared to have regained by the election of Tacitus. [13](#) 1. To invest one of their body, under the title of emperor, with the general command of the armies, and the government of the frontier provinces. 2. To determine the list, or, as it was then styled, the College of Consuls. They were twelve in number, who, in successive pairs, each, during the space of two months, filled the year, and represented the dignity of that ancient office. The authority of the senate, in the nomination of the consuls, was exercised with such independent freedom, that no regard was paid to an irregular request of the emperor in favor of his brother Florianus. “The senate,” exclaimed Tacitus, with the honest transport of a patriot, “understand the character of a prince whom they have chosen.” 3. To appoint the proconsuls and presidents of the provinces, and to confer on all the magistrates their civil jurisdiction. 4. To receive appeals through the intermediate office of the præfect of the city from all the tribunals of the empire. 5. To give force and validity, by their decrees, to such as they should approve of the emperor’s edicts. 6. To these several branches of authority we may add some inspection over the finances, since, even in the stern reign of Aurelian, it was in their power to divert a part of the revenue from the public service. [14](#)

12

[\(return\)](#)

[In his manumissions he never exceeded the number of a hundred, as limited by the Caninian law, which was enacted under Augustus, and at length repealed by Justinian. See Casaubon ad locum Vopisci.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[See the lives of Tacitus, Florianus, and Probus, in the Augustan History; we may be well assured, that whatever the soldier gave the senator had already given.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 216. The passage is perfectly clear, both Casaubon and Salmasius wish to correct it.]

Circular epistles were sent, without delay, to all the principal cities of the empire, Treves, Milan, Aquileia, Thessalonica, Corinth, Athens, Antioch, Alexandria, and Carthage, to claim their obedience, and to inform them of the happy revolution, which had restored the Roman senate to its ancient dignity. Two of these epistles are still extant. We likewise possess two very singular fragments of the private correspondence of the senators on this occasion. They discover the most excessive joy, and the most

unbounded hopes. “Cast away your indolence,” it is thus that one of the senators addresses his friend, “emerge from your retirements of Baiæ and Puteoli. Give yourself to the city, to the senate. Rome flourishes, the whole republic flourishes. Thanks to the Roman army, to an army truly Roman; at length we have recovered our just authority, the end of all our desires. We hear appeals, we appoint proconsuls, we create emperors; perhaps too we may restrain them—to the wise a word is sufficient.” [15](#) These lofty expectations were, however, soon disappointed; nor, indeed, was it possible that the armies and the provinces should long obey the luxurious and unwarlike nobles of Rome. On the slightest touch, the unsupported fabric of their pride and power fell to the ground. The expiring senate displayed a sudden lustre, blazed for a moment, and was extinguished forever.

15

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 230, 232, 233. The senators celebrated the happy restoration with hecatombs and public rejoicings.]

All that had yet passed at Rome was no more than a theatrical representation, unless it was ratified by the more substantial power of the legions. Leaving the senators to enjoy their dream of freedom and ambition, Tacitus proceeded to the Thracian camp, and was there, by the Prætorian præfect, presented to the assembled troops, as the prince whom they themselves had demanded, and whom the senate had bestowed. As soon as the præfect was silent, the emperor addressed himself to the soldiers with eloquence and propriety. He gratified their avarice by a liberal distribution of treasure, under the names of pay and donative. He engaged their esteem by a spirited declaration, that although his age might disable him from the performance of military exploits, his counsels should never be unworthy of a Roman general, the successor of the brave Aurelian. [16](#)

16

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 228.]

Whilst the deceased emperor was making preparations for a second expedition into the East, he had negotiated with the Alani, [161](#) a Scythian people, who pitched their tents in the neighborhood of the Lake Mæotis. Those barbarians, allured by presents and subsidies, had promised to invade Persia with a numerous body of light cavalry. They were faithful to their engagements; but when they arrived on the Roman frontier, Aurelian was already dead, the design of the Persian war was at least suspended, and the generals, who, during the interregnum, exercised a doubtful authority, were unprepared either to receive or to oppose them. Provoked by such treatment, which they considered as trifling and perfidious, the Alani had recourse to their own valor for their payment and revenge; and as they moved with the usual swiftness of Tartars, they had soon spread themselves over the provinces of Pontus, Cappadocia, Cilicia, and Galatia. The legions, who from the opposite shores of the Bosphorus could almost distinguish the flames of the cities and villages, impatiently urged their general to lead them against the invaders. The conduct of Tacitus was suitable to his age and station. He convinced

the barbarians of the faith, as well as the power, of the empire. Great numbers of the Alani, appeased by the punctual discharge of the engagements which Aurelian had contracted with them, relinquished their booty and captives, and quietly retreated to their own deserts, beyond the Phasis. Against the remainder, who refused peace, the Roman emperor waged, in person, a successful war. Seconded by an army of brave and experienced veterans, in a few weeks he delivered the provinces of Asia from the terror of the Scythian invasion. [17](#)

161 [\(return\)](#)

[On the Alani, see ch. xxvi. note 55.—M.]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 230. Zosimus, l. i. p. 57. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 637. Two passages in the life of Probus (p. 236, 238) convince me, that these Scythian invaders of Pontus were Alani. If we may believe Zosimus, (l. i. p. 58,) Florianus pursued them as far as the Cimmerian Bosphorus. But he had scarcely time for so long and difficult an expedition.]

But the glory and life of Tacitus were of short duration. Transported, in the depth of winter, from the soft retirement of Campania to the foot of Mount Caucasus, he sunk under the unaccustomed hardships of a military life. The fatigues of the body were aggravated by the cares of the mind. For a while, the angry and selfish passions of the soldiers had been suspended by the enthusiasm of public virtue. They soon broke out with redoubled violence, and raged in the camp, and even in the tent of the aged emperor. His mild and amiable character served only to inspire contempt, and he was incessantly tormented with factions which he could not assuage, and by demands which it was impossible to satisfy. Whatever flattering expectations he had conceived of reconciling the public disorders, Tacitus soon was convinced that the licentiousness of the army disdained the feeble restraint of laws, and his last hour was hastened by anguish and disappointment. It may be doubtful whether the soldiers imbrued their hands in the blood of this innocent prince. [18](#) It is certain that their insolence was the cause of his death. He expired at Tyana in Cappadocia, after a reign of only six months and about twenty days. [19](#)

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Eutropius and Aurelius Victor only say that he died; Victor Junior adds, that it was of a fever. Zosimus and Zonaras affirm, that he was killed by the soldiers. Vopiscus mentions both accounts, and seems to hesitate. Yet surely these jarring opinions are easily reconciled.]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[According to the two Victors, he reigned exactly two hundred days.]

The eyes of Tacitus were scarcely closed, before his brother Florianus showed himself unworthy to reign, by the hasty usurpation of the purple, without expecting the approbation of the senate. The reverence for the Roman constitution, which yet influenced the camp and the provinces, was sufficiently strong to dispose them to censure, but not to provoke them to oppose, the precipitate ambition of Florianus. The discontent would have evaporated in idle murmurs, had not the general of the East, the heroic Probus, boldly declared himself the avenger of the senate.

The contest, however, was still unequal; nor could the most able leader, at the head of the effeminate troops of Egypt and Syria, encounter, with any hopes of victory, the legions of Europe, whose irresistible strength appeared to support the brother of Tacitus. But the fortune and activity of Probus triumphed over every obstacle. The hardy veterans of his rival, accustomed to cold climates, sickened and consumed away in the sultry heats of Cilicia, where the summer proved remarkably unwholesome. Their numbers were diminished by frequent desertion; the passes of the mountains were feebly defended; Tarsus opened its gates; and the soldiers of Florianus, when they had permitted him to enjoy the Imperial title about three months, delivered the empire from civil war by the easy sacrifice of a prince whom they despised. [20](#)

20

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August, p. 231. Zosimus, l. i. p. 58, 59. Zonaras, l. xii. p. 637. Aurelius Victor says, that Probus assumed the empire in Illyricum; an opinion which (though adopted by a very learned man) would throw that period of history into inextricable confusion.]

The perpetual revolutions of the throne had so perfectly erased every notion of hereditary title, that the family of an unfortunate emperor was incapable of exciting the jealousy of his successors. The children of Tacitus and Florianus were permitted to descend into a private station, and to mingle with the general mass of the people. Their poverty indeed became an additional safeguard to their innocence. When Tacitus was elected by the senate, he resigned his ample patrimony to the public service; [21](#) an act of generosity specious in appearance, but which evidently disclosed his intention of transmitting the empire to his descendants. The only consolation of their fallen state was the remembrance of transient greatness, and a distant hope, the child of a flattering prophecy, that at the end of a thousand years, a monarch of the race of Tacitus should arise, the protector of the senate, the restorer of Rome, and the conqueror of the whole earth. [22](#)

21

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 229]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[He was to send judges to the Parthians, Persians, and Sarmatians, a president to Taprobani, and a proconsul to the Roman island, (supposed by Casaubon and Salmasius to mean Britain.) Such a

history as mine (says Vopiscus with proper modesty) will not subsist a thousand years, to expose or justify the prediction.]

The peasants of Illyricum, who had already given Claudius and Aurelian to the sinking empire, had an equal right to glory in the elevation of Probus. [23](#) Above twenty years before, the emperor Valerian, with his usual penetration, had discovered the rising merit of the young soldier, on whom he conferred the rank of tribune, long before the age prescribed by the military regulations. The tribune soon justified his choice, by a victory over a great body of Sarmatians, in which he saved the life of a near relation of Valerian; and deserved to receive from the emperor's hand the collars, bracelets, spears, and banners, the mural and the civic crown, and all the honorable rewards reserved by ancient Rome for successful valor. The third, and afterwards the tenth, legion were intrusted to the command of Probus, who, in every step of his promotion, showed himself superior to the station which he filled. Africa and Pontus, the Rhine, the Danube, the Euphrates, and the Nile, by turns afforded him the most splendid occasions of displaying his personal prowess and his conduct in war. Aurelian was indebted for the honest courage with which he often checked the cruelty of his master. Tacitus, who desired by the abilities of his generals to supply his own deficiency of military talents, named him commander-in-chief of all the eastern provinces, with five times the usual salary, the promise of the consulship, and the hope of a triumph. When Probus ascended the Imperial throne, he was about forty-four years of age; [24](#) in the full possession of his fame, of the love of the army, and of a mature vigor of mind and body.

23

[\(return\)](#)

[For the private life of Probus, see Vopiscus in Hist. August p. 234—237]

24

[\(return\)](#)

[According to the Alexandrian chronicle, he was fifty at the time of his death.]

His acknowledged merit, and the success of his arms against Florianus, left him without an enemy or a competitor. Yet, if we may credit his own professions, very far from being desirous of the empire, he had accepted it with the most sincere reluctance. “But it is no longer in my power,” says Probus, in a private letter, “to lay down a title so full of envy and of danger. I must continue to personate the character which the soldiers have imposed upon me.” [25](#) His dutiful address to the senate displayed the sentiments, or at least the language, of a Roman patriot: “When you elected one of your order, conscript fathers! to succeed the emperor Aurelian, you acted in a manner suitable to your justice and wisdom. For you are the legal sovereigns of the world, and the power which you derive from your ancestors will descend to your posterity. Happy would it have been, if Florianus, instead of usurping the purple of his brother, like a private inheritance, had expected what your majesty might determine, either in his favor, or in that of any other person. The prudent soldiers have punished his rashness. To me they have offered the title of Augustus. But I submit to your clemency my

pretensions and my merits.” [26](#) When this respectful epistle was read by the consul, the senators were unable to disguise their satisfaction, that Probus should condescend thus numbly to solicit a sceptre which he already possessed. They celebrated with the warmest gratitude his virtues, his exploits, and above all his moderation. A decree immediately passed, without a dissenting voice, to ratify the election of the eastern armies, and to confer on their chief all the several branches of the Imperial dignity: the names of Cæsar and Augustus, the title of Father of his country, the right of making in the same day three motions in the senate, [27](#) the office of Pontifex Maximus, the tribunitian power, and the proconsular command; a mode of investiture, which, though it seemed to multiply the authority of the emperor, expressed the constitution of the ancient republic. The reign of Probus corresponded with this fair beginning. The senate was permitted to direct the civil administration of the empire. Their faithful general asserted the honor of the Roman arms, and often laid at their feet crowns of gold and barbaric trophies, the fruits of his numerous victories. [28](#) Yet, whilst he gratified their vanity, he must secretly have despised their indolence and weakness. Though it was every moment in their power to repeal the disgraceful edict of Gallienus, the proud successors of the Scipios patiently acquiesced in their exclusion from all military employments. They soon experienced, that those who refuse the sword must renounce the sceptre.

- 25 [\(return\)](#)
 [This letter was addressed to the Prætorian præfect, whom (on condition of his good behavior) he promised to continue in his great office. See Hist. August. p. 237.]
- 26 [\(return\)](#)
 [Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 237. The date of the letter is assuredly faulty. Instead of Nen. Februar. we may read Non August.]
- 27 [\(return\)](#)
 [Hist. August. p. 238. It is odd that the senate should treat Probus less favorably than Marcus Antoninus. That prince had received, even before the death of Pius, Jus quintoe relationis. See Capitolin. in Hist. August. p. 24.]
- 28 [\(return\)](#)
 [See the dutiful letter of Probus to the senate, after his German victories. Hist. August. p. 239.]

Chapter XII: Reigns Of Tacitus, Probus, Carus And His Sons.— Part II.

The strength of Aurelian had crushed on every side the enemies of Rome. After his death they seemed to revive with an increase of fury and of numbers. They were again

vanquished by the active vigor of Probus, who, in a short reign of about six years, [29](#) equalled the fame of ancient heroes, and restored peace and order to every province of the Roman world. The dangerous frontier of Rhætia he so firmly secured, that he left it without the suspicion of an enemy. He broke the wandering power of the Sarmatian tribes, and by the terror of his arms compelled those barbarians to relinquish their spoil. The Gothic nation courted the alliance of so warlike an emperor. [30](#) He attacked the Isaurians in their mountains, besieged and took several of their strongest castles, [31](#) and flattered himself that he had forever suppressed a domestic foe, whose independence so deeply wounded the majesty of the empire. The troubles excited by the usurper Firmus in the Upper Egypt had never been perfectly appeased, and the cities of Ptolemais and Coptos, fortified by the alliance of the Blemmyes, still maintained an obscure rebellion. The chastisement of those cities, and of their auxiliaries the savages of the South, is said to have alarmed the court of Persia, [32](#) and the Great King sued in vain for the friendship of Probus. Most of the exploits which distinguished his reign were achieved by the personal valor and conduct of the emperor, insomuch that the writer of his life expresses some amazement how, in so short a time, a single man could be present in so many distant wars. The remaining actions he intrusted to the care of his lieutenants, the judicious choice of whom forms no inconsiderable part of his glory. Carus, Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius, Galerius, Asclepiodatus, Annibalianus, and a crowd of other chiefs, who afterwards ascended or supported the throne, were trained to arms in the severe school of Aurelian and Probus. [33](#)

[29](#) [\(return\)](#)

[The date and duration of the reign of Probus are very correctly ascertained by Cardinal Noris in his learned work, *De Epochis Syro-Macedonum*, p. 96—105. A passage of Eusebius connects the second year of Probus with the æras of several of the Syrian cities.]

[30](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* p. 239.]

[31](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. i. p. 62—65) tells us a very long and trifling story of Lycius, the Isaurian robber.]

[32](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Zosim. l. i. p. 65. Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* p. 239, 240. But it seems incredible that the defeat of the savages of Æthiopia could affect the Persian monarch.]

[33](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Besides these well-known chiefs, several others are named by Vopiscus, (*Hist. August.* p. 241,) whose actions have not reached knowledge.]

But the most important service which Probus rendered to the republic was the deliverance of Gaul, and the recovery of seventy flourishing cities oppressed by the

barbarians of Germany, who, since the death of Aurelian, had ravaged that great province with impunity. [34](#) Among the various multitude of those fierce invaders we may distinguish, with some degree of clearness, three great armies, or rather nations, successively vanquished by the valor of Probus. He drove back the Franks into their morasses; a descriptive circumstance from whence we may infer, that the confederacy known by the manly appellation of *Free*, already occupied the flat maritime country, intersected and almost overflowed by the stagnating waters of the Rhine, and that several tribes of the Frisians and Batavians had acceded to their alliance. He vanquished the Burgundians, a considerable people of the Vandalic race. [341](#) They had wandered in quest of booty from the banks of the Oder to those of the Seine. They esteemed themselves sufficiently fortunate to purchase, by the restitution of all their booty, the permission of an undisturbed retreat. They attempted to elude that article of the treaty. Their punishment was immediate and terrible. [35](#) But of all the invaders of Gaul, the most formidable were the Lygians, a distant people, who reigned over a wide domain on the frontiers of Poland and Silesia. [36](#) In the Lygian nation, the Aarii held the first rank by their numbers and fierceness. “The Aarii” (it is thus that they are described by the energy of Tacitus) “study to improve by art and circumstances the innate terrors of their barbarism. Their shields are black, their bodies are painted black. They choose for the combat the darkest hour of the night. Their host advances, covered as it were with a funeral shade; [37](#) nor do they often find an enemy capable of sustaining so strange and infernal an aspect. Of all our senses, the eyes are the first vanquished in battle.” [38](#) Yet the arms and discipline of the Romans easily discomfited these horrid phantoms. The Lygii were defeated in a general engagement, and Semno, the most renowned of their chiefs, fell alive into the hands of Probus. That prudent emperor, unwilling to reduce a brave people to despair, granted them an honorable capitulation, and permitted them to return in safety to their native country. But the losses which they suffered in the march, the battle, and the retreat, broke the power of the nation: nor is the Lygian name ever repeated in the history either of Germany or of the empire. The deliverance of Gaul is reported to have cost the lives of four hundred thousand of the invaders; a work of labor to the Romans, and of expense to the emperor, who gave a piece of gold for the head of every barbarian. [39](#) But as the fame of warriors is built on the destruction of human kind, we may naturally suspect that the sanguinary account was multiplied by the avarice of the soldiers, and accepted without any very severe examination by the liberal vanity of Probus.

34

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Cæsars of Julian, and Hist. August. p. 238, 240, 241.]

341

[\(return\)](#)

[It was only under the emperors Diocletian and Maximian, that the Burgundians, in concert with the Alemanni, invaded the interior of Gaul; under the reign of Probus, they did no more than pass the river which separated them from the Roman

Empire: they were repelled. Gatterer presumes that this river was the Danube; a passage in Zosimus appears to me rather to indicate the Rhine. Zos. l. i. p. 37, edit H. Etienne, 1581.—G. On the origin of the Burgundians may be consulted Malte Brun, Geogr vi. p. 396, (edit. 1831,) who observes that all the remains of the Burgundian language indicate that they spoke a Gothic dialect.—M.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 62. Hist. August. p. 240. But the latter supposes the punishment inflicted with the consent of their kings: if so, it was partial, like the offence.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[See Cluver. Germania Antiqua, l. iii. Ptolemy places in their country the city of Calisia, probably Calish in Silesia. * Note: Luden (vol ii. 501) supposes that these have been erroneously identified with the Lygii of Tacitus. Perhaps one fertile source of mistakes has been, that the Romans have turned appellations into national names. Malte Brun observes of the Lygii, “that their name appears Sclavonian, and signifies ‘inhabitants of plains;’ they are probably the Lieches of the middle ages, and the ancestors of the Poles. We find among the Arii the worship of the two twin gods known in the Sclavian mythology.” Malte Brun, vol. i. p. 278, (edit. 1831.)—M. But compare Schafarik, Slawische Alterthumer, 1, p. 406. They were of German or Keltish descent, occupying the Wendish (or Slavian) district, Luhy.—M. 1845.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[Feralis umbra, is the expression of Tacitus: it is surely a very bold one.]

38 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Germania, (c. 43.)]

39 [\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 238]

Since the expedition of Maximin, the Roman generals had confined their ambition to a defensive war against the nations of Germany, who perpetually pressed on the frontiers of the empire. The more daring Probus pursued his Gallic victories, passed the Rhine, and displayed his invincible eagles on the banks of the Elbe and the Neckar. He was fully convinced that nothing could reconcile the minds of the barbarians to peace, unless they experienced, in their own country, the calamities of war. Germany, exhausted by the ill success of the last emigration, was astonished by his presence. Nine of the most considerable princes repaired to his camp, and fell prostrate at his feet. Such a treaty was humbly received by the Germans, as it pleased the conqueror to dictate. He

exacted a strict restitution of the effects and captives which they had carried away from the provinces; and obliged their own magistrates to punish the more obstinate robbers who presumed to detain any part of the spoil. A considerable tribute of corn, cattle, and horses, the only wealth of barbarians, was reserved for the use of the garrisons which Probus established on the limits of their territory. He even entertained some thoughts of compelling the Germans to relinquish the exercise of arms, and to trust their differences to the justice, their safety to the power, of Rome. To accomplish these salutary ends, the constant residence of an Imperial governor, supported by a numerous army, was indispensably requisite. Probus therefore judged it more expedient to defer the execution of so great a design; which was indeed rather of specious than solid utility. [40](#) Had Germany been reduced into the state of a province, the Romans, with immense labor and expense, would have acquired only a more extensive boundary to defend against the fiercer and more active barbarians of Scythia.

40

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. 238, 239. Vopiscus quotes a letter from the emperor to the senate, in which he mentions his design of reducing Germany into a province.]

Instead of reducing the warlike natives of Germany to the condition of subjects, Probus contented himself with the humble expedient of raising a bulwark against their inroads. The country which now forms the circle of Swabia had been left desert in the age of Augustus by the emigration of its ancient inhabitants. [41](#) The fertility of the soil soon attracted a new colony from the adjacent provinces of Gaul. Crowds of adventurers, of a roving temper and of desperate fortunes, occupied the doubtful possession, and acknowledged, by the payment of tithes, the majesty of the empire. [42](#) To protect these new subjects, a line of frontier garrisons was gradually extended from the Rhine to the Danube. About the reign of Hadrian, when that mode of defence began to be practised, these garrisons were connected and covered by a strong intrenchment of trees and palisades. In the place of so rude a bulwark, the emperor Probus constructed a stone wall of a considerable height, and strengthened it by towers at convenient distances. From the neighborhood of Neustadt and Ratisbon on the Danube, it stretched across hills, valleys, rivers, and morasses, as far as Wimpfen on the Neckar, and at length terminated on the banks of the Rhine, after a winding course of near two hundred miles. [43](#) This important barrier, uniting the two mighty streams that protected the provinces of Europe, seemed to fill up the vacant space through which the barbarians, and particularly the Alemanni, could penetrate with the greatest facility into the heart of the empire. But the experience of the world, from China to Britain, has exposed the vain attempt of fortifying any extensive tract of country. [44](#) An active enemy, who can select and vary his points of attack, must, in the end, discover some feeble spot, or some unguarded moment. The strength, as well as the attention, of the defenders is divided; and such are the blind effects of terror on the firmest troops, that a line broken in a single place is almost instantly deserted. The fate

of the wall which Probus erected may confirm the general observation. Within a few years after his death, it was overthrown by the Alemanni. Its scattered ruins, universally ascribed to the power of the Dæmon, now serve only to excite the wonder of the Swabian peasant.

41 [\(return\)](#)

[Strabo, l. vii. According to Valleius Paterculus, (ii. 108,) Maroboduus led his Marcomanni into Bohemia; Cluverius (German. Antiq. iii. 8) proves that it was from Swabia.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[These settlers, from the payment of tithes, were denominated Decunates. Tacit. Germania, c. 29]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[See notes de l'Abbé de la Bleterie a la Germanie de Tacite, p. 183. His account of the wall is chiefly borrowed (as he says himself) from the Alsatia Illustrata of Schoepflin.]

44 [\(return\)](#)

[See Recherches sur les Chinois et les Egyptiens, tom. ii. p. 81—102. The anonymous author is well acquainted with the globe in general, and with Germany in particular: with regard to the latter, he quotes a work of M. Hanselman; but he seems to confound the wall of Probus, designed against the Alemanni, with the fortification of the Mattiaci, constructed in the neighborhood of Frankfort against the Catti. * Note: De Pauw is well known to have been the author of this work, as of the Recherches sur les Americains before quoted. The judgment of M. Remusat on this writer is in a very different, I fear a juster tone. Quand au lieu de rechercher, d'examiner, d'etudier, on se borne, comme cet ecrivain, a juger a prononcer, a decider, sans connoitre ni l'histoire. ni les langues, sans recourir aux sources, sans meme se douter de leur existence, on peut en imposer pendant quelque temps a des lecteurs prevenus ou peu instruits; mais le mepris qui ne manque guere de succeder a cet engouement fait bientot justice de ces assertions hazardees, et elles retombent dans l'oubli d'autant plus promptement, qu'elles ont ete posees avec plus de confiance. Sur les Langues Tartares, p. 231.—M.]

Among the useful conditions of peace imposed by Probus on the vanquished nations of Germany, was the obligation of supplying the Roman army with sixteen thousand recruits, the bravest and most robust of their youth. The emperor dispersed them through all the provinces, and distributed this dangerous reënforcement, in small bands of fifty

or sixty each, among the national troops; judiciously observing, that the aid which the republic derived from the barbarians should be felt but not seen. [45](#) Their aid was now become necessary. The feeble elegance of Italy and the internal provinces could no longer support the weight of arms. The hardy frontiers of the Rhine and Danube still produced minds and bodies equal to the labors of the camp; but a perpetual series of wars had gradually diminished their numbers. The infrequency of marriage, and the ruin of agriculture, affected the principles of population, and not only destroyed the strength of the present, but intercepted the hope of future, generations. The wisdom of Probus embraced a great and beneficial plan of replenishing the exhausted frontiers, by new colonies of captive or fugitive barbarians, on whom he bestowed lands, cattle, instruments of husbandry, and every encouragement that might engage them to educate a race of soldiers for the service of the republic. Into Britain, and most probably into Cambridgeshire, [46](#) he transported a considerable body of Vandals. The impossibility of an escape reconciled them to their situation, and in the subsequent troubles of that island, they approved themselves the most faithful servants of the state. [47](#) Great numbers of Franks and Gepidæ were settled on the banks of the Danube and the Rhine. A hundred thousand Bastarnæ, expelled from their own country, cheerfully accepted an establishment in Thrace, and soon imbibed the manners and sentiments of Roman subjects. [48](#) But the expectations of Probus were too often disappointed. The impatience and idleness of the barbarians could ill brook the slow labors of agriculture. Their unconquerable love of freedom, rising against despotism, provoked them into hasty rebellions, alike fatal to themselves and to the provinces; [49](#) nor could these artificial supplies, however repeated by succeeding emperors, restore the important limit of Gaul and Illyricum to its ancient and native vigor.

45 [\(return\)](#)

[He distributed about fifty or sixty barbarians to a Numerus, as it was then called, a corps with whose established number we are not exactly acquainted.]

46 [\(return\)](#)

[Camden's Britannia, Introduction, p. 136; but he speaks from a very doubtful conjecture.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. i. p. 62. According to Vopiscus, another body of Vandals was less faithful.]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[Footnote 48: Hist. August. p. 240. They were probably expelled by the Goths. Zosim. l. i. p. 66.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 240.]

Of all the barbarians who abandoned their new settlements, and disturbed the public tranquillity, a very small number returned to their own country. For a short season they might wander in arms through the empire; but in the end they were surely destroyed by the power of a warlike emperor. The successful rashness of a party of Franks was

attended, however, with such memorable consequences, that it ought not to be passed unnoticed. They had been established by Probus, on the sea-coast of Pontus, with a view of strengthening the frontier against the inroads of the Alani. A fleet stationed in one of the harbors of the Euxine fell into the hands of the Franks; and they resolved, through unknown seas, to explore their way from the mouth of the Phasis to that of the Rhine. They easily escaped through the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, and cruising along the Mediterranean, indulged their appetite for revenge and plunder by frequent descents on the unsuspecting shores of Asia, Greece, and Africa. The opulent city of Syracuse, in whose port the navies of Athens and Carthage had formerly been sunk, was sacked by a handful of barbarians, who massacred the greatest part of the trembling inhabitants. From the island of Sicily the Franks proceeded to the columns of Hercules, trusted themselves to the ocean, coasted round Spain and Gaul, and steering their triumphant course through the British Channel, at length finished their surprising voyage, by landing in safety on the Batavian or Frisian shores. [50](#) The example of their success, instructing their countrymen to conceive the advantages and to despise the dangers of the sea, pointed out to their enterprising spirit a new road to wealth and glory.

50

[\(return\)](#)

[Panegy. Vet. v. 18. Zosimus, l. i. p. 66.]

Notwithstanding the vigilance and activity of Probus, it was almost impossible that he could at once contain in obedience every part of his wide-extended dominions. The barbarians, who broke their chains, had seized the favorable opportunity of a domestic war. When the emperor marched to the relief of Gaul, he devolved the command of the East on Saturninus. That general, a man of merit and experience, was driven into rebellion by the absence of his sovereign, the levity of the Alexandrian people, the pressing instances of his friends, and his own fears; but from the moment of his elevation, he never entertained a hope of empire, or even of life. “Alas!” he said, “the republic has lost a useful servant, and the rashness of an hour has destroyed the services of many years. You know not,” continued he, “the misery of sovereign power; a sword is perpetually suspended over our head. We dread our very guards, we distrust our companions. The choice of action or of repose is no longer in our disposition, nor is there any age, or character, or conduct, that can protect us from the censure of envy. In thus exalting me to the throne, you have doomed me to a life of cares, and to an untimely fate. The only consolation which remains is the assurance that I shall not fall alone.” [51](#) But as the former part of his prediction was verified by the victory, so the latter was disappointed by the clemency, of Probus. That amiable prince attempted even to save the unhappy Saturninus from the fury of the soldiers. He had more than once solicited the usurper himself to place some confidence in the mercy of a sovereign who so highly esteemed his character, that he had punished, as a malicious informer, the first who related the improbable news of his disaffection. [52](#) Saturninus might, perhaps, have embraced the generous offer, had he not been restrained by the obstinate distrust

of his adherents. Their guilt was deeper, and their hopes more sanguine, than those of their experienced leader.

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 245, 246. The unfortunate orator had studied rhetoric at Carthage; and was therefore more probably a Moor (Zosim. l. i. p. 60) than a Gaul, as Vopiscus calls him.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Zonaras, l. xii. p. 638.]

The revolt of Saturninus was scarcely extinguished in the East, before new troubles were excited in the West, by the rebellion of Bonosus and Proculus, in Gaul. The most distinguished merit of those two officers was their respective prowess, of the one in the combats of Bacchus, of the other in those of Venus, [53](#) yet neither of them was destitute of courage and capacity, and both sustained, with honor, the august character which the fear of punishment had engaged them to assume, till they sunk at length beneath the superior genius of Probus. He used the victory with his accustomed moderation, and spared the fortune, as well as the lives of their innocent families. [54](#)

53

[\(return\)](#)

[A very surprising instance is recorded of the prowess of Proculus. He had taken one hundred Sarmatian virgins. The rest of the story he must relate in his own language: "Ex his una nocte decem inivi; omnes tamen, quod in me erat, mulieres intra dies quindecim reddidi." Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 246.]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[Proculus, who was a native of Albengue, on the Genoese coast armed two thousand of his own slaves. His riches were great, but they were acquired by robbery. It was afterwards a saying of his family, sibi non placere esse vel principes vel latrones. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 247.]

The arms of Probus had now suppressed all the foreign and domestic enemies of the state. His mild but steady administration confirmed the re-ëstablishment of the public tranquillity; nor was there left in the provinces a hostile barbarian, a tyrant, or even a robber, to revive the memory of past disorders. It was time that the emperor should revisit Rome, and celebrate his own glory and the general happiness. The triumph due to the valor of Probus was conducted with a magnificence suitable to his fortune, and the people, who had so lately admired the trophies of Aurelian, gazed with equal pleasure on those of his heroic successor. [55](#) We cannot, on this occasion, forget the desperate courage of about fourscore gladiators, reserved, with near six hundred others, for the inhuman sports of the amphitheatre. Disdaining to shed their blood for the amusement of the populace, they killed their keepers, broke from the place of their confinement, and filled the streets of Rome with blood and confusion. After an obstinate

resistance, they were overpowered and cut in pieces by the regular forces; but they obtained at least an honorable death, and the satisfaction of a just revenge. [56](#)

55

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 240.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosim. l. i. p. 66.]

The military discipline which reigned in the camps of Probus was less cruel than that of Aurelian, but it was equally rigid and exact. The latter had punished the irregularities of the soldiers with unrelenting severity, the former prevented them by employing the legions in constant and useful labors. When Probus commanded in Egypt, he executed many considerable works for the splendor and benefit of that rich country. The navigation of the Nile, so important to Rome itself, was improved; and temples, buildings, porticos, and palaces, were constructed by the hands of the soldiers, who acted by turns as architects, as engineers, and as husbandmen. [57](#) It was reported of Hannibal, that, in order to preserve his troops from the dangerous temptations of idleness, he had obliged them to form large plantations of olive-trees along the coast of Africa. [58](#) From a similar principle, Probus exercised his legions in covering with rich vineyards the hills of Gaul and Pannonia, and two considerable spots are described, which were entirely dug and planted by military labor. [59](#) One of these, known under the name of Mount Almo, was situated near Sirmium, the country where Probus was born, for which he ever retained a partial affection, and whose gratitude he endeavored to secure, by converting into tillage a large and unhealthy tract of marshy ground. An army thus employed constituted perhaps the most useful, as well as the bravest, portion of Roman subjects.

57

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 236.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurel. Victor. in Prob. But the policy of Hannibal, unnoticed by any more ancient writer, is irreconcilable with the history of his life. He left Africa when he was nine years old, returned to it when he was forty-five, and immediately lost his army in the decisive battle of Zama. Livius, xxx. 37.]

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 240. Eutrop. ix. 17. Aurel. Victor. in Prob. Victor Junior. He revoked the prohibition of Domitian, and granted a general permission of planting vines to the Gauls, the Britons, and the Pannonians.]

But in the prosecution of a favorite scheme, the best of men, satisfied with the rectitude of their intentions, are subject to forget the bounds of moderation; nor did Probus himself sufficiently consult the patience and disposition of his fierce legionaries. [60](#) The dangers of the military profession seem only to be compensated by

a life of pleasure and idleness; but if the duties of the soldier are incessantly aggravated by the labors of the peasant, he will at last sink under the intolerable burden, or shake it off with indignation. The imprudence of Probus is said to have inflamed the discontent of his troops. More attentive to the interests of mankind than to those of the army, he expressed the vain hope, that, by the establishment of universal peace, he should soon abolish the necessity of a standing and mercenary force. [61](#) The unguarded expression proved fatal to him. In one of the hottest days of summer, as he severely urged the unwholesome labor of draining the marshes of Sirmium, the soldiers, impatient of fatigue, on a sudden threw down their tools, grasped their arms, and broke out into a furious mutiny. The emperor, conscious of his danger, took refuge in a lofty tower, constructed for the purpose of surveying the progress of the work. [62](#) The tower was instantly forced, and a thousand swords were plunged at once into the bosom of the unfortunate Probus. The rage of the troops subsided as soon as it had been gratified. They then lamented their fatal rashness, forgot the severity of the emperor whom they had massacred, and hastened to perpetuate, by an honorable monument, the memory of his virtues and victories. [63](#)

60 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian bestows a severe, and indeed excessive, censure on the rigor of Probus, who, as he thinks, almost deserved his fate.]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 241. He lavishes on this idle hope a large stock of very foolish eloquence.]

62 [\(return\)](#)

[Turris ferrata. It seems to have been a movable tower, and cased with iron.]

63 [\(return\)](#)

[Probus, et vere probus situs est; Victor omnium gentium Barbararum; victor etiam tyrannorum.]

When the legions had indulged their grief and repentance for the death of Probus, their unanimous consent declared Carus, his Prætorian præfect, the most deserving of the Imperial throne. Every circumstance that relates to this prince appears of a mixed and doubtful nature. He gloried in the title of Roman Citizen; and affected to compare the purity of *his* blood with the foreign and even barbarous origin of the preceding emperors; yet the most inquisitive of his contemporaries, very far from admitting his claim, have variously deduced his own birth, or that of his parents, from Illyricum, from Gaul, or from Africa. [64](#) Though a soldier, he had received a learned education; though a senator, he was invested with the first dignity of the army; and in an age when the civil and military professions began to be irrecoverably separated from each other, they were united in the person of Carus. Notwithstanding the severe justice which he exercised against the assassins of Probus, to whose favor and esteem he was highly indebted, he could not escape the suspicion of being accessory to a deed from whence

he derived the principal advantage. He enjoyed, at least before his elevation, an acknowledged character of virtue and abilities; [65](#) but his austere temper insensibly degenerated into moroseness and cruelty; and the imperfect writers of his life almost hesitate whether they shall not rank him in the number of Roman tyrants. [66](#) When Carus assumed the purple, he was about sixty years of age, and his two sons, Carinus and Numerian had already attained the season of manhood. [67](#)

64 [\(return\)](#)

[Yet all this may be conciliated. He was born at Narbonne in Illyricum, confounded by Eutropius with the more famous city of that name in Gaul. His father might be an African, and his mother a noble Roman. Carus himself was educated in the capital. See Scaliger Animadversion. ad Euseb. Chron. p. 241.]

65 [\(return\)](#)

[Probus had requested of the senate an equestrian statue and a marble palace, at the public expense, as a just recompense of the singular merit of Carus. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 249.]

66 [\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 242, 249. Julian excludes the emperor Carus and both his sons from the banquet of the Cæsars.]

67 [\(return\)](#)

[John Malala, tom. i. p. 401. But the authority of that ignorant Greek is very slight. He ridiculously derives from Carus the city of Carrhæ, and the province of Caria, the latter of which is mentioned by Homer.]

The authority of the senate expired with Probus; nor was the repentance of the soldiers displayed by the same dutiful regard for the civil power, which they had testified after the unfortunate death of Aurelian. The election of Carus was decided without expecting the approbation of the senate, and the new emperor contented himself with announcing, in a cold and stately epistle, that he had ascended the vacant throne. [68](#) A behavior so very opposite to that of his amiable predecessor afforded no favorable presage of the new reign: and the Romans, deprived of power and freedom, asserted their privilege of licentious murmurs. [69](#) The voice of congratulation and flattery was not, however, silent; and we may still peruse, with pleasure and contempt, an eclogue, which was composed on the accession of the emperor Carus. Two shepherds, avoiding the noontide heat, retire into the cave of Faunus. On a spreading beech they discover some recent characters. The rural deity had described, in prophetic verses, the felicity promised to the empire under the reign of so great a prince. Faunus hails the approach of that hero, who, receiving on his shoulders the sinking weight of the Roman world, shall extinguish war and faction, and once again restore the innocence and security of the golden age. [70](#)

- 68 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 249. Carus congratulated the senate, that one of their own order was made emperor.]
- 69 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 242.]
- 70 [\(return\)](#)
[See the first eclogue of Calphurnius. The design of it is preferred by Fontenelle to that of Virgil's Pollio. See tom. iii. p. 148.]

It is more than probable, that these elegant trifles never reached the ears of a veteran general, who, with the consent of the legions, was preparing to execute the long-suspended design of the Persian war. Before his departure for this distant expedition, Carus conferred on his two sons, Carinus and Numerian, the title of Cæsar, and investing the former with almost an equal share of the Imperial power, directed the young prince first to suppress some troubles which had arisen in Gaul, and afterwards to fix the seat of his residence at Rome, and to assume the government of the Western provinces. [71](#) The safety of Illyricum was confirmed by a memorable defeat of the Sarmatians; sixteen thousand of those barbarians remained on the field of battle, and the number of captives amounted to twenty thousand. The old emperor, animated with the fame and prospect of victory, pursued his march, in the midst of winter, through the countries of Thrace and Asia Minor, and at length, with his younger son, Numerian, arrived on the confines of the Persian monarchy. There, encamping on the summit of a lofty mountain, he pointed out to his troops the opulence and luxury of the enemy whom they were about to invade.

- 71 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 353. Eutropius, ix. 18. Pagi. Annal.]

The successor of Artaxerxes, [711](#) Varanes, or Bahram, though he had subdued the Segestans, one of the most warlike nations of Upper Asia, [72](#) was alarmed at the approach of the Romans, and endeavored to retard their progress by a negotiation of peace. [721](#)

His ambassadors entered the camp about sunset, at the time when the troops were satisfying their hunger with a frugal repast. The Persians expressed their desire of being introduced to the presence of the Roman emperor. They were at length conducted to a soldier, who was seated on the grass. A piece of stale bacon and a few hard peas composed his supper. A coarse woollen garment of purple was the only circumstance that announced his dignity. The conference was conducted with the same disregard of courtly elegance. Carus, taking off a cap which he wore to conceal his baldness, assured the ambassadors, that, unless their master acknowledged the superiority of Rome, he would speedily render Persia as naked of trees as his own head was destitute of hair. [73](#) Notwithstanding some traces of art and preparation, we may discover in this

scene the manners of Carus, and the severe simplicity which the martial princes, who succeeded Gallienus, had already restored in the Roman camps. The ministers of the Great King trembled and retired.

711 [\(return\)](#)
[Three monarchs had intervened, Sapor, (Shahpour,) Hormisdas, (Hormooz,) Varanes; Baharam the First.—M.]

72 [\(return\)](#)
[Agathias, l. iv. p. 135. We find one of his sayings in the Bibliotheque Orientale of M. d’Herbelot. “The definition of humanity includes all other virtues.”]

721 [\(return\)](#)
[The manner in which his life was saved by the Chief Pontiff from a conspiracy of his nobles, is as remarkable as his saying. “By the advice (of the Pontiff) all the nobles absented themselves from court. The king wandered through his palace alone. He saw no one; all was silence around. He became alarmed and distressed. At last the Chief Pontiff appeared, and bowed his head in apparent misery, but spoke not a word. The king entreated him to declare what had happened. The virtuous man boldly related all that had passed, and conjured Bahram, in the name of his glorious ancestors, to change his conduct and save himself from destruction. The king was much moved, professed himself most penitent, and said he was resolved his future life should prove his sincerity. The overjoyed High Priest, delighted at this success, made a signal, at which all the nobles and attendants were in an instant, as if by magic, in their usual places. The monarch now perceived that only one opinion prevailed on his past conduct. He repeated therefore to his nobles all he had said to the Chief Pontiff, and his future reign was unstained by cruelty or oppression.” Malcolm’s Persia,—M.]

73 [\(return\)](#)
[Synesius tells this story of Carinus; and it is much more natural to understand it of Carus, than (as Petavius and Tillemont choose to do) of Probus.]

The threats of Carus were not without effect. He ravaged Mesopotamia, cut in pieces whatever opposed his passage, made himself master of the great cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon, (which seemed to have surrendered without resistance,) and carried his victorious arms beyond the Tigris. [74](#) He had seized the favorable moment for an invasion. The Persian councils were distracted by domestic factions, and the greater part of their forces were detained on the frontiers of India. Rome and the East received

with transport the news of such important advantages. Flattery and hope painted, in the most lively colors, the fall of Persia, the conquest of Arabia, the submission of Egypt, and a lasting deliverance from the inroads of the Scythian nations. [75](#) But the reign of Carus was destined to expose the vanity of predictions. They were scarcely uttered before they were contradicted by his death; an event attended with such ambiguous circumstances, that it may be related in a letter from his own secretary to the præfect of the city. “Carus,” says he, “our dearest emperor, was confined by sickness to his bed, when a furious tempest arose in the camp. The darkness which overspread the sky was so thick, that we could no longer distinguish each other; and the incessant flashes of lightning took from us the knowledge of all that passed in the general confusion. Immediately after the most violent clap of thunder, we heard a sudden cry that the emperor was dead; and it soon appeared, that his chamberlains, in a rage of grief, had set fire to the royal pavilion; a circumstance which gave rise to the report that Carus was killed by lightning. But, as far as we have been able to investigate the truth, his death was the natural effect of his disorder.” [76](#)

74

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 250. Eutropius, ix. 18. The two Victors.]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[To the Persian victory of Carus I refer the dialogue of the Philopatris, which has so long been an object of dispute among the learned. But to explain and justify my opinion, would require a dissertation. Note: Niebuhr, in the new edition of the Byzantine Historians, (vol. x.) has boldly assigned the Philopatris to the tenth century, and to the reign of Nicephorus Phocas. An opinion so decisively pronounced by Niebuhr and favorably received by Hase, the learned editor of Leo Diaconus, commands respectful consideration. But the whole tone of the work appears to me altogether inconsistent with any period in which philosophy did not stand, as it were, on some ground of equality with Christianity. The doctrine of the Trinity is sarcastically introduced rather as the strange doctrine of a new religion, than the established tenet of a faith universally prevalent. The argument, adopted from Solanus, concerning the formula of the procession of the Holy Ghost, is utterly worthless, as it is a mere quotation in the words of the Gospel of St. John, xv. 26. The only argument of any value is the historic one, from the allusion to the recent violation of many virgins in the Island of Crete. But neither is the language of Niebuhr quite accurate, nor his reference to the Acroases of Theodosius satisfactory. When, then, could this occurrence take place? Why not in the devastation

of the island by the Gothic pirates, during the reign of Claudius. Hist. Aug. in Claud. p. 814. edit. Var. Lugd. Bat 1661.—M.]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 250. Yet Eutropius, Festus, Rufus, the two Victors, Jerome, Sidonius Apollinaris, Syncellus, and Zonaras, all ascribe the death of Carus to lightning.]

Chapter XII: Reigns Of Tacitus, Probus, Carus And His Sons.— Part III.

The vacancy of the throne was not productive of any disturbance. The ambition of the aspiring generals was checked by their natural fears, and young Numerian, with his absent brother Carinus, were unanimously acknowledged as Roman emperors.

The public expected that the successor of Carus would pursue his father's footsteps, and, without allowing the Persians to recover from their consternation, would advance sword in hand to the palaces of Susa and Ecbatana. [77](#) But the legions, however strong in numbers and discipline, were dismayed by the most abject superstition. Notwithstanding all the arts that were practised to disguise the manner of the late emperor's death, it was found impossible to remove the opinion of the multitude, and the power of opinion is irresistible. Places or persons struck with lightning were considered by the ancients with pious horror, as singularly devoted to the wrath of Heaven. [78](#) An oracle was remembered, which marked the River Tigris as the fatal boundary of the Roman arms. The troops, terrified with the fate of Carus and with their own danger, called aloud on young Numerian to obey the will of the gods, and to lead them away from this inauspicious scene of war. The feeble emperor was unable to subdue their obstinate prejudice, and the Persians wondered at the unexpected retreat of a victorious enemy. [79](#)

77

[\(return\)](#)

[See Nemesian. Cynegeticon, v. 71, &c.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[See Festus and his commentators on the word Scribonianum. Places struck by lightning were surrounded with a wall; things were buried with mysterious ceremony.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 250. Aurelius Victor seems to believe the prediction, and to approve the retreat.]

The intelligence of the mysterious fate of the late emperor was soon carried from the frontiers of Persia to Rome; and the senate, as well as the provinces, congratulated the accession of the sons of Carus. These fortunate youths were strangers, however, to that

conscious superiority, either of birth or of merit, which can alone render the possession of a throne easy, and, as it were, natural. Born and educated in a private station, the election of their father raised them at once to the rank of princes; and his death, which happened about sixteen months afterwards, left them the unexpected legacy of a vast empire. To sustain with temper this rapid elevation, an uncommon share of virtue and prudence was requisite; and Carinus, the elder of the brothers, was more than commonly deficient in those qualities. In the Gallic war he discovered some degree of personal courage; [80](#) but from the moment of his arrival at Rome, he abandoned himself to the luxury of the capital, and to the abuse of his fortune. He was soft, yet cruel; devoted to pleasure, but destitute of taste; and though exquisitely susceptible of vanity, indifferent to the public esteem. In the course of a few months, he successively married and divorced nine wives, most of whom he left pregnant; and notwithstanding this legal inconstancy, found time to indulge such a variety of irregular appetites, as brought dishonor on himself and on the noblest houses of Rome. He beheld with inveterate hatred all those who might remember his former obscurity, or censure his present conduct. He banished, or put to death, the friends and counsellors whom his father had placed about him, to guide his inexperienced youth; and he persecuted with the meanest revenge his school-fellows and companions who had not sufficiently respected the latent majesty of the emperor.

With the senators, Carinus affected a lofty and regal demeanor, frequently declaring, that he designed to distribute their estates among the populace of Rome. From the dregs of that populace he selected his favorites, and even his ministers. The palace, and even the Imperial table, were filled with singers, dancers, prostitutes, and all the various retinue of vice and folly. One of his doorkeepers [81](#) he intrusted with the government of the city. In the room of the Prætorian præfect, whom he put to death, Carinus substituted one of the ministers of his looser pleasures. Another, who possessed the same, or even a more infamous, title to favor, was invested with the consulship. A confidential secretary, who had acquired uncommon skill in the art of forgery, delivered the indolent emperor, with his own consent from the irksome duty of signing his name.

80 [\(return\)](#)
[Nemesian. Cynegeticon, v 69. He was a contemporary, but a poet.]

81 [\(return\)](#)
[Cancellarius. This word, so humble in its origin, has, by a singular fortune, risen into the title of the first great office of state in the monarchies of Europe. See Casaubon and Salmasius, ad Hist. August, p. 253.]

When the emperor Carus undertook the Persian war, he was induced, by motives of affection as well as policy, to secure the fortunes of his family, by leaving in the hands of his eldest son the armies and provinces of the West. The intelligence which he soon received of the conduct of Carinus filled him with shame and regret; nor had he

concealed his resolution of satisfying the republic by a severe act of justice, and of adopting, in the place of an unworthy son, the brave and virtuous Constantius, who at that time was governor of Dalmatia. But the elevation of Constantius was for a while deferred; and as soon as the father's death had released Carinus from the control of fear or decency, he displayed to the Romans the extravagancies of Elagabalus, aggravated by the cruelty of Domitian. [82](#)

82

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 253, 254. Eutropius, x. 19. Vic to Junior. The reign of Diocletian indeed was so long and prosperous, that it must have been very unfavorable to the reputation of Carinus.]

The only merit of the administration of Carinus that history could record, or poetry celebrate, was the uncommon splendor with which, in his own and his brother's name, he exhibited the Roman games of the theatre, the circus, and the amphitheatre. More than twenty years afterwards, when the courtiers of Diocletian represented to their frugal sovereign the fame and popularity of his munificent predecessor, he acknowledged that the reign of Carinus had indeed been a reign of pleasure. [83](#) But this vain prodigality, which the prudence of Diocletian might justly despise, was enjoyed with surprise and transport by the Roman people. The oldest of the citizens, recollecting the spectacles of former days, the triumphal pomp of Probus or Aurelian, and the secular games of the emperor Philip, acknowledged that they were all surpassed by the superior magnificence of Carinus. [84](#)

83

[\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 254. He calls him Carus, but the sense is sufficiently obvious, and the words were often confounded.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[See Calphurnius, Eclog. vii. 43. We may observe, that the spectacles of Probus were still recent, and that the poet is seconded by the historian.]

The spectacles of Carinus may therefore be best illustrated by the observation of some particulars, which history has condescended to relate concerning those of his predecessors. If we confine ourselves solely to the hunting of wild beasts, however we may censure the vanity of the design or the cruelty of the execution, we are obliged to confess that neither before nor since the time of the Romans so much art and expense have ever been lavished for the amusement of the people. [85](#) By the order of Probus, a great quantity of large trees, torn up by the roots, were transplanted into the midst of the circus. The spacious and shady forest was immediately filled with a thousand ostriches, a thousand stags, a thousand fallow deer, and a thousand wild boars; and all this variety of game was abandoned to the riotous impetuosity of the multitude. The tragedy of the succeeding day consisted in the massacre of a hundred lions, an equal number of lionesses, two hundred leopards, and three hundred bears. [86](#) The collection prepared by the younger Gordian for his triumph, and which his successor exhibited in

the secular games, was less remarkable by the number than by the singularity of the animals. Twenty zebras displayed their elegant forms and variegated beauty to the eyes of the Roman people. [87](#) Ten elks, and as many camelopards, the loftiest and most harmless creatures that wander over the plains of Sarmatia and Æthiopia, were contrasted with thirty African hyænas and ten Indian tigers, the most implacable savages of the torrid zone. The unoffending strength with which Nature has endowed the greater quadrupeds was admired in the rhinoceros, the hippopotamus of the Nile, [88](#) and a majestic troop of thirty-two elephants. [89](#) While the populace gazed with stupid wonder on the splendid show, the naturalist might indeed observe the figure and properties of so many different species, transported from every part of the ancient world into the amphitheatre of Rome. But this accidental benefit, which science might derive from folly, is surely insufficient to justify such a wanton abuse of the public riches. There occurs, however, a single instance in the first Punic war, in which the senate wisely connected this amusement of the multitude with the interest of the state. A considerable number of elephants, taken in the defeat of the Carthaginian army, were driven through the circus by a few slaves, armed only with blunt javelins. [90](#) The useful spectacle served to impress the Roman soldier with a just contempt for those unwieldy animals; and he no longer dreaded to encounter them in the ranks of war.

85 [\(return\)](#)

[The philosopher Montaigne (Essais, l. iii. 6) gives a very just and lively view of Roman magnificence in these spectacles.]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 240.]

87 [\(return\)](#)

[They are called Onagri; but the number is too inconsiderable for mere wild asses. Cuper (de Elephantis Exercitat. ii. 7) has proved from Oppian, Dion, and an anonymous Greek, that zebras had been seen at Rome. They were brought from some island of the ocean, perhaps Madagascar.]

88 [\(return\)](#)

[Carinus gave a hippopotamus, (see Calphurn. Eclog. vi. 66.) In the latter spectacles, I do not recollect any crocodiles, of which Augustus once exhibited thirty-six. Dion Cassius, l. lv. p. 781.]

89 [\(return\)](#)

[Capitolin. in Hist. August. p. 164, 165. We are not acquainted with the animals which he calls archeleontes; some read argoleontes others agrioleontes: both corrections are very nugatory]

90 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Hist. Natur. viii. 6, from the annals of Piso.]

The hunting or exhibition of wild beasts was conducted with a magnificence suitable to a people who styled themselves the masters of the world; nor was the edifice

appropriated to that entertainment less expressive of Roman greatness. Posterity admires, and will long admire, the awful remains of the amphitheatre of Titus, which so well deserved the epithet of Colossal. [91](#) It was a building of an elliptic figure, five hundred and sixty-four feet in length, and four hundred and sixty-seven in breadth, founded on fourscore arches, and rising, with four successive orders of architecture, to the height of one hundred and forty feet. [92](#) The outside of the edifice was encrusted with marble, and decorated with statues. The slopes of the vast concave, which formed the inside, were filled and surrounded with sixty or eighty rows of seats of marble likewise, covered with cushions, and capable of receiving with ease about fourscore thousand spectators. [93](#) Sixty-four *vomitories* (for by that name the doors were very aptly distinguished) poured forth the immense multitude; and the entrances, passages, and staircases were contrived with such exquisite skill, that each person, whether of the senatorial, the equestrian, or the plebeian order, arrived at his destined place without trouble or confusion. [94](#) Nothing was omitted, which, in any respect, could be subservient to the convenience and pleasure of the spectators.

They were protected from the sun and rain by an ample canopy, occasionally drawn over their heads. The air was continually refreshed by the playing of fountains, and profusely impregnated by the grateful scent of aromatics. In the centre of the edifice, the *arena*, or stage, was strewn with the finest sand, and successively assumed the most different forms. At one moment it seemed to rise out of the earth, like the garden of the Hesperides, and was afterwards broken into the rocks and caverns of Thrace. The subterraneous pipes conveyed an inexhaustible supply of water; and what had just before appeared a level plain, might be suddenly converted into a wide lake, covered with armed vessels, and replenished with the monsters of the deep. [95](#) In the decoration of these scenes, the Roman emperors displayed their wealth and liberality; and we read on various occasions that the whole furniture of the amphitheatre consisted either of silver, or of gold, or of amber. [96](#) The poet who describes the games of Carinus, in the character of a shepherd, attracted to the capital by the fame of their magnificence, affirms that the nets designed as a defence against the wild beasts were of gold wire; that the porticos were gilded; and that the *belt* or circle which divided the several ranks of spectators from each other was studded with a precious mosaic of beautiful stones. [97](#)

91 [\(return\)](#)
[See Maffei, Verona Illustrata, p. iv. l. i. c. 2.]

92 [\(return\)](#)
[Maffei, l. ii. c. 2. The height was very much exaggerated by the ancients. It reached almost to the heavens, according to Calphurnius, (Eclog. vii. 23,) and surpassed the ken of human sight, according to Ammianus Marcellinus (xvi. 10.) Yet how trifling to the great pyramid of Egypt, which rises 500 feet perpendicular]

93 [\(return\)](#)
[According to different copies of Victor, we read

77,000, or 87,000 spectators; but Maffei (l. ii. c. 12) finds room on the open seats for no more than 34,000. The remainder were contained in the upper covered galleries.]

94 [\(return\)](#)

[See Maffei, l. ii. c. 5—12. He treats the very difficult subject with all possible clearness, and like an architect, as well as an antiquarian.]

95 [\(return\)](#)

[Calphurn. Eclog vii. 64, 73. These lines are curious, and the whole eclogue has been of infinite use to Maffei. Calphurnius, as well as Martial, (see his first book,) was a poet; but when they described the amphitheatre, they both wrote from their own senses, and to those of the Romans.]

96 [\(return\)](#)

[Consult Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiii. 16, xxxvii. 11.]

97 [\(return\)](#)

[Balteus en gemmis, en inlita porticus auro
Certatim radiant, &c. Calphurn. vii.]

In the midst of this glittering pageantry, the emperor Carinus, secure of his fortune, enjoyed the acclamations of the people, the flattery of his courtiers, and the songs of the poets, who, for want of a more essential merit, were reduced to celebrate the divine graces of his person. [98](#) In the same hour, but at the distance of nine hundred miles from Rome, his brother expired; and a sudden revolution transferred into the hands of a stranger the sceptre of the house of Carus. [99](#)

98 [\(return\)](#)

[Et Martis vultus et Apollinis esse putavi, says Calphurnius; but John Malala, who had perhaps seen pictures of Carinus, describes him as thick, short, and white, tom. i. p. 403.]

99 [\(return\)](#)

[With regard to the time when these Roman games were celebrated, Scaliger, Salmasius, and Cuper have given themselves a great deal of trouble to perplex a very clear subject.]

The sons of Carus never saw each other after their father's death. The arrangements which their new situation required were probably deferred till the return of the younger brother to Rome, where a triumph was decreed to the young emperors for the glorious success of the Persian war. [100](#) It is uncertain whether they intended to divide between them the administration, or the provinces, of the empire; but it is very unlikely that their union would have proved of any long duration. The jealousy of power must have been inflamed by the opposition of characters. In the most corrupt of times, Carinus was unworthy to live: Numerian deserved to reign in a happier period. His affable manners and gentle virtues secured him, as soon as they became known, the regard and affections

of the public. He possessed the elegant accomplishments of a poet and orator, which dignify as well as adorn the humblest and the most exalted station. His eloquence, however it was applauded by the senate, was formed not so much on the model of Cicero, as on that of the modern declaimers; but in an age very far from being destitute of poetical merit, he contended for the prize with the most celebrated of his contemporaries, and still remained the friend of his rivals; a circumstance which evinces either the goodness of his heart, or the superiority of his genius. [101](#) But the talents of Numerian were rather of the contemplative than of the active kind. When his father's elevation reluctantly forced him from the shade of retirement, neither his temper nor his pursuits had qualified him for the command of armies. His constitution was destroyed by the hardships of the Persian war; and he had contracted, from the heat of the climate, [102](#) such a weakness in his eyes, as obliged him, in the course of a long retreat, to confine himself to the solitude and darkness of a tent or litter.

The administration of all affairs, civil as well as military, was devolved on Arrius Aper, the Prætorian præfect, who to the power of his important office added the honor of being father-in-law to Numerian. The Imperial pavilion was strictly guarded by his most trusty adherents; and during many days, Aper delivered to the army the supposed mandates of their invisible sovereign. [103](#)

100 [\(return\)](#)

[Nemesianus (in the Cynegeticon) seems to anticipate in his fancy that auspicious day.]

101 [\(return\)](#)

[He won all the crowns from Nemesianus, with whom he vied in didactic poetry. The senate erected a statue to the son of Carus, with a very ambiguous inscription, "To the most powerful of orators." See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 251.]

102 [\(return\)](#)

[A more natural cause, at least, than that assigned by Vopiscus, (Hist. August. p. 251,) incessantly weeping for his father's death.]

103 [\(return\)](#)

[In the Persian war, Aper was suspected of a design to betray Carus. Hist. August. p. 250.]

It was not till eight months after the death of Carus, that the Roman army, returning by slow marches from the banks of the Tigris, arrived on those of the Thracian Bosphorus. The legions halted at Chalcedon in Asia, while the court passed over to Heraclea, on the European side of the Propontis. [104](#) But a report soon circulated through the camp, at first in secret whispers, and at length in loud clamors, of the emperor's death, and of the presumption of his ambitious minister, who still exercised the sovereign power in the name of a prince who was no more. The impatience of the soldiers could not long support a state of suspense. With rude curiosity they broke into the Imperial tent, and discovered only the corpse of Numerian. [105](#) The gradual decline

of his health might have induced them to believe that his death was natural; but the concealment was interpreted as an evidence of guilt, and the measures which Aper had taken to secure his election became the immediate occasion of his ruin. Yet, even in the transport of their rage and grief, the troops observed a regular proceeding, which proves how firmly discipline had been reëstablished by the martial successors of Gallienus. A general assembly of the army was appointed to be held at Chalcedon, whither Aper was transported in chains, as a prisoner and a criminal. A vacant tribunal was erected in the midst of the camp, and the generals and tribunes formed a great military council. They soon announced to the multitude that their choice had fallen on Diocletian, commander of the domestics or body-guards, as the person the most capable of revenging and succeeding their beloved emperor. The future fortunes of the candidate depended on the chance or conduct of the present hour. Conscious that the station which he had filled exposed him to some suspicions, Diocletian ascended the tribunal, and raising his eyes towards the Sun, made a solemn profession of his own innocence, in the presence of that all-seeing Deity. [106](#) Then, assuming the tone of a sovereign and a judge, he commanded that Aper should be brought in chains to the foot of the tribunal. “This man,” said he, “is the murderer of Numerian;” and without giving him time to enter on a dangerous justification, drew his sword, and buried it in the breast of the unfortunate præfect. A charge supported by such decisive proof was admitted without contradiction, and the legions, with repeated acclamations, acknowledged the justice and authority of the emperor Diocletian. [107](#)

104 [\(return\)](#)
[We are obliged to the Alexandrian Chronicle, p. 274, for the knowledge of the time and place where Diocletian was elected emperor.]

105 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 251. Eutrop. ix. 88. Hieronym. in Chron. According to these judicious writers, the death of Numerian was discovered by the stench of his dead body. Could no aromatics be found in the Imperial household?]

106 [\(return\)](#)
[Aurel. Victor. Eutropius, ix. 20. Hieronym. in Chron.]

107 [\(return\)](#)
[Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 252. The reason why Diocletian killed Aper, (a wild boar,) was founded on a prophecy and a pun, as foolish as they are well known.]

Before we enter upon the memorable reign of that prince, it will be proper to punish and dismiss the unworthy brother of Numerian. Carinus possessed arms and treasures sufficient to support his legal title to the empire. But his personal vices overbalanced every advantage of birth and situation. The most faithful servants of the father despised the incapacity, and dreaded the cruel arrogance, of the son. The hearts of the people

were engaged in favor of his rival, and even the senate was inclined to prefer a usurper to a tyrant. The arts of Diocletian inflamed the general discontent; and the winter was employed in secret intrigues, and open preparations for a civil war. In the spring, the forces of the East and of the West encountered each other in the plains of Margus, a small city of Mæsia, in the neighborhood of the Danube. [108](#) The troops, so lately returned from the Persian war, had acquired their glory at the expense of health and numbers; nor were they in a condition to contend with the unexhausted strength of the legions of Europe. Their ranks were broken, and, for a moment, Diocletian despaired of the purple and of life. But the advantage which Carinus had obtained by the valor of his soldiers, he quickly lost by the infidelity of his officers. A tribune, whose wife he had seduced, seized the opportunity of revenge, and, by a single blow, extinguished civil discord in the blood of the adulterer. [109](#)

108

[\(return\)](#)

[Eutropius marks its situation very accurately; it was between the Mons Aureus and Viminacum. M. d'Anville (Geographic Ancienne, tom. i. p. 304) places Margus at Kastolatz in Servia, a little below Belgrade and Semendria. * Note: Kullieza—Eton Atlas—M.]

109

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. August. p. 254. Eutropius, ix. 20. Aurelius Victor et Epitome]

Chapter XIII: Reign Of Diocletian And His Three Associates.— Part I.

The Reign Of Diocletian And His Three Associates, Maximian, Galerius, And Constantius.—General Reestablishment Of Order And Tranquillity.—The Persian War, Victory, And Triumph.—The New Form Of Administration.—Abdication And Retirement Of Diocletian And Maximian.

As the reign of Diocletian was more illustrious than that of any of his predecessors, so was his birth more abject and obscure. The strong claims of merit and of violence had frequently superseded the ideal prerogatives of nobility; but a distinct line of separation was hitherto preserved between the free and the servile part of mankind. The parents of Diocletian had been slaves in the house of Anulinus, a Roman senator; nor was he himself distinguished by any other name than that which he derived from a small town in Dalmatia, from whence his mother deduced her origin. [1](#) It is, however, probable that his father obtained the freedom of the family, and that he soon acquired an office of scribe, which was commonly exercised by persons of his condition. [2](#) Favorable oracles, or rather the consciousness of superior merit, prompted

his aspiring son to pursue the profession of arms and the hopes of fortune; and it would be extremely curious to observe the gradation of arts and accidents which enabled him in the end to fulfil those oracles, and to display that merit to the world. Diocletian was successively promoted to the government of Mæsia, the honors of the consulship, and the important command of the guards of the palace. He distinguished his abilities in the Persian war; and after the death of Numerian, the slave, by the confession and judgment of his rivals, was declared the most worthy of the Imperial throne. The malice of religious zeal, whilst it arraigns the savage fierceness of his colleague Maximian, has affected to cast suspicions on the personal courage of the emperor Diocletian. ³ It would not be easy to persuade us of the cowardice of a soldier of fortune, who acquired and preserved the esteem of the legions as well as the favor of so many warlike princes. Yet even calumny is sagacious enough to discover and to attack the most vulnerable part. The valor of Diocletian was never found inadequate to his duty, or to the occasion; but he appears not to have possessed the daring and generous spirit of a hero, who courts danger and fame, disdains artifice, and boldly challenges the allegiance of his equals. His abilities were useful rather than splendid; a vigorous mind, improved by the experience and study of mankind; dexterity and application in business; a judicious mixture of liberality and economy, of mildness and rigor; profound dissimulation, under the disguise of military frankness; steadiness to pursue his ends; flexibility to vary his means; and, above all, the great art of submitting his own passions, as well as those of others, to the interest of his ambition, and of coloring his ambition with the most specious pretences of justice and public utility. Like Augustus, Diocletian may be considered as the founder of a new empire. Like the adopted son of Cæsar, he was distinguished as a statesman rather than as a warrior; nor did either of those princes employ force, whenever their purpose could be effected by policy.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[Eutrop. ix. 19. Victor in Epitome. The town seems to have been properly called Doclia, from a small tribe of Illyrians, (see Cellarius, Geograph. Antiqua, tom. i. p. 393;) and the original name of the fortunate slave was probably Docles; he first lengthened it to the Grecian harmony of Diocles, and at length to the Roman majesty of Diocletianus. He likewise assumed the Patrician name of Valerius and it is usually given him by Aurelius Victor.]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[See Dacier on the sixth satire of the second book of Horace Cornel. Nepos, 'n Vit. Eumen. c. 1.]

3

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius (or whoever was the author of the little treatise De Mortibus Persecutorum) accuses Diocletian of timidity in two places, c. 7. 8. In chap. 9 he says of him, "erat in omni tumultu meticulosus et animi disjectus."]

The victory of Diocletian was remarkable for its singular mildness. A people accustomed to applaud the clemency of the conqueror, if the usual punishments of death, exile, and confiscation, were inflicted with any degree of temper and equity, beheld, with the most pleasing astonishment, a civil war, the flames of which were extinguished in the field of battle. Diocletian received into his confidence Aristobulus, the principal minister of the house of Carus, respected the lives, the fortunes, and the dignity, of his adversaries, and even continued in their respective stations the greater number of the servants of Carinus. [4](#) It is not improbable that motives of prudence might assist the humanity of the artful Dalmatian; of these servants, many had purchased his favor by secret treachery; in others, he esteemed their grateful fidelity to an unfortunate master. The discerning judgment of Aurelian, of Probus, and of Carus, had filled the several departments of the state and army with officers of approved merit, whose removal would have injured the public service, without promoting the interest of his successor. Such a conduct, however, displayed to the Roman world the fairest prospect of the new reign, and the emperor affected to confirm this favorable prepossession, by declaring, that, among all the virtues of his predecessors, he was the most ambitious of imitating the humane philosophy of Marcus Antoninus. [5](#)

4

[\(return\)](#)

[In this encomium, Aurelius Victor seems to convey a just, though indirect, censure of the cruelty of Constantius. It appears from the Fasti, that Aristobulus remained præfect of the city, and that he ended with Diocletian the consulship which he had commenced with Carinus.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor styles Diocletian, “Parentum potius quam Dominum.” See Hist. August. p. 30.]

The first considerable action of his reign seemed to evince his sincerity as well as his moderation. After the example of Marcus, he gave himself a colleague in the person of Maximian, on whom he bestowed at first the title of Cæsar, and afterwards that of Augustus. [6](#) But the motives of his conduct, as well as the object of his choice, were of a very different nature from those of his admired predecessor. By investing a luxurious youth with the honors of the purple, Marcus had discharged a debt of private gratitude, at the expense, indeed, of the happiness of the state. By associating a friend and a fellow-soldier to the labors of government, Diocletian, in a time of public danger, provided for the defence both of the East and of the West. Maximian was born a peasant, and, like Aurelian, in the territory of Sirmium. Ignorant of letters, [7](#) careless of laws, the rusticity of his appearance and manners still betrayed in the most elevated fortune the meanness of his extraction. War was the only art which he professed. In a long course of service he had distinguished himself on every frontier of the empire; and though his military talents were formed to obey rather than to command, though, perhaps, he never attained the skill of a consummate general, he was capable, by his valor, constancy, and experience, of executing the most arduous undertakings. Nor were

the vices of Maximian less useful to his benefactor. Insensible to pity, and fearless of consequences, he was the ready instrument of every act of cruelty which the policy of that artful prince might at once suggest and disclaim. As soon as a bloody sacrifice had been offered to prudence or to revenge, Diocletian, by his seasonable intercession, saved the remaining few whom he had never designed to punish, gently censured the severity of his stern colleague, and enjoyed the comparison of a golden and an iron age, which was universally applied to their opposite maxims of government. Notwithstanding the difference of their characters, the two emperors maintained, on the throne, that friendship which they had contracted in a private station. The haughty, turbulent spirit of Maximian, so fatal, afterwards, to himself and to the public peace, was accustomed to respect the genius of Diocletian, and confessed the ascendant of reason over brutal violence. [8](#) From a motive either of pride or superstition, the two emperors assumed the titles, the one of Jovius, the other of Herculus. Whilst the motion of the world (such was the language of their venal orators) was maintained by the all-seeing wisdom of Jupiter, the invincible arm of Hercules purged the earth from monsters and tyrants. [9](#)

6

[\(return\)](#)

[The question of the time when Maximian received the honors of Cæsar and Augustus has divided modern critics, and given occasion to a great deal of learned wrangling. I have followed M. de Tillemont, (*Histoire des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 500-505,) who has weighed the several reasons and difficulties with his scrupulous accuracy. * Note: Eckbel concurs in this view, viii p. 15.—M.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[In an oration delivered before him, (*Panegyrs. Vet.* ii. 8,) Mamertinus expresses a doubt, whether his hero, in imitating the conduct of Hannibal and Scipio, had ever heard of their names. From thence we may fairly infer, that Maximian was more desirous of being considered as a soldier than as a man of letters; and it is in this manner that we can often translate the language of flattery into that of truth.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius de M. P. c. 8. Aurelius Victor. As among the Panegyrics, we find orations pronounced in praise of Maximian, and others which flatter his adversaries at his expense, we derive some knowledge from the contrast.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[See the second and third Panegyrics, particularly iii. 3, 10, 14 but it would be tedious to copy the diffuse and affected expressions of their false eloquence. With regard to the titles, consult Aurel.

But even the omnipotence of Jovius and Herculus was insufficient to sustain the weight of the public administration. The prudence of Diocletian discovered that the empire, assailed on every side by the barbarians, required on every side the presence of a great army, and of an emperor. With this view, he resolved once more to divide his unwieldy power, and with the inferior title of *Cæsars*, [901](#) to confer on two generals of approved merit an unequal share of the sovereign authority. [10](#) Galerius, surnamed Armentarius, from his original profession of a herdsman, and Constantius, who from his pale complexion had acquired the denomination of Chlorus, [11](#) were the two persons invested with the second honors of the Imperial purple. In describing the country, extraction, and manners of Herculus, we have already delineated those of Galerius, who was often, and not improperly, styled the younger Maximian, though, in many instances both of virtue and ability, he appears to have possessed a manifest superiority over the elder. The birth of Constantius was less obscure than that of his colleagues. Eutropius, his father, was one of the most considerable nobles of Dardania, and his mother was the niece of the emperor Claudius. [12](#) Although the youth of Constantius had been spent in arms, he was endowed with a mild and amiable disposition, and the popular voice had long since acknowledged him worthy of the rank which he at last attained. To strengthen the bonds of political, by those of domestic, union, each of the emperors assumed the character of a father to one of the *Cæsars*, Diocletian to Galerius, and Maximian to Constantius; and each, obliging them to repudiate their former wives, bestowed his daughter in marriage or his adopted son. [13](#) These four princes distributed among themselves the wide extent of the Roman empire. The defence of Gaul, Spain, [14](#) and Britain, was intrusted to Constantius: Galerius was stationed on the banks of the Danube, as the safeguard of the Illyrian provinces. Italy and Africa were considered as the department of Maximian; and for his peculiar portion, Diocletian reserved Thrace, Egypt, and the rich countries of Asia. Every one was sovereign with his own jurisdiction; but their united authority extended over the whole monarchy, and each of them was prepared to assist his colleagues with his counsels or presence. The *Cæsars*, in their exalted rank, revered the majesty of the emperors, and the three younger princes invariably acknowledged, by their gratitude and obedience, the common parent of their fortunes. The suspicious jealousy of power found not any place among them; and the singular happiness of their union has been compared to a chorus of music, whose harmony was regulated and maintained by the skilful hand of the first artist. [15](#)

- 10 [\(return\)](#)
[Aurelius Victor. Victor in Epitome. Eutrop. ix. 22.
Lactant de M. P. c. 8. Hieronym. in Chron.]
- 11 [\(return\)](#)
[It is only among the modern Greeks that Tillemont
can discover his appellation of Chlorus. Any
remarkable degree of paleness seems inconsistent
with the rubor mentioned in Panegyric, v. 19.]
- 12 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian, the grandson of Constantius, boasts that his
family was derived from the warlike Mæsians.
Misopogon, p. 348. The Dardanians dwelt on the
edge of Mæsia.]
- 13 [\(return\)](#)
[Galerius married Valeria, the daughter of
Diocletian; if we speak with strictness, Theodora,
the wife of Constantius, was daughter only to the
wife of Maximian. Spanheim, Dissertat, xi. 2.]
- 14 [\(return\)](#)
[This division agrees with that of the four
præfectures; yet there is some reason to doubt
whether Spain was not a province of Maximian. See
Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 517. * Note: According to
Aurelius Victor and other authorities, Thrace
belonged to the division of Galerius. See Tillemont,
iv. 36. But the laws of Diocletian are in general
dated in Illyria or Thrace.—M.]
- 15 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian in Cæsarib. p. 315. Spanheim's notes to the
French translation, p. 122.]

This important measure was not carried into execution till about six years after the association of Maximian, and that interval of time had not been destitute of memorable incidents. But we have preferred, for the sake of perspicuity, first to describe the more perfect form of Diocletian's government, and afterwards to relate the actions of his reign, following rather the natural order of the events, than the dates of a very doubtful chronology.

The first exploit of Maximian, though it is mentioned in a few words by our imperfect writers, deserves, from its singularity, to be recorded in a history of human manners. He suppressed the peasants of Gaul, who, under the appellation of Bagaudæ, [16](#) had risen in a general insurrection; very similar to those which in the fourteenth century successively afflicted both France and England. [17](#) It should seem that very many of those institutions, referred by an easy solution to the feudal system, are derived from the Celtic barbarians. When Cæsar subdued the Gauls, that great nation was already divided into three orders of men; the clergy, the nobility, and the common people. The first governed by superstition, the second by arms, but the third and last was not of any

weight or account in their public councils. It was very natural for the plebeians, oppressed by debt, or apprehensive of injuries, to implore the protection of some powerful chief, who acquired over their persons and property the same absolute right as, among the Greeks and Romans, a master exercised over his slaves. [18](#) The greatest part of the nation was gradually reduced into a state of servitude; compelled to perpetual labor on the estates of the Gallic nobles, and confined to the soil, either by the real weight of fetters, or by the no less cruel and forcible restraints of the laws. During the long series of troubles which agitated Gaul, from the reign of Gallienus to that of Diocletian, the condition of these servile peasants was peculiarly miserable; and they experienced at once the complicated tyranny of their masters, of the barbarians, of the soldiers, and of the officers of the revenue. [19](#)

16 [\(return\)](#)

[The general name of Bagaudæ (in the signification of rebels) continued till the fifth century in Gaul. Some critics derive it from a Celtic word Bagad, a tumultuous assembly. Scaliger ad Euseb. Du Cange Glossar. (Compare S. Turner, Anglo-Sax. History, i. 214.—M.)]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Chronique de Froissart, vol. i. c. 182, ii. 73, 79. The naivete of his story is lost in our best modern writers.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Cæsar de Bell. Gallic. vi. 13. Orgetorix, the Helvetian, could arm for his defence a body of ten thousand slaves.]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[Their oppression and misery are acknowledged by Eumenius (Panegy. vi. 8,) Gallias efferatas injuriis.]

Their patience was at last provoked into despair. On every side they rose in multitudes, armed with rustic weapons, and with irresistible fury. The ploughman became a foot soldier, the shepherd mounted on horseback, the deserted villages and open towns were abandoned to the flames, and the ravages of the peasants equalled those of the fiercest barbarians. [20](#) They asserted the natural rights of men, but they asserted those rights with the most savage cruelty. The Gallic nobles, justly dreading their revenge, either took refuge in the fortified cities, or fled from the wild scene of anarchy. The peasants reigned without control; and two of their most daring leaders had the folly and rashness to assume the Imperial ornaments. [21](#) Their power soon expired at the approach of the legions. The strength of union and discipline obtained an easy victory over a licentious and divided multitude. [22](#) A severe retaliation was inflicted on the peasants who were found in arms; the affrighted remnant returned to their respective habitations, and their unsuccessful effort for freedom served only to confirm their slavery. So strong and uniform is the current of popular passions, that we might almost

venture, from very scanty materials, to relate the particulars of this war; but we are not disposed to believe that the principal leaders, Ælianus and Amandus, were Christians, [23](#) or to insinuate, that the rebellion, as it happened in the time of Luther, was occasioned by the abuse of those benevolent principles of Christianity, which inculcate the natural freedom of mankind.

20 [\(return\)](#)
[Panegy. Vet. ii. 4. Aurelius Victor.]

21 [\(return\)](#)
[Ælianus and Amandus. We have medals coined by them Goltzius in Thes. R. A. p. 117, 121.]

22 [\(return\)](#)
[Levibus proeliis domuit. Eutrop. ix. 20.]

23 [\(return\)](#)
[The fact rests indeed on very slight authority, a life of St. Babolinus, which is probably of the seventh century. See Duchesne Scriptores Rer. Francicar. tom. i. p. 662.]

Maximian had no sooner recovered Gaul from the hands of the peasants, than he lost Britain by the usurpation of Carausius. Ever since the rash but successful enterprise of the Franks under the reign of Probus, their daring countrymen had constructed squadrons of light brigantines, in which they incessantly ravaged the provinces adjacent to the ocean. [24](#) To repel their desultory incursions, it was found necessary to create a naval power; and the judicious measure was prosecuted with prudence and vigor. Gessoriacum, or Boulogne, in the straits of the British Channel, was chosen by the emperor for the station of the Roman fleet; and the command of it was intrusted to Carausius, a Menapian of the meanest origin, [25](#) but who had long signalized his skill as a pilot, and his valor as a soldier. The integrity of the new admiral corresponded not with his abilities. When the German pirates sailed from their own harbors, he connived at their passage, but he diligently intercepted their return, and appropriated to his own use an ample share of the spoil which they had acquired. The wealth of Carausius was, on this occasion, very justly considered as an evidence of his guilt; and Maximian had already given orders for his death. But the crafty Menapian foresaw and prevented the severity of the emperor. By his liberality he had attached to his fortunes the fleet which he commanded, and secured the barbarians in his interest. From the port of Boulogne he sailed over to Britain, persuaded the legion, and the auxiliaries which guarded that island, to embrace his party, and boldly assuming, with the Imperial purple, the title of Augustus, defied the justice and the arms of his injured sovereign. [26](#)

24 [\(return\)](#)
[Aurelius Victor calls them Germans. Eutropius (ix. 21) gives them the name of Saxons. But Eutropius lived in the ensuing century, and seems to use the language of his own times.]

25

[\(return\)](#)

[The three expressions of Eutropius, Aurelius Victor, and Eumenius, “vilissime natus,” “Bataviæ alumnus,” and “Menapiæ civis,” give us a very doubtful account of the birth of Carausius. Dr. Stukely, however, (Hist. of Carausius, p. 62,) chooses to make him a native of St. David’s and a prince of the blood royal of Britain. The former idea he had found in Richard of Cirencester, p. 44. * Note: The Menapians were settled between the Scheldt and the Meuse, is the northern part of Brabant. D’Anville, Geogr. Anc. i. 93.—G.]

26

[\(return\)](#)

[Panegy. v. 12. Britain at this time was secure, and slightly guarded.]

When Britain was thus dismembered from the empire, its importance was sensibly felt, and its loss sincerely lamented. The Romans celebrated, and perhaps magnified, the extent of that noble island, provided on every side with convenient harbors; the temperature of the climate, and the fertility of the soil, alike adapted for the production of corn or of vines; the valuable minerals with which it abounded; its rich pastures covered with innumerable flocks, and its woods free from wild beasts or venomous serpents. Above all, they regretted the large amount of the revenue of Britain, whilst they confessed, that such a province well deserved to become the seat of an independent monarchy. [27](#) During the space of seven years it was possessed by Carausius; and fortune continued propitious to a rebellion supported with courage and ability. The British emperor defended the frontiers of his dominions against the Caledonians of the North, invited, from the continent, a great number of skilful artists, and displayed, on a variety of coins that are still extant, his taste and opulence. Born on the confines of the Franks, he courted the friendship of that formidable people, by the flattering imitation of their dress and manners. The bravest of their youth he enlisted among his land or sea forces; and, in return for their useful alliance, he communicated to the barbarians the dangerous knowledge of military and naval arts. Carausius still preserved the possession of Boulogne and the adjacent country. His fleets rode triumphant in the channel, commanded the mouths of the Seine and of the Rhine, ravaged the coasts of the ocean, and diffused beyond the columns of Hercules the terror of his name. Under his command, Britain, destined in a future age to obtain the empire of the sea, already assumed its natural and respectable station of a maritime power. [28](#)

27

[\(return\)](#)

[Panegy. Vet v 11, vii. 9. The orator Eumenius wished to exalt the glory of the hero (Constantius) with the importance of the conquest. Notwithstanding our laudable partiality for our native country, it is difficult to conceive, that, in the beginning of the fourth century England deserved

all these commendations. A century and a half before, it hardly paid its own establishment.]

28

[\(return\)](#)

[As a great number of medals of Carausius are still preserved, he is become a very favorite object of antiquarian curiosity, and every circumstance of his life and actions has been investigated with sagacious accuracy. Dr. Stukely, in particular, has devoted a large volume to the British emperor. I have used his materials, and rejected most of his fanciful conjectures.]

By seizing the fleet of Boulogne, Carausius had deprived his master of the means of pursuit and revenge. And when, after a vast expense of time and labor, a new armament was launched into the water, [29](#) the Imperial troops, unaccustomed to that element, were easily baffled and defeated by the veteran sailors of the usurper. This disappointed effort was soon productive of a treaty of peace. Diocletian and his colleague, who justly dreaded the enterprising spirit of Carausius, resigned to him the sovereignty of Britain, and reluctantly admitted their perfidious servant to a participation of the Imperial honors. [30](#) But the adoption of the two Cæsars restored new vigor to the Romans arms; and while the Rhine was guarded by the presence of Maximian, his brave associate Constantius assumed the conduct of the British war. His first enterprise was against the important place of Boulogne. A stupendous mole, raised across the entrance of the harbor, intercepted all hopes of relief. The town surrendered after an obstinate defence; and a considerable part of the naval strength of Carausius fell into the hands of the besiegers. During the three years which Constantius employed in preparing a fleet adequate to the conquest of Britain, he secured the coast of Gaul, invaded the country of the Franks, and deprived the usurper of the assistance of those powerful allies.

29

[\(return\)](#)

[When Mamertinus pronounced his first panegyric, the naval preparations of Maximian were completed; and the orator presaged an assured victory. His silence in the second panegyric might alone inform us that the expedition had not succeeded.]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and the medals, (Pax Augg.) inform us of this temporary reconciliation; though I will not presume (as Dr. Stukely has done, Medallic History of Carausius, p. 86, &c) to insert the identical articles of the treaty.]

Before the preparations were finished, Constantius received the intelligence of the tyrant's death, and it was considered as a sure presage of the approaching victory. The servants of Carausius imitated the example of treason which he had given. He was murdered by his first minister, Allectus, and the assassin succeeded to his power and to

his danger. But he possessed not equal abilities either to exercise the one or to repel the other.

He beheld, with anxious terror, the opposite shores of the continent already filled with arms, with troops, and with vessels; for Constantius had very prudently divided his forces, that he might likewise divide the attention and resistance of the enemy. The attack was at length made by the principal squadron, which, under the command of the præfect Asclepiodatus, an officer of distinguished merit, had been assembled in the north of the Seine. So imperfect in those times was the art of navigation, that orators have celebrated the daring courage of the Romans, who ventured to set sail with a side-wind, and on a stormy day. The weather proved favorable to their enterprise. Under the cover of a thick fog, they escaped the fleet of Allectus, which had been stationed off the Isle of Wight to receive them, landed in safety on some part of the western coast, and convinced the Britons, that a superiority of naval strength will not always protect their country from a foreign invasion. Asclepiodatus had no sooner disembarked the imperial troops, then he set fire to his ships; and, as the expedition proved fortunate, his heroic conduct was universally admired. The usurper had posted himself near London, to expect the formidable attack of Constantius, who commanded in person the fleet of Boulogne; but the descent of a new enemy required his immediate presence in the West. He performed this long march in so precipitate a manner, that he encountered the whole force of the præfect with a small body of harassed and disheartened troops. The engagement was soon terminated by the total defeat and death of Allectus; a single battle, as it has often happened, decided the fate of this great island; and when Constantius landed on the shores of Kent, he found them covered with obedient subjects. Their acclamations were loud and unanimous; and the virtues of the conqueror may induce us to believe, that they sincerely rejoiced in a revolution, which, after a separation of ten years, restored Britain to the body of the Roman empire. [31](#)

31

[\(return\)](#)

[With regard to the recovery of Britain, we obtain
a few hints from Aurelius Victor and Eutropius.]

Chapter XIII: Reign Of Diocletian And His Three Associates.— Part II.

Britain had none but domestic enemies to dread; and as long as the governors preserved their fidelity, and the troops their discipline, the incursions of the naked savages of Scotland or Ireland could never materially affect the safety of the province.

The peace of the continent, and the defence of the principal rivers which bounded the empire, were objects of far greater difficulty and importance. The policy of Diocletian, which inspired the councils of his associates, provided for the public tranquility, by encouraging a spirit of dissension among the barbarians, and by strengthening the

fortifications of the Roman limit. In the East he fixed a line of camps from Egypt to the Persian dominions, and for every camp, he instituted an adequate number of stationary troops, commanded by their respective officers, and supplied with every kind of arms, from the new arsenals which he had formed at Antioch, Emesa, and Damascus. [32](#) Nor was the precaution of the emperor less watchful against the well-known valor of the barbarians of Europe. From the mouth of the Rhine to that of the Danube, the ancient camps, towns, and citidels, were diligently reëstablished, and, in the most exposed places, new ones were skilfully constructed: the strictest vigilance was introduced among the garrisons of the frontier, and every expedient was practised that could render the long chain of fortifications firm and impenetrable. [33](#) A barrier so respectable was seldom violated, and the barbarians often turned against each other their disappointed rage. The Goths, the Vandals, the Gepidæ, the Burgundians, the Alemanni, wasted each other's strength by destructive hostilities: and whosoever vanquished, they vanquished the enemies of Rome. The subjects of Diocletian enjoyed the bloody spectacle, and congratulated each other, that the mischiefs of civil war were now experienced only by the barbarians. [34](#)

32

[\(return\)](#)

[John Malala, in Chron, Antiochen. tom. i. p. 408, 409.]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosim. 1. i. p. 3. That partial historian seems to celebrate the vigilance of Diocletian with a design of exposing the negligence of Constantine; we may, however, listen to an orator: "Nam quid ego alarum et cohortium castra percenseam, toto Rheni et Istri et Euphraus limite restituta." Panegy. Vet. iv. 18.]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[Ruunt omnes in sanguinem suum populi, quibus ron contigillesse Romanis, obstinatæque feritatis poenas nunc sponte persolvunt. Panegy. Vet. iii. 16. Mamertinus illustrates the fact by the example of almost all the nations in the world.]

Notwithstanding the policy of Diocletian, it was impossible to maintain an equal and undisturbed tranquillity during a reign of twenty years, and along a frontier of many hundred miles. Sometimes the barbarians suspended their domestic animosities, and the relaxed vigilance of the garrisons sometimes gave a passage to their strength or dexterity. Whenever the provinces were invaded, Diocletian conducted himself with that calm dignity which he always affected or possessed; reserved his presence for such occasions as were worthy of his interposition, never exposed his person or reputation to any unnecessary danger, insured his success by every means that prudence could suggest, and displayed, with ostentation, the consequences of his victory. In wars of a more difficult nature, and more doubtful event, he employed the rough valor of Maximian; and that faithful soldier was content to ascribe his own victories to the wise

counsels and auspicious influence of his benefactor. But after the adoption of the two Cæsars, the emperors themselves, retiring to a less laborious scene of action, devolved on their adopted sons the defence of the Danube and of the Rhine. The vigilant Galerius was never reduced to the necessity of vanquishing an army of barbarians on the Roman territory. [35](#) The brave and active Constantius delivered Gaul from a very furious inroad of the Alemanni; and his victories of Langres and Vindonissa appear to have been actions of considerable danger and merit. As he traversed the open country with a feeble guard, he was encompassed on a sudden by the superior multitude of the enemy. He retreated with difficulty towards Langres; but, in the general consternation, the citizens refused to open their gates, and the wounded prince was drawn up the wall by the means of a rope. But, on the news of his distress, the Roman troops hastened from all sides to his relief, and before the evening he had satisfied his honor and revenge by the slaughter of six thousand Alemanni. [36](#) From the monuments of those times, the obscure traces of several other victories over the barbarians of Sarmatia and Germany might possibly be collected; but the tedious search would not be rewarded either with amusement or with instruction.

35

[\(return\)](#)

[He complained, though not with the strictest truth, “Jam fluxisse annos quindecim in quibus, in Illyrico, ad ripam Danubii relegatus cum gentibus barbaris luctaret.” Lactant. de M. P. c. 18.]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[In the Greek text of Eusebius, we read six thousand, a number which I have preferred to the sixty thousand of Jerome, Orosius Eutropius, and his Greek translator Pæanius.]

The conduct which the emperor Probus had adopted in the disposal of the vanquished was imitated by Diocletian and his associates. The captive barbarians, exchanging death for slavery, were distributed among the provincials, and assigned to those districts (in Gaul, the territories of Amiens, Beauvais, Cambrai, Treves, Langres, and Troyes, are particularly specified) [37](#) which had been depopulated by the calamities of war. They were usefully employed as shepherds and husbandmen, but were denied the exercise of arms, except when it was found expedient to enroll them in the military service. Nor did the emperors refuse the property of lands, with a less servile tenure, to such of the barbarians as solicited the protection of Rome. They granted a settlement to several colonies of the Carpi, the Bastarnæ, and the Sarmatians; and, by a dangerous indulgence, permitted them in some measure to retain their national manners and independence. [38](#) Among the provincials, it was a subject of flattering exultation, that the barbarian, so lately an object of terror, now cultivated their lands, drove their cattle to the neighboring fair, and contributed by his labor to the public plenty. They congratulated their masters on the powerful accession of subjects and soldiers; but they forgot to observe, that multitudes of secret enemies, insolent from favor, or desperate from oppression, were introduced into the heart of the empire. [39](#)

37 [\(return\)](#)

[Panegy. Vet. vii. 21.]

38 [\(return\)](#)

[There was a settlement of the Sarmatians in the neighborhood of Treves, which seems to have been deserted by those lazy barbarians. Ausonius speaks of them in his Mosella:— “Unde iter ingrediens nemorosa per avia solum, Et nulla humani spectans vestigia cultus; Arvaque Sauromatum nuper metata colonis.”]

39 [\(return\)](#)

[There was a town of the Carpi in the Lower Mæsia. See the rhetorical exultation of Eumenius.]

While the Cæsars exercised their valor on the banks of the Rhine and Danube, the presence of the emperors was required on the southern confines of the Roman world. From the Nile to Mount Atlas, Africa was in arms. A confederacy of five Moorish nations issued from their deserts to invade the peaceful provinces. [40](#) Julian had assumed the purple at Carthage. [41](#) Achilleus at Alexandria, and even the Blemmyes, renewed, or rather continued, their incursions into the Upper Egypt. Scarcely any circumstances have been preserved of the exploits of Maximian in the western parts of Africa; but it appears, by the event, that the progress of his arms was rapid and decisive, that he vanquished the fiercest barbarians of Mauritania, and that he removed them from the mountains, whose inaccessible strength had inspired their inhabitants with a lawless confidence, and habituated them to a life of rapine and violence. [42](#) Diocletian, on his side, opened the campaign in Egypt by the siege of Alexandria, cut off the aqueducts which conveyed the waters of the Nile into every quarter of that immense city, [43](#) and rendering his camp impregnable to the sallies of the besieged multitude, he pushed his reiterated attacks with caution and vigor. After a siege of eight months, Alexandria, wasted by the sword and by fire, implored the clemency of the conqueror, but it experienced the full extent of his severity. Many thousands of the citizens perished in a promiscuous slaughter, and there were few obnoxious persons in Egypt who escaped a sentence either of death or at least of exile. [44](#) The fate of Busiris and of Coptos was still more melancholy than that of Alexandria: those proud cities, the former distinguished by its antiquity, the latter enriched by the passage of the Indian trade, were utterly destroyed by the arms and by the severe order of Diocletian. [45](#) The character of the Egyptian nation, insensible to kindness, but extremely susceptible of fear, could alone justify this excessive rigor. The seditions of Alexandria had often affected the tranquillity and subsistence of Rome itself. Since the usurpation of Firmus, the province of Upper Egypt, incessantly relapsing into rebellion, had embraced the alliance of the savages of Æthiopia. The number of the Blemmyes, scattered between the Island of Meroe and the Red Sea, was very inconsiderable, their disposition was unwarlike, their weapons rude and inoffensive. [46](#) Yet in the public disorders, these barbarians, whom antiquity, shocked with the deformity of their figure, had almost excluded from the

human species, presumed to rank themselves among the enemies of Rome. [47](#) Such had been the unworthy allies of the Egyptians; and while the attention of the state was engaged in more serious wars, their vexations inroads might again harass the repose of the province. With a view of opposing to the Blemmyes a suitable adversary, Diocletian persuaded the Nobataë, or people of Nubia, to remove from their ancient habitations in the deserts of Libya, and resigned to them an extensive but unprofitable territory above Syene and the cataracts of the Nile, with the stipulation, that they should ever respect and guard the frontier of the empire. The treaty long subsisted; and till the establishment of Christianity introduced stricter notions of religious worship, it was annually ratified by a solemn sacrifice in the isle of Elephantine, in which the Romans, as well as the barbarians, adored the same visible or invisible powers of the universe. [48](#)

- 40 [\(return\)](#)
[Scaliger (Animadvers. ad Euseb. p. 243) decides, in his usual manner, that the Quinque gentiani, or five African nations, were the five great cities, the Pentapolis of the inoffensive province of Cyrene.]
- 41 [\(return\)](#)
[After his defeat, Julian stabbed himself with a dagger, and immediately leaped into the flames. Victor in Epitome.]
- 42 [\(return\)](#)
[Tu ferocissimos Mauritaniæ populos inaccessis montium jugis et naturali munitione fidentes, expugnasti, recepisti, transtulisti. Panegy. Vet. vi. 8.]
- 43 [\(return\)](#)
[See the description of Alexandria, in Hirtius de Bel. Alexandrin c. 5.]
- 44 [\(return\)](#)
[Eutrop. ix. 24. Orosius, vii. 25. John Malala in Chron. Antioch. p. 409, 410. Yet Eumenius assures us, that Egypt was pacified by the clemency of Diocletian.]
- 45 [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius (in Chron.) places their destruction several years sooner and at a time when Egypt itself was in a state of rebellion against the Romans.]
- 46 [\(return\)](#)
[Strabo, l. xvii. p. 172. Pomponius Mela, l. i. c. 4. His words are curious: “Intra, si credere libet vix, homines magisque semiferi Ægipanes, et Blemmyes, et Satyri.”]
- 47 [\(return\)](#)
[Ausus sese inserere fortunæ et provocare arma Romana.]

[See Procopius de Bell. Persic. l. i. c. 19. Note: Compare, on the epoch of the final extirpation of the rites of Paganism from the Isle of Philæ, (Elephantine,) which subsisted till the edict of Theodosius, in the sixth century, a dissertation of M. Letronne, on certain Greek inscriptions. The dissertation contains some very interesting observations on the conduct and policy of Diocletian in Egypt. Mater pour l'Hist. du Christianisme en Egypte, Nubie et Abyssinie, Paris 1817—M.]

At the same time that Diocletian chastised the past crimes of the Egyptians, he provided for their future safety and happiness by many wise regulations, which were confirmed and enforced under the succeeding reigns. [49](#) One very remarkable edict which he published, instead of being condemned as the effect of jealous tyranny, deserves to be applauded as an act of prudence and humanity. He caused a diligent inquiry to be made “for all the ancient books which treated of the admirable art of making gold and silver, and without pity, committed them to the flames; apprehensive, as we are assumed, lest the opulence of the Egyptians should inspire them with confidence to rebel against the empire.” [50](#) But if Diocletian had been convinced of the reality of that valuable art, far from extinguishing the memory, he would have converted the operation of it to the benefit of the public revenue. It is much more likely, that his good sense discovered to him the folly of such magnificent pretensions, and that he was desirous of preserving the reason and fortunes of his subjects from the mischievous pursuit. It may be remarked, that these ancient books, so liberally ascribed to Pythagoras, to Solomon, or to Hermes, were the pious frauds of more recent adepts. The Greeks were inattentive either to the use or to the abuse of chemistry. In that immense register, where Pliny has deposited the discoveries, the arts, and the errors of mankind, there is not the least mention of the transmutation of metals; and the persecution of Diocletian is the first authentic event in the history of alchemy. The conquest of Egypt by the Arabs diffused that vain science over the globe. Congenial to the avarice of the human heart, it was studied in China as in Europe, with equal eagerness, and with equal success. The darkness of the middle ages insured a favorable reception to every tale of wonder, and the revival of learning gave new vigor to hope, and suggested more specious arts of deception. Philosophy, with the aid of experience, has at length banished the study of alchemy; and the present age, however desirous of riches, is content to seek them by the humbler means of commerce and industry. [51](#)

[He fixed the public allowance of corn, for the people of Alexandria, at two millions of medimni; about four hundred thousand quarters. Chron. Paschal. p. 276 Procop. Hist. Arcan. c. 26.]

50 [\(return\)](#)
[John Antioch, in Excerpt. Valesian. p. 834. Suidas
in Diocletian.]

51 [\(return\)](#)
[See a short history and confutation of Alchemy, in
the works of that philosophical compiler, La Mothe
le Vayer, tom. i. p. 32—353.]

The reduction of Egypt was immediately followed by the Persian war. It was reserved for the reign of Diocletian to vanquish that powerful nation, and to extort a confession from the successors of Artaxerxes, of the superior majesty of the Roman empire.

We have observed, under the reign of Valerian, that Armenia was subdued by the perfidy and the arms of the Persians, and that, after the assassination of Chosroes, his son Tiridates, the infant heir of the monarchy, was saved by the fidelity of his friends, and educated under the protection of the emperors. Tiridates derived from his exile such advantages as he could never have obtained on the throne of Armenia; the early knowledge of adversity, of mankind, and of the Roman discipline. He signalized his youth by deeds of valor, and displayed a matchless dexterity, as well as strength, in every martial exercise, and even in the less honorable contests of the Olympian games. [52](#) Those qualities were more nobly exerted in the defence of his benefactor Licinius. [53](#) That officer, in the sedition which occasioned the death of Probus, was exposed to the most imminent danger, and the enraged soldiers were forcing their way into his tent, when they were checked by the single arm of the Armenian prince. The gratitude of Tiridates contributed soon afterwards to his restoration. Licinius was in every station the friend and companion of Galerius, and the merit of Galerius, long before he was raised to the dignity of Cæsar, had been known and esteemed by Diocletian. In the third year of that emperor's reign Tiridates was invested with the kingdom of Armenia. The justice of the measure was not less evident than its expediency. It was time to rescue from the usurpation of the Persian monarch an important territory, which, since the reign of Nero, had been always granted under the protection of the empire to a younger branch of the house of Arsaces. [54](#)

52 [\(return\)](#)
[See the education and strength of Tiridates in the
Armenian history of Moses of Chorene, l. ii. c. 76.
He could seize two wild bulls by the horns, and
break them off with his hands.]

53 [\(return\)](#)
[If we give credit to the younger Victor, who
supposes that in the year 323 Licinius was only
sixty years of age, he could scarcely be the same
person as the patron of Tiridates; but we know from
much better authority, (Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. x.
c. 8,) that Licinius was at that time in the last period
of old age: sixteen years before, he is represented
with gray hairs, and as the contemporary of

Galerius. See Lactant. c. 32. Licinius was probably born about the year 250.]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[See the sixty-second and sixty-third books of Dion Cassius.]

When Tiridates appeared on the frontiers of Armenia, he was received with an unfeigned transport of joy and loyalty. During twenty-six years, the country had experienced the real and imaginary hardships of a foreign yoke. The Persian monarchs adorned their new conquest with magnificent buildings; but those monuments had been erected at the expense of the people, and were abhorred as badges of slavery. The apprehension of a revolt had inspired the most rigorous precautions: oppression had been aggravated by insult, and the consciousness of the public hatred had been productive of every measure that could render it still more implacable. We have already remarked the intolerant spirit of the Magian religion. The statues of the deified kings of Armenia, and the sacred images of the sun and moon, were broke in pieces by the zeal of the conqueror; and the perpetual fire of Ormuzd was kindled and preserved upon an altar erected on the summit of Mount Bagavan. [55](#) It was natural, that a people exasperated by so many injuries, should arm with zeal in the cause of their independence, their religion, and their hereditary sovereign. The torrent bore down every obstacle, and the Persian garrisons retreated before its fury. The nobles of Armenia flew to the standard of Tiridates, all alleging their past merit, offering their future service, and soliciting from the new king those honors and rewards from which they had been excluded with disdain under the foreign government. [56](#) The command of the army was bestowed on Artavasdes, whose father had saved the infancy of Tiridates, and whose family had been massacred for that generous action. The brother of Artavasdes obtained the government of a province. One of the first military dignities was conferred on the satrap Otas, a man of singular temperance and fortitude, who presented to the king his sister [57](#) and a considerable treasure, both of which, in a sequestered fortress, Otas had preserved from violation. Among the Armenian nobles appeared an ally, whose fortunes are too remarkable to pass unnoticed. His name was Mamgo, [571](#) his origin was Scythian, and the horde which acknowledge his authority had encamped a very few years before on the skirts of the Chinese empire, [58](#) which at that time extended as far as the neighborhood of Sogdiana. [59](#) Having incurred the displeasure of his master, Mamgo, with his followers, retired to the banks of the Oxus, and implored the protection of Sapor. The emperor of China claimed the fugitive, and alleged the rights of sovereignty. The Persian monarch pleaded the laws of hospitality, and with some difficulty avoided a war, by the promise that he would banish Mamgo to the uttermost parts of the West, a punishment, as he described it, not less dreadful than death itself. Armenia was chosen for the place of exile, and a large district was assigned to the Scythian horde, on which they might feed their flocks and herds, and remove their encampment from one place to another, according to the different seasons of the year.

They were employed to repel the invasion of Tiridates; but their leader, after weighing the obligations and injuries which he had received from the Persian monarch, resolved to abandon his party.

The Armenian prince, who was well acquainted with the merit as well as power of Mamgo, treated him with distinguished respect; and, by admitting him into his confidence, acquired a brave and faithful servant, who contributed very effectually to his restoration. [60](#)

55

[\(return\)](#)

[Moses of Chorene. Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 74. The statues had been erected by Valarsaces, who reigned in Armenia about 130 years before Christ, and was the first king of the family of Arsaces, (see Moses, Hist. Armen. l. ii. 2, 3.) The deification of the Arsacides is mentioned by Justin, (xli. 5,) and by Ammianus Marcellinus, (xxiii. 6.)]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[The Armenian nobility was numerous and powerful. Moses mentions many families which were distinguished under the reign of Valarsaces, (l. ii. 7,) and which still subsisted in his own time, about the middle of the fifth century. See the preface of his Editors.]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[She was named Chosroiduchta, and had not the os patulum like other women. (Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 79.) I do not understand the expression. * Note: Os patulum signifies merely a large and widely opening mouth. Ovid (Metam. xv. 513) says, speaking of the monster who attacked Hippolytus, patulo partem maris evomit ore. Probably a wide mouth was a common defect among the Armenian women.—G.]

571

[\(return\)](#)

[Mamgo (according to M. St. Martin, note to Le Beau. ii. 213) belonged to the imperial race of Hon, who had filled the throne of China for four hundred years. Dethroned by the usurping race of Wei, Mamgo found a hospitable reception in Persia in the reign of Ardeschir. The emperor of china having demanded the surrender of the fugitive and his partisans, Sapor, then king, threatened with war both by Rome and China, counselled Mamgo to retire into Armenia. “I have expelled him from my dominions, (he answered the Chinese ambassador;) I have banished him to the extremity of the earth, where the sun sets; I have dismissed him to certain death.” Compare Mem. sur l’Armenie, ii. 25.—M.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[In the Armenian history, (l. ii. 78,) as well as in the Geography, (p. 367,) China is called Zenia, or Zenastan. It is characterized by the production of silk, by the opulence of the natives, and by their love of peace, above all the other nations of the earth. * Note: See St. Martin, Mem. sur l'Armenie, i. 304.]

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Vou-ti, the first emperor of the seventh dynasty, who then reigned in China, had political transactions with Fergana, a province of Sogdiana, and is said to have received a Roman embassy, (Histoire des Huns, tom. i. p. 38.) In those ages the Chinese kept a garrison at Kashgar, and one of their generals, about the time of Trajan, marched as far as the Caspian Sea. With regard to the intercourse between China and the Western countries, a curious memoir of M. de Guignes may be consulted, in the Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxii. p. 355. * Note: The Chinese Annals mention, under the ninth year of Yan-hi, which corresponds with the year 166 J. C., an embassy which arrived from Tathsin, and was sent by a prince called An-thun, who can be no other than Marcus Aurelius Antoninus, who then ruled over the Romans. St. Martin, Mem. sur l'Armænic. ii. 30. See also Klaproth, Tableaux Historiques de l'Asie, p. 69. The embassy came by Jy-nan, Tonquin.—M.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[See Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 81.]

For a while, fortune appeared to favor the enterprising valor of Tiridates. He not only expelled the enemies of his family and country from the whole extent of Armenia, but in the prosecution of his revenge he carried his arms, or at least his incursions, into the heart of Assyria. The historian, who has preserved the name of Tiridates from oblivion, celebrates, with a degree of national enthusiasm, his personal prowess: and, in the true spirit of eastern romance, describes the giants and the elephants that fell beneath his invincible arm. It is from other information that we discover the distracted state of the Persian monarchy, to which the king of Armenia was indebted for some part of his advantages. The throne was disputed by the ambition of contending brothers; and Hormuz, after exerting without success the strength of his own party, had recourse to the dangerous assistance of the barbarians who inhabited the banks of the Caspian Sea. [61](#) The civil war was, however, soon terminated, either by a victor or by a reconciliation; and Narses, who was universally acknowledged as king of Persia, directed his whole force against the foreign enemy. The contest then became too unequal; nor was the valor of the hero able to withstand the power of the monarch.

Tiridates, a second time expelled from the throne of Armenia, once more took refuge in the court of the emperors. [611](#) Narses soon reëstablished his authority over the revolted province; and loudly complaining of the protection afforded by the Romans to rebels and fugitives, aspired to the conquest of the East. [62](#)

61

[\(return\)](#)

[Ipsos Persas ipsumque Regem ascitis Saccis, et Russis, et Gellis, petit frater Ormies. Panegyric. Vet. iii. 1. The Saccæ were a nation of wandering Scythians, who encamped towards the sources of the Oxus and the Jaxartes. The Gelli where the inhabitants of Ghilan, along the Caspian Sea, and who so long, under the name of Dilemines, infested the Persian monarchy. See d’Herbelot, Bibliotheque]

611

[\(return\)](#)

[M St. Martin represents this differently. Le roi de Perse * * * profits d’un voyage que Tiridate avoit fait a Rome pour attaquer ce royaume. This reads like the evasion of the national historians to disguise the fact discreditable to their hero. See Mem. sur l’Armenie, i. 304.—M.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[Moses of Chorene takes no notice of this second revolution, which I have been obliged to collect from a passage of Ammianus Marcellinus, (l. xxiii. c. 5.) Lactantius speaks of the ambition of Narses: “Concitus domesticis exemplis avi sui Saporis ad occupandum orientem magnis copiis inhiabat.” De Mort. Persecut. c. 9.]

Neither prudence nor honor could permit the emperors to forsake the cause of the Armenian king, and it was resolved to exert the force of the empire in the Persian war. Diocletian, with the calm dignity which he constantly assumed, fixed his own station in the city of Antioch, from whence he prepared and directed the military operations. [63](#) The conduct of the legions was intrusted to the intrepid valor of Galerius, who, for that important purpose, was removed from the banks of the Danube to those of the Euphrates. The armies soon encountered each other in the plains of Mesopotamia, and two battles were fought with various and doubtful success; but the third engagement was of a more decisive nature; and the Roman army received a total overthrow, which is attributed to the rashness of Galerius, who, with an inconsiderable body of troops, attacked the innumerable host of the Persians. [64](#) But the consideration of the country that was the scene of action, may suggest another reason for his defeat. The same ground on which Galerius was vanquished, had been rendered memorable by the death of Crassus, and the slaughter of ten legions. It was a plain of more than sixty miles, which extended from the hills of Carrhæ to the Euphrates; a smooth and barren surface of sandy desert, without a hillock, without a tree, and without a spring of fresh

water. [65](#) The steady infantry of the Romans, fainting with heat and thirst, could neither hope for victory if they preserved their ranks, nor break their ranks without exposing themselves to the most imminent danger. In this situation they were gradually encompassed by the superior numbers, harassed by the rapid evolutions, and destroyed by the arrows of the barbarian cavalry.

The king of Armenia had signalized his valor in the battle, and acquired personal glory by the public misfortune. He was pursued as far as the Euphrates; his horse was wounded, and it appeared impossible for him to escape the victorious enemy. In this extremity Tiridates embraced the only refuge which appeared before him: he dismounted and plunged into the stream. His armor was heavy, the river very deep, and at those parts at least half a mile in breadth; [66](#) yet such was his strength and dexterity, that he reached in safety the opposite bank. [67](#) With regard to the Roman general, we are ignorant of the circumstances of his escape; but when he returned to Antioch, Diocletian received him, not with the tenderness of a friend and colleague, but with the indignation of an offended sovereign. The haughtiest of men, clothed in his purple, but humbled by the sense of his fault and misfortune, was obliged to follow the emperor's chariot above a mile on foot, and to exhibit, before the whole court, the spectacle of his disgrace. [68](#)

63 [\(return\)](#)

[We may readily believe, that Lactantius ascribes to cowardice the conduct of Diocletian. Julian, in his oration, says, that he remained with all the forces of the empire; a very hyperbolical expression.]

64 [\(return\)](#)

[Our five abbreviators, Eutropius, Festus, the two Victors, and Orosius, all relate the last and great battle; but Orosius is the only one who speaks of the two former.]

65 [\(return\)](#)

[The nature of the country is finely described by Plutarch, in the life of Crassus; and by Xenophon, in the first book of the Anabasis]

66 [\(return\)](#)

[See Foster's Dissertation in the second volume of the translation of the Anabasis by Spelman; which I will venture to recommend as one of the best versions extant.]

67 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 76. I have transferred this exploit of Tiridates from an imaginary defeat to the real one of Galerius.]

68 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. Marcellin. l. xiv. The mile, in the hands

of Eutropius, (ix. 24,) of Festus (c. 25,) and of Orosius, (vii 25), easily increased to several miles]

As soon as Diocletian had indulged his private resentment, and asserted the majesty of supreme power, he yielded to the submissive entreaties of the Cæsar, and permitted him to retrieve his own honor, as well as that of the Roman arms. In the room of the unwarlike troops of Asia, which had most probably served in the first expedition, a second army was drawn from the veterans and new levies of the Illyrian frontier, and a considerable body of Gothic auxiliaries were taken into the Imperial pay. [69](#) At the head of a chosen army of twenty-five thousand men, Galerius again passed the Euphrates; but, instead of exposing his legions in the open plains of Mesopotamia he advanced through the mountains of Armenia, where he found the inhabitants devoted to his cause, and the country as favorable to the operations of infantry as it was inconvenient for the motions of cavalry. [70](#) Adversity had confirmed the Roman discipline, while the barbarians, elated by success, were become so negligent and remiss, that in the moment when they least expected it, they were surprised by the active conduct of Galerius, who, attended only by two horsemen, had with his own eyes secretly examined the state and position of their camp. A surprise, especially in the night time, was for the most part fatal to a Persian army. “Their horses were tied, and generally shackled, to prevent their running away; and if an alarm happened, a Persian had his housing to fix, his horse to bridle, and his corselet to put on, before he could mount.” [71](#) On this occasion, the impetuous attack of Galerius spread disorder and dismay over the camp of the barbarians. A slight resistance was followed by a dreadful carnage, and, in the general confusion, the wounded monarch (for Narses commanded his armies in person) fled towards the deserts of Media. His sumptuous tents, and those of his satraps, afforded an immense booty to the conqueror; and an incident is mentioned, which proves the rustic but martial ignorance of the legions in the elegant superfluities of life. A bag of shining leather, filled with pearls, fell into the hands of a private soldier; he carefully preserved the bag, but he threw away its contents, judging that whatever was of no use could not possibly be of any value. [72](#) The principal loss of Narses was of a much more affecting nature. Several of his wives, his sisters, and children, who had attended the army, were made captives in the defeat. But though the character of Galerius had in general very little affinity with that of Alexander, he imitated, after his victory, the amiable behavior of the Macedonian towards the family of Darius. The wives and children of Narses were protected from violence and rapine, conveyed to a place of safety, and treated with every mark of respect and tenderness, that was due from a generous enemy to their age, their sex, and their royal dignity. [73](#)

69

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor. Jornandes de Rebus Geticis, c. 21.]

70

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor says, “Per Armeniam in hostes contendit, quæ fermo sola, seu facilius vincendi via

est.” He followed the conduct of Trajan, and the idea of Julius Cæsar.]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[Xenophon’s Anabasis, l. iii. For that reason the Persian cavalry encamped sixty stadia from the enemy.]

72 [\(return\)](#)

[The story is told by Ammianus, l. xxii. Instead of saccum, some read scutum.]

73 [\(return\)](#)

[The Persians confessed the Roman superiority in morals as well as in arms. Eutrop. ix. 24. But this respect and gratitude of enemies is very seldom to be found in their own accounts.]

Chapter XIII: Reign Of Diocletian And His Three Associates.— Part III.

While the East anxiously expected the decision of this great contest, the emperor Diocletian, having assembled in Syria a strong army of observation, displayed from a distance the resources of the Roman power, and reserved himself for any future emergency of the war. On the intelligence of the victory he condescended to advance towards the frontier, with a view of moderating, by his presence and counsels, the pride of Galerius. The interview of the Roman princes at Nisibis was accompanied with every expression of respect on one side, and of esteem on the other. It was in that city that they soon afterwards gave audience to the ambassador of the Great King. [74](#) The power, or at least the spirit, of Narses, had been broken by his last defeat; and he considered an immediate peace as the only means that could stop the progress of the Roman arms. He despatched Apharban, a servant who possessed his favor and confidence, with a commission to negotiate a treaty, or rather to receive whatever conditions the conqueror should impose. Apharban opened the conference by expressing his master’s gratitude for the generous treatment of his family, and by soliciting the liberty of those illustrious captives. He celebrated the valor of Galerius, without degrading the reputation of Narses, and thought it no dishonor to confess the superiority of the victorious Cæsar, over a monarch who had surpassed in glory all the princes of his race. Notwithstanding the justice of the Persian cause, he was empowered to submit the present differences to the decision of the emperors themselves; convinced as he was, that, in the midst of prosperity, they would not be unmindful of the vicissitudes of fortune. Apharban concluded his discourse in the style of eastern allegory, by observing that the Roman and Persian monarchies were the two eyes of the world, which would remain imperfect and mutilated if either of them should be put out.

[The account of the negotiation is taken from the fragments of Peter the Patrician, in the Excerpta Legationum, published in the Byzantine Collection. Peter lived under Justinian; but it is very evident, by the nature of his materials, that they are drawn from the most authentic and respectable writers.]

“It well becomes the Persians,” replied Galerius, with a transport of fury, which seemed to convulse his whole frame, “it well becomes the Persians to expatiate on the vicissitudes of fortune, and calmly to read us lectures on the virtues of moderation. Let them remember their own *moderation* towards the unhappy Valerian. They vanquished him by fraud, they treated him with indignity. They detained him till the last moment of his life in shameful captivity, and after his death they exposed his body to perpetual ignominy.” Softening, however, his tone, Galerius insinuated to the ambassador, that it had never been the practice of the Romans to trample on a prostrate enemy; and that, on this occasion, they should consult their own dignity rather than the Persian merit. He dismissed Apharban with a hope that Narses would soon be informed on what conditions he might obtain, from the clemency of the emperors, a lasting peace, and the restoration of his wives and children. In this conference we may discover the fierce passions of Galerius, as well as his deference to the superior wisdom and authority of Diocletian. The ambition of the former grasped at the conquest of the East, and had proposed to reduce Persia into the state of a province. The prudence of the latter, who adhered to the moderate policy of Augustus and the Antonines, embraced the favorable opportunity of terminating a successful war by an honorable and advantageous peace. [75](#)

[Adeo victor (says Aurelius) ut ni Valerius, cujus nutu omnis gerebantur, abnuisset, Romani fasces in provinciam novam ferrentur Verum pars terrarum tamen nobis utilior quæsitâ.]

In pursuance of their promise, the emperors soon afterwards appointed Sicius Probus, one of their secretaries, to acquaint the Persian court with their final resolution. As the minister of peace, he was received with every mark of politeness and friendship; but, under the pretence of allowing him the necessary repose after so long a journey, the audience of Probus was deferred from day to day; and he attended the slow motions of the king, till at length he was admitted to his presence, near the River Asprudus in Media. The secret motive of Narses, in this delay, had been to collect such a military force as might enable him, though sincerely desirous of peace, to negotiate with the greater weight and dignity. Three persons only assisted at this important conference, the minister Apharban, the præfect of the guards, and an officer who had commanded on the Armenian frontier. [76](#) The first condition proposed by the ambassador is not at present of a very intelligible nature; that the city of Nisibis might be established for the place of mutual exchange, or, as we should formerly have termed it, for the staple of

trade, between the two empires. There is no difficulty in conceiving the intention of the Roman princes to improve their revenue by some restraints upon commerce; but as Nisibis was situated within their own dominions, and as they were masters both of the imports and exports, it should seem that such restraints were the objects of an internal law, rather than of a foreign treaty. To render them more effectual, some stipulations were probably required on the side of the king of Persia, which appeared so very repugnant either to his interest or to his dignity, that Narses could not be persuaded to subscribe them. As this was the only article to which he refused his consent, it was no longer insisted on; and the emperors either suffered the trade to flow in its natural channels, or contented themselves with such restrictions, as it depended on their own authority to establish.

76

[\(return\)](#)

[He had been governor of Sumium, (Pot. Patricius in Excerpt. Legat. p. 30.) This province seems to be mentioned by Moses of Chorene, (Geograph. p. 360,) and lay to the east of Mount Ararat. * Note: The Siounikh of the Armenian writers St. Martin i. 142.—M.]

As soon as this difficulty was removed, a solemn peace was concluded and ratified between the two nations. The conditions of a treaty so glorious to the empire, and so necessary to Persia, may deserve a more peculiar attention, as the history of Rome presents very few transactions of a similar nature; most of her wars having either been terminated by absolute conquest, or waged against barbarians ignorant of the use of letters. I. The Aboras, or, as it is called by Xenophon, the Araxes, was fixed as the boundary between the two monarchies. [77](#) That river, which rose near the Tigris, was increased, a few miles below Nisibis, by the little stream of the Mygdonius, passed under the walls of Singara, and fell into the Euphrates at Circesium, a frontier town, which, by the care of Diocletian, was very strongly fortified. [78](#) Mesopotamia, the object of so many wars, was ceded to the empire; and the Persians, by this treaty, renounced all pretensions to that great province. II. They relinquished to the Romans five provinces beyond the Tigris. [79](#) Their situation formed a very useful barrier, and their natural strength was soon improved by art and military skill. Four of these, to the north of the river, were districts of obscure fame and inconsiderable extent; Intiline, Zabdicene, Arzanene, and Moxoene; [791](#) but on the east of the Tigris, the empire acquired the large and mountainous territory of Carduene, the ancient seat of the Carduchians, who preserved for many ages their manly freedom in the heart of the despotic monarchies of Asia. The ten thousand Greeks traversed their country, after a painful march, or rather engagement, of seven days; and it is confessed by their leader, in his incomparable relation of the retreat, that they suffered more from the arrows of the Carduchians, than from the power of the Great King. [80](#) Their posterity, the Curds, with very little alteration either of name or manners, [801](#) acknowledged the nominal sovereignty of the Turkish sultan. III. It is almost needless to observe, that Tiridates,

the faithful ally of Rome, was restored to the throne of his fathers, and that the rights of the Imperial supremacy were fully asserted and secured. The limits of Armenia were extended as far as the fortress of Sintha in Media, and this increase of dominion was not so much an act of liberality as of justice. Of the provinces already mentioned beyond the Tigris, the four first had been dismembered by the Parthians from the crown of Armenia; [81](#) and when the Romans acquired the possession of them, they stipulated, at the expense of the usurpers, an ample compensation, which invested their ally with the extensive and fertile country of Atropatene. Its principal city, in the same situation perhaps as the modern Tauris, was frequently honored by the residence of Tiridates; and as it sometimes bore the name of Ecbatana, he imitated, in the buildings and fortifications, the splendid capital of the Medes. [82](#) IV. The country of Iberia was barren, its inhabitants rude and savage. But they were accustomed to the use of arms, and they separated from the empire barbarians much fiercer and more formidable than themselves. The narrow defiles of Mount Caucasus were in their hands, and it was in their choice, either to admit or to exclude the wandering tribes of Sarmatia, whenever a rapacious spirit urged them to penetrate into the richer climes of the South. [83](#) The nomination of the kings of Iberia, which was resigned by the Persian monarch to the emperors, contributed to the strength and security of the Roman power in Asia. [84](#) The East enjoyed a profound tranquillity during forty years; and the treaty between the rival monarchies was strictly observed till the death of Tiridates; when a new generation, animated with different views and different passions, succeeded to the government of the world; and the grandson of Narses undertook a long and memorable war against the princes of the house of Constantine.

[By an error of the geographer Ptolemy, the position of Singara is removed from the Aboras to the Tigris, which may have produced the mistake of Peter, in assigning the latter river for the boundary, instead of the former. The line of the Roman frontier traversed, but never followed, the course of the Tigris. * Note: There are here several errors. Gibbon has confounded the streams, and the towns which they pass. The Aboras, or rather the Chaboras, the Araxes of Xenophon, has its source above Ras-Ain or Re-Saina, (Theodosiopolis,) about twenty-seven leagues from the Tigris; it receives the waters of the Mygdonius, or Saocoras, about thirty-three leagues below Nisibis. at a town now called Al Nahrain; it does not pass under the walls of Singara; it is the Saocoras that washes the walls of that town: the latter river has its source near Nisibis. at five leagues from the Tigris. See D'Anv. l'Euphrate et le Tigre, 46, 49, 50, and the map.— To the east of the Tigris is another less considerable river, named also the Chaboras, which D'Anville

calls the Centrites, Khabour, Nicephorius, without quoting the authorities on which he gives those names. Gibbon did not mean to speak of this river, which does not pass by Singara, and does not fall into the Euphrates. See Michaelis, Supp. ad Lex. Hebraica. 3d part, p. 664, 665.—G.]

78 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius de Edificiis, l. ii. c. 6.]

79 [\(return\)](#)
[Three of the provinces, Zabdicene, Arzanene, and Carduene, are allowed on all sides. But instead of the other two, Peter (in Excerpt. Leg. p. 30) inserts Rehimene and Sophene. I have preferred Ammianus, (l. xxv. 7,) because it might be proved that Sophene was never in the hands of the Persians, either before the reign of Diocletian, or after that of Jovian. For want of correct maps, like those of M. d'Anville, almost all the moderns, with Tillemont and Valesius at their head, have imagined, that it was in respect to Persia, and not to Rome, that the five provinces were situate beyond the Tigris.]

791 [\(return\)](#)
[See St. Martin, note on Le Beau, i. 380. He would read, for Intiline, Ingeleme, the name of a small province of Armenia, near the sources of the Tigris, mentioned by St. Epiphanius, (Hæres, 60;) for the unknown name Arzacene, with Gibbon, Arzanene. These provinces do not appear to have made an integral part of the Roman empire; Roman garrisons replaced those of Persia, but the sovereignty remained in the hands of the feudatory princes of Armenia. A prince of Carduene, ally or dependent on the empire, with the Roman name of Jovianus, occurs in the reign of Julian.—M.]

80 [\(return\)](#)
[Xenophon's Anabasis, l. iv. Their bows were three cubits in length, their arrows two; they rolled down stones that were each a wagon load. The Greeks found a great many villages in that rude country.]

801 [\(return\)](#)
[I travelled through this country in 1810, and should judge, from what I have read and seen of its inhabitants, that they have remained unchanged in their appearance and character for more than twenty centuries Malcolm, note to Hist. of Persia, vol. i. p. 82.—M.]

81 [\(return\)](#)
[According to Eutropius, (vi. 9, as the text is represented by the best Mss.,) the city of

Tigranocerta was in Arzanene. The names and situation of the other three may be faintly traced.]

82 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare Herodotus, l. i. c. 97, with Moses Choronens. Hist Armen. l. ii. c. 84, and the map of Armenia given by his editors.]

83 [\(return\)](#)

[Hiberi, locorum potentes, Caspia via Sarmatam in Armenios raptim effundunt. Tacit. Annal. vi. 34. See Strabon. Geograph. l. xi. p. 764, edit. Casaub.]

84 [\(return\)](#)

[Peter Patricius (in Excerpt. Leg. p. 30) is the only writer who mentions the Iberian article of the treaty.]

The arduous work of rescuing the distressed empire from tyrants and barbarians had now been completely achieved by a succession of Illyrian peasants. As soon as Diocletian entered into the twentieth year of his reign, he celebrated that memorable æra, as well as the success of his arms, by the pomp of a Roman triumph. [85](#) Maximian, the equal partner of his power, was his only companion in the glory of that day. The two Cæsars had fought and conquered, but the merit of their exploits was ascribed, according to the rigor of ancient maxims, to the auspicious influence of their fathers and emperors. [86](#) The triumph of Diocletian and Maximian was less magnificent, perhaps, than those of Aurelian and Probus, but it was dignified by several circumstances of superior fame and good fortune. Africa and Britain, the Rhine, the Danube, and the Nile, furnished their respective trophies; but the most distinguished ornament was of a more singular nature, a Persian victory followed by an important conquest. The representations of rivers, mountains, and provinces, were carried before the Imperial car. The images of the captive wives, the sisters, and the children of the Great King, afforded a new and grateful spectacle to the vanity of the people. [87](#) In the eyes of posterity, this triumph is remarkable, by a distinction of a less honorable kind. It was the last that Rome ever beheld. Soon after this period, the emperors ceased to vanquish, and Rome ceased to be the capital of the empire.

85 [\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. in Chron. Pagi ad annum. Till the discovery of the treatise De Mortibus Persecutorum, it was not certain that the triumph and the Vicennalia was celebrated at the same time.]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[At the time of the Vicennalia, Galerius seems to have kept station on the Danube. See Lactant. de M. P. c. 38.]

87 [\(return\)](#)

[Eutropius (ix. 27) mentions them as a part of the triumph. As the persons had been restored to

Narses, nothing more than their images could be exhibited.]

The spot on which Rome was founded had been consecrated by ancient ceremonies and imaginary miracles. The presence of some god, or the memory of some hero, seemed to animate every part of the city, and the empire of the world had been promised to the Capitol. [88](#) The native Romans felt and confessed the power of this agreeable illusion. It was derived from their ancestors, had grown up with their earliest habits of life, and was protected, in some measure, by the opinion of political utility. The form and the seat of government were intimately blended together, nor was it esteemed possible to transport the one without destroying the other. [89](#) But the sovereignty of the capital was gradually annihilated in the extent of conquest; the provinces rose to the same level, and the vanquished nations acquired the name and privileges, without imbibing the partial affections, of Romans. During a long period, however, the remains of the ancient constitution, and the influence of custom, preserved the dignity of Rome. The emperors, though perhaps of African or Illyrian extraction, respected their adopted country, as the seat of their power, and the centre of their extensive dominions. The emergencies of war very frequently required their presence on the frontiers; but Diocletian and Maximian were the first Roman princes who fixed, in time of peace, their ordinary residence in the provinces; and their conduct, however it might be suggested by private motives, was justified by very specious considerations of policy. The court of the emperor of the West was, for the most part, established at Milan, whose situation, at the foot of the Alps, appeared far more convenient than that of Rome, for the important purpose of watching the motions of the barbarians of Germany. Milan soon assumed the splendor of an Imperial city. The houses are described as numerous and well built; the manners of the people as polished and liberal. A circus, a theatre, a mint, a palace, baths, which bore the name of their founder Maximian; porticos adorned with statues, and a double circumference of walls, contributed to the beauty of the new capital; nor did it seem oppressed even by the proximity of Rome. [90](#) To rival the majesty of Rome was the ambition likewise of Diocletian, who employed his leisure, and the wealth of the East, in the embellishment of Nicomedia, a city placed on the verge of Europe and Asia, almost at an equal distance between the Danube and the Euphrates. By the taste of the monarch, and at the expense of the people, Nicomedia acquired, in the space of a few years, a degree of magnificence which might appear to have required the labor of ages, and became inferior only to Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, in extent of populousness. [91](#) The life of Diocletian and Maximian was a life of action, and a considerable portion of it was spent in camps, or in the long and frequent marches; but whenever the public business allowed them any relaxation, they seemed to have retired with pleasure to their favorite residences of Nicomedia and Milan. Till Diocletian, in the twentieth year of his reign, celebrated his Roman triumph, it is extremely doubtful whether he ever visited the ancient capital of the empire. Even on that memorable occasion his stay did not exceed two months. Disgusted with the

licentious familiarity of the people, he quitted Rome with precipitation thirteen days before it was expected that he should have appeared in the senate, invested with the ensigns of the consular dignity. [92](#)

- 88 [\(return\)](#)
[Livy gives us a speech of Camillus on that subject, (v. 51—55,) full of eloquence and sensibility, in opposition to a design of removing the seat of government from Rome to the neighboring city of Veii.]
- 89 [\(return\)](#)
[Julius Cæsar was reproached with the intention of removing the empire to Ilium or Alexandria. See Sueton. in Cæsar. c. 79. According to the ingenious conjecture of Le Fevre and Dacier, the ode of the third book of Horace was intended to divert from the execution of a similar design.]
- 90 [\(return\)](#)
[See Aurelius Victor, who likewise mentions the buildings erected by Maximian at Carthage, probably during the Moorish war. We shall insert some verses of Ausonius de Clar. Urb. v.— Et Mediolani miræomnia: copia rerum; Innumeræ cultæque domus; facunda virorum Ingenia, et mores læti: tum duplice muro Amplificata loci species; populique voluptas Circus; et inclusi moles cuneata Theatri; Templâ, Palatinæque arces, opulensque Moneta, Et regio Herculei celebris sub honore lavacri. Cunctaque marmoreis ornata Peristyla signis; Moeniaque in valli formam circumdata labro, Omnia quæ magnis operum velut æmula formis Excellunt: nec juncta premit vicinia Romæ.]
- 91 [\(return\)](#)
[Lactant. de M. P. c. 17. Libanius, Orat. viii. p. 203.]
- 92 [\(return\)](#)
[Lactant. de M. P. c. 17. On a similar occasion, Ammianus mentions the dicacitas plebis, as not very agreeable to an Imperial ear. (See l. xvi. c. 10.)]

The dislike expressed by Diocletian towards Rome and Roman freedom was not the effect of momentary caprice, but the result of the most artful policy. That crafty prince had framed a new system of Imperial government, which was afterwards completed by the family of Constantine; and as the image of the old constitution was religiously preserved in the senate, he resolved to deprive that order of its small remains of power and consideration. We may recollect, about eight years before the elevation of Diocletian, the transient greatness, and the ambitious hopes, of the Roman senate. As

long as that enthusiasm prevailed, many of the nobles imprudently displayed their zeal in the cause of freedom; and after the successes of Probus had withdrawn their countenance from the republican party, the senators were unable to disguise their impotent resentment.

As the sovereign of Italy, Maximian was intrusted with the care of extinguishing this troublesome, rather than dangerous spirit, and the task was perfectly suited to his cruel temper. The most illustrious members of the senate, whom Diocletian always affected to esteem, were involved, by his colleague, in the accusation of imaginary plots; and the possession of an elegant villa, or a well-cultivated estate, was interpreted as a convincing evidence of guilt. [93](#) The camp of the Prætorians, which had so long oppressed, began to protect, the majesty of Rome; and as those haughty troops were conscious of the decline of their power, they were naturally disposed to unite their strength with the authority of the senate. By the prudent measures of Diocletian, the numbers of the Prætorians were insensibly reduced, their privileges abolished, [94](#) and their place supplied by two faithful legions of Illyricum, who, under the new titles of Jovians and Herculians, were appointed to perform the service of the Imperial guards. [95](#) But the most fatal though secret wound, which the senate received from the hands of Diocletian and Maximian, was inflicted by the inevitable operation of their absence. As long as the emperors resided at Rome, that assembly might be oppressed, but it could scarcely be neglected. The successors of Augustus exercised the power of dictating whatever laws their wisdom or caprice might suggest; but those laws were ratified by the sanction of the senate. The model of ancient freedom was preserved in its deliberations and decrees; and wise princes, who respected the prejudices of the Roman people, were in some measure obliged to assume the language and behavior suitable to the general and first magistrate of the republic. In the armies and in the provinces, they displayed the dignity of monarchs; and when they fixed their residence at a distance from the capital, they forever laid aside the dissimulation which Augustus had recommended to his successors. In the exercise of the legislative as well as the executive power, the sovereign advised with his ministers, instead of consulting the great council of the nation. The name of the senate was mentioned with honor till the last period of the empire; the vanity of its members was still flattered with honorary distinctions; [96](#) but the assembly which had so long been the source, and so long the instrument of power, was respectfully suffered to sink into oblivion. The senate of Rome, losing all connection with the Imperial court and the actual constitution, was left a venerable but useless monument of antiquity on the Capitoline hill.

93

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius accuses Maximian of destroying fictis criminationibus lumina senatus, (De M. P. c. 8.) Aurelius Victor speaks very doubtfully of the faith of Diocletian towards his friends.]

94

[\(return\)](#)

[Truncatæ vires urbis, imminuto prætoriarum

cohortium atque in armis vulgi numero. Aurelius Victor. Lactantius attributes to Galerius the prosecution of the same plan, (c. 26.)]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[They were old corps stationed in Illyricum; and according to the ancient establishment, they each consisted of six thousand men. They had acquired much reputation by the use of the plumbatæ, or darts loaded with lead. Each soldier carried five of these, which he darted from a considerable distance, with great strength and dexterity. See Vegetius, i. 17.]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Theodosian Code, l. vi. tit. ii. with Godefroy's commentary.]

Chapter XIII: Reign Of Diocletian And His Three Associates.— Part IV.

When the Roman princes had lost sight of the senate and of their ancient capital, they easily forgot the origin and nature of their legal power. The civil offices of consul, of proconsul, of censor, and of tribune, by the union of which it had been formed, betrayed to the people its republican extraction. Those modest titles were laid aside; [97](#) and if they still distinguished their high station by the appellation of Emperor, or Imperator, that word was understood in a new and more dignified sense, and no longer denoted the general of the Roman armies, but the sovereign of the Roman world. The name of Emperor, which was at first of a military nature, was associated with another of a more servile kind. The epithet of Dominus, or Lord, in its primitive signification, was expressive not of the authority of a prince over his subjects, or of a commander over his soldiers, but of the despotic power of a master over his domestic slaves. [98](#) Viewing it in that odious light, it had been rejected with abhorrence by the first Cæsars. Their resistance insensibly became more feeble, and the name less odious; till at length the style of *our Lord and Emperor* was not only bestowed by flattery, but was regularly admitted into the laws and public monuments. Such lofty epithets were sufficient to elate and satisfy the most excessive vanity; and if the successors of Diocletian still declined the title of King, it seems to have been the effect not so much of their moderation as of their delicacy. Wherever the Latin tongue was in use, (and it was the language of government throughout the empire,) the Imperial title, as it was peculiar to themselves, conveyed a more respectable idea than the name of king, which they must have shared with a hundred barbarian chieftains; or which, at the best, they could derive only from Romulus, or from Tarquin. But the sentiments of the East were very different from those of the West. From the earliest period of history, the sovereigns of Asia had been celebrated in the Greek language by the title of Basileus, or King; and since it was

considered as the first distinction among men, it was soon employed by the servile provincials of the East, in their humble addresses to the Roman throne. [99](#) Even the attributes, or at least the titles, of the DIVINITY, were usurped by Diocletian and Maximian, who transmitted them to a succession of Christian emperors. [100](#) Such extravagant compliments, however, soon lose their impiety by losing their meaning; and when the ear is once accustomed to the sound, they are heard with indifference, as vague though excessive professions of respect.

97

[\(return\)](#)

[See the 12th dissertation in Spanheim's excellent work *de Usu Numismatum*. From medals, inscriptions, and historians, he examines every title separately, and traces it from Augustus to the moment of its disappearing.]

98

[\(return\)](#)

[Pliny (in *Panegy.* c. 3, 55, &c.) speaks of *Dominus* with execration, as synonymous to Tyrant, and opposite to Prince. And the same Pliny regularly gives that title (in the tenth book of the epistles) to his friend rather than master, the virtuous Trajan. This strange contradiction puzzles the commentators, who think, and the translators, who can write.]

99

[\(return\)](#)

[Synesius *de Regno*, edit. Petav. p. 15. I am indebted for this quotation to the Abbé de la Bleterie.]

100

[\(return\)](#)

[*Soe Vandale de Consecratione*, p. 354, &c. It was customary for the emperors to mention (in the preamble of laws) their numen, sacro majesty, divine oracles, &c. According to Tillemont, Gregory Nazianzen complains most bitterly of the profanation, especially when it was practised by an Arian emperor. * Note: In the time of the republic, says Hegewisch, when the consuls, the prætors, and the other magistrates appeared in public, to perform the functions of their office, their dignity was announced both by the symbols which use had consecrated, and the brilliant cortege by which they were accompanied. But this dignity belonged to the office, not to the individual; this pomp belonged to the magistrate, not to the man. * * The consul, followed, in the comitia, by all the senate, the prætors, the quæstors, the ædiles, the lictors, the apparitors, and the heralds, on reentering his house, was served only by freedmen and by his slaves. The first emperors went no further. Tiberius had, for his personal attendance, only a moderate number of

slaves, and a few freedmen. (Tacit. Ann. iv. 7.) But in proportion as the republican forms disappeared, one after another, the inclination of the emperors to environ themselves with personal pomp, displayed itself more and more. ** The magnificence and the ceremonial of the East were entirely introduced by Diocletian, and were consecrated by Constantine to the Imperial use. Thenceforth the palace, the court, the table, all the personal attendance, distinguished the emperor from his subjects, still more than his superior dignity. The organization which Diocletian gave to his new court, attached less honor and distinction to rank than to services performed towards the members of the Imperial family. Hegewisch, Essai, Hist. sur les Finances Romains. Few historians have characterized, in a more philosophic manner, the influence of a new institution.—G.—It is singular that the son of a slave reduced the haughty aristocracy of Rome to the offices of servitude.—M.]

From the time of Augustus to that of Diocletian, the Roman princes, conversing in a familiar manner among their fellow-citizens, were saluted only with the same respect that was usually paid to senators and magistrates. Their principal distinction was the Imperial or military robe of purple; whilst the senatorial garment was marked by a broad, and the equestrian by a narrow, band or stripe of the same honorable color. The pride, or rather the policy, of Diocletian engaged that artful prince to introduce the stately magnificence of the court of Persia. [101](#) He ventured to assume the diadem, an ornament detested by the Romans as the odious ensign of royalty, and the use of which had been considered as the most desperate act of the madness of Caligula. It was no more than a broad white fillet set with pearls, which encircled the emperor's head. The sumptuous robes of Diocletian and his successors were of silk and gold; and it is remarked with indignation that even their shoes were studded with the most precious gems. The access to their sacred person was every day rendered more difficult by the institution of new forms and ceremonies. The avenues of the palace were strictly guarded by the various schools, as they began to be called, of domestic officers. The interior apartments were intrusted to the jealous vigilance of the eunuchs, the increase of whose numbers and influence was the most infallible symptom of the progress of despotism. When a subject was at length admitted to the Imperial presence, he was obliged, whatever might be his rank, to fall prostrate on the ground, and to adore, according to the eastern fashion, the divinity of his lord and master. [102](#) Diocletian was a man of sense, who, in the course of private as well as public life, had formed a just estimate both of himself and of mankind; nor is it easy to conceive that in substituting the manners of Persia to those of Rome he was seriously actuated by so mean a principle as that of vanity. He flattered himself that an ostentation of splendor and luxury would subdue the imagination of the multitude; that the monarch would be less exposed to the

rude license of the people and the soldiers, as his person was secluded from the public view; and that habits of submission would insensibly be productive of sentiments of veneration. Like the modesty affected by Augustus, the state maintained by Diocletian was a theatrical representation; but it must be confessed, that of the two comedies, the former was of a much more liberal and manly character than the latter. It was the aim of the one to disguise, and the object of the other to display, the unbounded power which the emperors possessed over the Roman world.

101 [\(return\)](#)
[See Spanheim de Usu Numismat. Dissert. xii.]

102 [\(return\)](#)
[Aurelius Victor. Eutropius, ix. 26. It appears by the Panegyrist, that the Romans were soon reconciled to the name and ceremony of adoration.]

Ostentation was the first principle of the new system instituted by Diocletian. The second was division. He divided the empire, the provinces, and every branch of the civil as well as military administration. He multiplied the wheels of the machine of government, and rendered its operations less rapid, but more secure. Whatever advantages and whatever defects might attend these innovations, they must be ascribed in a very great degree to the first inventor; but as the new frame of policy was gradually improved and completed by succeeding princes, it will be more satisfactory to delay the consideration of it till the season of its full maturity and perfection. [103](#) Reserving, therefore, for the reign of Constantine a more exact picture of the new empire, we shall content ourselves with describing the principal and decisive outline, as it was traced by the hand of Diocletian. He had associated three colleagues in the exercise of the supreme power; and as he was convinced that the abilities of a single man were inadequate to the public defence, he considered the joint administration of four princes not as a temporary expedient, but as a fundamental law of the constitution. It was his intention that the two elder princes should be distinguished by the use of the diadem, and the title of *Augusti*; that, as affection or esteem might direct their choice, they should regularly call to their assistance two subordinate colleagues; and that the *Cæsars*, rising in their turn to the first rank, should supply an uninterrupted succession of emperors. The empire was divided into four parts. The East and Italy were the most honorable, the Danube and the Rhine the most laborious stations. The former claimed the presence of the *Augusti*, the latter were intrusted to the administration of the *Cæsars*. The strength of the legions was in the hands of the four partners of sovereignty, and the despair of successively vanquishing four formidable rivals might intimidate the ambition of an aspiring general. In their civil government the emperors were supposed to exercise the undivided power of the monarch, and their edicts, inscribed with their joint names, were received in all the provinces, as promulgated by their mutual councils and authority. Notwithstanding these precautions, the political union of the Roman world was gradually dissolved, and a principle of division was

introduced, which, in the course of a few years, occasioned the perpetual separation of the Eastern and Western Empires.

103

[\(return\)](#)

[The innovations introduced by Diocletian are chiefly deduced, 1st, from some very strong passages in Lactantius; and, 2dly, from the new and various offices which, in the Theodosian code, appear already established in the beginning of the reign of Constantine.]

The system of Diocletian was accompanied with another very material disadvantage, which cannot even at present be totally overlooked; a more expensive establishment, and consequently an increase of taxes, and the oppression of the people. Instead of a modest family of slaves and freedmen, such as had contented the simple greatness of Augustus and Trajan, three or four magnificent courts were established in the various parts of the empire, and as many Roman *kings* contended with each other and with the Persian monarch for the vain superiority of pomp and luxury. The number of ministers, of magistrates, of officers, and of servants, who filled the different departments of the state, was multiplied beyond the example of former times; and (if we may borrow the warm expression of a contemporary) “when the proportion of those who received exceeded the proportion of those who contributed, the provinces were oppressed by the weight of tributes.” [104](#) From this period to the extinction of the empire, it would be easy to deduce an uninterrupted series of clamors and complaints. According to his religion and situation, each writer chooses either Diocletian, or Constantine, or Valens, or Theodosius, for the object of his invectives; but they unanimously agree in representing the burden of the public impositions, and particularly the land tax and capitation, as the intolerable and increasing grievance of their own times. From such a concurrence, an impartial historian, who is obliged to extract truth from satire, as well as from panegyric, will be inclined to divide the blame among the princes whom they accuse, and to ascribe their exactions much less to their personal vices, than to the uniform system of their administration. [1041](#) The emperor Diocletian was indeed the author of that system; but during his reign, the growing evil was confined within the bounds of modesty and discretion, and he deserves the reproach of establishing pernicious precedents, rather than of exercising actual oppression. [105](#) It may be added, that his revenues were managed with prudent economy; and that after all the current expenses were discharged, there still remained in the Imperial treasury an ample provision either for judicious liberality or for any emergency of the state.

104

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactant. de M. P. c. 7.]

1041

[\(return\)](#)

[The most curious document which has come to light since the publication of Gibbon’s History, is the edict of Diocletian, published from an inscription found at Eski-hissar, (Stratonicea,) by

Col. Leake. This inscription was first copied by Sherard, afterwards much more completely by Mr. Bankes. It is confirmed and illustrated by a more imperfect copy of the same edict, found in the Levant by a gentleman of Aix, and brought to this country by M. Vescovali. This edict was issued in the name of the four Cæsars, Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius, and Galerius. It fixed a maximum of prices throughout the empire, for all the necessities and commodities of life. The preamble insists, with great vehemence on the extortion and inhumanity of the venders and merchants. Quis enim adeo obtunisi (obtusi) pectores (is) et a sensu inhumanitatis extorris est qui ignorare potest immo non senserit in venalibus rebus quævel in mercimoniis aguntur vel diurna urbium conversatione tractantur, in tantum se licen liam defuisse, ut effrænata libido rapien—rum copia nec annorum ubertatibus mitigaretur. The edict, as Col. Leake clearly shows, was issued A. C. 303. Among the articles of which the maximum value is assessed, are oil, salt, honey, butchers' meat, poultry, game, fish, vegetables, fruit the wages of laborers and artisans, schoolmasters and skins, boots and shoes, harness, timber, corn, wine, and beer, (zythus.) The depreciation in the value of money, or the rise in the price of commodities, had been so great during the past century, that butchers' meat, which, in the second century of the empire, was in Rome about two denaril the pound, was now fixed at a maximum of eight. Col. Leake supposes the average price could not be less than four: at the same time the maximum of the wages of the agricultural laborers was twenty-five. The whole edict is, perhaps, the most gigantic effort of a blind though well-intentioned despotism, to control that which is, and ought to be, beyond the regulation of the government. See an Edict of Diocletian, by Col. Leake, London, 1826. Col. Leake has not observed that this Edict is expressly named in the treatise de Mort. Persecut. ch. vii. Idem cum variis iniquitatibus immensam faceret caritatem, legem pretiis rerum venalium statuere conatus.—M]

[Indicta lex nova quæ sane illorum temporum modestia tolerabilis, in perniciem processit. Aurel. Victor., who has treated the character of Diocletian with good sense, though in bad Latin.]

It was in the twenty first year of his reign that Diocletian executed his memorable resolution of abdicating the empire; an action more naturally to have been expected

from the elder or the younger Antoninus, than from a prince who had never practised the lessons of philosophy either in the attainment or in the use of supreme power. Diocletian acquired the glory of giving to the world the first example of a resignation, [106](#) which has not been very frequently imitated by succeeding monarchs. The parallel of Charles the Fifth, however, will naturally offer itself to our mind, not only since the eloquence of a modern historian has rendered that name so familiar to an English reader, but from the very striking resemblance between the characters of the two emperors, whose political abilities were superior to their military genius, and whose specious virtues were much less the effect of nature than of art. The abdication of Charles appears to have been hastened by the vicissitudes of fortune; and the disappointment of his favorite schemes urged him to relinquish a power which he found inadequate to his ambition. But the reign of Diocletian had flowed with a tide of uninterrupted success; nor was it till after he had vanquished all his enemies, and accomplished all his designs, that he seems to have entertained any serious thoughts of resigning the empire. Neither Charles nor Diocletian were arrived at a very advanced period of life; since the one was only fifty-five, and the other was no more than fifty-nine years of age; but the active life of those princes, their wars and journeys, the cares of royalty, and their application to business, had already impaired their constitution, and brought on the infirmities of a premature old age. [107](#)

106

[\(return\)](#)

[Solus omnium post conditum Romanum Imperium, qui extanto fastigio sponte ad privatæ vitæ statum civilitatemque remearet, Eutrop. ix. 28.]

107

[\(return\)](#)

[The particulars of the journey and illness are taken from Laclantius, c. 17, who may sometimes be admitted as an evidence of public facts, though very seldom of private anecdotes.]

Notwithstanding the severity of a very cold and rainy winter, Diocletian left Italy soon after the ceremony of his triumph, and began his progress towards the East round the circuit of the Illyrian provinces. From the inclemency of the weather, and the fatigue of the journey, he soon contracted a slow illness; and though he made easy marches, and was generally carried in a close litter, his disorder, before he arrived at Nicomedia, about the end of the summer, was become very serious and alarming. During the whole winter he was confined to his palace: his danger inspired a general and unaffected concern; but the people could only judge of the various alterations of his health, from the joy or consternation which they discovered in the countenances and behavior of his attendants. The rumor of his death was for some time universally believed, and it was supposed to be concealed with a view to prevent the troubles that might have happened during the absence of the Cæsar Galerius. At length, however, on the first of March, Diocletian once more appeared in public, but so pale and emaciated, that he could scarcely have been recognized by those to whom his person was the most familiar. It

was time to put an end to the painful struggle, which he had sustained during more than a year, between the care of his health and that of his dignity. The former required indulgence and relaxation, the latter compelled him to direct, from the bed of sickness, the administration of a great empire. He resolved to pass the remainder of his days in honorable repose, to place his glory beyond the reach of fortune, and to relinquish the theatre of the world to his younger and more active associates. [108](#)

108

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor ascribes the abdication, which had been so variously accounted for, to two causes: 1st, Diocletian's contempt of ambition; and 2dly, His apprehension of impending troubles. One of the panegyrists (vi. 9) mentions the age and infirmities of Diocletian as a very natural reason for his retirement. * Note: Constantine (Orat. ad Sanct. c. 401) more than insinuated that derangement of mind, connected with the conflagration of the palace at Nicomedia by lightning, was the cause of his abdication. But Heinichen. in a very sensible note on this passage in Eusebius, while he admits that his long illness might produce a temporary depression of spirits, triumphantly appeals to the philosophical conduct of Diocletian in his retreat, and the influence which he still retained on public affairs.—M.]

The ceremony of his abdication was performed in a spacious plain, about three miles from Nicomedia. The emperor ascended a lofty throne, and in a speech, full of reason and dignity, declared his intention, both to the people and to the soldiers who were assembled on this extraordinary occasion. As soon as he had divested himself of his purple, he withdrew from the gazing multitude; and traversing the city in a covered chariot, proceeded, without delay, to the favorite retirement which he had chosen in his native country of Dalmatia. On the same day, which was the first of May, [109](#) Maximian, as it had been previously concerted, made his resignation of the Imperial dignity at Milan.

Even in the splendor of the Roman triumph, Diocletian had meditated his design of abdicating the government. As he wished to secure the obedience of Maximian, he exacted from him either a general assurance that he would submit his actions to the authority of his benefactor, or a particular promise that he would descend from the throne, whenever he should receive the advice and the example. This engagement, though it was confirmed by the solemnity of an oath before the altar of the Capitoline Jupiter, [110](#) would have proved a feeble restraint on the fierce temper of Maximian, whose passion was the love of power, and who neither desired present tranquility nor future reputation. But he yielded, however reluctantly, to the ascendant which his wiser colleague had acquired over him, and retired, immediately after his abdication, to a villa

in Lucania, where it was almost impossible that such an impatient spirit could find any lasting tranquility.

109

[\(return\)](#)

[The difficulties as well as mistakes attending the dates both of the year and of the day of Diocletian's abdication are perfectly cleared up by Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p 525, note 19, and by Pagi ad annum.]

110

[\(return\)](#)

[See Panegy. Veter. vi. 9. The oration was pronounced after Maximian had resumed the purple.]

Diocletian, who, from a servile origin, had raised himself to the throne, passed the nine last years of his life in a private condition. Reason had dictated, and content seems to have accompanied, his retreat, in which he enjoyed, for a long time, the respect of those princes to whom he had resigned the possession of the world. [111](#) It is seldom that minds long exercised in business have formed any habits of conversing with themselves, and in the loss of power they principally regret the want of occupation. The amusements of letters and of devotion, which afford so many resources in solitude, were incapable of fixing the attention of Diocletian; but he had preserved, or at least he soon recovered, a taste for the most innocent as well as natural pleasures, and his leisure hours were sufficiently employed in building, planting, and gardening. His answer to Maximian is deservedly celebrated. He was solicited by that restless old man to reassume the reins of government, and the Imperial purple. He rejected the temptation with a smile of pity, calmly observing, that if he could show Maximian the cabbages which he had planted with his own hands at Salona, he should no longer be urged to relinquish the enjoyment of happiness for the pursuit of power. [112](#) In his conversations with his friends, he frequently acknowledged, that of all arts, the most difficult was the art of reigning; and he expressed himself on that favorite topic with a degree of warmth which could be the result only of experience. "How often," was he accustomed to say, "is it the interest of four or five ministers to combine together to deceive their sovereign! Secluded from mankind by his exalted dignity, the truth is concealed from his knowledge; he can see only with their eyes, he hears nothing but their misrepresentations. He confers the most important offices upon vice and weakness, and disgraces the most virtuous and deserving among his subjects. By such infamous arts," added Diocletian, "the best and wisest princes are sold to the venal corruption of their courtiers." [113](#) A just estimate of greatness, and the assurance of immortal fame, improve our relish for the pleasures of retirement; but the Roman emperor had filled too important a character in the world, to enjoy without alloy the comforts and security of a private condition. It was impossible that he could remain ignorant of the troubles which afflicted the empire after his abdication. It was impossible that he could be indifferent to their consequences. Fear, sorrow, and discontent, sometimes pursued him into the solitude of Salona. His tenderness, or at least his pride, was deeply wounded

by the misfortunes of his wife and daughter; and the last moments of Diocletian were imbittered by some affronts, which Licinius and Constantine might have spared the father of so many emperors, and the first author of their own fortune. A report, though of a very doubtful nature, has reached our times, that he prudently withdrew himself from their power by a voluntary death. [114](#)

- 111 [\(return\)](#)
[Eumenius pays him a very fine compliment: “At enim divinum illum virum, qui primus imperium et participavit et posuit, consilii et facti sui non poenitet; nec amisisse se putat quod sponte transcripsit. Felix beatusque vere quem vestra, tantorum principum, colunt privatum.” Panegy. Vet. vii. 15.]
- 112 [\(return\)](#)
[We are obliged to the younger Victor for this celebrated item. Eutropius mentions the thing in a more general manner.]
- 113 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 223, 224. Vopiscus had learned this conversation from his father.]
- 114 [\(return\)](#)
[The younger Victor slightly mentions the report. But as Diocletian had disobliged a powerful and successful party, his memory has been loaded with every crime and misfortune. It has been affirmed that he died raving mad, that he was condemned as a criminal by the Roman senate, &c.]

Before we dismiss the consideration of the life and character of Diocletian, we may, for a moment, direct our view to the place of his retirement. Salona, a principal city of his native province of Dalmatia, was near two hundred Roman miles (according to the measurement of the public highways) from Aquileia and the confines of Italy, and about two hundred and seventy from Sirmium, the usual residence of the emperors whenever they visited the Illyrian frontier. [115](#) A miserable village still preserves the name of Salona; but so late as the sixteenth century, the remains of a theatre, and a confused prospect of broken arches and marble columns, continued to attest its ancient splendor. [116](#) About six or seven miles from the city Diocletian constructed a magnificent palace, and we may infer, from the greatness of the work, how long he had meditated his design of abdicating the empire. The choice of a spot which united all that could contribute either to health or to luxury did not require the partiality of a native. “The soil was dry and fertile, the air is pure and wholesome, and, though extremely hot during the summer months, this country seldom feels those sultry and noxious winds to which the coasts of Istria and some parts of Italy are exposed. The views from the palace are no less beautiful than the soil and climate were inviting. Towards the west lies the fertile shore that stretches along the Adriatic, in which a number of small islands are

scattered in such a manner as to give this part of the sea the appearance of a great lake. On the north side lies the bay, which led to the ancient city of Salona; and the country beyond it, appearing in sight, forms a proper contrast to that more extensive prospect of water, which the Adriatic presents both to the south and to the east. Towards the north, the view is terminated by high and irregular mountains, situated at a proper distance, and in many places covered with villages, woods, and vineyards.” [117](#)

115 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Itiner. p. 269, 272, edit. Wessel.]

116 [\(return\)](#)
[The Abate Fortis, in his Viaggio in Dalmazia, p. 43, (printed at Venice in the year 1774, in two small volumes in quarto,) quotes a Ms account of the antiquities of Salona, composed by Giambattista Giustiniani about the middle of the xvith century.]

117 [\(return\)](#)
[Adam’s Antiquities of Diocletian’s Palace at Spalatro, p. 6. We may add a circumstance or two from the Abate Fortis: the little stream of the Hyader, mentioned by Lucan, produces most exquisite trout, which a sagacious writer, perhaps a monk, supposes to have been one of the principal reasons that determined Diocletian in the choice of his retirement. Fortis, p. 45. The same author (p. 38) observes, that a taste for agriculture is reviving at Spalatro; and that an experimental farm has lately been established near the city, by a society of gentlemen.]

Though Constantine, from a very obvious prejudice, affects to mention the palace of Diocletian with contempt, [118](#) yet one of their successors, who could only see it in a neglected and mutilated state, celebrates its magnificence in terms of the highest admiration. [119](#) It covered an extent of ground consisting of between nine and ten English acres. The form was quadrangular, flanked with sixteen towers. Two of the sides were near six hundred, and the other two near seven hundred feet in length. The whole was constructed of a beautiful freestone, extracted from the neighboring quarries of Trau, or Tragutium, and very little inferior to marble itself. Four streets, intersecting each other at right angles, divided the several parts of this great edifice, and the approach to the principal apartment was from a very stately entrance, which is still denominated the Golden Gate. The approach was terminated by a *peristylum* of granite columns, on one side of which we discover the square temple of Æsculapius, on the other the octagon temple of Jupiter. The latter of those deities Diocletian revered as the patron of his fortunes, the former as the protector of his health. By comparing the present remains with the precepts of Vitruvius, the several parts of the building, the baths, bedchamber, the *atrium*, the *basilica*, and the Cyzicene, Corinthian, and Egyptian halls have been described with some degree of precision, or at least of

probability. Their forms were various, their proportions just; but they all were attended with two imperfections, very repugnant to our modern notions of taste and conveniency. These stately rooms had neither windows nor chimneys. They were lighted from the top, (for the building seems to have consisted of no more than one story,) and they received their heat by the help of pipes that were conveyed along the walls. The range of principal apartments was protected towards the south-west by a portico five hundred and seventeen feet long, which must have formed a very noble and delightful walk, when the beauties of painting and sculpture were added to those of the prospect.

118

[\(return\)](#)

[Constantin. Orat. ad Coetum Sanct. c. 25. In this sermon, the emperor, or the bishop who composed it for him, affects to relate the miserable end of all the persecutors of the church.]

119

[\(return\)](#)

[Constantin. Porphy. de Statu Imper. p. 86.]

Had this magnificent edifice remained in a solitary country, it would have been exposed to the ravages of time; but it might, perhaps, have escaped the rapacious industry of man. The village of Aspalathus, [120](#) and, long afterwards, the provincial town of Spalatro, have grown out of its ruins. The Golden Gate now opens into the market-place. St. John the Baptist has usurped the honors of Æsculapius; and the temple of Jupiter, under the protection of the Virgin, is converted into the cathedral church.

For this account of Diocletian's palace we are principally indebted to an ingenious artist of our own time and country, whom a very liberal curiosity carried into the heart of Dalmatia. [121](#) But there is room to suspect that the elegance of his designs and engraving has somewhat flattered the objects which it was their purpose to represent. We are informed by a more recent and very judicious traveller, that the awful ruins of Spalatro are not less expressive of the decline of the art than of the greatness of the Roman empire in the time of Diocletian. [122](#) If such was indeed the state of architecture, we must naturally believe that painting and sculpture had experienced a still more sensible decay. The practice of architecture is directed by a few general and even mechanical rules. But sculpture, and, above all, painting, propose to themselves the imitation not only of the forms of nature, but of the characters and passions of the human soul. In those sublime arts the dexterity of the hand is of little avail, unless it is animated by fancy, and guided by the most correct taste and observation.

120

[\(return\)](#)

[D'Anville, Geographie Ancienne, tom. i. p. 162.]

121

[\(return\)](#)

[Messieurs Adam and Clerisseau, attended by two draughtsmen visited Spalatro in the month of July, 1757. The magnificent work which their journey produced was published in London seven years afterwards.]

[I shall quote the words of the Abate Fortis. "E'bastevolmente agli amatori dell' Architettura, e dell' Antichita, l'opera del Signor Adams, che a donato molto a que' superbi vestigi coll'abituale eleganza del suo toccalapis e del bulino. In generale la rozzezza del scalpello, e'l cattivo gusto del secolo vi gareggiano colla magnificenz del fabricato." See Viaggio in Dalmazia, p. 40.]

It is almost unnecessary to remark, that the civil distractions of the empire, the license of the soldiers, the inroads of the barbarians, and the progress of despotism, had proved very unfavorable to genius, and even to learning. The succession of Illyrian princes restored the empire without restoring the sciences. Their military education was not calculated to inspire them with the love of letters; and even the mind of Diocletian, however active and capacious in business, was totally uninformed by study or speculation. The professions of law and physic are of such common use and certain profit that they will always secure a sufficient number of practitioners endowed with a reasonable degree of abilities and knowledge; but it does not appear that the students in those two faculties appeal to any celebrated masters who have flourished within that period. The voice of poetry was silent. History was reduced to dry and confused abridgments, alike destitute of amusement and instruction. A languid and affected eloquence was still retained in the pay and service of the emperors, who encouraged not any arts except those which contributed to the gratification of their pride, or the defence of their power. [123](#)

[The orator Eumenius was secretary to the emperors Maximian and Constantius, and Professor of Rhetoric in the college of Autun. His salary was six hundred thousand sesterces, which, according to the lowest computation of that age, must have exceeded three thousand pounds a year. He generously requested the permission of employing it in rebuilding the college. See his Oration De Restaurandis Scholis; which, though not exempt from vanity, may atone for his panegyrics.]

The declining age of learning and of mankind is marked, however, by the rise and rapid progress of the new Platonists. The school of Alexandria silenced those of Athens; and the ancient sects enrolled themselves under the banners of the more fashionable teachers, who recommended their system by the novelty of their method, and the austerity of their manners. Several of these masters, Ammonius, Plotinus, Amelius, and Porphyry, [124](#) were men of profound thought and intense application; but by mistaking the true object of philosophy, their labors contributed much less to improve than to corrupt the human understanding. The knowledge that is suited to our situation and powers, the whole compass of moral, natural, and mathematical science, was neglected

by the new Platonists; whilst they exhausted their strength in the verbal disputes of metaphysics, attempted to explore the secrets of the invisible world, and studied to reconcile Aristotle with Plato, on subjects of which both these philosophers were as ignorant as the rest of mankind. Consuming their reason in these deep but unsubstantial meditations, their minds were exposed to illusions of fancy. They flattered themselves that they possessed the secret of disengaging the soul from its corporal prison; claimed a familiar intercourse with demons and spirits; and, by a very singular revolution, converted the study of philosophy into that of magic. The ancient sages had derided the popular superstition; after disguising its extravagance by the thin pretence of allegory, the disciples of Plotinus and Porphyry became its most zealous defenders. As they agreed with the Christians in a few mysterious points of faith, they attacked the remainder of their theological system with all the fury of civil war. The new Platonists would scarcely deserve a place in the history of science, but in that of the church the mention of them will very frequently occur.

124

[\(return\)](#)

[Porphyry died about the time of Diocletian's abdication. The life of his master Plotinus, which he composed, will give us the most complete idea of the genius of the sect, and the manners of its professors. This very curious piece is inserted in Fabricius Bibliotheca Græca tom. iv. p. 88—148.]

Chapter XIV: Six Emperors At The Same Time, Reunion Of The Empire.—Part I.

Troubles After The Abdication Of Diocletian.—Death Of Constantius.—Elevation Of Constantine And Maxen Tius.—Six Emperors At The Same Time.—Death Of Maximian And Galerius.—Victories Of Constantine Over Maxentius And Licinus.—Reunion Of The Empire Under The Authority Of Constantine.

The balance of power established by Diocletian subsisted no longer than while it was sustained by the firm and dexterous hand of the founder. It required such a fortunate mixture of different tempers and abilities as could scarcely be found or even expected a second time; two emperors without jealousy, two Cæsars without ambition, and the same general interest invariably pursued by four independent princes. The abdication of Diocletian and Maximian was succeeded by eighteen years of discord and confusion. The empire was afflicted by five civil wars; and the remainder of the time was not so much a state of tranquillity as a suspension of arms between several hostile monarchs, who, viewing each other with an eye of fear and hatred, strove to increase their respective forces at the expense of their subjects.

As soon as Diocletian and Maximian had resigned the purple, their station, according to the rules of the new constitution, was filled by the two Cæsars, Constantius and Galerius, who immediately assumed the title of Augustus. [1](#)

1

[\(return\)](#)

[M. de Montesquieu (Considerations sur la Grandeur et La Decadence des Romains, c. 17) supposes, on the authority of Orosius and Eusebius, that, on this occasion, the empire, for the first time, was really divided into two parts. It is difficult, however, to discover in what respect the plan of Galerius differed from that of Diocletian.]

The honors of seniority and precedence were allowed to the former of those princes, and he continued under a new appellation to administer his ancient department of Gaul, Spain, and Britain.

The government of those ample provinces was sufficient to exercise his talents and to satisfy his ambition. Clemency, temperance, and moderation, distinguished the amiable character of Constantius, and his fortunate subjects had frequently occasion to compare the virtues of their sovereign with the passions of Maximian, and even with the arts of Diocletian. [2](#) Instead of imitating their eastern pride and magnificence, Constantius preserved the modesty of a Roman prince. He declared, with unaffected sincerity, that his most valued treasure was in the hearts of his people, and that, whenever the dignity of the throne, or the danger of the state, required any extraordinary supply, he could depend with confidence on their gratitude and liberality. [3](#) The provincials of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, sensible of his worth, and of their own happiness, reflected with anxiety on the declining health of the emperor Constantius, and the tender age of his numerous family, the issue of his second marriage with the daughter of Maximian.

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Hic non modo amabilis, sed etiam venerabilis Gallis fuit; præcipue quod Diocletiani suspectam prudentiam, et Maximiani sanguinariam violentiam imperio ejus evaserant. Eutrop. Breviar. x. i.]

3

[\(return\)](#)

[Divitiis Provincialium (mel. provinciarum) ac privatorum studens, fisci commoda non admodum affectans; ducensque melius publicas opes a privatis haberi, quam intra unum claustrum reservari. Id. ibid. He carried this maxim so far, that whenever he gave an entertainment, he was obliged to borrow a service of plate.]

The stern temper of Galerius was cast in a very different mould; and while he commanded the esteem of his subjects, he seldom condescended to solicit their affections. His fame in arms, and, above all, the success of the Persian war, had elated his haughty mind, which was naturally impatient of a superior, or even of an equal. If

it were possible to rely on the partial testimony of an injudicious writer, we might ascribe the abdication of Diocletian to the menaces of Galerius, and relate the particulars of a *private* conversation between the two princes, in which the former discovered as much pusillanimity as the latter displayed ingratitude and arrogance. [4](#) But these obscure anecdotes are sufficiently refuted by an impartial view of the character and conduct of Diocletian. Whatever might otherwise have been his intentions, if he had apprehended any danger from the violence of Galerius, his good sense would have instructed him to prevent the ignominious contest; and as he had held the sceptre with glory, he would have resigned it without disgrace.

4

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius de Mort. Persecutor. c. 18. Were the particulars of this conference more consistent with truth and decency, we might still ask how they came to the knowledge of an obscure rhetorician. But there are many historians who put us in mind of the admirable saying of the great Conde to Cardinal de Retz: “Ces coquins nous font parler et agir, comme ils auroient fait eux-memes a notre place.” * Note: This attack upon Lactantius is unfounded. Lactantius was so far from having been an obscure rhetorician, that he had taught rhetoric publicly, and with the greatest success, first in Africa, and afterwards in Nicomedia. His reputation obtained him the esteem of Constantine, who invited him to his court, and intrusted to him the education of his son Crispus. The facts which he relates took place during his own time; he cannot be accused of dishonesty or imposture. Satis me vixisse arbitrabor et officium hominis implese si labor meus aliquos homines, ab erroribus iberatos, ad iter coeleste direxerit. De Opif. Dei, cap. 20. The eloquence of Lactantius has caused him to be called the Christian Cicero. Annon Gent.—G. —Yet no unprejudiced person can read this coarse and particular private conversation of the two emperors, without assenting to the justice of Gibbon’s severe sentence. But the authorship of the treatise is by no means certain. The fame of Lactantius for eloquence as well as for truth, would suffer no loss if it should be adjudged to some more “obscure rhetorician.” Manso, in his *Leben Constantins des Grossen*, concurs on this point with Gibbon *Beilage*, iv. — M.]

After the elevation of Constantius and Galerius to the rank of *Augusti*, two new *Cæsars* were required to supply their place, and to complete the system of the Imperial government. Diocletian was sincerely desirous of withdrawing himself from the world; he considered Galerius, who had married his daughter, as the firmest support

of his family and of the empire; and he consented, without reluctance, that his successor should assume the merit as well as the envy of the important nomination. It was fixed without consulting the interest or inclination of the princes of the West. Each of them had a son who was arrived at the age of manhood, and who might have been deemed the most natural candidates for the vacant honor. But the impotent resentment of Maximian was no longer to be dreaded; and the moderate Constantius, though he might despise the dangers, was humanely apprehensive of the calamities, of civil war. The two persons whom Galerius promoted to the rank of Cæsar were much better suited to serve the views of his ambition; and their principal recommendation seems to have consisted in the want of merit or personal consequence. The first of these was Daza, or, as he was afterwards called, Maximin, whose mother was the sister of Galerius. The unexperienced youth still betrayed, by his manners and language, his rustic education, when, to his own astonishment, as well as that of the world, he was invested by Diocletian with the purple, exalted to the dignity of Cæsar, and intrusted with the sovereign command of Egypt and Syria. [5](#) At the same time, Severus, a faithful servant, addicted to pleasure, but not incapable of business, was sent to Milan, to receive, from the reluctant hands of Maximian, the Cæsarian ornaments, and the possession of Italy and Africa. According to the forms of the constitution, Severus acknowledged the supremacy of the western emperor; but he was absolutely devoted to the commands of his benefactor Galerius, who, reserving to himself the intermediate countries from the confines of Italy to those of Syria, firmly established his power over three fourths of the monarchy. In the full confidence that the approaching death of Constantius would leave him sole master of the Roman world, we are assured that he had arranged in his mind a long succession of future princes, and that he meditated his own retreat from public life, after he should have accomplished a glorious reign of about twenty years. [6](#) [7](#)

5 [\(return\)](#)

[Sublatus nuper a pecoribus et silvis (says Lactantius de M. P. c. 19) statim Scutarius, continuo Protector, mox Tribunus, postridie Cæsar, accepit Orientem. Aurelius Victor is too liberal in giving him the whole portion of Diocletian.]

6 [\(return\)](#)

[His diligence and fidelity are acknowledged even by Lactantius, de M. P. c. 18.]

7 [\(return\)](#)

[These schemes, however, rest only on the very doubtful authority of Lactantius de M. P. c. 20.]

But within less than eighteen months, two unexpected revolutions overturned the ambitious schemes of Galerius. The hopes of uniting the western provinces to his empire were disappointed by the elevation of Constantine, whilst Italy and Africa were lost by the successful revolt of Maxentius.

I. The fame of Constantine has rendered posterity attentive to the most minute circumstances of his life and actions. The place of his birth, as well as the condition of his mother Helena, have been the subject, not only of literary, but of national disputes. Notwithstanding the recent tradition, which assigns for her father a British king, [8](#) we are obliged to confess, that Helena was the daughter of an innkeeper; but at the same time, we may defend the legality of her marriage, against those who have represented her as the concubine of Constantius. [9](#) The great Constantine was most probably born at Naissus, in Dacia; [10](#) and it is not surprising that, in a family and province distinguished only by the profession of arms, the youth should discover very little inclination to improve his mind by the acquisition of knowledge. [11](#) He was about eighteen years of age when his father was promoted to the rank of Cæsar; but that fortunate event was attended with his mother's divorce; and the splendor of an Imperial alliance reduced the son of Helena to a state of disgrace and humiliation. Instead of following Constantius in the West, he remained in the service of Diocletian, signalized his valor in the wars of Egypt and Persia, and gradually rose to the honorable station of a tribune of the first order. The figure of Constantine was tall and majestic; he was dexterous in all his exercises, intrepid in war, affable in peace; in his whole conduct, the active spirit of youth was tempered by habitual prudence; and while his mind was engrossed by ambition, he appeared cold and insensible to the allurements of pleasure. The favor of the people and soldiers, who had named him as a worthy candidate for the rank of Cæsar, served only to exasperate the jealousy of Galerius; and though prudence might restrain him from exercising any open violence, an absolute monarch is seldom at a loss how to execute a sure and secret revenge. [12](#) Every hour increased the danger of Constantine, and the anxiety of his father, who, by repeated letters, expressed the warmest desire of embracing his son. For some time the policy of Galerius supplied him with delays and excuses; but it was impossible long to refuse so natural a request of his associate, without maintaining his refusal by arms. The permission of the journey was reluctantly granted, and whatever precautions the emperor might have taken to intercept a return, the consequences of which he, with so much reason, apprehended, they were effectually disappointed by the incredible diligence of Constantine. [13](#) Leaving the palace of Nicomedia in the night, he travelled post through Bithynia, Thrace, Dacia, Pannonia, Italy, and Gaul, and, amidst the joyful acclamations of the people, reached the port of Boulogne in the very moment when his father was preparing to embark for Britain. [14](#)

[This tradition, unknown to the contemporaries of Constantine was invented in the darkness of monestaries, was embellished by Jeffrey of Monmouth, and the writers of the xiith century, has been defended by our antiquarians of the last age, and is seriously related in the ponderous History of England, compiled by Mr. Carte, (vol. i. p. 147.) He transports, however, the kingdom of Coil, the

imaginary father of Helena, from Essex to the wall of Antoninus.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Eutropius (x. 2) expresses, in a few words, the real truth, and the occasion of the error “ex obscuriori matrimonio ejus filius.” Zosimus (l. ii. p. 78) eagerly seized the most unfavorable report, and is followed by Orosius, (vii. 25,) whose authority is oddly enough overlooked by the indefatigable, but partial Tillemont. By insisting on the divorce of Helena, Diocletian acknowledged her marriage.]

10

[\(return\)](#)

[There are three opinions with regard to the place of Constantine’s birth. 1. Our English antiquarians were used to dwell with rapture on the words of his panegyrist, “Britannias illic oriendo nobiles fecisti.” But this celebrated passage may be referred with as much propriety to the accession, as to the nativity of Constantine. 2. Some of the modern Greeks have ascribed the honor of his birth to Drepanum, a town on the Gulf of Nicomedia, (Cellarius, tom. ii. p. 174,) which Constantine dignified with the name of Helenopolis, and Justinian adorned with many splendid buildings, (Procop. de Edificiis, v. 2.) It is indeed probable enough, that Helena’s father kept an inn at Drepanum, and that Constantius might lodge there when he returned from a Persian embassy, in the reign of Aurelian. But in the wandering life of a soldier, the place of his marriage, and the places where his children are born, have very little connection with each other. 3. The claim of Naissus is supported by the anonymous writer, published at the end of Ammianus, p. 710, and who in general copied very good materials; and it is confirmed by Julius Firmicus, (de Astrologia, l. i. c. 4,) who flourished under the reign of Constantine himself. Some objections have been raised against the integrity of the text, and the application of the passage of Firmicus but the former is established by the best Mss., and the latter is very ably defended by Lipsius de Magnitudine Romana, l. iv. c. 11, et Supplement.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[Literis minus instructus. Anonym. ad Ammian. p. 710.]

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Galerius, or perhaps his own courage, exposed him to single combat with a Sarmatian, (Anonym. p. 710,) and with a monstrous lion. See Praxagoras

apud Photium, p. 63. Praxagoras, an Athenian philosopher, had written a life of Constantine in two books, which are now lost. He was a contemporary.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 78, 79. Lactantius de M. P. c. 24. The former tells a very foolish story, that Constantine caused all the post-horses which he had used to be hamstrung. Such a bloody execution, without preventing a pursuit, would have scattered suspicions, and might have stopped his journey. * Note: Zosimus is not the only writer who tells this story. The younger Victor confirms it. *Ad frustrandos insequentes, publica jumenta, quaquam iter ageret, interficiens.* Aurelius Victor de Cæsar says the same thing, G. as also the Anonymus Valesii.— M. —Manso, (*Leben Constantins.*) p. 18, observes that the story has been exaggerated; he took this precaution during the first stage of his journey.—M.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[Anonym. p. 710. Panegy. Veter. vii. 4. But Zosimus, l. ii. p. 79, Eusebius de Vit. Constant. l. i. c. 21, and Lactantius de M. P. c. 24. suppose, with less accuracy, that he found his father on his death-bed.]

The British expedition, and an easy victory over the barbarians of Caledonia, were the last exploits of the reign of Constantius. He ended his life in the Imperial palace of York, fifteen months after he had received the title of Augustus, and almost fourteen years and a half after he had been promoted to the rank of Cæsar. His death was immediately succeeded by the elevation of Constantine. The ideas of inheritance and succession are so very familiar, that the generality of mankind consider them as founded not only in reason but in nature itself. Our imagination readily transfers the same principles from private property to public dominion: and whenever a virtuous father leaves behind him a son whose merit seems to justify the esteem, or even the hopes, of the people, the joint influence of prejudice and of affection operates with irresistible weight. The flower of the western armies had followed Constantius into Britain, and the national troops were reënforced by a numerous body of Alemanni, who obeyed the orders of Crocus, one of their hereditary chieftains. [15](#) The opinion of their own importance, and the assurance that Britain, Gaul, and Spain would acquiesce in their nomination, were diligently inculcated to the legions by the adherents of Constantine. The soldiers were asked, whether they could hesitate a moment between the honor of placing at their head the worthy son of their beloved emperor, and the ignominy of tamely expecting the arrival of some obscure stranger, on whom it might please the sovereign of Asia to bestow the armies and provinces of the West. It was insinuated to

them, that gratitude and liberality held a distinguished place among the virtues of Constantine; nor did that artful prince show himself to the troops, till they were prepared to salute him with the names of Augustus and Emperor. The throne was the object of his desires; and had he been less actuated by ambition, it was his only means of safety. He was well acquainted with the character and sentiments of Galerius, and sufficiently apprised, that if he wished to live he must determine to reign. The decent and even obstinate resistance which he chose to affect, [16](#) was contrived to justify his usurpation; nor did he yield to the acclamations of the army, till he had provided the proper materials for a letter, which he immediately despatched to the emperor of the East. Constantine informed him of the melancholy event of his father's death, modestly asserted his natural claim to the succession, and respectfully lamented, that the affectionate violence of his troops had not permitted him to solicit the Imperial purple in the regular and constitutional manner. The first emotions of Galerius were those of surprise, disappointment, and rage; and as he could seldom restrain his passions, he loudly threatened, that he would commit to the flames both the letter and the messenger. But his resentment insensibly subsided; and when he recollected the doubtful chance of war, when he had weighed the character and strength of his adversary, he consented to embrace the honorable accommodation which the prudence of Constantine had left open to him. Without either condemning or ratifying the choice of the British army, Galerius accepted the son of his deceased colleague as the sovereign of the provinces beyond the Alps; but he gave him only the title of Cæsar, and the fourth rank among the Roman princes, whilst he conferred the vacant place of Augustus on his favorite Severus. The apparent harmony of the empire was still preserved, and Constantine, who already possessed the substance, expected, without impatience, an opportunity of obtaining the honors, of supreme power. [17](#)

15

[\(return\)](#)

[Cunctis qui aderant, annitentibus, sed præcipue Croco (alii Eroco) [Erich?] Alamannorum Rege, auxilii gratia Constantium comitato, imperium capit. Victor Junior, c. 41. This is perhaps the first instance of a barbarian king, who assisted the Roman arms with an independent body of his own subjects. The practice grew familiar and at last became fatal.]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[His panegyrist Eumenius (vii. 8) ventures to affirm in the presence of Constantine, that he put spurs to his horse, and tried, but in vain, to escape from the hands of his soldiers.]

17

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius de M. P. c. 25. Eumenius (vii. 8.) gives a rhetorical turn to the whole transaction.]

The children of Constantius by his second marriage were six in number, three of either sex, and whose Imperial descent might have solicited a preference over the

meaner extraction of the son of Helena. But Constantine was in the thirty-second year of his age, in the full vigor both of mind and body, at the time when the eldest of his brothers could not possibly be more than thirteen years old. His claim of superior merit had been allowed and ratified by the dying emperor. [18](#) In his last moments Constantius bequeathed to his eldest son the care of the safety as well as greatness of the family; conjuring him to assume both the authority and the sentiments of a father with regard to the children of Theodora. Their liberal education, advantageous marriages, the secure dignity of their lives, and the first honors of the state with which they were invested, attest the fraternal affection of Constantine; and as those princes possessed a mild and grateful disposition, they submitted without reluctance to the superiority of his genius and fortune. [19](#)

18

[\(return\)](#)

[The choice of Constantine, by his dying father, which is warranted by reason, and insinuated by Eumenius, seems to be confirmed by the most unexceptionable authority, the concurring evidence of Lactantius (de M. P. c. 24) and of Libanius, (Oratio i.,) of Eusebius (in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 18, 21) and of Julian, (Oratio i)]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Of the three sisters of Constantine, Constantia married the emperor Licinius, Anastasia the Cæsar Bassianus, and Eutropia the consul Nepotianus. The three brothers were, Dalmatius, Julius Constantius, and Annibalianus, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.]

II. The ambitious spirit of Galerius was scarcely reconciled to the disappointment of his views upon the Gallic provinces, before the unexpected loss of Italy wounded his pride as well as power in a still more sensible part. The long absence of the emperors had filled Rome with discontent and indignation; and the people gradually discovered, that the preference given to Nicomedia and Milan was not to be ascribed to the particular inclination of Diocletian, but to the permanent form of government which he had instituted. It was in vain that, a few months after his abdication, his successors dedicated, under his name, those magnificent baths, whose ruins still supply the ground as well as the materials for so many churches and convents. [20](#) The tranquility of those elegant recesses of ease and luxury was disturbed by the impatient murmurs of the Romans, and a report was insensibly circulated, that the sums expended in erecting those buildings would soon be required at their hands. About that time the avarice of Galerius, or perhaps the exigencies of the state, had induced him to make a very strict and rigorous inquisition into the property of his subjects, for the purpose of a general taxation, both on their lands and on their persons. A very minute survey appears to have been taken of their real estates; and wherever there was the slightest suspicion of concealment, torture was very freely employed to obtain a sincere declaration of their

personal wealth. ²¹ The privileges which had exalted Italy above the rank of the provinces were no longer regarded: ²¹¹ and the officers of the revenue already began to number the Roman people, and to settle the proportion of the new taxes. Even when the spirit of freedom had been utterly extinguished, the tamest subjects have sometimes ventured to resist an unprecedented invasion of their property; but on this occasion the injury was aggravated by the insult, and the sense of private interest was quickened by that of national honor. The conquest of Macedonia, as we have already observed, had delivered the Roman people from the weight of personal taxes.

Though they had experienced every form of despotism, they had now enjoyed that exemption near five hundred years; nor could they patiently brook the insolence of an Illyrian peasant, who, from his distant residence in Asia, presumed to number Rome among the tributary cities of his empire. The rising fury of the people was encouraged by the authority, or at least the connivance, of the senate; and the feeble remains of the Prætorian guards, who had reason to apprehend their own dissolution, embraced so honorable a pretence, and declared their readiness to draw their swords in the service of their oppressed country. It was the wish, and it soon became the hope, of every citizen, that after expelling from Italy their foreign tyrants, they should elect a prince who, by the place of his residence, and by his maxims of government, might once more deserve the title of Roman emperor. The name, as well as the situation, of Maxentius determined in his favor the popular enthusiasm.

20

[\(return\)](#)

[See Gruter. Inscript. p. 178. The six princes are all mentioned, Diocletian and Maximian as the senior Augusti, and fathers of the emperors. They jointly dedicate, for the use of their own Romans, this magnificent edifice. The architects have delineated the ruins of these Thermoe, and the antiquarians, particularly Donatus and Nardini, have ascertained the ground which they covered. One of the great rooms is now the Carthusian church; and even one of the porter's lodges is sufficient to form another church, which belongs to the Feuillans.]

21

[\(return\)](#)

[See Lactantius de M. P. c. 26, 31.]

211

[\(return\)](#)

[Saviguy, in his memoir on Roman taxation, (Mem. Berl. Academ. 1822, 1823, p. 5,) dates from this period the abolition of the Jus Italicum. He quotes a remarkable passage of Aurelius Victor. Hinc denique parti Italiæ invec tum tributorum ingens malum. Aur. Vict. c. 39. It was a necessary consequence of the division of the empire: it became impossible to maintain a second court and executive, and leave so large and fruitful a part of the territory exempt from contribution.—M.]

Maxentius was the son of the emperor Maximian, and he had married the daughter of Galerius. His birth and alliance seemed to offer him the fairest promise of succeeding to the empire; but his vices and incapacity procured him the same exclusion from the dignity of Cæsar, which Constantine had deserved by a dangerous superiority of merit. The policy of Galerius preferred such associates as would never disgrace the choice, nor dispute the commands, of their benefactor. An obscure stranger was therefore raised to the throne of Italy, and the son of the late emperor of the West was left to enjoy the luxury of a private fortune in a villa a few miles distant from the capital. The gloomy passions of his soul, shame, vexation, and rage, were inflamed by envy on the news of Constantine's success; but the hopes of Maxentius revived with the public discontent, and he was easily persuaded to unite his personal injury and pretensions with the cause of the Roman people. Two Prætorian tribunes and a commissary of provisions undertook the management of the conspiracy; and as every order of men was actuated by the same spirit, the immediate event was neither doubtful nor difficult. The præfect of the city, and a few magistrates, who maintained their fidelity to Severus, were massacred by the guards; and Maxentius, invested with the Imperial ornaments, was acknowledged by the applauding senate and people as the protector of the Roman freedom and dignity. It is uncertain whether Maximian was previously acquainted with the conspiracy; but as soon as the standard of rebellion was erected at Rome, the old emperor broke from the retirement where the authority of Diocletian had condemned him to pass a life of melancholy and solitude, and concealed his returning ambition under the disguise of paternal tenderness. At the request of his son and of the senate, he condescended to reassume the purple. His ancient dignity, his experience, and his fame in arms, added strength as well as reputation to the party of Maxentius. [22](#)

22

[\(return\)](#)

[The sixth Panegyric represents the conduct of Maximian in the most favorable light, and the ambiguous expression of Aurelius Victor, "retractante diu," may signify either that he contrived, or that he opposed, the conspiracy. See Zosimus, l. ii. p. 79, and Lactantius de M. P. c. 26.]

According to the advice, or rather the orders, of his colleague, the emperor Severus immediately hastened to Rome, in the full confidence, that, by his unexpected celerity, he should easily suppress the tumult of an unwarlike populace, commanded by a licentious youth. But he found on his arrival the gates of the city shut against him, the walls filled with men and arms, an experienced general at the head of the rebels, and his own troops without spirit or affection. A large body of Moors deserted to the enemy, allured by the promise of a large donative; and, if it be true that they had been levied by Maximian in his African war, preferring the natural feelings of gratitude to the artificial ties of allegiance. Anulinus, the Prætorian præfect, declared himself in favor of Maxentius, and drew after him the most considerable part of the troops, accustomed to obey his commands.

Rome, according to the expression of an orator, recalled her armies; and the unfortunate Severus, destitute of force and of counsel, retired, or rather fled, with precipitation, to Ravenna.

Here he might for some time have been safe. The fortifications of Ravenna were able to resist the attempts, and the morasses that surrounded the town were sufficient to prevent the approach, of the Italian army. The sea, which Severus commanded with a powerful fleet, secured him an inexhaustible supply of provisions, and gave a free entrance to the legions, which, on the return of spring, would advance to his assistance from Illyricum and the East. Maximian, who conducted the siege in person, was soon convinced that he might waste his time and his army in the fruitless enterprise, and that he had nothing to hope either from force or famine. With an art more suitable to the character of Diocletian than to his own, he directed his attack, not so much against the walls of Ravenna, as against the mind of Severus. The treachery which he had experienced disposed that unhappy prince to distrust the most sincere of his friends and adherents. The emissaries of Maximian easily persuaded his credulity, that a conspiracy was formed to betray the town, and prevailed upon his fears not to expose himself to the discretion of an irritated conqueror, but to accept the faith of an honorable capitulation. He was at first received with humanity and treated with respect. Maximian conducted the captive emperor to Rome, and gave him the most solemn assurances that he had secured his life by the resignation of the purple. But Severus could obtain only an easy death and an Imperial funeral. When the sentence was signified to him, the manner of executing it was left to his own choice; he preferred the favorite mode of the ancients, that of opening his veins; and as soon as he expired, his body was carried to the sepulchre which had been constructed for the family of Gallienus. [23](#)

23

[\(return\)](#)

[The circumstances of this war, and the death of Severus, are very doubtfully and variously told in our ancient fragments, (see Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. part i. p. 555.) I have endeavored to extract from them a consistent and probable narration. * Note: Manso justly observes that two totally different narratives might be formed, almost upon equal authority. Beylage, iv.—M.]

Chapter XIV: Six Emperors At The Same Time, Reunion Of The Empire.—Part II.

Though the characters of Constantine and Maxentius had very little affinity with each other, their situation and interest were the same; and prudence seemed to require that they should unite their forces against the common enemy. Notwithstanding the superiority of his age and dignity, the indefatigable Maximian passed the Alps, and,

courting a personal interview with the sovereign of Gaul, carried with him his daughter Fausta as the pledge of the new alliance. The marriage was celebrated at Arles with every circumstance of magnificence; and the ancient colleague of Diocletian, who again asserted his claim to the Western empire, conferred on his son-in-law and ally the title of Augustus. By consenting to receive that honor from Maximian, Constantine seemed to embrace the cause of Rome and of the senate; but his professions were ambiguous, and his assistance slow and ineffectual. He considered with attention the approaching contest between the masters of Italy and the emperor of the East, and was prepared to consult his own safety or ambition in the event of the war. [24](#)

24

[\(return\)](#)

[The sixth Panegyric was pronounced to celebrate the elevation of Constantine; but the prudent orator avoids the mention either of Galerius or of Maxentius. He introduces only one slight allusion to the actual troubles, and to the majesty of Rome.

* Note: Compare Manso, Beylage, iv. p. 302. Gibbon's account is at least as probable as that of his critic.—M.]

The importance of the occasion called for the presence and abilities of Galerius. At the head of a powerful army, collected from Illyricum and the East, he entered Italy, resolved to revenge the death of Severus, and to chastise the rebellious Romans; or, as he expressed his intentions, in the furious language of a barbarian, to extirpate the senate, and to destroy the people by the sword. But the skill of Maximian had concerted a prudent system of defence. The invader found every place hostile, fortified, and inaccessible; and though he forced his way as far as Narni, within sixty miles of Rome, his dominion in Italy was confined to the narrow limits of his camp. Sensible of the increasing difficulties of his enterprise, the haughty Galerius made the first advances towards a reconciliation, and despatched two of his most considerable officers to tempt the Roman princes by the offer of a conference, and the declaration of his paternal regard for Maxentius, who might obtain much more from his liberality than he could hope from the doubtful chance of war. [25](#) The offers of Galerius were rejected with firmness, his perfidious friendship refused with contempt, and it was not long before he discovered, that, unless he provided for his safety by a timely retreat, he had some reason to apprehend the fate of Severus. The wealth which the Romans defended against his rapacious tyranny, they freely contributed for his destruction. The name of Maximian, the popular arts of his son, the secret distribution of large sums, and the promise of still more liberal rewards, checked the ardor and corrupted the fidelity of the Illyrian legions; and when Galerius at length gave the signal of the retreat, it was with some difficulty that he could prevail on his veterans not to desert a banner which had so often conducted them to victory and honor. A contemporary writer assigns two other causes for the failure of the expedition; but they are both of such a nature, that a cautious historian will scarcely venture to adopt them. We are told that Galerius, who had formed

a very imperfect notion of the greatness of Rome by the cities of the East with which he was acquainted, found his forces inadequate to the siege of that immense capital.

But the extent of a city serves only to render it more accessible to the enemy: Rome had long since been accustomed to submit on the approach of a conqueror; nor could the temporary enthusiasm of the people have long contended against the discipline and valor of the legions. We are likewise informed that the legions themselves were struck with horror and remorse, and that those pious sons of the republic refused to violate the sanctity of their venerable parent. [26](#) But when we recollect with how much ease, in the more ancient civil wars, the zeal of party and the habits of military obedience had converted the native citizens of Rome into her most implacable enemies, we shall be inclined to distrust this extreme delicacy of strangers and barbarians, who had never beheld Italy till they entered it in a hostile manner. Had they not been restrained by motives of a more interested nature, they would probably have answered Galerius in the words of Cæsar's veterans: "If our general wishes to lead us to the banks of the Tyber, we are prepared to trace out his camp. Whatsoever walls he has determined to level with the ground, our hands are ready to work the engines: nor shall we hesitate, should the name of the devoted city be Rome itself." These are indeed the expressions of a poet; but of a poet who has been distinguished, and even censured, for his strict adherence to the truth of history. [27](#)

25 [\(return\)](#)

[With regard to this negotiation, see the fragments of an anonymous historian, published by Valesius at the end of his edition of Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 711. These fragments have furnished with several curious, and, as it should seem, authentic anecdotes.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius de M. P. c. 28. The former of these reasons is probably taken from Virgil's Shepherd: "Illam * * * ego huic nostra similem, Meliboeë, putavi," &c. Lactantius delights in these poetical illusions.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[Castra super Tusci si ponere Tybridis undas;
(jubeas)
Hesperios audax veniam metator in agros.
Tu quoscunque voles in planum effundere muros,
His aries actus disperget saxa lacertis;
Illa licet penitus tolli quam jusseris urbem
Roma sit.
Lucan. Pharsal. i. 381.]

The legions of Galerius exhibited a very melancholy proof of their disposition, by the ravages which they committed in their retreat. They murdered, they ravished, they plundered, they drove away the flocks and herds of the Italians; they burnt the villages

through which they passed, and they endeavored to destroy the country which it had not been in their power to subdue. During the whole march, Maxentius hung on their rear, but he very prudently declined a general engagement with those brave and desperate veterans. His father had undertaken a second journey into Gaul, with the hope of persuading Constantine, who had assembled an army on the frontier, to join in the pursuit, and to complete the victory. But the actions of Constantine were guided by reason, and not by resentment. He persisted in the wise resolution of maintaining a balance of power in the divided empire, and he no longer hated Galerius, when that aspiring prince had ceased to be an object of terror. [28](#)

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius de M. P. c. 27. Zosim. l. ii. p. 82. The latter, that Constantine, in his interview with Maximian, had promised to declare war against Galerius.]

The mind of Galerius was the most susceptible of the sterner passions, but it was not, however, incapable of a sincere and lasting friendship. Licinius, whose manners as well as character were not unlike his own, seems to have engaged both his affection and esteem. Their intimacy had commenced in the happier period perhaps of their youth and obscurity. It had been cemented by the freedom and dangers of a military life; they had advanced almost by equal steps through the successive honors of the service; and as soon as Galerius was invested with the Imperial dignity, he seems to have conceived the design of raising his companion to the same rank with himself. During the short period of his prosperity, he considered the rank of Cæsar as unworthy of the age and merit of Licinius, and rather chose to reserve for him the place of Constantius, and the empire of the West. While the emperor was employed in the Italian war, he intrusted his friend with the defence of the Danube; and immediately after his return from that unfortunate expedition, he invested Licinius with the vacant purple of Severus, resigning to his immediate command the provinces of Illyricum. [29](#) The news of his promotion was no sooner carried into the East, than Maximin, who governed, or rather oppressed, the countries of Egypt and Syria, betrayed his envy and discontent, disdained the inferior name of Cæsar, and, notwithstanding the prayers as well as arguments of Galerius, exacted, almost by violence, the equal title of Augustus. [30](#) For the first, and indeed for the last time, the Roman world was administered by six emperors. In the West, Constantine and Maxentius affected to reverence their father Maximian. In the East, Licinius and Maximin honored with more real consideration their benefactor Galerius. The opposition of interest, and the memory of a recent war, divided the empire into two great hostile powers; but their mutual fears produced an apparent tranquillity, and even a feigned reconciliation, till the death of the elder princes, of Maximian, and more particularly of Galerius, gave a new direction to the views and passions of their surviving associates.

29

[\(return\)](#)

[M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv.

part i. p. 559) has proved that Licinius, without passing through the intermediate rank of Cæsar, was declared Augustus, the 11th of November, A. D. 307, after the return of Galerius from Italy.]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius de M. P. c. 32. When Galerius declared Licinius Augustus with himself, he tried to satisfy his younger associates, by inventing for Constantine and Maximin (not Maxentius; see Baluze, p. 81) the new title of sons of the Augusti. But when Maximin acquainted him that he had been saluted Augustus by the army, Galerius was obliged to acknowledge him as well as Constantine, as equal associates in the Imperial dignity.]

When Maximian had reluctantly abdicated the empire, the venal orators of the times applauded his philosophic moderation. When his ambition excited, or at least encouraged, a civil war, they returned thanks to his generous patriotism, and gently censured that love of ease and retirement which had withdrawn him from the public service. [31](#) But it was impossible that minds like those of Maximian and his son could long possess in harmony an undivided power. Maxentius considered himself as the legal sovereign of Italy, elected by the Roman senate and people; nor would he endure the control of his father, who arrogantly declared that by *his* name and abilities the rash youth had been established on the throne. The cause was solemnly pleaded before the Prætorian guards; and those troops, who dreaded the severity of the old emperor, espoused the party of Maxentius. [32](#) The life and freedom of Maximian were, however, respected, and he retired from Italy into Illyricum, affecting to lament his past conduct, and secretly contriving new mischiefs. But Galerius, who was well acquainted with his character, soon obliged him to leave his dominions, and the last refuge of the disappointed Maximian was the court of his son-in-law Constantine. [33](#) He was received with respect by that artful prince, and with the appearance of filial tenderness by the empress Fausta. That he might remove every suspicion, he resigned the Imperial purple a second time, [34](#) professing himself at length convinced of the vanity of greatness and ambition. Had he persevered in this resolution, he might have ended his life with less dignity, indeed, than in his first retirement, yet, however, with comfort and reputation. But the near prospect of a throne brought back to his remembrance the state from whence he was fallen, and he resolved, by a desperate effort, either to reign or to perish. An incursion of the Franks had summoned Constantine, with a part of his army, to the banks of the Rhine; the remainder of the troops were stationed in the southern provinces of Gaul, which lay exposed to the enterprises of the Italian emperor, and a considerable treasure was deposited in the city of Arles. Maximian either craftily invented, or easily credited, a vain report of the death of Constantine. Without hesitation he ascended the throne, seized the treasure, and scattering it with his accustomed profusion among the soldiers, endeavored to awake in their minds the memory of his

ancient dignity and exploits. Before he could establish his authority, or finish the negotiation which he appears to have entered into with his son Maxentius, the celerity of Constantine defeated all his hopes. On the first news of his perfidy and ingratitude, that prince returned by rapid marches from the Rhine to the Saone, embarked on the last-mentioned river at Chalons, and, at Lyons trusting himself to the rapidity of the Rhone, arrived at the gates of Arles with a military force which it was impossible for Maximian to resist, and which scarcely permitted him to take refuge in the neighboring city of Marseilles. The narrow neck of land which joined that place to the continent was fortified against the besiegers, whilst the sea was open, either for the escape of Maximian, or for the succor of Maxentius, if the latter should choose to disguise his invasion of Gaul under the honorable pretence of defending a distressed, or, as he might allege, an injured father. Apprehensive of the fatal consequences of delay, Constantine gave orders for an immediate assault; but the scaling-ladders were found too short for the height of the walls, and Marseilles might have sustained as long a siege as it formerly did against the arms of Cæsar, if the garrison, conscious either of their fault or of their danger, had not purchased their pardon by delivering up the city and the person of Maximian. A secret but irrevocable sentence of death was pronounced against the usurper; he obtained only the same favor which he had indulged to Severus, and it was published to the world, that, oppressed by the remorse of his repeated crimes, he strangled himself with his own hands. After he had lost the assistance, and disdained the moderate counsels, of Diocletian, the second period of his active life was a series of public calamities and personal mortifications, which were terminated, in about three years, by an ignominious death. He deserved his fate; but we should find more reason to applaud the humanity of Constantine, if he had spared an old man, the benefactor of his father, and the father of his wife. During the whole of this melancholy transaction, it appears that Fausta sacrificed the sentiments of nature to her conjugal duties. [35](#)

31 [\(return\)](#)
[See Panegyr. Vet. vi. 9. Audi doloris nostri liberam vocem, &c. The whole passage is imagined with artful flattery, and expressed with an easy flow of eloquence.]

32 [\(return\)](#)
[Lactantius de M. P. c. 28. Zosim. l. ii. p. 82. A report was spread, that Maxentius was the son of some obscure Syrian, and had been substituted by the wife of Maximian as her own child. See Aurelius Victor, Anonym. Valesian, and Panegyr. Vet. ix. 3, 4.]

33 [\(return\)](#)
[Ab urbe pulsum, ab Italia fugatum, ab Illyrico repudiatum, provinciis, tuis copiis, tuo palatio recepisti. Eumen. in Panegyr Vet. vii. 14.]

34 [\(return\)](#)
[Lactantius de M. P. c. 29. Yet, after the resignation

of the purple, Constantine still continued to Maximian the pomp and honors of the Imperial dignity; and on all public occasions gave the right hand place to his father-in-law. Panegy. Vet. viii. 15.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosim. l. ii. p. 82. Eumenius in Panegy. Vet. vii. 16—21. The latter of these has undoubtedly represented the whole affair in the most favorable light for his sovereign. Yet even from this partial narrative we may conclude, that the repeated clemency of Constantine, and the reiterated treasons of Maximian, as they are described by Lactantius, (de M. P. c. 29, 30,) and copied by the moderns, are destitute of any historical foundation. Note: Yet some pagan authors relate and confirm them. Aurelius Victor speaking of Maximin, says, *cumque specie officii, dolis compositis, Constantinum generum tentaret acerbe, jure tamen interierat.* Aur. Vict. de Cæsar l. p. 623. Eutropius also says, *inde ad Gallias profectus est (Maximianus) composito tamquam a filio esset expulsus, ut Constantino genero jun geretur: moliens tamen Constantinum, reperta occasione, interficere, dedit justissimo exitu.* Eutrop. x. p. 661. (Anon. Gent.)—G. — These writers hardly confirm more than Gibbon admits; he denies the repeated clemency of Constantine, and the reiterated treasons of Maximian Compare Manso, p. 302.—M.]

The last years of Galerius were less shameful and unfortunate; and though he had filled with more glory the subordinate station of Cæsar than the superior rank of Augustus, he preserved, till the moment of his death, the first place among the princes of the Roman world. He survived his retreat from Italy about four years; and wisely relinquishing his views of universal empire, he devoted the remainder of his life to the enjoyment of pleasure, and to the execution of some works of public utility, among which we may distinguish the discharging into the Danube the superfluous waters of the Lake Pelso, and the cutting down the immense forests that encompassed it; an operation worthy of a monarch, since it gave an extensive country to the agriculture of his Pannonian subjects. [36](#) His death was occasioned by a very painful and lingering disorder. His body, swelled by an intemperate course of life to an unwieldy corpulence, was covered with ulcers, and devoured by innumerable swarms of those insects which have given their name to a most loathsome disease; [37](#) but as Galerius had offended a very zealous and powerful party among his subjects, his sufferings, instead of exciting their compassion, have been celebrated as the visible effects of divine justice. [38](#) He had no sooner expired in his palace of Nicomedia, than the two emperors who were

indebted for their purple to his favors, began to collect their forces, with the intention either of disputing, or of dividing, the dominions which he had left without a master. They were persuaded, however, to desist from the former design, and to agree in the latter. The provinces of Asia fell to the share of Maximin, and those of Europe augmented the portion of Licinius. The Hellespont and the Thracian Bosphorus formed their mutual boundary, and the banks of those narrow seas, which flowed in the midst of the Roman world, were covered with soldiers, with arms, and with fortifications. The deaths of Maximian and of Galerius reduced the number of emperors to four. The sense of their true interest soon connected Licinius and Constantine; a secret alliance was concluded between Maximin and Maxentius, and their unhappy subjects expected with terror the bloody consequences of their inevitable dissensions, which were no longer restrained by the fear or the respect which they had entertained for Galerius. [39](#)

36

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor, c. 40. But that lake was situated on the upper Pannonia, near the borders of Noricum; and the province of Valeria (a name which the wife of Galerius gave to the drained country) undoubtedly lay between the Drave and the Danube, (Sextus Rufus, c. 9.) I should therefore suspect that Victor has confounded the Lake Pelso with the Volocean marshes, or, as they are now called, the Lake Sabaton. It is placed in the heart of Valeria, and its present extent is not less than twelve Hungarian miles (about seventy English) in length, and two in breadth. See Severini Pannonia, l. i. c. 9.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius (de M. P. c. 33) and Eusebius (l. viii. c. 16) describe the symptoms and progress of his disorder with singular accuracy and apparent pleasure.]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[If any (like the late Dr. Jortin, Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 307—356) still delight in recording the wonderful deaths of the persecutors, I would recommend to their perusal an admirable passage of Grotius (Hist. l. vii. p. 332) concerning the last illness of Philip II. of Spain.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[See Eusebius, l. ix. 6, 10. Lactantius de M. P. c. 36. Zosimus is less exact, and evidently confounds Maximian with Maximin.]

Among so many crimes and misfortunes, occasioned by the passions of the Roman princes, there is some pleasure in discovering a single action which may be ascribed to their virtue. In the sixth year of his reign, Constantine visited the city of Autun, and generously remitted the arrears of tribute, reducing at the same time the proportion of

their assessment from twenty-five to eighteen thousand heads, subject to the real and personal capitation. [40](#) Yet even this indulgence affords the most unquestionable proof of the public misery. This tax was so extremely oppressive, either in itself or in the mode of collecting it, that whilst the revenue was increased by extortion, it was diminished by despair: a considerable part of the territory of Autun was left uncultivated; and great numbers of the provincials rather chose to live as exiles and outlaws, than to support the weight of civil society. It is but too probable, that the bountiful emperor relieved, by a partial act of liberality, one among the many evils which he had caused by his general maxims of administration. But even those maxims were less the effect of choice than of necessity. And if we except the death of Maximian, the reign of Constantine in Gaul seems to have been the most innocent and even virtuous period of his life.

The provinces were protected by his presence from the inroads of the barbarians, who either dreaded or experienced his active valor. After a signal victory over the Franks and Alemanni, several of their princes were exposed by his order to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre of Treves, and the people seem to have enjoyed the spectacle, without discovering, in such a treatment of royal captives, any thing that was repugnant to the laws of nations or of humanity. [41](#)

40

[\(return\)](#)

[See the viiith Panegy., in which Eumenius displays, in the presence of Constantine, the misery and the gratitude of the city of Autun.]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[Eutropius, x. 3. Panegy. Veter. vii. 10, 11, 12. A great number of the French youth were likewise exposed to the same cruel and ignominious death Yet the panegyric assumes something of an apologetic tone. Te vero Constantine, quantumlibet oderint hoses, dum perhorrescant. Hæc est enim vera virtus, ut non ament et quiescant. The orator appeals to the ancient ideal of the republic.—M.]

The virtues of Constantine were rendered more illustrious by the vices of Maxentius. Whilst the Gallic provinces enjoyed as much happiness as the condition of the times was capable of receiving, Italy and Africa groaned under the dominion of a tyrant, as contemptible as he was odious. The zeal of flattery and faction has indeed too frequently sacrificed the reputation of the vanquished to the glory of their successful rivals; but even those writers who have revealed, with the most freedom and pleasure, the faults of Constantine, unanimously confess that Maxentius was cruel, rapacious, and profligate. [42](#) He had the good fortune to suppress a slight rebellion in Africa. The governor and a few adherents had been guilty; the province suffered for their crime. The flourishing cities of Cirtha and Carthage, and the whole extent of that fertile country, were wasted by fire and sword. The abuse of victory was followed by the abuse of law and justice. A formidable army of sycophants and delators invaded Africa; the

rich and the noble were easily convicted of a connection with the rebels; and those among them who experienced the emperor's clemency, were only punished by the confiscation of their estates. [43](#) So signal a victory was celebrated by a magnificent triumph, and Maxentius exposed to the eyes of the people the spoils and captives of a Roman province. The state of the capital was no less deserving of compassion than that of Africa. The wealth of Rome supplied an inexhaustible fund for his vain and prodigal expenses, and the ministers of his revenue were skilled in the arts of rapine. It was under his reign that the method of exacting a *free gift* from the senators was first invented; and as the sum was insensibly increased, the pretences of levying it, a victory, a birth, a marriage, or an imperial consulship, were proportionably multiplied. [44](#) Maxentius had imbibed the same implacable aversion to the senate, which had characterized most of the former tyrants of Rome; nor was it possible for his ungrateful temper to forgive the generous fidelity which had raised him to the throne, and supported him against all his enemies. The lives of the senators were exposed to his jealous suspicions, the dishonor of their wives and daughters heightened the gratification of his sensual passions. [45](#) It may be presumed that an Imperial lover was seldom reduced to sigh in vain; but whenever persuasion proved ineffectual, he had recourse to violence; and there remains *one* memorable example of a noble matron, who preserved her chastity by a voluntary death. The soldiers were the only order of men whom he appeared to respect, or studied to please. He filled Rome and Italy with armed troops, connived at their tumults, suffered them with impunity to plunder, and even to massacre, the defenceless people; [46](#) and indulging them in the same licentiousness which their emperor enjoyed, Maxentius often bestowed on his military favorites the splendid villa, or the beautiful wife, of a senator. A prince of such a character, alike incapable of governing, either in peace or in war, might purchase the support, but he could never obtain the esteem, of the army. Yet his pride was equal to his other vices. Whilst he passed his indolent life either within the walls of his palace, or in the neighboring gardens of Sallust, he was repeatedly heard to declare, that *he alone* was emperor, and that the other princes were no more than his lieutenants, on whom he had devolved the defence of the frontier provinces, that he might enjoy without interruption the elegant luxury of the capital. Rome, which had so long regretted the absence, lamented, during the six years of his reign, the presence of her sovereign. [47](#)

42

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian excludes Maxentius from the banquet of the Cæsars with abhorrence and contempt; and Zosimus (l. ii. p. 85) accuses him of every kind of cruelty and profligacy.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 83—85. Aurelius Victor.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[The passage of Aurelius Victor should be read in the following manner: Primus instituto pessimo,

munerum specie, Patres Oratores que pecuniam conferre prodigenti sibi cogeret.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[Panegy. Vet. ix. 3. Euseb. Hist Eccles. viii. 14, et in Vit. Constant i. 33, 34. Rufinus, c. 17. The virtuous matron who stabbed herself to escape the violence of Maxentius, was a Christian, wife to the præfect of the city, and her name was Sophronia. It still remains a question among the casuists, whether, on such occasions, suicide is justifiable.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Prætorianis cædem vulgi quondam annueret, is the vague expression of Aurelius Victor. See more particular, though somewhat different, accounts of a tumult and massacre which happened at Rome, in Eusebius, (l. viii. c. 14,) and in Zosimus, (l. ii. p. 84.)]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[See, in the Panegyrics, (ix. 14,) a lively description of the indolence and vain pride of Maxentius. In another place the orator observes that the riches which Rome had accumulated in a period of 1060 years, were lavished by the tyrant on his mercenary bands; redemptis ad civile latrocinium manibus in gesserat.]

Though Constantine might view the conduct of Maxentius with abhorrence, and the situation of the Romans with compassion, we have no reason to presume that he would have taken up arms to punish the one or to relieve the other. But the tyrant of Italy rashly ventured to provoke a formidable enemy, whose ambition had been hitherto restrained by considerations of prudence, rather than by principles of justice. [48](#) After the death of Maximian, his titles, according to the established custom, had been erased, and his statues thrown down with ignominy. His son, who had persecuted and deserted him when alive, effected to display the most pious regard for his memory, and gave orders that a similar treatment should be immediately inflicted on all the statues that had been erected in Italy and Africa to the honor of Constantine.

That wise prince, who sincerely wished to decline a war, with the difficulty and importance of which he was sufficiently acquainted, at first dissembled the insult, and sought for redress by the milder expedient of negotiation, till he was convinced that the hostile and ambitious designs of the Italian emperor made it necessary for him to arm in his own defence. Maxentius, who openly avowed his pretensions to the whole monarchy of the West, had already prepared a very considerable force to invade the Gallic provinces on the side of Rhætia; and though he could not expect any assistance from Licinius, he was flattered with the hope that the legions of Illyricum, allured by his presents and promises, would desert the standard of that prince, and unanimously declare themselves his soldiers and subjects. [49](#) Constantine no longer hesitated. He had

deliberated with caution, he acted with vigor. He gave a private audience to the ambassadors, who, in the name of the senate and people, conjured him to deliver Rome from a detested tyrant; and without regarding the timid remonstrances of his council, he resolved to prevent the enemy, and to carry the war into the heart of Italy. [50](#)

48

[\(return\)](#)

[After the victory of Constantine, it was universally allowed, that the motive of delivering the republic from a detested tyrant, would, at any time, have justified his expedition into Italy. Euseb in Vi'. Constantin. l. i. c. 26. Panegyr. Vet. ix. 2.]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 84, 85. Nazarius in Panegyr. x. 7—13.]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[See Panegyr. Vet. ix. 2. Omnibus fere tuis Comitibus et Ducibus non solum tacite mussantibus, sed etiam aperte timentibus; contra consilia hominum, contra Haruspicum monita, ipse per temet liberandæ arbis tempus venisse sentires. The embassy of the Romans is mentioned only by Zonaras, (l. xiii.) and by Cedrenus, (in Compend. Hist. p. 370;) but those modern Greeks had the opportunity of consulting many writers which have since been lost, among which we may reckon the life of Constantine by Praxagoras. Photius (p. 63) has made a short extract from that historical work.]

The enterprise was as full of danger as of glory; and the unsuccessful event of two former invasions was sufficient to inspire the most serious apprehensions. The veteran troops, who revered the name of Maximian, had embraced in both those wars the party of his son, and were now restrained by a sense of honor, as well as of interest, from entertaining an idea of a second desertion. Maxentius, who considered the Prætorian guards as the firmest defence of his throne, had increased them to their ancient establishment; and they composed, including the rest of the Italians who were enlisted into his service, a formidable body of fourscore thousand men. Forty thousand Moors and Carthaginians had been raised since the reduction of Africa. Even Sicily furnished its proportion of troops; and the armies of Maxentius amounted to one hundred and seventy thousand foot and eighteen thousand horse. The wealth of Italy supplied the expenses of the war; and the adjacent provinces were exhausted, to form immense magazines of corn and every other kind of provisions.

The whole force of Constantine consisted of ninety thousand foot and eight thousand horse; [51](#) and as the defence of the Rhine required an extraordinary attention during the absence of the emperor, it was not in his power to employ above half his troops in the Italian expedition, unless he sacrificed the public safety to his private quarrel. [52](#) At the head of about forty thousand soldiers he marched to encounter an enemy whose

numbers were at least four times superior to his own. But the armies of Rome, placed at a secure distance from danger, were enervated by indulgence and luxury. Habituated to the baths and theatres of Rome, they took the field with reluctance, and were chiefly composed of veterans who had almost forgotten, or of new levies who had never acquired, the use of arms and the practice of war. The hardy legions of Gaul had long defended the frontiers of the empire against the barbarians of the North; and in the performance of that laborious service, their valor was exercised and their discipline confirmed. There appeared the same difference between the leaders as between the armies. Caprice or flattery had tempted Maxentius with the hopes of conquest; but these aspiring hopes soon gave way to the habits of pleasure and the consciousness of his inexperience. The intrepid mind of Constantine had been trained from his earliest youth to war, to action, and to military command.

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. ii. p. 86) has given us this curious account of the forces on both sides. He makes no mention of any naval armaments, though we are assured (Panegyr. Vet. ix. 25) that the war was carried on by sea as well as by land; and that the fleet of Constantine took possession of Sardinia, Corsica, and the ports of Italy.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Panegyr. Vet. ix. 3. It is not surprising that the orator should diminish the numbers with which his sovereign achieved the conquest of Italy; but it appears somewhat singular that he should esteem the tyrant's army at no more than 100,000 men.]

Chapter XIV: Six Emperors At The Same Time, Reunion Of The Empire.—Part III.

When Hannibal marched from Gaul into Italy, he was obliged, first to discover, and then to open, a way over mountains, and through savage nations, that had never yielded a passage to a regular army. [53](#) The Alps were then guarded by nature, they are now fortified by art. Citadels, constructed with no less skill than labor and expense, command every avenue into the plain, and on that side render Italy almost inaccessible to the enemies of the king of Sardinia. [54](#) But in the course of the intermediate period, the generals, who have attempted the passage, have seldom experienced any difficulty or resistance. In the age of Constantine, the peasants of the mountains were civilized and obedient subjects; the country was plentifully stocked with provisions, and the stupendous highways, which the Romans had carried over the Alps, opened several communications between Gaul and Italy. [55](#) Constantine preferred the road of the Cottian Alps, or, as it is now called, of Mount Cenis, and led his troops with such active

diligence, that he descended into the plain of Piedmont before the court of Maxentius had received any certain intelligence of his departure from the banks of the Rhine. The city of Susa, however, which is situated at the foot of Mount Cenis, was surrounded with walls, and provided with a garrison sufficiently numerous to check the progress of an invader; but the impatience of Constantine's troops disdained the tedious forms of a siege. The same day that they appeared before Susa, they applied fire to the gates, and ladders to the walls; and mounting to the assault amidst a shower of stones and arrows, they entered the place sword in hand, and cut in pieces the greatest part of the garrison. The flames were extinguished by the care of Constantine, and the remains of Susa preserved from total destruction. About forty miles from thence, a more severe contest awaited him. A numerous army of Italians was assembled under the lieutenants of Maxentius, in the plains of Turin. Its principal strength consisted in a species of heavy cavalry, which the Romans, since the decline of their discipline, had borrowed from the nations of the East. The horses, as well as the men, were clothed in complete armor, the joints of which were artfully adapted to the motions of their bodies. The aspect of this cavalry was formidable, their weight almost irresistible; and as, on this occasion, their generals had drawn them up in a compact column or wedge, with a sharp point, and with spreading flanks, they flattered themselves that they could easily break and trample down the army of Constantine. They might, perhaps, have succeeded in their design, had not their experienced adversary embraced the same method of defence, which in similar circumstances had been practised by Aurelian. The skilful evolutions of Constantine divided and baffled this massy column of cavalry. The troops of Maxentius fled in confusion towards Turin; and as the gates of the city were shut against them, very few escaped the sword of the victorious pursuers. By this important service, Turin deserved to experience the clemency and even favor of the conqueror. He made his entry into the Imperial palace of Milan, and almost all the cities of Italy between the Alps and the Po not only acknowledged the power, but embraced with zeal the party, of Constantine. [56](#)

[The three principal passages of the Alps between Gaul and Italy, are those of Mount St. Bernard, Mount Cenis, and Mount Genevre. Tradition, and a resemblance of names, (Alpes Penninoe,) had assigned the first of these for the march of Hannibal, (see Simler de Alpibus.) The Chevalier de Folard (Polyp. tom. iv.) and M. d'Anville have led him over Mount Genevre. But notwithstanding the authority of an experienced officer and a learned geographer, the pretensions of Mount Cenis are supported in a specious, not to say a convincing, manner, by M. Grosley. Observations sur l'Italie, tom. i. p. 40, &c. —The dissertation of Messrs. Cramer and Wickham has clearly shown that the Little St. Bernard must claim the honor of

Hannibal's passage. Mr. Long (London, 1831) has added some sensible corrections re Hannibal's march to the Alps.—M]

54 [\(return\)](#)

[La Brunette near Suse, Demont, Exiles, Fenestrelles, Coni, &c.]

55 [\(return\)](#)

[See Ammian. Marcellin. xv. 10. His description of the roads over the Alps is clear, lively, and accurate.]

56 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus as well as Eusebius hasten from the passage of the Alps to the decisive action near Rome. We must apply to the two Panegyrics for the intermediate actions of Constantine.]

From Milan to Rome, the Æmilian and Flaminian highways offered an easy march of about four hundred miles; but though Constantine was impatient to encounter the tyrant, he prudently directed his operations against another army of Italians, who, by their strength and position, might either oppose his progress, or, in case of a misfortune, might intercept his retreat. Ruricius Pompeianus, a general distinguished by his valor and ability, had under his command the city of Verona, and all the troops that were stationed in the province of Venetia. As soon as he was informed that Constantine was advancing towards him, he detached a large body of cavalry, which was defeated in an engagement near Brescia, and pursued by the Gallic legions as far as the gates of Verona. The necessity, the importance, and the difficulties of the siege of Verona, immediately presented themselves to the sagacious mind of Constantine. [57](#) The city was accessible only by a narrow peninsula towards the west, as the other three sides were surrounded by the Adige, a rapid river, which covered the province of Venetia, from whence the besieged derived an inexhaustible supply of men and provisions. It was not without great difficulty, and after several fruitless attempts, that Constantine found means to pass the river at some distance above the city, and in a place where the torrent was less violent. He then encompassed Verona with strong lines, pushed his attacks with prudent vigor, and repelled a desperate sally of Pompeianus. That intrepid general, when he had used every means of defence that the strength of the place or that of the garrison could afford, secretly escaped from Verona, anxious not for his own, but for the public safety. With indefatigable diligence he soon collected an army sufficient either to meet Constantine in the field, or to attack him if he obstinately remained within his lines. The emperor, attentive to the motions, and informed of the approach of so formidable an enemy, left a part of his legions to continue the operations of the siege, whilst, at the head of those troops on whose valor and fidelity he more particularly depended, he advanced in person to engage the general of Maxentius. The army of Gaul was drawn up in two lines, according to the usual practice of war; but their experienced leader, perceiving that the numbers of the Italians far exceeded his own, suddenly

changed his disposition, and, reducing the second, extended the front of his first line to a just proportion with that of the enemy. Such evolutions, which only veteran troops can execute without confusion in a moment of danger, commonly prove decisive; but as this engagement began towards the close of the day, and was contested with great obstinacy during the whole night, there was less room for the conduct of the generals than for the courage of the soldiers. The return of light displayed the victory of Constantine, and a field of carnage covered with many thousands of the vanquished Italians. Their general, Pompeianus, was found among the slain; Verona immediately surrendered at discretion, and the garrison was made prisoners of war. [58](#) When the officers of the victorious army congratulated their master on this important success, they ventured to add some respectful complaints, of such a nature, however, as the most jealous monarchs will listen to without displeasure. They represented to Constantine, that, not contented with all the duties of a commander, he had exposed his own person with an excess of valor which almost degenerated into rashness; and they conjured him for the future to pay more regard to the preservation of a life in which the safety of Rome and of the empire was involved. [59](#)

57

[\(return\)](#)

[The Marquis Maffei has examined the siege and battle of Verona with that degree of attention and accuracy which was due to a memorable action that happened in his native country. The fortifications of that city, constructed by Gallienus, were less extensive than the modern walls, and the amphitheatre was not included within their circumference. See Verona Illustrata, part i. p. 142 150.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[They wanted chains for so great a multitude of captives; and the whole council was at a loss; but the sagacious conqueror imagined the happy expedient of converting into fetters the swords of the vanquished. Panegy. Vet. ix. 11.]

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Panegy. Vet. ix. 11.]

While Constantine signalized his conduct and valor in the field, the sovereign of Italy appeared insensible of the calamities and danger of a civil war which reigned in the heart of his dominions. Pleasure was still the only business of Maxentius. Concealing, or at least attempting to conceal, from the public knowledge the misfortunes of his arms, [60](#) he indulged himself in a vain confidence which deferred the remedies of the approaching evil, without deferring the evil itself. [61](#) The rapid progress of Constantine [62](#) was scarcely sufficient to awaken him from his fatal security; he flattered himself, that his well-known liberality, and the majesty of the Roman name, which had already delivered him from two invasions, would dissipate with the same facility the rebellious army of Gaul. The officers of experience and ability, who had

served under the banners of Maximian, were at length compelled to inform his effeminate son of the imminent danger to which he was reduced; and, with a freedom that at once surprised and convinced him, to urge the necessity of preventing his ruin by a vigorous exertion of his remaining power. The resources of Maxentius, both of men and money, were still considerable. The Prætorian guards felt how strongly their own interest and safety were connected with his cause; and a third army was soon collected, more numerous than those which had been lost in the battles of Turin and Verona. It was far from the intention of the emperor to lead his troops in person. A stranger to the exercises of war, he trembled at the apprehension of so dangerous a contest; and as fear is commonly superstitious, he listened with melancholy attention to the rumors of omens and presages which seemed to menace his life and empire. Shame at length supplied the place of courage, and forced him to take the field. He was unable to sustain the contempt of the Roman people. The circus resounded with their indignant clamors, and they tumultuously besieged the gates of the palace, reproaching the pusillanimity of their indolent sovereign, and celebrating the heroic spirit of Constantine. [63](#) Before Maxentius left Rome, he consulted the Sibylline books. The guardians of these ancient oracles were as well versed in the arts of this world as they were ignorant of the secrets of fate; and they returned him a very prudent answer, which might adapt itself to the event, and secure their reputation, whatever should be the chance of arms. [64](#)

60 [\(return\)](#)
[Literas calamitatum suarum indices supprimebat. Panegy. Vet. ix. 15.]

61 [\(return\)](#)
[Remedia malorum potius quam mala differebat, is the fine censure which Tacitus passes on the supine indolence of Vitellius.]

62 [\(return\)](#)
[The Marquis Maffei has made it extremely probable that Constantine was still at Verona, the 1st of September, A.D. 312, and that the memorable æra of the indications was dated from his conquest of the Cisalpine Gaul.]

63 [\(return\)](#)
[See Panegy. Vet. xi. 16. Lactantius de M. P. c. 44.]

64 [\(return\)](#)
[Illo die hostem Romanorum esse peritum. The vanquished became of course the enemy of Rome.]

The celerity of Constantine's march has been compared to the rapid conquest of Italy by the first of the Cæsars; nor is the flattering parallel repugnant to the truth of history, since no more than fifty-eight days elapsed between the surrender of Verona and the final decision of the war. Constantine had always apprehended that the tyrant would consult the dictates of fear, and perhaps of prudence; and that, instead of risking his last

hopes in a general engagement, he would shut himself up within the walls of Rome. His ample magazines secured him against the danger of famine; and as the situation of Constantine admitted not of delay, he might have been reduced to the sad necessity of destroying with fire and sword the Imperial city, the noblest reward of his victory, and the deliverance of which had been the motive, or rather indeed the pretence, of the civil war. [65](#) It was with equal surprise and pleasure, that on his arrival at a place called Saxa Rubra, about nine miles from Rome, [66](#) he discovered the army of Maxentius prepared to give him battle. [67](#) Their long front filled a very spacious plain, and their deep array reached to the banks of the Tyber, which covered their rear, and forbade their retreat. We are informed, and we may believe, that Constantine disposed his troops with consummate skill, and that he chose for himself the post of honor and danger. Distinguished by the splendor of his arms, he charged in person the cavalry of his rival; and his irresistible attack determined the fortune of the day. The cavalry of Maxentius was principally composed either of unwieldy cuirassiers, or of light Moors and Numidians. They yielded to the vigor of the Gallic horse, which possessed more activity than the one, more firmness than the other. The defeat of the two wings left the infantry without any protection on its flanks, and the undisciplined Italians fled without reluctance from the standard of a tyrant whom they had always hated, and whom they no longer feared. The Prætorians, conscious that their offences were beyond the reach of mercy, were animated by revenge and despair. Notwithstanding their repeated efforts, those brave veterans were unable to recover the victory: they obtained, however, an honorable death; and it was observed that their bodies covered the same ground which had been occupied by their ranks. [68](#) The confusion then became general, and the dismayed troops of Maxentius, pursued by an implacable enemy, rushed by thousands into the deep and rapid stream of the Tyber. The emperor himself attempted to escape back into the city over the Milvian bridge; but the crowds which pressed together through that narrow passage forced him into the river, where he was immediately drowned by the weight of his armor. [69](#) His body, which had sunk very deep into the mud, was found with some difficulty the next day. The sight of his head, when it was exposed to the eyes of the people, convinced them of their deliverance, and admonished them to receive with acclamations of loyalty and gratitude the fortunate Constantine, who thus achieved by his valor and ability the most splendid enterprise of his life. [70](#)

65

[\(return\)](#)

[See Panegyr. Vet. ix. 16, x. 27. The former of these orators magnifies the hoards of corn, which Maxentius had collected from Africa and the Islands. And yet, if there is any truth in the scarcity mentioned by Eusebius, (in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 36,) the Imperial granaries must have been open only to the soldiers.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[Maxentius... tandem urbe in Saxa Rubra, millia

ferme novem ægerrime progressus. Aurelius Victor. See Cellarius Geograph. Antiq. tom. i. p. 463. Saxa Rubra was in the neighborhood of the Cremera, a trifling rivulet, illustrated by the valor and glorious death of the three hundred Fabii.]

67 [\(return\)](#)

[The post which Maxentius had taken, with the Tyber in his rear is very clearly described by the two Panegyrists, ix. 16, x. 28.]

68 [\(return\)](#)

[Exceptis latrocinii illius primis auctoribus, qui desperata venia oculum quem pugnae sumpserant texere corporibus. Panegy. Vet 17.]

69 [\(return\)](#)

[A very idle rumor soon prevailed, that Maxentius, who had not taken any precaution for his own retreat, had contrived a very artful snare to destroy the army of the pursuers; but that the wooden bridge, which was to have been loosened on the approach of Constantine, unluckily broke down under the weight of the flying Italians. M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. part i. p. 576) very seriously examines whether, in contradiction to common sense, the testimony of Eusebius and Zosimus ought to prevail over the silence of Lactantius, Nazarius, and the anonymous, but contemporary orator, who composed the ninth Panegyric. * Note: Manso (Beylage, vi.) examines the question, and adduces two manifest allusions to the bridge, from the Life of Constantine by Praxagoras, and from Libanius. Is it not very probable that such a bridge was thrown over the river to facilitate the advance, and to secure the retreat, of the army of Maxentius? In case of defeat, orders were given for destroying it, in order to check the pursuit: it broke down accidentally, or in the confusion was destroyed, as has not unfrequently been the case, before the proper time.—M.]

70 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 86-88, and the two Panegyrics, the former of which was pronounced a few months afterwards, afford the clearest notion of this great battle. Lactantius, Eusebius, and even the Epitomes, supply several useful hints.]

In the use of victory, Constantine neither deserved the praise of clemency, nor incurred the censure of immoderate rigor. [71](#) He inflicted the same treatment to which a defeat would have exposed his own person and family, put to death the two sons of the tyrant, and carefully extirpated his whole race. The most distinguished adherents of

Maxentius must have expected to share his fate, as they had shared his prosperity and his crimes; but when the Roman people loudly demanded a greater number of victims, the conqueror resisted, with firmness and humanity, those servile clamors, which were dictated by flattery as well as by resentment. Informers were punished and discouraged; the innocent, who had suffered under the late tyranny, were recalled from exile, and restored to their estates. A general act of oblivion quieted the minds and settled the property of the people, both in Italy and in Africa. [72](#) The first time that Constantine honored the senate with his presence, he recapitulated his own services and exploits in a modest oration, assured that illustrious order of his sincere regard, and promised to reëstablish its ancient dignity and privileges. The grateful senate repaid these unmeaning professions by the empty titles of honor, which it was yet in their power to bestow; and without presuming to ratify the authority of Constantine, they passed a decree to assign him the first rank among the three *Augusti* who governed the Roman world. [73](#) Games and festivals were instituted to preserve the fame of his victory, and several edifices, raised at the expense of Maxentius, were dedicated to the honor of his successful rival. The triumphal arch of Constantine still remains a melancholy proof of the decline of the arts, and a singular testimony of the meanest vanity. As it was not possible to find in the capital of the empire a sculptor who was capable of adorning that public monument, the arch of Trajan, without any respect either for his memory or for the rules of propriety, was stripped of its most elegant figures. The difference of times and persons, of actions and characters, was totally disregarded. The Parthian captives appear prostrate at the feet of a prince who never carried his arms beyond the Euphrates; and curious antiquarians can still discover the head of Trajan on the trophies of Constantine. The new ornaments which it was necessary to introduce between the vacancies of ancient sculpture are executed in the rudest and most unskilful manner. [74](#)

71

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, the enemy of Constantine, allows (l. ii. p. 88) that only a few of the friends of Maxentius were put to death; but we may remark the expressive passage of Nazarius, (Panegy. Vet. x. 6.) Omnibus qui labefactari statum ejus poterant cum stirpe deletis. The other orator (Panegy. Vet. ix. 20, 21) contents himself with observing, that Constantine, when he entered Rome, did not imitate the cruel massacres of Cinna, of Marius, or of Sylla.
* Note: This may refer to the son or sons of Maxentius.—M.]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[See the two Panegyrics, and the laws of this and the ensuing year, in the Theodosian Code.]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Panegy. Vet. ix. 20. Lactantius de M. P. c. 44. Maximin, who was confessedly the eldest Cæsar,

claimed, with some show of reason, the first rank among the Augusti.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[Adhuc cuncta opera quæ magnifice construxerat, urbis fanum atque basilicam, Flavii meritis patres sacravere. Aurelius Victor. With regard to the theft of Trajan's trophies, consult Flaminius Vacca, apud Montfaucon, *Diarium Italicum*, p. 250, and *l'Antiquite Expliquee* of the latter, tom. iv. p. 171.]

The final abolition of the Prætorian guards was a measure of prudence as well as of revenge. Those haughty troops, whose numbers and privileges had been restored, and even augmented, by Maxentius, were forever suppressed by Constantine. Their fortified camp was destroyed, and the few Prætorians who had escaped the fury of the sword were dispersed among the legions, and banished to the frontiers of the empire, where they might be serviceable without again becoming dangerous. [75](#) By suppressing the troops which were usually stationed in Rome, Constantine gave the fatal blow to the dignity of the senate and people, and the disarmed capital was exposed without protection to the insults or neglect of its distant master. We may observe, that in this last effort to preserve their expiring freedom, the Romans, from the apprehension of a tribute, had raised Maxentius to the throne. He exacted that tribute from the senate under the name of a free gift. They implored the assistance of Constantine. He vanquished the tyrant, and converted the free gift into a perpetual tax. The senators, according to the declaration which was required of their property, were divided into several classes. The most opulent paid annually eight pounds of gold, the next class paid four, the last two, and those whose poverty might have claimed an exemption, were assessed, however, at seven pieces of gold. Besides the regular members of the senate, their sons, their descendants, and even their relations, enjoyed the vain privileges, and supported the heavy burdens, of the senatorial order; nor will it any longer excite our surprise, that Constantine should be attentive to increase the number of persons who were included under so useful a description. [76](#) After the defeat of Maxentius, the victorious emperor passed no more than two or three months in Rome, which he visited twice during the remainder of his life, to celebrate the solemn festivals of the tenth and of the twentieth years of his reign. Constantine was almost perpetually in motion, to exercise the legions, or to inspect the state of the provinces. Treves, Milan, Aquileia, Sirmium, Naissus, and Thessalonica, were the occasional places of his residence, till he founded a new Rome on the confines of Europe and Asia. [77](#)

75

[\(return\)](#)

[Prætoriae legiones ac subsidia factionibus aptiora quam urbi Romæ, sublata penitus; simul arma atque usus indumenti militaris Aurelius Victor. Zosimus (l. ii. p. 89) mentions this fact as an historian, and it is very pompously celebrated in the ninth Panegyric.]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[Ex omnibus provinciis optimates viros Curiae tuæ pigneraveris ut Senatus dignitas.... ex totius Orbis flore consisteret. Nazarius in Panegy. Vet x. 35. The word pigneraveris might almost seem maliciously chosen. Concerning the senatorial tax, see Zosimus, l. ii. p. 115, the second title of the sixth book of the Theodosian Code, with Godefroy's Commentary, and Memoires de l'Academic des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii. p. 726.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

[From the Theodosian Code, we may now begin to trace the motions of the emperors; but the dates both of time and place have frequently been altered by the carelessness of transcribers.]

Before Constantine marched into Italy, he had secured the friendship, or at least the neutrality, of Licinius, the Illyrian emperor. He had promised his sister Constantia in marriage to that prince; but the celebration of the nuptials was deferred till after the conclusion of the war, and the interview of the two emperors at Milan, which was appointed for that purpose, appeared to cement the union of their families and interests. [78](#) In the midst of the public festivity they were suddenly obliged to take leave of each other. An inroad of the Franks summoned Constantine to the Rhine, and the hostile approach of the sovereign of Asia demanded the immediate presence of Licinius. Maximin had been the secret ally of Maxentius, and without being discouraged by his fate, he resolved to try the fortune of a civil war. He moved out of Syria, towards the frontiers of Bithynia, in the depth of winter. The season was severe and tempestuous; great numbers of men as well as horses perished in the snow; and as the roads were broken up by incessant rains, he was obliged to leave behind him a considerable part of the heavy baggage, which was unable to follow the rapidity of his forced marches. By this extraordinary effort of diligence, he arrived with a harassed but formidable army, on the banks of the Thracian Bosphorus before the lieutenants of Licinius were apprised of his hostile intentions. Byzantium surrendered to the power of Maximin, after a siege of eleven days. He was detained some days under the walls of Heraclea; and he had no sooner taken possession of that city than he was alarmed by the intelligence that Licinius had pitched his camp at the distance of only eighteen miles. After a fruitless negotiation, in which the two princes attempted to seduce the fidelity of each other's adherents, they had recourse to arms. The emperor of the East commanded a disciplined and veteran army of above seventy thousand men; and Licinius, who had collected about thirty thousand Illyrians, was at first oppressed by the superiority of numbers. His military skill, and the firmness of his troops, restored the day, and obtained a decisive victory. The incredible speed which Maximin exerted in his flight is much more celebrated than his prowess in the battle. Twenty-four hours afterwards he was seen, pale, trembling, and without his Imperial ornaments, at Nicomedia, one hundred and sixty miles from the place of his defeat. The wealth of Asia was yet unexhausted; and

though the flower of his veterans had fallen in the late action, he had still power, if he could obtain time, to draw very numerous levies from Syria and Egypt. But he survived his misfortune only three or four months. His death, which happened at Tarsus, was variously ascribed to despair, to poison, and to the divine justice. As Maximin was alike destitute of abilities and of virtue, he was lamented neither by the people nor by the soldiers. The provinces of the East, delivered from the terrors of civil war, cheerfully acknowledged the authority of Licinius. [79](#)

78

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. ii. p. 89) observes, that before the war the sister of Constantine had been betrothed to Licinius. According to the younger Victor, Diocletian was invited to the nuptials; but having ventured to plead his age and infirmities, he received a second letter, filled with reproaches for his supposed partiality to the cause of Maxentius and Maximin.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus mentions the defeat and death of Maximin as ordinary events; but Lactantius expatiates on them, (de M. P. c. 45-50,) ascribing them to the miraculous interposition of Heaven. Licinius at that time was one of the protectors of the church.]

The vanquished emperor left behind him two children, a boy of about eight, and a girl of about seven, years old. Their inoffensive age might have excited compassion; but the compassion of Licinius was a very feeble resource, nor did it restrain him from *extinguishing* the name and memory of his adversary. The death of Severianus will admit of less excuse, as it was dictated neither by revenge nor by policy. The conqueror had never received any injury from the father of that unhappy youth, and the short and obscure reign of Severus, in a distant part of the empire, was already forgotten. But the execution of Candidianus was an act of the blackest cruelty and ingratitude. He was the natural son of Galerius, the friend and benefactor of Licinius. The prudent father had judged him too young to sustain the weight of a diadem; but he hoped that, under the protection of princes who were indebted to his favor for the Imperial purple, Candidianus might pass a secure and honorable life. He was now advancing towards the twentieth year of his age, and the royalty of his birth, though unsupported either by merit or ambition, was sufficient to exasperate the jealous mind of Licinius. [80](#) To these innocent and illustrious victims of his tyranny, we must add the wife and daughter of the emperor Diocletian. When that prince conferred on Galerius the title of Cæsar, he had given him in marriage his daughter Valeria, whose melancholy adventures might furnish a very singular subject for tragedy. She had fulfilled and even surpassed the duties of a wife. As she had not any children herself, she condescended to adopt the illegitimate son of her husband, and invariably displayed towards the unhappy Candidianus the tenderness and anxiety of a real mother. After the death of Galerius,

her ample possessions provoked the avarice, and her personal attractions excited the desires, of his successor, Maximin. [81](#) He had a wife still alive; but divorce was permitted by the Roman law, and the fierce passions of the tyrant demanded an immediate gratification. The answer of Valeria was such as became the daughter and widow of emperors; but it was tempered by the prudence which her defenceless condition compelled her to observe. She represented to the persons whom Maximin had employed on this occasion, “that even if honor could permit a woman of her character and dignity to entertain a thought of second nuptials, decency at least must forbid her to listen to his addresses at a time when the ashes of her husband and his benefactor were still warm, and while the sorrows of her mind were still expressed by her mourning garments. She ventured to declare, that she could place very little confidence in the professions of a man whose cruel inconstancy was capable of repudiating a faithful and affectionate wife.” [82](#) On this repulse, the love of Maximin was converted into fury; and as witnesses and judges were always at his disposal, it was easy for him to cover his fury with an appearance of legal proceedings, and to assault the reputation as well as the happiness of Valeria. Her estates were confiscated, her eunuchs and domestics devoted to the most inhuman tortures; and several innocent and respectable matrons, who were honored with her friendship, suffered death, on a false accusation of adultery. The empress herself, together with her mother Prisca, was condemned to exile; and as they were ignominiously hurried from place to place before they were confined to a sequestered village in the deserts of Syria, they exposed their shame and distress to the provinces of the East, which, during thirty years, had respected their august dignity. Diocletian made several ineffectual efforts to alleviate the misfortunes of his daughter; and, as the last return that he expected for the Imperial purple, which he had conferred upon Maximin, he entreated that Valeria might be permitted to share his retirement of Salona, and to close the eyes of her afflicted father. [83](#) He entreated; but as he could no longer threaten, his prayers were received with coldness and disdain; and the pride of Maximin was gratified, in treating Diocletian as a suppliant, and his daughter as a criminal. The death of Maximin seemed to assure the empresses of a favorable alteration in their fortune. The public disorders relaxed the vigilance of their guard, and they easily found means to escape from the place of their exile, and to repair, though with some precaution, and in disguise, to the court of Licinius. His behavior, in the first days of his reign, and the honorable reception which he gave to young Candidianus, inspired Valeria with a secret satisfaction, both on her own account and on that of her adopted son. But these grateful prospects were soon succeeded by horror and astonishment; and the bloody executions which stained the palace of Nicomedia sufficiently convinced her that the throne of Maximin was filled by a tyrant more inhuman than himself. Valeria consulted her safety by a hasty flight, and, still accompanied by her mother Prisca, they wandered above fifteen months [84](#) through the provinces, concealed in the disguise of plebeian habits. They were at length discovered at Thessalonica; and as the sentence of their death was already pronounced, they were

immediately beheaded, and their bodies thrown into the sea. The people gazed on the melancholy spectacle; but their grief and indignation were suppressed by the terrors of a military guard. Such was the unworthy fate of the wife and daughter of Diocletian. We lament their misfortunes, we cannot discover their crimes; and whatever idea we may justly entertain of the cruelty of Licinius, it remains a matter of surprise that he was not contented with some more secret and decent method of revenge. [85](#)

80 [\(return\)](#)
[Lactantius de M. P. c. 50. Aurelius Victor touches on the different conduct of Licinius, and of Constantine, in the use of victory.]

81 [\(return\)](#)
[The sensual appetites of Maximin were gratified at the expense of his subjects. His eunuchs, who forced away wives and virgins, examined their naked charms with anxious curiosity, lest any part of their body should be found unworthy of the royal embraces. Coyness and disdain were considered as treason, and the obstinate fair one was condemned to be drowned. A custom was gradually introduced, that no person should marry a wife without the permission of the emperor, “ut ipse in omnibus nuptiis prægustator esset.” Lactantius de M. P. c. 38.]

82 [\(return\)](#)
[Lactantius de M. P. c. 39.]

83 [\(return\)](#)
[Diocletian at last sent cognatum suum, quendam militarem æ potentem virum, to intercede in favor of his daughter, (Lactantius de M. P. c. 41.) We are not sufficiently acquainted with the history of these times to point out the person who was employed.]

84 [\(return\)](#)
[Valeria quoque per varias provincias quindecim mensibus plebeio cultu pervagata. Lactantius de M. P. c. 51. There is some doubt whether we should compute the fifteen months from the moment of her exile, or from that of her escape. The expression of parvagata seems to denote the latter; but in that case we must suppose that the treatise of Lactantius was written after the first civil war between Licinius and Constantine. See Cuper, p. 254.]

85 [\(return\)](#)
[Ita illis pudicitia et conditio exitio fuit. Lactantius de M. P. c. 51. He relates the misfortunes of the innocent wife and daughter of Discretian with a very natural mixture of pity and exultation.]

The Roman world was now divided between Constantine and Licinius, the former of whom was master of the West, and the latter of the East. It might perhaps have been expected that the conquerors, fatigued with civil war, and connected by a private as well as public alliance, would have renounced, or at least would have suspended, any further designs of ambition. And yet a year had scarcely elapsed after the death of Maximin, before the victorious emperors turned their arms against each other. The genius, the success, and the aspiring temper of Constantine, may seem to mark him out as the aggressor; but the perfidious character of Licinius justifies the most unfavorable suspicions, and by the faint light which history reflects on this transaction, [86](#) we may discover a conspiracy fomented by his arts against the authority of his colleague. Constantine had lately given his sister Anastasia in marriage to Bassianus, a man of a considerable family and fortune, and had elevated his new kinsman to the rank of Cæsar. According to the system of government instituted by Diocletian, Italy, and perhaps Africa, were designed for his department in the empire. But the performance of the promised favor was either attended with so much delay, or accompanied with so many unequal conditions, that the fidelity of Bassianus was alienated rather than secured by the honorable distinction which he had obtained. His nomination had been ratified by the consent of Licinius; and that artful prince, by the means of his emissaries, soon contrived to enter into a secret and dangerous correspondence with the new Cæsar, to irritate his discontents, and to urge him to the rash enterprise of extorting by violence what he might in vain solicit from the justice of Constantine. But the vigilant emperor discovered the conspiracy before it was ripe for execution; and after solemnly renouncing the alliance of Bassianus, despoiled him of the purple, and inflicted the deserved punishment on his treason and ingratitude. The haughty refusal of Licinius, when he was required to deliver up the criminals who had taken refuge in his dominions, confirmed the suspicions already entertained of his perfidy; and the indignities offered at Æmona, on the frontiers of Italy, to the statues of Constantine, became the signal of discord between the two princes. [87](#)

86

[\(return\)](#)

[The curious reader, who consults the Valesian fragment, p. 713, will probably accuse me of giving a bold and licentious paraphrase; but if he considers it with attention, he will acknowledge that my interpretation is probable and consistent.]

87

[\(return\)](#)

[The situation of Æmona, or, as it is now called, Laybach, in Carniola, (D'Anville, *Geographie Ancienne*, tom. i. p. 187,) may suggest a conjecture. As it lay to the north-east of the Julian Alps, that important territory became a natural object of dispute between the sovereigns of Italy and of Illyricum.]

The first battle was fought near Cibalis, a city of Pannonia, situated on the River Save, about fifty miles above Sirmium. [88](#) From the inconsiderable forces which in this important contest two such powerful monarchs brought into the field, it may be inferred that the one was suddenly provoked, and that the other was unexpectedly surprised. The emperor of the West had only twenty thousand, and the sovereign of the East no more than five and thirty thousand, men. The inferiority of number was, however, compensated by the advantage of the ground. Constantine had taken post in a defile about half a mile in breadth, between a steep hill and a deep morass, and in that situation he steadily expected and repulsed the first attack of the enemy. He pursued his success, and advanced into the plain. But the veteran legions of Illyricum rallied under the standard of a leader who had been trained to arms in the school of Probus and Diocletian. The missile weapons on both sides were soon exhausted; the two armies, with equal valor, rushed to a closer engagement of swords and spears, and the doubtful contest had already lasted from the dawn of the day to a late hour of the evening, when the right wing, which Constantine led in person, made a vigorous and decisive charge. The judicious retreat of Licinius saved the remainder of his troops from a total defeat; but when he computed his loss, which amounted to more than twenty thousand men, he thought it unsafe to pass the night in the presence of an active and victorious enemy. Abandoning his camp and magazines, he marched away with secrecy and diligence at the head of the greatest part of his cavalry, and was soon removed beyond the danger of a pursuit. His diligence preserved his wife, his son, and his treasures, which he had deposited at Sirmium. Licinius passed through that city, and breaking down the bridge on the Save, hastened to collect a new army in Dacia and Thrace. In his flight he bestowed the precarious title of Cæsar on Valens, his general of the Illyrian frontier. [89](#)

88

[\(return\)](#)

[Cibalis or Cibalæ (whose name is still preserved in the obscure ruins of Swilei) was situated about fifty miles from Sirmium, the capital of Illyricum, and about one hundred from Taurunum, or Belgrade, and the conflux of the Danube and the Save. The Roman garrisons and cities on those rivers are finely illustrated by M. d’Anville in a memoir inserted in l’Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii.]

89

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. ii. p. 90, 91) gives a very particular account of this battle; but the descriptions of Zosimus are rhetorical rather than military]

Chapter XIV: Six Emperors At The Same Time, Reunion Of The Empire.—Part IV.

The plain of Mardia in Thrace was the theatre of a second battle no less obstinate and bloody than the former. The troops on both sides displayed the same valor and discipline; and the victory was once more decided by the superior abilities of Constantine, who directed a body of five thousand men to gain an advantageous height, from whence, during the heat of the action, they attacked the rear of the enemy, and made a very considerable slaughter. The troops of Licinius, however, presenting a double front, still maintained their ground, till the approach of night put an end to the combat, and secured their retreat towards the mountains of Macedonia. ⁹⁰ The loss of two battles, and of his bravest veterans, reduced the fierce spirit of Licinius to sue for peace. His ambassador Mistrianus was admitted to the audience of Constantine: he expatiated on the common topics of moderation and humanity, which are so familiar to the eloquence of the vanquished; represented in the most insinuating language, that the event of the war was still doubtful, whilst its inevitable calamities were alike pernicious to both the contending parties; and declared that he was authorized to propose a lasting and honorable peace in the name of the *two* emperors his masters. Constantine received the mention of Valens with indignation and contempt. "It was not for such a purpose," he sternly replied, "that we have advanced from the shores of the western ocean in an uninterrupted course of combats and victories, that, after rejecting an ungrateful kinsman, we should accept for our colleague a contemptible slave. The abdication of Valens is the first article of the treaty." ⁹¹ It was necessary to accept this humiliating condition; and the unhappy Valens, after a reign of a few days, was deprived of the purple and of his life. As soon as this obstacle was removed, the tranquillity of the Roman world was easily restored. The successive defeats of Licinius had ruined his forces, but they had displayed his courage and abilities. His situation was almost desperate, but the efforts of despair are sometimes formidable, and the good sense of Constantine preferred a great and certain advantage to a third trial of the chance of arms. He consented to leave his rival, or, as he again styled Licinius, his friend and brother, in the possession of Thrace, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt; but the provinces of Pannonia, Dalmatia, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece, were yielded to the Western empire, and the dominions of Constantine now extended from the confines of Caledonia to the extremity of Peloponnesus. It was stipulated by the same treaty, that three royal youths, the sons of emperors, should be called to the hopes of the succession. Crispus and the young Constantine were soon afterwards declared Cæsars in the West, while the younger Licinius was invested with the same dignity in the East. In this double proportion of honors, the conqueror asserted the superiority of his arms and power. ⁹²

90

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 92, 93. Anonym. Valesian. p. 713. The Epitomes furnish some circumstances; but they frequently confound the two wars between Licinius and Constantine.]

91

[\(return\)](#)

[Petrus Patricius in Excerpt. Legat. p. 27. If it

should be thought that signifies more properly a son-in-law, we might conjecture that Constantine, assuming the name as well as the duties of a father, had adopted his younger brothers and sisters, the children of Theodora. But in the best authors sometimes signifies a husband, sometimes a father-in-law, and sometimes a kinsman in general. See Spanheim, *Observat. ad Julian. Orat. i. p. 72.*]

92

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 93. Anonym. Valesian. p. 713. Eutropius, x. v. Aurelius Victor, Euseb. in Chron. Sozomen, l. i. c. 2. Four of these writers affirm that the promotion of the Cæsars was an article of the treaty. It is, however, certain, that the younger Constantine and Licinius were not yet born; and it is highly probable that the promotion was made the 1st of March, A. D. 317. The treaty had probably stipulated that the two Cæsars might be created by the western, and one only by the eastern emperor; but each of them reserved to himself the choice of the persons.]

The reconciliation of Constantine and Licinius, though it was imbittered by resentment and jealousy, by the remembrance of recent injuries, and by the apprehension of future dangers, maintained, however, above eight years, the tranquility of the Roman world. As a very regular series of the Imperial laws commences about this period, it would not be difficult to transcribe the civil regulations which employed the leisure of Constantine. But the most important of his institutions are intimately connected with the new system of policy and religion, which was not perfectly established till the last and peaceful years of his reign. There are many of his laws, which, as far as they concern the rights and property of individuals, and the practice of the bar, are more properly referred to the private than to the public jurisprudence of the empire; and he published many edicts of so local and temporary a nature, that they would ill deserve the notice of a general history. Two laws, however, may be selected from the crowd; the one for its importance, the other for its singularity; the former for its remarkable benevolence, the latter for its excessive severity. 1. The horrid practice, so familiar to the ancients, of exposing or murdering their new-born infants, was become every day more frequent in the provinces, and especially in Italy. It was the effect of distress; and the distress was principally occasioned by the intolerant burden of taxes, and by the vexatious as well as cruel prosecutions of the officers of the revenue against their insolvent debtors. The less opulent or less industrious part of mankind, instead of rejoicing in an increase of family, deemed it an act of paternal tenderness to release their children from the impending miseries of a life which they themselves were unable to support. The humanity of Constantine, moved, perhaps, by some recent and extraordinary instances of despair, engaged him to address an edict to all the cities of Italy, and afterwards of Africa, directing immediate and sufficient relief to be given to

those parents who should produce before the magistrates the children whom their own poverty would not allow them to educate. But the promise was too liberal, and the provision too vague, to effect any general or permanent benefit. [93](#) The law, though it may merit some praise, served rather to display than to alleviate the public distress. It still remains an authentic monument to contradict and confound those venal orators, who were too well satisfied with their own situation to discover either vice or misery under the government of a generous sovereign. [94](#) 2. The laws of Constantine against rapes were dictated with very little indulgence for the most amiable weaknesses of human nature; since the description of that crime was applied not only to the brutal violence which compelled, but even to the gentle seduction which might persuade, an unmarried woman, under the age of twenty-five, to leave the house of her parents. “The successful ravisher was punished with death;” and as if simple death was inadequate to the enormity of his guilt, he was either burnt alive, or torn in pieces by wild beasts in the amphitheatre. The virgin’s declaration, that she had been carried away with her own consent, instead of saving her lover, exposed her to share his fate. The duty of a public prosecution was intrusted to the parents of the guilty or unfortunate maid; and if the sentiments of nature prevailed on them to dissemble the injury, and to repair by a subsequent marriage the honor of their family, they were themselves punished by exile and confiscation. The slaves, whether male or female, who were convicted of having been accessory to rape or seduction, were burnt alive, or put to death by the ingenious torture of pouring down their throats a quantity of melted lead. As the crime was of a public kind, the accusation was permitted even to strangers.[9401](#)

9401

[\(return\)](#)

[This explanation appears to me little probable. Godefroy has made a much more happy conjecture, supported by all the historical circumstances which relate to this edict. It was published the 12th of May, A. D. 315. at Naissus in Pannonia, the birthplace of Constantine. The 8th of October, in that year, Constantine gained the victory of Cibalis over Licinius. He was yet uncertain as to the fate of the war: the Christians, no doubt, whom he favored, had prophesied his victory. Lactantius, then preceptor of Crispus, had just written his work upon Christianity, (his Divine Institutes;) he had dedicated it to Constantine. In this book he had inveighed with great force against infanticide, and the exposure of infants, (l. vi. c. 20.) Is it not probable that Constantine had read this work, that he had conversed on the subject with Lactantius, that he was moved, among other things, by the passage to which I have referred, and in the first transport of his enthusiasm, he published the edict in question? The whole of the edict bears the character of precipitation, of excitement,

(entrainment,) rather than of deliberate reflection—the extent of the promises, the indefiniteness of the means, of the conditions, and of the time during which the parents might have a right to the succor of the state. Is there not reason to believe that the humanity of Constantine was excited by the influence of Lactantius, by that of the principles of Christianity, and of the Christians themselves, already in high esteem with the emperor, rather than by some “extraordinary instances of despair”? * * * See Hegewisch, *Essai Hist. sur les Finances Romaines*. The edict for Africa was not published till 322: of that we may say in truth that its origin was in the misery of the times. Africa had suffered much from the cruelty of Maxentius. Constantine says expressly, that he had learned that parents, under the pressure of distress, were there selling their children. This decree is more distinct, more maturely deliberated than the former; the succor which was to be given to the parents, and the source from which it was to be derived, are determined. (Code Theod. l. xi. tit. 27, c. 2.) If the direct utility of these laws may not have been very extensive, they had at least the great and happy effect of establishing a decisive opposition between the principles of the government and those which, at this time, had prevailed among the subjects of the empire.—G.]

The commencement of the action was not limited to any term of years, and the consequences of the sentence were extended to the innocent offspring of such an irregular union. [95](#) But whenever the offence inspires less horror than the punishment, the rigor of penal law is obliged to give way to the common feelings of mankind. The most odious parts of this edict were softened or repealed in the subsequent reigns; [96](#) and even Constantine himself very frequently alleviated, by partial acts of mercy, the stern temper of his general institutions. Such, indeed, was the singular humor of that emperor, who showed himself as indulgent, and even remiss, in the execution of his laws, as he was severe, and even cruel, in the enacting of them. It is scarcely possible to observe a more decisive symptom of weakness, either in the character of the prince, or in the constitution of the government. [97](#)

93

[\(return\)](#)

[Codex Theodosian. l. xi. tit. 27, tom. iv. p. 188, with Godefroy's observations. See likewise l. v. tit. 7, 8.]

94

[\(return\)](#)

[Omnia foris placita, domi prospera, annonæ ubertate, fructuum copia, &c. Panegy. Vet. x. 38. This oration of Nazarius was pronounced on the day

of the Quinquennalia of the Cæsars, the 1st of March, A. D. 321.]

95 [\(return\)](#)

[See the edict of Constantine, addressed to the Roman people, in the Theodosian Code, l. ix. tit. 24, tom. iii. p. 189.]

96 [\(return\)](#)

[His son very fairly assigns the true reason of the repeal: “Na sub specie atrocioris judicii aliqua in ulciscendo crimine dilatio næ ceretur.” Cod. Theod. tom. iii. p. 193]

97 [\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius (in Vita Constant. l. iii. c. 1) chooses to affirm, that in the reign of this hero, the sword of justice hung idle in the hands of the magistrates. Eusebius himself, (l. iv. c. 29, 54,) and the Theodosian Code, will inform us that this excessive lenity was not owing to the want either of atrocious criminals or of penal laws.]

The civil administration was sometimes interrupted by the military defence of the empire. Crispus, a youth of the most amiable character, who had received with the title of Cæsar the command of the Rhine, distinguished his conduct, as well as valor, in several victories over the Franks and Alemanni, and taught the barbarians of that frontier to dread the eldest son of Constantine, and the grandson of Constantius. [98](#) The emperor himself had assumed the more difficult and important province of the Danube. The Goths, who in the time of Claudius and Aurelian had felt the weight of the Roman arms, respected the power of the empire, even in the midst of its intestine divisions. But the strength of that warlike nation was now restored by a peace of near fifty years; a new generation had arisen, who no longer remembered the misfortunes of ancient days; the Sarmatians of the Lake Mæotis followed the Gothic standard either as subjects or as allies, and their united force was poured upon the countries of Illyricum. Campona, Margus, and Benonia, [982](#) appear to have been the scenes of several memorable sieges and battles; [99](#) and though Constantine encountered a very obstinate resistance, he prevailed at length in the contest, and the Goths were compelled to purchased an ignominious retreat, by restoring the booty and prisoners which they had taken. Nor was this advantage sufficient to satisfy the indignation of the emperor. He resolved to chastise as well as to repulse the insolent barbarians who had dared to invade the territories of Rome. At the head of his legions he passed the Danube, after repairing the bridge which had been constructed by Trajan, penetrated into the strongest recesses of Dacia, [100](#) and when he had inflicted a severe revenge, condescended to give peace to the suppliant Goths, on condition that, as often as they were required, they should supply his armies with a body of forty thousand soldiers. [101](#) Exploits like these were no doubt honorable to Constantine, and beneficial to the state; but it may surely be questioned, whether they can justify the exaggerated assertion of Eusebius,

that ALL SCYTHIA, as far as the extremity of the North, divided as it was into so many names and nations of the most various and savage manners, had been added by his victorious arms to the Roman empire. [102](#)

- 98 [\(return\)](#)
[Nazarius in Panegy. Vet. x. The victory of Crispus over the Alemanni is expressed on some medals. * Note: Other medals are extant, the legends of which commemorate the success of Constantine over the Sarmatians and other barbarous nations, Sarmatia Devicta. Victoria Gothica. Debellatori Gentium Barbarorum. Exuperator Omnium Gentium. St. Martin, note on Le Beau, i. 148.—M.]
- 982 [\(return\)](#)
[Campona, Old Buda in Hungary; Margus, Benonia, Widdin, in Mæsia—G and M.]
- 99 [\(return\)](#)
[See Zosimus, l. ii. p. 93, 94; though the narrative of that historian is neither clear nor consistent. The Panegyric of Optatianus (c. 23) mentions the alliance of the Sarmatians with the Carpi and Getæ, and points out the several fields of battle. It is supposed that the Sarmatian games, celebrated in the month of November, derived their origin from the success of this war.]
- 100 [\(return\)](#)
[In the Cæsars of Julian, (p. 329. Commentaire de Spanheim, p. 252.) Constantine boasts, that he had recovered the province (Dacia) which Trajan had subdued. But it is insinuated by Silenus, that the conquests of Constantine were like the gardens of Adonis, which fade and wither almost the moment they appear.]
- 101 [\(return\)](#)
[Jornandes de Rebus Geticis, c. 21. I know not whether we may entirely depend on his authority. Such an alliance has a very recent air, and scarcely is suited to the maxims of the beginning of the fourth century.]
- 102 [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 8. This passage, however, is taken from a general declamation on the greatness of Constantine, and not from any particular account of the Gothic war.]

In this exalted state of glory, it was impossible that Constantine should any longer endure a partner in the empire. Confiding in the superiority of his genius and military power, he determined, without any previous injury, to exert them for the destruction of

Licinius, whose advanced age and unpopular vices seemed to offer a very easy conquest. [103](#) But the old emperor, awakened by the approaching danger, deceived the expectations of his friends, as well as of his enemies. Calling forth that spirit and those abilities by which he had deserved the friendship of Galerius and the Imperial purple, he prepared himself for the contest, collected the forces of the East, and soon filled the plains of Hadrianople with his troops, and the straits of the Hellespont with his fleet. The army consisted of one hundred and fifty thousand foot, and fifteen thousand horse; and as the cavalry was drawn, for the most part, from Phrygia and Cappadocia, we may conceive a more favorable opinion of the beauty of the horses, than of the courage and dexterity of their riders. The fleet was composed of three hundred and fifty galleys of three ranks of oars. A hundred and thirty of these were furnished by Egypt and the adjacent coast of Africa. A hundred and ten sailed from the ports of Phœnicia and the isle of Cyprus; and the maritime countries of Bithynia, Ionia, and Caria were likewise obliged to provide a hundred and ten galleys. The troops of Constantine were ordered to a rendezvous at Thessalonica; they amounted to above a hundred and twenty thousand horse and foot. [104](#) Their emperor was satisfied with their martial appearance, and his army contained more soldiers, though fewer men, than that of his eastern competitor. The legions of Constantine were levied in the warlike provinces of Europe; action had confirmed their discipline, victory had elevated their hopes, and there were among them a great number of veterans, who, after seventeen glorious campaigns under the same leader, prepared themselves to deserve an honorable dismissal by a last effort of their valor. [105](#) But the naval preparations of Constantine were in every respect much inferior to those of Licinius. The maritime cities of Greece sent their respective quotas of men and ships to the celebrated harbor of Piræus, and their united forces consisted of no more than two hundred small vessels—a very feeble armament, if it is compared with those formidable fleets which were equipped and maintained by the republic of Athens during the Peloponnesian war. [106](#) Since Italy was no longer the seat of government, the naval establishments of Misenum and Ravenna had been gradually neglected; and as the shipping and mariners of the empire were supported by commerce rather than by war, it was natural that they should the most abound in the industrious provinces of Egypt and Asia. It is only surprising that the eastern emperor, who possessed so great a superiority at sea, should have neglected the opportunity of carrying an offensive war into the centre of his rival's dominions.

103

[\(return\)](#)

[Constantinus tamen, vir ingens, et omnia efficere nitens quæ animo præparasset, simul principatum totius urbis affectans, Licinio bellum intulit. Eutropius, x. 5. Zosimus, l. ii. p 89. The reasons which they have assigned for the first civil war, may, with more propriety, be applied to the second.]

104

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 94, 95.]

105 [\(return\)](#)
[Constantine was very attentive to the privileges and comforts of his fellow-veterans, (Conveterani,) as he now began to style them. See the Theodosian Code, l. vii. tit. 10, tom. ii. p. 419, 429.]

106 [\(return\)](#)
[Whilst the Athenians maintained the empire of the sea, their fleet consisted of three, and afterwards of four, hundred galleys of three ranks of oars, all completely equipped and ready for immediate service. The arsenal in the port of Piræus had cost the republic a thousand talents, about two hundred and sixteen thousand pounds. See Thucydides de Bel. Pelopon. l. ii. c. 13, and Meursius de Fortuna Attica, c. 19.]

Instead of embracing such an active resolution, which might have changed the whole face of the war, the prudent Licinius expected the approach of his rival in a camp near Hadrianople, which he had fortified with an anxious care that betrayed his apprehension of the event. Constantine directed his march from Thessalonica towards that part of Thrace, till he found himself stopped by the broad and rapid stream of the Hebrus, and discovered the numerous army of Licinius, which filled the steep ascent of the hill, from the river to the city of Hadrianople. Many days were spent in doubtful and distant skirmishes; but at length the obstacles of the passage and of the attack were removed by the intrepid conduct of Constantine. In this place we might relate a wonderful exploit of Constantine, which, though it can scarcely be paralleled either in poetry or romance, is celebrated, not by a venal orator devoted to his fortune, but by an historian, the partial enemy of his fame. We are assured that the valiant emperor threw himself into the River Hebrus, accompanied only by *twelve* horsemen, and that by the effort or terror of his invincible arm, he broke, slaughtered, and put to flight a host of a hundred and fifty thousand men. The credulity of Zosimus prevailed so strongly over his passion, that among the events of the memorable battle of Hadrianople, he seems to have selected and embellished, not the most important, but the most marvellous. The valor and danger of Constantine are attested by a slight wound which he received in the thigh; but it may be discovered even from an imperfect narration, and perhaps a corrupted text, that the victory was obtained no less by the conduct of the general than by the courage of the hero; that a body of five thousand archers marched round to occupy a thick wood in the rear of the enemy, whose attention was diverted by the construction of a bridge, and that Licinius, perplexed by so many artful evolutions, was reluctantly drawn from his advantageous post to combat on equal ground on the plain. The contest was no longer equal. His confused multitude of new levies was easily vanquished by the experienced veterans of the West. Thirty-four thousand men are reported to have been slain. The fortified camp of Licinius was taken by assault the evening of the battle; the greater part of the fugitives, who had retired to the mountains, surrendered themselves the next day

to the discretion of the conqueror; and his rival, who could no longer keep the field, confined himself within the walls of Byzantium. [107](#)

107

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 95, 96. This great battle is described in the Valesian fragment, (p. 714,) in a clear though concise manner. "Licinius vero circum Hadrianopolin maximo exercitu latera ardui montis impleverat; illuc toto agmine Constantinus inflexit. Cum bellum terra marique traheretur, quamvis per arduum suis nitentibus, attamen disciplina militari et felicitate, Constantinus Licinu confusum et sine ordine agentem vicit exercitum; leviter femore sauciatus."]

The siege of Byzantium, which was immediately undertaken by Constantine, was attended with great labor and uncertainty. In the late civil wars, the fortifications of that place, so justly considered as the key of Europe and Asia, had been repaired and strengthened; and as long as Licinius remained master of the sea, the garrison was much less exposed to the danger of famine than the army of the besiegers. The naval commanders of Constantine were summoned to his camp, and received his positive orders to force the passage of the Hellespont, as the fleet of Licinius, instead of seeking and destroying their feeble enemy, continued inactive in those narrow straits, where its superiority of numbers was of little use or advantage. Crispus, the emperor's eldest son, was intrusted with the execution of this daring enterprise, which he performed with so much courage and success, that he deserved the esteem, and most probably excited the jealousy, of his father. The engagement lasted two days; and in the evening of the first, the contending fleets, after a considerable and mutual loss, retired into their respective harbors of Europe and Asia. The second day, about noon, a strong south wind [108](#) sprang up, which carried the vessels of Crispus against the enemy; and as the casual advantage was improved by his skilful intrepidity, he soon obtained a complete victory. A hundred and thirty vessels were destroyed, five thousand men were slain, and Amandus, the admiral of the Asiatic fleet, escaped with the utmost difficulty to the shores of Chalcedon. As soon as the Hellespont was open, a plentiful convoy of provisions flowed into the camp of Constantine, who had already advanced the operations of the siege. He constructed artificial mounds of earth of an equal height with the ramparts of Byzantium. The lofty towers which were erected on that foundation galled the besieged with large stones and darts from the military engines, and the battering rams had shaken the walls in several places. If Licinius persisted much longer in the defence, he exposed himself to be involved in the ruin of the place. Before he was surrounded, he prudently removed his person and treasures to Chalcedon in Asia; and as he was always desirous of associating companions to the hopes and dangers of his fortune, he now bestowed the title of Cæsar on Martinianus, who exercised one of the most important offices of the empire. [109](#)

108

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 97, 98. The current always sets out of the Hellespont; and when it is assisted by a north wind, no vessel can attempt the passage. A south wind renders the force of the current almost imperceptible. See Tournefort's Voyage au Levant, Let. xi.]

109

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 93. According to the latter, Martinianus was Magister Officiorum, (he uses the Latin appellation in Greek.) Some medals seem to intimate, that during his short reign he received the title of Augustus.]

Such were still the resources, and such the abilities, of Licinius, that, after so many successive defeats, he collected in Bithynia a new army of fifty or sixty thousand men, while the activity of Constantine was employed in the siege of Byzantium. The vigilant emperor did not, however, neglect the last struggles of his antagonist. A considerable part of his victorious army was transported over the Bosphorus in small vessels, and the decisive engagement was fought soon after their landing on the heights of Chrysopolis, or, as it is now called, of Scutari. The troops of Licinius, though they were lately raised, ill armed, and worse disciplined, made head against their conquerors with fruitless but desperate valor, till a total defeat, and a slaughter of five and twenty thousand men, irretrievably determined the fate of their leader. [110](#) He retired to Nicomedia, rather with the view of gaining some time for negotiation, than with the hope of any effectual defence. Constantia, his wife, and the sister of Constantine, interceded with her brother in favor of her husband, and obtained from his policy, rather than from his compassion, a solemn promise, confirmed by an oath, that after the sacrifice of Martinianus, and the resignation of the purple, Licinius himself should be permitted to pass the remainder of this life in peace and affluence. The behavior of Constantia, and her relation to the contending parties, naturally recalls the remembrance of that virtuous matron who was the sister of Augustus, and the wife of Antony. But the temper of mankind was altered, and it was no longer esteemed infamous for a Roman to survive his honor and independence. Licinius solicited and accepted the pardon of his offences, laid himself and his purple at the feet of his *lord* and *master*, was raised from the ground with insulting pity, was admitted the same day to the Imperial banquet, and soon afterwards was sent away to Thessalonica, which had been chosen for the place of his confinement. [111](#) His confinement was soon terminated by death, and it is doubtful whether a tumult of the soldiers, or a decree of the senate, was suggested as the motive for his execution. According to the rules of tyranny, he was accused of forming a conspiracy, and of holding a treasonable correspondence with the barbarians; but as he was never convicted, either by his own conduct or by any legal evidence, we may perhaps be allowed, from his weakness, to presume his innocence. [112](#) The memory of Licinius was branded with infamy, his statues were thrown down, and by a hasty edict,

of such mischievous tendency that it was almost immediately corrected, all his laws, and all the judicial proceedings of his reign, were at once abolished. [113](#) By this victory of Constantine, the Roman world was again united under the authority of one emperor, thirty-seven years after Diocletian had divided his power and provinces with his associate Maximian.

- 110 [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius (in Vita Constantin. I. ii. c. 16, 17) ascribes this decisive victory to the pious prayers of the emperor. The Valesian fragment (p. 714) mentions a body of Gothic auxiliaries, under their chief Aliquaca, who adhered to the party of Licinius.]
- 111 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 102. Victor Junior in Epitome. Anonym. Valesian. p. 714.]
- 112 [\(return\)](#)
[Contra religionem sacramenti Thessalonicae privatus occisus est. Eutropius, x. 6; and his evidence is confirmed by Jerome (in Chronic.) as well as by Zosimus, l. ii. p. 102. The Valesian writer is the only one who mentions the soldiers, and it is Zonaras alone who calls in the assistance of the senate. Eusebius prudently slides over this delicate transaction. But Sozomen, a century afterwards, ventures to assert the treasonable practices of Licinius.]
- 113 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Theodosian Code, l. xv. tit. 15, tom. v. p. 404, 405. These edicts of Constantine betray a degree of passion and precipitation very unbecoming the character of a lawgiver.]

The successive steps of the elevation of Constantine, from his first assuming the purple at York, to the resignation of Licinius, at Nicomedia, have been related with some minuteness and precision, not only as the events are in themselves both interesting and important, but still more, as they contributed to the decline of the empire by the expense of blood and treasure, and by the perpetual increase, as well of the taxes, as of the military establishment. The foundation of Constantinople, and the establishment of the Christian religion, were the immediate and memorable consequences of this revolution.

Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part I.

The Progress Of The Christian Religion, And The Sentiments,
Manners, Numbers, And Condition Of The Primitive
Christians.[101](#)

101

[\(return\)](#)

[In spite of my resolution, Lardner led me to look through the famous fifteenth and sixteenth chapters of Gibbon. I could not lay them down without finishing them. The causes assigned, in the fifteenth chapter, for the diffusion of Christianity, must, no doubt, have contributed to it materially; but I doubt whether he saw them all. Perhaps those which he enumerates are among the most obvious. They might all be safely adopted by a Christian writer, with some change in the language and manner. Mackintosh see Life, i. p. 244.—M.]

A candid but rational inquiry into the progress and establishment of Christianity may be considered as a very essential part of the history of the Roman empire. While that great body was invaded by open violence, or undermined by slow decay, a pure and humble religion gently insinuated itself into the minds of men, grew up in silence and obscurity, derived new vigor from opposition, and finally erected the triumphant banner of the Cross on the ruins of the Capitol. Nor was the influence of Christianity confined to the period or to the limits of the Roman empire. After a revolution of thirteen or fourteen centuries, that religion is still professed by the nations of Europe, the most distinguished portion of human kind in arts and learning as well as in arms. By the industry and zeal of the Europeans, it has been widely diffused to the most distant shores of Asia and Africa; and by the means of their colonies has been firmly established from Canada to Chili, in a world unknown to the ancients.

But this inquiry, however useful or entertaining, is attended with two peculiar difficulties. The scanty and suspicious materials of ecclesiastical history seldom enable us to dispel the dark cloud that hangs over the first age of the church. The great law of impartiality too often obliges us to reveal the imperfections of the uninspired teachers and believers of the gospel; and, to a careless observer, *their* faults may seem to cast a shade on the faith which they professed. But the scandal of the pious Christian, and the fallacious triumph of the Infidel, should cease as soon as they recollect not only *by whom*, but likewise *to whom*, the Divine Revelation was given. The theologian may indulge the pleasing task of describing Religion as she descended from Heaven, arrayed in her native purity. A more melancholy duty is imposed on the historian. He must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption, which she contracted in a long residence upon earth, among a weak and degenerate race of beings. [102](#)

102

[\(return\)](#)

[The art of Gibbon, or at least the unfair impression produced by these two memorable chapters, consists in confounding together, in one

undistinguishable mass, the origin and apostolic propagation of the Christian religion with its later progress. The main question, the divine origin of the religion, is dexterously eluded or speciously conceded; his plan enables him to commence his account, in most parts, below the apostolic times; and it is only by the strength of the dark coloring with which he has brought out the failings and the follies of succeeding ages, that a shadow of doubt and suspicion is thrown back on the primitive period of Christianity. Divest this whole passage of the latent sarcasm betrayed by the subsequent one of the whole disquisition, and it might commence a Christian history, written in the most Christian spirit of candor.—M.]

Our curiosity is naturally prompted to inquire by what means the Christian faith obtained so remarkable a victory over the established religions of the earth. To this inquiry, an obvious but satisfactory answer may be returned; that it was owing to the convincing evidence of the doctrine itself, and to the ruling providence of its great Author. But as truth and reason seldom find so favorable a reception in the world, and as the wisdom of Providence frequently condescends to use the passions of the human heart, and the general circumstances of mankind, as instruments to execute its purpose, we may still be permitted, though with becoming submission, to ask, not indeed what were the first, but what were the secondary causes of the rapid growth of the Christian church. It will, perhaps, appear, that it was most effectually favored and assisted by the five following causes:

I. The inflexible, and if we may use the expression, the intolerant zeal of the Christians, derived, it is true, from the Jewish religion, but purified from the narrow and unsocial spirit, which, instead of inviting, had deterred the Gentiles from embracing the law of Moses.[1023](#)

II. The doctrine of a future life, improved by every additional circumstance which could give weight and efficacy to that important truth. III. The miraculous powers ascribed to the primitive church. IV. The pure and austere morals of the Christians.

V. The union and discipline of the Christian republic, which gradually formed an independent and increasing state in the heart of the Roman empire.

1023

[\(return\)](#)

[Though we are thus far agreed with respect to the inflexibility and intolerance of Christian zeal, yet as to the principle from which it was derived, we are, *toto cœlo*, divided in opinion. You deduce it from the Jewish religion; I would refer it to a more adequate and a more obvious source, a full persuasion of the truth of Christianity. Watson. Letters Gibbon, i. 9.—M.]

I. We have already described the religious harmony of the ancient world, and the facility with which the most different and even hostile nations embraced, or at least respected, each other's superstitions. A single people refused to join in the common intercourse of mankind. The Jews, who, under the Assyrian and Persian monarchies, had languished for many ages the most despised portion of their slaves, [1](#) emerged from obscurity under the successors of Alexander; and as they multiplied to a surprising degree in the East, and afterwards in the West, they soon excited the curiosity and wonder of other nations. [2](#) The sullen obstinacy with which they maintained their peculiar rites and unsocial manners seemed to mark them out as a distinct species of men, who boldly professed, or who faintly disguised, their implacable habits to the rest of human kind. [3](#) Neither the violence of Antiochus, nor the arts of Herod, nor the example of the circumjacent nations, could ever persuade the Jews to associate with the institutions of Moses the elegant mythology of the Greeks. [4](#) According to the maxims of universal toleration, the Romans protected a superstition which they despised. [5](#) The polite Augustus condescended to give orders, that sacrifices should be offered for his prosperity in the temple of Jerusalem; [6](#) whilst the meanest of the posterity of Abraham, who should have paid the same homage to the Jupiter of the Capitol, would have been an object of abhorrence to himself and to his brethren.

But the moderation of the conquerors was insufficient to appease the jealous prejudices of their subjects, who were alarmed and scandalized at the ensigns of paganism, which necessarily introduced themselves into a Roman province. [7](#) The mad attempt of Caligula to place his own statue in the temple of Jerusalem was defeated by the unanimous resolution of a people who dreaded death much less than such an idolatrous profanation. [8](#) Their attachment to the law of Moses was equal to their detestation of foreign religions. The current of zeal and devotion, as it was contracted into a narrow channel, ran with the strength, and sometimes with the fury, of a torrent. This facility has not always prevented intolerance, which seems inherent in the religious spirit, when armed with authority. The separation of the ecclesiastical and civil power, appears to be the only means of at once maintaining religion and tolerance: but this is a very modern notion. The passions, which mingle themselves with opinions, made the Pagans very often intolerant and persecutors; witness the Persians, the Egyptians even the Greeks and Romans.

1st. The Persians.—Cambyzes, conqueror of the Egyptians, condemned to death the magistrates of Memphis, because they had offered divine honors to their god. Apis: he caused the god to be brought before him, struck him with his dagger, commanded the priests to be scourged, and ordered a general massacre of all the Egyptians who should be found celebrating the festival of the statues of the gods to be burnt. Not content with this intolerance, he sent an army to reduce the Ammonians to slavery, and to set on fire the temple in which Jupiter delivered his oracles. See Herod. iii. 25—29, 37. Xerxes, during his invasion of Greece, acted on the same principles: he destroyed all the temples of Greece and Ionia, except that of Ephesus. See Paus. i. vii. p. 533, and x. p. 887.

Strabo, l. xiv. b. 941. 2d. The Egyptians.—They thought themselves defiled when they had drunk from the same cup or eaten at the same table with a man of a different belief from their own. “He who has voluntarily killed any sacred animal is punished with death; but if any one, even involuntarily, has killed a cat or an ibis, he cannot escape the extreme penalty: the people drag him away, treat him in the most cruel manner, sometimes without waiting for a judicial sentence. * * * Even at the time when King Ptolemy was not yet the acknowledged friend of the Roman people, while the multitude were paying court with all possible attention to the strangers who came from Italy * * a Roman having killed a cat, the people rushed to his house, and neither the entreaties of the nobles, whom the king sent to them, nor the terror of the Roman name, were sufficiently powerful to rescue the man from punishment, though he had committed the crime involuntarily.” Diod. Sic. i 83. Juvenal, in his 13th Satire, describes the sanguinary conflict between the inhabitants of Ombos and of Tentyra, from religious animosity. The fury was carried so far, that the conquerors tore and devoured the quivering limbs of the conquered.

Ardet adhuc Ombos et Tentyra, summus utrinque Inde furor vulgo, quod numina vicinorum Odit uterque locus; quum solos credat habendos Esse Deos quos ipse colit. Sat. xv. v. 85.

3d. The Greeks.—“Let us not here,” says the Abbé Guénée, “refer to the cities of Peloponnesus and their severity against atheism; the Ephesians prosecuting Heraclitus for impiety; the Greeks armed one against the other by religious zeal, in the Amphictyonic war. Let us say nothing either of the frightful cruelties inflicted by three successors of Alexander upon the Jews, to force them to abandon their religion, nor of Antiochus expelling the philosophers from his states. Let us not seek our proofs of intolerance so far off. Athens, the polite and learned Athens, will supply us with sufficient examples. Every citizen made a public and solemn vow to conform to the religion of his country, to defend it, and to cause it to be respected. An express law severely punished all discourses against the gods, and a rigid decree ordered the denunciation of all who should deny their existence. * * * The practice was in unison with the severity of the law. The proceedings commenced against Protagoras; a price set upon the head of Diagoras; the danger of Alcibiades; Aristotle obliged to fly; Stilpo banished; Anaxagoras hardly escaping death; Pericles himself, after all his services to his country, and all the glory he had acquired, compelled to appear before the tribunals and make his defence; * * a priestess executed for having introduced strange gods; Socrates condemned and drinking the hemlock, because he was accused of not recognizing those of his country, &c.; these facts attest too loudly, to be called in question, the religious intolerance of the most humane and enlightened people in Greece.” *Lettres de quelques Juifs a Mons. Voltaire*, i. p. 221. (Compare Bentley on Freethinking, from which much of this is derived.)—M.

4th. The Romans.—The laws of Rome were not less express and severe. The intolerance of foreign religions reaches, with the Romans, as high as the laws of the

twelve tables; the prohibitions were afterwards renewed at different times. Intolerance did not discontinue under the emperors; witness the counsel of Mæcenas to Augustus. This counsel is so remarkable, that I think it right to insert it entire. “Honor the gods yourself,” says Mæcenas to Augustus, “in every way according to the usage of your ancestors, and compel others to worship them. Hate and punish those who introduce strange gods, not only for the sake of the gods, (he who despises them will respect no one,) but because those who introduce new gods engage a multitude of persons in foreign laws and customs. From hence arise unions bound by oaths and confederacies, and associations, things dangerous to a monarchy.” Dion Cass. l. ii. c. 36. (But, though some may differ from it, see Gibbon’s just observation on this passage in Dion Cassius, ch. xvi. note 117; impugned, indeed, by M. Guizot, note in loc.)—M.

Even the laws which the philosophers of Athens and of Rome wrote for their imaginary republics are intolerant. Plato does not leave to his citizens freedom of religious worship; and Cicero expressly prohibits them from having other gods than those of the state. *Lettres de quelques Juifs a Mons. Voltaire*, i. p. 226.—G.

According to M. Guizot’s just remarks, religious intolerance will always ally itself with the passions of man, however different those passions may be. In the instances quoted above, with the Persians it was the pride of despotism; to conquer the gods of a country was the last mark of subjugation. With the Egyptians, it was the gross Fetichism of the superstitious populace, and the local jealousy of neighboring towns. In Greece, persecution was in general connected with political party; in Rome, with the stern supremacy of the law and the interests of the state. Gibbon has been mistaken in attributing to the tolerant spirit of Paganism that which arose out of the peculiar circumstances of the times. 1st. The decay of the old Polytheism, through the progress of reason and intelligence, and the prevalence of philosophical opinions among the higher orders.

2d. The Roman character, in which the political always predominated over the religious party. The Romans were contented with having bowed the world to a uniformity of subjection to their power, and cared not for establishing the (to them) less important uniformity of religion.—M.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[*Dum Assyrios penes, Medosque, et Persas Oriens fuit, despectissima pars servientium. Tacit. Hist. v. 8. Herodotus, who visited Asia whilst it obeyed the last of those empires, slightly mentions the Syrians of Palestine, who, according to their own confession, had received from Egypt the rite of circumcision. See l. ii. c. 104.*]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[*Diodorus Siculus, l. xl. Dion Cassius, l. xxxvii. p. 121. Tacit Hist. v. 1—9. Justin xxxvi. 2, 3.*]

3

[\(return\)](#)

[Tradidit arcano quæcunque volumine Moses, Non monstrare vias cadem nisi sacra colenti, Quæsitum ad fontem solos deducere verpas. The letter of this law is not to be found in the present volume of Moses. But the wise, the humane Maimonides openly teaches that if an idolater fall into the water, a Jew ought not to save him from instant death. See Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. vi. c. 28. * Note: It is diametrically opposed to its spirit and to its letter, see, among other passages, Deut. v. 18. 19, (God) “loveth the stranger in giving him food and raiment. Love ye, therefore, the stranger: for ye were strangers in the land of Egypt.” Comp. Lev. xxiii. 25. Juvenal is a satirist, whose strong expressions can hardly be received as historic evidence; and he wrote after the horrible cruelties of the Romans, which, during and after the war, might give some cause for the complete isolation of the Jew from the rest of the world. The Jew was a bigot, but his religion was not the only source of his bigotry. After how many centuries of mutual wrong and hatred, which had still further estranged the Jew from mankind, did Maimonides write?—M.]

4

[\(return\)](#)

[A Jewish sect, which indulged themselves in a sort of occasional conformity, derived from Herod, by whose example and authority they had been seduced, the name of Herodians. But their numbers were so inconsiderable, and their duration so short, that Josephus has not thought them worthy of his notice. See Prideaux’s Connection, vol. ii. p. 285. * Note: The Herodians were probably more of a political party than a religious sect, though Gibbon is most likely right as to their occasional conformity. See Hist. of the Jews, ii. 108.—M.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[Cicero pro Flacco, c. 28. * Note: The edicts of Julius Cæsar, and of some of the cities in Asia Minor (Krebs. Decret. pro Judæis,) in favor of the nation in general, or of the Asiatic Jews, speak a different language.—M.]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Philo de Legatione. Augustus left a foundation for a perpetual sacrifice. Yet he approved of the neglect which his grandson Caius expressed towards the temple of Jerusalem. See Sueton. in August. c. 93, and Casaubon’s notes on that passage.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[See, in particular, Joseph. Antiquitat. xvii. 6, xviii.

3; and de Bell. Judiac. i. 33, and ii. 9, edit. Havercamp. * Note: This was during the government of Pontius Pilate. (Hist. of Jews, ii. 156.) Probably in part to avoid this collision, the Roman governor, in general, resided at Cæsarea.—M.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Jussi a Caio Cæsare, effigiem ejus in templo locare, arma potius sumpsere. Tacit. Hist. v. 9. Philo and Josephus gave a very circumstantial, but a very rhetorical, account of this transaction, which exceedingly perplexed the governor of Syria. At the first mention of this idolatrous proposal, King Agrippa fainted away; and did not recover his senses until the third day. (Hist. of Jews, ii. 181, &c.)]

This inflexible perseverance, which appeared so odious or so ridiculous to the ancient world, assumes a more awful character, since Providence has deigned to reveal to us the mysterious history of the chosen people. But the devout and even scrupulous attachment to the Mosaic religion, so conspicuous among the Jews who lived under the second temple, becomes still more surprising, if it is compared with the stubborn incredulity of their forefathers. When the law was given in thunder from Mount Sinai, when the tides of the ocean and the course of the planets were suspended for the convenience of the Israelites, and when temporal rewards and punishments were the immediate consequences of their piety or disobedience, they perpetually relapsed into rebellion against the visible majesty of their Divine King, placed the idols of the nations in the sanctuary of Jehovah, and imitated every fantastic ceremony that was practised in the tents of the Arabs, or in the cities of Phœnicia. [9](#) As the protection of Heaven was deservedly withdrawn from the ungrateful race, their faith acquired a proportionable degree of vigor and purity.

The contemporaries of Moses and Joshua had beheld with careless indifference the most amazing miracles. Under the pressure of every calamity, the belief of those miracles has preserved the Jews of a later period from the universal contagion of idolatry; and in contradiction to every known principle of the human mind, that singular people seems to have yielded a stronger and more ready assent to the traditions of their remote ancestors, than to the evidence of their own senses. [10](#)

9

[\(return\)](#)

[For the enumeration of the Syrian and Arabian deities, it may be observed, that Milton has comprised in one hundred and thirty very beautiful lines the two large and learned syntagmas which Selden had composed on that abstruse subject.]

10

[\(return\)](#)

[“How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs

which I have shown among them?" (Numbers xiv. 11.) It would be easy, but it would be unbecoming, to justify the complaint of the Deity from the whole tenor of the Mosaic history. Note: Among a rude and barbarous people, religious impressions are easily made, and are as soon effaced. The ignorance which multiplies imaginary wonders, would weaken and destroy the effect of real miracle. At the period of the Jewish history, referred to in the passage from Numbers, their fears predominated over their faith,—the fears of an unwarlike people, just rescued from debasing slavery, and commanded to attack a fierce, a well-armed, a gigantic, and a far more numerous race, the inhabitants of Canaan. As to the frequent apostasy of the Jews, their religion was beyond their state of civilization. Nor is it uncommon for a people to cling with passionate attachment to that of which, at first, they could not appreciate the value. Patriotism and national pride will contend, even to death, for political rights which have been forced upon a reluctant people. The Christian may at least retort, with justice, that the great sign of his religion, the resurrection of Jesus, was most ardently believed, and most resolutely asserted, by the eye witnesses of the fact.—M.]

The Jewish religion was admirably fitted for defence, but it was never designed for conquest; and it seems probable that the number of proselytes was never much superior to that of apostates. The divine promises were originally made, and the distinguishing rite of circumcision was enjoined, to a single family. When the posterity of Abraham had multiplied like the sands of the sea, the Deity, from whose mouth they received a system of laws and ceremonies, declared himself the proper and as it were the national God of Israel; and with the most jealous care separated his favorite people from the rest of mankind. The conquest of the land of Canaan was accompanied with so many wonderful and with so many bloody circumstances, that the victorious Jews were left in a state of irreconcilable hostility with all their neighbors. They had been commanded to extirpate some of the most idolatrous tribes, and the execution of the divine will had seldom been retarded by the weakness of humanity.

With the other nations they were forbidden to contract any marriages or alliances; and the prohibition of receiving them into the congregation, which in some cases was perpetual, almost always extended to the third, to the seventh, or even to the tenth generation. The obligation of preaching to the Gentiles the faith of Moses had never been inculcated as a precept of the law, nor were the Jews inclined to impose it on themselves as a voluntary duty.

In the admission of new citizens that unsocial people was actuated by the selfish vanity of the Greeks, rather than by the generous policy of Rome. The descendants of Abraham were flattered by the opinion that they alone were the heirs of the covenant, and they were apprehensive of diminishing the value of their inheritance by sharing it too easily with the strangers of the earth. A larger acquaintance with mankind extended their knowledge without correcting their prejudices; and whenever the God of Israel acquired any new votaries, he was much more indebted to the inconstant humor of polytheism than to the active zeal of his own missionaries. [11](#) The religion of Moses seems to be instituted for a particular country as well as for a single nation; and if a strict obedience had been paid to the order, that every male, three times in the year, should present himself before the Lord Jehovah, it would have been impossible that the Jews could ever have spread themselves beyond the narrow limits of the promised land. [12](#) That obstacle was indeed removed by the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem; but the most considerable part of the Jewish religion was involved in its destruction; and the Pagans, who had long wondered at the strange report of an empty sanctuary, [13](#) were at a loss to discover what could be the object, or what could be the instruments, of a worship which was destitute of temples and of altars, of priests and of sacrifices.

Yet even in their fallen state, the Jews, still asserting their lofty and exclusive privileges, shunned, instead of courting, the society of strangers. They still insisted with inflexible rigor on those parts of the law which it was in their power to practise. Their peculiar distinctions of days, of meats, and a variety of trivial though burdensome observances, were so many objects of disgust and aversion for the other nations, to whose habits and prejudices they were diametrically opposite. The painful and even dangerous rite of circumcision was alone capable of repelling a willing proselyte from the door of the synagogue. [14](#)

11 [\(return\)](#)
[All that relates to the Jewish proselytes has been very ably by Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, l. vi. c. 6, 7.]

12 [\(return\)](#)
[See Exod. xxiv. 23, Deut. xvi. 16, the commentators, and a very sensible note in the Universal History, vol. i. p. 603, edit. fol.]

13 [\(return\)](#)
[When Pompey, using or abusing the right of conquest, entered into the Holy of Holies, it was observed with amazement, “Nulli intus Deum effigie, vacuum sedem et inania arcana.” Tacit. Hist. v. 9. It was a popular saying, with regard to the Jews, “Nil præter nubes et coeli numen adorant.”]

14 [\(return\)](#)
[A second kind of circumcision was inflicted on a Samaritan or Egyptian proselyte. The sullen

indifference of the Talmudists, with respect to the conversion of strangers, may be seen in Basnage *Histoire des Juifs*, l. xi. c. 6.]

Under these circumstances, Christianity offered itself to the world, armed with the strength of the Mosaic law, and delivered from the weight of its fetters. An exclusive zeal for the truth of religion, and the unity of God, was as carefully inculcated in the new as in the ancient system; and whatever was now revealed to mankind concerning the nature and designs of the Supreme Being was fitted to increase their reverence for that mysterious doctrine. The divine authority of Moses and the prophets was admitted, and even established, as the firmest basis of Christianity. From the beginning of the world, an uninterrupted series of predictions had announced and prepared the long-expected coming of the Messiah, who, in compliance with the gross apprehensions of the Jews, had been more frequently represented under the character of a King and Conqueror, than under that of a Prophet, a Martyr, and the Son of God. By his expiatory sacrifice, the imperfect sacrifices of the temple were at once consummated and abolished. The ceremonial law, which consisted only of types and figures, was succeeded by a pure and spiritual worship equally adapted to all climates, as well as to every condition of mankind; and to the initiation of blood was substituted a more harmless initiation of water. The promise of divine favor, instead of being partially confined to the posterity of Abraham, was universally proposed to the freeman and the slave, to the Greek and to the barbarian, to the Jew and to the Gentile. Every privilege that could raise the proselyte from earth to heaven, that could exalt his devotion, secure his happiness, or even gratify that secret pride which, under the semblance of devotion, insinuates itself into the human heart, was still reserved for the members of the Christian church; but at the same time all mankind was permitted, and even solicited, to accept the glorious distinction, which was not only proffered as a favor, but imposed as an obligation. It became the most sacred duty of a new convert to diffuse among his friends and relations the inestimable blessing which he had received, and to warn them against a refusal that would be severely punished as a criminal disobedience to the will of a benevolent but all-powerful Deity.

Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part II.

The enfranchisement of the church from the bonds of the synagogue was a work, however, of some time and of some difficulty. The Jewish converts, who acknowledged Jesus in the character of the Messiah foretold by their ancient oracles, respected him as a prophetic teacher of virtue and religion; but they obstinately adhered to the ceremonies of their ancestors, and were desirous of imposing them on the Gentiles, who continually augmented the number of believers. These Judaizing Christians seem to have argued with some degree of plausibility from the divine origin of the Mosaic law, and from the immutable perfections of its great Author. They affirmed, that if the Being, who is the

same through all eternity, had designed to abolish those sacred rites which had served to distinguish his chosen people, the repeal of them would have been no less clear and solemn than their first promulgation: *that*, instead of those frequent declarations, which either suppose or assert the perpetuity of the Mosaic religion, it would have been represented as a provisionary scheme intended to last only to the coming of the Messiah, who should instruct mankind in a more perfect mode of faith and of worship: [15](#) *that* the Messiah himself, and his disciples who conversed with him on earth, instead of authorizing by their example the most minute observances of the Mosaic law, [16](#) would have published to the world the abolition of those useless and obsolete ceremonies, without suffering Christianity to remain during so many years obscurely confounded among the sects of the Jewish church. Arguments like these appear to have been used in the defence of the expiring cause of the Mosaic law; but the industry of our learned divines has abundantly explained the ambiguous language of the Old Testament, and the ambiguous conduct of the apostolic teachers. It was proper gradually to unfold the system of the gospel, and to pronounce, with the utmost caution and tenderness, a sentence of condemnation so repugnant to the inclination and prejudices of the believing Jews.

15

[\(return\)](#)

[These arguments were urged with great ingenuity by the Jew Orobio, and refuted with equal ingenuity and candor by the Christian Limborch. See the *Amica Collatio*, (it well deserves that name,) or account of the dispute between them.]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[Jesus... circumcised erat; cibus utebatur Judaicis; vestitu simili; purgatos scabie mittebat ad sacerdotes; Paschata et alios dies festos religiose observabat: Si quos sanavit sabbatho, ostendit non tantum ex lege, sed et exceptis sententiis, talia opera sabbatho non interdicta. Grotius de Veritate Religionis Christianæ, l. v. c. 7. A little afterwards, (c. 12,) he expatiates on the condescension of the apostles.]

The history of the church of Jerusalem affords a lively proof of the necessity of those precautions, and of the deep impression which the Jewish religion had made on the minds of its sectaries. The first fifteen bishops of Jerusalem were all circumcised Jews; and the congregation over which they presided united the law of Moses with the doctrine of Christ. [17](#) It was natural that the primitive tradition of a church which was founded only forty days after the death of Christ, and was governed almost as many years under the immediate inspection of his apostle, should be received as the standard of orthodoxy. The distant churches very frequently appealed to the authority of their venerable Parent, and relieved her distresses by a liberal contribution of alms. But when numerous and opulent societies were established in the great cities of the empire, in Antioch, Alexandria, Ephesus, Corinth, and Rome, the reverence which Jerusalem had

inspired to all the Christian colonies insensibly diminished. [18b](#) The Jewish converts, or, as they were afterwards called, the Nazarenes, who had laid the foundations of the church, soon found themselves overwhelmed by the increasing multitudes, that from all the various religions of polytheism enlisted under the banner of Christ: and the Gentiles, who, with the approbation of their peculiar apostle, had rejected the intolerable weight of the Mosaic ceremonies, at length refused to their more scrupulous brethren the same toleration which at first they had humbly solicited for their own practice. The ruin of the temple of the city, and of the public religion of the Jews, was severely felt by the Nazarenes; as in their manners, though not in their faith, they maintained so intimate a connection with their impious countrymen, whose misfortunes were attributed by the Pagans to the contempt, and more justly ascribed by the Christians to the wrath, of the Supreme Deity. The Nazarenes retired from the ruins of Jerusalem [18](#) to the little town of Pella beyond the Jordan, where that ancient church languished above sixty years in solitude and obscurity. [19](#) They still enjoyed the comfort of making frequent and devout visits to the *Holy City*, and the hope of being one day restored to those seats which both nature and religion taught them to love as well as to revere. But at length, under the reign of Hadrian, the desperate fanaticism of the Jews filled up the measure of their calamities; and the Romans, exasperated by their repeated rebellions, exercised the rights of victory with unusual rigor. The emperor founded, under the name of Ælia Capitolina, a new city on Mount Sion, [20](#) to which he gave the privileges of a colony; and denouncing the severest penalties against any of the Jewish people who should dare to approach its precincts, he fixed a vigilant garrison of a Roman cohort to enforce the execution of his orders. The Nazarenes had only one way left to escape the common proscription, and the force of truth was on this occasion assisted by the influence of temporal advantages. They elected Marcus for their bishop, a prelate of the race of the Gentiles, and most probably a native either of Italy or of some of the Latin provinces. At his persuasion, the most considerable part of the congregation renounced the Mosaic law, in the practice of which they had persevered above a century. By this sacrifice of their habits and prejudices, they purchased a free admission into the colony of Hadrian, and more firmly cemented their union with the Catholic church. [21](#)

17 [\(return\)](#)
[Pæne omnes Christum Deum sub legis
observatione credebant Sulpicius Severus, ii. 31.
See Eusebius, Hist. Ecclesiast. l. iv. c. 5.]

18b [\(return\)](#)
[Footnote 18b: Mosheim de Rebus Christianis ante
Constantinum Magnum, page 153. In this masterly
performance, which I shall often have occasion to
quote he enters much more fully into the state of the
primitive church than he has an opportunity of
doing in his General History.]

18 [\(return\)](#)
[This is incorrect: all the traditions concur in

placing the abandonment of the city by the Christians, not only before it was in ruins, but before the siege had commenced. Euseb. loc. cit., and Le Clerc.—M.]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, l. iii. c. 5. Le Clerc, Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 605. During this occasional absence, the bishop and church of Pella still retained the title of Jerusalem. In the same manner, the Roman pontiffs resided seventy years at Avignon; and the patriarchs of Alexandria have long since transferred their episcopal seat to Cairo.]

20

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius, l. lxxix. The exile of the Jewish nation from Jerusalem is attested by Aristo of Pella, (apud Euseb. l. iv. c. 6,) and is mentioned by several ecclesiastical writers; though some of them too hastily extend this interdiction to the whole country of Palestine.]

21

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, l. iv. c. 6. Sulpicius Severus, ii. 31. By comparing their unsatisfactory accounts, Mosheim (p. 327, &c.) has drawn out a very distinct representation of the circumstances and motives of this revolution.]

When the name and honors of the church of Jerusalem had been restored to Mount Sion, the crimes of heresy and schism were imputed to the obscure remnant of the Nazarenes, which refused to accompany their Latin bishop. They still preserved their former habitation of Pella, spread themselves into the villages adjacent to Damascus, and formed an inconsiderable church in the city of Berœa, or, as it is now called, of Aleppo, in Syria. [22](#) The name of Nazarenes was deemed too honorable for those Christian Jews, and they soon received, from the supposed poverty of their understanding, as well as of their condition, the contemptuous epithet of Ebionites. [23](#) In a few years after the return of the church of Jerusalem, it became a matter of doubt and controversy, whether a man who sincerely acknowledged Jesus as the Messiah, but who still continued to observe the law of Moses, could possibly hope for salvation. The humane temper of Justin Martyr inclined him to answer this question in the affirmative; and though he expressed himself with the most guarded diffidence, he ventured to determine in favor of such an imperfect Christian, if he were content to practise the Mosaic ceremonies, without pretending to assert their general use or necessity. But when Justin was pressed to declare the sentiment of the church, he confessed that there were very many among the orthodox Christians, who not only excluded their Judaizing brethren from the hope of salvation, but who declined any intercourse with them in the common offices of friendship, hospitality, and social life. [24](#) The more rigorous opinion prevailed, as it was natural to expect, over the

milder; and an eternal bar of separation was fixed between the disciples of Moses and those of Christ. The unfortunate Ebionites, rejected from one religion as apostates, and from the other as heretics, found themselves compelled to assume a more decided character; and although some traces of that obsolete sect may be discovered as late as the fourth century, they insensibly melted away, either into the church or the synagogue. [25](#)

22

[\(return\)](#)

[Le Clerc (Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 477, 535) seems to have collected from Eusebius, Jerome, Epiphanius, and other writers, all the principal circumstances that relate to the Nazarenes or Ebionites. The nature of their opinions soon divided them into a stricter and a milder sect; and there is some reason to conjecture, that the family of Jesus Christ remained members, at least, of the latter and more moderate party.]

23

[\(return\)](#)

[Some writers have been pleased to create an Ebion, the imaginary author of their sect and name. But we can more safely rely on the learned Eusebius than on the vehement Tertullian, or the credulous Epiphanius. According to Le Clerc, the Hebrew word Ebjonim may be translated into Latin by that of Pauperes. See Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 477. * Note: The opinion of Le Clerc is generally admitted; but Neander has suggested some good reasons for supposing that this term only applied to poverty of condition. The obscure history of their tenets and divisions, is clearly and rationally traced in his History of the Church, vol. i. part ii. p. 612, &c., Germ. edit.—M.]

24

[\(return\)](#)

[See the very curious Dialogue of Justin Martyr with the Jew Tryphon. The conference between them was held at Ephesus, in the reign of Antoninus Pius, and about twenty years after the return of the church of Pella to Jerusalem. For this date consult the accurate note of Tillemont, Memoires Ecclesiastiques, tom. ii. p. 511. * Note: Justin Martyr makes an important distinction, which Gibbon has neglected to notice. * * * There were some who were not content with observing the Mosaic law themselves, but enforced the same observance, as necessary to salvation, upon the heathen converts, and refused all social intercourse with them if they did not conform to the law. Justin Martyr himself freely admits those who kept the law themselves to Christian communion, though he acknowledges that some, not the Church, thought

otherwise; of the other party, he himself thought less favorably. The former by some are considered the Nazarenes the latter the Ebionites—G and M.]

25

[\(return\)](#)

[Of all the systems of Christianity, that of Abyssinia is the only one which still adheres to the Mosaic rites. (Geddes's Church History of Æthiopia, and Dissertations de La Grand sur la Relation du P. Lobo.) The eunuch of the queen Candace might suggest some suspicion; but as we are assured (Socrates, i. 19. Sozomen, ii. 24. Ludolphus, p. 281) that the Æthiopians were not converted till the fourth century, it is more reasonable to believe that they respected the sabbath, and distinguished the forbidden meats, in imitation of the Jews, who, in a very early period, were seated on both sides of the Red Sea. Circumcision had been practised by the most ancient Æthiopians, from motives of health and cleanliness, which seem to be explained in the Recherches Philosophiques sur les Americains, tom. ii. p. 117.]

While the orthodox church preserved a just medium between excessive veneration and improper contempt for the law of Moses, the various heretics deviated into equal but opposite extremes of error and extravagance. From the acknowledged truth of the Jewish religion, the Ebionites had concluded that it could never be abolished. From its supposed imperfections, the Gnostics as hastily inferred that it never was instituted by the wisdom of the Deity. There are some objections against the authority of Moses and the prophets, which too readily present themselves to the sceptical mind; though they can only be derived from our ignorance of remote antiquity, and from our incapacity to form an adequate judgment of the divine economy. These objections were eagerly embraced and as petulantly urged by the vain science of the Gnostics. [26](#) As those heretics were, for the most part, averse to the pleasures of sense, they morosely arraigned the polygamy of the patriarchs, the gallantries of David, and the seraglio of Solomon. The conquest of the land of Canaan, and the extirpation of the unsuspecting natives, they were at a loss how to reconcile with the common notions of humanity and justice. [261](#) But when they recollected the sanguinary list of murders, of executions, and of massacres, which stain almost every page of the Jewish annals, they acknowledged that the barbarians of Palestine had exercised as much compassion towards their idolatrous enemies, as they had ever shown to their friends or countrymen. [27](#) Passing from the sectaries of the law to the law itself, they asserted that it was impossible that a religion which consisted only of bloody sacrifices and trifling ceremonies, and whose rewards as well as punishments were all of a carnal and temporal nature, could inspire the love of virtue, or restrain the impetuosity of passion. The Mosaic account of the creation and fall of man was treated with profane derision

by the Gnostics, who would not listen with patience to the repose of the Deity after six days' labor, to the rib of Adam, the garden of Eden, the trees of life and of knowledge, the speaking serpent, the forbidden fruit, and the condemnation pronounced against human kind for the venial offence of their first progenitors. [28](#) The God of Israel was impiously represented by the Gnostics as a being liable to passion and to error, capricious in his favor, implacable in his resentment, meanly jealous of his superstitious worship, and confining his partial providence to a single people, and to this transitory life. In such a character they could discover none of the features of the wise and omnipotent Father of the universe. [29](#) They allowed that the religion of the Jews was somewhat less criminal than the idolatry of the Gentiles; but it was their fundamental doctrine that the Christ whom they adored as the first and brightest emanation of the Deity appeared upon earth to rescue mankind from their various errors, and to reveal a new system of truth and perfection. The most learned of the fathers, by a very singular condescension, have imprudently admitted the sophistry of the Gnostics. [291](#) Acknowledging that the literal sense is repugnant to every principle of faith as well as reason, they deem themselves secure and invulnerable behind the ample veil of allegory, which they carefully spread over every tender part of the Mosaic dispensation. [30](#)

26

[\(return\)](#)

[Beausobre, Histoire du Manicheisme, l. i. c. 3, has stated their objections, particularly those of Faustus, the adversary of Augustin, with the most learned impartiality.]

261

[\(return\)](#)

[On the "war law" of the Jews, see Hist. of Jews, i. 137.—M.]

27

[\(return\)](#)

[Apud ipsos fides obstinata, misericordia in promptu: adversus amnes alios hostile odium. Tacit. Hist. v. 4. Surely Tacitus had seen the Jews with too favorable an eye. The perusal of Josephus must have destroyed the antithesis. * Note: Few writers have suspected Tacitus of partiality towards the Jews. The whole later history of the Jews illustrates as well their strong feelings of humanity to their brethren, as their hostility to the rest of mankind. The character and the position of Josephus with the Roman authorities, must be kept in mind during the perusal of his History. Perhaps he has not exaggerated the ferocity and fanaticism of the Jews at that time; but insurrectionary warfare is not the best school for the humaner virtues, and much must be allowed for the grinding tyranny of the later Roman governors. See Hist. of Jews, ii. 254.—M.]

- 28 [\(return\)](#)
[Dr. Burnet (*Archæologia*, l. ii. c. 7) has discussed the first chapters of Genesis with too much wit and freedom. * Note: Dr. Burnet apologized for the levity with which he had conducted some of his arguments, by the excuse that he wrote in a learned language for scholars alone, not for the vulgar. Whatever may be thought of his success in tracing an Eastern allegory in the first chapters of Genesis, his other works prove him to have been a man of great genius, and of sincere piety.—M]
- 29 [\(return\)](#)
[The milder Gnostics considered Jehovah, the Creator, as a Being of a mixed nature between God and the Dæmon. Others confounded him with an evil principle. Consult the second century of the general history of Mosheim, which gives a very distinct, though concise, account of their strange opinions on this subject.]
- 291 [\(return\)](#)
[The Gnostics, and the historian who has stated these plausible objections with so much force as almost to make them his own, would have shown a more considerate and not less reasonable philosophy, if they had considered the religion of Moses with reference to the age in which it was promulgated; if they had done justice to its sublime as well as its more imperfect views of the divine nature; the humane and civilizing provisions of the Hebrew law, as well as those adapted for an infant and barbarous people. See *Hist of Jews*, i. 36, 37, &c.—M.]
- 30 [\(return\)](#)
[See Beausobre, *Hist. du Manicheisme*, l. i. c. 4. Origen and St. Augustin were among the allegorists.]

It has been remarked with more ingenuity than truth, that the virgin purity of the church was never violated by schism or heresy before the reign of Trajan or Hadrian, about one hundred years after the death of Christ. [31](#) We may observe with much more propriety, that, during that period, the disciples of the Messiah were indulged in a freer latitude, both of faith and practice, than has ever been allowed in succeeding ages. As the terms of communion were insensibly narrowed, and the spiritual authority of the prevailing party was exercised with increasing severity, many of its most respectable adherents, who were called upon to renounce, were provoked to assert their private opinions, to pursue the consequences of their mistaken principles, and openly to erect the standard of rebellion against the unity of the church. The Gnostics were distinguished as the most polite, the most learned, and the most wealthy of the Christian

name; and that general appellation, which expressed a superiority of knowledge, was either assumed by their own pride, or ironically bestowed by the envy of their adversaries. They were almost without exception of the race of the Gentiles, and their principal founders seem to have been natives of Syria or Egypt, where the warmth of the climate disposes both the mind and the body to indolent and contemplative devotion. The Gnostics blended with the faith of Christ many sublime but obscure tenets, which they derived from oriental philosophy, and even from the religion of Zoroaster, concerning the eternity of matter, the existence of two principles, and the mysterious hierarchy of the invisible world. [32](#) As soon as they launched out into that vast abyss, they delivered themselves to the guidance of a disordered imagination; and as the paths of error are various and infinite, the Gnostics were imperceptibly divided into more than fifty particular sects, [33](#) of whom the most celebrated appear to have been the Basilidians, the Valentinians, the Marcionites, and, in a still later period, the Manichæans. Each of these sects could boast of its bishops and congregations, of its doctors and martyrs; [34](#) and, instead of the Four Gospels adopted by the church, [341](#) the heretics produced a multitude of histories, in which the actions and discourses of Christ and of his apostles were adapted to their respective tenets. [35](#) The success of the Gnostics was rapid and extensive. [36](#) They covered Asia and Egypt, established themselves in Rome, and sometimes penetrated into the provinces of the West. For the most part they arose in the second century, flourished during the third, and were suppressed in the fourth or fifth, by the prevalence of more fashionable controversies, and by the superior ascendant of the reigning power. Though they constantly disturbed the peace, and frequently disgraced the name, of religion, they contributed to assist rather than to retard the progress of Christianity. The Gentile converts, whose strongest objections and prejudices were directed against the law of Moses, could find admission into many Christian societies, which required not from their untutored mind any belief of an antecedent revelation. Their faith was insensibly fortified and enlarged, and the church was ultimately benefited by the conquests of its most inveterate enemies. [37](#)

31

[\(return\)](#)

[Hegesippus, ap. Euseb. l. iii. 32, iv. 22. Clemens Alexandrin Stromat. vii. 17. * Note: The assertion of Hegesippus is not so positive: it is sufficient to read the whole passage in Eusebius, to see that the former part is modified by the matter. Hegesippus adds, that up to this period the church had remained pure and immaculate as a virgin. Those who labored to corrupt the doctrines of the gospel worked as yet in obscurity—G]

32

[\(return\)](#)

[In the account of the Gnostics of the second and third centuries, Mosheim is ingenious and candid; Le Clerc dull, but exact; Beausobre almost always an apologist; and it is much to be feared that the primitive fathers are very frequently calumniators.

* Note The Histoire du Gnosticisme of M. Matter is at once the fairest and most complete account of these sects.—M.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[See the catalogues of Irenæus and Epiphanius. It must indeed be allowed, that those writers were inclined to multiply the number of sects which opposed the unity of the church.]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, l. iv. c. 15. Sozomen, l. ii. c. 32. See in Bayle, in the article of Marcion, a curious detail of a dispute on that subject. It should seem that some of the Gnostics (the Basilidians) declined, and even refused the honor of Martyrdom. Their reasons were singular and abstruse. See Mosheim, p. 539.]

341 [\(return\)](#)

[M. Hahn has restored the Marcionite Gospel with great ingenuity. His work is reprinted in Thilo. Codex. Apoc. Nov. Test. vol. i.—M.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[See a very remarkable passage of Origen, (Proem. ad Lucam.) That indefatigable writer, who had consumed his life in the study of the Scriptures, relies for their authenticity on the inspired authority of the church. It was impossible that the Gnostics could receive our present Gospels, many parts of which (particularly in the resurrection of Christ) are directly, and as it might seem designedly, pointed against their favorite tenets. It is therefore somewhat singular that Ignatius (Epist. ad Smyrn. Patr. Apostol. tom. ii. p. 34) should choose to employ a vague and doubtful tradition, instead of quoting the certain testimony of the evangelists. Note: Bishop Pearson has attempted very happily to explain this singularity.' The first Christians were acquainted with a number of sayings of Jesus Christ, which are not related in our Gospels, and indeed have never been written. Why might not St. Ignatius, who had lived with the apostles or their disciples, repeat in other words that which St. Luke has related, particularly at a time when, being in prison, he could have the Gospels at hand? Pearson, Vind Ign. pp. 2, 9 p. 396 in tom. ii. Patres Apost. ed. Coteler—G.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[Faciunt favos et vespæ; faciunt ecclesias et Marcionitæ, is the strong expression of Tertullian, which I am obliged to quote from memory. In the time of Epiphanius (advers. Hæreses, p. 302) the

Marcionites were very numerous in Italy, Syria, Egypt, Arabia, and Persia.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[Augustin is a memorable instance of this gradual progress from reason to faith. He was, during several years, engaged in the Manichæar sect.]

But whatever difference of opinion might subsist between the Orthodox, the Ebionites, and the Gnostics, concerning the divinity or the obligation of the Mosaic law, they were all equally animated by the same exclusive zeal, and by the same abhorrence for idolatry, which had distinguished the Jews from the other nations of the ancient world. The philosopher, who considered the system of polytheism as a composition of human fraud and error, could disguise a smile of contempt under the mask of devotion, without apprehending that either the mockery, or the compliance, would expose him to the resentment of any invisible, or, as he conceived them, imaginary powers. But the established religions of Paganism were seen by the primitive Christians in a much more odious and formidable light. It was the universal sentiment both of the church and of heretics, that the dæmons were the authors, the patrons, and the objects of idolatry. [38](#) Those rebellious spirits who had been degraded from the rank of angels, and cast down into the infernal pit, were still permitted to roam upon earth, to torment the bodies, and to seduce the minds, of sinful men. The dæmons soon discovered and abused the natural propensity of the human heart towards devotion, and artfully withdrawing the adoration of mankind from their Creator, they usurped the place and honors of the Supreme Deity. By the success of their malicious contrivances, they at once gratified their own vanity and revenge, and obtained the only comfort of which they were yet susceptible, the hope of involving the human species in the participation of their guilt and misery. It was confessed, or at least it was imagined, that they had distributed among themselves the most important characters of polytheism, one dæmon assuming the name and attributes of Jupiter, another of Æsculapius, a third of Venus, and a fourth perhaps of Apollo; [39](#) and that, by the advantage of their long experience and ærial nature, they were enabled to execute, with sufficient skill and dignity, the parts which they had undertaken. They lurked in the temples, instituted festivals and sacrifices, invented fables, pronounced oracles, and were frequently allowed to perform miracles. The Christians, who, by the interposition of evil spirits, could so readily explain every præternatural appearance, were disposed and even desirous to admit the most extravagant fictions of the Pagan mythology. But the belief of the Christian was accompanied with horror. The most trifling mark of respect to the national worship he considered as a direct homage yielded to the dæmon, and as an act of rebellion against the majesty of God.

38

[\(return\)](#)

[The unanimous sentiment of the primitive church is very clearly explained by Justin Martyr, Apolog. Major, by Athenagoras, Legat. c. 22. &c., and by Lactantius, Institut. Divin. ii. 14—19.]

[Tertullian (Apolog. c. 23) alleges the confession of the dæmons themselves as often as they were tormented by the Christian exorcists]

Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part III.

In consequence of this opinion, it was the first but arduous duty of a Christian to preserve himself pure and undefiled by the practice of idolatry. The religion of the nations was not merely a speculative doctrine professed in the schools or preached in the temples. The innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of business or pleasure, of public or of private life, and it seemed impossible to escape the observance of them, without, at the same time, renouncing the commerce of mankind, and all the offices and amusements of society. [40](#) The important transactions of peace and war were prepared or concluded by solemn sacrifices, in which the magistrate, the senator, and the soldier, were obliged to preside or to participate. [41](#) The public spectacles were an essential part of the cheerful devotion of the Pagans, and the gods were supposed to accept, as the most grateful offering, the games that the prince and people celebrated in honor of their peculiar festivals. [42](#) The Christians, who with pious horror avoided the abomination of the circus or the theatre, found himself encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's happiness. [43](#) When the bride, struggling with well-affected reluctance, was forced in hymenæal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation, [44](#) or when the sad procession of the dead slowly moved towards the funeral pile, [45](#) the Christian, on these interesting occasions, was compelled to desert the persons who were the dearest to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent to those impious ceremonies. Every art and every trade that was in the least concerned in the framing or adorning of idols was polluted by the stain of idolatry; [46](#) a severe sentence, since it devoted to eternal misery the far greater part of the community, which is employed in the exercise of liberal or mechanic professions. If we cast our eyes over the numerous remains of antiquity, we shall perceive, that besides the immediate representations of the gods, and the holy instruments of their worship, the elegant forms and agreeable fictions consecrated by the imagination of the Greeks, were introduced as the richest ornaments of the houses, the dress, and the furniture of the Pagans. [47](#) Even the arts of music and painting, of eloquence and poetry, flowed from the same impure origin. In the style of the fathers, Apollo and the Muses were the organs of the infernal spirit; Homer and Virgil were the most eminent of his servants; and the beautiful mythology which pervades and animates the compositions of their genius, is destined to celebrate the glory of the dæmons. Even the common language of Greece

and Rome abounded with familiar but impious expressions, which the imprudent Christian might too carelessly utter, or too patiently hear. [48](#)

40

[\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian has written a most severe treatise against idolatry, to caution his brethren against the hourly danger of incurring that guilt. *Recogita sylvam, et quantæ latitant spinæ. De Corona Militis*, c. 10.]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[The Roman senate was always held in a temple or consecrated place. (Aulus Gellius, xiv. 7.) Before they entered on business, every senator dropped some wine and frankincense on the altar. Sueton. in August. c. 35.]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[See Tertullian, *De Spectaculis*. This severe reformer shows no more indulgence to a tragedy of Euripides, than to a combat of gladiators. The dress of the actors particularly offends him. By the use of the lofty buskin, they impiously strive to add a cubit to their stature. c. 23.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[The ancient practice of concluding the entertainment with libations, may be found in every classic. Socrates and Seneca, in their last moments, made a noble application of this custom. *Postquam stagnum, calidæ aquæ introiit, respergens proximos servorum, addita voce, libare se liquorem illum Jovi Liberatori. Tacit. Annal. xv. 64.*]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[See the elegant but idolatrous hymn of Catullus, on the nuptials of Manlius and Julia. O Hymen, Hymenæe Io! *Quis huic Deo compararier ausit?*]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[The ancient funerals (in those of Misenus and Pallas) are no less accurately described by Virgil, than they are illustrated by his commentator Servius. The pile itself was an altar, the flames were fed with the blood of victims, and all the assistants were sprinkled with lustral water.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian *de Idololatria*, c. 11. * Note: The exaggerated and declamatory opinions of Tertullian ought not to be taken as the general sentiment of the early Christians. Gibbon has too often allowed himself to consider the peculiar notions of certain Fathers of the Church as inherent in Christianity. This is not accurate.—G.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[See every part of Montfaucon's Antiquities. Even the reverses of the Greek and Roman coins were frequently of an idolatrous nature. Here indeed the scruples of the Christian were suspended by a stronger passion. Note: All this scrupulous nicety is at variance with the decision of St. Paul about meat offered to idols, 1, Cor. x. 21— 32.—M.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian de Idololatria, c. 20, 21, 22. If a Pagan friend (on the occasion perhaps of sneezing) used the familiar expression of "Jupiter bless you," the Christian was obliged to protest against the divinity of Jupiter.]

The dangerous temptations which on every side lurked in ambush to surprise the unguarded believer, assailed him with redoubled violence on the days of solemn festivals. So artfully were they framed and disposed throughout the year, that superstition always wore the appearance of pleasure, and often of virtue. Some of the most sacred festivals in the Roman ritual were destined to salute the new calends of January with vows of public and private felicity; to indulge the pious remembrance of the dead and living; to ascertain the inviolable bounds of property; to hail, on the return of spring, the genial powers of fecundity; to perpetuate the two memorable æras of Rome, the foundation of the city and that of the republic; and to restore, during the humane license of the Saturnalia, the primitive equality of mankind. Some idea may be conceived of the abhorrence of the Christians for such impious ceremonies, by the scrupulous delicacy which they displayed on a much less alarming occasion. On days of general festivity it was the custom of the ancients to adorn their doors with lamps and with branches of laurel, and to crown their heads with a garland of flowers. This innocent and elegant practice might perhaps have been tolerated as a mere civil institution. But it most unluckily happened that the doors were under the protection of the household gods, that the laurel was sacred to the lover of Daphne, and that garlands of flowers, though frequently worn as a symbol either of joy or mourning, had been dedicated in their first origin to the service of superstition. The trembling Christians, who were persuaded in this instance to comply with the fashion of their country, and the commands of the magistrate, labored under the most gloomy apprehensions, from the reproaches of his own conscience, the censures of the church, and the denunciations of divine vengeance. [49](#) [50](#)

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Consult the most labored work of Ovid, his imperfect Fasti. He finished no more than the first six months of the year. The compilation of Macrobius is called the Saturnalia, but it is only a small part of the first book that bears any relation to the title.]

[Tertullian has composed a defence, or rather panegyric, of the rash action of a Christian soldier, who, by throwing away his crown of laurel, had exposed himself and his brethren to the most imminent danger. By the mention of the emperors, (Severus and Caracalla,) it is evident, notwithstanding the wishes of M. de Tillemont, that Tertullian composed his treatise *De Corona* long before he was engaged in the errors of the Montanists. See *Memoires Ecclesiastiques*, tom. iii. p. 384. Note: The soldier did not tear off his crown to throw it down with contempt; he did not even throw it away; he held it in his hand, while others wore it on their heads. *Solus libero capite, ornamento in manu otioso*.—G Note: Tertullian does not expressly name the two emperors, Severus and Caracalla: he speaks only of two emperors, and of a long peace which the church had enjoyed. It is generally agreed that Tertullian became a Montanist about the year 200: his work, *de Corona Militis*, appears to have been written, at the earliest about the year 202 before the persecution of Severus: it may be maintained, then, that it is subsequent to the Montanism of the author. See Mosheim, *Diss. de Apol. Tertull.* p. 53. *Biblioth. Amsterd.* tom. x. part ii. p. 292. Cave's *Hist. Lit.* p. 92, 93.—G. —The state of Tertullian's opinions at the particular period is almost an idle question. "The fiery African" is not at any time to be considered a fair representative of Christianity.—M.]

Such was the anxious diligence which was required to guard the chastity of the gospel from the infectious breath of idolatry. The superstitious observances of public or private rites were carelessly practised, from education and habit, by the followers of the established religion. But as often as they occurred, they afforded the Christians an opportunity of declaring and confirming their zealous opposition. By these frequent protestations their attachment to the faith was continually fortified; and in proportion to the increase of zeal, they combated with the more ardor and success in the holy war, which they had undertaken against the empire of the demons.

II. The writings of Cicero [51](#) represent in the most lively colors the ignorance, the errors, and the uncertainty of the ancient philosophers with regard to the immortality of the soul. When they are desirous of arming their disciples against the fear of death, they inculcate, as an obvious though melancholy position, that the fatal stroke of our dissolution releases us from the calamities of life; and that those can no longer suffer, who no longer exist. Yet there were a few sages of Greece and Rome who had conceived a more exalted, and, in some respects, a juster idea of human nature, though it must be

confessed, that in the sublime inquiry, their reason had been often guided by their imagination, and that their imagination had been prompted by their vanity. When they viewed with complacency the extent of their own mental powers, when they exercised the various faculties of memory, of fancy, and of judgment, in the most profound speculations, or the most important labors, and when they reflected on the desire of fame, which transported them into future ages, far beyond the bounds of death and of the grave, they were unwilling to confound themselves with the beasts of the field, or to suppose that a being, for whose dignity they entertained the most sincere admiration, could be limited to a spot of earth, and to a few years of duration. With this favorable prepossession they summoned to their aid the science, or rather the language, of Metaphysics. They soon discovered, that as none of the properties of matter will apply to the operations of the mind, the human soul must consequently be a substance distinct from the body, pure, simple, and spiritual, incapable of dissolution, and susceptible of a much higher degree of virtue and happiness after the release from its corporeal prison. From these specious and noble principles, the philosophers who trod in the footsteps of Plato deduced a very unjustifiable conclusion, since they asserted, not only the future immortality, but the past eternity, of the human soul, which they were too apt to consider as a portion of the infinite and self-existing spirit, which pervades and sustains the universe. [52](#) A doctrine thus removed beyond the senses and the experience of mankind might serve to amuse the leisure of a philosophic mind; or, in the silence of solitude, it might sometimes impart a ray of comfort to desponding virtue; but the faint impression which had been received in the schools was soon obliterated by the commerce and business of active life. We are sufficiently acquainted with the eminent persons who flourished in the age of Cicero and of the first Cæsars, with their actions, their characters, and their motives, to be assured that their conduct in this life was never regulated by any serious conviction of the rewards or punishments of a future state. At the bar and in the senate of Rome the ablest orators were not apprehensive of giving offence to their hearers by exposing that doctrine as an idle and extravagant opinion, which was rejected with contempt by every man of a liberal education and understanding. [53](#)

51

[\(return\)](#)

[In particular, the first book of the Tusculan Questions, and the treatise De Senectute, and the Somnium Scipionis, contain, in the most beautiful language, every thing that Grecian philosophy, on Roman good sense, could possibly suggest on this dark but important object.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[The preexistence of human souls, so far at least as that doctrine is compatible with religion, was adopted by many of the Greek and Latin fathers. See Beausobre, Hist. du Manicheisme, l. vi. c. 4.]

[See Cicero pro Cluent. c. 61. Cæsar ap. Sallust. de Bell. Catilis n 50. Juvenal. Satir. ii. 149. —Esse aliquid manes, et subterranea regna, —
Nec pueri credunt, nisi qui nondum æree lavantæ.]

Since therefore the most sublime efforts of philosophy can extend no further than feebly to point out the desire, the hope, or, at most, the probability, of a future state, there is nothing, except a divine revelation, that can ascertain the existence and describe the condition, of the invisible country which is destined to receive the souls of men after their separation from the body. But we may perceive several defects inherent to the popular religions of Greece and Rome, which rendered them very unequal to so arduous a task. 1. The general system of their mythology was unsupported by any solid proofs; and the wisest among the Pagans had already disclaimed its usurped authority. 2. The description of the infernal regions had been abandoned to the fancy of painters and of poets, who peopled them with so many phantoms and monsters, who dispensed their rewards and punishments with so little equity, that a solemn truth, the most congenial to the human heart, was oppressed and disgraced by the absurd mixture of the wildest fictions. [54](#) 3. The doctrine of a future state was scarcely considered among the devout polytheists of Greece and Rome as a fundamental article of faith. The providence of the gods, as it related to public communities rather than to private individuals, was principally displayed on the visible theatre of the present world. The petitions which were offered on the altars of Jupiter or Apollo expressed the anxiety of their worshippers for temporal happiness, and their ignorance or indifference concerning a future life. [55](#) The important truth of the immortality of the soul was inculcated with more diligence, as well as success, in India, in Assyria, in Egypt, and in Gaul; and since we cannot attribute such a difference to the superior knowledge of the barbarians, we must ascribe it to the influence of an established priesthood, which employed the motives of virtue as the instrument of ambition. [56](#)

[The xith book of the Odyssey gives a very dreary and incoherent account of the infernal shades. Pindar and Virgil have embellished the picture; but even those poets, though more correct than their great model, are guilty of very strange inconsistencies. See Bayle, Responses aux Questions d'un Provincial, part iii. c. 22.]

[See xvith epistle of the first book of Horace, the xiiiith Satire of Juvenal, and the iid Satire of Persius: these popular discourses express the sentiment and language of the multitude.]

[If we confine ourselves to the Gauls, we may observe, that they intrusted, not only their lives, but even their money, to the security of another world.

Vetus ille mos Gallorum occurrit (says Valerius Maximus, l. ii. c. 6, p. 10) quos, memoria proditum est pecunias montuas, quæ his apud inferos redderentur, dare solitos. The same custom is more darkly insinuated by Mela, l. iii. c. 2. It is almost needless to add, that the profits of trade hold a just proportion to the credit of the merchant, and that the Druids derived from their holy profession a character of responsibility, which could scarcely be claimed by any other order of men.]

We might naturally expect that a principle so essential to religion, would have been revealed in the clearest terms to the chosen people of Palestine, and that it might safely have been intrusted to the hereditary priesthood of Aaron. It is incumbent on us to adore the mysterious dispensations of Providence, [57](#) when we discover that the doctrine of the immortality of the soul is omitted in the law of Moses; it is darkly insinuated by the prophets; and during the long period which elapsed between the Egyptian and the Babylonian servitudes, the hopes as well as fears of the Jews appear to have been confined within the narrow compass of the present life. [58](#) After Cyrus had permitted the exiled nation to return into the promised land, and after Ezra had restored the ancient records of their religion, two celebrated sects, the Sadducees and the Pharisees, insensibly arose at Jerusalem. [59](#) The former, selected from the more opulent and distinguished ranks of society, were strictly attached to the literal sense of the Mosaic law, and they piously rejected the immortality of the soul, as an opinion that received no countenance from the divine book, which they revered as the only rule of their faith. To the authority of Scripture the Pharisees added that of tradition, and they accepted, under the name of traditions, several speculative tenets from the philosophy or religion of the eastern nations. The doctrines of fate or predestination, of angels and spirits, and of a future state of rewards and punishments, were in the number of these new articles of belief; and as the Pharisees, by the austerity of their manners, had drawn into their party the body of the Jewish people, the immortality of the soul became the prevailing sentiment of the synagogue, under the reign of the Asmonæan princes and pontiffs. The temper of the Jews was incapable of contenting itself with such a cold and languid assent as might satisfy the mind of a Polytheist; and as soon as they admitted the idea of a future state, they embraced it with the zeal which has always formed the characteristic of the nation. Their zeal, however, added nothing to its evidence, or even probability: and it was still necessary that the doctrine of life and immortality, which had been dictated by nature, approved by reason, and received by superstition, should obtain the sanction of divine truth from the authority and example of Christ.

[The right reverend author of the Divine Legation of Moses as signs a very curious reason for the omission, and most ingeniously retorts it on the unbelievers. * Note: The hypothesis of Warburton concerning this remarkable fact, which, as far as the

Law of Moses, is unquestionable, made few disciples; and it is difficult to suppose that it could be intended by the author himself for more than a display of intellectual strength. Modern writers have accounted in various ways for the silence of the Hebrew legislator on the immortality of the soul. According to Michaelis, "Moses wrote as an historian and as a lawgiver; he regulated the ecclesiastical discipline, rather than the religious belief of his people; and the sanctions of the law being temporal, he had no occasion, and as a civil legislator could not with propriety, threaten punishments in another world." See Michaelis, *Laws of Moses*, art. 272, vol. iv. p. 209, Eng. Trans.; and *Syntagma Commentationum*, p. 80, quoted by Guizot. M. Guizot adds, the "ingenious conjecture of a philosophic theologian," which approximates to an opinion long entertained by the Editor. That writer believes, that in the state of civilization at the time of the legislator, this doctrine, become popular among the Jews, would necessarily have given birth to a multitude of idolatrous superstitions which he wished to prevent. His primary object was to establish a firm theocracy, to make his people the conservators of the doctrine of the Divine Unity, the basis upon which Christianity was hereafter to rest. He carefully excluded everything which could obscure or weaken that doctrine. Other nations had strangely abused their notions on the immortality of the soul; Moses wished to prevent this abuse: hence he forbade the Jews from consulting necromancers, (those who evoke the spirits of the dead.) Deut. xviii. 11. Those who reflect on the state of the Pagans and the Jews, and on the facility with which idolatry crept in on every side, will not be astonished that Moses has not developed a doctrine of which the influence might be more pernicious than useful to his people. *Orat. Fest. de Vitæ Immort. Spe., &c.*, auct. Ph. Alb. Stapfer, p. 12 13, 20. Berne, 1787. —Moses, as well from the intimations scattered in his writings, the passage relating to the translation of Enoch, (Gen. v. 24,) the prohibition of necromancy, (Michaelis believes him to be the author of the Book of Job though this opinion is in general rejected; other learned writers consider this Book to be coeval with and known to Moses,) as from his long residence in Egypt, and his acquaintance with Egyptian wisdom, could not be ignorant of the doctrine of the immortality of the soul. But this doctrine if popularly known among

the Jews, must have been purely Egyptian, and as so, intimately connected with the whole religious system of that country. It was no doubt moulded up with the tenet of the transmigration of the soul, perhaps with notions analogous to the emanation system of India in which the human soul was an efflux from or indeed a part of, the Deity. The Mosaic religion drew a wide and impassable interval between the Creator and created human beings: in this it differed from the Egyptian and all the Eastern religions. As then the immortality of the soul was thus inseparably blended with those foreign religions which were altogether to be effaced from the minds of the people, and by no means necessary for the establishment of the theocracy, Moses maintained silence on this point and a purer notion of it was left to be developed at a more favorable period in the history of man.—M.]

58 [\(return\)](#)

[See Le Clerc (Prolegomena ad Hist. Ecclesiast. sect. 1, c. 8) His authority seems to carry the greater weight, as he has written a learned and judicious commentary on the books of the Old Testament.]

59 [\(return\)](#)

[Joseph. Antiquitat. l. xiii. c. 10. De Bell. Jud. ii. 8. According to the most natural interpretation of his words, the Sadducees admitted only the Pentateuch; but it has pleased some modern critics to add the Prophets to their creed, and to suppose that they contented themselves with rejecting the traditions of the Pharisees. Dr. Jortin has argued that point in his Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 103.]

When the promise of eternal happiness was proposed to mankind on condition of adopting the faith, and of observing the precepts, of the gospel, it is no wonder that so advantageous an offer should have been accepted by great numbers of every religion, of every rank, and of every province in the Roman empire. The ancient Christians were animated by a contempt for their present existence, and by a just confidence of immortality, of which the doubtful and imperfect faith of modern ages cannot give us any adequate notion. In the primitive church, the influence of truth was very powerfully strengthened by an opinion, which, however it may deserve respect for its usefulness and antiquity, has not been found agreeable to experience. It was universally believed, that the end of the world, and the kingdom of heaven, were at hand. [591](#) The near approach of this wonderful event had been predicted by the apostles; the tradition of it was preserved by their earliest disciples, and those who understood in their literal senses the discourse of Christ himself, were obliged to expect the second and glorious coming of the Son of Man in the clouds, before that generation was totally extinguished, which

had beheld his humble condition upon earth, and which might still be witness of the calamities of the Jews under Vespasian or Hadrian. The revolution of seventeen centuries has instructed us not to press too closely the mysterious language of prophecy and revelation; but as long as, for wise purposes, this error was permitted to subsist in the church, it was productive of the most salutary effects on the faith and practice of Christians, who lived in the awful expectation of that moment, when the globe itself, and all the various race of mankind, should tremble at the appearance of their divine Judge. [60](#)

591

[\(return\)](#)

[This was, in fact, an integral part of the Jewish notion of the Messiah, from which the minds of the apostles themselves were but gradually detached. See Bertholdt, *Christologia Judæorum*, concluding chapters—M.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[This expectation was countenanced by the twenty-fourth chapter of St. Matthew, and by the first epistle of St. Paul to the Thessalonians. Erasmus removes the difficulty by the help of allegory and metaphor; and the learned Grotius ventures to insinuate, that, for wise purposes, the pious deception was permitted to take place. * Note: Some modern theologians explain it without discovering either allegory or deception. They say, that Jesus Christ, after having proclaimed the ruin of Jerusalem and of the Temple, speaks of his second coming and the signs which were to precede it; but those who believed that the moment was near deceived themselves as to the sense of two words, an error which still subsists in our versions of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, xxiv. 29, 34. In verse 29, we read, “Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened,” &c. The Greek word signifies all at once, suddenly, not immediately; so that it signifies only the sudden appearance of the signs which Jesus Christ announces not the shortness of the interval which was to separate them from the “days of tribulation,” of which he was speaking. The verse 34 is this “Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass till all these things shall be fulfilled.” Jesus, speaking to his disciples, uses these words, which the translators have rendered by this generation, but which means the race, the filiation of my disciples; that is, he speaks of a class of men, not of a generation. The true sense then, according to these learned men, is, In truth I tell you that this race of men, of which you are the commencement, shall not

pass away till this shall take place; that is to say, the succession of Christians shall not cease till his coming. See Commentary of M. Paulus on the New Test., edit. 1802, tom. iii. p. 445,—446.—G. — Others, as Rosenmuller and Kuinoel, in loc., confine this passage to a highly figurative description of the ruins of the Jewish city and polity.—M.]

Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part IV.

The ancient and popular doctrine of the Millennium was intimately connected with the second coming of Christ. As the works of the creation had been finished in six days, their duration in their present state, according to a tradition which was attributed to the prophet Elijah, was fixed to six thousand years. [61](#) By the same analogy it was inferred, that this long period of labor and contention, which was now almost elapsed, [62](#) would be succeeded by a joyful Sabbath of a thousand years; and that Christ, with the triumphant band of the saints and the elect who had escaped death, or who had been miraculously revived, would reign upon earth till the time appointed for the last and general resurrection. So pleasing was this hope to the mind of believers, that the *New Jerusalem*, the seat of this blissful kingdom, was quickly adorned with all the gayest colors of the imagination. A felicity consisting only of pure and spiritual pleasure would have appeared too refined for its inhabitants, who were still supposed to possess their human nature and senses. A garden of Eden, with the amusements of the pastoral life, was no longer suited to the advanced state of society which prevailed under the Roman empire. A city was therefore erected of gold and precious stones, and a supernatural plenty of corn and wine was bestowed on the adjacent territory; in the free enjoyment of whose spontaneous productions the happy and benevolent people was never to be restrained by any jealous laws of exclusive property. [63](#) The assurance of such a Millennium was carefully inculcated by a succession of fathers from Justin Martyr, [64](#) and Irenæus, who conversed with the immediate disciples of the apostles, down to Lactantius, who was preceptor to the son of Constantine. [65](#) Though it might not be universally received, it appears to have been the reigning sentiment of the orthodox believers; and it seems so well adapted to the desires and apprehensions of mankind, that it must have contributed in a very considerable degree to the progress of the Christian faith. But when the edifice of the church was almost completed, the temporary support was laid aside. The doctrine of Christ's reign upon earth was at first treated as a profound allegory, was considered by degrees as a doubtful and useless opinion, and was at length rejected as the absurd invention of heresy and fanaticism. [66](#) A mysterious prophecy, which still forms a part of the sacred canon, but which was thought to favor the exploded sentiment, has very narrowly escaped the proscription of the church. [67](#)

- 61 [\(return\)](#)
[See Burnet's Sacred Theory, part iii. c. 5. This tradition may be traced as high as the the author of Epistle of Barnabas, who wrote in the first century, and who seems to have been half a Jew. * Note: In fact it is purely Jewish. See Mosheim, De Reb. Christ. ii. 8. Lightfoot's Works, 8vo. edit. vol. iii. p. 37. Bertholdt, Christologia Judæorum ch. 38.—M.]
- 62 [\(return\)](#)
[The primitive church of Antioch computed almost 6000 years from the creation of the world to the birth of Christ. Africanus, Lactantius, and the Greek church, have reduced that number to 5500, and Eusebius has contented himself with 5200 years. These calculations were formed on the Septuagint, which was universally received during the six first centuries. The authority of the vulgate and of the Hebrew text has determined the moderns, Protestants as well as Catholics, to prefer a period of about 4000 years; though, in the study of profane antiquity, they often find themselves straitened by those narrow limits. * Note: Most of the more learned modern English Protestants, Dr. Hales, Mr. Faber, Dr. Russel, as well as the Continental writers, adopt the larger chronology. There is little doubt that the narrower system was framed by the Jews of Tiberias; it was clearly neither that of St. Paul, nor of Josephus, nor of the Samaritan Text. It is greatly to be regretted that the chronology of the earlier Scriptures should ever have been made a religious question—M.]
- 63 [\(return\)](#)
[Most of these pictures were borrowed from a misrepresentation of Isaiah, Daniel, and the Apocalypse. One of the grossest images may be found in Irenæus, (l. v. p. 455,) the disciple of Papias, who had seen the apostle St. John.]
- 64 [\(return\)](#)
[See the second dialogue of Justin with Triphon, and the seventh book of Lactantius. It is unnecessary to allege all the intermediate fathers, as the fact is not disputed. Yet the curious reader may consult Daille de Uus Patrum, l. ii. c. 4.]
- 65 [\(return\)](#)
[The testimony of Justin of his own faith and that of his orthodox brethren, in the doctrine of a Millennium, is delivered in the clearest and most solemn manner, (Dialog. cum Tryphonte Jud. p. 177, 178, edit. Benedictin.) If in the beginning of this important passage there is any thing like an

inconsistency, we may impute it, as we think proper, either to the author or to his transcribers. * Note: The Millenium is described in what once stood as the XLlst Article of the English Church (see Collier, Eccles. Hist., for Articles of Edw. VI.) as “a fable of Jewish dotage.” The whole of these gross and earthly images may be traced in the works which treat on the Jewish traditions, in Lightfoot, Schoetgen, and Eisenmenger; “Das enthdeckte Judenthum” t. ii 809; and briefly in Bertholdt, i. c. 38, 39.—M.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[Dupin, Bibliotheque Ecclesiastique, tom. i. p. 223, tom. ii. p. 366, and Mosheim, p. 720; though the latter of these learned divines is not altogether candid on this occasion.]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[In the council of Laodicea, (about the year 360,) the Apocalypse was tacitly excluded from the sacred canon, by the same churches of Asia to which it is addressed; and we may learn from the complaint of Sulpicius Severus, that their sentence had been ratified by the greater number of Christians of his time. From what causes then is the Apocalypse at present so generally received by the Greek, the Roman, and the Protestant churches? The following ones may be assigned. 1. The Greeks were subdued by the authority of an impostor, who, in the sixth century, assumed the character of Dionysius the Areopagite. 2. A just apprehension that the grammarians might become more important than the theologians, engaged the council of Trent to fix the seal of their infallibility on all the books of Scripture contained in the Latin Vulgate, in the number of which the Apocalypse was fortunately included. (Fr. Paolo, Istoria del Concilio Tridentino, l. ii.) 3. The advantage of turning those mysterious prophecies against the See of Rome, inspired the Protestants with uncommon veneration for so useful an ally. See the ingenious and elegant discourses of the present bishop of Litchfield on that unpromising subject. * Note: The exclusion of the Apocalypse is not improbably assigned to its obvious unfitness to be read in churches. It is to be feared that a history of the interpretation of the Apocalypse would not give a very favorable view either of the wisdom or the charity of the successive ages of Christianity. Wetstein’s interpretation, differently modified, is adopted by most Continental scholars.—M.]

Whilst the happiness and glory of a temporal reign were promised to the disciples of Christ, the most dreadful calamities were denounced against an unbelieving world. The edification of a new Jerusalem was to advance by equal steps with the destruction of the mystic Babylon; and as long as the emperors who reigned before Constantine persisted in the profession of idolatry, the epithet of Babylon was applied to the city and to the empire of Rome. A regular series was prepared of all the moral and physical evils which can afflict a flourishing nation; intestine discord, and the invasion of the fiercest barbarians from the unknown regions of the North; pestilence and famine, comets and eclipses, earthquakes and inundations. [68](#) All these were only so many preparatory and alarming signs of the great catastrophe of Rome, when the country of the Scipios and Cæsars should be consumed by a flame from Heaven, and the city of the seven hills, with her palaces, her temples, and her triumphal arches, should be buried in a vast lake of fire and brimstone. It might, however, afford some consolation to Roman vanity, that the period of their empire would be that of the world itself; which, as it had once perished by the element of water, was destined to experience a second and a speedy destruction from the element of fire. In the opinion of a general conflagration, the faith of the Christian very happily coincided with the tradition of the East, the philosophy of the Stoics, and the analogy of Nature; and even the country, which, from religious motives, had been chosen for the origin and principal scene of the conflagration, was the best adapted for that purpose by natural and physical causes; by its deep caverns, beds of sulphur, and numerous volcanoes, of which those of Ætna, of Vesuvius, and of Lipari, exhibit a very imperfect representation. The calmest and most intrepid sceptic could not refuse to acknowledge that the destruction of the present system of the world by fire was in itself extremely probable. The Christian, who founded his belief much less on the fallacious arguments of reason than on the authority of tradition and the interpretation of Scripture, expected it with terror and confidence as a certain and approaching event; and as his mind was perpetually filled with the solemn idea, he considered every disaster that happened to the empire as an infallible symptom of an expiring world. [69](#)

68

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius (Institut. Divin. vii. 15, &c.) relates the dismal talk of futurity with great spirit and eloquence. * Note: Lactantius had a notion of a great Asiatic empire, which was previously to rise on the ruins of the Roman: quod Romanum nomen animus dicere, sed dicam. quia futurum est tolletur de terra, et impere. Asiam revertetur.—M.]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[On this subject every reader of taste will be entertained with the third part of Burnet's Sacred Theory. He blends philosophy, Scripture, and tradition, into one magnificent system; in the description of which he displays a strength of fancy not inferior to that of Milton himself.]

The condemnation of the wisest and most virtuous of the Pagans, on account of their ignorance or disbelief of the divine truth, seems to offend the reason and the humanity of the present age. [70](#) But the primitive church, whose faith was of a much firmer consistence, delivered over, without hesitation, to eternal torture, the far greater part of the human species. A charitable hope might perhaps be indulged in favor of Socrates, or some other sages of antiquity, who had consulted the light of reason before that of the gospel had arisen. [71](#) But it was unanimously affirmed, that those who, since the birth or the death of Christ, had obstinately persisted in the worship of the dæmons, neither deserved nor could expect a pardon from the irritated justice of the Deity. These rigid sentiments, which had been unknown to the ancient world, appear to have infused a spirit of bitterness into a system of love and harmony. The ties of blood and friendship were frequently torn asunder by the difference of religious faith; and the Christians, who, in this world, found themselves oppressed by the power of the Pagans, were sometimes seduced by resentment and spiritual pride to delight in the prospect of their future triumph. “You are fond of spectacles,” exclaims the stern Tertullian; “expect the greatest of all spectacles, the last and eternal judgment of the universe. [71b](#) How shall I admire, how laugh, how rejoice, how exult, when I behold so many proud monarchs, so many fancied gods, groaning in the lowest abyss of darkness; so many magistrates, who persecuted the name of the Lord, liquefying in fiercer fires than they ever kindled against the Christians; so many sage philosophers blushing in red-hot flames with their deluded scholars; so many celebrated poets trembling before the tribunal, not of Minos, but of Christ; so many tragedians, more tuneful in the expression of their own sufferings; so many dancers.”

[711](#) But the humanity of the reader will permit me to draw a veil over the rest of this infernal description, which the zealous African pursues in a long variety of affected and unfeeling witticisms. [72](#)

70

[\(return\)](#)

[And yet whatever may be the language of individuals, it is still the public doctrine of all the Christian churches; nor can even our own refuse to admit the conclusions which must be drawn from the viiith and the xviiith of her Articles. The Jansenists, who have so diligently studied the works of the fathers, maintain this sentiment with distinguished zeal; and the learned M. de Tillemont never dismisses a virtuous emperor without pronouncing his damnation. Zuinglius is perhaps the only leader of a party who has ever adopted the milder sentiment, and he gave no less offence to the Lutherans than to the Catholics. See Bossuet, *Histoire des Variations des Eglises Protestantes*, l. ii. c. 19—22.]

71

[\(return\)](#)

[Justin and Clemens of Alexandria allow that some

of the philosophers were instructed by the Logos; confounding its double signification of the human reason, and of the Divine Word.]

711

[\(return\)](#)

[This translation is not exact: the first sentence is imperfect. Tertullian says, *Ille dies nationibus insperatus, ille derisus, cum tanta sacculi vetustas et tot ejus nativitates uno igne haurientur*. The text does not authorize the exaggerated expressions, so many magistrates, so many sago philosophers, so many poets, &c.; but simply magistrates, philosophers, poets.—G. —It is not clear that Gibbon's version or paraphrase is incorrect: Tertullian writes, *tot tantosque reges item præsides, &c.*—M.]

71b

[\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian, *de Spectaculis*, c. 30. In order to ascertain the degree of authority which the zealous African had acquired it may be sufficient to allege the testimony of Cyprian, the doctor and guide of all the western churches. (See Prudent. *Hym.* xiii. 100.) As often as he applied himself to his daily study of the writings of Tertullian, he was accustomed to say, "Da mihi magistram, Give me my master." (Hieronym. *de Viris Illustribus*, tom. i. p. 284.)]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[The object of Tertullian's vehemence in his Treatise, was to keep the Christians away from the secular games celebrated by the Emperor Severus: It has not prevented him from showing himself in other places full of benevolence and charity towards unbelievers: the spirit of the gospel has sometimes prevailed over the violence of human passions: *Qui ergo putaveris nihil nos de salute Cæsaris curare* (he says in his Apology) *inspice Dei voces, literas nostras. Scitote ex illis præceptum esse nobis ad redudantionem, benignitates etiam pro inimicis Deum orare, et pro persecutoribus cona precari. Sed etiam nominatim atque manifeste orate inquit (Christus) pro regibus et pro principibus et potestatibus ut omnia sint tranquilla vobis* Tert. *Apol.* c. 31.—G. —It would be wiser for Christianity, retreating upon its genuine records in the New Testament, to disclaim this fierce African, than to identify itself with his furious invectives by unsatisfactory apologies for their unchristian fanaticism.—M.]

Doubtless there were many among the primitive Christians of a temper more suitable to the meekness and charity of their profession. There were many who felt a sincere compassion for the danger of their friends and countrymen, and who exerted the most benevolent zeal to save them from the impending destruction.

The careless Polytheist, assailed by new and unexpected terrors, against which neither his priests nor his philosophers could afford him any certain protection, was very frequently terrified and subdued by the menace of eternal tortures. His fears might assist the progress of his faith and reason; and if he could once persuade himself to suspect that the Christian religion might possibly be true, it became an easy task to convince him that it was the safest and most prudent party that he could possibly embrace.

III. The supernatural gifts, which even in this life were ascribed to the Christians above the rest of mankind, must have conduced to their own comfort, and very frequently to the conviction of infidels. Besides the occasional prodigies, which might sometimes be effected by the immediate interposition of the Deity when he suspended the laws of Nature for the service of religion, the Christian church, from the time of the apostles and their first disciples, [73](#) has claimed an uninterrupted succession of miraculous powers, the gift of tongues, of vision, and of prophecy, the power of expelling dæmons, of healing the sick, and of raising the dead. The knowledge of foreign languages was frequently communicated to the contemporaries of Irenæus, though Irenæus himself was left to struggle with the difficulties of a barbarous dialect, whilst he preached the gospel to the natives of Gaul. [74](#) The divine inspiration, whether it was conveyed in the form of a waking or of a sleeping vision, is described as a favor very liberally bestowed on all ranks of the faithful, on women as on elders, on boys as well as upon bishops. When their devout minds were sufficiently prepared by a course of prayer, of fasting, and of vigils, to receive the extraordinary impulse, they were transported out of their senses, and delivered in ecstasy what was inspired, being mere organs of the Holy Spirit, just as a pipe or flute is of him who blows into it. [75](#) We may add, that the design of these visions was, for the most part, either to disclose the future history, or to guide the present administration, of the church. The expulsion of the dæmons from the bodies of those unhappy persons whom they had been permitted to torment, was considered as a signal though ordinary triumph of religion, and is repeatedly alleged by the ancient apologists, as the most convincing evidence of the truth of Christianity. The awful ceremony was usually performed in a public manner, and in the presence of a great number of spectators; the patient was relieved by the power or skill of the exorcist, and the vanquished dæmon was heard to confess that he was one of the fabled gods of antiquity, who had impiously usurped the adoration of mankind. [76](#) But the miraculous cure of diseases of the most inveterate or even preternatural kind can no longer occasion any surprise, when we recollect, that in the days of Irenæus, about the end of the second century, the resurrection of the dead was very far from being esteemed an uncommon event; that the miracle was frequently performed on necessary occasions, by great fasting and the joint supplication of the

church of the place, and that the persons thus restored to their prayers had lived afterwards among them many years. [77](#) At such a period, when faith could boast of so many wonderful victories over death, it seems difficult to account for the scepticism of those philosophers, who still rejected and derided the doctrine of the resurrection. A noble Grecian had rested on this important ground the whole controversy, and promised Theophilus, Bishop of Antioch, that if he could be gratified with the sight of a single person who had been actually raised from the dead, he would immediately embrace the Christian religion. It is somewhat remarkable, that the prelate of the first eastern church, however anxious for the conversion of his friend, thought proper to decline this fair and reasonable challenge. [78](#)

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Notwithstanding the evasions of Dr. Middleton, it is impossible to overlook the clear traces of visions and inspiration, which may be found in the apostolic fathers. * Note: Gibbon should have noticed the distinct and remarkable passage from Chrysostom, quoted by Middleton, (Works, vol. i. p. 105,) in which he affirms the long discontinuance of miracles as a notorious fact.—M.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[Irenæus adv. Hæres. Proem. p.3 Dr. Middleton (Free Inquiry, p. 96, &c.) observes, that as this pretension of all others was the most difficult to support by art, it was the soonest given up. The observation suits his hypothesis. * Note: This passage of Irenæus contains no allusion to the gift of tongues; it is merely an apology for a rude and unpolished Greek style, which could not be expected from one who passed his life in a remote and barbarous province, and was continually obliged to speak the Celtic language.—M. Note: Except in the life of Pachomius, an Egyptian monk of the fourth century. (see Jortin, Ecc. Hist. i. p. 368, edit. 1805,) and the latter (not earlier) lives of Xavier, there is no claim laid to the gift of tongues since the time of Irenæus; and of this claim, Xavier's own letters are profoundly silent. See Douglas's Criterion, p. 76 edit. 1807.—M.]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[Athenagoras in Legatione. Justin Martyr, Cohort. ad Gentes Tertullian advers. Marcionit. l. iv. These descriptions are not very unlike the prophetic fury, for which Cicero (de Divinat.ii. 54) expresses so little reverence.]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian (Apolog. c. 23) throws out a bold defiance to the Pagan magistrates. Of the primitive miracles, the power of exorcising is the only one

which has been assumed by Protestants. * Note: But by Protestants neither of the most enlightened ages nor most reasoning minds.—M.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

[Irenæus adv. Hæreses, l. ii. 56, 57, l. v. c. 6. Mr. Dodwell (Dissertat. ad Irenæum, ii. 42) concludes, that the second century was still more fertile in miracles than the first. * Note: It is difficult to answer Middleton's objection to this statement of Irenæus: "It is very strange, that from the time of the apostles there is not a single instance of this miracle to be found in the three first centuries; except a single case, slightly intimated in Eusebius, from the Works of Papias; which he seems to rank among the other fabulous stories delivered by that weak man." Middleton, Works, vol. i. p. 59. Bp. Douglas (Criterion, p 389) would consider Irenæus to speak of what had "been performed formerly." not in his own time.—M.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[Theophilus ad Autolyicum, l. i. p. 345. Edit. Benedictin. Paris, 1742. * Note: A candid sceptic might discern some impropriety in the Bishop being called upon to perform a miracle on demand.—M.]

The miracles of the primitive church, after obtaining the sanction of ages, have been lately attacked in a very free and ingenious inquiry, [79](#) which, though it has met with the most favorable reception from the public, appears to have excited a general scandal among the divines of our own as well as of the other Protestant churches of Europe. [80](#) Our different sentiments on this subject will be much less influenced by any particular arguments, than by our habits of study and reflection; and, above all, by the degree of evidence which we have accustomed ourselves to require for the proof of a miraculous event. The duty of an historian does not call upon him to interpose his private judgment in this nice and important controversy; but he ought not to dissemble the difficulty of adopting such a theory as may reconcile the interest of religion with that of reason, of making a proper application of that theory, and of defining with precision the limits of that happy period, exempt from error and from deceit, to which we might be disposed to extend the gift of supernatural powers. From the first of the fathers to the last of the popes, a succession of bishops, of saints, of martyrs, and of miracles, is continued without interruption; and the progress of superstition was so gradual, and almost imperceptible, that we know not in what particular link we should break the chain of tradition. Every age bears testimony to the wonderful events by which it was distinguished, and its testimony appears no less weighty and respectable than that of the preceding generation, till we are insensibly led on to accuse our own inconsistency, if in the eighth or in the twelfth century we deny to the venerable Bede, or to the holy Bernard, the same degree of confidence which, in the second century, we

had so liberally granted to Justin or to Irenæus. [81](#) If the truth of any of those miracles is appreciated by their apparent use and propriety, every age had unbelievers to convince, heretics to confute, and idolatrous nations to convert; and sufficient motives might always be produced to justify the interposition of Heaven. And yet, since every friend to revelation is persuaded of the reality, and every reasonable man is convinced of the cessation, of miraculous powers, it is evident that there must have been *some period* in which they were either suddenly or gradually withdrawn from the Christian church. Whatever æra is chosen for that purpose, the death of the apostles, the conversion of the Roman empire, or the extinction of the Arian heresy, [82](#) the insensibility of the Christians who lived at that time will equally afford a just matter of surprise. They still supported their pretensions after they had lost their power. Credulity performed the office of faith; fanaticism was permitted to assume the language of inspiration, and the effects of accident or contrivance were ascribed to supernatural causes. The recent experience of genuine miracles should have instructed the Christian world in the ways of Providence, and habituated their eye (if we may use a very inadequate expression) to the style of the divine artist. Should the most skilful painter of modern Italy presume to decorate his feeble imitations with the name of Raphaël or of Correggio, the insolent fraud would be soon discovered, and indignantly rejected.

79

[\(return\)](#)

[Dr. Middleton sent out his Introduction in the year 1747, published his Free Inquiry in 1749, and before his death, which happened in 1750, he had prepared a vindication of it against his numerous adversaries.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[The university of Oxford conferred degrees on his opponents. From the indignation of Mosheim, (p. 221,) we may discover the sentiments of the Lutheran divines. * Note: Yet many Protestant divines will now without reluctance confine miracles to the time of the apostles, or at least to the first century.—M]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[It may seem somewhat remarkable, that Bernard of Clairvaux, who records so many miracles of his friend St. Malachi, never takes any notice of his own, which, in their turn, however, are carefully related by his companions and disciples. In the long series of ecclesiastical history, does there exist a single instance of a saint asserting that he himself possessed the gift of miracles?]

82

[\(return\)](#)

[The conversion of Constantine is the æra which is most usually fixed by Protestants. The more rational divines are unwilling to admit the miracles of the ivth, whilst the more credulous are unwilling

to reject those of the vth century. * Note: All this appears to proceed on the principle that any distinct line can be drawn in an unphilosophic age between wonders and miracles, or between what piety, from their unexpected and extraordinary nature, the marvellous concurrence of secondary causes to some remarkable end, may consider providential interpositions, and miracles strictly so called, in which the laws of nature are suspended or violated. It is impossible to assign, on one side, limits to human credulity, on the other, to the influence of the imagination on the bodily frame; but some of the miracles recorded in the Gospels are such palpable impossibilities, according to the known laws and operations of nature, that if recorded on sufficient evidence, and the evidence we believe to be that of eye-witnesses, we cannot reject them, without either asserting, with Hume, that no evidence can prove a miracle, or that the Author of Nature has no power of suspending its ordinary laws. But which of the post-apostolic miracles will bear this test?—M.]

Whatever opinion may be entertained of the miracles of the primitive church since the time of the apostles, this unresisting softness of temper, so conspicuous among the believers of the second and third centuries, proved of some accidental benefit to the cause of truth and religion. In modern times, a latent and even involuntary scepticism adheres to the most pious dispositions. Their admission of supernatural truths is much less an active consent than a cold and passive acquiescence. Accustomed long since to observe and to respect the invariable order of Nature, our reason, or at least our imagination, is not sufficiently prepared to sustain the visible action of the Deity.

But, in the first ages of Christianity, the situation of mankind was extremely different. The most curious, or the most credulous, among the Pagans, were often persuaded to enter into a society which asserted an actual claim of miraculous powers. The primitive Christians perpetually trod on mystic ground, and their minds were exercised by the habits of believing the most extraordinary events. They felt, or they fancied, that on every side they were incessantly assaulted by dæmons, comforted by visions, instructed by prophecy, and surprisingly delivered from danger, sickness, and from death itself, by the supplications of the church. The real or imaginary prodigies, of which they so frequently conceived themselves to be the objects, the instruments, or the spectators, very happily disposed them to adopt with the same ease, but with far greater justice, the authentic wonders of the evangelic history; and thus miracles that exceeded not the measure of their own experience, inspired them with the most lively assurance of mysteries which were acknowledged to surpass the limits of their understanding. It is this deep impression of supernatural truths which has been so much celebrated under the name of faith; a state of mind described as the surest pledge of the divine favor and

of future felicity, and recommended as the first, or perhaps the only merit of a Christian. According to the more rigid doctors, the moral virtues, which may be equally practised by infidels, are destitute of any value or efficacy in the work of our justification.

Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part V.

IV. But the primitive Christian demonstrated his faith by his virtues; and it was very justly supposed that the divine persuasion, which enlightened or subdued the understanding, must, at the same time, purify the heart, and direct the actions, of the believer. The first apologists of Christianity who justify the innocence of their brethren, and the writers of a later period who celebrate the sanctity of their ancestors, display, in the most lively colors, the reformation of manners which was introduced into the world by the preaching of the gospel. As it is my intention to remark only such human causes as were permitted to second the influence of revelation, I shall slightly mention two motives which might naturally render the lives of the primitive Christians much purer and more austere than those of their Pagan contemporaries, or their degenerate successors; repentance for their past sins, and the laudable desire of supporting the reputation of the society in which they were engaged. [83](#)

83

[\(return\)](#)

[These, in the opinion of the editor, are the most uncandid paragraphs in Gibbon's History. He ought either, with manly courage, to have denied the moral reformation introduced by Christianity, or fairly to have investigated all its motives; not to have confined himself to an insidious and sarcastic description of the less pure and generous elements of the Christian character as it appeared even at that early time.—M.]

It is a very ancient reproach, suggested by the ignorance or the malice of infidelity, that the Christians allured into their party the most atrocious criminals, who, as soon as they were touched by a sense of remorse, were easily persuaded to wash away, in the water of baptism, the guilt of their past conduct, for which the temples of the gods refused to grant them any expiation. But this reproach, when it is cleared from misrepresentation, contributes as much to the honor as it did to the increase of the church. The friends of Christianity may acknowledge without a blush that many of the most eminent saints had been before their baptism the most abandoned sinners. Those persons, who in the world had followed, though in an imperfect manner, the dictates of benevolence and propriety, derived such a calm satisfaction from the opinion of their own rectitude, as rendered them much less susceptible of the sudden emotions of shame, of grief, and of terror, which have given birth to so many wonderful conversions. After the example of their divine Master, the missionaries of the gospel disdained not the society of men, and especially of women, oppressed by the consciousness, and very

often by the effects, of their vices. As they emerged from sin and superstition to the glorious hope of immortality, they resolved to devote themselves to a life, not only of virtue, but of penitence. The desire of perfection became the ruling passion of their soul; and it is well known that, while reason embraces a cold mediocrity, our passions hurry us, with rapid violence, over the space which lies between the most opposite extremes. [83b](#)

83b

[\(return\)](#)

[The imputations of Celsus and Julian, with the defence of the fathers, are very fairly stated by Spanheim, *Commentaire sur les Césars de Julian*, p. 468.]

When the new converts had been enrolled in the number of the faithful, and were admitted to the sacraments of the church, they found themselves restrained from relapsing into their past disorders by another consideration of a less spiritual, but of a very innocent and respectable nature. Any particular society that has departed from the great body of the nation, or the religion to which it belonged, immediately becomes the object of universal as well as invidious observation. In proportion to the smallness of its numbers, the character of the society may be affected by the virtues and vices of the persons who compose it; and every member is engaged to watch with the most vigilant attention over his own behavior, and over that of his brethren, since, as he must expect to incur a part of the common disgrace, he may hope to enjoy a share of the common reputation. When the Christians of Bithynia were brought before the tribunal of the younger Pliny, they assured the proconsul, that, far from being engaged in any unlawful conspiracy, they were bound by a solemn obligation to abstain from the commission of those crimes which disturb the private or public peace of society, from theft, robbery, adultery, perjury, and fraud. [84](#) [841](#) Near a century afterwards, Tertullian, with an honest pride, could boast, that very few Christians had suffered by the hand of the executioner, except on account of their religion. [85](#) Their serious and sequestered life, averse to the gay luxury of the age, inured them to chastity, temperance, economy, and all the sober and domestic virtues. As the greater number were of some trade or profession, it was incumbent on them, by the strictest integrity and the fairest dealing, to remove the suspicions which the profane are too apt to conceive against the appearances of sanctity. The contempt of the world exercised them in the habits of humility, meekness, and patience. The more they were persecuted, the more closely they adhered to each other. Their mutual charity and unsuspecting confidence has been remarked by infidels, and was too often abused by perfidious friends. [86](#)

84

[\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Epist. x. 97. * Note: Is not the sense of Tertullian rather, if guilty of any other offence, he had thereby ceased to be a Christian?—M.]

841

[\(return\)](#)

[And this blamelessness was fully admitted by the candid and enlightened Roman.—M.]

85

[\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian, Apolog. c. 44. He adds, however, with some degree of hesitation, “Aut si aliud, jam non Christianus.” * Note: Tertullian says positively no Christian, nemo illic Christianus; for the rest, the limitation which he himself subjoins, and which Gibbon quotes in the foregoing note, diminishes the force of this assertion, and appears to prove that at least he knew none such.—G.]

86

[\(return\)](#)

[The philosopher Peregrinus (of whose life and death Lucian has left us so entertaining an account) imposed, for a long time, on the credulous simplicity of the Christians of Asia.]

It is a very honorable circumstance for the morals of the primitive Christians, that even their faults, or rather errors, were derived from an excess of virtue. The bishops and doctors of the church, whose evidence attests, and whose authority might influence, the professions, the principles, and even the practice of their contemporaries, had studied the Scriptures with less skill than devotion; and they often received, in the most literal sense, those rigid precepts of Christ and the apostles, to which the prudence of succeeding commentators has applied a looser and more figurative mode of interpretation. Ambitious to exalt the perfection of the gospel above the wisdom of philosophy, the zealous fathers have carried the duties of self-mortification, of purity, and of patience, to a height which it is scarcely possible to attain, and much less to preserve, in our present state of weakness and corruption. A doctrine so extraordinary and so sublime must inevitably command the veneration of the people; but it was ill calculated to obtain the suffrage of those worldly philosophers who, in the conduct of this transitory life, consult only the feelings of nature and the interest of society. [87](#)

87

[\(return\)](#)

[See a very judicious treatise of Barbeyrac sur la Morale des Peres.]

There are two very natural propensities which we may distinguish in the most virtuous and liberal dispositions, the love of pleasure and the love of action. If the former is refined by art and learning, improved by the charms of social intercourse, and corrected by a just regard to economy, to health, and to reputation, it is productive of the greatest part of the happiness of private life. The love of action is a principle of a much stronger and more doubtful nature. It often leads to anger, to ambition, and to revenge; but when it is guided by the sense of propriety and benevolence, it becomes the parent of every virtue, and if those virtues are accompanied with equal abilities, a family, a state, or an empire may be indebted for their safety and prosperity to the undaunted courage of a single man. To the love of pleasure we may therefore ascribe most of the agreeable, to the love of action we may attribute most of the useful and respectable, qualifications. The character in which both the one and the other should be united and harmonized would seem to constitute the most perfect idea of human nature.

The insensible and inactive disposition, which should be supposed alike destitute of both, would be rejected, by the common consent of mankind, as utterly incapable of procuring any happiness to the individual, or any public benefit to the world. But it was not in *this* world that the primitive Christians were desirous of making themselves either agreeable or useful. [871](#)

871

[\(return\)](#)

[El que me fait cette homelie semi-stoicienne, semi-epicurienne? t'on jamais regarde l'amour du plaisir comme l'un des principes de la perfection morale? Et de quel droit faites vous de l'amour de l'action, et de l'amour du plaisir, les seuls elemens de l'etre humain? Est ce que vous faites abstraction de la verite en elle-meme, de la conscience et du sentiment du devoir? Est ce que vous ne sentez point, par exemple, que le sacrifice du moi a la justice et a la verite, est aussi dans le coeur de l'homme: que tout n'est pas pour lui action ou plaisir, et que dans le bien ce n'est pas le mouvement, mais la verite, qu'il cherche? Et puis *
* Thucy dide et Tacite. ces maitres de l'histoire, ont ils jamais introduits dans leur recits un fragment de dissertation sur le plaisir et sur l'action. Villemain
Cours de Lit. Franc part ii. Lecon v.—M.]

The acquisition of knowledge, the exercise of our reason or fancy, and the cheerful flow of unguarded conversation, may employ the leisure of a liberal mind. Such amusements, however, were rejected with abhorrence, or admitted with the utmost caution, by the severity of the fathers, who despised all knowledge that was not useful to salvation, and who considered all levity of discours as a criminal abuse of the gift of speech. In our present state of existence the body is so inseparably connected with the soul, that it seems to be our interest to taste, with innocence and moderation, the enjoyments of which that faithful companion is susceptible. Very different was the reasoning of our devout predecessors; vainly aspiring to imitate the perfection of angels, they disdained, or they affected to disdain, every earthly and corporeal delight. [88](#) Some of our senses indeed are necessary for our preservation, others for our subsistence, and others again for our information; and thus far it was impossible to reject the use of them. The first sensation of pleasure was marked as the first moment of their abuse. The unfeeling candidate for heaven was instructed, not only to resist the grosser allurements of the taste or smell, but even to shut his ears against the profane harmony of sounds, and to view with indifference the most finished productions of human art. Gay apparel, magnificent houses, and elegant furniture, were supposed to unite the double guilt of pride and of sensuality; a simple and mortified appearance was more suitable to the Christian who was certain of his sins and doubtful of his salvation. In their censures of luxury the fathers are extremely minute and circumstantial; [89](#) and among the various articles which excite their pious indignation we may enumerate false hair, garments of

any color except white, instruments of music, vases of gold or silver, downy pillows, (as Jacob reposed his head on a stone,) white bread, foreign wines, public salutations, the use of warm baths, and the practice of shaving the beard, which, according to the expression of Tertullian, is a lie against our own faces, and an impious attempt to improve the works of the Creator. [90](#) When Christianity was introduced among the rich and the polite, the observation of these singular laws was left, as it would be at present, to the few who were ambitious of superior sanctity. But it is always easy, as well as agreeable, for the inferior ranks of mankind to claim a merit from the contempt of that pomp and pleasure which fortune has placed beyond their reach. The virtue of the primitive Christians, like that of the first Romans, was very frequently guarded by poverty and ignorance.

88 [\(return\)](#)
[Lactant. Institut. Divin. l. vi. c. 20, 21, 22.]

89 [\(return\)](#)
[Consult a work of Clemens of Alexandria, entitled The Pædagogue, which contains the rudiments of ethics, as they were taught in the most celebrated of the Christian schools.]

90 [\(return\)](#)
[Tertullian, de Spectaculis, c. 23. Clemens Alexandrin. Pædagog. l. iii. c. 8.]

The chaste severity of the fathers, in whatever related to the commerce of the two sexes, flowed from the same principle; their abhorrence of every enjoyment which might gratify the sensual, and degrade the spiritual nature of man. It was their favorite opinion, that if Adam had preserved his obedience to the Creator, he would have lived forever in a state of virgin purity, and that some harmless mode of vegetation might have peopled paradise with a race of innocent and immortal beings. [91](#) The use of marriage was permitted only to his fallen posterity, as a necessary expedient to continue the human species, and as a restraint, however imperfect, on the natural licentiousness of desire. The hesitation of the orthodox casuists on this interesting subject, betrays the perplexity of men, unwilling to approve an institution which they were compelled to tolerate. [92](#) The enumeration of the very whimsical laws, which they most circumstantially imposed on the marriage-bed, would force a smile from the young and a blush from the fair. It was their unanimous sentiment that a first marriage was adequate to all the purposes of nature and of society. The sensual connection was refined into a resemblance of the mystic union of Christ with his church, and was pronounced to be indissoluble either by divorce or by death. The practice of second nuptials was branded with the name of a legal adultery; and the persons who were guilty of so scandalous an offence against Christian purity, were soon excluded from the honors, and even from the alms, of the church. [93](#) Since desire was imputed as a crime, and marriage was tolerated as a defect, it was consistent with the same principles to consider a state of celibacy as the nearest approach to the divine perfection. It was with

the utmost difficulty that ancient Rome could support the institution of six vestals; [94](#) but the primitive church was filled with a number of persons of either sex, who had devoted themselves to the profession of perpetual chastity. [95](#) A few of these, among whom we may reckon the learned Origen, judged it the most prudent to disarm the tempter. [96](#) Some were insensible and some were invincible against the assaults of the flesh. Disdaining an ignominious flight, the virgins of the warm climate of Africa encountered the enemy in the closest engagement; they permitted priests and deacons to share their bed, and gloried amidst the flames in their unsullied purity. But insulted Nature sometimes vindicated her rights, and this new species of martyrdom served only to introduce a new scandal into the church. [97](#) Among the Christian ascetics, however, (a name which they soon acquired from their painful exercise,) many, as they were less presumptuous, were probably more successful. The loss of sensual pleasure was supplied and compensated by spiritual pride. Even the multitude of Pagans were inclined to estimate the merit of the sacrifice by its apparent difficulty; and it was in the praise of these chaste spouses of Christ that the fathers have poured forth the troubled stream of their eloquence. [98](#) Such are the early traces of monastic principles and institutions, which, in a subsequent age, have counterbalanced all the temporal advantages of Christianity. [99](#)

91

[\(return\)](#)

[Beausobro, Hist. Critique du Manicheisme, l. vii. c. 3. Justin, Gregory of Nyssa, Augustin, &c., strongly incline to this opinion. Note: But these were Gnostic or Manichean opinions. Beausobre distinctly describes Autustine's bias to his recent escape from Manicheism; and adds that he afterwards changed his views.—M.]

92

[\(return\)](#)

[Some of the Gnostic heretics were more consistent; they rejected the use of marriage.]

93

[\(return\)](#)

[See a chain of tradition, from Justin Martyr to Jerome, in the Morale des Peres, c. iv. 6—26.]

94

[\(return\)](#)

[See a very curious Dissertation on the Vestals, in the Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. iv. p. 161—227. Notwithstanding the honors and rewards which were bestowed on those virgins, it was difficult to procure a sufficient number; nor could the dread of the most horrible death always restrain their incontinence.]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[Cupiditatem procreandi aut unam scimus aut nullam. Minutius Fælix, c. 31. Justin. Apolog. Major. Athenagoras in Legat. c 28. Tertullian de Cultu Foemin. l. ii.]

- 96 [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius, l. vi. 8. Before the fame of Origen had excited envy and persecution, this extraordinary action was rather admired than censured. As it was his general practice to allegorize Scripture, it seems unfortunate that in this instance only, he should have adopted the literal sense.]
- 97 [\(return\)](#)
[Cyprian. Epist. 4, and Dodwell, Dissertat. Cyprianic. iii. Something like this rash attempt was long afterwards imputed to the founder of the order of Fontevault. Bayle has amused himself and his readers on that very delicate subject.]
- 98 [\(return\)](#)
[Dupin (Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique, tom. i. p. 195) gives a particular account of the dialogue of the ten virgins, as it was composed by Methodius, Bishop of Tyre. The praises of virginity are excessive.]
- 99 [\(return\)](#)
[The Ascetics (as early as the second century) made a public profession of mortifying their bodies, and of abstaining from the use of flesh and wine. Mosheim, p. 310.]

The Christians were not less averse to the business than to the pleasures of this world. The defence of our persons and property they knew not how to reconcile with the patient doctrine which enjoined an unlimited forgiveness of past injuries, and commanded them to invite the repetition of fresh insults. Their simplicity was offended by the use of oaths, by the pomp of magistracy, and by the active contention of public life; nor could their humane ignorance be convinced that it was lawful on any occasion to shed the blood of our fellow-creatures, either by the sword of justice, or by that of war; even though their criminal or hostile attempts should threaten the peace and safety of the whole community. [100](#) It was acknowledged that, under a less perfect law, the powers of the Jewish constitution had been exercised, with the approbation of heaven, by inspired prophets and by anointed kings. The Christians felt and confessed that such institutions might be necessary for the present system of the world, and they cheerfully submitted to the authority of their Pagan governors. But while they inculcated the maxims of passive obedience, they refused to take any active part in the civil administration or the military defence of the empire. Some indulgence might, perhaps, be allowed to those persons who, before their conversion, were already engaged in such violent and sanguinary occupations; [101a](#) but it was impossible that the Christians, without renouncing a more sacred duty, could assume the character of soldiers, of magistrates, or of princes. [102b](#) This indolent, or even criminal disregard to the public welfare, exposed them to the contempt and reproaches of the Pagans, who very frequently asked, what must be the fate of the empire, attacked on every side by the barbarians, if all

mankind should adopt the pusillanimous sentiments of the new sect. [103](#) To this insulting question the Christian apologists returned obscure and ambiguous answers, as they were unwilling to reveal the secret cause of their security; the expectation that, before the conversion of mankind was accomplished, war, government, the Roman empire, and the world itself, would be no more. It may be observed, that, in this instance likewise, the situation of the first Christians coincided very happily with their religious scruples, and that their aversion to an active life contributed rather to excuse them from the service, than to exclude them from the honors, of the state and army.

100

[\(return\)](#)

[See the *Morale des Peres*. The same patient principles have been revived since the Reformation by the Socinians, the modern Anabaptists, and the Quakers. Barclay, the Apologist of the Quakers, has protected his brethren by the authority of the primitive Christian; p. 542-549]

101a

[\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian, *Apolog.* c. 21. *De Idololatria*, c. 17, 18. Origen *contra Celsum*, l. v. p. 253, l. vii. p. 348, l. viii. p. 423-428.]

102b

[\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian (*de Corona Militis*, c. 11) suggested to them the expedient of deserting; a counsel which, if it had been generally known, was not very proper to conciliate the favor of the emperors towards the Christian sect. * Note: There is nothing which ought to astonish us in the refusal of the primitive Christians to take part in public affairs; it was the natural consequence of the contrariety of their principles to the customs, laws, and active life of the Pagan world. As Christians, they could not enter into the senate, which, according to Gibbon himself, always assembled in a temple or consecrated place, and where each senator, before he took his seat, made a libation of a few drops of wine, and burnt incense on the altar; as Christians, they could not assist at festivals and banquets, which always terminated with libations, &c.; finally, as “the innumerable deities and rites of polytheism were closely interwoven with every circumstance of public and private life,” the Christians could not participate in them without incurring, according to their principles, the guilt of impiety. It was then much less by an effect of their doctrine, than by the consequence of their situation, that they stood aloof from public business. Whenever this situation offered no impediment, they showed as much activity as the Pagans. Proinde, says Justin Martyr, (*Apol.* c. 17,) nos

solum Deum adoramus, et vobis in rebus aliis læti inservimus.—G. ———This latter passage, M. Guizot quotes in Latin; if he had consulted the original, he would have found it to be altogether irrelevant: it merely relates to the payment of taxes.—M. ———Tertullian does not suggest to the soldiers the expedient of deserting; he says that they ought to be constantly on their guard to do nothing during their service contrary to the law of God, and to resolve to suffer martyrdom rather than submit to a base compliance, or openly to renounce the service. (De Cor. Mil. ii. p. 127.) He does not positively decide that the military service is not permitted to Christians; he ends, indeed, by saying, *Put a denique licere militiam usque ad causam coronæ.*—G. ———M. Guizot is. I think, again unfortunate in his defence of Tertullian. That father says, that many Christian soldiers had deserted, *aut deserendum statim sit, ut a multis actum.* The latter sentence, *Put a, &c. &c.*, is a concession for the sake of argument: what follows is more to the purpose.—M. Many other passages of Tertullian prove that the army was full of Christians, *Hesterni sumus et vestra omnia implevimus, urbes, insulas, castella, municipia, conciliabula, castra ipsa.* (Apol. c. 37.) *Navigamus et not vobiscum et militamus.* (c. 42.) Origen, in truth, appears to have maintained a more rigid opinion, (Cont. Cels. l. viii.;) but he has often renounced this exaggerated severity, perhaps necessary to produce great results, and he speaks of the profession of arms as an honorable one. (l. iv. c. 218.)—G. ———On these points Christian opinion, it should seem, was much divided Tertullian, when he wrote the De Cor. Mil., was evidently inclining to more ascetic opinions, and Origen was of the same class. See Neander, vol. 1 part ii. p. 305, edit. 1828.—M.]

103

[\(return\)](#)

[As well as we can judge from the mutilated representation of Origen, (l. viii. p. 423,) his adversary, Celsus, had urged his objection with great force and candor.]

Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part VI.

V. But the human character, however it may be exalted or depressed by a temporary enthusiasm, will return by degrees to its proper and natural level, and will resume those passions that seem the most adapted to its present condition. The primitive Christians

were dead to the business and pleasures of the world; but their love of action, which could never be entirely extinguished, soon revived, and found a new occupation in the government of the church. A separate society, which attacked the established religion of the empire, was obliged to adopt some form of internal policy, and to appoint a sufficient number of ministers, intrusted not only with the spiritual functions, but even with the temporal direction of the Christian commonwealth. The safety of that society, its honor, its aggrandizement, were productive, even in the most pious minds, of a spirit of patriotism, such as the first of the Romans had felt for the republic, and sometimes of a similar indifference, in the use of whatever means might probably conduce to so desirable an end. The ambition of raising themselves or their friends to the honors and offices of the church, was disguised by the laudable intention of devoting to the public benefit the power and consideration, which, for that purpose only, it became their duty to solicit. In the exercise of their functions, they were frequently called upon to detect the errors of heresy or the arts of faction, to oppose the designs of perfidious brethren, to stigmatize their characters with deserved infamy, and to expel them from the bosom of a society whose peace and happiness they had attempted to disturb. The ecclesiastical governors of the Christians were taught to unite the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove; but as the former was refined, so the latter was insensibly corrupted, by the habits of government. In the church as well as in the world, the persons who were placed in any public station rendered themselves considerable by their eloquence and firmness, by their knowledge of mankind, and by their dexterity in business; and while they concealed from others, and perhaps from themselves, the secret motives of their conduct, they too frequently relapsed into all the turbulent passions of active life, which were tinged with an additional degree of bitterness and obstinacy from the infusion of spiritual zeal.

The government of the church has often been the subject, as well as the prize, of religious contention. The hostile disputants of Rome, of Paris, of Oxford, and of Geneva, have alike struggled to reduce the primitive and apostolic model [1041](#) to the respective standards of their own policy. The few who have pursued this inquiry with more candor and impartiality, are of opinion, [105](#) that the apostles declined the office of legislation, and rather chose to endure some partial scandals and divisions, than to exclude the Christians of a future age from the liberty of varying their forms of ecclesiastical government according to the changes of times and circumstances. The scheme of policy, which, under their approbation, was adopted for the use of the first century, may be discovered from the practice of Jerusalem, of Ephesus, or of Corinth. The societies which were instituted in the cities of the Roman empire were united only by the ties of faith and charity. Independence and equality formed the basis of their internal constitution. The want of discipline and human learning was supplied by the occasional assistance of the *prophets*, [106](#) who were called to that function without distinction of age, of sex, [1061](#) or of natural abilities, and who, as often as they felt the divine impulse, poured forth the effusions of the Spirit in the assembly of the faithful.

But these extraordinary gifts were frequently abused or misapplied by the prophetic teachers. They displayed them at an improper season, presumptuously disturbed the service of the assembly, and, by their pride or mistaken zeal, they introduced, particularly into the apostolic church of Corinth, a long and melancholy train of disorders. [107](#) As the institution of prophets became useless, and even pernicious, their powers were withdrawn, and their office abolished. The public functions of religion were solely intrusted to the established ministers of the church, the *bishops* and the *presbyters*; two appellations which, in their first origin, appear to have distinguished the same office and the same order of persons. The name of Presbyter was expressive of their age, or rather of their gravity and wisdom. The title of Bishop denoted their inspection over the faith and manners of the Christians who were committed to their pastoral care. In proportion to the respective numbers of the faithful, a larger or smaller number of these *episcopal presbyters* guided each infant congregation with equal authority and with united counsels. [108](#)

1041 [\(return\)](#)

[The aristocratical party in France, as well as in England, has strenuously maintained the divine origin of bishops. But the Calvinistical presbyters were impatient of a superior; and the Roman Pontiff refused to acknowledge an equal. See Fra Paolo.]

105 [\(return\)](#)

[In the history of the Christian hierarchy, I have, for the most part, followed the learned and candid Mosheim.]

106 [\(return\)](#)

[For the prophets of the primitive church, see Mosheim, *Dissertationes ad Hist. Eccles. pertinentes*, tom. ii. p. 132—208.]

1061 [\(return\)](#)

[St. Paul distinctly reproves the intrusion of females into the prophets office. 1 Cor. xiv. 34, 35. 1 Tim. ii. 11.—M.]

107 [\(return\)](#)

[See the epistles of St. Paul, and of Clemens, to the Corinthians. * Note: The first ministers established in the church were the deacons, appointed at Jerusalem, seven in number; they were charged with the distribution of the alms; even females had a share in this employment. After the deacons came the elders or priests, charged with the maintenance of order and decorum in the community, and to act every where in its name. The bishops were afterwards charged to watch over the faith and the instruction of the disciples: the apostles themselves appointed several bishops. Tertullian, (*adv. Marium*, c. v.,) Clement of Alexandria, and many

fathers of the second and third century, do not permit us to doubt this fact. The equality of rank between these different functionaries did not prevent their functions being, even in their origin, distinct; they became subsequently still more so. See Plank, *Geschichte der Christ. Kirch. Verfassung.*, vol. i. p. 24.—G. On this extremely obscure subject, which has been so much perplexed by passion and interest, it is impossible to justify any opinion without entering into long and controversial details.—It must be admitted, in opposition to Plank, that in the New Testament, several words are sometimes indiscriminately used. (Acts xx. v. 17, comp. with 28 Tit. i. 5 and 7. Philip. i. 1.) But it is as clear, that as soon as we can discern the form of church government, at a period closely bordering upon, if not within, the apostolic age, it appears with a bishop at the head of each community, holding some superiority over the presbyters. Whether he was, as Gibbon from Mosheim supposes, merely an elective head of the College of Presbyters, (for this we have, in fact, no valid authority,) or whether his distinct functions were established on apostolic authority, is still contested. The universal submission to this episcopacy, in every part of the Christian world appears to me strongly to favor the latter view.—M.]

But the most perfect equality of freedom requires the directing hand of a superior magistrate: and the order of public deliberations soon introduces the office of a president, invested at least with the authority of collecting the sentiments, and of executing the resolutions, of the assembly. A regard for the public tranquillity, which would so frequently have been interrupted by annual or by occasional elections, induced the primitive Christians to constitute an honorable and perpetual magistracy, and to choose one of the wisest and most holy among their presbyters to execute, during his life, the duties of their ecclesiastical governor. It was under these circumstances that the lofty title of Bishop began to raise itself above the humble appellation of Presbyter; and while the latter remained the most natural distinction for the members of every Christian senate, the former was appropriated to the dignity of its new president. [109](#) The advantages of this episcopal form of government, which appears to have been introduced before the end of the first century, [110](#) were so obvious, and so important for the future greatness, as well as the present peace, of Christianity, that it was adopted without delay by all the societies which were already scattered over the empire, had acquired in a very early period the sanction of antiquity, [111](#) and is still revered by the

most powerful churches, both of the East and of the West, as a primitive and even as a divine establishment. [112](#) It is needless to observe, that the pious and humble presbyters, who were first dignified with the episcopal title, could not possess, and would probably have rejected, the power and pomp which now encircles the tiara of the Roman pontiff, or the mitre of a German prelate. But we may define, in a few words, the narrow limits of their original jurisdiction, which was chiefly of a spiritual, though in some instances of a temporal nature. [113](#) It consisted in the administration of the sacraments and discipline of the church, the superintendency of religious ceremonies, which imperceptibly increased in number and variety, the consecration of ecclesiastical ministers, to whom the bishop assigned their respective functions, the management of the public fund, and the determination of all such differences as the faithful were unwilling to expose before the tribunal of an idolatrous judge. These powers, during a short period, were exercised according to the advice of the presbyteral college, and with the consent and approbation of the assembly of Christians. The primitive bishops were considered only as the first of their equals, and the honorable servants of a free people. Whenever the episcopal chair became vacant by death, a new president was chosen among the presbyters by the suffrage of the whole congregation, every member of which supposed himself invested with a sacred and sacerdotal character. [114](#)

109

[\(return\)](#)

[See Jerome and Titum, c. i. and Epistol. 85, (in the Benedictine edition, 101,) and the elaborate apology of Blondel, pro sententia Hieronymi. The ancient state, as it is described by Jerome, of the bishop and presbyters of Alexandria, receives a remarkable confirmation from the patriarch Eutychius, (Annal. tom. i. p. 330, Vers Pocock;) whose testimony I know not how to reject, in spite of all the objections of the learned Pearson in his *Vindiciæ Ignatianæ*, part i. c. 11.]

110

[\(return\)](#)

[See the introduction to the Apocalypse. Bishops, under the name of angels, were already instituted in the seven cities of Asia. And yet the epistle of Clemens (which is probably of as ancient a date) does not lead us to discover any traces of episcopacy either at Corinth or Rome.]

111

[\(return\)](#)

[Nulla Ecclesia sine Episcopo, has been a fact as well as a maxim since the time of Tertullian and Irenæus.]

112

[\(return\)](#)

[After we have passed the difficulties of the first century, we find the episcopal government universally established, till it was interrupted by the republican genius of the Swiss and German reformers.]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[See Mosheim in the first and second centuries. Ignatius (ad Smyrnæos, c. 3, &c.) is fond of exalting the episcopal dignity. Le Clerc (Hist. Eccles. p. 569) very bluntly censures his conduct, Mosheim, with a more critical judgment, (p. 161,) suspects the purity even of the smaller epistles.]

114 [\(return\)](#)

[Nonne et Laici sacerdotes sumus? Tertullian, Exhort. ad Castitat. c. 7. As the human heart is still the same, several of the observations which Mr. Hume has made on Enthusiasm, (Essays, vol. i. p. 76, quarto edit.) may be applied even to real inspiration. * Note: This expression was employed by the earlier Christian writers in the sense used by St. Peter, 1 Ep ii. 9. It was the sanctity and virtue not the power of priesthood, in which all Christians were to be equally distinguished.—M.]

Such was the mild and equal constitution by which the Christians were governed more than a hundred years after the death of the apostles. Every society formed within itself a separate and independent republic; and although the most distant of these little states maintained a mutual as well as friendly intercourse of letters and deputations, the Christian world was not yet connected by any supreme authority or legislative assembly. As the numbers of the faithful were gradually multiplied, they discovered the advantages that might result from a closer union of their interest and designs. Towards the end of the second century, the churches of Greece and Asia adopted the useful institutions of provincial synods, [1141](#) and they may justly be supposed to have borrowed the model of a representative council from the celebrated examples of their own country, the Amphictyons, the Achæan league, or the assemblies of the Ionian cities. It was soon established as a custom and as a law, that the bishops of the independent churches should meet in the capital of the province at the stated periods of spring and autumn. Their deliberations were assisted by the advice of a few distinguished presbyters, and moderated by the presence of a listening multitude. [115](#) Their decrees, which were styled Canons, regulated every important controversy of faith and discipline; and it was natural to believe that a liberal effusion of the Holy Spirit would be poured on the united assembly of the delegates of the Christian people. The institution of synods was so well suited to private ambition, and to public interest, that in the space of a few years it was received throughout the whole empire. A regular correspondence was established between the provincial councils, which mutually communicated and approved their respective proceedings; and the catholic church soon assumed the form, and acquired the strength, of a great fœderative republic. [116](#)

1141 [\(return\)](#)

[The synods were not the first means taken by the insulated churches to enter into communion and to

assume a corporate character. The dioceses were first formed by the union of several country churches with a church in a city: many churches in one city uniting among themselves, or joining a more considerable church, became metropolitan. The dioceses were not formed before the beginning of the second century: before that time the Christians had not established sufficient churches in the country to stand in need of that union. It is towards the middle of the same century that we discover the first traces of the metropolitan constitution. (Probably the country churches were founded in general by missionaries from those in the city, and would preserve a natural connection with the parent church.)—M. —The provincial synods did not commence till towards the middle of the third century, and were not the first synods. History gives us distinct notions of the synods, held towards the end of the second century, at Ephesus at Jerusalem, at Pontus, and at Rome, to put an end to the disputes which had arisen between the Latin and Asiatic churches about the celebration of Easter. But these synods were not subject to any regular form or periodical return; this regularity was first established with the provincial synods, which were formed by a union of the bishops of a district, subject to a metropolitan. Plank, p. 90. Geschichte der Christ. Kirch. Verfassung—G]

115 [\(return\)](#)
[Acta Concil. Carthag. apud Cyprian. edit. Fell, p. 158. This council was composed of eighty-seven bishops from the provinces of Mauritania, Numidia, and Africa; some presbyters and deacons assisted at the assembly; *præsente plebis maxima parte.*]

116 [\(return\)](#)
[Aguntur præterea per Græcias illas, certis in locis concilia, &c Tertullian de Jejuniis, c. 13. The African mentions it as a recent and foreign institution. The coalition of the Christian churches is very ably explained by Mosheim, p. 164 170.]

As the legislative authority of the particular churches was insensibly superseded by the use of councils, the bishops obtained by their alliance a much larger share of executive and arbitrary power; and as soon as they were connected by a sense of their common interest, they were enabled to attack, with united vigor, the original rights of their clergy and people. The prelates of the third century imperceptibly changed the language of exhortation into that of command, scattered the seeds of future usurpations, and supplied, by scripture allegories and declamatory rhetoric, their deficiency of force and of reason. They exalted the unity and power of the church, as it was represented in

the episcopal office, of which every bishop enjoyed an equal and undivided portion. [117](#) Princes and magistrates, it was often repeated, might boast an earthly claim to a transitory dominion; it was the episcopal authority alone which was derived from the Deity, and extended itself over this and over another world. The bishops were the vicegerents of Christ, the successors of the apostles, and the mystic substitutes of the high priest of the Mosaic law. Their exclusive privilege of conferring the sacerdotal character invaded the freedom both of clerical and of popular elections; and if, in the administration of the church, they still consulted the judgment of the presbyters, or the inclination of the people, they most carefully inculcated the merit of such a voluntary condescension. The bishops acknowledged the supreme authority which resided in the assembly of their brethren; but in the government of his peculiar diocese, each of them exacted from his *flock* the same implicit obedience as if that favorite metaphor had been literally just, and as if the shepherd had been of a more exalted nature than that of his sheep. [118](#) This obedience, however, was not imposed without some efforts on one side, and some resistance on the other. The democratical part of the constitution was, in many places, very warmly supported by the zealous or interested opposition of the inferior clergy. But their patriotism received the ignominious epithets of faction and schism; and the episcopal cause was indebted for its rapid progress to the labors of many active prelates, who, like Cyprian of Carthage, could reconcile the arts of the most ambitious statesman with the Christian virtues which seem adapted to the character of a saint and martyr. [119](#)

117 [\(return\)](#)
[Cyprian, in his admired treatise *De Unitate Ecclesiæ*. p. 75—86]

118 [\(return\)](#)
[We may appeal to the whole tenor of Cyprian's conduct, of his doctrine, and of his epistles. Le Clerc, in a short life of Cyprian, (*Bibliothèque Universelle*, tom. xii. p. 207—378,) has laid him open with great freedom and accuracy.]

119 [\(return\)](#)
[If Novatus, Felicissimus, &c., whom the Bishop of Carthage expelled from his church, and from Africa, were not the most detestable monsters of wickedness, the zeal of Cyprian must occasionally have prevailed over his veracity. For a very just account of these obscure quarrels, see Mosheim, p. 497—512.]

The same causes which at first had destroyed the equality of the presbyters introduced among the bishops a preeminence of rank, and from thence a superiority of jurisdiction. As often as in the spring and autumn they met in provincial synod, the difference of personal merit and reputation was very sensibly felt among the members of the assembly, and the multitude was governed by the wisdom and eloquence of the few. But the order of public proceedings required a more regular and less invidious

distinction; the office of perpetual presidents in the councils of each province was conferred on the bishops of the principal city; and these aspiring prelates, who soon acquired the lofty titles of Metropolitans and Primates, secretly prepared themselves to usurp over their episcopal brethren the same authority which the bishops had so lately assumed above the college of presbyters. [120](#) Nor was it long before an emulation of preeminence and power prevailed among the Metropolitans themselves, each of them affecting to display, in the most pompous terms, the temporal honors and advantages of the city over which he presided; the numbers and opulence of the Christians who were subject to their pastoral care; the saints and martyrs who had arisen among them; and the purity with which they preserved the tradition of the faith, as it had been transmitted through a series of orthodox bishops from the apostle or the apostolic disciple, to whom the foundation of their church was ascribed. [121](#) From every cause, either of a civil or of an ecclesiastical nature, it was easy to foresee that Rome must enjoy the respect, and would soon claim the obedience, of the provinces. The society of the faithful bore a just proportion to the capital of the empire; and the Roman church was the greatest, the most numerous, and, in regard to the West, the most ancient of all the Christian establishments, many of which had received their religion from the pious labors of her missionaries. Instead of one apostolic founder, the utmost boast of Antioch, of Ephesus, or of Corinth, the banks of the Tyber were supposed to have been honored with the preaching and martyrdom of the two most eminent among the apostles; [122](#) and the bishops of Rome very prudently claimed the inheritance of whatsoever prerogatives were attributed either to the person or to the office of St. Peter. [123](#) The bishops of Italy and of the provinces were disposed to allow them a primacy of order and association (such was their very accurate expression) in the Christian aristocracy. [124](#) But the power of a monarch was rejected with abhorrence, and the aspiring genius of Rome experienced from the nations of Asia and Africa a more vigorous resistance to her spiritual, than she had formerly done to her temporal, dominion. The patriotic Cyprian, who ruled with the most absolute sway the church of Carthage and the provincial synods, opposed with resolution and success the ambition of the Roman pontiff, artfully connected his own cause with that of the eastern bishops, and, like Hannibal, sought out new allies in the heart of Asia. [125](#) If this Punic war was carried on without any effusion of blood, it was owing much less to the moderation than to the weakness of the contending prelates. Invectives and excommunications were *their* only weapons; and these, during the progress of the whole controversy, they hurled against each other with equal fury and devotion. The hard necessity of censuring either a pope, or a saint and martyr, distresses the modern Catholics whenever they are obliged to relate the particulars of a dispute in which the champions of religion indulged such passions as seem much more adapted to the senate or to the camp. [126](#)

- 121 [\(return\)](#)
[Tertullian, in a distinct treatise, has pleaded against the heretics the right of prescription, as it was held by the apostolic churches.]
- 122 [\(return\)](#)
[The journey of St. Peter to Rome is mentioned by most of the ancients, (see Eusebius, ii. 25,) maintained by all the Catholics, allowed by some Protestants, (see Pearson and Dodwell de Success. Episcop. Roman,) but has been vigorously attacked by Spanheim, (Miscellanes Sacra, iii. 3.) According to Father Hardouin, the monks of the thirteenth century, who composed the Æneid, represented St. Peter under the allegorical character of the Trojan hero. * Note: It is quite clear that, strictly speaking, the church of Rome was not founded by either of these apostles. St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans proves undeniably the flourishing state of the church before his visit to the city; and many Roman Catholic writers have given up the impracticable task of reconciling with chronology any visit of St. Peter to Rome before the end of the reign of Claudius, or the beginning of that of Nero.—M.]
- 123 [\(return\)](#)
[It is in French only that the famous allusion to St. Peter's name is exact. Tu es Pierre, et sur cette pierre.—The same is imperfect in Greek, Latin, Italian, &c., and totally unintelligible in our Tentonic languages. * Note: It is exact in Syro-Chaldaic, the language in which it was spoken by Jesus Christ. (St. Matt. xvi. 17.) Peter was called Cephas; and cepha signifies base, foundation, rock—G.]
- 124 [\(return\)](#)
[Irenæus adv. Hæreses, iii. 3. Tertullian de Præscription. c. 36, and Cyprian, Epistol. 27, 55, 71, 75. Le Clere (Hist. Eccles. p. 764) and Mosheim (p. 258, 578) labor in the interpretation of these passages. But the loose and rhetorical style of the fathers often appears favorable to the pretensions of Rome.]
- 125 [\(return\)](#)
[See the sharp epistle from Firmilianus, bishop of Cæsarea, to Stephen, bishop of Rome, ap. Cyprian, Epistol. 75.]
- 126 [\(return\)](#)
[Concerning this dispute of the rebaptism of heretics, see the epistles of Cyprian, and the seventh book of Eusebius.]

The progress of the ecclesiastical authority gave birth to the memorable distinction of the laity and of the clergy, which had been unknown to the Greeks and Romans. [127](#) The former of these appellations comprehended the body of the Christian people; the latter, according to the signification of the word, was appropriated to the chosen portion that had been set apart for the service of religion; a celebrated order of men, which has furnished the most important, though not always the most edifying, subjects for modern history. Their mutual hostilities sometimes disturbed the peace of the infant church, but their zeal and activity were united in the common cause, and the love of power, which (under the most artful disguises) could insinuate itself into the breasts of bishops and martyrs, animated them to increase the number of their subjects, and to enlarge the limits of the Christian empire. They were destitute of any temporal force, and they were for a long time discouraged and oppressed, rather than assisted, by the civil magistrate; but they had acquired, and they employed within their own society, the two most efficacious instruments of government, rewards and punishments; the former derived from the pious liberality, the latter from the devout apprehensions, of the faithful.

127

[\(return\)](#)

[For the origin of these words, see Mosheim, p. 141. Spanheim, Hist. Ecclesiast. p. 633. The distinction of Clerus and Laicus was established before the time of Tertullian.]

Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part VII

I. The community of goods, which had so agreeably amused the imagination of Plato, [128](#) and which subsisted in some degree among the austere sect of the Essenians, [129](#) was adopted for a short time in the primitive church. The fervor of the first proselytes prompted them to sell those worldly possessions, which they despised, to lay the price of them at the feet of the apostles, and to content themselves with receiving an equal share out of the general distribution. [130](#) The progress of the Christian religion relaxed, and gradually abolished, this generous institution, which, in hands less pure than those of the apostles, would too soon have been corrupted and abused by the returning selfishness of human nature; and the converts who embraced the new religion were permitted to retain the possession of their patrimony, to receive legacies and inheritances, and to increase their separate property by all the lawful means of trade and industry. Instead of an absolute sacrifice, a moderate proportion was accepted by the ministers of the gospel; and in their weekly or monthly assemblies, every believer, according to the exigency of the occasion, and the measure of his wealth and piety, presented his voluntary offering for the use of the common fund. [131](#) Nothing, however inconsiderable, was refused; but it was diligently inculcated that, in the article of Tithes, the Mosaic law was still of divine obligation;

and that since the Jews, under a less perfect discipline, had been commanded to pay a tenth part of all that they possessed, it would become the disciples of Christ to distinguish themselves by a superior degree of liberality, [132](#) and to acquire some merit by resigning a superfluous treasure, which must so soon be annihilated with the world itself. [133](#) It is almost unnecessary to observe, that the revenue of each particular church, which was of so uncertain and fluctuating a nature, must have varied with the poverty or the opulence of the faithful, as they were dispersed in obscure villages, or collected in the great cities of the empire. In the time of the emperor Decius, it was the opinion of the magistrates, that the Christians of Rome were possessed of very considerable wealth; that vessels of gold and silver were used in their religious worship, and that many among their proselytes had sold their lands and houses to increase the public riches of the sect, at the expense, indeed, of their unfortunate children, who found themselves beggars, because their parents had been saints. [134](#) We should listen with distrust to the suspicions of strangers and enemies: on this occasion, however, they receive a very specious and probable color from the two following circumstances, the only ones that have reached our knowledge, which define any precise sums, or convey any distinct idea. Almost at the same period, the bishop of Carthage, from a society less opulent than that of Rome, collected a hundred thousand sesterces, (above eight hundred and fifty pounds sterling,) on a sudden call of charity to redeem the brethren of Numidia, who had been carried away captives by the barbarians of the desert. [135](#) About a hundred years before the reign of Decius, the Roman church had received, in a single donation, the sum of two hundred thousand sesterces from a stranger of Pontus, who proposed to fix his residence in the capital. [136](#) These oblations, for the most part, were made in money; nor was the society of Christians either desirous or capable of acquiring, to any considerable degree, the encumbrance of landed property. It had been provided by several laws, which were enacted with the same design as our statutes of mortmain, that no real estates should be given or bequeathed to any corporate body, without either a special privilege or a particular dispensation from the emperor or from the senate; [137](#) who were seldom disposed to grant them in favor of a sect, at first the object of their contempt, and at last of their fears and jealousy. A transaction, however, is related under the reign of Alexander Severus, which discovers that the restraint was sometimes eluded or suspended, and that the Christians were permitted to claim and to possess lands within the limits of Rome itself. [138](#) The progress of Christianity, and the civil confusion of the empire, contributed to relax the severity of the laws; and before the close of the third century many considerable estates were bestowed on the opulent churches of Rome, Milan, Carthage, Antioch, Alexandria, and the other great cities of Italy and the provinces.

temporal goods, may be considered as inseparable parts of the same system.]

129 [\(return\)](#)

[Joseph. Antiquitat. xviii. 2. Philo, de Vit. Contemplativ.]

130 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Acts of the Apostles, c. 2, 4, 5, with Grotius's Commentary. Mosheim, in a particular dissertation, attacks the common opinion with very inconclusive arguments. * Note: This is not the general judgment on Mosheim's learned dissertation. There is no trace in the latter part of the New Testament of this community of goods, and many distinct proofs of the contrary. All exhortations to almsgiving would have been unmeaning if property had been in common—M.]

131 [\(return\)](#)

[Justin Martyr, Apolog. Major, c. 89. Tertullian, Apolog. c. 39.]

132 [\(return\)](#)

[Irenæus ad Hæres. l. iv. c. 27, 34. Origen in Num. Hom. ii Cyprian de Unitat. Eccles. Constitut. Apostol. l. ii. c. 34, 35, with the notes of Cotelerius. The Constitutions introduce this divine precept, by declaring that priests are as much above kings as the soul is above the body. Among the tithable articles, they enumerate corn, wine, oil, and wool. On this interesting subject, consult Prideaux's History of Tithes, and Fra Paolo delle Materie Beneficiarie; two writers of a very different character.]

133 [\(return\)](#)

[The same opinion which prevailed about the year one thousand, was productive of the same effects. Most of the Donations express their motive, "appropinquante mundi fine." See Mosheim's General History of the Church, vol. i. p. 457.]

134 [\(return\)](#)

[Tum summa cura est fratribus (Ut sermo testatur loquax.) Offerre, fundis venditis Sestertiorum millia. Addicta avorum prædia Foedis sub auctionibus, Successor exheres gemit Sanctis egens Parentibus. Hæc occuluntur abditis Ecclesiarum in angulis. Et summa pietas creditur Nudare dulces liberos.—Prudent. Hymn 2. The subsequent conduct of the deacon Laurence only proves how proper a use was made of the wealth of the Roman church; it was undoubtedly very considerable; but Fra Paolo (c. 3) appears to exaggerate, when he supposes that the successors of Commodus were

- urged to persecute the Christians by their own avarice, or that of their Prætorian præfects.]
- 135 [\(return\)](#)
[Cyprian, Epistol. 62.]
- 136 [\(return\)](#)
[Tertullian de Præscriptione, c. 30.]
- 137 [\(return\)](#)
[Diocletian gave a rescript, which is only a declaration of the old law; “Collegium, si nullo speciali privilegio subnixum sit, hæreditatem capere non posse, dubium non est.” Fra Paolo (c. 4) thinks that these regulations had been much neglected since the reign of Valerian.]
- 138 [\(return\)](#)
[Hist. August. p. 131. The ground had been public; and was row disputed between the society of Christians and that of butchers. Note *: Carponarii, rather victuallers.—M.]

The bishop was the natural steward of the church; the public stock was intrusted to his care without account or control; the presbyters were confined to their spiritual functions, and the more dependent order of the deacons was solely employed in the management and distribution of the ecclesiastical revenue. [139](#) If we may give credit to the vehement declamations of Cyprian, there were too many among his African brethren, who, in the execution of their charge, violated every precept, not only of evangelical perfection, but even of moral virtue. By some of these unfaithful stewards the riches of the church were lavished in sensual pleasures; by others they were perverted to the purposes of private gain, of fraudulent purchases, and of rapacious usury. [140](#) But as long as the contributions of the Christian people were free and unconstrained, the abuse of their confidence could not be very frequent, and the general uses to which their liberality was applied reflected honor on the religious society. A decent portion was reserved for the maintenance of the bishop and his clergy; a sufficient sum was allotted for the expenses of the public worship, of which the feasts of love, the *agapæ*, as they were called, constituted a very pleasing part. The whole remainder was the sacred patrimony of the poor. According to the discretion of the bishop, it was distributed to support widows and orphans, the lame, the sick, and the aged of the community; to comfort strangers and pilgrims, and to alleviate the misfortunes of prisoners and captives, more especially when their sufferings had been occasioned by their firm attachment to the cause of religion. [141](#) A generous intercourse of charity united the most distant provinces, and the smaller congregations were cheerfully assisted by the alms of their more opulent brethren. [142](#) Such an institution, which paid less regard to the merit than to the distress of the object, very materially conduced to the progress of Christianity. The Pagans, who were actuated by a sense of humanity, while they derided the doctrines, acknowledged the benevolence, of the new sect. [143](#) The prospect of immediate relief and of future protection allured into its

hospitable bosom many of those unhappy persons whom the neglect of the world would have abandoned to the miseries of want, of sickness, and of old age. There is some reason likewise to believe that great numbers of infants, who, according to the inhuman practice of the times, had been exposed by their parents, were frequently rescued from death, baptized, educated, and maintained by the piety of the Christians, and at the expense of the public treasure. [144](#)

139 [\(return\)](#)

[Constitut. Apostol. ii. 35.]

140 [\(return\)](#)

[Cyprian de Lapsis, p. 89. Epistol. 65. The charge is confirmed by the 19th and 20th canon of the council of Illiberis.]

141 [\(return\)](#)

[See the apologies of Justin, Tertullian, &c.]

142 [\(return\)](#)

[The wealth and liberality of the Romans to their most distant brethren is gratefully celebrated by Dionysius of Corinth, ap. Euseb. l. iv. c. 23.]

143 [\(return\)](#)

[See Lucian iu Peregrin. Julian (Epist. 49) seems mortified that the Christian charity maintains not only their own, but likewise the heathen poor.]

144 [\(return\)](#)

[Such, at least, has been the laudable conduct of more modern missionaries, under the same circumstances. Above three thousand new-born infants are annually exposed in the streets of Pekin. See Le Comte, Memoires sur la Chine, and the Recherches sur les Chinois et les Egyptians, tom. i. p. 61.]

II. It is the undoubted right of every society to exclude from its communion and benefits such among its members as reject or violate those regulations which have been established by general consent. In the exercise of this power, the censures of the Christian church were chiefly directed against scandalous sinners, and particularly those who were guilty of murder, of fraud, or of incontinence; against the authors or the followers of any heretical opinions which had been condemned by the judgment of the episcopal order; and against those unhappy persons, who, whether from choice or compulsion, had polluted themselves after their baptism by any act of idolatrous worship. The consequences of excommunication were of a temporal as well as a spiritual nature. The Christian against whom it was pronounced was deprived of any part in the oblations of the faithful. The ties both of religious and of private friendship were dissolved: he found himself a profane object of abhorrence to the persons whom he the most esteemed, or by whom he had been the most tenderly beloved; and as far as an expulsion from a respectable society could imprint on his character a mark of

disgrace, he was shunned or suspected by the generality of mankind. The situation of these unfortunate exiles was in itself very painful and melancholy; but, as it usually happens, their apprehensions far exceeded their sufferings. The benefits of the Christian communion were those of eternal life; nor could they erase from their minds the awful opinion, that to those ecclesiastical governors by whom they were condemned, the Deity had committed the keys of Hell and of Paradise. The heretics, indeed, who might be supported by the consciousness of their intentions, and by the flattering hope that they alone had discovered the true path of salvation, endeavored to regain, in their separate assemblies, those comforts, temporal as well as spiritual, which they no longer derived from the great society of Christians. But almost all those who had reluctantly yielded to the power of vice or idolatry were sensible of their fallen condition, and anxiously desirous of being restored to the benefits of the Christian communion.

With regard to the treatment of these penitents, two opposite opinions, the one of justice, the other of mercy, divided the primitive church. The more rigid and inflexible casuists refused them forever, and without exception, the meanest place in the holy community, which they had disgraced or deserted; and leaving them to the remorse of a guilty conscience, indulged them only with a faint ray of hope that the contrition of their life and death might possibly be accepted by the Supreme Being. [145](#) A milder sentiment was embraced, in practice as well as in theory, by the purest and most respectable of the Christian churches. [146](#) The gates of reconciliation and of heaven were seldom shut against the returning penitent; but a severe and solemn form of discipline was instituted, which, while it served to expiate his crime, might powerfully deter the spectators from the imitation of his example. Humbled by a public confession, emaciated by fasting and clothed in sackcloth, the penitent lay prostrate at the door of the assembly, imploring with tears the pardon of his offences, and soliciting the prayers of the faithful. [147](#) If the fault was of a very heinous nature, whole years of penance were esteemed an inadequate satisfaction to the divine justice; and it was always by slow and painful gradations that the sinner, the heretic, or the apostate, was readmitted into the bosom of the church. A sentence of perpetual excommunication was, however, reserved for some crimes of an extraordinary magnitude, and particularly for the inexcusable relapses of those penitents who had already experienced and abused the clemency of their ecclesiastical superiors. According to the circumstances or the number of the guilty, the exercise of the Christian discipline was varied by the discretion of the bishops. The councils of Ancyra and Illiberis were held about the same time, the one in Galatia, the other in Spain; but their respective canons, which are still extant, seem to breathe a very different spirit. The Galatian, who after his baptism had repeatedly sacrificed to idols, might obtain his pardon by a penance of seven years; and if he had seduced others to imitate his example, only three years more were added to the term of his exile. But the unhappy Spaniard, who had committed the same offence, was deprived of the hope of reconciliation, even in the article of death; and his idolatry was placed at the head of a list of seventeen other crimes, against which a sentence no

less terrible was pronounced. Among these we may distinguish the inexpressible guilt of calumniating a bishop, a presbyter, or even a deacon. [148](#)

145 [\(return\)](#)

[The Montanists and the Novatians, who adhered to this opinion with the greatest rigor and obstinacy, found themselves at last in the number of excommunicated heretics. See the learned and copious Mosheim, *Secul. ii. and iii.*]

146 [\(return\)](#)

[Dionysius ap. Euseb. iv. 23. Cyprian, *de Lapsis.*]

147 [\(return\)](#)

[Cave's *Primitive Christianity*, part iii. c. 5. The admirers of antiquity regret the loss of this public penance.]

148 [\(return\)](#)

[See in Dupin, *Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique*, tom. ii. p. 304—313, a short but rational exposition of the canons of those councils, which were assembled in the first moments of tranquillity, after the persecution of Diocletian. This persecution had been much less severely felt in Spain than in Galatia; a difference which may, in some measure account for the contrast of their regulations.]

The well-tempered mixture of liberality and rigor, the judicious dispensation of rewards and punishments, according to the maxims of policy as well as justice, constituted the *human* strength of the church. The Bishops, whose paternal care extended itself to the government of both worlds, were sensible of the importance of these prerogatives; and covering their ambition with the fair pretence of the love of order, they were jealous of any rival in the exercise of a discipline so necessary to prevent the desertion of those troops which had enlisted themselves under the banner of the cross, and whose numbers every day became more considerable. From the imperious declamations of Cyprian, we should naturally conclude that the doctrines of excommunication and penance formed the most essential part of religion; and that it was much less dangerous for the disciples of Christ to neglect the observance of the moral duties, than to despise the censures and authority of their bishops. Sometimes we might imagine that we were listening to the voice of Moses, when he commanded the earth to open, and to swallow up, in consuming flames, the rebellious race which refused obedience to the priesthood of Aaron; and we should sometimes suppose that we heard a Roman consul asserting the majesty of the republic, and declaring his inflexible resolution to enforce the rigor of the laws. “If such irregularities are suffered with impunity,” (it is thus that the bishop of Carthage chides the lenity of his colleague,) “if such irregularities are suffered, there is an end of EPISCOPAL VIGOR; [149](#) an end of the sublime and divine power of governing the Church, an end of Christianity itself.” Cyprian had renounced those temporal honors which it is probable he would never have

obtained; but the acquisition of such absolute command over the consciences and understanding of a congregation, however obscure or despised by the world, is more truly grateful to the pride of the human heart than the possession of the most despotic power, imposed by arms and conquest on a reluctant people.

[Gibbon has been accused of injustice to the character of Cyprian, as exalting the “censures and authority of the church above the observance of the moral duties.” Felicissimus had been condemned by a synod of bishops, (*non tantum mea, sed plurimorum coepiscoporum, sententia condemnatum,*) on the charge not only of schism, but of embezzlement of public money, the debauching of virgins, and frequent acts of adultery. His violent menaces had extorted his readmission into the church, against which Cyprian protests with much vehemence: *ne pecuniæ commissæ sibi fraudator, ne stuprator virginum, ne matrimoniorum multorum depopulator et corruptor, ultra adhuc sponsam Christi incorruptam præsentia suæ dedecore, et impudica atque incesta contagione, violaret.* See Chelsum’s Remarks, p. 134. If these charges against Felicissimus were true, they were something more than “irregularities,” A Roman censor would have been a fairer subject of comparison than a consul. On the other hand, it must be admitted that the charge of adultery deepens very rapidly as the controversy becomes more violent. It is first represented as a single act, recently detected, and which men of character were prepared to substantiate: *adulterii etiam crimen accedit. quod patres nostri graves viri deprehendisse se nuntiaverunt, et probaturos se asseverarunt.* Epist. xxxviii. The heretic has now darkened into a man of notorious and general profligacy. Nor can it be denied that of the whole long epistle, very far the larger and the more passionate part dwells on the breach of ecclesiastical unity rather than on the violation of Christian holiness.—M.]

[This supposition appears unfounded: the birth and the talents of Cyprian might make us presume the contrary. Thascius Cæcilius Cyprianus, Carthaginensis, artis oratoriæ professione clarus, magnam sibi gloriam, opes, honores acquisivit, epularibus cænis et largis dapibus assuetus, pretiosa veste conspicuus, auro atque purpura fulgens, fascibus oblectatus et honoribus, stipatus clientium cuneis, frequentiore comitatu officii agminis honestatus, ut ipse de se loquitur in Epistola ad Donatum. See De Cave, Hist. Liter. b. i. p. 87.—G. Cave has rather embellished Cyprian’s language.—M.]

In the course of this important, though perhaps tedious inquiry, I have attempted to display the secondary causes which so efficaciously assisted the truth of the Christian religion. If among these causes we have discovered any artificial ornaments, any accidental circumstances, or any mixture of error and passion, it cannot appear surprising that mankind should be the most sensibly affected by such motives as were suited to their imperfect nature. It was by the aid of these causes, exclusive zeal, the immediate expectation of another world, the claim of miracles, the practice of rigid virtue, and the constitution of the primitive church, that Christianity spread itself with

so much success in the Roman empire. To the first of these the Christians were indebted for their invincible valor, which disdained to capitulate with the enemy whom they were resolved to vanquish. The three succeeding causes supplied their valor with the most formidable arms. The last of these causes united their courage, directed their arms, and gave their efforts that irresistible weight, which even a small band of well-trained and intrepid volunteers has so often possessed over an undisciplined multitude, ignorant of the subject and careless of the event of the war. In the various religions of Polytheism, some wandering fanatics of Egypt and Syria, who addressed themselves to the credulous superstition of the populace, were perhaps the only order of priests [150](#) that derived their whole support and credit from their sacerdotal profession, and were very deeply affected by a personal concern for the safety or prosperity of their tutelar deities. The ministers of Polytheism, both in Rome and in the provinces, were, for the most part, men of a noble birth, and of an affluent fortune, who received, as an honorable distinction, the care of a celebrated temple, or of a public sacrifice, exhibited, very frequently at their own expense, the sacred games, [151](#) and with cold indifference performed the ancient rites, according to the laws and fashion of their country. As they were engaged in the ordinary occupations of life, their zeal and devotion were seldom animated by a sense of interest, or by the habits of an ecclesiastical character. Confined to their respective temples and cities, they remained without any connection of discipline or government; and whilst they acknowledged the supreme jurisdiction of the senate, of the college of pontiffs, and of the emperor, those civil magistrates contented themselves with the easy task of maintaining in peace and dignity the general worship of mankind. We have already seen how various, how loose, and how uncertain were the religious sentiments of Polytheists. They were abandoned, almost without control, to the natural workings of a superstitious fancy. The accidental circumstances of their life and situation determined the object as well as the degree of their devotion; and as long as their adoration was successively prostituted to a thousand deities, it was scarcely possible that their hearts could be susceptible of a very sincere or lively passion for any of them.

150

[\(return\)](#)

[The arts, the manners, and the vices of the priests of the Syrian goddess are very humorously described by Apuleius, in the eighth book of his *Metamorphosis*.]

151

[\(return\)](#)

[The office of Asiarch was of this nature, and it is frequently mentioned in *Aristides*, the *Inscriptions*, &c. It was annual and elective. None but the vainest citizens could desire the honor; none but the most wealthy could support the expense. See, in the *Patres Apostol.* tom. ii. p. 200, with how much indifference Philip the Asiarch conducted himself in the martyrdom of Polycarp. There were likewise Bithyniarchs, Lyciarchs, &c.]

When Christianity appeared in the world, even these faint and imperfect impressions had lost much of their original power. Human reason, which by its unassisted strength is incapable of perceiving the mysteries of faith, had already obtained an easy triumph over the folly of Paganism; and when Tertullian or Lactantius employ their labors in exposing its falsehood and extravagance, they are obliged to transcribe the eloquence of Cicero or the wit of Lucian. The contagion of these sceptical writings had been diffused far beyond the number of their readers. The fashion of incredulity was communicated from the philosopher to the man of pleasure or business, from the noble to the plebeian, and from the master to the menial slave who waited at his table, and who eagerly listened to the freedom of his conversation. On public occasions the philosophic part of mankind affected to treat with respect and decency the religious institutions of their country; but their secret contempt penetrated through the thin and awkward disguise; and even the people, when they discovered that their deities were rejected and derided by those whose rank or understanding they were accustomed to reverence, were filled with doubts and apprehensions concerning the truth of those doctrines, to which they had yielded the most implicit belief. The decline of ancient prejudice exposed a very numerous portion of human kind to the danger of a painful and comfortless situation. A state of scepticism and suspense may amuse a few inquisitive minds. But the practice of superstition is so congenial to the multitude, that if they are forcibly awakened, they still regret the loss of their pleasing vision. Their love of the marvellous and supernatural, their curiosity with regard to future events, and their strong propensity to extend their hopes and fears beyond the limits of the visible world, were the principal causes which favored the establishment of Polytheism. So urgent on the vulgar is the necessity of believing, that the fall of any system of mythology will most probably be succeeded by the introduction of some other mode of superstition. Some deities of a more recent and fashionable cast might soon have occupied the deserted temples of Jupiter and Apollo, if, in the decisive moment, the wisdom of Providence had not interposed a genuine revelation, fitted to inspire the most rational esteem and conviction, whilst, at the same time, it was adorned with all that could attract the curiosity, the wonder, and the veneration of the people. In their actual disposition, as many were almost disengaged from their artificial prejudices, but equally susceptible and desirous of a devout attachment; an object much less deserving would have been sufficient to fill the vacant place in their hearts, and to gratify the uncertain eagerness of their passions. Those who are inclined to pursue this reflection, instead of viewing with astonishment the rapid progress of Christianity, will perhaps be surprised that its success was not still more rapid and still more universal. It has been observed, with truth as well as propriety, that the conquests of Rome prepared and facilitated those of Christianity. In the second chapter of this work we have attempted to explain in what manner the most civilized provinces of Europe, Asia, and Africa were united under the dominion of one sovereign, and gradually connected by the most intimate ties of laws, of manners, and of language. The Jews of Palestine, who had fondly expected a

temporal deliverer, gave so cold a reception to the miracles of the divine prophet, that it was found unnecessary to publish, or at least to preserve, any Hebrew gospel. [152](#) The authentic histories of the actions of Christ were composed in the Greek language, at a considerable distance from Jerusalem, and after the Gentile converts were grown extremely numerous. [153](#) As soon as those histories were translated into the Latin tongue, they were perfectly intelligible to all the subjects of Rome, excepting only to the peasants of Syria and Egypt, for whose benefit particular versions were afterwards made. The public highways, which had been constructed for the use of the legions, opened an easy passage for the Christian missionaries from Damascus to Corinth, and from Italy to the extremity of Spain or Britain; nor did those spiritual conquerors encounter any of the obstacles which usually retard or prevent the introduction of a foreign religion into a distant country. There is the strongest reason to believe, that before the reigns of Diocletian and Constantine, the faith of Christ had been preached in every province, and in all the great cities of the empire; but the foundation of the several congregations, the numbers of the faithful who composed them, and their proportion to the unbelieving multitude, are now buried in obscurity, or disguised by fiction and declamation. Such imperfect circumstances, however, as have reached our knowledge concerning the increase of the Christian name in Asia and Greece, in Egypt, in Italy, and in the West, we shall now proceed to relate, without neglecting the real or imaginary acquisitions which lay beyond the frontiers of the Roman empire.

152

[\(return\)](#)

[The modern critics are not disposed to believe what the fathers almost unanimously assert, that St. Matthew composed a Hebrew gospel, of which only the Greek translation is extant. It seems, however, dangerous to reject their testimony. * Note: Strong reasons appear to confirm this testimony. Papias, contemporary of the Apostle St. John, says positively that Matthew had written the discourses of Jesus Christ in Hebrew, and that each interpreted them as he could. This Hebrew was the Syro-Chaldaic dialect, then in use at Jerusalem: Origen, Irenæus, Eusebius, Jerome, Epiphanius, confirm this statement. Jesus Christ preached himself in Syro-Chaldaic, as is proved by many words which he used, and which the Evangelists have taken the pains to translate. St. Paul, addressing the Jews, used the same language: Acts xxi. 40, xxii. 2, xxvi. 14. The opinions of some critics prove nothing against such undeniable testimonies. Moreover, their principal objection is, that St. Matthew quotes the Old Testament according to the Greek version of the LXX., which is inaccurate; for of ten quotations, found in his Gospel, seven are evidently taken from the Hebrew text; the three others offer little that differ: moreover, the latter are not literal

quotations. St. Jerome says positively, that, according to a copy which he had seen in the library of Cæsarea, the quotations were made in Hebrew (in Catal.) More modern critics, among others Michaelis, do not entertain a doubt on the subject. The Greek version appears to have been made in the time of the apostles, as St. Jerome and St. Augustus affirm, perhaps by one of them.—G. —Among modern critics, Dr. Hug has asserted the Greek original of St. Matthew, but the general opinion of the most learned biblical writer, supports the view of M. Guizot.—M.]

153

[\(return\)](#)

[Under the reigns of Nero and Domitian, and in the cities of Alexandria, Antioch, Rome, and Ephesus. See Mill. Prolegomena ad Nov. Testament, and Dr. Lardner's fair and extensive collection, vol. xv. Note: This question has, it is well known, been most elaborately discussed since the time of Gibbon. The Preface to the Translation of Schleier Macher's Version of St. Luke contains a very able summary of the various theories.—M.]

Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part VIII.

The rich provinces that extend from the Euphrates to the Ionian Sea were the principal theatre on which the apostle of the Gentiles displayed his zeal and piety. The seeds of the gospel, which he had scattered in a fertile soil, were diligently cultivated by his disciples; and it should seem that, during the two first centuries, the most considerable body of Christians was contained within those limits. Among the societies which were instituted in Syria, none were more ancient or more illustrious than those of Damascus, of Berea or Aleppo, and of Antioch. The prophetic introduction of the Apocalypse has described and immortalized the seven churches of Asia; Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamus, Thyatira, [154](#) Sardes, Laodicea, and Philadelphia; and their colonies were soon diffused over that populous country. In a very early period, the islands of Cyprus and Crete, the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia, gave a favorable reception to the new religion; and Christian republics were soon founded in the cities of Corinth, of Sparta, and of Athens. [155](#) The antiquity of the Greek and Asiatic churches allowed a sufficient space of time for their increase and multiplication; and even the swarms of Gnostics and other heretics serve to display the flourishing condition of the orthodox church, since the appellation of heretics has always been applied to the less numerous party. To these domestic testimonies we may add the confession, the complaints, and the apprehensions of the Gentiles themselves. From the writings of Lucian, a philosopher who had studied mankind, and who describes their manners in the most lively colors, we may learn that,

under the reign of Commodus, his native country of Pontus was filled with Epicureans and *Christians*. [156](#) Within fourscore years after the death of Christ, [157](#) the humane Pliny laments the magnitude of the evil which he vainly attempted to eradicate. In his very curious epistle to the emperor Trajan, he affirms that the temples were almost deserted, that the sacred victims scarcely found any purchasers, and that the superstition had not only infected the cities, but had even spread itself into the villages and the open country of Pontus and Bithynia. [158](#)

154 [\(return\)](#)

[The Alogians (Epiphanius de Hæres. 51) disputed the genuineness of the Apocalypse, because the church of Thyatira was not yet founded. Epiphanius, who allows the fact, extricates himself from the difficulty by ingeniously supposing that St. John wrote in the spirit of prophecy. See Abauzit, Discours sur l'Apocalypse.]

155 [\(return\)](#)

[The epistles of Ignatius and Dionysius (ap. Euseb. iv. 23) point out many churches in Asia and Greece. That of Athens seems to have been one of the least flourishing.]

156 [\(return\)](#)

[Lucian in Alexandro, c. 25. Christianity however, must have been very unequally diffused over Pontus; since, in the middle of the third century, there was no more than seventeen believers in the extensive diocese of Neo-Cæsarea. See M. de Tillemont, Memoires Ecclesiast. tom. iv. p. 675, from Basil and Gregory of Nyssa, who were themselves natives of Cappadocia. Note: Gibbon forgot the conclusion of this story, that Gregory left only seventeen heathens in his diocese. The antithesis is suspicious, and both numbers may have been chosen to magnify the spiritual fame of the wonder-worker.—M.]

157 [\(return\)](#)

[According to the ancients, Jesus Christ suffered under the consulship of the two Gemini, in the year 29 of our present æra. Pliny was sent into Bithynia (according to Pagi) in the year 110.]

158 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Epist. x. 97.]

Without descending into a minute scrutiny of the expressions or of the motives of those writers who either celebrate or lament the progress of Christianity in the East, it may in general be observed that none of them have left us any grounds from whence a just estimate might be formed of the real numbers of the faithful in those provinces. One circumstance, however, has been fortunately preserved, which seems to cast a more

distinct light on this obscure but interesting subject. Under the reign of Theodosius, after Christianity had enjoyed, during more than sixty years, the sunshine of Imperial favor, the ancient and illustrious church of Antioch consisted of one hundred thousand persons, three thousand of whom were supported out of the public oblations. [159](#) The splendor and dignity of the queen of the East, the acknowledged populousness of Cæsarea, Seleucia, and Alexandria, and the destruction of two hundred and fifty thousand souls in the earthquake which afflicted Antioch under the elder Justin, [160](#) are so many convincing proofs that the whole number of its inhabitants was not less than half a million, and that the Christians, however multiplied by zeal and power, did not exceed a fifth part of that great city. How different a proportion must we adopt when we compare the persecuted with the triumphant church, the West with the East, remote villages with populous towns, and countries recently converted to the faith with the place where the believers first received the appellation of Christians! It must not, however, be dissembled, that, in another passage, Chrysostom, to whom we are indebted for this useful information, computes the multitude of the faithful as even superior to that of the Jews and Pagans. [161](#) But the solution of this apparent difficulty is easy and obvious. The eloquent preacher draws a parallel between the civil and the ecclesiastical constitution of Antioch; between the list of Christians who had acquired heaven by baptism, and the list of citizens who had a right to share the public liberality. Slaves, strangers, and infants were comprised in the former; they were excluded from the latter.

159 [\(return\)](#)
[Chrysostom. Opera, tom. vii. p. 658, 810, (edit. Savil. ii. 422, 329.)]

160 [\(return\)](#)
[John Malala, tom. ii. p. 144. He draws the same conclusion with regard to the populousness of antioch.]

161 [\(return\)](#)
[Chrysostom. tom. i. p. 592. I am indebted for these passages, though not for my inference, to the learned Dr. Lardner. Credibility of the Gospel of History, vol. xii. p. 370. * Note: The statements of Chrysostom with regard to the population of Antioch, whatever may be their accuracy, are perfectly consistent. In one passage he reckons the population at 200,000. In a second the Christians at 100,000. In a third he states that the Christians formed more than half the population. Gibbon has neglected to notice the first passage, and has drawn by estimate of the population of Antioch from other sources. The 8000 maintained by alms were widows and virgins alone—M.]

The extensive commerce of Alexandria, and its proximity to Palestine, gave an easy entrance to the new religion. It was at first embraced by great numbers of the Theraputæ,

or Essenians, of the Lake Mareotis, a Jewish sect which had abated much of its reverence for the Mosaic ceremonies. The austere life of the Essenians, their fasts and excommunications, the community of goods, the love of celibacy, their zeal for martyrdom, and the warmth though not the purity of their faith, already offered a very lively image of the primitive discipline. [162](#) It was in the school of Alexandria that the Christian theology appears to have assumed a regular and scientific form; and when Hadrian visited Egypt, he found a church composed of Jews and of Greeks, sufficiently important to attract the notice of that inquisitive prince. [163](#) But the progress of Christianity was for a long time confined within the limits of a single city, which was itself a foreign colony, and till the close of the second century the predecessors of Demetrius were the only prelates of the Egyptian church. Three bishops were consecrated by the hands of Demetrius, and the number was increased to twenty by his successor Heraclas. [164](#) The body of the natives, a people distinguished by a sullen inflexibility of temper, [165](#) entertained the new doctrine with coldness and reluctance; and even in the time of Origen, it was rare to meet with an Egyptian who had surmounted his early prejudices in favor of the sacred animals of his country. [166](#) As soon, indeed, as Christianity ascended the throne, the zeal of those barbarians obeyed the prevailing impulsion; the cities of Egypt were filled with bishops, and the deserts of Thebais swarmed with hermits.

162

[\(return\)](#)

[Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. 2, c. 20, 21, 22, 23, has examined with the most critical accuracy the curious treatise of Philo, which describes the Therapeutæ. By proving that it was composed as early as the time of Augustus, Basnage has demonstrated, in spite of Eusebius (l. ii. c. 17) and a crowd of modern Catholics, that the Therapeutæ were neither Christians nor monks. It still remains probable that they changed their name, preserved their manners, adopted some new articles of faith, and gradually became the fathers of the Egyptian Ascetics.]

163

[\(return\)](#)

[See a letter of Hadrian in the Augustan History, p. 245.]

164

[\(return\)](#)

[For the succession of Alexandrian bishops, consult Renaudot's History, p. 24, &c. This curious fact is preserved by the patriarch Eutychius, (Annal. tom. i. p. 334, Vers. Pocock,) and its internal evidence would alone be a sufficient answer to all the objections which Bishop Pearson has urged in the Vindiciæ Ignatianæ.]

165

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. Marcellin. xxii. 16.]

[Origen contra Celsum, l. i. p. 40.]

A perpetual stream of strangers and provincials flowed into the capacious bosom of Rome. Whatever was strange or odious, whoever was guilty or suspected, might hope, in the obscurity of that immense capital, to elude the vigilance of the law. In such a various conflux of nations, every teacher, either of truth or falsehood, every founder, whether of a virtuous or a criminal association, might easily multiply his disciples or accomplices. The Christians of Rome, at the time of the accidental persecution of Nero, are represented by Tacitus as already amounting to a very great multitude, [167](#) and the language of that great historian is almost similar to the style employed by Livy, when he relates the introduction and the suppression of the rites of Bacchus. After the Bacchanals had awakened the severity of the senate, it was likewise apprehended that a very great multitude, as it were *another people*, had been initiated into those abhorred mysteries. A more careful inquiry soon demonstrated that the offenders did not exceed seven thousand; a number indeed sufficiently alarming, when considered as the object of public justice. [168](#) It is with the same candid allowance that we should interpret the vague expressions of Tacitus, and in a former instance of Pliny, when they exaggerate the crowds of deluded fanatics who had forsaken the established worship of the gods. The church of Rome was undoubtedly the first and most populous of the empire; and we are possessed of an authentic record which attests the state of religion in that city about the middle of the third century, and after a peace of thirty-eight years. The clergy, at that time, consisted of a bishop, forty-six presbyters, seven deacons, as many subdeacons, forty-two acolytes, and fifty readers, exorcists, and porters. The number of widows, of the infirm, and of the poor, who were maintained by the oblations of the faithful, amounted to fifteen hundred. [169](#) From reason, as well as from the analogy of Antioch, we may venture to estimate the Christians of Rome at about fifty thousand. The populousness of that great capital cannot perhaps be exactly ascertained; but the most modest calculation will not surely reduce it lower than a million of inhabitants, of whom the Christians might constitute at the most a twentieth part. [170](#)

167

[\(return\)](#)

[Ingens multitudo is the expression of Tacitus, xv. 44.]

168

[\(return\)](#)

[T. Liv. xxxix. 13, 15, 16, 17. Nothing could exceed the horror and consternation of the senate on the discovery of the Bacchanalians, whose depravity is described, and perhaps exaggerated, by Livy.]

169

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, l. vi. c. 43. The Latin translator (M. de Valois) has thought proper to reduce the number of presbyters to forty-four.]

[This proportion of the presbyters and of the poor, to the rest of the people, was originally fixed by Burnet, (Travels into Italy, p. 168,) and is approved by Moyle, (vol. ii. p. 151.) They were both unacquainted with the passage of Chrysostom, which converts their conjecture almost into a fact.]

The western provincials appeared to have derived the knowledge of Christianity from the same source which had diffused among them the language, the sentiments, and the manners of Rome.

In this more important circumstance, Africa, as well as Gaul was gradually fashioned to the imitation of the capital. Yet notwithstanding the many favorable occasions which might invite the Roman missionaries to visit their Latin provinces, it was late before they passed either the sea or the Alps; [171](#) nor can we discover in those great countries any assured traces either of faith or of persecution that ascend higher than the reign of the Antonines. [172](#) The slow progress of the gospel in the cold climate of Gaul, was extremely different from the eagerness with which it seems to have been received on the burning sands of Africa. The African Christians soon formed one of the principal members of the primitive church. The practice introduced into that province of appointing bishops to the most inconsiderable towns, and very frequently to the most obscure villages, contributed to multiply the splendor and importance of their religious societies, which during the course of the third century were animated by the zeal of Tertullian, directed by the abilities of Cyprian, and adorned by the eloquence of Lactantius.

But if, on the contrary, we turn our eyes towards Gaul, we must content ourselves with discovering, in the time of Marcus Antoninus, the feeble and united congregations of Lyons and Vienna; and even as late as the reign of Decius we are assured, that in a few cities only, Arles, Narbonne, Thoulouse, Limoges, Clermont, Tours, and Paris, some scattered churches were supported by the devotion of a small number of Christians. [173](#) Silence is indeed very consistent with devotion; but as it is seldom compatible with zeal, we may perceive and lament the languid state of Christianity in those provinces which had exchanged the Celtic for the Latin tongue, since they did not, during the three first centuries, give birth to a single ecclesiastical writer. From Gaul, which claimed a just preeminence of learning and authority over all the countries on this side of the Alps, the light of the gospel was more faintly reflected on the remote provinces of Spain and Britain; and if we may credit the vehement assertions of Tertullian, they had already received the first rays of the faith, when he addressed his apology to the magistrates of the emperor Severus. [174](#) But the obscure and imperfect origin of the western churches of Europe has been so negligently recorded, that if we would relate the time and manner of their foundation, we must supply the silence of antiquity by those legends which avarice or superstition long afterwards dictated to the monks in the lazy gloom of their convents. [175](#) Of these holy romances, that of the

apostle St. James can alone, by its singular extravagance, deserve to be mentioned. From a peaceful fisherman of the Lake of Gennesareth, he was transformed into a valorous knight, who charged at the head of the Spanish chivalry in their battles against the Moors. The gravest historians have celebrated his exploits; the miraculous shrine of Compostella displayed his power; and the sword of a military order, assisted by the terrors of the Inquisition, was sufficient to remove every objection of profane criticism. [176](#)

171 [\(return\)](#)

[*Serius trans Alpes, religione Dei suscepta.* Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. With regard to Africa, see Tertullian ad Scapulam, c. 3. It is imagined that the Scyllitan martyrs were the first, (*Acta Sincera* Rumart. p. 34.) One of the adversaries of Apuleius seems to have been a Christian. *Apolog.* p. 496, 497, edit. Delphin.]

172 [\(return\)](#)

[*Tum primum intra Gallias martyria visa.* Sulp. Severus, l. ii. These were the celebrated martyrs of Lyons. See Eusebius, v. i. Tillemont, *Mem. Ecclesiast.* tom. ii. p. 316. According to the Donatists, whose assertion is confirmed by the tacit acknowledgment of Augustin, Africa was the last of the provinces which received the gospel. Tillemont, *Mem. Ecclesiast.* tom. i. p. 754.]

173 [\(return\)](#)

[*Raræ in aliquibus civitatibus ecclesiæ, paucorum Christianorum devotione, resurgerent.* *Acta Sincera*, p. 130. Gregory of Tours, l. i. c. 28. Mosheim, p. 207, 449. There is some reason to believe that in the beginning of the fourth century, the extensive dioceses of Liege, of Treves, and of Cologne, composed a single bishopric, which had been very recently founded. See *Memoires de Tillemont*, tom. vi. part i. p. 43, 411.]

174 [\(return\)](#)

[The date of Tertullian's Apology is fixed, in a dissertation of Mosheim, to the year 198.]

175 [\(return\)](#)

[In the fifteenth century, there were few who had either inclination or courage to question, whether Joseph of Arimathea founded the monastery of Glastonbury, and whether Dionysius the Areopagite preferred the residence of Paris to that of Athens.]

176 [\(return\)](#)

[The stupendous metamorphosis was performed in the ninth century. See Mariana, (*Hist. Hispan.* l. vii. c. 13, tom. i. p. 285, edit. Hag. Com. 1733,) who, in

every sense, imitates Livy, and the honest detection
of the legend of St. James by Dr. Geddes,
Miscellanies, vol. ii. p. 221.]

The progress of Christianity was not confined to the Roman empire; and according to the primitive fathers, who interpret facts by prophecy, the new religion, within a century after the death of its divine Author, had already visited every part of the globe. “There exists not,” says Justin Martyr, “a people, whether Greek or Barbarian, or any other race of men, by whatsoever appellation or manners they may be distinguished, however ignorant of arts or agriculture, whether they dwell under tents, or wander about in covered wagons, among whom prayers are not offered up in the name of a crucified Jesus to the Father and Creator of all things.” [177](#) But this splendid exaggeration, which even at present it would be extremely difficult to reconcile with the real state of mankind, can be considered only as the rash sally of a devout but careless writer, the measure of whose belief was regulated by that of his wishes. But neither the belief nor the wishes of the fathers can alter the truth of history. It will still remain an undoubted fact, that the barbarians of Scythia and Germany, who afterwards subverted the Roman monarchy, were involved in the darkness of paganism; and that even the conversion of Iberia, of Armenia, or of Æthiopia, was not attempted with any degree of success till the sceptre was in the hands of an orthodox emperor. [178](#) Before that time, the various accidents of war and commerce might indeed diffuse an imperfect knowledge of the gospel among the tribes of Caledonia, [179](#) and among the borderers of the Rhine, the Danube, and the Euphrates. [180](#) Beyond the last-mentioned river, Edessa was distinguished by a firm and early adherence to the faith. [181](#) From Edessa the principles of Christianity were easily introduced into the Greek and Syrian cities which obeyed the successors of Artaxerxes; but they do not appear to have made any deep impression on the minds of the Persians, whose religious system, by the labors of a well-disciplined order of priests, had been constructed with much more art and solidity than the uncertain mythology of Greece and Rome. [182](#)

177

[\(return\)](#)

[Justin Martyr, Dialog. cum Tryphon. p. 341.
Irenæus adv. Hæres. l. i. c. 10. Tertullian adv. Jud.
c. 7. See Mosheim, p. 203.]

178

[\(return\)](#)

[See the fourth century of Mosheim’s History of
the Church. Many, though very confused
circumstances, that relate to the conversion of
Iberia and Armenia, may be found in Moses of
Chorene, l. ii. c. 78—89. Note: Mons. St. Martin
has shown that Armenia was the first nation that
embraced Christianity. Memoires sur l’Armenie,
vol. i. p. 306, and notes to Le Beæ. Gibbon, indeed
had expressed his intention of withdrawing the
words “of Armenia” from the text of future editions.
(Vindication, Works, iv. 577.) He was bitterly

taunted by Person for neglecting or declining to fulfil his promise. Preface to Letters to Travis.—M.]

179 [\(return\)](#)

[According to Tertullian, the Christian faith had penetrated into parts of Britain inaccessible to the Roman arms. About a century afterwards, Ossian, the son of Fingal, is said to have disputed, in his extreme old age, with one of the foreign missionaries, and the dispute is still extant, in verse, and in the Erse language. See Mr. Macpher son's Dissertation on the Antiquity of Ossian's Poems, p. 10.]

180 [\(return\)](#)

[The Goths, who ravaged Asia in the reign of Gallienus, carried away great numbers of captives; some of whom were Christians, and became missionaries. See Tillemont, Memoires Ecclesiast. tom. iv. p. 44.]

181 [\(return\)](#)

[The legends of Abgarus, fabulous as it is, affords a decisive proof, that many years before Eusebius wrote his history, the greatest part of the inhabitants of Edessa had embraced Christianity. Their rivals, the citizens of Carrhæ, adhered, on the contrary, to the cause of Paganism, as late as the sixth century.]

182 [\(return\)](#)

[According to Bardesanes (ap. Euseb. Præpar. Evangel.) there were some Christians in Persia before the end of the second century. In the time of Constantine (see his epistle to Sapor, Vit. l. iv. c. 13) they composed a flourishing church. Consult Beausobre, Hist. Cristique du Manicheisme, tom. i. p. 180, and the Bibliotheca Orientalis of Assemani.]

Chapter XV: Progress Of The Christian Religion.—Part IX.

From this impartial though imperfect survey of the progress of Christianity, it may perhaps seem probable, that the number of its proselytes has been excessively magnified by fear on the one side, and by devotion on the other. According to the irreproachable testimony of Origen, [183](#) the proportion of the faithful was very inconsiderable, when compared with the multitude of an unbelieving world; but, as we are left without any distinct information, it is impossible to determine, and it is difficult even to conjecture, the real numbers of the primitive Christians. The most favorable calculation, however, that can be deduced from the examples of Antioch and of Rome, will not permit us to imagine that more than a twentieth part of the subjects of the empire had enlisted

themselves under the banner of the cross before the important conversion of Constantine. But their habits of faith, of zeal, and of union, seemed to multiply their numbers; and the same causes which contributed to their future increase, served to render their actual strength more apparent and more formidable.

183

[\(return\)](#)

[Origen contra Celsum, l. viii. p. 424.]

Such is the constitution of civil society, that, whilst a few persons are distinguished by riches, by honors, and by knowledge, the body of the people is condemned to obscurity, ignorance and poverty. The Christian religion, which addressed itself to the whole human race, must consequently collect a far greater number of proselytes from the lower than from the superior ranks of life. This innocent and natural circumstance has been improved into a very odious imputation, which seems to be less strenuously denied by the apologists, than it is urged by the adversaries, of the faith; that the new sect of Christians was almost entirely composed of the dregs of the populace, of peasants and mechanics, of boys and women, of beggars and slaves, the last of whom might sometimes introduce the missionaries into the rich and noble families to which they belonged. These obscure teachers (such was the charge of malice and infidelity) are as mute in public as they are loquacious and dogmatical in private. Whilst they cautiously avoid the dangerous encounter of philosophers, they mingle with the rude and illiterate crowd, and insinuate themselves into those minds whom their age, their sex, or their education, has the best disposed to receive the impression of superstitious terrors. [184](#)

184

[\(return\)](#)

[Minucius Felix, c. 8, with Wowerus's notes.
Celsus ap. Origen, l. iii. p. 138, 142. Julian ap.
Cyril. l. vi. p. 206, edit. Spanheim.]

This unfavorable picture, though not devoid of a faint resemblance, betrays, by its dark coloring and distorted features, the pencil of an enemy. As the humble faith of Christ diffused itself through the world, it was embraced by several persons who derived some consequence from the advantages of nature or fortune. Aristides, who presented an eloquent apology to the emperor Hadrian, was an Athenian philosopher. [185](#) Justin Martyr had sought divine knowledge in the schools of Zeno, of Aristotle, of Pythagoras, and of Plato, before he fortunately was accosted by the old man, or rather the angel, who turned his attention to the study of the Jewish prophets. [186](#) Clemens of Alexandria had acquired much various reading in the Greek, and Tertullian in the Latin, language. Julius Africanus and Origen possessed a very considerable share of the learning of their times; and although the style of Cyprian is very different from that of Lactantius, we might almost discover that both those writers had been public teachers of rhetoric. Even the study of philosophy was at length introduced among the Christians, but it was not always productive of the most salutary effects; knowledge was as often the parent of heresy as of devotion, and the description which was designed for the followers of Artemon, may, with equal propriety, be applied

to the various sects that resisted the successors of the apostles. “They presume to alter the Holy Scriptures, to abandon the ancient rule of faith, and to form their opinions according to the subtile precepts of logic. The science of the church is neglected for the study of geometry, and they lose sight of heaven while they are employed in measuring the earth. Euclid is perpetually in their hands. Aristotle and Theophrastus are the objects of their admiration; and they express an uncommon reverence for the works of Galen. Their errors are derived from the abuse of the arts and sciences of the infidels, and they corrupt the simplicity of the gospel by the refinements of human reason.” [187](#)

185 [\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. Hist. Eccles. iv. 3. Hieronym. Epist. 83.]

186 [\(return\)](#)

[The story is prettily told in Justin’s Dialogues. Tillemont, (Mem Ecclesiast. tom. ii. p. 384,) who relates it after him is sure that the old man was a disguised angel.]

187 [\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, v. 28. It may be hoped, that none, except the heretics, gave occasion to the complaint of Celsus, (ap. Origen, l. ii. p. 77,) that the Christians were perpetually correcting and altering their Gospels. * Note: Origen states in reply, that he knows of none who had altered the Gospels except the Marcionites, the Valentinians, and perhaps some followers of Lucanus.—M.]

Nor can it be affirmed with truth, that the advantages of birth and fortune were always separated from the profession of Christianity. Several Roman citizens were brought before the tribunal of Pliny, and he soon discovered, that a great number of persons of *every order* of men in Bithynia had deserted the religion of their ancestors. [188](#) His unsuspected testimony may, in this instance, obtain more credit than the bold challenge of Tertullian, when he addresses himself to the fears as well as the humanity of the proconsul of Africa, by assuring him, that if he persists in his cruel intentions, he must decimate Carthage, and that he will find among the guilty many persons of his own rank, senators and matrons of noblest extraction, and the friends or relations of his most intimate friends. [189](#) It appears, however, that about forty years afterwards the emperor Valerian was persuaded of the truth of this assertion, since in one of his rescripts he evidently supposes that senators, Roman knights, and ladies of quality, were engaged in the Christian sect. [190](#) The church still continued to increase its outward splendor as it lost its internal purity; and, in the reign of Diocletian, the palace, the courts of justice, and even the army, concealed a multitude of Christians, who endeavored to reconcile the interests of the present with those of a future life.

188 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Epist. x. 97. Fuerunt alii similis amentiaë, cives Romani—Multi enim omnis ætatis, omnis

ordinis, utriusque sexus, etiam vocuntur in
periculum et vocabuntur.]

189

[\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian ad Scapulum. Yet even his rhetoric rises
no higher than to claim a tenth part of Carthage.]

190

[\(return\)](#)

[Cyprian. Epist. 70.]

And yet these exceptions are either too few in number, or too recent in time, entirely to remove the imputation of ignorance and obscurity which has been so arrogantly cast on the first proselytes of Christianity. [1901](#) Instead of employing in our defence the fictions of later ages, it will be more prudent to convert the occasion of scandal into a subject of edification. Our serious thoughts will suggest to us, that the apostles themselves were chosen by Providence among the fishermen of Galilee, and that the lower we depress the temporal condition of the first Christians, the more reason we shall find to admire their merit and success. It is incumbent on us diligently to remember, that the kingdom of heaven was promised to the poor in spirit, and that minds afflicted by calamity and the contempt of mankind, cheerfully listen to the divine promise of future happiness; while, on the contrary, the fortunate are satisfied with the possession of this world; and the wise abuse in doubt and dispute their vain superiority of reason and knowledge.

1901

[\(return\)](#)

[This incomplete enumeration ought to be increased by the names of several Pagans converted at the dawn of Christianity, and whose conversion weakens the reproach which the historian appears to support. Such are, the Proconsul Sergius Paulus, converted at Paphos, (Acts xiii. 7—12.) Dionysius, member of the Areopagus, converted with several others, at Athens, (Acts xvii. 34;) several persons at the court of Nero, (Philip. iv 22;) Erastus, receiver at Corinth, (Rom. xvi.23;) some Asiarchs, (Acts xix. 31) As to the philosophers, we may add Tatian, Athenagoras, Theophilus of Antioch, Hegesippus, Melito, Miltiades, Pantænus, Ammenius, all distinguished for their genius and learning.—G.]

We stand in need of such reflections to comfort us for the loss of some illustrious characters, which in our eyes might have seemed the most worthy of the heavenly present. The names of Seneca, of the elder and the younger Pliny, of Tacitus, of Plutarch, of Galen, of the slave Epictetus, and of the emperor Marcus Antoninus, adorn the age in which they flourished, and exalt the dignity of human nature. They filled with glory their respective stations, either in active or contemplative life; their excellent understandings were improved by study; Philosophy had purified their minds from the prejudices of the popular superstitions; and their days were spent in the pursuit of truth and the practice of virtue. Yet all these sages (it is no less an object of surprise than of

concern) overlooked or rejected the perfection of the Christian system. Their language or their silence equally discover their contempt for the growing sect, which in their time had diffused itself over the Roman empire. Those among them who condescended to mention the Christians, consider them only as obstinate and perverse enthusiasts, who exacted an implicit submission to their mysterious doctrines, without being able to produce a single argument that could engage the attention of men of sense and learning. [191](#)

191

[\(return\)](#)

[Dr. Lardner, in his first and second volumes of Jewish and Christian testimonies, collects and illustrates those of Pliny the younger, of Tacitus, of Galen, of Marcus Antoninus, and perhaps of Epictetus, (for it is doubtful whether that philosopher means to speak of the Christians.) The new sect is totally unnoticed by Seneca, the elder Pliny, and Plutarch.]

It is at least doubtful whether any of these philosophers perused the apologies [1911](#) which the primitive Christians repeatedly published in behalf of themselves and of their religion; but it is much to be lamented that such a cause was not defended by abler advocates. They expose with superfluous wit and eloquence the extravagance of Polytheism. They interest our compassion by displaying the innocence and sufferings of their injured brethren. But when they would demonstrate the divine origin of Christianity, they insist much more strongly on the predictions which announced, than on the miracles which accompanied, the appearance of the Messiah. Their favorite argument might serve to edify a Christian or to convert a Jew, since both the one and the other acknowledge the authority of those prophecies, and both are obliged, with devout reverence, to search for their sense and their accomplishment. But this mode of persuasion loses much of its weight and influence, when it is addressed to those who neither understand nor respect the Mosaic dispensation and the prophetic style. [192](#) In the unskilful hands of Justin and of the succeeding apologists, the sublime meaning of the Hebrew oracles evaporates in distant types, affected conceits, and cold allegories; and even their authenticity was rendered suspicious to an unenlightened Gentile, by the mixture of pious forgeries, which, under the names of Orpheus, Hermes, and the Sibyls, [193](#) were obtruded on him as of equal value with the genuine inspirations of Heaven. The adoption of fraud and sophistry in the defence of revelation too often reminds us of the injudicious conduct of those poets who load their *invulnerable* heroes with a useless weight of cumbersome and brittle armor.

1911

[\(return\)](#)

[The emperors Hadrian, Antoninus &c., read with astonishment the apologies of Justin Martyr, of Aristides, of Melito, &c. (See St. Hieron. ad mag. orat. Orosius, lviii. c. 13.) Eusebius says expressly, that the cause of Christianity was defended before the senate, in a very elegant discourse, by

Apollonius the Martyr.—G. —Gibbon, in his severer spirit of criticism, may have questioned the authority of Jerome and Eusebius. There are some difficulties about Apollonius, which Heinichen (note in loc. Eusebii) would solve, by suppose lag him to have been, as Jerome states, a senator.—M.]

192

[\(return\)](#)

[If the famous prophecy of the Seventy Weeks had been alleged to a Roman philosopher, would he not have replied in the words of Cicero, “Quæ tandem ista auguratio est, annorum potius quam aut rænsium aut dierum?” De Divinatione, ii. 30. Observe with what irreverence Lucian, (in Alexandro, c. 13.) and his friend Celsus ap. Origen, (l. vii. p. 327,) express themselves concerning the Hebrew prophets.]

193

[\(return\)](#)

[The philosophers who derided the more ancient predictions of the Sibyls, would easily have detected the Jewish and Christian forgeries, which have been so triumphantly quoted by the fathers, from Justin Martyr to Lactantius. When the Sibylline verses had performed their appointed task, they, like the system of the millennium, were quietly laid aside. The Christian Sybil had unluckily fixed the ruin of Rome for the year 195, A. U. C. 948.]

But how shall we excuse the supine inattention of the Pagan and philosophic world, to those evidences which were represented by the hand of Omnipotence, not to their reason, but to their senses? During the age of Christ, of his apostles, and of their first disciples, the doctrine which they preached was confirmed by innumerable prodigies. The lame walked, the blind saw, the sick were healed, the dead were raised, dæmons were expelled, and the laws of Nature were frequently suspended for the benefit of the church. But the sages of Greece and Rome turned aside from the awful spectacle, and, pursuing the ordinary occupations of life and study, appeared unconscious of any alterations in the moral or physical government of the world. Under the reign of Tiberius, the whole earth, [194](#) or at least a celebrated province of the Roman empire, [195](#) was involved in a preternatural darkness of three hours. Even this miraculous event, which ought to have excited the wonder, the curiosity, and the devotion of mankind, passed without notice in an age of science and history. [196](#) It happened during the lifetime of Seneca and the elder Pliny, who must have experienced the immediate effects, or received the earliest intelligence, of the prodigy. Each of these philosophers, in a laborious work, has recorded all the great phenomena of Nature, earthquakes, meteors, comets, and eclipses, which his indefatigable curiosity could collect. [197](#) Both the one and the other have omitted to mention the greatest phenomenon to which the mortal eye has been witness since the creation of the globe.

A distinct chapter of Pliny [198](#) is designed for eclipses of an extraordinary nature and unusual duration; but he contents himself with describing the singular defect of light which followed the murder of Cæsar, when, during the greatest part of a year, the orb of the sun appeared pale and without splendor. The season of obscurity, which cannot surely be compared with the preternatural darkness of the Passion, had been already celebrated by most of the poets [199](#) and historians of that memorable age. [200](#)

194

[\(return\)](#)

[The fathers, as they are drawn out in battle array by Dom Calmet, (Dissertations sur la Bible, tom. iii. p. 295—308,) seem to cover the whole earth with darkness, in which they are followed by most of the moderns.]

195

[\(return\)](#)

[Origen ad Matth. c. 27, and a few modern critics, Beza, Le Clerc, Lardner, &c., are desirous of confining it to the land of Judea.]

196

[\(return\)](#)

[The celebrated passage of Phlegon is now wisely abandoned. When Tertullian assures the Pagans that the mention of the prodigy is found in Arcanis (not Archivis) vestris, (see his Apology, c. 21,) he probably appeals to the Sibylline verses, which relate it exactly in the words of the Gospel. * Note: According to some learned theologians a misunderstanding of the text in the Gospel has given rise to this mistake, which has employed and wearied so many laborious commentators, though Origen had already taken the pains to preinform them. The expression does not mean, they assert, an eclipse, but any kind of obscurity occasioned in the atmosphere, whether by clouds or any other cause. As this obscuration of the sun rarely took place in Palestine, where in the middle of April the sky was usually clear, it assumed, in the eyes of the Jews and Christians, an importance conformable to the received notion, that the sun concealed at midday was a sinister presage. See Amos viii. 9, 10. The word is often taken in this sense by contemporary writers; the Apocalypse says the sun was concealed, when speaking of an obscuration caused by smoke and dust. (Revel. ix. 2.) Moreover, the Hebrew word ophal, which in the LXX. answers to the Greek, signifies any darkness; and the Evangelists, who have modelled the sense of their expressions by those of the LXX., must have taken it in the same latitude. This darkening of the sky usually precedes earthquakes. (Matt. xxvii. 51.) The Heathen authors furnish us a number of examples, of which a miraculous explanation was given at the time. See

Ovid. ii. v. 33, l. xv. v. 785. Pliny, Hist. Nat. l. ii. c. 30. Wetstein has collected all these examples in his edition of the New Testament. We need not, then, be astonished at the silence of the Pagan authors concerning a phenomenon which did not extend beyond Jerusalem, and which might have nothing contrary to the laws of nature; although the Christians and the Jews may have regarded it as a sinister presage. See Michaelis Notes on New Testament, v. i. p. 290. Paulus, Commentary on New Testament, iii. p. 760.—G.]

197 [\(return\)](#)

[Seneca, Quæst. Natur. l. i. 15, vi. l. vii. 17. Plin. Hist. Natur. l. ii.]

198 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Hist. Natur. ii. 30.]

199 [\(return\)](#)

[Virgil. Georgic. i. 466. Tibullus, l. i. Eleg. v. ver. 75. Ovid Metamorph. xv. 782. Lucan. Pharsal. i. 540. The last of these poets places this prodigy before the civil war.]

200 [\(return\)](#)

[See a public epistle of M. Antony in Joseph. Antiquit. xiv. 12. Plutarch in Cæsar. p. 471. Appian. Bell. Civil. l. iv. Dion Cassius, l. xlv. p. 431. Julius Obsequens, c. 128. His little treatise is an abstract of Livy's prodigies.]

VOLUME TWO

Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part I.

The Conduct Of The Roman Government Towards The Christians, From The Reign Of Nero To That Of Constantine. [1111](#)

1111 [\(return\)](#)

[The sixteenth chapter I cannot help considering as a very ingenious and specious, but very disgraceful extenuation of the cruelties perpetrated by the Roman magistrates against the Christians. It is written in the most contemptibly factious spirit of prejudice against the sufferers; it is unworthy of a philosopher and of humanity. Let the narrative of Cyprian's death be examined. He had to relate the murder of an innocent man of advanced age, and in a station deemed venerable by a considerable body

of the provincials of Africa, put to death because he refused to sacrifice to Jupiter. Instead of pointing the indignation of posterity against such an atrocious act of tyranny, he dwells, with visible art, on the small circumstances of decorum and politeness which attended this murder, and which he relates with as much parade as if they were the most important particulars of the event. Dr. Robertson has been the subject of much blame for his real or supposed lenity towards the Spanish murderers and tyrants in America. That the sixteenth chapter of Mr. G. did not excite the same or greater disapprobation, is a proof of the unphilosophical and indeed fanatical animosity against Christianity, which was so prevalent during the latter part of the eighteenth century.—*Mackintosh*: see *Life*, i. p. 244, 245.]

If we seriously consider the purity of the Christian religion, the sanctity of its moral precepts, and the innocent as well as austere lives of the greater number of those who during the first ages embraced the faith of the gospel, we should naturally suppose, that so benevolent a doctrine would have been received with due reverence, even by the unbelieving world; that the learned and the polite, however they may deride the miracles, would have esteemed the virtues, of the new sect; and that the magistrates, instead of persecuting, would have protected an order of men who yielded the most passive obedience to the laws, though they declined the active cares of war and government. If, on the other hand, we recollect the universal toleration of Polytheism, as it was invariably maintained by the faith of the people, the incredulity of philosophers, and the policy of the Roman senate and emperors, we are at a loss to discover what new offence the Christians had committed, what new provocation could exasperate the mild indifference of antiquity, and what new motives could urge the Roman princes, who beheld without concern a thousand forms of religion subsisting in peace under their gentle sway, to inflict a severe punishment on any part of their subjects, who had chosen for themselves a singular but an inoffensive mode of faith and worship.

The religious policy of the ancient world seems to have assumed a more stern and intolerant character, to oppose the progress of Christianity. About fourscore years after the death of Christ, his innocent disciples were punished with death by the sentence of a proconsul of the most amiable and philosophic character, and according to the laws of an emperor distinguished by the wisdom and justice of his general administration. The apologies which were repeatedly addressed to the successors of Trajan are filled with the most pathetic complaints, that the Christians, who obeyed the dictates, and solicited the liberty, of conscience, were alone, among all the subjects of the Roman empire, excluded from the common benefits of their auspicious government. The deaths of a few eminent martyrs have been recorded with care; and from the time that

Christianity was invested with the supreme power, the governors of the church have been no less diligently employed in displaying the cruelty, than in imitating the conduct, of their Pagan adversaries. To separate (if it be possible) a few authentic as well as interesting facts from an undigested mass of fiction and error, and to relate, in a clear and rational manner, the causes, the extent, the duration, and the most important circumstances of the persecutions to which the first Christians were exposed, is the design of the present chapter. [1222](#)

1222

[\(return\)](#)

[The history of the first age of Christianity is only found in the Acts of the Apostles, and in order to speak of the first persecutions experienced by the Christians, that book should naturally have been consulted; those persecutions, then limited to individuals and to a narrow sphere, interested only the persecuted, and have been related by them alone. Gibbon making the persecutions ascend no higher than Nero, has entirely omitted those which preceded this epoch, and of which St. Luke has preserved the memory. The only way to justify this omission was, to attack the authenticity of the Acts of the Apostles; for, if authentic, they must necessarily be consulted and quoted. Now, antiquity has left very few works of which the authenticity is so well established as that of the Acts of the Apostles. (See Lardner's Cred. of Gospel Hist. part iii.) It is therefore, without sufficient reason, that Gibbon has maintained silence concerning the narrative of St. Luke, and this omission is not without importance.—G.]

The sectaries of a persecuted religion, depressed by fear animated with resentment, and perhaps heated by enthusiasm, are seldom in a proper temper of mind calmly to investigate, or candidly to appreciate, the motives of their enemies, which often escape the impartial and discerning view even of those who are placed at a secure distance from the flames of persecution. A reason has been assigned for the conduct of the emperors towards the primitive Christians, which may appear the more specious and probable as it is drawn from the acknowledged genius of Polytheism. It has already been observed, that the religious concord of the world was principally supported by the implicit assent and reverence which the nations of antiquity expressed for their respective traditions and ceremonies. It might therefore be expected, that they would unite with indignation against any sect or people which should separate itself from the communion of mankind, and claiming the exclusive possession of divine knowledge, should disdain every form of worship, except its own, as impious and idolatrous. The rights of toleration were held by mutual indulgence: they were justly forfeited by a refusal of the accustomed tribute. As the payment of this tribute was inflexibly refused by the Jews, and by them alone, the consideration of the treatment which they

experienced from the Roman magistrates, will serve to explain how far these speculations are justified by facts, and will lead us to discover the true causes of the persecution of Christianity.

Without repeating what has already been mentioned of the reverence of the Roman princes and governors for the temple of Jerusalem, we shall only observe, that the destruction of the temple and city was accompanied and followed by every circumstance that could exasperate the minds of the conquerors, and authorize religious persecution by the most specious arguments of political justice and the public safety. From the reign of Nero to that of Antoninus Pius, the Jews discovered a fierce impatience of the dominion of Rome, which repeatedly broke out in the most furious massacres and insurrections. Humanity is shocked at the recital of the horrid cruelties which they committed in the cities of Egypt, of Cyprus, and of Cyrene, where they dwelt in treacherous friendship with the unsuspecting natives; [1](#) and we are tempted to applaud the severe retaliation which was exercised by the arms of the legions against a race of fanatics, whose dire and credulous superstition seemed to render them the implacable enemies not only of the Roman government, but of human kind. [2](#) The enthusiasm of the Jews was supported by the opinion, that it was unlawful for them to pay taxes to an idolatrous master; and by the flattering promise which they derived from their ancient oracles, that a conquering Messiah would soon arise, destined to break their fetters, and to invest the favorites of heaven with the empire of the earth. It was by announcing himself as their long-expected deliverer, and by calling on all the descendants of Abraham to assert the hope of Israel, that the famous Barchochebas collected a formidable army, with which he resisted during two years the power of the emperor Hadrian. [3](#)

1

[\(return\)](#)

[In Cyrene, they massacred 220,000 Greeks; in Cyprus, 240,000; in Egypt, a very great multitude. Many of these unhappy victims were sawn asunder, according to a precedent to which David had given the sanction of his example. The victorious Jews devoured the flesh, licked up the blood, and twisted the entrails like a girdle round their bodies. See Dion Cassius, l. lxviii. p. 1145. * Note: Some commentators, among them Reimar, in his notes on Dion Cassius think that the hatred of the Romans against the Jews has led the historian to exaggerate the cruelties committed by the latter. Don. Cass. lxviii. p. 1146.—G.]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Without repeating the well-known narratives of Josephus, we may learn from Dion, (l. lxix. p. 1162,) that in Hadrian's war 580,000 Jews were cut off by the sword, besides an infinite number which perished by famine, by disease, and by fire.]

[For the sect of the Zealots, see Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. i. c. 17; for the characters of the Messiah, according to the Rabbis, l. v. c. 11, 12, 13; for the actions of Barchochebas, l. vii. c. 12. (*Hist. of Jews* iii. 115, &c.)—M.]

Notwithstanding these repeated provocations, the resentment of the Roman princes expired after the victory; nor were their apprehensions continued beyond the period of war and danger. By the general indulgence of polytheism, and by the mild temper of Antoninus Pius, the Jews were restored to their ancient privileges, and once more obtained the permission of circumcising their children, with the easy restraint, that they should never confer on any foreign proselyte that distinguishing mark of the Hebrew race. [4](#) The numerous remains of that people, though they were still excluded from the precincts of Jerusalem, were permitted to form and to maintain considerable establishments both in Italy and in the provinces, to acquire the freedom of Rome, to enjoy municipal honors, and to obtain at the same time an exemption from the burdensome and expensive offices of society. The moderation or the contempt of the Romans gave a legal sanction to the form of ecclesiastical police which was instituted by the vanquished sect. The patriarch, who had fixed his residence at Tiberias, was empowered to appoint his subordinate ministers and apostles, to exercise a domestic jurisdiction, and to receive from his dispersed brethren an annual contribution. [5](#) New synagogues were frequently erected in the principal cities of the empire; and the sabbaths, the fasts, and the festivals, which were either commanded by the Mosaic law, or enjoined by the traditions of the Rabbis, were celebrated in the most solemn and public manner. [6](#) Such gentle treatment insensibly assuaged the stern temper of the Jews. Awakened from their dream of prophecy and conquest, they assumed the behavior of peaceable and industrious subjects. Their irreconcilable hatred of mankind, instead of flaming out in acts of blood and violence, evaporated in less dangerous gratifications. They embraced every opportunity of overreaching the idolaters in trade; and they pronounced secret and ambiguous imprecations against the haughty kingdom of Edom. [7](#)

[It is to Modestinus, a Roman lawyer (l. vi. regular.) that we are indebted for a distinct knowledge of the Edict of Antoninus. See Casaubon ad *Hist. August.* p. 27.]

[See Basnage, *Histoire des Juifs*, l. iii. c. 2, 3. The office of Patriarch was suppressed by Theodosius the younger.]

[We need only mention the Purim, or deliverance of the Jews from the rage of Haman, which, till the reign of Theodosius, was celebrated with insolent

triumph and riotous intemperance. Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, l. vi. c. 17, l. viii. c. 6.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[According to the false Josephus, Tsepho, the grandson of Esau, conducted into Italy the army of Eneas, king of Carthage. Another colony of Idumæans, flying from the sword of David, took refuge in the dominions of Romulus. For these, or for other reasons of equal weight, the name of Edom was applied by the Jews to the Roman empire. * Note: The false Josephus is a romancer of very modern date, though some of these legends are probably more ancient. It may be worth considering whether many of the stories in the Talmud are not history in a figurative disguise, adopted from prudence. The Jews might dare to say many things of Rome, under the significant appellation of Edom, which they feared to utter publicly. Later and more ignorant ages took literally, and perhaps embellished, what was intelligible among the generation to which it was addressed. Hist. of Jews, iii. 131. —The false Josephus has the inauguration of the emperor, with the seven electors and apparently the pope assisting at the coronation! Pref. page xxvi.—M.]

Since the Jews, who rejected with abhorrence the deities adored by their sovereign and by their fellow-subjects, enjoyed, however, the free exercise of their unsocial religion, there must have existed some other cause, which exposed the disciples of Christ to those severities from which the posterity of Abraham was exempt. The difference between them is simple and obvious; but, according to the sentiments of antiquity, it was of the highest importance. The Jews were a *nation*; the Christians were a *sect*: and if it was natural for every community to respect the sacred institutions of their neighbors, it was incumbent on them to persevere in those of their ancestors. The voice of oracles, the precepts of philosophers, and the authority of the laws, unanimously enforced this national obligation. By their lofty claim of superior sanctity the Jews might provoke the Polytheists to consider them as an odious and impure race. By disdaining the intercourse of other nations, they might deserve their contempt. The laws of Moses might be for the most part frivolous or absurd; yet, since they had been received during many ages by a large society, his followers were justified by the example of mankind; and it was universally acknowledged, that they had a right to practise what it would have been criminal in them to neglect. But this principle, which protected the Jewish synagogue, afforded not any favor or security to the primitive church. By embracing the faith of the gospel, the Christians incurred the supposed guilt of an unnatural and unpardonable offence. They dissolved the sacred ties of custom and education, violated the religious institutions of their country, and presumptuously

despised whatever their fathers had believed as true, or had revered as sacred. Nor was this apostasy (if we may use the expression) merely of a partial or local kind; since the pious deserter who withdrew himself from the temples of Egypt or Syria, would equally disdain to seek an asylum in those of Athens or Carthage. Every Christian rejected with contempt the superstitions of his family, his city, and his province. The whole body of Christians unanimously refused to hold any communion with the gods of Rome, of the empire, and of mankind. It was in vain that the oppressed believer asserted the inalienable rights of conscience and private judgment. Though his situation might excite the pity, his arguments could never reach the understanding, either of the philosophic or of the believing part of the Pagan world. To their apprehensions, it was no less a matter of surprise, that any individuals should entertain scruples against complying with the established mode of worship, than if they had conceived a sudden abhorrence to the manners, the dress, [8111](#) or the language of their native country. [8](#)

8

[\(return\)](#)

[From the arguments of Celsus, as they are represented and refuted by Origen, (l. v. p. 247—259,) we may clearly discover the distinction that was made between the Jewish *people* and the Christian *sect*. See, in the Dialogue of Minucius Felix, (c. 5, 6,) a fair and not inelegant description of the popular sentiments, with regard to the desertion of the established worship.]

8111

[\(return\)](#)

[In all this there is doubtless much truth; yet does not the more important difference lie on the surface? The Christians made many converts the Jews but few. Had the Jewish been equally a proselyting religion would it not have encountered as violent persecution?—M.]

The surprise of the Pagans was soon succeeded by resentment; and the most pious of men were exposed to the unjust but dangerous imputation of impiety. Malice and prejudice concurred in representing the Christians as a society of atheists, who, by the most daring attack on the religious constitution of the empire, had merited the severest animadversion of the civil magistrate. They had separated themselves (they gloried in the confession) from every mode of superstition which was received in any part of the globe by the various temper of polytheism: but it was not altogether so evident what deity, or what form of worship, they had substituted to the gods and temples of antiquity. The pure and sublime idea which they entertained of the Supreme Being escaped the gross conception of the Pagan multitude, who were at a loss to discover a spiritual and solitary God, that was neither represented under any corporeal figure or visible symbol, nor was adored with the accustomed pomp of libations and festivals, of altars and sacrifices. [9](#) The sages of Greece and Rome, who had elevated their minds to the contemplation of the existence and attributes of the First Cause, were induced by reason or by vanity to reserve for themselves and their chosen disciples the privilege of

this philosophical devotion. [10](#) They were far from admitting the prejudices of mankind as the standard of truth, but they considered them as flowing from the original disposition of human nature; and they supposed that any popular mode of faith and worship which presumed to disclaim the assistance of the senses, would, in proportion as it receded from superstition, find itself incapable of restraining the wanderings of the fancy, and the visions of fanaticism. The careless glance which men of wit and learning condescended to cast on the Christian revelation, served only to confirm their hasty opinion, and to persuade them that the principle, which they might have revered, of the Divine Unity, was defaced by the wild enthusiasm, and annihilated by the airy speculations, of the new sectaries. The author of a celebrated dialogue, which has been attributed to Lucian, whilst he affects to treat the mysterious subject of the Trinity in a style of ridicule and contempt, betrays his own ignorance of the weakness of human reason, and of the inscrutable nature of the divine perfections. [11](#)

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Cur nullas aras habent? templa nulla? nulla nota simulacra!—Unde autem, vel quis ille, aut ubi, Deus unicus, solitarius, desti tutus? Minucius Felix, c. 10. The Pagan interlocutor goes on to make a distinction in favor of the Jews, who had once a temple, altars, victims, &c.]

10

[\(return\)](#)

[It is difficult (says Plato) to attain, and dangerous to publish, the knowledge of the true God. See the Theologie des Philosophes, in the Abbé d'Olivet's French translation of Tully de Naturâ Deorum, tom. i. p. 275.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[The author of the Philopatris perpetually treats the Christians as a company of dreaming enthusiasts, &c.; and in one place he manifestly alludes to the vision in which St. Paul was transported to the third heaven. In another place, Triephon, who personates a Christian, after deriding the gods of Paganism, proposes a mysterious oath.]

It might appear less surprising, that the founder of Christianity should not only be revered by his disciples as a sage and a prophet, but that he should be adored as a God. The Polytheists were disposed to adopt every article of faith, which seemed to offer any resemblance, however distant or imperfect, with the popular mythology; and the legends of Bacchus, of Hercules, and of Æsculapius, had, in some measure, prepared their imagination for the appearance of the Son of God under a human form. [12](#) But they were astonished that the Christians should abandon the temples of those ancient heroes, who, in the infancy of the world, had invented arts, instituted laws, and vanquished the tyrants or monsters who infested the earth, in order to choose for the exclusive object of their religious worship an obscure teacher, who, in a recent age, and

among a barbarous people, had fallen a sacrifice either to the malice of his own countrymen, or to the jealousy of the Roman government. The Pagan multitude, reserving their gratitude for temporal benefits alone, rejected the inestimable present of life and immortality, which was offered to mankind by Jesus of Nazareth. His mild constancy in the midst of cruel and voluntary sufferings, his universal benevolence, and the sublime simplicity of his actions and character, were insufficient, in the opinion of those carnal men, to compensate for the want of fame, of empire, and of success; and whilst they refused to acknowledge his stupendous triumph over the powers of darkness and of the grave, they misrepresented, or they insulted, the equivocal birth, wandering life, and ignominious death, of the divine Author of Christianity. [13](#)

12

[\(return\)](#)

[According to Justin Martyr, (Apolog. Major, c. 70-85,) the dæmon who had gained some imperfect knowledge of the prophecies, purposely contrived this resemblance, which might deter, though by different means, both the people and the philosophers from embracing the faith of Christ.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[In the first and second books of Origen, Celsus treats the birth and character of our Savior with the most impious contempt. The orator Libanius praises Porphyry and Julian for confuting the folly of a sect., which styles a dead man of Palestine, God, and the Son of God. Socrates, Hist. Ecclesiast. iii. 23.]

The personal guilt which every Christian had contracted, in thus preferring his private sentiment to the national religion, was aggravated in a very high degree by the number and union of the criminals. It is well known, and has been already observed, that Roman policy viewed with the utmost jealousy and distrust any association among its subjects; and that the privileges of private corporations, though formed for the most harmless or beneficial purposes, were bestowed with a very sparing hand. [14](#) The religious assemblies of the Christians who had separated themselves from the public worship, appeared of a much less innocent nature; they were illegal in their principle, and in their consequences might become dangerous; nor were the emperors conscious that they violated the laws of justice, when, for the peace of society, they prohibited those secret and sometimes nocturnal meetings. [15](#) The pious disobedience of the Christians made their conduct, or perhaps their designs, appear in a much more serious and criminal light; and the Roman princes, who might perhaps have suffered themselves to be disarmed by a ready submission, deeming their honor concerned in the execution of their commands, sometimes attempted, by rigorous punishments, to subdue this independent spirit, which boldly acknowledged an authority superior to that of the magistrate. The extent and duration of this spiritual conspiracy seemed to render it everyday more deserving of his animadversion. We have already seen that the active

and successful zeal of the Christians had insensibly diffused them through every province and almost every city of the empire. The new converts seemed to renounce their family and country, that they might connect themselves in an indissoluble band of union with a peculiar society, which every where assumed a different character from the rest of mankind. Their gloomy and austere aspect, their abhorrence of the common business and pleasures of life, and their frequent predictions of impending calamities, [16](#) inspired the Pagans with the apprehension of some danger, which would arise from the new sect, the more alarming as it was the more obscure. “Whatever,” says Pliny, “may be the principle of their conduct, their inflexible obstinacy appeared deserving of punishment.” [17](#)

14 [\(return\)](#)

[The emperor Trajan refused to incorporate a company of 150 firemen, for the use of the city of Nicomedia. He disliked all associations. See Plin. Epist. x. 42, 43.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[The proconsul Pliny had published a general edict against unlawful meetings. The prudence of the Christians suspended their Agapæ; but it was impossible for them to omit the exercise of public worship.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[As the prophecies of the Antichrist, approaching conflagration, &c., provoked those Pagans whom they did not convert, they were mentioned with caution and reserve; and the Montanists were censured for disclosing too freely the dangerous secret. See Mosheim, 413.]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Neque enim dubitabam, quodcunque esset quod faterentur, (such are the words of Pliny,) pervicaciam certe et inflexibilem obstinationem lebere puniri.]

The precautions with which the disciples of Christ performed the offices of religion were at first dictated by fear and necessity; but they were continued from choice. By imitating the awful secrecy which reigned in the Eleusinian mysteries, the Christians had flattered themselves that they should render their sacred institutions more respectable in the eyes of the Pagan world. [18](#) But the event, as it often happens to the operations of subtile policy, deceived their wishes and their expectations. It was concluded, that they only concealed what they would have blushed to disclose. Their mistaken prudence afforded an opportunity for malice to invent, and for suspicious credulity to believe, the horrid tales which described the Christians as the most wicked of human kind, who practised in their dark recesses every abomination that a depraved fancy could suggest, and who solicited the favor of their unknown God by the sacrifice of every moral virtue. There were many who pretended to confess or to relate the

ceremonies of this abhorred society. It was asserted, “that a new-born infant, entirely covered over with flour, was presented, like some mystic symbol of initiation, to the knife of the proselyte, who unknowingly inflicted many a secret and mortal wound on the innocent victim of his error; that as soon as the cruel deed was perpetrated, the sectaries drank up the blood, greedily tore asunder the quivering members, and pledged themselves to eternal secrecy, by a mutual consciousness of guilt. It was as confidently affirmed, that this inhuman sacrifice was succeeded by a suitable entertainment, in which intemperance served as a provocative to brutal lust; till, at the appointed moment, the lights were suddenly extinguished, shame was banished, nature was forgotten; and, as accident might direct, the darkness of the night was polluted by the incestuous commerce of sisters and brothers, of sons and of mothers.” [19](#)

18

[\(return\)](#)

[See Mosheim’s Ecclesiastical History, vol. i. p. 101, and Spanheim, Remarques sur les Cæsars de Julien, p. 468, &c.]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[See Justin Martyr, Apolog. i. 35, ii. 14. Athenagoras, in Legation, c. 27. Tertullian, Apolog. c. 7, 8, 9. Minucius Felix, c. 9, 10, 80, 31. The last of these writers relates the accusation in the most elegant and circumstantial manner. The answer of Tertullian is the boldest and most vigorous.]

But the perusal of the ancient apologies was sufficient to remove even the slightest suspicion from the mind of a candid adversary. The Christians, with the intrepid security of innocence, appeal from the voice of rumor to the equity of the magistrates. They acknowledge, that if any proof can be produced of the crimes which calumny has imputed to them, they are worthy of the most severe punishment. They provoke the punishment, and they challenge the proof. At the same time they urge, with equal truth and propriety, that the charge is not less devoid of probability, than it is destitute of evidence; they ask, whether any one can seriously believe that the pure and holy precepts of the gospel, which so frequently restrain the use of the most lawful enjoyments, should inculcate the practice of the most abominable crimes; that a large society should resolve to dishonor itself in the eyes of its own members; and that a great number of persons of either sex, and every age and character, insensible to the fear of death or infamy, should consent to violate those principles which nature and education had imprinted most deeply in their minds. [20](#) Nothing, it should seem, could weaken the force or destroy the effect of so unanswerable a justification, unless it were the injudicious conduct of the apologists themselves, who betrayed the common cause of religion, to gratify their devout hatred to the domestic enemies of the church. It was sometimes faintly insinuated, and sometimes boldly asserted, that the same bloody sacrifices, and the same incestuous festivals, which were so falsely ascribed to the orthodox believers, were in reality celebrated by the Marcionites, by the Carpocratians, and by several other sects of the Gnostics, who, notwithstanding they might deviate into

the paths of heresy, were still actuated by the sentiments of men, and still governed by the precepts of Christianity. [21](#) Accusations of a similar kind were retorted upon the church by the schismatics who had departed from its communion, [22](#) and it was confessed on all sides, that the most scandalous licentiousness of manners prevailed among great numbers of those who affected the name of Christians. A Pagan magistrate, who possessed neither leisure nor abilities to discern the almost imperceptible line which divides the orthodox faith from heretical pravity, might easily have imagined that their mutual animosity had extorted the discovery of their common guilt. It was fortunate for the repose, or at least for the reputation, of the first Christians, that the magistrates sometimes proceeded with more temper and moderation than is usually consistent with religious zeal, and that they reported, as the impartial result of their judicial inquiry, that the sectaries, who had deserted the established worship, appeared to them sincere in their professions, and blameless in their manners; however they might incur, by their absurd and excessive superstition, the censure of the laws. [23](#)

20 [\(return\)](#)

[In the persecution of Lyons, some Gentile slaves were compelled, by the fear of tortures, to accuse their Christian master. The church of Lyons, writing to their brethren of Asia, treat the horrid charge with proper indignation and contempt. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. v. i.]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[See Justin Martyr, Apolog. i. 35. Irenæus adv. Hæres. i. 24. Clemens. Alexandrin. Stromat. l. iii. p. 438. Euseb. iv. 8. It would be tedious and disgusting to relate all that the succeeding writers have imagined, all that Epiphanius has received, and all that Tillemont has copied. M. de Beausobre (Hist. du Manicheisme, l. ix. c. 8, 9) has exposed, with great spirit, the disingenuous arts of Augustin and Pope Leo I.]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[When Tertullian became a Montanist, he aspersed the morals of the church which he had so resolutely defended. “Sed majoris est Agape, quia per hanc adolescentes tui cum sororibus dormiunt, appendices scilicet gulæ lascivia et luxuria.” De Jejuniis c. 17. The 85th canon of the council of Illiberis provides against the scandals which too often polluted the vigils of the church, and disgraced the Christian name in the eyes of unbelievers.]

23 [\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian (Apolog. c. 2) expatiates on the fair and honorable testimony of Pliny, with much reason and some declamation.]

Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part II.

History, which undertakes to record the transactions of the past, for the instruction of future ages, would ill deserve that honorable office, if she condescended to plead the cause of tyrants, or to justify the maxims of persecution. It must, however, be acknowledged, that the conduct of the emperors who appeared the least favorable to the primitive church, is by no means so criminal as that of modern sovereigns, who have employed the arm of violence and terror against the religious opinions of any part of their subjects. From their reflections, or even from their own feelings, a Charles V. or a Lewis XIV. might have acquired a just knowledge of the rights of conscience, of the obligation of faith, and of the innocence of error. But the princes and magistrates of ancient Rome were strangers to those principles which inspired and authorized the inflexible obstinacy of the Christians in the cause of truth, nor could they themselves discover in their own breasts any motive which would have prompted them to refuse a legal, and as it were a natural, submission to the sacred institutions of their country. The same reason which contributes to alleviate the guilt, must have tended to abate the vigor, of their persecutions. As they were actuated, not by the furious zeal of bigots, but by the temperate policy of legislators, contempt must often have relaxed, and humanity must frequently have suspended, the execution of those laws which they enacted against the humble and obscure followers of Christ. From the general view of their character and motives we might naturally conclude: I. That a considerable time elapsed before they considered the new sectaries as an object deserving of the attention of government. II. That in the conviction of any of their subjects who were accused of so very singular a crime, they proceeded with caution and reluctance. III. That they were moderate in the use of punishments; and, IV. That the afflicted church enjoyed many intervals of peace and tranquility. Notwithstanding the careless indifference which the most copious and the most minute of the Pagan writers have shown to the affairs of the Christians, [24](#) it may still be in our power to confirm each of these probable suppositions, by the evidence of authentic facts.

[In the various compilation of the Augustan History, (a part of which was composed under the reign of Constantine,) there are not six lines which relate to the Christians; nor has the diligence of Xiphilin discovered their name in the large history of Dion Cassius. * Note: The greater part of the Augustan History is dedicated to Diocletian. This may account for the silence of its authors concerning Christianity. The notices that occur are almost all in the lives composed under the reign of Constantine. It may fairly be concluded, from the language which he had into the mouth of Mæcenas,

that Dion was an enemy to all innovations in religion. (See Gibbon, *infra*, note 105.) In fact, when the silence of Pagan historians is noticed, it should be remembered how meagre and mutilated are all the extant histories of the period—M.]

1. By the wise dispensation of Providence, a mysterious veil was cast over the infancy of the church, which, till the faith of the Christians was matured, and their numbers were multiplied, served to protect them not only from the malice but even from the knowledge of the Pagan world. The slow and gradual abolition of the Mosaic ceremonies afforded a safe and innocent disguise to the more early proselytes of the gospel. As they were, for the greater part, of the race of Abraham, they were distinguished by the peculiar mark of circumcision, offered up their devotions in the Temple of Jerusalem till its final destruction, and received both the Law and the Prophets as the genuine inspirations of the Deity. The Gentile converts, who by a spiritual adoption had been associated to the hope of Israel, were likewise confounded under the garb and appearance of Jews, [25](#) and as the Polytheists paid less regard to articles of faith than to the external worship, the new sect, which carefully concealed, or faintly announced, its future greatness and ambition, was permitted to shelter itself under the general toleration which was granted to an ancient and celebrated people in the Roman empire. It was not long, perhaps, before the Jews themselves, animated with a fiercer zeal and a more jealous faith, perceived the gradual separation of their Nazarene brethren from the doctrine of the synagogue; and they would gladly have extinguished the dangerous heresy in the blood of its adherents. But the decrees of Heaven had already disarmed their malice; and though they might sometimes exert the licentious privilege of sedition, they no longer possessed the administration of criminal justice; nor did they find it easy to infuse into the calm breast of a Roman magistrate the rancor of their own zeal and prejudice. The provincial governors declared themselves ready to listen to any accusation that might affect the public safety; but as soon as they were informed that it was a question not of facts but of words, a dispute relating only to the interpretation of the Jewish laws and prophecies, they deemed it unworthy of the majesty of Rome seriously to discuss the obscure differences which might arise among a barbarous and superstitious people. The innocence of the first Christians was protected by ignorance and contempt; and the tribunal of the Pagan magistrate often proved their most assured refuge against the fury of the synagogue. [26](#) If indeed we were disposed to adopt the traditions of a too credulous antiquity, we might relate the distant peregrinations, the wonderful achievements, and the various deaths of the twelve apostles: but a more accurate inquiry will induce us to doubt, whether any of those persons who had been witnesses to the miracles of Christ were permitted, beyond the limits of Palestine, to seal with their blood the truth of their testimony. [27](#) From the ordinary term of human life, it may very naturally be presumed that most of them were deceased before the discontent of the Jews broke out into that furious war, which was terminated only by the ruin of Jerusalem. During a long period,

from the death of Christ to that memorable rebellion, we cannot discover any traces of Roman intolerance, unless they are to be found in the sudden, the transient, but the cruel persecution, which was exercised by Nero against the Christians of the capital, thirty-five years after the former, and only two years before the latter, of those great events. The character of the philosophic historian, to whom we are principally indebted for the knowledge of this singular transaction, would alone be sufficient to recommend it to our most attentive consideration.

25 [\(return\)](#)
[An obscure passage of Suetonius (in Claud. c. 25) may seem to offer a proof how strangely the Jews and Christians of Rome were confounded with each other.]

26 [\(return\)](#)
[See, in the xviiith and xxvth chapters of the Acts of the Apostles, the behavior of Gallio, proconsul of Achaia, and of Festus, procurator of Judea.]

27 [\(return\)](#)
[In the time of Tertullian and Clemens of Alexandria, the glory of martyrdom was confined to St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. James. It was gradually bestowed on the rest of the apostles, by the more recent Greeks, who prudently selected for the theatre of their preaching and sufferings some remote country beyond the limits of the Roman empire. See Mosheim, p. 81; and Tillemont, *Mémoires Ecclésiastiques*, tom. i. part iii.]

In the tenth year of the reign of Nero, the capital of the empire was afflicted by a fire which raged beyond the memory or example of former ages. [28](#) The monuments of Grecian art and of Roman virtue, the trophies of the Punic and Gallic wars, the most holy temples, and the most splendid palaces, were involved in one common destruction. Of the fourteen regions or quarters into which Rome was divided, four only subsisted entire, three were levelled with the ground, and the remaining seven, which had experienced the fury of the flames, displayed a melancholy prospect of ruin and desolation. The vigilance of government appears not to have neglected any of the precautions which might alleviate the sense of so dreadful a calamity. The Imperial gardens were thrown open to the distressed multitude, temporary buildings were erected for their accommodation, and a plentiful supply of corn and provisions was distributed at a very moderate price. [29](#) The most generous policy seemed to have dictated the edicts which regulated the disposition of the streets and the construction of private houses; and as it usually happens, in an age of prosperity, the conflagration of Rome, in the course of a few years, produced a new city, more regular and more beautiful than the former. But all the prudence and humanity affected by Nero on this occasion were insufficient to preserve him from the popular suspicion. Every crime might be imputed to the assassin of his wife and mother; nor could the prince who prostituted his person

and dignity on the theatre be deemed incapable of the most extravagant folly. The voice of rumor accused the emperor as the incendiary of his own capital; and as the most incredible stories are the best adapted to the genius of an enraged people, it was gravely reported, and firmly believed, that Nero, enjoying the calamity which he had occasioned, amused himself with singing to his lyre the destruction of ancient Troy. [30](#) To divert a suspicion, which the power of despotism was unable to suppress, the emperor resolved to substitute in his own place some fictitious criminals. “With this view,” continues Tacitus, “he inflicted the most exquisite tortures on those men, who, under the vulgar appellation of Christians, were already branded with deserved infamy. They derived their name and origin from Christ, who in the reign of Tiberius had suffered death by the sentence of the procurator Pontius Pilate. [31](#) For a while this dire superstition was checked; but it again burst forth; [3111](#) and not only spread itself over Judæa, the first seat of this mischievous sect, but was even introduced into Rome, the common asylum which receives and protects whatever is impure, whatever is atrocious. The confessions of those who were seized discovered a great multitude of their accomplices, and they were all convicted, not so much for the crime of setting fire to the city, as for their hatred of human kind. [32](#) They died in torments, and their torments were imbibited by insult and derision. Some were nailed on crosses; others sewn up in the skins of wild beasts, and exposed to the fury of dogs; others again, smeared over with combustible materials, were used as torches to illuminate the darkness of the night. The gardens of Nero were destined for the melancholy spectacle, which was accompanied with a horse-race and honored with the presence of the emperor, who mingled with the populace in the dress and attitude of a charioteer. The guilt of the Christians deserved indeed the most exemplary punishment, but the public abhorrence was changed into commiseration, from the opinion that those unhappy wretches were sacrificed, not so much to the public welfare, as to the cruelty of a jealous tyrant.” [33](#) Those who survey with a curious eye the revolutions of mankind, may observe, that the gardens and circus of Nero on the Vatican, which were polluted with the blood of the first Christians, have been rendered still more famous by the triumph and by the abuse of the persecuted religion. On the same spot, [34](#) a temple, which far surpasses the ancient glories of the Capitol, has been since erected by the Christian Pontiffs, who, deriving their claim of universal dominion from an humble fisherman of Galilee, have succeeded to the throne of the Cæsars, given laws to the barbarian conquerors of Rome, and extended their spiritual jurisdiction from the coast of the Baltic to the shores of the Pacific Ocean.

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. xv. 38—44. Sueton in Neron. c. 38.
Dion Cassius, l. lxxii. p. 1014. Orosius, vii. 7.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[The price of wheat (probably of the *modius*,) was
reduced as low as *terni Nummi*; which would be

equivalent to about fifteen shillings the English quarter.]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[We may observe, that the rumor is mentioned by Tacitus with a very becoming distrust and hesitation, whilst it is greedily transcribed by Suetonius, and solemnly confirmed by Dion.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[This testimony is alone sufficient to expose the anachronism of the Jews, who place the birth of Christ near a century sooner. (Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. v. c. 14, 15.) We may learn from Josephus, (Antiquitat. xviii. 3,) that the procuratorship of Pilate corresponded with the last ten years of Tiberius, A. D. 27—37. As to the particular time of the death of Christ, a very early tradition fixed it to the 25th of March, A. D. 29, under the consulship of the two Gemini. (Tertullian adv. Judæos, c. 8.) This date, which is adopted by Pagi, Cardinal Norris, and Le Clerc, seems at least as probable as the vulgar æra, which is placed (I know not from what conjectures) four years later.]

3111 [\(return\)](#)

[This single phrase, *Repressa in præsens exitiabilis superstitio rursus erumpebat*, proves that the Christians had already attracted the attention of the government; and that Nero was not the first to persecute them. I am surprised that more stress has not been laid on the confirmation which the Acts of the Apostles derive from these words of Tacitus, *Repressa in præsens*, and *rursus erumpebat*.—G. —I have been unwilling to suppress this note, but surely the expression of Tacitus refers to the expected extirpation of the religion by the death of its founder, Christ.—M.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[*Odio humani generis convicti*. These words may either signify the hatred of mankind towards the Christians, or the hatred of the Christians towards mankind. I have preferred the latter sense, as the most agreeable to the style of Tacitus, and to the popular error, of which a precept of the gospel (see Luke xiv. 26) had been, perhaps, the innocent occasion. My interpretation is justified by the authority of Lipsius; of the Italian, the French, and the English translators of Tacitus; of Mosheim, (p. 102,) of Le Clerc, (Historia Ecclesiast. p. 427,) of Dr. Lardner, (Testimonies, vol. i. p. 345,) and of the Bishop of Gloucester, (Divine Legation, vol. iii. p. 38.) But as the word *convicti* does not unite very

happily with the rest of the sentence, James Gronovius has preferred the reading of *conjuncti*, which is authorized by the valuable MS. of Florence.]

33

([return](#))

[Tacit. Annal xv. 44.]

34

([return](#))

[Nardini Roma Antica, p. 487. Donatus de Roma Antiqua, l. iii. p. 449.]

But it would be improper to dismiss this account of Nero's persecution, till we have made some observations that may serve to remove the difficulties with which it is perplexed, and to throw some light on the subsequent history of the church.

1. The most sceptical criticism is obliged to respect the truth of this extraordinary fact, and the integrity of this celebrated passage of Tacitus. The former is confirmed by the diligent and accurate Suetonius, who mentions the punishment which Nero inflicted on the Christians, a sect of men who had embraced a new and criminal superstition. [35](#) The latter may be proved by the consent of the most ancient manuscripts; by the inimitable character of the style of Tacitus by his reputation, which guarded his text from the interpolations of pious fraud; and by the purport of his narration, which accused the first Christians of the most atrocious crimes, without insinuating that they possessed any miraculous or even magical powers above the rest of mankind. [36](#) 2. Notwithstanding it is probable that Tacitus was born some years before the fire of Rome, [37](#) he could derive only from reading and conversation the knowledge of an event which happened during his infancy. Before he gave himself to the public, he calmly waited till his genius had attained its full maturity, and he was more than forty years of age, when a grateful regard for the memory of the virtuous Agricola extorted from him the most early of those historical compositions which will delight and instruct the most distant posterity. After making a trial of his strength in the life of Agricola and the description of Germany, he conceived, and at length executed, a more arduous work; the history of Rome, in thirty books, from the fall of Nero to the accession of Nerva. The administration of Nerva introduced an age of justice and propriety, which Tacitus had destined for the occupation of his old age; [38](#) but when he took a nearer view of his subject, judging, perhaps, that it was a more honorable or a less invidious office to record the vices of past tyrants, than to celebrate the virtues of a reigning monarch, he chose rather to relate, under the form of annals, the actions of the four immediate successors of Augustus. To collect, to dispose, and to adorn a series of fourscore years, in an immortal work, every sentence of which is pregnant with the deepest observations and the most lively images, was an undertaking sufficient to exercise the genius of Tacitus himself during the greatest part of his life. In the last years of the reign of Trajan, whilst the victorious monarch extended the power of Rome beyond its ancient limits, the historian was describing, in the second and fourth books of his annals, the tyranny of Tiberius; [39](#) and the emperor Hadrian must have succeeded

to the throne, before Tacitus, in the regular prosecution of his work, could relate the fire of the capital, and the cruelty of Nero towards the unfortunate Christians. At the distance of sixty years, it was the duty of the annalist to adopt the narratives of contemporaries; but it was natural for the philosopher to indulge himself in the description of the origin, the progress, and the character of the new sect, not so much according to the knowledge or prejudices of the age of Nero, as according to those of the time of Hadrian. 3 Tacitus very frequently trusts to the curiosity or reflection of his readers to supply those intermediate circumstances and ideas, which, in his extreme conciseness, he has thought proper to suppress. We may therefore presume to imagine some probable cause which could direct the cruelty of Nero against the Christians of Rome, whose obscurity, as well as innocence, should have shielded them from his indignation, and even from his notice. The Jews, who were numerous in the capital, and oppressed in their own country, were a much fitter object for the suspicions of the emperor and of the people: nor did it seem unlikely that a vanquished nation, who already discovered their abhorrence of the Roman yoke, might have recourse to the most atrocious means of gratifying their implacable revenge. But the Jews possessed very powerful advocates in the palace, and even in the heart of the tyrant; his wife and mistress, the beautiful Poppæa, and a favorite player of the race of Abraham, who had already employed their intercession in behalf of the obnoxious people. [40](#) In their room it was necessary to offer some other victims, and it might easily be suggested that, although the genuine followers of Moses were innocent of the fire of Rome, there had arisen among them a new and pernicious sect of Galilæans, which was capable of the most horrid crimes. Under the appellation of Galilæans, two distinctions of men were confounded, the most opposite to each other in their manners and principles; the disciples who had embraced the faith of Jesus of Nazareth, [41](#) and the zealots who had followed the standard of Judas the Gaulonite. [42](#) The former were the friends, the latter were the enemies, of human kind; and the only resemblance between them consisted in the same inflexible constancy, which, in the defence of their cause, rendered them insensible of death and tortures. The followers of Judas, who impelled their countrymen into rebellion, were soon buried under the ruins of Jerusalem; whilst those of Jesus, known by the more celebrated name of Christians, diffused themselves over the Roman empire. How natural was it for Tacitus, in the time of Hadrian, to appropriate to the Christians the guilt and the sufferings, [4211](#) which he might, with far greater truth and justice, have attributed to a sect whose odious memory was almost extinguished! 4. Whatever opinion may be entertained of this conjecture, (for it is no more than a conjecture,) it is evident that the effect, as well as the cause, of Nero's persecution, was confined to the walls of Rome, [43](#) that the religious tenets of the Galilæans or Christians, [431](#) were never made a subject of punishment, or even of inquiry; and that, as the idea of their sufferings was for a long time connected with the idea of cruelty and injustice, the moderation of succeeding princes inclined them to spare a sect, oppressed by a tyrant, whose rage had been usually directed against virtue and innocence.

- 35 [\(return\)](#)
[Sueton. in Nerone, c. 16. The epithet of *malefica*, which some sagacious commentators have translated magical, is considered by the more rational Mosheim as only synonymous to the *exitiabilis* of Tacitus.]
- 36 [\(return\)](#)
[The passage concerning Jesus Christ, which was inserted into the text of Josephus, between the time of Origen and that of Eusebius, may furnish an example of no vulgar forgery. The accomplishment of the prophecies, the virtues, miracles, and resurrection of Jesus, are distinctly related. Josephus acknowledges that he was the Messiah, and hesitates whether he should call him a man. If any doubt can still remain concerning this celebrated passage, the reader may examine the pointed objections of Le Fevre, (Havercamp. Joseph. tom. ii. p. 267-273), the labored answers of Daubuz, (p. 187-232, and the masterly reply (Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne, tom. vii. p. 237-288) of an anonymous critic, whom I believe to have been the learned Abbé de Longuerue. * Note: The modern editor of Eusebius, Heinichen, has adopted, and ably supported, a notion, which had before suggested itself to the editor, that this passage is not altogether a forgery, but interpolated with many additional clauses. Heinichen has endeavored to disengage the original text from the foreign and more recent matter.—M.]
- 37 [\(return\)](#)
[See the lives of Tacitus by Lipsius and the Abbé de la Bleterie, Dictionnaire de Bayle a l'article Particle Tacite, and Fabricius, Biblioth. Latin tem. Latin. tom. ii. p. 386, edit. Ernest. Ernst.]
- 38 [\(return\)](#)
[Principatum Divi Nervæ, et imperium Trajani, uberiolem, securiolemque materiam senectuti seposui. Tacit. Hist. i.]
- 39 [\(return\)](#)
[See Tacit. Annal. ii. 61, iv. 4. * Note: The perusal of this passage of Tacitus alone is sufficient, as I have already said, to show that the Christian sect was not so obscure as not already to have been repressed, (repressa,) and that it did not pass for innocent in the eyes of the Romans.—G.]
- 40 [\(return\)](#)
[The player's name was Aliturus. Through the same channel, Josephus, (de vitâ suâ, c. 2,) about two years before, had obtained the pardon and

release of some Jewish priests, who were prisoners at Rome.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[The learned Dr. Lardner (Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, vol ii. p. 102, 103) has proved that the name of Galilæans was a very ancient, and perhaps the primitive appellation of the Christians.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[Joseph. Antiquitat. xviii. 1, 2. Tillemont, Ruine des Juifs, p. 742 The sons of Judas were crucified in the time of Claudius. His grandson Eleazar, after Jerusalem was taken, defended a strong fortress with 960 of his most desperate followers. When the battering ram had made a breach, they turned their swords against their wives their children, and at length against their own breasts. They dies to the last man.]

4211 [\(return\)](#)

[This conjecture is entirely devoid, not merely of verisimilitude, but even of possibility. Tacitus could not be deceived in appropriating to the Christians of Rome the guilt and the sufferings which he might have attributed with far greater truth to the followers of Judas the Gaulonite, for the latter never went to Rome. Their revolt, their attempts, their opinions, their wars, their punishment, had no other theatre but Judæa (Basn. Hist. des Juifs, t. i. p. 491.) Moreover the name of Christians had long been given in Rome to the disciples of Jesus; and Tacitus affirms too positively, refers too distinctly to its etymology, to allow us to suspect any mistake on his part.—G. —M. Guizot's expressions are not in the least too strong against this strange imagination of Gibbon; it may be doubted whether the followers of Judas were known as a sect under the name of Galilæans.—M.]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[See Dodwell. Paucitat. Mart. l. xiii. The Spanish Inscription in Gruter. p. 238, No. 9, is a manifest and acknowledged forgery contrived by that noted imposter. Cyriacus of Ancona, to flatter the pride and prejudices of the Spaniards. See Ferreras, Histoire D'Espagne, tom. i. p. 192.]

431 [\(return\)](#)

[M. Guizot, on the authority of Sulpicius Severus, ii. 37, and of Orosius, viii. 5, inclines to the opinion of those who extend the persecution to the provinces. Mosheim rather leans to that side on this much disputed question, (c. xxxv.) Neander takes

the view of Gibbon, which is in general that of the most learned writers. There is indeed no evidence, which I can discover, of its reaching the provinces; and the apparent security, at least as regards his life, with which St. Paul pursued his travels during this period, affords at least a strong inference against a rigid and general inquisition against the Christians in other parts of the empire.—M.]

It is somewhat remarkable that the flames of war consumed, almost at the same time, the temple of Jerusalem and the Capitol of Rome; [44](#) and it appears no less singular, that the tribute which devotion had destined to the former, should have been converted by the power of an assaulting victor to restore and adorn the splendor of the latter. [45](#) The emperors levied a general capitation tax on the Jewish people; and although the sum assessed on the head of each individual was inconsiderable, the use for which it was designed, and the severity with which it was exacted, were considered as an intolerable grievance. [46](#) Since the officers of the revenue extended their unjust claim to many persons who were strangers to the blood or religion of the Jews, it was impossible that the Christians, who had so often sheltered themselves under the shade of the synagogue, should now escape this rapacious persecution. Anxious as they were to avoid the slightest infection of idolatry, their conscience forbade them to contribute to the honor of that dæmon who had assumed the character of the Capitoline Jupiter. As a very numerous though declining party among the Christians still adhered to the law of Moses, their efforts to dissemble their Jewish origin were detected by the decisive test of circumcision; [47](#) nor were the Roman magistrates at leisure to inquire into the difference of their religious tenets. Among the Christians who were brought before the tribunal of the emperor, or, as it seems more probable, before that of the procurator of Judæa, two persons are said to have appeared, distinguished by their extraction, which was more truly noble than that of the greatest monarchs. These were the grandsons of St. Jude the apostle, who himself was the brother of Jesus Christ. [48](#) Their natural pretensions to the throne of David might perhaps attract the respect of the people, and excite the jealousy of the governor; but the meanness of their garb, and the simplicity of their answers, soon convinced him that they were neither desirous nor capable of disturbing the peace of the Roman empire. They frankly confessed their royal origin, and their near relation to the Messiah; but they disclaimed any temporal views, and professed that his kingdom, which they devoutly expected, was purely of a spiritual and angelic nature. When they were examined concerning their fortune and occupation, they showed their hands, hardened with daily labor, and declared that they derived their whole subsistence from the cultivation of a farm near the village of Cocaba, of the extent of about twenty-four English acres, [49](#) and of the value of nine thousand drachms, or three hundred pounds sterling. The grandsons of St. Jude were dismissed with compassion and contempt. [50](#)

between Vitellius and Vespasian, the 19th of December, A. D. 69. On the 10th of August, A. D. 70, the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed by the hands of the Jews themselves, rather than by those of the Romans.]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[The new Capitol was dedicated by Domitian. Sueton. in Domitian. c. 5. Plutarch in Poplicola, tom. i. p. 230, edit. Bryant. The gilding alone cost 12,000 talents (above two millions and a half.) It was the opinion of Martial, (l. ix. Epigram 3,) that if the emperor had called in his debts, Jupiter himself, even though he had made a general auction of Olympus, would have been unable to pay two shillings in the pound.]

46 [\(return\)](#)

[With regard to the tribute, see Dion Cassius, l. lxvi. p. 1082, with Reimarus's notes. Spanheim, de Usu Numismatum, tom. ii. p. 571; and Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. vii. c. 2.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[Suetonius (in Domitian. c. 12) had seen an old man of ninety publicly examined before the procurator's tribunal. This is what Martial calls, Mentula tributis damnata.]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[This appellation was at first understood in the most obvious sense, and it was supposed, that the brothers of Jesus were the lawful issue of Joseph and Mary. A devout respect for the virginity of the mother of God suggested to the Gnostics, and afterwards to the orthodox Greeks, the expedient of bestowing a second wife on Joseph. The Latins (from the time of Jerome) improved on that hint, asserted the perpetual celibacy of Joseph, and justified by many similar examples the new interpretation that Jude, as well as Simon and James, who were styled the brothers of Jesus Christ, were only his first cousins. See Tillemont, Mém. Ecclesiast. tom. i. part iii.: and Beausobre, Hist. Critique du Manicheisme, l. ii. c. 2.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[Thirty-nine, squares of a hundred feet each, which, if strictly computed, would scarcely amount to nine acres.]

50 [\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, iii. 20. The story is taken from Hegesippus.]

But although the obscurity of the house of David might protect them from the suspicions of a tyrant, the present greatness of his own family alarmed the pusillanimous temper of Domitian, which could only be appeased by the blood of those Romans whom he either feared, or hated, or esteemed. Of the two sons of his uncle Flavius Sabinus, [51](#) the elder was soon convicted of treasonable intentions, and the younger, who bore the name of Flavius Clemens, was indebted for his safety to his want of courage and ability. [52](#) The emperor for a long time, distinguished so harmless a kinsman by his favor and protection, bestowed on him his own niece Domitilla, adopted the children of that marriage to the hope of the succession, and invested their father with the honors of the consulship.

51

[\(return\)](#)

[See the death and character of Sabinus in Tacitus, (Hist. iii. 74) Sabinus was the elder brother, and, till the accession of Vespasian, had been considered as the principal support of the Flavium family]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Flavium Clementem patruelem suum *contemptissimæ inertiae*.. ex tenuissimâ suspicione interemit. Sueton. in Domitian. c. 15.]

But he had scarcely finished the term of his annual magistracy, when, on a slight pretence, he was condemned and executed; Domitilla was banished to a desolate island on the coast of Campania; [53](#) and sentences either of death or of confiscation were pronounced against a great number of who were involved in the same accusation. The guilt imputed to their charge was that of *Atheism* and *Jewish manners*; [54](#) a singular association of ideas, which cannot with any propriety be applied except to the Christians, as they were obscurely and imperfectly viewed by the magistrates and by the writers of that period. On the strength of so probable an interpretation, and too eagerly admitting the suspicions of a tyrant as an evidence of their honorable crime, the church has placed both Clemens and Domitilla among its first martyrs, and has branded the cruelty of Domitian with the name of the second persecution. But this persecution (if it deserves that epithet) was of no long duration. A few months after the death of Clemens, and the banishment of Domitilla, Stephen, a freedman belonging to the latter, who had enjoyed the favor, but who had not surely embraced the faith, of his mistress, [5411](#) assassinated the emperor in his palace. [55](#) The memory of Domitian was condemned by the senate; his acts were rescinded; his exiles recalled; and under the gentle administration of Nerva, while the innocent were restored to their rank and fortunes, even the most guilty either obtained pardon or escaped punishment. [56](#)

53

[\(return\)](#)

[The Isle of Pandataria, according to Dion. Bruttius Præsens (apud Euseb. iii. 18) banishes her to that of Pontia, which was not far distant from the other. That difference, and a mistake, either of Eusebius or of his transcribers, have given occasion to

suppose two Domitillas, the wife and the niece of Clemens. See Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclésiastiques, tom. ii. p. 224.]

54 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion. l. lxvii. p. 1112. If the Bruttius Præsens, from whom it is probable that he collected this account, was the correspondent of Pliny, (Epistol. vii. 3,) we may consider him as a contemporary writer.]

5411 [\(return\)](#)

[This is an uncandid sarcasm. There is nothing to connect Stephen with the religion of Domitilla. He was a knave detected in the malversation of money—interceptorum pecuniaram reus.—M.]

55 [\(return\)](#)

[Suet. in Domit. c. 17. Philostratus in Vit. Apollon. l. viii.]

56 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion. l. lxxviii. p. 1118. Plin. Epistol. iv. 22.]

II. About ten years afterwards, under the reign of Trajan, the younger Pliny was intrusted by his friend and master with the government of Bithynia and Pontus. He soon found himself at a loss to determine by what rule of justice or of law he should direct his conduct in the execution of an office the most repugnant to his humanity. Pliny had never assisted at any judicial proceedings against the Christians, with whose name alone he seems to be acquainted; and he was totally uninformed with regard to the nature of their guilt, the method of their conviction, and the degree of their punishment. In this perplexity he had recourse to his usual expedient, of submitting to the wisdom of Trajan an impartial, and, in some respects, a favorable account of the new superstition, requesting the emperor, that he would condescend to resolve his doubts, and to instruct his ignorance. [57](#) The life of Pliny had been employed in the acquisition of learning, and in the business of the world.

Since the age of nineteen he had pleaded with distinction in the tribunals of Rome, [58](#) filled a place in the senate, had been invested with the honors of the consulship, and had formed very numerous connections with every order of men, both in Italy and in the provinces. From *his* ignorance therefore we may derive some useful information. We may assure ourselves, that when he accepted the government of Bithynia, there were no general laws or decrees of the senate in force against the Christians; that neither Trajan nor any of his virtuous predecessors, whose edicts were received into the civil and criminal jurisprudence, had publicly declared their intentions concerning the new sect; and that whatever proceedings had been carried on against the Christians, there were none of sufficient weight and authority to establish a precedent for the conduct of a Roman magistrate.

57 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Epistol. x. 97. The learned Mosheim

expresses himself (p. 147, 232) with the highest approbation of Pliny's moderate and candid temper. Notwithstanding Dr. Lardner's suspicions (see Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, vol. ii. p. 46,) I am unable to discover any bigotry in his language or proceedings. * Note: Yet the humane Pliny put two female attendants, probably deaconesses to the torture, in order to ascertain the real nature of these suspicious meetings: *necessarium credidi, ex duabus ancillis, quæ ministræ dicebantur quid asset veri et per tormenta quærere.*—M.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Epist. v. 8. He pleaded his first cause A. D. 81; the year after the famous eruptions of Mount Vesuvius, in which his uncle lost his life.]

Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part III.

The answer of Trajan, to which the Christians of the succeeding age have frequently appealed, discovers as much regard for justice and humanity as could be reconciled with his mistaken notions of religious policy. [59](#) Instead of displaying the implacable zeal of an inquisitor, anxious to discover the most minute particles of heresy, and exulting in the number of his victims, the emperor expresses much more solicitude to protect the security of the innocent, than to prevent the escape of the guilty. He acknowledged the difficulty of fixing any general plan; but he lays down two salutary rules, which often afforded relief and support to the distressed Christians. Though he directs the magistrates to punish such persons as are legally convicted, he prohibits them, with a very humane inconsistency, from making any inquiries concerning the supposed criminals. Nor was the magistrate allowed to proceed on every kind of information. Anonymous charges the emperor rejects, as too repugnant to the equity of his government; and he strictly requires, for the conviction of those to whom the guilt of Christianity is imputed, the positive evidence of a fair and open accuser. It is likewise probable, that the persons who assumed so invidious an office, were obliged to declare the grounds of their suspicions, to specify (both in respect to time and place) the secret assemblies, which their Christian adversary had frequented, and to disclose a great number of circumstances, which were concealed with the most vigilant jealousy from the eye of the profane. If they succeeded in their prosecution, they were exposed to the resentment of a considerable and active party, to the censure of the more liberal portion of mankind, and to the ignominy which, in every age and country, has attended the character of an informer. If, on the contrary, they failed in their proofs, they incurred the severe and perhaps capital penalty, which, according to a law published by the emperor Hadrian, was inflicted on those who falsely attributed to their fellow-citizens

the crime of Christianity. The violence of personal or superstitious animosity might sometimes prevail over the most natural apprehensions of disgrace and danger but it cannot surely be imagined, [60](#) that accusations of so unpromising an appearance were either lightly or frequently undertaken by the Pagan subjects of the Roman empire. [6011](#)

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Epist. x. 98. Tertullian (Apolog. c. 5) considers this rescript as a relaxation of the ancient penal laws, “quas Trajanus ex parte frustratus est:” and yet Tertullian, in another part of his Apology, exposes the inconsistency of prohibiting inquiries, and enjoining punishments.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius (Hist. Ecclesiast. l. iv. c. 9) has preserved the edict of Hadrian. He has likewise (c. 13) given us one still more favorable, under the name of Antoninus; the authenticity of which is not so universally allowed. The second Apology of Justin contains some curious particulars relative to the accusations of Christians. * Note: Professor Hegelmayer has proved the authenticity of the edict of Antoninus, in his Comm. Hist. Theol. in Edict. Imp. Antonini. Tubing. 1777, in 4to.—G. — Neander doubts its authenticity, (vol. i. p. 152.) In my opinion, the internal evidence is decisive against it.—M]

6011

[\(return\)](#)

[The enactment of this law affords strong presumption, that accusations of the “crime of Christianity,” were by no means so uncommon, nor received with so much mistrust and caution by the ruling authorities, as Gibbon would insinuate. — M.]

The expedient which was employed to elude the prudence of the laws, affords a sufficient proof how effectually they disappointed the mischievous designs of private malice or superstitious zeal. In a large and tumultuous assembly, the restraints of fear and shame, so forcible on the minds of individuals, are deprived of the greatest part of their influence. The pious Christian, as he was desirous to obtain, or to escape, the glory of martyrdom, expected, either with impatience or with terror, the stated returns of the public games and festivals. On those occasions the inhabitants of the great cities of the empire were collected in the circus or the theatre, where every circumstance of the place, as well as of the ceremony, contributed to kindle their devotion, and to extinguish their humanity. Whilst the numerous spectators, crowned with garlands, perfumed with incense, purified with the blood of victims, and surrounded with the altars and statues of their tutelar deities, resigned themselves to the enjoyment of pleasures, which they considered as an essential part of their religious worship, they recollected, that the Christians alone abhorred the gods of mankind, and by their absence and melancholy

on these solemn festivals, seemed to insult or to lament the public felicity. If the empire had been afflicted by any recent calamity, by a plague, a famine, or an unsuccessful war; if the Tyber had, or if the Nile had not, risen beyond its banks; if the earth had shaken, or if the temperate order of the seasons had been interrupted, the superstitious Pagans were convinced that the crimes and the impiety of the Christians, who were spared by the excessive lenity of the government, had at length provoked the divine justice. It was not among a licentious and exasperated populace, that the forms of legal proceedings could be observed; it was not in an amphitheatre, stained with the blood of wild beasts and gladiators, that the voice of compassion could be heard. The impatient clamors of the multitude denounced the Christians as the enemies of gods and men, doomed them to the severest tortures, and venturing to accuse by name some of the most distinguished of the new sectaries, required with irresistible vehemence that they should be instantly apprehended and cast to the lions. [61](#) The provincial governors and magistrates who presided in the public spectacles were usually inclined to gratify the inclinations, and to appease the rage, of the people, by the sacrifice of a few obnoxious victims. But the wisdom of the emperors protected the church from the danger of these tumultuous clamors and irregular accusations, which they justly censured as repugnant both to the firmness and to the equity of their administration. The edicts of Hadrian and of Antoninus Pius expressly declared, that the voice of the multitude should never be admitted as legal evidence to convict or to punish those unfortunate persons who had embraced the enthusiasm of the Christians. [62](#)

61

[\(return\)](#)

[See Tertullian, (Apolog. c. 40.) The acts of the martyrdom of Polycarp exhibit a lively picture of these tumults, which were usually fomented by the malice of the Jews.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[These regulations are inserted in the above mentioned document of Hadrian and Pius. See the apology of Melito, (apud Euseb. l iv 26)]

III. Punishment was not the inevitable consequence of conviction, and the Christians, whose guilt was the most clearly proved by the testimony of witnesses, or even by their voluntary confession, still retained in their own power the alternative of life or death. It was not so much the past offence, as the actual resistance, which excited the indignation of the magistrate. He was persuaded that he offered them an easy pardon, since, if they consented to cast a few grains of incense upon the altar, they were dismissed from the tribunal in safety and with applause. It was esteemed the duty of a humane judge to endeavor to reclaim, rather than to punish, those deluded enthusiasts. Varying his tone according to the age, the sex, or the situation of the prisoners, he frequently condescended to set before their eyes every circumstance which could render life more pleasing, or death more terrible; and to solicit, nay, to entreat, them, that they would show some compassion to themselves, to their families, and to their friends. [63](#) If threats

and persuasions proved ineffectual, he had often recourse to violence; the scourge and the rack were called in to supply the deficiency of argument, and every art of cruelty was employed to subdue such inflexible, and, as it appeared to the Pagans, such criminal, obstinacy. The ancient apologists of Christianity have censured, with equal truth and severity, the irregular conduct of their persecutors who, contrary to every principle of judicial proceeding, admitted the use of torture, in order to obtain, not a confession, but a denial, of the crime which was the object of their inquiry. [64](#) The monks of succeeding ages, who, in their peaceful solitudes, entertained themselves with diversifying the deaths and sufferings of the primitive martyrs, have frequently invented torments of a much more refined and ingenious nature. In particular, it has pleased them to suppose, that the zeal of the Roman magistrates, disdaining every consideration of moral virtue or public decency, endeavored to seduce those whom they were unable to vanquish, and that by their orders the most brutal violence was offered to those whom they found it impossible to seduce. It is related, that females, who were prepared to despise death, were sometimes condemned to a more severe trial, [6411](#) and called upon to determine whether they set a higher value on their religion or on their chastity. The youths to whose licentious embraces they were abandoned, received a solemn exhortation from the judge, to exert their most strenuous efforts to maintain the honor of Venus against the impious virgin who refused to burn incense on her altars. Their violence, however, was commonly disappointed, and the seasonable interposition of some miraculous power preserved the chaste spouses of Christ from the dishonor even of an involuntary defeat. We should not indeed neglect to remark, that the more ancient as well as authentic memorials of the church are seldom polluted with these extravagant and indecent fictions. [65](#)

63

[\(return\)](#)

[See the rescript of Trajan, and the conduct of Pliny. The most authentic acts of the martyrs abound in these exhortations. Note: Pliny's test was the worship of the gods, offerings to the statue of the emperor, and blaspheming Christ—præterea maledicerent Christo.—M.]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[In particular, see Tertullian, (Apolog. c. 2, 3,) and Lactantius, (Institut. Divin. v. 9.) Their reasonings are almost the same; but we may discover, that one of these apologists had been a lawyer, and the other a rhetorician.]

6411

[\(return\)](#)

[The more ancient as well as authentic memorials of the church, relate many examples of the fact, (of these *severe trials*,) which there is nothing to contradict. Tertullian, among others, says, Nam proxime ad leonem damnando Christianam, potius quam ad leonem, confessi estis labem pudicitiae apud nos atrocior omni pœna et omni morte

reputari, Apol. cap. ult. Eusebius likewise says, "Other virgins, dragged to brothels, have lost their life rather than defile their virtue." Euseb. Hist. Ecc. viii. 14.—G. The miraculous interpositions were the offspring of the coarse imaginations of the monks.—M.]

65

[\(return\)](#)

[See two instances of this kind of torture in the Acta Sincere Martyrum, published by Ruinart, p. 160, 399. Jerome, in his Legend of Paul the Hermit, tells a strange story of a young man, who was chained naked on a bed of flowers, and assaulted by a beautiful and wanton courtesan. He quelled the rising temptation by biting off his tongue.]

The total disregard of truth and probability in the representation of these primitive martyrdoms was occasioned by a very natural mistake. The ecclesiastical writers of the fourth or fifth centuries ascribed to the magistrates of Rome the same degree of implacable and unrelenting zeal which filled their own breasts against the heretics or the idolaters of their own times.

It is not improbable that some of those persons who were raised to the dignities of the empire, might have imbibed the prejudices of the populace, and that the cruel disposition of others might occasionally be stimulated by motives of avarice or of personal resentment. [66](#) But it is certain, and we may appeal to the grateful confessions of the first Christians, that the greatest part of those magistrates who exercised in the provinces the authority of the emperor, or of the senate, and to whose hands alone the jurisdiction of life and death was intrusted, behaved like men of polished manners and liberal education, who respected the rules of justice, and who were conversant with the precepts of philosophy. They frequently declined the odious task of persecution, dismissed the charge with contempt, or suggested to the accused Christian some legal evasion, by which he might elude the severity of the laws. [67](#) Whenever they were invested with a discretionary power, [68](#) they used it much less for the oppression, than for the relief and benefit of the afflicted church. They were far from condemning all the Christians who were accused before their tribunal, and very far from punishing with death all those who were convicted of an obstinate adherence to the new superstition. Contenting themselves, for the most part, with the milder chastisements of imprisonment, exile, or slavery in the mines, [69](#) they left the unhappy victims of their justice some reason to hope, that a prosperous event, the accession, the marriage, or the triumph of an emperor, might speedily restore them, by a general pardon, to their former state. The martyrs, devoted to immediate execution by the Roman magistrates, appear to have been selected from the most opposite extremes. They were either bishops and presbyters, the persons the most distinguished among the Christians by their rank and influence, and whose example might strike terror into the whole sect; [70](#) or else they were the meanest and most abject among them, particularly those of the servile

condition, whose lives were esteemed of little value, and whose sufferings were viewed by the ancients with too careless an indifference. [71](#) The learned Origen, who, from his experience as well as reading, was intimately acquainted with the history of the Christians, declares, in the most express terms, that the number of martyrs was very inconsiderable. [72](#) His authority would alone be sufficient to annihilate that formidable army of martyrs, whose relics, drawn for the most part from the catacombs of Rome, have replenished so many churches, [73](#) and whose marvellous achievements have been the subject of so many volumes of Holy Romance. [74](#) But the general assertion of Origen may be explained and confirmed by the particular testimony of his friend Dionysius, who, in the immense city of Alexandria, and under the rigorous persecution of Decius, reckons only ten men and seven women who suffered for the profession of the Christian name. [75](#)

66 [\(return\)](#)

[The conversion of his wife provoked Claudius Herminianus, governor of Cappadocia, to treat the Christians with uncommon severity. Tertullian ad Scapulam, c. 3.]

67 [\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian, in his epistle to the governor of Africa, mentions several remarkable instances of lenity and forbearance, which had happened within his knowledge.]

68 [\(return\)](#)

[Neque enim in universum aliquid quod quasi certam formam habeat, constitui potest; an expression of Trajan, which gave a very great latitude to the governors of provinces. * Note: Gibbon altogether forgets that Trajan fully approved of the course pursued by Pliny. That course was, to order all who persevered in their faith to be led to execution: perseverantes duci jussi.—M.]

69 [\(return\)](#)

[In Metalla damnatur, in insulas relegatur. Tertullian, Apolog. c. 12. The mines of Numidia contained nine bishops, with a proportionable number of their clergy and people, to whom Cyprian addressed a pious epistle of praise and comfort. See Cyprian. Epistol. 76, 77.]

70 [\(return\)](#)

[Though we cannot receive with entire confidence either the epistles, or the acts, of Ignatius, (they may be found in the 2d volume of the Apostolic Fathers,) yet we may quote that bishop of Antioch as one of these *exemplary* martyrs. He was sent in chains to Rome as a public spectacle, and when he arrived at Troas, he received the pleasing intelligence, that the

persecution of Antioch was already at an end. *
 Note: The acts of Ignatius are generally received as authentic, as are seven of his letters. Eusebius and St. Jerome mention them: there are two editions; in one, the letters are longer, and many passages appear to have been interpolated; the other edition is that which contains the real letters of St. Ignatius; such at least is the opinion of the wisest and most enlightened critics. (See Lardner. Cred. of Gospel Hist.) Less, *uber dis Religion*, v. i. p. 529. Usser. *Diss. de Ign. Epist.* Pearson, *Vindic. Ignatianæ*. It should be remarked, that it was under the reign of Trajan that the bishop Ignatius was carried from Antioch to Rome, to be exposed to the lions in the amphitheatre, the year of J. C. 107, according to some; of 116, according to others.—G.]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[Among the martyrs of Lyons, (Euseb. l. v. c. 1,) the slave Blandina was distinguished by more exquisite tortures. Of the five martyrs so much celebrated in the acts of Felicitas and Perpetua, two were of a servile, and two others of a very mean, condition.]

72 [\(return\)](#)

[Origen. *advers. Celsum*, l. iii. p. 116. His words deserve to be transcribed. * Note: The words that follow should be quoted. “God not permitting that all his class of men should be exterminated:” which appears to indicate that Origen thought the number put to death inconsiderable only when compared to the numbers who had survived. Besides this, he is speaking of the state of the religion under Caracalla, Elagabalus, Alexander Severus, and Philip, who had not persecuted the Christians. It was during the reign of the latter that Origen wrote his books against Celsus.—G.]

73 [\(return\)](#)

[If we recollect that all the Plebeians of Rome were not Christians, and that all the Christians were not saints and martyrs, we may judge with how much safety religious honors can be ascribed to bones or urns, indiscriminately taken from the public burial-place. After ten centuries of a very free and open trade, some suspicions have arisen among the more learned Catholics. They now require as a proof of sanctity and martyrdom, the letters B.M., a vial full of red liquor supposed to be blood, or the figure of a palm-tree. But the two former signs are of little weight, and with regard to the last, it is observed by the critics, 1. That the figure, as it is called, of a

palm, is perhaps a cypress, and perhaps only a stop, the flourish of a comma used in the monumental inscriptions. 2. That the palm was the symbol of victory among the Pagans. 3. That among the Christians it served as the emblem, not only of martyrdom, but in general of a joyful resurrection. See the epistle of P. Mabillon, on the worship of unknown saints, and Muratori sopra le Antichita Italiane, Dissertat. lviii.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[As a specimen of these legends, we may be satisfied with 10,000 Christian soldiers crucified in one day, either by Trajan or Hadrian on Mount Ararat. See Baronius ad Martyrologium Romanum; Tille mont, Mém. Ecclesiast. tom. ii. part ii. p. 438; and Geddes's Miscellanies, vol. ii. p. 203. The abbreviation of Mil., which may signify either *soldiers* or *thousands*, is said to have occasioned some extraordinary mistakes.]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[Dionysius ap. Euseb l. vi. c. 41 One of the seventeen was likewise accused of robbery. * Note: Gibbon ought to have said, was falsely accused of robbery, for so it is in the Greek text. This Christian, named Nemesion, falsely accused of robbery before the centurion, was acquitted of a crime altogether foreign to his character, but he was led before the governor as guilty of being a Christian, and the governor inflicted upon him a double torture. (Euseb. loc. cit.) It must be added, that Saint Dionysius only makes particular mention of the principal martyrs, [this is very doubtful.—M.] and that he says, in general, that the fury of the Pagans against the Christians gave to Alexandria the appearance of a city taken by storm. [This refers to plunder and ill usage, not to actual slaughter.—M.] Finally it should be observed that Origen wrote before the persecution of the emperor Decius.—G.]

During the same period of persecution, the zealous, the eloquent, the ambitious Cyprian governed the church, not only of Carthage, but even of Africa. He possessed every quality which could engage the reverence of the faithful, or provoke the suspicions and resentment of the Pagan magistrates. His character as well as his station seemed to mark out that holy prelate as the most distinguished object of envy and danger. [76](#) The experience, however, of the life of Cyprian, is sufficient to prove that our fancy has exaggerated the perilous situation of a Christian bishop; and the dangers to which he was exposed were less imminent than those which temporal ambition is always prepared to encounter in the pursuit of honors. Four Roman emperors, with their families, their favorites, and their adherents, perished by the sword in the space of ten

years, during which the bishop of Carthage guided by his authority and eloquence the councils of the African church. It was only in the third year of his administration, that he had reason, during a few months, to apprehend the severe edicts of Decius, the vigilance of the magistrate and the clamors of the multitude, who loudly demanded, that Cyprian, the leader of the Christians, should be thrown to the lions. Prudence suggested the necessity of a temporary retreat, and the voice of prudence was obeyed. He withdrew himself into an obscure solitude, from whence he could maintain a constant correspondence with the clergy and people of Carthage; and, concealing himself till the tempest was past, he preserved his life, without relinquishing either his power or his reputation. His extreme caution did not, however, escape the censure of the more rigid Christians, who lamented, or the reproaches of his personal enemies, who insulted, a conduct which they considered as a pusillanimous and criminal desertion of the most sacred duty. [77](#) The propriety of reserving himself for the future exigencies of the church, the example of several holy bishops, [78](#) and the divine admonitions, which, as he declares himself, he frequently received in visions and ecstasies, were the reasons alleged in his justification. [79](#) But his best apology may be found in the cheerful resolution, with which, about eight years afterwards, he suffered death in the cause of religion. The authentic history of his martyrdom has been recorded with unusual candor and impartiality. A short abstract, therefore, of its most important circumstances, will convey the clearest information of the spirit, and of the forms, of the Roman persecutions. [80](#)

76

[\(return\)](#)

[The letters of Cyprian exhibit a very curious and original picture both of the *man* and of the *times*. See likewise the two lives of Cyprian, composed with equal accuracy, though with very different views; the one by Le Clerc (Bibliothèque Universelle, tom. xii. p. 208-378,) the other by Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclésiastiques, tom. iv part i. p. 76-459.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

[See the polite but severe epistle of the clergy of Rome to the bishop of Carthage. (Cyprian. Epist. 8, 9.) Pontius labors with the greatest care and diligence to justify his master against the general censure.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[In particular those of Dionysius of Alexandria, and Gregory Thaumaturgus, of Neo-Cæsarea. See Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. vi. c. 40; and Mémoires de Tillemont, tom. iv. part ii. p. 685.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[See Cyprian. Epist. 16, and his life by Pontius.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[We have an original life of Cyprian by the deacon

Pontius, the companion of his exile, and the spectator of his death; and we likewise possess the ancient proconsular acts of his martyrdom. These two relations are consistent with each other, and with probability; and what is somewhat remarkable, they are both unsullied by any miraculous circumstances.]

Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part IV.

When Valerian was consul for the third, and Gallienus for the fourth time, Paternus, proconsul of Africa, summoned Cyprian to appear in his private council-chamber. He there acquainted him with the Imperial mandate which he had just received, [81](#) that those who had abandoned the Roman religion should immediately return to the practice of the ceremonies of their ancestors. Cyprian replied without hesitation, that he was a Christian and a bishop, devoted to the worship of the true and only Deity, to whom he offered up his daily supplications for the safety and prosperity of the two emperors, his lawful sovereigns.

With modest confidence he pleaded the privilege of a citizen, in refusing to give any answer to some invidious and indeed illegal questions which the proconsul had proposed. A sentence of banishment was pronounced as the penalty of Cyprian's disobedience; and he was conducted without delay to Curubis, a free and maritime city of Zeugitania, in a pleasant situation, a fertile territory, and at the distance of about forty miles from Carthage. [82](#) The exiled bishop enjoyed the conveniences of life and the consciousness of virtue. His reputation was diffused over Africa and Italy; an account of his behavior was published for the edification of the Christian world; [83](#) and his solitude was frequently interrupted by the letters, the visits, and the congratulations of the faithful. On the arrival of a new proconsul in the province the fortune of Cyprian appeared for some time to wear a still more favorable aspect. He was recalled from banishment; and though not yet permitted to return to Carthage, his own gardens in the neighborhood of the capital were assigned for the place of his residence. [84](#)

81

[\(return\)](#)

[It should seem that these were circular orders, sent at the same time to all the governors. Dionysius (ap. Euseb. l. vii. c. 11) relates the history of his own banishment from Alexandria almost in the same manner. But as he escaped and survived the persecution, we must account him either more or less fortunate than Cyprian.]

82

[\(return\)](#)

[See Plin. Hist. Natur. v. 3. Cellarius, Geograph. Antiq. part iii. p. 96. Shaw's Travels, p. 90; and for

the adjacent country, (which is terminated by Cape Bona, or the promontory of Mercury,) l’Afrique de Marmol. tom. ii. p. 494. There are the remains of an aqueduct near Curubis, or Curbis, at present altered into Gurbes; and Dr. Shaw read an inscription, which styles that city *Colonia Fulvia*. The deacon Pontius (in Vit. Cyprian. c. 12) calls it “Apricum et competentem locum, hospitium pro voluntate secretum, et quicquid apponi eis ante promissum est, qui regnum et justitiam Dei quærunt.”]

83 [\(return\)](#)

[See Cyprian. Epistol. 77, edit. Fell.]

84 [\(return\)](#)

[Upon his conversion, he had sold those gardens for the benefit of the poor. The indulgence of God (most probably the liberality of some Christian friend) restored them to Cyprian. See Pontius, c. 15.]

At length, exactly one year [85](#) after Cyprian was first apprehended, Galerius Maximus, proconsul of Africa, received the Imperial warrant for the execution of the Christian teachers. The bishop of Carthage was sensible that he should be singled out for one of the first victims; and the frailty of nature tempted him to withdraw himself, by a secret flight, from the danger and the honor of martyrdom; [8511](#) but soon recovering that fortitude which his character required, he returned to his gardens, and patiently expected the ministers of death. Two officers of rank, who were intrusted with that commission, placed Cyprian between them in a chariot, and as the proconsul was not then at leisure, they conducted him, not to a prison, but to a private house in Carthage, which belonged to one of them. An elegant supper was provided for the entertainment of the bishop, and his Christian friends were permitted for the last time to enjoy his society, whilst the streets were filled with a multitude of the faithful, anxious and alarmed at the approaching fate of their spiritual father. [86](#) In the morning he appeared before the tribunal of the proconsul, who, after informing himself of the name and situation of Cyprian, commanded him to offer sacrifice, and pressed him to reflect on the consequences of his disobedience. The refusal of Cyprian was firm and decisive; and the magistrate, when he had taken the opinion of his council, pronounced with some reluctance the sentence of death. It was conceived in the following terms: “That Thascius Cyprianus should be immediately beheaded, as the enemy of the gods of Rome, and as the chief and ringleader of a criminal association, which he had seduced into an impious resistance against the laws of the most holy emperors, Valerian and Gallienus.” [87](#) The manner of his execution was the mildest and least painful that could be inflicted on a person convicted of any capital offence; nor was the use of torture admitted to obtain from the bishop of Carthage either the recantation of his principles or the discovery of his accomplices.

- 85 [\(return\)](#)
[When Cyprian; a twelvemonth before, was sent into exile, he dreamt that he should be put to death the next day. The event made it necessary to explain that word, as signifying a year. Pontius, c. 12.]
- 8511 [\(return\)](#)
[This was not, as it appears, the motive which induced St. Cyprian to conceal himself for a short time; he was threatened to be carried to Utica; he preferred remaining at Carthage, in order to suffer martyrdom in the midst of his flock, and in order that his death might conduce to the edification of those whom he had guided during life. Such, at least, is his own explanation of his conduct in one of his letters: Cum perlatum ad nos fuisset, fratres carissimi, frumentarios esse missos qui me Uticam per ducerent, consilioque carissimorum persuasum est, ut de hortis interim recederemus, justa interveniente causâ, consensi; eo quod congruat episcopum in eâ civitate, in quâ Ecclesiæ dominicæ præest, illie. Dominum confiteri et plebem universam præpositi præsentis confessione clarificari Ep. 83.—G]
- 86 [\(return\)](#)
[Pontius (c. 15) acknowledges that Cyprian, with whom he supped, passed the night custodia delicata. The bishop exercised a last and very proper act of jurisdiction, by directing that the younger females, who watched in the streets, should be removed from the dangers and temptations of a nocturnal crowd. Act. Preconsularia, c. 2.]
- 87 [\(return\)](#)
[See the original sentence in the Acts, c. 4; and in Pontius, c. 17 The latter expresses it in a more rhetorical manner.]

As soon as the sentence was proclaimed, a general cry of “We will die with him,” arose at once among the listening multitude of Christians who waited before the palace gates. The generous effusions of their zeal and their affection were neither serviceable to Cyprian nor dangerous to themselves. He was led away under a guard of tribunes and centurions, without resistance and without insult, to the place of his execution, a spacious and level plain near the city, which was already filled with great numbers of spectators. His faithful presbyters and deacons were permitted to accompany their holy bishop. [8711](#) They assisted him in laying aside his upper garment, spread linen on the ground to catch the precious relics of his blood, and received his orders to bestow five-and-twenty pieces of gold on the executioner. The martyr then covered his face with his hands, and at one blow his head was separated from his body. His corpse remained

during some hours exposed to the curiosity of the Gentiles: but in the night it was removed, and transported in a triumphal procession, and with a splendid illumination, to the burial-place of the Christians. The funeral of Cyprian was publicly celebrated without receiving any interruption from the Roman magistrates; and those among the faithful, who had performed the last offices to his person and his memory, were secure from the danger of inquiry or of punishment. It is remarkable, that of so great a multitude of bishops in the province of Africa, Cyprian was the first who was esteemed worthy to obtain the crown of martyrdom. [88](#)

8711

[\(return\)](#)

[There is nothing in the life of St. Cyprian, by Pontius, nor in the ancient manuscripts, which can make us suppose that the presbyters and deacons in their clerical character, and known to be such, had the permission to attend their holy bishop. Setting aside all religious considerations, it is impossible not to be surprised at the kind of complaisance with which the historian here insists, in favor of the persecutors, on some mitigating circumstances allowed at the death of a man whose only crime was maintaining his own opinions with frankness and courage.—G.]

88

[\(return\)](#)

[Pontius, c. 19. M. de Tillemont (Mémoires, tom. iv. part i. p. 450, note 50) is not pleased with so positive an exclusion of any former martyr of the episcopal rank. * Note: M. de Tillemont, as an honest writer, explains the difficulties which he felt about the text of Pontius, and concludes by distinctly stating, that without doubt there is some mistake, and that Pontius must have meant only Africa Minor or Carthage; for St. Cyprian, in his 58th (69th) letter addressed to Pupianus, speaks expressly of many bishops his colleagues, qui proscripti sunt, vel apprehensi in carcere et catenis fuerunt; aut qui in exilium relegati, illustri itinere ed Dominum profecti sunt; aut qui quibusdam locis animadversi, cœlestes coronas de Domini clarificatione sumpserunt.—G.]

It was in the choice of Cyprian, either to die a martyr, or to live an apostate; but on the choice depended the alternative of honor or infamy. Could we suppose that the bishop of Carthage had employed the profession of the Christian faith only as the instrument of his avarice or ambition, it was still incumbent on him to support the character he had assumed; [89](#) and if he possessed the smallest degree of manly fortitude, rather to expose himself to the most cruel tortures, than by a single act to exchange the reputation of a whole life, for the abhorrence of his Christian brethren, and the contempt of the Gentile world. But if the zeal of Cyprian was supported by the sincere conviction

of the truth of those doctrines which he preached, the crown of martyrdom must have appeared to him as an object of desire rather than of terror. It is not easy to extract any distinct ideas from the vague though eloquent declamations of the Fathers, or to ascertain the degree of immortal glory and happiness which they confidently promised to those who were so fortunate as to shed their blood in the cause of religion. ⁹⁰ They inculcated with becoming diligence, that the fire of martyrdom supplied every defect and expiated every sin; that while the souls of ordinary Christians were obliged to pass through a slow and painful purification, the triumphant sufferers entered into the immediate fruition of eternal bliss, where, in the society of the patriarchs, the apostles, and the prophets, they reigned with Christ, and acted as his assessors in the universal judgment of mankind. The assurance of a lasting reputation upon earth, a motive so congenial to the vanity of human nature, often served to animate the courage of the martyrs.

The honors which Rome or Athens bestowed on those citizens who had fallen in the cause of their country, were cold and unmeaning demonstrations of respect, when compared with the ardent gratitude and devotion which the primitive church expressed towards the victorious champions of the faith. The annual commemoration of their virtues and sufferings was observed as a sacred ceremony, and at length terminated in religious worship. Among the Christians who had publicly confessed their religious principles, those who (as it very frequently happened) had been dismissed from the tribunal or the prisons of the Pagan magistrates, obtained such honors as were justly due to their imperfect martyrdom and their generous resolution. The most pious females courted the permission of imprinting kisses on the fetters which they had worn, and on the wounds which they had received. Their persons were esteemed holy, their decisions were admitted with deference, and they too often abused, by their spiritual pride and licentious manners, the preëminence which their zeal and intrepidity had acquired. ⁹¹ Distinctions like these, whilst they display the exalted merit, betray the inconsiderable number of those who suffered, and of those who died, for the profession of Christianity.

89

[\(return\)](#)

[Whatever opinion we may entertain of the character or principles of Thomas Becket, we must acknowledge that he suffered death with a constancy not unworthy of the primitive martyrs. See Lord Lyttleton's History of Henry II. vol. ii. p. 592, &c.]

90

[\(return\)](#)

[See in particular the treatise of Cyprian de Lapsis, p. 87-98, edit. Fell. The learning of Dodwell (Dissertat. Cyprianic. xii. xiii.,) and the ingenuity of Middleton, (Free Inquiry, p. 162, &c.,) have left scarcely any thing to add concerning the merit, the honors, and the motives of the martyrs.]

[Cyprian. Epistol. 5, 6, 7, 22, 24; and de Unitat. Ecclesiæ. The number of pretended martyrs has been very much multiplied, by the custom which was introduced of bestowing that honorable name on confessors. Note: M. Guizot denies that the letters of Cyprian, to which he refers, bear out the statement in the text. I cannot scruple to admit the accuracy of Gibbon's quotation. To take only the fifth letter, we find this passage: Doleo enim quando audio quosdam improbe et insolenter discurrere, et ad ineptian vel ad discordias vacare, Christi membra et jam Christum confessa per concubitûs illicitos inquinari, nec a diaconis aut presbyteris regi posse, sed id agere ut per paucorum prazos et malos mores, multorum et bonorum confessorum gloria honesta maculetur. Gibbon's misrepresentation lies in the ambiguous expression "too often." Were the epistles arranged in a different manner in the edition consulted by M. Guizot?—M.]

The sober discretion of the present age will more readily censure than admire, but can more easily admire than imitate, the fervor of the first Christians, who, according to the lively expressions of Sulpicius Severus, desired martyrdom with more eagerness than his own contemporaries solicited a bishopric. [92](#) The epistles which Ignatius composed as he was carried in chains through the cities of Asia, breathe sentiments the most repugnant to the ordinary feelings of human nature. He earnestly beseeches the Romans, that when he should be exposed in the amphitheatre, they would not, by their kind but unseasonable intercession, deprive him of the crown of glory; and he declares his resolution to provoke and irritate the wild beasts which might be employed as the instruments of his death. [93](#) Some stories are related of the courage of martyrs, who actually performed what Ignatius had intended; who exasperated the fury of the lions, pressed the executioner to hasten his office, cheerfully leaped into the fires which were kindled to consume them, and discovered a sensation of joy and pleasure in the midst of the most exquisite tortures. Several examples have been preserved of a zeal impatient of those restraints which the emperors had provided for the security of the church. The Christians sometimes supplied by their voluntary declaration the want of an accuser, rudely disturbed the public service of paganism, [94](#) and rushing in crowds round the tribunal of the magistrates, called upon them to pronounce and to inflict the sentence of the law. The behavior of the Christians was too remarkable to escape the notice of the ancient philosophers; but they seem to have considered it with much less admiration than astonishment. Incapable of conceiving the motives which sometimes transported the fortitude of believers beyond the bounds of prudence or reason, they treated such an eagerness to die as the strange result of obstinate despair, of stupid insensibility, or of superstitious frenzy. [95](#) "Unhappy men!" exclaimed the proconsul Antoninus to the

Christians of Asia; “unhappy men! if you are thus weary of your lives, is it so difficult for you to find ropes and precipices?” [96](#) He was extremely cautious (as it is observed by a learned and pious historian) of punishing men who had found no accusers but themselves, the Imperial laws not having made any provision for so unexpected a case: condemning therefore a few as a warning to their brethren, he dismissed the multitude with indignation and contempt. [97](#) Notwithstanding this real or affected disdain, the intrepid constancy of the faithful was productive of more salutary effects on those minds which nature or grace had disposed for the easy reception of religious truth. On these melancholy occasions, there were many among the Gentiles who pitied, who admired, and who were converted. The generous enthusiasm was communicated from the sufferer to the spectators; and the blood of martyrs, according to a well-known observation, became the seed of the church.

92 [\(return\)](#)

[Certatim gloriosa in certamina ruebatur; multique avidius tum martyria gloriosis mortibus quærebantur, quam nunc Episcopatus pravis ambitionibus appetuntur. Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. He might have omitted the word *nunc*.]

93 [\(return\)](#)

[See Epist. ad Roman. c. 4, 5, ap. Patres Apostol. tom. ii. p. 27. It suited the purpose of Bishop Pearson (see Vindiciæ Ignatianæ, part ii. c. 9) to justify, by a profusion of examples and authorities, the sentiments of Ignatius.]

94 [\(return\)](#)

[The story of Polyeuctes, on which Corneille has founded a very beautiful tragedy, is one of the most celebrated, though not perhaps the most authentic, instances of this excessive zeal. We should observe, that the 60th canon of the council of Illiberis refuses the title of martyrs to those who exposed themselves to death, by publicly destroying the idols.]

95 [\(return\)](#)

[See Epictetus, l. iv. c. 7, (though there is some doubt whether he alludes to the Christians.) Marcus Antoninus de Rebus suis, l. xi. c. 3 Lucian in Peregrin.]

96 [\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian ad Scapul. c. 5. The learned are divided between three persons of the same name, who were all proconsuls of Asia. I am inclined to ascribe this story to Antoninus Pius, who was afterwards emperor; and who may have governed Asia under the reign of Trajan.]

[Mosheim, de Rebus Christ, ante Constantin. p. 235.]

But although devotion had raised, and eloquence continued to inflame, this fever of the mind, it insensibly gave way to the more natural hopes and fears of the human heart, to the love of life, the apprehension of pain, and the horror of dissolution. The more prudent rulers of the church found themselves obliged to restrain the indiscreet ardor of their followers, and to distrust a constancy which too often abandoned them in the hour of trial. [98](#) As the lives of the faithful became less mortified and austere, they were every day less ambitious of the honors of martyrdom; and the soldiers of Christ, instead of distinguishing themselves by voluntary deeds of heroism, frequently deserted their post, and fled in confusion before the enemy whom it was their duty to resist. There were three methods, however, of escaping the flames of persecution, which were not attended with an equal degree of guilt: first, indeed, was generally allowed to be innocent; the second was of a doubtful, or at least of a venial, nature; but the third implied a direct and criminal apostasy from the Christian faith.

[See the Epistle of the Church of Smyrna, ap. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. Liv. c. 15 * Note: The 15th chapter of the 10th book of the Eccles. History of Eusebius treats principally of the martyrdom of St. Polycarp, and mentions some other martyrs. A single example of weakness is related; it is that of a Phrygian named Quintus, who, appalled at the sight of the wild beasts and the tortures, renounced his faith. This example proves little against the mass of Christians, and this chapter of Eusebius furnished much stronger evidence of their courage than of their timidity.—G—This Quintus had, however, rashly and of his own accord appeared before the tribunal; and the church of Smyrna condemn “*his indiscreet ardor*,” coupled as it was with weakness in the hour of trial.—M.]

I. A modern inquisitor would hear with surprise, that whenever an information was given to a Roman magistrate of any person within his jurisdiction who had embraced the sect of the Christians, the charge was communicated to the party accused, and that a convenient time was allowed him to settle his domestic concerns, and to prepare an answer to the crime which was imputed to him. [99](#) If he entertained any doubt of his own constancy, such a delay afforded him the opportunity of preserving his life and honor by flight, of withdrawing himself into some obscure retirement or some distant province, and of patiently expecting the return of peace and security. A measure so consonant to reason was soon authorized by the advice and example of the most holy prelates; and seems to have been censured by few except by the Montanists, who

deviated into heresy by their strict and obstinate adherence to the rigor of ancient discipline. [100](#)

II. The provincial governors, whose zeal was less prevalent than their avarice, had countenanced the practice of selling certificates, (or libels, as they were called,) which attested, that the persons therein mentioned had complied with the laws, and sacrificed to the Roman deities. By producing these false declarations, the opulent and timid Christians were enabled to silence the malice of an informer, and to reconcile in some measure their safety with their religion. [101](#) A slight penance atoned for this profane dissimulation. [1011](#)

III. In every persecution there were great numbers of unworthy Christians who publicly disowned or renounced the faith which they had professed; and who confirmed the sincerity of their abjuration, by the legal acts of burning incense or of offering sacrifices. Some of these apostates had yielded on the first menace or exhortation of the magistrate; whilst the patience of others had been subdued by the length and repetition of tortures. The affrighted countenances of some betrayed their inward remorse, while others advanced with confidence and alacrity to the altars of the gods. [102](#) But the disguise which fear had imposed, subsisted no longer than the present danger. As soon as the severity of the persecution was abated, the doors of the churches were assailed by the returning multitude of penitents who detested their idolatrous submission, and who solicited with equal ardor, but with various success, their readmission into the society of Christians. [103](#) [1031](#)

[In the second apology of Justin, there is a particular and very curious instance of this legal delay. The same indulgence was granted to accused Christians, in the persecution of Decius: and Cyprian (de Lapsis) expressly mentions the “Dies negantibus præstitutus.” * Note: The examples drawn by the historian from Justin Martyr and Cyprian relate altogether to particular cases, and prove nothing as to the general practice adopted towards the accused; it is evident, on the contrary, from the same apology of St. Justin, that they hardly ever obtained delay. “A man named Lucius, himself a Christian, present at an unjust sentence passed against a Christian by the judge Urbicus, asked him why he thus punished a man who was neither adulterer nor robber, nor guilty of any other crime but that of avowing himself a Christian.” Urbicus answered only in these words: “Thou also hast the appearance of being a Christian.” “Yes, without doubt,” replied Lucius. The judge ordered that he should be put to death on the instant. A third, who came up, was condemned to be beaten with rods. Here, then, are three examples where no delay was

granted.—[Surely these acts of a single passionate and irritated judge prove the general practice as little as those quoted by Gibbon.—M.] There exist a multitude of others, such as those of Ptolemy, Marcellus, &c. Justin expressly charges the judges with ordering the accused to be executed without hearing the cause. The words of St. Cyprian are as particular, and simply say, that he had appointed a day by which the Christians must have renounced their faith; those who had not done it by that time were condemned.—G. This confirms the statement in the text.—M.]

100 [\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian considers flight from persecution as an imperfect, but very criminal, apostasy, as an impious attempt to elude the will of God, &c., &c. He has written a treatise on this subject, (see p. 536—544, edit. Rigalt.,) which is filled with the wildest fanaticism and the most incoherent declamation. It is, however, somewhat remarkable, that Tertullian did not suffer martyrdom himself.]

101 [\(return\)](#)

[The *libellatici*, who are chiefly known by the writings of Cyprian, are described with the utmost precision, in the copious commentary of Mosheim, p. 483—489.]

1011 [\(return\)](#)

[The penance was not so slight, for it was exactly the same with that of apostates who had sacrificed to idols; it lasted several years. See Fleun Hist. Ecc. v. ii. p. 171.—G.]

102 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Epist. x. 97. Dionysius Alexandrin. ap. Euseb. l. vi. c. 41. Ad prima statim verba minantis inimici maximus fratrum numerus fidem suam prodidit: nec prostratus est persecutionis impetu, sed voluntario lapsu seipsum prostravit. Cyprian. Opera, p. 89. Among these deserters were many priests, and even bishops.]

103 [\(return\)](#)

[It was on this occasion that Cyprian wrote his treatise De Lapsis, and many of his epistles. The controversy concerning the treatment of penitent apostates, does not occur among the Christians of the preceding century. Shall we ascribe this to the superiority of their faith and courage, or to our less intimate knowledge of their history!]

1031 [\(return\)](#)

[Pliny says, that the greater part of the Christians

persisted in avowing themselves to be so; the reason for his consulting Trajan was the *periclitantium numerus*. Eusebius (l. vi. c. 41) does not permit us to doubt that the number of those who renounced their faith was infinitely below the number of those who boldly confessed it. The prefect, he says and his assessors present at the council, were alarmed at seeing the crowd of Christians; the judges themselves trembled. Lastly, St. Cyprian informs us, that the greater part of those who had appeared weak brethren in the persecution of Decius, signalized their courage in that of Gallius. *Steterunt fortes, et ipso dolore poenitentiae facti ad praelium fortiores* Epist. lx. p. 142.—G.]

IV. Notwithstanding the general rules established for the conviction and punishment of the Christians, the fate of those sectaries, in an extensive and arbitrary government, must still in a great measure, have depended on their own behavior, the circumstances of the times, and the temper of their supreme as well as subordinate rulers. Zeal might sometimes provoke, and prudence might sometimes avert or assuage, the superstitious fury of the Pagans. A variety of motives might dispose the provincial governors either to enforce or to relax the execution of the laws; and of these motives the most forcible was their regard not only for the public edicts, but for the secret intentions of the emperor, a glance from whose eye was sufficient to kindle or to extinguish the flames of persecution. As often as any occasional severities were exercised in the different parts of the empire, the primitive Christians lamented and perhaps magnified their own sufferings; but the celebrated number of *ten* persecutions has been determined by the ecclesiastical writers of the fifth century, who possessed a more distinct view of the prosperous or adverse fortunes of the church, from the age of Nero to that of Diocletian. The ingenious parallels of the *ten* plagues of Egypt, and of the *ten* horns of the Apocalypse, first suggested this calculation to their minds; and in their application of the faith of prophecy to the truth of history, they were careful to select those reigns which were indeed the most hostile to the Christian cause. [104](#) But these transient persecutions served only to revive the zeal and to restore the discipline of the faithful; and the moments of extraordinary rigor were compensated by much longer intervals of peace and security. The indifference of some princes, and the indulgence of others, permitted the Christians to enjoy, though not perhaps a legal, yet an actual and public, toleration of their religion.

[See Mosheim, p. 97. Sulpicius Severus was the first author of this computation; though he seemed desirous of reserving the tenth and greatest persecution for the coming of the Antichrist.]

Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part V.

The apology of Tertullian contains two very ancient, very singular, but at the same time very suspicious, instances of Imperial clemency; the edicts published by Tiberius, and by Marcus Antoninus, and designed not only to protect the innocence of the Christians, but even to proclaim those stupendous miracles which had attested the truth of their doctrine. The first of these examples is attended with some difficulties which might perplex a sceptical mind. [105](#) We are required to believe, *that* Pontius Pilate informed the emperor of the unjust sentence of death which he had pronounced against an innocent, and, as it appeared, a divine, person; and that, without acquiring the merit, he exposed himself to the danger of martyrdom; *that* Tiberius, who avowed his contempt for all religion, immediately conceived the design of placing the Jewish Messiah among the gods of Rome; *that* his servile senate ventured to disobey the commands of their master; *that* Tiberius, instead of resenting their refusal, contented himself with protecting the Christians from the severity of the laws, many years before such laws were enacted, or before the church had assumed any distinct name or existence; and lastly, *that* the memory of this extraordinary transaction was preserved in the most public and authentic records, which escaped the knowledge of the historians of Greece and Rome, and were only visible to the eyes of an African Christian, who composed his apology one hundred and sixty years after the death of Tiberius. The edict of Marcus Antoninus is supposed to have been the effect of his devotion and gratitude for the miraculous deliverance which he had obtained in the Marcomannic war. The distress of the legions, the seasonable tempest of rain and hail, of thunder and of lightning, and the dismay and defeat of the barbarians, have been celebrated by the eloquence of several Pagan writers. If there were any Christians in that army, it was natural that they should ascribe some merit to the fervent prayers, which, in the moment of danger, they had offered up for their own and the public safety. But we are still assured by monuments of brass and marble, by the Imperial medals, and by the Antonine column, that neither the prince nor the people entertained any sense of this signal obligation, since they unanimously attribute their deliverance to the providence of Jupiter, and to the interposition of Mercury. [106](#) During the whole course of his reign, Marcus despised the Christians as a philosopher, and punished them as a sovereign. [1061](#)

105

[\(return\)](#)

[The testimony given by Pontius Pilate is first mentioned by Justin. The successive improvements which the story acquired (as if has passed through the hands of Tertullian, Eusebius, Epiphanius, Chrysostom, Orosius, Gregory of Tours, and the authors of the several editions of the acts of Pilate)

are very fairly stated by Dom Calmet Dissertat. sur l'Ecriture, tom. iii. p. 651, &c.]

106 [\(return\)](#)

[On this miracle, as it is commonly called, of the thundering legion, see the admirable criticism of Mr. Moyle, in his Works, vol. ii. p. 81—390.]

1061 [\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon, with this phrase, and that below, which admits the injustice of Marcus, has dexterously glossed over one of the most remarkable facts in the early Christian history, that the reign of the wisest and most humane of the heathen emperors was the most fatal to the Christians. Most writers have ascribed the persecutions under Marcus to the latent bigotry of his character; Mosheim, to the influence of the philosophic party; but the fact is admitted by all. A late writer (Mr. Waddington, Hist. of the Church, p. 47) has not scrupled to assert, that “this prince polluted every year of a long reign with innocent blood;” but the causes as well as the date of the persecutions authorized or permitted by Marcus are equally uncertain. Of the Asiatic edict recorded by Melito. the date is unknown, nor is it quite clear that it was an Imperial edict. If it was the act under which Polycarp suffered, his martyrdom is placed by Ruinart in the sixth, by Mosheim in the ninth, year of the reign of Marcus. The martyrs of Vienne and Lyons are assigned by Dodwell to the seventh, by most writers to the seventeenth. In fact, the commencement of the persecutions of the Christians appears to synchronize exactly with the period of the breaking out of the Marcomannic war, which seems to have alarmed the whole empire, and the emperor himself, into a paroxysm of returning piety to their gods, of which the Christians were the victims. See Jul, Capit. Script. Hist August. p. 181, edit. 1661. It is remarkable that Tertullian (Apologet. c. v.) distinctly asserts that Verus (M. Aurelius) issued no edicts against the Christians, and almost positively exempts him from the charge of persecution.—M. This remarkable synchronism, which explains the persecutions under M Aurelius, is shown at length in Milman’s History of Christianity, book ii. v.—M. 1845.]

By a singular fatality, the hardships which they had endured under the government of a virtuous prince, immediately ceased on the accession of a tyrant; and as none except themselves had experienced the injustice of Marcus, so they alone were protected by the lenity of Commodus. The celebrated Marcia, the most favored of his concubines, and who at length contrived the murder of her Imperial lover, entertained a singular

affection for the oppressed church; and though it was impossible that she could reconcile the practice of vice with the precepts of the gospel, she might hope to atone for the frailties of her sex and profession by declaring herself the patroness of the Christians. [107](#) Under the gracious protection of Marcia, they passed in safety the thirteen years of a cruel tyranny; and when the empire was established in the house of Severus, they formed a domestic but more honorable connection with the new court. The emperor was persuaded, that in a dangerous sickness, he had derived some benefit, either spiritual or physical, from the holy oil, with which one of his slaves had anointed him. He always treated with peculiar distinction several persons of both sexes who had embraced the new religion. The nurse as well as the preceptor of Caracalla were Christians; [1071](#) and if that young prince ever betrayed a sentiment of humanity, it was occasioned by an incident, which, however trifling, bore some relation to the cause of Christianity. [108](#) Under the reign of Severus, the fury of the populace was checked; the rigor of ancient laws was for some time suspended; and the provincial governors were satisfied with receiving an annual present from the churches within their jurisdiction, as the price, or as the reward, of their moderation. [109](#) The controversy concerning the precise time of the celebration of Easter, armed the bishops of Asia and Italy against each other, and was considered as the most important business of this period of leisure and tranquillity. [110](#) Nor was the peace of the church interrupted, till the increasing numbers of proselytes seem at length to have attracted the attention, and to have alienated the mind of Severus. With the design of restraining the progress of Christianity, he published an edict, which, though it was designed to affect only the new converts, could not be carried into strict execution, without exposing to danger and punishment the most zealous of their teachers and missionaries. In this mitigated persecution we may still discover the indulgent spirit of Rome and of Polytheism, which so readily admitted every excuse in favor of those who practised the religious ceremonies of their fathers. [111](#)

107 [\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius, or rather his abbreviator Xiphilin, l. lxxii. p. 1206. Mr. Moyle (p. 266) has explained the condition of the church under the reign of Commodus.]

1071 [\(return\)](#)

[The Jews and Christians contest the honor of having furnished a nurse is the fratricide son of Severus Caracalla. Hist. of Jews, iii. 158.—M.]

108 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare the life of Caracalla in the Augustan History, with the epistle of Tertullian to Scapula. Dr. Jortin (Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 5, &c.) considers the cure of Severus by the means of holy oil, with a strong desire to convert it into a miracle.]

- 109 [\(return\)](#)
[Tertullian de Fuga, c. 13. The present was made during the feast of the Saturnalia; and it is a matter of serious concern to Tertullian, that the faithful should be confounded with the most infamous professions which purchased the connivance of the government.]
- 110 [\(return\)](#)
[Euseb. l. v. c. 23, 24. Mosheim, p. 435—447.]
- 111 [\(return\)](#)
[Judæos fieri sub gravi pœna vetuit. Idem etiam de Christianis sanxit. Hist. August. p. 70.]

But the laws which Severus had enacted soon expired with the authority of that emperor; and the Christians, after this accidental tempest, enjoyed a calm of thirty-eight years. [112](#) Till this period they had usually held their assemblies in private houses and sequestered places. They were now permitted to erect and consecrate convenient edifices for the purpose of religious worship; [113](#) to purchase lands, even at Rome itself, for the use of the community; and to conduct the elections of their ecclesiastical ministers in so public, but at the same time in so exemplary a manner, as to deserve the respectful attention of the Gentiles. [114](#) This long repose of the church was accompanied with dignity. The reigns of those princes who derived their extraction from the Asiatic provinces, proved the most favorable to the Christians; the eminent persons of the sect, instead of being reduced to implore the protection of a slave or concubine, were admitted into the palace in the honorable characters of priests and philosophers; and their mysterious doctrines, which were already diffused among the people, insensibly attracted the curiosity of their sovereign. When the empress Mammæa passed through Antioch, she expressed a desire of conversing with the celebrated Origen, the fame of whose piety and learning was spread over the East. Origen obeyed so flattering an invitation, and though he could not expect to succeed in the conversion of an artful and ambitious woman, she listened with pleasure to his eloquent exhortations, and honorably dismissed him to his retirement in Palestine. [115](#) The sentiments of Mammæa were adopted by her son Alexander, and the philosophic devotion of that emperor was marked by a singular but injudicious regard for the Christian religion. In his domestic chapel he placed the statues of Abraham, of Orpheus, of Apollonius, and of Christ, as an honor justly due to those respectable sages who had instructed mankind in the various modes of addressing their homage to the supreme and universal Deity. [116](#) A purer faith, as well as worship, was openly professed and practised among his household. Bishops, perhaps for the first time, were seen at court; and, after the death of Alexander, when the inhuman Maximin discharged his fury on the favorites and servants of his unfortunate benefactor, a great number of Christians of every rank and of both sexes, were involved in the promiscuous massacre, which, on their account, has improperly received the name of Persecution. [117](#) [1171](#)

- 112 [\(return\)](#)
[Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. p. 384. This computation (allowing for a single exception) is confirmed by the history of Eusebius, and by the writings of Cyprian.]
- 113 [\(return\)](#)
[The antiquity of Christian churches is discussed by Tillemont, (*Mémoires Ecclésiastiques*, tom. iii. part ii. p. 68-72,) and by Mr. Moyle, (vol. i. p. 378-398.) The former refers the first construction of them to the peace of Alexander Severus; the latter, to the peace of Gallienus.]
- 114 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Augustan History, p. 130. The emperor Alexander adopted their method of publicly proposing the names of those persons who were candidates for ordination. It is true that the honor of this practice is likewise attributed to the Jews.]
- 115 [\(return\)](#)
[Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. vi. c. 21. Hieronym. de Script. Eccles. c. 54. Mammæa was styled a holy and pious woman, both by the Christians and the Pagans. From the former, therefore, it was impossible that she should deserve that honorable epithet.]
- 116 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Augustan History, p. 123. Mosheim (p. 465) seems to refine too much on the domestic religion of Alexander. His design of building a public temple to Christ, (Hist. August. p. 129,) and the objection which was suggested either to him, or in similar circumstances to Hadrian, appear to have no other foundation than an improbable report, invented by the Christians, and credulously adopted by an historian of the age of Constantine.]
- 117 [\(return\)](#)
[Euseb. l. vi. c. 28. It may be presumed that the success of the Christians had exasperated the increasing bigotry of the Pagans. Dion Cassius, who composed his history under the former reign, had most probably intended for the use of his master those counsels of persecution, which he ascribes to a better age, and to and to the favorite of Augustus. Concerning this oration of Mæcenas, or rather of Dion, I may refer to my own unbiased opinion, (vol. i. c. 1, note 25,) and to the Abbé de la Bleterie (*Mémoires de l'Académie*, tom. xxiv. p. 303 tom xxv. p. 432.) * Note: If this be the case, Dion Cassius must have known the Christians they must have been the subject of his particular attention,

since the author supposes that he wished his master to profit by these “counsels of persecution.” How are we to reconcile this necessary consequence with what Gibbon has said of the ignorance of Dion Cassius even of the name of the Christians? (c. xvi. n. 24.) (Gibbon speaks of Dion’s *silence*, not of his *ignorance*.—M) The supposition in this note is supported by no proof; it is probable that Dion Cassius has often designated the Christians by the name of Jews. See Dion Cassius, l. lxvii. c. 14, lxviii. 1—G. On this point I should adopt the view of Gibbon rather than that of M Guizot.—M]

1171

[\(return\)](#)

[It is with good reason that this massacre has been called a persecution, for it lasted during the whole reign of Maximin, as may be seen in Eusebius. (l. vi. c. 28.) Rufinus expressly confirms it: Tribus annis a Maximino persecutione commota, in quibus finem et persecutionis fecit et vitas Hist. l. vi. c. 19.—G.]

Notwithstanding the cruel disposition of Maximin, the effects of his resentment against the Christians were of a very local and temporary nature, and the pious Origen, who had been proscribed as a devoted victim, was still reserved to convey the truths of the gospel to the ear of monarchs. [118](#) He addressed several edifying letters to the emperor Philip, to his wife, and to his mother; and as soon as that prince, who was born in the neighborhood of Palestine, had usurped the Imperial sceptre, the Christians acquired a friend and a protector. The public and even partial favor of Philip towards the sectaries of the new religion, and his constant reverence for the ministers of the church, gave some color to the suspicion, which prevailed in his own times, that the emperor himself was become a convert to the faith; [119](#) and afforded some grounds for a fable which was afterwards invented, that he had been purified by confession and penance from the guilt contracted by the murder of his innocent predecessor. [120](#) The fall of Philip introduced, with the change of masters, a new system of government, so oppressive to the Christians, that their former condition, ever since the time of Domitian, was represented as a state of perfect freedom and security, if compared with the rigorous treatment which they experienced under the short reign of Decius. [121](#) The virtues of that prince will scarcely allow us to suspect that he was actuated by a mean resentment against the favorites of his predecessor; and it is more reasonable to believe, that in the prosecution of his general design to restore the purity of Roman manners, he was desirous of delivering the empire from what he condemned as a recent and criminal superstition. The bishops of the most considerable cities were removed by exile or death: the vigilance of the magistrates prevented the clergy of Rome during sixteen months from proceeding to a new election; and it was the opinion of the Christians, that the emperor would more patiently endure a competitor for the purple, than a bishop in the capital. [122](#) Were it possible to suppose that the penetration of Decius had

discovered pride under the disguise of humility, or that he could foresee the temporal dominion which might insensibly arise from the claims of spiritual authority, we might be less surprised, that he should consider the successors of St. Peter, as the most formidable rivals to those of Augustus.

118 [\(return\)](#)

[Orosius, l. vii. c. 19, mentions Origen as the object of Maximin's resentment; and Firmilianus, a Cappadocian bishop of that age, gives a just and confined idea of this persecution, (apud Cyprian Epist. 75.)]

119 [\(return\)](#)

[The mention of those princes who were publicly supposed to be Christians, as we find it in an epistle of Dionysius of Alexandria, (ap. Euseb. l. vii. c. 10,) evidently alludes to Philip and his family, and forms a contemporary evidence, that such a report had prevailed; but the Egyptian bishop, who lived at an humble distance from the court of Rome, expresses himself with a becoming diffidence concerning the truth of the fact. The epistles of Origen (which were extant in the time of Eusebius, see l. vi. c. 36) would most probably decide this curious rather than important question.]

120 [\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. l. vi. c. 34. The story, as is usual, has been embellished by succeeding writers, and is confuted, with much superfluous learning, by Frederick Spanheim, (Opera Varia, tom. ii. p. 400, &c.)]

121 [\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius, de Mortibus Persecutorum, c. 3, 4. After celebrating the felicity and increase of the church, under a long succession of good princes, he adds, "Extitit post annos plurimos, execrabile animal, Decius, qui vexaret Ecclesiam."]

122 [\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. l. vi. c. 39. Cyprian. Epistol. 55. The see of Rome remained vacant from the martyrdom of Fabianus, the 20th of January, A. D. 259, till the election of Cornelius, the 4th of June, A. D. 251 Decius had probably left Rome, since he was killed before the end of that year.]

The administration of Valerian was distinguished by a levity and inconstancy ill suited to the gravity of the *Roman Censor*. In the first part of his reign, he surpassed in clemency those princes who had been suspected of an attachment to the Christian faith. In the last three years and a half, listening to the insinuations of a minister addicted to the superstitions of Egypt, he adopted the maxims, and imitated the severity, of his predecessor Decius. [123](#) The accession of Gallienus, which increased the calamities of

the empire, restored peace to the church; and the Christians obtained the free exercise of their religion by an edict addressed to the bishops, and conceived in such terms as seemed to acknowledge their office and public character. [124](#) The ancient laws, without being formally repealed, were suffered to sink into oblivion; and (excepting only some hostile intentions which are attributed to the emperor Aurelian [125](#) the disciples of Christ passed above forty years in a state of prosperity, far more dangerous to their virtue than the severest trials of persecution.

123 [\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. l. vii. c. 10. Mosheim (p. 548) has very clearly shown that the præfect Macrianus, and the Egyptian *Magus*, are one and the same person.]

124 [\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius (l. vii. c. 13) gives us a Greek version of this Latin edict, which seems to have been very concise. By another edict, he directed that the *Cæmeteria* should be restored to the Christians.]

125 [\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. l. vii. c. 30. Lactantius de M. P. c. 6. Hieronym. in Chron. p. 177. Orosius, l. vii. c. 23. Their language is in general so ambiguous and incorrect, that we are at a loss to determine how far Aurelian had carried his intentions before he was assassinated. Most of the moderns (except Dodwell, Dissertat. Cyprian. vi. 64) have seized the occasion of gaining a few extraordinary martyrs. * Note: Dr. Lardner has detailed, with his usual impartiality, all that has come down to us relating to the persecution of Aurelian, and concludes by saying, "Upon more carefully examining the words of Eusebius, and observing the accounts of other authors, learned men have generally, and, as I think, very judiciously, determined, that Aurelian not only intended, but did actually persecute: but his persecution was short, he having died soon after the publication of his edicts." Heathen Test. c. xxxvi.—Basmage positively pronounces the same opinion: Non intentatum modo, sed executum quoque brevissimo tempore mandatum, nobis infixum est in aniasis. Basn. Ann. 275, No. 2 and compare Pagi Ann. 272, Nos. 4, 12, 27—G.]

The story of Paul of Samosata, who filled the metropolitan see of Antioch, while the East was in the hands of Odenathus and Zenobia, may serve to illustrate the condition and character of the times. The wealth of that prelate was a sufficient evidence of his guilt, since it was neither derived from the inheritance of his fathers, nor acquired by the arts of honest industry. But Paul considered the service of the church as a very lucrative profession. [126](#) His ecclesiastical jurisdiction was venal and rapacious; he

extorted frequent contributions from the most opulent of the faithful, and converted to his own use a considerable part of the public revenue. By his pride and luxury, the Christian religion was rendered odious in the eyes of the Gentiles. His council chamber and his throne, the splendor with which he appeared in public, the suppliant crowd who solicited his attention, the multitude of letters and petitions to which he dictated his answers, and the perpetual hurry of business in which he was involved, were circumstances much better suited to the state of a civil magistrate, [127](#) than to the humility of a primitive bishop. When he harangued his people from the pulpit, Paul affected the figurative style and the theatrical gestures of an Asiatic sophist, while the cathedral resounded with the loudest and most extravagant acclamations in the praise of his divine eloquence. Against those who resisted his power, or refused to flatter his vanity, the prelate of Antioch was arrogant, rigid, and inexorable; but he relaxed the discipline, and lavished the treasures of the church on his dependent clergy, who were permitted to imitate their master in the gratification of every sensual appetite. For Paul indulged himself very freely in the pleasures of the table, and he had received into the episcopal palace two young and beautiful women as the constant companions of his leisure moments. [128](#)

126

[\(return\)](#)

[Paul was better pleased with the title of *Ducenarius*, than with that of bishop. The *Ducenarius* was an Imperial procurator, so called from his salary of two hundred *Sestertia*, or 1600*l.* a year. (See Salmatius ad Hist. August. p. 124.) Some critics suppose that the bishop of Antioch had actually obtained such an office from Zenobia, while others consider it only as a figurative expression of his pomp and insolence.]

127

[\(return\)](#)

[Simony was not unknown in those times; and the clergy some times bought what they intended to sell. It appears that the bishopric of Carthage was purchased by a wealthy matron, named Lucilla, for her servant Majorinus. The price was 400 *Folles*. (Monument. Antiq. ad calcem Optati, p. 263.) Every *Follis* contained 125 pieces of silver, and the whole sum may be computed at about 2400*l.*]

128

[\(return\)](#)

[If we are desirous of extenuating the vices of Paul, we must suspect the assembled bishops of the East of publishing the most malicious calumnies in circular epistles addressed to all the churches of the empire, (ap. Euseb. l. vii. c. 30.)]

Notwithstanding these scandalous vices, if Paul of Samosata had preserved the purity of the orthodox faith, his reign over the capital of Syria would have ended only with his

life; and had a seasonable persecution intervened, an effort of courage might perhaps have placed him in the rank of saints and martyrs. [1281](#)

Some nice and subtle errors, which he imprudently adopted and obstinately maintained, concerning the doctrine of the Trinity, excited the zeal and indignation of the Eastern churches. [129](#)

From Egypt to the Euxine Sea, the bishops were in arms and in motion. Several councils were held, confutations were published, excommunications were pronounced, ambiguous explanations were by turns accepted and refused, treaties were concluded and violated, and at length Paul of Samosata was degraded from his episcopal character, by the sentence of seventy or eighty bishops, who assembled for that purpose at Antioch, and who, without consulting the rights of the clergy or people, appointed a successor by their own authority. The manifest irregularity of this proceeding increased the numbers of the discontented faction; and as Paul, who was no stranger to the arts of courts, had insinuated himself into the favor of Zenobia, he maintained above four years the possession of the episcopal house and office. [1291](#) The victory of Aurelian changed the face of the East, and the two contending parties, who applied to each other the epithets of schism and heresy, were either commanded or permitted to plead their cause before the tribunal of the conqueror. This public and very singular trial affords a convincing proof that the existence, the property, the privileges, and the internal policy of the Christians, were acknowledged, if not by the laws, at least by the magistrates, of the empire. As a Pagan and as a soldier, it could scarcely be expected that Aurelian should enter into the discussion, whether the sentiments of Paul or those of his adversaries were most agreeable to the true standard of the orthodox faith. His determination, however, was founded on the general principles of equity and reason. He considered the bishops of Italy as the most impartial and respectable judges among the Christians, and as soon as he was informed that they had unanimously approved the sentence of the council, he acquiesced in their opinion, and immediately gave orders that Paul should be compelled to relinquish the temporal possessions belonging to an office, of which, in the judgment of his brethren, he had been regularly deprived. But while we applaud the justice, we should not overlook the policy, of Aurelian, who was desirous of restoring and cementing the dependence of the provinces on the capital, by every means which could bind the interest or prejudices of any part of his subjects. [130](#)

1281

[\(return\)](#)

[It appears, nevertheless, that the vices and immoralities of Paul of Samosata had much weight in the sentence pronounced against him by the bishops. The object of the letter, addressed by the synod to the bishops of Rome and Alexandria, was to inform them of the change in the faith of Paul, the altercations and discussions to which it had given rise, as well as of his morals and the whole of his conduct. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l. vii c. xxx—G.]

- 129 [\(return\)](#)
[His heresy (like those of Noetus and Sabellius, in the same century) tended to confound the mysterious distinction of the divine persons. See Mosheim, p. 702, &c.]
- 1291 [\(return\)](#)
[“Her favorite, (Zenobia’s,) Paul of Samosata, seems to have entertained some views of attempting a union between Judaism and Christianity; both parties rejected the unnatural alliance.” Hist. of Jews, iii. 175, and Jost. Geschichte der Israeliter, iv. 167. The protection of the severe Zenobia is the only circumstance which may raise a doubt of the notorious immorality of Paul.—M.]
- 130 [\(return\)](#)
[Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. vii. c. 30. We are entirely indebted to him for the curious story of Paul of Samosata.]

Amidst the frequent revolutions of the empire, the Christians still flourished in peace and prosperity; and notwithstanding a celebrated æra of martyrs has been deduced from the accession of Diocletian, [131](#) the new system of policy, introduced and maintained by the wisdom of that prince, continued, during more than eighteen years, to breathe the mildest and most liberal spirit of religious toleration. The mind of Diocletian himself was less adapted indeed to speculative inquiries, than to the active labors of war and government. His prudence rendered him averse to any great innovation, and though his temper was not very susceptible of zeal or enthusiasm, he always maintained an habitual regard for the ancient deities of the empire. But the leisure of the two empresses, of his wife Prisca, and of Valeria, his daughter, permitted them to listen with more attention and respect to the truths of Christianity, which in every age has acknowledged its important obligations to female devotion. [132](#) The principal eunuchs, Lucian [133](#) and Dorotheus, Gorgonius and Andrew, who attended the person, possessed the favor, and governed the household of Diocletian, protected by their powerful influence the faith which they had embraced. Their example was imitated by many of the most considerable officers of the palace, who, in their respective stations, had the care of the Imperial ornaments, of the robes, of the furniture, of the jewels, and even of the private treasury; and, though it might sometimes be incumbent on them to accompany the emperor when he sacrificed in the temple, [134](#) they enjoyed, with their wives, their children, and their slaves, the free exercise of the Christian religion. Diocletian and his colleagues frequently conferred the most important offices on those persons who avowed their abhorrence for the worship of the gods, but who had displayed abilities proper for the service of the state. The bishops held an honorable rank in their respective provinces, and were treated with distinction and respect, not only by the people, but by the magistrates themselves. Almost in every city, the ancient churches were found insufficient to contain the increasing multitude of proselytes; and in their place more

stately and capacious edifices were erected for the public worship of the faithful. The corruption of manners and principles, so forcibly lamented by Eusebius, [135](#) may be considered, not only as a consequence, but as a proof, of the liberty which the Christians enjoyed and abused under the reign of Diocletian. Prosperity had relaxed the nerves of discipline. Fraud, envy, and malice prevailed in every congregation. The presbyters aspired to the episcopal office, which every day became an object more worthy of their ambition. The bishops, who contended with each other for ecclesiastical preëminence, appeared by their conduct to claim a secular and tyrannical power in the church; and the lively faith which still distinguished the Christians from the Gentiles, was shown much less in their lives, than in their controversial writings.

131 [\(return\)](#)

[The Æra of Martyrs, which is still in use among the Copts and the Abyssinians, must be reckoned from the 29th of August, A. D. 284; as the beginning of the Egyptian year was nineteen days earlier than the real accession of Diocletian. See Dissertation Preliminaire a l'Art de verifier les Dates. * Note: On the æra of martyrs see the very curious dissertations of Mons Letronne on some recently discovered inscriptions in Egypt and Nubis, p. 102, &c.—M.]

132 [\(return\)](#)

[The expression of Lactantius, (de M. P. c. 15,) “sacrificio pollui coegit,” implies their antecedent conversion to the faith, but does not seem to justify the assertion of Mosheim, (p. 912,) that they had been privately baptized.]

133 [\(return\)](#)

[M. de Tillemont (Mémoires Ecclésiastiques, tom. v. part i. p. 11, 12) has quoted from the Spicilegium of Dom Luc d'Archeri a very curious instruction which Bishop Theonas composed for the use of Lucian.]

134 [\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius, de M. P. c. 10.]

135 [\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, Hist. Ecclesiast. l. viii. c. 1. The reader who consults the original will not accuse me of heightening the picture. Eusebius was about sixteen years of age at the accession of the emperor Diocletian.]

Notwithstanding this seeming security, an attentive observer might discern some symptoms that threatened the church with a more violent persecution than any which she had yet endured. The zeal and rapid progress of the Christians awakened the Polytheists from their supine indifference in the cause of those deities, whom custom and education had taught them to revere. The mutual provocations of a religious war,

which had already continued above two hundred years, exasperated the animosity of the contending parties. The Pagans were incensed at the rashness of a recent and obscure sect, which presumed to accuse their countrymen of error, and to devote their ancestors to eternal misery. The habits of justifying the popular mythology against the invectives of an implacable enemy, produced in their minds some sentiments of faith and reverence for a system which they had been accustomed to consider with the most careless levity. The supernatural powers assumed by the church inspired at the same time terror and emulation. The followers of the established religion intrenched themselves behind a similar fortification of prodigies; invented new modes of sacrifice, of expiation, and of initiation; [136](#) attempted to revive the credit of their expiring oracles; [137](#) and listened with eager credulity to every impostor, who flattered their prejudices by a tale of wonders. [138](#) Both parties seemed to acknowledge the truth of those miracles which were claimed by their adversaries; and while they were contented with ascribing them to the arts of magic, and to the power of dæmons, they mutually concurred in restoring and establishing the reign of superstition. [139](#) Philosophy, her most dangerous enemy, was now converted into her most useful ally. The groves of the academy, the gardens of Epicurus, and even the portico of the Stoics, were almost deserted, as so many different schools of scepticism or impiety; [140](#) and many among the Romans were desirous that the writings of Cicero should be condemned and suppressed by the authority of the senate. [141](#) The prevailing sect of the new Platonicians judged it prudent to connect themselves with the priests, whom perhaps they despised, against the Christians, whom they had reason to fear. These fashionable Philosophers prosecuted the design of extracting allegorical wisdom from the fictions of the Greek poets; instituted mysterious rites of devotion for the use of their chosen disciples; recommended the worship of the ancient gods as the emblems or ministers of the Supreme Deity, and composed against the faith of the gospel many elaborate treatises, [142](#) which have since been committed to the flames by the prudence of orthodox emperors. [143](#)

136

[\(return\)](#)

[We might quote, among a great number of instances, the mysterious worship of Mythras, and the Taurobolia; the latter of which became fashionable in the time of the Antonines, (see a Dissertation of M. de Boze, in the Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. ii. p. 443.) The romance of Apuleius is as full of devotion as of satire. * Note: On the extraordinary progress of the Mahriac rites, in the West, see De Guigniaud's translation of Creuzer, vol. i. p. 365, and Note 9, tom. i. part 2, p. 738, &c.—M.]

137

[\(return\)](#)

[The impostor Alexander very strongly recommended the oracle of Trophonius at Mallos, and those of Apollo at Claros and Miletus, (Lucian,

tom. ii. p. 236, edit. Reitz.) The last of these, whose singular history would furnish a very curious episode, was consulted by Diocletian before he published his edicts of persecution, (Lactantius, de M. P. c. 11.)]

138

[\(return\)](#)

[Besides the ancient stories of Pythagoras and Aristéas, the cures performed at the shrine of Æsculapius, and the fables related of Apollonius of Tyana, were frequently opposed to the miracles of Christ; though I agree with Dr. Lardner, (see Testimonies, vol. iii. p. 253, 352,) that when Philostratus composed the life of Apollonius, he had no such intention.]

139

[\(return\)](#)

[It is seriously to be lamented, that the Christian fathers, by acknowledging the supernatural, or, as they deem it, the infernal part of Paganism, destroy with their own hands the great advantage which we might otherwise derive from the liberal concessions of our adversaries.]

140

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian (p. 301, edit. Spanheim) expresses a pious joy, that the providence of the gods had extinguished the impious sects, and for the most part destroyed the books of the Pyrrhonians and Epicuræans, which had been very numerous, since Epicurus himself composed no less than 300 volumes. See Diogenes Laertius, l. x. c. 26.]

141

[\(return\)](#)

[Cumque alios audiam mussitare indignanter, et dicere oportere statui per Senatum, aboleantur ut hæc scripta, quibus Christiana Religio comprobetur, et vetustatis opprimatur auctoritas. Arnobius adversus Gentes, l. iii. p. 103, 104. He adds very properly, Erroris convincite Ciceronem... nam intercipere scripta, et publicatam velle submergere lectionem, non est Deum defendere sed veritatis testificationem timere.]

142

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius (Divin. Institut. l. v. c. 2, 3) gives a very clear and spirited account of two of these philosophic adversaries of the faith. The large treatise of Porphyry against the Christians consisted of thirty books, and was composed in Sicily about the year 270.]

143

[\(return\)](#)

[See Socrates, Hist. Ecclesiast. l. i. c. 9, and Codex Justinian. l. i. i. l. s.]

Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part VI.

Although the policy of Diocletian and the humanity of Constantius inclined them to preserve inviolate the maxims of toleration, it was soon discovered that their two associates, Maximian and Galerius, entertained the most implacable aversion for the name and religion of the Christians. The minds of those princes had never been enlightened by science; education had never softened their temper. They owed their greatness to their swords, and in their most elevated fortune they still retained their superstitious prejudices of soldiers and peasants. In the general administration of the provinces they obeyed the laws which their benefactor had established; but they frequently found occasions of exercising within their camp and palaces a secret persecution, [144](#) for which the imprudent zeal of the Christians sometimes offered the most specious pretences. A sentence of death was executed upon Maximilianus, an African youth, who had been produced by his own father [1441](#) before the magistrate as a sufficient and legal recruit, but who obstinately persisted in declaring, that his conscience would not permit him to embrace the profession of a soldier. [145](#) It could scarcely be expected that any government should suffer the action of Marcellus the Centurion to pass with impunity. On the day of a public festival, that officer threw away his belt, his arms, and the ensigns of his office, and exclaimed with a loud voice, that he would obey none but Jesus Christ the eternal King, and that he renounced forever the use of carnal weapons, and the service of an idolatrous master. The soldiers, as soon as they recovered from their astonishment, secured the person of Marcellus. He was examined in the city of Tingi by the president of that part of Mauritania; and as he was convicted by his own confession, he was condemned and beheaded for the crime of desertion. [146](#) Examples of such a nature savor much less of religious persecution than of martial or even civil law; but they served to alienate the mind of the emperors, to justify the severity of Galerius, who dismissed a great number of Christian officers from their employments; and to authorize the opinion, that a sect of enthusiasts, which avowed principles so repugnant to the public safety, must either remain useless, or would soon become dangerous, subjects of the empire.

144

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, l. viii. c. 4, c. 17. He limits the number of military martyrs, by a remarkable expression, of which neither his Latin nor French translator have rendered the energy. Notwithstanding the authority of Eusebius, and the silence of Lactantius, Ambrose, Sulpicius, Orosius, &c., it has been long believed, that the Thebæan legion, consisting of 6000 Christians, suffered martyrdom by the order of Maximian, in the valley of the Pennine Alps. The story was first published about the middle of the 5th century, by Eucherius, bishop of Lyons, who

received it from certain persons, who received it from Isaac, bishop of Geneva, who is said to have received it from Theodore, bishop of Octodurum. The abbey of St. Maurice still subsists, a rich monument of the credulity of Sigismund, king of Burgundy. See an excellent Dissertation in xxxvith volume of the Bibliothèque Raisonnée, p. 427-454.]

1441

[\(return\)](#)

[M. Guizot criticizes Gibbon's account of this incident. He supposes that Maximilian was not "produced by his father as a recruit," but was obliged to appear by the law, which compelled the sons of soldiers to serve at 21 years old. Was not this a law of Constantine? Neither does this circumstance appear in the acts. His father had clearly expected him to serve, as he had bought him a new dress for the occasion; yet he refused to force the conscience of his son. and when Maximilian was condemned to death, the father returned home in joy, blessing God for having bestowed upon him such a son.—M.]

145

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Acta Sincera, p. 299. The accounts of his martyrdom and that of Marcellus, bear every mark of truth and authenticity.]

146

[\(return\)](#)

[Acta Sincera, p. 302. * Note: M. Guizot here justly observes, that it was the necessity of sacrificing to the gods, which induced Marcellus to act in this manner.—M.]

After the success of the Persian war had raised the hopes and the reputation of Galerius, he passed a winter with Diocletian in the palace of Nicomedia; and the fate of Christianity became the object of their secret consultations. [147](#) The experienced emperor was still inclined to pursue measures of lenity; and though he readily consented to exclude the Christians from holding any employments in the household or the army, he urged in the strongest terms the danger as well as cruelty of shedding the blood of those deluded fanatics. Galerius at length extorted [1471](#) from him the permission of summoning a council, composed of a few persons the most distinguished in the civil and military departments of the state.

The important question was agitated in their presence, and those ambitious courtiers easily discerned, that it was incumbent on them to second, by their eloquence, the importunate violence of the Cæsar. It may be presumed, that they insisted on every topic which might interest the pride, the piety, or the fears, of their sovereign in the destruction of Christianity. Perhaps they represented, that the glorious work of the deliverance of the empire was left imperfect, as long as an independent people was permitted to subsist and multiply in the heart of the provinces. The Christians, (it might

specially be alleged,) renouncing the gods and the institutions of Rome, had constituted a distinct republic, which might yet be suppressed before it had acquired any military force; but which was already governed by its own laws and magistrates, was possessed of a public treasure, and was intimately connected in all its parts by the frequent assemblies of the bishops, to whose decrees their numerous and opulent congregations yielded an implicit obedience. Arguments like these may seem to have determined the reluctant mind of Diocletian to embrace a new system of persecution; but though we may suspect, it is not in our power to relate, the secret intrigues of the palace, the private views and resentments, the jealousy of women or eunuchs, and all those trifling but decisive causes which so often influence the fate of empires, and the councils of the wisest monarchs. [148](#)

147

[\(return\)](#)

[De M. P. c. 11. Lactantius (or whoever was the author of this little treatise) was, at that time, an inhabitant of Nicomedia; but it seems difficult to conceive how he could acquire so accurate a knowledge of what passed in the Imperial cabinet. Note: * Lactantius, who was subsequently chosen by Constantine to educate Crispus, might easily have learned these details from Constantine himself, already of sufficient age to interest himself in the affairs of the government, and in a position to obtain the best information.—G. This assumes the doubtful point of the authorship of the Treatise.—M.]

1471

[\(return\)](#)

[This permission was not extorted from Diocletian; he took the step of his own accord. Lactantius says, in truth, *Nec tamen deflectere potuit (Diocletianus) præcipitis hominis insaniam; placuit ergo amicorum sententiam experiri.* (De Mort. Pers. c. 11.) But this measure was in accordance with the artificial character of Diocletian, who wished to have the appearance of doing good by his own impulse and evil by the impulse of others. *Nam erat hujus malitiæ, cum bonum quid facere decrevisse sine consilio faciebat, ut ipse laudaretur. Cum autem malum. quoniam id reprehendendum sciebat, in consilium multos advocabat, ut aliorum culpæ adscriberetur quicquid ipse deliquerat.* Lact. ib. Eutropius says likewise, *Miratus callide fuit, sagax præterea et admodum subtilis ingenio, et qui severitatem suam aliena invidia vellet explere.* Eutrop. ix. c. 26.—G.—The manner in which the coarse and unfriendly pencil of the author of the Treatise de Mort. Pers. has drawn the character of Diocletian, seems inconsistent with this profound

subtilty. Many readers will perhaps agree with Gibbon.—M.]

148

[\(return\)](#)

[The only circumstance which we can discover, is the devotion and jealousy of the mother of Galerius. She is described by Lactantius, as Deorum montium cultrix; mulier admodum superstitiosa. She had a great influence over her son, and was offended by the disregard of some of her Christian servants. * Note: This disregard consisted in the Christians fasting and praying instead of participating in the banquets and sacrifices which she celebrated with the Pagans. Dapibus sacrificabat pœne quotidie ac vicariis suis epulis exhibebat. Christiani abstinebant, et illa cum gentibus epulante, jejuniis hi et orationibus insistebat; hine concepit odium Lact de Hist. Pers. c. 11.—G.]

The pleasure of the emperors was at length signified to the Christians, who, during the course of this melancholy winter, had expected, with anxiety, the result of so many secret consultations. The twenty-third of February, which coincided with the Roman festival of the Terminalia, [149](#) was appointed (whether from accident or design) to set bounds to the progress of Christianity. At the earliest dawn of day, the Prætorian præfect, [150](#) accompanied by several generals, tribunes, and officers of the revenue, repaired to the principal church of Nicomedia, which was situated on an eminence in the most populous and beautiful part of the city. The doors were instantly broke open; they rushed into the sanctuary; and as they searched in vain for some visible object of worship, they were obliged to content themselves with committing to the flames the volumes of the holy Scripture. The ministers of Diocletian were followed by a numerous body of guards and pioneers, who marched in order of battle, and were provided with all the instruments used in the destruction of fortified cities. By their incessant labor, a sacred edifice, which towered above the Imperial palace, and had long excited the indignation and envy of the Gentiles, was in a few hours levelled with the ground. [151](#)

149

[\(return\)](#)

[The worship and festival of the god Terminus are elegantly illustrated by M. de Boze, Mém. de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. i. p. 50.]

150

[\(return\)](#)

[In our only MS. of Lactantius, we read *profectus*; but reason, and the authority of all the critics, allow us, instead of that word, which destroys the sense of the passage, to substitute *præfectus*.]

151

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius, de M. P. c. 12, gives a very lively picture of the destruction of the church.]

The next day the general edict of persecution was published; [152](#) and though Diocletian, still averse to the effusion of blood, had moderated the fury of Galerius, who proposed, that every one refusing to offer sacrifice should immediately be burnt alive, the penalties inflicted on the obstinacy of the Christians might be deemed sufficiently rigorous and effectual. It was enacted, that their churches, in all the provinces of the empire, should be demolished to their foundations; and the punishment of death was denounced against all who should presume to hold any secret assemblies for the purpose of religious worship. The philosophers, who now assumed the unworthy office of directing the blind zeal of persecution, had diligently studied the nature and genius of the Christian religion; and as they were not ignorant that the speculative doctrines of the faith were supposed to be contained in the writings of the prophets, of the evangelists, and of the apostles, they most probably suggested the order, that the bishops and presbyters should deliver all their sacred books into the hands of the magistrates; who were commanded, under the severest penalties, to burn them in a public and solemn manner. By the same edict, the property of the church was at once confiscated; and the several parts of which it might consist were either sold to the highest bidder, united to the Imperial domain, bestowed on the cities and corporations, or granted to the solicitations of rapacious courtiers. After taking such effectual measures to abolish the worship, and to dissolve the government of the Christians, it was thought necessary to subject to the most intolerable hardships the condition of those perverse individuals who should still reject the religion of nature, of Rome, and of their ancestors. Persons of a liberal birth were declared incapable of holding any honors or employments; slaves were forever deprived of the hopes of freedom, and the whole body of the people were put out of the protection of the law. The judges were authorized to hear and to determine every action that was brought against a Christian. But the Christians were not permitted to complain of any injury which they themselves had suffered; and thus those unfortunate sectaries were exposed to the severity, while they were excluded from the benefits, of public justice. This new species of martyrdom, so painful and lingering, so obscure and ignominious, was, perhaps, the most proper to weary the constancy of the faithful: nor can it be doubted that the passions and interest of mankind were disposed on this occasion to second the designs of the emperors. But the policy of a well-ordered government must sometimes have interposed in behalf of the oppressed Christians; [1521](#) nor was it possible for the Roman princes entirely to remove the apprehension of punishment, or to connive at every act of fraud and violence, without exposing their own authority and the rest of their subjects to the most alarming dangers. [153](#)

1521 [\(return\)](#)
[This wants proof. The edict of Diocletian was executed in all its right during the rest of his reign. Euseb. Hist. Eccl. l viii. c. 13.—G.]

153 [\(return\)](#)
[Many ages afterwards, Edward J. practised, with great success, the same mode of persecution against the clergy of England. See Hume's History of England, vol. ii. p. 300, last 4to edition.]

This edict was scarcely exhibited to the public view, in the most conspicuous place of Nicomedia, before it was torn down by the hands of a Christian, who expressed at the same time, by the bitterest invectives, his contempt as well as abhorrence for such impious and tyrannical governors. His offence, according to the mildest laws, amounted to treason, and deserved death. And if it be true that he was a person of rank and education, those circumstances could serve only to aggravate his guilt. He was burnt, or rather roasted, by a slow fire; and his executioners, zealous to revenge the personal insult which had been offered to the emperors, exhausted every refinement of cruelty, without being able to subdue his patience, or to alter the steady and insulting smile which in his dying agonies he still preserved in his countenance. The Christians, though they confessed that his conduct had not been strictly conformable to the laws of prudence, admired the divine fervor of his zeal; and the excessive commendations which they lavished on the memory of their hero and martyr, contributed to fix a deep impression of terror and hatred in the mind of Diocletian. [154](#)

154 [\(return\)](#)
[Lactantius only calls him quidam, et si non recte, magno tamen animo, &c., c. 12. Eusebius (l. viii. c. 5) adorns him with secular honora Neither have condescended to mention his name; but the Greeks celebrate his memory under that of John. See Tillemont, Memones Ecclésiastiques, tom. v. part ii. p. 320.]

His fears were soon alarmed by the view of a danger from which he very narrowly escaped. Within fifteen days the palace of Nicomedia, and even the bed-chamber of Diocletian, were twice in flames; and though both times they were extinguished without any material damage, the singular repetition of the fire was justly considered as an evident proof that it had not been the effect of chance or negligence. The suspicion naturally fell on the Christians; and it was suggested, with some degree of probability, that those desperate fanatics, provoked by their present sufferings, and apprehensive of impending calamities, had entered into a conspiracy with their faithful brethren, the eunuchs of the palace, against the lives of two emperors, whom they detested as the irreconcilable enemies of the church of God.

Jealousy and resentment prevailed in every breast, but especially in that of Diocletian. A great number of persons, distinguished either by the offices which they had filled, or

by the favor which they had enjoyed, were thrown into prison. Every mode of torture was put in practice, and the court, as well as city, was polluted with many bloody executions. [155](#) But as it was found impossible to extort any discovery of this mysterious transaction, it seems incumbent on us either to presume the innocence, or to admire the resolution, of the sufferers. A few days afterwards Galerius hastily withdrew himself from Nicomedia, declaring, that if he delayed his departure from that devoted palace, he should fall a sacrifice to the rage of the Christians.

The ecclesiastical historians, from whom alone we derive a partial and imperfect knowledge of this persecution, are at a loss how to account for the fears and dangers of the emperors. Two of these writers, a prince and a rhetorician, were eye-witnesses of the fire of Nicomedia. The one ascribes it to lightning, and the divine wrath; the other affirms, that it was kindled by the malice of Galerius himself. [156](#)

155

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius de M. P. c. 13, 14. Potentissimi quondam Eunuchi necati, per quos Palatium et ipse constabat. Eusebius (l. viii. c. 6) mentions the cruel executions of the eunuchs, Gorgonius and Dorotheus, and of Anthimius, bishop of Nicomedia; and both those writers describe, in a vague but tragical manner, the horrid scenes which were acted even in the Imperial presence.]

156

[\(return\)](#)

[See Lactantius, Eusebius, and Constantine, ad Cœtum Sanctorum, c. xxv. Eusebius confesses his ignorance of the cause of this fire. Note: As the history of these times affords us no example of any attempts made by the Christians against their persecutors, we have no reason, not the slightest probability, to attribute to them the fire in the palace; and the authority of Constantine and Lactantius remains to explain it. M. de Tillemont has shown how they can be reconciled. Hist. des Empereurs, Vie de Diocletian, xix.—G. Had it been done by a Christian, it would probably have been a fanatic, who would have avowed and gloried in it. Tillemont's supposition that the fire was first caused by lightning, and fed and increased by the malice of Galerius, seems singularly improbable.—M.]

As the edict against the Christians was designed for a general law of the whole empire, and as Diocletian and Galerius, though they might not wait for the consent, were assured of the concurrence, of the Western princes, it would appear more consonant to our ideas of policy, that the governors of all the provinces should have received secret instructions to publish, on one and the same day, this declaration of war within their respective departments. It was at least to be expected, that the convenience

of the public highways and established posts would have enabled the emperors to transmit their orders with the utmost despatch from the palace of Nicomedia to the extremities of the Roman world; and that they would not have suffered fifty days to elapse, before the edict was published in Syria, and near four months before it was signified to the cities of Africa. [157](#)

This delay may perhaps be imputed to the cautious temper of Diocletian, who had yielded a reluctant consent to the measures of persecution, and who was desirous of trying the experiment under his more immediate eye, before he gave way to the disorders and discontent which it must inevitably occasion in the distant provinces. At first, indeed, the magistrates were restrained from the effusion of blood; but the use of every other severity was permitted, and even recommended to their zeal; nor could the Christians, though they cheerfully resigned the ornaments of their churches, resolve to interrupt their religious assemblies, or to deliver their sacred books to the flames. The pious obstinacy of Felix, an African bishop, appears to have embarrassed the subordinate ministers of the government. The curator of his city sent him in chains to the proconsul. The proconsul transmitted him to the Prætorian præfect of Italy; and Felix, who disdained even to give an evasive answer, was at length beheaded at Venusia, in Lucania, a place on which the birth of Horace has conferred fame. [158](#) This precedent, and perhaps some Imperial rescript, which was issued in consequence of it, appeared to authorize the governors of provinces, in punishing with death the refusal of the Christians to deliver up their sacred books. There were undoubtedly many persons who embraced this opportunity of obtaining the crown of martyrdom; but there were likewise too many who purchased an ignominious life, by discovering and betraying the holy Scripture into the hands of infidels. A great number even of bishops and presbyters acquired, by this criminal compliance, the opprobrious epithet of *Traditors*; and their offence was productive of much present scandal and of much future discord in the African church. [159](#)

157 [\(return\)](#)
[Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclesiast. tom. v. part i. p. 43.]

158 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Acta Sincera of Ruinart, p. 353; those of Felix of Thibara, or Tibiur, appear much less corrupted than in the other editions, which afford a lively specimen of legendary license.]

159 [\(return\)](#)
[See the first book of Optatus of Milevis against the Donatiste, Paris, 1700, edit. Dupin. He lived under the reign of Valens.]

The copies as well as the versions of Scripture, were already so multiplied in the empire, that the most severe inquisition could no longer be attended with any fatal consequences; and even the sacrifice of those volumes, which, in every congregation,

were preserved for public use, required the consent of some treacherous and unworthy Christians. But the ruin of the churches was easily effected by the authority of the government, and by the labor of the Pagans. In some provinces, however, the magistrates contented themselves with shutting up the places of religious worship. In others, they more literally complied with the terms of the edict; and after taking away the doors, the benches, and the pulpit, which they burnt as it were in a funeral pile, they completely demolished the remainder of the edifice. [160](#) It is perhaps to this melancholy occasion that we should apply a very remarkable story, which is related with so many circumstances of variety and improbability, that it serves rather to excite than to satisfy our curiosity. In a small town in Phrygia, of whose name as well as situation we are left ignorant, it should seem that the magistrates and the body of the people had embraced the Christian faith; and as some resistance might be apprehended to the execution of the edict, the governor of the province was supported by a numerous detachment of legionaries. On their approach the citizens threw themselves into the church, with the resolution either of defending by arms that sacred edifice, or of perishing in its ruins. They indignantly rejected the notice and permission which was given them to retire, till the soldiers, provoked by their obstinate refusal, set fire to the building on all sides, and consumed, by this extraordinary kind of martyrdom, a great number of Phrygians, with their wives and children. [161](#)

160

[\(return\)](#)

[The ancient monuments, published at the end of Optatus, p. 261, &c. describe, in a very circumstantial manner, the proceedings of the governors in the destruction of churches. They made a minute inventory of the plate, &c., which they found in them. That of the church of Cirta, in Numidia, is still extant. It consisted of two chalices of gold, and six of silver; six urns, one kettle, seven lamps, all likewise of silver; besides a large quantity of brass utensils, and wearing apparel.]

161

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius (Institut. Divin. v. 11) confines the calamity to the *conventiculum*, with its congregation. Eusebius (viii. 11) extends it to a whole city, and introduces something very like a regular siege. His ancient Latin translator, Rufinus, adds the important circumstance of the permission given to the inhabitants of retiring from thence. As Phrygia reached to the confines of Isauria, it is possible that the restless temper of those independent barbarians may have contributed to this misfortune. Note: Universum populum. Lact. Inst. Div. v. 11.—G.]

Some slight disturbances, though they were suppressed almost as soon as excited, in Syria and the frontiers of Armenia, afforded the enemies of the church a very plausible

occasion to insinuate, that those troubles had been secretly fomented by the intrigues of the bishops, who had already forgotten their ostentatious professions of passive and unlimited obedience. [162](#)

The resentment, or the fears, of Diocletian, at length transported him beyond the bounds of moderation, which he had hitherto preserved, and he declared, in a series of cruel edicts, [1621](#) his intention of abolishing the Christian name. By the first of these edicts, the governors of the provinces were directed to apprehend all persons of the ecclesiastical order; and the prisons, destined for the vilest criminals, were soon filled with a multitude of bishops, presbyters, deacons, readers, and exorcists. By a second edict, the magistrates were commanded to employ every method of severity, which might reclaim them from their odious superstition, and oblige them to return to the established worship of the gods. This rigorous order was extended, by a subsequent edict, to the whole body of Christians, who were exposed to a violent and general persecution. [163](#)

Instead of those salutary restraints, which had required the direct and solemn testimony of an accuser, it became the duty as well as the interest of the Imperial officers to discover, to pursue, and to torment the most obnoxious among the faithful. Heavy penalties were denounced against all who should presume to save a prescribed sectary from the just indignation of the gods, and of the emperors. Yet, notwithstanding the severity of this law, the virtuous courage of many of the Pagans, in concealing their friends or relations, affords an honorable proof, that the rage of superstition had not extinguished in their minds the sentiments of nature and humanity. [164](#)

162

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, l. viii. c. 6. M. de Valois (with some probability) thinks that he has discovered the Syrian rebellion in an oration of Libanius; and that it was a rash attempt of the tribune Eugenius, who with only five hundred men seized Antioch, and might perhaps allure the Christians by the promise of religious toleration. From Eusebius, (l. ix. c. 8,) as well as from Moses of Chorene, (Hist. Armen. l. ii. 77, &c.,) it may be inferred, that Christianity was already introduced into Armenia.]

1621

[\(return\)](#)

[He had already passed them in his first edict. It does not appear that resentment or fear had any share in the new persecutions: perhaps they originated in superstition, and a specious apparent respect for its ministers. The oracle of Apollo, consulted by Diocletian, gave no answer; and said that just men hindered it from speaking. Constantine, who assisted at the ceremony, affirms, with an oath, that when questioned about these men, the high priest named the Christians. "The Emperor eagerly seized on this answer; and drew against the

innocent a sword, destined only to punish the guilty: he instantly issued edicts, written, if I may use the expression, with a poniard; and ordered the judges to employ all their skill to invent new modes of punishment. Euseb. Vit Constant. l. ii c 54.”—G.]

163

[\(return\)](#)

[See Mosheim, p. 938: the text of Eusebius very plainly shows that the governors, whose powers were enlarged, not restrained, by the new laws, could punish with death the most obstinate Christians as an example to their brethren.]

164

[\(return\)](#)

[Athanasius, p. 833, ap. Tillemont, Mém. Ecclesiast. tom v part i. 90.]

Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part VII.

Diocletian had no sooner published his edicts against the Christians, than, as if he had been desirous of committing to other hands the work of persecution, he divested himself of the Imperial purple. The character and situation of his colleagues and successors sometimes urged them to enforce and sometimes inclined them to suspend, the execution of these rigorous laws; nor can we acquire a just and distinct idea of this important period of ecclesiastical history, unless we separately consider the state of Christianity, in the different parts of the empire, during the space of ten years, which elapsed between the first edicts of Diocletian and the final peace of the church.

The mild and humane temper of Constantius was averse to the oppression of any part of his subjects. The principal offices of his palace were exercised by Christians. He loved their persons, esteemed their fidelity, and entertained not any dislike to their religious principles. But as long as Constantius remained in the subordinate station of Cæsar, it was not in his power openly to reject the edicts of Diocletian, or to disobey the commands of Maximian. His authority contributed, however, to alleviate the sufferings which he pitied and abhorred. He consented with reluctance to the ruin of the churches; but he ventured to protect the Christians themselves from the fury of the populace, and from the rigor of the laws. The provinces of Gaul (under which we may probably include those of Britain) were indebted for the singular tranquillity which they enjoyed, to the gentle interposition of their sovereign. [165](#) But Datianus, the president or governor of Spain, actuated either by zeal or policy, chose rather to execute the public edicts of the emperors, than to understand the secret intentions of Constantius; and it can scarcely be doubted, that his provincial administration was stained with the blood of a few martyrs. [166](#)

The elevation of Constantius to the supreme and independent dignity of Augustus, gave a free scope to the exercise of his virtues, and the shortness of his reign did not prevent him from establishing a system of toleration, of which he left the precept and the example to his son Constantine. His fortunate son, from the first moment of his accession, declaring himself the protector of the church, at length deserved the appellation of the first emperor who publicly professed and established the Christian religion. The motives of his conversion, as they may variously be deduced from benevolence, from policy, from conviction, or from remorse, and the progress of the revolution, which, under his powerful influence and that of his sons, rendered Christianity the reigning religion of the Roman empire, will form a very interesting and important chapter in the present volume of this history. At present it may be sufficient to observe, that every victory of Constantine was productive of some relief or benefit to the church.

165 [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius, l. viii. c. 13. Lactantius de M. P. c. 15. Dodwell (Dissertat. Cyprian. xi. 75) represents them as inconsistent with each other. But the former evidently speaks of Constantius in the station of Cæsar, and the latter of the same prince in the rank of Augustus.]

166 [\(return\)](#)
[Datianus is mentioned, in Gruter's Inscriptions, as having determined the limits between the territories of Pax Julia, and those of Ebora, both cities in the southern part of Lusitania. If we recollect the neighborhood of those places to Cape St. Vincent, we may suspect that the celebrated deacon and martyr of that name had been inaccurately assigned by Prudentius, &c., to Saragossa, or Valentia. See the pompous history of his sufferings, in the Mémoires de Tillemont, tom. v. part ii. p. 58-85. Some critics are of opinion, that the department of Constantius, as Cæsar, did not include Spain, which still continued under the immediate jurisdiction of Maximian.]

The provinces of Italy and Africa experienced a short but violent persecution. The rigorous edicts of Diocletian were strictly and cheerfully executed by his associate Maximian, who had long hated the Christians, and who delighted in acts of blood and violence. In the autumn of the first year of the persecution, the two emperors met at Rome to celebrate their triumph; several oppressive laws appear to have issued from their secret consultations, and the diligence of the magistrates was animated by the presence of their sovereigns. After Diocletian had divested himself of the purple, Italy and Africa were administered under the name of Severus, and were exposed, without defence, to the implacable resentment of his master Galerius. Among the martyrs of Rome, Adauctus deserves the notice of posterity. He was of a noble family in Italy, and

had raised himself, through the successive honors of the palace, to the important office of treasurer of the private Jemesnes. Adauctus is the more remarkable for being the only person of rank and distinction who appears to have suffered death, during the whole course of this general persecution. [167](#)

167

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, l. viii. c. 11. Gruter, Inscrip. p. 1171, No. 18. Rufinus has mistaken the office of Adauctus, as well as the place of his martyrdom. *

Note: M. Guizot suggests the powerful cunuchs of the palace. Dorotheus, Gorgonius, and Andrew, admitted by Gibbon himself to have been put to death, p. 66.]

The revolt of Maxentius immediately restored peace to the churches of Italy and Africa; and the same tyrant who oppressed every other class of his subjects, showed himself just, humane, and even partial, towards the afflicted Christians. He depended on their gratitude and affection, and very naturally presumed, that the injuries which they had suffered, and the dangers which they still apprehended from his most inveterate enemy, would secure the fidelity of a party already considerable by their numbers and opulence. [168](#) Even the conduct of Maxentius towards the bishops of Rome and Carthage may be considered as the proof of his toleration, since it is probable that the most orthodox princes would adopt the same measures with regard to their established clergy. Marcellus, the former of these prelates, had thrown the capital into confusion, by the severe penance which he imposed on a great number of Christians, who, during the late persecution, had renounced or dissembled their religion. The rage of faction broke out in frequent and violent seditions; the blood of the faithful was shed by each other's hands, and the exile of Marcellus, whose prudence seems to have been less eminent than his zeal, was found to be the only measure capable of restoring peace to the distracted church of Rome. [169](#) The behavior of Mensurius, bishop of Carthage, appears to have been still more reprehensible. A deacon of that city had published a libel against the emperor. The offender took refuge in the episcopal palace; and though it was somewhat early to advance any claims of ecclesiastical immunities, the bishop refused to deliver him up to the officers of justice. For this treasonable resistance, Mensurius was summoned to court, and instead of receiving a legal sentence of death or banishment, he was permitted, after a short examination, to return to his diocese. [170](#) Such was the happy condition of the Christian subjects of Maxentius, that whenever they were desirous of procuring for their own use any bodies of martyrs, they were obliged to purchase them from the most distant provinces of the East. A story is related of Aglae, a Roman lady, descended from a consular family, and possessed of so ample an estate, that it required the management of seventy-three stewards. Among these Boniface was the favorite of his mistress; and as Aglae mixed love with devotion, it is reported that he was admitted to share her bed. Her fortune enabled her to gratify the pious desire of obtaining some sacred relics from the East. She intrusted Boniface

with a considerable sum of gold, and a large quantity of aromatics; and her lover, attended by twelve horsemen and three covered chariots, undertook a remote pilgrimage, as far as Tarsus in Cilicia. [171](#)

168

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, l. viii. c. 14. But as Maxentius was vanquished by Constantine, it suited the purpose of Lactantius to place his death among those of the persecutors. * Note: M. Guizot directly contradicts this statement of Gibbon, and appeals to Eusebius. Maxentius, who assumed the power in Italy, pretended at first to be a Christian, to gain the favor of the Roman people; he ordered his ministers to cease to persecute the Christians, affecting a hypocritical piety, in order to appear more mild than his predecessors; but his actions soon proved that he was very different from what they had at first hoped. The actions of Maxentius were those of a cruel tyrant, but not those of a persecutor: the Christians, like the rest of his subjects, suffered from his vices, but they were not oppressed as a sect. Christian females were exposed to his lusts, as well as to the brutal violence of his colleague Maximian, but they were not selected as Christians.—M.]

169

[\(return\)](#)

[The epitaph of Marcellus is to be found in Gruter, Inscript. p 1172, No. 3, and it contains all that we know of his history. Marcellinus and Marcellus, whose names follow in the list of popes, are supposed by many critics to be different persons; but the learned Abbé de Longuerue was convinced that they were one and the same.

Veridicus rector lapsis quia crimina flere
Prædixit miseris, fuit omnibus hostis amarus.
Hinc furor, hinc odium; sequitur discordia, lites,
Seditio, cædes; solvuntur fœdera pacis.
Crimen ob alterius, Christum qui in pace negavit
Finibus expulsus patriæ est feritate Tyranni.
Hæc breviter Damasus voluit comperta referre:
Marcelli populus meritum cognoscere posset.

We may observe that Damasus was made Bishop of Rome, A. D. 366.]

170

[\(return\)](#)

[Optatus contr. Donatist. l. i. c. 17, 18. * Note: The words of Optatus are, Profectus (Roman) causam dixit; jussus con reverti Carthaginem; perhaps, in

pleading his cause, he exculpated himself, since he received an order to return to Carthage.—G.]

171

[\(return\)](#)

[The Acts of the Passion of St. Boniface, which abound in miracles and declamation, are published by Ruinart, (p. 283—291,) both in Greek and Latin, from the authority of very ancient manuscripts. Note: We are ignorant whether Aglae and Boniface were Christians at the time of their unlawful connection. See Tillemont. Mem, Eccles. Note on the Persecution of Domitian, tom. v. note 82. M. de Tillemont proves also that the history is doubtful.—G. —Sir D. Dalrymple (Lord Hailes) calls the story of Aglae and Boniface as of equal authority with our *popular* histories of Whittington and Hickathrift. Christian Antiquities, ii. 64.—M.]

The sanguinary temper of Galerius, the first and principal author of the persecution, was formidable to those Christians whom their misfortunes had placed within the limits of his dominions; and it may fairly be presumed that many persons of a middle rank, who were not confined by the chains either of wealth or of poverty, very frequently deserted their native country, and sought a refuge in the milder climate of the West. [1711](#) As long as he commanded only the armies and provinces of Illyricum, he could with difficulty either find or make a considerable number of martyrs, in a warlike country, which had entertained the missionaries of the gospel with more coldness and reluctance than any other part of the empire. [172](#) But when Galerius had obtained the supreme power, and the government of the East, he indulged in their fullest extent his zeal and cruelty, not only in the provinces of Thrace and Asia, which acknowledged his immediate jurisdiction, but in those of Syria, Palestine, and Egypt, where Maximin gratified his own inclination, by yielding a rigorous obedience to the stern commands of his benefactor. [173](#) The frequent disappointments of his ambitious views, the experience of six years of persecution, and the salutary reflections which a lingering and painful distemper suggested to the mind of Galerius, at length convinced him that the most violent efforts of despotism are insufficient to extirpate a whole people, or to subdue their religious prejudices. Desirous of repairing the mischief that he had occasioned, he published in his own name, and in those of Licinius and Constantine, a general edict, which, after a pompous recital of the Imperial titles, proceeded in the following manner:—

1711

[\(return\)](#)

[A little after this, Christianity was propagated to the north of the Roman provinces, among the tribes of Germany: a multitude of Christians, forced by the persecutions of the Emperors to take refuge among the Barbarians, were received with kindness. Euseb. de Vit. Constant. ii. 53. Semler Select. cap. H. E. p. 115. The Goths owed their first

knowledge of Christianity to a young girl, a prisoner of war; she continued in the midst of them her exercises of piety; she fasted, prayed, and praised God day and night. When she was asked what good would come of so much painful trouble she answered, "It is thus that Christ, the Son of God, is to be honored." Sozomen, ii. c. 6.—G.]

172

[\(return\)](#)

[During the four first centuries, there exist few traces of either bishops or bishoprics in the western Illyricum. It has been thought probable that the primate of Milan extended his jurisdiction over Sirmium, the capital of that great province. See the *Geographia Sacra* of Charles de St. Paul, p. 68-76, with the observations of Lucas Holstenius.]

173

[\(return\)](#)

[The viiiith book of Eusebius, as well as the supplement concerning the martyrs of Palestine, principally relate to the persecution of Galerius and Maximin. The general lamentations with which Lactantius opens the vth book of his *Divine Institutions* allude to their cruelty.] "Among the important cares which have occupied our mind for the utility and preservation of the empire, it was our intention to correct and reestablish all things according to the ancient laws and public discipline of the Romans. We were particularly desirous of reclaiming into the way of reason and nature, the deluded Christians who had renounced the religion and ceremonies instituted by their fathers; and presumptuously despising the practice of antiquity, had invented extravagant laws and opinions, according to the dictates of their fancy, and had collected a various society from the different provinces of our empire. The edicts, which we have published to enforce the worship of the gods, having exposed many of the Christians to danger and distress, many having suffered death, and many more, who still persist in their impious folly, being left destitute of *any* public exercise of religion, we are disposed to extend to those unhappy men the effects of our wonted clemency. We permit them therefore freely to profess their private opinions, and to assemble in their conventicles without fear or molestation, provided always that they preserve a due respect to the established laws and government. By another rescript we shall signify our intentions to the judges and magistrates; and we hope that our indulgence will engage the Christians to offer up their prayers to the Deity whom they

adore, for our safety and prosperity for their own, and for that of the republic.” [174](#) It is not usually in the language of edicts and manifestos that we should search for the real character or the secret motives of princes; but as these were the words of a dying emperor, his situation, perhaps, may be admitted as a pledge of his sincerity.

174

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius (l. viii. c. 17) has given us a Greek version, and Lactantius (de M. P. c. 34) the Latin original, of this memorable edict. Neither of these writers seems to recollect how directly it contradicts whatever they have just affirmed of the remorse and repentance of Galerius. Note: But Gibbon has answered this by his just observation, that it is not in the language of edicts and manifestos that we should search * * for the secre motives of princes.—M.]

When Galerius subscribed this edict of toleration, he was well assured that Licinius would readily comply with the inclinations of his friend and benefactor, and that any measures in favor of the Christians would obtain the approbation of Constantine. But the emperor would not venture to insert in the preamble the name of Maximin, whose consent was of the greatest importance, and who succeeded a few days afterwards to the provinces of Asia. In the first six months, however, of his new reign, Maximin affected to adopt the prudent counsels of his predecessor; and though he never condescended to secure the tranquillity of the church by a public edict, Sabinus, his Prætorian præfect, addressed a circular letter to all the governors and magistrates of the provinces, expatiating on the Imperial clemency, acknowledging the invincible obstinacy of the Christians, and directing the officers of justice to cease their ineffectual prosecutions, and to connive at the secret assemblies of those enthusiasts. In consequence of these orders, great numbers of Christians were released from prison, or delivered from the mines. The confessors, singing hymns of triumph, returned into their own countries; and those who had yielded to the violence of the tempest, solicited with tears of repentance their readmission into the bosom of the church. [175](#)

175

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, l. ix. c. 1. He inserts the epistle of the præfect.]

But this treacherous calm was of short duration; nor could the Christians of the East place any confidence in the character of their sovereign. Cruelty and superstition were the ruling passions of the soul of Maximin. The former suggested the means, the latter pointed out the objects of persecution. The emperor was devoted to the worship of the gods, to the study of magic, and to the belief of oracles. The prophets or philosophers, whom he revered as the favorites of Heaven, were frequently raised to the government of provinces, and admitted into his most secret councils. They easily convinced him

that the Christians had been indebted for their victories to their regular discipline, and that the weakness of polytheism had principally flowed from a want of union and subordination among the ministers of religion. A system of government was therefore instituted, which was evidently copied from the policy of the church. In all the great cities of the empire, the temples were repaired and beautified by the order of Maximin, and the officiating priests of the various deities were subjected to the authority of a superior pontiff destined to oppose the bishop, and to promote the cause of paganism. These pontiffs acknowledged, in their turn, the supreme jurisdiction of the metropolitans or high priests of the province, who acted as the immediate vicegerents of the emperor himself. A white robe was the ensign of their dignity; and these new prelates were carefully selected from the most noble and opulent families. By the influence of the magistrates, and of the sacerdotal order, a great number of dutiful addresses were obtained, particularly from the cities of Nicomedia, Antioch, and Tyre, which artfully represented the well-known intentions of the court as the general sense of the people; solicited the emperor to consult the laws of justice rather than the dictates of his clemency; expressed their abhorrence of the Christians, and humbly prayed that those impious sectaries might at least be excluded from the limits of their respective territories. The answer of Maximin to the address which he obtained from the citizens of Tyre is still extant. He praises their zeal and devotion in terms of the highest satisfaction, descants on the obstinate impiety of the Christians, and betrays, by the readiness with which he consents to their banishment, that he considered himself as receiving, rather than as conferring, an obligation. The priests as well as the magistrates were empowered to enforce the execution of his edicts, which were engraved on tables of brass; and though it was recommended to them to avoid the effusion of blood, the most cruel and ignominious punishments were inflicted on the refractory Christians. [176](#)

176

[\(return\)](#)

[See Eusebius, l. viii. c. 14, l. ix. c. 2—8. Lactantius de M. P. c. 36. These writers agree in representing the arts of Maximin; but the former relates the execution of several martyrs, while the latter expressly affirms, *occidi servos Dei vetuit*. * Note: It is easy to reconcile them; it is sufficient to quote the entire text of Lactantius: *Nam cum clementiam specie tenus profiteretur, occidi servos Dei vetuit, debilitari jussit. Itaque confessoribus effodiebantur oculi, amputabantur manus, nares vel auriculæ desecabantur. Hæc ille moliens Constantini litteris deterretur. Dissimulavit ergo, et tamen, si quis inciderit. mari occulte mergebatur.* This detail of torments inflicted on the Christians easily reconciles Lactantius and Eusebius. Those who died in consequence of their tortures, those who were plunged into the sea, might well pass for martyrs. The mutilation of the words of Lactantius

has alone given rise to the apparent contradiction.—
 G. —Eusebius. ch. vi., relates the public
 martyrdom of the aged bishop of Emesa, with two
 others, who were thrown to the wild beasts, the
 beheading of Peter, bishop of Alexandria, with
 several others, and the death of Lucian, presbyter of
 Antioch, who was carried to Numidia, and put to
 death in prison. The contradiction is direct and
 undeniable, for although Eusebius may have
 misplaced the former martyrdoms, it may be
 doubted whether the authority of Maximin
 extended to Nicomedia till after the death of
 Galerius. The last edict of toleration issued by
 Maximin and published by Eusebius himself, Eccl.
 Hist. ix. 9. confirms the statement of Lactantius.—
 M.]

The Asiatic Christians had every thing to dread from the severity of a bigoted monarch who prepared his measures of violence with such deliberate policy. But a few months had scarcely elapsed before the edicts published by the two Western emperors obliged Maximin to suspend the prosecution of his designs: the civil war which he so rashly undertook against Licinius employed all his attention; and the defeat and death of Maximin soon delivered the church from the last and most implacable of her enemies. [177](#)

177

[\(return\)](#)

[A few days before his death, he published a very ample edict of toleration, in which he imputes all the severities which the Christians suffered to the judges and governors, who had misunderstood his intentions. See the edict of Eusebius, l. ix. c. 10.]

In this general view of the persecution, which was first authorized by the edicts of Diocletian, I have purposely refrained from describing the particular sufferings and deaths of the Christian martyrs. It would have been an easy task, from the history of Eusebius, from the declamations of Lactantius, and from the most ancient acts, to collect a long series of horrid and disgusting pictures, and to fill many pages with racks and scourges, with iron hooks and red-hot beds, and with all the variety of tortures which fire and steel, savage beasts, and more savage executioners, could inflict upon the human body. These melancholy scenes might be enlivened by a crowd of visions and miracles destined either to delay the death, to celebrate the triumph, or to discover the relics of those canonized saints who suffered for the name of Christ. But I cannot determine what I ought to transcribe, till I am satisfied how much I ought to believe. The gravest of the ecclesiastical historians, Eusebius himself, indirectly confesses, that he has related whatever might redound to the glory, and that he has suppressed all that could tend to the disgrace, of religion. [178](#) Such an acknowledgment will naturally excite a suspicion that a writer who has so openly violated one of the fundamental laws of history, has not paid a very strict regard to the observance of the other; and the

suspicion will derive additional credit from the character of Eusebius, [1781](#) which was less tinged with credulity, and more practised in the arts of courts, than that of almost any of his contemporaries. On some particular occasions, when the magistrates were exasperated by some personal motives of interest or resentment, the rules of prudence, and perhaps of decency, to overturn the altars, to pour out imprecations against the emperors, or to strike the judge as he sat on his tribunal, it may be presumed, that every mode of torture which cruelty could invent, or constancy could endure, was exhausted on those devoted victims. [179](#) Two circumstances, however, have been unwarily mentioned, which insinuate that the general treatment of the Christians, who had been apprehended by the officers of justice, was less intolerable than it is usually imagined to have been. 1. The confessors who were condemned to work in the mines were permitted by the humanity or the negligence of their keepers to build chapels, and freely to profess their religion in the midst of those dreary habitations. [180](#) 2. The bishops were obliged to check and to censure the forward zeal of the Christians, who voluntarily threw themselves into the hands of the magistrates. Some of these were persons oppressed by poverty and debts, who blindly sought to terminate a miserable existence by a glorious death. Others were allured by the hope that a short confinement would expiate the sins of a whole life; and others again were actuated by the less honorable motive of deriving a plentiful subsistence, and perhaps a considerable profit, from the alms which the charity of the faithful bestowed on the prisoners. [181](#) After the church had triumphed over all her enemies, the interest as well as vanity of the captives prompted them to magnify the merit of their respective sufferings. A convenient distance of time or place gave an ample scope to the progress of fiction; and the frequent instances which might be alleged of holy martyrs, whose wounds had been instantly healed, whose strength had been renewed, and whose lost members had miraculously been restored, were extremely convenient for the purpose of removing every difficulty, and of silencing every objection. The most extravagant legends, as they conduced to the honor of the church, were applauded by the credulous multitude, countenanced by the power of the clergy, and attested by the suspicious evidence of ecclesiastical history.

178

[\(return\)](#)

[Such is the *fair* deduction from two remarkable passages in Eusebius, l. viii. c. 2, and de Martyr. Palestin. c. 12. The prudence of the historian has exposed his own character to censure and suspicion. It was well known that he himself had been thrown into prison; and it was suggested that he had purchased his deliverance by some dishonorable compliance. The reproach was urged in his lifetime, and even in his presence, at the council of Tyre. See Tillemont, Mémoires Ecclésiastiques, tom. viii. part i. p. 67.]

1781

[\(return\)](#)

[Historical criticism does not consist in rejecting indiscriminately all the facts which do not agree

with a particular system, as Gibbon does in this chapter, in which, except at the last extremity, he will not consent to believe a martyrdom. Authorities are to be weighed, not excluded from examination. Now, the Pagan historians justify in many places the detail which have been transmitted to us by the historians of the church, concerning the tortures endured by the Christians. Celsus reproaches the Christians with holding their assemblies in secret, on account of the fear inspired by their sufferings, “for when you are arrested,” he says, “you are dragged to punishment: and, before you are put to death, you have to suffer all kinds of tortures.” Origen cont. Cels. l. i. ii. vi. viii. passing. Libanius, the panegyrist of Julian, says, while speaking of the Christians. “Those who followed a corrupt religion were in continual apprehensions; they feared lest Julian should invent tortures still more refined than those to which they had been exposed before, as mutilation, burning alive, &c.; for the emperors had inflicted upon them all these barbarities.” Lib. Parent in Julian. ap. Fab. Bib. Græc. No. 9, No. 58, p. 283—G. —This sentence of Gibbon has given rise to several learned dissertations: Möller, de Fide Eusebii Cæsar, &c., Havniæ, 1813. Danzius, de Eusebio Cæs. Hist. Eccl. Scriptore, ejusque tude historica recte æstimandâ, &c., Jenæ, 1815. Kestner Commentatio de Eusebii Hist. Eccles. conditoris auctoritate et fide, &c. See also Reuterdahl, de Fontibus Historiæ Eccles. Eusebianæ, Lond. Goth., 1826. Gibbon’s inference may appear stronger than the text will warrant, yet it is difficult, after reading the passages, to dismiss all suspicion of partiality from the mind.—M.]

[The ancient, and perhaps authentic, account of the sufferings of Tarachus and his companions, (Acta Sincera Ruinart, p. 419—448,) is filled with strong expressions of resentment and contempt, which could not fail of irritating the magistrate. The behavior of Ædesius to Hierocles, præfect of Egypt, was still more extraordinary. Euseb. de Martyr. Palestin. c. 5. * Note: M. Guizot states, that the acts of Tarachus and his companion contain nothing that appears dictated by violent feelings, (sentiment outré.) Nothing can be more painful than the constant attempt of Gibbon throughout this discussion, to find some flaw in the virtue and heroism of the martyrs, some extenuation for the

cruelty of the persecutors. But truth must not be sacrificed even to well-grounded moral indignation. Though the language of these martyrs is in great part that of calm defiance, of noble firmness, yet there are many expressions which betray “resentment and contempt.” “Children of Satan, worshippers of Devils,” is their common appellation of the heathen. One of them calls the judge another, one curses, and declares that he will curse the Emperors, as pestilential and bloodthirsty tyrants, whom God will soon visit in his wrath. On the other hand, though at first they speak the milder language of persuasion, the cold barbarity of the judges and officers might surely have called forth one sentence of abhorrence from Gibbon. On the first unsatisfactory answer, “Break his jaw,” is the order of the judge. They direct and witness the most excruciating tortures; the people, as M. Guizot observes, were so much revolted by the cruelty of Maximus that when the martyrs appeared in the amphitheatre, fear seized on all hearts, and general murmurs against the unjust judge rank through the assembly. It is singular, at least, that Gibbon should have quoted “as probably authentic,” acts so much embellished with miracle as these of Tarachus are, particularly towards the end.—M. * Note: Scarcely were the authorities informed of this, than the president of the province, a man, says Eusebius, harsh and cruel, banished the confessors, some to Cyprus, others to different parts of Palestine, and ordered them to be tormented by being set to the most painful labors. Four of them, whom he required to abjure their faith and refused, were burnt alive. Euseb. de Mart. Palest. c. xiii.—G. Two of these were bishops; a fifth, Silvanus, bishop of Gaza, was the last martyr; another, named John was blinded, but used to officiate, and recite from memory long passages of the sacred writings—M.]

180 [\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. de Martyr. Palestin. c. 13.]

181 [\(return\)](#)

[Augustin. Collat. Carthagin. Dei, iii. c. 13, ap. Tillanant, Mémoires Ecclésiastiques, tom. v. part i. p. 46. The controversy with the Donatists, has reflected some, though perhaps a partial, light on the history of the African church.]

Chapter XVI: Conduct Towards The Christians, From Nero To Constantine.—Part VIII.

The vague descriptions of exile and imprisonment, of pain and torture, are so easily exaggerated or softened by the pencil of an artful orator, [1811](#) that we are naturally induced to inquire into a fact of a more distinct and stubborn kind; the number of persons who suffered death in consequence of the edicts published by Diocletian, his associates, and his successors. The recent legendaries record whole armies and cities, which were at once swept away by the undistinguishing rage of persecution. The more ancient writers content themselves with pouring out a liberal effusion of loose and tragical invectives, without condescending to ascertain the precise number of those persons who were permitted to seal with their blood their belief of the gospel. From the history of Eusebius, it may, however, be collected, that only nine bishops were punished with death; and we are assured, by his particular enumeration of the martyrs of Palestine, [182](#) that no more than ninety-two Christians were entitled to that honorable appellation. [1821](#) As we are unacquainted with the degree of episcopal zeal and courage which prevailed at that time, it is not in our power to draw any useful inferences from the former of these facts: but the latter may serve to justify a very important and probable conclusion. According to the distribution of Roman provinces, Palestine may be considered as the sixteenth part of the Eastern empire: [183](#) and since there were some governors, who from a real or affected clemency had preserved their hands unstained with the blood of the faithful, [184](#) it is reasonable to believe, that the country which had given birth to Christianity, produced at least the sixteenth part of the martyrs who suffered death within the dominions of Galerius and Maximin; the whole might consequently amount to about fifteen hundred, a number which, if it is equally divided between the ten years of the persecution, will allow an annual consumption of one hundred and fifty martyrs. Allotting the same proportion to the provinces of Italy, Africa, and perhaps Spain, where, at the end of two or three years, the rigor of the penal laws was either suspended or abolished, the multitude of Christians in the Roman empire, on whom a capital punishment was inflicted by a judica, sentence, will be reduced to somewhat less than two thousand persons. Since it cannot be doubted that the Christians were more numerous, and their enemies more exasperated, in the time of Diocletian, than they had ever been in any former persecution, this probable and moderate computation may teach us to estimate the number of primitive saints and martyrs who sacrificed their lives for the important purpose of introducing Christianity into the world.

1811

[\(return\)](#)

[Perhaps there never was an instance of an author committing so deliberately the fault which he reprobates so strongly in others. What is the dexterous management of the more inartificial historians of Christianity, in exaggerating the

numbers of the martyrs, compared to the unfair address with which Gibbon here quietly dismisses from the account all the horrible and excruciating tortures which fell short of death? The reader may refer to the xiith chapter (book viii.) of Eusebius for the description and for the scenes of these tortures.—M.]

182

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius de Martyr. Palestin. c. 13. He closes his narration by assuring us that these were the martyrdoms inflicted in Palestine, during the *whole* course of the persecution. The 9th chapter of his viiith book, which relates to the province of Thebais in Egypt, may seem to contradict our moderate computation; but it will only lead us to admire the artful management of the historian. Choosing for the scene of the most exquisite cruelty the most remote and sequestered country of the Roman empire, he relates that in Thebais from ten to one hundred persons had frequently suffered martyrdom in the same day. But when he proceeds to mention his own journey into Egypt, his language insensibly becomes more cautious and moderate. Instead of a large, but definite number, he speaks of many Christians, and most artfully selects two ambiguous words, which may signify either what he had seen, or what he had heard; either the expectation, or the execution of the punishment. Having thus provided a secure evasion, he commits the equivocal passage to his readers and translators; justly conceiving that their piety would induce them to prefer the most favorable sense. There was perhaps some malice in the remark of Theodorus Metochita, that all who, like Eusebius, had been conversant with the Egyptians, delighted in an obscure and intricate style. (See Valesius ad loc.)]

1821

[\(return\)](#)

[This calculation is made from the martyrs, of whom Eusebius speaks by name; but he recognizes a much greater number. Thus the ninth and tenth chapters of his work are entitled, “Of Antoninus, Zebinus, Germanus, and other martyrs; of Peter the monk. of Asclepius the Maroionite, and other martyrs.” [Are these vague contents of chapters very good authority?—M.] Speaking of those who suffered under Diocletian, he says, “I will only relate the death of one of these, from which, the reader may divine what befell the rest.” Hist. Eccl. viii. 6. [This relates only to the martyrs in the royal

household.—M.] Dodwell had made, before Gibbon, this calculation and these objections; but Ruinart (Act. Mart. Pref p. 27, *et seq.*) has answered him in a peremptory manner: Nobis constat Eusebium in historia infinitos passim martyres admisisse. quamvis revera paucorum nomina recensuerit. Nec alium Eusebii interpretem quam ipsummet Eusebium proferimus, qui (l. iii. c. 33) ait sub Trajano plurimosa ex fidelibus martyrii certamen subiisse (l. v. init.) sub Antonino et Vero innumerabiles prope martyres per universum orbem enituisse affirmat. (L. vi. c. 1.) Severum persecutionem concitasse refert, in qua per omnes ubique locorum Ecclesias, ab athletic pro pietate certantibus, illustria confecta fuerunt martyria. Sic de Decii, sic de Valeriani, persecutionibus loquitur, quæ an Dodwelli faveant conjectionibus judicet æquus lector. Even in the persecutions which Gibbon has represented as much more mild than that of Diocletian, the number of martyrs appears much greater than that to which he limits the martyrs of the latter: and this number is attested by incontestable monuments. I will quote but one example. We find among the letters of St. Cyprian one from Lucianus to Celerinus, written from the depth of a prison, in which Lucianus names seventeen of his brethren dead, some in the quarries, some in the midst of tortures some of starvation in prison. Jussi sumus (he proceeds) secundum præceptum imperatoris, fame et siti necari, et reclusi sumus in duabus cellis, ta ut nos afficerent fame et siti et ignis vapore.—G.]

183 [\(return\)](#)

[When Palestine was divided into three, the præfecture of the East contained forty-eight provinces. As the ancient distinctions of nations were long since abolished, the Romans distributed the provinces according to a general proportion of their extent and opulence.]

184 [\(return\)](#)

[Ut gloriari possint nullam se innocentium poremissee, nam et ipse audiui aloquos gloriantes, quia administratio sua, in hac paris merit incruenta. Lactant. Institut. Divin v. 11.]

We shall conclude this chapter by a melancholy truth, which obtrudes itself on the reluctant mind; that even admitting, without hesitation or inquiry, all that history has recorded, or devotion has feigned, on the subject of martyrdoms, it must still be acknowledged, that the Christians, in the course of their intestine dissensions, have inflicted far greater severities on each other, than they had experienced from the zeal of

infidels. During the ages of ignorance which followed the subversion of the Roman empire in the West, the bishops of the Imperial city extended their dominion over the laity as well as clergy of the Latin church. The fabric of superstition which they had erected, and which might long have defied the feeble efforts of reason, was at length assaulted by a crowd of daring fanatics, who from the twelfth to the sixteenth century assumed the popular character of reformers. The church of Rome defended by violence the empire which she had acquired by fraud; a system of peace and benevolence was soon disgraced by proscriptions, war, massacres, and the institution of the holy office. And as the reformers were animated by the love of civil as well as of religious freedom, the Catholic princes connected their own interest with that of the clergy, and enforced by fire and the sword the terrors of spiritual censures. In the Netherlands alone, more than one hundred thousand of the subjects of Charles V. are said to have suffered by the hand of the executioner; and this extraordinary number is attested by Grotius, [185](#) a man of genius and learning, who preserved his moderation amidst the fury of contending sects, and who composed the annals of his own age and country, at a time when the invention of printing had facilitated the means of intelligence, and increased the danger of detection.

If we are obliged to submit our belief to the authority of Grotius, it must be allowed, that the number of Protestants, who were executed in a single province and a single reign, far exceeded that of the primitive martyrs in the space of three centuries, and of the Roman empire. But if the improbability of the fact itself should prevail over the weight of evidence; if Grotius should be convicted of exaggerating the merit and sufferings of the Reformers; [186](#) we shall be naturally led to inquire what confidence can be placed in the doubtful and imperfect monuments of ancient credulity; what degree of credit can be assigned to a courtly bishop, and a passionate declaimer, [1861](#) who, under the protection of Constantine, enjoyed the exclusive privilege of recording the persecutions inflicted on the Christians by the vanquished rivals or disregarded predecessors of their gracious sovereign.

[185](#) [\(return\)](#)
[Grot. Annal. de Rebus Belgicis, l. i. p. 12, edit. fol.]

[186](#) [\(return\)](#)
[Fra Paola (Istoria del Concilio Tridentino, l. iii.) reduces the number of the Belgic martyrs to 50,000. In learning and moderation Fra Paola was not inferior to Grotius. The priority of time gives some advantage to the evidence of the former, which he loses, on the other hand, by the distance of Venice from the Netherlands.]

[1861](#) [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius and the author of the Treatise de Mortibus Persecutorum. It is deeply to be regretted that the history of this period rest so much on the

loose and, it must be admitted, by no means scrupulous authority of Eusebius. Ecclesiastical history is a solemn and melancholy lesson that the best, even the most sacred, cause will eventually the least departure from truth!—M.]

Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part I.

*Foundation Of Constantinople.—Political System Constantine,
And His Successors.—Military Discipline.—The Palace.—The
Finances.*

The unfortunate Licinius was the last rival who opposed the greatness, and the last captive who adorned the triumph, of Constantine. After a tranquil and prosperous reign, the conquerer bequeathed to his family the inheritance of the Roman empire; a new capital, a new policy, and a new religion; and the innovations which he established have been embraced and consecrated by succeeding generations. The age of the great Constantine and his sons is filled with important events; but the historian must be oppressed by their number and variety, unless he diligently separates from each other the scenes which are connected only by the order of time. He will describe the political institutions that gave strength and stability to the empire, before he proceeds to relate the wars and revolutions which hastened its decline. He will adopt the division unknown to the ancients of civil and ecclesiastical affairs: the victory of the Christians, and their intestine discord, will supply copious and distinct materials both for edification and for scandal.

After the defeat and abdication of Licinius, his victorious rival proceeded to lay the foundations of a city destined to reign in future times, the mistress of the East, and to survive the empire and religion of Constantine. The motives, whether of pride or of policy, which first induced Diocletian to withdraw himself from the ancient seat of government, had acquired additional weight by the example of his successors, and the habits of forty years. Rome was insensibly confounded with the dependent kingdoms which had once acknowledged her supremacy; and the country of the Cæsars was viewed with cold indifference by a martial prince, born in the neighborhood of the Danube, educated in the courts and armies of Asia, and invested with the purple by the legions of Britain. The Italians, who had received Constantine as their deliverer, submissively obeyed the edicts which he sometimes condescended to address to the senate and people of Rome; but they were seldom honored with the presence of their new sovereign. During the vigor of his age, Constantine, according to the various exigencies of peace and war, moved with slow dignity, or with active diligence, along the frontiers of his extensive dominions; and was always prepared to take the field either against a foreign or a domestic enemy. But as he gradually reached the summit of prosperity and the decline of life, he began to meditate the design of fixing in a more permanent station the strength as well as majesty of the throne. In the choice of an

advantageous situation, he preferred the confines of Europe and Asia; to curb with a powerful arm the barbarians who dwelt between the Danube and the Tanais; to watch with an eye of jealousy the conduct of the Persian monarch, who indignantly supported the yoke of an ignominious treaty. With these views, Diocletian had selected and embellished the residence of Nicomedia: but the memory of Diocletian was justly abhorred by the protector of the church: and Constantine was not insensible to the ambition of founding a city which might perpetuate the glory of his own name. During the late operations of the war against Licinius, he had sufficient opportunity to contemplate, both as a soldier and as a statesman, the incomparable position of Byzantium; and to observe how strongly it was guarded by nature against a hostile attack, whilst it was accessible on every side to the benefits of commercial intercourse. Many ages before Constantine, one of the most judicious historians of antiquity¹ had described the advantages of a situation, from whence a feeble colony of Greeks derived the command of the sea, and the honors of a flourishing and independent republic. ²

1 [\(return\)](#)
[Polybius, l. iv. p. 423, edit. Casaubon. He observes that the peace of the Byzantines was frequently disturbed, and the extent of their territory contracted, by the inroads of the wild Thracians.]

2 [\(return\)](#)
[The navigator Byzas, who was styled the son of Neptune, founded the city 656 years before the Christian æra. His followers were drawn from Argos and Megara. Byzantium was afterwards rebuilt and fortified by the Spartan general Pausanias. See Scaliger Animadvers. ad Euseb. p. 81. Ducange, Constantinopolis, l. i part i. cap 15, 16. With regard to the wars of the Byzantines against Philip, the Gauls, and the kings of Bithynia, we should trust none but the ancient writers who lived before the greatness of the Imperial city had excited a spirit of flattery and fiction.]

If we survey Byzantium in the extent which it acquired with the august name of Constantinople, the figure of the Imperial city may be represented under that of an unequal triangle. The obtuse point, which advances towards the east and the shores of Asia, meets and repels the waves of the Thracian Bosphorus. The northern side of the city is bounded by the harbor; and the southern is washed by the Propontis, or Sea of Marmara. The basis of the triangle is opposed to the west, and terminates the continent of Europe. But the admirable form and division of the circumjacent land and water cannot, without a more ample explanation, be clearly or sufficiently understood. The winding channel through which the waters of the Euxine flow with a rapid and incessant course towards the Mediterranean, received the appellation of Bosphorus, a name not less celebrated in the history, than in the fables, of antiquity. ³ A crowd of temples and of votive altars, profusely scattered along its steep and woody banks, attested the

unskilfulness, the terrors, and the devotion of the Grecian navigators, who, after the example of the Argonauts, explored the dangers of the inhospitable Euxine. On these banks tradition long preserved the memory of the palace of Phineus, infested by the obscene harpies; [4](#) and of the sylvan reign of Amycus, who defied the son of Leda to the combat of the cestus. [5](#) The straits of the Bosphorus are terminated by the Cyanean rocks, which, according to the description of the poets, had once floated on the face of the waters; and were destined by the gods to protect the entrance of the Euxine against the eye of profane curiosity. [6](#) From the Cyanean rocks to the point and harbor of Byzantium, the winding length of the Bosphorus extends about sixteen miles, [7](#) and its most ordinary breadth may be computed at about one mile and a half. The new castles of Europe and Asia are constructed, on either continent, upon the foundations of two celebrated temples, of Serapis and of Jupiter Urius. The *old* castles, a work of the Greek emperors, command the narrowest part of the channel in a place where the opposite banks advance within five hundred paces of each other. These fortresses were destroyed and strengthened by Mahomet the Second, when he meditated the siege of Constantinople: [8](#) but the Turkish conqueror was most probably ignorant, that near two thousand years before his reign, Darius had chosen the same situation to connect the two continents by a bridge of boats. [9](#) At a small distance from the old castles we discover the little town of Chrysopolis, or Scutari, which may almost be considered as the Asiatic suburb of Constantinople. The Bosphorus, as it begins to open into the Propontis, passes between Byzantium and Chalcedon. The latter of those cities was built by the Greeks, a few years before the former; and the blindness of its founders, who overlooked the superior advantages of the opposite coast, has been stigmatized by a proverbial expression of contempt. [10](#)

3

[\(return\)](#)

[The Bosphorus has been very minutely described by Dionysius of Byzantium, who lived in the time of Domitian, (Hudson, Geograph Minor, tom. iii.,) and by Gilles or Gyllius, a French traveller of the XVIth century. Tournefort (Lettre XV.) seems to have used his own eyes, and the learning of Gyllius. Add Von Hammer, Constantinopolis und der Bosphoros, 8vo.—M.]

4

[\(return\)](#)

[There are very few conjectures so happy as that of Le Clere, (Bibliothèque Universelle, tom. i. p. 148,) who supposes that the harpies were only locusts. The Syriac or Phœnician name of those insects, their noisy flight, the stench and devastation which they occasion, and the north wind which drives them into the sea, all contribute to form the striking resemblance.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[The residence of Amycus was in Asia, between the old and the new castles, at a place called Laurus

Insana. That of Phineus was in Europe, near the village of Mauromole and the Black Sea. See Gyllius de Bosph. l. ii. c. 23. Tournefort, Lettre XV.]

6 [\(return\)](#)

[The deception was occasioned by several pointed rocks, alternately covered and abandoned by the waves. At present there are two small islands, one towards either shore; that of Europe is distinguished by the column of Pompey.]

7 [\(return\)](#)

[The ancients computed one hundred and twenty stadia, or fifteen Roman miles. They measured only from the new castles, but they carried the straits as far as the town of Chalcedon.]

8 [\(return\)](#)

[Ducas. Hist. c. 34. Leunclavius Hist. Turcica Mussulmanica, l. xv. p. 577. Under the Greek empire these castles were used as state prisons, under the tremendous name of Lethe, or towers of oblivion.]

9 [\(return\)](#)

[Darius engraved in Greek and Assyrian letters, on two marble columns, the names of his subject nations, and the amazing numbers of his land and sea forces. The Byzantines afterwards transported these columns into the city, and used them for the altars of their tutelar deities. Herodotus, l. iv. c. 87.]

10 [\(return\)](#)

[Namque arctissimo inter Europam Asiamque divortio Byzantium in extremâ Europâ posuere Greci, quibus, Pythium Apollinem consulentibus ubi conderent urbem, redditum oraculum est, quærerent sedem *cæcerum* terris adversam. Ea ambage Chalcedonii monstrabantur quod priores illuc advecti, prævisâ locorum utilitate pejora legissent Tacit. Annal. xii. 63.]

The harbor of Constantinople, which may be considered as an arm of the Bosphorus, obtained, in a very remote period, the denomination of the *Golden Horn*. The curve which it describes might be compared to the horn of a stag, or as it should seem, with more propriety, to that of an ox. [11](#) The epithet of *golden* was expressive of the riches which every wind wafted from the most distant countries into the secure and capacious port of Constantinople. The River Lycus, formed by the conflux of two little streams, pours into the harbor a perpetual supply of fresh water, which serves to cleanse the bottom, and to invite the periodical shoals of fish to seek their retreat in that convenient recess. As the vicissitudes of tides are scarcely felt in those seas, the constant depth of the harbor allows goods to be landed on the quays without the assistance of boats; and

it has been observed, that in many places the largest vessels may rest their prows against the houses, while their sterns are floating in the water. [12](#) From the mouth of the Lycus to that of the harbor, this arm of the Bosphorus is more than seven miles in length. The entrance is about five hundred yards broad, and a strong chain could be occasionally drawn across it, to guard the port and city from the attack of a hostile navy. [13](#)

11 [\(return\)](#)
[Strabo, l. vii. p. 492, [edit. Casaub.] Most of the antlers are now broken off; or, to speak less figuratively, most of the recesses of the harbor are filled up. See Gill. de Bosphoro Thracio, l. i. c. 5.]

12 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius de *Ædificiis*, l. i. c. 5. His description is confirmed by modern travellers. See Thevenot, part i. l. i. c. 15. Tournefort, *Lettre XII*. Niebuhr, *Voyage d'Arabie*, p. 22.]

13 [\(return\)](#)
[See Ducange, C. P. l. i. part i. c. 16, and his *Observations sur Villehardouin*, p. 289. The chain was drawn from the Acropolis near the modern Kiosk, to the tower of Galata; and was supported at convenient distances by large wooden piles.]

Between the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, the shores of Europe and Asia, receding on either side, enclose the sea of Marmara, which was known to the ancients by the denomination of Propontis. The navigation from the issue of the Bosphorus to the entrance of the Hellespont is about one hundred and twenty miles.

Those who steer their westward course through the middle of the Propontis, may at once descry the high lands of Thrace and Bithynia, and never lose sight of the lofty summit of Mount Olympus, covered with eternal snows. [14](#) They leave on the left a deep gulf, at the bottom of which Nicomedia was seated, the Imperial residence of Diocletian; and they pass the small islands of Cyzicus and Proconnesus before they cast anchor at Gallipoli; where the sea, which separates Asia from Europe, is again contracted into a narrow channel.

14 [\(return\)](#)
[Thevenot (*Voyages au Levant*, part i. l. i. c. 14) contracts the measure to 125 small Greek miles. Belon (*Observations*, l. ii. c. 1.) gives a good description of the Propontis, but contents himself with the vague expression of one day and one night's sail. When Sandy's (*Travels*, p. 21) talks of 150 furlongs in length, as well as breadth we can only suppose some mistake of the press in the text of that judicious traveller.]

The geographers who, with the most skilful accuracy, have surveyed the form and extent of the Hellespont, assign about sixty miles for the winding course, and about three miles for the ordinary breadth of those celebrated straits. [15](#) But the narrowest part

of the channel is found to the northward of the old Turkish castles between the cities of Sestus and Abydus. It was here that the adventurous Leander braved the passage of the flood for the possession of his mistress. [16](#) It was here likewise, in a place where the distance between the opposite banks cannot exceed five hundred paces, that Xerxes imposed a stupendous bridge of boats, for the purpose of transporting into Europe a hundred and seventy myriads of barbarians. [17](#) A sea contracted within such narrow limits may seem but ill to deserve the singular epithet of *broad*, which Homer, as well as Orpheus, has frequently bestowed on the Hellespont. [1711](#) But our ideas of greatness are of a relative nature: the traveller, and especially the poet, who sailed along the Hellespont, who pursued the windings of the stream, and contemplated the rural scenery, which appeared on every side to terminate the prospect, insensibly lost the remembrance of the sea; and his fancy painted those celebrated straits, with all the attributes of a mighty river flowing with a swift current, in the midst of a woody and inland country, and at length, through a wide mouth, discharging itself into the Ægean or Archipelago. [18](#) Ancient Troy, [19](#) seated on a an eminence at the foot of Mount Ida, overlooked the mouth of the Hellespont, which scarcely received an accession of waters from the tribute of those immortal rivulets the Simois and Scamander. The Grecian camp had stretched twelve miles along the shore from the Sigæan to the Rhætean promontory; and the flanks of the army were guarded by the bravest chiefs who fought under the banners of Agamemnon. The first of those promontories was occupied by Achilles with his invincible myrmidons, and the dauntless Ajax pitched his tents on the other. After Ajax had fallen a sacrifice to his disappointed pride, and to the ingratitude of the Greeks, his sepulchre was erected on the ground where he had defended the navy against the rage of Jove and of Hector; and the citizens of the rising town of Rhæteum celebrated his memory with divine honors. [20](#) Before Constantine gave a just preference to the situation of Byzantium, he had conceived the design of erecting the seat of empire on this celebrated spot, from whence the Romans derived their fabulous origin. The extensive plain which lies below ancient Troy, towards the Rhætean promontory and the tomb of Ajax, was first chosen for his new capital; and though the undertaking was soon relinquished the stately remains of unfinished walls and towers attracted the notice of all who sailed through the straits of the Hellespont. [21](#)

[See an admirable dissertation of M. d'Anville upon the Hellespont or Dardanelles, in the Mémoires tom. xxviii. p. 318—346. Yet even that ingenious geographer is too fond of supposing new, and perhaps imaginary *measures*, for the purpose of rendering ancient writers as accurate as himself. The stadia employed by Herodotus in the description of the Euxine, the Bosphorus, &c., (l. iv. c. 85,) must undoubtedly be all of the same species; but it seems impossible to reconcile them either with truth or with each other.]

- 16 [\(return\)](#)
[The oblique distance between Sestus and Abydus was thirty stadia. The improbable tale of Hero and Leander is exposed by M. Mahudel, but is defended on the authority of poets and medals by M. de la Nauze. See the Académie des Inscriptions, tom. vii. Hist. p. 74. elem. p. 240. Note: The practical illustration of the possibility of Leander's feat by Lord Byron and other English swimmers is too well known to need particularly reference—M.]
- 17 [\(return\)](#)
[See the seventh book of Herodotus, who has erected an elegant trophy to his own fame and to that of his country. The review appears to have been made with tolerable accuracy; but the vanity, first of the Persians, and afterwards of the Greeks, was interested to magnify the armament and the victory. I should much doubt whether the *invaders* have ever outnumbered the *men* of any country which they attacked.]
- 1711 [\(return\)](#)
[Gibbon does not allow greater width between the two nearest points of the shores of the Hellespont than between those of the Bosphorus; yet all the ancient writers speak of the Hellespontic strait as broader than the other: they agree in giving it seven stadia in its narrowest width, (Herod. in Melp. c. 85. Polym. c. 34. Strabo, p. 591. Plin. iv. c. 12.) which make 875 paces. It is singular that Gibbon, who in the fifteenth note of this chapter reproaches d'Anville with being fond of supposing new and perhaps imaginary measures, has here adopted the peculiar measurement which d'Anville has assigned to the stadium. This great geographer believes that the ancients had a stadium of fifty-one toises, and it is that which he applies to the walls of Babylon. Now, seven of these stadia are equal to about 500 paces, 7 stadia = 2142 feet: 500 paces = 2135 feet 5 inches.—G. See Rennell, Geog. of Herod. p. 121. Add Ukert, Geographie der Griechen und Romer, v. i. p. 2, 71.—M.]
- 18 [\(return\)](#)
[See Wood's Observations on Homer, p. 320. I have, with pleasure, selected this remark from an author who in general seems to have disappointed the expectation of the public as a critic, and still more as a traveller. He had visited the banks of the Hellespont; and had read Strabo; he ought to have consulted the Roman itineraries. How was it possible for him to confound Ilium and Alexandria

Troas, (Observations, p. 340, 341,) two cities which were sixteen miles distant from each other? * Note: Compare Walpole's Memoirs on Turkey, v. i. p. 101. Dr. Clarke adopted Mr. Walpole's interpretation of the salt Hellespont. But the old interpretation is more graphic and Homeric. Clarke's Travels, ii. 70.—M.]

19 [\(return\)](#)
[Demetrius of Scepsis wrote sixty books on thirty lines of Homer's catalogue. The XIIIth Book of Strabo is sufficient for *our* curiosity.]

20 [\(return\)](#)
[Strabo, l. xiii. p. 595, [890, edit. Casaub.] The disposition of the ships, which were drawn upon dry land, and the posts of Ajax and Achilles, are very clearly described by Homer. See Iliad, ix. 220.]

21 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosim. l. ii. [c. 30,] p. 105. Sozomen, l. ii. c. 3. Theophanes, p. 18. Nicephorus Callistus, l. vii. p. 48. Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 6. Zosimus places the new city between Ilium and Alexandria, but this apparent difference may be reconciled by the large extent of its circumference. Before the foundation of Constantinople, Thessalonica is mentioned by Cedrenus, (p. 283,) and Sardica by Zonaras, as the intended capital. They both suppose with very little probability, that the emperor, if he had not been prevented by a prodigy, would have repeated the mistake of the *blind* Chalcedonians.]

We are at present qualified to view the advantageous position of Constantinople; which appears to have been formed by nature for the centre and capital of a great monarchy. Situated in the forty-first degree of latitude, the Imperial city commanded, from her seven hills, [22](#) the opposite shores of Europe and Asia; the climate was healthy and temperate, the soil fertile, the harbor secure and capacious; and the approach on the side of the continent was of small extent and easy defence. The Bosphorus and the Hellespont may be considered as the two gates of Constantinople; and the prince who possessed those important passages could always shut them against a naval enemy, and open them to the fleets of commerce. The preservation of the eastern provinces may, in some degree, be ascribed to the policy of Constantine, as the barbarians of the Euxine, who in the preceding age had poured their armaments into the heart of the Mediterranean, soon desisted from the exercise of piracy, and despaired of forcing this insurmountable barrier. When the gates of the Hellespont and Bosphorus were shut, the capital still enjoyed within their spacious enclosure every production which could supply the wants, or gratify the luxury, of its numerous inhabitants. The sea-coasts of Thrace and Bithynia, which languish under the weight of Turkish oppression, still exhibit a rich prospect of vineyards, of gardens, and of plentiful harvests; and the

Propontis has ever been renowned for an inexhaustible store of the most exquisite fish, that are taken in their stated seasons, without skill, and almost without labor. [23](#) But when the passages of the straits were thrown open for trade, they alternately admitted the natural and artificial riches of the north and south, of the Euxine, and of the Mediterranean. Whatever rude commodities were collected in the forests of Germany and Scythia, and far as the sources of the Tanais and the Borysthenes; whatsoever was manufactured by the skill of Europe or Asia; the corn of Egypt, and the gems and spices of the farthest India, were brought by the varying winds into the port of Constantinople, which for many ages attracted the commerce of the ancient world. [24](#)

[See Basilica Of Constantinople]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[Pocock's Description of the East, vol. ii. part ii. p. 127. His plan of the seven hills is clear and accurate. That traveller is seldom unsatisfactory.]

23

[\(return\)](#)

[See Belon, Observations, c. 72—76. Among a variety of different species, the Pelamides, a sort of Thunnies, were the most celebrated. We may learn from Polybius, Strabo, and Tacitus, that the profits of the fishery constituted the principal revenue of Byzantium.]

24

[\(return\)](#)

[See the eloquent description of Busbequius, epistol. i. p. 64. Est in Europa; habet in conspectu Asiam, Egyptum. Africamque a dextrâ: quæ tametsi contiguæ non sunt, maris tamen navigandique commoditate veluti junguntur. A sinistra vero Pontus est Euxinus, &c.]

The prospect of beauty, of safety, and of wealth, united in a single spot, was sufficient to justify the choice of Constantine. But as some decent mixture of prodigy and fable has, in every age, been supposed to reflect a becoming majesty on the origin of great cities, [25](#) the emperor was desirous of ascribing his resolution, not so much to the uncertain counsels of human policy, as to the infallible and eternal decrees of divine wisdom. In one of his laws he has been careful to instruct posterity, that in obedience to the commands of God, he laid the everlasting foundations of Constantinople: [26](#) and though he has not condescended to relate in what manner the celestial inspiration was communicated to his mind, the defect of his modest silence has been liberally supplied by the ingenuity of succeeding writers; who describe the nocturnal vision which appeared to the fancy of Constantine, as he slept within the walls of Byzantium. The tutelar genius of the city, a venerable matron sinking under the weight of years and infirmities, was suddenly transformed into a blooming maid, whom his own hands adorned with all the symbols of Imperial greatness. [27](#) The monarch awoke, interpreted the auspicious omen, and obeyed, without hesitation, the will of Heaven. The day which gave birth to a city or colony was celebrated by the Romans with such ceremonies as

had been ordained by a generous superstition; [28](#) and though Constantine might omit some rites which savored too strongly of their Pagan origin, yet he was anxious to leave a deep impression of hope and respect on the minds of the spectators. On foot, with a lance in his hand, the emperor himself led the solemn procession; and directed the line, which was traced as the boundary of the destined capital: till the growing circumference was observed with astonishment by the assistants, who, at length, ventured to observe, that he had already exceeded the most ample measure of a great city. “I shall still advance,” replied Constantine, “till He, the invisible guide who marches before me, thinks proper to stop.” [29](#) Without presuming to investigate the nature or motives of this extraordinary conductor, we shall content ourselves with the more humble task of describing the extent and limits of Constantinople. [30](#)

25 [\(return\)](#)
[Datur hæc venia antiquitati, ut miscendo humana
divinis, primordia urbium augustiora faciat. T. Liv.
in procem.]

26 [\(return\)](#)
[He says in one of his laws, pro commoditate urbis
quam æterno nomine, jubente Deo, donavimus.
Cod. Theodos. l. xiii. tit. v. leg. 7.]

27 [\(return\)](#)
[The Greeks, Theophanes, Cedrenus, and the
author of the Alexandrian Chronicle, confine
themselves to vague and general expressions. For a
more particular account of the vision, we are
obliged to have recourse to such Latin writers as
William of Malmesbury. See Ducange, C. P. l. i. p.
24, 25.]

28 [\(return\)](#)
[See Plutarch in Romul. tom. i. p. 49, edit. Bryan.
Among other ceremonies, a large hole, which had
been dug for that purpose, was filled up with
handfuls of earth, which each of the settlers brought
from the place of his birth, and thus adopted his new
country.]

29 [\(return\)](#)
[Philostorgius, l. ii. c. 9. This incident, though
borrowed from a suspected writer, is characteristic
and probable.]

30 [\(return\)](#)
[See in the Mémoires de l’Académie, tom. xxxv p.
747-758, a dissertation of M. d’Anville on the
extent of Constantinople. He takes the plan inserted
in the Imperium Orientale of Banduri as the most
complete; but, by a series of very nice observations,
he reduced the extravagant proportion of the scale,
and instead of 9500, determines the circumference

of the city as consisting of about 7800
French *toises*.]

In the actual state of the city, the palace and gardens of the Seraglio occupy the eastern promontory, the first of the seven hills, and cover about one hundred and fifty acres of our own measure. The seat of Turkish jealousy and despotism is erected on the foundations of a Grecian republic; but it may be supposed that the Byzantines were tempted by the conveniency of the harbor to extend their habitations on that side beyond the modern limits of the Seraglio. The new walls of Constantine stretched from the port to the Propontis across the enlarged breadth of the triangle, at the distance of fifteen stadia from the ancient fortification; and with the city of Byzantium they enclosed five of the seven hills, which, to the eyes of those who approach Constantinople, appear to rise above each other in beautiful order. [31](#) About a century after the death of the founder, the new buildings, extending on one side up the harbor, and on the other along the Propontis, already covered the narrow ridge of the sixth, and the broad summit of the seventh hill. The necessity of protecting those suburbs from the incessant inroads of the barbarians engaged the younger Theodosius to surround his capital with an adequate and permanent enclosure of walls. [32](#) From the eastern promontory to the golden gate, the extreme length of Constantinople was about three Roman miles; [33](#) the circumference measured between ten and eleven; and the surface might be computed as equal to about two thousand English acres. It is impossible to justify the vain and credulous exaggerations of modern travellers, who have sometimes stretched the limits of Constantinople over the adjacent villages of the European, and even of the Asiatic coast. [34](#) But the suburbs of Pera and Galata, though situate beyond the harbor, may deserve to be considered as a part of the city; [35](#) and this addition may perhaps authorize the measure of a Byzantine historian, who assigns sixteen Greek (about fourteen Roman) miles for the circumference of his native city. [36](#) Such an extent may not seem unworthy of an Imperial residence. Yet Constantinople must yield to Babylon and Thebes, [37](#) to ancient Rome, to London, and even to Paris. [38](#)

31 [\(return\)](#)

[Codinus, *Antiquitat. Const.* p. 12. He assigns the church of St. Anthony as the boundary on the side of the harbor. It is mentioned in Ducange, l. iv. c. 6; but I have tried, without success, to discover the exact place where it was situated.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[The new wall of Theodosius was constructed in the year 413. In 447 it was thrown down by an earthquake, and rebuilt in three months by the diligence of the præfect Cyrus. The suburb of the Blanchernæ was first taken into the city in the reign of Heraclius Ducange, *Const.* l. i. c. 10, 11.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[The measurement is expressed in the *Notitia* by 14,075 feet. It is reasonable to suppose that these

were Greek feet, the proportion of which has been ingeniously determined by M. d'Anville. He compares the 180 feet with 78 Hashemite cubits, which in different writers are assigned for the heights of St. Sophia. Each of these cubits was equal to 27 French inches.]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[The accurate Thevenot (l. i. c. 15) walked in one hour and three quarters round two of the sides of the triangle, from the Kiosk of the Seraglio to the seven towers. D'Anville examines with care, and receives with confidence, this decisive testimony, which gives a circumference of ten or twelve miles. The extravagant computation of Tournefort (Lettre XI) of thirty-four or thirty miles, without including Scutari, is a strange departure from his usual character.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[The sycæ, or fig-trees, formed the thirteenth region, and were very much embellished by Justinian. It has since borne the names of Pera and Galata. The etymology of the former is obvious; that of the latter is unknown. See Ducange, Const. l. i. c. 22, and Gyllius de Byzant. l. iv. c. 10.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[One hundred and eleven stadia, which may be translated into modern Greek miles each of seven stadia, or 660, sometimes only 600 French toises. See D'Anville, Mesures Itinéraires, p. 53.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[When the ancient texts, which describe the size of Babylon and Thebes, are settled, the exaggerations reduced, and the measures ascertained, we find that those famous cities filled the great but not incredible circumference of about twenty-five or thirty miles. Compare D'Anville, Mém. de l'Académie, tom. xxviii. p. 235, with his Description de l'Egypte, p. 201, 202.]

38 [\(return\)](#)

[If we divide Constantinople and Paris into equal squares of 50 French *toises*, the former contains 850, and the latter 1160, of those divisions.]

Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part II.

The master of the Roman world, who aspired to erect an eternal monument of the glories of his reign could employ in the prosecution of that great work, the wealth, the

labor, and all that yet remained of the genius of obedient millions. Some estimate may be formed of the expense bestowed with Imperial liberality on the foundation of Constantinople, by the allowance of about two millions five hundred thousand pounds for the construction of the walls, the porticos, and the aqueducts. [39](#) The forests that overshadowed the shores of the Euxine, and the celebrated quarries of white marble in the little island of Proconnesus, supplied an inexhaustible stock of materials, ready to be conveyed, by the convenience of a short water carriage, to the harbor of Byzantium. [40](#) A multitude of laborers and artificers urged the conclusion of the work with incessant toil: but the impatience of Constantine soon discovered, that, in the decline of the arts, the skill as well as numbers of his architects bore a very unequal proportion to the greatness of his designs. The magistrates of the most distant provinces were therefore directed to institute schools, to appoint professors, and by the hopes of rewards and privileges, to engage in the study and practice of architecture a sufficient number of ingenious youths, who had received a liberal education. [41](#) The buildings of the new city were executed by such artificers as the reign of Constantine could afford; but they were decorated by the hands of the most celebrated masters of the age of Pericles and Alexander. To revive the genius of Phidias and Lysippus, surpassed indeed the power of a Roman emperor; but the immortal productions which they had bequeathed to posterity were exposed without defence to the rapacious vanity of a despot. By his commands the cities of Greece and Asia were despoiled of their most valuable ornaments. [42](#) The trophies of memorable wars, the objects of religious veneration, the most finished statues of the gods and heroes, of the sages and poets, of ancient times, contributed to the splendid triumph of Constantinople; and gave occasion to the remark of the historian Cedrenus, [43](#) who observes, with some enthusiasm, that nothing seemed wanting except the souls of the illustrious men whom these admirable monuments were intended to represent. But it is not in the city of Constantine, nor in the declining period of an empire, when the human mind was depressed by civil and religious slavery, that we should seek for the souls of Homer and of Demosthenes.

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Six hundred centenaries, or sixty thousand pounds' weight of gold. This sum is taken from Codinus, *Antiquit. Const.* p. 11; but unless that contemptible author had derived his information from some purer sources, he would probably have been unacquainted with so obsolete a mode of reckoning.]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[For the forests of the Black Sea, consult Tournefort, *Lettre XVI.* for the marble quarries of Proconnesus, see Strabo, l. xiii. p. 588, (881, edit. Casaub.) The latter had already furnished the materials of the stately buildings of Cyzicus.]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[See the *Codex Theodos.* l. xiii. tit. iv. leg. 1. This

law is dated in the year 334, and was addressed to the præfect of Italy, whose jurisdiction extended over Africa. The commentary of Godefroy on the whole title well deserves to be consulted.]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[Constantinopolis dedicatur pœne omnium urbium nuditate. Hieronym. Chron. p. 181. See Codinus, p. 8, 9. The author of the Antiquitat. Const. l. iii. (apud Banduri Imp. Orient. tom. i. p. 41) enumerates Rome, Sicily, Antioch, Athens, and a long list of other cities. The provinces of Greece and Asia Minor may be supposed to have yielded the richest booty.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[Hist. Compend. p. 369. He describes the statue, or rather bust, of Homer with a degree of taste which plainly indicates that Cadrenus copied the style of a more fortunate age.]

During the siege of Byzantium, the conqueror had pitched his tent on the commanding eminence of the second hill. To perpetuate the memory of his success, he chose the same advantageous position for the principal Forum; [44](#) which appears to have been of a circular, or rather elliptical form. The two opposite entrances formed triumphal arches; the porticos, which enclosed it on every side, were filled with statues; and the centre of the Forum was occupied by a lofty column, of which a mutilated fragment is now degraded by the appellation of the *burnt pillar*. This column was erected on a pedestal of white marble twenty feet high; and was composed of ten pieces of porphyry, each of which measured about ten feet in height, and about thirty-three in circumference. [45](#) On the summit of the pillar, above one hundred and twenty feet from the ground, stood the colossal statue of Apollo. It was a bronze, had been transported either from Athens or from a town of Phrygia, and was supposed to be the work of Phidias. The artist had represented the god of day, or, as it was afterwards interpreted, the emperor Constantine himself, with a sceptre in his right hand, the globe of the world in his left, and a crown of rays glittering on his head. [46](#) The Circus, or Hippodrome, was a stately building about four hundred paces in length, and one hundred in breadth. [47](#) The space between the two *metæ* or goals were filled with statues and obelisks; and we may still remark a very singular fragment of antiquity; the bodies of three serpents, twisted into one pillar of brass. Their triple heads had once supported the golden tripod which, after the defeat of Xerxes, was consecrated in the temple of Delphi by the victorious Greeks. [48](#) The beauty of the Hippodrome has been long since defaced by the rude hands of the Turkish conquerors; [4811](#) but, under the similar appellation of Atmeidan, it still serves as a place of exercise for their horses. From the throne, whence the emperor viewed the Circensian games, a winding staircase [49](#) descended to the palace; a magnificent edifice, which scarcely yielded to the residence of Rome itself, and which, together with the dependent courts, gardens,

and porticos, covered a considerable extent of ground upon the banks of the Propontis between the Hippodrome and the church of St. Sophia. [50](#) We might likewise celebrate the baths, which still retained the name of Zeuxippus, after they had been enriched, by the munificence of Constantine, with lofty columns, various marbles, and above threescore statues of bronze. [51](#) But we should deviate from the design of this history, if we attempted minutely to describe the different buildings or quarters of the city. It may be sufficient to observe, that whatever could adorn the dignity of a great capital, or contribute to the benefit or pleasure of its numerous inhabitants, was contained within the walls of Constantinople. A particular description, composed about a century after its foundation, enumerates a capitol or school of learning, a circus, two theatres, eight public, and one hundred and fifty-three private baths, fifty-two porticos, five granaries, eight aqueducts or reservoirs of water, four spacious halls for the meetings of the senate or courts of justice, fourteen churches, fourteen palaces, and four thousand three hundred and eighty-eight houses, which, for their size or beauty, deserved to be distinguished from the multitude of plebeian inhabitants. [52](#)

44

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosim. l. ii. p. 106. Chron. Alexandrin. vel Paschal. p. 284, Ducange, Const. l. i. c. 24. Even the last of those writers seems to confound the Forum of Constantine with the Augusteum, or court of the palace. I am not satisfied whether I have properly distinguished what belongs to the one and the other.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[The most tolerable account of this column is given by Pocock. Description of the East, vol. ii. part ii. p. 131. But it is still in many instances perplexed and unsatisfactory.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Ducange, Const. l. i. c. 24, p. 76, and his notes ad Alexiad. p. 382. The statue of Constantine or Apollo was thrown down under the reign of Alexius Comnenus. * Note: On this column (says M. von Hammer) Constantine, with singular shamelessness, placed his own statue with the attributes of Apollo and Christ. He substituted the nails of the Passion for the rays of the sun. Such is the direct testimony of the author of the Antiquit. Constantinop. apud Banduri. Constantine was replaced by the “great and religious” Julian, Julian, by Theodosius. A. D. 1412, the key stone was loosened by an earthquake. The statue fell in the reign of Alexius Comnenus, and was replaced by the cross. The Palladium was said to be buried under the pillar. Von Hammer, Constantinopolis und der Bosporos, i. 162.—M.]

- 47 [\(return\)](#)
[Tournefort (Lettre XII.) computes the Atmeidan at four hundred paces. If he means geometrical paces of five feet each, it was three hundred *toises* in length, about forty more than the great circus of Rome. See D'Anville, Mesures Itineraires, p. 73.]
- 48 [\(return\)](#)
[The guardians of the most holy relics would rejoice if they were able to produce such a chain of evidence as may be alleged on this occasion. See Banduri ad Antiquitat. Const. p. 668. Gyllius de Byzant. l. ii. c. 13. 1. The original consecration of the tripod and pillar in the temple of Delphi may be proved from Herodotus and Pausanias. 2. The Pagan Zosimus agrees with the three ecclesiastical historians, Eusebius, Socrates, and Sozomen, that the sacred ornaments of the temple of Delphi were removed to Constantinople by the order of Constantine; and among these the serpentine pillar of the Hippodrome is particularly mentioned. 3. All the European travellers who have visited Constantinople, from Buondelmonte to Pocock, describe it in the same place, and almost in the same manner; the differences between them are occasioned only by the injuries which it has sustained from the Turks. Mahomet the Second broke the under jaw of one of the serpents with a stroke of his battle axe Thevenot, l. i. c. 17. * Note: See note 75, ch. lxxviii. for Dr. Clarke's rejection of Thevenot's authority. Von Hammer, however, repeats the story of Thevenot without questioning its authenticity.—M.]
- 4811 [\(return\)](#)
[In 1808 the Janizaries revolted against the vizier Mustapha Baisactar, who wished to introduce a new system of military organization, besieged the quarter of the Hippodrome, in which stood the palace of the viziers, and the Hippodrome was consumed in the conflagration.—G.]
- 49 [\(return\)](#)
[The Latin name *Cochlea* was adopted by the Greeks, and very frequently occurs in the Byzantine history. Ducange, Const. i. c. l, p. 104.]
- 50 [\(return\)](#)
[There are three topographical points which indicate the situation of the palace. 1. The staircase which connected it with the Hippodrome or Atmeidan. 2. A small artificial port on the Propontis, from whence there was an easy ascent, by a flight of marble steps, to the gardens of the

palace. 3. The Augusteum was a spacious court, one side of which was occupied by the front of the palace, and another by the church of St. Sophia.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Zeuxippus was an epithet of Jupiter, and the baths were a part of old Byzantium. The difficulty of assigning their true situation has not been felt by Ducange. History seems to connect them with St. Sophia and the palace; but the original plan inserted in Banduri places them on the other side of the city, near the harbor. For their beauties, see Chron. Paschal. p. 285, and Gyllius de Byzant. l. ii. c. 7. Christodorus (see Antiquitat. Const. l. vii.) composed inscriptions in verse for each of the statues. He was a Theban poet in genius as well as in birth:—Bæotum in crasso jurares ære natum. * Note: Yet, for his age, the description of the statues of Hecuba and of Homer are by no means without merit. See Antholog. Palat. (edit. Jacobs) i. 37—M.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Notitia. Rome only reckoned 1780 large houses, *domus*; but the word must have had a more dignified signification. No *insulæ* are mentioned at Constantinople. The old capital consisted of 42 streets, the new of 322.]

The populousness of his favored city was the next and most serious object of the attention of its founder. In the dark ages which succeeded the translation of the empire, the remote and the immediate consequences of that memorable event were strangely confounded by the vanity of the Greeks and the credulity of the Latins. [53](#) It was asserted, and believed, that all the noble families of Rome, the senate, and the equestrian order, with their innumerable attendants, had followed their emperor to the banks of the Propontis; that a spurious race of strangers and plebeians was left to possess the solitude of the ancient capital; and that the lands of Italy, long since converted into gardens, were at once deprived of cultivation and inhabitants. [54](#) In the course of this history, such exaggerations will be reduced to their just value: yet, since the growth of Constantinople cannot be ascribed to the general increase of mankind and of industry, it must be admitted that this artificial colony was raised at the expense of the ancient cities of the empire. Many opulent senators of Rome, and of the eastern provinces, were probably invited by Constantine to adopt for their country the fortunate spot, which he had chosen for his own residence. The invitations of a master are scarcely to be distinguished from commands; and the liberality of the emperor obtained a ready and cheerful obedience. He bestowed on his favorites the palaces which he had built in the several quarters of the city, assigned them lands and pensions for the support of their dignity, [55](#) and alienated the demesnes of Pontus and Asia to grant hereditary estates

by the easy tenure of maintaining a house in the capital. [56](#) But these encouragements and obligations soon became superfluous, and were gradually abolished. Wherever the seat of government is fixed, a considerable part of the public revenue will be expended by the prince himself, by his ministers, by the officers of justice, and by the domestics of the palace. The most wealthy of the provincials will be attracted by the powerful motives of interest and duty, of amusement and curiosity. A third and more numerous class of inhabitants will insensibly be formed, of servants, of artificers, and of merchants, who derive their subsistence from their own labor, and from the wants or luxury of the superior ranks. In less than a century, Constantinople disputed with Rome itself the præminence of riches and numbers. New piles of buildings, crowded together with too little regard to health or convenience, scarcely allowed the intervals of narrow streets for the perpetual throng of men, of horses, and of carriages. The allotted space of ground was insufficient to contain the increasing people; and the additional foundations, which, on either side, were advanced into the sea, might alone have composed a very considerable city. [57](#)

53

[\(return\)](#)

[Liutprand, Legatio ad Imp. Nicephornm, p. 153. The modern Greeks have strangely disfigured the antiquities of Constantinople. We might excuse the errors of the Turkish or Arabian writers; but it is somewhat astonishing, that the Greeks, who had access to the authentic materials preserved in their own language, should prefer fiction to truth, and loose tradition to genuine history. In a single page of Codinus we may detect twelve unpardonable mistakes; the reconciliation of Severus and Niger, the marriage of their son and daughter, the siege of Byzantium by the Macedonians, the invasion of the Gauls, which recalled Severus to Rome, the *sixty* years which elapsed from his death to the foundation of Constantinople, &c.]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu, Grandeur et Décadence des Romains, c. 17.]

55

[\(return\)](#)

[Themist. Orat. iii. p. 48, edit. Hardouin. Sozomen, l. ii. c. 3. Zosim. l. ii. p. 107. Anonym. Valesian. p. 715. If we could credit Codinus, (p. 10,) Constantine built houses for the senators on the exact model of their Roman palaces, and gratified them, as well as himself, with the pleasure of an agreeable surprise; but the whole story is full of fictions and inconsistencies.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[The law by which the younger Theodosius, in the year 438, abolished this tenure, may be found

among the Novellæ of that emperor at the end of the Theodosian Code, tom. vi. nov. 12. M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 371) has evidently mistaken the nature of these estates. With a grant from the Imperial demesnes, the same condition was accepted as a favor, which would justly have been deemed a hardship, if it had been imposed upon private property.]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[The passages of Zosimus, of Eunapius, of Sozomen, and of Agathias, which relate to the increase of buildings and inhabitants at Constantinople, are collected and connected by Gyllius de Byzant. l. i. c. 3. Sidonius Apollinaris (in Panegy. Anthem. 56, p. 279, edit. Sirmond) describes the moles that were pushed forwards into the sea, they consisted of the famous Puzzolan sand, which hardens in the water.]

The frequent and regular distributions of wine and oil, of corn or bread, of money or provisions, had almost exempted the poorest citizens of Rome from the necessity of labor. The magnificence of the first Cæsars was in some measure imitated by the founder of Constantinople: [58](#) but his liberality, however it might excite the applause of the people, has incurred the censure of posterity. A nation of legislators and conquerors might assert their claim to the harvests of Africa, which had been purchased with their blood; and it was artfully contrived by Augustus, that, in the enjoyment of plenty, the Romans should lose the memory of freedom. But the prodigality of Constantine could not be excused by any consideration either of public or private interest; and the annual tribute of corn imposed upon Egypt for the benefit of his new capital, was applied to feed a lazy and insolent populace, at the expense of the husbandmen of an industrious province. [59](#) [5911](#) Some other regulations of this emperor are less liable to blame, but they are less deserving of notice. He divided Constantinople into fourteen regions or quarters, [60](#) dignified the public council with the appellation of senate, [61](#) communicated to the citizens the privileges of Italy, [62](#) and bestowed on the rising city the title of Colony, the first and most favored daughter of ancient Rome. The venerable parent still maintained the legal and acknowledged supremacy, which was due to her age, her dignity, and to the remembrance of her former greatness. [63](#)

58

[\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen, l. ii. c. 3. Philostorg. l. ii. c. 9. Codin. Antiquitat. Const. p. 8. It appears by Socrates, l. ii. c. 13, that the daily allowance of the city consisted of eight myriads of which we may either translate, with Valesius, by the words modii of corn, or consider us expressive of the number of loaves of bread. * Note: At Rome the poorer citizens who received these gratuities were inscribed in a

register; they had only a personal right. Constantine attached the right to the houses in his new capital, to engage the lower classes of the people to build their houses with expedition. Codex Theodos. l. xiv.—G.]

59

[\(return\)](#)

[See Cod. Theodos. l. xiii. and xiv., and Cod. Justinian. Edict. xii. tom. ii. p. 648, edit. Genev. See the beautiful complaint of Rome in the poem of Claudian de Bell. Gildonico, ver. 46-64.—Cum subiit par Roma mihi, divisaque sumsit Æquales aurora togas; Ægyptia rura In partem cessere novam.]

5911

[\(return\)](#)

[This was also at the expense of Rome. The emperor ordered that the fleet of Alexandria should transport to Constantinople the grain of Egypt which it carried before to Rome: this grain supplied Rome during four months of the year. Claudian has described with force the famine occasioned by this measure:—

*Hæc nobis, hæc ante dabas; nunc pabula tantum
Roma precor: miserere tuæ; pater optime, gentis:
Extremam defende famem. Claud. de Bell. Gildon. v. 34.—G.*

It was scarcely this measure. Gildo had cut off the African as well as the Egyptian supplies.—M.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[The regions of Constantinople are mentioned in the code of Justinian, and particularly described in the Notitia of the younger Theodosius; but as the four last of them are not included within the wall of Constantine, it may be doubted whether this division of the city should be referred to the founder.]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[Senatū constituit secundi ordinis; *Claros* vocavit. Anonym Valesian. p. 715. The senators of old Rome were styled *Clarissimi*. See a curious note of Valesius ad Ammian. Marcellin. xxii. 9. From the eleventh epistle of Julian, it should seem that the place of senator was considered as a burden, rather than as an honor; but the Abbé de la Bleterie (Vie de Jovien, tom. ii. p. 371) has shown that this epistle could not relate to Constantinople. Might we not read, instead of the celebrated name of the obscure but more probable word Bisanthe or Rhædestus, now Rhodosto, was a small maritime city of Thrace. See Stephan. Byz. de Urbibus, p. 225, and Cellar. Geograph. tom. i. p. 849.]

[Cod. Theodos. l. xiv. 13. The commentary of Godefroy (tom. v. p. 220) is long, but perplexed; nor indeed is it easy to ascertain in what the Jus Italicum could consist, after the freedom of the city had been communicated to the whole empire. * Note: "This right, (the Jus Italicum,) which by most writers is referred with out foundation to the personal condition of the citizens, properly related to the city as a whole, and contained two parts. First, the Roman or quiritarian property in the soil, (commercium,) and its capability of mancipation, usucaption, and vindication; moreover, as an inseparable consequence of this, exemption from land-tax. Then, secondly, a free constitution in the Italian form, with Duumvirs, Quinquennales. and Ædiles, and especially with Jurisdiction." Savigny, Geschichte des Rom. Rechts i. p. 51—M.]

[Julian (Orat. i. p. 8) celebrates Constantinople as not less superior to all other cities than she was inferior to Rome itself. His learned commentator (Spanheim, p. 75, 76) justifies this language by several parallel and contemporary instances. Zosimus, as well as Socrates and Sozomen, flourished after the division of the empire between the two sons of Theodosius, which established a perfect *equality* between the old and the new capital.]

As Constantine urged the progress of the work with the impatience of a lover, the walls, the porticos, and the principal edifices were completed in a few years, or, according to another account, in a few months; [64](#) but this extraordinary diligence should excite the less admiration, since many of the buildings were finished in so hasty and imperfect a manner, that under the succeeding reign, they were preserved with difficulty from impending ruin. [65](#) But while they displayed the vigor and freshness of youth, the founder prepared to celebrate the dedication of his city. [66](#) The games and largesses which crowned the pomp of this memorable festival may easily be supposed; but there is one circumstance of a more singular and permanent nature, which ought not entirely to be overlooked. As often as the birthday of the city returned, the statue of Constantine, framed by his order, of gilt wood, and bearing in his right hand a small image of the genius of the place, was erected on a triumphal car. The guards, carrying white tapers, and clothed in their richest apparel, accompanied the solemn procession as it moved through the Hippodrome. When it was opposite to the throne of the reigning emperor, he rose from his seat, and with grateful reverence adored the memory of his predecessor. [67](#) At the festival of the dedication, an edict, engraved on a column of marble, bestowed the title of Second or New Rome on the city of Constantine. [68](#) But

the name of Constantinople [69](#) has prevailed over that honorable epithet; and after the revolution of fourteen centuries, still perpetuates the fame of its author. [70](#)

64 [\(return\)](#)

[Codinus (*Antiquitat.* p. 8) affirms, that the foundations of Constantinople were laid in the year of the world 5837, (A. D. 329,) on the 26th of September, and that the city was dedicated the 11th of May, 5838, (A. D. 330.) He connects those dates with several characteristic epochs, but they contradict each other; the authority of Codinus is of little weight, and the space which he assigns must appear insufficient. The term of ten years is given us by Julian, (*Orat.* i. p. 8;) and Spanheim labors to establish the truth of it, (p. 69-75,) by the help of two passages from Themistius, (*Orat.* iv. p. 58,) and of Philostorgius, (l. ii. c. 9,) which form a period from the year 324 to the year 334. Modern critics are divided concerning this point of chronology and their different sentiments are very accurately described by Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 619-625.]

65 [\(return\)](#)

[Themistius. *Orat.* iii. p. 47. Zosim. l. ii. p. 108. Constantine himself, in one of his laws, (*Cod. Theod.* l. xv. tit. i.,) betrays his impatience.]

66 [\(return\)](#)

[Cedrenus and Zonaras, faithful to the mode of superstition which prevailed in their own times, assure us that Constantinople was consecrated to the virgin Mother of God.]

67 [\(return\)](#)

[The earliest and most complete account of this extraordinary ceremony may be found in the *Alexandrian Chronicle*, p. 285. Tillemont, and the other friends of Constantine, who are offended with the air of Paganism which seems unworthy of a Christian prince, had a right to consider it as doubtful, but they were not authorized to omit the mention of it.]

68 [\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen, l. ii. c. 2. Ducange *C. P.* l. i. c. 6. *Velut ipsius Romæ filiam*, is the expression of Augustin. *de Civitat. Dei*, l. v. c. 25.]

69 [\(return\)](#)

[Eutropius, l. x. c. 8. Julian. *Orat.* i. p. 8. Ducange *C. P.* l. i. c. 5. The name of Constantinople is extant on the medals of Constantine.]

70 [\(return\)](#)

[The lively Fontenelle (*Dialogues des Morts*, xii.)

affects to deride the vanity of human ambition, and seems to triumph in the disappointment of Constantine, whose immortal name is now lost in the vulgar appellation of Istambol, a Turkish corruption of. Yet the original name is still preserved, 1. By the nations of Europe. 2. By the modern Greeks. 3. By the Arabs, whose writings are diffused over the wide extent of their conquests in Asia and Africa. See D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. 275. 4. By the more learned Turks, and by the emperor himself in his public mandates Cantemir's *History of the Othman Empire*, p. 51.]

The foundation of a new capital is naturally connected with the establishment of a new form of civil and military administration. The distinct view of the complicated system of policy, introduced by Diocletian, improved by Constantine, and completed by his immediate successors, may not only amuse the fancy by the singular picture of a great empire, but will tend to illustrate the secret and internal causes of its rapid decay. In the pursuit of any remarkable institution, we may be frequently led into the more early or the more recent times of the Roman history; but the proper limits of this inquiry will be included within a period of about one hundred and thirty years, from the accession of Constantine to the publication of the Theodosian code; [71](#) from which, as well as from the *Notitia* [7111](#) of the East and West, [72](#) we derive the most copious and authentic information of the state of the empire. This variety of objects will suspend, for some time, the course of the narrative; but the interruption will be censured only by those readers who are insensible to the importance of laws and manners, while they peruse, with eager curiosity, the transient intrigues of a court, or the accidental event of a battle.

71 [\(return\)](#)
[The Theodosian code was promulgated A. D. 438.
See the Prolegomena of Godefroy, c. i. p. 185.]

7111 [\(return\)](#)
[The *Notitia Dignitatum Imperii* is a description of all the offices in the court and the state, of the legions, &c. It resembles our court almanacs, (Red Books,) with this single difference, that our almanacs name the persons in office, the *Notitia* only the offices. It is of the time of the emperor Theodosius II., that is to say, of the fifth century, when the empire was divided into the Eastern and Western. It is probable that it was not made for the first time, and that descriptions of the same kind existed before.—G.]

72 [\(return\)](#)
[Pancirolus, in his elaborate Commentary, assigns to the *Notitia* a date almost similar to that of the Theodosian Code; but his proofs, or rather

conjectures, are extremely feeble. I should be rather inclined to place this useful work between the final division of the empire (A. D. 395) and the successful invasion of Gaul by the barbarians, (A. D. 407.) See *Histoire des Anciens Peuples de l'Europe*, tom. vii. p. 40.]

Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part III.

The manly pride of the Romans, content with substantial power, had left to the vanity of the East the forms and ceremonies of ostentatious greatness. [73](#) But when they lost even the semblance of those virtues which were derived from their ancient freedom, the simplicity of Roman manners was insensibly corrupted by the stately affectation of the courts of Asia. The distinctions of personal merit and influence, so conspicuous in a republic, so feeble and obscure under a monarchy, were abolished by the despotism of the emperors; who substituted in their room a severe subordination of rank and office from the titled slaves who were seated on the steps of the throne, to the meanest instruments of arbitrary power. This multitude of abject dependants was interested in the support of the actual government from the dread of a revolution, which might at once confound their hopes and intercept the reward of their services. In this divine hierarchy (for such it is frequently styled) every rank was marked with the most scrupulous exactness, and its dignity was displayed in a variety of trifling and solemn ceremonies, which it was a study to learn, and a sacrilege to neglect. [74](#) The purity of the Latin language was debased, by adopting, in the intercourse of pride and flattery, a profusion of epithets, which Tully would scarcely have understood, and which Augustus would have rejected with indignation. The principal officers of the empire were saluted, even by the sovereign himself, with the deceitful titles of your *Sincerity*, your *Gravity*, your *Excellency*, your *Eminence*, your *sublime and wonderful Magnitude*, your *illustrious and magnificent Highness*. [75](#) The codicils or patents of their office were curiously emblazoned with such emblems as were best adapted to explain its nature and high dignity; the image or portrait of the reigning emperors; a triumphal car; the book of mandates placed on a table, covered with a rich carpet, and illuminated by four tapers; the allegorical figures of the provinces which they governed; or the appellations and standards of the troops whom they commanded. Some of these official ensigns were really exhibited in their hall of audience; others preceded their pompous march whenever they appeared in public; and every circumstance of their demeanor, their dress, their ornaments, and their train, was calculated to inspire a deep reverence for the representatives of supreme majesty. By a philosophic observer, the system of the Roman government might have been mistaken for a splendid theatre, filled with players of every character and degree, who repeated the language, and imitated the passions, of their original model. [76](#)

- 73 [\(return\)](#)
 [Scilicet externæ superbîæ sueto, non inerat notitia nostri, (perhaps *nostræ*;) apud quos vis Imperii valet, inania transmittuntur. Tacit. Annal. xv. 31. The gradation from the style of freedom and simplicity, to that of form and servitude, may be traced in the Epistles of Cicero, of Pliny, and of Symmachus.]
- 74 [\(return\)](#)
 [The emperor Gratian, after confirming a law of precedency published by Valentinian, the father of his *Divinity*, thus continues: Siquis igitur indebitum sibi locum usurpaverit, nulla se ignoratione defendat; sitque plane *sacrilegii* reus, qui *divina* præcepta neglexerit. Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. v. leg. 2.]
- 75 [\(return\)](#)
 [Consult the *Notitia Dignitatum* at the end of the Theodosian code, tom. vi. p. 316. * Note: Constantin, qui remplaca le grand Patriciat par une noblesse titree et qui changea avec d'autres institutions la nature de la societe Latine, est le veritable fondateur de la royaute moderne, dans ce quelle conserva de Romain. Chateaubriand, Etud. Histor. Preface, i. 151. Manso, (Leben Constantins des Grossen,) p. 153, &c., has given a lucid view of the dignities and duties of the officers in the Imperial court.—M.]
- 76 [\(return\)](#)
 [Pancirolus ad Notitiam utriusque Imperii, p. 39. But his explanations are obscure, and he does not sufficiently distinguish the painted emblems from the effective ensigns of office.]

All the magistrates of sufficient importance to find a place in the general state of the empire, were accurately divided into three classes. 1. The *Illustrious*. 2. The *Spectabiles*, or *Respectable*. And, 3. the *Clarissimi*; whom we may translate by the word *Honorable*. In the times of Roman simplicity, the last-mentioned epithet was used only as a vague expression of deference, till it became at length the peculiar and appropriated title of all who were members of the senate, [77](#) and consequently of all who, from that venerable body, were selected to govern the provinces. The vanity of those who, from their rank and office, might claim a superior distinction above the rest of the senatorial order, was long afterwards indulged with the new appellation of *Respectable*; but the title of *Illustrious* was always reserved to some eminent personages who were obeyed or revered by the two subordinate classes. It was communicated only, I. To the consuls and patricians; II. To the Prætorian præfects, with the præfects of Rome and Constantinople; III. To the masters-general of the cavalry and the infantry; and IV. To the seven ministers of the palace, who exercised

their *sacred* functions about the person of the emperor. [78](#) Among those illustrious magistrates who were esteemed coordinate with each other, the seniority of appointment gave place to the union of dignities. [79](#) By the expedient of honorary codicils, the emperors, who were fond of multiplying their favors, might sometimes gratify the vanity, though not the ambition, of impatient courtiers. [80](#)

77 [\(return\)](#)
[In the Pandects, which may be referred to the reigns of the Antonines, *Clarissimus* is the ordinary and legal title of a senator.]

78 [\(return\)](#)
[Pancirol. p. 12-17. I have not taken any notice of the two inferior ranks, *Prefectissimus* and *Egregius*, which were given to many persons who were not raised to the senatorial dignity.]

79 [\(return\)](#)
[Cod. Theodos. l. vi. tit. vi. The rules of precedency are ascertained with the most minute accuracy by the emperors, and illustrated with equal prolixity by their learned interpreter.]

80 [\(return\)](#)
[Cod. Theodos. l. vi. tit. xxii.]

I. As long as the Roman consuls were the first magistrates of a free state, they derived their right to power from the choice of the people. As long as the emperors condescended to disguise the servitude which they imposed, the consuls were still elected by the real or apparent suffrage of the senate. From the reign of Diocletian, even these vestiges of liberty were abolished, and the successful candidates who were invested with the annual honors of the consulship, affected to deplore the humiliating condition of their predecessors. The Scipios and the Catos had been reduced to solicit the votes of plebeians, to pass through the tedious and expensive forms of a popular election, and to expose their dignity to the shame of a public refusal; while their own happier fate had reserved them for an age and government in which the rewards of virtue were assigned by the unerring wisdom of a gracious sovereign. [81](#) In the epistles which the emperor addressed to the two consuls elect, it was declared, that they were created by his sole authority. [82](#) Their names and portraits, engraved on gilt tables of ivory, were dispersed over the empire as presents to the provinces, the cities, the magistrates, the senate, and the people. [83](#) Their solemn inauguration was performed at the place of the Imperial residence; and during a period of one hundred and twenty years, Rome was constantly deprived of the presence of her ancient magistrates. [84](#)

81 [\(return\)](#)
[Ausonius (in *Gratiarum Actione*) basely expatiates on this unworthy topic, which is managed by Mamertinus (*Panegy. Vet. xi. [x.] 16, 19*) with somewhat more freedom and ingenuity.]

82

[\(return\)](#)

[Cum de Consulibus in annum creandis, solus mecum volutarem.... te Consulem et designavi, et declaravi, et priorem nuncupavi; are some of the expressions employed by the emperor Gratian to his preceptor, the poet Ausonius.]

83

[\(return\)](#)

[Immanesque... dentes Qui secti ferro in tabulas auroque micantes, Inscripti rutilum cœlato Consule nomen Per procures et vulgus eant. —Claud. in ii. Cons. Stilichon. 456.

Montfaucon has represented some of these tablets or dypticks see Supplement à l'Antiquité expliquée, tom. iii. p. 220.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Consule lætatur post plurima seculo viso
Pallanteus apex: agnoscunt rostra curules
Auditas quondam proavis:
desuetaque cingit Regius auratis
Fora fascibus Ulpia lictor.
—Claud. in vi. Cons. Honorii, 643.*

From the reign of Carus to the sixth consulship of Honorius, there was an interval of one hundred and twenty years, during which the emperors were always absent from Rome on the first day of January. See the Chronologie de Tillemonte, tom. iii. iv. and v.]

On the morning of the first of January, the consuls assumed the ensigns of their dignity. Their dress was a robe of purple, embroidered in silk and gold, and sometimes ornamented with costly gems. [85](#) On this solemn occasion they were attended by the most eminent officers of the state and army, in the habit of senators; and the useless fasces, armed with the once formidable axes, were borne before them by the lictors. The procession moved from the palace [87](#) to the Forum or principal square of the city; where the consuls ascended their tribunal, and seated themselves in the curule chairs, which were framed after the fashion of ancient times. They immediately exercised an act of jurisdiction, by the manumission of a slave, who was brought before them for that purpose; and the ceremony was intended to represent the celebrated action of the elder Brutus, the author of liberty and of the consulship, when he admitted among his fellow-citizens the faithful Vindex, who had revealed the conspiracy of the Tarquins. [88](#) The public festival was continued during several days in all the principal cities in Rome, from custom; in Constantinople, from imitation in Carthage, Antioch, and Alexandria, from the love of pleasure, and the superfluity of wealth. [89](#) In the two capitals of the empire the annual games of the theatre, the circus, and the amphitheatre, [90](#) cost four thousand pounds of gold, (about) one hundred and sixty thousand pounds sterling; and if so heavy an expense surpassed the faculties or the inclinations of the magistrates themselves, the sum was supplied from the Imperial treasury. [91](#) As soon as the consuls

had discharged these customary duties, they were at liberty to retire into the shade of private life, and to enjoy, during the remainder of the year, the undisturbed contemplation of their own greatness. They no longer presided in the national councils; they no longer executed the resolutions of peace or war. Their abilities (unless they were employed in more effective offices) were of little moment; and their names served only as the legal date of the year in which they had filled the chair of Marius and of Cicero. Yet it was still felt and acknowledged, in the last period of Roman servitude, that this empty name might be compared, and even preferred, to the possession of substantial power. The title of consul was still the most splendid object of ambition, the noblest reward of virtue and loyalty. The emperors themselves, who disdained the faint shadow of the republic, were conscious that they acquired an additional splendor and majesty as often as they assumed the annual honors of the consular dignity. [92](#)

85

[\(return\)](#)

[See Claudian in Cons. Prob. et Olybrii, 178, &c.; and in iv. Cons. Honorii, 585, &c.; though in the latter it is not easy to separate the ornaments of the emperor from those of the consul. Ausonius received from the liberality of Gratian a *vestis palmata*, or robe of state, in which the figure of the emperor Constantius was embroidered. Cernis et armorum proceres legumque potentes: Patricios sumunt habitus; et more Gabino Discolor incedit legio, positisque parumper Bellorum signis, sequitur vexilla Quirini. Lictori cedunt aquilæ, ridetque togatus Miles, et in mediis effulget curia castris. —Claud. in iv. Cons. Honorii, 5. —*strictaque* procul radiare *securæ*. —In Cons. Prob. 229]

87

[\(return\)](#)

[See Valesius ad Ammian. Marcellin. l. xxii. c. 7.]

88

[\(return\)](#)

[Auspice mox læto sonuit clamore tribunal; Te fastos ineunte quater; solemnna ludit Omina libertas; deductum Vindice morem Lex servat, famulusque jugo laxatus herili Ducitur, et grato remeat securior ictu. —Claud. in iv Cons. Honorii, 611]

89

[\(return\)](#)

[Celebrant quidem solemnes istos dies omnes ubique urbes quæ sub legibus agunt; et Roma de more, et Constantinopolis de imitatione, et Antiochia pro luxu, et discincta Carthago, et domus fluminis Alexandria, sed Treviri Principis beneficio. Ausonius in Grat. Actione.]

90

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian (in Cons. Mall. Theodori, 279-331) describes, in a lively and fanciful manner, the

various games of the circus, the theatre, and the amphitheatre, exhibited by the new consul. The sanguinary combats of gladiators had already been prohibited.]

91 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius in Hist. Arcana, c. 26.]

92 [\(return\)](#)

[In Consulatu honos sine labore suscipitur. (Mamertin. in Panegy. Vet. xi. [x.] 2.) This exalted idea of the consulship is borrowed from an oration (iii. p. 107) pronounced by Julian in the servile court of Constantius. See the Abbé de la Bleterie, (Mémoires de l'Académie, tom. xxiv. p. 289,) who delights to pursue the vestiges of the old constitution, and who sometimes finds them in his copious fancy]

The proudest and most perfect separation which can be found in any age or country, between the nobles and the people, is perhaps that of the Patricians and the Plebeians, as it was established in the first age of the Roman republic. Wealth and honors, the offices of the state, and the ceremonies of religion, were almost exclusively possessed by the former who, preserving the purity of their blood with the most insulting jealousy, [93](#) held their clients in a condition of specious vassalage. But these distinctions, so incompatible with the spirit of a free people, were removed, after a long struggle, by the persevering efforts of the Tribunes. The most active and successful of the Plebeians accumulated wealth, aspired to honors, deserved triumphs, contracted alliances, and, after some generations, assumed the pride of ancient nobility. [94](#) The Patrician families, on the other hand, whose original number was never recruited till the end of the commonwealth, either failed in the ordinary course of nature, or were extinguished in so many foreign and domestic wars, or, through a want of merit or fortune, insensibly mingled with the mass of the people. [95](#) Very few remained who could derive their pure and genuine origin from the infancy of the city, or even from that of the republic, when Cæsar and Augustus, Claudius and Vespasian, created from the body of the senate a competent number of new Patrician families, in the hope of perpetuating an order, which was still considered as honorable and sacred. [96](#) But these artificial supplies (in which the reigning house was always included) were rapidly swept away by the rage of tyrants, by frequent revolutions, by the change of manners, and by the intermixture of nations. [97](#) Little more was left when Constantine ascended the throne, than a vague and imperfect tradition, that the Patricians had once been the first of the Romans. To form a body of nobles, whose influence may restrain, while it secures the authority of the monarch, would have been very inconsistent with the character and policy of Constantine; but had he seriously entertained such a design, it might have exceeded the measure of his power to ratify, by an arbitrary edict, an institution which must expect the sanction of time and of opinion. He revived, indeed, the title of Patricians, but he revived it as a personal, not as an hereditary distinction. They yielded

only to the transient superiority of the annual consuls; but they enjoyed the pre-eminence over all the great officers of state, with the most familiar access to the person of the prince. This honorable rank was bestowed on them for life; and as they were usually favorites, and ministers who had grown old in the Imperial court, the true etymology of the word was perverted by ignorance and flattery; and the Patricians of Constantine were revered as the adopted *Fathers* of the emperor and the republic. [98](#)

93

[\(return\)](#)

[Intermarriages between the Patricians and Plebeians were prohibited by the laws of the XII Tables; and the uniform operations of human nature may attest that the custom survived the law. See in Livy (iv. 1-6) the pride of family urged by the consul, and the rights of mankind asserted by the tribune Canuleius.]

94

[\(return\)](#)

[See the animated picture drawn by Sallust, in the Jugurthine war, of the pride of the nobles, and even of the virtuous Metellus, who was unable to brook the idea that the honor of the consulship should be bestowed on the obscure merit of his lieutenant Marius. (c. 64.) Two hundred years before, the race of the Metelli themselves were confounded among the Plebeians of Rome; and from the etymology of their name of *Cacilius*, there is reason to believe that those haughty nobles derived their origin from a sutler.]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[In the year of Rome 800, very few remained, not only of the old Patrician families, but even of those which had been created by Cæsar and Augustus. (Tacit. Annal. xi. 25.) The family of Scaurus (a branch of the Patrician Æmilii) was degraded so low that his father, who exercised the trade of a charcoal merchant, left him only teu slaves, and somewhat less than three hundred pounds sterling. (Valerius Maximus, l. iv. c. 4, n. 11. Aurel. Victor in Scauro.) The family was saved from oblivion by the merit of the son.]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. xi. 25. Dion Cassius, l. iii. p. 698. The virtues of Agricola, who was created a Patrician by the emperor Vespasian, reflected honor on that ancient order; but his ancestors had not any claim beyond an Equestrian nobility.]

97

[\(return\)](#)

[This failure would have been almost impossible if it were true, as Casaubon compels Aurelius Victor to affirm (ad Sueton, in Cæsar v. 24. See Hist.

August p. 203 and Casaubon Comment., p. 220) that Vespasian created at once a thousand Patrician families. But this extravagant number is too much even for the whole Senatorial order. unless we should include all the Roman knights who were distinguished by the permission of wearing the laticlave.]

98

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 118; and Godefroy ad Cod. Theodos. l. vi. tit. vi.]

II. The fortunes of the Prætorian præfects were essentially different from those of the consuls and Patricians. The latter saw their ancient greatness evaporate in a vain title.

The former, rising by degrees from the most humble condition, were invested with the civil and military administration of the Roman world. From the reign of Severus to that of Diocletian, the guards and the palace, the laws and the finances, the armies and the provinces, were intrusted to their superintending care; and, like the Viziers of the East, they held with one hand the seal, and with the other the standard, of the empire. The ambition of the præfects, always formidable, and sometimes fatal to the masters whom they served, was supported by the strength of the Prætorian bands; but after those haughty troops had been weakened by Diocletian, and finally suppressed by Constantine, the præfects, who survived their fall, were reduced without difficulty to the station of useful and obedient ministers. When they were no longer responsible for the safety of the emperor's person, they resigned the jurisdiction which they had hitherto claimed and exercised over all the departments of the palace. They were deprived by Constantine of all military command, as soon as they had ceased to lead into the field, under their immediate orders, the flower of the Roman troops; and at length, by a singular revolution, the captains of the guards were transformed into the civil magistrates of the provinces. According to the plan of government instituted by Diocletian, the four princes had each their Prætorian præfect; and after the monarchy was once more united in the person of Constantine, he still continued to create the same number of Four Præfects, and intrusted to their care the same provinces which they already administered. 1. The præfect of the East stretched his ample jurisdiction into the three parts of the globe which were subject to the Romans, from the cataracts of the Nile to the banks of the Phasis, and from the mountains of Thrace to the frontiers of Persia. 2. The important provinces of Pannonia, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece, once acknowledged the authority of the præfect of Illyricum. 3. The power of the præfect of Italy was not confined to the country from whence he derived his title; it extended over the additional territory of Rhætia as far as the banks of the Danube, over the dependent islands of the Mediterranean, and over that part of the continent of Africa which lies between the confines of Cyrene and those of Tingitania. 4. The præfect of the Gauls comprehended under that plural denomination the kindred provinces of Britain and Spain, and his authority was obeyed from the wall of Antoninus to the foot of Mount Atlas. [99](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 109, 110. If we had not fortunately possessed this satisfactory account of the division of the power and provinces of the Prætorian præfects, we should frequently have been perplexed amidst the copious details of the Code, and the circumstantial minuteness of the Notitia.]

After the Prætorian præfects had been dismissed from all military command, the civil functions which they were ordained to exercise over so many subject nations, were adequate to the ambition and abilities of the most consummate ministers. To their wisdom was committed the supreme administration of justice and of the finances, the two objects which, in a state of peace, comprehend almost all the respective duties of the sovereign and of the people; of the former, to protect the citizens who are obedient to the laws; of the latter, to contribute the share of their property which is required for the expenses of the state. The coin, the highways, the posts, the granaries, the manufactures, whatever could interest the public prosperity, was moderated by the authority of the Prætorian præfects. As the immediate representatives of the Imperial majesty, they were empowered to explain, to enforce, and on some occasions to modify, the general edicts by their discretionary proclamations. They watched over the conduct of the provincial governors, removed the negligent, and inflicted punishments on the guilty. From all the inferior jurisdictions, an appeal in every matter of importance, either civil or criminal, might be brought before the tribunal of the præfect; but *his* sentence was final and absolute; and the emperors themselves refused to admit any complaints against the judgment or the integrity of a magistrate whom they honored with such unbounded confidence. [100](#) His appointments were suitable to his dignity; [101](#) and if avarice was his ruling passion, he enjoyed frequent opportunities of collecting a rich harvest of fees, of presents, and of perquisites. Though the emperors no longer dreaded the ambition of their præfects, they were attentive to counterbalance the power of this great office by the uncertainty and shortness of its duration. [102](#)

100

[\(return\)](#)

[See a law of Constantine himself. A præfectis autem prætorio provocare, non sinimus. Cod. Justinian. l. vii. tit. lxii. leg. 19. Charisius, a lawyer of the time of Constantine, (Heinec. Hist. Romani, p. 349,) who admits this law as a fundamental principle of jurisprudence, compares the Prætorian præfects to the masters of the horse of the ancient dictators. Pandect. l. i. tit. xi.]

101

[\(return\)](#)

[When Justinian, in the exhausted condition of the empire, instituted a Prætorian præfect for Africa, he allowed him a salary of one hundred pounds of gold. Cod. Justinian. l. i. tit. xxvii. leg. i.]

102

[\(return\)](#)

[For this, and the other dignities of the empire, it

may be sufficient to refer to the ample commentaries of Pancirolus and Godefroy, who have diligently collected and accurately digested in their proper order all the legal and historical materials. From those authors, Dr. Howell (History of the World, vol. ii. p. 24-77) has deduced a very distinct abridgment of the state of the Roman empire]

From their superior importance and dignity, Rome and Constantinople were alone excepted from the jurisdiction of the Prætorian præfects. The immense size of the city, and the experience of the tardy, ineffectual operation of the laws, had furnished the policy of Augustus with a specious pretence for introducing a new magistrate, who alone could restrain a servile and turbulent populace by the strong arm of arbitrary power. [103](#) Valerius Messalla was appointed the first præfect of Rome, that his reputation might countenance so invidious a measure; but, at the end of a few days, that accomplished citizen [104](#) resigned his office, declaring, with a spirit worthy of the friend of Brutus, that he found himself incapable of exercising a power incompatible with public freedom. [105](#) As the sense of liberty became less exquisite, the advantages of order were more clearly understood; and the præfect, who seemed to have been designed as a terror only to slaves and vagrants, was permitted to extend his civil and criminal jurisdiction over the equestrian and noble families of Rome. The prætors, annually created as the judges of law and equity, could not long dispute the possession of the Forum with a vigorous and permanent magistrate, who was usually admitted into the confidence of the prince. Their courts were deserted, their number, which had once fluctuated between twelve and eighteen, [106](#) was gradually reduced to two or three, and their important functions were confined to the expensive obligation [107](#) of exhibiting games for the amusement of the people. After the office of the Roman consuls had been changed into a vain pageant, which was rarely displayed in the capital, the præfects assumed their vacant place in the senate, and were soon acknowledged as the ordinary presidents of that venerable assembly. They received appeals from the distance of one hundred miles; and it was allowed as a principle of jurisprudence, that all municipal authority was derived from them alone. [108](#) In the discharge of his laborious employment, the governor of Rome was assisted by fifteen officers, some of whom had been originally his equals, or even his superiors. The principal departments were relative to the command of a numerous watch, established as a safeguard against fires, robberies, and nocturnal disorders; the custody and distribution of the public allowance of corn and provisions; the care of the port, of the aqueducts, of the common sewers, and of the navigation and bed of the Tyber; the inspection of the markets, the theatres, and of the private as well as the public works. Their vigilance insured the three principal objects of a regular police, safety, plenty, and cleanliness; and as a proof of the attention of government to preserve the splendor and ornaments of the capital, a particular inspector was appointed for the statues; the guardian, as it were, of that inanimate people, which, according to the extravagant computation of an old writer, was scarcely

inferior in number to the living inhabitants of Rome. About thirty years after the foundation of Constantinople, a similar magistrate was created in that rising metropolis, for the same uses and with the same powers. A perfect equality was established between the dignity of the *two* municipal, and that of the *four* Prætorian præfects. [109](#)

103 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. vi. 11. Euseb. in Chron. p. 155. Dion Cassius, in the oration of Mæcenas, (l. lvii. p. 675,) describes the prerogatives of the præfect of the city as they were established in his own time.]

104 [\(return\)](#)

[The fame of Messalla has been scarcely equal to his merit. In the earliest youth he was recommended by Cicero to the friendship of Brutus. He followed the standard of the republic till it was broken in the fields of Philippi; he then accepted and deserved the favor of the most moderate of the conquerors; and uniformly asserted his freedom and dignity in the court of Augustus. The triumph of Messalla was justified by the conquest of Aquitain. As an orator, he disputed the palm of eloquence with Cicero himself. Messalla cultivated every muse, and was the patron of every man of genius. He spent his evenings in philosophic conversation with Horace; assumed his place at table between Delia and Tibullus; and amused his leisure by encouraging the poetical talents of young Ovid.]

105 [\(return\)](#)

[Incivilem esse potestatem contestans, says the translator of Eusebius. Tacitus expresses the same idea in other words; quasi nescius exercendi.]

106 [\(return\)](#)

[See Lipsius, Excursus D. ad 1 lib. Tacit. Annal.]

107 [\(return\)](#)

[Heineccii. Element. Juris Civilis secund ordinem Pandect i. p. 70. See, likewise, Spanheim de Usu. Numismatum, tom. ii. dissertat. x. p. 119. In the year 450, Marcian published a law, that *three* citizens should be annually created Prætors of Constantinople by the choice of the senate, but with their own consent. Cod. Justinian. li. i. tit. xxxix. leg. 2.]

108 [\(return\)](#)

[Quidquid igitur intra urbem admittitur, ad P. U. videtur pertinere; sed et siquid intra contesium milliarium. Ulpian in Pandect l. i. tit. xiii. n. 1. He proceeds to enumerate the various offices of the præfect, who, in the code of Justinian, (l. i. tit. xxxix. leg. 3,) is declared to precede and command

all city magistrates sine injuria ac detrimento honoris alieni.]

109

[\(return\)](#)

[Besides our usual guides, we may observe that Felix Cantelorius has written a separate treatise, *De Præfecto Urbis*; and that many curious details concerning the police of Rome and Constantinople are contained in the fourteenth book of the Theodosian Code.]

Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part IV.

Those who, in the imperial hierarchy, were distinguished by the title of *Respectable*, formed an intermediate class between the *illustrious* præfects, and the *honorable* magistrates of the provinces. In this class the proconsuls of Asia, Achaia, and Africa, claimed a preëminence, which was yielded to the remembrance of their ancient dignity; and the appeal from their tribunal to that of the præfects was almost the only mark of their dependence. [110](#) But the civil government of the empire was distributed into thirteen great Dioceses, each of which equalled the just measure of a powerful kingdom. The first of these dioceses was subject to the jurisdiction of the *count* of the east; and we may convey some idea of the importance and variety of his functions, by observing, that six hundred apparitors, who would be styled at present either secretaries, or clerks, or ushers, or messengers, were employed in his immediate office. [111](#) The place of *Augustal præfect* of Egypt was no longer filled by a Roman knight; but the name was retained; and the extraordinary powers which the situation of the country, and the temper of the inhabitants, had once made indispensable, were still continued to the governor. The eleven remaining dioceses, of Asiana, Pontica, and Thrace; of Macedonia, Dacia, and Pannonia, or Western Illyricum; of Italy and Africa; of Gaul, Spain, and Britain; were governed by twelve *vicars* or *vice-præfects*, [112](#) whose name sufficiently explains the nature and dependence of their office. It may be added, that the lieutenant-generals of the Roman armies, the military counts and dukes, who will be hereafter mentioned, were allowed the rank and title of *Respectable*.

110

[\(return\)](#)

[Eunapius affirms, that the proconsul of Asia was independent of the præfect; which must, however, be understood with some allowance. the jurisdiction of the vice-præfect he most assuredly disclaimed. Pancirolus, p. 161.]

111

[\(return\)](#)

[The proconsul of Africa had four hundred apparitors; and they all received large salaries, either from the treasury or the province See

Pancirol. p. 26, and Cod. Justinian. l. xii. tit. lvi. lvii.]

112

[\(return\)](#)

[In Italy there was likewise the *Vicar of Rome*. It has been much disputed whether his jurisdiction measured one hundred miles from the city, or whether it stretched over the ten thousand provinces of Italy.]

As the spirit of jealousy and ostentation prevailed in the councils of the emperors, they proceeded with anxious diligence to divide the substance and to multiply the titles of power. The vast countries which the Roman conquerors had united under the same simple form of administration, were imperceptibly crumbled into minute fragments; till at length the whole empire was distributed into one hundred and sixteen provinces, each of which supported an expensive and splendid establishment. Of these, three were governed by *proconsuls*, thirty-seven by *consulars*, five by *correctors*, and seventy-one by *presidents*. The appellations of these magistrates were different; they ranked in successive order, and the ensigns of and their situation, from accidental circumstances, might be more or less agreeable or advantageous. But they were all (excepting only the pro-consuls) alike included in the class of *honorable* persons; and they were alike intrusted, during the pleasure of the prince, and under the authority of the præfects or their deputies, with the administration of justice and the finances in their respective districts. The ponderous volumes of the Codes and Pandects [113](#) would furnish ample materials for a minute inquiry into the system of provincial government, as in the space of six centuries it was approved by the wisdom of the Roman statesmen and lawyers.

It may be sufficient for the historian to select two singular and salutary provisions, intended to restrain the abuse of authority.

1. For the preservation of peace and order, the governors of the provinces were armed with the sword of justice. They inflicted corporal punishments, and they exercised, in capital offences, the power of life and death. But they were not authorized to indulge the condemned criminal with the choice of his own execution, or to pronounce a sentence of the mildest and most honorable kind of exile. These prerogatives were reserved to the præfects, who alone could impose the heavy fine of fifty pounds of gold: their vicegerents were confined to the trifling weight of a few ounces. [114](#) This distinction, which seems to grant the larger, while it denies the smaller degree of authority, was founded on a very rational motive. The smaller degree was infinitely more liable to abuse. The passions of a provincial magistrate might frequently provoke him into acts of oppression, which affected only the freedom or the fortunes of the subject; though, from a principle of prudence, perhaps of humanity, he might still be terrified by the guilt of innocent blood. It may likewise be considered, that exile, considerable fines, or the choice of an easy death, relate more particularly to the rich and the noble; and the persons the most exposed to the avarice or resentment of a provincial magistrate, were thus removed from his obscure persecution to the more

august and impartial tribunal of the Prætorian præfect. 2. As it was reasonably apprehended that the integrity of the judge might be biased, if his interest was concerned, or his affections were engaged, the strictest regulations were established, to exclude any person, without the special dispensation of the emperor, from the government of the province where he was born; [115](#) and to prohibit the governor or his son from contracting marriage with a native, or an inhabitant; [116](#) or from purchasing slaves, lands, or houses, within the extent of his jurisdiction. [117](#) Notwithstanding these rigorous precautions, the emperor Constantine, after a reign of twenty-five years, still deploras the venal and oppressive administration of justice, and expresses the warmest indignation that the audience of the judge, his despatch of business, his seasonable delays, and his final sentence, were publicly sold, either by himself or by the officers of his court. The continuance, and perhaps the impunity, of these crimes, is attested by the repetition of impotent laws and ineffectual menaces. [118](#)

113 [\(return\)](#)

[Among the works of the celebrated Ulpian, there was one in ten books, concerning the office of a proconsul, whose duties in the most essential articles were the same as those of an ordinary governor of a province.]

114 [\(return\)](#)

[The presidents, or consulars, could impose only two ounces; the vice-præfects, three; the proconsuls, count of the east, and præfect of Egypt, six. See Heineccii Jur. Civil. tom. i. p. 75. Pandect. l. xlviii. tit. xix. n. 8. Cod. Justinian. l. i. tit. liv. leg. 4, 6.]

115 [\(return\)](#)

[Ut nulli patriæ suæ administratio sine speciali principis permissu permittatur. Cod. Justinian. l. i. tit. xli. This law was first enacted by the emperor Marcus, after the rebellion of Cassius. (Dion. l. lxxi.) The same regulation is observed in China, with equal strictness, and with equal effect.]

116 [\(return\)](#)

[Pandect. l. xxiii. tit. ii. n. 38, 57, 63.]

117 [\(return\)](#)

[In jure continetur, ne quis in administratione constitutus aliquid compararet. Cod. Theod. l. viii. tit. xv. leg. 1. This maxim of common law was enforced by a series of edicts (see the remainder of the title) from Constantine to Justin. From this prohibition, which is extended to the meanest officers of the governor, they except only clothes and provisions. The purchase within five years may be recovered; after which on information, it devolves to the treasury.]

[Cessent rapaces jam nunc officialium manus; cessent, inquam nam si moniti non cessaverint, gladiis præcidentur, &c. Cod. Theod. l. i. tit. vii. leg. 1. Zeno enacted that all governors should remain in the province, to answer any accusations, fifty days after the expiration of their power. Cod Justinian. l. ii. tit. xlix. leg. 1.]

All the civil magistrates were drawn from the profession of the law. The celebrated Institutes of Justinian are addressed to the youth of his dominions, who had devoted themselves to the study of Roman jurisprudence; and the sovereign condescends to animate their diligence, by the assurance that their skill and ability would in time be rewarded by an adequate share in the government of the republic. [119](#) The rudiments of this lucrative science were taught in all the considerable cities of the east and west; but the most famous school was that of Berytus, [120](#) on the coast of Phœnicia; which flourished above three centuries from the time of Alexander Severus, the author perhaps of an institution so advantageous to his native country. After a regular course of education, which lasted five years, the students dispersed themselves through the provinces, in search of fortune and honors; nor could they want an inexhaustible supply of business in a great empire already corrupted by the multiplicity of laws, of arts, and of vices. The court of the Prætorian præfect of the east could alone furnish employment for one hundred and fifty advocates, sixty-four of whom were distinguished by peculiar privileges, and two were annually chosen, with a salary of sixty pounds of gold, to defend the causes of the treasury. The first experiment was made of their judicial talents, by appointing them to act occasionally as assessors to the magistrates; from thence they were often raised to preside in the tribunals before which they had pleaded. They obtained the government of a province; and, by the aid of merit, of reputation, or of favor, they ascended, by successive steps, to the *illustrious* dignities of the state. [121](#) In the practice of the bar, these men had considered reason as the instrument of dispute; they interpreted the laws according to the dictates of private interest and the same pernicious habits might still adhere to their characters in the public administration of the state. The honor of a liberal profession has indeed been vindicated by ancient and modern advocates, who have filled the most important stations, with pure integrity and consummate wisdom: but in the decline of Roman jurisprudence, the ordinary promotion of lawyers was pregnant with mischief and disgrace. The noble art, which had once been preserved as the sacred inheritance of the patricians, was fallen into the hands of freedmen and plebeians, [122](#) who, with cunning rather than with skill, exercised a sordid and pernicious trade. Some of them procured admittance into families for the purpose of fomenting differences, of encouraging suits, and of preparing a harvest of gain for themselves or their brethren. Others, recluse in their chambers, maintained the dignity of legal professors, by furnishing a rich client with subtleties to confound the plainest truths, and with arguments to color the most unjustifiable pretensions. The splendid and popular class was composed of the advocates, who filled

the Forum with the sound of their turgid and loquacious rhetoric. Careless of fame and of justice, they are described, for the most part, as ignorant and rapacious guides, who conducted their clients through a maze of expense, of delay, and of disappointment; from whence, after a tedious series of years, they were at length dismissed, when their patience and fortune were almost exhausted. [123](#)

119 [\(return\)](#)

[Summâ igitur ope, et alacri studio has leges nostras accipite; et vosmetipsos sic eruditos ostendite, ut spes vos pulcherrima foveat; toto legitimo opere perfecto, posse etiam nostram rempublicam in par tibus ejus vobis credendis gubernari. Justinian in proem. Institutionum.]

120 [\(return\)](#)

[The splendor of the school of Berytus, which preserved in the east the language and jurisprudence of the Romans, may be computed to have lasted from the third to the middle of the sixth century Heinecc. Jur. Rom. Hist. p. 351-356.]

121 [\(return\)](#)

[As in a former period I have traced the civil and military promotion of Pertinax, I shall here insert the civil honors of Mallius Theodorus. 1. He was distinguished by his eloquence, while he pleaded as an advocate in the court of the Prætorian præfect. 2. He governed one of the provinces of Africa, either as president or consular, and deserved, by his administration, the honor of a brass statue. 3. He was appointed vicar, or vice-præfect, of Macedonia. 4. Quæstor. 5. Count of the sacred largesses. 6. Prætorian præfect of the Gauls; whilst he might yet be represented as a young man. 7. After a retreat, perhaps a disgrace of many years, which Mallius (confounded by some critics with the poet Manilius; see Fabricius Bibliothec. Latin. Edit. Ernest. tom. i.c. 18, p. 501) employed in the study of the Grecian philosophy he was named Prætorian præfect of Italy, in the year 397. 8. While he still exercised that great office, he was created, in the year 399, consul for the West; and his name, on account of the infamy of his colleague, the eunuch Eutropius, often stands alone in the Fasti. 9. In the year 408, Mallius was appointed a second time Prætorian præfect of Italy. Even in the venal panegyric of Claudian, we may discover the merit of Mallius Theodorus, who, by a rare felicity, was the intimate friend, both of Symmachus and of St. Augustin. See Tillemont, Hist. des Emp. tom. v. p. 1110-1114.]

122 [\(return\)](#)
[Mamertinus in Panegy. Vet. xi. [x.] 20. Asterius
apud Photium, p. 1500.]

123 [\(return\)](#)
[The curious passage of Ammianus, (l. xxx. c. 4,) in which he paints the manners of contemporary lawyers, affords a strange mixture of sound sense, false rhetoric, and extravagant satire. Godefroy (Prolegom. ad. Cod. Theod. c. i. p. 185) supports the historian by similar complaints and authentic facts. In the fourth century, many camels might have been laden with law-books. Eunapius in Vit. Ædesii, p. 72.]

III. In the system of policy introduced by Augustus, the governors, those at least of the Imperial provinces, were invested with the full powers of the sovereign himself. Ministers of peace and war, the distribution of rewards and punishments depended on them alone, and they successively appeared on their tribunal in the robes of civil magistracy, and in complete armor at the head of the Roman legions. [124](#) The influence of the revenue, the authority of law, and the command of a military force, concurred to render their power supreme and absolute; and whenever they were tempted to violate their allegiance, the loyal province which they involved in their rebellion was scarcely sensible of any change in its political state. From the time of Commodus to the reign of Constantine, near one hundred governors might be enumerated, who, with various success, erected the standard of revolt; and though the innocent were too often sacrificed, the guilty might be sometimes prevented, by the suspicious cruelty of their master. [125](#) To secure his throne and the public tranquillity from these formidable servants, Constantine resolved to divide the military from the civil administration, and to establish, as a permanent and professional distinction, a practice which had been adopted only as an occasional expedient. The supreme jurisdiction exercised by the Prætorian præfects over the armies of the empire, was transferred to the two *masters-general* whom he instituted, the one for the *cavalry*, the other for the *infantry*; and though each of these *illustrious* officers was more peculiarly responsible for the discipline of those troops which were under his immediate inspection, they both indifferently commanded in the field the several bodies, whether of horse or foot, which were united in the same army. [126](#) Their number was soon doubled by the division of the east and west; and as separate generals of the same rank and title were appointed on the four important frontiers of the Rhine, of the Upper and the Lower Danube, and of the Euphrates, the defence of the Roman empire was at length committed to eight masters-general of the cavalry and infantry. Under their orders, thirty-five military commanders were stationed in the provinces: three in Britain, six in Gaul, one in Spain, one in Italy, five on the Upper, and four on the Lower Danube; in Asia, eight, three in Egypt, and four in Africa. The titles of *counts*, and *dukes*, [127](#) by which they were properly distinguished, have obtained in modern languages so very different a sense,

that the use of them may occasion some surprise. But it should be recollected, that the second of those appellations is only a corruption of the Latin word, which was indiscriminately applied to any military chief. All these provincial generals were therefore *dukes*; but no more than ten among them were dignified with the rank of *counts* or companions, a title of honor, or rather of favor, which had been recently invented in the court of Constantine. A gold belt was the ensign which distinguished the office of the counts and dukes; and besides their pay, they received a liberal allowance sufficient to maintain one hundred and ninety servants, and one hundred and fifty-eight horses. They were strictly prohibited from interfering in any matter which related to the administration of justice or the revenue; but the command which they exercised over the troops of their department, was independent of the authority of the magistrates. About the same time that Constantine gave a legal sanction to the ecclesiastical order, he instituted in the Roman empire the nice balance of the civil and the military powers. The emulation, and sometimes the discord, which reigned between two professions of opposite interests and incompatible manners, was productive of beneficial and of pernicious consequences. It was seldom to be expected that the general and the civil governor of a province should either conspire for the disturbance, or should unite for the service, of their country. While the one delayed to offer the assistance which the other disdained to solicit, the troops very frequently remained without orders or without supplies; the public safety was betrayed, and the defenceless subjects were left exposed to the fury of the Barbarians. The divided administration which had been formed by Constantine, relaxed the vigor of the state, while it secured the tranquillity of the monarch.

124 [\(return\)](#)

[See a very splendid example in the life of Agricola, particularly c. 20, 21. The lieutenant of Britain was intrusted with the same powers which Cicero, proconsul of Cilicia, had exercised in the name of the senate and people.]

125 [\(return\)](#)

[The Abbé Dubos, who has examined with accuracy (see Hist. de la Monarchie Française, tom. i. p. 41-100, edit. 1742) the institutions of Augustus and of Constantine, observes, that if Otho had been put to death the day before he executed his conspiracy, Otho would now appear in history as innocent as Corbulo.]

126 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 110. Before the end of the reign of Constantius, the *magistri militum* were already increased to four. See Velesius ad Ammian. l. xvi. c. 7.]

127 [\(return\)](#)

[Though the military counts and dukes are frequently mentioned, both in history and the codes,

we must have recourse to the Notitia for the exact knowledge of their number and stations. For the institution, rank, privileges, &c., of the counts in general see Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. xii.—xx., with the commentary of Godefroy.]

The memory of Constantine has been deservedly censured for another innovation, which corrupted military discipline and prepared the ruin of the empire. The nineteen years which preceded his final victory over Licinius, had been a period of license and intestine war. The rivals who contended for the possession of the Roman world, had withdrawn the greatest part of their forces from the guard of the general frontier; and the principal cities which formed the boundary of their respective dominions were filled with soldiers, who considered their countrymen as their most implacable enemies. After the use of these internal garrisons had ceased with the civil war, the conqueror wanted either wisdom or firmness to revive the severe discipline of Diocletian, and to suppress a fatal indulgence, which habit had endeared and almost confirmed to the military order. From the reign of Constantine, a popular and even legal distinction was admitted between the *Palatines* [128](#) and the *Borderers*; the troops of the court, as they were improperly styled, and the troops of the frontier. The former, elevated by the superiority of their pay and privileges, were permitted, except in the extraordinary emergencies of war, to occupy their tranquil stations in the heart of the provinces. The most flourishing cities were oppressed by the intolerable weight of quarters. The soldiers insensibly forgot the virtues of their profession, and contracted only the vices of civil life. They were either degraded by the industry of mechanic trades, or enervated by the luxury of baths and theatres. They soon became careless of their martial exercises, curious in their diet and apparel; and while they inspired terror to the subjects of the empire, they trembled at the hostile approach of the Barbarians. [129](#) The chain of fortifications which Diocletian and his colleagues had extended along the banks of the great rivers, was no longer maintained with the same care, or defended with the same vigilance. The numbers which still remained under the name of the troops of the frontier, might be sufficient for the ordinary defence; but their spirit was degraded by the humiliating reflection, that *they* who were exposed to the hardships and dangers of a perpetual warfare, were rewarded only with about two thirds of the pay and emoluments which were lavished on the troops of the court. Even the bands or legions that were raised the nearest to the level of those unworthy favorites, were in some measure disgraced by the title of honor which they were allowed to assume. It was in vain that Constantine repeated the most dreadful menaces of fire and sword against the *Borderers* who should dare desert their colors, to connive at the inroads of the Barbarians, or to participate in the spoil. [130](#) The mischiefs which flow from injudicious counsels are seldom removed by the application of partial severities; and though succeeding princes labored to restore the strength and numbers of the frontier garrisons, the empire, till the last moment of its dissolution, continued to languish under the mortal wound which had been so rashly or so weakly inflicted by the hand of Constantine.

- 128 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l ii. p. 111. The distinction between the two classes of Roman troops, is very darkly expressed in the historians, the laws, and the Notitia. Consult, however, the copious *paratitlon*, or abstract, which Godefroy has drawn up of the seventh book, de Re Militari, of the Theodosian Code, l. vii. tit. i. leg. 18, l. viii. tit. i. leg. 10.]
- 129 [\(return\)](#)
[Ferox erat in suos miles et rapax, ignavus vero in hostes et fractus. Ammian. l. xxii. c. 4. He observes, that they loved downy beds and houses of marble; and that their cups were heavier than their swords.]
- 130 [\(return\)](#)
[Cod. Theod. l. vii. tit. i. leg. 1, tit. xii. leg. i. See Howell's Hist. of the World, vol. ii. p. 19. That learned historian, who is not sufficiently known, labors to justify the character and policy of Constantine.]

The same timid policy, of dividing whatever is united, of reducing whatever is eminent, of dreading every active power, and of expecting that the most feeble will prove the most obedient, seems to pervade the institutions of several princes, and particularly those of Constantine. The martial pride of the legions, whose victorious camps had so often been the scene of rebellion, was nourished by the memory of their past exploits, and the consciousness of their actual strength. As long as they maintained their ancient establishment of six thousand men, they subsisted, under the reign of Diocletian, each of them singly, a visible and important object in the military history of the Roman empire. A few years afterwards, these gigantic bodies were shrunk to a very diminutive size; and when *seven* legions, with some auxiliaries, defended the city of Amida against the Persians, the total garrison, with the inhabitants of both sexes, and the peasants of the deserted country, did not exceed the number of twenty thousand persons. [131](#) From this fact, and from similar examples, there is reason to believe, that the constitution of the legionary troops, to which they partly owed their valor and discipline, was dissolved by Constantine; and that the bands of Roman infantry, which still assumed the same names and the same honors, consisted only of one thousand or fifteen hundred men. [132](#) The conspiracy of so many separate detachments, each of which was awed by the sense of its own weakness, could easily be checked; and the successors of Constantine might indulge their love of ostentation, by issuing their orders to one hundred and thirty-two legions, inscribed on the muster-roll of their numerous armies. The remainder of their troops was distributed into several hundred cohorts of infantry, and squadrons of cavalry. Their arms, and titles, and ensigns, were calculated to inspire terror, and to display the variety of nations who marched under the Imperial standard. And not a vestige was left of that severe simplicity, which, in the ages of freedom and victory, had distinguished the line of battle of a Roman army from the

confused host of an Asiatic monarch. [133](#) A more particular enumeration, drawn from the *Notitia*, might exercise the diligence of an antiquary; but the historian will content himself with observing, that the number of permanent stations or garrisons established on the frontiers of the empire, amounted to five hundred and eighty-three; and that, under the successors of Constantine, the complete force of the military establishment was computed at six hundred and forty-five thousand soldiers. [134](#) An effort so prodigious surpassed the wants of a more ancient, and the faculties of a later, period.

131 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. l. xix. c. 2. He observes, (c. 5,) that the desperate sallies of two Gallic legions were like a handful of water thrown on a great conflagration.]

132 [\(return\)](#)

[Pancirolus ad Notitiam, p. 96. Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. xxv. p. 491.]

133 [\(return\)](#)

[Romana acies unius prope formæ erat et hominum et armorum genere.—Regia acies varia magis multis gentibus dissimilitudine armorum auxiliorumque erat. T. Liv. l. xxxvii. c. 39, 40. Flaminus, even before the event, had compared the army of Antiochus to a supper in which the flesh of one vile animal was diversified by the skill of the cooks. See the Life of Flaminus in Plutarch.]

134 [\(return\)](#)

[Agathias, l. v. p. 157, edit. Louvre.]

In the various states of society, armies are recruited from very different motives. Barbarians are urged by the love of war; the citizens of a free republic may be prompted by a principle of duty; the subjects, or at least the nobles, of a monarchy, are animated by a sentiment of honor; but the timid and luxurious inhabitants of a declining empire must be allured into the service by the hopes of profit, or compelled by the dread of punishment. The resources of the Roman treasury were exhausted by the increase of pay, by the repetition of donatives, and by the invention of new emolument and indulgences, which, in the opinion of the provincial youth might compensate the hardships and dangers of a military life. Yet, although the stature was lowered, [135](#) although slaves, least by a tacit connivance, were indiscriminately received into the ranks, the insurmountable difficulty of procuring a regular and adequate supply of volunteers, obliged the emperors to adopt more effectual and coercive methods. The lands bestowed on the veterans, as the free reward of their valor were henceforward granted under a condition which contain the first rudiments of the feudal tenures; that their sons, who succeeded to the inheritance, should devote themselves to the profession of arms, as soon as they attained the age of manhood; and their cowardly refusal was punished by the loss of honor, of fortune, or even of life. [136](#) But as the annual growth of the sons of the veterans bore a very small proportion to the demands of the service, levies of men were frequently required from

the provinces, and every proprietor was obliged either to take up arms, or to procure a substitute, or to purchase his exemption by the payment of a heavy fine. The sum of forty-two pieces of gold, to which it was *reduced* ascertains the exorbitant price of volunteers, and the reluctance with which the government admitted of this alternative. [137](#) Such was the horror for the profession of a soldier, which had affected the minds of the degenerate Romans, that many of the youth of Italy and the provinces chose to cut off the fingers of their right hand, to escape from being pressed into the service; and this strange expedient was so commonly practised, as to deserve the severe animadversion of the laws, [138](#) and a peculiar name in the Latin language. [139](#)

135 [\(return\)](#)

[Valentinian (Cod. Theodos. l. vii. tit. xiii. leg. 3) fixes the standard at five feet seven inches, about five feet four inches and a half, English measure. It had formerly been five feet ten inches, and in the best corps, six Roman feet. Sed tunc erat amplior multitudo se et plures sequebantur militiam armatam. Vegetius de Re Militari l. i. c. v.]

136 [\(return\)](#)

[See the two titles, De Veteranis and De Filiis Veteranorum, in the seventh book of the Theodosian Code. The age at which their military service was required, varied from twenty-five to sixteen. If the sons of the veterans appeared with a horse, they had a right to serve in the cavalry; two horses gave them some valuable privileges]

137 [\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. vii. tit. xiii. leg. 7. According to the historian Socrates, (see Godefroy ad loc.,) the same emperor Valens sometimes required eighty pieces of gold for a recruit. In the following law it is faintly expressed, that slaves shall not be admitted inter optimas lectissimorum militum turmas.]

138 [\(return\)](#)

[The person and property of a Roman knight, who had mutilated his two sons, were sold at public auction by order of Augustus. (Sueton. in August. c. 27.) The moderation of that artful usurper proves, that this example of severity was justified by the spirit of the times. Ammianus makes a distinction between the effeminate Italians and the hardy Gauls. (L. xv. c. 12.) Yet only 15 years afterwards, Valentinian, in a law addressed to the præfect of Gaul, is obliged to enact that these cowardly deserters shall be burnt alive. (Cod. Theod. l. vii. tit. xiii. leg. 5.) Their numbers in Illyricum were so considerable, that the province complained of a scarcity of recruits. (Id. leg. 10.)]

[They were called *Murci*. *Murcidus* is found in Plautus and Festus, to denote a lazy and cowardly person, who, according to Arnobius and Augustin, was under the immediate protection of the goddess *Murcia*. From this particular instance of cowardice, *murcare* is used as synonymous to *mutilare*, by the writers of the middle Latinity. See Linder brogius and Valesius ad Ammian. Marcellin, l. xv. c. 12]

Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part V.

The introduction of Barbarians into the Roman armies became every day more universal, more necessary, and more fatal. The most daring of the Scythians, of the Goths, and of the Germans, who delighted in war, and who found it more profitable to defend than to ravage the provinces, were enrolled, not only in the auxiliaries of their respective nations, but in the legions themselves, and among the most distinguished of the Palatine troops. As they freely mingled with the subjects of the empire, they gradually learned to despise their manners, and to imitate their arts. They abjured the implicit reverence which the pride of Rome had exacted from their ignorance, while they acquired the knowledge and possession of those advantages by which alone she supported her declining greatness. The Barbarian soldiers, who displayed any military talents, were advanced, without exception, to the most important commands; and the names of the tribunes, of the counts and dukes, and of the generals themselves, betray a foreign origin, which they no longer condescended to disguise. They were often intrusted with the conduct of a war against their countrymen; and though most of them preferred the ties of allegiance to those of blood, they did not always avoid the guilt, or at least the suspicion, of holding a treasonable correspondence with the enemy, of inviting his invasion, or of sparing his retreat. The camps and the palace of the son of Constantine were governed by the powerful faction of the Franks, who preserved the strictest connection with each other, and with their country, and who resented every personal affront as a national indignity. [140](#) When the tyrant Caligula was suspected of an intention to invest a very extraordinary candidate with the consular robes, the sacrilegious profanation would have scarcely excited less astonishment, if, instead of a horse, the noblest chieftain of Germany or Britain had been the object of his choice. The revolution of three centuries had produced so remarkable a change in the prejudices of the people, that, with the public approbation, Constantine showed his successors the example of bestowing the honors of the consulship on the Barbarians, who, by their merit and services, had deserved to be ranked among the first of the Romans. [141](#) But as these hardy veterans, who had been educated in the ignorance or contempt of the laws, were incapable of exercising any civil offices, the powers of the human mind were

contracted by the irreconcilable separation of talents as well as of professions. The accomplished citizens of the Greek and Roman republics, whose characters could adapt themselves to the bar, the senate, the camp, or the schools, had learned to write, to speak, and to act with the same spirit, and with equal abilities.

140

[\(return\)](#)

[Malarichus—adhibitis Francis quorum ea tempestate in palatio multitudo florebat, erectius jam loquebatur tumultuabaturque. Ammian. l. xv. c. 5.]

141

[\(return\)](#)

[Barbaros omnium primus, ad usque fasces auxerat et trabeas consulares. Ammian. l. xx. c. 10. Eusebius (in Vit. Constantin. l. iv c.7) and Aurelius Victor seem to confirm the truth of this assertion yet in the thirty-two consular Fasti of the reign of Constantine cannot discover the name of a single Barbarian. I should therefore interpret the liberality of that prince as relative to the ornaments rather than to the office, of the consulship.]

IV. Besides the magistrates and generals, who at a distance from the court diffused their delegated authority over the provinces and armies, the emperor conferred the rank of *Illustrious* on seven of his more immediate servants, to whose fidelity he intrusted his safety, or his counsels, or his treasures. 1. The private apartments of the palace were governed by a favorite eunuch, who, in the language of that age, was styled the *præpositus*, or præfect of the sacred bed-chamber. His duty was to attend the emperor in his hours of state, or in those of amusement, and to perform about his person all those menial services, which can only derive their splendor from the influence of royalty. Under a prince who deserved to reign, the great chamberlain (for such we may call him) was a useful and humble domestic; but an artful domestic, who improves every occasion of unguarded confidence, will insensibly acquire over a feeble mind that ascendant which harsh wisdom and uncomplying virtue can seldom obtain. The degenerate grandsons of Theodosius, who were invisible to their subjects, and contemptible to their enemies, exalted the præfects of their bed-chamber above the heads of all the ministers of the palace; [142](#) and even his deputy, the first of the splendid train of slaves who waited in the presence, was thought worthy to rank before the *respectable* proconsuls of Greece or Asia. The jurisdiction of the chamberlain was acknowledged by the *counts*, or superintendents, who regulated the two important provinces of the magnificence of the wardrobe, and of the luxury of the Imperial table. [143](#) 2. The principal administration of public affairs was committed to the diligence and abilities of the *master of the offices*. [144](#) He was the supreme magistrate of the palace, inspected the discipline of the civil and military *schools*, and received appeals from all parts of the empire, in the causes which related to that numerous army of privileged persons, who, as the servants of the court, had obtained for themselves

and families a right to decline the authority of the ordinary judges. The correspondence between the prince and his subjects was managed by the four *scrinia*, or offices of this minister of state. The first was appropriated to memorials, the second to epistles, the third to petitions, and the fourth to papers and orders of a miscellaneous kind. Each of these was directed by an *inferior* master of *respectable* dignity, and the whole business was despatched by a hundred and forty-eight secretaries, chosen for the most part from the profession of the law, on account of the variety of abstracts of reports and references which frequently occurred in the exercise of their several functions. From a condescension, which in former ages would have been esteemed unworthy the Roman majesty, a particular secretary was allowed for the Greek language; and interpreters were appointed to receive the ambassadors of the Barbarians; but the department of foreign affairs, which constitutes so essential a part of modern policy, seldom diverted the attention of the master of the offices. His mind was more seriously engaged by the general direction of the posts and arsenals of the empire. There were thirty-four cities, fifteen in the East, and nineteen in the West, in which regular companies of workmen were perpetually employed in fabricating defensive armor, offensive weapons of all sorts, and military engines, which were deposited in the arsenals, and occasionally delivered for the service of the troops. 3. In the course of nine centuries, the office of *quæstor* had experienced a very singular revolution. In the infancy of Rome, two inferior magistrates were annually elected by the people, to relieve the consuls from the invidious management of the public treasure; [145](#) a similar assistant was granted to every proconsul, and to every prætor, who exercised a military or provincial command; with the extent of conquest, the two quæstors were gradually multiplied to the number of four, of eight, of twenty, and, for a short time, perhaps, of forty; [146](#) and the noblest citizens ambitiously solicited an office which gave them a seat in the senate, and a just hope of obtaining the honors of the republic. Whilst Augustus affected to maintain the freedom of election, he consented to accept the annual privilege of recommending, or rather indeed of nominating, a certain proportion of candidates; and it was his custom to select one of these distinguished youths, to read his orations or epistles in the assemblies of the senate. [147](#) The practice of Augustus was imitated by succeeding princes; the occasional commission was established as a permanent office; and the favored quæstor, assuming a new and more illustrious character, alone survived the suppression of his ancient and useless colleagues. [148](#) As the orations which he composed in the name of the emperor, [149](#) acquired the force, and, at length, the form, of absolute edicts, he was considered as the representative of the legislative power, the oracle of the council, and the original source of the civil jurisprudence. He was sometimes invited to take his seat in the supreme judicature of the Imperial consistory, with the Prætorian præfects, and the master of the offices; and he was frequently requested to resolve the doubts of inferior judges: but as he was not oppressed with a variety of subordinate business, his leisure and talents were employed to cultivate that dignified style of eloquence, which, in the corruption of taste and language, still

preserves the majesty of the Roman laws. [150](#) In some respects, the office of the Imperial quæstor may be compared with that of a modern chancellor; but the use of a great seal, which seems to have been adopted by the illiterate barbarians, was never introduced to attest the public acts of the emperors. 4. The extraordinary title of *count of the sacred largesses* was bestowed on the treasurer-general of the revenue, with the intention perhaps of inculcating, that every payment flowed from the voluntary bounty of the monarch. To conceive the almost infinite detail of the annual and daily expense of the civil and military administration in every part of a great empire, would exceed the powers of the most vigorous imagination.

The actual account employed several hundred persons, distributed into eleven different offices, which were artfully contrived to examine and control their respective operations. The multitude of these agents had a natural tendency to increase; and it was more than once thought expedient to dismiss to their native homes the useless supernumeraries, who, deserting their honest labors, had pressed with too much eagerness into the lucrative profession of the finances. [151](#) Twenty-nine provincial receivers, of whom eighteen were honored with the title of count, corresponded with the treasurer; and he extended his jurisdiction over the mines from whence the precious metals were extracted, over the mints, in which they were converted into the current coin, and over the public treasuries of the most important cities, where they were deposited for the service of the state. The foreign trade of the empire was regulated by this minister, who directed likewise all the linen and woollen manufactures, in which the successive operations of spinning, weaving, and dyeing were executed, chiefly by women of a servile condition, for the use of the palace and army. Twenty-six of these institutions are enumerated in the West, where the arts had been more recently introduced, and a still larger proportion may be allowed for the industrious provinces of the East. [152](#) 5. Besides the public revenue, which an absolute monarch might levy and expend according to his pleasure, the emperors, in the capacity of opulent citizens, possessed a very extensive property, which was administered by the *count* or treasurer of *the private estate*. Some part had perhaps been the ancient demesnes of kings and republics; some accessions might be derived from the families which were successively invested with the purple; but the most considerable portion flowed from the impure source of confiscations and forfeitures. The Imperial estates were scattered through the provinces, from Mauritania to Britain; but the rich and fertile soil of Cappadocia tempted the monarch to acquire in that country his fairest possessions, [153](#) and either Constantine or his successors embraced the occasion of justifying avarice by religious zeal. They suppressed the rich temple of Comana, where the high priest of the goddess of war supported the dignity of a sovereign prince; and they applied to their private use the consecrated lands, which were inhabited by six thousand subjects or slaves of the deity and her ministers. [154](#) But these were not the valuable inhabitants: the plains that stretch from the foot of Mount Argæus to the banks of the Sarus, bred a generous race of horses, renowned above all others in the ancient world for their majestic shape and

incomparable swiftness. These *sacred* animals, destined for the service of the palace and the Imperial games, were protected by the laws from the profanation of a vulgar master. [155](#) The demesnes of Cappadocia were important enough to require the inspection of a count; [156](#) officers of an inferior rank were stationed in the other parts of the empire; and the deputies of the private, as well as those of the public, treasurer were maintained in the exercise of their independent functions, and encouraged to control the authority of the provincial magistrates. [157](#) 6, 7. The chosen bands of cavalry and infantry, which guarded the person of the emperor, were under the immediate command of the *two counts of the domestics*. The whole number consisted of three thousand five hundred men, divided into seven *schools*, or troops, of five hundred each; and in the East, this honorable service was almost entirely appropriated to the Armenians. Whenever, on public ceremonies, they were drawn up in the courts and porticos of the palace, their lofty stature, silent order, and splendid arms of silver and gold, displayed a martial pomp not unworthy of the Roman majesty. [158](#) From the seven schools two companies of horse and foot were selected, of the *protectors*, whose advantageous station was the hope and reward of the most deserving soldiers. They mounted guard in the interior apartments, and were occasionally despatched into the provinces, to execute with celerity and vigor the orders of their master. [159](#) The counts of the domestics had succeeded to the office of the Prætorian præfects; like the præfects, they aspired from the service of the palace to the command of armies.

142 [\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. 8.]

143 [\(return\)](#)

[By a very singular metaphor, borrowed from the military character of the first emperors, the steward of their household was styled the count of their camp, (comes castrensis.) Cassiodorus very seriously represents to him, that his own fame, and that of the empire, must depend on the opinion which foreign ambassadors may conceive of the plenty and magnificence of the royal table. (Variar. l. vi. epistol. 9.)]

144 [\(return\)](#)

[Gutherius (de Officiis Domûs Augustæ, l. ii. c. 20, l. iii.) has very accurately explained the functions of the master of the offices, and the constitution of the subordinate *scrinia*. But he vainly attempts, on the most doubtful authority, to deduce from the time of the Antonines, or even of Nero, the origin of a magistrate who cannot be found in history before the reign of Constantine.]

145 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacitus (Annal. xi. 22) says, that the first quæstors were elected by the people, sixty-four years after the foundation of the republic; but he is of opinion,

that they had, long before that period, been annually appointed by the consuls, and even by the kings. But this obscure point of antiquity is contested by other writers.]

146 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacitus (Annal. xi. 22) seems to consider twenty as the highest number of quæstors; and Dion (l. xliiii. p 374) insinuates, that if the dictator Cæsar once created forty, it was only to facilitate the payment of an immense debt of gratitude. Yet the augmentation which he made of prætors subsisted under the succeeding reigns.]

147 [\(return\)](#)

[Sueton. in August. c. 65, and Torrent. ad loc. Dion. Cas. p. 755.]

148 [\(return\)](#)

[The youth and inexperience of the quæstors, who entered on that important office in their twenty-fifth year, (Lips. Excurs. ad Tacit. l. iii. D.,) engaged Augustus to remove them from the management of the treasury; and though they were restored by Claudius, they seem to have been finally dismissed by Nero. (Tacit Annal. xiii. 29. Sueton. in Aug. c. 36, in Claud. c. 24. Dion, p. 696, 961, &c. Plin. Epistol. x. 20, et alibi.) In the provinces of the Imperial division, the place of the quæstors was more ably supplied by the *procurators*, (Dion Cas. p. 707. Tacit. in Vit. Agricol. c. 15;) or, as they were afterwards called, *rationales*. (Hist. August. p. 130.) But in the provinces of the senate we may still discover a series of quæstors till the reign of Marcus Antoninus. (See the Inscriptions of Gruter, the Epistles of Pliny, and a decisive fact in the Augustan History, p. 64.) From Ulpian we may learn, (Pandect. l. i. tit. 13,) that under the government of the house of Severus, their provincial administration was abolished; and in the subsequent troubles, the annual or triennial elections of quæstors must have naturally ceased.]

149 [\(return\)](#)

[Cum patris nomine et epistolas ipse dictaret, et edicta conscriberet, orationesque in senatu recitaret, etiam quæstoris vice. Sueton, in Tit. c. 6. The office must have acquired new dignity, which was occasionally executed by the heir apparent of the empire. Trajan intrusted the same care to Hadrian, his quæstor and cousin. See Dodwell, Prælection. Cambden, x. xi. p. 362-394.]

150 [\(return\)](#)

[Terris edicta daturus; Supplicibus responsa.—

Oracula regis Eloquio crevere tuo; nec dignius unquam Majestas meminit sese Romana locutam.—Claudian in Consulat. Mall. Theodor. 33. See likewise Symmachus (Epistol. i. 17) and Cassiodorus. (Variar. iv. 5.)]

151 [\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. 30. Cod. Justinian. l. xii. tit. 24.]

152 [\(return\)](#)

[In the departments of the two counts of the treasury, the eastern part of the *Notitia* happens to be very defective. It may be observed, that we had a treasury chest in London, and a gynceum or manufacture at Winchester. But Britain was not thought worthy either of a mint or of an arsenal. Gaul alone possessed three of the former, and eight of the latter.]

153 [\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. xxx. leg. 2, and Godefroy ad loc.]

154 [\(return\)](#)

[Strabon. Geograph. l. xxii. p. 809, [edit. Casaub.] The other temple of Comana, in Pontus, was a colony from that of Cappadocia, l. xii. p. 835. The President Des Brosses (see his Saluste, tom. ii. p. 21, [edit. Causub.]) conjectures that the deity adored in both Comanas was Beltis, the Venus of the east, the goddess of generation; a very different being indeed from the goddess of war.]

155 [\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. x. tit. vi. de Grege Dominico. Godefroy has collected every circumstance of antiquity relative to the Cappadocian horses. One of the finest breeds, the Palmatian, was the forfeiture of a rebel, whose estate lay about sixteen miles from Tyana, near the great road between Constantinople and Antioch.]

156 [\(return\)](#)

[Justinian (Novell. 30) subjected the province of the count of Cappadocia to the immediate authority of the favorite eunuch, who presided over the sacred bed-chamber.]

157 [\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. xxx. leg. 4, &c.]

158 [\(return\)](#)

[Pancirolus, p. 102, 136. The appearance of these military domestics is described in the Latin poem of Corippus, de Laudibus Justin. l. iii. 157-179. p. 419, 420 of the Appendix Hist. Byzantin. Rom. 177.]

[Ammianus Marcellinus, who served so many years, obtained only the rank of a protector. The first ten among these honorable soldiers were *Clarissimi*.]

The perpetual intercourse between the court and the provinces was facilitated by the construction of roads and the institution of posts. But these beneficial establishments were accidentally connected with a pernicious and intolerable abuse. Two or three hundred *agents* or messengers were employed, under the jurisdiction of the master of the offices, to announce the names of the annual consuls, and the edicts or victories of the emperors. They insensibly assumed the license of reporting whatever they could observe of the conduct either of magistrates or of private citizens; and were soon considered as the eyes of the monarch, [160](#) and the scourge of the people. Under the warm influence of a feeble reign, they multiplied to the incredible number of ten thousand, disdained the mild though frequent admonitions of the laws, and exercised in the profitable management of the posts a rapacious and insolent oppression. These official spies, who regularly corresponded with the palace, were encouraged by favor and reward, anxiously to watch the progress of every treasonable design, from the faint and latent symptoms of disaffection, to the actual preparation of an open revolt. Their careless or criminal violation of truth and justice was covered by the consecrated mask of zeal; and they might securely aim their poisoned arrows at the breast either of the guilty or the innocent, who had provoked their resentment, or refused to purchase their silence. A faithful subject, of Syria perhaps, or of Britain, was exposed to the danger, or at least to the dread, of being dragged in chains to the court of Milan or Constantinople, to defend his life and fortune against the malicious charge of these privileged informers. The ordinary administration was conducted by those methods which extreme necessity can alone palliate; and the defects of evidence were diligently supplied by the use of torture. [161](#)

160

[\(return\)](#)

[Xenophon, *Cyropæd.* l. viii. Brisson, de Regno Persico, l. i No 190, p. 264. The emperors adopted with pleasure this Persian metaphor.]

161

[\(return\)](#)

[For the *Agentes in Rebus*, see Ammian. l. xv. c. 3, l. xvi. c. 5, l. xxii. c. 7, with the curious annotations of Valesius. Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. xxvii. xxviii. xxix. Among the passages collected in the Commentary of Godefroy, the most remarkable is one from Libanius, in his discourse concerning the death of Julian.]

The deceitful and dangerous experiment of the criminal *quæstion*, as it is emphatically styled, was admitted, rather than approved, in the jurisprudence of the Romans. They applied this sanguinary mode of examination only to servile bodies, whose sufferings were seldom weighed by those haughty republicans in the scale of

justice or humanity; but they would never consent to violate the sacred person of a citizen, till they possessed the clearest evidence of his guilt. [162](#) The annals of tyranny, from the reign of Tiberius to that of Domitian, circumstantially relate the executions of many innocent victims; but, as long as the faintest remembrance was kept alive of the national freedom and honor, the last hours of a Roman were secured from the danger of ignominious torture. [163](#) The conduct of the provincial magistrates was not, however, regulated by the practice of the city, or the strict maxims of the civilians. They found the use of torture established not only among the slaves of oriental despotism, but among the Macedonians, who obeyed a limited monarch; among the Rhodians, who flourished by the liberty of commerce; and even among the sage Athenians, who had asserted and adorned the dignity of human kind. [164](#) The acquiescence of the provincials encouraged their governors to acquire, or perhaps to usurp, a discretionary power of employing the rack, to extort from vagrants or plebeian criminals the confession of their guilt, till they insensibly proceeded to confound the distinction of rank, and to disregard the privileges of Roman citizens. The apprehensions of the subjects urged them to solicit, and the interest of the sovereign engaged him to grant, a variety of special exemptions, which tacitly allowed, and even authorized, the general use of torture. They protected all persons of illustrious or honorable rank, bishops and their presbyters, professors of the liberal arts, soldiers and their families, municipal officers, and their posterity to the third generation, and all children under the age of puberty. [165](#) But a fatal maxim was introduced into the new jurisprudence of the empire, that in the case of treason, which included every offence that the subtlety of lawyers could derive from a *hostile intention* towards the prince or republic, [166](#) all privileges were suspended, and all conditions were reduced to the same ignominious level. As the safety of the emperor was avowedly preferred to every consideration of justice or humanity, the dignity of age and the tenderness of youth were alike exposed to the most cruel tortures; and the terrors of a malicious information, which might select them as the accomplices, or even as the witnesses, perhaps, of an imaginary crime, perpetually hung over the heads of the principal citizens of the Roman world. [167](#)

162

[\(return\)](#)

[The Pandects (l. xlvi. tit. xviii.) contain the sentiments of the most celebrated civilians on the subject of torture. They strictly confine it to slaves; and Ulpian himself is ready to acknowledge that *Res est fragilis, et periculosa, et quæ veritatem fallat.*]

163

[\(return\)](#)

[In the conspiracy of Piso against Nero, Epicharis (libertina mulier) was the only person tortured; the rest were *intacti tormentis*. It would be superfluous to add a weaker, and it would be difficult to find a stronger, example. Tacit. Annal. xv. 57.]

- 164 [\(return\)](#)
[Dicendum... de Institutis Atheniensium, Rhodiorum, doctissimorum hominum, apud quos etiam (id quod acerbissimum est) liberi, civesque torquentur. Cicero, Partit. Orat. c. 34. We may learn from the trial of Philotas the practice of the Macedonians. (Diodor. Sicul. l. xvii. p. 604. Q. Curt. l. vi. c. 11.)]
- 165 [\(return\)](#)
[Heineccius (Element. Jur. Civil. part vii. p. 81) has collected these exemptions into one view.]
- 166 [\(return\)](#)
[This definition of the sage Ulpian (Pandect. l. xlviii. tit. iv.) seems to have been adapted to the court of Caracalla, rather than to that of Alexander Severus. See the Codes of Theodosius and ad leg. Juliam majestatis.]
- 167 [\(return\)](#)
[Arcadius Charisius is the oldest lawyer quoted to justify the universal practice of torture in all cases of treason; but this maxim of tyranny, which is admitted by Ammianus with the most respectful terror, is enforced by several laws of the successors of Constantine. See Cod. Theod. l. ix. tit. xxxv. majestatis crimine omnibus æqua est conditio.]

These evils, however terrible they may appear, were confined to the smaller number of Roman subjects, whose dangerous situation was in some degree compensated by the enjoyment of those advantages, either of nature or of fortune, which exposed them to the jealousy of the monarch. The obscure millions of a great empire have much less to dread from the cruelty than from the avarice of their masters, and *their* humble happiness is principally affected by the grievance of excessive taxes, which, gently pressing on the wealthy, descend with accelerated weight on the meaner and more indigent classes of society. An ingenious philosopher [168](#) has calculated the universal measure of the public impositions by the degrees of freedom and servitude; and ventures to assert, that, according to an invariable law of nature, it must always increase with the former, and diminish in a just proportion to the latter. But this reflection, which would tend to alleviate the miseries of despotism, is contradicted at least by the history of the Roman empire; which accuses the same princes of despoiling the senate of its authority, and the provinces of their wealth. Without abolishing all the various customs and duties on merchandises, which are imperceptibly discharged by the apparent choice of the purchaser, the policy of Constantine and his successors preferred a simple and direct mode of taxation, more congenial to the spirit of an arbitrary government. [169](#)

- 168 [\(return\)](#)
[Montesquieu, Esprit des Loix, l. xii. c. 13.]

[Mr. Hume (Essays, vol. i. p. 389) has seen this importance with some degree of perplexity.]

Chapter XVII: Foundation Of Constantinople.—Part VI.

The name and use of the *indictions*, [170](#) which serve to ascertain the chronology of the middle ages, were derived from the regular practice of the Roman tributes. [171](#) The emperor subscribed with his own hand, and in purple ink, the solemn edict, or indiction, which was fixed up in the principal city of each diocese, during two months previous to the first day of September. And by a very easy connection of ideas, the word *indiction* was transferred to the measure of tribute which it prescribed, and to the annual term which it allowed for the payment. This general estimate of the supplies was proportioned to the real and imaginary wants of the state; but as often as the expense exceeded the revenue, or the revenue fell short of the computation, an additional tax, under the name of *superindiction*, was imposed on the people, and the most valuable attribute of sovereignty was communicated to the Prætorian præfects, who, on some occasions, were permitted to provide for the unforeseen and extraordinary exigencies of the public service. The execution of these laws (which it would be tedious to pursue in their minute and intricate detail) consisted of two distinct operations: the resolving the general imposition into its constituent parts, which were assessed on the provinces, the cities, and the individuals of the Roman world; and the collecting the separate contributions of the individuals, the cities, and the provinces, till the accumulated sums were poured into the Imperial treasuries. But as the account between the monarch and the subject was perpetually open, and as the renewal of the demand anticipated the perfect discharge of the preceding obligation, the weighty machine of the finances was moved by the same hands round the circle of its yearly revolution. Whatever was honorable or important in the administration of the revenue, was committed to the wisdom of the præfects, and their provincia. representatives; the lucrative functions were claimed by a crowd of subordinate officers, some of whom depended on the treasurer, others on the governor of the province; and who, in the inevitable conflicts of a perplexed jurisdiction, had frequent opportunities of disputing with each other the spoils of the people. The laborious offices, which could be productive only of envy and reproach, of expense and danger, were imposed on the *Decurions*, who formed the corporations of the cities, and whom the severity of the Imperial laws had condemned to sustain the burdens of civil society. [172](#) The whole landed property of the empire (without excepting the patrimonial estates of the monarch) was the object of ordinary taxation; and every new purchaser contracted the obligations of the former proprietor. An accurate *census*, [173](#) or survey, was the only equitable mode of ascertaining the proportion which every citizen should be obliged to contribute for the public service; and from the well-known period of the indictions, there is reason to believe that this

difficult and expensive operation was repeated at the regular distance of fifteen years. The lands were measured by surveyors, who were sent into the provinces; their nature, whether arable or pasture, or vineyards or woods, was distinctly reported; and an estimate was made of their common value from the average produce of five years. The numbers of slaves and of cattle constituted an essential part of the report; an oath was administered to the proprietors, which bound them to disclose the true state of their affairs; and their attempts to prevaricate, or elude the intention of the legislator, were severely watched, and punished as a capital crime, which included the double guilt of treason and sacrilege. [174](#) A large portion of the tribute was paid in money; and of the current coin of the empire, gold alone could be legally accepted. [175](#) The remainder of the taxes, according to the proportions determined by the annual indiction, was furnished in a manner still more direct, and still more oppressive. According to the different nature of lands, their real produce in the various articles of wine or oil, corn or barley, wood or iron, was transported by the labor or at the expense of the provincials [17511](#) to the Imperial magazines, from whence they were occasionally distributed for the use of the court, of the army, and of two capitals, Rome and Constantinople. The commissioners of the revenue were so frequently obliged to make considerable purchases, that they were strictly prohibited from allowing any compensation, or from receiving in money the value of those supplies which were exacted in kind. In the primitive simplicity of small communities, this method may be well adapted to collect the almost voluntary offerings of the people; but it is at once susceptible of the utmost latitude, and of the utmost strictness, which in a corrupt and absolute monarchy must introduce a perpetual contest between the power of oppression and the arts of fraud. [176](#) The agriculture of the Roman provinces was insensibly ruined, and, in the progress of despotism which tends to disappoint its own purpose, the emperors were obliged to derive some merit from the forgiveness of debts, or the remission of tributes, which their subjects were utterly incapable of paying. According to the new division of Italy, the fertile and happy province of Campania, the scene of the early victories and of the delicious retirements of the citizens of Rome, extended between the sea and the Apennine, from the Tiber to the Silarus. Within sixty years after the death of Constantine, and on the evidence of an actual survey, an exemption was granted in favor of three hundred and thirty thousand English acres of desert and uncultivated land; which amounted to one eighth of the whole surface of the province. As the footsteps of the Barbarians had not yet been seen in Italy, the cause of this amazing desolation, which is recorded in the laws, can be ascribed only to the administration of the Roman emperors. [177](#)

[The cycle of indictions, which may be traced as high as the reign of Constantius, or perhaps of his father, Constantine, is still employed by the Papal court; but the commencement of the year has been very reasonably altered to the first of January. See

l'Art de Verifier les Dates, p. xi.; and Dictionnaire Raison. de la Diplomatie, tom. ii. p. 25; two accurate treatises, which come from the workshop of the Benedictines. — It does not appear that the establishment of the indiction is to be attributed to Constantine: it existed before he had been created *Augustus* at Rome, and the remission granted by him to the city of Autun is the proof. He would not have ventured while only *Cæsar*, and under the necessity of courting popular favor, to establish such an odious impost. Aurelius Victor and Lactantius agree in designating Diocletian as the author of this despotic institution. Aur. Vict. de Cæs. c. 39. Lactant. de Mort. Pers. c. 7—G.]

171 [\(return\)](#)

[The first twenty-eight titles of the eleventh book of the Theodosian Code are filled with the circumstantial regulations on the important subject of tributes; but they suppose a clearer knowledge of fundamental principles than it is at present in our power to attain.]

172 [\(return\)](#)

[The title concerning the Decurions (l. xii. tit. i.) is the most ample in the whole Theodosian Code; since it contains not less than one hundred and ninety-two distinct laws to ascertain the duties and privileges of that useful order of citizens. * Note: The Decurions were charged with assessing, according to the census of property prepared by the *tabularii*, the payment due from each proprietor. This odious office was authoritatively imposed on the richest citizens of each town; they had no salary, and all their compensation was, to be exempt from certain corporal punishments, in case they should have incurred them. The Decurionate was the ruin of all the rich. Hence they tried every way of avoiding this dangerous honor; they concealed themselves, they entered into military service; but their efforts were unavailing; they were seized, they were compelled to become Decurions, and the dread inspired by this title was termed *Impiety*.—G. —The Decurions were mutually responsible; they were obliged to undertake for pieces of ground abandoned by their owners on account of the pressure of the taxes, and, finally, to make up all deficiencies. Savigny *chichte des Rom. Rechts*, i. 25.—M.]

173 [\(return\)](#)

[*Habemus enim et hominum numerum qui delati sunt, et agrum modum.* Eumenius in *Panegy. Vet.*

viii. 6. See Cod. Theod. l. xiii. tit. x. xi., with Godefroy's Commentary.]

174 [\(return\)](#)

[Siquis sacrilegâ vitem falce succiderit, aut feracium ramorum fœtus hebetaverit, quo delinet fidem Censuum, et mentiatur callide paupertatis ingenium, mox detectus capitale subibit exitium, et bona ejus in Fisci jura migrabunt. Cod. Theod. l. xiii. tit. xi. leg. 1. Although this law is not without its studied obscurity, it is, however clear enough to prove the minuteness of the inquisition, and the disproportion of the penalty.]

175 [\(return\)](#)

[The astonishment of Pliny would have ceased. Equidem miror P. R. victis gentibus argentum semper imperitasse non aurum. Hist Natur. xxxiii. 15.]

17511 [\(return\)](#)

[The proprietors were not charged with the expense of this transport in the provinces situated on the sea-shore or near the great rivers, there were companies of boatmen, and of masters of vessels, who had this commission, and furnished the means of transport at their own expense. In return, they were themselves exempt, altogether, or in part, from the indiction and other imposts. They had certain privileges; particular regulations determined their rights and obligations. (Cod. Theod. l. xiii. tit. v. ix.) The transports by land were made in the same manner, by the intervention of a privileged company called Bastaga; the members were called Bastagarii Cod. Theod. l. viii. tit. v.—G.]

176 [\(return\)](#)

[Some precautions were taken (see Cod. Theod. l. xi. tit. ii. and Cod. Justinian. l. x. tit. xxvii. leg. 1, 2, 3) to restrain the magistrates from the abuse of their authority, either in the exaction or in the purchase of corn: but those who had learning enough to read the orations of Cicero against Verres, (iii. de Frumento,) might instruct themselves in all the various arts of oppression, with regard to the weight, the price, the quality, and the carriage. The avarice of an unlettered governor would supply the ignorance of precept or precedent.]

177 [\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. xi. tit. xxviii. leg. 2, published the 24th of March, A. D. 395, by the emperor Honorius, only two months after the death of his father, Theodosius. He speaks of 528,042 Roman jugera,

which I have reduced to the English measure. The jugerum contained 28,800 square Roman feet.]

Either from design or from accident, the mode of assessment seemed to unite the substance of a land tax with the forms of a capitation. [178](#) The returns which were sent of every province or district, expressed the number of tributary subjects, and the amount of the public impositions. The latter of these sums was divided by the former; and the estimate, that such a province contained so many *capita*, or heads of tribute; and that each *head* was rated at such a price, was universally received, not only in the popular, but even in the legal computation. The value of a tributary head must have varied, according to many accidental, or at least fluctuating circumstances; but some knowledge has been preserved of a very curious fact, the more important, since it relates to one of the richest provinces of the Roman empire, and which now flourishes as the most splendid of the European kingdoms. The rapacious ministers of Constantius had exhausted the wealth of Gaul, by exacting twenty-five pieces of gold for the annual tribute of every head. The humane policy of his successor reduced the capitation to seven pieces. [179](#) A moderate proportion between these opposite extremes of extraordinary oppression and of transient indulgence, may therefore be fixed at sixteen pieces of gold, or about nine pounds sterling, the common standard, perhaps, of the impositions of Gaul. [180](#) But this calculation, or rather, indeed, the facts from whence it is deduced, cannot fail of suggesting two difficulties to a thinking mind, who will be at once surprised by the *equality*, and by the *enormity*, of the capitation. An attempt to explain them may perhaps reflect some light on the interesting subject of the finances of the declining empire.

178

[\(return\)](#)

[Godefroy (Cod. Theod. tom. vi. p. 116) argues with weight and learning on the subject of the capitation; but while he explains the *caput*, as a share or measure of property, he too absolutely excludes the idea of a personal assessment.]

179

[\(return\)](#)

[Quid profuerit (*Julianus*) anhelantibus extremâ penuriâ Gallis, hinc maxime claret, quod primitus partes eas ingressus, pro *capitibus* singulis tributi nomine videnos quinos aureos reperit flagitari; discedens vero septenos tantum numera universa complentes. Ammian. l. xvi. c. 5.]

180

[\(return\)](#)

[In the calculation of any sum of money under Constantine and his successors, we need only refer to the excellent discourse of Mr. Greaves on the Denarius, for the proof of the following principles; 1. That the ancient and modern Roman pound, containing 5256 grains of Troy weight, is about one twelfth lighter than the English pound, which is composed of 5760 of the same grains. 2. That the

pound of gold, which had once been divided into forty-eight *aurei*, was at this time coined into seventy-two smaller pieces of the same denomination. 3. That five of these aurei were the legal tender for a pound of silver, and that consequently the pound of gold was exchanged for fourteen pounds eight ounces of silver, according to the Roman, or about thirteen pounds according to the English weight. 4. That the English pound of silver is coined into sixty-two shillings. From these elements we may compute the Roman pound of gold, the usual method of reckoning large sums, at forty pounds sterling, and we may fix the currency of the *aureus* at somewhat more than eleven shillings. * Note: See, likewise, a Dissertation of M. Letronne, “Considerations Générales sur l’Evaluation des Monnaies Grecques et Romaines” Paris, 1817—M.]

I. It is obvious, that, as long as the immutable constitution of human nature produces and maintains so unequal a division of property, the most numerous part of the community would be deprived of their subsistence, by the equal assessment of a tax from which the sovereign would derive a very trifling revenue. Such indeed might be the theory of the Roman capitation; but in the practice, this unjust equality was no longer felt, as the tribute was collected on the principle of a *real*, not of a *personal* imposition. [18011](#) Several indigent citizens contributed to compose a single *head*, or share of taxation; while the wealthy provincial, in proportion to his fortune, alone represented several of those imaginary beings. In a poetical request, addressed to one of the last and most deserving of the Roman princes who reigned in Gaul, Sidonius Apollinaris personifies his tribute under the figure of a triple monster, the Geryon of the Grecian fables, and entreats the new Hercules that he would most graciously be pleased to save his life by cutting off three of his heads. [181](#) The fortune of Sidonius far exceeded the customary wealth of a poet; but if he had pursued the allusion, he might have painted many of the Gallic nobles with the hundred heads of the deadly Hydra, spreading over the face of the country, and devouring the substance of a hundred families. II. The difficulty of allowing an annual sum of about nine pounds sterling, even for the average of the capitation of Gaul, may be rendered more evident by the comparison of the present state of the same country, as it is now governed by the absolute monarch of an industrious, wealthy, and affectionate people. The taxes of France cannot be magnified, either by fear or by flattery, beyond the annual amount of eighteen millions sterling, which ought perhaps to be shared among four and twenty millions of inhabitants. [182](#) Seven millions of these, in the capacity of fathers, or brothers, or husbands, may discharge the obligations of the remaining multitude of women and children; yet the equal proportion of each tributary subject will scarcely rise above fifty shillings of our money, instead of a proportion almost four times as

considerable, which was regularly imposed on their Gallic ancestors. The reason of this difference may be found, not so much in the relative scarcity or plenty of gold and silver, as in the different state of society, in ancient Gaul and in modern France. In a country where personal freedom is the privilege of every subject, the whole mass of taxes, whether they are levied on property or on consumption, may be fairly divided among the whole body of the nation. But the far greater part of the lands of ancient Gaul, as well as of the other provinces of the Roman world, were cultivated by slaves, or by peasants, whose dependent condition was a less rigid servitude. [183](#) In such a state the poor were maintained at the expense of the masters who enjoyed the fruits of their labor; and as the rolls of tribute were filled only with the names of those citizens who possessed the means of an honorable, or at least of a decent subsistence, the comparative smallness of their numbers explains and justifies the high rate of their capitation. The truth of this assertion may be illustrated by the following example: The Ædui, one of the most powerful and civilized tribes or *cities* of Gaul, occupied an extent of territory, which now contains about five hundred thousand inhabitants, in the two ecclesiastical dioceses of Autun and Nevers; [184](#) and with the probable accession of those of Châlons and Maçon, [185](#) the population would amount to eight hundred thousand souls. In the time of Constantine, the territory of the Ædui afforded no more than twenty-five thousand *heads* of capitation, of whom seven thousand were discharged by that prince from the intolerable weight of tribute. [186](#) A just analogy would seem to countenance the opinion of an ingenious historian, [187](#) that the free and tributary citizens did not surpass the number of half a million; and if, in the ordinary administration of government, their annual payments may be computed at about four millions and a half of our money, it would appear, that although the share of each individual was four times as considerable, a fourth part only of the modern taxes of France was levied on the Imperial province of Gaul. The exactions of Constantius may be calculated at seven millions sterling, which were reduced to two millions by the humanity or the wisdom of Julian.

18011

[\(return\)](#)

[Two masterly dissertations of M. Savigny, in the Mem. of the Berlin Academy (1822 and 1823) have thrown new light on the taxation system of the Empire. Gibbon, according to M. Savigny, is mistaken in supposing that there was but one kind of capitation tax; there was a land tax, and a capitation tax, strictly so called. The land tax was, in its operation, a proprietor's or landlord's tax. But, besides this, there was a direct capitation tax on all who were not possessed of landed property. This tax dates from the time of the Roman conquests; its amount is not clearly known. Gradual exemptions released different persons and classes from this tax. One edict exempts painters. In Syria, all under twelve or fourteen, or above sixty-five, were

exempted; at a later period, all under twenty, and all unmarried females; still later, all under twenty-five, widows and nuns, soldiers, veterani and clerici—whole dioceses, that of Thrace and Illyricum. Under Galerius and Licinius, the plebs urbana became exempt; though this, perhaps, was only an ordinance for the East. By degrees, however, the exemption was extended to all the inhabitants of towns; and as it was strictly capitatio plebeia, from which all possessors were exempted it fell at length altogether on the coloni and agricultural slaves. These were registered in the same cataster (capitastrum) with the land tax. It was paid by the proprietor, who raised it again from his coloni and laborers.—M.]

181

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Geryones nos esse puta, monstrumque tributum,
Hic capita ut vivam, tu mihi tolle tria.
Sidon. Apollinar. Carm. xiii.*

The reputation of Father Sirmond led me to expect more satisfaction than I have found in his note (p. 144) on this remarkable passage. The words, suo vel *suorum* nomine, betray the perplexity of the commentator.]

182

[\(return\)](#)

[This assertion, however formidable it may seem, is founded on the original registers of births, deaths, and marriages, collected by public authority, and now deposited in the *Contrôle General* at Paris. The annual average of births throughout the whole kingdom, taken in five years, (from 1770 to 1774, both inclusive,) is 479,649 boys, and 449,269 girls, in all 928,918 children. The province of French Hainault alone furnishes 9906 births; and we are assured, by an actual enumeration of the people, annually repeated from the year 1773 to the year 1776, that upon an average, Hainault contains 257,097 inhabitants. By the rules of fair analogy, we might infer, that the ordinary proportion of annual births to the whole people, is about 1 to 26; and that the kingdom of France contains 24,151,868 persons of both sexes and of every age. If we content ourselves with the more moderate proportion of 1 to 25, the whole population will amount to 23,222,950. From the diligent researches of the French Government, (which are not unworthy of our own imitation,) we may hope to obtain a still greater degree of certainty on this important subject * Note: On no subject has so

much valuable information been collected since the time of Gibbon, as the statistics of the different countries of Europe but much is still wanting as to our own—M.]

183

[\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. v. tit. ix. x. xi. Cod. Justinian. l. xi. tit. lxiii. Coloni appellantur qui conditionem debent genitali solo, propter agriculturum sub dominio possessorum. Augustin. de Civitate Dei, l. x. c. i.]

184

[\(return\)](#)

[The ancient jurisdiction of (*Augustodunum*) Autun in Burgundy, the capital of the Ædui, comprehended the adjacent territory of (*Noviodunum*) Nevers. See D’Anville, Notice de l’Ancienne Gaule, p. 491. The two dioceses of Autun and Nevers are now composed, the former of 610, and the latter of 160 parishes. The registers of births, taken during eleven years, in 476 parishes of the same province of Burgundy, and multiplied by the moderate proportion of 25, (see Messance Recherches sur la Population, p. 142,) may authorizes us to assign an average number of 656 persons for each parish, which being again multiplied by the 770 parishes of the dioceses of Nevers and Autun, will produce the sum of 505,120 persons for the extent of country which was once possessed by the Ædui.]

185

[\(return\)](#)

[We might derive an additional supply of 301,750 inhabitants from the dioceses of Châlons (*Cabillonum*) and of Maçon, (*Matisco*.) since they contain, the one 200, and the other 260 parishes. This accession of territory might be justified by very specious reasons. 1. Châlons and Maçon were undoubtedly within the original jurisdiction of the Ædui. (See D’Anville, Notice, p. 187, 443.) 2. In the Notitia of Gaul, they are enumerated not as *Civitates*, but merely as *Castra*. 3. They do not appear to have been episcopal seats before the fifth and sixth centuries. Yet there is a passage in Eumenius (Panegy. Vet. viii. 7) which very forcibly deters me from extending the territory of the Ædui, in the reign of Constantine, along the beautiful banks of the navigable Saône. * Note: In this passage of Eumenius, Savigny supposes the original number to have been 32,000: 7000 being discharged, there remained 25,000 liable to the tribute. See Mem. quoted above.—M.]

186

[\(return\)](#)

[Eumenius in Panegy. Vet. viii. 11.]

[L'Abbé du Bos, Hist. Critique de la M. F. tom. i.
p. 121]

But this tax, or capitation, on the proprietors of land, would have suffered a rich and numerous class of free citizens to escape. With the view of sharing that species of wealth which is derived from art or labor, and which exists in money or in merchandise, the emperors imposed a distinct and personal tribute on the trading part of their subjects. [188](#) Some exemptions, very strictly confined both in time and place, were allowed to the proprietors who disposed of the produce of their own estates. Some indulgence was granted to the profession of the liberal arts: but every other branch of commercial industry was affected by the severity of the law. The honorable merchant of Alexandria, who imported the gems and spices of India for the use of the western world; the usurer, who derived from the interest of money a silent and ignominious profit; the ingenious manufacturer, the diligent mechanic, and even the most obscure retailer of a sequestered village, were obliged to admit the officers of the revenue into the partnership of their gain; and the sovereign of the Roman empire, who tolerated the profession, consented to share the infamous salary, of public prostitutes. [18811](#) As this general tax upon industry was collected every fourth year, it was styled the *Lustral Contribution*: and the historian Zosimus [189](#) laments that the approach of the fatal period was announced by the tears and terrors of the citizens, who were often compelled by the impending scourge to embrace the most abhorred and unnatural methods of procuring the sum at which their property had been assessed. The testimony of Zosimus cannot indeed be justified from the charge of passion and prejudice; but, from the nature of this tribute it seems reasonable to conclude, that it was arbitrary in the distribution, and extremely rigorous in the mode of collecting. The secret wealth of commerce, and the precarious profits of art or labor, are susceptible only of a discretionary valuation, which is seldom disadvantageous to the interest of the treasury; and as the person of the trader supplies the want of a visible and permanent security, the payment of the imposition, which, in the case of a land tax, may be obtained by the seizure of property, can rarely be extorted by any other means than those of corporal punishments. The cruel treatment of the insolvent debtors of the state, is attested, and was perhaps mitigated by a very humane edict of Constantine, who, disclaiming the use of racks and of scourges, allots a spacious and airy prison for the place of their confinement. [190](#)

188

[\(return\)](#)

[See Cod. Theod. l. xiii. tit. i. and iv.]

18811

[\(return\)](#)

[The emperor Theodosius put an end, by a law. to this disgraceful source of revenue. (Godef. ad Cod. Theod. xiii. tit. i. c. 1.) But before he deprived himself of it, he made sure of some way of replacing this deficit. A rich patrician, Florentius, indignant at this legalized licentiousness, had made representations on the subject to the emperor. To

induce him to tolerate it no longer, he offered his own property to supply the diminution of the revenue. The emperor had the baseness to accept his offer—G.]

189

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 115. There is probably as much passion and prejudice in the attack of Zosimus, as in the elaborate defence of the memory of Constantine by the zealous Dr. Howell. Hist. of the World, vol. ii. p. 20.]

190

[\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. xi. tit vii. leg. 3.]

These general taxes were imposed and levied by the absolute authority of the monarch; but the occasional offerings of the *coronary gold* still retained the name and semblance of popular consent. It was an ancient custom that the allies of the republic, who ascribed their safety or deliverance to the success of the Roman arms, and even the cities of Italy, who admired the virtues of their victorious general, adorned the pomp of his triumph by their voluntary gifts of crowns of gold, which after the ceremony were consecrated in the temple of Jupiter, to remain a lasting monument of his glory to future ages. The progress of zeal and flattery soon multiplied the number, and increased the size, of these popular donations; and the triumph of Cæsar was enriched with two thousand eight hundred and twenty-two massy crowns, whose weight amounted to twenty thousand four hundred and fourteen pounds of gold. This treasure was immediately melted down by the prudent dictator, who was satisfied that it would be more serviceable to his soldiers than to the gods: his example was imitated by his successors; and the custom was introduced of exchanging these splendid ornaments for the more acceptable present of the current gold coin of the empire. [191](#) The spontaneous offering was at length exacted as the debt of duty; and instead of being confined to the occasion of a triumph, it was supposed to be granted by the several cities and provinces of the monarchy, as often as the emperor condescended to announce his accession, his consulship, the birth of a son, the creation of a Cæsar, a victory over the Barbarians, or any other real or imaginary event which graced the annals of his reign. The peculiar free gift of the senate of Rome was fixed by custom at sixteen hundred pounds of gold, or about sixty-four thousand pounds sterling. The oppressed subjects celebrated their own felicity, that their sovereign should graciously consent to accept this feeble but voluntary testimony of their loyalty and gratitude. [192](#)

191

[\(return\)](#)

[See Lipsius de Magnitud. Romana, l. ii. c. 9. The Tarragonese Spain presented the emperor Claudius with a crown of gold of seven, and Gaul with another of nine, *hundred* pounds weight. I have followed the rational emendation of Lipsius. * Note: This custom is of still earlier date, the Romans had borrowed it from Greece. Who is not

acquainted with the famous oration of Demosthenes for the golden crown, which his citizens wished to bestow, and Æschines to deprive him of?—G.]

192

[\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. xii. tit. xiii. The senators were supposed to be exempt from the *Aurum Coronarium*; but the *Auri Oblatio*, which was required at their hands, was precisely of the same nature.]

A people elated by pride, or soured by discontent, are seldom qualified to form a just estimate of their actual situation. The subjects of Constantine were incapable of discerning the decline of genius and manly virtue, which so far degraded them below the dignity of their ancestors; but they could feel and lament the rage of tyranny, the relaxation of discipline, and the increase of taxes. The impartial historian, who acknowledges the justice of their complaints, will observe some favorable circumstances which tended to alleviate the misery of their condition. The threatening tempest of Barbarians, which so soon subverted the foundations of Roman greatness, was still repelled, or suspended, on the frontiers. The arts of luxury and literature were cultivated, and the elegant pleasures of society were enjoyed, by the inhabitants of a considerable portion of the globe. The forms, the pomp, and the expense of the civil administration contributed to restrain the irregular license of the soldiers; and although the laws were violated by power, or perverted by subtlety, the sage principles of the Roman jurisprudence preserved a sense of order and equity, unknown to the despotic governments of the East. The rights of mankind might derive some protection from religion and philosophy; and the name of freedom, which could no longer alarm, might sometimes admonish, the successors of Augustus, that they did not reign over a nation of Slaves or Barbarians. [193](#)

193

[\(return\)](#)

[The great Theodosius, in his judicious advice to his son, (Claudian in iv. Consulat. Honorii, 214, &c.,) distinguishes the station of a Roman prince from that of a Parthian monarch. Virtue was necessary for the one; birth might suffice for the other.]

Chapter XVIII: Character Of Constantine And His Sons.—Part I.

Character Of Constantine.—Gothic War.—Death Of Constantine.—Division Of The Empire Among His Three Sons.—Persian War.—Tragic Deaths Of Constantine The Younger And Constans.—Usurpation Of Magnentius.—Civil War.—Victory Of Constantius.

The character of the prince who removed the seat of empire, and introduced such important changes into the civil and religious constitution of his country, has fixed the attention, and divided the opinions, of mankind. By the grateful zeal of the Christians, the deliverer of the church has been decorated with every attribute of a hero, and even of a saint; while the discontent of the vanquished party has compared Constantine to the most abhorred of those tyrants, who, by their vice and weakness, dishonored the Imperial purple. The same passions have in some degree been perpetuated to succeeding generations, and the character of Constantine is considered, even in the present age, as an object either of satire or of panegyric. By the impartial union of those defects which are confessed by his warmest admirers, and of those virtues which are acknowledged by his most-implacable enemies, we might hope to delineate a just portrait of that extraordinary man, which the truth and candor of history should adopt without a blush. ¹ But it would soon appear, that the vain attempt to blend such discordant colors, and to reconcile such inconsistent qualities, must produce a figure monstrous rather than human, unless it is viewed in its proper and distinct lights, by a careful separation of the different periods of the reign of Constantine.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[On ne se trompera point sur Constantin, en croyant tout le mal ru'en dit Eusebe, et tout le bien qu'en dit Zosime. Fleury, Hist. Ecclesiastique, tom. iii. p. 233. Eusebius and Zosimus form indeed the two extremes of flattery and invective. The intermediate shades are expressed by those writers, whose character or situation variously tempered the influence of their religious zeal.]

The person, as well as the mind, of Constantine, had been enriched by nature with her choicest endowments. His stature was lofty, his countenance majestic, his deportment graceful; his strength and activity were displayed in every manly exercise, and from his earliest youth, to a very advanced season of life, he preserved the vigor of his constitution by a strict adherence to the domestic virtues of chastity and temperance. He delighted in the social intercourse of familiar conversation; and though he might sometimes indulge his disposition to raillery with less reserve than was required by the severe dignity of his station, the courtesy and liberality of his manners gained the hearts of all who approached him. The sincerity of his friendship has been suspected; yet he showed, on some occasions, that he was not incapable of a warm and lasting attachment. The disadvantage of an illiterate education had not prevented him from forming a just estimate of the value of learning; and the arts and sciences derived some encouragement from the munificent protection of Constantine. In the despatch of business, his diligence was indefatigable; and the active powers of his mind were almost continually exercised in reading, writing, or meditating, in giving audiences to ambassadors, and in examining the complaints of his subjects. Even those who censured the propriety of his measures were compelled to acknowledge, that he possessed magnanimity to conceive, and patience to execute, the most arduous designs, without being checked either by the

prejudices of education, or by the clamors of the multitude. In the field, he infused his own intrepid spirit into the troops, whom he conducted with the talents of a consummate general; and to his abilities, rather than to his fortune, we may ascribe the signal victories which he obtained over the foreign and domestic foes of the republic. He loved glory as the reward, perhaps as the motive, of his labors. The boundless ambition, which, from the moment of his accepting the purple at York, appears as the ruling passion of his soul, may be justified by the dangers of his own situation, by the character of his rivals, by the consciousness of superior merit, and by the prospect that his success would enable him to restore peace and order to the distracted empire. In his civil wars against Maxentius and Licinius, he had engaged on his side the inclinations of the people, who compared the undissembled vices of those tyrants with the spirit of wisdom and justice which seemed to direct the general tenor of the administration of Constantine. [2](#)

2

[\(return\)](#)

[The virtues of Constantine are collected for the most part from Eutropius and the younger Victor, two sincere pagans, who wrote after the extinction of his family. Even Zosimus, and the *Emperor* Julian, acknowledge his personal courage and military achievements.]

Had Constantine fallen on the banks of the Tyber, or even in the plains of Hadrianople, such is the character which, with a few exceptions, he might have transmitted to posterity. But the conclusion of his reign (according to the moderate and indeed tender sentence of a writer of the same age) degraded him from the rank which he had acquired among the most deserving of the Roman princes. [3](#) In the life of Augustus, we behold the tyrant of the republic, converted, almost by imperceptible degrees, into the father of his country, and of human kind. In that of Constantine, we may contemplate a hero, who had so long inspired his subjects with love, and his enemies with terror, degenerating into a cruel and dissolute monarch, corrupted by his fortune, or raised by conquest above the necessity of dissimulation. The general peace which he maintained during the last fourteen years of his reign, was a period of apparent splendor rather than of real prosperity; and the old age of Constantine was disgraced by the opposite yet reconcilable vices of rapaciousness and prodigality. The accumulated treasures found in the palaces of Maxentius and Licinius, were lavishly consumed; the various innovations introduced by the conqueror, were attended with an increasing expense; the cost of his buildings, his court, and his festivals, required an immediate and plentiful supply; and the oppression of the people was the only fund which could support the magnificence of the sovereign. [4](#) His unworthy favorites, enriched by the boundless liberality of their master, usurped with impunity the privilege of rapine and corruption. [5](#) A secret but universal decay was felt in every part of the public administration, and the emperor himself, though he still retained the obedience, gradually lost the esteem, of his subjects. The dress and manners, which, towards the

decline of life, he chose to affect, served only to degrade him in the eyes of mankind. The Asiatic pomp, which had been adopted by the pride of Diocletian, assumed an air of softness and effeminacy in the person of Constantine. He is represented with false hair of various colors, laboriously arranged by the skilful artists to the times; a diadem of a new and more expensive fashion; a profusion of gems and pearls, of collars and bracelets, and a variegated flowing robe of silk, most curiously embroidered with flowers of gold. In such apparel, scarcely to be excused by the youth and folly of Elagabalus, we are at a loss to discover the wisdom of an aged monarch, and the simplicity of a Roman veteran. [6](#) A mind thus relaxed by prosperity and indulgence, was incapable of rising to that magnanimity which disdains suspicion, and dares to forgive. The deaths of Maximian and Licinius may perhaps be justified by the maxims of policy, as they are taught in the schools of tyrants; but an impartial narrative of the executions, or rather murders, which sullied the declining age of Constantine, will suggest to our most candid thoughts the idea of a prince who could sacrifice without reluctance the laws of justice, and the feelings of nature, to the dictates either of his passions or of his interest.

3

[\(return\)](#)

[See Eutropius, x. 6. In primo Imperii tempore optimis principibus, ultimo mediis comparandus. From the ancient Greek version of Poeanius, (edit. Havercamp. p. 697,) I am inclined to suspect that Eutropius had originally written *vix* mediis; and that the offensive monosyllable was dropped by the wilful inadvertency of transcribers. Aurelius Victor expresses the general opinion by a vulgar and indeed obscure proverb. *Trachala* decem annis præstantissimds; duodecim sequentibus *latro*; decem novissimis *pupillus* ob immouicas profusiones.]

4

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian, Orat. i. p. 8, in a flattering discourse pronounced before the son of Constantine; and Cæsares, p. 336. Zosimus, p. 114, 115. The stately buildings of Constantinople, &c., may be quoted as a lasting and unexceptionable proof of the profuseness of their founder.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[The impartial Ammianus deserves all our confidence. Proximorum fauces aperuit primus omnium Constantinus. L. xvi. c. 8. Eusebius himself confesses the abuse, (Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 29, 54;) and some of the Imperial laws feebly point out the remedy. See above, p. 146 of this volume.]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian, in the Cæsars, attempts to ridicule his

uncle. His suspicious testimony is confirmed, however, by the learned Spanheim, with the authority of medals, (see *Commentaire*, p. 156, 299, 397, 459.) Eusebius (*Orat.* c. 5) alleges, that Constantine dressed for the public, not for himself. Were this admitted, the vainest coxcomb could never want an excuse.]

The same fortune which so invariably followed the standard of Constantine, seemed to secure the hopes and comforts of his domestic life. Those among his predecessors who had enjoyed the longest and most prosperous reigns, Augustus Trajan, and Diocletian, had been disappointed of posterity; and the frequent revolutions had never allowed sufficient time for any Imperial family to grow up and multiply under the shade of the purple. But the royalty of the Flavian line, which had been first ennobled by the Gothic Claudius, descended through several generations; and Constantine himself derived from his royal father the hereditary honors which he transmitted to his children. The emperor had been twice married. Minervina, the obscure but lawful object of his youthful attachment, [7](#) had left him only one son, who was called Crispus. By Fausta, the daughter of Maximian, he had three daughters, and three sons known by the kindred names of Constantine, Constantius, and Constans. The unambitious brothers of the great Constantine, Julius Constantius, Dalmatius, and Hannibalianus, [8](#) were permitted to enjoy the most honorable rank, and the most affluent fortune, that could be consistent with a private station. The youngest of the three lived without a name, and died without posterity. His two elder brothers obtained in marriage the daughters of wealthy senators, and propagated new branches of the Imperial race. Gallus and Julian afterwards became the most illustrious of the children of Julius Constantius, the *Patrician*. The two sons of Dalmatius, who had been decorated with the vain title of *Censor*, were named Dalmatius and Hannibalianus. The two sisters of the great Constantine, Anastasia and Eutropia, were bestowed on Optatus and Nepotianus, two senators of noble birth and of consular dignity. His third sister, Constantia, was distinguished by her preëminence of greatness and of misery. She remained the widow of the vanquished Licinius; and it was by her entreaties, that an innocent boy, the offspring of their marriage, preserved, for some time, his life, the title of Cæsar, and a precarious hope of the succession. Besides the females, and the allies of the Flavian house, ten or twelve males, to whom the language of modern courts would apply the title of princes of the blood, seemed, according to the order of their birth, to be destined either to inherit or to support the throne of Constantine. But in less than thirty years, this numerous and increasing family was reduced to the persons of Constantius and Julian, who alone had survived a series of crimes and calamities, such as the tragic poets have deplored in the devoted lines of Pelops and of Cadmus.

[Zosimus and Zonaras agree in representing Minervina as the concubine of Constantine; but Ducange has very gallantly rescued her character,

by producing a decisive passage from one of the panegyrics: “Ab ipso fine pueritiæ te matrimonii legibus dedisti.”]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Ducange (*Familiæ Byzantinæ*, p. 44) bestows on him, after Zosimus, the name of Constantine; a name somewhat unlikely, as it was already occupied by the elder brother. That of Hannibalianus is mentioned in the *Paschal Chronicle*, and is approved by Tillemont. *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 527.]

Crispus, the eldest son of Constantine, and the presumptive heir of the empire, is represented by impartial historians as an amiable and accomplished youth. The care of his education, or at least of his studies, was intrusted to Lactantius, the most eloquent of the Christians; a preceptor admirably qualified to form the taste, and to excite the virtues, of his illustrious disciple. [9](#) At the age of seventeen, Crispus was invested with the title of Cæsar, and the administration of the Gallic provinces, where the inroads of the Germans gave him an early occasion of signaling his military prowess. In the civil war which broke out soon afterwards, the father and son divided their powers; and this history has already celebrated the valor as well as conduct displayed by the latter, in forcing the straits of the Hellespont, so obstinately defended by the superior fleet of Lacinus. This naval victory contributed to determine the event of the war; and the names of Constantine and of Crispus were united in the joyful acclamations of their eastern subjects; who loudly proclaimed, that the world had been subdued, and was now governed, by an emperor endowed with every virtue; and by his illustrious son, a prince beloved of Heaven, and the lively image of his father's perfections. The public favor, which seldom accompanies old age, diffused its lustre over the youth of Crispus. He deserved the esteem, and he engaged the affections, of the court, the army, and the people. The experienced merit of a reigning monarch is acknowledged by his subjects with reluctance, and frequently denied with partial and discontented murmurs; while, from the opening virtues of his successor, they fondly conceive the most unbounded hopes of private as well as public felicity. [10](#)

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Jerom. in *Chron.* The poverty of Lactantius may be applied either to the praise of the disinterested philosopher, or to the shame of the unfeeling patron. See Tillemont, *Mém. Ecclesiast.* tom. vi. part 1. p. 345. Dupin, *Bibliothèque Ecclesiast.* tom. i. p. 205. Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*, part ii. vol. vii. p. 66.]

10

[\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. *Hist. Ecclesiast.* l. x. c. 9. Eutropius (x. 6) styles him “egregium virum;” and Julian (*Orat.* i.) very plainly alludes to the exploits of Crispus in the civil war. See Spanheim, *Comment.* p. 92.]

This dangerous popularity soon excited the attention of Constantine, who, both as a father and as a king, was impatient of an equal. Instead of attempting to secure the allegiance of his son by the generous ties of confidence and gratitude, he resolved to prevent the mischiefs which might be apprehended from dissatisfied ambition. Crispus soon had reason to complain, that while his infant brother Constantius was sent, with the title of Cæsar, to reign over his peculiar department of the Gallic provinces, [11](#) *he*, a prince of mature years, who had performed such recent and signal services, instead of being raised to the superior rank of Augustus, was confined almost a prisoner to his father's court; and exposed, without power or defence, to every calumny which the malice of his enemies could suggest. Under such painful circumstances, the royal youth might not always be able to compose his behavior, or suppress his discontent; and we may be assured, that he was encompassed by a train of indiscreet or perfidious followers, who assiduously studied to inflame, and who were perhaps instructed to betray, the unguarded warmth of his resentment. An edict of Constantine, published about this time, manifestly indicates his real or affected suspicions, that a secret conspiracy had been formed against his person and government. By all the allurements of honors and rewards, he invites informers of every degree to accuse without exception his magistrates or ministers, his friends or his most intimate favorites, protesting, with a solemn asseveration, that he himself will listen to the charge, that he himself will revenge his injuries; and concluding with a prayer, which discovers some apprehension of danger, that the providence of the Supreme Being may still continue to protect the safety of the emperor and of the empire. [12](#)

11

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare Idatius and the Paschal Chronicle, with Ammianus, (l. xiv. c. 5.) The *year* in which Constantius was created Cæsar seems to be more accurately fixed by the two chronologists; but the historian who lived in his court could not be ignorant of the *day* of the anniversary. For the appointment of the new Cæsar to the provinces of Gaul, see Julian, Orat. i. p. 12, Godefroy, Chronol. Legum, p. 26. and Blondel, de Primauté de l'Eglise, p. 1183.]

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. ix. tit. iv. Godefroy suspected the secret motives of this law. Comment. tom. iii. p. 9.]

The informers, who complied with so liberal an invitation, were sufficiently versed in the arts of courts to select the friends and adherents of Crispus as the guilty persons; nor is there any reason to distrust the veracity of the emperor, who had promised an ample measure of revenge and punishment. The policy of Constantine maintained, however, the same appearances of regard and confidence towards a son, whom he began to consider as his most irreconcilable enemy. Medals were struck with the customary vows for the long and auspicious reign of the young Cæsar; [13](#) and as the people, who

were not admitted into the secrets of the palace, still loved his virtues, and respected his dignity, a poet who solicits his recall from exile, adores with equal devotion the majesty of the father and that of the son. [14](#) The time was now arrived for celebrating the august ceremony of the twentieth year of the reign of Constantine; and the emperor, for that purpose, removed his court from Nicomedia to Rome, where the most splendid preparations had been made for his reception. Every eye, and every tongue, affected to express their sense of the general happiness, and the veil of ceremony and dissimulation was drawn for a while over the darkest designs of revenge and murder. [15](#) In the midst of the festival, the unfortunate Crispus was apprehended by order of the emperor, who laid aside the tenderness of a father, without assuming the equity of a judge. The examination was short and private; [16](#) and as it was thought decent to conceal the fate of the young prince from the eyes of the Roman people, he was sent under a strong guard to Pola, in Istria, where, soon afterwards, he was put to death, either by the hand of the executioner, or by the more gentle operations of poison. [17](#) The Cæsar Licinius, a youth of amiable manners, was involved in the ruin of Crispus: [18](#) and the stern jealousy of Constantine was unmoved by the prayers and tears of his favorite sister, pleading for the life of a son, whose rank was his only crime, and whose loss she did not long survive. The story of these unhappy princes, the nature and evidence of their guilt, the forms of their trial, and the circumstances of their death, were buried in mysterious obscurity; and the courtly bishop, who has celebrated in an elaborate work the virtues and piety of his hero, observes a prudent silence on the subject of these tragic events. [19](#) Such haughty contempt for the opinion of mankind, whilst it imprints an indelible stain on the memory of Constantine, must remind us of the very different behavior of one of the greatest monarchs of the present age. The Czar Peter, in the full possession of despotic power, submitted to the judgment of Russia, of Europe, and of posterity, the reasons which had compelled him to subscribe the condemnation of a criminal, or at least of a degenerate son. [20](#)

13 [\(return\)](#)
[Ducange, Fam. Byzant. p. 28. Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 610.]

14 [\(return\)](#)
[His name was Porphyrius Optatianus. The date of his panegyric, written, according to the taste of the age, in vile acrostics, is settled by Scaliger ad Euseb. p. 250, Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 607, and Fabricius, Biblioth. Latin, l. iv. c. 1.]

15 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosim. l. ii. p. 103. Godefroy, Chronol. Legum, p. 28.]

16 [\(return\)](#)
[The elder Victor, who wrote under the next reign, speaks with becoming caution. "Natu grandior incertum qua causa, patris judicio occidisset." If we consult the succeeding writers, Eutropius, the

younger Victor, Orosius, Jerom, Zosimus, Philostorgius, and Gregory of Tours, their knowledge will appear gradually to increase, as their means of information must have diminished—a circumstance which frequently occurs in historical disquisition.]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (l. xiv. c. 11) uses the general expression of peremptum Codinus (p. 34) beheads the young prince; but Sidonius Apollinaris (Epistol. v. 8,) for the sake perhaps of an antithesis to Fausta's *warm* bath, chooses to administer a draught of *cold* poison.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Sororis filium, commodæ indolis juvenem. Eutropius, x. 6 May I not be permitted to conjecture that Crispus had married Helena the daughter of the emperor Licinius, and that on the happy delivery of the princess, in the year 322, a general pardon was granted by Constantine? See Ducange, Fam. Byzant. p. 47, and the law (l. ix. tit. xxxvii.) of the Theodosian code, which has so much embarrassed the interpreters. Godefroy, tom. iii. p. 267 * Note: This conjecture is very doubtful. The obscurity of the law quoted from the Theodosian code scarcely allows any inference, and there is extant but one meda which can be attributed to a Helena, wife of Crispus.]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[See the life of Constantine, particularly l. ii. c. 19, 20. Two hundred and fifty years afterwards Evagrius (l. iii. c. 41) deduced from the silence of Eusebius a vain argument against the reality of the fact.]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[Histoire de Pierre le Grand, par Voltaire, part ii. c. 10.]

The innocence of Crispus was so universally acknowledged, that the modern Greeks, who adore the memory of their founder, are reduced to palliate the guilt of a parricide, which the common feelings of human nature forbade them to justify. They pretend, that as soon as the afflicted father discovered the falsehood of the accusation by which his credulity had been so fatally misled, he published to the world his repentance and remorse; that he mourned forty days, during which he abstained from the use of the bath, and all the ordinary comforts of life; and that, for the lasting instruction of posterity, he erected a golden statue of Crispus, with this memorable inscription: To my son, whom I unjustly condemned. [21](#) A tale so moral and so interesting would deserve to be supported by less exceptionable authority; but if we consult the more ancient and

authentic writers, they will inform us, that the repentance of Constantine was manifested only in acts of blood and revenge; and that he atoned for the murder of an innocent son, by the execution, perhaps, of a guilty wife. They ascribe the misfortunes of Crispus to the arts of his step-mother Fausta, whose implacable hatred, or whose disappointed love, renewed in the palace of Constantine the ancient tragedy of Hippolitus and of Phædra. [22](#) Like the daughter of Minos, the daughter of Maximian accused her son-in-law of an incestuous attempt on the chastity of his father's wife; and easily obtained, from the jealousy of the emperor, a sentence of death against a young prince, whom she considered with reason as the most formidable rival of her own children. But Helena, the aged mother of Constantine, lamented and revenged the untimely fate of her grandson Crispus; nor was it long before a real or pretended discovery was made, that Fausta herself entertained a criminal connection with a slave belonging to the Imperial stables. [23](#) Her condemnation and punishment were the instant consequences of the charge; and the adulteress was suffocated by the steam of a bath, which, for that purpose, had been heated to an extraordinary degree. [24](#) By some it will perhaps be thought, that the remembrance of a conjugal union of twenty years, and the honor of their common offspring, the destined heirs of the throne, might have softened the obdurate heart of Constantine, and persuaded him to suffer his wife, however guilty she might appear, to expiate her offences in a solitary prison. But it seems a superfluous labor to weigh the propriety, unless we could ascertain the truth, of this singular event, which is attended with some circumstances of doubt and perplexity. Those who have attacked, and those who have defended, the character of Constantine, have alike disregarded two very remarkable passages of two orations pronounced under the succeeding reign. The former celebrates the virtues, the beauty, and the fortune of the empress Fausta, the daughter, wife, sister, and mother of so many princes. [25](#) The latter asserts, in explicit terms, that the mother of the younger Constantine, who was slain three years after his father's death, survived to weep over the fate of her son. [26](#) Notwithstanding the positive testimony of several writers of the Pagan as well as of the Christian religion, there may still remain some reason to believe, or at least to suspect, that Fausta escaped the blind and suspicious cruelty of her husband. [2611](#) The deaths of a son and a nephew, with the execution of a great number of respectable, and perhaps innocent friends, [27](#) who were involved in their fall, may be sufficient, however, to justify the discontent of the Roman people, and to explain the satirical verses affixed to the palace gate, comparing the splendid and bloody reigns of Constantine and Nero. [28](#)

[In order to prove that the statue was erected by Constantine, and afterwards concealed by the malice of the Arians, Codinus very readily creates (p. 34) two witnesses, Hippolitus, and the younger Herodotus, to whose imaginary histories he appeals with unblushing confidence.]

- 22 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus (l. ii. p. 103) may be considered as our original. The ingenuity of the moderns, assisted by a few hints from the ancients, has illustrated and improved his obscure and imperfect narrative.]
- 23 [\(return\)](#)
[Philostorgius, l. ii. c. 4. Zosimus (l. ii. p. 104, 116) imputes to Constantine the death of two wives, of the innocent Fausta, and of an adulteress, who was the mother of his three successors. According to Jerom, three or four years elapsed between the death of Crispus and that of Fausta. The elder Victor is prudently silent.]
- 24 [\(return\)](#)
[If Fausta was put to death, it is reasonable to believe that the private apartments of the palace were the scene of her execution. The orator Chrysostom indulges his fancy by exposing the naked desert mountain to be devoured by wild beasts.]
- 25 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian. Orat. i. He seems to call her the mother of Crispus. She might assume that title by adoption. At least, she was not considered as his mortal enemy. Julian compares the fortune of Fausta with that of Parysatis, the Persian queen. A Roman would have more naturally recollected the second Agrippina: Et moi, qui sur le trone ai suivi mes ancêtres: Moi, fille, femme, sœur, et mere de vos maitres.]
- 26 [\(return\)](#)
[Monod. in Constantin. Jun. c. 4, ad Calcem Eutrop. edit. Havercamp. The orator styles her the most divine and pious of queens.]
- 2611 [\(return\)](#)
[Manso (Leben Constantins, p. 65) treats this inference of Gibbon, and the authorities to which he appeals, with too much contempt, considering the general scantiness of proof on this curious question.—M.]
- 27 [\(return\)](#)
[Interfecit numerosos amicos. Eutrop. xx. 6.]
- 28 [\(return\)](#)
[Saturni aurea sæcula quis requirat? Sunt hæc gemmea, sed Neroniana. Sidon. Apollinar. v. 8. —It is somewhat singular that these satirical lines should be attributed, not to an obscure libeller, or a disappointed patriot, but to Ablavius, prime minister and favorite of the emperor. We may now perceive that the imprecations of the Roman people

were dictated by humanity, as well as by superstition. Zosim. l. ii. p. 105.]

Chapter XVIII: Character Of Constantine And His Sons.—Part II.

By the death of Crispus, the inheritance of the empire seemed to devolve on the three sons of Fausta, who have been already mentioned under the names of Constantine, of Constantius, and of Constans. These young princes were successively invested with the title of Cæsar; and the dates of their promotion may be referred to the tenth, the twentieth, and the thirtieth years of the reign of their father. [29](#) This conduct, though it tended to multiply the future masters of the Roman world, might be excused by the partiality of paternal affection; but it is not so easy to understand the motives of the emperor, when he endangered the safety both of his family and of his people, by the unnecessary elevation of his two nephews, Dalmatius and Hannibalianus. The former was raised, by the title of Cæsar, to an equality with his cousins. In favor of the latter, Constantine invented the new and singular appellation of *Nobilissimus*; [30](#) to which he annexed the flattering distinction of a robe of purple and gold. But of the whole series of Roman princes in any age of the empire, Hannibalianus alone was distinguished by the title of King; a name which the subjects of Tiberius would have detested, as the profane and cruel insult of capricious tyranny. The use of such a title, even as it appears under the reign of Constantine, is a strange and unconnected fact, which can scarcely be admitted on the joint authority of Imperial medals and contemporary writers. [31](#) [3111](#)

[29](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. Orat. in Constantin. c. 3. These dates are sufficiently correct to justify the orator.]

[30](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Zosim. l. ii. p. 117. Under the predecessors of Constantine, *Nobilissimus* was a vague epithet, rather than a legal and determined title.]

[31](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Adstruunt nummi veteres ac singulares. Spanheim de Usu Numismat. Dissertat. xii. vol. ii. p. 357. Ammianus speaks of this Roman king (l. xiv. c. 1, and Valesius ad loc.) The Valesian fragment styles him King of kings; and the Paschal Chronicle acquires the weight of Latin evidence.]

[3111](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Hannibalianus is always designated in these authors by the title of king. There still exist medals struck to his honor, on which the same title is found, Fl. Hannibaliano Regi. See Eckhel, Doct. Num. t. viii. 204. Armeniam nationesque circum socias

habebat, says Aur. Victor, p. 225. The writer means the Lesser Armenia. Though it is not possible to question a fact supported by such respectable authorities, Gibbon considers it inexplicable and incredible. It is a strange abuse of the privilege of doubting, to refuse all belief in a fact of such little importance in itself, and attested thus formally by contemporary authors and public monuments. St. Martin note to Le Beau i. 341.—M.]

The whole empire was deeply interested in the education of these five youths, the acknowledged successors of Constantine. The exercise of the body prepared them for the fatigues of war and the duties of active life. Those who occasionally mention the education or talents of Constantius, allow that he excelled in the gymnastic arts of leaping and running that he was a dexterous archer, a skilful horseman, and a master of all the different weapons used in the service either of the cavalry or of the infantry. [32](#) The same assiduous cultivation was bestowed, though not perhaps with equal success, to improve the minds of the sons and nephews of Constantine. [33](#) The most celebrated professors of the Christian faith, of the Grecian philosophy, and of the Roman jurisprudence, were invited by the liberality of the emperor, who reserved for himself the important task of instructing the royal youths in the science of government, and the knowledge of mankind. But the genius of Constantine himself had been formed by adversity and experience. In the free intercourse of private life, and amidst the dangers of the court of Galerius, he had learned to command his own passions, to encounter those of his equals, and to depend for his present safety and future greatness on the prudence and firmness of his personal conduct. His destined successors had the misfortune of being born and educated in the imperial purple. Incessantly surrounded with a train of flatterers, they passed their youth in the enjoyment of luxury, and the expectation of a throne; nor would the dignity of their rank permit them to descend from that elevated station from whence the various characters of human nature appear to wear a smooth and uniform aspect. The indulgence of Constantine admitted them, at a very tender age, to share the administration of the empire; and they studied the art of reigning, at the expense of the people intrusted to their care. The younger Constantine was appointed to hold his court in Gaul; and his brother Constantius exchanged that department, the ancient patrimony of their father, for the more opulent, but less martial, countries of the East. Italy, the Western Illyricum, and Africa, were accustomed to revere Constans, the third of his sons, as the representative of the great Constantine. He fixed Dalmatius on the Gothic frontier, to which he annexed the government of Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece. The city of Cæsarea was chosen for the residence of Hannibalianus; and the provinces of Pontus, Cappadocia, and the Lesser Armenia, were destined to form the extent of his new kingdom. For each of these princes a suitable establishment was provided. A just proportion of guards, of legions, and of auxiliaries, was allotted for their respective dignity and defence. The ministers and generals, who were placed about their persons, were such as Constantine could trust to assist, and even

to control, these youthful sovereigns in the exercise of their delegated power. As they advanced in years and experience, the limits of their authority were insensibly enlarged: but the emperor always reserved for himself the title of Augustus; and while he showed the *Cæsars* to the armies and provinces, he maintained every part of the empire in equal obedience to its supreme head. [34](#) The tranquillity of the last fourteen years of his reign was scarcely interrupted by the contemptible insurrection of a camel-driver in the Island of Cyprus, [35](#) or by the active part which the policy of Constantine engaged him to assume in the wars of the Goths and Sarmatians.

- 32 [\(return\)](#)
[His dexterity in martial exercises is celebrated by Julian, (Orat. i. p. 11, Orat. ii. p. 53,) and allowed by Ammianus, (l. xxi. c. 16.)]
- 33 [\(return\)](#)
[Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 51. Julian, Orat. i. p. 11-16, with Spanheim's elaborate Commentary. Libanius, Orat. iii. p. 109. Constantius studied with laudable diligence; but the dulness of his fancy prevented him from succeeding in the art of poetry, or even of rhetoric.]
- 34 [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius, (l. iv. c. 51, 52,) with a design of exalting the authority and glory of Constantine, affirms, that he divided the Roman empire as a private citizen might have divided his patrimony. His distribution of the provinces may be collected from Eutropius, the two Victors and the Valesian fragment.]
- 35 [\(return\)](#)
[Calocerus, the obscure leader of this rebellion, or rather tumult, was apprehended and burnt alive in the market-place of Tarsus, by the vigilance of Dalmatius. See the elder Victor, the Chronicle of Jerom, and the doubtful traditions of Theophanes and Cedrenus.]

Among the different branches of the human race, the Sarmatians form a very remarkable shade; as they seem to unite the manners of the Asiatic barbarians with the figure and complexion of the ancient inhabitants of Europe. According to the various accidents of peace and war, of alliance or conquest, the Sarmatians were sometimes confined to the banks of the Tanais; and they sometimes spread themselves over the immense plains which lie between the Vistula and the Volga. [36](#) The care of their numerous flocks and herds, the pursuit of game, and the exercises of war, or rather of rapine, directed the vagrant motions of the Sarmatians. The movable camps or cities, the ordinary residence of their wives and children, consisted only of large wagons drawn by oxen, and covered in the form of tents. The military strength of the nation was composed of cavalry; and the custom of their warriors, to lead in their hand one or two

spare horses, enabled them to advance and to retreat with a rapid diligence, which surprised the security, and eluded the pursuit, of a distant enemy. [37](#) Their poverty of iron prompted their rude industry to invent a sort of cuirass, which was capable of resisting a sword or javelin, though it was formed only of horses' hoofs, cut into thin and polished slices, carefully laid over each other in the manner of scales or feathers, and strongly sewed upon an under garment of coarse linen. [38](#) The offensive arms of the Sarmatians were short daggers, long lances, and a weighty bow with a quiver of arrows. They were reduced to the necessity of employing fish-bones for the points of their weapons; but the custom of dipping them in a venomous liquor, that poisoned the wounds which they inflicted, is alone sufficient to prove the most savage manners, since a people impressed with a sense of humanity would have abhorred so cruel a practice, and a nation skilled in the arts of war would have disdained so impotent a resource. [39](#) Whenever these Barbarians issued from their deserts in quest of prey, their shaggy beards, uncombed locks, the furs with which they were covered from head to foot, and their fierce countenances, which seemed to express the innate cruelty of their minds, inspired the more civilized provincials of Rome with horror and dismay.

36 [\(return\)](#)

[Cellarius has collected the opinions of the ancients concerning the European and Asiatic Sarmatia; and M. D'Anville has applied them to modern geography with the skill and accuracy which always distinguish that excellent writer.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. l. xvii. c. 12. The Sarmatian horses were castrated to prevent the mischievous accidents which might happen from the noisy and ungovernable passions of the males.]

38 [\(return\)](#)

[Pausanias, l. i. p. 50., edit. Kuhn. That inquisitive traveller had carefully examined a Sarmatian cuirass, which was preserved in the temple of Æsculapius at Athens.]

39 [\(return\)](#)

[*Aspicis et mitti sub adunco toxica ferro, Et telum causas mortis habere duas.* Ovid, ex Ponto, l. iv. ep. 7, ver. 7.—See in the *Recherches sur les Americains*, tom. ii. p. 236—271, a very curious dissertation on poisoned darts. The venom was commonly extracted from the vegetable reign: but that employed by the Scythians appears to have been drawn from the viper, and a mixture of human blood.]

The use of poisoned arms, which has been spread over both worlds, never preserved a savage tribe from the arms of a disciplined enemy. The tender Ovid, after a youth spent in the enjoyment of fame and luxury, was condemned to a hopeless exile on the

frozen banks of the Danube, where he was exposed, almost without defence, to the fury of these monsters of the desert, with whose stern spirits he feared that his gentle shade might hereafter be confounded. In his pathetic, but sometimes unmanly lamentations, [40](#) he describes in the most lively colors the dress and manners, the arms and inroads, of the Getæ and Sarmatians, who were associated for the purposes of destruction; and from the accounts of history there is some reason to believe that these Sarmatians were the Jazygæ, one of the most numerous and warlike tribes of the nation. The allurements of plenty engaged them to seek a permanent establishment on the frontiers of the empire. Soon after the reign of Augustus, they obliged the Dacians, who subsisted by fishing on the banks of the River Teyss or Tibiscus, to retire into the hilly country, and to abandon to the victorious Sarmatians the fertile plains of the Upper Hungary, which are bounded by the course of the Danube and the semicircular enclosure of the Carpathian Mountains. [41](#) In this advantageous position, they watched or suspended the moment of attack, as they were provoked by injuries or appeased by presents; they gradually acquired the skill of using more dangerous weapons, and although the Sarmatians did not illustrate their name by any memorable exploits, they occasionally assisted their eastern and western neighbors, the Goths and the Germans, with a formidable body of cavalry. They lived under the irregular aristocracy of their chieftains: [42](#) but after they had received into their bosom the fugitive Vandals, who yielded to the pressure of the Gothic power, they seem to have chosen a king from that nation, and from the illustrious race of the Astingi, who had formerly dwelt on the shores of the northern ocean. [43](#)

40

[\(return\)](#)

[The nine books of Poetical Epistles which Ovid composed during the seven first years of his melancholy exile, possess, beside the merit of elegance, a double value. They exhibit a picture of the human mind under very singular circumstances; and they contain many curious observations, which no Roman except Ovid, could have an opportunity of making. Every circumstance which tends to illustrate the history of the Barbarians, has been drawn together by the very accurate Count de Buat. Hist. Ancienne des Peuples de l'Europe, tom. iv. c. xvi. p. 286-317]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[The Sarmatian Jazygæ were settled on the banks of Pathissus or Tibiscus, when Pliny, in the year 79, published his Natural History. See l. iv. c. 25. In the time of Strabo and Ovid, sixty or seventy years before, they appear to have inhabited beyond the Getæ, along the coast of the Euxine.]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[Principes Sarmaturum Jazygum penes quos civitatis regimen plebem quoque et vim equitum,

qua sola valent, offerebant. Tacit. Hist. iii. p. 5. This offer was made in the civil war between Vitellino and Vespasian.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[This hypothesis of a Vandal king reigning over Sarmatian subjects, seems necessary to reconcile the Goth Jornandes with the Greek and Latin historians of Constantine. It may be observed that Isidore, who lived in Spain under the dominion of the Goths, gives them for enemies, not the Vandals, but the Sarmatians. See his Chronicle in Grotius, p. 709. Note: I have already noticed the confusion which must necessarily arise in history, when names purely *geographical*, as this of Sarmatia, are taken for *historical* names belonging to a single nation. We perceive it here; it has forced Gibbon to suppose, without any reason but the necessity of extricating himself from his perplexity, that the Sarmatians had taken a king from among the Vandals; a supposition entirely contrary to the usages of Barbarians Dacia, at this period, was occupied, not by Sarmatians, who have never formed a distinct race, but by Vandals, whom the ancients have often confounded under the general term Sarmatians. See Gatterer's Welt-Geschichte p. 464—G.]

This motive of enmity must have inflamed the subjects of contention, which perpetually arise on the confines of warlike and independent nations. The Vandal princes were stimulated by fear and revenge; the Gothic kings aspired to extend their dominion from the Euxine to the frontiers of Germany; and the waters of the Maros, a small river which falls into the Teyss, were stained with the blood of the contending Barbarians. After some experience of the superior strength and numbers of their adversaries, the Sarmatians implored the protection of the Roman monarch, who beheld with pleasure the discord of the nations, but who was justly alarmed by the progress of the Gothic arms. As soon as Constantine had declared himself in favor of the weaker party, the haughty Araric, king of the Goths, instead of expecting the attack of the legions, boldly passed the Danube, and spread terror and devastation through the province of Mæsia.

To oppose the inroad of this destroying host, the aged emperor took the field in person; but on this occasion either his conduct or his fortune betrayed the glory which he had acquired in so many foreign and domestic wars. He had the mortification of seeing his troops fly before an inconsiderable detachment of the Barbarians, who pursued them to the edge of their fortified camp, and obliged him to consult his safety by a precipitate and ignominious retreat. [4311](#) The event of a second and more successful action retrieved the honor of the Roman name; and the powers of art and

discipline prevailed, after an obstinate contest, over the efforts of irregular valor. The broken army of the Goths abandoned the field of battle, the wasted province, and the passage of the Danube: and although the eldest of the sons of Constantine was permitted to supply the place of his father, the merit of the victory, which diffused universal joy, was ascribed to the auspicious counsels of the emperor himself.

4311

[\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon states, that Constantine was defeated by the Goths in a first battle. No ancient author mentions such an event. It is, no doubt, a mistake in Gibbon. St Martin, note to Le Beau. i. 324.—M.]

He contributed at least to improve this advantage, by his negotiations with the free and warlike people of Chersonesus, [44](#) whose capital, situate on the western coast of the Tauric or Crimæan peninsula, still retained some vestiges of a Grecian colony, and was governed by a perpetual magistrate, assisted by a council of senators, emphatically styled the Fathers of the City.

The Chersonites were animated against the Goths, by the memory of the wars, which, in the preceding century, they had maintained with unequal forces against the invaders of their country. They were connected with the Romans by the mutual benefits of commerce; as they were supplied from the provinces of Asia with corn and manufactures, which they purchased with their only productions, salt, wax, and hides. Obedient to the requisition of Constantine, they prepared, under the conduct of their magistrate Diogenes, a considerable army, of which the principal strength consisted in cross-bows and military chariots. The speedy march and intrepid attack of the Chersonites, by diverting the attention of the Goths, assisted the operations of the Imperial generals. The Goths, vanquished on every side, were driven into the mountains, where, in the course of a severe campaign, above a hundred thousand were computed to have perished by cold and hunger. Peace was at length granted to their humble supplications; the eldest son of Araric was accepted as the most valuable hostage; and Constantine endeavored to convince their chiefs, by a liberal distribution of honors and rewards, how far the friendship of the Romans was preferable to their enmity. In the expressions of his gratitude towards the faithful Chersonites, the emperor was still more magnificent. The pride of the nation was gratified by the splendid and almost royal decorations bestowed on their magistrate and his successors. A perpetual exemption from all duties was stipulated for their vessels which traded to the ports of the Black Sea. A regular subsidy was promised, of iron, corn, oil, and of every supply which could be useful either in peace or war. But it was thought that the Sarmatians were sufficiently rewarded by their deliverance from impending ruin; and the emperor, perhaps with too strict an economy, deducted some part of the expenses of the war from the customary gratifications which were allowed to that turbulent nation.

44

[\(return\)](#)

[I may stand in need of some apology for having used, without scruple, the authority of Constantine

Porphyrogenitus, in all that relates to the wars and negotiations of the Chersonites. I am aware that he was a Greek of the tenth century, and that his accounts of ancient history are frequently confused and fabulous. But on this occasion his narrative is, for the most part, consistent and probable nor is there much difficulty in conceiving that an emperor might have access to some secret archives, which had escaped the diligence of meaner historians. For the situation and history of Cherson, see Peyssonel, *des Peuples barbares qui ont habité les Bords du Danube*, c. xvi. 84-90. —Gibbon has confounded the inhabitants of the city of Cherson, the ancient Chersonesus, with the people of the Chersonesus Taurica. If he had read with more attention the chapter of Constantius Porphyrogenitus, from which this narrative is derived, he would have seen that the author clearly distinguishes the republic of Cherson from the rest of the Tauric Peninsula, then possessed by the kings of the Cimmerian Bosphorus, and that the city of Cherson alone furnished succors to the Romans. The English historian is also mistaken in saying that the Stephanephoros of the Chersonites was a perpetual magistrate; since it is easy to discover from the great number of Stephanephoroi mentioned by Constantine Porphyrogenitus, that they were annual magistrates, like almost all those which governed the Grecian republics. St. Martin, note to *Le Beau* i. 326.—M.]

Exasperated by this apparent neglect, the Sarmatians soon forgot, with the levity of barbarians, the services which they had so lately received, and the dangers which still threatened their safety. Their inroads on the territory of the empire provoked the indignation of Constantine to leave them to their fate; and he no longer opposed the ambition of Geberic, a renowned warrior, who had recently ascended the Gothic throne. Wisumar, the Vandal king, whilst alone, and unassisted, he defended his dominions with undaunted courage, was vanquished and slain in a decisive battle, which swept away the flower of the Sarmatian youth. [4411](#) The remainder of the nation embraced the desperate expedient of arming their slaves, a hardy race of hunters and herdsmen, by whose tumultuary aid they revenged their defeat, and expelled the invader from their confines. But they soon discovered that they had exchanged a foreign for a domestic enemy, more dangerous and more implacable. Enraged by their former servitude, elated by their present glory, the slaves, under the name of Limigantes, claimed and usurped the possession of the country which they had saved. Their masters, unable to withstand the ungoverned fury of the populace, preferred the hardships of exile to the tyranny of their servants. Some of the fugitive Sarmatians solicited a less ignominious dependence, under the hostile standard of the Goths. A more numerous band retired beyond the

Carpathian Mountains, among the Quadi, their German allies, and were easily admitted to share a superfluous waste of uncultivated land. But the far greater part of the distressed nation turned their eyes towards the fruitful provinces of Rome. Imploring the protection and forgiveness of the emperor, they solemnly promised, as subjects in peace, and as soldiers in war, the most inviolable fidelity to the empire which should graciously receive them into its bosom. According to the maxims adopted by Probus and his successors, the offers of this barbarian colony were eagerly accepted; and a competent portion of lands in the provinces of Pannonia, Thrace, Macedonia, and Italy, were immediately assigned for the habitation and subsistence of three hundred thousand Sarmatians. [45](#) [4511](#)

4411

[\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon supposes that this war took place because Constantine had deducted a part of the customary gratifications, granted by his predecessors to the Sarmatians. Nothing of this kind appears in the authors. We see, on the contrary, that after his victory, and to punish the Sarmatia is for the ravages they had committed, he withheld the sums which it had been the custom to bestow. St. Martin, note to Le Beau, i. 327.—M.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[The Gothic and Sarmatian wars are related in so broken and imperfect a manner, that I have been obliged to compare the following writers, who mutually supply, correct, and illustrate each other. Those who will take the same trouble, may acquire a right of criticizing my narrative. Ammianus, l. xvii. c. 12. Anonym. Valesian. p. 715. Eutropius, x. 7. Sextus Rufus de Provinciis, c. 26. Julian Orat. i. p. 9, and Spanheim, Comment. p. 94. Hieronym. in Chron. Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 6. Socrates, l. i. c. 18. Sozomen, l. i. c. 8. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 108. Jornandes de Reb. Geticis, c. 22. Isidorus in Chron. p. 709; in Hist. Gothorum Grotii. Constantin. Porphyrogenitus de Administrat. Imperii, c. 53, p. 208, edit. Meursii.]

4511

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare, on this very obscure but remarkable war, Manso, Leben Coa xantius, p. 195—M.]

By chastising the pride of the Goths, and by accepting the homage of a suppliant nation, Constantine asserted the majesty of the Roman empire; and the ambassadors of Æthiopia, Persia, and the most remote countries of India, congratulated the peace and prosperity of his government. [46](#) If he reckoned, among the favors of fortune, the death of his eldest son, of his nephew, and perhaps of his wife, he enjoyed an uninterrupted flow of private as well as public felicity, till the thirtieth year of his reign; a period which none of his predecessors, since Augustus, had been permitted to celebrate.

Constantine survived that solemn festival about ten months; and at the mature age of sixty-four, after a short illness, he ended his memorable life at the palace of Aquyrion, in the suburbs of Nicomedia, whither he had retired for the benefit of the air, and with the hope of recruiting his exhausted strength by the use of the warm baths. The excessive demonstrations of grief, or at least of mourning, surpassed whatever had been practised on any former occasion. Notwithstanding the claims of the senate and people of ancient Rome, the corpse of the deceased emperor, according to his last request, was transported to the city, which was destined to preserve the name and memory of its founder. The body of Constantine adorned with the vain symbols of greatness, the purple and diadem, was deposited on a golden bed in one of the apartments of the palace, which for that purpose had been splendidly furnished and illuminated. The forms of the court were strictly maintained. Every day, at the appointed hours, the principal officers of the state, the army, and the household, approaching the person of their sovereign with bended knees and a composed countenance, offered their respectful homage as seriously as if he had been still alive. From motives of policy, this theatrical representation was for some time continued; nor could flattery neglect the opportunity of remarking that Constantine alone, by the peculiar indulgence of Heaven, had reigned after his death. [47](#)

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius (in Vit. Const. l. iv. c. 50) remarks three circumstances relative to these Indians. 1. They came from the shores of the eastern ocean; a description which might be applied to the coast of China or Coromandel. 2. They presented shining gems, and unknown animals. 3. They protested their kings had erected statues to represent the supreme majesty of Constantine.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[Funus relatum in urbem sui nominis, quod sane P. R. ægerrime tulit. Aurelius Victor. Constantine prepared for himself a stately tomb in the church of the Holy Apostles. Euseb. l. iv. c. 60. The best, and indeed almost the only account of the sickness, death, and funeral of Constantine, is contained in the fourth book of his Life by Eusebius.]

But this reign could subsist only in empty pageantry; and it was soon discovered that the will of the most absolute monarch is seldom obeyed, when his subjects have no longer anything to hope from his favor, or to dread from his resentment. The same ministers and generals, who bowed with such referential awe before the inanimate corpse of their deceased sovereign, were engaged in secret consultations to exclude his two nephews, Dalmatius and Hannibalianus, from the share which he had assigned them in the succession of the empire. We are too imperfectly acquainted with the court of Constantine to form any judgment of the real motives which influenced the leaders of the conspiracy; unless we should suppose that they were actuated by a spirit of jealousy

and revenge against the præfect Ablavius, a proud favorite, who had long directed the counsels and abused the confidence of the late emperor. The arguments, by which they solicited the concurrence of the soldiers and people, are of a more obvious nature; and they might with decency, as well as truth, insist on the superior rank of the children of Constantine, the danger of multiplying the number of sovereigns, and the impending mischiefs which threatened the republic, from the discord of so many rival princes, who were not connected by the tender sympathy of fraternal affection. The intrigue was conducted with zeal and secrecy, till a loud and unanimous declaration was procured from the troops, that they would suffer none except the sons of their lamented monarch to reign over the Roman empire. [48](#) The younger Dalmatius, who was united with his collateral relations by the ties of friendship and interest, is allowed to have inherited a considerable share of the abilities of the great Constantine; but, on this occasion, he does not appear to have concerted any measure for supporting, by arms, the just claims which himself and his royal brother derived from the liberality of their uncle. Astonished and overwhelmed by the tide of popular fury, they seem to have remained, without the power of flight or of resistance, in the hands of their implacable enemies. Their fate was suspended till the arrival of Constantius, the second, and perhaps the most favored, of the sons of Constantine. [49](#)

48

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius (l. iv. c. 6) terminates his narrative by this loyal declaration of the troops, and avoids all the invidious circumstances of the subsequent massacre.]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[The character of Dalmatius is advantageously, though concisely drawn by Eutropius. (x. 9.) Dalmatius Cæsar prosperrimâ indole, neque patrou absimilis, *haud multo* post oppressus est factione militari. As both Jerom and the Alexandrian Chronicle mention the third year of the Cæsar, which did not commence till the 18th or 24th of September, A. D. 337, it is certain that these military factions continued above four months.]

Chapter XVIII: Character Of Constantine And His Sons.—Part III.

The voice of the dying emperor had recommended the care of his funeral to the piety of Constantius; and that prince, by the vicinity of his eastern station, could easily prevent the diligence of his brothers, who resided in their distant government of Italy and Gaul. As soon as he had taken possession of the palace of Constantinople, his first care was to remove the apprehensions of his kinsmen, by a solemn oath which he pledged for their security. His next employment was to find some specious pretence

which might release his conscience from the obligation of an imprudent promise. The arts of fraud were made subservient to the designs of cruelty; and a manifest forgery was attested by a person of the most sacred character. From the hands of the Bishop of Nicomedia, Constantius received a fatal scroll, affirmed to be the genuine testament of his father; in which the emperor expressed his suspicions that he had been poisoned by his brothers; and conjured his sons to revenge his death, and to consult their own safety, by the punishment of the guilty. [50](#) Whatever reasons might have been alleged by these unfortunate princes to defend their life and honor against so incredible an accusation, they were silenced by the furious clamors of the soldiers, who declared themselves, at once, their enemies, their judges, and their executioners. The spirit, and even the forms of legal proceedings were repeatedly violated in a promiscuous massacre; which involved the two uncles of Constantius, seven of his cousins, of whom Dalmatius and Hannibalianus were the most illustrious, the Patrician Optatus, who had married a sister of the late emperor, and the Præfect Ablavius, whose power and riches had inspired him with some hopes of obtaining the purple. If it were necessary to aggravate the horrors of this bloody scene, we might add, that Constantius himself had espoused the daughter of his uncle Julius, and that he had bestowed his sister in marriage on his cousin Hannibalianus. These alliances, which the policy of Constantine, regardless of the public prejudice, [51](#) had formed between the several branches of the Imperial house, served only to convince mankind, that these princes were as cold to the endearments of conjugal affection, as they were insensible to the ties of consanguinity, and the moving entreaties of youth and innocence. Of so numerous a family, Gallus and Julian alone, the two youngest children of Julius Constantius, were saved from the hands of the assassins, till their rage, satiated with slaughter, had in some measure subsided. The emperor Constantius, who, in the absence of his brothers, was the most obnoxious to guilt and reproach, discovered, on some future occasions, a faint and transient remorse for those cruelties which the perfidious counsels of his ministers, and the irresistible violence of the troops, had extorted from his unexperienced youth. [52](#)

50

[\(return\)](#)

[I have related this singular anecdote on the authority of Philostorgius, l. ii. c. 16. But if such a pretext was ever used by Constantius and his adherents, it was laid aside with contempt, as soon as it served their immediate purpose. Athanasius (tom. i. p. 856) mention the oath which Constantius had taken for the security of his kinsmen. —The authority of Philostorgius is so suspicious, as not to be sufficient to establish this fact, which Gibbon has inserted in his history as certain, while in the note he appears to doubt it.—G.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Conjugia sobrinarum diu ignorata, tempore addito percrebuisse. Tacit. Annal. xii. 6, and Lipsius ad loc. The repeal of the ancient law, and the practice

of five hundred years, were insufficient to eradicate the prejudices of the Romans, who still considered the marriages of cousins-german as a species of imperfect incest. (Augustin de Civitate Dei, xv. 6;) and Julian, whose mind was biased by superstition and resentment, stigmatizes these unnatural alliances between his own cousins with the opprobrious epithet (Orat. vii. p. 228.). The jurisprudence of the canons has since received and enforced this prohibition, without being able to introduce it either into the civil or the common law of Europe. See on the subject of these marriages, Taylor's Civil Law, p. 331. Brouer de Jure Connub. l. ii. c. 12. Hericourt des Loix Ecclésiastiques, part iii. c. 5. Fleury, Institutions du Droit Canonique, tom. i. p. 331. Paris, 1767, and Fra Paolo, Istoria del Concilio Trident, l. viii.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian (ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 270) charges his cousin Constantius with the whole guilt of a massacre, from which he himself so narrowly escaped. His assertion is confirmed by Athanasius, who, for reasons of a very different nature, was not less an enemy of Constantius, (tom. i. p. 856.) Zosimus joins in the same accusation. But the three abbreviators, Eutropius and the Victors, use very qualifying expressions: "sinente potius quam jubente;" "incertum quo suasore;" "vi militum."]

The massacre of the Flavian race was succeeded by a new division of the provinces; which was ratified in a personal interview of the three brothers. Constantine, the eldest of the Cæsars, obtained, with a certain preëminence of rank, the possession of the new capital, which bore his own name and that of his father. Thrace, and the countries of the East, were allotted for the patrimony of Constantius; and Constans was acknowledged as the lawful sovereign of Italy, Africa, and the Western Illyricum. The armies submitted to their hereditary right; and they condescended, after some delay, to accept from the Roman senate the title of *Augustus*. When they first assumed the reins of government, the eldest of these princes was twenty-one, the second twenty, and the third only seventeen, years of age. [53](#)

53

[\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 69. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 117. Idat. in Chron. See two notes of Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 1086-1091. The reign of the eldest brother at Constantinople is noticed only in the Alexandrian Chronicle.]

While the martial nations of Europe followed the standards of his brothers, Constantius, at the head of the effeminate troops of Asia, was left to sustain the weight

of the Persian war. At the decease of Constantine, the throne of the East was filled by Sapor, son of Hormouz, or Hormisdas, and grandson of Narses, who, after the victory of Galerius, had humbly confessed the superiority of the Roman power. Although Sapor was in the thirtieth year of his long reign, he was still in the vigor of youth, as the date of his accession, by a very strange fatality, had preceded that of his birth. The wife of Hormouz remained pregnant at the time of her husband's death; and the uncertainty of the sex, as well as of the event, excited the ambitious hopes of the princes of the house of Sassan. The apprehensions of civil war were at length removed, by the positive assurance of the Magi, that the widow of Hormouz had conceived, and would safely produce a son. Obedient to the voice of superstition, the Persians prepared, without delay, the ceremony of his coronation.

A royal bed, on which the queen lay in state, was exhibited in the midst of the palace; the diadem was placed on the spot, which might be supposed to conceal the future heir of Artaxerxes, and the prostrate satraps adored the majesty of their invisible and insensible sovereign. [54](#) If any credit can be given to this marvellous tale, which seems, however, to be countenanced by the manners of the people, and by the extraordinary duration of his reign, we must admire not only the fortune, but the genius, of Sapor. In the soft, sequestered education of a Persian harem, the royal youth could discover the importance of exercising the vigor of his mind and body; and, by his personal merit, deserved a throne, on which he had been seated, while he was yet unconscious of the duties and temptations of absolute power. His minority was exposed to the almost inevitable calamities of domestic discord; his capital was surprised and plundered by Thair, a powerful king of Yemen, or Arabia; and the majesty of the royal family was degraded by the captivity of a princess, the sister of the deceased king. But as soon as Sapor attained the age of manhood, the presumptuous Thair, his nation, and his country, fell beneath the first effort of the young warrior; who used his victory with so judicious a mixture of rigor and clemency, that he obtained from the fears and gratitude of the Arabs the title of *Dhoulacnaf*, or protector of the nation. [55](#) [5511](#)

[Agathias, who lived in the sixth century, is the author of this story, (l. iv. p. 135, edit. Louvre.) He derived his information from some extracts of the Persian Chronicles, obtained and translated by the interpreter Sergius, during his embassy at that country. The coronation of the mother of Sapor is likewise mentioned by Snikard, (Tarikh. p. 116,) and D'Herbelot (Bibliothèque Orientale, p. 703.) —The author of the Zenut-ul-Tarikh states, that the lady herself affirmed her belief of this from the extraordinary liveliness of the infant, and its lying on the right side. Those who are sage on such subjects must determine what right she had to be positive from these symptoms. Malcolm, Hist. of Persia, i 83.—M.]

[D'Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale, p. 764.]

[Gibbon, according to Sir J. Malcolm, has greatly mistaken the derivation of this name; it means Zoolaktaf, the Lord of the Shoulders, from his directing the shoulders of his captives to be pierced and then dislocated by a string passed through them. Eastern authors are agreed with respect to the origin of this title. Malcolm, i. 84. Gibbon took his derivation from D'Herbelot, who gives both, the latter on the authority of the Leb. Tarikh.—M.]

The ambition of the Persian, to whom his enemies ascribe the virtues of a soldier and a statesman, was animated by the desire of revenging the disgrace of his fathers, and of wresting from the hands of the Romans the five provinces beyond the Tigris. The military fame of Constantine, and the real or apparent strength of his government, suspended the attack; and while the hostile conduct of Sapor provoked the resentment, his artful negotiations amused the patience of the Imperial court. The death of Constantine was the signal of war, [56](#) and the actual condition of the Syrian and Armenian frontier seemed to encourage the Persians by the prospect of a rich spoil and an easy conquest. The example of the massacres of the palace diffused a spirit of licentiousness and sedition among the troops of the East, who were no longer restrained by their habits of obedience to a veteran commander. By the prudence of Constantius, who, from the interview with his brothers in Pannonia, immediately hastened to the banks of the Euphrates, the legions were gradually restored to a sense of duty and discipline; but the season of anarchy had permitted Sapor to form the siege of Nisibis, and to occupy several of the most important fortresses of Mesopotamia. [57](#) In Armenia, the renowned Tiridates had long enjoyed the peace and glory which he deserved by his valor and fidelity to the cause of Rome. [5711](#) The firm alliance which he maintained with Constantine was productive of spiritual as well as of temporal benefits; by the conversion of Tiridates, the character of a saint was applied to that of a hero, the Christian faith was preached and established from the Euphrates to the shores of the Caspian, and Armenia was attached to the empire by the double ties of policy and religion. But as many of the Armenian nobles still refused to abandon the plurality of their gods and of their wives, the public tranquillity was disturbed by a discontented faction, which insulted the feeble age of their sovereign, and impatiently expected the hour of his death. He died at length after a reign of fifty-six years, and the fortune of the Armenian monarchy expired with Tiridates. His lawful heir was driven into exile, the Christian priests were either murdered or expelled from their churches, the barbarous tribes of Albania were solicited to descend from their mountains; and two of the most powerful governors, usurping the ensigns or the powers of royalty, implored the assistance of Sapor, and opened the gates of their cities to the Persian garrisons. The Christian party, under the guidance of the Archbishop of Artaxata, the immediate

successor of St. Gregory the Illuminator, had recourse to the piety of Constantius. After the troubles had continued about three years, Antiochus, one of the officers of the household, executed with success the Imperial commission of restoring Chosroes, [5712](#) the son of Tiridates, to the throne of his fathers, of distributing honors and rewards among the faithful servants of the house of Arsaces, and of proclaiming a general amnesty, which was accepted by the greater part of the rebellious satraps. But the Romans derived more honor than advantage from this revolution. Chosroes was a prince of a puny stature and a pusillanimous spirit. Unequal to the fatigues of war, averse to the society of mankind, he withdrew from his capital to a retired palace, which he built on the banks of the River Eleutherus, and in the centre of a shady grove; where he consumed his vacant hours in the rural sports of hunting and hawking. To secure this inglorious ease, he submitted to the conditions of peace which Sapor condescended to impose; the payment of an annual tribute, and the restitution of the fertile province of Atropatene, which the courage of Tiridates, and the victorious arms of Galerius, had annexed to the Armenian monarchy. [58](#) [5811](#)

56

[\(return\)](#)

[Sextus Rufus, (c. 26,) who on this occasion is no contemptible authority, affirms, that the Persians sued in vain for peace, and that Constantine was preparing to march against them: yet the superior weight of the testimony of Eusebius obliges us to admit the preliminaries, if not the ratification, of the treaty. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 420. —Constantine had endeavored to allay the fury of the prosecutions, which, at the instigation of the Magi and the Jews, Sapor had commenced against the Christians. Euseb Vit. Hist. Theod. i. 25. Sozom. ii. c. 8, 15.—M.]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Orat. i. p. 20.]

5711

[\(return\)](#)

[Tiridates had sustained a war against Maximin. caused by the hatred of the latter against Christianity. Armenia was the first *nation* which embraced Christianity. About the year 276 it was the religion of the king, the nobles, and the people of Armenia. From St. Martin, Supplement to Le Beau, v. i. p. 78. —Compare Preface to History of Vartan by Professor Neumann, p ix.—M.]

5712

[\(return\)](#)

[Chosroes was restored probably by Licinius, between 314 and 319. There was an Antiochus who was præfectus vigilum at Rome, as appears from the Theodosian Code, (l. iii. de inf. his quæ sub ty.,) in 326, and from a fragment of the same work published by M. Amedee Peyron, in 319. He may

before this have been sent into Armenia. St. M. p. 407. [Is it not more probable that Antiochus was an officer in the service of the Cæsar who ruled in the East?—M.] Chosroes was succeeded in the year 322 by his son Diran. Diran was a weak prince, and in the sixteenth year of his reign. A. D. 337. was betrayed into the power of the Persians by the treachery of his chamberlain and the Persian governor of Atropatene or Aderbidjan. He was blinded: his wife and his son Arsaces shared his captivity, but the princes and nobles of Armenia claimed the protection of Rome; and this was the cause of Constantine's declaration of war against the Persians.—The king of Persia attempted to make himself master of Armenia; but the brave resistance of the people, the advance of Constantius, and a defeat which his army suffered at Oskha in Armenia, and the failure before Nisibis, forced Shahpour to submit to terms of peace. Varaz-Shahpour, the perfidious governor of Atropatene, was flayed alive; Diran and his son were released from captivity; Diran refused to ascend the throne, and retired to an obscure retreat: his son Arsaces was crowned king of Armenia. Arsaces pursued a vacillating policy between the influence of Rome and Persia, and the war recommenced in the year 345. At least, that was the period of the expedition of Constantius to the East. See St. Martin, additions to Le Beau, i. 442. The Persians have made an extraordinary romance out of the history of Shahpour, who went as a spy to Constantinople, was taken, harnessed like a horse, and carried to witness the devastation of his kingdom. Malcolm. 84—M.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Orat. i. p. 20, 21. Moses of Chorene, l. ii. c. 89, l. iii. c. 1—9, p. 226—240. The perfect agreement between the vague hints of the contemporary orator, and the circumstantial narrative of the national historian, gives light to the former, and weight to the latter. For the credit of Moses, it may be likewise observed, that the name of Antiochus is found a few years before in a civil office of inferior dignity. See Godefroy, Cod. Theod. tom. vi. p. 350.]

5811

[\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon has endeavored, in his History, to make use of the information furnished by Moses of Chorene, the only Armenian historian then translated into Latin. Gibbon has not perceived all

the chronological difficulties which occur in the narrative of that writer. He has not thought of all the critical discussions which his text ought to undergo before it can be combined with the relations of the western writers. From want of this attention, Gibbon has made the facts which he has drawn from this source more erroneous than they are in the original. This judgment applies to all which the English historian has derived from the Armenian author. I have made the History of Moses a subject of particular attention; and it is with confidence that I offer the results, which I insert here, and which will appear in the course of my notes. In order to form a judgment of the difference which exists between me and Gibbon, I will content myself with remarking, that throughout he has committed an anachronism of thirty years, from whence it follows, that he assigns to the reign of Constantius many events which took place during that of Constantine. He could not, therefore, discern the true connection which exists between the Roman history and that of Armenia, or form a correct notion of the reasons which induced Constantine, at the close of his life, to make war upon the Persians, or of the motives which detained Constantius so long in the East; he does not even mention them. St. Martin, note on Le Beau, i. 406. I have inserted M. St. Martin's observations, but I must add, that the chronology which he proposes, is not generally received by Armenian scholars, not, I believe, by Professor Neumann.—M.]

During the long period of the reign of Constantius, the provinces of the East were afflicted by the calamities of the Persian war. [5813](#) The irregular incursions of the light troops alternately spread terror and devastation beyond the Tigris and beyond the Euphrates, from the gates of Ctesiphon to those of Antioch; and this active service was performed by the Arabs of the desert, who were divided in their interest and affections; some of their independent chiefs being enlisted in the party of Sapor, whilst others had engaged their doubtful fidelity to the emperor. [59](#) The more grave and important operations of the war were conducted with equal vigor; and the armies of Rome and Persia encountered each other in nine bloody fields, in two of which Constantius himself commanded in person. [60](#) The event of the day was most commonly adverse to the Romans, but in the battle of Singara, their imprudent valor had almost achieved a signal and decisive victory. The stationary troops of Singara [6011](#) retired on the approach of Sapor, who passed the Tigris over three bridges, and occupied near the village of Hilleh an advantageous camp, which, by the labor of his numerous pioneers, he surrounded in one day with a deep ditch and a lofty rampart. His formidable host, when it was drawn out in order of battle, covered the banks of the river, the adjacent

heights, and the whole extent of a plain of above twelve miles, which separated the two armies. Both were alike impatient to engage; but the Barbarians, after a slight resistance, fled in disorder; unable to resist, or desirous to weary, the strength of the heavy legions, who, fainting with heat and thirst, pursued them across the plain, and cut in pieces a line of cavalry, clothed in complete armor, which had been posted before the gates of the camp to protect their retreat. Constantius, who was hurried along in the pursuit, attempted, without effect, to restrain the ardor of his troops, by representing to them the dangers of the approaching night, and the certainty of completing their success with the return of day. As they depended much more on their own valor than on the experience or the abilities of their chief, they silenced by their clamors his timid remonstrances; and rushing with fury to the charge, filled up the ditch, broke down the rampart, and dispersed themselves through the tents to recruit their exhausted strength, and to enjoy the rich harvest of their labors. But the prudent Sapor had watched the moment of victory. His army, of which the greater part, securely posted on the heights, had been spectators of the action, advanced in silence, and under the shadow of the night; and his Persian archers, guided by the illumination of the camp, poured a shower of arrows on a disarmed and licentious crowd. The sincerity of history [61](#) declares, that the Romans were vanquished with a dreadful slaughter, and that the flying remnant of the legions was exposed to the most intolerable hardships. Even the tenderness of panegyric, confessing that the glory of the emperor was sullied by the disobedience of his soldiers, chooses to draw a veil over the circumstances of this melancholy retreat. Yet one of those venal orators, so jealous of the fame of Constantius, relates, with amazing coolness, an act of such incredible cruelty, as, in the judgment of posterity, must imprint a far deeper stain on the honor of the Imperial name. The son of Sapor, the heir of his crown, had been made a captive in the Persian camp. The unhappy youth, who might have excited the compassion of the most savage enemy, was scourged, tortured, and publicly executed by the inhuman Romans. [62](#)

5813

[\(return\)](#)

[It was during this war that a bold flatterer (whose name is unknown) published the Itineraries of Alexander and Trajan, in order to direct the *victorious* Constantius in the footsteps of those great conquerors of the East. The former of these has been published for the first time by M. Angelo Mai (Milan, 1817, reprinted at Frankfort, 1818.) It adds so little to our knowledge of Alexander's campaigns, that it only excites our regret that it is not the Itinerary of Trajan, of whose eastern victories we have no distinct record—M]

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xiv. 4) gives a lively description of the wandering and predatory life of the Saracens, who stretched from the confines of Assyria to the cataracts of the Nile. It appears from the adventures

of Malchus, which Jerom has related in so entertaining a manner, that the high road between Beræa and Edessa was infested by these robbers. See Hieronym. tom. i. p. 256.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[We shall take from Eutropius the general idea of the war. *A Persis enim multa et gravia perpessus, sæpe captis, oppidis, obsessis urbibus, cæsis exercitibus, nullumque ei contra Saporem prosperum prælium fuit, nisi quod apud Singaram, &c.* This honest account is confirmed by the hints of Ammianus, Rufus, and Jerom. The two first orations of Julian, and the third oration of Libanius, exhibit a more flattering picture; but the recantation of both those orators, after the death of Constantius, while it restores us to the possession of the truth, degrades their own character, and that of the emperor. The Commentary of Spanheim on the first oration of Julian is profusely learned. See likewise the judicious observations of Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 656.]

6011

[\(return\)](#)

[Now Sinjar, or the River Claboras.—M.]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[*Acerrimâ nocturnâ concertatione pugnatum est, nostrorum copiis ngenti strage confossis.* Ammian. xviii. 5. See likewise Eutropius, x. 10, and S. Rufus, c. 27. —The Persian historians, or romancers, do not mention the battle of Singara, but make the captive Shahpour escape, defeat, and take prisoner, the Roman emperor. The Roman captives were forced to repair all the ravages they had committed, even to replanting the smallest trees. Malcolm. i. 82.—M.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, *Orat.* iii. p. 133, with Julian. *Orat.* i. p. 24, and Spanneism's Commentary, p. 179.]

Whatever advantages might attend the arms of Sapor in the field, though nine repeated victories diffused among the nations the fame of his valor and conduct, he could not hope to succeed in the execution of his designs, while the fortified towns of Mesopotamia, and, above all, the strong and ancient city of Nisibis, remained in the possession of the Romans. In the space of twelve years, Nisibis, which, since the time of Lucullus, had been deservedly esteemed the bulwark of the East, sustained three memorable sieges against the power of Sapor; and the disappointed monarch, after urging his attacks above sixty, eighty, and a hundred days, was thrice repulsed with loss and ignominy. [63](#) This large and populous city was situate about two days' journey from the Tigris, in the midst of a pleasant and fertile plain at the foot of Mount Masius.

A treble enclosure of brick walls was defended by a deep ditch; [64](#) and the intrepid resistance of Count Lucilianus, and his garrison, was seconded by the desperate courage of the people. The citizens of Nisibis were animated by the exhortations of their bishop, [65](#) inured to arms by the presence of danger, and convinced of the intentions of Sapor to plant a Persian colony in their room, and to lead them away into distant and barbarous captivity. The event of the two former sieges elated their confidence, and exasperated the haughty spirit of the Great King, who advanced a third time towards Nisibis, at the head of the united forces of Persia and India. The ordinary machines, invented to batter or undermine the walls, were rendered ineffectual by the superior skill of the Romans; and many days had vainly elapsed, when Sapor embraced a resolution worthy of an eastern monarch, who believed that the elements themselves were subject to his power. At the stated season of the melting of the snows in Armenia, the River Mygdonius, which divides the plain and the city of Nisibis, forms, like the Nile, [66](#) an inundation over the adjacent country. By the labor of the Persians, the course of the river was stopped below the town, and the waters were confined on every side by solid mounds of earth. On this artificial lake, a fleet of armed vessels filled with soldiers, and with engines which discharged stones of five hundred pounds weight, advanced in order of battle, and engaged, almost upon a level, the troops which defended the ramparts. [6611](#) The irresistible force of the waters was alternately fatal to the contending parties, till at length a portion of the walls, unable to sustain the accumulated pressure, gave way at once, and exposed an ample breach of one hundred and fifty feet. The Persians were instantly driven to the assault, and the fate of Nisibis depended on the event of the day. The heavy-armed cavalry, who led the van of a deep column, were embarrassed in the mud, and great numbers were drowned in the unseen holes which had been filled by the rushing waters. The elephants, made furious by their wounds, increased the disorder, and trampled down thousands of the Persian archers. The Great King, who, from an exalted throne, beheld the misfortunes of his arms, sounded, with reluctant indignation, the signal of the retreat, and suspended for some hours the prosecution of the attack. But the vigilant citizens improved the opportunity of the night; and the return of day discovered a new wall of six feet in height, rising every moment to fill up the interval of the breach. Notwithstanding the disappointment of his hopes, and the loss of more than twenty thousand men, Sapor still pressed the reduction of Nisibis, with an obstinate firmness, which could have yielded only to the necessity of defending the eastern provinces of Persia against a formidable invasion of the Massagetæ. [67](#) Alarmed by this intelligence, he hastily relinquished the siege, and marched with rapid diligence from the banks of the Tigris to those of the Oxus. The danger and difficulties of the Scythian war engaged him soon afterwards to conclude, or at least to observe, a truce with the Roman emperor, which was equally grateful to both princes; as Constantius himself, after the death of his two brothers, was involved, by the revolutions of the West, in a civil contest, which required and seemed to exceed the most vigorous exertion of his undivided strength.

- 63 [\(return\)](#)
[See Julian. Orat. i. p. 27, Orat. ii. p. 62, &c., with the Commentary of Spanheim, (p. 188-202,) who illustrates the circumstances, and ascertains the time of the three sieges of Nisibis. Their dates are likewise examined by Tillemont, (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 668, 671, 674.) Something is added from Zosimus, l. iii. p. 151, and the Alexandrine Chronicle, p. 290.]
- 64 [\(return\)](#)
[Sallust. Fragment. lxxxiv. edit. Brosses, and Plutarch in Lucull. tom. iii. p. 184. Nisibis is now reduced to one hundred and fifty houses: the marshy lands produce rice, and the fertile meadows, as far as Mosul and the Tigris, are covered with the ruins of towns and allages. See Niebuhr, Voyages, tom. ii. p. 300-309.]
- 65 [\(return\)](#)
[The miracles which Theodoret (l. ii. c. 30) ascribes to St. James, Bishop of Edessa, were at least performed in a worthy cause, the defence of his country. He appeared on the walls under the figure of the Roman emperor, and sent an army of gnats to sting the trunks of the elephants, and to discomfit the host of the new Sennacherib.]
- 66 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian. Orat. i. p. 27. Though Niebuhr (tom. ii. p. 307) allows a very considerable swell to the Mygdonius, over which he saw a bridge of *twelve* arches: it is difficult, however, to understand this parallel of a trifling rivulet with a mighty river. There are many circumstances obscure, and almost unintelligible, in the description of these stupendous water-works.]
- 6611 [\(return\)](#)
[Macdonald Kinnier observes on these floating batteries, "As the elevation of place is considerably above the level of the country in its immediate vicinity, and the Mygdonius is a very insignificant stream, it is difficult to imagine how this work could have been accomplished, even with the wonderful resources which the king must have had at his disposal" Geographical Memoir. p. 262.—M.]
- 67 [\(return\)](#)
[We are obliged to Zonaras (tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 11) for this invasion of the Massagetæ, which is perfectly consistent with the general series of events to which we are darkly led by the broken history of Ammianus.]

After the partition of the empire, three years had scarcely elapsed before the sons of Constantine seemed impatient to convince mankind that they were incapable of contenting themselves with the dominions which they were unqualified to govern. The eldest of those princes soon complained, that he was defrauded of his just proportion of the spoils of their murdered kinsmen; and though he might yield to the superior guilt and merit of Constantius, he exacted from Constans the cession of the African provinces, as an equivalent for the rich countries of Macedonia and Greece, which his brother had acquired by the death of Dalmatius. The want of sincerity, which Constantine experienced in a tedious and fruitless negotiation, exasperated the fierceness of his temper; and he eagerly listened to those favorites, who suggested to him that his honor, as well as his interest, was concerned in the prosecution of the quarrel. At the head of a tumultuary band, suited for rapine rather than for conquest, he suddenly broke onto the dominions of Constans, by the way of the Julian Alps, and the country round Aquileia felt the first effects of his resentment. The measures of Constans, who then resided in Dacia, were directed with more prudence and ability. On the news of his brother's invasion, he detached a select and disciplined body of his Illyrian troops, proposing to follow them in person, with the remainder of his forces. But the conduct of his lieutenants soon terminated the unnatural contest.

By the artful appearances of flight, Constantine was betrayed into an ambuscade, which had been concealed in a wood, where the rash youth, with a few attendants, was surprised, surrounded, and slain. His body, after it had been found in the obscure stream of the Elsa, obtained the honors of an Imperial sepulchre; but his provinces transferred their allegiance to the conqueror, who, refusing to admit his elder brother Constantius to any share in these new acquisitions, maintained the undisputed possession of more than two thirds of the Roman empire. [68](#)

68

[\(return\)](#)

[The causes and the events of this civil war are related with much perplexity and contradiction. I have chiefly followed Zonaras and the younger Victor. The monody (ad Calcem Eutrop. edit. Havercamp.) pronounced on the death of Constantine, might have been very instructive; but prudence and false taste engaged the orator to involve himself in vague declamation.]

Chapter XVIII: Character Of Constantine And His Sons.—Part IV.

The fate of Constans himself was delayed about ten years longer, and the revenge of his brother's death was reserved for the more ignoble hand of a domestic traitor. The pernicious tendency of the system introduced by Constantine was displayed in the feeble administration of his sons; who, by their vices and weakness, soon lost the esteem

and affections of their people. The pride assumed by Constans, from the unmerited success of his arms, was rendered more contemptible by his want of abilities and application. His fond partiality towards some German captives, distinguished only by the charms of youth, was an object of scandal to the people; [69](#) and Magnentius, an ambitious soldier, who was himself of Barbarian extraction, was encouraged by the public discontent to assert the honor of the Roman name. [70](#) The chosen bands of Jovians and Herculians, who acknowledged Magnentius as their leader, maintained the most respectable and important station in the Imperial camp. The friendship of Marcellinus, count of the sacred largesses, supplied with a liberal hand the means of seduction. The soldiers were convinced by the most specious arguments, that the republic summoned them to break the bonds of hereditary servitude; and, by the choice of an active and vigilant prince, to reward the same virtues which had raised the ancestors of the degenerate Constans from a private condition to the throne of the world. As soon as the conspiracy was ripe for execution, Marcellinus, under the pretence of celebrating his son's birthday, gave a splendid entertainment to the *illustrious* and *honorable* persons of the court of Gaul, which then resided in the city of Autun. The intemperance of the feast was artfully protracted till a very late hour of the night; and the unsuspecting guests were tempted to indulge themselves in a dangerous and guilty freedom of conversation. On a sudden the doors were thrown open, and Magnentius, who had retired for a few moments, returned into the apartment, invested with the diadem and purple. The conspirators instantly saluted him with the titles of Augustus and Emperor. The surprise, the terror, the intoxication, the ambitious hopes, and the mutual ignorance of the rest of the assembly, prompted them to join their voices to the general acclamation. The guards hastened to take the oath of fidelity; the gates of the town were shut; and before the dawn of day, Magnentius became master of the troops and treasure of the palace and city of Autun. By his secrecy and diligence he entertained some hopes of surprising the person of Constans, who was pursuing in the adjacent forest his favorite amusement of hunting, or perhaps some pleasures of a more private and criminal nature. The rapid progress of fame allowed him, however, an instant for flight, though the desertion of his soldiers and subjects deprived him of the power of resistance. Before he could reach a seaport in Spain, where he intended to embark, he was overtaken near Helena, [71](#) at the foot of the Pyrenees, by a party of light cavalry, whose chief, regardless of the sanctity of a temple, executed his commission by the murder of the son of Constantine. [72](#)

[Quarum (*gentium*) obsides pretio quæsitos pueros venustiore quod cultius habuerat libidine hujusmodi arsisse *pro certo* habet. Had not the depraved taste of Constans been publicly avowed, the elder Victor, who held a considerable office in his brother's reign, would not have asserted it in such positive terms.]

70

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Orat. i. and ii. Zosim. l. ii. p. 134. Victor in Epitome. There is reason to believe that Magnentius was born in one of those Barbarian colonies which Constantius Chlorus had established in Gaul, (see this History, vol. i. p. 414.) His behavior may remind us of the patriot earl of Leicester, the famous Simon de Montfort, who could persuade the good people of England, that he, a Frenchman by birth had taken arms to deliver them from foreign favorites.]

71

[\(return\)](#)

[This ancient city had once flourished under the name of Illiberis (Pomponius Mela, ii. 5.) The munificence of Constantine gave it new splendor, and his mother's name. Helena (it is still called Elne) became the seat of a bishop, who long afterwards transferred his residence to Perpignan, the capital of modern Rousillon. See D'Anville. Notice de l'Ancienne Gaule, p. 380. Longuerue, Description de la France, p. 223, and the Marca Hispanica, l. i. c. 2.]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 119, 120. Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 13, and the Abbreviators.]

As soon as the death of Constans had decided this easy but important revolution, the example of the court of Autun was imitated by the provinces of the West. The authority of Magnentius was acknowledged through the whole extent of the two great præfectures of Gaul and Italy; and the usurper prepared, by every act of oppression, to collect a treasure, which might discharge the obligation of an immense donative, and supply the expenses of a civil war. The martial countries of Illyricum, from the Danube to the extremity of Greece, had long obeyed the government of Vetricio, an aged general, beloved for the simplicity of his manners, and who had acquired some reputation by his experience and services in war. [73](#) Attached by habit, by duty, and by gratitude, to the house of Constantine, he immediately gave the strongest assurances to the only surviving son of his late master, that he would expose, with unshaken fidelity, his person and his troops, to inflict a just revenge on the traitors of Gaul. But the legions of Vetricio were seduced, rather than provoked, by the example of rebellion; their leader soon betrayed a want of firmness, or a want of sincerity; and his ambition derived a specious pretence from the approbation of the princess Constantina. That cruel and aspiring woman, who had obtained from the great Constantine, her father, the rank of *Augusta*, placed the diadem with her own hands on the head of the Illyrian general; and seemed to expect from his victory the accomplishment of those unbounded hopes, of which she had been disappointed by the death of her husband Hannibalianus. Perhaps it was without the consent of Constantina, that the new emperor formed a necessary,

though dishonorable, alliance with the usurper of the West, whose purple was so recently stained with her brother's blood. [74](#)

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Eutropius (x. 10) describes Vetranio with more temper, and probably with more truth, than either of the two Victors. Vetranio was born of obscure parents in the wildest parts of Mæsia; and so much had his education been neglected, that, after his elevation, he studied the alphabet.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[The doubtful, fluctuating conduct of Vetranio is described by Julian in his first oration, and accurately explained by Spanheim, who discusses the situation and behavior of Constantina.]

The intelligence of these important events, which so deeply affected the honor and safety of the Imperial house, recalled the arms of Constantius from the inglorious prosecution of the Persian war. He recommended the care of the East to his lieutenants, and afterwards to his cousin Gallus, whom he raised from a prison to a throne; and marched towards Europe, with a mind agitated by the conflict of hope and fear, of grief and indignation. On his arrival at Heraclea in Thrace, the emperor gave audience to the ambassadors of Magnentius and Vetranio. The first author of the conspiracy Marcellinus, who in some measure had bestowed the purple on his new master, boldly accepted this dangerous commission; and his three colleagues were selected from the illustrious personages of the state and army. These deputies were instructed to soothe the resentment, and to alarm the fears, of Constantius. They were empowered to offer him the friendship and alliance of the western princes, to cement their union by a double marriage; of Constantius with the daughter of Magnentius, and of Magnentius himself with the ambitious Constantina; and to acknowledge in the treaty the preëminence of rank, which might justly be claimed by the emperor of the East. Should pride and mistaken piety urge him to refuse these equitable conditions, the ambassadors were ordered to expatiate on the inevitable ruin which must attend his rashness, if he ventured to provoke the sovereigns of the West to exert their superior strength; and to employ against him that valor, those abilities, and those legions, to which the house of Constantine had been indebted for so many triumphs. Such propositions and such arguments appeared to deserve the most serious attention; the answer of Constantius was deferred till the next day; and as he had reflected on the importance of justifying a civil war in the opinion of the people, he thus addressed his council, who listened with real or affected credulity: "Last night," said he, "after I retired to rest, the shade of the great Constantine, embracing the corpse of my murdered brother, rose before my eyes; his well-known voice awakened me to revenge, forbade me to despair of the republic, and assured me of the success and immortal glory which would crown the justice of my arms." The authority of such a vision, or rather of the prince who alleged it, silenced every doubt, and excluded all negotiation. The ignominious terms of peace were

rejected with disdain. One of the ambassadors of the tyrant was dismissed with the haughty answer of Constantius; his colleagues, as unworthy of the privileges of the law of nations, were put in irons; and the contending powers prepared to wage an implacable war. [75](#)

75

[\(return\)](#)

[See Peter the Patrician, in the Excerpta
Legationem p. 27.]

Such was the conduct, and such perhaps was the duty, of the brother of Constans towards the perfidious usurper of Gaul. The situation and character of Vetrano admitted of milder measures; and the policy of the Eastern emperor was directed to disunite his antagonists, and to separate the forces of Illyricum from the cause of rebellion. It was an easy task to deceive the frankness and simplicity of Vetrano, who, fluctuating some time between the opposite views of honor and interest, displayed to the world the insincerity of his temper, and was insensibly engaged in the snares of an artful negotiation. Constantius acknowledged him as a legitimate and equal colleague in the empire, on condition that he would renounce his disgraceful alliance with Magnentius, and appoint a place of interview on the frontiers of their respective provinces; where they might pledge their friendship by mutual vows of fidelity, and regulate by common consent the future operations of the civil war. In consequence of this agreement, Vetrano advanced to the city of Sardica, [76](#) at the head of twenty thousand horse, and of a more numerous body of infantry; a power so far superior to the forces of Constantius, that the Illyrian emperor appeared to command the life and fortunes of his rival, who, depending on the success of his private negotiations, had seduced the troops, and undermined the throne, of Vetrano. The chiefs, who had secretly embraced the party of Constantius, prepared in his favor a public spectacle, calculated to discover and inflame the passions of the multitude. [77](#) The united armies were commanded to assemble in a large plain near the city. In the centre, according to the rules of ancient discipline, a military tribunal, or rather scaffold, was erected, from whence the emperors were accustomed, on solemn and important occasions, to harangue the troops. The well-ordered ranks of Romans and Barbarians, with drawn swords, or with erected spears, the squadrons of cavalry, and the cohorts of infantry, distinguished by the variety of their arms and ensigns, formed an immense circle round the tribunal; and the attentive silence which they preserved was sometimes interrupted by loud bursts of clamor or of applause. In the presence of this formidable assembly, the two emperors were called upon to explain the situation of public affairs: the precedence of rank was yielded to the royal birth of Constantius; and though he was indifferently skilled in the arts of rhetoric, he acquitted himself, under these difficult circumstances, with firmness, dexterity, and eloquence. The first part of his oration seemed to be pointed only against the tyrant of Gaul; but while he tragically lamented the cruel murder of Constans, he insinuated, that none, except a brother, could claim a right to the succession of his brother. He displayed, with some complacency, the glories of his Imperial race; and

recalled to the memory of the troops the valor, the triumphs, the liberality of the great Constantine, to whose sons they had engaged their allegiance by an oath of fidelity, which the ingratitude of his most favored servants had tempted them to violate. The officers, who surrounded the tribunal, and were instructed to act their part in this extraordinary scene, confessed the irresistible power of reason and eloquence, by saluting the emperor Constantius as their lawful sovereign. The contagion of loyalty and repentance was communicated from rank to rank; till the plain of Sardica resounded with the universal acclamation of "Away with these upstart usurpers! Long life and victory to the son of Constantine! Under his banners alone we will fight and conquer." The shout of thousands, their menacing gestures, the fierce clashing of their arms, astonished and subdued the courage of Vetranio, who stood, amidst the defection of his followers, in anxious and silent suspense. Instead of embracing the last refuge of generous despair, he tamely submitted to his fate; and taking the diadem from his head, in the view of both armies fell prostrate at the feet of his conqueror. Constantius used his victory with prudence and moderation; and raising from the ground the aged suppliant, whom he affected to style by the endearing name of Father, he gave him his hand to descend from the throne. The city of Prusa was assigned for the exile or retirement of the abdicated monarch, who lived six years in the enjoyment of ease and affluence. He often expressed his grateful sense of the goodness of Constantius, and, with a very amiable simplicity, advised his benefactor to resign the sceptre of the world, and to seek for content (where alone it could be found) in the peaceful obscurity of a private condition. [78](#)

76

[\(return\)](#)

[Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 16. The position of Sardica, near the modern city of Sophia, appears better suited to this interview than the situation of either Naissus or Sirmium, where it is placed by Jerom, Socrates, and Sozomen.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

[See the two first orations of Julian, particularly p. 31; and Zosimus, l. ii. p. 122. The distinct narrative of the historian serves to illustrate the diffuse but vague descriptions of the orator.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[The younger Victor assigns to his exile the emphatical appellation of "Voluptarium otium." Socrates (l. ii. c. 28) is the voucher for the correspondence with the emperor, which would seem to prove that Vetranio was indeed, *prope ad stultitiam simplicissimus*.]

The behavior of Constantius on this memorable occasion was celebrated with some appearance of justice; and his courtiers compared the studied orations which a Pericles or a Demosthenes addressed to the populace of Athens, with the victorious eloquence which had persuaded an armed multitude to desert and depose the object of their partial

choice. [79](#) The approaching contest with Magnentius was of a more serious and bloody kind. The tyrant advanced by rapid marches to encounter Constantius, at the head of a numerous army, composed of Gauls and Spaniards, of Franks and Saxons; of those provincials who supplied the strength of the legions, and of those barbarians who were dreaded as the most formidable enemies of the republic. The fertile plains [80](#) of the Lower Pannonia, between the Drave, the Save, and the Danube, presented a spacious theatre; and the operations of the civil war were protracted during the summer months by the skill or timidity of the combatants. [81](#) Constantius had declared his intention of deciding the quarrel in the fields of Cibalis, a name that would animate his troops by the remembrance of the victory, which, on the same auspicious ground, had been obtained by the arms of his father Constantine. Yet by the impregnable fortifications with which the emperor encompassed his camp, he appeared to decline, rather than to invite, a general engagement.

It was the object of Magnentius to tempt or to compel his adversary to relinquish this advantageous position; and he employed, with that view, the various marches, evolutions, and stratagems, which the knowledge of the art of war could suggest to an experienced officer. He carried by assault the important town of Siscia; made an attack on the city of Sirmium, which lay in the rear of the Imperial camp, attempted to force a passage over the Save into the eastern provinces of Illyricum; and cut in pieces a numerous detachment, which he had allured into the narrow passes of Adarne. During the greater part of the summer, the tyrant of Gaul showed himself master of the field. The troops of Constantius were harassed and dispirited; his reputation declined in the eye of the world; and his pride condescended to solicit a treaty of peace, which would have resigned to the assassin of Constans the sovereignty of the provinces beyond the Alps. These offers were enforced by the eloquence of Philip the Imperial ambassador; and the council as well as the army of Magnentius were disposed to accept them. But the haughty usurper, careless of the remonstrances of his friends, gave orders that Philip should be detained as a captive, or, at least, as a hostage; while he despatched an officer to reproach Constantius with the weakness of his reign, and to insult him by the promise of a pardon if he would instantly abdicate the purple. “That he should confide in the justice of his cause, and the protection of an avenging Deity,” was the only answer which honor permitted the emperor to return. But he was so sensible of the difficulties of his situation, that he no longer dared to retaliate the indignity which had been offered to his representative. The negotiation of Philip was not, however, ineffectual, since he determined Sylvanus the Frank, a general of merit and reputation, to desert with a considerable body of cavalry, a few days before the battle of Mursa.

all the artificial and gaudy coloring of their rhetoric.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[Busbequius (p. 112) traversed the Lower Hungary and Sclavonia at a time when they were reduced almost to a desert, by the reciprocal hostilities of the Turks and Christians. Yet he mentions with admiration the unconquerable fertility of the soil; and observes that the height of the grass was sufficient to conceal a loaded wagon from his sight. See likewise Browne's Travels, in Harris's Collection, vol ii. p. 762 &c.]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus gives a very large account of the war, and the negotiation, (l. ii. p. 123-130.) But as he neither shows himself a soldier nor a politician, his narrative must be weighed with attention, and received with caution.]

The city of Mursa, or Essek, celebrated in modern times for a bridge of boats, five miles in length, over the River Drave, and the adjacent morasses, [82](#) has been always considered as a place of importance in the wars of Hungary. Magnentius, directing his march towards Mursa, set fire to the gates, and, by a sudden assault, had almost scaled the walls of the town. The vigilance of the garrison extinguished the flames; the approach of Constantius left him no time to continue the operations of the siege; and the emperor soon removed the only obstacle that could embarrass his motions, by forcing a body of troops which had taken post in an adjoining amphitheatre. The field of battle round Mursa was a naked and level plain: on this ground the army of Constantius formed, with the Drave on their right; while their left, either from the nature of their disposition, or from the superiority of their cavalry, extended far beyond the right flank of Magnentius. [83](#) The troops on both sides remained under arms, in anxious expectation, during the greatest part of the morning; and the son of Constantine, after animating his soldiers by an eloquent speech, retired into a church at some distance from the field of battle, and committed to his generals the conduct of this decisive day. [84](#) They deserved his confidence by the valor and military skill which they exerted. They wisely began the action upon the left; and advancing their whole wing of cavalry in an oblique line, they suddenly wheeled it on the right flank of the enemy, which was unprepared to resist the impetuosity of their charge. But the Romans of the West soon rallied, by the habits of discipline; and the Barbarians of Germany supported the renown of their national bravery. The engagement soon became general; was maintained with various and singular turns of fortune; and scarcely ended with the darkness of the night. The signal victory which Constantius obtained is attributed to the arms of his cavalry. His cuirassiers are described as so many massy statues of steel, glittering with their scaly armor, and breaking with their ponderous lances the firm array of the Gallic legions. As soon as the legions gave way, the lighter and more active squadrons of the

second line rode sword in hand into the intervals, and completed the disorder. In the mean while, the huge bodies of the Germans were exposed almost naked to the dexterity of the Oriental archers; and whole troops of those Barbarians were urged by anguish and despair to precipitate themselves into the broad and rapid stream of the Drave. [85](#) The number of the slain was computed at fifty-four thousand men, and the slaughter of the conquerors was more considerable than that of the vanquished; [86](#) a circumstance which proves the obstinacy of the contest, and justifies the observation of an ancient writer, that the forces of the empire were consumed in the fatal battle of Mursa, by the loss of a veteran army, sufficient to defend the frontiers, or to add new triumphs to the glory of Rome. [87](#) Notwithstanding the invectives of a servile orator, there is not the least reason to believe that the tyrant deserted his own standard in the beginning of the engagement. He seems to have displayed the virtues of a general and of a soldier till the day was irrecoverably lost, and his camp in the possession of the enemy. Magnentius then consulted his safety, and throwing away the Imperial ornaments, escaped with some difficulty from the pursuit of the light horse, who incessantly followed his rapid flight from the banks of the Drave to the foot of the Julian Alps. [88](#)

82 [\(return\)](#)

[This remarkable bridge, which is flanked with towers, and supported on large wooden piles, was constructed A. D. 1566, by Sultan Soliman, to facilitate the march of his armies into Hungary.]

83 [\(return\)](#)

[This position, and the subsequent evolutions, are clearly, though concisely, described by Julian, Orat. i. p. 36.]

84 [\(return\)](#)

[Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. p. 405. The emperor passed the day in prayer with Valens, the Arian bishop of Mursa, who gained his confidence by announcing the success of the battle. M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 1110) very properly remarks the silence of Julian with regard to the personal prowess of Constantius in the battle of Mursa. The silence of flattery is sometimes equal to the most positive and authentic evidence.]

85 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Orat. i. p. 36, 37; and Orat. ii. p. 59, 60. Zonaras, tom ii. l. xiii. p. 17. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 130-133. The last of these celebrates the dexterity of the archer Menelaus, who could discharge three arrows at the same time; an advantage which, according to his apprehension of military affairs, materially contributed to the victory of Constantius.]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[According to Zonaras, Constantius, out of 80,000

men, lost 30,000; and Magnentius lost 24,000 out of 36,000. The other articles of this account seem probable and authentic, but the numbers of the tyrant's army must have been mistaken, either by the author or his transcribers. Magnentius had collected the whole force of the West, Romans and Barbarians, into one formidable body, which cannot fairly be estimated at less than 100,000 men. Julian. Orat. i. p. 34, 35.]

87

[\(return\)](#)

[Ingentes R. I. vires eâ dimicatione consumptæ sunt, ad quælibet bella externa idoneæ, quæ multum triumphorum possent securitatisque conferre. Eutropius, x. 13. The younger Victor expresses himself to the same effect.]

88

[\(return\)](#)

[On this occasion, we must prefer the unsuspected testimony of Zosimus and Zonaras to the flattering assertions of Julian. The younger Victor paints the character of Magnentius in a singular light: "Sermonis acer, animi tumidi, et immodice timidus; artifex tamen ad occultandam audaciæ specie formidinem." Is it most likely that in the battle of Mursa his behavior was governed by nature or by art should incline for the latter.]

The approach of winter supplied the indolence of Constantius with specious reasons for deferring the prosecution of the war till the ensuing spring. Magnentius had fixed his residence in the city of Aquileia, and showed a seeming resolution to dispute the passage of the mountains and morasses which fortified the confines of the Venetian province. The surprisal of a castle in the Alps by the secret march of the Imperialists, could scarcely have determined him to relinquish the possession of Italy, if the inclinations of the people had supported the cause of their tyrant. [89](#) But the memory of the cruelties exercised by his ministers, after the unsuccessful revolt of Nepotian, had left a deep impression of horror and resentment on the minds of the Romans. That rash youth, the son of the princess Eutropia, and the nephew of Constantine, had seen with indignation the sceptre of the West usurped by a perfidious barbarian. Arming a desperate troop of slaves and gladiators, he overpowered the feeble guard of the domestic tranquillity of Rome, received the homage of the senate, and assuming the title of Augustus, precariously reigned during a tumult of twenty-eight days. The march of some regular forces put an end to his ambitious hopes: the rebellion was extinguished in the blood of Nepotian, of his mother Eutropia, and of his adherents; and the proscription was extended to all who had contracted a fatal alliance with the name and family of Constantine. [90](#) But as soon as Constantius, after the battle of Mursa, became master of the sea-coast of Dalmatia, a band of noble exiles, who had ventured to equip a fleet in some harbor of the Adriatic, sought protection and revenge in his victorious

camp. By their secret intelligence with their countrymen, Rome and the Italian cities were persuaded to display the banners of Constantius on their walls. The grateful veterans, enriched by the liberality of the father, signalized their gratitude and loyalty to the son. The cavalry, the legions, and the auxiliaries of Italy, renewed their oath of allegiance to Constantius; and the usurper, alarmed by the general desertion, was compelled, with the remains of his faithful troops, to retire beyond the Alps into the provinces of Gaul. The detachments, however, which were ordered either to press or to intercept the flight of Magnentius, conducted themselves with the usual imprudence of success; and allowed him, in the plains of Pavia, an opportunity of turning on his pursuers, and of gratifying his despair by the carnage of a useless victory. [91](#)

89

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Orat. i. p. 38, 39. In that place, however, as well as in Oration ii. p. 97, he insinuates the general disposition of the senate, the people, and the soldiers of Italy, towards the party of the emperor.]

90

[\(return\)](#)

[The elder Victor describes, in a pathetic manner, the miserable condition of Rome: "Cujus stolidum ingenium adeo P. R. patribusque exitio fuit, uti passim domus, fora, viæ, templaque, cruore, cadaveri busque opplerentur bustorum modo." Athanasius (tom. i. p. 677) deplores the fate of several illustrious victims, and Julian (Orat. ii p 58) execrates the cruelty of Marcellinus, the implacable enemy of the house of Constantine.]

91

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosim. l. ii. p. 133. Victor in Epitome. The panegyrist of Constantius, with their usual candor, forget to mention this accidental defeat.]

The pride of Magnentius was reduced, by repeated misfortunes, to sue, and to sue in vain, for peace. He first despatched a senator, in whose abilities he confided, and afterwards several bishops, whose holy character might obtain a more favorable audience, with the offer of resigning the purple, and the promise of devoting the remainder of his life to the service of the emperor. But Constantius, though he granted fair terms of pardon and reconciliation to all who abandoned the standard of rebellion, [92](#) avowed his inflexible resolution to inflict a just punishment on the crimes of an assassin, whom he prepared to overwhelm on every side by the effort of his victorious arms. An Imperial fleet acquired the easy possession of Africa and Spain, confirmed the wavering faith of the Moorish nations, and landed a considerable force, which passed the Pyrenees, and advanced towards Lyons, the last and fatal station of Magnentius. [93](#) The temper of the tyrant, which was never inclined to clemency, was urged by distress to exercise every act of oppression which could extort an immediate supply from the cities of Gaul. [94](#) Their patience was at length exhausted; and Treves, the seat of Prætorian government, gave the signal of revolt, by shutting her gates against

Decentius, who had been raised by his brother to the rank either of Cæsar or of Augustus. [95](#) From Treves, Decentius was obliged to retire to Sens, where he was soon surrounded by an army of Germans, whom the pernicious arts of Constantius had introduced into the civil dissensions of Rome. [96](#) In the mean time, the Imperial troops forced the passages of the Cottian Alps, and in the bloody combat of Mount Seleucus irrevocably fixed the title of rebels on the party of Magnentius. [97](#) He was unable to bring another army into the field; the fidelity of his guards was corrupted; and when he appeared in public to animate them by his exhortations, he was saluted with a unanimous shout of “Long live the emperor Constantius!” The tyrant, who perceived that they were preparing to deserve pardon and rewards by the sacrifice of the most obnoxious criminal, prevented their design by falling on his sword; [98](#) a death more easy and more honorable than he could hope to obtain from the hands of an enemy, whose revenge would have been colored with the specious pretence of justice and fraternal piety. The example of suicide was imitated by Decentius, who strangled himself on the news of his brother’s death. The author of the conspiracy, Marcellinus, had long since disappeared in the battle of Mursa, [99](#) and the public tranquillity was confirmed by the execution of the surviving leaders of a guilty and unsuccessful faction. A severe inquisition was extended over all who, either from choice or from compulsion, had been involved in the cause of rebellion. Paul, surnamed Catena from his superior skill in the judicial exercise of tyranny, [9911](#) was sent to explore the latent remains of the conspiracy in the remote province of Britain. The honest indignation expressed by Martin, vice-præfect of the island, was interpreted as an evidence of his own guilt; and the governor was urged to the necessity of turning against his breast the sword with which he had been provoked to wound the Imperial minister. The most innocent subjects of the West were exposed to exile and confiscation, to death and torture; and as the timid are always cruel, the mind of Constantius was inaccessible to mercy. [100](#)

92 [\(return\)](#)
[Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 17. Julian, in several places of the two orations, expatiates on the clemency of Constantius to the rebels.]

93 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosim. l. ii. p. 133. Julian. Orat. i. p. 40, ii. p. 74.]

94 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammian. xv. 6. Zosim. l. ii. p. 123. Julian, who (Orat. i. p. 40) unveighs against the cruel effects of the tyrant’s despair, mentions (Orat. i. p. 34) the oppressive edicts which were dictated by his necessities, or by his avarice. His subjects were compelled to purchase the Imperial demesnes; a doubtful and dangerous species of property, which, in case of a revolution, might be imputed to them as a treasonable usurpation.]

95 [\(return\)](#)
[The medals of Magnentius celebrate the victories

of the *two* Augusti, and of the Cæsar. The Cæsar was another brother, named Desiderius. See Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 757.]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Orat. i. p. 40, ii. p. 74; with Spanheim, p. 263. His Commentary illustrates the transactions of this civil war. Mons Seleuci was a small place in the Cottian Alps, a few miles distant from Vapincum, or Gap, an episcopal city of Dauphine. See D'Anville, *Notice de la Gaule*, p. 464; and Longuerue, *Description de la France*, p. 327.—The Itinerary of Antoninus (p. 357, ed. Wess.) places Mons Seleucu twenty-four miles from Vapinicum, (Gap,) and twenty-six from Lucus. (le Luc,) on the road to Die, (Dea Vocontiorum.) The situation answers to Mont Saleon, a little place on the right of the small river Buech, which falls into the Durance. Roman antiquities have been found in this place. St. Martin. Note to Le Beau, ii. 47.—M.]

97

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 134. Liban. Orat. x. p. 268, 269. The latter most vehemently arraigns this cruel and selfish policy of Constantius.]

98

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Orat. i. p. 40. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 134. Socrates, l. ii. c. 32. Sozomen, l. iv. c. 7. The younger Victor describes his death with some horrid circumstances: *Transfosso latere, ut erat vasti corporis, vulnere naribusque et ore cruorem effundens, exspiravit*. If we can give credit to Zonaras, the tyrant, before he expired, had the pleasure of murdering, with his own hand, his mother and his brother Desiderius.]

99

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian (Orat. i. p. 58, 59) seems at a loss to determine, whether he inflicted on himself the punishment of his crimes, whether he was drowned in the Drave, or whether he was carried by the avenging dæmons from the field of battle to his destined place of eternal tortures.]

9911

[\(return\)](#)

[This is scarcely correct, *ut erat in complicandis negotiis artifex dirum made ei Catenæ inditum est cognomentum*. Amm. Mar. loc. cit.—M.]

100

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xiv. 5, xxi. 16.]

Chapter XIX: Constantius Sole Emperor.—Part I.

The divided provinces of the empire were again united by the victory of Constantius; but as that feeble prince was destitute of personal merit, either in peace or war; as he feared his generals, and distrusted his ministers; the triumph of his arms served only to establish the reign of the *eunuchs* over the Roman world. Those unhappy beings, the ancient production of Oriental jealousy and despotism, [1](#) were introduced into Greece and Rome by the contagion of Asiatic luxury. [2](#) Their progress was rapid; and the eunuchs, who, in the time of Augustus, had been abhorred, as the monstrous retinue of an Egyptian queen, [3](#) were gradually admitted into the families of matrons, of senators, and of the emperors themselves. [4](#) Restrained by the severe edicts of Domitian and Nerva, cherished by the pride of Diocletian, reduced to an humble station by the prudence of Constantine, [6](#) they multiplied in the palaces of his degenerate sons, and insensibly acquired the knowledge, and at length the direction, of the secret councils of Constantius. The aversion and contempt which mankind had so uniformly entertained for that imperfect species, appears to have degraded their character, and to have rendered them almost as incapable as they were supposed to be, of conceiving any generous sentiment, or of performing any worthy action. [7](#) But the eunuchs were skilled in the arts of flattery and intrigue; and they alternately governed the mind of Constantius by his fears, his indolence, and his vanity. [8](#) Whilst he viewed in a deceitful mirror the fair appearance of public prosperity, he supinely permitted them to intercept the complaints of the injured provinces, to accumulate immense treasures by the sale of justice and of honors; to disgrace the most important dignities, by the promotion of those who had purchased at their hands the powers of oppression, [9](#) and to gratify their resentment against the few independent spirits, who arrogantly refused to solicit the protection of slaves. Of these slaves the most distinguished was the chamberlain Eusebius, who ruled the monarch and the palace with such absolute sway, that Constantius, according to the sarcasm of an impartial historian, possessed some credit with this haughty favorite. [10](#) By his artful suggestions, the emperor was persuaded to subscribe the condemnation of the unfortunate Gallus, and to add a new crime to the long list of unnatural murders which pollute the honor of the house of Constantine.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (l. xiv. c. 6) imputes the first practice of castration to the cruel ingenuity of Semiramis, who is supposed to have reigned above nineteen hundred years before Christ. The use of eunuchs is of high antiquity, both in Asia and Egypt. They are mentioned in the law of Moses, Deuteron. xxxiii. 1. See Gouet, Origines des Loix, &c., Part i. l. i. c. 3.]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Eunuchum dixti velle te; Quia solæ utuntur his reginæ—Terent. Eunuch. act i. scene 2. This play is

translated from Meander, and the original must have appeared soon after the eastern conquests of Alexander.]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[Miles.... spadonibus Servire rugosis potest. Horat. Carm. v. 9, and Dacier ad loc. By the word *spado*, the Romans very forcibly expressed their abhorrence of this mutilated condition. The Greek appellation of eunuchs, which insensibly prevailed, had a milder sound, and a more ambiguous sense.]

4 [\(return\)](#)

[We need only mention Posides, a freedman and eunuch of Claudius, in whose favor the emperor prostituted some of the most honorable rewards of military valor. See Sueton. in Claudio, c. 28. Posides employed a great part of his wealth in building.

*Ut Spado vincebat Capitolia Nostra
Posides.
Juvenal. Sat. xiv.]*

Castrari mares vetuit. Sueton. in Domitian. c. 7. See Dion Cassius, l. lxvii. p. 1107, l. lxviii. p. 1119.]

6 [\(return\)](#)

[There is a passage in the Augustan History, p. 137, in which Lampridius, whilst he praises Alexander Severus and Constantine for restraining the tyranny of the eunuchs, deplores the mischiefs which they occasioned in other reigns. Huc accedit quod eunuchos nec in consiliis nec in ministeriis habuit; qui soli principes perdunt, dum eos more gentium aut regum Persarum volunt vivere; qui a populo etiam amicissimum semovent; qui internuntii sunt, aliud quam respondetur, referentes; claudentes principem suum, et agentes ante omnia ne quid sciat.]

7 [\(return\)](#)

[Xenophon (Cyropædia, l. viii. p. 540) has stated the specious reasons which engaged Cyrus to intrust his person to the guard of eunuchs. He had observed in animals, that although the practice of castration might tame their ungovernable fierceness, it did not diminish their strength or spirit; and he persuaded himself, that those who were separated from the rest of human kind, would be more firmly attached to the person of their benefactor. But a long experience has contradicted the judgment of Cyrus. Some particular instances may occur of eunuchs distinguished by their fidelity, their valor, and their abilities; but if we examine the general history of Persia, India, and

China, we shall find that the power of the eunuchs has uniformly marked the decline and fall of every dynasty.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xxi. c. 16, l. xxii. c. 4. The whole tenor of his impartial history serves to justify the invectives of Mamertinus, of Libanius, and of Julian himself, who have insulted the vices of the court of Constantius.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Aurelius Victor censures the negligence of his sovereign in choosing the governors of the provinces, and the generals of the army, and concludes his history with a very bold observation, as it is much more dangerous under a feeble reign to attack the ministers than the master himself. “Uti verum absolvam brevi, ut Imperatore ipso clarius ita apparitorum plerisque magis atrox nihil.”]

10

[\(return\)](#)

[Apud quem (si vere dici debeat) multum Constantius potuit. Ammian. l. xviii. c. 4.]

When the two nephews of Constantine, Gallus and Julian, were saved from the fury of the soldiers, the former was about twelve, and the latter about six, years of age; and, as the eldest was thought to be of a sickly constitution, they obtained with the less difficulty a precarious and dependent life, from the affected pity of Constantius, who was sensible that the execution of these helpless orphans would have been esteemed, by all mankind, an act of the most deliberate cruelty. [11](#) Different cities of Ionia and Bithynia were assigned for the places of their exile and education; but as soon as their growing years excited the jealousy of the emperor, he judged it more prudent to secure those unhappy youths in the strong castle of Macellum, near Cæsarea. The treatment which they experienced during a six years' confinement, was partly such as they could hope from a careful guardian, and partly such as they might dread from a suspicious tyrant. [12](#) Their prison was an ancient palace, the residence of the kings of Cappadocia; the situation was pleasant, the buildings stately, the enclosure spacious. They pursued their studies, and practised their exercises, under the tuition of the most skilful masters; and the numerous household appointed to attend, or rather to guard, the nephews of Constantine, was not unworthy of the dignity of their birth. But they could not disguise to themselves that they were deprived of fortune, of freedom, and of safety; secluded from the society of all whom they could trust or esteem, and condemned to pass their melancholy hours in the company of slaves devoted to the commands of a tyrant who had already injured them beyond the hope of reconciliation. At length, however, the emergencies of the state compelled the emperor, or rather his eunuchs, to invest Gallus, in the twenty-fifth year of his age, with the title of Cæsar, and to cement this political connection by his marriage with the princess Constantina. After a formal interview, in

which the two princes mutually engaged their faith never to undertake any thing to the prejudice of each other, they repaired without delay to their respective stations. Constantius continued his march towards the West, and Gallus fixed his residence at Antioch; from whence, with a delegated authority, he administered the five great dioceses of the eastern præfecture. [13](#) In this fortunate change, the new Cæsar was not unmindful of his brother Julian, who obtained the honors of his rank, the appearances of liberty, and the restitution of an ample patrimony. [14](#)

11 [\(return\)](#)

[Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. iii. p. 90) reproaches the apostate with his ingratitude towards Mark, bishop of Arethusa, who had contributed to save his life; and we learn, though from a less respectable authority, (Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 916,) that Julian was concealed in the sanctuary of a church. * Note: Gallus and Julian were not sons of the same mother. Their father, Julius Constantius, had had Gallus by his first wife, named Galla: Julian was the son of Basilina, whom he had espoused in a second marriage. Tillemont. Hist. des Emp. Vie de Constantin. art. 3.—G.]

12 [\(return\)](#)

[The most authentic account of the education and adventures of Julian is contained in the epistle or manifesto which he himself addressed to the senate and people of Athens. Libanius, (Orat. Parentalis,) on the side of the Pagans, and Socrates, (l. iii. c. 1,) on that of the Christians, have preserved several interesting circumstances.]

13 [\(return\)](#)

[For the promotion of Gallus, see Idatius, Zosimus, and the two Victors. According to Philostorgius, (l. iv. c. 1,) Theophilus, an Arian bishop, was the witness, and, as it were, the guarantee of this solemn engagement. He supported that character with generous firmness; but M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 1120) thinks it very improbable that a heretic should have possessed such virtue.]

14 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian was at first permitted to pursue his studies at Constantinople, but the reputation which he acquired soon excited the jealousy of Constantius; and the young prince was advised to withdraw himself to the less conspicuous scenes of Bithynia and Ionia.]

The writers the most indulgent to the memory of Gallus, and even Julian himself, though he wished to cast a veil over the frailties of his brother, are obliged to confess

that the Cæsar was incapable of reigning. Transported from a prison to a throne, he possessed neither genius nor application, nor docility to compensate for the want of knowledge and experience. A temper naturally morose and violent, instead of being corrected, was soured by solitude and adversity; the remembrance of what he had endured disposed him to retaliation rather than to sympathy; and the ungoverned sallies of his rage were often fatal to those who approached his person, or were subject to his power. [15](#) Constantina, his wife, is described, not as a woman, but as one of the infernal furies tormented with an insatiate thirst of human blood. [16](#) Instead of employing her influence to insinuate the mild counsels of prudence and humanity, she exasperated the fierce passions of her husband; and as she retained the vanity, though she had renounced, the gentleness of her sex, a pearl necklace was esteemed an equivalent price for the murder of an innocent and virtuous nobleman. [17](#) The cruelty of Gallus was sometimes displayed in the undissembled violence of popular or military executions; and was sometimes disguised by the abuse of law, and the forms of judicial proceedings. The private houses of Antioch, and the places of public resort, were besieged by spies and informers; and the Cæsar himself, concealed in a plebeian habit, very frequently condescended to assume that odious character. Every apartment of the palace was adorned with the instruments of death and torture, and a general consternation was diffused through the capital of Syria. The prince of the East, as if he had been conscious how much he had to fear, and how little he deserved to reign, selected for the objects of his resentment the provincials accused of some imaginary treason, and his own courtiers, whom with more reason he suspected of incensing, by their secret correspondence, the timid and suspicious mind of Constantius. But he forgot that he was depriving himself of his only support, the affection of the people; whilst he furnished the malice of his enemies with the arms of truth, and afforded the emperor the fairest pretence of exacting the forfeit of his purple, and of his life. [18](#)

15

[\(return\)](#)

[See Julian. ad S. P. Q. A. p. 271. Jerom. in Chron. Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, x. 14. I shall copy the words of Eutropius, who wrote his abridgment about fifteen years after the death of Gallus, when there was no longer any motive either to flatter or to depreciate his character. "Multis incivilibus gestis Gallus Cæsar.... vir natura ferox et ad tyrannidem pronior, si suo jure imperare licuisset."]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[Megæra quidem mortalis, inflammatrix sævientis assidua, humani cruoris avida, &c. Ammian. Marcellin. l. xiv. c. 1. The sincerity of Ammianus would not suffer him to misrepresent facts or characters, but his love of *ambitious* ornaments frequently betrayed him into an unnatural vehemence of expression.]

17

[\(return\)](#)

[His name was Clematius of Alexandria, and his only crime was a refusal to gratify the desires of his mother-in-law; who solicited his death, because she had been disappointed of his love. Ammian. xiv. c. i.]

18

[\(return\)](#)

[See in Ammianus (l. xiv. c. 1, 7) a very ample detail of the cruelties of Gallus. His brother Julian (p. 272) insinuates, that a secret conspiracy had been formed against him; and Zosimus names (l. ii. p. 135) the persons engaged in it; a minister of considerable rank, and two obscure agents, who were resolved to make their fortune.]

As long as the civil war suspended the fate of the Roman world, Constantius dissembled his knowledge of the weak and cruel administration to which his choice had subjected the East; and the discovery of some assassins, secretly despatched to Antioch by the tyrant of Gaul, was employed to convince the public, that the emperor and the Cæsar were united by the same interest, and pursued by the same enemies. [19](#) But when the victory was decided in favor of Constantius, his dependent colleague became less useful and less formidable. Every circumstance of his conduct was severely and suspiciously examined, and it was privately resolved, either to deprive Gallus of the purple, or at least to remove him from the indolent luxury of Asia to the hardships and dangers of a German war. The death of Theophilus, consular of the province of Syria, who in a time of scarcity had been massacred by the people of Antioch, with the connivance, and almost at the instigation, of Gallus, was justly resented, not only as an act of wanton cruelty, but as a dangerous insult on the supreme majesty of Constantius. Two ministers of illustrious rank, Domitian the Oriental præfect, and Montius, quæstor of the palace, were empowered by a special commission [1911](#) to visit and reform the state of the East. They were instructed to behave towards Gallus with moderation and respect, and, by the gentlest arts of persuasion, to engage him to comply with the invitation of his brother and colleague. The rashness of the præfect disappointed these prudent measures, and hastened his own ruin, as well as that of his enemy. On his arrival at Antioch, Domitian passed disdainfully before the gates of the palace, and alleging a slight pretence of indisposition, continued several days in sullen retirement, to prepare an inflammatory memorial, which he transmitted to the Imperial court. Yielding at length to the pressing solicitations of Gallus, the præfect condescended to take his seat in council; but his first step was to signify a concise and haughty mandate, importing that the Cæsar should immediately repair to Italy, and threatening that he himself would punish his delay or hesitation, by suspending the usual allowance of his household. The nephew and daughter of Constantine, who could ill brook the insolence of a subject, expressed their resentment by instantly delivering Domitian to the custody of a guard. The quarrel still admitted of some terms of accommodation. They were rendered

impracticable by the imprudent behavior of Montius, a statesman whose arts and experience were frequently betrayed by the levity of his disposition. [20](#) The quæstor reproached Gallus in a haughty language, that a prince who was scarcely authorized to remove a municipal magistrate, should presume to imprison a Prætorian præfect; convoked a meeting of the civil and military officers; and required them, in the name of their sovereign, to defend the person and dignity of his representatives. By this rash declaration of war, the impatient temper of Gallus was provoked to embrace the most desperate counsels. He ordered his guards to stand to their arms, assembled the populace of Antioch, and recommended to their zeal the care of his safety and revenge. His commands were too fatally obeyed. They rudely seized the præfect and the quæstor, and tying their legs together with ropes, they dragged them through the streets of the city, inflicted a thousand insults and a thousand wounds on these unhappy victims, and at last precipitated their mangled and lifeless bodies into the stream of the Orontes. [21](#)

19 [\(return\)](#)

[Zonaras, l. xiii. tom. ii. p. 17, 18. The assassins had seduced a great number of legionaries; but their designs were discovered and revealed by an old woman in whose cottage they lodged.]

1911 [\(return\)](#)

[The commission seems to have been granted to Domitian alone. Montius interfered to support his authority. Amm. Marc. loc. cit.—M]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[In the present text of Ammianus, we read *Asper*, quidem, sed ad *lenitatem* propensior; which forms a sentence of contradictory nonsense. With the aid of an old manuscript, Valesius has rectified the first of these corruptions, and we perceive a ray of light in the substitution of the word *vafer*. If we venture to change *lenitatem* into *levitatem*, this alteration of a single letter will render the whole passage clear and consistent.]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[Instead of being obliged to collect scattered and imperfect hints from various sources, we now enter into the full stream of the history of Ammianus, and need only refer to the seventh and ninth chapters of his fourteenth book. Philostorgius, however, (l. iii. c. 28) though partial to Gallus, should not be entirely overlooked.]

After such a deed, whatever might have been the designs of Gallus, it was only in a field of battle that he could assert his innocence with any hope of success. But the mind of that prince was formed of an equal mixture of violence and weakness. Instead of assuming the title of Augustus, instead of employing in his defence the troops and treasures of the East, he suffered himself to be deceived by the affected tranquillity of

Constantius, who, leaving him the vain pageantry of a court, imperceptibly recalled the veteran legions from the provinces of Asia. But as it still appeared dangerous to arrest Gallus in his capital, the slow and safer arts of dissimulation were practised with success. The frequent and pressing epistles of Constantius were filled with professions of confidence and friendship; exhorting the Cæsar to discharge the duties of his high station, to relieve his colleague from a part of the public cares, and to assist the West by his presence, his counsels, and his arms. After so many reciprocal injuries, Gallus had reason to fear and to distrust. But he had neglected the opportunities of flight and of resistance; he was seduced by the flattering assurances of the tribune Scudilo, who, under the semblance of a rough soldier, disguised the most artful insinuation; and he depended on the credit of his wife Constantina, till the unseasonable death of that princess completed the ruin in which he had been involved by her impetuous passions. [22](#)

22

[\(return\)](#)

[She had preceded her husband, but died of a fever on the road at a little place in Bithynia, called Coenum Gallicanum.]

Chapter XIX: Constantius Sole Emperor.—Part II.

After a long delay, the reluctant Cæsar set forwards on his journey to the Imperial court. From Antioch to Hadrianople, he traversed the wide extent of his dominions with a numerous and stately train; and as he labored to conceal his apprehensions from the world, and perhaps from himself, he entertained the people of Constantinople with an exhibition of the games of the circus. The progress of the journey might, however, have warned him of the impending danger. In all the principal cities he was met by ministers of confidence, commissioned to seize the offices of government, to observe his motions, and to prevent the hasty sallies of his despair. The persons despatched to secure the provinces which he left behind, passed him with cold salutations, or affected disdain; and the troops, whose station lay along the public road, were studiously removed on his approach, lest they might be tempted to offer their swords for the service of a civil war. [23](#) After Gallus had been permitted to repose himself a few days at Hadrianople, he received a mandate, expressed in the most haughty and absolute style, that his splendid retinue should halt in that city, while the Cæsar himself, with only ten post-carriages, should hasten to the Imperial residence at Milan.

In this rapid journey, the profound respect which was due to the brother and colleague of Constantius, was insensibly changed into rude familiarity; and Gallus, who discovered in the countenances of the attendants that they already considered themselves as his guards, and might soon be employed as his executioners, began to accuse his fatal rashness, and to recollect, with terror and remorse, the conduct by which he had provoked his fate. The dissimulation which had hitherto been preserved, was

laid aside at Petovio, [2311](#) in Pannonia. He was conducted to a palace in the suburbs, where the general Barbatio, with a select band of soldiers, who could neither be moved by pity, nor corrupted by rewards, expected the arrival of his illustrious victim. In the close of the evening he was arrested, ignominiously stripped of the ensigns of Cæsar, and hurried away to Pola, [23b] in Istria, a sequestered prison, which had been so recently polluted with royal blood. The horror which he felt was soon increased by the appearance of his implacable enemy the eunuch Eusebius, who, with the assistance of a notary and a tribune, proceeded to interrogate him concerning the administration of the East. The Cæsar sank under the weight of shame and guilt, confessed all the criminal actions and all the treasonable designs with which he was charged; and by imputing them to the advice of his wife, exasperated the indignation of Constantius, who reviewed with partial prejudice the minutes of the examination. The emperor was easily convinced, that his own safety was incompatible with the life of his cousin: the sentence of death was signed, despatched, and executed; and the nephew of Constantine, with his hands tied behind his back, was beheaded in prison like the vilest malefactor. [24](#) Those who are inclined to palliate the cruelties of Constantius, assert that he soon relented, and endeavored to recall the bloody mandate; but that the second messenger, intrusted with the reprieve, was detained by the eunuchs, who dreaded the unforgiving temper of Gallus, and were desirous of reuniting to *their* empire the wealthy provinces of the East. [25](#)

23

[\(return\)](#)

[The Thebæan legions, which were then quartered at Hadrianople, sent a deputation to Gallus, with a tender of their services. Ammian. l. xiv. c. 11. The Notitia (s. 6, 20, 38, edit. Labb.) mentions three several legions which bore the name of Thebæan. The zeal of M. de Voltaire to destroy a despicable though celebrated legion, has tempted him on the slightest grounds to deny the existence of a Thebæan legion in the Roman armies. See Œuvres de Voltaire, tom. xv. p. 414, quarto edition.]

2311

[\(return\)](#)

[Pettau in Styria.—M ---- Rather to Flanonia. now Fianone, near Pola. St. Martin.—M.]

24

[\(return\)](#)

[See the complete narrative of the journey and death of Gallus in Ammianus, l. xiv. c. 11. Julian complains that his brother was put to death without a trial; attempts to justify, or at least to excuse, the cruel revenge which he had inflicted on his enemies; but seems at last to acknowledge that he might justly have been deprived of the purple.]

25

[\(return\)](#)

[Philostorgius, l. iv. c. 1. Zonaras, l. xiii. tom. ii. p. 19. But the former was partial towards an Arian

monarch, and the latter transcribed, without choice or criticism, whatever he found in the writings of the ancients.]

Besides the reigning emperor, Julian alone survived, of all the numerous posterity of Constantius Chlorus. The misfortune of his royal birth involved him in the disgrace of Gallus. From his retirement in the happy country of Ionia, he was conveyed under a strong guard to the court of Milan; where he languished above seven months, in the continual apprehension of suffering the same ignominious death, which was daily inflicted almost before his eyes, on the friends and adherents of his persecuted family. His looks, his gestures, his silence, were scrutinized with malignant curiosity, and he was perpetually assaulted by enemies whom he had never offended, and by arts to which he was a stranger. [26](#) But in the school of adversity, Julian insensibly acquired the virtues of firmness and discretion. He defended his honor, as well as his life, against the insnaring subtleties of the eunuchs, who endeavored to extort some declaration of his sentiments; and whilst he cautiously suppressed his grief and resentment, he nobly disdained to flatter the tyrant, by any seeming approbation of his brother's murder. Julian most devoutly ascribes his miraculous deliverance to the protection of the gods, who had exempted his innocence from the sentence of destruction pronounced by their justice against the impious house of Constantine. [27](#) As the most effectual instrument of their providence, he gratefully acknowledges the steady and generous friendship of the empress Eusebia, [28](#) a woman of beauty and merit, who, by the ascendant which she had gained over the mind of her husband, counterbalanced, in some measure, the powerful conspiracy of the eunuchs. By the intercession of his patroness, Julian was admitted into the Imperial presence: he pleaded his cause with a decent freedom, he was heard with favor; and, notwithstanding the efforts of his enemies, who urged the danger of sparing an avenger of the blood of Gallus, the milder sentiment of Eusebia prevailed in the council. But the effects of a second interview were dreaded by the eunuchs; and Julian was advised to withdraw for a while into the neighborhood of Milan, till the emperor thought proper to assign the city of Athens for the place of his honorable exile. As he had discovered, from his earliest youth, a propensity, or rather passion, for the language, the manners, the learning, and the religion of the Greeks, he obeyed with pleasure an order so agreeable to his wishes. Far from the tumult of arms, and the treachery of courts, he spent six months under the groves of the academy, in a free intercourse with the philosophers of the age, who studied to cultivate the genius, to encourage the vanity, and to inflame the devotion of their royal pupil. Their labors were not unsuccessful; and Julian inviolably preserved for Athens that tender regard which seldom fails to arise in a liberal mind, from the recollection of the place where it has discovered and exercised its growing powers. The gentleness and affability of manners, which his temper suggested and his situation imposed, insensibly engaged the affections of the strangers, as well as citizens, with whom he conversed. Some of his fellow-students might perhaps examine his behavior with an eye of prejudice and aversion; but

Julian established, in the schools of Athens, a general prepossession in favor of his virtues and talents, which was soon diffused over the Roman world. [29](#)

26

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ammianus Marcellin. l. xv. c. 1, 3, 8. Julian himself in his epistle to the Athenians, draws a very lively and just picture of his own danger, and of his sentiments. He shows, however, a tendency to exaggerate his sufferings, by insinuating, though in obscure terms, that they lasted above a year; a period which cannot be reconciled with the truth of chronology.]

27

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian has worked the crimes and misfortunes of the family of Constantine into an allegorical fable, which is happily conceived and agreeably related. It forms the conclusion of the seventh Oration, from whence it has been detached and translated by the Abbé de la Bleterie, Vie de Jovien, tom. ii. p. 385-408.]

28

[\(return\)](#)

[She was a native of Thessalonica, in Macedonia, of a noble family, and the daughter, as well as sister, of consuls. Her marriage with the emperor may be placed in the year 352. In a divided age, the historians of all parties agree in her praises. See their testimonies collected by Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 750-754.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius and Gregory Nazianzen have exhausted the arts as well as the powers of their eloquence, to represent Julian as the first of heroes, or the worst of tyrants. Gregory was his fellow-student at Athens; and the symptoms which he so tragically describes, of the future wickedness of the apostate, amount only to some bodily imperfections, and to some peculiarities in his speech and manner. He protests, however, that he *then* foresaw and foretold the calamities of the church and state. (Greg. Nazianzen, Orat. iv. p. 121, 122.)]

Whilst his hours were passed in studious retirement, the empress, resolute to achieve the generous design which she had undertaken, was not unmindful of the care of his fortune. The death of the late Cæsar had left Constantius invested with the sole command, and oppressed by the accumulated weight, of a mighty empire. Before the wounds of civil discord could be healed, the provinces of Gaul were overwhelmed by a deluge of Barbarians. The Sarmatians no longer respected the barrier of the Danube. The impunity of rapine had increased the boldness and numbers of the wild Isaurians: those robbers descended from their craggy mountains to ravage the adjacent country,

and had even presumed, though without success, to besiege the important city of Seleucia, which was defended by a garrison of three Roman legions. Above all, the Persian monarch, elated by victory, again threatened the peace of Asia, and the presence of the emperor was indispensably required, both in the West and in the East. For the first time, Constantius sincerely acknowledged, that his single strength was unequal to such an extent of care and of dominion. [30](#) Insensible to the voice of flattery, which assured him that his all-powerful virtue, and celestial fortune, would still continue to triumph over every obstacle, he listened with complacency to the advice of Eusebia, which gratified his indolence, without offending his suspicious pride. As she perceived that the remembrance of Gallus dwelt on the emperor's mind, she artfully turned his attention to the opposite characters of the two brothers, which from their infancy had been compared to those of Domitian and of Titus. [31](#) She accustomed her husband to consider Julian as a youth of a mild, unambitious disposition, whose allegiance and gratitude might be secured by the gift of the purple, and who was qualified to fill with honor a subordinate station, without aspiring to dispute the commands, or to shade the glories, of his sovereign and benefactor. After an obstinate, though secret struggle, the opposition of the favorite eunuchs submitted to the ascendancy of the empress; and it was resolved that Julian, after celebrating his nuptials with Helena, sister of Constantius, should be appointed, with the title of Cæsar, to reign over the countries beyond the Alps. [32](#)

30

[\(return\)](#)

[Succumbere tot necessitatibus tamque crebris unum se, quod nunquam fecerat, aperte demonstrans. Ammian. l. xv. c. 8. He then expresses, in their own words, the flattering assurances of the courtiers.]

31

[\(return\)](#)

[Tantum a temperatis moribus Juliani differens fratris quantum inter Vespasiani filios fuit, Domitianum et Titum. Ammian. l. xiv. c. 11. The circumstances and education of the two brothers, were so nearly the same, as to afford a strong example of the innate difference of characters.]

32

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, l. xv. c. 8. Zosimus, l. iii. p. 137, 138.]

Although the order which recalled him to court was probably accompanied by some intimation of his approaching greatness, he appeals to the people of Athens to witness his tears of undissembled sorrow, when he was reluctantly torn away from his beloved retirement. [33](#) He trembled for his life, for his fame, and even for his virtue; and his sole confidence was derived from the persuasion, that Minerva inspired all his actions, and that he was protected by an invisible guard of angels, whom for that purpose she had borrowed from the Sun and Moon. He approached, with horror, the palace of Milan; nor could the ingenuous youth conceal his indignation, when he found himself accosted

with false and servile respect by the assassins of his family. Eusebia, rejoicing in the success of her benevolent schemes, embraced him with the tenderness of a sister; and endeavored, by the most soothing caresses, to dispel his terrors, and reconcile him to his fortune. But the ceremony of shaving his beard, and his awkward demeanor, when he first exchanged the cloak of a Greek philosopher for the military habit of a Roman prince, amused, during a few days, the levity of the Imperial court. [34](#)

33

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. ad S. P. Q. A. p. 275, 276. Libanius, Orat. x. p. 268. Julian did not yield till the gods had signified their will by repeated visions and omens. His piety then forbade him to resist.]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian himself relates, (p. 274) with some humor, the circumstances of his own metamorphoses, his downcast looks, and his perplexity at being thus suddenly transported into a new world, where every object appeared strange and hostile.]

The emperors of the age of Constantine no longer deigned to consult with the senate in the choice of a colleague; but they were anxious that their nomination should be ratified by the consent of the army. On this solemn occasion, the guards, with the other troops whose stations were in the neighborhood of Milan, appeared under arms; and Constantius ascended his lofty tribunal, holding by the hand his cousin Julian, who entered the same day into the twenty-fifth year of his age. [35](#) In a studied speech, conceived and delivered with dignity, the emperor represented the various dangers which threatened the prosperity of the republic, the necessity of naming a Cæsar for the administration of the West, and his own intention, if it was agreeable to their wishes, of rewarding with the honors of the purple the promising virtues of the nephew of Constantine. The approbation of the soldiers was testified by a respectful murmur; they gazed on the manly countenance of Julian, and observed with pleasure, that the fire which sparkled in his eyes was tempered by a modest blush, on being thus exposed, for the first time, to the public view of mankind. As soon as the ceremony of his investiture had been performed, Constantius addressed him with the tone of authority which his superior age and station permitted him to assume; and exhorting the new Cæsar to deserve, by heroic deeds, that sacred and immortal name, the emperor gave his colleague the strongest assurances of a friendship which should never be impaired by time, nor interrupted by their separation into the most distant climes. As soon as the speech was ended, the troops, as a token of applause, clashed their shields against their knees; [36](#) while the officers who surrounded the tribunal expressed, with decent reserve, their sense of the merits of the representative of Constantius.

35

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ammian. Marcellin. l. xv. c. 8. Zosimus, l. iii. p. 139. Aurelius Victor. Victor Junior in Epitom. Eutrop. x. 14.]

[*Militares omnes horrendo fragore scuta genibus illidentes; quod est prosperitatis indicium plenum; nam contra cum hastis clypei feriuntur, iræ documentum est et doloris...* ... Ammianus adds, with a nice distinction, *Eumque ut potiori reverentia servaretur, nec supra modum laudabant nec infra quam decebat.*]

The two princes returned to the palace in the same chariot; and during the slow procession, Julian repeated to himself a verse of his favorite Homer, which he might equally apply to his fortune and to his fears. [37](#) The four-and-twenty days which the Cæsar spent at Milan after his investiture, and the first months of his Gallic reign, were devoted to a splendid but severe captivity; nor could the acquisition of honor compensate for the loss of freedom. [38](#) His steps were watched, his correspondence was intercepted; and he was obliged, by prudence, to decline the visits of his most intimate friends. Of his former domestics, four only were permitted to attend him; two pages, his physician, and his librarian; the last of whom was employed in the care of a valuable collection of books, the gift of the empress, who studied the inclinations as well as the interest of her friend. In the room of these faithful servants, a household was formed, such indeed as became the dignity of a Cæsar; but it was filled with a crowd of slaves, destitute, and perhaps incapable, of any attachment for their new master, to whom, for the most part, they were either unknown or suspected. His want of experience might require the assistance of a wise council; but the minute instructions which regulated the service of his table, and the distribution of his hours, were adapted to a youth still under the discipline of his preceptors, rather than to the situation of a prince intrusted with the conduct of an important war. If he aspired to deserve the esteem of his subjects, he was checked by the fear of displeasing his sovereign; and even the fruits of his marriage-bed were blasted by the jealous artifices of Eusebia [39](#) herself, who, on this occasion alone, seems to have been unmindful of the tenderness of her sex, and the generosity of her character. The memory of his father and of his brothers reminded Julian of his own danger, and his apprehensions were increased by the recent and unworthy fate of Sylvanus. In the summer which preceded his own elevation, that general had been chosen to deliver Gaul from the tyranny of the Barbarians; but Sylvanus soon discovered that he had left his most dangerous enemies in the Imperial court. A dexterous informer, countenanced by several of the principal ministers, procured from him some commendatory letters; and erasing the whole of the contents, except the signature, filled up the vacant parchment with matters of high and treasonable import. By the industry and courage of his friends, the fraud was however detected, and in a great council of the civil and military officers, held in the presence of the emperor himself, the innocence of Sylvanus was publicly acknowledged. But the discovery came too late; the report of the calumny, and the hasty seizure of his estate, had already provoked the indignant chief to the rebellion of which he was so unjustly accused. He assumed the purple at his head-quarters of Cologne, and his active powers appeared to

menace Italy with an invasion, and Milan with a siege. In this emergency, Ursicinus, a general of equal rank, regained, by an act of treachery, the favor which he had lost by his eminent services in the East. Exasperated, as he might speciously allege, by the injuries of a similar nature, he hastened with a few followers to join the standard, and to betray the confidence, of his too credulous friend. After a reign of only twenty-eight days, Sylvanus was assassinated: the soldiers who, without any criminal intention, had blindly followed the example of their leader, immediately returned to their allegiance; and the flatterers of Constantius celebrated the wisdom and felicity of the monarch who had extinguished a civil war without the hazard of a battle. [40](#)

37

[\(return\)](#)

[The word *purple* which Homer had used as a vague but common epithet for death, was applied by Julian to express, very aptly, the nature and object of his own apprehensions.]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[He represents, in the most pathetic terms, (p. 277,) the distress of his new situation. The provision for his table was, however, so elegant and sumptuous, that the young philosopher rejected it with disdain. Quum legeret libellum assidue, quem Constantius ut privignum ad studia mittens manû suâ conscripserat, prælicenter disponens quid in convivio Cæsaris impendi deberit: Phasianum, et vulvam et sumen exigi vetuit et inferri. Ammian. Marcellin. l. xvi. c. 5.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[If we recollect that Constantine, the father of Helena, died above eighteen years before, in a mature old age, it will appear probable, that the daughter, though a virgin, could not be very young at the time of her marriage. She was soon afterwards delivered of a son, who died immediately, quod obstetrix corrupta mercede, mox natum præsecto plusquam convenerat umbilico necavit. She accompanied the emperor and empress in their journey to Rome, and the latter, quæsitum venenum bibere per fraudem illexit, ut quotiescunque concepisset, immaturum abjicerit partum. Ammian. l. xvi. c. 10. Our physicians will determine whether there exists such a poison. For my own part I am inclined to hope that the public malignity imputed the effects of accident as the guilt of Eusebia.]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xv. v.) was perfectly well informed of the conduct and fate of Sylvanus. He himself was one of the few followers who attended Ursicinus in his dangerous enterprise.]

The protection of the Rhætian frontier, and the persecution of the Catholic church, detained Constantius in Italy above eighteen months after the departure of Julian. Before the emperor returned into the East, he indulged his pride and curiosity in a visit to the ancient capital. [41](#) He proceeded from Milan to Rome along the Æmilian and Flaminian ways, and as soon as he approached within forty miles of the city, the march of a prince who had never vanquished a foreign enemy, assumed the appearance of a triumphal procession. His splendid train was composed of all the ministers of luxury; but in a time of profound peace, he was encompassed by the glittering arms of the numerous squadrons of his guards and cuirassiers. Their streaming banners of silk, embossed with gold, and shaped in the form of dragons, waved round the person of the emperor. Constantius sat alone in a lofty car, resplendent with gold and precious gems; and, except when he bowed his head to pass under the gates of the cities, he affected a stately demeanor of inflexible, and, as it might seem, of insensible gravity. The severe discipline of the Persian youth had been introduced by the eunuchs into the Imperial palace; and such were the habits of patience which they had inculcated, that during a slow and sultry march, he was never seen to move his hand towards his face, or to turn his eyes either to the right or to the left. He was received by the magistrates and senate of Rome; and the emperor surveyed, with attention, the civil honors of the republic, and the consular images of the noble families. The streets were lined with an innumerable multitude. Their repeated acclamations expressed their joy at beholding, after an absence of thirty-two years, the sacred person of their sovereign, and Constantius himself expressed, with some pleasantry, he affected surprise that the human race should thus suddenly be collected on the same spot. The son of Constantine was lodged in the ancient palace of Augustus: he presided in the senate, harangued the people from the tribunal which Cicero had so often ascended, assisted with unusual courtesy at the games of the Circus, and accepted the crowns of gold, as well as the Panegyrics which had been prepared for the ceremony by the deputies of the principal cities. His short visit of thirty days was employed in viewing the monuments of art and power which were scattered over the seven hills and the interjacent valleys. He admired the awful majesty of the Capitol, the vast extent of the baths of Caracalla and Diocletian, the severe simplicity of the Pantheon, the massy greatness of the amphitheatre of Titus, the elegant architecture of the theatre of Pompey and the Temple of Peace, and, above all, the stately structure of the Forum and column of Trajan; acknowledging that the voice of fame, so prone to invent and to magnify, had made an inadequate report of the metropolis of the world. The traveller, who has contemplated the ruins of ancient Rome, may conceive some imperfect idea of the sentiments which they must have inspired when they reared their heads in the splendor of unsullied beauty.

[See The Pantheon: The severe simplicity of the Pantheon]

Constantinople, and that he composed his fourth oration for his ceremony.]

The satisfaction which Constantius had received from this journey excited him to the generous emulation of bestowing on the Romans some memorial of his own gratitude and munificence. His first idea was to imitate the equestrian and colossal statue which he had seen in the Forum of Trajan; but when he had maturely weighed the difficulties of the execution, [42](#) he chose rather to embellish the capital by the gift of an Egyptian obelisk. In a remote but polished age, which seems to have preceded the invention of alphabetical writing, a great number of these obelisks had been erected, in the cities of Thebes and Heliopolis, by the ancient sovereigns of Egypt, in a just confidence that the simplicity of their form, and the hardness of their substance, would resist the injuries of time and violence. [43](#) Several of these extraordinary columns had been transported to Rome by Augustus and his successors, as the most durable monuments of their power and victory; [44](#) but there remained one obelisk, which, from its size or sanctity, escaped for a long time the rapacious vanity of the conquerors. It was designed by Constantine to adorn his new city; [45](#) and, after being removed by his order from the pedestal where it stood before the Temple of the Sun at Heliopolis, was floated down the Nile to Alexandria. The death of Constantine suspended the execution of his purpose, and this obelisk was destined by his son to the ancient capital of the empire. A vessel of uncommon strength and capaciousness was provided to convey this enormous weight of granite, at least a hundred and fifteen feet in length, from the banks of the Nile to those of the Tyber. The obelisk of Constantius was landed about three miles from the city, and elevated, by the efforts of art and labor, in the great Circus of Rome. [46](#) [4611](#)

42

[\(return\)](#)

[Hormisdas, a fugitive prince of Persia, observed to the emperor, that if he made such a horse, he must think of preparing a similar stable, (the Forum of Trajan.) Another saying of Hormisdas is recorded, “that one thing only had *displeased* him, to find that men died at Rome as well as elsewhere.” If we adopt this reading of the text of Ammianus, (*displacuisse*, instead of *placuisse*.) we may consider it as a reproof of Roman vanity. The contrary sense would be that of a misanthrope.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[When Germanicus visited the ancient monuments of Thebes, the eldest of the priests explained to him the meaning of these hieroglyphics. Tacit. Annal. ii. c. 60. But it seems probable, that before the useful invention of an alphabet, these natural or arbitrary signs were the common characters of the Egyptian nation. See Warburton’s Divine Legation of Moses, vol. iii. p. 69-243.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[See Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xxxvi. c. 14, 15.]

- 45 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammian. Marcellin l. xvii. c. 4. He gives us a Greek interpretation of the hieroglyphics, and his commentator Lindenbrogius adds a Latin inscription, which, in twenty verses of the age of Constantius, contain a short history of the obelisk.]
- 46 [\(return\)](#)
[See Donat. Roma. Antiqua, l. iii. c. 14, l. iv. c. 12, and the learned, though confused, Dissertation of Bargæus on Obelisks, inserted in the fourth volume of Grævius's Roman Antiquities, p. 1897- 1936. This dissertation is dedicated to Pope Sixtus V., who erected the obelisk of Constantius in the square before the patriarchal church of at. John Lateran.]
- 4611 [\(return\)](#)
[It is doubtful whether the obelisk transported by Constantius to Rome now exists. Even from the text of Ammianus, it is uncertain whether the interpretation of Hermapion refers to the older obelisk, (obelisco incisus est veteri quem videmus in Circo,) raised, as he himself states, in the Circus Maximus, long before, by Augustus, or to the one brought by Constantius. The obelisk in the square before the church of St. John Lateran is ascribed not to Rameses the Great but to Thoutmos II. Champollion, 1. Lettre a M. de Blacas, p. 32.—M]

The departure of Constantius from Rome was hastened by the alarming intelligence of the distress and danger of the Illyrian provinces. The distractions of civil war, and the irreparable loss which the Roman legions had sustained in the battle of Mursa, exposed those countries, almost without defence, to the light cavalry of the Barbarians; and particularly to the inroads of the Quadi, a fierce and powerful nation, who seem to have exchanged the institutions of Germany for the arms and military arts of their Sarmatian allies. [47](#) The garrisons of the frontiers were insufficient to check their progress; and the indolent monarch was at length compelled to assemble, from the extremities of his dominions, the flower of the Palatine troops, to take the field in person, and to employ a whole campaign, with the preceding autumn and the ensuing spring, in the serious prosecution of the war. The emperor passed the Danube on a bridge of boats, cut in pieces all that encountered his march, penetrated into the heart of the country of the Quadi, and severely retaliated the calamities which they had inflicted on the Roman province. The dismayed Barbarians were soon reduced to sue for peace: they offered the restitution of his captive subjects as an atonement for the past, and the noblest hostages as a pledge of their future conduct. The generous courtesy which was shown to the first among their chieftains who implored the clemency of Constantius, encouraged the more timid, or the more obstinate, to imitate their example; and the Imperial camp was crowded with the princes and ambassadors of the most

distant tribes, who occupied the plains of the Lesser Poland, and who might have deemed themselves secure behind the lofty ridge of the Carpathian Mountains. While Constantius gave laws to the Barbarians beyond the Danube, he distinguished, with specious compassion, the Sarmatian exiles, who had been expelled from their native country by the rebellion of their slaves, and who formed a very considerable accession to the power of the Quadi. The emperor, embracing a generous but artful system of policy, released the Sarmatians from the bands of this humiliating dependence, and restored them, by a separate treaty, to the dignity of a nation united under the government of a king, the friend and ally of the republic. He declared his resolution of asserting the justice of their cause, and of securing the peace of the provinces by the extirpation, or at least the banishment, of the Limigantes, whose manners were still infected with the vices of their servile origin. The execution of this design was attended with more difficulty than glory. The territory of the Limigantes was protected against the Romans by the Danube, against the hostile Barbarians by the Teyss. The marshy lands which lay between those rivers, and were often covered by their inundations, formed an intricate wilderness, pervious only to the inhabitants, who were acquainted with its secret paths and inaccessible fortresses. On the approach of Constantius, the Limigantes tried the efficacy of prayers, of fraud, and of arms; but he sternly rejected their supplications, defeated their rude stratagems, and repelled with skill and firmness the efforts of their irregular valor. One of their most warlike tribes, established in a small island towards the conflux of the Teyss and the Danube, consented to pass the river with the intention of surprising the emperor during the security of an amicable conference. They soon became the victims of the perfidy which they meditated. Encompassed on every side, trampled down by the cavalry, slaughtered by the swords of the legions, they disdained to ask for mercy; and with an undaunted countenance, still grasped their weapons in the agonies of death. After this victory, a considerable body of Romans was landed on the opposite banks of the Danube; the Taifalæ, a Gothic tribe engaged in the service of the empire, invaded the Limigantes on the side of the Teyss; and their former masters, the free Sarmatians, animated by hope and revenge, penetrated through the hilly country, into the heart of their ancient possessions. A general conflagration revealed the huts of the Barbarians, which were seated in the depth of the wilderness; and the soldier fought with confidence on marshy ground, which it was dangerous for him to tread. In this extremity, the bravest of the Limigantes were resolved to die in arms, rather than to yield: but the milder sentiment, enforced by the authority of their elders, at length prevailed; and the suppliant crowd, followed by their wives and children, repaired to the Imperial camp, to learn their fate from the mouth of the conqueror. After celebrating his own clemency, which was still inclined to pardon their repeated crimes, and to spare the remnant of a guilty nation, Constantius assigned for the place of their exile a remote country, where they might enjoy a safe and honorable repose. The Limigantes obeyed with reluctance; but before they could reach, at least before they could occupy, their destined habitations, they returned to the

banks of the Danube, exaggerating the hardships of their situation, and requesting, with fervent professions of fidelity, that the emperor would grant them an undisturbed settlement within the limits of the Roman provinces. Instead of consulting his own experience of their incurable perfidy, Constantius listened to his flatterers, who were ready to represent the honor and advantage of accepting a colony of soldiers, at a time when it was much easier to obtain the pecuniary contributions than the military service of the subjects of the empire. The Limigantes were permitted to pass the Danube; and the emperor gave audience to the multitude in a large plain near the modern city of Buda. They surrounded the tribunal, and seemed to hear with respect an oration full of mildness and dignity when one of the Barbarians, casting his shoe into the air, exclaimed with a loud voice, *Marha! Marha!* [4711](#) a word of defiance, which was received as a signal of the tumult. They rushed with fury to seize the person of the emperor; his royal throne and golden couch were pillaged by these rude hands; but the faithful defence of his guards, who died at his feet, allowed him a moment to mount a fleet horse, and to escape from the confusion. The disgrace which had been incurred by a treacherous surprise was soon retrieved by the numbers and discipline of the Romans; and the combat was only terminated by the extinction of the name and nation of the Limigantes. The free Sarmatians were reinstated in the possession of their ancient seats; and although Constantius distrusted the levity of their character, he entertained some hopes that a sense of gratitude might influence their future conduct. He had remarked the lofty stature and obsequious demeanor of Zizais, one of the noblest of their chiefs. He conferred on him the title of King; and Zizais proved that he was not unworthy to reign, by a sincere and lasting attachment to the interests of his benefactor, who, after this splendid success, received the name of *Sarmaticus* from the acclamations of his victorious army. [48](#)

- 47 [\(return\)](#)
 [The events of this Quadian and Sarmatian war are related by Ammianus, xvi. 10, xvii. 12, 13, xix. 11]
- 4711 [\(return\)](#)
 [Reinesius reads Warrha, Warrha, Guerre, War. Wagner note as a mm. Marc xix. 11.—M.]
- 48 [\(return\)](#)
 [Genti Sarmatarum magno decori confidens apud eos regem dedit. Aurelius Victor. In a pompous oration pronounced by Constantius himself, he expatiates on his own exploits with much vanity, and some truth]

Chapter XIX: Constantius Sole Emperor.—Part III.

While the Roman emperor and the Persian monarch, at the distance of three thousand miles, defended their extreme limits against the Barbarians of the Danube and of the

Oxus, their intermediate frontier experienced the vicissitudes of a languid war, and a precarious truce. Two of the eastern ministers of Constantius, the Prætorian præfect Musonian, whose abilities were disgraced by the want of truth and integrity, and Cassian, duke of Mesopotamia, a hardy and veteran soldier, opened a secret negotiation with the satrap Tamsapor. [49](#) [4911](#) These overtures of peace, translated into the servile and flattering language of Asia, were transmitted to the camp of the Great King; who resolved to signify, by an ambassador, the terms which he was inclined to grant to the suppliant Romans. Narses, whom he invested with that character, was honorably received in his passage through Antioch and Constantinople: he reached Sirmium after a long journey, and, at his first audience, respectfully unfolded the silken veil which covered the haughty epistle of his sovereign. Sapor, King of Kings, and Brother of the Sun and Moon, (such were the lofty titles affected by Oriental vanity,) expressed his satisfaction that his brother, Constantius Cæsar, had been taught wisdom by adversity. As the lawful successor of Darius Hystaspes, Sapor asserted, that the River Strymon, in Macedonia, was the true and ancient boundary of his empire; declaring, however, that as an evidence of his moderation, he would content himself with the provinces of Armenia and Mesopotamia, which had been fraudulently extorted from his ancestors. He alleged, that, without the restitution of these disputed countries, it was impossible to establish any treaty on a solid and permanent basis; and he arrogantly threatened, that if his ambassador returned in vain, he was prepared to take the field in the spring, and to support the justice of his cause by the strength of his invincible arms. Narses, who was endowed with the most polite and amiable manners, endeavored, as far as was consistent with his duty, to soften the harshness of the message. [50](#) Both the style and substance were maturely weighed in the Imperial council, and he was dismissed with the following answer: "Constantius had a right to disclaim the officiousness of his ministers, who had acted without any specific orders from the throne: he was not, however, averse to an equal and honorable treaty; but it was highly indecent, as well as absurd, to propose to the sole and victorious emperor of the Roman world, the same conditions of peace which he had indignantly rejected at the time when his power was contracted within the narrow limits of the East: the chance of arms was uncertain; and Sapor should recollect, that if the Romans had sometimes been vanquished in battle, they had almost always been successful in the event of the war." A few days after the departure of Narses, three ambassadors were sent to the court of Sapor, who was already returned from the Scythian expedition to his ordinary residence of Ctesiphon. A count, a notary, and a sophist, had been selected for this important commission; and Constantius, who was secretly anxious for the conclusion of the peace, entertained some hopes that the dignity of the first of these ministers, the dexterity of the second, and the rhetoric of the third, [51](#) would persuade the Persian monarch to abate of the rigor of his demands. But the progress of their negotiation was opposed and defeated by the hostile arts of Antoninus, [52](#) a Roman subject of Syria, who had fled from oppression, and was admitted into the councils of Sapor, and even to the royal table, where, according to the

custom of the Persians, the most important business was frequently discussed. [53](#) The dexterous fugitive promoted his interest by the same conduct which gratified his revenge. He incessantly urged the ambition of his new master to embrace the favorable opportunity when the bravest of the Palatine troops were employed with the emperor in a distant war on the Danube. He pressed Sapor to invade the exhausted and defenceless provinces of the East, with the numerous armies of Persia, now fortified by the alliance and accession of the fiercest Barbarians. The ambassadors of Rome retired without success, and a second embassy, of a still more honorable rank, was detained in strict confinement, and threatened either with death or exile.

49 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xvi. 9.]

4911 [\(return\)](#)

[In Persian, Ten-schah-pour. St. Martin, ii. 177.—M.]

50 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xvii. 5) transcribes the haughty letter. Themistius (Orat. iv. p. 57, edit. Petav.) takes notice of the silken covering. Idatius and Zonaras mention the journey of the ambassador; and Peter the Patrician (in Excerpt. Legat. p. 58) has informed us of his behavior.]

51 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, xvii. 5, and Valesius ad loc. The sophist, or philosopher, (in that age these words were almost synonymous,) was Eustathius the Cappadocian, the disciple of Jamblichus, and the friend of St. Basil. Eunapius (in Vit. Ædesii, p. 44-47) fondly attributes to this philosophic ambassador the glory of enchanting the Barbarian king by the persuasive charms of reason and eloquence. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 828, 1132.]

52 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xviii. 5, 6, 8. The decent and respectful behavior of Antoninus towards the Roman general, sets him in a very interesting light; and Ammianus himself speaks of the traitor with some compassion and esteem.]

53 [\(return\)](#)

[This circumstance, as it is noticed by Ammianus, serves to prove the veracity of Herodotus, (l. i. c. 133,) and the permanency of the Persian manners. In every age the Persians have been addicted to intemperance, and the wines of Shiraz have triumphed over the law of Mahomet. Brisson de Regno Pers. l. ii. p. 462-472, and Voyages en Perse, tom, iii. p. 90.]

The military historian, [54](#) who was himself despatched to observe the army of the Persians, as they were preparing to construct a bridge of boats over the Tigris, beheld from an eminence the plain of Assyria, as far as the edge of the horizon, covered with men, with horses, and with arms. Sapor appeared in the front, conspicuous by the splendor of his purple. On his left hand, the place of honor among the Orientals, Grumbates, king of the Chionites, displayed the stern countenance of an aged and renowned warrior. The monarch had reserved a similar place on his right hand for the king of the Albanians, who led his independent tribes from the shores of the Caspian. [5411](#) The satraps and generals were distributed according to their several ranks, and the whole army, besides the numerous train of Oriental luxury, consisted of more than one hundred thousand effective men, inured to fatigue, and selected from the bravest nations of Asia. The Roman deserter, who in some measure guided the councils of Sapor, had prudently advised, that, instead of wasting the summer in tedious and difficult sieges, he should march directly to the Euphrates, and press forwards without delay to seize the feeble and wealthy metropolis of Syria. But the Persians were no sooner advanced into the plains of Mesopotamia, than they discovered that every precaution had been used which could retard their progress, or defeat their design. The inhabitants, with their cattle, were secured in places of strength, the green forage throughout the country was set on fire, the fords of the rivers were fortified by sharp stakes; military engines were planted on the opposite banks, and a seasonable swell of the waters of the Euphrates deterred the Barbarians from attempting the ordinary passage of the bridge of Thapsacus. Their skilful guide, changing his plan of operations, then conducted the army by a longer circuit, but through a fertile territory, towards the head of the Euphrates, where the infant river is reduced to a shallow and accessible stream. Sapor overlooked, with prudent disdain, the strength of Nisibis; but as he passed under the walls of Amida, he resolved to try whether the majesty of his presence would not awe the garrison into immediate submission. The sacrilegious insult of a random dart, which glanced against the royal tiara, convinced him of his error; and the indignant monarch listened with impatience to the advice of his ministers, who conjured him not to sacrifice the success of his ambition to the gratification of his resentment. The following day Grumbates advanced towards the gates with a select body of troops, and required the instant surrender of the city, as the only atonement which could be accepted for such an act of rashness and insolence. His proposals were answered by a general discharge, and his only son, a beautiful and valiant youth, was pierced through the heart by a javelin, shot from one of the balistæ. The funeral of the prince of the Chionites was celebrated according to the rites of the country; and the grief of his aged father was alleviated by the solemn promise of Sapor, that the guilty city of Amida should serve as a funeral pile to expiate the death, and to perpetuate the memory, of his son.

54

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. lxviii. 6, 7, 8, 10.]

5411

[\(return\)](#)

[These perhaps were the barbarous tribes who

inhabit the northern part of the present Schirwan, the Albania of the ancients. This country, now inhabited by the Lezghis, the terror of the neighboring districts, was then occupied by the same people, called by the ancients Legæ, by the Armenians Gheg, or Leg. The latter represent them as constant allies of the Persians in their wars against Armenia and the Empire. A little after this period, a certain Schergir was their king, and it is of him doubtless Ammianus Marcellinus speaks. St. Martin, ii. 285.—M.]

The ancient city of Amid or Amida, [55](#) which sometimes assumes the provincial appellation of Diarbekir, [56](#) is advantageously situate in a fertile plain, watered by the natural and artificial channels of the Tigris, of which the least inconsiderable stream bends in a semicircular form round the eastern part of the city. The emperor Constantius had recently conferred on Amida the honor of his own name, and the additional fortifications of strong walls and lofty towers. It was provided with an arsenal of military engines, and the ordinary garrison had been reenforced to the amount of seven legions, when the place was invested by the arms of Sapor. [57](#) His first and most sanguine hopes depended on the success of a general assault. To the several nations which followed his standard, their respective posts were assigned; the south to the Vertæ; the north to the Albanians; the east to the Chionites, inflamed with grief and indignation; the west to the Segestans, the bravest of his warriors, who covered their front with a formidable line of Indian elephants. [58](#) The Persians, on every side, supported their efforts, and animated their courage; and the monarch himself, careless of his rank and safety, displayed, in the prosecution of the siege, the ardor of a youthful soldier. After an obstinate combat, the Barbarians were repulsed; they incessantly returned to the charge; they were again driven back with a dreadful slaughter, and two rebel legions of Gauls, who had been banished into the East, signalized their undisciplined courage by a nocturnal sally into the heart of the Persian camp. In one of the fiercest of these repeated assaults, Amida was betrayed by the treachery of a deserter, who indicated to the Barbarians a secret and neglected staircase, scooped out of the rock that hangs over the stream of the Tigris. Seventy chosen archers of the royal guard ascended in silence to the third story of a lofty tower, which commanded the precipice; they elevated on high the Persian banner, the signal of confidence to the assailants, and of dismay to the besieged; and if this devoted band could have maintained their post a few minutes longer, the reduction of the place might have been purchased by the sacrifice of their lives. After Sapor had tried, without success, the efficacy of force and of stratagem, he had recourse to the slower but more certain operations of a regular siege, in the conduct of which he was instructed by the skill of the Roman deserters. The trenches were opened at a convenient distance, and the troops destined for that service advanced under the portable cover of strong hurdles, to fill up the ditch, and undermine the foundations of the walls. Wooden towers were at the same

time constructed, and moved forwards on wheels, till the soldiers, who were provided with every species of missile weapons, could engage almost on level ground with the troops who defended the rampart. Every mode of resistance which art could suggest, or courage could execute, was employed in the defence of Amida, and the works of Sapor were more than once destroyed by the fire of the Romans. But the resources of a besieged city may be exhausted. The Persians repaired their losses, and pushed their approaches; a large breach was made by the battering-ram, and the strength of the garrison, wasted by the sword and by disease, yielded to the fury of the assault. The soldiers, the citizens, their wives, their children, all who had not time to escape through the opposite gate, were involved by the conquerors in a promiscuous massacre.

55

[\(return\)](#)

[For the description of Amida, see D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. *Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. 108. *Histoire de Timur Bec*, par Cherefeddin Ali, l. iii. c. 41. *Ahmed Arabsiades*, tom. i. p. 331, c. 43. *Voyages de Tavernier*, tom. i. p. 301. *Voyages d'Otter*, tom. ii. p. 273, and *Voyages de Niebuhr*, tom. ii. p. 324-328. The last of these travellers, a learned and accurate Dane, has given a plan of Amida, which illustrates the operations of the siege.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[Diarbekir, which is styled Amid, or Kara Amid, in the public writings of the Turks, contains above 16,000 houses, and is the residence of a pacha with three tails. The epithet of *Kara* is derived from the *blackness* of the stone which composes the strong and ancient wall of Amida. —In my *Mém. Hist. sur l'Arménie*, l. i. p. 166, 173, I conceive that I have proved this city, still called, by the Armenians, *Dirkranagerd*, the city of Tigranes, to be the same with the famous *Tigranocerta*, of which the situation was unknown. *St. Martin*, i. 432. On the siege of Amida, see *St. Martin's Notes*, ii. 290. *Faustus of Byzantium*, nearly a contemporary, (Armenian,) states that the Persians, on becoming masters of it, destroyed 40,000 houses though *Ammianus* describes the city as of no great extent, (*civitatis ambitum non nimium amplæ*.) Besides the ordinary population, and those who took refuge from the country, it contained 20,000 soldiers. *St. Martin*, ii. 290. This interpretation is extremely doubtful. *Wagner* (note on *Ammianus*) considers the whole population to amount only to—M.]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[The operations of the siege of Amida are very minutely described by *Ammianus*, (xix. 1-9,) who acted an honorable part in the defence, and escaped

with difficulty when the city was stormed by the Persians.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[Of these four nations, the Albanians are too well known to require any description. The Segestans [*Sacastenè. St. Martin.*] inhabited a large and level country, which still preserves their name, to the south of Khorasan, and the west of Hindostan. (See *Geographia Nubiensis.* p. 133, and *D'Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale,* p. 797.) Notwithstanding the boasted victory of Bahram, (vol. i. p. 410,) the Segestans, above fourscore years afterwards, appear as an independent nation, the ally of Persia. We are ignorant of the situation of the Vertæ and Chionites, but I am inclined to place them (at least the latter) towards the confines of India and Scythia. See *Ammian.* —Klaproth considers the real Albanians the same with the ancient Alani, and quotes a passage of the emperor Julian in support of his opinion. They are the Ossetæ, now inhabiting part of Caucasus. *Tableaux Hist. de l'Asie,* p. 179, 180.—M. —The Vertæ are still unknown. It is possible that the Chionites are the same as the Huns. These people were already known; and we find from Armenian authors that they were making, at this period, incursions into Asia. They were often at war with the Persians. The name was perhaps pronounced differently in the East and in the West, and this prevents us from recognizing it. *St. Martin,* ii. 177.—M.]

But the ruin of Amida was the safety of the Roman provinces.

As soon as the first transports of victory had subsided, Sapor was at leisure to reflect, that to chastise a disobedient city, he had lost the flower of his troops, and the most favorable season for conquest. [59](#) Thirty thousand of his veterans had fallen under the walls of Amida, during the continuance of a siege, which lasted seventy-three days; and the disappointed monarch returned to his capital with affected triumph and secret mortification. It is more than probable, that the inconstancy of his Barbarian allies was tempted to relinquish a war in which they had encountered such unexpected difficulties; and that the aged king of the Chionites, satiated with revenge, turned away with horror from a scene of action where he had been deprived of the hope of his family and nation. The strength as well as the spirit of the army with which Sapor took the field in the ensuing spring was no longer equal to the unbounded views of his ambition. Instead of aspiring to the conquest of the East, he was obliged to content himself with the reduction of two fortified cities of Mesopotamia, Singara and Bezabde; [60](#) the one situate in the midst of a sandy desert, the other in a small peninsula, surrounded almost on every side by the deep and rapid stream of the Tigris. Five Roman legions, of the diminutive size

to which they had been reduced in the age of Constantine, were made prisoners, and sent into remote captivity on the extreme confines of Persia. After dismantling the walls of Singara, the conqueror abandoned that solitary and sequestered place; but he carefully restored the fortifications of Bezabde, and fixed in that important post a garrison or colony of veterans; amply supplied with every means of defence, and animated by high sentiments of honor and fidelity. Towards the close of the campaign, the arms of Sapor incurred some disgrace by an unsuccessful enterprise against Virtha, or Tecrit, a strong, or, as it was universally esteemed till the age of Tamerlane, an impregnable fortress of the independent Arabs. [61 6111](#)

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus has marked the chronology of this year by three signs, which do not perfectly coincide with each other, or with the series of the history. 1 The corn was ripe when Sapor invaded Mesopotamia; “Cum jam stipula flaveate turgerent;” a circumstance, which, in the latitude of Aleppo, would naturally refer us to the month of April or May. See Harmer’s Observations on Scripture vol. i. p. 41. Shaw’s Travels, p. 335, edit 4to. 2. The progress of Sapor was checked by the overflowing of the Euphrates, which generally happens in July and August. Plin. Hist. Nat. v. 21. Viaggi di Pietro della Valle, tom. i. p. 696. 3. When Sapor had taken Amida, after a siege of seventy-three days, the autumn was far advanced. “Autumno præcipiti hædorumque improbo sidere exorto.” To reconcile these apparent contradictions, we must allow for some delay in the Persian king, some inaccuracy in the historian, and some disorder in the seasons.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[The account of these sieges is given by Ammianus, xx. 6, 7. —The Christian bishop of Bezabde went to the camp of the king of Persia, to persuade him to check the waste of human blood Amm. Mare xx. 7.—M.]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[For the identity of Virtha and Tecrit, see D’Anville, Geographie. For the siege of that castle by Timur Bec or Tamerlane, see Cherefeddin, l. iii. c. 33. The Persian biographer exaggerates the merit and difficulty of this exploit, which delivered the caravans of Bagdad from a formidable gang of robbers.]

6111

[\(return\)](#)

[St. Martin doubts whether it lay so much to the south. “The word Girtha means in Syriac a castle or fortress, and might be applied to many places.”]

The defence of the East against the arms of Sapor required and would have exercised, the abilities of the most consummate general; and it seemed fortunate for the state, that it was the actual province of the brave Ursicinus, who alone deserved the confidence of the soldiers and people. In the hour of danger, [62](#) Ursicinus was removed from his station by the intrigues of the eunuchs; and the military command of the East was bestowed, by the same influence, on Sabinian, a wealthy and subtle veteran, who had attained the infirmities, without acquiring the experience, of age. By a second order, which issued from the same jealous and inconstant councils, Ursicinus was again despatched to the frontier of Mesopotamia, and condemned to sustain the labors of a war, the honors of which had been transferred to his unworthy rival. Sabinian fixed his indolent station under the walls of Edessa; and while he amused himself with the idle parade of military exercise, and moved to the sound of flutes in the Pyrrhic dance, the public defence was abandoned to the boldness and diligence of the former general of the East. But whenever Ursicinus recommended any vigorous plan of operations; when he proposed, at the head of a light and active army, to wheel round the foot of the mountains, to intercept the convoys of the enemy, to harass the wide extent of the Persian lines, and to relieve the distress of Amida; the timid and envious commander alleged, that he was restrained by his positive orders from endangering the safety of the troops. Amida was at length taken; its bravest defenders, who had escaped the sword of the Barbarians, died in the Roman camp by the hand of the executioner: and Ursicinus himself, after supporting the disgrace of a partial inquiry, was punished for the misconduct of Sabinian by the loss of his military rank. But Constantius soon experienced the truth of the prediction which honest indignation had extorted from his injured lieutenant, that as long as such maxims of government were suffered to prevail, the emperor himself would find it is no easy task to defend his eastern dominions from the invasion of a foreign enemy. When he had subdued or pacified the Barbarians of the Danube, Constantius proceeded by slow marches into the East; and after he had wept over the smoking ruins of Amida, he formed, with a powerful army, the siege of Becabde. The walls were shaken by the reiterated efforts of the most enormous of the battering-rams; the town was reduced to the last extremity; but it was still defended by the patient and intrepid valor of the garrison, till the approach of the rainy season obliged the emperor to raise the siege, and ingloviuously to retreat into his winter quarters at Antioch. [63](#) The pride of Constantius, and the ingenuity of his courtiers, were at a loss to discover any materials for panegyric in the events of the Persian war; while the glory of his cousin Julian, to whose military command he had intrusted the provinces of Gaul, was proclaimed to the world in the simple and concise narrative of his exploits.

[Ammianus (xviii. 5, 6, xix. 3, xx. 2) represents the merit and disgrace of Ursicinus with that faithful attention which a soldier owed to his general. Some partiality may be suspected, yet the whole account is consistent and probable.]

[Ammian. xx. 11. Omisso vano incepto, hiematurus Antiochiæ redit in Syriam ærumnosam, perpressus et ulcerum sed et atrociam, diuque deflenda. It is *thus* that James Gronovius has restored an obscure passage; and he thinks that this correction alone would have deserved a new edition of his author: whose sense may now be darkly perceived. I expected some additional light from the recent labors of the learned Ernestus. (Lipsiæ, 1773.) * Note: The late editor (Wagner) has nothing better to suggest, and le menta with Gibbon, the silence of Ernesti.—M.]

In the blind fury of civil discord, Constantius had abandoned to the Barbarians of Germany the countries of Gaul, which still acknowledged the authority of his rival. A numerous swarm of Franks and Alemanni were invited to cross the Rhine by presents and promises, by the hopes of spoil, and by a perpetual grant of all the territories which they should be able to subdue. [64](#) But the emperor, who for a temporary service had thus imprudently provoked the rapacious spirit of the Barbarians, soon discovered and lamented the difficulty of dismissing these formidable allies, after they had tasted the richness of the Roman soil. Regardless of the nice distinction of loyalty and rebellion, these undisciplined robbers treated as their natural enemies all the subjects of the empire, who possessed any property which they were desirous of acquiring. Forty-five flourishing cities, Tongres, Cologne, Treves, Worms, Spire, Strasburgh, &c., besides a far greater number of towns and villages, were pillaged, and for the most part reduced to ashes. The Barbarians of Germany, still faithful to the maxims of their ancestors, abhorred the confinement of walls, to which they applied the odious names of prisons and sepulchres; and fixing their independent habitations on the banks of rivers, the Rhine, the Moselle, and the Meuse, they secured themselves against the danger of a surprise, by a rude and hasty fortification of large trees, which were felled and thrown across the roads. The Alemanni were established in the modern countries of Alsace and Lorraine; the Franks occupied the island of the Batavians, together with an extensive district of Brabant, which was then known by the appellation of Toxandria, [65](#) and may deserve to be considered as the original seat of their Gallic monarchy. [66](#) From the sources, to the mouth, of the Rhine, the conquests of the Germans extended above forty miles to the west of that river, over a country peopled by colonies of their own name and nation: and the scene of their devastations was three times more extensive than that of their conquests. At a still greater distance the open towns of Gaul were deserted, and the inhabitants of the fortified cities, who trusted to their strength and vigilance, were obliged to content themselves with such supplies of corn as they could raise on the vacant land within the enclosure of their walls. The diminished legions, destitute of pay and provisions, of arms and discipline, trembled at the approach, and even at the name, of the Barbarians.

- 64 [\(return\)](#)
[The ravages of the Germans, and the distress of Gaul, may be collected from Julian himself. Orat. ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 277. Ammian. xv. ll. Libanius, Orat. x. Zosimus, l. iii. p. 140. Sozomen, l. iii. c. l. (Mamertin. Grat. Art. c. iv.)]
- 65 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammianus, xvi. 8. This name seems to be derived from the Toxandri of Pliny, and very frequently occurs in the histories of the middle age. Toxandria was a country of woods and morasses, which extended from the neighborhood of Tongres to the conflux of the Vahal and the Rhine. See Valesius, Notit. Galliar. p. 558.]
- 66 [\(return\)](#)
[The paradox of P. Daniel, that the Franks never obtained any permanent settlement on this side of the Rhine before the time of Clovis, is refuted with much learning and good sense by M. Biet, who has proved by a chain of evidence, their uninterrupted possession of Toxandria, one hundred and thirty years before the accession of Clovis. The Dissertation of M. Biet was crowned by the Academy of Soissons, in the year 1736, and seems to have been justly preferred to the discourse of his more celebrated competitor, the Abbé le Bœuf, an antiquarian, whose name was happily expressive of his talents.]

Chapter XIX: Constantius Sole Emperor.—Part IV.

Under these melancholy circumstances, an unexperienced youth was appointed to save and to govern the provinces of Gaul, or rather, as he expressed it himself, to exhibit the vain image of Imperial greatness. The retired scholastic education of Julian, in which he had been more conversant with books than with arms, with the dead than with the living, left him in profound ignorance of the practical arts of war and government; and when he awkwardly repeated some military exercise which it was necessary for him to learn, he exclaimed with a sigh, “O Plato, Plato, what a task for a philosopher!” Yet even this speculative philosophy, which men of business are too apt to despise, had filled the mind of Julian with the noblest precepts and the most shining examples; had animated him with the love of virtue, the desire of fame, and the contempt of death. The habits of temperance recommended in the schools, are still more essential in the severe discipline of a camp. The simple wants of nature regulated the measure of his food and sleep. Rejecting with disdain the delicacies provided for his table, he satisfied his appetite with the coarse and common fare which was allotted to the meanest soldiers.

During the rigor of a Gallic winter, he never suffered a fire in his bed-chamber; and after a short and interrupted slumber, he frequently rose in the middle of the night from a carpet spread on the floor, to despatch any urgent business, to visit his rounds, or to steal a few moments for the prosecution of his favorite studies. [67](#) The precepts of eloquence, which he had hitherto practised on fancied topics of declamation, were more usefully applied to excite or to assuage the passions of an armed multitude: and although Julian, from his early habits of conversation and literature, was more familiarly acquainted with the beauties of the Greek language, he had attained a competent knowledge of the Latin tongue. [68](#) Since Julian was not originally designed for the character of a legislator, or a judge, it is probable that the civil jurisprudence of the Romans had not engaged any considerable share of his attention: but he derived from his philosophic studies an inflexible regard for justice, tempered by a disposition to clemency; the knowledge of the general principles of equity and evidence, and the faculty of patiently investigating the most intricate and tedious questions which could be proposed for his discussion. The measures of policy, and the operations of war, must submit to the various accidents of circumstance and character, and the unpractised student will often be perplexed in the application of the most perfect theory.

But in the acquisition of this important science, Julian was assisted by the active vigor of his own genius, as well as by the wisdom and experience of Sallust, and officer of rank, who soon conceived a sincere attachment for a prince so worthy of his friendship; and whose incorruptible integrity was adorned by the talent of insinuating the harshest truths without wounding the delicacy of a royal ear. [69](#)

67

[\(return\)](#)

[The private life of Julian in Gaul, and the severe discipline which he embraced, are displayed by Ammianus, (xvi. 5,) who professes to praise, and by Julian himself, who affects to ridicule, (Misopogon, p. 340,) a conduct, which, in a prince of the house of Constantine, might justly excite the surprise of mankind.]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[Aderat Latine quoque disserenti sufficiens sermo. Ammianus xvi. 5. But Julian, educated in the schools of Greece, always considered the language of the Romans as a foreign and popular dialect which he might use on necessary occasions.]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[We are ignorant of the actual office of this excellent minister, whom Julian afterwards created præfect of Gaul. Sallust was speedily recalled by the jealousy of the emperor; and we may still read a sensible but pedantic discourse, (p. 240-252,) in which Julian deplores the loss of so valuable a friend, to whom he acknowledges himself indebted

for his reputation. See La Bleterie, Preface a la Vie de lovien, p. 20.]

Immediately after Julian had received the purple at Milan, he was sent into Gaul with a feeble retinue of three hundred and sixty soldiers. At Vienna, where he passed a painful and anxious winter in the hands of those ministers to whom Constantius had intrusted the direction of his conduct, the Cæsar was informed of the siege and deliverance of Autun. That large and ancient city, protected only by a ruined wall and pusillanimous garrison, was saved by the generous resolution of a few veterans, who resumed their arms for the defence of their country. In his march from Autun, through the heart of the Gallic provinces, Julian embraced with ardor the earliest opportunity of signalizing his courage. At the head of a small body of archers and heavy cavalry, he preferred the shorter but the more dangerous of two roads; [6911](#) and sometimes eluding, and sometimes resisting, the attacks of the Barbarians, who were masters of the field, he arrived with honor and safety at the camp near Rheims, where the Roman troops had been ordered to assemble. The aspect of their young prince revived the drooping spirits of the soldiers, and they marched from Rheims in search of the enemy, with a confidence which had almost proved fatal to them. The Alemanni, familiarized to the knowledge of the country, secretly collected their scattered forces, and seizing the opportunity of a dark and rainy day, poured with unexpected fury on the rear-guard of the Romans. Before the inevitable disorder could be remedied, two legions were destroyed; and Julian was taught by experience that caution and vigilance are the most important lessons of the art of war. In a second and more successful action, he recovered and established his military fame; but as the agility of the Barbarians saved them from the pursuit, his victory was neither bloody nor decisive. He advanced, however, to the banks of the Rhine, surveyed the ruins of Cologne, convinced himself of the difficulties of the war, and retreated on the approach of winter, discontented with the court, with his army, and with his own success. [70](#) The power of the enemy was yet unbroken; and the Cæsar had no sooner separated his troops, and fixed his own quarters at Sens, in the centre of Gaul, than he was surrounded and besieged, by a numerous host of Germans. Reduced, in this extremity, to the resources of his own mind, he displayed a prudent intrepidity, which compensated for all the deficiencies of the place and garrison; and the Barbarians, at the end of thirty days, were obliged to retire with disappointed rage.

6911

[\(return\)](#)

[Aliis per Arbor—quibusdam per Sedelaucum et Coram in debere firrantibus. Amm. Marc. xvi. 2. I do not know what place can be meant by the mutilated name Arbor. Sedelanus is Saulieu, a small town of the department of the Cote d'Or, six leagues from Autun. Cora answers to the village of Cure, on the river of the same name, between Autun and Nevera 4; Martin, ii. 162.—M. —Note: At Brocomages, Brumat, near Strasburgh. St. Martin, ii. 184.—M.]

[Ammianus (xvi. 2, 3) appears much better satisfied with the success of his first campaign than Julian himself; who very fairly owns that he did nothing of consequence, and that he fled before the enemy.]

The conscious pride of Julian, who was indebted only to his sword for this signal deliverance, was embittered by the reflection, that he was abandoned, betrayed, and perhaps devoted to destruction, by those who were bound to assist him, by every tie of honor and fidelity. Marcellus, master-general of the cavalry in Gaul, interpreting too strictly the jealous orders of the court, beheld with supine indifference the distress of Julian, and had restrained the troops under his command from marching to the relief of Sens. If the Cæsar had dissembled in silence so dangerous an insult, his person and authority would have been exposed to the contempt of the world; and if an action so criminal had been suffered to pass with impunity, the emperor would have confirmed the suspicions, which received a very specious color from his past conduct towards the princes of the Flavian family. Marcellus was recalled, and gently dismissed from his office. [71](#) In his room Severus was appointed general of the cavalry; an experienced soldier, of approved courage and fidelity, who could advise with respect, and execute with zeal; and who submitted, without reluctance to the supreme command which Julian, by the interest of his patroness Eusebia, at length obtained over the armies of Gaul. [72](#) A very judicious plan of operations was adopted for the approaching campaign. Julian himself, at the head of the remains of the veteran bands, and of some new levies which he had been permitted to form, boldly penetrated into the centre of the German cantonments, and carefully reestablished the fortifications of Saverne, in an advantageous post, which would either check the incursions, or intercept the retreat, of the enemy. At the same time, Barbatio, general of the infantry, advanced from Milan with an army of thirty thousand men, and passing the mountains, prepared to throw a bridge over the Rhine, in the neighborhood of Basil. It was reasonable to expect that the Alemanni, pressed on either side by the Roman arms, would soon be forced to evacuate the provinces of Gaul, and to hasten to the defence of their native country. But the hopes of the campaign were defeated by the incapacity, or the envy, or the secret instructions, of Barbatio; who acted as if he had been the enemy of the Cæsar, and the secret ally of the Barbarians. The negligence with which he permitted a troop of pillagers freely to pass, and to return almost before the gates of his camp, may be imputed to his want of abilities; but the treasonable act of burning a number of boats, and a superfluous stock of provisions, which would have been of the most essential service to the army of Gaul, was an evidence of his hostile and criminal intentions. The Germans despised an enemy who appeared destitute either of power or of inclination to offend them; and the ignominious retreat of Barbatio deprived Julian of the expected support; and left him to extricate himself from a hazardous situation, where he could neither remain with safety, nor retire with honor. [73](#)

- 71 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammian. xvi. 7. Libanius speaks rather more advantageously of the military talents of Marcellus, Orat. x. p. 272. And Julian insinuates, that he would not have been so easily recalled, unless he had given other reasons of offence to the court, p. 278.]
- 72 [\(return\)](#)
[Severus, non discors, non arrogans, sed longa militiæ frugalitate compertus; et eum recta præeuntem secuturus, ut duetorem morigeran miles. Ammian xvi. 11. Zosimus, l. iii. p. 140.]
- 73 [\(return\)](#)
[On the design and failure of the cooperation between Julian and Barbatio, see Ammianus (xvi. 11) and Libanius, (Orat. x. p. 273.) Note: Barbatio seems to have allowed himself to be surprised and defeated—M.]

As soon as they were delivered from the fears of invasion, the Alemanni prepared to chastise the Roman youth, who presumed to dispute the possession of that country, which they claimed as their own by the right of conquest and of treaties. They employed three days, and as many nights, in transporting over the Rhine their military powers. The fierce Chnodomar, shaking the ponderous javelin which he had victoriously wielded against the brother of Magnentius, led the van of the Barbarians, and moderated by his experience the martial ardor which his example inspired. [74](#) He was followed by six other kings, by ten princes of regal extraction, by a long train of high-spirited nobles, and by thirty-five thousand of the bravest warriors of the tribes of Germany. The confidence derived from the view of their own strength, was increased by the intelligence which they received from a deserter, that the Cæsar, with a feeble army of thirteen thousand men, occupied a post about one-and-twenty miles from their camp of Strasburgh. With this inadequate force, Julian resolved to seek and to encounter the Barbarian host; and the chance of a general action was preferred to the tedious and uncertain operation of separately engaging the dispersed parties of the Alemanni. The Romans marched in close order, and in two columns; the cavalry on the right, the infantry on the left; and the day was so far spent when they appeared in sight of the enemy, that Julian was desirous of deferring the battle till the next morning, and of allowing his troops to recruit their exhausted strength by the necessary refreshments of sleep and food. Yielding, however, with some reluctance, to the clamors of the soldiers, and even to the opinion of his council, he exhorted them to justify by their valor the eager impatience, which, in case of a defeat, would be universally branded with the epithets of rashness and presumption. The trumpets sounded, the military shout was heard through the field, and the two armies rushed with equal fury to the charge. The Cæsar, who conducted in person his right wing, depended on the dexterity of his archers, and the weight of his cuirassiers. But his ranks were instantly broken by an irregular mixture of light horse and of light infantry, and he had the mortification of

beholding the flight of six hundred of his most renowned cuirassiers. [75](#) The fugitives were stopped and rallied by the presence and authority of Julian, who, careless of his own safety, threw himself before them, and urging every motive of shame and honor, led them back against the victorious enemy. The conflict between the two lines of infantry was obstinate and bloody. The Germans possessed the superiority of strength and stature, the Romans that of discipline and temper; and as the Barbarians, who served under the standard of the empire, united the respective advantages of both parties, their strenuous efforts, guided by a skilful leader, at length determined the event of the day. The Romans lost four tribunes, and two hundred and forty-three soldiers, in this memorable battle of Strasburgh, so glorious to the Cæsar, [76](#) and so salutary to the afflicted provinces of Gaul. Six thousand of the Alemanni were slain in the field, without including those who were drowned in the Rhine, or transfixed with darts while they attempted to swim across the river. [77](#) Chnodomar himself was surrounded and taken prisoner, with three of his brave companions, who had devoted themselves to follow in life or death the fate of their chieftain. Julian received him with military pomp in the council of his officers; and expressing a generous pity for the fallen state, dissembled his inward contempt for the abject humiliation, of his captive. Instead of exhibiting the vanquished king of the Alemanni, as a grateful spectacle to the cities of Gaul, he respectfully laid at the feet of the emperor this splendid trophy of his victory. Chnodomar experienced an honorable treatment: but the impatient Barbarian could not long survive his defeat, his confinement, and his exile. [78](#)

74

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xvi. 12) describes with his inflated eloquence the figure and character of Chnodomar. Audax et fidens ingenti robore lacertorum, ubi ardor prælii sperabatur immanis, equo spumante sublimior, erectus in jaculum formidandæ vastitatis, armorumque nitore conspicuus: antea strenuus et miles, et utilis præter cæteros ductor... Decentium Cæsarem superavit æquo Marte congressus.]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[After the battle, Julian ventured to revive the rigor of ancient discipline, by exposing these fugitives in female apparel to the derision of the whole camp. In the next campaign, these troops nobly retrieved their honor. Zosimus, l. iii. p. 142.]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian himself (ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 279) speaks of the battle of Strasburgh with the modesty of conscious merit; Zosimus compares it with the victory of Alexander over Darius; and yet we are at a loss to discover any of those strokes of military genius which fix the attention of ages on the conduct and success of a single day.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, xvi. 12. Libanius adds 2000 more to the number of the slain, (Orat. x. p. 274.) But these trifling differences disappear before the 60,000 Barbarians, whom Zosimus has sacrificed to the glory of his hero, (l. iii. p. 141.) We might attribute this extravagant number to the carelessness of transcribers, if this credulous or partial historian had not swelled the army of 35,000 Alemanni to an innumerable multitude of Barbarians,. It is our own fault if this detection does not inspire us with proper distrust on similar occasions.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xvi. 12. Libanius, Orat. x. p. 276.]

After Julian had repulsed the Alemanni from the provinces of the Upper Rhine, he turned his arms against the Franks, who were seated nearer to the ocean, on the confines of Gaul and Germany; and who, from their numbers, and still more from their intrepid valor, had ever been esteemed the most formidable of the Barbarians. [79](#) Although they were strongly actuated by the allurements of rapine, they professed a disinterested love of war; which they considered as the supreme honor and felicity of human nature; and their minds and bodies were so completely hardened by perpetual action, that, according to the lively expression of an orator, the snows of winter were as pleasant to them as the flowers of spring. In the month of December, which followed the battle of Strasburgh, Julian attacked a body of six hundred Franks, who had thrown themselves into two castles on the Meuse. [80](#) In the midst of that severe season they sustained, with inflexible constancy, a siege of fifty-four days; till at length, exhausted by hunger, and satisfied that the vigilance of the enemy, in breaking the ice of the river, left them no hopes of escape, the Franks consented, for the first time, to dispense with the ancient law which commanded them to conquer or to die. The Cæsar immediately sent his captives to the court of Constantius, who, accepting them as a valuable present, [81](#) rejoiced in the opportunity of adding so many heroes to the choicest troops of his domestic guards. The obstinate resistance of this handful of Franks apprised Julian of the difficulties of the expedition which he meditated for the ensuing spring, against the whole body of the nation. His rapid diligence surprised and astonished the active Barbarians. Ordering his soldiers to provide themselves with biscuit for twenty days, he suddenly pitched his camp near Tongres, while the enemy still supposed him in his winter quarters of Paris, expecting the slow arrival of his convoys from Aquitain. Without allowing the Franks to unite or deliberate, he skilfully spread his legions from Cologne to the ocean; and by the terror, as well as by the success, of his arms, soon reduced the suppliant tribes to implore the clemency, and to obey the commands, of their conqueror. The Chamavians submissively retired to their former habitations beyond the Rhine; but the Salians were permitted to possess their new establishment of Toxandria, as the subjects and auxiliaries of the Roman empire. [82](#) The treaty was

ratified by solemn oaths; and perpetual inspectors were appointed to reside among the Franks, with the authority of enforcing the strict observance of the conditions. An incident is related, interesting enough in itself, and by no means repugnant to the character of Julian, who ingeniously contrived both the plot and the catastrophe of the tragedy. When the Chamavians sued for peace, he required the son of their king, as the only hostage on whom he could rely. A mournful silence, interrupted by tears and groans, declared the sad perplexity of the Barbarians; and their aged chief lamented in pathetic language, that his private loss was now imbittered by a sense of public calamity. While the Chamavians lay prostrate at the foot of his throne, the royal captive, whom they believed to have been slain, unexpectedly appeared before their eyes; and as soon as the tumult of joy was hushed into attention, the Cæsar addressed the assembly in the following terms: “Behold the son, the prince, whom you wept. You had lost him by your fault. God and the Romans have restored him to you. I shall still preserve and educate the youth, rather as a monument of my own virtue, than as a pledge of your sincerity. Should you presume to violate the faith which you have sworn, the arms of the republic will avenge the perfidy, not on the innocent, but on the guilty.” The Barbarians withdrew from his presence, impressed with the warmest sentiments of gratitude and admiration. [83](#)

79

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius (Orat. iii. p. 137) draws a very lively picture of the manners of the Franks.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, xvii. 2. Libanius, Orat. x. p. 278. The Greek orator, by misapprehending a passage of Julian, has been induced to represent the Franks as consisting of a thousand men; and as his head was always full of the Peloponnesian war, he compares them to the Lacedæmonians, who were besieged and taken in the Island of Sphacteria.]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 280. Libanius, Orat. x. p. 278. According to the expression of Libanius, the emperor, which La Bleterie understands (Vie de Julien, p. 118) as an honest confession, and Valesius (ad Ammian. xvii. 2) as a mean evasion, of the truth. Dom Bouquet, (Historiens de France, tom. i. p. 733,) by substituting another word, would suppress both the difficulty and the spirit of this passage.]

82

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xvii. 8. Zosimus, l. iii. p. 146-150, (his narrative is darkened by a mixture of fable,) and Julian. ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 280. His expression. This difference of treatment confirms the opinion that the Salian Franks were permitted to retain the settlements in Toxandria. Note: A newly

discovered fragment of Eunapius, whom Zosimus probably transcribed, illustrates this transaction. "Julian commanded the Romans to abstain from all hostile measures against the Salians, neither to waste or ravage *their own* country, for he called every country *their own* which was surrendered without resistance or toil on the part of the conquerors." Mai, Script. Vez Nov. Collect. ii. 256, and Eunapius in Niebuhr, Byzant. Hist.]

83

[\(return\)](#)

[This interesting story, which Zosimus has abridged, is related by Eunapius, (in Excerpt. Legationum, p. 15, 16, 17,) with all the amplifications of Grecian rhetoric: but the silence of Libanius, of Ammianus, and of Julian himself, renders the truth of it extremely suspicious.]

It was not enough for Julian to have delivered the provinces of Gaul from the Barbarians of Germany. He aspired to emulate the glory of the first and most illustrious of the emperors; after whose example, he composed his own commentaries of the Gallic war. [84](#) Cæsar has related, with conscious pride, the manner in which he *twice* passed the Rhine. Julian could boast, that before he assumed the title of Augustus, he had carried the Roman eagles beyond that great river in *three* successful expeditions. [85](#) The consternation of the Germans, after the battle of Strasburgh, encouraged him to the first attempt; and the reluctance of the troops soon yielded to the persuasive eloquence of a leader, who shared the fatigues and dangers which he imposed on the meanest of the soldiers. The villages on either side of the Meyn, which were plentifully stored with corn and cattle, felt the ravages of an invading army. The principal houses, constructed with some imitation of Roman elegance, were consumed by the flames; and the Cæsar boldly advanced about ten miles, till his progress was stopped by a dark and impenetrable forest, undermined by subterraneous passages, which threatened with secret snares and ambush every step of the assailants. The ground was already covered with snow; and Julian, after repairing an ancient castle which had been erected by Trajan, granted a truce of ten months to the submissive Barbarians. At the expiration of the truce, Julian undertook a second expedition beyond the Rhine, to humble the pride of Surmar and Hortaire, two of the kings of the Alemanni, who had been present at the battle of Strasburgh. They promised to restore all the Roman captives who yet remained alive; and as the Cæsar had procured an exact account from the cities and villages of Gaul, of the inhabitants whom they had lost, he detected every attempt to deceive him, with a degree of readiness and accuracy, which almost established the belief of his supernatural knowledge. His third expedition was still more splendid and important than the two former. The Germans had collected their military powers, and moved along the opposite banks of the river, with a design of destroying the bridge, and of preventing the passage of the Romans. But this judicious plan of defence was disconcerted by a skilful diversion. Three hundred light-armed and active soldiers were

detached in forty small boats, to fall down the stream in silence, and to land at some distance from the posts of the enemy. They executed their orders with so much boldness and celerity, that they had almost surprised the Barbarian chiefs, who returned in the fearless confidence of intoxication from one of their nocturnal festivals. Without repeating the uniform and disgusting tale of slaughter and devastation, it is sufficient to observe, that Julian dictated his own conditions of peace to six of the haughtiest kings of the Alemanni, three of whom were permitted to view the severe discipline and martial pomp of a Roman camp. Followed by twenty thousand captives, whom he had rescued from the chains of the Barbarians, the Cæsar repassed the Rhine, after terminating a war, the success of which has been compared to the ancient glories of the Punic and Cimbric victories.

84

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, the friend of Julian, clearly insinuates (Orat. ix. p. 178) that his hero had composed the history of his Gallic campaigns But Zosimus (l. iii. p. 140) seems to have derived his information only from the Orations and the Epistles of Julian. The discourse which is addressed to the Athenians contains an accurate, though general, account of the war against the Germans.]

85

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ammian. xvii. 1, 10, xviii. 2, and Zosim. l. iii. p. 144. Julian ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 280.]

As soon as the valor and conduct of Julian had secured an interval of peace, he applied himself to a work more congenial to his humane and philosophic temper. The cities of Gaul, which had suffered from the inroads of the Barbarians, he diligently repaired; and seven important posts, between Mentz and the mouth of the Rhine, are particularly mentioned, as having been rebuilt and fortified by the order of Julian. [86](#) The vanquished Germans had submitted to the just but humiliating condition of preparing and conveying the necessary materials. The active zeal of Julian urged the prosecution of the work; and such was the spirit which he had diffused among the troops, that the auxiliaries themselves, waiving their exemption from any duties of fatigue, contended in the most servile labors with the diligence of the Roman soldiers. It was incumbent on the Cæsar to provide for the subsistence, as well as for the safety, of the inhabitants and of the garrisons. The desertion of the former, and the mutiny of the latter, must have been the fatal and inevitable consequences of famine. The tillage of the provinces of Gaul had been interrupted by the calamities of war; but the scanty harvests of the continent were supplied, by his paternal care, from the plenty of the adjacent island. Six hundred large barks, framed in the forest of the Ardennes, made several voyages to the coast of Britain; and returning from thence, laden with corn, sailed up the Rhine, and distributed their cargoes to the several towns and fortresses along the banks of the river. [87](#) The arms of Julian had restored a free and secure navigation, which Constantinius had offered to purchase at the expense of his dignity, and of a tributary

present of two thousand pounds of silver. The emperor parsimoniously refused to his soldiers the sums which he granted with a lavish and trembling hand to the Barbarians. The dexterity, as well as the firmness, of Julian was put to a severe trial, when he took the field with a discontented army, which had already served two campaigns, without receiving any regular pay or any extraordinary donative. [88](#)

86

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xviii. 2. Libanius, Orat. x. p. 279, 280. Of these seven posts, four are at present towns of some consequence; Bingen, Andernach, Bonn, and Nuyss. The other three, Tricesimæ, Quadriburgium, and Castra Herculis, or Heraclea, no longer subsist; but there is room to believe, that on the ground of Quadriburgium the Dutch have constructed the fort of Schenk, a name so offensive to the fastidious delicacy of Boileau. See D’Anville, Notice de l’Ancienne Gaule, p. 183. Boileau, Epitre iv. and the notes. Note: Tricesimæ, Kellen, Mannert, quoted by Wagner. Heraclea, Erkeleus in the district of Juliers. St. Martin, ii. 311.—M.]

87

[\(return\)](#)

[We may credit Julian himself, (Orat. ad S. P. Q. Atheniensem, p. 280,) who gives a very particular account of the transaction. Zosimus adds two hundred vessels more, (l. iii. p. 145.) If we compute the 600 corn ships of Julian at only seventy tons each, they were capable of exporting 120,000 quarters, (see Arbuthnot’s Weights and Measures, p. 237;) and the country which could bear so large an exportation, must already have attained an improved state of agriculture.]

88

[\(return\)](#)

[The troops once broke out into a mutiny, immediately before the second passage of the Rhine. Ammian. xvii. 9.]

A tender regard for the peace and happiness of his subjects was the ruling principle which directed, or seemed to direct, the administration of Julian. [89](#) He devoted the leisure of his winter quarters to the offices of civil government; and affected to assume, with more pleasure, the character of a magistrate than that of a general. Before he took the field, he devolved on the provincial governors most of the public and private causes which had been referred to his tribunal; but, on his return, he carefully revised their proceedings, mitigated the rigor of the law, and pronounced a second judgment on the judges themselves. Superior to the last temptation of virtuous minds, an indiscreet and intemperate zeal for justice, he restrained, with calmness and dignity, the warmth of an advocate, who prosecuted, for extortion, the president of the Narbonnese province. “Who will ever be found guilty,” exclaimed the vehement Delphidius, “if it be enough to deny?” “And who,” replied Julian, “will ever be innocent, if it be sufficient to

affirm?" In the general administration of peace and war, the interest of the sovereign is commonly the same as that of his people; but Constantius would have thought himself deeply injured, if the virtues of Julian had defrauded him of any part of the tribute which he extorted from an oppressed and exhausted country. The prince who was invested with the ensigns of royalty, might sometimes presume to correct the rapacious insolence of his inferior agents, to expose their corrupt arts, and to introduce an equal and easier mode of collection. But the management of the finances was more safely intrusted to Florentius, prætorian præfect of Gaul, an effeminate tyrant, incapable of pity or remorse: and the haughty minister complained of the most decent and gentle opposition, while Julian himself was rather inclined to censure the weakness of his own behavior. The Cæsar had rejected, with abhorrence, a mandate for the levy of an extraordinary tax; a new superindiction, which the præfect had offered for his signature; and the faithful picture of the public misery, by which he had been obliged to justify his refusal, offended the court of Constantius. We may enjoy the pleasure of reading the sentiments of Julian, as he expresses them with warmth and freedom in a letter to one of his most intimate friends. After stating his own conduct, he proceeds in the following terms: "Was it possible for the disciple of Plato and Aristotle to act otherwise than I have done? Could I abandon the unhappy subjects intrusted to my care? Was I not called upon to defend them from the repeated injuries of these unfeeling robbers? A tribune who deserts his post is punished with death, and deprived of the honors of burial. With what justice could I pronounce *his* sentence, if, in the hour of danger, I myself neglected a duty far more sacred and far more important? God has placed me in this elevated post; his providence will guard and support me. Should I be condemned to suffer, I shall derive comfort from the testimony of a pure and upright conscience. Would to Heaven that I still possessed a counsellor like Sallust! If they think proper to send me a successor, I shall submit without reluctance; and had much rather improve the short opportunity of doing good, than enjoy a long and lasting impunity of evil." ⁹⁰ The precarious and dependent situation of Julian displayed his virtues and concealed his defects. The young hero who supported, in Gaul, the throne of Constantius, was not permitted to reform the vices of the government; but he had courage to alleviate or to pity the distress of the people. Unless he had been able to revive the martial spirit of the Romans, or to introduce the arts of industry and refinement among their savage enemies, he could not entertain any rational hopes of securing the public tranquillity, either by the peace or conquest of Germany. Yet the victories of Julian suspended, for a short time, the inroads of the Barbarians, and delayed the ruin of the Western Empire.

89

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xvi. 5, xviii. 1. Mamertinus in Panegy. Vet. xi. 4]

90

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xvii. 3. Julian. Epistol. xv. edit. Spanheim. Such a conduct almost justifies the encomium of Mamertinus. Ita illi anni spatia divisa

sunt, ut aut Barbaros domitet, aut civibus jura
restituatur, perpetuum professus, aut contra hostem,
aut contra vitia, certamen.]

His salutary influence restored the cities of Gaul, which had been so long exposed to the evils of civil discord, Barbarian war, and domestic tyranny; and the spirit of industry was revived with the hopes of enjoyment. Agriculture, manufactures, and commerce, again flourished under the protection of the laws; and the *curiæ*, or civil corporations, were again filled with useful and respectable members: the youth were no longer apprehensive of marriage; and married persons were no longer apprehensive of posterity: the public and private festivals were celebrated with customary pomp; and the frequent and secure intercourse of the provinces displayed the image of national prosperity. [91](#) A mind like that of Julian must have felt the general happiness of which he was the author; but he viewed, with particular satisfaction and complacency, the city of Paris; the seat of his winter residence, and the object even of his partial affection. [92](#) That splendid capital, which now embraces an ample territory on either side of the Seine, was originally confined to the small island in the midst of the river, from whence the inhabitants derived a supply of pure and salubrious water. The river bathed the foot of the walls; and the town was accessible only by two wooden bridges. A forest overspread the northern side of the Seine, but on the south, the ground, which now bears the name of the University, was insensibly covered with houses, and adorned with a palace and amphitheatre, baths, an aqueduct, and a field of Mars for the exercise of the Roman troops. The severity of the climate was tempered by the neighborhood of the ocean; and with some precautions, which experience had taught, the vine and fig-tree were successfully cultivated. But in remarkable winters, the Seine was deeply frozen; and the huge pieces of ice that floated down the stream, might be compared, by an Asiatic, to the blocks of white marble which were extracted from the quarries of Phrygia. The licentiousness and corruption of Antioch recalled to the memory of Julian the severe and simple manners of his beloved Lutetia; [93](#) where the amusements of the theatre were unknown or despised. He indignantly contrasted the effeminate Syrians with the brave and honest simplicity of the Gauls, and almost forgave the intemperance, which was the only stain of the Celtic character. [94](#) If Julian could now revisit the capital of France, he might converse with men of science and genius, capable of understanding and of instructing a disciple of the Greeks; he might excuse the lively and graceful follies of a nation, whose martial spirit has never been enervated by the indulgence of luxury; and he must applaud the perfection of that inestimable art, which softens and refines and embellishes the intercourse of social life.

91

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, Orat. Parental. in Imp. Julian. c. 38, in
Fabricius Bibliothec. Græc. tom. vii. p. 263, 264.]

92

[\(return\)](#)

[See Julian. in Misopogon, p. 340, 341. The
primitive state of Paris is illustrated by Henry
Valesius, (ad Ammian. xx. 4,) his brother Hadrian

Valesius, or de Valois, and M. D'Anville, (in their respective Notitias of ancient Gaul,) the Abbé de Longuerue, (Description de la France, tom. i. p. 12, 13,) and M. Bonamy, (in the Mém. de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. xv. p. 656-691.)]

93

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian, in Misopogon, p. 340. Leuce tia, or Lutetia, was the ancient name of the city, which, according to the fashion of the fourth century, assumed the territorial appellation of *Parisii*.]

94

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian in Misopogon, p. 359, 360.]

Chapter XX: Conversion Of Constantine.—Part I.

The Motives, Progress, And Effects Of The Conversion Of Constantine.—Legal Establishment And Constitution Of The Christian Or Catholic Church.

The public establishment of Christianity may be considered as one of those important and domestic revolutions which excite the most lively curiosity, and afford the most valuable instruction. The victories and the civil policy of Constantine no longer influence the state of Europe; but a considerable portion of the globe still retains the impression which it received from the conversion of that monarch; and the ecclesiastical institutions of his reign are still connected, by an indissoluble chain, with the opinions, the passions, and the interests of the present generation. In the consideration of a subject which may be examined with impartiality, but cannot be viewed with indifference, a difficulty immediately arises of a very unexpected nature; that of ascertaining the real and precise date of the conversion of Constantine. The eloquent Lactantius, in the midst of his court, seems impatient [1](#) to proclaim to the world the glorious example of the sovereign of Gaul; who, in the first moments of his reign, acknowledged and adored the majesty of the true and only God. [2](#) The learned Eusebius has ascribed the faith of Constantine to the miraculous sign which was displayed in the heavens whilst he meditated and prepared the Italian expedition. [3](#) The historian Zosimus maliciously asserts, that the emperor had imbrued his hands in the blood of his eldest son, before he publicly renounced the gods of Rome and of his ancestors. [4](#) The perplexity produced by these discordant authorities is derived from the behavior of Constantine himself. According to the strictness of ecclesiastical language, the first of the *Christian* emperors was unworthy of that name, till the moment of his death; since it was only during his last illness that he received, as a catechumen, the imposition of hands, [5](#) and was afterwards admitted, by the initiatory rites of baptism, into the number of the faithful. [6](#) The Christianity of Constantine must be allowed in a much more vague and qualified sense; and the nicest accuracy is required in tracing the slow and almost imperceptible gradations by which the monarch declared himself the protector, and at

length the proselyte, of the church. It was an arduous task to eradicate the habits and prejudices of his education, to acknowledge the divine power of Christ, and to understand that the truth of *his* revelation was incompatible with the worship of the gods. The obstacles which he had probably experienced in his own mind, instructed him to proceed with caution in the momentous change of a national religion; and he insensibly discovered his new opinions, as far as he could enforce them with safety and with effect. During the whole course of his reign, the stream of Christianity flowed with a gentle, though accelerated, motion: but its general direction was sometimes checked, and sometimes diverted, by the accidental circumstances of the times, and by the prudence, or possibly by the caprice, of the monarch. His ministers were permitted to signify the intentions of their master in the various language which was best adapted to their respective principles; [7](#) and he artfully balanced the hopes and fears of his subjects, by publishing in the same year two edicts; the first of which enjoined the solemn observance of Sunday, [8](#) and the second directed the regular consultation of the Aruspices. [9](#) While this important revolution yet remained in suspense, the Christians and the Pagans watched the conduct of their sovereign with the same anxiety, but with very opposite sentiments. The former were prompted by every motive of zeal, as well as vanity, to exaggerate the marks of his favor, and the evidences of his faith. The latter, till their just apprehensions were changed into despair and resentment, attempted to conceal from the world, and from themselves, that the gods of Rome could no longer reckon the emperor in the number of their votaries. The same passions and prejudices have engaged the partial writers of the times to connect the public profession of Christianity with the most glorious or the most ignominious æra of the reign of Constantine.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[The date of the Divine Institutions of Lactantius has been accurately discussed, difficulties have been started, solutions proposed, and an expedient imagined of two *original* editions; the former published during the persecution of Diocletian, the latter under that of Licinius. See Dufresnoy, Prefat. p. v. Tillemont, Mém. Ecclesiast. tom. vi. p. 465-470. Lardner's Credibility, part ii. vol. vii. p. 78-86. For my own part, I am *almost* convinced that Lactantius dedicated his Institutions to the sovereign of Gaul, at a time when Galerius, Maximin, and even Licinius, persecuted the Christians; that is, between the years 306 and 311.]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactant. Divin. Instit. i. l. vii. 27. The first and most important of these passages is indeed wanting in twenty-eight manuscripts; but it is found in nineteen. If we weigh the comparative value of these manuscripts, one of 900 years old, in the king of France's library may be alleged in its favor; but

the passage is omitted in the correct manuscript of Bologna, which the P. de Montfaucon ascribes to the sixth or seventh century (Diarium Italic. p. 489.) The taste of most of the editors (except Isæus; see Lactant. edit. Dufresnoy, tom. i. p. 596) has felt the genuine style of Lactantius.]

3 (return)
[Euseb. in Vit. Constant. l. i. c. 27-32.]

4 (return)
[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 104.]

5 (return)
[That rite was *always* used in making a catechumen, (see Bingham's Antiquities. l. x. c. i. p. 419. Dom Chardon, Hist. des Sacramens, tom. i. p. 62,) and Constantine received it for the *first* time (Euseb. in Vit Constant. l. iv. c. 61) immediately before his baptism and death. From the connection of these two facts, Valesius (ad loc. Euseb.) has drawn the conclusion which is reluctantly admitted by Tillemont, (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 628,) and opposed with feeble arguments by Mosheim, (p. 968.)]

6 (return)
[Euseb. in Vit. Constant. l. iv. c. 61, 62, 63. The legend of Constantine's baptism at Rome, thirteen years before his death, was invented in the eighth century, as a proper motive for his *donation*. Such has been the gradual progress of knowledge, that a story, of which Cardinal Baronius (Annual Ecclesiast. A. D. 324, No. 43-49) declared himself the unblushing advocate, is now feebly supported, even within the verge of the Vatican. See the Antiquitates Christianæ, tom. ii. p. 232; a work published with six approbations at Rome, in the year 1751 by Father Mamachi, a learned Dominican.]

7 (return)
[The quæstor, or secretary, who composed the law of the Theodosian Code, makes his master say with indifference, "hominibus supradictæ religionis," (l. xvi. tit. ii. leg. 1.) The minister of ecclesiastical affairs was allowed a more devout and respectful style, [***Greek*] the legal, most holy, and Catholic worship.]

8 (return)
[Cod. Theodos. l. ii. viii. tit. leg. 1. Cod. Justinian. l. iii. tit. xii. leg. 3. Constantine styles the Lord's day *dies solis*, a name which could not offend the ears of his pagan subjects.]

[Cod. Theodos. l. xvi. tit. x. leg. l. Godefroy, in the character of a commentator, endeavors (tom. vi. p. 257) to excuse Constantine; but the more zealous Baronius (Annal. Eccles. A. D. 321, No. 17) censures his profane conduct with truth and asperity.]

Whatever symptoms of Christian piety might transpire in the discourses or actions of Constantine, he persevered till he was near forty years of age in the practice of the established religion; [10](#) and the same conduct which in the court of Nicomedia might be imputed to his fear, could be ascribed only to the inclination or policy of the sovereign of Gaul. His liberality restored and enriched the temples of the gods; the medals which issued from his Imperial mint are impressed with the figures and attributes of Jupiter and Apollo, of Mars and Hercules; and his filial piety increased the council of Olympus by the solemn apotheosis of his father Constantius. [11](#) But the devotion of Constantine was more peculiarly directed to the genius of the Sun, the Apollo of Greek and Roman mythology; and he was pleased to be represented with the symbols of the God of Light and Poetry. The unerring shafts of that deity, the brightness of his eyes, his laurel wreath, immortal beauty, and elegant accomplishments, seem to point him out as the patron of a young hero. The altars of Apollo were crowned with the votive offerings of Constantine; and the credulous multitude were taught to believe, that the emperor was permitted to behold with mortal eyes the visible majesty of their tutelar deity; and that, either walking or in a vision, he was blessed with the auspicious omens of a long and victorious reign. The Sun was universally celebrated as the invincible guide and protector of Constantine; and the Pagans might reasonably expect that the insulted god would pursue with unrelenting vengeance the impiety of his ungrateful favorite. [12](#)

10

[\(return\)](#)

[Theodoret. (l. i. c. 18) seems to insinuate that Helena gave her son a Christian education; but we may be assured, from the superior authority of Eusebius, (in Vit. Constant. l. iii. c. 47,) that she herself was indebted to Constantine for the knowledge of Christianity.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[See the medals of Constantine in Ducange and Banduri. As few cities had retained the privilege of coining, almost all the medals of that age issued from the mint under the sanction of the Imperial authority.]

12

[\(return\)](#)

[The panegyric of Eumenius, (vii. inter Panegyri. Vet.,) which was pronounced a few months before the Italian war, abounds with the most unexceptionable evidence of the Pagan superstition

of Constantine, and of his particular veneration for Apollo, or the Sun; to which Julian alludes.]

As long as Constantine exercised a limited sovereignty over the provinces of Gaul, his Christian subjects were protected by the authority, and perhaps by the laws, of a prince, who wisely left to the gods the care of vindicating their own honor. If we may credit the assertion of Constantine himself, he had been an indignant spectator of the savage cruelties which were inflicted, by the hands of Roman soldiers, on those citizens whose religion was their only crime. [13](#) In the East and in the West, he had seen the different effects of severity and indulgence; and as the former was rendered still more odious by the example of Galerius, his implacable enemy, the latter was recommended to his imitation by the authority and advice of a dying father. The son of Constantius immediately suspended or repealed the edicts of persecution, and granted the free exercise of their religious ceremonies to all those who had already professed themselves members of the church. They were soon encouraged to depend on the favor as well as on the justice of their sovereign, who had imbibed a secret and sincere reverence for the name of Christ, and for the God of the Christians. [14](#)

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Constantin. Orat. ad Sanctos, c. 25. But it might easily be shown, that the Greek translator has improved the sense of the Latin original; and the aged emperor might recollect the persecution of Diocletian with a more lively abhorrence than he had actually felt to the days of his youth and Paganism.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[See Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. viii. 13, l. ix. 9, and in Vit. Const. l. i. c. 16, 17 Lactant. Divin. Institut. i. l. Cæcilius de Mort. Persecut. c. 25.]

About five months after the conquest of Italy, the emperor made a solemn and authentic declaration of his sentiments by the celebrated edict of Milan, which restored peace to the Catholic church. In the personal interview of the two western princes, Constantine, by the ascendant of genius and power, obtained the ready concurrence of his colleague, Licinius; the union of their names and authority disarmed the fury of Maximin; and after the death of the tyrant of the East, the edict of Milan was received as a general and fundamental law of the Roman world. [15](#)

15

[\(return\)](#)

[Cæcilius (de Mort. Persecut. c. 48) has preserved the Latin original; and Eusebius (Hist. Eccles. l. x. c. 5) has given a Greek translation of this perpetual edict, which refers to some provisional regulations.]

The wisdom of the emperors provided for the restitution of all the civil and religious rights of which the Christians had been so unjustly deprived. It was enacted that the places of worship, and public lands, which had been confiscated, should be restored to the church, without dispute, without delay, and without expense; and this severe

injunction was accompanied with a gracious promise, that if any of the purchasers had paid a fair and adequate price, they should be indemnified from the Imperial treasury. The salutary regulations which guard the future tranquillity of the faithful are framed on the principles of enlarged and equal toleration; and such an equality must have been interpreted by a recent sect as an advantageous and honorable distinction. The two emperors proclaim to the world, that they have granted a free and absolute power to the Christians, and to all others, of following the religion which each individual thinks proper to prefer, to which he has addicted his mind, and which he may deem the best adapted to his own use. They carefully explain every ambiguous word, remove every exception, and exact from the governors of the provinces a strict obedience to the true and simple meaning of an edict, which was designed to establish and secure, without any limitation, the claims of religious liberty. They condescend to assign two weighty reasons which have induced them to allow this universal toleration: the humane intention of consulting the peace and happiness of their people; and the pious hope, that, by such a conduct, they shall appease and propitiate *the Deity*, whose seat is in heaven. They gratefully acknowledge the many signal proofs which they have received of the divine favor; and they trust that the same Providence will forever continue to protect the prosperity of the prince and people. From these vague and indefinite expressions of piety, three suppositions may be deduced, of a different, but not of an incompatible nature. The mind of Constantine might fluctuate between the Pagan and the Christian religions. According to the loose and complying notions of Polytheism, he might acknowledge the God of the Christians as *one* of the *many* deities who compose the hierarchy of heaven. Or perhaps he might embrace the philosophic and pleasing idea, that, notwithstanding the variety of names, of rites, and of opinions, all the sects, and all the nations of mankind, are united in the worship of the common Father and Creator of the universe. [16](#)

16

[\(return\)](#)

[A panegyric of Constantine, pronounced seven or eight months after the edict of Milan, (see Gothofred. Chronolog. Legum, p. 7, and Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 246,) uses the following remarkable expression: “Summe rerum sator, cujus tot nomina sant, quot linguas gentium esse voluisti, quem enim te ipse dici velin, scire non possumus.” (Panegyri. Vet. ix. 26.) In explaining Constantine’s progress in the faith, Mosheim (p. 971, &c.) is ingenious, subtle, prolix.]

But the counsels of princes are more frequently influenced by views of temporal advantage, than by considerations of abstract and speculative truth. The partial and increasing favor of Constantine may naturally be referred to the esteem which he entertained for the moral character of the Christians; and to a persuasion, that the propagation of the gospel would inculcate the practice of private and public virtue. Whatever latitude an absolute monarch may assume in his own conduct, whatever

indulgence he may claim for his own passions, it is undoubtedly his interest that all his subjects should respect the natural and civil obligations of society. But the operation of the wisest laws is imperfect and precarious. They seldom inspire virtue, they cannot always restrain vice. Their power is insufficient to prohibit all that they condemn, nor can they always punish the actions which they prohibit. The legislators of antiquity had summoned to their aid the powers of education and of opinion. But every principle which had once maintained the vigor and purity of Rome and Sparta, was long since extinguished in a declining and despotic empire. Philosophy still exercised her temperate sway over the human mind, but the cause of virtue derived very feeble support from the influence of the Pagan superstition. Under these discouraging circumstances, a prudent magistrate might observe with pleasure the progress of a religion which diffused among the people a pure, benevolent, and universal system of ethics, adapted to every duty and every condition of life; recommended as the will and reason of the supreme Deity, and enforced by the sanction of eternal rewards or punishments. The experience of Greek and Roman history could not inform the world how far the system of national manners might be reformed and improved by the precepts of a divine revelation; and Constantine might listen with some confidence to the flattering, and indeed reasonable, assurances of Lactantius. The eloquent apologist seemed firmly to expect, and almost ventured to promise, *that* the establishment of Christianity would restore the innocence and felicity of the primitive age; *that* the worship of the true God would extinguish war and dissension among those who mutually considered themselves as the children of a common parent; *that* every impure desire, every angry or selfish passion, would be restrained by the knowledge of the gospel; and *that* the magistrates might sheath the sword of justice among a people who would be universally actuated by the sentiments of truth and piety, of equity and moderation, of harmony and universal love. [17](#)

17

[\(return\)](#)

[See the elegant description of Lactantius, (Divin Institut. v. 8,) who is much more perspicuous and positive than becomes a discreet prophet.]

The passive and unresisting obedience, which bows under the yoke of authority, or even of oppression, must have appeared, in the eyes of an absolute monarch, the most conspicuous and useful of the evangelic virtues. [18](#) The primitive Christians derived the institution of civil government, not from the consent of the people, but from the decrees of Heaven. The reigning emperor, though he had usurped the sceptre by treason and murder, immediately assumed the sacred character of vicegerent of the Deity. To the Deity alone he was accountable for the abuse of his power; and his subjects were indissolubly bound, by their oath of fidelity, to a tyrant, who had violated every law of nature and society. The humble Christians were sent into the world as sheep among wolves; and since they were not permitted to employ force even in the defence of their religion, they should be still more criminal if they were tempted to shed the blood of their fellow-creatures in disputing the vain privileges, or the sordid possessions, of this

transitory life. Faithful to the doctrine of the apostle, who in the reign of Nero had preached the duty of unconditional submission, the Christians of the three first centuries preserved their conscience pure and innocent of the guilt of secret conspiracy, or open rebellion. While they experienced the rigor of persecution, they were never provoked either to meet their tyrants in the field, or indignantly to withdraw themselves into some remote and sequestered corner of the globe. [19](#) The Protestants of France, of Germany, and of Britain, who asserted with such intrepid courage their civil and religious freedom, have been insulted by the invidious comparison between the conduct of the primitive and of the reformed Christians. [20](#) Perhaps, instead of censure, some applause may be due to the superior sense and spirit of our ancestors, who had convinced themselves that religion cannot abolish the unalienable rights of human nature. [21](#) Perhaps the patience of the primitive church may be ascribed to its weakness, as well as to its virtue.

A sect of unwarlike plebeians, without leaders, without arms, without fortifications, must have encountered inevitable destruction in a rash and fruitless resistance to the master of the Roman legions. But the Christians, when they deprecated the wrath of Diocletian, or solicited the favor of Constantine, could allege, with truth and confidence, that they held the principle of passive obedience, and that, in the space of three centuries, their conduct had always been conformable to their principles. They might add, that the throne of the emperors would be established on a fixed and permanent basis, if all their subjects, embracing the Christian doctrine, should learn to suffer and to obey.

18

[\(return\)](#)

[The political system of the Christians is explained by Grotius, de Jure Belli et Pacis, l. i. c. 3, 4. Grotius was a republican and an exile, but the mildness of his temper inclined him to support the established powers.]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian. Apolog. c. 32, 34, 35, 36. Tamen nunquam Albiniani, nec Nigriani vel Cassiani inveniri potuerunt Christiani. Ad Scapulam, c. 2. If this assertion be strictly true, it excludes the Christians of that age from all civil and military employments, which would have compelled them to take an active part in the service of their respective governors. See Moyle's Works, vol. ii. p. 349.]

20

[\(return\)](#)

[See the artful Bossuet, (Hist. des Variations des Eglises Protestantes, tom. iii. p. 210-258.) and the malicious Bayle, (tom ii. p. 820.) I *name* Bayle, for he was certainly the author of the Avis aux Refugies; consult the Dictionnaire Critique de Chauffepié, tom. i. part ii. p. 145.]

[Buchanan is the earliest, or at least the most celebrated, of the reformers, who has justified the theory of resistance. See his Dialogue de Jure Regni apud Scotos, tom. ii. p. 28, 30, edit. fol. Rudiman.]

In the general order of Providence, princes and tyrants are considered as the ministers of Heaven, appointed to rule or to chastise the nations of the earth. But sacred history affords many illustrious examples of the more immediate interposition of the Deity in the government of his chosen people. The sceptre and the sword were committed to the hands of Moses, of Joshua, of Gideon, of David, of the Maccabees; the virtues of those heroes were the motive or the effect of the divine favor, the success of their arms was destined to achieve the deliverance or the triumph of the church. If the judges of Israel were occasional and temporary magistrates, the kings of Judah derived from the royal unction of their great ancestor an hereditary and indefeasible right, which could not be forfeited by their own vices, nor recalled by the caprice of their subjects. The same extraordinary providence, which was no longer confined to the Jewish people, might elect Constantine and his family as the protectors of the Christian world; and the devout Lactantius announces, in a prophetic tone, the future glories of his long and universal reign. [22](#) Galerius and Maximin, Maxentius and Licinius, were the rivals who shared with the favorite of heaven the provinces of the empire. The tragic deaths of Galerius and Maximin soon gratified the resentment, and fulfilled the sanguine expectations, of the Christians. The success of Constantine against Maxentius and Licinius removed the two formidable competitors who still opposed the triumph of the second David, and his cause might seem to claim the peculiar interposition of Providence. The character of the Roman tyrant disgraced the purple and human nature; and though the Christians might enjoy his precarious favor, they were exposed, with the rest of his subjects, to the effects of his wanton and capricious cruelty. The conduct of Licinius soon betrayed the reluctance with which he had consented to the wise and humane regulations of the edict of Milan. The convocation of provincial synods was prohibited in his dominions; his Christian officers were ignominiously dismissed; and if he avoided the guilt, or rather danger, of a general persecution, his partial oppressions were rendered still more odious by the violation of a solemn and voluntary engagement. [23](#) While the East, according to the lively expression of Eusebius, was involved in the shades of infernal darkness, the auspicious rays of celestial light warmed and illuminated the provinces of the West. The piety of Constantine was admitted as an unexceptionable proof of the justice of his arms; and his use of victory confirmed the opinion of the Christians, that their hero was inspired, and conducted, by the Lord of Hosts. The conquest of Italy produced a general edict of toleration; and as soon as the defeat of Licinius had invested Constantine with the sole dominion of the Roman world, he immediately, by circular letters, exhorted all his subjects to imitate, without delay, the example of their sovereign, and to embrace the divine truth of Christianity. [24](#)

- 22 [\(return\)](#)
[Lactant Divin. Institut. i. l. Eusebius in the course of his history, his life, and his oration, repeatedly inculcates the divine right of Constantine to the empire.]
- 23 [\(return\)](#)
[Our imperfect knowledge of the persecution of Licinius is derived from Eusebius, (Hist. l. x. c. 8. Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 49-56, l. ii. c. 1, 2.) Aurelius Victor mentions his cruelty in general terms.]
- 24 [\(return\)](#)
[Euseb. in Vit. Constant. l. ii. c. 24-42 48-60.]

Chapter XX: Conversion Of Constantine.—Part II.

The assurance that the elevation of Constantine was intimately connected with the designs of Providence, instilled into the minds of the Christians two opinions, which, by very different means, assisted the accomplishment of the prophecy. Their warm and active loyalty exhausted in his favor every resource of human industry; and they confidently expected that their strenuous efforts would be seconded by some divine and miraculous aid. The enemies of Constantine have imputed to interested motives the alliance which he insensibly contracted with the Catholic church, and which apparently contributed to the success of his ambition. In the beginning of the fourth century, the Christians still bore a very inadequate proportion to the inhabitants of the empire; but among a degenerate people, who viewed the change of masters with the indifference of slaves, the spirit and union of a religious party might assist the popular leader, to whose service, from a principle of conscience, they had devoted their lives and fortunes. [25](#) The example of his father had instructed Constantine to esteem and to reward the merit of the Christians; and in the distribution of public offices, he had the advantage of strengthening his government, by the choice of ministers or generals, in whose fidelity he could repose a just and unreserved confidence. By the influence of these dignified missionaries, the proselytes of the new faith must have multiplied in the court and army; the Barbarians of Germany, who filled the ranks of the legions, were of a careless temper, which acquiesced without resistance in the religion of their commander; and when they passed the Alps, it may fairly be presumed, that a great number of the soldiers had already consecrated their swords to the service of Christ and of Constantine. [26](#) The habits of mankind and the interests of religion gradually abated the horror of war and bloodshed, which had so long prevailed among the Christians; and in the councils which were assembled under the gracious protection of Constantine, the authority of the bishops was seasonably employed to ratify the obligation of the military oath, and to inflict the penalty of excommunication on those soldiers who threw away their arms during the peace of the church. [27](#) While Constantine, in his own

dominions, increased the number and zeal of his faithful adherents, he could depend on the support of a powerful faction in those provinces which were still possessed or usurped by his rivals. A secret disaffection was diffused among the Christian subjects of Maxentius and Licinius; and the resentment, which the latter did not attempt to conceal, served only to engage them still more deeply in the interest of his competitor. The regular correspondence which connected the bishops of the most distant provinces, enabled them freely to communicate their wishes and their designs, and to transmit without danger any useful intelligence, or any pious contributions, which might promote the service of Constantine, who publicly declared that he had taken up arms for the deliverance of the church. [28](#)

25

[\(return\)](#)

[In the beginning of the last century, the Papists of England were only a *thirtieth*, and the Protestants of France only a *fifteenth*, part of the respective nations, to whom their spirit and power were a constant object of apprehension. See the relations which Bentivoglio (who was then nuncio at Brussels, and afterwards cardinal) transmitted to the court of Rome, (Relazione, tom. ii. p. 211, 241.) Bentivoglio was curious, well informed, but somewhat partial.]

26

[\(return\)](#)

[This careless temper of the Germans appears almost uniformly on the history of the conversion of each of the tribes. The legions of Constantine were recruited with Germans, (Zosimus, l. ii. p. 86;) and the court even of his father had been filled with Christians. See the first book of the Life of Constantine, by Eusebius.]

27

[\(return\)](#)

[De his qui arma projiciunt in *pace*, placuit eos abstinere a communione. Council. Arelat. Canon. iii. The best critics apply these words to the *peace of the church*.]

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius always considers the second civil war against Licinius as a sort of religious crusade. At the invitation of the tyrant, some Christian officers had resumed their *zones*; or, in other words, had returned to the military service. Their conduct was afterwards censured by the twelfth canon of the Council of Nice; if this particular application may be received, instead of the loose and general sense of the Greek interpreters, Balsamor Zonaras, and Alexis Aristenus. See Beveridge, Pandect. Eccles. Græc. tom. i. p. 72, tom. ii. p. 73 Annotation.]

The enthusiasm which inspired the troops, and perhaps the emperor himself, had sharpened their swords while it satisfied their conscience. They marched to battle with the full assurance, that the same God, who had formerly opened a passage to the Israelites through the waters of Jordan, and had thrown down the walls of Jericho at the sound of the trumpets of Joshua, would display his visible majesty and power in the victory of Constantine. The evidence of ecclesiastical history is prepared to affirm, that their expectations were justified by the conspicuous miracle to which the conversion of the first Christian emperor has been almost unanimously ascribed. The real or imaginary cause of so important an event, deserves and demands the attention of posterity; and I shall endeavor to form a just estimate of the famous vision of Constantine, by a distinct consideration of the *standard*, the *dream*, and the *celestial sign*; by separating the historical, the natural, and the marvellous parts of this extraordinary story, which, in the composition of a specious argument, have been artfully confounded in one splendid and brittle mass.

I. An instrument of the tortures which were inflicted only on slaves and strangers, became an object of horror in the eyes of a Roman citizen; and the ideas of guilt, of pain, and of ignominy, were closely united with the idea of the cross. [29](#) The piety, rather than the humanity, of Constantine soon abolished in his dominions the punishment which the Savior of mankind had condescended to suffer; [30](#) but the emperor had already learned to despise the prejudices of his education, and of his people, before he could erect in the midst of Rome his own statue, bearing a cross in its right hand; with an inscription which referred the victory of his arms, and the deliverance of Rome, to the virtue of that salutary sign, the true symbol of force and courage. [31](#) The same symbol sanctified the arms of the soldiers of Constantine; the cross glittered on their helmet, was engraved on their shields, was interwoven into their banners; and the consecrated emblems which adorned the person of the emperor himself, were distinguished only by richer materials and more exquisite workmanship. [32](#) But the principal standard which displayed the triumph of the cross was styled the Labarum, [33](#) an obscure, though celebrated name, which has been vainly derived from almost all the languages of the world. It is described [34](#) as a long pike intersected by a transversal beam. The silken veil, which hung down from the beam, was curiously inwrought with the images of the reigning monarch and his children. The summit of the pike supported a crown of gold which enclosed the mysterious monogram, at once expressive of the figure of the cross, and the initial letters, of the name of Christ. [35](#) The safety of the labarum was intrusted to fifty guards, of approved valor and fidelity; their station was marked by honors and emoluments; and some fortunate accidents soon introduced an opinion, that as long as the guards of the labarum were engaged in the execution of their office, they were secure and invulnerable amidst the darts of the enemy. In the second civil war, Licinius felt and dreaded the power of this consecrated banner, the sight of which, in the distress of battle, animated the soldiers of Constantine with an invincible enthusiasm, and scattered terror and dismay

through the ranks of the adverse legions. [36](#) The Christian emperors, who respected the example of Constantine, displayed in all their military expeditions the standard of the cross; but when the degenerate successors of Theodosius had ceased to appear in person at the head of their armies, the labarum was deposited as a venerable but useless relic in the palace of Constantinople. [37](#) Its honors are still preserved on the medals of the Flavian family. Their grateful devotion has placed the monogram of Christ in the midst of the ensigns of Rome. The solemn epithets of, safety of the republic, glory of the army, restoration of public happiness, are equally applied to the religious and military trophies; and there is still extant a medal of the emperor Constantius, where the standard of the labarum is accompanied with these memorable words, BY THIS SIGN THOU SHALT CONQUER. [38](#)

29

[\(return\)](#)

[Nomen ipsum *crucis* absit non modo a corpore civium Romano rum, sed etiam a cogitatione, oculis, auribus. Cicero pro Raberio, c. 5. The Christian writers, Justin, Minucius Felix, Tertullian, Jerom, and Maximus of Turin, have investigated with tolerable success the figure or likeness of a cross in almost every object of nature or art; in the intersection of the meridian and equator, the human face, a bird flying, a man swimming, a mast and yard, a plough, a *standard*, &c., &c., &c. See Lipsius de Cruce, l. i. c. 9.]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[See Aurelius Victor, who considers this law as one of the examples of Constantine's piety. An edict so honorable to Christianity deserved a place in the Theodosian Code, instead of the indirect mention of it, which seems to result from the comparison of the fifth and eighteenth titles of the ninth book.]

31

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 40. This statue, or at least the cross and inscription, may be ascribed with more probability to the second, or even third, visit of Constantine to Rome. Immediately after the defeat of Maxentius, the minds of the senate and people were scarcely ripe for this public monument.]

32

[\(return\)](#)

[Agnoscas, regina, libens mea signa necesse est; In quibus effigies crucis aut gemmata refulget Aut longis solido ex auro præfertur in hastis. Hoc signo invictus, transmissis Alpibus Ultor Servitium solvit miserabile Constantinus.

Christus *purpureum* gemmanti textus in auro Signabat *Labarum*, clypeorum insignia Christus

Scripserat; ardebat summis crux addita cristis.

Prudent. in Symmachum, l. ii. 464, 486.]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[The derivation and meaning of the word *Labarum* or *Laborum*, which is employed by Gregory Nazianzen, Ambrose, Prudentius, &c., still remain totally unknown, in spite of the efforts of the critics, who have ineffectually tortured the Latin, Greek, Spanish, Celtic, Teutonic, Illyric, Armenian, &c., in search of an etymology. See Ducange, in Gloss. Med. et infim. Latinitat. sub voce *Labarum*, and Godefroy, ad Cod. Theodos. tom. ii. p. 143.]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 30, 31. Baronius (Annal. Eccles. A. D. 312, No. 26) has engraved a representation of the Labarum.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[Transversâ X literâ, summo capite circumflexo, Christum in scutis notat. Cæcilius de M. P. c. 44, Cuper, (ad M. P. in edit. Lactant. tom. ii. p. 500,) and Baronius (A. D. 312, No. 25) have engraved from ancient monuments several specimens (as thus of these monograms) which became extremely fashionable in the Christian world.]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. ii. c. 7, 8, 9. He introduces the Labarum before the Italian expedition; but his narrative seems to indicate that it was never shown at the head of an army till Constantine above ten years afterwards, declared himself the enemy of Licinius, and the deliverer of the church.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[See Cod. Theod. l. vi. tit. xxv. Sozomen, l. i. c. 2. Theophan. Chronograph. p. 11. Theophanes lived towards the end of the eighth century, almost five hundred years after Constantine. The modern Greeks were not inclined to display in the field the standard of the empire and of Christianity; and though they depended on every superstitious hope of *defence*, the promise of *victory* would have appeared too bold a fiction.]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[The Abbé du Voisin, p. 103, &c., alleges several of these medals, and quotes a particular dissertation of a Jesuit the Père de Grainville, on this subject.]

II. In all occasions of danger and distress, it was the practice of the primitive Christians to fortify their minds and bodies by the sign of the cross, which they used, in all their ecclesiastical rites, in all the daily occurrences of life, as an infallible preservative against every species of spiritual or temporal evil. [39](#) The authority of the church might alone have had sufficient weight to justify the devotion of Constantine, who in the same prudent and gradual progress acknowledged the truth, and assumed the symbol, of Christianity. But the testimony of a contemporary writer, who in a formal treatise has avenged the cause of religion, bestows on the piety of the emperor a more awful and sublime character. He affirms, with the most perfect confidence, that in the night which preceded the last battle against Maxentius, Constantine was admonished in a dream [39a](#) to inscribe the shields of his soldiers with the *celestial sign of God*, the sacred monogram of the name of Christ; that he executed the commands of Heaven, and that his valor and obedience were rewarded by the decisive victory of the Milvian Bridge. Some considerations might perhaps incline a sceptical mind to suspect the judgment or the veracity of the rhetorician, whose pen, either from zeal or interest, was devoted to the cause of the prevailing faction. [40](#) He appears to have published his deaths of the persecutors at Nicomedia about three years after the Roman victory; but the interval of a thousand miles, and a thousand days, will allow an ample latitude for the invention of declaimers, the credulity of party, and the tacit approbation of the emperor himself who might listen without indignation to a marvellous tale, which exalted his fame, and promoted his designs. In favor of Licinius, who still dissembled his animosity to the Christians, the same author has provided a similar vision, of a form of prayer, which was communicated by an angel, and repeated by the whole army before they engaged the legions of the tyrant Maximin. The frequent repetition of miracles serves to provoke, where it does not subdue, the reason of mankind; [41](#) but if the dream of Constantine is separately considered, it may be naturally explained either by the policy or the enthusiasm of the emperor. Whilst his anxiety for the approaching day, which must decide the fate of the empire, was suspended by a short and interrupted slumber, the venerable form of Christ, and the well-known symbol of his religion, might forcibly offer themselves to the active fancy of a prince who revered the name, and had perhaps secretly implored the power, of the God of the Christians. As readily might a consummate statesman indulge himself in the use of one of those military stratagems, one of those pious frauds, which Philip and Sertorius had employed with such art and effect. [42](#) The præternatural origin of dreams was universally admitted by the nations of antiquity, and a considerable part of the Gallic army was already prepared to place their confidence in the salutary sign of the Christian religion. The secret vision of Constantine could be disproved only by the event; and the intrepid hero who had passed the Alps and the Apennine, might view with careless despair the consequences of a defeat under the walls of Rome. The senate and people, exulting in their own deliverance from an odious tyrant, acknowledged that the victory of Constantine surpassed the powers of man, without daring to insinuate that it had been obtained by

the protection of the *Gods*. The triumphal arch, which was erected about three years after the event, proclaims, in ambiguous language, that by the greatness of his own mind, and by an *instinct* or impulse of the Divinity, he had saved and avenged the Roman republic. [43](#) The Pagan orator, who had seized an earlier opportunity of celebrating the virtues of the conqueror, supposes that he alone enjoyed a secret and intimate commerce with the Supreme Being, who delegated the care of mortals to his subordinate deities; and thus assigns a very plausible reason why the subjects of Constantine should not presume to embrace the new religion of their sovereign. [44](#)

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Tertullian de Corona, c. 3. Athanasius, tom. i. p. 101. The learned Jesuit Petavius (Dogmata Theolog. l. xv. c. 9, 10) has collected many similar passages on the virtues of the cross, which in the last age embarrassed our Protestant disputants.]

39a

[\(return\)](#)

[Manso has observed, that Gibbon ought not to have separated the vision of Constantine from the wonderful apparition in the sky, as the two wonders are closely connected in Eusebius. Manso, Leben Constantine, p. 82—M.]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[Cæcilius de M. P. c. 44. It is certain, that this historical declamation was composed and published while Licinius, sovereign of the East, still preserved the friendship of Constantine and of the Christians. Every reader of taste must perceive that the style is of a very different and inferior character to that of Lactantius; and such indeed is the judgment of Le Clerc and Lardner, (Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne, tom. iii. p. 438. Credibility of the Gospel, &c., part ii. vol. vii. p. 94.) Three arguments from the title of the book, and from the names of Donatus and Cæcilius, are produced by the advocates for Lactantius. (See the P. Lestocq, tom. ii. p. 46-60.) Each of these proofs is singly weak and defective; but their concurrence has great weight. I have often fluctuated, and shall *tamely* follow the Colbert Ms. in calling the author (whoever he was) Cæcilius.]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[Cæcilius de M. P. c. 46. There seems to be some reason in the observation of M. de Voltaire, (Œuvres, tom. xiv. p. 307.) who ascribes to the success of Constantine the superior fame of his Labarum above the angel of Licinius. Yet even this angel is favorably entertained by Pagi, Tillemont, Fleury, &c., who are fond of increasing their stock of miracles.]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[Besides these well-known examples, Tollius (Preface to Boileau's translation of Longinus) has discovered a vision of Antigonus, who assured his troops that he had seen a pentagon (the symbol of safety) with these words, "In this conquer." But Tollius has most inexcusably omitted to produce his authority, and his own character, literary as well as moral, is not free from reproach. (See Chauffepié, Dictionnaire Critique, tom. iv. p. 460.) Without insisting on the silence of Diodorus Plutarch, Justin, &c., it may be observed that Polyænus, who in a separate chapter (l. iv. c. 6) has collected nineteen military stratagems of Antigonus, is totally ignorant of this remarkable vision.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[Instinctu Divinitatis, mentis magnitudine. The inscription on the triumphal arch of Constantine, which has been copied by Baronius, Gruter, &c., may still be perused by every curious traveller.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[Habes profecto aliquid cum illa mente Divinâ secretum; quæ delegatâ nostrâ Diis Minoribus curâ uni se tibi dignatur ostendere Panegy. Vet. ix. 2.]

III. The philosopher, who with calm suspicion examines the dreams and omens, the miracles and prodigies, of profane or even of ecclesiastical history, will probably conclude, that if the eyes of the spectators have sometimes been deceived by fraud, the understanding of the readers has much more frequently been insulted by fiction. Every event, or appearance, or accident, which seems to deviate from the ordinary course of nature, has been rashly ascribed to the immediate action of the Deity; and the astonished fancy of the multitude has sometimes given shape and color, language and motion, to the fleeting but uncommon meteors of the air. [45](#) Nazarius and Eusebius are the two most celebrated orators, who, in studied panegyrics, have labored to exalt the glory of Constantine. Nine years after the Roman victory, Nazarius [46](#) describes an army of divine warriors, who seemed to fall from the sky: he marks their beauty, their spirit, their gigantic forms, the stream of light which beamed from their celestial armor, their patience in suffering themselves to be heard, as well as seen, by mortals; and their declaration that they were sent, that they flew, to the assistance of the great Constantine. For the truth of this prodigy, the Pagan orator appeals to the whole Gallic nation, in whose presence he was then speaking; and seems to hope that the ancient apparitions [47](#) would now obtain credit from this recent and public event. The Christian fable of Eusebius, which, in the space of twenty-six years, might arise from the original dream, is cast in a much more correct and elegant mould. In one of the marches of Constantine, he is reported to have seen with his own eyes the luminous trophy of the cross, placed above the meridian sun and inscribed with the following words: BY THIS

CONQUER. This amazing object in the sky astonished the whole army, as well as the emperor himself, who was yet undetermined in the choice of a religion: but his astonishment was converted into faith by the vision of the ensuing night. Christ appeared before his eyes; and displaying the same celestial sign of the cross, he directed Constantine to frame a similar standard, and to march, with an assurance of victory, against Maxentius and all his enemies. [48](#) The learned bishop of Cæsarea appears to be sensible, that the recent discovery of this marvellous anecdote would excite some surprise and distrust among the most pious of his readers. Yet, instead of ascertaining the precise circumstances of time and place, which always serve to detect falsehood or establish truth; [49](#) instead of collecting and recording the evidence of so many living witnesses who must have been spectators of this stupendous miracle; [50](#) Eusebius contents himself with alleging a very singular testimony; that of the deceased Constantine, who, many years after the event, in the freedom of conversation, had related to him this extraordinary incident of his own life, and had attested the truth of it by a solemn oath. The prudence and gratitude of the learned prelate forbade him to suspect the veracity of his victorious master; but he plainly intimates, that in a fact of such a nature, he should have refused his assent to any meaner authority. This motive of credibility could not survive the power of the Flavian family; and the celestial sign, which the Infidels might afterwards deride, [51](#) was disregarded by the Christians of the age which immediately followed the conversion of Constantine. [52](#) But the Catholic church, both of the East and of the West, has adopted a prodigy which favors, or seems to favor, the popular worship of the cross. The vision of Constantine maintained an honorable place in the legend of superstition, till the bold and sagacious spirit of criticism presumed to depreciate the triumph, and to arraign the truth, of the first Christian emperor. [53](#)

45

[\(return\)](#)

[M. Freret (Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. iv. p. 411-437) explains, by physical causes, many of the prodigies of antiquity; and Fabricius, who is abused by both parties, vainly tries to introduce the celestial cross of Constantine among the solar halos. Bibliothec. Græc. tom. iv. p. 8-29. * Note: The great difficulty in resolving it into a natural phenomenon, arises from the inscription; even the most heated or awe-struck imagination would hardly discover distinct and legible letters in a solar halo. But the inscription may have been a later embellishment, or an interpretation of the meaning which the sign was construed to convey. Compare Heirichen, Excur in locum Eusebii, and the authors quoted.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Nazarius inter Panegy. Vet. x. 14, 15. It is unnecessary to name the moderns, whose

undistinguishing and ravenous appetite has swallowed even the Pagan bait of Nazarius.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[The apparitions of Castor and Pollux, particularly to announce the Macedonian victory, are attested by historians and public monuments. See Cicero de Natura Deorum, ii. 2, iii. 5, 6. Florus, ii. 12. Valerius Maximus, l. i. c. 8, No. 1. Yet the most recent of these miracles is omitted, and indirectly denied, by Livy, (xlv. i.)]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, l. i. c. 28, 29, 30. The silence of the same Eusebius, in his Ecclesiastical History, is deeply felt by those advocates for the miracle who are not absolutely callous.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[The narrative of Constantine seems to indicate, that he saw the cross in the sky before he passed the Alps against Maxentius. The scene has been fixed by provincial vanity at Trèves, Besançon, &c. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 573.]

50 [\(return\)](#)

[The pious Tillemont (Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 1317) rejects with a sigh the useful Acts of Artemius, a veteran and a martyr, who attests as an eye-witness to the vision of Constantine.]

51 [\(return\)](#)

[Gelasius Cyzic. in Act. Concil. Nicen. l. i. c. 4.]

52 [\(return\)](#)

[The advocates for the vision are unable to produce a single testimony from the Fathers of the fourth and fifth centuries, who, in their voluminous writings, repeatedly celebrate the triumph of the church and of Constantine. As these venerable men had not any dislike to a miracle, we may suspect, (and the suspicion is confirmed by the ignorance of Jerom,) that they were all unacquainted with the life of Constantine by Eusebius. This tract was recovered by the diligence of those who translated or continued his Ecclesiastical History, and who have represented in various colors the vision of the cross.]

53 [\(return\)](#)

[Godefroy was the first, who, in the year 1643, (Not ad Philostorgium, l. i. c. 6, p. 16,) expressed any doubt of a miracle which had been supported with equal zeal by Cardinal Baronius, and the Centuriators of Magdeburgh. Since that time, many of the Protestant critics have inclined towards doubt

and disbelief. The objections are urged, with great force, by M. Chauffepié, (*Dictionnaire Critique*, tom. iv. p. 6–11;) and, in the year 1774, a doctor of Sorbonne, the Abbé du Voisin published an apology, which deserves the praise of learning and moderation. * Note: The first Excursus of Heinichen (in *Vitam Constantini*, p. 507) contains a full summary of the opinions and arguments of the later writers who have discussed this interminable subject. As to his conversion, where interest and inclination, state policy, and, if not a sincere conviction of its truth, at least a respect, an esteem, an awe of Christianity, thus coincided, Constantine himself would probably have been unable to trace the actual history of the workings of his own mind, or to assign its real influence to each concurrent motive.—M]

The Protestant and philosophic readers of the present age will incline to believe, that in the account of his own conversion, Constantine attested a wilful falsehood by a solemn and deliberate perjury. They may not hesitate to pronounce, that in the choice of a religion, his mind was determined only by a sense of interest; and that (according to the expression of a profane poet) [54](#) he used the altars of the church as a convenient footstool to the throne of the empire. A conclusion so harsh and so absolute is not, however, warranted by our knowledge of human nature, of Constantine, or of Christianity. In an age of religious fervor, the most artful statesmen are observed to feel some part of the enthusiasm which they inspire, and the most orthodox saints assume the dangerous privilege of defending the cause of truth by the arms of deceit and falsehood.

Personal interest is often the standard of our belief, as well as of our practice; and the same motives of temporal advantage which might influence the public conduct and professions of Constantine, would insensibly dispose his mind to embrace a religion so propitious to his fame and fortunes. His vanity was gratified by the flattering assurance, that *he* had been chosen by Heaven to reign over the earth; success had justified his divine title to the throne, and that title was founded on the truth of the Christian revelation. As real virtue is sometimes excited by undeserved applause, the specious piety of Constantine, if at first it was only specious, might gradually, by the influence of praise, of habit, and of example, be matured into serious faith and fervent devotion. The bishops and teachers of the new sect, whose dress and manners had not qualified them for the residence of a court, were admitted to the Imperial table; they accompanied the monarch in his expeditions; and the ascendant which one of them, an Egyptian or a Spaniard, [55](#) acquired over his mind, was imputed by the Pagans to the effect of magic. [56](#) Lactantius, who has adorned the precepts of the gospel with the eloquence of Cicero, [57](#) and Eusebius, who has consecrated the learning and philosophy of the Greeks to the service of religion, [58](#) were both received into the friendship and

familiarity of their sovereign; and those able masters of controversy could patiently watch the soft and yielding moments of persuasion, and dexterously apply the arguments which were the best adapted to his character and understanding. Whatever advantages might be derived from the acquisition of an Imperial proselyte, he was distinguished by the splendor of his purple, rather than by the superiority of wisdom, or virtue, from the many thousands of his subjects who had embraced the doctrines of Christianity. Nor can it be deemed incredible, that the mind of an unlettered soldier should have yielded to the weight of evidence, which, in a more enlightened age, has satisfied or subdued the reason of a Grotius, a Pascal, or a Locke. In the midst of the incessant labors of his great office, this soldier employed, or affected to employ, the hours of the night in the diligent study of the Scriptures, and the composition of theological discourses; which he afterwards pronounced in the presence of a numerous and applauding audience. In a very long discourse, which is still extant, the royal preacher expatiates on the various proofs still extant, the royal preacher expatiates on the various proofs of religion; but he dwells with peculiar complacency on the Sibylline verses, [59](#) and the fourth eclogue of Virgil. [60](#) Forty years before the birth of Christ, the Mantuan bard, as if inspired by the celestial muse of Isaiah, had celebrated, with all the pomp of oriental metaphor, the return of the Virgin, the fall of the serpent, the approaching birth of a godlike child, the offspring of the great Jupiter, who should expiate the guilt of human kind, and govern the peaceful universe with the virtues of his father; the rise and appearance of a heavenly race, primitive nation throughout the world; and the gradual restoration of the innocence and felicity of the golden age. The poet was perhaps unconscious of the secret sense and object of these sublime predictions, which have been so unworthily applied to the infant son of a consul, or a triumvir; [61](#) but if a more splendid, and indeed specious interpretation of the fourth eclogue contributed to the conversion of the first Christian emperor, Virgil may deserve to be ranked among the most successful missionaries of the gospel. [62](#)

54

[\(return\)](#)

[Lors Constantin dit ces propres paroles:
J'ai renversé le culte des idoles:
Sur les debris de leurs temples fumans
Au Dieu du Ciel j'ai prodigue l'encens.
Mais tous mes soins pour sa grandeur supreme
N'eurent jamais d'autre objêt que moi-même;

Les saints autels n'étoient à mes regards
Qu'un marchepié du trône des Césars.
L'ambition, la fureur, les delices
Étoient mes Dieux, avoient mes sacrifices.
L'or des Chrétiens, leur intrigues, leur sang
Ont cimenté ma fortune et mon rang.

The poem which contains these lines may be read
with pleasure, but cannot be named with decency.]

- 55 [\(return\)](#)
[This favorite was probably the great Osius, bishop of Cordova, who preferred the pastoral care of the whole church to the government of a particular diocese. His character is magnificently, though concisely, expressed by Athanasius, (tom. i. p. 703.) See Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 524-561. Osius was accused, perhaps unjustly, of retiring from court with a very ample fortune.]
- 56 [\(return\)](#)
[See Eusebius (in Vit. Constant. passim) and Zosimus, l. ii. p. 104.]
- 57 [\(return\)](#)
[The Christianity of Lactantius was of a moral rather than of a mysterious cast. "Erat pæne rudis (says the orthodox Bull) disciplinæ Christianæ, et in rhetorica melius quam in theologia versatus." Defensio Fidei Nicenæ, sect. ii. c. 14.]
- 58 [\(return\)](#)
[Fabricius, with his usual diligence, has collected a list of between three and four hundred authors quoted in the Evangelical Preparation of Eusebius. See Bibl. Græc. l. v. c. 4, tom. vi. p. 37-56.]
- 59 [\(return\)](#)
[See Constantin. Orat. ad Sanctos, c. 19 20. He chiefly depends on a mysterious acrostic, composed in the sixth age after the Deluge, by the Erythræan Sibyl, and translated by Cicero into Latin. The initial letters of the thirty-four Greek verses form this prophetic sentence: Jesus Christ, Son of God, Savior of the World.]
- 60 [\(return\)](#)
[In his paraphrase of Virgil, the emperor has frequently assisted and improved the literal sense of the Latin ext. See Blondel des Sibylles, l. i. c. 14, 15, 16.]
- 61 [\(return\)](#)
[The different claims of an elder and younger son of Pollio, of Julia, of Drusus, of Marcellus, are found to be incompatible with chronology, history, and the good sense of Virgil.]
- 62 [\(return\)](#)
[See Lowth de Sacra Poesi Hebræorum Prælect. xxi. p. 289- 293. In the examination of the fourth eclogue, the respectable bishop of London has displayed learning, taste, ingenuity, and a temperate enthusiasm, which exalts his fancy without degrading his judgment.]

Chapter XX: Conversion Of Constantine.—Part III.

The awful mysteries of the Christian faith and worship were concealed from the eyes of strangers, and even of catechu mens, with an affected secrecy, which served to excite their wonder and curiosity. [63](#) But the severe rules of discipline which the prudence of the bishops had instituted, were relaxed by the same prudence in favor of an Imperial proselyte, whom it was so important to allure, by every gentle condescension, into the pale of the church; and Constantine was permitted, at least by a tacit dispensation, to enjoy *most* of the privileges, before he had contracted *any* of the obligations, of a Christian. Instead of retiring from the congregation, when the voice of the deacon dismissed the profane multitude, he prayed with the faithful, disputed with the bishops, preached on the most sublime and intricate subjects of theology, celebrated with sacred rites the vigil of Easter, and publicly declared himself, not only a partaker, but, in some measure, a priest and hierophant of the Christian mysteries. [64](#) The pride of Constantine might assume, and his services had deserved, some extraordinary distinction: and ill-timed rigor might have blasted the unripened fruits of his conversion; and if the doors of the church had been strictly closed against a prince who had deserted the altars of the gods, the master of the empire would have been left destitute of any form of religious worship. In his last visit to Rome, he piously disclaimed and insulted the superstition of his ancestors, by refusing to lead the military procession of the equestrian order, and to offer the public vows to the Jupiter of the Capitoline Hill. [65](#) Many years before his baptism and death, Constantine had proclaimed to the world, that neither his person nor his image should ever more be seen within the walls of an idolatrous temple; while he distributed through the provinces a variety of medals and pictures, which represented the emperor in an humble and suppliant posture of Christian devotion. [66](#)

63

[\(return\)](#)

[The distinction between the public and the secret parts of divine service, the *missa catechumenorum* and the *missa fidelium*, and the mysterious veil which piety or policy had cast over the latter, are very judiciously explained by Thiers, Exposition du Saint Sacrament, l. i. c. 8- 12, p. 59-91: but as, on this subject, the Papists may reasonably be suspected, a Protestant reader will depend with more confidence on the learned Bingham, Antiquities, l. x. c. 5.]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[See Eusebius in Vit. Const. l. iv. c. 15-32, and the whole tenor of Constantine's Sermon. The faith and devotion of the emperor has furnished Batonics with a specious argument in favor of his early baptism. Note: Compare Heinichen, Excursus iv. et v., where these questions are examined with candor

and acuteness, and with constant reference to the opinions of more modern writers.—M.]

65

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 105.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius in Vit. Constant. l. iv. c. 15, 16.]

The pride of Constantine, who refused the privileges of a catechumen, cannot easily be explained or excused; but the delay of his baptism may be justified by the maxims and the practice of ecclesiastical antiquity. The sacrament of baptism [67](#) was regularly administered by the bishop himself, with his assistant clergy, in the cathedral church of the diocese, during the fifty days between the solemn festivals of Easter and Pentecost; and this holy term admitted a numerous band of infants and adult persons into the bosom of the church. The discretion of parents often suspended the baptism of their children till they could understand the obligations which they contracted: the severity of ancient bishops exacted from the new converts a novitiate of two or three years; and the catechumens themselves, from different motives of a temporal or a spiritual nature, were seldom impatient to assume the character of perfect and initiated Christians. The sacrament of baptism was supposed to contain a full and absolute expiation of sin; and the soul was instantly restored to its original purity, and entitled to the promise of eternal salvation. Among the proselytes of Christianity, there are many who judged it imprudent to precipitate a salutary rite, which could not be repeated; to throw away an inestimable privilege, which could never be recovered. By the delay of their baptism, they could venture freely to indulge their passions in the enjoyments of this world, while they still retained in their own hands the means of a sure and easy absolution. [68](#) The sublime theory of the gospel had made a much fainter impression on the heart than on the understanding of Constantine himself. He pursued the great object of his ambition through the dark and bloody paths of war and policy; and, after the victory, he abandoned himself, without moderation, to the abuse of his fortune. Instead of asserting his just superiority above the imperfect heroism and profane philosophy of Trajan and the Antonines, the mature age of Constantine forfeited the reputation which he had acquired in his youth. As he gradually advanced in the knowledge of truth, he proportionally declined in the practice of virtue; and the same year of his reign in which he convened the council of Nice, was polluted by the execution, or rather murder, of his eldest son. This date is alone sufficient to refute the ignorant and malicious suggestions of Zosimus, [69](#) who affirms, that, after the death of Crispus, the remorse of his father accepted from the ministers of christianity the expiation which he had vainly solicited from the Pagan pontiffs. At the time of the death of Crispus, the emperor could no longer hesitate in the choice of a religion; he could no longer be ignorant that the church was possessed of an infallible remedy, though he chose to defer the application of it till the approach of death had removed the temptation and danger of a relapse. The bishops whom he summoned, in his last illness, to the palace of Nicomedia, were edified by the fervor with which he requested and received the sacrament of baptism, by the solemn

protestation that the remainder of his life should be worthy of a disciple of Christ, and by his humble refusal to wear the Imperial purple after he had been clothed in the white garment of a Neophyte. The example and reputation of Constantine seemed to countenance the delay of baptism. [70](#) Future tyrants were encouraged to believe, that the innocent blood which they might shed in a long reign would instantly be washed away in the waters of regeneration; and the abuse of religion dangerously undermined the foundations of moral virtue.

67

[\(return\)](#)

[The theory and practice of antiquity, with regard to the sacrament of baptism, have been copiously explained by Dom Chardon, *Hist. des Sacremens*, tom. i. p. 3-405; Dom Martenne de *Ritibus Ecclesiæ Antiquis*, tom. i.; and by Bingham, in the tenth and eleventh books of his *Christian Antiquities*. One circumstance may be observed, in which the modern churches have materially departed from the ancient custom. The sacrament of baptism (even when it was administered to infants) was immediately followed by confirmation and the holy communion.]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[The Fathers, who censured this criminal delay, could not deny the certain and victorious efficacy even of a death-bed baptism. The ingenious rhetoric of Chrysostom could find only three arguments against these prudent Christians. 1. That we should love and pursue virtue for her own sake, and not merely for the reward. 2. That we may be surprised by death without an opportunity of baptism. 3. That although we shall be placed in heaven, we shall only twinkle like little stars, when compared to the suns of righteousness who have run their appointed course with labor, with success, and with glory. Chrysos tom in *Epist. ad Hebræos*, *Homil. xiii.* apud Chardon, *Hist. des Sacremens*, tom. i. p. 49. I believe that this delay of baptism, though attended with the most pernicious consequences, was never condemned by any general or provincial council, or by any public act or declaration of the church. The zeal of the bishops was easily kindled on much slighter occasion. * Note: This passage of Chrysostom, though not in his more forcible manner, is not quite fairly represented. He is stronger in other places, in *Act. Hom. xxiii.*—and *Hom. i.* Compare, likewise, the sermon of Gregory of Nysea on this subject, and Gregory Nazianzen. After all, to those who believed in the efficacy of baptism, what argument could be more conclusive, than the danger of dying without it? *Orat. xl.*—M.]

[Zosimus, l. ii. p. 104. For this disingenuous falsehood he has deserved and experienced the harshest treatment from all the ecclesiastical writers, except Cardinal Baronius, (A. D. 324, No. 15-28,) who had occasion to employ the infidel on a particular service against the Arian Eusebius. Note: Heyne, in a valuable note on this passage of Zosimus, has shown decisively that this malicious way of accounting for the conversion of Constantine was not an invention of Zosimus. It appears to have been the current calumny eagerly adopted and propagated by the exasperated Pagan party. Reitemeter, a later editor of Zosimus, whose notes are retained in the recent edition, in the collection of the Byzantine historians, has a disquisition on the passage, as candid, but not more conclusive than some which have preceded him—M.]

[Eusebius, l. iv. c. 61, 62, 63. The bishop of Cæsarea supposes the salvation of Constantine with the most perfect confidence.]

The gratitude of the church has exalted the virtues and excused the failings of a generous patron, who seated Christianity on the throne of the Roman world; and the Greeks, who celebrate the festival of the Imperial saint, seldom mention the name of Constantine without adding the title of *equal to the Apostles*. [71](#) Such a comparison, if it allude to the character of those divine missionaries, must be imputed to the extravagance of impious flattery. But if the parallel be confined to the extent and number of their evangelic victories the success of Constantine might perhaps equal that of the Apostles themselves. By the edicts of toleration, he removed the temporal disadvantages which had hitherto retarded the progress of Christianity; and its active and numerous ministers received a free permission, a liberal encouragement, to recommend the salutary truths of revelation by every argument which could affect the reason or piety of mankind. The exact balance of the two religions continued but a moment; and the piercing eye of ambition and avarice soon discovered, that the profession of Christianity might contribute to the interest of the present, as well as of a future life. [72](#) The hopes of wealth and honors, the example of an emperor, his exhortations, his irresistible smiles, diffused conviction among the venal and obsequious crowds which usually fill the apartments of a palace. The cities which signalized a forward zeal by the voluntary destruction of their temples, were distinguished by municipal privileges, and rewarded with popular donatives; and the new capital of the East gloried in the singular advantage that Constantinople was never profaned by the worship of idols. [73](#) As the lower ranks of society are governed by imitation, the conversion of those who possessed any eminence of birth, of power, or

of riches, was soon followed by dependent multitudes. [74](#) The salvation of the common people was purchased at an easy rate, if it be true that, in one year, twelve thousand men were baptized at Rome, besides a proportionable number of women and children, and that a white garment, with twenty pieces of gold, had been promised by the emperor to every convert. [75](#) The powerful influence of Constantine was not circumscribed by the narrow limits of his life, or of his dominions. The education which he bestowed on his sons and nephews secured to the empire a race of princes, whose faith was still more lively and sincere, as they imbibed, in their earliest infancy, the spirit, or at least the doctrine, of Christianity. War and commerce had spread the knowledge of the gospel beyond the confines of the Roman provinces; and the Barbarians, who had disdained as humble and proscribed sect, soon learned to esteem a religion which had been so lately embraced by the greatest monarch, and the most civilized nation, of the globe. [76](#) The Goths and Germans, who enlisted under the standard of Rome, revered the cross which glittered at the head of the legions, and their fierce countrymen received at the same time the lessons of faith and of humanity. The kings of Iberia and Armenia [76a](#) worshipped the god of their protector; and their subjects, who have invariably preserved the name of Christians, soon formed a sacred and perpetual connection with their Roman brethren. The Christians of Persia were suspected, in time of war, of preferring their religion to their country; but as long as peace subsisted between the two empires, the persecuting spirit of the Magi was effectually restrained by the interposition of Constantine. [77](#) The rays of the gospel illuminated the coast of India. The colonies of Jews, who had penetrated into Arabia and Ethiopia, [78](#) opposed the progress of Christianity; but the labor of the missionaries was in some measure facilitated by a previous knowledge of the Mosaic revelation; and Abyssinia still reveres the memory of Frumentius, [78a](#) who, in the time of Constantine, devoted his life to the conversion of those sequestered regions. Under the reign of his son Constantius, Theophilus, [79](#) who was himself of Indian extraction, was invested with the double character of ambassador and bishop. He embarked on the Red Sea with two hundred horses of the purest breed of Cappadocia, which were sent by the emperor to the prince of the Sabæans, or Homerites. Theophilus was intrusted with many other useful or curious presents, which might raise the admiration, and conciliate the friendship, of the Barbarians; and he successfully employed several years in a pastoral visit to the churches of the torrid zone. [80](#)

71

[\(return\)](#)

[See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 429. The Greeks, the Russians, and, in the darker ages, the Latins themselves, have been desirous of placing Constantine in the catalogue of saints.]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[See the third and fourth books of his life. He was accustomed to say, that whether Christ was preached in pretence, or in truth, he should still rejoice, (l. iii. c. 58.)]

- 73 [\(return\)](#)
[M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 374, 616) has defended, with strength and spirit, the virgin purity of Constantinople against some malevolent insinuations of the Pagan Zosimus.]
- 74 [\(return\)](#)
[The author of the Histoire Politique et Philosophique des deux Indes (tom. i. p. 9) condemns a law of Constantine, which gave freedom to all the slaves who should embrace Christianity. The emperor did indeed publish a law, which restrained the Jews from circumcising, perhaps from keeping, any Christian slave. (See Euseb. in Vit. Constant. l. iv. c. 27, and Cod. Theod. l. xvi. tit. ix., with Godefroy's Commentary, tom. vi. p. 247.) But this imperfect exception related only to the Jews, and the great body of slaves, who were the property of Christian or Pagan masters, could not improve their temporal condition by changing their religion. I am ignorant by what guides the Abbé Raynal was deceived; as the total absence of quotations is the unpardonable blemish of his entertaining history.]
- 75 [\(return\)](#)
[See Acta S^{ci} Silvestri, and Hist. Eccles. Nicephor. Callist. l. vii. c. 34, ap. Baronium Annal. Eccles. A. D. 324, No. 67, 74. Such evidence is contemptible enough; but these circumstances are in themselves so probable, that the learned Dr. Howell (History of the World, vol. iii. p. 14) has not scrupled to adopt them.]
- 76 [\(return\)](#)
[The conversion of the Barbarians under the reign of Constantine is celebrated by the ecclesiastical historians. (See Sozomen, l. ii. c. 6, and Theodoret, l. i. c. 23, 24.) But Rufinus, the Latin translator of Eusebius, deserves to be considered as an original authority. His information was curiously collected from one of the companions of the Apostle of Æthiopia, and from Bacurius, an Iberian prince, who was count of the domestics. Father Mamachi has given an ample compilation on the progress of Christianity, in the first and second volumes of his great but imperfect work.]
- 76a [\(return\)](#)
[According to the Georgian chronicles, Iberia (Georgia) was converted by the virgin Nino, who effected an extraordinary cure on the wife of the king Mihran. The temple of the god Aramazt, or Armaz, not far from the capital Mtskitha, was

destroyed, and the cross erected in its place. Le Beau, i. 202, with St. Martin's Notes.—St. Martin has likewise clearly shown (St. Martin, Add. to Le Beau, i. 291) Armenia was the first *nation* which embraced Christianity, (Addition to Le Beau, i. 76. and Mémoire sur l'Armenie, i. 305.) Gibbon himself suspected this truth.—“Instead of maintaining that the conversion of Armenia was not attempted with any degree of success, till the sceptre was in the hands of an orthodox emperor,” I ought to have said, that the seeds of the faith were deeply sown during the season of the last and greatest persecution, that many Roman exiles might assist the labors of Gregory, and that the renowned Tiridates, the hero of the East, may dispute with Constantine the honor of being the first sovereign who embraced the Christian religion [Vindication]

77 [\(return\)](#)

[See, in Eusebius, (in Vit. l. iv. c. 9,) the pressing and pathetic epistle of Constantine in favor of his Christian brethren of Persia.]

78 [\(return\)](#)

[See Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, tom. vii. p. 182, tom. viii. p. 333, tom. ix. p. 810. The curious diligence of this writer pursues the Jewish exiles to the extremities of the globe.]

78a [\(return\)](#)

[Abba Salama, or Fremonatus, is mentioned in the Tareek Negushti, chronicle of the kings of Abyssinia. Salt's Travels, vol. ii. p. 464.—M.]

79 [\(return\)](#)

[Theophilus had been given in his infancy as a hostage by his countrymen of the Isle of Diva, and was educated by the Romans in learning and piety. The Maldives, of which Male, or Diva, may be the capital, are a cluster of 1900 or 2000 minute islands in the Indian Ocean. The ancients were imperfectly acquainted with the Maldives; but they are described in the two Mahometan travellers of the ninth century, published by Renaudot, Geograph. Nubiensis, p. 30, 31 D'Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale p. 704. Hist. Generale des Voy ages, tom. viii.—See the dissertation of M. Letronne on this question. He conceives that Theophilus was born in the island of Dahlak, in the Arabian Gulf. His embassy was to Abyssinia rather than to India. Letronne, Materiaux pour l'Hist. du Christianisme en Egypte Indie, et Abyssinie. Paris, 1832 3d Dissert.—M.]

[Philostorgius, l. iii. c. 4, 5, 6, with Godefroy's learned observations. The historical narrative is soon lost in an inquiry concerning the seat of Paradise, strange monsters, &c.]

The irresistible power of the Roman emperors was displayed in the important and dangerous change of the national religion. The terrors of a military force silenced the faint and unsupported murmurs of the Pagans, and there was reason to expect, that the cheerful submission of the Christian clergy, as well as people, would be the result of conscience and gratitude. It was long since established, as a fundamental maxim of the Roman constitution, that every rank of citizens was alike subject to the laws, and that the care of religion was the right as well as duty of the civil magistrate. Constantine and his successors could not easily persuade themselves that they had forfeited, by their conversion, any branch of the Imperial prerogatives, or that they were incapable of giving laws to a religion which they had protected and embraced. The emperors still continued to exercise a supreme jurisdiction over the ecclesiastical order, and the sixteenth book of the Theodosian code represents, under a variety of titles, the authority which they assumed in the government of the Catholic church. But the distinction of the spiritual and temporal powers, [81](#) which had never been imposed on the free spirit of Greece and Rome, was introduced and confirmed by the legal establishment of Christianity. The office of supreme pontiff, which, from the time of Numa to that of Augustus, had always been exercised by one of the most eminent of the senators, was at length united to the Imperial dignity. The first magistrate of the state, as often as he was prompted by superstition or policy, performed with his own hands the sacerdotal functions; [82](#) nor was there any order of priests, either at Rome or in the provinces, who claimed a more sacred character among men, or a more intimate communication with the gods. But in the Christian church, which intrusts the service of the altar to a perpetual succession of consecrated ministers, the monarch, whose spiritual rank is less honorable than that of the meanest deacon, was seated below the rails of the sanctuary, and confounded with the rest of the faithful multitude. [83](#) The emperor might be saluted as the father of his people, but he owed a filial duty and reverence to the fathers of the church; and the same marks of respect, which Constantine had paid to the persons of saints and confessors, were soon exacted by the pride of the episcopal order. [84](#) A secret conflict between the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdictions embarrassed the operation of the Roman government; and a pious emperor was alarmed by the guilt and danger of touching with a profane hand the ark of the covenant. The separation of men into the two orders of the clergy and of the laity was, indeed, familiar to many nations of antiquity; and the priests of India, of Persia, of Assyria, of Judea, of Æthiopia, of Egypt, and of Gaul, derived from a celestial origin the temporal power and possessions which they had acquired. These venerable institutions had gradually assimilated themselves to the manners and government of their respective countries; [85](#) but the opposition or contempt of the civil power served to cement the discipline of the primitive church. The

Christians had been obliged to elect their own magistrates, to raise and distribute a peculiar revenue, and to regulate the internal policy of their republic by a code of laws, which were ratified by the consent of the people and the practice of three hundred years. When Constantine embraced the faith of the Christians, he seemed to contract a perpetual alliance with a distinct and independent society; and the privileges granted or confirmed by that emperor, or by his successors, were accepted, not as the precarious favors of the court, but as the just and inalienable rights of the ecclesiastical order.

81 [\(return\)](#)

[See the epistle of Osius, ap. Athanasium, vol. i. p. 840. The public remonstrance which Osius was forced to address to the son, contained the same principles of ecclesiastical and civil government which he had secretly instilled into the mind of the father.]

82 [\(return\)](#)

[M. de la Bastiel has evidently proved, that Augustus and his successors exercised in person all the sacred functions of pontifex maximus, of high priest, of the Roman empire.]

83 [\(return\)](#)

[Something of a contrary practice had insensibly prevailed in the church of Constantinople; but the rigid Ambrose commanded Theodosius to retire below the rails, and taught him to know the difference between a king and a priest. See Theodoret, l. v. c. 18.]

84 [\(return\)](#)

[At the table of the emperor Maximus, Martin, bishop of Tours, received the cup from an attendant, and gave it to the presbyter, his companion, before he allowed the emperor to drink; the empress waited on Martin at table. Sulpicius Severus, in Vit. S^{ti} Martin, c. 23, and Dialogue ii. 7. Yet it may be doubted, whether these extraordinary compliments were paid to the bishop or the saint. The honors usually granted to the former character may be seen in Bingham's Antiquities, l. ii. c. 9, and Vales ad Theodoret, l. iv. c. 6. See the haughty ceremonial which Leontius, bishop of Tripoli, imposed on the empress. Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 754. (Patres Apostol. tom. ii. p. 179.)]

85 [\(return\)](#)

[Plutarch, in his treatise of Isis and Osiris, informs us that the kings of Egypt, who were not already priests, were initiated, after their election, into the sacerdotal order.]

The Catholic church was administered by the spiritual and legal jurisdiction of eighteen hundred bishops; [86](#) of whom one thousand were seated in the Greek, and eight hundred in the Latin, provinces of the empire. The extent and boundaries of their respective dioceses had been variously and accidentally decided by the zeal and success of the first missionaries, by the wishes of the people, and by the propagation of the gospel. Episcopal churches were closely planted along the banks of the Nile, on the sea-coast of Africa, in the proconsular Asia, and through the southern provinces of Italy. The bishops of Gaul and Spain, of Thrace and Pontus, reigned over an ample territory, and delegated their rural suffragans to execute the subordinate duties of the pastoral office. [87](#) A Christian diocese might be spread over a province, or reduced to a village; but all the bishops possessed an equal and indelible character: they all derived the same powers and privileges from the apostles, from the people, and from the laws. While the *civil* and *military* professions were separated by the policy of Constantine, a new and perpetual order of *ecclesiastical* ministers, always respectable, sometimes dangerous, was established in the church and state. The important review of their station and attributes may be distributed under the following heads: I. Popular Election. II. Ordination of the Clergy. III. Property. IV. Civil Jurisdiction. V. Spiritual censures. VI. Exercise of public oratory. VII. Privilege of legislative assemblies.

86

[\(return\)](#)

[The numbers are not ascertained by any ancient writer or original catalogue; for the partial lists of the eastern churches are comparatively modern. The patient diligence of Charles a S^{to} Paolo, of Luke Holstentius, and of Bingham, has laboriously investigated all the episcopal sees of the Catholic church, which was almost commensurate with the Roman empire. The ninth book of the Christian antiquities is a very accurate map of ecclesiastical geography.]

87

[\(return\)](#)

[On the subject of rural bishops, or *Chorepiscopi*, who voted in tynods, and conferred the minor orders, See Thomassin, Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. i. p. 447, &c., and Chardon, Hist. des Sacremens, tom. v. p. 395, &c. They do not appear till the fourth century; and this equivocal character, which had excited the jealousy of the prelates, was abolished before the end of the tenth, both in the East and the West.]

I. The freedom of election subsisted long after the legal establishment of Christianity; [88](#) and the subjects of Rome enjoyed in the church the privilege which they had lost in the republic, of choosing the magistrates whom they were bound to obey. As soon as a bishop had closed his eyes, the metropolitan issued a commission to one of his suffragans to administer the vacant see, and prepare, within a limited time, the future election. The right of voting was vested in the inferior clergy, who were best

qualified to judge of the merit of the candidates; in the senators or nobles of the city, all those who were distinguished by their rank or property; and finally in the whole body of the people, who, on the appointed day, flocked in multitudes from the most remote parts of the diocese, [89](#) and sometimes silenced by their tumultuous acclamations, the voice of reason and the laws of discipline. These acclamations might accidentally fix on the head of the most deserving competitor; of some ancient presbyter, some holy monk, or some layman, conspicuous for his zeal and piety. But the episcopal chair was solicited, especially in the great and opulent cities of the empire, as a temporal rather than as a spiritual dignity. The interested views, the selfish and angry passions, the arts of perfidy and dissimulation, the secret corruption, the open and even bloody violence which had formerly disgraced the freedom of election in the commonwealths of Greece and Rome, too often influenced the choice of the successors of the apostles. While one of the candidates boasted the honors of his family, a second allured his judges by the delicacies of a plentiful table, and a third, more guilty than his rivals, offered to share the plunder of the church among the accomplices of his sacrilegious hopes [90](#) The civil as well as ecclesiastical laws attempted to exclude the populace from this solemn and important transaction. The canons of ancient discipline, by requiring several episcopal qualifications, of age, station, &c., restrained, in some measure, the indiscriminate caprice of the electors. The authority of the provincial bishops, who were assembled in the vacant church to consecrate the choice of the people, was interposed to moderate their passions and to correct their mistakes. The bishops could refuse to ordain an unworthy candidate, and the rage of contending factions sometimes accepted their impartial mediation. The submission, or the resistance, of the clergy and people, on various occasions, afforded different precedents, which were insensibly converted into positive laws and provincial customs; [91](#) but it was every where admitted, as a fundamental maxim of religious policy, that no bishop could be imposed on an orthodox church, without the consent of its members. The emperors, as the guardians of the public peace, and as the first citizens of Rome and Constantinople, might effectually declare their wishes in the choice of a primate; but those absolute monarchs respected the freedom of ecclesiastical elections; and while they distributed and resumed the honors of the state and army, they allowed eighteen hundred perpetual magistrates to receive their important offices from the free suffrages of the people. [92](#) It was agreeable to the dictates of justice, that these magistrates should not desert an honorable station from which they could not be removed; but the wisdom of councils endeavored, without much success, to enforce the residence, and to prevent the translation, of bishops. The discipline of the West was indeed less relaxed than that of the East; but the same passions which made those regulations necessary, rendered them ineffectual. The reproaches which angry prelates have so vehemently urged against each other, serve only to expose their common guilt, and their mutual indiscretion.

election of bishops during the five first centuries, both in the East and in the West; but he shows a very partial bias in favor of the episcopal aristocracy. Bingham, (l. iv. c. 2) is moderate; and Chardon (Hist. des Sacrements tom. v. p. 108-128) is very clear and concise. * Note: This freedom was extremely limited, and soon annihilated; already, from the third century, the deacons were no longer nominated by the members of the community, but by the bishops. Although it appears by the letters of Cyprian, that even in his time, no priest could be elected without the consent of the community. (Ep. 68,) that election was far from being altogether free. The bishop proposed to his parishioners the candidate whom he had chosen, and they were permitted to make such objections as might be suggested by his conduct and morals. (St. Cyprian, Ep. 33.) They lost this last right towards the middle of the fourth century.—G]

89 [\(return\)](#)

[Incredibilis multitudo, non solum ex eo oppido, (*Tours*,) sed etiam ex vicinis urbibus ad suffragia ferenda convenerat, &c. Sulpicius Severus, in Vit. Martin. c. 7. The council of Laodicea, (canon xiii.) prohibits mobs and tumults; and Justinian confines the right of election to the nobility. Novel. cxxiii. l.]

90 [\(return\)](#)

[The epistles of Sidonius Apollinaris (iv. 25, vii. 5, 9) exhibit some of the scandals of the Gallican church; and Gaul was less polished and less corrupt than the East.]

91 [\(return\)](#)

[A compromise was sometimes introduced by law or by consent; either the bishops or the people chose one of the three candidates who had been named by the other party.]

92 [\(return\)](#)

[All the examples quoted by Thomassin (Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. ii. l. iii. c. vi. p. 704-714) appear to be extraordinary acts of power, and even of oppression. The confirmation of the bishop of Alexandria is mentioned by Philostorgius as a more regular proceeding. (Hist Eccles. l. ii. ll.) * Note: The statement of Planck is more consistent with history: "From the middle of the fourth century, the bishops of some of the larger churches, particularly those of the Imperial residence, were almost always chosen under the influence of the court, and often directly and immediately

II. The bishops alone possessed the faculty of *spiritual* generation: and this extraordinary privilege might compensate, in some degree, for the painful celibacy [93](#) which was imposed as a virtue, as a duty, and at length as a positive obligation. The religions of antiquity, which established a separate order of priests, dedicated a holy race, a tribe or family, to the perpetual service of the gods. [94](#) Such institutions were founded for possession, rather than conquest. The children of the priests enjoyed, with proud and indolent security, their sacred inheritance; and the fiery spirit of enthusiasm was abated by the cares, the pleasures, and the endearments of domestic life. But the Christian sanctuary was open to every ambitious candidate, who aspired to its heavenly promises or temporal possessions. This office of priests, like that of soldiers or magistrates, was strenuously exercised by those men, whose temper and abilities had prompted them to embrace the ecclesiastical profession, or who had been selected by a discerning bishop, as the best qualified to promote the glory and interest of the church. The bishops [95](#) (till the abuse was restrained by the prudence of the laws) might constrain the reluctant, and protect the distressed; and the imposition of hands forever bestowed some of the most valuable privileges of civil society. The whole body of the Catholic clergy, more numerous perhaps than the legions, was exempted [95a] by the emperors from all service, private or public, all municipal offices, and all personal taxes and contributions, which pressed on their fellow-citizens with intolerable weight; and the duties of their holy profession were accepted as a full discharge of their obligations to the republic. [96](#) Each bishop acquired an absolute and indefeasible right to the perpetual obedience of the clerk whom he ordained: the clergy of each episcopal church, with its dependent parishes, formed a regular and permanent society; and the cathedrals of Constantinople [97](#) and Carthage [98](#) maintained their peculiar establishment of five hundred ecclesiastical ministers. Their ranks [99](#) and numbers were insensibly multiplied by the superstition of the times, which introduced into the church the splendid ceremonies of a Jewish or Pagan temple; and a long train of priests, deacons, sub-deacons, acolythes, exorcists, readers, singers, and doorkeepers, contributed, in their respective stations, to swell the pomp and harmony of religious worship. The clerical name and privileges were extended to many pious fraternities, who devoutly supported the ecclesiastical throne. [100](#) Six hundred *parabolani*, or adventurers, visited the sick at Alexandria; eleven hundred *copiatæ*, or grave-diggers, buried the dead at Constantinople; and the swarms of monks, who arose from the Nile, overspread and darkened the face of the Christian world.

examined. See in particular, Thomassin, *Discipline de l'Eglise*, tom. i. l. ii. c. lx. lxi. p. 886-902, and Bingham's *Antiquities*, l. iv. c. 5. By each of these learned but partial critics, one half of the truth is produced, and the other is concealed.—Note: Compare Planck, (vol. i. p. 348.) This century, the third, first brought forth the monks, or the spirit of monkery, the celibacy of the clergy. Planck likewise observes, that from the history of Eusebius alone, names of married bishops and presbyters may be adduced by dozens.—M.]

94

[\(return\)](#)

[Diodorus Siculus attests and approves the hereditary succession of the priesthood among the Egyptians, the Chaldeans, and the Indians, (l. i. p. 84, l. ii. p. 142, 153, edit. Wesseling.) The magi are described by Ammianus as a very numerous family: "Per sæcula multa ad præsens unâ eâdemque prosapiâ multitudo creata, Deorum cultibus dedicata." (xxiii. 6.) Ausonius celebrates the *Stirps Druidarum*, (De Professorib. Burdigal. iv.;) but we may infer from the remark of Cæsar, (vi. 13,) that in the Celtic hierarchy, some room was left for choice and emulation.]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[The subject of the vocation, ordination, obedience, &c., of the clergy, is laboriously discussed by Thomassin (*Discipline de l'Eglise*, tom. ii. p. 1-83) and Bingham, (in the 4th book of his *Antiquities*, more especially the 4th, 6th, and 7th chapters.) When the brother of St. Jerom was ordained in Cyprus, the deacons forcibly stopped his mouth, lest he should make a solemn protestation, which might invalidate the holy rites.]

[This exemption was very much limited. The municipal offices were of two kinds; the one attached to the individual in his character of inhabitant, the other in that of *proprietor*. Constantine had exempted ecclesiastics from offices of the first description. (Cod. Theod. xvi. t. ii. leg. 1, 2 Eusebius, *Hist. Eccles.* l. x. c. vii.) They sought, also, to be exempted from those of the second, (*munera patrimoniorum*.) The rich, to obtain this privilege, obtained subordinate situations among the clergy. Constantine published in 320 an edict, by which he prohibited the more opulent citizens (*decuriones* and *curiales*) from embracing the ecclesiastical profession, and the bishops from admitting new ecclesiastics, before a

place should be vacant by the death of the occupant, (Godefroy ad Cod. Theod.t. xii. t. i. de Decur.) Valentinian the First, by a rescript still more general enacted that no rich citizen should obtain a situation in the church, (De Episc l. lxvii.) He also enacted that ecclesiastics, who wished to be exempt from offices which they were bound to discharge as proprietors, should be obliged to give up their property to their relations. Cod Theodos l. xii t. i. lib. 49—G.]

- 96 [\(return\)](#)
[The charter of immunities, which the clergy obtained from the Christian emperors, is contained in the 16th book of the Theodosian code; and is illustrated with tolerable candor by the learned Godefroy, whose mind was balanced by the opposite prejudices of a civilian and a Protestant.]
- 97 [\(return\)](#)
[Justinian. Novell. ciii. Sixty presbyters, or priests, one hundred deacons, forty deaconesses, ninety sub-deacons, one hundred and ten readers, twenty-five chanters, and one hundred door-keepers; in all, five hundred and twenty-five. This moderate number was fixed by the emperor to relieve the distress of the church, which had been involved in debt and usury by the expense of a much higher establishment.]
- 98 [\(return\)](#)
[*Universus clerus ecclesiæ Carthaginiensis.... fere quingenti* vel amplius; inter quos quamplurima erant lectores infantuli. Victor Vitensis, de Persecut. Vandal. v. 9, p. 78, edit. Ruinart. This remnant of a more prosperous state still subsisted under the oppression of the Vandals.]
- 99 [\(return\)](#)
[The number of *seven* orders has been fixed in the Latin church, exclusive of the episcopal character. But the four inferior ranks, the minor orders, are now reduced to empty and useless titles.]
- 100 [\(return\)](#)
[See Cod. Theodos. l. xvi. tit. ii. leg. 42, 43. Godefroy's Commentary, and the Ecclesiastical History of Alexandria, show the danger of these pious institutions, which often disturbed the peace of that turbulent capital.]

Chapter XX: Conversion Of Constantine.—Part IV.

III. The edict of Milan secured the revenue as well as the peace of the church. [101](#) The Christians not only recovered the lands and houses of which they had been stripped by the persecuting laws of Diocletian, but they acquired a perfect title to all the possessions which they had hitherto enjoyed by the connivance of the magistrate. As soon as Christianity became the religion of the emperor and the empire, the national clergy might claim a decent and honorable maintenance; and the payment of an annual tax might have delivered the people from the more oppressive tribute, which superstition imposes on her votaries. But as the wants and expenses of the church increased with her prosperity, the ecclesiastical order was still supported and enriched by the voluntary oblations of the faithful. Eight years after the edict of Milan, Constantine granted to all his subjects the free and universal permission of bequeathing their fortunes to the holy Catholic church; [102](#) and their devout liberality, which during their lives was checked by luxury or avarice, flowed with a profuse stream at the hour of their death. The wealthy Christians were encouraged by the example of their sovereign. An absolute monarch, who is rich without patrimony, may be charitable without merit; and Constantine too easily believed that he should purchase the favor of Heaven, if he maintained the idle at the expense of the industrious; and distributed among the saints the wealth of the republic. The same messenger who carried over to Africa the head of Maxentius, might be intrusted with an epistle to Cæcilian, bishop of Carthage. The emperor acquaints him, that the treasurers of the province are directed to pay into his hands the sum of three thousand *folles*, or eighteen thousand pounds sterling, and to obey his further requisitions for the relief of the churches of Africa, Numidia, and Mauritania. [103](#) The liberality of Constantine increased in a just proportion to his faith, and to his vices. He assigned in each city a regular allowance of corn, to supply the fund of ecclesiastical charity; and the persons of both sexes who embraced the monastic life became the peculiar favorites of their sovereign. The Christian temples of Antioch, Alexandria, Jerusalem, Constantinople &c., displayed the ostentatious piety of a prince, ambitious in a declining age to equal the perfect labors of antiquity. [104](#) The form of these religious edifices was simple and oblong; though they might sometimes swell into the shape of a dome, and sometimes branch into the figure of a cross. The timbers were framed for the most part of cedars of Libanus; the roof was covered with tiles, perhaps of gilt brass; and the walls, the columns, the pavement, were encrusted with variegated marbles. The most precious ornaments of gold and silver, of silk and gems, were profusely dedicated to the service of the altar; and this specious magnificence was supported on the solid and perpetual basis of landed property. In the space of two centuries, from the reign of Constantine to that of Justinian, the eighteen hundred churches of the empire were enriched by the frequent and unalienable gifts of the prince and people. An annual income of six hundred pounds sterling may be reasonably assigned to the bishops, who were placed at an equal distance between riches and poverty, [105](#) but the standard of their wealth insensibly rose with the dignity and opulence of the cities which they governed. An authentic but imperfect [106](#) rent-roll

specifies some houses, shops, gardens, and farms, which belonged to the three *Basilicæ* of Rome, St. Peter, St. Paul, and St. John Lateran, in the provinces of Italy, Africa, and the East. They produce, besides a reserved rent of oil, linen, paper, aromatics, &c., a clear annual revenue of twenty-two thousand pieces of gold, or twelve thousand pounds sterling. In the age of Constantine and Justinian, the bishops no longer possessed, perhaps they no longer deserved, the unsuspecting confidence of their clergy and people. The ecclesiastical revenues of each diocese were divided into four parts for the respective uses of the bishop himself, of his inferior clergy, of the poor, and of the public worship; and the abuse of this sacred trust was strictly and repeatedly checked. [107](#) The patrimony of the church was still subject to all the public compositions of the state. [108](#) The clergy of Rome, Alexandria, Chessaionica, &c., might solicit and obtain some partial exemptions; but the premature attempt of the great council of Rimini, which aspired to universal freedom, was successfully resisted by the son of Constantine. [109](#)

101

[\(return\)](#)

[The edict of Milan (de M. P. c. 48) acknowledges, by reciting, that there existed a species of landed property, *ad jus corporis eorum, id est, ecclesiarum non hominum singulorum pertinentia*. Such a solemn declaration of the supreme magistrate must have been received in all the tribunals as a maxim of civil law.]

102

[\(return\)](#)

[Habeat unusquisque licentiam sanctissimo Catholicæ (*ecclesiæ*) venerabilique concilio, decedens bonorum quod optavit relinquere. Cod. Theodos. l. xvi. tit. ii. leg. 4. This law was published at Rome, A. D. 321, at a time when Constantine might foresee the probability of a rupture with the emperor of the East.]

103

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. l. x. 6; in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 28. He repeatedly expatiates on the liberality of the Christian hero, which the bishop himself had an opportunity of knowing, and even of lasting.]

104

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius, Hist. Eccles. l. x. c. 2, 3, 4. The bishop of Cæsarea who studied and gratified the taste of his master, pronounced in public an elaborate description of the church of Jerusalem, (in Vit Cons. l. vi. c. 46.) It no longer exists, but he has inserted in the life of Constantine (l. iii. c. 36) a short account of the architecture and ornaments. He likewise mentions the church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople, (l. iv. c. 59.)]

- 105 [\(return\)](#)
[See Justinian. Novell. cxxiii. 3. The revenue of the patriarchs, and the most wealthy bishops, is not expressed: the highest annual valuation of a bishopric is stated at *thirty*, and the lowest at *two*, pounds of gold; the medium might be taken at *sixteen*, but these valuations are much below the real value.]
- 106 [\(return\)](#)
[See Baronius, (Annal. Eccles. A. D. 324, No. 58, 65, 70, 71.) Every record which comes from the Vatican is justly suspected; yet these rent-rolls have an ancient and authentic color; and it is at least evident, that, if forged, they were forged in a period when *farms* not *kingdoms*, were the objects of papal avarice.]
- 107 [\(return\)](#)
[See Thomassin, Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. iii. l. ii. c. 13, 14, 15, p. 689-706. The legal division of the ecclesiastical revenue does not appear to have been established in the time of Ambrose and Chrysostom. Simplicius and Gelasius, who were bishops of Rome in the latter part of the fifth century, mention it in their pastoral letters as a general law, which was already confirmed by the custom of Italy.]
- 108 [\(return\)](#)
[Ambrose, the most strenuous assertor of ecclesiastical privileges, submits without a murmur to the payment of the land tax. "Si tri butum petit Imperator, non negamus; agri ecclesiæ solvunt tributum solvimus quæ sunt Cæsaris Cæsari, et quæ sunt Dei Deo; tributum Cæsaris est; non negatur." Baronius labors to interpret this tribute as an act of charity rather than of duty, (Annal. Eccles. A. D. 387;) but the words, if not the intentions of Ambrose are more candidly explained by Thomassin, Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. iii. l. i. c. 34. p. 668.]
- 109 [\(return\)](#)
[In Ariminense synodo super ecclesiarum et clericorum privilegiis tractatu habito, usque eo dispositio progressa est, ut juqa quæ viderentur ad ecclesiam pertinere, a publica functione cessarent inquietudine desistente; quod nostra videtur dudum sanctio repulsisse. Cod. Theod. l. xvi. tit. ii. leg. 15. Had the synod of Rimini carried this point, such practical merit might have atoned for some speculative heresies.]

IV. The Latin clergy, who erected their tribunal on the ruins of the civil and common law, have modestly accepted, as the gift of Constantine, [110](#) the independent jurisdiction, which was the fruit of time, of accident, and of their own industry. But the liberality of the Christian emperors had actually endowed them with some legal prerogatives, which secured and dignified the sacerdotal character. [111](#) 1. Under a despotic government, the bishops alone enjoyed and asserted the inestimable privilege of being tried only by their *peers*, and even in a capital accusation, a synod of their brethren were the sole judges of their guilt or innocence. Such a tribunal, unless it was inflamed by personal resentment or religious discord, might be favorable, or even partial, to the sacerdotal order: but Constantine was satisfied, [112](#) that secret impunity would be less pernicious than public scandal: and the Nicene council was edited by his public declaration, that if he surprised a bishop in the act of adultery, he should cast his Imperial mantle over the episcopal sinner. 2. The domestic jurisdiction of the bishops was at once a privilege and a restraint of the ecclesiastical order, whose civil causes were decently withdrawn from the cognizance of a secular judge. Their venial offences were not exposed to the shame of a public trial or punishment; and the gentle correction which the tenderness of youth may endure from its parents or instructors, was inflicted by the temperate severity of the bishops. But if the clergy were guilty of any crime which could not be sufficiently expiated by their degradation from an honorable and beneficial profession, the Roman magistrate drew the sword of justice, without any regard to ecclesiastical immunities. 3. The arbitration of the bishops was ratified by a positive law; and the judges were instructed to execute, without appeal or delay, the episcopal decrees, whose validity had hitherto depended on the consent of the parties. The conversion of the magistrates themselves, and of the whole empire, might gradually remove the fears and scruples of the Christians. But they still resorted to the tribunal of the bishops, whose abilities and integrity they esteemed; and the venerable Austin enjoyed the satisfaction of complaining that his spiritual functions were perpetually interrupted by the invidious labor of deciding the claim or the possession of silver and gold, of lands and cattle. 4. The ancient privilege of sanctuary was transferred to the Christian temples, and extended, by the liberal piety of the younger Theodosius, to the precincts of consecrated ground. [113](#) The fugitive, and even guilty suppliants, were permitted to implore either the justice, or the mercy, of the Deity and his ministers. The rash violence of despotism was suspended by the mild interposition of the church; and the lives or fortunes of the most eminent subjects might be protected by the mediation of the bishop.

[From Eusebius (in Vit. Constant. l. iv. c. 27) and Sozomen (l. i. c. 9) we are assured that the episcopal jurisdiction was extended and confirmed by Constantine; but the forgery of a famous edict, which was never fairly inserted in the Theodosian Code (see at the end, tom. vi. p. 303,) is demonstrated by Godefroy in the most satisfactory

manner. It is strange that M. de Montesquieu, who was a lawyer as well as a philosopher, should allege this edict of Constantine (*Esprit des Loix*, l. xxix. c. 16) without intimating any suspicion.]

111 [\(return\)](#)

[The subject of ecclesiastical jurisdiction has been involved in a mist of passion, of prejudice, and of interest. Two of the fairest books which have fallen into my hands, are the *Institutes of Canon Law*, by the Abbé de Fleury, and the *Civil History of Naples*, by Giannone. Their moderation was the effect of situation as well as of temper. Fleury was a French ecclesiastic, who respected the authority of the parliaments; Giannone was an Italian lawyer, who dreaded the power of the church. And here let me observe, that as the general propositions which I advance are the result of *many* particular and imperfect facts, I must either refer the reader to those modern authors who have expressly treated the subject, or swell these notes disproportioned size.]

112 [\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont has collected from Rufinus, Theodoret, &c., the sentiments and language of Constantine. *Mém Eccles* tom. iii p. 749, 759.]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[See *Cod. Theod.* l. ix. tit. xlv. leg. 4. In the works of Fra Paolo. (tom. iv. p. 192, &c.,) there is an excellent discourse on the origin, claims, abuses, and limits of sanctuaries. He justly observes, that ancient Greece might perhaps contain fifteen or twenty *azyla* or sanctuaries; a number which at present may be found in Italy within the walls of a single city.]

V. The bishop was the perpetual censor of the morals of his people The discipline of penance was digested into a system of canonical jurisprudence, [114](#) which accurately defined the duty of private or public confession, the rules of evidence, the degrees of guilt, and the measure of punishment. It was impossible to execute this spiritual censure, if the Christian pontiff, who punished the obscure sins of the multitude, respected the conspicuous vices and destructive crimes of the magistrate: but it was impossible to arraign the conduct of the magistrate, without, controlling the administration of civil government. Some considerations of religion, or loyalty, or fear, protected the sacred persons of the emperors from the zeal or resentment of the bishops; but they boldly censured and excommunicated the subordinate tyrants, who were not invested with the majesty of the purple. St. Athanasius excommunicated one of the ministers of Egypt; and the interdict which he pronounced, of fire and water, was solemnly transmitted to the churches of Cappadocia. [115](#) Under the reign of the younger Theodosius, the polite

and eloquent Synesius, one of the descendants of Hercules, [116](#) filled the episcopal seat of Ptolemais, near the ruins of ancient Cyrene, [117](#) and the philosophic bishop supported with dignity the character which he had assumed with reluctance. [118](#) He vanquished the monster of Libya, the president Andronicus, who abused the authority of a venal office, invented new modes of rapine and torture, and aggravated the guilt of oppression by that of sacrilege. [119](#) After a fruitless attempt to reclaim the haughty magistrate by mild and religious admonition, Synesius proceeds to inflict the last sentence of ecclesiastical justice, [120](#) which devotes Andronicus, with his associates and their *families*, to the abhorrence of earth and heaven. The impenitent sinners, more cruel than Phalaris or Sennacherib, more destructive than war, pestilence, or a cloud of locusts, are deprived of the name and privileges of Christians, of the participation of the sacraments, and of the hope of Paradise. The bishop exhorts the clergy, the magistrates, and the people, to renounce all society with the enemies of Christ; to exclude them from their houses and tables; and to refuse them the common offices of life, and the decent rites of burial. The church of Ptolemais, obscure and contemptible as she may appear, addresses this declaration to all her sister churches of the world; and the profane who reject her decrees, will be involved in the guilt and punishment of Andronicus and his impious followers. These spiritual terrors were enforced by a dexterous application to the Byzantine court; the trembling president implored the mercy of the church; and the descendants of Hercules enjoyed the satisfaction of raising a prostrate tyrant from the ground. [121](#) Such principles and such examples insensibly prepared the triumph of the Roman pontiffs, who have trampled on the necks of kings.

114

[\(return\)](#)

[The penitential jurisprudence was continually improved by the canons of the councils. But as many cases were still left to the discretion of the bishops, they occasionally published, after the example of the Roman Prætor, the rules of discipline which they proposed to observe. Among the canonical epistles of the fourth century, those of Basil the Great were the most celebrated. They are inserted in the Pandects of Beveridge, (tom. ii. p. 47-151,) and are translated by Chardon, Hist. des Sacremens, tom. iv. p. 219-277.]

115

[\(return\)](#)

[Basil, Epistol. xlvii. in Baronius, (Annal. Eccles. A. D. 370. N. 91,) who declares that he purposely relates it, to convince govern that they were not exempt from a sentence of excommunication his opinion, even a royal head is not safe from the thunders of the Vatican; and the cardinal shows himself much more consistent than the lawyers and theologians of the Gallican church.]

116

[\(return\)](#)

[The long series of his ancestors, as high as

Eurysthenes, the first Doric king of Sparta, and the fifth in lineal descent from Hercules, was inscribed in the public registers of Cyrene, a Lacedæmonian colony. (Synes. Epist. lvii. p. 197, edit. Petav.) Such a pure and illustrious pedigree of seventeen hundred years, without adding the royal ancestors of Hercules, cannot be equalled in the history of mankind.]

117 [\(return\)](#)

[Synesius (de Regno, p. 2) pathetically deplores the fallen and ruined state of Cyrene, [****Greek**]. Ptolemais, a new city, 82 miles to the westward of Cyrene, assumed the metropolitan honors of the Pentapolis, or Upper Libya, which were afterwards transferred to Sozusa.]

118 [\(return\)](#)

[Synesius had previously represented his own disqualifications. He loved profane studies and profane sports; he was incapable of supporting a life of celibacy; he disbelieved the resurrection; and he refused to preach *fables* to the people unless he might be permitted to *philosophize* at home. Theophilus primate of Egypt, who knew his merit, accepted this extraordinary compromise.]

119 [\(return\)](#)

[The promotion of Andronicus was illegal; since he was a native of Berenice, in the same province. The instruments of torture are curiously specified; the press that variously pressed on distended the fingers, the feet, the nose, the ears, and the lips of the victims.]

120 [\(return\)](#)

[The sentence of excommunication is expressed in a rhetorical style. (Synesius, Epist. lviii. p. 201-203.) The method of involving whole families, though somewhat unjust, was improved into national interdicts.]

121 [\(return\)](#)

[See Synesius, Epist. xlvii. p. 186, 187. Epist. lxxii. p. 218, 219 Epist. lxxxix. p. 230, 231.]

VI. Every popular government has experienced the effects of rude or artificial eloquence. The coldest nature is animated, the firmest reason is moved, by the rapid communication of the prevailing impulse; and each hearer is affected by his own passions, and by those of the surrounding multitude. The ruin of civil liberty had silenced the demagogues of Athens, and the tribunes of Rome; the custom of preaching which seems to constitute a considerable part of Christian devotion, had not been introduced into the temples of antiquity; and the ears of monarchs were never invaded

by the harsh sound of popular eloquence, till the pulpits of the empire were filled with sacred orators, who possessed some advantages unknown to their profane predecessors. [122](#) The arguments and rhetoric of the tribune were instantly opposed with equal arms, by skilful and resolute antagonists; and the cause of truth and reason might derive an accidental support from the conflict of hostile passions. The bishop, or some distinguished presbyter, to whom he cautiously delegated the powers of preaching, harangued, without the danger of interruption or reply, a submissive multitude, whose minds had been prepared and subdued by the awful ceremonies of religion. Such was the strict subordination of the Catholic church, that the same concerted sounds might issue at once from a hundred pulpits of Italy or Egypt, if they were *tuned* [123](#) by the master hand of the Roman or Alexandrian primate. The design of this institution was laudable, but the fruits were not always salutary. The preachers recommended the practice of the social duties; but they exalted the perfection of monastic virtue, which is painful to the individual, and useless to mankind. Their charitable exhortations betrayed a secret wish that the clergy might be permitted to manage the wealth of the faithful, for the benefit of the poor. The most sublime representations of the attributes and laws of the Deity were sullied by an idle mixture of metaphysical subtleties, puerile rites, and fictitious miracles: and they expatiated, with the most fervent zeal, on the religious merit of hating the adversaries, and obeying the ministers of the church. When the public peace was distracted by heresy and schism, the sacred orators sounded the trumpet of discord, and, perhaps, of sedition. The understandings of their congregations were perplexed by mystery, their passions were inflamed by invectives; and they rushed from the Christian temples of Antioch or Alexandria, prepared either to suffer or to inflict martyrdom. The corruption of taste and language is strongly marked in the vehement declamations of the Latin bishops; but the compositions of Gregory and Chrysostom have been compared with the most splendid models of Attic, or at least of Asiatic, eloquence. [124](#)

122

[\(return\)](#)

[See Thomassin (Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. ii. l. iii. c. 83, p. 1761-1770,) and Bingham, (Antiquities, vol. i. l. xiv. c. 4, p. 688- 717.) Preaching was considered as the most important office of the bishop but this function was sometimes intrusted to such presbyters as Chrysostom and Augustin.]

123

[\(return\)](#)

[Queen Elizabeth used this expression, and practised this art whenever she wished to prepossess the minds of her people in favor of any extraordinary measure of government. The hostile effects of this *music* were apprehended by her successor, and severely felt by his son. "When pulpit, drum ecclesiastic," &c. See Heylin's Life of Archbishop Laud, p. 153.]

[Those modest orators acknowledged, that, as they were destitute of the gift of miracles, they endeavored to acquire the arts of eloquence.]

VII. The representatives of the Christian republic were regularly assembled in the spring and autumn of each year; and these synods diffused the spirit of ecclesiastical discipline and legislation through the hundred and twenty provinces of the Roman world. [125](#) The archbishop or metropolitan was empowered, by the laws, to summon the suffragan bishops of his province; to revise their conduct, to vindicate their rights, to declare their faith, and to examine the merits of the candidates who were elected by the clergy and people to supply the vacancies of the episcopal college. The primates of Rome, Alexandria, Antioch, Carthage, and afterwards Constantinople, who exercised a more ample jurisdiction, convened the numerous assembly of their dependent bishops. But the convocation of great and extraordinary synods was the prerogative of the emperor alone. Whenever the emergencies of the church required this decisive measure, he despatched a peremptory summons to the bishops, or the deputies of each province, with an order for the use of post-horses, and a competent allowance for the expenses of their journey. At an early period, when Constantine was the protector, rather than the proselyte, of Christianity, he referred the African controversy to the council of Arles; in which the bishops of York of Trèves, of Milan, and of Carthage, met as friends and brethren, to debate in their native tongue on the common interest of the Latin or Western church. [126](#) Eleven years afterwards, a more numerous and celebrated assembly was convened at Nice in Bithynia, to extinguish, by their final sentence, the subtle disputes which had arisen in Egypt on the subject of the Trinity. Three hundred and eighteen bishops obeyed the summons of their indulgent master; the ecclesiastics of every rank, and sect, and denomination, have been computed at two thousand and forty-eight persons; [127](#) the Greeks appeared in person; and the consent of the Latins was expressed by the legates of the Roman pontiff. The session, which lasted about two months, was frequently honored by the presence of the emperor. Leaving his guards at the door, he seated himself (with the permission of the council) on a low stool in the midst of the hall. Constantine listened with patience, and spoke with modesty: and while he influenced the debates, he humbly professed that he was the minister, not the judge, of the successors of the apostles, who had been established as priests and as gods upon earth. [128](#) Such profound reverence of an absolute monarch towards a feeble and unarmed assembly of his own subjects, can only be compared to the respect with which the senate had been treated by the Roman princes who adopted the policy of Augustus. Within the space of fifty years, a philosophic spectator of the vicissitudes of human affairs might have contemplated Tacitus in the senate of Rome, and Constantine in the council of Nice. The fathers of the Capitol and those of the church had alike degenerated from the virtues of their founders; but as the bishops were more deeply rooted in the public opinion, they sustained their dignity with more decent pride, and sometimes opposed with a manly spirit the wishes of their sovereign. The progress of time and

superstition erased the memory of the weakness, the passion, the ignorance, which disgraced these ecclesiastical synods; and the Catholic world has unanimously submitted [129](#) to the *infallible* decrees of the general councils. [130](#)

125 [\(return\)](#)

[The council of Nice, in the fourth, fifth, sixth, and seventh canons, has made some fundamental regulations concerning synods, metropolitan, and primates. The Nicene canons have been variously tortured, abused, interpolated, or forged, according to the interest of the clergy. The *Suburbicarian* churches, assigned (by Rufinus) to the bishop of Rome, have been made the subject of vehement controversy (See Sirmond, Opera, tom. iv. p. 1-238.)]

126 [\(return\)](#)

[We have only thirty-three or forty-seven episcopal subscriptions: but Addo, a writer indeed of small account, reckons six hundred bishops in the council of Arles. Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 422.]

127 [\(return\)](#)

[See Tillemont, tom. vi. p. 915, and Beausobre, Hist. du Manicheisme, tom i p. 529. The name of *bishop*, which is given by Eusychius to the 2048 ecclesiastics, (Annal. tom. i. p. 440, vers. Pocock,) must be extended far beyond the limits of an orthodox or even episcopal ordination.]

128 [\(return\)](#)

[See Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. iii. c. 6-21. Tillemont, Mém. Ecclésiastiques, tom. vi. p. 669-759.]

129 [\(return\)](#)

[Sancimus igitur vicem legum obtinere, quæ a quatuor Sanctis Conciliis.... expositæ sunt act firmatæ. Prædictarum enim quatuor synodorum dogmata sicut sanctas Scripturas et regulas sicut leges observamus. Justinian. Novell. cxxxi. Beveridge (ad Pandect. proleg. p. 2) remarks, that the emperors never made new laws in ecclesiastical matters; and Giannone observes, in a very different spirit, that they gave a legal sanction to the canons of councils. Istoria Civile di Napoli, tom. i. p. 136.]

130 [\(return\)](#)

[See the article Concile in the Eucyclopedie, tom. iii. p. 668-879, edition de Lucques. The author, M. de docteur Bouchaud, has discussed, according to the principles of the Gallican church, the principal questions which relate to the form and constitution of general, national, and provincial councils. The editors (see Preface, p. xvi.) have reason to be proud

of *this* article. Those who consult their immense compilation, seldom depart so well satisfied.]

Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.— Part I.

Persecution Of Heresy.—The Schism Of The Donatists.—The Arian Controversy.—Athanasius.—Distracted State Of The Church And Empire Under Constantine And His Sons.—Toleration Of Paganism.

The grateful applause of the clergy has consecrated the memory of a prince who indulged their passions and promoted their interest. Constantine gave them security, wealth, honors, and revenge; and the support of the orthodox faith was considered as the most sacred and important duty of the civil magistrate. The edict of Milan, the great charter of toleration, had confirmed to each individual of the Roman world the privilege of choosing and professing his own religion. But this inestimable privilege was soon violated; with the knowledge of truth, the emperor imbibed the maxims of persecution; and the sects which dissented from the Catholic church were afflicted and oppressed by the triumph of Christianity. Constantine easily believed that the Heretics, who presumed to dispute *his* opinions, or to oppose *his* commands, were guilty of the most absurd and criminal obstinacy; and that a seasonable application of moderate severities might save those unhappy men from the danger of an everlasting condemnation. Not a moment was lost in excluding the ministers and teachers of the separated congregations from any share of the rewards and immunities which the emperor had so liberally bestowed on the orthodox clergy. But as the sectaries might still exist under the cloud of royal disgrace, the conquest of the East was immediately followed by an edict which announced their total destruction. [1](#) After a preamble filled with passion and reproach, Constantine absolutely prohibits the assemblies of the Heretics, and confiscates their public property to the use either of the revenue or of the Catholic church. The sects against whom the Imperial severity was directed, appear to have been the adherents of Paul of Samosata; the Montanists of Phrygia, who maintained an enthusiastic succession of prophecy; the Novatians, who sternly rejected the temporal efficacy of repentance; the Marcionites and Valentinians, under whose leading banners the various Gnostics of Asia and Egypt had insensibly rallied; and perhaps the Manichæans, who had recently imported from Persia a more artful composition of Oriental and Christian theology. [2](#) The design of extirpating the name, or at least of restraining the progress, of these odious Heretics, was prosecuted with vigor and effect. Some of the penal regulations were copied from the edicts of Diocletian; and this method of conversion was applauded by the same bishops who had felt the hand of oppression, and pleaded for the rights of humanity. Two immaterial circumstances may serve, however, to prove that the mind of Constantine was not entirely corrupted by the spirit of zeal and bigotry. Before he condemned the Manichæans and their kindred sects, he resolved to make an

accurate inquiry into the nature of their religious principles. As if he distrusted the impartiality of his ecclesiastical counsellors, this delicate commission was intrusted to a civil magistrate, whose learning and moderation he justly esteemed, and of whose venal character he was probably ignorant. [3](#) The emperor was soon convinced, that he had too hastily proscribed the orthodox faith and the exemplary morals of the Novatians, who had dissented from the church in some articles of discipline which were not perhaps essential to salvation. By a particular edict, he exempted them from the general penalties of the law; [4](#) allowed them to build a church at Constantinople, respected the miracles of their saints, invited their bishop Acesius to the council of Nice; and gently ridiculed the narrow tenets of his sect by a familiar jest; which, from the mouth of a sovereign, must have been received with applause and gratitude. [5](#)

1 [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius in Vit. Constantin. l. iii. c. 63, 64, 65, 66.]

2 [\(return\)](#)
[After some examination of the various opinions of Tillemont, Beausobre, Lardner, &c., I am convinced that Manes did not propagate his sect, even in Persia, before the year 270. It is strange, that a philosophic and foreign heresy should have penetrated so rapidly into the African provinces; yet I cannot easily reject the edict of Diocletian against the Manichæans, which may be found in Baronius. (Annal Eccl. A. D. 287.)]

3 [\(return\)](#)
[Constantinus enim, cum limatius superstitionum quæroret sectas, Manichæorum et similium, &c. Ammian. xv. 15. Strategius, who from this commission obtained the surname of *Musonianus*, was a Christian of the Arian sect. He acted as one of the counts at the council of Sardica. Libanius praises his mildness and prudence. Vales. ad locum Ammian.]

4 [\(return\)](#)
[Cod. Theod. l. xvi. tit. 5, leg. 2. As the general law is not inserted in the Theodosian Code, it probable that, in the year 438, the sects which it had condemned were already extinct.]

5 [\(return\)](#)
[Sozomen, l. i. c. 22. Socrates, l. i. c. 10. These historians have been suspected, but I think without reason, of an attachment to the Novatian doctrine. The emperor said to the bishop, “Acesius, take a ladder, and get up to heaven by yourself.” Most of the Christian sects have, by turns, borrowed the ladder of Acesius.]

The complaints and mutual accusations which assailed the throne of Constantine, as soon as the death of Maxentius had submitted Africa to his victorious arms, were ill adapted to edify an imperfect proselyte. He learned, with surprise, that the provinces of that great country, from the confines of Cyrene to the columns of Hercules, were distracted with religious discord. [6](#) The source of the division was derived from a double election in the church of Carthage; the second, in rank and opulence, of the ecclesiastical thrones of the West. Cæcilian and Majorinus were the two rival prelates of Africa; and the death of the latter soon made room for Donatus, who, by his superior abilities and apparent virtues, was the firmest support of his party. The advantage which Cæcilian might claim from the priority of his ordination, was destroyed by the illegal, or at least indecent, haste, with which it had been performed, without expecting the arrival of the bishops of Numidia. The authority of these bishops, who, to the number of seventy, condemned Cæcilian, and consecrated Majorinus, is again weakened by the infamy of some of their personal characters; and by the female intrigues, sacrilegious bargains, and tumultuous proceedings, which are imputed to this Numidian council. [7](#) The bishops of the contending factions maintained, with equal ardor and obstinacy, that their adversaries were degraded, or at least dishonored, by the odious crime of delivering the Holy Scriptures to the officers of Diocletian. From their mutual reproaches, as well as from the story of this dark transaction, it may justly be inferred, that the late persecution had imbittered the zeal, without reforming the manners, of the African Christians. That divided church was incapable of affording an impartial judicature; the controversy was solemnly tried in five successive tribunals, which were appointed by the emperor; and the whole proceeding, from the first appeal to the final sentence, lasted above three years. A severe inquisition, which was taken by the Prætorian vicar, and the proconsul of Africa, the report of two episcopal visitors who had been sent to Carthage, the decrees of the councils of Rome and of Arles, and the supreme judgment of Constantine himself in his sacred consistory, were all favorable to the cause of Cæcilian; and he was unanimously acknowledged by the civil and ecclesiastical powers, as the true and lawful primate of Africa. The honors and estates of the church were attributed to *his* suffragan bishops, and it was not without difficulty, that Constantine was satisfied with inflicting the punishment of exile on the principal leaders of the Donatist faction. As their cause was examined with attention, perhaps it was determined with justice. Perhaps their complaint was not without foundation, that the credulity of the emperor had been abused by the insidious arts of his favorite Osius. The influence of falsehood and corruption might procure the condemnation of the innocent, or aggravate the sentence of the guilty. Such an act, however, of injustice, if it concluded an importunate dispute, might be numbered among the transient evils of a despotic administration, which are neither felt nor remembered by posterity.

who has enriched it with critical notes, geographical discussions, original records, and an accurate abridgment of the whole controversy. M. de Tillemont has bestowed on the Donatists the greatest part of a volume, (tom. vi. part i. ;) and I am indebted to him for an ample collection of all the passages of his favorite St. Augustin, which relate to those heretics.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[Schisma igitur illo tempore confusæ mulieris iracundia peperit; ambitus nutrit; avaritia roboravit. Optatus, l. i. c. 19. The language of Purpurius is that of a furious madman. Dicitur te necasse lilios sororis tuæ duos. Purpurius respondit: Putas me terreri a te.. occidi; et occido eos qui contra me faciunt. Acta Concil. Cirtenais, ad calc. Optat. p. 274. When Cæcilian was invited to an assembly of bishops, Purpurius said to his brethren, or rather to his accomplices, "Let him come hither to receive our imposition of hands, and we will break his head by way of penance." Optat. l. i. c. 19.]

But this incident, so inconsiderable that it scarcely deserves a place in history, was productive of a memorable schism which afflicted the provinces of Africa above three hundred years, and was extinguished only with Christianity itself. The inflexible zeal of freedom and fanaticism animated the Donatists to refuse obedience to the usurpers, whose election they disputed, and whose spiritual powers they denied. Excluded from the civil and religious communion of mankind, they boldly excommunicated the rest of mankind, who had embraced the impious party of Cæcilian, and of the Traditors, from which he derived his pretended ordination. They asserted with confidence, and almost with exultation, that the Apostolical succession was interrupted; that *all* the bishops of Europe and Asia were infected by the contagion of guilt and schism; and that the prerogatives of the Catholic church were confined to the chosen portion of the African believers, who alone had preserved inviolate the integrity of their faith and discipline. This rigid theory was supported by the most uncharitable conduct. Whenever they acquired a proselyte, even from the distant provinces of the East, they carefully repeated the sacred rites of baptism [8](#) and ordination; as they rejected the validity of those which he had already received from the hands of heretics or schismatics. Bishops, virgins, and even spotless infants, were subjected to the disgrace of a public penance, before they could be admitted to the communion of the Donatists. If they obtained possession of a church which had been used by their Catholic adversaries, they purified the unhallowed building with the same zealous care which a temple of idols might have required. They washed the pavement, scraped the walls, burnt the altar, which was commonly of wood, melted the consecrated plate, and cast the Holy Eucharist to the dogs, with every circumstance of ignominy which could provoke and perpetuate the animosity of

religious factions. [9](#) Notwithstanding this irreconcilable aversion, the two parties, who were mixed and separated in all the cities of Africa, had the same language and manners, the same zeal and learning, the same faith and worship. Proscribed by the civil and ecclesiastical powers of the empire, the Donatists still maintained in some provinces, particularly in Numidia, their superior numbers; and four hundred bishops acknowledged the jurisdiction of their primate. But the invincible spirit of the sect sometimes preyed on its own vitals: and the bosom of their schismatical church was torn by intestine divisions. A fourth part of the Donatist bishops followed the independent standard of the Maximianists. The narrow and solitary path which their first leaders had marked out, continued to deviate from the great society of mankind. Even the imperceptible sect of the Rogatians could affirm, without a blush, that when Christ should descend to judge the earth, he would find his true religion preserved only in a few nameless villages of the Cæsarean Mauritania. [10](#)

8 [\(return\)](#)

[The councils of Arles, of Nice, and of Trent, confirmed the wise and moderate practice of the church of Rome. The Donatists, however, had the advantage of maintaining the sentiment of Cyprian, and of a considerable part of the primitive church. Vincentius Lirinensis (p. 532, ap. Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 138) has explained why the Donatists are eternally burning with the Devil, while St. Cyprian reigns in heaven with Jesus Christ.]

9 [\(return\)](#)

[See the sixth book of Optatus Milevitanus, p. 91-100.]

10 [\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont, Mém. Ecclésiastiques, tom. vi. part i. p. 253. He laughs at their partial credulity. He revered Augustin, the great doctor of the system of predestination.]

The schism of the Donatists was confined to Africa: the more diffusive mischief of the Trinitarian controversy successively penetrated into every part of the Christian world. The former was an accidental quarrel, occasioned by the abuse of freedom; the latter was a high and mysterious argument, derived from the abuse of philosophy. From the age of Constantine to that of Clovis and Theodoric, the temporal interests both of the Romans and Barbarians were deeply involved in the theological disputes of Arianism. The historian may therefore be permitted respectfully to withdraw the veil of the sanctuary; and to deduce the progress of reason and faith, of error and passion from the school of Plato, to the decline and fall of the empire.

The genius of Plato, informed by his own meditation, or by the traditional knowledge of the priests of Egypt, [11](#) had ventured to explore the mysterious nature of the Deity. When he had elevated his mind to the sublime contemplation of the first self-existent,

necessary cause of the universe, the Athenian sage was incapable of conceiving *how* the simple unity of his essence could admit the infinite variety of distinct and successive ideas which compose the model of the intellectual world; *how* a Being purely incorporeal could execute that perfect model, and mould with a plastic hand the rude and independent chaos. The vain hope of extricating himself from these difficulties, which must ever oppress the feeble powers of the human mind, might induce Plato to consider the divine nature under the threefold modification—of the first cause, the reason, or *Logos*, and the soul or spirit of the universe. His poetical imagination sometimes fixed and animated these metaphysical abstractions; the three *archical* on original principles were represented in the Platonic system as three Gods, united with each other by a mysterious and ineffable generation; and the Logos was particularly considered under the more accessible character of the Son of an Eternal Father, and the Creator and Governor of the world. Such appear to have been the secret doctrines which were cautiously whispered in the gardens of the academy; and which, according to the more recent disciples of Plato, [1111](#) could not be perfectly understood, till after an assiduous study of thirty years. [12](#)

11

[\(return\)](#)

[Plato Ægyptum peragravit ut a sacerdotibus Barbaris numeros et *cælestia* acciperet. Cicero de Finibus, v. 25. The Egyptians might still preserve the traditional creed of the Patriarchs. Josephus has persuaded many of the Christian fathers, that Plato derived a part of his knowledge from the Jews; but this vain opinion cannot be reconciled with the obscure state and unsocial manners of the Jewish people, whose scriptures were not accessible to Greek curiosity till more than one hundred years after the death of Plato. See Marsham Canon. Chron. p. 144 Le Clerc, Epistol. Critic. vii. p. 177-194.]

1111

[\(return\)](#)

[This exposition of the doctrine of Plato appears to me contrary to the true sense of that philosopher's writings. The brilliant imagination which he carried into metaphysical inquiries, his style, full of allegories and figures, have misled those interpreters who did not seek, from the whole tenor of his works and beyond the images which the writer employs, the system of this philosopher. In my opinion, there is no Trinity in Plato; he has established no mysterious generation between the three pretended principles which he is made to distinguish. Finally, he conceives only as *attributes* of the Deity, or of matter, those ideas, of which it is supposed that he made *substances*, real beings.

According to Plato, God and matter existed from

all eternity. Before the creation of the world, matter had in itself a principle of motion, but without end or laws: it is this principle which Plato calls the irrational soul of the world, because, according to his doctrine, every spontaneous and original principle of motion is called soul. God wished to impress *form* upon matter, that is to say, 1. To mould matter, and make it into a body; 2. To regulate its motion, and subject it to some end and to certain laws. The Deity, in this operation, could not act but according to the ideas existing in his intelligence: their union filled this, and formed the ideal type of the world. It is this ideal world, this divine intelligence, existing with God from all eternity, and called by Plato which he is supposed to personify, to substantialize; while an attentive examination is sufficient to convince us that he has never assigned it an existence external to the Deity, (hors de la Divinité,) and that he considered the as the aggregate of the ideas of God, the divine understanding in its relation to the world. The contrary opinion is irreconcilable with all his philosophy: thus he says (Timæus, p. 348, edit. Bip.) that to the idea of the Deity is essentially united that of intelligence, of a *logos*. He would thus have admitted a double *logos*; one inherent in the Deity as an attribute, the other independently existing as a substance. He affirms that the intelligence, the principle of order cannot exist but as an attribute of a soul, the principle of motion and of life, of which the nature is unknown to us. How, then, according to this, could he consider the *logos* as a substance endowed with an independent existence? In other places, he explains it by these two words, knowledge, science, and intelligence which signify the attributes of the Deity. When Plato separates God, the ideal archetype of the world and matter, it is to explain how, according to his system, God has proceeded, at the creation, to unite the principle of order which he had within himself, his proper intelligence, the principle of motion, to the principle of motion, the irrational soul which was in matter. When he speaks of the place occupied by the ideal world, it is to designate the divine intelligence, which is its cause. Finally, in no part of his writings do we find a true personification of the pretended beings of which he is said to have formed a trinity: and if this personification existed, it would equally apply to many other notions, of which might be formed many different trinities.

This error, into which many ancient as well as modern interpreters of Plato have fallen, was very natural. Besides the snares which were concealed in his figurative style; besides the necessity of comprehending as a whole the system of his ideas, and not to explain isolated passages, the nature of his doctrine itself would conduce to this error. When Plato appeared, the uncertainty of human knowledge, and the continual illusions of the senses, were acknowledged, and had given rise to a general scepticism. Socrates had aimed at raising morality above the influence of this scepticism: Plato endeavored to save metaphysics, by seeking in the human intellect a source of certainty which the senses could not furnish. He invented the system of innate ideas, of which the aggregate formed, according to him, the ideal world, and affirmed that these ideas were real attributes, not only attached to our conceptions of objects, but to the nature of the objects themselves; a nature of which from them we might obtain a knowledge. He gave, then, to these ideas a positive existence as attributes; his commentators could easily give them a real existence as substances; especially as the terms which he used to designate them, essential beauty, essential goodness, lent themselves to this substantialization, (hypostasis.)—G.

We have retained this view of the original philosophy of Plato, in which there is probably much truth. The genius of Plato was rather metaphysical than impersonative: his poetry was in his language, rather than, like that of the Orientals, in his conceptions.—M.]

12

([return](#))

[The modern guides who lead me to the knowledge of the Platonic system are Cudworth, Basnage, Le Clerc, and Brucker. As the learning of these writers was equal, and their intention different, an inquisitive observer may derive instruction from their disputes, and certainty from their agreement.]

The arms of the Macedonians diffused over Asia and Egypt the language and learning of Greece; and the theological system of Plato was taught, with less reserve, and perhaps with some improvements, in the celebrated school of Alexandria. [13](#) A numerous colony of Jews had been invited, by the favor of the Ptolemies, to settle in their new capital. [14](#) While the bulk of the nation practised the legal ceremonies, and pursued the lucrative occupations of commerce, a few Hebrews, of a more liberal spirit, devoted their lives to religious and philosophical contemplation. [15](#) They cultivated with diligence, and embraced with ardor, the theological system of the Athenian sage. But

their national pride would have been mortified by a fair confession of their former poverty: and they boldly marked, as the sacred inheritance of their ancestors, the gold and jewels which they had so lately stolen from their Egyptian masters. One hundred years before the birth of Christ, a philosophical treatise, which manifestly betrays the style and sentiments of the school of Plato, was produced by the Alexandrian Jews, and unanimously received as a genuine and valuable relic of the inspired Wisdom of Solomon. [16](#) A similar union of the Mosaic faith and the Grecian philosophy, distinguishes the works of Philo, which were composed, for the most part, under the reign of Augustus. [17](#) The material soul of the universe [18](#) might offend the piety of the Hebrews: but they applied the character of the Logos to the Jehovah of Moses and the patriarchs; and the Son of God was introduced upon earth under a visible, and even human appearance, to perform those familiar offices which seem incompatible with the nature and attributes of the Universal Cause. [19](#)

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Brucker, Hist. Philosoph. tom. i. p. 1349-1357. The Alexandrian school is celebrated by Strabo (l. xvii.) and Ammianus, (xxii. 6.) Note: The philosophy of Plato was not the only source of that professed in the school of Alexandria. That city, in which Greek, Jewish, and Egyptian men of letters were assembled, was the scene of a strange fusion of the system of these three people. The Greeks brought a Platonism, already much changed; the Jews, who had acquired at Babylon a great number of Oriental notions, and whose theological opinions had undergone great changes by this intercourse, endeavored to reconcile Platonism with their new doctrine, and disfigured it entirely: lastly, the Egyptians, who were not willing to abandon notions for which the Greeks themselves entertained respect, endeavored on their side to reconcile their own with those of their neighbors. It is in Ecclesiasticus and the Wisdom of Solomon that we trace the influence of Oriental philosophy rather than that of Platonism. We find in these books, and in those of the later prophets, as in Ezekiel, notions unknown to the Jews before the Babylonian captivity, of which we do not discover the germ in Plato, but which are manifestly derived from the Orientals. Thus God represented under the image of light, and the principle of evil under that of darkness; the history of the good and bad angels; paradise and hell, &c., are doctrines of which the origin, or at least the positive determination, can only be referred to the Oriental philosophy. Plato supposed matter eternal; the Orientals and the Jews considered it as a creation of God, who alone was eternal. It is impossible to explain the philosophy of

the Alexandrian school solely by the blending of the Jewish theology with the Greek philosophy. The Oriental philosophy, however little it may be known, is recognized at every instant. Thus, according to the Zend Avesta, it is by the Word (honover) more ancient than the world, that Ormuzd created the universe. This word is the logos of Philo, consequently very different from that of Plato. I have shown that Plato never personified the logos as the ideal archetype of the world: Philo ventured this personification. The Deity, according to him, has a double logos; the first is the ideal archetype of the world, the ideal world, the *first-born* of the Deity; the second is the word itself of God, personified under the image of a being acting to create the sensible world, and to make it like to the ideal world: it is the second-born of God. Following out his imaginations, Philo went so far as to personify anew the ideal world, under the image of a celestial man, the primitive type of man, and the sensible world under the image of another man less perfect than the celestial man. Certain notions of the Oriental philosophy may have given rise to this strange abuse of allegory, which it is sufficient to relate, to show what alterations Platonism had already undergone, and what was their source. Philo, moreover, of all the Jews of Alexandria, is the one whose Platonism is the most pure. It is from this mixture of Orientalism, Platonism, and Judaism, that Gnosticism arose, which had produced so many theological and philosophical extravagancies, and in which Oriental notions evidently predominate.—G.]

14 [\(return\)](#)

[Joseph. Antiquitat, l. xii. c. 1, 3. Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, l. vii. c. 7.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[For the origin of the Jewish philosophy, see Eusebius, Præparat. Evangel. viii. 9, 10. According to Philo, the Therapeutæ studied philosophy; and Brucker has proved (Hist. Philosoph. tom. ii. p. 787) that they gave the preference to that of Plato.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[See Calmet, Dissertations sur la Bible, tom. ii. p. 277. The book of the Wisdom of Solomon was received by many of the fathers as the work of that monarch: and although rejected by the Protestants for want of a Hebrew original, it has obtained, with the rest of the Vulgate, the sanction of the council of Trent.]

- 17 [\(return\)](#)
[The Platonism of Philo, which was famous to a proverb, is proved beyond a doubt by Le Clerc, (Epist. Crit. viii. p. 211-228.) Basnage (Hist. des Juifs, l. iv. c. 5) has clearly ascertained, that the theological works of Philo were composed before the death, and most probably before the birth, of Christ. In such a time of darkness, the knowledge of Philo is more astonishing than his errors. Bull, Defens. Fid. Nicen. s. i. c. i. p. 12.]
- 18 [\(return\)](#)
[Mens agitat molem, et magno se corpore *miscet*. Besides this material soul, Cudworth has discovered (p. 562) in Amelius, Porphyry, Plotinus, and, as he thinks, in Plato himself, a superior, spiritual *upercosmian* soul of the universe. But this double soul is exploded by Brucker, Basnage, and Le Clerc, as an idle fancy of the latter Platonists.]
- 19 [\(return\)](#)
[Petav. Dogmata Theologica, tom. ii. l. viii. c. 2, p. 791. Bull, Defens. Fid. Nicen. s. i. c. l. p. 8, 13. This notion, till it was abused by the Arians, was freely adopted in the Christian theology. Tertullian (adv. Praxeam, c. 16) has a remarkable and dangerous passage. After contrasting, with indiscreet wit, the nature of God, and the actions of Jehovah, he concludes: Scilicet ut hæc de filio Dei non credenda fuisse, si non scripta essent; fortasse non credenda de l'atre licet scripta. * Note: Tertullian is here arguing against the Patripassians; those who asserted that the Father was born of the Virgin, died and was buried.—M.]

Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.— Part II.

The eloquence of Plato, the name of Solomon, the authority of the school of Alexandria, and the consent of the Jews and Greeks, were insufficient to establish the truth of a mysterious doctrine, which might please, but could not satisfy, a rational mind. A prophet, or apostle, inspired by the Deity, can alone exercise a lawful dominion over the faith of mankind: and the theology of Plato might have been forever confounded with the philosophical visions of the Academy, the Porch, and the Lycæum, if the name and divine attributes of the *Logos* had not been confirmed by the celestial pen of the last and most sublime of the Evangelists. [20](#) The Christian Revelation, which was consummated under the reign of Nerva, disclosed to the world the amazing secret, that the Logos, who was with God from the beginning, and was God, who had made all

things, and for whom all things had been made, was incarnate in the person of Jesus of Nazareth; who had been born of a virgin, and suffered death on the cross. Besides the general design of fixing on a perpetual basis the divine honors of Christ, the most ancient and respectable of the ecclesiastical writers have ascribed to the evangelic theologian a particular intention to confute two opposite heresies, which disturbed the peace of the primitive church. [21](#) I. The faith of the Ebionites, [22](#) perhaps of the Nazarenes, [23](#) was gross and imperfect. They revered Jesus as the greatest of the prophets, endowed with supernatural virtue and power. They ascribed to his person and to his future reign all the predictions of the Hebrew oracles which relate to the spiritual and everlasting kingdom of the promised Messiah. [24](#) Some of them might confess that he was born of a virgin; but they obstinately rejected the preceding existence and divine perfections of the *Logos*, or Son of God, which are so clearly defined in the Gospel of St. John. About fifty years afterwards, the Ebionites, whose errors are mentioned by Justin Martyr with less severity than they seem to deserve, [25](#) formed a very inconsiderable portion of the Christian name. II. The Gnostics, who were distinguished by the epithet of *Docetes*, deviated into the contrary extreme; and betrayed the human, while they asserted the divine, nature of Christ. Educated in the school of Plato, accustomed to the sublime idea of the Logos, they readily conceived that the brightest *Æon*, or *Emanation* of the Deity, might assume the outward shape and visible appearances of a mortal; [26](#) but they vainly pretended, that the imperfections of matter are incompatible with the purity of a celestial substance.

While the blood of Christ yet smoked on Mount Calvary, the Docetes invented the impious and extravagant hypothesis, that, instead of issuing from the womb of the Virgin, [27](#) he had descended on the banks of the Jordan in the form of perfect manhood; that he had imposed on the senses of his enemies, and of his disciples; and that the ministers of Pilate had wasted their impotent rage on an ury phantom, who *seemed* to expire on the cross, and, after three days, to rise from the dead. [28](#)

[The Platonists admired the beginning of the Gospel of St. John as containing an exact transcript of their own principles. Augustin de Civitat. Dei, x. 29. Amelius apud Cyril. advers. Julian. l. viii. p. 283. But in the third and fourth centuries, the Platonists of Alexandria might improve their Trinity by the secret study of the Christian theology. Note: A short discussion on the sense in which St. John has used the word Logos, will prove that he has not borrowed it from the philosophy of Plato. The evangelist adopts this word without previous explanation, as a term with which his contemporaries were already familiar, and which they could at once comprehend. To know the sense which he gave to it, we must inquire that which it generally bore in his time. We find two: the one

attached to the word *logos* by the Jews of Palestine, the other by the school of Alexandria, particularly by Philo. The Jews had feared at all times to pronounce the name of Jehovah; they had formed a habit of designating God by one of his attributes; they called him sometimes Wisdom, sometimes the Word. *By the word of the Lord were the heavens made.* (Psalm xxxiii. 6.) Accustomed to allegories, they often addressed themselves to this attribute of the Deity as a real being. Solomon makes Wisdom say "The Lord possessed me in the beginning of his way, before his works of old. I was set up from everlasting, from the beginning, or ever the earth was." (Prov. viii. 22, 23.) Their residence in Persia only increased this inclination to sustained allegories. In the Ecclesiasticus of the son of Sirach, and the Book of Wisdom, we find allegorical descriptions of Wisdom like the following: "I came out of the mouth of the Most High; I covered the earth as a cloud;... I alone compassed the circuit of heaven, and walked in the bottom of the deep... The Creator created me from the beginning, before the world, and I shall never fail." (Eccles. xxiv. 35- 39.) See also the Wisdom of Solomon, c. vii. v. 9. [The latter book is clearly Alexandrian.—M.] We see from this that the Jews understood from the Hebrew and Chaldaic words which signify Wisdom, the Word, and which were translated into Greek, a simple attribute of the Deity, allegorically personified, but of which they did not make a real particular being separate from the Deity.

The school of Alexandria, on the contrary, and Philo among the rest, mingling Greek with Jewish and Oriental notions, and abandoning himself to his inclination to mysticism, personified the *logos*, and represented it a distinct being, created by God, and intermediate between God and man. This is the second *logos* of Philo, that which acts from the beginning of the world, alone in its kind, creator of the sensible world, formed by God according to the ideal world which he had in himself, and which was the first *logos*, the first-born of the Deity. The *logos* taken in this sense, then, was a created being, but, anterior to the creation of the world, near to God, and charged with his revelations to mankind.

Which of these two senses is that which St. John intended to assign to the word *logos* in the first chapter of his Gospel, and in all his writings? St. John was a Jew, born and educated in Palestine; he had no knowledge, at least very little, of the philosophy of the Greeks, and that of the Grecizing

Jews: he would naturally, then, attach to the word *logos* the sense attached to it by the Jews of Palestine. If, in fact, we compare the attributes which he assigns to the *logos* with those which are assigned to it in Proverbs, in the Wisdom of Solomon, in Ecclesiasticus, we shall see that they are the same. The Word was in the world, and the world was made by him; in him was life, and the life was the light of men, (c. i. v. 10-14.) It is impossible not to trace in this chapter the ideas which the Jews had formed of the allegorized *logos*. The evangelist afterwards really personifies that which his predecessors have personified only poetically; for he affirms "*that the Word became flesh*," (v. 14.) It was to prove this that he wrote. Closely examined, the ideas which he gives of the *logos* cannot agree with those of Philo and the school of Alexandria; they correspond, on the contrary, with those of the Jews of Palestine. Perhaps St. John, employing a well-known term to explain a doctrine which was yet unknown, has slightly altered the sense; it is this alteration which we appear to discover on comparing different passages of his writings.

It is worthy of remark, that the Jews of Palestine, who did not perceive this alteration, could find nothing extraordinary in what St. John said of the Logos; at least they comprehended it without difficulty, while the Greeks and Grecizing Jews, on their part, brought to it prejudices and preconceptions easily reconciled with those of the evangelist, who did not expressly contradict them. This circumstance must have much favored the progress of Christianity. Thus the fathers of the church in the two first centuries and later, formed almost all in the school of Alexandria, gave to the Logos of St. John a sense nearly similar to that which it received from Philo. Their doctrine approached very near to that which in the fourth century the council of Nice condemned in the person of Arius.—G.

M. Guizot has forgotten the long residence of St. John at Ephesus, the centre of the mingling opinions of the East and West, which were gradually growing up into Gnosticism. (See Matter. Hist. du Gnosticisme, vol. i. p. 154.) St. John's sense of the Logos seems as far removed from the simple allegory ascribed to the Palestinian Jews as from the Oriental impersonation of the Alexandrian. The simple truth may be that St. John took the familiar term, and, as it were infused into it the peculiar and

Christian sense in which it is used in his writings.—
M.]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[See Beausobre, Hist. Critique du Manicheisme, tom. i. p. 377. The Gospel according to St. John is supposed to have been published about seventy years after the death of Christ.]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[The sentiments of the Ebionites are fairly stated by Mosheim (p. 331) and Le Clerc, (Hist. Eccles. p. 535.) The Clementines, published among the apostolical fathers, are attributed by the critics to one of these sectaries.]

23 [\(return\)](#)

[Stanch polemics, like a Bull, (Judicium Eccles. Cathol. c. 2,) insist on the orthodoxy of the Nazarenes; which appears less pure and certain in the eyes of Mosheim, (p. 330.)]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[The humble condition and sufferings of Jesus have always been a stumbling-block to the Jews. “Deus... contrariis coloribus Messiam depinxerat: futurus erat Rex, Judex, Pastor,” &c. See Limborch et Orobio Amica Collat. p. 8, 19, 53-76, 192-234. But this objection has obliged the believing Christians to lift up their eyes to a spiritual and everlasting kingdom.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Justin Martyr, Dialog. cum Tryphonte, p. 143, 144. See Le Clerc, Hist. Eccles. p. 615. Bull and his editor Grabe (Judicium Eccles. Cathol. c. 7, and Appendix) attempt to distort either the sentiments or the words of Justin; but their violent correction of the text is rejected even by the Benedictine editors.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[The Arians reproached the orthodox party with borrowing their Trinity from the Valentinians and Marcionites. See Beausobre, Hist. de Manicheisme, l. iii. c. 5, 7.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[Non dignum est ex utero credere Deum, et Deum Christum.... non dignum est ut tanta majestas per sordes et squalores muli eris transire credatur. The Gnostics asserted the impurity of matter, and of marriage; and they were scandalized by the gross interpretations of the fathers, and even of Augustin himself. See Beausobre, tom. ii. p. 523, * Note: The greater part of the Docetæ rejected the true divinity

of Jesus Christ, as well as his human nature. They belonged to the Gnostics, whom some philosophers, in whose party Gibbon has enlisted, make to derive their opinions from those of Plato. These philosophers did not consider that Platonism had undergone continual alterations, and that those who gave it some analogy with the notions of the Gnostics were later in their origin than most of the sects comprehended under this name Mosheim has proved (in his *Instit. Histor. Eccles. Major. s. i. p. 136, sqq* and *p. 339, sqq.*) that the Oriental philosophy, combined with the cabalistical philosophy of the Jews, had given birth to Gnosticism. The relations which exist between this doctrine and the records which remain to us of that of the Orientals, the Chaldean and Persian, have been the source of the errors of the Gnostic Christians, who wished to reconcile their ancient notions with their new belief. It is on this account that, denying the human nature of Christ, they also denied his intimate union with God, and took him for one of the substances (æons) created by God. As they believed in the eternity of matter, and considered it to be the principle of evil, in opposition to the Deity, the first cause and principle of good, they were unwilling to admit that one of the pure substances, one of the æons which came forth from God, had, by partaking in the material nature, allied himself to the principle of evil; and this was their motive for rejecting the real humanity of Jesus Christ. See Ch. G. F. Walch, *Hist. of Heresies in Germ. t. i. p. 217, sqq.* Brucker, *Hist. Crit. Phil. ii. p. 639.—G.*]

28

[\(return\)](#)

[*Apostolis adhuc in sæculo superstitionibus apud Judæam Christi sanguine recente, et phantasma corpus Domini asserebatur.* Cotelierius thinks (*Patres Apostol. tom. ii. p. 24*) that those who will not allow the *Docetes* to have arisen in the time of the Apostles, may with equal reason deny that the sun shines at noonday. These *Docetes*, who formed the most considerable party among the Gnostics, were so called, because they granted only a *seeming* body to Christ. * Note: The name of *Docetæ* was given to these sectaries only in the course of the second century: this name did not designate a sect, properly so called; it applied to all the sects who taught the non- reality of the material body of Christ; of this number were the Valentinians, the Basilidians, the Ophites, the

Marcionites, (against whom Tertullian wrote his book, *De Carne Christi*,) and other Gnostics. In truth, Clement of Alexandria (l. iii. Strom. c. 13, p. 552) makes express mention of a sect of Docetæ, and even names as one of its heads a certain Cassianus; but every thing leads us to believe that it was not a distinct sect. Philastrius (de Hæres, c. 31) reproaches Saturninus with being a Docete. Irenæus (adv. Hær. c. 23) makes the same reproach against Basilides. Epiphanius and Philastrius, who have treated in detail on each particular heresy, do not specially name that of the Docetæ. Serapion, bishop of Antioch, (Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. vi. c. 12,) and Clement of Alexandria, (l. vii. Strom. p. 900,) appear to be the first who have used the generic name. It is not found in any earlier record, though the error which it points out existed even in the time of the Apostles. See Ch. G. F. Walch, Hist. of Her. v. i. p. 283. Tillemont, Mempoür servir a la Hist Eccles. ii. p. 50. Buddæus de Eccles. Apost. c. 5 & 7—G.]

The divine sanction, which the Apostle had bestowed on the fundamental principle of the theology of Plato, encouraged the learned proselytes of the second and third centuries to admire and study the writings of the Athenian sage, who had thus marvellously anticipated one of the most surprising discoveries of the Christian revelation. The respectable name of Plato was used by the orthodox, [29](#) and abused by the heretics, [30](#) as the common support of truth and error: the authority of his skilful commentators, and the science of dialectics, were employed to justify the remote consequences of his opinions and to supply the discreet silence of the inspired writers. The same subtle and profound questions concerning the nature, the generation, the distinction, and the equality of the three divine persons of the mysterious *Triad*, or *Trinity*, [31](#) were agitated in the philosophical and in the Christian schools of Alexandria. An eager spirit of curiosity urged them to explore the secrets of the abyss; and the pride of the professors, and of their disciples, was satisfied with the sciences of words. But the most sagacious of the Christian theologians, the great Athanasius himself, has candidly confessed, [32](#) that whenever he forced his understanding to meditate on the divinity of the *Logos*, his toilsome and unavailing efforts recoiled on themselves; that the more he thought, the less he comprehended; and the more he wrote, the less capable was he of expressing his thoughts. In every step of the inquiry, we are compelled to feel and acknowledge the immeasurable disproportion between the size of the object and the capacity of the human mind. We may strive to abstract the notions of time, of space, and of matter, which so closely adhere to all the perceptions of our experimental knowledge. But as soon as we presume to reason of infinite substance, of spiritual generation; as often as we deduce any positive conclusions from a negative idea, we are involved in darkness, perplexity, and inevitable contradiction. As these

difficulties arise from the nature of the subject, they oppress, with the same insuperable weight, the philosophic and the theological disputant; but we may observe two essential and peculiar circumstances, which discriminated the doctrines of the Catholic church from the opinions of the Platonic school.

29 [\(return\)](#)

[Some proofs of the respect which the Christians entertained for the person and doctrine of Plato may be found in De la Mothe le Vayer, tom. v. p. 135, &c., edit. 1757; and Basnage, Hist. des Juifs tom. iv. p. 29, 79, &c.]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[Doleo bona fide, Platonem omnium heræticorum condimentarium factum. Tertullian. de Anima, c. 23. Petavius (Dogm. Theolog. tom. iii. proleg. 2) shows that this was a general complaint. Beausobre (tom. i. l. iii. c. 9, 10) has deduced the Gnostic errors from Platonic principles; and as, in the school of Alexandria, those principles were blended with the Oriental philosophy, (Brucker, tom. i. p. 1356,) the sentiment of Beausobre may be reconciled with the opinion of Mosheim, (General History of the Church, vol. i. p. 37.)]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[If Theophilus, bishop of Antioch, (see Dupin, Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique, tom. i. p. 66,) was the first who employed the word *Triad*, *Trinity*, that abstract term, which was already familiar to the schools of philosophy, must have been introduced into the theology of the Christians after the middle of the second century.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[Athanasius, tom. i. p. 808. His expressions have an uncommon energy; and as he was writing to monks, there could not be any occasion for him to *affect* a rational language.]

I. A chosen society of philosophers, men of a liberal education and curious disposition, might silently meditate, and temperately discuss in the gardens of Athens or the library of Alexandria, the abstruse questions of metaphysical science. The lofty speculations, which neither convinced the understanding, nor agitated the passions, of the Platonists themselves, were carelessly overlooked by the idle, the busy, and even the studious part of mankind. [33](#) But after the *Logos* had been revealed as the sacred object of the faith, the hope, and the religious worship of the Christians, the mysterious system was embraced by a numerous and increasing multitude in every province of the Roman world. Those persons who, from their age, or sex, or occupations, were the least qualified to judge, who were the least exercised in the habits of abstract reasoning, aspired to contemplate the economy of the Divine Nature: and it is the boast of

Tertullian, [34](#) that a Christian mechanic could readily answer such questions as had perplexed the wisest of the Grecian sages. Where the subject lies so far beyond our reach, the difference between the highest and the lowest of human understandings may indeed be calculated as infinitely small; yet the degree of weakness may perhaps be measured by the degree of obstinacy and dogmatic confidence. These speculations, instead of being treated as the amusement of a vacant hour, became the most serious business of the present, and the most useful preparation for a future, life. A theology, which it was incumbent to believe, which it was impious to doubt, and which it might be dangerous, and even fatal, to mistake, became the familiar topic of private meditation and popular discourse. The cold indifference of philosophy was inflamed by the fervent spirit of devotion; and even the metaphors of common language suggested the fallacious prejudices of sense and experience. The Christians, who abhorred the gross and impure generation of the Greek mythology, [35](#) were tempted to argue from the familiar analogy of the filial and paternal relations. The character of *Son* seemed to imply a perpetual subordination to the voluntary author of his existence; [36](#) but as the act of generation, in the most spiritual and abstracted sense, must be supposed to transmit the properties of a common nature, [37](#) they durst not presume to circumscribe the powers or the duration of the Son of an eternal and omnipotent Father. Fourscore years after the death of Christ, the Christians of Bithynia, declared before the tribunal of Pliny, that they invoked him as a god: and his divine honors have been perpetuated in every age and country, by the various sects who assume the name of his disciples. [38](#) Their tender reverence for the memory of Christ, and their horror for the profane worship of any created being, would have engaged them to assert the equal and absolute divinity of the *Logos*, if their rapid ascent towards the throne of heaven had not been imperceptibly checked by the apprehension of violating the unity and sole supremacy of the great Father of Christ and of the Universe. The suspense and fluctuation produced in the minds of the Christians by these opposite tendencies, may be observed in the writings of the theologians who flourished after the end of the apostolic age, and before the origin of the Arian controversy. Their suffrage is claimed, with equal confidence, by the orthodox and by the heretical parties; and the most inquisitive critics have fairly allowed, that if they had the good fortune of possessing the Catholic verity, they have delivered their conceptions in loose, inaccurate, and sometimes contradictory language. [39](#)

[In a treatise, which professed to explain the opinions of the ancient philosophers concerning the nature of the gods we might expect to discover the theological Trinity of Plato. But Cicero very honestly confessed, that although he had translated the *Timæus*, he could never understand that mysterious dialogue. See Hieronym. præf. ad l. xii. in *Isaiam*, tom. v. p. 154.]

- 34 [\(return\)](#)
[Tertullian. in Apolog. c. 46. See Bayle, Dictionnaire, au mot *Simonide*. His remarks on the presumption of Tertullian are profound and interesting.]
- 35 [\(return\)](#)
[Lactantius, iv. 8. Yet the *Probole*, or *Prolatio*, which the most orthodox divines borrowed without scruple from the Valentinians, and illustrated by the comparisons of a fountain and stream, the sun and its rays, &c., either meant nothing, or favored a material idea of the divine generation. See Beausobre, tom. i. l. iii. c. 7, p. 548.]
- 36 [\(return\)](#)
[Many of the primitive writers have frankly confessed, that the Son owed his being to the *will* of the Father.—See Clarke's Scripture Trinity, p. 280-287. On the other hand, Athanasius and his followers seem unwilling to grant what they are afraid to deny. The schoolmen extricate themselves from this difficulty by the distinction of a *preceding* and a *concomitant* will. Petav. Dogm. Theolog. tom. ii. l. vi. c. 8, p. 587-603.]
- 37 [\(return\)](#)
[See Petav. Dogm. Theolog. tom. ii. l. ii. c. 10, p. 159.]
- 38 [\(return\)](#)
[Carmenque Christo quasi Deo dicere secum invicem. Plin. Epist. x. 97. The sense of *Deus*, *Elohim*, in the ancient languages, is critically examined by Le Clerc, (Ars Critica, p. 150-156,) and the propriety of worshipping a very excellent creature is ably defended by the Socinian Emlyn, (Tracts, p. 29-36, 51-145.)]
- 39 [\(return\)](#)
[See Daille de Usu Patrum, and Le Clerc, Bibliothèque Universelle, tom. x. p. 409. To arraign the faith of the Ante-Nicene fathers, was the object, or at least has been the effect, of the stupendous work of Petavius on the Trinity, (Dogm. Theolog. tom. ii. ;) nor has the deep impression been erased by the learned defence of Bishop Bull. Note: Dr. Burton's work on the doctrine of the Ante-Nicene fathers must be consulted by those who wish to obtain clear notions on this subject.—M.]

Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.— Part III.

II. The devotion of individuals was the first circumstance which distinguished the Christians from the Platonists: the second was the authority of the church. The disciples of philosophy asserted the rights of intellectual freedom, and their respect for the sentiments of their teachers was a liberal and voluntary tribute, which they offered to superior reason. But the Christians formed a numerous and disciplined society; and the jurisdiction of their laws and magistrates was strictly exercised over the minds of the faithful. The loose wanderings of the imagination were gradually confined by creeds and confessions; [40](#) the freedom of private judgment submitted to the public wisdom of synods; the authority of a theologian was determined by his ecclesiastical rank; and the episcopal successors of the apostles inflicted the censures of the church on those who deviated from the orthodox belief. But in an age of religious controversy, every act of oppression adds new force to the elastic vigor of the mind; and the zeal or obstinacy of a spiritual rebel was sometimes stimulated by secret motives of ambition or avarice. A metaphysical argument became the cause or pretence of political contests; the subtleties of the Platonic school were used as the badges of popular factions, and the distance which separated their respective tenets were enlarged or magnified by the acrimony of dispute. As long as the dark heresies of Praxeas and Sabellius labored to confound the *Father* with the *Son*, [41](#) the orthodox party might be excused if they adhered more strictly and more earnestly to the *distinction*, than to the *equality*, of the divine persons. But as soon as the heat of controversy had subsided, and the progress of the Sabellians was no longer an object of terror to the churches of Rome, of Africa, or of Egypt, the tide of theological opinion began to flow with a gentle but steady motion towards the contrary extreme; and the most orthodox doctors allowed themselves the use of the terms and definitions which had been censured in the mouth of the sectaries. [42](#) After the edict of toleration had restored peace and leisure to the Christians, the Trinitarian controversy was revived in the ancient seat of Platonism, the learned, the opulent, the tumultuous city of Alexandria; and the flame of religious discord was rapidly communicated from the schools to the clergy, the people, the province, and the East. The abstruse question of the eternity of the *Logos* was agitated in ecclesiastic conferences and popular sermons; and the heterodox opinions of Arius [43](#) were soon made public by his own zeal, and by that of his adversaries. His most implacable adversaries have acknowledged the learning and blameless life of that eminent presbyter, who, in a former election, had declared, and perhaps generously declined, his pretensions to the episcopal throne. [44](#) His competitor Alexander assumed the office of his judge. The important cause was argued before him; and if at first he seemed to hesitate, he at length pronounced his final sentence, as an absolute rule of faith. [45](#) The undaunted presbyter, who presumed to resist the authority of his angry bishop, was separated from the community of the church. But the pride of Arius was supported by

the applause of a numerous party. He reckoned among his immediate followers two bishops of Egypt, seven presbyters, twelve deacons, and (what may appear almost incredible) seven hundred virgins. A large majority of the bishops of Asia appeared to support or favor his cause; and their measures were conducted by Eusebius of Cæsarea, the most learned of the Christian prelates; and by Eusebius of Nicomedia, who had acquired the reputation of a statesman without forfeiting that of a saint. Synods in Palestine and Bithynia were opposed to the synods of Egypt. The attention of the prince and people was attracted by this theological dispute; and the decision, at the end of six years, [46](#) was referred to the supreme authority of the general council of Nice.

40 [\(return\)](#)

[The most ancient creeds were drawn up with the greatest latitude. See Bull, (Judicium Eccles. Cathol.,) who tries to prevent Episcopus from deriving any advantage from this observation.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[The heresies of Praxeas, Sabellius, &c., are accurately explained by Mosheim (p. 425, 680-714.) Praxeas, who came to Rome about the end of the second century, deceived, for some time, the simplicity of the bishop, and was confuted by the pen of the angry Tertullian.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[Socrates acknowledges, that the heresy of Arius proceeded from his strong desire to embrace an opinion the most diametrically opposite to that of Sabellius.]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[The figure and manners of Arius, the character and numbers of his first proselytes, are painted in very lively colors by Epiphanius, (tom. i. Hæres. lxi. 3, p. 729,) and we cannot but regret that he should soon forget the historian, to assume the task of controversy.]

44 [\(return\)](#)

[See Philostorgius (l. i. c. 3,) and Godefroy's ample Commentary. Yet the credibility of Philostorgius is lessened, in the eyes of the orthodox, by his Arianism; and in those of rational critics, by his passion, his prejudice, and his ignorance.]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen (l. i. c. 15) represents Alexander as indifferent, and even ignorant, in the beginning of the controversy; while Socrates (l. i. c. 5) ascribes the origin of the dispute to the vain curiosity of his theological speculations. Dr. Jortin (Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 178) has censured, with his usual freedom, the conduct of Alexander.]

[The flames of Arianism might burn for some time in secret; but there is reason to believe that they burst out with violence as early as the year 319. Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 774-780.]

When the mysteries of the Christian faith were dangerously exposed to public debate, it might be observed, that the human understanding was capable of forming three distinct, though imperfect systems, concerning the nature of the Divine Trinity; and it was pronounced, that none of these systems, in a pure and absolute sense, were exempt from heresy and error. [47](#) I. According to the first hypothesis, which was maintained by Arius and his disciples, the *Logos* was a dependent and spontaneous production, created from nothing by the will of the father. The Son, by whom all things were made, [48](#) had been begotten before all worlds, and the longest of the astronomical periods could be compared only as a fleeting moment to the extent of his duration; yet this duration was not infinite, [49](#) and there *had* been a time which preceded the ineffable generation of the *Logos*. On this only-begotten Son, the Almighty Father had transfused his ample spirit, and impressed the effulgence of his glory. Visible image of invisible perfection, he saw, at an immeasurable distance beneath his feet, the thrones of the brightest archangels; yet he shone only with a reflected light, and, like the sons of the Romans emperors, who were invested with the titles of Cæsar or Augustus, [50](#) he governed the universe in obedience to the will of his Father and Monarch. II. In the second hypothesis, the *Logos* possessed all the inherent, incommunicable perfections, which religion and philosophy appropriate to the Supreme God. Three distinct and infinite minds or substances, three coëqual and coëternal beings, composed the Divine Essence; [51](#) and it would have implied contradiction, that any of them should not have existed, or that they should ever cease to exist. [52](#) The advocates of a system which seemed to establish three independent Deities, attempted to preserve the unity of the First Cause, so conspicuous in the design and order of the world, by the perpetual concord of their administration, and the essential agreement of their will. A faint resemblance of this unity of action may be discovered in the societies of men, and even of animals. The causes which disturb their harmony, proceed only from the imperfection and inequality of their faculties; but the omnipotence which is guided by infinite wisdom and goodness, cannot fail of choosing the same means for the accomplishment of the same ends. III. Three beings, who, by the self-derived necessity of their existence, possess all the divine attributes in the most perfect degree; who are eternal in duration, infinite in space, and intimately present to each other, and to the whole universe; irresistibly force themselves on the astonished mind, as one and the same being, [53](#) who, in the economy of grace, as well as in that of nature, may manifest himself under different forms, and be considered under different aspects. By this hypothesis, a real substantial trinity is refined into a trinity of names, and abstract modifications, that subsist only in the mind which conceives them. The *Logos* is no longer a person, but an attribute; and it is only in a figurative sense that the epithet of

Son can be applied to the eternal reason, which was with God from the beginning, and by *which*, not by *whom*, all things were made. The incarnation of the *Logos* is reduced to a mere inspiration of the Divine Wisdom, which filled the soul, and directed all the actions, of the man Jesus. Thus, after revolving around the theological circle, we are surprised to find that the Sabellian ends where the Ebionite had begun; and that the incomprehensible mystery which excites our adoration, eludes our inquiry. [54](#)

47 [\(return\)](#)

[Quid credidit? Certe, *aut* tria nomina audiens tres Deos esse credidit, et idololatra effectus est; *aut* in tribus vocabulis trinominem credens Deum, in Sabellii hæresim incurrit; *aut* edoctus ab Arianis unum esse verum Deum Patrem, filium et spiritum sanctum credidit creaturas. Aut extra hæc quid credere potuerit nescio. Hieronym adv. Luciferianos. Jerom reserves for the last the orthodox system, which is more complicated and difficult.]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[As the doctrine of absolute creation from nothing was gradually introduced among the Christians, (Beausobre, tom. ii. p. 165- 215,) the dignity of the *workman* very naturally rose with that of the *work*.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[The metaphysics of Dr. Clarke (Scripture Trinity, p. 276-280) could digest an eternal generation from an infinite cause.]

50 [\(return\)](#)

[This profane and absurd simile is employed by several of the primitive fathers, particularly by Athenagoras, in his Apology to the emperor Marcus and his son; and it is alleged, without censure, by Bull himself. See Defens. Fid. Nicen. sect. iii. c. 5, No. 4.]

51 [\(return\)](#)

[See Cudworth's Intellectual System, p. 559, 579. This dangerous hypothesis was countenanced by the two Gregories, of Nyssa and Nazianzen, by Cyril of Alexandria, John of Damascus, &c. See Cudworth, p. 603. Le Clerc, Bibliothèque Universelle, tom xviii. p. 97-105.]

52 [\(return\)](#)

[Augustin seems to envy the freedom of the Philosophers. Liberis verbis loquuntur philosophi.... Nos autem non dicimus duo vel tria principia, duos vel tres Deos. De Civitat. Dei, x. 23.]

53

[\(return\)](#)

[Boetius, who was deeply versed in the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle, explains the unity of the Trinity by the *indifference* of the three persons. See the judicious remarks of Le Clerc, Bibliothèque Choisie, tom. xvi. p. 225, &c.]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[If the Sabellians were startled at this conclusion, they were driven another precipice into the confession, that the Father was born of a virgin, that *he* had suffered on the cross; and thus deserved the epithet of *Patripassians*, with which they were branded by their adversaries. See the invectives of Tertullian against Praxeas, and the temperate reflections of Mosheim, (p. 423, 681;) and Beausobre, tom. i. l. iii. c. 6, p. 533.]

If the bishops of the council of Nice [55](#) had been permitted to follow the unbiased dictates of their conscience, Arius and his associates could scarcely have flattered themselves with the hopes of obtaining a majority of votes, in favor of an hypothesis so directly averse to the two most popular opinions of the Catholic world. The Arians soon perceived the danger of their situation, and prudently assumed those modest virtues, which, in the fury of civil and religious dissensions, are seldom practised, or even praised, except by the weaker party. They recommended the exercise of Christian charity and moderation; urged the incomprehensible nature of the controversy, disclaimed the use of any terms or definitions which could not be found in the Scriptures; and offered, by very liberal concessions, to satisfy their adversaries without renouncing the integrity of their own principles. The victorious faction received all their proposals with haughty suspicion; and anxiously sought for some irreconcilable mark of distinction, the rejection of which might involve the Arians in the guilt and consequences of heresy. A letter was publicly read, and ignominiously torn, in which their patron, Eusebius of Nicomedia, ingenuously confessed, that the admission of the Homoousion, or Consubstantial, a word already familiar to the Platonists, was incompatible with the principles of their theological system. The fortunate opportunity was eagerly embraced by the bishops, who governed the resolutions of the synod; and, according to the lively expression of Ambrose, [56](#) they used the sword, which heresy itself had drawn from the scabbard, to cut off the head of the hated monster. The consubstantiality of the Father and the Son was established by the council of Nice, and has been unanimously received as a fundamental article of the Christian faith, by the consent of the Greek, the Latin, the Oriental, and the Protestant churches. But if the same word had not served to stigmatize the heretics, and to unite the Catholics, it would have been inadequate to the purpose of the majority, by whom it was introduced into the orthodox creed. This majority was divided into two parties, distinguished by a contrary tendency to the sentiments of the Tritheists and of the Sabellians. But as those opposite extremes seemed to overthrow the foundations either of natural or revealed

religion, they mutually agreed to qualify the rigor of their principles; and to disavow the just, but invidious, consequences, which might be urged by their antagonists. The interest of the common cause inclined them to join their numbers, and to conceal their differences; their animosity was softened by the healing counsels of toleration, and their disputes were suspended by the use of the mysterious *Homoousion*, which either party was free to interpret according to their peculiar tenets. The Sabellian sense, which, about fifty years before, had obliged the council of Antioch [57](#) to prohibit this celebrated term, had endeared it to those theologians who entertained a secret but partial affection for a nominal Trinity. But the more fashionable saints of the Arian times, the intrepid Athanasius, the learned Gregory Nazianzen, and the other pillars of the church, who supported with ability and success the Nicene doctrine, appeared to consider the expression of *substance* as if it had been synonymous with that of *nature*; and they ventured to illustrate their meaning, by affirming that three men, as they belong to the same common species, are consubstantial, or homoousian to each other. [58](#) This pure and distinct equality was tempered, on the one hand, by the internal connection, and spiritual penetration which indissolubly unites the divine persons; [59](#) and, on the other, by the preëminence of the Father, which was acknowledged as far as it is compatible with the independence of the Son. [60](#) Within these limits, the almost invisible and tremulous ball of orthodoxy was allowed securely to vibrate. On either side, beyond this consecrated ground, the heretics and the dæmons lurked in ambush to surprise and devour the unhappy wanderer. But as the degrees of theological hatred depend on the spirit of the war, rather than on the importance of the controversy, the heretics who degraded, were treated with more severity than those who annihilated, the person of the Son. The life of Athanasius was consumed in irreconcilable opposition to the impious *madness* of the Arians; [61](#) but he defended above twenty years the Sabellianism of Marcellus of Ancyra; and when at last he was compelled to withdraw himself from his communion, he continued to mention, with an ambiguous smile, the venial errors of his respectable friend. [62](#)

55

[\(return\)](#)

[The transactions of the council of Nice are related by the ancients, not only in a partial, but in a very imperfect manner. Such a picture as Fra Paolo would have drawn, can never be recovered; but such rude sketches as have been traced by the pencil of bigotry, and that of reason, may be seen in Tillemont, (Mém. Eccles. tom. v. p. 669-759,) and in Le Clerc, (Bibliothèque Universelle, tom. x p. 435-454.)]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[We are indebted to Ambrose (De Fide, l. iii.) knowledge of this curious anecdote. Hoc verbum quod viderunt adversariis esse formidini; ut ipsis gladio, ipsum nefandæ caput hæreseos.]

- 57 [\(return\)](#)
[See Bull, Defens. Fid. Nicen. sect. ii. c. i. p. 25-36. He thinks it his duty to reconcile two orthodox synods.]
- 58 [\(return\)](#)
[According to Aristotle, the stars were homooousian to each other. “That *Homooousios* means of one substance in *kind*, hath been shown by Petavius, Curcellæus, Cudworth, Le Clerc, &c., and to prove it would be *actum agere*.” This is the just remark of Dr. Jortin, (vol. ii p. 212,) who examines the Arian controversy with learning, candor, and ingenuity.]
- 59 [\(return\)](#)
[See Petavius, (Dogm. Theolog. tom. ii. l. iv. c. 16, p. 453, &c.,) Cudworth, (p. 559,) Bull, (sect. iv. p. 285-290, edit. Grab.) The *circumincessio*, is perhaps the deepest and darkest he whole theological abyss.]
- 60 [\(return\)](#)
[The third section of Bull’s Defence of the Nicene Faith, which some of his antagonists have called nonsense, and others heresy, is consecrated to the supremacy of the Father.]
- 61 [\(return\)](#)
[The ordinary appellation with which Athanasius and his followers chose to compliment the Arians, was that of *Ariomanites*.]
- 62 [\(return\)](#)
[Epiphanius, tom i. Hæres. lxxii. 4, p. 837. See the adventures of Marcellus, in Tillemont, (Mém. Eccles. tom. v. i. p. 880- 899.) His work, in *one* book, of the unity of God, was answered in the *three* books, which are still extant, of Eusebius.—After a long and careful examination, Petavius (tom. ii. l. i. c. 14, p. 78) has reluctantly pronounced the condemnation of Marcellus.]

The authority of a general council, to which the Arians themselves had been compelled to submit, inscribed on the banners of the orthodox party the mysterious characters of the word *Homooousion*, which essentially contributed, notwithstanding some obscure disputes, some nocturnal combats, to maintain and perpetuate the uniformity of faith, or at least of language. The consubstantialists, who by their success have deserved and obtained the title of Catholics, gloried in the simplicity and steadiness of their own creed, and insulted the repeated variations of their adversaries, who were destitute of any certain rule of faith. The sincerity or the cunning of the Arian chiefs, the fear of the laws or of the people, their reverence for Christ, their hatred of Athanasius, all the causes, human and divine, that influence and disturb the counsels of

a theological faction, introduced among the sectaries a spirit of discord and inconstancy, which, in the course of a few years, erected eighteen different models of religion, [63](#) and avenged the violated dignity of the church. The zealous Hilary, [64](#) who, from the peculiar hardships of his situation, was inclined to extenuate rather than to aggravate the errors of the Oriental clergy, declares, that in the wide extent of the ten provinces of Asia, to which he had been banished, there could be found very few prelates who had preserved the knowledge of the true God. [65](#) The oppression which he had felt, the disorders of which he was the spectator and the victim, appeased, during a short interval, the angry passions of his soul; and in the following passage, of which I shall transcribe a few lines, the bishop of Poitiers unwarily deviates into the style of a Christian philosopher. “It is a thing,” says Hilary, “equally deplorable and dangerous, that there are as many creeds as opinions among men, as many doctrines as inclinations, and as many sources of blasphemy as there are faults among us; because we make creeds arbitrarily, and explain them as arbitrarily. The Homousion is rejected, and received, and explained away by successive synods. The partial or total resemblance of the Father and of the Son is a subject of dispute for these unhappy times. Every year, nay, every moon, we make new creeds to describe invisible mysteries. We repent of what we have done, we defend those who repent, we anathematize those whom we defended. We condemn either the doctrine of others in ourselves, or our own in that of others; and reciprocally tearing one another to pieces, we have been the cause of each other’s ruin.” [66](#)

63

[\(return\)](#)

[Athanasius, in his epistle concerning the Synods of Seleucia and Rimini, (tom. i. p. 886-905,) has given an ample list of Arian creeds, which has been enlarged and improved by the labors of the indefatigable Tillemont, (Mém. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 477.)]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[Erasmus, with admirable sense and freedom, has delineated the just character of Hilary. To revise his text, to compose the annals of his life, and to justify his sentiments and conduct, is the province of the Benedictine editors.]

65

[\(return\)](#)

[Absque episcopo Eleusio et paucis cum eo, ex majore parte Asianæ decem provinciæ, inter quas consisto, vere Deum nesciunt. Atque utinam penitus nescirent! cum proclivore enim venia ignorarent quam obtrecent. Hilar. de Synodis, sive de Fide Orientalium, c. 63, p. 1186, edit. Benedict. In the celebrated parallel between atheism and superstition, the bishop of Poitiers would have been surprised in the philosophic society of Bayle and Plutarch.]

[Hilarius ad Constantium, l. i. c. 4, 5, p. 1227, 1228.
This remarkable passage deserved the attention of
Mr. Locke, who has transcribed it (vol. iii. p. 470)
into the model of his new common-place book.]

It will not be expected, it would not perhaps be endured, that I should swell this theological digression, by a minute examination of the eighteen creeds, the authors of which, for the most part, disclaimed the odious name of their parent Arius. It is amusing enough to delineate the form, and to trace the vegetation, of a singular plant; but the tedious detail of leaves without flowers, and of branches without fruit, would soon exhaust the patience, and disappoint the curiosity, of the laborious student. One question, which gradually arose from the Arian controversy, may, however, be noticed, as it served to produce and discriminate the three sects, who were united only by their common aversion to the Homousion of the Nicene synod. 1. If they were asked whether the Son was *like* unto the Father, the question was resolutely answered in the negative, by the heretics who adhered to the principles of Arius, or indeed to those of philosophy; which seem to establish an infinite difference between the Creator and the most excellent of his creatures. This obvious consequence was maintained by Ætius, [67](#) on whom the zeal of his adversaries bestowed the surname of the Atheist. His restless and aspiring spirit urged him to try almost every profession of human life. He was successively a slave, or at least a husbandman, a travelling tinker, a goldsmith, a physician, a schoolmaster, a theologian, and at last the apostle of a new church, which was propagated by the abilities of his disciple Eunomius. [68](#) Armed with texts of Scripture, and with captious syllogisms from the logic of Aristotle, the subtle Ætius had acquired the fame of an invincible disputant, whom it was impossible either to silence or to convince. Such talents engaged the friendship of the Arian bishops, till they were forced to renounce, and even to persecute, a dangerous ally, who, by the accuracy of his reasoning, had prejudiced their cause in the popular opinion, and offended the piety of their most devoted followers. 2. The omnipotence of the Creator suggested a specious and respectful solution of the *likeness* of the Father and the Son; and faith might humbly receive what reason could not presume to deny, that the Supreme God might communicate his infinite perfections, and create a being similar only to himself. [69](#) These Arians were powerfully supported by the weight and abilities of their leaders, who had succeeded to the management of the Eusebian interest, and who occupied the principal thrones of the East. They detested, perhaps with some affectation, the impiety of Ætius; they professed to believe, either without reserve, or according to the Scriptures, that the Son was different from all *other* creatures, and similar only to the Father. But they denied, that he was either of the same, or of a similar substance; sometimes boldly justifying their dissent, and sometimes objecting to the use of the word substance, which seems to imply an adequate, or at least, a distinct, notion of the nature of the Deity. 3. The sect which deserted the doctrine of a similar substance, was the most numerous, at least in the provinces of Asia; and when the leaders of both

parties were assembled in the council of Seleucia, [70](#) *their* opinion would have prevailed by a majority of one hundred and five to forty-three bishops. The Greek word, which was chosen to express this mysterious resemblance, bears so close an affinity to the orthodox symbol, that the profane of every age have derided the furious contests which the difference of a single diphthong excited between the Homoiousians and the Homoiousians. As it frequently happens, that the sounds and characters which approach the nearest to each other accidentally represent the most opposite ideas, the observation would be itself ridiculous, if it were possible to mark any real and sensible distinction between the doctrine of the Semi-Arians, as they were improperly styled, and that of the Catholics themselves. The bishop of Poitiers, who in his Phrygian exile very wisely aimed at a coalition of parties, endeavors to prove that by a pious and faithful interpretation, [71](#) the *Homoiousion* may be reduced to a consubstantial sense. Yet he confesses that the word has a dark and suspicious aspect; and, as if darkness were congenial to theological disputes, the Semi-Arians, who advanced to the doors of the church, assailed them with the most unrelenting fury.

67

[\(return\)](#)

[In Philostorgius (l. iii. c. 15) the character and adventures of Ætius appear singular enough, though they are carefully softened by the hand of a friend. The editor, Godefroy, (p. 153,) who was more attached to his principles than to his author, has collected the odious circumstances which his various adversaries have preserved or invented.]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[According to the judgment of a man who respected both these sectaries, Ætius had been endowed with a stronger understanding and Eunomius had acquired more art and learning. (Philostorgius l. viii. c. 18.) The confession and apology of Eunomius (Fabricius, Bibliot. Græc. tom. viii. p. 258-305) is one of the few heretical pieces which have escaped.]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[Yet, according to the opinion of Estius and Bull, (p. 297,) there is one power—that of creation—which God *cannot* communicate to a creature. Estius, who so accurately defined the limits of Omnipotence was a Dutchman by birth, and by trade a scholastic divine. Dupin Bibliot. Eccles. tom. xvii. p. 45.]

70

[\(return\)](#)

[Sabinus ap. Socrat. (l. ii. c. 39) had copied the acts: Athanasius and Hilary have explained the divisions of this Arian synod; the other circumstances which are relative to it are carefully collected by Baro and Tillemont]

[Fideli et piâ intelligentiâ... De Synod. c. 77, p. 1193. In his his short apologetical notes (first published by the Benedictines from a MS. of Chartres) he observes, that he used this cautious expression, qui intelligerum et impiam, p. 1206. See p. 1146. Philostorgius, who saw those objects through a different medium, is inclined to forget the difference of the important diphthong. See in particular viii. 17, and Godefroy, p. 352.]

The provinces of Egypt and Asia, which cultivated the language and manners of the Greeks, had deeply imbibed the venom of the Arian controversy. The familiar study of the Platonic system, a vain and argumentative disposition, a copious and flexible idiom, supplied the clergy and people of the East with an inexhaustible flow of words and distinctions; and, in the midst of their fierce contentions, they easily forgot the doubt which is recommended by philosophy, and the submission which is enjoined by religion. The inhabitants of the West were of a less inquisitive spirit; their passions were not so forcibly moved by invisible objects, their minds were less frequently exercised by the habits of dispute; and such was the happy ignorance of the Gallican church, that Hilary himself, above thirty years after the first general council, was still a stranger to the Nicene creed. [72](#) The Latins had received the rays of divine knowledge through the dark and doubtful medium of a translation. The poverty and stubbornness of their native tongue was not always capable of affording just equivalents for the Greek terms, for the technical words of the Platonic philosophy, [73](#) which had been consecrated, by the gospel or by the church, to express the mysteries of the Christian faith; and a verbal defect might introduce into the Latin theology a long train of error or perplexity. [74](#) But as the western provincials had the good fortune of deriving their religion from an orthodox source, they preserved with steadiness the doctrine which they had accepted with docility; and when the Arian pestilence approached their frontiers, they were supplied with the seasonable preservative of the Homousion, by the paternal care of the Roman pontiff. Their sentiments and their temper were displayed in the memorable synod of Rimini, which surpassed in numbers the council of Nice, since it was composed of above four hundred bishops of Italy, Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Illyricum. From the first debates it appeared, that only fourscore prelates adhered to the party, though *they* affected to anathematize the name and memory, of Arius. But this inferiority was compensated by the advantages of skill, of experience, and of discipline; and the minority was conducted by Valens and Ursacius, two bishops of Illyricum, who had spent their lives in the intrigues of courts and councils, and who had been trained under the Eusebian banner in the religious wars of the East. By their arguments and negotiations, they embarrassed, they confounded, they at last deceived, the honest simplicity of the Latin bishops; who suffered the palladium of the faith to be extorted from their hand by fraud and importunity, rather than by open violence. The council of Rimini was not allowed to separate, till the members had imprudently subscribed a

captious creed, in which some expressions, susceptible of an heretical sense, were inserted in the room of the Homousion. It was on this occasion, that, according to Jerom, the world was surprised to find itself Arian. [75](#) But the bishops of the Latin provinces had no sooner reached their respective dioceses, than they discovered their mistake, and repented of their weakness. The ignominious capitulation was rejected with disdain and abhorrence; and the Homousian standard, which had been shaken but not overthrown, was more firmly replanted in all the churches of the West. [76](#)

72 [\(return\)](#)

[Testor Deum cœli atque terræ me cum neutrum audissem, semper tamen utrumque sensisse.... Regeneratus pridem et in episcopatu aliquantisper manens fidem Nicenam nunquam nisi exsulaturus audiui. Hilar. de Synodis, c. xci. p. 1205. The Benedictines are persuaded that he governed the diocese of Poitiers several years before his exile.]

73 [\(return\)](#)

[Seneca (Epist. lviii.) complains that even the of the Platonists (the *ens* of the bolder schoolmen) could not be expressed by a Latin noun.]

74 [\(return\)](#)

[The preference which the fourth council of the Lateran at length gave to a *numerical* rather than a *generical* unity (See Petav. tom. ii. l. v. c. 13, p. 424) was favored by the Latin language: seems to excite the idea of substance, *trinitas* of qualities.]

75 [\(return\)](#)

[Ingemuit totus orbis, et Arianum se esse miratus est. Hieronym. adv. Lucifer. tom. i. p. 145.]

76 [\(return\)](#)

[The story of the council of Rimini is very elegantly told by Sulpicius Severus, (Hist. Sacra, l. ii. p. 419-430, edit. Lugd. Bat. 1647,) and by Jerom, in his dialogue against the Luciferians. The design of the latter is to apologize for the conduct of the Latin bishops, who were deceived, and who repented.]

Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.— Part IV.

Such was the rise and progress, and such were the natural revolutions of those theological disputes, which disturbed the peace of Christianity under the reigns of Constantine and of his sons. But as those princes presumed to extend their despotism over the faith, as well as over the lives and fortunes, of their subjects, the weight of their suffrage sometimes inclined the ecclesiastical balance: and the prerogatives of the King

of Heaven were settled, or changed, or modified, in the cabinet of an earthly monarch. The unhappy spirit of discord which pervaded the provinces of the East, interrupted the triumph of Constantine; but the emperor continued for some time to view, with cool and careless indifference, the object of the dispute. As he was yet ignorant of the difficulty of appeasing the quarrels of theologians, he addressed to the contending parties, to Alexander and to Arius, a moderating epistle; [77](#) which may be ascribed, with far greater reason, to the untutored sense of a soldier and statesman, than to the dictates of any of his episcopal counsellors. He attributes the origin of the whole controversy to a trifling and subtle question, concerning an incomprehensible point of law, which was foolishly asked by the bishop, and imprudently resolved by the presbyter. He laments that the Christian people, who had the same God, the same religion, and the same worship, should be divided by such inconsiderable distinctions; and he seriously recommends to the clergy of Alexandria the example of the Greek philosophers; who could maintain their arguments without losing their temper, and assert their freedom without violating their friendship. The indifference and contempt of the sovereign would have been, perhaps, the most effectual method of silencing the dispute, if the popular current had been less rapid and impetuous, and if Constantine himself, in the midst of faction and fanaticism, could have preserved the calm possession of his own mind. But his ecclesiastical ministers soon contrived to seduce the impartiality of the magistrate, and to awaken the zeal of the proselyte. He was provoked by the insults which had been offered to his statues; he was alarmed by the real, as well as the imaginary magnitude of the spreading mischief; and he extinguished the hope of peace and toleration, from the moment that he assembled three hundred bishops within the walls of the same palace. The presence of the monarch swelled the importance of the debate; his attention multiplied the arguments; and he exposed his person with a patient intrepidity, which animated the valor of the combatants. Notwithstanding the applause which has been bestowed on the eloquence and sagacity of Constantine, [78](#) a Roman general, whose religion might be still a subject of doubt, and whose mind had not been enlightened either by study or by inspiration, was indifferently qualified to discuss, in the Greek language, a metaphysical question, or an article of faith. But the credit of his favorite Osius, who appears to have presided in the council of Nice, might dispose the emperor in favor of the orthodox party; and a well-timed insinuation, that the same Eusebius of Nicomedia, who now protected the heretic, had lately assisted the tyrant, [79](#) might exasperate him against their adversaries. The Nicene creed was ratified by Constantine; and his firm declaration, that those who resisted the divine judgment of the synod, must prepare themselves for an immediate exile, annihilated the murmurs of a feeble opposition; which, from seventeen, was almost instantly reduced to two, protesting bishops. Eusebius of Cæsarea yielded a reluctant and ambiguous consent to the Homousion; [80](#) and the wavering conduct of the Nicomedian Eusebius served only to delay, about three months, his disgrace and exile. [81](#) The impious Arius was banished into one of the remote provinces of Illyricum;

his person and disciples were branded by law with the odious name of Porphyrians; his writings were condemned to the flames, and a capital punishment was denounced against those in whose possession they should be found. The emperor had now imbibed the spirit of controversy, and the angry, sarcastic style of his edicts was designed to inspire his subjects with the hatred which he had conceived against the enemies of Christ. [82](#)

- 77 [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius, in Vit. Constant. l. ii. c. 64-72. The principles of toleration and religious indifference, contained in this epistle, have given great offence to Baronius, Tillemont, &c., who suppose that the emperor had some evil counsellor, either Satan or Eusebius, at his elbow. See Cortin's Remarks, tom. ii. p. 183. * Note: Heinichen (Excursus xi.) quotes with approbation the term "golden words," applied by Ziegler to this moderate and tolerant letter of Constantine. May an English clergyman venture to express his regret that "the fine gold soon became dim" in the Christian church?—M.]
- 78 [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius in Vit. Constantin. l. iii. c. 13.]
- 79 [\(return\)](#)
[Theodoret has preserved (l. i. c. 20) an epistle from Constantine to the people of Nicomedia, in which the monarch declares himself the public accuser of one of his subjects; he styles Eusebius and complains of his hostile behavior during the civil war.]
- 80 [\(return\)](#)
[See in Socrates, (l. i. c. 8,) or rather in Theodoret, (l. i. c. 12,) an original letter of Eusebius of Cæsarea, in which he attempts to justify his subscribing the Homoeousion. The character of Eusebius has always been a problem; but those who have read the second critical epistle of Le Clerc, (Ars Critica, tom. iii. p. 30-69,) must entertain a very unfavorable opinion of the orthodoxy and sincerity of the bishop of Cæsarea.]
- 81 [\(return\)](#)
[Athanasius, tom. i. p. 727. Philostorgius, l. i. c. 10, and Godefroy's Commentary, p. 41.]
- 82 [\(return\)](#)
[Socrates, l. i. c. 9. In his circular letters, which were addressed to the several cities, Constantine employed against the heretics the arms of ridicule and *comic* raillery.]

But, as if the conduct of the emperor had been guided by passion instead of principle, three years from the council of Nice were scarcely elapsed before he discovered some symptoms of mercy, and even of indulgence, towards the proscribed sect, which was secretly protected by his favorite sister. The exiles were recalled, and Eusebius, who gradually resumed his influence over the mind of Constantine, was restored to the episcopal throne, from which he had been ignominiously degraded. Arius himself was treated by the whole court with the respect which would have been due to an innocent and oppressed man. His faith was approved by the synod of Jerusalem; and the emperor seemed impatient to repair his injustice, by issuing an absolute command, that he should be solemnly admitted to the communion in the cathedral of Constantinople. On the same day, which had been fixed for the triumph of Arius, he expired; and the strange and horrid circumstances of his death might excite a suspicion, that the orthodox saints had contributed more efficaciously than by their prayers, to deliver the church from the most formidable of her enemies. [83](#) The three principal leaders of the Catholics, Athanasius of Alexandria, Eustathius of Antioch, and Paul of Constantinople were deposed on various accusations, by the sentence of numerous councils; and were afterwards banished into distant provinces by the first of the Christian emperors, who, in the last moments of his life, received the rites of baptism from the Arian bishop of Nicomedia. The ecclesiastical government of Constantine cannot be justified from the reproach of levity and weakness. But the credulous monarch, unskilled in the stratagems of theological warfare, might be deceived by the modest and specious professions of the heretics, whose sentiments he never perfectly understood; and while he protected Arius, and persecuted Athanasius, he still considered the council of Nice as the bulwark of the Christian faith, and the peculiar glory of his own reign. [84](#)

83

[\(return\)](#)

[We derive the original story from Athanasius, (tom. i. p. 670,) who expresses some reluctance to stigmatize the memory of the dead. He might exaggerate; but the perpetual commerce of Alexandria and Constantinople would have rendered it dangerous to invent. Those who press the literal narrative of the death of Arius (his bowels suddenly burst out in a privy) must make their option between *poison* and *miracle*.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[The change in the sentiments, or at least in the conduct, of Constantine, may be traced in Eusebius, (in Vit. Constant. l. iii. c. 23, l. iv. c. 41,) Socrates, (l. i. c. 23-39,) Sozomen, (l. ii. c. 16-34,) Theodoret, (l. i. c. 14-34,) and Philostorgius, (l. ii. c. 1-17.) But the first of these writers was too near the scene of action, and the others were too remote from it. It is singular enough, that the important task of continuing the history of the church should have been left for two laymen and a heretic.]

The sons of Constantine must have been admitted from their childhood into the rank of catechumens; but they imitated, in the delay of their baptism, the example of their father. Like him they presumed to pronounce their judgment on mysteries into which they had never been regularly initiated; [85](#) and the fate of the Trinitarian controversy depended, in a great measure, on the sentiments of Constantius; who inherited the provinces of the East, and acquired the possession of the whole empire. The Arian presbyter or bishop, who had secreted for his use the testament of the deceased emperor, improved the fortunate occasion which had introduced him to the familiarity of a prince, whose public counsels were always swayed by his domestic favorites. The eunuchs and slaves diffused the spiritual poison through the palace, and the dangerous infection was communicated by the female attendants to the guards, and by the empress to her unsuspecting husband. [86](#) The partiality which Constantius always expressed towards the Eusebian faction, was insensibly fortified by the dexterous management of their leaders; and his victory over the tyrant Magnentius increased his inclination, as well as ability, to employ the arms of power in the cause of Arianism. While the two armies were engaged in the plains of Mursa, and the fate of the two rivals depended on the chance of war, the son of Constantine passed the anxious moments in a church of the martyrs under the walls of the city. His spiritual comforter, Valens, the Arian bishop of the diocese, employed the most artful precautions to obtain such early intelligence as might secure either his favor or his escape. A secret chain of swift and trusty messengers informed him of the vicissitudes of the battle; and while the courtiers stood trembling round their affrighted master, Valens assured him that the Gallic legions gave way; and insinuated with some presence of mind, that the glorious event had been revealed to him by an angel. The grateful emperor ascribed his success to the merits and intercession of the bishop of Mursa, whose faith had deserved the public and miraculous approbation of Heaven. [87](#) The Arians, who considered as their own the victory of Constantius, preferred his glory to that of his father. [88](#) Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, immediately composed the description of a celestial cross, encircled with a splendid rainbow; which during the festival of Pentecost, about the third hour of the day, had appeared over the Mount of Olives, to the edification of the devout pilgrims, and the people of the holy city. [89](#) The size of the meteor was gradually magnified; and the Arian historian has ventured to affirm, that it was conspicuous to the two armies in the plains of Pannonia; and that the tyrant, who is purposely represented as an idolater, fled before the auspicious sign of orthodox Christianity. [90](#)

85

[\(return\)](#)

[Quia etiam tum catechumenus sacramentum fidei merito videretui potuisse nescire. Sulp. Sever. Hist. Sacra, l. ii. p. 410.]

86

[\(return\)](#)

[Socrates, l. ii. c. 2. Sozomen, l. iii. c. 18. Athanas. tom. i. p. 813, 834. He observes that the eunuchs are the natural enemies of the *Son*. Compare Dr. Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. iv.

p. 3 with a certain genealogy in *Candide*, (ch. iv.,) which ends with one of the first companions of Christopher Columbus.]

87 [\(return\)](#)
[Sulpicius Severus in Hist. Sacra, l. ii. p. 405, 406.]

88 [\(return\)](#)
[Cyril (apud Baron. A. D. 353, No. 26) expressly observes that in the reign of Constantine, the cross had been found in the bowels of the earth; but that it had appeared, in the reign of Constantius, in the midst of the heavens. This opposition evidently proves, that Cyril was ignorant of the stupendous miracle to which the conversion of Constantine is attributed; and this ignorance is the more surprising, since it was no more than twelve years after his death that Cyril was consecrated bishop of Jerusalem, by the immediate successor of Eusebius of Cæsarea. See Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 715.]

89 [\(return\)](#)
[It is not easy to determine how far the ingenuity of Cyril might be assisted by some natural appearances of a solar halo.]

90 [\(return\)](#)
[Philostorgius, l. iii. c. 26. He is followed by the author of the Alexandrian Chronicle, by Cedrenus, and by Nicephorus. (See Gothofred. Dissert. p. 188.) They could not refuse a miracle, even from the hand of an enemy.]

The sentiments of a judicious stranger, who has impartially considered the progress of civil or ecclesiastical discord, are always entitled to our notice; and a short passage of Ammianus, who served in the armies, and studied the character of Constantius, is perhaps of more value than many pages of theological invectives. “The Christian religion, which, in itself,” says that moderate historian, “is plain and simple, *he* confounded by the dotage of superstition. Instead of reconciling the parties by the weight of his authority, he cherished and promulgated, by verbal disputes, the differences which his vain curiosity had excited. The highways were covered with troops of bishops galloping from every side to the assemblies, which they call synods; and while they labored to reduce the whole sect to their own particular opinions, the public establishment of the posts was almost ruined by their hasty and repeated journeys.” [91](#) Our more intimate knowledge of the ecclesiastical transactions of the reign of Constantius would furnish an ample commentary on this remarkable passage, which justifies the rational apprehensions of Athanasius, that the restless activity of the clergy, who wandered round the empire in search of the true faith, would excite the contempt and laughter of the unbelieving world. [92](#) As soon as the emperor was relieved from the terrors of the civil war, he devoted the leisure of his winter quarters

at Arles, Milan, Sirmium, and Constantinople, to the amusement or toils of controversy: the sword of the magistrate, and even of the tyrant, was unsheathed, to enforce the reasons of the theologian; and as he opposed the orthodox faith of Nice, it is readily confessed that his incapacity and ignorance were equal to his presumption. [93](#) The eunuchs, the women, and the bishops, who governed the vain and feeble mind of the emperor, had inspired him with an insuperable dislike to the Homoousion; but his timid conscience was alarmed by the impiety of Ætius. The guilt of that atheist was aggravated by the suspicious favor of the unfortunate Gallus; and even the death of the Imperial ministers, who had been massacred at Antioch, were imputed to the suggestions of that dangerous sophist. The mind of Constantius, which could neither be moderated by reason, nor fixed by faith, was blindly impelled to either side of the dark and empty abyss, by his horror of the opposite extreme; he alternately embraced and condemned the sentiments, he successively banished and recalled the leaders, of the Arian and Semi-Arian factions. [94](#) During the season of public business or festivity, he employed whole days, and even nights, in selecting the words, and weighing the syllables, which composed his fluctuating creeds. The subject of his meditations still pursued and occupied his slumbers: the incoherent dreams of the emperor were received as celestial visions, and he accepted with complacency the lofty title of bishop of bishops, from those ecclesiastics who forgot the interest of their order for the gratification of their passions. The design of establishing a uniformity of doctrine, which had engaged him to convene so many synods in Gaul, Italy, Illyricum, and Asia, was repeatedly baffled by his own levity, by the divisions of the Arians, and by the resistance of the Catholics; and he resolved, as the last and decisive effort, imperiously to dictate the decrees of a general council. The destructive earthquake of Nicomedia, the difficulty of finding a convenient place, and perhaps some secret motives of policy, produced an alteration in the summons. The bishops of the East were directed to meet at Seleucia, in Isauria; while those of the West held their deliberations at Rimini, on the coast of the Hadriatic; and instead of two or three deputies from each province, the whole episcopal body was ordered to march. The Eastern council, after consuming four days in fierce and unavailing debate, separated without any definitive conclusion. The council of the West was protracted till the seventh month. Taurus, the Prætorian præfect was instructed not to dismiss the prelates till they should all be united in the same opinion; and his efforts were supported by the power of banishing fifteen of the most refractory, and a promise of the consulship if he achieved so difficult an adventure. His prayers and threats, the authority of the sovereign, the sophistry of Valens and Ursacius, the distress of cold and hunger, and the tedious melancholy of a hopeless exile, at length extorted the reluctant consent of the bishops of Rimini. The deputies of the East and of the West attended the emperor in the palace of Constantinople, and he enjoyed the satisfaction of imposing on the world a profession of faith which established the *likeness*, without expressing the *consubstantiality*, of the Son of God. [95](#) But the triumph of Arianism had been preceded by the removal of the orthodox clergy, whom

it was impossible either to intimidate or to corrupt; and the reign of Constantius was disgraced by the unjust and ineffectual persecution of the great Athanasius.

- 91 [\(return\)](#)
[So curious a passage well deserves to be transcribed. Christianam religionem absolutam et simplicem, anili superstitione confundens; in qua scrutanda perplexius, quam componenda gravius excitaret discidia plurima; quæ progressa fusius aluit concertatione verborum, ut catervis antistium jumentis publicis ultro citroque discarrentibus, per synodos (quas appellant) dum ritum omnem ad suum sahère conantur (Valesius reads *conatur*) rei vehiculariæ concideret servos. Ammianus, xxi. 16.]
- 92 [\(return\)](#)
[Athanas. tom. i. p. 870.]
- 93 [\(return\)](#)
[Socrates, l. ii. c. 35-47. Sozomen, l. iv. c. 12-30. Theodore li. c. 18-32. Philostorg. l. iv. c. 4—12, l. v. c. 1-4, l. vi. c. 1-5]
- 94 [\(return\)](#)
[Sozomen, l. iv. c. 23. Athanas. tom. i. p. 831. Tillemont (Mem Eccles. tom. vii. p. 947) has collected several instances of the haughty fanaticism of Constantius from the detached treatises of Lucifer of Cagliari. The very titles of these treatises inspire zeal and terror; “Moriendum pro Dei Filio.” “De Regibus Apostaticis.” “De non conveniendo cum Hæretico.” “De non parcendo in Deum delinquentibus.”]
- 95 [\(return\)](#)
[Sulp. Sever. Hist. Sacra, l. ii. p. 418-430. The Greek historians were very ignorant of the affairs of the West.]

We have seldom an opportunity of observing, either in active or speculative life, what effect may be produced, or what obstacles may be surmounted, by the force of a single mind, when it is inflexibly applied to the pursuit of a single object. The immortal name of Athanasius [96](#) will never be separated from the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity, to whose defence he consecrated every moment and every faculty of his being. Educated in the family of Alexander, he had vigorously opposed the early progress of the Arian heresy: he exercised the important functions of secretary under the aged prelate; and the fathers of the Nicene council beheld with surprise and respect the rising virtues of the young deacon. In a time of public danger, the dull claims of age and of rank are sometimes superseded; and within five months after his return from Nice, the deacon Athanasius was seated on the archiepiscopal throne of Egypt. He filled that eminent station above forty-six years, and his long administration was spent in a perpetual combat against the powers of Arianism. Five times was Athanasius expelled from his

throne; twenty years he passed as an exile or a fugitive: and almost every province of the Roman empire was successively witness to his merit, and his sufferings in the cause of the Homoousion, which he considered as the sole pleasure and business, as the duty, and as the glory of his life. Amidst the storms of persecution, the archbishop of Alexandria was patient of labor, jealous of fame, careless of safety; and although his mind was tainted by the contagion of fanaticism, Athanasius displayed a superiority of character and abilities, which would have qualified him, far better than the degenerate sons of Constantine, for the government of a great monarchy. His learning was much less profound and extensive than that of Eusebius of Cæsarea, and his rude eloquence could not be compared with the polished oratory of Gregory of Basil; but whenever the primate of Egypt was called upon to justify his sentiments, or his conduct, his unpremeditated style, either of speaking or writing, was clear, forcible, and persuasive. He has always been revered, in the orthodox school, as one of the most accurate masters of the Christian theology; and he was supposed to possess two profane sciences, less adapted to the episcopal character, the knowledge of jurisprudence, [97](#) and that of divination. [98](#) Some fortunate conjectures of future events, which impartial reasoners might ascribe to the experience and judgment of Athanasius, were attributed by his friends to heavenly inspiration, and imputed by his enemies to infernal magic.

96

[\(return\)](#)

[We may regret that Gregory Nazianzen composed a panegyric instead of a life of Athanasius; but we should enjoy and improve the advantage of drawing our most authentic materials from the rich fund of his own epistles and apologies, (tom. i. p. 670-951.) I shall not imitate the example of Socrates, (l. ii. c. l.) who published the first edition of the history, without giving himself the trouble to consult the writings of Athanasius. Yet even Socrates, the more curious Sozomen, and the learned Theodoret, connect the life of Athanasius with the series of ecclesiastical history. The diligence of Tillemont, (tom. viii,) and of the Benedictine editors, has collected every fact, and examined every difficulty]

97

[\(return\)](#)

[Sulpicius Severus (Hist. Sacra, l. ii. p. 396) calls him a lawyer, a jurisconsult. This character cannot now be discovered either in the life or writings of Athanasius.]

98

[\(return\)](#)

[Dicebatur enim fatidicarum sortium fidem, quæve augurales portenderent alites scientissime callens aliquoties prædixisse futura. Ammianus, xv. 7. A prophecy, or rather a joke, is related by Sozomen, (l. iv c. 10,) which evidently proves (if the crows speak Latin) that Athanasius understood the language of the crows.]

But as Athanasius was continually engaged with the prejudices and passions of every order of men, from the monk to the emperor, the knowledge of human nature was his first and most important science. He preserved a distinct and unbroken view of a scene which was incessantly shifting; and never failed to improve those decisive moments which are irrecoverably past before they are perceived by a common eye. The archbishop of Alexandria was capable of distinguishing how far he might boldly command, and where he must dexterously insinuate; how long he might contend with power, and when he must withdraw from persecution; and while he directed the thunders of the church against heresy and rebellion, he could assume, in the bosom of his own party, the flexible and indulgent temper of a prudent leader. The election of Athanasius has not escaped the reproach of irregularity and precipitation; [99](#) but the propriety of his behavior conciliated the affections both of the clergy and of the people. The Alexandrians were impatient to rise in arms for the defence of an eloquent and liberal pastor. In his distress he always derived support, or at least consolation, from the faithful attachment of his parochial clergy; and the hundred bishops of Egypt adhered, with unshaken zeal, to the cause of Athanasius. In the modest equipage which pride and policy would affect, he frequently performed the episcopal visitation of his provinces, from the mouth of the Nile to the confines of Æthiopia; familiarly conversing with the meanest of the populace, and humbly saluting the saints and hermits of the desert. [100](#) Nor was it only in ecclesiastical assemblies, among men whose education and manners were similar to his own, that Athanasius displayed the ascendancy of his genius. He appeared with easy and respectful firmness in the courts of princes; and in the various turns of his prosperous and adverse fortune he never lost the confidence of his friends, or the esteem of his enemies.

99

[\(return\)](#)

[The irregular ordination of Athanasius was slightly mentioned in the councils which were held against him. See Philostorg. l. ii. c. 11, and Godefroy, p. 71; but it can scarcely be supposed that the assembly of the bishops of Egypt would solemnly attest a *public* falsehood. Athanas. tom. i. p. 726.]

100

[\(return\)](#)

[See the history of the Fathers of the Desert, published by Rosweide; and Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. vii., in the lives of Antony, Pachomius, &c. Athanasius himself, who did not disdain to compose the life of his friend Antony, has carefully observed how often the holy monk deplored and prophesied the mischiefs of the Arian heresy Athanas. tom. ii. p. 492, 498, &c.]

In his youth, the primate of Egypt resisted the great Constantine, who had repeatedly signified his will, that Arius should be restored to the Catholic communion. [101](#) The emperor respected, and might forgive, this inflexible resolution; and the faction who

considered Athanasius as their most formidable enemy, was constrained to dissemble their hatred, and silently to prepare an indirect and distant assault. They scattered rumors and suspicions, represented the archbishop as a proud and oppressive tyrant, and boldly accused him of violating the treaty which had been ratified in the Nicene council, with the schismatic followers of Meletius. [102](#) Athanasius had openly disapproved that ignominious peace, and the emperor was disposed to believe that he had abused his ecclesiastical and civil power, to prosecute those odious sectaries: that he had sacrilegiously broken a chalice in one of their churches of Mareotis; that he had whipped or imprisoned six of their bishops; and that Arsenius, a seventh bishop of the same party, had been murdered, or at least mutilated, by the cruel hand of the primate. [103](#) These charges, which affected his honor and his life, were referred by Constantine to his brother Dalmatius the censor, who resided at Antioch; the synods of Cæsarea and Tyre were successively convened; and the bishops of the East were instructed to judge the cause of Athanasius, before they proceeded to consecrate the new church of the Resurrection at Jerusalem. The primate might be conscious of his innocence; but he was sensible that the same implacable spirit which had dictated the accusation, would direct the proceeding, and pronounce the sentence. He prudently declined the tribunal of his enemies; despised the summons of the synod of Cæsarea; and, after a long and artful delay, submitted to the peremptory commands of the emperor, who threatened to punish his criminal disobedience if he refused to appear in the council of Tyre. [104](#) Before Athanasius, at the head of fifty Egyptian prelates, sailed from Alexandria, he had wisely secured the alliance of the Meletians; and Arsenius himself, his imaginary victim, and his secret friend, was privately concealed in his train. The synod of Tyre was conducted by Eusebius of Cæsarea, with more passion, and with less art, than his learning and experience might promise; his numerous faction repeated the names of homicide and tyrant; and their clamors were encouraged by the seeming patience of Athanasius, who expected the decisive moment to produce Arsenius alive and unhurt in the midst of the assembly. The nature of the other charges did not admit of such clear and satisfactory replies; yet the archbishop was able to prove, that in the village, where he was accused of breaking a consecrated chalice, neither church nor altar nor chalice could really exist.

The Arians, who had secretly determined the guilt and condemnation of their enemy, attempted, however, to disguise their injustice by the imitation of judicial forms: the synod appointed an episcopal commission of six delegates to collect evidence on the spot; and this measure which was vigorously opposed by the Egyptian bishops, opened new scenes of violence and perjury. [105](#) After the return of the deputies from Alexandria, the majority of the council pronounced the final sentence of degradation and exile against the primate of Egypt. The decree, expressed in the fiercest language of malice and revenge, was communicated to the emperor and the Catholic church; and the bishops immediately resumed a mild and devout aspect, such as became their holy pilgrimage to the Sepulchre of Christ. [106](#)

- 101 [\(return\)](#)
[At first Constantine threatened in *speaking*, but requested in *writing*. His letters gradually assumed a menacing tone; by while he required that the entrance of the church should be open to *all*, he avoided the odious name of Arius. Athanasius, like a skilful politician, has accurately marked these distinctions, (tom. i. p. 788.) which allowed him some scope for excuse and delay]
- 102 [\(return\)](#)
[The Meletians in Egypt, like the Donatists in Africa, were produced by an episcopal quarrel which arose from the persecution. I have not leisure to pursue the obscure controversy, which seems to have been misrepresented by the partiality of Athanasius and the ignorance of Epiphanius. See Mosheim's General History of the Church, vol. i. p. 201.]
- 103 [\(return\)](#)
[The treatment of the six bishops is specified by Sozomen, (l. ii. c. 25;) but Athanasius himself, so copious on the subject of Arsenius and the chalice, leaves this grave accusation without a reply. Note: This grave charge, if made, (and it rests entirely on the authority of Soz omen,) seems to have been silently dropped by the parties themselves: it is never alluded to in the subsequent investigations. From Sozomen himself, who gives the unfavorable report of the commission of inquiry sent to Egypt concerning the cup. it does not appear that they noticed this accusation of personal violence.—M]
- 104 [\(return\)](#)
[Athanas, tom. i. p. 788. Socrates, l. i.c. 28. Sozomen, l. ii. c 25. The emperor, in his Epistle of Convocation, (Euseb. in Vit. Constant. l. iv. c. 42,) seems to prejudge some members of the clergy and it was more than probable that the synod would apply those reproaches to Athanasius.]
- 105 [\(return\)](#)
[See, in particular, the second Apology of Athanasius, (tom. i. p. 763-808,) and his Epistles to the Monks, (p. 808-866.) They are justified by original and authentic documents; but they would inspire more confidence if he appeared less innocent, and his enemies less absurd.]
- 106 [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 41-47.]

Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.— Part V.

But the injustice of these ecclesiastical judges had not been countenanced by the submission, or even by the presence, of Athanasius. He resolved to make a bold and dangerous experiment, whether the throne was inaccessible to the voice of truth; and before the final sentence could be pronounced at Tyre, the intrepid primate threw himself into a bark which was ready to hoist sail for the Imperial city. The request of a formal audience might have been opposed or eluded; but Athanasius concealed his arrival, watched the moment of Constantine's return from an adjacent villa, and boldly encountered his angry sovereign as he passed on horseback through the principal street of Constantinople. So strange an apparition excited his surprise and indignation; and the guards were ordered to remove the importunate suitor; but his resentment was subdued by involuntary respect; and the haughty spirit of the emperor was awed by the courage and eloquence of a bishop, who implored his justice and awakened his conscience. [107](#) Constantine listened to the complaints of Athanasius with impartial and even gracious attention; the members of the synod of Tyre were summoned to justify their proceedings; and the arts of the Eusebian faction would have been confounded, if they had not aggravated the guilt of the primate, by the dexterous supposition of an unpardonable offence; a criminal design to intercept and detain the corn-fleet of Alexandria, which supplied the subsistence of the new capital. [108](#) The emperor was satisfied that the peace of Egypt would be secured by the absence of a popular leader; but he refused to fill the vacancy of the archiepiscopal throne; and the sentence, which, after long hesitation, he pronounced, was that of a jealous ostracism, rather than of an ignominious exile. In the remote province of Gaul, but in the hospitable court of Treves, Athanasius passed about twenty eight months. The death of the emperor changed the face of public affairs and, amidst the general indulgence of a young reign, the primate was restored to his country by an honorable edict of the younger Constantine, who expressed a deep sense of the innocence and merit of his venerable guest. [109](#)

107

[\(return\)](#)

[Athanas. tom. i. p. 804. In a church dedicated to St. Athanasius this situation would afford a better subject for a picture, than most of the stories of miracles and martyrdoms.]

108

[\(return\)](#)

[Athanas. tom. i. p. 729. Eunapius has related (in Vit. Sophist. p. 36, 37, edit. Commelin) a strange example of the cruelty and credulity of Constantine on a similar occasion. The eloquent Sopater, a Syrian philosopher, enjoyed his friendship, and provoked the resentment of Ablavius, his Prætorian præfect. The corn-fleet was detained for want of a

south wind; the people of Constantinople were discontented; and Sopater was beheaded, on a charge that he had *bound* the winds by the power of magic. Suidas adds, that Constantine wished to prove, by this execution, that he had absolutely renounced the superstition of the Gentiles.]

109

[\(return\)](#)

[In his return he saw Constantius twice, at Viminiacum, and at Cæsarea in Cappadocia, (Athanas. tom. i. p. 676.) Tillemont supposes that Constantine introduced him to the meeting of the three royal brothers in Pannonia, (Mémoires Eccles. tom. viii. p. 69.)]

The death of that prince exposed Athanasius to a second persecution; and the feeble Constantius, the sovereign of the East, soon became the secret accomplice of the Eusebians. Ninety bishops of that sect or faction assembled at Antioch, under the specious pretence of dedicating the cathedral. They composed an ambiguous creed, which is faintly tinged with the colors of Semi-Arianism, and twenty-five canons, which still regulate the discipline of the orthodox Greeks. [110](#) It was decided, with some appearance of equity, that a bishop, deprived by a synod, should not resume his episcopal functions till he had been absolved by the judgment of an equal synod; the law was immediately applied to the case of Athanasius; the council of Antioch pronounced, or rather confirmed, his degradation: a stranger, named Gregory, was seated on his throne; and Philagrius, [111](#) the præfect of Egypt, was instructed to support the new primate with the civil and military powers of the province. Oppressed by the conspiracy of the Asiatic prelates, Athanasius withdrew from Alexandria, and passed three years [112](#) as an exile and a suppliant on the holy threshold of the Vatican. [113](#) By the assiduous study of the Latin language, he soon qualified himself to negotiate with the western clergy; his decent flattery swayed and directed the haughty Julius; the Roman pontiff was persuaded to consider his appeal as the peculiar interest of the Apostolic see: and his innocence was unanimously declared in a council of fifty bishops of Italy. At the end of three years, the primate was summoned to the court of Milan by the emperor Constans, who, in the indulgence of unlawful pleasures, still professed a lively regard for the orthodox faith. The cause of truth and justice was promoted by the influence of gold, [114](#) and the ministers of Constans advised their sovereign to require the convocation of an ecclesiastical assembly, which might act as the representatives of the Catholic church. Ninety-four bishops of the West, seventy-six bishops of the East, encountered each other at Sardica, on the verge of the two empires, but in the dominions of the protector of Athanasius. Their debates soon degenerated into hostile altercations; the Asiatics, apprehensive for their personal safety, retired to Philippopolis in Thrace; and the rival synods reciprocally hurled their spiritual thunders against their enemies, whom they piously condemned as the enemies of the true God. Their decrees were published and ratified in their respective provinces: and Athanasius, who in the West

was revered as a saint, was exposed as a criminal to the abhorrence of the East. [115](#) The council of Sardica reveals the first symptoms of discord and schism between the Greek and Latin churches which were separated by the accidental difference of faith, and the permanent distinction of language.

110 [\(return\)](#)

[See Beveridge, Pandect. tom. i. p. 429-452, and tom. ii. Annotation. p. 182. Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 310-324. St. Hilary of Poitiers has mentioned this synod of Antioch with too much favor and respect. He reckons ninety-seven bishops.]

111 [\(return\)](#)

[This magistrate, so odious to Athanasius, is praised by Gregory Nazianzen, tom. i. Orat. xxi. p. 390, 391.

Sæpe premente Deo fert Deus alter opem.

For the credit of human nature, I am always pleased to discover some good qualities in those men whom party has represented as tyrants and monsters.]

112 [\(return\)](#)

[The chronological difficulties which perplex the residence of Athanasius at Rome, are strenuously agitated by Valesius (Observat ad Calcem, tom. ii. Hist. Eccles. l. i. c. 1-5) and Tillemont, (Men: Eccles. tom. viii. p. 674, &c.) I have followed the simple hypothesis of Valesius, who allows only one journey, after the intrusion Gregory.]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[I cannot forbear transcribing a judicious observation of Wetstein, (Prolegomen. N.S. p. 19:) Si tamen Historiam Ecclesiasticam velimus consulere, patebit jam inde a seculo quarto, cum, ortis controversiis, ecclesiæ Græciæ doctores in duas partes scinderentur, ingenio, eloquentia, numero, tantum non æquales, eam partem quæ vincere cupiebat Romam confugisse, majestatemque pontificis comiter coluisse, eoque pacto oppressis per pontificem et episcopos Latinos adversariis prævaluisse, atque orthodoxiam in conciliis stabilivisse. Eam ob causam Athanasius, non sine comitatu, Roman petiit, pluresque annos ibi hæsit.]

114 [\(return\)](#)

[Philostorgius, l. iii. c. 12. If any corruption was used to promote the interest of religion, an advocate of Athanasius might justify or excuse this questionable conduct, by the example of Cato and Sidney; the former of whom is *said* to have given,

and the latter to have received, a bribe in the cause of liberty.]

115

[\(return\)](#)

[The canon which allows appeals to the Roman pontiffs, has almost raised the council of Sardica to the dignity of a general council; and its acts have been ignorantly or artfully confounded with those of the Nicene synod. See Tillemont, tom. vii. p. 689, and Geddos's Tracts, vol. ii. p. 419-460.]

During his second exile in the West, Athanasius was frequently admitted to the Imperial presence; at Capua, Lodi, Milan, Verona, Padua, Aquileia, and Treves. The bishop of the diocese usually assisted at these interviews; the master of the offices stood before the veil or curtain of the sacred apartment; and the uniform moderation of the primate might be attested by these respectable witnesses, to whose evidence he solemnly appeals. [116](#) Prudence would undoubtedly suggest the mild and respectful tone that became a subject and a bishop. In these familiar conferences with the sovereign of the West, Athanasius might lament the error of Constantius, but he boldly arraigned the guilt of his eunuchs and his Arian prelates; deplored the distress and danger of the Catholic church; and excited Constans to emulate the zeal and glory of his father. The emperor declared his resolution of employing the troops and treasures of Europe in the orthodox cause; and signified, by a concise and peremptory epistle to his brother Constantius, that unless he consented to the immediate restoration of Athanasius, he himself, with a fleet and army, would seat the archbishop on the throne of Alexandria. [117](#) But this religious war, so horrible to nature, was prevented by the timely compliance of Constantius; and the emperor of the East condescended to solicit a reconciliation with a subject whom he had injured. Athanasius waited with decent pride, till he had received three successive epistles full of the strongest assurances of the protection, the favor, and the esteem of his sovereign; who invited him to resume his episcopal seat, and who added the humiliating precaution of engaging his principal ministers to attest the sincerity of his intentions. They were manifested in a still more public manner, by the strict orders which were despatched into Egypt to recall the adherents of Athanasius, to restore their privileges, to proclaim their innocence, and to erase from the public registers the illegal proceedings which had been obtained during the prevalence of the Eusebian faction. After every satisfaction and security had been given, which justice or even delicacy could require, the primate proceeded, by slow journeys, through the provinces of Thrace, Asia, and Syria; and his progress was marked by the abject homage of the Oriental bishops, who excited his contempt without deceiving his penetration. [118](#) At Antioch he saw the emperor Constantius; sustained, with modest firmness, the embraces and protestations of his master, and eluded the proposal of allowing the Arians a single church at Alexandria, by claiming, in the other cities of the empire, a similar toleration for his own party; a reply which might have appeared just and moderate in the mouth of an independent prince. The entrance of the archbishop into his capital was a triumphal procession; absence and persecution had

endeared him to the Alexandrians; his authority, which he exercised with rigor, was more firmly established; and his fame was diffused from Æthiopia to Britain, over the whole extent of the Christian world. [119](#)

116 [\(return\)](#)

[As Athanasius dispersed secret invectives against Constantius, (see the Epistle to the Monks,) at the same time that he assured him of his profound respect, we might distrust the professions of the archbishop. Tom. i. p. 677.]

117 [\(return\)](#)

[Notwithstanding the discreet silence of Athanasius, and the manifest forgery of a letter inserted by Socrates, these menaces are proved by the unquestionable evidence of Lucifer of Cagliari, and even of Constantius himself. See Tillemont, tom. viii. p. 693]

118 [\(return\)](#)

[I have always entertained some doubts concerning the retraction of Ursacius and Valens, (Athanas. tom. i. p. 776.) Their epistles to Julius, bishop of Rome, and to Athanasius himself, are of so different a cast from each other, that they cannot both be genuine. The one speaks the language of criminals who confess their guilt and infamy; the other of enemies, who solicit on equal terms an honorable reconciliation. * Note: I cannot quite comprehend the ground of Gibbon's doubts. Athanasius distinctly asserts the fact of their retraction. (Athanas. Op. i. p. 124, edit. Benedict.) The epistles are apparently translations from the Latin, if, in fact, more than the substance of the epistles. That to Athanasius is brief, almost abrupt. Their retraction is likewise mentioned in the address of the orthodox bishops of Rimini to Constantius. Athanas. de Synodis, Op t. i. p 723-M.]

119 [\(return\)](#)

[The circumstances of his second return may be collected from Athanasius himself, tom. i. p. 769, and 822, 843. Socrates, l. ii. c. 18, Sozomen, l. iii. c. 19. Theodoret, l. ii. c. 11, 12. Philostorgius, l. iii. c. 12.]

But the subject who has reduced his prince to the necessity of dissembling, can never expect a sincere and lasting forgiveness; and the tragic fate of Constans soon deprived Athanasius of a powerful and generous protector. The civil war between the assassin and the only surviving brother of Constans, which afflicted the empire above three years, secured an interval of repose to the Catholic church; and the two contending parties were desirous to conciliate the friendship of a bishop, who, by the weight of his

personal authority, might determine the fluctuating resolutions of an important province. He gave audience to the ambassadors of the tyrant, with whom he was afterwards accused of holding a secret correspondence; [120](#) and the emperor Constantius repeatedly assured his dearest father, the most reverend Athanasius, that, notwithstanding the malicious rumors which were circulated by their common enemies, he had inherited the sentiments, as well as the throne, of his deceased brother. [121](#) Gratitude and humanity would have disposed the primate of Egypt to deplore the untimely fate of Constans, and to abhor the guilt of Magnentius; but as he clearly understood that the apprehensions of Constantius were his only safeguard, the fervor of his prayers for the success of the righteous cause might perhaps be somewhat abated. The ruin of Athanasius was no longer contrived by the obscure malice of a few bigoted or angry bishops, who abused the authority of a credulous monarch. The monarch himself avowed the resolution, which he had so long suppressed, of avenging his private injuries; [122](#) and the first winter after his victory, which he passed at Arles, was employed against an enemy more odious to him than the vanquished tyrant of Gaul.

120

[\(return\)](#)

[Athanasius (tom. i. p. 677, 678) defends his innocence by pathetic complaints, solemn assertions, and specious arguments. He admits that letters had been forged in his name, but he requests that his own secretaries and those of the tyrant might be examined, whether those letters had been written by the former, or received by the latter.]

121

[\(return\)](#)

[Athanas. tom. i. p. 825-844.]

122

[\(return\)](#)

[Athanas. tom. i. p. 861. Theodoret, l. ii. c. 16. The emperor declared that he was more desirous to subdue Athanasius, than he had been to vanquish Magnentius or Sylvanus.]

If the emperor had capriciously decreed the death of the most eminent and virtuous citizen of the republic, the cruel order would have been executed without hesitation, by the ministers of open violence or of specious injustice. The caution, the delay, the difficulty with which he proceeded in the condemnation and punishment of a popular bishop, discovered to the world that the privileges of the church had already revived a sense of order and freedom in the Roman government. The sentence which was pronounced in the synod of Tyre, and subscribed by a large majority of the Eastern bishops, had never been expressly repealed; and as Athanasius had been once degraded from his episcopal dignity by the judgment of his brethren, every subsequent act might be considered as irregular, and even criminal. But the memory of the firm and effectual support which the primate of Egypt had derived from the attachment of the Western church, engaged Constantius to suspend the execution of the sentence till he had obtained the concurrence of the Latin bishops. Two years were consumed in

ecclesiastical negotiations; and the important cause between the emperor and one of his subjects was solemnly debated, first in the synod of Arles, and afterwards in the great council of Milan, [123](#) which consisted of above three hundred bishops. Their integrity was gradually undermined by the arguments of the Arians, the dexterity of the eunuchs, and the pressing solicitations of a prince who gratified his revenge at the expense of his dignity, and exposed his own passions, whilst he influenced those of the clergy. Corruption, the most infallible symptom of constitutional liberty, was successfully practised; honors, gifts, and immunities were offered and accepted as the price of an episcopal vote; [124](#) and the condemnation of the Alexandrian primate was artfully represented as the only measure which could restore the peace and union of the Catholic church. The friends of Athanasius were not, however, wanting to their leader, or to their cause. With a manly spirit, which the sanctity of their character rendered less dangerous, they maintained, in public debate, and in private conference with the emperor, the eternal obligation of religion and justice. They declared, that neither the hope of his favor, nor the fear of his displeasure, should prevail on them to join in the condemnation of an absent, an innocent, a respectable brother. [125](#) They affirmed, with apparent reason, that the illegal and obsolete decrees of the council of Tyre had long since been tacitly abolished by the Imperial edicts, the honorable reestablishment of the archbishop of Alexandria, and the silence or recantation of his most clamorous adversaries. They alleged, that his innocence had been attested by the unanimous bishops of Egypt, and had been acknowledged in the councils of Rome and Sardica, [126](#) by the impartial judgment of the Latin church. They deplored the hard condition of Athanasius, who, after enjoying so many years his seat, his reputation, and the seeming confidence of his sovereign, was again called upon to confute the most groundless and extravagant accusations. Their language was specious; their conduct was honorable: but in this long and obstinate contest, which fixed the eyes of the whole empire on a single bishop, the ecclesiastical factions were prepared to sacrifice truth and justice to the more interesting object of defending or removing the intrepid champion of the Nicene faith. The Arians still thought it prudent to disguise, in ambiguous language, their real sentiments and designs; but the orthodox bishops, armed with the favor of the people, and the decrees of a general council, insisted on every occasion, and particularly at Milan, that their adversaries should purge themselves from the suspicion of heresy, before they presumed to arraign the conduct of the great Athanasius. [127](#)

[The affairs of the council of Milan are so imperfectly and erroneously related by the Greek writers, that we must rejoice in the supply of some letters of Eusebius, extracted by Baronius from the archives of the church of Vercellæ, and of an old life of Dionysius of Milan, published by Bollandus. See Baronius, A.D. 355, and Tillemont, tom. vii. p. 1415.]

- 124 [\(return\)](#)
 [The honors, presents, feasts, which seduced so many bishops, are mentioned with indignation by those who were too pure or too proud to accept them. "We combat (says Hilary of Poitiers) against Constantius the Antichrist; who strokes the belly instead of scourging the back;" *qui non dorsa cædit; sed ventrem palpat.* Hilarius contra Constant c. 5, p. 1240.]
- 125 [\(return\)](#)
 [Something of this opposition is mentioned by Ammianus (x. 7,) who had a very dark and superficial knowledge of ecclesiastical history. Liberius... *perseveranter renitebatur, nec visum hominem, nec auditum damnare, nefas ultimum sæpe exclamans; aperte scilicet recalcitrans Imperatoris arbitrio. Id enim ille Athanasio semper infestus, &c.*]
- 126 [\(return\)](#)
 [More properly by the orthodox part of the council of Sardica. If the bishops of both parties had fairly voted, the division would have been 94 to 76. M. de Tillemont (see tom. viii. p. 1147-1158) is justly surprised that so small a majority should have proceeded as vigorously against their adversaries, the principal of whom they immediately deposed.]
- 127 [\(return\)](#)
 [Sulp. Severus in Hist. Sacra, l. ii. p. 412.]

But the voice of reason (if reason was indeed on the side of Athanasius) was silenced by the clamors of a factious or venal majority; and the councils of Arles and Milan were not dissolved, till the archbishop of Alexandria had been solemnly condemned and deposed by the judgment of the Western, as well as of the Eastern, church. The bishops who had opposed, were required to subscribe, the sentence, and to unite in religious communion with the suspected leaders of the adverse party. A formulary of consent was transmitted by the messengers of state to the absent bishops: and all those who refused to submit their private opinion to the public and inspired wisdom of the councils of Arles and Milan, were immediately banished by the emperor, who affected to execute the decrees of the Catholic church. Among those prelates who led the honorable band of confessors and exiles, Liberius of Rome, Osius of Cordova, Paulinus of Treves, Dionysius of Milan, Eusebius of Vercellæ, Lucifer of Cagliari and Hilary of Poitiers, may deserve to be particularly distinguished. The eminent station of Liberius, who governed the capital of the empire; the personal merit and long experience of the venerable Osius, who was revered as the favorite of the great Constantine, and the father of the Nicene faith, placed those prelates at the head of the Latin church: and their example, either of submission or resistance, would probable be imitated by the episcopal crowd. But the repeated attempts of the emperor to seduce or to intimidate

the bishops of Rome and Cordova, were for some time ineffectual. The Spaniard declared himself ready to suffer under Constantius, as he had suffered threescore years before under his grandfather Maximian. The Roman, in the presence of his sovereign, asserted the innocence of Athanasius and his own freedom. When he was banished to Beræa in Thrace, he sent back a large sum which had been offered for the accommodation of his journey; and insulted the court of Milan by the haughty remark, that the emperor and his eunuchs might want that gold to pay their soldiers and their bishops. [128](#) The resolution of Liberius and Osius was at length subdued by the hardships of exile and confinement. The Roman pontiff purchased his return by some criminal compliances; and afterwards expiated his guilt by a seasonable repentance. Persuasion and violence were employed to extort the reluctant signature of the decrepit bishop of Cordova, whose strength was broken, and whose faculties were perhaps impaired by the weight of a hundred years; and the insolent triumph of the Arians provoked some of the orthodox party to treat with inhuman severity the character, or rather the memory, of an unfortunate old man, to whose former services Christianity itself was so deeply indebted. [129](#)

128

[\(return\)](#)

[The exile of Liberius is mentioned by Ammianus, xv. 7. See Theodoret, l. ii. c. 16. Athanas. tom. i. p. 834-837. Hilar. Fragment l.]

129

[\(return\)](#)

[The life of Osius is collected by Tillemont, (tom. vii. p. 524-561,) who in the most extravagant terms first admires, and then reprobates, the bishop of Cordova. In the midst of their lamentations on his fall, the prudence of Athanasius may be distinguished from the blind and intemperate zeal of Hilary.]

The fall of Liberius and Osius reflected a brighter lustre on the firmness of those bishops who still adhered, with unshaken fidelity, to the cause of Athanasius and religious truth. The ingenious malice of their enemies had deprived them of the benefit of mutual comfort and advice, separated those illustrious exiles into distant provinces, and carefully selected the most inhospitable spots of a great empire. [130](#) Yet they soon experienced that the deserts of Libya, and the most barbarous tracts of Cappadocia, were less inhospitable than the residence of those cities in which an Arian bishop could satiate, without restraint, the exquisite rancor of theological hatred. [131](#) Their consolation was derived from the consciousness of rectitude and independence, from the applause, the visits, the letters, and the liberal alms of their adherents, [132](#) and from the satisfaction which they soon enjoyed of observing the intestine divisions of the adversaries of the Nicene faith. Such was the nice and capricious taste of the emperor Constantius; and so easily was he offended by the slightest deviation from his imaginary standard of Christian truth, that he persecuted, with equal zeal, those who defended the *consubstantiality*, those who asserted the *similar substance*, and those who denied

the *likeness* of the Son of God. Three bishops, degraded and banished for those adverse opinions, might possibly meet in the same place of exile; and, according to the difference of their temper, might either pity or insult the blind enthusiasm of their antagonists, whose present sufferings would never be compensated by future happiness.

130

[\(return\)](#)

[The confessors of the West were successively banished to the deserts of Arabia or Thebais, the lonely places of Mount Taurus, the wildest parts of Phrygia, which were in the possession of the impious Montanists, &c. When the heretic Ætius was too favorably entertained at Mopsuestia in Cilicia, the place of his exile was changed, by the advice of Acacius, to Amblada, a district inhabited by savages and infested by war and pestilence. Philostorg. l. v. c. 2.]

131

[\(return\)](#)

[See the cruel treatment and strange obstinacy of Eusebius, in his own letters, published by Baronius, A.D. 356, No. 92-102.]

132

[\(return\)](#)

[Cæterum exules satis constat, totius orbis studiis celebratos pecuniasque eis in sumptum affatim congestas, legationibus quoque plebis Catholicæ ex omnibus fere provinciis frequentatos. Sulp. Sever Hist. Sacra, p. 414. Athanas. tom. i. p. 836, 840.]

The disgrace and exile of the orthodox bishops of the West were designed as so many preparatory steps to the ruin of Athanasius himself. [133](#) Six-and-twenty months had elapsed, during which the Imperial court secretly labored, by the most insidious arts, to remove him from Alexandria, and to withdraw the allowance which supplied his popular liberality. But when the primate of Egypt, deserted and proscribed by the Latin church, was left destitute of any foreign support, Constantius despatched two of his secretaries with a verbal commission to announce and execute the order of his banishment. As the justice of the sentence was publicly avowed by the whole party, the only motive which could restrain Constantius from giving his messengers the sanction of a written mandate, must be imputed to his doubt of the event; and to a sense of the danger to which he might expose the second city, and the most fertile province, of the empire, if the people should persist in the resolution of defending, by force of arms, the innocence of their spiritual father. Such extreme caution afforded Athanasius a specious pretence respectfully to dispute the truth of an order, which he could not reconcile, either with the equity, or with the former declarations, of his gracious master. The civil powers of Egypt found themselves inadequate to the task of persuading or compelling the primate to abdicate his episcopal throne; and they were obliged to conclude a treaty with the popular leaders of Alexandria, by which it was stipulated, that all proceedings and all hostilities should be suspended till the emperor's pleasure had been more

distinctly ascertained. By this seeming moderation, the Catholics were deceived into a false and fatal security; while the legions of the Upper Egypt, and of Libya, advanced, by secret orders and hasty marches, to besiege, or rather to surprise, a capital habituated to sedition, and inflamed by religious zeal. [134](#) The position of Alexandria, between the sea and the Lake Mareotis, facilitated the approach and landing of the troops; who were introduced into the heart of the city, before any effectual measures could be taken either to shut the gates or to occupy the important posts of defence. At the hour of midnight, twenty-three days after the signature of the treaty, Syrianus, duke of Egypt, at the head of five thousand soldiers, armed and prepared for an assault, unexpectedly invested the church of St. Theonas, where the archbishop, with a part of his clergy and people, performed their nocturnal devotions. The doors of the sacred edifice yielded to the impetuosity of the attack, which was accompanied with every horrid circumstance of tumult and bloodshed; but, as the bodies of the slain, and the fragments of military weapons, remained the next day an unexceptionable evidence in the possession of the Catholics, the enterprise of Syrianus may be considered as a successful irruption rather than as an absolute conquest. The other churches of the city were profaned by similar outrages; and, during at least four months, Alexandria was exposed to the insults of a licentious army, stimulated by the ecclesiastics of a hostile faction. Many of the faithful were killed; who may deserve the name of martyrs, if their deaths were neither provoked nor revenged; bishops and presbyters were treated with cruel ignominy; consecrated virgins were stripped naked, scourged and violated; the houses of wealthy citizens were plundered; and, under the mask of religious zeal, lust, avarice, and private resentment were gratified with impunity, and even with applause. The Pagans of Alexandria, who still formed a numerous and discontented party, were easily persuaded to desert a bishop whom they feared and esteemed. The hopes of some peculiar favors, and the apprehension of being involved in the general penalties of rebellion, engaged them to promise their support to the destined successor of Athanasius, the famous George of Cappadocia. The usurper, after receiving the consecration of an Arian synod, was placed on the episcopal throne by the arms of Sebastian, who had been appointed Count of Egypt for the execution of that important design. In the use, as well as in the acquisition, of power, the tyrant, George disregarded the laws of religion, of justice, and of humanity; and the same scenes of violence and scandal which had been exhibited in the capital, were repeated in more than ninety episcopal cities of Egypt. Encouraged by success, Constantius ventured to approve the conduct of his minister. By a public and passionate epistle, the emperor congratulates the deliverance of Alexandria from a popular tyrant, who deluded his blind votaries by the magic of his eloquence; expatiates on the virtues and piety of the most reverend George, the elected bishop; and aspires, as the patron and benefactor of the city to surpass the fame of Alexander himself. But he solemnly declares his unalterable resolution to pursue with fire and sword the seditious adherents of the wicked Athanasius, who, by flying from justice, has

confessed his guilt, and escaped the ignominious death which he had so often deserved. [135](#)

133

[\(return\)](#)

[Ample materials for the history of this third persecution of Athanasius may be found in his own works. See particularly his very able Apology to Constantius, (tom. i. p. 673,) his first Apology for his flight (p. 701,) his prolix Epistle to the Solitaries, (p. 808,) and the original protest of the people of Alexandria against the violences committed by Syrianus, (p. 866.) Sozomen (l. iv. c. 9) has thrown into the narrative two or three luminous and important circumstances.]

134

[\(return\)](#)

[Athanasius had lately sent for Antony, and some of his chosen monks. They descended from their mountains, announced to the Alexandrians the sanctity of Athanasius, and were honorably conducted by the archbishop as far as the gates of the city. Athanas tom. ii. p. 491, 492. See likewise Rufinus, iii. 164, in Vit. Patr. p. 524.]

135

[\(return\)](#)

[Athanas. tom. i. p. 694. The emperor, or his Arian secretaries while they express their resentment, betray their fears and esteem of Athanasius.]

Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.— Part VI.

Athanasius had indeed escaped from the most imminent dangers; and the adventures of that extraordinary man deserve and fix our attention. On the memorable night when the church of St. Theonas was invested by the troops of Syrianus, the archbishop, seated on his throne, expected, with calm and intrepid dignity, the approach of death. While the public devotion was interrupted by shouts of rage and cries of terror, he animated his trembling congregation to express their religious confidence, by chanting one of the psalms of David which celebrates the triumph of the God of Israel over the haughty and impious tyrant of Egypt. The doors were at length burst open: a cloud of arrows was discharged among the people; the soldiers, with drawn swords, rushed forwards into the sanctuary; and the dreadful gleam of their arms was reflected by the holy luminaries which burnt round the altar. [136](#) Athanasius still rejected the pious importunity of the monks and presbyters, who were attached to his person; and nobly refused to desert his episcopal station, till he had dismissed in safety the last of the congregation. The darkness and tumult of the night favored the retreat of the archbishop; and though he was oppressed by the waves of an agitated multitude, though he was thrown to the

ground, and left without sense or motion, he still recovered his undaunted courage, and eluded the eager search of the soldiers, who were instructed by their Arian guides, that the head of Athanasius would be the most acceptable present to the emperor. From that moment the primate of Egypt disappeared from the eyes of his enemies, and remained above six years concealed in impenetrable obscurity. [137](#)

136

[\(return\)](#)

[These minute circumstances are curious, as they are literally transcribed from the protest, which was publicly presented three days afterwards by the Catholics of Alexandria. See Athanas. tom. 1. n. 867]

137

[\(return\)](#)

[The Jansenists have often compared Athanasius and Arnauld, and have expatiated with pleasure on the faith and zeal, the merit and exile, of those celebrated doctors. This concealed parallel is very dexterously managed by the Abbé de la Bleterie, Vie de Jovien, tom. i. p. 130.]

The despotic power of his implacable enemy filled the whole extent of the Roman world; and the exasperated monarch had endeavored, by a very pressing epistle to the Christian princes of Ethiopia, [13711](#) to exclude Athanasius from the most remote and sequestered regions of the earth. Counts, præfects, tribunes, whole armies, were successively employed to pursue a bishop and a fugitive; the vigilance of the civil and military powers was excited by the Imperial edicts; liberal rewards were promised to the man who should produce Athanasius, either alive or dead; and the most severe penalties were denounced against those who should dare to protect the public enemy. [138](#) But the deserts of Thebais were now peopled by a race of wild, yet submissive fanatics, who preferred the commands of their abbot to the laws of their sovereign. The numerous disciples of Antony and Pachonnus received the fugitive primate as their father, admired the patience and humility with which he conformed to their strictest institutions, collected every word which dropped from his lips as the genuine effusions of inspired wisdom; and persuaded themselves that their prayers, their fasts, and their vigils, were less meritorious than the zeal which they expressed, and the dangers which they braved, in the defence of truth and innocence. [139](#) The monasteries of Egypt were seated in lonely and desolate places, on the summit of mountains, or in the islands of the Nile; and the sacred horn or trumpet of Tabenne was the well-known signal which assembled several thousand robust and determined monks, who, for the most part, had been the peasants of the adjacent country. When their dark retreats were invaded by a military force, which it was impossible to resist, they silently stretched out their necks to the executioner; and supported their national character, that tortures could never wrest from an Egyptian the confession of a secret which he was resolved not to disclose. [140](#) The archbishop of Alexandria, for whose safety they eagerly devoted their lives, was lost among a uniform and well-disciplined

multitude; and on the nearer approach of danger, he was swiftly removed, by their officious hands, from one place of concealment to another, till he reached the formidable deserts, which the gloomy and credulous temper of superstition had peopled with dæmons and savage monsters. The retirement of Athanasius, which ended only with the life of Constantius, was spent, for the most part, in the society of the monks, who faithfully served him as guards, as secretaries, and as messengers; but the importance of maintaining a more intimate connection with the Catholic party tempted him, whenever the diligence of the pursuit was abated, to emerge from the desert, to introduce himself into Alexandria, and to trust his person to the discretion of his friends and adherents. His various adventures might have furnished the subject of a very entertaining romance. He was once secreted in a dry cistern, which he had scarcely left before he was betrayed by the treachery of a female slave; [141](#) and he was once concealed in a still more extraordinary asylum, the house of a virgin, only twenty years of age, and who was celebrated in the whole city for her exquisite beauty. At the hour of midnight, as she related the story many years afterwards, she was surprised by the appearance of the archbishop in a loose undress, who, advancing with hasty steps, conjured her to afford him the protection which he had been directed by a celestial vision to seek under her hospitable roof. The pious maid accepted and preserved the sacred pledge which was intrusted to her prudence and courage. Without imparting the secret to any one, she instantly conducted Athanasius into her most secret chamber, and watched over his safety with the tenderness of a friend and the assiduity of a servant. As long as the danger continued, she regularly supplied him with books and provisions, washed his feet, managed his correspondence, and dexterously concealed from the eye of suspicion this familiar and solitary intercourse between a saint whose character required the most unblemished chastity, and a female whose charms might excite the most dangerous emotions. [142](#) During the six years of persecution and exile, Athanasius repeated his visits to his fair and faithful companion; and the formal declaration, that he *saw* the councils of Rimini and Seleucia, [143](#) forces us to believe that he was secretly present at the time and place of their convocation. The advantage of personally negotiating with his friends, and of observing and improving the divisions of his enemies, might justify, in a prudent statesman, so bold and dangerous an enterprise: and Alexandria was connected by trade and navigation with every seaport of the Mediterranean. From the depth of his inaccessible retreat the intrepid primate waged an incessant and offensive war against the protector of the Arians; and his seasonable writings, which were diligently circulated and eagerly perused, contributed to unite and animate the orthodox party. In his public apologies, which he addressed to the emperor himself, he sometimes affected the praise of moderation; whilst at the same time, in secret and vehement invectives, he exposed Constantius as a weak and wicked prince, the executioner of his family, the tyrant of the republic, and the Antichrist of the church. In the height of his prosperity, the victorious monarch, who had chastised the rashness of Gallus, and suppressed the revolt of Sylvanus, who had taken the diadem

from the head of Vetranio, and vanquished in the field the legions of Magnentius, received from an invisible hand a wound, which he could neither heal nor revenge; and the son of Constantine was the first of the Christian princes who experienced the strength of those principles, which, in the cause of religion, could resist the most violent exertions [144](#) of the civil power.

13711

[\(return\)](#)

[These princes were called Aeizanas and Saiazanas. Athanasius calls them the kings of Axum. In the superscription of his letter, Constantius gives them no title. Mr. Salt, during his first journey in Ethiopia, (in 1806,) discovered, in the ruins of Axum, a long and very interesting inscription relating to these princes. It was erected to commemorate the victory of Aeizanas over the Bougaitæ, (St. Martin considers them the Blemmyes, whose true name is Bedjah or Bodjah.) Aeizanas is styled king of the Axumites, the Homerites, of Raeidan, of the Ethiopians, of the Sabsuites, of Silea, of Tiamo, of the Bougaites, and of Kaei. It appears that at this time the king of the Ethiopians ruled over the Homerites, the inhabitants of Yemen. He was not yet a Christian, as he calls himself son of the invincible Mars. Another brother besides Saiazanas, named Adephas, is mentioned, though Aeizanas seems to have been sole king. See St. Martin, note on Le Beau, ii. 151. Salt's Travels. De Sacy, note in Annales des Voyages, xii. p. 53.—M.]

138

[\(return\)](#)

[Hinc jam toto orbe profugus Athanasius, nec ullus ci tutus ad latendum supererat locus. Tribuni, Præfecti, Comites, exercitus quoque ad pervestigandum cum moventur edictis Imperialibus; præmia dela toribus proponuntur, si quis eum vivum, si id minus, caput certe Atha casii detulisset. Rufin. l. i. c. 16.]

139

[\(return\)](#)

[Gregor. Nazianzen. tom. i. Orat. xxi. p. 384, 385. See Tillemont Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 176-410, 820-830.]

140

[\(return\)](#)

[Et nulla tormentorum vis inveneri, adhuc potuit, quæ obdurato illius tractus latroni invito elicere potuit, ut nomen proprium dicat Ammian. xxii. 16, and Valesius ad locum.]

141

[\(return\)](#)

[Rufin. l. i. c. 18. Sozomen, l. iv. c. 10. This and the following story will be rendered impossible, if

we suppose that Athanasius always inhabited the asylum which he accidentally or occasionally had used.]

142 [\(return\)](#)

[Paladius, (Hist. Lausiac. c. 136, in Vit. Patrum, p. 776,) the original author of this anecdote, had conversed with the damsel, who in her old age still remembered with pleasure so pious and honorable a connection. I cannot indulge the delicacy of Baronius, Valesius, Tillemont, &c., who almost reject a story so unworthy, as they deem it, of the gravity of ecclesiastical history.]

143 [\(return\)](#)

[Athanas. tom. i. p. 869. I agree with Tillemont, (tom. iii. p. 1197,) that his expressions imply a personal, though perhaps secret visit to the synods.]

144 [\(return\)](#)

[The epistle of Athanasius to the monks is filled with reproaches, which the public must feel to be true, (vol. i. p. 834, 856;) and, in compliment to his readers, he has introduced the comparisons of Pharaoh, Ahab, Belshazzar, &c. The boldness of Hilary was attended with less danger, if he published his invective in Gaul after the revolt of Julian; but Lucifer sent his libels to Constantius, and almost challenged the reward of martyrdom. See Tillemont, tom. vii. p. 905.]

The persecution of Athanasius, and of so many respectable bishops, who suffered for the truth of their opinions, or at least for the integrity of their conscience, was a just subject of indignation and discontent to all Christians, except those who were blindly devoted to the Arian faction. The people regretted the loss of their faithful pastors, whose banishment was usually followed by the intrusion of a stranger [145](#) into the episcopal chair; and loudly complained, that the right of election was violated, and that they were condemned to obey a mercenary usurper, whose person was unknown, and whose principles were suspected. The Catholics might prove to the world, that they were not involved in the guilt and heresy of their ecclesiastical governor, by publicly testifying their dissent, or by totally separating themselves from his communion. The first of these methods was invented at Antioch, and practised with such success, that it was soon diffused over the Christian world. The doxology or sacred hymn, which celebrates the *glory* of the Trinity, is susceptible of very nice, but material, inflections; and the substance of an orthodox, or an heretical, creed, may be expressed by the difference of a disjunctive, or a copulative, particle. Alternate responses, and a more regular psalmody, [146](#) were introduced into the public service by Flavianus and Diodorus, two devout and active laymen, who were attached to the Nicene faith. Under their conduct a swarm of monks issued from the adjacent desert, bands of well-

disciplined singers were stationed in the cathedral of Antioch, the Glory to the Father, And the Son, And the Holy Ghost, [147](#) was triumphantly chanted by a full chorus of voices; and the Catholics insulted, by the purity of their doctrine, the Arian prelate, who had usurped the throne of the venerable Eustathius. The same zeal which inspired their songs prompted the more scrupulous members of the orthodox party to form separate assemblies, which were governed by the presbyters, till the death of their exiled bishop allowed the election and consecration of a new episcopal pastor. [148](#) The revolutions of the court multiplied the number of pretenders; and the same city was often disputed, under the reign of Constantius, by two, or three, or even four, bishops, who exercised their spiritual jurisdiction over their respective followers, and alternately lost and regained the temporal possessions of the church. The abuse of Christianity introduced into the Roman government new causes of tyranny and sedition; the bands of civil society were torn asunder by the fury of religious factions; and the obscure citizen, who might calmly have surveyed the elevation and fall of successive emperors, imagined and experienced, that his own life and fortune were connected with the interests of a popular ecclesiastic. The example of the two capitals, Rome and Constantinople, may serve to represent the state of the empire, and the temper of mankind, under the reign of the sons of Constantine.

145

[\(return\)](#)

[Athanasius (tom. i. p. 811) complains in general of this practice, which he afterwards exemplifies (p. 861) in the pretended election of Fælix. Three eunuchs represented the Roman people, and three prelates, who followed the court, assumed the functions of the bishops of the Suburbicarian provinces.]

146

[\(return\)](#)

[Thomassin (Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. i. l. ii. c. 72, 73, p. 966-984) has collected many curious facts concerning the origin and progress of church singing, both in the East and West. * Note: Arius appears to have been the first who availed himself of this means of impressing his doctrines on the popular ear: he composed songs for sailors, millers, and travellers, and set them to common airs; "beguiling the ignorant, by the sweetness of his music, into the impiety of his doctrines." Philostorgius, ii. 2. Arian singers used to parade the streets of Constantinople by night, till Chrysostom arrayed against them a band of orthodox choristers. Sozomen, viii. 8.—M.]

147

[\(return\)](#)

[Philostorgius, l. iii. c. 13. Godefroy has examined this subject with singular accuracy, (p. 147, &c.) There were three heterodox forms: "To the Father *by* the Son, *and* in the Holy Ghost." "To the

Father, *and* the Son *in* the Holy Ghost;” and “To the Father *in* the Son *and* the Holy Ghost.”]

148

[\(return\)](#)

[After the exile of Eustathius, under the reign of Constantine, the rigid party of the orthodox formed a separation which afterwards degenerated into a schism, and lasted about fourscore years. See Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 35-54, 1137-1158, tom. viii. p. 537-632, 1314-1332. In many churches, the Arians and Homoousians, who had renounced each other’s *communion*, continued for some time to join in prayer. Philostorgius, l. iii. c. 14.]

I. The Roman pontiff, as long as he maintained his station and his principles, was guarded by the warm attachment of a great people; and could reject with scorn the prayers, the menaces, and the oblations of an heretical prince. When the eunuchs had secretly pronounced the exile of Liberius, the well-grounded apprehension of a tumult engaged them to use the utmost precautions in the execution of the sentence. The capital was invested on every side, and the præfect was commanded to seize the person of the bishop, either by stratagem or by open force. The order was obeyed, and Liberius, with the greatest difficulty, at the hour of midnight, was swiftly conveyed beyond the reach of the Roman people, before their consternation was turned into rage. As soon as they were informed of his banishment into Thrace, a general assembly was convened, and the clergy of Rome bound themselves, by a public and solemn oath, never to desert their bishop, never to acknowledge the usurper Fælix; who, by the influence of the eunuchs, had been irregularly chosen and consecrated within the walls of a profane palace. At the end of two years, their pious obstinacy subsisted entire and unshaken; and when Constantius visited Rome, he was assailed by the importunate solicitations of a people, who had preserved, as the last remnant of their ancient freedom, the right of treating their sovereign with familiar insolence. The wives of many of the senators and most honorable citizens, after pressing their husbands to intercede in favor of Liberius, were advised to undertake a commission, which in their hands would be less dangerous, and might prove more successful. The emperor received with politeness these female deputies, whose wealth and dignity were displayed in the magnificence of their dress and ornaments: he admired their inflexible resolution of following their beloved pastor to the most distant regions of the earth; and consented that the two bishops, Liberius and Fælix, should govern in peace their respective congregations. But the ideas of toleration were so repugnant to the practice, and even to the sentiments, of those times, that when the answer of Constantius was publicly read in the Circus of Rome, so reasonable a project of accommodation was rejected with contempt and ridicule. The eager vehemence which animated the spectators in the decisive moment of a horse-race, was now directed towards a different object; and the Circus resounded with the shout of thousands, who repeatedly exclaimed, “One God, One Christ, One Bishop!” The zeal

of the Roman people in the cause of Liberius was not confined to words alone; and the dangerous and bloody sedition which they excited soon after the departure of Constantius determined that prince to accept the submission of the exiled prelate, and to restore him to the undivided dominion of the capital. After some ineffectual resistance, his rival was expelled from the city by the permission of the emperor and the power of the opposite faction; the adherents of Fælix were inhumanly murdered in the streets, in the public places, in the baths, and even in the churches; and the face of Rome, upon the return of a Christian bishop, renewed the horrid image of the massacres of Marius, and the proscriptions of Sylla. [149](#)

149

[\(return\)](#)

[See, on this ecclesiastical revolution of Rome, Ammianus, xv. 7 Athanas. tom. i. p. 834, 861. Sozomen, l. iv. c. 15. Theodoret, l. ii c. 17. Sulp. Sever. Hist. Sacra, l. ii. p. 413. Hieronym. Chron. Marcellin. et Faustin. Libell. p. 3, 4. Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. vi. p.]

II. Notwithstanding the rapid increase of Christians under the reign of the Flavian family, Rome, Alexandria, and the other great cities of the empire, still contained a strong and powerful faction of Infidels, who envied the prosperity, and who ridiculed, even in their theatres, the theological disputes of the church. Constantinople alone enjoyed the advantage of being born and educated in the bosom of the faith. The capital of the East had never been polluted by the worship of idols; and the whole body of the people had deeply imbibed the opinions, the virtues, and the passions, which distinguished the Christians of that age from the rest of mankind. After the death of Alexander, the episcopal throne was disputed by Paul and Macedonius. By their zeal and abilities they both deserved the eminent station to which they aspired; and if the moral character of Macedonius was less exceptionable, his competitor had the advantage of a prior election and a more orthodox doctrine. His firm attachment to the Nicene creed, which has given Paul a place in the calendar among saints and martyrs, exposed him to the resentment of the Arians. In the space of fourteen years he was five times driven from his throne; to which he was more frequently restored by the violence of the people, than by the permission of the prince; and the power of Macedonius could be secured only by the death of his rival. The unfortunate Paul was dragged in chains from the sandy deserts of Mesopotamia to the most desolate places of Mount Taurus, [150](#) confined in a dark and narrow dungeon, left six days without food, and at length strangled, by the order of Philip, one of the principal ministers of the emperor Constantius. [151](#) The first blood which stained the new capital was spilt in this ecclesiastical contest; and many persons were slain on both sides, in the furious and obstinate seditions of the people. The commission of enforcing a sentence of banishment against Paul had been intrusted to Hermogenes, the master-general of the cavalry; but the execution of it was fatal to himself. The Catholics rose in the defence of their bishop; the palace of Hermogenes was consumed; the first military officer of

the empire was dragged by the heels through the streets of Constantinople, and, after he expired, his lifeless corpse was exposed to their wanton insults. [152](#) The fate of Hermogenes instructed Philip, the Prætorian præfect, to act with more precaution on a similar occasion. In the most gentle and honorable terms, he required the attendance of Paul in the baths of Xeuxippus, which had a private communication with the palace and the sea. A vessel, which lay ready at the garden stairs, immediately hoisted sail; and, while the people were still ignorant of the meditated sacrilege, their bishop was already embarked on his voyage to Thessalonica. They soon beheld, with surprise and indignation, the gates of the palace thrown open, and the usurper Macedonius seated by the side of the præfect on a lofty chariot, which was surrounded by troops of guards with drawn swords. The military procession advanced towards the cathedral; the Arians and the Catholics eagerly rushed to occupy that important post; and three thousand one hundred and fifty persons lost their lives in the confusion of the tumult. Macedonius, who was supported by a regular force, obtained a decisive victory; but his reign was disturbed by clamor and sedition; and the causes which appeared the least connected with the subject of dispute, were sufficient to nourish and to kindle the flame of civil discord. As the chapel in which the body of the great Constantine had been deposited was in a ruinous condition, the bishop transported those venerable remains into the church of St. Acacius. This prudent and even pious measure was represented as a wicked profanation by the whole party which adhered to the Homœousian doctrine. The factions immediately flew to arms, the consecrated ground was used as their field of battle; and one of the ecclesiastical historians has observed, as a real fact, not as a figure of rhetoric, that the well before the church overflowed with a stream of blood, which filled the porticos and the adjacent courts. The writer who should impute these tumults solely to a religious principle, would betray a very imperfect knowledge of human nature; yet it must be confessed that the motive which misled the sincerity of zeal, and the pretence which disguised the licentiousness of passion, suppressed the remorse which, in another cause, would have succeeded to the rage of the Christians at Constantinople. [153](#)

150

[\(return\)](#)

[Cucusus was the last stage of his life and sufferings. The situation of that lonely town, on the confines of Cappadocia, Cilicia, and the Lesser Armenia, has occasioned some geographical perplexity; but we are directed to the true spot by the course of the Roman road from Cæsarea to Anazarbus. See Cellarii Geograph. tom. ii. p. 213. Wesseling ad Itinerar. p. 179, 703.]

151

[\(return\)](#)

[Athanasius (tom. i. p. 703, 813, 814) affirms, in the most positive terms, that Paul was murdered; and appeals, not only to common fame, but even to the unsuspicious testimony of Philagrius, one of the Arian persecutors. Yet he acknowledges that the

heretics attributed to disease the death of the bishop of Constantinople. Athanasius is servilely copied by Socrates, (l. ii. c. 26;) but Sozomen, who discovers a more liberal temper. presumes (l. iv. c. 2) to insinuate a prudent doubt.]

152

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xiv. 10) refers to his own account of this tragic event. But we no longer possess that part of his history. Note: The murder of Hermogenes took place at the first expulsion of Paul from the see of Constantinople.—M.]

153

[\(return\)](#)

[See Socrates, l. ii. c. 6, 7, 12, 13, 15, 16, 26, 27, 38, and Sozomen, l. iii. 3, 4, 7, 9, l. iv. c. ii. 21. The acts of St. Paul of Constantinople, of which Photius has made an abstract, (Phot. Bibliot. p. 1419-1430,) are an indifferent copy of these historians; but a modern Greek, who could write the life of a saint without adding fables and miracles, is entitled to some commendation.]

Chapter XXI: Persecution Of Heresy, State Of The Church.— Part VII.

The cruel and arbitrary disposition of Constantius, which did not always require the provocations of guilt and resistance, was justly exasperated by the tumults of his capital, and the criminal behavior of a faction, which opposed the authority and religion of their sovereign. The ordinary punishments of death, exile, and confiscation, were inflicted with partial vigor; and the Greeks still revere the holy memory of two clerks, a reader, and a sub-deacon, who were accused of the murder of Hermogenes, and beheaded at the gates of Constantinople. By an edict of Constantius against the Catholics which has not been judged worthy of a place in the Theodosian code, those who refused to communicate with the Arian bishops, and particularly with Macedonius, were deprived of the immunities of ecclesiastics, and of the rights of Christians; they were compelled to relinquish the possession of the churches; and were strictly prohibited from holding their assemblies within the walls of the city. The execution of this unjust law, in the provinces of Thrace and Asia Minor, was committed to the zeal of Macedonius; the civil and military powers were directed to obey his commands; and the cruelties exercised by this Semi- Arian tyrant in the support of the *Homoiousion*, exceeded the commission, and disgraced the reign, of Constantius. The sacraments of the church were administered to the reluctant victims, who denied the vocation, and abhorred the principles, of Macedonius. The rites of baptism were conferred on women and children, who, for that purpose, had been torn from the arms of their friends and parents; the mouths of the communicants were held open by a wooden engine, while the consecrated

bread was forced down their throat; the breasts of tender virgins were either burnt with red-hot egg-shells, or inhumanly compressed between harp and heavy boards. [154](#) The Novatians of Constantinople and the adjacent country, by their firm attachment to the Homooousian standard, deserved to be confounded with the Catholics themselves. Macedonius was informed, that a large district of Paphlagonia [155](#) was almost entirely inhabited by those sectaries. He resolved either to convert or to extirpate them; and as he distrusted, on this occasion, the efficacy of an ecclesiastical mission, he commanded a body of four thousand legionaries to march against the rebels, and to reduce the territory of Mantinium under his spiritual dominion. The Novatian peasants, animated by despair and religious fury, boldly encountered the invaders of their country; and though many of the Paphlagonians were slain, the Roman legions were vanquished by an irregular multitude, armed only with scythes and axes; and, except a few who escaped by an ignominious flight, four thousand soldiers were left dead on the field of battle. The successor of Constantius has expressed, in a concise but lively manner, some of the theological calamities which afflicted the empire, and more especially the East, in the reign of a prince who was the slave of his own passions, and of those of his eunuchs: “Many were imprisoned, and persecuted, and driven into exile. Whole troops of those who are styled heretics, were massacred, particularly at Cyzicus, and at Samosata. In Paphlagonia, Bithynia, Galatia, and in many other provinces, towns and villages were laid waste, and utterly destroyed.” [156](#)

154

[\(return\)](#)

[Socrates, l. ii. c. 27, 38. Sozomen, l. iv. c. 21. The principal assistants of Macedonius, in the work of persecution, were the two bishops of Nicomedia and Cyzicus, who were esteemed for their virtues, and especially for their charity. I cannot forbear reminding the reader, that the difference between the *Homooousion* and *Homoiousion*, is almost invisible to the nicest theological eye.]

155

[\(return\)](#)

[We are ignorant of the precise situation of Mantinium. In speaking of these four bands of legionaries, Socrates, Sozomen, and the author of the acts of St. Paul, use the indefinite terms of, which Nicephorus very properly translates thousands. Vales. ad Socrat. l. ii. c. 38.]

156

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Epist. lii. p. 436, edit. Spanheim.]

While the flames of the Arian controversy consumed the vitals of the empire, the African provinces were infested by their peculiar enemies, the savage fanatics, who, under the name of *Circumcellions*, formed the strength and scandal of the Donatist party. [157](#) The severe execution of the laws of Constantine had excited a spirit of discontent and resistance, the strenuous efforts of his son Constans, to restore the unity of the church, exasperated the sentiments of mutual hatred, which had first occasioned

the separation; and the methods of force and corruption employed by the two Imperial commissioners, Paul and Macarius, furnished the schismatics with a specious contrast between the maxims of the apostles and the conduct of their pretended successors. [158](#) The peasants who inhabited the villages of Numidia and Mauritania, were a ferocious race, who had been imperfectly reduced under the authority of the Roman laws; who were imperfectly converted to the Christian faith; but who were actuated by a blind and furious enthusiasm in the cause of their Donatist teachers. They indignantly supported the exile of their bishops, the demolition of their churches, and the interruption of their secret assemblies. The violence of the officers of justice, who were usually sustained by a military guard, was sometimes repelled with equal violence; and the blood of some popular ecclesiastics, which had been shed in the quarrel, inflamed their rude followers with an eager desire of revenging the death of these holy martyrs. By their own cruelty and rashness, the ministers of persecution sometimes provoked their fate; and the guilt of an accidental tumult precipitated the criminals into despair and rebellion. Driven from their native villages, the Donatist peasants assembled in formidable gangs on the edge of the Getulian desert; and readily exchanged the habits of labor for a life of idleness and rapine, which was consecrated by the name of religion, and faintly condemned by the doctors of the sect. The leaders of the Circumcellions assumed the title of captains of the saints; their principal weapon, as they were indifferently provided with swords and spears, was a huge and weighty club, which they termed an *Israelite*; and the well-known sound of "Praise be to God," which they used as their cry of war, diffused consternation over the unarmed provinces of Africa. At first their depredations were colored by the plea of necessity; but they soon exceeded the measure of subsistence, indulged without control their intemperance and avarice, burnt the villages which they had pillaged, and reigned the licentious tyrants of the open country. The occupations of husbandry, and the administration of justice, were interrupted; and as the Circumcellions pretended to restore the primitive equality of mankind, and to reform the abuses of civil society, they opened a secure asylum for the slaves and debtors, who flocked in crowds to their holy standard. When they were not resisted, they usually contented themselves with plunder, but the slightest opposition provoked them to acts of violence and murder; and some Catholic priests, who had imprudently signalized their zeal, were tortured by the fanatics with the most refined and wanton barbarity. The spirit of the Circumcellions was not always exerted against their defenceless enemies; they engaged, and sometimes defeated, the troops of the province; and in the bloody action of Bagai, they attacked in the open field, but with unsuccessful valor, an advanced guard of the Imperial cavalry. The Donatists who were taken in arms, received, and they soon deserved, the same treatment which might have been shown to the wild beasts of the desert. The captives died, without a murmur, either by the sword, the axe, or the fire; and the measures of retaliation were multiplied in a rapid proportion, which aggravated the horrors of rebellion, and excluded the hope of mutual forgiveness. In the beginning of the present century, the example of the

Circumcellions has been renewed in the persecution, the boldness, the crimes, and the enthusiasm of the Camisards; and if the fanatics of Languedoc surpassed those of Numidia, by their military achievements, the Africans maintained their fierce independence with more resolution and perseverance. [159](#)

157

[\(return\)](#)

[See Optatus Milevitanus, (particularly iii. 4,) with the Donatis history, by M. Dupin, and the original pieces at the end of his edition. The numerous circumstances which Augustin has mentioned, of the fury of the Circumcellions against others, and against themselves, have been laboriously collected by Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 147-165; and he has often, though without design, exposed injuries which had provoked those fanatics.]

158

[\(return\)](#)

[It is amusing enough to observe the language of opposite parties, when they speak of the same men and things. Gratus, bishop of Carthage, begins the acclamations of an orthodox synod, “Gratias Deo omnipotenti et Christu Jesu... qui imperavit religiosissimo Constanti Imperatori, ut votum gereret unitatis, et mitteret ministros sancti operis *famulos Dei* Paulum et Macarium.” Monument. Vet. ad Calcem Optati, p. 313. “Ecce subito,” (says the Donatist author of the Passion of Marculus), “de Constantis regis tyrannica domo.. pollutum Macarianæ persecutionis murmur increpuit, et *duabus bestiis* ad Africam missis, eodem scilicet Macario et Paulo, execrandum prorsus ac dirum ecclesiæ certamen indictum est; ut populus Christianus ad unionem cum traditoribus faciendam, nudatis militum gladiis et draconum præsentibus signis, et tubarum vocibus cogeretur.” Monument. p. 304.]

159

[\(return\)](#)

[The Histoire des Camisards, in 3 vols. 12mo. Villefranche, 1760 may be recommended as accurate and impartial. It requires some attention to discover the religion of the author.]

Such disorders are the natural effects of religious tyranny, but the rage of the Donatists was inflamed by a frenzy of a very extraordinary kind; and which, if it really prevailed among them in so extravagant a degree, cannot surely be paralleled in any country or in any age. Many of these fanatics were possessed with the horror of life, and the desire of martyrdom; and they deemed it of little moment by what means, or by what hands, they perished, if their conduct was sanctified by the intention of devoting themselves to the glory of the true faith, and the hope of eternal happiness. [160](#) Sometimes they rudely disturbed the festivals, and profaned the temples

of Paganism, with the design of exciting the most zealous of the idolaters to revenge the insulted honor of their gods. They sometimes forced their way into the courts of justice, and compelled the affrighted judge to give orders for their immediate execution. They frequently stopped travellers on the public highways, and obliged them to inflict the stroke of martyrdom, by the promise of a reward, if they consented, and by the threat of instant death, if they refused to grant so very singular a favor. When they were disappointed of every other resource, they announced the day on which, in the presence of their friends and brethren, they should cast themselves headlong from some lofty rock; and many precipices were shown, which had acquired fame by the number of religious suicides. In the actions of these desperate enthusiasts, who were admired by one party as the martyrs of God, and abhorred by the other as the victims of Satan, an impartial philosopher may discover the influence and the last abuse of that inflexible spirit which was originally derived from the character and principles of the Jewish nation.

160

[\(return\)](#)

[The Donatist suicides alleged in their justification the example of Razias, which is related in the 14th chapter of the second book of the Maccabees.]

The simple narrative of the intestine divisions, which distracted the peace, and dishonored the triumph, of the church, will confirm the remark of a Pagan historian, and justify the complaint of a venerable bishop. The experience of Ammianus had convinced him, that the enmity of the Christians towards each other, surpassed the fury of savage beasts against man; [161](#) and Gregory Nazianzen most pathetically laments, that the kingdom of heaven was converted, by discord, into the image of chaos, of a nocturnal tempest, and of hell itself. [162](#) The fierce and partial writers of the times, ascribing *all* virtue to themselves, and imputing *all* guilt to their adversaries, have painted the battle of the angels and dæmons. Our calmer reason will reject such pure and perfect monsters of vice or sanctity, and will impute an equal, or at least an indiscriminate, measure of good and evil to the hostile sectaries, who assumed and bestowed the appellations of orthodox and heretics. They had been educated in the same religion and the same civil society. Their hopes and fears in the present, or in a future life, were balanced in the same proportion. On either side, the error might be innocent, the faith sincere, the practice meritorious or corrupt. Their passions were excited by similar objects; and they might alternately abuse the favor of the court, or of the people. The metaphysical opinions of the Athanasians and the Arians could not influence their moral character; and they were alike actuated by the intolerant spirit which has been extracted from the pure and simple maxims of the gospel.

161

[\(return\)](#)

[Nullus infestas hominibus bestias, ut sunt sibi ferales plerique Christianorum, expertus. Ammian. xxii. 5.]

[Gregor, Nazianzen, Orav. i. p. 33. See Tillemont, tom vi. p. 501, qua to edit.]

A modern writer, who, with a just confidence, has prefixed to his own history the honorable epithets of political and philosophical, [163](#) accuses the timid prudence of Montesquieu, for neglecting to enumerate, among the causes of the decline of the empire, a law of Constantine, by which the exercise of the Pagan worship was absolutely suppressed, and a considerable part of his subjects was left destitute of priests, of temples, and of any public religion. The zeal of the philosophic historian for the rights of mankind, has induced him to acquiesce in the ambiguous testimony of those ecclesiastics, who have too lightly ascribed to their favorite hero the *merit* of a general persecution. [164](#) Instead of alleging this imaginary law, which would have blazed in the front of the Imperial codes, we may safely appeal to the original epistle, which Constantine addressed to the followers of the ancient religion; at a time when he no longer disguised his conversion, nor dreaded the rivals of his throne. He invites and exhorts, in the most pressing terms, the subjects of the Roman empire to imitate the example of their master; but he declares, that those who still refuse to open their eyes to the celestial light, may freely enjoy their temples and their fancied gods. A report, that the ceremonies of paganism were suppressed, is formally contradicted by the emperor himself, who wisely assigns, as the principle of his moderation, the invincible force of habit, of prejudice, and of superstition. [165](#) Without violating the sanctity of his promise, without alarming the fears of the Pagans, the artful monarch advanced, by slow and cautious steps, to undermine the irregular and decayed fabric of polytheism. The partial acts of severity which he occasionally exercised, though they were secretly promoted by a Christian zeal, were colored by the fairest pretences of justice and the public good; and while Constantine designed to ruin the foundations, he seemed to reform the abuses, of the ancient religion. After the example of the wisest of his predecessors, he condemned, under the most rigorous penalties, the occult and impious arts of divination; which excited the vain hopes, and sometimes the criminal attempts, of those who were discontented with their present condition. An ignominious silence was imposed on the oracles, which had been publicly convicted of fraud and falsehood; the effeminate priests of the Nile were abolished; and Constantine discharged the duties of a Roman censor, when he gave orders for the demolition of several temples of Phœnicia; in which every mode of prostitution was devoutly practised in the face of day, and to the honor of Venus. [166](#) The Imperial city of Constantinople was, in some measure, raised at the expense, and was adorned with the spoils, of the opulent temples of Greece and Asia; the sacred property was confiscated; the statues of gods and heroes were transported, with rude familiarity, among a people who considered them as objects, not of adoration, but of curiosity; the gold and silver were restored to circulation; and the magistrates, the bishops, and the eunuchs, improved the fortunate occasion of gratifying, at once, their zeal, their avarice, and their resentment. But these depredations were confined to a small part of the Roman world; and the provinces had

been long since accustomed to endure the same sacrilegious rapine, from the tyranny of princes and proconsuls, who could not be suspected of any design to subvert the established religion. [167](#)

163 [\(return\)](#)

[Histoire Politique et Philosophique des Etablissemens des Europeens dans les deux Indes, tom. i. p. 9.]

164 [\(return\)](#)

[According to Eusebius, (in Vit. Constantin. l. ii. c. 45,) the emperor prohibited, both in cities and in the country, the abominable acts or parts of idolatry. I Socrates (l. i. c. 17) and Sozomen (l. ii. c. 4, 5) have represented the conduct of Constantine with a just regard to truth and history; which has been neglected by Theodoret (l. v. c. 21) and Orosius, (vii. 28.) Tum deinde (says the latter) primus Constantinus *justo ordine et pio vicem* vertit edicto; siquidem statuit citra ullam hominum cædem, paganorum templa claudi.]

165 [\(return\)](#)

[See Eusebius in Vit. Constantin. l. ii. c. 56, 60. In the sermon to the assembly of saints, which the emperor pronounced when he was mature in years and piety, he declares to the idolaters (c. xii.) that they are permitted to offer sacrifices, and to exercise every part of their religious worship.]

166 [\(return\)](#)

[See Eusebius, in Vit. Constantin. l. iii. c. 54-58, and l. iv. c. 23, 25. These acts of authority may be compared with the suppression of the Bacchanals, and the demolition of the temple of Isis, by the magistrates of Pagan Rome.]

167 [\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius (in Vit. Constan. l. iii. c. 54-58) and Libanius (Orat. pro Templis, p. 9, 10, edit. Gothofred) both mention the pious sacrilege of Constantine, which they viewed in very different lights. The latter expressly declares, that “he made use of the sacred money, but made no alteration in the legal worship; the temples indeed were impoverished, but the sacred rites were performed there.” Lardner’s Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, vol. iv. p. 140.]

The sons of Constantine trod in the footsteps of their father, with more zeal, and with less discretion. The pretences of rapine and oppression were insensibly multiplied; [168](#) every indulgence was shown to the illegal behavior of the Christians; every doubt was explained to the disadvantage of Paganism; and the demolition of the

temples was celebrated as one of the auspicious events of the reign of Constans and Constantius. [169](#) The name of Constantius is prefixed to a concise law, which might have superseded the necessity of any future prohibitions. “It is our pleasure, that in all places, and in all cities, the temples be immediately shut, and carefully guarded, that none may have the power of offending. It is likewise our pleasure, that all our subjects should abstain from sacrifices. If any one should be guilty of such an act, let him feel the sword of vengeance, and after his execution, let his property be confiscated to the public use. We denounce the same penalties against the governors of the provinces, if they neglect to punish the criminals.” [170](#) But there is the strongest reason to believe, that this formidable edict was either composed without being published, or was published without being executed. The evidence of facts, and the monuments which are still extant of brass and marble, continue to prove the public exercise of the Pagan worship during the whole reign of the sons of Constantine. In the East, as well as in the West, in cities, as well as in the country, a great number of temples were respected, or at least were spared; and the devout multitude still enjoyed the luxury of sacrifices, of festivals, and of processions, by the permission, or by the connivance, of the civil government. About four years after the supposed date of this bloody edict, Constantius visited the temples of Rome; and the decency of his behavior is recommended by a pagan orator as an example worthy of the imitation of succeeding princes. “That emperor,” says Symmachus, “suffered the privileges of the vestal virgins to remain inviolate; he bestowed the sacerdotal dignities on the nobles of Rome, granted the customary allowance to defray the expenses of the public rites and sacrifices; and, though he had embraced a different religion, he never attempted to deprive the empire of the sacred worship of antiquity.” [171](#) The senate still presumed to consecrate, by solemn decrees, the *divine* memory of their sovereigns; and Constantine himself was associated, after his death, to those gods whom he had renounced and insulted during his life. The title, the ensigns, the prerogatives, of sovereign pontiff, which had been instituted by Numa, and assumed by Augustus, were accepted, without hesitation, by seven Christian emperors; who were invested with a more absolute authority over the religion which they had deserted, than over that which they professed. [172](#)

168

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxii. 4) speaks of some court eunuchs who were spoliis templorum pasti. Libanius says (Orat. pro Templ. p. 23) that the emperor often gave away a temple, like a dog, or a horse, or a slave, or a gold cup; but the devout philosopher takes care to observe that these sacrilegious favorites very seldom prospered.]

169

[\(return\)](#)

[See Gothofred. Cod. Theodos. tom. vi. p. 262. Liban. Orat. Parental c. x. in Fabric. Bibl. Græc. tom. vii. p. 235.]

170

[\(return\)](#)

[Placuit omnibus locis atque urbibus universis claudi protinus empla, et accessu vetitis omnibus licentiam delinquendi perditis abnegari. Volumus etiam cunctos a sacrificiis abstinere. Quod siquis aliquid forte hujusmodi perpetraverit, gladio sternatur: facultates etiam perempti fisco decernimus vindicari: et similiter adfligi rectores provinciarum si facinora vindicare neglexerint. Cod. Theodos. l. xvi. tit. x. leg. 4. Chronology has discovered some contradiction in the date of this extravagant law; the only one, perhaps, by which the negligence of magistrates is punished by death and confiscation. M. de la Bastie (Mém. de l'Académie, tom. xv. p. 98) conjectures, with a show of reason, that this was no more than the minutes of a law, the heads of an intended bill, which were found in Scriniis Memoriae among the papers of Constantius, and afterwards inserted, as a worthy model, in the Theodosian Code.]

171

[\(return\)](#)

[Symmach. Epistol. x. 54.]

172

[\(return\)](#)

[The fourth Dissertation of M. de la Bastie, sur le Souverain Pontificat des Empereurs Romains, (in the Mém. de l'Acad. tom. xv. p. 75- 144,) is a very learned and judicious performance, which explains the state, and prove the toleration, of Paganism from Constantino to Gratian. The assertion of Zosimus, that Gratian was the first who refused the pontifical robe, is confirmed beyond a doubt; and the murmurs of bigotry on that subject are almost silenced.]

The divisions of Christianity suspended the ruin of *Paganism*; [173](#) and the holy war against the infidels was less vigorously prosecuted by princes and bishops, who were more immediately alarmed by the guilt and danger of domestic rebellion. The extirpation of *idolatry* [174](#) might have been justified by the established principles of intolerance: but the hostile sects, which alternately reigned in the Imperial court were mutually apprehensive of alienating, and perhaps exasperating, the minds of a powerful, though declining faction. Every motive of authority and fashion, of interest and reason, now militated on the side of Christianity; but two or three generations elapsed, before their victorious influence was universally felt. The religion which had so long and so lately been established in the Roman empire was still revered by a numerous people, less attached indeed to speculative opinion, than to ancient custom. The honors of the state and army were indifferently bestowed on all the subjects of Constantine and Constantius; and a considerable portion of knowledge and wealth and valor was still engaged in the service of polytheism. The superstition of the senator and of the peasant,

of the poet and the philosopher, was derived from very different causes, but they met with equal devotion in the temples of the gods. Their zeal was insensibly provoked by the insulting triumph of a proscribed sect; and their hopes were revived by the well-grounded confidence, that the presumptive heir of the empire, a young and valiant hero, who had delivered Gaul from the arms of the Barbarians, had secretly embraced the religion of his ancestors.

173

[\(return\)](#)

[As I have freely anticipated the use of *pagans* and *paganism*, I shall now trace the singular revolutions of those celebrated words. 1. in the Doric dialect, so familiar to the Italians, signifies a fountain; and the rural neighborhood, which frequented the same fountain, derived the common appellation of *pagus* and *pagans*. (Festus sub voce, and Servius ad Virgil. Georgic. ii. 382.) 2. By an easy extension of the word, pagan and rural became almost synonymous, (Plin. Hist. Natur. xxviii. 5;) and the meaner rustics acquired that name, which has been corrupted into *peasants* in the modern languages of Europe. 3. The amazing increase of the military order introduced the necessity of a correlative term, (Hume's Essays, vol. i. p. 555;) and all the *people* who were not enlisted in the service of the prince were branded with the contemptuous epithets of pagans. (Tacit. Hist. iii. 24, 43, 77. Juvenal. Satir. 16. Tertullian de Pallio, c. 4.) 4. The Christians were the soldiers of Christ; their adversaries, who refused his *sacrament*, or military oath of baptism might deserve the metaphorical name of pagans; and this popular reproach was introduced as early as the reign of Valentinian (A. D. 365) into Imperial laws (Cod. Theodos. l. xvi. tit. ii. leg. 18) and theological writings. 5. Christianity gradually filled the cities of the empire: the old religion, in the time of Prudentius (advers. Symmachum, l. i. ad fin.) and Orosius, (in Præfat. Hist.,) retired and languished in obscure villages; and the word *pagans*, with its new signification, reverted to its primitive origin. 6. Since the worship of Jupiter and his family has expired, the vacant title of pagans has been successively applied to all the idolaters and polytheists of the old and new world. 7. The Latin Christians bestowed it, without scruple, on their mortal enemies, the Mahometans; and the purest *Unitarians* were branded with the unjust reproach of idolatry and *paganism*. See Gerard Vossius, Etymologicon Linguae Latinæ, in his works, tom. i. p. 420; Godefroy's Commentary on

the Theodosian Code, tom. vi. p. 250; and Ducange, *Mediæ et Infimæ Latinitat. Glossar.*]

174

[\(return\)](#)

[In the pure language of Ionia and Athens were ancient and familiar words. The former expressed a likeness, an apparition (Homer. *Odys.* xi. 601,) a representation, an *image*, created either by fancy or art. The latter denoted any sort of *service* or slavery. The Jews of Egypt, who translated the Hebrew Scriptures, restrained the use of these words (*Exod.* xx. 4, 5) to the religious worship of an image. The peculiar idiom of the Hellenists, or Grecian Jews, has been adopted by the sacred and ecclesiastical writers and the reproach of *idolatry* has stigmatized that visible and abject mode of superstition, which some sects of Christianity should not hastily impute to the polytheists of Greece and Rome.]

Chapter XXII: Julian Declared Emperor.—Part I.

Julian Is Declared Emperor By The Legions Of Gaul.—His March And Success.—The Death Of Constantius.—Civil Administration Of Julian.

While the Romans languished under the ignominious tyranny of eunuchs and bishops, the praises of Julian were repeated with transport in every part of the empire, except in the palace of Constantius. The barbarians of Germany had felt, and still dreaded, the arms of the young Cæsar; his soldiers were the companions of his victory; the grateful provincials enjoyed the blessings of his reign; but the favorites, who had opposed his elevation, were offended by his virtues; and they justly considered the friend of the people as the enemy of the court. As long as the fame of Julian was doubtful, the buffoons of the palace, who were skilled in the language of satire, tried the efficacy of those arts which they had so often practised with success. They easily discovered, that his simplicity was not exempt from affectation: the ridiculous epithets of a hairy savage, of an ape invested with the purple, were applied to the dress and person of the philosophic warrior; and his modest despatches were stigmatized as the vain and elaborate fictions of a loquacious Greek, a speculative soldier, who had studied the art of war amidst the groves of the academy. [1](#) The voice of malicious folly was at length silenced by the shouts of victory; the conqueror of the Franks and Alemanni could no longer be painted as an object of contempt; and the monarch himself was meanly ambitious of stealing from his lieutenant the honorable reward of his labors. In the letters crowned with laurel, which, according to ancient custom, were addressed to the provinces, the name of Julian was omitted. “Constantius had made his dispositions in person; *he* had signalized his valor in the foremost ranks; *his* military conduct had secured the victory; and the captive king of the barbarians was presented to *him* on the

field of battle,” from which he was at that time distant about forty days’ journey. [2](#) So extravagant a fable was incapable, however, of deceiving the public credulity, or even of satisfying the pride of the emperor himself. Secretly conscious that the applause and favor of the Romans accompanied the rising fortunes of Julian, his discontented mind was prepared to receive the subtle poison of those artful sycophants, who colored their mischievous designs with the fairest appearances of truth and candor. [3](#) Instead of depreciating the merits of Julian, they acknowledged, and even exaggerated, his popular fame, superior talents, and important services. But they darkly insinuated, that the virtues of the Cæsar might instantly be converted into the most dangerous crimes, if the inconstant multitude should prefer their inclinations to their duty; or if the general of a victorious army should be tempted from his allegiance by the hopes of revenge and independent greatness. The personal fears of Constantius were interpreted by his council as a laudable anxiety for the public safety; whilst in private, and perhaps in his own breast, he disguised, under the less odious appellation of fear, the sentiments of hatred and envy, which he had secretly conceived for the inimitable virtues of Julian.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[Omnes qui plus poterant in palatio, adulandi professores jam docti, recte consulta, prospereque completa vertebant in deridiculum: talia sine modo strepentes insulse; in odium venit cum victoriis suis; capella, non homo; ut hirsutum Julianum carpentes, appellantesque loquacem talpam, et purpuratam simiam, et litterionem Græcum: et his congruentia plurima atque vernacula principi resonantes, audire hæc taliaque gestienti, virtutes ejus obruere verbis impudentibus conabantur, et segnem incessentes et timidum et umbratilem, gestaque secus verbis comptioribus exornantem. Ammianus, s. xvii. 11. * Note: The philosophers retaliated on the courtiers. Marius (says Eunapius in a newly-discovered fragment) was wont to call his antagonist Sylla a beast half lion and half fox. Constantius had nothing of the lion, but was surrounded by a whole litter of foxes. Mai. Script. Byz. Nov. Col. ii. 238. Niebuhr. Byzant. Hist. 66.—M.]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xvi. 12. The orator Themistius (iv. p. 56, 57) believed whatever was contained in the Imperial letters, which were addressed to the senate of Constantinople Aurelius Victor, who published his Abridgment in the last year of Constantius, ascribes the German victories to the *wisdom* of the emperor, and the *fortune* of the Cæsar. Yet the historian, soon afterwards, was indebted to the favor or esteem of Julian for the honor of a brass statue, and the important offices of consular of the

second Pannonia, and præfect of the city, Ammian.
xxi. 10.]

3

[\(return\)](#)

[Callido nocendi artificio, accusatoriam diritatem
laudum titulis peragebant. .. Hæ voces fuerunt ad
inflammanda odia probria omnibus potentiores. See
Mamertin, in Actione Gratiarum in Vet Panegy. xi.
5, 6.]

The apparent tranquillity of Gaul, and the imminent danger of the eastern provinces, offered a specious pretence for the design which was artfully concerted by the Imperial ministers. They resolved to disarm the Cæsar; to recall those faithful troops who guarded his person and dignity; and to employ, in a distant war against the Persian monarch, the hardy veterans who had vanquished, on the banks of the Rhine, the fiercest nations of Germany. While Julian used the laborious hours of his winter quarters at Paris in the administration of power, which, in his hands, was the exercise of virtue, he was surprised by the hasty arrival of a tribune and a notary, with positive orders, from the emperor, which *they* were directed to execute, and *he* was commanded not to oppose. Constantius signified his pleasure, that four entire legions, the Celtæ, and Petulants, the Heruli, and the Batavians, should be separated from the standard of Julian, under which they had acquired their fame and discipline; that in each of the remaining bands three hundred of the bravest youths should be selected; and that this numerous detachment, the strength of the Gallic army, should instantly begin their march, and exert their utmost diligence to arrive, before the opening of the campaign, on the frontiers of Persia. [4](#) The Cæsar foresaw and lamented the consequences of this fatal mandate. Most of the auxiliaries, who engaged their voluntary service, had stipulated, that they should never be obliged to pass the Alps. The public faith of Rome, and the personal honor of Julian, had been pledged for the observance of this condition. Such an act of treachery and oppression would destroy the confidence, and excite the resentment, of the independent warriors of Germany, who considered truth as the noblest of their virtues, and freedom as the most valuable of their possessions. The legionaries, who enjoyed the title and privileges of Romans, were enlisted for the general defence of the republic; but those mercenary troops heard with cold indifference the antiquated names of the republic and of Rome. Attached, either from birth or long habit, to the climate and manners of Gaul, they loved and admired Julian; they despised, and perhaps hated, the emperor; they dreaded the laborious march, the Persian arrows, and the burning deserts of Asia. They claimed as their own the country which they had saved; and excused their want of spirit, by pleading the sacred and more immediate duty of protecting their families and friends.

The apprehensions of the Gauls were derived from the knowledge of the impending and inevitable danger. As soon as the provinces were exhausted of their military strength, the Germans would violate a treaty which had been imposed on their fears; and notwithstanding the abilities and valor of Julian, the general of a nominal army, to

whom the public calamities would be imputed, must find himself, after a vain resistance, either a prisoner in the camp of the barbarians, or a criminal in the palace of Constantius. If Julian complied with the orders which he had received, he subscribed his own destruction, and that of a people who deserved his affection. But a positive refusal was an act of rebellion, and a declaration of war. The inexorable jealousy of the emperor, the peremptory, and perhaps insidious, nature of his commands, left not any room for a fair apology, or candid interpretation; and the dependent station of the Cæsar scarcely allowed him to pause or to deliberate. Solitude increased the perplexity of Julian; he could no longer apply to the faithful counsels of Sallust, who had been removed from his office by the judicious malice of the eunuchs: he could not even enforce his representations by the concurrence of the ministers, who would have been afraid or ashamed to approve the ruin of Gaul. The moment had been chosen, when Lupicinus, [5](#) the general of the cavalry, was despatched into Britain, to repulse the inroads of the Scots and Picts; and Florentius was occupied at Vienna by the assessment of the tribute. The latter, a crafty and corrupt statesman, declining to assume a responsible part on this dangerous occasion, eluded the pressing and repeated invitations of Julian, who represented to him, that in every important measure, the presence of the præfect was indispensable in the council of the prince. In the mean while the Cæsar was oppressed by the rude and importunate solicitations of the Imperial messengers, who presumed to suggest, that if he expected the return of his ministers, he would charge himself with the guilt of the delay, and reserve for them the merit of the execution. Unable to resist, unwilling to comply, Julian expressed, in the most serious terms, his wish, and even his intention, of resigning the purple, which he could not preserve with honor, but which he could not abdicate with safety.

4

[\(return\)](#)

[The minute interval, which may be interposed, between the *hyeme adultâ* and the *primo vere* of Ammianus, (xx. l. 4,) instead of allowing a sufficient space for a march of three thousand miles, would render the orders of Constantius as extravagant as they were unjust. The troops of Gaul could not have reached Syria till the end of autumn. The memory of Ammianus must have been inaccurate, and his language incorrect. * Note: The late editor of Ammianus attempts to vindicate his author from the charge of inaccuracy. "It is clear, from the whole course of the narrative, that Constantius entertained this design of demanding his troops from Julian, immediately after the taking of Amida, in the autumn of the preceding year, and had transmitted his orders into Gaul, before it was known that Lupicinus had gone into Britain with the Herulians and Batavians." Wagner, note to Amm. xx. 4. But it seems also clear that the troops were in winter quarters (*hiemabant*) when the orders

arrived. Ammianus can scarcely be acquitted of incorrectness in his language at least.—M]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, xx. l. The valor of Lupicinus, and his military skill, are acknowledged by the historian, who, in his affected language, accuses the general of exalting the horns of his pride, bellowing in a tragic tone, and exciting a doubt whether he was more cruel or avaricious. The danger from the Scots and Picts was so serious that Julian himself had some thoughts of passing over into the island.]

After a painful conflict, Julian was compelled to acknowledge, that obedience was the virtue of the most eminent subject, and that the sovereign alone was entitled to judge of the public welfare. He issued the necessary orders for carrying into execution the commands of Constantius; a part of the troops began their march for the Alps; and the detachments from the several garrisons moved towards their respective places of assembly. They advanced with difficulty through the trembling and affrighted crowds of provincials, who attempted to excite their pity by silent despair, or loud lamentations, while the wives of the soldiers, holding their infants in their arms, accused the desertion of their husbands, in the mixed language of grief, of tenderness, and of indignation. This scene of general distress afflicted the humanity of the Cæsar; he granted a sufficient number of post-wagons to transport the wives and families of the soldiers, [6](#) endeavored to alleviate the hardships which he was constrained to inflict, and increased, by the most laudable arts, his own popularity, and the discontent of the exiled troops. The grief of an armed multitude is soon converted into rage; their licentious murmurs, which every hour were communicated from tent to tent with more boldness and effect, prepared their minds for the most daring acts of sedition; and by the connivance of their tribunes, a seasonable libel was secretly dispersed, which painted in lively colors the disgrace of the Cæsar, the oppression of the Gallic army, and the feeble vices of the tyrant of Asia. The servants of Constantius were astonished and alarmed by the progress of this dangerous spirit. They pressed the Cæsar to hasten the departure of the troops; but they imprudently rejected the honest and judicious advice of Julian; who proposed that they should not march through Paris, and suggested the danger and temptation of a last interview.

6

[\(return\)](#)

[He granted them the permission of the *cursus clavularis*, or *clabularis*. These post-wagons are often mentioned in the Code, and were supposed to carry fifteen hundred pounds weight. See Vales. ad Ammian. xx. 4.]

As soon as the approach of the troops was announced, the Cæsar went out to meet them, and ascended his tribunal, which had been erected in a plain before the gates of the city. After distinguishing the officers and soldiers, who by their rank or merit deserved a peculiar attention, Julian addressed himself in a studied oration to the

surrounding multitude: he celebrated their exploits with grateful applause; encouraged them to accept, with alacrity, the honor of serving under the eye of a powerful and liberal monarch; and admonished them, that the commands of Augustus required an instant and cheerful obedience. The soldiers, who were apprehensive of offending their general by an indecent clamor, or of belying their sentiments by false and venal acclamations, maintained an obstinate silence; and after a short pause, were dismissed to their quarters. The principal officers were entertained by the Cæsar, who professed, in the warmest language of friendship, his desire and his inability to reward, according to their deserts, the brave companions of his victories. They retired from the feast, full of grief and perplexity; and lamented the hardship of their fate, which tore them from their beloved general and their native country. The only expedient which could prevent their separation was boldly agitated and approved; the popular resentment was insensibly moulded into a regular conspiracy; their just reasons of complaint were heightened by passion, and their passions were inflamed by wine; as, on the eve of their departure, the troops were indulged in licentious festivity. At the hour of midnight, the impetuous multitude, with swords, and bows, and torches in their hands, rushed into the suburbs; encompassed the palace; [7](#) and, careless of future dangers, pronounced the fatal and irrevocable words, Julian Augustus! The prince, whose anxious suspense was interrupted by their disorderly acclamations, secured the doors against their intrusion; and as long as it was in his power, secluded his person and dignity from the accidents of a nocturnal tumult. At the dawn of day, the soldiers, whose zeal was irritated by opposition, forcibly entered the palace, seized, with respectful violence, the object of their choice, guarded Julian with drawn swords through the streets of Paris, placed him on the tribunal, and with repeated shouts saluted him as their emperor. Prudence, as well as loyalty, inculcated the propriety of resisting their treasonable designs; and of preparing, for his oppressed virtue, the excuse of violence. Addressing himself by turns to the multitude and to individuals, he sometimes implored their mercy, and sometimes expressed his indignation; conjured them not to sully the fame of their immortal victories; and ventured to promise, that if they would immediately return to their allegiance, he would undertake to obtain from the emperor not only a free and gracious pardon, but even the revocation of the orders which had excited their resentment. But the soldiers, who were conscious of their guilt, chose rather to depend on the gratitude of Julian, than on the clemency of the emperor. Their zeal was insensibly turned into impatience, and their impatience into rage. The inflexible Cæsar sustained, till the third hour of the day, their prayers, their reproaches, and their menaces; nor did he yield, till he had been repeatedly assured, that if he wished to live, he must consent to reign. He was exalted on a shield in the presence, and amidst the unanimous acclamations, of the troops; a rich military collar, which was offered by chance, supplied the want of a diadem; [8](#) the ceremony was concluded by the promise of a moderate donative; and the new emperor, overwhelmed with real or affected grief retired into the most secret recesses of his apartment. [10](#)

7

[\(return\)](#)

[Most probably the palace of the baths, (*Thermae*), of which a solid and lofty hall still subsists in the *Rue de la Harpe*. The buildings covered a considerable space of the modern quarter of the university; and the gardens, under the Merovingian kings, communicated with the abbey of St. Germain des Prez. By the injuries of time and the Normans, this ancient palace was reduced, in the twelfth century, to a maze of ruins, whose dark recesses were the scene of licentious love.

*Explicat aula sinus montemque amplectitur alis;
 Multiplici latebra scelerum tersura ruborem.
 pereuntis sæpe pudoris Celatura nefas,
 Venerisque accommoda furtis.*

(These lines are quoted from the *Architrenius*, l. iv. c. 8, a poetical work of John de Hauteville, or Hanville, a monk of St. Alban's, about the year 1190. See Warton's *History of English Poetry*, vol. i. dissert. ii.) Yet such *thefts* might be less pernicious to mankind than the theological disputes of the Sorbonne, which have been since agitated on the same ground. Bonamy, *Mém. de l'Académie*, tom. xv. p. 678-632]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Even in this tumultuous moment, Julian attended to the forms of superstitious ceremony, and obstinately refused the inauspicious use of a female necklace, or a horse collar, which the impatient soldiers would have employed in the room of a diadem. ---An equal proportion of gold and silver, five pieces of the former one pound of the latter; the whole amounting to about five pounds ten shillings of our money.]

10

[\(return\)](#)

[For the whole narrative of this revolt, we may appeal to authentic and original materials; Julian himself, (ad S. P. Q. Atheniensem, p. 282, 283, 284.) Libanius, (Orat. Parental. c. 44-48, in Fabricius, *Bibliot. Græc.* tom. vii. p. 269-273,) Ammianus, (xx. 4,) and Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 151, 152, 153.) who, in the reign of Julian, appears to follow the more respectable authority of Eunapius. With such guides we *might* neglect the abbreviators and ecclesiastical historians.]

The grief of Julian could proceed only from his innocence; out his innocence must appear extremely doubtful [11](#) in the eyes of those who have learned to suspect the motives and the professions of princes. His lively and active mind was susceptible of the various impressions of hope and fear, of gratitude and revenge, of duty and of

ambition, of the love of fame, and of the fear of reproach. But it is impossible for us to calculate the respective weight and operation of these sentiments; or to ascertain the principles of action which might escape the observation, while they guided, or rather impelled, the steps of Julian himself. The discontent of the troops was produced by the malice of his enemies; their tumult was the natural effect of interest and of passion; and if Julian had tried to conceal a deep design under the appearances of chance, he must have employed the most consummate artifice without necessity, and probably without success. He solemnly declares, in the presence of Jupiter, of the Sun, of Mars, of Minerva, and of all the other deities, that till the close of the evening which preceded his elevation, he was utterly ignorant of the designs of the soldiers; [12](#) and it may seem ungenerous to distrust the honor of a hero and the truth of a philosopher. Yet the superstitious confidence that Constantius was the enemy, and that he himself was the favorite, of the gods, might prompt him to desire, to solicit, and even to hasten the auspicious moment of his reign, which was predestined to restore the ancient religion of mankind. When Julian had received the intelligence of the conspiracy, he resigned himself to a short slumber; and afterwards related to his friends that he had seen the genius of the empire waiting with some impatience at his door, pressing for admittance, and reproaching his want of spirit and ambition. [13](#) Astonished and perplexed, he addressed his prayers to the great Jupiter, who immediately signified, by a clear and manifest omen, that he should submit to the will of heaven and of the army. The conduct which disclaims the ordinary maxims of reason, excites our suspicion and eludes our inquiry. Whenever the spirit of fanaticism, at once so credulous and so crafty, has insinuated itself into a noble mind, it insensibly corrodes the vital principles of virtue and veracity.

11 [\(return\)](#)

[Eutropius, a respectable witness, uses a doubtful expression, “consensu militum.” (x. 15.) Gregory Nazianzen, whose ignorance might excuse his fanaticism, directly charges the apostate with presumption, madness, and impious rebellion, Orat. iii. p. 67.]

12 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian. ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 284. The *devout* Abbé de la Bleterie (Vie de Julien, p. 159) is almost inclined to respect the *devout* protestations of a Pagan.]

13 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xx. 5, with the note of Lindenbrogius on the Genius of the empire. Julian himself, in a confidential letter to his friend and physician, Oribasius, (Epist. xvii. p. 384,) mentions another dream, to which, before the event, he gave credit; of a stately tree thrown to the ground, of a small plant striking a deep root into the earth. Even in his sleep, the mind of the Cæsar must have been

agitated by the hopes and fears of his fortune.
Zosimus (l. iii. p. 155) relates a subsequent dream.]

To moderate the zeal of his party, to protect the persons of his enemies, [14](#) to defeat and to despise the secret enterprises which were formed against his life and dignity, were the cares which employed the first days of the reign of the new emperor. Although he was firmly resolved to maintain the station which he had assumed, he was still desirous of saving his country from the calamities of civil war, of declining a contest with the superior forces of Constantius, and of preserving his own character from the reproach of perfidy and ingratitude. Adorned with the ensigns of military and imperial pomp, Julian showed himself in the field of Mars to the soldiers, who glowed with ardent enthusiasm in the cause of their pupil, their leader, and their friend. He recapitulated their victories, lamented their sufferings, applauded their resolution, animated their hopes, and checked their impetuosity; nor did he dismiss the assembly, till he had obtained a solemn promise from the troops, that if the emperor of the East would subscribe an equitable treaty, they would renounce any views of conquest, and satisfy themselves with the tranquil possession of the Gallic provinces. On this foundation he composed, in his own name, and in that of the army, a specious and moderate epistle, [15](#) which was delivered to Pentadius, his master of the offices, and to his chamberlain Eutherius; two ambassadors whom he appointed to receive the answer, and observe the dispositions of Constantius. This epistle is inscribed with the modest appellation of Cæsar; but Julian solicits in a peremptory, though respectful, manner, the confirmation of the title of Augustus. He acknowledges the irregularity of his own election, while he justifies, in some measure, the resentment and violence of the troops which had extorted his reluctant consent. He allows the supremacy of his brother Constantius; and engages to send him an annual present of Spanish horses, to recruit his army with a select number of barbarian youths, and to accept from his choice a Prætorian præfect of approved discretion and fidelity. But he reserves for himself the nomination of his other civil and military officers, with the troops, the revenue, and the sovereignty of the provinces beyond the Alps. He admonishes the emperor to consult the dictates of justice; to distrust the arts of those venal flatterers, who subsist only by the discord of princes; and to embrace the offer of a fair and honorable treaty, equally advantageous to the republic and to the house of Constantine. In this negotiation Julian claimed no more than he already possessed. The delegated authority which he had long exercised over the provinces of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, was still obeyed under a name more independent and august. The soldiers and the people rejoiced in a revolution which was not stained even with the blood of the guilty. Florentius was a fugitive; Lupicinus a prisoner. The persons who were disaffected to the new government were disarmed and secured; and the vacant offices were distributed, according to the recommendation of merit, by a prince who despised the intrigues of the palace, and the clamors of the soldiers. [16](#)

army is finely described by Tacitus, (Hist. 1, 80-85.) But Otho had much more guilt, and much less abilities, than Julian.]

15

[\(return\)](#)

[To this ostensible epistle he added, says Ammianus, private letters, objurgatorias et mordaces, which the historian had not seen, and would not have published. Perhaps they never existed.]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[See the first transactions of his reign, in Julian. ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 285, 286. Ammianus, xx. 5, 8. Liban. Orat. Parent. c. 49, 50, p. 273-275.]

The negotiations of peace were accompanied and supported by the most vigorous preparations for war. The army, which Julian held in readiness for immediate action, was recruited and augmented by the disorders of the times. The cruel persecutions of the faction of Magnentius had filled Gaul with numerous bands of outlaws and robbers. They cheerfully accepted the offer of a general pardon from a prince whom they could trust, submitted to the restraints of military discipline, and retained only their implacable hatred to the person and government of Constantius. [17](#) As soon as the season of the year permitted Julian to take the field, he appeared at the head of his legions; threw a bridge over the Rhine in the neighborhood of Cleves; and prepared to chastise the perfidy of the Attuarii, a tribe of Franks, who presumed that they might ravage, with impunity, the frontiers of a divided empire. The difficulty, as well as glory, of this enterprise, consisted in a laborious march; and Julian had conquered, as soon as he could penetrate into a country, which former princes had considered as inaccessible. After he had given peace to the Barbarians, the emperor carefully visited the fortifications along the Rhine from Cleves to Basil; surveyed, with peculiar attention, the territories which he had recovered from the hands of the Alemanni, passed through Besançon, [18](#) which had severely suffered from their fury, and fixed his headquarters at Vienna for the ensuing winter. The barrier of Gaul was improved and strengthened with additional fortifications; and Julian entertained some hopes that the Germans, whom he had so often vanquished, might, in his absence, be restrained by the terror of his name. Vadamair [19](#) was the only prince of the Alemanni whom he esteemed or feared and while the subtle Barbarian affected to observe the faith of treaties, the progress of his arms threatened the state with an unseasonable and dangerous war. The policy of Julian condescended to surprise the prince of the Alemanni by his own arts: and Vadamair, who, in the character of a friend, had incautiously accepted an invitation from the Roman governors, was seized in the midst of the entertainment, and sent away prisoner into the heart of Spain. Before the Barbarians were recovered from their amazement, the emperor appeared in arms on the banks of the Rhine, and, once more crossing the river, renewed the deep impressions of terror and respect which had been already made by four preceding expeditions. [20](#)

- 17 [\(return\)](#)
[Liban. Orat. Parent. c. 50, p. 275, 276. A strange disorder, since it continued above seven years. In the factions of the Greek republics, the exiles amounted to 20,000 persons; and Isocrates assures Philip, that it would be easier to raise an army from the vagabonds than from the cities. See Hume's Essays, tom. i. p. 426, 427.]
- 18 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian (Epist. xxxviii. p. 414) gives a short description of Vesontio, or Besançon; a rocky peninsula almost encircled by the River Doux; once a magnificent city, filled with temples, &c., now reduced to a small town, emerging, however, from its ruins.]
- 19 [\(return\)](#)
[Vadomair entered into the Roman service, and was promoted from a barbarian kingdom to the military rank of duke of Phœnicia. He still retained the same artful character, (Ammian. xxi. 4;) but under the reign of Valens, he signalized his valor in the Armenian war, (xxix. 1.)]
- 20 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammian. xx. 10, xxi. 3, 4. Zosimus, l. iii. p. 155.]

Chapter XXII: Julian Declared Emperor.—Part II.

The ambassadors of Julian had been instructed to execute, with the utmost diligence, their important commission. But, in their passage through Italy and Illyricum, they were detained by the tedious and affected delays of the provincial governors; they were conducted by slow journeys from Constantinople to Cæsarea in Cappadocia; and when at length they were admitted to the presence of Constantius, they found that he had already conceived, from the despatches of his own officers, the most unfavorable opinion of the conduct of Julian, and of the Gallic army. The letters were heard with impatience; the trembling messengers were dismissed with indignation and contempt; and the looks, gestures, the furious language of the monarch, expressed the disorder of his soul. The domestic connection, which might have reconciled the brother and the husband of Helena, was recently dissolved by the death of that princess, whose pregnancy had been several times fruitless, and was at last fatal to herself. [21](#) The empress Eusebia had preserved, to the last moment of her life, the warm, and even jealous, affection which she had conceived for Julian; and her mild influence might have moderated the resentment of a prince, who, since her death, was abandoned to his own passions, and to the arts of his eunuchs. But the terror of a foreign invasion obliged him to suspend the punishment of a private enemy: he continued his march towards the

confines of Persia, and thought it sufficient to signify the conditions which might entitle Julian and his guilty followers to the clemency of their offended sovereign. He required, that the presumptuous Cæsar should expressly renounce the appellation and rank of Augustus, which he had accepted from the rebels; that he should descend to his former station of a limited and dependent minister; that he should vest the powers of the state and army in the hands of those officers who were appointed by the Imperial court; and that he should trust his safety to the assurances of pardon, which were announced by Epictetus, a Gallic bishop, and one of the Arian favorites of Constantius. Several months were ineffectually consumed in a treaty which was negotiated at the distance of three thousand miles between Paris and Antioch; and, as soon as Julian perceived that his modest and respectful behavior served only to irritate the pride of an implacable adversary, he boldly resolved to commit his life and fortune to the chance of a civil war. He gave a public and military audience to the quæstor Leonas: the haughty epistle of Constantius was read to the attentive multitude; and Julian protested, with the most flattering deference, that he was ready to resign the title of Augustus, if he could obtain the consent of those whom he acknowledged as the authors of his elevation. The faint proposal was impetuously silenced; and the acclamations of “Julian Augustus, continue to reign, by the authority of the army, of the people, of the republic which you have saved,” thundered at once from every part of the field, and terrified the pale ambassador of Constantius. A part of the letter was afterwards read, in which the emperor arraigned the ingratitude of Julian, whom he had invested with the honors of the purple; whom he had educated with so much care and tenderness; whom he had preserved in his infancy, when he was left a helpless orphan.

“An orphan!” interrupted Julian, who justified his cause by indulging his passions: “does the assassin of my family reproach me that I was left an orphan? He urges me to revenge those injuries which I have long studied to forget.” The assembly was dismissed; and Leonas, who, with some difficulty, had been protected from the popular fury, was sent back to his master with an epistle, in which Julian expressed, in a strain of the most vehement eloquence, the sentiments of contempt, of hatred, and of resentment, which had been suppressed and embittered by the dissimulation of twenty years. After this message, which might be considered as a signal of irreconcilable war, Julian, who, some weeks before, had celebrated the Christian festival of the Epiphany, [22](#) made a public declaration that he committed the care of his safety to the Immortal Gods; and thus publicly renounced the religion as well as the friendship of Constantius. [23](#)

[Her remains were sent to Rome, and interred near those of her sister Constantina, in the suburb of the *Via Nomentana*. Ammian. xxi. 1. Libanius has composed a very weak apology, to justify his hero from a very absurd charge of poisoning his wife, and rewarding her physician with his mother's

jewels. (See the seventh of seventeen new orations, published at Venice, 1754, from a MS. in St. Mark's Library, p. 117-127.) Elpidius, the Prætorian præfect of the East, to whose evidence the accuser of Julian appeals, is arraigned by Libanius, as *effeminate* and ungrateful; yet the religion of Elpidius is praised by Jerom, (tom. i. p. 243,) and his Ammianus (xxi. 6.)]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[Feriarum die quem celebrantes mense Januario, Christiani *Epiphania* dictitant, progressus in eorum ecclesiam, solemniter numine orato discessit. Ammian. xxi. 2. Zonaras observes, that it was on Christmas day, and his assertion is not inconsistent; since the churches of Egypt, Asia, and perhaps Gaul, celebrated on the same day (the sixth of January) the nativity and the baptism of their Savior. The Romans, as ignorant as their brethren of the real date of his birth, fixed the solemn festival to the 25th of December, the *Brumalia*, or winter solstice, when the Pagans annually celebrated the birth of the sun. See Bingham's Antiquities of the Christian Church, l. xx. c. 4, and Beausobre, Hist. Critique du Manicheismo tom. ii. p. 690-700.]

23

[\(return\)](#)

[The public and secret negotiations between Constantius and Julian must be extracted, with some caution, from Julian himself. (Orat. ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 286.) Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 51, p. 276,) Ammianus, (xx. 9,) Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 154,) and even Zonaras, (tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 20, 21, 22,) who, on this occasion, appears to have possessed and used some valuable materials.]

The situation of Julian required a vigorous and immediate resolution. He had discovered, from intercepted letters, that his adversary, sacrificing the interest of the state to that of the monarch, had again excited the Barbarians to invade the provinces of the West. The position of two magazines, one of them collected on the banks of the Lake of Constance, the other formed at the foot of the Cottian Alps, seemed to indicate the march of two armies; and the size of those magazines, each of which consisted of six hundred thousand quarters of wheat, or rather flour, [24](#) was a threatening evidence of the strength and numbers of the enemy who prepared to surround him. But the Imperial legions were still in their distant quarters of Asia; the Danube was feebly guarded; and if Julian could occupy, by a sudden incursion, the important provinces of Illyricum, he might expect that a people of soldiers would resort to his standard, and that the rich mines of gold and silver would contribute to the expenses of the civil war. He proposed this bold enterprise to the assembly of the soldiers; inspired them with a just confidence in their general, and in themselves; and exhorted them to maintain their

reputation of being terrible to the enemy, moderate to their fellow-citizens, and obedient to their officers. His spirited discourse was received with the loudest acclamations, and the same troops which had taken up arms against Constantius, when he summoned them to leave Gaul, now declared with alacrity, that they would follow Julian to the farthest extremities of Europe or Asia. The oath of fidelity was administered; and the soldiers, clashing their shields, and pointing their drawn swords to their throats, devoted themselves, with horrid imprecations, to the service of a leader whom they celebrated as the deliverer of Gaul and the conqueror of the Germans. [25](#) This solemn engagement, which seemed to be dictated by affection rather than by duty, was singly opposed by Nebridius, who had been admitted to the office of Prætorian præfect. That faithful minister, alone and unassisted, asserted the rights of Constantius, in the midst of an armed and angry multitude, to whose fury he had almost fallen an honorable, but useless sacrifice. After losing one of his hands by the stroke of a sword, he embraced the knees of the prince whom he had offended. Julian covered the præfect with his Imperial mantle, and, protecting him from the zeal of his followers, dismissed him to his own house, with less respect than was perhaps due to the virtue of an enemy. [26](#) The high office of Nebridius was bestowed on Sallust; and the provinces of Gaul, which were now delivered from the intolerable oppression of taxes, enjoyed the mild and equitable administration of the friend of Julian, who was permitted to practise those virtues which he had instilled into the mind of his pupil. [27](#)

- 24 [\(return\)](#)
 [Three hundred myriads, or three millions of *medimni*, a corn measure familiar to the Athenians, and which contained six Roman *modii*. Julian explains, like a soldier and a statesman, the danger of his situation, and the necessity and advantages of an offensive war, (ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 286, 287.)]
- 25 [\(return\)](#)
 [See his oration, and the behavior of the troops, in Ammian. xxi. 5.]
- 26 [\(return\)](#)
 [He sternly refused his hand to the suppliant præfect, whom he sent into Tuscany. (Ammian. xxi. 5.) Libanius, with savage fury, insults Nebridius, applauds the soldiers, and almost censures the humanity of Julian. (Orat. Parent. c. 53, p. 278.)]
- 27 [\(return\)](#)
 [Ammian. xxi. 8. In this promotion, Julian obeyed the law which he publicly imposed on himself. Neque civilis quisquam iudex nec militaris rector, alio quodam præter merita suffragante, ad potiorem veniat gradum. (Ammian. xx. 5.) Absence did not weaken his regard for Sallust, with whose name (A. D. 363) he honored the consulship.]

The hopes of Julian depended much less on the number of his troops, than on the celerity of his motions. In the execution of a daring enterprise, he availed himself of every precaution, as far as prudence could suggest; and where prudence could no longer accompany his steps, he trusted the event to valor and to fortune. In the neighborhood of Basil he assembled and divided his army. [28](#) One body, which consisted of ten thousand men, was directed under the command of Nevitta, general of the cavalry, to advance through the midland parts of Rhætia and Noricum. A similar division of troops, under the orders of Jovius and Jovinus, prepared to follow the oblique course of the highways, through the Alps, and the northern confines of Italy. The instructions to the generals were conceived with energy and precision: to hasten their march in close and compact columns, which, according to the disposition of the ground, might readily be changed into any order of battle; to secure themselves against the surprises of the night by strong posts and vigilant guards; to prevent resistance by their unexpected arrival; to elude examination by their sudden departure; to spread the opinion of their strength, and the terror of his name; and to join their sovereign under the walls of Sirmium. For himself Julian had reserved a more difficult and extraordinary part. He selected three thousand brave and active volunteers, resolved, like their leader, to cast behind them every hope of a retreat; at the head of this faithful band, he fearlessly plunged into the recesses of the Marcian, or Black Forest, which conceals the sources of the Danube; [29](#) and, for many days, the fate of Julian was unknown to the world. The secrecy of his march, his diligence, and vigor, surmounted every obstacle; he forced his way over mountains and morasses, occupied the bridges or swam the rivers, pursued his direct course, [30](#) without reflecting whether he traversed the territory of the Romans or of the Barbarians, and at length emerged, between Ratisbon and Vienna, at the place where he designed to embark his troops on the Danube. By a well-concerted stratagem, he seized a fleet of light brigantines, [31](#) as it lay at anchor; secured a supply of coarse provisions sufficient to satisfy the indelicate, and voracious, appetite of a Gallic army; and boldly committed himself to the stream of the Danube. The labors of the mariners, who plied their oars with incessant diligence, and the steady continuance of a favorable wind, carried his fleet above seven hundred miles in eleven days; [32](#) and he had already disembarked his troops at Bononia, [3211](#) only nineteen miles from Sirmium, before his enemies could receive any certain intelligence that he had left the banks of the Rhine. In the course of this long and rapid navigation, the mind of Julian was fixed on the object of his enterprise; and though he accepted the deputations of some cities, which hastened to claim the merit of an early submission, he passed before the hostile stations, which were placed along the river, without indulging the temptation of signaling a useless and ill-timed valor. The banks of the Danube were crowded on either side with spectators, who gazed on the military pomp, anticipated the importance of the event, and diffused through the adjacent country the fame of a young hero, who advanced with more than mortal speed at the head of the innumerable forces of the West. Lucilian, who, with the rank of general of the cavalry, commanded the military powers of

Illyricum, was alarmed and perplexed by the doubtful reports, which he could neither reject nor believe. He had taken some slow and irresolute measures for the purpose of collecting his troops, when he was surprised by Dagalaiphus, an active officer, whom Julian, as soon as he landed at Bononia, had pushed forwards with some light infantry. The captive general, uncertain of his life or death, was hastily thrown upon a horse, and conducted to the presence of Julian; who kindly raised him from the ground, and dispelled the terror and amazement which seemed to stupefy his faculties. But Lucilian had no sooner recovered his spirits, than he betrayed his want of discretion, by presuming to admonish his conqueror that he had rashly ventured, with a handful of men, to expose his person in the midst of his enemies. “Reserve for your master Constantius these timid remonstrances,” replied Julian, with a smile of contempt: “when I gave you my purple to kiss, I received you not as a counsellor, but as a suppliant.” Conscious that success alone could justify his attempt, and that boldness only could command success, he instantly advanced, at the head of three thousand soldiers, to attack the strongest and most populous city of the Illyrian provinces. As he entered the long suburb of Sirmium, he was received by the joyful acclamations of the army and people; who, crowned with flowers, and holding lighted tapers in their hands, conducted their acknowledged sovereign to his Imperial residence. Two days were devoted to the public joy, which was celebrated by the games of the circus; but, early on the morning of the third day, Julian marched to occupy the narrow pass of Succus, in the defiles of Mount Hæmus; which, almost in the midway between Sirmium and Constantinople, separates the provinces of Thrace and Dacia, by an abrupt descent towards the former, and a gentle declivity on the side of the latter. [33](#) The defence of this important post was intrusted to the brave Nevitta; who, as well as the generals of the Italian division, successfully executed the plan of the march and junction which their master had so ably conceived. [34](#)

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxi. 8) ascribes the same practice, and the same motive, to Alexander the Great and other skilful generals.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[This wood was a part of the great Hercynian forest, which, in the time of Cæsar, stretched away from the country of the Rauraci (Basil) into the boundless regions of the north. See Cluver, *Germania Antiqua*. l. iii. c. 47.]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare Libanius, *Orat. Parent.* c. 53, p. 278, 279, with Gregory Nazianzen, *Orat.* iii. p. 68. Even the saint admires the speed and secrecy of this march. A modern divine might apply to the progress of Julian the lines which were originally designed for another apostate:—

—So eagerly the fiend,

*O'er bog, or steep, through strait, rough, dense, or rare,
With head, hands, wings, or feet, pursues his way,
And swims, or sinks, or wades, or creeps, or flies.]*

31 [\(return\)](#)

[In that interval the *Notitia* places two or three fleets, the Lauriacensis, (at Lauriacum, or Lorch,) the Arlapensis, the Maginensis; and mentions five legions, or cohorts, of Libernarii, who should be a sort of marines. Sect. lviii. edit. Labb.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus alone (l. iii. p. 156) has specified this interesting circumstance. Mamertinus, (in Panegy. Vet. xi. 6, 7, 8,) who accompanied Julian, as count of the sacred largesses, describes this voyage in a florid and picturesque manner, challenges Triptolemus and the Argonauts of Greece, &c.]

3211 [\(return\)](#)

[Banostar. *Mannert*.—M.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[The description of Ammianus, which might be supported by collateral evidence, ascertains the precise situation of the *Angustiæ Succorum*, or passes of *Succi*. M. d'Anville, from the trifling resemblance of names, has placed them between Sardica and Naissus. For my own justification I am obliged to mention the *only* error which I have discovered in the maps or writings of that admirable geographer.]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[Whatever circumstances we may borrow elsewhere, Ammianus (xx. 8, 9, 10) still supplies the series of the narrative.]

The homage which Julian obtained, from the fears or the inclination of the people, extended far beyond the immediate effect of his arms. [35](#) The præfectures of Italy and Illyricum were administered by Taurus and Florentius, who united that important office with the vain honors of the consulship; and as those magistrates had retired with precipitation to the court of Asia, Julian, who could not always restrain the levity of his temper, stigmatized their flight by adding, in all the Acts of the Year, the epithet of *fugitive* to the names of the two consuls. The provinces which had been deserted by their first magistrates acknowledged the authority of an emperor, who, conciliating the qualities of a soldier with those of a philosopher, was equally admired in the camps of the Danube and in the cities of Greece. From his palace, or, more properly, from his head-quarters of Sirmium and Naissus, he distributed to the principal cities of the empire, a labored apology for his own conduct; published the secret despatches of Constantius; and solicited the judgment of mankind between two competitors, the one of whom had expelled, and the other had invited, the Barbarians. [36](#) Julian, whose mind

was deeply wounded by the reproach of ingratitude, aspired to maintain, by argument as well as by arms, the superior merits of his cause; and to excel, not only in the arts of war, but in those of composition. His epistle to the senate and people of Athens [37](#) seems to have been dictated by an elegant enthusiasm; which prompted him to submit his actions and his motives to the degenerate Athenians of his own times, with the same humble deference as if he had been pleading, in the days of Aristides, before the tribunal of the Areopagus. His application to the senate of Rome, which was still permitted to bestow the titles of Imperial power, was agreeable to the forms of the expiring republic. An assembly was summoned by Tertullus, præfect of the city; the epistle of Julian was read; and, as he appeared to be master of Italy his claims were admitted without a dissenting voice. His oblique censure of the innovations of Constantine, and his passionate invective against the vices of Constantius, were heard with less satisfaction; and the senate, as if Julian had been present, unanimously exclaimed, “Respect, we beseech you, the author of your own fortune.” [38](#) An artful expression, which, according to the chance of war, might be differently explained; as a manly reproof of the ingratitude of the usurper, or as a flattering confession, that a single act of such benefit to the state ought to atone for all the failings of Constantius.

35 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammian. xxi. 9, 10. Libanius, Orat. Parent. c. 54, p. 279, 280. Zosimus, l. iii. p. 156, 157.]

36 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian (ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 286) positively asserts, that he intercepted the letters of Constantius to the Barbarians; and Libanius as positively affirms, that he read them on his march to the troops and the cities. Yet Ammianus (xxi. 4) expresses himself with cool and candid hesitation, *si famæ solius admittenda est fides*. He specifies, however, an intercepted letter from Vadomair to Constantius, which supposes an intimate correspondence between them. “disciplinam non habet.”]

37 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus mentions his epistles to the Athenians, the Corinthians, and the Lacedæmonians. The substance was probably the same, though the address was properly varied. The epistle to the Athenians is still extant, (p. 268-287,) and has afforded much valuable information. It deserves the praises of the Abbé de la Bleterie, (Pref. a l’Histoire de Jovien, p. 24, 25,) and is one of the best manifestoes to be found in any language.]

38 [\(return\)](#)
[*Auctori tuo reverentiam rogamus*. Ammian. xxi. 10. It is amusing enough to observe the secret conflicts of the senate between flattery and fear. See Tacit. Hist. i. 85.]

The intelligence of the march and rapid progress of Julian was speedily transmitted to his rival, who, by the retreat of Sapor, had obtained some respite from the Persian war. Disguising the anguish of his soul under the semblance of contempt, Constantius professed his intention of returning into Europe, and of giving chase to Julian; for he never spoke of his military expedition in any other light than that of a hunting party. [39](#) In the camp of Hierapolis, in Syria, he communicated this design to his army; slightly mentioned the guilt and rashness of the Cæsar; and ventured to assure them, that if the mutineers of Gaul presumed to meet them in the field, they would be unable to sustain the fire of their eyes, and the irresistible weight of their shout of onset. The speech of the emperor was received with military applause, and Theodotus, the president of the council of Hierapolis, requested, with tears of adulation, that *his* city might be adorned with the head of the vanquished rebel. [40](#) A chosen detachment was despatched away in post-wagons, to secure, if it were yet possible, the pass of Succii; the recruits, the horses, the arms, and the magazines, which had been prepared against Sapor, were appropriated to the service of the civil war; and the domestic victories of Constantius inspired his partisans with the most sanguine assurances of success. The notary Gaudentius had occupied in his name the provinces of Africa; the subsistence of Rome was intercepted; and the distress of Julian was increased by an unexpected event, which might have been productive of fatal consequences. Julian had received the submission of two legions and a cohort of archers, who were stationed at Sirmium; but he suspected, with reason, the fidelity of those troops which had been distinguished by the emperor; and it was thought expedient, under the pretence of the exposed state of the Gallic frontier, to dismiss them from the most important scene of action. They advanced, with reluctance, as far as the confines of Italy; but as they dreaded the length of the way, and the savage fierceness of the Germans, they resolved, by the instigation of one of their tribunes, to halt at Aquileia, and to erect the banners of Constantius on the walls of that impregnable city. The vigilance of Julian perceived at once the extent of the mischief, and the necessity of applying an immediate remedy. By his order, Jovinus led back a part of the army into Italy; and the siege of Aquileia was formed with diligence, and prosecuted with vigor. But the legionaries, who seemed to have rejected the yoke of discipline, conducted the defence of the place with skill and perseverance; vited the rest of Italy to imitate the example of their courage and loyalty; and threatened the retreat of Julian, if he should be forced to yield to the superior numbers of the armies of the East. [41](#)

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Tanquam venaticiam prædam caperet: hoc enim ad Jeniendum suorum metum subinde prædicabat. Ammian. xxii. 7.]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[See the speech and preparations in Ammianus, xxi. 13. The vile Theodotus afterwards implored and obtained his pardon from the merciful conqueror, who signified his wish of diminishing

his enemies and increasing the numbers of his friends, (xxii. 14.)]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxi. 7, 11, 12. He seems to describe, with superfluous labor, the operations of the siege of Aquileia, which, on this occasion, maintained its impregnable fame. Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. iii. p. 68) ascribes this accidental revolt to the wisdom of Constantius, whose assured victory he announces with some appearance of truth. Constantio quem credebat procul dubio fore victorem; nemo enim omnium tunc ab hac constanti sententia discrebat. Ammian. xxi. 7.]

But the humanity of Julian was preserved from the cruel alternative which he pathetically laments, of destroying or of being himself destroyed: and the seasonable death of Constantius delivered the Roman empire from the calamities of civil war. The approach of winter could not detain the monarch at Antioch; and his favorites durst not oppose his impatient desire of revenge. A slight fever, which was perhaps occasioned by the agitation of his spirits, was increased by the fatigues of the journey; and Constantius was obliged to halt at the little town of Mopsucrene, twelve miles beyond Tarsus, where he expired, after a short illness, in the forty-fifth year of his age, and the twenty-fourth of his reign. [42](#) His genuine character, which was composed of pride and weakness, of superstition and cruelty, has been fully displayed in the preceding narrative of civil and ecclesiastical events. The long abuse of power rendered him a considerable object in the eyes of his contemporaries; but as personal merit can alone deserve the notice of posterity, the last of the sons of Constantine may be dismissed from the world, with the remark, that he inherited the defects, without the abilities, of his father. Before Constantius expired, he is said to have named Julian for his successor; nor does it seem improbable, that his anxious concern for the fate of a young and tender wife, whom he left with child, may have prevailed, in his last moments, over the harsher passions of hatred and revenge. Eusebius, and his guilty associates, made a faint attempt to prolong the reign of the eunuchs, by the election of another emperor; but their intrigues were rejected with disdain, by an army which now abhorred the thought of civil discord; and two officers of rank were instantly despatched, to assure Julian, that every sword in the empire would be drawn for his service. The military designs of that prince, who had formed three different attacks against Thrace, were prevented by this fortunate event. Without shedding the blood of his fellow-citizens, he escaped the dangers of a doubtful conflict, and acquired the advantages of a complete victory. Impatient to visit the place of his birth, and the new capital of the empire, he advanced from Naissus through the mountains of Hæmus, and the cities of Thrace. When he reached Heraclea, at the distance of sixty miles, all Constantinople was poured forth to receive him; and he made his triumphal entry amidst the dutiful acclamations of the soldiers, the people, and the senate. An innumerable multitude pressed around him with

eager respect and were perhaps disappointed when they beheld the small stature and simple garb of a hero, whose unexperienced youth had vanquished the Barbarians of Germany, and who had now traversed, in a successful career, the whole continent of Europe, from the shores of the Atlantic to those of the Bosphorus. [43](#) A few days afterwards, when the remains of the deceased emperor were landed in the harbor, the subjects of Julian applauded the real or affected humanity of their sovereign. On foot, without his diadem, and clothed in a mourning habit, he accompanied the funeral as far as the church of the Holy Apostles, where the body was deposited: and if these marks of respect may be interpreted as a selfish tribute to the birth and dignity of his Imperial kinsman, the tears of Julian professed to the world that he had forgot the injuries, and remembered only the obligations, which he had received from Constantius. [44](#) As soon as the legions of Aquileia were assured of the death of the emperor, they opened the gates of the city, and, by the sacrifice of their guilty leaders, obtained an easy pardon from the prudence or lenity of Julian; who, in the thirty-second year of his age, acquired the undisputed possession of the Roman empire. [45](#)

42

[\(return\)](#)

[His death and character are faithfully delineated by Ammianus, (xxi. 14, 15, 16;) and we are authorized to despise and detest the foolish calumny of Gregory, (Orat. iii. p. 68,) who accuses Julian of contriving the death of his benefactor. The private repentance of the emperor, that he had spared and promoted Julian, (p. 69, and Orat. xxi. p. 389,) is not improbable in itself, nor incompatible with the public verbal testament which prudential considerations might dictate in the last moments of his life. Note: Wagner thinks this sudden change of sentiment altogether a fiction of the attendant courtiers and chiefs of the army. who up to this time had been hostile to Julian. Note in loco Ammian.—M.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[In describing the triumph of Julian, Ammianus (xxii. 1, 2) assumes the lofty tone of an orator or poet; while Libanius (Orat. Parent, c. 56, p. 281) sinks to the grave simplicity of an historian.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[The funeral of Constantius is described by Ammianus, (xxi. 16.) Gregory Nazianzen, (Orat. iv. p. 119,) Mamertinus, in (Panegy. Vet. xi. 27,) Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. lvi. p. 283,) and Philostorgius, (l. vi. c. 6, with Godefroy's Dissertations, p. 265.) These writers, and their followers, Pagans, Catholics, Arians, beheld with very different eyes both the dead and the living emperor.]

[The day and year of the birth of Julian are not perfectly ascertained. The day is probably the sixth of November, and the year must be either 331 or 332. Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 693. Ducange, *Fam. Byzantin.* p. 50. I have preferred the earlier date.]

Chapter XXII: Julian Declared Emperor.—Part III.

Philosophy had instructed Julian to compare the advantages of action and retirement; but the elevation of his birth, and the accidents of his life, never allowed him the freedom of choice. He might perhaps sincerely have preferred the groves of the academy, and the society of Athens; but he was constrained, at first by the will, and afterwards by the injustice, of Constantius, to expose his person and fame to the dangers of Imperial greatness; and to make himself accountable to the world, and to posterity, for the happiness of millions. [46](#) Julian recollected with terror the observation of his master Plato, [47](#) that the government of our flocks and herds is always committed to beings of a superior species; and that the conduct of nations requires and deserves the celestial powers of the gods or of the genii. From this principle he justly concluded, that the man who presumes to reign, should aspire to the perfection of the divine nature; that he should purify his soul from her mortal and terrestrial part; that he should extinguish his appetites, enlighten his understanding, regulate his passions, and subdue the wild beast, which, according to the lively metaphor of Aristotle, [48](#) seldom fails to ascend the throne of a despot. The throne of Julian, which the death of Constantius fixed on an independent basis, was the seat of reason, of virtue, and perhaps of vanity. He despised the honors, renounced the pleasures, and discharged with incessant diligence the duties, of his exalted station; and there were few among his subjects who would have consented to relieve him from the weight of the diadem, had they been obliged to submit their time and their actions to the rigorous laws which that philosophic emperor imposed on himself. One of his most intimate friends, [49](#) who had often shared the frugal simplicity of his table, has remarked, that his light and sparing diet (which was usually of the vegetable kind) left his mind and body always free and active, for the various and important business of an author, a pontiff, a magistrate, a general, and a prince. In one and the same day, he gave audience to several ambassadors, and wrote, or dictated, a great number of letters to his generals, his civil magistrates, his private friends, and the different cities of his dominions. He listened to the memorials which had been received, considered the subject of the petitions, and signified his intentions more rapidly than they could be taken in short-hand by the diligence of his secretaries. He possessed such flexibility of thought, and such firmness of attention, that he could employ his hand to write, his ear to listen, and his voice to dictate; and pursue at once three several trains of ideas without hesitation, and without error. While his ministers reposed, the prince

flew with agility from one labor to another, and, after a hasty dinner, retired into his library, till the public business, which he had appointed for the evening, summoned him to interrupt the prosecution of his studies. The supper of the emperor was still less substantial than the former meal; his sleep was never clouded by the fumes of indigestion; and except in the short interval of a marriage, which was the effect of policy rather than love, the chaste Julian never shared his bed with a female companion. [50](#) He was soon awakened by the entrance of fresh secretaries, who had slept the preceding day; and his servants were obliged to wait alternately while their indefatigable master allowed himself scarcely any other refreshment than the change of occupation. The predecessors of Julian, his uncle, his brother, and his cousin, indulged their puerile taste for the games of the Circus, under the specious pretence of complying with the inclinations of the people; and they frequently remained the greatest part of the day as idle spectators, and as a part of the splendid spectacle, till the ordinary round of twenty-four races [51](#) was completely finished. On solemn festivals, Julian, who felt and professed an unfashionable dislike to these frivolous amusements, condescended to appear in the Circus; and after bestowing a careless glance at five or six of the races, he hastily withdrew with the impatience of a philosopher, who considered every moment as lost that was not devoted to the advantage of the public or the improvement of his own mind. [52](#) By this avarice of time, he seemed to protract the short duration of his reign; and if the dates were less securely ascertained, we should refuse to believe, that only sixteen months elapsed between the death of Constantius and the departure of his successor for the Persian war. The actions of Julian can only be preserved by the care of the historian; but the portion of his voluminous writings, which is still extant, remains as a monument of the application, as well as of the genius, of the emperor. The *Misopogon*, the *Cæsars*, several of his orations, and his elaborate work against the Christian religion, were composed in the long nights of the two winters, the former of which he passed at Constantinople, and the latter at Antioch.

46 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian himself (p. 253-267) has expressed these philosophical ideas with much eloquence and some affectation, in a very elaborate epistle to Themistius. The Abbé de la Bleterie, (tom. ii. p. 146-193,) who has given an elegant translation, is inclined to believe that it was the celebrated Themistius, whose orations are still extant.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian. ad Themist. p. 258. Petavius (not. p. 95) observes that this passage is taken from the fourth book *De Legibus*; but either Julian quoted from memory, or his MSS. were different from ours Xenophon opens the *Cyropædia* with a similar reflection.]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[Aristot. ap. Julian. p. 261. The MS. of Vossius,

unsatisfied with the single beast, affords the stronger reading of which the experience of despotism may warrant.]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius (Orat. Parentalis, c. lxxxiv. lxxxv. p. 310, 311, 312) has given this interesting detail of the private life of Julian. He himself (in Misopogon, p. 350) mentions his vegetable diet, and upbraids the gross and sensual appetite of the people of Antioch.]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[Lectulus... Vestalium toris purior, is the praise which Mamertinus (Panegy. Vet. xi. 13) addresses to Julian himself. Libanius affirms, in sober peremptory language, that Julian never knew a woman before his marriage, or after the death of his wife, (Orat. Parent. c. lxxxviii. p. 313.) The chastity of Julian is confirmed by the impartial testimony of Ammianus, (xxv. 4,) and the partial silence of the Christians. Yet Julian ironically urges the reproach of the people of Antioch, that he *almost always* (in Misopogon, p. 345) lay alone. This suspicious expression is explained by the Abbé de la Bleterie (Hist. de Jovien, tom. ii. p. 103-109) with candor and ingenuity.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[See Salmasius ad Sueton in Claud. c. xxi. A twenty-fifth race, or *missus*, was added, to complete the number of one hundred chariots, four of which, the four colors, started each heat.

Centum quadrijugos agitabo ad flumina currus.

It appears, that they ran five or seven times round the *Meta* (Sueton. in Domitian. c. 4;) and (from the measure of the Circus Maximus at Rome, the Hippodrome at Constantinople, &c.) it might be about a four mile course.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. in Misopogon, p. 340. Julius Cæsar had offended the Roman people by reading his despatches during the actual race. Augustus indulged their taste, or his own, by his constant attention to the important business of the Circus, for which he professed the warmest inclination. Sueton. in August. c. xlv.]

The reformation of the Imperial court was one of the first and most necessary acts of the government of Julian. [53](#) Soon after his entrance into the palace of Constantinople, he had occasion for the service of a barber. An officer, magnificently dressed, immediately presented himself. “It is a barber,” exclaimed the prince, with affected surprise, “that I want, and not a receiver-general of the finances.” [54](#) He questioned the

man concerning the profits of his employment and was informed, that besides a large salary, and some valuable perquisites, he enjoyed a daily allowance for twenty servants, and as many horses. A thousand barbers, a thousand cup-bearers, a thousand cooks, were distributed in the several offices of luxury; and the number of eunuchs could be compared only with the insects of a summer's day. The monarch who resigned to his subjects the superiority of merit and virtue, was distinguished by the oppressive magnificence of his dress, his table, his buildings, and his train. The stately palaces erected by Constantine and his sons, were decorated with many colored marbles, and ornaments of massy gold. The most exquisite dainties were procured, to gratify their pride, rather than their taste; birds of the most distant climates, fish from the most remote seas, fruits out of their natural season, winter roses, and summer snows. [56](#) The domestic crowd of the palace surpassed the expense of the legions; yet the smallest part of this costly multitude was subservient to the use, or even to the splendor, of the throne. The monarch was disgraced, and the people was injured, by the creation and sale of an infinite number of obscure, and even titular employments; and the most worthless of mankind might purchase the privilege of being maintained, without the necessity of labor, from the public revenue. The waste of an enormous household, the increase of fees and perquisites, which were soon claimed as a lawful debt, and the bribes which they extorted from those who feared their enmity, or solicited their favor, suddenly enriched these haughty menials. They abused their fortune, without considering their past, or their future, condition; and their rapine and venality could be equalled only by the extravagance of their dissipations. Their silken robes were embroidered with gold, their tables were served with delicacy and profusion; the houses which they built for their own use, would have covered the farm of an ancient consul; and the most honorable citizens were obliged to dismount from their horses, and respectfully to salute a eunuch whom they met on the public highway. The luxury of the palace excited the contempt and indignation of Julian, who usually slept on the ground, who yielded with reluctance to the indispensable calls of nature; and who placed his vanity, not in emulating, but in despising, the pomp of royalty.

53 [\(return\)](#)

[The reformation of the palace is described by Ammianus, (xxii. 4,) Libanius, Orat. (Parent. c. lxii. p. 288, &c.) Mamertinus, in Panegy. (Vet. xi. 11,) Socrates, (l. iii. c. l.,) and Zonaras, (tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 24.)]

54 [\(return\)](#)

[Ego non *rationalem* jussi sed tonsorem acciri. Zonaras uses the less natural image of a senator. Yet an officer of the finances, who was satisfied with wealth, might desire and obtain the honors of the senate.]

56 [\(return\)](#)

[The expressions of Mamertinus are lively and

forcible. Quis etiam prandiorum et cænarum laboratas magnitudines Romanus populus sensit; cum quæsitissimæ dapes non gustu sed difficultatibus æstimarentur; miracula avium, longinqui maris pisces, aheni temporis poma, æstivæ nives, hybernæ rosæ]

By the total extirpation of a mischief which was magnified even beyond its real extent, he was impatient to relieve the distress, and to appease the murmurs of the people; who support with less uneasiness the weight of taxes, if they are convinced that the fruits of their industry are appropriated to the service of the state. But in the execution of this salutary work, Julian is accused of proceeding with too much haste and inconsiderate severity. By a single edict, he reduced the palace of Constantinople to an immense desert, and dismissed with ignominy the whole train of slaves and dependants, [57](#) without providing any just, or at least benevolent, exceptions, for the age, the services, or the poverty, of the faithful domestics of the Imperial family. Such indeed was the temper of Julian, who seldom recollected the fundamental maxim of Aristotle, that true virtue is placed at an equal distance between the opposite vices.

The splendid and effeminate dress of the Asiatics, the curls and paint, the collars and bracelets, which had appeared so ridiculous in the person of Constantine, were consistently rejected by his philosophic successor. But with the fopperies, Julian affected to renounce the decencies of dress; and seemed to value himself for his neglect of the laws of cleanliness. In a satirical performance, which was designed for the public eye, the emperor descants with pleasure, and even with pride, on the length of his nails, and the inky blackness of his hands; protests, that although the greatest part of his body was covered with hair, the use of the razor was confined to his head alone; and celebrates, with visible complacency, the shaggy and *populous* [58](#) beard, which he fondly cherished, after the example of the philosophers of Greece. Had Julian consulted the simple dictates of reason, the first magistrate of the Romans would have scorned the affectation of Diogenes, as well as that of Darius.

57

[\(return\)](#)

[Yet Julian himself was accused of bestowing whole towns on the eunuchs, (Orat. vii. against Polyclet. p. 117-127.) Libanius contents himself with a cold but positive denial of the fact, which seems indeed to belong more properly to Constantius. This charge, however, may allude to some unknown circumstance.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[In the Misopogon (p. 338, 339) he draws a very singular picture of himself, and the following words are strangely characteristic. The friends of the Abbé de la Bleterie adjured him, in the name of the French nation, not to translate this passage, so offensive to their delicacy, (Hist. de Jovien, tom. ii. p. 94.) Like him, I have contented myself with a

transient allusion; but the little animal which Julian *names*, is a beast familiar to man, and signifies love.]

But the work of public reformation would have remained imperfect, if Julian had only corrected the abuses, without punishing the crimes, of his predecessor's reign. "We are now delivered," says he, in a familiar letter to one of his intimate friends, "we are now surprisingly delivered from the voracious jaws of the Hydra. [59](#) I do not mean to apply the epithet to my brother Constantius. He is no more; may the earth lie light on his head! But his artful and cruel favorites studied to deceive and exasperate a prince, whose natural mildness cannot be praised without some efforts of adulation. It is not, however, my intention, that even those men should be oppressed: they are accused, and they shall enjoy the benefit of a fair and impartial trial." To conduct this inquiry, Julian named six judges of the highest rank in the state and army; and as he wished to escape the reproach of condemning his personal enemies, he fixed this extraordinary tribunal at Chalcedon, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus; and transferred to the commissioners an absolute power to pronounce and execute their final sentence, without delay, and without appeal. The office of president was exercised by the venerable præfect of the East, a *second* Sallust, [60](#) whose virtues conciliated the esteem of Greek sophists, and of Christian bishops. He was assisted by the eloquent Mamertinus, [61](#) one of the consuls elect, whose merit is loudly celebrated by the doubtful evidence of his own applause. But the civil wisdom of two magistrates was overbalanced by the ferocious violence of four generals, Nevitta, Agilo, Jovinus, and Arbetio. Arbetio, whom the public would have seen with less surprise at the bar than on the bench, was supposed to possess the secret of the commission; the armed and angry leaders of the Jovian and Herculan bands encompassed the tribunal; and the judges were alternately swayed by the laws of justice, and by the clamors of faction. [62](#)

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian, epist. xxiii. p. 389. He uses the words in writing to his friend Hermogenes, who, like himself, was conversant with the Greek poets.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[The two Sallusts, the præfect of Gaul, and the præfect of the East, must be carefully distinguished, (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 696.) I have used the surname of *Secundus*, as a convenient epithet. The second Sallust extorted the esteem of the Christians themselves; and Gregory Nazianzen, who condemned his religion, has celebrated his virtues, (Orat. iii. p. 90.) See a curious note of the Abbé de la Bleterie, Vie de Julien, p. 363. Note: Gibbonus secundum habet pro numero, quod tamen est viri agnomen Wagner, nota in loc. Amm. It is not a mistake; it is rather an error in taste. Wagner inclines to transfer the chief guilt to Arbetio.—M.]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[Mamertinus praises the emperor (xi. 1.) for bestowing the offices of Treasurer and Præfect on a man of wisdom, firmness, integrity, &c., like himself. Yet Ammianus ranks him (xxi. 1.) among the ministers of Julian, quorum merita norat et fidem.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[The proceedings of this chamber of justice are related by Ammianus, (xxii. 3,) and praised by Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 74, p. 299, 300.)]

The chamberlain Eusebius, who had so long abused the favor of Constantius, expiated, by an ignominious death, the insolence, the corruption, and cruelty of his servile reign. The executions of Paul and Apodemius (the former of whom was burnt alive) were accepted as an inadequate atonement by the widows and orphans of so many hundred Romans, whom those legal tyrants had betrayed and murdered. But justice herself (if we may use the pathetic expression of Ammianus) [63](#) appeared to weep over the fate of Ursulus, the treasurer of the empire; and his blood accused the ingratitude of Julian, whose distress had been seasonably relieved by the intrepid liberality of that honest minister. The rage of the soldiers, whom he had provoked by his indiscretion, was the cause and the excuse of his death; and the emperor, deeply wounded by his own reproaches and those of the public, offered some consolation to the family of Ursulus, by the restitution of his confiscated fortunes. Before the end of the year in which they had been adorned with the ensigns of the prefecture and consulship, [64](#) Taurus and Florentius were reduced to implore the clemency of the inexorable tribunal of Chalcedon. The former was banished to Vercellæ in Italy, and a sentence of death was pronounced against the latter. A wise prince should have rewarded the crime of Taurus: the faithful minister, when he was no longer able to oppose the progress of a rebel, had taken refuge in the court of his benefactor and his lawful sovereign. But the guilt of Florentius justified the severity of the judges; and his escape served to display the magnanimity of Julian, who nobly checked the interested diligence of an informer, and refused to learn what place concealed the wretched fugitive from his just resentment. [65](#) Some months after the tribunal of Chalcedon had been dissolved, the prætorian vicegerent of Africa, the notary Gaudentius, and Artemius [66](#) duke of Egypt, were executed at Antioch. Artemius had reigned the cruel and corrupt tyrant of a great province; Gaudentius had long practised the arts of calumny against the innocent, the virtuous, and even the person of Julian himself. Yet the circumstances of their trial and condemnation were so unskillfully managed, that these wicked men obtained, in the public opinion, the glory of suffering for the obstinate loyalty with which they had supported the cause of Constantius. The rest of his servants were protected by a general act of oblivion; and they were left to enjoy with impunity the bribes which they had accepted, either to defend the oppressed, or to oppress the friendless. This measure, which, on the soundest principles of policy, may deserve our approbation, was executed

in a manner which seemed to degrade the majesty of the throne. Julian was tormented by the importunities of a multitude, particularly of Egyptians, who loudly redemanded the gifts which they had imprudently or illegally bestowed; he foresaw the endless prosecution of vexatious suits; and he engaged a promise, which ought always to have been sacred, that if they would repair to Chalcedon, he would meet them in person, to hear and determine their complaints. But as soon as they were landed, he issued an absolute order, which prohibited the watermen from transporting any Egyptian to Constantinople; and thus detained his disappointed clients on the Asiatic shore till, their patience and money being utterly exhausted, they were obliged to return with indignant murmurs to their native country. [67](#)

63 [\(return\)](#)
[Ursuli vero necem ipsa mihi videtur flesse justitia. Libanius, who imputes his death to the soldiers, attempts to criminate the court of the largesses.]

64 [\(return\)](#)
[Such respect was still entertained for the venerable names of the commonwealth, that the public was surprised and scandalized to hear Taurus summoned as a criminal under the consulship of Taurus. The summons of his colleague Florentius was probably delayed till the commencement of the ensuing year.]

65 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammian. xx. 7.]

66 [\(return\)](#)
[For the guilt and punishment of Artemius, see Julian (Epist. x. p. 379) and Ammianus, (xxii. 6, and Vales, ad hoc.) The merit of Artemius, who demolished temples, and was put to death by an apostate, has tempted the Greek and Latin churches to honor him as a martyr. But as ecclesiastical history attests that he was not only a tyrant, but an Arian, it is not altogether easy to justify this indiscreet promotion. Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 1319.]

67 [\(return\)](#)
[See Ammian. xxii. 6, and Vales, ad locum; and the Codex Theodosianus, l. ii. tit. xxxix. leg. i.; and Godefroy's Commentary, tom. i. p. 218, ad locum.]

Chapter XXII: Julian Declared Emperor.—Part IV.

The numerous army of spies, of agents, and informers enlisted by Constantius to secure the repose of one man, and to interrupt that of millions, was immediately disbanded by his generous successor. Julian was slow in his suspicions, and gentle in

his punishments; and his contempt of treason was the result of judgment, of vanity, and of courage. Conscious of superior merit, he was persuaded that few among his subjects would dare to meet him in the field, to attempt his life, or even to seat themselves on his vacant throne. The philosopher could excuse the hasty sallies of discontent; and the hero could despise the ambitious projects which surpassed the fortune or the abilities of the rash conspirators. A citizen of Ancyra had prepared for his own use a purple garment; and this indiscreet action, which, under the reign of Constantius, would have been considered as a capital offence, [68](#) was reported to Julian by the officious importunity of a private enemy. The monarch, after making some inquiry into the rank and character of his rival, despatched the informer with a present of a pair of purple slippers, to complete the magnificence of his Imperial habit. A more dangerous conspiracy was formed by ten of the domestic guards, who had resolved to assassinate Julian in the field of exercise near Antioch. Their intemperance revealed their guilt; and they were conducted in chains to the presence of their injured sovereign, who, after a lively representation of the wickedness and folly of their enterprise, instead of a death of torture, which they deserved and expected, pronounced a sentence of exile against the two principal offenders. The only instance in which Julian seemed to depart from his accustomed clemency, was the execution of a rash youth, who, with a feeble hand, had aspired to seize the reins of empire. But that youth was the son of Marcellus, the general of cavalry, who, in the first campaign of the Gallic war, had deserted the standard of the Cæsar and the republic. Without appearing to indulge his personal resentment, Julian might easily confound the crime of the son and of the father; but he was reconciled by the distress of Marcellus, and the liberality of the emperor endeavored to heal the wound which had been inflicted by the hand of justice. [69](#)

68

[\(return\)](#)

[The president Montesquieu (*Considerations sur la Grandeur, &c., des Romains*, c. xiv. in his works, tom. iii. p. 448, 449,) excuses this minute and absurd tyranny, by supposing that actions the most indifferent in our eyes might excite, in a Roman mind, the idea of guilt and danger. This strange apology is supported by a strange misapprehension of the English laws, “chez une nation.... où il est défendu de boire à la santé d’une certaine personne.”]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[The clemency of Julian, and the conspiracy which was formed against his life at Antioch, are described by Ammianus (xxii. 9, 10, and Vales, ad loc.) and Libanius, (*Orat. Parent.* c. 99, p. 323.)]

Julian was not insensible of the advantages of freedom. [70](#) From his studies he had imbibed the spirit of ancient sages and heroes; his life and fortunes had depended on the caprice of a tyrant; and when he ascended the throne, his pride was sometimes mortified by the reflection, that the slaves who would not dare to censure his defects

were not worthy to applaud his virtues. [71](#) He sincerely abhorred the system of Oriental despotism, which Diocletian, Constantine, and the patient habits of fourscore years, had established in the empire. A motive of superstition prevented the execution of the design, which Julian had frequently meditated, of relieving his head from the weight of a costly diadem; [72](#) but he absolutely refused the title of *Dominus*, or *Lord*, [73](#) a word which was grown so familiar to the ears of the Romans, that they no longer remembered its servile and humiliating origin. The office, or rather the name, of consul, was cherished by a prince who contemplated with reverence the ruins of the republic; and the same behavior which had been assumed by the prudence of Augustus was adopted by Julian from choice and inclination. On the calends of January, at break of day, the new consuls, Mamertinus and Nevitta, hastened to the palace to salute the emperor. As soon as he was informed of their approach, he leaped from his throne, eagerly advanced to meet them, and compelled the blushing magistrates to receive the demonstrations of his affected humility. From the palace they proceeded to the senate. The emperor, on foot, marched before their litters; and the gazing multitude admired the image of ancient times, or secretly blamed a conduct, which, in their eyes, degraded the majesty of the purple. [74](#) But the behavior of Julian was uniformly supported. During the games of the Circus, he had, imprudently or designedly, performed the manumission of a slave in the presence of the consul. The moment he was reminded that he had trespassed on the jurisdiction of *another* magistrate, he condemned himself to pay a fine of ten pounds of gold; and embraced this public occasion of declaring to the world, that he was subject, like the rest of his fellow-citizens, to the laws, [75](#) and even to the forms, of the republic. The spirit of his administration, and his regard for the place of his nativity, induced Julian to confer on the senate of Constantinople the same honors, privileges, and authority, which were still enjoyed by the senate of ancient Rome. [76](#) A legal fiction was introduced, and gradually established, that one half of the national council had migrated into the East; and the despotic successors of Julian, accepting the title of Senators, acknowledged themselves the members of a respectable body, which was permitted to represent the majesty of the Roman name. From Constantinople, the attention of the monarch was extended to the municipal senates of the provinces. He abolished, by repeated edicts, the unjust and pernicious exemptions which had withdrawn so many idle citizens from the services of their country; and by imposing an equal distribution of public duties, he restored the strength, the splendor, or, according to the glowing expression of Libanius, [77](#) the soul of the expiring cities of his empire. The venerable age of Greece excited the most tender compassion in the mind of Julian, which kindled into rapture when he recollected the gods, the heroes, and the men superior to heroes and to gods, who have bequeathed to the latest posterity the monuments of their genius, or the example of their virtues. He relieved the distress, and restored the beauty, of the cities of Epirus and Peloponnesus. [78](#) Athens acknowledged him for her benefactor; Argos, for her deliverer. The pride of Corinth, again rising from her ruins with the honors of a Roman colony, exacted a tribute from the adjacent

republics, for the purpose of defraying the games of the Isthmus, which were celebrated in the amphitheatre with the hunting of bears and panthers. From this tribute the cities of Elis, of Delphi, and of Argos, which had inherited from their remote ancestors the sacred office of perpetuating the Olympic, the Pythian, and the Nemean games, claimed a just exemption. The immunity of Elis and Delphi was respected by the Corinthians; but the poverty of Argos tempted the insolence of oppression; and the feeble complaints of its deputies were silenced by the decree of a provincial magistrate, who seems to have consulted only the interest of the capital in which he resided. Seven years after this sentence, Julian [79](#) allowed the cause to be referred to a superior tribunal; and his eloquence was interposed, most probably with success, in the defence of a city, which had been the royal seat of Agamemnon, [80](#) and had given to Macedonia a race of kings and conquerors. [81](#)

70 [\(return\)](#)

[According to some, says Aristotle, (as he is quoted by Julian ad Themist. p. 261,) the form of absolute government is contrary to nature. Both the prince and the philosopher choose, how ever to involve this eternal truth in artful and labored obscurity.]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[That sentiment is expressed almost in the words of Julian himself. Ammian. xxii. 10.]

72 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 95, p. 320,) who mentions the wish and design of Julian, insinuates, in mysterious language that the emperor was restrained by some particular revelation.]

73 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian in Misopogon, p. 343. As he never abolished, by any public law, the proud appellations of *Despot*, or *Dominus*, they are still extant on his medals, (Ducange, Fam. Byzantin. p. 38, 39;) and the private displeasure which he affected to express, only gave a different tone to the servility of the court. The Abbé de la Bleterie (Hist. de Jovien, tom. ii. p. 99-102) has curiously traced the origin and progress of the word *Dominus* under the Imperial government.]

74 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxii. 7. The consul Mamertinus (in Panegy. Vet. xi. 28, 29, 30) celebrates the auspicious day, like an elegant slave, astonished and intoxicated by the condescension of his master.]

75 [\(return\)](#)

[Personal satire was condemned by the laws of the twelve tables: Si male condiderit in quem quis carmina, jus est Judiciumque—Horat. Sat. ii. 1. 82.

—Julian (in Misopogon, p. 337) owns himself subject to the law; and the Abbé de la Bleterie (Hist. de Jovien, tom. ii. p. 92) has eagerly embraced a declaration so agreeable to his own system, and, indeed, to the true spirit of the Imperial constitution.]

76 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. iii. p. 158.]

77 [\(return\)](#)

[See Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 71, p. 296,) Ammianus, (xxii. 9,) and the Theodosian Code (l. xii. tit. i. leg. 50-55.) with Godefroy's Commentary, (tom. iv. p. 390-402.) Yet the whole subject of the *Curia*, notwithstanding very ample materials, still remains the most obscure in the legal history of the empire.]

78 [\(return\)](#)

[Quæ paulo ante arida et siti anhelantia visebantur, ea nunc perlui, mundari, madere; Fora, Deambulacra, Gymnasia, lætis et gaudentibus populis frequentari; dies festos, et celebrari veteres, et novos in honorem principis consecrari, (Mamertin. xi. 9.) He particularly restored the city of Nicopolis and the Actiac games, which had been instituted by Augustus.]

79 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Epist. xxxv. p. 407-411. This epistle, which illustrates the declining age of Greece, is omitted by the Abbé de la Bleterie, and strangely disfigured by the Latin translator, who, by rendering *tributum*, and *populus*, directly contradicts the sense of the original.]

80 [\(return\)](#)

[He reigned in Mycenæ at the distance of fifty stadia, or six miles from Argos: but these cities, which alternately flourished, are confounded by the Greek poets. Strabo, l. viii. p. 579, edit. Amstel. 1707.]

81 [\(return\)](#)

[Marsham, Canon. Chron. p. 421. This pedigree from Temenus and Hercules may be suspicious; yet it was allowed, after a strict inquiry, by the judges of the Olympic games, (Herodot. l. v. c. 22,) at a time when the Macedonian kings were obscure and unpopular in Greece. When the Achæan league declared against Philip, it was thought decent that the deputies of Argos should retire, (T. Liv. xxxii. 22.)]

The laborious administration of military and civil affairs, which were multiplied in proportion to the extent of the empire, exercised the abilities of Julian; but he frequently assumed the two characters of Orator [82](#) and of Judge, [83](#) which are almost unknown to the modern sovereigns of Europe. The arts of persuasion, so diligently cultivated by the first Cæsars, were neglected by the military ignorance and Asiatic pride of their successors; and if they condescended to harangue the soldiers, whom they feared, they treated with silent disdain the senators, whom they despised. The assemblies of the senate, which Constantius had avoided, were considered by Julian as the place where he could exhibit, with the most propriety, the maxims of a republican, and the talents of a rhetorician. He alternately practised, as in a school of declamation, the several modes of praise, of censure, of exhortation; and his friend Libanius has remarked, that the study of Homer taught him to imitate the simple, concise style of Menelaus, the copiousness of Nestor, whose words descended like the flakes of a winter's snow, or the pathetic and forcible eloquence of Ulysses. The functions of a judge, which are sometimes incompatible with those of a prince, were exercised by Julian, not only as a duty, but as an amusement; and although he might have trusted the integrity and discernment of his Prætorian præfects, he often placed himself by their side on the seat of judgment. The acute penetration of his mind was agreeably occupied in detecting and defeating the chicanery of the advocates, who labored to disguise the truths of facts, and to pervert the sense of the laws. He sometimes forgot the gravity of his station, asked indiscreet or unseasonable questions, and betrayed, by the loudness of his voice, and the agitation of his body, the earnest vehemence with which he maintained his opinion against the judges, the advocates, and their clients. But his knowledge of his own temper prompted him to encourage, and even to solicit, the reproof of his friends and ministers; and whenever they ventured to oppose the irregular sallies of his passions, the spectators could observe the shame, as well as the gratitude, of their monarch. The decrees of Julian were almost always founded on the principles of justice; and he had the firmness to resist the two most dangerous temptations, which assault the tribunal of a sovereign, under the specious forms of compassion and equity. He decided the merits of the cause without weighing the circumstances of the parties; and the poor, whom he wished to relieve, were condemned to satisfy the just demands of a wealthy and noble adversary. He carefully distinguished the judge from the legislator; [84](#) and though he meditated a necessary reformation of the Roman jurisprudence, he pronounced sentence according to the strict and literal interpretation of those laws, which the magistrates were bound to execute, and the subjects to obey.

[His eloquence is celebrated by Libanius, (*Orat. Parent.* c. 75, 76, p. 300, 301,) who distinctly mentions the orators of Homer. Socrates (*l. iii. c. 1*) has rashly asserted that Julian was the only prince, since Julius Cæsar, who harangued the senate. All the predecessors of Nero, (*Tacit. Annal. xiii. 3.*) and many of his successors, possessed the faculty of

speaking in public; and it might be proved by various examples, that they frequently exercised it in the senate.]

83

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxi. 10) has impartially stated the merits and defects of his judicial proceedings. Libanius (Orat. Parent. c. 90, 91, p. 315, &c.) has seen only the fair side, and his picture, if it flatters the person, expresses at least the duties, of the judge. Gregory Nazianzen, (Orat. iv. p. 120,) who suppresses the virtues, and exaggerates even the venial faults of the Apostate, triumphantly asks, whether such a judge was fit to be seated between Minos and Rhadamanthus, in the Elysian Fields.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[Of the laws which Julian enacted in a reign of sixteen months, fifty-four have been admitted into the codes of Theodosius and Justinian. (Gothofred. Chron. Legum, p. 64-67.) The Abbé de la Bletterie (tom. ii. p. 329-336) has chosen one of these laws to give an idea of Julian's Latin style, which is forcible and elaborate, but less pure than his Greek.]

The generality of princes, if they were stripped of their purple, and cast naked into the world, would immediately sink to the lowest rank of society, without a hope of emerging from their obscurity. But the personal merit of Julian was, in some measure, independent of his fortune. Whatever had been his choice of life, by the force of intrepid courage, lively wit, and intense application, he would have obtained, or at least he would have deserved, the highest honors of his profession; and Julian might have raised himself to the rank of minister, or general, of the state in which he was born a private citizen. If the jealous caprice of power had disappointed his expectations, if he had prudently declined the paths of greatness, the employment of the same talents in studious solitude would have placed beyond the reach of kings his present happiness and his immortal fame. When we inspect, with minute, or perhaps malevolent attention, the portrait of Julian, something seems wanting to the grace and perfection of the whole figure. His genius was less powerful and sublime than that of Cæsar; nor did he possess the consummate prudence of Augustus. The virtues of Trajan appear more steady and natural, and the philosophy of Marcus is more simple and consistent. Yet Julian sustained adversity with firmness, and prosperity with moderation. After an interval of one hundred and twenty years from the death of Alexander Severus, the Romans beheld an emperor who made no distinction between his duties and his pleasures; who labored to relieve the distress, and to revive the spirit, of his subjects; and who endeavored always to connect authority with merit, and happiness with virtue. Even faction, and religious faction, was constrained to acknowledge the superiority of his genius, in peace as well as in war, and to confess, with a sigh, that the apostate Julian was a lover of his country, and that he deserved the empire of the world. [85](#)

[

*... Ductor fortissimus armis;
 Conditor et legum celeberrimus; ore manûque
 Consultor patriæ; sed non consultor habendæ
 Religionis; amans tercentum millia Divûm.
 Pertidus ille Deo, sed non et perfidus orbi.
 Prudent. Apotheosis, 450, &c.*

The consciousness of a generous sentiment seems to have
 raised the Christian post above his usual
 mediocrity.]

Chapter XXIII: Reign Of Julian.—Part I.

*The Religion Of Julian.—Universal Toleration.—He Attempts
 To Restore And Reform The Pagan Worship—To Rebuild The
 Temple Of Jerusalem—His Artful Persecution Of The
 Christians.—Mutual Zeal And Injustice.*

The character of Apostate has injured the reputation of Julian; and the enthusiasm which clouded his virtues has exaggerated the real and apparent magnitude of his faults. Our partial ignorance may represent him as a philosophic monarch, who studied to protect, with an equal hand, the religious factions of the empire; and to allay the theological fever which had inflamed the minds of the people, from the edicts of Diocletian to the exile of Athanasius. A more accurate view of the character and conduct of Julian will remove this favorable prepossession for a prince who did not escape the general contagion of the times. We enjoy the singular advantage of comparing the pictures which have been delineated by his fondest admirers and his implacable enemies. The actions of Julian are faithfully related by a judicious and candid historian, the impartial spectator of his life and death. The unanimous evidence of his contemporaries is confirmed by the public and private declarations of the emperor himself; and his various writings express the uniform tenor of his religious sentiments, which policy would have prompted him to dissemble rather than to affect. A devout and sincere attachment for the gods of Athens and Rome constituted the ruling passion of Julian; [1](#) the powers of an enlightened understanding were betrayed and corrupted by the influence of superstitious prejudice; and the phantoms which existed only in the mind of the emperor had a real and pernicious effect on the government of the empire. The vehement zeal of the Christians, who despised the worship, and overturned the altars of those fabulous deities, engaged their votary in a state of irreconcilable hostility with a very numerous party of his subjects; and he was sometimes tempted by the desire of victory, or the shame of a repulse, to violate the laws of prudence, and even of justice. The triumph of the party, which he deserted and opposed, has fixed a stain of infamy on the name of Julian; and the unsuccessful apostate has been overwhelmed with a torrent of pious invectives, of which the signal was given by the sonorous trumpet [2](#) of Gregory Nazianzen. [3](#) The interesting nature of the events which were crowded into the

short reign of this active emperor, deserve a just and circumstantial narrative. His motives, his counsels, and his actions, as far as they are connected with the history of religion, will be the subject of the present chapter.

1 [\(return\)](#)

[I shall transcribe some of his own expressions from a short religious discourse which the Imperial pontiff composed to censure the bold impiety of a Cynic. Orat. vii. p. 212. The variety and copiousness of the Greek tongue seem inadequate to the fervor of his devotion.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[The orator, with some eloquence, much enthusiasm, and more vanity, addresses his discourse to heaven and earth, to men and angels, to the living and the dead; and above all, to the great Constantius, an odd Pagan expression. He concludes with a bold assurance, that he has erected a monument not less durable, and much more portable, than the columns of Hercules. See Greg. Nazianzen, Orat. iii. p. 50, iv. p. 134.]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[See this long invective, which has been injudiciously divided into two orations in Gregory's works, tom. i. p. 49-134, Paris, 1630. It was published by Gregory and his friend Basil, (iv. p. 133,) about six months after the death of Julian, when his remains had been carried to Tarsus, (iv. p. 120;) but while Jovian was still on the throne, (iii. p. 54, iv. p. 117) I have derived much assistance from a French version and remarks, printed at Lyons, 1735.]

The cause of his strange and fatal apostasy may be derived from the early period of his life, when he was left an orphan in the hands of the murderers of his family. The names of Christ and of Constantius, the ideas of slavery and of religion, were soon associated in a youthful imagination, which was susceptible of the most lively impressions. The care of his infancy was intrusted to Eusebius, bishop of Nicomedia, [4](#) who was related to him on the side of his mother; and till Julian reached the twentieth year of his age, he received from his Christian preceptors the education, not of a hero, but of a saint. The emperor, less jealous of a heavenly than of an earthly crown, contented himself with the imperfect character of a catechumen, while he bestowed the advantages of baptism [5](#) on the nephews of Constantine. [6](#) They were even admitted to the inferior offices of the ecclesiastical order; and Julian publicly read the Holy Scriptures in the church of Nicomedia. The study of religion, which they assiduously cultivated, appeared to produce the fairest fruits of faith and devotion. [7](#) They prayed, they fasted, they distributed alms to the poor, gifts to the clergy, and oblations to the tombs of the martyrs; and the splendid monument of St.

Mamas, at Cæsarea, was erected, or at least was undertaken, by the joint labor of Gallus and Julian. [8](#) They respectfully conversed with the bishops, who were eminent for superior sanctity, and solicited the benediction of the monks and hermits, who had introduced into Cappadocia the voluntary hardships of the ascetic life. [9](#) As the two princes advanced towards the years of manhood, they discovered, in their religious sentiments, the difference of their characters. The dull and obstinate understanding of Gallus embraced, with implicit zeal, the doctrines of Christianity; which never influenced his conduct, or moderated his passions. The mild disposition of the younger brother was less repugnant to the precepts of the gospel; and his active curiosity might have been gratified by a theological system, which explains the mysterious essence of the Deity, and opens the boundless prospect of invisible and future worlds. But the independent spirit of Julian refused to yield the passive and unresisting obedience which was required, in the name of religion, by the haughty ministers of the church. Their speculative opinions were imposed as positive laws, and guarded by the terrors of eternal punishments; but while they prescribed the rigid formulary of the thoughts, the words, and the actions of the young prince; whilst they silenced his objections, and severely checked the freedom of his inquiries, they secretly provoked his impatient genius to disclaim the authority of his ecclesiastical guides. He was educated in the Lesser Asia, amidst the scandals of the Arian controversy. [10](#) The fierce contests of the Eastern bishops, the incessant alterations of their creeds, and the profane motives which appeared to actuate their conduct, insensibly strengthened the prejudice of Julian, that they neither understood nor believed the religion for which they so fiercely contended. Instead of listening to the proofs of Christianity with that favorable attention which adds weight to the most respectable evidence, he heard with suspicion, and disputed with obstinacy and acuteness, the doctrines for which he already entertained an invincible aversion. Whenever the young princes were directed to compose declamations on the subject of the prevailing controversies, Julian always declared himself the advocate of Paganism; under the specious excuse that, in the defence of the weaker cause, his learning and ingenuity might be more advantageously exercised and displayed.

4

[\(return\)](#)

[Nicomediæ ab Eusebio educatus Episcopo, quem genere longius contingebat, (Ammian. xxii. 9.) Julian never expresses any gratitude towards that Arian prelate; but he celebrates his preceptor, the eunuch Mardonius, and describes his mode of education, which inspired his pupil with a passionate admiration for the genius, and perhaps the religion of Homer. Misopogon, p. 351, 352.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[Greg. Naz. iii. p. 70. He labored to effect that holy mark in the blood, perhaps of a Taurobolium. Baron. Annal. Eccles. A. D. 361, No. 3, 4.]

- 6 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian himself (Epist. li. p. 454) assures the Alexandrians that he had been a Christian (he must mean a sincere one) till the twentieth year of his age.]
- 7 [\(return\)](#)
[See his Christian, and even ecclesiastical education, in Gregory, (iii. p. 58,) Socrates, (l. iii. c. 1,) and Sozomen, (l. v. c. 2.) He escaped very narrowly from being a bishop, and perhaps a saint.]
- 8 [\(return\)](#)
[The share of the work which had been allotted to Gallus, was prosecuted with vigor and success; but the earth obstinately rejected and subverted the structures which were imposed by the sacrilegious hand of Julian. Greg. iii. p. 59, 60, 61. Such a partial earthquake, attested by many living spectators, would form one of the clearest miracles in ecclesiastical story.]
- 9 [\(return\)](#)
[The *philosopher* (Fragment, p. 288,) ridicules the iron chains, &c, of these solitary fanatics, (see Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. ix. p. 661, 632,) who had forgot that man is by nature a gentle and social animal. The *Pagan* supposes, that because they had renounced the gods, they were possessed and tormented by evil dæmons.]
- 10 [\(return\)](#)
[See Julian apud Cyril, l. vi. p. 206, l. viii. p. 253, 262. “You persecute,” says he, “those heretics who do not mourn the dead man precisely in the way which you approve.” He shows himself a tolerable theologian; but he maintains that the Christian Trinity is not derived from the doctrine of Paul, of Jesus, or of Moses.]

As soon as Gallus was invested with the honors of the purple, Julian was permitted to breathe the air of freedom, of literature, and of Paganism. [11](#) The crowd of sophists, who were attracted by the taste and liberality of their royal pupil, had formed a strict alliance between the learning and the religion of Greece; and the poems of Homer, instead of being admired as the original productions of human genius, were seriously ascribed to the heavenly inspiration of Apollo and the muses. The deities of Olympus, as they are painted by the immortal bard, imprint themselves on the minds which are the least addicted to superstitious credulity. Our familiar knowledge of their names and characters, their forms and attributes, *seems* to bestow on those airy beings a real and substantial existence; and the pleasing enchantment produces an imperfect and momentary assent of the imagination to those fables, which are the most repugnant to our reason and experience. In the age of Julian, every circumstance contributed to

prolong and fortify the illusion; the magnificent temples of Greece and Asia; the works of those artists who had expressed, in painting or in sculpture, the divine conceptions of the poet; the pomp of festivals and sacrifices; the successful arts of divination; the popular traditions of oracles and prodigies; and the ancient practice of two thousand years. The weakness of polytheism was, in some measure, excused by the moderation of its claims; and the devotion of the Pagans was not incompatible with the most licentious scepticism. [12](#) Instead of an indivisible and regular system, which occupies the whole extent of the believing mind, the mythology of the Greeks was composed of a thousand loose and flexible parts, and the servant of the gods was at liberty to define the degree and measure of his religious faith. The creed which Julian adopted for his own use was of the largest dimensions; and, by strange contradiction, he disdained the salutary yoke of the gospel, whilst he made a voluntary offering of his reason on the altars of Jupiter and Apollo. One of the orations of Julian is consecrated to the honor of Cybele, the mother of the gods, who required from her effeminate priests the bloody sacrifice, so rashly performed by the madness of the Phrygian boy. The pious emperor condescends to relate, without a blush, and without a smile, the voyage of the goddess from the shores of Pergamus to the mouth of the Tyber, and the stupendous miracle, which convinced the senate and people of Rome that the lump of clay, which their ambassadors had transported over the seas, was endowed with life, and sentiment, and divine power. [13](#) For the truth of this prodigy he appeals to the public monuments of the city; and censures, with some acrimony, the sickly and affected taste of those men, who impertinently derided the sacred traditions of their ancestors. [14](#)

11 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, Orat. Parentalis, c. 9, 10, p. 232, &c. Greg. Nazianzen. Orat. iii. p 61. Eunap. Vit. Sophist. in Maximo, p. 68, 69, 70, edit Commelin.]

12 [\(return\)](#)

[A modern philosopher has ingeniously compared the different operation of theism and polytheism, with regard to the doubt or conviction which they produce in the human mind. See Hume's Essays vol. ii. p. 444- 457, in 8vo. edit. 1777.]

13 [\(return\)](#)

[The Idæan mother landed in Italy about the end of the second Punic war. The miracle of Claudia, either virgin or matron, who cleared her fame by disgracing the graver modesty of the Roman Indies, is attested by a cloud of witnesses. Their evidence is collected by Drakenborch, (ad Silium Italicum, xvii. 33;) but we may observe that Livy (xxix. 14) slides over the transaction with discreet ambiguity.]

14 [\(return\)](#)

[I cannot refrain from transcribing the emphatical words of Julian: Orat. v. p. 161. Julian likewise declares his firm belief in the ancilia, the holy

shields, which dropped from heaven on the Quirinal hill; and pities the strange blindness of the Christians, who preferred the cross to these celestial trophies. Apud Cyril. l. vi. p. 194.]

But the devout philosopher, who sincerely embraced, and warmly encouraged, the superstition of the people, reserved for himself the privilege of a liberal interpretation; and silently withdrew from the foot of the altars into the sanctuary of the temple. The extravagance of the Grecian mythology proclaimed, with a clear and audible voice, that the pious inquirer, instead of being scandalized or satisfied with the literal sense, should diligently explore the occult wisdom, which had been disguised, by the prudence of antiquity, under the mask of folly and of fable. [15](#) The philosophers of the Platonic school, [16](#) Plotinus, Porphyry, and the divine Iamblichus, were admired as the most skilful masters of this allegorical science, which labored to soften and harmonize the deformed features of Paganism. Julian himself, who was directed in the mysterious pursuit by Ædesius, the venerable successor of Iamblichus, aspired to the possession of a treasure, which he esteemed, if we may credit his solemn asseverations, far above the empire of the world. [17](#) It was indeed a treasure, which derived its value only from opinion; and every artist who flattered himself that he had extracted the precious ore from the surrounding dross, claimed an equal right of stamping the name and figure the most agreeable to his peculiar fancy. The fable of Atys and Cybele had been already explained by Porphyry; but his labors served only to animate the pious industry of Julian, who invented and published his own allegory of that ancient and mystic tale. This freedom of interpretation, which might gratify the pride of the Platonists, exposed the vanity of their art. Without a tedious detail, the modern reader could not form a just idea of the strange allusions, the forced etymologies, the solemn trifling, and the impenetrable obscurity of these sages, who professed to reveal the system of the universe. As the traditions of Pagan mythology were variously related, the sacred interpreters were at liberty to select the most convenient circumstances; and as they translated an arbitrary cipher, they could extract from *any* fable *any* sense which was adapted to their favorite system of religion and philosophy. The lascivious form of a naked Venus was tortured into the discovery of some moral precept, or some physical truth; and the castration of Atys explained the revolution of the sun between the tropics, or the separation of the human soul from vice and error. [18](#)

15 [\(return\)](#)

[See the principles of allegory, in Julian, (Orat. vii. p. 216, 222.) His reasoning is less absurd than that of some modern theologians, who assert that an extravagant or contradictory doctrine must be divine; since no man alive could have thought of inventing it.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[Eunapius has made these sophists the subject of a partial and fanatical history; and the learned

Brucker (Hist. Philosoph. tom. ii. p. 217-303) has employed much labor to illustrate their obscure lives and incomprehensible doctrines.]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian, Orat. vii p 222. He swears with the most fervent and enthusiastic devotion; and trembles, lest he should betray too much of these holy mysteries, which the profane might deride with an impious Sardonic laugh.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[See the fifth oration of Julian. But all the allegories which ever issued from the Platonic school are not worth the short poem of Catullus on the same extraordinary subject. The transition of Atys, from the wildest enthusiasm to sober, pathetic complaint, for his irretrievable loss, must inspire a man with pity, a eunuch with despair.]

The theological system of Julian appears to have contained the sublime and important principles of natural religion. But as the faith, which is not founded on revelation, must remain destitute of any firm assurance, the disciple of Plato imprudently relapsed into the habits of vulgar superstition; and the popular and philosophic notion of the Deity seems to have been confounded in the practice, the writings, and even in the mind of Julian. [19](#) The pious emperor acknowledged and adored the Eternal Cause of the universe, to whom he ascribed all the perfections of an infinite nature, invisible to the eyes and inaccessible to the understanding, of feeble mortals. The Supreme God had created, or rather, in the Platonic language, had generated, the gradual succession of dependent spirits, of gods, of dæmons, of heroes, and of men; and every being which derived its existence immediately from the First Cause, received the inherent gift of immortality. That so precious an advantage might not be lavished upon unworthy objects, the Creator had intrusted to the skill and power of the inferior gods the office of forming the human body, and of arranging the beautiful harmony of the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral kingdoms. To the conduct of these divine ministers he delegated the temporal government of this lower world; but their imperfect administration is not exempt from discord or error. The earth and its inhabitants are divided among them, and the characters of Mars or Minerva, of Mercury or Venus, may be distinctly traced in the laws and manners of their peculiar votaries. As long as our immortal souls are confined in a mortal prison, it is our interest, as well as our duty, to solicit the favor, and to deprecate the wrath, of the powers of heaven; whose pride is gratified by the devotion of mankind; and whose grosser parts may be supposed to derive some nourishment from the fumes of sacrifice. [20](#) The inferior gods might sometimes condescend to animate the statues, and to inhabit the temples, which were dedicated to their honor. They might occasionally visit the earth, but the heavens were the proper throne and symbol of their glory. The invariable order of the sun, moon, and stars, was hastily admitted by Julian, as a proof of their *eternal* duration; and their

eternity was a sufficient evidence that they were the workmanship, not of an inferior deity, but of the Omnipotent King. In the system of Platonists, the visible was a type of the invisible world. The celestial bodies, as they were informed by a divine spirit, might be considered as the objects the most worthy of religious worship. The Sun, whose genial influence pervades and sustains the universe, justly claimed the adoration of mankind, as the bright representative of the Logos, the lively, the rational, the beneficent image of the intellectual Father. [21](#)

19 [\(return\)](#)

[The true religion of Julian may be deduced from the Cæsars, p. 308, with Spanheim's notes and illustrations, from the fragments in Cyril, l. ii. p. 57, 58, and especially from the theological oration in Solem Regem, p. 130-158, addressed in the confidence of friendship, to the præfect Sallust.]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian adopts this gross conception by ascribing to his favorite Marcus Antoninus, (Cæsares, p. 333.) The Stoics and Platonists hesitated between the analogy of bodies and the purity of spirits; yet the gravest philosophers inclined to the whimsical fancy of Aristophanes and Lucian, that an unbelieving age might starve the immortal gods. See Observations de Spanheim, p. 284, 444, &c.]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Epist. li. In another place, (apud Cyril. l. ii. p. 69,) he calls the Sun God, and the throne of God. Julian believed the Platonician Trinity; and only blames the Christians for preferring a mortal to an immortal *Logos*.]

In every age, the absence of genuine inspiration is supplied by the strong illusions of enthusiasm, and the mimic arts of imposture. If, in the time of Julian, these arts had been practised only by the pagan priests, for the support of an expiring cause, some indulgence might perhaps be allowed to the interest and habits of the sacerdotal character. But it may appear a subject of surprise and scandal, that the philosophers themselves should have contributed to abuse the superstitious credulity of mankind, [22](#) and that the Grecian mysteries should have been supported by the magic or theurgy of the modern Platonists. They arrogantly pretended to control the order of nature, to explore the secrets of futurity, to command the service of the inferior dæmons, to enjoy the view and conversation of the superior gods, and by disengaging the soul from her material bands, to reunite that immortal particle with the Infinite and Divine Spirit.

22 [\(return\)](#)

[The sophists of Eunapias perform as many miracles as the saints of the desert; and the only circumstance in their favor is, that they are of a less

gloomy complexion. Instead of devils with horns and tails, Iamblichus evoked the genii of love, Eros and Anteros, from two adjacent fountains. Two beautiful boys issued from the water, fondly embraced him as their father, and retired at his command, p. 26, 27.]

The devout and fearless curiosity of Julian tempted the philosophers with the hopes of an easy conquest; which, from the situation of their young proselyte, might be productive of the most important consequences. [23](#) Julian imbibed the first rudiments of the Platonic doctrines from the mouth of Ædesius, who had fixed at Pergamus his wandering and persecuted school. But as the declining strength of that venerable sage was unequal to the ardor, the diligence, the rapid conception of his pupil, two of his most learned disciples, Chrysanthus and Eusebius, supplied, at his own desire, the place of their aged master. These philosophers seem to have prepared and distributed their respective parts; and they artfully contrived, by dark hints and affected disputes, to excite the impatient hopes of the *aspirant*, till they delivered him into the hands of their associate, Maximus, the boldest and most skilful master of the Theurgic science. By his hands, Julian was secretly initiated at Ephesus, in the twentieth year of his age. His residence at Athens confirmed this unnatural alliance of philosophy and superstition.

He obtained the privilege of a solemn initiation into the mysteries of Eleusis, which, amidst the general decay of the Grecian worship, still retained some vestiges of their primæval sanctity; and such was the zeal of Julian, that he afterwards invited the Eleusinian pontiff to the court of Gaul, for the sole purpose of consummating, by mystic rites and sacrifices, the great work of his sanctification. As these ceremonies were performed in the depth of caverns, and in the silence of the night, and as the inviolable secret of the mysteries was preserved by the discretion of the initiated, I shall not presume to describe the horrid sounds, and fiery apparitions, which were presented to the senses, or the imagination, of the credulous aspirant, [24](#) till the visions of comfort and knowledge broke upon him in a blaze of celestial light. [25](#) In the caverns of Ephesus and Eleusis, the mind of Julian was penetrated with sincere, deep, and unalterable enthusiasm; though he might sometimes exhibit the vicissitudes of pious fraud and hypocrisy, which may be observed, or at least suspected, in the characters of the most conscientious fanatics. From that moment he consecrated his life to the service of the gods; and while the occupations of war, of government, and of study, seemed to claim the whole measure of his time, a stated portion of the hours of the night was invariably reserved for the exercise of private devotion. The temperance which adorned the severe manners of the soldier and the philosopher was connected with some strict and frivolous rules of religious abstinence; and it was in honor of Pan or Mercury, of Hecate or Isis, that Julian, on particular days, denied himself the use of some particular food, which might have been offensive to his tutelar deities. By these voluntary fasts, he prepared his senses and his understanding for the frequent and familiar visits with which he was honored by the celestial powers. Notwithstanding the modest silence of Julian himself,

we may learn from his faithful friend, the orator Libanius, that he lived in a perpetual intercourse with the gods and goddesses; that they descended upon earth to enjoy the conversation of their favorite hero; that they gently interrupted his slumbers by touching his hand or his hair; that they warned him of every impending danger, and conducted him, by their infallible wisdom, in every action of his life; and that he had acquired such an intimate knowledge of his heavenly guests, as readily to distinguish the voice of Jupiter from that of Minerva, and the form of Apollo from the figure of Hercules. [26](#) These sleeping or waking visions, the ordinary effects of abstinence and fanaticism, would almost degrade the emperor to the level of an Egyptian monk. But the useless lives of Antony or Pachomius were consumed in these vain occupations. Julian could break from the dream of superstition to arm himself for battle; and after vanquishing in the field the enemies of Rome, he calmly retired into his tent, to dictate the wise and salutary laws of an empire, or to indulge his genius in the elegant pursuits of literature and philosophy.

23 [\(return\)](#)

[The dexterous management of these sophists, who played their credulous pupil into each other's hands, is fairly told by Eunapius (p. 69- 79) with unsuspecting simplicity. The Abbé de la Bleterie understands, and neatly describes, the whole comedy, (Vie de Julian, p. 61-67.)]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[When Julian, in a momentary panic, made the sign of the cross the dæmons instantly disappeared, (Greg. Naz. Orat. iii. p. 71.) Gregory supposes that they were frightened, but the priests declared that they were indignant. The reader, according to the measure of his faith, will determine this profound question.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[A dark and distant view of the terrors and joys of initiation is shown by Dion Chrysostom, Themistius, Proclus, and Stobæus. The learned author of the Divine Legation has exhibited their words, (vol. i. p. 239, 247, 248, 280, edit. 1765,) which he dexterously or forcibly applies to his own hypothesis.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian's modesty confined him to obscure and occasional hints: but Libanius expiates with pleasure on the facts and visions of the religious hero. (Legat. ad Julian. p. 157, and Orat. Parental. c. lxxxiii. p. 309, 310.)]

The important secret of the apostasy of Julian was intrusted to the fidelity of the *initiated*, with whom he was united by the sacred ties of friendship and religion. [27](#) The pleasing rumor was cautiously circulated among the adherents of the

ancient worship; and his future greatness became the object of the hopes, the prayers, and the predictions of the Pagans, in every province of the empire. From the zeal and virtues of their royal proselyte, they fondly expected the cure of every evil, and the restoration of every blessing; and instead of disapproving of the ardor of their pious wishes, Julian ingenuously confessed, that he was ambitious to attain a situation in which he might be useful to his country and to his religion. But this religion was viewed with a hostile eye by the successor of Constantine, whose capricious passions alternately saved and threatened the life of Julian. The arts of magic and divination were strictly prohibited under a despotic government, which condescended to fear them; and if the Pagans were reluctantly indulged in the exercise of their superstition, the rank of Julian would have excepted him from the general toleration. The apostate soon became the presumptive heir of the monarchy, and his death could alone have appeased the just apprehensions of the Christians. [28](#) But the young prince, who aspired to the glory of a hero rather than of a martyr, consulted his safety by dissembling his religion; and the easy temper of polytheism permitted him to join in the public worship of a sect which he inwardly despised. Libanius has considered the hypocrisy of his friend as a subject, not of censure, but of praise. “As the statues of the gods,” says that orator, “which have been defiled with filth, are again placed in a magnificent temple, so the beauty of truth was seated in the mind of Julian, after it had been purified from the errors and follies of his education. His sentiments were changed; but as it would have been dangerous to have avowed his sentiments, his conduct still continued the same. Very different from the ass in Æsop, who disguised himself with a lion’s hide, our lion was obliged to conceal himself under the skin of an ass; and, while he embraced the dictates of reason, to obey the laws of prudence and necessity.” [29](#) The dissimulation of Julian lasted about ten years, from his secret initiation at Ephesus to the beginning of the civil war; when he declared himself at once the implacable enemy of Christ and of Constantius. This state of constraint might contribute to strengthen his devotion; and as soon as he had satisfied the obligation of assisting, on solemn festivals, at the assemblies of the Christians, Julian returned, with the impatience of a lover, to burn his free and voluntary incense on the domestic chapels of Jupiter and Mercury. But as every act of dissimulation must be painful to an ingenuous spirit, the profession of Christianity increased the aversion of Julian for a religion which oppressed the freedom of his mind, and compelled him to hold a conduct repugnant to the noblest attributes of human nature, sincerity and courage.

[Libanius, Orat. Parent. c. x. p. 233, 234. Gallus had some reason to suspect the secret apostasy of his brother; and in a letter, which may be received as genuine, he exhorts Julian to adhere to the religion of their *ancestors*; an argument which, as it should seem, was not yet perfectly ripe. See Julian, Op. p. 454, and Hist. de Jovien tom ii. p. 141.]

- 28 [\(return\)](#)
[Gregory, (iii. p. 50,) with inhuman zeal, censures Constantius for paring the infant apostate. His French translator (p. 265) cautiously observes, that such expressions must not be prises à la lettre.]
- 29 [\(return\)](#)
[Libanius, Orat. Parental. c ix. p. 233.]

Chapter XXIII: Reign Of Julian.—Part II.

The inclination of Julian might prefer the gods of Homer, and of the Scipios, to the new faith, which his uncle had established in the Roman empire; and in which he himself had been sanctified by the sacrament of baptism. But, as a philosopher, it was incumbent on him to justify his dissent from Christianity, which was supported by the number of its converts, by the chain of prophecy, the splendor of miracles, and the weight of evidence. The elaborate work, [30](#) which he composed amidst the preparations of the Persian war, contained the substance of those arguments which he had long revolved in his mind. Some fragments have been transcribed and preserved, by his adversary, the vehement Cyril of Alexandria; [31](#) and they exhibit a very singular mixture of wit and learning, of sophistry and fanaticism. The elegance of the style and the rank of the author, recommended his writings to the public attention; [32](#) and in the impious list of the enemies of Christianity, the celebrated name of Porphyry was effaced by the superior merit or reputation of Julian. The minds of the faithful were either seduced, or scandalized, or alarmed; and the pagans, who sometimes presumed to engage in the unequal dispute, derived, from the popular work of their Imperial missionary, an inexhaustible supply of fallacious objections. But in the assiduous prosecution of these theological studies, the emperor of the Romans imbibed the illiberal prejudices and passions of a polemic divine. He contracted an irrevocable obligation to maintain and propagate his religious opinions; and whilst he secretly applauded the strength and dexterity with which he wielded the weapons of controversy, he was tempted to distrust the sincerity, or to despise the understandings, of his antagonists, who could obstinately resist the force of reason and eloquence.

- 30 [\(return\)](#)
[Fabricius (Biblioth. Græc. l. v. c. viii, p. 88-90) and Lardner (Heathen Testimonies, vol. iv. p. 44-47) have accurately compiled all that can now be discovered of Julian's work against the Christians.]
- 31 [\(return\)](#)
[About seventy years after the death of Julian, he executed a task which had been feebly attempted by Philip of Side, a prolix and contemptible writer. Even the work of Cyril has not entirely satisfied the most favorable judges; and the Abbé de la Bleterie (Preface a l'Hist. de Jovien, p. 30, 32) wishes that

some *theologien philosophe* (a strange centaur)
would undertake the refutation of Julian.]

32

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, (Orat. Parental. c. lxxxvii. p. 313,) who has been suspected of assisting his friend, prefers this divine vindication (Orat. ix in necem Julian. p. 255, edit. Morel.) to the writings of Porphyry. His judgment may be arraigned, (Socrates, l. iii. c. 23,) but Libanius cannot be accused of flattery to a dead prince.]

The Christians, who beheld with horror and indignation the apostasy of Julian, had much more to fear from his power than from his arguments. The pagans, who were conscious of his fervent zeal, expected, perhaps with impatience, that the flames of persecution should be immediately kindled against the enemies of the gods; and that the ingenious malice of Julian would invent some cruel refinements of death and torture which had been unknown to the rude and inexperienced fury of his predecessors. But the hopes, as well as the fears, of the religious factions were apparently disappointed, by the prudent humanity of a prince, [33](#) who was careful of his own fame, of the public peace, and of the rights of mankind. Instructed by history and reflection, Julian was persuaded, that if the diseases of the body may sometimes be cured by salutary violence, neither steel nor fire can eradicate the erroneous opinions of the mind. The reluctant victim may be dragged to the foot of the altar; but the heart still abhors and disclaims the sacrilegious act of the hand. Religious obstinacy is hardened and exasperated by oppression; and, as soon as the persecution subsides, those who have yielded are restored as penitents, and those who have resisted are honored as saints and martyrs. If Julian adopted the unsuccessful cruelty of Diocletian and his colleagues, he was sensible that he should stain his memory with the name of a tyrant, and add new glories to the Catholic church, which had derived strength and increase from the severity of the pagan magistrates. Actuated by these motives, and apprehensive of disturbing the repose of an unsettled reign, Julian surprised the world by an edict, which was not unworthy of a statesman, or a philosopher. He extended to all the inhabitants of the Roman world the benefits of a free and equal toleration; and the only hardship which he inflicted on the Christians, was to deprive them of the power of tormenting their fellow-subjects, whom they stigmatized with the odious titles of idolaters and heretics. The pagans received a gracious permission, or rather an express order, to open All their temples; [34](#) and they were at once delivered from the oppressive laws, and arbitrary vexations, which they had sustained under the reign of Constantine, and of his sons. At the same time the bishops and clergy, who had been banished by the Arian monarch, were recalled from exile, and restored to their respective churches; the Donatists, the Novatians, the Macedonians, the Eunomians, and those who, with a more prosperous fortune, adhered to the doctrine of the Council of Nice. Julian, who understood and derided their theological disputes, invited to the palace the leaders of the hostile sects, that he might enjoy the agreeable spectacle of their furious encounters. The clamor of

controversy sometimes provoked the emperor to exclaim, “Hear me! the Franks have heard me, and the Alemanni;” but he soon discovered that he was now engaged with more obstinate and implacable enemies; and though he exerted the powers of oratory to persuade them to live in concord, or at least in peace, he was perfectly satisfied, before he dismissed them from his presence, that he had nothing to dread from the union of the Christians. The impartial Ammianus has ascribed this affected clemency to the desire of fomenting the intestine divisions of the church, and the insidious design of undermining the foundations of Christianity, was inseparably connected with the zeal which Julian professed, to restore the ancient religion of the empire. [35](#)

33 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius (Orat. Parent. c. lviii. p. 283, 284) has eloquently explained the tolerating principles and conduct of his Imperial friend. In a very remarkable epistle to the people of Bostra, Julian himself (Epist. lii.) professes his moderation, and betrays his zeal, which is acknowledged by Ammianus, and exposed by Gregory (Orat. iii. p.72)]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[In Greece the temples of Minerva were opened by his express command, before the death of Constantius, (Liban. Orat. Parent. c. 55, p. 280;) and Julian declares himself a Pagan in his public manifesto to the Athenians. This unquestionable evidence may correct the hasty assertion of Ammianus, who seems to suppose Constantinople to be the place where he discovered his attachment to the gods]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, xxii. 5. Sozomen, l. v. c. 5. Bestia moritur, tranquillitas redit.... omnes episcopi qui de propriis sedibus fuerant exterminati per indulgentiam novi principis ad acclesias redeunt. Jerom. adversus Luciferianos, tom. ii. p. 143. Optatus accuses the Donatists for owing their safety to an apostate, (l. ii. c. 16, p. 36, 37, edit. Dupin.)]

As soon as he ascended the throne, he assumed, according to the custom of his predecessors, the character of supreme pontiff; not only as the most honorable title of Imperial greatness, but as a sacred and important office; the duties of which he was resolved to execute with pious diligence. As the business of the state prevented the emperor from joining every day in the public devotion of his subjects, he dedicated a domestic chapel to his tutelar deity the Sun; his gardens were filled with statues and altars of the gods; and each apartment of the palace displaced the appearance of a magnificent temple. Every morning he saluted the parent of light with a sacrifice; the blood of another victim was shed at the moment when the Sun sunk below the horizon; and the Moon, the Stars, and the Genii of the night received their respective and

seasonable honors from the indefatigable devotion of Julian. On solemn festivals, he regularly visited the temple of the god or goddess to whom the day was peculiarly consecrated, and endeavored to excite the religion of the magistrates and people by the example of his own zeal. Instead of maintaining the lofty state of a monarch, distinguished by the splendor of his purple, and encompassed by the golden shields of his guards, Julian solicited, with respectful eagerness, the meanest offices which contributed to the worship of the gods. Amidst the sacred but licentious crowd of priests, of inferior ministers, and of female dancers, who were dedicated to the service of the temple, it was the business of the emperor to bring the wood, to blow the fire, to handle the knife, to slaughter the victim, and, thrusting his bloody hands into the bowels of the expiring animal, to draw forth the heart or liver, and to read, with the consummate skill of an *haruspex*, imaginary signs of future events. The wisest of the Pagans censured this extravagant superstition, which affected to despise the restraints of prudence and decency. Under the reign of a prince, who practised the rigid maxims of economy, the expense of religious worship consumed a very large portion of the revenue; a constant supply of the scarcest and most beautiful birds was transported from distant climates, to bleed on the altars of the gods; a hundred oxen were frequently sacrificed by Julian on one and the same day; and it soon became a popular jest, that if he should return with conquest from the Persian war, the breed of horned cattle must infallibly be extinguished. Yet this expense may appear inconsiderable, when it is compared with the splendid presents which were offered either by the hand, or by order, of the emperor, to all the celebrated places of devotion in the Roman world; and with the sums allotted to repair and decorate the ancient temples, which had suffered the silent decay of time, or the recent injuries of Christian rapine. Encouraged by the example, the exhortations, the liberality, of their pious sovereign, the cities and families resumed the practice of their neglected ceremonies. “Every part of the world,” exclaims Libanius, with devout transport, “displayed the triumph of religion; and the grateful prospect of flaming altars, bleeding victims, the smoke of incense, and a solemn train of priests and prophets, without fear and without danger. The sound of prayer and of music was heard on the tops of the highest mountains; and the same ox afforded a sacrifice for the gods, and a supper for their joyous votaries.” [36](#)

[The restoration of the Pagan worship is described by Julian, (*Misopogon*, p. 346,) Libanius, (*Orat. Parent. c. 60*, p. 286, 287, and *Orat. Consular. ad Julian. p. 245, 246*, edit. Morel.,) Ammianus, (xxii. 12,) and Gregory Nazianzen, (*Orat. iv. p. 121.*) These writers agree in the essential, and even minute, facts; but the different lights in which they view the extreme devotion of Julian, are expressive of the gradations of self-applause, passionate admiration, mild reproof, and partial invective.]

But the genius and power of Julian were unequal to the enterprise of restoring a religion which was destitute of theological principles, of moral precepts, and of ecclesiastical discipline; which rapidly hastened to decay and dissolution, and was not susceptible of any solid or consistent reformation. The jurisdiction of the supreme pontiff, more especially after that office had been united with the Imperial dignity, comprehended the whole extent of the Roman empire. Julian named for his vicars, in the several provinces, the priests and philosophers whom he esteemed the best qualified to cooperate in the execution of his great design; and his pastoral letters, [37](#) if we may use that name, still represent a very curious sketch of his wishes and intentions. He directs, that in every city the sacerdotal order should be composed, without any distinction of birth and fortune, of those persons who were the most conspicuous for the love of the gods, and of men. "If they are guilty," continues he, "of any scandalous offence, they should be censured or degraded by the superior pontiff; but as long as they retain their rank, they are entitled to the respect of the magistrates and people. Their humility may be shown in the plainness of their domestic garb; their dignity, in the pomp of holy vestments. When they are summoned in their turn to officiate before the altar, they ought not, during the appointed number of days, to depart from the precincts of the temple; nor should a single day be suffered to elapse, without the prayers and the sacrifice, which they are obliged to offer for the prosperity of the state, and of individuals. The exercise of their sacred functions requires an immaculate purity, both of mind and body; and even when they are dismissed from the temple to the occupations of common life, it is incumbent on them to excel in decency and virtue the rest of their fellow-citizens. The priest of the gods should never be seen in theatres or taverns. His conversation should be chaste, his diet temperate, his friends of honorable reputation; and if he sometimes visits the Forum or the Palace, he should appear only as the advocate of those who have vainly solicited either justice or mercy. His studies should be suited to the sanctity of his profession. Licentious tales, or comedies, or satires, must be banished from his library, which ought solely to consist of historical or philosophical writings; of history, which is founded in truth, and of philosophy, which is connected with religion. The impious opinions of the Epicureans and sceptics deserve his abhorrence and contempt; [38](#) but he should diligently study the systems of Pythagoras, of Plato, and of the Stoics, which unanimously teach that there *are* gods; that the world is governed by their providence; that their goodness is the source of every temporal blessing; and that they have prepared for the human soul a future state of reward or punishment." The Imperial pontiff inculcates, in the most persuasive language, the duties of benevolence and hospitality; exhorts his inferior clergy to recommend the universal practice of those virtues; promises to assist their indigence from the public treasury; and declares his resolution of establishing hospitals in every city, where the poor should be received without any invidious distinction of country or of religion. Julian beheld with envy the wise and humane regulations of the church; and he very frankly confesses his intention to deprive the Christians of the applause, as well as

advantage, which they had acquired by the exclusive practice of charity and beneficence. [39](#) The same spirit of imitation might dispose the emperor to adopt several ecclesiastical institutions, the use and importance of which were approved by the success of his enemies. But if these imaginary plans of reformation had been realized, the forced and imperfect copy would have been less beneficial to Paganism, than honorable to Christianity. [40](#) The Gentiles, who peaceably followed the customs of their ancestors, were rather surprised than pleased with the introduction of foreign manners; and in the short period of his reign, Julian had frequent occasions to complain of the want of fervor of his own party. [41](#)

37

[\(return\)](#)

[See Julian. Epistol. xlix. lxii. lxiii., and a long and curious fragment, without beginning or end, (p. 288-305.) The supreme pontiff derides the Mosaic history and the Christian discipline, prefers the Greek poets to the Hebrew prophets, and palliates, with the skill of a Jesuit the *relative* worship of images.]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[The exultation of Julian (p. 301) that these impious sects and even their writings, are extinguished, may be consistent enough with the sacerdotal character; but it is unworthy of a philosopher to wish that any opinions and arguments the most repugnant to his own should be concealed from the knowledge of mankind.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Yet he insinuates, that the Christians, under the pretence of charity, inveigled children from their religion and parents, conveyed them on shipboard, and devoted those victims to a life of poverty or perversity in a remote country, (p. 305.) Had the charge been proved it was his duty, not to complain, but to punish.]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[Gregory Nazianzen is facetious, ingenious, and argumentative, (Orat. iii. p. 101, 102, &c.) He ridicules the folly of such vain imitation; and amuses himself with inquiring, what lessons, moral or theological, could be extracted from the Grecian fables.]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[He accuses one of his pontiffs of a secret confederacy with the Christian bishops and presbyters, (Epist. lxii.) &c. Epist. lxiii.]

The enthusiasm of Julian prompted him to embrace the friends of Jupiter as his personal friends and brethren; and though he partially overlooked the merit of Christian constancy, he admired and rewarded the noble perseverance of those Gentiles who had

preferred the favor of the gods to that of the emperor. [42](#) If they cultivated the literature, as well as the religion, of the Greeks, they acquired an additional claim to the friendship of Julian, who ranked the Muses in the number of his tutelar deities. In the religion which he had adopted, piety and learning were almost synonymous; [43](#) and a crowd of poets, of rhetoricians, and of philosophers, hastened to the Imperial court, to occupy the vacant places of the bishops, who had seduced the credulity of Constantius. His successor esteemed the ties of common initiation as far more sacred than those of consanguinity; he chose his favorites among the sages, who were deeply skilled in the occult sciences of magic and divination; and every impostor, who pretended to reveal the secrets of futurity, was assured of enjoying the present hour in honor and affluence. [44](#) Among the philosophers, Maximus obtained the most eminent rank in the friendship of his royal disciple, who communicated, with unreserved confidence, his actions, his sentiments, and his religious designs, during the anxious suspense of the civil war. [45](#) As soon as Julian had taken possession of the palace of Constantinople, he despatched an honorable and pressing invitation to Maximus, who then resided at Sardes in Lydia, with Chrysanthius, the associate of his art and studies. The prudent and superstitious Chrysanthius refused to undertake a journey which showed itself, according to the rules of divination, with the most threatening and malignant aspect: but his companion, whose fanaticism was of a bolder cast, persisted in his interrogations, till he had extorted from the gods a seeming consent to his own wishes, and those of the emperor. The journey of Maximus through the cities of Asia displayed the triumph of philosophic vanity; and the magistrates vied with each other in the honorable reception which they prepared for the friend of their sovereign. Julian was pronouncing an oration before the senate, when he was informed of the arrival of Maximus. The emperor immediately interrupted his discourse, advanced to meet him, and after a tender embrace, conducted him by the hand into the midst of the assembly; where he publicly acknowledged the benefits which he had derived from the instructions of the philosopher. Maximus, [46](#) who soon acquired the confidence, and influenced the councils of Julian, was insensibly corrupted by the temptations of a court. His dress became more splendid, his demeanor more lofty, and he was exposed, under a succeeding reign, to a disgraceful inquiry into the means by which the disciple of Plato had accumulated, in the short duration of his favor, a very scandalous proportion of wealth. Of the other philosophers and sophists, who were invited to the Imperial residence by the choice of Julian, or by the success of Maximus, few were able to preserve their innocence or their reputation. The liberal gifts of money, lands, and houses, were insufficient to satiate their rapacious avarice; and the indignation of the people was justly excited by the remembrance of their abject poverty and disinterested professions. The penetration of Julian could not always be deceived: but he was unwilling to despise the characters of those men whose talents deserved his esteem: he desired to escape the double reproach of imprudence and inconstancy; and he was

apprehensive of degrading, in the eyes of the profane, the honor of letters and of religion. [47](#) [48](#)

- 42 [\(return\)](#)
[He praises the fidelity of Callixene, priestess of Ceres, who had been twice as constant as Penelope, and rewards her with the priesthood of the Phrygian goddess at Pessinus, (Julian. Epist. xxi.) He applauds the firmness of Sopater of Hierapolis, who had been repeatedly pressed by Constantius and Gallus to *apostatize*, (Epist. xxvii p. 401.)]
- 43 [\(return\)](#)
[Orat. Parent. c. 77, p. 202. The same sentiment is frequently inculcated by Julian, Libanius, and the rest of their party.]
- 44 [\(return\)](#)
[The curiosity and credulity of the emperor, who tried every mode of divination, are fairly exposed by Ammianus, xxii. 12.]
- 45 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian. Epist. xxxviii. Three other epistles, (xv. xvi. xxxix.,) in the same style of friendship and confidence, are addressed to the philosopher Maximus.]
- 46 [\(return\)](#)
[Eunapius (in Maximo, p. 77, 78, 79, and in Chrysanthio, p. 147, 148) has minutely related these anecdotes, which he conceives to be the most important events of the age. Yet he fairly confesses the frailty of Maximus. His reception at Constantinople is described by Libanius (Orat. Parent. c. 86, p. 301) and Ammianus, (xxii. 7.) * Note: Eunapius wrote a continuation of the History of Dexippus. Some valuable fragments of this work have been recovered by M. Mai, and reprinted in Niebuhr's edition of the Byzantine Historians.—M.]
- 47 [\(return\)](#)
[Chrysanthius, who had refused to quit Lydia, was created high priest of the province. His cautious and temperate use of power secured him after the revolution; and he lived in peace, while Maximus, Priscus, &c., were persecuted by the Christian ministers. See the adventures of those fanatic sophists, collected by Brucker, tom ii. p. 281-293.]
- 48 [\(return\)](#)
[Sec Libanius (Orat. Parent. c. 101, 102, p. 324, 325, 326) and Eunapius, (Vit. Sophist. in Proæresio, p. 126.) Some students, whose expectations perhaps were groundless, or extravagant, retired in disgust,

(Greg. Naz. Orat. iv. p. 120.) It is strange that we should not be able to contradict the title of one of Tillemont's chapters, (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 960,) "La Cour de Julien est pleine de philosophes et de gens perdus."]

The favor of Julian was almost equally divided between the Pagans, who had firmly adhered to the worship of their ancestors, and the Christians, who prudently embraced the religion of their sovereign. The acquisition of new proselytes [49](#) gratified the ruling passions of his soul, superstition and vanity; and he was heard to declare, with the enthusiasm of a missionary, that if he could render each individual richer than Midas, and every city greater than Babylon, he should not esteem himself the benefactor of mankind, unless, at the same time, he could reclaim his subjects from their impious revolt against the immortal gods. [50](#) A prince who had studied human nature, and who possessed the treasures of the Roman empire, could adapt his arguments, his promises, and his rewards, to every order of Christians; [51](#) and the merit of a seasonable conversion was allowed to supply the defects of a candidate, or even to expiate the guilt of a criminal. As the army is the most forcible engine of absolute power, Julian applied himself, with peculiar diligence, to corrupt the religion of his troops, without whose hearty concurrence every measure must be dangerous and unsuccessful; and the natural temper of soldiers made this conquest as easy as it was important. The legions of Gaul devoted themselves to the faith, as well as to the fortunes, of their victorious leader; and even before the death of Constantius, he had the satisfaction of announcing to his friends, that they assisted with fervent devotion, and voracious appetite, at the sacrifices, which were repeatedly offered in his camp, of whole hecatombs of fat oxen. [52](#) The armies of the East, which had been trained under the standard of the cross, and of Constantius, required a more artful and expensive mode of persuasion. On the days of solemn and public festivals, the emperor received the homage, and rewarded the merit, of the troops. His throne of state was encircled with the military ensigns of Rome and the republic; the holy name of Christ was erased from the *Labarum*; and the symbols of war, of majesty, and of pagan superstition, were so dexterously blended, that the faithful subject incurred the guilt of idolatry, when he respectfully saluted the person or image of his sovereign. The soldiers passed successively in review; and each of them, before he received from the hand of Julian a liberal donative, proportioned to his rank and services, was required to cast a few grains of incense into the flame which burnt upon the altar. Some Christian confessors might resist, and others might repent; but the far greater number, allured by the prospect of gold, and awed by the presence of the emperor, contracted the criminal engagement; and their future perseverance in the worship of the gods was enforced by every consideration of duty and of interest.

By the frequent repetition of these arts, and at the expense of sums which would have purchased the service of half the nations of Scythia, Julian gradually acquired for his troops the imaginary protection of the gods, and for himself the firm and effectual support of the Roman legions. [53](#) It is indeed more than probable, that the restoration

and encouragement of Paganism revealed a multitude of pretended Christians, who, from motives of temporal advantage, had acquiesced in the religion of the former reign; and who afterwards returned, with the same flexibility of conscience, to the faith which was professed by the successors of Julian.

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Under the reign of Lewis XIV. his subjects of every rank aspired to the glorious title of *Convertisseur*, expressive of their zea and success in making proselytes. The word and the idea are growing obsolete in France may they never be introduced into England.]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[See the strong expressions of Libanius, which were probably those of Julian himself, (Orat. Parent. c. 59, p. 285.)]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[When Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. x. p. 167) is desirous to magnify the Christian firmness of his brother Cæsarius, physician to the Imperial court, he owns that Cæsarius disputed with a formidable adversary. In his invectives he scarcely allows any share of wit or courage to the apostate.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian, Epist. xxxviii. Ammianus, xxii. 12. Adeo ut in dies pæne singulos milites carnis distentiore sagina victitantes incultius, potusque aviditate correpti, humeris impositi transeuntium per plateas, ex publicis ædibus..... ad sua diversoria portarentur. The devout prince and the indignant historian describe the same scene; and in Illyricum or Antioch, similar causes must have produced similar effects.]

53

[\(return\)](#)

[Gregory (Orat. iii. p. 74, 75, 83-86) and Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. lxxxi. lxxxii. p. 307, 308,). The sophist owns and justifies the expense of these military conversions.]

While the devout monarch incessantly labored to restore and propagate the religion of his ancestors, he embraced the extraordinary design of rebuilding the temple of Jerusalem. In a public epistle [54](#) to the nation or community of the Jews, dispersed through the provinces, he pities their misfortunes, condemns their oppressors, praises their constancy, declares himself their gracious protector, and expresses a pious hope, that after his return from the Persian war, he may be permitted to pay his grateful vows to the Almighty in his holy city of Jerusalem. The blind superstition, and abject slavery, of those unfortunate exiles, must excite the contempt of a philosophic emperor; but they deserved the friendship of Julian, by their implacable hatred of the Christian name. The

barren synagogue abhorred and envied the fecundity of the rebellious church; the power of the Jews was not equal to their malice; but their gravest rabbis approved the private murder of an apostate; [55](#) and their seditious clamors had often awakened the indolence of the Pagan magistrates. Under the reign of Constantine, the Jews became the subjects of their revolted children nor was it long before they experienced the bitterness of domestic tyranny. The civil immunities which had been granted, or confirmed, by Severus, were gradually repealed by the Christian princes; and a rash tumult, excited by the Jews of Palestine, [56](#) seemed to justify the lucrative modes of oppression which were invented by the bishops and eunuchs of the court of Constantius. The Jewish patriarch, who was still permitted to exercise a precarious jurisdiction, held his residence at Tiberias; [57](#) and the neighboring cities of Palestine were filled with the remains of a people who fondly adhered to the promised land. But the edict of Hadrian was renewed and enforced; and they viewed from afar the walls of the holy city, which were profaned in their eyes by the triumph of the cross and the devotion of the Christians. [58](#)

54

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian's epistle (xxv.) is addressed to the community of the Jews. Aldus (Venet. 1499) has branded it with an; but this stigma is justly removed by the subsequent editors, Petavius and Spanheim. This epistle is mentioned by Sozomen, (l. v. c. 22,) and the purport of it is confirmed by Gregory, (Orat. iv. p. 111.) and by Julian himself (Fragment. p. 295.)]

55

[\(return\)](#)

[The Misnah denounced death against those who abandoned the foundation. The judgment of zeal is explained by Marsham (Canon. Chron. p. 161, 162, edit. fol. London, 1672) and Basnage, (Hist. des Juifs, tom. viii. p. 120.) Constantine made a law to protect Christian converts from Judaism. Cod. Theod. l. xvi. tit. viii. leg. 1. Godefroy, tom. vi. p. 215.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[Et interea (during the civil war of Magnentius) Judæorum seditio, qui Patricium, nefarie in regni speciem sustulerunt, oppressa. Aurelius Victor, in Constantio, c. xlii. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 379, in 4to.]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[The city and synagogue of Tiberias are curiously described by Reland. Palestin. tom. ii. p. 1036-1042.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[Basnage has fully illustrated the state of the Jews

under Constantine and his successors, (tom. viii. c.
iv. p. 111-153.))]

Chapter XXIII: Reign Of Julian.—Part III.

In the midst of a rocky and barren country, the walls of Jerusalem [59](#) enclosed the two mountains of Sion and Acra, within an oval figure of about three English miles. [60](#) Towards the south, the upper town, and the fortress of David, were erected on the lofty ascent of Mount Sion: on the north side, the buildings of the lower town covered the spacious summit of Mount Acra; and a part of the hill, distinguished by the name of Moriah, and levelled by human industry, was crowned with the stately temple of the Jewish nation. After the final destruction of the temple by the arms of Titus and Hadrian, a ploughshare was drawn over the consecrated ground, as a sign of perpetual interdiction. Sion was deserted; and the vacant space of the lower city was filled with the public and private edifices of the Ælian colony, which spread themselves over the adjacent hill of Calvary. The holy places were polluted with mountains of idolatry; and, either from design or accident, a chapel was dedicated to Venus, on the spot which had been sanctified by the death and resurrection of Christ. [61](#) [6111](#) Almost three hundred years after those stupendous events, the profane chapel of Venus was demolished by the order of Constantine; and the removal of the earth and stones revealed the holy sepulchre to the eyes of mankind. A magnificent church was erected on that mystic ground, by the first Christian emperor; and the effects of his pious munificence were extended to every spot which had been consecrated by the footstep of patriarchs, of prophets, and of the Son of God. [62](#)

[59](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Reland (Palestin. l. i. p. 309, 390, l. iii. p. 838) describes, with learning and perspicuity, Jerusalem, and the face of the adjacent country.]

[60](#) [\(return\)](#)

[I have consulted a rare and curious treatise of M. D'Anville, (sur l'Ancienne Jerusalem, Paris, 1747, p. 75.) The circumference of the ancient city (Euseb. Preparat. Evangel. l. ix. c. 36) was 27 stadia, or 2550 *toises*. A plan, taken on the spot, assigns no more than 1980 for the modern town. The circuit is defined by natural landmarks, which cannot be mistaken or removed.]

[61](#) [\(return\)](#)

[See two curious passages in Jerom, (tom. i. p. 102, tom. vi. p. 315,) and the ample details of Tillemont, (Hist, des Empereurs, tom. i. p. 569. tom. ii. p. 289, 294, 4to edition.))]

[6111](#) [\(return\)](#)

[On the site of the Holy Sepulchre, compare the

chapter in Professor Robinson's Travels in Palestine, which has renewed the old controversy with great vigor. To me, this temple of Venus, said to have been erected by Hadrian to insult the Christians, is not the least suspicious part of the whole legend.-M. 1845.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[Eusebius in Vit. Constantin. l. iii. c. 25-47, 51-53. The emperor likewise built churches at Bethlem, the Mount of Olives, and the oa of Mambre. The holy sepulchre is described by Sandys, (Travels, p. 125-133,) and curiously delineated by Le Bruyn, (Voyage au Levant, p. 28-296.)]

The passionate desire of contemplating the original monuments of their redemption attracted to Jerusalem a successive crowd of pilgrims, from the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, and the most distant countries of the East; [63](#) and their piety was authorized by the example of the empress Helena, who appears to have united the credulity of age with the warm feelings of a recent conversion. Sages and heroes, who have visited the memorable scenes of ancient wisdom or glory, have confessed the inspiration of the genius of the place; [64](#) and the Christian who knelt before the holy sepulchre, ascribed his lively faith, and his fervent devotion, to the more immediate influence of the Divine Spirit. The zeal, perhaps the avarice, of the clergy of Jerusalem, cherished and multiplied these beneficial visits. They fixed, by unquestionable tradition, the scene of each memorable event. They exhibited the instruments which had been used in the passion of Christ; the nails and the lance that had pierced his hands, his feet, and his side; the crown of thorns that was planted on his head; the pillar at which he was scourged; and, above all, they showed the cross on which he suffered, and which was dug out of the earth in the reign of those princes, who inserted the symbol of Christianity in the banners of the Roman legions. [65](#) Such miracles as seemed necessary to account for its extraordinary preservation, and seasonable discovery, were gradually propagated without opposition. The custody of the *true cross*, which on Easter Sunday was solemnly exposed to the people, was intrusted to the bishop of Jerusalem; and he alone might gratify the curious devotion of the pilgrims, by the gift of small pieces, which they encased in gold or gems, and carried away in triumph to their respective countries. But as this gainful branch of commerce must soon have been annihilated, it was found convenient to suppose, that the marvelous wood possessed a secret power of vegetation; and that its substance, though continually diminished, still remained entire and unimpaired. [66](#) It might perhaps have been expected, that the influence of the place and the belief of a perpetual miracle, should have produced some salutary effects on the morals, as well as on the faith, of the people. Yet the most respectable of the ecclesiastical writers have been obliged to confess, not only that the streets of Jerusalem were filled with the incessant tumult of business and pleasure, [67](#) but that every species of vice—adultery, theft, idolatry, poisoning, murder—was familiar to the inhabitants of

the holy city. [68](#) The wealth and preëminence of the church of Jerusalem excited the ambition of Arian, as well as orthodox, candidates; and the virtues of Cyril, who, since his death, has been honored with the title of Saint, were displayed in the exercise, rather than in the acquisition, of his episcopal dignity. [69](#)

63

[\(return\)](#)

[The Itinerary from Bourdeaux to Jerusalem was composed in the year 333, for the use of pilgrims; among whom Jerom (tom. i. p. 126) mentions the Britons and the Indians. The causes of this superstitious fashion are discussed in the learned and judicious preface of Wesseling. (Itinrar. p. 537-545.) —Much curious information on this subject is collected in the first chapter of Wilken, *Geschichte der Kreuzzüge*.—M.]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[Cicero (de Finibus, v. 1) has beautifully expressed the common sense of mankind.]

65

[\(return\)](#)

[Baronius (Annal. Eccles. A. D. 326, No. 42-50) and Tillemont (Mém. Eccles. tom. xii. p. 8-16) are the historians and champions of the miraculous *invention* of the cross, under the reign of Constantine. Their oldest witnesses are Paulinus, Sulpicius Severus, Rufinus, Ambrose, and perhaps Cyril of Jerusalem. The silence of Eusebius, and the Bourdeaux pilgrim, which satisfies those who think perplexes those who believe. See Jortin's sensible remarks, vol. ii. p 238-248.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[This multiplication is asserted by Paulinus, (Epist. xxxvi. See Dupin. Bibliot. Eccles. tom. iii. p. 149,) who seems to have improved a rhetorical flourish of Cyril into a real fact. The same supernatural privilege must have been communicated to the Virgin's milk, (Erasmi Opera, tom. i. p. 778, Lugd. Batav. 1703, in Colloq. de Peregrinat. Religionis ergo,) saints' heads, &c. and other relics, which are repeated in so many different churches. * Note: Lord Mahon, in a memoir read before the Society of Antiquaries, (Feb. 1831,) has traced in a brief but interesting manner, the singular adventures of the "true" cross. It is curious to inquire, what authority we have, except of *late* tradition, for the *Hill* of Calvary. There is none in the sacred writings; the uniform use of the common word, instead of any word expressing assent or acclivity, is against the notion.—M.]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[Jerom, (tom. i. p. 103,) who resided in the

neighboring village of Bethlem, describes the vices of Jerusalem from his personal experience.]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[Gregor. Nyssen, apud Wesseling, p. 539. The whole epistle, which condemns either the use or the abuse of religious pilgrimage, is painful to the Catholic divines, while it is dear and familiar to our Protestant polemics.]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[He renounced his orthodox ordination, officiated as a deacon, and was re-ordained by the hands of the Arians. But Cyril afterwards changed with the times, and prudently conformed to the Nicene faith. Tillemont, (Mém. Eccles. tom. viii.,) who treats his memory with tenderness and respect, has thrown his virtues into the text, and his faults into the notes, in decent obscurity, at the end of the volume.]

The vain and ambitious mind of Julian might aspire to restore the ancient glory of the temple of Jerusalem. [70](#) As the Christians were firmly persuaded that a sentence of everlasting destruction had been pronounced against the whole fabric of the Mosaic law, the Imperial sophist would have converted the success of his undertaking into a specious argument against the faith of prophecy, and the truth of revelation. [71](#) He was displeased with the spiritual worship of the synagogue; but he approved the institutions of Moses, who had not disdained to adopt many of the rites and ceremonies of Egypt. [72](#) The local and national deity of the Jews was sincerely adored by a polytheist, who desired only to multiply the number of the gods; [73](#) and such was the appetite of Julian for bloody sacrifice, that his emulation might be excited by the piety of Solomon, who had offered, at the feast of the dedication, twenty-two thousand oxen, and one hundred and twenty thousand sheep. [74](#) These considerations might influence his designs; but the prospect of an immediate and important advantage would not suffer the impatient monarch to expect the remote and uncertain event of the Persian war. He resolved to erect, without delay, on the commanding eminence of Moriah, a stately temple, which might eclipse the splendor of the church of the resurrection on the adjacent hill of Calvary; to establish an order of priests, whose interested zeal would detect the arts, and resist the ambition, of their Christian rivals; and to invite a numerous colony of Jews, whose stern fanaticism would be always prepared to second, and even to anticipate, the hostile measures of the Pagan government. Among the friends of the emperor (if the names of emperor, and of friend, are not incompatible) the first place was assigned, by Julian himself, to the virtuous and learned Alypius. [75](#) The humanity of Alypius was tempered by severe justice and manly fortitude; and while he exercised his abilities in the civil administration of Britain, he imitated, in his poetical compositions, the harmony and softness of the odes of Sappho. This minister, to whom Julian communicated, without reserve, his most careless levities, and his most serious counsels, received an extraordinary commission to restore, in its pristine beauty, the

temple of Jerusalem; and the diligence of Alypius required and obtained the strenuous support of the governor of Palestine. At the call of their great deliverer, the Jews, from all the provinces of the empire, assembled on the holy mountain of their fathers; and their insolent triumph alarmed and exasperated the Christian inhabitants of Jerusalem. The desire of rebuilding the temple has in every age been the ruling passion of the children of Israel. In this propitious moment the men forgot their avarice, and the women their delicacy; spades and pickaxes of silver were provided by the vanity of the rich, and the rubbish was transported in mantles of silk and purple. Every purse was opened in liberal contributions, every hand claimed a share in the pious labor, and the commands of a great monarch were executed by the enthusiasm of a whole people. [76](#)

70 [\(return\)](#)

[Imperii sui memoriam magnitudine operum gestiens propagare Ammian. xxiii. 1. The temple of Jerusalem had been famous even among the Gentiles. *They* had many temples in each city, (at Sichem five, at Gaza eight, at Rome four hundred and twenty-four;) but the wealth and religion of the Jewish nation was centred in one spot.]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[The secret intentions of Julian are revealed by the late bishop of Gloucester, the learned and dogmatic Warburton; who, with the authority of a theologian, prescribes the motives and conduct of the Supreme Being. The discourse entitled *Julian* (2d edition, London, 1751) is strongly marked with all the peculiarities which are imputed to the Warburtonian school.]

72 [\(return\)](#)

[I shelter myself behind Maimonides, Marsham, Spencer, Le Clerc, Warburton, &c., who have fairly derided the fears, the folly, and the falsehood of some superstitious divines. See *Divine Legation*, vol. iv. p. 25, &c.]

73 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian (Fragment. p. 295) respectfully styles him, and mentions him elsewhere (Epist. lxiii.) with still higher reverence. He doubly condemns the Christians for believing, and for renouncing, the religion of the Jews. Their Deity was a *true*, but not the *only*, God Apul Cyril. l. ix. p. 305, 306.]

74 [\(return\)](#)

[1 Kings, viii. 63. 2 Chronicles, vii. 5. Joseph. Antiquitat. Judaic. l. viii. c. 4, p. 431, edit. Havercamp. As the blood and smoke of so many hecatombs might be inconvenient, Lightfoot, the Christian Rabbi, removes them by a miracle. Le Clerc (ad loca) is bold enough to suspect to fidelity

of the numbers. * Note: According to the historian Kotobeddym, quoted by Burckhardt, (Travels in Arabia, p. 276,) the Khalif Mokteder sacrificed, during his pilgrimage to Mecca, in the year of the Hejira 350, forty thousand camels and cows, and fifty thousand sheep. Barthema describes thirty thousand oxen slain, and their carcasses given to the poor. Quarterly Review, xiii.p.39—M.]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian, epist. xxix. xxx. La Bleterie has neglected to translate the second of these epistles.]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[See the zeal and impatience of the Jews in Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. iv. p. 111) and Theodoret. (l. iii. c. 20.)]

Yet, on this occasion, the joint efforts of power and enthusiasm were unsuccessful; and the ground of the Jewish temple, which is now covered by a Mahometan mosque, [77](#) still continued to exhibit the same edifying spectacle of ruin and desolation. Perhaps the absence and death of the emperor, and the new maxims of a Christian reign, might explain the interruption of an arduous work, which was attempted only in the last six months of the life of Julian. [78](#) But the Christians entertained a natural and pious expectation, that, in this memorable contest, the honor of religion would be vindicated by some signal miracle. An earthquake, a whirlwind, and a fiery eruption, which overturned and scattered the new foundations of the temple, are attested, with some variations, by contemporary and respectable evidence. [79](#) This public event is described by Ambrose, [80](#) bishop of Milan, in an epistle to the emperor Theodosius, which must provoke the severe animadversion of the Jews; by the eloquent Chrysostom, [81](#) who might appeal to the memory of the elder part of his congregation at Antioch; and by Gregory Nazianzen, [82](#) who published his account of the miracle before the expiration of the same year. The last of these writers has boldly declared, that this preternatural event was not disputed by the infidels; and his assertion, strange as it may seem is confirmed by the unexceptionable testimony of Ammianus Marcellinus. [83](#) The philosophic soldier, who loved the virtues, without adopting the prejudices, of his master, has recorded, in his judicious and candid history of his own times, the extraordinary obstacles which interrupted the restoration of the temple of Jerusalem. “Whilst Alypius, assisted by the governor of the province, urged, with vigor and diligence, the execution of the work, horrible balls of fire breaking out near the foundations, with frequent and reiterated attacks, rendered the place, from time to time, inaccessible to the scorched and blasted workmen; and the victorious element continuing in this manner obstinately and resolutely bent, as it were, to drive them to a distance, the undertaking was abandoned.” [8311](#) Such authority should satisfy a believing, and must astonish an incredulous, mind. Yet a philosopher may still require the original evidence of impartial and intelligent spectators. At this important crisis, any

singular accident of nature would assume the appearance, and produce the effects of a real prodigy. This glorious deliverance would be speedily improved and magnified by the pious art of the clergy of Jerusalem, and the active credulity of the Christian world and, at the distance of twenty years, a Roman historian, careless of theological disputes, might adorn his work with the specious and splendid miracle. [84](#)

77 [\(return\)](#)

[Built by Omar, the second Khalif, who died A. D. 644. This great mosque covers the whole consecrated ground of the Jewish temple, and constitutes almost a square of 760 *toises*, or one Roman mile in circumference. See D’Anville, Jerusalem, p. 45.]

78 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus records the consults of the year 363, before he proceeds to mention the *thoughts* of Julian. Templum. ... instaurare sumptibus *cogitabat* immodicis. Warburton has a secret wish to anticipate the design; but he must have understood, from former examples, that the execution of such a work would have demanded many years.]

79 [\(return\)](#)

[The subsequent witnesses, Socrates, Sozomen, Theodoret, Philostorgius, &c., add contradictions rather than authority. Compare the objections of Basnage (Hist. des Juifs, tom. viii. p. 156-168) with Warburton’s answers, (Julian, p. 174-258.) The bishop has ingeniously explained the miraculous crosses which appeared on the garments of the spectators by a similar instance, and the natural effects of lightning.]

80 [\(return\)](#)

[Ambros. tom. ii. epist. xl. p. 946, edit. Benedictin. He composed this fanatic epistle (A. D. 388) to justify a bishop who had been condemned by the civil magistrate for burning a synagogue.]

81 [\(return\)](#)

[Chrysostom, tom. i. p. 580, advers. Judæos et Gentes, tom. ii. p. 574, de Sto Babyla, edit. Montfaucon. I have followed the common and natural supposition; but the learned Benedictine, who dates the composition of these sermons in the year 383, is confident they were never pronounced from the pulpit.]

82 [\(return\)](#)

[Greg. Nazianzen, Orat. iv. p. 110-113.]

83 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxiii. 1. Cum itaque rei fortiter instaret

Alypius, juvaretque provinciæ rector, metuendi globi flammæ prope fundamenta crebris assultibus erumpentes fecere locum exustis aliquoties operantibus inaccessum; hocque modo elemento destinatus repellente, cessavit inceptum. Warburton labors (p. 60-90) to extort a confession of the miracle from the mouths of Julian and Libanius, and to employ the evidence of a rabbi who lived in the fifteenth century. Such witnesses can only be received by a very favorable judge.]

8311

[\(return\)](#)

[Michaelis has given an ingenious and sufficiently probable explanation of this remarkable incident, which the positive testimony of Ammianus, a contemporary and a pagan, will not permit us to call in question. It was suggested by a passage in Tacitus. That historian, speaking of Jerusalem, says, [I omit the first part of the quotation adduced by M. Guizot, which only by a most extraordinary mistranslation of *muri introrsus sinuati* by “*enfonce-mens*” could be made to bear on the question.—M.] “The Temple itself was a kind of citadel, which had its own walls, superior in their workmanship and construction to those of the city. The porticos themselves, which surrounded the temple, were an excellent fortification. There was a fountain of constantly running water; *subterranean excavations under the mountain; reservoirs and cisterns to collect the rain-water.*” Tac. Hist. v. ii. 12. These excavations and reservoirs must have been very considerable. The latter furnished water during the whole siege of Jerusalem to 1,100,000 inhabitants, for whom the fountain of Siloe could not have sufficed, and who had no fresh rain-water, the siege having taken place from the month of April to the month of August, a period of the year during which it rarely rains in Jerusalem. As to the excavations, they served after, and even before, the return of the Jews from Babylon, to contain not only magazines of oil, wine, and corn, but also the treasures which were laid up in the Temple. Josephus has related several incidents which show their extent. When Jerusalem was on the point of being taken by Titus, the rebel chiefs, placing their last hopes in these vast subterranean cavities, formed a design of concealing themselves there, and remaining during the conflagration of the city, and until the Romans had retired to a distance. The greater part had not time to execute their design; but one of them, Simon, the Son of Gioras, having

provided himself with food, and tools to excavate the earth descended into this retreat with some companions: he remained there till Titus had set out for Rome: under the pressure of famine he issued forth on a sudden in the very place where the Temple had stood, and appeared in the midst of the Roman guard. He was seized and carried to Rome for the triumph. His appearance made it be suspected that other Jews might have chosen the same asylum; search was made, and a great number discovered. Joseph. de Bell. Jud. 1. vii. c. 2. It is probable that the greater part of these excavations were the remains of the time of Solomon, when it was the custom to work to a great extent under ground: no other date can be assigned to them. The Jews, on their return from the captivity, were too poor to undertake such works; and, although Herod, on rebuilding the Temple, made some excavations, (Joseph. Ant. Jud. xv. 11, vii.,) the haste with which that building was completed will not allow us to suppose that they belonged to that period. Some were used for sewers and drains, others served to conceal the immense treasures of which Crassus, a hundred and twenty years before, plundered the Jews, and which doubtless had been since replaced. The Temple was destroyed A. C. 70; the attempt of Julian to rebuild it, and the fact related by Ammianus, coincide with the year 363. There had then elapsed between these two epochs an interval of near 300 years, during which the excavations, choked up with ruins, must have become full of inflammable air. The workmen employed by Julian as they were digging, arrived at the excavations of the Temple; they would take torches to explore them; sudden flames repelled those who approached; explosions were heard, and these phenomena were renewed every time that they penetrated into new subterranean passages. This explanation is confirmed by the relation of an event nearly similar, by Josephus. King Herod having heard that immense treasures had been concealed in the sepulchre of David, he descended into it with a few confidential persons; he found in the first subterranean chamber only jewels and precious stuffs: but having wished to penetrate into a second chamber, which had been long closed, he was repelled, when he opened it, by flames which killed those who accompanied him. (Ant. Jud. xvi. 7, i.) As here there is no room for miracle, this fact may be considered as a new proof of the veracity of that related by Ammianus and the contemporary

writers.—G. —To the illustrations of the extent of the subterranean chambers adduced by Michaelis, may be added, that when John of Gischala, during the siege, surprised the Temple, the party of Eleazar took refuge within them. Bell. Jud. vi. 3, i. The sudden sinking of the hill of Sion when Jerusalem was occupied by Barchocab, may have been connected with similar excavations. Hist. of Jews, vol. iii. 122 and 186.—M. —It is a fact now popularly known, that when mines which have been long closed are opened, one of two things takes place; either the torches are extinguished and the men fall first into a swoor and soon die; or, if the air is inflammable, a little flame is seen to flicker round the lamp, which spreads and multiplies till the conflagration becomes general, is followed by an explosion, and kill all who are in the way.—G.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[Dr. Lardner, perhaps alone of the Christian critics, presumes to doubt the truth of this famous miracle. (Jewish and Heathen Testimonies, vol. iv. p. 47-71.)]

The silence of Jerom would lead to a suspicion that the same story which was celebrated at a distance, might be despised on the spot. * Note: Gibbon has forgotten Basnage, to whom Warburton replied.—M.

Chapter XXIII: Reign Of Julian.—Part IV.

The restoration of the Jewish temple was secretly connected with the ruin of the Christian church. Julian still continued to maintain the freedom of religious worship, without distinguishing whether this universal toleration proceeded from his justice or his clemency. He affected to pity the unhappy Christians, who were mistaken in the most important object of their lives; but his pity was degraded by contempt, his contempt was embittered by hatred; and the sentiments of Julian were expressed in a style of sarcastic wit, which inflicts a deep and deadly wound, whenever it issues from the mouth of a sovereign. As he was sensible that the Christians gloried in the name of their Redeemer, he countenanced, and perhaps enjoined, the use of the less honorable appellation of Galilæans. [85](#) He declared, that by the folly of the Galilæans, whom he describes as a sect of fanatics, contemptible to men, and odious to the gods, the empire had been reduced to the brink of destruction; and he insinuates in a public edict, that a frantic patient might sometimes be cured by salutary violence. [86](#) An ungenerous distinction was admitted into the mind and counsels of Julian, that, according to the difference of their religious sentiments, one part of his subjects deserved his favor and

friendship, while the other was entitled only to the common benefits that his justice could not refuse to an obedient people. According to a principle, pregnant with mischief and oppression, the emperor transferred to the pontiffs of his own religion the management of the liberal allowances from the public revenue, which had been granted to the church by the piety of Constantine and his sons. The proud system of clerical honors and immunities, which had been constructed with so much art and labor, was levelled to the ground; the hopes of testamentary donations were intercepted by the rigor of the laws; and the priests of the Christian sect were confounded with the last and most ignominious class of the people. Such of these regulations as appeared necessary to check the ambition and avarice of the ecclesiastics, were soon afterwards imitated by the wisdom of an orthodox prince. The peculiar distinctions which policy has bestowed, or superstition has lavished, on the sacerdotal order, *must* be confined to those priests who profess the religion of the state. But the will of the legislator was not exempt from prejudice and passion; and it was the object of the insidious policy of Julian, to deprive the Christians of all the temporal honors and advantages which rendered them respectable in the eyes of the world. [88](#)

85

[\(return\)](#)

[Greg. Naz. Orat. iii. p. 81. And this law was confirmed by the invariable practice of Julian himself. Warburton has justly observed (p. 35,) that the Platonists believed in the mysterious virtue of words and Julian's dislike for the name of Christ might proceed from superstition, as well as from contempt.]

86

[\(return\)](#)

[Fragment. Julian. p. 288. He derides the (Epist. vii.,) and so far loses sight of the principles of toleration, as to wish (Epist. xlii.).]

88

[\(return\)](#)

[These laws, which affected the clergy, may be found in the slight hints of Julian himself, (Epist. lii.) in the vague declamations of Gregory, (Orat. iii. p. 86, 87,) and in the positive assertions of Sozomen, (l. v. c. 5.)]

A just and severe censure has been inflicted on the law which prohibited the Christians from teaching the arts of grammar and rhetoric. [89](#) The motives alleged by the emperor to justify this partial and oppressive measure, might command, during his lifetime, the silence of slaves and the applause of Gatterers. Julian abuses the ambiguous meaning of a word which might be indifferently applied to the language and the religion of the Greeks: he contemptuously observes, that the men who exalt the merit of implicit faith are unfit to claim or to enjoy the advantages of science; and he vainly contends, that if they refuse to adore the gods of Homer and Demosthenes, they ought to content themselves with expounding Luke and Matthew in the church of the Galilæans. [90](#) In all the cities of the Roman world, the education of the youth was intrusted to masters of

grammar and rhetoric; who were elected by the magistrates, maintained at the public expense, and distinguished by many lucrative and honorable privileges. The edict of Julian appears to have included the physicians, and professors of all the liberal arts; and the emperor, who reserved to himself the approbation of the candidates, was authorized by the laws to corrupt, or to punish, the religious constancy of the most learned of the Christians. [91](#) As soon as the resignation of the more obstinate [92](#) teachers had established the unrivalled dominion of the Pagan sophists, Julian invited the rising generation to resort with freedom to the public schools, in a just confidence, that their tender minds would receive the impressions of literature and idolatry. If the greatest part of the Christian youth should be deterred by their own scruples, or by those of their parents, from accepting this dangerous mode of instruction, they must, at the same time, relinquish the benefits of a liberal education. Julian had reason to expect that, in the space of a few years, the church would relapse into its primæval simplicity, and that the theologians, who possessed an adequate share of the learning and eloquence of the age, would be succeeded by a generation of blind and ignorant fanatics, incapable of defending the truth of their own principles, or of exposing the various follies of Polytheism. [93](#)

89 [\(return\)](#)
[Inclemens.... perenni obruendum silentio.
Ammian. xxii. 10, ixv. 5.]

90 [\(return\)](#)
[The edict itself, which is still extant among the epistles of Julian, (xlii.,) may be compared with the loose invectives of Gregory (Orat. iii. p. 96.) Tillemont (Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 1291-1294) has collected the seeming differences of ancients and moderns. They may be easily reconciled. The Christians were *directly* forbid to teach, they were *indirectly* forbid to learn; since they would not frequent the schools of the Pagans.]

91 [\(return\)](#)
[Codex Theodos. l. xiii. tit. iii. de medicis et professoribus, leg. 5, (published the 17th of June, received, at Spoleto in Italy, the 29th of July, A. D. 363,) with Godefroy's Illustrations, tom. v. p. 31.]

92 [\(return\)](#)
[Orosius celebrates their disinterested resolution, Sicut a majori bus nostris compertum habemus, omnes ubique propemodum... officium quam fidem deserere maluerunt, vii. 30. Proæresius, a Christian sophist, refused to accept the partial favor of the emperor Hieronym. in Chron. p. 185, edit. Scaliger. Eunapius in Proæresio p. 126.]

93 [\(return\)](#)
[They had recourse to the expedient of composing books for their own schools. Within a few months

Apollinaris produced his Christian imitations of Homer, (a sacred history in twenty-four books,) Pindar, Euripides, and Menander; and Sozomen is satisfied, that they equalled, or excelled, the originals. * Note: Socrates, however, implies that, on the death of Julian, they were contemptuously thrown aside by the Christians. Socr. Hist. iii.16.—M.]

It was undoubtedly the wish and design of Julian to deprive the Christians of the advantages of wealth, of knowledge, and of power; but the injustice of excluding them from all offices of trust and profit seems to have been the result of his general policy, rather than the immediate consequence of any positive law. [94](#) Superior merit might deserve and obtain, some extraordinary exceptions; but the greater part of the Christian officers were gradually removed from their employments in the state, the army, and the provinces. The hopes of future candidates were extinguished by the declared partiality of a prince, who maliciously reminded them, that it was unlawful for a Christian to use the sword, either of justice, or of war; and who studiously guarded the camp and the tribunals with the ensigns of idolatry. The powers of government were intrusted to the pagans, who professed an ardent zeal for the religion of their ancestors; and as the choice of the emperor was often directed by the rules of divination, the favorites whom he preferred as the most agreeable to the gods, did not always obtain the approbation of mankind. [95](#) Under the administration of their enemies, the Christians had much to suffer, and more to apprehend. The temper of Julian was averse to cruelty; and the care of his reputation, which was exposed to the eyes of the universe, restrained the philosophic monarch from violating the laws of justice and toleration, which he himself had so recently established. But the provincial ministers of his authority were placed in a less conspicuous station. In the exercise of arbitrary power, they consulted the wishes, rather than the commands, of their sovereign; and ventured to exercise a secret and vexatious tyranny against the sectaries, on whom they were not permitted to confer the honors of martyrdom. The emperor, who dissembled as long as possible his knowledge of the injustice that was exercised in his name, expressed his real sense of the conduct of his officers, by gentle reproofs and substantial rewards. [96](#)

94

[\(return\)](#)

[It was the instruction of Julian to his magistrates, (Epist. vii.,). Sozomen (l. v. c. 18) and Socrates (l. iii. c. 13) must be reduced to the standard of Gregory, (Orat. iii. p. 95,) not less prone to exaggeration, but more restrained by the actual knowledge of his contemporary readers.]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, Orat. Parent. 88, p. 814.]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[Greg. Naz. Orat. iii. p. 74, 91, 92. Socrates, l. iii. c. 14. The doret, l. iii. c. 6. Some drawback may,

however, be allowed for the violence of *their* zeal,
not less partial than the zeal of Julian]

The most effectual instrument of oppression, with which they were armed, was the law that obliged the Christians to make full and ample satisfaction for the temples which they had destroyed under the preceding reign. The zeal of the triumphant church had not always expected the sanction of the public authority; and the bishops, who were secure of impunity, had often marched at the head of their congregation, to attack and demolish the fortresses of the prince of darkness. The consecrated lands, which had increased the patrimony of the sovereign or of the clergy, were clearly defined, and easily restored. But on these lands, and on the ruins of Pagan superstition, the Christians had frequently erected their own religious edifices: and as it was necessary to remove the church before the temple could be rebuilt, the justice and piety of the emperor were applauded by one party, while the other deplored and execrated his sacrilegious violence. [97](#) After the ground was cleared, the restitution of those stately structures which had been levelled with the dust, and of the precious ornaments which had been converted to Christian uses, swelled into a very large account of damages and debt. The authors of the injury had neither the ability nor the inclination to discharge this accumulated demand: and the impartial wisdom of a legislator would have been displayed in balancing the adverse claims and complaints, by an equitable and temperate arbitration.

But the whole empire, and particularly the East, was thrown into confusion by the rash edicts of Julian; and the Pagan magistrates, inflamed by zeal and revenge, abused the rigorous privilege of the Roman law, which substitutes, in the place of his inadequate property, the person of the insolvent debtor. Under the preceding reign, Mark, bishop of Arethusa, [98](#) had labored in the conversion of his people with arms more effectual than those of persuasion. [99](#) The magistrates required the full value of a temple which had been destroyed by his intolerant zeal: but as they were satisfied of his poverty, they desired only to bend his inflexible spirit to the promise of the slightest compensation. They apprehended the aged prelate, they inhumanly scourged him, they tore his beard; and his naked body, annointed with honey, was suspended, in a net, between heaven and earth, and exposed to the stings of insects and the rays of a Syrian sun. [100](#) From this lofty station, Mark still persisted to glory in his crime, and to insult the impotent rage of his persecutors. He was at length rescued from their hands, and dismissed to enjoy the honor of his divine triumph. The Arians celebrated the virtue of their pious confessor; the Catholics ambitiously claimed his alliance; [101](#) and the Pagans, who might be susceptible of shame or remorse, were deterred from the repetition of such unavailing cruelty. [102](#) Julian spared his life: but if the bishop of Arethusa had saved the infancy of Julian, [103](#) posterity will condemn the ingratitude, instead of praising the clemency, of the emperor.

exclamations of Gregory, (Orat. iii. p. 86, 87,) we may find it difficult to persuade ourselves that the two orators are really describing the same events.]

98

[\(return\)](#)

[Restan, or Arethusa, at the equal distance of sixteen miles between Emesa (*Hems*) and Epiphania, (*Hamath*,) was founded, or at least named, by Seleucus Nicator. Its peculiar æra dates from the year of Rome 685, according to the medals of the city. In the decline of the Seleucides, Emesa and Arethusa were usurped by the Arab Sampsiceramus, whose posterity, the vassals of Rome, were not extinguished in the reign of Vespasian.—See D’Anville’s Maps and Geographie Ancienne, tom. ii. p. 134. Wesseling, Itineraria, p. 188, and Noris. Epoch Syro-Macedon, p. 80, 481, 482.]

99

[\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen, l. v. c. 10. It is surprising, that Gregory and Theodoret should suppress a circumstance, which, in their eyes, must have enhanced the religious merit of the confessor.]

100

[\(return\)](#)

[The sufferings and constancy of Mark, which Gregory has so tragically painted, (Orat. iii. p. 88-91,) are confirmed by the unexceptionable and reluctant evidence of Libanius. Epist. 730, p. 350, 351. Edit. Wolf. Amstel. 1738.]

101

[\(return\)](#)

[Certatim eum sibi (Christiani) vindicant. It is thus that La Croze and Wolfius (ad loc.) have explained a Greek word, whose true signification had been mistaken by former interpreters, and even by Le Clerc, (Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne, tom. iii. p. 371.) Yet Tillemont is strangely puzzled to understand (Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 1309) *how* Gregory and Theodoret could mistake a Semi-Arian bishop for a saint.]

102

[\(return\)](#)

[See the probable advice of Sallust, (Greg. Nazianzen, Orat. iii. p. 90, 91.) Libanius intercedes for a similar offender, lest they should find many *Marks*; yet he allows, that if Orion had secreted the consecrated wealth, he deserved to suffer the punishment of Marsyas; to be flayed alive, (Epist. 730, p. 349-351.)]

103

[\(return\)](#)

[Gregory (Orat. iii. p. 90) is satisfied that, by saving

the apostate, Mark had deserved still more than he
had suffered.]

At the distance of five miles from Antioch, the Macedonian kings of Syria had consecrated to Apollo one of the most elegant places of devotion in the Pagan world. [104](#) A magnificent temple rose in honor of the god of light; and his colossal figure [105](#) almost filled the capacious sanctuary, which was enriched with gold and gems, and adorned by the skill of the Grecian artists. The deity was represented in a bending attitude, with a golden cup in his hand, pouring out a libation on the earth; as if he supplicated the venerable mother to give to his arms the cold and beauteous Daphne: for the spot was ennobled by fiction; and the fancy of the Syrian poets had transported the amorous tale from the banks of the Peneus to those of the Orontes. The ancient rites of Greece were imitated by the royal colony of Antioch. A stream of prophecy, which rivalled the truth and reputation of the Delphic oracle, flowed from the *Castalian* fountain of Daphne. [106](#) In the adjacent fields a stadium was built by a special privilege, [107](#) which had been purchased from Elis; the Olympic games were celebrated at the expense of the city; and a revenue of thirty thousand pounds sterling was annually applied to the public pleasures. [108](#) The perpetual resort of pilgrims and spectators insensibly formed, in the neighborhood of the temple, the stately and populous village of Daphne, which emulated the splendor, without acquiring the title, of a provincial city. The temple and the village were deeply bosomed in a thick grove of laurels and cypresses, which reached as far as a circumference of ten miles, and formed in the most sultry summers a cool and impenetrable shade. A thousand streams of the purest water, issuing from every hill, preserved the verdure of the earth, and the temperature of the air; the senses were gratified with harmonious sounds and aromatic odors; and the peaceful grove was consecrated to health and joy, to luxury and love. The vigorous youth pursued, like Apollo, the object of his desires; and the blushing maid was warned, by the fate of Daphne, to shun the folly of unseasonable coyness. The soldier and the philosopher wisely avoided the temptation of this sensual paradise: [109](#) where pleasure, assuming the character of religion, imperceptibly dissolved the firmness of manly virtue. But the groves of Daphne continued for many ages to enjoy the veneration of natives and strangers; the privileges of the holy ground were enlarged by the munificence of succeeding emperors; and every generation added new ornaments to the splendor of the temple. [110](#)

104

[\(return\)](#)

[The grove and temple of Daphne are described by Strabo, (l. xvi. p. 1089, 1090, edit. Amstel. 1707,) Libanius, (Nænia, p. 185-188. Antiochic. Orat. xi. p. 380, 381,) and Sozomen, (l. v. c. 19.) Wesseling (Itinerar. p. 581) and Casaubon (ad Hist. August. p. 64) illustrate this curious subject.]

105

[\(return\)](#)

[Simulacrum in eo Olympiaci Jovis imitamenti æquiparans magnitudinem. Ammian. xxii. 13. The

Olympic Jupiter was sixty feet high, and his bulk was consequently equal to that of a thousand men. See a curious *Mémoire* of the Abbé Gedoyn, (Académie des Inscriptions, tom. ix. p. 198.)]

106 [\(return\)](#)

[Hadrian read the history of his future fortunes on a leaf dipped in the Castalian stream; a trick which, according to the physician Vandale, (de Oraculis, p. 281, 282,) might be easily performed by chemical preparations. The emperor stopped the source of such dangerous knowledge; which was again opened by the devout curiosity of Julian.]

107 [\(return\)](#)

[It was purchased, A. D. 44, in the year 92 of the æra of Antioch, (Noris. Epoch. Syro-Maced. p. 139-174,) for the term of ninety Olympiads. But the Olympic games of Antioch were not regularly celebrated till the reign of Commodus. See the curious details in the Chronicle of John Malala, (tom. i. p. 290, 320, 372-381,) a writer whose merit and authority are confined within the limits of his native city.]

108 [\(return\)](#)

[Fifteen talents of gold, bequeathed by Sosibius, who died in the reign of Augustus. The theatrical merits of the Syrian cities in the reign of Constantine, are computed in the *Expositio totius* Murd, p. 8, (Hudson, *Geograph. Minor* tom. iii.)]

109 [\(return\)](#)

[Avidio Cassio Syriacas legiones dedi luxuria diffuentes et *Daphnicis* moribus. These are the words of the emperor Marcus Antoninus in an original letter preserved by his biographer in *Hist. August.* p. 41. Cassius dismissed or punished every soldier who was seen at Daphne.]

110 [\(return\)](#)

[Aliquantum agrorum Daphnensibus dedit, (*Pompey*,) quo locus ibi spatiosior fieret; delectatus amœnitate loci et aquarum abundantiz, Eutropius, vi. 14. Sextus Rufus, de Provinciis, c. 16.]

When Julian, on the day of the annual festival, hastened to adore the Apollo of Daphne, his devotion was raised to the highest pitch of eagerness and impatience. His lively imagination anticipated the grateful pomp of victims, of libations and of incense; a long procession of youths and virgins, clothed in white robes, the symbol of their innocence; and the tumultuous concourse of an innumerable people. But the zeal of Antioch was diverted, since the reign of Christianity, into a different channel. Instead of hecatombs of fat oxen sacrificed by the tribes of a wealthy city to their tutelary deity

the emperor complains that he found only a single goose, provided at the expense of a priest, the pale and solitary inhabitant of this decayed temple. [111](#) The altar was deserted, the oracle had been reduced to silence, and the holy ground was profaned by the introduction of Christian and funereal rites. After Babylas [112](#) (a bishop of Antioch, who died in prison in the persecution of Decius) had rested near a century in his grave, his body, by the order of Cæsar Gallus, was transported into the midst of the grove of Daphne. A magnificent church was erected over his remains; a portion of the sacred lands was usurped for the maintenance of the clergy, and for the burial of the Christians at Antioch, who were ambitious of lying at the feet of their bishop; and the priests of Apollo retired, with their affrighted and indignant votaries. As soon as another revolution seemed to restore the fortune of Paganism, the church of St. Babylas was demolished, and new buildings were added to the mouldering edifice which had been raised by the piety of Syrian kings. But the first and most serious care of Julian was to deliver his oppressed deity from the odious presence of the dead and living Christians, who had so effectually suppressed the voice of fraud or enthusiasm. [113](#) The scene of infection was purified, according to the forms of ancient rituals; the bodies were decently removed; and the ministers of the church were permitted to convey the remains of St. Babylas to their former habitation within the walls of Antioch. The modest behavior which might have assuaged the jealousy of a hostile government was neglected, on this occasion, by the zeal of the Christians. The lofty car, that transported the relics of Babylas, was followed, and accompanied, and received, by an innumerable multitude; who chanted, with thundering acclamations, the Psalms of David the most expressive of their contempt for idols and idolaters. The return of the saint was a triumph; and the triumph was an insult on the religion of the emperor, who exerted his pride to dissemble his resentment. During the night which terminated this indiscreet procession, the temple of Daphne was in flames; the statue of Apollo was consumed; and the walls of the edifice were left a naked and awful monument of ruin. The Christians of Antioch asserted, with religious confidence, that the powerful intercession of St. Babylas had pointed the lightnings of heaven against the devoted roof: but as Julian was reduced to the alternative of believing either a crime or a miracle, he chose, without hesitation, without evidence, but with some color of probability, to impute the fire of Daphne to the revenge of the Galilæans. [114](#) Their offence, had it been sufficiently proved, might have justified the retaliation, which was immediately executed by the order of Julian, of shutting the doors, and confiscating the wealth, of the cathedral of Antioch. To discover the criminals who were guilty of the tumult, of the fire, or of secreting the riches of the church, several of the ecclesiastics were tortured; [115](#) and a Presbyter, of the name of Theodoret, was beheaded by the sentence of the Count of the East. But this hasty act was blamed by the emperor; who lamented, with real or affected concern, that the imprudent zeal of his ministers would tarnish his reign with the disgrace of persecution. [116](#)

- 111 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian (Misopogon, p. 367, 362) discovers his own character with *naïveté*, that unconscious simplicity which always constitutes genuine humor.]
- 112 [\(return\)](#)
[Babylas is named by Eusebius in the succession of the bishops of Antioch, (Hist. Eccles. l. vi. c. 29, 39.) His triumph over two emperors (the first fabulous, the second historical) is diffusely celebrated by Chrysostom, (tom. ii. p. 536-579, edit. Montfaucon.) Tillemont (Mém. Eccles. tom. iii. part ii. p. 287-302, 459-465) becomes almost a sceptic.]
- 113 [\(return\)](#)
[Ecclesiastical critics, particularly those who love relics, exult in the confession of Julian (Misopogon, p. 361) and Libanius, (Lænia, p. 185,) that Apollo was disturbed by the vicinity of *one* dead man. Yet Ammianus (xxii. 12) clears and purifies the whole ground, according to the rites which the Athenians formerly practised in the Isle of Delos.]
- 114 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian (in Misopogon, p. 361) rather insinuates, than affirms, their guilt. Ammianus (xxii. 13) treats the imputation as *levissimus rumor*, and relates the story with extraordinary candor.]
- 115 [\(return\)](#)
[Quo tam atroci casu repente consumpto, ad id usque e imperatoris ira provexit, ut quæstiones agitare juberet solito acriores, (yet Julian blames the lenity of the magistrates of Antioch,) et majorem ecclesiam Antiochiæ claudi. This interdiction was performed with some circumstances of indignity and profanation; and the seasonable death of the principal actor, Julian's uncle, is related with much superstitious complacency by the Abbé de la Bleterie. Vie de Julien, p. 362-369.]
- 116 [\(return\)](#)
[Besides the ecclesiastical historians, who are more or less to be suspected, we may allege the passion of St. Theodore, in the Acta Sincera of Ruinart, p. 591. The complaint of Julian gives it an original and authentic air.]

Chapter XXIII: Reign Of Julian.—Part V.

The zeal of the ministers of Julian was instantly checked by the frown of their sovereign; but when the father of his country declares himself the leader of a faction,

the license of popular fury cannot easily be restrained, nor consistently punished. Julian, in a public composition, applauds the devotion and loyalty of the holy cities of Syria, whose pious inhabitants had destroyed, at the first signal, the sepulchres of the Galilæans; and faintly complains, that they had revenged the injuries of the gods with less moderation than he should have recommended. [117](#) This imperfect and reluctant confession may appear to confirm the ecclesiastical narratives; that in the cities of Gaza, Ascalon, Cæsarea, Heliopolis, &c., the Pagans abused, without prudence or remorse, the moment of their prosperity. That the unhappy objects of their cruelty were released from torture only by death; and as their mangled bodies were dragged through the streets, they were pierced (such was the universal rage) by the spits of cooks, and the distaffs of enraged women; and that the entrails of Christian priests and virgins, after they had been tasted by those bloody fanatics, were mixed with barley, and contemptuously thrown to the unclean animals of the city. [118](#) Such scenes of religious madness exhibit the most contemptible and odious picture of human nature; but the massacre of Alexandria attracts still more attention, from the certainty of the fact, the rank of the victims, and the splendor of the capital of Egypt.

117

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Misopogon, p. 361.]

118

[\(return\)](#)

[See Gregory Nazianzen, (Orat. iii. p. 87.) Sozomen (l. v. c. 9) may be considered as an original, though not impartial, witness. He was a native of Gaza, and had conversed with the confessor Zeno, who, as bishop of Maiuma, lived to the age of a hundred, (l. vii. c. 28.) Philostorgius (l. vii. c. 4, with Godefroy's Dissertations, p. 284) adds some tragic circumstances, of Christians who were *literally* sacrificed at the altars of the gods, &c.]

George, [119](#) from his parents or his education, surnamed the Cappadocian, was born at Epiphania in Cilicia, in a fuller's shop. From this obscure and servile origin he raised himself by the talents of a parasite; and the patrons, whom he assiduously flattered, procured for their worthless dependent a lucrative commission, or contract, to supply the army with bacon. His employment was mean; he rendered it infamous. He accumulated wealth by the basest arts of fraud and corruption; but his malversations were so notorious, that George was compelled to escape from the pursuits of justice. After this disgrace, in which he appears to have saved his fortune at the expense of his honor, he embraced, with real or affected zeal, the profession of Arianism. From the love, or the ostentation, of learning, he collected a valuable library of history rhetoric, philosophy, and theology, [120](#) and the choice of the prevailing faction promoted George of Cappadocia to the throne of Athanasius. The entrance of the new archbishop was that of a Barbarian conqueror; and each moment of his reign was polluted by cruelty and avarice. The Catholics of Alexandria and Egypt were abandoned to a tyrant,

qualified, by nature and education, to exercise the office of persecution; but he oppressed with an impartial hand the various inhabitants of his extensive diocese. The primate of Egypt assumed the pomp and insolence of his lofty station; but he still betrayed the vices of his base and servile extraction. The merchants of Alexandria were impoverished by the unjust, and almost universal, monopoly, which he acquired, of nitre, salt, paper, funerals, &c.: and the spiritual father of a great people condescended to practise the vile and pernicious arts of an informer. The Alexandrians could never forget, nor forgive, the tax, which he suggested, on all the houses of the city; under an obsolete claim, that the royal founder had conveyed to his successors, the Ptolemies and the Cæsars, the perpetual property of the soil. The Pagans, who had been flattered with the hopes of freedom and toleration, excited his devout avarice; and the rich temples of Alexandria were either pillaged or insulted by the haughty prince, who exclaimed, in a loud and threatening tone, “How long will these sepulchres be permitted to stand?” Under the reign of Constantius, he was expelled by the fury, or rather by the justice, of the people; and it was not without a violent struggle, that the civil and military powers of the state could restore his authority, and gratify his revenge. The messenger who proclaimed at Alexandria the accession of Julian, announced the downfall of the archbishop. George, with two of his obsequious ministers, Count Diodorus, and Dracontius, master of the mint were ignominiously dragged in chains to the public prison. At the end of twenty-four days, the prison was forced open by the rage of a superstitious multitude, impatient of the tedious forms of judicial proceedings. The enemies of gods and men expired under their cruel insults; the lifeless bodies of the archbishop and his associates were carried in triumph through the streets on the back of a camel; [12011](#) and the inactivity of the Athanasian party [121](#) was esteemed a shining example of evangelical patience. The remains of these guilty wretches were thrown into the sea; and the popular leaders of the tumult declared their resolution to disappoint the devotion of the Christians, and to intercept the future honors of these *martyrs*, who had been punished, like their predecessors, by the enemies of their religion. [122](#) The fears of the Pagans were just, and their precautions ineffectual. The meritorious death of the archbishop obliterated the memory of his life. The rival of Athanasius was dear and sacred to the Arians, and the seeming conversion of those sectaries introduced his worship into the bosom of the Catholic church. [123](#) The odious stranger, disguising every circumstance of time and place, assumed the mask of a martyr, a saint, and a Christian hero; [124](#) and the infamous George of Cappadocia has been transformed [125](#) into the renowned St. George of England, the patron of arms, of chivalry, and of the garter. [126](#)

[The life and death of George of Cappadocia are described by Ammianus, (xxii. 11,) Gregory of Nazianzen, (Orat. xxi. p. 382, 385, 389, 390,) and Epiphanius, (Hæres. lxxvi.) The invectives of the two saints might not deserve much credit, unless

they were confirmed by the testimony of the cool and impartial infidel.]

120 [\(return\)](#)

[After the massacre of George, the emperor Julian repeatedly sent orders to preserve the library for his own use, and to torture the slaves who might be suspected of secreting any books. He praises the merit of the collection, from whence he had borrowed and transcribed several manuscripts while he pursued his studies in Cappadocia. He could wish, indeed, that the works of the Galilæans might perish but he requires an exact account even of those theological volumes lest other treatises more valuable should be confounded in their less Julian. Epist. ix. xxxvi.]

12011 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian himself says, that they tore him to pieces like dogs, Epist. x.—M.]

121 [\(return\)](#)

[Philostorgius, with cautious malice, insinuates their guilt, l. vii. c. ii. Godefroy p. 267.]

122 [\(return\)](#)

[Cineres projecit in mare, id metuens ut clamabat, ne, collectis supremis, ædes illis exstruerentur ut reliquis, qui deviare a religione compulsi, pertulere, cruciabiles pœnas, adusque gloriosam mortem intemeratâ fide progressi, et nunc Martyres appellantur. Ammian. xxii. 11. Epiphanius proves to the Arians, that George was not a martyr.]

123 [\(return\)](#)

[Some Donatists (Optatus Milev. p. 60, 303, edit. Dupin; and Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 713, in 4to.) and Priscillianists (Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 517, in 4to.) have in like manner usurped the honors of the Catholic saints and martyrs.]

124 [\(return\)](#)

[The saints of Cappadocia, Basil, and the Gregories, were ignorant of their holy companion. Pope Gelasius, (A. D. 494,) the first Catholic who acknowledges St. George, places him among the martyrs “qui Deo magis quam hominibus noti sunt.” He rejects his Acts as the composition of heretics. Some, perhaps, not the oldest, of the spurious Acts, are still extant; and, through a cloud of fiction, we may yet distinguish the combat which St. George of Cappadocia sustained, in the presence of Queen *Alexandria*, against the *magician Athanasius*.]

[This transformation is not given as absolutely certain, but as *extremely* probable. See the Longueruana, tom. i. p. 194. —Note: The late Dr. Milner (the Roman Catholic bishop) wrote a tract to vindicate the existence and the orthodoxy of the tutelar saint of England. He succeeds, I think, in tracing the worship of St. George up to a period which makes it improbable that so notorious an Arian could be palmed upon the Catholic church as a saint and a martyr. The Acts rejected by Gelasius may have been of Arian origin, and designed to ingraft the story of their hero on the obscure adventures of some earlier saint. See an Historical and Critical Inquiry into the Existence and Character of Saint George, in a letter to the Earl of Leicester, by the Rev. J. Milner. F. S. A. London 1792.—M.]

[A curious history of the worship of St. George, from the sixth century, (when he was already revered in Palestine, in Armenia at Rome, and at Treves in Gaul,) might be extracted from Dr. Heylin (History of St. George, 2d edition, London, 1633, in 4to. p. 429) and the Bollandists, (Act. Ss. Mens. April. tom. iii. p. 100-163.) His fame and popularity in Europe, and especially in England, proceeded from the Crusades.]

About the same time that Julian was informed of the tumult of Alexandria, he received intelligence from Edessa, that the proud and wealthy faction of the Arians had insulted the weakness of the Valentinians, and committed such disorders as ought not to be suffered with impunity in a well-regulated state. Without expecting the slow forms of justice, the exasperated prince directed his mandate to the magistrates of Edessa, [127](#) by which he confiscated the whole property of the church: the money was distributed among the soldiers; the lands were added to the domain; and this act of oppression was aggravated by the most ungenerous irony. “I show myself,” says Julian, “the true friend of the Galilæans. Their *admirable* law has promised the kingdom of heaven to the poor; and they will advance with more diligence in the paths of virtue and salvation, when they are relieved by my assistance from the load of temporal possessions. Take care,” pursued the monarch, in a more serious tone, “take care how you provoke my patience and humanity. If these disorders continue, I will revenge on the magistrates the crimes of the people; and you will have reason to dread, not only confiscation and exile, but fire and the sword.” The tumults of Alexandria were doubtless of a more bloody and dangerous nature: but a Christian bishop had fallen by the hands of the Pagans; and the public epistle of Julian affords a very lively proof of the partial spirit of his administration. His reproaches to the citizens of Alexandria are

mingled with expressions of esteem and tenderness; and he laments, that, on this occasion, they should have departed from the gentle and generous manners which attested their Grecian extraction. He gravely censures the offence which they had committed against the laws of justice and humanity; but he recapitulates, with visible complacency, the intolerable provocations which they had so long endured from the impious tyranny of George of Cappadocia. Julian admits the principle, that a wise and vigorous government should chastise the insolence of the people; yet, in consideration of their founder Alexander, and of Serapis their tutelar deity, he grants a free and gracious pardon to the guilty city, for which he again feels the affection of a brother. [128](#)

127

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Epist. xliii.]

128

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian. Epist. x. He allowed his friends to assuage his anger Ammian. xxii. 11.]

After the tumult of Alexandria had subsided, Athanasius, amidst the public acclamations, seated himself on the throne from whence his unworthy competitor had been precipitated: and as the zeal of the archbishop was tempered with discretion, the exercise of his authority tended not to inflame, but to reconcile, the minds of the people. His pastoral labors were not confined to the narrow limits of Egypt. The state of the Christian world was present to his active and capacious mind; and the age, the merit, the reputation of Athanasius, enabled him to assume, in a moment of danger, the office of Ecclesiastical Dictator. [129](#) Three years were not yet elapsed since the majority of the bishops of the West had ignorantly, or reluctantly, subscribed the Confession of Rimini. They repented, they believed, but they dreaded the unseasonable rigor of their orthodox brethren; and if their pride was stronger than their faith, they might throw themselves into the arms of the Arians, to escape the indignity of a public penance, which must degrade them to the condition of obscure laymen. At the same time the domestic differences concerning the union and distinction of the divine persons, were agitated with some heat among the Catholic doctors; and the progress of this metaphysical controversy seemed to threaten a public and lasting division of the Greek and Latin churches. By the wisdom of a select synod, to which the name and presence of Athanasius gave the authority of a general council, the bishops, who had unwarily deviated into error, were admitted to the communion of the church, on the easy condition of subscribing the Nicene Creed; without any formal acknowledgment of their past fault, or any minute definition of their scholastic opinions. The advice of the primate of Egypt had already prepared the clergy of Gaul and Spain, of Italy and Greece, for the reception of this salutary measure; and, notwithstanding the opposition of some ardent spirits, [130](#) the fear of the common enemy promoted the peace and harmony of the Christians. [131](#)

129

[\(return\)](#)

[See Athanas. ad Rufin. tom. ii. p. 40, 41, and Greg. Nazianzen Orat. iii. p. 395, 396; who justly states

the temperate zeal of the primate, as much more meritorious than his prayers, his fasts, his persecutions, &c.]

130

[\(return\)](#)

[I have not leisure to follow the blind obstinacy of Lucifer of Cagliari. See his adventures in Tillemont, (Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 900-926;) and observe how the color of the narrative insensibly changes, as the confessor becomes a schismatic.]

131

[\(return\)](#)

[Assensus est huic sententiæ Occidens, et, per tam necessarium conilium, Satanæ faucibus mundus ereptus. The lively and artful dialogue of Jerom against the Luciferians (tom. ii. p. 135-155) exhibits an original picture of the ecclesiastical policy of the times.]

The skill and diligence of the primate of Egypt had improved the season of tranquillity, before it was interrupted by the hostile edicts of the emperor. [132](#) Julian, who despised the Christians, honored Athanasius with his sincere and peculiar hatred. For his sake alone, he introduced an arbitrary distinction, repugnant at least to the spirit of his former declarations. He maintained, that the Galilæans, whom he had recalled from exile, were not restored, by that general indulgence, to the possession of their respective churches; and he expressed his astonishment, that a criminal, who had been repeatedly condemned by the judgment of the emperors, should dare to insult the majesty of the laws, and insolently usurp the archiepiscopal throne of Alexandria, without expecting the orders of his sovereign. As a punishment for the imaginary offence, he again banished Athanasius from the city; and he was pleased to suppose, that this act of justice would be highly agreeable to his pious subjects. The pressing solicitations of the people soon convinced him, that the majority of the Alexandrians were Christians; and that the greatest part of the Christians were firmly attached to the cause of their oppressed primate. But the knowledge of their sentiments, instead of persuading him to recall his decree, provoked him to extend to all Egypt the term of the exile of Athanasius. The zeal of the multitude rendered Julian still more inexorable: he was alarmed by the danger of leaving at the head of a tumultuous city, a daring and popular leader; and the language of his resentment discovers the opinion which he entertained of the courage and abilities of Athanasius. The execution of the sentence was still delayed, by the caution or negligence of Ecdicius, præfect of Egypt, who was at length awakened from his lethargy by a severe reprimand. “Though you neglect,” says Julian, “to write to me on any other subject, at least it is your duty to inform me of your conduct towards Athanasius, the enemy of the gods. My intentions have been long since communicated to you. I swear by the great Serapis, that unless, on the calends of December, Athanasius has departed from Alexandria, nay, from Egypt, the officers of your government shall pay a fine of one hundred pounds of gold. You know my temper: I am slow to condemn, but I am still slower to forgive.” This epistle was enforced by a

short postscript, written with the emperor's own hand. "The contempt that is shown for all the gods fills me with grief and indignation. There is nothing that I should see, nothing that I should hear, with more pleasure, than the expulsion of Athanasius from all Egypt. The abominable wretch! Under my reign, the baptism of several Grecian ladies of the highest rank has been the effect of his persecutions." [133](#) The death of Athanasius was not *expressly* commanded; but the præfect of Egypt understood that it was safer for him to exceed, than to neglect, the orders of an irritated master. The archbishop prudently retired to the monasteries of the Desert; eluded, with his usual dexterity, the snares of the enemy; and lived to triumph over the ashes of a prince, who, in words of formidable import, had declared his wish that the whole venom of the Galilæan school were contained in the single person of Athanasius. [134](#) [13411](#)

132

[\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont, who supposes that George was massacred in August crowds the actions of Athanasius into a narrow space, (Mém. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 360.) An original fragment, published by the Marquis Maffei, from the old Chapter library of Verona, (Osservazioni Letterarie, tom. iii. p. 60-92,) affords many important dates, which are authenticated by the computation of Egyptian months.]

133

[\(return\)](#)

[I have preserved the ambiguous sense of the last word, the ambiguity of a tyrant who wished to find, or to create, guilt.]

134

[\(return\)](#)

[The three epistles of Julian, which explain his intentions and conduct with regard to Athanasius, should be disposed in the following chronological order, xxvi. x. vi. * See likewise, Greg. Nazianzen xxi. p. 393. Sozomen, l. v. c. 15. Socrates, l. iii. c. 14. Theodoret, l. iii. c. 9, and Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 361-368, who has used some materials prepared by the Bollandists.]

13411

[\(return\)](#)

[The sentence in the text is from Epist. li. addressed to the people of Alexandria.—M.]

I have endeavored faithfully to represent the artful system by which Julian proposed to obtain the effects, without incurring the guilt, or reproach, of persecution. But if the deadly spirit of fanaticism perverted the heart and understanding of a virtuous prince, it must, at the same time, be confessed that the *real* sufferings of the Christians were inflamed and magnified by human passions and religious enthusiasm. The meekness and resignation which had distinguished the primitive disciples of the gospel, was the object of the applause, rather than of the imitation of their successors. The Christians, who had now possessed above forty years the civil and ecclesiastical government of the

empire, had contracted the insolent vices of prosperity, [135](#) and the habit of believing that the saints alone were entitled to reign over the earth. As soon as the enmity of Julian deprived the clergy of the privileges which had been conferred by the favor of Constantine, they complained of the most cruel oppression; and the free toleration of idolaters and heretics was a subject of grief and scandal to the orthodox party. [136](#) The acts of violence, which were no longer countenanced by the magistrates, were still committed by the zeal of the people. At Pessinus, the altar of Cybele was overturned almost in the presence of the emperor; and in the city of Cæsarea in Cappadocia, the temple of Fortune, the sole place of worship which had been left to the Pagans, was destroyed by the rage of a popular tumult. On these occasions, a prince, who felt for the honor of the gods, was not disposed to interrupt the course of justice; and his mind was still more deeply exasperated, when he found that the fanatics, who had deserved and suffered the punishment of incendiaries, were rewarded with the honors of martyrdom. [137](#) The Christian subjects of Julian were assured of the hostile designs of their sovereign; and, to their jealous apprehension, every circumstance of his government might afford some grounds of discontent and suspicion. In the ordinary administration of the laws, the Christians, who formed so large a part of the people, must frequently be condemned: but their indulgent brethren, without examining the merits of the cause, presumed their innocence, allowed their claims, and imputed the severity of their judge to the partial malice of religious persecution. [138](#) These present hardships, intolerable as they might appear, were represented as a slight prelude of the impending calamities. The Christians considered Julian as a cruel and crafty tyrant; who suspended the execution of his revenge till he should return victorious from the Persian war. They expected, that as soon as he had triumphed over the foreign enemies of Rome, he would lay aside the irksome mask of dissimulation; that the amphitheatre would stream with the blood of hermits and bishops; and that the Christians who still persevered in the profession of the faith, would be deprived of the common benefits of nature and society. [139](#) Every calumny [140](#) that could wound the reputation of the Apostate, was credulously embraced by the fears and hatred of his adversaries; and their indiscreet clamors provoked the temper of a sovereign, whom it was their duty to respect, and their interest to flatter.

They still protested, that prayers and tears were their only weapons against the impious tyrant, whose head they devoted to the justice of offended Heaven. But they insinuated, with sullen resolution, that their submission was no longer the effect of weakness; and that, in the imperfect state of human virtue, the patience, which is founded on principle, may be exhausted by persecution. It is impossible to determine how far the zeal of Julian would have prevailed over his good sense and humanity; but if we seriously reflect on the strength and spirit of the church, we shall be convinced, that before the emperor could have extinguished the religion of Christ, he must have involved his country in the horrors of a civil war. [141](#)

- 135 [\(return\)](#)
[See the fair confession of Gregory, (Orat. iii. p. 61, 62.)]
- 136 [\(return\)](#)
[Hear the furious and absurd complaint of Optatus, (de Schismat Denatist. l. ii. c. 16, 17.)]
- 137 [\(return\)](#)
[Greg. Nazianzen, Orat. iii. p. 91, iv. p. 133. He praises the rioters of Cæsarea. See Sozomen, l. v. 4, 11. Tillemont (Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 649, 650) owns, that their behavior was not dans l'ordre commun: but he is perfectly satisfied, as the great St. Basil always celebrated the festival of these blessed martyrs.]
- 138 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian determined a lawsuit against the new Christian city at Maiuma, the port of Gaza; and his sentence, though it might be imputed to bigotry, was never reversed by his successors. Sozomen, l. v. c. 3. Reland, Palestin. tom. ii. p. 791.]
- 139 [\(return\)](#)
[Gregory (Orat. iii. p. 93, 94, 95. Orat. iv. p. 114) pretends to speak from the information of Julian's confidants, whom Orosius (vii. 30) could not have seen.]
- 140 [\(return\)](#)
[Gregory (Orat. iii. p. 91) charges the Apostate with secret sacrifices of boys and girls; and positively affirms, that the dead bodies were thrown into the Orontes. See Theodoret, l. iii. c. 26, 27; and the equivocal candor of the Abbé de la Bleterie, Vie de Julien, p. 351, 352. Yet *contemporary* malice could not impute to Julian the troops of martyrs, more especially in the West, which Baronius so greedily swallows, and Tillemont so faintly rejects, (Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 1295-1315.)]
- 141 [\(return\)](#)
[The resignation of Gregory is truly edifying, (Orat. iv. p. 123, 124.) Yet, when an officer of Julian attempted to seize the church of Nazianzus, he would have lost his life, if he had not yielded to the zeal of the bishop and people, (Orat. xix. p. 308.) See the reflections of Chrysostom, as they are alleged by Tillemont, (Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 575.)]

Chapter XXIV: The Retreat And Death Of Julian.—Part I.

The philosophical fable which Julian composed under the name of the Cæsars, [1](#) is one of the most agreeable and instructive productions of ancient wit. [2](#) During the freedom and equality of the days of the Saturnalia, Romulus prepared a feast for the deities of Olympus, who had adopted him as a worthy associate, and for the Roman princes, who had reigned over his martial people, and the vanquished nations of the earth. The immortals were placed in just order on their thrones of state, and the table of the Cæsars was spread below the Moon in the upper region of the air. The tyrants, who would have disgraced the society of gods and men, were thrown headlong, by the inexorable Nemesis, into the Tartarean abyss. The rest of the Cæsars successively advanced to their seats; and as they passed, the vices, the defects, the blemishes of their respective characters, were maliciously noticed by old Silenus, a laughing moralist, who disguised the wisdom of a philosopher under the mask of a Bacchanal. [3](#) As soon as the feast was ended, the voice of Mercury proclaimed the will of Jupiter, that a celestial crown should be the reward of superior merit. Julius Cæsar, Augustus, Trajan, and Marcus Antoninus, were selected as the most illustrious candidates; the effeminate Constantine [4](#) was not excluded from this honorable competition, and the great Alexander was invited to dispute the prize of glory with the Roman heroes. Each of the candidates was allowed to display the merit of his own exploits; but, in the judgment of the gods, the modest silence of Marcus pleaded more powerfully than the elaborate orations of his haughty rivals. When the judges of this awful contest proceeded to examine the heart, and to scrutinize the springs of action, the superiority of the Imperial Stoic appeared still more decisive and conspicuous. [5](#) Alexander and Cæsar, Augustus, Trajan, and Constantine, acknowledged, with a blush, that fame, or power, or pleasure had been the important object of *their* labors: but the gods themselves beheld, with reverence and love, a virtuous mortal, who had practised on the throne the lessons of philosophy; and who, in a state of human imperfection, had aspired to imitate the moral attributes of the Deity. The value of this agreeable composition (the Cæsars of Julian) is enhanced by the rank of the author. A prince, who delineates, with freedom, the vices and virtues of his predecessors, subscribes, in every line, the censure or approbation of his own conduct.

[See this fable or satire, p. 306-336 of the Leipsig edition of Julian's works. The French version of the learned Ezekiel Spanheim (Paris, 1683) is coarse, languid, and correct; and his notes, proofs, illustrations, &c., are piled on each other till they form a mass of 557 close-printed quarto pages. The Abbé' de la Bleterie (Vie de Jovien, tom. i. p. 241-393) has more happily expressed the spirit, as well

as the sense, of the original, which he illustrates with some concise and curious notes.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[Spanheim (in his preface) has most learnedly discussed the etymology, origin, resemblance, and disagreement of the Greek *satyrs*, a dramatic piece, which was acted after the tragedy; and the Latin *satires*, (from *Satura*,) a *miscellaneous* composition, either in prose or verse. But the Cæsars of Julian are of such an original cast, that the critic is perplexed to which class he should ascribe them. * Note: See also Casaubon de Satira, with Rambach's observations.—M.]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[This mixed character of Silenus is finely painted in the sixth eclogue of Virgil.]

4 [\(return\)](#)

[Every impartial reader must perceive and condemn the partiality of Julian against his uncle Constantine, and the Christian religion. On this occasion, the interpreters are compelled, by a most sacred interest, to renounce their allegiance, and to desert the cause of their author.]

5 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian was secretly inclined to prefer a Greek to a Roman. But when he seriously compared a hero with a philosopher, he was sensible that mankind had much greater obligations to Socrates than to Alexander, (Orat. ad Themistium, p. 264.)]

In the cool moments of reflection, Julian preferred the useful and benevolent virtues of Antoninus; but his ambitious spirit was inflamed by the glory of Alexander; and he solicited, with equal ardor, the esteem of the wise, and the applause of the multitude. In the season of life when the powers of the mind and body enjoy the most active vigor, the emperor who was instructed by the experience, and animated by the success, of the German war, resolved to signalize his reign by some more splendid and memorable achievement. The ambassadors of the East, from the continent of India, and the Isle of Ceylon, [6](#) had respectfully saluted the Roman purple. [7](#) The nations of the West esteemed and dreaded the personal virtues of Julian, both in peace and war. He despised the trophies of a Gothic victory, and was satisfied that the rapacious Barbarians of the Danube would be restrained from any future violation of the faith of treaties by the terror of his name, and the additional fortifications with which he strengthened the Thracian and Illyrian frontiers. The successor of Cyrus and Artaxerxes was the only rival whom he deemed worthy of his arms; and he resolved, by the final conquest of Persia, to chastise the naughty nation which had so long resisted and insulted the majesty of Rome. [9](#) As soon as the Persian monarch was informed that the throne of

Constantius was filled by a prince of a very different character, he condescended to make some artful, or perhaps sincere, overtures towards a negotiation of peace. But the pride of Sapor was astonished by the firmness of Julian; who sternly declared, that he would never consent to hold a peaceful conference among the flames and ruins of the cities of Mesopotamia; and who added, with a smile of contempt, that it was needless to treat by ambassadors, as he himself had determined to visit speedily the court of Persia. The impatience of the emperor urged the diligence of the military preparations. The generals were named; and Julian, marching from Constantinople through the provinces of Asia Minor, arrived at Antioch about eight months after the death of his predecessor. His ardent desire to march into the heart of Persia, was checked by the indispensable duty of regulating the state of the empire; by his zeal to revive the worship of the gods; and by the advice of his wisest friends; who represented the necessity of allowing the salutary interval of winter quarters, to restore the exhausted strength of the legions of Gaul, and the discipline and spirit of the Eastern troops. Julian was persuaded to fix, till the ensuing spring, his residence at Antioch, among a people maliciously disposed to deride the haste, and to censure the delays, of their sovereign. [10](#)

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Inde nationibus Indicis certatim cum aonis optimates mittentibus.... ab usque Divis et *Serendivis*. Ammian. xx. 7. This island, to which the names of Taprobana, Serendib, and Ceylon, have been successively applied, manifests how imperfectly the seas and lands to the east of Cape Comorin were known to the Romans. 1. Under the reign of Claudius, a freedman, who farmed the customs of the Red Sea, was accidentally driven by the winds upon this strange and undiscovered coast: he conversed six months with the natives; and the king of Ceylon, who heard, for the first time, of the power and justice of Rome, was persuaded to send an embassy to the emperor. (Plin. Hist. Nat. vi. 24.) 2. The geographers (and even Ptolemy) have magnified, above fifteen times, the real size of this new world, which they extended as far as the equator, and the neighborhood of China. * Note: The name of Diva gens or Divorum regio, according to the probable conjecture of M. Letronne, (Trois Mém. Acad. p. 127,) was applied by the ancients to the whole eastern coast of the Indian Peninsula, from Ceylon to the Canges. The name may be traced in Devipatnam, Devidan, Devicotta, Divinely, the point of Divy.—M. Letronne, p.121, considers the freedman with his embassy from Ceylon to have been an impostor.—M.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[These embassies had been sent to Constantius.

Ammianus, who unwarily deviates into gross flattery, must have forgotten the length of the way, and the short duration of the reign of Julian. —
Gothos sæpe fallaces et perfidos; hostes quærere se meliores aiebat: illis enim sufficere mercatores Galatas per quos ubique sine conditionis discrimine venundantur. (Ammian. xxii. 7.) Within less than fifteen years, these Gothic slaves threatened and subdued their masters.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Alexander reminds his rival Cæsar, who depreciated the fame and merit of an Asiatic victory, that Crassus and Antony had felt the Persian arrows; and that the Romans, in a war of three hundred years, had not yet subdued the single province of Mesopotamia or Assyria, (Cæsares, p. 324.)]

10

[\(return\)](#)

[The design of the Persian war is declared by Ammianus, (xxii. 7, 12,) Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 79, 80, p. 305, 306,) Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 158,) and Socrates, (l. iii. c. 19.)]

If Julian had flattered himself, that his personal connection with the capital of the East would be productive of mutual satisfaction to the prince and people, he made a very false estimate of his own character, and of the manners of Antioch. [11](#) The warmth of the climate disposed the natives to the most intemperate enjoyment of tranquillity and opulence; and the lively licentiousness of the Greeks was blended with the hereditary softness of the Syrians. Fashion was the only law, pleasure the only pursuit, and the splendor of dress and furniture was the only distinction of the citizens of Antioch. The arts of luxury were honored; the serious and manly virtues were the subject of ridicule; and the contempt for female modesty and reverent age announced the universal corruption of the capital of the East. The love of spectacles was the taste, or rather passion, of the Syrians; the most skilful artists were procured from the adjacent cities; [12](#) a considerable share of the revenue was devoted to the public amusements; and the magnificence of the games of the theatre and circus was considered as the happiness and as the glory of Antioch. The rustic manners of a prince who disdained such glory, and was insensible of such happiness, soon disgusted the delicacy of his subjects; and the effeminate Orientals could neither imitate, nor admire, the severe simplicity which Julian always maintained, and sometimes affected. The days of festivity, consecrated, by ancient custom, to the honor of the gods, were the only occasions in which Julian relaxed his philosophic severity; and those festivals were the only days in which the Syrians of Antioch could reject the allurements of pleasure. The majority of the people supported the glory of the Christian name, which had been first invented by their ancestors: [13](#) they contended themselves with disobeying the moral precepts, but they were scrupulously attached to the speculative doctrines of their

religion. The church of Antioch was distracted by heresy and schism; but the Arians and the Athanasians, the followers of Meletius and those of Paulinus, [14](#) were actuated by the same pious hatred of their common adversary.

- 11 [\(return\)](#)
[The Satire of Julian, and the Homilies of St. Chrysostom, exhibit the same picture of Antioch. The miniature which the Abbé de la Bleterie has copied from thence, (Vie de Julian, p. 332,) is elegant and correct.]
- 12 [\(return\)](#)
[Laodicea furnished charioteers; Tyre and Berytus, comedians; Cæsarea, pantomimes; Heliopolis, singers; Gaza, gladiators, Ascalon, wrestlers; and Castabala, rope-dancers. See the Expositio totius Mundi, p. 6, in the third tome of Hudson's Minor Geographers.]
- 13 [\(return\)](#)
[The people of Antioch ingenuously professed their attachment to the *Chi*, (Christ,) and the *Kappa*, (Constantius.) Julian in Misopogon, p. 357.]
- 14 [\(return\)](#)
[The schism of Antioch, which lasted eighty-five years, (A. D. 330-415,) was inflamed, while Julian resided in that city, by the indiscreet ordination of Paulinus. See Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. iii. p. 803 of the quarto edition, (Paris, 1701, &c,) which henceforward I shall quote.]

The strongest prejudice was entertained against the character of an apostate, the enemy and successor of a prince who had engaged the affections of a very numerous sect; and the removal of St. Babylas excited an implacable opposition to the person of Julian. His subjects complained, with superstitious indignation, that famine had pursued the emperor's steps from Constantinople to Antioch; and the discontent of a hungry people was exasperated by the injudicious attempt to relieve their distress. The inclemency of the season had affected the harvests of Syria; and the price of bread, [15](#) in the markets of Antioch, had naturally risen in proportion to the scarcity of corn. But the fair and reasonable proportion was soon violated by the rapacious arts of monopoly. In this unequal contest, in which the produce of the land is claimed by one party as his exclusive property, is used by another as a lucrative object of trade, and is required by a third for the daily and necessary support of life, all the profits of the intermediate agents are accumulated on the head of the defenceless customers. The hardships of their situation were exaggerated and increased by their own impatience and anxiety; and the apprehension of a scarcity gradually produced the appearances of a famine. When the luxurious citizens of Antioch complained of the high price of poultry and fish, Julian publicly declared, that a frugal city ought to be satisfied with a regular supply of wine,

oil, and bread; but he acknowledged, that it was the duty of a sovereign to provide for the subsistence of his people. With this salutary view, the emperor ventured on a very dangerous and doubtful step, of fixing, by legal authority, the value of corn. He enacted, that, in a time of scarcity, it should be sold at a price which had seldom been known in the most plentiful years; and that his own example might strengthen his laws, he sent into the market four hundred and twenty-two thousand *modii*, or measures, which were drawn by his order from the granaries of Hierapolis, of Chalcis, and even of Egypt. The consequences might have been foreseen, and were soon felt. The Imperial wheat was purchased by the rich merchants; the proprietors of land, or of corn, withheld from the city the accustomed supply; and the small quantities that appeared in the market were secretly sold at an advanced and illegal price. Julian still continued to applaud his own policy, treated the complaints of the people as a vain and ungrateful murmur, and convinced Antioch that he had inherited the obstinacy, though not the cruelty, of his brother Gallus. [16](#) The remonstrances of the municipal senate served only to exasperate his inflexible mind. He was persuaded, perhaps with truth, that the senators of Antioch who possessed lands, or were concerned in trade, had themselves contributed to the calamities of their country; and he imputed the disrespectful boldness which they assumed, to the sense, not of public duty, but of private interest. The whole body, consisting of two hundred of the most noble and wealthy citizens, were sent, under a guard, from the palace to the prison; and though they were permitted, before the close of evening, to return to their respective houses, [17](#) the emperor himself could not obtain the forgiveness which he had so easily granted. The same grievances were still the subject of the same complaints, which were industriously circulated by the wit and levity of the Syrian Greeks. During the licentious days of the Saturnalia, the streets of the city resounded with insolent songs, which derided the laws, the religion, the personal conduct, and even the *beard*, of the emperor; the spirit of Antioch was manifested by the connivance of the magistrates, and the applause of the multitude. [18](#) The disciple of Socrates was too deeply affected by these popular insults; but the monarch, endowed with a quick sensibility, and possessed of absolute power, refused his passions the gratification of revenge. A tyrant might have proscribed, without distinction, the lives and fortunes of the citizens of Antioch; and the unwarlike Syrians must have patiently submitted to the lust, the rapaciousness and the cruelty, of the faithful legions of Gaul. A milder sentence might have deprived the capital of the East of its honors and privileges; and the courtiers, perhaps the subjects, of Julian, would have applauded an act of justice, which asserted the dignity of the supreme magistrate of the republic. [19](#) But instead of abusing, or exerting, the authority of the state, to revenge his personal injuries, Julian contented himself with an inoffensive mode of retaliation, which it would be in the power of few princes to employ. He had been insulted by satires and libels; in his turn, he composed, under the title of the *Enemy of the Beard*, an ironical confession of his own faults, and a severe satire on the licentious and effeminate manners of Antioch. This Imperial reply was publicly

exposed before the gates of the palace; and the Misopogon [20](#) still remains a singular monument of the resentment, the wit, the humanity, and the indiscretion of Julian. Though he affected to laugh, he could not forgive. [21](#) His contempt was expressed, and his revenge might be gratified, by the nomination of a governor [22](#) worthy only of such subjects; and the emperor, forever renouncing the ungrateful city, proclaimed his resolution to pass the ensuing winter at Tarsus in Cilicia. [23](#)

15 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian states three different proportions, of five, ten, or fifteen *modii* of wheat for one piece of gold, according to the degrees of plenty and scarcity, (in Misopogon, p. 369.) From this fact, and from some collateral examples, I conclude, that under the successors of Constantine, the moderate price of wheat was about thirty-two shillings the English quarter, which is equal to the average price of the sixty-four first years of the present century. See Arbuthnot's Tables of Coins, Weights, and Measures, p. 88, 89. Plin. Hist. Natur. xviii. 12. Mém. de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii. p. 718-721. Smith's Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, vol. i. p 246. This last I am proud to quote as the work of a sage and a friend.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[Nunquam a proposito declinabat, Galli similis fratris, licet incruentus. Ammian. xxii. 14. The ignorance of the most enlightened princes may claim some excuse; but we cannot be satisfied with Julian's own defence, (in Misopogon, p. 363, 369,) or the elaborate apology of Libanius, (Orat. Parental c. xcvi. p. 321.)]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Their short and easy confinement is gently touched by Libanius, (Orat. Parental. c. xcvi. p. 322, 323.)]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, (ad Antiochenos de Imperatoris ira, c. 17, 18, 19, in Fabricius, Bibliot. Græc. tom. vii. p. 221-223,) like a skilful advocate, severely censures the folly of the people, who suffered for the crime of a few obscure and drunken wretches.]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius (ad Antiochen. c. vii. p. 213) reminds Antioch of the recent chastisement of Cæsarea; and even Julian (in Misopogon, p. 355) insinuates how severely Tarentum had expiated the insult to the Roman ambassadors.]

- 20 [\(return\)](#)
[On the subject of the Misopogon, see Ammianus, (xxii. 14,) Libanius, (Orat. Parentalis, c. xcix. p. 323,) Gregory Nazianzen, (Orat. iv. p. 133) and the Chronicle of Antioch, by John Malala, (tom. ii. p. 15, 16.) I have essential obligations to the translation and notes of the Abbé de la Bleterie, (Vie de Jovien, tom. ii. p. 1-138.)]
- 21 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammianus very justly remarks, Coactus dissimulare pro tempore ira sufflabatur interna. The elaborate irony of Julian at length bursts forth into serious and direct invective.]
- 22 [\(return\)](#)
[Ipse autem Antiochiam egressurus, Heliopoliten quendam Alexandrum Syriacæ jurisdictioni præfecit, turbulentum et sævum; dicebatque non illum meruisse, sed Antiochensibus avaris et contumeliosis hujusmodi judicem convenire. Ammian. xxiii. 2. Libanius, (Epist. 722, p. 346, 347,) who confesses to Julian himself, that he had shared the general discontent, pretends that Alexander was a useful, though harsh, reformer of the manners and religion of Antioch.]
- 23 [\(return\)](#)
[Julian, in Misopogon, p. 364. Ammian. xxiii. 2, and Valesius, ad loc. Libanius, in a professed oration, invites him to return to his loyal and penitent city of Antioch.]

Yet Antioch possessed one citizen, whose genius and virtues might atone, in the opinion of Julian, for the vice and folly of his country. The sophist Libanius was born in the capital of the East; he publicly professed the arts of rhetoric and declamation at Nice, Nicomedia, Constantinople, Athens, and, during the remainder of his life, at Antioch. His school was assiduously frequented by the Grecian youth; his disciples, who sometimes exceeded the number of eighty, celebrated their incomparable master; and the jealousy of his rivals, who persecuted him from one city to another, confirmed the favorable opinion which Libanius ostentatiously displayed of his superior merit. The preceptors of Julian had extorted a rash but solemn assurance, that he would never attend the lectures of their adversary: the curiosity of the royal youth was checked and inflamed: he secretly procured the writings of this dangerous sophist, and gradually surpassed, in the perfect imitation of his style, the most laborious of his domestic pupils. [24](#) When Julian ascended the throne, he declared his impatience to embrace and reward the Syrian sophist, who had preserved, in a degenerate age, the Grecian purity of taste, of manners, and of religion. The emperor's prepossession was increased and justified by the discreet pride of his favorite. Instead of pressing, with the foremost of the crowd, into the palace of Constantinople, Libanius calmly expected his arrival at

Antioch; withdrew from court on the first symptoms of coldness and indifference; required a formal invitation for each visit; and taught his sovereign an important lesson, that he might command the obedience of a subject, but that he must deserve the attachment of a friend. The sophists of every age, despising, or affecting to despise, the accidental distinctions of birth and fortune, [25](#) reserve their esteem for the superior qualities of the mind, with which they themselves are so plentifully endowed. Julian might disdain the acclamations of a venal court, who adored the Imperial purple; but he was deeply flattered by the praise, the admonition, the freedom, and the envy of an independent philosopher, who refused his favors, loved his person, celebrated his fame, and protected his memory. The voluminous writings of Libanius still exist; for the most part, they are the vain and idle compositions of an orator, who cultivated the science of words; the productions of a recluse student, whose mind, regardless of his contemporaries, was incessantly fixed on the Trojan war and the Athenian commonwealth. Yet the sophist of Antioch sometimes descended from this imaginary elevation; he entertained a various and elaborate correspondence; [26](#) he praised the virtues of his own times; he boldly arraigned the abuse of public and private life; and he eloquently pleaded the cause of Antioch against the just resentment of Julian and Theodosius. It is the common calamity of old age, [27](#) to lose whatever might have rendered it desirable; but Libanius experienced the peculiar misfortune of surviving the religion and the sciences, to which he had consecrated his genius. The friend of Julian was an indignant spectator of the triumph of Christianity; and his bigotry, which darkened the prospect of the visible world, did not inspire Libanius with any lively hopes of celestial glory and happiness. [28](#)

24 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, Orat. Parent. c. vii. p. 230, 231.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Eunapius reports, that Libanius refused the honorary rank of Prætorian præfect, as less illustrious than the title of Sophist, (in Vit. Sophist. p. 135.) The critics have observed a similar sentiment in one of the epistles (xviii. edit. Wolf) of Libanius himself.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Near two thousand of his letters—a mode of composition in which Libanius was thought to excel—are still extant, and already published. The critics may praise their subtle and elegant brevity; yet Dr. Bentley (Dissertation upon Phalaris, p. 48) might justly, though quaintly observe, that “you feel, by the emptiness and deadness of them, that you converse with some dreaming pedant, with his elbow on his desk.”]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[His birth is assigned to the year 314. He mentions

the seventy-sixth year of his age, (A. D. 390,) and seems to allude to some events of a still later date.]

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius has composed the vain, prolix, but curious narrative of his own life, (tom. ii. p. 1-84, edit. Morell,) of which Eunapius (p. 130-135) has left a concise and unfavorable account. Among the moderns, Tillemont, (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 571-576,) Fabricius, (Bibliot. Græc. tom. vii. p. 376-414,) and Lardner, (Heathen Testimonies, tom. iv. p. 127-163,) have illustrated the character and writings of this famous sophist.]

Chapter XXIV: The Retreat And Death Of Julian.—Part II.

The martial impatience of Julian urged him to take the field in the beginning of the spring; and he dismissed, with contempt and reproach, the senate of Antioch, who accompanied the emperor beyond the limits of their own territory, to which he was resolved never to return. After a laborious march of two days, [29](#) he halted on the third at Beræa, or Aleppo, where he had the mortification of finding a senate almost entirely Christian; who received with cold and formal demonstrations of respect the eloquent sermon of the apostle of paganism. The son of one of the most illustrious citizens of Beræa, who had embraced, either from interest or conscience, the religion of the emperor, was disinherited by his angry parent. The father and the son were invited to the Imperial table. Julian, placing himself between them, attempted, without success, to inculcate the lesson and example of toleration; supported, with affected calmness, the indiscreet zeal of the aged Christian, who seemed to forget the sentiments of nature, and the duty of a subject; and at length, turning towards the afflicted youth, “Since you have lost a father,” said he, “for my sake, it is incumbent on me to supply his place.” [30](#) The emperor was received in a manner much more agreeable to his wishes at Batnæ, [3011](#) a small town pleasantly seated in a grove of cypresses, about twenty miles from the city of Hierapolis. The solemn rites of sacrifice were decently prepared by the inhabitants of Batnæ, who seemed attached to the worship of their tutelar deities, Apollo and Jupiter; but the serious piety of Julian was offended by the tumult of their applause; and he too clearly discerned, that the smoke which arose from their altars was the incense of flattery, rather than of devotion. The ancient and magnificent temple which had sanctified, for so many ages, the city of Hierapolis, [31](#) no longer subsisted; and the consecrated wealth, which afforded a liberal maintenance to more than three hundred priests, might hasten its downfall. Yet Julian enjoyed the satisfaction of embracing a philosopher and a friend, whose religious firmness had withstood the pressing and repeated solicitations of Constantius and Gallus, as often as those princes lodged at his house, in their passage through Hierapolis. In the hurry of military preparation, and the careless confidence of a familiar correspondence, the zeal of Julian

appears to have been lively and uniform. He had now undertaken an important and difficult war; and the anxiety of the event rendered him still more attentive to observe and register the most trifling presages, from which, according to the rules of divination, any knowledge of futurity could be derived. [32](#) He informed Libanius of his progress as far as Hierapolis, by an elegant epistle, [33](#) which displays the facility of his genius, and his tender friendship for the sophist of Antioch.

29 [\(return\)](#)

[From Antioch to Litarbe, on the territory of Chalcis, the road, over hills and through morasses, was extremely bad; and the loose stones were cemented only with sand, (Julian. epist. xxvii.) It is singular enough that the Romans should have neglected the great communication between Antioch and the Euphrates. See Wesseling Itinerar. p. 190 Bergier, Hist des Grands Chemins, tom. ii. p. 100]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian alludes to this incident, (epist. xxvii.,) which is more distinctly related by Theodoret, (l. iii. c. 22.) The intolerant spirit of the father is applauded by Tillemont, (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 534.) and even by La Bleterie, (Vie de Julien, p. 413.)]

3011 [\(return\)](#)

[This name, of Syriac origin, is found in the Arabic, and means a place in a valley where waters meet. Julian says, the name of the city is Barbaric, the situation Greek. The geographer Abulfeda (tab. Syriac. p. 129, edit. Koehler) speaks of it in a manner to justify the praises of Julian.—St. Martin. Notes to Le Beau, iii. 56.—M.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[See the curious treatise de Deâ Syriâ, inserted among the works of Lucian, (tom. iii. p. 451-490, edit. Reitz.) The singular appellation of *Ninus vetus* (Ammian. xiv. 8) might induce a suspicion, that Heirapolis had been the royal seat of the Assyrians.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian (epist. xxviii.) kept a regular account of all the fortunate omens; but he suppresses the inauspicious signs, which Ammianus (xxiii. 2) has carefully recorded.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[Julian. epist. xxvii. p. 399-402.]

Hierapolis, [3311](#) situate almost on the banks of the Euphrates, [34](#) had been appointed for the general rendezvous of the Roman troops, who immediately passed the great river

on a bridge of boats, which was previously constructed. [35](#) If the inclinations of Julian had been similar to those of his predecessor, he might have wasted the active and important season of the year in the circus of Samosata or in the churches of Edessa. But as the warlike emperor, instead of Constantius, had chosen Alexander for his model, he advanced without delay to Carrhæ, [36](#) a very ancient city of Mesopotamia, at the distance of fourscore miles from Hierapolis. The temple of the Moon attracted the devotion of Julian; but the halt of a few days was principally employed in completing the immense preparations of the Persian war. The secret of the expedition had hitherto remained in his own breast; but as Carrhæ is the point of separation of the two great roads, he could no longer conceal whether it was his design to attack the dominions of Sapor on the side of the Tigris, or on that of the Euphrates. The emperor detached an army of thirty thousand men, under the command of his kinsman Procopius, and of Sebastian, who had been duke of Egypt. They were ordered to direct their march towards Nisibis, and to secure the frontier from the desultory incursions of the enemy, before they attempted the passage of the Tigris. Their subsequent operations were left to the discretion of the generals; but Julian expected, that after wasting with fire and sword the fertile districts of Media and Adiabene, they might arrive under the walls of Ctesiphon at the same time that he himself, advancing with equal steps along the banks of the Euphrates, should besiege the capital of the Persian monarchy. The success of this well-concerted plan depended, in a great measure, on the powerful and ready assistance of the king of Armenia, who, without exposing the safety of his own dominions, might detach an army of four thousand horse, and twenty thousand foot, to the assistance of the Romans. [37](#) But the feeble Arsaces Tiranus, [38](#) king of Armenia, had degenerated still more shamefully than his father Chosroes, from the manly virtues of the great Tiridates; and as the pusillanimous monarch was averse to any enterprise of danger and glory, he could disguise his timid indolence by the more decent excuses of religion and gratitude. He expressed a pious attachment to the memory of Constantius, from whose hands he had received in marriage Olympias, the daughter of the præfect Ablavius; and the alliance of a female, who had been educated as the destined wife of the emperor Constans, exalted the dignity of a Barbarian king. [39](#) Tiranus professed the Christian religion; he reigned over a nation of Christians; and he was restrained, by every principle of conscience and interest, from contributing to the victory, which would consummate the ruin of the church. The alienated mind of Tiranus was exasperated by the indiscretion of Julian, who treated the king of Armenia as *his* slave, and as the enemy of the gods. The haughty and threatening style of the Imperial mandates [40](#) awakened the secret indignation of a prince, who, in the humiliating state of dependence, was still conscious of his royal descent from the Arsacides, the lords of the East, and the rivals of the Roman power. [4011](#)

- 34 [\(return\)](#)
[I take the earliest opportunity of acknowledging my obligations to M. d'Anville, for his recent geography of the Euphrates and Tigris, (Paris, 1780, in 4to.,) which particularly illustrates the expedition of Julian.]
- 35 [\(return\)](#)
[There are three passages within a few miles of each other; 1. Zeugma, celebrated by the ancients; 2. Bir, frequented by the moderns; and, 3. The bridge of Menbigz, or Hierapolis, at the distance of four parasangs from the city. — Djisr Manbedj is the same with the ancient Zeugma. St. Martin, iii. 58—M.]
- 36 [\(return\)](#)
[Haran, or Carrhæ, was the ancient residence of the Sabæans, and of Abraham. See the Index Geographicus of Schultens, (ad calcem Vit. Saladin.,) a work from which I have obtained much *Oriental* knowledge concerning the ancient and modern geography of Syria and the adjacent countries. —On an inedited medal in the collection of the late M. Tochon. of the Academy of Inscriptions, it is read Xappan. St. Martin. iii 60—M.]
- 37 [\(return\)](#)
[See Xenophon. Cyropæd. l. iii. p. 189, edit. Hutchinson. Artavasdes might have supplied Marc Antony with 16,000 horse, armed and disciplined after the Parthian manner, (Plutarch, in M. Antonio. tom. v. p. 117.)]
- 38 [\(return\)](#)
[Moses of Chorene (Hist. Armeniac. l. iii. c. 11, p. 242) fixes his accession (A. D. 354) to the 17th year of Constantius. —Arsaces Tiranus, or Diran, had ceased to reign twenty-five years before, in 337. The intermediate changes in Armenia, and the character of this Arsaces, the son of Diran, are traced by M. St. Martin, at considerable length, in his supplement to Le Beau, ii. 208-242. As long as his Grecian queen Olympias maintained her influence, Arsaces was faithful to the Roman and *Christian* alliance. On the accession of Julian, the same influence made his fidelity to waver; but Olympias having been poisoned in the sacramental bread by the agency of Pharandcem, the former wife of Arsaces, another change took place in Armenian politics unfavorable to the Christian interest. The patriarch Narses retired from the impious court to a safe seclusion. Yet Pharandsem

was equally hostile to the Persian influence, and Arsaces began to support with vigor the cause of Julian. He made an inroad into the Persian dominions with a body of Rans and Alans as auxiliaries; wasted Aderbidgan and Sapor, who had been defeated near Tauriz, was engaged in making head against his troops in Persarmenia, at the time of the death of Julian. Such is M. St. Martin's view, (ii. 276, et sqq.,) which rests on the Armenian historians, Faustos of Byzantium, and Mezrob the biographer of the Partriarch Narses. In the history of Armenia by Father Chamitch, and translated by Avdall, Tiran is still king of Armenia, at the time of Julian's death. F. Chamitch follows Moses of Chorene, The authority of Gibbon.—M.]

39 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xx. 11. Athanasius (tom. i. p. 856) says, in general terms, that Constantius gave to his brother's widow, an expression more suitable to a Roman than a Christian.]

40 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxiii. 2) uses a word much too soft for the occasion, *monuerat*. Muratori (Fabricius, Bibliothec. Græc. tom. vii. p. 86) has published an epistle from Julian to the satrap Arsaces; fierce, vulgar, and (though it might deceive Sozomen, l. vi. c. 5) most probably spurious. La Bleterie (Hist. de Jovien, tom. ii. p. 339) translates and rejects it. Note: St. Martin considers it genuine: the Armenian writers mention such a letter, iii. 37.—M.]

4011 [\(return\)](#)

[Arsaces did not abandon the Roman alliance, but gave it only feeble support. St. Martin, iii. 41—M.]

The military dispositions of Julian were skilfully contrived to deceive the spies and to divert the attention of Sapor. The legions appeared to direct their march towards Nisibis and the Tigris. On a sudden they wheeled to the right; traversed the level and naked plain of Carrhæ; and reached, on the third day, the banks of the Euphrates, where the strong town of Nicephorium, or Callinicum, had been founded by the Macedonian kings. From thence the emperor pursued his march, above ninety miles, along the winding stream of the Euphrates, till, at length, about one month after his departure from Antioch, he discovered the towers of Circesium, [4012](#) the extreme limit of the Roman dominions. The army of Julian, the most numerous that any of the Cæsars had ever led against Persia, consisted of sixty-five thousand effective and well-disciplined soldiers. The veteran bands of cavalry and infantry, of Romans and Barbarians, had been selected from the different provinces; and a just preëminence of loyalty and valor was claimed by the hardy Gauls, who guarded the throne and person of their beloved prince. A formidable body of Scythian auxiliaries had been transported from another

climate, and almost from another world, to invade a distant country, of whose name and situation they were ignorant. The love of rapine and war allured to the Imperial standard several tribes of Saracens, or roving Arabs, whose service Julian had commanded, while he sternly refused the payment of the accustomed subsidies. The broad channel of the Euphrates [41](#) was crowded by a fleet of eleven hundred ships, destined to attend the motions, and to satisfy the wants, of the Roman army. The military strength of the fleet was composed of fifty armed galleys; and these were accompanied by an equal number of flat-bottomed boats, which might occasionally be connected into the form of temporary bridges. The rest of the ships, partly constructed of timber, and partly covered with raw hides, were laden with an almost inexhaustible supply of arms and engines, of utensils and provisions. The vigilant humanity of Julian had embarked a very large magazine of vinegar and biscuit for the use of the soldiers, but he prohibited the indulgence of wine; and rigorously stopped a long string of superfluous camels that attempted to follow the rear of the army. The River Chaboras falls into the Euphrates at Circesium; [42](#) and as soon as the trumpet gave the signal of march, the Romans passed the little stream which separated two mighty and hostile empires. The custom of ancient discipline required a military oration; and Julian embraced every opportunity of displaying his eloquence. He animated the impatient and attentive legions by the example of the inflexible courage and glorious triumphs of their ancestors. He excited their resentment by a lively picture of the insolence of the Persians; and he exhorted them to imitate his firm resolution, either to extirpate that perfidious nation, or to devote his life in the cause of the republic. The eloquence of Julian was enforced by a donative of one hundred and thirty pieces of silver to every soldier; and the bridge of the Chaboras was instantly cut away, to convince the troops that they must place their hopes of safety in the success of their arms. Yet the prudence of the emperor induced him to secure a remote frontier, perpetually exposed to the inroads of the hostile Arabs. A detachment of four thousand men was left at Circesium, which completed, to the number of ten thousand, the regular garrison of that important fortress. [43](#)

4012 [\(return\)](#)

[Kirkesia the Carchemish of the Scriptures.—M.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[Latissimum flumen Euphraten artabat. Ammian. xxiii. 3 Somewhat higher, at the fords of Thapsacus, the river is four stadia or 800 yards, almost half an English mile, broad. (Xenophon, Anabasis, l. i. p. 41, edit. Hutchinson, with Foster's Observations, p. 29, &c., in the 2d volume of Spelman's translation.) If the breadth of the Euphrates at Bir and Zeugma is no more than 130 yards, (Voyages de Niebuhr, tom. ii. p. 335,) the enormous difference must chiefly arise from the depth of the channel.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[Munimentum tutissimum et fabre politum, Abora (the Orientals aspiate Chaboras or Chabour) et

Euphrates ambiunt flumina, velut spatium insulare
fingentes. Ammian. xxiii. 5.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[The enterprise and armament of Julian are described by himself, (Epist. xxvii.,) Ammianus Marcellinus, (xxiii. 3, 4, 5,) Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 108, 109, p. 332, 333,) Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 160, 161, 162) Sozomen, (l. vi. c. l,) and John Malala, (tom. ii. p. 17.)]

From the moment that the Romans entered the enemy's country, [44](#) the country of an active and artful enemy, the order of march was disposed in three columns. [45](#) The strength of the infantry, and consequently of the whole army was placed in the centre, under the peculiar command of their master-general Victor. On the right, the brave Nevitta led a column of several legions along the banks of the Euphrates, and almost always in sight of the fleet. The left flank of the army was protected by the column of cavalry. Hormisdas and Arinthæus were appointed generals of the horse; and the singular adventures of Hormisdas [46](#) are not undeserving of our notice. He was a Persian prince, of the royal race of the Sassanides, who, in the troubles of the minority of Sapor, had escaped from prison to the hospitable court of the great Constantine. Hormisdas at first excited the compassion, and at length acquired the esteem, of his new masters; his valor and fidelity raised him to the military honors of the Roman service; and though a Christian, he might indulge the secret satisfaction of convincing his ungrateful country, that an oppressed subject may prove the most dangerous enemy. Such was the disposition of the three principal columns. The front and flanks of the army were covered by Lucilianus with a flying detachment of fifteen hundred light-armed soldiers, whose active vigilance observed the most distant signs, and conveyed the earliest notice, of any hostile approach. Dagalaiphus, and Secundinus duke of Osrhoene, conducted the troops of the rear-guard; the baggage securely proceeded in the intervals of the columns; and the ranks, from a motive either of use or ostentation, were formed in such open order, that the whole line of march extended almost ten miles. The ordinary post of Julian was at the head of the centre column; but as he preferred the duties of a general to the state of a monarch, he rapidly moved, with a small escort of light cavalry, to the front, the rear, the flanks, wherever his presence could animate or protect the march of the Roman army. The country which they traversed from the Chaboras, to the cultivated lands of Assyria, may be considered as a part of the desert of Arabia, a dry and barren waste, which could never be improved by the most powerful arts of human industry. Julian marched over the same ground which had been trod above seven hundred years before by the footsteps of the younger Cyrus, and which is described by one of the companions of his expedition, the sage and heroic Xenophon. [47](#) "The country was a plain throughout, as even as the sea, and full of wormwood; and if any other kind of shrubs or reeds grew there, they had all an aromatic smell, but no trees could be seen. Bustards and ostriches, antelopes and wild asses, [48](#) appeared to be the only inhabitants of the desert; and the fatigues of the march

were alleviated by the amusements of the chase.” The loose sand of the desert was frequently raised by the wind into clouds of dust; and a great number of the soldiers of Julian, with their tents, were suddenly thrown to the ground by the violence of an unexpected hurricane.

44 [\(return\)](#)

[Before he enters Persia, Ammianus copiously describes (xxiii. p. 396-419, edit. Gronov. in 4to.) the eighteen great provinces, (as far as the Seric, or Chinese frontiers,) which were subject to the Sassanides.]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxiv. 1) and Zosimus (l. iii. p. 162, 163) rately expressed the order of march.]

46 [\(return\)](#)

[The adventures of Hormisdas are related with some mixture of fable, (Zosimus, l. ii. p. 100-102; Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs tom. iv. p. 198.) It is almost impossible that he should be the brother (frater germanus) of an *eldest* and *posthumous* child: nor do I recollect that Ammianus ever gives him that title. * Note: St. Martin conceives that he was an elder brother by another mother who had several children, ii. 24—M.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[See the first book of the Anabasis, p. 45, 46. This pleasing work is original and authentic. Yet Xenophon’s memory, perhaps many years after the expedition, has sometimes betrayed him; and the distances which he marks are often larger than either a soldier or a geographer will allow.]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[Mr. Spelman, the English translator of the Anabasis, (vol. i. p. 51,) confounds the antelope with the roebuck, and the wild ass with the zebra.]

The sandy plains of Mesopotamia were abandoned to the antelopes and wild asses of the desert; but a variety of populous towns and villages were pleasantly situated on the banks of the Euphrates, and in the islands which are occasionally formed by that river. The city of Annah, or Anatho, [49](#) the actual residence of an Arabian emir, is composed of two long streets, which enclose, within a natural fortification, a small island in the midst, and two fruitful spots on either side, of the Euphrates. The warlike inhabitants of Anatho showed a disposition to stop the march of a Roman emperor; till they were diverted from such fatal presumption by the mild exhortations of Prince Hormisdas, and the approaching terrors of the fleet and army. They implored, and experienced, the clemency of Julian, who transplanted the people to an advantageous settlement, near Chalcis in Syria, and admitted Pusæus, the governor, to an honorable rank in his service

and friendship. But the impregnable fortress of Thilutha could scorn the menace of a siege; and the emperor was obliged to content himself with an insulting promise, that, when he had subdued the interior provinces of Persia, Thilutha would no longer refuse to grace the triumph of the emperor. The inhabitants of the open towns, unable to resist, and unwilling to yield, fled with precipitation; and their houses, filled with spoil and provisions, were occupied by the soldiers of Julian, who massacred, without remorse and without punishment, some defenceless women. During the march, the Surenas, [4911](#) or Persian general, and Malek Rodosaces, the renowned emir of the tribe of Gassan, [50](#) incessantly hovered round the army; every straggler was intercepted; every detachment was attacked; and the valiant Hormisdas escaped with some difficulty from their hands. But the Barbarians were finally repulsed; the country became every day less favorable to the operations of cavalry; and when the Romans arrived at Macepracta, they perceived the ruins of the wall, which had been constructed by the ancient kings of Assyria, to secure their dominions from the incursions of the Medes. These preliminaries of the expedition of Julian appear to have employed about fifteen days; and we may compute near three hundred miles from the fortress of Circesium to the wall of Macepracta. [51](#)

49

[\(return\)](#)

[See Voyages de Tavernier, part i. l. iii. p. 316, and more especially Viaggi di Pietro della Valle, tom. i. lett. xvii. p. 671, &c. He was ignorant of the old name and condition of Annah. Our blind travellers *seldom* possess any previous knowledge of the countries which they visit. Shaw and Tournefort deserve an honorable exception.]

4911

[\(return\)](#)

[This is not a title, but the name of a great Persian family. St. Martin, iii. 79.—M.]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[Famosi nominis latro, says Ammianus; a high encomium for an Arab. The tribe of Gassan had settled on the edge of Syria, and reigned some time in Damascus, under a dynasty of thirty-one kings, or emirs, from the time of Pompey to that of the Khalif Omar. D'Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale, p. 360. Pococke, Specimen Hist. Arabicæ, p. 75-78. The name of Rodosaces does not appear in the list. * Note: Rodosaces-malek is king. St. Martin considers that Gibbon has fallen into an error in bringing the tribe of Gassan to the Euphrates. In Ammianus it is Assan. M. St. Martin would read Massanitarum, the same with the Mauzanitæ of Malala.—M.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ammianus, (xxiv. 1, 2,) Libanius, (Orat. Parental. c. 110, 111, p. 334,) Zosimus, (l. iii. p.

164-168.) * Note: This Syriac or Chaldaic has relation to its position; it easily bears the signification of the division of the waters. M. St. M. considers it the Missice of Pliny, v. 26. St. Martin, iii. 83.—M.]

The fertile province of Assyria, [52](#) which stretched beyond the Tigris, as far as the mountains of Media, [53](#) extended about four hundred miles from the ancient wall of Macepracta, to the territory of Basra, where the united streams of the Euphrates and Tigris discharge themselves into the Persian Gulf. [54](#) The whole country might have claimed the peculiar name of Mesopotamia; as the two rivers, which are never more distant than fifty, approach, between Bagdad and Babylon, within twenty-five miles, of each other. A multitude of artificial canals, dug without much labor in a soft and yielding soil connected the rivers, and intersected the plain of Assyria. The uses of these artificial canals were various and important. They served to discharge the superfluous waters from one river into the other, at the season of their respective inundations. Subdividing themselves into smaller and smaller branches, they refreshed the dry lands, and supplied the deficiency of rain. They facilitated the intercourse of peace and commerce; and, as the dams could be speedily broke down, they armed the despair of the Assyrians with the means of opposing a sudden deluge to the progress of an invading army. To the soil and climate of Assyria, nature had denied some of her choicest gifts, the vine, the olive, and the fig-tree; [5411](#) but the food which supports the life of man, and particularly wheat and barley, were produced with inexhaustible fertility; and the husbandman, who committed his seed to the earth, was frequently rewarded with an increase of two, or even of three, hundred. The face of the country was interspersed with groves of innumerable palm-trees; [55](#) and the diligent natives celebrated, either in verse or prose, the three hundred and sixty uses to which the trunk, the branches, the leaves, the juice, and the fruit, were skilfully applied. Several manufactures, especially those of leather and linen, employed the industry of a numerous people, and afforded valuable materials for foreign trade; which appears, however, to have been conducted by the hands of strangers. Babylon had been converted into a royal park; but near the ruins of the ancient capital, new cities had successively arisen, and the populousness of the country was displayed in the multitude of towns and villages, which were built of bricks dried in the sun, and strongly cemented with bitumen; the natural and peculiar production of the Babylonian soil. While the successors of Cyrus reigned over Asia, the province of Syria alone maintained, during a third part of the year, the luxurious plenty of the table and household of the Great King. Four considerable villages were assigned for the subsistence of his Indian dogs; eight hundred stallions, and sixteen thousand mares, were constantly kept, at the expense of the country, for the royal stables; and as the daily tribute, which was paid to the satrap, amounted to one English bushe of silver, we may compute the annual revenue of Assyria at more than twelve hundred thousand pounds sterling. [56](#)

- 52 [\(return\)](#)
 [The description of Assyria, is furnished by Herodotus, (l. i. c. 192, &c.,) who sometimes writes for children, and sometimes for philosophers; by Strabo, (l. xvi. p. 1070-1082,) and by Ammianus, (l.xxiii. c. 6.) The most useful of the modern travellers are Tavernier, (part i. l. ii. p. 226-258,) Otter, (tom. ii. p. 35-69, and 189-224,) and Niebuhr, (tom. ii. p. 172-288.) Yet I much regret that the *Irak Arabi* of Abulfeda has not been translated.]
- 53 [\(return\)](#)
 [Ammianus remarks, that the primitive Assyria, which comprehended Ninus, (Nineveh,) and Arbela, had assumed the more recent and peculiar appellation of Adiabene; and he seems to fix Teredon, Vologesia, and Apollonia, as the *extreme* cities of the actual province of Assyria.]
- 54 [\(return\)](#)
 [The two rivers unite at Apamea, or Corna, (one hundred miles from the Persian Gulf,) into the broad stream of the Pasitigris, or Shutul-Arab. The Euphrates formerly reached the sea by a separate channel, which was obstructed and diverted by the citizens of Orchoe, about twenty miles to the south-east of modern Basra. (D'Anville, in the Mémoires de l'Acad. des Inscriptions, tom.xxx. p. 171-191.)]
- 5411 [\(return\)](#)
 [We are informed by Mr. Gibbon, that nature has denied to the soil an climate of Assyria some of her choicest gifts, the vine, the olive, and the fig-tree. This might have been the case in the age of Ammianus Marcellinus, but it is not so at the present day; and it is a curious fact that the grape, the olive, and the fig, are the most common fruits in the province, and may be seen in every garden. Macdonald Kinneir, Geogr. Mem. on Persia 239—M.]
- 55 [\(return\)](#)
 [The learned Kämpfer, as a botanist, an antiquary, and a traveller, has exhausted (Amœnitat. Exoticæ, Fascicul. iv. p. 660-764) the whole subject of palm-trees.]
- 56 [\(return\)](#)
 [Assyria yielded to the Persian satrap an *Artaba* of silver each day. The well-known proportion of weights and measures (see Bishop Hooper's elaborate Inquiry,) the specific gravity of water and silver, and the value of that metal, will afford, after a short process, the annual revenue which I have

stated. Yet the Great King received no more than 1000 Euboic, or Tyrian, talents (252,000l.) from Assyria. The comparison of two passages in Herodotus, (l. i. c. 192, l. iii. c. 89-96) reveals an important difference between the *gross*, and the *net*, revenue of Persia; the sums paid by the province, and the gold or silver deposited in the royal treasure. The monarch might annually save three millions six hundred thousand pounds, of the seventeen or eighteen millions raised upon the people.]

Chapter XXIV: The Retreat And Death Of Julian.—Part III.

The fields of Assyria were devoted by Julian to the calamities of war; and the philosopher retaliated on a guiltless people the acts of rapine and cruelty which had been committed by their haughty master in the Roman provinces. The trembling Assyrians summoned the rivers to their assistance; and completed, with their own hands, the ruin of their country. The roads were rendered impracticable; a flood of waters was poured into the camp; and, during several days, the troops of Julian were obliged to contend with the most discouraging hardships. But every obstacle was surmounted by the perseverance of the legionaries, who were inured to toil as well as to danger, and who felt themselves animated by the spirit of their leader. The damage was gradually repaired; the waters were restored to their proper channels; whole groves of palm-trees were cut down, and placed along the broken parts of the road; and the army passed over the broad and deeper canals, on bridges of floating rafts, which were supported by the help of bladders. Two cities of Assyria presumed to resist the arms of a Roman emperor: and they both paid the severe penalty of their rashness. At the distance of fifty miles from the royal residence of Ctesiphon, Perisabor, [5711](#) or Anbar, held the second rank in the province; a city, large, populous, and well fortified, surrounded with a double wall, almost encompassed by a branch of the Euphrates, and defended by the valor of a numerous garrison. The exhortations of Hormisdas were repulsed with contempt; and the ears of the Persian prince were wounded by a just reproach, that, unmindful of his royal birth, he conducted an army of strangers against his king and country. The Assyrians maintained their loyalty by a skilful, as well as vigorous, defence; till the lucky stroke of a battering-ram, having opened a large breach, by shattering one of the angles of the wall, they hastily retired into the fortifications of the interior citadel. The soldiers of Julian rushed impetuously into the town, and after the full gratification of every military appetite, Perisabor was reduced to ashes; and the engines which assaulted the citadel were planted on the ruins of the smoking houses. The contest was continued by an incessant and mutual discharge of missile weapons; and the superiority which the Romans might derive from the mechanical powers of their balistæ and catapultæ was counterbalanced by the advantage of the ground on the side

of the besieged. But as soon as an *Helepolis* had been constructed, which could engage on equal terms with the loftiest ramparts, the tremendous aspect of a moving turret, that would leave no hope of resistance or mercy, terrified the defenders of the citadel into an humble submission; and the place was surrendered only two days after Julian first appeared under the walls of Perisabor. Two thousand five hundred persons, of both sexes, the feeble remnant of a flourishing people, were permitted to retire; the plentiful magazines of corn, of arms, and of splendid furniture, were partly distributed among the troops, and partly reserved for the public service; the useless stores were destroyed by fire or thrown into the stream of the Euphrates; and the fate of Amida was revenged by the total ruin of Perisabor.

5711

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius says that it was a great city of Assyria, called after the name of the reigning king. The orator of Antioch is not mistaken. The Persians and Syrians called it Fyrouz Schapour or Fyrouz Schahbour; in Persian, the victory of Schahpour. It owed that name to Sapor the First. It was before called Anbar St. Martin, iii. 85.—M.]

The city or rather fortress, of Maogamalcha, which was defended by sixteen large towers, a deep ditch, and two strong and solid walls of brick and bitumen, appears to have been constructed at the distance of eleven miles, as the safeguard of the capital of Persia. The emperor, apprehensive of leaving such an important fortress in his rear, immediately formed the siege of Maogamalcha; and the Roman army was distributed, for that purpose, into three divisions. Victor, at the head of the cavalry, and of a detachment of heavy-armed foot, was ordered to clear the country, as far as the banks of the Tigris, and the suburbs of Ctesiphon. The conduct of the attack was assumed by Julian himself, who seemed to place his whole dependence in the military engines which he erected against the walls; while he secretly contrived a more efficacious method of introducing his troops into the heart of the city. Under the direction of Nevitta and Dagalaiphus, the trenches were opened at a considerable distance, and gradually prolonged as far as the edge of the ditch. The ditch was speedily filled with earth; and, by the incessant labor of the troops, a mine was carried under the foundations of the walls, and sustained, at sufficient intervals, by props of timber. Three chosen cohorts, advancing in a single file, silently explored the dark and dangerous passage; till their intrepid leader whispered back the intelligence, that he was ready to issue from his confinement into the streets of the hostile city. Julian checked their ardor, that he might insure their success; and immediately diverted the attention of the garrison, by the tumult and clamor of a general assault. The Persians, who, from their walls, contemptuously beheld the progress of an impotent attack, celebrated with songs of triumph the glory of Sapor; and ventured to assure the emperor, that he might ascend the starry mansion of Ormusd, before he could hope to take the impregnable city of Maogamalcha. The city was already taken. History has recorded the name of a private

soldier the first who ascended from the mine into a deserted tower. The passage was widened by his companions, who pressed forwards with impatient valor. Fifteen hundred enemies were already in the midst of the city. The astonished garrison abandoned the walls, and their only hope of safety; the gates were instantly burst open; and the revenge of the soldier, unless it were suspended by lust or avarice, was satiated by an undistinguishing massacre. The governor, who had yielded on a promise of mercy, was burnt alive, a few days afterwards, on a charge of having uttered some disrespectful words against the honor of Prince Hormisdas. The fortifications were razed to the ground; and not a vestige was left, that the city of Maogamalcha had ever existed. The neighborhood of the capital of Persia was adorned with three stately palaces, laboriously enriched with every production that could gratify the luxury and pride of an Eastern monarch. The pleasant situation of the gardens along the banks of the Tigris, was improved, according to the Persian taste, by the symmetry of flowers, fountains, and shady walks: and spacious parks were enclosed for the reception of the bears, lions, and wild boars, which were maintained at a considerable expense for the pleasure of the royal chase. The park walls were broken down, the savage game was abandoned to the darts of the soldiers, and the palaces of Sapor were reduced to ashes, by the command of the Roman emperor. Julian, on this occasion, showed himself ignorant, or careless, of the laws of civility, which the prudence and refinement of polished ages have established between hostile princes. Yet these wanton ravages need not excite in our breasts any vehement emotions of pity or resentment. A simple, naked statue, finished by the hand of a Grecian artist, is of more genuine value than all these rude and costly monuments of Barbaric labor; and, if we are more deeply affected by the ruin of a palace than by the conflagration of a cottage, our humanity must have formed a very erroneous estimate of the miseries of human life. [57](#)

57

[\(return\)](#)

[The operations of the Assyrian war are circumstantially related by Ammianus, (xxiv. 2, 3, 4, 5,) Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 112-123, p. 335-347,) Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 168-180,) and Gregory Nazianzen, (Orat. iv. p. 113, 144.) The *military* criticisms of the saint are devoutly copied by Tillemont, his faithful slave.]

Julian was an object of hatred and terror to the Persian and the painters of that nation represented the invader of their country under the emblem of a furious lion, who vomited from his mouth a consuming fire. [58](#) To his friends and soldiers the philosophic hero appeared in a more amiable light; and his virtues were never more conspicuously displayed, than in the last and most active period of his life. He practised, without effort, and almost without merit, the habitual qualities of temperance and sobriety. According to the dictates of that artificial wisdom, which assumes an absolute dominion over the mind and body, he sternly refused himself the indulgence of the most natural appetites. [59](#) In the warm climate of Assyria, which solicited a luxurious people to the

gratification of every sensual desire, [60](#) a youthful conqueror preserved his chastity pure and inviolate; nor was Julian ever tempted, even by a motive of curiosity, to visit his female captives of exquisite beauty, [61](#) who, instead of resisting his power, would have disputed with each other the honor of his embraces. With the same firmness that he resisted the allurements of love, he sustained the hardships of war. When the Romans marched through the flat and flooded country, their sovereign, on foot, at the head of his legions, shared their fatigues and animated their diligence. In every useful labor, the hand of Julian was prompt and strenuous; and the Imperial purple was wet and dirty as the coarse garment of the meanest soldier. The two sieges allowed him some remarkable opportunities of signaling his personal valor, which, in the improved state of the military art, can seldom be exerted by a prudent general. The emperor stood before the citadel of Perisabor, insensible of his extreme danger, and encouraged his troops to burst open the gates of iron, till he was almost overwhelmed under a cloud of missile weapons and huge stones, that were directed against his person. As he examined the exterior fortifications of Maogamalcha, two Persians, devoting themselves for their country, suddenly rushed upon him with drawn cimeters: the emperor dexterously received their blows on his uplifted shield; and, with a steady and well-aimed thrust, laid one of his adversaries dead at his feet. The esteem of a prince who possesses the virtues which he approves, is the noblest recompense of a deserving subject; and the authority which Julian derived from his personal merit, enabled him to revive and enforce the rigor of ancient discipline. He punished with death or ignominy the misbehavior of three troops of horse, who, in a skirmish with the Surenas, had lost their honor and one of their standards: and he distinguished with *obsidional* [62](#) crowns the valor of the foremost soldiers, who had ascended into the city of Maogamalcha.

After the siege of Perisabor, the firmness of the emperor was exercised by the insolent avarice of the army, who loudly complained, that their services were rewarded by a trifling donative of one hundred pieces of silver. His just indignation was expressed in the grave and manly language of a Roman. “Riches are the object of your desires; those riches are in the hands of the Persians; and the spoils of this fruitful country are proposed as the prize of your valor and discipline. Believe me,” added Julian, “the Roman republic, which formerly possessed such immense treasures, is now reduced to want and wretchedness once our princes have been persuaded, by weak and interested ministers, to purchase with gold the tranquillity of the Barbarians. The revenue is exhausted; the cities are ruined; the provinces are dispeopled. For myself, the only inheritance that I have received from my royal ancestors is a soul incapable of fear; and as long as I am convinced that every real advantage is seated in the mind, I shall not blush to acknowledge an honorable poverty, which, in the days of ancient virtue, was considered as the glory of Fabricius. That glory, and that virtue, may be your own, if you will listen to the voice of Heaven and of your leader. But if you will rashly persist, if you are determined to renew the shameful and mischievous examples of old seditions, proceed. As it becomes an emperor who has filled the first rank among men, I am

prepared to die, standing; and to despise a precarious life, which, every hour, may depend on an accidental fever. If I have been found unworthy of the command, there are now among you, (I speak it with pride and pleasure,) there are many chiefs whose merit and experience are equal to the conduct of the most important war. Such has been the temper of my reign, that I can retire, without regret, and without apprehension, to the obscurity of a private station” [63](#) The modest resolution of Julian was answered by the unanimous applause and cheerful obedience of the Romans, who declared their confidence of victory, while they fought under the banners of their heroic prince. Their courage was kindled by his frequent and familiar asseverations, (for such wishes were the oaths of Julian,) “So may I reduce the Persians under the yoke!” “Thus may I restore the strength and splendor of the republic!” The love of fame was the ardent passion of his soul: but it was not before he trampled on the ruins of Maogamalcha, that he allowed himself to say, “We have now provided some materials for the sophist of Antioch.” [64](#)

58 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius de ulciscenda Juliani nece, c. 13, p. 162.]

59 [\(return\)](#)

[The famous examples of Cyrus, Alexander, and Scipio, were acts of justice. Julian’s chastity was voluntary, and, in his opinion, meritorious.]

60 [\(return\)](#)

[Sallust (ap. Vet. Scholiast. Juvenal. Satir. i. 104) observes, that nihil corruptius moribus. The matrons and virgins of Babylon freely mingled with the men in licentious banquets; and as they felt the intoxication of wine and love, they gradually, and almost completely, threw aside the encumbrance of dress; ad ultimum ima corporum velamenta projiciunt. Q. Curtius, v. 1.]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[Ex virginibus autem quæ speciosæ sunt captæ, et in Perside, ubi fæminarum pulchritudo excellit, nec contrectare aliquam votuit nec videre. Ammian. xxiv. 4. The native race of Persians is small and ugly; but it has been improved by the perpetual mixture of Circassian blood, (Herodot. l. iii. c. 97. Buffon, Hist. Naturelle, tom. iii. p. 420.)]

62 [\(return\)](#)

[Obsidionalibus coronis donati. Ammian. xxiv. 4. Either Julian or his historian were unskillful antiquaries. He should have given mural crowns. The *obsidional* were the reward of a general who had delivered a besieged city, (Aulus Gellius, Noct. Attic. v. 6.)]

63 [\(return\)](#)

[I give this speech as original and genuine. Ammianus might hear, could transcribe, and was

incapable of inventing, it. I have used some slight freedoms, and conclude with the most forcible sentence.]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxiv. 3. Libanius, Orat. Parent. c. 122, p. 346.]

The successful valor of Julian had triumphed over all the obstacles that opposed his march to the gates of Ctesiphon. But the reduction, or even the siege, of the capital of Persia, was still at a distance: nor can the military conduct of the emperor be clearly apprehended, without a knowledge of the country which was the theatre of his bold and skilful operations. [65](#) Twenty miles to the south of Bagdad, and on the eastern bank of the Tigris, the curiosity of travellers has observed some ruins of the palaces of Ctesiphon, which, in the time of Julian, was a great and populous city. The name and glory of the adjacent Seleucia were forever extinguished; and the only remaining quarter of that Greek colony had resumed, with the Assyrian language and manners, the primitive appellation of Coche. Coche was situate on the western side of the Tigris; but it was naturally considered as a suburb of Ctesiphon, with which we may suppose it to have been connected by a permanent bridge of boats.

The united parts contribute to form the common epithet of Al Modain, the cities, which the Orientals have bestowed on the winter residence of the Sassinadees; and the whole circumference of the Persian capital was strongly fortified by the waters of the river, by lofty walls, and by impracticable morasses. Near the ruins of Seleucia, the camp of Julian was fixed, and secured, by a ditch and rampart, against the sallies of the numerous and enterprising garrison of Coche. In this fruitful and pleasant country, the Romans were plentifully supplied with water and forage: and several forts, which might have embarrassed the motions of the army, submitted, after some resistance, to the efforts of their valor. The fleet passed from the Euphrates into an artificial derivation of that river, which pours a copious and navigable stream into the Tigris, at a small distance *below* the great city. If they had followed this royal canal, which bore the name of Nahar-Malcha, [66](#) the intermediate situation of Coche would have separated the fleet and army of Julian; and the rash attempt of steering against the current of the Tigris, and forcing their way through the midst of a hostile capital, must have been attended with the total destruction of the Roman navy. The prudence of the emperor foresaw the danger, and provided the remedy. As he had minutely studied the operations of Trajan in the same country, he soon recollected that his warlike predecessor had dug a new and navigable canal, which, leaving Coche on the right hand, conveyed the waters of the Nahar-Malcha into the river Tigris, at some distance *above* the cities. From the information of the peasants, Julian ascertained the vestiges of this ancient work, which were almost obliterated by design or accident. By the indefatigable labor of the soldiers, a broad and deep channel was speedily prepared for the reception of the Euphrates. A strong dike was constructed to interrupt the ordinary current of the Nahar-Malcha: a flood of waters rushed impetuously into their new bed; and the Roman fleet, steering

their triumphant course into the Tigris, derided the vain and ineffectual barriers which the Persians of Ctesiphon had erected to oppose their passage.

65

[\(return\)](#)

[M. d'Anville, (Mém. de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. xxxviii p. 246-259) has ascertained the true position and distance of Babylon, Seleucia, Ctesiphon, Bagdad, &c. The Roman traveller, Pietro della Valle, (tom. i. lett. xvii. p. 650-780,) seems to be the most intelligent spectator of that famous province. He is a gentleman and a scholar, but intolerably vain and prolix.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[The Royal Canal (*Nahar-Malcha*) might be successively restored, altered, divided, &c., (Cellarius, Geograph. Antiq. tom. ii. p. 453;) and these changes may serve to explain the seeming contradictions of antiquity. In the time of Julian, it must have fallen into the Euphrates *below* Ctesiphon.]

As it became necessary to transport the Roman army over the Tigris, another labor presented itself, of less toil, but of more danger, than the preceding expedition. The stream was broad and rapid; the ascent steep and difficult; and the intrenchments which had been formed on the ridge of the opposite bank, were lined with a numerous army of heavy cuirassiers, dexterous archers, and huge elephants; who (according to the extravagant hyperbole of Libanius) could trample with the same ease a field of corn, or a legion of Romans. [67](#) In the presence of such an enemy, the construction of a bridge was impracticable; and the intrepid prince, who instantly seized the only possible expedient, concealed his design, till the moment of execution, from the knowledge of the Barbarians, of his own troops, and even of his generals themselves. Under the specious pretence of examining the state of the magazines, fourscore vessels [6711](#) were gradually unladen; and a select detachment, apparently destined for some secret expedition, was ordered to stand to their arms on the first signal. Julian disguised the silent anxiety of his own mind with smiles of confidence and joy; and amused the hostile nations with the spectacle of military games, which he insultingly celebrated under the walls of Coche. The day was consecrated to pleasure; but, as soon as the hour of supper was passed, the emperor summoned the generals to his tent, and acquainted them that he had fixed that night for the passage of the Tigris. They stood in silent and respectful astonishment; but, when the venerable Sallust assumed the privilege of his age and experience, the rest of the chiefs supported with freedom the weight of his prudent remonstrances. [68](#) Julian contented himself with observing, that conquest and safety depended on the attempt; that instead of diminishing, the number of their enemies would be increased, by successive reinforcements; and that a longer delay would neither contract the breadth of the stream, nor level the height of the bank. The signal

was instantly given, and obeyed; the most impatient of the legionaries leaped into five vessels that lay nearest to the bank; and as they plied their oars with intrepid diligence, they were lost, after a few moments, in the darkness of the night. A flame arose on the opposite side; and Julian, who too clearly understood that his foremost vessels, in attempting to land, had been fired by the enemy, dexterously converted their extreme danger into a presage of victory. “Our fellow-soldiers,” he eagerly exclaimed, “are already masters of the bank; see—they make the appointed signal; let us hasten to emulate and assist their courage.” The united and rapid motion of a great fleet broke the violence of the current, and they reached the eastern shore of the Tigris with sufficient speed to extinguish the flames, and rescue their adventurous companions. The difficulties of a steep and lofty ascent were increased by the weight of armor, and the darkness of the night. A shower of stones, darts, and fire, was incessantly discharged on the heads of the assailants; who, after an arduous struggle, climbed the bank and stood victorious upon the rampart. As soon as they possessed a more equal field, Julian, who, with his light infantry, had led the attack, [69](#) darted through the ranks a skilful and experienced eye: his bravest soldiers, according to the precepts of Homer, [70](#) were distributed in the front and rear: and all the trumpets of the Imperial army sounded to battle. The Romans, after sending up a military shout, advanced in measured steps to the animating notes of martial music; launched their formidable javelins; and rushed forwards with drawn swords, to deprive the Barbarians, by a closer onset, of the advantage of their missile weapons. The whole engagement lasted above twelve hours; till the gradual retreat of the Persians was changed into a disorderly flight, of which the shameful example was given by the principal leader, and the Surenas himself. They were pursued to the gates of Ctesiphon; and the conquerors might have entered the dismayed city, [71](#) if their general, Victor, who was dangerously wounded with an arrow, had not conjured them to desist from a rash attempt, which must be fatal, if it were not successful. On *their* side, the Romans acknowledged the loss of only seventy-five men; while they affirmed, that the Barbarians had left on the field of battle two thousand five hundred, or even six thousand, of their bravest soldiers. The spoil was such as might be expected from the riches and luxury of an Oriental camp; large quantities of silver and gold, splendid arms and trappings, and beds and tables of massy silver. [7111](#) The victorious emperor distributed, as the rewards of valor, some honorable gifts, civic, and mural, and naval crowns; which he, and perhaps he alone, esteemed more precious than the wealth of Asia. A solemn sacrifice was offered to the god of war, but the appearances of the victims threatened the most inauspicious events; and Julian soon discovered, by less ambiguous signs, that he had now reached the term of his prosperity. [72](#)

67

[\(return\)](#)

[Rien n’est beau que le vrai; a maxim which should be inscribed on the desk of every rhetorician.]

6711

[\(return\)](#)

[This is a mistake; each vessel (according to

Zosimus two, according to Ammianus five) had eighty men. Amm. xxiv. 6, with Wagner's note. Gibbon must have read *octogenas* for *octogenis*. The five vessels selected for this service were remarkably large and strong provision transports. The strength of the fleet remained with Julian to carry over the army—M.]

68 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius alludes to the most powerful of the generals. I have ventured to name *Sallust*. Ammianus says, of all the leaders, quod acri metû territ acrimetu territi duces concordî precatû precaut fieri prohibere tentarent. * Note: It is evident that Gibbon has mistaken the sense of Libanius; his words can only apply to a commander of a detachment, not to so eminent a person as the Præfect of the East. St. Martin, iii. 313.—M.]

69 [\(return\)](#)

[Hinc Imperator.... (says Ammianus) ipse cum levis armaturæ auxiliis per prima postremaque discurrens, &c. Yet Zosimus, his friend, does not allow him to pass the river till two days after the battle.]

70 [\(return\)](#)

[Secundum Homericam dispositionem. A similar disposition is ascribed to the wise Nestor, in the fourth book of the Iliad; and Homer was never absent from the mind of Julian.]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[Persas terrore subito miscuerunt, versisque agminibus totius gentis, apertas Ctesiphontis portas victor miles intrâsset, ni major prædarum occasio fuisset, quam cura victoriæ, (Sextus Rufus de Provinciis c. 28.) Their avarice might dispose them to hear the advice of Victor.]

7111 [\(return\)](#)

[The suburbs of Ctesiphon, according to a new fragment of Eunapius, were so full of provisions, that the soldiers were in danger of suffering from excess. Mai, p. 260. Eunapius in Niebuhr. Nov. Byz. Coll. 68. Julian exhibited warlike dances and games in his camp to recreate the soldiers Ibid.—M.]

72 [\(return\)](#)

[The labor of the canal, the passage of the Tigris, and the victory, are described by Ammianus, (xxiv. 5, 6,) Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 124-128, p. 347-353,) Greg. Nazianzen, (Orat. iv. p. 115,) Zosimus,

(l. iii. p. 181-183,) and Sextus Rufus, (de Provinciis, c. 28.)]

On the second day after the battle, the domestic guards, the Jovians and Herculians, and the remaining troops, which composed near two thirds of the whole army, were securely wafted over the Tigris. [73](#) While the Persians beheld from the walls of Ctesiphon the desolation of the adjacent country, Julian cast many an anxious look towards the North, in full expectation, that as he himself had victoriously penetrated to the capital of Sapor, the march and junction of his lieutenants, Sebastian and Procopius, would be executed with the same courage and diligence. His expectations were disappointed by the treachery of the Armenian king, who permitted, and most probably directed, the desertion of his auxiliary troops from the camp of the Romans; [74](#) and by the dissensions of the two generals, who were incapable of forming or executing any plan for the public service. When the emperor had relinquished the hope of this important reenforcement, he condescended to hold a council of war, and approved, after a full debate, the sentiment of those generals, who dissuaded the siege of Ctesiphon, as a fruitless and pernicious undertaking. It is not easy for us to conceive, by what arts of fortification a city thrice besieged and taken by the predecessors of Julian could be rendered impregnable against an army of sixty thousand Romans, commanded by a brave and experienced general, and abundantly supplied with ships, provisions, battering engines, and military stores. But we may rest assured, from the love of glory, and contempt of danger, which formed the character of Julian, that he was not discouraged by any trivial or imaginary obstacles. [75](#) At the very time when he declined the siege of Ctesiphon, he rejected, with obstinacy and disdain, the most flattering offers of a negotiation of peace. Sapor, who had been so long accustomed to the tardy ostentation of Constantius, was surprised by the intrepid diligence of his successor. As far as the confines of India and Scythia, the satraps of the distant provinces were ordered to assemble their troops, and to march, without delay, to the assistance of their monarch. But their preparations were dilatory, their motions slow; and before Sapor could lead an army into the field, he received the melancholy intelligence of the devastation of Assyria, the ruin of his palaces, and the slaughter of his bravest troops, who defended the passage of the Tigris. The pride of royalty was humbled in the dust; he took his repasts on the ground; and the disorder of his hair expressed the grief and anxiety of his mind. Perhaps he would not have refused to purchase, with one half of his kingdom, the safety of the remainder; and he would have gladly subscribed himself, in a treaty of peace, the faithful and dependent ally of the Roman conqueror. Under the pretence of private business, a minister of rank and confidence was secretly despatched to embrace the knees of Hormisdas, and to request, in the language of a suppliant, that he might be introduced into the presence of the emperor. The Sassanian prince, whether he listened to the voice of pride or humanity, whether he consulted the sentiments of his birth, or the duties of his situation, was equally inclined to promote a salutary measure, which would terminate the calamities of Persia, and secure the triumph of Rome. He was

astonished by the inflexible firmness of a hero, who remembered, most unfortunately for himself and for his country, that Alexander had uniformly rejected the propositions of Darius. But as Julian was sensible, that the hope of a safe and honorable peace might cool the ardor of his troops, he earnestly requested that Hormisdas would privately dismiss the minister of Sapor, and conceal this dangerous temptation from the knowledge of the camp. [76](#)

73 [\(return\)](#)
[The fleet and army were formed in three divisions,
of which the first only had passed during the night.]

74 [\(return\)](#)
[Moses of Chorene (Hist. Armen. l. iii. c. 15, p. 246) supplies us with a national tradition, and a spurious letter. I have borrowed only the leading circumstance, which is consistent with truth, probability, and Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 131, p. 355.)]

75 [\(return\)](#)
[Civitas inexpugnabilis, facinus audax et importunum. Ammianus, xxiv. 7. His fellow-soldier, Eutropius, turns aside from the difficulty, Assyriamque populatus, castra apud Ctesiphontem stativa aliquandiu habuit: remeansbue victor, &c. x. 16. Zosimus is artful or ignorant, and Socrates inaccurate.]

76 [\(return\)](#)
[Libanius, Orat. Parent. c. 130, p. 354, c. 139, p. 361. Socrates, l. iii. c. 21. The ecclesiastical historian imputes the refusal of peace to the advice of Maximus. Such advice was unworthy of a philosopher; but the philosopher was likewise a magician, who flattered the hopes and passions of his master.]

Chapter XXIV: The Retreat And Death Of Julian.—Part IV.

The honor, as well as interest, of Julian, forbade him to consume his time under the impregnable walls of Ctesiphon and as often as he defied the Barbarians, who defended the city, to meet him on the open plain, they prudently replied, that if he desired to exercise his valor, he might seek the army of the Great King. He felt the insult, and he accepted the advice. Instead of confining his servile march to the banks of the Euphrates and Tigris, he resolved to imitate the adventurous spirit of Alexander, and boldly to advance into the inland provinces, till he forced his rival to contend with him, perhaps in the plains of Arbela, for the empire of Asia. The magnanimity of Julian was applauded and betrayed, by the arts of a noble Persian, who, in the cause of his country, had generously submitted to act a part full of danger, of falsehood, and of

shame. [77](#) With a train of faithful followers, he deserted to the Imperial camp; exposed, in a specious tale, the injuries which he had sustained; exaggerated the cruelty of Sapor, the discontent of the people, and the weakness of the monarchy; and confidently offered himself as the hostage and guide of the Roman march. The most rational grounds of suspicion were urged, without effect, by the wisdom and experience of Hormisdas; and the credulous Julian, receiving the traitor into his bosom, was persuaded to issue a hasty order, which, in the opinion of mankind, appeared to arraign his prudence, and to endanger his safety. He destroyed, in a single hour, the whole navy, which had been transported above five hundred miles, at so great an expense of toil, of treasure, and of blood. Twelve, or, at the most, twenty-two small vessels were saved, to accompany, on carriages, the march of the army, and to form occasional bridges for the passage of the rivers. A supply of twenty days' provisions was reserved for the use of the soldiers; and the rest of the magazines, with a fleet of eleven hundred vessels, which rode at anchor in the Tigris, were abandoned to the flames, by the absolute command of the emperor. The Christian bishops, Gregory and Augustin, insult the madness of the Apostate, who executed, with his own hands, the sentence of divine justice. Their authority, of less weight, perhaps, in a military question, is confirmed by the cool judgment of an experienced soldier, who was himself spectator of the conflagration, and who could not disapprove the reluctant murmurs of the troops. [78](#) Yet there are not wanting some specious, and perhaps solid, reasons, which might justify the resolution of Julian. The navigation of the Euphrates never ascended above Babylon, nor that of the Tigris above Opis. [79](#) The distance of the last-mentioned city from the Roman camp was not very considerable: and Julian must soon have renounced the vain and impracticable attempt of forcing upwards a great fleet against the stream of a rapid river, [80](#) which in several places was embarrassed by natural or artificial cataracts. [81](#) The power of sails and oars was insufficient; it became necessary to tow the ships against the current of the river; the strength of twenty thousand soldiers was exhausted in this tedious and servile labor, and if the Romans continued to march along the banks of the Tigris, they could only expect to return home without achieving any enterprise worthy of the genius or fortune of their leader. If, on the contrary, it was advisable to advance into the inland country, the destruction of the fleet and magazines was the only measure which could save that valuable prize from the hands of the numerous and active troops which might suddenly be poured from the gates of Ctesiphon. Had the arms of Julian been victorious, we should now admire the conduct, as well as the courage, of a hero, who, by depriving his soldiers of the hopes of a retreat, left them only the alternative of death or conquest. [82](#)

[The arts of this new Zopyrus (Greg. Nazianzen, Orat. iv. p. 115, 116) may derive some credit from the testimony of two abbreviators, (Sextus Rufus and Victor,) and the casual hints of Libanius (Orat. Parent. c. 134, p. 357) and Ammianus, (xxiv. 7.) The course of genuine history is interrupted by a most unseasonable chasm in the text of Ammianus.]

- 78 [\(return\)](#)
 [See Ammianus, (xxiv. 7,) Libanius, (Orat. Parentalis, c. 132, 133, p. 356, 357,) Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 183,) Zonaras, (tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 26) Gregory, (Orat. iv. p. 116,) and Augustin, (de Civitate Dei, l. iv. c. 29, l. v. c. 21.) Of these Libanius alone attempts a faint apology for his hero; who, according to Ammianus, pronounced his own condemnation by a tardy and ineffectual attempt to extinguish the flames.]
- 79 [\(return\)](#)
 [Consult Herodotus, (l. i. c. 194,) Strabo, (l. xvi. p. 1074,) and Tavernier, (part i. l. ii. p. 152.)]
- 80 [\(return\)](#)
 [A celeritate Tigris incipit vocari, ita appellat Medi sagittam. Plin. Hist. Natur. vi. 31.]
- 81 [\(return\)](#)
 [One of these dikes, which produces an artificial cascade or cataract, is described by Tavernier (part i. l. ii. p. 226) and Thevenot, (part ii. l. i. p. 193.) The Persians, or Assyrians, labored to interrupt the navigation of the river, (Strabo, l. xv. p. 1075. D’Anville, l’Euphrate et le Tigre, p. 98, 99.)]
- 82 [\(return\)](#)
 [Recollect the successful and applauded rashness of Agathocles and Cortez, who burnt their ships on the coast of Africa and Mexico.]

The cumbersome train of artillery and wagons, which retards the operations of a modern army, were in a great measure unknown in the camps of the Romans. [83](#) Yet, in every age, the subsistence of sixty thousand men must have been one of the most important cares of a prudent general; and that subsistence could only be drawn from his own or from the enemy’s country. Had it been possible for Julian to maintain a bridge of communication on the Tigris, and to preserve the conquered places of Assyria, a desolated province could not afford any large or regular supplies, in a season of the year when the lands were covered by the inundation of the Euphrates, [84](#) and the unwholesome air was darkened with swarms of innumerable insects. [85](#) The appearance of the hostile country was far more inviting. The extensive region that lies between the River Tigris and the mountains of Media, was filled with villages and towns; and the fertile soil, for the most part, was in a very improved state of cultivation. Julian might expect, that a conqueror, who possessed the two forcible instruments of persuasion, steel and gold, would easily procure a plentiful subsistence from the fears or avarice of the natives. But, on the approach of the Romans, the rich and smiling prospect was instantly blasted. Wherever they moved, the inhabitants deserted the open villages, and took shelter in the fortified towns; the cattle was driven away; the grass and ripe corn were consumed with fire; and, as soon as the flames had subsided which

interrupted the march of Julian, he beheld the melancholy face of a smoking and naked desert. This desperate but effectual method of defence can only be executed by the enthusiasm of a people who prefer their independence to their property; or by the rigor of an arbitrary government, which consults the public safety without submitting to their inclinations the liberty of choice. On the present occasion the zeal and obedience of the Persians seconded the commands of Sapor; and the emperor was soon reduced to the scanty stock of provisions, which continually wasted in his hands. Before they were entirely consumed, he might still have reached the wealthy and unwarlike cities of Ecbatana or Susa, by the effort of a rapid and well-directed march; [86](#) but he was deprived of this last resource by his ignorance of the roads, and by the perfidy of his guides. The Romans wandered several days in the country to the eastward of Bagdad; the Persian deserter, who had artfully led them into the snare, escaped from their resentment; and his followers, as soon as they were put to the torture, confessed the secret of the conspiracy. The visionary conquests of Hyrcania and India, which had so long amused, now tormented, the mind of Julian. Conscious that his own imprudence was the cause of the public distress, he anxiously balanced the hopes of safety or success, without obtaining a satisfactory answer, either from gods or men. At length, as the only practicable measure, he embraced the resolution of directing his steps towards the banks of the Tigris, with the design of saving the army by a hasty march to the confines of Corduene; a fertile and friendly province, which acknowledged the sovereignty of Rome. The desponding troops obeyed the signal of the retreat, only seventy days after they had passed the Chaboras, with the sanguine expectation of subverting the throne of Persia. [87](#)

83

[\(return\)](#)

[See the judicious reflections of the author of the *Essai sur la Tactique*, tom. ii. p. 287-353, and the learned remarks of M. Guichardt *Nouveaux Mémoires Militaires*, tom. i. p. 351-382, on the baggage and subsistence of the Roman armies.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[The Tigris rises to the south, the Euphrates to the north, of the Armenian mountains. The former overflows in March, the latter in July. These circumstances are well explained in the *Geographical Dissertation* of Foster, inserted in *Spelman's Expedition of Cyrus*, vol. ii. p. 26.]

85

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxiv. 8) describes, as he had felt, the inconveniency of the flood, the heat, and the insects. The lands of Assyria, oppressed by the Turks, and ravaged by the Curds or Arabs, yield an increase of ten, fifteen, and twenty fold, for the seed which is cast into the ground by the wretched and unskillful husbandmen. *Voyage de Niebuhr*, tom. ii. p. 279, 285.]

[Isidore of Charax (Mansion. Parthic. p. 5, 6, in Hudson, Geograph. Minor. tom. ii.) reckons 129 schæni from Seleucia, and Thevenot, (part i. l. i. ii. p. 209-245,) 128 hours of march from Bagdad to Ecbatana, or Hamadan. These measures cannot exceed an ordinary parasang, or three Roman miles.]

[The march of Julian from Ctesiphon is circumstantially, but not clearly, described by Ammianus, (xxiv. 7, 8,) Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 134, p. 357,) and Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 183.) The two last seem ignorant that their conqueror was retreating; and Libanius absurdly confines him to the banks of the Tigris.]

As long as the Romans seemed to advance into the country, their march was observed and insulted from a distance, by several bodies of Persian cavalry; who, showing themselves sometimes in loose, and sometimes in close order, faintly skirmished with the advanced guards. These detachments were, however, supported by a much greater force; and the heads of the columns were no sooner pointed towards the Tigris than a cloud of dust arose on the plain. The Romans, who now aspired only to the permission of a safe and speedy retreat, endeavored to persuade themselves, that this formidable appearance was occasioned by a troop of wild asses, or perhaps by the approach of some friendly Arabs. They halted, pitched their tents, fortified their camp, passed the whole night in continual alarms; and discovered at the dawn of day, that they were surrounded by an army of Persians. This army, which might be considered only as the van of the Barbarians, was soon followed by the main body of cuirassiers, archers, and elephants, commanded by Meranes, a general of rank and reputation. He was accompanied by two of the king's sons, and many of the principal satraps; and fame and expectation exaggerated the strength of the remaining powers, which slowly advanced under the conduct of Sapor himself. As the Romans continued their march, their long array, which was forced to bend or divide, according to the varieties of the ground, afforded frequent and favorable opportunities to their vigilant enemies. The Persians repeatedly charged with fury; they were repeatedly repulsed with firmness; and the action at Maronga, which almost deserved the name of a battle, was marked by a considerable loss of satraps and elephants, perhaps of equal value in the eyes of their monarch. These splendid advantages were not obtained without an adequate slaughter on the side of the Romans: several officers of distinction were either killed or wounded; and the emperor himself, who, on all occasions of danger, inspired and guided the valor of his troops, was obliged to expose his person, and exert his abilities. The weight of offensive and defensive arms, which still constituted the strength and safety of the Romans, disabled them from making any long or effectual pursuit; and as the horsemen of the East were trained to dart their javelins, and shoot their arrows, at full speed, and in every possible

direction, [88](#) the cavalry of Persia was never more formidable than in the moment of a rapid and disorderly flight. But the most certain and irreparable loss of the Romans was that of time. The hardy veterans, accustomed to the cold climate of Gaul and Germany, fainted under the sultry heat of an Assyrian summer; their vigor was exhausted by the incessant repetition of march and combat; and the progress of the army was suspended by the precautions of a slow and dangerous retreat, in the presence of an active enemy. Every day, every hour, as the supply diminished, the value and price of subsistence increased in the Roman camp. [89](#) Julian, who always contented himself with such food as a hungry soldier would have disdained, distributed, for the use of the troops, the provisions of the Imperial household, and whatever could be spared, from the sumpter-horses, of the tribunes and generals. But this feeble relief served only to aggravate the sense of the public distress; and the Romans began to entertain the most gloomy apprehensions that, before they could reach the frontiers of the empire, they should all perish, either by famine, or by the sword of the Barbarians. [90](#)

88

[\(return\)](#)

[Chardin, the most judicious of modern travellers, describes (tom. ii. p. 57, 58, &c., edit. in 4to.) the education and dexterity of the Persian horsemen. Brissonius (de Regno Persico, p. 650 651, &c.,) has collected the testimonies of antiquity.]

89

[\(return\)](#)

[In Mark Antony's retreat, an attic chœnix sold for fifty drachmæ, or, in other words, a pound of flour for twelve or fourteen shillings barley bread was sold for its weight in silver. It is impossible to peruse the interesting narrative of Plutarch, (tom. v. p. 102-116,) without perceiving that Mark Antony and Julian were pursued by the same enemies, and involved in the same distress.]

90

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxiv. 8, xxv. 1. Zosimus, l. iii. p. 184, 185, 186. Libanius, Orat. Parent. c. 134, 135, p. 357, 358, 359. The sophist of Antioch appears ignorant that the troops were hungry.]

While Julian struggled with the almost insuperable difficulties of his situation, the silent hours of the night were still devoted to study and contemplation. Whenever he closed his eyes in short and interrupted slumbers, his mind was agitated with painful anxiety; nor can it be thought surprising, that the Genius of the empire should once more appear before him, covering with a funeral veil his head, and his horn of abundance, and slowly retiring from the Imperial tent. The monarch started from his couch, and stepping forth to refresh his wearied spirits with the coolness of the midnight air, he beheld a fiery meteor, which shot athwart the sky, and suddenly vanished. Julian was convinced that he had seen the menacing countenance of the god of war; [91](#) the council which he summoned, of Tuscan Haruspices, [92](#) unanimously pronounced that

he should abstain from action; but on this occasion, necessity and reason were more prevalent than superstition; and the trumpets sounded at the break of day. The army marched through a hilly country; and the hills had been secretly occupied by the Persians. Julian led the van with the skill and attention of a consummate general; he was alarmed by the intelligence that his rear was suddenly attacked. The heat of the weather had tempted him to lay aside his cuirass; but he snatched a shield from one of his attendants, and hastened, with a sufficient reenforcement, to the relief of the rear-guard. A similar danger recalled the intrepid prince to the defence of the front; and, as he galloped through the columns, the centre of the left was attacked, and almost overpowered by the furious charge of the Persian cavalry and elephants. This huge body was soon defeated, by the well-timed evolution of the light infantry, who aimed their weapons, with dexterity and effect, against the backs of the horsemen, and the legs of the elephants. The Barbarians fled; and Julian, who was foremost in every danger, animated the pursuit with his voice and gestures. His trembling guards, scattered and oppressed by the disorderly throng of friends and enemies, reminded their fearless sovereign that he was without armor; and conjured him to decline the fall of the impending ruin. As they exclaimed, [93](#) a cloud of darts and arrows was discharged from the flying squadrons; and a javelin, after razing the skin of his arm, transpierced the ribs, and fixed in the inferior part of the liver. Julian attempted to draw the deadly weapon from his side; but his fingers were cut by the sharpness of the steel, and he fell senseless from his horse. His guards flew to his relief; and the wounded emperor was gently raised from the ground, and conveyed out of the tumult of the battle into an adjacent tent. The report of the melancholy event passed from rank to rank; but the grief of the Romans inspired them with invincible valor, and the desire of revenge. The bloody and obstinate conflict was maintained by the two armies, till they were separated by the total darkness of the night. The Persians derived some honor from the advantage which they obtained against the left wing, where Anatolius, master of the offices, was slain, and the præfect Sallust very narrowly escaped. But the event of the day was adverse to the Barbarians. They abandoned the field; their two generals, Meranes and Nohordates, [94](#) fifty nobles or satraps, and a multitude of their bravest soldiers; and the success of the Romans, if Julian had survived, might have been improved into a decisive and useful victory.

91

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxv. 2. Julian had sworn in a passion, *nunquam se Marti sacra facturum*, (xxiv. 6.) Such whimsical quarrels were not uncommon between the gods and their insolent votaries; and even the prudent Augustus, after his fleet had been twice shipwrecked, excluded Neptune from the honors of public processions. See Hume's Philosophical Reflections. Essays, vol. ii. p. 418.]

92

[\(return\)](#)

[They still retained the monopoly of the vain but

lucrative science, which had been invented in
Hetruria; and professed to derive their knowledge
of signs and omens from the ancient books of
Tarquitiuſ, a Tuſcan ſage.]

93

[\(return\)](#)

[Clambant hinc inde *candidati* (ſee the note of
Valeſiuſ) quos terror, ut fugientium molem
tanquam ruinam male compoſiti culminiſ
declinaret. Ammian. xxv 3.]

94

[\(return\)](#)

[Sapor himſelf declared to the Romans, that it was
his practice to comfort the families of his deceased
ſatrapſ, by ſending them, as a preſent, the heads of
the guards and officers who had not fallen by their
maſter's ſide. Libaniuſ, de nece Julian. ulciſ. c. xiii.
p. 163.]

The firſt words that Julian uttered, after his recovery from the fainting fit into which he had been thrown by loſs of blood, were expreſſive of his martial ſpirit. He called for his horſe and arms, and was impatient to ruſh into the battle. His remaining ſtrength was exhausted by the painful effort; and the ſurgeons, who examined his wound, diſcovered the ſymptoms of approaching death. He employed the awful moments with the firm temper of a hero and a ſage; the philoſophers who had accompanied him in this fatal expedition, compared the tent of Julian with the priſon of Socrates; and the ſpectators, whom duty, or friendſhip, or curioſity, had aſſembled round his couch, liſtened with reſpectful grief to the funeral oration of their dying emperor. [95](#) “Friends and fellow-ſoldiers, the ſeaſonable period of my departure is now arrived, and I diſcharge, with the cheerfulneſs of a ready debtor, the demands of nature. I have learned from philoſophy, how much the ſoul is more excellent than the body; and that the ſeparation of the nobler ſubſtance ſhould be the ſubject of joy, rather than of affliction. I have learned from religion, that an early death has often been the reward of piety; [96](#) and I accept, as a favor of the gods, the mortal ſtroke that ſecures me from the danger of diſgracing a character, which has hitherto been ſupported by virtue and fortitude. I die without remorse, as I have lived without guilt. I am pleaſed to reflect on the innocence of my private life; and I can affirm with confidence, that the ſupreme authority, that emanation of the Divine Power, has been preſerved in my hands pure and immaculate. Detesting the corrupt and deſtructive maxims of deſpotiſm, I have conſidered the happineſs of the people as the end of government. Submitting my actions to the laws of prudence, of juſtice, and of moderation, I have truſted the event to the care of Providence. Peace was the object of my counſels, as long as peace was conſiſtent with the public welfare; but when the imperious voice of my country ſummoned me to arms, I expoſed my perſon to the dangers of war, with the clear foreknowledge (which I had acquired from the art of divination) that I was deſtined to fall by the ſword. I now offer my tribute of gratitude to the Eternal Being, who has not ſuffered me to periſh by the cruelty of a tyrant, by the ſecret dagger of conſpiracy, or

by the slow tortures of lingering disease. He has given me, in the midst of an honorable career, a splendid and glorious departure from this world; and I hold it equally absurd, equally base, to solicit, or to decline, the stroke of fate. This much I have attempted to say; but my strength fails me, and I feel the approach of death. I shall cautiously refrain from any word that may tend to influence your suffrages in the election of an emperor. My choice might be imprudent or injudicious; and if it should not be ratified by the consent of the army, it might be fatal to the person whom I should recommend. I shall only, as a good citizen, express my hopes, that the Romans may be blessed with the government of a virtuous sovereign.” After this discourse, which Julian pronounced in a firm and gentle tone of voice, he distributed, by a military testament, [97](#) the remains of his private fortune; and making some inquiry why Anatolius was not present, he understood, from the answer of Sallust, that Anatolius was killed; and bewailed, with amiable inconsistency, the loss of his friend. At the same time he reproved the immoderate grief of the spectators; and conjured them not to disgrace, by unmanly tears, the fate of a prince, who in a few moments would be united with heaven, and with the stars. [98](#) The spectators were silent; and Julian entered into a metaphysical argument with the philosophers Priscus and Maximus, on the nature of the soul. The efforts which he made, of mind as well as body, most probably hastened his death. His wound began to bleed with fresh violence; his respiration was embarrassed by the swelling of the veins; he called for a draught of cold water, and, as soon as he had drank it, expired without pain, about the hour of midnight. Such was the end of that extraordinary man, in the thirty-second year of his age, after a reign of one year and about eight months, from the death of Constantius. In his last moments he displayed, perhaps with some ostentation, the love of virtue and of fame, which had been the ruling passions of his life. [99](#)

95

[\(return\)](#)

[The character and situation of Julian might countenance the suspicion that he had previously composed the elaborate oration, which Ammianus heard, and has transcribed. The version of the Abbé de la Bleterie is faithful and elegant. I have followed him in expressing the Platonic idea of emanations, which is darkly insinuated in the original.]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodotus (l. i. c. 31,) has displayed that doctrine in an agreeable tale. Yet the Jupiter, (in the 16th book of the Iliad,) who laments with tears of blood the death of Sarpedon his son, had a very imperfect notion of happiness or glory beyond the grave.]

97

[\(return\)](#)

[The soldiers who made their verbal or nuncupatory testaments, upon actual service, (in procinctu,) were exempted from the formalities of

the Roman law. See Heineccius, (*Antiquit. Jur. Roman.* tom. i. p. 504,) and Montesquieu, (*Esprit des Loix*, l. xxvii.)]

98

[\(return\)](#)

[This union of the human soul with the divine æthereal substance of the universe, is the ancient doctrine of Pythagoras and Plato: but it seems to exclude any personal or conscious immortality. See Warburton's learned and rational observations. *Divine Legation*, vol ii. p. 199-216.]

99

[\(return\)](#)

[The whole relation of the death of Julian is given by Ammianus, (xxv. 3,) an intelligent spectator. Libanius, who turns with horror from the scene, has supplied some circumstances, (*Orat. Parental.* c 136-140, p. 359-362.) The calumnies of Gregory, and the legends of more recent saints, may now be *silently* despised. * Note: A very remarkable fragment of Eunapius describes, not without spirit, the struggle between the terror of the army on account of their perilous situation, and their grief for the death of Julian. "Even the vulgar felt that they would soon provide a general, but such a general as Julian they would never find, even though a god in the form of man—Julian, who, with a mind equal to the divinity, triumphed over the evil propensities of human nature,—* * who held commerce with immaterial beings while yet in the material body—who condescended to rule because a ruler was necessary to the welfare of mankind." *Mai*, Nov. Coll. ii. 261. Eunapius in Niebuhr, 69.]

The triumph of Christianity, and the calamities of the empire, may, in some measure, be ascribed to Julian himself, who had neglected to secure the future execution of his designs, by the timely and judicious nomination of an associate and successor. But the royal race of Constantius Chlorus was reduced to his own person; and if he entertained any serious thoughts of investing with the purple the most worthy among the Romans, he was diverted from his resolution by the difficulty of the choice, the jealousy of power, the fear of ingratitude, and the natural presumption of health, of youth, and of prosperity. His unexpected death left the empire without a master, and without an heir, in a state of perplexity and danger, which, in the space of fourscore years, had never been experienced, since the election of Diocletian. In a government which had almost forgotten the distinction of pure and noble blood, the superiority of birth was of little moment; the claims of official rank were accidental and precarious; and the candidates, who might aspire to ascend the vacant throne could be supported only by the consciousness of personal merit, or by the hopes of popular favor. But the situation of a famished army, encompassed on all sides by a host of Barbarians, shortened the

moments of grief and deliberation. In this scene of terror and distress, the body of the deceased prince, according to his own directions, was decently embalmed; and, at the dawn of day, the generals convened a military senate, at which the commanders of the legions, and the officers both of cavalry and infantry, were invited to assist. Three or four hours of the night had not passed away without some secret cabals; and when the election of an emperor was proposed, the spirit of faction began to agitate the assembly. Victor and Arinthæus collected the remains of the court of Constantius; the friends of Julian attached themselves to the Gallic chiefs, Dagalaiphus and Nevitta; and the most fatal consequences might be apprehended from the discord of two factions, so opposite in their character and interest, in their maxims of government, and perhaps in their religious principles. The superior virtues of Sallust could alone reconcile their divisions, and unite their suffrages; and the venerable præfect would immediately have been declared the successor of Julian, if he himself, with sincere and modest firmness, had not alleged his age and infirmities, so unequal to the weight of the diadem. The generals, who were surprised and perplexed by his refusal, showed some disposition to adopt the salutary advice of an inferior officer, [100](#) that they should act as they would have acted in the absence of the emperor; that they should exert their abilities to extricate the army from the present distress; and, if they were fortunate enough to reach the confines of Mesopotamia, they should proceed with united and deliberate counsels in the election of a lawful sovereign. While they debated, a few voices saluted Jovian, who was no more than *first* [101](#) of the domestics, with the names of Emperor and Augustus. The tumultuary acclamation [10111](#) was instantly repeated by the guards who surrounded the tent, and passed, in a few minutes, to the extremities of the line. The new prince, astonished with his own fortune was hastily invested with the Imperial ornaments, and received an oath of fidelity from the generals, whose favor and protection he so lately solicited. The strongest recommendation of Jovian was the merit of his father, Count Varronian, who enjoyed, in honorable retirement, the fruit of his long services. In the obscure freedom of a private station, the son indulged his taste for wine and women; yet he supported, with credit, the character of a Christian [102](#) and a soldier. Without being conspicuous for any of the ambitious qualifications which excite the admiration and envy of mankind, the comely person of Jovian, his cheerful temper, and familiar wit, had gained the affection of his fellow-soldiers; and the generals of both parties acquiesced in a popular election, which had not been conducted by the arts of their enemies. The pride of this unexpected elevation was moderated by the just apprehension, that the same day might terminate the life and reign of the new emperor. The pressing voice of necessity was obeyed without delay; and the first orders issued by Jovian, a few hours after his predecessor had expired, were to prosecute a march, which could alone extricate the Romans from their actual distress. [103](#)

describes the scene of the election, at which he was undoubtedly present, (xxv. 5.)]

101 [\(return\)](#)

[The *primus* or *primicerius* enjoyed the dignity of a senator, and though only a tribune, he ranked with the military dukes. Cod. Theodosian. l. vi. tit. xxiv. These privileges are perhaps more recent than the time of Jovian.]

10111 [\(return\)](#)

[The soldiers supposed that the acclamations proclaimed the name of Julian, restored, as they fondly thought, to health, not that of Jovian. loc.—M.]

102 [\(return\)](#)

[The ecclesiastical historians, Socrates, (l. iii. c. 22,) Sozomen, (l. vi. c. 3,) and Theodoret, (l. iv. c. 1,) ascribe to Jovian the merit of a confessor under the preceding reign; and piously suppose that he refused the purple, till the whole army unanimously exclaimed that they were Christians. Ammianus, calmly pursuing his narrative, overthrows the legend by a single sentence. *Hostiis pro Joviano extisque inspectis, pronuntiatum est, &c.*, xxv. 6.]

103 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxv. 10) has drawn from the life an impartial portrait of Jovian; to which the younger Victor has added some remarkable strokes. The Abbé de la Bleterie (*Histoire de Jovien*, tom. i. p. 1-238) has composed an elaborate history of his short reign; a work remarkably distinguished by elegance of style, critical disquisition, and religious prejudice.]

Chapter XXIV: The Retreat And Death Of Julian.—Part V.

The esteem of an enemy is most sincerely expressed by his fears; and the degree of fear may be accurately measured by the joy with which he celebrates his deliverance. The welcome news of the death of Julian, which a deserter revealed to the camp of Sapor, inspired the desponding monarch with a sudden confidence of victory. He immediately detached the royal cavalry, perhaps the ten thousand *Immortals*, [104](#) to second and support the pursuit; and discharged the whole weight of his united forces on the rear-guard of the Romans. The rear-guard was thrown into disorder; the renowned legions, which derived their titles from Diocletian, and his warlike colleague, were broke and trampled down by the elephants; and three tribunes lost their lives in attempting to stop the flight of their soldiers. The battle was at length restored by the persevering valor of the Romans; the Persians were repulsed with a great slaughter of

men and elephants; and the army, after marching and fighting a long summer's day, arrived, in the evening, at Samara, on the banks of the Tigris, about one hundred miles above Ctesiphon. [105](#) On the ensuing day, the Barbarians, instead of harassing the march, attacked the camp, of Jovian; which had been seated in a deep and sequestered valley. From the hills, the archers of Persia insulted and annoyed the wearied legionaries; and a body of cavalry, which had penetrated with desperate courage through the Prætorian gate, was cut in pieces, after a doubtful conflict, near the Imperial tent. In the succeeding night, the camp of Carche was protected by the lofty dikes of the river; and the Roman army, though incessantly exposed to the vexatious pursuit of the Saracens, pitched their tents near the city of Dura, [106](#) four days after the death of Julian. The Tigris was still on their left; their hopes and provisions were almost consumed; and the impatient soldiers, who had fondly persuaded themselves that the frontiers of the empire were not far distant, requested their new sovereign, that they might be permitted to hazard the passage of the river. With the assistance of his wisest officers, Jovian endeavored to check their rashness; by representing, that if they possessed sufficient skill and vigor to stem the torrent of a deep and rapid stream, they would only deliver themselves naked and defenceless to the Barbarians, who had occupied the opposite banks, Yielding at length to their clamorous importunities, he consented, with reluctance, that five hundred Gauls and Germans, accustomed from their infancy to the waters of the Rhine and Danube, should attempt the bold adventure, which might serve either as an encouragement, or as a warning, for the rest of the army. In the silence of the night, they swam the Tigris, surprised an unguarded post of the enemy, and displayed at the dawn of day the signal of their resolution and fortune. The success of this trial disposed the emperor to listen to the promises of his architects, who propose to construct a floating bridge of the inflated skins of sheep, oxen, and goats, covered with a floor of earth and fascines. [107](#) Two important days were spent in the ineffectual labor; and the Romans, who already endured the miseries of famine, cast a look of despair on the Tigris, and upon the Barbarians; whose numbers and obstinacy increased with the distress of the Imperial army. [108](#)

104

[\(return\)](#)

[Regius equitatus. It appears, from Irocopius, that the Immortals, so famous under Cyrus and his successors, were revived, if we may use that improper word, by the Sassanides. Brisson de Regno Persico, p. 268, &c.]

105

[\(return\)](#)

[The obscure villages of the inland country are irrecoverably lost; nor can we name the field of battle where Julian fell: but M. D'Anville has demonstrated the precise situation of Sumere, Carche, and Dura, along the banks of the Tigris, (Geographie Ancienne, tom. ii. p. 248 L'Euphrate et le Tigre, p. 95, 97.) In the ninth century, Sumere, or Samara, became, with a slight change of name,

the royal residence of the khalifs of the house of Abbas. * Note: Sormanray, called by the Arabs Samira, where D'Anville placed Samara, is too much to the south; and is a modern town built by Caliph Morasen. Serra-man-rai means, in Arabic, it rejoices every one who sees it. St. Martin, iii. 133.—M.]

106 [\(return\)](#)
[Dura was a fortified place in the wars of Antiochus against the rebels of Media and Persia, (Polybius, l. v. c. 48, 52, p. 548, 552 edit. Casaubon, in 8vo.)]

107 [\(return\)](#)
[A similar expedient was proposed to the leaders of the ten thousand, and wisely rejected. Xenophon, Anabasis, l. iii. p. 255, 256, 257. It appears, from our modern travellers, that rafts floating on bladders perform the trade and navigation of the Tigris.]

108 [\(return\)](#)
[The first military acts of the reign of Jovian are related by Ammianus, (xxv. 6,) Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 146, p. 364,) and Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 189, 190, 191.) Though we may distrust the fairness of Libanius, the ocular testimony of Eutropius (uno a Persis atque altero prælio victus, x. 17) must incline us to suspect that Ammianus had been too jealous of the honor of the Roman arms.]

In this hopeless condition, the fainting spirits of the Romans were revived by the sound of peace. The transient presumption of Sapor had vanished: he observed, with serious concern, that, in the repetition of doubtful combats, he had lost his most faithful and intrepid nobles, his bravest troops, and the greatest part of his train of elephants: and the experienced monarch feared to provoke the resistance of despair, the vicissitudes of fortune, and the unexhausted powers of the Roman empire; which might soon advance to elieve, or to revenge, the successor of Julian. The Surenas himself, accompanied by another satrap, appeared in the camp of Jovian; [109](#) and declared, that the clemency of his sovereign was not averse to signify the conditions on which he would consent to spare and to dismiss the Cæsar with the relics of his captive army. [10911](#) The hopes of safety subdued the firmness of the Romans; the emperor was compelled, by the advice of his council, and the cries of his soldiers, to embrace the offer of peace; [10912](#) and the præfect Sallust was immediately sent, with the general Arinthæus, to understand the pleasure of the Great King. The crafty Persian delayed, under various pretenses, the conclusion of the agreement; started difficulties, required explanations, suggested expedients, receded from his concessions, increased his demands, and wasted four days in the arts of negotiation, till he had consumed the stock of provisions which yet remained in the camp of the Romans. Had Jovian been capable of executing a bold and prudent measure, he would have continued his march, with

unremitting diligence; the progress of the treaty would have suspended the attacks of the Barbarians; and, before the expiration of the fourth day, he might have safely reached the fruitful province of Corduene, at the distance only of one hundred miles. [110](#) The irresolute emperor, instead of breaking through the toils of the enemy, expected his fate with patient resignation; and accepted the humiliating conditions of peace, which it was no longer in his power to refuse. The five provinces beyond the Tigris, which had been ceded by the grandfather of Sapor, were restored to the Persian monarchy. He acquired, by a single article, the impregnable city of Nisibis; which had sustained, in three successive sieges, the effort of his arms. Singara, and the castle of the Moors, one of the strongest places of Mesopotamia, were likewise dismembered from the empire. It was considered as an indulgence, that the inhabitants of those fortresses were permitted to retire with their effects; but the conqueror rigorously insisted, that the Romans should forever abandon the king and kingdom of Armenia. [11011](#) A peace, or rather a long truce, of thirty years, was stipulated between the hostile nations; the faith of the treaty was ratified by solemn oaths and religious ceremonies; and hostages of distinguished rank were reciprocally delivered to secure the performance of the conditions. [111](#)

109

[\(return\)](#)

[Sextus Rufus (de Provinciis, c. 29) embraces a poor subterfuge of national vanity. Tanta reverentia nominis Romani fuit, ut a Persis *primus* de pace sermo haberetur. —He is called Junius by John Malala; the same, M. St. Martin conjectures, with a satrap of Gordyene named Jovianus, or Jovinianus; mentioned in Ammianus Marcellinus, xviii. 6.—M.]

10911

[\(return\)](#)

[The Persian historians couch the message of Shah-pour in these Oriental terms: “I have reassembled my numerous army. I am resolved to revenge my subjects, who have been plundered, made captives, and slain. It is for this that I have bared my arm, and girded my loins. If you consent to pay the price of the blood which has been shed, to deliver up the booty which has been plundered, and to restore the city of Nisibis, which is in Irak, and belongs to our empire, though now in your possession, I will sheathe the sword of war; but should you refuse these terms, the hoofs of my horse, which are hard as steel, shall efface the name of the Romans from the earth; and my glorious cimeter, that destroys like fire, shall exterminate the people of your empire.” These authorities do not mention the death of Julian. Malcolm’s Persia, i. 87.—M.]

10912

[\(return\)](#)

[The Paschal chronicle, not, as M. St. Martin says,

supported by John Malala, places the mission of this ambassador before the death of Julian. The king of Persia was then in Persarmenia, ignorant of the death of Julian; he only arrived at the army subsequent to that event. St. Martin adopts this view, and finds or extorts support for it, from Libanius and Ammianus, iii. 158.—M.]

110

[\(return\)](#)

[It is presumptuous to controvert the opinion of Ammianus, a soldier and a spectator. Yet it is difficult to understand *how* the mountains of Corduene could extend over the plains of Assyria, as low as the conflux of the Tigris and the great Zab; or *how* an army of sixty thousand men could march one hundred miles in four days. Note: * Yet this appears to be the case (in modern maps:) the march is the difficulty.—M.]

11011

[\(return\)](#)

[Sapor availed himself, a few years after, of the dissolution of the alliance between the Romans and the Armenians. See St. M. iii. 163.—M.]

111

[\(return\)](#)

[The treaty of Dura is recorded with grief or indignation by Ammianus, (xxv. 7,) Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 142, p. 364,) Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 190, 191,) Gregory Nazianzen, (Orat. iv. p. 117, 118, who imputes the distress to Julian, the deliverance to Jovian,) and Eutropius, (x. 17.) The last-mentioned writer, who was present in military station, styles this peace *necessarium quidem sed ignobilem*.]

The sophist of Antioch, who saw with indignation the sceptre of his hero in the feeble hand of a Christian successor, professes to admire the moderation of Sapor, in contenting himself with so small a portion of the Roman empire. If he had stretched as far as the Euphrates the claims of his ambition, he might have been secure, says Libanius, of not meeting with a refusal. If he had fixed, as the boundary of Persia, the Orontes, the Cydnus, the Sangarius, or even the Thracian Bosphorus, flatterers would not have been wanting in the court of Jovian to convince the timid monarch, that his remaining provinces would still afford the most ample gratifications of power and luxury. [112](#) Without adopting in its full force this malicious insinuation, we must acknowledge, that the conclusion of so ignominious a treaty was facilitated by the private ambition of Jovian. The obscure domestic, exalted to the throne by fortune, rather than by merit, was impatient to escape from the hands of the Persians, that he might prevent the designs of Procopius, who commanded the army of Mesopotamia, and establish his doubtful reign over the legions and provinces which were still ignorant of the hasty and tumultuous choice of the camp beyond the Tigris. [113](#) In the

neighborhood of the same river, at no very considerable distance from the fatal station of Dura, [114](#) the ten thousand Greeks, without generals, or guides, or provisions, were abandoned, above twelve hundred miles from their native country, to the resentment of a victorious monarch. The difference of *their* conduct and success depended much more on their character than on their situation. Instead of tamely resigning themselves to the secret deliberations and private views of a single person, the united councils of the Greeks were inspired by the generous enthusiasm of a popular assembly; where the mind of each citizen is filled with the love of glory, the pride of freedom, and the contempt of death. Conscious of their superiority over the Barbarians in arms and discipline, they disdained to yield, they refused to capitulate: every obstacle was surmounted by their patience, courage, and military skill; and the memorable retreat of the ten thousand exposed and insulted the weakness of the Persian monarchy. [115](#)

112 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, Orat. Parent. c. 143, p. 364, 365.]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[Conditionibus..... dispendiosis Romanæ reipublicæ impositis.... quibus cupidior regni quam gloriæ Jovianus, imperio rudis, adqueivit. Sextus Rufus de Provinciis, c. 29. La Bleterie has expressed, in a long, direct oration, these specious considerations of public and private interest, (Hist. de Jovien, tom. i. p. 39, &c.)]

114 [\(return\)](#)

[The generals were murdered on the banks of the Zabatus, (Anabasis, l. ii. p. 156, l. iii. p. 226,) or great Zab, a river of Assyria, 400 feet broad, which falls into the Tigris fourteen hours below Mosul. The error of the Greeks bestowed on the greater and lesser Zab the names of the *Wolf*, (Lycus,) and the *Goat*, (Capros.) They created these animals to attend the *Tiger* of the East.]

115 [\(return\)](#)

[The *Cyropædia* is vague and languid; the *Anabasis* circumstance and animated. Such is the eternal difference between fiction and truth.]

As the price of his disgraceful concessions, the emperor might perhaps have stipulated, that the camp of the hungry Romans should be plentifully supplied; [116](#) and that they should be permitted to pass the Tigris on the bridge which was constructed by the hands of the Persians. But, if Jovian presumed to solicit those equitable terms, they were sternly refused by the haughty tyrant of the East, whose clemency had pardoned the invaders of his country. The Saracens sometimes intercepted the stragglers of the march; but the generals and troops of Sapor respected the cessation of arms; and Jovian was suffered to explore the most convenient place for the passage of the river. The small vessels, which had been saved from the conflagration of the fleet, performed the most essential service. They first conveyed the emperor and his favorites; and afterwards

transported, in many successive voyages, a great part of the army. But, as every man was anxious for his personal safety, and apprehensive of being left on the hostile shore, the soldiers, who were too impatient to wait the slow returns of the boats, boldly ventured themselves on light hurdles, or inflated skins; and, drawing after them their horses, attempted, with various success, to swim across the river. Many of these daring adventurers were swallowed by the waves; many others, who were carried along by the violence of the stream, fell an easy prey to the avarice or cruelty of the wild Arabs: and the loss which the army sustained in the passage of the Tigris, was not inferior to the carnage of a day of battle. As soon as the Romans were landed on the western bank, they were delivered from the hostile pursuit of the Barbarians; but, in a laborious march of two hundred miles over the plains of Mesopotamia, they endured the last extremities of thirst and hunger. They were obliged to traverse the sandy desert, which, in the extent of seventy miles, did not afford a single blade of sweet grass, nor a single spring of fresh water; and the rest of the inhospitable waste was untrod by the footsteps either of friends or enemies. Whenever a small measure of flour could be discovered in the camp, twenty pounds weight were greedily purchased with ten pieces of gold: [117](#) the beasts of burden were slaughtered and devoured; and the desert was strewed with the arms and baggage of the Roman soldiers, whose tattered garments and meagre countenances displayed their past sufferings and actual misery. A small convoy of provisions advanced to meet the army as far as the castle of Ur; and the supply was the more grateful, since it declared the fidelity of Sebastian and Procopius. At Thilsaphata, [118](#) the emperor most graciously received the generals of Mesopotamia; and the remains of a once flourishing army at length reposed themselves under the walls of Nisibis. The messengers of Jovian had already proclaimed, in the language of flattery, his election, his treaty, and his return; and the new prince had taken the most effectual measures to secure the allegiance of the armies and provinces of Europe, by placing the military command in the hands of those officers, who, from motives of interest, or inclination, would firmly support the cause of their benefactor. [119](#)

116

[\(return\)](#)

[According to Rufinus, an immediate supply of provisions was stipulated by the treaty, and Theodoret affirms, that the obligation was faithfully discharged by the Persians. Such a fact is probable but undoubtedly false. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 702.]

117

[\(return\)](#)

[We may recollect some lines of Lucan, (Pharsal. iv. 95,) who describes a similar distress of Cæsar's army in Spain:— —Sæva fames aderat—Miles eget: toto censu non prodigus emit Exiguam Cererem. Proh lucri pallida tabes! Non deest prolato jejunos venditor auro. See Guichardt (Nouveaux Mémoires Militaires, tom. i. p. 370-382.) His analysis of the two campaigns in Spain and Africa

is the noblest monument that has ever been raised to the fame of Cæsar.]

118

[\(return\)](#)

[M. d'Anville (see his Maps, and l'Euphrate et le Tigre, p. 92, 93) traces their march, and assigns the true position of Hatra, Ur, and Thilsaphata, which Ammianus has mentioned. —He does not complain of the Samiel, the deadly hot wind, which Thevenot (Voyages, part ii. l. i. p. 192) so much dreaded. —Hatra, now Kadhr. Ur, Kasr or Skervidgi. Thilsaphata is unknown—M.]

119

[\(return\)](#)

[The retreat of Jovian is described by Ammianus, (xxv. 9,) Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 143, p. 365,) and Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 194.)]

The friends of Julian had confidently announced the success of his expedition. They entertained a fond persuasion that the temples of the gods would be enriched with the spoils of the East; that Persia would be reduced to the humble state of a tributary province, governed by the laws and magistrates of Rome; that the Barbarians would adopt the dress, and manners, and language of their conquerors; and that the youth of Ecbatana and Susa would study the art of rhetoric under Grecian masters. [120](#) The progress of the arms of Julian interrupted his communication with the empire; and, from the moment that he passed the Tigris, his affectionate subjects were ignorant of the fate and fortunes of their prince. Their contemplation of fancied triumphs was disturbed by the melancholy rumor of his death; and they persisted to doubt, after they could no longer deny, the truth of that fatal event. [121](#) The messengers of Jovian promulgated the specious tale of a prudent and necessary peace; the voice of fame, louder and more sincere, revealed the disgrace of the emperor, and the conditions of the ignominious treaty. The minds of the people were filled with astonishment and grief, with indignation and terror, when they were informed, that the unworthy successor of Julian relinquished the five provinces which had been acquired by the victory of Galerius; and that he shamefully surrendered to the Barbarians the important city of Nisibis, the firmest bulwark of the provinces of the East. [122](#) The deep and dangerous question, how far the public faith should be observed, when it becomes incompatible with the public safety, was freely agitated in popular conversation; and some hopes were entertained that the emperor would redeem his pusillanimous behavior by a splendid act of patriotic perfidy. The inflexible spirit of the Roman senate had always disclaimed the unequal conditions which were extorted from the distress of their captive armies; and, if it were necessary to satisfy the national honor, by delivering the guilty general into the hands of the Barbarians, the greatest part of the subjects of Jovian would have cheerfully acquiesced in the precedent of ancient times. [123](#)

120

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 145, p. 366.) Such were the natural hopes and wishes of a rhetorician.]

- 121 [\(return\)](#)
[The people of Carrhæ, a city devoted to Paganism, buried the inauspicious messenger under a pile of stones, (Zosimus, l. iii. p. 196.) Libanius, when he received the fatal intelligence, cast his eye on his sword; but he recollected that Plato had condemned suicide, and that he must live to compose the Panegyric of Julian, (Libanius de Vita sua, tom. ii. p. 45, 46.)]
- 122 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammianus and Eutropius may be admitted as fair and credible witnesses of the public language and opinions. The people of Antioch reviled an ignominious peace, which exposed them to the Persians, on a naked and defenceless frontier, (Excerpt. Valesiana, p. 845, ex Johanne Antiocheno.)]
- 123 [\(return\)](#)
[The Abbé de la Bleterie, (Hist. de Jovien, tom. i. p. 212-227.) though a severe casuist, has pronounced that Jovian was not bound to execute his promise; since he *could not* dismember the empire, nor alienate, without their consent, the allegiance of his people. I have never found much delight or instruction in such political metaphysics.]

But the emperor, whatever might be the limits of his constitutional authority, was the absolute master of the laws and arms of the state; and the same motives which had forced him to subscribe, now pressed him to execute, the treaty of peace. He was impatient to secure an empire at the expense of a few provinces; and the respectable names of religion and honor concealed the personal fears and ambition of Jovian. Notwithstanding the dutiful solicitations of the inhabitants, decency, as well as prudence, forbade the emperor to lodge in the palace of Nisibis; but the next morning after his arrival, Bineses, the ambassador of Persia, entered the place, displayed from the citadel the standard of the Great King, and proclaimed, in his name, the cruel alternative of exile or servitude. The principal citizens of Nisibis, who, till that fatal moment, had confided in the protection of their sovereign, threw themselves at his feet. They conjured him not to abandon, or, at least, not to deliver, a faithful colony to the rage of a Barbarian tyrant, exasperated by the three successive defeats which he had experienced under the walls of Nisibis. They still possessed arms and courage to repel the invaders of their country: they requested only the permission of using them in their own defence; and, as soon as they had asserted their independence, they should implore the favor of being again admitted into the ranks of his subjects. Their arguments, their eloquence, their tears, were ineffectual. Jovian alleged, with some confusion, the sanctity of oaths; and, as the reluctance with which he accepted the present of a crown of gold, convinced the citizens of their hopeless condition, the advocate Sylvanus was

provoked to exclaim, “O emperor! may you thus be crowned by all the cities of your dominions!” Jovian, who in a few weeks had assumed the habits of a prince, [124](#) was displeased with freedom, and offended with truth: and as he reasonably supposed, that the discontent of the people might incline them to submit to the Persian government, he published an edict, under pain of death, that they should leave the city within the term of three days. Ammianus has delineated in lively colors the scene of universal despair, which he seems to have viewed with an eye of compassion. [125](#) The martial youth deserted, with indignant grief, the walls which they had so gloriously defended: the disconsolate mourner dropped a last tear over the tomb of a son or husband, which must soon be profaned by the rude hand of a Barbarian master; and the aged citizen kissed the threshold, and clung to the doors, of the house where he had passed the cheerful and careless hours of infancy. The highways were crowded with a trembling multitude: the distinctions of rank, and sex, and age, were lost in the general calamity. Every one strove to bear away some fragment from the wreck of his fortunes; and as they could not command the immediate service of an adequate number of horses or wagons, they were obliged to leave behind them the greatest part of their valuable effects. The savage insensibility of Jovian appears to have aggravated the hardships of these unhappy fugitives. They were seated, however, in a new-built quarter of Amida; and that rising city, with the reenforcement of a very considerable colony, soon recovered its former splendor, and became the capital of Mesopotamia. [126](#) Similar orders were despatched by the emperor for the evacuation of Singara and the castle of the Moors; and for the restitution of the five provinces beyond the Tigris. Sapor enjoyed the glory and the fruits of his victory; and this ignominious peace has justly been considered as a memorable æra in the decline and fall of the Roman empire. The predecessors of Jovian had sometimes relinquished the dominion of distant and unprofitable provinces; but, since the foundation of the city, the genius of Rome, the god Terminus, who guarded the boundaries of the republic, had never retired before the sword of a victorious enemy. [127](#)

- 124 [\(return\)](#)
[At Nisibis he performed a *royal* act. A brave officer, his namesake, who had been thought worthy of the purple, was dragged from supper, thrown into a well, and stoned to death without any form of trial or evidence of guilt. Anomian. xxv. 8.]
- 125 [\(return\)](#)
[See xxv. 9, and Zosimus, l. iii. p. 194, 195.]
- 126 [\(return\)](#)
[Chron. Paschal. p. 300. The ecclesiastical Notitiæ may be consulted.]
- 127 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. iii. p. 192, 193. Sextus Rufus de Provinciis, c. 29. Augustin de Civitat. Dei, l. iv. c.

29. This general position must be applied and interpreted with some caution.]

After Jovian had performed those engagements which the voice of his people might have tempted him to violate, he hastened away from the scene of his disgrace, and proceeded with his whole court to enjoy the luxury of Antioch. [128](#) Without consulting the dictates of religious zeal, he was prompted, by humanity and gratitude, to bestow the last honors on the remains of his deceased sovereign: [129](#) and Procopius, who sincerely bewailed the loss of his kinsman, was removed from the command of the army, under the decent pretence of conducting the funeral. The corpse of Julian was transported from Nisibis to Tarsus, in a slow march of fifteen days; and, as it passed through the cities of the East, was saluted by the hostile factions, with mournful lamentations and clamorous insults. The Pagans already placed their beloved hero in the rank of those gods whose worship he had restored; while the invectives of the Christians pursued the soul of the Apostate to hell, and his body to the grave. [130](#) One party lamented the approaching ruin of their altars; the other celebrated the marvellous deliverance of their church. The Christians applauded, in lofty and ambiguous strains, the stroke of divine vengeance, which had been so long suspended over the guilty head of Julian. They acknowledge, that the death of the tyrant, at the instant he expired beyond the Tigris, was *revealed* to the saints of Egypt, Syria, and Cappadocia; [131](#) and instead of suffering him to fall by the Persian darts, their indiscretion ascribed the heroic deed to the obscure hand of some mortal or immortal champion of the faith. [132](#) Such imprudent declarations were eagerly adopted by the malice, or credulity, of their adversaries; [133](#) who darkly insinuated, or confidently asserted, that the governors of the church had instigated and directed the fanaticism of a domestic assassin. [134](#) Above sixteen years after the death of Julian, the charge was solemnly and vehemently urged, in a public oration, addressed by Libanius to the emperor Theodosius. His suspicions are unsupported by fact or argument; and we can only esteem the generous zeal of the sophist of Antioch for the cold and neglected ashes of his friend. [135](#)

128 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, xxv. 9. Zosimus, l. iii. p. 196. He might be edax, vino Venerique indulgens. But I agree with La Bleterie (tom. i. p. 148-154) in rejecting the foolish report of a Bacchanalian riot (ap. Suidam) celebrated at Antioch, by the emperor, his *wife*, and a troop of concubines.]

129 [\(return\)](#)

[The Abbé de la Bleterie (tom. i. p. 156-209) handsomely exposes the brutal bigotry of Baronius, who would have thrown Julian to the dogs, ne cespititia quidem sepultura dignus.]

130 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare the sophist and the saint, (Libanius, Monod. tom. ii. p. 251, and Orat. Parent. c. 145, p. 367, c. 156, p. 377, with Gregory Nazianzen, Orat.

iv. p. 125-132.) The Christian orator faintly mutters some exhortations to modesty and forgiveness; but he is well satisfied, that the real sufferings of Julian will far exceed the fabulous torments of Ixion or Tantalus.]

131 [\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 549) has collected these visions. Some saint or angel was observed to be absent in the night, on a secret expedition, &c.]

132 [\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen (l. vi. 2) applauds the Greek doctrine of *tyrannicide*; but the whole passage, which a Jesuit might have translated, is prudently suppressed by the president Cousin.]

133 [\(return\)](#)

[Immediately after the death of Julian, an uncertain rumor was scattered, *telo cecidis*se Romano. It was carried, by some deserters to the Persian camp; and the Romans were reproached as the assassins of the emperor by Sapor and his subjects, (Ammian. xxv. 6. Libanius de *ulciscenda* Juliani nece, c. xiii. p. 162, 163.) It was urged, as a decisive proof, that no Persian had appeared to claim the promised reward, (Liban. Orat. Parent. c. 141, p. 363.) But the flying horseman, who darted the fatal javelin, might be ignorant of its effect; or he might be slain in the same action. Ammianus neither feels nor inspires a suspicion.]

134 [\(return\)](#)

[This dark and ambiguous expression may point to Athanasius, the first, without a rival, of the Christian clergy, (Libanius de *ulcis*. Jul. nece, c. 5, p. 149. La Bleterie, Hist. de Jovien, tom. i. p. 179.)]

135 [\(return\)](#)

[The orator (Fabricius, Bibliot. Græc. tom. vii. p. 145-179) scatters suspicions, demands an inquiry, and insinuates, that proofs might still be obtained. He ascribes the success of the Huns to the criminal neglect of revenging Julian's death.]

It was an ancient custom in the funerals, as well as in the triumphs, of the Romans, that the voice of praise should be corrected by that of satire and ridicule; and that, in the midst of the splendid pageants, which displayed the glory of the living or of the dead, their imperfections should not be concealed from the eyes of the world. [136](#) This custom was practised in the funeral of Julian. The comedians, who resented his contempt and aversion for the theatre, exhibited, with the applause of a Christian audience, the lively and exaggerated representation of the faults and follies of the

deceased emperor. His various character and singular manners afforded an ample scope for pleasantry and ridicule. [137](#) In the exercise of his uncommon talents, he often descended below the majesty of his rank. Alexander was transformed into Diogenes; the philosopher was degraded into a priest. The purity of his virtue was sullied by excessive vanity; his superstition disturbed the peace, and endangered the safety, of a mighty empire; and his irregular sallies were the less entitled to indulgence, as they appeared to be the laborious efforts of art, or even of affectation. The remains of Julian were interred at Tarsus in Cilicia; but his stately tomb, which arose in that city, on the banks of the cold and limpid Cydnus, [138](#) was displeasing to the faithful friends, who loved and revered the memory of that extraordinary man. The philosopher expressed a very reasonable wish, that the disciple of Plato might have reposed amidst the groves of the academy; [139](#) while the soldier exclaimed, in bolder accents, that the ashes of Julian should have been mingled with those of Cæsar, in the field of Mars, and among the ancient monuments of Roman virtue. [140](#) The history of princes does not very frequently renew the examples of a similar competition.

136 [\(return\)](#)

[At the funeral of Vespasian, the comedian who personated that frugal emperor, anxiously inquired how much it cost. Fourscore thousand pounds, (centies.) Give me the tenth part of the sum, and throw my body into the Tiber. Sueton, in Vespasian, c. 19, with the notes of Casaubon and Gronovius.]

137 [\(return\)](#)

[Gregory (Orat. iv. p. 119, 120) compares this supposed ignominy and ridicule to the funeral honors of Constantius, whose body was chanted over Mount Taurus by a choir of angels.]

138 [\(return\)](#)

[Quintus Curtius, l. iii. c. 4. The luxuriancy of his descriptions has been often censured. Yet it was almost the duty of the historian to describe a river, whose waters had nearly proved fatal to Alexander.]

139 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, Orat. Parent. c. 156, p. 377. Yet he acknowledges with gratitude the liberality of the two royal brothers in decorating the tomb of Julian, (de ulcis. Jul. nece, c. 7, p. 152.)]

140 [\(return\)](#)

[Cujus suprema et cineres, si qui tunc juste consuleret, non Cydnus videre deberet, quamvis gratissimus amnis et liquidus: sed ad perpetuandam gloriam recte factorum præterlambere Tiberis, intersecans urbem æternam, divorumque veterum monumenta præstringens Ammian. xxv. 10.]

Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part I.

The Government And Death Of Jovian.—Election Of Valentinian, Who Associates His Brother Valens, And Makes The Final Division Of The Eastern And Western Empires.—Revolt Of Procopius.—Civil And Ecclesiastical Administration.—Germany. —Britain.—Africa.—The East.—The Danube.—Death Of Valentinian.—His Two Sons, Gratian And Valentinian II., Succeed To The Western Empire.

The death of Julian had left the public affairs of the empire in a very doubtful and dangerous situation. The Roman army was saved by an inglorious, perhaps a necessary treaty; [1](#) and the first moments of peace were consecrated by the pious Jovian to restore the domestic tranquility of the church and state. The indiscretion of his predecessor, instead of reconciling, had artfully fomented the religious war: and the balance which he affected to preserve between the hostile factions, served only to perpetuate the contest, by the vicissitudes of hope and fear, by the rival claims of ancient possession and actual favor. The Christians had forgotten the spirit of the gospel; and the Pagans had imbibed the spirit of the church. In private families, the sentiments of nature were extinguished by the blind fury of zeal and revenge: the majesty of the laws was violated or abused; the cities of the East were stained with blood; and the most implacable enemies of the Romans were in the bosom of their country. Jovian was educated in the profession of Christianity; and as he marched from Nisibis to Antioch, the banner of the Cross, the Labarum of Constantine, which was again displayed at the head of the legions, announced to the people the faith of their new emperor. As soon as he ascended the throne, he transmitted a circular epistle to all the governors of provinces; in which he confessed the divine truth, and secured the legal establishment, of the Christian religion. The insidious edicts of Julian were abolished; the ecclesiastical immunities were restored and enlarged; and Jovian condescended to lament, that the distress of the times obliged him to diminish the measure of charitable distributions. [2](#) The Christians were unanimous in the loud and sincere applause which they bestowed on the pious successor of Julian. But they were still ignorant what creed, or what synod, he would choose for the standard of orthodoxy; and the peace of the church immediately revived those eager disputes which had been suspended during the season of persecution. The episcopal leaders of the contending sects, convinced, from experience, how much their fate would depend on the earliest impressions that were made on the mind of an untutored soldier, hastened to the court of Edessa, or Antioch. The highways of the East were crowded with Homoousian, and Arian, and Semi-Arian, and Eunomian bishops, who struggled to outstrip each other in the holy race: the apartments of the palace resounded with their clamors; and the ears of the prince were assaulted, and perhaps astonished, by the singular mixture of metaphysical argument and passionate invective. [3](#) The moderation of Jovian, who recommended concord and charity, and referred the disputants to the sentence of a future council, was interpreted as a symptom

of indifference: but his attachment to the Nicene creed was at length discovered and declared, by the reverence which he expressed for the *celestial* [4](#) virtues of the great Athanasius. The intrepid veteran of the faith, at the age of seventy, had issued from his retreat on the first intelligence of the tyrant's death. The acclamations of the people seated him once more on the archiepiscopal throne; and he wisely accepted, or anticipated, the invitation of Jovian. The venerable figure of Athanasius, his calm courage, and insinuating eloquence, sustained the reputation which he had already acquired in the courts of four successive princes. [5](#) As soon as he had gained the confidence, and secured the faith, of the Christian emperor, he returned in triumph to his diocese, and continued, with mature counsels and undiminished vigor, to direct, ten years longer, [6](#) the ecclesiastical government of Alexandria, Egypt, and the Catholic church. Before his departure from Antioch, he assured Jovian that his orthodox devotion would be rewarded with a long and peaceful reign. Athanasius, had reason to hope, that he should be allowed either the merit of a successful prediction, or the excuse of a grateful though ineffectual prayer. [7](#)

1 [\(return\)](#)

[The medals of Jovian adorn him with victories, laurel crowns, and prostrate captives. Ducange, Famil. Byzantin. p. 52. Flattery is a foolish suicide; she destroys herself with her own hands.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[Jovian restored to the church a forcible and comprehensive expression, (Philostorgius, l. viii. c. 5, with Godefroy's Dissertations, p. 329. Sozomen, l. vi. c. 3.) The new law which condemned the rape or marriage of nuns (Cod. Theod. l. ix. tit. xxv. leg. 2) is exaggerated by Sozomen; who supposes, that an amorous glance, the adultery of the heart, was punished with death by the evangelic legislator.]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare Socrates, l. iii. c. 25, and Philostorgius, l. viii. c. 6, with Godefroy's Dissertations, p. 330.]

4 [\(return\)](#)

[The word *celestial* faintly expresses the impious and extravagant flattery of the emperor to the archbishop. (See the original epistle in Athanasius, tom. ii. p. 33.) Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. xxi. p. 392) celebrates the friendship of Jovian and Athanasius. The primate's journey was advised by the Egyptian monks, (Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 221.)]

5 [\(return\)](#)

[Athanasius, at the court of Antioch, is agreeably represented by La Bleterie, (Hist. de Jovien, tom. i. p. 121-148;) he translates the singular and original conferences of the emperor, the primate of Egypt,

and the Arian deputies. The Abbé is not satisfied with the coarse pleasantry of Jovian; but his partiality for Athanasius assumes, in *his* eyes, the character of justice.]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[The true area of his death is perplexed with some difficulties, (Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 719-723.) But the date (A. D. 373, May 2) which seems the most consistent with history and reason, is ratified by his authentic life, (Maffei Osservazioni Letterarie, tom. iii. p. 81.)]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[See the observations of Valesius and Jortin (Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. iv. p. 38) on the original letter of Athanasius; which is preserved by Theodoret, (l. iv. c. 3.) In some Mss. this indiscreet promise is omitted; perhaps by the Catholics, jealous of the prophetic fame of their leader.]

The slightest force, when it is applied to assist and guide the natural descent of its object, operates with irresistible weight; and Jovian had the good fortune to embrace the religious opinions which were supported by the spirit of the times, and the zeal and numbers of the most powerful sect. [8](#) Under his reign, Christianity obtained an easy and lasting victory; and as soon as the smile of royal patronage was withdrawn, the genius of Paganism, which had been fondly raised and cherished by the arts of Julian, sunk irrecoverably in the. In many cities, the temples were shut or deserted: the philosophers who had abused their transient favor, thought it prudent to shave their beards, and disguise their profession; and the Christians rejoiced, that they were now in a condition to forgive, or to revenge, the injuries which they had suffered under the preceding reign. [9](#) The consternation of the Pagan world was dispelled by a wise and gracious edict of toleration; in which Jovian explicitly declared, that although he should severely punish the sacrilegious rites of magic, his subjects might exercise, with freedom and safety, the ceremonies of the ancient worship. The memory of this law has been preserved by the orator Themistius, who was deputed by the senate of Constantinople to express their royal devotion for the new emperor. Themistius expatiates on the clemency of the Divine Nature, the facility of human error, the rights of conscience, and the independence of the mind; and, with some eloquence, inculcates the principles of philosophical toleration; whose aid Superstition herself, in the hour of her distress, is not ashamed to implore. He justly observes, that in the recent changes, both religions had been alternately disgraced by the seeming acquisition of worthless proselytes, of those votaries of the reigning purple, who could pass, without a reason, and without a blush, from the church to the temple, and from the altars of Jupiter to the sacred table of the Christians. [10](#)

- 8 [\(return\)](#)
[Athanasius (apud Theodoret, l. iv. c. 3) magnifies the number of the orthodox, who composed the whole world. This assertion was verified in the space of thirty and forty years.]
- 9 [\(return\)](#)
[Socrates, l. iii. c. 24. Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. iv. p. 131) and Libanius (Orat. Parentalis, c. 148, p. 369) expresses the *living* sentiments of their respective factions.]
- 10 [\(return\)](#)
[Themistius, Orat. v. p. 63-71, edit. Harduin, Paris, 1684. The Abbé de la Bleterie judiciously remarks, (Hist. de Jovien, tom. i. p. 199,) that Sozomen has forgot the general toleration; and Themistius the establishment of the Catholic religion. Each of them turned away from the object which he disliked, and wished to suppress the part of the edict the least honorable, in his opinion, to the emperor.]

In the space of seven months, the Roman troops, who were now returned to Antioch, had performed a march of fifteen hundred miles; in which they had endured all the hardships of war, of famine, and of climate. Notwithstanding their services, their fatigues, and the approach of winter, the timid and impatient Jovian allowed only, to the men and horses, a respite of six weeks. The emperor could not sustain the indiscreet and malicious raillery of the people of Antioch. [11](#) He was impatient to possess the palace of Constantinople; and to prevent the ambition of some competitor, who might occupy the vacant allegiance of Europe. But he soon received the grateful intelligence, that his authority was acknowledged from the Thracian Bosphorus to the Atlantic Ocean. By the first letters which he despatched from the camp of Mesopotamia, he had delegated the military command of Gaul and Illyricum to Malarich, a brave and faithful officer of the nation of the Franks; and to his father-in-law, Count Lucillian, who had formerly distinguished his courage and conduct in the defence of Nisibis. Malarich had declined an office to which he thought himself unequal; and Lucillian was massacred at Rheims, in an accidental mutiny of the Batavian cohorts. [12](#) But the moderation of Jovinus, master-general of the cavalry, who forgave the intention of his disgrace, soon appeased the tumult, and confirmed the uncertain minds of the soldiers. The oath of fidelity was administered and taken, with loyal acclamations; and the deputies of the Western armies [13](#) saluted their new sovereign as he descended from Mount Taurus to the city of Tyana in Cappadocia. From Tyana he continued his hasty march to Ancyra, capital of the province of Galatia; where Jovian assumed, with his infant son, the name and ensigns of the consulship. [14](#) Dadastana, [15](#) an obscure town, almost at an equal distance between Ancyra and Nice, was marked for the fatal term of his journey and life. After indulging himself with a plentiful, perhaps an intemperate, supper, he retired to rest; and the next morning the emperor Jovian was found dead in his bed. The cause

of this sudden death was variously understood. By some it was ascribed to the consequences of an indigestion, occasioned either by the quantity of the wine, or the quality of the mushrooms, which he had swallowed in the evening. According to others, he was suffocated in his sleep by the vapor of charcoal, which extracted from the walls of the apartment the unwholesome moisture of the fresh plaster. [16](#) But the want of a regular inquiry into the death of a prince, whose reign and person were soon forgotten, appears to have been the only circumstance which countenanced the malicious whispers of poison and domestic guilt. [17](#) The body of Jovian was sent to Constantinople, to be interred with his predecessors, and the sad procession was met on the road by his wife Charito, the daughter of Count Lucillian; who still wept the recent death of her father, and was hastening to dry her tears in the embraces of an Imperial husband. Her disappointment and grief were imbibited by the anxiety of maternal tenderness. Six weeks before the death of Jovian, his infant son had been placed in the curule chair, adorned with the title of *Nobilissimus*, and the vain ensigns of the consulship. Unconscious of his fortune, the royal youth, who, from his grandfather, assumed the name of Varronian, was reminded only by the jealousy of the government, that he was the son of an emperor. Sixteen years afterwards he was still alive, but he had already been deprived of an eye; and his afflicted mother expected every hour, that the innocent victim would be torn from her arms, to appease, with his blood, the suspicions of the reigning prince. [18](#)

11 [\(return\)](#)
[Johan. Antiochen. in Excerpt. Valesian. p. 845.
The libels of Antioch may be admitted on very
slight evidence.]

12 [\(return\)](#)
[Compare Ammianus, (xxv. 10,) who omits the
name of the Batarians, with Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 197,) who removes the scene of action from Rheims to Sirmium.]

13 [\(return\)](#)
[Quos capita scholarum ordo castrensis appellat.
Ammian. xxv. 10, and Vales. ad locum.]

14 [\(return\)](#)
[Cugus vagitus, pertinaciter reluctantis, ne in curuli
sella veheretur ex more, id quod mox accidit
protendebat. Augustus and his successors
respectfully solicited a dispensation of age for the
sons or nephews whom they raised to the
consulship. But the curule chair of the first Brutus
had never been dishonored by an infant.]

15 [\(return\)](#)
[The Itinerary of Antoninus fixes Dadastana 125
Roman miles from Nice; 117 from Ancyra,
(Wesseling, Itinerar. p. 142.) The pilgrim of
Bordeaux, by omitting some stages, reduces the

whole space from 242 to 181 miles. Wesseling, p. 574. * Note: Dadastana is supposed to be Castabat.—M.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[See Ammianus, (xxv. 10,) Eutropius, (x. 18.) who might likewise be present, Jerom, (tom. i. p. 26, ad Heliodorum.) Orosius, (vii. 31,) Sozomen, (l. vi. c. 6,) Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 197, 198,) and Zonaras, (tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 28, 29.) We cannot expect a perfect agreement, and we shall not discuss minute differences.]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, unmindful of his usual candor and good sense, compares the death of the harmless Jovian to that of the second Africanus, who had excited the fears and resentment of the popular faction.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Chrysostom, tom. i. p. 336, 344, edit. Montfaucon. The Christian orator attempts to comfort a widow by the examples of illustrious misfortunes; and observes, that of nine emperors (including the Cæsar Gallus) who had reigned in his time, only two (Constantine and Constantius) died a natural death. Such vague consolations have never wiped away a single tear.]

After the death of Jovian, the throne of the Roman world remained ten days, [19](#) without a master. The ministers and generals still continued to meet in council; to exercise their respective functions; to maintain the public order; and peaceably to conduct the army to the city of Nice in Bithynia, which was chosen for the place of the election. [20](#) In a solemn assembly of the civil and military powers of the empire, the diadem was again unanimously offered to the præfect Sallust. He enjoyed the glory of a second refusal: and when the virtues of the father were alleged in favor of his son, the præfect, with the firmness of a disinterested patriot, declared to the electors, that the feeble age of the one, and the unexperienced youth of the other, were equally incapable of the laborious duties of government. Several candidates were proposed; and, after weighing the objections of character or situation, they were successively rejected; but, as soon as the name of Valentinian was pronounced, the merit of that officer united the suffrages of the whole assembly, and obtained the sincere approbation of Sallust himself. Valentinian [21](#) was the son of Count Gratian, a native of Cibalis, in Pannonia, who from an obscure condition had raised himself, by matchless strength and dexterity, to the military commands of Africa and Britain; from which he retired with an ample fortune and suspicious integrity. The rank and services of Gratian contributed, however, to smooth the first steps of the promotion of his son; and afforded him an early opportunity of displaying those solid and useful qualifications, which raised his

character above the ordinary level of his fellow-soldiers. The person of Valentinian was tall, graceful, and majestic. His manly countenance, deeply marked with the impression of sense and spirit, inspired his friends with awe, and his enemies with fear; and to second the efforts of his undaunted courage, the son of Gratian had inherited the advantages of a strong and healthy constitution. By the habits of chastity and temperance, which restrain the appetites and invigorate the faculties, Valentinian preserved his own and the public esteem. The avocations of a military life had diverted his youth from the elegant pursuits of literature; [2111](#) he was ignorant of the Greek language, and the arts of rhetoric; but as the mind of the orator was never disconcerted by timid perplexity, he was able, as often as the occasion prompted him, to deliver his decided sentiments with bold and ready elocution. The laws of martial discipline were the only laws that he had studied; and he was soon distinguished by the laborious diligence, and inflexible severity, with which he discharged and enforced the duties of the camp. In the time of Julian he provoked the danger of disgrace, by the contempt which he publicly expressed for the reigning religion; [22](#) and it should seem, from his subsequent conduct, that the indiscreet and unseasonable freedom of Valentinian was the effect of military spirit, rather than of Christian zeal. He was pardoned, however, and still employed by a prince who esteemed his merit; [23](#) and in the various events of the Persian war, he improved the reputation which he had already acquired on the banks of the Rhine. The celerity and success with which he executed an important commission, recommended him to the favor of Jovian; and to the honorable command of the second *school*, or company, of Targetiers, of the domestic guards. In the march from Antioch, he had reached his quarters at Ancyra, when he was unexpectedly summoned, without guilt and without intrigue, to assume, in the forty-third year of his age, the absolute government of the Roman empire.

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Ten days appear scarcely sufficient for the march and election. But it may be observed, 1. That the generals might command the expeditious use of the public posts for themselves, their attendants, and messengers. 2. That the troops, for the ease of the cities, marched in many divisions; and that the head of the column might arrive at Nice, when the rear halted at Ancyra.]

20

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, xxvi. 1. Zosimus, l. iii. p. 198. Philostorgius, l. viii. c. 8, and Godefroy, Dissertat. p. 334. Philostorgius, who appears to have obtained some curious and authentic intelligence, ascribes the choice of Valentinian to the præfect Sallust, the master-general Arintheus, Dagalaiphus count of the domestics, and the patrician Datianus, whose pressing recommendations from Ancyra had a weighty influence in the election.]

- 21 [\(return\)](#)
 [Ammianus (xxx. 7, 9) and the younger Victor have furnished the portrait of Valentinian, which naturally precedes and illustrates the history of his reign. * Note: Symmachus, in a fragment of an oration published by M. Mai, describes Valentinian as born among the snows of Illyria, and habituated to military labor amid the heat and dust of Libya: *genitus in frigoribus, educatus is solibus* Sym. Orat. Frag. edit. Niebuhr, p. 5.—M.]
- 2111 [\(return\)](#)
 [According to Ammianus, he wrote elegantly, and was skilled in painting and modelling. *Scribens decore, venustequae pingens et fingens.* xxx. 7.—M.]
- 22 [\(return\)](#)
 [At Antioch, where he was obliged to attend the emperor to the table, he struck a priest, who had presumed to purify him with lustral water, (Sozomen, l. vi. c. 6. Theodoret, l. iii. c. 15.) Such public defiance might become Valentinian; but it could leave no room for the unworthy delation of the philosopher Maximus, which supposes some more private offence, (Zosimus, l. iv. p. 200, 201.)]
- 23 [\(return\)](#)
 [Socrates, l. iv. A previous exile to Melitene, or Thebais (the first might be possible,) is interposed by Sozomen (l. vi. c. 6) and Philostorgius, (l. vii. c. 7, with Godefroy's Dissertations, p. 293.)]

The invitation of the ministers and generals at Nice was of little moment, unless it were confirmed by the voice of the army.

The aged Sallust, who had long observed the irregular fluctuations of popular assemblies, proposed, under pain of death, that none of those persons, whose rank in the service might excite a party in their favor, should appear in public on the day of the inauguration. Yet such was the prevalence of ancient superstition, that a whole day was voluntarily added to this dangerous interval, because it happened to be the intercalation of the Bissexile. [24](#) At length, when the hour was supposed to be propitious, Valentinian showed himself from a lofty tribunal; the judicious choice was applauded; and the new prince was solemnly invested with the diadem and the purple, amidst the acclamation of the troops, who were disposed in martial order round the tribunal. But when he stretched forth his hand to address the armed multitude, a busy whisper was accidentally started in the ranks, and insensibly swelled into a loud and imperious clamor, that he should name, without delay, a colleague in the empire. The intrepid calmness of Valentinian obtained silence, and commanded respect; and he thus addressed the assembly: “A few minutes since it was in *your* power, fellow-soldiers, to have left me in the obscurity of a private station. Judging, from the testimony of my

past life, that I deserved to reign, you have placed me on the throne. It is now *my* duty to consult the safety and interest of the republic. The weight of the universe is undoubtedly too great for the hands of a feeble mortal. I am conscious of the limits of my abilities, and the uncertainty of my life; and far from declining, I am anxious to solicit, the assistance of a worthy colleague. But, where discord may be fatal, the choice of a faithful friend requires mature and serious deliberation. That deliberation shall be *my* care. Let *your* conduct be dutiful and consistent. Retire to your quarters; refresh your minds and bodies; and expect the accustomed donative on the accession of a new emperor.” [25](#) The astonished troops, with a mixture of pride, of satisfaction, and of terror, confessed the voice of their master.

Their angry clamors subsided into silent reverence; and Valentinian, encompassed with the eagles of the legions, and the various banners of the cavalry and infantry, was conducted, in warlike pomp, to the palace of Nice. As he was sensible, however, of the importance of preventing some rash declaration of the soldiers, he consulted the assembly of the chiefs; and their real sentiments were concisely expressed by the generous freedom of Dagalaiphus. “Most excellent prince,” said that officer, “if you consider only your family, you have a brother; if you love the republic, look round for the most deserving of the Romans.” [26](#) The emperor, who suppressed his displeasure, without altering his intention, slowly proceeded from Nice to Nicomedia and Constantinople. In one of the suburbs of that capital, [27](#) thirty days after his own elevation, he bestowed the title of Augustus on his brother Valens; [2711](#) and as the boldest patriots were convinced, that their opposition, without being serviceable to their country, would be fatal to themselves, the declaration of his absolute will was received with silent submission. Valens was now in the thirty-sixth year of his age; but his abilities had never been exercised in any employment, military or civil; and his character had not inspired the world with any sanguine expectations. He possessed, however, one quality, which recommended him to Valentinian, and preserved the domestic peace of the empire; devout and grateful attachment to his benefactor, whose superiority of genius, as well as of authority, Valens humbly and cheerfully acknowledged in every action of his life. [28](#)

[Ammianus, in a long, because unseasonable, digression, (xxvi. l, and Valesius, ad locum,) rashly supposes that he understands an astronomical question, of which his readers are ignorant. It is treated with more judgment and propriety by Censorinus (de Die Natali, c. 20) and Macrobius, (Saturnal. i. c. 12-16.) The appellation of *Bissextile*, which marks the inauspicious year, (Augustin. ad Januarium, Epist. 119,) is derived from the *repetition* of the *sixth* day of the calends of March.]

- 25 [\(return\)](#)
[Valentinian's first speech is in Ammianus, (xxvi. 2;) concise and sententious in Philostorgius, (l. viii. c. 8.)]
- 26 [\(return\)](#)
[Si tuos amas, Imperator optime, habes fratrem; si Rempublicam quære quem vestias. Ammian. xxvi. 4. In the division of the empire, Valentinian retained that sincere counsellor for himself, (c.6.)]
- 27 [\(return\)](#)
[In suburbano, Ammian. xxvi. 4. The famous *Hebdomon*, or field of Mars, was distant from Constantinople either seven stadia, or seven miles. See Valesius, and his brother, ad loc., and Ducange, Const. l. ii. p. 140, 141, 172, 173.]
- 2711 [\(return\)](#)
[Symmachus praises the liberality of Valentinian in raising his brother at once to the rank of Augustus, not training him through the slow and probationary degree of Cæsar. Exigui animi vices munerum partiuntur, liberalitas desideriis nihil reliquit. Symm. Orat. p. 7. edit. Niebuhr, 1816, reprinted from Mai.—M.]
- 28 [\(return\)](#)
[Participem quidem legitimum potestatis; sed in modum apparitoris morigerum, ut progrediens aperiet textus. Ammian. xxvi. 4.]

Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part II.

Before Valentinian divided the provinces, he reformed the administration of the empire. All ranks of subjects, who had been injured or oppressed under the reign of Julian, were invited to support their public accusations. The silence of mankind attested the spotless integrity of the præfect Sallust; [29](#) and his own pressing solicitations, that he might be permitted to retire from the business of the state, were rejected by Valentinian with the most honorable expressions of friendship and esteem. But among the favorites of the late emperor, there were many who had abused his credulity or superstition; and who could no longer hope to be protected either by favor or justice. [30](#) The greater part of the ministers of the palace, and the governors of the provinces, were removed from their respective stations; yet the eminent merit of some officers was distinguished from the obnoxious crowd; and, notwithstanding the opposite clamors of zeal and resentment, the whole proceedings of this delicate inquiry appear to have been conducted with a reasonable share of wisdom and

moderation. [31](#) The festivity of a new reign received a short and suspicious interruption from the sudden illness of the two princes; but as soon as their health was restored, they left Constantinople in the beginning of the spring. In the castle, or palace, of Mediana, only three miles from Naissus, they executed the solemn and final division of the Roman empire. [32](#) Valentinian bestowed on his brother the rich præfecture of the *East*, from the Lower Danube to the confines of Persia; whilst he reserved for his immediate government the warlike [3211](#) præfectures of *Illyricum*, *Italy*, and *Gaul*, from the extremity of Greece to the Caledonian rampart, and from the rampart of Caledonia to the foot of Mount Atlas. The provincial administration remained on its former basis; but a double supply of generals and magistrates was required for two councils, and two courts: the division was made with a just regard to their peculiar merit and situation, and seven master-generals were soon created, either of the cavalry or infantry. When this important business had been amicably transacted, Valentinian and Valens embraced for the last time. The emperor of the West established his temporary residence at Milan; and the emperor of the East returned to Constantinople, to assume the dominion of fifty provinces, of whose language he was totally ignorant. [33](#)

29 [\(return\)](#)

[Notwithstanding the evidence of Zonaras, Suidas, and the Paschal Chronicle, M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 671) *wishes* to disbelieve those stories, si avantageuses à un payen.]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[Eunapius celebrates and exaggerates the sufferings of Maximus. (p. 82, 83;) yet he allows that the sophist or magician, the guilty favorite of Julian, and the personal enemy of Valentinian, was dismissed on the payment of a small fine.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[The loose assertions of a general disgrace (Zosimus, l. iv. p. 201), are detected and refuted by Tillemont, (tom. v. p. 21.)]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, xxvi. 5.]

3211 [\(return\)](#)

[Ipse supra impacati Rhen semibarbaras ripas raptim vexilla constituens * * Princeps creatus ad difficilem militiam revertisti. Symm. Orat. 81.—M.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus says, in general terms, subagrestis ingenii, nec bellicis nec liberalibus studiis eruditus. Ammian. xxxi. 14. The orator Themistius, with the genuine impertinence of a Greek, wishes for the first time to speak the Latin language, the dialect of his sovereign. Orat. vi. p. 71.]

The tranquility of the East was soon disturbed by rebellion; and the throne of Valens was threatened by the daring attempts of a rival whose affinity to the emperor Julian [34](#) was his sole merit, and had been his only crime. Procopius had been hastily promoted from the obscure station of a tribune, and a notary, to the joint command of the army of Mesopotamia; the public opinion already named him as the successor of a prince who was destitute of natural heirs; and a vain rumor was propagated by his friends, or his enemies, that Julian, before the altar of the Moon at Carrhæ, had privately invested Procopius with the Imperial purple. [35](#) He endeavored, by his dutiful and submissive behavior, to disarm the jealousy of Jovian; resigned, without a contest, his military command; and retired, with his wife and family, to cultivate the ample patrimony which he possessed in the province of Cappadocia. These useful and innocent occupations were interrupted by the appearance of an officer with a band of soldiers, who, in the name of his new sovereigns, Valentinian and Valens, was despatched to conduct the unfortunate Procopius either to a perpetual prison or an ignominious death. His presence of mind procured him a longer respite, and a more splendid fate. Without presuming to dispute the royal mandate, he requested the indulgence of a few moments to embrace his weeping family; and while the vigilance of his guards was relaxed by a plentiful entertainment, he dexterously escaped to the sea-coast of the Euxine, from whence he passed over to the country of Bosphorus. In that sequestered region he remained many months, exposed to the hardships of exile, of solitude, and of want; his melancholy temper brooding over his misfortunes, and his mind agitated by the just apprehension, that, if any accident should discover his name, the faithless Barbarians would violate, without much scruple, the laws of hospitality. In a moment of impatience and despair, Procopius embarked in a merchant vessel, which made sail for Constantinople; and boldly aspired to the rank of a sovereign, because he was not allowed to enjoy the security of a subject. At first he lurked in the villages of Bithynia, continually changing his habitation and his disguise. [36](#) By degrees he ventured into the capital, trusted his life and fortune to the fidelity of two friends, a senator and a eunuch, and conceived some hopes of success, from the intelligence which he obtained of the actual state of public affairs. The body of the people was infected with a spirit of discontent: they regretted the justice and the abilities of Sallust, who had been imprudently dismissed from the præfecture of the East. They despised the character of Valens, which was rude without vigor, and feeble without mildness. They dreaded the influence of his father-in-law, the patrician Petronius, a cruel and rapacious minister, who rigorously exacted all the arrears of tribute that might remain unpaid since the reign of the emperor Aurelian. The circumstances were propitious to the designs of a usurper. The hostile measures of the Persians required the presence of Valens in Syria: from the Danube to the Euphrates the troops were in motion; and the capital was occasionally filled with the soldiers who passed or repassed the Thracian Bosphorus. Two cohorts of Gaul were persuaded to listen to the secret proposals of the conspirators; which were recommended by the promise of a liberal donative; and, as they still revered

the memory of Julian, they easily consented to support the hereditary claim of his proscribed kinsman. At the dawn of day they were drawn up near the baths of Anastasia; and Procopius, clothed in a purple garment, more suitable to a player than to a monarch, appeared, as if he rose from the dead, in the midst of Constantinople. The soldiers, who were prepared for his reception, saluted their trembling prince with shouts of joy and vows of fidelity. Their numbers were soon increased by a band of sturdy peasants, collected from the adjacent country; and Procopius, shielded by the arms of his adherents, was successively conducted to the tribunal, the senate, and the palace. During the first moments of his tumultuous reign, he was astonished and terrified by the gloomy silence of the people; who were either ignorant of the cause, or apprehensive of the event. But his military strength was superior to any actual resistance: the malcontents flocked to the standard of rebellion; the poor were excited by the hopes, and the rich were intimidated by the fear, of a general pillage; and the obstinate credulity of the multitude was once more deceived by the promised advantages of a revolution. The magistrates were seized; the prisons and arsenals broke open; the gates, and the entrance of the harbor, were diligently occupied; and, in a few hours, Procopius became the absolute, though precarious, master of the Imperial city. [3611](#) The usurper improved this unexpected success with some degree of courage and dexterity. He artfully propagated the rumors and opinions the most favorable to his interest; while he deluded the populace by giving audience to the frequent, but imaginary, ambassadors of distant nations. The large bodies of troops stationed in the cities of Thrace and the fortresses of the Lower Danube, were gradually involved in the guilt of rebellion: and the Gothic princes consented to supply the sovereign of Constantinople with the formidable strength of several thousand auxiliaries. His generals passed the Bosphorus, and subdued, without an effort, the unarmed, but wealthy provinces of Bithynia and Asia. After an honorable defence, the city and island of Cyzicus yielded to his power; the renowned legions of the Jovians and Herculeans embraced the cause of the usurper, whom they were ordered to crush; and, as the veterans were continually augmented with new levies, he soon appeared at the head of an army, whose valor, as well as numbers, were not unequal to the greatness of the contest. The son of Hormisdas, [37](#) a youth of spirit and ability, condescended to draw his sword against the lawful emperor of the East; and the Persian prince was immediately invested with the ancient and extraordinary powers of a Roman Proconsul. The alliance of Faustina, the widow of the emperor Constantius, who intrusted herself and her daughter to the hands of the usurper, added dignity and reputation to his cause. The princess Constantia, who was then about five years of age, accompanied, in a litter, the march of the army. She was shown to the multitude in the arms of her adopted father; and, as often as she passed through the ranks, the tenderness of the soldiers was inflamed into martial fury: [38](#) they recollected the glories of the house of Constantine, and they declared, with loyal acclamation, that they would shed the last drop of their blood in the defence of the royal infant. [39](#)

- 34 [\(return\)](#)
[The uncertain degree of alliance, or consanguinity, is expressed by the words, cognatus, consobrinus, (see Valesius ad Ammian. xxiii. 3.) The mother of Procopius might be a sister of Basilina and Count Julian, the mother and uncle of the Apostate. Ducange, Fam. Byzantin. p. 49.]
- 35 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammian. xxiii. 3, xxvi. 6. He mentions the report with much hesitation: *susurravit obscurior fama; nemo enim dicti auctor exstitit verus*. It serves, however, to remark, that Procopius was a Pagan. Yet his religion does not appear to have promoted, or obstructed, his pretensions.]
- 36 [\(return\)](#)
[One of his retreats was a country-house of Eunomius, the heretic. The master was absent, innocent, ignorant; yet he narrowly escaped a sentence of death, and was banished into the remote parts of Mauritania, (Philostorg. l. ix. c. 5, 8, and Godefroy's Dissert. p. 369-378.)]
- 3611 [\(return\)](#)
[It may be suspected, from a fragment of Eunapius, that the heathen and philosophic party espoused the cause of Procopius. Heraclius, the Cynic, a man who had been honored by a philosophic controversy with Julian, striking the ground with his staff, incited him to courage with the line of Homer Eunapius. Mai, p. 207 or in Niebuhr's edition, p. 73.—M.]
- 37 [\(return\)](#)
[Hormisdæ maturo juveni Hormisdæ regalis illius filio, potestatem Proconsulis detulit; et civilia, more veterum, et bella, recturo. Ammian. xxvi. 8. The Persian prince escaped with honor and safety, and was afterwards (A. D. 380) restored to the same extraordinary office of proconsul of Bithynia, (Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 204) I am ignorant whether the race of Sassan was propagated. I find (A. D. 514) a pope Hormisdas; but he was a native of Frusino, in Italy, (Pagi Brev. Pontific. tom. i. p. 247)]
- 38 [\(return\)](#)
[The infant rebel was afterwards the wife of the emperor Gratian but she died young, and childless. See Ducange, Fam. Byzantin. p. 48, 59.]
- 39 [\(return\)](#)
[Sequimini culminis summi prosapiam, was the language of Procopius, who affected to despise the

obscure birth, and fortuitous election of the upstart
Pannonian. Ammian. xxvi. 7.]

In the mean while Valentinian was alarmed and perplexed by the doubtful intelligence of the revolt of the East. [3911](#) The difficulties of a German war forced him to confine his immediate care to the safety of his own dominions; and, as every channel of communication was stopped or corrupted, he listened, with doubtful anxiety, to the rumors which were industriously spread, that the defeat and death of Valens had left Procopius sole master of the Eastern provinces. Valens was not dead: but on the news of the rebellion, which he received at Cæsarea, he basely despaired of his life and fortune; proposed to negotiate with the usurper, and discovered his secret inclination to abdicate the Imperial purple. The timid monarch was saved from disgrace and ruin by the firmness of his ministers, and their abilities soon decided in his favor the event of the civil war. In a season of tranquillity, Sallust had resigned without a murmur; but as soon as the public safety was attacked, he ambitiously solicited the præminence of toil and danger; and the restoration of that virtuous minister to the præfecture of the East, was the first step which indicated the repentance of Valens, and satisfied the minds of the people. The reign of Procopius was apparently supported by powerful armies and obedient provinces. But many of the principal officers, military as well as civil, had been urged, either by motives of duty or interest, to withdraw themselves from the guilty scene; or to watch the moment of betraying, and deserting, the cause of the usurper. Lupicinus advanced by hasty marches, to bring the legions of Syria to the aid of Valens. Arintheus, who, in strength, beauty, and valor, excelled all the heroes of the age, attacked with a small troop a superior body of the rebels. When he beheld the faces of the soldiers who had served under his banner, he commanded them, with a loud voice, to seize and deliver up their pretended leader; and such was the ascendant of his genius, that this extraordinary order was instantly obeyed. [40](#) Arbetio, a respectable veteran of the great Constantine, who had been distinguished by the honors of the consulship, was persuaded to leave his retirement, and once more to conduct an army into the field. In the heat of action, calmly taking off his helmet, he showed his gray hairs and venerable countenance: saluted the soldiers of Procopius by the endearing names of children and companions, and exhorted them no longer to support the desperate cause of a contemptible tyrant; but to follow their old commander, who had so often led them to honor and victory. In the two engagements of Thyatira [41](#) and Nacolia, the unfortunate Procopius was deserted by his troops, who were seduced by the instructions and example of their perfidious officers. After wandering some time among the woods and mountains of Phrygia, he was betrayed by his desponding followers, conducted to the Imperial camp, and immediately beheaded. He suffered the ordinary fate of an unsuccessful usurper; but the acts of cruelty which were exercised by the conqueror, under the forms of legal justice, excited the pity and indignation of mankind. [42](#)

3911

[\(return\)](#)

[Symmachus describes his embarrassment. “The
Germans are the common enemies of the state,

Procopius the private foe of the Emperor; his first care must be victory, his second revenge." Symm. Orat. p. 11.—M.]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[Et dedignatus hominem superare certamine despicabilem, auctoritatis et celsi fiducia corporis ipsis hostibus jussit, suum vincere rectorem: atque ita turmarum, antesignanus umbratilis comprehensus suorum manibus. The strength and beauty of Arintheus, the new Hercules, are celebrated by St. Basil, who supposed that God had created him as an inimitable model of the human species. The painters and sculptors could not express his figure: the historians appeared fabulous when they related his exploits, (Ammian. xxvi. and Vales. ad loc.)]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[The same field of battle is placed by Ammianus in Lycia, and by Zosimus at Thyatira, which are at the distance of 150 miles from each other. But Thyatira alluitur *Lycø*, (Plin. Hist. Natur. v. 31, Cellarius, Geograph. Antiq. tom. ii. p. 79;) and the transcribers might easily convert an obscure river into a well-known province. * Note: Ammianus and Zosimus place the last battle at Nacolia in *Phrygia*; Ammianus altogether omits the former battle near Thyatira. Procopius was on his march (iter tendebat) towards Lycia. See Wagner's note, in c.—M.]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[The adventures, usurpation, and fall of Procopius, are related, in a regular series, by Ammianus, (xxvi. 6, 7, 8, 9, 10,) and Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 203-210.) They often illustrate, and seldom contradict, each other. Themistius (Orat. vii. p. 91, 92) adds some base panegyric; and Euna pius (p. 83, 84) some malicious satire. —Symmachus joins with Themistius in praising the clemency of Valens dic victoriæ moderatus est, quasi contra se nemo pugnavit. Symm. Orat. p. 12.—M.]

Such indeed are the common and natural fruits of despotism and rebellion. But the inquisition into the crime of magic, [4211](#) which, under the reign of the two brothers, was so rigorously prosecuted both at Rome and Antioch, was interpreted as the fatal symptom, either of the displeasure of Heaven, or of the depravity of mankind. [43](#) Let us not hesitate to indulge a liberal pride, that, in the present age, the enlightened part of Europe has abolished [44](#) a cruel and odious prejudice, which reigned in every climate of the globe, and adhered to every system of religious opinions. [45](#) The nations, and the sects, of the Roman world, admitted with equal credulity, and similar abhorrence, the reality of that infernal art, [46](#) which was able to control the eternal order of the planets,

and the voluntary operations of the human mind. They dreaded the mysterious power of spells and incantations, of potent herbs, and execrable rites; which could extinguish or recall life, inflame the passions of the soul, blast the works of creation, and extort from the reluctant dæmons the secrets of futurity. They believed, with the wildest inconsistency, that this preternatural dominion of the air, of earth, and of hell, was exercised, from the vilest motives of malice or gain, by some wrinkled hags and itinerant sorcerers, who passed their obscure lives in penury and contempt. [47](#) The arts of magic were equally condemned by the public opinion, and by the laws of Rome; but as they tended to gratify the most imperious passions of the heart of man, they were continually proscribed, and continually practised. [48](#) An imaginary cause was capable of producing the most serious and mischievous effects. The dark predictions of the death of an emperor, or the success of a conspiracy, were calculated only to stimulate the hopes of ambition, and to dissolve the ties of fidelity; and the intentional guilt of magic was aggravated by the actual crimes of treason and sacrilege. [49](#) Such vain terrors disturbed the peace of society, and the happiness of individuals; and the harmless flame which insensibly melted a waxen image, might derive a powerful and pernicious energy from the affrighted fancy of the person whom it was maliciously designed to represent. [50](#) From the infusion of those herbs, which were supposed to possess a supernatural influence, it was an easy step to the use of more substantial poison; and the folly of mankind sometimes became the instrument, and the mask, of the most atrocious crimes. As soon as the zeal of informers was encouraged by the ministers of Valens and Valentinian, they could not refuse to listen to another charge, too frequently mingled in the scenes of domestic guilt; a charge of a softer and less malignant nature, for which the pious, though excessive, rigor of Constantine had recently decreed the punishment of death. [51](#) This deadly and incoherent mixture of treason and magic, of poison and adultery, afforded infinite gradations of guilt and innocence, of excuse and aggravation, which in these proceedings appear to have been confounded by the angry or corrupt passions of the judges. They easily discovered that the degree of their industry and discernment was estimated, by the Imperial court, according to the number of executions that were furnished from the respective tribunals. It was not without extreme reluctance that they pronounced a sentence of acquittal; but they eagerly admitted such evidence as was stained with perjury, or procured by torture, to prove the most improbable charges against the most respectable characters. The progress of the inquiry continually opened new subjects of criminal prosecution; the audacious informer, whose falsehood was detected, retired with impunity; but the wretched victim, who discovered his real or pretended accomplices, were seldom permitted to receive the price of his infamy. From the extremity of Italy and Asia, the young, and the aged, were dragged in chains to the tribunals of Rome and Antioch. Senators, matrons, and philosophers, expired in ignominious and cruel tortures. The soldiers, who were appointed to guard the prisons, declared, with a murmur of pity and indignation, that their numbers were insufficient to oppose the flight, or resistance, of the multitude of

captives. The wealthiest families were ruined by fines and confiscations; the most innocent citizens trembled for their safety; and we may form some notion of the magnitude of the evil, from the extravagant assertion of an ancient writer, that, in the obnoxious provinces, the prisoners, the exiles, and the fugitives, formed the greatest part of the inhabitants. [52](#)

4211

[\(return\)](#)

[This infamous inquisition into sorcery and witchcraft has been of greater influence on human affairs than is commonly supposed. The persecutions against philosophers and their libraries was carried on with so much fury, that from this time (A. D. 374) the names of the Gentile philosophers became almost extinct; and the Christian philosophy and religion, particularly in the East, established their ascendancy. I am surprised that Gibbon has not made this observation. Heyne, Note on Zosimus, l. iv. 14, p. 637. Besides vast heaps of manuscripts publicly destroyed throughout the East, men of letters burned their whole libraries, lest some fatal volume should expose them to the malice of the informers and the extreme penalty of the law. Amm. Marc. xxix. 11.—M.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius de ulciscend. Julian. nece, c. ix. p. 158, 159. The sophist deplores the public frenzy, but he does not (after their deaths) impeach the justice of the emperors.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[The French and English lawyers, of the present age, allow the *theory*, and deny the *practice*, of witchcraft, (Denisart, Recueil de Decisions de Jurisprudence, au mot *Sorciars*, tom. iv. p. 553. Blackstone's Commentaries, vol. iv. p. 60.) As private reason always prevents, or outstrips, public wisdom, the president Montesquieu (Esprit des Loix, l. xii. c. 5, 6) rejects the *existence* of magic.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[See Œuvres de Bayle, tom. iii. p. 567-589. The sceptic of Rotterdam exhibits, according to his custom, a strange medley of loose knowledge and lively wit.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[The Pagans distinguished between good and bad magic, the Theurgic and the Goetic, (Hist. de l'Académie, &c., tom. vii. p. 25.) But they could not have defended this obscure distinction against the acute logic of Bayle. In the Jewish and Christian

system, *all* dæmons are infernal spirits; and *all* commerce with them is idolatry, apostasy &c., which deserves death and damnation.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[The Canidia of Horace (Carm. l. v. Od. 5, with Dacier's and Sanadon's illustrations) is a vulgar witch. The Erichtho of Lucan (Pharsal. vi. 430-830) is tedious, disgusting, but sometimes sublime. She chides the delay of the Furies, and threatens, with tremendous obscurity, to pronounce their real names; to reveal the true infernal countenance of Hecate; to invoke the secret powers that lie below hell, &c.]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[Genus hominum potentibus infidum, sperantibus fallax, quod in civitate nostrâ et vetabitur semper et retinebitur. Tacit. Hist. i. 22. See Augustin. de Civitate Dei, l. viii. c. 19, and the Theodosian Code l. ix. tit. xvi., with Godefroy's Commentary.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[The persecution of Antioch was occasioned by a criminal consultation. The twenty-four letters of the alphabet were arranged round a magic tripod: and a dancing ring, which had been placed in the centre, pointed to the four first letters in the name of the future emperor, O. E. O Triangle. Theodorus (perhaps with many others, who owned the fatal syllables) was executed. Theodosius succeeded. Lardner (Heathen Testimonies, vol. iv. p. 353-372) has copiously and fairly examined this dark transaction of the reign of Valens.]

50 [\(return\)](#)

[

*Limus ut hic durescit, et hæc ut cera liquescit
Uno eodemque igni—Virgil. Bucolic. viii. 80.*

*Devovet absentes, simulacraque cerea figit.
—Ovid. in Epist. Hypsil. ad Jason 91.*

Such vain incantations could affect the mind, and increase the disease of Germanicus. Tacit. Annal. ii. 69.]

51 [\(return\)](#)

[See Heineccius, Antiquitat. Juris Roman. tom. ii. p. 353, &c. Cod. Theodosian. l. ix. tit. 7, with Godefroy's Commentary.]

52 [\(return\)](#)

[The cruel persecution of Rome and Antioch is described, and most probably exaggerated, by Ammianus (xxvii. l. xxix. 1, 2) and Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 216-218.) The philosopher Maximus, with some justice, was involved in the charge of magic,

(Eunapius in Vit. Sophist. p. 88, 89;) and young Chrysostom, who had accidentally found one of the proscribed books, gave himself up for lost, (Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 340.)]

When Tacitus describes the deaths of the innocent and illustrious Romans, who were sacrificed to the cruelty of the first Cæsars, the art of the historian, or the merit of the sufferers, excites in our breast the most lively sensations of terror, of admiration, and of pity. The coarse and undistinguishing pencil of Ammianus has delineated his bloody figures with tedious and disgusting accuracy. But as our attention is no longer engaged by the contrast of freedom and servitude, of recent greatness and of actual misery, we should turn with horror from the frequent executions, which disgraced, both at Rome and Antioch, the reign of the two brothers. [53](#) Valens was of a timid, [54](#) and Valentinian of a choleric, disposition. [55](#) An anxious regard to his personal safety was the ruling principle of the administration of Valens. In the condition of a subject, he had kissed, with trembling awe, the hand of the oppressor; and when he ascended the throne, he reasonably expected, that the same fears, which had subdued his own mind, would secure the patient submission of his people. The favorites of Valens obtained, by the privilege of rapine and confiscation, the wealth which his economy would have refused. [56](#) They urged, with persuasive eloquence, *that*, in all cases of treason, suspicion is equivalent to proof; *that* the power supposes the intention, of mischief; *that* the intention is not less criminal than the act; and *that* a subject no longer deserves to live, if his life may threaten the safety, or disturb the repose, of his sovereign. The judgment of Valentinian was sometimes deceived, and his confidence abused; but he would have silenced the informers with a contemptuous smile, had they presumed to alarm his fortitude by the sound of danger. They praised his inflexible love of justice; and, in the pursuit of justice, the emperor was easily tempted to consider clemency as a weakness, and passion as a virtue. As long as he wrestled with his equals, in the bold competition of an active and ambitious life, Valentinian was seldom injured, and never insulted, with impunity: if his prudence was arraigned, his spirit was applauded; and the proudest and most powerful generals were apprehensive of provoking the resentment of a fearless soldier. After he became master of the world, he unfortunately forgot, that where no resistance can be made, no courage can be exerted; and instead of consulting the dictates of reason and magnanimity, he indulged the furious emotions of his temper, at a time when they were disgraceful to himself, and fatal to the defenceless objects of his displeasure. In the government of his household, or of his empire, slight, or even imaginary, offences—a hasty word, a casual omission, an involuntary delay—were chastised by a sentence of immediate death. The expressions which issued the most readily from the mouth of the emperor of the West were, “Strike off his head;” “Burn him alive;” “Let him be beaten with clubs till he expires;” [57](#) and his most favored ministers soon understood, that, by a rash attempt to dispute, or suspend, the execution of his sanguinary commands, they might involve themselves in the guilt and punishment of disobedience. The repeated gratification of

this savage justice hardened the mind of Valentinian against pity and remorse; and the sallies of passion were confirmed by the habits of cruelty. [58](#) He could behold with calm satisfaction the convulsive agonies of torture and death; he reserved his friendship for those faithful servants whose temper was the most congenial to his own. The merit of Maximin, who had slaughtered the noblest families of Rome, was rewarded with the royal approbation, and the præfecture of Gaul.

Two fierce and enormous bears, distinguished by the appellations of *Innocence*, and *Mica Aurea*, could alone deserve to share the favor of Maximin. The cages of those trusty guards were always placed near the bed-chamber of Valentinian, who frequently amused his eyes with the grateful spectacle of seeing them tear and devour the bleeding limbs of the malefactors who were abandoned to their rage. Their diet and exercises were carefully inspected by the Roman emperor; and when *Innocence* had earned her discharge, by a long course of meritorious service, the faithful animal was again restored to the freedom of her native woods. [59](#)

- 53 [\(return\)](#)
[Consult the six last books of Ammianus, and more particularly the portraits of the two royal brothers, (xxx. 8, 9, xxxi. 14.) Tillemont has collected (tom. v. p. 12-18, p. 127-133) from all antiquity their virtues and vices.]
- 54 [\(return\)](#)
[The younger Victor asserts, that he was valde timidus: yet he behaved, as almost every man would do, with decent resolution at the *head* of an army. The same historian attempts to prove that his anger was harmless. Ammianus observes, with more candor and judgment, incidentia crimina ad contemptam vel læsam principis amplitudinem trahens, in sanguinem sæviebat.]
- 55 [\(return\)](#)
[Cum esset ad acerbitatem naturæ calore propensior. .. pœnas perignes augebat et gladios. Ammian. xxx. 8. See xxvii. 7]
- 56 [\(return\)](#)
[I have transferred the reproach of avarice from Valens to his servant. Avarice more properly belongs to ministers than to kings; in whom that passion is commonly extinguished by absolute possession.]
- 57 [\(return\)](#)
[He sometimes expressed a sentence of death with a tone of pleasantry: “Abi, Comes, et muta ei caput, qui sibi mutari provinciam cupit.” A boy, who had slipped too hastily a Spartan bound; an armorer, who had made a polished cuirass that wanted some

grains of the legitimate weight, &c., were the victims of his fury.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[The innocents of Milan were an agent and three apparitors, whom Valentinian condemned for signifying a legal summons. Ammianus (xxvii. 7) strangely supposes, that all who had been unjustly executed were worshipped as martyrs by the Christians. His impartial silence does not allow us to believe, that the great chamberlain Rhodanus was burnt alive for an act of oppression, (Chron. Paschal. p. 392.) * Note: Ammianus does not say that they were worshipped as *martyrs*. Quorum memoriam apud Mediolanum colentes nunc usque Christiani loculos ubi sepulti sunt, *ad innocentes* appellant. Wagner's note in loco. Yet if the next paragraph refers to that transaction, which is not quite clear. Gibbon is right.—M.]

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Ut bene meritam in sylvas jussit abire *Innoxiam*. Ammian. xxix. and Valesius ad locum.]

Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part III.

But in the calmer moments of reflection, when the mind of Valens was not agitated by fear, or that of Valentinian by rage, the tyrant resumed the sentiments, or at least the conduct, of the father of his country. The dispassionate judgment of the Western emperor could clearly perceive, and accurately pursue, his own and the public interest; and the sovereign of the East, who imitated with equal docility the various examples which he received from his elder brother, was sometimes guided by the wisdom and virtue of the præfect Sallust. Both princes invariably retained, in the purple, the chaste and temperate simplicity which had adorned their private life; and, under their reign, the pleasures of the court never cost the people a blush or a sigh. They gradually reformed many of the abuses of the times of Constantius; judiciously adopted and improved the designs of Julian and his successor; and displayed a style and spirit of legislation which might inspire posterity with the most favorable opinion of their character and government. It is not from the master of *Innocence*, that we should expect the tender regard for the welfare of his subjects, which prompted Valentinian to condemn the exposition of new-born infants; [60](#) and to establish fourteen skilful physicians, with stipends and privileges, in the fourteen quarters of Rome. The good sense of an illiterate soldier founded a useful and liberal institution for the education of youth, and the support of declining science. [61](#) It was his intention, that the arts of rhetoric and grammar should be taught in the Greek and Latin languages, in the

metropolis of every province; and as the size and dignity of the school was usually proportioned to the importance of the city, the academies of Rome and Constantinople claimed a just and singular preëminence. The fragments of the literary edicts of Valentinian imperfectly represent the school of Constantinople, which was gradually improved by subsequent regulations. That school consisted of thirty-one professors in different branches of learning. One philosopher, and two lawyers; five sophists, and ten grammarians for the Greek, and three orators, and ten grammarians for the Latin tongue; besides seven scribes, or, as they were then styled, antiquarians, whose laborious pens supplied the public library with fair and correct copies of the classic writers. The rule of conduct, which was prescribed to the students, is the more curious, as it affords the first outlines of the form and discipline of a modern university. It was required, that they should bring proper certificates from the magistrates of their native province. Their names, professions, and places of abode, were regularly entered in a public register.

60

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Code of Justinian, l. viii. tit. lii. leg. 2. Unusquisque sabolem suam nutriat. Quod si exponendam putaverit animadversioni quæ constituta est subiacebit. For the present I shall not interfere in the dispute between Noodt and Binkershoek; how far, or how long this unnatural practice had been condemned or abolished by law philosophy, and the more civilized state of society.]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[These salutary institutions are explained in the Theodosian Code, l. xiii. tit. iii. *De Professoribus et Medicis*, and l. xiv. tit. ix. *De Studiis liberalibus Urbis Romæ*. Besides our usual guide, (Godefroy,) we may consult Giannone, (Istoria di Napoli, tom. i. p. 105-111,) who has treated the interesting subject with the zeal and curiosity of a man of letters who studies his domestic history.]

The studious youth were severely prohibited from wasting their time in feasts, or in the theatre; and the term of their education was limited to the age of twenty. The præfect of the city was empowered to chastise the idle and refractory by stripes or expulsion; and he was directed to make an annual report to the master of the offices, that the knowledge and abilities of the scholars might be usefully applied to the public service. The institutions of Valentinian contributed to secure the benefits of peace and plenty; and the cities were guarded by the establishment of the *Defensors*; [62](#) freely elected as the tribunes and advocates of the people, to support their rights, and to expose their grievances, before the tribunals of the civil magistrates, or even at the foot of the Imperial throne. The finances were diligently administered by two princes, who had been so long accustomed to the rigid economy of a private fortune; but in the receipt and application of the revenue, a discerning eye might observe some difference between the government of the East and of the West. Valens was persuaded, that royal liberality

can be supplied only by public oppression, and his ambition never aspired to secure, by their actual distress, the future strength and prosperity of his people. Instead of increasing the weight of taxes, which, in the space of forty years, had been gradually doubled, he reduced, in the first years of his reign, one fourth of the tribute of the East. [63](#) Valentinian appears to have been less attentive and less anxious to relieve the burdens of his people. He might reform the abuses of the fiscal administration; but he exacted, without scruple, a very large share of the private property; as he was convinced, that the revenues, which supported the luxury of individuals, would be much more advantageously employed for the defence and improvement of the state. The subjects of the East, who enjoyed the present benefit, applauded the indulgence of their prince. The solid but less splendid, merit of Valentinian was felt and acknowledged by the subsequent generation. [64](#)

62 [\(return\)](#)
[Cod. Theodos. l. i. tit. xi. with Godefroy's *Paratitlon*, which diligently gleans from the rest of the code.]

63 [\(return\)](#)
[Three lines of Ammianus (xxxi. 14) countenance a whole oration of Themistius, (viii. p. 101-120,) full of adulation, pedantry, and common-place morality. The eloquent M. Thomas (tom. i. p. 366-396) has amused himself with celebrating the virtues and genius of Themistius, who was not unworthy of the age in which he lived.]

64 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. iv. p. 202. Ammian. xxx. 9. His reformation of costly abuses might entitle him to the praise of, in provinciales admodum parcus, tributorum ubique molliens sarcinas. By some his frugality was styled avarice, (Jerom. Chron. p. 186)]

But the most honorable circumstance of the character of Valentinian, is the firm and temperate impartiality which he uniformly preserved in an age of religious contention. His strong sense, unenlightened, but uncorrupted, by study, declined, with respectful indifference, the subtle questions of theological debate. The government of the *Earth* claimed his vigilance, and satisfied his ambition; and while he remembered that he was the disciple of the church, he never forgot that he was the sovereign of the clergy. Under the reign of an apostate, he had signaled his zeal for the honor of Christianity: he allowed to his subjects the privilege which he had assumed for himself; and they might accept, with gratitude and confidence, the general toleration which was granted by a prince addicted to passion, but incapable of fear or of disguise. [65](#) The Pagans, the Jews, and all the various sects which acknowledged the divine authority of Christ, were protected by the laws from arbitrary power or popular insult; nor was any mode of worship prohibited by Valentinian, except those secret and criminal practices,

which abused the name of religion for the dark purposes of vice and disorder. The art of magic, as it was more cruelly punished, was more strictly proscribed: but the emperor admitted a formal distinction to protect the ancient methods of divination, which were approved by the senate, and exercised by the Tuscan haruspices. He had condemned, with the consent of the most rational Pagans, the license of nocturnal sacrifices; but he immediately admitted the petition of Prætextatus, proconsul of Achaia, who represented, that the life of the Greeks would become dreary and comfortless, if they were deprived of the invaluable blessing of the Eleusinian mysteries. Philosophy alone can boast, (and perhaps it is no more than the boast of philosophy,) that her gentle hand is able to eradicate from the human mind the latent and deadly principle of fanaticism. But this truce of twelve years, which was enforced by the wise and vigorous government of Valentinian, by suspending the repetition of mutual injuries, contributed to soften the manners, and abate the prejudices, of the religious factions.

65

[\(return\)](#)

[Testes sunt leges a me in exordio Imperii mei datæ; quibus unicuique quod animo imbibisset colendi libera facultas tributa est. Cod. Theodos. l. ix. tit. xvi. leg. 9. To this declaration of Valentinian, we may add the various testimonies of Ammianus, (xxx. 9,) Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 204,) and Sozomen, (l. vi. c. 7, 21.) Baronius would naturally blame such rational toleration, (Annal. Eccles A. D. 370, No. 129-132, A. D. 376, No. 3, 4.) —Comme il s'était prescrit pour règle de ne point se mêler de disputes de religion, son histoire est presque entièrement dégagée des affaires ecclésiastiques. Le Beau. iii. 214.—M.]

The friend of toleration was unfortunately placed at a distance from the scene of the fiercest controversies. As soon as the Christians of the West had extricated themselves from the snares of the creed of Rimini, they happily relapsed into the slumber of orthodoxy; and the small remains of the Arian party, that still subsisted at Sirmium or Milan, might be considered rather as objects of contempt than of resentment. But in the provinces of the East, from the Euxine to the extremity of Thebais, the strength and numbers of the hostile factions were more equally balanced; and this equality, instead of recommending the counsels of peace, served only to perpetuate the horrors of religious war. The monks and bishops supported their arguments by invectives; and their invectives were sometimes followed by blows. Athanasius still reigned at Alexandria; the thrones of Constantinople and Antioch were occupied by Arian prelates, and every episcopal vacancy was the occasion of a popular tumult. The Homoousians were fortified by the reconciliation of fifty-nine Macelonian, or Semi-Arian, bishops; but their secret reluctance to embrace the divinity of the Holy Ghost, clouded the splendor of the triumph; and the declaration of Valens, who, in the first years of his reign, had imitated the impartial conduct of his brother, was an important

victory on the side of Arianism. The two brothers had passed their private life in the condition of catechumens; but the piety of Valens prompted him to solicit the sacrament of baptism, before he exposed his person to the dangers of a Gothic war. He naturally addressed himself to Eudoxus, [66 6611](#) bishop of the Imperial city; and if the ignorant monarch was instructed by that Arian pastor in the principles of heterodox theology, his misfortune, rather than his guilt, was the inevitable consequence of his erroneous choice. Whatever had been the determination of the emperor, he must have offended a numerous party of his Christian subjects; as the leaders both of the Homoiousians and of the Arians believed, that, if they were not suffered to reign, they were most cruelly injured and oppressed. After he had taken this decisive step, it was extremely difficult for him to preserve either the virtue, or the reputation of impartiality. He never aspired, like Constantius, to the fame of a profound theologian; but as he had received with simplicity and respect the tenets of Euxodus, Valens resigned his conscience to the direction of his ecclesiastical guides, and promoted, by the influence of his authority, the reunion of the *Athanasian heretics* to the body of the Catholic church. At first, he pitied their blindness; by degrees he was provoked at their obstinacy; and he insensibly hated those sectaries to whom he was an object of hatred. [67](#) The feeble mind of Valens was always swayed by the persons with whom he familiarly conversed; and the exile or imprisonment of a private citizen are the favors the most readily granted in a despotic court. Such punishments were frequently inflicted on the leaders of the Homoousian party; and the misfortune of fourscore ecclesiastics of Constantinople, who, perhaps accidentally, were burned on shipboard, was imputed to the cruel and premeditated malice of the emperor, and his Arian ministers. In every contest, the Catholics (if we may anticipate that name) were obliged to pay the penalty of their own faults, and of those of their adversaries. In every election, the claims of the Arian candidate obtained the preference; and if they were opposed by the majority of the people, he was usually supported by the authority of the civil magistrate, or even by the terrors of a military force. The enemies of Athanasius attempted to disturb the last years of his venerable age; and his temporary retreat to his father's sepulchre has been celebrated as a fifth exile. But the zeal of a great people, who instantly flew to arms, intimidated the præfect: and the archbishop was permitted to end his life in peace and in glory, after a reign of forty-seven years. The death of Athanasius was the signal of the persecution of Egypt; and the Pagan minister of Valens, who forcibly seated the worthless Lucius on the archiepiscopal throne, purchased the favor of the reigning party, by the blood and sufferings of their Christian brethren. The free toleration of the heathen and Jewish worship was bitterly lamented, as a circumstance which aggravated the misery of the Catholics, and the guilt of the impious tyrant of the East. [68](#)

[Eudoxus was of a mild and timid disposition. When he baptized Valens, (A. D. 367,) he must have been extremely old; since he had studied theology fifty-five years before, under Lucian, a

learned and pious martyr. Philostorg. l. ii. c. 14-16, l. iv. c. 4, with Godefroy, p 82, 206, and Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. v. p. 471-480, &c.]

6611 [\(return\)](#)

[Through the influence of his wife say the ecclesiastical writers.—M.]

67 [\(return\)](#)

[Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. xxv. p. 432) insults the persecuting spirit of the Arians, as an infallible symptom of error and heresy.]

68 [\(return\)](#)

[This sketch of the ecclesiastical government of Valens is drawn from Socrates, (l. iv.,) Sozomen, (l. vi.,) Theodoret, (l. iv.,) and the immense compilations of Tillemont, (particularly tom. vi. viii. and ix.)]

The triumph of the orthodox party has left a deep stain of persecution on the memory of Valens; and the character of a prince who derived his virtues, as well as his vices, from a feeble understanding and a pusillanimous temper, scarcely deserves the labor of an apology. Yet candor may discover some reasons to suspect that the ecclesiastical ministers of Valens often exceeded the orders, or even the intentions, of their master; and that the real measure of facts has been very liberally magnified by the vehement declamation and easy credulity of his antagonists. [69](#) 1. The silence of Valentinian may suggest a probable argument that the partial severities, which were exercised in the name and provinces of his colleague, amounted only to some obscure and inconsiderable deviations from the established system of religious toleration: and the judicious historian, who has praised the equal temper of the elder brother, has not thought himself obliged to contrast the tranquillity of the West with the cruel persecution of the East. [70](#) 2. Whatever credit may be allowed to vague and distant reports, the character, or at least the behavior, of Valens, may be most distinctly seen in his personal transactions with the eloquent Basil, archbishop of Cæsarea, who had succeeded Athanasius in the management of the Trinitarian cause. [71](#) The circumstantial narrative has been composed by the friends and admirers of Basil; and as soon as we have stripped away a thick coat of rhetoric and miracle, we shall be astonished by the unexpected mildness of the Arian tyrant, who admired the firmness of his character, or was apprehensive, if he employed violence, of a general revolt in the province of Cappadocia. The archbishop, who asserted, with inflexible pride, [72](#) the truth of his opinions, and the dignity of his rank, was left in the free possession of his conscience and his throne. The emperor devoutly assisted at the solemn service of the cathedral; and, instead of a sentence of banishment, subscribed the donation of a valuable estate for the use of a hospital, which Basil had lately founded in the neighborhood of Cæsarea. [73](#) 3. I am not able to discover, that any law (such as Theodosius afterwards enacted against the Arians) was published by Valens against the

Athanasian sectaries; and the edict which excited the most violent clamors, may not appear so extremely reprehensible. The emperor had observed, that several of his subjects, gratifying their lazy disposition under the pretence of religion, had associated themselves with the monks of Egypt; and he directed the count of the East to drag them from their solitude; and to compel these deserters of society to accept the fair alternative of renouncing their temporal possessions, or of discharging the public duties of men and citizens. [74](#) The ministers of Valens seem to have extended the sense of this penal statute, since they claimed a right of enlisting the young and ablebodied monks in the Imperial armies. A detachment of cavalry and infantry, consisting of three thousand men, marched from Alexandria into the adjacent desert of Nitria, [75](#) which was peopled by five thousand monks. The soldiers were conducted by Arian priests; and it is reported, that a considerable slaughter was made in the monasteries which disobeyed the commands of their sovereign. [76](#)

69 [\(return\)](#)

[Dr. Jortin (Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. iv. p. 78) has already conceived and intimated the same suspicion.]

70 [\(return\)](#)

[This reflection is so obvious and forcible, that Orosius (l. vii. c. 32, 33,) delays the persecution till after the death of Valentinian. Socrates, on the other hand, supposes, (l. iii. c. 32,) that it was appeased by a philosophical oration, which Themistius pronounced in the year 374, (Orat. xii. p. 154, in Latin only.) Such contradictions diminish the evidence, and reduce the term, of the persecution of Valens.]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont, whom I follow and abridge, has extracted (Mém. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 153-167) the most authentic circumstances from the Panegyrics of the two Gregories; the brother, and the friend, of Basil. The letters of Basil himself (Dupin, Bibliothèque, Ecclesiastique, tom. ii. p. 155-180) do not present the image of a very lively persecution.]

72 [\(return\)](#)

[Basilius Cæsariensis episcopus Cappadociæ clarus habetur... qui multa continentiae et ingenii bona uno superbiæ malo perdidit. This irreverent passage is perfectly in the style and character of St. Jerom. It does not appear in Scaliger's edition of his Chronicle; but Isaac Vossius found it in some old Mss. which had not been reformed by the monks.]

73 [\(return\)](#)

[This noble and charitable foundation (almost a new city) surpassed in merit, if not in greatness, the

pyramids, or the walls of Babylon. It was principally intended for the reception of lepers, (Greg. Nazianzen, Orat. xx. p. 439.)]

74 [\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theodos. l. xii. tit. i. leg. 63. Godefroy (tom. iv. p. 409-413) performs the duty of a commentator and advocate. Tillemont (Mém. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 808) *supposes* a second law to excuse his orthodox friends, who had misrepresented the edict of Valens, and suppressed the liberty of choice.]

75 [\(return\)](#)

[See D'Anville, Description de l'Egypte, p. 74. Hereafter I shall consider the monastic institutions.]

76 [\(return\)](#)

[Socrates, l. iv. c. 24, 25. Orosius, l. vii. c. 33. Jerom. in Chron. p. 189, and tom. ii. p. 212. The monks of Egypt performed many miracles, which prove the truth of their faith. Right, says Jortin, (Remarks, vol iv. p. 79,) but what proves the truth of those miracles.]

The strict regulations which have been framed by the wisdom of modern legislators to restrain the wealth and avarice of the clergy, may be originally deduced from the example of the emperor Valentinian. His edict, [77](#) addressed to Damasus, bishop of Rome, was publicly read in the churches of the city. He admonished the ecclesiastics and monks not to frequent the houses of widows and virgins; and menaced their disobedience with the animadversion of the civil judge. The director was no longer permitted to receive any gift, or legacy, or inheritance, from the liberality of his spiritual-daughter: every testament contrary to this edict was declared null and void; and the illegal donation was confiscated for the use of the treasury. By a subsequent regulation, it should seem, that the same provisions were extended to nuns and bishops; and that all persons of the ecclesiastical order were rendered incapable of receiving any testamentary gifts, and strictly confined to the natural and legal rights of inheritance. As the guardian of domestic happiness and virtue, Valentinian applied this severe remedy to the growing evil. In the capital of the empire, the females of noble and opulent houses possessed a very ample share of independent property: and many of those devout females had embraced the doctrines of Christianity, not only with the cold assent of the understanding, but with the warmth of affection, and perhaps with the eagerness of fashion. They sacrificed the pleasures of dress and luxury; and renounced, for the praise of chastity, the soft endearments of conjugal society. Some ecclesiastic, of real or apparent sanctity, was chosen to direct their timorous conscience, and to amuse the vacant tenderness of their heart: and the unbounded confidence, which they hastily bestowed, was often abused by knaves and enthusiasts; who hastened from the extremities of the East, to enjoy, on a splendid theatre, the privileges of the monastic profession. By their contempt of the world, they insensibly acquired its most desirable

advantages; the lively attachment, perhaps of a young and beautiful woman, the delicate plenty of an opulent household, and the respectful homage of the slaves, the freedmen, and the clients of a senatorial family. The immense fortunes of the Roman ladies were gradually consumed in lavish alms and expensive pilgrimages; and the artful monk, who had assigned himself the first, or possibly the sole place, in the testament of his spiritual daughter, still presumed to declare, with the smooth face of hypocrisy, that *he* was only the instrument of charity, and the steward of the poor. The lucrative, but disgraceful, trade, [78](#) which was exercised by the clergy to defraud the expectations of the natural heirs, had provoked the indignation of a superstitious age: and two of the most respectable of the Latin fathers very honestly confess, that the ignominious edict of Valentinian was just and necessary; and that the Christian priests had deserved to lose a privilege, which was still enjoyed by comedians, charioteers, and the ministers of idols. But the wisdom and authority of the legislator are seldom victorious in a contest with the vigilant dexterity of private interest; and Jerom, or Ambrose, might patiently acquiesce in the justice of an ineffectual or salutary law. If the ecclesiastics were checked in the pursuit of personal emolument, they would exert a more laudable industry to increase the wealth of the church; and dignify their covetousness with the specious names of piety and patriotism. [79](#)

77

[\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theodos. l. xvi. tit. ii. leg. 20. Godefroy, (tom. vi. p. 49,) after the example of Baronius, impartially collects all that the fathers have said on the subject of this important law; whose spirit was long afterwards revived by the emperor Frederic II., Edward I. of England, and other Christian princes who reigned after the twelfth century.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[The expressions which I have used are temperate and feeble, if compared with the vehement invectives of Jerom, (tom. i. p. 13, 45, 144, &c.) In *his* turn he was reproached with the guilt which he imputed to his brother monks; and the *Sceleratus*, the *Versipellis*, was publicly accused as the lover of the widow Paula, (tom. ii. p. 363.) He undoubtedly possessed the affection, both of the mother and the daughter; but he declares that he never abused his influence to any selfish or sensual purpose.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[Pudet dicere, sacerdotes idolorum, mimi et aurigæ, et scorta, hæreditates capiunt: solis *clericis* ac *monachis* hac lege prohibetur. Et non prohibetur a persecutoribus, sed a principibus Christianis. Nec de lege queror; sed doleo cur *meruerimus* hanc legem. Jerom (tom. i. p. 13)

discreetly insinuates the secret policy of his patron
Damasus.]

Damasus, bishop of Rome, who was constrained to stigmatize the avarice of his clergy by the publication of the law of Valentinian, had the good sense, or the good fortune, to engage in his service the zeal and abilities of the learned Jerom; and the grateful saint has celebrated the merit and purity of a very ambiguous character. [80](#) But the splendid vices of the church of Rome, under the reign of Valentinian and Damasus, have been curiously observed by the historian Ammianus, who delivers his impartial sense in these expressive words: “The præfecture of Juventius was accompanied with peace and plenty, but the tranquillity of his government was soon disturbed by a bloody sedition of the distracted people. The ardor of Damasus and Ursinus, to seize the episcopal seat, surpassed the ordinary measure of human ambition. They contended with the rage of party; the quarrel was maintained by the wounds and death of their followers; and the præfect, unable to resist or appease the tumult, was constrained, by superior violence, to retire into the suburbs. Damasus prevailed: the well-disputed victory remained on the side of his faction; one hundred and thirty-seven dead bodies [81](#) were found in the *Basilica* of Sicininus, [82](#) where the Christians hold their religious assemblies; and it was long before the angry minds of the people resumed their accustomed tranquillity. When I consider the splendor of the capital, I am not astonished that so valuable a prize should inflame the desires of ambitious men, and produce the fiercest and most obstinate contests. The successful candidate is secure, that he will be enriched by the offerings of matrons; [83](#) that, as soon as his dress is composed with becoming care and elegance, he may proceed, in his chariot, through the streets of Rome; [84](#) and that the sumptuousness of the Imperial table will not equal the profuse and delicate entertainments provided by the taste, and at the expense, of the Roman pontiffs. How much more rationally (continues the honest Pagan) would those pontiffs consult their true happiness, if, instead of alleging the greatness of the city as an excuse for their manners, they would imitate the exemplary life of some provincial bishops, whose temperance and sobriety, whose mean apparel and downcast looks, recommend their pure and modest virtue to the Deity and his true worshippers!” [85](#) The schism of Damasus and Ursinus was extinguished by the exile of the latter; and the wisdom of the præfect Prætextatus [86](#) restored the tranquillity of the city. Prætextatus was a philosophic Pagan, a man of learning, of taste, and politeness; who disguised a reproach in the form of a jest, when he assured Damasus, that if he could obtain the bishopric of Rome, he himself would immediately embrace the Christian religion. [87](#) This lively picture of the wealth and luxury of the popes in the fourth century becomes the more curious, as it represents the intermediate degree between the humble poverty of the apostolic fishermen, and the royal state of a temporal prince, whose dominions extend from the confines of Naples to the banks of the Po.

and blind the devout eyes of Tillemont. (Mem Eccles. tom. viii. p. 386-424.)]

81 [\(return\)](#)

[Jerom himself is forced to allow, crudelissimæ interfectiones diversi sexûs perpetratae, (in Chron. p. 186.) But an original *libel*, or petition of two presbyters of the adverse party, has unaccountably escaped. They affirm that the doors of the Basilica were burnt, and that the roof was untiled; that Damasus marched at the head of his own clergy, grave-diggers, charioteers, and hired gladiators; that none of *his* party were killed, but that one hundred and sixty dead bodies were found. This petition is published by the P. Sirmond, in the first volume of his work.]

82 [\(return\)](#)

[The *Basilica* of Sicininus, or Liberius, is probably the church of Sancta Maria Maggiore, on the Esquiline hill. Baronius, A. D. 367 No. 3; and Donatus, Roma Antiqua et Nova, l. iv. c. 3, p. 462.]

83 [\(return\)](#)

[The enemies of Damasus styled him *Auriscalpius Matronarum* the ladies' ear-scratcher.]

84 [\(return\)](#)

[Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. xxxii. p. 526) describes the pride and luxury of the prelates who reigned in the Imperial cities; their gilt car, fiery steeds, numerous train, &c. The crowd gave way as to a wild beast.]

85 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxvii. 3. Perpetuo Numini, *verisque* ejus cultoribus. The incomparable pliancy of a polytheist!]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, who makes a fair report of his præfecture (xxvii. 9) styles him præclaræ indolis, gravitatisque senator, (xxii. 7, and Vales. ad loc.) A curious inscription (Grutor MCII. No. 2) records, in two columns, his religious and civil honors. In one line he was Pontiff of the Sun, and of Vesta, Augur, Quindecemvir, Hierophant, &c., &c. In the other, 1. Quæstor candidatus, more probably titular. 2. Prætor. 3. Corrector of Tuscany and Umbria. 4. Consular of Lusitania. 5. Proconsul of Achaia. 6. Præfect of Rome. 7. Prætorian præfect of Italy. 8. Of Illyricum. 9. Consul elect; but he died before the beginning of the year 385. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom v. p. 241, 736.]

[Facite me Romanæ urbis episcopum; et ero protinus Christianus (Jerom, tom. ii. p. 165.) It is more than probable that Damasus would not have purchased his conversion at such a price.]

Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part IV.

When the suffrage of the generals and of the army committed the sceptre of the Roman empire to the hands of Valentinian, his reputation in arms, his military skill and experience, and his rigid attachment to the forms, as well as spirit, of ancient discipline, were the principal motives of their judicious choice.

The eagerness of the troops, who pressed him to nominate his colleague, was justified by the dangerous situation of public affairs; and Valentinian himself was conscious, that the abilities of the most active mind were unequal to the defence of the distant frontiers of an invaded monarchy. As soon as the death of Julian had relieved the Barbarians from the terror of his name, the most sanguine hopes of rapine and conquest excited the nations of the East, of the North, and of the South. Their inroads were often vexatious, and sometimes formidable; but, during the twelve years of the reign of Valentinian, his firmness and vigilance protected his own dominions; and his powerful genius seemed to inspire and direct the feeble counsels of his brother. Perhaps the method of annals would more forcibly express the urgent and divided cares of the two emperors; but the attention of the reader, likewise, would be distracted by a tedious and desultory narrative. A separate view of the five great theatres of war; I. Germany; II. Britain; III. Africa; IV. The East; and, V. The Danube; will impress a more distinct image of the military state of the empire under the reigns of Valentinian and Valens.

I. The ambassadors of the Alemanni had been offended by the harsh and haughty behavior of Ursacius, master of the offices; [88](#) who by an act of unseasonable parsimony, had diminished the value, as well as the quantity, of the presents to which they were entitled, either from custom or treaty, on the accession of a new emperor. They expressed, and they communicated to their countrymen, their strong sense of the national affront. The irascible minds of the chiefs were exasperated by the suspicion of contempt; and the martial youth crowded to their standard. Before Valentinian could pass the Alps, the villages of Gaul were in flames; before his general Degalaiphus could encounter the Alemanni, they had secured the captives and the spoil in the forests of Germany. In the beginning of the ensuing year, the military force of the whole nation, in deep and solid columns, broke through the barrier of the Rhine, during the severity of a northern winter. Two Roman counts were defeated and mortally wounded; and the standard of the Heruli and Batavians fell into the hands of the conquerors, who displayed, with insulting shouts and menaces, the trophy of their victory. The standard

was recovered; but the Batavians had not redeemed the shame of their disgrace and flight in the eyes of their severe judge. It was the opinion of Valentinian, that his soldiers must learn to fear their commander, before they could cease to fear the enemy. The troops were solemnly assembled; and the trembling Batavians were enclosed within the circle of the Imperial army. Valentinian then ascended his tribunal; and, as if he disdained to punish cowardice with death, he inflicted a stain of indelible ignominy on the officers, whose misconduct and pusillanimity were found to be the first occasion of the defeat. The Batavians were degraded from their rank, stripped of their arms, and condemned to be sold for slaves to the highest bidder. At this tremendous sentence, the troops fell prostrate on the ground, deprecated the indignation of their sovereign, and protested, that, if he would indulge them in another trial, they would approve themselves not unworthy of the name of Romans, and of his soldiers. Valentinian, with affected reluctance, yielded to their entreaties; the Batavians resumed their arms, and with their arms, the invincible resolution of wiping away their disgrace in the blood of the Alemanni. [89](#) The principal command was declined by Dagalaiphus; and that experienced general, who had represented, perhaps with too much prudence, the extreme difficulties of the undertaking, had the mortification, before the end of the campaign, of seeing his rival Jovinus convert those difficulties into a decisive advantage over the scattered forces of the Barbarians. At the head of a well-disciplined army of cavalry, infantry, and light troops, Jovinus advanced, with cautious and rapid steps, to Scarponna, [90](#) [9011](#) in the territory of Metz, where he surprised a large division of the Alemanni, before they had time to run to their arms; and flushed his soldiers with the confidence of an easy and bloodless victory. Another division, or rather army, of the enemy, after the cruel and wanton devastation of the adjacent country, reposed themselves on the shady banks of the Moselle. Jovinus, who had viewed the ground with the eye of a general, made a silent approach through a deep and woody vale, till he could distinctly perceive the indolent security of the Germans. Some were bathing their huge limbs in the river; others were combing their long and flaxen hair; others again were swallowing large draughts of rich and delicious wine. On a sudden they heard the sound of the Roman trumpet; they saw the enemy in their camp. Astonishment produced disorder; disorder was followed by flight and dismay; and the confused multitude of the bravest warriors was pierced by the swords and javelins of the legionaries and auxiliaries. The fugitives escaped to the third, and most considerable, camp, in the Catalonian plains, near Châlons in Champagne: the straggling detachments were hastily recalled to their standard; and the Barbarian chiefs, alarmed and admonished by the fate of their companions, prepared to encounter, in a decisive battle, the victorious forces of the lieutenant of Valentinian. The bloody and obstinate conflict lasted a whole summer's day, with equal valor, and with alternate success. The Romans at length prevailed, with the loss of about twelve hundred men. Six thousand of the Alemanni were slain, four thousand were wounded; and the brave Jovinus, after chasing the flying remnant of their host as far as the banks of the Rhine, returned to Paris, to

receive the applause of his sovereign, and the ensigns of the consulship for the ensuing year. [91](#) The triumph of the Romans was indeed sullied by their treatment of the captive king, whom they hung on a gibbet, without the knowledge of their indignant general. This disgraceful act of cruelty, which might be imputed to the fury of the troops, was followed by the deliberate murder of Withicab, the son of Vadomair; a German prince, of a weak and sickly constitution, but of a daring and formidable spirit. The domestic assassin was instigated and protected by the Romans; [92](#) and the violation of the laws of humanity and justice betrayed their secret apprehension of the weakness of the declining empire. The use of the dagger is seldom adopted in public councils, as long as they retain any confidence in the power of the sword.

88 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammian, xxvi. 5. Valesius adds a long and good note on the master of the offices.]

89 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammian. xxvii. 1. Zosimus, l. iv. p. 208. The disgrace of the Batavians is suppressed by the contemporary soldier, from a regard for military honor, which could not affect a Greek rhetorician of the succeeding age.]

90 [\(return\)](#)
[See D’Anville, Notice de l’Ancienne Gaule, p. 587. The name of the Moselle, which is not specified by Ammianus, is clearly understood by Mascou, (Hist. of the Ancient Germans, vii. 2)]

9011 [\(return\)](#)
[Charpeigne on the Moselle. Mannert—M.]

91 [\(return\)](#)
[The battles are described by Ammianus, (xxvii. 2,) and by Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 209,) who supposes Valentinian to have been present.]

92 [\(return\)](#)
[Studio solicitante nostrorum, occubuit. Ammian xxvii. 10.]

While the Alemanni appeared to be humbled by their recent calamities, the pride of Valentinian was mortified by the unexpected surprisal of Moguntiacum, or Mentz, the principal city of the Upper Germany. In the unsuspecting moment of a Christian festival, [9211](#) Rando, a bold and artful chieftain, who had long meditated his attempt, suddenly passed the Rhine; entered the defenceless town, and retired with a multitude of captives of either sex. Valentinian resolved to execute severe vengeance on the whole body of the nation. Count Sebastian, with the bands of Italy and Illyricum, was ordered to invade their country, most probably on the side of Rhætia. The emperor in person, accompanied by his son Gratian, passed the Rhine at the head of a formidable army, which was supported on both flanks by Jovinus and Severus, the two masters-general of the cavalry and infantry of the West. The Alemanni, unable to prevent the devastation

of their villages, fixed their camp on a lofty, and almost inaccessible, mountain, in the modern duchy of Wirtemberg, and resolutely expected the approach of the Romans. The life of Valentinian was exposed to imminent danger by the intrepid curiosity with which he persisted to explore some secret and unguarded path. A troop of Barbarians suddenly rose from their ambuscade: and the emperor, who vigorously spurred his horse down a steep and slippery descent, was obliged to leave behind him his armor-bearer, and his helmet, magnificently enriched with gold and precious stones. At the signal of the general assault, the Roman troops encompassed and ascended the mountain of Solicinium on three different sides. [9212](#) Every step which they gained, increased their ardor, and abated the resistance of the enemy: and after their united forces had occupied the summit of the hill, they impetuously urged the Barbarians down the northern descent, where Count Sebastian was posted to intercept their retreat. After this signal victory, Valentinian returned to his winter quarters at Treves; where he indulged the public joy by the exhibition of splendid and triumphal games. [93](#) But the wise monarch, instead of aspiring to the conquest of Germany, confined his attention to the important and laborious defence of the Gallic frontier, against an enemy whose strength was renewed by a stream of daring volunteers, which incessantly flowed from the most distant tribes of the North. [94](#) The banks of the Rhine [9411](#) from its source to the straits of the ocean, were closely planted with strong castles and convenient towers; new works, and new arms, were invented by the ingenuity of a prince who was skilled in the mechanical arts; and his numerous levies of Roman and Barbarian youth were severely trained in all the exercises of war. The progress of the work, which was sometimes opposed by modest representations, and sometimes by hostile attempts, secured the tranquillity of Gaul during the nine subsequent years of the administration of Valentinian. [95](#)

9211 [\(return\)](#)
[Probably Easter. Wagner.—M.]

9212 [\(return\)](#)
[Mannert is unable to fix the position of Solicinium. Haefelin (in Comm Acad Elect. Palat. v. 14) conjectures Schwetzingen, near Heidelberg. See Wagner's note. St. Martin, Sultz in Wirtemberg, near the sources of the Neckar St. Martin, iii. 339.—M.]

93 [\(return\)](#)
[The expedition of Valentinian is related by Ammianus, (xxvii. 10;) and celebrated by Ausonius, (Mosell. 421, &c.,) who foolishly supposes, that the Romans were ignorant of the sources of the Danube.]

94 [\(return\)](#)
[Immanis enim natio, jam inde ab incunabulis primis varietate casuum imminuta; ita sæpius adolescit, ut fuisse longis sæculis æstimetur intacta.

Ammianus, xxviii. 5. The Count de Buat (*Hist. des Peuples de l'Europe*, tom. vi. p. 370) ascribes the fecundity of the Alemanni to their easy adoption of strangers. —Note: "This explanation," says Mr. Malthus, "only removes the difficulty a little farther off. It makes the earth rest upon the tortoise, but does not tell us on what the tortoise rests. We may still ask what northern reservoir supplied this incessant stream of daring adventurers. Montesquieu's solution of the problem will, I think, hardly be admitted, (*Grandeur et Décadence des Romains*, c. 16, p. 187.) * * * The whole difficulty, however, is at once removed, if we apply to the German nations, at that time, a fact which is so generally known to have occurred in America, and suppose that, when not checked by wars and famine, they increased at a rate that would double their numbers in twenty-five or thirty years. The propriety, and even the necessity, of applying this rate of increase to the inhabitants of ancient Germany, will strikingly appear from that most valuable picture of their manners which has been left us by Tacitus, (*Tac. de Mor. Germ.* 16 to 20.) * * * With these manners, and a habit of enterprise and emigration, which would naturally remove all fears about providing for a family, it is difficult to conceive a society with a stronger principle of increase in it, and we see at once that prolific source of armies and colonies against which the force of the Roman empire so long struggled with difficulty, and under which it ultimately sunk. It is not probable that, for two periods together, or even for one, the population within the confines of Germany ever doubled itself in twenty-five years. Their perpetual wars, the rude state of agriculture, and particularly the very strange custom adopted by most of the tribes of marking their barriers by extensive deserts, would prevent any very great actual increase of numbers. At no one period could the country be called well peopled, though it was often redundant in population. * * * Instead of clearing their forests, draining their swamps, and rendering their soil fit to support an extended population, they found it more congenial to their martial habits and impatient dispositions to go in quest of food, of plunder, or of glory, into other countries." Malthus on Population, i. p. 128.—G.]

asserts that the Neckar first became known to the Romans by the conquests and fortifications of Valentinian. Nunc primum victoriis tuis externus fluvius publicatur. Gaudeat servitute, captivus innotuit. Symm. Orat. p. 22.—M.]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxviii. 2. Zosimus, l. iv. p. 214. The younger Victor mentions the mechanical genius of Valentinian, nova arma meditari fingere terra seu limo simulacra.]

That prudent emperor, who diligently practised the wise maxims of Diocletian, was studious to foment and excite the intestine divisions of the tribes of Germany. About the middle of the fourth century, the countries, perhaps of Lusace and Thuringia, on either side of the Elbe, were occupied by the vague dominion of the Burgundians; a warlike and numerous people, [9511](#) of the Vandal race, [96](#) whose obscure name insensibly swelled into a powerful kingdom, and has finally settled on a flourishing province. The most remarkable circumstance in the ancient manners of the Burgundians appears to have been the difference of their civil and ecclesiastical constitution. The appellation of *Hendinos* was given to the king or general, and the title of *Sinistus* to the high priest, of the nation. The person of the priest was sacred, and his dignity perpetual; but the temporal government was held by a very precarious tenure. If the events of war accuses the courage or conduct of the king, he was immediately deposed; and the injustice of his subjects made him responsible for the fertility of the earth, and the regularity of the seasons, which seemed to fall more properly within the sacerdotal department. [97](#) The disputed possession of some salt-pits [98](#) engaged the Alemanni and the Burgundians in frequent contests: the latter were easily tempted, by the secret solicitations and liberal offers of the emperor; and their fabulous descent from the Roman soldiers, who had formerly been left to garrison the fortresses of Drusus, was admitted with mutual credulity, as it was conducive to mutual interest. [99](#) An army of fourscore thousand Burgundians soon appeared on the banks of the Rhine; and impatiently required the support and subsidies which Valentinian had promised: but they were amused with excuses and delays, till at length, after a fruitless expectation, they were compelled to retire. The arms and fortifications of the Gallic frontier checked the fury of their just resentment; and their massacre of the captives served to imbitter the hereditary feud of the Burgundians and the Alemanni. The inconstancy of a wise prince may, perhaps, be explained by some alteration of circumstances; and perhaps it was the original design of Valentinian to intimidate, rather than to destroy; as the balance of power would have been equally overturned by the extirpation of either of the German nations. Among the princes of the Alemanni, Macrianus, who, with a Roman name, had assumed the arts of a soldier and a statesman, deserved his hatred and esteem. The emperor himself, with a light and unencumbered band, condescended to pass the Rhine, marched fifty miles into the country, and would infallibly have seized the object of his pursuit, if his judicious measures had not been defeated by the impatience of the

troops. Macrianus was afterwards admitted to the honor of a personal conference with the emperor; and the favors which he received, fixed him, till the hour of his death, a steady and sincere friend of the republic. [100](#)

9511 [\(return\)](#)

[According to the general opinion, the Burgundians formed a Gothic o Vandalic tribe, who, from the banks of the Lower Vistula, made incursions, on one side towards Transylvania, on the other towards the centre of Germany. All that remains of the Burgundian language is Gothic. * * * Nothing in their customs indicates a different origin. Malte Brun, Geog. tom. i. p. 396. (edit. 1831.)—M.]

96 [\(return\)](#)

[Bellicosos et pubis immensæ viribus affluentes; et ideo metuendos finitimis universis. Ammian. xxviii. 5.]

97 [\(return\)](#)

[I am always apt to suspect historians and travellers of improving extraordinary facts into general laws. Ammianus ascribes a similar custom to Egypt; and the Chinese have imputed it to the Ta-tsin, or Roman empire, (De Guignes, Hist. des Huns, tom. ii. part. 79.)]

98 [\(return\)](#)

[Salinarum finiumque causa Alemannis sæpe jurgabant. Ammian xxviii. 5. Possibly they disputed the possession of the *Sala*, a river which produced salt, and which had been the object of ancient contention. Tacit. Annal. xiii. 57, and Lipsius ad loc.]

99 [\(return\)](#)

[Jam inde temporibus priscis sobolem se esse Romanam Burgundii sciunt: and the vague tradition gradually assumed a more regular form, (Oros. l. vii. c. 32.) It is annihilated by the decisive authority of Pliny, who composed the History of Drusus, and served in Germany, (Plin. Secund. Epist. iii. 5,) within sixty years after the death of that hero. *Germanorum genera* quinque; Vindili, quorum pars *Burgundiones*, &c., (Hist. Natur. iv. 28.)]

100 [\(return\)](#)

[The wars and negotiations relative to the Burgundians and Alemanni, are distinctly related by Ammianus Marcellinus, (xxviii. 5, xxix 4, xxx. 3.) Orosius, (l. vii. c. 32,) and the Chronicles of Jerom and Cassiodorus, fix some dates, and add some circumstances.]

The land was covered by the fortifications of Valentinian; but the sea-coast of Gaul and Britain was exposed to the depredations of the Saxons. That celebrated name, in which we have a dear and domestic interest, escaped the notice of Tacitus; and in the maps of Ptolemy, it faintly marks the narrow neck of the Cimbric peninsula, and three small islands towards the mouth of the Elbe. [101](#) This contracted territory, the present duchy of Sleswig, or perhaps of Holstein, was incapable of pouring forth the inexhaustible swarms of Saxons who reigned over the ocean, who filled the British island with their language, their laws, and their colonies; and who so long defended the liberty of the North against the arms of Charlemagne. [102](#) The solution of this difficulty is easily derived from the similar manners, and loose constitution, of the tribes of Germany; which were blended with each other by the slightest accidents of war or friendship. The situation of the native Saxons disposed them to embrace the hazardous professions of fishermen and pirates; and the success of their first adventures would naturally excite the emulation of their bravest countrymen, who were impatient of the gloomy solitude of their woods and mountains. Every tide might float down the Elbe whole fleets of canoes, filled with hardy and intrepid associates, who aspired to behold the unbounded prospect of the ocean, and to taste the wealth and luxury of unknown worlds. It should seem probable, however, that the most numerous auxiliaries of the Saxons were furnished by the nations who dwelt along the shores of the Baltic. They possessed arms and ships, the art of navigation, and the habits of naval war; but the difficulty of issuing through the northern columns of Hercules [103](#) (which, during several months of the year, are obstructed with ice) confined their skill and courage within the limits of a spacious lake. The rumor of the successful armaments which sailed from the mouth of the Elbe, would soon provoke them to cross the narrow isthmus of Sleswig, and to launch their vessels on the great sea. The various troops of pirates and adventurers, who fought under the same standard, were insensibly united in a permanent society, at first of rapine, and afterwards of government. A military confederation was gradually moulded into a national body, by the gentle operation of marriage and consanguinity; and the adjacent tribes, who solicited the alliance, accepted the name and laws, of the Saxons. If the fact were not established by the most unquestionable evidence, we should appear to abuse the credulity of our readers, by the description of the vessels in which the Saxon pirates ventured to sport in the waves of the German Ocean, the British Channel, and the Bay of Biscay. The keel of their large flat-bottomed boats were framed of light timber, but the sides and upper works consisted only of wicker, with a covering of strong hides. [104](#) In the course of their slow and distant navigations, they must always have been exposed to the danger, and very frequently to the misfortune, of shipwreck; and the naval annals of the Saxons were undoubtedly filled with the accounts of the losses which they sustained on the coasts of Britain and Gaul. But the daring spirit of the pirates braved the perils both of the sea and of the shore: their skill was confirmed by the habits of enterprise; the meanest of their mariners was alike capable of handling an oar, of rearing a sail, or of conducting a vessel, and

the Saxons rejoiced in the appearance of a tempest, which concealed their design, and dispersed the fleets of the enemy. [105](#) After they had acquired an accurate knowledge of the maritime provinces of the West, they extended the scene of their depredations, and the most sequestered places had no reason to presume on their security. The Saxon boats drew so little water that they could easily proceed fourscore or a hundred miles up the great rivers; their weight was so inconsiderable, that they were transported on wagons from one river to another; and the pirates who had entered the mouth of the Seine, or of the Rhine, might descend, with the rapid stream of the Rhone, into the Mediterranean. Under the reign of Valentinian, the maritime provinces of Gaul were afflicted by the Saxons: a military count was stationed for the defence of the sea-coast, or Armorican limit; and that officer, who found his strength, or his abilities, unequal to the task, implored the assistance of Severus, master-general of the infantry. The Saxons, surrounded and outnumbered, were forced to relinquish their spoil, and to yield a select band of their tall and robust youth to serve in the Imperial armies. They stipulated only a safe and honorable retreat; and the condition was readily granted by the Roman general, who meditated an act of perfidy, [106](#) imprudent as it was inhuman, while a Saxon remained alive, and in arms, to revenge the fate of their countrymen. The premature eagerness of the infantry, who were secretly posted in a deep valley, betrayed the ambuscade; and they would perhaps have fallen the victims of their own treachery, if a large body of cuirassiers, alarmed by the noise of the combat, had not hastily advanced to extricate their companions, and to overwhelm the undaunted valor of the Saxons. Some of the prisoners were saved from the edge of the sword, to shed their blood in the amphitheatre; and the orator Symmachus complains, that twenty-nine of those desperate savages, by strangling themselves with their own hands, had disappointed the amusement of the public. Yet the polite and philosophic citizens of Rome were impressed with the deepest horror, when they were informed, that the Saxons consecrated to the gods the tithe of their *human* spoil; and that they ascertained by lot the objects of the barbarous sacrifice. [107](#)

101

[\(return\)](#)

[At the northern extremity of the peninsula, (the Cimbric promontory of Pliny, iv. 27,) Ptolemy fixes the remnant of the *Cimbri*. He fills the interval between the *Saxons* and the *Cimbri* with six obscure tribes, who were united, as early as the sixth century, under the national appellation of *Danes*. See Cluver. *German. Antiq.* l. iii. c. 21, 22, 23.]

102

[\(return\)](#)

[M. D'Anville (*Etablissement des Etats de l'Europe*, &c., p. 19-26) has marked the extensive limits of the Saxony of Charlemagne.]

103

[\(return\)](#)

[The fleet of Drusus had failed in their attempt to pass, or even to approach, the *Sound*, (styled, from

an obvious resemblance, the columns of Hercules,) and the naval enterprise was never resumed, (Tacit. de Moribus German. c. 34.) The knowledge which the Romans acquired of the naval powers of the Baltic, (c. 44, 45) was obtained by their land journeys in search of amber.]

104

[\(return\)](#)

[Quin et Aremorius piratam Saxona tractus Sperabat; cui pelle salum sulcare Britannum Ludus; et assuto glaucum mare findere lembo. Sidon. in Panegy. Avit. 369.

The genius of Cæsar imitated, for a particular service, these rude, but light vessels, which were likewise used by the natives of Britain. (Comment. de Bell. Civil. i. 51, and Guichardt, Nouveaux Mémoires Militaires, tom. ii. p. 41, 42.) The British vessels would now astonish the genius of Cæsar.]

105

[\(return\)](#)

[The best original account of the Saxon pirates may be found in Sidonius Apollinaris, (l. viii. epist. 6, p. 223, edit. Sirmond,) and the best commentary in the Abbé du Bos, (Hist. Critique de la Monarchie Française, &c. tom. i. l. i. c. 16, p. 148-155. See likewise p. 77, 78.)]

106

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. (xxviii. 5) justifies this breach of faith to pirates and robbers; and Orosius (l. vii. c. 32) more clearly expresses their real guilt; virtute atque agilitate terribiles.]

107

[\(return\)](#)

[Symmachus (l. ii. epist. 46) still presumes to mention the sacred name of Socrates and philosophy. Sidonius, bishop of Clermont, might condemn, (l. viii. epist. 6,) with *less* inconsistency, the human sacrifices of the Saxons.]

II. The fabulous colonies of Egyptians and Trojans, of Scandinavians and Spaniards, which flattered the pride, and amused the credulity, of our rude ancestors, have insensibly vanished in the light of science and philosophy. [108](#) The present age is satisfied with the simple and rational opinion, that the islands of Great Britain and Ireland were gradually peopled from the adjacent continent of Gaul. From the coast of Kent, to the extremity of Caithness and Ulster, the memory of a Celtic origin was distinctly preserved, in the perpetual resemblance of language, of religion, and of manners; and the peculiar characters of the British tribes might be naturally ascribed to the influence of accidental and local circumstances. [109](#) The Roman Province was reduced to the state of civilized and peaceful servitude; the rights of savage freedom were contracted to the narrow limits of Caledonia. The inhabitants of that northern region were divided, as early as the reign of Constantine, between the two great tribes

of the Scots and of the Picts, [110](#) who have since experienced a very different fortune. The power, and almost the memory, of the Picts have been extinguished by their successful rivals; and the Scots, after maintaining for ages the dignity of an independent kingdom, have multiplied, by an equal and voluntary union, the honors of the English name. The hand of nature had contributed to mark the ancient distinctions of the Scots and Picts. The former were the men of the hills, and the latter those of the plain. The eastern coast of Caledonia may be considered as a level and fertile country, which, even in a rude state of tillage, was capable of producing a considerable quantity of corn; and the epithet of *cruitnich*, or wheat-eaters, expressed the contempt or envy of the carnivorous highlander. The cultivation of the earth might introduce a more accurate separation of property, and the habits of a sedentary life; but the love of arms and rapine was still the ruling passion of the Picts; and their warriors, who stripped themselves for a day of battle, were distinguished, in the eyes of the Romans, by the strange fashion of painting their naked bodies with gaudy colors and fantastic figures. The western part of Caledonia irregularly rises into wild and barren hills, which scarcely repay the toil of the husbandman, and are most profitably used for the pasture of cattle. The highlanders were condemned to the occupations of shepherds and hunters; and, as they seldom were fixed to any permanent habitation, they acquired the expressive name of Scots, which, in the Celtic tongue, is said to be equivalent to that of *wanderers*, or *vagrants*. The inhabitants of a barren land were urged to seek a fresh supply of food in the waters. The deep lakes and bays which intersect their country, are plentifully supplied with fish; and they gradually ventured to cast their nets in the waves of the ocean. The vicinity of the Hebrides, so profusely scattered along the western coast of Scotland, tempted their curiosity, and improved their skill; and they acquired, by slow degrees, the art, or rather the habit, of managing their boats in a tempestuous sea, and of steering their nocturnal course by the light of the well-known stars. The two bold headlands of Caledonia almost touch the shores of a spacious island, which obtained, from its luxuriant vegetation, the epithet of *Green*; and has preserved, with a slight alteration, the name of Erin, or Ierne, or Ireland. It is *probable*, that in some remote period of antiquity, the fertile plains of Ulster received a colony of hungry Scots; and that the strangers of the North, who had dared to encounter the arms of the legions, spread their conquests over the savage and unwarlike natives of a solitary island. It is *certain*, that, in the declining age of the Roman empire, Caledonia, Ireland, and the Isle of Man, were inhabited by the Scots, and that the kindred tribes, who were often associated in military enterprise, were deeply affected by the various accidents of their mutual fortunes. They long cherished the lively tradition of their common name and origin; and the missionaries of the Isle of Saints, who diffused the light of Christianity over North Britain, established the vain opinion, that their Irish countrymen were the natural, as well as spiritual, fathers of the Scottish race. The loose and obscure tradition has been preserved by the venerable Bede, who scattered some rays of light over the darkness of the eighth century. On this slight foundation, a huge superstructure of fable was gradually reared, by the bards and

the monks; two orders of men, who equally abused the privilege of fiction. The Scottish nation, with mistaken pride, adopted their Irish genealogy; and the annals of a long line of imaginary kings have been adorned by the fancy of Boethius, and the classic elegance of Buchanan. [111](#)

108

[\(return\)](#)

[In the beginning of the last century, the learned Camden was obliged to undermine, with respectful scepticism, the romance of *Brutus*, the Trojan; who is now buried in silent oblivion with *Scota*, the daughter of Pharaoh, and her numerous progeny. Yet I am informed, that some champions of the *Milesian colony* may still be found among the original natives of Ireland. A people dissatisfied with their present condition, grasp at any visions of their past or future glory.]

109

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacitus, or rather his father-in-law, Agricola, might remark the German or Spanish complexion of some British tribes. But it was their sober, deliberate opinion: “In universum tamen æstimanti Gallos cicinum solum occupâsse credibile est. Eorum sacra deprehendas.... ermo haud multum diversus,” (in Vit. Agric. c. xi.) Cæsar had observed their common religion, (Comment. de Bello Gallico, vi. 13;) and in his time the emigration from the Belgic Gaul was a recent, or at least an historical event, (v. 10.) Camden, the British Strabo, has modestly ascertained our genuine antiquities, (Britannia, vol. i. Introduction, p. ii.—xxx.)]

110

[\(return\)](#)

[In the dark and doubtful paths of Caledonian antiquity, I have chosen for my guides two learned and ingenious Highlanders, whom their birth and education had peculiarly qualified for that office. See Critical Dissertations on the Origin and Antiquities, &c., of the Caledonians, by Dr. John Macpherson, London 1768, in 4to.; and Introduction to the History of Great Britain and Ireland, by James Macpherson, Esq., London 1773, in 4to., third edit. Dr. Macpherson was a minister in the Isle of Sky: and it is a circumstance honorable for the present age, that a work, replete with erudition and criticism, should have been composed in the most remote of the Hebrides.]

111

[\(return\)](#)

[The Irish descent of the Scots has been revived in the last moments of its decay, and strenuously supported, by the Rev. Mr. Whitaker, (Hist. of

Manchester, vol. i. p. 430, 431; and Genuine History of the Britons asserted, &c., p. 154-293) Yet he acknowledges, 1. *That* the Scots of Ammianus Marcellinus (A.D. 340) were already settled in Caledonia; and that the Roman authors do not afford any hints of their emigration from another country. 2. *That* all the accounts of such emigrations, which have been asserted or received, by Irish bards, Scotch historians, or English antiquaries, (Buchanan, Camden, Usher, Stillingfleet, &c.,) are totally fabulous. 3. *That* three of the Irish tribes, which are mentioned by Ptolemy, (A.D. 150,) were of Caledonian extraction. 4. *That* a younger branch of Caledonian princes, of the house of Fingal, acquired and possessed the monarchy of Ireland. After these concessions, the remaining difference between Mr. Whitaker and his adversaries is minute and obscure. The *genuine history*, which he produces, of a Fergus, the cousin of Ossian, who was transplanted (A.D. 320) from Ireland to Caledonia, is built on a conjectural supplement to the Erse poetry, and the feeble evidence of Richard of Cirencester, a monk of the fourteenth century. The lively spirit of the learned and ingenious antiquarian has tempted him to forget the nature of a question, which he so *vehemently* debates, and so *absolutely* decides. * Note: This controversy has not slumbered since the days of Gibbon. We have strenuous advocates of the Phœnician origin of the Irish, and each of the old theories, with several new ones, maintains its partisans. It would require several pages fairly to bring down the dispute to our own days, and perhaps we should be no nearer to any satisfactory theory than Gibbon was.—M.]

Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part V.

Six years after the death of Constantine, the destructive inroads of the Scots and Picts required the presence of his youngest son, who reigned in the Western empire. Constans visited his British dominions: but we may form some estimate of the importance of his achievements, by the language of panegyric, which celebrates only his triumph over the elements or, in other words, the good fortune of a safe and easy passage from the port of Boulogne to the harbor of Sandwich. [112](#) The calamities which the afflicted provincials continued to experience, from foreign war and domestic tyranny, were aggravated by the feeble and corrupt administration of the eunuchs of Constantius; and

the transient relief which they might obtain from the virtues of Julian, was soon lost by the absence and death of their benefactor. The sums of gold and silver, which had been painfully collected, or liberally transmitted, for the payment of the troops, were intercepted by the avarice of the commanders; discharges, or, at least, exemptions, from the military service, were publicly sold; the distress of the soldiers, who were injuriously deprived of their legal and scanty subsistence, provoked them to frequent desertion; the nerves of discipline were relaxed, and the highways were infested with robbers. [113](#) The oppression of the good, and the impunity of the wicked, equally contributed to diffuse through the island a spirit of discontent and revolt; and every ambitious subject, every desperate exile, might entertain a reasonable hope of subverting the weak and distracted government of Britain. The hostile tribes of the North, who detested the pride and power of the King of the World, suspended their domestic feuds; and the Barbarians of the land and sea, the Scots, the Picts, and the Saxons, spread themselves with rapid and irresistible fury, from the wall of Antoninus to the shores of Kent. Every production of art and nature, every object of convenience and luxury, which they were incapable of creating by labor or procuring by trade, was accumulated in the rich and fruitful province of Britain. [114](#) A philosopher may deplore the eternal discords of the human race, but he will confess, that the desire of spoil is a more rational provocation than the vanity of conquest. From the age of Constantine to the Plantagenets, this rapacious spirit continued to instigate the poor and hardy Caledonians; but the same people, whose generous humanity seems to inspire the songs of Ossian, was disgraced by a savage ignorance of the virtues of peace, and of the laws of war. Their southern neighbors have felt, and perhaps exaggerated, the cruel depredations of the Scots and Picts; [115](#) and a valiant tribe of Caledonia, the Attacotti, [116](#) the enemies, and afterwards the soldiers, of Valentinian, are accused, by an eye-witness, of delighting in the taste of human flesh. When they hunted the woods for prey, it is said, that they attacked the shepherd rather than his flock; and that they curiously selected the most delicate and brawny parts, both of males and females, which they prepared for their horrid repasts. [117](#) If, in the neighborhood of the commercial and literary town of Glasgow, a race of cannibals has really existed, we may contemplate, in the period of the Scottish history, the opposite extremes of savage and civilized life. Such reflections tend to enlarge the circle of our ideas; and to encourage the pleasing hope, that New Zealand may produce, in some future age, the Hume of the Southern Hemisphere.

112

[\(return\)](#)

[Hyeme tumentes ac sævientes undas calcâstis
Oceani sub remis vestris;... insperatam imperatoris
faciem Britannus expavit. Julius Firmicus
Maternus de Errore Profan. Relig. p. 464. edit.
Gronov. ad calcem Minuc. Fæl. See Tillemont,
(Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 336.)]

113

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius, Orat. Parent. c. xxxix. p. 264. This

curious passage has escaped the diligence of our British antiquaries.]

114 [\(return\)](#)

[The Caledonians praised and coveted the gold, the steeds, the lights, &c., of the *stranger*. See Dr. Blair's Dissertation on Ossian, vol ii. p. 343; and Mr. Macpherson's Introduction, p. 242-286.]

115 [\(return\)](#)

[Lord Lyttelton has circumstantially related, (History of Henry II. vol. i. p. 182,) and Sir David Dalrymple has slightly mentioned, (Annals of Scotland, vol. i. p. 69,) a barbarous inroad of the Scots, at a time (A.D. 1137) when law, religion, and society must have softened their primitive manners.]

116 [\(return\)](#)

[Attacotti bellicosa hominum natio. Ammian. xxvii. 8. Camden (Introduct. p. clii.) has restored their true name in the text of Jerom. The bands of Attacotti, which Jerom had seen in Gaul, were afterwards stationed in Italy and Illyricum, (Notitia, S. viii. xxxix. xl.)]

117 [\(return\)](#)

[Cum ipse adolescentulus in Gallia viderim Attacottos (or Scotos) gentem Britannicam humanis vesci carnibus; et cum per silvas porcorum greges, et armentorum percutumque reperiant, pastorum *nates* et feminarum *papillas* solere abscindere; et has solas ciborum delicias arbitrari. Such is the evidence of Jerom, (tom. ii. p. 75,) whose veracity I find no reason to question. * Note: See Dr. Parr's works, iii. 93, where he questions the propriety of Gibbon's translation of this passage. The learned doctor approves of the version proposed by a Mr. Gaches, who would make out that it was the delicate parts of the swine and the cattle, which were eaten by these ancestors of the Scotch nation. I confess that even to acquit them of this charge. I cannot agree to the new version, which, in my opinion, is directly contrary both to the meaning of the words, and the general sense of the passage. But I would suggest, did Jerom, as a boy, accompany these savages in any of their hunting expeditions? If he did not, how could he be an eye-witness of this practice? The Attacotti in Gaul must have been in the service of Rome. Were they permitted to indulge these cannibal propensities at the expense, not of the flocks, but of the shepherds of the provinces? These sanguinary trophies of plunder would scarce'y have been

publicly exhibited in a Roman city or a Roman camp. I must leave the hereditary pride of our northern neighbors at issue with the veracity of St. Jerom.—M.]

Every messenger who escaped across the British Channel, conveyed the most melancholy and alarming tidings to the ears of Valentinian; and the emperor was soon informed that the two military commanders of the province had been surprised and cut off by the Barbarians. Severus, count of the domestics, was hastily despatched, and as suddenly recalled, by the court of Treves. The representations of Jovinus served only to indicate the greatness of the evil; and, after a long and serious consultation, the defence, or rather the recovery, of Britain was intrusted to the abilities of the brave Theodosius. The exploits of that general, the father of a line of emperors, have been celebrated, with peculiar complacency, by the writers of the age: but his real merit deserved their applause; and his nomination was received, by the army and province, as a sure presage of approaching victory. He seized the favorable moment of navigation, and securely landed the numerous and veteran bands of the Heruli and Batavians, the Jovians and the Victors. In his march from Sandwich to London, Theodosius defeated several parties of the Barbarians, released a multitude of captives, and, after distributing to his soldiers a small portion of the spoil, established the fame of disinterested justice, by the restitution of the remainder to the rightful proprietors. The citizens of London, who had almost despaired of their safety, threw open their gates; and as soon as Theodosius had obtained from the court of Treves the important aid of a military lieutenant, and a civil governor, he executed, with wisdom and vigor, the laborious task of the deliverance of Britain. The vagrant soldiers were recalled to their standard; an edict of amnesty dispelled the public apprehensions; and his cheerful example alleviated the rigor of martial discipline. The scattered and desultory warfare of the Barbarians, who infested the land and sea, deprived him of the glory of a signal victory; but the prudent spirit, and consummate art, of the Roman general, were displayed in the operations of two campaigns, which successively rescued every part of the province from the hands of a cruel and rapacious enemy. The splendor of the cities, and the security of the fortifications, were diligently restored, by the paternal care of Theodosius; who with a strong hand confined the trembling Caledonians to the northern angle of the island; and perpetuated, by the name and settlement of the new province of *Valentia*, the glories of the reign of Valentinian. [118](#) The voice of poetry and panegyric may add, perhaps with some degree of truth, that the unknown regions of Thule were stained with the blood of the Picts; that the oars of Theodosius dashed the waves of the Hyperborean ocean; and that the distant Orkneys were the scene of his naval victory over the Saxon pirates. [119](#) He left the province with a fair, as well as splendid, reputation; and was immediately promoted to the rank of master-general of the cavalry, by a prince who could applaud, without envy, the merit of his servants. In the important station of the Upper Danube, the conqueror of Britain checked and defeated the armies of the Alemanni, before he was chosen to suppress the revolt of Africa.

118 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammianus has concisely represented (xx. l. xxvi. 4, xxvii. 8 xxviii. 3) the whole series of the British war.]

119 [\(return\)](#)
[Horrescit.... ratibus.... impervia Thule. Ille.... nec falso nomine Pictos Edomuit. Scotumque vago mucrone secutus, Fregit Hyperboreas remis audacibus undas. Claudian, in iii. Cons. Honorii, ver. 53, &c—Madurunt Saxone fuso Orcades: incaluit Pictorum sanguine Thule, Scotorum cumulos flevit glacialis Ierne. In iv. Cons. Hon. ver. 31, &c. —See likewise Pacatus, (in Panegy. Vet. xii. 5.) But it is not easy to appreciate the intrinsic value of flattery and metaphor. Compare the *British* victories of Bolanus (Statius, Silv. v. 2) with his real character, (Tacit. in Vit. Agric. c. 16.)]

III. The prince who refuses to be the judge, instructs the people to consider him as the accomplice, of his ministers. The military command of Africa had been long exercised by Count Romanus, and his abilities were not inadequate to his station; but, as sordid interest was the sole motive of his conduct, he acted, on most occasions, as if he had been the enemy of the province, and the friend of the Barbarians of the desert. The three flourishing cities of Oea, Leptis, and Sobrata, which, under the name of Tripoli, had long constituted a federal union, [120](#) were obliged, for the first time, to shut their gates against a hostile invasion; several of their most honorable citizens were surprised and massacred; the villages, and even the suburbs, were pillaged; and the vines and fruit trees of that rich territory were extirpated by the malicious savages of Getulia. The unhappy provincials implored the protection of Romanus; but they soon found that their military governor was not less cruel and rapacious than the Barbarians. As they were incapable of furnishing the four thousand camels, and the exorbitant present, which he required, before he would march to the assistance of Tripoli; his demand was equivalent to a refusal, and he might justly be accused as the author of the public calamity. In the annual assembly of the three cities, they nominated two deputies, to lay at the feet of Valentinian the customary offering of a gold victory; and to accompany this tribute of duty, rather than of gratitude, with their humble complaint, that they were ruined by the enemy, and betrayed by their governor. If the severity of Valentinian had been rightly directed, it would have fallen on the guilty head of Romanus. But the count, long exercised in the arts of corruption, had despatched a swift and trusty messenger to secure the venal friendship of Remigius, master of the offices. The wisdom of the Imperial council was deceived by artifice; and their honest indignation was cooled by delay. At length, when the repetition of complaint had been justified by the repetition of public misfortunes, the notary Palladius was sent from the court of Treves, to examine the state of Africa, and the conduct of Romanus. The rigid

impartiality of Palladius was easily disarmed: he was tempted to reserve for himself a part of the public treasure, which he brought with him for the payment of the troops; and from the moment that he was conscious of his own guilt, he could no longer refuse to attest the innocence and merit of the count. The charge of the Tripolitans was declared to be false and frivolous; and Palladius himself was sent back from Treves to Africa, with a special commission to discover and prosecute the authors of this impious conspiracy against the representatives of the sovereign. His inquiries were managed with so much dexterity and success, that he compelled the citizens of Leptis, who had sustained a recent siege of eight days, to contradict the truth of their own decrees, and to censure the behavior of their own deputies. A bloody sentence was pronounced, without hesitation, by the rash and headstrong cruelty of Valentinian. The president of Tripoli, who had presumed to pity the distress of the province, was publicly executed at Utica; four distinguished citizens were put to death, as the accomplices of the imaginary fraud; and the tongues of two others were cut out, by the express order of the emperor. Romanus, elated by impunity, and irritated by resistance, was still continued in the military command; till the Africans were provoked, by his avarice, to join the rebellious standard of Firmus, the Moor. [121](#)

120

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus frequently mentions their concilium annuum, legitimum, &c. Leptis and Sabrata are long since ruined; but the city of Oea, the native country of Apuleius, still flourishes under the provincial denomination of *Tripoli*. See Cellarius (Geograph. Antiqua, tom. ii. part ii. p. 81,) D'Anville, (Geographie Ancienne, tom. iii. p. 71, 72,) and Marmol, (Arrique, tom. ii. p. 562.)]

121

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xviii. 6. Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p 25, 676) has discussed the chronological difficulties of the history of Count Romanus.]

His father Nabal was one of the richest and most powerful of the Moorish princes, who acknowledged the supremacy of Rome. But as he left, either by his wives or concubines, a very numerous posterity, the wealthy inheritance was eagerly disputed; and Zamma, one of his sons, was slain in a domestic quarrel by his brother Firmus. The implacable zeal, with which Romanus prosecuted the legal revenge of this murder, could be ascribed only to a motive of avarice, or personal hatred; but, on this occasion, his claims were just; his influence was weighty; and Firmus clearly understood, that he must either present his neck to the executioner, or appeal from the sentence of the Imperial consistory, to his sword, and to the people. [122](#) He was received as the deliverer of his country; and, as soon as it appeared that Romanus was formidable only to a submissive province, the tyrant of Africa became the object of universal contempt. The ruin of Cæsarea, which was plundered and burnt by the licentious Barbarians, convinced the refractory cities of the danger of resistance; the power of Firmus was

established, at least in the provinces of Mauritania and Numidia; and it seemed to be his only doubt whether he should assume the diadem of a Moorish king, or the purple of a Roman emperor. But the imprudent and unhappy Africans soon discovered, that, in this rash insurrection, they had not sufficiently consulted their own strength, or the abilities of their leader. Before he could procure any certain intelligence, that the emperor of the West had fixed the choice of a general, or that a fleet of transports was collected at the mouth of the Rhone, he was suddenly informed that the great Theodosius, with a small band of veterans, had landed near Igilgilis, or Gigeri, on the African coast; and the timid usurper sunk under the ascendant of virtue and military genius. Though Firmus possessed arms and treasures, his despair of victory immediately reduced him to the use of those arts, which, in the same country, and in a similar situation, had formerly been practised by the crafty Jugurtha. He attempted to deceive, by an apparent submission, the vigilance of the Roman general; to seduce the fidelity of his troops; and to protract the duration of the war, by successively engaging the independent tribes of Africa to espouse his quarrel, or to protect his flight. Theodosius imitated the example, and obtained the success, of his predecessor Metellus. When Firmus, in the character of a suppliant, accused his own rashness, and humbly solicited the clemency of the emperor, the lieutenant of Valentinian received and dismissed him with a friendly embrace: but he diligently required the useful and substantial pledges of a sincere repentance; nor could he be persuaded, by the assurances of peace, to suspend, for an instant, the operations of an active war. A dark conspiracy was detected by the penetration of Theodosius; and he satisfied, without much reluctance, the public indignation, which he had secretly excited. Several of the guilty accomplices of Firmus were abandoned, according to ancient custom, to the tumult of a military execution; many more, by the amputation of both their hands, continued to exhibit an instructive spectacle of horror; the hatred of the rebels was accompanied with fear; and the fear of the Roman soldiers was mingled with respectful admiration. Amidst the boundless plains of Getulia, and the innumerable valleys of Mount Atlas, it was impossible to prevent the escape of Firmus; and if the usurper could have tired the patience of his antagonist, he would have secured his person in the depth of some remote solitude, and expected the hopes of a future revolution. He was subdued by the perseverance of Theodosius; who had formed an inflexible determination, that the war should end only by the death of the tyrant; and that every nation of Africa, which presumed to support his cause, should be involved in his ruin. At the head of a small body of troops, which seldom exceeded three thousand five hundred men, the Roman general advanced, with a steady prudence, devoid of rashness or of fear, into the heart of a country, where he was sometimes attacked by armies of twenty thousand Moors. The boldness of his charge dismayed the irregular Barbarians; they were disconcerted by his seasonable and orderly retreats; they were continually baffled by the unknown resources of the military art; and they felt and confessed the just superiority which was assumed by the leader of a civilized nation. When Theodosius

entered the extensive dominions of Igmazen, king of the Isaflenses, the haughty savage required, in words of defiance, his name, and the object of his expedition. "I am," replied the stern and disdainful count, "I am the general of Valentinian, the lord of the world; who has sent me hither to pursue and punish a desperate robber. Deliver him instantly into my hands; and be assured, that if thou dost not obey the commands of my invincible sovereign, thou, and the people over whom thou reignest, shall be utterly extirpated." [12211](#) As soon as Igmazen was satisfied, that his enemy had strength and resolution to execute the fatal menace, he consented to purchase a necessary peace by the sacrifice of a guilty fugitive. The guards that were placed to secure the person of Firmus deprived him of the hopes of escape; and the Moorish tyrant, after wine had extinguished the sense of danger, disappointed the insulting triumph of the Romans, by strangling himself in the night. His dead body, the only present which Igmazen could offer to the conqueror, was carelessly thrown upon a camel; and Theodosius, leading back his victorious troops to Sitifi, was saluted by the warmest acclamations of joy and loyalty. [123](#)

122

[\(return\)](#)

[The Chronology of Ammianus is loose and obscure; and Orosius (i. vii. c. 33, p. 551, edit. Havercamp) seems to place the revolt of Firmus after the deaths of Valentinian and Valens. Tillemont (Hist. des. Emp. tom. v. p. 691) endeavors to pick his way. The patient and sure-foot mule of the Alps may be trusted in the most slippery paths.]

12211

[\(return\)](#)

[The war was longer protracted than this sentence would lead us to suppose: it was not till defeated more than once that Igmazen yielded Amm. xxix. 5.—M]

123

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian xxix. 5. The text of this long chapter (fifteen quarto pages) is broken and corrupted; and the narrative is perplexed by the want of chronological and geographical landmarks.]

Africa had been lost by the vices of Romanus; it was restored by the virtues of Theodosius; and our curiosity may be usefully directed to the inquiry of the respective treatment which the two generals received from the Imperial court. The authority of Count Romanus had been suspended by the master-general of the cavalry; and he was committed to safe and honorable custody till the end of the war. His crimes were proved by the most authentic evidence; and the public expected, with some impatience, the decree of severe justice. But the partial and powerful favor of Mellobaudes encouraged him to challenge his legal judges, to obtain repeated delays for the purpose of procuring a crowd of friendly witnesses, and, finally, to cover his guilty conduct, by the additional guilt of fraud and forgery. About the same time, the restorer of Britain and Africa, on a

vague suspicion that his name and services were superior to the rank of a subject, was ignominiously beheaded at Carthage. Valentinian no longer reigned; and the death of Theodosius, as well as the impunity of Romanus, may justly be imputed to the arts of the ministers, who abused the confidence, and deceived the inexperienced youth, of his sons. [124](#)

124

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian xxviii. 4. Orosius, l. vii. c. 33, p. 551,
552. Jerom. in Chron. p. 187.]

If the geographical accuracy of Ammianus had been fortunately bestowed on the British exploits of Theodosius, we should have traced, with eager curiosity, the distinct and domestic footsteps of his march. But the tedious enumeration of the unknown and uninteresting tribes of Africa may be reduced to the general remark, that they were all of the swarthy race of the Moors; that they inhabited the back settlements of the Mauritanian and Numidian province, the country, as they have since been termed by the Arabs, of dates and of locusts; [125](#) and that, as the Roman power declined in Africa, the boundary of civilized manners and cultivated land was insensibly contracted. Beyond the utmost limits of the Moors, the vast and inhospitable desert of the South extends above a thousand miles to the banks of the Niger. The ancients, who had a very faint and imperfect knowledge of the great peninsula of Africa, were sometimes tempted to believe, that the torrid zone must ever remain destitute of inhabitants; [126](#) and they sometimes amused their fancy by filling the vacant space with headless men, or rather monsters; [127](#) with horned and cloven-footed satyrs; [128](#) with fabulous centaurs; [129](#) and with human pygmies, who waged a bold and doubtful warfare against the cranes. [130](#) Carthage would have trembled at the strange intelligence that the countries on either side of the equator were filled with innumerable nations, who differed only in their color from the ordinary appearance of the human species: and the subjects of the Roman empire might have anxiously expected, that the swarms of Barbarians, which issued from the North, would soon be encountered from the South by new swarms of Barbarians, equally fierce and equally formidable. These gloomy terrors would indeed have been dispelled by a more intimate acquaintance with the character of their African enemies. The inaction of the negroes does not seem to be the effect either of their virtue or of their pusillanimity. They indulge, like the rest of mankind, their passions and appetites; and the adjacent tribes are engaged in frequent acts of hostility. [131](#) But their rude ignorance has never invented any effectual weapons of defence, or of destruction; they appear incapable of forming any extensive plans of government, or conquest; and the obvious inferiority of their mental faculties has been discovered and abused by the nations of the temperate zone. Sixty thousand blacks are annually embarked from the coast of Guinea, never to return to their native country; but they are embarked in chains; [132](#) and this constant emigration, which, in the space of two centuries, might have furnished armies to overrun the globe, accuses the guilt of Europe, and the weakness of Africa.

- 125 [\(return\)](#)
[Leo Africanus (in the Viaggi di Ramusio, tom. i. fol. 78-83) has traced a curious picture of the people and the country; which are more minutely described in the Afrique de Marmol, tom. iii. p. 1-54.]
- 126 [\(return\)](#)
[This uninhabitable zone was gradually reduced by the improvements of ancient geography, from forty-five to twenty-four, or even sixteen degrees of latitude. See a learned and judicious note of Dr. Robertson, Hist. of America, vol. i. p. 426.]
- 127 [\(return\)](#)
[Intra, si credere libet, vix jam homines et magis semiferi... Blemmyes, Satyri, &c. Pomponius Mela, i. 4, p. 26, edit. Voss. in 8vo. Pliny *philosophically* explains (vi. 35) the irregularities of nature, which he had *credulously* admitted, (v. 8.)]
- 128 [\(return\)](#)
[If the satyr was the Orang-outang, the great human ape, (Buffon, Hist. Nat. tom. xiv. p. 43, &c.,) one of that species might actually be shown alive at Alexandria, in the reign of Constantine. Yet some difficulty will still remain about the conversation which St. Anthony held with one of these pious savages, in the desert of Thebais. (Jerom. in Vit. Paul. Eremit. tom. i. p. 238.)]
- 129 [\(return\)](#)
[St. Anthony likewise met one of *these* monsters; whose existence was seriously asserted by the emperor Claudius. The public laughed; but his præfect of Egypt had the address to send an artful preparation, the embalmed corpse of a *Hippocentaur*, which was preserved almost a century afterwards in the Imperial palace. See Pliny, (Hist. Natur. vii. 3,) and the judicious observations of Freret. (Mémoires de l'Acad. tom. vii. p. 321, &c.)]
- 130 [\(return\)](#)
[The fable of the pygmies is as old as Homer, (Iliad. iii. 6) The pygmies of India and Æthiopia were (trispithami) twenty-seven inches high. Every spring their cavalry (mounted on rams and goats) marched, in battle array, to destroy the cranes' eggs, aliter (says Pliny) futuris gregibus non resisti. Their houses were built of mud, feathers, and egg-shells. See Pliny, (vi. 35, vii. 2,) and Strabo, (l. ii. p. 121.)]
- 131 [\(return\)](#)
[The third and fourth volumes of the valuable

Histoire des Voyages describe the present state of the Negroes. The nations of the sea-coast have been polished by European commerce; and those of the inland country have been improved by Moorish colonies. * Note: The martial tribes in chain armor, discovered by Denham, are Mahometan; the great question of the inferiority of the African tribes in their mental faculties will probably be experimentally resolved before the close of the century; but the Slave Trade still continues, and will, it is to be feared, till the spirit of gain is subdued by the spirit of Christian humanity.—M.]

132

[\(return\)](#)

[Histoire Philosophique et Politique, &c., tom. iv. p. 192.]

Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part VI.

IV. The ignominious treaty, which saved the army of Jovian, had been faithfully executed on the side of the Romans; and as they had solemnly renounced the sovereignty and alliance of Armenia and Iberia, those tributary kingdoms were exposed, without protection, to the arms of the Persian monarch. [133](#) Sapor entered the Armenian territories at the head of a formidable host of cuirassiers, of archers, and of mercenary foot; but it was the invariable practice of Sapor to mix war and negotiation, and to consider falsehood and perjury as the most powerful instruments of regal policy. He affected to praise the prudent and moderate conduct of the king of Armenia; and the unsuspecting Tiranus was persuaded, by the repeated assurances of insidious friendship, to deliver his person into the hands of a faithless and cruel enemy. In the midst of a splendid entertainment, he was bound in chains of silver, as an honor due to the blood of the Arsacides; and, after a short confinement in the Tower of Oblivion at Ecbatana, he was released from the miseries of life, either by his own dagger, or by that of an assassin. [13311](#) The kingdom of Armenia was reduced to the state of a Persian province; the administration was shared between a distinguished satrap and a favorite eunuch; and Sapor marched, without delay, to subdue the martial spirit of the Iberians. Sauromaces, who reigned in that country by the permission of the emperors, was expelled by a superior force; and, as an insult on the majesty of Rome, the king of kings placed a diadem on the head of his abject vassal Aspacuras. The city of Artogerassa [134](#) was the only place of Armenia [13411](#) which presumed to resist the efforts of his arms. The treasure deposited in that strong fortress tempted the avarice of Sapor; but the danger of Olympias, the wife or widow of the Armenian king, excited the public compassion, and animated the desperate valor of her subjects and soldiers. [13412](#) The Persians were surprised and repulsed under the walls of

Artogerassa, by a bold and well-concerted sally of the besieged. But the forces of Sapor were continually renewed and increased; the hopeless courage of the garrison was exhausted; the strength of the walls yielded to the assault; and the proud conqueror, after wasting the rebellious city with fire and sword, led away captive an unfortunate queen; who, in a more auspicious hour, had been the destined bride of the son of Constantine. [135](#) Yet if Sapor already triumphed in the easy conquest of two dependent kingdoms, he soon felt, that a country is unsubdued as long as the minds of the people are actuated by a hostile and contumacious spirit. The satraps, whom he was obliged to trust, embraced the first opportunity of regaining the affection of their countrymen, and of signaling their immortal hatred to the Persian name. Since the conversion of the Armenians and Iberians, these nations considered the Christians as the favorites, and the Magians as the adversaries, of the Supreme Being: the influence of the clergy, over a superstitious people was uniformly exerted in the cause of Rome; and as long as the successors of Constantine disputed with those of Artaxerxes the sovereignty of the intermediate provinces, the religious connection always threw a decisive advantage into the scale of the empire. A numerous and active party acknowledged Para, the son of Tiranus, as the lawful sovereign of Armenia, and his title to the throne was deeply rooted in the hereditary succession of five hundred years. By the unanimous consent of the Iberians, the country was equally divided between the rival princes; and Aspacuras, who owed his diadem to the choice of Sapor, was obliged to declare, that his regard for his children, who were detained as hostages by the tyrant, was the only consideration which prevented him from openly renouncing the alliance of Persia. The emperor Valens, who respected the obligations of the treaty, and who was apprehensive of involving the East in a dangerous war, ventured, with slow and cautious measures, to support the Roman party in the kingdoms of Iberia and Armenia. [13511](#) Twelve legions established the authority of Sauromaces on the banks of the Cyrus. The Euphrates was protected by the valor of Arintheus. A powerful army, under the command of Count Trajan, and of Vadomair, king of the Alemanni, fixed their camp on the confines of Armenia. But they were strictly enjoined not to commit the first hostilities, which might be understood as a breach of the treaty: and such was the implicit obedience of the Roman general, that they retreated, with exemplary patience, under a shower of Persian arrows till they had clearly acquired a just title to an honorable and legitimate victory. Yet these appearances of war insensibly subsided in a vain and tedious negotiation. The contending parties supported their claims by mutual reproaches of perfidy and ambition; and it should seem, that the original treaty was expressed in very obscure terms, since they were reduced to the necessity of making their inconclusive appeal to the partial testimony of the generals of the two nations, who had assisted at the negotiations. [136](#) The invasion of the Goths and Huns which soon afterwards shook the foundations of the Roman empire, exposed the provinces of Asia to the arms of Sapor. But the declining age, and perhaps the infirmities, of the monarch suggested new maxims of tranquillity and moderation. His death, which happened in the full maturity

of a reign of seventy years, changed in a moment the court and councils of Persia; and their attention was most probably engaged by domestic troubles, and the distant efforts of a Carmanian war. [137](#) The remembrance of ancient injuries was lost in the enjoyment of peace. The kingdoms of Armenia and Iberia were permitted, by the mutual, though tacit consent of both empires, to resume their doubtful neutrality. In the first years of the reign of Theodosius, a Persian embassy arrived at Constantinople, to excuse the unjustifiable measures of the former reign; and to offer, as the tribute of friendship, or even of respect, a splendid present of gems, of silk, and of Indian elephants. [138](#)

133

[\(return\)](#)

[The evidence of Ammianus is original and decisive, (xxvii. 12.) Moses of Chorene, (l. iii. c. 17, p. 249, and c. 34, p. 269,) and Procopius, (de Bell. Persico, l. i. c. 5, p. 17, edit. Louvre,) have been consulted: but those historians who confound distinct facts, repeat the same events, and introduce strange stories, must be used with diffidence and caution. Note: The statement of Ammianus is more brief and succinct, but harmonizes with the more complicated history developed by M. St. Martin from the Armenian writers, and from Procopius, who wrote, as he states from Armenian authorities.—M.]

13311

[\(return\)](#)

[According to M. St. Martin, Sapor, though supported by the two apostate Armenian princes, Meroujan the Ardzronnian and Vahan the Mamigonian, was gallantly resisted by Arsaces, and his brave though impious wife Pharandsem. His troops were defeated by Vasag, the high constable of the kingdom. (See M. St. Martin.) But after four years' courageous defence of his kingdom, Arsaces was abandoned by his nobles, and obliged to accept the perfidious hospitality of Sapor. He was blinded and imprisoned in the "Castle of Oblivion;" his brave general Vasag was flayed alive; his skin stuffed and placed near the king in his lonely prison. It was not till many years after (A.D. 371) that he stabbed himself, according to the romantic story, (St. M. iii. 387, 389,) in a paroxysm of excitement at his restoration to royal honors. St. Martin, Additions to Le Beau, iii. 283, 296.—M.]

134

[\(return\)](#)

[Perhaps Artagera, or Ardis; under whose walls Caius, the grandson of Augustus, was wounded. This fortress was situate above Amida, near one of the sources of the Tigris. See D'Anville, Geographie Ancienue, tom. ii. p. 106. * Note: St.

Martin agrees with Gibbon, that it was the same fortress with Ardis Note, p. 373.—M.]

13411 [\(return\)](#)

[Artaxata, Vagharschabad, or Edchmiadzin, Erovantaschad, and many other cities, in all of which there was a considerable Jewish population were taken and destroyed.—M.]

13412 [\(return\)](#)

[Pharandsem, not Olympias, refusing the orders of her captive husband to surrender herself to Sapor, threw herself into Artogerassa St. Martin, iii. 293, 302. She defended herself for fourteen months, till famine and disease had left few survivors out of 11,000 soldiers and 6000 women who had taken refuge in the fortress. She then threw open the gates with her own hand. M. St. Martin adds, what even the horrors of Oriental warfare will scarcely permit us to credit, that she was exposed by Sapor on a public scaffold to the brutal lusts of his soldiery, and afterwards empaled, iii. 373, &c.—M.]

135 [\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 701) proves, from chronology, that Olympias must have been the mother of Para. Note *: An error according to St. M. 273.—M.]

13511 [\(return\)](#)

[According to Themistius, quoted by St. Martin, he once advanced to the Tigris, iii. 436.—M.]

136 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxvii. 12, xix. 1. xxx. 1, 2) has described the events, without the dates, of the Persian war. Moses of Chorene (Hist. Armen. l. iii. c. 28, p. 261, c. 31, p. 266, c. 35, p. 271) affords some additional facts; but it is extremely difficult to separate truth from fable.]

137 [\(return\)](#)

[Artaxerxes was the successor and brother (*the cousin-german*) of the great Sapor; and the guardian of his son, Sapor III. (Agathias, l. iv. p. 136, edit. Louvre.) See the Universal History, vol. xi. p. 86, 161. The authors of that unequal work have compiled the Sassanian dynasty with erudition and diligence; but it is a preposterous arrangement to divide the Roman and Oriental accounts into two distinct histories. * Note: On the war of Sapor with the Bactrians, which diverted from Armenia, see St. M. iii. 387.—M.]

138 [\(return\)](#)

[Pacatus in Panegy. Vet. xii. 22, and Orosius, l.

vii. c. 34. Ictumque tum fœdus est, quo universus
Oriens usque ad num (A. D. 416) tranquillissime
fruitur.]

In the general picture of the affairs of the East under the reign of Valens, the adventures of Para form one of the most striking and singular objects. The noble youth, by the persuasion of his mother Olympias, had escaped through the Persian host that besieged Artogerassa, and implored the protection of the emperor of the East. By his timid councils, Para was alternately supported, and recalled, and restored, and betrayed. The hopes of the Armenians were sometimes raised by the presence of their natural sovereign, [13811](#) and the ministers of Valens were satisfied, that they preserved the integrity of the public faith, if their vassal was not suffered to assume the diadem and title of King. But they soon repented of their own rashness. They were confounded by the reproaches and threats of the Persian monarch. They found reason to distrust the cruel and inconstant temper of Para himself; who sacrificed, to the slightest suspicions, the lives of his most faithful servants, and held a secret and disgraceful correspondence with the assassin of his father and the enemy of his country. Under the specious pretence of consulting with the emperor on the subject of their common interest, Para was persuaded to descend from the mountains of Armenia, where his party was in arms, and to trust his independence and safety to the discretion of a perfidious court. The king of Armenia, for such he appeared in his own eyes and in those of his nation, was received with due honors by the governors of the provinces through which he passed; but when he arrived at Tarsus in Cilicia, his progress was stopped under various pretences; his motions were watched with respectful vigilance, and he gradually discovered, that he was a prisoner in the hands of the Romans. Para suppressed his indignation, dissembled his fears, and after secretly preparing his escape, mounted on horseback with three hundred of his faithful followers. The officer stationed at the door of his apartment immediately communicated his flight to the consular of Cilicia, who overtook him in the suburbs, and endeavored without success, to dissuade him from prosecuting his rash and dangerous design. A legion was ordered to pursue the royal fugitive; but the pursuit of infantry could not be very alarming to a body of light cavalry; and upon the first cloud of arrows that was discharged into the air, they retreated with precipitation to the gates of Tarsus. After an incessant march of two days and two nights, Para and his Armenians reached the banks of the Euphrates; but the passage of the river which they were obliged to swim, [13812](#) was attended with some delay and some loss. The country was alarmed; and the two roads, which were only separated by an interval of three miles had been occupied by a thousand archers on horseback, under the command of a count and a tribune. Para must have yielded to superior force, if the accidental arrival of a friendly traveller had not revealed the danger and the means of escape. A dark and almost impervious path securely conveyed the Armenian troop through the thicket; and Para had left behind him the count and the tribune, while they patiently expected his approach along the public highways. They returned to the Imperial court to excuse their want of diligence or success; and seriously alleged, that the king of Armenia, who was

a skilful magician, had transformed himself and his followers, and passed before their eyes under a borrowed shape. [13813](#) After his return to his native kingdom, Para still continued to profess himself the friend and ally of the Romans: but the Romans had injured him too deeply ever to forgive, and the secret sentence of his death was signed in the council of Valens. The execution of the bloody deed was committed to the subtle prudence of Count Trajan; and he had the merit of insinuating himself into the confidence of the credulous prince, that he might find an opportunity of stabbing him to the heart Para was invited to a Roman banquet, which had been prepared with all the pomp and sensuality of the East; the hall resounded with cheerful music, and the company was already heated with wine; when the count retired for an instant, drew his sword, and gave the signal of the murder. A robust and desperate Barbarian instantly rushed on the king of Armenia; and though he bravely defended his life with the first weapon that chance offered to his hand, the table of the Imperial general was stained with the royal blood of a guest, and an ally. Such were the weak and wicked maxims of the Roman administration, that, to attain a doubtful object of political interest the laws of nations, and the sacred rights of hospitality were inhumanly violated in the face of the world. [139](#)

13811 [\(return\)](#)

[On the reconquest of Armenia by Para, or rather by Mouschegh, the Mamigonian see St. M. iii. 375, 383.—M.]

13812 [\(return\)](#)

[On planks floated by bladders.—M.]

13813 [\(return\)](#)

[It is curious enough that the Armenian historian, Faustus of Byzandum, represents Para as a magician. His impious mother Pharandac had devoted him to the demons on his birth. St. M. iv. 23.—M.]

139 [\(return\)](#)

[See in Ammianus (xxx. 1) the adventures of Para. Moses of Chorene calls him Tiridates; and tells a long, and not improbable story of his son Gnelus, who afterwards made himself popular in Armenia, and provoked the jealousy of the reigning king, (l. iii. c 21, &c., p. 253, &c.) * Note: This note is a tissue of mistakes. Tiridates and Para are two totally different persons. Tiridates was the father of Gnel first husband of Pharandsem, the mother of Para. St. Martin, iv. 27—M.]

V. During a peaceful interval of thirty years, the Romans secured their frontiers, and the Goths extended their dominions. The victories of the great Hermanric, [140](#) king of the Ostrogoths, and the most noble of the race of the Amali, have been compared, by the enthusiasm of his countrymen, to the exploits of Alexander; with this singular, and almost incredible, difference, that the martial spirit of the Gothic hero, instead of being

supported by the vigor of youth, was displayed with glory and success in the extreme period of human life, between the age of fourscore and one hundred and ten years. The independent tribes were persuaded, or compelled, to acknowledge the king of the Ostrogoths as the sovereign of the Gothic nation: the chiefs of the Visigoths, or Thervingi, renounced the royal title, and assumed the more humble appellation of *Judges*; and, among those judges, Athanaric, Fritigern, and Alavivus, were the most illustrious, by their personal merit, as well as by their vicinity to the Roman provinces. These domestic conquests, which increased the military power of Hermanric, enlarged his ambitious designs. He invaded the adjacent countries of the North; and twelve considerable nations, whose names and limits cannot be accurately defined, successively yielded to the superiority of the Gothic arms. [141](#) The Heruli, who inhabited the marshy lands near the lake Mæotis, were renowned for their strength and agility; and the assistance of their light infantry was eagerly solicited, and highly esteemed, in all the wars of the Barbarians. But the active spirit of the Heruli was subdued by the slow and steady perseverance of the Goths; and, after a bloody action, in which the king was slain, the remains of that warlike tribe became a useful accession to the camp of Hermanric.

He then marched against the Venedi; unskilled in the use of arms, and formidable only by their numbers, which filled the wide extent of the plains of modern Poland. The victorious Goths, who were not inferior in numbers, prevailed in the contest, by the decisive advantages of exercise and discipline. After the submission of the Venedi, the conqueror advanced, without resistance, as far as the confines of the Æstii; [142](#) an ancient people, whose name is still preserved in the province of Esthonia. Those distant inhabitants of the Baltic coast were supported by the labors of agriculture, enriched by the trade of amber, and consecrated by the peculiar worship of the Mother of the Gods. But the scarcity of iron obliged the Æstian warriors to content themselves with wooden clubs; and the reduction of that wealthy country is ascribed to the prudence, rather than to the arms, of Hermanric. His dominions, which extended from the Danube to the Baltic, included the native seats, and the recent acquisitions, of the Goths; and he reigned over the greatest part of Germany and Scythia with the authority of a conqueror, and sometimes with the cruelty of a tyrant. But he reigned over a part of the globe incapable of perpetuating and adorning the glory of its heroes. The name of Hermanric is almost buried in oblivion; his exploits are imperfectly known; and the Romans themselves appeared unconscious of the progress of an aspiring power which threatened the liberty of the North, and the peace of the empire. [143](#)

140

[\(return\)](#)

[The concise account of the reign and conquests of Hermanric seems to be one of the valuable fragments which Jornandes (c 28) borrowed from the Gothic histories of Ablavius, or Cassiodorus.]

141

[\(return\)](#)

[M. d. Buat. (Hist. des Peuples de l'Europe, tom.

vi. p. 311-329) investigates, with more industry than success, the nations subdued by the arms of Hermanric. He denies the existence of the *Vasinobroncæ*, on account of the immoderate length of their name. Yet the French envoy to Ratisbon, or Dresden, must have traversed the country of the *Mediomatrici*.]

142

[\(return\)](#)

[The edition of Grotius (Jornandes, p. 642) exhibits the name of *Æstri*. But reason and the Ambrosian MS. have restored the *Æstii*, whose manners and situation are expressed by the pencil of Tacitus, (Germania, c. 45.)]

143

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxxi. 3) observes, in general terms, Ermenrichi.... nobilissimi Regis, et per multa variaque fortiter facta, vicinigentibus formidati, &c.]

The Goths had contracted an hereditary attachment for the Imperial house of Constantine, of whose power and liberality they had received so many signal proofs. They respected the public peace; and if a hostile band sometimes presumed to pass the Roman limit, their irregular conduct was candidly ascribed to the ungovernable spirit of the Barbarian youth. Their contempt for two new and obscure princes, who had been raised to the throne by a popular election, inspired the Goths with bolder hopes; and, while they agitated some design of marching their confederate force under the national standard, [144](#) they were easily tempted to embrace the party of Procopius; and to foment, by their dangerous aid, the civil discord of the Romans. The public treaty might stipulate no more than ten thousand auxiliaries; but the design was so zealously adopted by the chiefs of the Visigoths, that the army which passed the Danube amounted to the number of thirty thousand men. [145](#) They marched with the proud confidence, that their invincible valor would decide the fate of the Roman empire; and the provinces of Thrace groaned under the weight of the Barbarians, who displayed the insolence of masters and the licentiousness of enemies. But the intemperance which gratified their appetites, retarded their progress; and before the Goths could receive any certain intelligence of the defeat and death of Procopius, they perceived, by the hostile state of the country, that the civil and military powers were resumed by his successful rival. A chain of posts and fortifications, skilfully disposed by Valens, or the generals of Valens, resisted their march, prevented their retreat, and intercepted their subsistence. The fierceness of the Barbarians was tamed and suspended by hunger; they indignantly threw down their arms at the feet of the conqueror, who offered them food and chains: the numerous captives were distributed in all the cities of the East; and the provincials, who were soon familiarized with their savage appearance, ventured, by degrees, to measure their own strength with these formidable adversaries, whose name had so long been the object of their terror. The king of Scythia (and Hermanric alone could deserve

so lofty a title) was grieved and exasperated by this national calamity. His ambassadors loudly complained, at the court of Valens, of the infraction of the ancient and solemn alliance, which had so long subsisted between the Romans and the Goths. They alleged, that they had fulfilled the duty of allies, by assisting the kinsman and successor of the emperor Julian; they required the immediate restitution of the noble captives; and they urged a very singular claim, that the Gothic generals marching in arms, and in hostile array, were entitled to the sacred character and privileges of ambassadors. The decent, but peremptory, refusal of these extravagant demands, was signified to the Barbarians by Victor, master-general of the cavalry; who expressed, with force and dignity, the just complaints of the emperor of the East. [146](#) The negotiation was interrupted; and the manly exhortations of Valentinian encouraged his timid brother to vindicate the insulted majesty of the empire. [147](#)

144 [\(return\)](#)

[Valens. ... docetur relationibus Ducum, gentem Gothorum, ea tempestate intactam ideoque sævissimam, conspirantem in unum, ad pervadenda parari collimitia Thraciarum. Ammian. xxi. 6.]

145 [\(return\)](#)

[M. de Buat (Hist. des Peuples de l'Europe, tom. vi. p. 332) has curiously ascertained the real number of these auxiliaries. The 3000 of Ammianus, and the 10,000 of Zosimus, were only the first divisions of the Gothic army. * Note: M. St. Martin (iii. 246) denies that there is any authority for these numbers.—M.]

146 [\(return\)](#)

[The march, and subsequent negotiation, are described in the Fragments of Eunapius, (Excerpt. Legat. p. 18, edit. Louvre.) The provincials who afterwards became familiar with the Barbarians, found that their strength was more apparent than real. They were tall of stature; but their legs were clumsy, and their shoulders were narrow.]

147 [\(return\)](#)

[Valens enim, ut consulto placuerat fratri, cujus regebatur arbitrio, arma concussit in Gothos ratione justâ permotus. Ammianus (xxvii. 4) then proceeds to describe, not the country of the Goths, but the peaceful and obedient province of Thrace, which was not affected by the war.]

The splendor and magnitude of this Gothic war are celebrated by a contemporary historian: [148](#) but the events scarcely deserve the attention of posterity, except as the preliminary steps of the approaching decline and fall of the empire. Instead of leading the nations of Germany and Scythia to the banks of the Danube, or even to the gates of Constantinople, the aged monarch of the Goths resigned to the brave Athanaric the

danger and glory of a defensive war, against an enemy, who wielded with a feeble hand the powers of a mighty state. A bridge of boats was established upon the Danube; the presence of Valens animated his troops; and his ignorance of the art of war was compensated by personal bravery, and a wise deference to the advice of Victor and Arintheus, his masters-general of the cavalry and infantry. The operations of the campaign were conducted by their skill and experience; but they found it impossible to drive the Visigoths from their strong posts in the mountains; and the devastation of the plains obliged the Romans themselves to repass the Danube on the approach of winter. The incessant rains, which swelled the waters of the river, produced a tacit suspension of arms, and confined the emperor Valens, during the whole course of the ensuing summer, to his camp of Marcianopolis. The third year of the war was more favorable to the Romans, and more pernicious to the Goths. The interruption of trade deprived the Barbarians of the objects of luxury, which they already confounded with the necessaries of life; and the desolation of a very extensive tract of country threatened them with the horrors of famine. Athanaric was provoked, or compelled, to risk a battle, which he lost, in the plains; and the pursuit was rendered more bloody by the cruel precaution of the victorious generals, who had promised a large reward for the head of every Goth that was brought into the Imperial camp. The submission of the Barbarians appeased the resentment of Valens and his council: the emperor listened with satisfaction to the flattering and eloquent remonstrance of the senate of Constantinople, which assumed, for the first time, a share in the public deliberations; and the same generals, Victor and Arintheus, who had successfully directed the conduct of the war, were empowered to regulate the conditions of peace. The freedom of trade, which the Goths had hitherto enjoyed, was restricted to two cities on the Danube; the rashness of their leaders was severely punished by the suppression of their pensions and subsidies; and the exception, which was stipulated in favor of Athanaric alone, was more advantageous than honorable to the Judge of the Visigoths. Athanaric, who, on this occasion, appears to have consulted his private interest, without expecting the orders of his sovereign, supported his own dignity, and that of his tribe, in the personal interview which was proposed by the ministers of Valens. He persisted in his declaration, that it was impossible for him, without incurring the guilt of perjury, ever to set his foot on the territory of the empire; and it is more than probable, that his regard for the sanctity of an oath was confirmed by the recent and fatal examples of Roman treachery. The Danube, which separated the dominions of the two independent nations, was chosen for the scene of the conference. The emperor of the East, and the Judge of the Visigoths, accompanied by an equal number of armed followers, advanced in their respective barges to the middle of the stream. After the ratification of the treaty, and the delivery of hostages, Valens returned in triumph to Constantinople; and the Goths remained in a state of tranquillity about six years; till they were violently impelled against the Roman empire by an innumerable host of Scythians, who appeared to issue from the frozen regions of the North. [149](#)

- 148 [\(return\)](#)
[Eunapius, in Excerpt. Legat. p. 18, 19. The Greek sophist must have considered as *one* and the *same* war, the whole series of Gothic history till the victories and peace of Theodosius.]
- 149 [\(return\)](#)
[The Gothic war is described by Ammianus, (xxvii. 6,) Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 211-214,) and Themistius, (Orat. x. p. 129-141.) The orator Themistius was sent from the senate of Constantinople to congratulate the victorious emperor; and his servile eloquence compares Valens on the Danube to Achilles in the Scamander. Jornandes forgets a war peculiar to the *Visi*-Goths, and inglorious to the Gothic name, (Mascon's Hist. of the Germans, vii. 3.)]

The emperor of the West, who had resigned to his brother the command of the Lower Danube, reserved for his immediate care the defence of the Rhætian and Illyrian provinces, which spread so many hundred miles along the greatest of the European rivers. The active policy of Valentinian was continually employed in adding new fortifications to the security of the frontier: but the abuse of this policy provoked the just resentment of the Barbarians. The Quadi complained, that the ground for an intended fortress had been marked out on their territories; and their complaints were urged with so much reason and moderation, that Equitius, master-general of Illyricum, consented to suspend the prosecution of the work, till he should be more clearly informed of the will of his sovereign. This fair occasion of injuring a rival, and of advancing the fortune of his son, was eagerly embraced by the inhuman Maximin, the præfect, or rather tyrant, of Gaul. The passions of Valentinian were impatient of control; and he credulously listened to the assurances of his favorite, that if the government of Valeria, and the direction of the work, were intrusted to the zeal of his son Marcellinus, the emperor should no longer be importuned with the audacious remonstrances of the Barbarians. The subjects of Rome, and the natives of Germany, were insulted by the arrogance of a young and worthless minister, who considered his rapid elevation as the proof and reward of his superior merit. He affected, however, to receive the modest application of Gabinus, king of the Quadi, with some attention and regard: but this artful civility concealed a dark and bloody design, and the credulous prince was persuaded to accept the pressing invitation of Marcellinus. I am at a loss how to vary the narrative of similar crimes; or how to relate, that, in the course of the same year, but in remote parts of the empire, the inhospitable table of two Imperial generals was stained with the royal blood of two guests and allies, inhumanly murdered by their order, and in their presence. The fate of Gabinus, and of Para, was the same: but the cruel death of their sovereign was resented in a very different manner by the servile temper of the Armenians, and the free and daring spirit of the Germans. The Quadi were much declined from that formidable power, which, in the time of Marcus Antoninus,

had spread terror to the gates of Rome. But they still possessed arms and courage; their courage was animated by despair, and they obtained the usual reenforcement of the cavalry of their Sarmatian allies. So improvident was the assassin Marcellinus, that he chose the moment when the bravest veterans had been drawn away, to suppress the revolt of Firmus; and the whole province was exposed, with a very feeble defence, to the rage of the exasperated Barbarians. They invaded Pannonia in the season of harvest; unmercifully destroyed every object of plunder which they could not easily transport; and either disregarded, or demolished, the empty fortifications. The princess Constantia, the daughter of the emperor Constantius, and the granddaughter of the great Constantine, very narrowly escaped. That royal maid, who had innocently supported the revolt of Procopius, was now the destined wife of the heir of the Western empire. She traversed the peaceful province with a splendid and unarmed train. Her person was saved from danger, and the republic from disgrace, by the active zeal of Messala, governor of the provinces. As soon as he was informed that the village, where she stopped only to dine, was almost encompassed by the Barbarians, he hastily placed her in his own chariot, and drove full speed till he reached the gates of Sirmium, which were at the distance of six-and-twenty miles. Even Sirmium might not have been secure, if the Quadi and Sarmatians had diligently advanced during the general consternation of the magistrates and people. Their delay allowed Probus, the Prætorian præfect, sufficient time to recover his own spirits, and to revive the courage of the citizens. He skilfully directed their strenuous efforts to repair and strengthen the decayed fortifications; and procured the seasonable and effectual assistance of a company of archers, to protect the capital of the Illyrian provinces. Disappointed in their attempts against the walls of Sirmium, the indignant Barbarians turned their arms against the master general of the frontier, to whom they unjustly attributed the murder of their king. Equitius could bring into the field no more than two legions; but they contained the veteran strength of the Mæsan and Pannonian bands. The obstinacy with which they disputed the vain honors of rank and precedence, was the cause of their destruction; and while they acted with separate forces and divided councils, they were surprised and slaughtered by the active vigor of the Sarmatian horse. The success of this invasion provoked the emulation of the bordering tribes; and the province of Mæsia would infallibly have been lost, if young Theodosius, the duke, or military commander, of the frontier, had not signalized, in the defeat of the public enemy, an intrepid genius, worthy of his illustrious father, and of his future greatness. [150](#)

150

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxix. 6) and Zosimus (I. iv. p. 219, 220) carefully mark the origin and progress of the Quadic and Sarmatian war.]

Chapter XXV: Reigns Of Jovian And Valentinian, Division Of The Empire.—Part VII.

The mind of Valentinian, who then resided at Treves, was deeply affected by the calamities of Illyricum; but the lateness of the season suspended the execution of his designs till the ensuing spring. He marched in person, with a considerable part of the forces of Gaul, from the banks of the Moselle: and to the suppliant ambassadors of the Sarmatians, who met him on the way, he returned a doubtful answer, that, as soon as he reached the scene of action, he should examine, and pronounce. When he arrived at Sirmium, he gave audience to the deputies of the Illyrian provinces; who loudly congratulated their own felicity under the auspicious government of Probus, his Prætorian præfect. [151](#) Valentinian, who was flattered by these demonstrations of their loyalty and gratitude, imprudently asked the deputy of Epirus, a Cynic philosopher of intrepid sincerity, [152](#) whether he was freely sent by the wishes of the province. “With tears and groans am I sent,” replied Iphicles, “by a reluctant people.” The emperor paused: but the impunity of his ministers established the pernicious maxim, that they might oppress his subjects, without injuring his service. A strict inquiry into their conduct would have relieved the public discontent. The severe condemnation of the murder of Gabinius, was the only measure which could restore the confidence of the Germans, and vindicate the honor of the Roman name. But the haughty monarch was incapable of the magnanimity which dares to acknowledge a fault. He forgot the provocation, remembered only the injury, and advanced into the country of the Quadi with an insatiate thirst of blood and revenge. The extreme devastation, and promiscuous massacre, of a savage war, were justified, in the eyes of the emperor, and perhaps in those of the world, by the cruel equity of retaliation: [153](#) and such was the discipline of the Romans, and the consternation of the enemy, that Valentinian repassed the Danube without the loss of a single man. As he had resolved to complete the destruction of the Quadi by a second campaign, he fixed his winter quarters at Bregetio, on the Danube, near the Hungarian city of Presburg. While the operations of war were suspended by the severity of the weather, the Quadi made an humble attempt to deprecate the wrath of their conqueror; and, at the earnest persuasion of Equitius, their ambassadors were introduced into the Imperial council. They approached the throne with bended bodies and dejected countenances; and without daring to complain of the murder of their king, they affirmed, with solemn oaths, that the late invasion was the crime of some irregular robbers, which the public council of the nation condemned and abhorred. The answer of the emperor left them but little to hope from his clemency or compassion. He reviled, in the most intemperate language, their baseness, their ingratitude, their insolence. His eyes, his voice, his color, his gestures, expressed the violence of his ungoverned fury; and while his whole frame was agitated with convulsive passion, a large blood vessel suddenly burst in his body; and Valentinian fell speechless into the arms of his attendants. Their pious care immediately concealed his situation from the crowd; but, in a few minutes, the emperor of the West expired in an agony of pain, retaining his senses till the last; and struggling, without success, to declare his intentions to the generals and ministers, who surrounded the royal couch. Valentinian was about fifty-

four years of age; and he wanted only one hundred days to accomplish the twelve years of his reign. [154](#)

151

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, (xxx. 5,) who acknowledges the merit, has censured, with becoming asperity, the oppressive administration of Petronius Probus. When Jerom translated and continued the Chronicle of Eusebius, (A. D. 380; see Tillemont, Mém. Eccles. tom. xii. p. 53, 626,) he expressed the truth, or at least the public opinion of his country, in the following words: “Probus P. P. Illyrici iniquissimus tributorum exactionibus, ante provincias quas regebat, quam a Barbaris vastarentur, *erasit*.” (Chron. edit. Scaliger, p. 187. Animadvers p. 259.) The Saint afterwards formed an intimate and tender friendship with the widow of Probus; and the name of Count Equitius with less propriety, but without much injustice, has been substituted in the text.]

152

[\(return\)](#)

[Julian (Orat. vi. p. 198) represents his friend Iphicles, as a man of virtue and merit, who had made himself ridiculous and unhappy by adopting the extravagant dress and manners of the Cynics.]

153

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxx. v. Jerom, who exaggerates the misfortune of Valentinian, refuses him even this last consolation of revenge. Genitali vastato solo et *inultam* patriam derelinquens, (tom. i. p. 26.)]

154

[\(return\)](#)

[See, on the death of Valentinian, Ammianus, (xxx. 6,) Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 221,) Victor, (in Epitom.,) Socrates, (l. iv. c. 31,) and Jerom, (in Chron. p. 187, and tom. i. p. 26, ad Heliodor.) There is much variety of circumstances among them; and Ammianus is so eloquent, that he writes nonsense.]

The polygamy of Valentinian is seriously attested by an ecclesiastical historian. [155](#) “The empress Severa (I relate the fable) admitted into her familiar society the lovely Justina, the daughter of an Italian governor: her admiration of those naked charms, which she had often seen in the bath, was expressed with such lavish and imprudent praise, that the emperor was tempted to introduce a second wife into his bed; and his public edict extended to all the subjects of the empire the same domestic privilege which he had assumed for himself.” But we may be assured, from the evidence of reason as well as history, that the two marriages of Valentinian, with Severa, and with Justina, were *successively* contracted; and that he used the ancient permission of divorce, which was still allowed by the laws, though it was condemned by the church. Severa was the mother of Gratian, who seemed to unite every claim which could entitle

him to the undoubted succession of the Western empire. He was the eldest son of a monarch whose glorious reign had confirmed the free and honorable choice of his fellow-soldiers. Before he had attained the ninth year of his age, the royal youth received from the hands of his indulgent father the purple robe and diadem, with the title of Augustus; the election was solemnly ratified by the consent and applause of the armies of Gaul; [156](#) and the name of Gratian was added to the names of Valentinian and Valens, in all the legal transactions of the Roman government. By his marriage with the granddaughter of Constantine, the son of Valentinian acquired all the hereditary rights of the Flavian family; which, in a series of three Imperial generations, were sanctified by time, religion, and the reverence of the people. At the death of his father, the royal youth was in the seventeenth year of his age; and his virtues already justified the favorable opinion of the army and the people. But Gratian resided, without apprehension, in the palace of Treves; whilst, at the distance of many hundred miles, Valentinian suddenly expired in the camp of Bregetio. The passions, which had been so long suppressed by the presence of a master, immediately revived in the Imperial council; and the ambitious design of reigning in the name of an infant, was artfully executed by Mellobaudes and Equitius, who commanded the attachment of the Illyrian and Italian bands. They contrived the most honorable pretences to remove the popular leaders, and the troops of Gaul, who might have asserted the claims of the lawful successor; they suggested the necessity of extinguishing the hopes of foreign and domestic enemies, by a bold and decisive measure. The empress Justina, who had been left in a palace about one hundred miles from Bregetio, was respectfully invited to appear in the camp, with the son of the deceased emperor. On the sixth day after the death of Valentinian, the infant prince of the same name, who was only four years old, was shown, in the arms of his mother, to the legions; and solemnly invested, by military acclamation, with the titles and ensigns of supreme power. The impending dangers of a civil war were seasonably prevented by the wise and moderate conduct of the emperor Gratian. He cheerfully accepted the choice of the army; declared that he should always consider the son of Justina as a brother, not as a rival; and advised the empress, with her son Valentinian to fix their residence at Milan, in the fair and peaceful province of Italy; while he assumed the more arduous command of the countries beyond the Alps. Gratian dissembled his resentment till he could safely punish, or disgrace, the authors of the conspiracy; and though he uniformly behaved with tenderness and regard to his infant colleague, he gradually confounded, in the administration of the Western empire, the office of a guardian with the authority of a sovereign. The government of the Roman world was exercised in the united names of Valens and his two nephews; but the feeble emperor of the East, who succeeded to the rank of his elder brother, never obtained any weight or influence in the councils of the West. [157](#)

the formal and elaborate dissertation of M. Bonamy, (Mém. de l'Académie, tom. xxx. p. 394-405.) Yet I would preserve the natural circumstance of the bath; instead of following Zosimus who represents Justina as an old woman, the widow of Magnentius.]

156

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxvii. 6) describes the form of this military election, and *august* investiture. Valentinian does not appear to have consulted, or even informed, the senate of Rome.]

157

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, xxx. 10. Zosimus, l. iv. p. 222, 223. Tillemont has proved (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 707-709) that Gratian *reigned* in Italy, Africa, and Illyricum. I have endeavored to express his authority over his brother's dominions, as he used it, in an ambiguous style.]

Chapter XXVI: Progress of The Huns.—Part I.

Manners Of The Pastoral Nations.—Progress Of The Huns, From China To Europe.—Flight Of The Goths.—They Pass The Danube.—Gothic War.—Defeat And Death Of Valens.—Gratian Invests Theodosius With The Eastern Empire.—His Character And Success.—Peace And Settlement Of The Goths.

In the second year of the reign of Valentinian and Valens, on the morning of the twenty-first day of July, the greatest part of the Roman world was shaken by a violent and destructive earthquake. The impression was communicated to the waters; the shores of the Mediterranean were left dry, by the sudden retreat of the sea; great quantities of fish were caught with the hand; large vessels were stranded on the mud; and a curious spectator [1](#) amused his eye, or rather his fancy, by contemplating the various appearance of valleys and mountains, which had never, since the formation of the globe, been exposed to the sun. But the tide soon returned, with the weight of an immense and irresistible deluge, which was severely felt on the coasts of Sicily, of Dalmatia, of Greece, and of Egypt: large boats were transported, and lodged on the roofs of houses, or at the distance of two miles from the shore; the people, with their habitations, were swept away by the waters; and the city of Alexandria annually commemorated the fatal day, on which fifty thousand persons had lost their lives in the inundation. This calamity, the report of which was magnified from one province to another, astonished and terrified the subjects of Rome; and their affrighted imagination enlarged the real extent of a momentary evil. They recollected the preceding earthquakes, which had subverted the cities of Palestine and Bithynia: they considered these alarming strokes as the prelude only of still more dreadful calamities, and their fearful vanity was disposed to confound the symptoms of a declining empire and a sinking world. [2](#) It was

the fashion of the times to attribute every remarkable event to the particular will of the Deity; the alterations of nature were connected, by an invisible chain, with the moral and metaphysical opinions of the human mind; and the most sagacious divines could distinguish, according to the color of their respective prejudices, that the establishment of heresy tended to produce an earthquake; or that a deluge was the inevitable consequence of the progress of sin and error. Without presuming to discuss the truth or propriety of these lofty speculations, the historian may content himself with an observation, which seems to be justified by experience, that man has much more to fear from the passions of his fellow-creatures, than from the convulsions of the elements. [3](#) The mischievous effects of an earthquake, or deluge, a hurricane, or the eruption of a volcano, bear a very inconsiderable portion to the ordinary calamities of war, as they are now moderated by the prudence or humanity of the princes of Europe, who amuse their own leisure, and exercise the courage of their subjects, in the practice of the military art. But the laws and manners of modern nations protect the safety and freedom of the vanquished soldier; and the peaceful citizen has seldom reason to complain, that his life, or even his fortune, is exposed to the rage of war. In the disastrous period of the fall of the Roman empire, which may justly be dated from the reign of Valens, the happiness and security of each individual were personally attacked; and the arts and labors of ages were rudely defaced by the Barbarians of Scythia and Germany. The invasion of the Huns precipitated on the provinces of the West the Gothic nation, which advanced, in less than forty years, from the Danube to the Atlantic, and opened a way, by the success of their arms, to the inroads of so many hostile tribes, more savage than themselves. The original principle of motion was concealed in the remote countries of the North; and the curious observation of the pastoral life of the Scythians, [4](#) or Tartars, [5](#) will illustrate the latent cause of these destructive emigrations.

1 [\(return\)](#)
[Such is the bad taste of Ammianus, (xxvi. 10,) that it is not easy to distinguish his facts from his metaphors. Yet he positively affirms, that he saw the rotten carcass of a ship, *ad decundum lapidem*, at Mothone, or Modon, in Peloponnesus.]

2 [\(return\)](#)
[The earthquakes and inundations are variously described by Libanius, (Orat. de ulciscenda Julianece, c. x., in Fabricius, Bibl. Græc. tom. vii. p. 158, with a learned note of Olearius,) Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 221,) Sozomen, (l. vi. c. 2,) Cedrenus, (p. 310, 314,) and Jerom, (in Chron. p. 186, and tom. i. p. 250, in Vit. Hilarion.) Epidauros must have been overwhelmed, had not the prudent citizens placed St. Hilarion, an Egyptian monk, on the beach. He made the sign of the Cross; the mountain-wave stopped, bowed, and returned.]

- 3 [\(return\)](#)
[Dicæarchus, the Peripatetic, composed a formal treatise, to prove this obvious truth; which is not the most honorable to the human species. (Cicero, de Officiis, ii. 5.)]
- 4 [\(return\)](#)
[The original Scythians of Herodotus (l. iv. c. 47—57, 99—101) were confined, by the Danube and the Palus Mæotis, within a square of 4000 stadia, (400 Roman miles.) See D’Anville (Mém. de l’Académie, tom. xxxv. p. 573—591.) Diodorus Siculus (tom. i. l. ii. p. 155, edit. Wesseling) has marked the gradual progress of the *name* and nation.]
- 5 [\(return\)](#)
[The *Tatars*, or Tartars, were a primitive tribe, the rivals, and at length the subjects, of the Moguls. In the victorious armies of Zingis Khan, and his successors, the Tartars formed the vanguard; and the name, which first reached the ears of foreigners, was applied to the whole nation, (Freret, in the Hist. de l’Académie, tom. xviii. p. 60.) In speaking of all, or any of the northern shepherds of Europe, or Asia, I indifferently use the appellations of *Scythians* or *Tartars*. * Note: The Moguls, (Mongols,) according to M. Klaproth, are a tribe of the Tartar nation. Tableaux Hist. de l’Asie, p. 154.—M.]

The different characters that mark the civilized nations of the globe, may be ascribed to the use, and the abuse, of reason; which so variously shapes, and so artificially composes, the manners and opinions of a European, or a Chinese. But the operation of instinct is more sure and simple than that of reason: it is much easier to ascertain the appetites of a quadruped than the speculations of a philosopher; and the savage tribes of mankind, as they approach nearer to the condition of animals, preserve a stronger resemblance to themselves and to each other. The uniform stability of their manners is the natural consequence of the imperfection of their faculties. Reduced to a similar situation, their wants, their desires, their enjoyments, still continue the same: and the influence of food or climate, which, in a more improved state of society, is suspended, or subdued, by so many moral causes, most powerfully contributes to form, and to maintain, the national character of Barbarians. In every age, the immense plains of Scythia, or Tartary, have been inhabited by vagrant tribes of hunters and shepherds, whose indolence refuses to cultivate the earth, and whose restless spirit disdains the confinement of a sedentary life. In every age, the Scythians, and Tartars, have been renowned for their invincible courage and rapid conquests. The thrones of Asia have been repeatedly overturned by the shepherds of the North; and their arms have spread terror and devastation over the most fertile and warlike countries of Europe. [6](#) On this

occasion, as well as on many others, the sober historian is forcibly awakened from a pleasing vision; and is compelled, with some reluctance, to confess, that the pastoral manners, which have been adorned with the fairest attributes of peace and innocence, are much better adapted to the fierce and cruel habits of a military life. To illustrate this observation, I shall now proceed to consider a nation of shepherds and of warriors, in the three important articles of, I. Their diet; II. Their habitations; and, III. Their exercises. The narratives of antiquity are justified by the experience of modern times; [7](#) and the banks of the Borysthenes, of the Volga, or of the Selinga, will indifferently present the same uniform spectacle of similar and native manners. [8](#)

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Imperium Asiæ *ter* quæsivere: ipsi perpetuo ab alieno imperio, aut intacti aut invicti, mansere. Since the time of Justin, (ii. 2,) they have multiplied this account. Voltaire, in a few words, (tom. x. p. 64, Hist. Generale, c. 156,) has abridged the Tartar conquests.

Oft o'er the trembling nations from afar,
Has Scythia breathed the living cloud of war.
Note *: Gray.—M.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[The fourth book of Herodotus affords a curious though imperfect, portrait of the Scythians. Among the moderns, who describe the uniform scene, the Khan of Khowaresm, Abulghazi Bahadur, expresses his native feelings; and his genealogical history of the Tartars has been copiously illustrated by the French and English editors. Carpin, Ascelin, and Rubruquis (in the Hist. des Voyages, tom. vii.) represent the Moguls of the fourteenth century. To these guides I have added Gerbillon, and the other Jesuits, (Description de la China par du Halde, tom. iv.,) who accurately surveyed the Chinese Tartary; and that honest and intelligent traveller, Bell, of Antermoney, (two volumes in 4to. Glasgow, 1763.)
* Note: Of the various works published since the time of Gibbon, which throw light on the nomadic population of Central Asia, may be particularly remarked the Travels and Dissertations of Pallas; and above all, the very curious work of Bergman, Nomadische Streifereyen. Riga, 1805.—M.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[The Uzbecks are the most altered from their primitive manners; 1. By the profession of the Mahometan religion; and 2. By the possession of the cities and harvests of the great Bucharía.]

I. The corn, or even the rice, which constitutes the ordinary and wholesome food of a civilized people, can be obtained only by the patient toil of the husbandman. Some of the happy savages, who dwell between the tropics, are plentifully nourished by the liberality of nature; but in the climates of the North, a nation of shepherds is reduced to their flocks and herds. The skilful practitioners of the medical art will determine (if they are able to determine) how far the temper of the human mind may be affected by the use of animal, or of vegetable, food; and whether the common association of carniverous and cruel deserves to be considered in any other light than that of an innocent, perhaps a salutary, prejudice of humanity. [9](#) Yet, if it be true, that the sentiment of compassion is imperceptibly weakened by the sight and practice of domestic cruelty, we may observe, that the horrid objects which are disguised by the arts of European refinement, are exhibited in their naked and most disgusting simplicity in the tent of a Tartarian shepherd. The ox, or the sheep, are slaughtered by the same hand from which they were accustomed to receive their daily food; and the bleeding limbs are served, with very little preparation, on the table of their unfeeling murderer. In the military profession, and especially in the conduct of a numerous army, the exclusive use of animal food appears to be productive of the most solid advantages. Corn is a bulky and perishable commodity; and the large magazines, which are indispensably necessary for the subsistence of our troops, must be slowly transported by the labor of men or horses. But the flocks and herds, which accompany the march of the Tartars, afford a sure and increasing supply of flesh and milk: in the far greater part of the uncultivated waste, the vegetation of the grass is quick and luxuriant; and there are few places so extremely barren, that the hardy cattle of the North cannot find some tolerable pasture.

The supply is multiplied and prolonged by the undistinguishing appetite, and patient abstinence, of the Tartars. They indifferently feed on the flesh of those animals that have been killed for the table, or have died of disease. Horseflesh, which in every age and country has been proscribed by the civilized nations of Europe and Asia, they devour with peculiar greediness; and this singular taste facilitates the success of their military operations. The active cavalry of Scythia is always followed, in their most distant and rapid incursions, by an adequate number of spare horses, who may be occasionally used, either to redouble the speed, or to satisfy the hunger, of the Barbarians. Many are the resources of courage and poverty. When the forage round a camp of Tartars is almost consumed, they slaughter the greatest part of their cattle, and preserve the flesh, either smoked, or dried in the sun. On the sudden emergency of a hasty march, they provide themselves with a sufficient quantity of little balls of cheese, or rather of hard curd, which they occasionally dissolve in water; and this unsubstantial diet will support, for many days, the life, and even the spirits, of the patient warrior. But this extraordinary abstinence, which the Stoic would approve, and the hermit might envy, is commonly succeeded by the most voracious indulgence of appetite. The wines of a happier climate are the most grateful present, or the most valuable commodity, that

can be offered to the Tartars; and the only example of their industry seems to consist in the art of extracting from mare's milk a fermented liquor, which possesses a very strong power of intoxication. Like the animals of prey, the savages, both of the old and new world, experience the alternate vicissitudes of famine and plenty; and their stomach is inured to sustain, without much inconvenience, the opposite extremes of hunger and of intemperance.

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Il est certain que les grands mangeurs de viande sont en général cruels et féroces plus que les autres hommes. Cette observation est de tous les lieux, et de tous les temps: la barbarie Angloise est connue, &c. Emile de Rousseau, tom. i. p. 274. Whatever we may think of the general observation, *we* shall not easily allow the truth of his example. The good-natured complaints of Plutarch, and the pathetic lamentations of Ovid, seduce our reason, by exciting our sensibility.]

II. In the ages of rustic and martial simplicity, a people of soldiers and husbandmen are dispersed over the face of an extensive and cultivated country; and some time must elapse before the warlike youth of Greece or Italy could be assembled under the same standard, either to defend their own confines, or to invade the territories of the adjacent tribes. The progress of manufactures and commerce insensibly collects a large multitude within the walls of a city: but these citizens are no longer soldiers; and the arts which adorn and improve the state of civil society, corrupt the habits of the military life. The pastoral manners of the Scythians seem to unite the different advantages of simplicity and refinement. The individuals of the same tribe are constantly assembled, but they are assembled in a camp; and the native spirit of these dauntless shepherds is animated by mutual support and emulation. The houses of the Tartars are no more than small tents, of an oval form, which afford a cold and dirty habitation, for the promiscuous youth of both sexes. The palaces of the rich consist of wooden huts, of such a size that they may be conveniently fixed on large wagons, and drawn by a team perhaps of twenty or thirty oxen. The flocks and herds, after grazing all day in the adjacent pastures, retire, on the approach of night, within the protection of the camp. The necessity of preventing the most mischievous confusion, in such a perpetual concourse of men and animals, must gradually introduce, in the distribution, the order, and the guard, of the encampment, the rudiments of the military art. As soon as the forage of a certain district is consumed, the tribe, or rather army, of shepherds, makes a regular march to some fresh pastures; and thus acquires, in the ordinary occupations of the pastoral life, the practical knowledge of one of the most important and difficult operations of war. The choice of stations is regulated by the difference of the seasons: in the summer, the Tartars advance towards the North, and pitch their tents on the banks of a river, or, at least, in the neighborhood of a running stream. But in the winter, they return to the South, and shelter their camp, behind some convenient eminence, against

the winds, which are chilled in their passage over the bleak and icy regions of Siberia. These manners are admirably adapted to diffuse, among the wandering tribes, the spirit of emigration and conquest. The connection between the people and their territory is of so frail a texture, that it may be broken by the slightest accident. The camp, and not the soil, is the native country of the genuine Tartar. Within the precincts of that camp, his family, his companions, his property, are always included; and, in the most distant marches, he is still surrounded by the objects which are dear, or valuable, or familiar in his eyes. The thirst of rapine, the fear, or the resentment of injury, the impatience of servitude, have, in every age, been sufficient causes to urge the tribes of Scythia boldly to advance into some unknown countries, where they might hope to find a more plentiful subsistence or a less formidable enemy. The revolutions of the North have frequently determined the fate of the South; and in the conflict of hostile nations, the victor and the vanquished have alternately drove, and been driven, from the confines of China to those of Germany. [10](#) These great emigrations, which have been sometimes executed with almost incredible diligence, were rendered more easy by the peculiar nature of the climate. It is well known that the cold of Tartary is much more severe than in the midst of the temperate zone might reasonably be expected; this uncommon rigor is attributed to the height of the plains, which rise, especially towards the East, more than half a mile above the level of the sea; and to the quantity of saltpetre with which the soil is deeply impregnated. [11](#) In the winter season, the broad and rapid rivers, that discharge their waters into the Euxine, the Caspian, or the Icy Sea, are strongly frozen; the fields are covered with a bed of snow; and the fugitive, or victorious, tribes may securely traverse, with their families, their wagons, and their cattle, the smooth and hard surface of an immense plain.

10

[\(return\)](#)

[These Tartar emigrations have been discovered by M. de Guignes (*Histoire des Huns*, tom. i. ii.) a skilful and laborious interpreter of the Chinese language; who has thus laid open new and important scenes in the history of mankind.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[A plain in the Chinese Tartary, only eighty leagues from the great wall, was found by the missionaries to be three thousand geometrical paces above the level of the sea. Montesquieu, who has used, and abused, the relations of travellers, deduces the revolutions of Asia from this important circumstance, that heat and cold, weakness and strength, touch each other without any temperate zone, (*Esprit des Loix*, l. xvii. c. 3.)]

III. The pastoral life, compared with the labors of agriculture and manufactures, is undoubtedly a life of idleness; and as the most honorable shepherds of the Tartar race devolve on their captives the domestic management of the cattle, their own leisure is seldom disturbed by any servile and assiduous cares. But this leisure, instead of being

devoted to the soft enjoyments of love and harmony, is usefully spent in the violent and sanguinary exercise of the chase. The plains of Tartary are filled with a strong and serviceable breed of horses, which are easily trained for the purposes of war and hunting. The Scythians of every age have been celebrated as bold and skilful riders; and constant practice had seated them so firmly on horseback, that they were supposed by strangers to perform the ordinary duties of civil life, to eat, to drink, and even to sleep, without dismounting from their steeds. They excel in the dexterous management of the lance; the long Tartar bow is drawn with a nervous arm; and the weighty arrow is directed to its object with unerring aim and irresistible force. These arrows are often pointed against the harmless animals of the desert, which increase and multiply in the absence of their most formidable enemy; the hare, the goat, the roebuck, the fallow-deer, the stag, the elk, and the antelope. The vigor and patience, both of the men and horses, are continually exercised by the fatigues of the chase; and the plentiful supply of game contributes to the subsistence, and even luxury, of a Tartar camp. But the exploits of the hunters of Scythia are not confined to the destruction of timid or innoxious beasts; they boldly encounter the angry wild boar, when he turns against his pursuers, excite the sluggish courage of the bear, and provoke the fury of the tiger, as he slumbers in the thicket. Where there is danger, there may be glory; and the mode of hunting, which opens the fairest field to the exertions of valor, may justly be considered as the image, and as the school, of war. The general hunting matches, the pride and delight of the Tartar princes, compose an instructive exercise for their numerous cavalry. A circle is drawn, of many miles in circumference, to encompass the game of an extensive district; and the troops that form the circle regularly advance towards a common centre; where the captive animals, surrounded on every side, are abandoned to the darts of the hunters. In this march, which frequently continues many days, the cavalry are obliged to climb the hills, to swim the rivers, and to wind through the valleys, without interrupting the prescribed order of their gradual progress. They acquire the habit of directing their eye, and their steps, to a remote object; of preserving their intervals of suspending or accelerating their pace, according to the motions of the troops on their right and left; and of watching and repeating the signals of their leaders. Their leaders study, in this practical school, the most important lesson of the military art; the prompt and accurate judgment of ground, of distance, and of time. To employ against a human enemy the same patience and valor, the same skill and discipline, is the only alteration which is required in real war; and the amusements of the chase serve as a prelude to the conquest of an empire. [12](#)

[Petit de la Croix (Vie de Gengiscan, l. iii. c. 6) represents the full glory and extent of the Mogul chase. The Jesuits Gerbillon and Verbiest followed the emperor Khamhi when he hunted in Tartary, (Duhalde, Description de la Chine, tom. iv. p. 81, 290, &c., folio edit.) His grandson, Kienlong, who unites the Tartar discipline with the laws and

learning of China, describes (Eloge de Moukden, p. 273—285) as a poet the pleasures which he had often enjoyed as a sportsman.]

The political society of the ancient Germans has the appearance of a voluntary alliance of independent warriors. The tribes of Scythia, distinguished by the modern appellation of *Hords*, assume the form of a numerous and increasing family; which, in the course of successive generations, has been propagated from the same original stock. The meanest, and most ignorant, of the Tartars, preserve, with conscious pride, the inestimable treasure of their genealogy; and whatever distinctions of rank may have been introduced, by the unequal distribution of pastoral wealth, they mutually respect themselves, and each other, as the descendants of the first founder of the tribe. The custom, which still prevails, of adopting the bravest and most faithful of the captives, may countenance the very probable suspicion, that this extensive consanguinity is, in a great measure, legal and fictitious. But the useful prejudice, which has obtained the sanction of time and opinion, produces the effects of truth; the haughty Barbarians yield a cheerful and voluntary obedience to the head of their blood; and their chief, or *mursa*, as the representative of their great father, exercises the authority of a judge in peace, and of a leader in war. In the original state of the pastoral world, each of the *mursas* (if we may continue to use a modern appellation) acted as the independent chief of a large and separate family; and the limits of their peculiar territories were gradually fixed by superior force, or mutual consent. But the constant operation of various and permanent causes contributed to unite the vagrant Hords into national communities, under the command of a supreme head. The weak were desirous of support, and the strong were ambitious of dominion; the power, which is the result of union, oppressed and collected the divided force of the adjacent tribes; and, as the vanquished were freely admitted to share the advantages of victory, the most valiant chiefs hastened to range themselves and their followers under the formidable standard of a confederate nation. The most successful of the Tartar princes assumed the military command, to which he was entitled by the superiority, either of merit or of power. He was raised to the throne by the acclamations of his equals; and the title of *Khan* expresses, in the language of the North of Asia, the full extent of the regal dignity. The right of hereditary succession was long confined to the blood of the founder of the monarchy; and at this moment all the Khans, who reign from Crimea to the wall of China, are the lineal descendants of the renowned Zingis. [13](#) But, as it is the indispensable duty of a Tartar sovereign to lead his warlike subjects into the field, the claims of an infant are often disregarded; and some royal kinsman, distinguished by his age and valor, is intrusted with the sword and sceptre of his predecessor. Two distinct and regular taxes are levied on the tribes, to support the dignity of the national monarch, and of their peculiar chief; and each of those contributions amounts to the tithe, both of their property, and of their spoil. A Tartar sovereign enjoys the tenth part of the wealth of his people; and as his own domestic riches of flocks and herds increase in a much larger proportion, he is able plentifully to maintain the rustic splendor of his court, to reward the most deserving, or

the most favored of his followers, and to obtain, from the gentle influence of corruption, the obedience which might be sometimes refused to the stern mandates of authority. The manners of his subjects, accustomed, like himself, to blood and rapine, might excuse, in their eyes, such partial acts of tyranny, as would excite the horror of a civilized people; but the power of a despot has never been acknowledged in the deserts of Scythia. The immediate jurisdiction of the khan is confined within the limits of his own tribe; and the exercise of his royal prerogative has been moderated by the ancient institution of a national council. The Coroulai, [14](#) or Diet, of the Tartars, was regularly held in the spring and autumn, in the midst of a plain; where the princes of the reigning family, and the mursas of the respective tribes, may conveniently assemble on horseback, with their martial and numerous trains; and the ambitious monarch, who reviewed the strength, must consult the inclination of an armed people. The rudiments of a feudal government may be discovered in the constitution of the Scythian or Tartar nations; but the perpetual conflict of those hostile nations has sometimes terminated in the establishment of a powerful and despotic empire. The victor, enriched by the tribute, and fortified by the arms of dependent kings, has spread his conquests over Europe or Asia: the successful shepherds of the North have submitted to the confinement of arts, of laws, and of cities; and the introduction of luxury, after destroying the freedom of the people, has undermined the foundations of the throne. [15](#)

13

[\(return\)](#)

[See the second volume of the Genealogical History of the Tartars; and the list of the Khans, at the end of the life of Geng's, or Zingis. Under the reign of Timur, or Tamerlane, one of his subjects, a descendant of Zingis, still bore the regal appellation of Khan and the conqueror of Asia contented himself with the title of Emir or Sultan. Abulghazi, part v. c. 4. D'Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale, p. 878.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Diets of the ancient Huns, (De Guignes, tom. ii. p. 26,) and a curious description of those of Zingis, (Vie de Gengiscan, l. i. c. 6, l. iv. c. 11.) Such assemblies are frequently mentioned in the Persian history of Timur; though they served only to countenance the resolutions of their master.]

15

[\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu labors to explain a difference, which has not existed, between the liberty of the Arabs, and the *perpetual* slavery of the Tartars. (Esprit des Loix, l. xvii. c. 5, l. xviii. c. 19, &c.)]

The memory of past events cannot long be preserved in the frequent and remote emigrations of illiterate Barbarians. The modern Tartars are ignorant of the conquests of their ancestors; [16](#) and our knowledge of the history of the Scythians is derived from their intercourse with the learned and civilized nations of the South, the Greeks, the

Persians, and the Chinese. The Greeks, who navigated the Euxine, and planted their colonies along the sea-coast, made the gradual and imperfect discovery of Scythia; from the Danube, and the confines of Thrace, as far as the frozen Mæotis, the seat of eternal winter, and Mount Caucasus, which, in the language of poetry, was described as the utmost boundary of the earth. They celebrated, with simple credulity, the virtues of the pastoral life: [17](#) they entertained a more rational apprehension of the strength and numbers of the warlike Barbarians, [18](#) who contemptuously baffled the immense armament of Darius, the son of Hystaspes. [19](#) The Persian monarchs had extended their western conquests to the banks of the Danube, and the limits of European Scythia. The eastern provinces of their empire were exposed to the Scythians of Asia; the wild inhabitants of the plains beyond the Oxus and the Jaxartes, two mighty rivers, which direct their course towards the Caspian Sea. The long and memorable quarrel of Iran and Touran is still the theme of history or romance: the famous, perhaps the fabulous, valor of the Persian heroes, Rustan and Asfendiar, was signalized, in the defence of their country, against the Afrasiabs of the North; [20](#) and the invincible spirit of the same Barbarians resisted, on the same ground, the victorious arms of Cyrus and Alexander. [21](#) In the eyes of the Greeks and Persians, the real geography of Scythia was bounded, on the East, by the mountains of Imaus, or Caf; and their distant prospect of the extreme and inaccessible parts of Asia was clouded by ignorance, or perplexed by fiction. But those inaccessible regions are the ancient residence of a powerful and civilized nation, [22](#) which ascends, by a probable tradition, above forty centuries; [23](#) and which is able to verify a series of near two thousand years, by the perpetual testimony of accurate and contemporary historians. [24](#) The annals of China [25](#) illustrate the state and revolutions of the pastoral tribes, which may still be distinguished by the vague appellation of Scythians, or Tartars; the vassals, the enemies, and sometimes the conquerors, of a great empire; whose policy has uniformly opposed the blind and impetuous valor of the Barbarians of the North. From the mouth of the Danube to the Sea of Japan, the whole longitude of Scythia is about one hundred and ten degrees, which, in that parallel, are equal to more than five thousand miles. The latitude of these extensive deserts cannot be so easily, or so accurately, measured; but, from the fortieth degree, which touches the wall of China, we may securely advance above a thousand miles to the northward, till our progress is stopped by the excessive cold of Siberia. In that dreary climate, instead of the animated picture of a Tartar camp, the smoke that issues from the earth, or rather from the snow, betrays the subterraneous dwellings of the Tongouses, and the Samoides: the want of horses and oxen is imperfectly supplied by the use of reindeer, and of large dogs; and the conquerors of the earth insensibly degenerate into a race of deformed and diminutive savages, who tremble at the sound of arms. [26](#)

times which preceded the reign of Zingis. * Note: The differences between the various pastoral tribes and nations comprehended by the ancients under the vague name of Scythians, and by Gibbon under inst of Tartars, have received some, and still, perhaps, may receive more, light from the comparisons of their dialects and languages by modern scholars.—M]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[In the thirteenth book of the Iliad, Jupiter turns away his eyes from the bloody fields of Troy, to the plains of Thrace and Scythia. He would not, by changing the prospect, behold a more peaceful or innocent scene.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Thucydides, l. ii. c. 97.]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[See the fourth book of Herodotus. When Darius advanced into the Moldavian desert, between the Danube and the Niester, the king of the Scythians sent him a mouse, a frog, a bird, and five arrows; a tremendous allegory!]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[These wars and heroes may be found under their respective *titles*, in the Bibliothèque Orientale of D’Herbelot. They have been celebrated in an epic poem of sixty thousand rhymed couplets, by Ferdusi, the Homer of Persia. See the history of Nadir Shah, p. 145, 165. The public must lament that Mr. Jones has suspended the pursuit of Oriental learning. Note: Ferdusi is yet imperfectly known to European readers. An abstract of the whole poem has been published by Goerres in German, under the title “das Heldenbuch des Iran.” In English, an abstract with poetical translations, by Mr. Atkinson, has appeared, under the auspices of the Oriental Fund. But to translate a poet a man must be a poet. The best account of the poem is in an article by Von Hammer in the Vienna Jahrbucher, 1820: or perhaps in a masterly article in Cochrane’s Foreign Quarterly Review, No. 1, 1835. A splendid and critical edition of the whole work has been published by a very learned English Orientalist, Captain Macan, at the expense of the king of Oude. As to the number of 60,000 couplets, Captain Macan (Preface, p. 39) states that he never saw a MS. containing more than 56,685, including doubtful and spurious passages and episodes.—M.

* Note: The later studies of Sir W. Jones were more

in unison with the wishes of the public, thus expressed by Gibbon.—M.]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[The Caspian Sea, with its rivers and adjacent tribes, are laboriously illustrated in the *Examen Critique des Historiens d’Alexandre*, which compares the true geography, and the errors produced by the vanity or ignorance of the Greeks.]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[The original seat of the nation appears to have been in the Northwest of China, in the provinces of Chensi and Chansi. Under the two first dynasties, the principal town was still a movable camp; the villages were thinly scattered; more land was employed in pasture than in tillage; the exercise of hunting was ordained to clear the country from wild beasts; Petcheli (where Pekin stands) was a desert, and the Southern provinces were peopled with Indian savages. The dynasty of the *Han* (before Christ 206) gave the empire its actual form and extent.]

23 [\(return\)](#)

[The æra of the Chinese monarchy has been variously fixed from 2952 to 2132 years before Christ; and the year 2637 has been chosen for the lawful epoch, by the authority of the present emperor. The difference arises from the uncertain duration of the two first dynasties; and the vacant space that lies beyond them, as far as the real, or fabulous, times of Fohi, or Hoangti. Sematsien dates his authentic chronology from the year 841; the thirty-six eclipses of Confucius (thirty-one of which have been verified) were observed between the years 722 and 480 before Christ. The *historical* period of China does not ascend above the Greek Olympiads.]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[After several ages of anarchy and despotism, the dynasty of the Han (before Christ 206) was the æra of the revival of learning. The fragments of ancient literature were restored; the characters were improved and fixed; and the future preservation of books was secured by the useful inventions of ink, paper, and the art of printing. Ninety-seven years before Christ, Sematsien published the first history of China. His labors were illustrated, and continued, by a series of one hundred and eighty historians. The substance of their works is still extant; and the most considerable of them are now deposited in the king of France’s library.]

[China has been illustrated by the labors of the French; of the missionaries at Peking, and Messrs. Freret and De Guignes at Paris. The substance of the three preceding notes is extracted from the Chou-king, with the preface and notes of M. de Guignes, Paris, 1770. The *Tong-Kien-Kang-Mou*, translated by P. de Mailla, under the name of Hist. Générale de la Chine, tom. i. p. xlix.—cc.; the Mémoires sur la Chine, Paris, 1776, &c., tom. i. p. 1—323; tom. ii. p. 5—364; the Histoire des Huns, tom. i. p. 4—131, tom. v. p. 345—362; and the Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. x. p. 377—402; tom. xv. p. 495—564; tom. xviii. p. 178—295; xxxvi. p. 164—238.]

[See the Histoire Generale des Voyages, tom. xviii., and the Genealogical History, vol. ii. p. 620—664.]

Chapter XXVI: Progress of The Huns.—Part II.

The Huns, who under the reign of Valens threatened the empire of Rome, had been formidable, in a much earlier period, to the empire of China. [27](#) Their ancient, perhaps their original, seat was an extensive, though dry and barren, tract of country, immediately on the north side of the great wall. Their place is at present occupied by the forty-nine Hords or Banners of the Mongous, a pastoral nation, which consists of about two hundred thousand families. [28](#) But the valor of the Huns had extended the narrow limits of their dominions; and their rustic chiefs, who assumed the appellation of *Tanjou*, gradually became the conquerors, and the sovereigns of a formidable empire. Towards the East, their victorious arms were stopped only by the ocean; and the tribes, which are thinly scattered between the Amoor and the extreme peninsula of Corea, adhered, with reluctance, to the standard of the Huns. On the West, near the head of the Irtysh, in the valleys of Imaus, they found a more ample space, and more numerous enemies. One of the lieutenants of the Tanjou subdued, in a single expedition, twenty-six nations; the Igours, [29](#) distinguished above the Tartar race by the use of letters, were in the number of his vassals; and, by the strange connection of human events, the flight of one of those vagrant tribes recalled the victorious Parthians from the invasion of Syria. [30](#) On the side of the North, the ocean was assigned as the limit of the power of the Huns. Without enemies to resist their progress, or witnesses to contradict their vanity, they might securely achieve a real, or imaginary, conquest of the frozen regions of Siberia. The *Northern Sea* was fixed as the remote boundary of their empire. But the name of that sea, on whose shores the patriot Sovou embraced the life of a shepherd and an exile, [31](#) may be transferred, with much more probability, to the Baikal, a

capacious basin, above three hundred miles in length, which disdains the modest appellation of a lake [32](#) and which actually communicates with the seas of the North, by the long course of the Angara, the Tongusha, and the Jenissea. The submission of so many distant nations might flatter the pride of the Tanjou; but the valor of the Huns could be rewarded only by the enjoyment of the wealth and luxury of the empire of the South. In the third century [3211](#) before the Christian æra, a wall of fifteen hundred miles in length was constructed, to defend the frontiers of China against the inroads of the Huns; [33](#) but this stupendous work, which holds a conspicuous place in the map of the world, has never contributed to the safety of an unwarlike people. The cavalry of the Tanjou frequently consisted of two or three hundred thousand men, formidable by the matchless dexterity with which they managed their bows and their horses: by their hardy patience in supporting the inclemency of the weather; and by the incredible speed of their march, which was seldom checked by torrents, or precipices, by the deepest rivers, or by the most lofty mountains. They spread themselves at once over the face of the country; and their rapid impetuosity surprised, astonished, and disconcerted the grave and elaborate tactics of a Chinese army. The emperor Kaoti, [34](#) a soldier of fortune, whose personal merit had raised him to the throne, marched against the Huns with those veteran troops which had been trained in the civil wars of China. But he was soon surrounded by the Barbarians; and, after a siege of seven days, the monarch, hopeless of relief, was reduced to purchase his deliverance by an ignominious capitulation. The successors of Kaoti, whose lives were dedicated to the arts of peace, or the luxury of the palace, submitted to a more permanent disgrace. They too hastily confessed the insufficiency of arms and fortifications. They were too easily convinced, that while the blazing signals announced on every side the approach of the Huns, the Chinese troops, who slept with the helmet on their head, and the cuirass on their back, were destroyed by the incessant labor of ineffectual marches. [35](#) A regular payment of money, and silk, was stipulated as the condition of a temporary and precarious peace; and the wretched expedient of disguising a real tribute, under the names of a gift or subsidy, was practised by the emperors of China as well as by those of Rome. But there still remained a more disgraceful article of tribute, which violated the sacred feelings of humanity and nature. The hardships of the savage life, which destroy in their infancy the children who are born with a less healthy and robust constitution, introduced a remarkable disproportion between the numbers of the two sexes. The Tartars are an ugly and even deformed race; and while they consider their own women as the instruments of domestic labor, their desires, or rather their appetites, are directed to the enjoyment of more elegant beauty. A select band of the fairest maidens of China was annually devoted to the rude embraces of the Huns; [36](#) and the alliance of the haughty Tanjous was secured by their marriage with the genuine, or adopted, daughters of the Imperial family, which vainly attempted to escape the sacrilegious pollution. The situation of these unhappy victims is described in the verses of a Chinese princess, who laments that she had been condemned by her parents to a distant exile, under a Barbarian husband; who complains that sour milk was

her only drink, raw flesh her only food, a tent her only palace; and who expresses, in a strain of pathetic simplicity, the natural wish, that she were transformed into a bird, to fly back to her dear country; the object of her tender and perpetual regret. [37](#)

27

[\(return\)](#)

[M. de Guignes (tom. ii. p. 1—124) has given the original history of the ancient Hiong-nou, or Huns. The Chinese geography of their country (tom. i. part. p. lv.—lxiii.) seems to comprise a part of their conquests. * Note: The theory of De Guignes on the early history of the Huns is, in general, rejected by modern writers. De Guignes advanced no valid proof of the identity of the Hioung-nou of the Chinese writers with the Huns, except the similarity of name. Schlozer, (Allgemeine Nordische Geschichte, p. 252,) Klaproth, (Tableaux Historiques de l'Asie, p. 246,) St. Martin, iv. 61, and A. Remusat, (Recherches sur les Langues Tartares, D. P. xlv, and p. 328; though in the latter passage he considers the theory of De Guignes not absolutely disproved,) concur in considering the Huns as belonging to the Finnish stock, distinct from the Moguls the Mandscheus, and the Turks. The Hiong-nou, according to Klaproth, were Turks. The names of the Hunnish chiefs could not be pronounced by a Turk; and, according to the same author, the Hioung-nou, which is explained in Chinese as *detestable slaves*, as early as the year 91 J. C., were dispersed by the Chinese, and assumed the name of Yue-po or Yue-pan. M. St. Martin does not consider it impossible that the appellation of Hioung-nou may have belonged to the Huns. But all agree in considering the Madjar or Magyar of modern Hungary the descendants of the Huns. Their language (compare Gibbon, c. lv. n. 22) is nearly related to the Lapponian and Vogoul. The noble forms of the modern Hungarians, so strongly contrasted with the hideous pictures which the fears and the hatred of the Romans give of the Huns, M. Klaproth accounts for by the intermingling with other races, Turkish and Slavonian. The present state of the question is thus stated in the last edition of Malte Brun, and a new and ingenious hypothesis suggested to resolve all the difficulties of the question.

Were the Huns Finns? This obscure question has not been debated till very recently, and is yet very far from being decided. We are of opinion that it will be so hereafter in the same manner as that with regard to the Scythians. We shall trace in the portrait of Attila a dominant tribe or Mongols, or

Kalmucks, with all the hereditary ugliness of that race; but in the mass of the Hunnish army and nation will be recognized the Chuni and the Ounni of the Greek Geography. the Kuns of the Hungarians, the European Huns, and a race in close relationship with the Flemish stock. Malte Brun, vi. p. 94. This theory is more fully and ably developed, p. 743. Whoever has seen the emperor of Austria's Hungarian guard, will not readily admit their descent from the Huns described by Sidonius Appolinaris.—M]

28 [\(return\)](#)

[See in Duhalde (tom. iv. p. 18—65) a circumstantial description, with a correct map, of the country of the Mongous.]

29 [\(return\)](#)

[The Igours, or Vigours, were divided into three branches; hunters, shepherds, and husbandmen; and the last class was despised by the two former. See Abulghazi, part ii. c. 7. * Note: On the Ouigour or Igour characters, see the work of M. A. Remusat, Sur les Langues Tartares. He conceives the Ouigour alphabet of sixteen letters to have been formed from the Syriac, and introduced by the Nestorian Christians.—Ch. ii. M.]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. xxv. p. 17—33. The comprehensive view of M. de Guignes has compared these distant events.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[The fame of Sovou, or So-ou, his merit, and his singular adventurers, are still celebrated in China. See the Eloge de Moukden, p. 20, and notes, p. 241—247; and Mémoires sur la Chine, tom. iii. p. 317—360.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[See Isbrand Ives in Harris's Collection, vol. ii. p. 931; Bell's Travels, vol. i. p. 247—254; and Gmelin, in the Hist. Generale des Voyages, tom. xviii. 283—329. They all remark the vulgar opinion that the *holy sea* grows angry and tempestuous if any one presumes to call it a *lake*. This grammatical nicety often excites a dispute between the absurd superstition of the mariners and the absurd obstinacy of travellers.]

3211 [\(return\)](#)

[224 years before Christ. It was built by Chi-hoang-ti of the Dynasty Thsin. It is from twenty to twenty-five feet high. Ce monument, aussi gigantesque

qu'impuissant, arreterait bien les incursions de quelques Nomades; mais il n'a jamais empêché les invasions des Turcs, des Mongols, et des Mandchous. Abe Remusat Rech. Asiat. 2d ser. vol. i. p. 58—M.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[The construction of the wall of China is mentioned by Duhalde (tom. ii. p. 45) and De Guignes, (tom. ii. p. 59.)]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[See the life of Lieoupang, or Kaoti, in the Hist, de la Chine, published at Paris, 1777, &c., tom. i. p. 442—522. This voluminous work is the translation (by the P. de Mailla) of the *Tong- Kien-Kang-Mou*, the celebrated abridgment of the great History of Semakouang (A.D. 1084) and his continuators.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[See a free and ample memorial, presented by a Mandarin to the emperor Venti, (before Christ 180—157,) in Duhalde, (tom. ii. p. 412—426,) from a collection of State papers marked with the red pencil by Kamhi himself, (p. 354—612.) Another memorial from the minister of war (Kang-Mou, tom. ii. p. 555) supplies some curious circumstances of the manners of the Huns.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[A supply of women is mentioned as a customary article of treaty and tribute, (Hist. de la Conquete de la Chine, par les Tartares Mantcheoux, tom. i. p. 186, 187, with the note of the editor.)]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[De Guignes, Hist. des Huns, tom. ii. p. 62.]

The conquest of China has been twice achieved by the pastoral tribes of the North: the forces of the Huns were not inferior to those of the Moguls, or of the Mantcheoux; and their ambition might entertain the most sanguine hopes of success. But their pride was humbled, and their progress was checked, by the arms and policy of Vouti, [38](#) the fifth emperor of the powerful dynasty of the Han. In his long reign of fifty- four years, the Barbarians of the southern provinces submitted to the laws and manners of China; and the ancient limits of the monarchy were enlarged, from the great river of Kiang, to the port of Canton. Instead of confining himself to the timid operations of a defensive war, his lieutenants penetrated many hundred miles into the country of the Huns. In those boundless deserts, where it is impossible to form magazines, and difficult to transport a sufficient supply of provisions, the armies of Vouti were repeatedly exposed to intolerable hardships: and, of one hundred and forty thousand soldiers, who marched against the Barbarians, thirty thousand only returned in safety to the feet of their master. These losses, however, were compensated by splendid and decisive success. The

Chinese generals improved the superiority which they derived from the temper of their arms, their chariots of war, and the service of their Tartar auxiliaries. The camp of the Tanjou was surprised in the midst of sleep and intemperance; and, though the monarch of the Huns bravely cut his way through the ranks of the enemy, he left above fifteen thousand of his subjects on the field of battle. Yet this signal victory, which was preceded and followed by many bloody engagements, contributed much less to the destruction of the power of the Huns than the effectual policy which was employed to detach the tributary nations from their obedience. Intimidated by the arms, or allured by the promises, of Vouti and his successors, the most considerable tribes, both of the East and of the West, disclaimed the authority of the Tanjou. While some acknowledged themselves the allies or vassals of the empire, they all became the implacable enemies of the Huns; and the numbers of that haughty people, as soon as they were reduced to their native strength, might, perhaps, have been contained within the walls of one of the great and populous cities of China. [39](#) The desertion of his subjects, and the perplexity of a civil war, at length compelled the Tanjou himself to renounce the dignity of an independent sovereign, and the freedom of a warlike and high-spirited nation. He was received at Sigan, the capital of the monarchy, by the troops, the mandarins, and the emperor himself, with all the honors that could adorn and disguise the triumph of Chinese vanity. [40](#) A magnificent palace was prepared for his reception; his place was assigned above all the princes of the royal family; and the patience of the Barbarian king was exhausted by the ceremonies of a banquet, which consisted of eight courses of meat, and of nine solemn pieces of music. But he performed, on his knees, the duty of a respectful homage to the emperor of China; pronounced, in his own name, and in the name of his successors, a perpetual oath of fidelity; and gratefully accepted a seal, which was bestowed as the emblem of his regal dependence. After this humiliating submission, the Tanjous sometimes departed from their allegiance and seized the favorable moments of war and rapine; but the monarchy of the Huns gradually declined, till it was broken, by civil dissension, into two hostile and separate kingdoms. One of the princes of the nation was urged, by fear and ambition, to retire towards the South with eight hords, which composed between forty and fifty thousand families. He obtained, with the title of Tanjou, a convenient territory on the verge of the Chinese provinces; and his constant attachment to the service of the empire was secured by weakness, and the desire of revenge. From the time of this fatal schism, the Huns of the North continued to languish about fifty years; till they were oppressed on every side by their foreign and domestic enemies. The proud inscription [41](#) of a column, erected on a lofty mountain, announced to posterity, that a Chinese army had marched seven hundred miles into the heart of their country. The Sienpi, [42](#) a tribe of Oriental Tartars, retaliated the injuries which they had formerly sustained; and the power of the Tanjous, after a reign of thirteen hundred years, was utterly destroyed before the end of the first century of the Christian æra. [43](#)

- 38 [\(return\)](#)
[See the reign of the emperor Vouti, in the Kang-Mou, tom. iii. p. 1—98. His various and inconsistent character seems to be impartially drawn.]
- 39 [\(return\)](#)
[This expression is used in the memorial to the emperor Venti, (Duhalde, tom. ii. p. 411.) Without adopting the exaggerations of Marco Polo and Isaac Vossius, we may rationally allow for Pekin two millions of inhabitants. The cities of the South, which contain the manufactures of China, are still more populous.]
- 40 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Kang-Mou, tom. iii. p. 150, and the subsequent events under the proper years. This memorable festival is celebrated in the Eloge de Moukden, and explained in a note by the P. Gaubil, p. 89, 90.]
- 41 [\(return\)](#)
[This inscription was composed on the spot by Parkou, President of the Tribunal of History (Kang-Mou, tom. iii. p. 392.) Similar monuments have been discovered in many parts of Tartary, (Histoire des Huns, tom. ii. p. 122.)]
- 42 [\(return\)](#)
[M. de Guignes (tom. i. p. 189) has inserted a short account of the Sienpi.]
- 43 [\(return\)](#)
[The æra of the Huns is placed, by the Chinese, 1210 years before Christ. But the series of their kings does not commence till the year 230, (Hist. des Huns, tom. ii. p. 21, 123.)]

The fate of the vanquished Huns was diversified by the various influence of character and situation. [44](#) Above one hundred thousand persons, the poorest, indeed, and the most pusillanimous of the people, were contented to remain in their native country, to renounce their peculiar name and origin, and to mingle with the victorious nation of the Sienpi. Fifty-eight hords, about two hundred thousand men, ambitious of a more honorable servitude, retired towards the South; implored the protection of the emperors of China; and were permitted to inhabit, and to guard, the extreme frontiers of the province of Chansi and the territory of Ortous. But the most warlike and powerful tribes of the Huns maintained, in their adverse fortune, the undaunted spirit of their ancestors. The Western world was open to their valor; and they resolved, under the conduct of their hereditary chieftains, to conquer and subdue some remote country, which was still inaccessible to the arms of the Sienpi, and to the laws of China. [45](#) The course of their emigration soon carried them beyond the mountains of Imaus, and the limits of the

Chinese geography; but *we* are able to distinguish the two great divisions of these formidable exiles, which directed their march towards the Oxus, and towards the Volga. The first of these colonies established their dominion in the fruitful and extensive plains of Sogdiana, on the eastern side of the Caspian; where they preserved the name of Huns, with the epithet of Euthalites, or Nepthalites. [4511](#) Their manners were softened, and even their features were insensibly improved, by the mildness of the climate, and their long residence in a flourishing province, [46](#) which might still retain a faint impression of the arts of Greece. [47](#) The *white* Huns, a name which they derived from the change of their complexions, soon abandoned the pastoral life of Scythia. Gorgo, which, under the appellation of Carizme, has since enjoyed a temporary splendor, was the residence of the king, who exercised a legal authority over an obedient people. Their luxury was maintained by the labor of the Sogdians; and the only vestige of their ancient barbarism, was the custom which obliged all the companions, perhaps to the number of twenty, who had shared the liberality of a wealthy lord, to be buried alive in the same grave. [48](#) The vicinity of the Huns to the provinces of Persia, involved them in frequent and bloody contests with the power of that monarchy. But they respected, in peace, the faith of treaties; in war, the dictates of humanity; and their memorable victory over Peroses, or Firuz, displayed the moderation, as well as the valor, of the Barbarians. The *second* division of their countrymen, the Huns, who gradually advanced towards the North-west, were exercised by the hardships of a colder climate, and a more laborious march. Necessity compelled them to exchange the silks of China for the furs of Siberia; the imperfect rudiments of civilized life were obliterated; and the native fierceness of the Huns was exasperated by their intercourse with the savage tribes, who were compared, with some propriety, to the wild beasts of the desert. Their independent spirit soon rejected the hereditary succession of the Tanjous; and while each horde was governed by its peculiar mursa, their tumultuary council directed the public measures of the whole nation. As late as the thirteenth century, their transient residence on the eastern banks of the Volga was attested by the name of Great Hungary. [49](#) In the winter, they descended with their flocks and herds towards the mouth of that mighty river; and their summer excursions reached as high as the latitude of Saratoff, or perhaps the conflux of the Kama. Such at least were the recent limits of the black Calmucks, [50](#) who remained about a century under the protection of Russia; and who have since returned to their native seats on the frontiers of the Chinese empire. The march, and the return, of those wandering Tartars, whose united camp consists of fifty thousand tents or families, illustrate the distant emigrations of the ancient Huns. [51](#)

44

[\(return\)](#)

[The various accidents, the downfall, and the flight of the Huns, are related in the Kang-Mou, tom. iii. p. 88, 91, 95, 139, &c. The small numbers of each horde may be due to their losses and divisions.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[M. de Guignes has skilfully traced the footsteps of

the Huns through the vast deserts of Tartary, (tom. ii. p. 123, 277, &c., 325, &c.)]

4511 [\(return\)](#)

[The Armenian authors often mention this people under the name of Hepthal. St. Martin considers that the name of Nepthalites is an error of a copyist. St. Martin, iv. 254.—M.]

46 [\(return\)](#)

[Mohammed, sultan of Carizme, reigned in Sogdiana when it was invaded (A.D. 1218) by Zingis and his moguls. The Oriental historians (see D'Herbelot, Petit de la Croix, &c.) celebrate the populous cities which he ruined, and the fruitful country which he desolated. In the next century, the same provinces of Chorasmia and Nawaralnahr were described by Abulfeda, (Hudson, Geograph. Minor. tom. iii.) Their actual misery may be seen in the Genealogical History of the Tartars, p. 423—469.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[Justin (xli. 6) has left a short abridgment of the Greek kings of Bactriana. To their industry I should ascribe the new and extraordinary trade, which transported the merchandises of India into Europe, by the Oxus, the Caspian, the Cyrus, the Phasis, and the Euxine. The other ways, both of the land and sea, were possessed by the Seleucides and the Ptolemies. (See l'Esprit des Loix, l. xxi.)]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius de Bell. Persico, l. i. c. 3, p. 9.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[In the thirteenth century, the monk Rubruquis (who traversed the immense plain of Kipzak, in his journey to the court of the Great Khan) observed the remarkable name of *Hungary*, with the traces of a common language and origin, (Hist. des Voyages, tom. vii. p. 269.)]

50 [\(return\)](#)

[Bell, (vol. i. p. 29—34,) and the editors of the Genealogical History, (p. 539,) have described the Calmucks of the Volga in the beginning of the present century.]

51 [\(return\)](#)

[This great transmigration of 300,000 Calmucks, or Torgouts, happened in the year 1771. The original narrative of Kien-long, the reigning emperor of China, which was intended for the inscription of a column, has been translated by the missionaries of Pekin, (Mémoires sur la Chine, tom. i. p. 401—

418.) The emperor affects the smooth and specious language of the Son of Heaven, and the Father of his People.]

It is impossible to fill the dark interval of time, which elapsed, after the Huns of the Volga were lost in the eyes of the Chinese, and before they showed themselves to those of the Romans. There is some reason, however, to apprehend, that the same force which had driven them from their native seats, still continued to impel their march towards the frontiers of Europe. The power of the Sienpi, their implacable enemies, which extended above three thousand miles from East to West, [52](#) must have gradually oppressed them by the weight and terror of a formidable neighborhood; and the flight of the tribes of Scythia would inevitably tend to increase the strength or to contract the territories, of the Huns. The harsh and obscure appellations of those tribes would offend the ear, without informing the understanding, of the reader; but I cannot suppress the very natural suspicion, *that* the Huns of the North derived a considerable reenforcement from the ruin of the dynasty of the South, which, in the course of the third century, submitted to the dominion of China; *that* the bravest warriors marched away in search of their free and adventurous countrymen; *and* that, as they had been divided by prosperity, they were easily reunited by the common hardships of their adverse fortune. [53](#) The Huns, with their flocks and herds, their wives and children, their dependents and allies, were transported to the west of the Volga, and they boldly advanced to invade the country of the Alani, a pastoral people, who occupied, or wasted, an extensive tract of the deserts of Scythia. The plains between the Volga and the Tanais were covered with the tents of the Alani, but their name and manners were diffused over the wide extent of their conquests; and the painted tribes of the Agathyrsi and Geloni were confounded among their vassals. Towards the North, they penetrated into the frozen regions of Siberia, among the savages who were accustomed, in their rage or hunger, to the taste of human flesh; and their Southern inroads were pushed as far as the confines of Persia and India. The mixture of Samartic and German blood had contributed to improve the features of the Alani, [5311](#) to whiten their swarthy complexions, and to tinge their hair with a yellowish cast, which is seldom found in the Tartar race. They were less deformed in their persons, less brutish in their manners, than the Huns; but they did not yield to those formidable Barbarians in their martial and independent spirit; in the love of freedom, which rejected even the use of domestic slaves; and in the love of arms, which considered war and rapine as the pleasure and the glory of mankind. A naked cimeter, fixed in the ground, was the only object of their religious worship; the scalps of their enemies formed the costly trappings of their horses; and they viewed, with pity and contempt, the pusillanimous warriors, who patiently expected the infirmities of age, and the tortures of lingering disease. [54](#) On the banks of the Tanais, the military power of the Huns and the Alani encountered each other with equal valor, but with unequal success. The Huns prevailed in the bloody contest; the king of the Alani was slain; and the remains of the vanquished nation were dispersed by the ordinary alternative of flight or submission. [55](#) A colony of exiles

found a secure refuge in the mountains of Caucasus, between the Euxine and the Caspian, where they still preserve their name and their independence. Another colony advanced, with more intrepid courage, towards the shores of the Baltic; associated themselves with the Northern tribes of Germany; and shared the spoil of the Roman provinces of Gaul and Spain. But the greatest part of the nation of the Alani embraced the offers of an honorable and advantageous union; and the Huns, who esteemed the valor of their less fortunate enemies, proceeded, with an increase of numbers and confidence, to invade the limits of the Gothic empire.

52 [\(return\)](#)

[The Khan-Mou (tom. iii. p. 447) ascribes to their conquests a space of 14,000 *lis*. According to the present standard, 200 *lis* (or more accurately 193) are equal to one degree of latitude; and one English mile consequently exceeds three miles of China. But there are strong reasons to believe that the ancient *li* scarcely equalled one half of the modern. See the elaborate researches of M. D'Anville, a geographer who is not a stranger in any age or climate of the globe. (Mémoires de l'Acad. tom. ii. p. 125-502. Itinéraires, p. 154-167.)]

53 [\(return\)](#)

[See Histoire des Huns, tom. ii. p. 125—144. The subsequent history (p. 145—277) of three or four Hunnic dynasties evidently proves that their martial spirit was not impaired by a long residence in China.]

5311 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare M. Klaproth's curious speculations on the Alani. He supposes them to have been the people, known by the Chinese, at the time of their first expeditions to the West, under the name of Yath-sai or A-lanna, the Alanân of Persian tradition, as preserved in Ferdusi; the same, according to Ammianus, with the Massagetæ, and with the Albani. The remains of the nation still exist in the Ossetæ of Mount Caucasus. Klaproth, Tableaux Historiques de l'Asie, p. 174.—M. Compare Shafarik Slawische alterthümer, i. p. 350.—M. 1845.]

54 [\(return\)](#)

[Utque hominibus quietis et placidis otium est voluptabile, ita illos pericula juvent et bella. Judicatur ibi beatus qui in prælio profuderit animam: senescentes etiam et fortuitis mortibus mundo digressos, ut degeneres et ignavos, conviciis atrocibus insectantur. [Ammian. xxxi. 11.] We must think highly of the conquerors of *such* men.]

[On the subject of the Alani, see Ammianus, (xxxi. 2,) Jornandes, (de Rebus Geticis, c. 24,) M. de Guignes, (Hist. des Huns, tom. ii. p. 279,) and the Genealogical History of the Tartars, (tom. ii. p. 617.)]

The great Hermanric, whose dominions extended from the Baltic to the Euxine, enjoyed, in the full maturity of age and reputation, the fruit of his victories, when he was alarmed by the formidable approach of a host of unknown enemies, [56](#) on whom his barbarous subjects might, without injustice, bestow the epithet of Barbarians. The numbers, the strength, the rapid motions, and the implacable cruelty of the Huns, were felt, and dreaded, and magnified, by the astonished Goths; who beheld their fields and villages consumed with flames, and deluged with indiscriminate slaughter. To these real terrors they added the surprise and abhorrence which were excited by the shrill voice, the uncouth gestures, and the strange deformity of the Huns. [5611](#) These savages of Scythia were compared (and the picture had some resemblance) to the animals who walk very awkwardly on two legs and to the misshapen figures, the *Termini*, which were often placed on the bridges of antiquity. They were distinguished from the rest of the human species by their broad shoulders, flat noses, and small black eyes, deeply buried in the head; and as they were almost destitute of beards, they never enjoyed either the manly grace of youth, or the venerable aspect of age. [57](#) A fabulous origin was assigned, worthy of their form and manners; that the witches of Scythia, who, for their foul and deadly practices, had been driven from society, had copulated in the desert with infernal spirits; and that the Huns were the offspring of this execrable conjunction. [58](#) The tale, so full of horror and absurdity, was greedily embraced by the credulous hatred of the Goths; but, while it gratified their hatred, it increased their fear, since the posterity of dæmons and witches might be supposed to inherit some share of the præternatural powers, as well as of the malignant temper, of their parents. Against these enemies, Hermanric prepared to exert the united forces of the Gothic state; but he soon discovered that his vassal tribes, provoked by oppression, were much more inclined to second, than to repel, the invasion of the Huns. One of the chiefs of the Roxolani [59](#) had formerly deserted the standard of Hermanric, and the cruel tyrant had condemned the innocent wife of the traitor to be torn asunder by wild horses. The brothers of that unfortunate woman seized the favorable moment of revenge.

The aged king of the Goths languished some time after the dangerous wound which he received from their daggers; but the conduct of the war was retarded by his infirmities; and the public councils of the nation were distracted by a spirit of jealousy and discord. His death, which has been imputed to his own despair, left the reins of government in the hands of Withimer, who, with the doubtful aid of some Scythian mercenaries, maintained the unequal contest against the arms of the Huns and the Alani, till he was defeated and slain in a decisive battle. The Ostrogoths submitted to their fate; and the royal race of the Amali will hereafter be found among the subjects of the

haughty Attila. But the person of Witheric, the infant king, was saved by the diligence of Alatheus and Saphrax; two warriors of approved valor and fidelity, who, by cautious marches, conducted the independent remains of the nation of the Ostrogoths towards the Danastus, or Niester; a considerable river, which now separates the Turkish dominions from the empire of Russia. On the banks of the Niester, the prudent Athanaric, more attentive to his own than to the general safety, had fixed the camp of the Visigoths; with the firm resolution of opposing the victorious Barbarians, whom he thought it less advisable to provoke. The ordinary speed of the Huns was checked by the weight of baggage, and the encumbrance of captives; but their military skill deceived, and almost destroyed, the army of Athanaric. While the Judge of the Visigoths defended the banks of the Niester, he was encompassed and attacked by a numerous detachment of cavalry, who, by the light of the moon, had passed the river in a fordable place; and it was not without the utmost efforts of courage and conduct, that he was able to effect his retreat towards the hilly country. The undaunted general had already formed a new and judicious plan of defensive war; and the strong lines, which he was preparing to construct between the mountains, the Pruth, and the Danube, would have secured the extensive and fertile territory that bears the modern name of Walachia, from the destructive inroads of the Huns. [60](#) But the hopes and measures of the Judge of the Visigoths was soon disappointed, by the trembling impatience of his dismayed countrymen; who were persuaded by their fears, that the interposition of the Danube was the only barrier that could save them from the rapid pursuit, and invincible valor, of the Barbarians of Scythia. Under the command of Fritigern and Alavivus, [61](#) the body of the nation hastily advanced to the banks of the great river, and implored the protection of the Roman emperor of the East. Athanaric himself, still anxious to avoid the guilt of perjury, retired, with a band of faithful followers, into the mountainous country of Caucaland; which appears to have been guarded, and almost concealed, by the impenetrable forests of Transylvania. [62](#) [6211](#)

56

[\(return\)](#)

[As we are possessed of the authentic history of the Huns, it would be impertinent to repeat, or to refute, the fables which misrepresent their origin and progress, their passage of the mud or water of the Mæotis, in pursuit of an ox or stag, les Indes qu'ils avoient découvertes, &c., (Zosimus, l. iv. p. 224. Sozomen, l. vi. c. 37. Procopius, Hist. Miscell. c. 5. Jornandes, c. 24. Grandeur et Décadence, &c., des Romains, c. 17.)]

5611

[\(return\)](#)

[Art added to their native ugliness; in fact, it is difficult to ascribe the proper share in the features of this hideous picture to nature, to the barbarous skill with which they were self-disfigured, or to the terror and hatred of the Romans. Their noses were flattened by their nurses, their cheeks were gashed

by an iron instrument, that the scars might look more fearful, and prevent the growth of the beard.
Jornandes and Sidonius Apollinaris:—

*Obtundit teneras circumdata fascia nares,
Ut galeis cedant.*

Yet he adds that their forms were robust and manly, their height of a middle size, but, from the habit of riding, disproportioned.

*Stant pectora vasta,
Insignes humer, succincta sub ilibus alvus.
Forma quidem pediti media est, procera sed extat
Si cernas equites, sic longi sæpe putantur
Si sedeant.]*

57 [\(return\)](#)

[*Prodigosæ formæ, et pandi; ut bipedes existimes bestias; vel quales in commarginandis pontibus, effigiati stipites dolantur incompte.* Ammian. xxxi. i. Jornandes (c. 24) draws a strong caricature of a Calmuck face. *Species pavenda nigredine... quædam deformis offa, non fecies; habensque magis puncta quam lumina.* See Buffon. *Hist. Naturelle*, tom. iii. 380.]

58 [\(return\)](#)

[This execrable origin, which Jornandes (c. 24) describes with the rancor of a Goth, might be originally derived from a more pleasing fable of the Greeks. (Herodot. l. iv. c. 9, &c.)]

59 [\(return\)](#)

[The Roxolani may be the fathers of the the *Russians*, (D’Anville, *Empire de Russie*, p. 1—10,) whose residence (A.D. 862) about Novogrod Veliki cannot be very remote from that which the Geographer of Ravenna (i. 12, iv. 4, 46, v. 28, 30) assigns to the Roxolani, (A.D. 886.) * Note: See, on the origin of the Russ, Schlozer, *Nordische Geschichte*, p. 78—M.]

60 [\(return\)](#)

[The text of Ammianus seems to be imperfect or corrupt; but the nature of the ground explains, and almost defines, the Gothic rampart. *Mémoires de l’Académie*, &c., tom. xxviii. p. 444—462.]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[M. de Buat (*Hist. des Peuples de l’Europe*, tom. vi. p. 407) has conceived a strange idea, that Alavivus was the same person as Ulphilas, the Gothic bishop; and that Ulphilas, the grandson of a Cappadocian captive, became a temporal prince of the Goths.]

62 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxx. 3) and Jornandes (de Rebus

Geticis, c. 24) describe the subversion of the Gothic empire by the Huns.]

6211

[\(return\)](#)

[The most probable opinion as to the position of this land is that of M. Malte-Brun. He thinks that Caucaland is the territory of the Cacoenses, placed by Ptolemy (l. iii. c. 8) towards the Carpathian Mountains, on the side of the present Transylvania, and therefore the canton of Cacava, to the south of Hermanstadt, the capital of the principality. Caucaland it is evident, is the Gothic form of these different names. St. Martin, iv 103.—M.]

Chapter XXVI: Progress of The Huns.—Part III.

After Valens had terminated the Gothic war with some appearance of glory and success, he made a progress through his dominions of Asia, and at length fixed his residence in the capital of Syria. The five years [63](#) which he spent at Antioch was employed to watch, from a secure distance, the hostile designs of the Persian monarch; to check the depredations of the Saracens and Isaurians; [64](#) to enforce, by arguments more prevalent than those of reason and eloquence, the belief of the Arian theology; and to satisfy his anxious suspicions by the promiscuous execution of the innocent and the guilty. But the attention of the emperor was most seriously engaged, by the important intelligence which he received from the civil and military officers who were intrusted with the defence of the Danube. He was informed, that the North was agitated by a furious tempest; that the irruption of the Huns, an unknown and monstrous race of savages, had subverted the power of the Goths; and that the suppliant multitudes of that warlike nation, whose pride was now humbled in the dust, covered a space of many miles along the banks of the river. With outstretched arms, and pathetic lamentations, they loudly deplored their past misfortunes and their present danger; acknowledged that their only hope of safety was in the clemency of the Roman government; and most solemnly protested, that if the gracious liberality of the emperor would permit them to cultivate the waste lands of Thrace, they should ever hold themselves bound, by the strongest obligations of duty and gratitude, to obey the laws, and to guard the limits, of the republic. These assurances were confirmed by the ambassadors of the Goths, [6411](#) who impatiently expected from the mouth of Valens an answer that must finally determine the fate of their unhappy countrymen. The emperor of the East was no longer guided by the wisdom and authority of his elder brother, whose death happened towards the end of the preceding year; and as the distressful situation of the Goths required an instant and peremptory decision, he was deprived of the favorite resources of feeble and timid minds, who consider the use of dilatory and ambiguous measures as the most admirable efforts of consummate prudence. As long as the same passions and interests subsist among mankind, the questions of war and peace, of justice

and policy, which were debated in the councils of antiquity, will frequently present themselves as the subject of modern deliberation. But the most experienced statesman of Europe has never been summoned to consider the propriety, or the danger, of admitting, or rejecting, an innumerable multitude of Barbarians, who are driven by despair and hunger to solicit a settlement on the territories of a civilized nation. When that important proposition, so essentially connected with the public safety, was referred to the ministers of Valens, they were perplexed and divided; but they soon acquiesced in the flattering sentiment which seemed the most favorable to the pride, the indolence, and the avarice of their sovereign. The slaves, who were decorated with the titles of præfects and generals, dissembled or disregarded the terrors of this national emigration; so extremely different from the partial and accidental colonies, which had been received on the extreme limits of the empire. But they applauded the liberality of fortune, which had conducted, from the most distant countries of the globe, a numerous and invincible army of strangers, to defend the throne of Valens; who might now add to the royal treasures the immense sums of gold supplied by the provincials to compensate their annual proportion of recruits. The prayers of the Goths were granted, and their service was accepted by the Imperial court: and orders were immediately despatched to the civil and military governors of the Thracian diocese, to make the necessary preparations for the passage and subsistence of a great people, till a proper and sufficient territory could be allotted for their future residence. The liberality of the emperor was accompanied, however, with two harsh and rigorous conditions, which prudence might justify on the side of the Romans; but which distress alone could extort from the indignant Goths. Before they passed the Danube, they were required to deliver their arms: and it was insisted, that their children should be taken from them, and dispersed through the provinces of Asia; where they might be civilized by the arts of education, and serve as hostages to secure the fidelity of their parents.

63 [\(return\)](#)
 [The Chronology of Ammianus is obscure and imperfect. Tillemont has labored to clear and settle the annals of Valens.]

64 [\(return\)](#)
 [Zosimus, l. iv. p. 223. Sozomen, l. vi. c. 38. The Isaurians, each winter, infested the roads of Asia Minor, as far as the neighborhood of Constantinople. Basil, Epist. cel. apud Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 106.]

6411 [\(return\)](#)
 [Sozomen and Philostorgius say that the bishop Ulphilas was one of these ambassadors.—M.]

During the suspense of a doubtful and distant negotiation, the impatient Goths made some rash attempts to pass the Danube, without the permission of the government, whose protection they had implored. Their motions were strictly observed by the vigilance of the troops which were stationed along the river and their foremost

detachments were defeated with considerable slaughter; yet such were the timid councils of the reign of Valens, that the brave officers who had served their country in the execution of their duty, were punished by the loss of their employments, and narrowly escaped the loss of their heads. The Imperial mandate was at length received for transporting over the Danube the whole body of the Gothic nation; [65](#) but the execution of this order was a task of labor and difficulty. The stream of the Danube, which in those parts is above a mile broad, [66](#) had been swelled by incessant rains; and in this tumultuous passage, many were swept away, and drowned, by the rapid violence of the current. A large fleet of vessels, of boats, and of canoes, was provided; many days and nights they passed and repassed with indefatigable toil; and the most strenuous diligence was exerted by the officers of Valens, that not a single Barbarian, of those who were reserved to subvert the foundations of Rome, should be left on the opposite shore. It was thought expedient that an accurate account should be taken of their numbers; but the persons who were employed soon desisted, with amazement and dismay, from the prosecution of the endless and impracticable task: [67](#) and the principal historian of the age most seriously affirms, that the prodigious armies of Darius and Xerxes, which had so long been considered as the fables of vain and credulous antiquity, were now justified, in the eyes of mankind, by the evidence of fact and experience. A probable testimony has fixed the number of the Gothic warriors at two hundred thousand men: and if we can venture to add the just proportion of women, of children, and of slaves, the whole mass of people which composed this formidable emigration, must have amounted to near a million of persons, of both sexes, and of all ages. The children of the Goths, those at least of a distinguished rank, were separated from the multitude. They were conducted, without delay, to the distant seats assigned for their residence and education; and as the numerous train of hostages or captives passed through the cities, their gay and splendid apparel, their robust and martial figure, excited the surprise and envy of the Provincials. [6711](#) But the stipulation, the most offensive to the Goths, and the most important to the Romans, was shamefully eluded. The Barbarians, who considered their arms as the ensigns of honor and the pledges of safety, were disposed to offer a price, which the lust or avarice of the Imperial officers was easily tempted to accept. To preserve their arms, the haughty warriors consented, with some reluctance, to prostitute their wives or their daughters; the charms of a beauteous maid, or a comely boy, secured the connivance of the inspectors; who sometimes cast an eye of covetousness on the fringed carpets and linen garments of their new allies, [68](#) or who sacrificed their duty to the mean consideration of filling their farms with cattle, and their houses with slaves. The Goths, with arms in their hands, were permitted to enter the boats; and when their strength was collected on the other side of the river, the immense camp which was spread over the plains and the hills of the Lower Mæsia, assumed a threatening and even hostile aspect. The leaders of the Ostrogoths, Alatheus and Saphrax, the guardians of their infant king, appeared soon afterwards on the Northern banks of the Danube; and immediately despatched their ambassadors to

the court of Antioch, to solicit, with the same professions of allegiance and gratitude, the same favor which had been granted to the suppliant Visigoths. The absolute refusal of Valens suspended their progress, and discovered the repentance, the suspicions, and the fears, of the Imperial council.

65

[\(return\)](#)

[The passage of the Danube is exposed by Ammianus, (xxxi. 3, 4,) Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 223, 224,) Eunapius in Excerpt. Legat. (p. 19, 20,) and Jornandes, (c. 25, 26.) Ammianus declares (c. 5) that he means only, *ispas rerum digerere summitates*. But he often takes a false measure of their importance; and his superfluous prolixity is disagreeably balanced by his unseasonable brevity.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[Chishull, a curious traveller, has remarked the breadth of the Danube, which he passed to the south of Bucharest near the conflux of the Argish, (p. 77.) He admires the beauty and spontaneous plenty of Mæsia, or Bulgaria.]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Quem sci scire velit, Libyci velit æquoris idem
Discere quam multæ Zephyro turbentur harenæ.*

Ammianus has inserted, in his prose, these lines of Virgil, (Georgia l. ii. 105,) originally designed by the poet to express the impossibility of numbering the different sorts of vines. See Plin. Hist. Natur l. xiv.]

6711

[\(return\)](#)

[A very curious, but obscure, passage of Eunapius, appears to me to have been misunderstood by M. Mai, to whom we owe its discovery. The substance is as follows: “The Goths transported over the river their native deities, with their priests of both sexes; but concerning their rites they maintained a deep and ‘adamantine silence.’ To the Romans they pretended to be generally Christians, and placed certain persons to represent bishops in a conspicuous manner on their wagons. There was even among them a sort of what are called monks, persons whom it was not difficult to mimic; it was enough to wear black raiment, to be wicked, and held in respect.” (Eunapius hated the “black-robed monks,” as appears in another passage, with the cordial detestation of a heathen philosopher.) “Thus, while they faithfully but secretly adhered to their own religion, the Romans were weak enough to suppose them perfect Christians.” Mai, 277. Eunapius in Niebuhr, 82.—M]

[Eunapius and Zosimus curiously specify these articles of Gothic wealth and luxury. Yet it must be presumed, that they were the manufactures of the provinces; which the Barbarians had acquired as the spoils of war; or as the gifts, or merchandise, of peace.]

An undisciplined and unsettled nation of Barbarians required the firmest temper, and the most dexterous management. The daily subsistence of near a million of extraordinary subjects could be supplied only by constant and skilful diligence, and might continually be interrupted by mistake or accident. The insolence, or the indignation, of the Goths, if they conceived themselves to be the objects either of fear or of contempt, might urge them to the most desperate extremities; and the fortune of the state seemed to depend on the prudence, as well as the integrity, of the generals of Valens. At this important crisis, the military government of Thrace was exercised by Lupicinus and Maximus, in whose venal minds the slightest hope of private emolument outweighed every consideration of public advantage; and whose guilt was only alleviated by their incapacity of discerning the pernicious effects of their rash and criminal administration.

Instead of obeying the orders of their sovereign, and satisfying, with decent liberality, the demands of the Goths, they levied an ungenerous and oppressive tax on the wants of the hungry Barbarians. The vilest food was sold at an extravagant price; and, in the room of wholesome and substantial provisions, the markets were filled with the flesh of dogs, and of unclean animals, who had died of disease. To obtain the valuable acquisition of a pound of bread, the Goths resigned the possession of an expensive, though serviceable, slave; and a small quantity of meat was greedily purchased with ten pounds of a precious, but useless metal, [69](#) when their property was exhausted, they continued this necessary traffic by the sale of their sons and daughters; and notwithstanding the love of freedom, which animated every Gothic breast, they submitted to the humiliating maxim, that it was better for their children to be maintained in a servile condition, than to perish in a state of wretched and helpless independence. The most lively resentment is excited by the tyranny of pretended benefactors, who sternly exact the debt of gratitude which they have cancelled by subsequent injuries: a spirit of discontent insensibly arose in the camp of the Barbarians, who pleaded, without success, the merit of their patient and dutiful behavior; and loudly complained of the inhospitable treatment which they had received from their new allies. They beheld around them the wealth and plenty of a fertile province, in the midst of which they suffered the intolerable hardships of artificial famine. But the means of relief, and even of revenge, were in their hands; since the rapaciousness of their tyrants had left to an injured people the possession and the use of arms. The clamors of a multitude, untaught to disguise their sentiments, announced the first symptoms of resistance, and alarmed the timid and guilty minds of Lupicinus and Maximus. Those crafty ministers, who

substituted the cunning of temporary expedients to the wise and salutary counsels of general policy, attempted to remove the Goths from their dangerous station on the frontiers of the empire; and to disperse them, in separate quarters of cantonment, through the interior provinces. As they were conscious how ill they had deserved the respect, or confidence, of the Barbarians, they diligently collected, from every side, a military force, that might urge the tardy and reluctant march of a people, who had not yet renounced the title, or the duties, of Roman subjects. But the generals of Valens, while their attention was solely directed to the discontented Visigoths, imprudently disarmed the ships and the fortifications which constituted the defence of the Danube. The fatal oversight was observed, and improved, by Alatheus and Saphrax, who anxiously watched the favorable moment of escaping from the pursuit of the Huns. By the help of such rafts and vessels as could be hastily procured, the leaders of the Ostrogoths transported, without opposition, their king and their army; and boldly fixed a hostile and independent camp on the territories of the empire. [70](#)

69

[\(return\)](#)

[*Decem libras*; the word *silver* must be understood. Jornandes betrays the passions and prejudices of a Goth. The servile Geeks, Eunapius and Zosimus, disguise the Roman oppression, and execrate the perfidy of the Barbarians. Ammianus, a patriot historian, slightly, and reluctantly, touches on the odious subject. Jerom, who wrote almost on the spot, is fair, though concise. *Per avaritiam aximi ducis, ad rebellionem fame coacti sunt*, (in Chron.)

* Note: A new passage from the history of Eunapius is nearer to the truth. 'It appeared to our commanders a legitimate source of gain to be bribed by the Barbarians: Edit. Niebuhr, p. 82.—M.]

70

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, xxxi. 4, 5.]

Under the name of Judges, Alavivus and Fritigern were the leaders of the Visigoths in peace and war; and the authority which they derived from their birth was ratified by the free consent of the nation. In a season of tranquility, their power might have been equal, as well as their rank; but, as soon as their countrymen were exasperated by hunger and oppression, the superior abilities of Fritigern assumed the military command, which he was qualified to exercise for the public welfare. He restrained the impatient spirit of the Visigoths till the injuries and the insults of their tyrants should justify their resistance in the opinion of mankind: but he was not disposed to sacrifice any solid advantages for the empty praise of justice and moderation. Sensible of the benefits which would result from the union of the Gothic powers under the same standard, he secretly cultivated the friendship of the Ostrogoths; and while he professed an implicit obedience to the orders of the Roman generals, he proceeded by slow marches towards Marcianopolis, the capital of the Lower Mæsia, about seventy miles from the banks of

the Danube. On that fatal spot, the flames of discord and mutual hatred burst forth into a dreadful conflagration. Lupicinus had invited the Gothic chiefs to a splendid entertainment; and their martial train remained under arms at the entrance of the palace. But the gates of the city were strictly guarded, and the Barbarians were sternly excluded from the use of a plentiful market, to which they asserted their equal claim of subjects and allies. Their humble prayers were rejected with insolence and derision; and as their patience was now exhausted, the townsmen, the soldiers, and the Goths, were soon involved in a conflict of passionate altercation and angry reproaches. A blow was imprudently given; a sword was hastily drawn; and the first blood that was spilt in this accidental quarrel, became the signal of a long and destructive war. In the midst of noise and brutal intemperance, Lupicinus was informed, by a secret messenger, that many of his soldiers were slain, and despoiled of their arms; and as he was already inflamed by wine, and oppressed by sleep he issued a rash command, that their death should be revenged by the massacre of the guards of Fritigern and Alavivus.

The clamorous shouts and dying groans apprised Fritigern of his extreme danger; and, as he possessed the calm and intrepid spirit of a hero, he saw that he was lost if he allowed a moment of deliberation to the man who had so deeply injured him. "A trifling dispute," said the Gothic leader, with a firm but gentle tone of voice, "appears to have arisen between the two nations; but it may be productive of the most dangerous consequences, unless the tumult is immediately pacified by the assurance of our safety, and the authority of our presence." At these words, Fritigern and his companions drew their swords, opened their passage through the unresisting crowd, which filled the palace, the streets, and the gates, of Marcianopolis, and, mounting their horses, hastily vanished from the eyes of the astonished Romans. The generals of the Goths were saluted by the fierce and joyful acclamations of the camp; war was instantly resolved, and the resolution was executed without delay: the banners of the nation were displayed according to the custom of their ancestors; and the air resounded with the harsh and mournful music of the Barbarian trumpet. [71](#) The weak and guilty Lupicinus, who had dared to provoke, who had neglected to destroy, and who still presumed to despise, his formidable enemy, marched against the Goths, at the head of such a military force as could be collected on this sudden emergency. The Barbarians expected his approach about nine miles from Marcianopolis; and on this occasion the talents of the general were found to be of more prevailing efficacy than the weapons and discipline of the troops. The valor of the Goths was so ably directed by the genius of Fritigern, that they broke, by a close and vigorous attack, the ranks of the Roman legions. Lupicinus left his arms and standards, his tribunes and his bravest soldiers, on the field of battle; and their useless courage served only to protect the ignominious flight of their leader. "That successful day put an end to the distress of the Barbarians, and the security of the Romans: from that day, the Goths, renouncing the precarious condition of strangers and exiles, assumed the character of citizens and masters, claimed an absolute dominion over the possessors of land, and held, in their own right, the northern provinces of the

empire, which are bounded by the Danube.” Such are the words of the Gothic historian, [72](#) who celebrates, with rude eloquence, the glory of his countrymen. But the dominion of the Barbarians was exercised only for the purposes of rapine and destruction. As they had been deprived, by the ministers of the emperor, of the common benefits of nature, and the fair intercourse of social life, they retaliated the injustice on the subjects of the empire; and the crimes of Lupicinus were expiated by the ruin of the peaceful husbandmen of Thrace, the conflagration of their villages, and the massacre, or captivity, of their innocent families. The report of the Gothic victory was soon diffused over the adjacent country; and while it filled the minds of the Romans with terror and dismay, their own hasty imprudence contributed to increase the forces of Fritigern, and the calamities of the province. Some time before the great emigration, a numerous body of Goths, under the command of Suerid and Colias, had been received into the protection and service of the empire. [73](#) They were encamped under the walls of Hadrianople; but the ministers of Valens were anxious to remove them beyond the Hellespont, at a distance from the dangerous temptation which might so easily be communicated by the neighborhood, and the success, of their countrymen. The respectful submission with which they yielded to the order of their march, might be considered as a proof of their fidelity; and their moderate request of a sufficient allowance of provisions, and of a delay of only two days was expressed in the most dutiful terms. But the first magistrate of Hadrianople, incensed by some disorders which had been committed at his country-house, refused this indulgence; and arming against them the inhabitants and manufacturers of a populous city, he urged, with hostile threats, their instant departure. The Barbarians stood silent and amazed, till they were exasperated by the insulting clamors, and missile weapons, of the populace: but when patience or contempt was fatigued, they crushed the undisciplined multitude, inflicted many a shameful wound on the backs of their flying enemies, and despoiled them of the splendid armor, [74](#) which they were unworthy to bear. The resemblance of their sufferings and their actions soon united this victorious detachment to the nation of the Visigoths; the troops of Colias and Suerid expected the approach of the great Fritigern, ranged themselves under his standard, and signalized their ardor in the siege of Hadrianople. But the resistance of the garrison informed the Barbarians, that in the attack of regular fortifications, the efforts of unskillful courage are seldom effectual. Their general acknowledged his error, raised the siege, declared that “he was at peace with stone walls,” [75](#) and revenged his disappointment on the adjacent country. He accepted, with pleasure, the useful reenforcement of hardy workmen, who labored in the gold mines of Thrace, [76](#) for the emolument, and under the lash, of an unfeeling master: [77](#) and these new associates conducted the Barbarians, through the secret paths, to the most sequestered places, which had been chosen to secure the inhabitants, the cattle, and the magazines of corn. With the assistance of such guides, nothing could remain impervious or inaccessible; resistance was fatal; flight was impracticable; and the patient submission of helpless innocence seldom found mercy from the Barbarian

conqueror. In the course of these depredations, a great number of the children of the Goths, who had been sold into captivity, were restored to the embraces of their afflicted parents; but these tender interviews, which might have revived and cherished in their minds some sentiments of humanity, tended only to stimulate their native fierceness by the desire of revenge. They listened, with eager attention, to the complaints of their captive children, who had suffered the most cruel indignities from the lustful or angry passions of their masters, and the same cruelties, the same indignities, were severely retaliated on the sons and daughters of the Romans. [78](#)

71

[\(return\)](#)

[*Vexillis de more sublati*, *auditisque triste sonantibus classicis*. Ammian. xxxi. 5. These are the *rauca cornua* of Claudian, (in Rufin. ii. 57,) the large horns of the *Uri*, or wild bull; such as have been more recently used by the Swiss Cantons of Uri and Underwald. (Simler de Republicâ Helvet, l. ii. p. 201, edit. Fuselin. Tigur 1734.) Their military horn is finely, though perhaps casually, introduced in an original narrative of the battle of Nancy, (A.D. 1477.) “Attendant le combat le dit cor fut corné par trois fois, tant que le vent du souffler pouvoit durer: ce qui esbahit fort Monsieur de Bourgoigne; *car déjà à Morat l’avoit ouy*.” (See the Pièces Justificatives in the 4to. edition of Philippe de Comines, tom. iii. p. 493.)]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[*Jornandes de Rebus Geticis*, c. 26, p. 648, edit. Grot. These *splendidi panni* (they are comparatively such) are undoubtedly transcribed from the larger histories of Priscus, Ablavius, or Cassiodorus.]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[*Cum populis suis longe ante suscepti*. We are ignorant of the precise date and circumstances of their transmigration.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[An Imperial manufacture of shields, &c., was established at Hadrianople; and the populace were headed by the *Fabricenses*, or workmen. (Vales. ad Ammian. xxxi. 6.)]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[*Pacem sibi esse cum parietibus memorans*. Ammian. xxxi. 7.]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[These mines were in the country of the Bessi, in the ridge of mountains, the Rhodope, that runs between Philippi and Philippopolis; two Macedonian cities, which derived their name and

origin from the father of Alexander. From the mines of Thrace he annually received the value, not the weight, of a thousand talents, (200,000l.,) a revenue which paid the phalanx, and corrupted the orators of Greece. See Diodor. Siculus, tom. ii. l. xvi. p. 88, edit. Wesseling. Godefroy's Commentary on the Theodosian Code, tom. iii. p. 496. Cellarius, Geograph. Antiq. tom. i. p. 676, 857. D Anville, Geographie Ancienne, tom. i. p. 336.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

[As those unhappy workmen often ran away, Valens had enacted severe laws to drag them from their hiding-places. Cod. Theodosian, l. x. tit xix leg. 5, 7.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ammianus, xxxi. 5, 6. The historian of the Gothic war loses time and space, by an unseasonable recapitulation of the ancient inroads of the Barbarians.]

The imprudence of Valens and his ministers had introduced into the heart of the empire a nation of enemies; but the Visigoths might even yet have been reconciled, by the manly confession of past errors, and the sincere performance of former engagements. These healing and temperate measures seemed to concur with the timorous disposition of the sovereign of the East: but, on this occasion alone, Valens was brave; and his unseasonable bravery was fatal to himself and to his subjects. He declared his intention of marching from Antioch to Constantinople, to subdue this dangerous rebellion; and, as he was not ignorant of the difficulties of the enterprise, he solicited the assistance of his nephew, the emperor Gratian, who commanded all the forces of the West. The veteran troops were hastily recalled from the defence of Armenia; that important frontier was abandoned to the discretion of Sapor; and the immediate conduct of the Gothic war was intrusted, during the absence of Valens, to his lieutenants Trajan and Profuturus, two generals who indulged themselves in a very false and favorable opinion of their own abilities. On their arrival in Thrace, they were joined by Richomer, count of the domestics; and the auxiliaries of the West, that marched under his banner, were composed of the Gallic legions, reduced indeed, by a spirit of desertion, to the vain appearances of strength and numbers. In a council of war, which was influenced by pride, rather than by reason, it was resolved to seek, and to encounter, the Barbarians, who lay encamped in the spacious and fertile meadows, near the most southern of the six mouths of the Danube. [79](#) Their camp was surrounded by the usual fortification of wagons; [80](#) and the Barbarians, secure within the vast circle of the enclosure, enjoyed the fruits of their valor, and the spoils of the province. In the midst of riotous intemperance, the watchful Fritigern observed the motions, and penetrated the designs, of the Romans. He perceived, that the numbers of the enemy were continually increasing: and, as he understood their intention of attacking his rear,

as soon as the scarcity of forage should oblige him to remove his camp, he recalled to their standard his predatory detachments, which covered the adjacent country. As soon as they descried the flaming beacons, [81](#) they obeyed, with incredible speed, the signal of their leader: the camp was filled with the martial crowd of Barbarians; their impatient clamors demanded the battle, and their tumultuous zeal was approved and animated by the spirit of their chiefs. The evening was already far advanced; and the two armies prepared themselves for the approaching combat, which was deferred only till the dawn of day.

While the trumpets sounded to arms, the undaunted courage of the Goths was confirmed by the mutual obligation of a solemn oath; and as they advanced to meet the enemy, the rude songs, which celebrated the glory of their forefathers, were mingled with their fierce and dissonant outcries, and opposed to the artificial harmony of the Roman shout. Some military skill was displayed by Fritigern to gain the advantage of a commanding eminence; but the bloody conflict, which began and ended with the light, was maintained on either side, by the personal and obstinate efforts of strength, valor, and agility. The legions of Armenia supported their fame in arms; but they were oppressed by the irresistible weight of the hostile multitude the left wing of the Romans was thrown into disorder and the field was strewed with their mangled carcasses. This partial defeat was balanced, however, by partial success; and when the two armies, at a late hour of the evening, retreated to their respective camps, neither of them could claim the honors, or the effects, of a decisive victory. The real loss was more severely felt by the Romans, in proportion to the smallness of their numbers; but the Goths were so deeply confounded and dismayed by this vigorous, and perhaps unexpected, resistance, that they remained seven days within the circle of their fortifications. Such funeral rites, as the circumstances of time and place would admit, were piously discharged to some officers of distinguished rank; but the indiscriminate vulgar was left unburied on the plain. Their flesh was greedily devoured by the birds of prey, who in that age enjoyed very frequent and delicious feasts; and several years afterwards the white and naked bones, which covered the wide extent of the fields, presented to the eyes of Ammianus a dreadful monument of the battle of Salices. [82](#)

79

[\(return\)](#)

[The Itinerary of Antoninus (p. 226, 227, edit. Wesseling) marks the situation of this place about sixty miles north of Tomi, Ovid's exile; and the name of *Salices* (the willows) expresses the nature of the soil.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[This circle of wagons, the *Carrago*, was the usual fortification of the Barbarians. (Vegetius de Re Militari, l. iii. c. 10. Valesius ad Ammian. xxxi. 7.) The practice and the name were preserved by their descendants as late as the fifteenth century.

The *Charroy*, which surrounded the *Ost*, is a word familiar to the readers of Froissard, or Comines.]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[Statim ut accensi malleoli. I have used the literal sense of real torches or beacons; but I almost suspect, that it is only one of those turgid metaphors, those false ornaments, that perpetually disfigure to style of Ammianus.]

82

[\(return\)](#)

[Indicant nunc usque albentes ossibus campi. Ammian. xxxi. 7. The historian might have viewed these plains, either as a soldier, or as a traveller. But his modesty has suppressed the adventures of his own life subsequent to the Persian wars of Constantius and Julian. We are ignorant of the time when he quitted the service, and retired to Rome, where he appears to have composed his History of his Own Times.]

The progress of the Goths had been checked by the doubtful event of that bloody day; and the Imperial generals, whose army would have been consumed by the repetition of such a contest, embraced the more rational plan of destroying the Barbarians by the wants and pressure of their own multitudes. They prepared to confine the Visigoths in the narrow angle of land between the Danube, the desert of Scythia, and the mountains of Hæmus, till their strength and spirit should be insensibly wasted by the inevitable operation of famine. The design was prosecuted with some conduct and success: the Barbarians had almost exhausted their own magazines, and the harvests of the country; and the diligence of Saturninus, the master-general of the cavalry, was employed to improve the strength, and to contract the extent, of the Roman fortifications. His labors were interrupted by the alarming intelligence, that new swarms of Barbarians had passed the unguarded Danube, either to support the cause, or to imitate the example, of Fritigern. The just apprehension, that he himself might be surrounded, and overwhelmed, by the arms of hostile and unknown nations, compelled Saturninus to relinquish the siege of the Gothic camp; and the indignant Visigoths, breaking from their confinement, satiated their hunger and revenge by the repeated devastation of the fruitful country, which extends above three hundred miles from the banks of the Danube to the straits of the Hellespont. [83](#) The sagacious Fritigern had successfully appealed to the passions, as well as to the interest, of his Barbarian allies; and the love of rapine, and the hatred of Rome, seconded, or even prevented, the eloquence of his ambassadors. He cemented a strict and useful alliance with the great body of his countrymen, who obeyed Alatheus and Saphrax as the guardians of their infant king: the long animosity of rival tribes was suspended by the sense of their common interest; the independent part of the nation was associated under one standard; and the chiefs of the Ostrogoths appear to have yielded to the superior genius of the general of the Visigoths. He obtained the formidable aid of the Taifalæ, [8311](#) whose military renown was disgraced

and polluted by the public infamy of their domestic manners. Every youth, on his entrance into the world, was united by the ties of honorable friendship, and brutal love, to some warrior of the tribe; nor could he hope to be released from this unnatural connection, till he had approved his manhood by slaying, in single combat, a huge bear, or a wild boar of the forest. [84](#) But the most powerful auxiliaries of the Goths were drawn from the camp of those enemies who had expelled them from their native seats. The loose subordination, and extensive possessions, of the Huns and the Alani, delayed the conquests, and distracted the councils, of that victorious people. Several of the hords were allured by the liberal promises of Fritigern; and the rapid cavalry of Scythia added weight and energy to the steady and strenuous efforts of the Gothic infantry. The Sarmatians, who could never forgive the successor of Valentinian, enjoyed and increased the general confusion; and a seasonable irruption of the Alemanni, into the provinces of Gaul, engaged the attention, and diverted the forces, of the emperor of the West. [85](#)

83 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxxi. 8.]

8311 [\(return\)](#)

[The Taifalæ, who at this period inhabited the country which now forms the principality of Wallachia, were, in my opinion, the last remains of the great and powerful nation of the Dacians, (Daci or Dahæ.) which has given its name to these regions, over which they had ruled so long. The Taifalæ passed with the Goths into the territory of the empire. A great number of them entered the Roman service, and were quartered in different provinces. They are mentioned in the Notitia Imperii. There was a considerable body in the country of the Pictavi, now Poithou. They long retained their manners and language, and caused the name of the Theofalgicus pagus to be given to the district they inhabited. Two places in the department of La Vendee, Tiffanges and La Tiffardière, still preserve evident traces of this denomination. St. Martin, iv. 118.—M.]

84 [\(return\)](#)

[Hanc Taifalorum gentem turpem, et obscenæ vitæ flagitiis ita accipimus mersam; ut apud eos nefandi concubitûs fœdere copulentur mares puberes, ætatis viriditatem in eorum pollutis usibus consumpturi. Porro, siqui jam adultus aprum exceperit solus, vel interemit ursum immanem, colluvione liberatur incesti. Ammian. xxxi. 9. —Among the Greeks, likewise, more especially among the Cretans, the holy bands of friendship were confirmed, and sullied, by unnatural love.]

[Ammian. xxxi. 8, 9. Jerom (tom. i. p. 26) enumerates the nations and marks a calamitous period of twenty years. This epistle to Heliodorus was composed in the year 397, (Tillemont, Mém. Eccles tom xii. p. 645.)]

Chapter XXVI: Progress of The Huns.—Part IV.

One of the most dangerous inconveniences of the introduction of the Barbarians into the army and the palace, was sensibly felt in their correspondence with their hostile countrymen; to whom they imprudently, or maliciously, revealed the weakness of the Roman empire. A soldier, of the lifeguards of Gratian, was of the nation of the Alemanni, and of the tribe of the Lentienses, who dwelt beyond the Lake of Constance. Some domestic business obliged him to request a leave of absence. In a short visit to his family and friends, he was exposed to their curious inquiries: and the vanity of the loquacious soldier tempted him to display his intimate acquaintance with the secrets of the state, and the designs of his master. The intelligence, that Gratian was preparing to lead the military force of Gaul, and of the West, to the assistance of his uncle Valens, pointed out to the restless spirit of the Alemanni the moment, and the mode, of a successful invasion. The enterprise of some light detachments, who, in the month of February, passed the Rhine upon the ice, was the prelude of a more important war. The boldest hopes of rapine, perhaps of conquest, outweighed the considerations of timid prudence, or national faith. Every forest, and every village, poured forth a band of hardy adventurers; and the great army of the Alemanni, which, on their approach, was estimated at forty thousand men by the fears of the people, was afterwards magnified to the number of seventy thousand by the vain and credulous flattery of the Imperial court. The legions, which had been ordered to march into Pannonia, were immediately recalled, or detained, for the defence of Gaul; the military command was divided between Nanienus and Mellobaudes; and the youthful emperor, though he respected the long experience and sober wisdom of the former, was much more inclined to admire, and to follow, the martial ardor of his colleague; who was allowed to unite the incompatible characters of count of the domestics, and of king of the Franks. His rival Priarius, king of the Alemanni, was guided, or rather impelled, by the same headstrong valor; and as their troops were animated by the spirit of their leaders, they met, they saw, they encountered each other, near the town of Argentaria, or Colmar, [86](#) in the plains of Alsace. The glory of the day was justly ascribed to the missile weapons, and well-practised evolutions, of the Roman soldiers; the Alemanni, who long maintained their ground, were slaughtered with unrelenting fury; five thousand only of the Barbarians escaped to the woods and mountains; and the glorious death of their king on the field of battle saved him from the reproaches of the people, who are always disposed to accuse the justice, or policy, of an unsuccessful war. After this signal victory, which

secured the peace of Gaul, and asserted the honor of the Roman arms, the emperor Gratian appeared to proceed without delay on his Eastern expedition; but as he approached the confines of the Alemanni, he suddenly inclined to the left, surprised them by his unexpected passage of the Rhine, and boldly advanced into the heart of their country. The Barbarians opposed to his progress the obstacles of nature and of courage; and still continued to retreat, from one hill to another, till they were satisfied, by repeated trials, of the power and perseverance of their enemies. Their submission was accepted as a proof, not indeed of their sincere repentance, but of their actual distress; and a select number of their brave and robust youth was exacted from the faithless nation, as the most substantial pledge of their future moderation. The subjects of the empire, who had so often experienced that the Alemanni could neither be subdued by arms, nor restrained by treaties, might not promise themselves any solid or lasting tranquillity: but they discovered, in the virtues of their young sovereign, the prospect of a long and auspicious reign. When the legions climbed the mountains, and scaled the fortifications of the Barbarians, the valor of Gratian was distinguished in the foremost ranks; and the gilt and variegated armor of his guards was pierced and shattered by the blows which they had received in their constant attachment to the person of their sovereign. At the age of nineteen, the son of Valentinian seemed to possess the talents of peace and war; and his personal success against the Alemanni was interpreted as a sure presage of his Gothic triumphs. [87](#)

86

[\(return\)](#)

[The field of battle, *Argentaria* or *Argentovaria*, is accurately fixed by M. D’Anville (Notice de l’Ancienne Gaule, p. 96—99) at twenty-three Gallic leagues, or thirty-four and a half Roman miles to the south of Strasburg. From its ruins the adjacent town of *Colmar* has arisen. Note: It is rather Horburg, on the right bank of the River Ill, opposite to Colmar. From Schoepflin, *Alsacia Illustrata*. St. Martin, iv. 121.—M.]

87

[\(return\)](#)

[The full and impartial narrative of Ammianus (xxxi. 10) may derive some additional light from the Epitome of Victor, the Chronicle of Jerom, and the History of Orosius, (l. vii. c. 33, p. 552, edit. Havercamp.)]

While Gratian deserved and enjoyed the applause of his subjects, the emperor Valens, who, at length, had removed his court and army from Antioch, was received by the people of Constantinople as the author of the public calamity. Before he had reposed himself ten days in the capital, he was urged by the licentious clamors of the Hippodrome to march against the Barbarians, whom he had invited into his dominions; and the citizens, who are always brave at a distance from any real danger, declared, with confidence, that, if they were supplied with arms, *they* alone would undertake to deliver the province from the ravages of an insulting foe. [88](#) The vain reproaches of an ignorant

multitude hastened the downfall of the Roman empire; they provoked the desperate rashness of Valens; who did not find, either in his reputation or in his mind, any motives to support with firmness the public contempt. He was soon persuaded, by the successful achievements of his lieutenants, to despise the power of the Goths, who, by the diligence of Fritigern, were now collected in the neighborhood of Hadrianople. The march of the Taifalæ had been intercepted by the valiant Frigeric: the king of those licentious Barbarians was slain in battle; and the suppliant captives were sent into distant exile to cultivate the lands of Italy, which were assigned for their settlement in the vacant territories of Modena and Parma. [89](#) The exploits of Sebastian, [90](#) who was recently engaged in the service of Valens, and promoted to the rank of master-general of the infantry, were still more honorable to himself, and useful to the republic. He obtained the permission of selecting three hundred soldiers from each of the legions; and this separate detachment soon acquired the spirit of discipline, and the exercise of arms, which were almost forgotten under the reign of Valens. By the vigor and conduct of Sebastian, a large body of the Goths were surprised in their camp; and the immense spoil, which was recovered from their hands, filled the city of Hadrianople, and the adjacent plain. The splendid narratives, which the general transmitted of his own exploits, alarmed the Imperial court by the appearance of superior merit; and though he cautiously insisted on the difficulties of the Gothic war, his valor was praised, his advice was rejected; and Valens, who listened with pride and pleasure to the flattering suggestions of the eunuchs of the palace, was impatient to seize the glory of an easy and assured conquest. His army was strengthened by a numerous reenforcement of veterans; and his march from Constantinople to Hadrianople was conducted with so much military skill, that he prevented the activity of the Barbarians, who designed to occupy the intermediate defiles, and to intercept either the troops themselves, or their convoys of provisions. The camp of Valens, which he pitched under the walls of Hadrianople, was fortified, according to the practice of the Romans, with a ditch and rampart; and a most important council was summoned, to decide the fate of the emperor and of the empire. The party of reason and of delay was strenuously maintained by Victor, who had corrected, by the lessons of experience, the native fierceness of the Sarmatian character; while Sebastian, with the flexible and obsequious eloquence of a courtier, represented every precaution, and every measure, that implied a doubt of immediate victory, as unworthy of the courage and majesty of their invincible monarch. The ruin of Valens was precipitated by the deceitful arts of Fritigern, and the prudent admonitions of the emperor of the West. The advantages of negotiating in the midst of war were perfectly understood by the general of the Barbarians; and a Christian ecclesiastic was despatched, as the holy minister of peace, to penetrate, and to perplex, the councils of the enemy. The misfortunes, as well as the provocations, of the Gothic nation, were forcibly and truly described by their ambassador; who protested, in the name of Fritigern, that he was still disposed to lay down his arms, or to employ them only in the defence of the empire; if he could secure for his wandering countrymen a

tranquil settlement on the waste lands of Thrace, and a sufficient allowance of corn and cattle. But he added, in a whisper of confidential friendship, that the exasperated Barbarians were averse to these reasonable conditions; and that Fritigern was doubtful whether he could accomplish the conclusion of the treaty, unless he found himself supported by the presence and terrors of an Imperial army. About the same time, Count Richomer returned from the West to announce the defeat and submission of the Alemanni, to inform Valens that his nephew advanced by rapid marches at the head of the veteran and victorious legions of Gaul, and to request, in the name of Gratian and of the republic, that every dangerous and decisive measure might be suspended, till the junction of the two emperors should insure the success of the Gothic war. But the feeble sovereign of the East was actuated only by the fatal illusions of pride and jealousy. He disdained the importunate advice; he rejected the humiliating aid; he secretly compared the ignominious, at least the inglorious, period of his own reign, with the fame of a beardless youth; and Valens rushed into the field, to erect his imaginary trophy, before the diligence of his colleague could usurp any share of the triumphs of the day.

88

[\(return\)](#)

[Moratus paucissimos dies, seditione popularium levium pulsus Ammian. xxxi. 11. Socrates (l. iv. c. 38) supplies the dates and some circumstances. * Note: Compare fragment of Eunapius. Mai, 272, in Niebuhr, p. 77.—M]

89

[\(return\)](#)

[Vivosque omnes circa Mutinam, Regiumque, et Parmam, Italica oppida, rura culturos exterminavit. Ammianus, xxxi. 9. Those cities and districts, about ten years after the colony of the Taifalæ, appear in a very desolate state. See Muratori, Dissertazioni sopra le Antichità Italiane, tom. i. Dissertat. xxi. p. 354.]

90

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammian. xxxi. 11. Zosimus, l. iv. p. 228—230. The latter expatiates on the desultory exploits of Sebastian, and despatches, in a few lines, the important battle of Hadrianople. According to the ecclesiastical critics, who hate Sebastian, the praise of Zosimus is disgrace, (Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 121.) His prejudice and ignorance undoubtedly render him a very questionable judge of merit.]

On the ninth of August, a day which has deserved to be marked among the most inauspicious of the Roman Calendar, [91](#) the emperor Valens, leaving, under a strong guard, his baggage and military treasure, marched from Hadrianople to attack the Goths, who were encamped about twelve miles from the city. [92](#) By some mistake of the orders, or some ignorance of the ground, the right wing, or column of cavalry arrived in sight of the enemy, whilst the left was still at a considerable distance; the soldiers

were compelled, in the sultry heat of summer, to precipitate their pace; and the line of battle was formed with tedious confusion and irregular delay. The Gothic cavalry had been detached to forage in the adjacent country; and Fritigern still continued to practise his customary arts. He despatched messengers of peace, made proposals, required hostages, and wasted the hours, till the Romans, exposed without shelter to the burning rays of the sun, were exhausted by thirst, hunger, and intolerable fatigue. The emperor was persuaded to send an ambassador to the Gothic camp; the zeal of Richomer, who alone had courage to accept the dangerous commission, was applauded; and the count of the domestics, adorned with the splendid ensigns of his dignity, had proceeded some way in the space between the two armies, when he was suddenly recalled by the alarm of battle. The hasty and imprudent attack was made by Bacurius the Iberian, who commanded a body of archers and targeteers; and as they advanced with rashness, they retreated with loss and disgrace. In the same moment, the flying squadrons of Alatheus and Saphrax, whose return was anxiously expected by the general of the Goths, descended like a whirlwind from the hills, swept across the plain, and added new terrors to the tumultuous, but irresistible charge of the Barbarian host. The event of the battle of Hadrianople, so fatal to Valens and to the empire, may be described in a few words: the Roman cavalry fled; the infantry was abandoned, surrounded, and cut in pieces. The most skilful evolutions, the firmest courage, are scarcely sufficient to extricate a body of foot, encompassed, on an open plain, by superior numbers of horse; but the troops of Valens, oppressed by the weight of the enemy and their own fears, were crowded into a narrow space, where it was impossible for them to extend their ranks, or even to use, with effect, their swords and javelins. In the midst of tumult, of slaughter, and of dismay, the emperor, deserted by his guards and wounded, as it was supposed, with an arrow, sought protection among the Lancearii and the Mattiarii, who still maintained their ground with some appearance of order and firmness. His faithful generals, Trajan and Victor, who perceived his danger, loudly exclaimed that all was lost, unless the person of the emperor could be saved. Some troops, animated by their exhortation, advanced to his relief: they found only a bloody spot, covered with a heap of broken arms and mangled bodies, without being able to discover their unfortunate prince, either among the living or the dead. Their search could not indeed be successful, if there is any truth in the circumstances with which some historians have related the death of the emperor.

By the care of his attendants, Valens was removed from the field of battle to a neighboring cottage, where they attempted to dress his wound, and to provide for his future safety. But this humble retreat was instantly surrounded by the enemy: they tried to force the door, they were provoked by a discharge of arrows from the roof, till at length, impatient of delay, they set fire to a pile of dry magots, and consumed the cottage with the Roman emperor and his train. Valens perished in the flames; and a youth, who dropped from the window, alone escaped, to attest the melancholy tale, and to inform the Goths of the inestimable prize which they had lost by their own rashness. A great

number of brave and distinguished officers perished in the battle of Hadrianople, which equalled in the actual loss, and far surpassed in the fatal consequences, the misfortune which Rome had formerly sustained in the fields of Cannæ. [93](#) Two master-generals of the cavalry and infantry, two great officers of the palace, and thirty-five tribunes, were found among the slain; and the death of Sebastian might satisfy the world, that he was the victim, as well as the author, of the public calamity. Above two thirds of the Roman army were destroyed: and the darkness of the night was esteemed a very favorable circumstance, as it served to conceal the flight of the multitude, and to protect the more orderly retreat of Victor and Richomer, who alone, amidst the general consternation, maintained the advantage of calm courage and regular discipline. [94](#)

91 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxxi. 12, 13) almost alone describes the councils and actions which were terminated by the fatal battle of Hadrianople. We might censure the vices of his style, the disorder and perplexity of his narrative: but we must now take leave of this impartial historian; and reproach is silenced by our regret for such an irreparable loss.]

92 [\(return\)](#)

[The difference of the eight miles of Ammianus, and the twelve of Idatius, can only embarrass those critics (Valesius ad loc.,) who suppose a great army to be a mathematical point, without space or dimensions.]

93 [\(return\)](#)

[Nec ulla annalibus, præter Cannensem pugnam, ita ad internecionem res legitur gesta. Ammian. xxxi. 13. According to the grave Polybius, no more than 370 horse, and 3,000 foot, escaped from the field of Cannæ: 10,000 were made prisoners; and the number of the slain amounted to 5,630 horse, and 70,000 foot, (Polyb. l. iii. p 371, edit. Casaubon, 8vo.) Livy (xxii. 49) is somewhat less bloody: he slaughters only 2,700 horse, and 40,000 foot. The Roman army was supposed to consist of 87,200 effective men, (xxii. 36.)]

94 [\(return\)](#)

[We have gained some faint light from Jerom, (tom. i. p. 26 and in Chron. p. 188,) Victor, (in Epitome,) Orosius, (l. vii. c. 33, p. 554,) Jornandes, (c. 27,) Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 230,) Socrates, (l. iv. c. 38,) Sozomen, (l. vi. c. 40,) Idatius, (in Chron.) But their united evidence, if weighed against Ammianus alone, is light and unsubstantial.]

While the impressions of grief and terror were still recent in the minds of men, the most celebrated rhetorician of the age composed the funeral oration of a vanquished army, and of an unpopular prince, whose throne was already occupied by a stranger.

“There are not wanting,” says the candid Libanius, “those who arraign the prudence of the emperor, or who impute the public misfortune to the want of courage and discipline in the troops. For my own part, I reverence the memory of their former exploits: I reverence the glorious death, which they bravely received, standing, and fighting in their ranks: I reverence the field of battle, stained with *their* blood, and the blood of the Barbarians. Those honorable marks have been already washed away by the rains; but the lofty monuments of their bones, the bones of generals, of centurions, and of valiant warriors, claim a longer period of duration. The king himself fought and fell in the foremost ranks of the battle. His attendants presented him with the fleetest horses of the Imperial stable, that would soon have carried him beyond the pursuit of the enemy. They vainly pressed him to reserve his important life for the future service of the republic. He still declared that he was unworthy to survive so many of the bravest and most faithful of his subjects; and the monarch was nobly buried under a mountain of the slain. Let none, therefore, presume to ascribe the victory of the Barbarians to the fear, the weakness, or the imprudence, of the Roman troops. The chiefs and the soldiers were animated by the virtue of their ancestors, whom they equalled in discipline and the arts of war. Their generous emulation was supported by the love of glory, which prompted them to contend at the same time with heat and thirst, with fire and the sword; and cheerfully to embrace an honorable death, as their refuge against flight and infamy. The indignation of the gods has been the only cause of the success of our enemies.” The truth of history may disclaim some parts of this panegyric, which cannot strictly be reconciled with the character of Valens, or the circumstances of the battle: but the fairest commendation is due to the eloquence, and still more to the generosity, of the sophist of Antioch. [95](#)

The pride of the Goths was elated by this memorable victory; but their avarice was disappointed by the mortifying discovery, that the richest part of the Imperial spoil had been within the walls of Hadrianople. They hastened to possess the reward of their valor; but they were encountered by the remains of a vanquished army, with an intrepid resolution, which was the effect of their despair, and the only hope of their safety. The walls of the city, and the ramparts of the adjacent camp, were lined with military engines, that threw stones of an enormous weight; and astonished the ignorant Barbarians by the noise, and velocity, still more than by the real effects, of the discharge. The soldiers, the citizens, the provincials, the domestics of the palace, were united in the danger, and in the defence: the furious assault of the Goths was repulsed; their secret arts of treachery and treason were discovered; and, after an obstinate conflict of many hours, they retired to their tents; convinced, by experience, that it would be far more advisable to observe the treaty, which their sagacious leader had tacitly stipulated with the fortifications of great and populous cities. After the hasty and impolitic

massacre of three hundred deserters, an act of justice extremely useful to the discipline of the Roman armies, the Goths indignantly raised the siege of Hadrianople. The scene of war and tumult was instantly converted into a silent solitude: the multitude suddenly disappeared; the secret paths of the woods and mountains were marked with the footsteps of the trembling fugitives, who sought a refuge in the distant cities of Illyricum and Macedonia; and the faithful officers of the household, and the treasury, cautiously proceeded in search of the emperor, of whose death they were still ignorant. The tide of the Gothic inundation rolled from the walls of Hadrianople to the suburbs of Constantinople. The Barbarians were surprised with the splendid appearance of the capital of the East, the height and extent of the walls, the myriads of wealthy and affrighted citizens who crowded the ramparts, and the various prospect of the sea and land. While they gazed with hopeless desire on the inaccessible beauties of Constantinople, a sally was made from one of the gates by a party of Saracens, [96](#) who had been fortunately engaged in the service of Valens. The cavalry of Scythia was forced to yield to the admirable swiftness and spirit of the Arabian horses: their riders were skilled in the evolutions of irregular war; and the Northern Barbarians were astonished and dismayed, by the inhuman ferocity of the Barbarians of the South.

A Gothic soldier was slain by the dagger of an Arab; and the hairy, naked savage, applying his lips to the wound, expressed a horrid delight, while he sucked the blood of his vanquished enemy. [97](#) The army of the Goths, laden with the spoils of the wealthy suburbs and the adjacent territory, slowly moved, from the Bosphorus, to the mountains which form the western boundary of Thrace. The important pass of Succus was betrayed by the fear, or the misconduct, of Maurus; and the Barbarians, who no longer had any resistance to apprehend from the scattered and vanquished troops of the East, spread themselves over the face of a fertile and cultivated country, as far as the confines of Italy and the Adriatic Sea. [98](#)

96

[\(return\)](#)

[Valens had gained, or rather purchased, the friendship of the Saracens, whose vexatious inroads were felt on the borders of Phœnicia, Palestine, and Egypt. The Christian faith had been lately introduced among a people, reserved, in a future age, to propagate another religion, (Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 104, 106, 141. Mém. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 593.)]

97

[\(return\)](#)

[Crinitus quidam, nudus omnia præter pubem, subraunum et ugubre strepens. Ammian. xxxi. 16, and Vales. ad loc. The Arabs often fought naked; a custom which may be ascribed to their sultry climate, and ostentatious bravery. The description of this unknown savage is the lively portrait of Derar, a name so dreadful to the Christians of Syria.

See Ockley's Hist. of the Saracens, vol. i. p. 72, 84, 87.]

98

[\(return\)](#)

[The series of events may still be traced in the last pages of Ammianus, (xxxi. 15, 16.) Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 227, 231,) whom we are now reduced to cherish, misplaces the sally of the Arabs before the death of Valens. Eunapius (in Excerpt. Legat. p. 20) praises the fertility of Thrace, Macedonia, &c.]

The Romans, who so coolly, and so concisely, mention the acts of *justice* which were exercised by the legions, [99](#) reserve their compassion, and their eloquence, for their own sufferings, when the provinces were invaded, and desolated, by the arms of the successful Barbarians. The simple circumstantial narrative (did such a narrative exist) of the ruin of a single town, of the misfortunes of a single family, [100](#) might exhibit an interesting and instructive picture of human manners: but the tedious repetition of vague and declamatory complaints would fatigue the attention of the most patient reader. The same censure may be applied, though not perhaps in an equal degree, to the profane, and the ecclesiastical, writers of this unhappy period; that their minds were inflamed by popular and religious animosity; and that the true size and color of every object is falsified by the exaggerations of their corrupt eloquence. The vehement Jerom [101](#) might justly deplore the calamities inflicted by the Goths, and their barbarous allies, on his native country of Pannonia, and the wide extent of the provinces, from the walls of Constantinople to the foot of the Julian Alps; the rapes, the massacres, the conflagrations; and, above all, the profanation of the churches, that were turned into stables, and the contemptuous treatment of the relics of holy martyrs. But the Saint is surely transported beyond the limits of nature and history, when he affirms, “that, in those desert countries, nothing was left except the sky and the earth; that, after the destruction of the cities, and the extirpation of the human race, the land was overgrown with thick forests and inextricable brambles; and that the universal desolation, announced by the prophet Zephaniah, was accomplished, in the scarcity of the beasts, the birds, and even of the fish.” These complaints were pronounced about twenty years after the death of Valens; and the Illyrian provinces, which were constantly exposed to the invasion and passage of the Barbarians, still continued, after a calamitous period of ten centuries, to supply new materials for rapine and destruction. Could it even be supposed, that a large tract of country had been left without cultivation and without inhabitants, the consequences might not have been so fatal to the inferior productions of animated nature. The useful and feeble animals, which are nourished by the hand of man, might suffer and perish, if they were deprived of his protection; but the beasts of the forest, his enemies or his victims, would multiply in the free and undisturbed possession of their solitary domain. The various tribes that people the air, or the waters, are still less connected with the fate of the human species; and it is highly probable that the fish of the Danube would have felt more terror and distress, from the approach of a voracious pike, than from the hostile inroad of a Gothic army.

99

[\(return\)](#)

[Observe with how much indifference Cæsar relates, in the Commentaries of the Gallic war, *that* he put to death the whole senate of the Veneti, who had yielded to his mercy, (iii. 16;) *that* he labored to extirpate the whole nation of the Eburones, (vi. 31;) *that* forty thousand persons were massacred at Bourges by the just revenge of his soldiers, who spared neither age nor sex, (vii. 27,) &c.]

100

[\(return\)](#)

[Such are the accounts of the sack of Magdeburgh, by the ecclesiastic and the fisherman, which Mr. Harte has transcribed, (Hist. of Gustavus Adolphus, vol. i. p. 313—320,) with some apprehension of violating the *dignity* of history.]

101

[\(return\)](#)

[Et vastatis urbibus, hominibusque interfectis, solitudinem et *raritatem bestiarum* quoque fieri, *et volatilium, pisciumque*: testis Illyricum est, testis Thracia, testis in quo ortus sum solum, (Pannonia;) ubi præter cælum et terram, et crescentes vepres, et condensa sylvarum *cuncta perierunt*. Tom. vii. p. 250, l, Cap. Sophonias and tom. i. p. 26.]

Chapter XXVI: Progress of The Huns.—Part V.

Whatever may have been the just measure of the calamities of Europe, there was reason to fear that the same calamities would soon extend to the peaceful countries of Asia. The sons of the Goths had been judiciously distributed through the cities of the East; and the arts of education were employed to polish, and subdue, the native fierceness of their temper. In the space of about twelve years, their numbers had continually increased; and the children, who, in the first emigration, were sent over the Hellespont, had attained, with rapid growth, the strength and spirit of perfect manhood. [102](#) It was impossible to conceal from their knowledge the events of the Gothic war; and, as those daring youths had not studied the language of dissimulation, they betrayed their wish, their desire, perhaps their intention, to emulate the glorious example of their fathers. The danger of the times seemed to justify the jealous suspicions of the provincials; and these suspicions were admitted as unquestionable evidence, that the Goths of Asia had formed a secret and dangerous conspiracy against the public safety. The death of Valens had left the East without a sovereign; and Julius, who filled the important station of master-general of the troops, with a high reputation of diligence and ability, thought it his duty to consult the senate of Constantinople; which he considered, during the vacancy of the throne, as the representative council of the nation. As soon as he had obtained the discretionary power of acting as he should

judge most expedient for the good of the republic, he assembled the principal officers, and privately concerted effectual measures for the execution of his bloody design. An order was immediately promulgated, that, on a stated day, the Gothic youth should assemble in the capital cities of their respective provinces; and, as a report was industriously circulated, that they were summoned to receive a liberal gift of lands and money, the pleasing hope allayed the fury of their resentment, and, perhaps, suspended the motions of the conspiracy. On the appointed day, the unarmed crowd of the Gothic youth was carefully collected in the square or Forum; the streets and avenues were occupied by the Roman troops, and the roofs of the houses were covered with archers and slingers. At the same hour, in all the cities of the East, the signal was given of indiscriminate slaughter; and the provinces of Asia were delivered by the cruel prudence of Julius, from a domestic enemy, who, in a few months, might have carried fire and sword from the Hellespont to the Euphrates. [103](#) The urgent consideration of the public safety may undoubtedly authorize the violation of every positive law. How far that, or any other, consideration may operate to dissolve the natural obligations of humanity and justice, is a doctrine of which I still desire to remain ignorant.

102

[\(return\)](#)

[Eunapius (in Excerpt. Legat. p. 20) foolishly supposes a præternatural growth of the young Goths, that he may introduce Cadmus's armed men, who sprang from the dragon's teeth, &c. Such was the Greek eloquence of the times.]

103

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus evidently approves this execution, *efficacia velox et salutaris*, which concludes his work, (xxx. 16.) Zosimus, who is curious and copious, (l. iv. p. 233—236,) mistakes the date, and labors to find the reason, why Julius did not consult the emperor Theodosius who had not yet ascended the throne of the East.]

The emperor Gratian was far advanced on his march towards the plains of Hadrianople, when he was informed, at first by the confused voice of fame, and afterwards by the more accurate reports of Victor and Richomer, that his impatient colleague had been slain in battle, and that two thirds of the Roman army were exterminated by the sword of the victorious Goths. Whatever resentment the rash and jealous vanity of his uncle might deserve, the resentment of a generous mind is easily subdued by the softer emotions of grief and compassion; and even the sense of pity was soon lost in the serious and alarming consideration of the state of the republic. Gratian was too late to assist, he was too weak to revenge, his unfortunate colleague; and the valiant and modest youth felt himself unequal to the support of a sinking world. A formidable tempest of the Barbarians of Germany seemed ready to burst over the provinces of Gaul; and the mind of Gratian was oppressed and distracted by the administration of the Western empire. In this important crisis, the government of the

East, and the conduct of the Gothic war, required the undivided attention of a hero and a statesman. A subject invested with such ample command would not long have preserved his fidelity to a distant benefactor; and the Imperial council embraced the wise and manly resolution of conferring an obligation, rather than of yielding to an insult. It was the wish of Gratian to bestow the purple as the reward of virtue; but, at the age of nineteen, it is not easy for a prince, educated in the supreme rank, to understand the true characters of his ministers and generals. He attempted to weigh, with an impartial hand, their various merits and defects; and, whilst he checked the rash confidence of ambition, he distrusted the cautious wisdom which despaired of the republic. As each moment of delay diminished something of the power and resources of the future sovereign of the East, the situation of the times would not allow a tedious debate. The choice of Gratian was soon declared in favor of an exile, whose father, only three years before, had suffered, under the sanction of *his* authority, an unjust and ignominious death. The great Theodosius, a name celebrated in history, and dear to the Catholic church, [104](#) was summoned to the Imperial court, which had gradually retreated from the confines of Thrace to the more secure station of Sirmium. Five months after the death of Valens, the emperor Gratian produced before the assembled troops *his* colleague and *their* master; who, after a modest, perhaps a sincere, resistance, was compelled to accept, amidst the general acclamations, the diadem, the purple, and the equal title of Augustus. [105](#) The provinces of Thrace, Asia, and Egypt, over which Valens had reigned, were resigned to the administration of the new emperor; but, as he was specially intrusted with the conduct of the Gothic war, the Illyrian præfecture was dismembered; and the two great dioceses of Dacia and Macedonia were added to the dominions of the Eastern empire. [106](#)

104

[\(return\)](#)

[A life of Theodosius the Great was composed in the last century, (Paris, 1679, in 4to-1680, 12mo.,) to inflame the mind of the young Dauphin with Catholic zeal. The author, Flechier, afterwards bishop of Nismes, was a celebrated preacher; and his history is adorned, or tainted, with pulpit eloquence; but he takes his learning from Baronius, and his principles from St. Ambrose and St. Augustin.]

105

[\(return\)](#)

[The birth, character, and elevation of Theodosius are marked in Pacatus, (in Panegy. Vet. xii. 10, 11, 12,) Themistius, (Orat. xiv. p. 182,) (Zosimus, l. iv. p. 231,) Augustin. (de Civitat. Dei. v. 25,) Orosius, (l. vii. c. 34,) Sozomen, (l. vii. c. 2,) Socrates, (l. v. c. 2,) Theodoret, (l. v. c. 5,) Philostorgius, (l. ix. c. 17, with Godefroy, p. 393,) the Epitome of Victor, and the Chronicles of Prosper, Idatius, and Marcellinus, in the Thesaurus Temporum of

Scaliger. * Note: Add a hostile fragment of
Eunapius. Mai, p. 273, in Niebuhr, p 178—M.]

106

[\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 716,
&c.]

The same province, and perhaps the same city, [107](#) which had given to the throne the virtues of Trajan, and the talents of Hadrian, was the original seat of another family of Spaniards, who, in a less fortunate age, possessed, near fourscore years, the declining empire of Rome. [108](#) They emerged from the obscurity of municipal honors by the active spirit of the elder Theodosius, a general whose exploits in Britain and Africa have formed one of the most splendid parts of the annals of Valentinian. The son of that general, who likewise bore the name of Theodosius, was educated, by skilful preceptors, in the liberal studies of youth; but he was instructed in the art of war by the tender care and severe discipline of his father. [109](#) Under the standard of such a leader, young Theodosius sought glory and knowledge, in the most distant scenes of military action; inured his constitution to the difference of seasons and climates; distinguished his valor by sea and land; and observed the various warfare of the Scots, the Saxons, and the Moors. His own merit, and the recommendation of the conqueror of Africa, soon raised him to a separate command; and, in the station of Duke of Mæsia, he vanquished an army of Sarmatians; saved the province; deserved the love of the soldiers; and provoked the envy of the court. [110](#) His rising fortunes were soon blasted by the disgrace and execution of his illustrious father; and Theodosius obtained, as a favor, the permission of retiring to a private life in his native province of Spain. He displayed a firm and temperate character in the ease with which he adapted himself to this new situation. His time was almost equally divided between the town and country; the spirit, which had animated his public conduct, was shown in the active and affectionate performance of every social duty; and the diligence of the soldier was profitably converted to the improvement of his ample patrimony, [111](#) which lay between Valladolid and Segovia, in the midst of a fruitful district, still famous for a most exquisite breed of sheep. [112](#) From the innocent, but humble labors of his farm, Theodosius was transported, in less than four months, to the throne of the Eastern empire; and the whole period of the history of the world will not perhaps afford a similar example, of an elevation at the same time so pure and so honorable. The princes who peaceably inherit the sceptre of their fathers, claim and enjoy a legal right, the more secure as it is absolutely distinct from the merits of their personal characters. The subjects, who, in a monarchy, or a popular state, acquire the possession of supreme power, may have raised themselves, by the superiority either of genius or virtue, above the heads of their equals; but their virtue is seldom exempt from ambition; and the cause of the successful candidate is frequently stained by the guilt of conspiracy, or civil war. Even in those governments which allow the reigning monarch to declare a colleague or a successor, his partial choice, which may be influenced by the blindest passions, is often directed to an unworthy object But the most suspicious malignity cannot ascribe

to Theodosius, in his obscure solitude of Caucha, the arts, the desires, or even the hopes, of an ambitious statesman; and the name of the Exile would long since have been forgotten, if his genuine and distinguished virtues had not left a deep impression in the Imperial court. During the season of prosperity, he had been neglected; but, in the public distress, his superior merit was universally felt and acknowledged. What confidence must have been reposed in his integrity, since Gratian could trust, that a pious son would forgive, for the sake of the republic, the murder of his father! What expectations must have been formed of his abilities to encourage the hope, that a single man could save, and restore, the empire of the East! Theodosius was invested with the purple in the thirty-third year of his age. The vulgar gazed with admiration on the manly beauty of his face, and the graceful majesty of his person, which they were pleased to compare with the pictures and medals of the emperor Trajan; whilst intelligent observers discovered, in the qualities of his heart and understanding, a more important resemblance to the best and greatest of the Roman princes.

107 [\(return\)](#)

[*Italica*, founded by Scipio Africanus for his wounded veterans of *Italy*. The ruins still appear, about a league above Seville, but on the opposite bank of the river. See the *Hispania Illustrata* of Nonius, a short though valuable treatise, c. xvii. p. 64—67.]

108 [\(return\)](#)

[I agree with Tillemont (*Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. v. p. 726) in suspecting the royal pedigree, which remained a secret till the promotion of Theodosius. Even after that event, the silence of Pacatus outweighs the venal evidence of Themistius, Victor, and Claudian, who connect the family of Theodosius with the blood of Trajan and Hadrian.]

109 [\(return\)](#)

[Pacatus compares, and consequently prefers, the youth of Theodosius to the military education of Alexander, Hannibal, and the second Africanus; who, like him, had served under their fathers, (xii. 8.)]

110 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxix. 6) mentions this victory of Theodosius Junior Dux Mæsiæ, prima etiam tum lanugine juvenis, princeps postea perspectissimus. The same fact is attested by Themistius and Zosimus but Theodoret, (l. v. c. 5,) who adds some curious circumstances, strangely applies it to the time of the interregnum.]

111 [\(return\)](#)

[Pacatus (in *Panegy. Vet.* xii. 9) prefers the rustic

life of Theodosius to that of Cincinnatus; the one was the effect of choice, the other of poverty.]

112

[\(return\)](#)

[M. D'Anville (Geographie Ancienne, tom. i. p. 25) has fixed the situation of Caucha, or Coca, in the old province of Gallicia, where Zosimus and Idatius have placed the birth, or patrimony, of Theodosius.]

It is not without the most sincere regret, that I must now take leave of an accurate and faithful guide, who has composed the history of his own times, without indulging the prejudices and passions, which usually affect the mind of a contemporary. Ammianus Marcellinus, who terminates his useful work with the defeat and death of Valens, recommends the more glorious subject of the ensuing reign to the youthful vigor and eloquence of the rising generation. [113](#) The rising generation was not disposed to accept his advice or to imitate his example; [114](#) and, in the study of the reign of Theodosius, we are reduced to illustrate the partial narrative of Zosimus, by the obscure hints of fragments and chronicles, by the figurative style of poetry or panegyric, and by the precarious assistance of the ecclesiastical writers, who, in the heat of religious faction, are apt to despise the profane virtues of sincerity and moderation. Conscious of these disadvantages, which will continue to involve a considerable portion of the decline and fall of the Roman empire, I shall proceed with doubtful and timorous steps. Yet I may boldly pronounce, that the battle of Hadrianople was never revenged by any signal or decisive victory of Theodosius over the Barbarians: and the expressive silence of his venal orators may be confirmed by the observation of the condition and circumstances of the times. The fabric of a mighty state, which has been reared by the labors of successive ages, could not be overturned by the misfortune of a single day, if the fatal power of the imagination did not exaggerate the real measure of the calamity. The loss of forty thousand Romans, who fell in the plains of Hadrianople, might have been soon recruited in the populous provinces of the East, which contained so many millions of inhabitants. The courage of a soldier is found to be the cheapest, and most common, quality of human nature; and sufficient skill to encounter an undisciplined foe might have been speedily taught by the care of the surviving centurions. If the Barbarians were mounted on the horses, and equipped with the armor, of their vanquished enemies, the numerous studs of Cappadocia and Spain would have supplied new squadrons of cavalry; the thirty-four arsenals of the empire were plentifully stored with magazines of offensive and defensive arms: and the wealth of Asia might still have yielded an ample fund for the expenses of the war. But the effects which were produced by the battle of Hadrianople on the minds of the Barbarians and of the Romans, extended the victory of the former, and the defeat of the latter, far beyond the limits of a single day. A Gothic chief was heard to declare, with insolent moderation, that, for his own part, he was fatigued with slaughter: but that he was astonished how a people, who fled before him like a flock of sheep, could still presume to dispute the possession of their treasures and

provinces. [115](#) The same terrors which the name of the Huns had spread among the Gothic tribes, were inspired, by the formidable name of the Goths, among the subjects and soldiers of the Roman empire. [116](#) If Theodosius, hastily collecting his scattered forces, had led them into the field to encounter a victorious enemy, his army would have been vanquished by their own fears; and his rashness could not have been excused by the chance of success. But the *great* Theodosius, an epithet which he honorably deserved on this momentous occasion, conducted himself as the firm and faithful guardian of the republic. He fixed his head-quarters at Thessalonica, the capital of the Macedonian diocese; [117](#) from whence he could watch the irregular motions of the Barbarians, and direct the operations of his lieutenants, from the gates of Constantinople to the shores of the Hadriatic. The fortifications and garrisons of the cities were strengthened; and the troops, among whom a sense of order and discipline was revived, were insensibly emboldened by the confidence of their own safety. From these secure stations, they were encouraged to make frequent sallies on the Barbarians, who infested the adjacent country; and, as they were seldom allowed to engage, without some decisive superiority, either of ground or of numbers, their enterprises were, for the most part, successful; and they were soon convinced, by their own experience, of the possibility of vanquishing their *invincible* enemies. The detachments of these separate garrisons were generally united into small armies; the same cautious measures were pursued, according to an extensive and well-concerted plan of operations; the events of each day added strength and spirit to the Roman arms; and the artful diligence of the emperor, who circulated the most favorable reports of the success of the war, contributed to subdue the pride of the Barbarians, and to animate the hopes and courage of his subjects. If, instead of this faint and imperfect outline, we could accurately represent the counsels and actions of Theodosius, in four successive campaigns, there is reason to believe, that his consummate skill would deserve the applause of every military reader. The republic had formerly been saved by the delays of Fabius; and, while the splendid trophies of Scipio, in the field of Zama, attract the eyes of posterity, the camps and marches of the dictator among the hills of the Campania, may claim a juster proportion of the solid and independent fame, which the general is not compelled to share, either with fortune or with his troops. Such was likewise the merit of Theodosius; and the infirmities of his body, which most unseasonably languished under a long and dangerous disease, could not oppress the vigor of his mind, or divert his attention from the public service. [118](#)

[Let us hear Ammianus himself. Hæc, ut miles quondam et Græcus, a principatu Cæsaris Nervæ exorsus, adusque Valentis inter, pro virium explicavi mensurâ: opus veritatem professum nunquam, ut arbitror, sciens, silentio ausus corrumpere vel mendacio. Scribant reliqua potiores ætate, doctrinisque florentes. Quos id, si libuerit, aggressuros, procudere linguas ad majores moneo

stilos. Ammian. xxxi. 16. The first thirteen books, a superficial epitome of two hundred and fifty-seven years, are now lost: the last eighteen, which contain no more than twenty-five years, still preserve the copious and authentic history of his own times.]

114

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus was the last subject of Rome who composed a profane history in the Latin language. The East, in the next century, produced some rhetorical historians, Zosimus, Olympiodorus, Malchus, Candidus &c. See Vossius de Historicis Græcis, l. ii. c. 18, de Historicis Latinis l. ii. c. 10, &c.]

115

[\(return\)](#)

[Chrysostom, tom. i. p. 344, edit. Montfaucon. I have verified and examined this passage: but I should never, without the aid of Tillemont, (Hist. des Emp. tom. v. p. 152,) have detected an historical anecdote, in a strange medley of moral and mystic exhortations, addressed, by the preacher of Antioch, to a young widow.]

116

[\(return\)](#)

[Eunapius, in Excerpt. Legation. p. 21.]

117

[\(return\)](#)

[See Godefroy's Chronology of the Laws. Codex Theodos tom. l. Prolegomen. p. xcix.—civ.]

118

[\(return\)](#)

[Most writers insist on the illness, and long repose, of Theodosius, at Thessalonica: Zosimus, to diminish his glory; Jornandes, to favor the Goths; and the ecclesiastical writers, to introduce his baptism.]

The deliverance and peace of the Roman provinces [119](#) was the work of prudence, rather than of valor: the prudence of Theodosius was seconded by fortune: and the emperor never failed to seize, and to improve, every favorable circumstance. As long as the superior genius of Fritigern preserved the union, and directed the motions of the Barbarians, their power was not inadequate to the conquest of a great empire. The death of that hero, the predecessor and master of the renowned Alaric, relieved an impatient multitude from the intolerable yoke of discipline and discretion. The Barbarians, who had been restrained by his authority, abandoned themselves to the dictates of their passions; and their passions were seldom uniform or consistent. An army of conquerors was broken into many disorderly bands of savage robbers; and their blind and irregular fury was not less pernicious to themselves, than to their enemies. Their mischievous disposition was shown in the destruction of every object which they wanted strength to remove, or taste to enjoy; and they often consumed, with improvident rage, the harvests, or the granaries, which soon afterwards became necessary for their own subsistence. A

spirit of discord arose among the independent tribes and nations, which had been united only by the bands of a loose and voluntary alliance. The troops of the Huns and the Alani would naturally upbraid the flight of the Goths; who were not disposed to use with moderation the advantages of their fortune; the ancient jealousy of the Ostrogoths and the Visigoths could not long be suspended; and the haughty chiefs still remembered the insults and injuries, which they had reciprocally offered, or sustained, while the nation was seated in the countries beyond the Danube. The progress of domestic faction abated the more diffusive sentiment of national animosity; and the officers of Theodosius were instructed to purchase, with liberal gifts and promises, the retreat or service of the discontented party. The acquisition of Modar, a prince of the royal blood of the Amali, gave a bold and faithful champion to the cause of Rome. The illustrious deserter soon obtained the rank of master-general, with an important command; surprised an army of his countrymen, who were immersed in wine and sleep; and, after a cruel slaughter of the astonished Goths, returned with an immense spoil, and four thousand wagons, to the Imperial camp. [120](#) In the hands of a skilful politician, the most different means may be successfully applied to the same ends; and the peace of the empire, which had been forwarded by the divisions, was accomplished by the reunion, of the Gothic nation. Athanaric, who had been a patient spectator of these extraordinary events, was at length driven, by the chance of arms, from the dark recesses of the woods of Caucaland. He no longer hesitated to pass the Danube; and a very considerable part of the subjects of Fritigern, who already felt the inconveniences of anarchy, were easily persuaded to acknowledge for their king a Gothic Judge, whose birth they respected, and whose abilities they had frequently experienced. But age had chilled the daring spirit of Athanaric; and, instead of leading his people to the field of battle and victory, he wisely listened to the fair proposal of an honorable and advantageous treaty. Theodosius, who was acquainted with the merit and power of his new ally, condescended to meet him at the distance of several miles from Constantinople; and entertained him in the Imperial city, with the confidence of a friend, and the magnificence of a monarch. “The Barbarian prince observed, with curious attention, the variety of objects which attracted his notice, and at last broke out into a sincere and passionate exclamation of wonder. I now behold (said he) what I never could believe, the glories of this stupendous capital! And as he cast his eyes around, he viewed, and he admired, the commanding situation of the city, the strength and beauty of the walls and public edifices, the capacious harbor, crowded with innumerable vessels, the perpetual concourse of distant nations, and the arms and discipline of the troops. Indeed, (continued Athanaric,) the emperor of the Romans is a god upon earth; and the presumptuous man, who dares to lift his hand against him, is guilty of his own blood.” [121](#) The Gothic king did not long enjoy this splendid and honorable reception; and, as temperance was not the virtue of his nation, it may justly be suspected, that his mortal disease was contracted amidst the pleasures of the Imperial banquets. But the policy of Theodosius derived more solid benefit from the death, than he could have

expected from the most faithful services, of his ally. The funeral of Athanaric was performed with solemn rites in the capital of the East; a stately monument was erected to his memory; and his whole army, won by the liberal courtesy, and decent grief, of Theodosius, enlisted under the standard of the Roman empire. [122](#) The submission of so great a body of the Visigoths was productive of the most salutary consequences; and the mixed influence of force, of reason, and of corruption, became every day more powerful, and more extensive. Each independent chieftain hastened to obtain a separate treaty, from the apprehension that an obstinate delay might expose *him*, alone and unprotected, to the revenge, or justice, of the conqueror. The general, or rather the final, capitulation of the Goths, may be dated four years, one month, and twenty-five days, after the defeat and death of the emperor Valens. [123](#)

119 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare Themistius (Orat, xiv. p. 181) with Zosimus (l. iv. p. 232,) Jornandes, (c. xxvii. p. 649,) and the prolix Commentary of M. de Buat, (Hist. de Peuples, &c., tom. vi. p. 477—552.) The Chronicles of Idatius and Marcellinus allude, in general terms, to magna certamina, *magna multaque* prælia. The two epithets are not easily reconciled.]

120 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. iv. p. 232) styles him a Scythian, a name which the more recent Greeks seem to have appropriated to the Goths.]

121 [\(return\)](#)

[The reader will not be displeased to see the original words of Jornandes, or the author whom he transcribed. Regiam urbem ingressus est, miransque, En, inquit, cerno quod sæpe incredulus audiebam, famam videlicet tantæ urbis. Et huc illuc oculos volvens, nunc situm urbis, commeatumque navium, nunc mœnia clara pro spectans, miratur; populosque diversarum gentium, quasi fonte in uno e diversis partibus scaturiente unda, sic quoque militem ordinatum aspiciens; Deus, inquit, sine dubio est terrenus Imperator, et quisquis adversus eum manum moverit, ipse sui sanguinis reus existit Jornandes (c. xxviii. p. 650) proceeds to mention his death and funeral.]

122 [\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes, c. xxviii. p. 650. Even Zosimus (l. v. p. 246) is compelled to approve the generosity of Theodosius, so honorable to himself, and so beneficial to the public.]

123 [\(return\)](#)

[The short, but authentic, hints in the *Fasti* of Idatius (Chron. Scaliger. p. 52) are stained with contemporary passion. The fourteenth oration of

Themistius is a compliment to Peace, and the consul
Saturninus, (A.D. 383.)]

The provinces of the Danube had been already relieved from the oppressive weight of the Gruthungi, or Ostrogoths, by the voluntary retreat of Alatheus and Saphrax, whose restless spirit had prompted them to seek new scenes of rapine and glory. Their destructive course was pointed towards the West; but we must be satisfied with a very obscure and imperfect knowledge of their various adventures. The Ostrogoths impelled several of the German tribes on the provinces of Gaul; concluded, and soon violated, a treaty with the emperor Gratian; advanced into the unknown countries of the North; and, after an interval of more than four years, returned, with accumulated force, to the banks of the Lower Danube. Their troops were recruited with the fiercest warriors of Germany and Scythia; and the soldiers, or at least the historians, of the empire, no longer recognized the name and countenances of their former enemies. [124](#) The general who commanded the military and naval powers of the Thracian frontier, soon perceived that his superiority would be disadvantageous to the public service; and that the Barbarians, awed by the presence of his fleet and legions, would probably defer the passage of the river till the approaching winter. The dexterity of the spies, whom he sent into the Gothic camp, allured the Barbarians into a fatal snare. They were persuaded that, by a bold attempt, they might surprise, in the silence and darkness of the night, the sleeping army of the Romans; and the whole multitude was hastily embarked in a fleet of three thousand canoes. [125](#) The bravest of the Ostrogoths led the van; the main body consisted of the remainder of their subjects and soldiers; and the women and children securely followed in the rear. One of the nights without a moon had been selected for the execution of their design; and they had almost reached the southern bank of the Danube, in the firm confidence that they should find an easy landing and an unguarded camp. But the progress of the Barbarians was suddenly stopped by an unexpected obstacle a triple line of vessels, strongly connected with each other, and which formed an impenetrable chain of two miles and a half along the river. While they struggled to force their way in the unequal conflict, their right flank was overwhelmed by the irresistible attack of a fleet of galleys, which were urged down the stream by the united impulse of oars and of the tide. The weight and velocity of those ships of war broke, and sunk, and dispersed, the rude and feeble canoes of the Barbarians; their valor was ineffectual; and Alatheus, the king, or general, of the Ostrogoths, perished with his bravest troops, either by the sword of the Romans, or in the waves of the Danube. The last division of this unfortunate fleet might regain the opposite shore; but the distress and disorder of the multitude rendered them alike incapable, either of action or counsel; and they soon implored the clemency of the victorious enemy. On this occasion, as well as on many others, it is a difficult task to reconcile the passions and prejudices of the writers of the age of Theodosius. The partial and malignant historian, who misrepresents every action of his reign, affirms, that the emperor did not appear in the field of battle till the Barbarians had been vanquished by the valor and conduct of his

lieutenant Promotus. [126](#) The flattering poet, who celebrated, in the court of Honorius, the glory of the father and of the son, ascribes the victory to the personal prowess of Theodosius; and almost insinuates, that the king of the Ostrogoths was slain by the hand of the emperor. [127](#) The truth of history might perhaps be found in a just medium between these extreme and contradictory assertions.

124 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. iv. p. 252.]

125 [\(return\)](#)
[I am justified, by reason and example, in applying this Indian name to the the Barbarians, the single trees hollowed into the shape of a boat. Zosimus, l. iv. p. 253. Ausi Danubium quondam tranare Gruthungi In lintres fregere nemus: ter mille ruebant Per fluvium plenæ cuneis immanibus alni. Claudian, in iv. Cols. Hon. 623.]

126 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. iv. p. 252—255. He too frequently betrays his poverty of judgment by disgracing the most serious narratives with trifling and incredible circumstances.]

127 [\(return\)](#)
[—Odothæi Regis *opima* Retulit—Ver. 632. The *opima* were the spoils which a Roman general could only win from the king, or general, of the enemy, whom he had slain with his own hands: and no more than three such examples are celebrated in the victorious ages of Rome.]

The original treaty which fixed the settlement of the Goths, ascertained their privileges, and stipulated their obligations, would illustrate the history of Theodosius and his successors. The series of their history has imperfectly preserved the spirit and substance of this single agreement. [128](#) The ravages of war and tyranny had provided many large tracts of fertile but uncultivated land for the use of those Barbarians who might not disdain the practice of agriculture. A numerous colony of the Visigoths was seated in Thrace; the remains of the Ostrogoths were planted in Phrygia and Lydia; their immediate wants were supplied by a distribution of corn and cattle; and their future industry was encouraged by an exemption from tribute, during a certain term of years. The Barbarians would have deserved to feel the cruel and perfidious policy of the Imperial court, if they had suffered themselves to be dispersed through the provinces. They required, and they obtained, the sole possession of the villages and districts assigned for their residence; they still cherished and propagated their native manners and language; asserted, in the bosom of despotism, the freedom of their domestic government; and acknowledged the sovereignty of the emperor, without submitting to the inferior jurisdiction of the laws and magistrates of Rome. The hereditary chiefs of the tribes and families were still permitted to command their followers in peace and

war; but the royal dignity was abolished; and the generals of the Goths were appointed and removed at the pleasure of the emperor. An army of forty thousand Goths was maintained for the perpetual service of the empire of the East; and those haughty troops, who assumed the title of *Fæderati*, or allies, were distinguished by their gold collars, liberal pay, and licentious privileges. Their native courage was improved by the use of arms and the knowledge of discipline; and, while the republic was guarded, or threatened, by the doubtful sword of the Barbarians, the last sparks of the military flame were finally extinguished in the minds of the Romans. [129](#) Theodosius had the address to persuade his allies, that the conditions of peace, which had been extorted from him by prudence and necessity, were the voluntary expressions of his sincere friendship for the Gothic nation. [130](#) A different mode of vindication or apology was opposed to the complaints of the people; who loudly censured these shameful and dangerous concessions. [131](#) The calamities of the war were painted in the most lively colors; and the first symptoms of the return of order, of plenty, and security, were diligently exaggerated. The advocates of Theodosius could affirm, with some appearance of truth and reason, that it was impossible to extirpate so many warlike tribes, who were rendered desperate by the loss of their native country; and that the exhausted provinces would be revived by a fresh supply of soldiers and husbandmen. The Barbarians still wore an angry and hostile aspect; but the experience of past times might encourage the hope, that they would acquire the habits of industry and obedience; that their manners would be polished by time, education, and the influence of Christianity; and that their posterity would insensibly blend with the great body of the Roman people. [132](#)

128

[\(return\)](#)

[See Themistius, Orat. xvi. p. 211. Claudian (in Eutrop. l. ii. 112) mentions the Phrygian colony:—*Ostrogothis colitur mistisque Gruthungis Phyrx ager*—and then proceeds to name the rivers of Lydia, the Pactolus, and Herreus.]

129

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare Jornandes, (c. xx. 27,) who marks the condition and number of the Gothic *Fæderati*, with Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 258,) who mentions their golden collars; and Pacatus, (in Panegy. Vet. xii. 37,) who applauds, with false or foolish joy, their bravery and discipline.]

130

[\(return\)](#)

[*Amator pacis generisque Gothorum*, is the praise bestowed by the Gothic historian, (c. xxix.,) who represents his nation as innocent, peaceable men, slow to anger, and patient of injuries. According to Livy, the Romans conquered the world in their own defence.]

131

[\(return\)](#)

[Besides the partial invectives of Zosimus, (always discontented with the Christian reigns,) see the

grave representations which Synesius addresses to the emperor Arcadius, (de Regno, p. 25, 26, edit. Petav.) The philosophic bishop of Cyrene was near enough to judge; and he was sufficiently removed from the temptation of fear or flattery.]

132

[\(return\)](#)

[Themistius (Orat. xvi. p. 211, 212) composes an elaborate and rational apology, which is not, however, exempt from the puerilities of Greek rhetoric. Orpheus could *only* charm the wild beasts of Thrace; but Theodosius enchanted the men and women, whose predecessors in the same country had torn Orpheus in pieces, &c.]

Notwithstanding these specious arguments, and these sanguine expectations, it was apparent to every discerning eye, that the Goths would long remain the enemies, and might soon become the conquerors of the Roman empire. Their rude and insolent behavior expressed their contempt of the citizens and provincials, whom they insulted with impunity. [133](#) To the zeal and valor of the Barbarians Theodosius was indebted for the success of his arms: but their assistance was precarious; and they were sometimes seduced, by a treacherous and inconstant disposition, to abandon his standard, at the moment when their service was the most essential. During the civil war against Maximus, a great number of Gothic deserters retired into the morasses of Macedonia, wasted the adjacent provinces, and obliged the intrepid monarch to expose his person, and exert his power, to suppress the rising flame of rebellion. [134](#) The public apprehensions were fortified by the strong suspicion, that these tumults were not the effect of accidental passion, but the result of deep and premeditated design. It was generally believed, that the Goths had signed the treaty of peace with a hostile and insidious spirit; and that their chiefs had previously bound themselves, by a solemn and secret oath, never to keep faith with the Romans; to maintain the fairest show of loyalty and friendship, and to watch the favorable moment of rapine, of conquest, and of revenge. But as the minds of the Barbarians were not insensible to the power of gratitude, several of the Gothic leaders sincerely devoted themselves to the service of the empire, or, at least, of the emperor; the whole nation was insensibly divided into two opposite factions, and much sophistry was employed in conversation and dispute, to compare the obligations of their first, and second, engagements. The Goths, who considered themselves as the friends of peace, of justice, and of Rome, were directed by the authority of Fravitta, a valiant and honorable youth, distinguished above the rest of his countrymen by the politeness of his manners, the liberality of his sentiments, and the mild virtues of social life. But the more numerous faction adhered to the fierce and faithless Priulf, [13411](#) who inflamed the passions, and asserted the independence, of his warlike followers. On one of the solemn festivals, when the chiefs of both parties were invited to the Imperial table, they were insensibly heated by wine, till they forgot the usual restraints of discretion and respect, and betrayed, in the presence of Theodosius,

the fatal secret of their domestic disputes. The emperor, who had been the reluctant witness of this extraordinary controversy, dissembled his fears and resentment, and soon dismissed the tumultuous assembly. Fravitta, alarmed and exasperated by the insolence of his rival, whose departure from the palace might have been the signal of a civil war, boldly followed him; and, drawing his sword, laid Priulf dead at his feet. Their companions flew to arms; and the faithful champion of Rome would have been oppressed by superior numbers, if he had not been protected by the seasonable interposition of the Imperial guards. [135](#) Such were the scenes of Barbaric rage, which disgraced the palace and table of the Roman emperor; and, as the impatient Goths could only be restrained by the firm and temperate character of Theodosius, the public safety seemed to depend on the life and abilities of a single man. [136](#)

133 [\(return\)](#)

[Constantinople was deprived half a day of the public allowance of bread, to expiate the murder of a Gothic soldier: was the guilt of the people. Libanius, Orat. xii. p. 394, edit. Morel.]

134 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. iv. p. 267-271. He tells a long and ridiculous story of the adventurous prince, who roved the country with only five horsemen, of a spy whom they detected, whipped, and killed in an old woman's cottage, &c.]

13411 [\(return\)](#)

[Eunapius.—M.]

135 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare Eunapius (in Excerpt. Legat. p. 21, 22) with Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 279.) The difference of circumstances and names must undoubtedly be applied to the same story. Fravitta, or Travitta, was afterwards consul, (A.D. 401.) and still continued his faithful services to the eldest son of Theodosius. (Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 467.)]

136 [\(return\)](#)

[Les Goths ravagerent tout depuis le Danube jusqu'au Bosphore; exterminerent Valens et son armée; et ne repasserent le Danube, que pour abandonner l'affreuse solitude qu'ils avoient faite, (Œuvres de Montesquieu, tom. iii. p. 479. Considerations sur les *Causes* de la Grandeur et de la Décadence des Romains, c. xvii.) The president Montesquieu seems ignorant that the Goths, after the defeat of Valens, *never* abandoned the Roman territory. It is now thirty years, says Claudian, (de Bello Getico, 166, &c., A.D. 404,) Ex quo jam patrios gens hæc oblita Triones, Atque Istrum transvecta semel, vestigia fixit Threicio funesta solo—the error is inexcusable; since it disguises the

principal and immediate cause of the fall of the
Western empire of Rome.]

VOLUME THREE

Chapter XXVII: Civil Wars, Reign Of Theodosius.—Part I.

*Death Of Gratian.—Ruin Of Arianism.—St. Ambrose.—First
Civil War, Against Maximus.—Character, Administration, And
Penance Of Theodosius.—Death Of Valentinian II.—Second
Civil War, Against Eugenius.—Death Of Theodosius.*

The fame of Gratian, before he had accomplished the twentieth year of his age, was equal to that of the most celebrated princes. His gentle and amiable disposition endeared him to his private friends, the graceful affability of his manners engaged the affection of the people: the men of letters, who enjoyed the liberality, acknowledged the taste and eloquence, of their sovereign; his valor and dexterity in arms were equally applauded by the soldiers; and the clergy considered the humble piety of Gratian as the first and most useful of his virtues. The victory of Colmar had delivered the West from a formidable invasion; and the grateful provinces of the East ascribed the merits of Theodosius to the author of his greatness, and of the public safety. Gratian survived those memorable events only four or five years; but he survived his reputation; and, before he fell a victim to rebellion, he had lost, in a great measure, the respect and confidence of the Roman world.

The remarkable alteration of his character or conduct may not be imputed to the arts of flattery, which had besieged the son of Valentinian from his infancy; nor to the headstrong passions which the that gentle youth appears to have escaped. A more attentive view of the life of Gratian may perhaps suggest the true cause of the disappointment of the public hopes. His apparent virtues, instead of being the hardy productions of experience and adversity, were the premature and artificial fruits of a royal education. The anxious tenderness of his father was continually employed to bestow on him those advantages, which he might perhaps esteem the more highly, as he himself had been deprived of them; and the most skilful masters of every science, and of every art, had labored to form the mind and body of the young prince. [1](#) The knowledge which they painfully communicated was displayed with ostentation, and celebrated with lavish praise. His soft and tractable disposition received the fair impression of their judicious precepts, and the absence of passion might easily be mistaken for the strength of reason. His preceptors gradually rose to the rank and consequence of ministers of state: [2](#) and, as they wisely dissembled their secret authority, he seemed to act with firmness, with propriety, and with judgment, on the most important occasions of his life and reign. But the influence of this elaborate instruction did not penetrate beyond the surface; and the skilful preceptors, who so

accurately guided the steps of their royal pupil, could not infuse into his feeble and indolent character the vigorous and independent principle of action which renders the laborious pursuit of glory essentially necessary to the happiness, and almost to the existence, of the hero. As soon as time and accident had removed those faithful counsellors from the throne, the emperor of the West insensibly descended to the level of his natural genius; abandoned the reins of government to the ambitious hands which were stretched forwards to grasp them; and amused his leisure with the most frivolous gratifications. A public sale of favor and injustice was instituted, both in the court and in the provinces, by the worthless delegates of his power, whose merit it was made sacrilege to question. [3](#) The conscience of the credulous prince was directed by saints and bishops; [4](#) who procured an Imperial edict to punish, as a capital offence, the violation, the neglect, or even the ignorance, of the divine law. [5](#) Among the various arts which had exercised the youth of Gratian, he had applied himself, with singular inclination and success, to manage the horse, to draw the bow, and to dart the javelin; and these qualifications, which might be useful to a soldier, were prostituted to the viler purposes of hunting. Large parks were enclosed for the Imperial pleasures, and plentifully stocked with every species of wild beasts; and Gratian neglected the duties, and even the dignity, of his rank, to consume whole days in the vain display of his dexterity and boldness in the chase. The pride and wish of the Roman emperor to excel in an art, in which he might be surpassed by the meanest of his slaves, reminded the numerous spectators of the examples of Nero and Commodus, but the chaste and temperate Gratian was a stranger to their monstrous vices; and his hands were stained only with the blood of animals. [6](#) The behavior of Gratian, which degraded his character in the eyes of mankind, could not have disturbed the security of his reign, if the army had not been provoked to resent their peculiar injuries. As long as the young emperor was guided by the instructions of his masters, he professed himself the friend and pupil of the soldiers; many of his hours were spent in the familiar conversation of the camp; and the health, the comforts, the rewards, the honors, of his faithful troops, appeared to be the objects of his attentive concern. But, after Gratian more freely indulged his prevailing taste for hunting and shooting, he naturally connected himself with the most dexterous ministers of his favorite amusement. A body of the Alani was received into the military and domestic service of the palace; and the admirable skill, which they were accustomed to display in the unbounded plains of Scythia, was exercised, on a more narrow theatre, in the parks and enclosures of Gaul. Gratian admired the talents and customs of these favorite guards, to whom alone he intrusted the defence of his person; and, as if he meant to insult the public opinion, he frequently showed himself to the soldiers and people, with the dress and arms, the long bow, the sounding quiver, and the fur garments of a Scythian warrior. The unworthy spectacle of a Roman prince, who had renounced the dress and manners of his country, filled the minds of the legions with grief and indignation. [7](#) Even the Germans, so strong and formidable in the armies of the empire, affected to disdain the strange and horrid appearance of the savages of the

North, who, in the space of a few years, had wandered from the banks of the Volga to those of the Seine. A loud and licentious murmur was echoed through the camps and garrisons of the West; and as the mild indolence of Gratian neglected to extinguish the first symptoms of discontent, the want of love and respect was not supplied by the influence of fear. But the subversion of an established government is always a work of some real, and of much apparent, difficulty; and the throne of Gratian was protected by the sanctions of custom, law, religion, and the nice balance of the civil and military powers, which had been established by the policy of Constantine. It is not very important to inquire from what cause the revolt of Britain was produced. Accident is commonly the parent of disorder; the seeds of rebellion happened to fall on a soil which was supposed to be more fruitful than any other in tyrants and usurpers; [8](#) the legions of that sequestered island had been long famous for a spirit of presumption and arrogance; [9](#) and the name of Maximus was proclaimed, by the tumultuary, but unanimous voice, both of the soldiers and of the provincials. The emperor, or the rebel,—for this title was not yet ascertained by fortune,—was a native of Spain, the countryman, the fellow-soldier, and the rival of Theodosius whose elevation he had not seen without some emotions of envy and resentment: the events of his life had long since fixed him in Britain; and I should not be unwilling to find some evidence for the marriage, which he is said to have contracted with the daughter of a wealthy lord of Caernarvonshire. [10](#) But this provincial rank might justly be considered as a state of exile and obscurity; and if Maximus had obtained any civil or military office, he was not invested with the authority either of governor or general. [11](#) His abilities, and even his integrity, are acknowledged by the partial writers of the age; and the merit must indeed have been conspicuous that could extort such a confession in favor of the vanquished enemy of Theodosius. The discontent of Maximus might incline him to censure the conduct of his sovereign, and to encourage, perhaps, without any views of ambition, the murmurs of the troops. But in the midst of the tumult, he artfully, or modestly, refused to ascend the throne; and some credit appears to have been given to his own positive declaration, that he was compelled to accept the dangerous present of the Imperial purple. [12](#)

1

[\(return\)](#)

[Valentinian was less attentive to the religion of his son; since he intrusted the education of Gratian to Ausonius, a professed Pagan. (Mem. de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xv. p. 125-138). The poetical fame of Ausonius condemns the taste of his age.]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Ausonius was successively promoted to the Prætorian præfecture of Italy, (A.D. 377,) and of Gaul, (A.D. 378;) and was at length invested with the consulship, (A.D. 379.) He expressed his gratitude in a servile and insipid piece of flattery,

(Actio Gratiarum, p. 699-736,) which has survived more worthy productions.]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[Disputare de principali iudicio non oportet. Sacrilegii enim instar est dubitare, an is dignus sit, quem elegerit imperator. Codex Justinian, l. ix. tit. xxix. leg. 3. This convenient law was revived and promulgated, after the death of Gratian, by the feeble court of Milan.]

4 [\(return\)](#)

[Ambrose composed, for his instruction, a theological treatise on the faith of the Trinity: and Tillemont, (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 158, 169,) ascribes to the archbishop the merit of Gratian's intolerant laws.]

5 [\(return\)](#)

[Qui divinae legis sanctitatem nesciendo omittunt, aut negligende violant, et offendunt, sacrilegium committunt. Codex Justinian. l. ix. tit. xxix. leg. 1. Theodosius indeed may claim his share in the merit of this comprehensive law.]

6 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus (xxxi. 10) and the younger Victor acknowledge the virtues of Gratian; and accuse, or rather lament, his degenerate taste. The odious parallel of Commodus is saved by "licet incruentus;" and perhaps Philostorgius (l. x. c. 10, and Godefroy, p. 41) had guarded with some similar reserve, the comparison of Nero.]

7 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. iv. p. 247) and the younger Victor ascribe the revolution to the favor of the Alani, and the discontent of the Roman troops Dum exercitum negligeret, et paucos ex Alanis, quos ingenti auro ad sa transtulerat, anteferebat veteri ac Romano militi.]

8 [\(return\)](#)

[Britannia fertilis provincia tyrannorum, is a memorable expression, used by Jerom in the Pelagian controversy, and variously tortured in the disputes of our national antiquaries. The revolutions of the last age appeared to justify the image of the sublime Bossuet, "sette ile, plus orageuse que les mers qui l'environnent."]

9 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus says of the British soldiers.]

10 [\(return\)](#)

[Helena, the daughter of Eudda. Her chapel may still be seen at Caer-segont, now Caer-narvon.

(Carte's Hist. of England, vol. i. p. 168, from Rowland's Mona Antiqua.) The prudent reader may not perhaps be satisfied with such Welsh evidence.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[Camden (vol. i. introduct. p. ci.) appoints him governor at Britain; and the father of our antiquities is followed, as usual, by his blind progeny. Pacatus and Zosimus had taken some pains to prevent this error, or fable; and I shall protect myself by their decisive testimonies. *Regali habitu exulem suum, illi exules orbis induerunt*, (in *Panegy. Vet.* xii. 23,) and the Greek historian still less equivocally, (Maximus) (l. iv. p. 248.)]

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Sulpicius Severus, *Dialog.* ii. 7. Orosius, l. vii. c. 34. p. 556. They both acknowledge (Sulpicius had been his subject) his innocence and merit. It is singular enough, that Maximus should be less favorably treated by Zosimus, the partial adversary of his rival.]

But there was danger likewise in refusing the empire; and from the moment that Maximus had violated his allegiance to his lawful sovereign, he could not hope to reign, or even to live, if he confined his moderate ambition within the narrow limits of Britain. He boldly and wisely resolved to prevent the designs of Gratian; the youth of the island crowded to his standard, and he invaded Gaul with a fleet and army, which were long afterwards remembered, as the emigration of a considerable part of the British nation. [13](#) The emperor, in his peaceful residence of Paris, was alarmed by their hostile approach; and the darts which he idly wasted on lions and bears, might have been employed more honorably against the rebels. But his feeble efforts announced his degenerate spirit and desperate situation; and deprived him of the resources, which he still might have found, in the support of his subjects and allies. The armies of Gaul, instead of opposing the march of Maximus, received him with joyful and loyal acclamations; and the shame of the desertion was transferred from the people to the prince. The troops, whose station more immediately attached them to the service of the palace, abandoned the standard of Gratian the first time that it was displayed in the neighborhood of Paris. The emperor of the West fled towards Lyons, with a train of only three hundred horse; and, in the cities along the road, where he hoped to find refuge, or at least a passage, he was taught, by cruel experience, that every gate is shut against the unfortunate. Yet he might still have reached, in safety, the dominions of his brother; and soon have returned with the forces of Italy and the East; if he had not suffered himself to be fatally deceived by the perfidious governor of the Lyonnese province. Gratian was amused by protestations of doubtful fidelity, and the hopes of a support, which could not be effectual; till the arrival of Andragathius, the general of the cavalry of Maximus, put an end to his suspense. That resolute officer executed, without

remorse, the orders or the intention of the usurper. Gratian, as he rose from supper, was delivered into the hands of the assassin: and his body was denied to the pious and pressing entreaties of his brother Valentinian. [14](#) The death of the emperor was followed by that of his powerful general Mellobaudes, the king of the Franks; who maintained, to the last moment of his life, the ambiguous reputation, which is the just recompense of obscure and subtle policy. [15](#) These executions might be necessary to the public safety: but the successful usurper, whose power was acknowledged by all the provinces of the West, had the merit, and the satisfaction, of boasting, that, except those who had perished by the chance of war, his triumph was not stained by the blood of the Romans. [16](#)

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Archbishop Usher (Antiquat. Britan. Eccles. p. 107, 108) has diligently collected the legends of the island, and the continent. The whole emigration consisted of 30,000 soldiers, and 100,000 plebeians, who settled in Bretagne. Their destined brides, St. Ursula with 11,000 noble, and 60,000 plebeian, virgins, mistook their way; landed at Cologne, and were all most cruelly murdered by the Huns. But the plebeian sisters have been defrauded of their equal honors; and what is still harder, John Trithemius presumes to mention the children of these British virgins.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. iv. p. 248, 249) has transported the death of Gratian from Lugdunum in Gaul (Lyons) to Singidunum in Moesia. Some hints may be extracted from the Chronicles; some lies may be detected in Sozomen (l. vii. c. 13) and Socrates, (l. v. c. 11.) Ambrose is our most authentic evidence, (tom. i. Enarrat. in Psalm lxi. p. 961, tom ii. epist. xxiv. p. 888 &c., and de Obitu Valentinian Consolat. Ner. 28, p. 1182.)]

15

[\(return\)](#)

[Pacatus (xii. 28) celebrates his fidelity; while his treachery is marked in Prosper's Chronicle, as the cause of the ruin of Gratian. Ambrose, who has occasion to exculpate himself, only condemns the death of Vallio, a faithful servant of Gratian, (tom. ii. epist. xxiv. p. 891, edit. Benedict.) * Note: Le Beau contests the reading in the chronicle of Prosper upon which this charge rests. Le Beau, iv. 232.—M. * Note: According to Pacatus, the Count Vallio, who commanded the army, was carried to Chalons to be burnt alive; but Maximus, dreading the imputation of cruelty, caused him to be secretly strangled by his Bretons. Macedonius also, master

of the offices, suffered the death which he merited.
Le Beau, iv. 244.—M.]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[He protested, *nullum ex adversariis nisi in acissie occubu*. Sulp. Jeverus in Vit. B. Martin, c. 23. The orator Theodosius bestows reluctant, and therefore weighty, praise on his clemency. *Si cui ille, pro ceteris sceleribus suis, minus crudelis fuisse videtur*, (Panegy. Vet. xii. 28.)]

The events of this revolution had passed in such rapid succession, that it would have been impossible for Theodosius to march to the relief of his benefactor, before he received the intelligence of his defeat and death. During the season of sincere grief, or ostentatious mourning, the Eastern emperor was interrupted by the arrival of the principal chamberlain of Maximus; and the choice of a venerable old man, for an office which was usually exercised by eunuchs, announced to the court of Constantinople the gravity and temperance of the British usurper.

The ambassador condescended to justify, or excuse, the conduct of his master; and to protest, in specious language, that the murder of Gratian had been perpetrated, without his knowledge or consent, by the precipitate zeal of the soldiers. But he proceeded, in a firm and equal tone, to offer Theodosius the alternative of peace, or war. The speech of the ambassador concluded with a spirited declaration, that although Maximus, as a Roman, and as the father of his people, would choose rather to employ his forces in the common defence of the republic, he was armed and prepared, if his friendship should be rejected, to dispute, in a field of battle, the empire of the world. An immediate and peremptory answer was required; but it was extremely difficult for Theodosius to satisfy, on this important occasion, either the feelings of his own mind, or the expectations of the public. The imperious voice of honor and gratitude called aloud for revenge. From the liberality of Gratian, he had received the Imperial diadem; his patience would encourage the odious suspicion, that he was more deeply sensible of former injuries, than of recent obligations; and if he accepted the friendship, he must seem to share the guilt, of the assassin. Even the principles of justice, and the interest of society, would receive a fatal blow from the impunity of Maximus; and the example of successful usurpation would tend to dissolve the artificial fabric of government, and once more to replunge the empire in the crimes and calamities of the preceding age. But, as the sentiments of gratitude and honor should invariably regulate the conduct of an individual, they may be overbalanced in the mind of a sovereign, by the sense of superior duties; and the maxims both of justice and humanity must permit the escape of an atrocious criminal, if an innocent people would be involved in the consequences of his punishment. The assassin of Gratian had usurped, but he actually possessed, the most warlike provinces of the empire: the East was exhausted by the misfortunes, and even by the success, of the Gothic war; and it was seriously to be apprehended, that, after the vital strength of the republic had been wasted in a doubtful and destructive

contest, the feeble conqueror would remain an easy prey to the Barbarians of the North. These weighty considerations engaged Theodosius to dissemble his resentment, and to accept the alliance of the tyrant. But he stipulated, that Maximus should content himself with the possession of the countries beyond the Alps. The brother of Gratian was confirmed and secured in the sovereignty of Italy, Africa, and the Western Illyricum; and some honorable conditions were inserted in the treaty, to protect the memory, and the laws, of the deceased emperor. [17](#) According to the custom of the age, the images of the three Imperial colleagues were exhibited to the veneration of the people; nor should it be lightly supposed, that, in the moment of a solemn reconciliation, Theodosius secretly cherished the intention of perfidy and revenge. [18](#)

17 [\(return\)](#)
[Ambrose mentions the laws of Gratian, quas non abrogavit hostia (tom. ii epist. xvii. p. 827.)]

18 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. iv. p. 251, 252. We may disclaim his odious suspicions; but we cannot reject the treaty of peace which the friends of Theodosius have absolutely forgotten, or slightly mentioned.]

The contempt of Gratian for the Roman soldiers had exposed him to the fatal effects of their resentment. His profound veneration for the Christian clergy was rewarded by the applause and gratitude of a powerful order, which has claimed, in every age, the privilege of dispensing honors, both on earth and in heaven. [19](#) The orthodox bishops bewailed his death, and their own irreparable loss; but they were soon comforted by the discovery, that Gratian had committed the sceptre of the East to the hands of a prince, whose humble faith and fervent zeal, were supported by the spirit and abilities of a more vigorous character. Among the benefactors of the church, the fame of Constantine has been rivalled by the glory of Theodosius. If Constantine had the advantage of erecting the standard of the cross, the emulation of his successor assumed the merit of subduing the Arian heresy, and of abolishing the worship of idols in the Roman world. Theodosius was the first of the emperors baptized in the true faith of the Trinity. Although he was born of a Christian family, the maxims, or at least the practice, of the age, encouraged him to delay the ceremony of his initiation; till he was admonished of the danger of delay, by the serious illness which threatened his life, towards the end of the first year of his reign. Before he again took the field against the Goths, he received the sacrament of baptism [20](#) from Acholius, the orthodox bishop of Thessalonica: [21](#) and, as the emperor ascended from the holy font, still glowing with the warm feelings of regeneration, he dictated a solemn edict, which proclaimed his own faith, and prescribed the religion of his subjects. “It is our pleasure (such is the Imperial style) that all the nations, which are governed by our clemency and moderation, should steadfastly adhere to the religion which was taught by St. Peter to the Romans; which faithful tradition has preserved; and which is now professed by the pontiff Damasus, and by Peter, bishop of Alexandria, a man of apostolic holiness.

According to the discipline of the apostles, and the doctrine of the gospel, let us believe the sole deity of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; under an equal majesty, and a pious Trinity. We authorize the followers of this doctrine to assume the title of Catholic Christians; and as we judge, that all others are extravagant madmen, we brand them with the infamous name of Heretics; and declare that their conventicles shall no longer usurp the respectable appellation of churches. Besides the condemnation of divine justice, they must expect to suffer the severe penalties, which our authority, guided by heavenly wisdom, shall think proper to inflict upon them.” [22](#) The faith of a soldier is commonly the fruit of instruction, rather than of inquiry; but as the emperor always fixed his eyes on the visible landmarks of orthodoxy, which he had so prudently constituted, his religious opinions were never affected by the specious texts, the subtle arguments, and the ambiguous creeds of the Arian doctors. Once indeed he expressed a faint inclination to converse with the eloquent and learned Eunomius, who lived in retirement at a small distance from Constantinople. But the dangerous interview was prevented by the prayers of the empress Flaccilla, who trembled for the salvation of her husband; and the mind of Theodosius was confirmed by a theological argument, adapted to the rudest capacity. He had lately bestowed on his eldest son, Arcadius, the name and honors of Augustus, and the two princes were seated on a stately throne to receive the homage of their subjects. A bishop, Amphilochius of Iconium, approached the throne, and after saluting, with due reverence, the person of his sovereign, he accosted the royal youth with the same familiar tenderness which he might have used towards a plebeian child. Provoked by this insolent behavior, the monarch gave orders, that the rustic priest should be instantly driven from his presence. But while the guards were forcing him to the door, the dexterous polemic had time to execute his design, by exclaiming, with a loud voice, “Such is the treatment, O emperor! which the King of heaven has prepared for those impious men, who affect to worship the Father, but refuse to acknowledge the equal majesty of his divine Son.” Theodosius immediately embraced the bishop of Iconium, and never forgot the important lesson, which he had received from this dramatic parable. [23](#)

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Their oracle, the archbishop of Milan, assigns to his pupil Gratian, a high and respectable place in heaven, (tom. ii. de Obit. Val. Consol p. 1193.)]

20

[\(return\)](#)

[For the baptism of Theodosius, see Sozomen, (l. vii. c. 4,) Socrates, (l. v. c. 6,) and Tillemont, (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 728.)]

21

[\(return\)](#)

[Ascolius, or Acholius, was honored by the friendship, and the praises, of Ambrose; who styles him murus fidei atque sanctitatis, (tom. ii. epist. xv. p. 820;) and afterwards celebrates his speed and diligence in running to Constantinople, Italy, &c.,

(epist. xvi. p. 822.) a virtue which does not appertain either to a wall, or a bishop.]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[Codex Theodos. l. xvi. tit. i. leg. 2, with Godefroy's Commentary, tom. vi. p. 5-9. Such an edict deserved the warmest praises of Baronius, auream sanctionem, edictum pium et salutare.—Sic itua ad astra.]

23

[\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen, l. vii. c. 6. Theodoret, l. v. c. 16. Tillemont is displeased (Mem. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 627, 628) with the terms of "rustic bishop," "obscure city." Yet I must take leave to think, that both Amphilocheus and Iconium were objects of inconsiderable magnitude in the Roman empire.]

Chapter XXVII: Civil Wars, Reign Of Theodosius.—Part II.

Constantinople was the principal seat and fortress of Arianism; and, in a long interval of forty years, [24](#) the faith of the princes and prelates, who reigned in the capital of the East, was rejected in the purer schools of Rome and Alexandria. The archiepiscopal throne of Macedonius, which had been polluted with so much Christian blood, was successively filled by Eudoxus and Damophilus. Their diocese enjoyed a free importation of vice and error from every province of the empire; the eager pursuit of religious controversy afforded a new occupation to the busy idleness of the metropolis; and we may credit the assertion of an intelligent observer, who describes, with some pleasantry, the effects of their loquacious zeal. "This city," says he, "is full of mechanics and slaves, who are all of them profound theologians; and preach in the shops, and in the streets. If you desire a man to change a piece of silver, he informs you, wherein the Son differs from the Father; if you ask the price of a loaf, you are told by way of reply, that the Son is inferior to the Father; and if you inquire, whether the bath is ready, the answer is, that the Son was made out of nothing." [25](#) The heretics, of various denominations, subsisted in peace under the protection of the Arians of Constantinople; who endeavored to secure the attachment of those obscure sectaries, while they abused, with unrelenting severity, the victory which they had obtained over the followers of the council of Nice. During the partial reigns of Constantius and Valens, the feeble remnant of the Homoeousians was deprived of the public and private exercise of their religion; and it has been observed, in pathetic language, that the scattered flock was left without a shepherd to wander on the mountains, or to be devoured by rapacious wolves. [26](#) But, as their zeal, instead of being subdued, derived strength and vigor from oppression, they seized the first moments of imperfect freedom, which they had acquired by the death of Valens, to form themselves into a regular congregation, under the conduct of an episcopal pastor. Two natives of Cappadocia, Basil, and Gregory Nazianzen, [27](#) were

distinguished above all their contemporaries, [28](#) by the rare union of profane eloquence and of orthodox piety.

These orators, who might sometimes be compared, by themselves, and by the public, to the most celebrated of the ancient Greeks, were united by the ties of the strictest friendship. They had cultivated, with equal ardor, the same liberal studies in the schools of Athens; they had retired, with equal devotion, to the same solitude in the deserts of Pontus; and every spark of emulation, or envy, appeared to be totally extinguished in the holy and ingenuous breasts of Gregory and Basil. But the exaltation of Basil, from a private life to the archiepiscopal throne of Caesarea, discovered to the world, and perhaps to himself, the pride of his character; and the first favor which he condescended to bestow on his friend, was received, and perhaps was intended, as a cruel insult. [29](#) Instead of employing the superior talents of Gregory in some useful and conspicuous station, the haughty prelate selected, among the fifty bishoprics of his extensive province, the wretched village of Sasima, [30](#) without water, without verdure, without society, situate at the junction of three highways, and frequented only by the incessant passage of rude and clamorous wagoners. Gregory submitted with reluctance to this humiliating exile; he was ordained bishop of Sasima; but he solemnly protests, that he never consummated his spiritual marriage with this disgusting bride. He afterwards consented to undertake the government of his native church of Nazianzus, [31](#) of which his father had been bishop above five-and-forty years. But as he was still conscious that he deserved another audience, and another theatre, he accepted, with no unworthy ambition, the honorable invitation, which was addressed to him from the orthodox party of Constantinople. On his arrival in the capital, Gregory was entertained in the house of a pious and charitable kinsman; the most spacious room was consecrated to the uses of religious worship; and the name of Anastasia was chosen to express the resurrection of the Nicene faith. This private conventicle was afterwards converted into a magnificent church; and the credulity of the succeeding age was prepared to believe the miracles and visions, which attested the presence, or at least the protection, of the Mother of God. [32](#) The pulpit of the Anastasia was the scene of the labors and triumphs of Gregory Nazianzen; and, in the space of two years, he experienced all the spiritual adventures which constitute the prosperous or adverse fortunes of a missionary. [33](#) The Arians, who were provoked by the boldness of his enterprise, represented his doctrine, as if he had preached three distinct and equal Deities; and the devout populace was excited to suppress, by violence and tumult, the irregular assemblies of the Athanasian heretics. From the cathedral of St. Sophia there issued a motley crowd “of common beggars, who had forfeited their claim to pity; of monks, who had the appearance of goats or satyrs; and of women, more terrible than so many Jezebels.” The doors of the Anastasia were broke open; much mischief was perpetrated, or attempted, with sticks, stones, and firebrands; and as a man lost his life in the affray, Gregory, who was summoned the next morning before the magistrate, had the satisfaction of supposing, that he publicly confessed the name of Christ. After he

was delivered from the fear and danger of a foreign enemy, his infant church was disgraced and distracted by intestine faction. A stranger who assumed the name of Maximus, [34](#) and the cloak of a Cynic philosopher, insinuated himself into the confidence of Gregory; deceived and abused his favorable opinion; and forming a secret connection with some bishops of Egypt, attempted, by a clandestine ordination, to supplant his patron in the episcopal seat of Constantinople. These mortifications might sometimes tempt the Cappadocian missionary to regret his obscure solitude. But his fatigues were rewarded by the daily increase of his fame and his congregation; and he enjoyed the pleasure of observing, that the greater part of his numerous audience retired from his sermons satisfied with the eloquence of the preacher, [35](#) or dissatisfied with the manifold imperfections of their faith and practice. [36](#)

24 [\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen, l. vii. c. v. Socrates, l. v. c. 7. Marcellin. in Chron. The account of forty years must be dated from the election or intrusion of Eusebius, who wisely exchanged the bishopric of Nicomedia for the throne of Constantinople.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[See Jortin's Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. iv. p. 71. The thirty-third Oration of Gregory Nazianzen affords indeed some similar ideas, even some still more ridiculous; but I have not yet found the words of this remarkable passage, which I allege on the faith of a correct and liberal scholar.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[See the thirty-second Oration of Gregory Nazianzen, and the account of his own life, which he has composed in 1800 iambics. Yet every physician is prone to exaggerate the inveterate nature of the disease which he has cured.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[I confess myself deeply indebted to the two lives of Gregory Nazianzen, composed, with very different views, by Tillemont (Mem. Eccles. tom. ix. p. 305-560, 692-731) and Le Clerc, (Bibliothèque Universelle, tom. xviii. p. 1-128.)]

28 [\(return\)](#)

[Unless Gregory Nazianzen mistook thirty years in his own age, he was born, as well as his friend Basil, about the year 329. The preposterous chronology of Suidas has been graciously received, because it removes the scandal of Gregory's father, a saint likewise, begetting children after he became a bishop, (Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. ix. p. 693-697.)]

29 [\(return\)](#)

[Gregory's Poem on his own Life contains some

beautiful lines, (tom. ii. p. 8,) which burst from the heart, and speak the pangs of injured and lost friendship. —In the Midsummer Night's Dream, Helena addresses the same pathetic complaint to her friend Hermia:—Is all the counsel that we two have shared. The sister's vows, &c. Shakspeare had never read the poems of Gregory Nazianzen; he was ignorant of the Greek language; but his mother tongue, the language of Nature, is the same in Cappadocia and in Britain.]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[This unfavorable portrait of Sasimae is drawn by Gregory Nazianzen, (tom. ii. de Vita sua, p. 7, 8.) Its precise situation, forty-nine miles from Archelais, and thirty-two from Tyana, is fixed in the Itinerary of Antoninus, (p. 144, edit. Wesseling.)]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[The name of Nazianzus has been immortalized by Gregory; but his native town, under the Greek or Roman title of Diocaesarea, (Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. ix. p. 692,) is mentioned by Pliny, (vi. 3,) Ptolemy, and Hierocles, (Itinerar. Wesseling, p. 709). It appears to have been situate on the edge of Isauria.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[See Ducange, Constant. Christiana, l. iv. p. 141, 142. The Sozomen (l. vii. c. 5) is interpreted to mean the Virgin Mary.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont (Mem. Eccles. tom. ix. p. 432, &c.) diligently collects, enlarges, and explains, the oratorical and poetical hints of Gregory himself.]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[He pronounced an oration (tom. i. Orat. xxiii. p. 409) in his praise; but after their quarrel, the name of Maximus was changed into that of Heron, (see Jerom, tom. i. in Catalog. Script. Eccles. p. 301). I touch slightly on these obscure and personal squabbles.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[Under the modest emblem of a dream, Gregory (tom. ii. Carmen ix. p. 78) describes his own success with some human complacency. Yet it should seem, from his familiar conversation with his auditor St. Jerom, (tom. i. Epist. ad Nepotian. p. 14,) that the preacher understood the true value of popular applause.]

[Lachrymae auditorum laudes tuae sint, is the lively and judicious advice of St. Jerom.]

The Catholics of Constantinople were animated with joyful confidence by the baptism and edict of Theodosius; and they impatiently waited the effects of his gracious promise. Their hopes were speedily accomplished; and the emperor, as soon as he had finished the operations of the campaign, made his public entry into the capital at the head of a victorious army. The next day after his arrival, he summoned Damophilus to his presence, and offered that Arian prelate the hard alternative of subscribing the Nicene creed, or of instantly resigning, to the orthodox believers, the use and possession of the episcopal palace, the cathedral of St. Sophia, and all the churches of Constantinople. The zeal of Damophilus, which in a Catholic saint would have been justly applauded, embraced, without hesitation, a life of poverty and exile, [37](#) and his removal was immediately followed by the purification of the Imperial city. The Arians might complain, with some appearance of justice, that an inconsiderable congregation of sectaries should usurp the hundred churches, which they were insufficient to fill; whilst the far greater part of the people was cruelly excluded from every place of religious worship. Theodosius was still inexorable; but as the angels who protected the Catholic cause were only visible to the eyes of faith, he prudently reenforced those heavenly legions with the more effectual aid of temporal and carnal weapons; and the church of St. Sophia was occupied by a large body of the Imperial guards. If the mind of Gregory was susceptible of pride, he must have felt a very lively satisfaction, when the emperor conducted him through the streets in solemn triumph; and, with his own hand, respectfully placed him on the archiepiscopal throne of Constantinople. But the saint (who had not subdued the imperfections of human virtue) was deeply affected by the mortifying consideration, that his entrance into the fold was that of a wolf, rather than of a shepherd; that the glittering arms which surrounded his person, were necessary for his safety; and that he alone was the object of the imprecations of a great party, whom, as men and citizens, it was impossible for him to despise. He beheld the innumerable multitude of either sex, and of every age, who crowded the streets, the windows, and the roofs of the houses; he heard the tumultuous voice of rage, grief, astonishment, and despair; and Gregory fairly confesses, that on the memorable day of his installation, the capital of the East wore the appearance of a city taken by storm, and in the hands of a Barbarian conqueror. [38](#) About six weeks afterwards, Theodosius declared his resolution of expelling from all the churches of his dominions the bishops and their clergy who should obstinately refuse to believe, or at least to profess, the doctrine of the council of Nice. His lieutenant, Sapor, was armed with the ample powers of a general law, a special commission, and a military force; [39](#) and this ecclesiastical revolution was conducted with so much discretion and vigor, that the religion of the emperor was established, without tumult or bloodshed, in all the provinces of the East. The writings of the Arians, if they had been permitted to exist, [40](#) would perhaps contain the lamentable story of the persecution, which afflicted the church under the

reign of the impious Theodosius; and the sufferings of their holy confessors might claim the pity of the disinterested reader. Yet there is reason to imagine, that the violence of zeal and revenge was, in some measure, eluded by the want of resistance; and that, in their adversity, the Arians displayed much less firmness than had been exerted by the orthodox party under the reigns of Constantius and Valens. The moral character and conduct of the hostile sects appear to have been governed by the same common principles of nature and religion: but a very material circumstance may be discovered, which tended to distinguish the degrees of their theological faith. Both parties, in the schools, as well as in the temples, acknowledged and worshipped the divine majesty of Christ; and, as we are always prone to impute our own sentiments and passions to the Deity, it would be deemed more prudent and respectful to exaggerate, than to circumscribe, the adorable perfections of the Son of God. The disciple of Athanasius exulted in the proud confidence, that he had entitled himself to the divine favor; while the follower of Arius must have been tormented by the secret apprehension, that he was guilty, perhaps, of an unpardonable offence, by the scanty praise, and parsimonious honors, which he bestowed on the Judge of the World. The opinions of Arianism might satisfy a cold and speculative mind: but the doctrine of the Nicene creed, most powerfully recommended by the merits of faith and devotion, was much better adapted to become popular and successful in a believing age.

37

[\(return\)](#)

[Socrates (l. v. c. 7) and Sozomen (l. vii. c. 5) relate the evangelical words and actions of Damophilus without a word of approbation. He considered, says Socrates, that it is difficult to resist the powerful, but it was easy, and would have been profitable, to submit.]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[See Gregory Nazianzen, tom. ii. de Vita sua, p. 21, 22. For the sake of posterity, the bishop of Constantinople records a stupendous prodigy. In the month of November, it was a cloudy morning, but the sun broke forth when the procession entered the church.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Of the three ecclesiastical historians, Theodoret alone (l. v. c. 2) has mentioned this important commission of Sapor, which Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 728) judiciously removes from the reign of Gratian to that of Theodosius.]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[I do not reckon Philostorgius, though he mentions (l. ix. c. 19) the explosion of Damophilus. The Eunomian historian has been carefully strained through an orthodox sieve.]

The hope, that truth and wisdom would be found in the assemblies of the orthodox clergy, induced the emperor to convene, at Constantinople, a synod of one hundred and fifty bishops, who proceeded, without much difficulty or delay, to complete the theological system which had been established in the council of Nice. The vehement disputes of the fourth century had been chiefly employed on the nature of the Son of God; and the various opinions which were embraced, concerning the Second, were extended and transferred, by a natural analogy, to the Third person of the Trinity. [41](#) Yet it was found, or it was thought, necessary, by the victorious adversaries of Arianism, to explain the ambiguous language of some respectable doctors; to confirm the faith of the Catholics; and to condemn an unpopular and inconsistent sect of Macedonians; who freely admitted that the Son was consubstantial to the Father, while they were fearful of seeming to acknowledge the existence of Three Gods. A final and unanimous sentence was pronounced to ratify the equal Deity of the Holy Ghost: the mysterious doctrine has been received by all the nations, and all the churches of the Christian world; and their grateful reverence has assigned to the bishops of Theodosius the second rank among the general councils. [42](#) Their knowledge of religious truth may have been preserved by tradition, or it may have been communicated by inspiration; but the sober evidence of history will not allow much weight to the personal authority of the Fathers of Constantinople. In an age when the ecclesiastics had scandalously degenerated from the model of apostolic purity, the most worthless and corrupt were always the most eager to frequent, and disturb, the episcopal assemblies. The conflict and fermentation of so many opposite interests and tempers inflamed the passions of the bishops: and their ruling passions were, the love of gold, and the love of dispute. Many of the same prelates who now applauded the orthodox piety of Theodosius, had repeatedly changed, with prudent flexibility, their creeds and opinions; and in the various revolutions of the church and state, the religion of their sovereign was the rule of their obsequious faith. When the emperor suspended his prevailing influence, the turbulent synod was blindly impelled by the absurd or selfish motives of pride, hatred, or resentment. The death of Meletius, which happened at the council of Constantinople, presented the most favorable opportunity of terminating the schism of Antioch, by suffering his aged rival, Paulinus, peaceably to end his days in the episcopal chair. The faith and virtues of Paulinus were unblemished. But his cause was supported by the Western churches; and the bishops of the synod resolved to perpetuate the mischiefs of discord, by the hasty ordination of a perjured candidate, [43](#) rather than to betray the imagined dignity of the East, which had been illustrated by the birth and death of the Son of God. Such unjust and disorderly proceedings forced the gravest members of the assembly to dissent and to secede; and the clamorous majority which remained masters of the field of battle, could be compared only to wasps or magpies, to a flight of cranes, or to a flock of geese. [44](#)

theological sermons which Gregory Nazianzen pronounced at Constantinople against the Arians, Eunomians, Macedonians, &c. He tells the Macedonians, who deified the Father and the Son without the Holy Ghost, that they might as well be styled Tritheists as Ditheists. Gregory himself was almost a Tritheist; and his monarchy of heaven resembles a well-regulated aristocracy.]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[The first general council of Constantinople now triumphs in the Vatican; but the popes had long hesitated, and their hesitation perplexes, and almost staggers, the humble Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. ix. p. 499, 500.)]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[Before the death of Meletius, six or eight of his most popular ecclesiastics, among whom was Flavian, had abjured, for the sake of peace, the bishopric of Antioch, (Sozomen, l. vii. c. 3, 11. Socrates, l. v. c. v.) Tillemont thinks it his duty to disbelieve the story; but he owns that there are many circumstances in the life of Flavian which seem inconsistent with the praises of Chrysostom, and the character of a saint, (Mem. Eccles. tom. x. p. 541.)]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[Consult Gregory Nazianzen, de Vita sua, tom. ii. p. 25-28. His general and particular opinion of the clergy and their assemblies may be seen in verse and prose, (tom. i. Orat. i. p. 33. Epist. lv. p. 814, tom. ii. Carmen x. p. 81.) Such passages are faintly marked by Tillemont, and fairly produced by Le Clerc.]

A suspicion may possibly arise, that so unfavorable a picture of ecclesiastical synods has been drawn by the partial hand of some obstinate heretic, or some malicious infidel. But the name of the sincere historian who has conveyed this instructive lesson to the knowledge of posterity, must silence the impotent murmurs of superstition and bigotry. He was one of the most pious and eloquent bishops of the age; a saint, and a doctor of the church; the scourge of Arianism, and the pillar of the orthodox faith; a distinguished member of the council of Constantinople, in which, after the death of Meletius, he exercised the functions of president; in a word—Gregory Nazianzen himself. The harsh and ungenerous treatment which he experienced, [45](#) instead of derogating from the truth of his evidence, affords an additional proof of the spirit which actuated the deliberations of the synod. Their unanimous suffrage had confirmed the pretensions which the bishop of Constantinople derived from the choice of the people, and the approbation of the emperor. But Gregory soon became the victim of malice and envy. The bishops of the East, his strenuous adherents, provoked by his moderation in the

affairs of Antioch, abandoned him, without support, to the adverse faction of the Egyptians; who disputed the validity of his election, and rigorously asserted the obsolete canon, that prohibited the licentious practice of episcopal translations. The pride, or the humility, of Gregory prompted him to decline a contest which might have been imputed to ambition and avarice; and he publicly offered, not without some mixture of indignation, to renounce the government of a church which had been restored, and almost created, by his labors. His resignation was accepted by the synod, and by the emperor, with more readiness than he seems to have expected. At the time when he might have hoped to enjoy the fruits of his victory, his episcopal throne was filled by the senator Nectarius; and the new archbishop, accidentally recommended by his easy temper and venerable aspect, was obliged to delay the ceremony of his consecration, till he had previously despatched the rites of his baptism. [46](#) After this remarkable experience of the ingratitude of princes and prelates, Gregory retired once more to his obscure solitude of Cappadocia; where he employed the remainder of his life, about eight years, in the exercises of poetry and devotion. The title of Saint has been added to his name: but the tenderness of his heart, [47](#) and the elegance of his genius, reflect a more pleasing lustre on the memory of Gregory Nazianzen.

45

[\(return\)](#)

[See Gregory, tom. ii. de Vita sua, p. 28-31. The fourteenth, twenty-seventh, and thirty-second Orations were pronounced in the several stages of this business. The peroration of the last, (tom. i. p. 528,) in which he takes a solemn leave of men and angels, the city and the emperor, the East and the West, &c., is pathetic, and almost sublime.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[The whimsical ordination of Nectarius is attested by Sozomen, (l. vii. c. 8;) but Tillemont observes, (Mem. Eccles. tom. ix. p. 719,) Apres tout, ce narre de Sozomene est si honteux, pour tous ceux qu'il y mele, et surtout pour Theodose, qu'il vaut mieux travailler a le detruire, qu'a le soutenir; an admirable canon of criticism!]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[I can only be understood to mean, that such was his natural temper when it was not hardened, or inflamed, by religious zeal. From his retirement, he exhorts Nectarius to prosecute the heretics of Constantinople.]

It was not enough that Theodosius had suppressed the insolent reign of Arianism, or that he had abundantly revenged the injuries which the Catholics sustained from the zeal of Constantius and Valens. The orthodox emperor considered every heretic as a rebel against the supreme powers of heaven and of earth; and each of those powers might exercise their peculiar jurisdiction over the soul and body of the guilty. The decrees of the council of Constantinople had ascertained the true standard of the faith;

and the ecclesiastics, who governed the conscience of Theodosius, suggested the most effectual methods of persecution. In the space of fifteen years, he promulgated at least fifteen severe edicts against the heretics; [48](#) more especially against those who rejected the doctrine of the Trinity; and to deprive them of every hope of escape, he sternly enacted, that if any laws or rescripts should be alleged in their favor, the judges should consider them as the illegal productions either of fraud or forgery. The penal statutes were directed against the ministers, the assemblies, and the persons of the heretics; and the passions of the legislator were expressed in the language of declamation and invective. I. The heretical teachers, who usurped the sacred titles of Bishops, or Presbyters, were not only excluded from the privileges and emoluments so liberally granted to the orthodox clergy, but they were exposed to the heavy penalties of exile and confiscation, if they presumed to preach the doctrine, or to practise the rites, of their accursed sects. A fine of ten pounds of gold (above four hundred pounds sterling) was imposed on every person who should dare to confer, or receive, or promote, an heretical ordination: and it was reasonably expected, that if the race of pastors could be extinguished, their helpless flocks would be compelled, by ignorance and hunger, to return within the pale of the Catholic church. II. The rigorous prohibition of conventicles was carefully extended to every possible circumstance, in which the heretics could assemble with the intention of worshipping God and Christ according to the dictates of their conscience. Their religious meetings, whether public or secret, by day or by night, in cities or in the country, were equally proscribed by the edicts of Theodosius; and the building, or ground, which had been used for that illegal purpose, was forfeited to the Imperial domain. III. It was supposed, that the error of the heretics could proceed only from the obstinate temper of their minds; and that such a temper was a fit object of censure and punishment. The anathemas of the church were fortified by a sort of civil excommunication; which separated them from their fellow-citizens, by a peculiar brand of infamy; and this declaration of the supreme magistrate tended to justify, or at least to excuse, the insults of a fanatic populace. The sectaries were gradually disqualified from the possession of honorable or lucrative employments; and Theodosius was satisfied with his own justice, when he decreed, that, as the Eunomians distinguished the nature of the Son from that of the Father, they should be incapable of making their wills or of receiving any advantage from testamentary donations. The guilt of the Manichaean heresy was esteemed of such magnitude, that it could be expiated only by the death of the offender; and the same capital punishment was inflicted on the Audians, or Quartodecimans, [49](#) who should dare to perpetrate the atrocious crime of celebrating on an improper day the festival of Easter. Every Roman might exercise the right of public accusation; but the office of Inquisitors of the Faith, a name so deservedly abhorred, was first instituted under the reign of Theodosius. Yet we are assured, that the execution of his penal edicts was seldom enforced; and that the pious emperor appeared less desirous to punish, than to reclaim, or terrify, his refractory subjects. [50](#)

- 48 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Theodosian Code, l. xvi. tit. v. leg. 6—23, with Godefroy's commentary on each law, and his general summary, or Paratitlon, tom vi. p. 104-110.]
- 49 [\(return\)](#)
[They always kept their Easter, like the Jewish Passover, on the fourteenth day of the first moon after the vernal equinox; and thus pertinaciously opposed the Roman Church and Nicene synod, which had fixed Easter to a Sunday. Bingham's Antiquities, l. xx. c. 5, vol. ii. p. 309, fol. edit.]
- 50 [\(return\)](#)
[Sozomen, l. vii. c. 12.]

The theory of persecution was established by Theodosius, whose justice and piety have been applauded by the saints: but the practice of it, in the fullest extent, was reserved for his rival and colleague, Maximus, the first, among the Christian princes, who shed the blood of his Christian subjects on account of their religious opinions. The cause of the Priscillianists, [51](#) a recent sect of heretics, who disturbed the provinces of Spain, was transferred, by appeal, from the synod of Bordeaux to the Imperial consistory of Treves; and by the sentence of the Prætorian præfect, seven persons were tortured, condemned, and executed. The first of these was Priscillian [52](#) himself, bishop of Avila, in Spain; who adorned the advantages of birth and fortune, by the accomplishments of eloquence and learning. [53](#) Two presbyters, and two deacons, accompanied their beloved master in his death, which they esteemed as a glorious martyrdom; and the number of religious victims was completed by the execution of Latronian, a poet, who rivalled the fame of the ancients; and of Euchrocia, a noble matron of Bordeaux, the widow of the orator Delphidius. [54](#) Two bishops who had embraced the sentiments of Priscillian, were condemned to a distant and dreary exile; [55](#) and some indulgence was shown to the meaner criminals, who assumed the merit of an early repentance. If any credit could be allowed to confessions extorted by fear or pain, and to vague reports, the offspring of malice and credulity, the heresy of the Priscillianists would be found to include the various abominations of magic, of impiety, and of lewdness. [56](#) Priscillian, who wandered about the world in the company of his spiritual sisters, was accused of praying stark naked in the midst of the congregation; and it was confidently asserted, that the effects of his criminal intercourse with the daughter of Euchrocia had been suppressed, by means still more odious and criminal. But an accurate, or rather a candid, inquiry will discover, that if the Priscillianists violated the laws of nature, it was not by the licentiousness, but by the austerity, of their lives. They absolutely condemned the use of the marriage-bed; and the peace of families was often disturbed by indiscreet separations. They enjoyed, or recommended, a total abstinence from all animal food; and their continual prayers, fasts, and vigils, inculcated a rule of strict and perfect devotion. The speculative tenets of the sect, concerning the person of Christ, and the nature of the human soul, were derived

from the Gnostic and Manichæan system; and this vain philosophy, which had been transported from Egypt to Spain, was ill adapted to the grosser spirits of the West. The obscure disciples of Priscillian suffered languished, and gradually disappeared: his tenets were rejected by the clergy and people, but his death was the subject of a long and vehement controversy; while some arraigned, and others applauded, the justice of his sentence. It is with pleasure that we can observe the humane inconsistency of the most illustrious saints and bishops, Ambrose of Milan, [57](#) and Martin of Tours, [58](#) who, on this occasion, asserted the cause of toleration. They pitied the unhappy men, who had been executed at Treves; they refused to hold communion with their episcopal murderers; and if Martin deviated from that generous resolution, his motives were laudable, and his repentance was exemplary. The bishops of Tours and Milan pronounced, without hesitation, the eternal damnation of heretics; but they were surprised, and shocked, by the bloody image of their temporal death, and the honest feelings of nature resisted the artificial prejudices of theology. The humanity of Ambrose and Martin was confirmed by the scandalous irregularity of the proceedings against Priscillian and his adherents. The civil and ecclesiastical ministers had transgressed the limits of their respective provinces. The secular judge had presumed to receive an appeal, and to pronounce a definitive sentence, in a matter of faith, and episcopal jurisdiction. The bishops had disgraced themselves, by exercising the functions of accusers in a criminal prosecution. The cruelty of Ithacius, [59](#) who beheld the tortures, and solicited the death, of the heretics, provoked the just indignation of mankind; and the vices of that profligate bishop were admitted as a proof, that his zeal was instigated by the sordid motives of interest. Since the death of Priscillian, the rude attempts of persecution have been refined and methodized in the holy office, which assigns their distinct parts to the ecclesiastical and secular powers. The devoted victim is regularly delivered by the priest to the magistrate, and by the magistrate to the executioner; and the inexorable sentence of the church, which declares the spiritual guilt of the offender, is expressed in the mild language of pity and intercession.

51

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Sacred History of Sulpicius Severus, (l. ii. p. 437-452, edit. Ludg. Bat. 1647,) a correct and original writer. Dr. Lardner (Credibility, &c., part ii. vol. ix. p. 256-350) has labored this article with pure learning, good sense, and moderation. Tillemont (Mem. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 491-527) has raked together all the dirt of the fathers; a useful scavenger!]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Severus Sulpicius mentions the arch-heretic with esteem and pity Faelix profecto, si non pravo studio corrupisset optimum ingenium prorsus multa in eo animi et corporis bona cerneret. (Hist. Sacra, l. ii. p. 439.) Even Jerom (tom. i. in Script. Eccles. p. 302) speaks with temper of Priscillian and Latronian.]

- 53 [\(return\)](#)
[The bishopric (in Old Castile) is now worth 20,000 ducats a year, (Busching's Geography, vol. ii. p. 308,) and is therefore much less likely to produce the author of a new heresy.]
- 54 [\(return\)](#)
[Exprobrabatur mulieri viduae nimia religio, et diligentius culta divinitas, (Pacat. in Panegy. Vet. xii. 29.) Such was the idea of a humane, though ignorant, polytheist.]
- 55 [\(return\)](#)
[One of them was sent in Sillinam insulam quae ultra Britannianest. What must have been the ancient condition of the rocks of Scilly? (Camden's Britannia, vol. ii. p. 1519.)]
- 56 [\(return\)](#)
[The scandalous calumnies of Augustin, Pope Leo, &c., which Tillemont swallows like a child, and Lardner refutes like a man, may suggest some candid suspicions in favor of the older Gnostics.]
- 57 [\(return\)](#)
[Ambros. tom. ii. Epist. xxiv. p. 891.]
- 58 [\(return\)](#)
[In the Sacred History, and the Life of St. Martin, Sulpicius Severus uses some caution; but he declares himself more freely in the Dialogues, (iii. 15.) Martin was reprov'd, however, by his own conscience, and by an angel; nor could he afterwards perform miracles with so much ease.]
- 59 [\(return\)](#)
[The Catholic Presbyter (Sulp. Sever. l. ii. p. 448) and the Pagan Orator (Pacat. in Panegy. Vet. xii. 29) reprobate, with equal indignation, the character and conduct of Ithacius.]

Chapter XXVII: Civil Wars, Reign Of Theodosius.—Part III.

Among the ecclesiastics, who illustrated the reign of Theodosius, Gregory Nazianzen was distinguished by the talents of an eloquent preacher; the reputation of miraculous gifts added weight and dignity to the monastic virtues of Martin of Tours; [60](#) but the palm of episcopal vigor and ability was justly claimed by the intrepid Ambrose. [61](#) He was descended from a noble family of Romans; his father had exercised the important office of Prætorian præfect of Gaul; and the son, after passing through the studies of a liberal education, attained, in the regular gradation of civil honors, the station of consular of Liguria, a province which included the Imperial residence of Milan. At the age of thirty-four, and before he had received the sacrament of baptism, Ambrose, to

his own surprise, and to that of the world, was suddenly transformed from a governor to an archbishop. Without the least mixture, as it is said, of art or intrigue, the whole body of the people unanimously saluted him with the episcopal title; the concord and perseverance of their acclamations were ascribed to a praeternatural impulse; and the reluctant magistrate was compelled to undertake a spiritual office, for which he was not prepared by the habits and occupations of his former life. But the active force of his genius soon qualified him to exercise, with zeal and prudence, the duties of his ecclesiastical jurisdiction; and while he cheerfully renounced the vain and splendid trappings of temporal greatness, he condescended, for the good of the church, to direct the conscience of the emperors, and to control the administration of the empire. Gratian loved and revered him as a father; and the elaborate treatise on the faith of the Trinity was designed for the instruction of the young prince. After his tragic death, at a time when the empress Justina trembled for her own safety, and for that of her son Valentinian, the archbishop of Milan was despatched, on two different embassies, to the court of Treves. He exercised, with equal firmness and dexterity, the powers of his spiritual and political characters; and perhaps contributed, by his authority and eloquence, to check the ambition of Maximus, and to protect the peace of Italy. [62](#) Ambrose had devoted his life, and his abilities, to the service of the church. Wealth was the object of his contempt; he had renounced his private patrimony; and he sold, without hesitation, the consecrated plate, for the redemption of captives. The clergy and people of Milan were attached to their archbishop; and he deserved the esteem, without soliciting the favor, or apprehending the displeasure, of his feeble sovereigns.

- 60 [\(return\)](#)
 [The Life of St. Martin, and the Dialogues concerning his miracles contain facts adapted to the grossest barbarism, in a style not unworthy of the Augustan age. So natural is the alliance between good taste and good sense, that I am always astonished by this contrast.]
- 61 [\(return\)](#)
 [The short and superficial Life of St. Ambrose, by his deacon Paulinus, (Appendix ad edit. Benedict. p. i.—xv.,) has the merit of original evidence. Tillemont (Mem. Eccles. tom. x. p. 78-306) and the Benedictine editors (p. xxxi.—lxiii.) have labored with their usual diligence.]
- 62 [\(return\)](#)
 [Ambrose himself (tom. ii. Epist. xxiv. p. 888—891) gives the emperor a very spirited account of his own embassy.]

The government of Italy, and of the young emperor, naturally devolved to his mother Justina, a woman of beauty and spirit, but who, in the midst of an orthodox people, had the misfortune of professing the Arian heresy, which she endeavored to instil into the

mind of her son. Justina was persuaded, that a Roman emperor might claim, in his own dominions, the public exercise of his religion; and she proposed to the archbishop, as a moderate and reasonable concession, that he should resign the use of a single church, either in the city or the suburbs of Milan. But the conduct of Ambrose was governed by very different principles. [63](#) The palaces of the earth might indeed belong to Caesar; but the churches were the houses of God; and, within the limits of his diocese, he himself, as the lawful successor of the apostles, was the only minister of God. The privileges of Christianity, temporal as well as spiritual, were confined to the true believers; and the mind of Ambrose was satisfied, that his own theological opinions were the standard of truth and orthodoxy. The archbishop, who refused to hold any conference, or negotiation, with the instruments of Satan, declared, with modest firmness, his resolution to die a martyr, rather than to yield to the impious sacrilege; and Justina, who resented the refusal as an act of insolence and rebellion, hastily determined to exert the Imperial prerogative of her son. As she desired to perform her public devotions on the approaching festival of Easter, Ambrose was ordered to appear before the council. He obeyed the summons with the respect of a faithful subject, but he was followed, without his consent, by an innumerable people; they pressed, with impetuous zeal, against the gates of the palace; and the affrighted ministers of Valentinian, instead of pronouncing a sentence of exile on the archbishop of Milan, humbly requested that he would interpose his authority, to protect the person of the emperor, and to restore the tranquility of the capital. But the promises which Ambrose received and communicated were soon violated by a perfidious court; and, during six of the most solemn days, which Christian piety had set apart for the exercise of religion, the city was agitated by the irregular convulsions of tumult and fanaticism. The officers of the household were directed to prepare, first, the Portian, and afterwards, the new, Basilica, for the immediate reception of the emperor and his mother. The splendid canopy and hangings of the royal seat were arranged in the customary manner; but it was found necessary to defend them. by a strong guard, from the insults of the populace. The Arian ecclesiastics, who ventured to show themselves in the streets, were exposed to the most imminent danger of their lives; and Ambrose enjoyed the merit and reputation of rescuing his personal enemies from the hands of the enraged multitude.

[His own representation of his principles and conduct (tom. ii. Epist. xx xxi. xxii. p. 852-880) is one of the curious monuments of ecclesiastical antiquity. It contains two letters to his sister Marcellina, with a petition to Valentinian and the sermon de Basilicis non madendis.]

But while he labored to restrain the effects of their zeal, the pathetic vehemence of his sermons continually inflamed the angry and seditious temper of the people of Milan. The characters of Eve, of the wife of Job, of Jezebel, of Herodias, were indecently applied to the mother of the emperor; and her desire to obtain a church for the Arians

was compared to the most cruel persecutions which Christianity had endured under the reign of Paganism. The measures of the court served only to expose the magnitude of the evil. A fine of two hundred pounds of gold was imposed on the corporate body of merchants and manufacturers: an order was signified, in the name of the emperor, to all the officers, and inferior servants, of the courts of justice, that, during the continuance of the public disorders, they should strictly confine themselves to their houses; and the ministers of Valentinian imprudently confessed, that the most respectable part of the citizens of Milan was attached to the cause of their archbishop. He was again solicited to restore peace to his country, by timely compliance with the will of his sovereign. The reply of Ambrose was couched in the most humble and respectful terms, which might, however, be interpreted as a serious declaration of civil war. "His life and fortune were in the hands of the emperor; but he would never betray the church of Christ, or degrade the dignity of the episcopal character. In such a cause he was prepared to suffer whatever the malice of the daemon could inflict; and he only wished to die in the presence of his faithful flock, and at the foot of the altar; he had not contributed to excite, but it was in the power of God alone to appease, the rage of the people: he deprecated the scenes of blood and confusion which were likely to ensue; and it was his fervent prayer, that he might not survive to behold the ruin of a flourishing city, and perhaps the desolation of all Italy." [64](#) The obstinate bigotry of Justina would have endangered the empire of her son, if, in this contest with the church and people of Milan, she could have depended on the active obedience of the troops of the palace. A large body of Goths had marched to occupy the Basilica, which was the object of the dispute: and it might be expected from the Arian principles, and barbarous manners, of these foreign mercenaries, that they would not entertain any scruples in the execution of the most sanguinary orders. They were encountered, on the sacred threshold, by the archbishop, who, thundering against them a sentence of excommunication, asked them, in the tone of a father and a master, whether it was to invade the house of God, that they had implored the hospitable protection of the republic. The suspense of the Barbarians allowed some hours for a more effectual negotiation; and the empress was persuaded, by the advice of her wisest counsellors, to leave the Catholics in possession of all the churches of Milan; and to dissemble, till a more convenient season, her intentions of revenge. The mother of Valentinian could never forgive the triumph of Ambrose; and the royal youth uttered a passionate exclamation, that his own servants were ready to betray him into the hands of an insolent priest.

[Retz had a similar message from the queen, to request that he would appease the tumult of Paris. It was no longer in his power, &c. A quoi j'ajoutai tout ce que vous pouvez vous imaginer de respect de douleur, de regret, et de soumission, &c. (Mémoires, tom. i. p. 140.) Certainly I do not compare either the causes or the men yet the

coadjutor himself had some idea (p. 84) of imitating
St. Ambrose]

The laws of the empire, some of which were inscribed with the name of Valentinian, still condemned the Arian heresy, and seemed to excuse the resistance of the Catholics. By the influence of Justina, an edict of toleration was promulgated in all the provinces which were subject to the court of Milan; the free exercise of their religion was granted to those who professed the faith of Rimini; and the emperor declared, that all persons who should infringe this sacred and salutary constitution, should be capitally punished, as the enemies of the public peace. [65](#) The character and language of the archbishop of Milan may justify the suspicion, that his conduct soon afforded a reasonable ground, or at least a specious pretence, to the Arian ministers; who watched the opportunity of surprising him in some act of disobedience to a law which he strangely represents as a law of blood and tyranny. A sentence of easy and honorable banishment was pronounced, which enjoined Ambrose to depart from Milan without delay; whilst it permitted him to choose the place of his exile, and the number of his companions. But the authority of the saints, who have preached and practised the maxims of passive loyalty, appeared to Ambrose of less moment than the extreme and pressing danger of the church. He boldly refused to obey; and his refusal was supported by the unanimous consent of his faithful people. [66](#) They guarded by turns the person of their archbishop; the gates of the cathedral and the episcopal palace were strongly secured; and the Imperial troops, who had formed the blockade, were unwilling to risk the attack, of that impregnable fortress. The numerous poor, who had been relieved by the liberality of Ambrose, embraced the fair occasion of signaling their zeal and gratitude; and as the patience of the multitude might have been exhausted by the length and uniformity of nocturnal vigils, he prudently introduced into the church of Milan the useful institution of a loud and regular psalmody. While he maintained this arduous contest, he was instructed, by a dream, to open the earth in a place where the remains of two martyrs, Gervasius and Protasius, [67](#) had been deposited above three hundred years. Immediately under the pavement of the church two perfect skeletons were found, [68](#) with the heads separated from their bodies, and a plentiful effusion of blood. The holy relics were presented, in solemn pomp, to the veneration of the people; and every circumstance of this fortunate discovery was admirably adapted to promote the designs of Ambrose. The bones of the martyrs, their blood, their garments, were supposed to contain a healing power; and the praeternatural influence was communicated to the most distant objects, without losing any part of its original virtue. The extraordinary cure of a blind man, [69](#) and the reluctant confessions of several daemoniacs, appeared to justify the faith and sanctity of Ambrose; and the truth of those miracles is attested by Ambrose himself, by his secretary Paulinus, and by his proselyte, the celebrated Augustin, who, at that time, professed the art of rhetoric in Milan. The reason of the present age may possibly approve the incredulity of Justina and her Arian court; who derided the theatrical representations which were exhibited by the

contrivance, and at the expense, of the archbishop. [70](#) Their effect, however, on the minds of the people, was rapid and irresistible; and the feeble sovereign of Italy found himself unable to contend with the favorite of Heaven. The powers likewise of the earth interposed in the defence of Ambrose: the disinterested advice of Theodosius was the genuine result of piety and friendship; and the mask of religious zeal concealed the hostile and ambitious designs of the tyrant of Gaul. [71](#)

65 [\(return\)](#)
[Sozomen alone (l. vii. c. 13) throws this luminous fact into a dark and perplexed narrative.]

66 [\(return\)](#)
[Excubabat pia plebs in ecclesia, mori parata cum episcopo suo.... Nos, adhuc frigidi, excitabamur tamen civitate attonita atque curbata. Augustin. Confession. l. ix. c. 7]

67 [\(return\)](#)
[Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. ii. p. 78, 498. Many churches in Italy, Gaul, &c., were dedicated to these unknown martyrs, of whom St. Gervaise seems to have been more fortunate than his companion.]

68 [\(return\)](#)
[Invenimus mirae magnitudinis viros duos, ut prisca aetas ferebat, tom. ii. Epist. xxii. p. 875. The size of these skeletons was fortunately, or skillfully, suited to the popular prejudice of the gradual decrease of the human stature, which has prevailed in every age since the time of Homer.—Grandiaque effossis mirabitur ossa sepulchris.]

69 [\(return\)](#)
[Ambros. tom. ii. Epist. xxii. p. 875. Augustin. Confes, l. ix. c. 7, de Civitat. Dei, l. xxii. c. 8. Paulin. in Vita St. Ambros. c. 14, in Append. Benedict. p. 4. The blind man's name was Severus; he touched the holy garment, recovered his sight, and devoted the rest of his life (at least twenty-five years) to the service of the church. I should recommend this miracle to our divines, if it did not prove the worship of relics, as well as the Nicene creed.]

70 [\(return\)](#)
[Paulin, in Tit. St. Ambros. c. 5, in Append. Benedict. p. 5.]

71 [\(return\)](#)
[Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. x. p. 190, 750. He partially allow the mediation of Theodosius, and capriciously rejects that of Maximus, though it is attested by Prosper, Sozomen, and Theodoret.]

The reign of Maximus might have ended in peace and prosperity, could he have contented himself with the possession of three ample countries, which now constitute the three most flourishing kingdoms of modern Europe. But the aspiring usurper, whose sordid ambition was not dignified by the love of glory and of arms, considered his actual forces as the instruments only of his future greatness, and his success was the immediate cause of his destruction. The wealth which he extorted [72](#) from the oppressed provinces of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, was employed in levying and maintaining a formidable army of Barbarians, collected, for the most part, from the fiercest nations of Germany. The conquest of Italy was the object of his hopes and preparations: and he secretly meditated the ruin of an innocent youth, whose government was abhorred and despised by his Catholic subjects. But as Maximus wished to occupy, without resistance, the passes of the Alps, he received, with perfidious smiles, Domninus of Syria, the ambassador of Valentinian, and pressed him to accept the aid of a considerable body of troops, for the service of a Pannonian war. The penetration of Ambrose had discovered the snares of an enemy under the professions of friendship; [73](#) but the Syrian Domninus was corrupted, or deceived, by the liberal favor of the court of Treves; and the council of Milan obstinately rejected the suspicion of danger, with a blind confidence, which was the effect, not of courage, but of fear. The march of the auxiliaries was guided by the ambassador; and they were admitted, without distrust, into the fortresses of the Alps. But the crafty tyrant followed, with hasty and silent footsteps, in the rear; and, as he diligently intercepted all intelligence of his motions, the gleam of armor, and the dust excited by the troops of cavalry, first announced the hostile approach of a stranger to the gates of Milan. In this extremity, Justina and her son might accuse their own imprudence, and the perfidious arts of Maximus; but they wanted time, and force, and resolution, to stand against the Gauls and Germans, either in the field, or within the walls of a large and disaffected city. Flight was their only hope, Aquileia their only refuge; and as Maximus now displayed his genuine character, the brother of Gratian might expect the same fate from the hands of the same assassin. Maximus entered Milan in triumph; and if the wise archbishop refused a dangerous and criminal connection with the usurper, he might indirectly contribute to the success of his arms, by inculcating, from the pulpit, the duty of resignation, rather than that of resistance. [74](#) The unfortunate Justina reached Aquileia in safety; but she distrusted the strength of the fortifications: she dreaded the event of a siege; and she resolved to implore the protection of the great Theodosius, whose power and virtue were celebrated in all the countries of the West. A vessel was secretly provided to transport the Imperial family; they embarked with precipitation in one of the obscure harbors of Venetia, or Istria; traversed the whole extent of the Adriatic and Ionian Seas; turned the extreme promontory of Peloponnesus; and, after a long, but successful navigation, reposed themselves in the port of Thessalonica. All the subjects of Valentinian deserted the cause of a prince, who, by his abdication, had absolved them from the duty of allegiance; and if the little city of Aemona, on the verge of Italy, had not presumed to

stop the career of his inglorious victory, Maximus would have obtained, without a struggle, the sole possession of the Western empire.

72

[\(return\)](#)

[The modest censure of Sulpicius (Dialog. iii. 15) inflicts a much deeper wound than the declamation of Pacatus, (xii. 25, 26.)]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Esto tutior adversus hominem, pacis involurco tegentem, was the wise caution of Ambrose (tom. ii. p. 891) after his return from his second embassy.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[Baronius (A.D. 387, No. 63) applies to this season of public distress some of the penitential sermons of the archbishop.]

Instead of inviting his royal guests to take the palace of Constantinople, Theodosius had some unknown reasons to fix their residence at Thessalonica; but these reasons did not proceed from contempt or indifference, as he speedily made a visit to that city, accompanied by the greatest part of his court and senate. After the first tender expressions of friendship and sympathy, the pious emperor of the East gently admonished Justina, that the guilt of heresy was sometimes punished in this world, as well as in the next; and that the public profession of the Nicene faith would be the most efficacious step to promote the restoration of her son, by the satisfaction which it must occasion both on earth and in heaven. The momentous question of peace or war was referred, by Theodosius, to the deliberation of his council; and the arguments which might be alleged on the side of honor and justice, had acquired, since the death of Gratian, a considerable degree of additional weight. The persecution of the Imperial family, to which Theodosius himself had been indebted for his fortune, was now aggravated by recent and repeated injuries. Neither oaths nor treaties could restrain the boundless ambition of Maximus; and the delay of vigorous and decisive measures, instead of prolonging the blessings of peace, would expose the Eastern empire to the danger of a hostile invasion. The Barbarians, who had passed the Danube, had lately assumed the character of soldiers and subjects, but their native fierceness was yet untamed: and the operations of a war, which would exercise their valor, and diminish their numbers, might tend to relieve the provinces from an intolerable oppression. Notwithstanding these specious and solid reasons, which were approved by a majority of the council, Theodosius still hesitated whether he should draw the sword in a contest which could no longer admit any terms of reconciliation; and his magnanimous character was not disgraced by the apprehensions which he felt for the safety of his infant sons, and the welfare of his exhausted people. In this moment of anxious doubt, while the fate of the Roman world depended on the resolution of a single man, the charms of the princess Galla most powerfully pleaded the cause of her brother Valentinian. [75](#) The heart of Theodosius was softened by the tears of beauty; his affections were insensibly engaged by the graces of youth and innocence: the art of

Justina managed and directed the impulse of passion; and the celebration of the royal nuptials was the assurance and signal of the civil war. The unfeeling critics, who consider every amorous weakness as an indelible stain on the memory of a great and orthodox emperor, are inclined, on this occasion, to dispute the suspicious evidence of the historian Zosimus. For my own part, I shall frankly confess, that I am willing to find, or even to seek, in the revolutions of the world, some traces of the mild and tender sentiments of domestic life; and amidst the crowd of fierce and ambitious conquerors, I can distinguish, with peculiar complacency, a gentle hero, who may be supposed to receive his armor from the hands of love. The alliance of the Persian king was secured by the faith of treaties; the martial Barbarians were persuaded to follow the standard, or to respect the frontiers, of an active and liberal monarch; and the dominions of Theodosius, from the Euphrates to the Adriatic, resounded with the preparations of war both by land and sea. The skilful disposition of the forces of the East seemed to multiply their numbers, and distracted the attention of Maximus. He had reason to fear, that a chosen body of troops, under the command of the intrepid Arbogastes, would direct their march along the banks of the Danube, and boldly penetrate through the Rhaetian provinces into the centre of Gaul. A powerful fleet was equipped in the harbors of Greece and Epirus, with an apparent design, that, as soon as the passage had been opened by a naval victory, Valentinian and his mother should land in Italy, proceed, without delay, to Rome, and occupy the majestic seat of religion and empire. In the mean while, Theodosius himself advanced at the head of a brave and disciplined army, to encounter his unworthy rival, who, after the siege of Aemona, [7511](#) had fixed his camp in the neighborhood of Siscia, a city of Pannonia, strongly fortified by the broad and rapid stream of the Save.

75

[\(return\)](#)

[The flight of Valentinian, and the love of Theodosius for his sister, are related by Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 263, 264.) Tillemont produces some weak and ambiguous evidence to antedate the second marriage of Theodosius, (Hist. des Empereurs, to. v. p. 740,) and consequently to refute ces contes de Zosime, qui seroient trop contraires a la piete de Theodose.]

7511

[\(return\)](#)

[Aemonah, Laybach. Siscia Sciszek.—M.]

Chapter XXVII: Civil Wars, Reign Of Theodosius.—Part IV.

The veterans, who still remembered the long resistance, and successive resources, of the tyrant Magnentius, might prepare themselves for the labors of three bloody campaigns. But the contest with his successor, who, like him, had usurped the throne of the West, was easily decided in the term of two months, [76](#) and within the space of

two hundred miles. The superior genius of the emperor of the East might prevail over the feeble Maximus, who, in this important crisis, showed himself destitute of military skill, or personal courage; but the abilities of Theodosius were seconded by the advantage which he possessed of a numerous and active cavalry. The Huns, the Alani, and, after their example, the Goths themselves, were formed into squadrons of archers; who fought on horseback, and confounded the steady valor of the Gauls and Germans, by the rapid motions of a Tartar war. After the fatigue of a long march, in the heat of summer, they spurred their foaming horses into the waters of the Save, swam the river in the presence of the enemy, and instantly charged and routed the troops who guarded the high ground on the opposite side. Marcellinus, the tyrant's brother, advanced to support them with the select cohorts, which were considered as the hope and strength of the army. The action, which had been interrupted by the approach of night, was renewed in the morning; and, after a sharp conflict, the surviving remnant of the bravest soldiers of Maximus threw down their arms at the feet of the conqueror. Without suspending his march, to receive the loyal acclamations of the citizens of Aemona, Theodosius pressed forwards to terminate the war by the death or captivity of his rival, who fled before him with the diligence of fear. From the summit of the Julian Alps, he descended with such incredible speed into the plain of Italy, that he reached Aquileia on the evening of the first day; and Maximus, who found himself encompassed on all sides, had scarcely time to shut the gates of the city. But the gates could not long resist the effort of a victorious enemy; and the despair, the disaffection, the indifference of the soldiers and people, hastened the downfall of the wretched Maximus. He was dragged from his throne, rudely stripped of the Imperial ornaments, the robe, the diadem, and the purple slippers; and conducted, like a malefactor, to the camp and presence of Theodosius, at a place about three miles from Aquileia. The behavior of the emperor was not intended to insult, and he showed disposition to pity and forgive, the tyrant of the West, who had never been his personal enemy, and was now become the object of his contempt. Our sympathy is the most forcibly excited by the misfortunes to which we are exposed; and the spectacle of a proud competitor, now prostrate at his feet, could not fail of producing very serious and solemn thoughts in the mind of the victorious emperor. But the feeble emotion of involuntary pity was checked by his regard for public justice, and the memory of Gratian; and he abandoned the victim to the pious zeal of the soldiers, who drew him out of the Imperial presence, and instantly separated his head from his body. The intelligence of his defeat and death was received with sincere or well-dissembled joy: his son Victor, on whom he had conferred the title of Augustus, died by the order, perhaps by the hand, of the bold Arbogastes; and all the military plans of Theodosius were successfully executed. When he had thus terminated the civil war, with less difficulty and bloodshed than he might naturally expect, he employed the winter months of his residence at Milan, to restore the state of the afflicted provinces; and early in the spring he made, after the example of Constantine and Constantius, his triumphal entry into the ancient capital of the Roman empire. [77](#)

[See Godefroy's Chronology of the Laws, Cod. Theodos, tom l. p. cxix.]

[Besides the hints which may be gathered from chronicles and ecclesiastical history, Zosimus (l. iv. p. 259—267,) Orosius, (l. vii. c. 35,) and Pacatus, (in Panegyr. Vet. xii. 30-47,) supply the loose and scanty materials of this civil war. Ambrose (tom. ii. Epist. xl. p. 952, 953) darkly alludes to the well-known events of a magazine surprised, an action at Petovio, a Sicilian, perhaps a naval, victory, &c., Ausonius (p. 256, edit. Toll.) applauds the peculiar merit and good fortune of Aquileia.]

The orator, who may be silent without danger, may praise without difficulty, and without reluctance; [78](#) and posterity will confess, that the character of Theodosius [79](#) might furnish the subject of a sincere and ample panegyric. The wisdom of his laws, and the success of his arms, rendered his administration respectable in the eyes both of his subjects and of his enemies. He loved and practised the virtues of domestic life, which seldom hold their residence in the palaces of kings. Theodosius was chaste and temperate; he enjoyed, without excess, the sensual and social pleasures of the table; and the warmth of his amorous passions was never diverted from their lawful objects. The proud titles of Imperial greatness were adorned by the tender names of a faithful husband, an indulgent father; his uncle was raised, by his affectionate esteem, to the rank of a second parent: Theodosius embraced, as his own, the children of his brother and sister; and the expressions of his regard were extended to the most distant and obscure branches of his numerous kindred. His familiar friends were judiciously selected from among those persons, who, in the equal intercourse of private life, had appeared before his eyes without a mask; the consciousness of personal and superior merit enabled him to despise the accidental distinction of the purple; and he proved by his conduct, that he had forgotten all the injuries, while he most gratefully remembered all the favors and services, which he had received before he ascended the throne of the Roman empire. The serious or lively tone of his conversation was adapted to the age, the rank, or the character of his subjects, whom he admitted into his society; and the affability of his manners displayed the image of his mind. Theodosius respected the simplicity of the good and virtuous: every art, every talent, of a useful, or even of an innocent nature, was rewarded by his judicious liberality; and, except the heretics, whom he persecuted with implacable hatred, the diffusive circle of his benevolence was circumscribed only by the limits of the human race. The government of a mighty empire may assuredly suffice to occupy the time, and the abilities, of a mortal: yet the diligent prince, without aspiring to the unsuitable reputation of profound learning, always reserved some moments of his leisure for the instructive amusement of reading. History, which enlarged his experience, was his favorite study. The annals of Rome, in the long

period of eleven hundred years, presented him with a various and splendid picture of human life: and it has been particularly observed, that whenever he perused the cruel acts of Cinna, of Marius, or of Sylla, he warmly expressed his generous detestation of those enemies of humanity and freedom. His disinterested opinion of past events was usefully applied as the rule of his own actions; and Theodosius has deserved the singular commendation, that his virtues always seemed to expand with his fortune: the season of his prosperity was that of his moderation; and his clemency appeared the most conspicuous after the danger and success of a civil war. The Moorish guards of the tyrant had been massacred in the first heat of the victory, and a small number of the most obnoxious criminals suffered the punishment of the law. But the emperor showed himself much more attentive to relieve the innocent than to chastise the guilty. The oppressed subjects of the West, who would have deemed themselves happy in the restoration of their lands, were astonished to receive a sum of money equivalent to their losses; and the liberality of the conqueror supported the aged mother, and educated the orphan daughters, of Maximus. [80](#) A character thus accomplished might almost excuse the extravagant supposition of the orator Pacatus; that, if the elder Brutus could be permitted to revisit the earth, the stern republican would abjure, at the feet of Theodosius, his hatred of kings; and ingenuously confess, that such a monarch was the most faithful guardian of the happiness and dignity of the Roman people. [81](#)

78

[\(return\)](#)

[Quam promptum laudare principem, tam tutum siluisse de principe, (Pacat. in Panegyr. Vet. xii. 2.) Latinus Pacatus Drepanius, a native of Gaul, pronounced this oration at Rome, (A.D. 388.) He was afterwards proconsul of Africa; and his friend Ausonius praises him as a poet second only to Virgil. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 303.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[See the fair portrait of Theodosius, by the younger Victor; the strokes are distinct, and the colors are mixed. The praise of Pacatus is too vague; and Claudian always seems afraid of exalting the father above the son.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[Ambros. tom. ii. Epist. xl. p. 55. Pacatus, from the want of skill or of courage, omits this glorious circumstance.]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[Pacat. in Panegyr. Vet. xii. 20.]

Yet the piercing eye of the founder of the republic must have discerned two essential imperfections, which might, perhaps, have abated his recent love of despotism. The virtuous mind of Theodosius was often relaxed by indolence, [82](#) and it was sometimes inflamed by passion. [83](#) In the pursuit of an important object, his active courage was

capable of the most vigorous exertions; but, as soon as the design was accomplished, or the danger was surmounted, the hero sunk into inglorious repose; and, forgetful that the time of a prince is the property of his people, resigned himself to the enjoyment of the innocent, but trifling, pleasures of a luxurious court. The natural disposition of Theodosius was hasty and choleric; and, in a station where none could resist, and few would dissuade, the fatal consequence of his resentment, the humane monarch was justly alarmed by the consciousness of his infirmity and of his power. It was the constant study of his life to suppress, or regulate, the intemperate sallies of passion and the success of his efforts enhanced the merit of his clemency. But the painful virtue which claims the merit of victory, is exposed to the danger of defeat; and the reign of a wise and merciful prince was polluted by an act of cruelty which would stain the annals of Nero or Domitian. Within the space of three years, the inconsistent historian of Theodosius must relate the generous pardon of the citizens of Antioch, and the inhuman massacre of the people of Thessalonica.

82

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. iv. p. 271, 272. His partial evidence is marked by an air of candor and truth. He observes these vicissitudes of sloth and activity, not as a vice, but as a singularity in the character of Theodosius.]

83

[\(return\)](#)

[This choleric temper is acknowledged and excused by Victor Sed habes (says Ambrose, in decent and many language, to his sovereign) nature impetum, quem si quis lenire velit, cito vertes ad misericordiam: si quis stimulet, in magis exsuscitas, ut eum revocare vix possis, (tom. ii. Epist. li. p. 998.) Theodosius (Claud. in iv. Hon. 266, &c.) exhorts his son to moderate his anger.]

The lively impatience of the inhabitants of Antioch was never satisfied with their own situation, or with the character and conduct of their successive sovereigns. The Arian subjects of Theodosius deplored the loss of their churches; and as three rival bishops disputed the throne of Antioch, the sentence which decided their pretensions excited the murmurs of the two unsuccessful congregations. The exigencies of the Gothic war, and the inevitable expense that accompanied the conclusion of the peace, had constrained the emperor to aggravate the weight of the public impositions; and the provinces of Asia, as they had not been involved in the distress were the less inclined to contribute to the relief, of Europe. The auspicious period now approached of the tenth year of his reign; a festival more grateful to the soldiers, who received a liberal donative, than to the subjects, whose voluntary offerings had been long since converted into an extraordinary and oppressive burden. The edicts of taxation interrupted the repose, and pleasures, of Antioch; and the tribunal of the magistrate was besieged by a suppliant crowd; who, in pathetic, but, at first, in respectful language, solicited the redress of their grievances. They were gradually incensed by the pride of their haughty rulers, who

treated their complaints as a criminal resistance; their satirical wit degenerated into sharp and angry invectives; and, from the subordinate powers of government, the invectives of the people insensibly rose to attack the sacred character of the emperor himself. Their fury, provoked by a feeble opposition, discharged itself on the images of the Imperial family, which were erected, as objects of public veneration, in the most conspicuous places of the city. The statues of Theodosius, of his father, of his wife Flaccilla, of his two sons, Arcadius and Honorius, were insolently thrown down from their pedestals, broken in pieces, or dragged with contempt through the streets; and the indignities which were offered to the representations of Imperial majesty, sufficiently declared the impious and treasonable wishes of the populace. The tumult was almost immediately suppressed by the arrival of a body of archers: and Antioch had leisure to reflect on the nature and consequences of her crime. [84](#) According to the duty of his office, the governor of the province despatched a faithful narrative of the whole transaction: while the trembling citizens intrusted the confession of their crime, and the assurances of their repentance, to the zeal of Flavian, their bishop, and to the eloquence of the senator Hilarius, the friend, and most probably the disciple, of Libanius; whose genius, on this melancholy occasion, was not useless to his country. [85](#) But the two capitals, Antioch and Constantinople, were separated by the distance of eight hundred miles; and, notwithstanding the diligence of the Imperial posts, the guilty city was severely punished by a long and dreadful interval of suspense. Every rumor agitated the hopes and fears of the Antiochians, and they heard with terror, that their sovereign, exasperated by the insult which had been offered to his own statues, and more especially, to those of his beloved wife, had resolved to level with the ground the offending city; and to massacre, without distinction of age or sex, the criminal inhabitants; [86](#) many of whom were actually driven, by their apprehensions, to seek a refuge in the mountains of Syria, and the adjacent desert. At length, twenty-four days after the sedition, the general Hellebicus and Caesarius, master of the offices, declared the will of the emperor, and the sentence of Antioch. That proud capital was degraded from the rank of a city; and the metropolis of the East, stripped of its lands, its privileges, and its revenues, was subjected, under the humiliating denomination of a village, to the jurisdiction of Laodicea. [87](#) The baths, the Circus, and the theatres were shut: and, that every source of plenty and pleasure might at the same time be intercepted, the distribution of corn was abolished, by the severe instructions of Theodosius. His commissioners then proceeded to inquire into the guilt of individuals; of those who had perpetrated, and of those who had not prevented, the destruction of the sacred statues. The tribunal of Hellebicus and Caesarius, encompassed with armed soldiers, was erected in the midst of the Forum. The noblest, and most wealthy, of the citizens of Antioch appeared before them in chains; the examination was assisted by the use of torture, and their sentence was pronounced or suspended, according to the judgment of these extraordinary magistrates. The houses of the criminals were exposed to sale, their wives and children were suddenly reduced, from affluence and luxury, to the most

abject distress; and a bloody execution was expected to conclude the horrors of the day, [88](#) which the preacher of Antioch, the eloquent Chrysostom, has represented as a lively image of the last and universal judgment of the world. But the ministers of Theodosius performed, with reluctance, the cruel task which had been assigned them; they dropped a gentle tear over the calamities of the people; and they listened with reverence to the pressing solicitations of the monks and hermits, who descended in swarms from the mountains. [89](#) Hellebicus and Caesarius were persuaded to suspend the execution of their sentence; and it was agreed that the former should remain at Antioch, while the latter returned, with all possible speed, to Constantinople; and presumed once more to consult the will of his sovereign. The resentment of Theodosius had already subsided; the deputies of the people, both the bishop and the orator, had obtained a favorable audience; and the reproaches of the emperor were the complaints of injured friendship, rather than the stern menaces of pride and power. A free and general pardon was granted to the city and citizens of Antioch; the prison doors were thrown open; the senators, who despaired of their lives, recovered the possession of their houses and estates; and the capital of the East was restored to the enjoyment of her ancient dignity and splendor. Theodosius condescended to praise the senate of Constantinople, who had generously interceded for their distressed brethren: he rewarded the eloquence of Hilarius with the government of Palestine; and dismissed the bishop of Antioch with the warmest expressions of his respect and gratitude. A thousand new statues arose to the clemency of Theodosius; the applause of his subjects was ratified by the approbation of his own heart; and the emperor confessed, that, if the exercise of justice is the most important duty, the indulgence of mercy is the most exquisite pleasure, of a sovereign. [90](#)

84 [\(return\)](#)

[The Christians and Pagans agreed in believing that the sedition of Antioch was excited by the daemons. A gigantic woman (says Sozomen, l. vii. c. 23) paraded the streets with a scourge in her hand. An old man, says Libanius, (Orat. xii. p. 396,) transformed himself into a youth, then a boy, &c.]

85 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, in his short and disingenuous account, (l. iv. p. 258, 259,) is certainly mistaken in sending Libanius himself to Constantinople. His own orations fix him at Antioch.]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius (Orat. i. p. 6, edit. Venet.) declares, that under such a reign the fear of a massacre was groundless and absurd, especially in the emperor's absence, for his presence, according to the eloquent slave, might have given a sanction to the most bloody acts.]

- 87 [\(return\)](#)
[Laodicea, on the sea-coast, sixty-five miles from Antioch, (see Noris Epoch. Syro-Maced. Dissert. iii. p. 230.) The Antiochians were offended, that the dependent city of Seleucia should presume to intercede for them.]
- 88 [\(return\)](#)
[As the days of the tumult depend on the movable festival of Easter, they can only be determined by the previous determination of the year. The year 387 has been preferred, after a laborious inquiry, by Tillemont (Hist. des. Emp. tom. v. p. 741-744) and Montfaucon, (Chrysostom, tom. xiii. p. 105-110.)]
- 89 [\(return\)](#)
[Chrysostom opposes their courage, which was not attended with much risk, to the cowardly flight of the Cynics.]
- 90 [\(return\)](#)
[The sedition of Antioch is represented in a lively, and almost dramatic, manner by two orators, who had their respective shares of interest and merit. See Libanius (Orat. xiv. xv. p. 389-420, edit. Morel. Orat. i. p. 1-14, Venet. 1754) and the twenty orations of St. John Chrysostom, de Statuis, (tom. ii. p. 1-225, edit. Montfaucon.) I do not pretend to much personal acquaintance with Chrysostom but Tillemont (Hist. des. Empereurs, tom. v. p. 263-283) and Hermant (Vie de St. Chrysostome, tom. i. p. 137-224) had read him with pious curiosity and diligence.]

The sedition of Thessalonica is ascribed to a more shameful cause, and was productive of much more dreadful consequences. That great city, the metropolis of all the Illyrian provinces, had been protected from the dangers of the Gothic war by strong fortifications and a numerous garrison. Botheric, the general of those troops, and, as it should seem from his name, a Barbarian, had among his slaves a beautiful boy, who excited the impure desires of one of the charioteers of the Circus. The insolent and brutal lover was thrown into prison by the order of Botheric; and he sternly rejected the importunate clamors of the multitude, who, on the day of the public games, lamented the absence of their favorite; and considered the skill of a charioteer as an object of more importance than his virtue. The resentment of the people was imbibed by some previous disputes; and, as the strength of the garrison had been drawn away for the service of the Italian war, the feeble remnant, whose numbers were reduced by desertion, could not save the unhappy general from their licentious fury. Botheric, and several of his principal officers, were inhumanly murdered; their mangled bodies were dragged about the streets; and the emperor, who then resided at Milan, was surprised by the intelligence of the audacious and wanton cruelty of the people of Thessalonica.

The sentence of a dispassionate judge would have inflicted a severe punishment on the authors of the crime; and the merit of Botheric might contribute to exasperate the grief and indignation of his master.

The fiery and choleric temper of Theodosius was impatient of the dilatory forms of a judicial inquiry; and he hastily resolved, that the blood of his lieutenant should be expiated by the blood of the guilty people. Yet his mind still fluctuated between the counsels of clemency and of revenge; the zeal of the bishops had almost extorted from the reluctant emperor the promise of a general pardon; his passion was again inflamed by the flattering suggestions of his minister Rufinus; and, after Theodosius had despatched the messengers of death, he attempted, when it was too late, to prevent the execution of his orders. The punishment of a Roman city was blindly committed to the undistinguishing sword of the Barbarians; and the hostile preparations were concerted with the dark and perfidious artifice of an illegal conspiracy. The people of Thessalonica were treacherously invited, in the name of their sovereign, to the games of the Circus; and such was their insatiate avidity for those amusements, that every consideration of fear, or suspicion, was disregarded by the numerous spectators. As soon as the assembly was complete, the soldiers, who had secretly been posted round the Circus, received the signal, not of the races, but of a general massacre. The promiscuous carnage continued three hours, without discrimination of strangers or natives, of age or sex, of innocence or guilt; the most moderate accounts state the number of the slain at seven thousand; and it is affirmed by some writers that more than fifteen thousand victims were sacrificed to the names of Botheric. A foreign merchant, who had probably no concern in his murder, offered his own life, and all his wealth, to supply the place of one of his two sons; but, while the father hesitated with equal tenderness, while he was doubtful to choose, and unwilling to condemn, the soldiers determined his suspense, by plunging their daggers at the same moment into the breasts of the defenceless youths. The apology of the assassins, that they were obliged to produce the prescribed number of heads, serves only to increase, by an appearance of order and design, the horrors of the massacre, which was executed by the commands of Theodosius. The guilt of the emperor is aggravated by his long and frequent residence at Thessalonica. The situation of the unfortunate city, the aspect of the streets and buildings, the dress and faces of the inhabitants, were familiar, and even present, to his imagination; and Theodosius possessed a quick and lively sense of the existence of the people whom he destroyed. [91](#)

[The original evidence of Ambrose, (tom. ii. Epist. li. p. 998.) Augustin, (de Civitat. Dei, v. 26,) and Paulinus, (in Vit. Ambros. c. 24,) is delivered in vague expressions of horror and pity. It is illustrated by the subsequent and unequal testimonies of Sozomen, (l. vii. c. 25,) Theodoret, (l. v. c. 17,) Theophanes, (Chronograph. p. 62,) Cedrenus, (p. 317,) and Zonaras, (tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 34.) Zosimus

alone, the partial enemy of Theodosius, most unaccountably passes over in silence the worst of his actions.]

The respectful attachment of the emperor for the orthodox clergy, had disposed him to love and admire the character of Ambrose; who united all the episcopal virtues in the most eminent degree. The friends and ministers of Theodosius imitated the example of their sovereign; and he observed, with more surprise than displeasure, that all his secret counsels were immediately communicated to the archbishop; who acted from the laudable persuasion, that every measure of civil government may have some connection with the glory of God, and the interest of the true religion. The monks and populace of Callinicum, [9111](#) an obscure town on the frontier of Persia, excited by their own fanaticism, and by that of their bishop, had tumultuously burnt a conventicle of the Valentinians, and a synagogue of the Jews. The seditious prelate was condemned, by the magistrate of the province, either to rebuild the synagogue, or to repay the damage; and this moderate sentence was confirmed by the emperor. But it was not confirmed by the archbishop of Milan. [92](#) He dictated an epistle of censure and reproach, more suitable, perhaps, if the emperor had received the mark of circumcision, and renounced the faith of his baptism. Ambrose considers the toleration of the Jewish, as the persecution of the Christian, religion; boldly declares that he himself, and every true believer, would eagerly dispute with the bishop of Callinicum the merit of the deed, and the crown of martyrdom; and laments, in the most pathetic terms, that the execution of the sentence would be fatal to the fame and salvation of Theodosius. As this private admonition did not produce an immediate effect, the archbishop, from his pulpit, [93](#) publicly addressed the emperor on his throne; [94](#) nor would he consent to offer the oblation of the altar, till he had obtained from Theodosius a solemn and positive declaration, which secured the impunity of the bishop and monks of Callinicum. The recantation of Theodosius was sincere; [95](#) and, during the term of his residence at Milan, his affection for Ambrose was continually increased by the habits of pious and familiar conversation.

9111 [\(return\)](#)

[Raeca, on the Euphrates—M.]

92 [\(return\)](#)

[See the whole transaction in Ambrose, (tom. ii. Epist. xl. xli. p. 950-956,) and his biographer Paulinus, (c. 23.) Bayle and Barbeyrac (Morales des Peres, c. xvii. p. 325, &c.) have justly condemned the archbishop.]

93 [\(return\)](#)

[His sermon is a strange allegory of Jeremiah's rod, of an almond tree, of the woman who washed and anointed the feet of Christ. But the peroration is direct and personal.]

94 [\(return\)](#)

[Hodie, Episcopo, de me proposuisti. Ambrose

modestly confessed it; but he sternly reprimanded Timasius, general of the horse and foot, who had presumed to say that the monks of Callinicum deserved punishment.]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[Yet, five years afterwards, when Theodosius was absent from his spiritual guide, he tolerated the Jews, and condemned the destruction of their synagogues. Cod. Theodos. l. xvi. tit. viii. leg. 9, with Godefroy's Commentary, tom. vi. p. 225.]

When Ambrose was informed of the massacre of Thessalonica, his mind was filled with horror and anguish. He retired into the country to indulge his grief, and to avoid the presence of Theodosius. But as the archbishop was satisfied that a timid silence would render him the accomplice of his guilt, he represented, in a private letter, the enormity of the crime; which could only be effaced by the tears of penitence. The episcopal vigor of Ambrose was tempered by prudence; and he contented himself with signifying [96](#) an indirect sort of excommunication, by the assurance, that he had been warned in a vision not to offer the oblation in the name, or in the presence, of Theodosius; and by the advice, that he would confine himself to the use of prayer, without presuming to approach the altar of Christ, or to receive the holy eucharist with those hands that were still polluted with the blood of an innocent people. The emperor was deeply affected by his own reproaches, and by those of his spiritual father; and after he had bewailed the mischievous and irreparable consequences of his rash fury, he proceeded, in the accustomed manner, to perform his devotions in the great church of Milan. He was stopped in the porch by the archbishop; who, in the tone and language of an ambassador of Heaven, declared to his sovereign, that private contrition was not sufficient to atone for a public fault, or to appease the justice of the offended Deity. Theodosius humbly represented, that if he had contracted the guilt of homicide, David, the man after God's own heart, had been guilty, not only of murder, but of adultery. "You have imitated David in his crime, imitate then his repentance," was the reply of the undaunted Ambrose. The rigorous conditions of peace and pardon were accepted; and the public penance of the emperor Theodosius has been recorded as one of the most honorable events in the annals of the church. According to the mildest rules of ecclesiastical discipline, which were established in the fourth century, the crime of homicide was expiated by the penitence of twenty years: [97](#) and as it was impossible, in the period of human life, to purge the accumulated guilt of the massacre of Thessalonica, the murderer should have been excluded from the holy communion till the hour of his death. But the archbishop, consulting the maxims of religious policy, granted some indulgence to the rank of his illustrious penitent, who humbled in the dust the pride of the diadem; and the public edification might be admitted as a weighty reason to abridge the duration of his punishment. It was sufficient, that the emperor of the Romans, stripped of the ensigns of royalty, should appear in a mournful and suppliant posture; and that, in the midst of the church of Milan, he should humbly

solicit, with sighs and tears, the pardon of his sins. [98](#) In this spiritual cure, Ambrose employed the various methods of mildness and severity. After a delay of about eight months, Theodosius was restored to the communion of the faithful; and the edict which interposes a salutary interval of thirty days between the sentence and the execution, may be accepted as the worthy fruits of his repentance. [99](#) Posterity has applauded the virtuous firmness of the archbishop; and the example of Theodosius may prove the beneficial influence of those principles, which could force a monarch, exalted above the apprehension of human punishment, to respect the laws, and ministers, of an invisible Judge. “The prince,” says Montesquieu, “who is actuated by the hopes and fears of religion, may be compared to a lion, docile only to the voice, and tractable to the hand, of his keeper.” [100](#) The motions of the royal animal will therefore depend on the inclination, and interest, of the man who has acquired such dangerous authority over him; and the priest, who holds in his hands the conscience of a king, may inflame, or moderate, his sanguinary passions. The cause of humanity, and that of persecution, have been asserted, by the same Ambrose, with equal energy, and with equal success.

96

[\(return\)](#)

[Ambros. tom. ii. Epist. li. p. 997-1001. His epistle is a miserable rhapsody on a noble subject. Ambrose could act better than he could write. His compositions are destitute of taste, or genius; without the spirit of Tertullian, the copious elegance of Lactantius the lively wit of Jerom, or the grave energy of Augustin.]

97

[\(return\)](#)

[According to the discipline of St. Basil, (Canon lvi.,) the voluntary homicide was four years a mourner; five a hearer; seven in a prostrate state; and four in a standing posture. I have the original (Beveridge, Pandect. tom. ii. p. 47-151) and a translation (Chardon, Hist. des Sacremens, tom. iv. p. 219-277) of the Canonical Epistles of St. Basil.]

98

[\(return\)](#)

[The penance of Theodosius is authenticated by Ambrose, (tom. vi. de Obit. Theodos. c. 34, p. 1207,) Augustin, (de Civitat. Dei, v. 26,) and Paulinus, (in Vit. Ambros. c. 24.) Socrates is ignorant; Sozomen (l. vii. c. 25) concise; and the copious narrative of Theodoret (l. v. c. 18) must be used with precaution.]

99

[\(return\)](#)

[Codex Theodos. l. ix. tit. xl. leg. 13. The date and circumstances of this law are perplexed with difficulties; but I feel myself inclined to favor the honest efforts of Tillemont (Hist. des Emp. tom. v. p. 721) and Pagi, (Critica, tom. i. p. 578.)]

[Un prince qui aime la religion, et qui la craint, est un lion qui cede a la main qui le flatte, ou a la voix qui l'appaise. Esprit des Loix, l. xxiv. c. 2.]

Chapter XXVII: Civil Wars, Reign Of Theodosius.—Part V.

After the defeat and death of the tyrant of Gaul, the Roman world was in the possession of Theodosius. He derived from the choice of Gratian his honorable title to the provinces of the East: he had acquired the West by the right of conquest; and the three years which he spent in Italy were usefully employed to restore the authority of the laws, and to correct the abuses which had prevailed with impunity under the usurpation of Maximus, and the minority of Valentinian. The name of Valentinian was regularly inserted in the public acts: but the tender age, and doubtful faith, of the son of Justina, appeared to require the prudent care of an orthodox guardian; and his specious ambition might have excluded the unfortunate youth, without a struggle, and almost without a murmur, from the administration, and even from the inheritance, of the empire. If Theodosius had consulted the rigid maxims of interest and policy, his conduct would have been justified by his friends; but the generosity of his behavior on this memorable occasion has extorted the applause of his most inveterate enemies. He seated Valentinian on the throne of Milan; and, without stipulating any present or future advantages, restored him to the absolute dominion of all the provinces, from which he had been driven by the arms of Maximus. To the restitution of his ample patrimony, Theodosius added the free and generous gift of the countries beyond the Alps, which his successful valor had recovered from the assassin of Gratian. [101](#) Satisfied with the glory which he had acquired, by revenging the death of his benefactor, and delivering the West from the yoke of tyranny, the emperor returned from Milan to Constantinople; and, in the peaceful possession of the East, insensibly relapsed into his former habits of luxury and indolence. Theodosius discharged his obligation to the brother, he indulged his conjugal tenderness to the sister, of Valentinian; and posterity, which admires the pure and singular glory of his elevation, must applaud his unrivalled generosity in the use of victory.

[It is the niggard praise of Zosimus himself, (l. iv. p. 267.) Augustin says, with some happiness of expression, Valentinianum.... misericordissima veneratione restituit.]

The empress Justina did not long survive her return to Italy; and, though she beheld the triumph of Theodosius, she was not allowed to influence the government of her son. [102](#) The pernicious attachment to the Arian sect, which Valentinian had imbibed from her example and instructions, was soon erased by the lessons of a more orthodox education. His growing zeal for the faith of Nice, and his filial reverence for the

character and authority of Ambrose, disposed the Catholics to entertain the most favorable opinion of the virtues of the young emperor of the West. [103](#) They applauded his chastity and temperance, his contempt of pleasure, his application to business, and his tender affection for his two sisters; which could not, however, seduce his impartial equity to pronounce an unjust sentence against the meanest of his subjects. But this amiable youth, before he had accomplished the twentieth year of his age, was oppressed by domestic treason; and the empire was again involved in the horrors of a civil war. Arbogastes, [104](#) a gallant soldier of the nation of the Franks, held the second rank in the service of Gratian. On the death of his master he joined the standard of Theodosius; contributed, by his valor and military conduct, to the destruction of the tyrant; and was appointed, after the victory, master-general of the armies of Gaul. His real merit, and apparent fidelity, had gained the confidence both of the prince and people; his boundless liberality corrupted the allegiance of the troops; and, whilst he was universally esteemed as the pillar of the state, the bold and crafty Barbarian was secretly determined either to rule, or to ruin, the empire of the West. The important commands of the army were distributed among the Franks; the creatures of Arbogastes were promoted to all the honors and offices of the civil government; the progress of the conspiracy removed every faithful servant from the presence of Valentinian; and the emperor, without power and without intelligence, insensibly sunk into the precarious and dependent condition of a captive. [105](#) The indignation which he expressed, though it might arise only from the rash and impatient temper of youth, may be candidly ascribed to the generous spirit of a prince, who felt that he was not unworthy to reign. He secretly invited the archbishop of Milan to undertake the office of a mediator; as the pledge of his sincerity, and the guardian of his safety. He contrived to apprise the emperor of the East of his helpless situation, and he declared, that, unless Theodosius could speedily march to his assistance, he must attempt to escape from the palace, or rather prison, of Vienna in Gaul, where he had imprudently fixed his residence in the midst of the hostile faction. But the hopes of relief were distant, and doubtful: and, as every day furnished some new provocation, the emperor, without strength or counsel, too hastily resolved to risk an immediate contest with his powerful general. He received Arbogastes on the throne; and, as the count approached with some appearance of respect, delivered to him a paper, which dismissed him from all his employments. "My authority," replied Arbogastes, with insulting coolness, "does not depend on the smile or the frown of a monarch;" and he contemptuously threw the paper on the ground. The indignant monarch snatched at the sword of one of the guards, which he struggled to draw from its scabbard; and it was not without some degree of violence that he was prevented from using the deadly weapon against his enemy, or against himself. A few days after this extraordinary quarrel, in which he had exposed his resentment and his weakness, the unfortunate Valentinian was found strangled in his apartment; and some pains were employed to disguise the manifest guilt of Arbogastes, and to persuade the world, that the death of the young emperor had been the voluntary effect of his own despair. [106](#) His body was

conducted with decent pomp to the sepulchre of Milan; and the archbishop pronounced a funeral oration to commemorate his virtues and his misfortunes. [107](#) On this occasion the humanity of Ambrose tempted him to make a singular breach in his theological system; and to comfort the weeping sisters of Valentinian, by the firm assurance, that their pious brother, though he had not received the sacrament of baptism, was introduced, without difficulty, into the mansions of eternal bliss. [108](#)

102 [\(return\)](#)
[Sozomen, l. vii. c. 14. His chronology is very irregular.]

103 [\(return\)](#)
[See Ambrose, (tom. ii. de Obit. Valentinian. c. 15, &c. p. 1178. c. 36, &c. p. 1184.) When the young emperor gave an entertainment, he fasted himself; he refused to see a handsome actress, &c. Since he ordered his wild beasts to to be killed, it is ungenerous in Philostor (l. xi. c. 1) to reproach him with the love of that amusement.]

104 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus (l. iv. p. 275) praises the enemy of Theodosius. But he is detested by Socrates (l. v. c. 25) and Orosius, (l. vii. c. 35.)]

105 [\(return\)](#)
[Gregory of Tours (l. ii. c. 9, p. 165, in the second volume of the Historians of France) has preserved a curious fragment of Sulpicius Alexander, an historian far more valuable than himself.]

106 [\(return\)](#)
[Godefroy (Dissertat. ad. Philostorg. p. 429-434) has diligently collected all the circumstances of the death of Valentinian II. The variations, and the ignorance, of contemporary writers, prove that it was secret.]

107 [\(return\)](#)
[De Obitu Valentinian. tom. ii. p. 1173-1196. He is forced to speak a discreet and obscure language: yet he is much bolder than any layman, or perhaps any other ecclesiastic, would have dared to be.]

108 [\(return\)](#)
[See c. 51, p. 1188, c. 75, p. 1193. Dom Chardon, (Hist. des Sacramens, tom. i. p. 86,) who owns that St. Ambrose most strenuously maintains the indispensable necessity of baptism, labors to reconcile the contradiction.]

The prudence of Arbogastes had prepared the success of his ambitious designs: and the provincials, in whose breast every sentiment of patriotism or loyalty was extinguished, expected, with tame resignation, the unknown master, whom the choice of a Frank might place on the Imperial throne. But some remains of pride and prejudice

still opposed the elevation of Arbogastes himself; and the judicious Barbarian thought it more advisable to reign under the name of some dependent Roman. He bestowed the purple on the rhetorician Eugenius; [109](#) whom he had already raised from the place of his domestic secretary to the rank of master of the offices. In the course, both of his private and public service, the count had always approved the attachment and abilities of Eugenius; his learning and eloquence, supported by the gravity of his manners, recommended him to the esteem of the people; and the reluctance with which he seemed to ascend the throne, may inspire a favorable prejudice of his virtue and moderation. The ambassadors of the new emperor were immediately despatched to the court of Theodosius, to communicate, with affected grief, the unfortunate accident of the death of Valentinian; and, without mentioning the name of Arbogastes, to request, that the monarch of the East would embrace, as his lawful colleague, the respectable citizen, who had obtained the unanimous suffrage of the armies and provinces of the West. [110](#) Theodosius was justly provoked, that the perfidy of a Barbarian, should have destroyed, in a moment, the labors, and the fruit, of his former victory; and he was excited by the tears of his beloved wife, [111](#) to revenge the fate of her unhappy brother, and once more to assert by arms the violated majesty of the throne. But as the second conquest of the West was a task of difficulty and danger, he dismissed, with splendid presents, and an ambiguous answer, the ambassadors of Eugenius; and almost two years were consumed in the preparations of the civil war. Before he formed any decisive resolution, the pious emperor was anxious to discover the will of Heaven; and as the progress of Christianity had silenced the oracles of Delphi and Dodona, he consulted an Egyptian monk, who possessed, in the opinion of the age, the gift of miracles, and the knowledge of futurity. Eutropius, one of the favorite eunuchs of the palace of Constantinople, embarked for Alexandria, from whence he sailed up the Nile, as far as the city of Lycopolis, or of Wolves, in the remote province of Thebais. [112](#) In the neighborhood of that city, and on the summit of a lofty mountain, the holy John [113](#) had constructed, with his own hands, an humble cell, in which he had dwelt above fifty years, without opening his door, without seeing the face of a woman, and without tasting any food that had been prepared by fire, or any human art. Five days of the week he spent in prayer and meditation; but on Saturdays and Sundays he regularly opened a small window, and gave audience to the crowd of suppliants who successively flowed from every part of the Christian world. The eunuch of Theodosius approached the window with respectful steps, proposed his questions concerning the event of the civil war, and soon returned with a favorable oracle, which animated the courage of the emperor by the assurance of a bloody, but infallible victory. [114](#) The accomplishment of the prediction was forwarded by all the means that human prudence could supply. The industry of the two master-generals, Stilicho and Timasius, was directed to recruit the numbers, and to revive the discipline of the Roman legions. The formidable troops of Barbarians marched under the ensigns of their national chieftains. The Iberian, the Arab, and the Goth, who gazed on each other with mutual astonishment, were enlisted

in the service of the same prince; [1141](#) and the renowned Alaric acquired, in the school of Theodosius, the knowledge of the art of war, which he afterwards so fatally exerted for the destruction of Rome. [115](#)

109 [\(return\)](#)

[Quem sibi Germanus famulam delegerat exul, is the contemptuous expression of Claudian, (iv. Cons. Hon. 74.) Eugenius professed Christianity; but his secret attachment to Paganism (Sozomen, l. vii. c. 22, Philostorg. l. xi. c. 2) is probable in a grammarian, and would secure the friendship of Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 276, 277.)]

110 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. iv. p. 278) mentions this embassy; but he is diverted by another story from relating the event.]

111 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosim. l. iv. p. 277. He afterwards says (p. 280) that Galla died in childbed; and intimates, that the affliction of her husband was extreme but short.]

112 [\(return\)](#)

[Lycopolis is the modern Siut, or Osiot, a town of Said, about the size of St. Denys, which drives a profitable trade with the kingdom of Senaar, and has a very convenient fountain, “cujus potu signa virgini tatis eripiuntur.” See D’Anville, Description de l’Egypte, p. 181 Abulfeda, Descript. Egypt. p. 14, and the curious Annotations, p. 25, 92, of his editor Michaelis.]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[The Life of John of Lycopolis is described by his two friends, Rufinus (l. ii. c. i. p. 449) and Palladius, (Hist. Lausiaca. c. 43, p. 738,) in Rosweyde’s great Collection of the Vitae Patrum. Tillemont (Mem. Eccles. tom. x. p. 718, 720) has settled the chronology.]

114 [\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen, l. vii. c. 22. Claudian (in Eutrop. l. i. 312) mentions the eunuch’s journey; but he most contemptuously derides the Egyptian dreams, and the oracles of the Nile.]

1141 [\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon has embodied the picturesque verses of Claudian:—

.... Nec tantis dissona linguis
Turba, nec armorum cultu diversion unquam]

115 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. iv. p. 280. Socrates, l. vii. 10. Alaric himself (de Bell. Getico, 524) dwells with more

complacency on his early exploits against the Romans.

.... *Tot Augustos Hebro qui teste fugavi.*

Yet his vanity could scarcely have proved this plurality of flying emperors.]

The emperor of the West, or, to speak more properly, his general Arbogastes, was instructed by the misconduct and misfortune of Maximus, how dangerous it might prove to extend the line of defence against a skilful antagonist, who was free to press, or to suspend, to contract, or to multiply, his various methods of attack. [116](#) Arbogastes fixed his station on the confines of Italy; the troops of Theodosius were permitted to occupy, without resistance, the provinces of Pannonia, as far as the foot of the Julian Alps; and even the passes of the mountains were negligently, or perhaps artfully, abandoned to the bold invader. He descended from the hills, and beheld, with some astonishment, the formidable camp of the Gauls and Germans, that covered with arms and tents the open country which extends to the walls of Aquileia, and the banks of the Frigidus, [117](#) or Cold River. [118](#) This narrow theatre of the war, circumscribed by the Alps and the Adriatic, did not allow much room for the operations of military skill; the spirit of Arbogastes would have disdained a pardon; his guilt extinguished the hope of a negotiation; and Theodosius was impatient to satisfy his glory and revenge, by the chastisement of the assassins of Valentinian. Without weighing the natural and artificial obstacles that opposed his efforts, the emperor of the East immediately attacked the fortifications of his rivals, assigned the post of honorable danger to the Goths, and cherished a secret wish, that the bloody conflict might diminish the pride and numbers of the conquerors. Ten thousand of those auxiliaries, and Bacurius, general of the Iberians, died bravely on the field of battle. But the victory was not purchased by their blood; the Gauls maintained their advantage; and the approach of night protected the disorderly flight, or retreat, of the troops of Theodosius. The emperor retired to the adjacent hills; where he passed a disconsolate night, without sleep, without provisions, and without hopes; [119](#) except that strong assurance, which, under the most desperate circumstances, the independent mind may derive from the contempt of fortune and of life. The triumph of Eugenius was celebrated by the insolent and dissolute joy of his camp; whilst the active and vigilant Arbogastes secretly detached a considerable body of troops to occupy the passes of the mountains, and to encompass the rear of the Eastern army. The dawn of day discovered to the eyes of Theodosius the extent and the extremity of his danger; but his apprehensions were soon dispelled, by a friendly message from the leaders of those troops who expressed their inclination to desert the standard of the tyrant. The honorable and lucrative rewards, which they stipulated as the price of their perfidy, were granted without hesitation; and as ink and paper could not easily be procured, the emperor subscribed, on his own tablets, the ratification of the treaty. The spirit of his soldiers was revived by this seasonable reenforcement; and they again marched, with confidence, to surprise the camp of a tyrant, whose principal officers appeared to distrust, either the justice or the success of his arms. In the heat of

the battle, a violent tempest, [120](#) such as is often felt among the Alps, suddenly arose from the East. The army of Theodosius was sheltered by their position from the impetuosity of the wind, which blew a cloud of dust in the faces of the enemy, disordered their ranks, wrested their weapons from their hands, and diverted, or repelled, their ineffectual javelins. This accidental advantage was skilfully improved, the violence of the storm was magnified by the superstitious terrors of the Gauls; and they yielded without shame to the invisible powers of heaven, who seemed to militate on the side of the pious emperor. His victory was decisive; and the deaths of his two rivals were distinguished only by the difference of their characters. The rhetorician Eugenius, who had almost acquired the dominion of the world, was reduced to implore the mercy of the conqueror; and the unrelenting soldiers separated his head from his body as he lay prostrate at the feet of Theodosius. Arbogastes, after the loss of a battle, in which he had discharged the duties of a soldier and a general, wandered several days among the mountains. But when he was convinced that his cause was desperate, and his escape impracticable, the intrepid Barbarian imitated the example of the ancient Romans, and turned his sword against his own breast. The fate of the empire was determined in a narrow corner of Italy; and the legitimate successor of the house of Valentinian embraced the archbishop of Milan, and graciously received the submission of the provinces of the West. Those provinces were involved in the guilt of rebellion; while the inflexible courage of Ambrose alone had resisted the claims of successful usurpation. With a manly freedom, which might have been fatal to any other subject, the archbishop rejected the gifts of Eugenius, [1201](#) declined his correspondence, and withdrew himself from Milan, to avoid the odious presence of a tyrant, whose downfall he predicted in discreet and ambiguous language. The merit of Ambrose was applauded by the conqueror, who secured the attachment of the people by his alliance with the church; and the clemency of Theodosius is ascribed to the humane intercession of the archbishop of Milan. [121](#)

116

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian (in iv. Cons. Honor. 77, &c.) contrasts the military plans of the two usurpers:—

*.... Novitas audere priorem
Suadebat; cautumque dabant exempla sequentem.
Hic nova moliri praeceps: hic quaerere tuta
Providus. Hic fuis; colectis viribus ille.
Hic vagus excurrrens; hic claustra reductus
Dissimiles, sed morte pares.....]*

117

[\(return\)](#)

[The Frigidus, a small, though memorable, stream in the country of Goretz, now called the Vipao, falls into the Sontius, or Lisonzo, above Aquileia, some miles from the Adriatic. See D’Anville’s ancient and modern maps, and the Italia Antiqua of Cluverius, (tom. i. c. 188.)]

118

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian’s wit is intolerable: the snow was dyed

red; the cold ver smoked; and the channel must have been choked with carcasses the current had not been swelled with blood. Confluxit populus: totam pater undique secum Moverat Aurorem; mixtis hic Colchus Iberis, Hic mitra velatus Arabs, hic crine decoro Armenius, hic picta Saces, fucataque Medus, Hic gemmata tiger tentoria fixerat Indus.—De Laud. Stil. l. 145.—M.]

119 [\(return\)](#)

[Theodoret affirms, that St. John, and St. Philip, appeared to the waking, or sleeping, emperor, on horseback, &c. This is the first instance of apostolic chivalry, which afterwards became so popular in Spain, and in the Crusades.]

120 [\(return\)](#)

[Te propter, gelidis Aquilo de monte procellis

*Obruit adversas acies; revolutaque tela
Vertit in auctores, et turbine reppulit hastas*

*O nimium dilecte Deo, cui fundit ab antris
Aeolus armatas hyemes; cui militat Aether,
Et conjurati veniunt ad classica venti.*

These famous lines of Claudian (in iii. Cons. Honor. 93, &c. A.D. 396) are alleged by his contemporaries, Augustin and Orosius; who suppress the Pagan deity of Aeolus, and add some circumstances from the information of eye-witnesses. Within four months after the victory, it was compared by Ambrose to the miraculous victories of Moses and Joshua.]

1201 [\(return\)](#)

[Arbogastes and his emperor had openly espoused the Pagan party, according to Ambrose and Augustin. See Le Beau, v. 40. Beugnot (Histoire de la Destruction du Paganisme) is more full, and perhaps somewhat fanciful, on this remarkable reaction in favor of Paganism, but compare p 116.—M.]

121 [\(return\)](#)

[The events of this civil war are gathered from Ambrose, (tom. ii. Epist. lxii. p. 1022,) Paulinus, (in Vit. Ambros. c. 26-34,) Augustin, (de Civitat. Dei, v. 26,) Orosius, (l. vii. c. 35,) Sozomen, (l. vii. c. 24,) Theodoret, (l. v. c. 24,) Zosimus, (l. iv. p. 281, 282,) Claudian, (in iii. Cons. Hon. 63-105, in iv. Cons. Hon. 70-117,) and the Chronicles published by Scaliger.]

After the defeat of Eugenius, the merit, as well as the authority, of Theodosius was cheerfully acknowledged by all the inhabitants of the Roman world. The experience of his past conduct encouraged the most pleasing expectations of his future reign; and the

age of the emperor, which did not exceed fifty years, seemed to extend the prospect of the public felicity. His death, only four months after his victory, was considered by the people as an unforeseen and fatal event, which destroyed, in a moment, the hopes of the rising generation. But the indulgence of ease and luxury had secretly nourished the principles of disease. [122](#) The strength of Theodosius was unable to support the sudden and violent transition from the palace to the camp; and the increasing symptoms of a dropsy announced the speedy dissolution of the emperor. The opinion, and perhaps the interest, of the public had confirmed the division of the Eastern and Western empires; and the two royal youths, Arcadius and Honorius, who had already obtained, from the tenderness of their father, the title of Augustus, were destined to fill the thrones of Constantinople and of Rome. Those princes were not permitted to share the danger and glory of the civil war; [123](#) but as soon as Theodosius had triumphed over his unworthy rivals, he called his younger son, Honorius, to enjoy the fruits of the victory, and to receive the sceptre of the West from the hands of his dying father. The arrival of Honorius at Milan was welcomed by a splendid exhibition of the games of the Circus; and the emperor, though he was oppressed by the weight of his disorder, contributed by his presence to the public joy. But the remains of his strength were exhausted by the painful effort which he made to assist at the spectacles of the morning. Honorius supplied, during the rest of the day, the place of his father; and the great Theodosius expired in the ensuing night. Notwithstanding the recent animosities of a civil war, his death was universally lamented. The Barbarians, whom he had vanquished and the churchmen, by whom he had been subdued, celebrated, with loud and sincere applause, the qualities of the deceased emperor, which appeared the most valuable in their eyes. The Romans were terrified by the impending dangers of a feeble and divided administration, and every disgraceful moment of the unfortunate reigns of Arcadius and Honorius revived the memory of their irreparable loss.

122

[\(return\)](#)

[This disease, ascribed by Socrates (l. v. c. 26) to the fatigues of war, is represented by Philostorgius (l. xi. c. 2) as the effect of sloth and intemperance; for which Photius calls him an impudent liar, (Godefroy, Dissert. p. 438.)]

123

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus supposes, that the boy Honorius accompanied his father, (l. iv. p. 280.) Yet the quanto flagrant pectora voto is all that flattery would allow to a contemporary poet; who clearly describes the emperor's refusal, and the journey of Honorius, after the victory (Claudian in iii. Cons. 78-125.)]

In the faithful picture of the virtues of Theodosius, his imperfections have not been dissembled; the act of cruelty, and the habits of indolence, which tarnished the glory of one of the greatest of the Roman princes. An historian, perpetually adverse to the fame

of Theodosius, has exaggerated his vices, and their pernicious effects; he boldly asserts, that every rank of subjects imitated the effeminate manners of their sovereign; and that every species of corruption polluted the course of public and private life; and that the feeble restraints of order and decency were insufficient to resist the progress of that degenerate spirit, which sacrifices, without a blush, the consideration of duty and interest to the base indulgence of sloth and appetite. [124](#) The complaints of contemporary writers, who deplore the increase of luxury, and depravation of manners, are commonly expressive of their peculiar temper and situation. There are few observers, who possess a clear and comprehensive view of the revolutions of society; and who are capable of discovering the nice and secret springs of action, which impel, in the same uniform direction, the blind and capricious passions of a multitude of individuals. If it can be affirmed, with any degree of truth, that the luxury of the Romans was more shameless and dissolute in the reign of Theodosius than in the age of Constantine, perhaps, or of Augustus, the alteration cannot be ascribed to any beneficial improvements, which had gradually increased the stock of national riches. A long period of calamity or decay must have checked the industry, and diminished the wealth, of the people; and their profuse luxury must have been the result of that indolent despair, which enjoys the present hour, and declines the thoughts of futurity. The uncertain condition of their property discouraged the subjects of Theodosius from engaging in those useful and laborious undertakings which require an immediate expense, and promise a slow and distant advantage. The frequent examples of ruin and desolation tempted them not to spare the remains of a patrimony, which might, every hour, become the prey of the rapacious Goth. And the mad prodigality which prevails in the confusion of a shipwreck, or a siege, may serve to explain the progress of luxury amidst the misfortunes and terrors of a sinking nation.

The effeminate luxury, which infected the manners of courts and cities, had instilled a secret and destructive poison into the camps of the legions; and their degeneracy has been marked by the pen of a military writer, who had accurately studied the genuine and ancient principles of Roman discipline. It is the just and important observation of Vegetius, that the infantry was invariably covered with defensive armor, from the foundation of the city, to the reign of the emperor Gratian. The relaxation of discipline, and the disuse of exercise, rendered the soldiers less able, and less willing, to support the fatigues of the service; they complained of the weight of the armor, which they seldom wore; and they successively obtained the permission of laying aside both their cuirasses and their helmets. The heavy weapons of their ancestors, the short sword, and the formidable pilum, which had subdued the world, insensibly dropped from their feeble hands. As the use of the shield is incompatible with that of the bow, they reluctantly marched into the field; condemned to suffer either the pain of wounds, or the ignominy of flight, and always disposed to prefer the more shameful alternative.

The cavalry of the Goths, the Huns, and the Alani, had felt the benefits, and adopted the use, of defensive armor; and, as they excelled in the management of missile weapons, they easily overwhelmed the naked and trembling legions, whose heads and breasts were exposed, without defence, to the arrows of the Barbarians. The loss of armies, the destruction of cities, and the dishonor of the Roman name, ineffectually solicited the successors of Gratian to restore the helmets and the cuirasses of the infantry. The enervated soldiers abandoned their own and the public defence; and their pusillanimous indolence may be considered as the immediate cause of the downfall of the empire. [125](#)

125

[\(return\)](#)

[Vegetius, de Re Militari, l. i. c. 10. The series of calamities which he marks, compel us to believe, that the Hero, to whom he dedicates his book, is the last and most inglorious of the Valentinians.]

Chapter XXVIII: Destruction Of Paganism.—Part I.

Final Destruction Of Paganism.—Introduction Of The Worship Of Saints, And Relics, Among The Christians.

The ruin of Paganism, in the age of Theodosius, is perhaps the only example of the total extirpation of any ancient and popular superstition; and may therefore deserve to be considered as a singular event in the history of the human mind. The Christians, more especially the clergy, had impatiently supported the prudent delays of Constantine, and the equal toleration of the elder Valentinian; nor could they deem their conquest perfect or secure, as long as their adversaries were permitted to exist. The influence which Ambrose and his brethren had acquired over the youth of Gratian, and the piety of Theodosius, was employed to infuse the maxims of persecution into the breasts of their Imperial proselytes. Two specious principles of religious jurisprudence were established, from whence they deduced a direct and rigorous conclusion, against the subjects of the empire who still adhered to the ceremonies of their ancestors: that the magistrate is, in some measure, guilty of the crimes which he neglects to prohibit, or to punish; and, that the idolatrous worship of fabulous deities, and real daemons, is the most abominable crime against the supreme majesty of the Creator. The laws of Moses, and the examples of Jewish history, [1](#) were hastily, perhaps erroneously, applied, by the clergy, to the mild and universal reign of Christianity. [2](#) The zeal of the emperors was excited to vindicate their own honor, and that of the Deity: and the temples of the Roman world were subverted, about sixty years after the conversion of Constantine.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[St. Ambrose (tom. ii. de Obit. Theodos. p. 1208) expressly praises and recommends the zeal of Josiah in the destruction of idolatry The language of Julius Firmicus Maternus on the same subject (de Errore Profan. Relig. p. 467, edit. Gronov.) is piously inhuman. Nec filio jubet (the Mosaic Law)

parci, nec fratri, et per amatam conjugera gladium
vindicem ducit, &c.]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Bayle (tom. ii. p. 406, in his Commentaire
Philosophique) justifies, and limits, these intolerant
laws by the temporal reign of Jehovah over the
Jews. The attempt is laudable.]

From the age of Numa to the reign of Gratian, the Romans preserved the regular succession of the several colleges of the sacerdotal order. [3](#) Fifteen Pontiffs exercised their supreme jurisdiction over all things, and persons, that were consecrated to the service of the gods; and the various questions which perpetually arose in a loose and traditionary system, were submitted to the judgment of their holy tribunal. Fifteen grave and learned Augurs observed the face of the heavens, and prescribed the actions of heroes, according to the flight of birds. Fifteen keepers of the Sibylline books (their name of Quindecemvirs was derived from their number) occasionally consulted the history of future, and, as it should seem, of contingent, events. Six Vestals devoted their virginity to the guard of the sacred fire, and of the unknown pledges of the duration of Rome; which no mortal had been suffered to behold with impunity. [4](#) Seven Epulos prepared the table of the gods, conducted the solemn procession, and regulated the ceremonies of the annual festival. The three Flamens of Jupiter, of Mars, and of Quirinus, were considered as the peculiar ministers of the three most powerful deities, who watched over the fate of Rome and of the universe. The King of the Sacrifices represented the person of Numa, and of his successors, in the religious functions, which could be performed only by royal hands. The confraternities of the Salians, the Lupercals, &c., practised such rites as might extort a smile of contempt from every reasonable man, with a lively confidence of recommending themselves to the favor of the immortal gods. The authority, which the Roman priests had formerly obtained in the counsels of the republic, was gradually abolished by the establishment of monarchy, and the removal of the seat of empire. But the dignity of their sacred character was still protected by the laws, and manners of their country; and they still continued, more especially the college of pontiffs, to exercise in the capital, and sometimes in the provinces, the rights of their ecclesiastical and civil jurisdiction. Their robes of purple, chariotz of state, and sumptuous entertainments, attracted the admiration of the people; and they received, from the consecrated lands, and the public revenue, an ample stipend, which liberally supported the splendor of the priesthood, and all the expenses of the religious worship of the state. As the service of the altar was not incompatible with the command of armies, the Romans, after their consulships and triumphs, aspired to the place of pontiff, or of augur; the seats of Cicero [5](#) and Pompey were filled, in the fourth century, by the most illustrious members of the senate; and the dignity of their birth reflected additional splendor on their sacerdotal character. The fifteen priests, who composed the college of pontiffs, enjoyed a more distinguished rank as the companions of their sovereign; and the Christian emperors condescended to accept the robe and

ensigns, which were appropriated to the office of supreme pontiff. But when Gratian ascended the throne, more scrupulous or more enlightened, he sternly rejected those profane symbols; [6](#) applied to the service of the state, or of the church, the revenues of the priests and vestals; abolished their honors and immunities; and dissolved the ancient fabric of Roman superstition, which was supported by the opinions and habits of eleven hundred years. Paganism was still the constitutional religion of the senate. The hall, or temple, in which they assembled, was adorned by the statue and altar of Victory; [7](#) a majestic female standing on a globe, with flowing garments, expanded wings, and a crown of laurel in her outstretched hand. [8](#) The senators were sworn on the altar of the goddess to observe the laws of the emperor and of the empire: and a solemn offering of wine and incense was the ordinary prelude of their public deliberations. [9](#) The removal of this ancient monument was the only injury which Constantius had offered to the superstition of the Romans. The altar of Victory was again restored by Julian, tolerated by Valentinian, and once more banished from the senate by the zeal of Gratian. [10](#) But the emperor yet spared the statues of the gods which were exposed to the public veneration: four hundred and twenty-four temples, or chapels, still remained to satisfy the devotion of the people; and in every quarter of Rome the delicacy of the Christians was offended by the fumes of idolatrous sacrifice. [11](#)

3

[\(return\)](#)

[See the outlines of the Roman hierarchy in Cicero, (de Legibus, ii. 7, 8,) Livy, (i. 20,) Dionysius Halicarnassensis, (l. ii. p. 119-129, edit. Hudson,) Beaufort, (Republique Romaine, tom. i. p. 1-90,) and Moyle, (vol. i. p. 10-55.) The last is the work of an English whig, as well as of a Roman antiquary.]

4

[\(return\)](#)

[These mystic, and perhaps imaginary, symbols have given birth to various fables and conjectures. It seems probable, that the Palladium was a small statue (three cubits and a half high) of Minerva, with a lance and distaff; that it was usually enclosed in a seria, or barrel; and that a similar barrel was placed by its side to disconcert curiosity, or sacrilege. See Mezeriac (Comment. sur les Epitres d'Ovide, tom i. p. 60—66) and Lipsius, (tom. iii. p. 610 de Vesta, &c. c 10.)]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[Cicero frankly (ad Atticum, l. ii. Epist. 5) or indirectly (ad Familiar. l. xv. Epist. 4) confesses that the Augurate is the supreme object of his wishes. Pliny is proud to tread in the footsteps of Cicero, (l. iv. Epist. 8,) and the chain of tradition might be continued from history and marbles.]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. iv. p. 249, 250. I have suppressed the foolish pun about Pontifex and Maximus.]

- 7 [\(return\)](#)
[This statue was transported from Tarentum to Rome, placed in the Curia Julia by Caesar, and decorated by Augustus with the spoils of Egypt.]
- 8 [\(return\)](#)
[Prudentius (l. ii. in initio) has drawn a very awkward portrait of Victory; but the curious reader will obtain more satisfaction from Montfaucon's Antiquities, (tom. i. p. 341.)]
- 9 [\(return\)](#)
[See Suetonius (in August. c. 35) and the Exordium of Pliny's Panegyric.]
- 10 [\(return\)](#)
[These facts are mutually allowed by the two advocates, Symmachus and Ambrose.]
- 11 [\(return\)](#)
[The Notitia Urbis, more recent than Constantine, does not find one Christian church worthy to be named among the edifices of the city. Ambrose (tom. ii. Epist. xvii. p. 825) deplores the public scandals of Rome, which continually offended the eyes, the ears, and the nostrils of the faithful.]

But the Christians formed the least numerous party in the senate of Rome: [12](#) and it was only by their absence, that they could express their dissent from the legal, though profane, acts of a Pagan majority. In that assembly, the dying embers of freedom were, for a moment, revived and inflamed by the breath of fanaticism. Four respectable deputations were successively voted to the Imperial court, [13](#) to represent the grievances of the priesthood and the senate, and to solicit the restoration of the altar of Victory. The conduct of this important business was intrusted to the eloquent Symmachus, [14](#) a wealthy and noble senator, who united the sacred characters of pontiff and augur with the civil dignities of proconsul of Africa and praefect of the city. The breast of Symmachus was animated by the warmest zeal for the cause of expiring Paganism; and his religious antagonists lamented the abuse of his genius, and the inefficacy of his moral virtues. [15](#) The orator, whose petition is extant to the emperor Valentinian, was conscious of the difficulty and danger of the office which he had assumed. He cautiously avoids every topic which might appear to reflect on the religion of his sovereign; humbly declares, that prayers and entreaties are his only arms; and artfully draws his arguments from the schools of rhetoric, rather than from those of philosophy. Symmachus endeavors to seduce the imagination of a young prince, by displaying the attributes of the goddess of victory; he insinuates, that the confiscation of the revenues, which were consecrated to the service of the gods, was a measure unworthy of his liberal and disinterested character; and he maintains, that the Roman sacrifices would be deprived of their force and energy, if they were no longer celebrated at the expense, as well as in the name, of the republic. Even scepticism is made to supply

an apology for superstition. The great and incomprehensible secret of the universe eludes the inquiry of man. Where reason cannot instruct, custom may be permitted to guide; and every nation seems to consult the dictates of prudence, by a faithful attachment to those rites and opinions, which have received the sanction of ages. If those ages have been crowned with glory and prosperity, if the devout people have frequently obtained the blessings which they have solicited at the altars of the gods, it must appear still more advisable to persist in the same salutary practice; and not to risk the unknown perils that may attend any rash innovations. The test of antiquity and success was applied with singular advantage to the religion of Numa; and Rome herself, the celestial genius that presided over the fates of the city, is introduced by the orator to plead her own cause before the tribunal of the emperors. “Most excellent princes,” says the venerable matron, “fathers of your country! pity and respect my age, which has hitherto flowed in an uninterrupted course of piety. Since I do not repent, permit me to continue in the practice of my ancient rites. Since I am born free, allow me to enjoy my domestic institutions. This religion has reduced the world under my laws. These rites have repelled Hannibal from the city, and the Gauls from the Capitol. Were my gray hairs reserved for such intolerable disgrace? I am ignorant of the new system that I am required to adopt; but I am well assured, that the correction of old age is always an ungrateful and ignominious office.” ¹⁶ The fears of the people supplied what the discretion of the orator had suppressed; and the calamities, which afflicted, or threatened, the declining empire, were unanimously imputed, by the Pagans, to the new religion of Christ and of Constantine.

12 [\(return\)](#)
[Ambrose repeatedly affirms, in contradiction to common sense (Moyle’s Works, vol. ii. p. 147,) that the Christians had a majority in the senate.]

13 [\(return\)](#)
[The first (A.D. 382) to Gratian, who refused them audience; the second (A.D. 384) to Valentinian, when the field was disputed by Symmachus and Ambrose; the third (A.D. 388) to Theodosius; and the fourth (A.D. 392) to Valentinian. Lardner (Heathen Testimonies, vol. iv. p. 372-399) fairly represents the whole transaction.]

14 [\(return\)](#)
[Symmachus, who was invested with all the civil and sacerdotal honors, represented the emperor under the two characters of Pontifex Maximus, and Princeps Senatus. See the proud inscription at the head of his works. * Note: Mr. Beugnot has made it doubtful whether Symmachus was more than Pontifex Major. Destruction du Paganisme, vol. i. p. 459.—M.]

15 [\(return\)](#)
[As if any one, says Prudentius (in Symmach. i.

639) should dig in the mud with an instrument of gold and ivory. Even saints, and polemic saints, treat this adversary with respect and civility.]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[See the fifty-fourth Epistle of the tenth book of Symmachus. In the form and disposition of his ten books of Epistles, he imitated the younger Pliny; whose rich and florid style he was supposed, by his friends, to equal or excel, (Macrob. Saturnal. l. v. c. i.) But the luxcriancy of Symmachus consists of barren leaves, without fruits, and even without flowers. Few facts, and few sentiments, can be extracted from his verbose correspondence.]

But the hopes of Symmachus were repeatedly baffled by the firm and dexterous opposition of the archbishop of Milan, who fortified the emperors against the fallacious eloquence of the advocate of Rome. In this controversy, Ambrose condescends to speak the language of a philosopher, and to ask, with some contempt, why it should be thought necessary to introduce an imaginary and invisible power, as the cause of those victories, which were sufficiently explained by the valor and discipline of the legions. He justly derides the absurd reverence for antiquity, which could only tend to discourage the improvements of art, and to replunge the human race into their original barbarism. From thence, gradually rising to a more lofty and theological tone, he pronounces, that Christianity alone is the doctrine of truth and salvation; and that every mode of Polytheism conducts its deluded votaries, through the paths of error, to the abyss of eternal perdition. [17](#) Arguments like these, when they were suggested by a favorite bishop, had power to prevent the restoration of the altar of Victory; but the same arguments fell, with much more energy and effect, from the mouth of a conqueror; and the gods of antiquity were dragged in triumph at the chariot-wheels of Theodosius. [18](#) In a full meeting of the senate, the emperor proposed, according to the forms of the republic, the important question, Whether the worship of Jupiter, or that of Christ, should be the religion of the Romans. [1811](#) The liberty of suffrages, which he affected to allow, was destroyed by the hopes and fears that his presence inspired; and the arbitrary exile of Symmachus was a recent admonition, that it might be dangerous to oppose the wishes of the monarch. On a regular division of the senate, Jupiter was condemned and degraded by the sense of a very large majority; and it is rather surprising, that any members should be found bold enough to declare, by their speeches and votes, that they were still attached to the interest of an abdicated deity. [19](#) The hasty conversion of the senate must be attributed either to supernatural or to sordid motives; and many of these reluctant proselytes betrayed, on every favorable occasion, their secret disposition to throw aside the mask of odious dissimulation. But they were gradually fixed in the new religion, as the cause of the ancient became more hopeless; they yielded to the authority of the emperor, to the fashion of the times, and to the entreaties of their wives and children, [20](#) who were instigated and governed by the

clergy of Rome and the monks of the East. The edifying example of the Anician family was soon imitated by the rest of the nobility: the Bassi, the Paullini, the Gracchi, embraced the Christian religion; and “the luminaries of the world, the venerable assembly of Catos (such are the high-flown expressions of Prudentius) were impatient to strip themselves of their pontifical garment; to cast the skin of the old serpent; to assume the snowy robes of baptismal innocence, and to humble the pride of the consular fasces before tombs of the martyrs.” [21](#) The citizens, who subsisted by their own industry, and the populace, who were supported by the public liberality, filled the churches of the Lateran, and Vatican, with an incessant throng of devout proselytes. The decrees of the senate, which proscribed the worship of idols, were ratified by the general consent of the Romans; [22](#) the splendor of the Capitol was defaced, and the solitary temples were abandoned to ruin and contempt. [23](#) Rome submitted to the yoke of the Gospel; and the vanquished provinces had not yet lost their reverence for the name and authority of Rome. [2311](#)

17

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ambrose, (tom. ii. Epist. xvii. xviii. p. 825-833.) The former of these epistles is a short caution; the latter is a formal reply of the petition or libel of Symmachus. The same ideas are more copiously expressed in the poetry, if it may deserve that name, of Prudentius; who composed his two books against Symmachus (A.D. 404) while that senator was still alive. It is whimsical enough that Montesquieu (Considerations, &c. c. xix. tom. iii. p. 487) should overlook the two professed antagonists of Symmachus, and amuse himself with descanting on the more remote and indirect confutations of Orosius, St. Augustin, and Salvian.]

18

[\(return\)](#)

[See Prudentius (in Symmach. l. i. 545, &c.) The Christian agrees with the Pagan Zosimus (l. iv. p. 283) in placing this visit of Theodosius after the second civil war, *gemini bis victor caede Tyranni*, (l. i. 410.) But the time and circumstances are better suited to his first triumph.]

1811

[\(return\)](#)

[M. Beugnot (in his *Histoire de la Destruction du Paganisme en Occident*, i. p. 483-488) questions, altogether, the truth of this statement. It is very remarkable that Zosimus and Prudentius concur in asserting the fact of the question being solemnly deliberated by the senate, though with directly opposite results. Zosimus declares that the majority of the assembly adhered to the ancient religion of Rome; Gibbon has adopted the authority of Prudentius, who, as a Latin writer, though a poet, deserves more credit than the Greek historian. Both

concur in placing this scene after the second triumph of Theodosius; but it has been almost demonstrated (and Gibbon—see the preceding note—seems to have acknowledged this) by Pagi and Tillemont, that Theodosius did not visit Rome after the defeat of Eugenius. M. Beugnot urges, with much force, the improbability that the Christian emperor would submit such a question to the senate, whose authority was nearly obsolete, except on one occasion, which was almost hailed as an epoch in the restoration of her ancient privileges. The silence of Ambrose and of Jerom on an event so striking, and redounding so much to the honor of Christianity, is of considerable weight. M. Beugnot would ascribe the whole scene to the poetic imagination of Prudentius; but I must observe, that, however Prudentius is sometimes elevated by the grandeur of his subject to vivid and eloquent language, this flight of invention would be so much bolder and more vigorous than usual with this poet, that I cannot but suppose there must have been some foundation for the story, though it may have been exaggerated by the poet, or misrepresented by the historian.—M]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[Prudentius, after proving that the sense of the senate is declared by a legal majority, proceeds to say, (609, &c.)—

*Adspice quam pleno subsellia nostra Senatu
Decernant infame Jovis pulvinar, et omne
Idolum longe purgata ex urbe fugandum,
Qua vocat egregii sententia Principis, illuc
Libera, cum pedibus, tum corde, frequentia transit.*

Zosimus ascribes to the conscript fathers a heathenish courage, which few of them are found to possess.]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[Jerom specifies the pontiff Albinus, who was surrounded with such a believing family of children and grandchildren, as would have been sufficient to convert even Jupiter himself; an extraordinary proselyted (tom. i. ad Laetam, p. 54.)]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[

*Exultare Patres videas, pulcherrima mundi
Lumina; Conciliumque senum gestire Catonum
Candidiore toga niveum pietatis amictum
Sumere; et exuvias deponere pontificales.*

The fancy of Prudentius is warmed and elevated by victory]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[Prudentius, after he has described the conversion

of the senate and people, asks, with some truth and confidence,

*Et dubitamus adhuc Romam, tibi, Christe, dicatam
In leges transisse tuas?]*

23

[\(return\)](#)

[Jerom exults in the desolation of the Capitol, and the other temples of Rome, (tom. i. p. 54, tom. ii. p. 95.)]

2311

[\(return\)](#)

[M. Beugnot is more correct in his general estimate of the measures enforced by Theodosius for the abolition of Paganism. He seized (according to Zosimus) the funds bestowed by the public for the expense of sacrifices. The public sacrifices ceased, not because they were positively prohibited, but because the public treasury would no longer bear the expense. The public and the private sacrifices in the provinces, which were not under the same regulations with those of the capital, continued to take place. In Rome itself, many pagan ceremonies, which were without sacrifice, remained in full force. The gods, therefore, were invoked, the temples were frequented, the pontificates inscribed, according to ancient usage, among the family titles of honor; and it cannot be asserted that idolatry was completely destroyed by Theodosius. See Beugnot, p. 491.—M.]

Chapter XXVIII: Destruction Of Paganism.—Part II.

The filial piety of the emperors themselves engaged them to proceed, with some caution and tenderness, in the reformation of the eternal city. Those absolute monarchs acted with less regard to the prejudices of the provincials. The pious labor which had been suspended near twenty years since the death of Constantius, [24](#) was vigorously resumed, and finally accomplished, by the zeal of Theodosius. Whilst that warlike prince yet struggled with the Goths, not for the glory, but for the safety, of the republic, he ventured to offend a considerable party of his subjects, by some acts which might perhaps secure the protection of Heaven, but which must seem rash and unseasonable in the eye of human prudence. The success of his first experiments against the Pagans encouraged the pious emperor to reiterate and enforce his edicts of proscription: the same laws which had been originally published in the provinces of the East, were applied, after the defeat of Maximus, to the whole extent of the Western empire; and every victory of the orthodox Theodosius contributed to the triumph of the Christian and Catholic faith. [25](#) He attacked superstition in her most vital part, by prohibiting the use of sacrifices, which he declared to be criminal as well as infamous; and if the terms

of his edicts more strictly condemned the impious curiosity which examined the entrails of the victim, [26](#) every subsequent explanation tended to involve in the same guilt the general practice of immolation, which essentially constituted the religion of the Pagans. As the temples had been erected for the purpose of sacrifice, it was the duty of a benevolent prince to remove from his subjects the dangerous temptation of offending against the laws which he had enacted. A special commission was granted to Cynegius, the Prætorian præfect of the East, and afterwards to the counts Jovius and Gaudentius, two officers of distinguished rank in the West; by which they were directed to shut the temples, to seize or destroy the instruments of idolatry, to abolish the privileges of the priests, and to confiscate the consecrated property for the benefit of the emperor, of the church, or of the army. [27](#) Here the desolation might have stopped: and the naked edifices, which were no longer employed in the service of idolatry, might have been protected from the destructive rage of fanaticism. Many of those temples were the most splendid and beautiful monuments of Grecian architecture; and the emperor himself was interested not to deface the splendor of his own cities, or to diminish the value of his own possessions. Those stately edifices might be suffered to remain, as so many lasting trophies of the victory of Christ. In the decline of the arts they might be usefully converted into magazines, manufactures, or places of public assembly: and perhaps, when the walls of the temple had been sufficiently purified by holy rites, the worship of the true Deity might be allowed to expiate the ancient guilt of idolatry. But as long as they subsisted, the Pagans fondly cherished the secret hope, that an auspicious revolution, a second Julian, might again restore the altars of the gods: and the earnestness with which they addressed their unavailing prayers to the throne, [28](#) increased the zeal of the Christian reformers to extirpate, without mercy, the root of superstition. The laws of the emperors exhibit some symptoms of a milder disposition: [29](#) but their cold and languid efforts were insufficient to stem the torrent of enthusiasm and rapine, which was conducted, or rather impelled, by the spiritual rulers of the church. In Gaul, the holy Martin, bishop of Tours, [30](#) marched at the head of his faithful monks to destroy the idols, the temples, and the consecrated trees of his extensive diocese; and, in the execution of this arduous task, the prudent reader will judge whether Martin was supported by the aid of miraculous powers, or of carnal weapons. In Syria, the divine and excellent Marcellus, [31](#) as he is styled by Theodoret, a bishop animated with apostolic fervor, resolved to level with the ground the stately temples within the diocese of Apamea. His attack was resisted by the skill and solidity with which the temple of Jupiter had been constructed. The building was seated on an eminence: on each of the four sides, the lofty roof was supported by fifteen massy columns, sixteen feet in circumference; and the large stone, of which they were composed, were firmly cemented with lead and iron. The force of the strongest and sharpest tools had been tried without effect. It was found necessary to undermine the foundations of the columns, which fell down as soon as the temporary wooden props had been consumed with fire; and the difficulties of the enterprise are described under

the allegory of a black daemon, who retarded, though he could not defeat, the operations of the Christian engineers. Elated with victory, Marcellus took the field in person against the powers of darkness; a numerous troop of soldiers and gladiators marched under the episcopal banner, and he successively attacked the villages and country temples of the diocese of Apamea. Whenever any resistance or danger was apprehended, the champion of the faith, whose lameness would not allow him either to fight or fly, placed himself at a convenient distance, beyond the reach of darts. But this prudence was the occasion of his death: he was surprised and slain by a body of exasperated rustics; and the synod of the province pronounced, without hesitation, that the holy Marcellus had sacrificed his life in the cause of God. In the support of this cause, the monks, who rushed with tumultuous fury from the desert, distinguished themselves by their zeal and diligence. They deserved the enmity of the Pagans; and some of them might deserve the reproaches of avarice and intemperance; of avarice, which they gratified with holy plunder, and of intemperance, which they indulged at the expense of the people, who foolishly admired their tattered garments, loud psalmody, and artificial paleness. [32](#) A small number of temples was protected by the fears, the venality, the taste, or the prudence, of the civil and ecclesiastical governors. The temple of the Celestial Venus at Carthage, whose sacred precincts formed a circumference of two miles, was judiciously converted into a Christian church; [33](#) and a similar consecration has preserved inviolate the majestic dome of the Pantheon at Rome. [34](#) But in almost every province of the Roman world, an army of fanatics, without authority, and without discipline, invaded the peaceful inhabitants; and the ruin of the fairest structures of antiquity still displays the ravages of those Barbarians, who alone had time and inclination to execute such laborious destruction.

24

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius (Orat. pro Templis, p. 10, Genev. 1634, published by James Godefroy, and now extremely scarce) accuses Valentinian and Valens of prohibiting sacrifices. Some partial order may have been issued by the Eastern emperor; but the idea of any general law is contradicted by the silence of the Code, and the evidence of ecclesiastical history. Note: See in Reiske's edition of Libanius, tom. ii. p. 155. Sacrific was prohibited by Valens, but not the offering of incense.—M.]

25

[\(return\)](#)

[See his laws in the Theodosian Code, l. xvi. tit. x. leg. 7-11.]

26

[\(return\)](#)

[Homer's sacrifices are not accompanied with any inquisition of entrails, (see Feithius, Antiquitat. Homer. l. i. c. 10, 16.) The Tuscans, who produced the first Haruspices, subdued both the Greeks and the Romans, (Cicero de Divinatione, ii. 23.)]

- 27 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. iv. p. 245, 249. Theodoret. l. v. c. 21. Idatius in Chron. Prosper. Aquitan. l. iii. c. 38, apud Baronium, Annal. Eccles. A.D. 389, No. 52. Libanius (pro Templis, p. 10) labors to prove that the commands of Theodosius were not direct and positive. * Note: Libanius appears to be the best authority for the East, where, under Theodosius, the work of devastation was carried on with very different degrees of violence, according to the temper of the local authorities and of the clergy; and more especially the neighborhood of the more fanatic monks. Neander well observes, that the prohibition of sacrifice would be easily misinterpreted into an authority for the destruction of the buildings in which sacrifices were performed. (Geschichte der Christlichen religion ii. p. 156.) An abuse of this kind led to this remarkable oration of Libanius. Neander, however, justly doubts whether this bold vindication or at least exculpation, of Paganism was ever delivered before, or even placed in the hands of the Christian emperor.—M.]
- 28 [\(return\)](#)
[Cod. Theodos, l. xvi. tit. x. leg. 8, 18. There is room to believe, that this temple of Edessa, which Theodosius wished to save for civil uses, was soon afterwards a heap of ruins, (Libanius pro Templis, p. 26, 27, and Godefroy's notes, p. 59.)]
- 29 [\(return\)](#)
[See this curious oration of Libanius pro Templis, pronounced, or rather composed, about the year 390. I have consulted, with advantage, Dr. Lardner's version and remarks, (Heathen Testimonies, vol. iv. p. 135-163.)]
- 30 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Life of Martin by Sulpicius Severus, c. 9-14. The saint once mistook (as Don Quixote might have done) a harmless funeral for an idolatrous procession, and imprudently committed a miracle.]
- 31 [\(return\)](#)
[Compare Sozomen, (l. vii. c. 15) with Theodoret, (l. v. c. 21.) Between them, they relate the crusade and death of Marcellus.]
- 32 [\(return\)](#)
[Libanius, pro Templis, p. 10-13. He rails at these black-garbed men, the Christian monks, who eat more than elephants. Poor elephants! they are temperate animals.]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[Prosper. Aquitan. l. iii. c. 38, apud Baronium; Annal. Eccles. A.D. 389, No. 58, &c. The temple had been shut some time, and the access to it was overgrown with brambles.]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[Donatus, Roma Antiqua et Nova, l. iv. c. 4, p. 468. This consecration was performed by Pope Boniface IV. I am ignorant of the favorable circumstances which had preserved the Pantheon above two hundred years after the reign of Theodosius.]

In this wide and various prospect of devastation, the spectator may distinguish the ruins of the temple of Serapis, at Alexandria. [35](#) Serapis does not appear to have been one of the native gods, or monsters, who sprung from the fruitful soil of superstitious Egypt. [36](#) The first of the Ptolemies had been commanded, by a dream, to import the mysterious stranger from the coast of Pontus, where he had been long adored by the inhabitants of Sinope; but his attributes and his reign were so imperfectly understood, that it became a subject of dispute, whether he represented the bright orb of day, or the gloomy monarch of the subterraneous regions. [37](#) The Egyptians, who were obstinately devoted to the religion of their fathers, refused to admit this foreign deity within the walls of their cities. [38](#) But the obsequious priests, who were seduced by the liberality of the Ptolemies, submitted, without resistance, to the power of the god of Pontus: an honorable and domestic genealogy was provided; and this fortunate usurper was introduced into the throne and bed of Osiris, [39](#) the husband of Isis, and the celestial monarch of Egypt. Alexandria, which claimed his peculiar protection, gloried in the name of the city of Serapis. His temple, [40](#) which rivalled the pride and magnificence of the Capitol, was erected on the spacious summit of an artificial mount, raised one hundred steps above the level of the adjacent parts of the city; and the interior cavity was strongly supported by arches, and distributed into vaults and subterraneous apartments. The consecrated buildings were surrounded by a quadrangular portico; the stately halls, and exquisite statues, displayed the triumph of the arts; and the treasures of ancient learning were preserved in the famous Alexandrian library, which had arisen with new splendor from its ashes. [41](#) After the edicts of Theodosius had severely prohibited the sacrifices of the Pagans, they were still tolerated in the city and temple of Serapis; and this singular indulgence was imprudently ascribed to the superstitious terrors of the Christians themselves; as if they had feared to abolish those ancient rites, which could alone secure the inundations of the Nile, the harvests of Egypt, and the subsistence of Constantinople. [42](#)

35

[\(return\)](#)

[Sophronius composed a recent and separate history, (Jerom, in Script. Eccles. tom. i. p. 303,) which has furnished materials to Socrates, (l. v. c. 16.) Theodoret, (l. v. c. 22,) and Rufinus, (l. ii. c. 22.) Yet the last, who had been at Alexandria before

and after the event, may deserve the credit of an original witness.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[Gerard Vossius (Opera, tom. v. p. 80, and de Idololatria, l. i. c. 29) strives to support the strange notion of the Fathers; that the patriarch Joseph was adored in Egypt, as the bull Apis, and the god Serapis. * Note: Consult du Dieu Serapis et son Origine, par J D. Guigniaut, (the translator of Creuzer's Symbolique,) Paris, 1828; and in the fifth volume of Bournouf's translation of Tacitus.—M.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[Origo dei nondum nostris celebrata. Aegyptiorum antistites sic memorant, &c., Tacit. Hist. iv. 83. The Greeks, who had travelled into Egypt, were alike ignorant of this new deity.]

38 [\(return\)](#)

[Macrobius, Saturnal, l. i. c. 7. Such a living fact decisively proves his foreign extraction.]

39 [\(return\)](#)

[At Rome, Isis and Serapis were united in the same temple. The precedency which the queen assumed, may seem to betray her unequal alliance with the stranger of Pontus. But the superiority of the female sex was established in Egypt as a civil and religious institution, (Diodor. Sicul. tom. i. l. i. p. 31, edit. Wesseling,) and the same order is observed in Plutarch's Treatise of Isis and Osiris; whom he identifies with Serapis.]

40 [\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, (xxii. 16.) The Expositio totius Mundi, (p. 8, in Hudson's Geograph. Minor. tom. iii.,) and Rufinus, (l. ii. c. 22,) celebrate the Serapeum, as one of the wonders of the world.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[See Mémoires de l'Acad. des Inscriptions, tom. ix. p. 397-416. The old library of the Ptolemies was totally consumed in Caesar's Alexandrian war. Marc Antony gave the whole collection of Pergamus (200,000 volumes) to Cleopatra, as the foundation of the new library of Alexandria.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius (pro Templis, p. 21) indiscreetly provokes his Christian masters by this insulting remark.]

At that time [43](#) the archiepiscopal throne of Alexandria was filled by Theophilus, [44](#) the perpetual enemy of peace and virtue; a bold, bad man, whose hands were alternately polluted with gold and with blood. His pious indignation was excited

by the honors of Serapis; and the insults which he offered to an ancient temple of Bacchus, [4411](#) convinced the Pagans that he meditated a more important and dangerous enterprise. In the tumultuous capital of Egypt, the slightest provocation was sufficient to inflame a civil war. The votaries of Serapis, whose strength and numbers were much inferior to those of their antagonists, rose in arms at the instigation of the philosopher Olympius, [45](#) who exhorted them to die in the defence of the altars of the gods. These Pagan fanatics fortified themselves in the temple, or rather fortress, of Serapis; repelled the besiegers by daring sallies, and a resolute defence; and, by the inhuman cruelties which they exercised on their Christian prisoners, obtained the last consolation of despair. The efforts of the prudent magistrate were usefully exerted for the establishment of a truce, till the answer of Theodosius should determine the fate of Serapis. The two parties assembled, without arms, in the principal square; and the Imperial rescript was publicly read. But when a sentence of destruction against the idols of Alexandria was pronounced, the Christians set up a shout of joy and exultation, whilst the unfortunate Pagans, whose fury had given way to consternation, retired with hasty and silent steps, and eluded, by their flight or obscurity, the resentment of their enemies. Theophilus proceeded to demolish the temple of Serapis, without any other difficulties, than those which he found in the weight and solidity of the materials: but these obstacles proved so insuperable, that he was obliged to leave the foundations; and to content himself with reducing the edifice itself to a heap of rubbish, a part of which was soon afterwards cleared away, to make room for a church, erected in honor of the Christian martyrs. The valuable library of Alexandria was pillaged or destroyed; and near twenty years afterwards, the appearance of the empty shelves excited the regret and indignation of every spectator, whose mind was not totally darkened by religious prejudice. [46](#) The compositions of ancient genius, so many of which have irretrievably perished, might surely have been excepted from the wreck of idolatry, for the amusement and instruction of succeeding ages; and either the zeal or the avarice of the archbishop, [47](#) might have been satiated with the rich spoils, which were the reward of his victory. While the images and vases of gold and silver were carefully melted, and those of a less valuable metal were contemptuously broken, and cast into the streets, Theophilus labored to expose the frauds and vices of the ministers of the idols; their dexterity in the management of the loadstone; their secret methods of introducing a human actor into a hollow statue; [4711](#) and their scandalous abuse of the confidence of devout husbands and unsuspecting females. [48](#) Charges like these may seem to deserve some degree of credit, as they are not repugnant to the crafty and interested spirit of superstition. But the same spirit is equally prone to the base practice of insulting and calumniating a fallen enemy; and our belief is naturally checked by the reflection, that it is much less difficult to invent a fictitious story, than to support a practical fraud. The colossal statue of Serapis [49](#) was involved in the ruin of his temple and religion. A great number of plates of different metals, artificially joined together, composed the majestic figure of the deity, who touched on either side the walls of the sanctuary. The aspect of

Serapis, his sitting posture, and the sceptre, which he bore in his left hand, were extremely similar to the ordinary representations of Jupiter. He was distinguished from Jupiter by the basket, or bushel, which was placed on his head; and by the emblematic monster which he held in his right hand; the head and body of a serpent branching into three tails, which were again terminated by the triple heads of a dog, a lion, and a wolf. It was confidently affirmed, that if any impious hand should dare to violate the majesty of the god, the heavens and the earth would instantly return to their original chaos. An intrepid soldier, animated by zeal, and armed with a weighty battle-axe, ascended the ladder; and even the Christian multitude expected, with some anxiety, the event of the combat. [50](#) He aimed a vigorous stroke against the cheek of Serapis; the cheek fell to the ground; the thunder was still silent, and both the heavens and the earth continued to preserve their accustomed order and tranquillity. The victorious soldier repeated his blows: the huge idol was overthrown, and broken in pieces; and the limbs of Serapis were ignominiously dragged through the streets of Alexandria. His mangled carcass was burnt in the Amphitheatre, amidst the shouts of the populace; and many persons attributed their conversion to this discovery of the impotence of their tutelar deity. The popular modes of religion, that propose any visible and material objects of worship, have the advantage of adapting and familiarizing themselves to the senses of mankind: but this advantage is counterbalanced by the various and inevitable accidents to which the faith of the idolater is exposed. It is scarcely possible, that, in every disposition of mind, he should preserve his implicit reverence for the idols, or the relics, which the naked eye, and the profane hand, are unable to distinguish from the most common productions of art or nature; and if, in the hour of danger, their secret and miraculous virtue does not operate for their own preservation, he scorns the vain apologies of his priests, and justly derides the object, and the folly, of his superstitious attachment. [51](#) After the fall of Serapis, some hopes were still entertained by the Pagans, that the Nile would refuse his annual supply to the impious masters of Egypt; and the extraordinary delay of the inundation seemed to announce the displeasure of the river-god. But this delay was soon compensated by the rapid swell of the waters. They suddenly rose to such an unusual height, as to comfort the discontented party with the pleasing expectation of a deluge; till the peaceful river again subsided to the well-known and fertilizing level of sixteen cubits, or about thirty English feet. [52](#)

43

[\(return\)](#)

[We may choose between the date of Marcellinus (A.D. 389) or that of Prosper, (A.D. 391.) Tillemont (Hist. des Emp. tom. v. p. 310, 756) prefers the former, and Pagi the latter.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xi. p. 441-500. The ambiguous situation of Theophilus—a saint, as the friend of Jerom a devil, as the enemy of Chrysostom—produces a sort of impartiality; yet,

upon the whole, the balance is justly inclined against him.]

4411 [\(return\)](#)

[No doubt a temple of Osiris. St. Martin, iv 398-M.]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[Lardner (Heathen Testimonies, vol. iv. p. 411) has alleged beautiful passage from Suidas, or rather from Damascius, which show the devout and virtuous Olympius, not in the light of a warrior, but of a prophet.]

46 [\(return\)](#)

[Nos vidimus armaria librorum, quibus direptis, exinanita ea a nostris hominibus, nostris temporibus memorant. Orosius, l. vi. c. 15, p. 421, edit. Havercamp. Though a bigot, and a controversial writer. Orosius seems to blush.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[Eunapius, in the Lives of Antoninus and Aedesius, execrates the sacrilegious rapine of Theophilus. Tillemont (Mem. Eccles. tom. xiii. p. 453) quotes an epistle of Isidore of Pelusium, which reproaches the primate with the idolatrous worship of gold, the auri sacra fames.]

4711 [\(return\)](#)

[An English traveller, Mr. Wilkinson, has discovered the secret of the vocal Memnon. There was a cavity in which a person was concealed, and struck a stone, which gave a ringing sound like brass. The Arabs, who stood below when Mr. Wilkinson performed the miracle, described sound just as the author of the epigram.—M.]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[Rufinus names the priest of Saturn, who, in the character of the god, familiarly conversed with many pious ladies of quality, till he betrayed himself, in a moment of transport, when he could not disguise the tone of his voice. The authentic and impartial narrative of Aeschines, (see Bayle, Dictionnaire Critique, Scamandre,) and the adventure of Mudus, (Joseph. Antiquitat. Judaic. l. xviii. c. 3, p. 877 edit. Havercamp,) may prove that such amorous frauds have been practised with success.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[See the images of Serapis, in Montfaucon, (tom. ii. p. 297:) but the description of Macrobius (Saturnal. l. i. c. 20) is much more picturesque and satisfactory.]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Sed fortes tremuere manus, motique verenda
Majestate loci, si robora sacra ferirent
In sua credebant redituras membra secures.*

(Lucan. iii. 429.) “Is it true,” (said Augustus to a veteran of Italy, at whose house he supped) “that the man who gave the first blow to the golden statue of Anaitis, was instantly deprived of his eyes, and of his life?”—“I was that man, (replied the clear-sighted veteran,) and you now sup on one of the legs of the goddess.” (Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiii. 24)]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[The history of the reformation affords frequent examples of the sudden change from superstition to contempt.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen, l. vii. c. 20. I have supplied the measure. The same standard, of the inundation, and consequently of the cubit, has uniformly subsisted since the time of Herodotus. See Freret, in the Mem. de l’Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xvi. p. 344-353. Greaves’s Miscellaneous Works, vol. i. p. 233. The Egyptian cubit is about twenty-two inches of the English measure. * Note: Compare Wilkinson’s Thebes and Egypt, p. 313.—M.]

The temples of the Roman empire were deserted, or destroyed; but the ingenious superstition of the Pagans still attempted to elude the laws of Theodosius, by which all sacrifices had been severely prohibited. The inhabitants of the country, whose conduct was less opposed to the eye of malicious curiosity, disguised their religious, under the appearance of convivial, meetings. On the days of solemn festivals, they assembled in great numbers under the spreading shade of some consecrated trees; sheep and oxen were slaughtered and roasted; and this rural entertainment was sanctified by the use of incense, and by the hymns which were sung in honor of the gods. But it was alleged, that, as no part of the animal was made a burnt-offering, as no altar was provided to receive the blood, and as the previous oblation of salt cakes, and the concluding ceremony of libations, were carefully omitted, these festal meetings did not involve the guests in the guilt, or penalty, of an illegal sacrifice. [53](#) Whatever might be the truth of the facts, or the merit of the distinction, [54](#) these vain pretences were swept away by the last edict of Theodosius, which inflicted a deadly wound on the superstition of the Pagans. [55](#) [5511](#) This prohibitory law is expressed in the most absolute and comprehensive terms. “It is our will and pleasure,” says the emperor, “that none of our subjects, whether magistrates or private citizens, however exalted or however humble may be their rank and condition, shall presume, in any city or in any place, to worship an inanimate idol, by the sacrifice of a guiltless victim.” The act of sacrificing, and the practice of divination by the entrails of the victim, are declared (without any regard to

the object of the inquiry) a crime of high treason against the state, which can be expiated only by the death of the guilty. The rites of Pagan superstition, which might seem less bloody and atrocious, are abolished, as highly injurious to the truth and honor of religion; luminaries, garlands, frankincense, and libations of wine, are specially enumerated and condemned; and the harmless claims of the domestic genius, of the household gods, are included in this rigorous proscription. The use of any of these profane and illegal ceremonies, subjects the offender to the forfeiture of the house or estate, where they have been performed; and if he has artfully chosen the property of another for the scene of his impiety, he is compelled to discharge, without delay, a heavy fine of twenty-five pounds of gold, or more than one thousand pounds sterling. A fine, not less considerable, is imposed on the connivance of the secret enemies of religion, who shall neglect the duty of their respective stations, either to reveal, or to punish, the guilt of idolatry. Such was the persecuting spirit of the laws of Theodosius, which were repeatedly enforced by his sons and grandsons, with the loud and unanimous applause of the Christian world. [56](#)

53

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius (pro Templis, p. 15, 16, 17) pleads their cause with gentle and insinuating rhetoric. From the earliest age, such feasts had enlivened the country: and those of Bacchus (Georgic. ii. 380) had produced the theatre of Athens. See Godefroy, ad loc. Liban. and Codex Theodos. tom. vi. p. 284.]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[Honorius tolerated these rustic festivals, (A.D. 399.) “Absque ullo sacrificio, atque ulla superstitione damnabili.” But nine years afterwards he found it necessary to reiterate and enforce the same proviso, (Codex Theodos. l. xvi. tit. x. leg. 17, 19.)]

55

[\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theodos. l. xvi. tit. x. leg. 12. Jortin (Remarks on Eccles. History, vol. iv. p. 134) censures, with becoming asperity, the style and sentiments of this intolerant law.]

5511

[\(return\)](#)

[Paganism maintained its ground for a considerable time in the rural districts. Endelevius, a poet who lived at the beginning of the fifth century, speaks of the cross as Signum quod perhibent esse crucis Dei, Magnis qui colitur solus inurbibus. In the middle of the same century, Maximus, bishop of Turin, writes against the heathen deities as if their worship was still in full vigor in the neighborhood of his city. Augustine complains of the encouragement of the Pagan rites by heathen landowners; and Zeno of Verona, still later, reproves the apathy of the

Christian proprietors in conniving at this abuse. (Compare Neander, ii. p. 169.) M. Beugnot shows that this was the case throughout the north and centre of Italy and in Sicily. But neither of these authors has adverted to one fact, which must have tended greatly to retard the progress of Christianity in these quarters. It was still chiefly a slave population which cultivated the soil; and however, in the towns, the better class of Christians might be eager to communicate “the blessed liberty of the gospel” to this class of mankind; however their condition could not but be silently ameliorated by the humanizing influence of Christianity; yet, on the whole, no doubt the servile class would be the least fitted to receive the gospel; and its general propagation among them would be embarrassed by many peculiar difficulties. The rural population was probably not entirely converted before the general establishment of the monastic institutions. Compare Quarterly Review of Beugnot. vol lvii. p. 52—M.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[Such a charge should not be lightly made; but it may surely be justified by the authority of St. Augustin, who thus addresses the Donatists: “Quis nostrum, quis vestrum non laudat leges ab Imperatoribus datas adversus sacrificia Paganorum? Et certe longe ibi poera severior constituta est; illius quippe impietatis capitale supplicium est.” Epist. xciii. No. 10, quoted by Le Clerc, (Bibliothèque Choisie, tom. viii. p. 277,) who adds some judicious reflections on the intolerance of the victorious Christians. * Note: Yet Augustine, with laudable inconsistency, disapproved of the forcible demolition of the temples. “Let us first extirpate the idolatry of the hearts of the heathen, and they will either themselves invite us or anticipate us in the execution of this good work,” tom. v. p. 62. Compare Neander, ii. 169, and, in p. 155, a beautiful passage from Chrysostom against all violent means of propagating Christianity.—M.]

Chapter XXVIII: Destruction Of Paganism.—Part III.

In the cruel reigns of Decius and Diocletian, Christianity had been proscribed, as a revolt from the ancient and hereditary religion of the empire; and the unjust suspicions which were entertained of a dark and dangerous faction, were, in some measure, countenanced by the inseparable union and rapid conquests of the Catholic church. But

the same excuses of fear and ignorance cannot be applied to the Christian emperors who violated the precepts of humanity and of the Gospel. The experience of ages had betrayed the weakness, as well as folly, of Paganism; the light of reason and of faith had already exposed, to the greatest part of mankind, the vanity of idols; and the declining sect, which still adhered to their worship, might have been permitted to enjoy, in peace and obscurity, the religious costumes of their ancestors. Had the Pagans been animated by the undaunted zeal which possessed the minds of the primitive believers, the triumph of the Church must have been stained with blood; and the martyrs of Jupiter and Apollo might have embraced the glorious opportunity of devoting their lives and fortunes at the foot of their altars. But such obstinate zeal was not congenial to the loose and careless temper of Polytheism. The violent and repeated strokes of the orthodox princes were broken by the soft and yielding substance against which they were directed; and the ready obedience of the Pagans protected them from the pains and penalties of the Theodosian Code. [57](#) Instead of asserting, that the authority of the gods was superior to that of the emperor, they desisted, with a plaintive murmur, from the use of those sacred rites which their sovereign had condemned. If they were sometimes tempted by a sally of passion, or by the hopes of concealment, to indulge their favorite superstition, their humble repentance disarmed the severity of the Christian magistrate, and they seldom refused to atone for their rashness, by submitting, with some secret reluctance, to the yoke of the Gospel. The churches were filled with the increasing multitude of these unworthy proselytes, who had conformed, from temporal motives, to the reigning religion; and whilst they devoutly imitated the postures, and recited the prayers, of the faithful, they satisfied their conscience by the silent and sincere invocation of the gods of antiquity. [58](#) If the Pagans wanted patience to suffer they wanted spirit to resist; and the scattered myriads, who deplored the ruin of the temples, yielded, without a contest, to the fortune of their adversaries. The disorderly opposition [59](#) of the peasants of Syria, and the populace of Alexandria, to the rage of private fanaticism, was silenced by the name and authority of the emperor. The Pagans of the West, without contributing to the elevation of Eugenius, disgraced, by their partial attachment, the cause and character of the usurper. The clergy vehemently exclaimed, that he aggravated the crime of rebellion by the guilt of apostasy; that, by his permission, the altar of victory was again restored; and that the idolatrous symbols of Jupiter and Hercules were displayed in the field, against the invincible standard of the cross. But the vain hopes of the Pagans were soon annihilated by the defeat of Eugenius; and they were left exposed to the resentment of the conqueror, who labored to deserve the favor of Heaven by the extirpation of idolatry. [60](#)

[Orosius, l. vii. c. 28, p. 537. Augustin (Enarrat. in Psalm cxi apud Lardner, Heathen Testimonies, vol. iv. p. 458) insults their cowardice. "Quis eorum comprehensus est in sacrificio (cum his legibus sta prohiberentur) et non negavit?"]

- 58 [\(return\)](#)
[Libanius (pro Templis, p. 17, 18) mentions,
without censure the occasional conformity, and as
it were theatrical play, of these hypocrites.]
- 59 [\(return\)](#)
[Libanius concludes his apology (p. 32) by
declaring to the emperor, that unless he expressly
warrants the destruction of the temples, the
proprietors will defend themselves and the laws.]
- 60 [\(return\)](#)
[Paulinus, in Vit. Ambros. c. 26. Augustin de
Civitat. Dei, l. v. c. 26. Theodoret, l. v. c. 24.]

A nation of slaves is always prepared to applaud the clemency of their master, who, in the abuse of absolute power, does not proceed to the last extremes of injustice and oppression. Theodosius might undoubtedly have proposed to his Pagan subjects the alternative of baptism or of death; and the eloquent Libanius has praised the moderation of a prince, who never enacted, by any positive law, that all his subjects should immediately embrace and practise the religion of their sovereign. [61](#) The profession of Christianity was not made an essential qualification for the enjoyment of the civil rights of society, nor were any peculiar hardships imposed on the sectaries, who credulously received the fables of Ovid, and obstinately rejected the miracles of the Gospel. The palace, the schools, the army, and the senate, were filled with declared and devout Pagans; they obtained, without distinction, the civil and military honors of the empire. [6111](#) Theodosius distinguished his liberal regard for virtue and genius by the consular dignity, which he bestowed on Symmachus; [62](#) and by the personal friendship which he expressed to Libanius; [63](#) and the two eloquent apologists of Paganism were never required either to change or to dissemble their religious opinions. The Pagans were indulged in the most licentious freedom of speech and writing; the historical and philosophic remains of Eunapius, Zosimus, [64](#) and the fanatic teachers of the school of Plato, betray the most furious animosity, and contain the sharpest invectives, against the sentiments and conduct of their victorious adversaries. If these audacious libels were publicly known, we must applaud the good sense of the Christian princes, who viewed, with a smile of contempt, the last struggles of superstition and despair. [65](#) But the Imperial laws, which prohibited the sacrifices and ceremonies of Paganism, were rigidly executed; and every hour contributed to destroy the influence of a religion, which was supported by custom, rather than by argument. The devotion or the poet, or the philosopher, may be secretly nourished by prayer, meditation, and study; but the exercise of public worship appears to be the only solid foundation of the religious sentiments of the people, which derive their force from imitation and habit. The interruption of that public exercise may consummate, in the period of a few years, the important work of a national revolution. The memory of theological opinions cannot long be preserved, without the artificial helps of priests, of temples, and of books. [66](#) The ignorant vulgar, whose minds are still agitated by the blind hopes and

terrors of superstition, will be soon persuaded by their superiors to direct their vows to the reigning deities of the age; and will insensibly imbibe an ardent zeal for the support and propagation of the new doctrine, which spiritual hunger at first compelled them to accept. The generation that arose in the world after the promulgation of the Imperial laws, was attracted within the pale of the Catholic church: and so rapid, yet so gentle, was the fall of Paganism, that only twenty-eight years after the death of Theodosius, the faint and minute vestiges were no longer visible to the eye of the legislator. [67](#)

61

[\(return\)](#)

[Libanius suggests the form of a persecuting edict, which Theodosius might enact, (pro Templis, p. 32;) a rash joke, and a dangerous experiment. Some princes would have taken his advice.]

6111

[\(return\)](#)

[The most remarkable instance of this, at a much later period, occurs in the person of Merobaudes, a general and a poet, who flourished in the first half of the fifth century. A statue in honor of Merobaudes was placed in the Forum of Trajan, of which the inscription is still extant. Fragments of his poems have been recovered by the industry and sagacity of Niebuhr. In one passage, Merobaudes, in the genuine heathen spirit, attributes the ruin of the empire to the abolition of Paganism, and almost renews the old accusation of Atheism against Christianity. He impersonates some deity, probably Discord, who summons Bellona to take arms for the destruction of Rome; and in a strain of fierce irony recommends to her other fatal measures, to extirpate the gods of Rome:—

*Roma, ipsique tremant furialia murmura reges.
Jam superos terris atque hospita numina pelle:
Romanos populare Deos, et nullus in aris
Vestoe exoratoe fatus strue palleat ignis.
Ilis instructa dolis palatia celsa subibo;
Majorum mores, et pectora prisca fugabo
Funditus; atque simul, nullo discrimine rerum,
Spernantur fortes, nec sic reverentia justis.
Attica neglecto pereat facundia Phoebus:
Indignis contingat honos, et pondera rerum;
Non virtus sed casus agat; tristisque cupido;
Pectoribus saevi demens furor aestuet aevi;
Omniaque hoc sine mente Jovis, sine numine summo.*

Merobaudes in Niebuhr's edit. of the Byzantines, p. 14.—

M.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[Denique pro meritis terrestribus aequa rependens

Munera, sacricolis summos impertit honores.

*Dux bonus, et certare sinit cum laude suorum,
Nec pago implicitos per debita culmina mundi Ire
viros prohibet.*

Ipse magistratum tibi consulis, ipse tribunal

Contulit.

Prudent. in Symmach. i. 617, &c.

Note: I have inserted some lines omitted by Gibbon.—M.]

63 [\(return\)](#)

[Libanius (pro Templis, p. 32) is proud that Theodosius should thus distinguish a man, who even in his presence would swear by Jupiter. Yet this presence seems to be no more than a figure of rhetoric.]

64 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, who styles himself Count and Ex-advocate of the Treasury, reviles, with partial and indecent bigotry, the Christian princes, and even the father of his sovereign. His work must have been privately circulated, since it escaped the invectives of the ecclesiastical historians prior to Evagrius, (l. iii. c. 40-42,) who lived towards the end of the sixth century. * Note: Heyne in his *Disquisitio in Zosimum Ejusque Fidem*. places Zosimum towards the close of the fifth century. Zosim. Heynii, p. xvii.—M.]

65 [\(return\)](#)

[Yet the Pagans of Africa complained, that the times would not allow them to answer with freedom the City of God; nor does St. Augustin (v. 26) deny the charge.]

66 [\(return\)](#)

[The Moors of Spain, who secretly preserved the Mahometan religion above a century, under the tyranny of the Inquisition, possessed the Koran, with the peculiar use of the Arabic tongue. See the curious and honest story of their expulsion in Geddes, (*Miscellanies*, vol. i. p. 1-198.)]

67 [\(return\)](#)

[*Paganos qui supersunt, quanquam jam nullos esse credamus, &c.* Cod. Theodos. l. xvi. tit. x. leg. 22, A.D. 423. The younger Theodosius was afterwards satisfied, that his judgment had been somewhat premature. Note: The statement of Gibbon is much too strongly worded. M. Beugnot has traced the vestiges of Paganism in the West, after this period, in monuments and inscriptions with curious industry. Compare likewise note, p. 112, on the more tardy progress of Christianity in the rural districts.—M.]

The ruin of the Pagan religion is described by the sophists as a dreadful and amazing prodigy, which covered the earth with darkness, and restored the ancient dominion of

chaos and of night. They relate, in solemn and pathetic strains, that the temples were converted into sepulchres, and that the holy places, which had been adorned by the statues of the gods, were basely polluted by the relics of Christian martyrs. “The monks” (a race of filthy animals, to whom Eunapius is tempted to refuse the name of men) “are the authors of the new worship, which, in the place of those deities who are conceived by the understanding, has substituted the meanest and most contemptible slaves. The heads, salted and pickled, of those infamous malefactors, who for the multitude of their crimes have suffered a just and ignominious death; their bodies still marked by the impression of the lash, and the scars of those tortures which were inflicted by the sentence of the magistrate; such” (continues Eunapius) “are the gods which the earth produces in our days; such are the martyrs, the supreme arbitrators of our prayers and petitions to the Deity, whose tombs are now consecrated as the objects of the veneration of the people.” [68](#) Without approving the malice, it is natural enough to share the surprise of the sophist, the spectator of a revolution, which raised those obscure victims of the laws of Rome to the rank of celestial and invisible protectors of the Roman empire. The grateful respect of the Christians for the martyrs of the faith, was exalted, by time and victory, into religious adoration; and the most illustrious of the saints and prophets were deservedly associated to the honors of the martyrs. One hundred and fifty years after the glorious deaths of St. Peter and St. Paul, the Vatican and the Ostian road were distinguished by the tombs, or rather by the trophies, of those spiritual heroes. [69](#) In the age which followed the conversion of Constantine, the emperors, the consuls, and the generals of armies, devoutly visited the sepulchres of a tentmaker and a fisherman; [70](#) and their venerable bones were deposited under the altars of Christ, on which the bishops of the royal city continually offered the unbloody sacrifice. [71](#) The new capital of the Eastern world, unable to produce any ancient and domestic trophies, was enriched by the spoils of dependent provinces. The bodies of St. Andrew, St. Luke, and St. Timothy, had reposed near three hundred years in the obscure graves, from whence they were transported, in solemn pomp, to the church of the apostles, which the magnificence of Constantine had founded on the banks of the Thracian Bosphorus. [72](#) About fifty years afterwards, the same banks were honored by the presence of Samuel, the judge and prophet of the people of Israel. His ashes, deposited in a golden vase, and covered with a silken veil, were delivered by the bishops into each other’s hands. The relics of Samuel were received by the people with the same joy and reverence which they would have shown to the living prophet; the highways, from Palestine to the gates of Constantinople, were filled with an uninterrupted procession; and the emperor Arcadius himself, at the head of the most illustrious members of the clergy and senate, advanced to meet his extraordinary guest, who had always deserved and claimed the homage of kings. [73](#) The example of Rome and Constantinople confirmed the faith and discipline of the Catholic world. The honors of the saints and martyrs, after a feeble and ineffectual murmur of profane reason, [74](#) were universally established; and in the age of Ambrose and Jerom, something was still deemed wanting

to the sanctity of a Christian church, till it had been consecrated by some portion of holy relics, which fixed and inflamed the devotion of the faithful.

- 68 [\(return\)](#)
[See Eunapius, in the Life of the sophist Aedesius; in that of Eustathius he foretells the ruin of Paganism.]
- 69 [\(return\)](#)
[Caius, (apud Euseb. Hist. Eccles. l. ii. c. 25,) a Roman presbyter, who lived in the time of Zephyrinus, (A.D. 202-219,) is an early witness of this superstitious practice.]
- 70 [\(return\)](#)
[Chrysostom. Quod Christus sit Deus. Tom. i. nov. edit. No. 9. I am indebted for this quotation to Benedict the XIVth's pastoral letter on the Jubilee of the year 1759. See the curious and entertaining letters of M. Chais, tom. iii.]
- 71 [\(return\)](#)
[Male facit ergo Romanus episcopus? qui, super mortuorum hominum, Petri & Pauli, secundum nos, ossa veneranda ... offeri Domino sacrificia, et tumulos eorum, Christi arbitratur altaria. Jerom. tom. ii. advers. Vigilant. p. 183.]
- 72 [\(return\)](#)
[Jerom (tom. ii. p. 122) bears witness to these translations, which are neglected by the ecclesiastical historians. The passion of St. Andrew at Patrae is described in an epistle from the clergy of Achaia, which Baronius (Annal. Eccles. A.D. 60, No. 34) wishes to believe, and Tillemont is forced to reject. St. Andrew was adopted as the spiritual founder of Constantinople, (Mem. Eccles. tom. i. p. 317-323, 588-594.)]
- 73 [\(return\)](#)
[Jerom (tom. ii. p. 122) pompously describes the translation of Samuel, which is noticed in all the chronicles of the times.]
- 74 [\(return\)](#)
[The presbyter Vigilantius, the Protestant of his age, firmly, though ineffectually, withstood the superstition of monks, relics, saints, fasts, &c., for which Jerom compares him to the Hydra, Cerberus, the Centaurs, &c., and considers him only as the organ of the Daemon, (tom. ii. p. 120-126.) Whoever will peruse the controversy of St. Jerom and Vigilantius, and St. Augustin's account of the miracles of St. Stephen, may speedily gain some idea of the spirit of the Fathers.]

In the long period of twelve hundred years, which elapsed between the reign of Constantine and the reformation of Luther, the worship of saints and relics corrupted the pure and perfect simplicity of the Christian model: and some symptoms of degeneracy may be observed even in the first generations which adopted and cherished this pernicious innovation.

I. The satisfactory experience, that the relics of saints were more valuable than gold or precious stones, [75](#) stimulated the clergy to multiply the treasures of the church. Without much regard for truth or probability, they invented names for skeletons, and actions for names. The fame of the apostles, and of the holy men who had imitated their virtues, was darkened by religious fiction. To the invincible band of genuine and primitive martyrs, they added myriads of imaginary heroes, who had never existed, except in the fancy of crafty or credulous legendaries; and there is reason to suspect, that Tours might not be the only diocese in which the bones of a malefactor were adored, instead of those of a saint. [76](#) A superstitious practice, which tended to increase the temptations of fraud, and credulity, insensibly extinguished the light of history, and of reason, in the Christian world.

75

[\(return\)](#)

[M. de Beausobre (Hist. du Manicheisme, tom. ii. p. 648) has applied a worldly sense to the pious observation of the clergy of Smyrna, who carefully preserved the relics of St. Polycarp the martyr.]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[Martin of Tours (see his Life, c. 8, by Sulpicius Severus) extorted this confession from the mouth of the dead man. The error is allowed to be natural; the discovery is supposed to be miraculous. Which of the two was likely to happen most frequently?]

II. But the progress of superstition would have been much less rapid and victorious, if the faith of the people had not been assisted by the seasonable aid of visions and miracles, to ascertain the authenticity and virtue of the most suspicious relics. In the reign of the younger Theodosius, Lucian, [77](#) a presbyter of Jerusalem, and the ecclesiastical minister of the village of Caphargamala, about twenty miles from the city, related a very singular dream, which, to remove his doubts, had been repeated on three successive Saturdays. A venerable figure stood before him, in the silence of the night, with a long beard, a white robe, and a gold rod; announced himself by the name of Gamaliel, and revealed to the astonished presbyter, that his own corpse, with the bodies of his son Abibas, his friend Nicodemus, and the illustrious Stephen, the first martyr of the Christian faith, were secretly buried in the adjacent field. He added, with some impatience, that it was time to release himself and his companions from their obscure prison; that their appearance would be salutary to a distressed world; and that they had made choice of Lucian to inform the bishop of Jerusalem of their situation and their wishes. The doubts and difficulties which still retarded this important discovery were successively removed by new visions; and the ground was opened by the bishop, in the

presence of an innumerable multitude. The coffins of Gamaliel, of his son, and of his friend, were found in regular order; but when the fourth coffin, which contained the remains of Stephen, was shown to the light, the earth trembled, and an odor, such as that of paradise, was smelt, which instantly cured the various diseases of seventy-three of the assistants. The companions of Stephen were left in their peaceful residence of Caphargamala: but the relics of the first martyr were transported, in solemn procession, to a church constructed in their honor on Mount Sion; and the minute particles of those relics, a drop of blood, [78](#) or the scrapings of a bone, were acknowledged, in almost every province of the Roman world, to possess a divine and miraculous virtue. The grave and learned Augustin, [79](#) whose understanding scarcely admits the excuse of credulity, has attested the innumerable prodigies which were performed in Africa by the relics of St. Stephen; and this marvellous narrative is inserted in the elaborate work of the City of God, which the bishop of Hippo designed as a solid and immortal proof of the truth of Christianity. Augustin solemnly declares, that he has selected those miracles only which were publicly certified by the persons who were either the objects, or the spectators, of the power of the martyr. Many prodigies were omitted, or forgotten; and Hippo had been less favorably treated than the other cities of the province. And yet the bishop enumerates above seventy miracles, of which three were resurrections from the dead, in the space of two years, and within the limits of his own diocese. [80](#) If we enlarge our view to all the dioceses, and all the saints, of the Christian world, it will not be easy to calculate the fables, and the errors, which issued from this inexhaustible source. But we may surely be allowed to observe, that a miracle, in that age of superstition and credulity, lost its name and its merit, since it could scarcely be considered as a deviation from the ordinary and established laws of nature.

77

[\(return\)](#)

[Lucian composed in Greek his original narrative, which has been translated by Avitus, and published by Baronius, (Annal. Eccles. A.D. 415, No. 7-16.) The Benedictine editors of St. Augustin have given (at the end of the work de Civitate Dei) two several copies, with many various readings. It is the character of falsehood to be loose and inconsistent. The most incredible parts of the legend are smoothed and softened by Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. ii. p. 9, &c.)]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[A phial of St. Stephen's blood was annually liquefied at Naples, till he was superseded by St. Jamarius, (Ruinart. Hist. Persecut. Vandal p. 529.)]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[Augustin composed the two-and-twenty books de Civitate Dei in the space of thirteen years, A.D. 413-426. Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. xiv. p. 608, &c.) His learning is too often borrowed, and his arguments are too often his own; but the whole

work claims the merit of a magnificent design, vigorously, and not unskilfully, executed.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[See Augustin de Civitat. Dei, l. xxii. c. 22, and the Appendix, which contains two books of St. Stephen's miracles, by Evodius, bishop of Uzalis. Freculphus (apud Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, tom. vii. p. 249) has preserved a Gallic or a Spanish proverb, "Whoever pretends to have read all the miracles of St. Stephen, he lies."]

III. The innumerable miracles, of which the tombs of the martyrs were the perpetual theatre, revealed to the pious believer the actual state and constitution of the invisible world; and his religious speculations appeared to be founded on the firm basis of fact and experience. Whatever might be the condition of vulgar souls, in the long interval between the dissolution and the resurrection of their bodies, it was evident that the superior spirits of the saints and martyrs did not consume that portion of their existence in silent and inglorious sleep. [81](#) It was evident (without presuming to determine the place of their habitation, or the nature of their felicity) that they enjoyed the lively and active consciousness of their happiness, their virtue, and their powers; and that they had already secured the possession of their eternal reward. The enlargement of their intellectual faculties surpassed the measure of the human imagination; since it was proved by experience, that they were capable of hearing and understanding the various petitions of their numerous votaries; who, in the same moment of time, but in the most distant parts of the world, invoked the name and assistance of Stephen or of Martin. [82](#) The confidence of their petitioners was founded on the persuasion, that the saints, who reigned with Christ, cast an eye of pity upon earth; that they were warmly interested in the prosperity of the Catholic Church; and that the individuals, who imitated the example of their faith and piety, were the peculiar and favorite objects of their most tender regard. Sometimes, indeed, their friendship might be influenced by considerations of a less exalted kind: they viewed with partial affection the places which had been consecrated by their birth, their residence, their death, their burial, or the possession of their relics. The meaner passions of pride, avarice, and revenge, may be deemed unworthy of a celestial breast; yet the saints themselves condescended to testify their grateful approbation of the liberality of their votaries; and the sharpest bolts of punishment were hurled against those impious wretches, who violated their magnificent shrines, or disbelieved their supernatural power. [83](#) Atrocious, indeed, must have been the guilt, and strange would have been the scepticism, of those men, if they had obstinately resisted the proofs of a divine agency, which the elements, the whole range of the animal creation, and even the subtle and invisible operations of the human mind, were compelled to obey. [84](#) The immediate, and almost instantaneous, effects that were supposed to follow the prayer, or the offence, satisfied the Christians of the ample measure of favor and authority which the saints enjoyed in the presence of the Supreme God; and it seemed almost superfluous to inquire whether they were continually obliged

to intercede before the throne of grace; or whether they might not be permitted to exercise, according to the dictates of their benevolence and justice, the delegated powers of their subordinate ministry. The imagination, which had been raised by a painful effort to the contemplation and worship of the Universal Cause, eagerly embraced such inferior objects of adoration as were more proportioned to its gross conceptions and imperfect faculties. The sublime and simple theology of the primitive Christians was gradually corrupted; and the Monarchy of heaven, already clouded by metaphysical subtleties, was degraded by the introduction of a popular mythology, which tended to restore the reign of polytheism. [85](#)

- 81 [\(return\)](#)
[Burnet (de Statu Mortuorum, p. 56-84) collects the opinions of the Fathers, as far as they assert the sleep, or repose, of human souls till the day of judgment. He afterwards exposes (p. 91, &c.) the inconveniences which must arise, if they possessed a more active and sensible existence.]
- 82 [\(return\)](#)
[Vigilantius placed the souls of the prophets and martyrs, either in the bosom of Abraham, (in loco refrigerii,) or else under the altar of God. Nec posse suis tumulis et ubi voluerunt adesse praesentes. But Jerom (tom. ii. p. 122) sternly refutes this blasphemy. Tu Deo leges pones? Tu apostolis vincula injicies, ut usque ad diem judicii teneantur custodia, nec sint cum Domino suo; de quibus scriptum est, Sequuntur Agnum quocunque vadit. Si Agnus ubique, ergo, et hi, qui cum Agno sunt, ubique esse credendi sunt. Et cum diabolus et daemones tote vagentur in orbe, &c.]
- 83 [\(return\)](#)
[Fleury Discours sur l'Hist. Ecclesiastique, iii p. 80.]
- 84 [\(return\)](#)
[At Minorca, the relics of St. Stephen converted, in eight days, 540 Jews; with the help, indeed, of some wholesome severities, such as burning the synagogue, driving the obstinate infidels to starve among the rocks, &c. See the original letter of Severus, bishop of Minorca (ad calcem St. Augustin. de Civ. Dei,) and the judicious remarks of Basnage, (tom. viii. p. 245-251.)]
- 85 [\(return\)](#)
[Mr. Hume (Essays, vol. ii. p. 434) observes, like a philosopher, the natural flux and reflux of polytheism and theism.]

IV. As the objects of religion were gradually reduced to the standard of the imagination, the rites and ceremonies were introduced that seemed most powerfully to

affect the senses of the vulgar. If, in the beginning of the fifth century, [86](#) Tertullian, or Lactantius, [87](#) had been suddenly raised from the dead, to assist at the festival of some popular saint, or martyr, [88](#) they would have gazed with astonishment, and indignation, on the profane spectacle, which had succeeded to the pure and spiritual worship of a Christian congregation. As soon as the doors of the church were thrown open, they must have been offended by the smoke of incense, the perfume of flowers, and the glare of lamps and tapers, which diffused, at noonday, a gaudy, superfluous, and, in their opinion, a sacrilegious light. If they approached the balustrade of the altar, they made their way through the prostrate crowd, consisting, for the most part, of strangers and pilgrims, who resorted to the city on the vigil of the feast; and who already felt the strong intoxication of fanaticism, and, perhaps, of wine. Their devout kisses were imprinted on the walls and pavement of the sacred edifice; and their fervent prayers were directed, whatever might be the language of their church, to the bones, the blood, or the ashes of the saint, which were usually concealed, by a linen or silken veil, from the eyes of the vulgar. The Christians frequented the tombs of the martyrs, in the hope of obtaining, from their powerful intercession, every sort of spiritual, but more especially of temporal, blessings. They implored the preservation of their health, or the cure of their infirmities; the fruitfulness of their barren wives, or the safety and happiness of their children. Whenever they undertook any distant or dangerous journey, they requested, that the holy martyrs would be their guides and protectors on the road; and if they returned without having experienced any misfortune, they again hastened to the tombs of the martyrs, to celebrate, with grateful thanksgivings, their obligations to the memory and relics of those heavenly patrons. The walls were hung round with symbols of the favors which they had received; eyes, and hands, and feet, of gold and silver: and edifying pictures, which could not long escape the abuse of indiscreet or idolatrous devotion, represented the image, the attributes, and the miracles of the tutelar saint. The same uniform original spirit of superstition might suggest, in the most distant ages and countries, the same methods of deceiving the credulity, and of affecting the senses of mankind: [89](#) but it must ingenuously be confessed, that the ministers of the Catholic church imitated the profane model, which they were impatient to destroy. The most respectable bishops had persuaded themselves that the ignorant rustics would more cheerfully renounce the superstitions of Paganism, if they found some resemblance, some compensation, in the bosom of Christianity. The religion of Constantine achieved, in less than a century, the final conquest of the Roman empire: but the victors themselves were insensibly subdued by the arts of their vanquished rivals. [90](#) [9011](#)

[D'Aubigne (see his own Mémoires, p. 156-160) frankly offered, with the consent of the Huguenot ministers, to allow the first 400 years as the rule of faith. The Cardinal du Perron haggled for forty years more, which were indiscreetly given. Yet

neither party would have found their account in this foolish bargain.]

87 [\(return\)](#)

[The worship practised and inculcated by Tertullian, Lactantius Arnobius, &c., is so extremely pure and spiritual, that their declamations against the Pagan sometimes glance against the Jewish, ceremonies.]

88 [\(return\)](#)

[Faustus the Manichæan accuses the Catholics of idolatry. Vertitis idola in martyres.... quos votis similibus colitis. M. de Beausobre, (Hist. Critique du Manichæisme, tom. ii. p. 629-700,) a Protestant, but a philosopher, has represented, with candor and learning, the introduction of Christian idolatry in the fourth and fifth centuries.]

89 [\(return\)](#)

[The resemblance of superstition, which could not be imitated, might be traced from Japan to Mexico. Warburton has seized this idea, which he distorts, by rendering it too general and absolute, (Divine Legation, vol. iv. p. 126, &c.)]

90 [\(return\)](#)

[The imitation of Paganism is the subject of Dr. Middleton's agreeable letter from Rome. Warburton's animadversions obliged him to connect (vol. iii. p. 120-132,) the history of the two religions, and to prove the antiquity of the Christian copy.]

9011 [\(return\)](#)

[But there was always this important difference between Christian and heathen Polytheism. In Paganism this was the whole religion; in the darkest ages of Christianity, some, however obscure and vague, Christian notions of future retribution, of the life after death, lurked at the bottom, and operated, to a certain extent, on the thoughts and feelings, sometimes on the actions.—M.]

Chapter XXIX: Division Of Roman Empire Between Sons Of Theodosius.—Part I.

Final Division Of The Roman Empire Between The Sons Of Theodosius.—Reign Of Arcadius And Honorius—Administration Of Rufinus And Stilicho.—Revolt And Defeat Of Gildo In Africa.

The genius of Rome expired with Theodosius; the last of the successors of Augustus and Constantine, who appeared in the field at the head of their armies, and whose

authority was universally acknowledged throughout the whole extent of the empire. The memory of his virtues still continued, however, to protect the feeble and inexperienced youth of his two sons. After the death of their father, Arcadius and Honorius were saluted, by the unanimous consent of mankind, as the lawful emperors of the East, and of the West; and the oath of fidelity was eagerly taken by every order of the state; the senates of old and new Rome, the clergy, the magistrates, the soldiers, and the people. Arcadius, who was then about eighteen years of age, was born in Spain, in the humble habitation of a private family. But he received a princely education in the palace of Constantinople; and his inglorious life was spent in that peaceful and splendid seat of royalty, from whence he appeared to reign over the provinces of Thrace, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt, from the Lower Danube to the confines of Persia and Æthiopia. His younger brother Honorius, assumed, in the eleventh year of his age, the nominal government of Italy, Africa, Gaul, Spain, and Britain; and the troops, which guarded the frontiers of his kingdom, were opposed, on one side, to the Caledonians, and on the other, to the Moors. The great and martial praefecture of Illyricum was divided between the two princes: the defence and possession of the provinces of Noricum, Pannonia, and Dalmatia still belonged to the Western empire; but the two large dioceses of Dacia and Macedonia, which Gratian had intrusted to the valor of Theodosius, were forever united to the empire of the East. The boundary in Europe was not very different from the line which now separates the Germans and the Turks; and the respective advantages of territory, riches, populousness, and military strength, were fairly balanced and compensated, in this final and permanent division of the Roman empire. The hereditary sceptre of the sons of Theodosius appeared to be the gift of nature, and of their father; the generals and ministers had been accustomed to adore the majesty of the royal infants; and the army and people were not admonished of their rights, and of their power, by the dangerous example of a recent election. The gradual discovery of the weakness of Arcadius and Honorius, and the repeated calamities of their reign, were not sufficient to obliterate the deep and early impressions of loyalty. The subjects of Rome, who still revered the persons, or rather the names, of their sovereigns, beheld, with equal abhorrence, the rebels who opposed, and the ministers who abused, the authority of the throne.

Theodosius had tarnished the glory of his reign by the elevation of Rufinus; an odious favorite, who, in an age of civil and religious faction, has deserved, from every party, the imputation of every crime. The strong impulse of ambition and avarice [1](#) had urged Rufinus to abandon his native country, an obscure corner of Gaul, [2](#) to advance his fortune in the capital of the East: the talent of bold and ready elocution, [3](#) qualified him to succeed in the lucrative profession of the law; and his success in that profession was a regular step to the most honorable and important employments of the state. He was raised, by just degrees, to the station of master of the offices. In the exercise of his various functions, so essentially connected with the whole system of civil government, he acquired the confidence of a monarch, who soon discovered his diligence and

capacity in business, and who long remained ignorant of the pride, the malice, and the covetousness of his disposition. These vices were concealed beneath the mask of profound dissimulation; [4](#) his passions were subservient only to the passions of his master; yet in the horrid massacre of Thessalonica, the cruel Rufinus inflamed the fury, without imitating the repentance, of Theodosius. The minister, who viewed with proud indifference the rest of mankind, never forgave the appearance of an injury; and his personal enemies had forfeited, in his opinion, the merit of all public services. Promotus, the master-general of the infantry, had saved the empire from the invasion of the Ostrogoths; but he indignantly supported the preeminence of a rival, whose character and profession he despised; and in the midst of a public council, the impatient soldier was provoked to chastise with a blow the indecent pride of the favorite. This act of violence was represented to the emperor as an insult, which it was incumbent on his dignity to resent. The disgrace and exile of Promotus were signified by a peremptory order, to repair, without delay, to a military station on the banks of the Danube; and the death of that general (though he was slain in a skirmish with the Barbarians) was imputed to the perfidious arts of Rufinus. [5](#) The sacrifice of a hero gratified his revenge; the honors of the consulship elated his vanity; but his power was still imperfect and precarious, as long as the important posts of praefect of the East, and of praefect of Constantinople, were filled by Tatian, [6](#) and his son Proculus; whose united authority balanced, for some time, the ambition and favor of the master of the offices. The two praefects were accused of rapine and corruption in the administration of the laws and finances. For the trial of these illustrious offenders, the emperor constituted a special commission: several judges were named to share the guilt and reproach of injustice; but the right of pronouncing sentence was reserved to the president alone, and that president was Rufinus himself. The father, stripped of the praefecture of the East, was thrown into a dungeon; but the son, conscious that few ministers can be found innocent, where an enemy is their judge, had secretly escaped; and Rufinus must have been satisfied with the least obnoxious victim, if despotism had not condescended to employ the basest and most ungenerous artifice. The prosecution was conducted with an appearance of equity and moderation, which flattered Tatian with the hope of a favorable event: his confidence was fortified by the solemn assurances, and perfidious oaths, of the president, who presumed to interpose the sacred name of Theodosius himself; and the unhappy father was at last persuaded to recall, by a private letter, the fugitive Proculus. He was instantly seized, examined, condemned, and beheaded, in one of the suburbs of Constantinople, with a precipitation which disappointed the clemency of the emperor. Without respecting the misfortunes of a consular senator, the cruel judges of Tatian compelled him to behold the execution of his son: the fatal cord was fastened round his own neck; but in the moment when he expected, and perhaps desired, the relief of a speedy death, he was permitted to consume the miserable remnant of his old age in poverty and exile. [7](#) The punishment of the two praefects might, perhaps, be excused by the exceptionable parts of their own conduct; the enmity of Rufinus might

be palliated by the jealous and unsociable nature of ambition. But he indulged a spirit of revenge equally repugnant to prudence and to justice, when he degraded their native country of Lycia from the rank of Roman provinces; stigmatized a guiltless people with a mark of ignominy; and declared, that the countrymen of Tatian and Proculus should forever remain incapable of holding any employment of honor or advantage under the Imperial government. [8](#) The new praefect of the East (for Rufinus instantly succeeded to the vacant honors of his adversary) was not diverted, however, by the most criminal pursuits, from the performance of the religious duties, which in that age were considered as the most essential to salvation. In the suburb of Chalcedon, surnamed the Oak, he had built a magnificent villa; to which he devoutly added a stately church, consecrated to the apostles St. Peter and St. Paul, and continually sanctified by the prayers and penance of a regular society of monks. A numerous, and almost general, synod of the bishops of the Eastern empire, was summoned to celebrate, at the same time, the dedication of the church, and the baptism of the founder. This double ceremony was performed with extraordinary pomp; and when Rufinus was purified, in the holy font, from all the sins that he had hitherto committed, a venerable hermit of Egypt rashly proposed himself as the sponsor of a proud and ambitious statesman. [9](#)

1 [\(return\)](#)

[Alecto, envious of the public felicity, convenes an infernal synod Megaera recommends her pupil Rufinus, and excites him to deeds of mischief, &c. But there is as much difference between Claudian's fury and that of Virgil, as between the characters of Turnus and Rufinus.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[It is evident, (Tillemont, Hist. des Emp. tom. v. p. 770,) though De Marca is ashamed of his countryman, that Rufinus was born at Elusa, the metropolis of Novempopulania, now a small village of Gassony, (D'Anville, Notice de l'Ancienne Gaule, p. 289.)]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[Philostorgius, l. xi c. 3, with Godefroy's Dissert. p. 440.]

4 [\(return\)](#)

[A passage of Suidas is expressive of his profound dissimulation.]

5 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. iv. p. 272, 273.]

6 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, who describes the fall of Tatian and his son, (l. iv. p. 273, 274,) asserts their innocence; and even his testimony may outweigh the charges of their enemies, (Cod. Theod. tom. iv. p. 489,) who accuse them of oppressing the Curiae. The

connection of Tatian with the Arians, while he was praefect of Egypt, (A.D. 373,) inclines Tillemont to believe that he was guilty of every crime, (Hist. des Emp. tom. v. p. 360. Mem. Eccles. tom vi. p. 589.)]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[—Juvenum rorantia colla Ante patrum vultus stricta cecidere securi.

Ibat grandaevus nato moriente superstes

Post trabeas exsul.

--In *Rufin. i. 248.*

The facts of Zosimus explain the allusions of Claudian; but his classic interpreters were ignorant of the fourth century. The fatal cord, I found, with the help of Tillemont, in a sermon of St. Asterius of Amasea.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[This odious law is recited and repealed by Arcadius, (A.D. 296,) on the Theodosian Code, l. ix. tit. xxxviii. leg. 9. The sense as it is explained by Claudian, (in *Rufin. i. 234.*) and Godefroy, (tom. iii. p. 279,) is perfectly clear.

--*Exscindere cives*

Funditus; et nomen gentis delere laborat.

The scruples of Pagi and Tillemont can arise only from their zeal for the glory of Theodosius.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammonius.... *Rufinum propriis manibus suscepit sacro fonte mundatum.* See Rosweyde's *Vitae Patrum*, p. 947. Sozomen (l. viii. c. 17) mentions the church and monastery; and Tillemont (*Mem. Eccles. tom. ix. p. 593*) records this synod, in which St. Gregory of Nyssa performed a conspicuous part.]

The character of Theodosius imposed on his minister the task of hypocrisy, which disguised, and sometimes restrained, the abuse of power; and Rufinus was apprehensive of disturbing the indolent slumber of a prince still capable of exerting the abilities and the virtue, which had raised him to the throne. [10](#) But the absence, and, soon afterwards, the death, of the emperor, confirmed the absolute authority of Rufinus over the person and dominions of Arcadius; a feeble youth, whom the imperious praefect considered as his pupil, rather than his sovereign. Regardless of the public opinion, he indulged his passions without remorse, and without resistance; and his malignant and rapacious spirit rejected every passion that might have contributed to his own glory, or the happiness of the people. His avarice, [11](#) which seems to have prevailed, in his corrupt mind, over every other sentiment, attracted the wealth of the East, by the various arts of partial and general extortion; oppressive taxes, scandalous bribery, immoderate fines, unjust confiscations, forced or fictitious testaments, by which the tyrant despoiled of their lawful inheritance the children of strangers, or enemies; and the public sale of justice,

as well as of favor, which he instituted in the palace of Constantinople. The ambitious candidate eagerly solicited, at the expense of the fairest part of his patrimony, the honors and emoluments of some provincial government; the lives and fortunes of the unhappy people were abandoned to the most liberal purchaser; and the public discontent was sometimes appeased by the sacrifice of an unpopular criminal, whose punishment was profitable only to the praefect of the East, his accomplice and his judge. If avarice were not the blindest of the human passions, the motives of Rufinus might excite our curiosity; and we might be tempted to inquire with what view he violated every principle of humanity and justice, to accumulate those immense treasures, which he could not spend without folly, nor possess without danger. Perhaps he vainly imagined, that he labored for the interest of an only daughter, on whom he intended to bestow his royal pupil, and the august rank of Empress of the East. Perhaps he deceived himself by the opinion, that his avarice was the instrument of his ambition. He aspired to place his fortune on a secure and independent basis, which should no longer depend on the caprice of the young emperor; yet he neglected to conciliate the hearts of the soldiers and people, by the liberal distribution of those riches, which he had acquired with so much toil, and with so much guilt. The extreme parsimony of Rufinus left him only the reproach and envy of ill-gotten wealth; his dependants served him without attachment; the universal hatred of mankind was repressed only by the influence of servile fear. The fate of Lucian proclaimed to the East, that the praefect, whose industry was much abated in the despatch of ordinary business, was active and indefatigable in the pursuit of revenge. Lucian, the son of the praefect Florentius, the oppressor of Gaul, and the enemy of Julian, had employed a considerable part of his inheritance, the fruit of rapine and corruption, to purchase the friendship of Rufinus, and the high office of Count of the East. But the new magistrate imprudently departed from the maxims of the court, and of the times; disgraced his benefactor by the contrast of a virtuous and temperate administration; and presumed to refuse an act of injustice, which might have tended to the profit of the emperor's uncle. Arcadius was easily persuaded to resent the supposed insult; and the praefect of the East resolved to execute in person the cruel vengeance, which he meditated against this ungrateful delegate of his power. He performed with incessant speed the journey of seven or eight hundred miles, from Constantinople to Antioch, entered the capital of Syria at the dead of night, and spread universal consternation among a people ignorant of his design, but not ignorant of his character. The Count of the fifteen provinces of the East was dragged, like the vilest malefactor, before the arbitrary tribunal of Rufinus. Notwithstanding the clearest evidence of his integrity, which was not impeached even by the voice of an accuser, Lucian was condemned, almost without a trial, to suffer a cruel and ignominious punishment. The ministers of the tyrant, by the orders, and in the presence, of their master, beat him on the neck with leather thongs armed at the extremities with lead; and when he fainted under the violence of the pain, he was removed in a close litter, to conceal his dying agonies from the eyes of the indignant city. No sooner had Rufinus perpetrated this

inhuman act, the sole object of his expedition, than he returned, amidst the deep and silent curses of a trembling people, from Antioch to Constantinople; and his diligence was accelerated by the hope of accomplishing, without delay, the nuptials of his daughter with the emperor of the East. [12](#)

10

[\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu (Esprit des Loix, l. xii. c. 12) praises one of the laws of Theodosius addressed to the praefect Rufinus, (l. ix. tit. iv. leg. unic.,) to discourage the prosecution of treasonable, or sacrilegious, words. A tyrannical statute always proves the existence of tyranny; but a laudable edict may only contain the specious professions, or ineffectual wishes, of the prince, or his ministers. This, I am afraid, is a just, though mortifying, canon of criticism.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[

-fluctibus auri Expleri sitis ista nequit-

Congestae cumulantur opes; orbisque ruinas Accipit una domus.

This character (Claudian, in. Rufin. i. 184-220) is confirmed by Jerom, a disinterested witness, (*dedecus insatiabilis avaritiae*, tom. i. ad Heliodor. p. 26,) by Zosimus, (l. v. p. 286,) and by Suidas, who copied the history of Eunapius.]

12

[\(return\)](#)

[

*-Caetera segnis;
Ad facinus velox; penitus regione remotas
Impiger ire vias.*

This allusion of Claudian (in Rufin. i. 241) is again explained by the circumstantial narrative of Zosimus, (l. v. p. 288, 289.)]

But Rufinus soon experienced, that a prudent minister should constantly secure his royal captive by the strong, though invisible chain of habit; and that the merit, and much more easily the favor, of the absent, are obliterated in a short time from the mind of a weak and capricious sovereign. While the praefect satiated his revenge at Antioch, a secret conspiracy of the favorite eunuchs, directed by the great chamberlain Eutropius, undermined his power in the palace of Constantinople. They discovered that Arcadius was not inclined to love the daughter of Rufinus, who had been chosen, without his consent, for his bride; and they contrived to substitute in her place the fair Eudoxia, the daughter of Bauto, [13](#) a general of the Franks in the service of Rome; and who was educated, since the death of her father, in the family of the sons of Promotus. The young emperor, whose chastity had been strictly guarded by the pious care of his tutor Arsenius, [14](#) eagerly listened to the artful and flattering descriptions of the charms of Eudoxia: he gazed with impatient ardor on her picture, and he understood the necessity

of concealing his amorous designs from the knowledge of a minister who was so deeply interested to oppose the consummation of his happiness. Soon after the return of Rufinus, the approaching ceremony of the royal nuptials was announced to the people of Constantinople, who prepared to celebrate, with false and hollow acclamations, the fortune of his daughter. A splendid train of eunuchs and officers issued, in hymeneal pomp, from the gates of the palace; bearing aloft the diadem, the robes, and the inestimable ornaments, of the future empress. The solemn procession passed through the streets of the city, which were adorned with garlands, and filled with spectators; but when it reached the house of the sons of Promotus, the principal eunuch respectfully entered the mansion, invested the fair Eudoxia with the Imperial robes, and conducted her in triumph to the palace and bed of Arcadius. [15](#) The secrecy and success with which this conspiracy against Rufinus had been conducted, imprinted a mark of indelible ridicule on the character of a minister, who had suffered himself to be deceived, in a post where the arts of deceit and dissimulation constitute the most distinguished merit. He considered, with a mixture of indignation and fear, the victory of an aspiring eunuch, who had secretly captivated the favor of his sovereign; and the disgrace of his daughter, whose interest was inseparably connected with his own, wounded the tenderness, or, at least, the pride of Rufinus. At the moment when he flattered himself that he should become the father of a line of kings, a foreign maid, who had been educated in the house of his implacable enemies, was introduced into the Imperial bed; and Eudoxia soon displayed a superiority of sense and spirit, to improve the ascendant which her beauty must acquire over the mind of a fond and youthful husband. The emperor would soon be instructed to hate, to fear, and to destroy the powerful subject, whom he had injured; and the consciousness of guilt deprived Rufinus of every hope, either of safety or comfort, in the retirement of a private life. But he still possessed the most effectual means of defending his dignity, and perhaps of oppressing his enemies. The praefect still exercised an uncontrolled authority over the civil and military government of the East; and his treasures, if he could resolve to use them, might be employed to procure proper instruments for the execution of the blackest designs, that pride, ambition, and revenge could suggest to a desperate statesman. The character of Rufinus seemed to justify the accusations that he conspired against the person of his sovereign, to seat himself on the vacant throne; and that he had secretly invited the Huns and the Goths to invade the provinces of the empire, and to increase the public confusion. The subtle praefect, whose life had been spent in the intrigues of the palace, opposed, with equal arms, the artful measures of the eunuch Eutropius; but the timid soul of Rufinus was astonished by the hostile approach of a more formidable rival, of the great Stilicho, the general, or rather the master, of the empire of the West. [16](#)

- 14 [\(return\)](#)
[Arsenius escaped from the palace of Constantinople, and passed fifty-five years in rigid penance in the monasteries of Egypt. See Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xiv. p. 676-702; and Fleury, Hist Eccles. tom. v. p. 1, &c.; but the latter, for want of authentic materials, has given too much credit to the legend of Metaphrastes.]
- 15 [\(return\)](#)
[This story (Zosimus, l. v. p. 290) proves that the hymeneal rites of antiquity were still practised, without idolatry, by the Christians of the East; and the bride was forcibly conducted from the house of her parents to that of her husband. Our form of marriage requires, with less delicacy, the express and public consent of a virgin.]
- 16 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, (l. v. p. 290,) Orosius, (l. vii. c. 37,) and the Chronicle of Marcellinus. Claudian (in Rufin. ii. 7-100) paints, in lively colors, the distress and guilt of the praefect.]

The celestial gift, which Achilles obtained, and Alexander envied, of a poet worthy to celebrate the actions of heroes has been enjoyed by Stilicho, in a much higher degree than might have been expected from the declining state of genius, and of art. The muse of Claudian, [17](#) devoted to his service, was always prepared to stigmatize his adversaries, Rufinus, or Eutropius, with eternal infamy; or to paint, in the most splendid colors, the victories and virtues of a powerful benefactor. In the review of a period indifferently supplied with authentic materials, we cannot refuse to illustrate the annals of Honorius, from the invectives, or the panegyrics, of a contemporary writer; but as Claudian appears to have indulged the most ample privilege of a poet and a courtier, some criticism will be requisite to translate the language of fiction or exaggeration, into the truth and simplicity of historic prose. His silence concerning the family of Stilicho may be admitted as a proof, that his patron was neither able, nor desirous, to boast of a long series of illustrious progenitors; and the slight mention of his father, an officer of Barbarian cavalry in the service of Valens, seems to countenance the assertion, that the general, who so long commanded the armies of Rome, was descended from the savage and perfidious race of the Vandals. [18](#) If Stilicho had not possessed the external advantages of strength and stature, the most flattering bard, in the presence of so many thousand spectators, would have hesitated to affirm, that he surpassed the measure of the demi-gods of antiquity; and that whenever he moved, with lofty steps, through the streets of the capital, the astonished crowd made room for the stranger, who displayed, in a private condition, the awful majesty of a hero. From his earliest youth he embraced the profession of arms; his prudence and valor were soon distinguished in the field; the horsemen and archers of the East admired his superior dexterity; and in each degree of his military promotions, the public judgment always prevented and approved the choice

of the sovereign. He was named, by Theodosius, to ratify a solemn treaty with the monarch of Persia; he supported, during that important embassy, the dignity of the Roman name; and after he returned to Constantinople, his merit was rewarded by an intimate and honorable alliance with the Imperial family. Theodosius had been prompted, by a pious motive of fraternal affection, to adopt, for his own, the daughter of his brother Honorius; the beauty and accomplishments of Serena [19](#) were universally admired by the obsequious court; and Stilicho obtained the preference over a crowd of rivals, who ambitiously disputed the hand of the princess, and the favor of her adopted father. [20](#) The assurance that the husband of Serena would be faithful to the throne, which he was permitted to approach, engaged the emperor to exalt the fortunes, and to employ the abilities, of the sagacious and intrepid Stilicho. He rose, through the successive steps of master of the horse, and count of the domestics, to the supreme rank of master-general of all the cavalry and infantry of the Roman, or at least of the Western, empire; [21](#) and his enemies confessed, that he invariably disdained to barter for gold the rewards of merit, or to defraud the soldiers of the pay and gratifications which they deserved or claimed, from the liberality of the state. [22](#) The valor and conduct which he afterwards displayed, in the defence of Italy, against the arms of Alaric and Radagaisus, may justify the fame of his early achievements and in an age less attentive to the laws of honor, or of pride, the Roman generals might yield the preeminence of rank, to the ascendant of superior genius. [23](#) He lamented, and revenged, the murder of Promotus, his rival and his friend; and the massacre of many thousands of the flying Bastarnae is represented by the poet as a bloody sacrifice, which the Roman Achilles offered to the manes of another Patroclus. The virtues and victories of Stilicho deserved the hatred of Rufinus: and the arts of calumny might have been successful if the tender and vigilant Serena had not protected her husband against his domestic foes, whilst he vanquished in the field the enemies of the empire. [24](#) Theodosius continued to support an unworthy minister, to whose diligence he delegated the government of the palace, and of the East; but when he marched against the tyrant Eugenius, he associated his faithful general to the labors and glories of the civil war; and in the last moments of his life, the dying monarch recommended to Stilicho the care of his sons, and of the republic. [25](#) The ambition and the abilities of Stilicho were not unequal to the important trust; and he claimed the guardianship of the two empires, during the minority of Arcadius and Honorius. [26](#) The first measure of his administration, or rather of his reign, displayed to the nations the vigor and activity of a spirit worthy to command. He passed the Alps in the depth of winter; descended the stream of the Rhine, from the fortress of Basil to the marshes of Batavia; reviewed the state of the garrisons; repressed the enterprises of the Germans; and, after establishing along the banks a firm and honorable peace, returned, with incredible speed, to the palace of Milan. [27](#) The person and court of Honorius were subject to the master-general of the West; and the armies and provinces of Europe obeyed, without hesitation, a regular authority, which was exercised in the name of their young sovereign. Two rivals only remained to dispute the claims, and to

provoke the vengeance, of Stilicho. Within the limits of Africa, Gildo, the Moor, maintained a proud and dangerous independence; and the minister of Constantinople asserted his equal reign over the emperor, and the empire, of the East.

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Stilicho, directly or indirectly, is the perpetual theme of Claudian. The youth and private life of the hero are vaguely expressed in the poem on his first consulship, 35-140.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Vandalorum, imbellis, avarae, perfidae, et dolosae, gentis, genere editus. Orosius, l. vii. c. 38. Jerom (tom. i. ad Gerontiam, p. 93) call him a Semi-Barbarian.]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[Claudian, in an imperfect poem, has drawn a fair, perhaps a flattering, portrait of Serena. That favorite niece of Theodosius was born, as well as here sister Thermantia, in Spain; from whence, in their earliest youth, they were honorably conducted to the palace of Constantinople.]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[Some doubt may be entertained, whether this adoption was legal or only metaphorical, (see Ducange, Fam. Byzant. p. 75.) An old inscription gives Stilicho the singular title of Pro-gener Divi Theodosius]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[Claudian (Laus Serenae, 190, 193) expresses, in poetic language “the dilectus equorum,” and the “gemino mox idem culmine duxit agmina.” The inscription adds, “count of the domestics,” an important command, which Stilicho, in the height of his grandeur, might prudently retain.]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[The beautiful lines of Claudian (in i. Cons. Stilich. ii. 113) displays his genius; but the integrity of Stilicho (in the military administration) is much more firmly established by the unwilling evidence of Zosimus, (l. v. p. 345.)]

23 [\(return\)](#)

[—Si bellica moles Ingrueret, quamvis annis et jure minori,

Cedere grandaevos equitum peditumque magistros

Adspiceres. Claudian, Laus Seren. p. 196, &c. A modern general would deem their submission either heroic patriotism or abject servility.]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare the poem on the first consulship (i. 95-

115) with the Laus Serenoe (227-237, where it unfortunately breaks off.) We may perceive the deep, inveterate malice of Rufinus.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[—Quem fratribus ipse Discedens, clypeum defensoremque dedisti. Yet the nomination (iv. Cons. Hon. 432) was private, (iii. Cons. Hon. 142,) cunctos discedere... jubet; and may therefore be suspected. Zosimus and Suidas apply to Stilicho and Rufinus the same equal title of guardians, or procurators.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[The Roman law distinguishes two sorts of minority, which expired at the age of fourteen, and of twenty-five. The one was subject to the tutor, or guardian, of the person; the other, to the curator, or trustee, of the estate, (Heineccius, Antiquitat. Rom. ad Jurisprud. pertinent. l. i. tit. xxii. xxiii. p. 218-232.) But these legal ideas were never accurately transferred into the constitution of an elective monarchy.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[See Claudian, (i. Cons. Stilich. i. 188-242;) but he must allow more than fifteen days for the journey and return between Milan and Leyden.]

Chapter XXIX: Division Of Roman Empire Between Sons Of Theodosius.—Part II.

The impartiality which Stilicho affected, as the common guardian of the royal brothers, engaged him to regulate the equal division of the arms, the jewels, and the magnificent wardrobe and furniture of the deceased emperor. [28](#) But the most important object of the inheritance consisted of the numerous legions, cohorts, and squadrons, of Romans, or Barbarians, whom the event of the civil war had united under the standard of Theodosius. The various multitudes of Europe and Asia, exasperated by recent animosities, were overawed by the authority of a single man; and the rigid discipline of Stilicho protected the lands of the citizens from the rapine of the licentious soldier. [29](#) Anxious, however, and impatient, to relieve Italy from the presence of this formidable host, which could be useful only on the frontiers of the empire, he listened to the just requisition of the minister of Arcadius, declared his intention of reconducting in person the troops of the East, and dexterously employed the rumor of a Gothic tumult to conceal his private designs of ambition and revenge. [30](#) The guilty soul of Rufinus was alarmed by the approach of a warrior and a rival, whose enmity he deserved; he computed, with increasing terror, the narrow space of his life and greatness; and, as the

last hope of safety, he interposed the authority of the emperor Arcadius. Stilicho, who appears to have directed his march along the sea-coast of the Adriatic, was not far distant from the city of Thessalonica, when he received a peremptory message, to recall the troops of the East, and to declare, that his nearer approach would be considered, by the Byzantine court, as an act of hostility. The prompt and unexpected obedience of the general of the West, convinced the vulgar of his loyalty and moderation; and, as he had already engaged the affection of the Eastern troops, he recommended to their zeal the execution of his bloody design, which might be accomplished in his absence, with less danger, perhaps, and with less reproach. Stilicho left the command of the troops of the East to Gainas, the Goth, on whose fidelity he firmly relied, with an assurance, at least, that the hardy Barbarians would never be diverted from his purpose by any consideration of fear or remorse. The soldiers were easily persuaded to punish the enemy of Stilicho and of Rome; and such was the general hatred which Rufinus had excited, that the fatal secret, communicated to thousands, was faithfully preserved during the long march from Thessalonica to the gates of Constantinople. As soon as they had resolved his death, they condescended to flatter his pride; the ambitious praefect was seduced to believe, that those powerful auxiliaries might be tempted to place the diadem on his head; and the treasures which he distributed, with a tardy and reluctant hand, were accepted by the indignant multitude as an insult, rather than as a gift. At the distance of a mile from the capital, in the field of Mars, before the palace of Hebdomon, the troops halted: and the emperor, as well as his minister, advanced, according to ancient custom, respectfully to salute the power which supported their throne. As Rufinus passed along the ranks, and disguised, with studied courtesy, his innate haughtiness, the wings insensibly wheeled from the right and left, and enclosed the devoted victim within the circle of their arms. Before he could reflect on the danger of his situation, Gainas gave the signal of death; a daring and forward soldier plunged his sword into the breast of the guilty praefect, and Rufinus fell, groaned, and expired, at the feet of the affrighted emperor. If the agonies of a moment could expiate the crimes of a whole life, or if the outrages inflicted on a breathless corpse could be the object of pity, our humanity might perhaps be affected by the horrid circumstances which accompanied the murder of Rufinus. His mangled body was abandoned to the brutal fury of the populace of either sex, who hastened in crowds, from every quarter of the city, to trample on the remains of the haughty minister, at whose frown they had so lately trembled. His right hand was cut off, and carried through the streets of Constantinople, in cruel mockery, to extort contributions for the avaricious tyrant, whose head was publicly exposed, borne aloft on the point of a long lance. [31](#) According to the savage maxims of the Greek republics, his innocent family would have shared the punishment of his crimes. The wife and daughter of Rufinus were indebted for their safety to the influence of religion. Her sanctuary protected them from the raging madness of the people; and they were permitted to spend the remainder

of their lives in the exercise of Christian devotions, in the peaceful retirement of Jerusalem. [32](#)

- 28 [\(return\)](#)
[I. Cons. Stilich. ii. 88-94. Not only the robes and diadems of the deceased emperor, but even the helmets, sword-hilts, belts, rasses, &c., were enriched with pearls, emeralds, and diamonds.]
- 29 [\(return\)](#)
[—Tantoque remoto Principe, mutatas orbis non sensit habenas. This high commendation (i. Cons. Stil. i. 149) may be justified by the fears of the dying emperor, (de Bell. Gildon. 292-301;) and the peace and good order which were enjoyed after his death, (i. Cons. Stil i. 150-168.)]
- 30 [\(return\)](#)
[Stilicho's march, and the death of Rufinus, are described by Claudian, (in Rufin. l. ii. 101-453, Zosimus, l. v. p. 296, 297,) Sozomen (l. viii. c. 1,) Socrates, l. vi. c. 1,) Philostorgius, (l. xi c. 3, with Godefory, p. 441,) and the Chronicle of Marcellinus.]
- 31 [\(return\)](#)
[The dissection of Rufinus, which Claudian performs with the savage coolness of an anatomist, (in Rufin. ii. 405-415,) is likewise specified by Zosimus and Jerom, (tom. i. p. 26.)]
- 32 [\(return\)](#)
[The Pagan Zosimus mentions their sanctuary and pilgrimage. The sister of Rufinus, Sylvania, who passed her life at Jerusalem, is famous in monastic history. 1. The studious virgin had diligently, and even repeatedly, perused the commentators on the Bible, Origen, Gregory, Basil, &c., to the amount of five millions of lines. 2. At the age of threescore, she could boast, that she had never washed her hands, face, or any part of her whole body, except the tips of her fingers to receive the communion. See the Vitae Patrum, p. 779, 977.]

The servile poet of Stilicho applauds, with ferocious joy, this horrid deed, which, in the execution, perhaps, of justice, violated every law of nature and society, profaned the majesty of the prince, and renewed the dangerous examples of military license. The contemplation of the universal order and harmony had satisfied Claudian of the existence of the Deity; but the prosperous impunity of vice appeared to contradict his moral attributes; and the fate of Rufinus was the only event which could dispel the religious doubts of the poet. [33](#) Such an act might vindicate the honor of Providence, but it did not much contribute to the happiness of the people. In less than three months they were informed of the maxims of the new administration, by a singular edict, which

established the exclusive right of the treasury over the spoils of Rufinus; and silenced, under heavy penalties, the presumptuous claims of the subjects of the Eastern empire, who had been injured by his rapacious tyranny. [34](#) Even Stilicho did not derive from the murder of his rival the fruit which he had proposed; and though he gratified his revenge, his ambition was disappointed. Under the name of a favorite, the weakness of Arcadius required a master, but he naturally preferred the obsequious arts of the eunuch Eutropius, who had obtained his domestic confidence: and the emperor contemplated, with terror and aversion, the stern genius of a foreign warrior. Till they were divided by the jealousy of power, the sword of Gainas, and the charms of Eudoxia, supported the favor of the great chamberlain of the palace: the perfidious Goth, who was appointed master-general of the East, betrayed, without scruple, the interest of his benefactor; and the same troops, who had so lately massacred the enemy of Stilicho, were engaged to support, against him, the independence of the throne of Constantinople. The favorites of Arcadius fomented a secret and irreconcilable war against a formidable hero, who aspired to govern, and to defend, the two empires of Rome, and the two sons of Theodosius. They incessantly labored, by dark and treacherous machinations, to deprive him of the esteem of the prince, the respect of the people, and the friendship of the Barbarians. The life of Stilicho was repeatedly attempted by the dagger of hired assassins; and a decree was obtained from the senate of Constantinople, to declare him an enemy of the republic, and to confiscate his ample possessions in the provinces of the East. At a time when the only hope of delaying the ruin of the Roman name depended on the firm union, and reciprocal aid, of all the nations to whom it had been gradually communicated, the subjects of Arcadius and Honorius were instructed, by their respective masters, to view each other in a foreign, and even hostile, light; to rejoice in their mutual calamities, and to embrace, as their faithful allies, the Barbarians, whom they excited to invade the territories of their countrymen. [35](#) The natives of Italy affected to despise the servile and effeminate Greeks of Byzantium, who presumed to imitate the dress, and to usurp the dignity, of Roman senators; [36](#) and the Greeks had not yet forgot the sentiments of hatred and contempt, which their polished ancestors had so long entertained for the rude inhabitants of the West. The distinction of two governments, which soon produced the separation of two nations, will justify my design of suspending the series of the Byzantine history, to prosecute, without interruption, the disgraceful, but memorable, reign of Honorius.

33

[\(return\)](#)

[See the beautiful exordium of his invective against Rufinus, which is curiously discussed by the sceptic Bayle, Dictionnaire Critique, Rufin. Not. E.]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Theodosian Code, l. ix. tit. xlii. leg. 14, 15. The new ministers attempted, with inconsistent avarice, to seize the spoils of their predecessor, and to provide for their own future security.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[See Claudian, (i. Cons. Stilich, l. i. 275, 292, 296, l. ii. 83,) and Zosimus, (l. v. p. 302.)]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian turns the consulship of the eunuch Eutropius into a national reflection, (l. ii. 134):—

--*Plaudentem cerne senatum,
Et Byzantinos proceres Graiosque Quirites:
O patribus plebes, O digni consule patres.*

It is curious to observe the first symptoms of jealousy and schism between old and new Rome, between the Greeks and Latins.]

The prudent Stilicho, instead of persisting to force the inclinations of a prince, and people, who rejected his government, wisely abandoned Arcadius to his unworthy favorites; and his reluctance to involve the two empires in a civil war displayed the moderation of a minister, who had so often signalized his military spirit and abilities. But if Stilicho had any longer endured the revolt of Africa, he would have betrayed the security of the capital, and the majesty of the Western emperor, to the capricious insolence of a Moorish rebel. Gildo, [37](#) the brother of the tyrant Firmus, had preserved and obtained, as the reward of his apparent fidelity, the immense patrimony which was forfeited by treason: long and meritorious service, in the armies of Rome, raised him to the dignity of a military count; the narrow policy of the court of Theodosius had adopted the mischievous expedient of supporting a legal government by the interest of a powerful family; and the brother of Firmus was invested with the command of Africa. His ambition soon usurped the administration of justice, and of the finances, without account, and without control; and he maintained, during a reign of twelve years, the possession of an office, from which it was impossible to remove him, without the danger of a civil war. During those twelve years, the provinces of Africa groaned under the dominion of a tyrant, who seemed to unite the unfeeling temper of a stranger with the partial resentments of domestic faction. The forms of law were often superseded by the use of poison; and if the trembling guests, who were invited to the table of Gildo, presumed to express fears, the insolent suspicion served only to excite his fury, and he loudly summoned the ministers of death. Gildo alternately indulged the passions of avarice and lust; [38](#) and if his days were terrible to the rich, his nights were not less dreadful to husbands and parents. The fairest of their wives and daughters were prostituted to the embraces of the tyrant; and afterwards abandoned to a ferocious troop of Barbarians and assassins, the black, or swarthy, natives of the desert; whom Gildo considered as the only guardians of his throne. In the civil war between Theodosius and Eugenius, the count, or rather the sovereign, of Africa, maintained a haughty and suspicious neutrality; refused to assist either of the contending parties with troops or vessels, expected the declaration of fortune, and reserved for the conqueror the vain professions of his allegiance. Such professions would not have satisfied the master of the Roman world; but the death of Theodosius, and the weakness and discord of his

sons, confirmed the power of the Moor; who condescended, as a proof of his moderation, to abstain from the use of the diadem, and to supply Rome with the customary tribute, or rather subsidy, of corn. In every division of the empire, the five provinces of Africa were invariably assigned to the West; and Gildo had to govern that extensive country in the name of Honorius, but his knowledge of the character and designs of Stilicho soon engaged him to address his homage to a more distant and feeble sovereign. The ministers of Arcadius embraced the cause of a perfidious rebel; and the delusive hope of adding the numerous cities of Africa to the empire of the East, tempted them to assert a claim, which they were incapable of supporting, either by reason or by arms. [39](#)

37 [\(return\)](#)
[Claudian may have exaggerated the vices of Gildo; but his Moorish extraction, his notorious actions, and the complaints of St. Augustin, may justify the poet's invectives. Baronius (Annal. Eccles. A.D. 398, No. 35-56) has treated the African rebellion with skill and learning.]

38 [\(return\)](#)
[
*Instat terribilis vivis, morientibus haeres,
Virginibus raptor, thalamis obscoenus adulter.
Nulla quies: oritur praeda cessante libido,
Divitibusque dies, et nox metuenda maritis.
Mauris clarissima quaeque
Fastidita datur.*
—De Bello Gildonico, 165, 189.

Baronius condemns, still more severely, the licentiousness of Gildo; as his wife, his daughter, and his sister, were examples of perfect chastity. The adulteries of the African soldiers are checked by one of the Imperial laws.]

39 [\(return\)](#)
[Inque tuam sortem numerosas transtulit urbes. Claudian (de Bell. Gildonico, 230-324) has touched, with political delicacy, the intrigues of the Byzantine court, which are likewise mentioned by Zosimus, (l. v. p. 302.)]

When Stilicho had given a firm and decisive answer to the pretensions of the Byzantine court, he solemnly accused the tyrant of Africa before the tribunal, which had formerly judged the kings and nations of the earth; and the image of the republic was revived, after a long interval, under the reign of Honorius. The emperor transmitted an accurate and ample detail of the complaints of the provincials, and the crimes of Gildo, to the Roman senate; and the members of that venerable assembly were required to pronounce the condemnation of the rebel. Their unanimous suffrage declared him the enemy of the republic; and the decree of the senate added a sacred and legitimate sanction to the Roman arms. [40](#) A people, who still remembered that their ancestors

had been the masters of the world, would have applauded, with conscious pride, the representation of ancient freedom; if they had not since been accustomed to prefer the solid assurance of bread to the unsubstantial visions of liberty and greatness. The subsistence of Rome depended on the harvests of Africa; and it was evident, that a declaration of war would be the signal of famine. The praefect Symmachus, who presided in the deliberations of the senate, admonished the minister of his just apprehension, that as soon as the revengeful Moor should prohibit the exportation of corn, tranquility and perhaps the safety, of the capital would be threatened by the hungry rage of a turbulent multitude. [41](#) The prudence of Stilicho conceived and executed, without delay, the most effectual measure for the relief of the Roman people. A large and seasonable supply of corn, collected in the inland provinces of Gaul, was embarked on the rapid stream of the Rhone, and transported, by an easy navigation, from the Rhone to the Tyber. During the whole term of the African war, the granaries of Rome were continually filled, her dignity was vindicated from the humiliating dependence, and the minds of an immense people were quieted by the calm confidence of peace and plenty. [42](#)

40 [\(return\)](#)

[Symmachus (l. iv. epist. 4) expresses the judicial forms of the senate; and Claudian (i. Cons. Stilich. l. i. 325, &c.) seems to feel the spirit of a Roman.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[Claudian finely displays these complaints of Symmachus, in a speech of the goddess of Rome, before the throne of Jupiter, (de Bell Gildon. 28-128.)]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[See Claudian (in Eutrop. l. i 401, &c. i. Cons. Stil. l. i. 306, &c. i. Cons. Stilich. 91, &c.)]

The cause of Rome, and the conduct of the African war, were intrusted by Stilicho to a general, active and ardent to avenge his private injuries on the head of the tyrant. The spirit of discord which prevailed in the house of Nabal, had excited a deadly quarrel between two of his sons, Gildo and Mascezel. [43](#) The usurper pursued, with implacable rage, the life of his younger brother, whose courage and abilities he feared; and Mascezel, oppressed by superior power, took refuge in the court of Milan, where he soon received the cruel intelligence that his two innocent and helpless children had been murdered by their inhuman uncle. The affliction of the father was suspended only by the desire of revenge. The vigilant Stilicho already prepared to collect the naval and military force of the Western empire; and he had resolved, if the tyrant should be able to wage an equal and doubtful war, to march against him in person. But as Italy required his presence, and as it might be dangerous to weaken the defence of the frontier, he judged it more advisable, that Mascezel should attempt this arduous adventure at the head of a chosen body of Gallic veterans, who had lately served under the standard of Eugenius. These troops, who were exhorted to convince the world that they could

subvert, as well as defend the throne of a usurper, consisted of the Jovian, the Herculan, and the Augustan legions; of the Nervian auxiliaries; of the soldiers who displayed in their banners the symbol of a lion, and of the troops which were distinguished by the auspicious names of Fortunate, and Invincible. Yet such was the smallness of their establishments, or the difficulty of recruiting, that these seven bands, [44](#) of high dignity and reputation in the service of Rome, amounted to no more than five thousand effective men. [45](#) The fleet of galleys and transports sailed in tempestuous weather from the port of Pisa, in Tuscany, and steered their course to the little island of Capraria; which had borrowed that name from the wild goats, its original inhabitants, whose place was occupied by a new colony of a strange and savage appearance. “The whole island (says an ingenious traveller of those times) is filled, or rather defiled, by men who fly from the light. They call themselves Monks, or solitaries, because they choose to live alone, without any witnesses of their actions. They fear the gifts of fortune, from the apprehension of losing them; and, lest they should be miserable, they embrace a life of voluntary wretchedness. How absurd is their choice! how perverse their understanding! to dread the evils, without being able to support the blessings, of the human condition. Either this melancholy madness is the effect of disease, or exercise on their own bodies the tortures which are inflicted on fugitive slaves by the hand of justice.” [46](#) Such was the contempt of a profane magistrate for the monks as the chosen servants of God. [47](#) Some of them were persuaded, by his entreaties, to embark on board the fleet; and it is observed, to the praise of the Roman general, that his days and nights were employed in prayer, fasting, and the occupation of singing psalms. The devout leader, who, with such a reenforcement, appeared confident of victory, avoided the dangerous rocks of Corsica, coasted along the eastern side of Sardinia, and secured his ships against the violence of the south wind, by casting anchor in the and capacious harbor of Cagliari, at the distance of one hundred and forty miles from the African shores. [48](#)

43

[\(return\)](#)

[He was of a mature age; since he had formerly (A.D. 373) served against his brother Firmus (Ammian. xxix. 5.) Claudian, who understood the court of Milan, dwells on the injuries, rather than the merits, of Mascezel, (de Bell. Gild. 389-414.) The Moorish war was not worthy of Honorius, or Stilicho, &c.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian, Bell. Gild. 415-423. The change of discipline allowed him to use indifferently the names of Legio Cohors, Manipulus. See Notitia Imperii, S. 38, 40.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[Orosius (l. vii. c. 36, p. 565) qualifies this account with an expression of doubt, (ut aiunt;) and it scarcely coincides with Zosimus, (l. v. p. 303.) Yet Claudian, after some declamation about Cadmus,

soldiers, frankly owns that Stilicho sent a small army lest the rebels should fly, ne timeare times, (i. Cons. Stilich. l. i. 314 &c.)]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Claud. Rutil. Numatian. Itinerar. i. 439-448. He afterwards (515-526) mentions a religious madman on the Isle of Gorgona. For such profane remarks, Rutilius and his accomplices are styled, by his commentator, Barthius, rabiosi canes diaboli. Tillemont (Mem. Eccles com. xii. p. 471) more calmly observes, that the unbelieving poet praises where he means to censure.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[Orosius, l. vii. c. 36, p. 564. Augustin commends two of these savage saints of the Isle of Goats, (epist. lxxxii. apud Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xiii. p. 317, and Baronius, Annal Eccles. A.D. 398 No. 51.)]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[Here the first book of the Gildonic war is terminated. The rest of Claudian's poem has been lost; and we are ignorant how or where the army made good their landing in Africa.]

Gildo was prepared to resist the invasion with all the forces of Africa. By the liberality of his gifts and promises, he endeavored to secure the doubtful allegiance of the Roman soldiers, whilst he attracted to his standard the distant tribes of Gaetulia and Æthiopia. He proudly reviewed an army of seventy thousand men, and boasted, with the rash presumption which is the forerunner of disgrace, that his numerous cavalry would trample under their horses' feet the troops of Mascezel, and involve, in a cloud of burning sand, the natives of the cold regions of Gaul and Germany. [49](#) But the Moor, who commanded the legions of Honorius, was too well acquainted with the manners of his countrymen, to entertain any serious apprehension of a naked and disorderly host of Barbarians; whose left arm, instead of a shield, was protected only by mantle; who were totally disarmed as soon as they had darted their javelin from their right hand; and whose horses had never been in combat. He fixed his camp of five thousand veterans in the face of a superior enemy, and, after the delay of three days, gave the signal of a general engagement. [50](#) As Mascezel advanced before the front with fair offers of peace and pardon, he encountered one of the foremost standard-bearers of the Africans, and, on his refusal to yield, struck him on the arm with his sword. The arm, and the standard, sunk under the weight of the blow; and the imaginary act of submission was hastily repeated by all the standards of the line. At this the disaffected cohorts proclaimed the name of their lawful sovereign; the Barbarians, astonished by the defection of their Roman allies, dispersed, according to their custom, in tumultuary flight; and Mascezel obtained the honors of an easy, and almost bloodless, victory. [51](#) The tyrant escaped from the field of battle to the sea-shore; and threw himself into a small vessel, with the

hope of reaching in safety some friendly port of the empire of the East; but the obstinacy of the wind drove him back into the harbor of Tabraca, [52](#) which had acknowledged, with the rest of the province, the dominion of Honorius, and the authority of his lieutenant. The inhabitants, as a proof of their repentance and loyalty, seized and confined the person of Gildo in a dungeon; and his own despair saved him from the intolerable torture of supporting the presence of an injured and victorious brother. [53](#) The captives and the spoils of Africa were laid at the feet of the emperor; but Stilicho, whose moderation appeared more conspicuous and more sincere, in the midst of prosperity, still affected to consult the laws of the republic; and referred to the senate and people of Rome the judgment of the most illustrious criminals. [54](#) Their trial was public and solemn; but the judges, in the exercise of this obsolete and precarious jurisdiction, were impatient to punish the African magistrates, who had intercepted the subsistence of the Roman people. The rich and guilty province was oppressed by the Imperial ministers, who had a visible interest to multiply the number of the accomplices of Gildo; and if an edict of Honorius seems to check the malicious industry of informers, a subsequent edict, at the distance of ten years, continues and renews the prosecution of the offences which had been committed in the time of the general rebellion. [55](#) The adherents of the tyrant who escaped the first fury of the soldiers, and the judges, might derive some consolation from the tragic fate of his brother, who could never obtain his pardon for the extraordinary services which he had performed. After he had finished an important war in the space of a single winter, Mascezel was received at the court of Milan with loud applause, affected gratitude, and secret jealousy; [56](#) and his death, which, perhaps, was the effect of passage of a bridge, the Moorish prince, who accompanied the master-general of the West, was suddenly thrown from his horse into the river; the officious haste of the attendants was restrained by a cruel and perfidious smile which they observed on the countenance of Stilicho; and while they delayed the necessary assistance, the unfortunate Mascezel was irrecoverably drowned. [57](#)

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Orosius must be responsible for the account. The presumption of Gildo and his various train of Barbarians is celebrated by Claudian, Cons. Stil. l. i. 345-355.]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[St. Ambrose, who had been dead about a year, revealed, in a vision, the time and place of the victory. Mascezel afterwards related his dream to Paulinus, the original biographer of the saint, from whom it might easily pass to Orosius.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. v. p. 303) supposes an obstinate combat; but the narrative of Orosius appears to conceal a real fact, under the disguise of a miracle.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Tabraca lay between the two Hippos, (Cellarius,

tom. ii. p. 112; D'Anville, tom. iii. p. 84.) Orosius has distinctly named the field of battle, but our ignorance cannot define the precise situation.]

53 [\(return\)](#)

[The death of Gildo is expressed by Claudian (i. Cons. Stil. 357) and his best interpreters, Zosimus and Orosius.]

54 [\(return\)](#)

[Claudian (ii. Cons. Stilich. 99-119) describes their trial (tremuit quos Africa nuper, cernunt rostra reos,) and applauds the restoration of the ancient constitution. It is here that he introduces the famous sentence, so familiar to the friends of despotism:

--*Nunquam libertas gratior exstat,
Quam sub rege pio.*

But the freedom which depends on royal piety, scarcely deserves appellation]

55 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Theodosian Code, l. ix. tit. xxxix. leg. 3, tit. xl. leg. 19.]

56 [\(return\)](#)

[Stilicho, who claimed an equal share in all the victories of Theodosius and his son, particularly asserts, that Africa was recovered by the wisdom of his counsels, (see an inscription produced by Baronius.)]

57 [\(return\)](#)

[I have softened the narrative of Zosimus, which, in its crude simplicity, is almost incredible, (l. v. p. 303.) Orosius damns the victorious general (p. 538) for violating the right of sanctuary.]

The joy of the African triumph was happily connected with the nuptials of the emperor Honorius, and of his cousin Maria, the daughter of Stilicho: and this equal and honorable alliance seemed to invest the powerful minister with the authority of a parent over his submissive pupil. The muse of Claudian was not silent on this propitious day; [58](#) he sung, in various and lively strains, the happiness of the royal pair; and the glory of the hero, who confirmed their union, and supported their throne. The ancient fables of Greece, which had almost ceased to be the object of religious faith, were saved from oblivion by the genius of poetry. The picture of the Cyprian grove, the seat of harmony and love; the triumphant progress of Venus over her native seas, and the mild influence which her presence diffused in the palace of Milan, express to every age the natural sentiments of the heart, in the just and pleasing language of allegorical fiction. But the amorous impatience which Claudian attributes to the young prince, [59](#) must excite the smiles of the court; and his beauteous spouse (if she deserved the praise of beauty) had not much to fear or to hope from the passions of her lover. Honorius was only in the fourteenth year of his age; Serena, the mother of his bride, deferred, by art

of persuasion, the consummation of the royal nuptials; Maria died a virgin, after she had been ten years a wife; and the chastity of the emperor was secured by the coldness, or perhaps, the debility, of his constitution. [60](#) His subjects, who attentively studied the character of their young sovereign, discovered that Honorius was without passions, and consequently without talents; and that his feeble and languid disposition was alike incapable of discharging the duties of his rank, or of enjoying the pleasures of his age. In his early youth he made some progress in the exercises of riding and drawing the bow: but he soon relinquished these fatiguing occupations, and the amusement of feeding poultry became the serious and daily care of the monarch of the West, [61](#) who resigned the reins of empire to the firm and skilful hand of his guardian Stilicho. The experience of history will countenance the suspicion that a prince who was born in the purple, received a worse education than the meanest peasant of his dominions; and that the ambitious minister suffered him to attain the age of manhood, without attempting to excite his courage, or to enlighten his understanding. [62](#) The predecessors of Honorius were accustomed to animate by their example, or at least by their presence, the valor of the legions; and the dates of their laws attest the perpetual activity of their motions through the provinces of the Roman world. But the son of Theodosius passed the slumber of his life, a captive in his palace, a stranger in his country, and the patient, almost the indifferent, spectator of the ruin of the Western empire, which was repeatedly attacked, and finally subverted, by the arms of the Barbarians. In the eventful history of a reign of twenty-eight years, it will seldom be necessary to mention the name of the emperor Honorius.

58

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian,as the poet laureate, composed a serious and elaborate epithalamium of 340 lines; besides some gay Fescennines, which were sung, in a more licentious tone, on the wedding night.]

59

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Calet obvius ire
Jam princeps, tardumque cupit discedere solem.
Nobilis haud aliter sonipes.*

(De Nuptiis Honor. et Mariae, and more freely in the Fescennines 112-116)

*Dices, O quoties,hoc mihi dulcius
Quam flavos decics vincere Sarmatas.*

.....

*Tum victor madido prosilias toro,
Nocturni referens vulnera proelii.]*

60

[\(return\)](#)

[See Zosimus, l. v. p. 333.]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius de Bell. Gothico, l. i. c. 2. I have borrowed the general practice of Honorius, without adopting the singular, and indeed improbable tale, which is related by the Greek historian.]

[The lessons of Theodosius, or rather Claudian, (iv. Cons. Honor 214-418,) might compose a fine institution for the future prince of a great and free nation. It was far above Honorius, and his degenerate subjects.]

Chapter XXX: Revolt Of The Goths.—Part I.

*Revolt Of The Goths.—They Plunder Greece.—Two Great
Invasions Of Italy By Alaric And Radagaisus.—They Are
Repulsed By Stilicho.—The Germans Overrun Gaul.—Usurpation
Of Constantine In The West.—Disgrace And Death Of Stilicho.*

If the subjects of Rome could be ignorant of their obligations to the great Theodosius, they were too soon convinced, how painfully the spirit and abilities of their deceased emperor had supported the frail and mouldering edifice of the republic. He died in the month of January; and before the end of the winter of the same year, the Gothic nation was in arms. [1](#) The Barbarian auxiliaries erected their independent standard; and boldly avowed the hostile designs, which they had long cherished in their ferocious minds. Their countrymen, who had been condemned, by the conditions of the last treaty, to a life of tranquility and labor, deserted their farms at the first sound of the trumpet; and eagerly resumed the weapons which they had reluctantly laid down. The barriers of the Danube were thrown open; the savage warriors of Scythia issued from their forests; and the uncommon severity of the winter allowed the poet to remark, “that they rolled their ponderous wagons over the broad and icy back of the indignant river.” [2](#) The unhappy natives of the provinces to the south of the Danube submitted to the calamities, which, in the course of twenty years, were almost grown familiar to their imagination; and the various troops of Barbarians, who gloried in the Gothic name, were irregularly spread from woody shores of Dalmatia, to the walls of Constantinople. [3](#) The interruption, or at least the diminution, of the subsidy, which the Goths had received from the prudent liberality of Theodosius, was the specious pretence of their revolt: the affront was imbibited by their contempt for the unwarlike sons of Theodosius; and their resentment was inflamed by the weakness, or treachery, of the minister of Arcadius. The frequent visits of Rufinus to the camp of the Barbarians whose arms and apparel he affected to imitate, were considered as a sufficient evidence of his guilty correspondence, and the public enemy, from a motive either of gratitude or of policy, was attentive, amidst the general devastation, to spare the private estates of the unpopular praefect. The Goths, instead of being impelled by the blind and headstrong passions of their chiefs, were now directed by the bold and artful genius of Alaric. That renowned leader was descended from the noble race of the Balti; [4](#) which yielded only to the royal dignity of the Amali: he had solicited the command of the Roman armies; and the Imperial court provoked him to demonstrate the folly of their refusal, and the importance of their loss. Whatever hopes might be entertained of the conquest of Constantinople, the judicious general

soon abandoned an impracticable enterprise. In the midst of a divided court and a discontented people, the emperor Arcadius was terrified by the aspect of the Gothic arms; but the want of wisdom and valor was supplied by the strength of the city; and the fortifications, both of the sea and land, might securely brave the impotent and random darts of the Barbarians. Alaric disdained to trample any longer on the prostrate and ruined countries of Thrace and Dacia, and he resolved to seek a plentiful harvest of fame and riches in a province which had hitherto escaped the ravages of war. [5](#)

1 [\(return\)](#)
[The revolt of the Goths, and the blockade of Constantinople, are distinctly mentioned by Claudian, (in *Rufin.* l. ii. 7-100,) Zosimus, (l. v. 292,) and Jornandes, (*de Rebus Geticis*, c. 29.)]

2 [\(return\)](#)
[—
Alii per toga ferocis
Danubii solidata ruunt; expertaque remis
Frangunt stagna rotis.

Claudian and Ovid often amuse their fancy by interchanging the metaphors and properties of liquid water, and solid ice. Much false wit has been expended in this easy exercise.]

3 [\(return\)](#)
[Jerom, tom. i. p. 26. He endeavors to comfort his friend Heliodorus, bishop of Altinum, for the loss of his nephew, Nepotian, by a curious recapitulation of all the public and private misfortunes of the times. See Tillemont, *Mem. Eccles.* tom. xii. p. 200, &c.]

4 [\(return\)](#)
[Baltha or bold: origo mirifica, says Jornandes, (c. 29.) This illustrious race long continued to flourish in France, in the Gothic province of Septimania, or Languedoc; under the corrupted appellation of Boax; and a branch of that family afterwards settled in the kingdom of Naples (Grotius in *Prolegom. ad Hist. Gothic.* p. 53.) The lords of Baux, near Arles, and of seventy-nine subordinate places, were independent of the counts of Provence, (Longuerue, *Description de la France*, tom. i. p. 357).]

5 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus (l. v. p. 293-295) is our best guide for the conquest of Greece: but the hints and allusion of Claudian are so many rays of historic light.]

The character of the civil and military officers, on whom Rufinus had devolved the government of Greece, confirmed the public suspicion, that he had betrayed the ancient seat of freedom and learning to the Gothic invader. The proconsul Antiochus was the unworthy son of a respectable father; and Gerontius, who commanded the provincial

troops, was much better qualified to execute the oppressive orders of a tyrant, than to defend, with courage and ability, a country most remarkably fortified by the hand of nature. Alaric had traversed, without resistance, the plains of Macedonia and Thessaly, as far as the foot of Mount Oeta, a steep and woody range of hills, almost impervious to his cavalry. They stretched from east to west, to the edge of the sea-shore; and left, between the precipice and the Malian Gulf, an interval of three hundred feet, which, in some places, was contracted to a road capable of admitting only a single carriage. [6](#) In this narrow pass of Thermopylae, where Leonidas and the three hundred Spartans had gloriously devoted their lives, the Goths might have been stopped, or destroyed, by a skilful general; and perhaps the view of that sacred spot might have kindled some sparks of military ardor in the breasts of the degenerate Greeks. The troops which had been posted to defend the Straits of Thermopylae, retired, as they were directed, without attempting to disturb the secure and rapid passage of Alaric; [7](#) and the fertile fields of Phocis and Boeotia were instantly covered by a deluge of Barbarians who massacred the males of an age to bear arms, and drove away the beautiful females, with the spoil and cattle of the flaming villages. The travellers, who visited Greece several years afterwards, could easily discover the deep and bloody traces of the march of the Goths; and Thebes was less indebted for her preservation to the strength of her seven gates, than to the eager haste of Alaric, who advanced to occupy the city of Athens, and the important harbor of the Piraeus. The same impatience urged him to prevent the delay and danger of a siege, by the offer of a capitulation; and as soon as the Athenians heard the voice of the Gothic herald, they were easily persuaded to deliver the greatest part of their wealth, as the ransom of the city of Minerva and its inhabitants. The treaty was ratified by solemn oaths, and observed with mutual fidelity. The Gothic prince, with a small and select train, was admitted within the walls; he indulged himself in the refreshment of the bath, accepted a splendid banquet, which was provided by the magistrate, and affected to show that he was not ignorant of the manners of civilized nations. [8](#) But the whole territory of Attica, from the promontory of Sunium to the town of Megara, was blasted by his baleful presence; and, if we may use the comparison of a contemporary philosopher, Athens itself resembled the bleeding and empty skin of a slaughtered victim. The distance between Megara and Corinth could not much exceed thirty miles; but the bad road, an expressive name, which it still bears among the Greeks, was, or might easily have been made, impassable for the march of an enemy. The thick and gloomy woods of Mount Cithaeron covered the inland country; the Scironian rocks approached the water's edge, and hung over the narrow and winding path, which was confined above six miles along the sea-shore. [9](#) The passage of those rocks, so infamous in every age, was terminated by the Isthmus of Corinth; and a small a body of firm and intrepid soldiers might have successfully defended a temporary intrenchment of five or six miles from the Ionian to the Aegean Sea. The confidence of the cities of Peloponnesus in their natural rampart, had tempted them to neglect the care of their antique walls; and the avarice of the Roman governors had exhausted and betrayed the

unhappy province. [10](#) Corinth, Argos, Sparta, yielded without resistance to the arms of the Goths; and the most fortunate of the inhabitants were saved, by death, from beholding the slavery of their families and the conflagration of their cities. [11](#) The vases and statues were distributed among the Barbarians, with more regard to the value of the materials, than to the elegance of the workmanship; the female captives submitted to the laws of war; the enjoyment of beauty was the reward of valor; and the Greeks could not reasonably complain of an abuse which was justified by the example of the heroic times. [12](#) The descendants of that extraordinary people, who had considered valor and discipline as the walls of Sparta, no longer remembered the generous reply of their ancestors to an invader more formidable than Alaric. “If thou art a god, thou wilt not hurt those who have never injured thee; if thou art a man, advance:—and thou wilt find men equal to thyself.” [13](#) From Thermopylae to Sparta, the leader of the Goths pursued his victorious march without encountering any mortal antagonists: but one of the advocates of expiring Paganism has confidently asserted, that the walls of Athens were guarded by the goddess Minerva, with her formidable Aegis, and by the angry phantom of Achilles; [14](#) and that the conqueror was dismayed by the presence of the hostile deities of Greece. In an age of miracles, it would perhaps be unjust to dispute the claim of the historian Zosimus to the common benefit: yet it cannot be dissembled, that the mind of Alaric was ill prepared to receive, either in sleeping or waking visions, the impressions of Greek superstition. The songs of Homer, and the fame of Achilles, had probably never reached the ear of the illiterate Barbarian; and the Christian faith, which he had devoutly embraced, taught him to despise the imaginary deities of Rome and Athens. The invasion of the Goths, instead of vindicating the honor, contributed, at least accidentally, to extirpate the last remains of Paganism: and the mysteries of Ceres, which had subsisted eighteen hundred years, did not survive the destruction of Eleusis, and the calamities of Greece. [15](#)

6 [\(return\)](#)
[Compare Herodotus (l. vii. c. 176) and Livy, (xxxvi. 15.) The narrow entrance of Greece was probably enlarged by each successive ravisher.]

7 [\(return\)](#)
[He passed, says Eunapius, (in Vit. Philosoph. p. 93, edit. Commelin, 1596,) through the straits, of Thermopylae.]

8 [\(return\)](#)
[In obedience to Jerom and Claudian, (in Rufin. l. ii. 191,) I have mixed some darker colors in the mild representation of Zosimus, who wished to soften the calamities of Athens.

Nec fera Cecropias traxissent vincula matres.

Synesius (Epist. clvi. p. 272, edit. Petav.) observes, that Athens, whose sufferings he imputes to the proconsul’s avarice, was at that time less famous for

her schools of philosophy than for her trade of honey.]

9 [\(return\)](#)

[—

*Vallata mari Scironia rupes,
Et duo continuo connectens aequora muro
Isthmos.*
—Claudian de Bel. Getico, 188.

The Scironian rocks are described by Pausanias, (l. i. c. 44, p. 107, edit. Kuhn,) and our modern travellers, Wheeler (p. 436) and Chandler, (p. 298.) Hadrian made the road passable for two carriages.]

10 [\(return\)](#)

[Claudian (in Rufin. l. ii. 186, and de Bello Getico, 611, &c.) vaguely, though forcibly, delineates the scene of rapine and destruction.]

11 [\(return\)](#)

[These generous lines of Homer (Odys. l. v. 306) were transcribed by one of the captive youths of Corinth: and the tears of Mummius may prove that the rude conqueror, though he was ignorant of the value of an original picture, possessed the purest source of good taste, a benevolent heart, (Plutarch, Symposiac. l. ix. tom. ii. p. 737, edit. Wechel.)]

12 [\(return\)](#)

[Homer perpetually describes the exemplary patience of those female captives, who gave their charms, and even their hearts, to the murderers of their fathers, brothers, &c. Such a passion (of Eriphile for Achilles) is touched with admirable delicacy by Racine.]

13 [\(return\)](#)

[Plutarch (in Pyrrho, tom. ii. p. 474, edit. Brian) gives the genuine answer in the Laconic dialect. Pyrrhus attacked Sparta with 25,000 foot, 2000 horse, and 24 elephants, and the defence of that open town is a fine comment on the laws of Lycurgus, even in the last stage of decay.]

14 [\(return\)](#)

[Such, perhaps, as Homer (Iliad, xx. 164) had so nobly painted him.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[Eunapius (in Vit. Philosoph. p. 90-93) intimates that a troop of monks betrayed Greece, and followed the Gothic camp. * Note: The expression is curious: Vit. Max. t. i. p. 53, edit. Boissonade.—M.]

The last hope of a people who could no longer depend on their arms, their gods, or their sovereign, was placed in the powerful assistance of the general of the West; and

Stilicho, who had not been permitted to repulse, advanced to chastise, the invaders of Greece. [16](#) A numerous fleet was equipped in the ports of Italy; and the troops, after a short and prosperous navigation over the Ionian Sea, were safely disembarked on the isthmus, near the ruins of Corinth. The woody and mountainous country of Arcadia, the fabulous residence of Pan and the Dryads, became the scene of a long and doubtful conflict between the two generals not unworthy of each other. The skill and perseverance of the Roman at length prevailed; and the Goths, after sustaining a considerable loss from disease and desertion, gradually retreated to the lofty mountain of Pholoe, near the sources of the Peneus, and on the frontiers of Elis; a sacred country, which had formerly been exempted from the calamities of war. [17](#) The camp of the Barbarians was immediately besieged; the waters of the river [18](#) were diverted into another channel; and while they labored under the intolerable pressure of thirst and hunger, a strong line of circumvallation was formed to prevent their escape. After these precautions, Stilicho, too confident of victory, retired to enjoy his triumph, in the theatrical games, and lascivious dances, of the Greeks; his soldiers, deserting their standards, spread themselves over the country of their allies, which they stripped of all that had been saved from the rapacious hands of the enemy. Alaric appears to have seized the favorable moment to execute one of those hardy enterprises, in which the abilities of a general are displayed with more genuine lustre, than in the tumult of a day of battle. To extricate himself from the prison of Peloponnesus, it was necessary that he should pierce the intrenchments which surrounded his camp; that he should perform a difficult and dangerous march of thirty miles, as far as the Gulf of Corinth; and that he should transport his troops, his captives, and his spoil, over an arm of the sea, which, in the narrow interval between Rhium and the opposite shore, is at least half a mile in breadth. [19](#) The operations of Alaric must have been secret, prudent, and rapid; since the Roman general was confounded by the intelligence, that the Goths, who had eluded his efforts, were in full possession of the important province of Epirus. This unfortunate delay allowed Alaric sufficient time to conclude the treaty, which he secretly negotiated, with the ministers of Constantinople. The apprehension of a civil war compelled Stilicho to retire, at the haughty mandate of his rivals, from the dominions of Arcadius; and he respected, in the enemy of Rome, the honorable character of the ally and servant of the emperor of the East.

16

[\(return\)](#)

[For Stilicho's Greek war, compare the honest narrative of Zosimus (l. v. p. 295, 296) with the curious circumstantial flattery of Claudian, (i. Cons. Stilich. l. i. 172-186, iv. Cons. Hon. 459-487.) As the event was not glorious, it is artfully thrown into the shade.]

17

[\(return\)](#)

[The troops who marched through Elis delivered up their arms. This security enriched the Eleans, who were lovers of a rural life. Riches beget pride:

they disdained their privilege, and they suffered. Polybius advises them to retire once more within their magic circle. See a learned and judicious discourse on the Olympic games, which Mr. West has prefixed to his translation of Pindar.]

18

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian (in iv. Cons. Hon. 480) alludes to the fact without naming the river; perhaps the Alpheus, (i. Cons. Stil. l. i. 185.)

--*Et Alpheus Geticis angustus acervis
Tardior ad Siculos etiamnum pergit amores.*

Yet I should prefer the Peneus, a shallow stream in a wide and deep bed, which runs through Elis, and falls into the sea below Cyllene. It had been joined with the Alpheus to cleanse the Augean stable. (Cellarius, tom. i. p. 760. Chandler's Travels, p. 286.)]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Strabo, l. viii. p. 517. Plin. Hist. Natur. iv. 3. Wheeler, p. 308. Chandler, p. 275. They measured from different points the distance between the two lands.]

A Grecian philosopher, [20](#) who visited Constantinople soon after the death of Theodosius, published his liberal opinions concerning the duties of kings, and the state of the Roman republic. Synesius observes, and deplores, the fatal abuse, which the imprudent bounty of the late emperor had introduced into the military service. The citizens and subjects had purchased an exemption from the indispensable duty of defending their country; which was supported by the arms of Barbarian mercenaries. The fugitives of Scythia were permitted to disgrace the illustrious dignities of the empire; their ferocious youth, who disdained the salutary restraint of laws, were more anxious to acquire the riches, than to imitate the arts, of a people, the object of their contempt and hatred; and the power of the Goths was the stone of Tantalus, perpetually suspended over the peace and safety of the devoted state. The measures which Synesius recommends, are the dictates of a bold and generous patriot. He exhorts the emperor to revive the courage of his subjects, by the example of manly virtue; to banish luxury from the court and from the camp; to substitute, in the place of the Barbarian mercenaries, an army of men, interested in the defence of their laws and of their property; to force, in such a moment of public danger, the mechanic from his shop, and the philosopher from his school; to rouse the indolent citizen from his dream of pleasure, and to arm, for the protection of agriculture, the hands of the laborious husbandman. At the head of such troops, who might deserve the name, and would display the spirit, of Romans, he animates the son of Theodosius to encounter a race of Barbarians, who were destitute of any real courage; and never to lay down his arms, till he had chased them far away into the solitudes of Scythia; or had reduced them to the state of ignominious servitude, which the Lacedaemonians formerly imposed on the

captive Helots. [21](#) The court of Arcadius indulged the zeal, applauded the eloquence, and neglected the advice, of Synesius. Perhaps the philosopher who addresses the emperor of the East in the language of reason and virtue, which he might have used to a Spartan king, had not condescended to form a practicable scheme, consistent with the temper, and circumstances, of a degenerate age. Perhaps the pride of the ministers, whose business was seldom interrupted by reflection, might reject, as wild and visionary, every proposal, which exceeded the measure of their capacity, and deviated from the forms and precedents of office. While the oration of Synesius, and the downfall of the Barbarians, were the topics of popular conversation, an edict was published at Constantinople, which declared the promotion of Alaric to the rank of master-general of the Eastern Illyricum. The Roman provincials, and the allies, who had respected the faith of treaties, were justly indignant, that the ruin of Greece and Epirus should be so liberally rewarded. The Gothic conqueror was received as a lawful magistrate, in the cities which he had so lately besieged. The fathers, whose sons he had massacred, the husbands, whose wives he had violated, were subject to his authority; and the success of his rebellion encouraged the ambition of every leader of the foreign mercenaries. The use to which Alaric applied his new command, distinguishes the firm and judicious character of his policy. He issued his orders to the four magazines and manufactures of offensive and defensive arms, Margus, Ratiaria, Naissus, and Thessalonica, to provide his troops with an extraordinary supply of shields, helmets, swords, and spears; the unhappy provincials were compelled to forge the instruments of their own destruction; and the Barbarians removed the only defect which had sometimes disappointed the efforts of their courage. [22](#) The birth of Alaric, the glory of his past exploits, and the confidence in his future designs, insensibly united the body of the nation under his victorious standard; and, with the unanimous consent of the Barbarian chieftains, the master-general of Illyricum was elevated, according to ancient custom, on a shield, and solemnly proclaimed king of the Visigoths. [23](#) Armed with this double power, seated on the verge of the two empires, he alternately sold his deceitful promises to the courts of Arcadius and Honorius; till he declared and executed his resolution of invading the dominions of the West. The provinces of Europe which belonged to the Eastern emperor, were already exhausted; those of Asia were inaccessible; and the strength of Constantinople had resisted his attack. But he was tempted by the fame, the beauty, the wealth of Italy, which he had twice visited; and he secretly aspired to plant the Gothic standard on the walls of Rome, and to enrich his army with the accumulated spoils of three hundred triumphs. [25](#)

[Synesius passed three years (A.D. 397-400) at Constantinople, as deputy from Cyrene to the emperor Arcadius. He presented him with a crown of gold, and pronounced before him the instructive oration de Regno, (p. 1-32, edit. Petav. Paris, 1612.) The philosopher was made bishop of Ptolemais,

A.D. 410, and died about 430. See Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xii. p. 490, 554, 683-685.]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[Synesius de Regno, p. 21-26.]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[—qui foedera rumpit

*Ditatur: qui servat, eget: vastator Achivae
Gentis, et Epirum nuper populatus inultam,
Praesidet Illyrico: jam, quos obsedit, amicos
Ingreditur muros; illis responsa daturus,
Quorum conjugibus potitur, natosque peremit.*

Claudian in Eutrop. l. ii. 212. Alaric applauds his own policy (de Bell Getic. 533-543) in the use which he had made of this Illyrian jurisdiction.]

23 [\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes, c. 29, p. 651. The Gothic historian adds, with unusual spirit, Cum suis deliberans suasit suo labore quaerere regna, quam alienis per otium subiacere.

*Discors odiisque anceps civilibus orbis,
Non sua vis tutata diu, dum foedera fallax
Ludit, et alternae perjuria venditat aulae.*
—Claudian de Bell. Get. 565]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Alpibus Italiae ruptis penetrabis ad Urbem. This authentic prediction was announced by Alaric, or at least by Claudian, (de Bell. Getico, 547,) seven years before the event. But as it was not accomplished within the term which has been rashly fixed the interpreters escaped through an ambiguous meaning.]

The scarcity of facts, [26](#) and the uncertainty of dates, [27](#) oppose our attempts to describe the circumstances of the first invasion of Italy by the arms of Alaric. His march, perhaps from Thessalonica, through the warlike and hostile country of Pannonia, as far as the foot of the Julian Alps; his passage of those mountains, which were strongly guarded by troops and intrenchments; the siege of Aquileia, and the conquest of the provinces of Istria and Venetia, appear to have employed a considerable time. Unless his operations were extremely cautious and slow, the length of the interval would suggest a probable suspicion, that the Gothic king retreated towards the banks of the Danube; and reenforced his army with fresh swarms of Barbarians, before he again attempted to penetrate into the heart of Italy. Since the public and important events escape the diligence of the historian, he may amuse himself with contemplating, for a moment, the influence of the arms of Alaric on the fortunes of two obscure individuals, a presbyter of Aquileia and a husbandman of Verona. The learned Rufinus, who was summoned by his enemies to appear before a Roman synod, [28](#) wisely preferred the dangers of a besieged city; and the Barbarians, who furiously shook the walls of Aquileia, might save him from the cruel sentence of another heretic, who, at the request

of the same bishops, was severely whipped, and condemned to perpetual exile on a desert island. [29](#) The old man, [30](#) who had passed his simple and innocent life in the neighborhood of Verona, was a stranger to the quarrels both of kings and of bishops; his pleasures, his desires, his knowledge, were confined within the little circle of his paternal farm; and a staff supported his aged steps, on the same ground where he had sported in his infancy. Yet even this humble and rustic felicity (which Claudian describes with so much truth and feeling) was still exposed to the undistinguishing rage of war. His trees, his old contemporary trees, [31](#) must blaze in the conflagration of the whole country; a detachment of Gothic cavalry might sweep away his cottage and his family; and the power of Alaric could destroy this happiness, which he was not able either to taste or to bestow. "Fame," says the poet, "encircling with terror her gloomy wings, proclaimed the march of the Barbarian army, and filled Italy with consternation:" the apprehensions of each individual were increased in just proportion to the measure of his fortune: and the most timid, who had already embarked their valuable effects, meditated their escape to the Island of Sicily, or the African coast. The public distress was aggravated by the fears and reproaches of superstition. [32](#) Every hour produced some horrid tale of strange and portentous accidents; the Pagans deplored the neglect of omens, and the interruption of sacrifices; but the Christians still derived some comfort from the powerful intercession of the saints and martyrs. [33](#)

26

[\(return\)](#)

[Our best materials are 970 verses of Claudian in the poem on the Getic war, and the beginning of that which celebrates the sixth consulship of Honorius. Zosimus is totally silent; and we are reduced to such scraps, or rather crumbs, as we can pick from Orosius and the Chronicles.]

27

[\(return\)](#)

[Notwithstanding the gross errors of Jornandes, who confounds the Italian wars of Alaric, (c. 29,) his date of the consulship of Stilicho and Aurelian (A.D. 400) is firm and respectable. It is certain from Claudian (Tillemont, Hist. des Emp. tom. v. p. 804) that the battle of Polentia was fought A.D. 403; but we cannot easily fill the interval.]

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Tantum Romanae urbis judicium fugis, ut magis obsidionem barbaricam, quam pacatæ urbis judicium velis sustinere. Jerom, tom. ii. p. 239. Rufinus understood his own danger; the peaceful city was inflamed by the beldam Marcella, and the rest of Jerom's faction.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[Jovinian, the enemy of fasts and of celibacy, who was persecuted and insulted by the furious Jerom, (Jortin's Remarks, vol. iv. p. 104, &c.) See the

original edict of banishment in the Theodosian Code, xvi. tit. v. leg. 43.]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[This epigram (de Sene Veronensi qui suburbium nusquam egres sus est) is one of the earliest and most pleasing compositions of Claudian. Cowley's imitation (Hurd's edition, vol. ii. p. 241) has some natural and happy strokes: but it is much inferior to the original portrait, which is evidently drawn from the life.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[

*Ingentem meminit parvo qui germine quercum
Aequaevumque videt consenuisse nemus.*

*A neighboring wood born with himself he sees,
And loves his old contemporary trees.*

In this passage, Cowley is perhaps superior to his original; and the English poet, who was a good botanist, has concealed the oaks under a more general expression.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[Claudian de Bell. Get. 199-266. He may seem prolix: but fear and superstition occupied as large a space in the minds of the Italians.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[From the passages of Paulinus, which Baronius has produced, (Annal. Eccles. A.D. 403, No. 51,) it is manifest that the general alarm had pervaded all Italy, as far as Nola in Campania, where that famous penitent had fixed his abode.]

Chapter XXX: Revolt Of The Goths.—Part II.

The emperor Honorius was distinguished, above his subjects, by the preeminence of fear, as well as of rank. The pride and luxury in which he was educated, had not allowed him to suspect, that there existed on the earth any power presumptuous enough to invade the repose of the successor of Augustus. The arts of flattery concealed the impending danger, till Alaric approached the palace of Milan. But when the sound of war had awakened the young emperor, instead of flying to arms with the spirit, or even the rashness, of his age, he eagerly listened to those timid counsellors, who proposed to convey his sacred person, and his faithful attendants, to some secure and distant station in the provinces of Gaul. Stilicho alone [34](#) had courage and authority to resist his disgraceful measure, which would have abandoned Rome and Italy to the Barbarians; but as the troops of the palace had been lately detached to the Rhaetian frontier, and as the resource of new levies was slow and precarious, the general of the West could only

promise, that if the court of Milan would maintain their ground during his absence, he would soon return with an army equal to the encounter of the Gothic king. Without losing a moment, (while each moment was so important to the public safety,) Stilicho hastily embarked on the Larian Lake, ascended the mountains of ice and snow, amidst the severity of an Alpine winter, and suddenly repressed, by his unexpected presence, the enemy, who had disturbed the tranquillity of Rhaetia. [35](#) The Barbarians, perhaps some tribes of the Alemanni, respected the firmness of a chief, who still assumed the language of command; and the choice which he condescended to make, of a select number of their bravest youth, was considered as a mark of his esteem and favor. The cohorts, who were delivered from the neighboring foe, diligently repaired to the Imperial standard; and Stilicho issued his orders to the most remote troops of the West, to advance, by rapid marches, to the defence of Honorius and of Italy. The fortresses of the Rhine were abandoned; and the safety of Gaul was protected only by the faith of the Germans, and the ancient terror of the Roman name. Even the legion, which had been stationed to guard the wall of Britain against the Caledonians of the North, was hastily recalled; [36](#) and a numerous body of the cavalry of the Alani was persuaded to engage in the service of the emperor, who anxiously expected the return of his general. The prudence and vigor of Stilicho were conspicuous on this occasion, which revealed, at the same time, the weakness of the falling empire. The legions of Rome, which had long since languished in the gradual decay of discipline and courage, were exterminated by the Gothic and civil wars; and it was found impossible, without exhausting and exposing the provinces, to assemble an army for the defence of Italy.

34

[\(return\)](#)

[Solus erat Stilicho, &c., is the exclusive commendation which Claudian bestows, (del Bell. Get. 267,) without condescending to except the emperor. How insignificant must Honorius have appeared in his own court.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[The face of the country, and the hardiness of Stilicho, are finely described, (de Bell. Get. 340-363.)]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Venit et extremis legio praetenta Britannis,
Quae Scoto dat frena truci.*

—De Bell. Get. 416.

Yet the most rapid march from Edinburgh, or Newcastle, to Milan, must have required a longer space of time than Claudian seems willing to allow for the duration of the Gothic war.]

Chapter XXX: Revolt Of The Goths.—Part III.

When Stilicho seemed to abandon his sovereign in the unguarded palace of Milan, he had probably calculated the term of his absence, the distance of the enemy, and the obstacles that might retard their march. He principally depended on the rivers of Italy, the Adige, the Mincius, the Oglio, and the Addua, which, in the winter or spring, by the fall of rains, or by the melting of the snows, are commonly swelled into broad and impetuous torrents. [37](#) But the season happened to be remarkably dry: and the Goths could traverse, without impediment, the wide and stony beds, whose centre was faintly marked by the course of a shallow stream. The bridge and passage of the Addua were secured by a strong detachment of the Gothic army; and as Alaric approached the walls, or rather the suburbs, of Milan, he enjoyed the proud satisfaction of seeing the emperor of the Romans fly before him. Honorius, accompanied by a feeble train of statesmen and eunuchs, hastily retreated towards the Alps, with a design of securing his person in the city of Arles, which had often been the royal residence of his predecessors. [3711](#) But Honorius [38](#) had scarcely passed the Po, before he was overtaken by the speed of the Gothic cavalry; [39](#) since the urgency of the danger compelled him to seek a temporary shelter within the fortifications of Asta, a town of Liguria or Piemont, situate on the banks of the Tanarus. [40](#) The siege of an obscure place, which contained so rich a prize, and seemed incapable of a long resistance, was instantly formed, and indefatigably pressed, by the king of the Goths; and the bold declaration, which the emperor might afterwards make, that his breast had never been susceptible of fear, did not probably obtain much credit, even in his own court. [41](#) In the last, and almost hopeless extremity, after the Barbarians had already proposed the indignity of a capitulation, the Imperial captive was suddenly relieved by the fame, the approach, and at length the presence, of the hero, whom he had so long expected. At the head of a chosen and intrepid vanguard, Stilicho swam the stream of the Addua, to gain the time which he must have lost in the attack of the bridge; the passage of the Po was an enterprise of much less hazard and difficulty; and the successful action, in which he cut his way through the Gothic camp under the walls of Asta, revived the hopes, and vindicated the honor, of Rome. Instead of grasping the fruit of his victory, the Barbarian was gradually invested, on every side, by the troops of the West, who successively issued through all the passes of the Alps; his quarters were straitened; his convoys were intercepted; and the vigilance of the Romans prepared to form a chain of fortifications, and to besiege the lines of the besiegers. A military council was assembled of the long-haired chiefs of the Gothic nation; of aged warriors, whose bodies were wrapped in furs, and whose stern countenances were marked with honorable wounds. They weighed the glory of persisting in their attempt against the advantage of securing their plunder; and they recommended the prudent measure of a seasonable retreat. In this important debate, Alaric displayed the spirit of the conqueror of Rome; and after he had reminded his countrymen of their achievements and of their designs, he concluded his animating speech by the solemn and positive assurance that he was resolved to find in Italy either a kingdom or a grave. [42](#)

- 37 [\(return\)](#)
 [Every traveller must recollect the face of Lombardy, (see Fonvenelle, tom. v. p. 279,) which is often tormented by the capricious and irregular abundance of waters. The Austrians, before Genoa, were encamped in the dry bed of the Polcevera. “Ne sarebbe” (says Muratori) “mai passato per mente a que’ buoni Alemanni, che quel picciolo torrente potesse, per cosi dire, in un instante cangiarsi in un terribil gigante.” (Annali d’Italia, tom. xvi. p. 443, Milan, 1752, 8vo edit.)]
- 3711 [\(return\)](#)
 [According to Le Beau and his commentator M. St. Martin, Honorius did not attempt to fly. Settlements were offered to the Goths in Lombardy, and they advanced from the Po towards the Alps to take possession of them. But it was a treacherous stratagem of Stilicho, who surprised them while they were reposing on the faith of this treaty. Le Beau, v. x.]
- 38 [\(return\)](#)
 [Claudian does not clearly answer our question, Where was Honorius himself? Yet the flight is marked by the pursuit; and my idea of the Gothic was is justified by the Italian critics, Sigonius (tom. P, ii. p. 369, de Imp. Occident. l. x.) and Muratori, (Annali d’Italia. tom. iv. p. 45.)]
- 39 [\(return\)](#)
 [One of the roads may be traced in the Itineraries, (p. 98, 288, 294, with Wesseling’s Notes.) Asta lay some miles on the right hand.]
- 40 [\(return\)](#)
 [Asta, or Asti, a Roman colony, is now the capital of a pleasant country, which, in the sixteenth century, devolved to the dukes of Savoy, (Leandro Alberti Descrizione d’Italia, p. 382.)]
- 41 [\(return\)](#)
 [Nec me timor impulit ullus. He might hold this proud language the next year at Rome, five hundred miles from the scene of danger (vi. Cons. Hon. 449.)]
- 42 [\(return\)](#)
 [Hanc ego vel victor regno, vel morte tenebo Victus, humum.—The speeches (de Bell. Get. 479-549) of the Gothic Nestor, and Achilles, are strong, characteristic, adapted to the circumstances; and possibly not less genuine than those of Livy.]

The loose discipline of the Barbarians always exposed them to the danger of a surprise; but, instead of choosing the dissolute hours of riot and intemperance, Stilicho

resolved to attack the Christian Goths, whilst they were devoutly employed in celebrating the festival of Easter. [43](#) The execution of the stratagem, or, as it was termed by the clergy of the sacrilege, was intrusted to Saul, a Barbarian and a Pagan, who had served, however, with distinguished reputation among the veteran generals of Theodosius. The camp of the Goths, which Alaric had pitched in the neighborhood of Pollentia, [44](#) was thrown into confusion by the sudden and impetuous charge of the Imperial cavalry; but, in a few moments, the undaunted genius of their leader gave them an order, and a field of battle; and, as soon as they had recovered from their astonishment, the pious confidence, that the God of the Christians would assert their cause, added new strength to their native valor. In this engagement, which was long maintained with equal courage and success, the chief of the Alani, whose diminutive and savage form concealed a magnanimous soul approved his suspected loyalty, by the zeal with which he fought, and fell, in the service of the republic; and the fame of this gallant Barbarian has been imperfectly preserved in the verses of Claudian, since the poet, who celebrates his virtue, has omitted the mention of his name. His death was followed by the flight and dismay of the squadrons which he commanded; and the defeat of the wing of cavalry might have decided the victory of Alaric, if Stilicho had not immediately led the Roman and Barbarian infantry to the attack. The skill of the general, and the bravery of the soldiers, surmounted every obstacle. In the evening of the bloody day, the Goths retreated from the field of battle; the intrenchments of their camp were forced, and the scene of rapine and slaughter made some atonement for the calamities which they had inflicted on the subjects of the empire. [45](#) The magnificent spoils of Corinth and Argos enriched the veterans of the West; the captive wife of Alaric, who had impatiently claimed his promise of Roman jewels and Patrician handmaids, [46](#) was reduced to implore the mercy of the insulting foe; and many thousand prisoners, released from the Gothic chains, dispersed through the provinces of Italy the praises of their heroic deliverer. The triumph of Stilicho [47](#) was compared by the poet, and perhaps by the public, to that of Marius; who, in the same part of Italy, had encountered and destroyed another army of Northern Barbarians. The huge bones, and the empty helmets, of the Cimbri and of the Goths, would easily be confounded by succeeding generations; and posterity might erect a common trophy to the memory of the two most illustrious generals, who had vanquished, on the same memorable ground, the two most formidable enemies of Rome. [48](#)

[Orosius (l. vii. c. 37) is shocked at the impiety of the Romans, who attacked, on Easter Sunday, such pious Christians. Yet, at the same time, public prayers were offered at the shrine of St. Thomas of Edessa, for the destruction of the Arian robber. See Tillemont (Hist des Emp. tom. v. p. 529) who quotes a homily, which has been erroneously ascribed to St. Chrysostom.]

- 44 [\(return\)](#)
[The vestiges of Pollentia are twenty-five miles to the south-east of Turin. Urbs, in the same neighborhood, was a royal chase of the kings of Lombardy, and a small river, which excused the prediction, "penetrabis ad urbem," (Cluver. Ital. Antiq tom. i. p. 83-85.)]
- 45 [\(return\)](#)
[Orosius wishes, in doubtful words, to insinuate the defeat of the Romans. "Pugnantes vicimus, victores victi sumus." Prosper (in Chron.) makes it an equal and bloody battle, but the Gothic writers Cassiodorus (in Chron.) and Jornandes (de Reb. Get. c. 29) claim a decisive victory.]
- 46 [\(return\)](#)
[Demens Ausonidum gemmata monilia matrum, Romanasque alta famulas cervice petebat. De Bell. Get. 627.]
- 47 [\(return\)](#)
[Claudian (de Bell. Get. 580-647) and Prudentius (in Symmach. n. 694-719) celebrate, without ambiguity, the Roman victory of Pollentia. They are poetical and party writers; yet some credit is due to the most suspicious witnesses, who are checked by the recent notoriety of facts.]
- 48 [\(return\)](#)
[Claudian's peroration is strong and elegant; but the identity of the Cimbric and Gothic fields must be understood (like Virgil's Philippi, Georgic i. 490) according to the loose geography of a poet. Verselle and Pollentia are sixty miles from each other; and the latitude is still greater, if the Cimbri were defeated in the wide and barren plain of Verona, (Maffei, Verona Illustrata, P. i. p. 54-62.)]

The eloquence of Claudian [49](#) has celebrated, with lavish applause, the victory of Pollentia, one of the most glorious days in the life of his patron; but his reluctant and partial muse bestows more genuine praise on the character of the Gothic king. His name is, indeed, branded with the reproachful epithets of pirate and robber, to which the conquerors of every age are so justly entitled; but the poet of Stilicho is compelled to acknowledge that Alaric possessed the invincible temper of mind, which rises superior to every misfortune, and derives new resources from adversity. After the total defeat of his infantry, he escaped, or rather withdrew, from the field of battle, with the greatest part of his cavalry entire and unbroken. Without wasting a moment to lament the irreparable loss of so many brave companions, he left his victorious enemy to bind in chains the captive images of a Gothic king; [50](#) and boldly resolved to break through the ungarded passes of the Apennine, to spread desolation over the fruitful face of Tuscany, and to conquer or die before the gates of Rome. The capital was saved by the

active and incessant diligence of Stilicho; but he respected the despair of his enemy; and, instead of committing the fate of the republic to the chance of another battle, he proposed to purchase the absence of the Barbarians. The spirit of Alaric would have rejected such terms, the permission of a retreat, and the offer of a pension, with contempt and indignation; but he exercised a limited and precarious authority over the independent chieftains who had raised him, for their service, above the rank of his equals; they were still less disposed to follow an unsuccessful general, and many of them were tempted to consult their interest by a private negotiation with the minister of Honorius. The king submitted to the voice of his people, ratified the treaty with the empire of the West, and repassed the Po with the remains of the flourishing army which he had led into Italy. A considerable part of the Roman forces still continued to attend his motions; and Stilicho, who maintained a secret correspondence with some of the Barbarian chiefs, was punctually apprised of the designs that were formed in the camp and council of Alaric. The king of the Goths, ambitious to signalize his retreat by some splendid achievement, had resolved to occupy the important city of Verona, which commands the principal passage of the Rhaetian Alps; and, directing his march through the territories of those German tribes, whose alliance would restore his exhausted strength, to invade, on the side of the Rhine, the wealthy and unsuspecting provinces of Gaul. Ignorant of the treason which had already betrayed his bold and judicious enterprise, he advanced towards the passes of the mountains, already possessed by the Imperial troops; where he was exposed, almost at the same instant, to a general attack in the front, on his flanks, and in the rear. In this bloody action, at a small distance from the walls of Verona, the loss of the Goths was not less heavy than that which they had sustained in the defeat of Pollentia; and their valiant king, who escaped by the swiftness of his horse, must either have been slain or made prisoner, if the hasty rashness of the Alani had not disappointed the measures of the Roman general. Alaric secured the remains of his army on the adjacent rocks; and prepared himself, with undaunted resolution, to maintain a siege against the superior numbers of the enemy, who invested him on all sides. But he could not oppose the destructive progress of hunger and disease; nor was it possible for him to check the continual desertion of his impatient and capricious Barbarians. In this extremity he still found resources in his own courage, or in the moderation of his adversary; and the retreat of the Gothic king was considered as the deliverance of Italy. [51](#) Yet the people, and even the clergy, incapable of forming any rational judgment of the business of peace and war, presumed to arraign the policy of Stilicho, who so often vanquished, so often surrounded, and so often dismissed the implacable enemy of the republic. The first mornen of the public safety is devoted to gratitude and joy; but the second is diligently occupied by envy and calumny. [52](#)

50

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Et gravant en airain ses freles avantages
De mes etats conquis enchaîner les images.*

The practice of exposing in triumph the images of kings and provinces was familiar to the Romans. The bust of Mithridates himself was twelve feet high, of massy gold, (Freinshem. Supplement. Livian. ciii. 47.)]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[The Getic war, and the sixth consulship of Honorius, obscurely connect the events of Alaric's retreat and losses.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Taceo de Alarico... saepe visto, saepe concluso, semperque dimisso. Orosius, l. vii. c. 37, p. 567. Claudian (vi. Cons. Hon. 320) drops the curtain with a fine image.]

The citizens of Rome had been astonished by the approach of Alaric; and the diligence with which they labored to restore the walls of the capital, confessed their own fears, and the decline of the empire. After the retreat of the Barbarians, Honorius was directed to accept the dutiful invitation of the senate, and to celebrate, in the Imperial city, the auspicious era of the Gothic victory, and of his sixth consulship. [53](#) The suburbs and the streets, from the Milvian bridge to the Palatine mount, were filled by the Roman people, who, in the space of a hundred years, had only thrice been honored with the presence of their sovereigns. While their eyes were fixed on the chariot where Stilicho was deservedly seated by the side of his royal pupil, they applauded the pomp of a triumph, which was not stained, like that of Constantine, or of Theodosius, with civil blood. The procession passed under a lofty arch, which had been purposely erected: but in less than seven years, the Gothic conquerors of Rome might read, if they were able to read, the superb inscription of that monument, which attested the total defeat and destruction of their nation. [54](#) The emperor resided several months in the capital, and every part of his behavior was regulated with care to conciliate the affection of the clergy, the senate, and the people of Rome. The clergy was edified by his frequent visits and liberal gifts to the shrines of the apostles. The senate, who, in the triumphal procession, had been excused from the humiliating ceremony of preceding on foot the Imperial chariot, was treated with the decent reverence which Stilicho always affected for that assembly. The people was repeatedly gratified by the attention and courtesy of Honorius in the public games, which were celebrated on that occasion with a magnificence not unworthy of the spectator. As soon as the appointed number of chariot-races was concluded, the decoration of the Circus was suddenly changed; the hunting of wild beasts afforded a various and splendid entertainment; and the chase was succeeded by a military dance, which seems, in the lively description of Claudian, to present the image of a modern tournament.

53 [\(return\)](#)
[The remainder of Claudian's poem on the sixth consulship of Honorius, describes the journey, the triumph, and the games, (330-660.)]

54 [\(return\)](#)
[See the inscription in Mascou's History of the Ancient Germans, viii. 12. The words are positive and indiscreet: Getarum nationem in omne aevum domitam, &c.]

In these games of Honorius, the inhuman combats of gladiators [55](#) polluted, for the last time, the amphitheater of Rome. The first Christian emperor may claim the honor of the first edict which condemned the art and amusement of shedding human blood; [56](#) but this benevolent law expressed the wishes of the prince, without reforming an inveterate abuse, which degraded a civilized nation below the condition of savage cannibals. Several hundred, perhaps several thousand, victims were annually slaughtered in the great cities of the empire; and the month of December, more peculiarly devoted to the combats of gladiators, still exhibited to the eyes of the Roman people a grateful spectacle of blood and cruelty. Amidst the general joy of the victory of Pollentia, a Christian poet exhorted the emperor to extirpate, by his authority, the horrid custom which had so long resisted the voice of humanity and religion. [57](#) The pathetic representations of Prudentius were less effectual than the generous boldness of Telemachus, an Asiatic monk, whose death was more useful to mankind than his life. [58](#) The Romans were provoked by the interruption of their pleasures; and the rash monk, who had descended into the arena to separate the gladiators, was overwhelmed under a shower of stones. But the madness of the people soon subsided; they respected the memory of Telemachus, who had deserved the honors of martyrdom; and they submitted, without a murmur, to the laws of Honorius, which abolished forever the human sacrifices of the amphitheater. [5811](#) The citizens, who adhered to the manners of their ancestors, might perhaps insinuate that the last remains of a martial spirit were preserved in this school of fortitude, which accustomed the Romans to the sight of blood, and to the contempt of death; a vain and cruel prejudice, so nobly confuted by the valor of ancient Greece, and of modern Europe! [59](#)

55 [\(return\)](#)
[On the curious, though horrid, subject of the gladiators, consult the two books of the Saturnalia of Lipsius, who, as an antiquarian, is inclined to excuse the practice of antiquity, (tom. iii. p. 483-545.)]

56 [\(return\)](#)
[Cod. Theodos. l. xv. tit. xii. leg. i. The Commentary of Godefroy affords large materials (tom. v. p. 396) for the history of gladiators.]

57 [\(return\)](#)
[See the peroration of Prudentius (in Symmach. l.

ii. 1121-1131) who had doubtless read the eloquent invective of Lactantius, (Divin. Institut. l. vi. c. 20.) The Christian apologists have not spared these bloody games, which were introduced in the religious festivals of Paganism.]

58 [\(return\)](#)

[Theodoret, l. v. c. 26. I wish to believe the story of St. Telemachus. Yet no church has been dedicated, no altar has been erected, to the only monk who died a martyr in the cause of humanity.]

5811 [\(return\)](#)

[Muller, in his valuable Treatise, de Genio, moribus et luxu aevi Theodosiani, is disposed to question the effect produced by the heroic, or rather saintly, death of Telemachus. No prohibitory law of Honorius is to be found in the Theodosian Code, only the old and imperfect edict of Constantine. But Muller has produced no evidence or allusion to gladiatorial shows after this period. The combats with wild beasts certainly lasted till the fall of the Western empire; but the gladiatorial combats ceased either by common consent, or by Imperial edict.—M.]

59 [\(return\)](#)

[Crudele gladiatorum spectaculum et inhumanum nonnullis videri solet, et haud scio an ita sit, ut nunc fit. Cicero Tusculan. ii. 17. He faintly censures the abuse, and warmly defends the use, of these sports; oculis nulla poterat esse fortior contra dolorem et mortem disciplina. Seneca (epist. vii.) shows the feelings of a man.]

The recent danger, to which the person of the emperor had been exposed in the defenceless palace of Milan, urged him to seek a retreat in some inaccessible fortress of Italy, where he might securely remain, while the open country was covered by a deluge of Barbarians. On the coast of the Adriatic, about ten or twelve miles from the most southern of the seven mouths of the Po, the Thessalians had founded the ancient colony of Ravenna, [60](#) which they afterwards resigned to the natives of Umbria. Augustus, who had observed the opportunity of the place, prepared, at the distance of three miles from the old town, a capacious harbor, for the reception of two hundred and fifty ships of war. This naval establishment, which included the arsenals and magazines, the barracks of the troops, and the houses of the artificers, derived its origin and name from the permanent station of the Roman fleet; the intermediate space was soon filled with buildings and inhabitants, and the three extensive and populous quarters of Ravenna gradually contributed to form one of the most important cities of Italy. The principal canal of Augustus poured a copious stream of the waters of the Po through the midst of the city, to the entrance of the harbor; the same waters were introduced into

the profound ditches that encompassed the walls; they were distributed by a thousand subordinate canals, into every part of the city, which they divided into a variety of small islands; the communication was maintained only by the use of boats and bridges; and the houses of Ravenna, whose appearance may be compared to that of Venice, were raised on the foundation of wooden piles. The adjacent country, to the distance of many miles, was a deep and impassable morass; and the artificial causeway, which connected Ravenna with the continent, might be easily guarded or destroyed, on the approach of a hostile army. These morasses were interspersed, however, with vineyards: and though the soil was exhausted by four or five crops, the town enjoyed a more plentiful supply of wine than of fresh water. [61](#) The air, instead of receiving the sickly, and almost pestilential, exhalations of low and marshy grounds, was distinguished, like the neighborhood of Alexandria, as uncommonly pure and salubrious; and this singular advantage was ascribed to the regular tides of the Adriatic, which swept the canals, interrupted the unwholesome stagnation of the waters, and floated, every day, the vessels of the adjacent country into the heart of Ravenna. The gradual retreat of the sea has left the modern city at the distance of four miles from the Adriatic; and as early as the fifth or sixth century of the Christian era, the port of Augustus was converted into pleasant orchards; and a lonely grove of pines covered the ground where the Roman fleet once rode at anchor. [62](#) Even this alteration contributed to increase the natural strength of the place, and the shallowness of the water was a sufficient barrier against the large ships of the enemy. This advantageous situation was fortified by art and labor; and in the twentieth year of his age, the emperor of the West, anxious only for his personal safety, retired to the perpetual confinement of the walls and morasses of Ravenna. The example of Honorius was imitated by his feeble successors, the Gothic kings, and afterwards the Exarchs, who occupied the throne and palace of the emperors; and till the middle of the eight century, Ravenna was considered as the seat of government, and the capital of Italy. [63](#)

60

[\(return\)](#)

[This account of Ravenna is drawn from Strabo, (l. v. p. 327,) Pliny, (iii. 20,) Stephen of Byzantium, (sub voce, p. 651, edit. Berkel,) Claudian, (in vi. Cons. Honor. 494, &c.,) Sidonius Apollinaris, (l. i. epist. 5, 8,) Jornandes, (de Reb. Get. c. 29,) Procopius (de Bell. Goth. l. i. c. i. p. 309, edit. Louvre,) and Cluverius, (Ital. Antiq. tom i. p. 301-307.) Yet I still want a local antiquarian and a good topographical map.]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[Martial (Epigram iii. 56, 57) plays on the trick of the knave, who had sold him wine instead of water; but he seriously declares that a cistern at Ravenna is more valuable than a vineyard. Sidonius complains that the town is destitute of fountains and aqueducts; and ranks the want of fresh water among

the local evils, such as the croaking of frogs, the stinging of gnats, &c.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[The fable of Theodore and Honoria, which Dryden has so admirably transplanted from Boccaccio, (*Giornata iii. novell. viii.*.) was acted in the wood of Chiassi, a corrupt word from Classis, the naval station which, with the intermediate road, or suburb the *Via Caesaris*, constituted the triple city of Ravenna.]

63

[\(return\)](#)

[From the year 404, the dates of the Theodosian Code become sedentary at Constantinople and Ravenna. See Godefroy's *Chronology of the Laws*, tom. i. p. cxlviii., &c.]

The fears of Honorius were not without foundation, nor were his precautions without effect. While Italy rejoiced in her deliverance from the Goths, a furious tempest was excited among the nations of Germany, who yielded to the irresistible impulse that appears to have been gradually communicated from the eastern extremity of the continent of Asia. The Chinese annals, as they have been interpreted by the learned industry of the present age, may be usefully applied to reveal the secret and remote causes of the fall of the Roman empire. The extensive territory to the north of the great wall was possessed, after the flight of the Huns, by the victorious Sienpi, who were sometimes broken into independent tribes, and sometimes reunited under a supreme chief; till at length, styling themselves Topa, or masters of the earth, they acquired a more solid consistence, and a more formidable power. The Topa soon compelled the pastoral nations of the eastern desert to acknowledge the superiority of their arms; they invaded China in a period of weakness and intestine discord; and these fortunate Tartars, adopting the laws and manners of the vanquished people, founded an Imperial dynasty, which reigned near one hundred and sixty years over the northern provinces of the monarchy. Some generations before they ascended the throne of China, one of the Topa princes had enlisted in his cavalry a slave of the name of Moko, renowned for his valor, but who was tempted, by the fear of punishment, to desert his standard, and to range the desert at the head of a hundred followers. This gang of robbers and outlaws swelled into a camp, a tribe, a numerous people, distinguished by the appellation of Geougen; and their hereditary chieftains, the posterity of Moko the slave, assumed their rank among the Scythian monarchs. The youth of Toulun, the greatest of his descendants, was exercised by those misfortunes which are the school of heroes. He bravely struggled with adversity, broke the imperious yoke of the Topa, and became the legislator of his nation, and the conqueror of Tartary. His troops were distributed into regular bands of a hundred and of a thousand men; cowards were stoned to death; the most splendid honors were proposed as the reward of valor; and Toulun, who had knowledge enough to despise the learning of China, adopted only such arts and

institutions as were favorable to the military spirit of his government. His tents, which he removed in the winter season to a more southern latitude, were pitched, during the summer, on the fruitful banks of the Selenga. His conquests stretched from Corea far beyond the River Irtysh. He vanquished, in the country to the north of the Caspian Sea, the nation of the Huns; and the new title of Khan, or Cagan, expressed the fame and power which he derived from this memorable victory. [64](#)

64

[\(return\)](#)

[See M. de Guignes, Hist. des Huns, tom. i. p. 179-189, tom ii p. 295, 334-338.]

The chain of events is interrupted, or rather is concealed, as it passes from the Volga to the Vistula, through the dark interval which separates the extreme limits of the Chinese, and of the Roman, geography. Yet the temper of the Barbarians, and the experience of successive emigrations, sufficiently declare, that the Huns, who were oppressed by the arms of the Geougen, soon withdrew from the presence of an insulting victor. The countries towards the Euxine were already occupied by their kindred tribes; and their hasty flight, which they soon converted into a bold attack, would more naturally be directed towards the rich and level plains, through which the Vistula gently flows into the Baltic Sea. The North must again have been alarmed, and agitated, by the invasion of the Huns; [6411](#) and the nations who retreated before them must have pressed with incumbent weight on the confines of Germany. [65](#) The inhabitants of those regions, which the ancients have assigned to the Suevi, the Vandals, and the Burgundians, might embrace the resolution of abandoning to the fugitives of Sarmatia their woods and morasses; or at least of discharging their superfluous numbers on the provinces of the Roman empire. [66](#) About four years after the victorious Toulun had assumed the title of Khan of the Geougen, another Barbarian, the haughty Rhodogast, or Radagaisus, [67](#) marched from the northern extremities of Germany almost to the gates of Rome, and left the remains of his army to achieve the destruction of the West. The Vandals, the Suevi, and the Burgundians, formed the strength of this mighty host; but the Alani, who had found a hospitable reception in their new seats, added their active cavalry to the heavy infantry of the Germans; and the Gothic adventurers crowded so eagerly to the standard of Radagaisus, that by some historians, he has been styled the King of the Goths. Twelve thousand warriors, distinguished above the vulgar by their noble birth, or their valiant deeds, glittered in the van; [68](#) and the whole multitude, which was not less than two hundred thousand fighting men, might be increased, by the accession of women, of children, and of slaves, to the amount of four hundred thousand persons. This formidable emigration issued from the same coast of the Baltic, which had poured forth the myriads of the Cimbri and Teutones, to assault Rome and Italy in the vigor of the republic. After the departure of those Barbarians, their native country, which was marked by the vestiges of their greatness, long ramparts, and gigantic moles, [69](#) remained, during some ages, a vast and dreary solitude; till the human species was renewed by the powers of generation, and the vacancy was filled by the influx of

new inhabitants. The nations who now usurp an extent of land which they are unable to cultivate, would soon be assisted by the industrious poverty of their neighbors, if the government of Europe did not protect the claims of dominion and property.

6411 [\(return\)](#)

[There is no authority which connects this inroad of the Teutonic tribes with the movements of the Huns. The Huns can hardly have reached the shores of the Baltic, and probably the greater part of the forces of Radagaisus, particularly the Vandals, had long occupied a more southern position.—M.]

65 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius (de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. iii. p. 182) has observed an emigration from the Palus Maeotis to the north of Germany, which he ascribes to famine. But his views of ancient history are strangely darkened by ignorance and error.]

66 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. v. p. 331) uses the general description of the nations beyond the Danube and the Rhine. Their situation, and consequently their names, are manifestly shown, even in the various epithets which each ancient writer may have casually added.]

67 [\(return\)](#)

[The name of Rhadagast was that of a local deity of the Obotrites, (in Mecklenburg.) A hero might naturally assume the appellation of his tutelar god; but it is not probable that the Barbarians should worship an unsuccessful hero. See Mascou, Hist. of the Germans, viii. 14. * Note: The god of war and of hospitality with the Vends and all the Sclavonian races of Germany bore the name of Radegast, apparently the same with Rhadagaisus. His principal temple was at Rhetra in Mecklenburg. It was adorned with great magnificence. The statue of the god was of gold. St. Martin, v. 255. A statue of Radegast, of much coarser materials, and of the rudest workmanship, was discovered between 1760 and 1770, with those of other Wendish deities, on the supposed site of Rhetra. The names of the gods were cut upon them in Runic characters. See the very curious volume on these antiquities—Die Gottesdienstliche Alterthümer der Obotriter—Masch and Wogen. Berlin, 1771.—M.]

68 [\(return\)](#)

[Olympiodorus (apud Photium, p. 180), uses the Greek word which does not convey any precise idea. I suspect that they were the princes and nobles with their faithful companions; the knights with

their squires, as they would have been styled some centuries afterwards.]

Chapter XXX: Revolt Of The Goths.—Part IV.

The correspondence of nations was, in that age, so imperfect and precarious, that the revolutions of the North might escape the knowledge of the court of Ravenna; till the dark cloud, which was collected along the coast of the Baltic, burst in thunder upon the banks of the Upper Danube. The emperor of the West, if his ministers disturbed his amusements by the news of the impending danger, was satisfied with being the occasion, and the spectator, of the war. [70](#) The safety of Rome was intrusted to the counsels, and the sword, of Stilicho; but such was the feeble and exhausted state of the empire, that it was impossible to restore the fortifications of the Danube, or to prevent, by a vigorous effort, the invasion of the Germans. [71](#) The hopes of the vigilant minister of Honorius were confined to the defence of Italy. He once more abandoned the provinces, recalled the troops, pressed the new levies, which were rigorously exacted, and pusillanimously eluded; employed the most efficacious means to arrest, or allure, the deserters; and offered the gift of freedom, and of two pieces of gold, to all the slaves who would enlist. [72](#) By these efforts he painfully collected, from the subjects of a great empire, an army of thirty or forty thousand men, which, in the days of Scipio or Camillus, would have been instantly furnished by the free citizens of the territory of Rome. [73](#) The thirty legions of Stilicho were reenforced by a large body of Barbarian auxiliaries; the faithful Alani were personally attached to his service; and the troops of Huns and of Goths, who marched under the banners of their native princes, Huldin and Sarus, were animated by interest and resentment to oppose the ambition of Radagaisus. The king of the confederate Germans passed, without resistance, the Alps, the Po, and the Apennine; leaving on one hand the inaccessible palace of Honorius, securely buried among the marshes of Ravenna; and, on the other, the camp of Stilicho, who had fixed his head-quarters at Ticinum, or Pavia, but who seems to have avoided a decisive battle, till he had assembled his distant forces. Many cities of Italy were pillaged, or destroyed; and the siege of Florence, [74](#) by Radagaisus, is one of the earliest events in the history of that celebrated republic; whose firmness checked and delayed the unskillful fury of the Barbarians. The senate and people trembled at their approach within a hundred and eighty miles of Rome; and anxiously compared the danger which they had escaped, with the new perils to which they were exposed. Alaric was a Christian and a soldier, the leader of a disciplined army; who understood the laws of war, who respected the sanctity of treaties, and who had familiarly conversed with the subjects of the empire in the same camps, and the same churches. The savage Radagaisus was a stranger to the manners, the religion, and even the language, of the civilized nations of the South. The

fierceness of his temper was exasperated by cruel superstition; and it was universally believed, that he had bound himself, by a solemn vow, to reduce the city into a heap of stones and ashes, and to sacrifice the most illustrious of the Roman senators on the altars of those gods who were appeased by human blood. The public danger, which should have reconciled all domestic animosities, displayed the incurable madness of religious faction. The oppressed votaries of Jupiter and Mercury respected, in the implacable enemy of Rome, the character of a devout Pagan; loudly declared, that they were more apprehensive of the sacrifices, than of the arms, of Radagaisus; and secretly rejoiced in the calamities of their country, which condemned the faith of their Christian adversaries. [75 7511](#)

70

[\(return\)](#)

[

Cujus agendi

Spectator vel causa fui,

--(Claudian, vi. Cons. Hon. 439,)

is the modest language of Honorius, in speaking of the Gothic war, which he had seen somewhat nearer.]

71

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. v. p. 331) transports the war, and the victory of Stilicho, beyond the Danube. A strange error, which is awkwardly and imperfectly cured (Tillemont, Hist. des Emp. tom. v. p. 807.) In good policy, we must use the service of Zosimus, without esteeming or trusting him.]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[Codex Theodos. l. vii. tit. xiii. leg. 16. The date of this law A.D. 406. May 18 satisfies me, as it had done Godefroy, (tom. ii. p. 387,) of the true year of the invasion of Radagaisus. Tillemont, Pagi, and Muratori, prefer the preceding year; but they are bound, by certain obligations of civility and respect, to St. Paulinus of Nola.]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Soon after Rome had been taken by the Gauls, the senate, on a sudden emergency, armed ten legions, 3000 horse, and 42,000 foot; a force which the city could not have sent forth under Augustus, (Livy, xi. 25.) This declaration may puzzle an antiquary, but it is clearly explained by Montesquieu.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[Machiavel has explained, at least as a philosopher, the origin of Florence, which insensibly descended, for the benefit of trade, from the rock of Faesulae to the banks of the Arno, (Istoria Fiorentina, tom. i. p. 36. Londra, 1747.) The triumvirs sent a colony to Florence, which, under Tiberius, (Tacit. Annal. i. 79,) deserved the reputation and name of a

flourishing city. See Cluver. Ital. Antiq. tom. i. p. 507, &c.]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[Yet the Jupiter of Radagaisus, who worshipped Thor and Woden, was very different from the Olympic or Capitoline Jove. The accommodating temper of Polytheism might unite those various and remote deities; but the genuine Romans ahhorred the human sacrifices of Gaul and Germany.]

7511

[\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon has rather softened the language of Augustine as to this threatened insurrection of the Pagans, in order to restore the prohibited rites and ceremonies of Paganism; and their treasonable hopes that the success of Radagaisus would be the triumph of idolatry. Compare ii. 25—M.]

Florence was reduced to the last extremity; and the fainting courage of the citizens was supported only by the authority of St. Ambrose; who had communicated, in a dream, the promise of a speedy deliverance. [76](#) On a sudden, they beheld, from their walls, the banners of Stilicho, who advanced, with his united force, to the relief of the faithful city; and who soon marked that fatal spot for the grave of the Barbarian host. The apparent contradictions of those writers who variously relate the defeat of Radagaisus, may be reconciled without offering much violence to their respective testimonies. Orosius and Augustin, who were intimately connected by friendship and religion, ascribed this miraculous victory to the providence of God, rather than to the valor of man. [77](#) They strictly exclude every idea of chance, or even of bloodshed; and positively affirm, that the Romans, whose camp was the scene of plenty and idleness, enjoyed the distress of the Barbarians, slowly expiring on the sharp and barren ridge of the hills of Faesulae, which rise above the city of Florence. Their extravagant assertion that not a single soldier of the Christian army was killed, or even wounded, may be dismissed with silent contempt; but the rest of the narrative of Augustin and Orosius is consistent with the state of the war, and the character of Stilicho. Conscious that he commanded the last army of the republic, his prudence would not expose it, in the open field, to the headstrong fury of the Germans. The method of surrounding the enemy with strong lines of circumvallation, which he had twice employed against the Gothic king, was repeated on a larger scale, and with more considerable effect. The examples of Caesar must have been familiar to the most illiterate of the Roman warriors; and the fortifications of Dyrrachium, which connected twenty-four castles, by a perpetual ditch and rampart of fifteen miles, afforded the model of an intrenchment which might confine, and starve, the most numerous host of Barbarians. [78](#) The Roman troops had less degenerated from the industry, than from the valor, of their ancestors; and if their servile and laborious work offended the pride of the soldiers, Tuscany could supply many thousand peasants, who would labor, though, perhaps, they would not fight, for the salvation of their native country. The imprisoned multitude of horses and

men [79](#) was gradually destroyed, by famine rather than by the sword; but the Romans were exposed, during the progress of such an extensive work, to the frequent attacks of an impatient enemy. The despair of the hungry Barbarians would precipitate them against the fortifications of Stilicho; the general might sometimes indulge the ardor of his brave auxiliaries, who eagerly pressed to assault the camp of the Germans; and these various incidents might produce the sharp and bloody conflicts which dignify the narrative of Zosimus, and the Chronicles of Prosper and Marcellinus. [80](#) A seasonable supply of men and provisions had been introduced into the walls of Florence, and the famished host of Radagaisus was in its turn besieged. The proud monarch of so many warlike nations, after the loss of his bravest warriors, was reduced to confide either in the faith of a capitulation, or in the clemency of Stilicho. [81](#) But the death of the royal captive, who was ignominiously beheaded, disgraced the triumph of Rome and of Christianity; and the short delay of his execution was sufficient to brand the conqueror with the guilt of cool and deliberate cruelty. [82](#) The famished Germans, who escaped the fury of the auxiliaries, were sold as slaves, at the contemptible price of as many single pieces of gold; but the difference of food and climate swept away great numbers of those unhappy strangers; and it was observed, that the inhuman purchasers, instead of reaping the fruits of their labor were soon obliged to provide the expense of their interment. Stilicho informed the emperor and the senate of his success; and deserved, a second time, the glorious title of Deliverer of Italy. [83](#)

76

[\(return\)](#)

[Paulinus (in Vit. Ambros c. 50) relates this story, which he received from the mouth of Pansophia herself, a religious matron of Florence. Yet the archbishop soon ceased to take an active part in the business of the world, and never became a popular saint.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

[Augustin de Civitat. Dei, v. 23. Orosius, l. vii. c. 37, p. 567-571. The two friends wrote in Africa, ten or twelve years after the victory; and their authority is implicitly followed by Isidore of Seville, (in Chron. p. 713, edit. Grot.) How many interesting facts might Orosius have inserted in the vacant space which is devoted to pious nonsense!]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Franguntur montes, planumque per ardua Caesar
Ducit opus: pandit fossas, turritaque summis
Disponit castella jugis, magnoque necessu
Amplexus fines, saltus, memorosaque tesqua
Et silvas, vastaue feras indagine claudit.!*

Yet the simplicity of truth (Caesar, de Bell. Civ. iii. 44) is far greater than the amplifications of Lucan, (Pharsal. l. vi. 29-63.)]

- 79 [\(return\)](#)
[The rhetorical expressions of Orosius, “in arido et aspero montis jugo;” “in unum ac parvum verticem,” are not very suitable to the encampment of a great army. But Faesulae, only three miles from Florence, might afford space for the head-quarters of Radagaisus, and would be comprehended within the circuit of the Roman lines.]
- 80 [\(return\)](#)
[See Zosimus, l. v. p. 331, and the Chronicles of Prosper and Marcellinus.]
- 81 [\(return\)](#)
[Olympiodorus (apud Photium, p. 180) uses an expression which would denote a strict and friendly alliance, and render Stilicho still more criminal. The paulisper detentus, deinde interfectus, of Orosius, is sufficiently odious. * Note: Gibbon, by translating this passage of Olympiodorus, as if it had been good Greek, has probably fallen into an error. The natural order of the words is as Gibbon translates it; but it is almost clear, refers to the Gothic chiefs, “whom Stilicho, after he had defeated Radagaisus, attached to his army.” So in the version corrected by Classen for Niebuhr’s edition of the Byzantines, p. 450.—M.]
- 82 [\(return\)](#)
[Orosius, piously inhuman, sacrifices the king and people, Agag and the Amalekites, without a symptom of compassion. The bloody actor is less detestable than the cool, unfeeling historian.—
Note: Considering the vow, which he was universally believed to have made, to destroy Rome, and to sacrifice the senators on the altars, and that he is said to have immolated his prisoners to his gods, the execution of Radagaisus, if, as it appears, he was taken in arms, cannot deserve Gibbon’s severe condemnation. Mr. Herbert (notes to his poem of Attila, p. 317) justly observes, that “Stilicho had probably authority for hanging him on the first tree.” Marcellinus, adds Mr. Herbert, attributes the execution to the Gothic chiefs Sarus.—M.]
- 83 [\(return\)](#)
[And Claudian’s muse, was she asleep? had she been ill paid! Methinks the seventh consulship of Honorius (A.D. 407) would have furnished the subject of a noble poem. Before it was discovered that the state could no longer be saved, Stilicho (after Romulus, Camillus and Marius) might have

been worthily surnamed the fourth founder of Rome.]

The fame of the victory, and more especially of the miracle, has encouraged a vain persuasion, that the whole army, or rather nation, of Germans, who migrated from the shores of the Baltic, miserably perished under the walls of Florence. Such indeed was the fate of Radagaisus himself, of his brave and faithful companions, and of more than one third of the various multitude of Sueves and Vandals, of Alani and Burgundians, who adhered to the standard of their general. [84](#) The union of such an army might excite our surprise, but the causes of separation are obvious and forcible; the pride of birth, the insolence of valor, the jealousy of command, the impatience of subordination, and the obstinate conflict of opinions, of interests, and of passions, among so many kings and warriors, who were untaught to yield, or to obey. After the defeat of Radagaisus, two parts of the German host, which must have exceeded the number of one hundred thousand men, still remained in arms, between the Apennine and the Alps, or between the Alps and the Danube. It is uncertain whether they attempted to revenge the death of their general; but their irregular fury was soon diverted by the prudence and firmness of Stilicho, who opposed their march, and facilitated their retreat; who considered the safety of Rome and Italy as the great object of his care, and who sacrificed, with too much indifference, the wealth and tranquillity of the distant provinces. [85](#) The Barbarians acquired, from the junction of some Pannonian deserters, the knowledge of the country, and of the roads; and the invasion of Gaul, which Alaric had designed, was executed by the remains of the great army of Radagaisus. [86](#)

84 [\(return\)](#)

[A luminous passage of Prosper's Chronicle, "In tres partes, per diversos principes, diversus exercitus," reduces the miracle of Florence and connects the history of Italy, Gaul, and Germany.]

85 [\(return\)](#)

[Orosius and Jerom positively charge him with instigating the invasion. "Excitatae a Stilichone gentes," &c. They must mean a directly. He saved Italy at the expense of Gaul]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[The Count de Buat is satisfied, that the Germans who invaded Gaul were the two thirds that yet remained of the army of Radagaisus. See the *Histoire Ancienne des Peuples de l'Europe*, (tom. vii. p. 87, 121. Paris, 1772;) an elaborate work, which I had not the advantage of perusing till the year 1777. As early as 1771, I find the same idea expressed in a rough draught of the present History. I have since observed a similar intimation in *Mascou*, (viii. 15.) Such agreement, without mutual communication, may add some weight to our common sentiment.]

Yet if they expected to derive any assistance from the tribes of Germany, who inhabited the banks of the Rhine, their hopes were disappointed. The Alemanni preserved a state of inactive neutrality; and the Franks distinguished their zeal and courage in the defence of the of the empire. In the rapid progress down the Rhine, which was the first act of the administration of Stilicho, he had applied himself, with peculiar attention, to secure the alliance of the warlike Franks, and to remove the irreconcilable enemies of peace and of the republic. Marcomir, one of their kings, was publicly convicted, before the tribunal of the Roman magistrate, of violating the faith of treaties. He was sentenced to a mild, but distant exile, in the province of Tuscany; and this degradation of the regal dignity was so far from exciting the resentment of his subjects, that they punished with death the turbulent Sunno, who attempted to revenge his brother; and maintained a dutiful allegiance to the princes, who were established on the throne by the choice of Stilicho. [87](#) When the limits of Gaul and Germany were shaken by the northern emigration, the Franks bravely encountered the single force of the Vandals; who, regardless of the lessons of adversity, had again separated their troops from the standard of their Barbarian allies. They paid the penalty of their rashness; and twenty thousand Vandals, with their king Godigisclus, were slain in the field of battle. The whole people must have been extirpated, if the squadrons of the Alani, advancing to their relief, had not trampled down the infantry of the Franks; who, after an honorable resistance, were compelled to relinquish the unequal contest. The victorious confederates pursued their march, and on the last day of the year, in a season when the waters of the Rhine were most probably frozen, they entered, without opposition, the defenceless provinces of Gaul. This memorable passage of the Suevi, the Vandals, the Alani, and the Burgundians, who never afterwards retreated, may be considered as the fall of the Roman empire in the countries beyond the Alps; and the barriers, which had so long separated the savage and the civilized nations of the earth, were from that fatal moment levelled with the ground. [88](#)

87

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Provincia missos
Expellet citius fasces, quam Francia reges
Quos dederis.*

Claudian (i. Cons. Stil. l. i. 235, &c.) is clear and satisfactory. These kings of France are unknown to Gregory of Tours; but the author of the *Gesta Francorum* mentions both Sunno and Marcomir, and names the latter as the father of Pharamond, (in tom. ii. p. 543.) He seems to write from good materials, which he did not understand.]

88

[\(return\)](#)

[See Zosimus, (l. vi. p. 373,) Orosius, (l. vii. c. 40, p. 576,) and the *Chronicles*. Gregory of Tours (l. ii. c. 9, p. 165, in the second volume of the *Historians of France*) has preserved a valuable fragment of

Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus, whose three names denote a Christian, a Roman subject, and a Semi-Barbarian.]

While the peace of Germany was secured by the attachment of the Franks, and the neutrality of the Alemanni, the subjects of Rome, unconscious of their approaching calamities, enjoyed the state of quiet and prosperity, which had seldom blessed the frontiers of Gaul. Their flocks and herds were permitted to graze in the pastures of the Barbarians; their huntsmen penetrated, without fear or danger, into the darkest recesses of the Hercynian wood. [89](#) The banks of the Rhine were crowned, like those of the Tyber, with elegant houses, and well-cultivated farms; and if a poet descended the river, he might express his doubt, on which side was situated the territory of the Romans. [90](#) This scene of peace and plenty was suddenly changed into a desert; and the prospect of the smoking ruins could alone distinguish the solitude of nature from the desolation of man. The flourishing city of Mentz was surprised and destroyed; and many thousand Christians were inhumanly massacred in the church. Worms perished after a long and obstinate siege; Strasburgh, Spire, Rheims, Tournay, Arras, Amiens, experienced the cruel oppression of the German yoke; and the consuming flames of war spread from the banks of the Rhine over the greatest part of the seventeen provinces of Gaul. That rich and extensive country, as far as the ocean, the Alps, and the Pyrenees, was delivered to the Barbarians, who drove before them, in a promiscuous crowd, the bishop, the senator, and the virgin, laden with the spoils of their houses and altars. [91](#) The ecclesiastics, to whom we are indebted for this vague description of the public calamities, embraced the opportunity of exhorting the Christians to repent of the sins which had provoked the Divine Justice, and to renounce the perishable goods of a wretched and deceitful world. But as the Pelagian controversy, [92](#) which attempts to sound the abyss of grace and predestination, soon became the serious employment of the Latin clergy, the Providence which had decreed, or foreseen, or permitted, such a train of moral and natural evils, was rashly weighed in the imperfect and fallacious balance of reason. The crimes, and the misfortunes, of the suffering people, were presumptuously compared with those of their ancestors; and they arraigned the Divine Justice, which did not exempt from the common destruction the feeble, the guiltless, the infant portion of the human species. These idle disputants overlooked the invariable laws of nature, which have connected peace with innocence, plenty with industry, and safety with valor. The timid and selfish policy of the court of Ravenna might recall the Palatine legions for the protection of Italy; the remains of the stationary troops might be unequal to the arduous task; and the Barbarian auxiliaries might prefer the unbounded license of spoil to the benefits of a moderate and regular stipend. But the provinces of Gaul were filled with a numerous race of hardy and robust youth, who, in the defence of their houses, their families, and their altars, if they had dared to die, would have deserved to vanquish. The knowledge of their native country would have enabled them to oppose continual and insuperable obstacles to the progress of an invader; and the deficiency of the Barbarians, in arms, as well as in discipline, removed

the only pretence which excuses the submission of a populous country to the inferior numbers of a veteran army. When France was invaded by Charles V., he inquired of a prisoner, how many days Paris might be distant from the frontier; “Perhaps twelve, but they will be days of battle:” [93](#) such was the gallant answer which checked the arrogance of that ambitious prince. The subjects of Honorius, and those of Francis I., were animated by a very different spirit; and in less than two years, the divided troops of the savages of the Baltic, whose numbers, were they fairly stated, would appear contemptible, advanced, without a combat, to the foot of the Pyrenean Mountains.

89 [\(return\)](#)

[Claudian (i. Cons. Stil. l. i. 221, &c., l. ii. 186) describes the peace and prosperity of the Gallic frontier. The Abbe Dubos (Hist. Critique, &c., tom. i. p. 174) would read Alba (a nameless rivulet of the Ardennes) instead of Albis; and expatiates on the danger of the Gallic cattle grazing beyond the Elbe. Foolish enough! In poetical geography, the Elbe, and the Hercynian, signify any river, or any wood, in Germany. Claudian is not prepared for the strict examination of our antiquaries.]

90 [\(return\)](#)

[—Germinasque viator Cum videat ripas, quae sit Romana requirat.]

91 [\(return\)](#)

[Jerom, tom. i. p. 93. See in the 1st vol. of the Historians of France, p. 777, 782, the proper extracts from the Carmen de Providentil Divina, and Salvian. The anonymous poet was himself a captive, with his bishop and fellow-citizens.]

92 [\(return\)](#)

[The Pelagian doctrine, which was first agitated A.D. 405, was condemned, in the space of ten years, at Rome and Carthage. St Augustin fought and conquered; but the Greek church was favorable to his adversaries; and (what is singular enough) the people did not take any part in a dispute which they could not understand.]

93 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Mémoires de Guillaume du Bellay, l. vi. In French, the original reproof is less obvious, and more pointed, from the double sense of the word journee, which alike signifies, a day’s travel, or a battle.]

In the early part of the reign of Honorius, the vigilance of Stilicho had successfully guarded the remote island of Britain from her incessant enemies of the ocean, the mountains, and the Irish coast. [94](#) But those restless Barbarians could not neglect the fair opportunity of the Gothic war, when the walls and stations of the province were

stripped of the Roman troops. If any of the legionaries were permitted to return from the Italian expedition, their faithful report of the court and character of Honorius must have tended to dissolve the bonds of allegiance, and to exasperate the seditious temper of the British army. The spirit of revolt, which had formerly disturbed the age of Gallienus, was revived by the capricious violence of the soldiers; and the unfortunate, perhaps the ambitious, candidates, who were the objects of their choice, were the instruments, and at length the victims, of their passion. [95](#) Marcus was the first whom they placed on the throne, as the lawful emperor of Britain and of the West. They violated, by the hasty murder of Marcus, the oath of fidelity which they had imposed on themselves; and their disapprobation of his manners may seem to inscribe an honorable epitaph on his tomb. Gratian was the next whom they adorned with the diadem and the purple; and, at the end of four months, Gratian experienced the fate of his predecessor. The memory of the great Constantine, whom the British legions had given to the church and to the empire, suggested the singular motive of their third choice. They discovered in the ranks a private soldier of the name of Constantine, and their impetuous levity had already seated him on the throne, before they perceived his incapacity to sustain the weight of that glorious appellation. [96](#) Yet the authority of Constantine was less precarious, and his government was more successful, than the transient reigns of Marcus and of Gratian. The danger of leaving his inactive troops in those camps, which had been twice polluted with blood and sedition, urged him to attempt the reduction of the Western provinces. He landed at Boulogne with an inconsiderable force; and after he had reposed himself some days, he summoned the cities of Gaul, which had escaped the yoke of the Barbarians, to acknowledge their lawful sovereign. They obeyed the summons without reluctance. The neglect of the court of Ravenna had absolved a deserted people from the duty of allegiance; their actual distress encouraged them to accept any circumstances of change, without apprehension, and, perhaps, with some degree of hope; and they might flatter themselves, that the troops, the authority, and even the name of a Roman emperor, who fixed his residence in Gaul, would protect the unhappy country from the rage of the Barbarians. The first successes of Constantine against the detached parties of the Germans, were magnified by the voice of adulation into splendid and decisive victories; which the reunion and insolence of the enemy soon reduced to their just value. His negotiations procured a short and precarious truce; and if some tribes of the Barbarians were engaged, by the liberality of his gifts and promises, to undertake the defence of the Rhine, these expensive and uncertain treaties, instead of restoring the pristine vigor of the Gallic frontier, served only to disgrace the majesty of the prince, and to exhaust what yet remained of the treasures of the republic. Elated, however, with this imaginary triumph, the vain deliverer of Gaul advanced into the provinces of the South, to encounter a more pressing and personal danger. Sarus the Goth was ordered to lay the head of the rebel at the feet of the emperor Honorius; and the forces of Britain and Italy were unworthily consumed in this domestic quarrel. After the loss of his two bravest

generals, Justinian and Nevigastes, the former of whom was slain in the field of battle, the latter in a peaceful but treacherous interview, Constantine fortified himself within the walls of Vienna. The place was ineffectually attacked seven days; and the Imperial army supported, in a precipitate retreat, the ignominy of purchasing a secure passage from the freebooters and outlaws of the Alps. [97](#) Those mountains now separated the dominions of two rival monarchs; and the fortifications of the double frontier were guarded by the troops of the empire, whose arms would have been more usefully employed to maintain the Roman limits against the Barbarians of Germany and Scythia.

94 [\(return\)](#)

[Claudian, (i. Cons. Stil. l. ii. 250.) It is supposed that the Scots of Ireland invaded, by sea, the whole western coast of Britain: and some slight credit may be given even to Nennius and the Irish traditions, (Carte's Hist. of England, vol. i. p. 169.) Whitaker's Genuine History of the Britons, p. 199. The sixty-six lives of St. Patrick, which were extant in the ninth century, must have contained as many thousand lies; yet we may believe, that, in one of these Irish inroads the future apostle was led away captive, (Usher, Antiquit. Eccles. Britann. p. 431, and Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xvi. p. 45 782, &c.)]

95 [\(return\)](#)

[The British usurpers are taken from Zosimus, (l. vi. p. 371-375,) Orosius, (l. vii. c. 40, p. 576, 577,) Olympiodorus, (apud Photium, p. 180, 181,) the ecclesiastical historians, and the Chronicles. The Latins are ignorant of Marcus.]

96 [\(return\)](#)

[Cum in Constantino inconstantiam... execrarentur, (Sidonius Apollinaris, l. v. epist. 9, p. 139, edit. secund. Sirmond.) Yet Sidonius might be tempted, by so fair a pun, to stigmatize a prince who had disgraced his grandfather.]

97 [\(return\)](#)

[Bagaudoe is the name which Zosimus applies to them; perhaps they deserved a less odious character, (see Dubos, Hist. Critique, tom. i. p. 203, and this History, vol. i. p. 407.) We shall hear of them again.]

Chapter XXX: Revolt Of The Goths.—Part V.

On the side of the Pyrenees, the ambition of Constantine might be justified by the proximity of danger; but his throne was soon established by the conquest, or rather submission, of Spain; which yielded to the influence of regular and habitual

subordination, and received the laws and magistrates of the Gallic praefecture. The only opposition which was made to the authority of Constantine proceeded not so much from the powers of government, or the spirit of the people, as from the private zeal and interest of the family of Theodosius. Four brothers [98](#) had obtained, by the favor of their kinsman, the deceased emperor, an honorable rank and ample possessions in their native country; and the grateful youths resolved to risk those advantages in the service of his son. After an unsuccessful effort to maintain their ground at the head of the stationary troops of Lusitania, they retired to their estates; where they armed and levied, at their own expense, a considerable body of slaves and dependants, and boldly marched to occupy the strong posts of the Pyrenean Mountains. This domestic insurrection alarmed and perplexed the sovereign of Gaul and Britain; and he was compelled to negotiate with some troops of Barbarian auxiliaries, for the service of the Spanish war. They were distinguished by the title of Honorians; [99](#) a name which might have reminded them of their fidelity to their lawful sovereign; and if it should candidly be allowed that the Scots were influenced by any partial affection for a British prince, the Moors and the Marcomanni could be tempted only by the profuse liberality of the usurper, who distributed among the Barbarians the military, and even the civil, honors of Spain. The nine bands of Honorians, which may be easily traced on the establishment of the Western empire, could not exceed the number of five thousand men: yet this inconsiderable force was sufficient to terminate a war, which had threatened the power and safety of Constantine. The rustic army of the Theodosian family was surrounded and destroyed in the Pyrenees: two of the brothers had the good fortune to escape by sea to Italy, or the East; the other two, after an interval of suspense, were executed at Arles; and if Honorius could remain insensible of the public disgrace, he might perhaps be affected by the personal misfortunes of his generous kinsmen. Such were the feeble arms which decided the possession of the Western provinces of Europe, from the wall of Antoninus to the columns of Hercules. The events of peace and war have undoubtedly been diminished by the narrow and imperfect view of the historians of the times, who were equally ignorant of the causes, and of the effects, of the most important revolutions. But the total decay of the national strength had annihilated even the last resource of a despotic government; and the revenue of exhausted provinces could no longer purchase the military service of a discontented and pusillanimous people.

98

[\(return\)](#)

[Verinianus, Didymus, Theodosius, and Lagodius, who in modern courts would be styled princes of the blood, were not distinguished by any rank or privileges above the rest of their fellow-subjects.]

99

[\(return\)](#)

[These Honoriani, or Honoriaci, consisted of two bands of Scots, or Attacotti, two of Moors, two of Marcomanni, the Victores, the Asca in, and the Gallicani, (Notitia Imperii, sect. xxxiii. edit. Lab.)

They were part of the sixty-five Auxilia Palatina,
and are properly styled by Zosimus, (l. vi. 374.)]

The poet, whose flattery has ascribed to the Roman eagle the victories of Pollentia and Verona, pursues the hasty retreat of Alaric, from the confines of Italy, with a horrid train of imaginary spectres, such as might hover over an army of Barbarians, which was almost exterminated by war, famine, and disease. [100](#) In the course of this unfortunate expedition, the king of the Goths must indeed have sustained a considerable loss; and his harassed forces required an interval of repose, to recruit their numbers and revive their confidence. Adversity had exercised and displayed the genius of Alaric; and the fame of his valor invited to the Gothic standard the bravest of the Barbarian warriors; who, from the Euxine to the Rhine, were agitated by the desire of rapine and conquest. He had deserved the esteem, and he soon accepted the friendship, of Stilicho himself. Renouncing the service of the emperor of the East, Alaric concluded, with the court of Ravenna, a treaty of peace and alliance, by which he was declared master-general of the Roman armies throughout the praefecture of Illyricum; as it was claimed, according to the true and ancient limits, by the minister of Honorius. [101](#) The execution of the ambitious design, which was either stipulated, or implied, in the articles of the treaty, appears to have been suspended by the formidable irruption of Radagaisus; and the neutrality of the Gothic king may perhaps be compared to the indifference of Caesar, who, in the conspiracy of Catiline, refused either to assist, or to oppose, the enemy of the republic. After the defeat of the Vandals, Stilicho resumed his pretensions to the provinces of the East; appointed civil magistrates for the administration of justice, and of the finances; and declared his impatience to lead to the gates of Constantinople the united armies of the Romans and of the Goths. The prudence, however, of Stilicho, his aversion to civil war, and his perfect knowledge of the weakness of the state, may countenance the suspicion, that domestic peace, rather than foreign conquest, was the object of his policy; and that his principal care was to employ the forces of Alaric at a distance from Italy. This design could not long escape the penetration of the Gothic king, who continued to hold a doubtful, and perhaps a treacherous, correspondence with the rival courts; who protracted, like a dissatisfied mercenary, his languid operations in Thessaly and Epirus, and who soon returned to claim the extravagant reward of his ineffectual services. From his camp near Aemona, [102](#) on the confines of Italy, he transmitted to the emperor of the West a long account of promises, of expenses, and of demands; called for immediate satisfaction, and clearly intimated the consequences of a refusal. Yet if his conduct was hostile, his language was decent and dutiful. He humbly professed himself the friend of Stilicho, and the soldier of Honorius; offered his person and his troops to march, without delay, against the usurper of Gaul; and solicited, as a permanent retreat for the Gothic nation, the possession of some vacant province of the Western empire.

*Pallor, et atra fames; et saucia lividus ora
Luctus; et inferno stridentes agmine morbi.*
—Claudian in vi. Cons. Hon. 821, &c.]

101

[\(return\)](#)

[These dark transactions are investigated by the Count de Bual (Hist. des Peuples de l'Europe, tom. vii. c. iii.—viii. p. 69-206,) whose laborious accuracy may sometimes fatigue a superficial reader.]

102

[\(return\)](#)

[See Zosimus, l. v. p. 334, 335. He interrupts his scanty narrative to relate the fable of Aemona, and of the ship Argo; which was drawn overland from that place to the Adriatic. Sozomen (l. viii. c. 25, l. ix. c. 4) and Socrates (l. vii. c. 10) cast a pale and doubtful light; and Orosius (l. vii. c. 38, p. 571) is abominably partial.]

The political and secret transactions of two statesmen, who labored to deceive each other and the world, must forever have been concealed in the impenetrable darkness of the cabinet, if the debates of a popular assembly had not thrown some rays of light on the correspondence of Alaric and Stilicho. The necessity of finding some artificial support for a government, which, from a principle, not of moderation, but of weakness, was reduced to negotiate with its own subjects, had insensibly revived the authority of the Roman senate; and the minister of Honorius respectfully consulted the legislative council of the republic. Stilicho assembled the senate in the palace of the Caesars; represented, in a studied oration, the actual state of affairs; proposed the demands of the Gothic king, and submitted to their consideration the choice of peace or war. The senators, as if they had been suddenly awakened from a dream of four hundred years, appeared, on this important occasion, to be inspired by the courage, rather than by the wisdom, of their predecessors. They loudly declared, in regular speeches, or in tumultuary acclamations, that it was unworthy of the majesty of Rome to purchase a precarious and disgraceful truce from a Barbarian king; and that, in the judgment of a magnanimous people, the chance of ruin was always preferable to the certainty of dishonor. The minister, whose pacific intentions were seconded only by the voice of a few servile and venal followers, attempted to allay the general ferment, by an apology for his own conduct, and even for the demands of the Gothic prince. “The payment of a subsidy, which had excited the indignation of the Romans, ought not (such was the language of Stilicho) to be considered in the odious light, either of a tribute, or of a ransom, extorted by the menaces of a Barbarian enemy. Alaric had faithfully asserted the just pretensions of the republic to the provinces which were usurped by the Greeks of Constantinople: he modestly required the fair and stipulated recompense of his services; and if he had desisted from the prosecution of his enterprise, he had obeyed, in his retreat, the peremptory, though private, letters of the emperor himself. These contradictory orders (he would not dissemble the errors of his own family) had been

procured by the intercession of Serena. The tender piety of his wife had been too deeply affected by the discord of the royal brothers, the sons of her adopted father; and the sentiments of nature had too easily prevailed over the stern dictates of the public welfare.” These ostensible reasons, which faintly disguise the obscure intrigues of the palace of Ravenna, were supported by the authority of Stilicho; and obtained, after a warm debate, the reluctant approbation of the senate. The tumult of virtue and freedom subsided; and the sum of four thousand pounds of gold was granted, under the name of a subsidy, to secure the peace of Italy, and to conciliate the friendship of the king of the Goths. Lampadius alone, one of the most illustrious members of the assembly, still persisted in his dissent; exclaimed, with a loud voice, “This is not a treaty of peace, but of servitude;” [103](#) and escaped the danger of such bold opposition by immediately retiring to the sanctuary of a Christian church. [See Palace Of The Caesars]

103

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. v. p. 338, 339. He repeats the words of Lampadius, as they were spoke in Latin, “Non est ista pax, sed pactio servi tutis,” and then translates them into Greek for the benefit of his readers. *

Note: From Cicero’s XIIth Philippic, 14.—M.]

But the reign of Stilicho drew towards its end; and the proud minister might perceive the symptoms of his approaching disgrace. The generous boldness of Lampadius had been applauded; and the senate, so patiently resigned to a long servitude, rejected with disdain the offer of invidious and imaginary freedom. The troops, who still assumed the name and prerogatives of the Roman legions, were exasperated by the partial affection of Stilicho for the Barbarians: and the people imputed to the mischievous policy of the minister the public misfortunes, which were the natural consequence of their own degeneracy. Yet Stilicho might have continued to brave the clamors of the people, and even of the soldiers, if he could have maintained his dominion over the feeble mind of his pupil. But the respectful attachment of Honorius was converted into fear, suspicion, and hatred. The crafty Olympius, [104](#) who concealed his vices under the mask of Christian piety, had secretly undermined the benefactor, by whose favor he was promoted to the honorable offices of the Imperial palace. Olympius revealed to the unsuspecting emperor, who had attained the twenty-fifth year of his age, that he was without weight, or authority, in his own government; and artfully alarmed his timid and indolent disposition by a lively picture of the designs of Stilicho, who already meditated the death of his sovereign, with the ambitious hope of placing the diadem on the head of his son Eucherius. The emperor was instigated, by his new favorite, to assume the tone of independent dignity; and the minister was astonished to find, that secret resolutions were formed in the court and council, which were repugnant to his interest, or to his intentions. Instead of residing in the palace of Rome, Honorius declared that it was his pleasure to return to the secure fortress of Ravenna. On the first intelligence of the death of his brother Arcadius, he prepared to visit Constantinople, and to regulate, with the authority of a guardian, the provinces of the infant Theodosius. [105](#) The

representation of the difficulty and expense of such a distant expedition, checked this strange and sudden sally of active diligence; but the dangerous project of showing the emperor to the camp of Pavia, which was composed of the Roman troops, the enemies of Stilicho, and his Barbarian auxiliaries, remained fixed and unalterable. The minister was pressed, by the advice of his confidant, Justinian, a Roman advocate, of a lively and penetrating genius, to oppose a journey so prejudicial to his reputation and safety. His strenuous but ineffectual efforts confirmed the triumph of Olympius; and the prudent lawyer withdrew himself from the impending ruin of his patron.

104

[\(return\)](#)

[He came from the coast of the Euxine, and exercised a splendid office. His actions justify his character, which Zosimus (l. v. p. 340) exposes with visible satisfaction. Augustin revered the piety of Olympius, whom he styles a true son of the church, (Baronius, Annal. Eccles, Eccles. A.D. 408, No. 19, &c. Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xiii. p. 467, 468.) But these praises, which the African saint so unworthily bestows, might proceed as well from ignorance as from adulation.]

105

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. v. p. 338, 339. Sozomen, l. ix. c. 4. Stilicho offered to undertake the journey to Constantinople, that he might divert Honorius from the vain attempt. The Eastern empire would not have obeyed, and could not have been conquered.]

In the passage of the emperor through Bologna, a mutiny of the guards was excited and appeased by the secret policy of Stilicho; who announced his instructions to decimate the guilty, and ascribed to his own intercession the merit of their pardon. After this tumult, Honorius embraced, for the last time, the minister whom he now considered as a tyrant, and proceeded on his way to the camp of Pavia; where he was received by the loyal acclamations of the troops who were assembled for the service of the Gallic war. On the morning of the fourth day, he pronounced, as he had been taught, a military oration in the presence of the soldiers, whom the charitable visits, and artful discourses, of Olympius had prepared to execute a dark and bloody conspiracy. At the first signal, they massacred the friends of Stilicho, the most illustrious officers of the empire; two Prætorian præfects, of Gaul and of Italy; two masters-general of the cavalry and infantry; the master of the offices; the quaestor, the treasurer, and the count of the domestics. Many lives were lost; many houses were plundered; the furious sedition continued to rage till the close of the evening; and the trembling emperor, who was seen in the streets of Pavia without his robes or diadem, yielded to the persuasions of his favorite; condemned the memory of the slain; and solemnly approved the innocence and fidelity of their assassins. The intelligence of the massacre of Pavia filled the mind of Stilicho with just and gloomy apprehensions; and he instantly summoned, in the camp of Bologna, a council of the confederate leaders, who were attached to his service,

and would be involved in his ruin. The impetuous voice of the assembly called aloud for arms, and for revenge; to march, without a moment's delay, under the banners of a hero, whom they had so often followed to victory; to surprise, to oppress, to extirpate the guilty Olympius, and his degenerate Romans; and perhaps to fix the diadem on the head of their injured general. Instead of executing a resolution, which might have been justified by success, Stilicho hesitated till he was irrecoverably lost. He was still ignorant of the fate of the emperor; he distrusted the fidelity of his own party; and he viewed with horror the fatal consequences of arming a crowd of licentious Barbarians against the soldiers and people of Italy. The confederates, impatient of his timorous and doubtful delay, hastily retired, with fear and indignation. At the hour of midnight, Sarus, a Gothic warrior, renowned among the Barbarians themselves for his strength and valor, suddenly invaded the camp of his benefactor, plundered the baggage, cut in pieces the faithful Huns, who guarded his person, and penetrated to the tent, where the minister, pensive and sleepless, meditated on the dangers of his situation. Stilicho escaped with difficulty from the sword of the Goths and, after issuing a last and generous admonition to the cities of Italy, to shut their gates against the Barbarians, his confidence, or his despair, urged him to throw himself into Ravenna, which was already in the absolute possession of his enemies. Olympius, who had assumed the dominion of Honorius, was speedily informed, that his rival had embraced, as a suppliant the altar of the Christian church. The base and cruel disposition of the hypocrite was incapable of pity or remorse; but he piously affected to elude, rather than to violate, the privilege of the sanctuary. Count Heraclian, with a troop of soldiers, appeared, at the dawn of day, before the gates of the church of Ravenna. The bishop was satisfied by a solemn oath, that the Imperial mandate only directed them to secure the person of Stilicho: but as soon as the unfortunate minister had been tempted beyond the holy threshold, he produced the warrant for his instant execution. Stilicho supported, with calm resignation, the injurious names of traitor and parricide; repressed the unseasonable zeal of his followers, who were ready to attempt an ineffectual rescue; and, with a firmness not unworthy of the last of the Roman generals, submitted his neck to the sword of Heraclian. [106](#)

106

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. v. p. 336-345) has copiously, though not clearly, related the disgrace and death of Stilicho. Olympiodorus, (apud Phot. p. 177.) Orosius, (l. vii. c. 38, p. 571, 572,) Sozomen, (l. ix. c. 4,) and Philostorgius, (l. xi. c. 3, l. xii. c. 2,) afford supplemental hints.]

The servile crowd of the palace, who had so long adored the fortune of Stilicho, affected to insult his fall; and the most distant connection with the master-general of the West, which had so lately been a title to wealth and honors, was studiously denied, and rigorously punished. His family, united by a triple alliance with the family of Theodosius, might envy the condition of the meanest peasant. The flight of his son

Eucherius was intercepted; and the death of that innocent youth soon followed the divorce of Thermantia, who filled the place of her sister Maria; and who, like Maria, had remained a virgin in the Imperial bed. [107](#) The friends of Stilicho, who had escaped the massacre of Pavia, were persecuted by the implacable revenge of Olympius; and the most exquisite cruelty was employed to extort the confession of a treasonable and sacrilegious conspiracy. They died in silence: their firmness justified the choice, [108](#) and perhaps absolved the innocence of their patron: and the despotic power, which could take his life without a trial, and stigmatize his memory without a proof, has no jurisdiction over the impartial suffrage of posterity. [109](#) The services of Stilicho are great and manifest; his crimes, as they are vaguely stated in the language of flattery and hatred, are obscure at least, and improbable. About four months after his death, an edict was published, in the name of Honorius, to restore the free communication of the two empires, which had been so long interrupted by the public enemy. [110](#) The minister, whose fame and fortune depended on the prosperity of the state, was accused of betraying Italy to the Barbarians; whom he repeatedly vanquished at Pollentia, at Verona, and before the walls of Florence. His pretended design of placing the diadem on the head of his son Eucherius, could not have been conducted without preparations or accomplices; and the ambitious father would not surely have left the future emperor, till the twentieth year of his age, in the humble station of tribune of the notaries. Even the religion of Stilicho was arraigned by the malice of his rival. The seasonable, and almost miraculous, deliverance was devoutly celebrated by the applause of the clergy; who asserted, that the restoration of idols, and the persecution of the church, would have been the first measure of the reign of Eucherius. The son of Stilicho, however, was educated in the bosom of Christianity, which his father had uniformly professed, and zealously supported. [111](#) [1111](#) Serena had borrowed her magnificent necklace from the statue of Vesta; [112](#) and the Pagans execrated the memory of the sacrilegious minister, by whose order the Sibylline books, the oracles of Rome, had been committed to the flames. [113](#) The pride and power of Stilicho constituted his real guilt. An honorable reluctance to shed the blood of his countrymen appears to have contributed to the success of his unworthy rival; and it is the last humiliation of the character of Honorius, that posterity has not condescended to reproach him with his base ingratitude to the guardian of his youth, and the support of his empire.

107

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. v. p. 333. The marriage of a Christian with two sisters, scandalizes Tillemont, (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 557;) who expects, in vain, that Pope Innocent I. should have done something in the way either of censure or of dispensation.]

108

[\(return\)](#)

[Two of his friends are honorably mentioned, (Zosimus, l. v. p. 346:) Peter, chief of the school of notaries, and the great chamberlain Deuterius. Stilicho had secured the bed-chamber; and it is

surprising that, under a feeble prince, the bed-chamber was not able to secure him.]

109 [\(return\)](#)

[Orosius (l. vii. c. 38, p. 571, 572) seems to copy the false and furious manifestos, which were dispersed through the provinces by the new administration.]

110 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Theodosian code, l. vii. tit. xvi. leg. 1, l. ix. tit. xlii. leg. 22. Stilicho is branded with the name of proedo publicus, who employed his wealth, ad omnem ditandam, inquietandamque Barbariem.]

111 [\(return\)](#)

[Augustin himself is satisfied with the effectual laws, which Stilicho had enacted against heretics and idolaters; and which are still extant in the Code. He only applies to Olympius for their confirmation, (Baronius, Annal. Eccles. A.D. 408, No. 19.)]

112 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. v. p. 351. We may observe the bad taste of the age, in dressing their statues with such awkward finery.]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[See Rutilius Numatianus, (Itinerar. l. ii. 41-60,) to whom religious enthusiasm has dictated some elegant and forcible lines. Stilicho likewise stripped the gold plates from the doors of the Capitol, and read a prophetic sentence which was engraven under them, (Zosimus, l. v. p. 352.) These are foolish stories: yet the charge of impiety adds weight and credit to the praise which Zosimus reluctantly bestows on his virtues. Note: One particular in the extorted praise of Zosimus, deserved the notice of the historian, as strongly opposed to the former imputations of Zosimus himself, and indicative of the corrupt practices of a declining age. "He had never bartered promotion in the army for bribes, nor peculated in the supplies of provisions for the army." l. v. c. xxxiv.—M.]

1111 [\(return\)](#)

[Hence, perhaps, the accusation of treachery is countenanced by Hatilius:—

*Quo magis est facinus diri Stilichonis iniquum
Proditor arcani quod fuit imperii.
Romano generi dum nititur esse superstes,
Crudelis summis miscuit ima furor.
Dumque timet, quicquid se fecerat ipso timeri,
Immisit Latiae barbara tela neci. Rutil. Itin. II. 41.—M.]*
*Among the train of dependants whose wealth and dignity
attracted the notice of their own times, our curiosity is excited
by the celebrated name of the poet Claudian, who enjoyed the*

favor of Stilicho, and was overwhelmed in the ruin of his patron.]

Among the train of dependants whose wealth and dignity attracted the notice of their own times, *our* curiosity is excited by the celebrated name of the poet Claudian, who enjoyed the favor of Stilicho, and was overwhelmed in the ruin of his patron. The titular offices of tribune and notary fixed his rank in the Imperial court: he was indebted to the powerful intercession of Serena for his marriage with a very rich heiress of the province of Africa; [114](#) and the statute of Claudian, erected in the forum of Trajan, was a monument of the taste and liberality of the Roman senate. [115](#) After the praises of Stilicho became offensive and criminal, Claudian was exposed to the enmity of a powerful and unforgiving courtier, whom he had provoked by the insolence of wit. He had compared, in a lively epigram, the opposite characters of two Prætorian præfects of Italy; he contrasts the innocent repose of a philosopher, who sometimes resigned the hours of business to slumber, perhaps to study, with the interesting diligence of a rapacious minister, indefatigable in the pursuit of unjust or sacrilegious, gain. “How happy,” continues Claudian, “how happy might it be for the people of Italy, if Mallius could be constantly awake, and if Hadrian would always sleep!” [116](#) The repose of Mallius was not disturbed by this friendly and gentle admonition; but the cruel vigilance of Hadrian watched the opportunity of revenge, and easily obtained, from the enemies of Stilicho, the trifling sacrifice of an obnoxious poet. The poet concealed himself, however, during the tumult of the revolution; and, consulting the dictates of prudence rather than of honor, he addressed, in the form of an epistle, a suppliant and humble recantation to the offended præfect. He deplores, in mournful strains, the fatal indiscretion into which he had been hurried by passion and folly; submits to the imitation of his adversary the generous examples of the clemency of gods, of heroes, and of lions; and expresses his hope that the magnanimity of Hadrian will not trample on a defenceless and contemptible foe, already humbled by disgrace and poverty, and deeply wounded by the exile, the tortures, and the death of his dearest friends. [117](#) Whatever might be the success of his prayer, or the accidents of his future life, the period of a few years levelled in the grave the minister and the poet: but the name of Hadrian is almost sunk in oblivion, while Claudian is read with pleasure in every country which has retained, or acquired, the knowledge of the Latin language. If we fairly balance his merits and his defects, we shall acknowledge that Claudian does not either satisfy, or silence, our reason. It would not be easy to produce a passage that deserves the epithet of sublime or pathetic; to select a verse that melts the heart or enlarges the imagination. We should vainly seek, in the poems of Claudian, the happy invention, and artificial conduct, of an interesting fable; or the just and lively representation of the characters and situations of real life. For the service of his patron, he published occasional panegyrics and invectives: and the design of these slavish compositions encouraged his propensity to exceed the limits of truth and nature. These imperfections, however, are compensated in some degree by the poetical virtues of Claudian. He was endowed with the rare and precious talent of raising the meanest, of

adorning the most barren, and of diversifying the most similar, topics: his coloring, more especially in descriptive poetry, is soft and splendid; and he seldom fails to display, and even to abuse, the advantages of a cultivated understanding, a copious fancy, an easy, and sometimes forcible, expression; and a perpetual flow of harmonious versification. To these commendations, independent of any accidents of time and place, we must add the peculiar merit which Claudian derived from the unfavorable circumstances of his birth. In the decline of arts, and of empire, a native of Egypt, [118](#) who had received the education of a Greek, assumed, in a mature age, the familiar use, and absolute command, of the Latin language; [119](#) soared above the heads of his feeble contemporaries; and placed himself, after an interval of three hundred years, among the poets of ancient Rome. [120](#)

114

[\(return\)](#)

[At the nuptials of Orpheus (a modest comparison!) all the parts of animated nature contributed their various gifts; and the gods themselves enriched their favorite. Claudian had neither flocks, nor herds, nor vines, nor olives. His wealthy bride was heiress to them all. But he carried to Africa a recommendatory letter from Serena, his Juno, and was made happy, (Epist. ii. ad Serenam.)]

115

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian feels the honor like a man who deserved it, (in praefat Bell. Get.) The original inscription, on marble, was found at Rome, in the fifteenth century, in the house of Pomponius Laetus. The statue of a poet, far superior to Claudian, should have been erected, during his lifetime, by the men of letters, his countrymen and contemporaries. It was a noble design.]

116

[\(return\)](#)

[See Epigram xxx.

*Mallius indulget somno noctesque diesque:
Insomnis Pharius sacra, profana, rapit.
Omnibus, hoc, Italae gentes, exposcite votis;
Mallius ut vigilet, dormiat ut Pharius.*

Hadrian was a Pharian, (of Alexandrian.) See his public life in Godefroy, Cod. Theodos. tom. vi. p. 364. Mallius did not always sleep. He composed some elegant dialogues on the Greek systems of natural philosophy, (Claud. in Mall. Theodor. Cons. 61-112.)]

117

[\(return\)](#)

[See Claudian's first Epistle. Yet, in some places, an air of irony and indignation betrays his secret reluctance. * Note: M. Beugnot has pointed out one remarkable characteristic of Claudian's poetry, and of the times—his extraordinary religious indifference. Here is a poet writing at the actual

crisis of the complete triumph of the new religion, the visible extinction of the old: if we may so speak, a strictly historical poet, whose works, excepting his Mythological poem on the rape of Proserpine, are confined to temporary subjects, and to the politics of his own eventful day; yet, excepting in one or two small and indifferent pieces, manifestly written by a Christian, and interpolated among his poems, there is no allusion whatever to the great religious strife. No one would know the existence of Christianity at that period of the world, by reading the works of Claudian. His panegyric and his satire preserve the same religious impartiality; award their most lavish praise or their bitterest invective on Christian or Pagan; he insults the fall of Eugenius, and glories in the victories of Theodosius. Under the child,—and Honorius never became more than a child,—Christianity continued to inflict wounds more and more deadly on expiring Paganism. Are the gods of Olympus agitated with apprehension at the birth of this new enemy? They are introduced as rejoicing at his appearance, and promising long years of glory. The whole prophetic choir of Paganism, all the oracles throughout the world, are summoned to predict the felicity of his reign. His birth is compared to that of Apollo, but the narrow limits of an island must not confine the new deity—

*... Non littora nostro
Sufficerent angusta Deo.*

Augury and divination, the shrines of Ammon, and of Delphi, the Persian Magi, and the Etruscan seers, the Chaldean astrologers, the Sibyl herself, are described as still discharging their prophetic functions, and celebrating the natal day of this Christian prince. They are noble lines, as well as curious illustrations of the times:

*... Quae tunc documenta futuri?
Quae voces avium? quanti per inane volatus?
Quis vatum discursus erat? Tibi corniger Ammon,
Et dudum taciti rupere silentia Delphi.
Te Persae cecinere Magi, te sensit Etruscus
Augur, et inspectis Babylonius horruit astris;
Chaldaei stupuere senes, Cumanaque rursus
Itonuit rupes, rabidae delubra Sibyllae.
—Claud. iv. Cons. Hon. 141.*

From the Quarterly Review of Beugnot. Hist. de la Paganisme en Occident, Q. R. v. lvii. p. 61.—M.]

him a native of Alexandria, (Fabricius, Bibliot. Latin. tom. iii. p. 191-202, edit. Ernest.)]

119

[\(return\)](#)

[His first Latin verses were composed during the consulship of Probinus, A.D. 395.

Romanos bibimus primum, te consule, fontes, Et Latiae cessit Graia Thalia togae.

Besides some Greek epigrams, which are still extant, the Latin poet had composed, in Greek, the Antiquities of Tarsus, Anazarbus, Berytus, Nice, &c. It is more easy to supply the loss of good poetry, than of authentic history.]

120

[\(return\)](#)

[Strada (Prolusion v. vi.) allows him to contend with the five heroic poets, Lucretius, Virgil, Ovid, Lucan, and Statius. His patron is the accomplished courtier Balthazar Castiglione. His admirers are numerous and passionate. Yet the rigid critics reproach the exotic weeds, or flowers, which spring too luxuriantly in his Latian soil]

Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part I.

Invasion Of Italy By Alaric.—Manners Of The Roman Senate And People.—Rome Is Thrice Besieged, And At Length Pillaged, By The Goths.—Death Of Alaric.—The Goths Evacuate Italy.—Fall Of Constantine.—Gaul And Spain Are Occupied By The Barbarians. —Independence Of Britain.

The incapacity of a weak and distracted government may often assume the appearance, and produce the effects, of a treasonable correspondence with the public enemy. If Alaric himself had been introduced into the council of Ravenna, he would probably have advised the same measures which were actually pursued by the ministers of Honorius. [1](#) The king of the Goths would have conspired, perhaps with some reluctance, to destroy the formidable adversary, by whose arms, in Italy, as well as in Greece, he had been twice overthrown. Their active and interested hatred laboriously accomplished the disgrace and ruin of the great Stilicho. The valor of Sarus, his fame in arms, and his personal, or hereditary, influence over the confederate Barbarians, could recommend him only to the friends of their country, who despised, or detested, the worthless characters of Turpilio, Varanes, and Vigilantius. By the pressing instances of the new favorites, these generals, unworthy as they had shown themselves of the names of soldiers, [2](#) were promoted to the command of the cavalry, of the infantry, and of the domestic troops. The Gothic prince would have subscribed with pleasure the edict which the fanaticism of Olympius dictated to the simple and devout emperor. Honorius excluded all persons, who were adverse to the Catholic church, from holding any office in the state; obstinately rejected the service of all those who dissented from his religion;

and rashly disqualified many of his bravest and most skilful officers, who adhered to the Pagan worship, or who had imbibed the opinions of Arianism. [3](#) These measures, so advantageous to an enemy, Alaric would have approved, and might perhaps have suggested; but it may seem doubtful, whether the Barbarian would have promoted his interest at the expense of the inhuman and absurd cruelty which was perpetrated by the direction, or at least with the connivance of the Imperial ministers. The foreign auxiliaries, who had been attached to the person of Stilicho, lamented his death; but the desire of revenge was checked by a natural apprehension for the safety of their wives and children; who were detained as hostages in the strong cities of Italy, where they had likewise deposited their most valuable effects. At the same hour, and as if by a common signal, the cities of Italy were polluted by the same horrid scenes of universal massacre and pillage, which involved, in promiscuous destruction, the families and fortunes of the Barbarians. Exasperated by such an injury, which might have awakened the tamest and most servile spirit, they cast a look of indignation and hope towards the camp of Alaric, and unanimously swore to pursue, with just and implacable war, the perfidious nation who had so basely violated the laws of hospitality. By the imprudent conduct of the ministers of Honorius, the republic lost the assistance, and deserved the enmity, of thirty thousand of her bravest soldiers; and the weight of that formidable army, which alone might have determined the event of the war, was transferred from the scale of the Romans into that of the Goths.

- 1 [\(return\)](#)
[The series of events, from the death of Stilicho to the arrival of Alaric before Rome, can only be found in Zosimus, l. v. p. 347-350.]
- 2 [\(return\)](#)
[The expression of Zosimus is strong and lively, sufficient to excite the contempt of the enemy.]
- 3 [\(return\)](#)
[Eos qui catholicae sectae sunt inimici, intra palatium militare pro hibemus. Nullus nobis sit aliqua ratione conjunctus, qui a nobis fidei religione discordat. Cod. Theodos. l. xvi. tit. v. leg. 42, and Godefroy's Commentary, tom. vi. p. 164. This law was applied in the utmost latitude, and rigorously executed. Zosimus, l. v. p. 364.]

In the arts of negotiation, as well as in those of war, the Gothic king maintained his superior ascendant over an enemy, whose seeming changes proceeded from the total want of counsel and design. From his camp, on the confines of Italy, Alaric attentively observed the revolutions of the palace, watched the progress of faction and discontent, disguised the hostile aspect of a Barbarian invader, and assumed the more popular appearance of the friend and ally of the great Stilicho: to whose virtues, when they were no longer formidable, he could pay a just tribute of sincere praise and regret. The pressing invitation of the malecontents, who urged the king of the Goths to invade Italy,

was enforced by a lively sense of his personal injuries; and he might especially complain, that the Imperial ministers still delayed and eluded the payment of the four thousand pounds of gold which had been granted by the Roman senate, either to reward his services, or to appease his fury. His decent firmness was supported by an artful moderation, which contributed to the success of his designs. He required a fair and reasonable satisfaction; but he gave the strongest assurances, that, as soon as he had obtained it, he would immediately retire. He refused to trust the faith of the Romans, unless Ætius and Jason, the sons of two great officers of state, were sent as hostages to his camp; but he offered to deliver, in exchange, several of the noblest youths of the Gothic nation. The modesty of Alaric was interpreted, by the ministers of Ravenna, as a sure evidence of his weakness and fear. They disdained either to negotiate a treaty, or to assemble an army; and with a rash confidence, derived only from their ignorance of the extreme danger, irretrievably wasted the decisive moments of peace and war. While they expected, in sullen silence, that the Barbarians would evacuate the confines of Italy, Alaric, with bold and rapid marches, passed the Alps and the Po; hastily pillaged the cities of Aquileia, Altinum, Concordia, and Cremona, which yielded to his arms; increased his forces by the accession of thirty thousand auxiliaries; and, without meeting a single enemy in the field, advanced as far as the edge of the morass which protected the impregnable residence of the emperor of the West. Instead of attempting the hopeless siege of Ravenna, the prudent leader of the Goths proceeded to Rimini, stretched his ravages along the sea-coast of the Hadriatic, and meditated the conquest of the ancient mistress of the world. An Italian hermit, whose zeal and sanctity were respected by the Barbarians themselves, encountered the victorious monarch, and boldly denounced the indignation of Heaven against the oppressors of the earth; but the saint himself was confounded by the solemn asseveration of Alaric, that he felt a secret and praeternatural impulse, which directed, and even compelled, his march to the gates of Rome. He felt, that his genius and his fortune were equal to the most arduous enterprises; and the enthusiasm which he communicated to the Goths, insensibly removed the popular, and almost superstitious, reverence of the nations for the majesty of the Roman name. His troops, animated by the hopes of spoil, followed the course of the Flaminian way, occupied the unguarded passes of the Apennine, [4](#) descended into the rich plains of Umbria; and, as they lay encamped on the banks of the Clitumnus, might wantonly slaughter and devour the milk-white oxen, which had been so long reserved for the use of Roman triumphs. A lofty situation, and a seasonable tempest of thunder and lightning, preserved the little city of Narni; but the king of the Goths, despising the ignoble prey, still advanced with unabated vigor; and after he had passed through the stately arches, adorned with the spoils of Barbaric victories, he pitched his camp under the walls of Rome. [6](#)

Goths were not at leisure to observe the beauties of the prospect; but they were pleased to find that the Saxa Intercisa, a narrow passage which Vespasian had cut through the rock, (Cluver. Italia Antiq. tom. i. p. 168,) was totally neglected.

*Hinc albi, Clitumne, greges, et maxima taurus
Victima, saepe tuo perfusi flumine sacro,
Romanos ad templa Deum duxere triumphos.
—Georg. ii. 147.*

Besides Virgil, most of the Latin poets, Propertius, Lucan, Silius Italicus, Claudian, &c., whose passages may be found in Cluverius and Addison, have celebrated the triumphal victims of the Clitumnus.]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Some ideas of the march of Alaric are borrowed from the journey of Honorius over the same ground. (See Claudian in vi. Cons. Hon. 494-522.) The measured distance between Ravenna and Rome was 254 Roman miles. Itinerar. Wesseling, p. 126.]

During a period of six hundred and nineteen years, the seat of empire had never been violated by the presence of a foreign enemy. The unsuccessful expedition of Hannibal [7](#) served only to display the character of the senate and people; of a senate degraded, rather than ennobled, by the comparison of an assembly of kings; and of a people, to whom the ambassador of Pyrrhus ascribed the inexhaustible resources of the Hydra. [8](#) Each of the senators, in the time of the Punic war, had accomplished his term of the military service, either in a subordinate or a superior station; and the decree, which invested with temporary command all those who had been consuls, or censors, or dictators, gave the republic the immediate assistance of many brave and experienced generals. In the beginning of the war, the Roman people consisted of two hundred and fifty thousand citizens of an age to bear arms. [9](#) Fifty thousand had already died in the defence of their country; and the twenty-three legions which were employed in the different camps of Italy, Greece, Sardinia, Sicily, and Spain, required about one hundred thousand men. But there still remained an equal number in Rome, and the adjacent territory, who were animated by the same intrepid courage; and every citizen was trained, from his earliest youth, in the discipline and exercises of a soldier. Hannibal was astonished by the constancy of the senate, who, without raising the siege of Capua, or recalling their scattered forces, expected his approach. He encamped on the banks of the Anio, at the distance of three miles from the city; and he was soon informed, that the ground on which he had pitched his tent, was sold for an adequate price at a public auction; [911](#) and that a body of troops was dismissed by an opposite road, to reenforce the legions of Spain. [10](#) He led his Africans to the gates of Rome, where he found three armies in order of battle, prepared to receive him; but Hannibal dreaded the event of a combat, from which he could not hope to escape, unless he destroyed the last of his enemies; and his speedy retreat confessed the invincible courage of the Romans.

- 7 [\(return\)](#)
[The march and retreat of Hannibal are described by Livy, l. xxvi. c. 7, 8, 9, 10, 11; and the reader is made a spectator of the interesting scene.]
- 8 [\(return\)](#)
[These comparisons were used by Cyneas, the counsellor of Pyrrhus, after his return from his embassy, in which he had diligently studied the discipline and manners of Rome. See Plutarch in Pyrrho. tom. ii. p. 459.]
- 9 [\(return\)](#)
[In the three census which were made of the Roman people, about the time of the second Punic war, the numbers stand as follows, (see Livy, Epitom. l. xx. Hist. l. xxvii. 36. xxix. 37:) 270,213, 137,108 214,000. The fall of the second, and the rise of the third, appears so enormous, that several critics, notwithstanding the unanimity of the Mss., have suspected some corruption of the text of Livy. (See Drakenborch ad xxvii. 36, and Beaufort, Republique Romaine, tom. i. p. 325.) They did not consider that the second census was taken only at Rome, and that the numbers were diminished, not only by the death, but likewise by the absence, of many soldiers. In the third census, Livy expressly affirms, that the legions were mustered by the care of particular commissaries. From the numbers on the list we must always deduct one twelfth above threescore, and incapable of bearing arms. See Population de la France, p. 72.]
- 911 [\(return\)](#)
[Compare the remarkable transaction in Jeremiah xxxii. 6, to 44, where the prophet purchases his uncle's estate at the approach of the Babylonian captivity, in his undoubting confidence in the future restoration of the people. In the one case it is the triumph of religious faith, in the other of national pride.—M.]
- 10 [\(return\)](#)
[Livy considers these two incidents as the effects only of chance and courage. I suspect that they were both managed by the admirable policy of the senate.]

From the time of the Punic war, the uninterrupted succession of senators had preserved the name and image of the republic; and the degenerate subjects of Honorius ambitiously derived their descent from the heroes who had repulsed the arms of Hannibal, and subdued the nations of the earth. The temporal honors which the devout Paula [11](#) inherited and despised, are carefully recapitulated by Jerom, the guide of her

conscience, and the historian of her life. The genealogy of her father, Rogatus, which ascended as high as Agamemnon, might seem to betray a Grecian origin; but her mother, Blaesilla, numbered the Scipios, Aemilius Paulus, and the Gracchi, in the list of her ancestors; and Toxotius, the husband of Paula, deduced his royal lineage from Aeneas, the father of the Julian line. The vanity of the rich, who desired to be noble, was gratified by these lofty pretensions. Encouraged by the applause of their parasites, they easily imposed on the credulity of the vulgar; and were countenanced, in some measure, by the custom of adopting the name of their patron, which had always prevailed among the freedmen and clients of illustrious families. Most of those families, however, attacked by so many causes of external violence or internal decay, were gradually extirpated; and it would be more reasonable to seek for a lineal descent of twenty generations, among the mountains of the Alps, or in the peaceful solitude of Apulia, than on the theatre of Rome, the seat of fortune, of danger, and of perpetual revolutions. Under each successive reign, and from every province of the empire, a crowd of hardy adventurers, rising to eminence by their talents or their vices, usurped the wealth, the honors, and the palaces of Rome; and oppressed, or protected, the poor and humble remains of consular families; who were ignorant, perhaps, of the glory of their ancestors. [12](#)

11

[\(return\)](#)

[See Jerom, tom. i. p. 169, 170, ad Eustochium; he bestows on Paula the splendid titles of Gracchorum stirps, soboles Scipionum, Pauli haeres, cujus vocabulum trahit, Martiae Papyriae Matris Africani vera et germana propago. This particular description supposes a more solid title than the surname of Julius, which Toxotius shared with a thousand families of the western provinces. See the Index of Tacitus, of Gruter's Inscriptions, &c.]

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacitus (Annal. iii. 55) affirms, that between the battle of Actium and the reign of Vespasian, the senate was gradually filled with new families from the Municipia and colonies of Italy.]

In the time of Jerom and Claudian, the senators unanimously yielded the preeminence to the Anician line; and a slight view of their history will serve to appreciate the rank and antiquity of the noble families, which contended only for the second place. [13](#) During the five first ages of the city, the name of the Anicians was unknown; they appear to have derived their origin from Praeneste; and the ambition of those new citizens was long satisfied with the Plebeian honors of tribunes of the people. [14](#) One hundred and sixty-eight years before the Christian era, the family was ennobled by the Prætorship of Anicius, who gloriously terminated the Illyrian war, by the conquest of the nation, and the captivity of their king. [15](#) From the triumph of that general, three consulships, in distant periods, mark the succession of the Anician name. [16](#) From the

reign of Diocletian to the final extinction of the Western empire, that name shone with a lustre which was not eclipsed, in the public estimation, by the majesty of the Imperial purple. [17](#) The several branches, to whom it was communicated, united, by marriage or inheritance, the wealth and titles of the Annian, the Petronian, and the Olybrian houses; and in each generation the number of consulships was multiplied by an hereditary claim. [18](#) The Anician family excelled in faith and in riches: they were the first of the Roman senate who embraced Christianity; and it is probable that Anicius Julian, who was afterwards consul and praefect of the city, atoned for his attachment to the party of Maxentius, by the readiness with which he accepted the religion of Constantine. [19](#) Their ample patrimony was increased by the industry of Probus, the chief of the Anician family; who shared with Gratian the honors of the consulship, and exercised, four times, the high office of Prætorian praefect. [20](#) His immense estates were scattered over the wide extent of the Roman world; and though the public might suspect or disapprove the methods by which they had been acquired, the generosity and magnificence of that fortunate statesman deserved the gratitude of his clients, and the admiration of strangers. [21](#) Such was the respect entertained for his memory, that the two sons of Probus, in their earliest youth, and at the request of the senate, were associated in the consular dignity; a memorable distinction, without example, in the annals of Rome. [22](#)

13

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Nec quisquam Procerum tentet (licet aere vetusto
Floreat, et claro cingatur Roma senatu)
Se jactare parem; sed prima sede relictâ
Auchenii, de jure licet certare secundo.*
—Claud. in Prob. et Olybrii Coss. 18.

Such a compliment paid to the obscure name of the Auchenii has amazed the critics; but they all agree, that whatever may be the true reading, the sense of Claudian can be applied only to the Anician family.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[The earliest date in the annals of Pighius, is that of M. Anicius Gallus. Trib. Pl. A. U. C. 506. Another tribune, Q. Anicius, A. U. C. 508, is distinguished by the epithet of Praenestinus. Livy (xlv. 43) places the Anicii below the great families of Rome.]

15

[\(return\)](#)

[Livy, xlv. 30, 31, xlv. 3, 26, 43. He fairly appreciates the merit of Anicius, and justly observes, that his fame was clouded by the superior lustre of the Macedonian, which preceded the Illyrian triumph.]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[The dates of the three consulships are, A. U. C. 593, 818, 967 the two last under the reigns of Nero

and Caracalla. The second of these consuls distinguished himself only by his infamous flattery, (Tacit. Annal. xv. 74;) but even the evidence of crimes, if they bear the stamp of greatness and antiquity, is admitted, without reluctance, to prove the genealogy of a noble house.]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[In the sixth century, the nobility of the Anician name is mentioned (Cassiodor. Variar. l. x. Ep. 10, 12) with singular respect by the minister of a Gothic king of Italy.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[

*Fixus in omnes
Cognatos procedit honos; quemcumque requiras
Hac de stirpe virum, certum est de Consule
nasci. Per fasces numerantur Avi, semperque
renata Nobilitate virent, et prolem fata sequuntur.*

(Claudian in Prob. et Olyb. Consulat. 12, &c.) The Annii, whose name seems to have merged in the Anician, mark the Fasti with many consulships, from the time of Vespasian to the fourth century.]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[The title of first Christian senator may be justified by the authority of Prudentius (in Symmach. i. 553) and the dislike of the Pagans to the Anician family. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 183, v. p. 44. Baron. Annal. A.D. 312, No. 78, A.D. 322, No. 2.]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[Probus... claritudine generis et potentia et opum magnitudine, cognitus Orbi Romano, per quem universum poene patrimonia sparsa possedit, juste an secus non judicioli est nostri. Ammian Marcellin. xxvii. 11. His children and widow erected for him a magnificent tomb in the Vatican, which was demolished in the time of Pope Nicholas V. to make room for the new church of St. Peter Baronius, who laments the ruin of this Christian monument, has diligently preserved the inscriptions and basso-relievos. See Annal. Eccles. A.D. 395, No. 5-17.]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[Two Persian satraps travelled to Milan and Rome, to hear St. Ambrose, and to see Probus, (Paulin. in Vit. Ambros.) Claudian (in Cons. Probin. et Olybr. 30-60) seems at a loss how to express the glory of Probus.]

[See the poem which Claudian addressed to the two noble youths.]

Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part II.

“The marbles of the Anician palace,” were used as a proverbial expression of opulence and splendor; [23](#) but the nobles and senators of Rome aspired, in due gradation, to imitate that illustrious family. The accurate description of the city, which was composed in the Theodosian age, enumerates one thousand seven hundred and eighty houses, the residence of wealthy and honorable citizens. [24](#) Many of these stately mansions might almost excuse the exaggeration of the poet; that Rome contained a multitude of palaces, and that each palace was equal to a city: since it included within its own precincts every thing which could be subservient either to use or luxury; markets, hippodromes, temples, fountains, baths, porticos, shady groves, and artificial aviaries. [25](#) The historian Olympiodorus, who represents the state of Rome when it was besieged by the Goths, [26](#) continues to observe, that several of the richest senators received from their estates an annual income of four thousand pounds of gold, above one hundred and sixty thousand pounds sterling; without computing the stated provision of corn and wine, which, had they been sold, might have equalled in value one third of the money. Compared to this immoderate wealth, an ordinary revenue of a thousand or fifteen hundred pounds of gold might be considered as no more than adequate to the dignity of the senatorian rank, which required many expenses of a public and ostentatious kind. Several examples are recorded, in the age of Honorius, of vain and popular nobles, who celebrated the year of their praetorship by a festival, which lasted seven days, and cost above one hundred thousand pounds sterling. [27](#) The estates of the Roman senators, which so far exceeded the proportion of modern wealth, were not confined to the limits of Italy. Their possessions extended far beyond the Ionian and Aegean Seas, to the most distant provinces: the city of Nicopolis, which Augustus had founded as an eternal monument of the Actian victory, was the property of the devout Paula; [28](#) and it is observed by Seneca, that the rivers, which had divided hostile nations, now flowed through the lands of private citizens. [29](#) According to their temper and circumstances, the estates of the Romans were either cultivated by the labor of their slaves, or granted, for a certain and stipulated rent, to the industrious farmer. The economical writers of antiquity strenuously recommend the former method, wherever it may be practicable; but if the object should be removed, by its distance or magnitude, from the immediate eye of the master, they prefer the active care of an old hereditary tenant, attached to the soil, and interested in the produce, to the mercenary administration of a negligent, perhaps an unfaithful, steward. [30](#)

- 23 [\(return\)](#)
[Secundinus, the Manichaeon, ap. Baron. Annal. Eccles. A.D. 390, No. 34.]
- 24 [\(return\)](#)
[See Nardini, Roma Antica, p. 89, 498, 500.]
- 25 [\(return\)](#)
[
*Quid loquar inclusas inter laquearia sylvas;
Vernula queis vario carmine ludit avis.*
Claud. Rutil. Numatian. Itinerar. ver. 111. The poet lived at the time of the Gothic invasion. A moderate palace would have covered Cincinnatus's farm of four acres (Val. Max. iv. 4.) In laxitatem ruris excurrunt, says Seneca, Epist. 114. See a judicious note of Mr. Hume, Essays, vol. i. p. 562, last 8vo edition.]
- 26 [\(return\)](#)
[This curious account of Rome, in the reign of Honorius, is found in a fragment of the historian Olympiodorus, ap. Photium, p. 197.]
- 27 [\(return\)](#)
[The sons of Alypius, of Symmachus, and of Maximus, spent, during their respective praetorships, twelve, or twenty, or forty, centenaries, (or hundred weight of gold.) See Olympiodor. ap. Phot. p. 197. This popular estimation allows some latitude; but it is difficult to explain a law in the Theodosian Code, (l. vi. leg. 5,) which fixes the expense of the first praetor at 25,000, of the second at 20,000, and of the third at 15,000 folles. The name of follis (see Mem. de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii. p. 727) was equally applied to a purse of 125 pieces of silver, and to a small copper coin of the value of 1/2625 part of that purse. In the former sense, the 25,000 folles would be equal to 150,000 L.; in the latter, to five or six pounds sterling. The one appears extravagant, the other is ridiculous. There must have existed some third and middle value, which is here understood; but ambiguity is an excusable fault in the language of laws.]
- 28 [\(return\)](#)
[Nicopolis..... in Actiaco littore sita possessoris vestra nunc pars vel maxima est. Jerom. in Praefat. Comment. ad Epistol. ad Titum, tom. ix. p. 243. M. D. Tillemont supposes, strangely enough, that it was part of Agamemnon's inheritance. Mem. Eccles. tom. xii. p. 85.]
- 29 [\(return\)](#)
[Seneca, Epist. lxxxix. His language is of the

declamatory kind: but declamation could scarcely exaggerate the avarice and luxury of the Romans. The philosopher himself deserved some share of the reproach, if it be true that his rigorous exaction of Quadringenties, above three hundred thousand pounds which he had lent at high interest, provoked a rebellion in Britain, (Dion Cassius, l. lxii. p. 1003.) According to the conjecture of Gale (Antoninus's Itinerary in Britain, p. 92,) the same Faustinus possessed an estate near Bury, in Suffolk and another in the kingdom of Naples.]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[Volusius, a wealthy senator, (Tacit. Annal. iii. 30,) always preferred tenants born on the estate. Columella, who received this maxim from him, argues very judiciously on the subject. De Re Rustica, l. i. c. 7, p. 408, edit. Gesner. Leipsig, 1735.]

The opulent nobles of an immense capital, who were never excited by the pursuit of military glory, and seldom engaged in the occupations of civil government, naturally resigned their leisure to the business and amusements of private life. At Rome, commerce was always held in contempt: but the senators, from the first age of the republic, increased their patrimony, and multiplied their clients, by the lucrative practice of usury; and the obsolete laws were eluded, or violated, by the mutual inclinations and interest of both parties. [31](#) A considerable mass of treasure must always have existed at Rome, either in the current coin of the empire, or in the form of gold and silver plate; and there were many sideboards in the time of Pliny which contained more solid silver, than had been transported by Scipio from vanquished Carthage. [32](#) The greater part of the nobles, who dissipated their fortunes in profuse luxury, found themselves poor in the midst of wealth, and idle in a constant round of dissipation. Their desires were continually gratified by the labor of a thousand hands; of the numerous train of their domestic slaves, who were actuated by the fear of punishment; and of the various professions of artificers and merchants, who were more powerfully impelled by the hopes of gain. The ancients were destitute of many of the conveniences of life, which have been invented or improved by the progress of industry; and the plenty of glass and linen has diffused more real comforts among the modern nations of Europe, than the senators of Rome could derive from all the refinements of pompous or sensual luxury. [33](#) Their luxury, and their manners, have been the subject of minute and laborious disposition: but as such inquiries would divert me too long from the design of the present work, I shall produce an authentic state of Rome and its inhabitants, which is more peculiarly applicable to the period of the Gothic invasion. Ammianus Marcellinus, who prudently chose the capital of the empire as the residence the best adapted to the historian of his own times, has mixed with the narrative of public events a lively representation of the scenes with which he was familiarly conversant.

The judicious reader will not always approve of the asperity of censure, the choice of circumstances, or the style of expression; he will perhaps detect the latent prejudices, and personal resentments, which soured the temper of Ammianus himself; but he will surely observe, with philosophic curiosity, the interesting and original picture of the manners of Rome. [34](#)

31

[\(return\)](#)

[Valesius (ad Ammian. xiv. 6) has proved, from Chrysostom and Augustin, that the senators were not allowed to lend money at usury. Yet it appears from the Theodosian Code, (see Godefroy ad l. ii. tit. xxxiii. tom. i. p. 230-289,) that they were permitted to take six percent., or one half of the legal interest; and, what is more singular, this permission was granted to the young senators.]

32

[\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiii. 50. He states the silver at only 4380 pounds, which is increased by Livy (xxx. 45) to 100,023: the former seems too little for an opulent city, the latter too much for any private sideboard.]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[The learned Arbuthnot (Tables of Ancient Coins, &c. p. 153) has observed with humor, and I believe with truth, that Augustus had neither glass to his windows, nor a shirt to his back. Under the lower empire, the use of linen and glass became somewhat more common. * Note: The discovery of glass in such common use at Pompeii, spoils the argument of Arbuthnot. See Sir W. Gell. Pompeiana, 2d ser. p. 98.—M.]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[It is incumbent on me to explain the liberties which I have taken with the text of Ammianus. 1. I have melted down into one piece the sixth chapter of the fourteenth and the fourth of the twenty-eighth book. 2. I have given order and connection to the confused mass of materials. 3. I have softened some extravagant hyperbeles, and pared away some superfluities of the original. 4. I have developed some observations which were insinuated rather than expressed. With these allowances, my version will be found, not literal indeed, but faithful and exact.]

“The greatness of Rome”—such is the language of the historian—“was founded on the rare, and almost incredible, alliance of virtue and of fortune. The long period of her infancy was employed in a laborious struggle against the tribes of Italy, the neighbors and enemies of the rising city. In the strength and ardor of youth, she sustained the

storms of war; carried her victorious arms beyond the seas and the mountains; and brought home triumphal laurels from every country of the globe. At length, verging towards old age, and sometimes conquering by the terror only of her name, she sought the blessings of ease and tranquillity. The venerable city, which had trampled on the necks of the fiercest nations, and established a system of laws, the perpetual guardians of justice and freedom, was content, like a wise and wealthy parent, to devolve on the Caesars, her favorite sons, the care of governing her ample patrimony. [35](#) A secure and profound peace, such as had been once enjoyed in the reign of Numa, succeeded to the tumults of a republic; while Rome was still adored as the queen of the earth; and the subject nations still revered the name of the people, and the majesty of the senate. But this native splendor," continues Ammianus, "is degraded, and sullied, by the conduct of some nobles, who, unmindful of their own dignity, and of that of their country, assume an unbounded license of vice and folly. They contend with each other in the empty vanity of titles and surnames; and curiously select, or invent, the most lofty and sonorous appellations, Reburus, or Fabunius, Pagonius, or Tarasius, [36](#) which may impress the ears of the vulgar with astonishment and respect. From a vain ambition of perpetuating their memory, they affect to multiply their likeness, in statues of bronze and marble; nor are they satisfied, unless those statues are covered with plates of gold; an honorable distinction, first granted to Acilius the consul, after he had subdued, by his arms and counsels, the power of King Antiochus. The ostentation of displaying, of magnifying, perhaps, the rent-roll of the estates which they possess in all the provinces, from the rising to the setting sun, provokes the just resentment of every man, who recollects, that their poor and invincible ancestors were not distinguished from the meanest of the soldiers, by the delicacy of their food, or the splendor of their apparel. But the modern nobles measure their rank and consequence according to the loftiness of their chariots, [37](#) and the weighty magnificence of their dress. Their long robes of silk and purple float in the wind; and as they are agitated, by art or accident, they occasionally discover the under garments, the rich tunics, embroidered with the figures of various animals. [38](#) Followed by a train of fifty servants, and tearing up the pavement, they move along the streets with the same impetuous speed as if they travelled with post-horses; and the example of the senators is boldly imitated by the matrons and ladies, whose covered carriages are continually driving round the immense space of the city and suburbs. Whenever these persons of high distinction condescend to visit the public baths, they assume, on their entrance, a tone of loud and insolent command, and appropriate to their own use the conveniences which were designed for the Roman people. If, in these places of mixed and general resort, they meet any of the infamous ministers of their pleasures, they express their affection by a tender embrace; while they proudly decline the salutations of their fellow-citizens, who are not permitted to aspire above the honor of kissing their hands, or their knees. As soon as they have indulged themselves in the refreshment of the bath, they resume their rings, and the other ensigns of their dignity, select from their private wardrobe of the finest linen, such

as might suffice for a dozen persons, the garments the most agreeable to their fancy, and maintain till their departure the same haughty demeanor; which perhaps might have been excused in the great Marcellus, after the conquest of Syracuse. Sometimes, indeed, these heroes undertake more arduous achievements; they visit their estates in Italy, and procure themselves, by the toil of servile hands, the amusements of the chase. [39](#) If at any time, but more especially on a hot day, they have courage to sail, in their painted galleys, from the Lucrine Lake [40](#) to their elegant villas on the seacoast of Puteoli and Cayeta, [41](#) they compare their own expeditions to the marches of Caesar and Alexander. Yet should a fly presume to settle on the silken folds of their gilded umbrellas; should a sunbeam penetrate through some unguarded and imperceptible chink, they deplore their intolerable hardships, and lament, in affected language, that they were not born in the land of the Cimmerians, [42](#) the regions of eternal darkness. In these journeys into the country, [43](#) the whole body of the household marches with their master. In the same manner as the cavalry and infantry, the heavy and the light armed troops, the advanced guard and the rear, are marshalled by the skill of their military leaders; so the domestic officers, who bear a rod, as an ensign of authority, distribute and arrange the numerous train of slaves and attendants. The baggage and wardrobe move in the front; and are immediately followed by a multitude of cooks, and inferior ministers, employed in the service of the kitchens, and of the table. The main body is composed of a promiscuous crowd of slaves, increased by the accidental concourse of idle or dependent plebeians. The rear is closed by the favorite band of eunuchs, distributed from age to youth, according to the order of seniority. Their numbers and their deformity excite the horror of the indignant spectators, who are ready to execrate the memory of Semiramis, for the cruel art which she invented, of frustrating the purposes of nature, and of blasting in the bud the hopes of future generations. In the exercise of domestic jurisdiction, the nobles of Rome express an exquisite sensibility for any personal injury, and a contemptuous indifference for the rest of the human species. When they have called for warm water, if a slave has been tardy in his obedience, he is instantly chastised with three hundred lashes: but should the same slave commit a wilful murder, the master will mildly observe, that he is a worthless fellow; but that, if he repeats the offence, he shall not escape punishment. Hospitality was formerly the virtue of the Romans; and every stranger, who could plead either merit or misfortune, was relieved, or rewarded by their generosity. At present, if a foreigner, perhaps of no contemptible rank, is introduced to one of the proud and wealthy senators, he is welcomed indeed in the first audience, with such warm professions, and such kind inquiries, that he retires, enchanted with the affability of his illustrious friend, and full of regret that he had so long delayed his journey to Rome, the active seat of manners, as well as of empire. Secure of a favorable reception, he repeats his visit the ensuing day, and is mortified by the discovery, that his person, his name, and his country, are already forgotten. If he still has resolution to persevere, he is gradually numbered in the train of dependants, and obtains the permission to pay his assiduous and unprofitable court to a haughty patron, incapable

of gratitude or friendship; who scarcely deigns to remark his presence, his departure, or his return. Whenever the rich prepare a solemn and popular entertainment; [44](#) whenever they celebrate, with profuse and pernicious luxury, their private banquets; the choice of the guests is the subject of anxious deliberation. The modest, the sober, and the learned, are seldom preferred; and the nomenclators, who are commonly swayed by interested motives, have the address to insert, in the list of invitations, the obscure names of the most worthless of mankind. But the frequent and familiar companions of the great, are those parasites, who practise the most useful of all arts, the art of flattery; who eagerly applaud each word, and every action, of their immortal patron; gaze with rapture on his marble columns and variegated pavements; and strenuously praise the pomp and elegance which he is taught to consider as a part of his personal merit. At the Roman tables, the birds, the squirrels, [45](#) or the fish, which appear of an uncommon size, are contemplated with curious attention; a pair of scales is accurately applied, to ascertain their real weight; and, while the more rational guests are disgusted by the vain and tedious repetition, notaries are summoned to attest, by an authentic record, the truth of such a marvelous event. Another method of introduction into the houses and society of the great, is derived from the profession of gaming, or, as it is more politely styled, of play. The confederates are united by a strict and indissoluble bond of friendship, or rather of conspiracy; a superior degree of skill in the Tesserarian art (which may be interpreted the game of dice and tables) [46](#) is a sure road to wealth and reputation. A master of that sublime science, who in a supper, or assembly, is placed below a magistrate, displays in his countenance the surprise and indignation which Cato might be supposed to feel, when he was refused the praetorship by the votes of a capricious people. The acquisition of knowledge seldom engages the curiosity of nobles, who abhor the fatigue, and disdain the advantages, of study; and the only books which they peruse are the Satires of Juvenal, and the verbose and fabulous histories of Marius Maximus. [47](#) The libraries, which they have inherited from their fathers, are secluded, like dreary sepulchres, from the light of day. [48](#) But the costly instruments of the theatre, flutes, and enormous lyres, and hydraulic organs, are constructed for their use; and the harmony of vocal and instrumental music is incessantly repeated in the palaces of Rome. In those palaces, sound is preferred to sense, and the care of the body to that of the mind.”

It is allowed as a salutary maxim, that the light and frivolous suspicion of a contagious malady, is of sufficient weight to excuse the visits of the most intimate friends; and even the servants, who are despatched to make the decent inquiries, are not suffered to return home, till they have undergone the ceremony of a previous ablution. Yet this selfish and unmanly delicacy occasionally yields to the more imperious passion of avarice. The prospect of gain will urge a rich and gouty senator as far as Spoleto; every sentiment of arrogance and dignity is subdued by the hopes of an inheritance, or even of a legacy; and a wealthy childless citizen is the most powerful of the Romans. The art of obtaining the signature of a favorable testament, and sometimes of hastening the

moment of its execution, is perfectly understood; and it has happened, that in the same house, though in different apartments, a husband and a wife, with the laudable design of overreaching each other, have summoned their respective lawyers, to declare, at the same time, their mutual, but contradictory, intentions. The distress which follows and chastises extravagant luxury, often reduces the great to the use of the most humiliating expedients. When they desire to borrow, they employ the base and supplicating style of the slave in the comedy; but when they are called upon to pay, they assume the royal and tragic declamation of the grandsons of Hercules. If the demand is repeated, they readily procure some trusty sycophant, instructed to maintain a charge of poison, or magic, against the insolent creditor; who is seldom released from prison, till he has signed a discharge of the whole debt. These vices, which degrade the moral character of the Romans, are mixed with a puerile superstition, that disgraces their understanding. They listen with confidence to the predictions of haruspices, who pretend to read, in the entrails of victims, the signs of future greatness and prosperity; and there are many who do not presume either to bathe, or to dine, or to appear in public, till they have diligently consulted, according to the rules of astrology, the situation of Mercury, and the aspect of the moon. [49](#) It is singular enough, that this vain credulity may often be discovered among the profane sceptics, who impiously doubt, or deny, the existence of a celestial power.”

35

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian, who seems to have read the history of Ammianus, speaks of this great revolution in a much less courtly style:—

*Postquam jura ferox in se communia Caesar
Transtulit; et lapsi mores; desuetaque priscis
Artibus, in gremium pacis servile recessi.
—De Be. Gildonico, p. 49.]*

36

[\(return\)](#)

[The minute diligence of antiquarians has not been able to verify these extraordinary names. I am of opinion that they were invented by the historian himself, who was afraid of any personal satire or application. It is certain, however, that the simple denominations of the Romans were gradually lengthened to the number of four, five, or even seven, pompous surnames; as, for instance, Marcus Maecius Maemmius Furius Balburius Caecilianus Placidus. See Noris Cenotaph Piran Dissert. iv. p. 438.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[The or coaches of the romans, were often of solid silver, curiously carved and engraved; and the trappings of the mules, or horses, were embossed with gold. This magnificence continued from the reign of Nero to that of Honorius; and the Appian way was covered with the splendid equipages of the

nobles, who came out to meet St. Melania, when she returned to Rome, six years before the Gothic siege, (Seneca, epist. lxxxvii. Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiii. 49. Paulin. Nolan. apud Baron. Annal. Eccles. A.D. 397, No. 5.) Yet pomp is well exchange for convenience; and a plain modern coach, that is hung upon springs, is much preferable to the silver or gold carts of antiquity, which rolled on the axle-tree, and were exposed, for the most part, to the inclemency of the weather.]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[In a homily of Asterius, bishop of Amasia, M. de Valois has discovered (ad Ammian. xiv. 6) that this was a new fashion; that bears, wolves lions, and tigers, woods, hunting-matches, &c., were represented in embroidery: and that the more pious coxcombs substituted the figure or legend of some favorite saint.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[See Pliny's Epistles, i. 6. Three large wild boars were allured and taken in the toils without interrupting the studies of the philosophic sportsman.]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[The change from the inauspicious word Avernus, which stands in the text, is immaterial. The two lakes, Avernus and Lucrinus, communicated with each other, and were fashioned by the stupendous moles of Agrippa into the Julian port, which opened, through a narrow entrance, into the Gulf of Puteoli. Virgil, who resided on the spot, has described (Georgic ii. 161) this work at the moment of its execution: and his commentators, especially Catrou, have derived much light from Strabo, Suetonius, and Dion. Earthquakes and volcanoes have changed the face of the country, and turned the Lucrine Lake, since the year 1538, into the Monte Nuovo. See Camillo Pellegrino Discorsi della Campania Felice, p. 239, 244, &c. Antonii Sanfelicii Campania, p. 13, 88—Note: Compare Lyell's Geology, ii. 72.—M.]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[The regna Cumana et Puteolana; loca caetiroqui valde expe tenda, interpellantium autem multitudine paene fugienda. Cicero ad Attic. xvi. 17.]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[The proverbial expression of Cimmerian darkness was originally borrowed from the description of Homer, (in the eleventh book of the Odyssey,)

which he applies to a remote and fabulous country on the shores of the ocean. See Erasmi Adagia, in his works, tom. ii. p. 593, the Leyden edition.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[We may learn from Seneca (epist. cxxiii.) three curious circumstances relative to the journeys of the Romans. 1. They were preceded by a troop of Numidian light horse, who announced, by a cloud of dust, the approach of a great man. 2. Their baggage mules transported not only the precious vases, but even the fragile vessels of crystal and murra, which last is almost proved, by the learned French translator of Seneca, (tom. iii. p. 402-422,) to mean the porcelain of China and Japan. 3. The beautiful faces of the young slaves were covered with a medicated crust, or ointment, which secured them against the effects of the sun and frost.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[Distributio solemnium sportularum. The sportuloe, or sportelloe, were small baskets, supposed to contain a quantity of hot provisions of the value of 100 quadrantes, or twelvepence halfpenny, which were ranged in order in the hall, and ostentatiously distributed to the hungry or servile crowd who waited at the door. This indelicate custom is very frequently mentioned in the epigrams of Martial, and the satires of Juvenal. See likewise Suetonius, in Claud. c. 21, in Neron. c. 16, in Domitian, c. 4, 7. These baskets of provisions were afterwards converted into large pieces of gold and silver coin, or plate, which were mutually given and accepted even by persons of the highest rank, (see Symmach. epist. iv. 55, ix. 124, and Miscell. p. 256,) on solemn occasions, of consulships, marriages, &c.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[The want of an English name obliges me to refer to the common genus of squirrels, the Latin glis, the French loir; a little animal, who inhabits the woods, and remains torpid in cold weather, (see Plin. Hist. Natur. viii. 82. Buffon, Hist. Naturelle, tom. viii. 153. Pennant's Synopsis of Quadrupeds, p. 289.) The art of rearing and fattening great numbers of glires was practised in Roman villas as a profitable article of rural economy, (Varro, de Re Rustica, iii. 15.) The excessive demand of them for luxurious tables was increased by the foolish prohibitions of the censors; and it is reported that they are still esteemed in modern Rome, and are frequently sent as presents by the Colonna princes, (see Brotier, the

last editor of Pliny tom. ii. p. 453. epud Barbou, 1779.)—Note: Is it not the dormouse?—M.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[This game, which might be translated by the more familiar names of trictrac, or backgammon, was a favorite amusement of the gravest Romans; and old Mucius Scaevola, the lawyer, had the reputation of a very skilful player. It was called ludus duodecim scriptorum, from the twelve scripta, or lines, which equally divided the alveolus or table. On these, the two armies, the white and the black, each consisting of fifteen men, or catculi, were regularly placed, and alternately moved according to the laws of the game, and the chances of the tesseræ, or dice. Dr. Hyde, who diligently traces the history and varieties of the nerdiludium (a name of Persic etymology) from Ireland to Japan, pours forth, on this trifling subject, a copious torrent of classic and Oriental learning. See Syntagma Dissertat. tom. ii. p. 217-405.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[Marius Maximus, homo omnium verbosissimus, qui, et mythistoricis se voluminibus implicavit. Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 242. He wrote the lives of the emperors, from Trajan to Alexander Severus. See Gerard Vossius de Historicis Latin. l. ii. c. 3, in his works, vol. iv. p. 47.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[This satire is probably exaggerated. The Saturnalia of Macrobius, and the epistles of Jerom, afford satisfactory proofs, that Christian theology and classic literature were studiously cultivated by several Romans, of both sexes, and of the highest rank.]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Macrobius, the friend of these Roman nobles, considered the siara as the cause, or at least the signs, of future events, (de Somn. Scipion l. i. c 19. p. 68.)]

Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part III.

In populous cities, which are the seat of commerce and manufactures, the middle ranks of inhabitants, who derive their subsistence from the dexterity or labor of their hands, are commonly the most prolific, the most useful, and, in that sense, the most respectable part of the community. But the plebeians of Rome, who disdained such

sedentary and servile arts, had been oppressed from the earliest times by the weight of debt and usury; and the husbandman, during the term of his military service, was obliged to abandon the cultivation of his farm. [50](#) The lands of Italy which had been originally divided among the families of free and indigent proprietors, were insensibly purchased or usurped by the avarice of the nobles; and in the age which preceded the fall of the republic, it was computed that only two thousand citizens were possessed of an independent substance. [51](#) Yet as long as the people bestowed, by their suffrages, the honors of the state, the command of the legions, and the administration of wealthy provinces, their conscious pride alleviated in some measure, the hardships of poverty; and their wants were seasonably supplied by the ambitious liberality of the candidates, who aspired to secure a venal majority in the thirty-five tribes, or the hundred and ninety-three centuries, of Rome. But when the prodigal commons had not only imprudently alienated the use, but the inheritance of power, they sunk, under the reign of the Caesars, into a vile and wretched populace, which must, in a few generations, have been totally extinguished, if it had not been continually recruited by the manumission of slaves, and the influx of strangers. As early as the time of Hadrian, it was the just complaint of the ingenuous natives, that the capital had attracted the vices of the universe, and the manners of the most opposite nations. The intemperance of the Gauls, the cunning and levity of the Greeks, the savage obstinacy of the Egyptians and Jews, the servile temper of the Asiatics, and the dissolute, effeminate prostitution of the Syrians, were mingled in the various multitude, which, under the proud and false denomination of Romans, presumed to despise their fellow-subjects, and even their sovereigns, who dwelt beyond the precincts of the Eternal City. [52](#)

50

[\(return\)](#)

[The histories of Livy (see particularly vi. 36) are full of the extortions of the rich, and the sufferings of the poor debtors. The melancholy story of a brave old soldier (Dionys. Hal. l. vi. c. 26, p. 347, edit. Hudson, and Livy, ii. 23) must have been frequently repeated in those primitive times, which have been so undeservedly praised.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Non esse in civitate duo millia hominum qui rem haberent. Cicero. Offic. ii. 21, and Comment. Paul. Manut. in edit. Graev. This vague computation was made A. U. C. 649, in a speech of the tribune Philippus, and it was his object, as well as that of the Gracchi, (see Plutarch,) to deplore, and perhaps to exaggerate, the misery of the common people.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[See the third Satire (60-125) of Juvenal, who indignantly complains,

*Quamvis quota portio faecis Achaei!
Jampridem Syrus in Tiberem defluxit Orontes;
Et linguam et mores, &c.*

Seneca, when he proposes to comfort his mother (Consolat. ad Helv. c. 6) by the reflection, that a great part of mankind were in a state of exile, reminds her how few of the inhabitants of Rome were born in the city.]

Yet the name of that city was still pronounced with respect: the frequent and capricious tumults of its inhabitants were indulged with impunity; and the successors of Constantine, instead of crushing the last remains of the democracy by the strong arm of military power, embraced the mild policy of Augustus, and studied to relieve the poverty, and to amuse the idleness, of an innumerable people. [53](#) I. For the convenience of the lazy plebeians, the monthly distributions of corn were converted into a daily allowance of bread; a great number of ovens were constructed and maintained at the public expense; and at the appointed hour, each citizen, who was furnished with a ticket, ascended the flight of steps, which had been assigned to his peculiar quarter or division, and received, either as a gift, or at a very low price, a loaf of bread of the weight of three pounds, for the use of his family. II. The forest of Lucania, whose acorns fattened large droves of wild hogs, [54](#) afforded, as a species of tribute, a plentiful supply of cheap and wholesome meat. During five months of the year, a regular allowance of bacon was distributed to the poorer citizens; and the annual consumption of the capital, at a time when it was much declined from its former lustre, was ascertained, by an edict from Valentinian the Third, at three millions six hundred and twenty-eight thousand pounds. [55](#) III. In the manners of antiquity, the use of oil was indispensable for the lamp, as well as for the bath; and the annual tax, which was imposed on Africa for the benefit of Rome, amounted to the weight of three millions of pounds, to the measure, perhaps, of three hundred thousand English gallons. IV. The anxiety of Augustus to provide the metropolis with sufficient plenty of corn, was not extended beyond that necessary article of human subsistence; and when the popular clamor accused the dearness and scarcity of wine, a proclamation was issued, by the grave reformer, to remind his subjects that no man could reasonably complain of thirst, since the aqueducts of Agrippa had introduced into the city so many copious streams of pure and salubrious water. [56](#) This rigid sobriety was insensibly relaxed; and, although the generous design of Aurelian [57](#) does not appear to have been executed in its full extent, the use of wine was allowed on very easy and liberal terms. The administration of the public cellars was delegated to a magistrate of honorable rank; and a considerable part of the vintage of Campania was reserved for the fortunate inhabitants of Rome.

[Almost all that is said of the bread, bacon, oil, wine, &c., may be found in the fourteenth book of the Theodosian Code; which expressly treats of the police of the great cities. See particularly the titles iii. iv. xv. xvi. xvii. xxiv. The collateral testimonies are produced in Godefroy's Commentary, and it is needless to transcribe them. According to a law of

Theodosius, which appreciates in money the military allowance, a piece of gold (eleven shillings) was equivalent to eighty pounds of bacon, or to eighty pounds of oil, or to twelve modii (or pecks) of salt, (Cod. Theod. l. viii. tit. iv. leg. 17.) This equation, compared with another of seventy pounds of bacon for an amphora, (Cod. Theod. l. xiv. tit. iv. leg. 4,) fixes the price of wine at about sixteenpence the gallon.]

54 [\(return\)](#)

[The anonymous author of the Description of the World (p. 14. in tom. iii. Geograph. Minor. Hudson) observes of Lucania, in his barbarous Latin, Regio optima, et ipsa omnibus habundans, et lardum multum foras. Proptor quod est in montibus, cujus aescam animalium rariam, &c.]

55 [\(return\)](#)

[See Novell. ad calcem Cod. Theod. D. Valent. l. i. tit. xv. This law was published at Rome, June 29th, A.D. 452.]

56 [\(return\)](#)

[Sueton. in August. c. 42. The utmost debauch of the emperor himself, in his favorite wine of Rhaetia, never exceeded a sextarius, (an English pint.) Id. c. 77. Torrentius ad loc. and Arbuthnot's Tables, p. 86.]

57 [\(return\)](#)

[His design was to plant vineyards along the sea-coast of Hetruria, (Vopiscus, in Hist. August. p. 225;) the dreary, unwholesome, uncultivated Maremme of modern Tuscany]

The stupendous aqueducts, so justly celebrated by the praises of Augustus himself, replenished the Thermoe, or baths, which had been constructed in every part of the city, with Imperial magnificence. The baths of Antoninus Caracalla, which were open, at stated hours, for the indiscriminate service of the senators and the people, contained above sixteen hundred seats of marble; and more than three thousand were reckoned in the baths of Diocletian. [58](#) The walls of the lofty apartments were covered with curious mosaics, that imitated the art of the pencil in the elegance of design, and the variety of colors. The Egyptian granite was beautifully encrusted with the precious green marble of Numidia; the perpetual stream of hot water was poured into the capacious basins, through so many wide mouths of bright and massy silver; and the meanest Roman could purchase, with a small copper coin, the daily enjoyment of a scene of pomp and luxury, which might excite the envy of the kings of Asia. [59](#) From these stately palaces issued a swarm of dirty and ragged plebeians, without shoes and without a mantle; who loitered away whole days in the street of Forum, to hear news and to hold disputes; who dissipated in extravagant gaming, the miserable pittance of their wives and children;

and spent the hours of the night in the obscure taverns, and brothels, in the indulgence of gross and vulgar sensuality. [60](#)

58

[\(return\)](#)

[Olympiodor. apud Phot. p. 197.]

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Seneca (epistol. lxxxvi.) compares the baths of Scipio Africanus, at his villa of Liternum, with the magnificence (which was continually increasing) of the public baths of Rome, long before the stately Thermae of Antoninus and Diocletian were erected. The quadrans paid for admission was the quarter of the as, about one eighth of an English penny.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[Ammianus, (l. xiv. c. 6, and l. xxviii. c. 4,) after describing the luxury and pride of the nobles of Rome, exposes, with equal indignation, the vices and follies of the common people.]

But the most lively and splendid amusement of the idle multitude, depended on the frequent exhibition of public games and spectacles. The piety of Christian princes had suppressed the inhuman combats of gladiators; but the Roman people still considered the Circus as their home, their temple, and the seat of the republic. The impatient crowd rushed at the dawn of day to secure their places, and there were many who passed a sleepless and anxious night in the adjacent porticos. From the morning to the evening, careless of the sun, or of the rain, the spectators, who sometimes amounted to the number of four hundred thousand, remained in eager attention; their eyes fixed on the horses and charioteers, their minds agitated with hope and fear, for the success of the colors which they espoused: and the happiness of Rome appeared to hang on the event of a race. [61](#) The same immoderate ardor inspired their clamors and their applause, as often as they were entertained with the hunting of wild beasts, and the various modes of theatrical representation. These representations in modern capitals may deserve to be considered as a pure and elegant school of taste, and perhaps of virtue. But the Tragic and Comic Muse of the Romans, who seldom aspired beyond the imitation of Attic genius, [62](#) had been almost totally silent since the fall of the republic; [63](#) and their place was unworthily occupied by licentious farce, effeminate music, and splendid pageantry. The pantomimes, [64](#) who maintained their reputation from the age of Augustus to the sixth century, expressed, without the use of words, the various fables of the gods and heroes of antiquity; and the perfection of their art, which sometimes disarmed the gravity of the philosopher, always excited the applause and wonder of the people. The vast and magnificent theatres of Rome were filled by three thousand female dancers, and by three thousand singers, with the masters of the respective choruses. Such was the popular favor which they enjoyed, that, in a time of scarcity, when all strangers were banished from the city, the merit of contributing to the public pleasures exempted them from a law, which was strictly executed against the professors of the liberal arts. [65](#)

- 61 [\(return\)](#)
[Juvenal. Satir. xi. 191, &c. The expressions of the historian Ammianus are not less strong and animated than those of the satirist and both the one and the other painted from the life. The numbers which the great Circus was capable of receiving are taken from the original Notitioe of the city. The differences between them prove that they did not transcribe each other; but the same may appear incredible, though the country on these occasions flocked to the city.]
- 62 [\(return\)](#)
[Sometimes indeed they composed original pieces.
Vestigia Graeca
Ausi deserere et celeb rare domestica facta.
Horat. Epistol. ad Pisones, 285, and the learned, though perplexed note of Dacier, who might have allowed the name of tragedies to the Brutus and the Decius of Pacuvius, or to the Cato of Maternus. The Octavia, ascribed to one of the Senecas, still remains a very unfavorable specimen of Roman tragedy.]
- 63 [\(return\)](#)
[In the time of Quintilian and Pliny, a tragic poet was reduced to the imperfect method of hiring a great room, and reading his play to the company, whom he invited for that purpose. (See Dialog. de Oratoribus, c. 9, 11, and Plin. Epistol. vii. 17.)]
- 64 [\(return\)](#)
[See the dialogue of Lucian, entitled the Saltatione, tom. ii. p. 265-317, edit. Reitz. The pantomimes obtained the honorable name; and it was required, that they should be conversant with almost every art and science. Burette (in the Mémoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. i. p. 127, &c.) has given a short history of the art of pantomimes.]
- 65 [\(return\)](#)
[Ammianus, l. xiv. c. 6. He complains, with decent indignation that the streets of Rome were filled with crowds of females, who might have given children to the state, but whose only occupation was to curl and dress their hair, and jactari volubilibus gyris, dum experimunt innumera simulacra, quae finxere fabulae teatrales.]

It is said, that the foolish curiosity of Elagabalus attempted to discover, from the quantity of spiders' webs, the number of the inhabitants of Rome. A more rational method of inquiry might not have been undeserving of the attention of the wisest princes, who could easily have resolved a question so important for the Roman

government, and so interesting to succeeding ages. The births and deaths of the citizens were duly registered; and if any writer of antiquity had condescended to mention the annual amount, or the common average, we might now produce some satisfactory calculation, which would destroy the extravagant assertions of critics, and perhaps confirm the modest and probable conjectures of philosophers. [66](#) The most diligent researches have collected only the following circumstances; which, slight and imperfect as they are, may tend, in some degree, to illustrate the question of the populousness of ancient Rome. I. When the capital of the empire was besieged by the Goths, the circuit of the walls was accurately measured, by Ammonius, the mathematician, who found it equal to twenty-one miles. [67](#) It should not be forgotten that the form of the city was almost that of a circle; the geometrical figure which is known to contain the largest space within any given circumference. II. The architect Vitruvius, who flourished in the Augustan age, and whose evidence, on this occasion, has peculiar weight and authority, observes, that the innumerable habitations of the Roman people would have spread themselves far beyond the narrow limits of the city; and that the want of ground, which was probably contracted on every side by gardens and villas, suggested the common, though inconvenient, practice of raising the houses to a considerable height in the air. [68](#) But the loftiness of these buildings, which often consisted of hasty work and insufficient materials, was the cause of frequent and fatal accidents; and it was repeatedly enacted by Augustus, as well as by Nero, that the height of private edifices within the walls of Rome, should not exceed the measure of seventy feet from the ground. [69](#) III. Juvenal [70](#) laments, as it should seem from his own experience, the hardships of the poorer citizens, to whom he addresses the salutary advice of emigrating, without delay, from the smoke of Rome, since they might purchase, in the little towns of Italy, a cheerful commodious dwelling, at the same price which they annually paid for a dark and miserable lodging. House-rent was therefore immoderately dear: the rich acquired, at an enormous expense, the ground, which they covered with palaces and gardens; but the body of the Roman people was crowded into a narrow space; and the different floors, and apartments, of the same house, were divided, as it is still the custom of Paris, and other cities, among several families of plebeians. IV. The total number of houses in the fourteen regions of the city, is accurately stated in the description of Rome, composed under the reign of Theodosius, and they amount to forty-eight thousand three hundred and eighty-two. [71](#) The two classes of domus and of insulæ, into which they are divided, include all the habitations of the capital, of every rank and condition from the marble palace of the Anicii, with a numerous establishment of freedmen and slaves, to the lofty and narrow lodging-house, where the poet Codrus and his wife were permitted to hire a wretched garret immediately under the tiles. If we adopt the same average, which, under similar circumstances, has been found applicable to Paris, [72](#) and indifferently allow about twenty-five persons for each house, of every degree, we may fairly estimate the inhabitants of Rome at twelve hundred thousand: a

number which cannot be thought excessive for the capital of a mighty empire, though it exceeds the populousness of the greatest cities of modern Europe. [73](#) [7311](#)

66 [\(return\)](#)

[Lipsius (tom. iii. p. 423, de Magnitud. Romana, l. iii. c. 3) and Isaac Vossius (Observant. Var. p. 26-34) have indulged strange dreams, of four, or eight, or fourteen, millions in Rome. Mr. Hume, (Essays, vol. i. p. 450-457,) with admirable good sense and scepticism betrays some secret disposition to extenuate the populousness of ancient times.]

67 [\(return\)](#)

[Olympiodor. ap. Phot. p. 197. See Fabricius, Bibl. Graec. tom. ix. p. 400.]

68 [\(return\)](#)

[In ea autem majestate urbis, et civium infinita frequentia, innumerabiles habitationes opus fuit explicare. Ergo cum recipero non posset area plana tantam multitudinem in urbe, ad auxilium altitudinis aedificiorum res ipsa coegit devenire. Vitruv. ii. 8. This passage, which I owe to Vossius, is clear, strong, and comprehensive.]

69 [\(return\)](#)

[The successive testimonies of Pliny, Aristides, Claudian, Rutilius, &c., prove the insufficiency of these restrictive edicts. See Lipsius, de Magnitud. Romana, l. iii. c. 4.

*Tabulata tibi jam tertia fumant;
Tu nescis; nam si gradibus trepidatur ab imis
Ultimus ardebit, quem tegula sola tuetur
A pluvia. --Juvenal. Satir. iii. 199]*

70 [\(return\)](#)

[Read the whole third satire, but particularly 166, 223, &c. The description of a crowded insula, or lodging-house, in Petronius, (c. 95, 97,) perfectly tallies with the complaints of Juvenal; and we learn from legal authority, that, in the time of Augustus, (Heineccius, Hist. Juris. Roman. c. iv. p. 181,) the ordinary rent of the several coenacula, or apartments of an insula, annually produced forty thousand sesterces, between three and four hundred pounds sterling, (Pandect. l. xix. tit. ii. No. 30,) a sum which proves at once the large extent, and high value, of those common buildings.]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[This sum total is composed of 1780 domus, or great houses of 46,602 insulæ, or plebeian habitations, (see Nardini, Roma Antica, l. iii. p. 88;) and these numbers are ascertained by the agreement

of the texts of the different Notitioe. Nardini, l. viii. p. 498, 500.]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[See that accurate writer M. de Messance, *Recherches sur la Population*, p. 175-187. From probable, or certain grounds, he assigns to Paris 23,565 houses, 71,114 families, and 576,630 inhabitants.]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[This computation is not very different from that which M. Brotier, the last editor of Tacitus, (tom. ii. p. 380,) has assumed from similar principles; though he seems to aim at a degree of precision which it is neither possible nor important to obtain.]

7311

[\(return\)](#)

[M. Dureau de la Malle (*Economic Politique des Romaines*, t. i. p. 369) quotes a passage from the xvth chapter of Gibbon, in which he estimates the population of Rome at not less than a million, and adds (omitting any reference to this passage,) that he (Gibbon) could not have seriously studied the question. M. Dureau de la Malle proceeds to argue that Rome, as contained within the walls of Servius Tullius, occupying an area only one fifth of that of Paris, could not have contained 300,000 inhabitants; within those of Aurelian not more than 560,000, inclusive of soldiers and strangers. The suburbs, he endeavors to show, both up to the time of Aurelian, and after his reign, were neither so extensive, nor so populous, as generally supposed. M. Dureau de la Malle has but imperfectly quoted the important passage of Dionysius, that which proves that when he wrote (in the time of Augustus) the walls of Servius no longer marked the boundary of the city. In many places they were so built upon, that it was impossible to trace them. There was no certain limit, where the city ended and ceased to be the city; it stretched out to so boundless an extent into the country. *Ant. Rom.* iv. 13. None of M. de la Malle's arguments appear to me to prove, against this statement, that these irregular suburbs did not extend so far in many parts, as to make it impossible to calculate accurately the inhabited area of the city. Though no doubt the city, as reconstructed by Nero, was much less closely built and with many more open spaces for palaces, temples, and other public edifices, yet many passages seem to prove that the laws respecting the height of houses were not rigidly enforced. A great part of the lower especially of the slave population, were very

densely crowded, and lived, even more than in our modern towns, in cellars and subterranean dwellings under the public edifices. Nor do M. de la Malle's arguments, by which he would explain the *insulae insulae* (of which the *Notitiae Urbis* give us the number) as rows of shops, with a chamber or two within the *domus*, or houses of the wealthy, satisfy me as to their soundness of their scholarship. Some passages which he adduces directly contradict his theory; none, as appears to me, distinctly prove it. I must adhere to the old interpretation of the word, as chiefly dwellings for the middling or lower classes, or clusters of tenements, often perhaps, under the same roof. On this point, Zumpt, in the Dissertation before quoted, entirely disagrees with M. de la Malle. Zumpt has likewise detected the mistake of M. de la Malle as to the "canon" of corn, mentioned in the life of Septimius Severus by Spartianus. On this canon the French writer calculates the inhabitants of Rome at that time. But the "canon" was not the whole supply of Rome, but that quantity which the state required for the public granaries to supply the gratuitous distributions to the people, and the public officers and slaves; no doubt likewise to keep down the general price. M. Zumpt reckons the population of Rome at 2,000,000. After careful consideration, I should conceive the number in the text, 1,200,000, to be nearest the truth—M. 1845.]

Such was the state of Rome under the reign of Honorius; at the time when the Gothic army formed the siege, or rather the blockade, of the city. [74](#) By a skilful disposition of his numerous forces, who impatiently watched the moment of an assault, Alaric encompassed the walls, commanded the twelve principal gates, intercepted all communication with the adjacent country, and vigilantly guarded the navigation of the Tyber, from which the Romans derived the surest and most plentiful supply of provisions. The first emotions of the nobles, and of the people, were those of surprise and indignation, that a vile Barbarian should dare to insult the capital of the world: but their arrogance was soon humbled by misfortune; and their unmanly rage, instead of being directed against an enemy in arms, was meanly exercised on a defenceless and innocent victim. Perhaps in the person of Serena, the Romans might have respected the niece of Theodosius, the aunt, nay, even the adoptive mother, of the reigning emperor: but they abhorred the widow of Stilicho; and they listened with credulous passion to the tale of calumny, which accused her of maintaining a secret and criminal correspondence with the Gothic invader. Actuated, or overawed, by the same popular frenzy, the senate, without requiring any evidence of his guilt, pronounced the sentence of her death. Serena was ignominiously strangled; and the infatuated multitude were astonished to

find, that this cruel act of injustice did not immediately produce the retreat of the Barbarians, and the deliverance of the city. That unfortunate city gradually experienced the distress of scarcity, and at length the horrid calamities of famine. The daily allowance of three pounds of bread was reduced to one half, to one third, to nothing; and the price of corn still continued to rise in a rapid and extravagant proportion. The poorer citizens, who were unable to purchase the necessities of life, solicited the precarious charity of the rich; and for a while the public misery was alleviated by the humanity of Laeta, the widow of the emperor Gratian, who had fixed her residence at Rome, and consecrated to the use of the indigent the princely revenue which she annually received from the grateful successors of her husband. [75](#) But these private and temporary donatives were insufficient to appease the hunger of a numerous people; and the progress of famine invaded the marble palaces of the senators themselves. The persons of both sexes, who had been educated in the enjoyment of ease and luxury, discovered how little is requisite to supply the demands of nature; and lavished their unavailing treasures of gold and silver, to obtain the coarse and scanty sustenance which they would formerly have rejected with disdain. The food the most repugnant to sense or imagination, the aliments the most unwholesome and pernicious to the constitution, were eagerly devoured, and fiercely disputed, by the rage of hunger. A dark suspicion was entertained, that some desperate wretches fed on the bodies of their fellow-creatures, whom they had secretly murdered; and even mothers, (such was the horrid conflict of the two most powerful instincts implanted by nature in the human breast,) even mothers are said to have tasted the flesh of their slaughtered infants! [76](#) Many thousands of the inhabitants of Rome expired in their houses, or in the streets, for want of sustenance; and as the public sepulchres without the walls were in the power of the enemy the stench, which arose from so many putrid and unburied carcasses, infected the air; and the miseries of famine were succeeded and aggravated by the contagion of a pestilential disease. The assurances of speedy and effectual relief, which were repeatedly transmitted from the court of Ravenna, supported for some time, the fainting resolution of the Romans, till at length the despair of any human aid tempted them to accept the offers of a praeternatural deliverance. Pompeianus, praefect of the city, had been persuaded, by the art or fanaticism of some Tuscan diviners, that, by the mysterious force of spells and sacrifices, they could extract the lightning from the clouds, and point those celestial fires against the camp of the Barbarians. [77](#) The important secret was communicated to Innocent, the bishop of Rome; and the successor of St. Peter is accused, perhaps without foundation, of preferring the safety of the republic to the rigid severity of the Christian worship. But when the question was agitated in the senate; when it was proposed, as an essential condition, that those sacrifices should be performed in the Capitol, by the authority, and in the presence, of the magistrates, the majority of that respectable assembly, apprehensive either of the Divine or of the Imperial displeasure, refused to join in an act, which appeared almost equivalent to the public restoration of Paganism. [78](#)

74 [\(return\)](#)
[For the events of the first siege of Rome, which are often confounded with those of the second and third, see Zosimus, l. v. p. 350-354, Sozomen, l. ix. c. 6, Olympiodorus, ap. Phot. p. 180, Philostorgius, l. xii. c. 3, and Godefroy, Dissertat. p. 467-475.]

75 [\(return\)](#)
[The mother of Laeta was named Pissumena. Her father, family, and country, are unknown. Ducange, Fam. Byzantium, p. 59.]

76 [\(return\)](#)
[Ad nefandos cibos erupit esurientium rabies, et sua invicem membra laniant, dum mater non parcat lactenti infantiae; et recipit utero, quem paulo ante effuderat. Jerom. ad Principiam, tom. i. p. 121. The same horrid circumstance is likewise told of the sieges of Jerusalem and Paris. For the latter, compare the tenth book of the Henriade, and the Journal de Henri IV. tom. i. p. 47-83; and observe that a plain narrative of facts is much more pathetic, than the most labored descriptions of epic poetry]

77 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus (l. v. p. 355, 356) speaks of these ceremonies like a Greek unacquainted with the national superstition of Rome and Tuscany. I suspect, that they consisted of two parts, the secret and the public; the former were probably an imitation of the arts and spells, by which Numa had drawn down Jupiter and his thunder on Mount Aventine.

*Quid agant laqueis, quae carmine dicant,
Quaque trahant superis sedibus arte Jovem,
Scire nefas homini.*

The ancilia, or shields of Mars, the pignora Imperii, which were carried in solemn procession on the calends of March, derived their origin from this mysterious event, (Ovid. Fast. iii. 259-398.) It was probably designed to revive this ancient festival, which had been suppressed by Theodosius. In that case, we recover a chronological date (March the 1st, A.D. 409) which has not hitherto been observed. * Note: On this curious question of the knowledge of conducting lightning, processed by the ancients, consult Eusebe Salverte, des Sciences Occultes, l. xxiv. Paris, 1829.—M.]

78 [\(return\)](#)
[Sozomen (l. ix. c. 6) insinuates that the experiment was actually, though unsuccessfully, made; but he does not mention the name of Innocent: and

Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. x. p. 645) is determined not to believe, that a pope could be guilty of such impious condescension.]

The last resource of the Romans was in the clemency, or at least in the moderation, of the king of the Goths. The senate, who in this emergency assumed the supreme powers of government, appointed two ambassadors to negotiate with the enemy. This important trust was delegated to Basilius, a senator, of Spanish extraction, and already conspicuous in the administration of provinces; and to John, the first tribune of the notaries, who was peculiarly qualified, by his dexterity in business, as well as by his former intimacy with the Gothic prince. When they were introduced into his presence, they declared, perhaps in a more lofty style than became their abject condition, that the Romans were resolved to maintain their dignity, either in peace or war; and that, if Alaric refused them a fair and honorable capitulation, he might sound his trumpets, and prepare to give battle to an innumerable people, exercised in arms, and animated by despair. “The thicker the hay, the easier it is mowed,” was the concise reply of the Barbarian; and this rustic metaphor was accompanied by a loud and insulting laugh, expressive of his contempt for the menaces of an unwarlike populace, enervated by luxury before they were emaciated by famine. He then condescended to fix the ransom, which he would accept as the price of his retreat from the walls of Rome: all the gold and silver in the city, whether it were the property of the state, or of individuals; all the rich and precious movables; and all the slaves that could prove their title to the name of Barbarians. The ministers of the senate presumed to ask, in a modest and suppliant tone, “If such, O king, are your demands, what do you intend to leave us?” “Your Lives!” replied the haughty conqueror: they trembled, and retired. Yet, before they retired, a short suspension of arms was granted, which allowed some time for a more temperate negotiation. The stern features of Alaric were insensibly relaxed; he abated much of the rigor of his terms; and at length consented to raise the siege, on the immediate payment of five thousand pounds of gold, of thirty thousand pounds of silver, of four thousand robes of silk, of three thousand pieces of fine scarlet cloth, and of three thousand pounds weight of pepper. [79](#) But the public treasury was exhausted; the annual rents of the great estates in Italy and the provinces, had been exchanged, during the famine, for the vilest sustenance; the hoards of secret wealth were still concealed by the obstinacy of avarice; and some remains of consecrated spoils afforded the only resource that could avert the impending ruin of the city. As soon as the Romans had satisfied the rapacious demands of Alaric, they were restored, in some measure, to the enjoyment of peace and plenty. Several of the gates were cautiously opened; the importation of provisions from the river and the adjacent country was no longer obstructed by the Goths; the citizens resorted in crowds to the free market, which was held during three days in the suburbs; and while the merchants who undertook this gainful trade made a considerable profit, the future subsistence of the city was secured by the ample magazines which were deposited in the public and private granaries. A more regular discipline than could have been expected, was maintained in the camp of Alaric; and the wise Barbarian justified

his regard for the faith of treaties, by the just severity with which he chastised a party of licentious Goths, who had insulted some Roman citizens on the road to Ostia. His army, enriched by the contributions of the capital, slowly advanced into the fair and fruitful province of Tuscany, where he proposed to establish his winter quarters; and the Gothic standard became the refuge of forty thousand Barbarian slaves, who had broke their chains, and aspired, under the command of their great deliverer, to revenge the injuries and the disgrace of their cruel servitude. About the same time, he received a more honorable reenforcement of Goths and Huns, whom Adolphus, [80](#) the brother of his wife, had conducted, at his pressing invitation, from the banks of the Danube to those of the Tyber, and who had cut their way, with some difficulty and loss, through the superior number of the Imperial troops. A victorious leader, who united the daring spirit of a Barbarian with the art and discipline of a Roman general, was at the head of a hundred thousand fighting men; and Italy pronounced, with terror and respect, the formidable name of Alaric. [81](#)

79

[\(return\)](#)

[Pepper was a favorite ingredient of the most expensive Roman cookery, and the best sort commonly sold for fifteen denarii, or ten shillings, the pound. See Pliny, *Hist. Natur.* xii. 14. It was brought from India; and the same country, the coast of Malabar, still affords the greatest plenty: but the improvement of trade and navigation has multiplied the quantity and reduced the price. See *Histoire Politique et Philosophique*, &c., tom. i. p. 457.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[This Gothic chieftain is called by Jornandes and Isidore, Athaulphus; by Zosimus and Orosius, Ataulphus; and by Olympiodorus, Adaoulphus. I have used the celebrated name of Adolphus, which seems to be authorized by the practice of the Swedes, the sons or brothers of the ancient Goths.]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[The treaty between Alaric and the Romans, &c., is taken from Zosimus, l. v. p. 354, 355, 358, 359, 362, 363. The additional circumstances are too few and trifling to require any other quotation.]

Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part IV.

At the distance of fourteen centuries, we may be satisfied with relating the military exploits of the conquerors of Rome, without presuming to investigate the motives of their political conduct. In the midst of his apparent prosperity, Alaric was conscious, perhaps, of some secret weakness, some internal defect; or perhaps the moderation

which he displayed, was intended only to deceive and disarm the easy credulity of the ministers of Honorius. The king of the Goths repeatedly declared, that it was his desire to be considered as the friend of peace, and of the Romans. Three senators, at his earnest request, were sent ambassadors to the court of Ravenna, to solicit the exchange of hostages, and the conclusion of the treaty; and the proposals, which he more clearly expressed during the course of the negotiations, could only inspire a doubt of his sincerity, as they might seem inadequate to the state of his fortune. The Barbarian still aspired to the rank of master-general of the armies of the West; he stipulated an annual subsidy of corn and money; and he chose the provinces of Dalmatia, Noricum, and Venetia, for the seat of his new kingdom, which would have commanded the important communication between Italy and the Danube. If these modest terms should be rejected, Alaric showed a disposition to relinquish his pecuniary demands, and even to content himself with the possession of Noricum; an exhausted and impoverished country, perpetually exposed to the inroads of the Barbarians of Germany. [82](#) But the hopes of peace were disappointed by the weak obstinacy, or interested views, of the minister Olympius. Without listening to the salutary remonstrances of the senate, he dismissed their ambassadors under the conduct of a military escort, too numerous for a retinue of honor, and too feeble for any army of defence. Six thousand Dalmatians, the flower of the Imperial legions, were ordered to march from Ravenna to Rome, through an open country which was occupied by the formidable myriads of the Barbarians. These brave legionaries, encompassed and betrayed, fell a sacrifice to ministerial folly; their general, Valens, with a hundred soldiers, escaped from the field of battle; and one of the ambassadors, who could no longer claim the protection of the law of nations, was obliged to purchase his freedom with a ransom of thirty thousand pieces of gold. Yet Alaric, instead of resenting this act of impotent hostility, immediately renewed his proposals of peace; and the second embassy of the Roman senate, which derived weight and dignity from the presence of Innocent, bishop of the city, was guarded from the dangers of the road by a detachment of Gothic soldiers. [83](#)

82 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. v. p. 367 368, 369.]

83 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. v. p. 360, 361, 362. The bishop, by remaining at Ravenna, escaped the impending calamities of the city. Orosius, l. vii. c. 39, p. 573.]

Olympius [84](#) might have continued to insult the just resentment of a people who loudly accused him as the author of the public calamities; but his power was undermined by the secret intrigues of the palace. The favorite eunuchs transferred the government of Honorius, and the empire, to Jovius, the Prætorian præfect; an unworthy servant, who did not atone, by the merit of personal attachment, for the errors and misfortunes of his administration. The exile, or escape, of the guilty Olympius, reserved him for more vicissitudes of fortune: he experienced the adventures of an obscure and wandering life; he again rose to power; he fell a second time into disgrace; his ears were

cut off; he expired under the lash; and his ignominious death afforded a grateful spectacle to the friends of Stilicho. After the removal of Olympius, whose character was deeply tainted with religious fanaticism, the Pagans and heretics were delivered from the impolitic proscription, which excluded them from the dignities of the state. The brave Gennerid, [85](#) a soldier of Barbarian origin, who still adhered to the worship of his ancestors, had been obliged to lay aside the military belt: and though he was repeatedly assured by the emperor himself, that laws were not made for persons of his rank or merit, he refused to accept any partial dispensation, and persevered in honorable disgrace, till he had extorted a general act of justice from the distress of the Roman government. The conduct of Gennerid in the important station to which he was promoted or restored, of master-general of Dalmatia, Pannonia, Noricum, and Rhaetia, seemed to revive the discipline and spirit of the republic. From a life of idleness and want, his troops were soon habituated to severe exercise and plentiful subsistence; and his private generosity often supplied the rewards, which were denied by the avarice, or poverty, of the court of Ravenna. The valor of Gennerid, formidable to the adjacent Barbarians, was the firmest bulwark of the Illyrian frontier; and his vigilant care assisted the empire with a reenforcement of ten thousand Huns, who arrived on the confines of Italy, attended by such a convoy of provisions, and such a numerous train of sheep and oxen, as might have been sufficient, not only for the march of an army, but for the settlement of a colony. But the court and councils of Honorius still remained a scene of weakness and distraction, of corruption and anarchy. Instigated by the praefect Jovius, the guards rose in furious mutiny, and demanded the heads of two generals, and of the two principal eunuchs. The generals, under a perfidious promise of safety, were sent on shipboard, and privately executed; while the favor of the eunuchs procured them a mild and secure exile at Milan and Constantinople. Eusebius the eunuch, and the Barbarian Allobich, succeeded to the command of the bed-chamber and of the guards; and the mutual jealousy of these subordinate ministers was the cause of their mutual destruction. By the insolent order of the count of the domestics, the great chamberlain was shamefully beaten to death with sticks, before the eyes of the astonished emperor; and the subsequent assassination of Allobich, in the midst of a public procession, is the only circumstance of his life, in which Honorius discovered the faintest symptom of courage or resentment. Yet before they fell, Eusebius and Allobich had contributed their part to the ruin of the empire, by opposing the conclusion of a treaty which Jovius, from a selfish, and perhaps a criminal, motive, had negotiated with Alaric, in a personal interview under the walls of Rimini. During the absence of Jovius, the emperor was persuaded to assume a lofty tone of inflexible dignity, such as neither his situation, nor his character, could enable him to support; and a letter, signed with the name of Honorius, was immediately despatched to the Prætorian praefect, granting him a free permission to dispose of the public money, but sternly refusing to prostitute the military honors of Rome to the proud demands of a Barbarian. This letter was imprudently communicated to Alaric himself; and the Goth, who in the whole transaction had

behaved with temper and decency, expressed, in the most outrageous language, his lively sense of the insult so wantonly offered to his person and to his nation. The conference of Rimini was hastily interrupted; and the praefect Jovius, on his return to Ravenna, was compelled to adopt, and even to encourage, the fashionable opinions of the court. By his advice and example, the principal officers of the state and army were obliged to swear, that, without listening, in any circumstances, to any conditions of peace, they would still persevere in perpetual and implacable war against the enemy of the republic. This rash engagement opposed an insuperable bar to all future negotiation. The ministers of Honorius were heard to declare, that, if they had only invoked the name of the Deity, they would consult the public safety, and trust their souls to the mercy of Heaven: but they had sworn by the sacred head of the emperor himself; they had touched, in solemn ceremony, that august seat of majesty and wisdom; and the violation of their oath would expose them to the temporal penalties of sacrilege and rebellion. [86](#)

84 [\(return\)](#)

[For the adventures of Olympius, and his successors in the ministry, see Zosimus, l. v. p. 363, 365, 366, and Olympiodor. ap. Phot. p. 180, 181.]

85 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. v. p. 364) relates this circumstance with visible complacency, and celebrates the character of Gennerid as the last glory of expiring Paganism. Very different were the sentiments of the council of Carthage, who deputed four bishops to the court of Ravenna to complain of the law, which had been just enacted, that all conversions to Christianity should be free and voluntary. See Baronius, Annal. Eccles. A.D. 409, No. 12, A.D. 410, No. 47, 48.]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. v. p. 367, 368, 369. This custom of swearing by the head, or life, or safety, or genius, of the sovereign, was of the highest antiquity, both in Egypt (Genesis, xlii. 15) and Scythia. It was soon transferred, by flattery, to the Caesars; and Tertullian complains, that it was the only oath which the Romans of his time affected to reverence. See an elegant Dissertation of the Abbe Mossieu on the Oaths of the Ancients, in the Mem de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. i. p. 208, 209.]

While the emperor and his court enjoyed, with sullen pride, the security of the marches and fortifications of Ravenna, they abandoned Rome, almost without defence, to the resentment of Alaric. Yet such was the moderation which he still preserved, or affected, that, as he moved with his army along the Flaminian way, he successively despatched the bishops of the towns of Italy to reiterate his offers of peace, and to

conjure the emperor, that he would save the city and its inhabitants from hostile fire, and the sword of the Barbarians. [87](#) These impending calamities were, however, averted, not indeed by the wisdom of Honorius, but by the prudence or humanity of the Gothic king; who employed a milder, though not less effectual, method of conquest. Instead of assaulting the capital, he successfully directed his efforts against the Port of Ostia, one of the boldest and most stupendous works of Roman magnificence. [88](#) The accidents to which the precarious subsistence of the city was continually exposed in a winter navigation, and an open road, had suggested to the genius of the first Caesar the useful design, which was executed under the reign of Claudius. The artificial moles, which formed the narrow entrance, advanced far into the sea, and firmly repelled the fury of the waves, while the largest vessels securely rode at anchor within three deep and capacious basins, which received the northern branch of the Tyber, about two miles from the ancient colony of Ostia. [89](#) The Roman Port insensibly swelled to the size of an episcopal city, [90](#) where the corn of Africa was deposited in spacious granaries for the use of the capital. As soon as Alaric was in possession of that important place, he summoned the city to surrender at discretion; and his demands were enforced by the positive declaration, that a refusal, or even a delay, should be instantly followed by the destruction of the magazines, on which the life of the Roman people depended. The clamors of that people, and the terror of famine, subdued the pride of the senate; they listened, without reluctance, to the proposal of placing a new emperor on the throne of the unworthy Honorius; and the suffrage of the Gothic conqueror bestowed the purple on Attalus, praefect of the city. The grateful monarch immediately acknowledged his protector as master-general of the armies of the West; Adolphus, with the rank of count of the domestics, obtained the custody of the person of Attalus; and the two hostile nations seemed to be united in the closest bands of friendship and alliance. [91](#)

87

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. v. p. 368, 369. I have softened the expressions of Alaric, who expatiates, in too florid a manner, on the history of Rome]

88

[\(return\)](#)

[See Sueton. in Claud. c. 20. Dion Cassius, l. lx. p. 949, edit Reimar, and the lively description of Juvenal, Satir. xii. 75, &c. In the sixteenth century, when the remains of this Augustan port were still visible, the antiquarians sketched the plan, (see D'Anville, Mem. de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxx. p. 198,) and declared, with enthusiasm, that all the monarchs of Europe would be unable to execute so great a work, (Bergier, Hist. des grands Chemins des Romains, tom. ii. p. 356.)]

89

[\(return\)](#)

[The Ostia Tyberina, (see Cluver. Italia Antiq. l. iii. p. 870-879,) in the plural number, the two mouths of the Tyber, were separated by the Holy Island, an

equilateral triangle, whose sides were each of them computed at about two miles. The colony of Ostia was founded immediately beyond the left, or southern, and the Port immediately beyond the right, or northern, branch of the river; and the distance between their remains measures something more than two miles on Cingolani's map. In the time of Strabo, the sand and mud deposited by the Tyber had choked the harbor of Ostia; the progress of the same cause has added much to the size of the Holy Islands, and gradually left both Ostia and the Port at a considerable distance from the shore. The dry channels (*fiumi morti*) and the large estuaries (*stagno di Ponente, di Levante*) mark the changes of the river, and the efforts of the sea. Consult, for the present state of this dreary and desolate tract, the excellent map of the ecclesiastical state by the mathematicians of Benedict XIV.; an actual survey of the *Agro Romano*, in six sheets, by Cingolani, which contains 113,819 *rubbia*, (about 570,000 acres;) and the large topographical map of *Ameti*, in eight sheets.]

90

[\(return\)](#)

[As early as the third, (Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel*, part ii. vol. iii. p. 89-92,) or at least the fourth, century, (Carol. a Sancta Paulo, *Notit. Eccles.* p. 47,) the Port of Rome was an episcopal city, which was demolished, as it should seem in the ninth century, by Pope Gregory IV., during the incursions of the Arabs. It is now reduced to an inn, a church, and the house, or palace, of the bishop; who ranks as one of six cardinal-bishops of the Roman church. See Eschinard, *Deserizione di Roman et dell' Agro Romano*, p. 328. * Note: Compare Sir W. Gell. *Rome and its Vicinity* vol. ii p. 134.—M.]

91

[\(return\)](#)

[For the elevation of Attalus, consult Zosimus, l. vi. p. 377-380, Sozomen, l. ix. c. 8, 9, Olympiodor. ap. Phot. p. 180, 181, Philostorg. l. xii. c. 3, and Godefroy's *Dissertat.* p. 470.]

The gates of the city were thrown open, and the new emperor of the Romans, encompassed on every side by the Gothic arms, was conducted, in tumultuous procession, to the palace of Augustus and Trajan. After he had distributed the civil and military dignities among his favorites and followers, Attalus convened an assembly of the senate; before whom, in a formal and florid speech, he asserted his resolution of restoring the majesty of the republic, and of uniting to the empire the provinces of Egypt and the East, which had once acknowledged the sovereignty of Rome. Such extravagant

promises inspired every reasonable citizen with a just contempt for the character of an unwarlike usurper, whose elevation was the deepest and most ignominious wound which the republic had yet sustained from the insolence of the Barbarians. But the populace, with their usual levity, applauded the change of masters. The public discontent was favorable to the rival of Honorius; and the sectaries, oppressed by his persecuting edicts, expected some degree of countenance, or at least of toleration, from a prince, who, in his native country of Ionia, had been educated in the Pagan superstition, and who had since received the sacrament of baptism from the hands of an Arian bishop. [92](#) The first days of the reign of Attalus were fair and prosperous. An officer of confidence was sent with an inconsiderable body of troops to secure the obedience of Africa; the greatest part of Italy submitted to the terror of the Gothic powers; and though the city of Bologna made a vigorous and effectual resistance, the people of Milan, dissatisfied perhaps with the absence of Honorius, accepted, with loud acclamations, the choice of the Roman senate. At the head of a formidable army, Alaric conducted his royal captive almost to the gates of Ravenna; and a solemn embassy of the principal ministers, of Jovius, the Prætorian præfect, of Valens, master of the cavalry and infantry, of the quaestor Potamius, and of Julian, the first of the notaries, was introduced, with martial pomp, into the Gothic camp. In the name of their sovereign, they consented to acknowledge the lawful election of his competitor, and to divide the provinces of Italy and the West between the two emperors. Their proposals were rejected with disdain; and the refusal was aggravated by the insulting clemency of Attalus, who condescended to promise, that, if Honorius would instantly resign the purple, he should be permitted to pass the remainder of his life in the peaceful exile of some remote island. [93](#) So desperate indeed did the situation of the son of Theodosius appear, to those who were the best acquainted with his strength and resources, that Jovius and Valens, his minister and his general, betrayed their trust, infamously deserted the sinking cause of their benefactor, and devoted their treacherous allegiance to the service of his more fortunate rival. Astonished by such examples of domestic treason, Honorius trembled at the approach of every servant, at the arrival of every messenger. He dreaded the secret enemies, who might lurk in his capital, his palace, his bed-chamber; and some ships lay ready in the harbor of Ravenna, to transport the abdicated monarch to the dominions of his infant nephew, the emperor of the East.

92

[\(return\)](#)

[We may admit the evidence of Sozomen for the Arian baptism, and that of Philostorgius for the Pagan education, of Attalus. The visible joy of Zosimus, and the discontent which he imputes to the Anician family, are very unfavorable to the Christianity of the new emperor.]

93

[\(return\)](#)

[He carried his insolence so far, as to declare that he should mutilate Honorius before he sent him into exile. But this assertion of Zosimus is destroyed by

the more impartial testimony of Olympiodorus; who attributes the ungenerous proposal (which was absolutely rejected by Attalus) to the baseness, and perhaps the treachery, of Jovius.]

But there is a Providence (such at least was the opinion of the historian Procopius) [94](#) that watches over innocence and folly; and the pretensions of Honorius to its peculiar care cannot reasonably be disputed. At the moment when his despair, incapable of any wise or manly resolution, meditated a shameful flight, a seasonable reenforcement of four thousand veterans unexpectedly landed in the port of Ravenna. To these valiant strangers, whose fidelity had not been corrupted by the factions of the court, he committed the walls and gates of the city; and the slumbers of the emperor were no longer disturbed by the apprehension of imminent and internal danger. The favorable intelligence which was received from Africa suddenly changed the opinions of men, and the state of public affairs. The troops and officers, whom Attalus had sent into that province, were defeated and slain; and the active zeal of Heraclian maintained his own allegiance, and that of his people. The faithful count of Africa transmitted a large sum of money, which fixed the attachment of the Imperial guards; and his vigilance, in preventing the exportation of corn and oil, introduced famine, tumult, and discontent, into the walls of Rome. The failure of the African expedition was the source of mutual complaint and recrimination in the party of Attalus; and the mind of his protector was insensibly alienated from the interest of a prince, who wanted spirit to command, or docility to obey. The most imprudent measures were adopted, without the knowledge, or against the advice, of Alaric; and the obstinate refusal of the senate, to allow, in the embarkation, the mixture even of five hundred Goths, betrayed a suspicious and distrustful temper, which, in their situation, was neither generous nor prudent. The resentment of the Gothic king was exasperated by the malicious arts of Jovius, who had been raised to the rank of patrician, and who afterwards excused his double perfidy, by declaring, without a blush, that he had only seemed to abandon the service of Honorius, more effectually to ruin the cause of the usurper. In a large plain near Rimini, and in the presence of an innumerable multitude of Romans and Barbarians, the wretched Attalus was publicly despoiled of the diadem and purple; and those ensigns of royalty were sent by Alaric, as the pledge of peace and friendship, to the son of Theodosius. [95](#) The officers who returned to their duty, were reinstated in their employments, and even the merit of a tardy repentance was graciously allowed; but the degraded emperor of the Romans, desirous of life, and insensible of disgrace, implored the permission of following the Gothic camp, in the train of a haughty and capricious Barbarian. [96](#)

94

[\(return\)](#)

[Procop. de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 2.]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[See the cause and circumstances of the fall of Attalus in Zosimus, l. vi. p. 380-383. Sozomen, l. ix. c. 8. Philostorg. l. xii. c. 3. The two acts of

indemnity in the Theodosian Code, l. ix. tit. xxxviii. leg. 11, 12, which were published the 12th of February, and the 8th of August, A.D. 410, evidently relate to this usurper.]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[In hoc, Alaricus, imperatore, facto, infecto, refecto, ac defecto... Mimum risit, et ludum spectavit imperii. Orosius, l. vii. c. 42, p. 582.]

The degradation of Attalus removed the only real obstacle to the conclusion of the peace; and Alaric advanced within three miles of Ravenna, to press the irresolution of the Imperial ministers, whose insolence soon returned with the return of fortune. His indignation was kindled by the report, that a rival chieftain, that Sarus, the personal enemy of Adolphus, and the hereditary foe of the house of Balti, had been received into the palace. At the head of three hundred followers, that fearless Barbarian immediately sallied from the gates of Ravenna; surprised, and cut in pieces, a considerable body of Goths; reentered the city in triumph; and was permitted to insult his adversary, by the voice of a herald, who publicly declared that the guilt of Alaric had forever excluded him from the friendship and alliance of the emperor. [97](#) The crime and folly of the court of Ravenna was expiated, a third time, by the calamities of Rome. The king of the Goths, who no longer dissembled his appetite for plunder and revenge, appeared in arms under the walls of the capital; and the trembling senate, without any hopes of relief, prepared, by a desperate resistance, to defray the ruin of their country. But they were unable to guard against the secret conspiracy of their slaves and domestics; who, either from birth or interest, were attached to the cause of the enemy. At the hour of midnight, the Salarian gate was silently opened, and the inhabitants were awakened by the tremendous sound of the Gothic trumpet. Eleven hundred and sixty-three years after the foundation of Rome, the Imperial city, which had subdued and civilized so considerable a part of mankind, was delivered to the licentious fury of the tribes of Germany and Scythia. [98](#)

97

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. vi. p. 384. Sozomen, l. ix. c. 9. Philostorgius, l. xii. c. 3. In this place the text of Zosimus is mutilated, and we have lost the remainder of his sixth and last book, which ended with the sack of Rome. Credulous and partial as he is, we must take our leave of that historian with some regret.]

98

[\(return\)](#)

[Adest Alaricus, trepidam Romam obsidet, turbat, irrumpit. Orosius, l. vii. c. 39, p. 573. He despatches this great event in seven words; but he employs whole pages in celebrating the devotion of the Goths. I have extracted from an improbable story of Procopius, the circumstances which had an air of probability. Procop. de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 2. He

supposes that the city was surprised while the senators slept in the afternoon; but Jerom, with more authority and more reason, affirms, that it was in the night, *nocte Moab capta est. nocte cecidit murus ejus*, tom. i. p. 121, ad Principiam.]

The proclamation of Alaric, when he forced his entrance into a vanquished city, discovered, however, some regard for the laws of humanity and religion. He encouraged his troops boldly to seize the rewards of valor, and to enrich themselves with the spoils of a wealthy and effeminate people: but he exhorted them, at the same time, to spare the lives of the unresisting citizens, and to respect the churches of the apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, as holy and inviolable sanctuaries. Amidst the horrors of a nocturnal tumult, several of the Christian Goths displayed the fervor of a recent conversion; and some instances of their uncommon piety and moderation are related, and perhaps adorned, by the zeal of ecclesiastical writers. [99](#) While the Barbarians roamed through the city in quest of prey, the humble dwelling of an aged virgin, who had devoted her life to the service of the altar, was forced open by one of the powerful Goths. He immediately demanded, though in civil language, all the gold and silver in her possession; and was astonished at the readiness with which she conducted him to a splendid hoard of massy plate, of the richest materials, and the most curious workmanship. The Barbarian viewed with wonder and delight this valuable acquisition, till he was interrupted by a serious admonition, addressed to him in the following words: “These,” said she, “are the consecrated vessels belonging to St. Peter: if you presume to touch them, the sacrilegious deed will remain on your conscience. For my part, I dare not keep what I am unable to defend.” The Gothic captain, struck with reverential awe, despatched a messenger to inform the king of the treasure which he had discovered; and received a peremptory order from Alaric, that all the consecrated plate and ornaments should be transported, without damage or delay, to the church of the apostle. From the extremity, perhaps, of the Quirinal hill, to the distant quarter of the Vatican, a numerous detachment of Goths, marching in order of battle through the principal streets, protected, with glittering arms, the long train of their devout companions, who bore aloft, on their heads, the sacred vessels of gold and silver; and the martial shouts of the Barbarians were mingled with the sound of religious psalmody. From all the adjacent houses, a crowd of Christians hastened to join this edifying procession; and a multitude of fugitives, without distinction of age, or rank, or even of sect, had the good fortune to escape to the secure and hospitable sanctuary of the Vatican. The learned work, concerning the City of God, was professedly composed by St. Augustin, to justify the ways of Providence in the destruction of the Roman greatness. He celebrates, with peculiar satisfaction, this memorable triumph of Christ; and insults his adversaries, by challenging them to produce some similar example of a town taken by storm, in which the fabulous gods of antiquity had been able to protect either themselves or their deluded votaries. [100](#)

[Orosius (l. vii. c. 39, p. 573-576) applauds the piety of the Christian Goths, without seeming to perceive that the greatest part of them were Arian heretics. Jornandes (c. 30, p. 653) and Isidore of Seville, (Chron. p. 417, edit. Grot.,) who were both attached to the Gothic cause, have repeated and embellished these edifying tales. According to Isidore, Alaric himself was heard to say, that he waged war with the Romans, and not with the apostles. Such was the style of the seventh century; two hundred years before, the fame and merit had been ascribed, not to the apostles, but to Christ.]

[See Augustin, de Civitat. Dei, l. i. c. 1-6. He particularly appeals to the examples of Troy, Syracuse, and Tarentum.]

In the sack of Rome, some rare and extraordinary examples of Barbarian virtue have been deservedly applauded. But the holy precincts of the Vatican, and the apostolic churches, could receive a very small proportion of the Roman people; many thousand warriors, more especially of the Huns, who served under the standard of Alaric, were strangers to the name, or at least to the faith, of Christ; and we may suspect, without any breach of charity or candor, that in the hour of savage license, when every passion was inflamed, and every restraint was removed, the precepts of the Gospel seldom influenced the behavior of the Gothic Christians. The writers, the best disposed to exaggerate their clemency, have freely confessed, that a cruel slaughter was made of the Romans; [101](#) and that the streets of the city were filled with dead bodies, which remained without burial during the general consternation. The despair of the citizens was sometimes converted into fury: and whenever the Barbarians were provoked by opposition, they extended the promiscuous massacre to the feeble, the innocent, and the helpless. The private revenge of forty thousand slaves was exercised without pity or remorse; and the ignominious lashes, which they had formerly received, were washed away in the blood of the guilty, or obnoxious, families. The matrons and virgins of Rome were exposed to injuries more dreadful, in the apprehension of chastity, than death itself; and the ecclesiastical historian has selected an example of female virtue, for the admiration of future ages. [102](#) A Roman lady, of singular beauty and orthodox faith, had excited the impatient desires of a young Goth, who, according to the sagacious remark of Sozomen, was attached to the Arian heresy. Exasperated by her obstinate resistance, he drew his sword, and, with the anger of a lover, slightly wounded her neck. The bleeding heroine still continued to brave his resentment, and to repel his love, till the ravisher desisted from his unavailing efforts, respectfully conducted her to the sanctuary of the Vatican, and gave six pieces of gold to the guards of the church, on condition that they should restore her inviolate to the arms of her husband. Such instances of courage and generosity were not extremely common. The brutal soldiers

satisfied their sensual appetites, without consulting either the inclination or the duties of their female captives: and a nice question of casuistry was seriously agitated, Whether those tender victims, who had inflexibly refused their consent to the violation which they sustained, had lost, by their misfortune, the glorious crown of virginity. [103](#) Their were other losses indeed of a more substantial kind, and more general concern. It cannot be presumed, that all the Barbarians were at all times capable of perpetrating such amorous outrages; and the want of youth, or beauty, or chastity, protected the greatest part of the Roman women from the danger of a rape. But avarice is an insatiate and universal passion; since the enjoyment of almost every object that can afford pleasure to the different tastes and tempers of mankind may be procured by the possession of wealth. In the pillage of Rome, a just preference was given to gold and jewels, which contain the greatest value in the smallest compass and weight: but, after these portable riches had been removed by the more diligent robbers, the palaces of Rome were rudely stripped of their splendid and costly furniture. The sideboards of massy plate, and the variegated wardrobes of silk and purple, were irregularly piled in the wagons, that always followed the march of a Gothic army. The most exquisite works of art were roughly handled, or wantonly destroyed; many a statue was melted for the sake of the precious materials; and many a vase, in the division of the spoil, was shivered into fragments by the stroke of a battle-axe.

The acquisition of riches served only to stimulate the avarice of the rapacious Barbarians, who proceeded, by threats, by blows, and by tortures, to force from their prisoners the confession of hidden treasure. [104](#) Visible splendor and expense were alleged as the proof of a plentiful fortune; the appearance of poverty was imputed to a parsimonious disposition; and the obstinacy of some misers, who endured the most cruel torments before they would discover the secret object of their affection, was fatal to many unhappy wretches, who expired under the lash, for refusing to reveal their imaginary treasures. The edifices of Rome, though the damage has been much exaggerated, received some injury from the violence of the Goths. At their entrance through the Salarian gate, they fired the adjacent houses to guide their march, and to distract the attention of the citizens; the flames, which encountered no obstacle in the disorder of the night, consumed many private and public buildings; and the ruins of the palace of Sallust [105](#) remained, in the age of Justinian, a stately monument of the Gothic conflagration. [106](#) Yet a contemporary historian has observed, that fire could scarcely consume the enormous beams of solid brass, and that the strength of man was insufficient to subvert the foundations of ancient structures. Some truth may possibly be concealed in his devout assertion, that the wrath of Heaven supplied the imperfections of hostile rage; and that the proud Forum of Rome, decorated with the statues of so many gods and heroes, was levelled in the dust by the stroke of lightning. [107](#)

to the sack of Rome all the strong expressions of Virgil:—

*Quis cladem illius noctis, quis funera fando,
Explicet, &c.*

Procopius (l. i. c. 2) positively affirms that great numbers were slain by the Goths. Augustin (de Civ. Dei, l. i. c. 12, 13) offers Christian comfort for the death of those whose bodies (multa corpora) had remained (in tanta strage) unburied. Baronius, from the different writings of the Fathers, has thrown some light on the sack of Rome. Annal. Eccles. A.D. 410, No. 16-34.]

102 [\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen. l. ix. c. 10. Augustin (de Civitat. Dei, l. i. c. 17) intimates, that some virgins or matrons actually killed themselves to escape violation; and though he admires their spirit, he is obliged, by his theology, to condemn their rash presumption. Perhaps the good bishop of Hippo was too easy in the belief, as well as too rigid in the censure, of this act of female heroism. The twenty maidens (if they ever existed) who threw themselves into the Elbe, when Magdeburgh was taken by storm, have been multiplied to the number of twelve hundred. See Harte's History of Gustavus Adolphus, vol. i. p. 308.]

103 [\(return\)](#)

[See Augustin de Civitat. Dei, l. i. c. 16, 18. He treats the subject with remarkable accuracy: and after admitting that there cannot be any crime where there is no consent, he adds, Sed quia non solum quod ad dolorem, verum etiam quod ad libidinem, pertinet, in corpore alieno peperari potest; quicquid tale factum fuerit, etsi retentam constantissimo animo pudicitiam non excutit, pudorem tamen incutit, ne credatur factum cum mentis etiam voluntate, quod fieri fortasse sine carnis aliqua voluptate non potuit. In c. 18 he makes some curious distinctions between moral and physical virginity.]

104 [\(return\)](#)

[Marcella, a Roman lady, equally respectable for her rank, her age, and her piety, was thrown on the ground, and cruelly beaten and whipped, caesam fustibus flagellisque, &c. Jerom, tom. i. p. 121, ad Principiam. See Augustin, de Civ. Dei, l. c. 10. The modern Sacco di Roma, p. 208, gives an idea of the various methods of torturing prisoners for gold.]

105 [\(return\)](#)

[The historian Sallust, who usefully practiced the

vices which he has so eloquently censured, employed the plunder of Numidia to adorn his palace and gardens on the Quirinal hill. The spot where the house stood is now marked by the church of St. Susanna, separated only by a street from the baths of Diocletian, and not far distant from the Salarian gate. See Nardini, *Roma Antica*, p. 192, 193, and the great Plan of Modern Rome, by Nolli.]

106

[\(return\)](#)

[The expressions of Procopius are distinct and moderate, (de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 2.) The Chronicle of Marcellinus speaks too strongly *partem urbis Romae cremavit*; and the words of Philostorgius (l. xii. c. 3) convey a false and exaggerated idea. Bargaeus has composed a particular dissertation (see tom. iv. *Antiquit. Rom. Graev.*) to prove that the edifices of Rome were not subverted by the Goths and Vandals.]

107

[\(return\)](#)

[Orosius, l. ii. c. 19, p. 143. He speaks as if he disapproved all statues; *vel Deum vel hominem mentiuntur*. They consisted of the kings of Alba and Rome from Aeneas, the Romans, illustrious either in arms or arts, and the deified Caesars. The expression which he uses of Forum is somewhat ambiguous, since there existed five principal Fora; but as they were all contiguous and adjacent, in the plain which is surrounded by the Capitoline, the Quirinal, the Esquiline, and the Palatine hills, they might fairly be considered as one. See the *Roma Antiqua* of Donatus, p. 162-201, and the *Roma Antica* of Nardini, p. 212-273. The former is more useful for the ancient descriptions, the latter for the actual topography.]

Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part V.

Whatever might be the numbers of equestrian or plebeian rank, who perished in the massacre of Rome, it is confidently affirmed that only one senator lost his life by the sword of the enemy. [108](#) But it was not easy to compute the multitudes, who, from an honorable station and a prosperous fortune, were suddenly reduced to the miserable condition of captives and exiles. As the Barbarians had more occasion for money than for slaves, they fixed at a moderate price the redemption of their indigent prisoners; and the ransom was often paid by the benevolence of their friends, or the charity of strangers. [109](#) The captives, who were regularly sold, either in open market, or by

private contract, would have legally regained their native freedom, which it was impossible for a citizen to lose, or to alienate. [110](#) But as it was soon discovered that the vindication of their liberty would endanger their lives; and that the Goths, unless they were tempted to sell, might be provoked to murder, their useless prisoners; the civil jurisprudence had been already qualified by a wise regulation, that they should be obliged to serve the moderate term of five years, till they had discharged by their labor the price of their redemption. [111](#) The nations who invaded the Roman empire, had driven before them, into Italy, whole troops of hungry and affrighted provincials, less apprehensive of servitude than of famine. The calamities of Rome and Italy dispersed the inhabitants to the most lonely, the most secure, the most distant places of refuge. While the Gothic cavalry spread terror and desolation along the sea-coast of Campania and Tuscany, the little island of Igilium, separated by a narrow channel from the Argentario promontory, repulsed, or eluded, their hostile attempts; and at so small a distance from Rome, great numbers of citizens were securely concealed in the thick woods of that sequestered spot. [112](#) The ample patrimonies, which many senatorian families possessed in Africa, invited them, if they had time, and prudence, to escape from the ruin of their country, to embrace the shelter of that hospitable province. The most illustrious of these fugitives was the noble and pious Proba, [113](#) the widow of the praefect Petronius. After the death of her husband, the most powerful subject of Rome, she had remained at the head of the Anician family, and successively supplied, from her private fortune, the expense of the consulships of her three sons. When the city was besieged and taken by the Goths, Proba supported, with Christian resignation, the loss of immense riches; embarked in a small vessel, from whence she beheld, at sea, the flames of her burning palace, and fled with her daughter Laeta, and her granddaughter, the celebrated virgin, Demetrias, to the coast of Africa. The benevolent profusion with which the matron distributed the fruits, or the price, of her estates, contributed to alleviate the misfortunes of exile and captivity. But even the family of Proba herself was not exempt from the rapacious oppression of Count Heraclian, who basely sold, in matrimonial prostitution, the noblest maidens of Rome to the lust or avarice of the Syrian merchants. The Italian fugitives were dispersed through the provinces, along the coast of Egypt and Asia, as far as Constantinople and Jerusalem; and the village of Bethlem, the solitary residence of St. Jerom and his female converts, was crowded with illustrious beggars of either sex, and every age, who excited the public compassion by the remembrance of their past fortune. [114](#) This awful catastrophe of Rome filled the astonished empire with grief and terror. So interesting a contrast of greatness and ruin, disposed the fond credulity of the people to deplore, and even to exaggerate, the afflictions of the queen of cities. The clergy, who applied to recent events the lofty metaphors of oriental prophecy, were sometimes tempted to confound the destruction of the capital and the dissolution of the globe.

quemquam inventum senatorem, qui vel absens evaserit; hic vix quemquam requiri, qui forte ut latens perierit. But there is an air of rhetoric, and perhaps of falsehood, in this antithesis; and Socrates (l. vii. c. 10) affirms, perhaps by an opposite exaggeration, that many senators were put to death with various and exquisite tortures.]

109 [\(return\)](#)

[Multi... Christiani incaptivitatem ducti sunt. Augustin, de Civ Dei, l. i. c. 14; and the Christians experienced no peculiar hardships.]

110 [\(return\)](#)

[See Heineccius, Antiquitat. Juris Roman. tom. i. p. 96.]

111 [\(return\)](#)

[Appendix Cod. Theodos. xvi. in Sirmond. Opera, tom. i. p. 735. This edict was published on the 11th of December, A.D. 408, and is more reasonable than properly belonged to the ministers of Honorius.]

112 [\(return\)](#)

[Eminus Igilii sylvosa cacumina miror; Quem fraudare nefas laudis honore suae.

Haec proprios nuper tutata est insula saltus;

Sive loci ingenio, seu Domini genio.

*Gurgite cum modico victricibus obstitit
armis, Tanquam longinquo dissociata mari.*

Haec multos lacera suscepit ab urbe fugates,

Hic fessis posito certa timore salus.

Plurima terreno populaverat aequora bello,

Contra naturam classe timendus eques:

Unum, mira fides, vario discrimine portum!

Tam prope Romanis, tam procul esse Getis.

--Rutilius, in Itinerar. l. i. 325

The island is now called Giglio. See Cluver. Ital. Antiq. l. ii.]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[As the adventures of Proba and her family are connected with the life of St. Augustin, they are diligently illustrated by Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xiii. p. 620-635. Some time after their arrival in Africa, Demetrias took the veil, and made a vow of virginity; an event which was considered as of the highest importance to Rome and to the world. All the Saints wrote congratulatory letters to her; that of Jerom is still extant, (tom. i. p. 62-73, ad

Demetriad. de servand Virginitat.,) and contains a mixture of absurd reasoning, spirited declamation, and curious facts, some of which relate to the siege and sack of Rome.]

114

[\(return\)](#)

[See the pathetic complaint of Jerom, (tom. v. p. 400,) in his preface to the second book of his Commentaries on the Prophet Ezekiel.]

There exists in human nature a strong propensity to depreciate the advantages, and to magnify the evils, of the present times. Yet, when the first emotions had subsided, and a fair estimate was made of the real damage, the more learned and judicious contemporaries were forced to confess, that infant Rome had formerly received more essential injury from the Gauls, than she had now sustained from the Goths in her declining age. [115](#) The experience of eleven centuries has enabled posterity to produce a much more singular parallel; and to affirm with confidence, that the ravages of the Barbarians, whom Alaric had led from the banks of the Danube, were less destructive than the hostilities exercised by the troops of Charles the Fifth, a Catholic prince, who styled himself Emperor of the Romans. [116](#) The Goths evacuated the city at the end of six days, but Rome remained above nine months in the possession of the Imperialists; and every hour was stained by some atrocious act of cruelty, lust, and rapine. The authority of Alaric preserved some order and moderation among the ferocious multitude which acknowledged him for their leader and king; but the constable of Bourbon had gloriously fallen in the attack of the walls; and the death of the general removed every restraint of discipline from an army which consisted of three independent nations, the Italians, the Spaniards, and the Germans. In the beginning of the sixteenth century, the manners of Italy exhibited a remarkable scene of the depravity of mankind. They united the sanguinary crimes that prevail in an unsettled state of society, with the polished vices which spring from the abuse of art and luxury; and the loose adventurers, who had violated every prejudice of patriotism and superstition to assault the palace of the Roman pontiff, must deserve to be considered as the most profligate of the Italians. At the same era, the Spaniards were the terror both of the Old and New World: but their high-spirited valor was disgraced by gloomy pride, rapacious avarice, and unrelenting cruelty. Indefatigable in the pursuit of fame and riches, they had improved, by repeated practice, the most exquisite and effectual methods of torturing their prisoners: many of the Castilians, who pillaged Rome, were familiars of the holy inquisition; and some volunteers, perhaps, were lately returned from the conquest of Mexico. The Germans were less corrupt than the Italians, less cruel than the Spaniards; and the rustic, or even savage, aspect of those Tramontane warriors, often disguised a simple and merciful disposition. But they had imbibed, in the first fervor of the reformation, the spirit, as well as the principles, of Luther. It was their favorite amusement to insult, or destroy, the consecrated objects of Catholic superstition; they indulged, without pity or remorse, a devout hatred against the clergy of every denomination and degree, who form so

considerable a part of the inhabitants of modern Rome; and their fanatic zeal might aspire to subvert the throne of Anti-christ, to purify, with blood and fire, the abominations of the spiritual Babylon. [117](#)

115 [\(return\)](#)

[Orosius, though with some theological partiality, states this comparison, l. ii. c. 19, p. 142, l. vii. c. 39, p. 575. But, in the history of the taking of Rome by the Gauls, every thing is uncertain, and perhaps fabulous. See Beaufort sur l'Incertitude, &c., de l'Histoire Romaine, p. 356; and Melot, in the Mem. de l'Academie des Inscript. tom. xv. p. 1-21.]

116 [\(return\)](#)

[The reader who wishes to inform himself of the circumstances of his famous event, may peruse an admirable narrative in Dr. Robertson's History of Charles V. vol. ii. p. 283; or consult the Annali d'Italia of the learned Muratori, tom. xiv. p. 230-244, octavo edition. If he is desirous of examining the originals, he may have recourse to the eighteenth book of the great, but unfinished, history of Guicciardini. But the account which most truly deserves the name of authentic and original, is a little book, entitled, Il Sacco di Roma, composed, within less than a month after the assault of the city, by the brother of the historian Guicciardini, who appears to have been an able magistrate and a dispassionate writer.]

117 [\(return\)](#)

[The furious spirit of Luther, the effect of temper and enthusiasm, has been forcibly attacked, (Bossuet, Hist. des Variations des Eglises Protestantes, livre i. p. 20-36,) and feebly defended, (Seckendorf. Comment. de Lutherismo, especially l. i. No. 78, p. 120, and l. iii. No. 122, p. 556.)]

The retreat of the victorious Goths, who evacuated Rome on the sixth day, [118](#) might be the result of prudence; but it was not surely the effect of fear. [119](#) At the head of an army encumbered with rich and weighty spoils, their intrepid leader advanced along the Appian way into the southern provinces of Italy, destroying whatever dared to oppose his passage, and contenting himself with the plunder of the unresisting country. The fate of Capua, the proud and luxurious metropolis of Campania, and which was respected, even in its decay, as the eighth city of the empire, [120](#) is buried in oblivion; whilst the adjacent town of Nola [121](#) has been illustrated, on this occasion, by the sanctity of Paulinus, [122](#) who was successively a consul, a monk, and a bishop. At the age of forty, he renounced the enjoyment of wealth and honor, of society and literature, to embrace a life of solitude and penance; and the loud applause of the clergy

encouraged him to despise the reproaches of his worldly friends, who ascribed this desperate act to some disorder of the mind or body. [123](#) An early and passionate attachment determined him to fix his humble dwelling in one of the suburbs of Nola, near the miraculous tomb of St. Faelix, which the public devotion had already surrounded with five large and populous churches. The remains of his fortune, and of his understanding, were dedicated to the service of the glorious martyr; whose praise, on the day of his festival, Paulinus never failed to celebrate by a solemn hymn; and in whose name he erected a sixth church, of superior elegance and beauty, which was decorated with many curious pictures, from the history of the Old and New Testament. Such assiduous zeal secured the favor of the saint, [124](#) or at least of the people; and, after fifteen years' retirement, the Roman consul was compelled to accept the bishopric of Nola, a few months before the city was invested by the Goths. During the siege, some religious persons were satisfied that they had seen, either in dreams or visions, the divine form of their tutelar patron; yet it soon appeared by the event, that Faelix wanted power, or inclination, to preserve the flock of which he had formerly been the shepherd. Nola was not saved from the general devastation; [125](#) and the captive bishop was protected only by the general opinion of his innocence and poverty. Above four years elapsed from the successful invasion of Italy by the arms of Alaric, to the voluntary retreat of the Goths under the conduct of his successor Adolphus; and, during the whole time, they reigned without control over a country, which, in the opinion of the ancients, had united all the various excellences of nature and art. The prosperity, indeed, which Italy had attained in the auspicious age of the Antonines, had gradually declined with the decline of the empire.

The fruits of a long peace perished under the rude grasp of the Barbarians; and they themselves were incapable of tasting the more elegant refinements of luxury, which had been prepared for the use of the soft and polished Italians. Each soldier, however, claimed an ample portion of the substantial plenty, the corn and cattle, oil and wine, that was daily collected and consumed in the Gothic camp; and the principal warriors insulted the villas and gardens, once inhabited by Lucullus and Cicero, along the beauteous coast of Campania. Their trembling captives, the sons and daughters of Roman senators, presented, in goblets of gold and gems, large draughts of Falernian wine to the haughty victors; who stretched their huge limbs under the shade of plane-trees, [126](#) artificially disposed to exclude the scorching rays, and to admit the genial warmth, of the sun. These delights were enhanced by the memory of past hardships: the comparison of their native soil, the bleak and barren hills of Scythia, and the frozen banks of the Elbe and Danube, added new charms to the felicity of the Italian climate. [127](#)

- 119 [\(return\)](#)
[Socrates (l. vii. c. 10) pretends, without any color of truth, or reason, that Alaric fled on the report that the armies of the Eastern empire were in full march to attack him.]
- 120 [\(return\)](#)
[Ausonius de Claris Urbibus, p. 233, edit. Toll. The luxury of Capua had formerly surpassed that of Sybaris itself. See Athenaeus Deipnosophist. l. xii. p. 528, edit. Casaubon.]
- 121 [\(return\)](#)
[Forty-eight years before the foundation of Rome, (about 800 before the Christian era,) the Tuscans built Capua and Nola, at the distance of twenty-three miles from each other; but the latter of the two cities never emerged from a state of mediocrity.]
- 122 [\(return\)](#)
[Tillemont (Mem. Eccles. tom. xiv. p. 1-46) has compiled, with his usual diligence, all that relates to the life and writings of Paulinus, whose retreat is celebrated by his own pen, and by the praises of St. Ambrose, St. Jerom, St. Augustin, Sulpicius Severus, &c., his Christian friends and contemporaries.]
- 123 [\(return\)](#)
[See the affectionate letters of Ausonius (epist. xix.—xxv. p. 650-698, edit. Toll.) to his colleague, his friend, and his disciple, Paulinus. The religion of Ausonius is still a problem, (see Mem. de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xv. p. 123-138.) I believe that it was such in his own time, and, consequently, that in his heart he was a Pagan.]
- 124 [\(return\)](#)
[The humble Paulinus once presumed to say, that he believed St. Faelix did love him; at least, as a master loves his little dog.]
- 125 [\(return\)](#)
[See Jornandes, de Reb. Get. c. 30, p. 653. Philostorgius, l. xii. c. 3. Augustin. de Civ. Dei, l.i.c. 10. Baronius, Annal. Eccles. A.D. 410, No. 45, 46.]
- 126 [\(return\)](#)
[The platanus, or plane-tree, was a favorite of the ancients, by whom it was propagated, for the sake of shade, from the East to Gaul. Plin. Hist. Natur. xii. 3, 4, 5. He mentions several of an enormous size; one in the Imperial villa, at Velitrae, which Caligula called his nest, as the branches were capable of holding a large table, the proper

attendants, and the emperor himself, whom Pliny quaintly styles *pars umbroe*; an expression which might, with equal reason, be applied to Alaric]

127

[\(return\)](#)

[The prostrate South to the destroyer yields

*Her boasted titles, and her golden fields;
With grim delight the brood of winter view
A brighter day, and skies of azure hue;
Scent the new fragrance of the opening rose,
And quaff the pendent vintage as it grows.*

See Gray's Poems, published by Mr. Mason, p. 197. Instead of compiling tables of chronology and natural history, why did not Mr. Gray apply the powers of his genius to finish the philosophic poem, of which he has left such an exquisite specimen?]

Whether fame, or conquest, or riches, were the object of Alaric, he pursued that object with an indefatigable ardor, which could neither be quelled by adversity nor satiated by success. No sooner had he reached the extreme land of Italy, than he was attracted by the neighboring prospect of a fertile and peaceful island. Yet even the possession of Sicily he considered only as an intermediate step to the important expedition, which he already meditated against the continent of Africa. The Straits of Rhegium and Messina [128](#) are twelve miles in length, and, in the narrowest passage, about one mile and a half broad; and the fabulous monsters of the deep, the rocks of Scylla, and the whirlpool of Charybdis, could terrify none but the most timid and unskilful mariners. Yet as soon as the first division of the Goths had embarked, a sudden tempest arose, which sunk, or scattered, many of the transports; their courage was daunted by the terrors of a new element; and the whole design was defeated by the premature death of Alaric, which fixed, after a short illness, the fatal term of his conquests. The ferocious character of the Barbarians was displayed in the funeral of a hero whose valor and fortune they celebrated with mournful applause. By the labor of a captive multitude, they forcibly diverted the course of the Busentinus, a small river that washes the walls of Consentia. The royal sepulchre, adorned with the splendid spoils and trophies of Rome, was constructed in the vacant bed; the waters were then restored to their natural channel; and the secret spot, where the remains of Alaric had been deposited, was forever concealed by the inhuman massacre of the prisoners, who had been employed to execute the work. [129](#)

128

[\(return\)](#)

[For the perfect description of the Straits of Messina, Scylla, Clarybdis, &c., see Cluverius, (*Ital. Antiq.* l. iv. p. 1293, and *Sicilia Antiq.* l. i. p. 60-76), who had diligently studied the ancients, and surveyed with a curious eye the actual face of the country.]

129

[\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes, *de Reb Get.* c. 30, p. 654.]

Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part VI.

The personal animosities and hereditary feuds of the Barbarians were suspended by the strong necessity of their affairs; and the brave Adolphus, the brother-in-law of the deceased monarch, was unanimously elected to succeed to his throne. The character and political system of the new king of the Goths may be best understood from his own conversation with an illustrious citizen of Narbonne; who afterwards, in a pilgrimage to the Holy Land, related it to St. Jerom, in the presence of the historian Orosius. “In the full confidence of valor and victory, I once aspired (said Adolphus) to change the face of the universe; to obliterate the name of Rome; to erect on its ruins the dominion of the Goths; and to acquire, like Augustus, the immortal fame of the founder of a new empire. By repeated experiments, I was gradually convinced, that laws are essentially necessary to maintain and regulate a well-constituted state; and that the fierce, untractable humor of the Goths was incapable of bearing the salutary yoke of laws and civil government. From that moment I proposed to myself a different object of glory and ambition; and it is now my sincere wish that the gratitude of future ages should acknowledge the merit of a stranger, who employed the sword of the Goths, not to subvert, but to restore and maintain, the prosperity of the Roman empire.” [130](#) With these pacific views, the successor of Alaric suspended the operations of war; and seriously negotiated with the Imperial court a treaty of friendship and alliance. It was the interest of the ministers of Honorius, who were now released from the obligation of their extravagant oath, to deliver Italy from the intolerable weight of the Gothic powers; and they readily accepted their service against the tyrants and Barbarians who infested the provinces beyond the Alps. [131](#) Adolphus, assuming the character of a Roman general, directed his march from the extremity of Campania to the southern provinces of Gaul. His troops, either by force or agreement, immediately occupied the cities of Narbonne, Thoulouse, and Bordeaux; and though they were repulsed by Count Boniface from the walls of Marseilles, they soon extended their quarters from the Mediterranean to the Ocean.

The oppressed provincials might exclaim, that the miserable remnant, which the enemy had spared, was cruelly ravished by their pretended allies; yet some specious colors were not wanting to palliate, or justify the violence of the Goths. The cities of Gaul, which they attacked, might perhaps be considered as in a state of rebellion against the government of Honorius: the articles of the treaty, or the secret instructions of the court, might sometimes be alleged in favor of the seeming usurpations of Adolphus; and the guilt of any irregular, unsuccessful act of hostility might always be imputed, with an appearance of truth, to the ungovernable spirit of a Barbarian host, impatient of peace or discipline. The luxury of Italy had been less effectual to soften the temper, than to relax the courage, of the Goths; and they had imbibed the vices, without imitating the arts and institutions, of civilized society. [132](#)

- 130 [\(return\)](#)
[Orosius, l. vii. c. 43, p. 584, 585. He was sent by St. Augustin in the year 415, from Africa to Palestine, to visit St. Jerom, and to consult with him on the subject of the Pelagian controversy.]
- 131 [\(return\)](#)
[Jornandes supposes, without much probability, that Adolphus visited and plundered Rome a second time, (more locustarum erasit) Yet he agrees with Orosius in supposing that a treaty of peace was concluded between the Gothic prince and Honorius. See Oros. l. vii. c. 43 p. 584, 585. Jornandes, de Reb. Geticis, c. 31, p. 654, 655.]
- 132 [\(return\)](#)
[The retreat of the Goths from Italy, and their first transactions in Gaul, are dark and doubtful. I have derived much assistance from Mascou, (Hist. of the Ancient Germans, l. viii. c. 29, 35, 36, 37,) who has illustrated, and connected, the broken chronicles and fragments of the times.]

The professions of Adolphus were probably sincere, and his attachment to the cause of the republic was secured by the ascendant which a Roman princess had acquired over the heart and understanding of the Barbarian king. Placidia, [133](#) the daughter of the great Theodosius, and of Galla, his second wife, had received a royal education in the palace of Constantinople; but the eventful story of her life is connected with the revolutions which agitated the Western empire under the reign of her brother Honorius. When Rome was first invested by the arms of Alaric, Placidia, who was then about twenty years of age, resided in the city; and her ready consent to the death of her cousin Serena has a cruel and ungrateful appearance, which, according to the circumstances of the action, may be aggravated, or excused, by the consideration of her tender age. [134](#) The victorious Barbarians detained, either as a hostage or a captive, [135](#) the sister of Honorius; but, while she was exposed to the disgrace of following round Italy the motions of a Gothic camp, she experienced, however, a decent and respectful treatment. The authority of Jornandes, who praises the beauty of Placidia, may perhaps be counterbalanced by the silence, the expressive silence, of her flatterers: yet the splendor of her birth, the bloom of youth, the elegance of manners, and the dexterous insinuation which she condescended to employ, made a deep impression on the mind of Adolphus; and the Gothic king aspired to call himself the brother of the emperor. The ministers of Honorius rejected with disdain the proposal of an alliance so injurious to every sentiment of Roman pride; and repeatedly urged the restitution of Placidia, as an indispensable condition of the treaty of peace. But the daughter of Theodosius submitted, without reluctance, to the desires of the conqueror, a young and valiant prince, who yielded to Alaric in loftiness of stature, but who excelled in the more attractive qualities of grace and beauty. The marriage of Adolphus and Placidia [136](#) was

consummated before the Goths retired from Italy; and the solemn, perhaps the anniversary day of their nuptials was afterwards celebrated in the house of Ingenuus, one of the most illustrious citizens of Narbonne in Gaul. The bride, attired and adorned like a Roman empress, was placed on a throne of state; and the king of the Goths, who assumed, on this occasion, the Roman habit, contented himself with a less honorable seat by her side. The nuptial gift, which, according to the custom of his nation, [137](#) was offered to Placidia, consisted of the rare and magnificent spoils of her country. Fifty beautiful youths, in silken robes, carried a basin in each hand; and one of these basins was filled with pieces of gold, the other with precious stones of an inestimable value. Attalus, so long the sport of fortune, and of the Goths, was appointed to lead the chorus of the Hymeneal song; and the degraded emperor might aspire to the praise of a skilful musician. The Barbarians enjoyed the insolence of their triumph; and the provincials rejoiced in this alliance, which tempered, by the mild influence of love and reason, the fierce spirit of their Gothic lord. [138](#)

133 [\(return\)](#)

[See an account of Placidia in Ducange *Fam. Byzant.* p. 72; and Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. v. p. 260, 386, &c. tom. vi. p. 240.]

134 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosim. l. v. p. 350.]

135 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosim. l. vi. p. 383. Orosius, (l. vii. c. 40, p. 576,) and the Chronicles of Marcellinus and Idatius, seem to suppose, that the Goths did not carry away Placidia till after the last siege of Rome.]

136 [\(return\)](#)

[See the pictures of Adolphus and Placidia, and the account of their marriage, in Jornandes, *de Reb. Geticis*, c. 31, p. 654, 655. With regard to the place where the nuptials were stipulated, or consummated, or celebrated, the Mss. of Jornandes vary between two neighboring cities, Forli and Imola, (Forum Livii and Forum Cornelii.) It is fair and easy to reconcile the Gothic historian with Olympiodorus, (see Mascou, l. viii. c. 46:) but Tillemont grows peevish, and swears that it is not worth while to try to conciliate Jornandes with any good authors.]

137 [\(return\)](#)

[The Visigoths (the subjects of Adolphus) restrained by subsequent laws, the prodigality of conjugal love. It was illegal for a husband to make any gift or settlement for the benefit of his wife during the first year of their marriage; and his liberality could not at any time exceed the tenth part of his property. The Lombards were somewhat

more indulgent: they allowed the morningcap immediately after the wedding night; and this famous gift, the reward of virginity might equal the fourth part of the husband's substance. Some cautious maidens, indeed, were wise enough to stipulate beforehand a present, which they were too sure of not deserving. See Montesquieu, *Esprit des Loix*, l. xix. c. 25. Muratori, *delle Antichita Italiane*, tom. i. Dissertazion, xx. p. 243.]

138

[\(return\)](#)

[We owe the curious detail of this nuptial feast to the historian Olympiodorus, ap. Photium, p. 185, 188.]

The hundred basins of gold and gems, presented to Placidia at her nuptial feast, formed an inconsiderable portion of the Gothic treasures; of which some extraordinary specimens may be selected from the history of the successors of Adolphus. Many curious and costly ornaments of pure gold, enriched with jewels, were found in their palace of Narbonne, when it was pillaged, in the sixth century, by the Franks: sixty cups, or chalices; fifteen patens, or plates, for the use of the communion; twenty boxes, or cases, to hold the books of the Gospels: this consecrated wealth [139](#) was distributed by the son of Clovis among the churches of his dominions, and his pious liberality seems to upbraid some former sacrilege of the Goths. They possessed, with more security of conscience, the famous missorium, or great dish for the service of the table, of massy gold, of the weight of five hundred pounds, and of far superior value, from the precious stones, the exquisite workmanship, and the tradition, that it had been presented by Ætius, the patrician, to Torismond, king of the Goths. One of the successors of Torismond purchased the aid of the French monarch by the promise of this magnificent gift. When he was seated on the throne of Spain, he delivered it with reluctance to the ambassadors of Dagobert; despoiled them on the road; stipulated, after a long negotiation, the inadequate ransom of two hundred thousand pieces of gold; and preserved the missorium, as the pride of the Gothic treasury. [140](#) When that treasury, after the conquest of Spain, was plundered by the Arabs, they admired, and they have celebrated, another object still more remarkable; a table of considerable size, of one single piece of solid emerald, [141](#) encircled with three rows of fine pearls, supported by three hundred and sixty-five feet of gems and massy gold, and estimated at the price of five hundred thousand pieces of gold. [142](#) Some portion of the Gothic treasures might be the gift of friendship, or the tribute of obedience; but the far greater part had been the fruits of war and rapine, the spoils of the empire, and perhaps of Rome.

139

[\(return\)](#)

[See in the great collection of the Historians of France by Dom Bouquet, tom. ii. Greg. Turonens. l. iii. c. 10, p. 191. *Gesta Regum Francorum*, c. 23, p. 557. The anonymous writer, with an ignorance worthy of his times, supposes that these instruments

of Christian worship had belonged to the temple of Solomon. If he has any meaning it must be, that they were found in the sack of Rome.]

140

[\(return\)](#)

[Consult the following original testimonies in the Historians of France, tom. ii. Fredegarii Scholastici Chron. c. 73, p. 441. Fredegar. Fragment. iii. p. 463. Gesta Regis Dagobert, c. 29, p. 587. The accession of Sisenand to the throne of Spain happened A.D. 631. The 200,000 pieces of gold were appropriated by Dagobert to the foundation of the church of St. Denys.]

141

[\(return\)](#)

[The president Goguet (*Origine des Loix*, &c., tom. ii. p. 239) is of opinion, that the stupendous pieces of emerald, the statues and columns which antiquity has placed in Egypt, at Gades, at Constantinople, were in reality artificial compositions of colored glass. The famous emerald dish, which is shown at Genoa, is supposed to countenance the suspicion.]

142

[\(return\)](#)

[Elmacin. *Hist. Saracenica*, l. i. p. 85. Roderic. Tolet. *Hist. Arab.* c. 9. Cardonne, *Hist. de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne sous les Arabes* tom. i. p. 83. It was called the Table of Solomon, according to the custom of the Orientals, who ascribe to that prince every ancient work of knowledge or magnificence.]

After the deliverance of Italy from the oppression of the Goths, some secret counsellor was permitted, amidst the factions of the palace, to heal the wounds of that afflicted country. [143](#) By a wise and humane regulation, the eight provinces which had been the most deeply injured, Campania, Tuscany, Picenum, Samnium, Apulia, Calabria, Bruttium, and Lucania, obtained an indulgence of five years: the ordinary tribute was reduced to one fifth, and even that fifth was destined to restore and support the useful institution of the public posts. By another law, the lands which had been left without inhabitants or cultivation, were granted, with some diminution of taxes, to the neighbors who should occupy, or the strangers who should solicit them; and the new possessors were secured against the future claims of the fugitive proprietors. About the same time a general amnesty was published in the name of Honorius, to abolish the guilt and memory of all the involuntary offences which had been committed by his unhappy subjects, during the term of the public disorder and calamity. A decent and respectful attention was paid to the restoration of the capital; the citizens were encouraged to rebuild the edifices which had been destroyed or damaged by hostile fire; and extraordinary supplies of corn were imported from the coast of Africa. The crowds that so lately fled before the sword of the Barbarians, were soon recalled by the hopes of plenty and pleasure; and Albinus, praefect of Rome, informed the court, with some

anxiety and surprise, that, in a single day, he had taken an account of the arrival of fourteen thousand strangers. [144](#) In less than seven years, the vestiges of the Gothic invasion were almost obliterated; and the city appeared to resume its former splendor and tranquillity. The venerable matron replaced her crown of laurel, which had been ruffled by the storms of war; and was still amused, in the last moment of her decay, with the prophecies of revenge, of victory, and of eternal dominion. [145](#)

143

[\(return\)](#)

[His three laws are inserted in the Theodosian Code, l. xi. tit. xxviii. leg. 7. L. xiii. tit. xi. leg. 12. L. xv. tit. xiv. leg. 14 The expressions of the last are very remarkable; since they contain not only a pardon, but an apology.]

144

[\(return\)](#)

[Olympiodorus ap. Phot. p. 188. Philostorgius (l. xii. c. 5) observes, that when Honorius made his triumphal entry, he encouraged the Romans, with his hand and voice, to rebuild their city; and the Chronicle of Prosper commends Heraclian, qui in Romanae urbis reparationem strenuum exhibuerat ministerium.]

145

[\(return\)](#)

[The date of the voyage of Claudius Rutilius Numatianus is clogged with some difficulties; but Scaliger has deduced from astronomical characters, that he left Rome the 24th of September and embarked at Porto the 9th of October, A.D. 416. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom, v. p. 820. In this poetical Itinerary, Rutilius (l. i. 115, &c.) addresses Rome in a high strain of congratulation:—

Erige crinales lauros, seniumque sacrati Verticis in virides, Roma, recinge comas, &c.]

This apparent tranquillity was soon disturbed by the approach of a hostile armament from the country which afforded the daily subsistence of the Roman people. Heraclian, count of Africa, who, under the most difficult and distressful circumstances, had supported, with active loyalty, the cause of Honorius, was tempted, in the year of his consulship, to assume the character of a rebel, and the title of emperor. The ports of Africa were immediately filled with the naval forces, at the head of which he prepared to invade Italy: and his fleet, when it cast anchor at the mouth of the Tyber, indeed surpassed the fleets of Xerxes and Alexander, if all the vessels, including the royal galley, and the smallest boat, did actually amount to the incredible number of three thousand two hundred. [146](#) Yet with such an armament, which might have subverted, or restored, the greatest empires of the earth, the African usurper made a very faint and feeble impression on the provinces of his rival. As he marched from the port, along the road which leads to the gates of Rome, he was encountered, terrified, and routed, by

one of the Imperial captains; and the lord of this mighty host, deserting his fortune and his friends, ignominiously fled with a single ship. [147](#) When Heraclian landed in the harbor of Carthage, he found that the whole province, disdaining such an unworthy ruler, had returned to their allegiance. The rebel was beheaded in the ancient temple of Memory; his consulship was abolished: [148](#) and the remains of his private fortune, not exceeding the moderate sum of four thousand pounds of gold, were granted to the brave Constantius, who had already defended the throne, which he afterwards shared with his feeble sovereign. Honorius viewed, with supine indifference, the calamities of Rome and Italy; [149](#) but the rebellious attempts of Attalus and Heraclian, against his personal safety, awakened, for a moment, the torpid instinct of his nature. He was probably ignorant of the causes and events which preserved him from these impending dangers; and as Italy was no longer invaded by any foreign or domestic enemies, he peaceably existed in the palace of Ravenna, while the tyrants beyond the Alps were repeatedly vanquished in the name, and by the lieutenants, of the son of Theodosius. [150](#) In the course of a busy and interesting narrative I might possibly forget to mention the death of such a prince: and I shall therefore take the precaution of observing, in this place, that he survived the last siege of Rome about thirteen years.

146 [\(return\)](#)

[Orosius composed his history in Africa, only two years after the event; yet his authority seems to be overbalanced by the improbability of the fact. The Chronicle of Marcellinus gives Heraclian 700 ships and 3000 men: the latter of these numbers is ridiculously corrupt; but the former would please me very much.]

147 [\(return\)](#)

[The Chronicle of Idatius affirms, without the least appearance of truth, that he advanced as far as Otriculum, in Umbria, where he was overthrown in a great battle, with the loss of 50,000 men.]

148 [\(return\)](#)

[See Cod. Theod. l. xv. tit. xiv. leg. 13. The legal acts performed in his name, even the manumission of slaves, were declared invalid, till they had been formally repeated.]

149 [\(return\)](#)

[I have disdained to mention a very foolish, and probably a false, report, (Procop. de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 2,) that Honorius was alarmed by the loss of Rome, till he understood that it was not a favorite chicken of that name, but only the capital of the world, which had been lost. Yet even this story is some evidence of the public opinion.]

150 [\(return\)](#)

[The materials for the lives of all these tyrants are taken from six contemporary historians, two Latins

and four Greeks: Orosius, l. vii. c. 42, p. 581, 582, 583; Renatus Profuturus Frigeridus, apud Gregor Turon. l. ii. c. 9, in the Historians of France, tom. ii. p. 165, 166; Zosimus, l. v. p. 370, 371; Olympiodorus, apud Phot. p. 180, 181, 184, 185; Sozomen, l. ix. c. 12, 13, 14, 15; and Philostorgius, l. xii. c. 5, 6, with Godefroy's Dissertation, p. 477-481; besides the four Chronicles of Prosper Tyro, Prosper of Aquitain, Idatius, and Marcellinus.]

The usurpation of Constantine, who received the purple from the legions of Britain, had been successful, and seemed to be secure. His title was acknowledged, from the wall of Antoninus to the columns of Hercules; and, in the midst of the public disorder he shared the dominion, and the plunder, of Gaul and Spain, with the tribes of Barbarians, whose destructive progress was no longer checked by the Rhine or Pyrenees. Stained with the blood of the kinsmen of Honorius, he extorted, from the court of Ravenna, with which he secretly corresponded, the ratification of his rebellious claims. Constantine engaged himself, by a solemn promise, to deliver Italy from the Goths; advanced as far as the banks of the Po; and after alarming, rather than assisting, his pusillanimous ally, hastily returned to the palace of Arles, to celebrate, with intemperate luxury, his vain and ostentatious triumph. But this transient prosperity was soon interrupted and destroyed by the revolt of Count Gerontius, the bravest of his generals; who, during the absence of his son Constans, a prince already invested with the Imperial purple, had been left to command in the provinces of Spain. From some reason, of which we are ignorant, Gerontius, instead of assuming the diadem, placed it on the head of his friend Maximus, who fixed his residence at Tarragona, while the active count pressed forwards, through the Pyrenees, to surprise the two emperors, Constantine and Constans, before they could prepare for their defence. The son was made prisoner at Vienna, and immediately put to death: and the unfortunate youth had scarcely leisure to deplore the elevation of his family; which had tempted, or compelled him, sacrilegiously to desert the peaceful obscurity of the monastic life. The father maintained a siege within the walls of Arles; but those walls must have yielded to the assailants, had not the city been unexpectedly relieved by the approach of an Italian army. The name of Honorius, the proclamation of a lawful emperor, astonished the contending parties of the rebels. Gerontius, abandoned by his own troops, escaped to the confines of Spain; and rescued his name from oblivion, by the Roman courage which appeared to animate the last moments of his life. In the middle of the night, a great body of his perfidious soldiers surrounded and attacked his house, which he had strongly barricaded. His wife, a valiant friend of the nation of the Alani, and some faithful slaves, were still attached to his person; and he used, with so much skill and resolution, a large magazine of darts and arrows, that above three hundred of the assailants lost their lives in the attempt. His slaves when all the missile weapons were spent, fled at the dawn of day; and Gerontius, if he had not been restrained by conjugal tenderness, might have imitated their example; till the soldiers, provoked by such

obstinate resistance, applied fire on all sides to the house. In this fatal extremity, he complied with the request of his Barbarian friend, and cut off his head. The wife of Gerontius, who conjured him not to abandon her to a life of misery and disgrace, eagerly presented her neck to his sword; and the tragic scene was terminated by the death of the count himself, who, after three ineffectual strokes, drew a short dagger, and sheathed it in his heart. [151](#) The unprotected Maximus, whom he had invested with the purple, was indebted for his life to the contempt that was entertained of his power and abilities. The caprice of the Barbarians, who ravaged Spain, once more seated this Imperial phantom on the throne: but they soon resigned him to the justice of Honorius; and the tyrant Maximus, after he had been shown to the people of Ravenna and Rome, was publicly executed.

151

[\(return\)](#)

[The praises which Sozomen has bestowed on this act of despair, appear strange and scandalous in the mouth of an ecclesiastical historian. He observes (p. 379) that the wife of Gerontius was a Christian; and that her death was worthy of her religion, and of immortal fame.]

The general, (Constantius was his name,) who raised by his approach the siege of Arles, and dissipated the troops of Gerontius, was born a Roman; and this remarkable distinction is strongly expressive of the decay of military spirit among the subjects of the empire. The strength and majesty which were conspicuous in the person of that general, [152](#) marked him, in the popular opinion, as a candidate worthy of the throne, which he afterwards ascended. In the familiar intercourse of private life, his manners were cheerful and engaging; nor would he sometimes disdain, in the license of convivial mirth, to vie with the pantomimes themselves, in the exercises of their ridiculous profession. But when the trumpet summoned him to arms; when he mounted his horse, and, bending down (for such was his singular practice) almost upon the neck, fiercely rolled his large animated eyes round the field, Constantius then struck terror into his foes, and inspired his soldiers with the assurance of victory. He had received from the court of Ravenna the important commission of extirpating rebellion in the provinces of the West; and the pretended emperor Constantine, after enjoying a short and anxious respite, was again besieged in his capital by the arms of a more formidable enemy. Yet this interval allowed time for a successful negotiation with the Franks and Alemanni and his ambassador, Edobic, soon returned at the head of an army, to disturb the operations of the siege of Arles. The Roman general, instead of expecting the attack in his lines, boldly and perhaps wisely, resolved to pass the Rhone, and to meet the Barbarians. His measures were conducted with so much skill and secrecy, that, while they engaged the infantry of Constantius in the front, they were suddenly attacked, surrounded, and destroyed, by the cavalry of his lieutenant Ulphilas, who had silently gained an advantageous post in their rear. The remains of the army of Edobic were preserved by flight or submission, and their leader escaped from the field of battle to

the house of a faithless friend; who too clearly understood, that the head of his obnoxious guest would be an acceptable and lucrative present for the Imperial general. On this occasion, Constantius behaved with the magnanimity of a genuine Roman. Subduing, or suppressing, every sentiment of jealousy, he publicly acknowledged the merit and services of Ulphilas; but he turned with horror from the assassin of Edobic; and sternly intimated his commands, that the camp should no longer be polluted by the presence of an ungrateful wretch, who had violated the laws of friendship and hospitality. The usurper, who beheld, from the walls of Arles, the ruin of his last hopes, was tempted to place some confidence in so generous a conqueror. He required a solemn promise for his security; and after receiving, by the imposition of hands, the sacred character of a Christian Presbyter, he ventured to open the gates of the city. But he soon experienced that the principles of honor and integrity, which might regulate the ordinary conduct of Constantius, were superseded by the loose doctrines of political morality. The Roman general, indeed, refused to sully his laurels with the blood of Constantine; but the abdicated emperor, and his son Julian, were sent under a strong guard into Italy; and before they reached the palace of Ravenna, they met the ministers of death.

152

[\(return\)](#)

[It is the expression of Olympiodorus, which he seems to have borrowed from *Aeolus*, a tragedy of Euripides, of which some fragments only are now extant, (Euripid. Barnes, tom. ii. p. 443, ver 38.) This allusion may prove, that the ancient tragic poets were still familiar to the Greeks of the fifth century.]

At a time when it was universally confessed, that almost every man in the empire was superior in personal merit to the princes whom the accident of their birth had seated on the throne, a rapid succession of usurpers, regardless of the fate of their predecessors, still continued to arise. This mischief was peculiarly felt in the provinces of Spain and Gaul, where the principles of order and obedience had been extinguished by war and rebellion. Before Constantine resigned the purple, and in the fourth month of the siege of Arles, intelligence was received in the Imperial camp, that Jovinus has assumed the diadem at Mentz, in the Upper Germany, at the instigation of Goar, king of the Alani, and of Guntiarius, king of the Burgundians; and that the candidate, on whom they had bestowed the empire, advanced with a formidable host of Barbarians, from the banks of the Rhine to those of the Rhone. Every circumstance is dark and extraordinary in the short history of the reign of Jovinus. It was natural to expect, that a brave and skilful general, at the head of a victorious army, would have asserted, in a field of battle, the justice of the cause of Honorius. The hasty retreat of Constantius might be justified by weighty reasons; but he resigned, without a struggle, the possession of Gaul; and Dardanus, the Prætorian præfect, is recorded as the only magistrate who refused to yield obedience to the usurper. [153](#) When the Goths, two years after the siege of Rome, established their quarters in Gaul, it was natural to suppose that their inclinations could

be divided only between the emperor Honorius, with whom they had formed a recent alliance, and the degraded Attalus, whom they reserved in their camp for the occasional purpose of acting the part of a musician or a monarch. Yet in a moment of disgust, (for which it is not easy to assign a cause, or a date,) Adolphus connected himself with the usurper of Gaul; and imposed on Attalus the ignominious task of negotiating the treaty, which ratified his own disgrace. We are again surprised to read, that, instead of considering the Gothic alliance as the firmest support of his throne, Jovinus upbraided, in dark and ambiguous language, the officious importunity of Attalus; that, scorning the advice of his great ally, he invested with the purple his brother Sebastian; and that he most imprudently accepted the service of Sarus, when that gallant chief, the soldier of Honorius, was provoked to desert the court of a prince, who knew not how to reward or punish. Adolphus, educated among a race of warriors, who esteemed the duty of revenge as the most precious and sacred portion of their inheritance, advanced with a body of ten thousand Goths to encounter the hereditary enemy of the house of Balti. He attacked Sarus at an unguarded moment, when he was accompanied only by eighteen or twenty of his valiant followers. United by friendship, animated by despair, but at length oppressed by multitudes, this band of heroes deserved the esteem, without exciting the compassion, of their enemies; and the lion was no sooner taken in the toils, [154](#) than he was instantly despatched. The death of Sarus dissolved the loose alliance which Adolphus still maintained with the usurpers of Gaul. He again listened to the dictates of love and prudence; and soon satisfied the brother of Placidia, by the assurance that he would immediately transmit to the palace of Ravenna the heads of the two tyrants, Jovinus and Sebastian. The king of the Goths executed his promise without difficulty or delay; the helpless brothers, unsupported by any personal merit, were abandoned by their Barbarian auxiliaries; and the short opposition of Valentia was expiated by the ruin of one of the noblest cities of Gaul. The emperor, chosen by the Roman senate, who had been promoted, degraded, insulted, restored, again degraded, and again insulted, was finally abandoned to his fate; but when the Gothic king withdrew his protection, he was restrained, by pity or contempt, from offering any violence to the person of Attalus. The unfortunate Attalus, who was left without subjects or allies, embarked in one of the ports of Spain, in search of some secure and solitary retreat: but he was intercepted at sea, conducted to the presence of Honorius, led in triumph through the streets of Rome or Ravenna, and publicly exposed to the gazing multitude, on the second step of the throne of his invincible conqueror. The same measure of punishment, with which, in the days of his prosperity, he was accused of menacing his rival, was inflicted on Attalus himself; he was condemned, after the amputation of two fingers, to a perpetual exile in the Isle of Lipari, where he was supplied with the decent necessities of life. The remainder of the reign of Honorius was undisturbed by rebellion; and it may be observed, that, in the space of five years, seven usurpers had yielded to the fortune of a prince, who was himself incapable either of counsel or of action.

153

[\(return\)](#)

[Sidonius Apollinaris, (l. v. epist. 9, p. 139, and Not. Sirmond. p. 58,) after stigmatizing the inconstancy of Constantine, the facility of Jovinus, the perfidy of Gerontius, continues to observe, that all the vices of these tyrants were united in the person of Dardanus. Yet the praefect supported a respectable character in the world, and even in the church; held a devout correspondence with St. Augustin and St. Jerom; and was complimented by the latter (tom. iii. p. 66) with the epithets of Christianorum Nobilissime, and Nobilium Christianissime.]

154

[\(return\)](#)

[The expression may be understood almost literally: Olympiodorus says a sack, or a loose garment; and this method of entangling and catching an enemy, laciniis contortis, was much practised by the Huns, (Ammian. xxxi. 2.) Il fut pris vif avec des filets, is the translation of Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 608. * Note: Bekker in his Photius reads something, but in the new edition of the Bysantines, he retains the old version, which is translated Scutis, as if they protected him with their shields, in order to take him alive. Photius, Bekker, p. 58.—M]

Chapter XXXI: Invasion Of Italy, Occupation Of Territories By Barbarians.—Part VII.

The situation of Spain, separated, on all sides, from the enemies of Rome, by the sea, by the mountains, and by intermediate provinces, had secured the long tranquillity of that remote and sequestered country; and we may observe, as a sure symptom of domestic happiness, that, in a period of four hundred years, Spain furnished very few materials to the history of the Roman empire. The footsteps of the Barbarians, who, in the reign of Gallienus, had penetrated beyond the Pyrenees, were soon obliterated by the return of peace; and in the fourth century of the Christian era, the cities of Emerita, or Merida, of Corduba, Seville, Bracara, and Tarragona, were numbered with the most illustrious of the Roman world. The various plenty of the animal, the vegetable, and the mineral kingdoms, was improved and manufactured by the skill of an industrious people; and the peculiar advantages of naval stores contributed to support an extensive and profitable trade. [155](#) The arts and sciences flourished under the protection of the emperors; and if the character of the Spaniards was enfeebled by peace and servitude, the hostile approach of the Germans, who had spread terror and desolation from the Rhine to the Pyrenees, seemed to rekindle some sparks of military ardor. As long as the

defence of the mountains was intrusted to the hardy and faithful militia of the country, they successfully repelled the frequent attempts of the Barbarians. But no sooner had the national troops been compelled to resign their post to the Honorian bands, in the service of Constantine, than the gates of Spain were treacherously betrayed to the public enemy, about ten months before the sack of Rome by the Goths. [156](#) The consciousness of guilt, and the thirst of rapine, prompted the mercenary guards of the Pyrenees to desert their station; to invite the arms of the Suevi, the Vandals, and the Alani; and to swell the torrent which was poured with irresistible violence from the frontiers of Gaul to the sea of Africa. The misfortunes of Spain may be described in the language of its most eloquent historian, who has concisely expressed the passionate, and perhaps exaggerated, declamations of contemporary writers. [157](#) “The irruption of these nations was followed by the most dreadful calamities; as the Barbarians exercised their indiscriminate cruelty on the fortunes of the Romans and the Spaniards, and ravaged with equal fury the cities and the open country. The progress of famine reduced the miserable inhabitants to feed on the flesh of their fellow-creatures; and even the wild beasts, who multiplied, without control, in the desert, were exasperated, by the taste of blood, and the impatience of hunger, boldly to attack and devour their human prey. Pestilence soon appeared, the inseparable companion of famine; a large proportion of the people was swept away; and the groans of the dying excited only the envy of their surviving friends. At length the Barbarians, satiated with carnage and rapine, and afflicted by the contagious evils which they themselves had introduced, fixed their permanent seats in the depopulated country. The ancient Gallicia, whose limits included the kingdom of Old Castile, was divided between the Suevi and the Vandals; the Alani were scattered over the provinces of Carthagera and Lusitania, from the Mediterranean to the Atlantic Ocean; and the fruitful territory of Boetica was allotted to the Silingi, another branch of the Vandalic nation. After regulating this partition, the conquerors contracted with their new subjects some reciprocal engagements of protection and obedience: the lands were again cultivated; and the towns and villages were again occupied by a captive people. The greatest part of the Spaniards was even disposed to prefer this new condition of poverty and barbarism, to the severe oppressions of the Roman government; yet there were many who still asserted their native freedom; and who refused, more especially in the mountains of Gallicia, to submit to the Barbarian yoke.” [158](#)

[Without recurring to the more ancient writers, I shall quote three respectable testimonies which belong to the fourth and seventh centuries; the *Expositio totius Mundi*, (p. 16, in the third volume of Hudson’s *Minor Geographers*,) Ausonius, (de *Claris Urbibus*, p. 242, edit. Toll.,) and Isidore of Seville, (Praefat. ad. *Chron.* ap. Grotium, *Hist. Goth.* 707.) Many particulars relative to the fertility and trade of Spain may be found in Nonnius,

Hispania Illustrata; and in Huet, Hist. du Commerce des Anciens, c. 40. p. 228-234.]

156 [\(return\)](#)

[The date is accurately fixed in the Fasti, and the Chronicle of Idatius. Orosius (l. vii. c. 40, p. 578) imputes the loss of Spain to the treachery of the Honorians; while Sozomen (l. ix. c. 12) accuses only their negligence.]

157 [\(return\)](#)

[Idatius wishes to apply the prophecies of Daniel to these national calamities; and is therefore obliged to accommodate the circumstances of the event to the terms of the prediction.]

158 [\(return\)](#)

[Mariana de Rebus Hispanicis, l. v. c. 1, tom. i. p. 148. Comit. 1733. He had read, in Orosius, (l. vii. c. 41, p. 579,) that the Barbarians had turned their swords into ploughshares; and that many of the Provincials had preferred inter Barbaros pauperem libertatem, quam inter Romanos tributariam solitudinem, sustinere.]

The important present of the heads of Jovinus and Sebastian had approved the friendship of Adolphus, and restored Gaul to the obedience of his brother Honorius. Peace was incompatible with the situation and temper of the king of the Goths. He readily accepted the proposal of turning his victorious arms against the Barbarians of Spain; the troops of Constantius intercepted his communication with the seaports of Gaul, and gently pressed his march towards the Pyrenees: [159](#) he passed the mountains, and surprised, in the name of the emperor, the city of Barcelona. The fondness of Adolphus for his Roman bride, was not abated by time or possession: and the birth of a son, surnamed, from his illustrious grandsire, Theodosius, appeared to fix him forever in the interest of the republic. The loss of that infant, whose remains were deposited in a silver coffin in one of the churches near Barcelona, afflicted his parents; but the grief of the Gothic king was suspended by the labors of the field; and the course of his victories was soon interrupted by domestic treason.

He had imprudently received into his service one of the followers of Sarus; a Barbarian of a daring spirit, but of a diminutive stature; whose secret desire of revenging the death of his beloved patron was continually irritated by the sarcasms of his insolent master. Adolphus was assassinated in the palace of Barcelona; the laws of the succession were violated by a tumultuous faction; [160](#) and a stranger to the royal race, Singeric, the brother of Sarus himself, was seated on the Gothic throne. The first act of his reign was the inhuman murder of the six children of Adolphus, the issue of a former marriage, whom he tore, without pity, from the feeble arms of a venerable bishop. [161](#) The unfortunate Placidia, instead of the respectful compassion, which she might have excited in the most savage breasts, was treated with cruel and wanton insult.

The daughter of the emperor Theodosius, confounded among a crowd of vulgar captives, was compelled to march on foot above twelve miles, before the horse of a Barbarian, the assassin of a husband whom Placidia loved and lamented. [162](#)

159 [\(return\)](#)

[This mixture of force and persuasion may be fairly inferred from comparing Orosius and Jornandes, the Roman and the Gothic historian.]

160 [\(return\)](#)

[According to the system of Jornandes, (c. 33, p. 659,) the true hereditary right to the Gothic sceptre was vested in the Amali; but those princes, who were the vassals of the Huns, commanded the tribes of the Ostrogoths in some distant parts of Germany or Scythia.]

161 [\(return\)](#)

[The murder is related by Olympiodorus: but the number of the children is taken from an epitaph of suspected authority.]

162 [\(return\)](#)

[The death of Adolphus was celebrated at Constantinople with illuminations and Circensian games. (See Chron. Alexandrin.) It may seem doubtful whether the Greeks were actuated, on this occasion, be their hatred of the Barbarians, or of the Latins.]

But Placidia soon obtained the pleasure of revenge, and the view of her ignominious sufferings might rouse an indignant people against the tyrant, who was assassinated on the seventh day of his usurpation. After the death of Singeric, the free choice of the nation bestowed the Gothic sceptre on Wallia; whose warlike and ambitious temper appeared, in the beginning of his reign, extremely hostile to the republic. He marched in arms from Barcelona to the shores of the Atlantic Ocean, which the ancients revered and dreaded as the boundary of the world. But when he reached the southern promontory of Spain, [163](#) and, from the rock now covered by the fortress of Gibraltar, contemplated the neighboring and fertile coast of Africa, Wallia resumed the designs of conquest, which had been interrupted by the death of Alaric. The winds and waves again disappointed the enterprise of the Goths; and the minds of a superstitious people were deeply affected by the repeated disasters of storms and shipwrecks. In this disposition the successor of Adolphus no longer refused to listen to a Roman ambassador, whose proposals were enforced by the real, or supposed, approach of a numerous army, under the conduct of the brave Constantius. A solemn treaty was stipulated and observed; Placidia was honorably restored to her brother; six hundred thousand measures of wheat were delivered to the hungry Goths; [164](#) and Wallia engaged to draw his sword in the service of the empire. A bloody war was instantly excited among the Barbarians of Spain; and the contending princes are said to have

addressed their letters, their ambassadors, and their hostages, to the throne of the Western emperor, exhorting him to remain a tranquil spectator of their contest; the events of which must be favorable to the Romans, by the mutual slaughter of their common enemies. [165](#) The Spanish war was obstinately supported, during three campaigns, with desperate valor, and various success; and the martial achievements of Wallia diffused through the empire the superior renown of the Gothic hero. He exterminated the Silingi, who had irretrievably ruined the elegant plenty of the province of Boetica. He slew, in battle, the king of the Alani; and the remains of those Scythian wanderers, who escaped from the field, instead of choosing a new leader, humbly sought a refuge under the standard of the Vandals, with whom they were ever afterwards confounded. The Vandals themselves, and the Suevi, yielded to the efforts of the invincible Goths. The promiscuous multitude of Barbarians, whose retreat had been intercepted, were driven into the mountains of Gallicia; where they still continued, in a narrow compass and on a barren soil, to exercise their domestic and implacable hostilities. In the pride of victory, Wallia was faithful to his engagements: he restored his Spanish conquests to the obedience of Honorius; and the tyranny of the Imperial officers soon reduced an oppressed people to regret the time of their Barbarian servitude. While the event of the war was still doubtful, the first advantages obtained by the arms of Wallia had encouraged the court of Ravenna to decree the honors of a triumph to their feeble sovereign. He entered Rome like the ancient conquerors of nations; and if the monuments of servile corruption had not long since met with the fate which they deserved, we should probably find that a crowd of poets and orators, of magistrates and bishops, applauded the fortune, the wisdom, and the invincible courage, of the emperor Honorius. [166](#)

163 [\(return\)](#)

[

*Quod Tartessiacis avus hujus Vallia terris
Vandalicas turmas, et juncti Martis Alanos
Stravit, et occiduum texere cadavera Calpen.*

Sidon. Apollinar. in Panegyr. Anthem. 363 p. 300, edit. Sirmond.]

164 [\(return\)](#)

[This supply was very acceptable: the Goths were insulted by the Vandals of Spain with the epithet of Truli, because in their extreme distress, they had given a piece of gold for a trula, or about half a pound of flour. Olympiod. apud Phot. p. 189.]

165 [\(return\)](#)

[Orosius inserts a copy of these pretended letters. Tu cum omnibus pacem habe, omniumque obsides accipe; nos nobis conflagimus nobis perimus, tibi vincimus; immortalis vero quaestus erit Reipublicae tuae, si utrique pereamus. The idea is just; but I cannot persuade myself that it was entertained or expressed by the Barbarians.]

[Roman triumphans ingreditur, is the formal expression of Prosper's Chronicle. The facts which relate to the death of Adolphus, and the exploits of Wallia, are related from Olympiodorus, (ap. Phot. p. 188,) Orosius, (l. vii. c. 43 p. 584-587,) Jornandes, (de Rebus p. 31, 32,) and the chronicles of Idatius and Isidore.]

Such a triumph might have been justly claimed by the ally of Rome, if Wallia, before he repassed the Pyrenees, had extirpated the seeds of the Spanish war. His victorious Goths, forty-three years after they had passed the Danube, were established, according to the faith of treaties, in the possession of the second Aquitain; a maritime province between the Garonne and the Loire, under the civil and ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Bourdeaux. That metropolis, advantageously situated for the trade of the ocean, was built in a regular and elegant form; and its numerous inhabitants were distinguished among the Gauls by their wealth, their learning, and the politeness of their manners. The adjacent province, which has been fondly compared to the garden of Eden, is blessed with a fruitful soil, and a temperate climate; the face of the country displayed the arts and the rewards of industry; and the Goths, after their martial toils, luxuriously exhausted the rich vineyards of Aquitain. [167](#) The Gothic limits were enlarged by the additional gift of some neighboring dioceses; and the successors of Alaric fixed their royal residence at Thoulouse, which included five populous quarters, or cities, within the spacious circuit of its walls. About the same time, in the last years of the reign of Honorius, the Goths, the Burgundians, and the Franks, obtained a permanent seat and dominion in the provinces of Gaul. The liberal grant of the usurper Jovinus to his Burgundian allies, was confirmed by the lawful emperor; the lands of the First, or Upper, Germany, were ceded to those formidable Barbarians; and they gradually occupied, either by conquest or treaty, the two provinces which still retain, with the titles of Duchy and County, the national appellation of Burgundy. [168](#) The Franks, the valiant and faithful allies of the Roman republic, were soon tempted to imitate the invaders, whom they had so bravely resisted. Treves, the capital of Gaul, was pillaged by their lawless bands; and the humble colony, which they so long maintained in the district of Toxandia, in Brabant, insensibly multiplied along the banks of the Meuse and Scheld, till their independent power filled the whole extent of the Second, or Lower Germany. These facts may be sufficiently justified by historic evidence; but the foundation of the French monarchy by Pharamond, the conquests, the laws, and even the existence, of that hero, have been justly arraigned by the impartial severity of modern criticism. [169](#)

[Ausonius (de Claris Urbibus, p. 257-262) celebrates Bourdeaux with the partial affection of a native. See in Salvian (de Gubern. Dei, p. 228.

Paris, 1608) a florid description of the provinces of Aquitain and Novempopulania.]

168

[\(return\)](#)

[Orosius (l. vii. c. 32, p. 550) commends the mildness and modesty of these Burgundians, who treated their subjects of Gaul as their Christian brethren. Mascou has illustrated the origin of their kingdom in the four first annotations at the end of his laborious History of the Ancient Germans, vol. ii. p. 555-572, of the English translation.]

169

[\(return\)](#)

[See Mascou, l. viii. c. 43, 44, 45. Except in a short and suspicious line of the Chronicle of Prosper, (in tom. i. p. 638,) the name of Pharamond is never mentioned before the seventh century. The author of the Gesta Francorum (in tom. ii. p. 543) suggests, probably enough, that the choice of Pharamond, or at least of a king, was recommended to the Franks by his father Marcomir, who was an exile in Tuscany. Note: The first mention of Pharamond is in the Gesta Francorum, assigned to about the year 720. St. Martin, iv. 469. The modern French writers in general subscribe to the opinion of Thierry: Faramond fils de Markomir, quo que son nom soit bien germanique, et son regne possible, ne figure pas dans les histoires les plus dignes de foi. A. Thierry, Lettres l'Histoire de France, p. 90.—M.]

The ruin of the opulent provinces of Gaul may be dated from the establishment of these Barbarians, whose alliance was dangerous and oppressive, and who were capriciously impelled, by interest or passion, to violate the public peace. A heavy and partial ransom was imposed on the surviving provincials, who had escaped the calamities of war; the fairest and most fertile lands were assigned to the rapacious strangers, for the use of their families, their slaves, and their cattle; and the trembling natives relinquished with a sigh the inheritance of their fathers. Yet these domestic misfortunes, which are seldom the lot of a vanquished people, had been felt and inflicted by the Romans themselves, not only in the insolence of foreign conquest, but in the madness of civil discord. The Triumvirs proscribed eighteen of the most flourishing colonies of Italy; and distributed their lands and houses to the veterans who revenged the death of Caesar, and oppressed the liberty of their country. Two poets of unequal fame have deplored, in similar circumstances, the loss of their patrimony; but the legionaries of Augustus appear to have surpassed, in violence and injustice, the Barbarians who invaded Gaul under the reign of Honorius. It was not without the utmost difficulty that Virgil escaped from the sword of the Centurion, who had usurped his farm in the neighborhood of Mantua; [170](#) but Paulinus of Bourdeaux received a sum of money from his Gothic purchaser, which he accepted with pleasure and surprise; and though it was much inferior to the real value of his estate, this act of rapine was

disguised by some colors of moderation and equity. [171](#) The odious name of conquerors was softened into the mild and friendly appellation of the guests of the Romans; and the Barbarians of Gaul, more especially the Goths, repeatedly declared, that they were bound to the people by the ties of hospitality, and to the emperor by the duty of allegiance and military service. The title of Honorius and his successors, their laws, and their civil magistrates, were still respected in the provinces of Gaul, of which they had resigned the possession to the Barbarian allies; and the kings, who exercised a supreme and independent authority over their native subjects, ambitiously solicited the more honorable rank of master-generals of the Imperial armies. [172](#) Such was the involuntary reverence which the Roman name still impressed on the minds of those warriors, who had borne away in triumph the spoils of the Capitol.

170

[\(return\)](#)

[O Lycida, vivi pervenimus: advena nostri (Quod nunquam veriti sumus) ut possessor agelli Diseret: Haec mea sunt; veteres migrate coloni. Nunc victi tristes, &c.—See the whole of the ninth eclogue, with the useful Commentary of Servius. Fifteen miles of the Mantuan territory were assigned to the veterans, with a reservation, in favor of the inhabitants, of three miles round the city. Even in this favor they were cheated by Alfenus Varus, a famous lawyer, and one of the commissioners, who measured eight hundred paces of water and morass.]

171

[\(return\)](#)

[See the remarkable passage of the Eucharisticon of Paulinus, 575, apud Mascou, l. viii. c. 42.]

172

[\(return\)](#)

[This important truth is established by the accuracy of Tillemont, (Hist. des Emp. tom. v. p. 641,) and by the ingenuity of the Abbe Dubos, (Hist. de l'Etablissement de la Monarchie Francoise dans les Gaules, tom. i. p. 259.)]

Whilst Italy was ravaged by the Goths, and a succession of feeble tyrants oppressed the provinces beyond the Alps, the British island separated itself from the body of the Roman empire. The regular forces, which guarded that remote province, had been gradually withdrawn; and Britain was abandoned without defence to the Saxon pirates, and the savages of Ireland and Caledonia. The Britons, reduced to this extremity, no longer relied on the tardy and doubtful aid of a declining monarchy. They assembled in arms, repelled the invaders, and rejoiced in the important discovery of their own strength. [173](#) Afflicted by similar calamities, and actuated by the same spirit, the Armorican provinces (a name which comprehended the maritime countries of Gaul between the Seine and the Loire [174](#) resolved to imitate the example of the neighboring island. They expelled the Roman magistrates, who acted under the authority of the usurper Constantine; and a free government was established among a people who had

so long been subject to the arbitrary will of a master. The independence of Britain and Armorica was soon confirmed by Honorius himself, the lawful emperor of the West; and the letters, by which he committed to the new states the care of their own safety, might be interpreted as an absolute and perpetual abdication of the exercise and rights of sovereignty. This interpretation was, in some measure, justified by the event.

After the usurpers of Gaul had successively fallen, the maritime provinces were restored to the empire. Yet their obedience was imperfect and precarious: the vain, inconstant, rebellious disposition of the people, was incompatible either with freedom or servitude; [175](#) and Armorica, though it could not long maintain the form of a republic, [176](#) was agitated by frequent and destructive revolts. Britain was irrecoverably lost. [177](#) But as the emperors wisely acquiesced in the independence of a remote province, the separation was not imbittered by the reproach of tyranny or rebellion; and the claims of allegiance and protection were succeeded by the mutual and voluntary offices of national friendship. [178](#)

173

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus (l. vi. 376, 383) relates in a few words the revolt of Britain and Armorica. Our antiquarians, even the great Cambder himself, have been betrayed into many gross errors, by their imperfect knowledge of the history of the continent.]

174

[\(return\)](#)

[The limits of Armorica are defined by two national geographers, Messieurs De Valois and D'Anville, in their Notitias of Ancient Gaul. The word had been used in a more extensive, and was afterwards contracted to a much narrower, signification.]

175

[\(return\)](#)

[Gens inter geminos notissima clauditur amnes,
Armoricana prius veteri cognomine dicta.
Torva, ferox, ventosa, procax, incauta, rebellis;
Inconstans, disparque sibi novitatis amore;
Prodiga verborum, sed non et prodiga facti.
 Erricus, Monach. in Vit. St. Germani. l. v. apud Vales. Notit. Galliarum, p. 43. Valesius alleges several testimonies to confirm this character; to which I shall add the evidence of the presbyter Constantine, (A.D. 488,) who, in the life of St. Germain, calls the Armorican rebels *mobilem et indisciplinatum populum*. See the Historians of France, tom. i. p. 643.]

176

[\(return\)](#)

[I thought it necessary to enter my protest against this part of the system of the Abbe Dubos, which Montesquieu has so vigorously opposed. See *Esprit des Loix*, l. xxx. c. 24. Note: See *Mémoires de Gallet sur l'Origine des Bretons*, quoted by Daru

Histoire de Bretagne, i. p. 57. According to the opinion of these authors, the government of Armorica was monarchical from the period of its independence on the Roman empire.—M.]

177

[\(return\)](#)

[The words of Procopius (de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 2, p. 181, Louvre edition) in a very important passage, which has been too much neglected Even Bede (Hist. Gent. Anglican. l. i. c. 12, p. 50, edit. Smith) acknowledges that the Romans finally left Britain in the reign of Honorius. Yet our modern historians and antiquaries extend the term of their dominion; and there are some who allow only the interval of a few months between their departure and the arrival of the Saxons.]

178

[\(return\)](#)

[Bede has not forgotten the occasional aid of the legions against the Scots and Picts; and more authentic proof will hereafter be produced, that the independent Britons raised 12,000 men for the service of the emperor Anthemius, in Gaul.]

This revolution dissolved the artificial fabric of civil and military government; and the independent country, during a period of forty years, till the descent of the Saxons, was ruled by the authority of the clergy, the nobles, and the municipal towns. [179](#) I. Zosimus, who alone has preserved the memory of this singular transaction, very accurately observes, that the letters of Honorius were addressed to the cities of Britain. [180](#) Under the protection of the Romans, ninety-two considerable towns had arisen in the several parts of that great province; and, among these, thirty-three cities were distinguished above the rest by their superior privileges and importance. [181](#) Each of these cities, as in all the other provinces of the empire, formed a legal corporation, for the purpose of regulating their domestic policy; and the powers of municipal government were distributed among annual magistrates, a select senate, and the assembly of the people, according to the original model of the Roman constitution. [182](#) The management of a common revenue, the exercise of civil and criminal jurisdiction, and the habits of public counsel and command, were inherent to these petty republics; and when they asserted their independence, the youth of the city, and of the adjacent districts, would naturally range themselves under the standard of the magistrate. But the desire of obtaining the advantages, and of escaping the burdens, of political society, is a perpetual and inexhaustible source of discord; nor can it reasonably be presumed, that the restoration of British freedom was exempt from tumult and faction. The preeminence of birth and fortune must have been frequently violated by bold and popular citizens; and the haughty nobles, who complained that they were become the subjects of their own servants, [183](#) would sometimes regret the reign of an arbitrary monarch.

II. The jurisdiction of each city over the adjacent country, was supported by the patrimonial influence of the principal senators; and the smaller towns, the villages, and the proprietors of land, consulted their own safety by adhering to the shelter of these rising republics. The sphere of their attraction was proportioned to the respective degrees of their wealth and populousness; but the hereditary lords of ample possessions, who were not oppressed by the neighborhood of any powerful city, aspired to the rank of independent princes, and boldly exercised the rights of peace and war. The gardens and villas, which exhibited some faint imitation of Italian elegance, would soon be converted into strong castles, the refuge, in time of danger, of the adjacent country: [184](#) the produce of the land was applied to purchase arms and horses; to maintain a military force of slaves, of peasants, and of licentious followers; and the chieftain might assume, within his own domain, the powers of a civil magistrate. Several of these British chiefs might be the genuine posterity of ancient kings; and many more would be tempted to adopt this honorable genealogy, and to vindicate their hereditary claims, which had been suspended by the usurpation of the Caesars. [185](#) Their situation and their hopes would dispose them to affect the dress, the language, and the customs of their ancestors. If the princes of Britain relapsed into barbarism, while the cities studiously preserved the laws and manners of Rome, the whole island must have been gradually divided by the distinction of two national parties; again broken into a thousand subdivisions of war and faction, by the various provocations of interest and resentment. The public strength, instead of being united against a foreign enemy, was consumed in obscure and intestine quarrels; and the personal merit which had placed a successful leader at the head of his equals, might enable him to subdue the freedom of some neighboring cities; and to claim a rank among the tyrants, [186](#) who infested Britain after the dissolution of the Roman government. III. The British church might be composed of thirty or forty bishops, [187](#) with an adequate proportion of the inferior clergy; and the want of riches (for they seem to have been poor [188](#)) would compel them to deserve the public esteem, by a decent and exemplary behavior.

The interest, as well as the temper of the clergy, was favorable to the peace and union of their distracted country: those salutary lessons might be frequently inculcated in their popular discourses; and the episcopal synods were the only councils that could pretend to the weight and authority of a national assembly.

In such councils, where the princes and magistrates sat promiscuously with the bishops, the important affairs of the state, as well as of the church, might be freely debated; differences reconciled, alliances formed, contributions imposed, wise resolutions often concerted, and sometimes executed; and there is reason to believe, that, in moments of extreme danger, a Pendragon, or Dictator, was elected by the general consent of the Britons. These pastoral cares, so worthy of the episcopal character, were interrupted, however, by zeal and superstition; and the British clergy

incessantly labored to eradicate the Pelagian heresy, which they abhorred, as the peculiar disgrace of their native country. [189](#)

179 [\(return\)](#)

[I owe it to myself, and to historic truth, to declare, that some circumstances in this paragraph are founded only on conjecture and analogy. The stubbornness of our language has sometimes forced me to deviate from the conditional into the indicative mood.]

180 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. vi. p. 383.]

181 [\(return\)](#)

[Two cities of Britain were municipia, nine colonies, ten Latii jure donatoe, twelve stipendiarioe of eminent note. This detail is taken from Richard of Cirencester, de Situ Britanniae, p. 36; and though it may not seem probable that he wrote from the Mss. of a Roman general, he shows a genuine knowledge of antiquity, very extraordinary for a monk of the fourteenth century.

Note: The names may be found in Whitaker's Hist. of Manchester vol. ii. 330, 379. Turner, Hist. Anglo-Saxons, i. 216.—M.]

182 [\(return\)](#)

[See Maffei Verona Illustrata, part i. l. v. p. 83-106.]

183 [\(return\)](#)

[Leges restituit, libertatemque reducit, Et servos famulis non sinit esse suis. Itinerar. Rutil. l. i. 215.]

184 [\(return\)](#)

[An inscription (apud Sirmond, Not. ad Sidon. Apollinar. p. 59) describes a castle, cum muris et portis, tutioni omnium, erected by Dardanus on his own estate, near Sisteron, in the second Narbonnese, and named by him Theopolis.]

185 [\(return\)](#)

[The establishment of their power would have been easy indeed, if we could adopt the impracticable scheme of a lively and learned antiquarian; who supposes that the British monarchs of the several tribes continued to reign, though with subordinate jurisdiction, from the time of Claudius to that of Honorius. See Whitaker's History of Manchester, vol. i. p. 247-257.]

186 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 3, p. 181. Britannia fertilis provincia tyrannorum, was the expression of Jerom, in the year 415 (tom. ii. p. 255, ad Ctesiphont.) By the pilgrims, who resorted every

year to the Holy Land, the monk of Bethlem received the earliest and most accurate intelligence.]

187 [\(return\)](#)

[See Bingham's Eccles. Antiquities, vol. i. l. ix. c. 6, p. 394.]

188 [\(return\)](#)

[It is reported of three British bishops who assisted at the council of Rimini, A.D. 359, tam pauperes fuisset ut nihil haberent. Sulpicius Severus, Hist. Sacra, l. ii. p. 420. Some of their brethren however, were in better circumstances.]

189 [\(return\)](#)

[Consult Usher, de Antiq. Eccles. Britannicar. c. 8-12.]

It is somewhat remarkable, or rather it is extremely natural, that the revolt of Britain and Armorica should have introduced an appearance of liberty into the obedient provinces of Gaul. In a solemn edict, [190](#) filled with the strongest assurances of that paternal affection which princes so often express, and so seldom feel, the emperor Honorius promulgated his intention of convening an annual assembly of the seven provinces: a name peculiarly appropriated to Aquitaine and the ancient Narbonnese, which had long since exchanged their Celtic rudeness for the useful and elegant arts of Italy. [191](#) Arles, the seat of government and commerce, was appointed for the place of the assembly; which regularly continued twenty-eight days, from the fifteenth of August to the thirteenth of September, of every year. It consisted of the Prætorian præfect of the Gauls; of seven provincial governors, one consular, and six presidents; of the magistrates, and perhaps the bishops, of about sixty cities; and of a competent, though indefinite, number of the most honorable and opulent possessors of land, who might justly be considered as the representatives of their country. They were empowered to interpret and communicate the laws of their sovereign; to expose the grievances and wishes of their constituents; to moderate the excessive or unequal weight of taxes; and to deliberate on every subject of local or national importance, that could tend to the restoration of the peace and prosperity of the seven provinces. If such an institution, which gave the people an interest in their own government, had been universally established by Trajan or the Antonines, the seeds of public wisdom and virtue might have been cherished and propagated in the empire of Rome. The privileges of the subject would have secured the throne of the monarch; the abuses of an arbitrary administration might have been prevented, in some degree, or corrected, by the interposition of these representative assemblies; and the country would have been defended against a foreign enemy by the arms of natives and freemen. Under the mild and generous influence of liberty, the Roman empire might have remained invincible and immortal; or if its excessive magnitude, and the instability of human affairs, had opposed such perpetual continuance, its vital and constituent members might have

separately preserved their vigor and independence. But in the decline of the empire, when every principle of health and life had been exhausted, the tardy application of this partial remedy was incapable of producing any important or salutary effects. The emperor Honorius expresses his surprise, that he must compel the reluctant provinces to accept a privilege which they should ardently have solicited. A fine of three, or even five, pounds of gold, was imposed on the absent representatives; who seem to have declined this imaginary gift of a free constitution, as the last and most cruel insult of their oppressors.

190

[\(return\)](#)

[See the correct text of this edict, as published by Sirmond, (Not. ad Sidon. Apollin. p. 148.) Hincmar of Rheims, who assigns a place to the bishops, had probably seen (in the ninth century) a more perfect copy. Dubos, Hist. Critique de la Monarchie Francoise, tom. i. p. 241-255]

191

[\(return\)](#)

[It is evident from the Notitia, that the seven provinces were the Viennensis, the maritime Alps, the first and second Narbonnese Novempopulania, and the first and second Aquitain. In the room of the first Aquitain, the Abbe Dubos, on the authority of Hincmar, desires to introduce the first Lugdunensis, or Lyonnese.]

Chapter XXXII: Emperors Arcadius, Eutropius, Theodosius II.—Part I.

Arcadius Emperor Of The East.—Administration And Disgrace Of Eutropius.—Revolt Of Gainas.—Persecution Of St. John Chrysostom.—Theodosius II. Emperor Of The East.—His Sister Pulcheria.—His Wife Eudocia.—The Persian War, And Division Of Armenia.

The division of the Roman world between the sons of Theodosius marks the final establishment of the empire of the East, which, from the reign of Arcadius to the taking of Constantinople by the Turks, subsisted one thousand and fifty-eight years, in a state of premature and perpetual decay. The sovereign of that empire assumed, and obstinately retained, the vain, and at length fictitious, title of Emperor of the Romans; and the hereditary appellation of Caesar and Augustus continued to declare, that he was the legitimate successor of the first of men, who had reigned over the first of nations. The place of Constantinople rivalled, and perhaps excelled, the magnificence of Persia; and the eloquent sermons of St. Chrysostom [1](#) celebrate, while they condemn, the pompous luxury of the reign of Arcadius. “The emperor,” says he, “wears on his head either a diadem, or a crown of gold, decorated with precious stones of inestimable value. These ornaments, and his purple garments, are reserved for his sacred person alone; and

his robes of silk are embroidered with the figures of golden dragons. His throne is of massy gold. Whenever he appears in public, he is surrounded by his courtiers, his guards, and his attendants. Their spears, their shields, their cuirasses, the bridles and trappings of their horses, have either the substance or the appearance of gold; and the large splendid boss in the midst of their shield is encircled with smaller bosses, which represent the shape of the human eye. The two mules that drew the chariot of the monarch are perfectly white, and shining all over with gold. The chariot itself, of pure and solid gold, attracts the admiration of the spectators, who contemplate the purple curtains, the snowy carpet, the size of the precious stones, and the resplendent plates of gold, that glitter as they are agitated by the motion of the carriage. The Imperial pictures are white, on a blue ground; the emperor appears seated on his throne, with his arms, his horses, and his guards beside him; and his vanquished enemies in chains at his feet.” The successors of Constantine established their perpetual residence in the royal city, which he had erected on the verge of Europe and Asia. Inaccessible to the menaces of their enemies, and perhaps to the complaints of their people, they received, with each wind, the tributary productions of every climate; while the impregnable strength of their capital continued for ages to defy the hostile attempts of the Barbarians. Their dominions were bounded by the Adriatic and the Tigris; and the whole interval of twenty-five days’ navigation, which separated the extreme cold of Scythia from the torrid zone of Æthiopia, [2](#) was comprehended within the limits of the empire of the East. The populous countries of that empire were the seat of art and learning, of luxury and wealth; and the inhabitants, who had assumed the language and manners of Greeks, styled themselves, with some appearance of truth, the most enlightened and civilized portion of the human species. The form of government was a pure and simple monarchy; the name of the Roman Republic, which so long preserved a faint tradition of freedom, was confined to the Latin provinces; and the princes of Constantinople measured their greatness by the servile obedience of their people. They were ignorant how much this passive disposition enervates and degrades every faculty of the mind. The subjects, who had resigned their will to the absolute commands of a master, were equally incapable of guarding their lives and fortunes against the assaults of the Barbarians, or of defending their reason from the terrors of superstition.

[Father Montfaucon, who, by the command of his Benedictine superiors, was compelled (see Longueruana, tom. i. p. 205) to execute the laborious edition of St. Chrysostom, in thirteen volumes in folio, (Paris, 1738,) amused himself with extracting from that immense collection of morals, some curious antiquities, which illustrate the manners of the Theodosian age, (see Chrysostom, Opera, tom. xiii. p. 192-196,) and his French Dissertation, in the Mémoires de l’Acad. des Inscriptions, tom. xiii. p. 474-490.]

[According to the loose reckoning, that a ship could sail, with a fair wind, 1000 stadia, or 125 miles, in the revolution of a day and night, Diodorus Siculus computes ten days from the Palus Moeotis to Rhodes, and four days from Rhodes to Alexandria. The navigation of the Nile from Alexandria to Syene, under the tropic of Cancer, required, as it was against the stream, ten days more. Diodor. Sicul. tom. i. l. iii. p. 200, edit. Wesseling. He might, without much impropriety, measure the extreme heat from the verge of the torrid zone; but he speaks of the Moeotis in the 47th degree of northern latitude, as if it lay within the polar circle.]

The first events of the reign of Arcadius and Honorius are so intimately connected, that the rebellion of the Goths, and the fall of Rufinus, have already claimed a place in the history of the West. It has already been observed, that Eutropius, [3](#) one of the principal eunuchs of the palace of Constantinople, succeeded the haughty minister whose ruin he had accomplished, and whose vices he soon imitated. Every order of the state bowed to the new favorite; and their tame and obsequious submission encouraged him to insult the laws, and, what is still more difficult and dangerous, the manners of his country. Under the weakest of the predecessors of Arcadius, the reign of the eunuchs had been secret and almost invisible. They insinuated themselves into the confidence of the prince; but their ostensible functions were confined to the menial service of the wardrobe and Imperial bed-chamber. They might direct, in a whisper, the public counsels, and blast, by their malicious suggestions, the fame and fortunes of the most illustrious citizens; but they never presumed to stand forward in the front of empire, [4](#) or to profane the public honors of the state. Eutropius was the first of his artificial sex, who dared to assume the character of a Roman magistrate and general. Sometimes, in the presence of the blushing senate, he ascended the tribunal to pronounce judgment, or to repeat elaborate harangues; and, sometimes, appeared on horseback, at the head of his troops, in the dress and armor of a hero. The disregard of custom and decency always betrays a weak and ill-regulated mind; nor does Eutropius seem to have compensated for the folly of the design by any superior merit or ability in the execution. His former habits of life had not introduced him to the study of the laws, or the exercises of the field; his awkward and unsuccessful attempts provoked the secret contempt of the spectators; the Goths expressed their wish that such a general might always command the armies of Rome; and the name of the minister was branded with ridicule, more pernicious, perhaps, than hatred, to a public character. The subjects of Arcadius were exasperated by the recollection, that this deformed and decrepit eunuch, [6](#) who so perversely mimicked the actions of a man, was born in the most abject condition of servitude; that before he entered the Imperial palace, he had been successively sold and purchased by a hundred masters, who had exhausted his youthful strength in every mean and infamous office, and at length dismissed him, in his old age, to freedom and

poverty. [7](#) While these disgraceful stories were circulated, and perhaps exaggerated, in private conversation, the vanity of the favorite was flattered with the most extraordinary honors. In the senate, in the capital, in the provinces, the statues of Eutropius were erected, in brass, or marble, decorated with the symbols of his civil and military virtues, and inscribed with the pompous title of the third founder of Constantinople. He was promoted to the rank of patrician, which began to signify in a popular, and even legal, acceptance, the father of the emperor; and the last year of the fourth century was polluted by the consulship of a eunuch and a slave. This strange and inexpiable prodigy [8](#) awakened, however, the prejudices of the Romans. The effeminate consul was rejected by the West, as an indelible stain to the annals of the republic; and without invoking the shades of Brutus and Camillus, the colleague of Eutropius, a learned and respectable magistrate, [9](#) sufficiently represented the different maxims of the two administrations.

3

[\(return\)](#)

[Barthius, who adored his author with the blind superstition of a commentator, gives the preference to the two books which Claudian composed against Eutropius, above all his other productions, (Baillet Jugemens des Savans, tom. iv. p. 227.) They are indeed a very elegant and spirited satire; and would be more valuable in an historical light, if the invective were less vague and more temperate.]

4

[\(return\)](#)

[After lamenting the progress of the eunuchs in the Roman palace, and defining their proper functions, Claudian adds,

A fronte recedant.

Imperii.

--In *Eutrop.* i. 422.

Yet it does not appear that the eunuchs had assumed any of the efficient offices of the empire, and he is styled only Praepositus sacri cubiculi, in the edict of his banishment. See Cod. Theod. l. leg 17.

Jamque oblita sui, nec sobria divitiis mens

In miseras leges hominumque negotia ludit

Judicat eunuchus.....

Arma etiam violare parat.....

Claudian, (i. 229-270,) with that mixture of indignation and humor which always pleases in a satiric poet, describes the insolent folly of the eunuch, the disgrace of the empire, and the joy of the Goths.

Gaudet, cum viderit, hostis,

Et sentit jam deesse viros.]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[The poet's lively description of his deformity (i. 110-125) is confirmed by the authentic testimony of Chrysostom, (tom. iii. p. 384, edit Montfaucon;) who observes, that when the paint was washed

away the face of Eutropius appeared more ugly and wrinkled than that of an old woman. Claudian remarks, (i. 469,) and the remark must have been founded on experience, that there was scarcely an interval between the youth and the decrepit age of a eunuch.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[Eutropius appears to have been a native of Armenia or Assyria. His three services, which Claudian more particularly describes, were these: 1. He spent many years as the catamite of Ptolemy, a groom or soldier of the Imperial stables. 2. Ptolemy gave him to the old general Arintheus, for whom he very skilfully exercised the profession of a pimp. 3. He was given, on her marriage, to the daughter of Arintheus; and the future consul was employed to comb her hair, to present the silver ewer to wash and to fan his mistress in hot weather. See l. i. 31-137.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian, (l. i. in Eutrop. 1.—22,) after enumerating the various prodigies of monstrous births, speaking animals, showers of blood or stones, double suns, &c., adds, with some exaggeration,

Omnia cesserunt eunucho consule monstra.

The first book concludes with a noble speech of the goddess of Rome to her favorite Honorius, deprecating the new ignominy to which she was exposed.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Fl. Mallius Theodorus, whose civil honors, and philosophical works, have been celebrated by Claudian in a very elegant panegyric.]

The bold and vigorous mind of Rufinus seems to have been actuated by a more sanguinary and revengeful spirit; but the avarice of the eunuch was not less insatiate than that of the praefect. [10](#) As long as he despoiled the oppressors, who had enriched themselves with the plunder of the people, Eutropius might gratify his covetous disposition without much envy or injustice: but the progress of his rapine soon invaded the wealth which had been acquired by lawful inheritance, or laudable industry. The usual methods of extortion were practised and improved; and Claudian has sketched a lively and original picture of the public auction of the state. “The impotence of the eunuch,” says that agreeable satirist, “has served only to stimulate his avarice: the same hand which in his servile condition, was exercised in petty thefts, to unlock the coffers of his master, now grasps the riches of the world; and this infamous broker of the empire appreciates and divides the Roman provinces from Mount Haemus to the Tigris. One man, at the expense of his villa, is made proconsul of Asia; a second purchases Syria

with his wife's jewels; and a third laments that he has exchanged his paternal estate for the government of Bithynia. In the antechamber of Eutropius, a large tablet is exposed to public view, which marks the respective prices of the provinces. The different value of Pontus, of Galatia, of Lydia, is accurately distinguished. Lycia may be obtained for so many thousand pieces of gold; but the opulence of Phrygia will require a more considerable sum. The eunuch wishes to obliterate, by the general disgrace, his personal ignominy; and as he has been sold himself, he is desirous of selling the rest of mankind. In the eager contention, the balance, which contains the fate and fortunes of the province, often trembles on the beam; and till one of the scales is inclined, by a superior weight, the mind of the impartial judge remains in anxious suspense. Such," continues the indignant poet, "are the fruits of Roman valor, of the defeat of Antiochus, and of the triumph of Pompey." This venal prostitution of public honors secured the impunity of future crimes; but the riches, which Eutropius derived from confiscation, were already stained with injustice; since it was decent to accuse, and to condemn, the proprietors of the wealth, which he was impatient to confiscate. Some noble blood was shed by the hand of the executioner; and the most inhospitable extremities of the empire were filled with innocent and illustrious exiles. Among the generals and consuls of the East, Abundantius [12](#) had reason to dread the first effects of the resentment of Eutropius. He had been guilty of the unpardonable crime of introducing that abject slave to the palace of Constantinople; and some degree of praise must be allowed to a powerful and ungrateful favorite, who was satisfied with the disgrace of his benefactor. Abundantius was stripped of his ample fortunes by an Imperial rescript, and banished to Pityus, on the Euxine, the last frontier of the Roman world; where he subsisted by the precarious mercy of the Barbarians, till he could obtain, after the fall of Eutropius, a milder exile at Sidon, in Phoenicia. The destruction of Timasius [13](#) required a more serious and regular mode of attack. That great officer, the master-general of the armies of Theodosius, had signalized his valor by a decisive victory, which he obtained over the Goths of Thessaly; but he was too prone, after the example of his sovereign, to enjoy the luxury of peace, and to abandon his confidence to wicked and designing flatterers. Timasius had despised the public clamor, by promoting an infamous dependant to the command of a cohort; and he deserved to feel the ingratitude of Bargus, who was secretly instigated by the favorite to accuse his patron of a treasonable conspiracy. The general was arraigned before the tribunal of Arcadius himself; and the principal eunuch stood by the side of the throne to suggest the questions and answers of his sovereign. But as this form of trial might be deemed partial and arbitrary, the further inquiry into the crimes of Timasius was delegated to Saturninus and Procopius; the former of consular rank, the latter still respected as the father-in-law of the emperor Valens. The appearances of a fair and legal proceeding were maintained by the blunt honesty of Procopius; and he yielded with reluctance to the obsequious dexterity of his colleague, who pronounced a sentence of condemnation against the unfortunate Timasius. His immense riches were confiscated in the name of the emperor, and for the benefit of the

favorite; and he was doomed to perpetual exile a Oasis, a solitary spot in the midst of the sandy deserts of Libya. [14](#) Secluded from all human converse, the master-general of the Roman armies was lost forever to the world; but the circumstances of his fate have been related in a various and contradictory manner. It is insinuated that Eutropius despatched a private order for his secret execution. [15](#) It was reported, that, in attempting to escape from Oasis, he perished in the desert, of thirst and hunger; and that his dead body was found on the sands of Libya. [16](#) It has been asserted, with more confidence, that his son Syagrius, after successfully eluding the pursuit of the agents and emissaries of the court, collected a band of African robbers; that he rescued Timasius from the place of his exile; and that both the father and the son disappeared from the knowledge of mankind. [17](#) But the ungrateful Bargus, instead of being suffered to possess the reward of guilt was soon after circumvented and destroyed, by the more powerful villany of the minister himself, who retained sense and spirit enough to abhor the instrument of his own crimes.

10

[\(return\)](#)

[Drunk with riches, is the forcible expression of Zosimus, (l. v. p. 301;) and the avarice of Eutropius is equally execrated in the Lexicon of Suidas and the Chronicle of Marcellinus Chrysostom had often admonished the favorite of the vanity and danger of immoderate wealth, tom. iii. p. 381. -certantum saepe duorum Diversum suspendit onus: cum pondere iudex Vergit, et in geminas nutat provincia lances. Claudian (i. 192-209) so curiously distinguishes the circumstances of the sale, that they all seem to allude to particular anecdotes.]

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian (i. 154-170) mentions the guilt and exile of Abundantius; nor could he fail to quote the example of the artist, who made the first trial of the brazen bull, which he presented to Phalaris. See Zosimus, l. v. p. 302. Jerom, tom. i. p. 26. The difference of place is easily reconciled; but the decisive authority of Asterius of Amasia (Orat. iv. p. 76, apud Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 435) must turn the scale in favor of Pityus.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Suidas (most probably from the history of Eunapius) has given a very unfavorable picture of Timasius. The account of his accuser, the judges, trial, &c., is perfectly agreeable to the practice of ancient and modern courts. (See Zosimus, l. v. p. 298, 299, 300.) I am almost tempted to quote the romance of a great master, (Fielding's Works, vol. iv. p. 49, &c., 8vo. edit.,) which may be considered as the history of human nature.]

- 14 [\(return\)](#)
[The great Oasis was one of the spots in the sands of Libya, watered with springs, and capable of producing wheat, barley, and palm-trees. It was about three days' journey from north to south, about half a day in breadth, and at the distance of about five days' march to the west of Abydus, on the Nile. See D'Anville, Description de l'Egypte, p. 186, 187, 188. The barren desert which encompasses Oasis (Zosimus, l. v. p. 300) has suggested the idea of comparative fertility, and even the epithet of the happy island]
- 15 [\(return\)](#)
[The line of Claudian, in Eutrop. l. i. 180,
Marmaricus claris violatur caedibus Hammon,
evidently alludes to his persuasion of the death of Timasius.
* Note: A fragment of Eunapius confirms this account. "Thus having deprived this great person of his life—a eunuch, a man, a slave, a consul, a minister of the bed-chamber, one bred in camps." Mai, p. 283, in Niebuhr. 87—M.]
- 16 [\(return\)](#)
[Sozomen, l. viii. c. 7. He speaks from report.]
- 17 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. v. p. 300. Yet he seems to suspect that this rumor was spread by the friends of Eutropius.]

The public hatred, and the despair of individuals, continually threatened, or seemed to threaten, the personal safety of Eutropius; as well as of the numerous adherents, who were attached to his fortune, and had been promoted by his venal favor. For their mutual defence, he contrived the safeguard of a law, which violated every principal of humanity and justice. [18](#) I. It is enacted, in the name, and by the authority of Arcadius, that all those who should conspire, either with subjects or with strangers, against the lives of any of the persons whom the emperor considers as the members of his own body, shall be punished with death and confiscation. This species of fictitious and metaphorical treason is extended to protect, not only the illustrious officers of the state and army, who were admitted into the sacred consistory, but likewise the principal domestics of the palace, the senators of Constantinople, the military commanders, and the civil magistrates of the provinces; a vague and indefinite list, which, under the successors of Constantine, included an obscure and numerous train of subordinate ministers. II. This extreme severity might perhaps be justified, had it been only directed to secure the representatives of the sovereign from any actual violence in the execution of their office. But the whole body of Imperial dependants claimed a privilege, or rather impunity, which screened them, in the loosest moments of their lives, from the hasty, perhaps the justifiable, resentment of their fellow-citizens; and, by a strange perversion of the laws, the same degree of guilt and punishment was applied to a private quarrel,

and to a deliberate conspiracy against the emperor and the empire. The edicts of Arcadius most positively and most absurdly declares, that in such cases of treason, thoughts and actions ought to be punished with equal severity; that the knowledge of a mischievous intention, unless it be instantly revealed, becomes equally criminal with the intention itself; [19](#) and that those rash men, who shall presume to solicit the pardon of traitors, shall themselves be branded with public and perpetual infamy. III. “With regard to the sons of the traitors,” (continues the emperor,) “although they ought to share the punishment, since they will probably imitate the guilt, of their parents, yet, by the special effect of our Imperial lenity, we grant them their lives; but, at the same time, we declare them incapable of inheriting, either on the father’s or on the mother’s side, or of receiving any gift or legacy, from the testament either of kinsmen or of strangers. Stigmatized with hereditary infamy, excluded from the hopes of honors or fortune, let them endure the pangs of poverty and contempt, till they shall consider life as a calamity, and death as a comfort and relief.” In such words, so well adapted to insult the feelings of mankind, did the emperor, or rather his favorite eunuch, applaud the moderation of a law, which transferred the same unjust and inhuman penalties to the children of all those who had seconded, or who had not disclosed, their fictitious conspiracies. Some of the noblest regulations of Roman jurisprudence have been suffered to expire; but this edict, a convenient and forcible engine of ministerial tyranny, was carefully inserted in the codes of Theodosius and Justinian; and the same maxims have been revived in modern ages, to protect the electors of Germany, and the cardinals of the church of Rome. [20](#)

18

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Theodosian Code, l. ix. tit. 14, ad legem Cornelianam de Sicariis, leg. 3, and the Code of Justinian, l. ix. tit. viii, viii. ad legem Juliam de Majestate, leg. 5. The alteration of the title, from murder to treason, was an improvement of the subtle Tribonian. Godefroy, in a formal dissertation, which he has inserted in his Commentary, illustrates this law of Arcadius, and explains all the difficult passages which had been perverted by the jurisconsults of the darker ages. See tom. iii. p. 88-111.]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Bartolus understands a simple and naked consciousness, without any sign of approbation or concurrence. For this opinion, says Baldus, he is now roasting in hell. For my own part, continues the discreet Heineccius, (Element. Jur. Civil l. iv. p. 411,) I must approve the theory of Bartolus; but in practice I should incline to the sentiments of Baldus. Yet Bartolus was gravely quoted by the lawyers of Cardinal Richelieu; and Eutropius was

indirectly guilty of the murder of the virtuous De
Thou.]

20

[\(return\)](#)

[Godefroy, tom. iii. p. 89. It is, however, suspected,
that this law, so repugnant to the maxims of
Germanic freedom, has been surreptitiously added
to the golden bull.]

Yet these sanguinary laws, which spread terror among a disarmed and dispirited people, were of too weak a texture to restrain the bold enterprise of Tribigild [21](#) the Ostrogoth. The colony of that warlike nation, which had been planted by Theodosius in one of the most fertile districts of Phrygia, [22](#) impatiently compared the slow returns of laborious husbandry with the successful rapine and liberal rewards of Alaric; and their leader resented, as a personal affront, his own ungracious reception in the palace of Constantinople. A soft and wealthy province, in the heart of the empire, was astonished by the sound of war; and the faithful vassal who had been disregarded or oppressed, was again respected, as soon as he resumed the hostile character of a Barbarian. The vineyards and fruitful fields, between the rapid Marsyas and the winding Maeander, [23](#) were consumed with fire; the decayed walls of the cities crumbled into dust, at the first stroke of an enemy; the trembling inhabitants escaped from a bloody massacre to the shores of the Hellespont; and a considerable part of Asia Minor was desolated by the rebellion of Tribigild. His rapid progress was checked by the resistance of the peasants of Pamphylia; and the Ostrogoths, attacked in a narrow pass, between the city of Selgae, [24](#) a deep morass, and the craggy cliffs of Mount Taurus, were defeated with the loss of their bravest troops. But the spirit of their chief was not daunted by misfortune; and his army was continually recruited by swarms of Barbarians and outlaws, who were desirous of exercising the profession of robbery, under the more honorable names of war and conquest. The rumors of the success of Tribigild might for some time be suppressed by fear, or disguised by flattery; yet they gradually alarmed both the court and the capital. Every misfortune was exaggerated in dark and doubtful hints; and the future designs of the rebels became the subject of anxious conjecture. Whenever Tribigild advanced into the inland country, the Romans were inclined to suppose that he meditated the passage of Mount Taurus, and the invasion of Syria. If he descended towards the sea, they imputed, and perhaps suggested, to the Gothic chief, the more dangerous project of arming a fleet in the harbors of Ionia, and of extending his depredations along the maritime coast, from the mouth of the Nile to the port of Constantinople. The approach of danger, and the obstinacy of Tribigild, who refused all terms of accommodation, compelled Eutropius to summon a council of war. [25](#) After claiming for himself the privilege of a veteran soldier, the eunuch intrusted the guard of Thrace and the Hellespont to Gainas the Goth, and the command of the Asiatic army to his favorite, Leo; two generals, who differently, but effectually, promoted the cause of the rebels. Leo, [26](#) who, from the bulk of his body, and the dulness of his mind, was surnamed the Ajax of the East, had deserted his original trade of a woolcomber, to

exercise, with much less skill and success, the military profession; and his uncertain operations were capriciously framed and executed, with an ignorance of real difficulties, and a timorous neglect of every favorable opportunity. The rashness of the Ostrogoths had drawn them into a disadvantageous position between the Rivers Melas and Eurymedon, where they were almost besieged by the peasants of Pamphylia; but the arrival of an Imperial army, instead of completing their destruction, afforded the means of safety and victory. Tribigild surprised the unguarded camp of the Romans, in the darkness of the night; seduced the faith of the greater part of the Barbarian auxiliaries, and dissipated, without much effort, the troops, which had been corrupted by the relaxation of discipline, and the luxury of the capital. The discontent of Gainas, who had so boldly contrived and executed the death of Rufinus, was irritated by the fortune of his unworthy successor; he accused his own dishonorable patience under the servile reign of a eunuch; and the ambitious Goth was convicted, at least in the public opinion, of secretly fomenting the revolt of Tribigild, with whom he was connected by a domestic, as well as by a national alliance. [27](#) When Gainas passed the Hellespont, to unite under his standard the remains of the Asiatic troops, he skilfully adapted his motions to the wishes of the Ostrogoths; abandoning, by his retreat, the country which they desired to invade; or facilitating, by his approach, the desertion of the Barbarian auxiliaries. To the Imperial court he repeatedly magnified the valor, the genius, the inexhaustible resources of Tribigild; confessed his own inability to prosecute the war; and extorted the permission of negotiating with his invincible adversary. The conditions of peace were dictated by the haughty rebel; and the peremptory demand of the head of Eutropius revealed the author and the design of this hostile conspiracy.

21

[\(return\)](#)

[A copious and circumstantial narrative (which he might have reserved for more important events) is bestowed by Zosimus (l. v. p. 304-312) on the revolt of Tribigild and Gainas. See likewise Socrates, l. vi. c. 6, and Sozomen, l. viii. c. 4. The second book of Claudian against Eutropius, is a fine, though imperfect, piece of history.]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[Claudian (in Eutrop. l. ii. 237-250) very accurately observes, that the ancient name and nation of the Phrygians extended very far on every side, till their limits were contracted by the colonies of the Bithynians of Thrace, of the Greeks, and at last of the Gauls. His description (ii. 257-272) of the fertility of Phrygia, and of the four rivers that produced gold, is just and picturesque.]

23

[\(return\)](#)

[Xenophon, Anabasis, l. i. p. 11, 12, edit. Hutchinson. Strabo, l. xii p. 865, edit. Amstel. Q. Curt. l. iii. c. 1. Claudian compares the junction of the Marsyas and Maeander to that of the Saone and

the Rhone, with this difference, however, that the smaller of the Phrygian rivers is not accelerated, but retarded, by the larger.]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[Selgae, a colony of the Lacedaemonians, had formerly numbered twenty thousand citizens; but in the age of Zosimus it was reduced to a small town. See Cellarius, Geograph. Antiq tom. ii. p. 117.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[The council of Eutropius, in Claudian, may be compared to that of Domitian in the fourth Satire of Juvenal. The principal members of the former were juvenes protervi lascivique senes; one of them had been a cook, a second a woolcomber. The language of their original profession exposes their assumed dignity; and their trifling conversation about tragedies, dancers, &c., is made still more ridiculous by the importance of the debate.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Claudian (l. ii. 376-461) has branded him with infamy; and Zosimus, in more temperate language, confirms his reproaches. L. v. p. 305.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[The conspiracy of Gainas and Tribigild, which is attested by the Greek historian, had not reached the ears of Claudian, who attributes the revolt of the Ostrogoth to his own martial spirit, and the advice of his wife.]

Chapter XXXII: Emperors Arcadius, Eutropius, Theodosius II.—Part II.

The bold satirist, who has indulged his discontent by the partial and passionate censure of the Christian emperors, violates the dignity, rather than the truth, of history, by comparing the son of Theodosius to one of those harmless and simple animals, who scarcely feel that they are the property of their shepherd. Two passions, however, fear and conjugal affection, awakened the languid soul of Arcadius: he was terrified by the threats of a victorious Barbarian; and he yielded to the tender eloquence of his wife Eudoxia, who, with a flood of artificial tears, presenting her infant children to their father, implored his justice for some real or imaginary insult, which she imputed to the audacious eunuch. [28](#) The emperor's hand was directed to sign the condemnation of Eutropius; the magic spell, which during four years had bound the prince and the people, was instantly dissolved; and the acclamations that so lately hailed the merit and fortune of the favorite, were converted into the clamors of the soldiers and people, who reproached his crimes, and pressed his immediate execution. In this hour of distress and

despair, his only refuge was in the sanctuary of the church, whose privileges he had wisely or profanely attempted to circumscribe; and the most eloquent of the saints, John Chrysostom, enjoyed the triumph of protecting a prostrate minister, whose choice had raised him to the ecclesiastical throne of Constantinople. The archbishop, ascending the pulpit of the cathedral, that he might be distinctly seen and heard by an innumerable crowd of either sex and of every age, pronounced a seasonable and pathetic discourse on the forgiveness of injuries, and the instability of human greatness. The agonies of the pale and affrighted wretch, who lay grovelling under the table of the altar, exhibited a solemn and instructive spectacle; and the orator, who was afterwards accused of insulting the misfortunes of Eutropius, labored to excite the contempt, that he might assuage the fury, of the people. [29](#) The powers of humanity, of superstition, and of eloquence, prevailed. The empress Eudoxia was restrained by her own prejudices, or by those of her subjects, from violating the sanctuary of the church; and Eutropius was tempted to capitulate, by the milder arts of persuasion, and by an oath, that his life should be spared. [30](#) Careless of the dignity of their sovereign, the new ministers of the palace immediately published an edict to declare, that his late favorite had disgraced the names of consul and patrician, to abolish his statues, to confiscate his wealth, and to inflict a perpetual exile in the Island of Cyprus. [31](#) A despicable and decrepit eunuch could no longer alarm the fears of his enemies; nor was he capable of enjoying what yet remained, the comforts of peace, of solitude, and of a happy climate. But their implacable revenge still envied him the last moments of a miserable life, and Eutropius had no sooner touched the shores of Cyprus, than he was hastily recalled. The vain hope of eluding, by a change of place, the obligation of an oath, engaged the empress to transfer the scene of his trial and execution from Constantinople to the adjacent suburb of Chalcedon. The consul Aurelian pronounced the sentence; and the motives of that sentence expose the jurisprudence of a despotic government. The crimes which Eutropius had committed against the people might have justified his death; but he was found guilty of harnessing to his chariot the sacred animals, who, from their breed or color, were reserved for the use of the emperor alone. [32](#)

28

[\(return\)](#)

[This anecdote, which Philostorgius alone has preserved, (l xi. c. 6, and Gothofred. Dissertat. p. 451-456) is curious and important; since it connects the revolt of the Goths with the secret intrigues of the palace.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Homily of Chrysostom, tom. iii. p. 381-386, which the exordium is particularly beautiful. Socrates, l. vi. c. 5. Sozomen, l. viii. c. 7. Montfaucon (in his Life of Chrysostom, tom. xiii. p. 135) too hastily supposes that Tribigild was actually in Constantinople; and that he commanded the soldiers who were ordered to seize Eutropius. Even Claudian, a Pagan poet, (praefat. ad l. ii. in

Eutrop. 27,) has mentioned the flight of the eunuch to the sanctuary.

*Suppliciterque pias humilis prostratus ad aras,
Mitigat iratas voce tremante nurus,]*

30 [\(return\)](#)

[Chrysostom, in another homily, (tom. iii. p. 386,) affects to declare that Eutropius would not have been taken, had he not deserted the church. Zosimus, (l. v. p. 313,) on the contrary, pretends, that his enemies forced him from the sanctuary. Yet the promise is an evidence of some treaty; and the strong assurance of Claudian, (Praefat. ad l. ii. 46,) Sed tamen exemplo non feriere tuo, may be considered as an evidence of some promise.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. ix. tit. xi. leg. 14. The date of that law (Jan. 17, A.D. 399) is erroneous and corrupt; since the fall of Eutropius could not happen till the autumn of the same year. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 780.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. v. p. 313. Philostorgius, l. xi. c. 6.]

While this domestic revolution was transacted, Gainas [33](#) openly revolted from his allegiance; united his forces at Thyatira in Lydia, with those of Tribigild; and still maintained his superior ascendant over the rebellious leader of the Ostrogoths. The confederate armies advanced, without resistance, to the straits of the Hellespont and the Bosphorus; and Arcadius was instructed to prevent the loss of his Asiatic dominions, by resigning his authority and his person to the faith of the Barbarians. The church of the holy martyr Euphemia, situate on a lofty eminence near Chalcedon, [34](#) was chosen for the place of the interview. Gainas bowed with reverence at the feet of the emperor, whilst he required the sacrifice of Aurelian and Saturninus, two ministers of consular rank; and their naked necks were exposed, by the haughty rebel, to the edge of the sword, till he condescended to grant them a precarious and disgraceful respite. The Goths, according to the terms of the agreement, were immediately transported from Asia into Europe; and their victorious chief, who accepted the title of master-general of the Roman armies, soon filled Constantinople with his troops, and distributed among his dependants the honors and rewards of the empire. In his early youth, Gainas had passed the Danube as a suppliant and a fugitive: his elevation had been the work of valor and fortune; and his indiscreet or perfidious conduct was the cause of his rapid downfall. Notwithstanding the vigorous opposition of the archbishop, he importunately claimed for his Arian sectaries the possession of a peculiar church; and the pride of the Catholics was offended by the public toleration of heresy. [35](#) Every quarter of Constantinople was filled with tumult and disorder; and the Barbarians gazed with such ardor on the rich shops of the jewellers, and the tables of the bankers, which were covered with gold and silver, that it was judged prudent to remove those dangerous

temptations from their sight. They resented the injurious precaution; and some alarming attempts were made, during the night, to attack and destroy with fire the Imperial palace. [36](#) In this state of mutual and suspicious hostility, the guards and the people of Constantinople shut the gates, and rose in arms to prevent or to punish the conspiracy of the Goths. During the absence of Gainas, his troops were surprised and oppressed; seven thousand Barbarians perished in this bloody massacre. In the fury of the pursuit, the Catholics uncovered the roof, and continued to throw down flaming logs of wood, till they overwhelmed their adversaries, who had retreated to the church or conventicle of the Arians. Gainas was either innocent of the design, or too confident of his success; he was astonished by the intelligence that the flower of his army had been ingloriously destroyed; that he himself was declared a public enemy; and that his countryman, Fravitta, a brave and loyal confederate, had assumed the management of the war by sea and land. The enterprises of the rebel, against the cities of Thrace, were encountered by a firm and well-ordered defence; his hungry soldiers were soon reduced to the grass that grew on the margin of the fortifications; and Gainas, who vainly regretted the wealth and luxury of Asia, embraced a desperate resolution of forcing the passage of the Hellespont. He was destitute of vessels; but the woods of the Chersonesus afforded materials for rafts, and his intrepid Barbarians did not refuse to trust themselves to the waves. But Fravitta attentively watched the progress of their undertaking. As soon as they had gained the middle of the stream, the Roman galleys, [37](#) impelled by the full force of oars, of the current, and of a favorable wind, rushed forwards in compact order, and with irresistible weight; and the Hellespont was covered with the fragments of the Gothic shipwreck. After the destruction of his hopes, and the loss of many thousands of his bravest soldiers, Gainas, who could no longer aspire to govern or to subdue the Romans, determined to resume the independence of a savage life. A light and active body of Barbarian horse, disengaged from their infantry and baggage, might perform in eight or ten days a march of three hundred miles from the Hellespont to the Danube; [38](#) the garrisons of that important frontier had been gradually annihilated; the river, in the month of December, would be deeply frozen; and the unbounded prospect of Scythia was opened to the ambition of Gainas. This design was secretly communicated to the national troops, who devoted themselves to the fortunes of their leader; and before the signal of departure was given, a great number of provincial auxiliaries, whom he suspected of an attachment to their native country, were perfidiously massacred. The Goths advanced, by rapid marches, through the plains of Thrace; and they were soon delivered from the fear of a pursuit, by the vanity of Fravitta, [3811](#) who, instead of extinguishing the war, hastened to enjoy the popular applause, and to assume the peaceful honors of the consulship. But a formidable ally appeared in arms to vindicate the majesty of the empire, and to guard the peace and liberty of Scythia. [39](#) The superior forces of Uldin, king of the Huns, opposed the progress of Gainas; a hostile and ruined country prohibited his retreat; he disdained to capitulate; and after repeatedly attempting to cut his way through the ranks of the

enemy, he was slain, with his desperate followers, in the field of battle. Eleven days after the naval victory of the Hellespont, the head of Gainas, the inestimable gift of the conqueror, was received at Constantinople with the most liberal expressions of gratitude; and the public deliverance was celebrated by festivals and illuminations. The triumphs of Arcadius became the subject of epic poems; [40](#) and the monarch, no longer oppressed by any hostile terrors, resigned himself to the mild and absolute dominion of his wife, the fair and artful Eudoxia, who was sullied her fame by the persecution of St. John Chrysostom.

- 33 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosimus, l. v. p. 313-323,) Socrates, (l. vi. c. 4,) Sozomen, (l. viii. c. 4,) and Theodoret, (l. v. c. 32, 33,) represent, though with some various circumstances, the conspiracy, defeat, and death of Gainas.]
- 34 [\(return\)](#)
[It is the expression of Zosimus himself, (l. v. p. 314,) who inadvertently uses the fashionable language of the Christians. Evagrius describes (l. ii. c. 3) the situation, architecture, relics, and miracles, of that celebrated church, in which the general council of Chalcedon was afterwards held.]
- 35 [\(return\)](#)
[The pious remonstrances of Chrysostom, which do not appear in his own writings, are strongly urged by Theodoret; but his insinuation, that they were successful, is disproved by facts. Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. v. p. 383) has discovered that the emperor, to satisfy the rapacious demands of Gainas, was obliged to melt the plate of the church of the apostles.]
- 36 [\(return\)](#)
[The ecclesiastical historians, who sometimes guide, and sometimes follow, the public opinion, most confidently assert, that the palace of Constantinople was guarded by legions of angels.]
- 37 [\(return\)](#)
[Zosmuis (l. v. p. 319) mentions these galleys by the name of Liburnians, and observes that they were as swift (without explaining the difference between them) as the vessels with fifty oars; but that they were far inferior in speed to the triremes, which had been long disused. Yet he reasonably concludes, from the testimony of Polybius, that galleys of a still larger size had been constructed in the Punic wars. Since the establishment of the Roman empire over the Mediterranean, the useless art of building large ships of war had probably been neglected, and at length forgotten.]

- 38 [\(return\)](#)
[Chishull (Travels, p. 61-63, 72-76) proceeded from Gallipoli, through Hadrianople to the Danube, in about fifteen days. He was in the train of an English ambassador, whose baggage consisted of seventy-one wagons. That learned traveller has the merit of tracing a curious and unfrequented route.]
- 3811 [\(return\)](#)
[Fravitta, according to Zosimus, though a Pagan, received the honors of the consulate. Zosim, v. c. 20. On Fravitta, see a very imperfect fragment of Eunapius. Mai. ii. 290, in Niebuhr. 92.—M.]
- 39 [\(return\)](#)
[The narrative of Zosimus, who actually leads Gainas beyond the Danube, must be corrected by the testimony of Socrates, and Sozomen, that he was killed in Thrace; and by the precise and authentic dates of the Alexandrian, or Paschal, Chronicle, p. 307. The naval victory of the Hellespont is fixed to the month Apellaeus, the tenth of the Calends of January, (December 23;) the head of Gainas was brought to Constantinople the third of the nones of January, (January 3,) in the month Audynaesus.]
- 40 [\(return\)](#)
[Eusebius Scholasticus acquired much fame by his poem on the Gothic war, in which he had served. Near forty years afterwards Ammonius recited another poem on the same subject, in the presence of the emperor Theodosius. See Socrates, l. vi. c. 6.]

After the death of the indolent Nectarius, the successor of Gregory Nazianzen, the church of Constantinople was distracted by the ambition of rival candidates, who were not ashamed to solicit, with gold or flattery, the suffrage of the people, or of the favorite. On this occasion Eutropius seems to have deviated from his ordinary maxims; and his uncorrupted judgment was determined only by the superior merit of a stranger. In a late journey into the East, he had admired the sermons of John, a native and presbyter of Antioch, whose name has been distinguished by the epithet of Chrysostom, or the Golden Mouth. [41](#) A private order was despatched to the governor of Syria; and as the people might be unwilling to resign their favorite preacher, he was transported, with speed and secrecy in a post-chariot, from Antioch to Constantinople. The unanimous and unsolicited consent of the court, the clergy, and the people, ratified the choice of the minister; and, both as a saint and as an orator, the new archbishop surpassed the sanguine expectations of the public. Born of a noble and opulent family, in the capital of Syria, Chrysostom had been educated, by the care of a tender mother, under the tuition of the most skilful masters. He studied the art of rhetoric in the school of Libanius; and that celebrated sophist, who soon discovered the talents of his disciple,

ingenuously confessed that John would have deserved to succeed him, had he not been stolen away by the Christians. His piety soon disposed him to receive the sacrament of baptism; to renounce the lucrative and honorable profession of the law; and to bury himself in the adjacent desert, where he subdued the lusts of the flesh by an austere penance of six years. His infirmities compelled him to return to the society of mankind; and the authority of Meletius devoted his talents to the service of the church: but in the midst of his family, and afterwards on the archiepiscopal throne, Chrysostom still persevered in the practice of the monastic virtues. The ample revenues, which his predecessors had consumed in pomp and luxury, he diligently applied to the establishment of hospitals; and the multitudes, who were supported by his charity, preferred the eloquent and edifying discourses of their archbishop to the amusements of the theatre or the circus. The monuments of that eloquence, which was admired near twenty years at Antioch and Constantinople, have been carefully preserved; and the possession of near one thousand sermons, or homilies has authorized the critics [42](#) of succeeding times to appreciate the genuine merit of Chrysostom. They unanimously attribute to the Christian orator the free command of an elegant and copious language; the judgment to conceal the advantages which he derived from the knowledge of rhetoric and philosophy; an inexhaustible fund of metaphors and similitudes of ideas and images, to vary and illustrate the most familiar topics; the happy art of engaging the passions in the service of virtue; and of exposing the folly, as well as the turpitude, of vice, almost with the truth and spirit of a dramatic representation.

[The sixth book of Socrates, the eighth of Sozomen, and the fifth of Theodoret, afford curious and authentic materials for the life of John Chrysostom. Besides those general historians, I have taken for my guides the four principal biographers of the saint. 1. The author of a partial and passionate Vindication of the archbishop of Constantinople, composed in the form of a dialogue, and under the name of his zealous partisan, Palladius, bishop of Helenopolis, (Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xi. p. 500-533.) It is inserted among the works of Chrysostom. tom. xiii. p. 1-90, edit. Montfaucon. 2. The moderate Erasmus, (tom. iii. epist. Mcl. p. 1331-1347, edit. Lugd. Bat.) His vivacity and good sense were his own; his errors, in the uncultivated state of ecclesiastical antiquity, were almost inevitable. 3. The learned Tillemont, (Mem. Ecclesiastiques, tom. xi. p. 1-405, 547-626, &c. &c.,) who compiles the lives of the saints with incredible patience and religious accuracy. He has minutely searched the voluminous works of Chrysostom himself. 4. Father Montfaucon, who has perused those works with the curious diligence of an editor, discovered

several new homilies, and again reviewed and composed the Life of Chrysostom, (Opera Chrysostom. tom. xiii. p. 91-177.)]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[As I am almost a stranger to the voluminous sermons of Chrysostom, I have given my confidence to the two most judicious and moderate of the ecclesiastical critics, Erasmus (tom. iii. p. 1344) and Dupin, (Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique, tom. iii. p. 38:) yet the good taste of the former is sometimes vitiated by an excessive love of antiquity; and the good sense of the latter is always restrained by prudential considerations.]

The pastoral labors of the archbishop of Constantinople provoked, and gradually united against him, two sorts of enemies; the aspiring clergy, who envied his success, and the obstinate sinners, who were offended by his reproofs. When Chrysostom thundered, from the pulpit of St. Sophia, against the degeneracy of the Christians, his shafts were spent among the crowd, without wounding, or even marking, the character of any individual. When he declaimed against the peculiar vices of the rich, poverty might obtain a transient consolation from his invectives; but the guilty were still sheltered by their numbers; and the reproach itself was dignified by some ideas of superiority and enjoyment. But as the pyramid rose towards the summit, it insensibly diminished to a point; and the magistrates, the ministers, the favorite eunuchs, the ladies of the court, [43](#) the empress Eudoxia herself, had a much larger share of guilt to divide among a smaller proportion of criminals. The personal applications of the audience were anticipated, or confirmed, by the testimony of their own conscience; and the intrepid preacher assumed the dangerous right of exposing both the offence and the offender to the public abhorrence. The secret resentment of the court encouraged the discontent of the clergy and monks of Constantinople, who were too hastily reformed by the fervent zeal of their archbishop. He had condemned, from the pulpit, the domestic females of the clergy of Constantinople, who, under the name of servants, or sisters, afforded a perpetual occasion either of sin or of scandal. The silent and solitary ascetics, who had secluded themselves from the world, were entitled to the warmest approbation of Chrysostom; but he despised and stigmatized, as the disgrace of their holy profession, the crowd of degenerate monks, who, from some unworthy motives of pleasure or profit, so frequently infested the streets of the capital. To the voice of persuasion, the archbishop was obliged to add the terrors of authority; and his ardor, in the exercise of ecclesiastical jurisdiction, was not always exempt from passion; nor was it always guided by prudence. Chrysostom was naturally of a choleric disposition. [44](#) Although he struggled, according to the precepts of the gospel, to love his private enemies, he indulged himself in the privilege of hating the enemies of God and of the church; and his sentiments were sometimes delivered with too much energy of countenance and expression. He still maintained, from some considerations of health or abstinence, his

former habits of taking his repasts alone; and this inhospitable custom, [45](#) which his enemies imputed to pride, contributed, at least, to nourish the infirmity of a morose and unsocial humor. Separated from that familiar intercourse, which facilitates the knowledge and the despatch of business, he reposed an unsuspecting confidence in his deacon Serapion; and seldom applied his speculative knowledge of human nature to the particular character, either of his dependants, or of his equals.

Conscious of the purity of his intentions, and perhaps of the superiority of his genius, the archbishop of Constantinople extended the jurisdiction of the Imperial city, that he might enlarge the sphere of his pastoral labors; and the conduct which the profane imputed to an ambitious motive, appeared to Chrysostom himself in the light of a sacred and indispensable duty. In his visitation through the Asiatic provinces, he deposed thirteen bishops of Lydia and Phrygia; and indiscreetly declared that a deep corruption of simony and licentiousness had infected the whole episcopal order. [46](#) If those bishops were innocent, such a rash and unjust condemnation must excite a well-grounded discontent. If they were guilty, the numerous associates of their guilt would soon discover that their own safety depended on the ruin of the archbishop; whom they studied to represent as the tyrant of the Eastern church.

43

[\(return\)](#)

[The females of Constantinople distinguished themselves by their enmity or their attachment to Chrysostom. Three noble and opulent widows, Marsa, Castricia, and Eugraphia, were the leaders of the persecution, (Pallad. Dialog. tom. xiii. p. 14.) It was impossible that they should forgive a preacher who reproached their affectation to conceal, by the ornaments of dress, their age and ugliness, (Pallad p. 27.) Olympias, by equal zeal, displayed in a more pious cause, has obtained the title of saint. See Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xi p. 416-440.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen, and more especially Socrates, have defined the real character of Chrysostom with a temperate and impartial freedom, very offensive to his blind admirers. Those historians lived in the next generation, when party violence was abated, and had conversed with many persons intimately acquainted with the virtues and imperfections of the saint.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[Palladius (tom. xiii. p. 40, &c.) very seriously defends the archbishop 1. He never tasted wine. 2. The weakness of his stomach required a peculiar diet. 3. Business, or study, or devotion, often kept him fasting till sunset. 4. He detested the noise and levity of great dinners. 5. He saved the expense for

the use of the poor. 6. He was apprehensive, in a capital like Constantinople, of the envy and reproach of partial invitations.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Chrysostom declares his free opinion (tom. ix. hom. iii in Act. Apostol. p. 29) that the number of bishops, who might be saved, bore a very small proportion to those who would be damned.]

This ecclesiastical conspiracy was managed by Theophilus, [47](#) archbishop of Alexandria, an active and ambitious prelate, who displayed the fruits of rapine in monuments of ostentation. His national dislike to the rising greatness of a city which degraded him from the second to the third rank in the Christian world, was exasperated by some personal dispute with Chrysostom himself. [48](#) By the private invitation of the empress, Theophilus landed at Constantinople with a stout body of Egyptian mariners, to encounter the populace; and a train of dependent bishops, to secure, by their voices, the majority of a synod. The synod [49](#) was convened in the suburb of Chalcedon, surnamed the Oak, where Rufinus had erected a stately church and monastery; and their proceedings were continued during fourteen days, or sessions. A bishop and a deacon accused the archbishop of Constantinople; but the frivolous or improbable nature of the forty-seven articles which they presented against him, may justly be considered as a fair and unexceptional panegyric. Four successive summons were signified to Chrysostom; but he still refused to trust either his person or his reputation in the hands of his implacable enemies, who, prudently declining the examination of any particular charges, condemned his contumacious disobedience, and hastily pronounced a sentence of deposition. The synod of the Oak immediately addressed the emperor to ratify and execute their judgment, and charitably insinuated, that the penalties of treason might be inflicted on the audacious preacher, who had reviled, under the name of Jezebel, the empress Eudoxia herself. The archbishop was rudely arrested, and conducted through the city, by one of the Imperial messengers, who landed him, after a short navigation, near the entrance of the Euxine; from whence, before the expiration of two days, he was gloriously recalled.

47

[\(return\)](#)

[See Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xi. p. 441-500.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[I have purposely omitted the controversy which arose among the monks of Egypt, concerning Origenism and Anthropomorphism; the dissimulation and violence of Theophilus; his artful management of the simplicity of Epiphanius; the persecution and flight of the long, or tall, brothers; the ambiguous support which they received at Constantinople from Chrysostom, &c. &c.]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Photius (p. 53-60) has preserved the original acts

of the synod of the Oak; which destroys the false assertion, that Chrysostom was condemned by no more than thirty-six bishops, of whom twenty-nine were Egyptians. Forty-five bishops subscribed his sentence. See Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xi. p. 595. * Note: Tillemont argues strongly for the number of thirty-six—M]

The first astonishment of his faithful people had been mute and passive: they suddenly rose with unanimous and irresistible fury. Theophilus escaped, but the promiscuous crowd of monks and Egyptian mariners was slaughtered without pity in the streets of Constantinople. [50](#) A seasonable earthquake justified the interposition of Heaven; the torrent of sedition rolled forwards to the gates of the palace; and the empress, agitated by fear or remorse, threw herself at the feet of Arcadius, and confessed that the public safety could be purchased only by the restoration of Chrysostom. The Bosphorus was covered with innumerable vessels; the shores of Europe and Asia were profusely illuminated; and the acclamations of a victorious people accompanied, from the port to the cathedral, the triumph of the archbishop; who, too easily, consented to resume the exercise of his functions, before his sentence had been legally reversed by the authority of an ecclesiastical synod. Ignorant, or careless, of the impending danger, Chrysostom indulged his zeal, or perhaps his resentment; declaimed with peculiar asperity against female vices; and condemned the profane honors which were addressed, almost in the precincts of St. Sophia, to the statue of the empress. His imprudence tempted his enemies to inflame the haughty spirit of Eudoxia, by reporting, or perhaps inventing, the famous exordium of a sermon, “Herodias is again furious; Herodias again dances; she once more requires the head of John;” an insolent allusion, which, as a woman and a sovereign, it was impossible for her to forgive. [51](#) The short interval of a perfidious truce was employed to concert more effectual measures for the disgrace and ruin of the archbishop. A numerous council of the Eastern prelates, who were guided from a distance by the advice of Theophilus, confirmed the validity, without examining the justice, of the former sentence; and a detachment of Barbarian troops was introduced into the city, to suppress the emotions of the people. On the vigil of Easter, the solemn administration of baptism was rudely interrupted by the soldiers, who alarmed the modesty of the naked catechumens, and violated, by their presence, the awful mysteries of the Christian worship. Arsacius occupied the church of St. Sophia, and the archiepiscopal throne. The Catholics retreated to the baths of Constantine, and afterwards to the fields; where they were still pursued and insulted by the guards, the bishops, and the magistrates. The fatal day of the second and final exile of Chrysostom was marked by the conflagration of the cathedral, of the senate-house, and of the adjacent buildings; and this calamity was imputed, without proof, but not without probability, to the despair of a persecuted faction. [52](#)

Constantinople had found Theophilus, they would certainly have thrown him into the sea. Socrates mentions (l. vi. c. 17) a battle between the mob and the sailors of Alexandria, in which many wounds were given, and some lives were lost. The massacre of the monks is observed only by the Pagan Zosimus, (l. v. p. 324,) who acknowledges that Chrysostom had a singular talent to lead the illiterate multitude.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[See Socrates, l. vi. c. 18. Sozomen, l. viii. c. 20. Zosimus (l. v. p. 324, 327) mentions, in general terms, his invectives against Eudoxia. The homily, which begins with those famous words, is rejected as spurious. Montfaucon, tom. xiii. p. 151. Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom xi. p. 603.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[We might naturally expect such a charge from Zosimus, (l. v. p. 327;) but it is remarkable enough, that it should be confirmed by Socrates, (l. vi. c. 18,) and the Paschal Chronicle, (p. 307.)]

Cicero might claim some merit, if his voluntary banishment preserved the peace of the republic; [53](#) but the submission of Chrysostom was the indispensable duty of a Christian and a subject. Instead of listening to his humble prayer, that he might be permitted to reside at Cyzicus, or Nicomedia, the inflexible empress assigned for his exile the remote and desolate town of Cucusus, among the ridges of Mount Taurus, in the Lesser Armenia. A secret hope was entertained, that the archbishop might perish in a difficult and dangerous march of seventy days, in the heat of summer, through the provinces of Asia Minor, where he was continually threatened by the hostile attacks of the Isaurians, and the more implacable fury of the monks. Yet Chrysostom arrived in safety at the place of his confinement; and the three years which he spent at Cucusus, and the neighboring town of Arabissus, were the last and most glorious of his life. His character was consecrated by absence and persecution; the faults of his administration were no longer remembered; but every tongue repeated the praises of his genius and virtue: and the respectful attention of the Christian world was fixed on a desert spot among the mountains of Taurus. From that solitude the archbishop, whose active mind was invigorated by misfortunes, maintained a strict and frequent correspondence [54](#) with the most distant provinces; exhorted the separate congregation of his faithful adherents to persevere in their allegiance; urged the destruction of the temples of Phoenicia, and the extirpation of heresy in the Isle of Cyprus; extended his pastoral care to the missions of Persia and Scythia; negotiated, by his ambassadors, with the Roman pontiff and the emperor Honorius; and boldly appealed, from a partial synod, to the supreme tribunal of a free and general council. The mind of the illustrious exile was still independent; but his captive body was exposed to the revenge of the oppressors, who continued to abuse the name and authority of Arcadius. [55](#) An order

was despatched for the instant removal of Chrysostom to the extreme desert of Pityus: and his guards so faithfully obeyed their cruel instructions, that, before he reached the sea-coast of the Euxine, he expired at Comana, in Pontus, in the sixtieth year of his age. The succeeding generation acknowledged his innocence and merit. The archbishops of the East, who might blush that their predecessors had been the enemies of Chrysostom, were gradually disposed, by the firmness of the Roman pontiff, to restore the honors of that venerable name. [56](#) At the pious solicitation of the clergy and people of Constantinople, his relics, thirty years after his death, were transported from their obscure sepulchre to the royal city. [57](#) The emperor Theodosius advanced to receive them as far as Chalcedon; and, falling prostrate on the coffin, implored, in the name of his guilty parents, Arcadius and Eudoxia, the forgiveness of the injured saint. [58](#)

53 [\(return\)](#)
[He displays those specious motives (Post Reditum, c. 13, 14) in the language of an orator and a politician.]

54 [\(return\)](#)
[Two hundred and forty-two of the epistles of Chrysostom are still extant, (Opera, tom. iii. p. 528-736.) They are addressed to a great variety of persons, and show a firmness of mind much superior to that of Cicero in his exile. The fourteenth epistle contains a curious narrative of the dangers of his journey.]

55 [\(return\)](#)
[After the exile of Chrysostom, Theophilus published an enormous and horrible volume against him, in which he perpetually repeats the polite expressions of *hostem humanitatis, sacrilegorum principem, immundum daemonem*; he affirms, that John Chrysostom had delivered his soul to be adulterated by the devil; and wishes that some further punishment, adequate (if possible) to the magnitude of his crimes, may be inflicted on him. St. Jerom, at the request of his friend Theophilus, translated this edifying performance from Greek into Latin. See Facundus Hermian. Defens. pro iii. Capitul. l. vi. c. 5 published by Sirmond. Opera, tom. ii. p. 595, 596, 597.]

56 [\(return\)](#)
[His name was inserted by his successor Atticus in the Dyptics of the church of Constantinople, A.D. 418. Ten years afterwards he was revered as a saint. Cyril, who inherited the place, and the passions, of his uncle Theophilus, yielded with much reluctance. See Facund. Hermian. l. 4, c. 1. Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xiv. p. 277-283.]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[Socrates, l. vii. c. 45. Theodoret, l. v. c. 36. This event reconciled the Joannites, who had hitherto refused to acknowledge his successors. During his lifetime, the Joannites were respected, by the Catholics, as the true and orthodox communion of Constantinople. Their obstinacy gradually drove them to the brink of schism.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[According to some accounts, (Baronius, Annal. Eccles. A.D. 438 No. 9, 10,) the emperor was forced to send a letter of invitation and excuses, before the body of the ceremonious saint could be moved from Comana.]

Chapter XXXII: Emperors Arcadius, Eutropius, Theodosius II.—Part III.

Yet a reasonable doubt may be entertained, whether any stain of hereditary guilt could be derived from Arcadius to his successor. Eudoxia was a young and beautiful woman, who indulged her passions, and despised her husband; Count John enjoyed, at least, the familiar confidence of the empress; and the public named him as the real father of Theodosius the younger. [59](#) The birth of a son was accepted, however, by the pious husband, as an event the most fortunate and honorable to himself, to his family, and to the Eastern world: and the royal infant, by an unprecedented favor, was invested with the titles of Caesar and Augustus. In less than four years afterwards, Eudoxia, in the bloom of youth, was destroyed by the consequences of a miscarriage; and this untimely death confounded the prophecy of a holy bishop, [60](#) who, amidst the universal joy, had ventured to foretell, that she should behold the long and auspicious reign of her glorious son. The Catholics applauded the justice of Heaven, which avenged the persecution of St. Chrysostom; and perhaps the emperor was the only person who sincerely bewailed the loss of the haughty and rapacious Eudoxia. Such a domestic misfortune afflicted him more deeply than the public calamities of the East; [61](#) the licentious excursions, from Pontus to Palestine, of the Isaurian robbers, whose impunity accused the weakness of the government; and the earthquakes, the conflagrations, the famine, and the flights of locusts, [62](#) which the popular discontent was equally disposed to attribute to the incapacity of the monarch. At length, in the thirty-first year of his age, after a reign (if we may abuse that word) of thirteen years, three months, and fifteen days, Arcadius expired in the palace of Constantinople. It is impossible to delineate his character; since, in a period very copiously furnished with historical materials, it has not been possible to remark one action that properly belongs to the son of the great Theodosius.

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Zosimus, l. v. p. 315. The chastity of an empress

should not be impeached without producing a witness; but it is astonishing, that the witness should write and live under a prince whose legitimacy he dared to attack. We must suppose that his history was a party libel, privately read and circulated by the Pagans. Tillemont (*Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. v. p. 782) is not averse to brand the reputation of Eudoxia.]

60 [\(return\)](#)

[Porphyry of Gaza. His zeal was transported by the order which he had obtained for the destruction of eight Pagan temples of that city. See the curious details of his life, (Baronius, A.D. 401, No. 17-51,) originally written in Greek, or perhaps in Syriac, by a monk, one of his favorite deacons.]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[Philostorg. l. xi. c. 8, and Godefroy, *Dissertat.* p. 457.]

62 [\(return\)](#)

[Jerom (tom. vi. p. 73, 76) describes, in lively colors, the regular and destructive march of the locusts, which spread a dark cloud, between heaven and earth, over the land of Palestine. Seasonable winds scattered them, partly into the Dead Sea, and partly into the Mediterranean.]

The historian Procopius [63](#) has indeed illuminated the mind of the dying emperor with a ray of human prudence, or celestial wisdom. Arcadius considered, with anxious foresight, the helpless condition of his son Theodosius, who was no more than seven years of age, the dangerous factions of a minority, and the aspiring spirit of Jezdegerd, the Persian monarch. Instead of tempting the allegiance of an ambitious subject, by the participation of supreme power, he boldly appealed to the magnanimity of a king; and placed, by a solemn testament, the sceptre of the East in the hands of Jezdegerd himself. The royal guardian accepted and discharged this honorable trust with unexampled fidelity; and the infancy of Theodosius was protected by the arms and councils of Persia. Such is the singular narrative of Procopius; and his veracity is not disputed by Agathias, [64](#) while he presumes to dissent from his judgment, and to arraign the wisdom of a Christian emperor, who, so rashly, though so fortunately, committed his son and his dominions to the unknown faith of a stranger, a rival, and a heathen. At the distance of one hundred and fifty years, this political question might be debated in the court of Justinian; but a prudent historian will refuse to examine the propriety, till he has ascertained the truth, of the testament of Arcadius. As it stands without a parallel in the history of the world, we may justly require, that it should be attested by the positive and unanimous evidence of contemporaries. The strange novelty of the event, which excites our distrust, must have attracted their notice; and their universal silence annihilates the vain tradition of the succeeding age.

63

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, de Bell. Persic. l. i. c. 2, p. 8, edit. Louvre.]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[Agathias, l. iv. p. 136, 137. Although he confesses the prevalence of the tradition, he asserts, that Procopius was the first who had committed it to writing. Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. vi. p. 597) argues very sensibly on the merits of this fable. His criticism was not warped by any ecclesiastical authority: both Procopius and Agathias are half Pagans. * Note: See St Martin's article on Jezdegerd, in the Biographie Universelle de Michand.—M.]

The maxims of Roman jurisprudence, if they could fairly be transferred from private property to public dominion, would have adjudged to the emperor Honorius the guardianship of his nephew, till he had attained, at least, the fourteenth year of his age. But the weakness of Honorius, and the calamities of his reign, disqualified him from prosecuting this natural claim; and such was the absolute separation of the two monarchies, both in interest and affection, that Constantinople would have obeyed, with less reluctance, the orders of the Persian, than those of the Italian, court. Under a prince whose weakness is disguised by the external signs of manhood and discretion, the most worthless favorites may secretly dispute the empire of the palace; and dictate to submissive provinces the commands of a master, whom they direct and despise. But the ministers of a child, who is incapable of arming them with the sanction of the royal name, must acquire and exercise an independent authority. The great officers of the state and army, who had been appointed before the death of Arcadius, formed an aristocracy, which might have inspired them with the idea of a free republic; and the government of the Eastern empire was fortunately assumed by the praefect Anthemius, [65](#) who obtained, by his superior abilities, a lasting ascendant over the minds of his equals. The safety of the young emperor proved the merit and integrity of Anthemius; and his prudent firmness sustained the force and reputation of an infant reign. Uldin, with a formidable host of Barbarians, was encamped in the heart of Thrace; he proudly rejected all terms of accommodation; and, pointing to the rising sun, declared to the Roman ambassadors, that the course of that planet should alone terminate the conquest of the Huns. But the desertion of his confederates, who were privately convinced of the justice and liberality of the Imperial ministers, obliged Uldin to repass the Danube: the tribe of the Scyrri, which composed his rear-guard, was almost extirpated; and many thousand captives were dispersed to cultivate, with servile labor, the fields of Asia. [66](#) In the midst of the public triumph, Constantinople was protected by a strong enclosure of new and more extensive walls; the same vigilant care was applied to restore the fortifications of the Illyrian cities; and a plan was judiciously conceived, which, in the space of seven years, would have secured the command of the

Danube, by establishing on that river a perpetual fleet of two hundred and fifty armed vessels. [67](#)

65

[\(return\)](#)

[Socrates, l. vii. c. 1. Anthemius was the grandson of Philip, one of the ministers of Constantius, and the grandfather of the emperor Anthemius. After his return from the Persian embassy, he was appointed consul and Prætorian præfect of the East, in the year 405 and held the præfecture about ten years. See his honors and praises in Godefroy, Cod. Theod. tom. vi. p. 350. Tillemont, Hist. des Emptom. vi. p. 1. &c.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen, l. ix. c. 5. He saw some Scyrri at work near Mount Olympus, in Bithynia, and cherished the vain hope that those captives were the last of the nation.]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theod. l. vii. tit. xvi. l. xv. tit. i. leg. 49.]

But the Romans had so long been accustomed to the authority of a monarch, that the first, even among the females, of the Imperial family, who displayed any courage or capacity, was permitted to ascend the vacant throne of Theodosius. His sister Pulcheria, [68](#) who was only two years older than himself, received, at the age of sixteen, the title of Augusta; and though her favor might be sometimes clouded by caprice or intrigue, she continued to govern the Eastern empire near forty years; during the long minority of her brother, and after his death, in her own name, and in the name of Marcian, her nominal husband. From a motive either of prudence or religion, she embraced a life of celibacy; and notwithstanding some aspersions on the chastity of Pulcheria, [69](#) this resolution, which she communicated to her sisters Arcadia and Marina, was celebrated by the Christian world, as the sublime effort of heroic piety. In the presence of the clergy and people, the three daughters of Arcadius [70](#) dedicated their virginity to God; and the obligation of their solemn vow was inscribed on a tablet of gold and gems; which they publicly offered in the great church of Constantinople. Their palace was converted into a monastery; and all males, except the guides of their conscience, the saints who had forgotten the distinction of sexes, were scrupulously excluded from the holy threshold. Pulcheria, her two sisters, and a chosen train of favorite damsels, formed a religious community: they denounced the vanity of dress; interrupted, by frequent fasts, their simple and frugal diet; allotted a portion of their time to works of embroidery; and devoted several hours of the day and night to the exercises of prayer and psalmody. The piety of a Christian virgin was adorned by the zeal and liberality of an empress. Ecclesiastical history describes the splendid churches, which were built at the expense of Pulcheria, in all the provinces of the East; her charitable foundations for the benefit of strangers and the poor; the ample donations which she assigned for the perpetual maintenance of monastic societies; and the active

severity with which she labored to suppress the opposite heresies of Nestorius and Eutyches. Such virtues were supposed to deserve the peculiar favor of the Deity: and the relics of martyrs, as well as the knowledge of future events, were communicated in visions and revelations to the Imperial saint. [71](#) Yet the devotion of Pulcheria never diverted her indefatigable attention from temporal affairs; and she alone, among all the descendants of the great Theodosius, appears to have inherited any share of his manly spirit and abilities. The elegant and familiar use which she had acquired, both of the Greek and Latin languages, was readily applied to the various occasions of speaking or writing, on public business: her deliberations were maturely weighed; her actions were prompt and decisive; and, while she moved, without noise or ostentation, the wheel of government, she discreetly attributed to the genius of the emperor the long tranquillity of his reign. In the last years of his peaceful life, Europe was indeed afflicted by the arms of war; but the more extensive provinces of Asia still continued to enjoy a profound and permanent repose. Theodosius the younger was never reduced to the disgraceful necessity of encountering and punishing a rebellious subject: and since we cannot applaud the vigor, some praise may be due to the mildness and prosperity, of the administration of Pulcheria.

68

[\(return\)](#)

[Sozomen has filled three chapters with a magnificent panegyric of Pulcheria, (l. ix. c. 1, 2, 3;) and Tillemont (*Mémoires Eccles. tom. xv. p. 171-184*) has dedicated a separate article to the honor of St. Pulcheria, virgin and empress. * Note: The heathen Eunapius gives a frightful picture of the venality and a justice of the court of Pulcheria. *Fragm. Eunap. in Mai, ii. 293, in p. 97.—M.*]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[Suidas, (*Excerpta, p. 68, in Script. Byzant.*) pretends, on the credit of the Nestorians, that Pulcheria was exasperated against their founder, because he censured her connection with the beautiful Paulinus, and her incest with her brother Theodosius.]

70

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ducange, *Famil. Byzantin. p. 70*. Flaccilla, the eldest daughter, either died before Arcadius, or, if she lived till the year 431, (*Marcellin. Chron.*) some defect of mind or body must have excluded her from the honors of her rank.]

71

[\(return\)](#)

[She was admonished, by repeated dreams, of the place where the relics of the forty martyrs had been buried. The ground had successively belonged to the house and garden of a woman of Constantinople, to a monastery of Macedonian monks, and to a church of St. Thyrsus, erected by

Caesarius, who was consul A.D. 397; and the memory of the relics was almost obliterated. Notwithstanding the charitable wishes of Dr. Jortin, (Remarks, tom. iv. p. 234,) it is not easy to acquit Pulcheria of some share in the pious fraud; which must have been transacted when she was more than five-and-thirty years of age.]

The Roman world was deeply interested in the education of its master. A regular course of study and exercise was judiciously instituted; of the military exercises of riding, and shooting with the bow; of the liberal studies of grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy: the most skilful masters of the East ambitiously solicited the attention of their royal pupil; and several noble youths were introduced into the palace, to animate his diligence by the emulation of friendship. Pulcheria alone discharged the important task of instructing her brother in the arts of government; but her precepts may countenance some suspicions of the extent of her capacity, or of the purity of her intentions. She taught him to maintain a grave and majestic deportment; to walk, to hold his robes, to seat himself on his throne, in a manner worthy of a great prince; to abstain from laughter; to listen with condescension; to return suitable answers; to assume, by turns, a serious or a placid countenance: in a word, to represent with grace and dignity the external figure of a Roman emperor. But Theodosius [72](#) was never excited to support the weight and glory of an illustrious name: and, instead of aspiring to support his ancestors, he degenerated (if we may presume to measure the degrees of incapacity) below the weakness of his father and his uncle. Arcadius and Honorius had been assisted by the guardian care of a parent, whose lessons were enforced by his authority and example. But the unfortunate prince, who is born in the purple, must remain a stranger to the voice of truth; and the son of Arcadius was condemned to pass his perpetual infancy encompassed only by a servile train of women and eunuchs. The ample leisure which he acquired by neglecting the essential duties of his high office, was filled by idle amusements and unprofitable studies. Hunting was the only active pursuit that could tempt him beyond the limits of the palace; but he most assiduously labored, sometimes by the light of a midnight lamp, in the mechanic occupations of painting and carving; and the elegance with which he transcribed religious books entitled the Roman emperor to the singular epithet of Calligraphes, or a fair writer. Separated from the world by an impenetrable veil, Theodosius trusted the persons whom he loved; he loved those who were accustomed to amuse and flatter his indolence; and as he never perused the papers that were presented for the royal signature, the acts of injustice the most repugnant to his character were frequently perpetrated in his name. The emperor himself was chaste, temperate, liberal, and merciful; but these qualities, which can only deserve the name of virtues when they are supported by courage and regulated by discretion, were seldom beneficial, and they sometimes proved mischievous, to mankind. His mind, enervated by a royal education, was oppressed and degraded by abject superstition: he fasted, he sung psalms, he blindly

accepted the miracles and doctrines with which his faith was continually nourished. Theodosius devoutly worshipped the dead and living saints of the Catholic church; and he once refused to eat, till an insolent monk, who had cast an excommunication on his sovereign, condescended to heal the spiritual wound which he had inflicted. [73](#)

72

[\(return\)](#)

[There is a remarkable difference between the two ecclesiastical historians, who in general bear so close a resemblance. Sozomen (l. ix. c. 1) ascribes to Pulcheria the government of the empire, and the education of her brother, whom he scarcely condescends to praise. Socrates, though he affectedly disclaims all hopes of favor or fame, composes an elaborate panegyric on the emperor, and cautiously suppresses the merits of his sister, (l. vii. c. 22, 42.) Philostorgius (l. xii. c. 7) expresses the influence of Pulcheria in gentle and courtly language. Suidas (Excerpt. p. 53) gives a true character of Theodosius; and I have followed the example of Tillemont (tom. vi. p. 25) in borrowing some strokes from the modern Greeks.]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Theodoret, l. v. c. 37. The bishop of Cyrrhus, one of the first men of his age for his learning and piety, applauds the obedience of Theodosius to the divine laws.]

The story of a fair and virtuous maiden, exalted from a private condition to the Imperial throne, might be deemed an incredible romance, if such a romance had not been verified in the marriage of Theodosius. The celebrated Athenais [74](#) was educated by her father Leontius in the religion and sciences of the Greeks; and so advantageous was the opinion which the Athenian philosopher entertained of his contemporaries, that he divided his patrimony between his two sons, bequeathing to his daughter a small legacy of one hundred pieces of gold, in the lively confidence that her beauty and merit would be a sufficient portion. The jealousy and avarice of her brothers soon compelled Athenais to seek a refuge at Constantinople; and, with some hopes, either of justice or favor, to throw herself at the feet of Pulcheria. That sagacious princess listened to her eloquent complaint; and secretly destined the daughter of the philosopher Leontius for the future wife of the emperor of the East, who had now attained the twentieth year of his age. She easily excited the curiosity of her brother, by an interesting picture of the charms of Athenais; large eyes, a well-proportioned nose, a fair complexion, golden locks, a slender person, a graceful demeanor, an understanding improved by study, and a virtue tried by distress. Theodosius, concealed behind a curtain in the apartment of his sister, was permitted to behold the Athenian virgin: the modest youth immediately declared his pure and honorable love; and the royal nuptials were celebrated amidst the acclamations of the capital and the provinces. Athenais, who was easily persuaded to renounce the errors of Paganism, received at her baptism the Christian name of Eudocia;

but the cautious Pulcheria withheld the title of Augusta, till the wife of Theodosius had approved her fruitfulness by the birth of a daughter, who espoused, fifteen years afterwards, the emperor of the West. The brothers of Eudocia obeyed, with some anxiety, her Imperial summons; but as she could easily forgive their unfortunate unkindness, she indulged the tenderness, or perhaps the vanity, of a sister, by promoting them to the rank of consuls and praefects. In the luxury of the palace, she still cultivated those ingenuous arts which had contributed to her greatness; and wisely dedicated her talents to the honor of religion, and of her husband. Eudocia composed a poetical paraphrase of the first eight books of the Old Testament, and of the prophecies of Daniel and Zechariah; a cento of the verses of Homer, applied to the life and miracles of Christ, the legend of St. Cyprian, and a panegyric on the Persian victories of Theodosius; and her writings, which were applauded by a servile and superstitious age, have not been disdained by the candor of impartial criticism. [75](#) The fondness of the emperor was not abated by time and possession; and Eudocia, after the marriage of her daughter, was permitted to discharge her grateful vows by a solemn pilgrimage to Jerusalem. Her ostentatious progress through the East may seem inconsistent with the spirit of Christian humility; she pronounced, from a throne of gold and gems, an eloquent oration to the senate of Antioch, declared her royal intention of enlarging the walls of the city, bestowed a donative of two hundred pounds of gold to restore the public baths, and accepted the statues, which were decreed by the gratitude of Antioch. In the Holy Land, her alms and pious foundations exceeded the munificence of the great Helena, and though the public treasure might be impoverished by this excessive liberality, she enjoyed the conscious satisfaction of returning to Constantinople with the chains of St. Peter, the right arm of St. Stephen, and an undoubted picture of the Virgin, painted by St. Luke. [76](#) But this pilgrimage was the fatal term of the glories of Eudocia. Satiated with empty pomp, and unmindful, perhaps, of her obligations to Pulcheria, she ambitiously aspired to the government of the Eastern empire; the palace was distracted by female discord; but the victory was at last decided, by the superior ascendant of the sister of Theodosius. The execution of Paulinus, master of the offices, and the disgrace of Cyrus, Prætorian praefect of the East, convinced the public that the favor of Eudocia was insufficient to protect her most faithful friends; and the uncommon beauty of Paulinus encouraged the secret rumor, that his guilt was that of a successful lover. [77](#) As soon as the empress perceived that the affection of Theodosius was irretrievably lost, she requested the permission of retiring to the distant solitude of Jerusalem. She obtained her request; but the jealousy of Theodosius, or the vindictive spirit of Pulcheria, pursued her in her last retreat; and Saturninus, count of the domestics, was directed to punish with death two ecclesiastics, her most favored servants. Eudocia instantly revenged them by the assassination of the count; the furious passions which she indulged on this suspicious occasion, seemed to justify the severity of Theodosius; and the empress, ignominiously stripped of the honors of her rank, [78](#) was disgraced, perhaps unjustly, in the eyes of the world. The remainder of the life of Eudocia, about

sixteen years, was spent in exile and devotion; and the approach of age, the death of Theodosius, the misfortunes of her only daughter, who was led a captive from Rome to Carthage, and the society of the Holy Monks of Palestine, insensibly confirmed the religious temper of her mind. After a full experience of the vicissitudes of human life, the daughter of the philosopher Leontius expired, at Jerusalem, in the sixty-seventh year of her age; protesting, with her dying breath, that she had never transgressed the bounds of innocence and friendship. [79](#)

74

[\(return\)](#)

[Socrates (l. vii. c. 21) mentions her name, (Athenais, the daughter of Leontius, an Athenian sophist,) her baptism, marriage, and poetical genius. The most ancient account of her history is in John Malala (part ii. p. 20, 21, edit. Venet. 1743) and in the Paschal Chronicle, (p. 311, 312.) Those authors had probably seen original pictures of the empress Eudocia. The modern Greeks, Zonaras, Cedrenus, &c., have displayed the love, rather than the talent of fiction. From Nicephorus, indeed, I have ventured to assume her age. The writer of a romance would not have imagined, that Athenais was near twenty eight years old when she inflamed the heart of a young emperor.]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[Socrates, l. vii. c. 21, Photius, p. 413-420. The Homeric cento is still extant, and has been repeatedly printed: but the claim of Eudocia to that insipid performance is disputed by the critics. See Fabricius, Biblioth. Graec. tom. i. p. 357. The Ionia, a miscellaneous dictionary of history and fable, was compiled by another empress of the name of Eudocia, who lived in the eleventh century: and the work is still extant in manuscript.]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[Baronius (Annal. Eccles. A.D. 438, 439) is copious and florid, but he is accused of placing the lies of different ages on the same level of authenticity.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

[In this short view of the disgrace of Eudocia, I have imitated the caution of Evagrius (l. i. c. 21) and Count Marcellinus, (in Chron A.D. 440 and 444.) The two authentic dates assigned by the latter, overturn a great part of the Greek fictions; and the celebrated story of the apple, &c., is fit only for the Arabian Nights, where something not very unlike it may be found.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[Priscus, (in Excerpt. Legat. p. 69,) a

contemporary, and a courtier, dryly mentions her Pagan and Christian names, without adding any title of honor or respect.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[For the two pilgrimages of Eudocia, and her long residence at Jerusalem, her devotion, alms, &c., see Socrates (l. vii. c. 47) and Evagrius, (l. i. c. 21, 22.) The Paschal Chronicle may sometimes deserve regard; and in the domestic history of Antioch, John Malala becomes a writer of good authority. The Abbe Guenee, in a memoir on the fertility of Palestine, of which I have only seen an extract, calculates the gifts of Eudocia at 20,488 pounds of gold, above 800,000 pounds sterling.]

The gentle mind of Theodosius was never inflamed by the ambition of conquest, or military renown; and the slight alarm of a Persian war scarcely interrupted the tranquillity of the East. The motives of this war were just and honorable. In the last year of the reign of Jezdegerd, the supposed guardian of Theodosius, a bishop, who aspired to the crown of martyrdom, destroyed one of the fire-temples of Susa. [80](#) His zeal and obstinacy were revenged on his brethren: the Magi excited a cruel persecution; and the intolerant zeal of Jezdegerd was imitated by his son Varanes, or Bahram, who soon afterwards ascended the throne. Some Christian fugitives, who escaped to the Roman frontier, were sternly demanded, and generously refused; and the refusal, aggravated by commercial disputes, soon kindled a war between the rival monarchies. The mountains of Armenia, and the plains of Mesopotamia, were filled with hostile armies; but the operations of two successive campaigns were not productive of any decisive or memorable events. Some engagements were fought, some towns were besieged, with various and doubtful success: and if the Romans failed in their attempt to recover the long-lost possession of Nisibis, the Persians were repulsed from the walls of a Mesopotamian city, by the valor of a martial bishop, who pointed his thundering engine in the name of St. Thomas the Apostle. Yet the splendid victories which the incredible speed of the messenger Palladius repeatedly announced to the palace of Constantinople, were celebrated with festivals and panegyrics. From these panegyrics the historians [81](#) of the age might borrow their extraordinary, and, perhaps, fabulous tales; of the proud challenge of a Persian hero, who was entangled by the net, and despatched by the sword, of Areobindus the Goth; of the ten thousand Immortals, who were slain in the attack of the Roman camp; and of the hundred thousand Arabs, or Saracens, who were impelled by a panic terror to throw themselves headlong into the Euphrates. Such events may be disbelieved or disregarded; but the charity of a bishop, Acacius of Amida, whose name might have dignified the saintly calendar, shall not be lost in oblivion. Boldly declaring, that vases of gold and silver are useless to a God who neither eats nor drinks, the generous prelate sold the plate of the church of Amida; employed the price in the redemption of seven thousand Persian captives; supplied their wants

with affectionate liberality; and dismissed them to their native country, to inform their king of the true spirit of the religion which he persecuted. The practice of benevolence in the midst of war must always tend to assuage the animosity of contending nations; and I wish to persuade myself, that Acacius contributed to the restoration of peace. In the conference which was held on the limits of the two empires, the Roman ambassadors degraded the personal character of their sovereign, by a vain attempt to magnify the extent of his power; when they seriously advised the Persians to prevent, by a timely accommodation, the wrath of a monarch, who was yet ignorant of this distant war. A truce of one hundred years was solemnly ratified; and although the revolutions of Armenia might threaten the public tranquillity, the essential conditions of this treaty were respected near fourscore years by the successors of Constantine and Artaxerxes.

80

[\(return\)](#)

[Theodoret, l. v. c. 39 Tillemont. Mem. Eccles tom. xii. 356-364. Assemani, Bibliot. Oriental. tom. iii. p. 396, tom. iv. p. 61. Theodoret blames the rashness of Abdas, but extols the constancy of his martyrdom. Yet I do not clearly understand the casuistry which prohibits our repairing the damage which we have unlawfully committed.]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[Socrates (l. vii. c. 18, 19, 20, 21) is the best author for the Persian war. We may likewise consult the three Chronicles, the Paschal and those of Marcellinus and Malala.]

Since the Roman and Parthian standards first encountered on the banks of the Euphrates, the kingdom of Armenia [82](#) was alternately oppressed by its formidable protectors; and in the course of this History, several events, which inclined the balance of peace and war, have been already related. A disgraceful treaty had resigned Armenia to the ambition of Sapor; and the scale of Persia appeared to preponderate. But the royal race of Arsaces impatiently submitted to the house of Sassan; the turbulent nobles asserted, or betrayed, their hereditary independence; and the nation was still attached to the Christian princes of Constantinople. In the beginning of the fifth century, Armenia was divided by the progress of war and faction; [83](#) and the unnatural division precipitated the downfall of that ancient monarchy. Chosroes, the Persian vassal, reigned over the Eastern and most extensive portion of the country; while the Western province acknowledged the jurisdiction of Arsaces, and the supremacy of the emperor Arcadius. [8111](#) After the death of Arsaces, the Romans suppressed the regal government, and imposed on their allies the condition of subjects. The military command was delegated to the count of the Armenian frontier; the city of Theodosiopolis [84](#) was built and fortified in a strong situation, on a fertile and lofty ground, near the sources of the Euphrates; and the dependent territories were ruled by five satraps, whose dignity was marked by a peculiar habit of gold and purple. The less fortunate nobles, who lamented the loss of their king, and envied the honors of their

equals, were provoked to negotiate their peace and pardon at the Persian court; and returning, with their followers, to the palace of Artaxata, acknowledged Chosroes [8411](#) for their lawful sovereign. About thirty years afterwards, Artasires, the nephew and successor of Chosroes, fell under the displeasure of the haughty and capricious nobles of Armenia; and they unanimously desired a Persian governor in the room of an unworthy king. The answer of the archbishop Isaac, whose sanction they earnestly solicited, is expressive of the character of a superstitious people. He deplored the manifest and inexcusable vices of Artasires; and declared, that he should not hesitate to accuse him before the tribunal of a Christian emperor, who would punish, without destroying, the sinner. “Our king,” continued Isaac, “is too much addicted to licentious pleasures, but he has been purified in the holy waters of baptism. He is a lover of women, but he does not adore the fire or the elements. He may deserve the reproach of lewdness, but he is an undoubted Catholic; and his faith is pure, though his manners are flagitious. I will never consent to abandon my sheep to the rage of devouring wolves; and you would soon repent your rash exchange of the infirmities of a believer, for the specious virtues of a heathen.” [85](#) Exasperated by the firmness of Isaac, the factious nobles accused both the king and the archbishop as the secret adherents of the emperor; and absurdly rejoiced in the sentence of condemnation, which, after a partial hearing, was solemnly pronounced by Bahram himself. The descendants of Arsaces were degraded from the royal dignity, [86](#) which they had possessed above five hundred and sixty years; [87](#) and the dominions of the unfortunate Artasires, [8711](#) under the new and significant appellation of Persarmenia, were reduced into the form of a province. This usurpation excited the jealousy of the Roman government; but the rising disputes were soon terminated by an amicable, though unequal, partition of the ancient kingdom of Armenia: [8712](#) and a territorial acquisition, which Augustus might have despised, reflected some lustre on the declining empire of the younger Theodosius.

82

[\(return\)](#)

[This account of the ruin and division of the kingdom of Armenia is taken from the third book of the Armenian history of Moses of Chorene. Deficient as he is in every qualification of a good historian, his local information, his passions, and his prejudices are strongly expressive of a native and contemporary. Procopius (de Edificiis, l. iii. c. 1, 5) relates the same facts in a very different manner; but I have extracted the circumstances the most probable in themselves, and the least inconsistent with Moses of Chorene.]

83

[\(return\)](#)

[The western Armenians used the Greek language and characters in their religious offices; but the use of that hostile tongue was prohibited by the Persians in the Eastern provinces, which were obliged to use the Syriac, till the invention of the Armenian letters

by Mesrobes, in the beginning of the fifth century, and the subsequent version of the Bible into the Armenian language; an event which relaxed to the connection of the church and nation with Constantinople.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[Moses Choren. l. iii. c. 59, p. 309, and p. 358. Procopius, de Edificiis, l. iii. c. 5. Theodosiopolis stands, or rather stood, about thirty-five miles to the east of Arzeroum, the modern capital of Turkish Armenia. See D'Anville, Geographie Ancienne, tom. ii. p. 99, 100.]

8111

[\(return\)](#)

[The division of Armenia, according to M. St. Martin, took place much earlier, A. C. 390. The Eastern or Persian division was four times as large as the Western or Roman. This partition took place during the reigns of Theodosius the First, and Varanes (Bahram) the Fourth. St. Martin, Sup. to Le Beau, iv. 429. This partition was but imperfectly accomplished, as both parts were afterwards reunited under Chosroes, who paid tribute both to the Roman emperor and to the Persian king. v. 439.—M.]

8411

[\(return\)](#)

[Chosroes, according to Procopius (who calls him Arsaces, the common name of the Armenian kings) and the Armenian writers, bequeathed to his two sons, to Tigranes the Persian, to Arsaces the Roman, division of Armenia, A. C. 416. With the assistance of the discontented nobles the Persian king placed his son Sapor on the throne of the Eastern division; the Western at the same time was united to the Roman empire, and called the Greater Armenia. It was then that Theodosiopolis was built. Sapor abandoned the throne of Armenia to assert his rights to that of Persia; he perished in the struggle, and after a period of anarchy, Bahram V., who had ascended the throne of Persia, placed the last native prince, Ardaschir, son of Bahram Schahpour, on the throne of the Persian division of Armenia. St. Martin, v. 506. This Ardaschir was the Artasires of Gibbon. The archbishop Isaac is called by the Armenians the Patriarch Schag. St. Martin, vi. 29.—M.]

85

[\(return\)](#)

[Moses Choren, l. iii. c. 63, p. 316. According to the institution of St. Gregory, the Apostle of Armenia, the archbishop was always of the royal family; a circumstance which, in some degree,

corrected the influence of the sacerdotal character, and united the mitre with the crown.]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[A branch of the royal house of Arsaces still subsisted with the rank and possessions (as it should seem) of Armenian satraps. See Moses Choren. l. iii. c. 65, p. 321.]

87 [\(return\)](#)

[Valarsaces was appointed king of Armenia by his brother the Parthian monarch, immediately after the defeat of Antiochus Sidetes, (Moses Choren. l. ii. c. 2, p. 85,) one hundred and thirty years before Christ. Without depending on the various and contradictory periods of the reigns of the last kings, we may be assured, that the ruin of the Armenian kingdom happened after the council of Chalcedon, A.D. 431, (l. iii. c. 61, p. 312;) and under Varamus, or Bahram, king of Persia, (l. iii. c. 64, p. 317,) who reigned from A.D. 420 to 440. See Assemani, Bibliot. Oriental. tom. iii. p. 396. * Note: Five hundred and eighty. St. Martin, *ibid.* He places this event A. C 429.—M.—Note: According to M. St. Martin, vi. 32, Vagharschah, or Valarsaces, was appointed king by his brother Mithridates the Great, king of Parthia.—M.]

8711 [\(return\)](#)

[Artasires or Ardaschir was probably sent to the castle of Oblivion. St. Martin, vi. 31.—M.]

8712 [\(return\)](#)

[The duration of the Armenian kingdom according to M. St. Martin, was 580 years.—M]

Chapter XXXIII: Conquest Of Africa By The Vandals.—Part I.

*Death Of Honorius.—Valentinian III.—Emperor Of The East.
—Administration Of His Mother Placidia—Ætius And
Boniface.—Conquest Of Africa By The Vandals.*

During a long and disgraceful reign of twenty-eight years, Honorius, emperor of the West, was separated from the friendship of his brother, and afterwards of his nephew, who reigned over the East; and Constantinople beheld, with apparent indifference and secret joy, the calamities of Rome. The strange adventures of Placidia 1 gradually renewed and cemented the alliance of the two empires. The daughter of the great Theodosius had been the captive, and the queen, of the Goths; she lost an affectionate husband; she was dragged in chains by his insulting assassin; she tasted the pleasure of revenge, and was exchanged, in the treaty of peace, for six hundred thousand measures of wheat. After her return from Spain to Italy, Placidia experienced a new persecution

in the bosom of her family. She was averse to a marriage, which had been stipulated without her consent; and the brave Constantius, as a noble reward for the tyrants whom he had vanquished, received, from the hand of Honorius himself, the struggling and the reluctant hand of the widow of Adolphus. But her resistance ended with the ceremony of the nuptials: nor did Placidia refuse to become the mother of Honoria and Valentinian the Third, or to assume and exercise an absolute dominion over the mind of her grateful husband. The generous soldier, whose time had hitherto been divided between social pleasure and military service, was taught new lessons of avarice and ambition: he extorted the title of Augustus: and the servant of Honorius was associated to the empire of the West. The death of Constantius, in the seventh month of his reign, instead of diminishing, seemed to increase the power of Placidia; and the indecent familiarity ² of her brother, which might be no more than the symptoms of a childish affection, were universally attributed to incestuous love. On a sudden, by some base intrigues of a steward and a nurse, this excessive fondness was converted into an irreconcilable quarrel: the debates of the emperor and his sister were not long confined within the walls of the palace; and as the Gothic soldiers adhered to their queen, the city of Ravenna was agitated with bloody and dangerous tumults, which could only be appeased by the forced or voluntary retreat of Placidia and her children. The royal exiles landed at Constantinople, soon after the marriage of Theodosius, during the festival of the Persian victories. They were treated with kindness and magnificence; but as the statues of the emperor Constantius had been rejected by the Eastern court, the title of Augusta could not decently be allowed to his widow. Within a few months after the arrival of Placidia, a swift messenger announced the death of Honorius, the consequence of a dropsy; but the important secret was not divulged, till the necessary orders had been despatched for the march of a large body of troops to the sea-coast of Dalmatia. The shops and the gates of Constantinople remained shut during seven days; and the loss of a foreign prince, who could neither be esteemed nor regretted, was celebrated with loud and affected demonstrations of the public grief.

1 [\(return\)](#)

[See vol. iii. p. 296.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[It is the expression of Olympiodorus (apud Phetium p. 197;) who means, perhaps, to describe the same caresses which Mahomet bestowed on his daughter Phatemah. Quando, (says the prophet himself,) quando subit mihi desiderium Paradisi, osculor eam, et ingero linguam meam in os ejus. But this sensual indulgence was justified by miracle and mystery; and the anecdote has been communicated to the public by the Reverend Father Maracci in his Version and Confutation of the Koran, tom. i. p. 32.]

While the ministers of Constantinople deliberated, the vacant throne of Honorius was usurped by the ambition of a stranger. The name of the rebel was John; he filled the confidential office of Primicerius, or principal secretary, and history has attributed to his character more virtues, than can easily be reconciled with the violation of the most sacred duty. Elated by the submission of Italy, and the hope of an alliance with the Huns, John presumed to insult, by an embassy, the majesty of the Eastern emperor; but when he understood that his agents had been banished, imprisoned, and at length chased away with deserved ignominy, John prepared to assert, by arms, the injustice of his claims. In such a cause, the grandson of the great Theodosius should have marched in person: but the young emperor was easily diverted, by his physicians, from so rash and hazardous a design; and the conduct of the Italian expedition was prudently intrusted to Ardaburius, and his son Aspar, who had already signalized their valor against the Persians. It was resolved, that Ardaburius should embark with the infantry; whilst Aspar, at the head of the cavalry, conducted Placidia and her son Valentinian along the sea-coast of the Adriatic. The march of the cavalry was performed with such active diligence, that they surprised, without resistance, the important city of Aquileia: when the hopes of Aspar were unexpectedly confounded by the intelligence, that a storm had dispersed the Imperial fleet; and that his father, with only two galleys, was taken and carried a prisoner into the port of Ravenna. Yet this incident, unfortunate as it might seem, facilitated the conquest of Italy. Ardaburius employed, or abused, the courteous freedom which he was permitted to enjoy, to revive among the troops a sense of loyalty and gratitude; and as soon as the conspiracy was ripe for execution, he invited, by private messages, and pressed the approach of, Aspar. A shepherd, whom the popular credulity transformed into an angel, guided the eastern cavalry by a secret, and, it was thought, an impassable road, through the morasses of the Po: the gates of Ravenna, after a short struggle, were thrown open; and the defenceless tyrant was delivered to the mercy, or rather to the cruelty, of the conquerors. His right hand was first cut off; and, after he had been exposed, mounted on an ass, to the public derision, John was beheaded in the circus of Aquileia. The emperor Theodosius, when he received the news of the victory, interrupted the horse-races; and singing, as he marched through the streets, a suitable psalm, conducted his people from the Hippodrome to the church, where he spent the remainder of the day in grateful devotion. [3](#)

[For these revolutions of the Western empire, consult Olympiodor, apud Phot. p. 192, 193, 196, 197, 200; Sozomen, l. ix. c. 16; Socrates, l. vii. 23, 24; Philostorgius, l. xii. c. 10, 11, and Godefroy, Dissertat p. 486; Procopius, de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 3, p. 182, 183, in Chronograph, p. 72, 73, and the Chronicles.]

In a monarchy, which, according to various precedents, might be considered as elective, or hereditary, or patrimonial, it was impossible that the intricate claims of

female and collateral succession should be clearly defined; [4](#) and Theodosius, by the right of consanguinity or conquest, might have reigned the sole legitimate emperor of the Romans. For a moment, perhaps, his eyes were dazzled by the prospect of unbounded sway; but his indolent temper gradually acquiesced in the dictates of sound policy. He contented himself with the possession of the East; and wisely relinquished the laborious task of waging a distant and doubtful war against the Barbarians beyond the Alps; or of securing the obedience of the Italians and Africans, whose minds were alienated by the irreconcilable difference of language and interest. Instead of listening to the voice of ambition, Theodosius resolved to imitate the moderation of his grandfather, and to seat his cousin Valentinian on the throne of the West. The royal infant was distinguished at Constantinople by the title of Nobilissimus: he was promoted, before his departure from Thessalonica, to the rank and dignity of Caesar; and after the conquest of Italy, the patrician Helion, by the authority of Theodosius, and in the presence of the senate, saluted Valentinian the Third by the name of Augustus, and solemnly invested him with the diadem and the Imperial purple. [5](#) By the agreement of the three females who governed the Roman world, the son of Placidia was betrothed to Eudoxia, the daughter of Theodosius and Athenais; and as soon as the lover and his bride had attained the age of puberty, this honorable alliance was faithfully accomplished. At the same time, as a compensation, perhaps, for the expenses of the war, the Western Illyricum was detached from the Italian dominions, and yielded to the throne of Constantinople. [6](#) The emperor of the East acquired the useful dominion of the rich and maritime province of Dalmatia, and the dangerous sovereignty of Pannonia and Noricum, which had been filled and ravaged above twenty years by a promiscuous crowd of Huns, Ostrogoths, Vandals, and Bavarians. Theodosius and Valentinian continued to respect the obligations of their public and domestic alliance; but the unity of the Roman government was finally dissolved. By a positive declaration, the validity of all future laws was limited to the dominions of their peculiar author; unless he should think proper to communicate them, subscribed with his own hand, for the approbation of his independent colleague. [7](#)

4

[\(return\)](#)

[See Grotius de Jure Belli et Pacis, l. ii. c. 7. He has laboriously out vainly, attempted to form a reasonable system of jurisprudence from the various and discordant modes of royal succession, which have been introduced by fraud or force, by time or accident.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[The original writers are not agreed (see Muratori, Annali d'Italia tom. iv. p. 139) whether Valentinian received the Imperial diadem at Rome or Ravenna. In this uncertainty, I am willing to believe, that some respect was shown to the senate.]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[The count de Buat (Hist. des Peup es de l'Europe, tom. vii. p. 292-300) has established the reality, explained the motives, and traced the consequences, of this remarkable cession.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[See the first Novel of Theodosius, by which he ratifies and communicates (A.D. 438) the Theodosian Code. About forty years before that time, the unity of legislation had been proved by an exception. The Jews, who were numerous in the cities of Apulia and Calabria, produced a law of the East to justify their exemption from municipal offices, (Cod. Theod. l. xvi. tit. viii. leg. 13;) and the Western emperor was obliged to invalidate, by a special edict, the law, *quam constat meis partibus esse damnosam*. Cod. Theod. l. xi. tit. i. leg. 158.]

Valentinian, when he received the title of Augustus, was no more than six years of age; and his long minority was intrusted to the guardian care of a mother, who might assert a female claim to the succession of the Western empire. Placidia envied, but she could not equal, the reputation and virtues of the wife and sister of Theodosius, the elegant genius of Eudocia, the wise and successful policy of Pulcheria. The mother of Valentinian was jealous of the power which she was incapable of exercising; [8](#) she reigned twenty-five years, in the name of her son; and the character of that unworthy emperor gradually countenanced the suspicion that Placidia had enervated his youth by a dissolute education, and studiously diverted his attention from every manly and honorable pursuit. Amidst the decay of military spirit, her armies were commanded by two generals, Ætius [9](#) and Boniface, [10](#) who may be deservedly named as the last of the Romans. Their union might have supported a sinking empire; their discord was the fatal and immediate cause of the loss of Africa. The invasion and defeat of Attila have immortalized the fame of Ætius; and though time has thrown a shade over the exploits of his rival, the defence of Marseilles, and the deliverance of Africa, attest the military talents of Count Boniface. In the field of battle, in partial encounters, in single combats, he was still the terror of the Barbarians: the clergy, and particularly his friend Augustin, were edified by the Christian piety which had once tempted him to retire from the world; the people applauded his spotless integrity; the army dreaded his equal and inexorable justice, which may be displayed in a very singular example. A peasant, who complained of the criminal intimacy between his wife and a Gothic soldier, was directed to attend his tribunal the following day: in the evening the count, who had diligently informed himself of the time and place of the assignation, mounted his horse, rode ten miles into the country, surprised the guilty couple, punished the soldier with instant death, and silenced the complaints of the husband by presenting him, the next morning, with the head of the adulterer. The abilities of Ætius and Boniface might have been usefully employed against the public enemies, in separate and important commands; but the

experience of their past conduct should have decided the real favor and confidence of the empress Placidia. In the melancholy season of her exile and distress, Boniface alone had maintained her cause with unshaken fidelity: and the troops and treasures of Africa had essentially contributed to extinguish the rebellion. The same rebellion had been supported by the zeal and activity of Ætius, who brought an army of sixty thousand Huns from the Danube to the confines of Italy, for the service of the usurper. The untimely death of John compelled him to accept an advantageous treaty; but he still continued, the subject and the soldier of Valentinian, to entertain a secret, perhaps a treasonable, correspondence with his Barbarian allies, whose retreat had been purchased by liberal gifts, and more liberal promises. But Ætius possessed an advantage of singular moment in a female reign; he was present: he besieged, with artful and assiduous flattery, the palace of Ravenna; disguised his dark designs with the mask of loyalty and friendship; and at length deceived both his mistress and his absent rival, by a subtle conspiracy, which a weak woman and a brave man could not easily suspect. He had secretly persuaded [11](#) Placidia to recall Boniface from the government of Africa; he secretly advised Boniface to disobey the Imperial summons: to the one, he represented the order as a sentence of death; to the other, he stated the refusal as a signal of revolt; and when the credulous and unsuspectful count had armed the province in his defence, Ætius applauded his sagacity in foreseeing the rebellion, which his own perfidy had excited. A temperate inquiry into the real motives of Boniface would have restored a faithful servant to his duty and to the republic; but the arts of Ætius still continued to betray and to inflame, and the count was urged, by persecution, to embrace the most desperate counsels. The success with which he eluded or repelled the first attacks, could not inspire a vain confidence, that at the head of some loose, disorderly Africans, he should be able to withstand the regular forces of the West, commanded by a rival, whose military character it was impossible for him to despise. After some hesitation, the last struggles of prudence and loyalty, Boniface despatched a trusty friend to the court, or rather to the camp, of Gonderic, king of the Vandals, with the proposal of a strict alliance, and the offer of an advantageous and perpetual settlement.

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Cassiodorus (Variar. l. xi. Epist. i. p. 238) has compared the regencies of Placidia and Amalasuntha. He arraigns the weakness of the mother of Valentinian, and praises the virtues of his royal mistress. On this occasion, flattery seems to have spoken the language of truth.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Philostorgius, l. xii. c. 12, and Godefroy's Dissertat. p. 493, &c.; and Renatus Frigeridus, apud Gregor. Turon. l. ii. c. 8, in tom. ii. p. 163. The father of Ætius was Gaudentius, an illustrious citizen of the province of Scythia, and master-general of the cavalry; his mother was a rich and noble Italian. From his earliest youth, Ætius, as a

soldier and a hostage, had conversed with the Barbarians.]

10

[\(return\)](#)

[For the character of Boniface, see Olympiodorus, apud Phot. p. 196; and St. Augustin apud Tillemont, Mémoires Eccles. tom. xiii. p. 712-715, 886. The bishop of Hippo at length deplored the fall of his friend, who, after a solemn vow of chastity, had married a second wife of the Arian sect, and who was suspected of keeping several concubines in his house.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius (de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 3, 4, p. 182-186) relates the fraud of Ætius, the revolt of Boniface, and the loss of Africa. This anecdote, which is supported by some collateral testimony, (see Ruinart, Hist. Persecut. Vandal. p. 420, 421,) seems agreeable to the practice of ancient and modern courts, and would be naturally revealed by the repentance of Boniface.]

After the retreat of the Goths, the authority of Honorius had obtained a precarious establishment in Spain; except only in the province of Gallicia, where the Suevi and the Vandals had fortified their camps, in mutual discord and hostile independence. The Vandals prevailed; and their adversaries were besieged in the Nervasian hills, between Leon and Oviedo, till the approach of Count Asterius compelled, or rather provoked, the victorious Barbarians to remove the scene of the war to the plains of Boetica. The rapid progress of the Vandals soon acquired a more effectual opposition; and the master-general Castinus marched against them with a numerous army of Romans and Goths. Vanquished in battle by an inferior army, Castinus fled with dishonor to Tarragona; and this memorable defeat, which has been represented as the punishment, was most probably the effect, of his rash presumption. [12](#) Seville and Carthagen a became the reward, or rather the prey, of the ferocious conquerors; and the vessels which they found in the harbor of Carthagen a might easily transport them to the Isles of Majorca and Minorca, where the Spanish fugitives, as in a secure recess, had vainly concealed their families and their fortunes. The experience of navigation, and perhaps the prospect of Africa, encouraged the Vandals to accept the invitation which they received from Count Boniface; and the death of Gonderic served only to forward and animate the bold enterprise. In the room of a prince not conspicuous for any superior powers of the mind or body, they acquired his bastard brother, the terrible Genseric; [13](#) a name, which, in the destruction of the Roman empire, has deserved an equal rank with the names of Alaric and Attila. The king of the Vandals is described to have been of a middle stature, with a lameness in one leg, which he had contracted by an accidental fall from his horse. His slow and cautious speech seldom declared the deep purposes of his soul; he disdained to imitate the luxury of the vanquished; but he

indulged the sterner passions of anger and revenge. The ambition of Genseric was without bounds and without scruples; and the warrior could dexterously employ the dark engines of policy to solicit the allies who might be useful to his success, or to scatter among his enemies the seeds of hatred and contention. Almost in the moment of his departure he was informed that Hermanric, king of the Suevi, had presumed to ravage the Spanish territories, which he was resolved to abandon.

Impatient of the insult, Genseric pursued the hasty retreat of the Suevi as far as Merida; precipitated the king and his army into the River Anas, and calmly returned to the sea-shore to embark his victorious troops. The vessels which transported the Vandals over the modern Straits of Gibraltar, a channel only twelve miles in breadth, were furnished by the Spaniards, who anxiously wished their departure; and by the African general, who had implored their formidable assistance. [14](#)

12

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Chronicles of Prosper and Idatius. Salvian (de Gubernat. Dei, l. vii. p. 246, Paris, 1608) ascribes the victory of the Vandals to their superior piety. They fasted, they prayed, they carried a Bible in the front of the Host, with the design, perhaps, of reproaching the perfidy and sacrilege of their enemies.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Gizericus (his name is variously expressed) *statura mediocris et equi casu claudicans, animo profundus, sermone rarus, luxuriae contemptor, ira turbidus, habendi cupidus, ad solicitandas gentes providentissimus, semina contentionum jacere, odia miscere paratus.* Jornandes, de Rebus Geticis, c. 33, p. 657. This portrait, which is drawn with some skill, and a strong likeness, must have been copied from the Gothic history of Cassiodorus.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Chronicle of Idatius. That bishop, a Spaniard and a contemporary, places the passage of the Vandals in the month of May, of the year of Abraham, (which commences in October,) 2444. This date, which coincides with A.D. 429, is confirmed by Isidore, another Spanish bishop, and is justly preferred to the opinion of those writers who have marked for that event one of the two preceding years. See Pagi Critica, tom. ii. p. 205, &c.]

Our fancy, so long accustomed to exaggerate and multiply the martial swarms of Barbarians that seemed to issue from the North, will perhaps be surprised by the account of the army which Genseric mustered on the coast of Mauritania. The Vandals, who in twenty years had penetrated from the Elbe to Mount Atlas, were united under the command of their warlike king; and he reigned with equal authority over the Alani, who

had passed, within the term of human life, from the cold of Scythia to the excessive heat of an African climate. The hopes of the bold enterprise had excited many brave adventurers of the Gothic nation; and many desperate provincials were tempted to repair their fortunes by the same means which had occasioned their ruin. Yet this various multitude amounted only to fifty thousand effective men; and though Genseric artfully magnified his apparent strength, by appointing eighty chinarchs, or commanders of thousands, the fallacious increase of old men, of children, and of slaves, would scarcely have swelled his army to the number of four-score thousand persons. [15](#) But his own dexterity, and the discontents of Africa, soon fortified the Vandal powers, by the accession of numerous and active allies. The parts of Mauritania which border on the Great Desert and the Atlantic Ocean, were filled with a fierce and untractable race of men, whose savage temper had been exasperated, rather than reclaimed, by their dread of the Roman arms. The wandering Moors, [16](#) as they gradually ventured to approach the seashore, and the camp of the Vandals, must have viewed with terror and astonishment the dress, the armor, the martial pride and discipline of the unknown strangers who had landed on their coast; and the fair complexions of the blue-eyed warriors of Germany formed a very singular contrast with the swarthy or olive hue which is derived from the neighborhood of the torrid zone. After the first difficulties had in some measure been removed, which arose from the mutual ignorance of their respective language, the Moors, regardless of any future consequence, embraced the alliance of the enemies of Rome; and a crowd of naked savages rushed from the woods and valleys of Mount Atlas, to satiate their revenge on the polished tyrants, who had injuriously expelled them from the native sovereignty of the land.

15

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare Procopius (de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 5, p. 190) and Victor Vitensis, (de Persecutione Vandal. l. i. c. 1, p. 3, edit. Ruinart.) We are assured by Idatius, that Genseric evacuated Spain, cum Vandalis omnibus eorumque familiis; and Possidius (in Vit. Augustin. c. 28, apud Ruinart, p. 427) describes his army as manus ingens immanium gentium Vandalorum et Alanorum, commixtam secum babens Gothorum gentem, aliarumque diversarum personas.]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[For the manners of the Moors, see Procopius, (de Bell. Vandal. l. ii. c. 6, p. 249;) for their figure and complexion, M. de Buffon, (Histoire Naturelle, tom. iii. p. 430.) Procopius says in general, that the Moors had joined the Vandals before the death of Valentinian, (de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 5, p. 190;) and it is probable that the independent tribes did not embrace any uniform system of policy.]

The persecution of the Donatists [17](#) was an event not less favorable to the designs of Genseric. Seventeen years before he landed in Africa, a public conference was held at Carthage, by the order of the magistrate. The Catholics were satisfied, that, after the invincible reasons which they had alleged, the obstinacy of the schismatics must be inexcusable and voluntary; and the emperor Honorius was persuaded to inflict the most rigorous penalties on a faction which had so long abused his patience and clemency. Three hundred bishops, [18](#) with many thousands of the inferior clergy, were torn from their churches, stripped of their ecclesiastical possessions, banished to the islands, and proscribed by the laws, if they presumed to conceal themselves in the provinces of Africa. Their numerous congregations, both in cities and in the country, were deprived of the rights of citizens, and of the exercise of religious worship. A regular scale of fines, from ten to two hundred pounds of silver, was curiously ascertained, according to the distinction of rank and fortune, to punish the crime of assisting at a schismatic conventicle; and if the fine had been levied five times, without subduing the obstinacy of the offender, his future punishment was referred to the discretion of the Imperial court. [19](#) By these severities, which obtained the warmest approbation of St. Augustin, [20](#) great numbers of Donatists were reconciled to the Catholic Church; but the fanatics, who still persevered in their opposition, were provoked to madness and despair; the distracted country was filled with tumult and bloodshed; the armed troops of Circumcellions alternately pointed their rage against themselves, or against their adversaries; and the calendar of martyrs received on both sides a considerable augmentation. [21](#) Under these circumstances, Genseric, a Christian, but an enemy of the orthodox communion, showed himself to the Donatists as a powerful deliverer, from whom they might reasonably expect the repeal of the odious and oppressive edicts of the Roman emperors. [22](#) The conquest of Africa was facilitated by the active zeal, or the secret favor, of a domestic faction; the wanton outrages against the churches and the clergy of which the Vandals are accused, may be fairly imputed to the fanaticism of their allies; and the intolerant spirit which disgraced the triumph of Christianity, contributed to the loss of the most important province of the West. [23](#)

17

[\(return\)](#)

[See Tillemont, Mémoires Eccles. tom. xiii. p. 516-558; and the whole series of the persecution, in the original monuments, published by Dupin at the end of Optatus, p. 323-515.]

18

[\(return\)](#)

[The Donatist Bishops, at the conference of Carthage, amounted to 279; and they asserted that their whole number was not less than 400. The Catholics had 286 present, 120 absent, besides sixty four vacant bishoprics.]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[The fifth title of the sixteenth book of the Theodosian Code exhibits a series of the Imperial

laws against the Donatists, from the year 400 to the year 428. Of these the 54th law, promulgated by Honorius, A.D. 414, is the most severe and effectual.]

20

[\(return\)](#)

[St. Augustin altered his opinion with regard to the proper treatment of heretics. His pathetic declaration of pity and indulgence for the Manichæans, has been inserted by Mr. Locke (vol. iii. p. 469) among the choice specimens of his common-place book. Another philosopher, the celebrated Bayle, (tom. ii. p. 445-496,) has refuted, with superfluous diligence and ingenuity, the arguments by which the bishop of Hippo justified, in his old age, the persecution of the Donatists.]

21

[\(return\)](#)

[See Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xiii. p. 586-592, 806. The Donatists boasted of thousands of these voluntary martyrs. Augustin asserts, and probably with truth, that these numbers were much exaggerated; but he sternly maintains, that it was better that some should burn themselves in this world, than that all should burn in hell flames.]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[According to St. Augustin and Theodoret, the Donatists were inclined to the principles, or at least to the party, of the Arians, which Genseric supported. Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 68.]

23

[\(return\)](#)

[See Baronius, Annal. Eccles. A.D. 428, No. 7, A.D. 439, No. 35. The cardinal, though more inclined to seek the cause of great events in heaven than on the earth, has observed the apparent connection of the Vandals and the Donatists. Under the reign of the Barbarians, the schismatics of Africa enjoyed an obscure peace of one hundred years; at the end of which we may again trace them by the fight of the Imperial persecutions. See Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 192. &c.]

The court and the people were astonished by the strange intelligence, that a virtuous hero, after so many favors, and so many services, had renounced his allegiance, and invited the Barbarians to destroy the province intrusted to his command. The friends of Boniface, who still believed that his criminal behavior might be excused by some honorable motive, solicited, during the absence of Ætius, a free conference with the Count of Africa; and Darius, an officer of high distinction, was named for the important embassy. [24](#) In their first interview at Carthage, the imaginary provocations were mutually explained; the opposite letters of Ætius were produced and compared; and the

fraud was easily detected. Placidia and Boniface lamented their fatal error; and the count had sufficient magnanimity to confide in the forgiveness of his sovereign, or to expose his head to her future resentment. His repentance was fervent and sincere; but he soon discovered that it was no longer in his power to restore the edifice which he had shaken to its foundations. Carthage and the Roman garrisons returned with their general to the allegiance of Valentinian; but the rest of Africa was still distracted with war and faction; and the inexorable king of the Vandals, disdaining all terms of accommodation, sternly refused to relinquish the possession of his prey. The band of veterans who marched under the standard of Boniface, and his hasty levies of provincial troops, were defeated with considerable loss; the victorious Barbarians insulted the open country; and Carthage, Cirta, and Hippo Regius, were the only cities that appeared to rise above the general inundation.

24

[\(return\)](#)

[In a confidential letter to Count Boniface, St. Augustin, without examining the grounds of the quarrel, piously exhorts him to discharge the duties of a Christian and a subject: to extricate himself without delay from his dangerous and guilty situation; and even, if he could obtain the consent of his wife, to embrace a life of celibacy and penance, (Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xiii. p. 890.) The bishop was intimately connected with Darius, the minister of peace, (Id. tom. xiii. p. 928.)]

The long and narrow tract of the African coast was filled with frequent monuments of Roman art and magnificence; and the respective degrees of improvement might be accurately measured by the distance from Carthage and the Mediterranean. A simple reflection will impress every thinking mind with the clearest idea of fertility and cultivation: the country was extremely populous; the inhabitants reserved a liberal subsistence for their own use; and the annual exportation, particularly of wheat, was so regular and plentiful, that Africa deserved the name of the common granary of Rome and of mankind. On a sudden the seven fruitful provinces, from Tangier to Tripoli, were overwhelmed by the invasion of the Vandals; whose destructive rage has perhaps been exaggerated by popular animosity, religious zeal, and extravagant declamation. War, in its fairest form, implies a perpetual violation of humanity and justice; and the hostilities of Barbarians are inflamed by the fierce and lawless spirit which incessantly disturbs their peaceful and domestic society. The Vandals, where they found resistance, seldom gave quarter; and the deaths of their valiant countrymen were expiated by the ruin of the cities under whose walls they had fallen. Careless of the distinctions of age, or sex, or rank, they employed every species of indignity and torture, to force from the captives a discovery of their hidden wealth. The stern policy of Genseric justified his frequent examples of military execution: he was not always the master of his own passions, or of those of his followers; and the calamities of war were aggravated by the licentiousness of the Moors, and the fanaticism of the Donatists. Yet I shall not easily

be persuaded, that it was the common practice of the Vandals to extirpate the olives, and other fruit trees, of a country where they intended to settle: nor can I believe that it was a usual stratagem to slaughter great numbers of their prisoners before the walls of a besieged city, for the sole purpose of infecting the air, and producing a pestilence, of which they themselves must have been the first victims. [25](#)

25

[\(return\)](#)

[The original complaints of the desolation of Africa are contained 1. In a letter from Capreolus, bishop of Carthage, to excuse his absence from the council of Ephesus, (ap. Ruinart, p. 427.) 2. In the life of St. Augustin, by his friend and colleague Possidius, (ap. Ruinart, p. 427.) 3. In the history of the Vandalic persecution, by Victor Vitensis, (l. i. c. 1, 2, 3, edit. Ruinart.) The last picture, which was drawn sixty years after the event, is more expressive of the author's passions than of the truth of facts.]

The generous mind of Count Boniface was tortured by the exquisite distress of beholding the ruin which he had occasioned, and whose rapid progress he was unable to check. After the loss of a battle he retired into Hippo Regius; where he was immediately besieged by an enemy, who considered him as the real bulwark of Africa. The maritime colony of Hippo, [26](#) about two hundred miles westward of Carthage, had formerly acquired the distinguishing epithet of Regius, from the residence of Numidian kings; and some remains of trade and populousness still adhere to the modern city, which is known in Europe by the corrupted name of Bona. The military labors, and anxious reflections, of Count Boniface, were alleviated by the edifying conversation of his friend St. Augustin; [27](#) till that bishop, the light and pillar of the Catholic church, was gently released, in the third month of the siege, and in the seventy-sixth year of his age, from the actual and the impending calamities of his country. The youth of Augustin had been stained by the vices and errors which he so ingenuously confesses; but from the moment of his conversion to that of his death, the manners of the bishop of Hippo were pure and austere: and the most conspicuous of his virtues was an ardent zeal against heretics of every denomination; the Manichæans, the Donatists, and the Pelagians, against whom he waged a perpetual controversy. When the city, some months after his death, was burnt by the Vandals, the library was fortunately saved, which contained his voluminous writings; two hundred and thirty-two separate books or treatises on theological subjects, besides a complete exposition of the psalter and the gospel, and a copious magazine of epistles and homilies. [28](#) According to the judgment of the most impartial critics, the superficial learning of Augustin was confined to the Latin language; [29](#) and his style, though sometimes animated by the eloquence of passion, is usually clouded by false and affected rhetoric. But he possessed a strong, capacious, argumentative mind; he boldly sounded the dark abyss of grace, predestination, free will, and original sin; and the rigid system of Christianity which he

framed or restored, [30](#) has been entertained, with public applause, and secret reluctance, by the Latin church. [31](#)

26

[\(return\)](#)

[See Cellarius, Geograph. Antiq. tom. ii. part ii. p. 112. Leo African. in Ramusio, tom. i. fol. 70. L'Afrique de Marmol, tom. ii. p. 434, 437. Shaw's Travels, p. 46, 47. The old Hippo Regius was finally destroyed by the Arabs in the seventh century; but a new town, at the distance of two miles, was built with the materials; and it contained, in the sixteenth century, about three hundred families of industrious, but turbulent manufacturers. The adjacent territory is renowned for a pure air, a fertile soil, and plenty of exquisite fruits.]

27

[\(return\)](#)

[The life of St. Augustin, by Tillemont, fills a quarto volume (Mem. Eccles. tom. xiii.) of more than one thousand pages; and the diligence of that learned Jansenist was excited, on this occasion, by factious and devout zeal for the founder of his sect.]

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Such, at least, is the account of Victor Vitensis, (de Persecut. Vandal. l. i. c. 3;) though Gennadius seems to doubt whether any person had read, or even collected, all the works of St. Augustin, (see Hieronym. Opera, tom. i. p. 319, in Catalog. Scriptor. Eccles.) They have been repeatedly printed; and Dupin (Bibliothèque Eccles. tom. iii. p. 158-257) has given a large and satisfactory abstract of them as they stand in the last edition of the Benedictines. My personal acquaintance with the bishop of Hippo does not extend beyond the Confessions, and the City of God.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[In his early youth (Confess. i. 14) St. Augustin disliked and neglected the study of Greek; and he frankly owns that he read the Platonists in a Latin version, (Confes. vii. 9.) Some modern critics have thought, that his ignorance of Greek disqualified him from expounding the Scriptures; and Cicero or Quintilian would have required the knowledge of that language in a professor of rhetoric.]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[These questions were seldom agitated, from the time of St. Paul to that of St. Augustin. I am informed that the Greek fathers maintain the natural sentiments of the Semi-Pelagians; and that the orthodoxy of St. Augustin was derived from the Manichæan school.]

[The church of Rome has canonized Augustin, and reprobated Calvin. Yet as the real difference between them is invisible even to a theological microscope, the Molinists are oppressed by the authority of the saint, and the Jansenists are disgraced by their resemblance to the heretic. In the mean while, the Protestant Arminians stand aloof, and deride the mutual perplexity of the disputants, (see a curious Review of the Controversy, by Le Clerc, Bibliothèque Universelle, tom. xiv. p. 144-398.) Perhaps a reasoner still more independent may smile in his turn, when he peruses an Arminian Commentary on the Epistle to the Romans.]

Chapter XXXIII: Conquest Of Africa By The Vandals.—Part II.

By the skill of Boniface, and perhaps by the ignorance of the Vandals, the siege of Hippo was protracted above fourteen months: the sea was continually open; and when the adjacent country had been exhausted by irregular rapine, the besiegers themselves were compelled by famine to relinquish their enterprise. The importance and danger of Africa were deeply felt by the regent of the West. Placidia implored the assistance of her eastern ally; and the Italian fleet and army were reenforced by Asper, who sailed from Constantinople with a powerful armament. As soon as the force of the two empires was united under the command of Boniface, he boldly marched against the Vandals; and the loss of a second battle irretrievably decided the fate of Africa. He embarked with the precipitation of despair; and the people of Hippo were permitted, with their families and effects, to occupy the vacant place of the soldiers, the greatest part of whom were either slain or made prisoners by the Vandals. The count, whose fatal credulity had wounded the vitals of the republic, might enter the palace of Ravenna with some anxiety, which was soon removed by the smiles of Placidia. Boniface accepted with gratitude the rank of patrician, and the dignity of master-general of the Roman armies; but he must have blushed at the sight of those medals, in which he was represented with the name and attributes of victory. [32](#) The discovery of his fraud, the displeasure of the empress, and the distinguished favor of his rival, exasperated the haughty and perfidious soul of Ætius. He hastily returned from Gaul to Italy, with a retinue, or rather with an army, of Barbarian followers; and such was the weakness of the government, that the two generals decided their private quarrel in a bloody battle. Boniface was successful; but he received in the conflict a mortal wound from the spear of his adversary, of which he expired within a few days, in such Christian and charitable sentiments, that he exhorted his wife, a rich heiress of Spain, to accept Ætius for her second husband. But Ætius could not derive any immediate advantage from the generosity of his dying enemy: he was proclaimed a rebel by the justice of Placidia; and though he attempted

to defend some strong fortresses, erected on his patrimonial estate, the Imperial power soon compelled him to retire into Pannonia, to the tents of his faithful Huns. The republic was deprived, by their mutual discord, of the service of her two most illustrious champions. [33](#)

32

[\(return\)](#)

[Ducange, Fam. Byzant. p. 67. On one side, the head of Valentinian; on the reverse, Boniface, with a scourge in one hand, and a palm in the other, standing in a triumphal car, which is drawn by four horses, or, in another medal, by four stags; an unlucky emblem! I should doubt whether another example can be found of the head of a subject on the reverse of an Imperial medal. See Science des Medailles, by the Pere Jobert, tom. i. p. 132-150, edit. of 1739, by the haron de la Bastie. * Note: Lord Mahon, Life of Belisarius, p. 133, mentions one of Belisarius on the authority of Cedrenus—M.]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius (de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 3, p. 185) continues the history of Boniface no further than his return to Italy. His death is mentioned by Prosper and Marcellinus; the expression of the latter, that Ætius, the day before, had provided himself with a longer spear, implies something like a regular duel.]

It might naturally be expected, after the retreat of Boniface, that the Vandals would achieve, without resistance or delay, the conquest of Africa. Eight years, however, elapsed, from the evacuation of Hippo to the reduction of Carthage. In the midst of that interval, the ambitious Genseric, in the full tide of apparent prosperity, negotiated a treaty of peace, by which he gave his son Hunneric for a hostage; and consented to leave the Western emperor in the undisturbed possession of the three Mauritanias. [34](#) This moderation, which cannot be imputed to the justice, must be ascribed to the policy, of the conqueror.

His throne was encompassed with domestic enemies, who accused the baseness of his birth, and asserted the legitimate claims of his nephews, the sons of Gonderic. Those nephews, indeed, he sacrificed to his safety; and their mother, the widow of the deceased king, was precipitated, by his order, into the river Ampsaga. But the public discontent burst forth in dangerous and frequent conspiracies; and the warlike tyrant is supposed to have shed more Vandal blood by the hand of the executioner, than in the field of battle. [35](#) The convulsions of Africa, which had favored his attack, opposed the firm establishment of his power; and the various seditions of the Moors and Germans, the Donatists and Catholics, continually disturbed, or threatened, the unsettled reign of the conqueror. As he advanced towards Carthage, he was forced to withdraw his troops from the Western provinces; the sea-coast was exposed to the naval enterprises of the

Romans of Spain and Italy; and, in the heart of Numidia, the strong inland city of Corta still persisted in obstinate independence. [36](#) These difficulties were gradually subdued by the spirit, the perseverance, and the cruelty of Genseric; who alternately applied the arts of peace and war to the establishment of his African kingdom. He subscribed a solemn treaty, with the hope of deriving some advantage from the term of its continuance, and the moment of its violation. The vigilance of his enemies was relaxed by the protestations of friendship, which concealed his hostile approach; and Carthage was at length surprised by the Vandals, five hundred and eighty-five years after the destruction of the city and republic by the younger Scipio. [37](#)

34 [\(return\)](#)

[See Procopius, de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 4, p. 186. Valentinian published several humane laws, to relieve the distress of his Numidian and Mauritanian subjects; he discharged them, in a great measure, from the payment of their debts, reduced their tribute to one eighth, and gave them a right of appeal from their provincial magistrates to the praefect of Rome. Cod. Theod. tom. vi. Novell. p. 11, 12.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[Victor Vitensis, de Persecut. Vandal. l. ii. c. 5, p. 26. The cruelties of Genseric towards his subjects are strongly expressed in Prosper's Chronicle, A.D. 442.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[Possidius, in Vit. Augustin. c. 28, apud Ruinart, p. 428.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Chronicles of Idatius, Isidore, Prosper, and Marcellinus. They mark the same year, but different days, for the surprisal of Carthage.]

A new city had arisen from its ruins, with the title of a colony; and though Carthage might yield to the royal prerogatives of Constantinople, and perhaps to the trade of Alexandria, or the splendor of Antioch, she still maintained the second rank in the West; as the Rome (if we may use the style of contemporaries) of the African world. That wealthy and opulent metropolis [38](#) displayed, in a dependent condition, the image of a flourishing republic. Carthage contained the manufactures, the arms, and the treasures of the six provinces. A regular subordination of civil honors gradually ascended from the procurators of the streets and quarters of the city, to the tribunal of the supreme magistrate, who, with the title of proconsul, represented the state and dignity of a consul of ancient Rome. Schools and gymnasia were instituted for the education of the African youth; and the liberal arts and manners, grammar, rhetoric, and philosophy, were publicly taught in the Greek and Latin languages. The buildings of Carthage were uniform and magnificent; a shady grove was planted in the midst of the capital; the new

port, a secure and capacious harbor, was subservient to the commercial industry of citizens and strangers; and the splendid games of the circus and theatre were exhibited almost in the presence of the Barbarians. The reputation of the Carthaginians was not equal to that of their country, and the reproach of Punic faith still adhered to their subtle and faithless character. [39](#) The habits of trade, and the abuse of luxury, had corrupted their manners; but their impious contempt of monks, and the shameless practice of unnatural lusts, are the two abominations which excite the pious vehemence of Salvian, the preacher of the age. [40](#) The king of the Vandals severely reformed the vices of a voluptuous people; and the ancient, noble, ingenuous freedom of Carthage (these expressions of Victor are not without energy) was reduced by Genseric into a state of ignominious servitude. After he had permitted his licentious troops to satiate their rage and avarice, he instituted a more regular system of rapine and oppression. An edict was promulgated, which enjoined all persons, without fraud or delay, to deliver their gold, silver, jewels, and valuable furniture or apparel, to the royal officers; and the attempt to secrete any part of their patrimony was inexorably punished with death and torture, as an act of treason against the state. The lands of the proconsular province, which formed the immediate district of Carthage, were accurately measured, and divided among the Barbarians; and the conqueror reserved for his peculiar domain the fertile territory of Byzacium, and the adjacent parts of Numidia and Getulia. [41](#)

38

[\(return\)](#)

[The picture of Carthage; as it flourished in the fourth and fifth centuries, is taken from the *Expositio totius Mundi*, p. 17, 18, in the third volume of Hudson's *Minor Geographers*, from Ausonius de *Claris Urbibus*, p. 228, 229; and principally from Salvian, de *Gubernatione Dei*, l. vii. p. 257, 258.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[The anonymous author of the *Expositio totius Mundi* compares in his barbarous Latin, the country and the inhabitants; and, after stigmatizing their want of faith, he coolly concludes, *Difficile autem inter eos invenitur bonus, tamen in multis pauci boni esse possunt* P. 18.]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[He declares, that the peculiar vices of each country were collected in the sink of Carthage, (l. vii. p. 257.) In the indulgence of vice, the Africans applauded their manly virtue. *Et illi se magis virilis fortitudinis esse crederent, qui maxime vires foeminei usus probositate fregissent*, (p. 268.) The streets of Carthage were polluted by effeminate wretches, who publicly assumed the countenance, the dress, and the character of women, (p. 264.) If a monk appeared in the city, the holy man was

pursued with impious scorn and ridicule; de
testantibus ridentium cachinnis, (p. 289.)]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare Procopius de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 5, p.
189, 190, and Victor Vitensis, de Persecut Vandal.
l. i. c. 4.]

It was natural enough that Genseric should hate those whom he had injured: the nobility and senators of Carthage were exposed to his jealousy and resentment; and all those who refused the ignominious terms, which their honor and religion forbade them to accept, were compelled by the Arian tyrant to embrace the condition of perpetual banishment. Rome, Italy, and the provinces of the East, were filled with a crowd of exiles, of fugitives, and of ingenuous captives, who solicited the public compassion; and the benevolent epistles of Theodoret still preserve the names and misfortunes of Cælestian and Maria. [42](#) The Syrian bishop deploras the misfortunes of Cælestian, who, from the state of a noble and opulent senator of Carthage, was reduced, with his wife and family, and servants, to beg his bread in a foreign country; but he applauds the resignation of the Christian exile, and the philosophic temper, which, under the pressure of such calamities, could enjoy more real happiness than was the ordinary lot of wealth and prosperity. The story of Maria, the daughter of the magnificent Eudaemon, is singular and interesting. In the sack of Carthage, she was purchased from the Vandals by some merchants of Syria, who afterwards sold her as a slave in their native country. A female attendant, transported in the same ship, and sold in the same family, still continued to respect a mistress whom fortune had reduced to the common level of servitude; and the daughter of Eudaemon received from her grateful affection the domestic services which she had once required from her obedience. This remarkable behavior divulged the real condition of Maria, who, in the absence of the bishop of Cyrrhus, was redeemed from slavery by the generosity of some soldiers of the garrison. The liberality of Theodoret provided for her decent maintenance; and she passed ten months among the deaconesses of the church; till she was unexpectedly informed, that her father, who had escaped from the ruin of Carthage, exercised an honorable office in one of the Western provinces. Her filial impatience was seconded by the pious bishop: Theodoret, in a letter still extant, recommends Maria to the bishop of Aegae, a maritime city of Cilicia, which was frequented, during the annual fair, by the vessels of the West; most earnestly requesting, that his colleague would use the maiden with a tenderness suitable to her birth; and that he would intrust her to the care of such faithful merchants, as would esteem it a sufficient gain, if they restored a daughter, lost beyond all human hope, to the arms of her afflicted parent.

42

[\(return\)](#)

[Ruinart (p. 441-457) has collected from
Theodoret, and other authors, the misfortunes, real
and fabulous, of the inhabitants of Carthage.]

Among the insipid legends of ecclesiastical history, I am tempted to distinguish the memorable fable of the Seven Sleepers; [43](#) whose imaginary date corresponds with the reign of the younger Theodosius, and the conquest of Africa by the Vandals. [44](#) When the emperor Decius persecuted the Christians, seven noble youths of Ephesus concealed themselves in a spacious cavern in the side of an adjacent mountain; where they were doomed to perish by the tyrant, who gave orders that the entrance should be firmly secured by the a pile of huge stones. They immediately fell into a deep slumber, which was miraculously prolonged without injuring the powers of life, during a period of one hundred and eighty-seven years. At the end of that time, the slaves of Adolius, to whom the inheritance of the mountain had descended, removed the stones to supply materials for some rustic edifice: the light of the sun darted into the cavern, and the Seven Sleepers were permitted to awake. After a slumber, as they thought of a few hours, they were pressed by the calls of hunger; and resolved that Jamblichus, one of their number, should secretly return to the city to purchase bread for the use of his companions. The youth (if we may still employ that appellation) could no longer recognize the once familiar aspect of his native country; and his surprise was increased by the appearance of a large cross, triumphantly erected over the principal gate of Ephesus. His singular dress, and obsolete language, confounded the baker, to whom he offered an ancient medal of Decius as the current coin of the empire; and Jamblichus, on the suspicion of a secret treasure, was dragged before the judge. Their mutual inquiries produced the amazing discovery, that two centuries were almost elapsed since Jamblichus and his friends had escaped from the rage of a Pagan tyrant. The bishop of Ephesus, the clergy, the magistrates, the people, and, as it is said, the emperor Theodosius himself, hastened to visit the cavern of the Seven Sleepers; who bestowed their benediction, related their story, and at the same instant peaceably expired. The origin of this marvellous fable cannot be ascribed to the pious fraud and credulity of the modern Greeks, since the authentic tradition may be traced within half a century of the supposed miracle. James of Sarug, a Syrian bishop, who was born only two years after the death of the younger Theodosius, has devoted one of his two hundred and thirty homilies to the praise of the young men of Ephesus. [45](#) Their legend, before the end of the sixth century, was translated from the Syriac into the Latin language, by the care of Gregory of Tours. The hostile communions of the East preserve their memory with equal reverence; and their names are honorably inscribed in the Roman, the Abyssinian, and the Russian calendar. [46](#) Nor has their reputation been confined to the Christian world. This popular tale, which Mahomet might learn when he drove his camels to the fairs of Syria, is introduced as a divine revelation, into the Koran. [47](#) The story of the Seven Sleepers has been adopted and adorned by the nations, from Bengal to Africa, who profess the Mahometan religion; [48](#) and some vestiges of a similar tradition have been discovered in the remote extremities of Scandinavia. [49](#) This easy and universal belief, so expressive of the sense of mankind, may be ascribed to the genuine merit of the fable itself. We imperceptibly advance from youth to age, without observing the gradual, but

incessant, change of human affairs; and even in our larger experience of history, the imagination is accustomed, by a perpetual series of causes and effects, to unite the most distant revolutions. But if the interval between two memorable eras could be instantly annihilated; if it were possible, after a momentary slumber of two hundred years, to display the new world to the eyes of a spectator, who still retained a lively and recent impression of the old, his surprise and his reflections would furnish the pleasing subject of a philosophical romance. The scene could not be more advantageously placed, than in the two centuries which elapsed between the reigns of Decius and of Theodosius the Younger. During this period, the seat of government had been transported from Rome to a new city on the banks of the Thracian Bosphorus; and the abuse of military spirit had been suppressed by an artificial system of tame and ceremonious servitude. The throne of the persecuting Decius was filled by a succession of Christian and orthodox princes, who had extirpated the fabulous gods of antiquity: and the public devotion of the age was impatient to exalt the saints and martyrs of the Catholic church, on the altars of Diana and Hercules. The union of the Roman empire was dissolved; its genius was humbled in the dust; and armies of unknown Barbarians, issuing from the frozen regions of the North, had established their victorious reign over the fairest provinces of Europe and Africa.

43

[\(return\)](#)

[The choice of fabulous circumstances is of small importance; yet I have confined myself to the narrative which was translated from the Syriac by the care of Gregory of Tours, (de Gloria Martyrum, l. i. c. 95, in Max. Bibliotheca Patrum, tom. xi. p. 856,) to the Greek acts of their martyrdom (apud Photium, p. 1400, 1401) and to the Annals of the Patriarch Eutychius, (tom. i. p. 391, 531, 532, 535, Vers. Pocock.)]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[Two Syriac writers, as they are quoted by Assemani, (Biblot. Oriental. tom. i. p. 336, 338,) place the resurrection of the Seven Sleepers in the year 736 (A.D. 425) or 748, (A.D. 437,) of the era of the Seleucides. Their Greek acts, which Photius had read, assign the date of the thirty-eighth year of the reign of Theodosius, which may coincide either with A.D. 439, or 446. The period which had elapsed since the persecution of Decius is easily ascertained; and nothing less than the ignorance of Mahomet, or the legendaries, could suppose an interval of three or four hundred years.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[James, one of the orthodox fathers of the Syrian church, was born A.D. 452; he began to compose his sermons A.D. 474; he was made bishop of Batnae, in the district of Sarug, and province of

Mesopotamia, A.D. 519, and died A.D. 521. (Assemani, tom. i. p. 288, 289.) For the homily de Pueris Ephesinis, see p. 335-339: though I could wish that Assemani had translated the text of James of Sarug, instead of answering the objections of Baronius.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Acta Sanctorum of the Bollandists, Mensis Julii, tom. vi. p. 375-397. This immense calendar of Saints, in one hundred and twenty-six years, (1644-1770,) and in fifty volumes in folio, has advanced no further than the 7th day of October. The suppression of the Jesuits has most probably checked an undertaking, which, through the medium of fable and superstition, communicates much historical and philosophical instruction.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[See Maracci Alcoran. Sura xviii. tom. ii. p. 420-427, and tom. i. part iv. p. 103. With such an ample privilege, Mahomet has not shown much taste or ingenuity. He has invented the dog (Al Rakim) the Seven Sleepers; the respect of the sun, who altered his course twice a day, that he might not shine into the cavern; and the care of God himself, who preserved their bodies from putrefaction, by turning them to the right and left.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[See D'Herbelot, Bibliothèque Orientale, p. 139; and Renaudot, Hist. Patriarch. Alexandrin. p. 39, 40.]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Paul, the deacon of Aquileia, (de Gestis Langobardorum, l. i. c. 4, p. 745, 746, edit. Grot.) who lived towards the end of the eight century, has placed in a cavern, under a rock, on the shore of the ocean, the Seven Sleepers of the North, whose long repose was respected by the Barbarians. Their dress declared them to be Romans and the deacon conjectures, that they were reserved by Providence as the future apostles of those unbelieving countries.]

Chapter XXXIV: Attila.—Part I.

The Character, Conquests, And Court Of Attila, King Of The Huns.—Death Of Theodosius The Younger.—Elevation Of Marcian To The Empire Of The East.

The Western world was oppressed by the Goths and Vandals, who fled before the Huns; but the achievements of the Huns themselves were not adequate to their power and prosperity. Their victorious hordes had spread from the Volga to the Danube; but the public force was exhausted by the discord of independent chieftains; their valor was idly consumed in obscure and predatory excursions; and they often degraded their national dignity, by condescending, for the hopes of spoil, to enlist under the banners of their fugitive enemies. In the reign of Attila, [1](#) the Huns again became the terror of the world; and I shall now describe the character and actions of that formidable Barbarian; who alternately insulted and invaded the East and the West, and urged the rapid downfall of the Roman empire.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[The authentic materials for the history of Attila, may be found in Jornandes (*de Rebus Geticis*, c. 34-50, p. 668-688, edit. Grot.) and Priscus (*Excerpta de Legationibus*, p. 33-76, Paris, 1648.) I have not seen the *Lives of Attila*, composed by Juvenius Caelius Calanus Dalmatinus, in the twelfth century, or by Nicholas Olahus, archbishop of Gran, in the sixteenth. See Mascou's *History of the Germans*, ix., and Maffei *Osservazioni Letterarie*, tom. i. p. 88, 89. Whatever the modern Hungarians have added must be fabulous; and they do not seem to have excelled in the art of fiction. They suppose, that when Attila invaded Gaul and Italy, married innumerable wives, &c., he was one hundred and twenty years of age. Thewrocz *Chron.* c. i. p. 22, in *Script. Hungar.* tom. i. p. 76.]

In the tide of emigration which impetuously rolled from the confines of China to those of Germany, the most powerful and populous tribes may commonly be found on the verge of the Roman provinces. The accumulated weight was sustained for a while by artificial barriers; and the easy condescension of the emperors invited, without satisfying, the insolent demands of the Barbarians, who had acquired an eager appetite for the luxuries of civilized life. The Hungarians, who ambitiously insert the name of Attila among their native kings, may affirm with truth that the hordes, which were subject to his uncle Roas, or Rugilas, had formed their encampments within the limits of modern Hungary, [2](#) in a fertile country, which liberally supplied the wants of a nation of hunters and shepherds. In this advantageous situation, Rugilas, and his valiant brothers, who continually added to their power and reputation, commanded the alternative of peace or war with the two empires. His alliance with the Romans of the West was cemented by his personal friendship for the great Ætius; who was always secure of finding, in the Barbarian camp, a hospitable reception and a powerful support. At his solicitation, and in the name of John the usurper, sixty thousand Huns advanced to the confines of Italy; their march and their retreat were alike expensive to the state; and the grateful policy of Ætius abandoned the possession of Pannonia to his faithful

confederates. The Romans of the East were not less apprehensive of the arms of Rugilas, which threatened the provinces, or even the capital. Some ecclesiastical historians have destroyed the Barbarians with lightning and pestilence; [3](#) but Theodosius was reduced to the more humble expedient of stipulating an annual payment of three hundred and fifty pounds of gold, and of disguising this dishonorable tribute by the title of general, which the king of the Huns condescended to accept. The public tranquillity was frequently interrupted by the fierce impatience of the Barbarians, and the perfidious intrigues of the Byzantine court. Four dependent nations, among whom we may distinguish the Barbarians, disclaimed the sovereignty of the Huns; and their revolt was encouraged and protected by a Roman alliance; till the just claims, and formidable power, of Rugilas, were effectually urged by the voice of Eslaw his ambassador. Peace was the unanimous wish of the senate: their decree was ratified by the emperor; and two ambassadors were named, Plinthas, a general of Scythian extraction, but of consular rank; and the quaestor Epigenes, a wise and experienced statesman, who was recommended to that office by his ambitious colleague.

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Hungary has been successively occupied by three Scythian colonies. 1. The Huns of Attila; 2. The Abares, in the sixth century; and, 3. The Turks or Magiars, A.D. 889; the immediate and genuine ancestors of the modern Hungarians, whose connection with the two former is extremely faint and remote. The Prodrumus and Notitia of Matthew Belius appear to contain a rich fund of information concerning ancient and modern Hungary. I have seen the extracts in *Bibliothèque Ancienne et Moderne*, tom. xxii. p. 1-51, and *Bibliothèque Raisonnée*, tom. xvi. p. 127-175. * Note: Mailath (in his *Geschichte der Magyaren*) considers the question of the origin of the Magyars as still undecided. The old Hungarian chronicles unanimously derived them from the Huns of Attila See note, vol. iv. pp. 341, 342. The later opinion, adopted by Schlozer, Belnay, and Dankowsky, ascribes them, from their language, to the Finnish race. Fessler, in his history of Hungary, agrees with Gibbon in supposing them Turks. Mailath has inserted an ingenious dissertation of Fejer, which attempts to connect them with the Parthians. Vol. i. *Ammerkungen* p. 50—M.]

3

[\(return\)](#)

[Socrates, l. vii. c. 43. Theodoret, l. v. c. 36. Tillemont, who always depends on the faith of his ecclesiastical authors, strenuously contends (*Hist. des Emp.* tom. vi. p. 136, 607) that the wars and personages were not the same.]

The death of Rugilas suspended the progress of the treaty. His two nephews, Attila and Bleda, who succeeded to the throne of their uncle, consented to a personal interview with the ambassadors of Constantinople; but as they proudly refused to dismount, the business was transacted on horseback, in a spacious plain near the city of Margus, in the Upper Maesia. The kings of the Huns assumed the solid benefits, as well as the vain honors, of the negotiation. They dictated the conditions of peace, and each condition was an insult on the majesty of the empire. Besides the freedom of a safe and plentiful market on the banks of the Danube, they required that the annual contribution should be augmented from three hundred and fifty to seven hundred pounds of gold; that a fine or ransom of eight pieces of gold should be paid for every Roman captive who had escaped from his Barbarian master; that the emperor should renounce all treaties and engagements with the enemies of the Huns; and that all the fugitives who had taken refuge in the court or provinces of Theodosius, should be delivered to the justice of their offended sovereign. This justice was rigorously inflicted on some unfortunate youths of a royal race. They were crucified on the territories of the empire, by the command of Attila: and as soon as the king of the Huns had impressed the Romans with the terror of his name, he indulged them in a short and arbitrary respite, whilst he subdued the rebellious or independent nations of Scythia and Germany. [4](#)

Attila, the son of Mundzuk, deduced his noble, perhaps his regal, descent [5](#) from the ancient Huns, who had formerly contended with the monarchs of China. His features, according to the observation of a Gothic historian, bore the stamp of his national origin; and the portrait of Attila exhibits the genuine deformity of a modern Calmuk; [6](#) a large head, a swarthy complexion, small, deep-seated eyes, a flat nose, a few hairs in the place of a beard, broad shoulders, and a short square body, of nervous strength, though of a disproportioned form. The haughty step and demeanor of the king of the Huns expressed the consciousness of his superiority above the rest of mankind; and he had a custom of fiercely rolling his eyes, as if he wished to enjoy the terror which he inspired. Yet this savage hero was not inaccessible to pity; his suppliant enemies might confide in the assurance of peace or pardon; and Attila was considered by his subjects as a just and indulgent master. He delighted in war; but, after he had ascended the throne in a mature age, his head, rather than his hand, achieved the conquest of the North; and the fame of an adventurous soldier was usefully exchanged for that of a prudent and successful general. The effects of personal valor are so inconsiderable, except in poetry or romance, that victory, even among Barbarians, must depend on the degree of skill with which the passions of the multitude are combined and guided for the service of a single man. The Scythian conquerors, Attila and Zingis, surpassed their rude countrymen in art rather than in courage; and it may be observed that the monarchies, both of the Huns and of the Moguls, were erected by their founders on the basis of

popular superstition. The miraculous conception, which fraud and credulity ascribed to the virgin-mother of Zingis, raised him above the level of human nature; and the naked prophet, who in the name of the Deity invested him with the empire of the earth, pointed the valor of the Moguls with irresistible enthusiasm. [7](#) The religious arts of Attila were not less skillfully adapted to the character of his age and country. It was natural enough that the Scythians should adore, with peculiar devotion, the god of war; but as they were incapable of forming either an abstract idea, or a corporeal representation, they worshipped their tutelar deity under the symbol of an iron cimex. [8](#) One of the shepherds of the Huns perceived, that a heifer, who was grazing, had wounded herself in the foot, and curiously followed the track of the blood, till he discovered, among the long grass, the point of an ancient sword, which he dug out of the ground and presented to Attila. That magnanimous, or rather that artful, prince accepted, with pious gratitude, this celestial favor; and, as the rightful possessor of the sword of Mars, asserted his divine and indefeasible claim to the dominion of the earth. [9](#) If the rites of Scythia were practised on this solemn occasion, a lofty altar, or rather pile of fagots, three hundred yards in length and in breadth, was raised in a spacious plain; and the sword of Mars was placed erect on the summit of this rustic altar, which was annually consecrated by the blood of sheep, horses, and of the hundredth captive. [10](#) Whether human sacrifices formed any part of the worship of Attila, or whether he propitiated the god of war with the victims which he continually offered in the field of battle, the favorite of Mars soon acquired a sacred character, which rendered his conquests more easy and more permanent; and the Barbarian princes confessed, in the language of devotion or flattery, that they could not presume to gaze, with a steady eye, on the divine majesty of the king of the Huns. [11](#) His brother Bleda, who reigned over a considerable part of the nation, was compelled to resign his sceptre and his life. Yet even this cruel act was attributed to a supernatural impulse; and the vigor with which Attila wielded the sword of Mars, convinced the world that it had been reserved alone for his invincible arm. [12](#) But the extent of his empire affords the only remaining evidence of the number and importance of his victories; and the Scythian monarch, however ignorant of the value of science and philosophy, might perhaps lament that his illiterate subjects were destitute of the art which could perpetuate the memory of his exploits.

5

[\(return\)](#)

[Priscus, p. 39. The modern Hungarians have deduced his genealogy, which ascends, in the thirty-fifth degree, to Ham, the son of Noah; yet they are ignorant of his father's real name. (De Guignes, Hist. des Huns, tom. ii. p. 297.)]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare Jornandes (c. 35, p. 661) with Buffon, Hist. Naturelle, tom. iii. p. 380. The former had a right to observe, originis suae sigua restituens. The character and portrait of Attila are probably transcribed from Cassiodorus.]

- 7 [\(return\)](#)
[Abulpharag. Pocock, p. 281. Genealogical History of the Tartars, by Abulghazi Bahader Khan, part iii c. 15, part iv c. 3. Vie de Gengiscan, par Petit de la Croix, l. 1, c. 1, 6. The relations of the missionaries, who visited Tartary in the thirteenth century, (see the seventh volume of the Histoire des Voyages,) express the popular language and opinions; Zingis is styled the son of God, &c. &c.]
- 8 [\(return\)](#)
[Nec templum apud eos visitur, aut delubrum, ne tugurium quidem culmo tectum cerni usquam potest; sed gladius Barbarico ritu humi figitur nudus, eumque ut Martem regionum quas circumcitant praesulem verecundius colunt. Ammian. Marcellin. xxxi. 2, and the learned Notes of Lindenbrogius and Valesius.]
- 9 [\(return\)](#)
[Priscus relates this remarkable story, both in his own text (p. 65) and in the quotation made by Jornandes, (c. 35, p. 662.) He might have explained the tradition, or fable, which characterized this famous sword, and the name, as well as attributes, of the Scythian deity, whom he has translated into the Mars of the Greeks and Romans.]
- 10 [\(return\)](#)
[Herodot. l. iv. c. 62. For the sake of economy, I have calculated by the smallest stadium. In the human sacrifices, they cut off the shoulder and arm of the victim, which they threw up into the air, and drew omens and presages from the manner of their falling on the pile]
- 11 [\(return\)](#)
[Priscus, p. 65. A more civilized hero, Augustus himself, was pleased, if the person on whom he fixed his eyes seemed unable to support their divine lustre. Sueton. in August. c. 79.]
- 12 [\(return\)](#)
[The Count de Buat (Hist. des Peuples de l'Europe, tom. vii. p. 428, 429) attempts to clear Attila from the murder of his brother; and is almost inclined to reject the concurrent testimony of Jornandes, and the contemporary Chronicles.]

If a line of separation were drawn between the civilized and the savage climates of the globe; between the inhabitants of cities, who cultivated the earth, and the hunters and shepherds, who dwelt in tents, Attila might aspire to the title of supreme and sole monarch of the Barbarians. [13](#) He alone, among the conquerors of ancient and modern times, united the two mighty kingdoms of Germany and Scythia; and those vague

appellations, when they are applied to his reign, may be understood with an ample latitude. Thuringia, which stretched beyond its actual limits as far as the Danube, was in the number of his provinces; he interposed, with the weight of a powerful neighbor, in the domestic affairs of the Franks; and one of his lieutenants chastised, and almost exterminated, the Burgundians of the Rhine.

He subdued the islands of the ocean, the kingdoms of Scandinavia, encompassed and divided by the waters of the Baltic; and the Huns might derive a tribute of furs from that northern region, which has been protected from all other conquerors by the severity of the climate, and the courage of the natives. Towards the East, it is difficult to circumscribe the dominion of Attila over the Scythian deserts; yet we may be assured, that he reigned on the banks of the Volga; that the king of the Huns was dreaded, not only as a warrior, but as a magician; [14](#) that he insulted and vanquished the khan of the formidable Geougen; and that he sent ambassadors to negotiate an equal alliance with the empire of China. In the proud review of the nations who acknowledged the sovereignty of Attila, and who never entertained, during his lifetime, the thought of a revolt, the Gepidae and the Ostrogoths were distinguished by their numbers, their bravery, and the personal merits of their chiefs. The renowned Ardaric, king of the Gepidae, was the faithful and sagacious counsellor of the monarch, who esteemed his intrepid genius, whilst he loved the mild and discreet virtues of the noble Walamir, king of the Ostrogoths. The crowd of vulgar kings, the leaders of so many martial tribes, who served under the standard of Attila, were ranged in the submissive order of guards and domestics round the person of their master. They watched his nod; they trembled at his frown; and at the first signal of his will, they executed, without murmur or hesitation, his stern and absolute commands. In time of peace, the dependent princes, with their national troops, attended the royal camp in regular succession; but when Attila collected his military force, he was able to bring into the field an army of five, or, according to another account, of seven hundred thousand Barbarians. [15](#)

13 [\(return\)](#)

[Fortissimarum gentium dominus, qui inaudita ante se potentia colus Scythica et Germanica regna possedit. Jornandes, c. 49, p. 684. Priscus, p. 64, 65. M. de Guignes, by his knowledge of the Chinese, has acquired (tom. ii. p. 295-301) an adequate idea of the empire of Attila.]

14 [\(return\)](#)

[See Hist. des Huns, tom. ii. p. 296. The Geougen believed that the Huns could excite, at pleasure, storms of wind and rain. This phenomenon was produced by the stone Gezi; to whose magic power the loss of a battle was ascribed by the Mahometan Tartars of the fourteenth century. See Cherefeddin Ali, Hist. de Timur Bec, tom. i. p. 82, 83.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes, c. 35, p. 661, c. 37, p. 667. See

Tillemont, Hist. dea Empereurs, tom. vi. p. 129, 138. Corneille has represented the pride of Attila to his subject kings, and his tragedy opens with these two ridiculous lines:—

*Ils ne sont pas venus, nos deux rois! qu'on leur die
Qu'ils se font trop attendre, et qu'Attila s'ennuie.*

The two kings of the Gepidae and the Ostrogoths are profound politicians and sentimental lovers, and the whole piece exhibits the defects without the genius, of the poet.]

The ambassadors of the Huns might awaken the attention of Theodosius, by reminding him that they were his neighbors both in Europe and Asia; since they touched the Danube on one hand, and reached, with the other, as far as the Tanais. In the reign of his father Arcadius, a band of adventurous Huns had ravaged the provinces of the East; from whence they brought away rich spoils and innumerable captives. [16](#) They advanced, by a secret path, along the shores of the Caspian Sea; traversed the snowy mountains of Armenia; passed the Tigris, the Euphrates, and the Halys; recruited their weary cavalry with the generous breed of Cappadocian horses; occupied the hilly country of Cilicia, and disturbed the festal songs and dances of the citizens of Antioch. Egypt trembled at their approach; and the monks and pilgrims of the Holy Land prepared to escape their fury by a speedy embarkation. The memory of this invasion was still recent in the minds of the Orientals. The subjects of Attila might execute, with superior forces, the design which these adventurers had so boldly attempted; and it soon became the subject of anxious conjecture, whether the tempest would fall on the dominions of Rome, or of Persia. Some of the great vassals of the king of the Huns, who were themselves in the rank of powerful princes, had been sent to ratify an alliance and society of arms with the emperor, or rather with the general of the West. They related, during their residence at Rome, the circumstances of an expedition, which they had lately made into the East. After passing a desert and a morass, supposed by the Romans to be the Lake Maeotis, they penetrated through the mountains, and arrived, at the end of fifteen days' march, on the confines of Media; where they advanced as far as the unknown cities of Basic and Cursic. [1611](#) They encountered the Persian army in the plains of Media and the air, according to their own expression, was darkened by a cloud of arrows. But the Huns were obliged to retire before the numbers of the enemy. Their laborious retreat was effected by a different road; they lost the greatest part of their booty; and at length returned to the royal camp, with some knowledge of the country, and an impatient desire of revenge. In the free conversation of the Imperial ambassadors, who discussed, at the court of Attila, the character and designs of their formidable enemy, the ministers of Constantinople expressed their hope, that his strength might be diverted and employed in a long and doubtful contest with the princes of the house of Sassan. The more sagacious Italians admonished their Eastern brethren of the folly and danger of such a hope; and convinced them, that the Medes and Persians were incapable of resisting the arms of the Huns; and that the easy and important

acquisition would exalt the pride, as well as power, of the conqueror. Instead of contenting himself with a moderate contribution, and a military title, which equalled him only to the generals of Theodosius, Attila would proceed to impose a disgraceful and intolerable yoke on the necks of the prostrate and captive Romans, who would then be encompassed, on all sides, by the empire of the Huns. [17](#)

16

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Alii per Caspia claustra
Armeniasque nives, inopino tramite ducti
Invadunt Orientis opes: jam pascua fumant
Cappadocum, volucrumque parens Argaeus equorum.
Jam rubet altus Halys, nec se defendit iniquo
Monte Cilix; Syriae tractus vestantur amoeni
Assuetumque choris, et laeta plebe canorum,
Proterit imbellem sonipes hostilis Orontem.*
—Claudian, in Rufin. l. ii. 28–35.

See likewise, in Eutrop. l. i. 243–251, and the strong description of Jerom, who wrote from his feelings, tom. i. p. 26, ad Heliodor. p. 200 ad Ocean. Philostorgius (l. ix. c. 8) mentions this irruption.]

1611

[\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon has made a curious mistake; Basic and Cursic were the names of the commanders of the Huns. Priscus, edit. Bonn, p. 200.—M.]

17

[\(return\)](#)

[See the original conversation in Priscus, p. 64, 65.]

While the powers of Europe and Asia were solicitous to avert the impending danger, the alliance of Attila maintained the Vandals in the possession of Africa. An enterprise had been concerted between the courts of Ravenna and Constantinople, for the recovery of that valuable province; and the ports of Sicily were already filled with the military and naval forces of Theodosius. But the subtle Genseric, who spread his negotiations round the world, prevented their designs, by exciting the king of the Huns to invade the Eastern empire; and a trifling incident soon became the motive, or pretence, of a destructive war. [18](#) Under the faith of the treaty of Margus, a free market was held on the Northern side of the Danube, which was protected by a Roman fortress surnamed Constantia. A troop of Barbarians violated the commercial security; killed, or dispersed, the unsuspecting traders; and levelled the fortress with the ground. The Huns justified this outrage as an act of reprisal; alleged, that the bishop of Margus had entered their territories, to discover and steal a secret treasure of their kings; and sternly demanded the guilty prelate, the sacrilegious spoil, and the fugitive subjects, who had escaped from the justice of Attila. The refusal of the Byzantine court was the signal of war; and the Maesians at first applauded the generous firmness of their sovereign. But they were soon intimidated by the destruction of Viminicum and the adjacent towns; and the people was persuaded to adopt the convenient maxim, that a private citizen, however innocent or respectable, may be justly sacrificed to the safety of his country. The bishop

of Margus, who did not possess the spirit of a martyr, resolved to prevent the designs which he suspected. He boldly treated with the princes of the Huns: secured, by solemn oaths, his pardon and reward; posted a numerous detachment of Barbarians, in silent ambush, on the banks of the Danube; and, at the appointed hour, opened, with his own hand, the gates of his episcopal city. This advantage, which had been obtained by treachery, served as a prelude to more honorable and decisive victories. The Illyrian frontier was covered by a line of castles and fortresses; and though the greatest part of them consisted only of a single tower, with a small garrison, they were commonly sufficient to repel, or to intercept, the inroads of an enemy, who was ignorant of the art, and impatient of the delay, of a regular siege. But these slight obstacles were instantly swept away by the inundation of the Huns. [19](#) They destroyed, with fire and sword, the populous cities of Sirmium and Singidunum, of Ratiaria and Marcianopolis, of Naissus and Sardica; where every circumstance of the discipline of the people, and the construction of the buildings, had been gradually adapted to the sole purpose of defence. The whole breadth of Europe, as it extends above five hundred miles from the Euxine to the Hadriatic, was at once invaded, and occupied, and desolated, by the myriads of Barbarians whom Attila led into the field. The public danger and distress could not, however, provoke Theodosius to interrupt his amusements and devotion, or to appear in person at the head of the Roman legions. But the troops, which had been sent against Genseric, were hastily recalled from Sicily; the garrisons, on the side of Persia, were exhausted; and a military force was collected in Europe, formidable by their arms and numbers, if the generals had understood the science of command, and the soldiers the duty of obedience. The armies of the Eastern empire were vanquished in three successive engagements; and the progress of Attila may be traced by the fields of battle.

The two former, on the banks of the Utus, and under the walls of Marcianopolis, were fought in the extensive plains between the Danube and Mount Haemus. As the Romans were pressed by a victorious enemy, they gradually, and unskilfully, retired towards the Chersonesus of Thrace; and that narrow peninsula, the last extremity of the land, was marked by their third, and irreparable, defeat. By the destruction of this army, Attila acquired the indisputable possession of the field. From the Hellespont to Thermopylae, and the suburbs of Constantinople, he ravaged, without resistance, and without mercy, the provinces of Thrace and Macedonia. Heraclea and Hadrianople might, perhaps, escape this dreadful irruption of the Huns; but the words, the most expressive of total extirpation and erasure, are applied to the calamities which they inflicted on seventy cities of the Eastern empire. [20](#) Theodosius, his court, and the unwarlike people, were protected by the walls of Constantinople; but those walls had been shaken by a recent earthquake, and the fall of fifty-eight towers had opened a large and tremendous breach. The damage indeed was speedily repaired; but this accident was aggravated by a superstitious fear, that Heaven itself had delivered the Imperial city to the shepherds of Scythia, who were strangers to the laws, the language, and the religion, of the Romans. [21](#)

- 18 [\(return\)](#)
[Priscus, p. 331. His history contained a copious and elegant account of the war, (Evagrius, l. i. c. 17;) but the extracts which relate to the embassies are the only parts that have reached our times. The original work was accessible, however, to the writers from whom we borrow our imperfect knowledge, Jornandes, Theophanes, Count Marcellinus, Prosper-Tyro, and the author of the Alexandrian, or Paschal, Chronicle. M. de Buat (Hist. des Peuples de l'Europe, tom. vii. c. xv.) has examined the cause, the circumstances, and the duration of this war; and will not allow it to extend beyond the year 44.]
- 19 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius, de Edificiis, l. 4, c. 5. These fortresses were afterwards restored, strengthened, and enlarged by the emperor Justinian, but they were soon destroyed by the Abares, who succeeded to the power and possessions of the Huns.]
- 20 [\(return\)](#)
[Septuaginta civitates (says Prosper-Tyro) depredatione vastatoe. The language of Count Marcellinus is still more forcible. Pene totam Europam, invasis excisisque civitatibus atque castellis, conrasit.]
- 21 [\(return\)](#)
[Tillemont (Hist des Empereurs, tom. vi. p. 106, 107) has paid great attention to this memorable earthquake; which was felt as far from Constantinople as Antioch and Alexandria, and is celebrated by all the ecclesiastical writers. In the hands of a popular preacher, an earthquake is an engine of admirable effect.]

In all their invasions of the civilized empires of the South, the Scythian shepherds have been uniformly actuated by a savage and destructive spirit. The laws of war, that restrain the exercise of national rapine and murder, are founded on two principles of substantial interest: the knowledge of the permanent benefits which may be obtained by a moderate use of conquest; and a just apprehension, lest the desolation which we inflict on the enemy's country may be retaliated on our own. But these considerations of hope and fear are almost unknown in the pastoral state of nations. The Huns of Attila may, without injustice, be compared to the Moguls and Tartars, before their primitive manners were changed by religion and luxury; and the evidence of Oriental history may reflect some light on the short and imperfect annals of Rome. After the Moguls had subdued the northern provinces of China, it was seriously proposed, not in the hour of victory and passion, but in calm deliberate council, to exterminate all the inhabitants of that populous country, that the vacant land might be converted to the pasture of cattle.

The firmness of a Chinese mandarin, [22](#) who insinuated some principles of rational policy into the mind of Zingis, diverted him from the execution of this horrid design. But in the cities of Asia, which yielded to the Moguls, the inhuman abuse of the rights of war was exercised with a regular form of discipline, which may, with equal reason, though not with equal authority, be imputed to the victorious Huns. The inhabitants, who had submitted to their discretion, were ordered to evacuate their houses, and to assemble in some plain adjacent to the city; where a division was made of the vanquished into three parts. The first class consisted of the soldiers of the garrison, and of the young men capable of bearing arms; and their fate was instantly decided: they were either enlisted among the Moguls, or they were massacred on the spot by the troops, who, with pointed spears and bended bows, had formed a circle round the captive multitude. The second class, composed of the young and beautiful women, of the artificers of every rank and profession, and of the more wealthy or honorable citizens, from whom a private ransom might be expected, was distributed in equal or proportionable lots. The remainder, whose life or death was alike useless to the conquerors, were permitted to return to the city; which, in the mean while, had been stripped of its valuable furniture; and a tax was imposed on those wretched inhabitants for the indulgence of breathing their native air. Such was the behavior of the Moguls, when they were not conscious of any extraordinary rigor. [23](#) But the most casual provocation, the slightest motive of caprice or convenience, often provoked them to involve a whole people in an indiscriminate massacre; and the ruin of some flourishing cities was executed with such unrelenting perseverance, that, according to their own expression, horses might run, without stumbling, over the ground where they had once stood. The three great capitals of Khorasan, Maru, Neisabour, and Herat, were destroyed by the armies of Zingis; and the exact account which was taken of the slain amounted to four millions three hundred and forty-seven thousand persons. [24](#) Timur, or Tamerlane, was educated in a less barbarous age, and in the profession of the Mahometan religion; yet, if Attila equalled the hostile ravages of Tamerlane, [25](#) either the Tartar or the Hun might deserve the epithet of the Scourge of God. [26](#)

22

[\(return\)](#)

[He represented to the emperor of the Moguls that the four provinces, (Petcheli, Chantong, Chansi, and Leaotong,) which he already possessed, might annually produce, under a mild administration, 500,000 ounces of silver, 400,000 measures of rice, and 800,000 pieces of silk. Gaubil, *Hist. de la Dynastie des Mongous*, p. 58, 59. Yelut chousay (such was the name of the mandarin) was a wise and virtuous minister, who saved his country, and civilized the conquerors. * Note: Compare the life of this remarkable man, translated from the Chinese by M. Abel Remusat. *Nouveaux Melanges Asiatiques*, t. ii. p. 64.—M]

- 23 [\(return\)](#)
[Particular instances would be endless; but the curious reader may consult the life of Gengiscan, by Petit de la Croix, the *Histoire des Mongous*, and the fifteenth book of the *History of the Huns*.]
- 24 [\(return\)](#)
[At Maru, 1,300,000; at Herat, 1,600,000; at Neisabour, 1,747,000. D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. 380, 381. I use the orthography of D'Anville's maps. It must, however, be allowed, that the Persians were disposed to exaggerate their losses and the Moguls to magnify their exploits.]
- 25 [\(return\)](#)
[Cherefeddin Ali, his servile panegyrist, would afford us many horrid examples. In his camp before Delhi, Timour massacred 100,000 Indian prisoners, who had smiled when the army of their countrymen appeared in sight, (*Hist. de Timur Bec*, tom. iii. p. 90.) The people of Ispahan supplied 70,000 human skulls for the structure of several lofty towers, (*id.* tom. i. p. 434.) A similar tax was levied on the revolt of Bagdad, (tom. iii. p. 370;) and the exact account, which Cherefeddin was not able to procure from the proper officers, is stated by another historian (*Ahmed Arabsiada*, tom. ii. p. 175, *vera Manger*) at 90,000 heads.]
- 26 [\(return\)](#)
[The ancients, Jornandes, Priscus, &c., are ignorant of this epithet. The modern Hungarians have imagined, that it was applied, by a hermit of Gaul, to Attila, who was pleased to insert it among the titles of his royal dignity. *Mascou*, ix. 23, and *Tillemont*, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. vi. p. 143.]

Chapter XXXIV: Attila.—Part II.

It may be affirmed, with bolder assurance, that the Huns depopulated the provinces of the empire, by the number of Roman subjects whom they led away into captivity. In the hands of a wise legislator, such an industrious colony might have contributed to diffuse through the deserts of Scythia the rudiments of the useful and ornamental arts; but these captives, who had been taken in war, were accidentally dispersed among the hordes that obeyed the empire of Attila. The estimate of their respective value was formed by the simple judgment of unenlightened and unprejudiced Barbarians. Perhaps they might not understand the merit of a theologian, profoundly skilled in the controversies of the Trinity and the Incarnation; yet they respected the ministers of every religion; and the active zeal of the Christian missionaries, without approaching

the person or the palace of the monarch, successfully labored in the propagation of the gospel. [27](#) The pastoral tribes, who were ignorant of the distinction of landed property, must have disregarded the use, as well as the abuse, of civil jurisprudence; and the skill of an eloquent lawyer could excite only their contempt or their abhorrence. [28](#) The perpetual intercourse of the Huns and the Goths had communicated the familiar knowledge of the two national dialects; and the Barbarians were ambitious of conversing in Latin, the military idiom even of the Eastern empire. [29](#) But they disdained the language and the sciences of the Greeks; and the vain sophist, or grave philosopher, who had enjoyed the flattering applause of the schools, was mortified to find that his robust servant was a captive of more value and importance than himself. The mechanic arts were encouraged and esteemed, as they tended to satisfy the wants of the Huns. An architect in the service of Onegesius, one of the favorites of Attila, was employed to construct a bath; but this work was a rare example of private luxury; and the trades of the smith, the carpenter, the armorer, were much more adapted to supply a wandering people with the useful instruments of peace and war. But the merit of the physician was received with universal favor and respect: the Barbarians, who despised death, might be apprehensive of disease; and the haughty conqueror trembled in the presence of a captive, to whom he ascribed, perhaps, an imaginary power of prolonging or preserving his life. [30](#) The Huns might be provoked to insult the misery of their slaves, over whom they exercised a despotic command; [31](#) but their manners were not susceptible of a refined system of oppression; and the efforts of courage and diligence were often recompensed by the gift of freedom. The historian Priscus, whose embassy is a source of curious instruction, was accosted in the camp of Attila by a stranger, who saluted him in the Greek language, but whose dress and figure displayed the appearance of a wealthy Scythian. In the siege of Viminacum, he had lost, according to his own account, his fortune and liberty; he became the slave of Onegesius; but his faithful services, against the Romans and the Acatzires, had gradually raised him to the rank of the native Huns; to whom he was attached by the domestic pledges of a new wife and several children. The spoils of war had restored and improved his private property; he was admitted to the table of his former lord; and the apostate Greek blessed the hour of his captivity, since it had been the introduction to a happy and independent state; which he held by the honorable tenure of military service. This reflection naturally produced a dispute on the advantages and defects of the Roman government, which was severely arraigned by the apostate, and defended by Priscus in a prolix and feeble declamation. The freedman of Onegesius exposed, in true and lively colors, the vices of a declining empire, of which he had so long been the victim; the cruel absurdity of the Roman princes, unable to protect their subjects against the public enemy, unwilling to trust them with arms for their own defence; the intolerable weight of taxes, rendered still more oppressive by the intricate or arbitrary modes of collection; the obscurity of numerous and contradictory laws; the tedious and expensive forms of judicial proceedings; the partial administration of justice; and the universal corruption, which

increased the influence of the rich, and aggravated the misfortunes of the poor. A sentiment of patriotic sympathy was at length revived in the breast of the fortunate exile; and he lamented, with a flood of tears, the guilt or weakness of those magistrates who had perverted the wisest and most salutary institutions. [32](#)

27 [\(return\)](#)

[The missionaries of St. Chrysostom had converted great numbers of the Scythians, who dwelt beyond the Danube in tents and wagons. Theodoret, l. v. c. 31. Photius, p. 1517. The Mahometans, the Nestorians, and the Latin Christians, thought themselves secure of gaining the sons and grandsons of Zingis, who treated the rival missionaries with impartial favor.]

28 [\(return\)](#)

[The Germans, who exterminated Varus and his legions, had been particularly offended with the Roman laws and lawyers. One of the Barbarians, after the effectual precautions of cutting out the tongue of an advocate, and sewing up his mouth, observed, with much satisfaction, that the viper could no longer hiss. Florus, iv. 12.]

29 [\(return\)](#)

[Priscus, p. 59. It should seem that the Huns preferred the Gothic and Latin languages to their own; which was probably a harsh and barren idiom.]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[Philip de Comines, in his admirable picture of the last moments of Lewis XI., (*Mémoires*, l. vi. c. 12,) represents the insolence of his physician, who, in five months, extorted 54,000 crowns, and a rich bishopric, from the stern, avaricious tyrant.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[Priscus (p. 61) extols the equity of the Roman laws, which protected the life of a slave. *Occidere solent* (says Tacitus of the Germans) *non disciplina et severitate, sed impetu et ira, ut inimicum, nisi quod impune.* *De Moribus Germ.* c. 25. The Heruli, who were the subjects of Attila, claimed, and exercised, the power of life and death over their slaves. See a remarkable instance in the second book of Agathias]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[See the whole conversation in Priscus, p. 59-62.]

The timid or selfish policy of the Western Romans had abandoned the Eastern empire to the Huns. [33](#) The loss of armies, and the want of discipline or virtue, were not supplied by the personal character of the monarch. Theodosius might still affect the

style, as well as the title, of Invincible Augustus; but he was reduced to solicit the clemency of Attila, who imperiously dictated these harsh and humiliating conditions of peace. I. The emperor of the East resigned, by an express or tacit convention, an extensive and important territory, which stretched along the southern banks of the Danube, from Singidunum, or Belgrade, as far as Novae, in the diocese of Thrace. The breadth was defined by the vague computation of fifteen [3311](#) days' journey; but, from the proposal of Attila to remove the situation of the national market, it soon appeared, that he comprehended the ruined city of Naissus within the limits of his dominions. II. The king of the Huns required and obtained, that his tribute or subsidy should be augmented from seven hundred pounds of gold to the annual sum of two thousand one hundred; and he stipulated the immediate payment of six thousand pounds of gold, to defray the expenses, or to expiate the guilt, of the war. One might imagine, that such a demand, which scarcely equalled the measure of private wealth, would have been readily discharged by the opulent empire of the East; and the public distress affords a remarkable proof of the impoverished, or at least of the disorderly, state of the finances. A large proportion of the taxes extorted from the people was detained and intercepted in their passage, though the foulest channels, to the treasury of Constantinople. The revenue was dissipated by Theodosius and his favorites in wasteful and profuse luxury; which was disguised by the names of Imperial magnificence, or Christian charity. The immediate supplies had been exhausted by the unforeseen necessity of military preparations. A personal contribution, rigorously, but capriciously, imposed on the members of the senatorian order, was the only expedient that could disarm, without loss of time, the impatient avarice of Attila; and the poverty of the nobles compelled them to adopt the scandalous resource of exposing to public auction the jewels of their wives, and the hereditary ornaments of their palaces. [34](#) III. The king of the Huns appears to have established, as a principle of national jurisprudence, that he could never lose the property, which he had once acquired, in the persons who had yielded either a voluntary, or reluctant, submission to his authority. From this principle he concluded, and the conclusions of Attila were irrevocable laws, that the Huns, who had been taken prisoner in war, should be released without delay, and without ransom; that every Roman captive, who had presumed to escape, should purchase his right to freedom at the price of twelve pieces of gold; and that all the Barbarians, who had deserted the standard of Attila, should be restored, without any promise or stipulation of pardon.

In the execution of this cruel and ignominious treaty, the Imperial officers were forced to massacre several loyal and noble deserters, who refused to devote themselves to certain death; and the Romans forfeited all reasonable claims to the friendship of any Scythian people, by this public confession, that they were destitute either of faith, or power, to protect the suppliant, who had embraced the throne of Theodosius. [35](#)

composed his Chronicle in the West; and his observation implies a censure.]

3311 [\(return\)](#)

[Five in the last edition of Priscus. Niebuhr, Byz. Hist. p 147—M]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[According to the description, or rather invective, of Chrysostom, an auction of Byzantine luxury must have been very productive. Every wealthy house possessed a semicircular table of massy silver such as two men could scarcely lift, a vase of solid gold of the weight of forty pounds, cups, dishes, of the same metal, &c.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[The articles of the treaty, expressed without much order or precision, may be found in Priscus, (p. 34, 35, 36, 37, 53, &c.) Count Marcellinus dispenses some comfort, by observing, 1. That Attila himself solicited the peace and presents, which he had formerly refused; and, 2dly, That, about the same time, the ambassadors of India presented a fine large tame tiger to the emperor Theodosius.]

The firmness of a single town, so obscure, that, except on this occasion, it has never been mentioned by any historian or geographer, exposed the disgrace of the emperor and empire. Azimus, or Azimuntium, a small city of Thrace on the Illyrian borders, [36](#) had been distinguished by the martial spirit of its youth, the skill and reputation of the leaders whom they had chosen, and their daring exploits against the innumerable host of the Barbarians. Instead of tamely expecting their approach, the Azimuntines attacked, in frequent and successful sallies, the troops of the Huns, who gradually declined the dangerous neighborhood, rescued from their hands the spoil and the captives, and recruited their domestic force by the voluntary association of fugitives and deserters. After the conclusion of the treaty, Attila still menaced the empire with implacable war, unless the Azimuntines were persuaded, or compelled, to comply with the conditions which their sovereign had accepted. The ministers of Theodosius confessed with shame, and with truth, that they no longer possessed any authority over a society of men, who so bravely asserted their natural independence; and the king of the Huns condescended to negotiate an equal exchange with the citizens of Azimus. They demanded the restitution of some shepherds, who, with their cattle, had been accidentally surprised. A strict, though fruitless, inquiry was allowed: but the Huns were obliged to swear, that they did not detain any prisoners belonging to the city, before they could recover two surviving countrymen, whom the Azimuntines had reserved as pledges for the safety of their lost companions. Attila, on his side, was satisfied, and deceived, by their solemn asseveration, that the rest of the captives had been put to the sword; and that it was their constant practice, immediately to dismiss the Romans and the deserters, who had obtained the security of the public faith. This prudent and

officious dissimulation may be condemned, or excused, by the casuists, as they incline to the rigid decree of St. Augustin, or to the milder sentiment of St. Jerom and St. Chrysostom: but every soldier, every statesman, must acknowledge, that, if the race of the Azimuntines had been encouraged and multiplied, the Barbarians would have ceased to trample on the majesty of the empire. [37](#)

36

[\(return\)](#)

[Priscus, p. 35, 36. Among the hundred and eighty-two forts, or castles, of Thrace, enumerated by Procopius, (de Edificiis, l. iv. c. xi. tom. ii. p. 92, edit. Paris,) there is one of the name of Esimontou, whose position is doubtfully marked, in the neighborhood of Anchialus and the Euxine Sea. The name and walls of Azimuntium might subsist till the reign of Justinian; but the race of its brave defenders had been carefully extirpated by the jealousy of the Roman princes]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[The peevish dispute of St. Jerom and St. Augustin, who labored, by different expedients, to reconcile the seeming quarrel of the two apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, depends on the solution of an important question, (Middleton's Works, vol. ii. p. 5-20,) which has been frequently agitated by Catholic and Protestant divines, and even by lawyers and philosophers of every age.]

It would have been strange, indeed, if Theodosius had purchased, by the loss of honor, a secure and solid tranquillity, or if his tameness had not invited the repetition of injuries. The Byzantine court was insulted by five or six successive embassies; [38](#) and the ministers of Attila were uniformly instructed to press the tardy or imperfect execution of the last treaty; to produce the names of fugitives and deserters, who were still protected by the empire; and to declare, with seeming moderation, that, unless their sovereign obtained complete and immediate satisfaction, it would be impossible for him, were it even his wish, to check the resentment of his warlike tribes. Besides the motives of pride and interest, which might prompt the king of the Huns to continue this train of negotiation, he was influenced by the less honorable view of enriching his favorites at the expense of his enemies. The Imperial treasury was exhausted, to procure the friendly offices of the ambassadors and their principal attendants, whose favorable report might conduce to the maintenance of peace. The Barbarian monarch was flattered by the liberal reception of his ministers; he computed, with pleasure, the value and splendor of their gifts, rigorously exacted the performance of every promise which would contribute to their private emolument, and treated as an important business of state the marriage of his secretary Constantius. [39](#) That Gallic adventurer, who was recommended by Ætius to the king of the Huns, had engaged his service to the ministers of Constantinople, for the stipulated reward of a wealthy and noble wife; and the

daughter of Count Saturninus was chosen to discharge the obligations of her country. The reluctance of the victim, some domestic troubles, and the unjust confiscation of her fortune, cooled the ardor of her interested lover; but he still demanded, in the name of Attila, an equivalent alliance; and, after many ambiguous delays and excuses, the Byzantine court was compelled to sacrifice to this insolent stranger the widow of Armatius, whose birth, opulence, and beauty, placed her in the most illustrious rank of the Roman matrons. For these importunate and oppressive embassies, Attila claimed a suitable return: he weighed, with suspicious pride, the character and station of the Imperial envoys; but he condescended to promise that he would advance as far as Sardica to receive any ministers who had been invested with the consular dignity. The council of Theodosius eluded this proposal, by representing the desolate and ruined condition of Sardica, and even ventured to insinuate that every officer of the army or household was qualified to treat with the most powerful princes of Scythia. Maximin, [40](#) a respectable courtier, whose abilities had been long exercised in civil and military employments, accepted, with reluctance, the troublesome, and perhaps dangerous, commission of reconciling the angry spirit of the king of the Huns. His friend, the historian Priscus, [41](#) embraced the opportunity of observing the Barbarian hero in the peaceful and domestic scenes of life: but the secret of the embassy, a fatal and guilty secret, was intrusted only to the interpreter Vigilius. The two last ambassadors of the Huns, Orestes, a noble subject of the Pannonian province, and Edecon, a valiant chieftain of the tribe of the Scyrri, returned at the same time from Constantinople to the royal camp. Their obscure names were afterwards illustrated by the extraordinary fortune and the contrast of their sons: the two servants of Attila became the fathers of the last Roman emperor of the West, and of the first Barbarian king of Italy.

38 [\(return\)](#)
[Montesquieu (*Considerations sur la Grandeur, &c.* c. xix.) has delineated, with a bold and easy pencil, some of the most striking circumstances of the pride of Attila, and the disgrace of the Romans. He deserves the praise of having read the Fragments of Priscus, which have been too much disregarded.]

39 [\(return\)](#)
[See Priscus, p. 69, 71, 72, &c. I would fain believe, that this adventurer was afterwards crucified by the order of Attila, on a suspicion of treasonable practices; but Priscus (p. 57) has too plainly distinguished two persons of the name of Constantius, who, from the similar events of their lives, might have been easily confounded.]

40 [\(return\)](#)
[In the Persian treaty, concluded in the year 422, the wise and eloquent Maximin had been the assessor of Ardaburius, (*Socrates*, l. vii. c. 20.)

When Marcian ascended the throne, the office of Great Chamberlain was bestowed on Maximin, who is ranked, in the public edict, among the four principal ministers of state, (Novell. ad Calc. Cod. Theod. p. 31.) He executed a civil and military commission in the Eastern provinces; and his death was lamented by the savages of Æthiopia, whose incursions he had repressed. See Priscus, p. 40, 41.]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[Priscus was a native of Panium in Thrace, and deserved, by his eloquence, an honorable place among the sophists of the age. His Byzantine history, which related to his own times, was comprised in seven books. See Fabricius, Bibliot. Graec. tom. vi. p. 235, 236. Notwithstanding the charitable judgment of the critics, I suspect that Priscus was a Pagan. * Note: Niebuhr concurs in this opinion. Life of Priscus in the new edition of the Byzantine historians.—M]

The ambassadors, who were followed by a numerous train of men and horses, made their first halt at Sardica, at the distance of three hundred and fifty miles, or thirteen days' journey, from Constantinople. As the remains of Sardica were still included within the limits of the empire, it was incumbent on the Romans to exercise the duties of hospitality. They provided, with the assistance of the provincials, a sufficient number of sheep and oxen, and invited the Huns to a splendid, or at least, a plentiful supper. But the harmony of the entertainment was soon disturbed by mutual prejudice and indiscretion. The greatness of the emperor and the empire was warmly maintained by their ministers; the Huns, with equal ardor, asserted the superiority of their victorious monarch: the dispute was inflamed by the rash and unseasonable flattery of Vigilius, who passionately rejected the comparison of a mere mortal with the divine Theodosius; and it was with extreme difficulty that Maximin and Priscus were able to divert the conversation, or to soothe the angry minds, of the Barbarians. When they rose from table, the Imperial ambassador presented Edecon and Orestes with rich gifts of silk robes and Indian pearls, which they thankfully accepted. Yet Orestes could not forbear insinuating that he had not always been treated with such respect and liberality: and the offensive distinction which was implied, between his civil office and the hereditary rank of his colleague seems to have made Edecon a doubtful friend, and Orestes an irreconcilable enemy. After this entertainment, they travelled about one hundred miles from Sardica to Naissus. That flourishing city, which has given birth to the great Constantine, was levelled with the ground: the inhabitants were destroyed or dispersed; and the appearance of some sick persons, who were still permitted to exist among the ruins of the churches, served only to increase the horror of the prospect. The surface of the country was covered with the bones of the slain; and the ambassadors, who directed their course to the north-west, were obliged to pass the hills of modern Servia, before

they descended into the flat and marshy grounds which are terminated by the Danube. The Huns were masters of the great river: their navigation was performed in large canoes, hollowed out of the trunk of a single tree; the ministers of Theodosius were safely landed on the opposite bank; and their Barbarian associates immediately hastened to the camp of Attila, which was equally prepared for the amusements of hunting or of war. No sooner had Maximin advanced about two miles [4111](#) from the Danube, than he began to experience the fastidious insolence of the conqueror. He was sternly forbid to pitch his tents in a pleasant valley, lest he should infringe the distant awe that was due to the royal mansion. [4112](#) The ministers of Attila pressed them to communicate the business, and the instructions, which he reserved for the ear of their sovereign. When Maximin temperately urged the contrary practice of nations, he was still more confounded to find that the resolutions of the Sacred Consistory, those secrets (says Priscus) which should not be revealed to the gods themselves, had been treacherously disclosed to the public enemy. On his refusal to comply with such ignominious terms, the Imperial envoy was commanded instantly to depart; the order was recalled; it was again repeated; and the Huns renewed their ineffectual attempts to subdue the patient firmness of Maximin. At length, by the intercession of Scotta, the brother of Onegesius, whose friendship had been purchased by a liberal gift, he was admitted to the royal presence; but, instead of obtaining a decisive answer, he was compelled to undertake a remote journey towards the north, that Attila might enjoy the proud satisfaction of receiving, in the same camp, the ambassadors of the Eastern and Western empires. His journey was regulated by the guides, who obliged him to halt, to hasten his march, or to deviate from the common road, as it best suited the convenience of the king. The Romans, who traversed the plains of Hungary, suppose that they passed several navigable rivers, either in canoes or portable boats; but there is reason to suspect that the winding stream of the Teyss, or Tibiscus, might present itself in different places under different names. From the contiguous villages they received a plentiful and regular supply of provisions; mead instead of wine, millet in the place of bread, and a certain liquor named camus, which according to the report of Priscus, was distilled from barley. [42](#) Such fare might appear coarse and indelicate to men who had tasted the luxury of Constantinople; but, in their accidental distress, they were relieved by the gentleness and hospitality of the same Barbarians, so terrible and so merciless in war. The ambassadors had encamped on the edge of a large morass. A violent tempest of wind and rain, of thunder and lightning, overturned their tents, immersed their baggage and furniture in the water, and scattered their retinue, who wandered in the darkness of the night, uncertain of their road, and apprehensive of some unknown danger, till they awakened by their cries the inhabitants of a neighboring village, the property of the widow of Bleda. A bright illumination, and, in a few moments, a comfortable fire of reeds, was kindled by their officious benevolence; the wants, and even the desires, of the Romans were liberally satisfied; and they seem to have been embarrassed by the singular politeness of Bleda's widow, who added to her other favors the gift, or at least

the loan, of a sufficient number of beautiful and obsequious damsels. The sunshine of the succeeding day was dedicated to repose, to collect and dry the baggage, and to the refreshment of the men and horses: but, in the evening, before they pursued their journey, the ambassadors expressed their gratitude to the bounteous lady of the village, by a very acceptable present of silver cups, red fleeces, dried fruits, and Indian pepper. Soon after this adventure, they rejoined the march of Attila, from whom they had been separated about six days, and slowly proceeded to the capital of an empire, which did not contain, in the space of several thousand miles, a single city.

4111 [\(return\)](#)

[70 stadia. Priscus, 173.—M.]

4112 [\(return\)](#)

[He was forbidden to pitch his tents on an eminence because Attila's were below on the plain. Ibid.—M.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[The Huns themselves still continued to despise the labors of agriculture: they abused the privilege of a victorious nation; and the Goths, their industrious subjects, who cultivated the earth, dreaded their neighborhood, like that of so many ravenous wolves, (Priscus, p. 45.) In the same manner the Sarts and Tadcics provide for their own subsistence, and for that of the Usbec Tartars, their lazy and rapacious sovereigns. See Genealogical History of the Tartars, p. 423 455, &c.]

As far as we may ascertain the vague and obscure geography of Priscus, this capital appears to have been seated between the Danube, the Teyss, and the Carpathian hills, in the plains of Upper Hungary, and most probably in the neighborhood of Jezberin, Agria, or Tokay. [43](#) In its origin it could be no more than an accidental camp, which, by the long and frequent residence of Attila, had insensibly swelled into a huge village, for the reception of his court, of the troops who followed his person, and of the various multitude of idle or industrious slaves and retainers. [44](#) The baths, constructed by Onegesius, were the only edifice of stone; the materials had been transported from Pannonia; and since the adjacent country was destitute even of large timber, it may be presumed, that the meaner habitations of the royal village consisted of straw, or mud, or of canvass. The wooden houses of the more illustrious Huns were built and adorned with rude magnificence, according to the rank, the fortune, or the taste of the proprietors. They seem to have been distributed with some degree of order and symmetry; and each spot became more honorable as it approached the person of the sovereign. The palace of Attila, which surpassed all other houses in his dominions, was built entirely of wood, and covered an ample space of ground. The outward enclosure was a lofty wall, or palisade, of smooth square timber, intersected with high towers, but intended rather for ornament than defence. This wall, which seems to have encircled

the declivity of a hill, comprehended a great variety of wooden edifices, adapted to the uses of royalty.

A separate house was assigned to each of the numerous wives of Attila; and, instead of the rigid and illiberal confinement imposed by Asiatic jealousy they politely admitted the Roman ambassadors to their presence, their table, and even to the freedom of an innocent embrace. When Maximin offered his presents to Cerca, [4411](#) the principal queen, he admired the singular architecture on her mansion, the height of the round columns, the size and beauty of the wood, which was curiously shaped or turned or polished or carved; and his attentive eye was able to discover some taste in the ornaments and some regularity in the proportions. After passing through the guards, who watched before the gate, the ambassadors were introduced into the private apartment of Cerca. The wife of Attila received their visit sitting, or rather lying, on a soft couch; the floor was covered with a carpet; the domestics formed a circle round the queen; and her damsels, seated on the ground, were employed in working the variegated embroidery which adorned the dress of the Barbaric warriors. The Huns were ambitious of displaying those riches which were the fruit and evidence of their victories: the trappings of their horses, their swords, and even their shoes, were studded with gold and precious stones; and their tables were profusely spread with plates, and goblets, and vases of gold and silver, which had been fashioned by the labor of Grecian artists.

The monarch alone assumed the superior pride of still adhering to the simplicity of his Scythian ancestors. [45](#) The dress of Attila, his arms, and the furniture of his horse, were plain, without ornament, and of a single color. The royal table was served in wooden cups and platters; flesh was his only food; and the conqueror of the North never tasted the luxury of bread.

43

[\(return\)](#)

[It is evident that Priscus passed the Danube and the Teyss, and that he did not reach the foot of the Carpathian hills. Agria, Tokay, and Jazberin, are situated in the plains circumscribed by this definition. M. de Buat (*Histoire des Peuples*, &c., tom. vii. p. 461) has chosen Tokay; Otrokosci, (p. 180, apud Mascou, ix. 23,) a learned Hungarian, has preferred Jazberin, a place about thirty-six miles westward of Buda and the Danube. * Note: M. St. Martin considers the narrative of Priscus, the only authority of M. de Buat and of Gibbon, too vague to fix the position of Attila's camp. "It is worthy of remark, that in the Hungarian traditions collected by Thwrocz, l. 2, c. 17, precisely on the left branch of the Danube, where Attila's residence was situated, in the same parallel stands the present city of Buda, in Hungarian Buduvur. It is for this reason that this city has retained for a long time among the Germans of Hungary the name of Etzelburgh or Etzela-burgh, i. e., the city of Attila. The distance

of Buda from the place where Priscus crossed the Danube, on his way from Naissus, is equal to that which he traversed to reach the residence of the king of the Huns. I see no good reason for not acceding to the relations of the Hungarian historians.” St. Martin, vi. 191.—M]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[The royal village of Attila may be compared to the city of Karacorum, the residence of the successors of Zingis; which, though it appears to have been a more stable habitation, did not equal the size or splendor of the town and abbey of St. Denys, in the 13th century. (See Rubruquis, in the *Histoire Generale des Voyages*, tom. vii p. 286.) The camp of Aurengzebe, as it is so agreeably described by Bernier, (tom. ii. p. 217-235,) blended the manners of Scythia with the magnificence and luxury of Hindostan.]

4411

[\(return\)](#)

[The name of this queen occurs three times in Priscus, and always in a different form—Cerca, Creca, and Rheca. The Scandinavian poets have preserved her memory under the name of Herkia. St. Martin, vi. 192.—M.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[When the Moguls displayed the spoils of Asia, in the diet of Toncat, the throne of Zingis was still covered with the original black felt carpet, on which he had been seated, when he was raised to the command of his warlike countrymen. See *Vie de Gengiscan*, v. c. 9.]

When Attila first gave audience to the Roman ambassadors on the banks of the Danube, his tent was encompassed with a formidable guard. The monarch himself was seated in a wooden chair. His stern countenance, angry gestures, and impatient tone, astonished the firmness of Maximin; but Vigilius had more reason to tremble, since he distinctly understood the menace, that if Attila did not respect the law of nations, he would nail the deceitful interpreter to the cross. and leave his body to the vultures. The Barbarian condescended, by producing an accurate list, to expose the bold falsehood of Vigilius, who had affirmed that no more than seventeen deserters could be found. But he arrogantly declared, that he apprehended only the disgrace of contending with his fugitive slaves; since he despised their impotent efforts to defend the provinces which Theodosius had intrusted to their arms: “For what fortress,” (added Attila,) “what city, in the wide extent of the Roman empire, can hope to exist, secure and impregnable, if it is our pleasure that it should be erased from the earth?” He dismissed, however, the interpreter, who returned to Constantinople with his peremptory demand of more complete restitution, and a more splendid embassy.

His anger gradually subsided, and his domestic satisfaction in a marriage which he celebrated on the road with the daughter of Eslam, [4511](#) might perhaps contribute to mollify the native fierceness of his temper. The entrance of Attila into the royal village was marked by a very singular ceremony. A numerous troop of women came out to meet their hero and their king. They marched before him, distributed into long and regular files; the intervals between the files were filled by white veils of thin linen, which the women on either side bore aloft in their hands, and which formed a canopy for a chorus of young virgins, who chanted hymns and songs in the Scythian language. The wife of his favorite Onegesius, with a train of female attendants, saluted Attila at the door of her own house, on his way to the palace; and offered, according to the custom of the country, her respectful homage, by entreating him to taste the wine and meat which she had prepared for his reception. As soon as the monarch had graciously accepted her hospitable gift, his domestics lifted a small silver table to a convenient height, as he sat on horseback; and Attila, when he had touched the goblet with his lips, again saluted the wife of Onegesius, and continued his march. During his residence at the seat of empire, his hours were not wasted in the recluse idleness of a seraglio; and the king of the Huns could maintain his superior dignity, without concealing his person from the public view. He frequently assembled his council, and gave audience to the ambassadors of the nations; and his people might appeal to the supreme tribunal, which he held at stated times, and, according to the Eastern custom, before the principal gate of his wooden palace. The Romans, both of the East and of the West, were twice invited to the banquets, where Attila feasted with the princes and nobles of Scythia. Maximin and his colleagues were stopped on the threshold, till they had made a devout libation to the health and prosperity of the king of the Huns; and were conducted, after this ceremony, to their respective seats in a spacious hall. The royal table and couch, covered with carpets and fine linen, was raised by several steps in the midst of the hall; and a son, an uncle, or perhaps a favorite king, were admitted to share the simple and homely repast of Attila. Two lines of small tables, each of which contained three or four guests, were ranged in order on either hand; the right was esteemed the most honorable, but the Romans ingenuously confess, that they were placed on the left; and that Beric, an unknown chieftain, most probably of the Gothic race, preceded the representatives of Theodosius and Valentinian. The Barbarian monarch received from his cup-bearer a goblet filled with wine, and courteously drank to the health of the most distinguished guest; who rose from his seat, and expressed, in the same manner, his loyal and respectful vows. This ceremony was successively performed for all, or at least for the illustrious persons of the assembly; and a considerable time must have been consumed, since it was thrice repeated as each course or service was placed on the table. But the wine still remained after the meat had been removed; and the Huns continued to indulge their intemperance long after the sober and decent ambassadors of the two empires had withdrawn themselves from the nocturnal banquet. Yet before they retired, they enjoyed a singular opportunity of observing the manners of the nation in their convivial

amusements. Two Scythians stood before the couch of Attila, and recited the verses which they had composed, to celebrate his valor and his victories. [4512](#) A profound silence prevailed in the hall; and the attention of the guests was captivated by the vocal harmony, which revived and perpetuated the memory of their own exploits; a martial ardor flashed from the eyes of the warriors, who were impatient for battle; and the tears of the old men expressed their generous despair, that they could no longer partake the danger and glory of the field. [46](#) This entertainment, which might be considered as a school of military virtue, was succeeded by a farce, that debased the dignity of human nature. A Moorish and a Scythian buffoon successively excited the mirth of the rude spectators, by their deformed figure, ridiculous dress, antic gestures, absurd speeches, and the strange, unintelligible confusion of the Latin, the Gothic, and the Hunnic languages; and the hall resounded with loud and licentious peals of laughter. In the midst of this intemperate riot, Attila alone, without a change of countenance, maintained his steadfast and inflexible gravity; which was never relaxed, except on the entrance of Irnac, the youngest of his sons: he embraced the boy with a smile of paternal tenderness, gently pinched him by the cheek, and betrayed a partial affection, which was justified by the assurance of his prophets, that Irnac would be the future support of his family and empire. Two days afterwards, the ambassadors received a second invitation; and they had reason to praise the politeness, as well as the hospitality, of Attila. The king of the Huns held a long and familiar conversation with Maximin; but his civility was interrupted by rude expressions and haughty reproaches; and he was provoked, by a motive of interest, to support, with unbecoming zeal, the private claims of his secretary Constantius.

“The emperor” (said Attila) “has long promised him a rich wife: Constantius must not be disappointed; nor should a Roman emperor deserve the name of liar.” On the third day, the ambassadors were dismissed; the freedom of several captives was granted, for a moderate ransom, to their pressing entreaties; and, besides the royal presents, they were permitted to accept from each of the Scythian nobles the honorable and useful gift of a horse. Maximin returned, by the same road, to Constantinople; and though he was involved in an accidental dispute with Beric, the new ambassador of Attila, he flattered himself that he had contributed, by the laborious journey, to confirm the peace and alliance of the two nations.

4511

[\(return\)](#)

[Was this his own daughter, or the daughter of a person named Escam? (Gibbon has written incorrectly Eslam, an unknown name. The officer of Attila, called Eslas.) In either case the construction is imperfect: a good Greek writer would have introduced an article to determine the sense. Nor is it quite clear, whether Scythian usage is adduced to excuse the polygamy, or a marriage, which would be considered incestuous in other countries. The Latin version has carefully preserved

the ambiguity, *filiam Escam uxorem*. I am not inclined to construe it 'his own daughter' though I have too little confidence in the uniformity of the grammatical idioms of the Byzantines (though Priscus is one of the best) to express myself without hesitation.—M.]

4512

[\(return\)](#)

[This passage is remarkable from the connection of the name of Attila with that extraordinary cycle of poetry, which is found in different forms in almost all the Teutonic languages.]

A Latin poem, *de prima expeditione Attilæ, Regis Hunnorum*, in Gallias, was published in the year 1780, by Fischer at Leipsic. It contains, with the continuation, 1452 lines. It abounds in metrical faults, but is occasionally not without some rude spirit and some copiousness of fancy in the variation of the circumstances in the different combats of the hero Walther, prince of Aquitania. It contains little which can be supposed historical, and still less which is characteristic concerning Attila. It relates to a first expedition of Attila into Europe which cannot be traced in history, during which the kings of the Franks, of the Burgundians, and of Aquitaine, submit themselves, and give hostages to Attila: the king of the Franks, a personage who seems the same with the Hagen of Teutonic romance; the king of Burgundy, his daughter Heldgund; the king of Aquitaine, his son Walther. The main subject of the poem is the escape of Walther and Heldgund from the camp of Attila, and the combat between Walther and Gunthar, king of the Franks. with his twelve peers, among whom is Hagen. Walther had been betrayed while he passed through Worms, the city of the Frankish king, by paying for his ferry over the Rhine with some strange fish, which he had caught during his flight, and which were unknown in the waters of the Rhine. Gunthar was desirous of plundering him of the treasure, which Walther had carried off from the camp of Attila. The author of this poem is unknown, nor can I, on the vague and rather doubtful allusion to Thule, as Iceland, venture to assign its date. It was, evidently, recited in a monastery, as appears by the first line; and no doubt composed there. The faults of metre would point out a late date; and it may have been formed upon some local tradition, as Walther, the hero, seems to have turned monk.

This poem, however, in its character and its incidents, bears no relation to the Teutonic cycle, of which the Nibelungen Lied is the most complete form. In this, in the Heldenbuch, in some of the Danish Sagas. in countess lays and ballads in all the dialects of Scandinavia, appears King Etzel (Attila) in strife with the Burgundians and the Franks. With these appears, by a poetic anachronism, Dietrich of Berne. (Theodoric of Verona,) the celebrated Ostrogothic king; and many other very singular coincidences of historic names, which appear in the poems. (See Lachman Kritik der Sage in his volume of various readings to the Nibelungen; Berlin, 1836, p. 336.)

Chapter XXXIV: Attila.—Part III.

I must acknowledge myself unable to form any satisfactory theory as to the connection of these poems with the history of the time, or the period, from which they may date their origin; notwithstanding the laborious investigations and critical sagacity of the Schlegels, the Grimms, of P. E. Muller and Lachman, and a whole host of German critics and antiquaries; not to omit our own countryman, Mr. Herbert, whose theory concerning Attila is certainly neither deficient in boldness nor originality. I conceive the only way to obtain any thing like a clear conception on this point would be what Lachman has begun, (see above,) patiently to collect and compare the various forms which the traditions have assumed, without any preconceived, either mythical or poetical, theory, and, if possible, to discover the original basis of the whole rich and fantastic legend. One point, which to me is strongly in favor of the antiquity of this poetic cycle, is, that the manners are so clearly anterior to chivalry, and to the influence exercised on the poetic literature of Europe by the chivalrous poems and romances. I think I find some traces of that influence in the Latin poem, though strained through the imagination of a monk. The English reader will find an amusing account of the German Nibelungen and Heldenbuch, and of some of the Scandinavian Sagas, in the volume of Northern Antiquities published by Weber, the friend of Sir Walter Scott. Scott himself contributed a considerable, no doubt far the most valuable, part to the work. [4612](#) [4712](#)

See also the various German editions of the Nibelungen, to which Lachman, with true German perseverance, has compiled a thick volume of various readings; the Heldenbuch, the old Danish poems by Grimm, the Eddas, &c. Herbert's Attila, p. 510, et seq.—M.]

- 46 [\(return\)](#)
[If we may believe Plutarch, (in Demetrio, tom. v. p. 24,) it was the custom of the Scythians, when they indulged in the pleasures of the table, to awaken their languid courage by the martial harmony of twanging their bow-strings.]
- 4612 [\(return\)](#)
[The Scythian was an idiot or lunatic; the Moor a regular buffoon—M.]
- 4712 [\(return\)](#)
[The curious narrative of this embassy, which required few observations, and was not susceptible of any collateral evidence, may be found in Priscus, p. 49-70. But I have not confined myself to the same order; and I had previously extracted the historical circumstances, which were less intimately connected with the journey, and business, of the Roman ambassadors.]

But the Roman ambassador was ignorant of the treacherous design, which had been concealed under the mask of the public faith. The surprise and satisfaction of Edecon,

when he contemplated the splendor of Constantinople, had encouraged the interpreter Vigilius to procure for him a secret interview with the eunuch Chrysaphius, [48](#) who governed the emperor and the empire. After some previous conversation, and a mutual oath of secrecy, the eunuch, who had not, from his own feelings or experience, imbibed any exalted notions of ministerial virtue, ventured to propose the death of Attila, as an important service, by which Edecon might deserve a liberal share of the wealth and luxury which he admired. The ambassador of the Huns listened to the tempting offer; and professed, with apparent zeal, his ability, as well as readiness, to execute the bloody deed; the design was communicated to the master of the offices, and the devout Theodosius consented to the assassination of his invincible enemy. But this perfidious conspiracy was defeated by the dissimulation, or the repentance, of Edecon; and though he might exaggerate his inward abhorrence for the treason, which he seemed to approve, he dexterously assumed the merit of an early and voluntary confession. If we now review the embassy of Maximin, and the behavior of Attila, we must applaud the Barbarian, who respected the laws of hospitality, and generously entertained and dismissed the minister of a prince who had conspired against his life. But the rashness of Vigilius will appear still more extraordinary, since he returned, conscious of his guilt and danger, to the royal camp, accompanied by his son, and carrying with him a weighty purse of gold, which the favorite eunuch had furnished, to satisfy the demands of Edecon, and to corrupt the fidelity of the guards. The interpreter was instantly seized, and dragged before the tribunal of Attila, where he asserted his innocence with specious firmness, till the threat of inflicting instant death on his son extorted from him a sincere discovery of the criminal transaction. Under the name of ransom, or confiscation, the rapacious king of the Huns accepted two hundred pounds of gold for the life of a traitor, whom he disdained to punish. He pointed his just indignation against a nobler object. His ambassadors, Eslaw and Orestes, were immediately despatched to Constantinople, with a peremptory instruction, which it was much safer for them to execute than to disobey. They boldly entered the Imperial presence, with the fatal purse hanging down from the neck of Orestes; who interrogated the eunuch Chrysaphius, as he stood beside the throne, whether he recognized the evidence of his guilt. But the office of reproof was reserved for the superior dignity of his colleague Eslaw, who gravely addressed the emperor of the East in the following words: "Theodosius is the son of an illustrious and respectable parent: Attila likewise is descended from a noble race; and he has supported, by his actions, the dignity which he inherited from his father Mundzuk. But Theodosius has forfeited his paternal honors, and, by consenting to pay tribute has degraded himself to the condition of a slave. It is therefore just, that he should reverence the man whom fortune and merit have placed above him; instead of attempting, like a wicked slave, clandestinely to conspire against his master." The son of Arcadius, who was accustomed only to the voice of flattery, heard with astonishment the severe language of truth: he blushed and trembled; nor did he presume directly to refuse the head of Chrysaphius, which Eslaw and Orestes were instructed to demand. A solemn embassy,

armed with full powers and magnificent gifts, was hastily sent to deprecate the wrath of Attila; and his pride was gratified by the choice of Nomius and Anatolius, two ministers of consular or patrician rank, of whom the one was great treasurer, and the other was master-general of the armies of the East. He condescended to meet these ambassadors on the banks of the River Drengo; and though he at first affected a stern and haughty demeanor, his anger was insensibly mollified by their eloquence and liberality. He condescended to pardon the emperor, the eunuch, and the interpreter; bound himself by an oath to observe the conditions of peace; released a great number of captives; abandoned the fugitives and deserters to their fate; and resigned a large territory, to the south of the Danube, which he had already exhausted of its wealth and inhabitants. But this treaty was purchased at an expense which might have supported a vigorous and successful war; and the subjects of Theodosius were compelled to redeem the safety of a worthless favorite by oppressive taxes, which they would more cheerfully have paid for his destruction. [49](#)

48

[\(return\)](#)

[M. de Tillemont has very properly given the succession of chamberlains, who reigned in the name of Theodosius. Chrysaphius was the last, and, according to the unanimous evidence of history, the worst of these favorites, (see Hist. des Empereurs, tom. vi. p. 117-119. Mem. Eccles. tom. xv. p. 438.) His partiality for his godfather the heresiarch Eutyches, engaged him to persecute the orthodox party]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[This secret conspiracy and its important consequences, may be traced in the fragments of Priscus, p. 37, 38, 39, 54, 70, 71, 72. The chronology of that historian is not fixed by any precise date; but the series of negotiations between Attila and the Eastern empire must be included within the three or four years which are terminated, A.D. 450. by the death of Theodosius.]

The emperor Theodosius did not long survive the most humiliating circumstance of an inglorious life. As he was riding, or hunting, in the neighborhood of Constantinople, he was thrown from his horse into the River Lycus: the spine of the back was injured by the fall; and he expired some days afterwards, in the fiftieth year of his age, and the forty-third of his reign. [50](#) His sister Pulcheria, whose authority had been controlled both in civil and ecclesiastical affairs by the pernicious influence of the eunuchs, was unanimously proclaimed Empress of the East; and the Romans, for the first time, submitted to a female reign. No sooner had Pulcheria ascended the throne, than she indulged her own and the public resentment, by an act of popular justice. Without any legal trial, the eunuch Chrysaphius was executed before the gates of the city; and the immense riches which had been accumulated by the rapacious favorite, served only to

hasten and to justify his punishment. [51](#) Amidst the general acclamations of the clergy and people, the empress did not forget the prejudice and disadvantage to which her sex was exposed; and she wisely resolved to prevent their murmurs by the choice of a colleague, who would always respect the superior rank and virgin chastity of his wife. She gave her hand to Marcian, a senator, about sixty years of age; and the nominal husband of Pulcheria was solemnly invested with the Imperial purple. The zeal which he displayed for the orthodox creed, as it was established by the council of Chalcedon, would alone have inspired the grateful eloquence of the Catholics. But the behavior of Marcian in a private life, and afterwards on the throne, may support a more rational belief, that he was qualified to restore and invigorate an empire, which had been almost dissolved by the successive weakness of two hereditary monarchs. He was born in Thrace, and educated to the profession of arms; but Marcian's youth had been severely exercised by poverty and misfortune, since his only resource, when he first arrived at Constantinople, consisted in two hundred pieces of gold, which he had borrowed of a friend. He passed nineteen years in the domestic and military service of Aspar, and his son Ardaburius; followed those powerful generals to the Persian and African wars; and obtained, by their influence, the honorable rank of tribune and senator. His mild disposition, and useful talents, without alarming the jealousy, recommended Marcian to the esteem and favor of his patrons; he had seen, perhaps he had felt, the abuses of a venal and oppressive administration; and his own example gave weight and energy to the laws, which he promulgated for the reformation of manners. [52](#)

50

[\(return\)](#)

[Theodorus the Reader, (see Vales. Hist. Eccles. tom. iii. p. 563,) and the Paschal Chronicle, mention the fall, without specifying the injury: but the consequence was so likely to happen, and so unlikely to be invented, that we may safely give credit to Nicephorus Callistus, a Greek of the fourteenth century.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Pulcheriae nutu (says Count Marcellinus) sua cum avaritia interemptus est. She abandoned the eunuch to the pious revenge of a son, whose father had suffered at his instigation. Note: Might not the execution of Chrysaphius have been a sacrifice to avert the anger of Attila, whose assassination the eunuch had attempted to contrive?—M.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 4. Evagrius, l. ii. c. 1. Theophanes, p. 90, 91. Novell. ad Calcem. Cod. Theod. tom. vi. p. 30. The praises which St. Leo and the Catholics have bestowed on Marcian, are diligently transcribed by Baronius, as an encouragement for future princes.]

Chapter XXXV: Invasion By Attila.—Part I.

*Invasion Of Gaul By Attila.—He Is Repulsed By Ætius And
The Visigoths.—Attila Invades And Evacuates Italy.—The
Deaths Of Attila, Ætius, And Valentinian The Third.*

It was the opinion of Marcian, that war should be avoided, as long as it is possible to preserve a secure and honorable peace; but it was likewise his opinion, that peace cannot be honorable or secure, if the sovereign betrays a pusillanimous aversion to war. This temperate courage dictated his reply to the demands of Attila, who insolently pressed the payment of the annual tribute. The emperor signified to the Barbarians, that they must no longer insult the majesty of Rome by the mention of a tribute; that he was disposed to reward, with becoming liberality, the faithful friendship of his allies; but that, if they presumed to violate the public peace, they should feel that he possessed troops, and arms, and resolution, to repel their attacks. The same language, even in the camp of the Huns, was used by his ambassador Apollonius, whose bold refusal to deliver the presents, till he had been admitted to a personal interview, displayed a sense of dignity, and a contempt of danger, which Attila was not prepared to expect from the degenerate Romans. ¹ He threatened to chastise the rash successor of Theodosius; but he hesitated whether he should first direct his invincible arms against the Eastern or the Western empire. While mankind awaited his decision with awful suspense, he sent an equal defiance to the courts of Ravenna and Constantinople; and his ministers saluted the two emperors with the same haughty declaration. “Attila, my lord, and thy lord, commands thee to provide a palace for his immediate reception.” ² But as the Barbarian despised, or affected to despise, the Romans of the East, whom he had so often vanquished, he soon declared his resolution of suspending the easy conquest, till he had achieved a more glorious and important enterprise. In the memorable invasions of Gaul and Italy, the Huns were naturally attracted by the wealth and fertility of those provinces; but the particular motives and provocations of Attila can only be explained by the state of the Western empire under the reign of Valentinian, or, to speak more correctly, under the administration of Ætius. ³

1 [\(return\)](#)

[See Priscus, p. 39, 72.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[The Alexandrian or Paschal Chronicle, which introduces this haughty message, during the lifetime of Theodosius, may have anticipated the date; but the dull annalist was incapable of inventing the original and genuine style of Attila.]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[The second book of the *Histoire Critique de l’Etablissement de la Monarchie Francoise* tom. i. p. 189-424, throws great light on the state of Gaul, when it was invaded by Attila; but the ingenious

author, the Abbe Dubos, too often bewilders himself in system and conjecture.]

After the death of his rival Boniface, Ætius had prudently retired to the tents of the Huns; and he was indebted to their alliance for his safety and his restoration. Instead of the suppliant language of a guilty exile, he solicited his pardon at the head of sixty thousand Barbarians; and the empress Placidia confessed, by a feeble resistance, that the condescension, which might have been ascribed to clemency, was the effect of weakness or fear. She delivered herself, her son Valentinian, and the Western empire, into the hands of an insolent subject; nor could Placidia protect the son-in-law of Boniface, the virtuous and faithful Sebastian, [4](#) from the implacable persecution which urged him from one kingdom to another, till he miserably perished in the service of the Vandals. The fortunate Ætius, who was immediately promoted to the rank of patrician, and thrice invested with the honors of the consulship, assumed, with the title of master of the cavalry and infantry, the whole military power of the state; and he is sometimes styled, by contemporary writers, the duke, or general, of the Romans of the West. His prudence, rather than his virtue, engaged him to leave the grandson of Theodosius in the possession of the purple; and Valentinian was permitted to enjoy the peace and luxury of Italy, while the patrician appeared in the glorious light of a hero and a patriot, who supported near twenty years the ruins of the Western empire. The Gothic historian ingenuously confesses, that Ætius was born for the salvation of the Roman republic; [5](#) and the following portrait, though it is drawn in the fairest colors, must be allowed to contain a much larger proportion of truth than of flattery. [411](#) “His mother was a wealthy and noble Italian, and his father Gaudentius, who held a distinguished rank in the province of Scythia, gradually rose from the station of a military domestic, to the dignity of master of the cavalry. Their son, who was enrolled almost in his infancy in the guards, was given as a hostage, first to Alaric, and afterwards to the Huns; [412](#) and he successively obtained the civil and military honors of the palace, for which he was equally qualified by superior merit. The graceful figure of Ætius was not above the middle stature; but his manly limbs were admirably formed for strength, beauty, and agility; and he excelled in the martial exercises of managing a horse, drawing the bow, and darting the javelin. He could patiently endure the want of food, or of sleep; and his mind and body were alike capable of the most laborious efforts. He possessed the genuine courage that can despise not only dangers, but injuries: and it was impossible either to corrupt, or deceive, or intimidate the firm integrity of his soul.” [6](#) The Barbarians, who had seated themselves in the Western provinces, were insensibly taught to respect the faith and valor of the patrician Ætius. He soothed their passions, consulted their prejudices, balanced their interests, and checked their ambition. [611](#) A seasonable treaty, which he concluded with Genseric, protected Italy from the depredations of the Vandals; the independent Britons implored and acknowledged his salutary aid; the Imperial authority was restored and maintained in

Gaul and Spain; and he compelled the Franks and the Suevi, whom he had vanquished in the field, to become the useful confederates of the republic.

4

[\(return\)](#)

[Victor Vitensis (de Persecut. Vandal. l. i. 6, p. 8, edit. Ruinart) calls him, acer consilio et strenuus in bello: but his courage, when he became unfortunate, was censured as desperate rashness; and Sebastian deserved, or obtained, the epithet of proeceph, (Sidon. Apollinar Carmen ix. 181.) His adventures in Constantinople, in Sicily, Gaul, Spain, and Africa, are faintly marked in the Chronicles of Marcellinus and Idatius. In his distress he was always followed by a numerous train; since he could ravage the Hellespont and Propontis, and seize the city of Barcelona.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[Reipublicae Romanae singulariter natus, qui superbiam Suevorum, Francorumque barbariem immensis caedibus servire Imperio Romano coegisset. Jornandes de Rebus Geticis, c. 34, p. 660.]

411

[\(return\)](#)

[Some valuable fragments of a poetical panegyric on Ætius by Merobaudes, a Spaniard, have been recovered from a palimpsest MS. by the sagacity and industry of Niebuhr. They have been reprinted in the new edition of the Byzantine Historians. The poet speaks in glowing terms of the long (annosa) peace enjoyed under the administration of Ætius. The verses are very spirited. The poet was rewarded by a statue publicly dedicated to his honor in Rome.

*Danuvii cum pace redit, Tanaimque furore
Exuit, et nigro candentes aethere terras
Marte suo caruisse jubet. Dedit otia ferro
Caucasus, et saevi condemnant praelia reges.
Addidit hiberni famulantia foedera Rhenus
Orbis.....*

*Lustrat Aremoricos jam mitior incola saltus;
Perdidit et mores tellus, adsuetaque saevo
Crimine quaesitas silvis celare rapinas,
Discit inexpertis Cererem committere campis;
Caesareoque diu manus obluctata labori
Sustinet acceptas nostro sub consule leges;
Et quamvis Geticis sulcum confundat aratris,
Barbara vicinae refugit consortia gentis.
—Merobaudes, p. 1]*

412

[\(return\)](#)

[—cum Scythicis succumberet ensibus orbis,

*Telaque Tarpeias premerent Arctoa secures,
Hostilem fregit rabiem, pignus quesuperbi
Foederis et mundi pretium fuit. Hinc modo voti
Rata fides, validis quod dux premat impiger armis
Edomuit quos pace puer; bellumque repressit*

*Ignarus quid bella forent. Stupere feroces
In tenero jam membra Getae. Rex ipse, verendum
Miratus pueri decus et prodentia fatum
Lumina, primaevae dederat gestare faretras,
Laudabatque manus librantem et tela gerentem
Oblitus quod noster erat Pro nescia regis
Corda, feris quanto populis discrimine constet
Quod Latium docet arma ducem.
—Merobaudes, Panegy. p. 15.—M.]*

6

[\(return\)](#)

[This portrait is drawn by Renetus Profuturus Frigeridus, a contemporary historian, known only by some extracts, which are preserved by Gregory of Tours, (l. ii. c. 8, in tom. ii. p. 163.) It was probably the duty, or at least the interest, of Renatus, to magnify the virtues of Ætius; but he would have shown more dexterity if he had not insisted on his patient, forgiving disposition.]

611

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Insessor Libyes, quamvis, fatalibus armis
Ausus Elisæi solium rescindere regni,
Milibus Arctois Tyrias compleverat arces,
Nunc hostem exutus pactis proprioribus arsit*

*Romanam vincere fidem, Latiosque parentes
Adnumerare sib, sociamque intexere prolem.
—Merobaudes, p. 12.—M.]*

From a principle of interest, as well as gratitude, Ætius assiduously cultivated the alliance of the Huns. While he resided in their tents as a hostage, or an exile, he had familiarly conversed with Attila himself, the nephew of his benefactor; and the two famous antagonists appeared to have been connected by a personal and military friendship, which they afterwards confirmed by mutual gifts, frequent embassies, and the education of Carpilio, the son of Ætius, in the camp of Attila. By the specious professions of gratitude and voluntary attachment, the patrician might disguise his apprehensions of the Scythian conqueror, who pressed the two empires with his innumerable armies. His demands were obeyed or eluded. When he claimed the spoils of a vanquished city, some vases of gold, which had been fraudulently embezzled, the civil and military governors of Noricum were immediately despatched to satisfy his complaints: [7](#) and it is evident, from their conversation with Maximin and Priscus, in the royal village, that the valor and prudence of Ætius had not saved the Western Romans from the common ignominy of tribute. Yet his dexterous policy prolonged the advantages of a salutary peace; and a numerous army of Huns and Alani, whom he had attached to his person, was employed in the defence of Gaul. Two colonies of these Barbarians were judiciously fixed in the territories of Valens and Orleans; [8](#) and their active cavalry secured the important passages of the Rhone and of the Loire. These savage allies were not indeed less formidable to the subjects than to the enemies of Rome. Their original settlement was enforced with the licentious violence of conquest;

and the province through which they marched was exposed to all the calamities of a hostile invasion. [9](#) Strangers to the emperor or the republic, the Alani of Gaul were devoted to the ambition of Ætius, and though he might suspect, that, in a contest with Attila himself, they would revolt to the standard of their national king, the patrician labored to restrain, rather than to excite, their zeal and resentment against the Goths, the Burgundians, and the Franks.

7

[\(return\)](#)

[The embassy consisted of Count Romulus; of Promotus, president of Noricum; and of Romanus, the military duke. They were accompanied by Tatullus, an illustrious citizen of Petovio, in the same province, and father of Orestes, who had married the daughter of Count Romulus. See Priscus, p. 57, 65. Cassiodorus (Variar. i. 4) mentions another embassy, which was executed by his father and Carpilio, the son of Ætius; and, as Attila was no more, he could safely boast of their manly, intrepid behavior in his presence.]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Deserta Valentinae urbis rura Alanis partienda traduntur. Prosper. Tyronis Chron. in Historiens de France, tom. i. p. 639. A few lines afterwards, Prosper observes, that lands in the ulterior Gaul were assigned to the Alani. Without admitting the correction of Dubos, (tom. i. p. 300,) the reasonable supposition of two colonies or garrisons of Alani will confirm his arguments, and remove his objections.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[See Prosper. Tyro, p. 639. Sidonius (Panegy. Avit. 246) complains, in the name of Auvergne, his native country,

*Litorius Scythicos equites tunc forte subacto
Celsus Aremorico, Geticum rapiebat in agmen
Per terras, Averno, tuas, qui proxima quaedue
Discursu, flammis, ferro, feritate, rapinis,
Delebant; pacis fallentes nomen inane.*

another poet, Paulinus of Perigord, confirms the complaint:—

Nam socium vix ferre queas, qui durior hoste.
—See Dubos, tom. i. p. 330.]

The kingdom established by the Visigoths in the southern provinces of Gaul, had gradually acquired strength and maturity; and the conduct of those ambitious Barbarians, either in peace or war, engaged the perpetual vigilance of Ætius. After the death of Wallia, the Gothic sceptre devolved to Theodoric, the son of the great Alaric; [10](#) and his prosperous reign of more than thirty years, over a turbulent people, may be allowed to prove, that his prudence was supported by uncommon vigor, both of

mind and body. Impatient of his narrow limits, Theodoric aspired to the possession of Arles, the wealthy seat of government and commerce; but the city was saved by the timely approach of Ætius; and the Gothic king, who had raised the siege with some loss and disgrace, was persuaded, for an adequate subsidy, to divert the martial valor of his subjects in a Spanish war. Yet Theodoric still watched, and eagerly seized, the favorable moment of renewing his hostile attempts. The Goths besieged Narbonne, while the Belgic provinces were invaded by the Burgundians; and the public safety was threatened on every side by the apparent union of the enemies of Rome. On every side, the activity of Ætius, and his Scythian cavalry, opposed a firm and successful resistance. Twenty thousand Burgundians were slain in battle; and the remains of the nation humbly accepted a dependent seat in the mountains of Savoy. [11](#) The walls of Narbonne had been shaken by the battering engines, and the inhabitants had endured the last extremities of famine, when Count Litorius, approaching in silence, and directing each horseman to carry behind him two sacks of flour, cut his way through the intrenchments of the besiegers. The siege was immediately raised; and the more decisive victory, which is ascribed to the personal conduct of Ætius himself, was marked with the blood of eight thousand Goths. But in the absence of the patrician, who was hastily summoned to Italy by some public or private interest, Count Litorius succeeded to the command; and his presumption soon discovered that far different talents are required to lead a wing of cavalry, or to direct the operations of an important war. At the head of an army of Huns, he rashly advanced to the gates of Thoulouse, full of careless contempt for an enemy whom his misfortunes had rendered prudent, and his situation made desperate. The predictions of the augurs had inspired Litorius with the profane confidence that he should enter the Gothic capital in triumph; and the trust which he reposed in his Pagan allies, encouraged him to reject the fair conditions of peace, which were repeatedly proposed by the bishops in the name of Theodoric. The king of the Goths exhibited in his distress the edifying contrast of Christian piety and moderation; nor did he lay aside his sackcloth and ashes till he was prepared to arm for the combat. His soldiers, animated with martial and religious enthusiasm, assaulted the camp of Litorius. The conflict was obstinate; the slaughter was mutual. The Roman general, after a total defeat, which could be imputed only to his unskilful rashness, was actually led through the streets of Thoulouse, not in his own, but in a hostile triumph; and the misery which he experienced, in a long and ignominious captivity, excited the compassion of the Barbarians themselves. [12](#) Such a loss, in a country whose spirit and finances were long since exhausted, could not easily be repaired; and the Goths, assuming, in their turn, the sentiments of ambition and revenge, would have planted their victorious standards on the banks of the Rhone, if the presence of Ætius had not restored strength and discipline to the Romans. [13](#) The two armies expected the signal of a decisive action; but the generals, who were conscious of each other's force, and doubtful of their own superiority, prudently sheathed their swords in the field of battle; and their reconciliation was permanent and sincere. Theodoric, king of the Visigoths, appears to

have deserved the love of his subjects, the confidence of his allies, and the esteem of mankind. His throne was surrounded by six valiant sons, who were educated with equal care in the exercises of the Barbarian camp, and in those of the Gallic schools: from the study of the Roman jurisprudence, they acquired the theory, at least, of law and justice; and the harmonious sense of Virgil contributed to soften the asperity of their native manners. [14](#) The two daughters of the Gothic king were given in marriage to the eldest sons of the kings of the Suevi and of the Vandals, who reigned in Spain and Africa: but these illustrious alliances were pregnant with guilt and discord. The queen of the Suevi bewailed the death of a husband inhumanly massacred by her brother. The princess of the Vandals was the victim of a jealous tyrant, whom she called her father. The cruel Genseric suspected that his son's wife had conspired to poison him; the supposed crime was punished by the amputation of her nose and ears; and the unhappy daughter of Theodoric was ignominiously returned to the court of Thoulouse in that deformed and mutilated condition. This horrid act, which must seem incredible to a civilized age drew tears from every spectator; but Theodoric was urged, by the feelings of a parent and a king, to revenge such irreparable injuries. The Imperial ministers, who always cherished the discord of the Barbarians, would have supplied the Goths with arms, and ships, and treasures, for the African war; and the cruelty of Genseric might have been fatal to himself, if the artful Vandal had not armed, in his cause, the formidable power of the Huns. His rich gifts and pressing solicitations inflamed the ambition of Attila; and the designs of Ætius and Theodoric were prevented by the invasion of Gaul. [15](#)

10

[\(return\)](#)

[Theodoric II., the son of Theodoric I., declares to Avitus his resolution of repairing, or expiating, the faults which his grandfather had committed,—

Quae noster peccavit avus, quem fuscatur id unum, Quod te, Roma, capit.

Sidon. Panegyric. Avit. 505.

This character, applicable only to the great Alaric, establishes the genealogy of the Gothic kings, which has hitherto been unnoticed.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[The name of Sapaudia, the origin of Savoy, is first mentioned by Ammianus Marcellinus; and two military posts are ascertained by the Notitia, within the limits of that province; a cohort was stationed at Grenoble in Dauphine; and Ebredunum, or Iverdun, sheltered a fleet of small vessels, which commanded the Lake of Neufchatel. See Valesius, Notit. Galliarum, p. 503. D'Anville, Notice de l'Ancienne Gaule, p. 284, 579.]

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Salvian has attempted to explain the moral government of the Deity; a task which may be readily performed by supposing that the calamities

of the wicked are judgments, and those of the
righteous, trials.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[

*-Capto terrarum damna patebant
Litorio, in Rhodanum proprios producere fines,
Thendoridae fixum; nec erat pugnare necesse,
Sed migrare Getis; rabidam trux asperat iram
Victor; quod sensit Scythicum sub moenibus hostem
Imputat, et nihil est gravius, si forsitan unquam
Vincere contingat, trepido.
-Panegy. Avit. 300, &c.*

Sitionius then proceeds, according to the duty of a
panegyrist, to transfer the whole merit from Ætius
to his minister Avitus.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[Theodoric II. revered, in the person of Avitus, the
character of his preceptor.

*Mihi Romula dudum
Per te jura placent; parvumque ediscere jussit
Ad tua verba pater, docili quo prisca Maronis
Carmine molliret Scythicos mihi pagina mores.
--Sidon. Panegy. Avit. 495 &c.]*

15

[\(return\)](#)

[Our authorities for the reign of Theodoric I. are,
Jornandes de Rebus Geticis, c. 34, 36, and the
Chronicles of Idatius, and the two Prosper, inserted
in the historians of France, tom. i. p. 612-640. To these
we may add Salvian de Gubernatione Dei, l. vii. p. 243,
244, 245, and the panegyric of Avitus, by Sidonius.]

The Franks, whose monarchy was still confined to the neighborhood of the Lower Rhine, had wisely established the right of hereditary succession in the noble family of the Merovingians. [16](#) These princes were elevated on a buckler, the symbol of military command; [17](#) and the royal fashion of long hair was the ensign of their birth and dignity. Their flaxen locks, which they combed and dressed with singular care, hung down in flowing ringlets on their back and shoulders; while the rest of the nation were obliged, either by law or custom, to shave the hinder part of their head, to comb their hair over the forehead, and to content themselves with the ornament of two small whiskers. [18](#) The lofty stature of the Franks, and their blue eyes, denoted a Germanic origin; their close apparel accurately expressed the figure of their limbs; a weighty sword was suspended from a broad belt; their bodies were protected by a large shield; and these warlike Barbarians were trained, from their earliest youth, to run, to leap, to swim; to dart the javelin, or battle-axe, with unerring aim; to advance, without hesitation, against a superior enemy; and to maintain, either in life or death, the invincible reputation of their ancestors. [19](#) Clodion, the first of their long-haired kings, whose name and actions are mentioned in authentic history, held his residence at Dispargum, [20](#) a village or fortress, whose place may be assigned between Louvain and

Brussels. From the report of his spies, the king of the Franks was informed, that the defenceless state of the second Belgic must yield, on the slightest attack, to the valor of his subjects. He boldly penetrated through the thickets and morasses of the Carbonarian forest; [21](#) occupied Tournay and Cambray, the only cities which existed in the fifth century, and extended his conquests as far as the River Somme, over a desolate country, whose cultivation and populousness are the effects of more recent industry. [22](#) While Clodion lay encamped in the plains of Artois, [23](#) and celebrated, with vain and ostentatious security, the marriage, perhaps, of his son, the nuptial feast was interrupted by the unexpected and unwelcome presence of Ætius, who had passed the Somme at the head of his light cavalry. The tables, which had been spread under the shelter of a hill, along the banks of a pleasant stream, were rudely overturned; the Franks were oppressed before they could recover their arms, or their ranks; and their unavailing valor was fatal only to themselves. The loaded wagons, which had followed their march, afforded a rich booty; and the virgin-bride, with her female attendants, submitted to the new lovers, who were imposed on them by the chance of war. This advance, which had been obtained by the skill and activity of Ætius, might reflect some disgrace on the military prudence of Clodion; but the king of the Franks soon regained his strength and reputation, and still maintained the possession of his Gallic kingdom from the Rhine to the Somme. [24](#) Under his reign, and most probably from the enterprising spirit of his subjects, his three capitals, Mentz, Treves, and Cologne, experienced the effects of hostile cruelty and avarice. The distress of Cologne was prolonged by the perpetual dominion of the same Barbarians, who evacuated the ruins of Treves; and Treves, which in the space of forty years had been four times besieged and pillaged, was disposed to lose the memory of her afflictions in the vain amusements of the Circus. [25](#) The death of Clodion, after a reign of twenty years, exposed his kingdom to the discord and ambition of his two sons. Meroveus, the younger, [26](#) was persuaded to implore the protection of Rome; he was received at the Imperial court, as the ally of Valentinian, and the adopted son of the patrician Ætius; and dismissed to his native country, with splendid gifts, and the strongest assurances of friendship and support. During his absence, his elder brother had solicited, with equal ardor, the formidable aid of Attila; and the king of the Huns embraced an alliance, which facilitated the passage of the Rhine, and justified, by a specious and honorable pretence, the invasion of Gaul. [27](#)

[Reges Crinitos se creavisse de prima, et ut ita dicam nobiliori suorum familia, (Greg. Turon. l. ii. c. 9, p. 166, of the second volume of the Historians of France.) Gregory himself does not mention the Merovingian name, which may be traced, however, to the beginning of the seventh century, as the distinctive appellation of the royal family, and even of the French monarchy. An ingenious critic has deduced the Merovingians from the great Maroboduus; and he has clearly proved, that the

prince, who gave his name to the first race, was more ancient than the father of Childeric. See Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions, tom. xx. p. 52-90, tom. xxx. p. 557-587.]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[This German custom, which may be traced from Tacitus to Gregory of Tours, was at length adopted by the emperors of Constantinople. From a MS. of the tenth century, Montfaucon has delineated the representation of a similar ceremony, which the ignorance of the age had applied to King David. See Monumens de la Monarchie Francoise, tom. i. Discours Preliminaire.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Caesaries proluxa... crinium flagellis per terga dimissis, &c. See the Preface to the third volume of the Historians of France, and the Abbe Le Boeuf, (Dissertat. tom. iii. p. 47-79.) This peculiar fashion of the Merovingians has been remarked by natives and strangers; by Priscus, (tom. i. p. 608,) by Agathias, (tom. ii. p. 49,) and by Gregory of Tours, (l. viii. 18, vi. 24, viii. 10, tom. ii. p. 196, 278, 316.)]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[See an original picture of the figure, dress, arms, and temper of the ancient Franks, in Sidonius Apollinaris, (Panegy. Majorian. 238-254;) and such pictures, though coarsely drawn, have a real and intrinsic value. Father Daniel (History de la Milice Francoise, tom. i. p. 2-7) has illustrated the description.]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[Dubos, Hist. Critique, &c., tom. i. p. 271, 272. Some geographers have placed Disparium on the German side of the Rhine. See a note of the Benedictine Editors, to the Historians of France, tom. ii p. 166.]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[The Carbonarian wood was that part of the great forest of the Ardennes which lay between the Escaut, or Scheldt, and the Meuse. Vales. Notit. Gall. p. 126.]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[Gregor. Turon. l. ii. c. 9, in tom. ii. p. 166, 167. Fredegar. Epitom. c. 9, p. 395. Gesta Reg. Francor. c. 5, in tom. ii. p. 544. Vit St. Remig. ab Hincmar, in tom. iii. p. 373.]

23 [\(return\)](#)

[

-Francus qua Cloio patentes

Atrebatum terras pervaserat.
—*Panegy. Majorian 213*

The precise spot was a town or village, called Vicus Helena; and both the name and place are discovered by modern geographers at Lens See Vales. Notit. Gall. p. 246. Longuerue, Description de la France tom. ii. p. 88.]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[See a vague account of the action in Sidonius. Panegy. Majorian 212-230. The French critics, impatient to establish their monarchy in Gaul, have drawn a strong argument from the silence of Sidonius, who dares not insinuate, that the vanquished Franks were compelled to repass the Rhine. Dubos, tom. i. p. 322.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Salvian (de Gubernat. Dei, l. vi.) has expressed, in vague and declamatory language, the misfortunes of these three cities, which are distinctly ascertained by the learned Mascou, Hist. of the Ancient Germans, ix. 21.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Priscus, in relating the contest, does not name the two brothers; the second of whom he had seen at Rome, a beardless youth, with long, flowing hair, (Historians of France, tom. i. p. 607, 608.) The Benedictine Editors are inclined to believe, that they were the sons of some unknown king of the Franks, who reigned on the banks of the Neckar; but the arguments of M. de Foncemagne (Mem. de l'Academie, tom. viii. p. 464) seem to prove that the succession of Clodion was disputed by his two sons, and that the younger was Meroveus, the father of Childeric. * Note: The relationship of Meroveus to Clodion is extremely doubtful.—By some he is called an illegitimate son; by others merely of his race. Tur ii. c. 9, in Sismondi, Hist. des Francais, i. 177. See Mezeray.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[Under the Merovingian race, the throne was hereditary; but all the sons of the deceased monarch were equally entitled to their share of his treasures and territories. See the Dissertations of M. de Foncemagne, in the sixth and eighth volumes of the Mémoires de l'Academie.]

Chapter XXXV: Invasion By Attila.—Part II.

When Attila declared his resolution of supporting the cause of his allies, the Vandals and the Franks, at the same time, and almost in the spirit of romantic chivalry, the savage monarch professed himself the lover and the champion of the princess Honoria. The sister of Valentinian was educated in the palace of Ravenna; and as her marriage might be productive of some danger to the state, she was raised, by the title of Augusta, [28](#) above the hopes of the most presumptuous subject. But the fair Honoria had no sooner attained the sixteenth year of her age, than she detested the importunate greatness which must forever exclude her from the comforts of honorable love; in the midst of vain and unsatisfactory pomp, Honoria sighed, yielded to the impulse of nature, and threw herself into the arms of her chamberlain Eugenius. Her guilt and shame (such is the absurd language of imperious man) were soon betrayed by the appearances of pregnancy; but the disgrace of the royal family was published to the world by the imprudence of the empress Placidia who dismissed her daughter, after a strict and shameful confinement, to a remote exile at Constantinople. The unhappy princess passed twelve or fourteen years in the irksome society of the sisters of Theodosius, and their chosen virgins; to whose crown Honoria could no longer aspire, and whose monastic assiduity of prayer, fasting, and vigils, she reluctantly imitated. Her impatience of long and hopeless celibacy urged her to embrace a strange and desperate resolution. The name of Attila was familiar and formidable at Constantinople; and his frequent embassies entertained a perpetual intercourse between his camp and the Imperial palace. In the pursuit of love, or rather of revenge, the daughter of Placidia sacrificed every duty and every prejudice; and offered to deliver her person into the arms of a Barbarian, of whose language she was ignorant, whose figure was scarcely human, and whose religion and manners she abhorred. By the ministry of a faithful eunuch, she transmitted to Attila a ring, the pledge of her affection; and earnestly conjured him to claim her as a lawful spouse, to whom he had been secretly betrothed. These indecent advances were received, however, with coldness and disdain; and the king of the Huns continued to multiply the number of his wives, till his love was awakened by the more forcible passions of ambition and avarice. The invasion of Gaul was preceded, and justified, by a formal demand of the princess Honoria, with a just and equal share of the Imperial patrimony. His predecessors, the ancient Tanjous, had often addressed, in the same hostile and peremptory manner, the daughters of China; and the pretensions of Attila were not less offensive to the majesty of Rome. A firm, but temperate, refusal was communicated to his ambassadors. The right of female succession, though it might derive a specious argument from the recent examples of Placidia and Pulcheria, was strenuously denied; and the indissoluble engagements of Honoria were opposed to the claims of her Scythian lover. [29](#) On the discovery of her connection with the king of the Huns, the guilty princess had been sent away, as an object of horror, from Constantinople to Italy: her life was spared; but the ceremony of her marriage was performed with some obscure and nominal husband, before she was

immured in a perpetual prison, to bewail those crimes and misfortunes, which Honoria might have escaped, had she not been born the daughter of an emperor. [30](#)

28

[\(return\)](#)

[A medal is still extant, which exhibits the pleasing countenance of Honoria, with the title of Augusta; and on the reverse, the improper legend of Salus Reipublicoe round the monogram of Christ. See Ducange, Famil. Byzantin. p. 67, 73.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[See Priscus, p, 39, 40. It might be fairly alleged, that if females could succeed to the throne, Valentinian himself, who had married the daughter and heiress of the younger Theodosius, would have asserted her right to the Eastern empire.]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[The adventures of Honoria are imperfectly related by Jornandes, de Successione Regn. c. 97, and de Reb. Get. c. 42, p. 674; and in the Chronicles of Prosper and Marcellinus; but they cannot be made consistent, or probable, unless we separate, by an interval of time and place, her intrigue with Eugenius, and her invitation of Attila.]

A native of Gaul, and a contemporary, the learned and eloquent Sidonius, who was afterwards bishop of Clermont, had made a promise to one of his friends, that he would compose a regular history of the war of Attila. If the modesty of Sidonius had not discouraged him from the prosecution of this interesting work, [31](#) the historian would have related, with the simplicity of truth, those memorable events, to which the poet, in vague and doubtful metaphors, has concisely alluded. [32](#) The kings and nations of Germany and Scythia, from the Volga perhaps to the Danube, obeyed the warlike summons of Attila. From the royal village, in the plains of Hungary his standard moved towards the West; and after a march of seven or eight hundred miles, he reached the conflux of the Rhine and the Neckar, where he was joined by the Franks, who adhered to his ally, the elder of the sons of Clodion. A troop of light Barbarians, who roamed in quest of plunder, might choose the winter for the convenience of passing the river on the ice; but the innumerable cavalry of the Huns required such plenty of forage and provisions, as could be procured only in a milder season; the Hercynian forest supplied materials for a bridge of boats; and the hostile myriads were poured, with resistless violence, into the Belgic provinces. [33](#) The consternation of Gaul was universal; and the various fortunes of its cities have been adorned by tradition with martyrdoms and miracles. [34](#) Troyes was saved by the merits of St. Lupus; St. Servatius was removed from the world, that he might not behold the ruin of Tongres; and the prayers of St. Genevieve diverted the march of Attila from the neighborhood of Paris. But as the greatest part of the Gallic cities were alike destitute of saints and soldiers, they were besieged and stormed by the Huns; who practised, in the example of Metz, [35](#) their

customary maxims of war. They involved, in a promiscuous massacre, the priests who served at the altar, and the infants, who, in the hour of danger, had been providently baptized by the bishop; the flourishing city was delivered to the flames, and a solitary chapel of St. Stephen marked the place where it formerly stood. From the Rhine and the Moselle, Attila advanced into the heart of Gaul; crossed the Seine at Auxerre; and, after a long and laborious march, fixed his camp under the walls of Orleans. He was desirous of securing his conquests by the possession of an advantageous post, which commanded the passage of the Loire; and he depended on the secret invitation of Sangiban, king of the Alani, who had promised to betray the city, and to revolt from the service of the empire. But this treacherous conspiracy was detected and disappointed: Orleans had been strengthened with recent fortifications; and the assaults of the Huns were vigorously repelled by the faithful valor of the soldiers, or citizens, who defended the place. The pastoral diligence of Anianus, a bishop of primitive sanctity and consummate prudence, exhausted every art of religious policy to support their courage, till the arrival of the expected succors. After an obstinate siege, the walls were shaken by the battering rams; the Huns had already occupied the suburbs; and the people, who were incapable of bearing arms, lay prostrate in prayer. Anianus, who anxiously counted the days and hours, despatched a trusty messenger to observe, from the rampart, the face of the distant country. He returned twice, without any intelligence that could inspire hope or comfort; but, in his third report, he mentioned a small cloud, which he had faintly descried at the extremity of the horizon. "It is the aid of God!" exclaimed the bishop, in a tone of pious confidence; and the whole multitude repeated after him, "It is the aid of God." The remote object, on which every eye was fixed, became each moment larger, and more distinct; the Roman and Gothic banners were gradually perceived; and a favorable wind blowing aside the dust, discovered, in deep array, the impatient squadrons of Ætius and Theodoric, who pressed forwards to the relief of Orleans.

31 [\(return\)](#)

[Exegeras mihi, ut promitterem tibi, Attilæ bellum
 stylo me posteris intimaturum.... coeperam scribere,
 sed operis arrepti fasce perspecto, taeduit
 inchoasse. Sidon. Apoll. l. viii. epist. 15, p. 235]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[

*Subito cum rupta tumultu
 Barbaries totas in te transfuderat Arctos,*

*Gallia. Pugnacem Rugum comitante Gelono,
 Gepida trux sequitur; Scyrum Burgundio cogit:*

Chunus, Bellonotus, Neurus, Basterna, Toringus,

Bructerus, ulvosa vel quem Nicer abluit unda

Prorumpit Francus. Cecidit cito secta bipenni Hercynia in
 lintres, et Rhenum texuit alno. Et jam terrificis

diffuderat Attila turmis In campos se, Belga, tuos.
Panegy. Avit.]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[The most authentic and circumstantial account of this war is contained in Jornandes, (de Reb. Geticis, c. 36-41, p. 662-672,) who has sometimes abridged, and sometimes transcribed, the larger history of Cassiodorus. Jornandes, a quotation which it would be superfluous to repeat, may be corrected and illustrated by Gregory of Tours, l. ii. c. 5, 6, 7, and the Chronicles of Idatius, Isidore, and the two Prosper. All the ancient testimonies are collected and inserted in the Historians of France; but the reader should be cautioned against a supposed extract from the Chronicle of Idatius, (among the fragments of Fredegarius, tom. ii. p. 462,) which often contradicts the genuine text of the Gallician bishop.]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[The ancient legendaries deserve some regard, as they are obliged to connect their fables with the real history of their own times. See the lives of St. Lupus, St. Anianus, the bishops of Metz, Ste. Genevieve, &c., in the Historians of France, tom. i. p. 644, 645, 649, tom. iii. p. 369.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[The scepticism of the count de Buat (Hist. des Peuples, tom. vii. p. 539, 540) cannot be reconciled with any principles of reason or criticism. Is not Gregory of Tours precise and positive in his account of the destruction of Metz? At the distance of no more than a hundred years, could he be ignorant, could the people be ignorant of the fate of a city, the actual residence of his sovereigns, the kings of Austrasia? The learned count, who seems to have undertaken the apology of Attila and the Barbarians, appeals to the false Idatius, parcens Germaniae et Galliae, and forgets that the true Idatius had explicitly affirmed, plurimae civitates effractae, among which he enumerates Metz.]

The facility with which Attila had penetrated into the heart of Gaul, may be ascribed to his insidious policy, as well as to the terror of his arms. His public declarations were skilfully mitigated by his private assurances; he alternately soothed and threatened the Romans and the Goths; and the courts of Ravenna and Thoulouse, mutually suspicious of each other's intentions, beheld, with supine indifference, the approach of their common enemy. Ætius was the sole guardian of the public safety; but his wisest measures were embarrassed by a faction, which, since the death of Placidia, infested the Imperial palace: the youth of Italy trembled at the sound of the trumpet; and the

Barbarians, who, from fear or affection, were inclined to the cause of Attila, awaited with doubtful and venal faith, the event of the war. The patrician passed the Alps at the head of some troops, whose strength and numbers scarcely deserved the name of an army. [36](#) But on his arrival at Arles, or Lyons, he was confounded by the intelligence, that the Visigoths, refusing to embrace the defence of Gaul, had determined to expect, within their own territories, the formidable invader, whom they professed to despise. The senator Avitus, who, after the honorable exercise of the Prætorian præfecture, had retired to his estate in Auvergne, was persuaded to accept the important embassy, which he executed with ability and success. He represented to Theodoric, that an ambitious conqueror, who aspired to the dominion of the earth, could be resisted only by the firm and unanimous alliance of the powers whom he labored to oppress. The lively eloquence of Avitus inflamed the Gothic warriors, by the description of the injuries which their ancestors had suffered from the Huns; whose implacable fury still pursued them from the Danube to the foot of the Pyrenees. He strenuously urged, that it was the duty of every Christian to save, from sacrilegious violation, the churches of God, and the relics of the saints: that it was the interest of every Barbarian, who had acquired a settlement in Gaul, to defend the fields and vineyards, which were cultivated for his use, against the desolation of the Scythian shepherds. Theodoric yielded to the evidence of truth; adopted the measure at once the most prudent and the most honorable; and declared, that, as the faithful ally of Ætius and the Romans, he was ready to expose his life and kingdom for the common safety of Gaul. [37](#) The Visigoths, who, at that time, were in the mature vigor of their fame and power, obeyed with alacrity the signal of war; prepared their arms and horses, and assembled under the standard of their aged king, who was resolved, with his two eldest sons, Torismond and Theodoric, to command in person his numerous and valiant people. The example of the Goths determined several tribes or nations, that seemed to fluctuate between the Huns and the Romans. The indefatigable diligence of the patrician gradually collected the troops of Gaul and Germany, who had formerly acknowledged themselves the subjects, or soldiers, of the republic, but who now claimed the rewards of voluntary service, and the rank of independent allies; the Læti, the Armoricans, the Breones, the Saxons, the Burgundians, the Sarmatians, or Alani, the Ripuarians, and the Franks who followed Meroveus as their lawful prince. Such was the various army, which, under the conduct of Ætius and Theodoric, advanced, by rapid marches to relieve Orleans, and to give battle to the innumerable host of Attila. [38](#)

36

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Vix liquerat Alpes
Ætius, tenue, et rarum sine milite ducens
Robur, in auxiliis Geticum male credulus agmen
Incassum propriis præsumens adfore castris.*

--Panegy. Avit. 328, &c.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[The policy of Attila, of Ætius, and of the

Visigoths, is imperfectly described in the Panegyric of Avitus, and the thirty-sixth chapter of Jornandes. The poet and the historian were both biased by personal or national prejudices. The former exalts the merit and importance of Avitus; orbis, Avite, salus, &c.! The latter is anxious to show the Goths in the most favorable light. Yet their agreement when they are fairly interpreted, is a proof of their veracity.]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[The review of the army of Ætius is made by Jornandes, c. 36, p. 664, edit. Grot. tom. ii. p. 23, of the Historians of France, with the notes of the Benedictine editor. The Loeti were a promiscuous race of Barbarians, born or naturalized in Gaul; and the Riparii, or Ripuarii, derived their name from their post on the three rivers, the Rhine, the Meuse, and the Moselle; the Armoricans possessed the independent cities between the Seine and the Loire. A colony of Saxons had been planted in the diocese of Bayeux; the Burgundians were settled in Savoy; and the Breones were a warlike tribe of Rhaetians, to the east of the Lake of Constance.]

On their approach the king of the Huns immediately raised the siege, and sounded a retreat to recall the foremost of his troops from the pillage of a city which they had already entered. [39](#) The valor of Attila was always guided by his prudence; and as he foresaw the fatal consequences of a defeat in the heart of Gaul, he repassed the Seine, and expected the enemy in the plains of Chalons, whose smooth and level surface was adapted to the operations of his Scythian cavalry. But in this tumultuary retreat, the vanguard of the Romans and their allies continually pressed, and sometimes engaged, the troops whom Attila had posted in the rear; the hostile columns, in the darkness of the night and the perplexity of the roads, might encounter each other without design; and the bloody conflict of the Franks and Gepidae, in which fifteen thousand [40](#) Barbarians were slain, was a prelude to a more general and decisive action. The Catalaunian fields [41](#) spread themselves round Chalons, and extend, according to the vague measurement of Jornandes, to the length of one hundred and fifty, and the breadth of one hundred miles, over the whole province, which is entitled to the appellation of a champaign country. [42](#) This spacious plain was distinguished, however, by some inequalities of ground; and the importance of a height, which commanded the camp of Attila, was understood and disputed by the two generals. The young and valiant Torismond first occupied the summit; the Goths rushed with irresistible weight on the Huns, who labored to ascend from the opposite side: and the possession of this advantageous post inspired both the troops and their leaders with a fair assurance of victory. The anxiety of Attila prompted him to consult his priests and haruspices. It was reported, that, after scrutinizing the entrails of victims, and scraping their bones, they

revealed, in mysterious language, his own defeat, with the death of his principal adversary; and that the Barbarians, by accepting the equivalent, expressed his involuntary esteem for the superior merit of Ætius. But the unusual despondency, which seemed to prevail among the Huns, engaged Attila to use the expedient, so familiar to the generals of antiquity, of animating his troops by a military oration; and his language was that of a king, who had often fought and conquered at their head. [43](#) He pressed them to consider their past glory, their actual danger, and their future hopes. The same fortune, which opened the deserts and morasses of Scythia to their unarmed valor, which had laid so many warlike nations prostrate at their feet, had reserved the joys of this memorable field for the consummation of their victories. The cautious steps of their enemies, their strict alliance, and their advantageous posts, he artfully represented as the effects, not of prudence, but of fear. The Visigoths alone were the strength and nerves of the opposite army; and the Huns might securely trample on the degenerate Romans, whose close and compact order betrayed their apprehensions, and who were equally incapable of supporting the dangers or the fatigues of a day of battle. The doctrine of predestination, so favorable to martial virtue, was carefully inculcated by the king of the Huns; who assured his subjects, that the warriors, protected by Heaven, were safe and invulnerable amidst the darts of the enemy; but that the unerring Fates would strike their victims in the bosom of inglorious peace. “I myself,” continued Attila, “will throw the first javelin, and the wretch who refuses to imitate the example of his sovereign, is devoted to inevitable death.” The spirit of the Barbarians was rekindled by the presence, the voice, and the example of their intrepid leader; and Attila, yielding to their impatience, immediately formed his order of battle. At the head of his brave and faithful Huns, he occupied in person the centre of the line. The nations subject to his empire, the Rugians, the Heruli, the Thuringians, the Franks, the Burgundians, were extended on either hand, over the ample space of the Catalaunian fields; the right wing was commanded by Ardaric, king of the Gepidae; and the three valiant brothers, who reigned over the Ostrogoths, were posted on the left to oppose the kindred tribes of the Visigoths. The disposition of the allies was regulated by a different principle. Sangiban, the faithless king of the Alani, was placed in the centre, where his motions might be strictly watched, and that the treachery might be instantly punished. Ætius assumed the command of the left, and Theodoric of the right wing; while Torismond still continued to occupy the heights which appear to have stretched on the flank, and perhaps the rear, of the Scythian army. The nations from the Volga to the Atlantic were assembled on the plain of Chalons; but many of these nations had been divided by faction, or conquest, or emigration; and the appearance of similar arms and ensigns, which threatened each other, presented the image of a civil war.

turned into a miracle, obtained and foretold by the holy bishop.]

40 [\(return\)](#)

[The common editions read xcm but there is some authority of manuscripts (and almost any authority is sufficient) for the more reasonable number of xvm.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[Chalons, or Duro-Catalaunum, afterwards Catalauni, had formerly made a part of the territory of Rheims from whence it is distant only twenty-seven miles. See Vales, Notit. Gall. p. 136. D’Anville, Notice de l’Ancienne Gaule, p. 212, 279.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[The name of Campania, or Champagne, is frequently mentioned by Gregory of Tours; and that great province, of which Rheims was the capital, obeyed the command of a duke. Vales. Notit. p. 120-123.]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[I am sensible that these military orations are usually composed by the historian; yet the old Ostrogoths, who had served under Attila, might repeat his discourse to Cassiodorus; the ideas, and even the expressions, have an original Scythian cast; and I doubt, whether an Italian of the sixth century would have thought of the hujus certaminis gaudia.]

The discipline and tactics of the Greeks and Romans form an interesting part of their national manners. The attentive study of the military operations of Xenophon, or Caesar, or Frederic, when they are described by the same genius which conceived and executed them, may tend to improve (if such improvement can be wished) the art of destroying the human species. But the battle of Chalons can only excite our curiosity by the magnitude of the object; since it was decided by the blind impetuosity of Barbarians, and has been related by partial writers, whose civil or ecclesiastical profession secluded them from the knowledge of military affairs. Cassiodorus, however, had familiarly conversed with many Gothic warriors, who served in that memorable engagement; “a conflict,” as they informed him, “fierce, various, obstinate, and bloody; such as could not be paralleled either in the present or in past ages.” The number of the slain amounted to one hundred and sixty-two thousand, or, according to another account, three hundred thousand persons; [44](#) and these incredible exaggerations suppose a real and effective loss sufficient to justify the historian’s remark, that whole generations may be swept away by the madness of kings, in the space of a single hour. After the mutual and repeated discharge of missile weapons, in which the archers of Scythia might signalize their superior dexterity, the cavalry and infantry of the two

armies were furiously mingled in closer combat. The Huns, who fought under the eyes of their king pierced through the feeble and doubtful centre of the allies, separated their wings from each other, and wheeling, with a rapid effort, to the left, directed their whole force against the Visigoths. As Theodoric rode along the ranks, to animate his troops, he received a mortal stroke from the javelin of Andages, a noble Ostrogoth, and immediately fell from his horse. The wounded king was oppressed in the general disorder, and trampled under the feet of his own cavalry; and this important death served to explain the ambiguous prophecy of the haruspices. Attila already exulted in the confidence of victory, when the valiant Torismond descended from the hills, and verified the remainder of the prediction. The Visigoths, who had been thrown into confusion by the flight or defection of the Alani, gradually restored their order of battle; and the Huns were undoubtedly vanquished, since Attila was compelled to retreat. He had exposed his person with the rashness of a private soldier; but the intrepid troops of the centre had pushed forwards beyond the rest of the line; their attack was faintly supported; their flanks were unguarded; and the conquerors of Scythia and Germany were saved by the approach of the night from a total defeat. They retired within the circle of wagons that fortified their camp; and the dismounted squadrons prepared themselves for a defence, to which neither their arms, nor their temper, were adapted. The event was doubtful: but Attila had secured a last and honorable resource. The saddles and rich furniture of the cavalry were collected, by his order, into a funeral pile; and the magnanimous Barbarian had resolved, if his intrenchments should be forced, to rush headlong into the flames, and to deprive his enemies of the glory which they might have acquired, by the death or captivity of Attila. [45](#)

44

[\(return\)](#)

[The expressions of Jornandes, or rather of Cassiodorus, are extremely strong. *Bellum atrox, multiplex, immane, pertinax, cui simile nulla usquam narrat antiquitas: ubi talia gesta referuntur, ut nihil esset quod in vita sua conspiceret potuisset egregius, qui hujus miraculi privaretur aspectu.* Dubos (*Hist. Critique*, tom. i. p. 392, 393) attempts to reconcile the 162,000 of Jornandes with the 300,000 of Idatius and Isidore, by supposing that the larger number included the total destruction of the war, the effects of disease, the slaughter of the unarmed people, &c.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[The count de Buat, (*Hist. des Peuples, &c.*, tom. vii. p. 554-573,) still depending on the false, and again rejecting the true, Idatius, has divided the defeat of Attila into two great battles; the former near Orleans, the latter in Champagne: in the one, Theodoric was slain in the other, he was revenged.]

But his enemies had passed the night in equal disorder and anxiety. The inconsiderate courage of Torismond was tempted to urge the pursuit, till he unexpectedly found himself, with a few followers, in the midst of the Scythian wagons. In the confusion of a nocturnal combat, he was thrown from his horse; and the Gothic prince must have perished like his father, if his youthful strength, and the intrepid zeal of his companions, had not rescued him from this dangerous situation. In the same manner, but on the left of the line, Ætius himself, separated from his allies, ignorant of their victory, and anxious for their fate, encountered and escaped the hostile troops that were scattered over the plains of Chalons; and at length reached the camp of the Goths, which he could only fortify with a slight rampart of shields, till the dawn of day. The Imperial general was soon satisfied of the defeat of Attila, who still remained inactive within his intrenchments; and when he contemplated the bloody scene, he observed, with secret satisfaction, that the loss had principally fallen on the Barbarians. The body of Theodoric, pierced with honorable wounds, was discovered under a heap of the slain: his subjects bewailed the death of their king and father; but their tears were mingled with songs and acclamations, and his funeral rites were performed in the face of a vanquished enemy. The Goths, clashing their arms, elevated on a buckler his eldest son Torismond, to whom they justly ascribed the glory of their success; and the new king accepted the obligation of revenge as a sacred portion of his paternal inheritance. Yet the Goths themselves were astonished by the fierce and undaunted aspect of their formidable antagonist; and their historian has compared Attila to a lion encompassed in his den, and threatening his hunters with redoubled fury. The kings and nations who might have deserted his standard in the hour of distress, were made sensible that the displeasure of their monarch was the most imminent and inevitable danger. All his instruments of martial music incessantly sounded a loud and animating strain of defiance; and the foremost troops who advanced to the assault were checked or destroyed by showers of arrows from every side of the intrenchments. It was determined, in a general council of war, to besiege the king of the Huns in his camp, to intercept his provisions, and to reduce him to the alternative of a disgraceful treaty or an unequal combat. But the impatience of the Barbarians soon disdained these cautious and dilatory measures; and the mature policy of Ætius was apprehensive that, after the extirpation of the Huns, the republic would be oppressed by the pride and power of the Gothic nation. The patrician exerted the superior ascendant of authority and reason to calm the passions, which the son of Theodoric considered as a duty; represented, with seeming affection and real truth, the dangers of absence and delay and persuaded Torismond to disappoint, by his speedy return, the ambitious designs of his brothers, who might occupy the throne and treasures of Thoulouse. [46](#) After the departure of the Goths, and the separation of the allied army, Attila was surprised at the vast silence that reigned over the plains of Chalons: the suspicion of some hostile stratagem detained him several days within the circle of his wagons, and his retreat beyond the Rhine confessed the last victory which was achieved in the name of the Western empire.

Meroveus and his Franks, observing a prudent distance, and magnifying the opinion of their strength by the numerous fires which they kindled every night, continued to follow the rear of the Huns till they reached the confines of Thuringia. The Thuringians served in the army of Attila: they traversed, both in their march and in their return, the territories of the Franks; and it was perhaps in this war that they exercised the cruelties which, about fourscore years afterwards, were revenged by the son of Clovis. They massacred their hostages, as well as their captives: two hundred young maidens were tortured with exquisite and unrelenting rage; their bodies were torn asunder by wild horses, or their bones were crushed under the weight of rolling wagons; and their unburied limbs were abandoned on the public roads, as a prey to dogs and vultures. Such were those savage ancestors, whose imaginary virtues have sometimes excited the praise and envy of civilized ages. [47](#)

46

[\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes de Rebus Geticis, c. 41, p. 671. The policy of Ætius, and the behavior of Torismond, are extremely natural; and the patrician, according to Gregory of Tours, (l. ii. c. 7, p. 163,) dismissed the prince of the Franks, by suggesting to him a similar apprehension. The false Idatius ridiculously pretends, that Ætius paid a clandestine nocturnal visit to the kings of the Huns and of the Visigoths; from each of whom he obtained a bribe of ten thousand pieces of gold, as the price of an undisturbed retreat.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[These cruelties, which are passionately deplored by Theodoric, the son of Clovis, (Gregory of Tours, l. iii. c. 10, p. 190,) suit the time and circumstances of the invasion of Attila. His residence in Thuringia was long attested by popular tradition; and he is supposed to have assembled a couroultai, or diet, in the territory of Eisenach. See Mascou, ix. 30, who settles with nice accuracy the extent of ancient Thuringia, and derives its name from the Gothic tribe of the Therungi]

Chapter XXXV: Invasion By Attila.—Part III.

Neither the spirit, nor the forces, nor the reputation, of Attila, were impaired by the failure of the Gallic expedition. In the ensuing spring he repeated his demand of the princess Honoria, and her patrimonial treasures. The demand was again rejected, or eluded; and the indignant lover immediately took the field, passed the Alps, invaded Italy, and besieged Aquileia with an innumerable host of Barbarians. Those Barbarians were unskilled in the methods of conducting a regular siege, which, even among the

ancients, required some knowledge, or at least some practice, of the mechanic arts. But the labor of many thousand provincials and captives, whose lives were sacrificed without pity, might execute the most painful and dangerous work. The skill of the Roman artists might be corrupted to the destruction of their country. The walls of Aquileia were assaulted by a formidable train of battering rams, movable turrets, and engines, that threw stones, darts, and fire; [48](#) and the monarch of the Huns employed the forcible impulse of hope, fear, emulation, and interest, to subvert the only barrier which delayed the conquest of Italy. Aquileia was at that period one of the richest, the most populous, and the strongest of the maritime cities of the Adriatic coast. The Gothic auxiliaries, who appeared to have served under their native princes, Alaric and Antala, communicated their intrepid spirit; and the citizens still remembered the glorious and successful resistance which their ancestors had opposed to a fierce, inexorable Barbarian, who disgraced the majesty of the Roman purple. Three months were consumed without effect in the siege of the Aquileia; till the want of provisions, and the clamors of his army, compelled Attila to relinquish the enterprise; and reluctantly to issue his orders, that the troops should strike their tents the next morning, and begin their retreat. But as he rode round the walls, pensive, angry, and disappointed, he observed a stork preparing to leave her nest, in one of the towers, and to fly with her infant family towards the country. He seized, with the ready penetration of a statesman, this trifling incident, which chance had offered to superstition; and exclaimed, in a loud and cheerful tone, that such a domestic bird, so constantly attached to human society, would never have abandoned her ancient seats, unless those towers had been devoted to impending ruin and solitude. [49](#) The favorable omen inspired an assurance of victory; the siege was renewed and prosecuted with fresh vigor; a large breach was made in the part of the wall from whence the stork had taken her flight; the Huns mounted to the assault with irresistible fury; and the succeeding generation could scarcely discover the ruins of Aquileia. [50](#) After this dreadful chastisement, Attila pursued his march; and as he passed, the cities of Altinum, Concordia, and Padua, were reduced into heaps of stones and ashes. The inland towns, Vicenza, Verona, and Bergamo, were exposed to the rapacious cruelty of the Huns. Milan and Pavia submitted, without resistance, to the loss of their wealth; and applauded the unusual clemency which preserved from the flames the public, as well as private, buildings, and spared the lives of the captive multitude. The popular traditions of Comum, Turin, or Modena, may justly be suspected; yet they concur with more authentic evidence to prove, that Attila spread his ravages over the rich plains of modern Lombardy; which are divided by the Po, and bounded by the Alps and Apennine. [51](#) When he took possession of the royal palace of Milan, he was surprised and offended at the sight of a picture which represented the Caesars seated on their throne, and the princes of Scythia prostrate at their feet. The revenge which Attila inflicted on this monument of Roman vanity, was harmless and ingenious. He commanded a painter to reverse the figures and the attitudes; and the emperors were delineated on the same canvas, approaching in a suppliant posture to

empty their bags of tributary gold before the throne of the Scythian monarch. [52](#) The spectators must have confessed the truth and propriety of the alteration; and were perhaps tempted to apply, on this singular occasion, the well-known fable of the dispute between the lion and the man. [53](#)

48

[\(return\)](#)

[Machinis constructis, omnibusque tormentorum generibus adhibitis. Jornandes, c. 42, p. 673. In the thirteenth century, the Moguls battered the cities of China with large engines, constructed by the Mahometans or Christians in their service, which threw stones from 150 to 300 pounds weight. In the defence of their country, the Chinese used gunpowder, and even bombs, above a hundred years before they were known in Europe; yet even those celestial, or infernal, arms were insufficient to protect a pusillanimous nation. See Gaubil. Hist. des Mongous, p. 70, 71, 155, 157, &c.]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[The same story is told by Jornandes, and by Procopius, (de Bell Vandal. l. i. c. 4, p. 187, 188:) nor is it easy to decide which is the original. But the Greek historian is guilty of an inexcusable mistake, in placing the siege of Aquileia after the death of Ætius.]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes, about a hundred years afterwards, affirms, that Aquileia was so completely ruined, ita ut vix ejus vestigia, ut appareant, reliquerint. See Jornandes de Reb. Geticis, c. 42, p. 673. Paul. Diacon. l. ii. c. 14, p. 785. Liutprand, Hist. l. iii. c. 2. The name of Aquileia was sometimes applied to Forum Julii, (Cividad del Friuli,) the more recent capital of the Venetian province. * Note: Compare the curious Latin poems on the destruction of Aquileia, published by M. Endlicher in his valuable catalogue of Latin Mss. in the library of Vienna, p. 298, &c.]

*Repleta quondam domibus sublimibus, ornatis mire, niveis, marmoreis,
Nunc ferax frugum metiris funiculo ruricularum.*

The monkish poet has his consolation in Attila's sufferings
in soul and body.

*Vindictam tamen non evasit impius destructor tuus Attila sevissimus,
Nunc igni simul gehennae et vermibus excruciat—P. 290.—M.]*

51

[\(return\)](#)

[In describing this war of Attila, a war so famous, but so imperfectly known, I have taken for my guides two learned Italians, who considered the subject with some peculiar advantages; Sigonius, de Imperio Occidentali, l. xiii. in his works, tom. i.

p. 495-502; and Muratori, Annali d'Italia, tom. iv.
p. 229-236, 8vo. edition.]

52 [\(return\)](#)

[This anecdote may be found under two different
articles of the miscellaneous compilation of
Suidas.]

53 [\(return\)](#)

[

*Leo respondit, humana, hoc pictum manu:
Videres hominem dejectum, si pingere
Leones scirent.
—Appendix ad Phaedrum, Fab. xxv.*

The lion in Phaedrus very foolishly appeals from pictures to
the amphitheatre; and I am glad to observe, that the
native taste of La Fontaine (l. iii. fable x.) has
omitted this most lame and impotent conclusion.]

It is a saying worthy of the ferocious pride of Attila, that the grass never grew on the spot where his horse had trod. Yet the savage destroyer undesignedly laid the foundation of a republic, which revived, in the feudal state of Europe, the art and spirit of commercial industry. The celebrated name of Venice, or Venetia, [54](#) was formerly diffused over a large and fertile province of Italy, from the confines of Pannonia to the River Addua, and from the Po to the Rhaetian and Julian Alps. Before the irruption of the Barbarians, fifty Venetian cities flourished in peace and prosperity: Aquileia was placed in the most conspicuous station: but the ancient dignity of Padua was supported by agriculture and manufactures; and the property of five hundred citizens, who were entitled to the equestrian rank, must have amounted, at the strictest computation, to one million seven hundred thousand pounds. Many families of Aquileia, Padua, and the adjacent towns, who fled from the sword of the Huns, found a safe, though obscure, refuge in the neighboring islands. [55](#) At the extremity of the Gulf, where the Adriatic feebly imitates the tides of the ocean, near a hundred small islands are separated by shallow water from the continent, and protected from the waves by several long slips of land, which admit the entrance of vessels through some secret and narrow channels. [56](#) Till the middle of the fifth century, these remote and sequestered spots remained without cultivation, with few inhabitants, and almost without a name. But the manners of the Venetian fugitives, their arts and their government, were gradually formed by their new situation; and one of the epistles of Cassiodorus, [57](#) which describes their condition about seventy years afterwards, may be considered as the primitive monument of the republic. [571](#) The minister of Theodoric compares them, in his quaint declamatory style, to water-fowl, who had fixed their nests on the bosom of the waves; and though he allows, that the Venetian provinces had formerly contained many noble families, he insinuates, that they were now reduced by misfortune to the same level of humble poverty. Fish was the common, and almost the universal, food of every rank: their only treasure consisted in the plenty of salt, which they extracted from the sea: and the exchange of that commodity, so essential to human life, was substituted

in the neighboring markets to the currency of gold and silver. A people, whose habitations might be doubtfully assigned to the earth or water, soon became alike familiar with the two elements; and the demands of avarice succeeded to those of necessity. The islanders, who, from Grado to Chiozza, were intimately connected with each other, penetrated into the heart of Italy, by the secure, though laborious, navigation of the rivers and inland canals. Their vessels, which were continually increasing in size and number, visited all the harbors of the Gulf; and the marriage which Venice annually celebrates with the Adriatic, was contracted in her early infancy. The epistle of Cassiodorus, the Prætorian præfect, is addressed to the maritime tribunes; and he exhorts them, in a mild tone of authority, to animate the zeal of their countrymen for the public service, which required their assistance to transport the magazines of wine and oil from the province of Istria to the royal city of Ravenna. The ambiguous office of these magistrates is explained by the tradition, that, in the twelve principal islands, twelve tribunes, or judges, were created by an annual and popular election. The existence of the Venetian republic under the Gothic kingdom of Italy, is attested by the same authentic record, which annihilates their lofty claim of original and perpetual independence. [58](#)

54

[\(return\)](#)

[Paul the Deacon (de Gestis Langobard. l. ii. c. 14, p. 784) describes the provinces of Italy about the end of the eighth century Venetia non solum in paucis insulis quas nunc Venetias dicimus, constat; sed ejus terminus a Pannoniae finibus usque Adduam fluvium protelatur. The history of that province till the age of Charlemagne forms the first and most interesting part of the Verona (Illustrata, p. 1-388,) in which the marquis Scipio Maffei has shown himself equally capable of enlarged views and minute disquisitions.]

55

[\(return\)](#)

[This emigration is not attested by any contemporary evidence; but the fact is proved by the event, and the circumstances might be preserved by tradition. The citizens of Aquileia retired to the Isle of Gradus, those of Padua to Rivus Altus, or Rialto, where the city of Venice was afterwards built, &c.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[The topography and antiquities of the Venetian islands, from Gradus to Clodia, or Chioggia, are accurately stated in the Dissertatio Chorographica de Italia Medii Aevi. p. 151-155.]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[Cassiodor. Variar. l. xii. epist. 24. Maffei (Verona Illustrata, part i. p. 240-254) has translated and explained this curious letter, in the spirit of a

learned antiquarian and a faithful subject, who considered Venice as the only legitimate offspring of the Roman republic. He fixes the date of the epistle, and consequently the praefecture, of Cassiodorus, A.D. 523; and the marquis's authority has the more weight, as he prepared an edition of his works, and actually published a dissertation on the true orthography of his name. See Osservazioni Letterarie, tom. ii. p. 290-339.]

571

[\(return\)](#)

[The learned count Figliasi has proved, in his memoirs upon the Veneti (*Memorie de' Veneti primi e secondi del conte Figliasi*, t. vi. Venezia, 1796,) that from the most remote period, this nation, which occupied the country which has since been called the Venetian States or Terra Firma, likewise inhabited the islands scattered upon the coast, and that from thence arose the names of Venetia prima and secunda, of which the first applied to the main land and the second to the islands and lagunes. From the time of the Pelasgi and of the Etrurians, the first Veneti, inhabiting a fertile and pleasant country, devoted themselves to agriculture: the second, placed in the midst of canals, at the mouth of several rivers, conveniently situated with regard to the islands of Greece, as well as the fertile plains of Italy, applied themselves to navigation and commerce. Both submitted to the Romans a short time before the second Punic war; yet it was not till after the victory of Marius over the Cimbri, that their country was reduced to a Roman province. Under the emperors, Venetia Prima obtained more than once, by its calamities, a place in history. * * But the maritime province was occupied in salt works, fisheries, and commerce. The Romans have considered the inhabitants of this part as beneath the dignity of history, and have left them in obscurity. * * * They dwelt there until the period when their islands afforded a retreat to their ruined and fugitive compatriots. Sismondi. *Hist. des Rep. Italiens*, v. i. p. 313.—G. —Compare, on the origin of Venice, Daru, *Hist. de Venise*, vol. i. c. l.—M.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[See, in the second volume of Amelot de la Houssaie, *Histoire du Gouvernement de Venise*, a translation of the famous Squittinio. This book, which has been exalted far above its merits, is stained, in every line, with the disingenuous malevolence of party: but the principal evidence,

genuine and apocryphal, is brought together and the reader will easily choose the fair medium.]

The Italians, who had long since renounced the exercise of arms, were surprised, after forty years' peace, by the approach of a formidable Barbarian, whom they abhorred, as the enemy of their religion, as well as of their republic. Amidst the general consternation, Ætius alone was incapable of fear; but it was impossible that he should achieve, alone and unassisted, any military exploits worthy of his former renown. The Barbarians who had defended Gaul, refused to march to the relief of Italy; and the succors promised by the Eastern emperor were distant and doubtful. Since Ætius, at the head of his domestic troops, still maintained the field, and harassed or retarded the march of Attila, he never showed himself more truly great, than at the time when his conduct was blamed by an ignorant and ungrateful people. [59](#) If the mind of Valentinian had been susceptible of any generous sentiments, he would have chosen such a general for his example and his guide. But the timid grandson of Theodosius, instead of sharing the dangers, escaped from the sound of war; and his hasty retreat from Ravenna to Rome, from an impregnable fortress to an open capital, betrayed his secret intention of abandoning Italy, as soon as the danger should approach his Imperial person. This shameful abdication was suspended, however, by the spirit of doubt and delay, which commonly adheres to pusillanimous counsels, and sometimes corrects their pernicious tendency. The Western emperor, with the senate and people of Rome, embraced the more salutary resolution of deprecating, by a solemn and suppliant embassy, the wrath of Attila. This important commission was accepted by Avienus, who, from his birth and riches, his consular dignity, the numerous train of his clients, and his personal abilities, held the first rank in the Roman senate. The specious and artful character of Avienus [60](#) was admirably qualified to conduct a negotiation either of public or private interest: his colleague Trigetius had exercised the Prætorian præfecture of Italy; and Leo, bishop of Rome, consented to expose his life for the safety of his flock. The genius of Leo [61](#) was exercised and displayed in the public misfortunes; and he has deserved the appellation of Great, by the successful zeal with which he labored to establish his opinions and his authority, under the venerable names of orthodox faith and ecclesiastical discipline. The Roman ambassadors were introduced to the tent of Attila, as he lay encamped at the place where the slow-winding Mincius is lost in the foaming waves of the Lake Benacus, [62](#) and trampled, with his Scythian cavalry, the farms of Catullus and Virgil. [63](#) The Barbarian monarch listened with favorable, and even respectful, attention; and the deliverance of Italy was purchased by the immense ransom, or dowry, of the princess Honoria. The state of his army might facilitate the treaty, and hasten his retreat. Their martial spirit was relaxed by the wealth and idolence of a warm climate. The shepherds of the North, whose ordinary food consisted of milk and raw flesh, indulged themselves too freely in the use of bread, of wine, and of meat, prepared and seasoned by the arts of cookery; and the progress of disease revenged in some measure the injuries of the Italians. [64](#) When Attila declared his resolution of

carrying his victorious arms to the gates of Rome, he was admonished by his friends, as well as by his enemies, that Alaric had not long survived the conquest of the eternal city. His mind, superior to real danger, was assaulted by imaginary terrors; nor could he escape the influence of superstition, which had so often been subservient to his designs. [65](#) The pressing eloquence of Leo, his majestic aspect and sacerdotal robes, excited the veneration of Attila for the spiritual father of the Christians. The apparition of the two apostles, St. Peter and St. Paul, who menaced the Barbarian with instant death, if he rejected the prayer of their successor, is one of the noblest legends of ecclesiastical tradition. The safety of Rome might deserve the interposition of celestial beings; and some indulgence is due to a fable, which has been represented by the pencil of Raphael, and the chisel of Algardi. [66](#)

59

[\(return\)](#)

[Sirmond (Not. ad Sidon. Apollin. p. 19) has published a curious passage from the Chronicle of Prosper. Attila, redintegratis viribus, quas in Gallia amiserat, Italiam ingredi per Pannonias intendit; nihil duce nostro Aetio secundum prioris belli opera prospiciente, &c. He reproaches Ætius with neglecting to guard the Alps, and with a design to abandon Italy; but this rash censure may at least be counterbalanced by the favorable testimonies of Idatius and Isidore.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[See the original portraits of Avienus and his rival Basilius, delineated and contrasted in the epistles (i. 9. p. 22) of Sidonius. He had studied the characters of the two chiefs of the senate; but he attached himself to Basilius, as the more solid and disinterested friend.]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[The character and principles of Leo may be traced in one hundred and forty-one original epistles, which illustrate the ecclesiastical history of his long and busy pontificate, from A.D. 440 to 461. See Dupin, Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique, tom. iii. part ii p. 120-165.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Tardis ingens ubi flexibus errat
Mincius, et tenera praetexit arundine ripas*

*Anne lacus tantos, te Lari maxime, teque
Fluctibus, et fremitu assurgens Benace marino.]*

63

[\(return\)](#)

[The marquis Maffei (Verona Illustrata, part i. p. 95, 129, 221, part ii. p. 2, 6) has illustrated with taste and learning this interesting topography. He places the interview of Attila and St. Leo near Ariolica, or

Ardelica, now Peschiera, at the conflux of the lake and river; ascertains the villa of Catullus, in the delightful peninsula of Sirmio, and discovers the Andes of Virgil, in the village of Bades, precisely situate, qua se subducere colles incipiunt, where the Veronese hills imperceptibly slope down into the plain of Mantua. * Note: Gibbon has made a singular mistake: the Mincius flows out of the Bonacus at Peschiera, not into it. The interview is likewise placed at Ponte Molino. and at Governolo, at the conflux of the Mincio and the Gonzaga. bishop of Mantua, erected a tablet in the year 1616, in the church of the latter place, commemorative of the event. Descrizione di Verona a de la sua provincia. C. 11, p. 126.—M.]

64 [\(return\)](#)

[Si statim infesto agmine urbem petiissent, grande discrimen esset: sed in Venetia quo fere tractu Italia mollissima est, ipsa soli coelique clementia robur elanquit. Ad hoc panis usu carnisque coctae, et dulcedine vini mitigatos, &c. This passage of Florus (iii. 3) is still more applicable to the Huns than to the Cimbri, and it may serve as a commentary on the celestial plague, with which Idatius and Isidore have afflicted the troops of Attila.]

65 [\(return\)](#)

[The historian Priscus had positively mentioned the effect which this example produced on the mind of Attila. Jornandes, c. 42, p. 673]

66 [\(return\)](#)

[The picture of Raphael is in the Vatican; the basso (or perhaps the alto) relievo of Algardi, on one of the altars of St. Peter, (see Dubos, Reflexions sur la Poesie et sur la Peinture, tom. i. p. 519, 520.) Baronius (Annal. Eccles. A.D. 452, No. 57, 58) bravely sustains the truth of the apparition; which is rejected, however, by the most learned and pious Catholics.]

Before the king of the Huns evacuated Italy, he threatened to return more dreadful, and more implacable, if his bride, the princess Honoria, were not delivered to his ambassadors within the term stipulated by the treaty. Yet, in the mean while, Attila relieved his tender anxiety, by adding a beautiful maid, whose name was Ildico, to the list of his innumerable wives. [67](#) Their marriage was celebrated with barbaric pomp and festivity, at his wooden palace beyond the Danube; and the monarch, oppressed with wine and sleep, retired at a late hour from the banquet to the nuptial bed. His attendants continued to respect his pleasures, or his repose, the greatest part of the ensuing day, till the unusual silence alarmed their fears and suspicions; and, after attempting to

awaken Attila by loud and repeated cries, they at length broke into the royal apartment. They found the trembling bride sitting by the bedside, hiding her face with her veil, and lamenting her own danger, as well as the death of the king, who had expired during the night. [68](#) An artery had suddenly burst: and as Attila lay in a supine posture, he was suffocated by a torrent of blood, which, instead of finding a passage through the nostrils, regurgitated into the lungs and stomach. His body was solemnly exposed in the midst of the plain, under a silken pavilion; and the chosen squadrons of the Huns, wheeling round in measured evolutions, chanted a funeral song to the memory of a hero, glorious in his life, invincible in his death, the father of his people, the scourge of his enemies, and the terror of the world. According to their national custom, the Barbarians cut off a part of their hair, gashed their faces with unseemly wounds, and bewailed their valiant leader as he deserved, not with the tears of women, but with the blood of warriors. The remains of Attila were enclosed within three coffins, of gold, of silver, and of iron, and privately buried in the night: the spoils of nations were thrown into his grave; the captives who had opened the ground were inhumanly massacred; and the same Huns, who had indulged such excessive grief, feasted, with dissolute and intemperate mirth, about the recent sepulchre of their king. It was reported at Constantinople, that on the fortunate night on which he expired, Marcian beheld in a dream the bow of Attila broken asunder: and the report may be allowed to prove, how seldom the image of that formidable Barbarian was absent from the mind of a Roman emperor. [69](#)

67

[\(return\)](#)

[Attila, ut Priscus historicus refert, extinctionis suae tempore, puellam Ildico nomine, decoram, valde, sibi matrimonium post innumerabiles uxores... socians. Jornandes, c. 49, p. 683, 684.

He afterwards adds, (c. 50, p. 686,) Filii Attilæ, quorum per licentiam libidinis poene populus fuit. Polygamy has been established among the Tartars of every age. The rank of plebeian wives is regulated only by their personal charms; and the faded matron prepares, without a murmur, the bed which is destined for her blooming rival. But in royal families, the daughters of Khans communicate to their sons a prior right. See Genealogical History, p. 406, 407, 408.]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[The report of her guilt reached Constantinople, where it obtained a very different name; and Marcellinus observes, that the tyrant of Europe was slain in the night by the hand, and the knife, of a woman Corneille, who has adapted the genuine account to his tragedy, describes the irruption of blood in forty bombast lines, and Attila exclaims, with ridiculous fury,

S'il ne veut s'arreter, (his blood.)
(Dit-il) on me payera ce qui m'en va couler.]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[The curious circumstances of the death and

funeral of Attila are related by Jornandes, (c. 49, p. 683, 684, 685,) and were probably transcribed from Priscus.]

The revolution which subverted the empire of the Huns, established the fame of Attila, whose genius alone had sustained the huge and disjointed fabric. After his death, the boldest chieftains aspired to the rank of kings; the most powerful kings refused to acknowledge a superior; and the numerous sons, whom so many various mothers bore to the deceased monarch, divided and disputed, like a private inheritance, the sovereign command of the nations of Germany and Scythia. The bold Ardaric felt and represented the disgrace of this servile partition; and his subjects, the warlike Gepidae, with the Ostrogoths, under the conduct of three valiant brothers, encouraged their allies to vindicate the rights of freedom and royalty. In a bloody and decisive conflict on the banks of the River Netad, in Pannonia, the lance of the Gepidae, the sword of the Goths, the arrows of the Huns, the Suevic infantry, the light arms of the Heruli, and the heavy weapons of the Alani, encountered or supported each other; and the victory of the Ardaric was accompanied with the slaughter of thirty thousand of his enemies. Ellac, the eldest son of Attila, lost his life and crown in the memorable battle of Netad: his early valor had raised him to the throne of the Acatzires, a Scythian people, whom he subdued; and his father, who loved the superior merit, would have envied the death of Ellac. [70](#) His brother, Dengisich, with an army of Huns, still formidable in their flight and ruin, maintained his ground above fifteen years on the banks of the Danube. The palace of Attila, with the old country of Dacia, from the Carpathian hills to the Euxine, became the seat of a new power, which was erected by Ardaric, king of the Gepidae. The Pannonian conquests from Vienna to Sirmium, were occupied by the Ostrogoths; and the settlements of the tribes, who had so bravely asserted their native freedom, were irregularly distributed, according to the measure of their respective strength. Surrounded and oppressed by the multitude of his father's slaves, the kingdom of Dengisich was confined to the circle of his wagons; his desperate courage urged him to invade the Eastern empire: he fell in battle; and his head ignominiously exposed in the Hippodrome, exhibited a grateful spectacle to the people of Constantinople. Attila had fondly or superstitiously believed, that Irnac, the youngest of his sons, was destined to perpetuate the glories of his race. The character of that prince, who attempted to moderate the rashness of his brother Dengisich, was more suitable to the declining condition of the Huns; and Irnac, with his subject hordes, retired into the heart of the Lesser Scythia. They were soon overwhelmed by a torrent of new Barbarians, who followed the same road which their own ancestors had formerly discovered. The Geougen, or Avars, whose residence is assigned by the Greek writers to the shores of the ocean, impelled the adjacent tribes; till at length the Igours of the North, issuing from the cold Siberian regions, which produce the most valuable furs, spread themselves over the desert, as far as the Borysthenes and the Caspian gates; and finally extinguished the empire of the Huns. [71](#)

70

[\(return\)](#)

[See Jornandes, de Rebus Geticis, c. 50, p. 685, 686, 687, 688. His distinction of the national arms is curious and important. Nan ibi admirandum reor fuisse spectaculum, ubi cernere erat cunctis, pugnantem Gothum ense furem, Gepidam in vulnere suorum cuncta tela frangentem, Suevum pede, Hunnum sagitta praesumere, Alanum gravi Herulum levi, armatura, aciem instruere. I am not precisely informed of the situation of the River Netad.]

71

[\(return\)](#)

[Two modern historians have thrown much new light on the ruin and division of the empire of Attila; M. de Buat, by his laborious and minute diligence, (tom. viii. p. 3-31, 68-94,) and M. de Guignes, by his extraordinary knowledge of the Chinese language and writers. See Hist. des Huns, tom. ii. p. 315-319.]

Such an event might contribute to the safety of the Eastern empire, under the reign of a prince who conciliated the friendship, without forfeiting the esteem, of the Barbarians. But the emperor of the West, the feeble and dissolute Valentinian, who had reached his thirty-fifth year without attaining the age of reason or courage, abused this apparent security, to undermine the foundations of his own throne, by the murder of the patrician Ætius. From the instinct of a base and jealous mind, he hated the man who was universally celebrated as the terror of the Barbarians, and the support of the republic; [711](#) and his new favorite, the eunuch Heraclius, awakened the emperor from the supine lethargy, which might be disguised, during the life of Placidia, [72](#) by the excuse of filial piety. The fame of Ætius, his wealth and dignity, the numerous and martial train of Barbarian followers, his powerful dependants, who filled the civil offices of the state, and the hopes of his son Gaudentius, who was already contracted to Eudoxia, the emperor's daughter, had raised him above the rank of a subject. The ambitious designs, of which he was secretly accused, excited the fears, as well as the resentment, of Valentinian. Ætius himself, supported by the consciousness of his merit, his services, and perhaps his innocence, seems to have maintained a haughty and indiscreet behavior. The patrician offended his sovereign by a hostile declaration; he aggravated the offence, by compelling him to ratify, with a solemn oath, a treaty of reconciliation and alliance; he proclaimed his suspicions, he neglected his safety; and from a vain confidence that the enemy, whom he despised, was incapable even of a manly crime, he rashly ventured his person in the palace of Rome. Whilst he urged, perhaps with intemperate vehemence, the marriage of his son, Valentinian, drawing his sword, the first sword he had ever drawn, plunged it in the breast of a general who had saved his empire: his courtiers and eunuchs ambitiously struggled to imitate their master; and Ætius, pierced with a hundred wounds, fell dead in the royal presence.

Boethius, the Prætorian præfect, was killed at the same moment, and before the event could be divulged, the principal friends of the patrician were summoned to the palace, and separately murdered. The horrid deed, palliated by the specious names of justice and necessity, was immediately communicated by the emperor to his soldiers, his subjects, and his allies. The nations, who were strangers or enemies to Ætius, generously deplored the unworthy fate of a hero: the Barbarians, who had been attached to his service, dissembled their grief and resentment: and the public contempt, which had been so long entertained for Valentinian, was at once converted into deep and universal abhorrence. Such sentiments seldom pervade the walls of a palace; yet the emperor was confounded by the honest reply of a Roman, whose approbation he had not disdained to solicit. “I am ignorant, sir, of your motives or provocations; I only know, that you have acted like a man who cuts off his right hand with his left.” [73](#)

711

[\(return\)](#)

[The praises awarded by Gibbon to the character of Ætius have been animadverted upon with great severity. (See Mr. Herbert’s *Attila*. p. 321.) I am not aware that Gibbon has dissembled or palliated any of the crimes or treasons of Ætius: but his position at the time of his murder was certainly that of the preserver of the empire, the conqueror of the most dangerous of the barbarians: it is by no means clear that he was not “innocent” of any treasonable designs against Valentinian. If the early acts of his life, the introduction of the Huns into Italy, and of the Vandals into Africa, were among the proximate causes of the ruin of the empire, his murder was the signal for its almost immediate downfall.—M.]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[Placidia died at Rome, November 27, A.D. 450. She was buried at Ravenna, where her sepulchre, and even her corpse, seated in a chair of cypress wood, were preserved for ages. The empress received many compliments from the orthodox clergy; and St. Peter Chrysologus assured her, that her zeal for the Trinity had been recompensed by an august trinity of children. See Tillemont, *Uist. Jer Emp.* tom. vi. p. 240.]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Aetium Placidus mactavit semivir amens, is the expression of Sidonius, (*Panegy. Avit.* 359.) The poet knew the world, and was not inclined to flatter a minister who had injured or disgraced Avitus and Majorian, the successive heroes of his song.]

The luxury of Rome seems to have attracted the long and frequent visits of Valentinian; who was consequently more despised at Rome than in any other part of his dominions. A republican spirit was insensibly revived in the senate, as their authority,

and even their supplies, became necessary for the support of his feeble government. The stately demeanor of an hereditary monarch offended their pride; and the pleasures of Valentinian were injurious to the peace and honor of noble families. The birth of the empress Eudoxia was equal to his own, and her charms and tender affection deserved those testimonies of love which her inconstant husband dissipated in vague and unlawful amours. Petronius Maximus, a wealthy senator of the Anician family, who had been twice consul, was possessed of a chaste and beautiful wife: her obstinate resistance served only to irritate the desires of Valentinian; and he resolved to accomplish them, either by stratagem or force. Deep gaming was one of the vices of the court: the emperor, who, by chance or contrivance, had gained from Maximus a considerable sum, uncourteously exacted his ring as a security for the debt; and sent it by a trusty messenger to his wife, with an order, in her husband's name, that she should immediately attend the empress Eudoxia. The unsuspecting wife of Maximus was conveyed in her litter to the Imperial palace; the emissaries of her impatient lover conducted her to a remote and silent bed-chamber; and Valentinian violated, without remorse, the laws of hospitality. Her tears, when she returned home, her deep affliction, and her bitter reproaches against a husband whom she considered as the accomplice of his own shame, excited Maximus to a just revenge; the desire of revenge was stimulated by ambition; and he might reasonably aspire, by the free suffrage of the Roman senate, to the throne of a detested and despicable rival. Valentinian, who supposed that every human breast was devoid, like his own, of friendship and gratitude, had imprudently admitted among his guards several domestics and followers of Ætius. Two of these, of Barbarian race were persuaded to execute a sacred and honorable duty, by punishing with death the assassin of their patron; and their intrepid courage did not long expect a favorable moment. Whilst Valentinian amused himself, in the field of Mars, with the spectacle of some military sports, they suddenly rushed upon him with drawn weapons, despatched the guilty Heraclius, and stabbed the emperor to the heart, without the least opposition from his numerous train, who seemed to rejoice in the tyrant's death. Such was the fate of Valentinian the Third, [74](#) the last Roman emperor of the family of Theodosius. He faithfully imitated the hereditary weakness of his cousin and his two uncles, without inheriting the gentleness, the purity, the innocence, which alleviate, in their characters, the want of spirit and ability. Valentinian was less excusable, since he had passions, without virtues: even his religion was questionable; and though he never deviated into the paths of heresy, he scandalized the pious Christians by his attachment to the profane arts of magic and divination.

[With regard to the cause and circumstances of the deaths of Ætius and Valentinian, our information is dark and imperfect. Procopius (de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 4, p. 186, 187, 188) is a fabulous writer for the events which precede his own memory. His narrative must therefore be supplied and corrected by five or six Chronicles, none of which were

composed in Rome or Italy; and which can only express, in broken sentences, the popular rumors, as they were conveyed to Gaul, Spain, Africa, Constantinople, or Alexandria.]

As early as the time of Cicero and Varro, it was the opinion of the Roman augurs, that the twelve vultures which Romulus had seen, represented the twelve centuries, assigned for the fatal period of his city. [75](#) This prophecy, disregarded perhaps in the season of health and prosperity, inspired the people with gloomy apprehensions, when the twelfth century, clouded with disgrace and misfortune, was almost elapsed; [76](#) and even posterity must acknowledge with some surprise, that the arbitrary interpretation of an accidental or fabulous circumstance has been seriously verified in the downfall of the Western empire. But its fall was announced by a clearer omen than the flight of vultures: the Roman government appeared every day less formidable to its enemies, more odious and oppressive to its subjects. [77](#) The taxes were multiplied with the public distress; economy was neglected in proportion as it became necessary; and the injustice of the rich shifted the unequal burden from themselves to the people, whom they defrauded of the indulgences that might sometimes have alleviated their misery. The severe inquisition which confiscated their goods, and tortured their persons, compelled the subjects of Valentinian to prefer the more simple tyranny of the Barbarians, to fly to the woods and mountains, or to embrace the vile and abject condition of mercenary servants. They abjured and abhorred the name of Roman citizens, which had formerly excited the ambition of mankind. The Armorican provinces of Gaul, and the greatest part of Spain, were thrown into a state of disorderly independence, by the confederations of the Bagaudae; and the Imperial ministers pursued with proscriptive laws, and ineffectual arms, the rebels whom they had made. [78](#) If all the Barbarian conquerors had been annihilated in the same hour, their total destruction would not have restored the empire of the West: and if Rome still survived, she survived the loss of freedom, of virtue, and of honor.

75

[\(return\)](#)

[This interpretation of Vettius, a celebrated augur, was quoted by Varro, in the xviiith book of his Antiquities. Censorinus, de Die Natali, c. 17, p. 90, 91, edit. Havercamp.]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[According to Varro, the twelfth century would expire A.D. 447, but the uncertainty of the true era of Rome might allow some latitude of anticipation or delay. The poets of the age, Claudian (de Bell Getico, 265) and Sidonius, (in Panegy. Avit. 357,) may be admitted as fair witnesses of the popular opinion.

*Jam reputant annos, interceptoque volatu
Vulturis, incidunt properatis saecula metis.
.....
Jam prope fata tui bis senas Vulturis alas*

Implebant; seis namque tuos, scis, Roma, labores.
—See Dubos, *Hist. Critique*, tom. i. p. 340–346.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

[The fifth book of Salvian is filled with pathetic lamentations and vehement invectives. His immoderate freedom serves to prove the weakness, as well as the corruption, of the Roman government. His book was published after the loss of Africa, (A.D. 439,) and before Attila's war, (A.D. 451.)]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[The Bagaudae of Spain, who fought pitched battles with the Roman troops, are repeatedly mentioned in the Chronicle of Idatius. Salvian has described their distress and rebellion in very forcible language. Itaque nomen civium Romanorum... nunc ultro repudiatur ac fugitur, nec vile tamen sed etiam abominabile poene habetur... Et hinc est ut etiam hi quid ad Barbaros non confugiunt, Barbari tamen esse coguntur, scilicet ut est pars magna Hispanorum, et non minima Gallorum.... De Bagaudis nunc mihi sermo est, qui per malos iudices et cruentos spoliati, afflicti, necati postquam jus Romanae libertatis amiserant, etiam honorem Romani nominis perdiderunt.... Vocamus rabelles, vocamus perditos quos esse compulimua criminosos. De Gubernat. Dei, l. v. p. 158, 159.]

Chapter XXXVI: Total Extinction Of The Western Empire.— Part I.

Sack Of Rome By Genseric, King Of The Vandals.—His Naval Depredations.—Succession Of The Last Emperors Of The West, Maximus, Avitus, Majorian, Severus, Anthemius, Olybrius, Glycerius, Nepos, Augustulus.—Total Extinction Of The Western Empire.—Reign Of Odoacer, The First Barbarian King Of Italy.

The loss or desolation of the provinces, from the Ocean to the Alps, impaired the glory and greatness of Rome: her internal prosperity was irretrievably destroyed by the separation of Africa. The rapacious Vandals confiscated the patrimonial estates of the senators, and intercepted the regular subsidies, which relieved the poverty and encouraged the idleness of the plebeians. The distress of the Romans was soon aggravated by an unexpected attack; and the province, so long cultivated for their use by industrious and obedient subjects, was armed against them by an ambitious Barbarian. The Vandals and Alani, who followed the successful standard of Genseric, had acquired a rich and fertile territory, which stretched along the coast above ninety days' journey from Tangier to Tripoli; but their narrow limits were pressed and

confined, on either side, by the sandy desert and the Mediterranean. The discovery and conquest of the Black nations, that might dwell beneath the torrid zone, could not tempt the rational ambition of Genseric; but he cast his eyes towards the sea; he resolved to create a naval power, and his bold resolution was executed with steady and active perseverance.

The woods of Mount Atlas afforded an inexhaustible nursery of timber: his new subjects were skilled in the arts of navigation and ship-building; he animated his daring Vandals to embrace a mode of warfare which would render every maritime country accessible to their arms; the Moors and Africans were allured by the hopes of plunder; and, after an interval of six centuries, the fleets that issued from the port of Carthage again claimed the empire of the Mediterranean. The success of the Vandals, the conquest of Sicily, the sack of Palermo, and the frequent descents on the coast of Lucania, awakened and alarmed the mother of Valentinian, and the sister of Theodosius. Alliances were formed; and armaments, expensive and ineffectual, were prepared, for the destruction of the common enemy; who reserved his courage to encounter those dangers which his policy could not prevent or elude. The designs of the Roman government were repeatedly baffled by his artful delays, ambiguous promises, and apparent concessions; and the interposition of his formidable confederate, the king of the Huns, recalled the emperors from the conquest of Africa to the care of their domestic safety. The revolutions of the palace, which left the Western empire without a defender, and without a lawful prince, dispelled the apprehensions, and stimulated the avarice, of Genseric. He immediately equipped a numerous fleet of Vandals and Moors, and cast anchor at the mouth of the Tyber, about three months after the death of Valentinian, and the elevation of Maximus to the Imperial throne.

The private life of the senator Petronius Maximus [1](#) was often alleged as a rare example of human felicity. His birth was noble and illustrious, since he descended from the Anician family; his dignity was supported by an adequate patrimony in land and money; and these advantages of fortune were accompanied with liberal arts and decent manners, which adorn or imitate the inestimable gifts of genius and virtue. The luxury of his palace and table was hospitable and elegant. Whenever Maximus appeared in public, he was surrounded by a train of grateful and obsequious clients; [2](#) and it is possible that among these clients, he might deserve and possess some real friends. His merit was rewarded by the favor of the prince and senate: he thrice exercised the office of Prætorian præfect of Italy; he was twice invested with the consulship, and he obtained the rank of patrician. These civil honors were not incompatible with the enjoyment of leisure and tranquillity; his hours, according to the demands of pleasure or reason, were accurately distributed by a water-clock; and this avarice of time may be allowed to prove the sense which Maximus entertained of his own happiness. The injury which he received from the emperor Valentinian appears to excuse the most bloody revenge. Yet a philosopher might have reflected, that, if the resistance of his wife had been sincere, her chastity was still inviolate, and that it could never be restored if she

had consented to the will of the adulterer. A patriot would have hesitated before he plunged himself and his country into those inevitable calamities which must follow the extinction of the royal house of Theodosius. The imprudent Maximus disregarded these salutary considerations; he gratified his resentment and ambition; he saw the bleeding corpse of Valentinian at his feet; and he heard himself saluted Emperor by the unanimous voice of the senate and people. But the day of his inauguration was the last day of his happiness. He was imprisoned (such is the lively expression of Sidonius) in the palace; and after passing a sleepless night, he sighed that he had attained the summit of his wishes, and aspired only to descend from the dangerous elevation. Oppressed by the weight of the diadem, he communicated his anxious thoughts to his friend and quaestor Fulgentius; and when he looked back with unavailing regret on the secure pleasures of his former life, the emperor exclaimed, “O fortunate Damocles, [3](#) thy reign began and ended with the same dinner;” a well-known allusion, which Fulgentius afterwards repeated as an instructive lesson for princes and subjects.

1 [\(return\)](#)

[Sidonius Apollinaris composed the thirteenth epistle of the second book, to refute the paradox of his friend Serranus, who entertained a singular, though generous, enthusiasm for the deceased emperor. This epistle, with some indulgence, may claim the praise of an elegant composition; and it throws much light on the character of Maximus.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[Clientum, praevia, pedisequa, circumfusa, populositas, is the train which Sidonius himself (l. i. epist. 9) assigns to another senator of rank]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[

*Districtus ensis cui super impia
Cervice pendet, non Siculoe dapes
Dulcem elaborabunt saporem:
Non avium citharaeque cantus
Somnum reducent.
—Horat. Carm. iii. 1.*

Sidonius concludes his letter with the story of Damocles, which Cicero (Tusculan. v. 20, 21) had so inimitably told.]

The reign of Maximus continued about three months. His hours, of which he had lost the command, were disturbed by remorse, or guilt, or terror, and his throne was shaken by the seditions of the soldiers, the people, and the confederate Barbarians. The marriage of his son Paladius with the eldest daughter of the late emperor, might tend to establish the hereditary succession of his family; but the violence which he offered to the empress Eudoxia, could proceed only from the blind impulse of lust or revenge. His own wife, the cause of these tragic events, had been seasonably removed by death; and the widow of Valentinian was compelled to violate her decent mourning, perhaps her

real grief, and to submit to the embraces of a presumptuous usurper, whom she suspected as the assassin of her deceased husband. These suspicions were soon justified by the indiscreet confession of Maximus himself; and he wantonly provoked the hatred of his reluctant bride, who was still conscious that she was descended from a line of emperors. From the East, however, Eudoxia could not hope to obtain any effectual assistance; her father and her aunt Pulcheria were dead; her mother languished at Jerusalem in disgrace and exile; and the sceptre of Constantinople was in the hands of a stranger. She directed her eyes towards Carthage; secretly implored the aid of the king of the Vandals; and persuaded Genseric to improve the fair opportunity of disguising his rapacious designs by the specious names of honor, justice, and compassion. [4](#) Whatever abilities Maximus might have shown in a subordinate station, he was found incapable of administering an empire; and though he might easily have been informed of the naval preparations which were made on the opposite shores of Africa, he expected with supine indifference the approach of the enemy, without adopting any measures of defence, of negotiation, or of a timely retreat. When the Vandals disembarked at the mouth of the Tyber, the emperor was suddenly roused from his lethargy by the clamors of a trembling and exasperated multitude. The only hope which presented itself to his astonished mind was that of a precipitate flight, and he exhorted the senators to imitate the example of their prince. But no sooner did Maximus appear in the streets, than he was assaulted by a shower of stones; a Roman, or a Burgundian soldier, claimed the honor of the first wound; his mangled body was ignominiously cast into the Tyber; the Roman people rejoiced in the punishment which they had inflicted on the author of the public calamities; and the domestics of Eudoxia signalized their zeal in the service of their mistress. [5](#)

4

[\(return\)](#)

[Notwithstanding the evidence of Procopius, Evagrius, Idatius Marcellinus, &c., the learned Muratori (Annali d'Italia, tom. iv. p. 249) doubts the reality of this invitation, and observes, with great truth, "Non si puo dir quanto sia facile il popolo a sognare e spacciar voci false." But his argument, from the interval of time and place, is extremely feeble. The figs which grew near Carthage were produced to the senate of Rome on the third day.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Infidoque tibi Burgundio ductu
Extorquet trepidas mactandi principis iras.*
—Sidon. in Panegy. Avit. 442.

A remarkable line, which insinuates that Rome and Maximus were betrayed by their Burgundian mercenaries.]

On the third day after the tumult, Genseric boldly advanced from the port of Ostia to the gates of the defenceless city. Instead of a sally of the Roman youth, there issued from the gates an unarmed and venerable procession of the bishop at the head of his clergy. [6](#) The fearless spirit of Leo, his authority and eloquence, again mitigated the fierceness of a Barbarian conqueror; the king of the Vandals promised to spare the unresisting multitude, to protect the buildings from fire, and to exempt the captives from torture; and although such orders were neither seriously given, nor strictly obeyed, the mediation of Leo was glorious to himself, and in some degree beneficial to his country. But Rome and its inhabitants were delivered to the licentiousness of the Vandals and Moors, whose blind passions revenged the injuries of Carthage. The pillage lasted fourteen days and nights; and all that yet remained of public or private wealth, of sacred or profane treasure, was diligently transported to the vessels of Genseric. Among the spoils, the splendid relics of two temples, or rather of two religions, exhibited a memorable example of the vicissitudes of human and divine things.

Since the abolition of Paganism, the Capitol had been violated and abandoned; yet the statues of the gods and heroes were still respected, and the curious roof of gilt bronze was reserved for the rapacious hands of Genseric. [7](#) The holy instruments of the Jewish worship, [8](#) the gold table, and the gold candlestick with seven branches, originally framed according to the particular instructions of God himself, and which were placed in the sanctuary of his temple, had been ostentatiously displayed to the Roman people in the triumph of Titus. They were afterwards deposited in the temple of Peace; and at the end of four hundred years, the spoils of Jerusalem were transferred from Rome to Carthage, by a Barbarian who derived his origin from the shores of the Baltic. These ancient monuments might attract the notice of curiosity, as well as of avarice. But the Christian churches, enriched and adorned by the prevailing superstition of the times, afforded more plentiful materials for sacrilege; and the pious liberality of Pope Leo, who melted six silver vases, the gift of Constantine, each of a hundred pounds weight, is an evidence of the damage which he attempted to repair. In the forty-five years that had elapsed since the Gothic invasion, the pomp and luxury of Rome were in some measure restored; and it was difficult either to escape, or to satisfy, the avarice of a conqueror, who possessed leisure to collect, and ships to transport, the wealth of the capital. The Imperial ornaments of the palace, the magnificent furniture and wardrobe, the sideboards of massy plate, were accumulated with disorderly rapine; the gold and silver amounted to several thousand talents; yet even the brass and copper were laboriously removed. Eudoxia herself, who advanced to meet her friend and deliverer, soon bewailed the imprudence of her own conduct. She was rudely stripped of her jewels; and the unfortunate empress, with her two daughters, the only surviving remains of the great Theodosius, was compelled, as a captive, to follow the haughty Vandal; who immediately hoisted sail, and returned with a prosperous navigation to the port of Carthage. [9](#) Many thousand Romans of both sexes, chosen for some useful or agreeable qualifications, reluctantly embarked on board the fleet of Genseric; and their distress

was aggravated by the unfeeling Barbarians, who, in the division of the booty, separated the wives from their husbands, and the children from their parents. The charity of Deogratias, bishop of Carthage, [10](#) was their only consolation and support. He generously sold the gold and silver plate of the church to purchase the freedom of some, to alleviate the slavery of others, and to assist the wants and infirmities of a captive multitude, whose health was impaired by the hardships which they had suffered in their passage from Italy to Africa. By his order, two spacious churches were converted into hospitals; the sick were distributed into convenient beds, and liberally supplied with food and medicines; and the aged prelate repeated his visits both in the day and night, with an assiduity that surpassed his strength, and a tender sympathy which enhanced the value of his services. Compare this scene with the field of Cannae; and judge between Hannibal and the successor of St. Cyprian. [11](#)

6 [\(return\)](#)

[The apparant success of Pope Leo may be justified by Prosper, and the Historia Miscellan.; but the improbable notion of Baronius A.D. 455, (No. 13) that Genseric spared the three apostolical churches, is not countenanced even by the doubtful testimony of the Liber Pontificalis.]

7 [\(return\)](#)

[The profusion of Catulus, the first who gilt the roof of the Capitol, was not universally approved, (Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiii. 18;) but it was far exceeded by the emperor's, and the external gilding of the temple cost Domitian 12,000 talents, (2,400,000 L.) The expressions of Claudian and Rutilius (luce metalli oemula.... fastigia astris, and confunduntque vagos delubra micantia visus) manifestly prove, that this splendid covering was not removed either by the Christians or the Goths, (see Donatus, Roma Antiqua, l. ii. c. 6, p. 125.) It should seem that the roof of the Capitol was decorated with gilt statues, and chariots drawn by four horses.]

8 [\(return\)](#)

[The curious reader may consult the learned and accurate treatise of Hadrian Reland, de Spoliis Templi Hierosolymitani in Arcu Titiano Romae conspicuis, in 12mo. Trajecti ad Rhenum, 1716.]

9 [\(return\)](#)

[The vessel which transported the relics of the Capitol was the only one of the whole fleet that suffered shipwreck. If a bigoted sophist, a Pagan bigot, had mentioned the accident, he might have rejoiced that this cargo of sacrilege was lost in the sea.]

10

[\(return\)](#)

[See Victor Vitensis, de Persecut. Vandal. l. i. c. 8, p. 11, 12, edit. Ruinart. Deogratius governed the church of Carthage only three years. If he had not been privately buried, his corpse would have been torn piecemeal by the mad devotion of the people.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[The general evidence for the death of Maximus, and the sack of Rome by the Vandals, is comprised in Sidonius, (Panegy. Avit. 441-450,) Procopius, (de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 4, 5, p. 188, 189, and l. ii. c. 9, p. 255,) Evagrius, (l. ii. c. 7,) Jornandes, (de Reb. Geticis, c. 45, p. 677,) and the Chronicles of Idatius, Prosper, Marcellinus, and Theophanes, under the proper year.]

The deaths of Ætius and Valentinian had relaxed the ties which held the Barbarians of Gaul in peace and subordination. The sea-coast was infested by the Saxons; the Alemanni and the Franks advanced from the Rhine to the Seine; and the ambition of the Goths seemed to meditate more extensive and permanent conquests. The emperor Maximus relieved himself, by a judicious choice, from the weight of these distant cares; he silenced the solicitations of his friends, listened to the voice of fame, and promoted a stranger to the general command of the forces of Gaul.

Avitus, [12](#) the stranger, whose merit was so nobly rewarded, descended from a wealthy and honorable family in the diocese of Auvergne. The convulsions of the times urged him to embrace, with the same ardor, the civil and military professions: and the indefatigable youth blended the studies of literature and jurisprudence with the exercise of arms and hunting. Thirty years of his life were laudably spent in the public service; he alternately displayed his talents in war and negotiation; and the soldier of Ætius, after executing the most important embassies, was raised to the station of Prætorian præfect of Gaul. Either the merit of Avitus excited envy, or his moderation was desirous of repose, since he calmly retired to an estate, which he possessed in the neighborhood of Clermont. A copious stream, issuing from the mountain, and falling headlong in many a loud and foaming cascade, discharged its waters into a lake about two miles in length, and the villa was pleasantly seated on the margin of the lake. The baths, the porticos, the summer and winter apartments, were adapted to the purposes of luxury and use; and the adjacent country afforded the various prospects of woods, pastures, and meadows. [13](#) In this retreat, where Avitus amused his leisure with books, rural sports, the practice of husbandry, and the society of his friends, [14](#) he received the Imperial diploma, which constituted him master-general of the cavalry and infantry of Gaul. He assumed the military command; the Barbarians suspended their fury; and whatever means he might employ, whatever concessions he might be forced to make, the people enjoyed the benefits of actual tranquillity. But the fate of Gaul depended on the Visigoths; and the Roman general, less attentive to his dignity than to the public

interest, did not disdain to visit Thoulouse in the character of an ambassador. He was received with courteous hospitality by Theodoric, the king of the Goths; but while Avitus laid the foundations of a solid alliance with that powerful nation, he was astonished by the intelligence, that the emperor Maximus was slain, and that Rome had been pillaged by the Vandals. A vacant throne, which he might ascend without guilt or danger, tempted his ambition; [15](#) and the Visigoths were easily persuaded to support his claim by their irresistible suffrage. They loved the person of Avitus; they respected his virtues; and they were not insensible of the advantage, as well as honor, of giving an emperor to the West. The season was now approaching, in which the annual assembly of the seven provinces was held at Arles; their deliberations might perhaps be influenced by the presence of Theodoric and his martial brothers; but their choice would naturally incline to the most illustrious of their countrymen. Avitus, after a decent resistance, accepted the Imperial diadem from the representatives of Gaul; and his election was ratified by the acclamations of the Barbarians and provincials. The formal consent of Marcian, emperor of the East, was solicited and obtained; but the senate, Rome, and Italy, though humbled by their recent calamities, submitted with a secret murmur to the presumption of the Gallic usurper.

12 [\(return\)](#)

[The private life and elevation of Avitus must be deduced, with becoming suspicion, from the panegyric pronounced by Sidonius Apollinaris, his subject, and his son-in-law.]

13 [\(return\)](#)

[After the example of the younger Pliny, Sidonius (l. ii. c. 2) has labored the florid, prolix, and obscure description of his villa, which bore the name, (Avitacum,) and had been the property of Avitus. The precise situation is not ascertained. Consult, however, the notes of Savaron and Sirmond.]

14 [\(return\)](#)

[Sidonius (l. ii. epist. 9) has described the country life of the Gallic nobles, in a visit which he made to his friends, whose estates were in the neighborhood of Nismes. The morning hours were spent in the sphoeristerium, or tennis-court; or in the library, which was furnished with Latin authors, profane and religious; the former for the men, the latter for the ladies. The table was twice served, at dinner and supper, with hot meat (boiled and roast) and wine. During the intermediate time, the company slept, took the air on horseback, and need the warm bath.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[Seventy lines of panegyric (505-575) which describe the importunity of Theodoric and of Gaul, struggling to overcome the modest reluctance of Avitus, are blown away by three words of an honest

historian. Romanum ambisset Imperium, (Greg.
Turon. l. ii. c. 11, in tom. ii. p. 168.)]

Theodoric, to whom Avitus was indebted for the purple, had acquired the Gothic sceptre by the murder of his elder brother Torismond; and he justified this atrocious deed by the design which his predecessor had formed of violating his alliance with the empire. [16](#) Such a crime might not be incompatible with the virtues of a Barbarian; but the manners of Theodoric were gentle and humane; and posterity may contemplate without terror the original picture of a Gothic king, whom Sidonius had intimately observed, in the hours of peace and of social intercourse. In an epistle, dated from the court of Thoulouse, the orator satisfies the curiosity of one of his friends, in the following description: [17](#) “By the majesty of his appearance, Theodoric would command the respect of those who are ignorant of his merit; and although he is born a prince, his merit would dignify a private station. He is of a middle stature, his body appears rather plump than fat, and in his well-proportioned limbs agility is united with muscular strength. [18](#) If you examine his countenance, you will distinguish a high forehead, large shaggy eyebrows, an aquiline nose, thin lips, a regular set of white teeth, and a fair complexion, that blushes more frequently from modesty than from anger. The ordinary distribution of his time, as far as it is exposed to the public view, may be concisely represented. Before daybreak, he repairs, with a small train, to his domestic chapel, where the service is performed by the Arian clergy; but those who presume to interpret his secret sentiments, consider this assiduous devotion as the effect of habit and policy. The rest of the morning is employed in the administration of his kingdom. His chair is surrounded by some military officers of decent aspect and behavior: the noisy crowd of his Barbarian guards occupies the hall of audience; but they are not permitted to stand within the veils or curtains that conceal the council-chamber from vulgar eyes. The ambassadors of the nations are successively introduced: Theodoric listens with attention, answers them with discreet brevity, and either announces or delays, according to the nature of their business, his final resolution. About eight (the second hour) he rises from his throne, and visits either his treasury or his stables. If he chooses to hunt, or at least to exercise himself on horseback, his bow is carried by a favorite youth; but when the game is marked, he bends it with his own hand, and seldom misses the object of his aim: as a king, he disdains to bear arms in such ignoble warfare; but as a soldier, he would blush to accept any military service which he could perform himself. On common days, his dinner is not different from the repast of a private citizen, but every Saturday, many honorable guests are invited to the royal table, which, on these occasions, is served with the elegance of Greece, the plenty of Gaul, and the order and diligence of Italy. [19](#) The gold or silver plate is less remarkable for its weight than for the brightness and curious workmanship: the taste is gratified without the help of foreign and costly luxury; the size and number of the cups of wine are regulated with a strict regard to the laws of temperance; and the respectful silence that prevails, is interrupted only by grave and instructive conversation. After dinner, Theodoric

sometimes indulges himself in a short slumber; and as soon as he wakes, he calls for the dice and tables, encourages his friends to forget the royal majesty, and is delighted when they freely express the passions which are excited by the incidents of play. At this game, which he loves as the image of war, he alternately displays his eagerness, his skill, his patience, and his cheerful temper. If he loses, he laughs; he is modest and silent if he wins. Yet, notwithstanding this seeming indifference, his courtiers choose to solicit any favor in the moments of victory; and I myself, in my applications to the king, have derived some benefit from my losses. [20](#) About the ninth hour (three o'clock) the tide of business again returns, and flows incessantly till after sunset, when the signal of the royal supper dismisses the weary crowd of suppliants and pleaders. At the supper, a more familiar repast, buffoons and pantomimes are sometimes introduced, to divert, not to offend, the company, by their ridiculous wit: but female singers, and the soft, effeminate modes of music, are severely banished, and such martial tunes as animate the soul to deeds of valor are alone grateful to the ear of Theodoric. He retires from table; and the nocturnal guards are immediately posted at the entrance of the treasury, the palace, and the private apartments."

16 [\(return\)](#)

[Isidore, archbishop of Seville, who was himself of the blood royal of the Goths, acknowledges, and almost justifies, (Hist. Goth. p. 718,) the crime which their slave Jornandes had basely dissembled, (c 43, p. 673.)]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[This elaborate description (l. i. ep. ii. p. 2-7) was dictated by some political motive. It was designed for the public eye, and had been shown by the friends of Sidonius, before it was inserted in the collection of his epistles. The first book was published separately. See Tillemont, Mémoires Eccles. tom. xvi. p. 264.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[I have suppressed, in this portrait of Theodoric, several minute circumstances, and technical phrases, which could be tolerable, or indeed intelligible, to those only who, like the contemporaries of Sidonius, had frequented the markets where naked slaves were exposed to sale, (Dubos, Hist. Critique, tom. i. p. 404.)]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[Videas ibi elegantiam Græcam, abundantiam Gallicanam; celeritatem Italam; publicam pompam, privatam diligentiam, regiam disciplinam.]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[Tunc etiam ego aliquid obsecraturus feliciter vincor, et mihi tabula perit ut causa salvetur. Sidonius of Auvergne was not a subject of

Theodoric; but he might be compelled to solicit
either justice or favor at the court of Thoulouse.]

When the king of the Visigoths encouraged Avitus to assume the purple, he offered his person and his forces, as a faithful soldier of the republic. [21](#) The exploits of Theodoric soon convinced the world that he had not degenerated from the warlike virtues of his ancestors. After the establishment of the Goths in Aquitain, and the passage of the Vandals into Africa, the Suevi, who had fixed their kingdom in Gallicia, aspired to the conquest of Spain, and threatened to extinguish the feeble remains of the Roman dominion. The provincials of Carthagen and Tarragona, afflicted by a hostile invasion, represented their injuries and their apprehensions. Count Fronto was despatched, in the name of the emperor Avitus, with advantageous offers of peace and alliance; and Theodoric interposed his weighty mediation, to declare, that, unless his brother-in-law, the king of the Suevi, immediately retired, he should be obliged to arm in the cause of justice and of Rome. "Tell him," replied the haughty Rechiarius, "that I despise his friendship and his arms; but that I shall soon try whether he will dare to expect my arrival under the walls of Thoulouse." Such a challenge urged Theodoric to prevent the bold designs of his enemy; he passed the Pyrenees at the head of the Visigoths: the Franks and Burgundians served under his standard; and though he professed himself the dutiful servant of Avitus, he privately stipulated, for himself and his successors, the absolute possession of his Spanish conquests. The two armies, or rather the two nations, encountered each other on the banks of the River Urbicus, about twelve miles from Astorga; and the decisive victory of the Goths appeared for a while to have extirpated the name and kingdom of the Suevi. From the field of battle Theodoric advanced to Braga, their metropolis, which still retained the splendid vestiges of its ancient commerce and dignity. [22](#) His entrance was not polluted with blood; and the Goths respected the chastity of their female captives, more especially of the consecrated virgins: but the greatest part of the clergy and people were made slaves, and even the churches and altars were confounded in the universal pillage. The unfortunate king of the Suevi had escaped to one of the ports of the ocean; but the obstinacy of the winds opposed his flight: he was delivered to his implacable rival; and Rechiarius, who neither desired nor expected mercy, received, with manly constancy, the death which he would probably have inflicted. After this bloody sacrifice to policy or resentment, Theodoric carried his victorious arms as far as Merida, the principal town of Lusitania, without meeting any resistance, except from the miraculous powers of St. Eulalia; but he was stopped in the full career of success, and recalled from Spain before he could provide for the security of his conquests. In his retreat towards the Pyrenees, he revenged his disappointment on the country through which he passed; and, in the sack of Pollentia and Astorga, he showed himself a faithless ally, as well as a cruel enemy. Whilst the king of the Visigoths fought and vanquished in the name of Avitus, the reign of Avitus had expired; and both the honor and the interest of Theodoric were

deeply wounded by the disgrace of a friend, whom he had seated on the throne of the Western empire. [23](#)

21

[\(return\)](#)

[Theodoric himself had given a solemn and voluntary promise of fidelity, which was understood both in Gaul and Spain.

*Romae sum, te duce, Amicus,
Principe te, Miles.
Sidon. Panegy. Avit. 511.]*

22

[\(return\)](#)

[Quaeque sinu pelagi jactat se Bracara dives. Auson. de Claris Urbibus, p. 245. —From the design of the king of the Suevi, it is evident that the navigation from the ports of Galicia to the Mediterranean was known and practised. The ships of Bracara, or Braga, cautiously steered along the coast, without daring to lose themselves in the Atlantic.]

23

[\(return\)](#)

[This Suevic war is the most authentic part of the Chronicle of Idatius, who, as bishop of Iria Flavia, was himself a spectator and a sufferer. Jornandes (c. 44, p. 675, 676, 677) has expatiated, with pleasure, on the Gothic victory.]

Chapter XXXVI: Total Extinction Of The Western Empire.— Part II.

The pressing solicitations of the senate and people persuaded the emperor Avitus to fix his residence at Rome, and to accept the consulship for the ensuing year. On the first day of January, his son-in-law, Sidonius Apollinaris, celebrated his praises in a panegyric of six hundred verses; but this composition, though it was rewarded with a brass statue, [24](#) seems to contain a very moderate proportion, either of genius or of truth. The poet, if we may degrade that sacred name, exaggerates the merit of a sovereign and a father; and his prophecy of a long and glorious reign was soon contradicted by the event. Avitus, at a time when the Imperial dignity was reduced to a preeminence of toil and danger, indulged himself in the pleasures of Italian luxury: age had not extinguished his amorous inclinations; and he is accused of insulting, with indiscreet and ungenerous raillery, the husbands whose wives he had seduced or violated. [25](#) But the Romans were not inclined either to excuse his faults or to acknowledge his virtues. The several parts of the empire became every day more alienated from each other; and the stranger of Gaul was the object of popular hatred and contempt. The senate asserted their legitimate claim in the election of an emperor; and their authority, which had been originally derived from the old constitution, was again

fortified by the actual weakness of a declining monarchy. Yet even such a monarchy might have resisted the votes of an unarmed senate, if their discontent had not been supported, or perhaps inflamed, by the Count Ricimer, one of the principal commanders of the Barbarian troops, who formed the military defence of Italy. The daughter of Wallia, king of the Visigoths, was the mother of Ricimer; but he was descended, on the father's side, from the nation of the Suevi; [26](#) his pride or patriotism might be exasperated by the misfortunes of his countrymen; and he obeyed, with reluctance, an emperor in whose elevation he had not been consulted. His faithful and important services against the common enemy rendered him still more formidable; [27](#) and, after destroying on the coast of Corsica a fleet of Vandals, which consisted of sixty galleys, Ricimer returned in triumph with the appellation of the Deliverer of Italy. He chose that moment to signify to Avitus, that his reign was at an end; and the feeble emperor, at a distance from his Gothic allies, was compelled, after a short and unavailing struggle to abdicate the purple. By the clemency, however, or the contempt, of Ricimer, [28](#) he was permitted to descend from the throne to the more desirable station of bishop of Placentia: but the resentment of the senate was still unsatisfied; and their inflexible severity pronounced the sentence of his death. He fled towards the Alps, with the humble hope, not of arming the Visigoths in his cause, but of securing his person and treasures in the sanctuary of Julian, one of the tutelar saints of Auvergne. [29](#) Disease, or the hand of the executioner, arrested him on the road; yet his remains were decently transported to Brivas, or Brioude, in his native province, and he reposed at the feet of his holy patron. [30](#) Avitus left only one daughter, the wife of Sidonius Apollinaris, who inherited the patrimony of his father-in-law; lamenting, at the same time, the disappointment of his public and private expectations. His resentment prompted him to join, or at least to countenance, the measures of a rebellious faction in Gaul; and the poet had contracted some guilt, which it was incumbent on him to expiate, by a new tribute of flattery to the succeeding emperor. [31](#)

24 [\(return\)](#)

[In one of the porticos or galleries belonging to Trajan's library, among the statues of famous writers and orators. Sidon. Apoll. l. ix. epist, 16, p. 284. Carm. viii. p. 350.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Luxuriose agere volens a senatoribus projectus est, is the concise expression of Gregory of Tours, (l. ii. c. xi. in tom. ii. p. 168.) An old Chronicle (in tom. ii. p. 649) mentions an indecent jest of Avitus, which seems more applicable to Rome than to Treves.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Sidonius (Panegy. Anthem. 302, &c.) praises the royal birth of Ricimer, the lawful heir, as he chooses to insinuate, both of the Gothic and Suevic kingdoms.]

- 27 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Chronicle of Idatius. Jornandes (c. xlv. p. 676) styles him, with some truth, *virum egregium, et pene tunc in Italia ad exercitum singularem.*]
- 28 [\(return\)](#)
[*Parcens innocentiae Aviti*, is the compassionate, but contemptuous, language of Victor Tunnunensis, (in Chron. apud Scaliger Euseb.) In another place, he calls him, *vir totius simplicitatis*. This commendation is more humble, but it is more solid and sincere, than the praises of Sidonius]
- 29 [\(return\)](#)
[He suffered, as it is supposed, in the persecution of Diocletian, (Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. v. p. 279, 696.) Gregory of Tours, his peculiar votary, has dedicated to the glory of Julian the Martyr an entire book, (*de Gloria Martyrum*, l. ii. in Max. Bibliot. Patrum, tom. xi. p. 861-871,) in which he relates about fifty foolish miracles performed by his relics.]
- 30 [\(return\)](#)
[Gregory of Tours (l. ii. c. xi. p. 168) is concise, but correct, in the reign of his countryman. The words of Idatius, “*cadet imperio, caret et vita,*” seem to imply, that the death of Avitus was violent; but it must have been secret, since Evagrius (l. ii. c. 7) could suppose, that he died of the plague.]
- 31 [\(return\)](#)
[After a modest appeal to the examples of his brethren, Virgil and Horace, Sidonius honestly confesses the debt, and promises payment.

*Sic mihi diverso nuper sub Marte cadenti
Jussisti placido Victor ut essem animo.
Serviat ergo tibi servati lingua poetae,
Atque meae vitae laus tua sit pretium.
—Sidon. Apoll. Carm. iv. p. 308*

See Dubos, Hist. Critique, tom. i. p. 448, &c.]

The successor of Avitus presents the welcome discovery of a great and heroic character, such as sometimes arise, in a degenerate age, to vindicate the honor of the human species. The emperor Majorian has deserved the praises of his contemporaries, and of posterity; and these praises may be strongly expressed in the words of a judicious and disinterested historian: “That he was gentle to his subjects; that he was terrible to his enemies; and that he excelled, in every virtue, all his predecessors who had reigned over the Romans.” [32](#) Such a testimony may justify at least the panegyric of Sidonius; and we may acquiesce in the assurance, that, although the obsequious orator would have flattered, with equal zeal, the most worthless of princes, the extraordinary merit of his object confined him, on this occasion, within the bounds of truth. [33](#) Majorian derived his name from his maternal grandfather, who, in the reign of the great Theodosius, had

commanded the troops of the Illyrian frontier. He gave his daughter in marriage to the father of Majorian, a respectable officer, who administered the revenues of Gaul with skill and integrity; and generously preferred the friendship of Ætius to the tempting offer of an insidious court. His son, the future emperor, who was educated in the profession of arms, displayed, from his early youth, intrepid courage, premature wisdom, and unbounded liberality in a scanty fortune. He followed the standard of Ætius, contributed to his success, shared, and sometimes eclipsed, his glory, and at last excited the jealousy of the patrician, or rather of his wife, who forced him to retire from the service. [34](#) Majorian, after the death of Ætius, was recalled and promoted; and his intimate connection with Count Ricimer was the immediate step by which he ascended the throne of the Western empire. During the vacancy that succeeded the abdication of Avitus, the ambitious Barbarian, whose birth excluded him from the Imperial dignity, governed Italy with the title of Patrician; resigned to his friend the conspicuous station of master-general of the cavalry and infantry; and, after an interval of some months, consented to the unanimous wish of the Romans, whose favor Majorian had solicited by a recent victory over the Alemanni. [35](#) He was invested with the purple at Ravenna: and the epistle which he addressed to the senate, will best describe his situation and his sentiments. “Your election, Conscript Fathers! and the ordinance of the most valiant army, have made me your emperor. [36](#) May the propitious Deity direct and prosper the counsels and events of my administration, to your advantage and to the public welfare! For my own part, I did not aspire, I have submitted to reign; nor should I have discharged the obligations of a citizen if I had refused, with base and selfish ingratitude, to support the weight of those labors, which were imposed by the republic. Assist, therefore, the prince whom you have made; partake the duties which you have enjoined; and may our common endeavors promote the happiness of an empire, which I have accepted from your hands. Be assured, that, in our times, justice shall resume her ancient vigor, and that virtue shall become, not only innocent, but meritorious. Let none, except the authors themselves, be apprehensive of delations, [37](#) which, as a subject, I have always condemned, and, as a prince, will severely punish. Our own vigilance, and that of our father, the patrician Ricimer, shall regulate all military affairs, and provide for the safety of the Roman world, which we have saved from foreign and domestic enemies. [38](#) You now understand the maxims of my government; you may confide in the faithful love and sincere assurances of a prince who has formerly been the companion of your life and dangers; who still glories in the name of senator, and who is anxious that you should never repent the judgment which you have pronounced in his favor.” The emperor, who, amidst the ruins of the Roman world, revived the ancient language of law and liberty, which Trajan would not have disclaimed, must have derived those generous sentiments from his own heart; since they were not suggested to his imitation by the customs of his age, or the example of his predecessors. [39](#)

(de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 7, p. 194;) a concise but comprehensive definition of royal virtue.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[The Panegyric was pronounced at Lyons before the end of the year 458, while the emperor was still consul. It has more art than genius, and more labor than art. The ornaments are false and trivial; the expression is feeble and prolix; and Sidonius wants the skill to exhibit the principal figure in a strong and distinct light. The private life of Majorian occupies about two hundred lines, 107-305.]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[She pressed his immediate death, and was scarcely satisfied with his disgrace. It should seem that Ætius, like Belisarius and Marlborough, was governed by his wife; whose fervent piety, though it might work miracles, (Gregor. Turon. l. ii. c. 7, p. 162,) was not incompatible with base and sanguinary counsels.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[The Alemanni had passed the Rhaetian Alps, and were defeated in the Campi Canini, or Valley of Bellinzzone, through which the Tesin flows, in its descent from Mount Adula to the Lago Maggiore, (Cluver Italia Antiq. tom. i. p. 100, 101.) This boasted victory over nine hundred Barbarians (Panegy. Majorian. 373, &c.) betrays the extreme weakness of Italy.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[Imperatorem me factum, P.C. electionis vestrae arbitrio, et fortissimi exercitus ordinatione agnoscite, (Novell. Majorian. tit. iii. p. 34, ad Calcem. Cod. Theodos.) Sidonius proclaims the unanimous voice of the empire:—

*Postquam ordine vobis
Ordo omnis regnum dederat; plebs, curia, nules,
—Et collega simul. 386.*

This language is ancient and constitutional; and we may observe, that the clergy were not yet considered as a distinct order of the state.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[Either dilationes, or delationes would afford a tolerable reading, but there is much more sense and spirit in the latter, to which I have therefore given the preference.]

38 [\(return\)](#)

[Ab externo hoste et a domestica clade liberavimus: by the latter, Majorian must understand the tyranny of Avitus; whose death he

consequently avowed as a meritorious act. On this occasion, Sidonius is fearful and obscure; he describes the twelve Caesars, the nations of Africa, &c., that he may escape the dangerous name of Avitus (805-369.)]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[See the whole edict or epistle of Majorian to the senate, (Novell. tit. iv. p. 34.) Yet the expression, regnum nostrum, bears some taint of the age, and does not mix kindly with the word respublica, which he frequently repeats.]

The private and public actions of Majorian are very imperfectly known: but his laws, remarkable for an original cast of thought and expression, faithfully represent the character of a sovereign who loved his people, who sympathized in their distress, who had studied the causes of the decline of the empire, and who was capable of applying (as far as such reformation was practicable) judicious and effectual remedies to the public disorders. [40](#) His regulations concerning the finances manifestly tended to remove, or at least to mitigate, the most intolerable grievances. I. From the first hour of his reign, he was solicitous (I translate his own words) to relieve the weary fortunes of the provincials, oppressed by the accumulated weight of indictions and superindictions. [41](#) With this view he granted a universal amnesty, a final and absolute discharge of all arrears of tribute, of all debts, which, under any pretence, the fiscal officers might demand from the people. This wise dereliction of obsolete, vexatious, and unprofitable claims, improved and purified the sources of the public revenue; and the subject who could now look back without despair, might labor with hope and gratitude for himself and for his country. II. In the assessment and collection of taxes, Majorian restored the ordinary jurisdiction of the provincial magistrates; and suppressed the extraordinary commissions which had been introduced, in the name of the emperor himself, or of the Prætorian præfects. The favorite servants, who obtained such irregular powers, were insolent in their behavior, and arbitrary in their demands: they affected to despise the subordinate tribunals, and they were discontented, if their fees and profits did not twice exceed the sum which they condescended to pay into the treasury. One instance of their extortion would appear incredible, were it not authenticated by the legislator himself. They exacted the whole payment in gold: but they refused the current coin of the empire, and would accept only such ancient pieces as were stamped with the names of Faustina or the Antonines. The subject, who was unprovided with these curious medals, had recourse to the expedient of compounding with their rapacious demands; or if he succeeded in the research, his imposition was doubled, according to the weight and value of the money of former times. [42](#) III. “The municipal corporations, (says the emperor,) the lesser senates, (so antiquity has justly styled them,) deserve to be considered as the heart of the cities, and the sinews of the republic. And yet so low are they now reduced, by the injustice of magistrates and the venality of collectors, that many of their members, renouncing their dignity and their

country, have taken refuge in distant and obscure exile.” He urges, and even compels, their return to their respective cities; but he removes the grievance which had forced them to desert the exercise of their municipal functions. They are directed, under the authority of the provincial magistrates, to resume their office of levying the tribute; but, instead of being made responsible for the whole sum assessed on their district, they are only required to produce a regular account of the payments which they have actually received, and of the defaulters who are still indebted to the public. IV. But Majorian was not ignorant that these corporate bodies were too much inclined to retaliate the injustice and oppression which they had suffered; and he therefore revives the useful office of the defenders of cities. He exhorts the people to elect, in a full and free assembly, some man of discretion and integrity, who would dare to assert their privileges, to represent their grievances, to protect the poor from the tyranny of the rich, and to inform the emperor of the abuses that were committed under the sanction of his name and authority.

40 [\(return\)](#)

[See the laws of Majorian (they are only nine in number, but very long, and various) at the end of the Theodosian Code, Novell. l. iv. p. 32-37. Godefroy has not given any commentary on these additional pieces.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[Fessas provincialium varia atque multiplici tributorum exactione fortunas, et extraordinariis fiscalium solutionum oneribus attritas, &c. Novell. Majorian. tit. iv. p. 34.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[The learned Greaves (vol. i. p. 329, 330, 331) has found, by a diligent inquiry, that aurei of the Antonines weighed one hundred and eighteen, and those of the fifth century only sixty-eight, English grains. Majorian gives currency to all gold coin, excepting only the Gallic solidus, from its deficiency, not in the weight, but in the standard.]

The spectator who casts a mournful view over the ruins of ancient Rome, is tempted to accuse the memory of the Goths and Vandals, for the mischief which they had neither leisure, nor power, nor perhaps inclination, to perpetrate. The tempest of war might strike some lofty turrets to the ground; but the destruction which undermined the foundations of those massy fabrics was prosecuted, slowly and silently, during a period of ten centuries; and the motives of interest, that afterwards operated without shame or control, were severely checked by the taste and spirit of the emperor Majorian. The decay of the city had gradually impaired the value of the public works. The circus and theatres might still excite, but they seldom gratified, the desires of the people: the temples, which had escaped the zeal of the Christians, were no longer inhabited, either by gods or men; the diminished crowds of the Romans were lost in the immense space

of their baths and porticos; and the stately libraries and halls of justice became useless to an indolent generation, whose repose was seldom disturbed, either by study or business. The monuments of consular, or Imperial, greatness were no longer revered, as the immortal glory of the capital: they were only esteemed as an inexhaustible mine of materials, cheaper, and more convenient than the distant quarry. Specious petitions were continually addressed to the easy magistrates of Rome, which stated the want of stones or bricks, for some necessary service: the fairest forms of architecture were rudely defaced, for the sake of some paltry, or pretended, repairs; and the degenerate Romans, who converted the spoil to their own emolument, demolished, with sacrilegious hands, the labors of their ancestors. Majorian, who had often sighed over the desolation of the city, applied a severe remedy to the growing evil. [43](#) He reserved to the prince and senate the sole cognizance of the extreme cases which might justify the destruction of an ancient edifice; imposed a fine of fifty pounds of gold (two thousand pounds sterling) on every magistrate who should presume to grant such illegal and scandalous license, and threatened to chastise the criminal obedience of their subordinate officers, by a severe whipping, and the amputation of both their hands. In the last instance, the legislator might seem to forget the proportion of guilt and punishment; but his zeal arose from a generous principle, and Majorian was anxious to protect the monuments of those ages, in which he would have desired and deserved to live. The emperor conceived, that it was his interest to increase the number of his subjects; and that it was his duty to guard the purity of the marriage-bed: but the means which he employed to accomplish these salutary purposes are of an ambiguous, and perhaps exceptionable, kind. The pious maids, who consecrated their virginity to Christ, were restrained from taking the veil till they had reached their fortieth year. Widows under that age were compelled to form a second alliance within the term of five years, by the forfeiture of half their wealth to their nearest relations, or to the state. Unequal marriages were condemned or annulled. The punishment of confiscation and exile was deemed so inadequate to the guilt of adultery, that, if the criminal returned to Italy, he might, by the express declaration of Majorian, be slain with impunity. [44](#)

43

[\(return\)](#)

[The whole edict (Novell. Majorian. tit. vi. p. 35) is curious. “Antiquarum aedium dissipatur speciosa constructio; et ut aliquid reparetur, magna diruuntur. Hinc jam occasio nascitur, ut etiam unusquisque privatum aedificium construens, per gratiam judicum..... praesumere de publicis locis necessaria, et transferre non dubitet” &c. With equal zeal, but with less power, Petrarch, in the fourteenth century, repeated the same complaints. (Vie de Petrarque, tom. i. p. 326, 327.) If I prosecute this history, I shall not be unmindful of the decline and fall of the city of Rome; an interesting object to which any plan was originally confined.]

[The emperor chides the lenity of Rogatian, consular of Tuscany in a style of acrimonious reproof, which sounds almost like personal resentment, (Novell. tit. ix. p. 47.) The law of Majorian, which punished obstinate widows, was soon afterwards repealed by his successor Severus, (Novell. Sever. tit. i. p. 37.)]

While the emperor Majorian assiduously labored to restore the happiness and virtue of the Romans, he encountered the arms of Genseric, from his character and situation their most formidable enemy. A fleet of Vandals and Moors landed at the mouth of the Liris, or Garigliano; but the Imperial troops surprised and attacked the disorderly Barbarians, who were encumbered with the spoils of Campania; they were chased with slaughter to their ships, and their leader, the king's brother-in-law, was found in the number of the slain. [45](#) Such vigilance might announce the character of the new reign; but the strictest vigilance, and the most numerous forces, were insufficient to protect the long-extended coast of Italy from the depredations of a naval war. The public opinion had imposed a nobler and more arduous task on the genius of Majorian. Rome expected from him alone the restitution of Africa; and the design, which he formed, of attacking the Vandals in their new settlements, was the result of bold and judicious policy. If the intrepid emperor could have infused his own spirit into the youth of Italy; if he could have revived in the field of Mars, the manly exercises in which he had always surpassed his equals; he might have marched against Genseric at the head of a Roman army. Such a reformation of national manners might be embraced by the rising generation; but it is the misfortune of those princes who laboriously sustain a declining monarchy, that, to obtain some immediate advantage, or to avert some impending danger, they are forced to countenance, and even to multiply, the most pernicious abuses. Majorian, like the weakest of his predecessors, was reduced to the disgraceful expedient of substituting Barbarian auxiliaries in the place of his unwarlike subjects: and his superior abilities could only be displayed in the vigor and dexterity with which he wielded a dangerous instrument, so apt to recoil on the hand that used it. Besides the confederates, who were already engaged in the service of the empire, the fame of his liberality and valor attracted the nations of the Danube, the Borysthenes, and perhaps of the Tanais. Many thousands of the bravest subjects of Attila, the Gepidae, the Ostrogoths, the Rugians, the Burgundians, the Suevi, the Alani, assembled in the plains of Liguria; and their formidable strength was balanced by their mutual animosities. [46](#) They passed the Alps in a severe winter. The emperor led the way, on foot, and in complete armor; sounding, with his long staff, the depth of the ice, or snow, and encouraging the Scythians, who complained of the extreme cold, by the cheerful assurance, that they should be satisfied with the heat of Africa. The citizens of Lyons had presumed to shut their gates; they soon implored, and experienced, the clemency of Majorian. He vanquished Theodoric in the field; and admitted to his friendship and alliance a king whom he had found not unworthy of his arms. The beneficial, though

precarious, reunion of the greater part of Gaul and Spain, was the effect of persuasion, as well as of force; [47](#) and the independent Bagaudae, who had escaped, or resisted, the oppression, of former reigns, were disposed to confide in the virtues of Majorian. His camp was filled with Barbarian allies; his throne was supported by the zeal of an affectionate people; but the emperor had foreseen, that it was impossible, without a maritime power, to achieve the conquest of Africa. In the first Punic war, the republic had exerted such incredible diligence, that, within sixty days after the first stroke of the axe had been given in the forest, a fleet of one hundred and sixty galleys proudly rode at anchor in the sea. [48](#) Under circumstances much less favorable, Majorian equalled the spirit and perseverance of the ancient Romans. The woods of the Apennine were felled; the arsenals and manufactures of Ravenna and Misenum were restored; Italy and Gaul vied with each other in liberal contributions to the public service; and the Imperial navy of three hundred large galleys, with an adequate proportion of transports and smaller vessels, was collected in the secure and capacious harbor of Carthagera in Spain. [49](#) The intrepid countenance of Majorian animated his troops with a confidence of victory; and, if we might credit the historian Procopius, his courage sometimes hurried him beyond the bounds of prudence. Anxious to explore, with his own eyes, the state of the Vandals, he ventured, after disguising the color of his hair, to visit Carthage, in the character of his own ambassador: and Genseric was afterwards mortified by the discovery, that he had entertained and dismissed the emperor of the Romans. Such an anecdote may be rejected as an improbable fiction; but it is a fiction which would not have been imagined, unless in the life of a hero. [50](#)

45

[\(return\)](#)

[Sidon. Panegy. Majorian, 385-440.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[The review of the army, and passage of the Alps, contain the most tolerable passages of the Panegyric, (470-552.) M. de Buat (Hist. des Peuples, &c., tom. viii. p. 49-55) is a more satisfactory commentator, than either Savaron or Sirmond.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[It is the just and forcible distinction of Priscus, (Excerpt. Legat. p. 42,) in a short fragment, which throws much light on the history of Majorian. Jornandes has suppressed the defeat and alliance of the Visigoths, which were solemnly proclaimed in Galicia; and are marked in the Chronicle of Idatius.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[Florus, l. ii. c. 2. He amuses himself with the poetical fancy, that the trees had been transformed into ships; and indeed the whole transaction, as it is related in the first book of Polybius, deviates too much from the probable course of human events.]

[

*Iterea duplici taxis dum littore classem
Inferno superoque mari, cadit omnis in aequor
Sylva tibi, &c.*

--*Sidon. Panegy. Majorian, 441-461.*

The number of ships, which Priscus fixed at 300, is magnified, by an indefinite comparison with the fleets of Agamemnon, Xerxes, and Augustus.]

[Procopius de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 8, p. 194. When Genseric conducted his unknown guest into the arsenal of Carthage, the arms clashed of their own accord. Majorian had tinged his yellow locks with a black color.]

Chapter XXXVI: Total Extinction Of The Western Empire.— Part III.

Without the help of a personal interview, Genseric was sufficiently acquainted with the genius and designs of his adversary. He practiced his customary arts of fraud and delay, but he practiced them without success. His applications for peace became each hour more submissive, and perhaps more sincere; but the inflexible Majorian had adopted the ancient maxim, that Rome could not be safe, as long as Carthage existed in a hostile state. The king of the Vandals distrusted the valor of his native subjects, who were enervated by the luxury of the South; [51](#) he suspected the fidelity of the vanquished people, who abhorred him as an Arian tyrant; and the desperate measure, which he executed, of reducing Mauritania into a desert, [52](#) could not defeat the operations of the Roman emperor, who was at liberty to land his troops on any part of the African coast. But Genseric was saved from impending and inevitable ruin by the treachery of some powerful subjects, envious, or apprehensive, of their master's success. Guided by their secret intelligence, he surprised the unguarded fleet in the Bay of Carthagenæ: many of the ships were sunk, or taken, or burnt; and the preparations of three years were destroyed in a single day. [53](#) After this event, the behavior of the two antagonists showed them superior to their fortune. The Vandal, instead of being elated by this accidental victory, immediately renewed his solicitations for peace. The emperor of the West, who was capable of forming great designs, and of supporting heavy disappointments, consented to a treaty, or rather to a suspension of arms; in the full assurance that, before he could restore his navy, he should be supplied with provocations to justify a second war. Majorian returned to Italy, to prosecute his labors for the public happiness; and, as he was conscious of his own integrity, he might long remain ignorant of the dark conspiracy which threatened his throne and his life. The recent misfortune of Carthagenæ sullied the glory which had dazzled the eyes of the

multitude; almost every description of civil and military officers were exasperated against the Reformer, since they all derived some advantage from the abuses which he endeavored to suppress; and the patrician Ricimer impelled the inconstant passions of the Barbarians against a prince whom he esteemed and hated. The virtues of Majorian could not protect him from the impetuous sedition, which broke out in the camp near Tortona, at the foot of the Alps. He was compelled to abdicate the Imperial purple: five days after his abdication, it was reported that he died of a dysentery; [54](#) and the humble tomb, which covered his remains, was consecrated by the respect and gratitude of succeeding generations. [55](#) The private character of Majorian inspired love and respect. Malicious calumny and satire excited his indignation, or, if he himself were the object, his contempt; but he protected the freedom of wit, and, in the hours which the emperor gave to the familiar society of his friends, he could indulge his taste for pleasantry, without degrading the majesty of his rank. [56](#)

51 [\(return\)](#)

[

*Spoliisque potitus
Immensis, robux luxu jam perdidit omne,
Quo valuit dum pauper erat.*
—Panegy. Majorian, 330.

He afterwards applies to Genseric, unjustly, as it should seem, the vices of his subjects.]

52 [\(return\)](#)

[He burnt the villages, and poisoned the springs, (Priscus, p. 42.) Dubos (Hist. Critique, tom. i. p. 475) observes, that the magazines which the Moors buried in the earth might escape his destructive search. Two or three hundred pits are sometimes dug in the same place; and each pit contains at least four hundred bushels of corn Shaw's Travels, p. 139.]

53 [\(return\)](#)

[Idatius, who was safe in Gallicia from the power of Ricimer boldly and honestly declares, Vandali per proditeres admoniti, &c: i. e. dissembles, however, the name of the traitor.]

54 [\(return\)](#)

[Procop. de Bell. Vandal. l. i. i. c. 8, p. 194. The testimony of Idatius is fair and impartial: "Majorianum de Galliis Romam redeuntem, et Romano imperio vel nomini res necessarias ordinantem; Richimer livore percitus, et invidorum consilio fultus, fraude interficit circumventum." Some read Suevorum, and I am unwilling to efface either of the words, as they express the different accomplices who united in the conspiracy against Majorian.]

55

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Epigrams of Ennodius, No. cxxxv. inter Sirmond. Opera, tom. i. p. 1903. It is flat and obscure; but Ennodius was made bishop of Pavia fifty years after the death of Majorian, and his praise deserves credit and regard.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[Sidonius gives a tedious account (l. i. epist. xi. p. 25-31) of a supper at Arles, to which he was invited by Majorian, a short time before his death. He had no intention of praising a deceased emperor: but a casual disinterested remark, "Subrisit Augustus; ut erat, auctoritate servata, cum se communioni dedisset, joci plenus," outweighs the six hundred lines of his venal panegyric.]

It was not, perhaps, without some regret, that Ricimer sacrificed his friend to the interest of his ambition: but he resolved, in a second choice, to avoid the imprudent preference of superior virtue and merit. At his command, the obsequious senate of Rome bestowed the Imperial title on Libius Severus, who ascended the throne of the West without emerging from the obscurity of a private condition. History has scarcely deigned to notice his birth, his elevation, his character, or his death. Severus expired, as soon as his life became inconvenient to his patron; [57](#) and it would be useless to discriminate his nominal reign in the vacant interval of six years, between the death of Majorian and the elevation of Anthemius. During that period, the government was in the hands of Ricimer alone; and, although the modest Barbarian disclaimed the name of king, he accumulated treasures, formed a separate army, negotiated private alliances, and ruled Italy with the same independent and despotic authority, which was afterwards exercised by Odoacer and Theodoric. But his dominions were bounded by the Alps; and two Roman generals, Marcellinus and Aegidius, maintained their allegiance to the republic, by rejecting, with disdain, the phantom which he styled an emperor. Marcellinus still adhered to the old religion; and the devout Pagans, who secretly disobeyed the laws of the church and state, applauded his profound skill in the science of divination. But he possessed the more valuable qualifications of learning, virtue, and courage; [58](#) the study of the Latin literature had improved his taste; and his military talents had recommended him to the esteem and confidence of the great Ætius, in whose ruin he was involved. By a timely flight, Marcellinus escaped the rage of Valentinian, and boldly asserted his liberty amidst the convulsions of the Western empire. His voluntary, or reluctant, submission to the authority of Majorian, was rewarded by the government of Sicily, and the command of an army, stationed in that island to oppose, or to attack, the Vandals; but his Barbarian mercenaries, after the emperor's death, were tempted to revolt by the artful liberality of Ricimer. At the head of a band of faithful followers, the intrepid Marcellinus occupied the province of Dalmatia, assumed the title of patrician of the West, secured the love of his subjects by a mild and equitable reign, built a fleet which claimed the dominion of the Adriatic, and alternately alarmed the

coasts of Italy and of Africa. [59](#) Aegidius, the master-general of Gaul, who equalled, or at least who imitated, the heroes of ancient Rome, [60](#) proclaimed his immortal resentment against the assassins of his beloved master. A brave and numerous army was attached to his standard: and, though he was prevented by the arts of Ricimer, and the arms of the Visigoths, from marching to the gates of Rome, he maintained his independent sovereignty beyond the Alps, and rendered the name of Aegidius, respectable both in peace and war. The Franks, who had punished with exile the youthful follies of Childeric, elected the Roman general for their king: his vanity, rather than his ambition, was gratified by that singular honor; and when the nation, at the end of four years, repented of the injury which they had offered to the Merovingian family, he patiently acquiesced in the restoration of the lawful prince. The authority of Aegidius ended only with his life, and the suspicions of poison and secret violence, which derived some countenance from the character of Ricimer, were eagerly entertained by the passionate credulity of the Gauls. [61](#)

57 [\(return\)](#)

[Sidonius (Panegy. Anthem. 317) dismisses him to heaven:—Auxerat Augustus naturae lege Severus—Divorum numerum. And an old list of the emperors, composed about the time of Justinian, praises his piety, and fixes his residence at Rome, (Sirmond. Not. ad Sidon. p. 111, 112.)]

58 [\(return\)](#)

[Tillemont, who is always scandalized by the virtues of infidels, attributes this advantageous portrait of Marcellinus (which Suidas has preserved) to the partial zeal of some Pagan historian, (Hist. des Empereurs. tom. vi. p. 330.)]

59 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 6, p. 191. In various circumstances of the life of Marcellinus, it is not easy to reconcile the Greek historian with the Latin Chronicles of the times.]

60 [\(return\)](#)

[I must apply to Aegidius the praises which Sidonius (Panegy. Majorian, 553) bestows on a nameless master-general, who commanded the rear-guard of Majorian. Idatius, from public report, commends his Christian piety; and Priscus mentions (p. 42) his military virtues.]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[Greg. Turon. l. ii. c. 12, in tom. ii. p. 168. The Pere Daniel, whose ideas were superficial and modern, has started some objections against the story of Childeric, (Hist. de France, tom. i. Preface Historique, p. lxxvii., &c.:) but they have been fairly satisfied by Dubos, (Hist. Critique, tom. i. p.

460-510,) and by two authors who disputed the prize of the Academy of Soissons, (p. 131-177, 310-339.) With regard to the term of Childeric's exile, it is necessary either to prolong the life of Aegidius beyond the date assigned by the Chronicle of Idatius or to correct the text of Gregory, by reading *quarto anno*, instead of *octavo*.]

The kingdom of Italy, a name to which the Western empire was gradually reduced, was afflicted, under the reign of Ricimer, by the incessant depredations of the Vandal pirates. [62](#) In the spring of each year, they equipped a formidable navy in the port of Carthage; and Genseric himself, though in a very advanced age, still commanded in person the most important expeditions. His designs were concealed with impenetrable secrecy, till the moment that he hoisted sail. When he was asked, by his pilot, what course he should steer, "Leave the determination to the winds, (replied the Barbarian, with pious arrogance;) they will transport us to the guilty coast, whose inhabitants have provoked the divine justice;" but if Genseric himself deigned to issue more precise orders, he judged the most wealthy to be the most criminal. The Vandals repeatedly visited the coasts of Spain, Liguria, Tuscany, Campania, Lucania, Bruttium, Apulia, Calabria, Venetia, Dalmatia, Epirus, Greece, and Sicily: they were tempted to subdue the Island of Sardinia, so advantageously placed in the centre of the Mediterranean; and their arms spread desolation, or terror, from the columns of Hercules to the mouth of the Nile. As they were more ambitious of spoil than of glory, they seldom attacked any fortified cities, or engaged any regular troops in the open field. But the celerity of their motions enabled them, almost at the same time, to threaten and to attack the most distant objects, which attracted their desires; and as they always embarked a sufficient number of horses, they had no sooner landed, than they swept the dismayed country with a body of light cavalry. Yet, notwithstanding the example of their king, the native Vandals and Alani insensibly declined this toilsome and perilous warfare; the hardy generation of the first conquerors was almost extinguished, and their sons, who were born in Africa, enjoyed the delicious baths and gardens which had been acquired by the valor of their fathers. Their place was readily supplied by a various multitude of Moors and Romans, of captives and outlaws; and those desperate wretches, who had already violated the laws of their country, were the most eager to promote the atrocious acts which disgrace the victories of Genseric. In the treatment of his unhappy prisoners, he sometimes consulted his avarice, and sometimes indulged his cruelty; and the massacre of five hundred noble citizens of Zant or Zacynthus, whose mangled bodies he cast into the Ionian Sea, was imputed, by the public indignation, to his latest posterity.

[The naval war of Genseric is described by Priscus, (*Excerpta Legation.* p. 42,) Procopius, (*de Bell. Vandal.* l. i. c. 5, p. 189, 190, and c. 22, p. 228,) Victor Vitensis, (*de Persecut. Vandal.* l. i. c. 17, and Ruinart, p. 467-481,) and in three panegyrics of

Sidonius, whose chronological order is absurdly transposed in the editions both of Savaron and Sirmond. (Avit. Carm. vii. 441-451. Majorian. Carm. v. 327-350, 385-440. Anthem. Carm. ii. 348-386) In one passage the poet seems inspired by his subject, and expresses a strong idea by a lively image:—

*Hinc Vandalus hostis
Urget; et in nostrum numerosa classe quotannis
Militat excidium; conversoque ordine Fati
Torrida Caucaseos infert mihi Byrsa furores]*

Such crimes could not be excused by any provocations; but the war, which the king of the Vandals prosecuted against the Roman empire was justified by a specious and reasonable motive. The widow of Valentinian, Eudoxia, whom he had led captive from Rome to Carthage, was the sole heiress of the Theodosian house; her elder daughter, Eudocia, became the reluctant wife of Hunneric, his eldest son; and the stern father, asserting a legal claim, which could not easily be refuted or satisfied, demanded a just proportion of the Imperial patrimony. An adequate, or at least a valuable, compensation, was offered by the Eastern emperor, to purchase a necessary peace. Eudoxia and her younger daughter, Placidia, were honorably restored, and the fury of the Vandals was confined to the limits of the Western empire. The Italians, destitute of a naval force, which alone was capable of protecting their coasts, implored the aid of the more fortunate nations of the East; who had formerly acknowledged, in peace and war, the supremacy of Rome. But the perpetual divisions of the two empires had alienated their interest and their inclinations; the faith of a recent treaty was alleged; and the Western Romans, instead of arms and ships, could only obtain the assistance of a cold and ineffectual mediation. The haughty Ricimer, who had long struggled with the difficulties of his situation, was at length reduced to address the throne of Constantinople, in the humble language of a subject; and Italy submitted, as the price and security of the alliance, to accept a master from the choice of the emperor of the East. [63](#) It is not the purpose of the present chapter, or even of the present volume, to continue the distinct series of the Byzantine history; but a concise view of the reign and character of the emperor Leo, may explain the last efforts that were attempted to save the falling empire of the West. [64](#)

63

[\(return\)](#)

[The poet himself is compelled to acknowledge the distress of Ricimer:—

*Præterea invictus Ricimer, quem publica fata
Respiciunt, proprio solas vix Marte repellit
Piratam per rura vagum.*

Italy addresses her complaint to the Tyber, and Rome, at the solicitation of the river god, transports herself to Constantinople, renounces her ancient claims, and implores the friendship of Aurora, the goddess of the East. This fabulous machinery, which the genius of Claudian had used and abused, is the

constant and miserable resource of the muse of
Sidonius.]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[The original authors of the reigns of Marcian, Leo,
and Zeno, are reduced to some imperfect fragments,
whose deficiencies must be supplied from the more
recent compilations of Theophanes, Zonaras, and
Cedrenus.]

Since the death of the younger Theodosius, the domestic repose of Constantinople had never been interrupted by war or faction. Pulcheria had bestowed her hand, and the sceptre of the East, on the modest virtue of Marcian: he gratefully revered her august rank and virgin chastity; and, after her death, he gave his people the example of the religious worship that was due to the memory of the Imperial saint. [65](#) Attentive to the prosperity of his own dominions, Marcian seemed to behold, with indifference, the misfortunes of Rome; and the obstinate refusal of a brave and active prince, to draw his sword against the Vandals, was ascribed to a secret promise, which had formerly been exacted from him when he was a captive in the power of Genseric. [66](#) The death of Marcian, after a reign of seven years, would have exposed the East to the danger of a popular election; if the superior weight of a single family had not been able to incline the balance in favor of the candidate whose interest they supported. The patrician Aspar might have placed the diadem on his own head, if he would have subscribed the Nicene creed. [67](#) During three generations, the armies of the East were successively commanded by his father, by himself, and by his son Ardaburius; his Barbarian guards formed a military force that overawed the palace and the capital; and the liberal distribution of his immense treasures rendered Aspar as popular as he was powerful. He recommended the obscure name of Leo of Thrace, a military tribune, and the principal steward of his household. His nomination was unanimously ratified by the senate; and the servant of Aspar received the Imperial crown from the hands of the patriarch or bishop, who was permitted to express, by this unusual ceremony, the suffrage of the Deity. [68](#) This emperor, the first of the name of Leo, has been distinguished by the title of the Great; from a succession of princes, who gradually fixed in the opinion of the Greeks a very humble standard of heroic, or at least of royal, perfection. Yet the temperate firmness with which Leo resisted the oppression of his benefactor, showed that he was conscious of his duty and of his prerogative. Aspar was astonished to find that his influence could no longer appoint a praefect of Constantinople: he presumed to reproach his sovereign with a breach of promise, and insolently shaking his purple, "It is not proper, (said he,) that the man who is invested with this garment, should be guilty of lying." "Nor is it proper, (replied Leo,) that a prince should be compelled to resign his own judgment, and the public interest, to the will of a subject." [69](#) After this extraordinary scene, it was impossible that the reconciliation of the emperor and the patrician could be sincere; or, at least, that it could be solid and permanent. An army of Isaurians [70](#) was secretly levied, and introduced into Constantinople; and while Leo

undermined the authority, and prepared the disgrace, of the family of Aspar, his mild and cautious behavior restrained them from any rash and desperate attempts, which might have been fatal to themselves, or their enemies. The measures of peace and war were affected by this internal revolution. As long as Aspar degraded the majesty of the throne, the secret correspondence of religion and interest engaged him to favor the cause of Genseric. When Leo had delivered himself from that ignominious servitude, he listened to the complaints of the Italians; resolved to extirpate the tyranny of the Vandals; and declared his alliance with his colleague, Anthemius, whom he solemnly invested with the diadem and purple of the West.

- 65 [\(return\)](#)
[St. Pulcheria died A.D. 453, four years before her nominal husband; and her festival is celebrated on the 10th of September by the modern Greeks: she bequeathed an immense patrimony to pious, or, at least, to ecclesiastical, uses. See Tillemont, *Mémoires Eccles.* tom. xv p. 181-184.]
- 66 [\(return\)](#)
[See Procopius, *de Bell. Vandal.* l. i. c. 4, p. 185.]
- 67 [\(return\)](#)
[From this disability of Aspar to ascend the throne, it may be inferred that the stain of Heresy was perpetual and indelible, while that of Barbarism disappeared in the second generation.]
- 68 [\(return\)](#)
[Theophanes, p. 95. This appears to be the first origin of a ceremony, which all the Christian princes of the world have since adopted and from which the clergy have deduced the most formidable consequences.]
- 69 [\(return\)](#)
[Cedrenus, (p. 345, 346,) who was conversant with the writers of better days, has preserved the remarkable words of Aspar.]
- 70 [\(return\)](#)
[The power of the Isaurians agitated the Eastern empire in the two succeeding reigns of Zeno and Anastasius; but it ended in the destruction of those Barbarians, who maintained their fierce independences about two hundred and thirty years.]

The virtues of Anthemius have perhaps been magnified, since the Imperial descent, which he could only deduce from the usurper Procopius, has been swelled into a line of emperors. [71](#) But the merit of his immediate parents, their honors, and their riches, rendered Anthemius one of the most illustrious subjects of the East. His father, Procopius, obtained, after his Persian embassy, the rank of general and patrician; and the name of Anthemius was derived from his maternal grandfather, the celebrated

praefect, who protected, with so much ability and success, the infant reign of Theodosius. The grandson of the praefect was raised above the condition of a private subject, by his marriage with Euphemia, the daughter of the emperor Marcian. This splendid alliance, which might supersede the necessity of merit, hastened the promotion of Anthemius to the successive dignities of count, of master-general, of consul, and of patrician; and his merit or fortune claimed the honors of a victory, which was obtained on the banks of the Danube, over the Huns. Without indulging an extravagant ambition, the son-in-law of Marcian might hope to be his successor; but Anthemius supported the disappointment with courage and patience; and his subsequent elevation was universally approved by the public, who esteemed him worthy to reign, till he ascended the throne. [72](#) The emperor of the West marched from Constantinople, attended by several counts of high distinction, and a body of guards almost equal to the strength and numbers of a regular army: he entered Rome in triumph, and the choice of Leo was confirmed by the senate, the people, and the Barbarian confederates of Italy. [73](#) The solemn inauguration of Anthemius was followed by the nuptials of his daughter and the patrician Ricimer; a fortunate event, which was considered as the firmest security of the union and happiness of the state. The wealth of two empires was ostentatiously displayed; and many senators completed their ruin, by an expensive effort to disguise their poverty. All serious business was suspended during this festival; the courts of justice were shut; the streets of Rome, the theatres, the places of public and private resort, resounded with hymeneal songs and dances: and the royal bride, clothed in silken robes, with a crown on her head, was conducted to the palace of Ricimer, who had changed his military dress for the habit of a consul and a senator. On this memorable occasion, Sidonius, whose early ambition had been so fatally blasted, appeared as the orator of Auvergne, among the provincial deputies who addressed the throne with congratulations or complaints. [74](#) The calends of January were now approaching, and the venal poet, who had loved Avitus, and esteemed Majorian, was persuaded by his friends to celebrate, in heroic verse, the merit, the felicity, the second consulship, and the future triumphs, of the emperor Anthemius. Sidonius pronounced, with assurance and success, a panegyric which is still extant; and whatever might be the imperfections, either of the subject or of the composition, the welcome flatterer was immediately rewarded with the praefecture of Rome; a dignity which placed him among the illustrious personages of the empire, till he wisely preferred the more respectable character of a bishop and a saint. [75](#)

71

[\(return\)](#)

[

*Tali tu civis ab urbe
Procopio genitore micas; cui prisca propago
Augustis venit a proavis.*

The poet (Sidon. Panegy. Anthem. 67-306) then proceeds to relate the private life and fortunes of the future emperor, with which he must have been imperfectly acquainted.]

- 72 [\(return\)](#)
[Sidonius discovers, with tolerable ingenuity, that this disappointment added new lustre to the virtues of Anthemius, (210, &c.,) who declined one sceptre, and reluctantly accepted another, (22, &c.)]
- 73 [\(return\)](#)
[The poet again celebrates the unanimity of all orders of the state, (15-22;) and the Chronicle of Idatius mentions the forces which attended his march.]
- 74 [\(return\)](#)
[Intervenī autem nuptiis Patricii Ricimeris, cui filia perennis Augusti in spem publicae securitatis copulabatur. The journey of Sidonius from Lyons, and the festival of Rome, are described with some spirit. L. i. epist. 5, p. 9-13, epist. 9, p. 21.]
- 75 [\(return\)](#)
[Sidonius (l. i. epist. 9, p. 23, 24) very fairly states his motive, his labor, and his reward. “Hic ipse Panegyricus, si non iudicium, certa eventum, boni operis, accepit.” He was made bishop of Clermont, A.D. 471. Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xvi. p. 750.]

The Greeks ambitiously commend the piety and catholic faith of the emperor whom they gave to the West; nor do they forget to observe, that when he left Constantinople, he converted his palace into the pious foundation of a public bath, a church, and a hospital for old men. [76](#) Yet some suspicious appearances are found to sully the theological fame of Anthemius. From the conversation of Philotheus, a Macedonian sectary, he had imbibed the spirit of religious toleration; and the Heretics of Rome would have assembled with impunity, if the bold and vehement censure which Pope Hilary pronounced in the church of St. Peter, had not obliged him to abjure the unpopular indulgence. [77](#) Even the Pagans, a feeble and obscure remnant, conceived some vain hopes, from the indifference, or partiality, of Anthemius; and his singular friendship for the philosopher Severus, whom he promoted to the consulship, was ascribed to a secret project, of reviving the ancient worship of the gods. [78](#) These idols were crumbled into dust: and the mythology which had once been the creed of nations, was so universally disbelieved, that it might be employed without scandal, or at least without suspicion, by Christian poets. [79](#) Yet the vestiges of superstition were not absolutely obliterated, and the festival of the Lupercalia, whose origin had preceded the foundation of Rome, was still celebrated under the reign of Anthemius. The savage and simple rites were expressive of an early state of society before the invention of arts and agriculture. The rustic deities who presided over the toils and pleasures of the pastoral life, Pan, Faunus, and their train of satyrs, were such as the fancy of shepherds might create, sportive, petulant, and lascivious; whose power was limited, and whose malice was inoffensive. A goat was the offering the best adapted to their character and

attributes; the flesh of the victim was roasted on willow spits; and the riotous youths, who crowded to the feast, ran naked about the fields, with leather thongs in their hands, communicating, as it was supposed, the blessing of fecundity to the women whom they touched. [80](#) The altar of Pan was erected, perhaps by Evander the Arcadian, in a dark recess in the side of the Palantine hill, watered by a perpetual fountain, and shaded by a hanging grove. A tradition, that, in the same place, Romulus and Remus were suckled by the wolf, rendered it still more sacred and venerable in the eyes of the Romans; and this sylvan spot was gradually surrounded by the stately edifices of the Forum. [81](#) After the conversion of the Imperial city, the Christians still continued, in the month of February, the annual celebration of the Lupercalia; to which they ascribed a secret and mysterious influence on the genial powers of the animal and vegetable world.

The bishops of Rome were solicitous to abolish a profane custom, so repugnant to the spirit of Christianity; but their zeal was not supported by the authority of the civil magistrate: the inveterate abuse subsisted till the end of the fifth century, and Pope Gelasius, who purified the capital from the last stain of idolatry, appeased by a formal apology, the murmurs of the senate and people. [82](#)

76

[\(return\)](#)

[The palace of Anthemius stood on the banks of the Propontis. In the ninth century, Alexius, the son-in-law of the emperor Theophilus, obtained permission to purchase the ground; and ended his days in a monastery which he founded on that delightful spot. Ducange Constantinopolis Christiana, p. 117, 152.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

[Papa Hilarius... apud beatum Petrum Apostolum, palam ne id fieret, clara voce constrinxit, in tantum ut non ea facienda cum interpositione juramenti idem promitteret Imperator. Gelasius Epistol ad Andronicum, apud Baron. A.D. 467, No. 3. The cardinal observes, with some complacency, that it was much easier to plant heresies at Constantinople, than at Rome.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[Damascius, in the life of the philosopher Isidore, apud Photium, p. 1049. Damascius, who lived under Justinian, composed another work, consisting of 570 praeternatural stories of souls, daemons, apparitions, the dotage of Platonic Paganism.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[In the poetical works of Sidonius, which he afterwards condemned, (l. ix. epist. 16, p. 285,) the fabulous deities are the principal actors. If Jerom was scourged by the angels for only reading Virgil, the bishop of Clermont, for such a vile imitation, deserved an additional whipping from the Muses.]

- 80 [\(return\)](#)
[Ovid (Fast. l. ii. 267-452) has given an amusing description of the follies of antiquity, which still inspired so much respect, that a grave magistrate, running naked through the streets, was not an object of astonishment or laughter.]
- 81 [\(return\)](#)
[See Dionys. Halicarn. l. i. p. 25, 65, edit. Hudson. The Roman antiquaries Donatus (l. ii. c. 18, p. 173, 174) and Nardini (p. 386, 387) have labored to ascertain the true situation of the Lupercal.]
- 82 [\(return\)](#)
[Baronius published, from the MSS. of the Vatican, this epistle of Pope Gelasius, (A.D. 496, No. 28-45,) which is entitled *Adversus Andromachum Senatorem, caeterosque Romanos, qui Lupercalia secundum morem pristinum colenda constituebant*. Gelasius always supposes that his adversaries are nominal Christians, and, that he may not yield to them in absurd prejudice, he imputes to this harmless festival all the calamities of the age.]

Chapter XXXVI: Total Extinction Of The Western Empire.— Part IV.

In all his public declarations, the emperor Leo assumes the authority, and professes the affection, of a father, for his son Anthemius, with whom he had divided the administration of the universe. [83](#) The situation, and perhaps the character, of Leo, dissuaded him from exposing his person to the toils and dangers of an African war. But the powers of the Eastern empire were strenuously exerted to deliver Italy and the Mediterranean from the Vandals; and Genseric, who had so long oppressed both the land and sea, was threatened from every side with a formidable invasion. The campaign was opened by a bold and successful enterprise of the praefect Heraclius. [84](#) The troops of Egypt, Thebais, and Libya, were embarked, under his command; and the Arabs, with a train of horses and camels, opened the roads of the desert. Heraclius landed on the coast of Tripoli, surprised and subdued the cities of that province, and prepared, by a laborious march, which Cato had formerly executed, [85](#) to join the Imperial army under the walls of Carthage. The intelligence of this loss extorted from Genseric some insidious and ineffectual propositions of peace; but he was still more seriously alarmed by the reconciliation of Marcellinus with the two empires. The independent patrician had been persuaded to acknowledge the legitimate title of Anthemius, whom he accompanied in his journey to Rome; the Dalmatian fleet was received into the harbors of Italy; the active valor of Marcellinus expelled the Vandals from the Island of Sardinia; and the languid efforts of the West added some weight to the immense

preparations of the Eastern Romans. The expense of the naval armament, which Leo sent against the Vandals, has been distinctly ascertained; and the curious and instructive account displays the wealth of the declining empire. The Royal demesnes, or private patrimony of the prince, supplied seventeen thousand pounds of gold; forty-seven thousand pounds of gold, and seven hundred thousand of silver, were levied and paid into the treasury by the Prætorian præfects. But the cities were reduced to extreme poverty; and the diligent calculation of fines and forfeitures, as a valuable object of the revenue, does not suggest the idea of a just or merciful administration. The whole expense, by whatsoever means it was defrayed, of the African campaign, amounted to the sum of one hundred and thirty thousand pounds of gold, about five millions two hundred thousand pounds sterling, at a time when the value of money appears, from the comparative price of corn, to have been somewhat higher than in the present age. [86](#) The fleet that sailed from Constantinople to Carthage, consisted of eleven hundred and thirteen ships, and the number of soldiers and mariners exceeded one hundred thousand men. Basiliscus, the brother of the empress Vorina, was intrusted with this important command. His sister, the wife of Leo, had exaggerated the merit of his former exploits against the Scythians. But the discovery of his guilt, or incapacity, was reserved for the African war; and his friends could only save his military reputation by asserting, that he had conspired with Aspar to spare Genseric, and to betray the last hope of the Western empire.

83

[\(return\)](#)

[Itaque nos quibus totius mundi regimen commisit superna provisio.... Pius et triumphator semper Augustus filius noster Anthemius, licet Divina Majestas et nostra creatio pietati ejus plenam Imperii commiserit potestatem, &c..... Such is the dignified style of Leo, whom Anthemius respectfully names, Dominus et Pater meus Princeps sacratissimus Leo. See Novell. Anthem. tit. ii. iii. p. 38, ad calcem Cod. Theod.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[The expedition of Heraclius is clouded with difficulties, (Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. vi. p. 640,) and it requires some dexterity to use the circumstances afforded by Theophanes, without injury to the more respectable evidence of Procopius.]

85

[\(return\)](#)

[The march of Cato from Berenice, in the province of Cyrene, was much longer than that of Heraclius from Tripoli. He passed the deep sandy desert in thirty days, and it was found necessary to provide, besides the ordinary supplies, a great number of skins filled with water, and several Psylli, who were supposed to possess the art of sucking the wounds

which had been made by the serpents of their native country. See Plutarch in Caton. Uticens. tom. iv. p. 275. Straben Geograph. l. xxii. p. 1193.]

86

[\(return\)](#)

[The principal sum is clearly expressed by Procopius, (de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 6, p. 191;) the smaller constituent parts, which Tillemont, (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. vi. p. 396) has laboriously collected from the Byzantine writers, are less certain, and less important. The historian Malchus laments the public misery, (Excerpt. ex Suida in Corp. Hist. Byzant. p. 58;) but he is surely unjust, when he charges Leo with hoarding the treasures which he extorted from the people. * Note: Compare likewise the newly-discovered work of Lydus, de Magistratibus, ed. Hase, Paris, 1812, (and in the new collection of the Byzantines,) l. iii. c. 43. Lydus states the expenditure at 65,000 lbs. of gold, 700,000 of silver. But Lydus exaggerates the fleet to the incredible number of 10,000 long ships, (Liburnae,) and the troops to 400,000 men. Lydus describes this fatal measure, of which he charges the blame on Basiliscus, as the shipwreck of the state. From that time all the revenues of the empire were anticipated; and the finances fell into inextricable confusion.—M.]

Experience has shown, that the success of an invader most commonly depends on the vigor and celerity of his operations. The strength and sharpness of the first impression are blunted by delay; the health and spirit of the troops insensibly languish in a distant climate; the naval and military force, a mighty effort which perhaps can never be repeated, is silently consumed; and every hour that is wasted in negotiation, accustoms the enemy to contemplate and examine those hostile terrors, which, on their first appearance, he deemed irresistible. The formidable navy of Basiliscus pursued its prosperous navigation from the Thracian Bosphorus to the coast of Africa. He landed his troops at Cape Bona, or the promontory of Mercury, about forty miles from Carthage. [87](#) The army of Heraclius, and the fleet of Marcellinus, either joined or seconded the Imperial lieutenant; and the Vandals who opposed his progress by sea or land, were successively vanquished. [88](#) If Basiliscus had seized the moment of consternation, and boldly advanced to the capital, Carthage must have surrendered, and the kingdom of the Vandals was extinguished. Genseric beheld the danger with firmness, and eluded it with his veteran dexterity. He protested, in the most respectful language, that he was ready to submit his person, and his dominions, to the will of the emperor; but he requested a truce of five days to regulate the terms of his submission; and it was universally believed, that his secret liberality contributed to the success of this public negotiation. Instead of obstinately refusing whatever indulgence his enemy so earnestly solicited, the guilty, or the credulous, Basiliscus consented to the fatal

truce; and his imprudent security seemed to proclaim, that he already considered himself as the conqueror of Africa. During this short interval, the wind became favorable to the designs of Genseric. He manned his largest ships of war with the bravest of the Moors and Vandals; and they towed after them many large barks, filled with combustible materials. In the obscurity of the night, these destructive vessels were impelled against the unguarded and unsuspecting fleet of the Romans, who were awakened by the sense of their instant danger. Their close and crowded order assisted the progress of the fire, which was communicated with rapid and irresistible violence; and the noise of the wind, the crackling of the flames, the dissonant cries of the soldiers and mariners, who could neither command nor obey, increased the horror of the nocturnal tumult. Whilst they labored to extricate themselves from the fire-ships, and to save at least a part of the navy, the galleys of Genseric assaulted them with temperate and disciplined valor; and many of the Romans, who escaped the fury of the flames, were destroyed or taken by the victorious Vandals. Among the events of that disastrous night, the heroic, or rather desperate, courage of John, one of the principal officers of Basiliscus, has rescued his name from oblivion. When the ship, which he had bravely defended, was almost consumed, he threw himself in his armor into the sea, disdainfully rejected the esteem and pity of Genso, the son of Genseric, who pressed him to accept honorable quarter, and sunk under the waves; exclaiming, with his last breath, that he would never fall alive into the hands of those impious dogs. Actuated by a far different spirit, Basiliscus, whose station was the most remote from danger, disgracefully fled in the beginning of the engagement, returned to Constantinople with the loss of more than half of his fleet and army, and sheltered his guilty head in the sanctuary of St. Sophia, till his sister, by her tears and entreaties, could obtain his pardon from the indignant emperor. Heraclius effected his retreat through the desert; Marcellinus retired to Sicily, where he was assassinated, perhaps at the instigation of Ricimer, by one of his own captains; and the king of the Vandals expressed his surprise and satisfaction, that the Romans themselves should remove from the world his most formidable antagonists. [89](#) After the failure of this great expedition, [891](#) Genseric again became the tyrant of the sea: the coasts of Italy, Greece, and Asia, were again exposed to his revenge and avarice; Tripoli and Sardinia returned to his obedience; he added Sicily to the number of his provinces; and before he died, in the fulness of years and of glory, he beheld the final extinction of the empire of the West. [90](#)

87

[\(return\)](#)

[This promontory is forty miles from Carthage, (Procop. l. i. c. 6, p. 192,) and twenty leagues from Sicily, (Shaw's Travels, p. 89.) Scipio landed farther in the bay, at the fair promontory; see the animated description of Livy, xxix. 26, 27.]

88

[\(return\)](#)

[Theophanes (p. 100) affirms that many ships of the Vandals were sunk. The assertion of Jornandes, (de Successione Regn.,) that Basiliscus attacked

Carthage, must be understood in a very qualified sense]

89 [\(return\)](#)

[Damascius in Vit. Isidor. apud Phot. p. 1048. It will appear, by comparing the three short chronicles of the times, that Marcellinus had fought near Carthage, and was killed in Sicily.]

891 [\(return\)](#)

[According to Lydus, Leo, distracted by this and the other calamities of his reign, particularly a dreadful fire at Constantinople, abandoned the palace, like another Orestes, and was preparing to quit Constantinople forever l iii. c. 44, p. 230.—M.]

90 [\(return\)](#)

[For the African war, see Procopius, de Bell. (Vandal. l. i. c. 6, p. 191, 192, 193,) Theophanes, (p. 99, 100, 101,) Cedrenus, (p. 349, 350,) and Zonaras, (tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 50, 51.) Montesquieu (Considerations sur la Grandeur, &c., c. xx. tom. iii. p. 497) has made a judicious observation on the failure of these great naval armaments.]

During his long and active reign, the African monarch had studiously cultivated the friendship of the Barbarians of Europe, whose arms he might employ in a seasonable and effectual diversion against the two empires. After the death of Attila, he renewed his alliance with the Visigoths of Gaul; and the sons of the elder Theodoric, who successively reigned over that warlike nation, were easily persuaded, by the sense of interest, to forget the cruel affront which Genseric had inflicted on their sister. [91](#) The death of the emperor Majorian delivered Theodoric the Second from the restraint of fear, and perhaps of honor; he violated his recent treaty with the Romans; and the ample territory of Narbonne, which he firmly united to his dominions, became the immediate reward of his perfidy. The selfish policy of Ricimer encouraged him to invade the provinces which were in the possession of Aegidius, his rival; but the active count, by the defence of Arles, and the victory of Orleans, saved Gaul, and checked, during his lifetime, the progress of the Visigoths. Their ambition was soon rekindled; and the design of extinguishing the Roman empire in Spain and Gaul was conceived, and almost completed, in the reign of Euric, who assassinated his brother Theodoric, and displayed, with a more savage temper, superior abilities, both in peace and war. He passed the Pyrenees at the head of a numerous army, subdued the cities of Saragossa and Pampeluna, vanquished in battle the martial nobles of the Tarragonese province, carried his victorious arms into the heart of Lusitania, and permitted the Suevi to hold the kingdom of Galicia under the Gothic monarchy of Spain. [92](#) The efforts of Euric were not less vigorous, or less successful, in Gaul; and throughout the country that extends from the Pyrenees to the Rhone and the Loire, Berry and Auvergne were the only cities, or dioceses, which refused to acknowledge him as their master. [93](#) In the defence of

Clermont, their principal town, the inhabitants of Auvergne sustained, with inflexible resolution, the miseries of war, pestilence, and famine; and the Visigoths, relinquishing the fruitless siege, suspended the hopes of that important conquest. The youth of the province were animated by the heroic, and almost incredible, valor of Ecdicius, the son of the emperor Avitus, [94](#) who made a desperate sally with only eighteen horsemen, boldly attacked the Gothic army, and, after maintaining a flying skirmish, retired safe and victorious within the walls of Clermont. His charity was equal to his courage: in a time of extreme scarcity, four thousand poor were fed at his expense; and his private influence levied an army of Burgundians for the deliverance of Auvergne. From his virtues alone the faithful citizens of Gaul derived any hopes of safety or freedom; and even such virtues were insufficient to avert the impending ruin of their country, since they were anxious to learn, from his authority and example, whether they should prefer the alternative of exile or servitude. [95](#) The public confidence was lost; the resources of the state were exhausted; and the Gauls had too much reason to believe, that Anthemius, who reigned in Italy, was incapable of protecting his distressed subjects beyond the Alps. The feeble emperor could only procure for their defence the service of twelve thousand British auxiliaries. Riothamus, one of the independent kings, or chieftains, of the island, was persuaded to transport his troops to the continent of Gaul: he sailed up the Loire, and established his quarters in Berry, where the people complained of these oppressive allies, till they were destroyed or dispersed by the arms of the Visigoths. [96](#)

91 [\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes is our best guide through the reigns of Theodoric II. and Euric, (de Rebus Geticis, c. 44, 45, 46, 47, p. 675-681.) Idatius ends too soon, and Isidore is too sparing of the information which he might have given on the affairs of Spain. The events that relate to Gaul are laboriously illustrated in the third book of the Abbe Dubos, Hist. Critique, tom. i. p. 424-620.]

92 [\(return\)](#)

[See Mariana, Hist. Hispan. tom. i. l. v. c. 5. p. 162.]

93 [\(return\)](#)

[An imperfect, but original, picture of Gaul, more especially of Auvergne, is shown by Sidonius; who, as a senator, and afterwards as a bishop, was deeply interested in the fate of his country. See l. v. epist. 1, 5, 9, &c.]

94 [\(return\)](#)

[Sidonius, l. iii. epist. 3, p. 65-68. Greg. Turon. l. ii. c. 24, in tom. ii. p. 174. Jornandes, c. 45, p. 675. Perhaps Ecdicius was only the son-in-law of Avitus, his wife's son by another husband.]

95 [\(return\)](#)

[Si nullae a republica vires, nulla praesidia; si

nullae, quantum rumor est, Anthemii principis opes; statuit, te auctore, nobilitas, seu patriaca dimittere seu capillos, (Sidon. l. ii. epist. 1, p. 33.) The last words Sirmond, (Not. p. 25) may likewise denote the clerical tonsure, which was indeed the choice of Sidonius himself.]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[The history of these Britons may be traced in Jornandes, (c. 45, p. 678,) Sidonius, (l. iii. epistol. 9, p. 73, 74,) and Gregory of Tours, (l. ii. c. 18, in tom. ii. p. 170.) Sidonius (who styles these mercenary troops argutos, armatos, tumultuosos, virtute numero, contul ernio, contumaces) addresses their general in a tone of friendship and familiarity.]

One of the last acts of jurisdiction, which the Roman senate exercised over their subjects of Gaul, was the trial and condemnation of Arvandus, the Prætorian præfect. Sidonius, who rejoices that he lived under a reign in which he might pity and assist a state criminal, has expressed, with tenderness and freedom, the faults of his indiscreet and unfortunate friend. [97](#) From the perils which he had escaped, Arvandus imbibed confidence rather than wisdom; and such was the various, though uniform, imprudence of his behavior, that his prosperity must appear much more surprising than his downfall. The second præfecture, which he obtained within the term of five years, abolished the merit and popularity of his preceding administration. His easy temper was corrupted by flattery, and exasperated by opposition; he was forced to satisfy his importunate creditors with the spoils of the province; his capricious insolence offended the nobles of Gaul, and he sunk under the weight of the public hatred. The mandate of his disgrace summoned him to justify his conduct before the senate; and he passed the Sea of Tuscany with a favorable wind, the presage, as he vainly imagined, of his future fortunes. A decent respect was still observed for the Proefectorian rank; and on his arrival at Rome, Arvandus was committed to the hospitality, rather than to the custody, of Flavius Asellus, the count of the sacred largesses, who resided in the Capitol. [98](#) He was eagerly pursued by his accusers, the four deputies of Gaul, who were all distinguished by their birth, their dignities, or their eloquence. In the name of a great province, and according to the forms of Roman jurisprudence, they instituted a civil and criminal action, requiring such restitution as might compensate the losses of individuals, and such punishment as might satisfy the justice of the state. Their charges of corrupt oppression were numerous and weighty; but they placed their secret dependence on a letter which they had intercepted, and which they could prove, by the evidence of his secretary, to have been dictated by Arvandus himself. The author of this letter seemed to dissuade the king of the Goths from a peace with the Greek emperor: he suggested the attack of the Britons on the Loire; and he recommended a division of Gaul, according to the law of nations, between the Visigoths and the Burgundians. [99](#) These pernicious schemes, which a friend could only palliate by the reproaches of vanity and

indiscretion, were susceptible of a treasonable interpretation; and the deputies had artfully resolved not to produce their most formidable weapons till the decisive moment of the contest. But their intentions were discovered by the zeal of Sidonius. He immediately apprised the unsuspecting criminal of his danger; and sincerely lamented, without any mixture of anger, the haughty presumption of Arvandus, who rejected, and even resented, the salutary advice of his friends. Ignorant of his real situation, Arvandus showed himself in the Capitol in the white robe of a candidate, accepted indiscriminate salutations and offers of service, examined the shops of the merchants, the silks and gems, sometimes with the indifference of a spectator, and sometimes with the attention of a purchaser; and complained of the times, of the senate, of the prince, and of the delays of justice. His complaints were soon removed. An early day was fixed for his trial; and Arvandus appeared, with his accusers, before a numerous assembly of the Roman senate. The mournful garb which they affected, excited the compassion of the judges, who were scandalized by the gay and splendid dress of their adversary: and when the praefect Arvandus, with the first of the Gallic deputies, were directed to take their places on the senatorial benches, the same contrast of pride and modesty was observed in their behavior. In this memorable judgment, which presented a lively image of the old republic, the Gauls exposed, with force and freedom, the grievances of the province; and as soon as the minds of the audience were sufficiently inflamed, they recited the fatal epistle. The obstinacy of Arvandus was founded on the strange supposition, that a subject could not be convicted of treason, unless he had actually conspired to assume the purple. As the paper was read, he repeatedly, and with a loud voice, acknowledged it for his genuine composition; and his astonishment was equal to his dismay, when the unanimous voice of the senate declared him guilty of a capital offence. By their decree, he was degraded from the rank of a praefect to the obscure condition of a plebeian, and ignominiously dragged by servile hands to the public prison. After a fortnight's adjournment, the senate was again convened to pronounce the sentence of his death; but while he expected, in the Island of Aesculapius, the expiration of the thirty days allowed by an ancient law to the vilest malefactors, [100](#) his friends interposed, the emperor Anthemius relented, and the praefect of Gaul obtained the milder punishment of exile and confiscation. The faults of Arvandus might deserve compassion; but the impunity of Seronatus accused the justice of the republic, till he was condemned and executed, on the complaint of the people of Auvergne. That flagitious minister, the Catiline of his age and country, held a secret correspondence with the Visigoths, to betray the province which he oppressed: his industry was continually exercised in the discovery of new taxes and obsolete offences; and his extravagant vices would have inspired contempt, if they had not excited fear and abhorrence. [101](#)

Sidonius, however vitiated by a false and affected taste, is much superior to his insipid verses.]

98 [\(return\)](#)

[When the Capitol ceased to be a temple, it was appropriated to the use of the civil magistrate; and it is still the residence of the Roman senator. The jewellers, &c., might be allowed to expose then precious wares in the porticos.]

99 [\(return\)](#)

[Haec ad regem Gothorum, charta videbatur emitti, pacem cum Graeco Imperatore dissuadens, Britannos super Ligerim sitos impugnari oportere, demonstrans, cum Burgundionibus jure gentium Gallias dividi debere confirmans.]

100 [\(return\)](#)

[Senatusconsultum Tiberianum, (Sirmond Not. p. 17;) but that law allowed only ten days between the sentence and execution; the remaining twenty were added in the reign of Theodosius.]

101 [\(return\)](#)

[Catilina seculi nostri. Sidonius, l. ii. epist. 1, p. 33; l. v. epist. 13, p. 143; l. vii. epist. vii. p. 185. He execrates the crimes, and applauds the punishment, of Seronatus, perhaps with the indignation of a virtuous citizen, perhaps with the resentment of a personal enemy.]

Such criminals were not beyond the reach of justice; but whatever might be the guilt of Ricimer, that powerful Barbarian was able to contend or to negotiate with the prince, whose alliance he had condescended to accept. The peaceful and prosperous reign which Anthemius had promised to the West, was soon clouded by misfortune and discord. Ricimer, apprehensive, or impatient, of a superior, retired from Rome, and fixed his residence at Milan; an advantageous situation either to invite or to repel the warlike tribes that were seated between the Alps and the Danube. [102](#) Italy was gradually divided into two independent and hostile kingdoms; and the nobles of Liguria, who trembled at the near approach of a civil war, fell prostrate at the feet of the patrician, and conjured him to spare their unhappy country. “For my own part,” replied Ricimer, in a tone of insolent moderation, “I am still inclined to embrace the friendship of the Galatian; [103](#) but who will undertake to appease his anger, or to mitigate the pride, which always rises in proportion to our submission?” They informed him, that Epiphanius, bishop of Pavia, [104](#) united the wisdom of the serpent with the innocence of the dove; and appeared confident, that the eloquence of such an ambassador must prevail against the strongest opposition, either of interest or passion. Their recommendation was approved; and Epiphanius, assuming the benevolent office of mediation, proceeded without delay to Rome, where he was received with the honors due to his merit and reputation. The oration of a bishop in favor of peace may be easily

supposed; he argued, that, in all possible circumstances, the forgiveness of injuries must be an act of mercy, or magnanimity, or prudence; and he seriously admonished the emperor to avoid a contest with a fierce Barbarian, which might be fatal to himself, and must be ruinous to his dominions. Anthemius acknowledged the truth of his maxims; but he deeply felt, with grief and indignation, the behavior of Ricimer, and his passion gave eloquence and energy to his discourse. “What favors,” he warmly exclaimed, “have we refused to this ungrateful man? What provocations have we not endured! Regardless of the majesty of the purple, I gave my daughter to a Goth; I sacrificed my own blood to the safety of the republic. The liberality which ought to have secured the eternal attachment of Ricimer has exasperated him against his benefactor. What wars has he not excited against the empire! How often has he instigated and assisted the fury of hostile nations! Shall I now accept his perfidious friendship? Can I hope that he will respect the engagements of a treaty, who has already violated the duties of a son?” But the anger of Anthemius evaporated in these passionate exclamations: he insensibly yielded to the proposals of Epiphanius; and the bishop returned to his diocese with the satisfaction of restoring the peace of Italy, by a reconciliation, [105](#) of which the sincerity and continuance might be reasonably suspected. The clemency of the emperor was extorted from his weakness; and Ricimer suspended his ambitious designs till he had secretly prepared the engines with which he resolved to subvert the throne of Anthemius. The mask of peace and moderation was then thrown aside. The army of Ricimer was fortified by a numerous reenforcement of Burgundians and Oriental Suevi: he disclaimed all allegiance to the Greek emperor, marched from Milan to the Gates of Rome, and fixing his camp on the banks of the Anio, impatiently expected the arrival of Olybrius, his Imperial candidate.

102

[\(return\)](#)

[Ricimer, under the reign of Anthemius, defeated and slew in battle Beorgor, king of the Alani, (Jornandes, c. 45, p. 678.) His sister had married the king of the Burgundians, and he maintained an intimate connection with the Suevic colony established in Pannonia and Noricum.]

103

[\(return\)](#)

[Galatam concitatum. Sirmond (in his notes to Ennodius) applies this appellation to Anthemius himself. The emperor was probably born in the province of Galatia, whose inhabitants, the Gallo-Grecians, were supposed to unite the vices of a savage and a corrupted people.]

104

[\(return\)](#)

[Epiphanius was thirty years bishop of Pavia, (A.D. 467-497;) see Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xvi. p. 788. His name and actions would have been unknown to posterity, if Ennodius, one of his successors, had not written his life; (Sirmond,

Opera tom. i. p. 1647-1692;) in which he represents him as one of the greatest characters of the age]

105

[\(return\)](#)

[Ennodius (p. 1659-1664) has related this embassy of Epiphanius; and his narrative, verbose and turgid as it must appear, illustrates some curious passages in the fall of the Western empire.]

The senator Olybrius, of the Anician family, might esteem himself the lawful heir of the Western empire. He had married Placidia, the younger daughter of Valentinian, after she was restored by Genseric; who still detained her sister Eudoxia, as the wife, or rather as the captive, of his son. The king of the Vandals supported, by threats and solicitations, the fair pretensions of his Roman ally; and assigned, as one of the motives of the war, the refusal of the senate and people to acknowledge their lawful prince, and the unworthy preference which they had given to a stranger. [106](#) The friendship of the public enemy might render Olybrius still more unpopular to the Italians; but when Ricimer meditated the ruin of the emperor Anthemius, he tempted, with the offer of a diadem, the candidate who could justify his rebellion by an illustrious name and a royal alliance. The husband of Placidia, who, like most of his ancestors, had been invested with the consular dignity, might have continued to enjoy a secure and splendid fortune in the peaceful residence of Constantinople; nor does he appear to have been tormented by such a genius as cannot be amused or occupied, unless by the administration of an empire. Yet Olybrius yielded to the importunities of his friends, perhaps of his wife; rashly plunged into the dangers and calamities of a civil war; and, with the secret connivance of the emperor Leo, accepted the Italian purple, which was bestowed, and resumed, at the capricious will of a Barbarian. He landed without obstacle (for Genseric was master of the sea) either at Ravenna, or the port of Ostia, and immediately proceeded to the camp of Ricimer, where he was received as the sovereign of the Western world. [107](#)

106

[\(return\)](#)

[Priscus, Excerpt. Legation p. 74. Procopius de Bell. Vandel l. i. c. 6, p. 191. Eudoxia and her daughter were restored after the death of Majorian. Perhaps the consulship of Olybrius (A.D. 464) was bestowed as a nuptial present.]

107

[\(return\)](#)

[The hostile appearance of Olybrius is fixed (notwithstanding the opinion of Pagi) by the duration of his reign. The secret connivance of Leo is acknowledged by Theophanes and the Paschal Chronicle. We are ignorant of his motives; but in this obscure period, our ignorance extends to the most public and important facts.]

The patrician, who had extended his posts from the Anio to the Melvian bridge, already possessed two quarters of Rome, the Vatican and the Janiculum, which are

separated by the Tyber from the rest of the city; [108](#) and it may be conjectured, that an assembly of seceding senators imitated, in the choice of Olybrius, the forms of a legal election. But the body of the senate and people firmly adhered to the cause of Anthemius; and the more effectual support of a Gothic army enabled him to prolong his reign, and the public distress, by a resistance of three months, which produced the concomitant evils of famine and pestilence. At length Ricimer made a furious assault on the bridge of Hadrian, or St. Angelo; and the narrow pass was defended with equal valor by the Goths, till the death of Gilimer, their leader. The victorious troops, breaking down every barrier, rushed with irresistible violence into the heart of the city, and Rome (if we may use the language of a contemporary pope) was subverted by the civil fury of Anthemius and Ricimer. [109](#) The unfortunate Anthemius was dragged from his concealment, and inhumanly massacred by the command of his son-in-law; who thus added a third, or perhaps a fourth, emperor to the number of his victims. The soldiers, who united the rage of factious citizens with the savage manners of Barbarians, were indulged, without control, in the license of rapine and murder: the crowd of slaves and plebeians, who were unconcerned in the event, could only gain by the indiscriminate pillage; and the face of the city exhibited the strange contrast of stern cruelty and dissolute intemperance. [110](#) Forty days after this calamitous event, the subject, not of glory, but of guilt, Italy was delivered, by a painful disease, from the tyrant Ricimer, who bequeathed the command of his army to his nephew Gundobald, one of the princes of the Burgundians. In the same year all the principal actors in this great revolution were removed from the stage; and the whole reign of Olybrius, whose death does not betray any symptoms of violence, is included within the term of seven months. He left one daughter, the offspring of his marriage with Placidia; and the family of the great Theodosius, transplanted from Spain to Constantinople, was propagated in the female line as far as the eighth generation. [111](#)

108

[\(return\)](#)

[Of the fourteen regions, or quarters, into which Rome was divided by Augustus, only one, the Janiculum, lay on the Tuscan side of the Tyber. But, in the fifth century, the Vatican suburb formed a considerable city; and in the ecclesiastical distribution, which had been recently made by Simplicius, the reigning pope, two of the seven regions, or parishes of Rome, depended on the church of St. Peter. See Nardini *Roma Antica*, p. 67. It would require a tedious dissertation to mark the circumstances, in which I am inclined to depart from the topography of that learned Roman.]

109

[\(return\)](#)

[Nuper Anthemii et Ricimeris civili furore subversa est. Gelasius in *Epist. ad Andromach.* apud Baron. A.D. 496, No. 42, Sigonius (tom. i. l. xiv. de *Occidentali Imperio*, p. 542, 543,) and

Muratori (Annali d'Italia, tom. iv. p. 308, 309,) with the aid of a less imperfect Ms. of the Historia Miscella., have illustrated this dark and bloody transaction.]

110

[\(return\)](#)

[Such had been the saeva ac deformis urbe tota facies, when Rome was assaulted and stormed by the troops of Vespasian, (see Tacit. Hist. iii. 82, 83;) and every cause of mischief had since acquired much additional energy. The revolution of ages may bring round the same calamities; but ages may revolve without producing a Tacitus to describe them.]

111

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ducange, Familiae Byzantin. p. 74, 75. Areobindus, who appears to have married the niece of the emperor Justinian, was the eighth descendant of the elder Theodosius.]

Chapter XXXVI: Total Extinction Of The Western Empire.— Part V.

Whilst the vacant throne of Italy was abandoned to lawless Barbarians, [112](#) the election of a new colleague was seriously agitated in the council of Leo. The empress Verina, studious to promote the greatness of her own family, had married one of her nieces to Julius Nepos, who succeeded his uncle Marcellinus in the sovereignty of Dalmatia, a more solid possession than the title which he was persuaded to accept, of Emperor of the West. But the measures of the Byzantine court were so languid and irresolute, that many months elapsed after the death of Anthemius, and even of Olybrius, before their destined successor could show himself, with a respectable force, to his Italian subjects. During that interval, Glycerius, an obscure soldier, was invested with the purple by his patron Gundobald; but the Burgundian prince was unable, or unwilling, to support his nomination by a civil war: the pursuits of domestic ambition recalled him beyond the Alps, [113](#) and his client was permitted to exchange the Roman sceptre for the bishopric of Salona. After extinguishing such a competitor, the emperor Nepos was acknowledged by the senate, by the Italians, and by the provincials of Gaul; his moral virtues, and military talents, were loudly celebrated; and those who derived any private benefit from his government, announced, in prophetic strains, the restoration of the public felicity. [114](#) Their hopes (if such hopes had been entertained) were confounded within the term of a single year, and the treaty of peace, which ceded Auvergne to the Visigoths, is the only event of his short and inglorious reign. The most faithful subjects of Gaul were sacrificed, by the Italian emperor, to the hope of domestic security; [115](#) but his repose was soon invaded by a furious sedition of the Barbarian

confederates, who, under the command of Orestes, their general, were in full march from Rome to Ravenna. Nepos trembled at their approach; and, instead of placing a just confidence in the strength of Ravenna, he hastily escaped to his ships, and retired to his Dalmatian principality, on the opposite coast of the Adriatic. By this shameful abdication, he protracted his life about five years, in a very ambiguous state, between an emperor and an exile, till he was assassinated at Salona by the ungrateful Glycerius, who was translated, perhaps as the reward of his crime, to the archbishopric of Milan. [116](#)

112 [\(return\)](#)

[The last revolutions of the Western empire are faintly marked in Theophanes, (p. 102,) Jornandes, (c. 45, p. 679,) the Chronicle of Marcellinus, and the Fragments of an anonymous writer, published by Valesius at the end of Ammianus, (p. 716, 717.) If Photius had not been so wretchedly concise, we should derive much information from the contemporary histories of Malchus and Candidus. See his Extracts, p. 172-179.]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[See Greg. Turon. l. ii. c. 28, in tom. ii. p. 175. Dubos, Hist. Critique, tom. i. p. 613. By the murder or death of his two brothers, Gundobald acquired the sole possession of the kingdom of Burgundy, whose ruin was hastened by their discord.]

114 [\(return\)](#)

[Julius Nepos armis pariter summus Augustus ac moribus. Sidonius, l. v. ep. 16, p. 146. Nepos had given to Ecdicius the title of Patrician, which Anthemius had promised, decessoris Anthemii fidem absolvit. See l. viii. ep. 7, p. 224.]

115 [\(return\)](#)

[Epiphanius was sent ambassador from Nepos to the Visigoths, for the purpose of ascertaining the fines Imperii Italici, (Ennodius in Sirmond, tom. i. p. 1665-1669.) His pathetic discourse concealed the disgraceful secret which soon excited the just and bitter complaints of the bishop of Clermont.]

116 [\(return\)](#)

[Malchus, apud Phot. p. 172. Ennod. Epigram. lxxxii. in Sirmond. Oper. tom. i. p. 1879. Some doubt may, however, be raised on the identity of the emperor and the archbishop.]

The nations who had asserted their independence after the death of Attila, were established, by the right of possession or conquest, in the boundless countries to the north of the Danube; or in the Roman provinces between the river and the Alps. But the bravest of their youth enlisted in the army of confederates, who formed the defence and

the terror of Italy; [117](#) and in this promiscuous multitude, the names of the Heruli, the Scyrri, the Alani, the Turcilingi, and the Rugians, appear to have predominated. The example of these warriors was imitated by Orestes, [118](#) the son of Tatullus, and the father of the last Roman emperor of the West. Orestes, who has been already mentioned in this History, had never deserted his country. His birth and fortunes rendered him one of the most illustrious subjects of Pannonia. When that province was ceded to the Huns, he entered into the service of Attila, his lawful sovereign, obtained the office of his secretary, and was repeatedly sent ambassador to Constantinople, to represent the person, and signify the commands, of the imperious monarch. The death of that conqueror restored him to his freedom; and Orestes might honorably refuse either to follow the sons of Attila into the Scythian desert, or to obey the Ostrogoths, who had usurped the dominion of Pannonia. He preferred the service of the Italian princes, the successors of Valentinian; and as he possessed the qualifications of courage, industry, and experience, he advanced with rapid steps in the military profession, till he was elevated, by the favor of Nepos himself, to the dignities of patrician, and master-general of the troops. These troops had been long accustomed to reverence the character and authority of Orestes, who affected their manners, conversed with them in their own language, and was intimately connected with their national chieftains, by long habits of familiarity and friendship. At his solicitation they rose in arms against the obscure Greek, who presumed to claim their obedience; and when Orestes, from some secret motive, declined the purple, they consented, with the same facility, to acknowledge his son Augustulus as the emperor of the West. By the abdication of Nepos, Orestes had now attained the summit of his ambitious hopes; but he soon discovered, before the end of the first year, that the lessons of perjury and ingratitude, which a rebel must inculcate, will be resorted to against himself; and that the precarious sovereign of Italy was only permitted to choose, whether he would be the slave, or the victim, of his Barbarian mercenaries. The dangerous alliance of these strangers had oppressed and insulted the last remains of Roman freedom and dignity. At each revolution, their pay and privileges were augmented; but their insolence increased in a still more extravagant degree; they envied the fortune of their brethren in Gaul, Spain, and Africa, whose victorious arms had acquired an independent and perpetual inheritance; and they insisted on their peremptory demand, that a third part of the lands of Italy should be immediately divided among them. Orestes, with a spirit, which, in another situation, might be entitled to our esteem, chose rather to encounter the rage of an armed multitude, than to subscribe the ruin of an innocent people. He rejected the audacious demand; and his refusal was favorable to the ambition of Odoacer; a bold Barbarian, who assured his fellow-soldiers, that, if they dared to associate under his command, they might soon extort the justice which had been denied to their dutiful petitions. From all the camps and garrisons of Italy, the confederates, actuated by the same resentment and the same hopes, impatiently flocked to the standard of this popular leader; and the unfortunate patrician, overwhelmed by the torrent, hastily retreated to the strong city of Pavia, the episcopal

seat of the holy Epiphanites. Pavia was immediately besieged, the fortifications were stormed, the town was pillaged; and although the bishop might labor, with much zeal and some success, to save the property of the church, and the chastity of female captives, the tumult could only be appeased by the execution of Orestes. [119](#) His brother Paul was slain in an action near Ravenna; and the helpless Augustulus, who could no longer command the respect, was reduced to implore the clemency, of Odoacer.

117

[\(return\)](#)

[Our knowledge of these mercenaries, who subverted the Western empire, is derived from Procopius, (de Bell. Gothico, l. i. c. i. p. 308.) The popular opinion, and the recent historians, represent Odoacer in the false light of a stranger, and a king, who invaded Italy with an army of foreigners, his native subjects.]

118

[\(return\)](#)

[Orestes, qui eo tempore quando Attila ad Italiam venit, se illi unxit, ejus notarius factus fuerat. Anonym. Vales. p. 716. He is mistaken in the date; but we may credit his assertion, that the secretary of Attila was the father of Augustulus]

119

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ennodius, (in Vit. Epiphan. Sirmond, tom. i. p. 1669, 1670.) He adds weight to the narrative of Procopius, though we may doubt whether the devil actually contrived the siege of Pavia, to distress the bishop and his flock.]

That successful Barbarian was the son of Edecon; who, in some remarkable transactions, particularly described in a preceding chapter, had been the colleague of Orestes himself. [1191](#) The honor of an ambassador should be exempt from suspicion; and Edecon had listened to a conspiracy against the life of his sovereign. But this apparent guilt was expiated by his merit or repentance; his rank was eminent and conspicuous; he enjoyed the favor of Attila; and the troops under his command, who guarded, in their turn, the royal village, consisted of a tribe of Scyrri, his immediate and hereditary subjects. In the revolt of the nations, they still adhered to the Huns; and more than twelve years afterwards, the name of Edecon is honorably mentioned, in their unequal contests with the Ostrogoths; which was terminated, after two bloody battles, by the defeat and dispersion of the Scyrri. [120](#) Their gallant leader, who did not survive this national calamity, left two sons, Onulf and Odoacer, to struggle with adversity, and to maintain as they might, by rapine or service, the faithful followers of their exile. Onulf directed his steps towards Constantinople, where he sullied, by the assassination of a generous benefactor, the fame which he had acquired in arms. His brother Odoacer led a wandering life among the Barbarians of Noricum, with a mind and a fortune suited to the most desperate adventures; and when he had fixed his choice, he piously visited the cell of Severinus, the popular saint of the country, to solicit his approbation and

blessing. The lowness of the door would not admit the lofty stature of Odoacer: he was obliged to stoop; but in that humble attitude the saint could discern the symptoms of his future greatness; and addressing him in a prophetic tone, “Pursue” (said he) “your design; proceed to Italy; you will soon cast away this coarse garment of skins; and your wealth will be adequate to the liberality of your mind.” [121](#) The Barbarian, whose daring spirit accepted and ratified the prediction, was admitted into the service of the Western empire, and soon obtained an honorable rank in the guards. His manners were gradually polished, his military skill was improved, and the confederates of Italy would not have elected him for their general, unless the exploits of Odoacer had established a high opinion of his courage and capacity. [122](#) Their military acclamations saluted him with the title of king; but he abstained, during his whole reign, from the use of the purple and diadem, [123](#) lest he should offend those princes, whose subjects, by their accidental mixture, had formed the victorious army, which time and policy might insensibly unite into a great nation.

1191

[\(return\)](#)

[Manso observes that the evidence which identifies Edecon, the father of Odoacer, with the colleague of Orestes, is not conclusive. *Geschichte des Ost-Gothischen Reiches*, p. 32. But St. Martin inclines to agree with Gibbon, note, vi. 75.—M.]

120

[\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes, c. 53, 54, p. 692-695. M. de Buat (*Hist. des Peuples de l’Europe*, tom. viii. p. 221-228) has clearly explained the origin and adventures of Odoacer. I am almost inclined to believe that he was the same who pillaged Angers, and commanded a fleet of Saxon pirates on the ocean. *Greg. Turon.* l. ii. c. 18, in tom. ii. p. 170. 8 Note: According to St. Martin there is no foundation for this conjecture, vii 5—M.]

121

[\(return\)](#)

[*Vade ad Italiam, vade vilissimis nunc pellibus coopertis: sed multis cito plurima largiturus.* Anonym. *Vales.* p. 717. He quotes the life of St. Severinus, which is extant, and contains much unknown and valuable history; it was composed by his disciple Eugippius (A.D. 511) thirty years after his death. See Tillemont, *Mem. Eccles.* tom. xvi. p. 168-181.]

122

[\(return\)](#)

[Theophanes, who calls him a Goth, affirms, that he was educated, aursed in Italy, (p. 102;) and as this strong expression will not bear a literal interpretation, it must be explained by long service in the Imperial guards.]

[*Nomen regis Odoacer assumpsit, cum tamen neque purpura nee regalibus uteretur insignibus.* Cassiodor. in Chron. A.D. 476. He seems to have assumed the abstract title of a king, without applying it to any particular nation or country. 8
 Note: Manso observes that Odoacer never called himself king of Italy, assume the purple, and no coins are extant with his name. *Geschichte Osi Goth. Reiches*, p. 36—M.]

Royalty was familiar to the Barbarians, and the submissive people of Italy was prepared to obey, without a murmur, the authority which he should condescend to exercise as the vicegerent of the emperor of the West. But Odoacer had resolved to abolish that useless and expensive office; and such is the weight of antique prejudice, that it required some boldness and penetration to discover the extreme facility of the enterprise. The unfortunate Augustulus was made the instrument of his own disgrace: he signified his resignation to the senate; and that assembly, in their last act of obedience to a Roman prince, still affected the spirit of freedom, and the forms of the constitution. An epistle was addressed, by their unanimous decree, to the emperor Zeno, the son-in-law and successor of Leo; who had lately been restored, after a short rebellion, to the Byzantine throne. They solemnly “disclaim the necessity, or even the wish, of continuing any longer the Imperial succession in Italy; since, in their opinion, the majesty of a sole monarch is sufficient to pervade and protect, at the same time, both the East and the West. In their own name, and in the name of the people, they consent that the seat of universal empire shall be transferred from Rome to Constantinople; and they basely renounce the right of choosing their master, the only vestige that yet remained of the authority which had given laws to the world. The republic (they repeat that name without a blush) might safely confide in the civil and military virtues of Odoacer; and they humbly request, that the emperor would invest him with the title of Patrician, and the administration of the diocese of Italy.” The deputies of the senate were received at Constantinople with some marks of displeasure and indignation: and when they were admitted to the audience of Zeno, he sternly reproached them with their treatment of the two emperors, Anthemius and Nepos, whom the East had successively granted to the prayers of Italy. “The first” (continued he) “you have murdered; the second you have expelled; but the second is still alive, and whilst he lives he is your lawful sovereign.” But the prudent Zeno soon deserted the hopeless cause of his abdicated colleague. His vanity was gratified by the title of sole emperor, and by the statues erected to his honor in the several quarters of Rome; he entertained a friendly, though ambiguous, correspondence with the patrician Odoacer; and he gratefully accepted the Imperial ensigns, the sacred ornaments of the throne and palace, which the Barbarian was not unwilling to remove from the sight of the people. [124](#)

[Malchus, whose loss excites our regret, has

preserved (in Excerpt. Legat. p. 93) this extraordinary embassy from the senate to Zeno. The anonymous fragment, (p. 717,) and the extract from Candidus, (apud Phot. p. 176,) are likewise of some use.]

In the space of twenty years since the death of Valentinian, nine emperors had successively disappeared; and the son of Orestes, a youth recommended only by his beauty, would be the least entitled to the notice of posterity, if his reign, which was marked by the extinction of the Roman empire in the West, did not leave a memorable era in the history of mankind. [125](#) The patrician Orestes had married the daughter of Count Romulus, of Petovio in Noricum: the name of Augustus, notwithstanding the jealousy of power, was known at Aquileia as a familiar surname; and the appellations of the two great founders, of the city and of the monarchy, were thus strangely united in the last of their successors. [126](#) The son of Orestes assumed and disgraced the names of Romulus Augustus; but the first was corrupted into Momyllus, by the Greeks, and the second has been changed by the Latins into the contemptible diminutive Augustulus. The life of this inoffensive youth was spared by the generous clemency of Odoacer; who dismissed him, with his whole family, from the Imperial palace, fixed his annual allowance at six thousand pieces of gold, and assigned the castle of Lucullus, in Campania, for the place of his exile or retirement. [127](#) As soon as the Romans breathed from the toils of the Punic war, they were attracted by the beauties and the pleasures of Campania; and the country-house of the elder Scipio at Liternum exhibited a lasting model of their rustic simplicity. [128](#) The delicious shores of the Bay of Naples were crowded with villas; and Sylla applauded the masterly skill of his rival, who had seated himself on the lofty promontory of Misenum, that commands, on every side, the sea and land, as far as the boundaries of the horizon. [129](#) The villa of Marius was purchased, within a few years, by Lucullus, and the price had increased from two thousand five hundred, to more than fourscore thousand, pounds sterling. [130](#) It was adorned by the new proprietor with Grecian arts and Asiatic treasures; and the houses and gardens of Lucullus obtained a distinguished rank in the list of Imperial palaces. [131](#) When the Vandals became formidable to the sea-coast, the Lucullan villa, on the promontory of Misenum, gradually assumed the strength and appellation of a strong castle, the obscure retreat of the last emperor of the West. About twenty years after that great revolution, it was converted into a church and monastery, to receive the bones of St. Severinus. They securely reposed, amidst the the broken trophies of Cimbric and Armenian victories, till the beginning of the tenth century; when the fortifications, which might afford a dangerous shelter to the Saracens, were demolished by the people of Naples. [132](#)

by Jornandes (c. 46, p. 680) would delay that great event to the year 479; and though M. de Buat has overlooked his evidence, he produces (tom. viii. p. 261-288) many collateral circumstances in support of the same opinion.]

126 [\(return\)](#)

[See his medals in Ducange, (Fam. Byzantin. p. 81,) Priscus, (Excerpt. Legat. p. 56,) Maffei, (Osservazioni Letterarie, tom. ii p. 314.) We may allege a famous and similar case. The meanest subjects of the Roman empire assumed the illustrious name of Patricius, which, by the conversion of Ireland has been communicated to a whole nation.]

127 [\(return\)](#)

[Ingrediens autem Ravennam deposuit Augustulum de regno, cujus infantiam misertus concessit ei sanguinem; et quia pulcher erat, tamen donavit ei reditum sex millia solidos, et misit eum intra Campaniam cum parentibus suis libere vivere. Anonym. Vales. p. 716. Jornandes says, (c 46, p. 680,) in Lucullano Campaniae castello exilii poena damnavit.]

128 [\(return\)](#)

[See the eloquent Declamation of Seneca, (Epist. lxxxvi.) The philosopher might have recollected, that all luxury is relative; and that the elder Scipio, whose manners were polished by study and conversation, was himself accused of that vice by his ruder contemporaries, (Livy, xxix. 19.)]

129 [\(return\)](#)

[Sylla, in the language of a soldier, praised his peritia castrametandi, (Plin. Hist. Natur. xviii. 7.) Phaedrus, who makes its shady walks (loeta viridia) the scene of an insipid fable, (ii. 5.) has thus described the situation:—

*Caesar Tiberius quum petens Neapolim,
In Misenensem villam venisset suam;
Quae monte summo posita Luculli manu
Prospectat Siculum et prospicit Tuscum mare.]*

130 [\(return\)](#)

[From seven myriads and a half to two hundred and fifty myriads of drachmae. Yet even in the possession of Marius, it was a luxurious retirement. The Romans derided his indolence; they soon bewailed his activity. See Plutarch, in Mario, tom. ii. p. 524.]

131 [\(return\)](#)

[Lucullus had other villa of equal, though various, magnificence, at Baiae, Naples, Tusculum, &c., He

boasted that he changed his climate with the storks and cranes. Plutarch, in Lucull. tom. iii. p. 193.]

132

[\(return\)](#)

[Severinus died in Noricum, A.D. 482. Six years afterwards, his body, which scattered miracles as it passed, was transported by his disciples into Italy. The devotion of a Neapolitan lady invited the saint to the Lucullan villa, in the place of Augustulus, who was probably no more. See Baronius (Annal. Eccles. A.D. 496, No. 50, 51) and Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. xvi. p. 178-181,) from the original life by Eugippius. The narrative of the last migration of Severinus to Naples is likewise an authentic piece.]

Odoacer was the first Barbarian who reigned in Italy, over a people who had once asserted their just superiority above the rest of mankind. The disgrace of the Romans still excites our respectful compassion, and we fondly sympathize with the imaginary grief and indignation of their degenerate posterity. But the calamities of Italy had gradually subdued the proud consciousness of freedom and glory. In the age of Roman virtue the provinces were subject to the arms, and the citizens to the laws, of the republic; till those laws were subverted by civil discord, and both the city and the province became the servile property of a tyrant. The forms of the constitution, which alleviated or disguised their abject slavery, were abolished by time and violence; the Italians alternately lamented the presence or the absence of the sovereign, whom they detested or despised; and the succession of five centuries inflicted the various evils of military license, capricious despotism, and elaborate oppression. During the same period, the Barbarians had emerged from obscurity and contempt, and the warriors of Germany and Scythia were introduced into the provinces, as the servants, the allies, and at length the masters, of the Romans, whom they insulted or protected. The hatred of the people was suppressed by fear; they respected the spirit and splendor of the martial chiefs who were invested with the honors of the empire; and the fate of Rome had long depended on the sword of those formidable strangers. The stern Ricimer, who trampled on the ruins of Italy, had exercised the power, without assuming the title, of a king; and the patient Romans were insensibly prepared to acknowledge the royalty of Odoacer and his Barbaric successors. The king of Italy was not unworthy of the high station to which his valor and fortune had exalted him: his savage manners were polished by the habits of conversation; and he respected, though a conqueror and a Barbarian, the institutions, and even the prejudices, of his subjects. After an interval of seven years, Odoacer restored the consulship of the West. For himself, he modestly, or proudly, declined an honor which was still accepted by the emperors of the East; but the curule chair was successively filled by eleven of the most illustrious senators; [133](#) and the list is adorned by the respectable name of Basilius, whose virtues claimed the friendship and grateful applause of Sidonius, his client. [134](#) The laws of the emperors were strictly enforced, and the civil administration of Italy was still exercised by the Prætorian

praefect and his subordinate officers. Odoacer devolved on the Roman magistrates the odious and oppressive task of collecting the public revenue; but he reserved for himself the merit of seasonable and popular indulgence. [135](#) Like the rest of the Barbarians, he had been instructed in the Arian heresy; but he revered the monastic and episcopal characters; and the silence of the Catholics attest the toleration which they enjoyed. The peace of the city required the interposition of his praefect Basilius in the choice of a Roman pontiff: the decree which restrained the clergy from alienating their lands was ultimately designed for the benefit of the people, whose devotions would have been taxed to repair the dilapidations of the church. [136](#) Italy was protected by the arms of its conqueror; and its frontiers were respected by the Barbarians of Gaul and Germany, who had so long insulted the feeble race of Theodosius. Odoacer passed the Adriatic, to chastise the assassins of the emperor Nepos, and to acquire the maritime province of Dalmatia. He passed the Alps, to rescue the remains of Noricum from Fava, or Feletheus, king of the Rugians, who held his residence beyond the Danube. The king was vanquished in battle, and led away prisoner; a numerous colony of captives and subjects was transplanted into Italy; and Rome, after a long period of defeat and disgrace, might claim the triumph of her Barbarian master. [137](#)

133 [\(return\)](#)

[The consular Fasti may be found in Pagi or Muratori. The consuls named by Odoacer, or perhaps by the Roman senate, appear to have been acknowledged in the Eastern empire.]

134 [\(return\)](#)

[Sidonius Apollinaris (l. i. epist. 9, p. 22, edit. Sirmond) has compared the two leading senators of his time, (A.D. 468,) Gennadius Avienus and Caecina Basilius. To the former he assigns the specious, to the latter the solid, virtues of public and private life. A Basilius junior, possibly his son, was consul in the year 480.]

135 [\(return\)](#)

[Epiphanius interceded for the people of Pavia; and the king first granted an indulgence of five years, and afterwards relieved them from the oppression of Pelagius, the Prætorian praefect, (Ennodius in Vit St. Epiphan., in Sirmond, Oper. tom. i. p. 1670-1672.)]

136 [\(return\)](#)

[See Baronius, Annal. Eccles. A.D. 483, No. 10-15. Sixteen years afterwards the irregular proceedings of Basilius were condemned by Pope Symmachus in a Roman synod.]

137 [\(return\)](#)

[The wars of Odoacer are concisely mentioned by Paul the Deacon, (de Gest. Langobard. l. i. c. 19, p. 757, edit. Grot.,) and in the two Chronicles of

Cassiodorus and Cuspinian. The life of St. Severinus by Eugippius, which the count de Buat (Hist. des Peuples, &c., tom. viii. c. 1, 4, 8, 9) has diligently studied, illustrates the ruin of Noricum and the Bavarian antiquities]

Notwithstanding the prudence and success of Odoacer, his kingdom exhibited the sad prospect of misery and desolation. Since the age of Tiberius, the decay of agriculture had been felt in Italy; and it was a just subject of complaint, that the life of the Roman people depended on the accidents of the winds and waves. [138](#) In the division and the decline of the empire, the tributary harvests of Egypt and Africa were withdrawn; the numbers of the inhabitants continually diminished with the means of subsistence; and the country was exhausted by the irretrievable losses of war, famine, [139](#) and pestilence. St. Ambrose has deplored the ruin of a populous district, which had been once adorned with the flourishing cities of Bologna, Modena, Regium, and Placentia. [140](#) Pope Gelasius was a subject of Odoacer; and he affirms, with strong exaggeration, that in Aemilia, Tuscany, and the adjacent provinces, the human species was almost extirpated. [141](#) The plebeians of Rome, who were fed by the hand of their master, perished or disappeared, as soon as his liberality was suppressed; the decline of the arts reduced the industrious mechanic to idleness and want; and the senators, who might support with patience the ruin of their country, bewailed their private loss of wealth and luxury. [1411](#) One third of those ample estates, to which the ruin of Italy is originally imputed, [142](#) was extorted for the use of the conquerors. Injuries were aggravated by insults; the sense of actual sufferings was imbibed by the fear of more dreadful evils; and as new lands were allotted to the new swarms of Barbarians, each senator was apprehensive lest the arbitrary surveyors should approach his favorite villa, or his most profitable farm. The least unfortunate were those who submitted without a murmur to the power which it was impossible to resist. Since they desired to live, they owed some gratitude to the tyrant who had spared their lives; and since he was the absolute master of their fortunes, the portion which he left must be accepted as his pure and voluntary gift. [143](#) The distress of Italy [1431](#) was mitigated by the prudence and humanity of Odoacer, who had bound himself, as the price of his elevation, to satisfy the demands of a licentious and turbulent multitude. The kings of the Barbarians were frequently resisted, deposed, or murdered, by their native subjects, and the various bands of Italian mercenaries, who associated under the standard of an elective general, claimed a larger privilege of freedom and rapine. A monarchy destitute of national union, and hereditary right, hastened to its dissolution. After a reign of fourteen years, Odoacer was oppressed by the superior genius of Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths; a hero alike excellent in the arts of war and of government, who restored an age of peace and prosperity, and whose name still excites and deserves the attention of mankind.

351-361) clearly state the progress of internal decay.]

139 [\(return\)](#)

[A famine, which afflicted Italy at the time of the irruption of Odoacer, king of the Heruli, is eloquently described, in prose and verse, by a French poet, (*Les Mois*, tom. ii. p. 174, 205, edit. in 12 mo.) I am ignorant from whence he derives his information; but I am well assured that he relates some facts incompatible with the truth of history]

140 [\(return\)](#)

[See the xxxixth epistle of St. Ambrose, as it is quoted by Muratori, *sopra le Antichita Italiane*, tom. i. Dissert. xxi. p. 354.]

141 [\(return\)](#)

[Aemilia, Tuscia, ceteraeque provinciae in quibus hominum propenullus existit. Gelasius, *Epist. ad Andromachum*, ap. Baronium, *Annal. Eccles. A.D. 496*, No. 36.]

1411 [\(return\)](#)

[Denina supposes that the Barbarians were compelled by necessity to turn their attention to agriculture. Italy, either imperfectly cultivated, or not at all, by the indolent or ruined proprietors, not only could not furnish the imposts, on which the pay of the soldiery depended, but not even a certain supply of the necessaries of life. The neighboring countries were now occupied by warlike nations; the supplies of corn from Africa were cut off; foreign commerce nearly destroyed; they could not look for supplies beyond the limits of Italy, throughout which the agriculture had been long in a state of progressive but rapid depression. (*Denina, Rev. d'Italia t. v. c. i.*)—M.]

142 [\(return\)](#)

[*Verumque confitentibus, latifundia perdidere Italiam*. Plin. *Hist. Natur.* xviii. 7.]

143 [\(return\)](#)

[Such are the topics of consolation, or rather of patience, which Cicero (*ad Familiares*, lib. ix. *Epist.* 17) suggests to his friend Papirius Paetus, under the military despotism of Caesar. The argument, however, of “*vivere pulcherrimum duxi*,” is more forcibly addressed to a Roman philosopher, who possessed the free alternative of life or death]

1431 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare, on the desolation and change of property in Italy, *Manno des Ost-Gothischen Reiches*, Part ii. p. 73, et seq.—M.]

Chapter XXXVII: Conversion Of The Barbarians To Christianity.—Part I.

*Origin Progress, And Effects Of The Monastic Life.—
Conversion Of The Barbarians To Christianity And Arianism.—
Persecution Of The Vandals In Africa.—Extinction Of
Arianism Among The Barbarians.*

The indissoluble connection of civil and ecclesiastical affairs has compelled, and encouraged, me to relate the progress, the persecutions, the establishment, the divisions, the final triumph, and the gradual corruption, of Christianity. I have purposely delayed the consideration of two religious events, interesting in the study of human nature, and important in the decline and fall of the Roman empire. I. The institution of the monastic life; [1](#) and, II. The conversion of the northern Barbarians.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[The origin of the monastic institution has been laboriously discussed by Thomassin (*Discipline de l'Eglise*, tom. i. p. 1119-1426) and Helyot, (*Hist. des Ordres Monastiques*, tom. i. p. 1-66.) These authors are very learned, and tolerably honest, and their difference of opinion shows the subject in its full extent. Yet the cautious Protestant, who distrusts any popish guides, may consult the seventh book of Bingham's *Christian Antiquities*.]

I. Prosperity and peace introduced the distinction of the vulgar and the Ascetic Christians. [2](#) The loose and imperfect practice of religion satisfied the conscience of the multitude. The prince or magistrate, the soldier or merchant, reconciled their fervent zeal, and implicit faith, with the exercise of their profession, the pursuit of their interest, and the indulgence of their passions: but the Ascetics, who obeyed and abused the rigid precepts of the gospel, were inspired by the savage enthusiasm which represents man as a criminal, and God as a tyrant. They seriously renounced the business, and the pleasures, of the age; abjured the use of wine, of flesh, and of marriage; chastised their body, mortified their affections, and embraced a life of misery, as the price of eternal happiness. In the reign of Constantine, the Ascetics fled from a profane and degenerate world, to perpetual solitude, or religious society. Like the first Christians of Jerusalem, [3](#) [311](#) they resigned the use, or the property of their temporal possessions; established regular communities of the same sex, and a similar disposition; and assumed the names of Hermits, Monks, and Anachorets, expressive of their lonely retreat in a natural or artificial desert. They soon acquired the respect of the world, which they despised; and the loudest applause was bestowed on this Divine Philosophy, [4](#) which surpassed, without the aid of science or reason, the laborious virtues of the Grecian schools. The monks might indeed contend with the Stoics, in the contempt of fortune, of pain, and of death: the Pythagorean silence and submission were revived in their servile discipline; and they disdained, as firmly as the Cynics themselves, all the forms

and decencies of civil society. But the votaries of this Divine Philosophy aspired to imitate a purer and more perfect model. They trod in the footsteps of the prophets, who had retired to the desert; [5](#) and they restored the devout and contemplative life, which had been instituted by the Essenians, in Palestine and Egypt. The philosophic eye of Pliny had surveyed with astonishment a solitary people, who dwelt among the palm-trees near the Dead Sea; who subsisted without money, who were propagated without women; and who derived from the disgust and repentance of mankind a perpetual supply of voluntary associates. [6](#)

2 [\(return\)](#)

[See Euseb. Demonstrat. Evangel., (l. i. p. 20, 21, edit. Graec. Rob. Stephani, Paris, 1545.) In his Ecclesiastical History, published twelve years after the Demonstration, Eusebius (l. ii. c. 17) asserts the Christianity of the Therapeutae; but he appears ignorant that a similar institution was actually revived in Egypt.]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[Cassian (Collat. xviii. 5.) claims this origin for the institution of the Coenobites, which gradually decayed till it was restored by Antony and his disciples.]

311 [\(return\)](#)

[It has before been shown that the first Christian community was not strictly coenobitic. See vol. ii.—M.]

4 [\(return\)](#)

[These are the expressive words of Sozomen, who copiously and agreeably describes (l. i. c. 12, 13, 14) the origin and progress of this monkish philosophy, (see Suicer. Thesau, Eccles., tom. ii. p. 1441.) Some modern writers, Lipsius (tom. iv. p. 448. Manuduct. ad Philosoph. Stoic. iii. 13) and La Mothe le Vayer, (tom. ix. de la Vertu des Payens, p. 228-262,) have compared the Carmelites to the Pythagoreans, and the Cynics to the Capucins.]

5 [\(return\)](#)

[The Carmelites derive their pedigree, in regular succession, from the prophet Elijah, (see the Theses of Beziers, A.D. 1682, in Bayle's Nouvelles de la Republique des Lettres, Oeuvres, tom. i. p. 82, &c., and the prolix irony of the Ordres Monastiques, an anonymous work, tom. i. p. 1-433, Berlin, 1751.) Rome, and the inquisition of Spain, silenced the profane criticism of the Jesuits of Flanders, (Helyot, Hist. des Ordres Monastiques, tom. i. p. 282-300,) and the statue of Elijah, the Carmelite, has been erected in the church of St. Peter, (Voyages du P. Labat tom. iii. p. 87.)]

[Plin. Hist. Natur. v. 15. Gens sola, et in toto orbe praeter ceteras mira, sine ulla femina, omni venere abdicata, sine pecunia, socia palmarum. Ita per seculorum millia (incredibile dictu) gens aeterna est in qua nemo nascitur. Tam foecunda illis aliorum vitae poenitentia est. He places them just beyond the noxious influence of the lake, and names Engaddi and Massada as the nearest towns. The Laura, and monastery of St. Sabas, could not be far distant from this place. See Reland. Palestin., tom. i. p. 295; tom. ii. p. 763, 874, 880, 890.]

Egypt, the fruitful parent of superstition, afforded the first example of the monastic life. Antony, [7](#) an illiterate [8](#) youth of the lower parts of Thebais, distributed his patrimony, [9](#) deserted his family and native home, and executed his monastic penance with original and intrepid fanaticism. After a long and painful novitiate, among the tombs, and in a ruined tower, he boldly advanced into the desert three days' journey to the eastward of the Nile; discovered a lonely spot, which possessed the advantages of shade and water, and fixed his last residence on Mount Colzim, near the Red Sea; where an ancient monastery still preserves the name and memory of the saint. [10](#) The curious devotion of the Christians pursued him to the desert; and when he was obliged to appear at Alexandria, in the face of mankind, he supported his fame with discretion and dignity. He enjoyed the friendship of Athanasius, whose doctrine he approved; and the Egyptian peasant respectfully declined a respectful invitation from the emperor Constantine. The venerable patriarch (for Antony attained the age of one hundred and five years) beheld the numerous progeny which had been formed by his example and his lessons. The prolific colonies of monks multiplied with rapid increase on the sands of Libya, upon the rocks of Thebais, and in the cities of the Nile. To the south of Alexandria, the mountain, and adjacent desert, of Nitria, were peopled by five thousand anachorets; and the traveller may still investigate the ruins of fifty monasteries, which were planted in that barren soil by the disciples of Antony. [11](#) In the Upper Thebais, the vacant island of Tabenne, [12](#) was occupied by Pachomius and fourteen hundred of his brethren. That holy abbot successively founded nine monasteries of men, and one of women; and the festival of Easter sometimes collected fifty thousand religious persons, who followed his angelic rule of discipline. [13](#) The stately and populous city of Oxyrinchus, the seat of Christian orthodoxy, had devoted the temples, the public edifices, and even the ramparts, to pious and charitable uses; and the bishop, who might preach in twelve churches, computed ten thousand females and twenty thousand males, of the monastic profession. [14](#) The Egyptians, who gloried in this marvellous revolution, were disposed to hope, and to believe, that the number of the monks was equal to the remainder of the people; [15](#) and posterity might repeat the saying, which had formerly been applied to the sacred animals of the same country, That in Egypt it was less difficult to find a god than a man.

- 7 [\(return\)](#)
[See Athanas. Op. tom. ii. p. 450-505, and the Vit. Patrum, p. 26-74, with Rosweyde's Annotations. The former is the Greek original the latter, a very ancient Latin version by Evagrius, the friend of St. Jerom.]
- 8 [\(return\)](#)
[Athanas. tom. ii. in Vit. St. Anton. p. 452; and the assertion of his total ignorance has been received by many of the ancients and moderns. But Tillemont (Mem. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 666) shows, by some probable arguments, that Antony could read and write in the Coptic, his native tongue; and that he was only a stranger to the Greek letters. The philosopher Synesius (p. 51) acknowledges that the natural genius of Antony did not require the aid of learning.]
- 9 [\(return\)](#)
[Aruroe autem erant ei trecentae uberes, et valde optima, (Vit. Patr. l. v. p. 36.) If the Arura be a square measure, of a hundred Egyptian cubits, (Rosweyde, Onomasticon ad Vit. Patrum, p. 1014, 1015,) and the Egyptian cubit of all ages be equal to twenty-two English inches, (Greaves, vol. i. p. 233,) the arura will consist of about three quarters of an English acre.]
- 10 [\(return\)](#)
[The description of the monastery is given by Jerom (tom. i. p. 248, 249, in Vit. Hilarion) and the P. Sicard, (Missions du Levant tom. v. p. 122-200.) Their accounts cannot always be reconciled the father painted from his fancy, and the Jesuit from his experience.]
- 11 [\(return\)](#)
[Jerom, tom. i. p. 146, ad Eustochium. Hist. Lausiac. c. 7, in Vit. Patrum, p. 712. The P. Sicard (Missions du Levant, tom. ii. p. 29-79) visited and has described this desert, which now contains four monasteries, and twenty or thirty monks. See D'Anville, Description de l'Egypte, p. 74.]
- 12 [\(return\)](#)
[Tabenne is a small island in the Nile, in the diocese of Tentyra or Dendera, between the modern town of Girge and the ruins of ancient Thebes, (D'Anville, p. 194.) M. de Tillemont doubts whether it was an isle; but I may conclude, from his own facts, that the primitive name was afterwards transferred to the great monastery of Bau or Pabau, (Mem. Eccles. tom. vii. p. 678, 688.)]

- 13 [\(return\)](#)
[See in the Codex Regularum (published by Lucas Holstenius, Rome, 1661) a preface of St. Jerom to his Latin version of the Rule of Pachomius, tom. i. p. 61.]
- 14 [\(return\)](#)
[Rufin. c. 5, in Vit. Patrum, p. 459. He calls it civitas ampla ralde et populosa, and reckons twelve churches. Strabo (l. xvii. p. 1166) and Ammianus (xxii. 16) have made honorable mention of Oxyrinchus, whose inhabitants adored a small fish in a magnificent temple.]
- 15 [\(return\)](#)
[Quanti populi habentur in urbibus, tantae paene habentur in desertis multitudines monachorum. Rufin. c. 7, in Vit. Patrum, p. 461. He congratulates the fortunate change.]

Athanasius introduced into Rome the knowledge and practice of the monastic life; and a school of this new philosophy was opened by the disciples of Antony, who accompanied their primate to the holy threshold of the Vatican. The strange and savage appearance of these Egyptians excited, at first, horror and contempt, and, at length, applause and zealous imitation. The senators, and more especially the matrons, transformed their palaces and villas into religious houses; and the narrow institution of six vestals was eclipsed by the frequent monasteries, which were seated on the ruins of ancient temples, and in the midst of the Roman forum. [16](#) Inflamed by the example of Antony, a Syrian youth, whose name was Hilarion, [17](#) fixed his dreary abode on a sandy beach, between the sea and a morass, about seven miles from Gaza. The austere penance, in which he persisted forty-eight years, diffused a similar enthusiasm; and the holy man was followed by a train of two or three thousand anachorets, whenever he visited the innumerable monasteries of Palestine. The fame of Basil [18](#) is immortal in the monastic history of the East. With a mind that had tasted the learning and eloquence of Athens; with an ambition scarcely to be satisfied with the archbishopric of Caesarea, Basil retired to a savage solitude in Pontus; and deigned, for a while, to give laws to the spiritual colonies which he profusely scattered along the coast of the Black Sea. In the West, Martin of Tours, [19](#) a soldier, a hermit, a bishop, and a saint, established the monasteries of Gaul; two thousand of his disciples followed him to the grave; and his eloquent historian challenges the deserts of Thebais to produce, in a more favorable climate, a champion of equal virtue. The progress of the monks was not less rapid, or universal, than that of Christianity itself. Every province, and, at last, every city, of the empire, was filled with their increasing multitudes; and the bleak and barren isles, from Lerins to Lipari, that arose out of the Tuscan Sea, were chosen by the anachorets for the place of their voluntary exile. An easy and perpetual intercourse by sea and land connected the provinces of the Roman world; and the life of Hilarion displays the facility with which an indigent hermit of Palestine might traverse Egypt, embark for

Sicily, escape to Epirus, and finally settle in the Island of Cyprus. [20](#) The Latin Christians embraced the religious institutions of Rome. The pilgrims, who visited Jerusalem, eagerly copied, in the most distant climates of the earth, the faithful model of the monastic life. The disciples of Antony spread themselves beyond the tropic, over the Christian empire of Æthiopia. [21](#) The monastery of Banchor, [22](#) in Flintshire, which contained above two thousand brethren, dispersed a numerous colony among the Barbarians of Ireland; [23](#) and Iona, one of the Hebrides, which was planted by the Irish monks, diffused over the northern regions a doubtful ray of science and superstition. [24](#)

16 [\(return\)](#)
[The introduction of the monastic life into Rome and Italy is occasionally mentioned by Jerom, tom. i. p. 119, 120, 199.]

17 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Life of Hilarion, by St. Jerom, (tom. i. p. 241, 252.) The stories of Paul, Hilarion, and Malchus, by the same author, are admirably told: and the only defect of these pleasing compositions is the want of truth and common sense.]

18 [\(return\)](#)
[His original retreat was in a small village on the banks of the Iris, not far from Neo-Caesarea. The ten or twelve years of his monastic life were disturbed by long and frequent avocations. Some critics have disputed the authenticity of his Ascetic rules; but the external evidence is weighty, and they can only prove that it is the work of a real or affected enthusiast. See Tillemont, Mem. Eccles tom. ix. p. 636-644. Helyot, Hist. des Ordres Monastiques tom. i. p. 175-181]

19 [\(return\)](#)
[See his Life, and the three Dialogues by Sulpicius Severus, who asserts (Dialog. i. 16) that the booksellers of Rome were delighted with the quick and ready sale of his popular work.]

20 [\(return\)](#)
[When Hilarion sailed from Paraetionium to Cape Pachynus, he offered to pay his passage with a book of the Gospels. Posthumian, a Gallic monk, who had visited Egypt, found a merchant ship bound from Alexandria to Marseilles, and performed the voyage in thirty days, (Sulp. Sever. Dialog. i. 1.) Athanasius, who addressed his Life of St. Antony to the foreign monks, was obliged to hasten the composition, that it might be ready for the sailing of the fleets, (tom. ii. p. 451.)]

21 [\(return\)](#)
[See Jerom, (tom. i. p. 126,) Assemani, Bibliot.

Orient. tom. iv. p. 92, p. 857-919, and Geddes, Church History of Æthiopia, p. 29-31. The Abyssinian monks adhere very strictly to the primitive institution.]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[Camden's Britannia, vol. i. p. 666, 667.]

23 [\(return\)](#)

[All that learning can extract from the rubbish of the dark ages is copiously stated by Archbishop Usher in his Britannicarum Ecclesiarum Antiquitates, cap. xvi. p. 425-503.]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[This small, though not barren, spot, Iona, Hy, or Columkill, only two miles in length, and one mile in breadth, has been distinguished, 1. By the monastery of St. Columba, founded A.D. 566; whose abbot exercised an extraordinary jurisdiction over the bishops of Caledonia; 2. By a classic library, which afforded some hopes of an entire Livy; and, 3. By the tombs of sixty kings, Scots, Irish, and Norwegians, who reposed in holy ground. See Usher (p. 311, 360-370) and Buchanan, (Rer. Scot. l. ii. p. 15, edit. Ruddiman.)]

These unhappy exiles from social life were impelled by the dark and implacable genius of superstition. Their mutual resolution was supported by the example of millions, of either sex, of every age, and of every rank; and each proselyte who entered the gates of a monastery, was persuaded that he trod the steep and thorny path of eternal happiness. [25](#) But the operation of these religious motives was variously determined by the temper and situation of mankind. Reason might subdue, or passion might suspend, their influence: but they acted most forcibly on the infirm minds of children and females; they were strengthened by secret remorse, or accidental misfortune; and they might derive some aid from the temporal considerations of vanity or interest. It was naturally supposed, that the pious and humble monks, who had renounced the world to accomplish the work of their salvation, were the best qualified for the spiritual government of the Christians. The reluctant hermit was torn from his cell, and seated, amidst the acclamations of the people, on the episcopal throne: the monasteries of Egypt, of Gaul, and of the East, supplied a regular succession of saints and bishops; and ambition soon discovered the secret road which led to the possession of wealth and honors. [26](#) The popular monks, whose reputation was connected with the fame and success of the order, assiduously labored to multiply the number of their fellow-captives. They insinuated themselves into noble and opulent families; and the specious arts of flattery and seduction were employed to secure those proselytes who might bestow wealth or dignity on the monastic profession. The indignant father bewailed the loss, perhaps, of an only son; [27](#) the credulous maid was betrayed by vanity to violate the laws of nature; and the matron aspired to imaginary perfection, by renouncing the

virtues of domestic life. Paula yielded to the persuasive eloquence of Jerom; [28](#) and the profane title of mother-in-law of God [29](#) tempted that illustrious widow to consecrate the virginity of her daughter Eustochium. By the advice, and in the company, of her spiritual guide, Paula abandoned Rome and her infant son; retired to the holy village of Bethlem; founded a hospital and four monasteries; and acquired, by her alms and penance, an eminent and conspicuous station in the Catholic church. Such rare and illustrious penitents were celebrated as the glory and example of their age; but the monasteries were filled by a crowd of obscure and abject plebeians, [30](#) who gained in the cloister much more than they had sacrificed in the world. Peasants, slaves, and mechanics, might escape from poverty and contempt to a safe and honorable profession; whose apparent hardships are mitigated by custom, by popular applause, and by the secret relaxation of discipline. [31](#) The subjects of Rome, whose persons and fortunes were made responsible for unequal and exorbitant tributes, retired from the oppression of the Imperial government; and the pusillanimous youth preferred the penance of a monastic, to the dangers of a military, life. The affrighted provincials of every rank, who fled before the Barbarians, found shelter and subsistence: whole legions were buried in these religious sanctuaries; and the same cause, which relieved the distress of individuals, impaired the strength and fortitude of the empire. [32](#)

25

[\(return\)](#)

[Chrysostom (in the first tome of the Benedictine edition) has consecrated three books to the praise and defence of the monastic life. He is encouraged, by the example of the ark, to presume that none but the elect (the monks) can possibly be saved (l. i. p. 55, 56.) Elsewhere, indeed, he becomes more merciful, (l. iii. p. 83, 84,) and allows different degrees of glory, like the sun, moon, and stars. In his lively comparison of a king and a monk, (l. iii. p. 116-121,) he supposes (what is hardly fair) that the king will be more sparingly rewarded, and more rigorously punished.]

26

[\(return\)](#)

[Thomassin (Discipline de l'Eglise tom. i. p. 1426-1469) and Mabillon, (Oeuvres Posthumes, tom. ii. p. 115-158.) The monks were gradually adopted as a part of the ecclesiastical hierarchy.]

27

[\(return\)](#)

[Dr. Middleton (vol. i. p. 110) liberally censures the conduct and writings of Chrysostom, one of the most eloquent and successful advocates for the monastic life.]

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Jerom's devout ladies form a very considerable portion of his works: the particular treatise, which he styles the Epitaph of Paula, (tom. i. p. 169-192,) is an elaborate and extravagant panegyric. The

exordium is ridiculously turgid: "If all the members of my body were changed into tongues, and if all my limbs resounded with a human voice, yet should I be incapable," &c.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[Socrus Dei esse coepisti, (Jerom, tom. i. p. 140, ad Eustochium.) Rufinus, (in Hieronym. Op. tom. iv. p. 223,) who was justly scandalized, asks his adversary, from what Pagan poet he had stolen an expression so impious and absurd.]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[Nunc autem veniunt plerumque ad hanc professionem servitutis Dei, et ex conditione servili, vel etiam liberati, vel propter hoc a Dominis liberati sive liberandi; et ex vita rusticana et ex opificum exercitatione, et plebeio labore. Augustin, de Oper. Monach. c. 22, ap. Thomassin, Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. iii. p. 1094. The Egyptian, who blamed Arsenius, owned that he led a more comfortable life as a monk than as a shepherd. See Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xiv. p. 679.]

31

[\(return\)](#)

[A Dominican friar, (Voyages du P. Labat, tom. i. p. 10,) who lodged at Cadiz in a convent of his brethren, soon understood that their repose was never interrupted by nocturnal devotion; "quoiqu'on ne laisse pas de sonner pour l'edification du peuple."]

32

[\(return\)](#)

[See a very sensible preface of Lucas Holstenius to the Codex Regularum. The emperors attempted to support the obligation of public and private duties; but the feeble dikes were swept away by the torrent of superstition; and Justinian surpassed the most sanguine wishes of the monks, (Thomassin, tom. i. p. 1782-1799, and Bingham, l. vii. c. iii. p. 253.) Note: The emperor Valens, in particular, promulgates a law contra ignavise quosdam sectatores, qui desertis civitatum muneribus, captant solitudines secreta, et specie religionis cum coetibus monachorum congregantur. Cad. Theod l. xii. tit. i. leg. 63.—G.]

The monastic profession of the ancients [33](#) was an act of voluntary devotion. The inconstant fanatic was threatened with the eternal vengeance of the God whom he deserted; but the doors of the monastery were still open for repentance. Those monks, whose conscience was fortified by reason or passion, were at liberty to resume the character of men and citizens; and even the spouses of Christ might accept the legal embraces of an earthly lover. [34](#) The examples of scandal, and the progress of

superstition, suggested the propriety of more forcible restraints. After a sufficient trial, the fidelity of the novice was secured by a solemn and perpetual vow; and his irrevocable engagement was ratified by the laws of the church and state. A guilty fugitive was pursued, arrested, and restored to his perpetual prison; and the interposition of the magistrate oppressed the freedom and the merit, which had alleviated, in some degree, the abject slavery of the monastic discipline. [35](#) The actions of a monk, his words, and even his thoughts, were determined by an inflexible rule, [36](#) or a capricious superior: the slightest offences were corrected by disgrace or confinement, extraordinary fasts, or bloody flagellation; and disobedience, murmur, or delay, were ranked in the catalogue of the most heinous sins. [37](#) A blind submission to the commands of the abbot, however absurd, or even criminal, they might seem, was the ruling principle, the first virtue of the Egyptian monks; and their patience was frequently exercised by the most extravagant trials. They were directed to remove an enormous rock; assiduously to water a barren staff, that was planted in the ground, till, at the end of three years, it should vegetate and blossom like a tree; to walk into a fiery furnace; or to cast their infant into a deep pond: and several saints, or madmen, have been immortalized in monastic story, by their thoughtless and fearless obedience. [38](#) The freedom of the mind, the source of every generous and rational sentiment, was destroyed by the habits of credulity and submission; and the monk, contracting the vices of a slave, devoutly followed the faith and passions of his ecclesiastical tyrant. The peace of the Eastern church was invaded by a swarm of fanatics, incapable of fear, or reason, or humanity; and the Imperial troops acknowledged, without shame, that they were much less apprehensive of an encounter with the fiercest Barbarians. [39](#)

33

[\(return\)](#)

[The monastic institutions, particularly those of Egypt, about the year 400, are described by four curious and devout travellers; Rufinus, (*Vit. Patrum*, l. ii. iii. p. 424-536,) Posthumian, (*Sulp. Sever. Dialog. i.*) Palladius, (*Hist. Lausiac. in Vit. Patrum*, p. 709-863,) and Cassian, (see in *tom. vii. Bibliothec. Max. Patrum*, his four first books of *Institutes*, and the twenty-four *Collations* or *Conferences*.)]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[The example of Malchus, (*Jerom*, *tom. i. p. 256*,) and the design of Cassian and his friend, (*Collation. xxiv. 1.*) are incontestable proofs of their freedom; which is elegantly described by Erasmus in his *Life of St. Jerom*. See Chardon, *Hist. des Sacremens*, *tom. vi. p. 279-300*.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[See the *Laws of Justinian*, (*Novel. cxxiii. No. 42*,) and of Lewis the Pious, (in the *Historians of France*, *tom. vi. p. 427*,) and the actual jurisprudence of

France, in Denissart, (Decisions, &c., tom. iv. p. 855,) &c.]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[The ancient Codex Regularum, collected by Benedict Anianinus, the reformer of the monks in the beginning of the ninth century, and published in the seventeenth, by Lucas Holstenius, contains thirty different rules for men and women. Of these, seven were composed in Egypt, one in the East, one in Cappadocia, one in Italy, one in Africa, four in Spain, eight in Gaul, or France, and one in England.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[The rule of Columbanus, so prevalent in the West, inflicts one hundred lashes for very slight offences, (Cod. Reg. part ii. p. 174.) Before the time of Charlemagne, the abbots indulged themselves in mutilating their monks, or putting out their eyes; a punishment much less cruel than the tremendous vade in pace (the subterraneous dungeon or sepulchre) which was afterwards invented. See an admirable discourse of the learned Mabillon, (Oeuvres Posthumes, tom. ii. p. 321-336,) who, on this occasion, seems to be inspired by the genius of humanity. For such an effort, I can forgive his defence of the holy tear of Vendeme (p. 361-399.)]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[Sulp. Sever. Dialog. i. 12, 13, p. 532, &c. Cassian. Institut. l. iv. c. 26, 27. "Praecipua ibi virtus et prima est obedientia." Among the Verba seniorum, (in Vit. Patrum, l. v. p. 617,) the fourteenth libel or discourse is on the subject of obedience; and the Jesuit Rosweyde, who published that huge volume for the use of convents, has collected all the scattered passages in his two copious indexes.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Dr. Jortin (Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. iv. p. 161) has observed the scandalous valor of the Cappadocian monks, which was exemplified in the banishment of Chrysostom.]

Superstition has often framed and consecrated the fantastic garments of the monks: [40](#) but their apparent singularity sometimes proceeds from their uniform attachment to a simple and primitive model, which the revolutions of fashion have made ridiculous in the eyes of mankind. The father of the Benedictines expressly disclaims all idea of choice of merit; and soberly exhorts his disciples to adopt the coarse and convenient dress of the countries which they may inhabit. [41](#) The monastic habits of the ancients varied with the climate, and their mode of life; and they assumed, with the same indifference, the sheep-skin of the Egyptian peasants, or the cloak of the Grecian

philosophers. They allowed themselves the use of linen in Egypt, where it was a cheap and domestic manufacture; but in the West they rejected such an expensive article of foreign luxury. [42](#) It was the practice of the monks either to cut or shave their hair; they wrapped their heads in a cowl to escape the sight of profane objects; their legs and feet were naked, except in the extreme cold of winter; and their slow and feeble steps were supported by a long staff. The aspect of a genuine anachoret was horrid and disgusting: every sensation that is offensive to man was thought acceptable to God; and the angelic rule of Tabenne condemned the salutary custom of bathing the limbs in water, and of anointing them with oil. [43](#) [431](#) The austere monks slept on the ground, on a hard mat, or a rough blanket; and the same bundle of palm-leaves served them as a seat in the day, and a pillow in the night. Their original cells were low, narrow huts, built of the slightest materials; which formed, by the regular distribution of the streets, a large and populous village, enclosing, within the common wall, a church, a hospital, perhaps a library, some necessary offices, a garden, and a fountain or reservoir of fresh water. Thirty or forty brethren composed a family of separate discipline and diet; and the great monasteries of Egypt consisted of thirty or forty families.

40 [\(return\)](#)

[Cassian has simply, though copiously, described the monastic habit of Egypt, (Institut. l. i.,) to which Sozomen (l. iii. c. 14) attributes such allegorical meaning and virtue.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[Regul. Benedict. No. 55, in Cod. Regul. part ii. p. 51.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[See the rule of Ferreolus, bishop of Usez, (No. 31, in Cod. Regul part ii. p. 136,) and of Isidore, bishop of Seville, (No. 13, in Cod. Regul part ii. p. 214.)]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[Some partial indulgences were granted for the hands and feet “Totum autem corpus nemo unguet nisi causa infirmitatis, nec lavabitur aqua nudo corpore, nisi languor perspicuus sit,” (Regul. Pachom xcii. part i. p. 78.)]

431 [\(return\)](#)

[Athanasius (Vit. Ant. c. 47) boasts of Antony’s holy horror of clear water, by which his feet were uncontaminated except under dire necessity—M.]

Chapter XXXVII: Conversion Of The Barbarians To Christianity.—Part II.

Pleasure and guilt are synonymous terms in the language of the monks, and they discovered, by experience, that rigid fasts, and abstemious diet, are the most effectual preservatives against the impure desires of the flesh. [44](#) The rules of abstinence which they imposed, or practised, were not uniform or perpetual: the cheerful festival of the Pentecost was balanced by the extraordinary mortification of Lent; the fervor of new monasteries was insensibly relaxed; and the voracious appetite of the Gauls could not imitate the patient and temperate virtue of the Egyptians. [45](#) The disciples of Antony and Pachomius were satisfied with their daily pittance, [46](#) of twelve ounces of bread, or rather biscuit, [47](#) which they divided into two frugal repasts, of the afternoon and of the evening. It was esteemed a merit, and almost a duty, to abstain from the boiled vegetables which were provided for the refectory; but the extraordinary bounty of the abbot sometimes indulged them with the luxury of cheese, fruit, salad, and the small dried fish of the Nile. [48](#) A more ample latitude of sea and river fish was gradually allowed or assumed; but the use of flesh was long confined to the sick or travellers; and when it gradually prevailed in the less rigid monasteries of Europe, a singular distinction was introduced; as if birds, whether wild or domestic, had been less profane than the grosser animals of the field. Water was the pure and innocent beverage of the primitive monks; and the founder of the Benedictines regrets the daily portion of half a pint of wine, which had been extorted from him by the intemperance of the age. [49](#) Such an allowance might be easily supplied by the vineyards of Italy; and his victorious disciples, who passed the Alps, the Rhine, and the Baltic, required, in the place of wine, an adequate compensation of strong beer or cider.

44

[\(return\)](#)

[St. Jerom, in strong, but indiscreet, language, expresses the most important use of fasting and abstinence: "Non quod Deus universitatis Creator et Dominus, intestinorum nostrorum rugitu, et inanitate ventris, pulmonisque ardore delectetur, sed quod aliter pudicitia tuta esse non possit." (Op. tom. i. p. 32, ad Eustochium.) See the twelfth and twenty-second Collations of Cassian, de Castitate and de Illusionibus Nocturnis.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[Edacitas in Graecis gula est, in Gallis natura, (Dialog. i. c. 4 p. 521.) Cassian fairly owns, that the perfect model of abstinence cannot be imitated in Gaul, on account of the aerum temperies, and the qualitas nostrae fragilitatis, (Institut. iv. 11.) Among the Western rules, that of Columbanus is the most austere; he had been educated amidst the poverty of Ireland, as rigid, perhaps, and inflexible as the abstemious virtue of Egypt. The rule of Isidore of Seville is the mildest; on holidays he allows the use of flesh.]

- 46 [\(return\)](#)
[“Those who drink only water, and have no nutritious liquor, ought, at least, to have a pound and a half (twenty-four ounces) of bread every day.” State of Prisons, p. 40, by Mr. Howard.]
- 47 [\(return\)](#)
[See Cassian. Collat. l. ii. 19-21. The small loaves, or biscuit, of six ounces each, had obtained the name of Paximacia, (Rosweyde, Onomasticon, p. 1045.) Pachomius, however, allowed his monks some latitude in the quantity of their food; but he made them work in proportion as they ate, (Pallad. in Hist. Lausiac. c. 38, 39, in Vit. Patrum, l. viii. p. 736, 737.)]
- 48 [\(return\)](#)
[See the banquet to which Cassian (Collation viii. 1) was invited by Serenus, an Egyptian abbot.]
- 49 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Rule of St. Benedict, No. 39, 40, (in Cod. Reg. part ii. p. 41, 42.) Licet legamus vinum omnino monachorum non esse, sed quia nostris temporibus id monachis persuaderi non potest; he allows them a Roman hemina, a measure which may be ascertained from Arbuthnot’s Tables.]

The candidate who aspired to the virtue of evangelical poverty, abjured, at his first entrance into a regular community, the idea, and even the name, of all separate or exclusive possessions. [50](#) The brethren were supported by their manual labor; and the duty of labor was strenuously recommended as a penance, as an exercise, and as the most laudable means of securing their daily subsistence. [51](#) The garden and fields, which the industry of the monks had often rescued from the forest or the morass, were diligently cultivated by their hands. They performed, without reluctance, the menial offices of slaves and domestics; and the several trades that were necessary to provide their habits, their utensils, and their lodging, were exercised within the precincts of the great monasteries. The monastic studies have tended, for the most part, to darken, rather than to dispel, the cloud of superstition. Yet the curiosity or zeal of some learned solitaires has cultivated the ecclesiastical, and even the profane, sciences; and posterity must gratefully acknowledge, that the monuments of Greek and Roman literature have been preserved and multiplied by their indefatigable pens. [52](#) But the more humble industry of the monks, especially in Egypt, was contented with the silent, sedentary occupation of making wooden sandals, or of twisting the leaves of the palm-tree into mats and baskets. The superfluous stock, which was not consumed in domestic use, supplied, by trade, the wants of the community: the boats of Tabenne, and the other monasteries of Thebais, descended the Nile as far as Alexandria; and, in a Christian market, the sanctity of the workmen might enhance the intrinsic value of the work.

- 50 [\(return\)](#)
[Such expressions as my book, my cloak, my shoes, (Cassian Institut. l. iv. c. 13,) were not less severely prohibited among the Western monks, (Cod. Regul. part ii. p. 174, 235, 288;) and the rule of Columbanus punished them with six lashes. The ironical author of the Ordres Monastiques, who laughs at the foolish nicety of modern convents, seems ignorant that the ancients were equally absurd.]
- 51 [\(return\)](#)
[Two great masters of ecclesiastical science, the P. Thomassin, (Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. iii. p. 1090-1139,) and the P. Mabillon, (Etudes Monastiques, tom. i. p. 116-155,) have seriously examined the manual labor of the monks, which the former considers as a merit and the latter as a duty.]
- 52 [\(return\)](#)
[Mabillon (Etudes Monastiques, tom. i. p. 47-55) has collected many curious facts to justify the literary labors of his predecessors, both in the East and West. Books were copied in the ancient monasteries of Egypt, (Cassian. Institut. l. iv. c. 12,) and by the disciples of St. Martin, (Sulp. Sever. in Vit. Martin. c. 7, p. 473.) Cassiodorus has allowed an ample scope for the studies of the monks; and we shall not be scandalized, if their pens sometimes wandered from Chrysostom and Augustin to Homer and Virgil. But the necessity of manual labor was insensibly superseded.]

The novice was tempted to bestow his fortune on the saints, in whose society he was resolved to spend the remainder of his life; and the pernicious indulgence of the laws permitted him to receive, for their use, any future accessions of legacy or inheritance. [53](#) Melania contributed her plate, three hundred pounds weight of silver; and Paula contracted an immense debt, for the relief of their favorite monks; who kindly imparted the merits of their prayers and penance to a rich and liberal sinner. [54](#) Time continually increased, and accidents could seldom diminish, the estates of the popular monasteries, which spread over the adjacent country and cities: and, in the first century of their institution, the infidel Zosimus has maliciously observed, that, for the benefit of the poor, the Christian monks had reduced a great part of mankind to a state of beggary. [55](#) As long as they maintained their original fervor, they approved themselves, however, the faithful and benevolent stewards of the charity, which was entrusted to their care. But their discipline was corrupted by prosperity: they gradually assumed the pride of wealth, and at last indulged the luxury of expense. Their public luxury might be excused by the magnificence of religious worship, and the decent motive of erecting durable habitations for an immortal society. But every age of the church has accused

the licentiousness of the degenerate monks; who no longer remembered the object of their institution, embraced the vain and sensual pleasures of the world, which they had renounced, [56](#) and scandalously abused the riches which had been acquired by the austere virtues of their founders. [57](#) Their natural descent, from such painful and dangerous virtue, to the common vices of humanity, will not, perhaps, excite much grief or indignation in the mind of a philosopher.

53 [\(return\)](#)

[Thomassin (Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. iii. p. 118, 145, 146, 171-179) has examined the revolution of the civil, canon, and common law. Modern France confirms the death which monks have inflicted on themselves, and justly deprives them of all right of inheritance.]

54 [\(return\)](#)

[See Jerom, (tom. i. p. 176, 183.) The monk Pambo made a sublime answer to Melania, who wished to specify the value of her gift: "Do you offer it to me, or to God? If to God, He who suspends the mountain in a balance, need not be informed of the weight of your plate." (Pallad. Hist. Lausiac. c. 10, in the Vit. Patrum, l. viii. p. 715.)]

55 [\(return\)](#)

[Zosim. l. v. p. 325. Yet the wealth of the Eastern monks was far surpassed by the princely greatness of the Benedictines.]

56 [\(return\)](#)

[The sixth general council (the Quinisext in Trullo, Canon xlvii in Beveridge, tom. i. p. 213) restrains women from passing the night in a male, or men in a female, monastery. The seventh general council (the second Nicene, Canon xx. in Beveridge, tom. i. p. 325) prohibits the erection of double or promiscuous monasteries of both sexes; but it appears from Balsamon, that the prohibition was not effectual. On the irregular pleasures and expenses of the clergy and monks, see Thomassin, tom. iii. p. 1334-1368.]

57 [\(return\)](#)

[I have somewhere heard or read the frank confession of a Benedictine abbot: "My vow of poverty has given me a hundred thousand crowns a year; my vow of obedience has raised me to the rank of a sovereign prince."—I forget the consequences of his vow of chastity.]

The lives of the primitive monks were consumed in penance and solitude; undisturbed by the various occupations which fill the time, and exercise the faculties, of reasonable, active, and social beings. Whenever they were permitted to step beyond the precincts

of the monastery, two jealous companions were the mutual guards and spies of each other's actions; and, after their return, they were condemned to forget, or, at least, to suppress, whatever they had seen or heard in the world. Strangers, who professed the orthodox faith, were hospitably entertained in a separate apartment; but their dangerous conversation was restricted to some chosen elders of approved discretion and fidelity. Except in their presence, the monastic slave might not receive the visits of his friends or kindred; and it was deemed highly meritorious, if he afflicted a tender sister, or an aged parent, by the obstinate refusal of a word or look. [58](#) The monks themselves passed their lives, without personal attachments, among a crowd which had been formed by accident, and was detained, in the same prison, by force or prejudice. Recluse fanatics have few ideas or sentiments to communicate: a special license of the abbot regulated the time and duration of their familiar visits; and, at their silent meals, they were enveloped in their cowls, inaccessible, and almost invisible, to each other. [59](#) Study is the resource of solitude: but education had not prepared and qualified for any liberal studies the mechanics and peasants who filled the monastic communities. They might work: but the vanity of spiritual perfection was tempted to disdain the exercise of manual labor; and the industry must be faint and languid, which is not excited by the sense of personal interest.

58

[\(return\)](#)

[Pior, an Egyptian monk, allowed his sister to see him; but he shut his eyes during the whole visit. See Vit. Patrum, l. iii. p. 504. Many such examples might be added.]

59

[\(return\)](#)

[The 7th, 8th, 29th, 30th, 31st, 34th, 57th, 60th, 86th, and 95th articles of the Rule of Pachomius, impose most intolerable laws of silence and mortification.]

According to their faith and zeal, they might employ the day, which they passed in their cells, either in vocal or mental prayer: they assembled in the evening, and they were awakened in the night, for the public worship of the monastery. The precise moment was determined by the stars, which are seldom clouded in the serene sky of Egypt; and a rustic horn, or trumpet, the signal of devotion, twice interrupted the vast silence of the desert. [60](#) Even sleep, the last refuge of the unhappy, was rigorously measured: the vacant hours of the monk heavily rolled along, without business or pleasure; and, before the close of each day, he had repeatedly accused the tedious progress of the sun. [61](#) In this comfortless state, superstition still pursued and tormented her wretched votaries. [62](#) The repose which they had sought in the cloister was disturbed by a tardy repentance, profane doubts, and guilty desires; and, while they considered each natural impulse as an unpardonable sin, they perpetually trembled on the edge of a flaming and bottomless abyss. From the painful struggles of disease and despair, these unhappy victims were sometimes relieved by madness or death; and, in the sixth century, a hospital was founded at Jerusalem for a small portion of the austere

penitents, who were deprived of their senses. [63](#) Their visions, before they attained this extreme and acknowledged term of frenzy, have afforded ample materials of supernatural history. It was their firm persuasion, that the air, which they breathed, was peopled with invisible enemies; with innumerable demons, who watched every occasion, and assumed every form, to terrify, and above all to tempt, their unguarded virtue. The imagination, and even the senses, were deceived by the illusions of distempered fanaticism; and the hermit, whose midnight prayer was oppressed by involuntary slumber, might easily confound the phantoms of horror or delight, which had occupied his sleeping and his waking dreams. [64](#)

60

[\(return\)](#)

[The diurnal and nocturnal prayers of the monks are copiously discussed by Cassian, in the third and fourth books of his Institutions; and he constantly prefers the liturgy, which an angel had dictated to the monasteries of Tebennoe.]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[Cassian, from his own experience, describes the acedia, or listlessness of mind and body, to which a monk was exposed, when he sighed to find himself alone. *Saepiusque egreditur et ingreditur cellam, et Solem velut ad occasum tardius properantem crebrius intuetur*, (Institut. x. l.)]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[The temptations and sufferings of Stagirus were communicated by that unfortunate youth to his friend St. Chrysostom. See Middleton's Works, vol. i. p. 107-110. Something similar introduces the life of every saint; and the famous Inigo, or Ignatius, the founder of the Jesuits, (vide d'Inigo de Guiposcoa, tom. i. p. 29-38,) may serve as a memorable example.]

63

[\(return\)](#)

[Fleury, Hist. Ecclesiastique, tom. vii. p. 46. I have read somewhere, in the Vitae Patrum, but I cannot recover the place that several, I believe many, of the monks, who did not reveal their temptations to the abbot, became guilty of suicide.]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[See the seventh and eighth Collations of Cassian, who gravely examines, why the demons were grown less active and numerous since the time of St. Antony. Rosweyde's copious index to the Vitae Patrum will point out a variety of infernal scenes. The devils were most formidable in a female shape.]

The monks were divided into two classes: the Coenobites, who lived under a common and regular discipline; and the Anachorets, who indulged their unsocial, independent

fanaticism. [65](#) The most devout, or the most ambitious, of the spiritual brethren, renounced the convent, as they had renounced the world. The fervent monasteries of Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, were surrounded by a Laura, [66](#) a distant circle of solitary cells; and the extravagant penance of Hermits was stimulated by applause and emulation. [67](#) They sunk under the painful weight of crosses and chains; and their emaciated limbs were confined by collars, bracelets, gauntlets, and greaves of massy and rigid iron. All superfluous encumbrance of dress they contemptuously cast away; and some savage saints of both sexes have been admired, whose naked bodies were only covered by their long hair. They aspired to reduce themselves to the rude and miserable state in which the human brute is scarcely distinguishable above his kindred animals; and the numerous sect of Anachorets derived their name from their humble practice of grazing in the fields of Mesopotamia with the common herd. [68](#) They often usurped the den of some wild beast whom they affected to resemble; they buried themselves in some gloomy cavern, which art or nature had scooped out of the rock; and the marble quarries of Thebais are still inscribed with the monuments of their penance. [69](#) The most perfect Hermits are supposed to have passed many days without food, many nights without sleep, and many years without speaking; and glorious was the man (I abuse that name) who contrived any cell, or seat, of a peculiar construction, which might expose him, in the most inconvenient posture, to the inclemency of the seasons.

- 65 [\(return\)](#)
 [For the distinction of the Coenobites and the Hermits, especially in Egypt, see Jerom, (tom. i. p. 45, ad Rusticum,) the first Dialogue of Sulpicius Severus, Rufinus, (c. 22, in Vit. Patrum, l. ii. p. 478,) Palladius, (c. 7, 69, in Vit. Patrum, l. viii. p. 712, 758,) and, above all, the eighteenth and nineteenth Collations of Cassian. These writers, who compare the common and solitary life, reveal the abuse and danger of the latter.]
- 66 [\(return\)](#)
 [Suicer. Thesaur. Ecclesiast. tom. ii. p. 205, 218. Thomassin (Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. i. p. 1501, 1502) gives a good account of these cells. When Gerasimus founded his monastery in the wilderness of Jordan, it was accompanied by a Laura of seventy cells.]
- 67 [\(return\)](#)
 [Theodoret, in a large volume, (the Philotheus in Vit. Patrum, l. ix. p. 793-863,) has collected the lives and miracles of thirty Anachorets. Evagrius (l. i. c. 12) more briefly celebrates the monks and hermits of Palestine.]
- 68 [\(return\)](#)
 [Sozomen, l. vi. c. 33. The great St. Ephrem

composed a panegyric on these or grazing monks,
(Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 292.)]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[The P. Sicard (Missions du Levant, tom. ii. p. 217-233) examined the caverns of the Lower Thebais with wonder and devotion. The inscriptions are in the old Syriac character, which was used by the Christians of Abyssinia.]

Among these heroes of the monastic life, the name and genius of Simeon Stylites [70](#) have been immortalized by the singular invention of an aerial penance. At the age of thirteen, the young Syrian deserted the profession of a shepherd, and threw himself into an austere monastery. After a long and painful novitiate, in which Simeon was repeatedly saved from pious suicide, he established his residence on a mountain, about thirty or forty miles to the east of Antioch. Within the space of a mandra, or circle of stones, to which he had attached himself by a ponderous chain, he ascended a column, which was successively raised from the height of nine, to that of sixty, feet from the ground. [71](#) In this last and lofty station, the Syrian Anachoret resisted the heat of thirty summers, and the cold of as many winters. Habit and exercise instructed him to maintain his dangerous situation without fear or giddiness, and successively to assume the different postures of devotion. He sometimes prayed in an erect attitude, with his outstretched arms in the figure of a cross, but his most familiar practice was that of bending his meagre skeleton from the forehead to the feet; and a curious spectator, after numbering twelve hundred and forty-four repetitions, at length desisted from the endless account. The progress of an ulcer in his thigh [72](#) might shorten, but it could not disturb, this celestial life; and the patient Hermit expired, without descending from his column. A prince, who should capriciously inflict such tortures, would be deemed a tyrant; but it would surpass the power of a tyrant to impose a long and miserable existence on the reluctant victims of his cruelty. This voluntary martyrdom must have gradually destroyed the sensibility both of the mind and body; nor can it be presumed that the fanatics, who torment themselves, are susceptible of any lively affection for the rest of mankind. A cruel, unfeeling temper has distinguished the monks of every age and country: their stern indifference, which is seldom mollified by personal friendship, is inflamed by religious hatred; and their merciless zeal has strenuously administered the holy office of the Inquisition.

70

[\(return\)](#)

[See Theodoret (in Vit. Patrum, l. ix. p. 848-854,) Antony, (in Vit. Patrum, l. i. p. 170-177,) Cosmas, (in Asseman. Bibliot. Oriental tom. i. p. 239-253,) Evagrius, (l. i. c. 13, 14,) and Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. xv. p. 347-392.)]

71

[\(return\)](#)

[The narrow circumference of two cubits, or three feet, which Evagrius assigns for the summit of the column is inconsistent with reason, with facts, and

with the rules of architecture. The people who saw it from below might be easily deceived.]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[I must not conceal a piece of ancient scandal concerning the origin of this ulcer. It has been reported that the Devil, assuming an angelic form, invited him to ascend, like Elijah, into a fiery chariot. The saint too hastily raised his foot, and Satan seized the moment of inflicting this chastisement on his vanity.]

The monastic saints, who excite only the contempt and pity of a philosopher, were respected, and almost adored, by the prince and people. Successive crowds of pilgrims from Gaul and India saluted the divine pillar of Simeon: the tribes of Saracens disputed in arms the honor of his benediction; the queens of Arabia and Persia gratefully confessed his supernatural virtue; and the angelic Hermit was consulted by the younger Theodosius, in the most important concerns of the church and state. His remains were transported from the mountain of Telenissa, by a solemn procession of the patriarch, the master-general of the East, six bishops, twenty-one counts or tribunes, and six thousand soldiers; and Antioch revered his bones, as her glorious ornament and impregnable defence. The fame of the apostles and martyrs was gradually eclipsed by these recent and popular Anachorets; the Christian world fell prostrate before their shrines; and the miracles ascribed to their relics exceeded, at least in number and duration, the spiritual exploits of their lives. But the golden legend of their lives [73](#) was embellished by the artful credulity of their interested brethren; and a believing age was easily persuaded, that the slightest caprice of an Egyptian or a Syrian monk had been sufficient to interrupt the eternal laws of the universe. The favorites of Heaven were accustomed to cure inveterate diseases with a touch, a word, or a distant message; and to expel the most obstinate demons from the souls or bodies which they possessed. They familiarly accosted, or imperiously commanded, the lions and serpents of the desert; infused vegetation into a sapless trunk; suspended iron on the surface of the water; passed the Nile on the back of a crocodile, and refreshed themselves in a fiery furnace. These extravagant tales, which display the fiction without the genius, of poetry, have seriously affected the reason, the faith, and the morals, of the Christians. Their credulity debased and vitiated the faculties of the mind: they corrupted the evidence of history; and superstition gradually extinguished the hostile light of philosophy and science. Every mode of religious worship which had been practised by the saints, every mysterious doctrine which they believed, was fortified by the sanction of divine revelation, and all the manly virtues were oppressed by the servile and pusillanimous reign of the monks. If it be possible to measure the interval between the philosophic writings of Cicero and the sacred legend of Theodoret, between the character of Cato and that of Simeon, we may appreciate the memorable revolution which was accomplished in the Roman empire within a period of five hundred years.

[I know not how to select or specify the miracles contained in the Vitae Patrum of Rosweyde, as the number very much exceeds the thousand pages of that voluminous work. An elegant specimen may be found in the dialogues of Sulpicius Severus, and his Life of St. Martin. He reveres the monks of Egypt; yet he insults them with the remark, that they never raised the dead; whereas the bishop of Tours had restored three dead men to life.]

II. The progress of Christianity has been marked by two glorious and decisive victories: over the learned and luxurious citizens of the Roman empire; and over the warlike Barbarians of Scythia and Germany, who subverted the empire, and embraced the religion, of the Romans. The Goths were the foremost of these savage proselytes; and the nation was indebted for its conversion to a countryman, or, at least, to a subject, worthy to be ranked among the inventors of useful arts, who have deserved the remembrance and gratitude of posterity. A great number of Roman provincials had been led away into captivity by the Gothic bands, who ravaged Asia in the time of Gallienus; and of these captives, many were Christians, and several belonged to the ecclesiastical order. Those involuntary missionaries, dispersed as slaves in the villages of Dacia, successively labored for the salvation of their masters. The seeds which they planted, of the evangelic doctrine, were gradually propagated; and before the end of a century, the pious work was achieved by the labors of Ulphilas, whose ancestors had been transported beyond the Danube from a small town of Cappadocia.

Ulphilas, the bishop and apostle of the Goths, [74](#) acquired their love and reverence by his blameless life and indefatigable zeal; and they received, with implicit confidence, the doctrines of truth and virtue which he preached and practised. He executed the arduous task of translating the Scriptures into their native tongue, a dialect of the German or Teutonic language; but he prudently suppressed the four books of Kings, as they might tend to irritate the fierce and sanguinary spirit of the Barbarians. The rude, imperfect idiom of soldiers and shepherds, so ill qualified to communicate any spiritual ideas, was improved and modulated by his genius: and Ulphilas, before he could frame his version, was obliged to compose a new alphabet of twenty-four letters; [741](#) four of which he invented, to express the peculiar sounds that were unknown to the Greek and Latin pronunciation. [75](#) But the prosperous state of the Gothic church was soon afflicted by war and intestine discord, and the chieftains were divided by religion as well as by interest. Fritigern, the friend of the Romans, became the proselyte of Ulphilas; while the haughty soul of Athanaric disdained the yoke of the empire and of the gospel. The faith of the new converts was tried by the persecution which he excited. A wagon, bearing aloft the shapeless image of Thor, perhaps, or of Woden, was conducted in solemn procession through the streets of the camp; and the rebels, who refused to worship the god of their fathers, were immediately burnt, with their tents and families. The character of Ulphilas recommended him to the esteem of the Eastern court, where

he twice appeared as the minister of peace; he pleaded the cause of the distressed Goths, who implored the protection of Valens; and the name of Moses was applied to this spiritual guide, who conducted his people through the deep waters of the Danube to the Land of Promise. [76](#) The devout shepherds, who were attached to his person, and tractable to his voice, acquiesced in their settlement, at the foot of the Maesian mountains, in a country of woodlands and pastures, which supported their flocks and herds, and enabled them to purchase the corn and wine of the more plentiful provinces. These harmless Barbarians multiplied in obscure peace and the profession of Christianity. [77](#)

74

[\(return\)](#)

[On the subject of Ulphilas, and the conversion of the Goths, see Sozomen, l. vi. c. 37. Socrates, l. iv. c. 33. Theodoret, l. iv. c. 37. Philostorg. l. ii. c. 5. The heresy of Philostorgius appears to have given him superior means of information.]

741

[\(return\)](#)

[This is the Moeso-Gothic alphabet of which many of the letters are evidently formed from the Greek and Roman. M. St. Martin, however contends, that it is impossible but that some written alphabet must have been known long before among the Goths. He supposes that their former letters were those inscribed on the runes, which, being inseparably connected with the old idolatrous superstitions, were proscribed by the Christian missionaries. Everywhere the runes, so common among all the German tribes, disappear after the propagation of Christianity. S. Martin iv. p. 97, 98.—M.]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[A mutilated copy of the four Gospels, in the Gothic version, was published A.D. 1665, and is esteemed the most ancient monument of the Teutonic language, though Wetstein attempts, by some frivolous conjectures, to deprive Ulphilas of the honor of the work. Two of the four additional letters express the W, and our own Th. See Simon, Hist. Critique du Nouveau Testament, tom ii. p. 219-223. Mill. Prolegom p. 151, edit. Kuster. Wetstein, Prolegom. tom. i. p. 114. * Note: The Codex Argenteus, found in the sixteenth century at Wenden, near Cologne, and now preserved at Upsal, contains almost the entire four Gospels. The best edition is that of J. Christ. Zahn, Weissenfels, 1805. In 1762 Knettel discovered and published from a Palimpsest MS. four chapters of the Epistle to the Romans: they were reprinted at Upsal, 1763. M. Mai has since that time discovered further fragments, and other remains of Moeso-Gothic

literature, from a Palimpsest at Milan. See Ulphilae partium ineditarum in Ambrosianis Palimpsestis ab Ang. Maio repertarum specimen Milan. Ito. 1819.—M.]

76 [\(return\)](#)

[Philostorgius erroneously places this passage under the reign of Constantine; but I am much inclined to believe that it preceded the great emigration.]

77 [\(return\)](#)

[We are obliged to Jornandes (de Reb. Get. c. 51, p. 688) for a short and lively picture of these lesser Goths. Gothi minores, populus immensus, cum suo Pontifice ipsoque primate Wulfila. The last words, if they are not mere tautology, imply some temporal jurisdiction.]

Their fiercer brethren, the formidable Visigoths, universally adopted the religion of the Romans, with whom they maintained a perpetual intercourse, of war, of friendship, or of conquest. In their long and victorious march from the Danube to the Atlantic Ocean, they converted their allies; they educated the rising generation; and the devotion which reigned in the camp of Alaric, or the court of Thoulouse, might edify or disgrace the palaces of Rome and Constantinople. [78](#) During the same period, Christianity was embraced by almost all the Barbarians, who established their kingdoms on the ruins of the Western empire; the Burgundians in Gaul, the Suevi in Spain, the Vandals in Africa, the Ostrogoths in Pannonia, and the various bands of mercenaries, that raised Odoacer to the throne of Italy. The Franks and the Saxons still persevered in the errors of Paganism; but the Franks obtained the monarchy of Gaul by their submission to the example of Clovis; and the Saxon conquerors of Britain were reclaimed from their savage superstition by the missionaries of Rome. These Barbarian proselytes displayed an ardent and successful zeal in the propagation of the faith. The Merovingian kings, and their successors, Charlemagne and the Otthos, extended, by their laws and victories, the dominion of the cross. England produced the apostle of Germany; and the evangelic light was gradually diffused from the neighborhood of the Rhine, to the nations of the Elbe, the Vistula, and the Baltic. [79](#)

78 [\(return\)](#)

[At non ita Gothi non ita Vandali; malis licet doctoribus instituti meliores tamen etiam in hac parte quam nostri. Salvian, de Gubern. Dei, l. vii. p. 243.]

79 [\(return\)](#)

[Mosheim has slightly sketched the progress of Christianity in the North, from the fourth to the fourteenth century. The subject would afford materials for an ecclesiastical and even philosophical, history]

Chapter XXXVII: Conversion Of The Barbarians To Christianity.—Part III.

The different motives which influenced the reason, or the passions, of the Barbarian converts, cannot easily be ascertained. They were often capricious and accidental; a dream, an omen, the report of a miracle, the example of some priest, or hero, the charms of a believing wife, and, above all, the fortunate event of a prayer, or vow, which, in a moment of danger, they had addressed to the God of the Christians. [80](#) The early prejudices of education were insensibly erased by the habits of frequent and familiar society, the moral precepts of the gospel were protected by the extravagant virtues of the monks; and a spiritual theology was supported by the visible power of relics, and the pomp of religious worship. But the rational and ingenious mode of persuasion, which a Saxon bishop [81](#) suggested to a popular saint, might sometimes be employed by the missionaries, who labored for the conversion of infidels. “Admit,” says the sagacious disputant, “whatever they are pleased to assert of the fabulous, and carnal, genealogy of their gods and goddesses, who are propagated from each other. From this principle deduce their imperfect nature, and human infirmities, the assurance they were born, and the probability that they will die. At what time, by what means, from what cause, were the eldest of the gods or goddesses produced? Do they still continue, or have they ceased, to propagate? If they have ceased, summon your antagonists to declare the reason of this strange alteration. If they still continue, the number of the gods must become infinite; and shall we not risk, by the indiscreet worship of some impotent deity, to excite the resentment of his jealous superior? The visible heavens and earth, the whole system of the universe, which may be conceived by the mind, is it created or eternal? If created, how, or where, could the gods themselves exist before creation? If eternal, how could they assume the empire of an independent and preexisting world? Urge these arguments with temper and moderation; insinuate, at seasonable intervals, the truth and beauty of the Christian revelation; and endeavor to make the unbelievers ashamed, without making them angry.” This metaphysical reasoning, too refined, perhaps, for the Barbarians of Germany, was fortified by the grosser weight of authority and popular consent. The advantage of temporal prosperity had deserted the Pagan cause, and passed over to the service of Christianity. The Romans themselves, the most powerful and enlightened nation of the globe, had renounced their ancient superstition; and, if the ruin of their empire seemed to accuse the efficacy of the new faith, the disgrace was already retrieved by the conversion of the victorious Goths. The valiant and fortunate Barbarians, who subdued the provinces of the West, successively received, and reflected, the same edifying example. Before the age of Charlemagne, the Christian nations of Europe might exult in the exclusive possession of the temperate climates, of the fertile lands, which produced corn, wine, and oil; while the savage idolaters, and their helpless idols, were confined to the extremities of the earth, the dark and frozen regions of the North. [82](#)

- 80 [\(return\)](#)
[To such a cause has Socrates (l. vii. c. 30) ascribed the conversion of the Burgundians, whose Christian piety is celebrated by Orosius, (l. vii. c. 19.)]
- 81 [\(return\)](#)
[See an original and curious epistle from Daniel, the first bishop of Winchester, (Beda, Hist. Eccles. Anglorum, l. v. c. 18, p. 203, edit Smith,) to St. Boniface, who preached the gospel among the savages of Hesse and Thuringia. Epistol. Bonifacii, lxvii., in the Maxima Bibliotheca Patrum, tom. xiii. p. 93]
- 82 [\(return\)](#)
[The sword of Charlemagne added weight to the argument; but when Daniel wrote this epistle, (A.D. 723,) the Mahometans, who reigned from India to Spain, might have retorted it against the Christians.]

Christianity, which opened the gates of Heaven to the Barbarians, introduced an important change in their moral and political condition. They received, at the same time, the use of letters, so essential to a religion whose doctrines are contained in a sacred book; and while they studied the divine truth, their minds were insensibly enlarged by the distant view of history, of nature, of the arts, and of society. The version of the Scriptures into their native tongue, which had facilitated their conversion, must excite among their clergy some curiosity to read the original text, to understand the sacred liturgy of the church, and to examine, in the writings of the fathers, the chain of ecclesiastical tradition. These spiritual gifts were preserved in the Greek and Latin languages, which concealed the inestimable monuments of ancient learning. The immortal productions of Virgil, Cicero, and Livy, which were accessible to the Christian Barbarians, maintained a silent intercourse between the reign of Augustus and the times of Clovis and Charlemagne. The emulation of mankind was encouraged by the remembrance of a more perfect state; and the flame of science was secretly kept alive, to warm and enlighten the mature age of the Western world.

In the most corrupt state of Christianity, the Barbarians might learn justice from the law, and mercy from the gospel; and if the knowledge of their duty was insufficient to guide their actions, or to regulate their passions, they were sometimes restrained by conscience, and frequently punished by remorse. But the direct authority of religion was less effectual than the holy communion, which united them with their Christian brethren in spiritual friendship. The influence of these sentiments contributed to secure their fidelity in the service, or the alliance, of the Romans, to alleviate the horrors of war, to moderate the insolence of conquest, and to preserve, in the downfall of the empire, a permanent respect for the name and institutions of Rome. In the days of Paganism, the priests of Gaul and Germany reigned over the people, and controlled the jurisdiction of the magistrates; and the zealous proselytes transferred an equal, or more ample, measure of devout obedience, to the pontiffs of the Christian faith. The sacred

character of the bishops was supported by their temporal possessions; they obtained an honorable seat in the legislative assemblies of soldiers and freemen; and it was their interest, as well as their duty, to mollify, by peaceful counsels, the fierce spirit of the Barbarians. The perpetual correspondence of the Latin clergy, the frequent pilgrimages to Rome and Jerusalem, and the growing authority of the popes, cemented the union of the Christian republic, and gradually produced the similar manners, and common jurisprudence, which have distinguished, from the rest of mankind, the independent, and even hostile, nations of modern Europe.

But the operation of these causes was checked and retarded by the unfortunate accident, which infused a deadly poison into the cup of Salvation. Whatever might be the early sentiments of Ulphilas, his connections with the empire and the church were formed during the reign of Arianism. The apostle of the Goths subscribed the creed of Rimini; professed with freedom, and perhaps with sincerity, that the Son was not equal, or consubstantial to the Father; [83](#) communicated these errors to the clergy and people; and infected the Barbaric world with a heresy, [84](#) which the great Theodosius proscribed and extinguished among the Romans. The temper and understanding of the new proselytes were not adapted to metaphysical subtilties; but they strenuously maintained, what they had piously received, as the pure and genuine doctrines of Christianity. The advantage of preaching and expounding the Scriptures in the Teutonic language promoted the apostolic labors of Ulphilas and his successors; and they ordained a competent number of bishops and presbyters for the instruction of the kindred tribes. The Ostrogoths, the Burgundians, the Suevi, and the Vandals, who had listened to the eloquence of the Latin clergy, [85](#) preferred the more intelligible lessons of their domestic teachers; and Arianism was adopted as the national faith of the warlike converts, who were seated on the ruins of the Western empire. This irreconcilable difference of religion was a perpetual source of jealousy and hatred; and the reproach of Barbarian was imbibed by the more odious epithet of Heretic. The heroes of the North, who had submitted, with some reluctance, to believe that all their ancestors were in hell, [86](#) were astonished and exasperated to learn, that they themselves had only changed the mode of their eternal condemnation. Instead of the smooth applause, which Christian kings are accustomed to expect from their royal prelates, the orthodox bishops and their clergy were in a state of opposition to the Arian courts; and their indiscreet opposition frequently became criminal, and might sometimes be dangerous. [87](#) The pulpit, that safe and sacred organ of sedition, resounded with the names of Pharaoh and Holofernes; [88](#) the public discontent was inflamed by the hope or promise of a glorious deliverance; and the seditious saints were tempted to promote the accomplishment of their own predictions. Notwithstanding these provocations, the Catholics of Gaul, Spain, and Italy, enjoyed, under the reign of the Arians, the free and peaceful exercise of their religion. Their haughty masters respected the zeal of a numerous people, resolved to die at the foot of their altars; and the example of their devout constancy was admired and imitated by the Barbarians themselves. The conquerors evaded, however,

the disgraceful reproach, or confession, of fear, by attributing their toleration to the liberal motives of reason and humanity; and while they affected the language, they imperceptibly imbibed the spirit, of genuine Christianity.

- 83 [\(return\)](#)
[The opinions of Ulphilas and the Goths inclined to semi-Arianism, since they would not say that the Son was a creature, though they held communion with those who maintained that heresy. Their apostle represented the whole controversy as a question of trifling moment, which had been raised by the passions of the clergy. Theodoret l. iv. c. 37.]
- 84 [\(return\)](#)
[The Arianism of the Goths has been imputed to the emperor Valens: "Itaque justo Dei judicio ipsi eum vivum incenderunt, qui propter eum etiam mortui, vitio erroris arsurus sunt." Orosius, l. vii. c. 33, p. 554. This cruel sentence is confirmed by Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 604-610,) who coolly observes, "un seul homme entraîna dans l'enfer un nombre infini de Septentrionaux, &c." Salvian (de Gubern. Dei, l. v p. 150, 151) pities and excuses their involuntary error.]
- 85 [\(return\)](#)
[Orosius affirms, in the year 416, (l. vii. c. 41, p. 580,) that the Churches of Christ (of the Catholics) were filled with Huns, Suevi, Vandals, Burgundians.]
- 86 [\(return\)](#)
[Radbod, king of the Frisons, was so much scandalized by this rash declaration of a missionary, that he drew back his foot after he had entered the baptismal font. See Fleury, Hist. Eccles. tom. ix p. 167.]
- 87 [\(return\)](#)
[The epistles of Sidonius, bishop of Clermont, under the Visigoths, and of Avitus, bishop of Vienna, under the Burgundians, explain sometimes in dark hints, the general dispositions of the Catholics. The history of Clovis and Theodoric will suggest some particular facts]
- 88 [\(return\)](#)
[Genseric confessed the resemblance, by the severity with which he punished such indiscreet allusions. Victor Vitensis, l. 7, p. 10.]

The peace of the church was sometimes interrupted. The Catholics were indiscreet, the Barbarians were impatient; and the partial acts of severity or injustice, which had been recommended by the Arian clergy, were exaggerated by the orthodox writers. The

guilt of persecution may be imputed to Euric, king of the Visigoths; who suspended the exercise of ecclesiastical, or, at least, of episcopal functions; and punished the popular bishops of Aquitain with imprisonment, exile, and confiscation. [89](#) But the cruel and absurd enterprise of subduing the minds of a whole people was undertaken by the Vandals alone. Genseric himself, in his early youth, had renounced the orthodox communion; and the apostate could neither grant, nor expect, a sincere forgiveness. He was exasperated to find that the Africans, who had fled before him in the field, still presumed to dispute his will in synods and churches; and his ferocious mind was incapable of fear or of compassion. His Catholic subjects were oppressed by intolerant laws and arbitrary punishments. The language of Genseric was furious and formidable; the knowledge of his intentions might justify the most unfavorable interpretation of his actions; and the Arians were reproached with the frequent executions which stained the palace and the dominions of the tyrant. Arms and ambition were, however, the ruling passions of the monarch of the sea. But Hunneric, his inglorious son, who seemed to inherit only his vices, tormented the Catholics with the same unrelenting fury which had been fatal to his brother, his nephews, and the friends and favorites of his father; and even to the Arian patriarch, who was inhumanly burnt alive in the midst of Carthage. The religious war was preceded and prepared by an insidious truce; persecution was made the serious and important business of the Vandal court; and the loathsome disease which hastened the death of Hunneric, revenged the injuries, without contributing to the deliverance, of the church. The throne of Africa was successively filled by the two nephews of Hunneric; by Gundamund, who reigned about twelve, and by Thrasimund, who governed the nation about twenty-seven, years. Their administration was hostile and oppressive to the orthodox party. Gundamund appeared to emulate, or even to surpass, the cruelty of his uncle; and, if at length he relented, if he recalled the bishops, and restored the freedom of Athanasian worship, a premature death intercepted the benefits of his tardy clemency. His brother, Thrasimund, was the greatest and most accomplished of the Vandal kings, whom he excelled in beauty, prudence, and magnanimity of soul. But this magnanimous character was degraded by his intolerant zeal and deceitful clemency. Instead of threats and tortures, he employed the gentle, but efficacious, powers of seduction. Wealth, dignity, and the royal favor, were the liberal rewards of apostasy; the Catholics, who had violated the laws, might purchase their pardon by the renunciation of their faith; and whenever Thrasimund meditated any rigorous measure, he patiently waited till the indiscretion of his adversaries furnished him with a specious opportunity. Bigotry was his last sentiment in the hour of death; and he exacted from his successor a solemn oath, that he would never tolerate the sectaries of Athanasius. But his successor, Hilderic, the gentle son of the savage Hunneric, preferred the duties of humanity and justice to the vain obligation of an impious oath; and his accession was gloriously marked by the restoration of peace and universal freedom. The throne of that virtuous, though feeble monarch, was usurped by his cousin Gelimer, a zealous Arian: but the Vandal kingdom, before he could enjoy

or abuse his power, was subverted by the arms of Belisarius; and the orthodox party retaliated the injuries which they had endured. [90](#)

89

[\(return\)](#)

[Such are the contemporary complaints of Sidonius, bishop of Clermont (l. vii. c. 6, p. 182, &c., edit. Sirmond.) Gregory of Tours who quotes this Epistle, (l. ii. c. 25, in tom. ii. p. 174,) extorts an unwarrantable assertion, that of the nine vacancies in Aquitain, some had been produced by episcopal martyrdoms]

90

[\(return\)](#)

[The original monuments of the Vandal persecution are preserved in the five books of the history of Victor Vitensis, (de Persecutione Vandalica,) a bishop who was exiled by Hunneric; in the life of St. Fulgentius, who was distinguished in the persecution of Thrasimund (in Biblioth. Max. Patrum, tom. ix. p. 4-16;) and in the first book of the Vandalic War, by the impartial Procopius, (c. 7, 8, p. 196, 197, 198, 199.) Dom Ruinart, the last editor of Victor, has illustrated the whole subject with a copious and learned apparatus of notes and supplement (Paris, 1694.)]

The passionate declamations of the Catholics, the sole historians of this persecution, cannot afford any distinct series of causes and events; any impartial view of the characters, or counsels; but the most remarkable circumstances that deserve either credit or notice, may be referred to the following heads; I. In the original law, which is still extant, [91](#) Hunneric expressly declares, (and the declaration appears to be correct,) that he had faithfully transcribed the regulations and penalties of the Imperial edicts, against the heretical congregations, the clergy, and the people, who dissented from the established religion. If the rights of conscience had been understood, the Catholics must have condemned their past conduct or acquiesced in their actual suffering. But they still persisted to refuse the indulgence which they claimed. While they trembled under the lash of persecution, they praised the laudable severity of Hunneric himself, who burnt or banished great numbers of Manichæans; [92](#) and they rejected, with horror, the ignominious compromise, that the disciples of Arius and of Athanasius should enjoy a reciprocal and similar toleration in the territories of the Romans, and in those of the Vandals. [93](#) II. The practice of a conference, which the Catholics had so frequently used to insult and punish their obstinate antagonists, was retorted against themselves. [94](#) At the command of Hunneric, four hundred and sixty-six orthodox bishops assembled at Carthage; but when they were admitted into the hall of audience, they had the mortification of beholding the Arian Cyrila exalted on the patriarchal throne. The disputants were separated, after the mutual and ordinary reproaches of noise and silence, of delay and precipitation, of military force and of popular clamor. One martyr and one confessor were selected among the Catholic bishops; twenty-eight escaped by

flight, and eighty-eight by conformity; forty-six were sent into Corsica to cut timber for the royal navy; and three hundred and two were banished to the different parts of Africa, exposed to the insults of their enemies, and carefully deprived of all the temporal and spiritual comforts of life. [95](#) The hardships of ten years' exile must have reduced their numbers; and if they had complied with the law of Thrasimund, which prohibited any episcopal consecrations, the orthodox church of Africa must have expired with the lives of its actual members. They disobeyed, and their disobedience was punished by a second exile of two hundred and twenty bishops into Sardinia; where they languished fifteen years, till the accession of the gracious Hilderic. [96](#) The two islands were judiciously chosen by the malice of their Arian tyrants. Seneca, from his own experience, has deplored and exaggerated the miserable state of Corsica, [97](#) and the plenty of Sardinia was overbalanced by the unwholesome quality of the air. [98](#) III. The zeal of Genseric and his successors, for the conversion of the Catholics, must have rendered them still more jealous to guard the purity of the Vandal faith. Before the churches were finally shut, it was a crime to appear in a Barbarian dress; and those who presumed to neglect the royal mandate were rudely dragged backwards by their long hair. [99](#) The palatine officers, who refused to profess the religion of their prince, were ignominiously stripped of their honors and employments; banished to Sardinia and Sicily; or condemned to the servile labors of slaves and peasants in the fields of Utica. In the districts which had been peculiarly allotted to the Vandals, the exercise of the Catholic worship was more strictly prohibited; and severe penalties were denounced against the guilt both of the missionary and the proselyte. By these arts, the faith of the Barbarians was preserved, and their zeal was inflamed: they discharged, with devout fury, the office of spies, informers, or executioners; and whenever their cavalry took the field, it was the favorite amusement of the march to defile the churches, and to insult the clergy of the adverse faction. [100](#) IV. The citizens who had been educated in the luxury of the Roman province, were delivered, with exquisite cruelty, to the Moors of the desert. A venerable train of bishops, presbyters, and deacons, with a faithful crowd of four thousand and ninety-six persons, whose guilt is not precisely ascertained, were torn from their native homes, by the command of Hunneric. During the night they were confined, like a herd of cattle, amidst their own ordure: during the day they pursued their march over the burning sands; and if they fainted under the heat and fatigue, they were goaded, or dragged along, till they expired in the hands of their tormentors. [101](#) These unhappy exiles, when they reached the Moorish huts, might excite the compassion of a people, whose native humanity was neither improved by reason, nor corrupted by fanaticism: but if they escaped the dangers, they were condemned to share the distress of a savage life. V. It is incumbent on the authors of persecution previously to reflect, whether they are determined to support it in the last extreme. They excite the flame which they strive to extinguish; and it soon becomes necessary to chastise the contumacy, as well as the crime, of the offender. The fine, which he is unable or unwilling to discharge, exposes his person to the severity of the

law; and his contempt of lighter penalties suggests the use and propriety of capital punishment. Through the veil of fiction and declamation we may clearly perceive, that the Catholics more especially under the reign of Hunneric, endured the most cruel and ignominious treatment. [102](#) Respectable citizens, noble matrons, and consecrated virgins, were stripped naked, and raised in the air by pulleys, with a weight suspended at their feet. In this painful attitude their naked bodies were torn with scourges, or burnt in the most tender parts with red-hot plates of iron. The amputation of the ears the nose, the tongue, and the right hand, was inflicted by the Arians; and although the precise number cannot be defined, it is evident that many persons, among whom a bishop [103](#) and a proconsul [104](#) may be named, were entitled to the crown of martyrdom. The same honor has been ascribed to the memory of Count Sebastian, who professed the Nicene creed with unshaken constancy; and Genseric might detest, as a heretic, the brave and ambitious fugitive whom he dreaded as a rival. [105](#) VI. A new mode of conversion, which might subdue the feeble, and alarm the timorous, was employed by the Arian ministers. They imposed, by fraud or violence, the rites of baptism; and punished the apostasy of the Catholics, if they disclaimed this odious and profane ceremony, which scandalously violated the freedom of the will, and the unity of the sacrament. [106](#) The hostile sects had formerly allowed the validity of each other's baptism; and the innovation, so fiercely maintained by the Vandals, can be imputed only to the example and advice of the Donatists. VII. The Arian clergy surpassed in religious cruelty the king and his Vandals; but they were incapable of cultivating the spiritual vineyard, which they were so desirous to possess. A patriarch [107](#) might seat himself on the throne of Carthage; some bishops, in the principal cities, might usurp the place of their rivals; but the smallness of their numbers, and their ignorance of the Latin language, [108](#) disqualified the Barbarians for the ecclesiastical ministry of a great church; and the Africans, after the loss of their orthodox pastors, were deprived of the public exercise of Christianity. VIII. The emperors were the natural protectors of the Homoeousian doctrine; and the faithful people of Africa, both as Romans and as Catholics, preferred their lawful sovereignty to the usurpation of the Barbarous heretics. During an interval of peace and friendship, Hunneric restored the cathedral of Carthage; at the intercession of Zeno, who reigned in the East, and of Placidia, the daughter and relict of emperors, and the sister of the queen of the Vandals. [109](#) But this decent regard was of short duration; and the haughty tyrant displayed his contempt for the religion of the empire, by studiously arranging the bloody images of persecution, in all the principal streets through which the Roman ambassador must pass in his way to the palace. [110](#) An oath was required from the bishops, who were assembled at Carthage, that they would support the succession of his son Hilderic, and that they would renounce all foreign or transmarine correspondence. This engagement, consistent, as it should seem, with their moral and religious duties, was refused by the more sagacious members [111](#) of the assembly. Their refusal, faintly colored by the pretence that it is unlawful for a Christian to swear, must provoke the suspicions of a jealous tyrant.

- 91 [\(return\)](#)
[Victor, iv. 2, p. 65. Hunneric refuses the name of Catholics to the Homoousians. He describes, as the veri Divinae Majestatis cultores, his own party, who professed the faith, confirmed by more than a thousand bishops, in the synods of Rimini and Seleucia.]
- 92 [\(return\)](#)
[Victor, ii, 1, p. 21, 22: Laudabilior... videbatur. In the Mss which omit this word, the passage is unintelligible. See Ruinart Not. p. 164.]
- 93 [\(return\)](#)
[Victor, ii. p. 22, 23. The clergy of Carthage called these conditions periculosae; and they seem, indeed, to have been proposed as a snare to entrap the Catholic bishops.]
- 94 [\(return\)](#)
[See the narrative of this conference, and the treatment of the bishops, in Victor, ii. 13-18, p. 35-42 and the whole fourth book p. 63-171. The third book, p. 42-62, is entirely filled by their apology or confession of faith.]
- 95 [\(return\)](#)
[See the list of the African bishops, in Victor, p. 117-140, and Ruinart's notes, p. 215-397. The schismatic name of Donatus frequently occurs, and they appear to have adopted (like our fanatics of the last age) the pious appellations of Deodatus, Deogratias, Quidvultdeus, Habetdeum, &c. Note: These names appear to have been introduced by the Donatists.—M.]
- 96 [\(return\)](#)
[Fulgent. Vit. c. 16-29. Thrasimund affected the praise of moderation and learning; and Fulgentius addressed three books of controversy to the Arian tyrant, whom he styles piissime Rex. Biblioth. Maxim. Patrum, tom. ix. p. 41. Only sixty bishops are mentioned as exiles in the life of Fulgentius; they are increased to one hundred and twenty by Victor Tununensis and Isidore; but the number of two hundred and twenty is specified in the Historia Miscella, and a short authentic chronicle of the times. See Ruinart, p. 570, 571.]
- 97 [\(return\)](#)
[See the base and insipid epigrams of the Stoic, who could not support exile with more fortitude than Ovid. Corsica might not produce corn, wine, or oil; but it could not be destitute of grass, water, and even fire.]

- 98 [\(return\)](#)
[Si ob gravitatem coeli interissent vile damnum. Tacit. Annal. ii. 85. In this application, Thrasimund would have adopted the reading of some critics, utile damnum.]
- 99 [\(return\)](#)
[See these preludes of a general persecution, in Victor, ii. 3, 4, 7 and the two edicts of Hunneric, l. ii. p. 35, l. iv. p. 64.]
- 100 [\(return\)](#)
[See Procopius de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 7, p. 197, 198. A Moorish prince endeavored to propitiate the God of the Christians, by his diligence to erase the marks of the Vandal sacrilege.]
- 101 [\(return\)](#)
[See this story in Victor. ii. 8-12, p. 30-34. Victor describes the distress of these confessors as an eye-witness.]
- 102 [\(return\)](#)
[See the fifth book of Victor. His passionate complaints are confirmed by the sober testimony of Procopius, and the public declaration of the emperor Justinian. Cod. l. i. tit. xxvii.]
- 103 [\(return\)](#)
[Victor, ii. 18, p. 41.]
- 104 [\(return\)](#)
[Victor, v. 4, p. 74, 75. His name was Victorianus, and he was a wealthy citizen of Adrumetum, who enjoyed the confidence of the king; by whose favor he had obtained the office, or at least the title, of proconsul of Africa.]
- 105 [\(return\)](#)
[Victor, i. 6, p. 8, 9. After relating the firm resistance and dexterous reply of Count Sebastian, he adds, quare alio generis argumento postea bellicosum virum eccidit.]
- 106 [\(return\)](#)
[Victor, v. 12, 13. Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. vi. p. 609.]
- 107 [\(return\)](#)
[Primate was more properly the title of the bishop of Carthage; but the name of patriarch was given by the sects and nations to their principal ecclesiastic. See Thomassin, Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. i. p. 155, 158.]
- 108 [\(return\)](#)
[The patriarch Cyrila himself publicly declared, that he did not understand Latin (Victor, ii. 18, p.

42:) Nescio Latine; and he might converse with tolerable ease, without being capable of disputing or preaching in that language. His Vandal clergy were still more ignorant; and small confidence could be placed in the Africans who had conformed.]

109 [\(return\)](#)

[Victor, ii. 1, 2, p. 22.]

110 [\(return\)](#)

[Victor, v. 7, p. 77. He appeals to the ambassador himself, whose name was Uranius.]

111 [\(return\)](#)

[Astutiores, Victor, iv. 4, p. 70. He plainly intimates that their quotation of the gospel “Non jurabitis in toto,” was only meant to elude the obligation of an inconvenient oath. The forty-six bishops who refused were banished to Corsica; the three hundred and two who swore were distributed through the provinces of Africa.]

Chapter XXXVII: Conversion Of The Barbarians To Christianity.—Part IV.

The Catholics, oppressed by royal and military force, were far superior to their adversaries in numbers and learning. With the same weapons which the Greek [112](#) and Latin fathers had already provided for the Arian controversy, they repeatedly silenced, or vanquished, the fierce and illiterate successors of Ulphilas. The consciousness of their own superiority might have raised them above the arts and passions of religious warfare. Yet, instead of assuming such honorable pride, the orthodox theologians were tempted, by the assurance of impunity, to compose fictions, which must be stigmatized with the epithets of fraud and forgery. They ascribed their own polemical works to the most venerable names of Christian antiquity; the characters of Athanasius and Augustin were awkwardly personated by Vigilius and his disciples; [113](#) and the famous creed, which so clearly expounds the mysteries of the Trinity and the Incarnation, is deduced, with strong probability, from this African school. [114](#) Even the Scriptures themselves were profaned by their rash and sacrilegious hands. The memorable text, which asserts the unity of the three who bear witness in heaven, [115](#) is condemned by the universal silence of the orthodox fathers, ancient versions, and authentic manuscripts. [116](#) It was first alleged by the Catholic bishops whom Hunneric summoned to the conference of Carthage. [117](#) An allegorical interpretation, in the form, perhaps, of a marginal note, invaded the text of the Latin Bibles, which were renewed and corrected in a dark period of ten centuries. [118](#) After the invention of printing, [119](#) the editors of the Greek Testament yielded to their own prejudices, or those of the times; [120](#) and the pious

fraud, which was embraced with equal zeal at Rome and at Geneva, has been infinitely multiplied in every country and every language of modern Europe.

112

[\(return\)](#)

[Fulgentius, bishop of Ruspae, in the Byzacene province, was of a senatorial family, and had received a liberal education. He could repeat all Homer and Menander before he was allowed to study Latin his native tongue, (Vit. Fulgent. c. l.) Many African bishops might understand Greek, and many Greek theologians were translated into Latin.]

113

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare the two prefaces to the Dialogue of Vigilius of Thapsus, (p. 118, 119, edit. Chiflet.) He might amuse his learned reader with an innocent fiction; but the subject was too grave, and the Africans were too ignorant.]

114

[\(return\)](#)

[The P. Quesnel started this opinion, which has been favorably received. But the three following truths, however surprising they may seem, are now universally acknowledged, (Gerard Vossius, tom. vi. p. 516-522. Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 667-671.) 1. St. Athanasius is not the author of the creed which is so frequently read in our churches. 2. It does not appear to have existed within a century after his death. 3. It was originally composed in the Latin tongue, and, consequently in the Western provinces. Gennadius patriarch of Constantinople, was so much amazed by this extraordinary composition, that he frankly pronounced it to be the work of a drunken man. Petav. Dogmat. Theologica, tom. ii. l. vii. c. 8, p. 687.]

115

[\(return\)](#)

[1 John, v. 7. See Simon, Hist. Critique du Nouveau Testament, part i. c. xviii. p. 203-218; and part ii. c. ix. p. 99-121; and the elaborate Prolegomena and Annotations of Dr. Mill and Wetstein to their editions of the Greek Testament. In 1689, the papist Simon strove to be free; in 1707, the Protestant Mill wished to be a slave; in 1751, the Armenian Wetstein used the liberty of his times, and of his sect. * Note: This controversy has continued to be agitated, but with declining interest even in the more religious part of the community; and may now be considered to have terminated in an almost general acquiescence of the learned to the conclusions of Porson in his Letters to Travis. See

the pamphlets of the late Bishop of Salisbury and of Crito Cantabrigiensis, Dr. Turton of Cambridge.— M.]

116 [\(return\)](#)

[Of all the Mss. now extant, above fourscore in number, some of which are more than 1200 years old, (Wetstein ad loc.) The orthodox copies of the Vatican, of the Complutensian editors, of Robert Stephens, are become invisible; and the two Mss. of Dublin and Berlin are unworthy to form an exception. See Emlyn's Works, vol. ii. p 227-255, 269-299; and M. de Missy's four ingenious letters, in tom. viii. and ix. of the Journal Britannique.]

117 [\(return\)](#)

[Or, more properly, by the four bishops who composed and published the profession of faith in the name of their brethren. They styled this text, luce clarius, (Victor Vitensis de Persecut. Vandal. l. iii. c. 11, p. 54.) It is quoted soon afterwards by the African polemics, Vigilius and Fulgentius.]

118 [\(return\)](#)

[In the eleventh and twelfth centuries, the Bibles were corrected by Lanfranc, archbishop of Canterbury, and by Nicholas, cardinal and librarian of the Roman church, secundum orthodoxam fidem, (Wetstein, Prolegom. p. 84, 85.) Notwithstanding these corrections, the passage is still wanting in twenty-five Latin Mss., (Wetstein ad loc.,) the oldest and the fairest; two qualities seldom united, except in manuscripts.]

119 [\(return\)](#)

[The art which the Germans had invented was applied in Italy to the profane writers of Rome and Greece. The original Greek of the New Testament was published about the same time (A.D. 1514, 1516, 1520,) by the industry of Erasmus, and the munificence of Cardinal Ximenes. The Complutensian Polyglot cost the cardinal 50,000 ducats. See Mattaire, Annal. Typograph. tom. ii. p. 2-8, 125-133; and Wetstein, Prolegomena, p. 116-127.]

120 [\(return\)](#)

[The three witnesses have been established in our Greek Testaments by the prudence of Erasmus; the honest bigotry of the Complutensian editors; the typographical fraud, or error, of Robert Stephens, in the placing a crotchet; and the deliberate falsehood, or strange misapprehension, of Theodore Beza.]

The example of fraud must excite suspicion: and the specious miracles by which the African Catholics have defended the truth and justice of their cause, may be ascribed, with more reason, to their own industry, than to the visible protection of Heaven. Yet the historian, who views this religious conflict with an impartial eye, may condescend to mention one preternatural event, which will edify the devout, and surprise the incredulous. Tipasa, [121](#) a maritime colony of Mauritania, sixteen miles to the east of Caesarea, had been distinguished, in every age, by the orthodox zeal of its inhabitants. They had braved the fury of the Donatists; [122](#) they resisted, or eluded, the tyranny of the Arians. The town was deserted on the approach of an heretical bishop: most of the inhabitants who could procure ships passed over to the coast of Spain; and the unhappy remnant, refusing all communion with the usurper, still presumed to hold their pious, but illegal, assemblies. Their disobedience exasperated the cruelty of Hunneric. A military count was despatched from Carthage to Tipasa: he collected the Catholics in the Forum, and, in the presence of the whole province, deprived the guilty of their right hands and their tongues. But the holy confessors continued to speak without tongues; and this miracle is attested by Victor, an African bishop, who published a history of the persecution within two years after the event. [123](#) “If any one,” says Victor, “should doubt of the truth, let him repair to Constantinople, and listen to the clear and perfect language of Restitutus, the sub-deacon, one of these glorious sufferers, who is now lodged in the palace of the emperor Zeno, and is respected by the devout empress.” At Constantinople we are astonished to find a cool, a learned, and unexceptionable witness, without interest, and without passion. Aeneas of Gaza, a Platonic philosopher, has accurately described his own observations on these African sufferers. “I saw them myself: I heard them speak: I diligently inquired by what means such an articulate voice could be formed without any organ of speech: I used my eyes to examine the report of my ears; I opened their mouth, and saw that the whole tongue had been completely torn away by the roots; an operation which the physicians generally suppose to be mortal.” [124](#) The testimony of Aeneas of Gaza might be confirmed by the superfluous evidence of the emperor Justinian, in a perpetual edict; of Count Marcellinus, in his Chronicle of the times; and of Pope Gregory the First, who had resided at Constantinople, as the minister of the Roman pontiff. [125](#) They all lived within the compass of a century; and they all appeal to their personal knowledge, or the public notoriety, for the truth of a miracle, which was repeated in several instances, displayed on the greatest theatre of the world, and submitted, during a series of years, to the calm examination of the senses. This supernatural gift of the African confessors, who spoke without tongues, will command the assent of those, and of those only, who already believe, that their language was pure and orthodox. But the stubborn mind of an infidel, is guarded by secret, incurable suspicion; and the Arian, or Socinian, who has seriously rejected the doctrine of a Trinity, will not be shaken by the most plausible evidence of an Athanasian miracle.

- 121 [\(return\)](#)
 [Plin. Hist. Natural. v. 1. Itinerar. Wesseling, p. 15. Cellanius, Geograph. Antiq. tom. ii. part ii. p. 127. This Tipasa (which must not be confounded with another in Numidia) was a town of some note since Vespasian endowed it with the right of Latium.]
- 122 [\(return\)](#)
 [Optatus Milevitanus de Schism. Donatist. l. ii. p. 38.]
- 123 [\(return\)](#)
 [Victor Vitensis, v. 6, p. 76. Ruinart, p. 483-487.]
- 124 [\(return\)](#)
 [Aeneas Gazaeus in Theophrasto, in Biblioth. Patrum, tom. viii. p. 664, 665. He was a Christian, and composed this Dialogue (the Theophrastus) on the immortality of the soul, and the resurrection of the body; besides twenty-five Epistles, still extant. See Cave, (Hist. Litteraria, p. 297,) and Fabricius, (Biblioth. Graec. tom. i. p. 422.)]
- 125 [\(return\)](#)
 [Justinian. Codex. l. i. tit. xxvii. Marcellin. in Chron. p. 45, in Thesaur. Temporum Scaliger. Procopius, de Bell. Vandal. l. i. c. 7. p. 196. Gregor. Magnus, Dialog. iii. 32. None of these witnesses have specified the number of the confessors, which is fixed at sixty in an old menology, (apud Ruinart. p. 486.) Two of them lost their speech by fornication; but the miracle is enhanced by the singular instance of a boy who had never spoken before his tongue was cut out.]

The Vandals and the Ostrogoths persevered in the profession of Arianism till the final ruin of the kingdoms which they had founded in Africa and Italy. The Barbarians of Gaul submitted to the orthodox dominion of the Franks; and Spain was restored to the Catholic church by the voluntary conversion of the Visigoths.

This salutary revolution [126](#) was hastened by the example of a royal martyr, whom our calmer reason may style an ungrateful rebel. Leovigild, the Gothic monarch of Spain, deserved the respect of his enemies, and the love of his subjects; the Catholics enjoyed a free toleration, and his Arian synods attempted, without much success, to reconcile their scruples by abolishing the unpopular rite of a second baptism. His eldest son Hermenegild, who was invested by his father with the royal diadem, and the fair principality of Boetica, contracted an honorable and orthodox alliance with a Merovingian princess, the daughter of Sigebert, king of Austrasia, and of the famous Brunechild. The beauteous Ingundis, who was no more than thirteen years of age, was received, beloved, and persecuted, in the Arian court of Toledo; and her religious constancy was alternately assaulted with blandishments and violence by Goisvintha, the Gothic queen, who abused the double claim of maternal authority. [127](#) Incensed by her

resistance, Goisvintha seized the Catholic princess by her long hair, inhumanly dashed her against the ground, kicked her till she was covered with blood, and at last gave orders that she should be stripped, and thrown into a basin, or fish-pond. [128](#) Love and honor might excite Hermenegild to resent this injurious treatment of his bride; and he was gradually persuaded that Ingundis suffered for the cause of divine truth. Her tender complaints, and the weighty arguments of Leander, archbishop of Seville, accomplished his conversion and the heir of the Gothic monarchy was initiated in the Nicene faith by the solemn rites of confirmation. [129](#) The rash youth, inflamed by zeal, and perhaps by ambition, was tempted to violate the duties of a son and a subject; and the Catholics of Spain, although they could not complain of persecution, applauded his pious rebellion against an heretical father. The civil war was protracted by the long and obstinate sieges of Merida, Cordova, and Seville, which had strenuously espoused the party of Hermenegild. He invited the orthodox Barbarians, the Seuvi, and the Franks, to the destruction of his native land; he solicited the dangerous aid of the Romans, who possessed Africa, and a part of the Spanish coast; and his holy ambassador, the archbishop Leander, effectually negotiated in person with the Byzantine court. But the hopes of the Catholics were crushed by the active diligence of the monarch who commanded the troops and treasures of Spain; and the guilty Hermenegild, after his vain attempts to resist or to escape, was compelled to surrender himself into the hands of an incensed father. Leovigild was still mindful of that sacred character; and the rebel, despoiled of the regal ornaments, was still permitted, in a decent exile, to profess the Catholic religion. His repeated and unsuccessful treasons at length provoked the indignation of the Gothic king; and the sentence of death, which he pronounced with apparent reluctance, was privately executed in the tower of Seville. The inflexible constancy with which he refused to accept the Arian communion, as the price of his safety, may excuse the honors that have been paid to the memory of St. Hermenegild. His wife and infant son were detained by the Romans in ignominious captivity; and this domestic misfortune tarnished the glories of Leovigild, and imbittered the last moments of his life.

126

[\(return\)](#)

[See the two general historians of Spain, Mariana (*Hist. de Rebus Hispaniae*, tom. i. l. v. c. 12-15, p. 182-194) and Ferreras, (French translation, tom. ii. p. 206-247.) Mariana almost forgets that he is a Jesuit, to assume the style and spirit of a Roman classic. Ferreras, an industrious compiler, reviews his facts, and rectifies his chronology.]

127

[\(return\)](#)

[Goisvintha successively married two kings of the Visigoths: Athanigild, to whom she bore Brunechild, the mother of Ingundis; and Leovigild, whose two sons, Hermenegild and Recared, were the issue of a former marriage.]

128

[\(return\)](#)

[Iracundiae furore succensa, adprehensam per comam capitis puellam in terram conludit, et diu calcibus verberatam, ac sanguine cruentatam, jussit exspoliari, et piscinae immergi. Greg. Turon. l. v. c. 39. in tom. ii. p. 255. Gregory is one of our best originals for this portion of history.]

129

[\(return\)](#)

[The Catholics who admitted the baptism of heretics repeated the rite, or, as it was afterwards styled, the sacrament, of confirmation, to which they ascribed many mystic and marvellous prerogatives both visible and invisible. See Chardon. Hist. des Sacremens, tom. 1. p. 405-552.]

His son and successor, Recared, the first Catholic king of Spain, had imbibed the faith of his unfortunate brother, which he supported with more prudence and success. Instead of revolting against his father, Recared patiently expected the hour of his death. Instead of condemning his memory, he piously supposed, that the dying monarch had abjured the errors of Arianism, and recommended to his son the conversion of the Gothic nation. To accomplish that salutary end, Recared convened an assembly of the Arian clergy and nobles, declared himself a Catholic, and exhorted them to imitate the example of their prince. The laborious interpretation of doubtful texts, or the curious pursuit of metaphysical arguments, would have excited an endless controversy; and the monarch discreetly proposed to his illiterate audience two substantial and visible arguments,—the testimony of Earth, and of Heaven. The Earth had submitted to the Nicene synod: the Romans, the Barbarians, and the inhabitants of Spain, unanimously professed the same orthodox creed; and the Visigoths resisted, almost alone, the consent of the Christian world. A superstitious age was prepared to reverence, as the testimony of Heaven, the preternatural cures, which were performed by the skill or virtue of the Catholic clergy; the baptismal fonts of Osset in Boetica, [130](#) which were spontaneously replenished every year, on the vigil of Easter; [131](#) and the miraculous shrine of St. Martin of Tours, which had already converted the Suevic prince and people of Gallicia. [132](#) The Catholic king encountered some difficulties on this important change of the national religion. A conspiracy, secretly fomented by the queen-dowager, was formed against his life; and two counts excited a dangerous revolt in the Narbonnese Gaul. But Recared disarmed the conspirators, defeated the rebels, and executed severe justice; which the Arians, in their turn, might brand with the reproach of persecution. Eight bishops, whose names betray their Barbaric origin, abjured their errors; and all the books of Arian theology were reduced to ashes, with the house in which they had been purposely collected. The whole body of the Visigoths and Suevi were allured or driven into the pale of the Catholic communion; the faith, at least of the rising generation, was fervent and sincere: and the devout liberality of the Barbarians enriched the churches and monasteries of Spain. Seventy bishops, assembled in the council of

Toledo, received the submission of their conquerors; and the zeal of the Spaniards improved the Nicene creed, by declaring the procession of the Holy Ghost from the Son, as well as from the Father; a weighty point of doctrine, which produced, long afterwards, the schism of the Greek and Latin churches. [133](#) The royal proselyte immediately saluted and consulted Pope Gregory, surnamed the Great, a learned and holy prelate, whose reign was distinguished by the conversion of heretics and infidels. The ambassadors of Recared respectfully offered on the threshold of the Vatican his rich presents of gold and gems; they accepted, as a lucrative exchange, the hairs of St. John the Baptist; a cross, which enclosed a small piece of the true wood; and a key, that contained some particles of iron which had been scraped from the chains of St. Peter. [134](#)

130 [\(return\)](#)

[Osset, or Julia Constantia, was opposite to Seville, on the northern side of the Boetis, (Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 3:) and the authentic reference of Gregory of Tours (Hist. Francor. l. vi. c. 43, p. 288) deserves more credit than the name of Lusitania, (de Gloria Martyr. c. 24,) which has been eagerly embraced by the vain and superstitious Portuguese, (Ferrerar, Hist. d’Espagne, tom. ii. p. 166.)]

131 [\(return\)](#)

[This miracle was skilfully performed. An Arian king sealed the doors, and dug a deep trench round the church, without being able to intercept the Easter supply of baptismal water.]

132 [\(return\)](#)

[Ferreras (tom. ii. p. 168-175, A.D. 550) has illustrated the difficulties which regard the time and circumstances of the conversion of the Suevi. They had been recently united by Leovigild to the Gothic monarchy of Spain.]

133 [\(return\)](#)

[This addition to the Nicene, or rather the Constantinopolitan creed, was first made in the eighth council of Toledo, A.D. 653; but it was expressive of the popular doctrine, (Gerard Vossius, tom. vi. p. 527, de tribus Symbolis.)]

134 [\(return\)](#)

[See Gregor. Magn. l. vii. epist. 126, apud Baronium, Annal. Eccles. A.D. 559, No. 25, 26.]

The same Gregory, the spiritual conqueror of Britain, encouraged the pious Theodelinda, queen of the Lombards, to propagate the Nicene faith among the victorious savages, whose recent Christianity was polluted by the Arian heresy. Her devout labors still left room for the industry and success of future missionaries; and many cities of Italy were still disputed by hostile bishops. But the cause of Arianism

was gradually suppressed by the weight of truth, of interest, and of example; and the controversy, which Egypt had derived from the Platonic school, was terminated, after a war of three hundred years, by the final conversion of the Lombards of Italy. [135](#)

135

[\(return\)](#)

[Paul Warnefrid (de Gestis Langobard. l. iv. c. 44, p. 153, edit Grot.) allows that Arianism still prevailed under the reign of Rotharis, (A.D. 636-652.) The pious deacon does not attempt to mark the precise era of the national conversion, which was accomplished, however, before the end of the seventh century.]

The first missionaries who preached the gospel to the Barbarians, appealed to the evidence of reason, and claimed the benefit of toleration. [136](#) But no sooner had they established their spiritual dominion, than they exhorted the Christian kings to extirpate, without mercy, the remains of Roman or Barbaric superstition. The successors of Clovis inflicted one hundred lashes on the peasants who refused to destroy their idols; the crime of sacrificing to the demons was punished by the Anglo-Saxon laws with the heavier penalties of imprisonment and confiscation; and even the wise Alfred adopted, as an indispensable duty, the extreme rigor of the Mosaic institutions. [137](#) But the punishment and the crime were gradually abolished among a Christian people; the theological disputes of the schools were suspended by propitious ignorance; and the intolerant spirit which could find neither idolaters nor heretics, was reduced to the persecution of the Jews. That exiled nation had founded some synagogues in the cities of Gaul; but Spain, since the time of Hadrian, was filled with their numerous colonies. [138](#) The wealth which they accumulated by trade, and the management of the finances, invited the pious avarice of their masters; and they might be oppressed without danger, as they had lost the use, and even the remembrance, of arms. Sisebut, a Gothic king, who reigned in the beginning of the seventh century, proceeded at once to the last extremes of persecution. [139](#) Ninety thousand Jews were compelled to receive the sacrament of baptism; the fortunes of the obstinate infidels were confiscated, their bodies were tortured; and it seems doubtful whether they were permitted to abandon their native country. The excessive zeal of the Catholic king was moderated, even by the clergy of Spain, who solemnly pronounced an inconsistent sentence: that the sacraments should not be forcibly imposed; but that the Jews who had been baptized should be constrained, for the honor of the church, to persevere in the external practice of a religion which they disbelieved and detested. Their frequent relapses provoked one of the successors of Sisebut to banish the whole nation from his dominions; and a council of Toledo published a decree, that every Gothic king should swear to maintain this salutary edict. But the tyrants were unwilling to dismiss the victims, whom they delighted to torture, or to deprive themselves of the industrious slaves, over whom they might exercise a lucrative oppression. The Jews still continued in Spain, under the weight of the civil and ecclesiastical laws, which in the same country have been

faithfully transcribed in the Code of the Inquisition. The Gothic kings and bishops at length discovered, that injuries will produce hatred, and that hatred will find the opportunity of revenge. A nation, the secret or professed enemies of Christianity, still multiplied in servitude and distress; and the intrigues of the Jews promoted the rapid success of the Arabian conquerors. [140](#)

136 [\(return\)](#)

[Quorum fidei et conversioni ita congratulatus esse rex perhibetur, ut nullum tamen cogeret ad Christianismum.... Didiceret enim a doctoribus auctoribusque suae salutis, servitium Christi voluntarium non coactitium esse debere. Bedae Hist. Ecclesiastic. l. i. c. 26, p. 62, edit. Smith.]

137 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Historians of France, tom. iv. p. 114; and Wilkins, Leges Anglo-Saxonicae, p. 11, 31. Siquis sacrificium immolaverit praeter Deo soli morte moriatur.]

138 [\(return\)](#)

[The Jews pretend that they were introduced into Spain by the fleets of Solomon, and the arms of Nebuchadnezzar; that Hadrian transported forty thousand families of the tribe of Judah, and ten thousand of the tribe of Benjamin, &c. Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, tom. vii. c. 9, p. 240-256.]

139 [\(return\)](#)

[Isidore, at that time archbishop of Seville, mentions, disapproves and congratulates, the zeal of Sisebut (Chron. Goth. p. 728.) Barosins (A.D. 614, No. 41) assigns the number of the evidence of Almoïn, (l. iv. c. 22;) but the evidence is weak, and I have not been able to verify the quotation, (Historians of France, tom. iii. p. 127.)]

140 [\(return\)](#)

[Basnage (tom. viii. c. 13, p. 388-400) faithfully represents the state of the Jews; but he might have added from the canons of the Spanish councils, and the laws of the Visigoths, many curious circumstances, essential to his subject, though they are foreign to mine. * Note: Compare Milman, Hist. of Jews iii. 256—M]

As soon as the Barbarians withdrew their powerful support, the unpopular heresy of Arius sunk into contempt and oblivion. But the Greeks still retained their subtle and loquacious disposition: the establishment of an obscure doctrine suggested new questions, and new disputes; and it was always in the power of an ambitious prelate, or a fanatic monk, to violate the peace of the church, and, perhaps, of the empire. The historian of the empire may overlook those disputes which were confined to the obscurity of schools and synods. The Manichæans, who labored to reconcile the

religions of Christ and of Zoroaster, had secretly introduced themselves into the provinces: but these foreign sectaries were involved in the common disgrace of the Gnostics, and the Imperial laws were executed by the public hatred. The rational opinions of the Pelagians were propagated from Britain to Rome, Africa, and Palestine, and silently expired in a superstitious age. But the East was distracted by the Nestorian and Eutychian controversies; which attempted to explain the mystery of the incarnation, and hastened the ruin of Christianity in her native land. These controversies were first agitated under the reign of the younger Theodosius: but their important consequences extend far beyond the limits of the present volume. The metaphysical chain of argument, the contests of ecclesiastical ambition, and their political influence on the decline of the Byzantine empire, may afford an interesting and instructive series of history, from the general councils of Ephesus and Chalcedon, to the conquest of the East by the successors of Mahomet.

Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part I.

Reign And Conversion Of Clovis.—His Victories Over The Alemanni, Burgundians, And Visigoths.—Establishment Of The French Monarchy In Gaul.—Laws Of The Barbarians.—State Of The Romans.—The Visigoths Of Spain.—Conquest Of Britain By The Saxons.

The Gauls, [1](#) who impatiently supported the Roman yoke, received a memorable lesson from one of the lieutenants of Vespasian, whose weighty sense has been refined and expressed by the genius of Tacitus. [2](#) “The protection of the republic has delivered Gaul from internal discord and foreign invasions. By the loss of national independence, you have acquired the name and privileges of Roman citizens. You enjoy, in common with yourselves, the permanent benefits of civil government; and your remote situation is less exposed to the accidental mischiefs of tyranny. Instead of exercising the rights of conquest, we have been contented to impose such tributes as are requisite for your own preservation. Peace cannot be secured without armies; and armies must be supported at the expense of the people. It is for your sake, not for our own, that we guard the barrier of the Rhine against the ferocious Germans, who have so often attempted, and who will always desire, to exchange the solitude of their woods and morasses for the wealth and fertility of Gaul. The fall of Rome would be fatal to the provinces; and you would be buried in the ruins of that mighty fabric, which has been raised by the valor and wisdom of eight hundred years. Your imaginary freedom would be insulted and oppressed by a savage master; and the expulsion of the Romans would be succeeded by the eternal hostilities of the Barbarian conquerors.” [3](#) This salutary advice was accepted, and this strange prediction was accomplished. In the space of four hundred years, the hardy Gauls, who had encountered the arms of Caesar, were imperceptibly melted into the general mass of citizens and subjects: the Western empire was dissolved; and the Germans, who had passed the Rhine, fiercely contended for the

possession of Gaul, and excited the contempt, or abhorrence, of its peaceful and polished inhabitants. With that conscious pride which the preeminence of knowledge and luxury seldom fails to inspire, they derided the hairy and gigantic savages of the North; their rustic manners, dissonant joy, voracious appetite, and their horrid appearance, equally disgusting to the sight and to the smell. The liberal studies were still cultivated in the schools of Autun and Bordeaux; and the language of Cicero and Virgil was familiar to the Gallic youth. Their ears were astonished by the harsh and unknown sounds of the Germanic dialect, and they ingeniously lamented that the trembling muses fled from the harmony of a Burgundian lyre. The Gauls were endowed with all the advantages of art and nature; but as they wanted courage to defend them, they were justly condemned to obey, and even to flatter, the victorious Barbarians, by whose clemency they held their precarious fortunes and their lives. [4](#)

1 [\(return\)](#)

[In this chapter I shall draw my quotations from the *Recueil des Historiens des Gaules et de la France*, Paris, 1738-1767, in eleven volumes in folio. By the labor of Dom Bouquet, and the other Benedictines, all the original testimonies, as far as A.D. 1060, are disposed in chronological order, and illustrated with learned notes. Such a national work, which will be continued to the year 1500, might provoke our emulation.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Hist. iv. 73, 74, in tom. i. p. 445. To abridge Tacitus would indeed be presumptuous; but I may select the general ideas which he applies to the present state and future revelations of Gaul.]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[Eadem semper causa Germanis transcendendi in Gallias libido atque avaritiae et mutandae sedis amor; ut relictis paludibus et solitudinibus, suis, fecundissimum hoc solum vosque ipsos possiderent.... Nam pulsus Romanis quid aliud quam bella omnium inter se gentium existent?]

4 [\(return\)](#)

[Sidonius Apollinaris ridicules, with affected wit and pleasantry, the hardships of his situation, (Carm. xii. in tom. i. p. 811.)]

As soon as Odoacer had extinguished the Western empire, he sought the friendship of the most powerful of the Barbarians. The new sovereign of Italy resigned to Euric, king of the Visigoths, all the Roman conquests beyond the Alps, as far as the Rhine and the Ocean: [5](#) and the senate might confirm this liberal gift with some ostentation of power, and without any real loss of revenue and dominion. The lawful pretensions of Euric were justified by ambition and success; and the Gothic nation might aspire, under his command, to the monarchy of Spain and Gaul. Arles and Marseilles surrendered to

his arms: he oppressed the freedom of Auvergne; and the bishop condescended to purchase his recall from exile by a tribute of just, but reluctant praise. Sidonius waited before the gates of the palace among a crowd of ambassadors and suppliants; and their various business at the court of Bordeaux attested the power, and the renown, of the king of the Visigoths. The Heruli of the distant ocean, who painted their naked bodies with its coerulean color, implored his protection; and the Saxons respected the maritime provinces of a prince, who was destitute of any naval force. The tall Burgundians submitted to his authority; nor did he restore the captive Franks, till he had imposed on that fierce nation the terms of an unequal peace. The Vandals of Africa cultivated his useful friendship; and the Ostrogoths of Pannonia were supported by his powerful aid against the oppression of the neighboring Huns. The North (such are the lofty strains of the poet) was agitated or appeased by the nod of Euric; the great king of Persia consulted the oracle of the West; and the aged god of the Tyber was protected by the swelling genius of the Garonne. [6](#) The fortune of nations has often depended on accidents; and France may ascribe her greatness to the premature death of the Gothic king, at a time when his son Alaric was a helpless infant, and his adversary Clovis [7](#) an ambitious and valiant youth.

5 [\(return\)](#)

[See Procopius de Bell. Gothico, l. i. c. 12, in tom. ii. p. 81. The character of Grotius inclines me to believe, that he has not substituted the Rhine for the Rhone (Hist. Gothorum, p. 175) without the authority of some Ms.]

6 [\(return\)](#)

[Sidonius, l. viii. epist. 3, 9, in tom. i. p. 800. Jornandes (de Rebus Geticis, c. 47 p. 680) justifies, in some measure, this portrait of the Gothic hero.]

7 [\(return\)](#)

[I use the familiar appellation of Clovis, from the Latin Chlodovechus, or Chlodovoeus. But the Ch expresses only the German aspiration, and the true name is not different from Lewis, (Mem. de 'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xx. p. 68.)]

While Childeric, the father of Clovis, lived an exile in Germany, he was hospitably entertained by the queen, as well as by the king, of the Thuringians. After his restoration, Basina escaped from her husband's bed to the arms of her lover; freely declaring, that if she had known a man wiser, stronger, or more beautiful, than Childeric, that man should have been the object of her preference. [8](#) [9](#) Clovis was the offspring of this voluntary union; and, when he was no more than fifteen years of age, he succeeded, by his father's death, to the command of the Salian tribe. The narrow limits of his kingdom were confined to the island of the Batavians, with the ancient dioceses of Tournay and Arras; [10](#) and at the baptism of Clovis the number of his warriors could not exceed five thousand. The kindred tribes of the Franks, who had

seated themselves along the Belgic rivers, the Scheld, the Meuse, the Moselle, and the Rhine, were governed by their independent kings, of the Merovingian race; the equals, the allies, and sometimes the enemies of the Salic prince. But the Germans, who obeyed, in peace, the hereditary jurisdiction of their chiefs, were free to follow the standard of a popular and victorious general; and the superior merit of Clovis attracted the respect and allegiance of the national confederacy. When he first took the field, he had neither gold and silver in his coffers, nor wine and corn in his magazine; [11](#) but he imitated the example of Caesar, who, in the same country, had acquired wealth by the sword, and purchased soldiers with the fruits of conquest. After each successful battle or expedition, the spoils were accumulated in one common mass; every warrior received his proportionable share; and the royal prerogative submitted to the equal regulations of military law. The untamed spirit of the Barbarians was taught to acknowledge the advantages of regular discipline. [12](#) At the annual review of the month of March, their arms were diligently inspected; and when they traversed a peaceful territory, they were prohibited from touching a blade of grass. The justice of Clovis was inexorable; and his careless or disobedient soldiers were punished with instant death. It would be superfluous to praise the valor of a Frank; but the valor of Clovis was directed by cool and consummate prudence. [13](#) In all his transactions with mankind, he calculated the weight of interest, of passion, and of opinion; and his measures were sometimes adapted to the sanguinary manners of the Germans, and sometimes moderated by the milder genius of Rome, and Christianity. He was intercepted in the career of victory, since he died in the forty-fifth year of his age: but he had already accomplished, in a reign of thirty years, the establishment of the French monarchy in Gaul.

8 [\(return\)](#)

[Greg. l. ii. c. 12, in tom. i. p. 168. Basina speaks the language of nature; the Franks, who had seen her in their youth, might converse with Gregory in their old age; and the bishop of Tours could not wish to defame the mother of the first Christian king.]

9 [\(return\)](#)

[The Abbe Dubos (Hist. Critique de l'Etablissement de la Monarchie Francoise dans les Gaules, tom. i. p. 630-650) has the merit of defining the primitive kingdom of Clovis, and of ascertaining the genuine number of his subjects.]

10 [\(return\)](#)

[Ecclesiam incultam ac negligentia civium Paganorum praetermissam, veprium densitate oppletam, &c. Vit. St. Vedasti, in tom. iii. p. 372. This description supposes that Arras was possessed by the Pagans many years before the baptism of Clovis.]

11 [\(return\)](#)

[Gregory of Tours (l v. c. i. tom. ii. p. 232) contrasts

the poverty of Clovis with the wealth of his grandsons. Yet Remigius (in tom. iv. p. 52) mentions his paternas opes, as sufficient for the redemption of captives.]

12

[\(return\)](#)

[See Gregory, (l. ii. c. 27, 37, in tom. ii. p. 175, 181, 182.) The famous story of the vase of Soissons explains both the power and the character of Clovis. As a point of controversy, it has been strangely tortured by Boulainvilliers Dubos, and the other political antiquarians.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[The duke of Nivernois, a noble statesman, who has managed weighty and delicate negotiations, ingeniously illustrates (Mem. de l'Acad. des Inscriptions, tom. xx. p. 147-184) the political system of Clovis.]

The first exploit of Clovis was the defeat of Syagrius, the son of Aegidius; and the public quarrel might, on this occasion, be inflamed by private resentment. The glory of the father still insulted the Merovingian race; the power of the son might excite the jealous ambition of the king of the Franks. Syagrius inherited, as a patrimonial estate, the city and diocese of Soissons: the desolate remnant of the second Belgic, Rheims and Troyes, Beauvais and Amiens, would naturally submit to the count or patrician: [14](#) and after the dissolution of the Western empire, he might reign with the title, or at least with the authority, of king of the Romans. [15](#) As a Roman, he had been educated in the liberal studies of rhetoric and jurisprudence; but he was engaged by accident and policy in the familiar use of the Germanic idiom. The independent Barbarians resorted to the tribunal of a stranger, who possessed the singular talent of explaining, in their native tongue, the dictates of reason and equity. The diligence and affability of their judge rendered him popular, the impartial wisdom of his decrees obtained their voluntary obedience, and the reign of Syagrius over the Franks and Burgundians seemed to revive the original institution of civil society. [16](#) In the midst of these peaceful occupations, Syagrius received, and boldly accepted, the hostile defiance of Clovis; who challenged his rival in the spirit, and almost in the language, of chivalry, to appoint the day and the field [17](#) of battle. In the time of Caesar Soissons would have poured forth a body of fifty thousand horse and such an army might have been plentifully supplied with shields, cuirasses, and military engines, from the three arsenals or manufactures of the city. [18](#) But the courage and numbers of the Gallic youth were long since exhausted; and the loose bands of volunteers, or mercenaries, who marched under the standard of Syagrius, were incapable of contending with the national valor of the Franks. It would be ungenerous without some more accurate knowledge of his strength and resources, to condemn the rapid flight of Syagrius, who escaped, after the loss of a battle, to the distant court of Thoulouse. The feeble minority of Alaric could not assist or protect an unfortunate fugitive; the pusillanimous [19](#) Goths were intimidated by the menaces of

Clovis; and the Roman king, after a short confinement, was delivered into the hands of the executioner. The Belgic cities surrendered to the king of the Franks; and his dominions were enlarged towards the East by the ample diocese of Tongres [20](#) which Clovis subdued in the tenth year of his reign.

14 [\(return\)](#)

[M. Biet (in a Dissertation which deserved the prize of the Academy of Soissons, p. 178-226,) has accurately defined the nature and extent of the kingdom of Syagrius and his father; but he too readily allows the slight evidence of Dubos (tom. ii. p. 54-57) to deprive him of Beauvais and Amiens.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[I may observe that Fredegarius, in his epitome of Gregory of Tours, (tom. ii. p. 398,) has prudently substituted the name of Patricius for the incredible title of Rex Romanorum.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[Sidonius, (l. v. Epist. 5, in tom. i. p. 794,) who styles him the Solon, the Amphion, of the Barbarians, addresses this imaginary king in the tone of friendship and equality. From such offices of arbitration, the crafty Dejoces had raised himself to the throne of the Medes, (Herodot. l. i. c. 96-100.)]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Campum sibi praeparari jussit. M. Biet (p. 226-251) has diligently ascertained this field of battle, at Nogent, a Benedictine abbey, about ten miles to the north of Soissons. The ground was marked by a circle of Pagan sepulchres; and Clovis bestowed the adjacent lands of Leully and Coucy on the church of Rheims.]

18 [\(return\)](#)

[See Caesar. Comment. de Bell. Gallic. ii. 4, in tom. i. p. 220, and the Notitiae, tom. i. p. 126. The three Fabricae of Soissons were, Seutaria, Balistaria, and Clinabaria. The last supplied the complete armor of the heavy cuirassiers.]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[The epithet must be confined to the circumstances; and history cannot justify the French prejudice of Gregory, (l. ii. c. 27, in tom. ii. p. 175,) ut Gothorum pavere mos est.]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[Dubos has satisfied me (tom. i. p. 277-286) that Gregory of Tours, his transcribers, or his readers, have repeatedly confounded the German kingdom of Thuringia, beyond the Rhine, and the Gallic city

of Tongria, on the Meuse, which was more
anciently the country of the Eburones, and more
recently the diocese of Liege.]

The name of the Alemanni has been absurdly derived from their imaginary settlement on the banks of the Leman Lake. [21](#) That fortunate district, from the lake to the Avenche, and Mount Jura, was occupied by the Burgundians. [22](#) The northern parts of Helvetia had indeed been subdued by the ferocious Alemanni, who destroyed with their own hands the fruits of their conquest. A province, improved and adorned by the arts of Rome, was again reduced to a savage wilderness; and some vestige of the stately Vindonissa may still be discovered in the fertile and populous valley of the Aar. [23](#) From the source of the Rhine to its conflux with the Mein and the Moselle, the formidable swarms of the Alemanni commanded either side of the river, by the right of ancient possession, or recent victory. They had spread themselves into Gaul, over the modern provinces of Alsace and Lorraine; and their bold invasion of the kingdom of Cologne summoned the Salic prince to the defence of his Ripuarian allies.

Clovis encountered the invaders of Gaul in the plain of Tolbiac, about twenty-four miles from Cologne; and the two fiercest nations of Germany were mutually animated by the memory of past exploits, and the prospect of future greatness. The Franks, after an obstinate struggle, gave way; and the Alemanni, raising a shout of victory, impetuously pressed their retreat. But the battle was restored by the valor, and the conduct, and perhaps by the piety, of Clovis; and the event of the bloody day decided forever the alternative of empire or servitude. The last king of the Alemanni was slain in the field, and his people were slaughtered or pursued, till they threw down their arms, and yielded to the mercy of the conqueror. Without discipline it was impossible for them to rally: they had contemptuously demolished the walls and fortifications which might have protected their distress; and they were followed into the heart of their forests by an enemy not less active, or intrepid, than themselves. The great Theodoric congratulated the victory of Clovis, whose sister Albofleda the king of Italy had lately married; but he mildly interceded with his brother in favor of the suppliants and fugitives, who had implored his protection. The Gallic territories, which were possessed by the Alemanni, became the prize of their conqueror; and the haughty nation, invincible, or rebellious, to the arms of Rome, acknowledged the sovereignty of the Merovingian kings, who graciously permitted them to enjoy their peculiar manners and institutions, under the government of official, and, at length, of hereditary, dukes. After the conquest of the Western provinces, the Franks alone maintained their ancient habitations beyond the Rhine. They gradually subdued, and civilized, the exhausted countries, as far as the Elbe, and the mountains of Bohemia; and the peace of Europe was secured by the obedience of Germany. [24](#)

the more recent and corrupt text of Isidore of Seville.]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[Gregory of Tours sends St. Lupicinus inter illa Jurensis deserti secreta, quae, inter Burgundiam Alamanniamque sita, Aventicae adjacent civitati, in tom. i. p. 648. M. de Watteville (Hist. de la Confederation Helvetique, tom. i. p. 9, 10) has accurately defined the Helvetian limits of the Duchy of Alemannia, and the Transjurane Burgundy. They were commensurate with the dioceses of Constance and Avenche, or Lausanne, and are still discriminated, in modern Switzerland, by the use of the German, or French, language.]

23

[\(return\)](#)

[See Guilliman de Rebus Helveticis, l i. c. 3, p. 11, 12. Within the ancient walls of Vindonissa, the castle of Hapsburgh, the abbey of Konigsfield, and the town of Bruck, have successively risen. The philosophic traveller may compare the monuments of Roman conquest of feudal or Austrian tyranny, of monkish superstition, and of industrious freedom. If he be truly a philosopher, he will applaud the merit and happiness of his own times.]

24

[\(return\)](#)

[Gregory of Tours, (l. ii. 30, 37, in tom. ii. p. 176, 177, 182,) the Gesta Francorum, (in tom. ii. p. 551,) and the epistle of Theodoric, (Cassiodor. Variar. l. ii. c. 41, in tom. iv. p. 4,) represent the defeat of the Alemanni. Some of their tribes settled in Rhaetia, under the protection of Theodoric; whose successors ceded the colony and their country to the grandson of Clovis. The state of the Alemanni under the Merovingian kings may be seen in Mascou (Hist. of the Ancient Germans, xi. 8, &c. Annotation xxxvi.) and Guilliman, (de Reb. Helvet. l. ii. c. 10-12, p. 72-80.)]

Till the thirtieth year of his age, Clovis continued to worship the gods of his ancestors. [25](#) His disbelief, or rather disregard, of Christianity, might encourage him to pillage with less remorse the churches of a hostile territory: but his subjects of Gaul enjoyed the free exercise of religious worship; and the bishops entertained a more favorable hope of the idolater, than of the heretics. The Merovingian prince had contracted a fortunate alliance with the fair Clotilda, the niece of the king of Burgundy, who, in the midst of an Arian court, was educated in the profession of the Catholic faith. It was her interest, as well as her duty, to achieve the conversion [26](#) of a Pagan husband; and Clovis insensibly listened to the voice of love and religion. He consented (perhaps such terms had been previously stipulated) to the baptism of his eldest son; and though

the sudden death of the infant excited some superstitious fears, he was persuaded, a second time, to repeat the dangerous experiment. In the distress of the battle of Tolbiac, Clovis loudly invoked the God of Clotilda and the Christians; and victory disposed him to hear, with respectful gratitude, the eloquent [27](#) Remigius, [28](#) bishop of Rheims, who forcibly displayed the temporal and spiritual advantages of his conversion. The king declared himself satisfied of the truth of the Catholic faith; and the political reasons which might have suspended his public profession, were removed by the devout or loyal acclamations of the Franks, who showed themselves alike prepared to follow their heroic leader to the field of battle, or to the baptismal font. The important ceremony was performed in the cathedral of Rheims, with every circumstance of magnificence and solemnity that could impress an awful sense of religion on the minds of its rude proselytes. [29](#) The new Constantine was immediately baptized, with three thousand of his warlike subjects; and their example was imitated by the remainder of the gentle Barbarians, who, in obedience to the victorious prelate, adored the cross which they had burnt, and burnt the idols which they had formerly adored. [30](#) The mind of Clovis was susceptible of transient fervor: he was exasperated by the pathetic tale of the passion and death of Christ; and, instead of weighing the salutary consequences of that mysterious sacrifice, he exclaimed, with indiscreet fury, "Had I been present at the head of my valiant Franks, I would have revenged his injuries." [31](#) But the savage conqueror of Gaul was incapable of examining the proofs of a religion, which depends on the laborious investigation of historic evidence and speculative theology. He was still more incapable of feeling the mild influence of the gospel, which persuades and purifies the heart of a genuine convert. His ambitious reign was a perpetual violation of moral and Christian duties: his hands were stained with blood in peace as well as in war; and, as soon as Clovis had dismissed a synod of the Gallican church, he calmly assassinated all the princes of the Merovingian race. [32](#) Yet the king of the Franks might sincerely worship the Christian God, as a Being more excellent and powerful than his national deities; and the signal deliverance and victory of Tolbiac encouraged Clovis to confide in the future protection of the Lord of Hosts. Martin, the most popular of the saints, had filled the Western world with the fame of those miracles which were incessantly performed at his holy sepulchre of Tours. His visible or invisible aid promoted the cause of a liberal and orthodox prince; and the profane remark of Clovis himself, that St. Martin was an expensive friend, [33](#) need not be interpreted as the symptom of any permanent or rational scepticism. But earth, as well as heaven, rejoiced in the conversion of the Franks. On the memorable day when Clovis ascended from the baptismal font, he alone, in the Christian world, deserved the name and prerogatives of a Catholic king. The emperor Anastasius entertained some dangerous errors concerning the nature of the divine incarnation; and the Barbarians of Italy, Africa, Spain, and Gaul, were involved in the Arian heresy. The eldest, or rather the only, son of the church, was acknowledged by the clergy as their lawful sovereign, or glorious deliverer; and the

armies of Clovis were strenuously supported by the zeal and fervor of the Catholic faction. [34](#)

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Clotilda, or rather Gregory, supposes that Clovis worshipped the gods of Greece and Rome. The fact is incredible, and the mistake only shows how completely, in less than a century, the national religion of the Franks had been abolished and even forgotten]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Gregory of Tours relates the marriage and conversion of Clovis, (l. ii. c. 28-31, in tom. ii. p. 175-178.) Even Fredegarius, or the nameless Epitomizer, (in tom. ii. p. 398-400,) the author of the Gesta Francorum, (in tom. ii. p. 548-552,) and Aimoin himself, (l. i. c. 13, in tom. iii. p. 37-40,) may be heard without disdain. Tradition might long preserve some curious circumstances of these important transactions.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[A traveller, who returned from Rheims to Auvergne, had stolen a copy of his declamations from the secretary or bookseller of the modest archbishop, (Sidonius Apollinar. l. ix. epist. 7.) Four epistles of Remigius, which are still extant, (in tom. iv. p. 51, 52, 53,) do not correspond with the splendid praise of Sidonius.]

28 [\(return\)](#)

[Hincmar, one of the successors of Remigius, (A.D. 845-882,) had composed his life, (in tom. iii. p. 373-380.) The authority of ancient MSS. of the church of Rheims might inspire some confidence, which is destroyed, however, by the selfish and audacious fictions of Hincmar. It is remarkable enough, that Remigius, who was consecrated at the age of twenty-two, (A.D. 457,) filled the episcopal chair seventy-four years, (Pagi Critica, in Baron tom. ii. p. 384, 572.)]

29 [\(return\)](#)

[A phial (the Sainte Ampoule of holy, or rather celestial, oil,) was brought down by a white dove, for the baptism of Clovis; and it is still used and renewed, in the coronation of the kings of France. Hincmar (he aspired to the primacy of Gaul) is the first author of this fable, (in tom. iii. p. 377,) whose slight foundations the Abbe de Vertot (Mémoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. ii. p. 619-633) has undermined, with profound respect and consummate dexterity.]

- 30 [\(return\)](#)
[Mitis depone colla, Sicamber: adora quod incendisti, incende quod adorasti. Greg. Turon. l. ii. c. 31, in tom. ii. p. 177.]
- 31 [\(return\)](#)
[Si ego ibidem cum Francis meis fuisset, injurias ejus vindicasset. This rash expression, which Gregory has prudently concealed, is celebrated by Fredegarius, (Epitom. c. 21, in tom. ii. p. 400,) Aimoin, (l. i. c. 16, in tom. iii. p. 40,) and the Chroniques de St. Denys, (l. i. c. 20, in tom. iii. p. 171,) as an admirable effusion of Christian zeal.]
- 32 [\(return\)](#)
[Gregory, (l. ii. c. 40-43, in tom. ii. p. 183-185,) after coolly relating the repeated crimes, and affected remorse, of Clovis, concludes, perhaps undesignedly, with a lesson, which ambition will never hear. "His ita transactis obiit."]
- 33 [\(return\)](#)
[After the Gothic victory, Clovis made rich offerings to St. Martin of Tours. He wished to redeem his war-horse by the gift of one hundred pieces of gold, but the enchanted steed could not remove from the stable till the price of his redemption had been doubled. This miracle provoked the king to exclaim, Vere B. Martinus est bonus in auxilio, sed carus in negotio. (Gesta Francorum, in tom. ii. p. 554, 555.)]
- 34 [\(return\)](#)
[See the epistle from Pope Anastasius to the royal convert, (in Com. iv. p. 50, 51.) Avitus, bishop of Vienna, addressed Clovis on the same subject, (p. 49;) and many of the Latin bishops would assure him of their joy and attachment.]

Under the Roman empire, the wealth and jurisdiction of the bishops, their sacred character, and perpetual office, their numerous dependants, popular eloquence, and provincial assemblies, had rendered them always respectable, and sometimes dangerous. Their influence was augmented with the progress of superstition; and the establishment of the French monarchy may, in some degree, be ascribed to the firm alliance of a hundred prelates, who reigned in the discontented, or independent, cities of Gaul. The slight foundations of the Armorican republic had been repeatedly shaken, or overthrown; but the same people still guarded their domestic freedom; asserted the dignity of the Roman name; and bravely resisted the predatory inroads, and regular attacks, of Clovis, who labored to extend his conquests from the Seine to the Loire. Their successful opposition introduced an equal and honorable union. The Franks esteemed the valor of the Armoricans [35](#) and the Armoricans were reconciled by the religion of the Franks. The military force which had been stationed for the defence of

Gaul, consisted of one hundred different bands of cavalry or infantry; and these troops, while they assumed the title and privileges of Roman soldiers, were renewed by an incessant supply of the Barbarian youth. The extreme fortifications, and scattered fragments of the empire, were still defended by their hopeless courage. But their retreat was intercepted, and their communication was impracticable: they were abandoned by the Greek princes of Constantinople, and they piously disclaimed all connection with the Arian usurpers of Gaul. They accepted, without shame or reluctance, the generous capitulation, which was proposed by a Catholic hero; and this spurious, or legitimate, progeny of the Roman legions, was distinguished in the succeeding age by their arms, their ensigns, and their peculiar dress and institutions. But the national strength was increased by these powerful and voluntary accessions; and the neighboring kingdoms dreaded the numbers, as well as the spirit, of the Franks. The reduction of the Northern provinces of Gaul, instead of being decided by the chance of a single battle, appears to have been slowly effected by the gradual operation of war and treaty and Clovis acquired each object of his ambition, by such efforts, or such concessions, as were adequate to its real value. His savage character, and the virtues of Henry IV., suggest the most opposite ideas of human nature; yet some resemblance may be found in the situation of two princes, who conquered France by their valor, their policy, and the merits of a seasonable conversion. [36](#)

35

[\(return\)](#)

[Instead of an unknown people, who now appear on the text of Procopious, Hadrian de Valois has restored the proper name of the easy correction has been almost universally approved. Yet an unprejudiced reader would naturally suppose, that Procopius means to describe a tribe of Germans in the alliance of Rome; and not a confederacy of Gallic cities, which had revolted from the empire. * Note: Compare Hallam's Europe during the Middle Ages, vol i. p. 2, Daru, Hist. de Bretagne vol. i. p. 129—M.]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[This important digression of Procopius (de Bell. Gothic. l. i. c. 12, in tom. ii. p. 29-36) illustrates the origin of the French monarchy. Yet I must observe, 1. That the Greek historian betrays an inexcusable ignorance of the geography of the West. 2. That these treaties and privileges, which should leave some lasting traces, are totally invisible in Gregory of Tours, the Salic laws, &c.]

The kingdom of the Burgundians, which was defined by the course of two Gallic rivers, the Saone and the Rhone, extended from the forest of Vosges to the Alps and the sea of Marscilles. [37](#) The sceptre was in the hands of Gundobald. That valiant and ambitious prince had reduced the number of royal candidates by the death of two brothers, one of whom was the father of Clotilda; [38](#) but his imperfect prudence still

permitted Godegisel, the youngest of his brothers, to possess the dependent principality of Geneva. The Arian monarch was justly alarmed by the satisfaction, and the hopes, which seemed to animate his clergy and people after the conversion of Clovis; and Gundobald convened at Lyons an assembly of his bishops, to reconcile, if it were possible, their religious and political discontents. A vain conference was agitated between the two factions. The Arians upbraided the Catholics with the worship of three Gods: the Catholics defended their cause by theological distinctions; and the usual arguments, objections, and replies were reverberated with obstinate clamor; till the king revealed his secret apprehensions, by an abrupt but decisive question, which he addressed to the orthodox bishops. "If you truly profess the Christian religion, why do you not restrain the king of the Franks? He has declared war against me, and forms alliances with my enemies for my destruction. A sanguinary and covetous mind is not the symptom of a sincere conversion: let him show his faith by his works." The answer of Avitus, bishop of Vienna, who spoke in the name of his brethren, was delivered with the voice and countenance of an angel. "We are ignorant of the motives and intentions of the king of the Franks: but we are taught by Scripture, that the kingdoms which abandon the divine law are frequently subverted; and that enemies will arise on every side against those who have made God their enemy. Return, with thy people, to the law of God, and he will give peace and security to thy dominions." The king of Burgundy, who was not prepared to accept the condition which the Catholics considered as essential to the treaty, delayed and dismissed the ecclesiastical conference; after reproaching his bishops, that Clovis, their friend and proselyte, had privately tempted the allegiance of his brother. [39](#)

37

[\(return\)](#)

[Regnum circa Rhodanum aut Ararim cum provincia Massiliensi retinebant. Greg. Turon. l. ii. c. 32, in tom. ii. p. 178. The province of Marseilles, as far as the Durance, was afterwards ceded to the Ostrogoths; and the signatures of twenty-five bishops are supposed to represent the kingdom of Burgundy, A.D. 519. (Concil. Epaon, in tom. iv. p. 104, 105.) Yet I would except Vindonissa. The bishop, who lived under the Pagan Alemanni, would naturally resort to the synods of the next Christian kingdom. Mascou (in his four first annotations) has explained many circumstances relative to the Burgundian monarchy.]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[Mascou, (Hist. of the Germans, xi. 10,) who very reasonably distracts the testimony of Gregory of Tours, has produced a passage from Avitus (epist. v.) to prove that Gundobald affected to deplore the tragic event, which his subjects affected to applaud.]

[See the original conference, (in tom. iv. p. 99-102.) Avitus, the principal actor, and probably the secretary of the meeting, was bishop of Vienna. A short account of his person and works may be found in Dupin, (Bibliothèque Ecclesiastique, tom. v. p. 5-10.)]

Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part II.

The allegiance of his brother was already seduced; and the obedience of Godegisel, who joined the royal standard with the troops of Geneva, more effectually promoted the success of the conspiracy. While the Franks and Burgundians contended with equal valor, his seasonable desertion decided the event of the battle; and as Gundobald was faintly supported by the disaffected Gauls, he yielded to the arms of Clovis, and hastily retreated from the field, which appears to have been situate between Langres and Dijon. He distrusted the strength of Dijon, a quadrangular fortress, encompassed by two rivers, and by a wall thirty feet high, and fifteen thick, with four gates, and thirty-three towers: [40](#) he abandoned to the pursuit of Clovis the important cities of Lyons and Vienna; and Gundobald still fled with precipitation, till he had reached Avignon, at the distance of two hundred and fifty miles from the field of battle.

A long siege and an artful negotiation, admonished the king of the Franks of the danger and difficulty of his enterprise. He imposed a tribute on the Burgundian prince, compelled him to pardon and reward his brother's treachery, and proudly returned to his own dominions, with the spoils and captives of the southern provinces. This splendid triumph was soon clouded by the intelligence, that Gundobald had violated his recent obligations, and that the unfortunate Godegisel, who was left at Vienna with a garrison of five thousand Franks, [41](#) had been besieged, surprised, and massacred by his inhuman brother. Such an outrage might have exasperated the patience of the most peaceful sovereign; yet the conqueror of Gaul dissembled the injury, released the tribute, and accepted the alliance, and military service, of the king of Burgundy. Clovis no longer possessed those advantages which had assured the success of the preceding war; and his rival, instructed by adversity, had found new resources in the affections of his people. The Gauls or Romans applauded the mild and impartial laws of Gundobald, which almost raised them to the same level with their conquerors. The bishops were reconciled, and flattered, by the hopes, which he artfully suggested, of his approaching conversion; and though he eluded their accomplishment to the last moment of his life, his moderation secured the peace, and suspended the ruin, of the kingdom of Burgundy. [42](#)

[Gregory of Tours (l. iii. c. 19, in tom. ii. p. 197) indulges his genius, or rather describes some more

eloquent writer, in the description of Dijon; a castle, which already deserved the title of a city. It depended on the bishops of Langres till the twelfth century, and afterwards became the capital of the dukes of Burgundy Longuerue Description de la France, part i. p. 280.]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[The Epitomizer of Gregory of Tours (in tom. ii. p. 401) has supplied this number of Franks; but he rashly supposes that they were cut in pieces by Gundobald. The prudent Burgundian spared the soldiers of Clovis, and sent these captives to the king of the Visigoths, who settled them in the territory of Thoulouse.]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[In this Burgundian war I have followed Gregory of Tours, (l. ii. c. 32, 33, in tom. ii. p. 178, 179,) whose narrative appears so incompatible with that of Procopius, (de Bell. Goth. l. i. c. 12, in tom. ii. p. 31, 32,) that some critics have supposed two different wars. The Abbe Dubos (Hist. Critique, &c., tom. ii. p. 126-162) has distinctly represented the causes and the events.]

I am impatient to pursue the final ruin of that kingdom, which was accomplished under the reign of Sigismond, the son of Gundobald. The Catholic Sigismond has acquired the honors of a saint and martyr; [43](#) but the hands of the royal saint were stained with the blood of his innocent son, whom he inhumanly sacrificed to the pride and resentment of a step-mother. He soon discovered his error, and bewailed the irreparable loss. While Sigismond embraced the corpse of the unfortunate youth, he received a severe admonition from one of his attendants: "It is not his situation, O king! it is thine which deserves pity and lamentation." The reproaches of a guilty conscience were alleviated, however, by his liberal donations to the monastery of Agaunum, or St. Maurice, in Vallais; which he himself had founded in honor of the imaginary martyrs of the Thebaean legion. [44](#) A full chorus of perpetual psalmody was instituted by the pious king; he assiduously practised the austere devotion of the monks; and it was his humble prayer, that Heaven would inflict in this world the punishment of his sins. His prayer was heard: the avengers were at hand: and the provinces of Burgundy were overwhelmed by an army of victorious Franks. After the event of an unsuccessful battle, Sigismond, who wished to protract his life that he might prolong his penance, concealed himself in the desert in a religious habit, till he was discovered and betrayed by his subjects, who solicited the favor of their new masters. The captive monarch, with his wife and two children, was transported to Orleans, and buried alive in a deep well, by the stern command of the sons of Clovis; whose cruelty might derive some excuse from the maxims and examples of their barbarous age. Their ambition, which urged them to achieve the conquest of Burgundy, was inflamed, or disguised, by filial piety: and

Clotilda, whose sanctity did not consist in the forgiveness of injuries, pressed them to revenge her father's death on the family of his assassin. The rebellious Burgundians (for they attempted to break their chains) were still permitted to enjoy their national laws under the obligation of tribute and military service; and the Merovingian princes peaceably reigned over a kingdom, whose glory and greatness had been first overthrown by the arms of Clovis. [45](#)

43 [\(return\)](#)

[See his life or legend, (in tom. iii. p. 402.) A martyr! how strangely has that word been distorted from its original sense of a common witness. St. Sigismond was remarkable for the cure of fevers]

44 [\(return\)](#)

[Before the end of the fifth century, the church of St. Maurice, and his Thebaean legion, had rendered Agaunum a place of devout pilgrimage. A promiscuous community of both sexes had introduced some deeds of darkness, which were abolished (A.D. 515) by the regular monastery of Sigismond. Within fifty years, his angels of light made a nocturnal sally to murder their bishop, and his clergy. See in the Bibliothèque Raisonnée (tom. xxxvi. p. 435-438) the curious remarks of a learned librarian of Geneva.]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[Marius, bishop of Avenche, (Chron. in tom. ii. p. 15,) has marked the authentic dates, and Gregory of Tours (l. iii. c. 5, 6, in tom. ii. p. 188, 189) has expressed the principal facts, of the life of Sigismond, and the conquest of Burgundy. Procopius (in tom. ii. p. 34) and Agathias (in tom. ii. p. 49) show their remote and imperfect knowledge.]

The first victory of Clovis had insulted the honor of the Goths. They viewed his rapid progress with jealousy and terror; and the youthful fame of Alaric was oppressed by the more potent genius of his rival. Some disputes inevitably arose on the edge of their contiguous dominions; and after the delays of fruitless negotiation, a personal interview of the two kings was proposed and accepted. The conference of Clovis and Alaric was held in a small island of the Loire, near Amboise. They embraced, familiarly conversed, and feasted together; and separated with the warmest professions of peace and brotherly love. But their apparent confidence concealed a dark suspicion of hostile and treacherous designs; and their mutual complaints solicited, eluded, and disclaimed, a final arbitration. At Paris, which he already considered as his royal seat, Clovis declared to an assembly of the princes and warriors, the pretence, and the motive, of a Gothic war. "It grieves me to see that the Arians still possess the fairest portion of Gaul. Let us march against them with the aid of God; and, having vanquished the heretics, we will

possess and divide their fertile provinces.” [46](#) The Franks, who were inspired by hereditary valor and recent zeal, applauded the generous design of their monarch; expressed their resolution to conquer or die, since death and conquest would be equally profitable; and solemnly protested that they would never shave their beards till victory should absolve them from that inconvenient vow. The enterprise was promoted by the public or private exhortations of Clotilda. She reminded her husband how effectually some pious foundation would propitiate the Deity, and his servants: and the Christian hero, darting his battle-axe with a skilful and nervous band, “There, (said he,) on that spot where my Francisca, [47](#) shall fall, will I erect a church in honor of the holy apostles.” This ostentatious piety confirmed and justified the attachment of the Catholics, with whom he secretly corresponded; and their devout wishes were gradually ripened into a formidable conspiracy. The people of Aquitain were alarmed by the indiscreet reproaches of their Gothic tyrants, who justly accused them of preferring the dominion of the Franks: and their zealous adherent Quintianus, bishop of Rodez, [48](#) preached more forcibly in his exile than in his diocese. To resist these foreign and domestic enemies, who were fortified by the alliance of the Burgundians, Alaric collected his troops, far more numerous than the military powers of Clovis. The Visigoths resumed the exercise of arms, which they had neglected in a long and luxurious peace; [49](#) a select band of valiant and robust slaves attended their masters to the field; [50](#) and the cities of Gaul were compelled to furnish their doubtful and reluctant aid. Theodoric, king of the Ostrogoths, who reigned in Italy, had labored to maintain the tranquillity of Gaul; and he assumed, or affected, for that purpose, the impartial character of a mediator. But the sagacious monarch dreaded the rising empire of Clovis, and he was firmly engaged to support the national and religious cause of the Goths.

- 46 [\(return\)](#)
 [Gregory of Tours (l. ii. c. 37, in tom. ii. p. 181) inserts the short but persuasive speech of Clovis. Valde moleste fero, quod hi Ariani partem teneant Galliarum, (the author of the Gesta Francorum, in tom. ii. p. 553, adds the precious epithet of optimam,) camus cum Dei adjutorio, et, superatis eis, redigamus terram in ditionem nostram.]
- 47 [\(return\)](#)
 [Tunc rex projecit a se in directum Bipennem suam quod est Francisca, &c. (Gesta Franc. in tom. ii. p. 554.) The form and use of this weapon are clearly described by Procopius, (in tom. ii. p. 37.) Examples of its national appellation in Latin and French may be found in the Glossary of Ducange, and the large Dictionnaire de Trevoux.]
- 48 [\(return\)](#)
 [It is singular enough that some important and authentic facts should be found in a Life of

Quintianus, composed in rhyme in the old Patois of Rouergue, (Dubos, Hist. Critique, &c., tom. ii. p. 179.)]

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Quamvis fortitudini vestrae confidentiam tribuat parentum vestrorum innumerabilis multitudo; quamvis Attilam potentem reminiscamini Visigotharum viribus inclinatum; tamen quia populorum ferocia corda longa pace mollescunt, cavete subito in aleam mittere, quos constat tantis temporibus exercitia non habere. Such was the salutary, but fruitless, advice of peace of reason, and of Theodoric, (Cassiodor. l. iii. ep. 2.)]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu (Esprit des Loix, l. xv. c. 14) mentions and approves the law of the Visigoths, (l. ix. tit. 2, in tom. iv. p. 425,) which obliged all masters to arm, and send, or lead, into the field a tenth of their slaves.]

The accidental, or artificial, prodigies which adorned the expedition of Clovis, were accepted by a superstitious age, as the manifest declaration of the divine favor. He marched from Paris; and as he proceeded with decent reverence through the holy diocese of Tours, his anxiety tempted him to consult the shrine of St. Martin, the sanctuary and the oracle of Gaul. His messengers were instructed to remark the words of the Psalm which should happen to be chanted at the precise moment when they entered the church. Those words most fortunately expressed the valor and victory of the champions of Heaven, and the application was easily transferred to the new Joshua, the new Gideon, who went forth to battle against the enemies of the Lord. [51](#) Orleans secured to the Franks a bridge on the Loire; but, at the distance of forty miles from Poitiers, their progress was intercepted by an extraordinary swell of the River Vienne; and the opposite banks were covered by the encampment of the Visigoths. Delay must be always dangerous to Barbarians, who consume the country through which they march; and had Clovis possessed leisure and materials, it might have been impracticable to construct a bridge, or to force a passage, in the face of a superior enemy. But the affectionate peasants who were impatient to welcome their deliverer, could easily betray some unknown or unguarded ford: the merit of the discovery was enhanced by the useful interposition of fraud or fiction; and a white hart, of singular size and beauty, appeared to guide and animate the march of the Catholic army. The counsels of the Visigoths were irresolute and distracted. A crowd of impatient warriors, presumptuous in their strength, and disdaining to fly before the robbers of Germany, excited Alaric to assert in arms the name and blood of the conquerors of Rome. The advice of the graver chieftains pressed him to elude the first ardor of the Franks; and to expect, in the southern provinces of Gaul, the veteran and victorious Ostrogoths, whom the king of Italy had already sent to his assistance. The decisive moments were wasted

in idle deliberation the Goths too hastily abandoned, perhaps, an advantageous post; and the opportunity of a secure retreat was lost by their slow and disorderly motions. After Clovis had passed the ford, as it is still named, of the Hart, he advanced with bold and hasty steps to prevent the escape of the enemy. His nocturnal march was directed by a flaming meteor, suspended in the air above the cathedral of Poitiers; and this signal, which might be previously concerted with the orthodox successor of St. Hilary, was compared to the column of fire that guided the Israelites in the desert. At the third hour of the day, about ten miles beyond Poitiers, Clovis overtook, and instantly attacked, the Gothic army; whose defeat was already prepared by terror and confusion. Yet they rallied in their extreme distress, and the martial youths, who had clamorously demanded the battle, refused to survive the ignominy of flight. The two kings encountered each other in single combat. Alaric fell by the hand of his rival; and the victorious Frank was saved by the goodness of his cuirass, and the vigor of his horse, from the spears of two desperate Goths, who furiously rode against him to revenge the death of their sovereign. The vague expression of a mountain of the slain, serves to indicate a cruel though indefinite slaughter; but Gregory has carefully observed, that his valiant countryman Apollinaris, the son of Sidonius, lost his life at the head of the nobles of Auvergne. Perhaps these suspected Catholics had been maliciously exposed to the blind assault of the enemy; and perhaps the influence of religion was superseded by personal attachment or military honor. [52](#)

51

[\(return\)](#)

[This mode of divination, by accepting as an omen the first sacred words, which in particular circumstances should be presented to the eye or ear, was derived from the Pagans; and the Psalter, or Bible, was substituted to the poems of Homer and Virgil. From the fourth to the fourteenth century, these sortes sanctorum, as they are styled, were repeatedly condemned by the decrees of councils, and repeatedly practised by kings, bishops, and saints. See a curious dissertation of the Abbe du Resnel, in the Mémoires de l'Academie, tom. xix. p. 287-310]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[After correcting the text, or excusing the mistake, of Procopius, who places the defeat of Alaric near Carcassone, we may conclude, from the evidence of Gregory, Fortunatus, and the author of the Gesta Francorum, that the battle was fought in campo Vocladensi, on the banks of the Clain, about ten miles to the south of Poitiers. Clovis overtook and attacked the Visigoths near Vivonne, and the victory was decided near a village still named Champagne St. Hilaire. See the Dissertations of the Abbe le Boeuf, tom. i. p. 304-331.]

Such is the empire of Fortune, (if we may still disguise our ignorance under that popular name,) that it is almost equally difficult to foresee the events of war, or to explain their various consequences. A bloody and complete victory has sometimes yielded no more than the possession of the field; and the loss of ten thousand men has sometimes been sufficient to destroy, in a single day, the work of ages. The decisive battle of Poitiers was followed by the conquest of Aquitain. Alaric had left behind him an infant son, a bastard competitor, factious nobles, and a disloyal people; and the remaining forces of the Goths were oppressed by the general consternation, or opposed to each other in civil discord. The victorious king of the Franks proceeded without delay to the siege of Angoulême. At the sound of his trumpets the walls of the city imitated the example of Jericho, and instantly fell to the ground; a splendid miracle, which may be reduced to the supposition, that some clerical engineers had secretly undermined the foundations of the rampart. [53](#) At Bordeaux, which had submitted without resistance, Clovis established his winter quarters; and his prudent economy transported from Thoulouse the royal treasures, which were deposited in the capital of the monarchy. The conqueror penetrated as far as the confines of Spain; [54](#) restored the honors of the Catholic church; fixed in Aquitain a colony of Franks; [55](#) and delegated to his lieutenants the easy task of subduing, or extirpating, the nation of the Visigoths. But the Visigoths were protected by the wise and powerful monarch of Italy. While the balance was still equal, Theodoric had perhaps delayed the march of the Ostrogoths; but their strenuous efforts successfully resisted the ambition of Clovis; and the army of the Franks, and their Burgundian allies, was compelled to raise the siege of Arles, with the loss, as it is said, of thirty thousand men. These vicissitudes inclined the fierce spirit of Clovis to acquiesce in an advantageous treaty of peace. The Visigoths were suffered to retain the possession of Septimania, a narrow tract of sea-coast, from the Rhone to the Pyrenees; but the ample province of Aquitain, from those mountains to the Loire, was indissolubly united to the kingdom of France. [56](#)

53

[\(return\)](#)

[Angoulême is in the road from Poitiers to Bordeaux; and although Gregory delays the siege, I can more readily believe that he confounded the order of history, than that Clovis neglected the rules of war.]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[Pyrenaeos montes usque Perpinianum subjecit, is the expression of Rorico, which betrays his recent date; since Perpignan did not exist before the tenth century, (Marca Hispanica, p. 458.) This florid and fabulous writer (perhaps a monk of Amiens—see the Abbe le Boeuf, Mem. de l'Academie, tom. xvii. p. 228-245) relates, in the allegorical character of a shepherd, the general history of his countrymen the Franks; but his narrative ends with the death of Clovis.]

55

[\(return\)](#)

[The author of the *Gesta Francorum* positively affirms, that Clovis fixed a body of Franks in the Saintonge and Bourdelois: and he is not injudiciously followed by Rorico, *electos milites, atque fortissimos, cum parvulis, atque mulieribus*. Yet it should seem that they soon mingled with the Romans of Aquitain, till Charlemagne introduced a more numerous and powerful colony, (Dubos, *Hist. Critique*, tom. ii. p. 215.)]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[In the composition of the Gothic war, I have used the following materials, with due regard to their unequal value. Four epistles from Theodoric, king of Italy, (Cassiodor l. iii. epist. 1-4. in tom. iv p. 3-5;) Procopius, (*de Bell. Goth.* l. i. c. 12, in tom. ii. p. 32, 33;) Gregory of Tours, (l. ii. c. 35, 36, 37, in tom. ii. p. 181-183;) Jornandes, (*de Reb. Geticis*, c. 58, in tom. ii. p. 28;) Fortunatas, (in *Vit. St. Hilarii*, in tom. iii. p. 380;) Isidore, (in *Chron. Goth.* in tom. ii. p. 702;) the Epitome of Gregory of Tours, (in tom. ii. p. 401;) the author of the *Gesta Francorum*, (in tom. ii. p. 553-555;) the Fragments of Fredegarius, (in tom. ii. p. 463;) Aimoin, (l. i. c. 20, in tom. iii. p. 41, 42,) and Rorico, (l. iv. in tom. iii. p. 14-19.)]

After the success of the Gothic war, Clovis accepted the honors of the Roman consulship. The emperor Anastasius ambitiously bestowed on the most powerful rival of Theodoric the title and ensigns of that eminent dignity; yet, from some unknown cause, the name of Clovis has not been inscribed in the *Fasti* either of the East or West. [57](#) On the solemn day, the monarch of Gaul, placing a diadem on his head, was invested, in the church of St. Martin, with a purple tunic and mantle. From thence he proceeded on horseback to the cathedral of Tours; and, as he passed through the streets, profusely scattered, with his own hand, a donative of gold and silver to the joyful multitude, who incessantly repeated their acclamations of Consul and Augustus. The actual or legal authority of Clovis could not receive any new accessions from the consular dignity. It was a name, a shadow, an empty pageant; and if the conqueror had been instructed to claim the ancient prerogatives of that high office, they must have expired with the period of its annual duration. But the Romans were disposed to revere, in the person of their master, that antique title which the emperors condescended to assume: the Barbarian himself seemed to contract a sacred obligation to respect the majesty of the republic; and the successors of Theodosius, by soliciting his friendship, tacitly forgave, and almost ratified, the usurpation of Gaul.

57

[\(return\)](#)

[The *Fasti* of Italy would naturally reject a consul, the enemy of their sovereign; but any ingenious

hypothesis that might explain the silence of Constantinople and Egypt, (the Chronicle of Marcellinus, and the Paschal,) is overturned by the similar silence of Marius, bishop of Avenche, who composed his Fasti in the kingdom of Burgundy. If the evidence of Gregory of Tours were less weighty and positive, (l. ii. c. 38, in tom. ii. p. 183,) I could believe that Clovis, like Odoacer, received the lasting title and honors of Patrician, (Pagi Critica, tom. ii. p. 474, 492.)]

Twenty-five years after the death of Clovis this important concession was more formally declared, in a treaty between his sons and the emperor Justinian. The Ostrogoths of Italy, unable to defend their distant acquisitions, had resigned to the Franks the cities of Arles and Marseilles; of Arles, still adorned with the seat of a Prætorian præfect, and of Marseilles, enriched by the advantages of trade and navigation. [58](#) This transaction was confirmed by the Imperial authority; and Justinian, generously yielding to the Franks the sovereignty of the countries beyond the Alps, which they already possessed, absolved the provincials from their allegiance; and established on a more lawful, though not more solid, foundation, the throne of the Merovingians. [59](#) From that era they enjoyed the right of celebrating at Arles the games of the circus; and by a singular privilege, which was denied even to the Persian monarch, the gold coin, impressed with their name and image, obtained a legal currency in the empire. [60](#) A Greek historian of that age has praised the private and public virtues of the Franks, with a partial enthusiasm, which cannot be sufficiently justified by their domestic annals. [61](#) He celebrates their politeness and urbanity, their regular government, and orthodox religion; and boldly asserts, that these Barbarians could be distinguished only by their dress and language from the subjects of Rome. Perhaps the Franks already displayed the social disposition, and lively graces, which, in every age, have disguised their vices, and sometimes concealed their intrinsic merit. Perhaps Agathias, and the Greeks, were dazzled by the rapid progress of their arms, and the splendor of their empire. Since the conquest of Burgundy, Gaul, except the Gothic province of Septimania, was subject, in its whole extent, to the sons of Clovis. They had extinguished the German kingdom of Thuringia, and their vague dominion penetrated beyond the Rhine, into the heart of their native forests. The Alemanni, and Bavarians, who had occupied the Roman provinces of Rhaetia and Noricum, to the south of the Danube, confessed themselves the humble vassals of the Franks; and the feeble barrier of the Alps was incapable of resisting their ambition. When the last survivor of the sons of Clovis united the inheritance and conquests of the Merovingians, his kingdom extended far beyond the limits of modern France. Yet modern France, such has been the progress of arts and policy, far surpasses, in wealth, populousness, and power, the spacious but savage realms of Clotaire or Dagobert. [62](#)

imported from the East paper, wine, oil, linen, silk, precious stones, spices, &c. The Gauls, or Franks, traded to Syria, and the Syrians were established in Gaul. See M. de Guignes, *Mem. de l'Academie*, tom. xxxvii. p. 471-475.]

59 [\(return\)](#)

[This strong declaration of Procopius (de Bell. Gothic. l. iii. cap. 33, in tom. ii. p. 41) would almost suffice to justify the Abbe Dubos.]

60 [\(return\)](#)

[The Franks, who probably used the mints of Treves, Lyons, and Arles, imitated the coinage of the Roman emperors of seventy-two solidi, or pieces, to the pound of gold. But as the Franks established only a decuple proportion of gold and silver, ten shillings will be a sufficient valuation of their solidus of gold. It was the common standard of the Barbaric fines, and contained forty denarii, or silver three pences. Twelve of these denarii made a solidus, or shilling, the twentieth part of the ponderal and numeral livre, or pound of silver, which has been so strangely reduced in modern France. See La Blanc, *Traite Historique des Monnoyes de France*, p. 36-43, &c.]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[Agathias, in tom. ii. p. 47. Gregory of Tours exhibits a very different picture. Perhaps it would not be easy, within the same historical space, to find more vice and less virtue. We are continually shocked by the union of savage and corrupt manners.]

62 [\(return\)](#)

[M. de Foncemagne has traced, in a correct and elegant dissertation, (*Mem. de l'Academie*, tom. viii. p. 505-528,) the extent and limits of the French monarchy.]

The Franks, or French, are the only people of Europe who can deduce a perpetual succession from the conquerors of the Western empire. But their conquest of Gaul was followed by ten centuries of anarchy and ignorance. On the revival of learning, the students, who had been formed in the schools of Athens and Rome, disdained their Barbarian ancestors; and a long period elapsed before patient labor could provide the requisite materials to satisfy, or rather to excite, the curiosity of more enlightened times. [63](#) At length the eye of criticism and philosophy was directed to the antiquities of France; but even philosophers have been tainted by the contagion of prejudice and passion. The most extreme and exclusive systems, of the personal servitude of the Gauls, or of their voluntary and equal alliance with the Franks, have been rashly conceived, and obstinately defended; and the intemperate disputants have accused each

other of conspiring against the prerogative of the crown, the dignity of the nobles, or the freedom of the people. Yet the sharp conflict has usefully exercised the adverse powers of learning and genius; and each antagonist, alternately vanquished and victorious has extirpated some ancient errors, and established some interesting truths. An impartial stranger, instructed by their discoveries, their disputes, and even their faults, may describe, from the same original materials, the state of the Roman provincials, after Gaul had submitted to the arms and laws of the Merovingian kings. [64](#)

63

[\(return\)](#)

[The Abbe Dubos (*Histoire Critique*, tom. i. p. 29-36) has truly and agreeably represented the slow progress of these studies; and he observes, that Gregory of Tours was only once printed before the year 1560. According to the complaint of Heineccius, (*Opera*, tom. iii. *Sylloge*, iii. p. 248, &c.,) Germany received with indifference and contempt the codes of Barbaric laws, which were published by Heroldus, Lindenbrogius, &c. At present those laws, (as far as they relate to Gaul,) the history of Gregory of Tours, and all the monuments of the Merovingian race, appear in a pure and perfect state, in the first four volumes of the *Historians of France*.]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[In the space of [about] thirty years (1728-1765) this interesting subject has been agitated by the free spirit of the count de Boulainvilliers, (*Mémoires Historiques sur l'Etat de la France*, particularly tom. i. p. 15-49;) the learned ingenuity of the Abbe Dubos, (*Histoire Critique de l'Etablissement de la Monarchie Francoise dans les Gaules*, 2 vols. in 4to;) the comprehensive genius of the president de Montesquieu, (*Esprit des Loix*, particularly l. xxviii. xxx. xxxi. ;) and the good sense and diligence of the Abbe de Mably, (*Observations sur l'Histoire de France*, 2 vols. 12mo.)]

The rudest, or the most servile, condition of human society, is regulated, however, by some fixed and general rules. When Tacitus surveyed the primitive simplicity of the Germans, he discovered some permanent maxims, or customs, of public and private life, which were preserved by faithful tradition till the introduction of the art of writing, and of the Latin tongue. [65](#) Before the election of the Merovingian kings, the most powerful tribe, or nation, of the Franks, appointed four venerable chieftains to compose the Salic laws; [66](#) and their labors were examined and approved in three successive assemblies of the people. After the baptism of Clovis, he reformed several articles that appeared incompatible with Christianity: the Salic law was again amended by his sons; and at length, under the reign of Dagobert, the code was revised and promulgated in its actual form, one hundred years after the establishment of the French monarchy. Within

the same period, the customs of the Ripuarians were transcribed and published; and Charlemagne himself, the legislator of his age and country, had accurately studied the two national laws, which still prevailed among the Franks. [67](#) The same care was extended to their vassals; and the rude institutions of the Alemanni and Bavarians were diligently compiled and ratified by the supreme authority of the Merovingian kings. The Visigoths and Burgundians, whose conquests in Gaul preceded those of the Franks, showed less impatience to attain one of the principal benefits of civilized society. Euric was the first of the Gothic princes who expressed, in writing, the manners and customs of his people; and the composition of the Burgundian laws was a measure of policy rather than of justice; to alleviate the yoke, and regain the affections, of their Gallic subjects. [68](#) Thus, by a singular coincidence, the Germans framed their artless institutions, at a time when the elaborate system of Roman jurisprudence was finally consummated. In the Salic laws, and the Pandects of Justinian, we may compare the first rudiments, and the full maturity, of civil wisdom; and whatever prejudices may be suggested in favor of Barbarism, our calmer reflections will ascribe to the Romans the superior advantages, not only of science and reason, but of humanity and justice. Yet the laws [681](#) of the Barbarians were adapted to their wants and desires, their occupations and their capacity; and they all contributed to preserve the peace, and promote the improvement, of the society for whose use they were originally established. The Merovingians, instead of imposing a uniform rule of conduct on their various subjects, permitted each people, and each family, of their empire, freely to enjoy their domestic institutions; [69](#) nor were the Romans excluded from the common benefits of this legal toleration. [70](#) The children embraced the law of their parents, the wife that of her husband, the freedman that of his patron; and in all causes where the parties were of different nations, the plaintiff or accuser was obliged to follow the tribunal of the defendant, who may always plead a judicial presumption of right, or innocence. A more ample latitude was allowed, if every citizen, in the presence of the judge, might declare the law under which he desired to live, and the national society to which he chose to belong. Such an indulgence would abolish the partial distinctions of victory: and the Roman provincials might patiently acquiesce in the hardships of their condition; since it depended on themselves to assume the privilege, if they dared to assert the character, of free and warlike Barbarians. [71](#)

65

[\(return\)](#)

[I have derived much instruction from two learned works of Heineccius, the History, and the Elements, of the Germanic law. In a judicious preface to the Elements, he considers, and tries to excuse the defects of that barbarous jurisprudence.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[Latin appears to have been the original language of the Salic law. It was probably composed in the beginning of the fifth century, before the era (A.D. 421) of the real or fabulous Pharamond. The preface

mentions the four cantons which produced the four legislators; and many provinces, Franconia, Saxony, Hanover, Brabant, &c., have claimed them as their own. See an excellent Dissertation of Heinecties de Lege Salica, tom. iii. Sylloge iii. p. 247-267. * Note: The relative antiquity of the two copies of the Salic law has been contested with great learning and ingenuity. The work of M. Wiarda, History and Explanation of the Salic Law, Bremen, 1808, asserts that what is called the Lex Antiqua, or Vetustior in which many German words are mingled with the Latin, has no claim to superior antiquity, and may be suspected to be more modern. M. Wiarda has been opposed by M. Fuerbach, who maintains the higher age of the “ancient” Code, which has been greatly corrupted by the transcribers. See Guizot, Cours de l’Histoire Moderne, vol. i. sect. 9: and the preface to the useful republication of five of the different texts of the Salic law, with that of the Ripuarian in parallel columns. By E. A. I. Laspeyres, Halle, 1833.—M.]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[Eginhard, in Vit. Caroli Magni, c. 29, in tom. v. p. 100. By these two laws, most critics understand the Salic and the Ripuarian. The former extended from the Carbonarian forest to the Loire, (tom. iv. p. 151,) and the latter might be obeyed from the same forest to the Rhine, (tom. iv. p. 222.)]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[Consult the ancient and modern prefaces of the several codes, in the fourth volume of the Historians of France. The original prologue to the Salic law expresses (though in a foreign dialect) the genuine spirit of the Franks more forcibly than the ten books of Gregory of Tours.]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[The Ripuarian law declares, and defines, this indulgence in favor of the plaintiff, (tit. xxxi. in tom. iv. p. 240;) and the same toleration is understood, or expressed, in all the codes, except that of the Visigoths of Spain. Tanta diversitas legum (says Agobard in the ninth century) quanta non solum in regionibus, aut civitatibus, sed etiam in multis domibus habetur. Nam plerumque contingit ut simul eant aut sedeant quinque homines, et nullus eorum communem legem cum altero habeat, (in tom. vi. p. 356.) He foolishly proposes to introduce a uniformity of law, as well as of faith. * Note: It is the object of the important work of M. Savigny, Geschichte des Romisches

Rechts in Mittelalter, to show the perpetuity of the Roman law from the 5th to the 12th century.—M.]

681 [\(return\)](#)

[The most complete collection of these codes is in the “Barbarorum leges antiquae,” by P. Canciani, 5 vols. folio, Venice, 1781-9.—M.]

70 [\(return\)](#)

[Inter Romanos negotia causarum Romanis legibus praecipimus terminari. Such are the words of a general constitution promulgated by Clotaire, the son of Clovis, the sole monarch of the Franks (in tom. iv. p. 116) about the year 560.]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[This liberty of choice has been aptly deduced (Esprit des Loix, l. xxviii. 2) from the constitution of Lothaire I. (Leg. Langobard. l. ii. tit. lvii. in Codex Lindenbrog. p. 664;) though the example is too recent and partial. From a various reading in the Salic law, (tit. xlv. not. xlv.) the Abbe de Mably (tom. i. p. 290-293) has conjectured, that, at first, a Barbarian only, and afterwards any man, (consequently a Roman,) might live according to the law of the Franks. I am sorry to offend this ingenious conjecture by observing, that the stricter sense (Barbarum) is expressed in the reformed copy of Charlemagne; which is confirmed by the Royal and Wolfenbuttle MSS. The looser interpretation (hominem) is authorized only by the MS. of Fulda, from from whence Heroldus published his edition. See the four original texts of the Salic law in tom. iv. p. 147, 173, 196, 220. * Note: Gibbon appears to have doubted the evidence on which this “liberty of choice” rested. His doubts have been confirmed by the researches of M. Savigny, who has not only confuted but traced with convincing sagacity the origin and progress of this error. As a general principle, though liable to some exceptions, each lived according to his native law. Romische Recht. vol. i. p. 123-138—M. * Note: This constitution of Lothaire at first related only to the duchy of Rome; it afterwards found its way into the Lombard code. Savigny. p. 138.—M.]

Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part III.

When justice inexorably requires the death of a murderer, each private citizen is fortified by the assurance, that the laws, the magistrate, and the whole community, are the guardians of his personal safety. But in the loose society of the Germans, revenge

was always honorable, and often meritorious: the independent warrior chastised, or vindicated, with his own hand, the injuries which he had offered or received; and he had only to dread the resentment of the sons and kinsmen of the enemy, whom he had sacrificed to his selfish or angry passions. The magistrate, conscious of his weakness, interposed, not to punish, but to reconcile; and he was satisfied if he could persuade or compel the contending parties to pay and to accept the moderate fine which had been ascertained as the price of blood. [72](#) The fierce spirit of the Franks would have opposed a more rigorous sentence; the same fierceness despised these ineffectual restraints; and, when their simple manners had been corrupted by the wealth of Gaul, the public peace was continually violated by acts of hasty or deliberate guilt. In every just government the same penalty is inflicted, or at least is imposed, for the murder of a peasant or a prince. But the national inequality established by the Franks, in their criminal proceedings, was the last insult and abuse of conquest. [73](#) In the calm moments of legislation, they solemnly pronounced, that the life of a Roman was of smaller value than that of a Barbarian. The Antrustion, [74](#) a name expressive of the most illustrious birth or dignity among the Franks, was appreciated at the sum of six hundred pieces of gold; while the noble provincial, who was admitted to the king's table, might be legally murdered at the expense of three hundred pieces.

Two hundred were deemed sufficient for a Frank of ordinary condition; but the meaner Romans were exposed to disgrace and danger by a trifling compensation of one hundred, or even fifty, pieces of gold. Had these laws been regulated by any principle of equity or reason, the public protection should have supplied, in just proportion, the want of personal strength. But the legislator had weighed in the scale, not of justice, but of policy, the loss of a soldier against that of a slave: the head of an insolent and rapacious Barbarian was guarded by a heavy fine; and the slightest aid was afforded to the most defenceless subjects. Time insensibly abated the pride of the conquerors and the patience of the vanquished; and the boldest citizen was taught, by experience, that he might suffer more injuries than he could inflict. As the manners of the Franks became less ferocious, their laws were rendered more severe; and the Merovingian kings attempted to imitate the impartial rigor of the Visigoths and Burgundians. [75](#) Under the empire of Charlemagne, murder was universally punished with death; and the use of capital punishments has been liberally multiplied in the jurisprudence of modern Europe. [76](#)

[In the heroic times of Greece, the guilt of murder was expiated by a pecuniary satisfaction to the family of the deceased, (Feithius Antiquitat. Homeric. l. ii. c. 8.) Heineccius, in his preface to the Elements of Germanic Law, favorably suggests, that at Rome and Athens homicide was only punished with exile. It is true: but exile was a capital punishment for a citizen of Rome or Athens.]

- 73 [\(return\)](#)
[This proportion is fixed by the Salic (tit. xlv. in tom. iv. p. 147) and the Ripuarian (tit. vii. xi. xxxvi. in tom. iv. p. 237, 241) laws: but the latter does not distinguish any difference of Romans. Yet the orders of the clergy are placed above the Franks themselves, and the Burgundians and Alemanni between the Franks and the Romans.]
- 74 [\(return\)](#)
[The Antrustiones, qui in truste Dominica sunt, leudi, fideles, undoubtedly represent the first order of Franks; but it is a question whether their rank was personal or hereditary. The Abbe de Mably (tom. i. p. 334-347) is not displeased to mortify the pride of birth (Esprit, l. xxx. c. 25) by dating the origin of the French nobility from the reign Clotaire II. (A.D. 615.)]
- 75 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Burgundian laws, (tit. ii. in tom. iv. p. 257,) the code of the Visigoths, (l. vi. tit. v. in tom. p. 384,) and the constitution of Childebert, not of Paris, but most evidently of Austrasia, (in tom. iv. p. 112.) Their premature severity was sometimes rash, and excessive. Childebert condemned not only murderers but robbers; quomodo sine lege involavit, sine lege moriatur; and even the negligent judge was involved in the same sentence. The Visigoths abandoned an unsuccessful surgeon to the family of his deceased patient, ut quod de eo facere voluerint habeant potestatem, (l. xi. tit. i. in tom. iv. p. 435.)]
- 76 [\(return\)](#)
[See, in the sixth volume of the works of Heineccius, the Elementa Juris Germanici, l. ii. p. 2, No. 261, 262, 280-283. Yet some vestiges of these pecuniary compositions for murder have been traced in Germany as late as the sixteenth century.]

The civil and military professions, which had been separated by Constantine, were again united by the Barbarians. The harsh sound of the Teutonic appellations was mollified into the Latin titles of Duke, of Count, or of Praefect; and the same officer assumed, within his district, the command of the troops, and the administration of justice. [77](#) But the fierce and illiterate chieftain was seldom qualified to discharge the duties of a judge, which required all the faculties of a philosophic mind, laboriously cultivated by experience and study; and his rude ignorance was compelled to embrace some simple, and visible, methods of ascertaining the cause of justice. In every religion, the Deity has been invoked to confirm the truth, or to punish the falsehood of human testimony; but this powerful instrument was misapplied and abused by the simplicity

of the German legislators. The party accused might justify his innocence, by producing before their tribunal a number of friendly witnesses, who solemnly declared their belief, or assurance, that he was not guilty. According to the weight of the charge, this legal number of compurgators was multiplied; seventy-two voices were required to absolve an incendiary or assassin: and when the chastity of a queen of France was suspected, three hundred gallant nobles swore, without hesitation, that the infant prince had been actually begotten by her deceased husband. [78](#) The sin and scandal of manifest and frequent perjuries engaged the magistrates to remove these dangerous temptations; and to supply the defects of human testimony by the famous experiments of fire and water. These extraordinary trials were so capriciously contrived, that, in some cases, guilt, and innocence in others, could not be proved without the interposition of a miracle. Such miracles were really provided by fraud and credulity; the most intricate causes were determined by this easy and infallible method, and the turbulent Barbarians, who might have disdained the sentence of the magistrate, submissively acquiesced in the judgment of God. [79](#)

77

[\(return\)](#)

[The whole subject of the Germanic judges, and their jurisdiction, is copiously treated by Heineccius, (*Element. Jur. Germ.* l. iii. No. 1-72.) I cannot find any proof that, under the Merovingian race, the scabini, or assessors, were chosen by the people. * Note: The question of the scabini is treated at considerable length by Savigny. He questions the existence of the scabini anterior to Charlemagne. Before this time the decision was by an open court of the freemen, the *boni Romische Recht*, vol. i. p. 195. et seq.—M.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[*Gregor. Turon.* l. viii. c. 9, in tom. ii. p. 316. Montesquieu observes, (*Esprit des Loix.* l. xxviii. c. 13,) that the Salic law did not admit these negative proofs so universally established in the Barbaric codes. Yet this obscure concubine (*Fredegundis*), who became the wife of the grandson of Clovis, must have followed the Salic law.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[Muratori, in the *Antiquities of Italy*, has given two Dissertations (xxxvii. xxxix.) on the judgments of God. It was expected that fire would not burn the innocent; and that the pure element of water would not allow the guilty to sink into its bosom.]

But the trials by single combat gradually obtained superior credit and authority, among a warlike people, who could not believe that a brave man deserved to suffer, or that a coward deserved to live. [80](#) Both in civil and criminal proceedings, the plaintiff, or accuser, the defendant, or even the witness, were exposed to mortal challenge from

the antagonist who was destitute of legal proofs; and it was incumbent on them either to desert their cause, or publicly to maintain their honor, in the lists of battle. They fought either on foot, or on horseback, according to the custom of their nation; [81](#) and the decision of the sword, or lance, was ratified by the sanction of Heaven, of the judge, and of the people. This sanguinary law was introduced into Gaul by the Burgundians; and their legislator Gundobald [82](#) condescended to answer the complaints and objections of his subject Avitus. “Is it not true,” said the king of Burgundy to the bishop, “that the event of national wars, and private combats, is directed by the judgment of God; and that his providence awards the victory to the juster cause?” By such prevailing arguments, the absurd and cruel practice of judicial duels, which had been peculiar to some tribes of Germany, was propagated and established in all the monarchies of Europe, from Sicily to the Baltic. At the end of ten centuries, the reign of legal violence was not totally extinguished; and the ineffectual censures of saints, of popes, and of synods, may seem to prove, that the influence of superstition is weakened by its unnatural alliance with reason and humanity. The tribunals were stained with the blood, perhaps, of innocent and respectable citizens; the law, which now favors the rich, then yielded to the strong; and the old, the feeble, and the infirm, were condemned, either to renounce their fairest claims and possessions, to sustain the dangers of an unequal conflict, [83](#) or to trust the doubtful aid of a mercenary champion. This oppressive jurisprudence was imposed on the provincials of Gaul, who complained of any injuries in their persons and property. Whatever might be the strength, or courage, of individuals, the victorious Barbarians excelled in the love and exercise of arms; and the vanquished Roman was unjustly summoned to repeat, in his own person, the bloody contest which had been already decided against his country. [84](#)

80

[\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu (*Esprit des Loix*, l. xxviii. c. 17) has condescended to explain and excuse “la maniere de penser de nos peres,” on the subject of judicial combats. He follows this strange institution from the age of Gundobald to that of St. Lewis; and the philosopher is some times lost in the legal antiquarian.]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[In a memorable duel at Aix-la-Chapelle, (A.D. 820,) before the emperor Lewis the Pious, his biographer observes, *secundum legem propriam, utpote quia uterque Gothus erat, equestri pugna est*, (*Vit. Lud. Pii*, c. 33, in tom. vi. p. 103.) Ermoldus Nigellus, (l. iii. 543-628, in tom. vi. p. 48-50,) who describes the duel, admires the *ars nova* of fighting on horseback, which was unknown to the Franks.]

82

[\(return\)](#)

[In his original edict, published at Lyons, (A.D. 501,) establishes and justifies the use of judicial combat, (*Les Burgund. tit. xlv. in tom. ii. p. 267*,

268.) Three hundred years afterwards, Agobard, bishop of Lyons, solicited Lewis the Pious to abolish the law of an Arian tyrant, (in tom. vi. p. 356-358.) He relates the conversation of Gundobald and Avitus.]

83

[\(return\)](#)

[“Accidit, (says Agobard,) ut non solum valentes viribus, sed etiam infirmi et senes laceessantur ad pugnam, etiam pro vilissimis rebus. Quibus foralibus certaminibus contingunt homicidia injusta; et crudeles ac perversi eventus judiciorum.” Like a prudent rhetorician, he suppresses the legal privilege of hiring champions.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu, (Esprit des Loix, xxviii. c. 14,) who understands why the judicial combat was admitted by the Burgundians, Ripuarians, Alemanni, Bavarians, Lombards, Thuringians, Frisons, and Saxons, is satisfied (and Agobard seems to countenance the assertion) that it was not allowed by the Salic law. Yet the same custom, at least in case of treason, is mentioned by Ermoldus, Nigellus (l. iii. 543, in tom. vi. p. 48,) and the anonymous biographer of Lewis the Pious, (c. 46, in tom. vi. p. 112,) as the “mos antiquus Francorum, more Francis solito,” &c., expressions too general to exclude the noblest of their tribes.]

A devouring host of one hundred and twenty thousand Germans had formerly passed the Rhine under the command of Ariovistus. One third part of the fertile lands of the Sequani was appropriated to their use; and the conqueror soon repeated his oppressive demand of another third, for the accommodation of a new colony of twenty-four thousand Barbarians, whom he had invited to share the rich harvest of Gaul. [85](#) At the distance of five hundred years, the Visigoths and Burgundians, who revenged the defeat of Ariovistus, usurped the same unequal proportion of two thirds of the subject lands. But this distribution, instead of spreading over the province, may be reasonably confined to the peculiar districts where the victorious people had been planted by their own choice, or by the policy of their leader. In these districts, each Barbarian was connected by the ties of hospitality with some Roman provincial. To this unwelcome guest, the proprietor was compelled to abandon two thirds of his patrimony, but the German, a shepherd and a hunter, might sometimes content himself with a spacious range of wood and pasture, and resign the smallest, though most valuable, portion, to the toil of the industrious husbandman. [86](#) The silence of ancient and authentic testimony has encouraged an opinion, that the rapine of the Franks was not moderated, or disguised, by the forms of a legal division; that they dispersed themselves over the provinces of Gaul, without order or control; and that each victorious robber, according to his wants, his avarice, and his strength, measured with his sword the extent of his

new inheritance. At a distance from their sovereign, the Barbarians might indeed be tempted to exercise such arbitrary depredation; but the firm and artful policy of Clovis must curb a licentious spirit, which would aggravate the misery of the vanquished, whilst it corrupted the union and discipline of the conquerors. [861](#) The memorable vase of Soissons is a monument and a pledge of the regular distribution of the Gallic spoils. It was the duty and the interest of Clovis to provide rewards for a successful army, settlements for a numerous people; without inflicting any wanton or superfluous injuries on the loyal Catholics of Gaul. The ample fund, which he might lawfully acquire, of the Imperial patrimony, vacant lands, and Gothic usurpations, would diminish the cruel necessity of seizure and confiscation, and the humble provincials would more patiently acquiesce in the equal and regular distribution of their loss. [87](#)

85 [\(return\)](#)
[Caesar de Bell. Gall. l. i. c. 31, in tom. i. p. 213.]

86 [\(return\)](#)
[The obscure hints of a division of lands occasionally scattered in the laws of the Burgundians, (tit. liv. No. 1, 2, in tom. iv. p. 271, 272,) and Visigoths, (l. x. tit. i. No. 8, 9, 16, in tom. iv. p. 428, 429, 430,) are skillfully explained by the president Montesquieu, (Esprit des Loix, l. xxx. c. 7, 8, 9.) I shall only add, that among the Goths, the division seems to have been ascertained by the judgment of the neighborhood, that the Barbarians frequently usurped the remaining third; and that the Romans might recover their right, unless they were barred by a prescription of fifty years.]

861 [\(return\)](#)
[Sismondi (Hist des Francais, vol. i. p. 197) observes, they were not a conquering people, who had emigrated with their families, like the Goths or Burgundians. The women, the children, the old, had not followed Clovis: they remained in their ancient possessions on the Waal and the Rhine. The adventurers alone had formed the invading force, and they always considered themselves as an army, not as a colony. Hence their laws retained no traces of the partition of the Roman properties. It is curious to observe the recoil from the national vanity of the French historians of the last century. M. Sismondi compares the position of the Franks with regard to the conquered people with that of the Dey of Algiers and his corsair troops to the peaceful inhabitants of that province: M. Thierry (Lettres sur l'Histoire de France, p. 117) with that of the Turks towards the Raïas or Phanariotes, the mass of the Greeks.—M.]

[It is singular enough that the president de Montesquieu (*Esprit des Loix*, l. xxx. c. 7) and the Abbe de Mably (*Observations*, tom i. p. 21, 22) agree in this strange supposition of arbitrary and private rapine. The Count de Boulainvilliers (*Etat de la France*, tom. i. p. 22, 23) shows a strong understanding through a cloud of ignorance and prejudice. Note: Sismondi supposes that the Barbarians, if a farm were conveniently situated, would show no great respect for the laws of property; but in general there would have been vacant land enough for the lots assigned to old or worn-out warriors, (*Hist. des Francais*, vol. i. p. 196.)—M.]

The wealth of the Merovingian princes consisted in their extensive domain. After the conquest of Gaul, they still delighted in the rustic simplicity of their ancestors; the cities were abandoned to solitude and decay; and their coins, their charters, and their synods, are still inscribed with the names of the villas, or rural palaces, in which they successively resided.

One hundred and sixty of these palaces, a title which need not excite any unseasonable ideas of art or luxury, were scattered through the provinces of their kingdom; and if some might claim the honors of a fortress, the far greater part could be esteemed only in the light of profitable farms. The mansion of the long-haired kings was surrounded with convenient yards and stables, for the cattle and the poultry; the garden was planted with useful vegetables; the various trades, the labors of agriculture, and even the arts of hunting and fishing, were exercised by servile hands for the emolument of the sovereign; his magazines were filled with corn and wine, either for sale or consumption; and the whole administration was conducted by the strictest maxims of private economy. [88](#) This ample patrimony was appropriated to supply the hospitable plenty of Clovis and his successors; and to reward the fidelity of their brave companions who, both in peace and war, were devoted to their personal service. Instead of a horse, or a suit of armor, each companion, according to his rank, or merit, or favor, was invested with a benefice, the primitive name, and most simple form, of the feudal possessions. These gifts might be resumed at the pleasure of the sovereign; and his feeble prerogative derived some support from the influence of his liberality. [881](#) But this dependent tenure was gradually abolished [89](#) by the independent and rapacious nobles of France, who established the perpetual property, and hereditary succession, of their benefices; a revolution salutary to the earth, which had been injured, or neglected, by its precarious masters. [90](#) Besides these royal and beneficiary estates, a large proportion had been assigned, in the division of Gaul, of allodial and Salic lands: they were exempt from tribute, and the Salic lands were equally shared among the male descendants of the Franks. [91](#)

- 88 [\(return\)](#)
[See the rustic edict, or rather code, of Charlemagne, which contains seventy distinct and minute regulations of that great monarch (in tom. v. p. 652-657.) He requires an account of the horns and skins of the goats, allows his fish to be sold, and carefully directs, that the larger villas (Capitaneoe) shall maintain one hundred hens and thirty geese; and the smaller (Mansionales) fifty hens and twelve geese. Mabillon (de Re Diplomatica) has investigated the names, the number, and the situation of the Merovingian villas.]
- 881 [\(return\)](#)
[The resumption of benefices at the pleasure of the sovereign, (the general theory down to his time,) is ably contested by Mr. Hallam; “for this resumption some delinquency must be imputed to the vassal.” Middle Ages, vol. i. p. 162. The reader will be interested by the singular analogies with the beneficial and feudal system of Europe in a remote part of the world, indicated by Col. Tod in his splendid work on Raja’sthan, vol. ii p. 129, &c.—M.]
- 89 [\(return\)](#)
[From a passage of the Burgundian law (tit. i. No. 4, in tom. iv. p. 257) it is evident, that a deserving son might expect to hold the lands which his father had received from the royal bounty of Gundobald. The Burgundians would firmly maintain their privilege, and their example might encourage the Beneficiaries of France.]
- 90 [\(return\)](#)
[The revolutions of the benefices and fiefs are clearly fixed by the Abbe de Mably. His accurate distinction of times gives him a merit to which even Montesquieu is a stranger.]
- 91 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Salic law, (tit. lxii. in tom. iv. p. 156.) The origin and nature of these Salic lands, which, in times of ignorance, were perfectly understood, now perplex our most learned and sagacious critics. * Note: No solution seems more probable, than that the ancient lawgivers of the Salic Franks prohibited females from inheriting the lands assigned to the nation, upon its conquest of Gaul, both in compliance with their ancient usages, and in order to secure the military service of every proprietor. But lands subsequently acquired by purchase or other means, though equally bound to the public defence, were relieved from the severity of this rule,

and presumed not to belong to the class of Sallic.
Hallam's Middle Ages, vol. i. p. 145. Compare
Sismondi, vol. i. p. 196.—M.]

In the bloody discord and silent decay of the Merovingian line, a new order of tyrants arose in the provinces, who, under the appellation of Seniors, or Lords, usurped a right to govern, and a license to oppress, the subjects of their peculiar territory. Their ambition might be checked by the hostile resistance of an equal: but the laws were extinguished; and the sacrilegious Barbarians, who dared to provoke the vengeance of a saint or bishop, [92](#) would seldom respect the landmarks of a profane and defenceless neighbor. The common or public rights of nature, such as they had always been deemed by the Roman jurisprudence, [93](#) were severely restrained by the German conquerors, whose amusement, or rather passion, was the exercise of hunting. The vague dominion which Man has assumed over the wild inhabitants of the earth, the air, and the waters, was confined to some fortunate individuals of the human species. Gaul was again overspread with woods; and the animals, who were reserved for the use or pleasure of the lord, might ravage with impunity the fields of his industrious vassals. The chase was the sacred privilege of the nobles and their domestic servants. Plebeian transgressors were legally chastised with stripes and imprisonment; [94](#) but in an age which admitted a slight composition for the life of a citizen, it was a capital crime to destroy a stag or a wild bull within the precincts of the royal forests. [95](#)

92

[\(return\)](#)

[Many of the two hundred and six miracles of St. Martin (Greg Turon. in Maxima Bibliotheca Patrum, tom. xi. p. 896-932) were repeatedly performed to punish sacrilege. Audite haec omnes (exclaims the bishop of Tours) protestatem habentes, after relating, how some horses ran mad, that had been turned into a sacred meadow.]

93

[\(return\)](#)

[Heinec. Element. Jur. German. l. ii. p. 1, No. 8.]

94

[\(return\)](#)

[Jonas, bishop of Orleans, (A.D. 821-826. Cave, Hist. Litteraria, p. 443,) censures the legal tyranny of the nobles. Pro feris, quas cura hominum non aluit, sed Deus in commune mortalibus ad utendum concessit, pauperes a potentioribus spoliuntur, flagellantur, ergastulis detruduntur, et multa alia patiuntur. Hoc enim qui faciunt, lege mundi se facere juste posse contendunt. De Institutione Laicorum, l. ii. c. 23, apud Thomassin, Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. iii. p. 1348.]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[On a mere suspicion, Chundo, a chamberlain of Gontram, king of Burgundy, was stoned to death, (Greg. Turon. l. x. c. 10, in tom. ii. p. 369.) John of Salisbury (Policrat. l. i. c. 4) asserts the rights of

nature, and exposes the cruel practice of the twelfth century. See Heineccius, Elem. Jur. Germ. l. ii. p. 1, No. 51-57.]

According to the maxims of ancient war, the conqueror became the lawful master of the enemy whom he had subdued and spared: [96](#) and the fruitful cause of personal slavery, which had been almost suppressed by the peaceful sovereignty of Rome, was again revived and multiplied by the perpetual hostilities of the independent Barbarians. The Goth, the Burgundian, or the Frank, who returned from a successful expedition, dragged after him a long train of sheep, of oxen, and of human captives, whom he treated with the same brutal contempt. The youths of an elegant form and an ingenuous aspect were set apart for the domestic service; a doubtful situation, which alternately exposed them to the favorable or cruel impulse of passion. The useful mechanics and servants (smiths, carpenters, tailors, shoemakers, cooks, gardeners, dyers, and workmen in gold and silver, &c.) employed their skill for the use, or profit, of their master. But the Roman captives, who were destitute of art, but capable of labor, were condemned, without regard to their former rank, to tend the cattle and cultivate the lands of the Barbarians. The number of the hereditary bondsmen, who were attached to the Gallic estates, was continually increased by new supplies; and the servile people, according to the situation and temper of their lords, was sometimes raised by precarious indulgence, and more frequently depressed by capricious despotism. [97](#) An absolute power of life and death was exercised by these lords; and when they married their daughters, a train of useful servants, chained on the wagons to prevent their escape, was sent as a nuptial present into a distant country. [98](#) The majesty of the Roman laws protected the liberty of each citizen, against the rash effects of his own distress or despair. But the subjects of the Merovingian kings might alienate their personal freedom; and this act of legal suicide, which was familiarly practised, is expressed in terms most disgraceful and afflicting to the dignity of human nature. [99](#) The example of the poor, who purchased life by the sacrifice of all that can render life desirable, was gradually imitated by the feeble and the devout, who, in times of public disorder, pusillanimously crowded to shelter themselves under the battlements of a powerful chief, and around the shrine of a popular saint. Their submission was accepted by these temporal or spiritual patrons; and the hasty transaction irrecoverably fixed their own condition, and that of their latest posterity. From the reign of Clovis, during five successive centuries, the laws and manners of Gaul uniformly tended to promote the increase, and to confirm the duration, of personal servitude. Time and violence almost obliterated the intermediate ranks of society; and left an obscure and narrow interval between the noble and the slave. This arbitrary and recent division has been transformed by pride and prejudice into a national distinction, universally established by the arms and the laws of the Merovingians. The nobles, who claimed their genuine or fabulous descent from the independent and victorious Franks, have asserted and abused the indefeasible right of conquest over a prostrate crowd of slaves and plebeians, to whom they imputed the imaginary disgrace of Gallic or Roman extraction.

- 96 [\(return\)](#)
 [The custom of enslaving prisoners of war was totally extinguished in the thirteenth century, by the prevailing influence of Christianity; but it might be proved, from frequent passages of Gregory of Tours, &c., that it was practised, without censure, under the Merovingian race; and even Grotius himself, (*de Jure Belli et Pacis* l. iii. c. 7,) as well as his commentator Barbeyrac, have labored to reconcile it with the laws of nature and reason.]
- 97 [\(return\)](#)
 [The state, professions, &c., of the German, Italian, and Gallic slaves, during the middle ages, are explained by Heineccius, (*Element Jur. Germ.* l. i. No. 28-47,) Muratori, (*Dissertat.* xiv. xv.,) Ducange, (*Gloss. sub voce Servi*,) and the Abbe de Mably, (*Observations*, tom. ii. p. 3, &c., p. 237, &c.) Note: Compare Hallam, vol. i. p. 216.—M.]
- 98 [\(return\)](#)
 [Gregory of Tours (l. vi. c. 45, in tom. ii. p. 289) relates a memorable example, in which Chilperic only abused the private rights of a master. Many families which belonged to his *domus fiscales* in the neighborhood of Paris, were forcibly sent away into Spain.]
- 99 [\(return\)](#)
 [*Licentiam habeatis mihi qualemcunque volueritis disciplinam ponere; vel venundare, aut quod vobis placuerit de me facere* Marculf. *Formul.* l. ii. 28, in tom. iv. p. 497. The Formula of Lindenbrogius, (p. 559,) and that of Anjou, (p. 565,) are to the same effect Gregory of Tours (l. vii. c. 45, in tom. ii. p. 311) speak of many person who sold themselves for bread, in a great famine.]

The general state and revolutions of France, a name which was imposed by the conquerors, may be illustrated by the particular example of a province, a diocese, or a senatorial family. Auvergne had formerly maintained a just preeminence among the independent states and cities of Gaul. The brave and numerous inhabitants displayed a singular trophy; the sword of Caesar himself, which he had lost when he was repulsed before the walls of Gergovia. [100](#) As the common offspring of Troy, they claimed a fraternal alliance with the Romans; [101](#) and if each province had imitated the courage and loyalty of Auvergne, the fall of the Western empire might have been prevented or delayed. They firmly maintained the fidelity which they had reluctantly sworn to the Visigoths, out when their bravest nobles had fallen in the battle of Poitiers, they accepted, without resistance, a victorious and Catholic sovereign. This easy and valuable conquest was achieved and possessed by Theodoric, the eldest son of Clovis: but the remote province was separated from his Austrasian dominions, by the

intermediate kingdoms of Soissons, Paris, and Orleans, which formed, after their father's death, the inheritance of his three brothers. The king of Paris, Childebert, was tempted by the neighborhood and beauty of Auvergne. [102](#) The Upper country, which rises towards the south into the mountains of the Cevennes, presented a rich and various prospect of woods and pastures; the sides of the hills were clothed with vines; and each eminence was crowned with a villa or castle. In the Lower Auvergne, the River Allier flows through the fair and spacious plain of Limagne; and the inexhaustible fertility of the soil supplied, and still supplies, without any interval of repose, the constant repetition of the same harvests. [103](#) On the false report, that their lawful sovereign had been slain in Germany, the city and diocese of Auvergne were betrayed by the grandson of Sidonius Apollinaris. Childebert enjoyed this clandestine victory; and the free subjects of Theodoric threatened to desert his standard, if he indulged his private resentment, while the nation was engaged in the Burgundian war. But the Franks of Austrasia soon yielded to the persuasive eloquence of their king. "Follow me," said Theodoric, "into Auvergne; I will lead you into a province, where you may acquire gold, silver, slaves, cattle, and precious apparel, to the full extent of your wishes. I repeat my promise; I give you the people and their wealth as your prey; and you may transport them at pleasure into your own country." By the execution of this promise, Theodoric justly forfeited the allegiance of a people whom he devoted to destruction. His troops, reenforced by the fiercest Barbarians of Germany, [104](#) spread desolation over the fruitful face of Auvergne; and two places only, a strong castle and a holy shrine, were saved or redeemed from their licentious fury. The castle of Merolias [105](#) was seated on a lofty rock, which rose a hundred feet above the surface of the plain; and a large reservoir of fresh water was enclosed, with some arable lands, within the circle of its fortifications. The Franks beheld with envy and despair this impregnable fortress; but they surprised a party of fifty stragglers; and, as they were oppressed by the number of their captives, they fixed, at a trifling ransom, the alternative of life or death for these wretched victims, whom the cruel Barbarians were prepared to massacre on the refusal of the garrison. Another detachment penetrated as far as Brivas, or Brioude, where the inhabitants, with their valuable effects, had taken refuge in the sanctuary of St. Julian. The doors of the church resisted the assault; but a daring soldier entered through a window of the choir, and opened a passage to his companions. The clergy and people, the sacred and the profane spoils, were rudely torn from the altar; and the sacrilegious division was made at a small distance from the town of Brioude. But this act of impiety was severely chastised by the devout son of Clovis. He punished with death the most atrocious offenders; left their secret accomplices to the vengeance of St. Julian; released the captives; restored the plunder; and extended the rights of sanctuary five miles round the sepulchre of the holy martyr. [106](#)

than we might expect from a great man to whom victory was familiar. He acknowledges, however, that in one attack he lost forty-six centurions and seven hundred men, (de Bell. Gallico, l. vi. c. 44-53, in tom. i. p. 270-272.)]

101 [\(return\)](#)

[Audebant se quondam fatres Latio dicere, et sanguine ab Iliaco populos computare, (Sidon. Apollinar. l. vii. epist. 7, in tom i. p. 799.) I am not informed of the degrees and circumstances of this fabulous pedigree.]

102 [\(return\)](#)

[Either the first, or second, partition among the sons of Clovis, had given Berry to Childebert, (Greg. Turon. l. iii. c. 12, in tom. ii. p. 192.) Velim (said he) Arvernam Lemanem, quae tanta jocunditatis gratia refulgere dicitur, oculis cernere, (l. iii. c. p. 191.) The face of the country was concealed by a thick fog, when the king of Paris made his entry into Clermen.]

103 [\(return\)](#)

[For the description of Auvergne, see Sidonius, (l. iv. epist. 21, in tom. i. p. 703,) with the notes of Savaron and Sirmond, (p. 279, and 51, of their respective editions.) Boulainvilliers, (Etat de la France, tom. ii. p. 242-268,) and the Abbe de la Longuerue, (Description de la France, part i. p. 132-139.)]

104 [\(return\)](#)

[Furorem gentium, quae de ulteriore Rheni amnis parte venerant, superare non poterat, (Greg. Turon. l. iv. c. 50, in tom. ii. 229.) was the excuse of another king of Austrasia (A.D. 574) for the ravages which his troops committed in the neighborhood of Paris.]

105 [\(return\)](#)

[From the name and situation, the Benedictine editors of Gregory of Tours (in tom. ii. p. 192) have fixed this fortress at a place named Castel Merliac, two miles from Mauriac, in the Upper Auvergne. In this description, I translate *infra* as if I read *intra*; the two are perpetually confounded by Gregory, or his transcribed and the sense must always decide.]

106 [\(return\)](#)

[See these revolutions, and wars, of Auvergne, in Gregory of Tours, (l. ii. c. 37, in tom. ii. p. 183, and l. iii. c. 9, 12, 13, p. 191, 192, de Miraculis St. Julian. c. 13, in tom. ii. p. 466.) He frequently

betrays his extraordinary attention to his native country.]

Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part IV.

Before the Austrasian army retreated from Auvergne, Theodoric exacted some pledges of the future loyalty of a people, whose just hatred could be restrained only by their fear. A select band of noble youths, the sons of the principal senators, was delivered to the conqueror, as the hostages of the faith of Childebert, and of their countrymen. On the first rumor of war, or conspiracy, these guiltless youths were reduced to a state of servitude; and one of them, Attalus, [107](#) whose adventures are more particularly related, kept his master's horses in the diocese of Treves. After a painful search, he was discovered, in this unworthy occupation, by the emissaries of his grandfather, Gregory bishop of Langres; but his offers of ransom were sternly rejected by the avarice of the Barbarian, who required an exorbitant sum of ten pounds of gold for the freedom of his noble captive. His deliverance was effected by the hardy stratagem of Leo, a slave belonging to the kitchens of the bishop of Langres. [108](#) An unknown agent easily introduced him into the same family. The Barbarian purchased Leo for the price of twelve pieces of gold; and was pleased to learn that he was deeply skilled in the luxury of an episcopal table: "Next Sunday," said the Frank, "I shall invite my neighbors and kinsmen. Exert thy art, and force them to confess, that they have never seen, or tasted, such an entertainment, even in the king's house." Leo assured him, that if he would provide a sufficient quantity of poultry, his wishes should be satisfied. The master who already aspired to the merit of elegant hospitality, assumed, as his own, the praise which the voracious guests unanimously bestowed on his cook; and the dexterous Leo insensibly acquired the trust and management of his household. After the patient expectation of a whole year, he cautiously whispered his design to Attalus, and exhorted him to prepare for flight in the ensuing night. At the hour of midnight, the intemperate guests retired from the table; and the Frank's son-in-law, whom Leo attended to his apartment with a nocturnal potation, condescended to jest on the facility with which he might betray his trust. The intrepid slave, after sustaining this dangerous raillery, entered his master's bedchamber; removed his spear and shield; silently drew the fleetest horses from the stable; unbarred the ponderous gates; and excited Attalus to save his life and liberty by incessant diligence. Their apprehensions urged them to leave their horses on the banks of the Meuse; [109](#) they swam the river, wandered three days in the adjacent forest, and subsisted only by the accidental discovery of a wild plum-tree. As they lay concealed in a dark thicket, they heard the noise of horses; they were terrified by the angry countenance of their master, and they anxiously listened to his declaration, that, if he could seize the guilty fugitives, one of them he would cut in pieces with his sword, and would expose the other on a gibbet. A length, Attalus and his faithful Leo reached the friendly habitation of a presbyter of

Rheims, who recruited their fainting strength with bread and wine, concealed them from the search of their enemy, and safely conducted them beyond the limits of the Austrasian kingdom, to the episcopal palace of Langres. Gregory embraced his grandson with tears of joy, gratefully delivered Leo, with his whole family, from the yoke of servitude, and bestowed on him the property of a farm, where he might end his days in happiness and freedom. Perhaps this singular adventure, which is marked with so many circumstances of truth and nature, was related by Attalus himself, to his cousin or nephew, the first historian of the Franks. Gregory of Tours [110](#) was born about sixty years after the death of Sidonius Apollinaris; and their situation was almost similar, since each of them was a native of Auvergne, a senator, and a bishop. The difference of their style and sentiments may, therefore, express the decay of Gaul; and clearly ascertain how much, in so short a space, the human mind had lost of its energy and refinement. [111](#)

107

[\(return\)](#)

[The story of Attalus is related by Gregory of Tours, (l. iii. c. 16, tom. ii. p. 193-195.) His editor, the P. Ruinart, confounds this Attalus, who was a youth (puer) in the year 532, with a friend of Silonius of the same name, who was count of Autun, fifty or sixty years before. Such an error, which cannot be imputed to ignorance, is excused, in some degree, by its own magnitude.]

108

[\(return\)](#)

[This Gregory, the great grandfather of Gregory of Tours, (in tom. ii. p. 197, 490,) lived ninety-two years; of which he passed forty as count of Autun, and thirty-two as bishop of Langres. According to the poet Fortunatus, he displayed equal merit in these different stations. *Nobilis antiqua decurrens prole parentum, Nobilior gestis, nunc super astra manet. Arbiter ante ferox, dein pius ipse sacerdos, Quos domuit iudex, fovit amore patris.*]

109

[\(return\)](#)

[As M. de Valois, and the P. Ruinart, are determined to change the Mosella of the text into Mosa, it becomes me to acquiesce in the alteration. Yet, after some examination of the topography. I could defend the common reading.]

110

[\(return\)](#)

[The parents of Gregory (Gregorius Florentius Georgius) were of noble extraction, (natalibus... illustres,) and they possessed large estates (latifundia) both in Auvergne and Burgundy. He was born in the year 539, was consecrated bishop of Tours in 573, and died in 593 or 595, soon after he had terminated his history. See his life by Odo, abbot of Clugny, (in tom. ii. p. 129-135,) and a new

[Decedente atque immo potius pereunte ab urbibus Gallicanis liberalium cultura literarum, &c., (in praefat. in tom. ii. p. 137,) is the complaint of Gregory himself, which he fully verifies by his own work. His style is equally devoid of elegance and simplicity. In a conspicuous station, he still remained a stranger to his own age and country; and in a prolific work (the five last books contain ten years) he has omitted almost every thing that posterity desires to learn. I have tediously acquired, by a painful perusal, the right of pronouncing this unfavorable sentence]

We are now qualified to despise the opposite, and, perhaps, artful, misrepresentations, which have softened, or exaggerated, the oppression of the Romans of Gaul under the reign of the Merovingians. The conquerors never promulgated any universal edict of servitude, or confiscation; but a degenerate people, who excused their weakness by the specious names of politeness and peace, was exposed to the arms and laws of the ferocious Barbarians, who contemptuously insulted their possessions, their freedom, and their safety. Their personal injuries were partial and irregular; but the great body of the Romans survived the revolution, and still preserved the property, and privileges, of citizens. A large portion of their lands was exacted for the use of the Franks: but they enjoyed the remainder, exempt from tribute; [112](#) and the same irresistible violence which swept away the arts and manufactures of Gaul, destroyed the elaborate and expensive system of Imperial despotism. The Provincials must frequently deplore the savage jurisprudence of the Salic or Ripuarian laws; but their private life, in the important concerns of marriage, testaments, or inheritance, was still regulated by the Theodosian Code; and a discontented Roman might freely aspire, or descend, to the title and character of a Barbarian. The honors of the state were accessible to his ambition: the education and temper of the Romans more peculiarly qualified them for the offices of civil government; and, as soon as emulation had rekindled their military ardor, they were permitted to march in the ranks, or even at the head, of the victorious Germans. I shall not attempt to enumerate the generals and magistrates, whose names [113](#) attest the liberal policy of the Merovingians. The supreme command of Burgundy, with the title of Patrician, was successively intrusted to three Romans; and the last, and most powerful, Mummolus, [114](#) who alternately saved and disturbed the monarchy, had supplanted his father in the station of count of Autun, and left a treasury of thirty talents of gold, and two hundred and fifty talents of silver. The fierce and illiterate Barbarians were excluded, during several generations, from the dignities, and even from the orders, of the church. [115](#) The clergy of Gaul consisted almost entirely of native provincials; the haughty Franks fell at the feet of their subjects, who were dignified with the episcopal character: and the power and riches which had been lost in war, were

insensibly recovered by superstition. [116](#) In all temporal affairs, the Theodosian Code was the universal law of the clergy; but the Barbaric jurisprudence had liberally provided for their personal safety; a sub-deacon was equivalent to two Franks; the antrusion, and priest, were held in similar estimation: and the life of a bishop was appreciated far above the common standard, at the price of nine hundred pieces of gold. [117](#) The Romans communicated to their conquerors the use of the Christian religion and Latin language; [118](#) but their language and their religion had alike degenerated from the simple purity of the Augustan, and Apostolic age. The progress of superstition and Barbarism was rapid and universal: the worship of the saints concealed from vulgar eyes the God of the Christians; and the rustic dialect of peasants and soldiers was corrupted by a Teutonic idiom and pronunciation. Yet such intercourse of sacred and social communion eradicated the distinctions of birth and victory; and the nations of Gaul were gradually confounded under the name and government of the Franks.

112 [\(return\)](#)

[The Abbe de Mably (tom. p. i. 247-267) has diligently confirmed this opinion of the President de Montesquieu, (*Esprit des Loix*, l. xxx. c. 13.)]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[See Dubos, *Hist. Critique de la Monarchie Francoise*, tom. ii. l. vi. c. 9, 10. The French antiquarians establish as a principle, that the Romans and Barbarians may be distinguished by their names. Their names undoubtedly form a reasonable presumption; yet in reading Gregory of Tours, I have observed Gondulphus, of Senatorian, or Roman, extraction, (l. vi. c. 11, in tom. ii. p. 273,) and Claudius, a Barbarian, (l. vii. c. 29, p. 303.)]

114 [\(return\)](#)

[Eunius Mummolus is repeatedly mentioned by Gregory of Tours, from the fourth (c. 42, p. 224) to the seventh (c. 40, p. 310) book. The computation by talents is singular enough; but if Gregory attached any meaning to that obsolete word, the treasures of Mummolus must have exceeded 100,000 L. sterling.]

115 [\(return\)](#)

[See Fleury, *Discours iii. sur l'Histoire Ecclesiastique*.]

116 [\(return\)](#)

[The bishop of Tours himself has recorded the complaint of Chilperic, the grandson of Clovis. *Ecce pauper remansit Fiscus noster; ecce divitiae nostrae ad ecclesias sunt translatae; nulli penitus nisi soli Episcopi regnant*, (l. vi. c. 46, in tom. ii. p. 291.)]

117

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Ripuarian Code, (tit. xxxvi in tom. iv. p. 241.) The Salic law does not provide for the safety of the clergy; and we might suppose, on the behalf of the more civilized tribe, that they had not foreseen such an impious act as the murder of a priest. Yet Praetextatus, archbishop of Rouen, was assassinated by the order of Queen Fredegundis before the altar, (Greg. Turon. l. viii. c. 31, in tom. ii. p. 326.)]

118

[\(return\)](#)

[M. Bonamy (Mem. de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxiv. p. 582-670) has ascertained the *Lingua Romana Rustica*, which, through the medium of the Romance, has gradually been polished into the actual form of the French language. Under the Carlovingian race, the kings and nobles of France still understood the dialect of their German ancestors.]

The Franks, after they mingled with their Gallic subjects, might have imparted the most valuable of human gifts, a spirit and system of constitutional liberty. Under a king, hereditary, but limited, the chiefs and counsellors might have debated at Paris, in the palace of the Caesars: the adjacent field, where the emperors reviewed their mercenary legions, would have admitted the legislative assembly of freemen and warriors; and the rude model, which had been sketched in the woods of Germany, [119](#) might have been polished and improved by the civil wisdom of the Romans. But the careless Barbarians, secure of their personal independence, disdained the labor of government: the annual assemblies of the month of March were silently abolished; and the nation was separated, and almost dissolved, by the conquest of Gaul. [120](#) The monarchy was left without any regular establishment of justice, of arms, or of revenue. The successors of Clovis wanted resolution to assume, or strength to exercise, the legislative and executive powers, which the people had abdicated: the royal prerogative was distinguished only by a more ample privilege of rapine and murder; and the love of freedom, so often invigorated and disgraced by private ambition, was reduced, among the licentious Franks, to the contempt of order, and the desire of impunity. Seventy-five years after the death of Clovis, his grandson, Gontran, king of Burgundy, sent an army to invade the Gothic possessions of Septimania, or Languedoc. The troops of Burgundy, Berry, Auvergne, and the adjacent territories, were excited by the hopes of spoil. They marched, without discipline, under the banners of German, or Gallic, counts: their attack was feeble and unsuccessful; but the friendly and hostile provinces were desolated with indiscriminate rage. The cornfields, the villages, the churches themselves, were consumed by fire: the inhabitants were massacred, or dragged into captivity; and, in the disorderly retreat, five thousand of these inhuman savages were destroyed by hunger or intestine discord. When the pious Gontran reproached the guilt

or neglect of their leaders, and threatened to inflict, not a legal sentence, but instant and arbitrary execution, they accused the universal and incurable corruption of the people. “No one,” they said, “any longer fears or respects his king, his duke, or his count. Each man loves to do evil, and freely indulges his criminal inclinations. The most gentle correction provokes an immediate tumult, and the rash magistrate, who presumes to censure or restrain his seditious subjects, seldom escapes alive from their revenge.” [121](#) It has been reserved for the same nation to expose, by their intemperate vices, the most odious abuse of freedom; and to supply its loss by the spirit of honor and humanity, which now alleviates and dignifies their obedience to an absolute sovereign. [1211](#)

119 [\(return\)](#)
[Ce beau systeme a ete trouve dans les bois.
Montesquieu, Esprit des Loix, l. xi. c. 6.]

120 [\(return\)](#)
[See the Abbe de Mably. Observations, &c., tom.
i. p. 34-56. It should seem that the institution of
national assemblies, which are with the French
nation, has never been congenial to its temper.]

121 [\(return\)](#)
[Gregory of Tours (l. viii. c. 30, in tom. ii. p. 325,
326) relates, with much indifference, the crimes, the
reproof, and the apology. Nullus Regem metuit,
nullus Ducem, nullus Comitem reveretur; et si
fortassis alicui ista displicent, et ea, pro longaevitate
vitae vestrae, emendare conatur, statim seditio in
populo, statim tumultus exoritur, et in tantum
unusquisque contra seniore[m] saeva intentione
grassatur, ut vix se credat evadere, si tandem silere
nequiverit.]

1211 [\(return\)](#)
[This remarkable passage was published in 1779—
M.]

The Visigoths had resigned to Clovis the greatest part of their Gallic possessions; but their loss was amply compensated by the easy conquest, and secure enjoyment, of the provinces of Spain. From the monarchy of the Goths, which soon involved the Suevic kingdom of Galicia, the modern Spaniards still derive some national vanity; but the historian of the Roman empire is neither invited, nor compelled, to pursue the obscure and barren series of their annals. [122](#) The Goths of Spain were separated from the rest of mankind by the lofty ridge of the Pyrenaean mountains: their manners and institutions, as far as they were common to the Germanic tribes, have been already explained. I have anticipated, in the preceding chapter, the most important of their ecclesiastical events, the fall of Arianism, and the persecution of the Jews; and it only remains to observe some interesting circumstances which relate to the civil and ecclesiastical constitution of the Spanish kingdom.

[Spain, in these dark ages, has been peculiarly unfortunate. The Franks had a Gregory of Tours; the Saxons, or Angles, a Bede; the Lombards, a Paul Warnefrid, &c. But the history of the Visigoths is contained in the short and imperfect Chronicles of Isidore of Seville and John of Biclar]

After their conversion from idolatry or heresy, the Frank and the Visigoths were disposed to embrace, with equal submission, the inherent evils and the accidental benefits, of superstition. But the prelates of France, long before the extinction of the Merovingian race, had degenerated into fighting and hunting Barbarians. They disdained the use of synods; forgot the laws of temperance and chastity; and preferred the indulgence of private ambition and luxury to the general interest of the sacerdotal profession. [123](#) The bishops of Spain respected themselves, and were respected by the public: their indissoluble union disguised their vices, and confirmed their authority; and the regular discipline of the church introduced peace, order, and stability, into the government of the state. From the reign of Recared, the first Catholic king, to that of Witiza, the immediate predecessor of the unfortunate Roderic, sixteen national councils were successively convened. The six metropolitans, Toledo, Seville, Merida, Braga, Tarragona, and Narbonne, presided according to their respective seniority; the assembly was composed of their suffragan bishops, who appeared in person, or by their proxies; and a place was assigned to the most holy, or opulent, of the Spanish abbots. During the first three days of the convocation, as long as they agitated the ecclesiastical question of doctrine and discipline, the profane laity was excluded from their debates; which were conducted, however, with decent solemnity. But, on the morning of the fourth day, the doors were thrown open for the entrance of the great officers of the palace, the dukes and counts of the provinces, the judges of the cities, and the Gothic nobles, and the decrees of Heaven were ratified by the consent of the people.

The same rules were observed in the provincial assemblies, the annual synods, which were empowered to hear complaints, and to redress grievances; and a legal government was supported by the prevailing influence of the Spanish clergy. The bishops, who, in each revolution, were prepared to flatter the victorious, and to insult the prostrate labored, with diligence and success, to kindle the flames of persecution, and to exalt the mitre above the crown. Yet the national councils of Toledo, in which the free spirit of the Barbarians was tempered and guided by episcopal policy, have established some prudent laws for the common benefit of the king and people. The vacancy of the throne was supplied by the choice of the bishops and palatines; and after the failure of the line of Alaric, the regal dignity was still limited to the pure and noble blood of the Goths. The clergy, who anointed their lawful prince, always recommended, and sometimes practised, the duty of allegiance; and the spiritual censures were denounced on the heads of the impious subjects, who should resist his authority, conspire against his life, or violate, by an indecent union, the chastity even of his widow. But the monarch himself,

when he ascended the throne, was bound by a reciprocal oath to God and his people, that he would faithfully execute this important trust. The real or imaginary faults of his administration were subject to the control of a powerful aristocracy; and the bishops and palatines were guarded by a fundamental privilege, that they should not be degraded, imprisoned, tortured, nor punished with death, exile, or confiscation, unless by the free and public judgment of their peers. [124](#)

123

[\(return\)](#)

[Such are the complaints of St. Boniface, the apostle of Germany, and the reformer of Gaul, (in tom. iv. p. 94.) The fourscore years, which he deplores, of license and corruption, would seem to insinuate that the Barbarians were admitted into the clergy about the year 660.]

124

[\(return\)](#)

[The acts of the councils of Toledo are still the most authentic records of the church and constitution of Spain. The following passages are particularly important, (iii. 17, 18; iv. 75; v. 2, 3, 4, 5, 8; vi. 11, 12, 13, 14, 17, 18; vii. 1; xiii. 2 3 6.) I have found Mascou (Hist. of the Ancient Germans, xv. 29, and Annotations, xxvi. and xxxiii.) and Ferreras (Hist. Generale de l'Espagne, tom. ii.) very useful and accurate guides.]

One of these legislative councils of Toledo examined and ratified the code of laws which had been compiled by a succession of Gothic kings, from the fierce Euric, to the devout Egica. As long as the Visigoths themselves were satisfied with the rude customs of their ancestors, they indulged their subjects of Aquitain and Spain in the enjoyment of the Roman law. Their gradual improvement in arts, in policy, and at length in religion, encouraged them to imitate, and to supersede, these foreign institutions; and to compose a code of civil and criminal jurisprudence, for the use of a great and united people. The same obligations, and the same privileges, were communicated to the nations of the Spanish monarchy; and the conquerors, insensibly renouncing the Teutonic idiom, submitted to the restraints of equity, and exalted the Romans to the participation of freedom. The merit of this impartial policy was enhanced by the situation of Spain under the reign of the Visigoths. The provincials were long separated from their Arian masters by the irreconcilable difference of religion. After the conversion of Recared had removed the prejudices of the Catholics, the coasts, both of the Ocean and Mediterranean, were still possessed by the Eastern emperors; who secretly excited a discontented people to reject the yoke of the Barbarians, and to assert the name and dignity of Roman citizens. The allegiance of doubtful subjects is indeed most effectually secured by their own persuasion, that they hazard more in a revolt, than they can hope to obtain by a revolution; but it has appeared so natural to oppress those whom we hate and fear, that the contrary system well deserves the praise of wisdom and moderation. [125](#)

[The Code of the Visigoths, regularly divided into twelve books, has been correctly published by Dom Bouquet, (in tom. iv. p. 273-460.) It has been treated by the President de Montesquieu (*Esprit des Loix*, l. xxviii. c. 1) with excessive severity. I dislike the style; I detest the superstition; but I shall presume to think, that the civil jurisprudence displays a more civilized and enlightened state of society, than that of the Burgundians, or even of the Lombards.]

While the kingdom of the Franks and Visigoths were established in Gaul and Spain, the Saxons achieved the conquest of Britain, the third great diocese of the Praefecture of the West. Since Britain was already separated from the Roman empire, I might, without reproach, decline a story familiar to the most illiterate, and obscure to the most learned, of my readers. The Saxons, who excelled in the use of the oar, or the battle-axe, were ignorant of the art which could alone perpetuate the fame of their exploits; the Provincials, relapsing into barbarism, neglected to describe the ruin of their country; and the doubtful tradition was almost extinguished, before the missionaries of Rome restored the light of science and Christianity. The declamations of Gildas, the fragments, or fables, of Nennius, the obscure hints of the Saxon laws and chronicles, and the ecclesiastical tales of the venerable Bede, [126](#) have been illustrated by the diligence, and sometimes embellished by the fancy, of succeeding writers, whose works I am not ambitious either to censure or to transcribe. [127](#) Yet the historian of the empire may be tempted to pursue the revolutions of a Roman province, till it vanishes from his sight; and an Englishman may curiously trace the establishment of the Barbarians, from whom he derives his name, his laws, and perhaps his origin.

[See Gildas de Excidio Britanniae, c. 11-25, p. 4-9, edit. Gale. Nennius, *Hist. Britonum*, c. 28, 35-65, p. 105-115, edit. Gale. Bede, *Hist. Ecclesiast. Gentis Anglorum* l. i. c. 12-16, p. 49-53. c. 22, p. 58, edit. Smith. *Chron. Saxonicum*, p. 11-23, &c., edit. Gibson. The Anglo-Saxon laws were published by Wilkins, London, 1731, in folio; and the *Leges Wallicae*, by Wotton and Clarke, London, 1730, in folio.]

[The laborious Mr. Carte, and the ingenious Mr. Whitaker, are the two modern writers to whom I am principally indebted. The particular historian of Manchester embraces, under that obscure title, a subject almost as extensive as the general history of England. * Note: Add the Anglo-Saxon History of Mr. S. Turner; and Sir F. Palgrave *Sketch of the "Early History of England."*—M.]

About forty years after the dissolution of the Roman government, Vortigern appears to have obtained the supreme, though precarious command of the princes and cities of Britain. That unfortunate monarch has been almost unanimously condemned for the weak and mischievous policy of inviting [128](#) a formidable stranger, to repel the vexatious inroads of a domestic foe. His ambassadors are despatched, by the gravest historians, to the coast of Germany: they address a pathetic oration to the general assembly of the Saxons, and those warlike Barbarians resolve to assist with a fleet and army the suppliants of a distant and unknown island. If Britain had indeed been unknown to the Saxons, the measure of its calamities would have been less complete. But the strength of the Roman government could not always guard the maritime province against the pirates of Germany; the independent and divided states were exposed to their attacks; and the Saxons might sometimes join the Scots and the Picts, in a tacit, or express, confederacy of rapine and destruction. Vortigern could only balance the various perils, which assaulted on every side his throne and his people; and his policy may deserve either praise or excuse, if he preferred the alliance of those Barbarians, whose naval power rendered them the most dangerous enemies and the most serviceable allies. Hengist and Horsa, as they ranged along the Eastern coast with three ships, were engaged, by the promise of an ample stipend, to embrace the defence of Britain; and their intrepid valor soon delivered the country from the Caledonian invaders. The Isle of Thanet, a secure and fertile district, was allotted for the residence of these German auxiliaries, and they were supplied, according to the treaty, with a plentiful allowance of clothing and provisions. This favorable reception encouraged five thousand warriors to embark with their families in seventeen vessels, and the infant power of Hengist was fortified by this strong and seasonable reenforcement. The crafty Barbarian suggested to Vortigern the obvious advantage of fixing, in the neighborhood of the Picts, a colony of faithful allies: a third fleet of forty ships, under the command of his son and nephew, sailed from Germany, ravaged the Orkneys, and disembarked a new army on the coast of Northumberland, or Lothian, at the opposite extremity of the devoted land. It was easy to foresee, but it was impossible to prevent, the impending evils. The two nations were soon divided and exasperated by mutual jealousies. The Saxons magnified all that they had done and suffered in the cause of an ungrateful people; while the Britons regretted the liberal rewards which could not satisfy the avarice of those haughty mercenaries. The causes of fear and hatred were inflamed into an irreconcilable quarrel. The Saxons flew to arms; and if they perpetrated a treacherous massacre during the security of a feast, they destroyed the reciprocal confidence which sustains the intercourse of peace and war. [129](#)

[This invitation, which may derive some countenance from the loose expressions of Gildas and Bede, is framed into a regular story by Witikind, a Saxon monk of the tenth century, (see Cousin, Hist. de l'Empire d'Occident, tom. ii. p.

356.) Rapin, and even Hume, have too freely used this suspicious evidence, without regarding the precise and probable testimony of Tenny: *Iterea venerunt tres Chinlae a exilio pulsoe, in quibus erant Hors et Hengist.*]

129

[\(return\)](#)

[Nennius imputes to the Saxons the murder of three hundred British chiefs; a crime not unsuitable to their savage manners. But we are not obliged to believe (see Jeffrey of Monmouth, l. viii. c. 9-12) that Stonehenge is their monument, which the giants had formerly transported from Africa to Ireland, and which was removed to Britain by the order of Ambrosius, and the art of Merlin. * Note: Sir f. Palgrave (Hist. of England, p. 36) is inclined to resolve the whole of these stories, as Niebuhr the older Roman history, into poetry. To the editor they appeared, in early youth, so essentially poetic, as to justify the rash attempt to embody them in an Epic Poem, called *Samor*, commenced at Eton, and finished before he had arrived at the maturer taste of manhood.—M.]

Hengist, who boldly aspired to the conquest of Britain, exhorted his countrymen to embrace the glorious opportunity: he painted in lively colors the fertility of the soil, the wealth of the cities, the pusillanimous temper of the natives, and the convenient situation of a spacious solitary island, accessible on all sides to the Saxon fleets. The successive colonies which issued, in the period of a century, from the mouths of the Elbe, the Weser, and the Rhine, were principally composed of three valiant tribes or nations of Germany; the Jutes, the old Saxons, and the Angles. The Jutes, who fought under the peculiar banner of Hengist, assumed the merit of leading their countrymen in the paths of glory, and of erecting, in Kent, the first independent kingdom. The fame of the enterprise was attributed to the primitive Saxons; and the common laws and language of the conquerors are described by the national appellation of a people, which, at the end of four hundred years, produced the first monarchs of South Britain. The Angles were distinguished by their numbers and their success; and they claimed the honor of fixing a perpetual name on the country, of which they occupied the most ample portion. The Barbarians, who followed the hopes of rapine either on the land or sea, were insensibly blended with this triple confederacy; the Frisians, who had been tempted by their vicinity to the British shores, might balance, during a short space, the strength and reputation of the native Saxons; the Danes, the Prussians, the Rugians, are faintly described; and some adventurous Huns, who had wandered as far as the Baltic, might embark on board the German vessels, for the conquest of a new world. [130](#) But this arduous achievement was not prepared or executed by the union of national powers. Each intrepid chieftain, according to the measure of his fame and fortunes, assembled his followers; equipped a fleet of three, or perhaps of sixty, vessels; chose the place of

the attack; and conducted his subsequent operations according to the events of the war, and the dictates of his private interest. In the invasion of Britain many heroes vanquished and fell; but only seven victorious leaders assumed, or at least maintained, the title of kings. Seven independent thrones, the Saxon Heptarchy, [1301](#) were founded by the conquerors, and seven families, one of which has been continued, by female succession, to our present sovereign, derived their equal and sacred lineage from Woden, the god of war. It has been pretended, that this republic of kings was moderated by a general council and a supreme magistrate. But such an artificial scheme of policy is repugnant to the rude and turbulent spirit of the Saxons: their laws are silent; and their imperfect annals afford only a dark and bloody prospect of intestine discord. [131](#)

130 [\(return\)](#)

[All these tribes are expressly enumerated by Bede, (l. i. c. 15, p. 52, l. v. c. 9, p. 190;) and though I have considered Mr. Whitaker's remarks, (Hist. of Manchester, vol. ii. p. 538-543,) I do not perceive the absurdity of supposing that the Frisians, &c., were mingled with the Anglo-Saxons.]

1301 [\(return\)](#)

[This term (the Heptarchy) must be rejected because an idea is conveyed thereby which is substantially wrong. At no one period were there ever seven kingdoms independent of each other. Palgrave, vol. i. p. 46. Mr. Sharon Turner has the merit of having first confuted the popular notion on this subject. Anglo-Saxon History, vol. i. p. 302.—M.]

131 [\(return\)](#)

[Bede has enumerated seven kings, two Saxons, a Jute, and four Angles, who successively acquired in the heptarchy an indefinite supremacy of power and renown. But their reign was the effect, not of law, but of conquest; and he observes, in similar terms, that one of them subdued the Isles of Man and Anglesey; and that another imposed a tribute on the Scots and Picts. (Hist. Eccles. l. ii. c. 5, p. 83.)]

A monk, who, in the profound ignorance of human life, has presumed to exercise the office of historian, strangely disfigures the state of Britain at the time of its separation from the Western empire. Gildas [132](#) describes in florid language the improvements of agriculture, the foreign trade which flowed with every tide into the Thames and the Severn the solid and lofty construction of public and private edifices; he accuses the sinful luxury of the British people; of a people, according to the same writer, ignorant of the most simple arts, and incapable, without the aid of the Romans, of providing walls of stone, or weapons of iron, for the defence of their native land. [133](#) Under the long dominion of the emperors, Britain had been insensibly moulded into the elegant and servile form of a Roman province, whose safety was intrusted to a foreign power.

The subjects of Honorius contemplated their new freedom with surprise and terror; they were left destitute of any civil or military constitution; and their uncertain rulers wanted either skill, or courage, or authority, to direct the public force against the common enemy. The introduction of the Saxons betrayed their internal weakness, and degraded the character both of the prince and people. Their consternation magnified the danger; the want of union diminished their resources; and the madness of civil factions was more solicitous to accuse, than to remedy, the evils, which they imputed to the misconduct of their adversaries.

Yet the Britons were not ignorant, they could not be ignorant, of the manufacture or the use of arms; the successive and disorderly attacks of the Saxons allowed them to recover from their amazement, and the prosperous or adverse events of the war added discipline and experience to their native valor.

132

[\(return\)](#)

[See Gildas de Excidio Britanniae, c. i. p. l. edit. Gale.]

133

[\(return\)](#)

[Mr. Whitaker (Hist. of Manchester, vol. ii. p. 503, 516) has smartly exposed this glaring absurdity, which had passed unnoticed by the general historians, as they were hastening to more interesting and important events]

While the continent of Europe and Africa yielded, without resistance, to the Barbarians, the British island, alone and unaided, maintained a long, a vigorous, though an unsuccessful, struggle, against the formidable pirates, who, almost at the same instant, assaulted the Northern, the Eastern, and the Southern coasts. The cities which had been fortified with skill, were defended with resolution; the advantages of ground, hills, forests, and morasses, were diligently improved by the inhabitants; the conquest of each district was purchased with blood; and the defeats of the Saxons are strongly attested by the discreet silence of their annalist. Hengist might hope to achieve the conquest of Britain; but his ambition, in an active reign of thirty-five years, was confined to the possession of Kent; and the numerous colony which he had planted in the North, was extirpated by the sword of the Britons. The monarchy of the West Saxons was laboriously founded by the persevering efforts of three martial generations. The life of Cerdic, one of the bravest of the children of Woden, was consumed in the conquest of Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight; and the loss which he sustained in the battle of Mount Badon, reduced him to a state of inglorious repose. Kenric, his valiant son, advanced into Wiltshire; besieged Salisbury, at that time seated on a commanding eminence; and vanquished an army which advanced to the relief of the city. In the subsequent battle of Marlborough, [134](#) his British enemies displayed their military science. Their troops were formed in three lines; each line consisted of three distinct bodies, and the cavalry, the archers, and the pikemen, were distributed according to the principles of Roman tactics. The Saxons charged in one weighty column, boldly

encountered with their shord swords the long lances of the Britons, and maintained an equal conflict till the approach of night. Two decisive victories, the death of three British kings, and the reduction of Cirencester, Bath, and Gloucester, established the fame and power of Ceaulin, the grandson of Cerdic, who carried his victorious arms to the banks of the Severn.

134

[\(return\)](#)

[At Beran-birig, or Barbury-castle, near Marlborough. The Saxon chronicle assigns the name and date. Camden (Britannia, vol. i. p. 128) ascertains the place; and Henry of Huntingdon (Scriptores pest Bedam, p. 314) relates the circumstances of this battle. They are probable and characteristic; and the historians of the twelfth century might consult some materials that no longer exist.] After a war of a hundred years, the independent Britons still occupied the whole extent of the Western coast, from the wall of Antoninus to the extreme promontory of Cornwall; and the principal cities of the inland country still opposed the arms of the Barbarians. Resistance became more languid, as the number and boldness of the assailants continually increased. Winning their way by slow and painful efforts, the Saxons, the Angles, and their various confederates, advanced from the North, from the East, and from the South, till their victorious banners were united in the centre of the island. Beyond the Severn the Britons still asserted their national freedom, which survived the heptarchy, and even the monarchy, of the Saxons. The bravest warriors, who preferred exile to slavery, found a secure refuge in the mountains of Wales: the reluctant submission of Cornwall was delayed for some ages; [135](#) and a band of fugitives acquired a settlement in Gaul, by their own valor, or the liberality of the Merovingian kings. [136](#) The Western angle of Armorica acquired the new appellations of Cornwall, and the Lesser Britain; and the vacant lands of the Osismii were filled by a strange people, who, under the authority of their counts and bishops, preserved the laws and language of their ancestors. To the feeble descendants of Clovis and Charlemagne, the Britons of Armorica refused the customary tribute, subdued the neighboring dioceses of Vannes, Rennes, and Nantes, and formed a powerful, though vassal, state, which has been united to the crown of France. [137](#)

135

[\(return\)](#)

[Cornwall was finally subdued by Athelstan, (A.D.

927-941,) who planted an English colony at Exeter, and confined the Britons beyond the River Tamar. See William of Malmsbury, l. ii., in the *Scriptores post Bedam*, p. 50. The spirit of the Cornish knights was degraded by servitude: and it should seem, from the Romance of Sir Tristram, that their cowardice was almost proverbial.]

136

[\(return\)](#)

[The establishment of the Britons in Gaul is proved in the sixth century, by Procopius, Gregory of Tours, the second council of Tours, (A.D. 567,) and the least suspicious of their chronicles and lives of saints. The subscription of a bishop of the Britons to the first council of Tours, (A.D. 461, or rather 481,) the army of Riothamus, and the loose declamation of Gildas, (*alii transmarinas petebant regiones*, c. 25, p. 8,) may countenance an emigration as early as the middle of the fifth century. Beyond that era, the Britons of Armorica can be found only in romance; and I am surprised that Mr. Whitaker (*Genuine History of the Britons*, p. 214-221) should so faithfully transcribe the gross ignorance of Carte, whose venial errors he has so rigorously chastised.]

137

[\(return\)](#)

[The antiquities of Bretagne, which have been the subject even of political controversy, are illustrated by Hadrian Valesius, (*Notitia Galliarum*, sub voce *Britannia Cismarina*, p. 98-100.) M. D'Anville, (*Notice de l'Ancienne Gaule*, *Corisopiti*, *Curiosolites*, *Osismii*, *Vorganium*, p. 248, 258, 508, 720, and *Etats de l'Europe*, p. 76-80,) Longuerue, (*Description de la France*, tom. i. p. 84-94,) and the Abbe de Vertot, (*Hist. Critique de l'Etablissement des Bretons dans les Gaules*, 2 vols. in 12 mo., Paris, 1720.) I may assume the merit of examining the original evidence which they have produced. * Note: Compare Gallet, *Mémoires sur la Bretagne*, and Daru, *Histoire de Bretagne*. These authors appear to me to establish the point of the independence of Bretagne at the time that the insular Britons took refuge in their country, and that the greater part landed as fugitives rather than as conquerors. I observe that M. Lappenberg (*Geschichte von England*, vol. i. p. 56) supposes the settlement of a military colony formed of British soldiers, (*Milites limitanei*, *laeti*,) during the usurpation of Maximus, (381, 388,) who gave their name and peculiar civilization to Bretagne. M. Lappenberg expresses his surprise that Gibbon here

rejects the authority which he follows elsewhere.—
M.]

Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part V.

In a century of perpetual, or at least implacable, war, much courage, and some skill, must have been exerted for the defence of Britain. Yet if the memory of its champions is almost buried in oblivion, we need not repine; since every age, however destitute of science or virtue, sufficiently abounds with acts of blood and military renown. The tomb of Vortimer, the son of Vortigern, was erected on the margin of the sea-shore, as a landmark formidable to the Saxons, whom he had thrice vanquished in the fields of Kent. Ambrosius Aurelianus was descended from a noble family of Romans; [138](#) his modesty was equal to his valor, and his valor, till the last fatal action, [139](#) was crowned with splendid success. But every British name is effaced by the illustrious name of Arthur, [140](#) the hereditary prince of the Silures, in South Wales, and the elective king or general of the nation. According to the most rational account, he defeated, in twelve successive battles, the Angles of the North, and the Saxons of the West; but the declining age of the hero was embittered by popular ingratitude and domestic misfortunes. The events of his life are less interesting than the singular revolutions of his fame. During a period of five hundred years the tradition of his exploits was preserved, and rudely embellished, by the obscure bards of Wales and Armorica, who were odious to the Saxons, and unknown to the rest of mankind. The pride and curiosity of the Norman conquerors prompted them to inquire into the ancient history of Britain: they listened with fond credulity to the tale of Arthur, and eagerly applauded the merit of a prince who had triumphed over the Saxons, their common enemies. His romance, transcribed in the Latin of Jeffrey of Monmouth, and afterwards translated into the fashionable idiom of the times, was enriched with the various, though incoherent, ornaments which were familiar to the experience, the learning, or the fancy, of the twelfth century. The progress of a Phrygian colony, from the Tyber to the Thames, was easily ingrafted on the fable of the Aeneid; and the royal ancestors of Arthur derived their origin from Troy, and claimed their alliance with the Caesars. His trophies were decorated with captive provinces and Imperial titles; and his Danish victories avenged the recent injuries of his country. The gallantry and superstition of the British hero, his feasts and tournaments, and the memorable institution of his Knights of the Round Table, were faithfully copied from the reigning manners of chivalry; and the fabulous exploits of Uther's son appear less incredible than the adventures which were achieved by the enterprising valor of the Normans. Pilgrimage, and the holy wars, introduced into Europe the specious miracles of Arabian magic. Fairies and giants, flying dragons, and enchanted palaces, were blended with the more simple fictions of the West; and the fate of Britain depended on the art, or the predictions, of Merlin. Every nation embraced and adorned the popular romance of Arthur, and the Knights of the Round Table: their

names were celebrated in Greece and Italy; and the voluminous tales of Sir Lancelot and Sir Tristram were devoutly studied by the princes and nobles, who disregarded the genuine heroes and historians of antiquity. At length the light of science and reason was rekindled; the talisman was broken; the visionary fabric melted into air; and by a natural, though unjust, reverse of the public opinion, the severity of the present age is inclined to question the existence of Arthur. [141](#)

138

[\(return\)](#)

[Bede, who in his chronicle (p. 28) places Ambrosius under the reign of Zeno, (A.D. 474-491,) observes, that his parents had been “*purpura induti*,” which he explains, in his ecclesiastical history, by “*regium nomen et insigne ferentibus*,” (l. i. c. 16, p. 53.) The expression of Nennius (c. 44, p. 110, edit. Gale) is still more singular, “*Unus de consulibus gentis Romanicæ est pater meus*.”]

139

[\(return\)](#)

[By the unanimous, though doubtful, conjecture of our antiquarians, Ambrosius is confounded with Natanleod, who (A.D. 508) lost his own life, and five thousand of his subjects, in a battle against Cerdic, the West Saxon, (Chron. Saxon. p. 17, 18.)]

140

[\(return\)](#)

[As I am a stranger to the Welsh bards, Myrdhin, Llomarch, and Taliessin, my faith in the existence and exploits of Arthur principally rests on the simple and circumstantial testimony of Nennius. (Hist. Brit. c. 62, 63, p. 114.) Mr. Whitaker, (Hist. of Manchester, vol. ii. p. 31-71) had framed an interesting, and even probable, narrative of the wars of Arthur: though it is impossible to allow the reality of the round table. * Note: I presume that Gibbon means Llywarch Hen, or the Aged.—The Elegies of this Welsh prince and bard have been published by Mr. Owen; to whose works and in the Myvyrian Archaeology, slumbers much curious information on the subject of Welsh tradition and poetry. But the Welsh antiquarians have never obtained a hearing from the public; they have had no Macpherson to compensate for his corruption of their poetic legends by forcing them into popularity.—See also Mr. Sharon Turner’s Essay on the Welsh Bards.—M.]

141

[\(return\)](#)

[The progress of romance, and the state of learning, in the middle ages, are illustrated by Mr. Thomas Warton, with the taste of a poet, and the minute diligence of an antiquarian. I have derived much instruction from the two learned dissertations

prefixed to the first volume of his History of English Poetry. * Note: These valuable dissertations should not now be read without the notes and preliminary essay of the late editor, Mr. Price, which, in point of taste and fulness of information, are worthy of accompanying and completing those of Warton.—M.]

Resistance, if it cannot avert, must increase the miseries of conquest; and conquest has never appeared more dreadful and destructive than in the hands of the Saxons; who hated the valor of their enemies, disdained the faith of treaties, and violated, without remorse, the most sacred objects of the Christian worship. The fields of battle might be traced, almost in every district, by monuments of bones; the fragments of falling towers were stained with blood; the last of the Britons, without distinction of age or sex, was massacred, [142](#) in the ruins of Anderida; [143](#) and the repetition of such calamities was frequent and familiar under the Saxon heptarchy. The arts and religion, the laws and language, which the Romans had so carefully planted in Britain, were extirpated by their barbarous successors. After the destruction of the principal churches, the bishops, who had declined the crown of martyrdom, retired with the holy relics into Wales and Armorica; the remains of their flocks were left destitute of any spiritual food; the practice, and even the remembrance, of Christianity were abolished; and the British clergy might obtain some comfort from the damnation of the idolatrous strangers. The kings of France maintained the privileges of their Roman subjects; but the ferocious Saxons trampled on the laws of Rome, and of the emperors. The proceedings of civil and criminal jurisdiction, the titles of honor, the forms of office, the ranks of society, and even the domestic rights of marriage, testament, and inheritance, were finally suppressed; and the indiscriminate crowd of noble and plebeian slaves was governed by the traditionary customs, which had been coarsely framed for the shepherds and pirates of Germany. The language of science, of business, and of conversation, which had been introduced by the Romans, was lost in the general desolation. A sufficient number of Latin or Celtic words might be assumed by the Germans, to express their new wants and ideas; [144](#) but those illiterate Pagans preserved and established the use of their national dialect. [145](#) Almost every name, conspicuous either in the church or state, reveals its Teutonic origin; [146](#) and the geography of England was universally inscribed with foreign characters and appellations. The example of a revolution, so rapid and so complete, may not easily be found; but it will excite a probable suspicion, that the arts of Rome were less deeply rooted in Britain than in Gaul or Spain; and that the native rudeness of the country and its inhabitants was covered by a thin varnish of Italian manners.

dreadful in its simplicity, than all the vague and tedious lamentations of the British Jeremiah.]

143 [\(return\)](#)

[Andredes-Ceaster, or Anderida, is placed by Camden (Britannia, vol. i. p. 258) at Newenden, in the marshy grounds of Kent, which might be formerly covered by the sea, and on the edge of the great forest (Anderida) which overspread so large a portion of Hampshire and Sussex.]

144 [\(return\)](#)

[Dr. Johnson affirms, that few English words are of British extraction. Mr. Whitaker, who understands the British language, has discovered more than three thousand, and actually produces a long and various catalogue, (vol. ii. p. 235-329.) It is possible, indeed, that many of these words may have been imported from the Latin or Saxon into the native idiom of Britain. * Note: Dr. Prichard's very curious researches, which connect the Celtic, as well as the Teutonic languages with the Indo-European class, make it still more difficult to decide between the Celtic or Teutonic origin of English words.—See Prichard on the Eastern Origin of the Celtic Nations Oxford, 1831.—M.]

145 [\(return\)](#)

[In the beginning of the seventh century, the Franks and the Anglo-Saxons mutually understood each other's language, which was derived from the same Teutonic root, (Bede, l. i. c. 25, p. 60.)]

146 [\(return\)](#)

[After the first generation of Italian, or Scottish, missionaries, the dignities of the church were filled with Saxon proselytes.]

This strange alteration has persuaded historians, and even philosophers, that the provincials of Britain were totally exterminated; and that the vacant land was again peopled by the perpetual influx, and rapid increase, of the German colonies. Three hundred thousand Saxons are said to have obeyed the summons of Hengist; [147](#) the entire emigration of the Angles was attested, in the age of Bede, by the solitude of their native country; [148](#) and our experience has shown the free propagation of the human race, if they are cast on a fruitful wilderness, where their steps are unconfined, and their subsistence is plentiful. The Saxon kingdoms displayed the face of recent discovery and cultivation; the towns were small, the villages were distant; the husbandry was languid and unskilful; four sheep were equivalent to an acre of the best land; [149](#) an ample space of wood and morass was resigned to the vague dominion of nature; and the modern bishopric of Durham, the whole territory from the Tyne to the Tees, had returned to its primitive state of a savage and solitary forest. [150](#) Such imperfect population might

have been supplied, in some generations, by the English colonies; but neither reason nor facts can justify the unnatural supposition, that the Saxons of Britain remained alone in the desert which they had subdued. After the sanguinary Barbarians had secured their dominion, and gratified their revenge, it was their interest to preserve the peasants as well as the cattle, of the unresisting country. In each successive revolution, the patient herd becomes the property of its new masters; and the salutary compact of food and labor is silently ratified by their mutual necessities. Wilfrid, the apostle of Sussex, [151](#) accepted from his royal convert the gift of the peninsula of Selsey, near Chichester, with the persons and property of its inhabitants, who then amounted to eighty-seven families. He released them at once from spiritual and temporal bondage; and two hundred and fifty slaves of both sexes were baptized by their indulgent master. The kingdom of Sussex, which spread from the sea to the Thames, contained seven thousand families; twelve hundred were ascribed to the Isle of Wight; and, if we multiply this vague computation, it may seem probable, that England was cultivated by a million of servants, or villains, who were attached to the estates of their arbitrary landlords. The indigent Barbarians were often tempted to sell their children, or themselves into perpetual, and even foreign, bondage; [152](#) yet the special exemptions which were granted to national slaves, [153](#) sufficiently declare that they were much less numerous than the strangers and captives, who had lost their liberty, or changed their masters, by the accidents of war. When time and religion had mitigated the fierce spirit of the Anglo-Saxons, the laws encouraged the frequent practice of manumission; and their subjects, of Welsh or Cambrian extraction, assumed the respectable station of inferior freemen, possessed of lands, and entitled to the rights of civil society. [154](#) Such gentle treatment might secure the allegiance of a fierce people, who had been recently subdued on the confines of Wales and Cornwall. The sage Ina, the legislator of Wessex, united the two nations in the bands of domestic alliance; and four British lords of Somersetshire may be honorably distinguished in the court of a Saxon monarch. [155](#)

147 [\(return\)](#)

[Carte's History of England, vol. i. p. 195. He quotes the British historians; but I much fear, that Jeffrey of Monmouth (l. vi. c. 15) is his only witness.]

148 [\(return\)](#)

[Bede, Hist. Ecclesiast. l. i. c. 15, p. 52. The fact is probable, and well attested: yet such was the loose intermixture of the German tribes, that we find, in a subsequent period, the law of the Angli and Warini of Germany, (Lindenbrog. Codex, p. 479-486.)]

149 [\(return\)](#)

[See Dr. Henry's useful and laborious History of Great Britain, vol. ii. p. 388.]

150 [\(return\)](#)

[Quicquid (says John of Tinemouth) inter Tynam et Tesam fluvios extitit, sola eremi vastitudo tunc

temporis fuit, et idcirco nullius ditioni servivit, eo quod sola indomitorum et sylvestrium animalium spelunca et habitatio fuit, (apud Carte, vol. i. p. 195.) From bishop Nicholson (English Historical Library, p. 65, 98) I understand that fair copies of John of Tinemouth's ample collections are preserved in the libraries of Oxford, Lambeth, &c.]

151 [\(return\)](#)
[See the mission of Wilfrid, &c., in Bede, Hist. Eccles. l. iv. c. 13, 16, p. 155, 156, 159.]

152 [\(return\)](#)
[From the concurrent testimony of Bede (l. ii. c. 1, p. 78) and William of Malmsbury, (l. iii. p. 102,) it appears, that the Anglo-Saxons, from the first to the last age, persisted in this unnatural practice. Their youths were publicly sold in the market of Rome.]

153 [\(return\)](#)
[According to the laws of Ina, they could not be lawfully sold beyond the seas.]

154 [\(return\)](#)
[The life of a Wallus, or Cambricus, homo, who possessed a hyde of land, is fixed at 120 shillings, by the same laws (of Ina, tit. xxxii. in Leg. Anglo-Saxon. p. 20) which allowed 200 shillings for a free Saxon, 1200 for a Thane, (see likewise Leg. Anglo-Saxon. p. 71.) We may observe, that these legislators, the West Saxons and Mercians, continued their British conquests after they became Christians. The laws of the four kings of Kent do not condescend to notice the existence of any subject Britons.]

155 [\(return\)](#)
[See Carte's Hist. of England, vol. i. p. 278.]

The independent Britons appear to have relapsed into the state of original barbarism, from whence they had been imperfectly reclaimed. Separated by their enemies from the rest of mankind, they soon became an object of scandal and abhorrence to the Catholic world. [156](#) Christianity was still professed in the mountains of Wales; but the rude schismatics, in the form of the clerical tonsure, and in the day of the celebration of Easter, obstinately resisted the imperious mandates of the Roman pontiffs. The use of the Latin language was insensibly abolished, and the Britons were deprived of the art and learning which Italy communicated to her Saxon proselytes. In Wales and Armorica, the Celtic tongue, the native idiom of the West, was preserved and propagated; and the Bards, who had been the companions of the Druids, were still protected, in the sixteenth century, by the laws of Elizabeth. Their chief, a respectable officer of the courts of Pengwern, or Aberfraw, or Caermarthen, accompanied the king's servants to war: the monarchy of the Britons, which he sung in the front of battle,

excited their courage, and justified their depredations; and the songster claimed for his legitimate prize the fairest heifer of the spoil. His subordinate ministers, the masters and disciples of vocal and instrumental music, visited, in their respective circuits, the royal, the noble, and the plebeian houses; and the public poverty, almost exhausted by the clergy, was oppressed by the importunate demands of the bards. Their rank and merit were ascertained by solemn trials, and the strong belief of supernatural inspiration exalted the fancy of the poet, and of his audience. [157](#) The last retreats of Celtic freedom, the extreme territories of Gaul and Britain, were less adapted to agriculture than to pasturage: the wealth of the Britons consisted in their flocks and herds; milk and flesh were their ordinary food; and bread was sometimes esteemed, or rejected, as a foreign luxury. Liberty had peopled the mountains of Wales and the morasses of Armorica; but their populousness has been maliciously ascribed to the loose practice of polygamy; and the houses of these licentious barbarians have been supposed to contain ten wives, and perhaps fifty children. [158](#) Their disposition was rash and choleric; they were bold in action and in speech; [159](#) and as they were ignorant of the arts of peace, they alternately indulged their passions in foreign and domestic war. The cavalry of Armorica, the spearmen of Gwent, and the archers of Merioneth, were equally formidable; but their poverty could seldom procure either shields or helmets; and the inconvenient weight would have retarded the speed and agility of their desultory operations. One of the greatest of the English monarchs was requested to satisfy the curiosity of a Greek emperor concerning the state of Britain; and Henry II. could assert, from his personal experience, that Wales was inhabited by a race of naked warriors, who encountered, without fear, the defensive armor of their enemies. [160](#)

156

[\(return\)](#)

[At the conclusion of his history, (A.D. 731,) Bede describes the ecclesiastical state of the island, and censures the implacable, though impotent, hatred of the Britons against the English nation, and the Catholic church, (l. v. c. 23, p. 219.)]

157

[\(return\)](#)

[Mr. Pennant's Tour in Wales (p. 426-449) has furnished me with a curious and interesting account of the Welsh bards. In the year 1568, a session was held at Caerwys by the special command of Queen Elizabeth, and regular degrees in vocal and instrumental music were conferred on fifty-five minstrels. The prize (a silver harp) was adjudged by the Mostyn family.]

158

[\(return\)](#)

[Regio longe lateque diffusa, milite, magis quam credibile sit, referta. Partibus equidem in illis miles unus quinquaginta generat, sortitus more barbaro denas aut amplius uxores. This reproach of William of Poitiers (in the Historians of France, tom. xi. p. 88) is disclaimed by the Benedictine editors.]

159

[\(return\)](#)

[Giraldus Cambrensis confines this gift of bold and ready eloquence to the Romans, the French, and the Britons. The malicious Welshman insinuates that the English taciturnity might possibly be the effect of their servitude under the Normans.]

160

[\(return\)](#)

[The picture of Welsh and Armorican manners is drawn from Giraldus, (*Descript. Cambriae*, c. 6-15, *inter Script. Camden*. p. 886-891,) and the authors quoted by the Abbe de Vertot, (*Hist. Critique tom. ii. p. 259-266.*)]

By the revolution of Britain, the limits of science, as well as of empire, were contracted. The dark cloud, which had been cleared by the Phoenician discoveries, and finally dispelled by the arms of Caesar, again settled on the shores of the Atlantic, and a Roman province was again lost among the fabulous Islands of the Ocean. One hundred and fifty years after the reign of Honorius, the gravest historian of the times [161](#) describes the wonders of a remote isle, whose eastern and western parts are divided by an antique wall, the boundary of life and death, or, more properly, of truth and fiction. The east is a fair country, inhabited by a civilized people: the air is healthy, the waters are pure and plentiful, and the earth yields her regular and fruitful increase. In the west, beyond the wall, the air is infectious and mortal; the ground is covered with serpents; and this dreary solitude is the region of departed spirits, who are transported from the opposite shores in substantial boats, and by living rowers. Some families of fishermen, the subjects of the Franks, are excused from tribute, in consideration of the mysterious office which is performed by these Charons of the ocean. Each in his turn is summoned, at the hour of midnight, to hear the voices, and even the names, of the ghosts: he is sensible of their weight, and he feels himself impelled by an unknown, but irresistible power. After this dream of fancy, we read with astonishment, that the name of this island is Brittia; that it lies in the ocean, against the mouth of the Rhine, and less than thirty miles from the continent; that it is possessed by three nations, the Frisians, the Angles, and the Britons; and that some Angles had appeared at Constantinople, in the train of the French ambassadors. From these ambassadors Procopius might be informed of a singular, though not improbable, adventure, which announces the spirit, rather than the delicacy, of an English heroine. She had been betrothed to Radiger, king of the Varni, a tribe of Germans who touched the ocean and the Rhine; but the perfidious lover was tempted, by motives of policy, to prefer his father's widow, the sister of Theodebert, king of the Franks. [162](#) The forsaken princess of the Angles, instead of bewailing, revenged her disgrace. Her warlike subjects are said to have been ignorant of the use, and even of the form, of a horse; but she boldly sailed from Britain to the mouth of the Rhine, with a fleet of four hundred ships, and an army of one hundred thousand men. After the loss of a battle, the captive Radiger implored the mercy of his victorious bride, who generously pardoned his offence, dismissed her rival, and

compelled the king of the Varni to discharge with honor and fidelity the duties of a husband. [163](#) This gallant exploit appears to be the last naval enterprise of the Anglo-Saxons. The arts of navigation, by which they acquired the empire of Britain and of the sea, were soon neglected by the indolent Barbarians, who supinely renounced all the commercial advantages of their insular situation. Seven independent kingdoms were agitated by perpetual discord; and the British world was seldom connected, either in peace or war, with the nations of the Continent. [164](#)

161 [\(return\)](#)

[See Procopius de Bell. Gothic. l. iv. c. 20, p. 620-625. The Greek historian is himself so confounded by the wonders which he relates, that he weakly attempts to distinguish the islands of Britia and Britain, which he has identified by so many inseparable circumstances.]

162 [\(return\)](#)

[Theodebert, grandson of Clovis, and king of Austrasia, was the most powerful and warlike prince of the age; and this remarkable adventure may be placed between the years 534 and 547, the extreme terms of his reign. His sister Theudechildis retired to Sens, where she founded monasteries, and distributed alms, (see the notes of the Benedictine editors, in tom. ii. p. 216.) If we may credit the praises of Fortunatus, (l. vi. carm. 5, in tom. ii. p. 507,) Radiger was deprived of a most valuable wife.]

163 [\(return\)](#)

[Perhaps she was the sister of one of the princes or chiefs of the Angles, who landed in 527, and the following years, between the Humber and the Thames, and gradually founded the kingdoms of East Anglia and Mercia. The English writers are ignorant of her name and existence: but Procopius may have suggested to Mr. Rowe the character and situation of Rodogune in the tragedy of the Royal Convert.]

164 [\(return\)](#)

[In the copious history of Gregory of Tours, we cannot find any traces of hostile or friendly intercourse between France and England except in the marriage of the daughter of Caribert, king of Paris, quam regis cujusdam in Cantia filius matrimonio copulavit, (l. ix. c. 28, in tom. ii. p. 348.) The bishop of Tours ended his history and his life almost immediately before the conversion of Kent.]

I have now accomplished the laborious narrative of the decline and fall of the Roman empire, from the fortunate age of Trajan and the Antonines, to its total extinction in the West, about five centuries after the Christian era. At that unhappy period, the Saxons fiercely struggled with the natives for the possession of Britain: Gaul and Spain were divided between the powerful monarchies of the Franks and Visigoths, and the dependent kingdoms of the Suevi and Burgundians: Africa was exposed to the cruel persecution of the Vandals, and the savage insults of the Moors: Rome and Italy, as far as the banks of the Danube, were afflicted by an army of Barbarian mercenaries, whose lawless tyranny was succeeded by the reign of Theodoric the Ostrogoth. All the subjects of the empire, who, by the use of the Latin language, more particularly deserved the name and privileges of Romans, were oppressed by the disgrace and calamities of foreign conquest; and the victorious nations of Germany established a new system of manners and government in the western countries of Europe. The majesty of Rome was faintly represented by the princes of Constantinople, the feeble and imaginary successors of Augustus. Yet they continued to reign over the East, from the Danube to the Nile and Tigris; the Gothic and Vandal kingdoms of Italy and Africa were subverted by the arms of Justinian; and the history of the Greek emperors may still afford a long series of instructive lessons, and interesting revolutions.

Chapter XXXVIII: Reign Of Clovis.—Part VI.

General Observations On The Fall Of The Roman Empire In The West.

The Greeks, after their country had been reduced into a province, imputed the triumphs of Rome, not to the merit, but to the fortune, of the republic. The inconstant goddess, who so blindly distributes and resumes her favors, had now consented (such was the language of envious flattery) to resign her wings, to descend from her globe, and to fix her firm and immutable throne on the banks of the Tyber. [1000](#) A wiser Greek, who has composed, with a philosophic spirit, the memorable history of his own times, deprived his countrymen of this vain and delusive comfort, by opening to their view the deep foundations of the greatness of Rome. [2000](#) The fidelity of the citizens to each other, and to the state, was confirmed by the habits of education, and the prejudices of religion. Honor, as well as virtue, was the principle of the republic; the ambitious citizens labored to deserve the solemn glories of a triumph; and the ardor of the Roman youth was kindled into active emulation, as often as they beheld the domestic images of their ancestors. [3000](#) The temperate struggles of the patricians and plebeians had finally established the firm and equal balance of the constitution; which united the freedom of popular assemblies, with the authority and wisdom of a senate, and the executive powers of a regal magistrate. When the consul displayed the standard of the republic, each citizen bound himself, by the obligation of an oath, to draw his sword in the cause of his country, till he had discharged the sacred duty by a military

service of ten years. This wise institution continually poured into the field the rising generations of freemen and soldiers; and their numbers were reenforced by the warlike and populous states of Italy, who, after a brave resistance, had yielded to the valor and embraced the alliance, of the Romans. The sage historian, who excited the virtue of the younger Scipio, and beheld the ruin of Carthage, [4000](#) has accurately described their military system; their levies, arms, exercises, subordination, marches, encampments; and the invincible legion, superior in active strength to the Macedonian phalanx of Philip and Alexander. From these institutions of peace and war Polybius has deduced the spirit and success of a people, incapable of fear, and impatient of repose. The ambitious design of conquest, which might have been defeated by the seasonable conspiracy of mankind, was attempted and achieved; and the perpetual violation of justice was maintained by the political virtues of prudence and courage. The arms of the republic, sometimes vanquished in battle, always victorious in war, advanced with rapid steps to the Euphrates, the Danube, the Rhine, and the Ocean; and the images of gold, or silver, or brass, that might serve to represent the nations and their kings, were successively broken by the iron monarchy of Rome. [5000](#)

1000

[\(return\)](#)

[Such are the figurative expressions of Plutarch, (Opera, tom. ii. p. 318, edit. Wechel,) to whom, on the faith of his son Lamprias, (Fabricius, Bibliot. Graec. tom. iii. p. 341,) I shall boldly impute the malicious declamation. The same opinions had prevailed among the Greeks two hundred and fifty years before Plutarch; and to confute them is the professed intention of Polybius, (Hist. l. i. p. 90, edit. Gronov. Amstel. 1670.)]

2000

[\(return\)](#)

[See the inestimable remains of the sixth book of Polybius, and many other parts of his general history, particularly a digression in the seventeenth book, in which he compares the phalanx and the legion.]

3000

[\(return\)](#)

[Sallust, de Bell. Jugurthin. c. 4. Such were the generous professions of P. Scipio and Q. Maximus. The Latin historian had read and most probably transcribes, Polybius, their contemporary and friend.]

4000

[\(return\)](#)

[While Carthage was in flames, Scipio repeated two lines of the Iliad, which express the destruction of Troy, acknowledging to Polybius, his friend and preceptor, (Polyb. in Excerpt. de Virtut. et Vit. tom. ii. p. 1455-1465,) that while he recollected the vicissitudes of human affairs, he inwardly applied

them to the future calamities of Rome, (Appian. in Libycis, p. 136, edit. Toll.)]

5000

[\(return\)](#)

[See Daniel, ii. 31-40. "And the fourth kingdom shall be strong as iron; forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things." The remainder of the prophecy (the mixture of iron and clay) was accomplished, according to St. Jerom, in his own time. *Sicut enim in principio nihil Romano Imperio fortius et durius, ita in fine rerum nihil imbecillius; quum et in bellis civilibus et adversus diversas nationes, aliarum gentium barbararum auxilio indigemus,* (Opera, tom. v. p. 572.)]

The rise of a city, which swelled into an empire, may deserve, as a singular prodigy, the reflection of a philosophic mind. But the decline of Rome was the natural and inevitable effect of immoderate greatness. Prosperity ripened the principle of decay; the causes of destruction multiplied with the extent of conquest; and as soon as time or accident had removed the artificial supports, the stupendous fabric yielded to the pressure of its own weight. The story of its ruin is simple and obvious; and instead of inquiring why the Roman empire was destroyed, we should rather be surprised that it had subsisted so long. The victorious legions, who, in distant wars, acquired the vices of strangers and mercenaries, first oppressed the freedom of the republic, and afterwards violated the majesty of the purple. The emperors, anxious for their personal safety and the public peace, were reduced to the base expedient of corrupting the discipline which rendered them alike formidable to their sovereign and to the enemy; the vigor of the military government was relaxed, and finally dissolved, by the partial institutions of Constantine; and the Roman world was overwhelmed by a deluge of Barbarians.

The decay of Rome has been frequently ascribed to the translation of the seat of empire; but this History has already shown, that the powers of government were divided, rather than removed. The throne of Constantinople was erected in the East; while the West was still possessed by a series of emperors who held their residence in Italy, and claimed their equal inheritance of the legions and provinces. This dangerous novelty impaired the strength, and fomented the vices, of a double reign: the instruments of an oppressive and arbitrary system were multiplied; and a vain emulation of luxury, not of merit, was introduced and supported between the degenerate successors of Theodosius. Extreme distress, which unites the virtue of a free people, imbitters the factions of a declining monarchy. The hostile favorites of Arcadius and Honorius betrayed the republic to its common enemies; and the Byzantine court beheld with indifference, perhaps with pleasure, the disgrace of Rome, the misfortunes of Italy, and the loss of the West. Under the succeeding reigns, the alliance of the two empires was restored; but the aid of the Oriental Romans was tardy, doubtful, and ineffectual; and the national schism of the Greeks and Latins was enlarged by the perpetual difference of language and manners, of interests, and even of religion. Yet the salutary event

approved in some measure the judgment of Constantine. During a long period of decay, his impregnable city repelled the victorious armies of Barbarians, protected the wealth of Asia, and commanded, both in peace and war, the important straits which connect the Euxine and Mediterranean Seas. The foundation of Constantinople more essentially contributed to the preservation of the East, than to the ruin of the West.

As the happiness of a future life is the great object of religion, we may hear without surprise or scandal, that the introduction or at least the abuse, of Christianity had some influence on the decline and fall of the Roman empire. The clergy successfully preached the doctrines of patience and pusillanimity: the active virtues of society were discouraged; and the last remains of military spirit were buried in the cloister: a large portion of public and private wealth was consecrated to the specious demands of charity and devotion; and the soldiers' pay was lavished on the useless multitudes of both sexes, who could only plead the merits of abstinence and chastity. [511](#) Faith, zeal, curiosity, and the more earthly passions of malice and ambition, kindled the flame of theological discord; the church, and even the state, were distracted by religious factions, whose conflicts were sometimes bloody, and always implacable; the attention of the emperors was diverted from camps to synods; the Roman world was oppressed by a new species of tyranny; and the persecuted sects became the secret enemies of their country. Yet party spirit, however pernicious or absurd, is a principle of union as well as of dissension. The bishops, from eighteen hundred pulpits, inculcated the duty of passive obedience to a lawful and orthodox sovereign; their frequent assemblies, and perpetual correspondence, maintained the communion of distant churches; and the benevolent temper of the gospel was strengthened, though confined, by the spiritual alliance of the Catholics. The sacred indolence of the monks was devoutly embraced by a servile and effeminate age; but if superstition had not afforded a decent retreat, the same vices would have tempted the unworthy Romans to desert, from baser motives, the standard of the republic. Religious precepts are easily obeyed, which indulge and sanctify the natural inclinations of their votaries; but the pure and genuine influence of Christianity may be traced in its beneficial, though imperfect, effects on the Barbarian proselytes of the North. If the decline of the Roman empire was hastened by the conversion of Constantine, his victorious religion broke the violence of the fall, and mollified the ferocious temper of the conquerors.

511

[\(return\)](#)

[It might be a curious speculation, how far the purer morals of the genuine and more active Christians may have compensated, in the population of the Roman empire, for the secession of such numbers into inactive and unproductive celibacy.—M.]

This awful revolution may be usefully applied to the instruction of the present age. It is the duty of a patriot to prefer and promote the exclusive interest and glory of his native country: but a philosopher may be permitted to enlarge his views, and to consider Europe as one great republic whose various inhabitants have obtained almost the same

level of politeness and cultivation. The balance of power will continue to fluctuate, and the prosperity of our own, or the neighboring kingdoms, may be alternately exalted or depressed; but these partial events cannot essentially injure our general state of happiness, the system of arts, and laws, and manners, which so advantageously distinguish, above the rest of mankind, the Europeans and their colonies. The savage nations of the globe are the common enemies of civilized society; and we may inquire, with anxious curiosity, whether Europe is still threatened with a repetition of those calamities, which formerly oppressed the arms and institutions of Rome. Perhaps the same reflections will illustrate the fall of that mighty empire, and explain the probable causes of our actual security.

I. The Romans were ignorant of the extent of their danger, and the number of their enemies. Beyond the Rhine and Danube, the Northern countries of Europe and Asia were filled with innumerable tribes of hunters and shepherds, poor, voracious, and turbulent; bold in arms, and impatient to ravish the fruits of industry. The Barbarian world was agitated by the rapid impulse of war; and the peace of Gaul or Italy was shaken by the distant revolutions of China. The Huns, who fled before a victorious enemy, directed their march towards the West; and the torrent was swelled by the gradual accession of captives and allies. The flying tribes who yielded to the Huns assumed in their turn the spirit of conquest; the endless column of Barbarians pressed on the Roman empire with accumulated weight; and, if the foremost were destroyed, the vacant space was instantly replenished by new assailants. Such formidable emigrations can no longer issue from the North; and the long repose, which has been imputed to the decrease of population, is the happy consequence of the progress of arts and agriculture. Instead of some rude villages, thinly scattered among its woods and morasses, Germany now produces a list of two thousand three hundred walled towns: the Christian kingdoms of Denmark, Sweden, and Poland, have been successively established; and the Hanse merchants, with the Teutonic knights, have extended their colonies along the coast of the Baltic, as far as the Gulf of Finland. From the Gulf of Finland to the Eastern Ocean, Russia now assumes the form of a powerful and civilized empire. The plough, the loom, and the forge, are introduced on the banks of the Volga, the Oby, and the Lena; and the fiercest of the Tartar hordes have been taught to tremble and obey. The reign of independent Barbarism is now contracted to a narrow span; and the remnant of Calmucks or Uzbecks, whose forces may be almost numbered, cannot seriously excite the apprehensions of the great republic of Europe. [6000](#) Yet this apparent security should not tempt us to forget, that new enemies, and unknown dangers, may possibly arise from some obscure people, scarcely visible in the map of the world, The Arabs or Saracens, who spread their conquests from India to Spain, had languished in poverty and contempt, till Mahomet breathed into those savage bodies the soul of enthusiasm.

Genealogical History of the Tartars have subjoined a curious, though imperfect, description, of their present state. We might question the independence of the Calmucks, or Eluths, since they have been recently vanquished by the Chinese, who, in the year 1759, subdued the Lesser Bucharía, and advanced into the country of Badakshan, near the source of the Oxus, (*Mémoires sur les Chinois*, tom. i. p. 325-400.) But these conquests are precarious, nor will I venture to insure the safety of the Chinese empire.]

II. The empire of Rome was firmly established by the singular and perfect coalition of its members. The subject nations, resigning the hope, and even the wish, of independence, embraced the character of Roman citizens; and the provinces of the West were reluctantly torn by the Barbarians from the bosom of their mother country. [7000](#) But this union was purchased by the loss of national freedom and military spirit; and the servile provinces, destitute of life and motion, expected their safety from the mercenary troops and governors, who were directed by the orders of a distant court. The happiness of a hundred millions depended on the personal merit of one or two men, perhaps children, whose minds were corrupted by education, luxury, and despotic power. The deepest wounds were inflicted on the empire during the minorities of the sons and grandsons of Theodosius; and, after those incapable princes seemed to attain the age of manhood, they abandoned the church to the bishops, the state to the eunuchs, and the provinces to the Barbarians. Europe is now divided into twelve powerful, though unequal kingdoms, three respectable commonwealths, and a variety of smaller, though independent, states: the chances of royal and ministerial talents are multiplied, at least, with the number of its rulers; and a Julian, or Semiramis, may reign in the North, while Arcadius and Honorius again slumber on the thrones of the South. The abuses of tyranny are restrained by the mutual influence of fear and shame; republics have acquired order and stability; monarchies have imbibed the principles of freedom, or, at least, of moderation; and some sense of honor and justice is introduced into the most defective constitutions by the general manners of the times. In peace, the progress of knowledge and industry is accelerated by the emulation of so many active rivals: in war, the European forces are exercised by temperate and undecisive contests. If a savage conqueror should issue from the deserts of Tartary, he must repeatedly vanquish the robust peasants of Russia, the numerous armies of Germany, the gallant nobles of France, and the intrepid freemen of Britain; who, perhaps, might confederate for their common defence. Should the victorious Barbarians carry slavery and desolation as far as the Atlantic Ocean, ten thousand vessels would transport beyond their pursuit the remains of civilized society; and Europe would revive and flourish in the American world, which is already filled with her colonies and institutions. [8000](#)

7000

[\(return\)](#)

[The prudent reader will determine how far this

general proposition is weakened by the revolt of the Isaurians, the independence of Britain and Armorica, the Moorish tribes, or the Bagaudae of Gaul and Spain, (vol. i. p. 328, vol. iii. p. 315, vol. iii. p. 372, 480.)]

8000

[\(return\)](#)

[America now contains about six millions of European blood and descent; and their numbers, at least in the North, are continually increasing. Whatever may be the changes of their political situation, they must preserve the manners of Europe; and we may reflect with some pleasure, that the English language will probably be diffused ever an immense and populous continent.]

III. Cold, poverty, and a life of danger and fatigue, fortify the strength and courage of Barbarians. In every age they have oppressed the polite and peaceful nations of China, India, and Persia, who neglected, and still neglect, to counterbalance these natural powers by the resources of military art. The warlike states of antiquity, Greece, Macedonia, and Rome, educated a race of soldiers; exercised their bodies, disciplined their courage, multiplied their forces by regular evolutions, and converted the iron, which they possessed, into strong and serviceable weapons. But this superiority insensibly declined with their laws and manners; and the feeble policy of Constantine and his successors armed and instructed, for the ruin of the empire, the rude valor of the Barbarian mercenaries. The military art has been changed by the invention of gunpowder; which enables man to command the two most powerful agents of nature, air and fire. Mathematics, chemistry, mechanics, architecture, have been applied to the service of war; and the adverse parties oppose to each other the most elaborate modes of attack and of defence. Historians may indignantly observe, that the preparations of a siege would found and maintain a flourishing colony; [9000](#) yet we cannot be displeased, that the subversion of a city should be a work of cost and difficulty; or that an industrious people should be protected by those arts, which survive and supply the decay of military virtue. Cannon and fortifications now form an impregnable barrier against the Tartar horse; and Europe is secure from any future irruptions of Barbarians; since, before they can conquer, they must cease to be barbarous. Their gradual advances in the science of war would always be accompanied, as we may learn from the example of Russia, with a proportionable improvement in the arts of peace and civil policy; and they themselves must deserve a place among the polished nations whom they subdue.

9000

[\(return\)](#)

[On avoit fait venir (for the siege of Turin) 140 pieces de canon; et il est a remarquer que chaque gros canon monte revient a environ ecus: il y avoit 100,000 boulets; 106,000 cartouches d'une facon, et 300,000 d'une autre; 21,000 bombes; 27,700 grenades, 15,000 sacs a terre, 30,000 instruments pour la pionnage; 1,200,000 livres de poudre.

Ajoutez a ces munitions, le plomb, le fer, et le fer-blanc, les cordages, tout ce qui sert aux mineurs, le souphre, le salpêtre, les outils de toute espece. Il est certain que les frais de tous ces preparatifs de destruction suffiroient pour fonder et pour faire fleurir la plus aombreuse colonie. Voltaire, Siecle de Louis XIV. c. xx. in his Works. tom. xi. p. 391.]

Should these speculations be found doubtful or fallacious, there still remains a more humble source of comfort and hope. The discoveries of ancient and modern navigators, and the domestic history, or tradition, of the most enlightened nations, represent the human savage, naked both in body and mind and destitute of laws, of arts, of ideas, and almost of language. [1001](#) From this abject condition, perhaps the primitive and universal state of man, he has gradually arisen to command the animals, to fertilize the earth, to traverse the ocean and to measure the heavens. His progress in the improvement and exercise of his mental and corporeal faculties [1101](#) has been irregular and various; infinitely slow in the beginning, and increasing by degrees with redoubled velocity: ages of laborious ascent have been followed by a moment of rapid downfall; and the several climates of the globe have felt the vicissitudes of light and darkness. Yet the experience of four thousand years should enlarge our hopes, and diminish our apprehensions: we cannot determine to what height the human species may aspire in their advances towards perfection; but it may safely be presumed, that no people, unless the face of nature is changed, will relapse into their original barbarism. The improvements of society may be viewed under a threefold aspect. 1. The poet or philosopher illustrates his age and country by the efforts of a single mind; but those superior powers of reason or fancy are rare and spontaneous productions; and the genius of Homer, or Cicero, or Newton, would excite less admiration, if they could be created by the will of a prince, or the lessons of a preceptor. 2. The benefits of law and policy, of trade and manufactures, of arts and sciences, are more solid and permanent: and many individuals may be qualified, by education and discipline, to promote, in their respective stations, the interest of the community. But this general order is the effect of skill and labor; and the complex machinery may be decayed by time, or injured by violence.

3. Fortunately for mankind, the more useful, or, at least, more necessary arts, can be performed without superior talents, or national subordination: without the powers of one, or the union of many. Each village, each family, each individual, must always possess both ability and inclination to perpetuate the use of fire [1201](#) and of metals; the propagation and service of domestic animals; the methods of hunting and fishing; the rudiments of navigation; the imperfect cultivation of corn, or other nutritive grain; and the simple practice of the mechanic trades. Private genius and public industry may be extirpated; but these hardy plants survive the tempest, and strike an everlasting root into the most unfavorable soil. The splendid days of Augustus and Trajan were eclipsed by a cloud of ignorance; and the Barbarians subverted the laws and palaces of Rome. But

the scythe, the invention or emblem of Saturn, [1302](#) still continued annually to mow the harvests of Italy; and the human feasts of the Laestrigons [1401](#) have never been renewed on the coast of Campania.

1001 [\(return\)](#)

[It would be an easy, though tedious, task, to produce the authorities of poets, philosophers, and historians. I shall therefore content myself with appealing to the decisive and authentic testimony of Diodorus Siculus, (tom. i. l. i. p. 11, 12, l. iii. p. 184, &c., edit. Wesseling.) The Ichthyophagi, who in his time wandered along the shores of the Red Sea, can only be compared to the natives of New Holland, (Dampier's Voyages, vol. i. p. 464-469.) Fancy, or perhaps reason, may still suppose an extreme and absolute state of nature far below the level of these savages, who had acquired some arts and instruments.]

1101 [\(return\)](#)

[See the learned and rational work of the president Goguet, de l'Origine des Loix, des Arts, et des Sciences. He traces from facts, or conjectures, (tom. i. p. 147-337, edit. 12mo.,) the first and most difficult steps of human invention.]

1201 [\(return\)](#)

[It is certain, however strange, that many nations have been ignorant of the use of fire. Even the ingenious natives of Otaheite, who are destitute of metals, have not invented any earthen vessels capable of sustaining the action of fire, and of communicating the heat to the liquids which they contain.]

1302 [\(return\)](#)

[Plutarch. Quaest. Rom. in tom. ii. p. 275. Macrob. Saturnal. l. i. c. 8, p. 152, edit. London. The arrival of Saturn (of his religious worship) in a ship, may indicate, that the savage coast of Latium was first discovered and civilized by the Phoenicians.]

1401 [\(return\)](#)

[In the ninth and tenth books of the Odyssey, Homer has embellished the tales of fearful and credulous sailors, who transformed the cannibals of Italy and Sicily into monstrous giants.]

Since the first discovery of the arts, war, commerce, and religious zeal have diffused, among the savages of the Old and New World, these inestimable gifts: they have been successively propagated; they can never be lost. We may therefore acquiesce in the pleasing conclusion, that every age of the world has increased, and still increases, the

real wealth, the happiness, the knowledge, and perhaps the virtue, of the human race. [1501](#)

1501

[\(return\)](#)

[The merit of discovery has too often been stained with avarice, cruelty, and fanaticism; and the intercourse of nations has produced the communication of disease and prejudice. A singular exception is due to the virtue of our own times and country. The five great voyages, successively undertaken by the command of his present Majesty, were inspired by the pure and generous love of science and of mankind. The same prince, adapting his benefactions to the different stages of society, has founded his school of painting in his capital; and has introduced into the islands of the South Sea the vegetables and animals most useful to human life.]

VOLUME FOUR

Chapter XXXIX: Gothic Kingdom Of Italy.—Part I.

Zeno And Anastasius, Emperors Of The East.—Birth, Education, And First Exploits Of Theodoric The Ostrogoth.—His Invasion And Conquest Of Italy.—The Gothic Kingdom Of Italy.—State Of The West.—Military And Civil Government.—The Senator Boethius.—Last Acts And Death Of Theodoric.

After the fall of the Roman empire in the West, an interval of fifty years, till the memorable reign of Justinian, is faintly marked by the obscure names and imperfect annals of Zeno, Anastasius, and Justin, who successively ascended to the throne of Constantinople. During the same period, Italy revived and flourished under the government of a Gothic king, who might have deserved a statue among the best and bravest of the ancient Romans.

Theodoric the Ostrogoth, the fourteenth in lineal descent of the royal line of the Amali, [1](#) was born in the neighborhood of Vienna [2](#) two years after the death of Attila. [2111](#) A recent victory had restored the independence of the Ostrogoths; and the three brothers, Walamir, Theodemir, and Widimir, who ruled that warlike nation with united counsels, had separately pitched their habitations in the fertile though desolate province of Pannonia. The Huns still threatened their revolted subjects, but their hasty attack was repelled by the single forces of Walamir, and the news of his victory reached the distant camp of his brother in the same auspicious moment that the favorite

concubine of Theodemir was delivered of a son and heir. In the eighth year of his age, Theodoric was reluctantly yielded by his father to the public interest, as the pledge of an alliance which Leo, emperor of the East, had consented to purchase by an annual subsidy of three hundred pounds of gold. The royal hostage was educated at Constantinople with care and tenderness. His body was formed to all the exercises of war, his mind was expanded by the habits of liberal conversation; he frequented the schools of the most skilful masters; but he disdained or neglected the arts of Greece, and so ignorant did he always remain of the first elements of science, that a rude mark was contrived to represent the signature of the illiterate king of Italy. [3](#) As soon as he had attained the age of eighteen, he was restored to the wishes of the Ostrogoths, whom the emperor aspired to gain by liberality and confidence. Walamir had fallen in battle; the youngest of the brothers, Widimir, had led away into Italy and Gaul an army of Barbarians, and the whole nation acknowledged for their king the father of Theodoric. His ferocious subjects admired the strength and stature of their young prince; [4](#) and he soon convinced them that he had not degenerated from the valor of his ancestors. At the head of six thousand volunteers, he secretly left the camp in quest of adventures, descended the Danube as far as Singidunum, or Belgrade, and soon returned to his father with the spoils of a Sarmatian king whom he had vanquished and slain. Such triumphs, however, were productive only of fame, and the invincible Ostrogoths were reduced to extreme distress by the want of clothing and food. They unanimously resolved to desert their Pannonian encampments, and boldly to advance into the warm and wealthy neighborhood of the Byzantine court, which already maintained in pride and luxury so many bands of confederate Goths. After proving, by some acts of hostility, that they could be dangerous, or at least troublesome, enemies, the Ostrogoths sold at a high price their reconciliation and fidelity, accepted a donative of lands and money, and were intrusted with the defence of the Lower Danube, under the command of Theodoric, who succeeded after his father's death to the hereditary throne of the Amali. [5](#)

1

[\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes (de Rebus Geticis, c. 13, 14, p. 629, 630, edit. Grot.) has drawn the pedigree of Theodoric from Gapt, one of the Anses or Demigods, who lived about the time of Domitian. Cassiodorus, the first who celebrates the royal race of the Amali, (Viriar. viii. 5, ix. 25, x. 2, xi. 1.) reckons the grandson of Theodoric as the xviith in descent. Peringsciold (the Swedish commentator of Cochloeus, Vit. Theodoric. p. 271, &c., Stockholm, 1699) labors to connect this genealogy with the legends or traditions of his native country. * Note: Amala was a name of hereditary sanctity and honor among the Visigoths. It enters into the names of Amalaberga, Amala suintha, (swinther means strength,) Amalafred, Amalarich. In the poem of the

Nibelungen written three hundred years later, the Ostrogoths are called the Amilungen. According to Wachter it means, unstained, from the privative a, and malo a stain. It is pure Sanscrit, Amala, immaculatus. Schlegel. Indische Bibliothek, 1. p. 233.—M.]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[More correctly on the banks of the Lake Pelso, (Nieusiedler-see,) near Carnuntum, almost on the same spot where Marcus Antoninus composed his meditations, Jornandes, c. 52, p. 659. Severin. Pannonia Illustrata, p. 22. Cellarius, Geograph. Antiq. (tom. i. p. 350.)]

2111 [\(return\)](#)

[The date of Theodoric's birth is not accurately determined. We can hardly err, observes Manso, in placing it between the years 453 and 455, Manso, Geschichte des Ost Gothischen Reichs, p. 14.—M.]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[The four first letters of his name were inscribed on a gold plate, and when it was fixed on the paper, the king drew his pen through the intervals (Anonym. Valesian. ad calcem Amm. Marcellin p. 722.) This authentic fact, with the testimony of Procopius, or at least of the contemporary Goths, (Gothic. 1. i. c. 2, p. 311,) far outweighs the vague praises of Ennodius (Sirmond Opera, tom. i. p. 1596) and Theophanes, (Chronograph. p. 112.) * Note: Le Beau and his Commentator, M. St. Martin, support, though with no very satisfactory evidence, the opposite opinion. But Lord Mahon (Life of Belisarius, p. 19) urges the much stronger argument, the Byzantine education of Theodoric.—M.]

4 [\(return\)](#)

[Statura est quae resignet proceritate regnantem, (Ennodius, p. 1614.) The bishop of Pavia (I mean the ecclesiastic who wished to be a bishop) then proceeds to celebrate the complexion, eyes, hands, &c, of his sovereign.]

5 [\(return\)](#)

[The state of the Ostrogoths, and the first years of Theodoric, are found in Jornandes, (c. 52—56, p. 689—696) and Malchus, (Excerpt. Legat. p. 78—80,) who erroneously styles him the son of Walamir.]

A hero, descended from a race of kings, must have despised the base Isaurian who was invested with the Roman purple, without any endowment of mind or body, without any advantages of royal birth, or superior qualifications. After the failure of the

Theodosian line, the choice of Pulcheria and of the senate might be justified in some measure by the characters of Martin and Leo, but the latter of these princes confirmed and dishonored his reign by the perfidious murder of Aspar and his sons, who too rigorously exacted the debt of gratitude and obedience. The inheritance of Leo and of the East was peaceably devolved on his infant grandson, the son of his daughter Ariadne; and her Isaurian husband, the fortunate Trascalisseus, exchanged that barbarous sound for the Grecian appellation of Zeno. After the decease of the elder Leo, he approached with unnatural respect the throne of his son, humbly received, as a gift, the second rank in the empire, and soon excited the public suspicion on the sudden and premature death of his young colleague, whose life could no longer promote the success of his ambition. But the palace of Constantinople was ruled by female influence, and agitated by female passions: and Verina, the widow of Leo, claiming his empire as her own, pronounced a sentence of deposition against the worthless and ungrateful servant on whom she alone had bestowed the sceptre of the East. [6](#) As soon as she sounded a revolt in the ears of Zeno, he fled with precipitation into the mountains of Isauria, and her brother Basiliscus, already infamous by his African expedition, [7](#) was unanimously proclaimed by the servile senate. But the reign of the usurper was short and turbulent. Basiliscus presumed to assassinate the lover of his sister; he dared to offend the lover of his wife, the vain and insolent Harmatius, who, in the midst of Asiatic luxury, affected the dress, the demeanor, and the surname of Achilles. [8](#) By the conspiracy of the malcontents, Zeno was recalled from exile; the armies, the capital, the person, of Basiliscus, were betrayed; and his whole family was condemned to the long agony of cold and hunger by the inhuman conqueror, who wanted courage to encounter or to forgive his enemies. [811](#) The haughty spirit of Verina was still incapable of submission or repose. She provoked the enmity of a favorite general, embraced his cause as soon as he was disgraced, created a new emperor in Syria and Egypt, [812](#) raised an army of seventy thousand men, and persisted to the last moment of her life in a fruitless rebellion, which, according to the fashion of the age, had been predicted by Christian hermits and Pagan magicians. While the East was afflicted by the passions of Verina, her daughter Ariadne was distinguished by the female virtues of mildness and fidelity; she followed her husband in his exile, and after his restoration, she implored his clemency in favor of her mother. On the decease of Zeno, Ariadne, the daughter, the mother, and the widow of an emperor, gave her hand and the Imperial title to Anastasius, an aged domestic of the palace, who survived his elevation above twenty-seven years, and whose character is attested by the acclamation of the people, "Reign as you have lived!" [9](#) [912](#)

- 7 [\(return\)](#)
[Vol. iii. p. 504—508.]
- 8 [\(return\)](#)
[Suidas, tom. i. p. 332, 333, edit. Kuster.]
- 811 [\(return\)](#)
[Joannes Lydus accuses Zeno of timidity, or, rather, of cowardice; he purchased an ignominious peace from the enemies of the empire, whom he dared not meet in battle; and employed his whole time at home in confiscations and executions. Lydus, de Magist. iii. 45, p. 230.—M.]
- 812 [\(return\)](#)
[Named Illus.—M.]
- 9 [\(return\)](#)
[The contemporary histories of Malchus and Candidus are lost; but some extracts or fragments have been saved by Photius, (lxxviii. lxxix. p. 100—102,) Constantine Porphyrogenitus, (Excerpt. Leg. p. 78—97,) and in various articles of the Lexicon of Suidas. The Chronicles of Marcellinus (Imago Historiae) are originals for the reigns of Zeno and Anastasius; and I must acknowledge, almost for the last time, my obligations to the large and accurate collections of Tillemont, (Hist. des Emp. tom. vi. p. 472—652).]
- 912 [\(return\)](#)
[The Panegyric of Procopius of Gaza, (edited by Villoison in his Anecdota Graeca, and reprinted in the new edition of the Byzantine historians by Niebuhr, in the same vol. with Dexippus and Eunapius, viii. p. 488 516,) was unknown to Gibbon. It is vague and pedantic, and contains few facts. The same criticism will apply to the poetical panegyric of Priscian edited from the Ms. of Bobbio by Ang. Mai. Priscian, the gram marian, Niebuhr argues from this work, must have been born in the African, not in either of the Asiatic Caesareas. Pref. p. xi.—M.]

Whatever fear or affection could bestow, was profusely lavished by Zeno on the king of the Ostrogoths; the rank of patrician and consul, the command of the Palatine troops, an equestrian statue, a treasure in gold and silver of many thousand pounds, the name of son, and the promise of a rich and honorable wife. As long as Theodoric condescended to serve, he supported with courage and fidelity the cause of his benefactor; his rapid march contributed to the restoration of Zeno; and in the second revolt, the Walamirs, as they were called, pursued and pressed the Asiatic rebels, till they left an easy victory to the Imperial troops. [10](#) But the faithful servant was suddenly converted into a formidable enemy, who spread the flames of war from Constantinople

to the Adriatic; many flourishing cities were reduced to ashes, and the agriculture of Thrace was almost extirpated by the wanton cruelty of the Goths, who deprived their captive peasants of the right hand that guided the plough. [11](#) On such occasions, Theodoric sustained the loud and specious reproach of disloyalty, of ingratitude, and of insatiate avarice, which could be only excused by the hard necessity of his situation. He reigned, not as the monarch, but as the minister of a ferocious people, whose spirit was unbroken by slavery, and impatient of real or imaginary insults. Their poverty was incurable; since the most liberal donatives were soon dissipated in wasteful luxury, and the most fertile estates became barren in their hands; they despised, but they envied, the laborious provincials; and when their subsistence had failed, the Ostrogoths embraced the familiar resources of war and rapine. It had been the wish of Theodoric (such at least was his declaration) to lead a peaceful, obscure, obedient life on the confines of Scythia, till the Byzantine court, by splendid and fallacious promises, seduced him to attack a confederate tribe of Goths, who had been engaged in the party of Basiliscus. He marched from his station in Maesia, on the solemn assurance that before he reached Adrianople, he should meet a plentiful convoy of provisions, and a reenforcement of eight thousand horse and thirty thousand foot, while the legions of Asia were encamped at Heraclea to second his operations. These measures were disappointed by mutual jealousy. As he advanced into Thrace, the son of Theodemir found an inhospitable solitude, and his Gothic followers, with a heavy train of horses, of mules, and of wagons, were betrayed by their guides among the rocks and precipices of Mount Sondis, where he was assaulted by the arms and invectives of Theodoric the son of Triarius. From a neighboring height, his artful rival harangued the camp of the Walamirs, and branded their leader with the opprobrious names of child, of madman, of perjured traitor, the enemy of his blood and nation. “Are you ignorant,” exclaimed the son of Triarius, “that it is the constant policy of the Romans to destroy the Goths by each other’s swords? Are you insensible that the victor in this unnatural contest will be exposed, and justly exposed, to their implacable revenge? Where are those warriors, my kinsmen and thy own, whose widows now lament that their lives were sacrificed to thy rash ambition? Where is the wealth which thy soldiers possessed when they were first allured from their native homes to enlist under thy standard? Each of them was then master of three or four horses; they now follow thee on foot, like slaves, through the deserts of Thrace; those men who were tempted by the hope of measuring gold with a bushel, those brave men who are as free and as noble as thyself.” A language so well suited to the temper of the Goths excited clamor and discontent; and the son of Theodemir, apprehensive of being left alone, was compelled to embrace his brethren, and to imitate the example of Roman perfidy. [12](#) [1211](#)

dragon?) into Aethiopia, beyond the tropic of Cancer. The evidence of the Valesian Fragment, (p. 717,) Liberatus, (Brev. Eutychn. c. 25 p. 118,) and Theophanes, (p. 112,) is more sober and rational.]

11 [\(return\)](#)

[This cruel practice is specially imputed to the Triarian Goths, less barbarous, as it should seem, than the Walamirs; but the son of Theodemir is charged with the ruin of many Roman cities, (Malchus, Excerpt. Leg. p. 95.)]

12 [\(return\)](#)

[Jornandes (c. 56, 57, p. 696) displays the services of Theodoric, confesses his rewards, but dissembles his revolt, of which such curious details have been preserved by Malchus, (Excerpt. Legat. p. 78—97.) Marcellinus, a domestic of Justinian, under whose ivth consulship (A.D. 534) he composed his Chronicle, (Scaliger, Thesaurus Temporum, P. ii, p. 34—57,) betrays his prejudice and passion: in Graeciam debacchantem ...Zenonis munificentia pene pacatus...beneficiis nunquam satiatus, &c.]

1211 [\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon has omitted much of the complicated intrigues of the Byzantine court with the two Theodorics. The weak emperor attempted to play them one against the other, and was himself in turn insulted, and the empire ravaged, by both. The details of the successive alliance and revolt, of hostility and of union, between the two Gothic chieftains, to dictate terms to the emperor, may be found in Malchus.—M.]

In every state of his fortune, the prudence and firmness of Theodoric were equally conspicuous; whether he threatened Constantinople at the head of the confederate Goths, or retreated with a faithful band to the mountains and sea-coast of Epirus. At length the accidental death of the son of Triarius [13](#) destroyed the balance which the Romans had been so anxious to preserve, the whole nation acknowledged the supremacy of the Amali, and the Byzantine court subscribed an ignominious and oppressive treaty. [14](#) The senate had already declared, that it was necessary to choose a party among the Goths, since the public was unequal to the support of their united forces; a subsidy of two thousand pounds of gold, with the ample pay of thirteen thousand men, were required for the least considerable of their armies; [15](#) and the Isaurians, who guarded not the empire but the emperor, enjoyed, besides the privilege of rapine, an annual pension of five thousand pounds. The sagacious mind of Theodoric soon perceived that he was odious to the Romans, and suspected by the Barbarians: he understood the popular murmur, that his subjects were exposed in their frozen huts to intolerable hardships, while their king was dissolved in the luxury of Greece, and he

prevented the painful alternative of encountering the Goths, as the champion, or of leading them to the field, as the enemy, of Zeno. Embracing an enterprise worthy of his courage and ambition, Theodoric addressed the emperor in the following words: “Although your servant is maintained in affluence by your liberality, graciously listen to the wishes of my heart! Italy, the inheritance of your predecessors, and Rome itself, the head and mistress of the world, now fluctuate under the violence and oppression of Odoacer the mercenary. Direct me, with my national troops, to march against the tyrant. If I fall, you will be relieved from an expensive and troublesome friend: if, with the divine permission, I succeed, I shall govern in your name, and to your glory, the Roman senate, and the part of the republic delivered from slavery by my victorious arms.” The proposal of Theodoric was accepted, and perhaps had been suggested, by the Byzantine court. But the forms of the commission, or grant, appear to have been expressed with a prudent ambiguity, which might be explained by the event; and it was left doubtful, whether the conqueror of Italy should reign as the lieutenant, the vassal, or the ally, of the emperor of the East.¹⁶

13 [\(return\)](#)

[As he was riding in his own camp, an unruly horse threw him against the point of a spear which hung before a tent, or was fixed on a wagon, (Marcellin. in Chron. Evagrius, l. iii. c. 25.)]

14 [\(return\)](#)

[See Malchus (p. 91) and Evagrius, (l. iii. c. 35.)]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[Malchus, p. 85. In a single action, which was decided by the skill and discipline of Sabinian, Theodoric could lose 5000 men.] [Footnote 16: Jornandes (c. 57, p. 696, 697) has abridged the great history of Cassiodorus. See, compare, and reconcile Procopius, (Gothic. l. i. c. i.,) the Valesian Fragment, (p. 718,) Theophanes, (p. 113,) and Marcellinus, (in Chron.)]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[Jordanes (c. 57, p. 696, 697) has abridged the great history of Cassiodorus. See, compare, and reconcile, Procopius (Gothic. l. i. c. i.), the Valesian Fragment (p.718), Theophanes (p. 113), and Marcellinus (in Chron.).]

The reputation both of the leader and of the war diffused a universal ardor; the Walamirs were multiplied by the Gothic swarms already engaged in the service, or seated in the provinces, of the empire; and each bold Barbarian, who had heard of the wealth and beauty of Italy, was impatient to seek, through the most perilous adventures, the possession of such enchanting objects. The march of Theodoric must be considered as the emigration of an entire people; the wives and children of the Goths, their aged parents, and most precious effects, were carefully transported; and some idea may be

formed of the heavy baggage that now followed the camp, by the loss of two thousand wagons, which had been sustained in a single action in the war of Epirus. For their subsistence, the Goths depended on the magazines of corn which was ground in portable mills by the hands of their women; on the milk and flesh of their flocks and herds; on the casual produce of the chase, and upon the contributions which they might impose on all who should presume to dispute the passage, or to refuse their friendly assistance. Notwithstanding these precautions, they were exposed to the danger, and almost to the distress, of famine, in a march of seven hundred miles, which had been undertaken in the depth of a rigorous winter. Since the fall of the Roman power, Dacia and Pannonia no longer exhibited the rich prospect of populous cities, well-cultivated fields, and convenient highways: the reign of barbarism and desolation was restored, and the tribes of Bulgarians, Gepidae, and Sarmatians, who had occupied the vacant province, were prompted by their native fierceness, or the solicitations of Odoacer, to resist the progress of his enemy. In many obscure though bloody battles, Theodoric fought and vanquished; till at length, surmounting every obstacle by skilful conduct and persevering courage, he descended from the Julian Alps, and displayed his invincible banners on the confines of Italy. [17](#)

17

[\(return\)](#)

[Theodoric's march is supplied and illustrated by Ennodius, (p. 1598—1602,) when the bombast of the oration is translated into the language of common sense.]

Odoacer, a rival not unworthy of his arms, had already occupied the advantageous and well-known post of the River Sontius, near the ruins of Aquileia, at the head of a powerful host, whose independent kings [18](#) or leaders disdained the duties of subordination and the prudence of delays. No sooner had Theodoric gained a short repose and refreshment to his wearied cavalry, than he boldly attacked the fortifications of the enemy; the Ostrogoths showed more ardor to acquire, than the mercenaries to defend, the lands of Italy; and the reward of the first victory was the possession of the Venetian province as far as the walls of Verona. In the neighborhood of that city, on the steep banks of the rapid Adige, he was opposed by a new army, reenforced in its numbers, and not impaired in its courage: the contest was more obstinate, but the event was still more decisive; Odoacer fled to Ravenna, Theodoric advanced to Milan, and the vanquished troops saluted their conqueror with loud acclamations of respect and fidelity. But their want either of constancy or of faith soon exposed him to the most imminent danger; his vanguard, with several Gothic counts, which had been rashly intrusted to a deserter, was betrayed and destroyed near Faenza by his double treachery; Odoacer again appeared master of the field, and the invader, strongly intrenched in his camp of Pavia, was reduced to solicit the aid of a kindred nation, the Visigoths of Gaul. In the course of this History, the most voracious appetite for war will be abundantly satiated; nor can I much lament that our dark and imperfect materials do not afford a more ample narrative of the distress of Italy, and of the fierce conflict, which was finally

decided by the abilities, experience, and valor of the Gothic king. Immediately before the battle of Verona, he visited the tent of his mother [19](#) and sister, and requested, that on a day, the most illustrious festival of his life, they would adorn him with the rich garments which they had worked with their own hands. “Our glory,” said he, “is mutual and inseparable. You are known to the world as the mother of Theodoric; and it becomes me to prove, that I am the genuine offspring of those heroes from whom I claim my descent.” The wife or concubine of Theodemir was inspired with the spirit of the German matrons, who esteemed their sons’ honor far above their safety; and it is reported, that in a desperate action, when Theodoric himself was hurried along by the torrent of a flying crowd, she boldly met them at the entrance of the camp, and, by her generous reproaches, drove them back on the swords of the enemy. [20](#)

18 [\(return\)](#)

[Tot reges, &c., (Ennodius, p. 1602.) We must recollect how much the royal title was multiplied and degraded, and that the mercenaries of Italy were the fragments of many tribes and nations.]

19 [\(return\)](#)

[See Ennodius, p. 1603, 1604. Since the orator, in the king’s presence, could mention and praise his mother, we may conclude that the magnanimity of Theodoric was not hurt by the vulgar reproaches of concubine and bastard. * Note: Gibbon here assumes that the mother of Theodoric was the concubine of Theodemir, which he leaves doubtful in the text.—M.]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[This anecdote is related on the modern but respectable authority of Sigonius, (Op. tom. i. p. 580. De Occident. Impl. l. xv.): his words are curious: “Would you return?” &c. She presented and almost displayed the original recess. * Note: The authority of Sigonius would scarcely have weighed with Gibbon except for an indecent anecdote. I have a recollection of a similar story in some of the Italian wars.—M.]

From the Alps to the extremity of Calabria, Theodoric reigned by the right of conquest; the Vandal ambassadors surrendered the Island of Sicily, as a lawful appendage of his kingdom; and he was accepted as the deliverer of Rome by the senate and people, who had shut their gates against the flying usurper. [21](#) Ravenna alone, secure in the fortifications of art and nature, still sustained a siege of almost three years; and the daring sallies of Odoacer carried slaughter and dismay into the Gothic camp. At length, destitute of provisions and hopeless of relief, that unfortunate monarch yielded to the groans of his subjects and the clamors of his soldiers. A treaty of peace was negotiated by the bishop of Ravenna; the Ostrogoths were admitted into the city, and the hostile kings consented, under the sanction of an oath, to rule with equal and

undivided authority the provinces of Italy. The event of such an agreement may be easily foreseen. After some days had been devoted to the semblance of joy and friendship, Odoacer, in the midst of a solemn banquet, was stabbed by the hand, or at least by the command, of his rival. Secret and effectual orders had been previously despatched; the faithless and rapacious mercenaries, at the same moment, and without resistance, were universally massacred; and the royalty of Theodoric was proclaimed by the Goths, with the tardy, reluctant, ambiguous consent of the emperor of the East. The design of a conspiracy was imputed, according to the usual forms, to the prostrate tyrant; but his innocence, and the guilt of his conqueror, [22](#) are sufficiently proved by the advantageous treaty which force would not sincerely have granted, nor weakness have rashly infringed. The jealousy of power, and the mischiefs of discord, may suggest a more decent apology, and a sentence less rigorous may be pronounced against a crime which was necessary to introduce into Italy a generation of public felicity. The living author of this felicity was audaciously praised in his own presence by sacred and profane orators; [23](#) but history (in his time she was mute and inglorious) has not left any just representation of the events which displayed, or of the defects which clouded, the virtues of Theodoric. [24](#) One record of his fame, the volume of public epistles composed by Cassiodorus in the royal name, is still extant, and has obtained more implicit credit than it seems to deserve. [25](#) They exhibit the forms, rather than the substance, of his government; and we should vainly search for the pure and spontaneous sentiments of the Barbarian amidst the declamation and learning of a sophist, the wishes of a Roman senator, the precedents of office, and the vague professions, which, in every court, and on every occasion, compose the language of discreet ministers. The reputation of Theodoric may repose with more confidence on the visible peace and prosperity of a reign of thirty-three years; the unanimous esteem of his own times, and the memory of his wisdom and courage, his justice and humanity, which was deeply impressed on the minds of the Goths and Italians.

21 [\(return\)](#)

[Hist. Miscell. l. xv., a Roman history from Janus to the ixth century, an Epitome of Eutropius, Paulus Diaconus, and Theophanes which Muratori has published from a Ms. in the Ambrosian library, (Script. Rerum Italicarum, tom. i. p. 100.)]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius (Gothic. l. i. c. i.) approves himself an impartial sceptic. Cassiodorus (in Chron.) and Ennodius (p. 1604) are loyal and credulous, and the testimony of the Valesian Fragment (p. 718) may justify their belief. Marcellinus spits the venom of a Greek subject—perjuriis illectus, interfectusque est, (in Chron.)]

23 [\(return\)](#)

[The sonorous and servile oration of Ennodius was pronounced at Milan or Ravenna in the years 507 or

508, (Sirmond, tom. i. p. 615.) Two or three years afterwards, the orator was rewarded with the bishopric of Pavia, which he held till his death in the year 521. (Dupin, Bibliot. Eccles. tom. v. p. 11-14. See Saxii Onomasticon, tom. ii. p. 12.)]

24

[\(return\)](#)

[Our best materials are occasional hints from Procopius and the Valesian Fragment, which was discovered by Sirmond, and is published at the end of Ammianus Marcellinus. The author's name is unknown, and his style is barbarous; but in his various facts he exhibits the knowledge, without the passions, of a contemporary. The president Montesquieu had formed the plan of a history of Theodoric, which at a distance might appear a rich and interesting subject.]

25

[\(return\)](#)

[The best edition of the Variarum Libri xii. is that of Joh. Garretius, (Rotomagi, 1679, in Opp. Cassiodor. 2 vols. in fol. ;) but they deserved and required such an editor as the Marquis Scipio Maffei, who thought of publishing them at Verona. The Barbara Eleganza (as it is ingeniously named by Tiraboschi) is never simple, and seldom perspicuous]

The partition of the lands of Italy, of which Theodoric assigned the third part to his soldiers, is honorably arraigned as the sole injustice of his life. [2511](#) And even this act may be fairly justified by the example of Odoacer, the rights of conquest, the true interest of the Italians, and the sacred duty of subsisting a whole people, who, on the faith of his promises, had transported themselves into a distant land. [26](#) Under the reign of Theodoric, and in the happy climate of Italy, the Goths soon multiplied to a formidable host of two hundred thousand men, [27](#) and the whole amount of their families may be computed by the ordinary addition of women and children. Their invasion of property, a part of which must have been already vacant, was disguised by the generous but improper name of hospitality; these unwelcome guests were irregularly dispersed over the face of Italy, and the lot of each Barbarian was adequate to his birth and office, the number of his followers, and the rustic wealth which he possessed in slaves and cattle. The distinction of noble and plebeian were acknowledged; [28](#) but the lands of every freeman were exempt from taxes, [2811](#) and he enjoyed the inestimable privilege of being subject only to the laws of his country. [29](#) Fashion, and even convenience, soon persuaded the conquerors to assume the more elegant dress of the natives, but they still persisted in the use of their mother-tongue; and their contempt for the Latin schools was applauded by Theodoric himself, who gratified their prejudices, or his own, by declaring, that the child who had trembled at a rod, would never dare to look upon a sword. [30](#) Distress might sometimes provoke the indigent Roman to

assume the ferocious manners which were insensibly relinquished by the rich and luxurious Barbarian; [31](#) but these mutual conversions were not encouraged by the policy of a monarch who perpetuated the separation of the Italians and Goths; reserving the former for the arts of peace, and the latter for the service of war. To accomplish this design, he studied to protect his industrious subjects, and to moderate the violence, without enervating the valor, of his soldiers, who were maintained for the public defence. They held their lands and benefices as a military stipend: at the sound of the trumpet, they were prepared to march under the conduct of their provincial officers; and the whole extent of Italy was distributed into the several quarters of a well-regulated camp. The service of the palace and of the frontiers was performed by choice or by rotation; and each extraordinary fatigue was recompensed by an increase of pay and occasional donatives. Theodoric had convinced his brave companions, that empire must be acquired and defended by the same arts. After his example, they strove to excel in the use, not only of the lance and sword, the instruments of their victories, but of the missile weapons, which they were too much inclined to neglect; and the lively image of war was displayed in the daily exercise and annual reviews of the Gothic cavalry. A firm though gentle discipline imposed the habits of modesty, obedience, and temperance; and the Goths were instructed to spare the people, to reverence the laws, to understand the duties of civil society, and to disclaim the barbarous license of judicial combat and private revenge. [32](#)

2511

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare Gibbon, ch. xxxvi. vol. iii. p. 459, &c.—Manso observes that this division was conducted not in a violent and irregular, but in a legal and orderly, manner. The Barbarian, who could not show a title of grant from the officers of Theodoric appointed for the purpose, or a prescriptive right of thirty years, in case he had obtained the property before the Ostrogothic conquest, was ejected from the estate. He conceives that estates too small to bear division paid a third of their produce.—Geschichte des Os Gothischen Reiches, p. 82.—M.]

26

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, Gothic, l. i. c. i. Variarum, ii. Maffei (Verona Illustrata, P. i. p. 228) exaggerates the injustice of the Goths, whom he hated as an Italian noble. The plebeian Muratori crouches under their oppression.]

27

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, Goth. l. iii. c. 421. Ennodius describes (p. 1612, 1613) the military arts and increasing numbers of the Goths.]

28

[\(return\)](#)

[When Theodoric gave his sister to the king of the Vandals she sailed for Africa with a guard of 1000

- noble Goths, each of whom was attended by five armed followers, (Procop. Vandal. l. i. c. 8.) The Gothic nobility must have been as numerous as brave.]
- 2811 [\(return\)](#)
[Manso (p. 100) quotes two passages from Cassiodorus to show that the Goths were not exempt from the fiscal claims.—Cassiodor, i. 19, iv. 14—M.]
- 29 [\(return\)](#)
[See the acknowledgment of Gothic liberty, (Var. v. 30.)]
- 30 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius, Goth. l. i. c. 2. The Roman boys learnt the language (Var. viii. 21) of the Goths. Their general ignorance is not destroyed by the exceptions of Amalasuntha, a female, who might study without shame, or of Theodatus, whose learning provoked the indignation and contempt of his countrymen.]
- 31 [\(return\)](#)
[A saying of Theodoric was founded on experience: “Romanus miser imitatur Gothum; ut utilis (dives) Gothus imitatur Romanum.” (See the Fragment and Notes of Valesius, p. 719.)]
- 32 [\(return\)](#)
[The view of the military establishment of the Goths in Italy is collected from the Epistles of Cassiodorus (Var. i. 24, 40; iii. 3, 24, 48; iv. 13, 14; v. 26, 27; viii. 3, 4, 25.) They are illustrated by the learned Mascou, (Hist. of the Germans, l. xi. 40—44, Annotation xiv.) Note: Compare Manso, Geschichte des Ost Gothischen Reiches, p. 114.—M.]

Chapter XXXIX: Gothic Kingdom Of Italy.—Part II.

Among the Barbarians of the West, the victory of Theodoric had spread a general alarm. But as soon as it appeared that he was satisfied with conquest and desirous of peace, terror was changed into respect, and they submitted to a powerful mediation, which was uniformly employed for the best purposes of reconciling their quarrels and civilizing their manners. [33](#) The ambassadors who resorted to Ravenna from the most distant countries of Europe, admired his wisdom, magnificence, [34](#) and courtesy; and if he sometimes accepted either slaves or arms, white horses or strange animals, the gift of a sun-dial, a water-clock, or a musician, admonished even the princes of Gaul of the superior art and industry of his Italian subjects. His domestic alliances, [35](#) a wife, two

daughters, a sister, and a niece, united the family of Theodoric with the kings of the Franks, the Burgundians, the Visigoths, the Vandals, and the Thuringians, and contributed to maintain the harmony, or at least the balance, of the great republic of the West. [36](#) It is difficult in the dark forests of Germany and Poland to pursue the emigrations of the Heruli, a fierce people who disdained the use of armor, and who condemned their widows and aged parents not to survive the loss of their husbands, or the decay of their strength. [37](#) The king of these savage warriors solicited the friendship of Theodoric, and was elevated to the rank of his son, according to the barbaric rites of a military adoption. [38](#) From the shores of the Baltic, the Aestians or Livonians laid their offerings of native amber [39](#) at the feet of a prince, whose fame had excited them to undertake an unknown and dangerous journey of fifteen hundred miles. With the country [40](#) from whence the Gothic nation derived their origin, he maintained a frequent and friendly correspondence: the Italians were clothed in the rich sables [41](#) of Sweden; and one of its sovereigns, after a voluntary or reluctant abdication, found a hospitable retreat in the palace of Ravenna. He had reigned over one of the thirteen populous tribes who cultivated a small portion of the great island or peninsula of Scandinavia, to which the vague appellation of Thule has been sometimes applied. That northern region was peopled, or had been explored, as high as the sixty-eighth degree of latitude, where the natives of the polar circle enjoy and lose the presence of the sun at each summer and winter solstice during an equal period of forty days. [42](#) The long night of his absence or death was the mournful season of distress and anxiety, till the messengers, who had been sent to the mountain tops, descried the first rays of returning light, and proclaimed to the plain below the festival of his resurrection. [43](#)

33 [\(return\)](#)

[See the clearness and vigor of his negotiations in Ennodius, (p. 1607,) and Cassiodorus, (Var. iii. 1, 2, 3, 4; iv. 13; v. 43, 44,) who gives the different styles of friendship, counsel expostulation, &c.]

34 [\(return\)](#)

[Even of his table (Var. vi. 9) and palace, (vii. 5.) The admiration of strangers is represented as the most rational motive to justify these vain expenses, and to stimulate the diligence of the officers to whom these provinces were intrusted.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[See the public and private alliances of the Gothic monarch, with the Burgundians, (Var. i. 45, 46,) with the Franks, (ii. 40,) with the Thuringians, (iv. 1,) and with the Vandals, (v. 1;) each of these epistles affords some curious knowledge of the policy and manners of the Barbarians.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[His political system may be observed in Cassiodorus, (Var. iv. l ix. l,) Jornandes, (c. 58, p. 698, 699,) and the Valesian Fragment, (p. 720,

721.) Peace, honorable peace, was the constant aim of Theodoric.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[The curious reader may contemplate the Heruli of Procopius, (Goth. l. ii. c. 14,) and the patient reader may plunge into the dark and minute researches of M. de Buat, (Hist. des Peuples Anciens, tom. ix. p. 348—396. * Note: Compare Manso, Ost Gothische Reich. Beylage, vi. Malte-Brun brings them from Scandinavia: their names, the only remains of their language, are Gothic. “They fought almost naked, like the Icelandic Berserkirs their bravery was like madness: few in number, they were mostly of royal blood. What ferocity, what unrestrained license, sullied their victories! The Goth respects the church, the priests, the senate; the Heruli mangle all in a general massacre: there is no pity for age, no refuge for chastity. Among themselves there is the same ferocity: the sick and the aged are put to death. at their own request, during a solemn festival; the widow ends her days by hanging herself upon the tree which shadows her husband’s tomb. All these circumstances, so striking to a mind familiar with Scandinavian history, lead us to discover among the Heruli not so much a nation as a confederacy of princes and nobles, bound by an oath to live and die together with their arms in their hands. Their name, sometimes written Heruli or Eruli. sometimes Aeruli, signified, according to an ancient author, (Isid. Hispal. in gloss. p. 24, ad calc. Lex. Philolog. Martini, II,) nobles, and appears to correspond better with the Scandinavian word iarl or earl, than with any of those numerous derivations proposed by etymologists.” Malte-Brun, vol. i. p. 400, (edit. 1831.) Of all the Barbarians who threw themselves on the ruins of the Roman empire, it is most difficult to trace the origin of the Heruli. They seem never to have been very powerful as a nation, and branches of them are found in countries very remote from each other. In my opinion they belong to the Gothic race, and have a close affinity with the Scyrri or Hirri. They were, possibly, a division of that nation. They are often mingled and confounded with the Alani. Though brave and formidable. they were never numerous. nor did they found any state.—St. Martin, vol. vi. p. 375.—M. Schafarck considers them descendants of the Hirri. of which Heruli is a diminutive,—Slawische Alter thinner—M. 1845.]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[Variarum, iv. 2. The spirit and forms of this

martial institution are noticed by Cassiodorus; but he seems to have only translated the sentiments of the Gothic king into the language of Roman eloquence.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Cassiodorus, who quotes Tacitus to the Aestians, the unlettered savages of the Baltic, (Var. v. 2,) describes the amber for which their shores have ever been famous, as the gum of a tree, hardened by the sun, and purified and wafted by the waves. When that singular substance is analyzed by the chemists, it yields a vegetable oil and a mineral acid.]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[Scanzia, or Thule, is described by Jornandes (c. 3, p. 610—613) and Procopius, (Goth. l. ii. c. 15.) Neither the Goth nor the Greek had visited the country: both had conversed with the natives in their exile at Ravenna or Constantinople.]

41

[\(return\)](#)

[Sapherinas pelles. In the time of Jornandes they inhabited Suethans, the proper Sweden; but that beautiful race of animals has gradually been driven into the eastern parts of Siberia. See Buffon, (Hist. Nat. tom. xiii. p. 309—313, quarto edition;) Pennant, (System of Quadrupeds, vol. i. p. 322—328;) Gmelin, (Hist. Gen des. Voyages, tom. xviii. p. 257, 258;) and Levesque, (Hist. de Russie, tom. v. p. 165, 166, 514, 515.)]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[In the system or romance of Mr. Bailly, (Lettres sur les Sciences et sur l'Atlantide, tom. i. p. 249—256, tom. ii. p. 114—139,) the phoenix of the Edda, and the annual death and revival of Adonis and Osiris, are the allegorical symbols of the absence and return of the sun in the Arctic regions. This ingenious writer is a worthy disciple of the great Buffon; nor is it easy for the coldest reason to withstand the magic of their philosophy.]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[Says Procopius. At present a rude Manicheism (generous enough) prevails among the Samoyedes in Greenland and in Lapland, (Hist. des Voyages, tom. xviii. p. 508, 509, tom. xix. p. 105, 106, 527, 528;) yet, according to Orotius Samojutae coelum atque astra adorant, numina haud aliis iniquiora, (de Rebus Belgicis, l. iv. p. 338, folio edition) a sentence which Tacitus would not have disowned.]

The life of Theodoric represents the rare and meritorious example of a Barbarian, who sheathed his sword in the pride of victory and the vigor of his age. A reign of three and thirty years was consecrated to the duties of civil government, and the hostilities, in which he was sometimes involved, were speedily terminated by the conduct of his lieutenants, the discipline of his troops, the arms of his allies, and even by the terror of his name. He reduced, under a strong and regular government, the unprofitable countries of Rhaetia, Noricum, Dalmatia, and Pannonia, from the source of the Danube and the territory of the Bavarians, [44](#) to the petty kingdom erected by the Gepidae on the ruins of Sirmium. His prudence could not safely intrust the bulwark of Italy to such feeble and turbulent neighbors; and his justice might claim the lands which they oppressed, either as a part of his kingdom, or as the inheritance of his father. The greatness of a servant, who was named perfidious because he was successful, awakened the jealousy of the emperor Anastasius; and a war was kindled on the Dacian frontier, by the protection which the Gothic king, in the vicissitude of human affairs, had granted to one of the descendants of Attila. Sabinian, a general illustrious by his own and father's merit, advanced at the head of ten thousand Romans; and the provisions and arms, which filled a long train of wagons, were distributed to the fiercest of the Bulgarian tribes. But in the fields of Margus, the eastern powers were defeated by the inferior forces of the Goths and Huns; the flower and even the hope of the Roman armies was irretrievably destroyed; and such was the temperance with which Theodoric had inspired his victorious troops, that, as their leader had not given the signal of pillage, the rich spoils of the enemy lay untouched at their feet. [45](#) Exasperated by this disgrace, the Byzantine court despatched two hundred ships and eight thousand men to plunder the sea-coast of Calabria and Apulia: they assaulted the ancient city of Tarentum, interrupted the trade and agriculture of a happy country, and sailed back to the Hellespont, proud of their piratical victory over a people whom they still presumed to consider as their Roman brethren. [46](#) Their retreat was possibly hastened by the activity of Theodoric; Italy was covered by a fleet of a thousand light vessels, [47](#) which he constructed with incredible despatch; and his firm moderation was soon rewarded by a solid and honorable peace. He maintained, with a powerful hand, the balance of the West, till it was at length overthrown by the ambition of Clovis; and although unable to assist his rash and unfortunate kinsman, the king of the Visigoths, he saved the remains of his family and people, and checked the Franks in the midst of their victorious career. I am not desirous to prolong or repeat [48](#) this narrative of military events, the least interesting of the reign of Theodoric; and shall be content to add, that the Alemanni were protected, [49](#) that an inroad of the Burgundians was severely chastised, and that the conquest of Arles and Marseilles opened a free communication with the Visigoths, who revered him as their national protector, and as the guardian of his grandchild, the infant son of Alaric. Under this respectable character, the king of Italy restored the praetorian praefecture of the Gauls, reformed some abuses in the civil government of Spain, and accepted the annual tribute and apparent submission of its military governor,

who wisely refused to trust his person in the palace of Ravenna. [50](#) The Gothic sovereignty was established from Sicily to the Danube, from Sirmium or Belgrade to the Atlantic Ocean; and the Greeks themselves have acknowledged that Theodoric reigned over the fairest portion of the Western empire. [51](#)

44 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Hist. des Peuples Anciens, &c., tom. ix. p. 255—273, 396—501. The count de Buat was French minister at the court of Bavaria: a liberal curiosity prompted his inquiries into the antiquities of the country, and that curiosity was the germ of twelve respectable volumes.]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Gothic transactions on the Danube and the Illyricum, in Jornandes, (c. 58, p. 699;) Ennodius, (p. 1607-1610;) Marcellinus (in Chron. p. 44, 47, 48;) and Cassiodorus, in (in Chron and Var. iii. 29 50, iv. 13, vii. 4 24, viii. 9, 10, 11, 21, ix. 8, 9.)]

46 [\(return\)](#)

[I cannot forbear transcribing the liberal and classic style of Count Marcellinus: Romanus comes domesticorum, et Rusticus comes scholariorum cum centum armatis navibus, totidemque dromonibus, octo millia militum armatorum secum ferentibus, ad devastanda Italiae littora processerunt, ut usque ad Tarentum antiquissimam civitatem aggressi sunt; remensoque mari in honestam victoriam quam piratico ausu Romani ex Romanis rapuerunt, Anastasio Caesari reportarunt, (in Chron. p. 48.) See Variar. i. 16, ii. 38.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[See the royal orders and instructions, (Var. iv. 15, v. 16—20.) These armed boats should be still smaller than the thousand vessels of Agamemnon at the siege of Troy. (Manso, p. 121.)]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[Vol. iii. p. 581—585.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[Ennodius (p. 1610) and Cassiodorus, in the royal name, (Var. ii 41,) record his salutary protection of the Alemanni.]

50 [\(return\)](#)

[The Gothic transactions in Gaul and Spain are represented with some perplexity in Cassiodorus, (Var. iii. 32, 38, 41, 43, 44, v. 39.) Jornandes, (c. 58, p. 698, 699,) and Procopius, (Goth. l. i. c. 12.) I will neither hear nor reconcile the long and contradictory arguments of the Abbe Dubos and the Count de Buat, about the wars of Burgundy.]

The union of the Goths and Romans might have fixed for ages the transient happiness of Italy; and the first of nations, a new people of free subjects and enlightened soldiers, might have gradually arisen from the mutual emulation of their respective virtues. But the sublime merit of guiding or seconding such a revolution was not reserved for the reign of Theodoric: he wanted either the genius or the opportunities of a legislator; [52](#) and while he indulged the Goths in the enjoyment of rude liberty, he servilely copied the institutions, and even the abuses, of the political system which had been framed by Constantine and his successors. From a tender regard to the expiring prejudices of Rome, the Barbarian declined the name, the purple, and the diadem, of the emperors; but he assumed, under the hereditary title of king, the whole substance and plenitude of Imperial prerogative. [53](#) His addresses to the eastern throne were respectful and ambiguous: he celebrated, in pompous style, the harmony of the two republics, applauded his own government as the perfect similitude of a sole and undivided empire, and claimed above the kings of the earth the same preeminence which he modestly allowed to the person or rank of Anastasius. The alliance of the East and West was annually declared by the unanimous choice of two consuls; but it should seem that the Italian candidate who was named by Theodoric accepted a formal confirmation from the sovereign of Constantinople. [54](#) The Gothic palace of Ravenna reflected the image of the court of Theodosius or Valentinian. The Praetorian præfect, the præfect of Rome, the quaestor, the master of the offices, with the public and patrimonial treasurers, [5411](#) whose functions are painted in gaudy colors by the rhetoric of Cassiodorus, still continued to act as the ministers of state. And the subordinate care of justice and the revenue was delegated to seven consulars, three correctors, and five presidents, who governed the fifteen regions of Italy according to the principles, and even the forms, of Roman jurisprudence. [55](#) The violence of the conquerors was abated or eluded by the slow artifice of judicial proceedings; the civil administration, with its honors and emoluments, was confined to the Italians; and the people still preserved their dress and language, their laws and customs, their personal freedom, and two thirds of their landed property. [5511](#) It had been the object of Augustus to conceal the introduction of monarchy; it was the policy of Theodoric to disguise the reign of a Barbarian. [56](#) If his subjects were sometimes awakened from this pleasing vision of a Roman government, they derived more substantial comfort from the character of a Gothic prince, who had penetration to discern, and firmness to pursue, his own and the public interest. Theodoric loved the virtues which he possessed, and the talents of which he was destitute. Liberius was promoted to the office of Praetorian præfect for his unshaken fidelity to the unfortunate cause of Odoacer. The ministers of Theodoric, Cassiodorus, [57](#) and Boethius, have reflected on his reign the lustre of their genius and learning. More prudent or more fortunate than his colleague, Cassiodorus preserved his own esteem without forfeiting the royal favor; and after passing thirty years in the

honors of the world, he was blessed with an equal term of repose in the devout and studious solitude of Squillace. [5711](#)

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius affirms that no laws whatsoever were promulgated by Theodoric and the succeeding kings of Italy, (Goth. l. ii. c. 6.) He must mean in the Gothic language. A Latin edict of Theodoric is still extant, in one hundred and fifty-four articles. * Note: See Manso, 92. Savigny, vol. ii. p. 164, et seq.—M.]

53

[\(return\)](#)

[The image of Theodoric is engraved on his coins: his modest successors were satisfied with adding their own name to the head of the reigning emperor, (Muratori, Antiquitat. Italiae Medii Aevi, tom. ii. dissert. xxvii. p. 577—579. Giannone, Istoria Civile di Napoli tom. i. p. 166.)]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[The alliance of the emperor and the king of Italy are represented by Cassiodorus (Var. i. l. ii. 1, 2, 3, vi. l.) and Procopius, (Goth. l. ii. c. 6, l. iii. c. 21,) who celebrate the friendship of Anastasius and Theodoric; but the figurative style of compliment was interpreted in a very different sense at Constantinople and Ravenna.]

5411

[\(return\)](#)

[All causes between Roman and Roman were judged by the old Roman courts. The comes Gothorum judged between Goth and Goth; between Goths and Romans, (without considering which was the plaintiff.) the comes Gothorum, with a Roman jurist as his assessor, making a kind of mixed jurisdiction, but with a natural predominance to the side of the Goth Savigny, vol. i. p. 290.—M.]

55

[\(return\)](#)

[To the xvii. provinces of the Notitia, Paul Warnefrid the deacon (De Reb. Longobard. l. ii. c. 14—22) has subjoined an xviiiith, the Apennine, (Muratori, Script. Rerum Italicarum, tom. i. p. 431—443.) But of these Sardinia and Corsica were possessed by the Vandals, and the two Rhaetias, as well as the Cottian Alps, seem to have been abandoned to a military government. The state of the four provinces that now form the kingdom of Naples is labored by Giannone (tom. i. p. 172, 178) with patriotic diligence.]

5511

[\(return\)](#)

[Manso enumerates and develops at some length the following sources of the royal revenue of

Theodoric: 1. A domain, either by succession to that of Odoacer, or a part of the third of the lands was reserved for the royal patrimony. 1. Regalia, including mines, unclaimed estates, treasure-trove, and confiscations. 3. Land tax. 4. Aurarium, like the Chrysargyrum, a tax on certain branches of trade. 5. Grant of Monopolies. 6. Siliquaticum, a small tax on the sale of all kinds of commodities. 7. Portoria, customs Manso, 96, 111. Savigny (i. 285) supposes that in many cases the property remained in the original owner, who paid his *tertia*, a third of the produce to the crown, vol. i. p. 285.—M.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Gothic history of Procopius, (l. i. c. 1, l. ii. c. 6,) the Epistles of Cassiodorus, *passim*, but especially the *vth* and *vith* books, which contain the formulae, or patents of offices,) and the Civil History of Giannone, (tom. i. l. ii. iii.) The Gothic counts, which he places in every Italian city, are annihilated, however, by Maffei, (*Verona Illustrata*, P. i. l. viii. p. 227; for those of Syracuse and Naples (Var vi. 22, 23) were special and temporary commissions.]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[Two Italians of the name of Cassiodorus, the father (Var. i. 24, 40) and the son, (ix. 24, 25,) were successively employed in the administration of Theodoric. The son was born in the year 479: his various epistles as quaestor, master of the offices, and Praetorian praefect, extend from 509 to 539, and he lived as a monk about thirty years, (Tiraboschi *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, tom. iii. p. 7—24. Fabricius, *Bibliot. Lat. Med. Aevi*, tom. i. p. 357, 358, edit. Mansi.)]

5711

[\(return\)](#)

[Cassiodorus was of an ancient and honorable family; his grandfather had distinguished himself in the defence of Sicily against the ravages of Genseric; his father held a high rank at the court of Valentinian III., enjoyed the friendship of Aetius, and was one of the ambassadors sent to arrest the progress of Attila. Cassiodorus himself was first the treasurer of the private expenditure to Odoacer, afterwards “count of the sacred largesses.” Yielding with the rest of the Romans to the dominion of Theodoric, he was instrumental in the peaceable submission of Sicily; was successively governor of his native provinces of Bruttium and Lucania, quaestor, magister, palatii, Praetorian praefect, patrician, consul, and private secretary, and, in fact,

first minister of the king. He was five times Praetorian praefect under different sovereigns, the last time in the reign of Vitiges. This is the theory of Manso, which is not unencumbered with difficulties. M. Buat had supposed that it was the father of Cassiodorus who held the office first named. Compare Manso, p. 85, &c., and Beylage, vii. It certainly appears improbable that Cassiodorus should have been count of the sacred largesses at twenty years old.—M.]

As the patron of the republic, it was the interest and duty of the Gothic king to cultivate the affections of the senate [58](#) and people. The nobles of Rome were flattered by sonorous epithets and formal professions of respect, which had been more justly applied to the merit and authority of their ancestors. The people enjoyed, without fear or danger, the three blessings of a capital, order, plenty, and public amusements. A visible diminution of their numbers may be found even in the measure of liberality; [59](#) yet Apulia, Calabria, and Sicily, poured their tribute of corn into the granaries of Rome; an allowance of bread and meat was distributed to the indigent citizens; and every office was deemed honorable which was consecrated to the care of their health and happiness. The public games, such as the Greek ambassador might politely applaud, exhibited a faint and feeble copy of the magnificence of the Caesars: yet the musical, the gymnastic, and the pantomime arts, had not totally sunk in oblivion; the wild beasts of Africa still exercised in the amphitheatre the courage and dexterity of the hunters; and the indulgent Goth either patiently tolerated or gently restrained the blue and green factions, whose contests so often filled the circus with clamor and even with blood. [60](#) In the seventh year of his peaceful reign, Theodoric visited the old capital of the world; the senate and people advanced in solemn procession to salute a second Trajan, a new Valentinian; and he nobly supported that character by the assurance of a just and legal government, [61](#) in a discourse which he was not afraid to pronounce in public, and to inscribe on a tablet of brass. Rome, in this august ceremony, shot a last ray of declining glory; and a saint, the spectator of this pompous scene, could only hope, in his pious fancy, that it was excelled by the celestial splendor of the new Jerusalem. [62](#) During a residence of six months, the fame, the person, and the courteous demeanor of the Gothic king, excited the admiration of the Romans, and he contemplated, with equal curiosity and surprise, the monuments that remained of their ancient greatness. He imprinted the footsteps of a conqueror on the Capitoline hill, and frankly confessed that each day he viewed with fresh wonder the forum of Trajan and his lofty column. The theatre of Pompey appeared, even in its decay, as a huge mountain artificially hollowed, and polished, and adorned by human industry; and he vaguely computed, that a river of gold must have been drained to erect the colossal amphitheatre of Titus. [63](#) From the mouths of fourteen aqueducts, a pure and copious stream was diffused into every part of the city; among these the Claudian water, which arose at the distance of thirty-eight miles in the Sabine mountains, was conveyed along a gentle

though constant declivity of solid arches, till it descended on the summit of the Aventine hill. The long and spacious vaults which had been constructed for the purpose of common sewers, subsisted, after twelve centuries, in their pristine strength; and these subterraneous channels have been preferred to all the visible wonders of Rome. [64](#) The Gothic kings, so injuriously accused of the ruin of antiquity, were anxious to preserve the monuments of the nation whom they had subdued. [65](#) The royal edicts were framed to prevent the abuses, the neglect, or the depredations of the citizens themselves; and a professed architect, the annual sum of two hundred pounds of gold, twenty-five thousand tiles, and the receipt of customs from the Lucrine port, were assigned for the ordinary repairs of the walls and public edifices. A similar care was extended to the statues of metal or marble of men or animals. The spirit of the horses, which have given a modern name to the Quirinal, was applauded by the Barbarians; [66](#) the brazen elephants of the Via sacra were diligently restored; [67](#) the famous heifer of Myron deceived the cattle, as they were driven through the forum of peace; [68](#) and an officer was created to protect those works of art, which Theodoric considered as the noblest ornament of his kingdom.

58 [\(return\)](#)
[See his regard for the senate in Cochlaeus, (Vit. Theod. viii. p. 72—80.)]

59 [\(return\)](#)
[No more than 120,000 modii, or four thousand quarters, (Anonym. Valesian. p. 721, and Var. i. 35, vi. 18, xi. 5, 39.)]

60 [\(return\)](#)
[See his regard and indulgence for the spectacles of the circus, the amphitheatre, and the theatre, in the Chronicle and Epistles of Cassiodorus, (Var. i. 20, 27, 30, 31, 32, iii. 51, iv. 51, illustrated by the xivth Annotation of Mascou's History), who has contrived to sprinkle the subject with ostentatious, though agreeable, learning.]

61 [\(return\)](#)
[Anonym. Vales. p. 721. Marius Aventicensis in Chron. In the scale of public and personal merit, the Gothic conqueror is at least as much above Valentinian, as he may seem inferior to Trajan.]

62 [\(return\)](#)
[Vit. Fulgentii in Baron. Annal. Eccles. A.D. 500, No. 10.]

63 [\(return\)](#)
[Cassiodorus describes in his pompous style the Forum of Trajan (Var. vii. 6,) the theatre of Marcellus, (iv. 51,) and the amphitheatre of Titus, (v. 42;) and his descriptions are not unworthy of the reader's perusal. According to the modern prices, the Abbe Barthelemy computes that the brick work

and masonry of the Coliseum would now cost twenty millions of French livres, (Mem. de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii. p. 585, 586.) How small a part of that stupendous fabric!]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[For the aqueducts and cloacae, see Strabo, (l. v. p. 360;) Pliny, (Hist. Natur. xxxvi. 24; Cassiodorus, Var. iii. 30, 31, vi. 6;) Procopius, (Goth. l. i. c. 19;) and Nardini, (Roma Antica, p. 514—522.) How such works could be executed by a king of Rome, is yet a problem. Note: See Niebuhr, vol. i. p. 402. These stupendous works are among the most striking confirmations of Niebuhr's views of the early Roman history; at least they appear to justify his strong sentence—"These works and the building of the Capitol attest with unquestionable evidence that this Rome of the later kings was the chief city of a great state."—Page 110—M.]

65

[\(return\)](#)

[For the Gothic care of the buildings and statues, see Cassiodorus (Var. i. 21, 25, ii. 34, iv. 30, vii. 6, 13, 15) and the Valesian Fragment, (p. 721.)]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[Var. vii. 15. These horses of Monte Cavallo had been transported from Alexandria to the baths of Constantine, (Nardini, p. 188.) Their sculpture is disdained by the Abbe Dubos, (Reflexions sur la Poesie et sur la Peinture, tom. i. section 39,) and admired by Winkelman, (Hist. de l'Art, tom. ii. p. 159.)]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[Var. x. 10. They were probably a fragment of some triumphal car, (Cuper de Elephantis, ii. 10.)]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius (Goth. l. iv. c. 21) relates a foolish story of Myron's cow, which is celebrated by the false wit of thirty-six Greek epigrams, (Antholog. l. iv. p. 302—306, edit. Hen. Steph.; Auson. Epigram. xiii.—lxviii.)]

Chapter XXXIX: Gothic Kingdom Of Italy.—Part III.

After the example of the last emperors, Theodoric preferred the residence of Ravenna, where he cultivated an orchard with his own hands. [69](#) As often as the peace of his kingdom was threatened (for it was never invaded) by the Barbarians, he removed his court to Verona [70](#) on the northern frontier, and the image of his palace, still extant on a coin, represents the oldest and most authentic model of Gothic architecture. These

two capitals, as well as Pavia, Spoleto, Naples, and the rest of the Italian cities, acquired under his reign the useful or splendid decorations of churches, aqueducts, baths, porticos, and palaces. [71](#) But the happiness of the subject was more truly conspicuous in the busy scene of labor and luxury, in the rapid increase and bold enjoyment of national wealth. From the shades of Tibur and Praeneste, the Roman senators still retired in the winter season to the warm sun, and salubrious springs of Baiae; and their villas, which advanced on solid moles into the Bay of Naples, commanded the various prospect of the sky, the earth, and the water. On the eastern side of the Adriatic, a new Campania was formed in the fair and fruitful province of Istria, which communicated with the palace of Ravenna by an easy navigation of one hundred miles. The rich productions of Lucania and the adjacent provinces were exchanged at the Marcilian fountain, in a populous fair annually dedicated to trade, intemperance, and superstition. In the solitude of Comum, which had once been animated by the mild genius of Pliny, a transparent basin above sixty miles in length still reflected the rural seats which encompassed the margin of the Larian lake; and the gradual ascent of the hills was covered by a triple plantation of olives, of vines, and of chestnut trees. [72](#) Agriculture revived under the shadow of peace, and the number of husbandmen was multiplied by the redemption of captives. [73](#) The iron mines of Dalmatia, a gold mine in Bruttium, were carefully explored, and the Pomptine marshes, as well as those of Spoleto, were drained and cultivated by private undertakers, whose distant reward must depend on the continuance of the public prosperity. [74](#) Whenever the seasons were less propitious, the doubtful precautions of forming magazines of corn, fixing the price, and prohibiting the exportation, attested at least the benevolence of the state; but such was the extraordinary plenty which an industrious people produced from a grateful soil, that a gallon of wine was sometimes sold in Italy for less than three farthings, and a quarter of wheat at about five shillings and sixpence. [75](#) A country possessed of so many valuable objects of exchange soon attracted the merchants of the world, whose beneficial traffic was encouraged and protected by the liberal spirit of Theodoric. The free intercourse of the provinces by land and water was restored and extended; the city gates were never shut either by day or by night; and the common saying, that a purse of gold might be safely left in the fields, was expressive of the conscious security of the inhabitants.

69 [\(return\)](#)

[See an epigram of Ennodius (ii. 3, p. 1893, 1894) on this garden and the royal gardener.]

70 [\(return\)](#)

[His affection for that city is proved by the epithet of "Verona tua," and the legend of the hero; under the barbarous name of Dietrich of Bern, (Peringsciold and Cochloeum, p. 240,) Maffei traces him with knowledge and pleasure in his native country, (l. ix. p. 230—236.)]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[See Maffei, (Verona Illustrata, Part i. p. 231, 232,

308, &c.) His amputes Gothic architecture, like the corruption of language, writing &c., not to the Barbarians, but to the Italians themselves. Compare his sentiments with those of Tiraboschi, (tom. iii. p. 61.) * Note: Mr. Hallam (vol. iii. p. 432) observes that “the image of Theodoric’s palace” is represented in Maffei, not from a coin, but from a seal. Compare D’Agincourt (*Storia dell’arte*, Italian Transl., *Arcitectura*, Plate xvii. No. 2, and *Pittura*, Plate xvi. No. 15,) where there is likewise an engraving from a mosaic in the church of St. Apollinaris in Ravenna, representing a building ascribed to Theodoric in that city. Neither of these, as Mr. Hallam justly observes, in the least approximates to what is called the Gothic style. They are evidently the degenerate Roman architecture, and more resemble the early attempts of our architects to get back from our national Gothic into a classical Greek style. One of them calls to mind Inigo Jones inner quadrangle in St. John’s College Oxford. Compare Hallam and D’Agincon vol. i. p. 140—145.—M]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[The villas, climate, and landscape of Baiae, (Var. ix. 6; see Cluver *Italia Antiq.* l. iv. c. 2, p. 1119, &c.,) Istria, (Var. xii. 22, 26,) and Comum, (Var. xi. 14; compare with Pliny’s two villas, ix. 7,) are agreeably painted in the Epistles of Cassiodorus.]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[In Liguria numerosa agricolarum progenies, (Ennodius, p. 1678, 1679, 1680.) St. Epiphanius of Pavia redeemed by prayer or ransom 6000 captives from the Burgundians of Lyons and Savoy. Such deeds are the best of miracles.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[The political economy of Theodoric (see Anonym. Vales. p. 721, and Cassiodorus, in *Chron.*) may be distinctly traced under the following heads: iron mine, (Var. iii. 23;) gold mine, (ix. 3;) Pomptine marshes, (ii. 32, 33;) Spoleto, (ii. 21;) corn, (i. 34, x. 27, 28, xi. 11, 12;) trade, (vi. 7, vii. 9, 23;) fair of Leucothoe or St. Cyprian in Lucania, (viii. 33;) plenty, (xii. 4;) the cursus, or public post, (i. 29, ii. 31, iv. 47, v. 5, vi. 6, vii. 33;) the Flaminian way, (xii. 18.) * Note: The inscription commemorative of the draining of the Pomptine marshes may be found in many works; in Gruter, *Inscript. Ant.* Heidelberg, p. 152, No. 8. With variations, in Nicolai *De’ bonificamenti delle terre Pontine*, p. 103. In

Sartorius, in his prize essay on the reign of Theodoric, and Manse Beylage, xi.—M.]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[LX modii tritici in solidum ipsius tempore fuerunt, et vinum xxx amphoras in solidum, (Fragment. Vales.) Corn was distributed from the granaries at xv or xxv modii for a piece of gold, and the price was still moderate.]

A difference of religion is always pernicious, and often fatal, to the harmony of the prince and people: the Gothic conqueror had been educated in the profession of Arianism, and Italy was devoutly attached to the Nicene faith. But the persuasion of Theodoric was not infected by zeal; and he piously adhered to the heresy of his fathers, without condescending to balance the subtle arguments of theological metaphysics. Satisfied with the private toleration of his Arian sectaries, he justly conceived himself to be the guardian of the public worship, and his external reverence for a superstition which he despised, may have nourished in his mind the salutary indifference of a statesman or philosopher. The Catholics of his dominions acknowledged, perhaps with reluctance, the peace of the church; their clergy, according to the degrees of rank or merit, were honorably entertained in the palace of Theodoric; he esteemed the living sanctity of Caesarius [76](#) and Epiphanius, [77](#) the orthodox bishops of Arles and Pavia; and presented a decent offering on the tomb of St. Peter, without any scrupulous inquiry into the creed of the apostle. [78](#) His favorite Goths, and even his mother, were permitted to retain or embrace the Athanasian faith, and his long reign could not afford the example of an Italian Catholic, who, either from choice or compulsion, had deviated into the religion of the conqueror. [79](#) The people, and the Barbarians themselves, were edified by the pomp and order of religious worship; the magistrates were instructed to defend the just immunities of ecclesiastical persons and possessions; the bishops held their synods, the metropolitans exercised their jurisdiction, and the privileges of sanctuary were maintained or moderated according to the spirit of the Roman jurisprudence. [80](#) With the protection, Theodoric assumed the legal supremacy, of the church; and his firm administration restored or extended some useful prerogatives which had been neglected by the feeble emperors of the West. He was not ignorant of the dignity and importance of the Roman pontiff, to whom the venerable name of Pope was now appropriated. The peace or the revolt of Italy might depend on the character of a wealthy and popular bishop, who claimed such ample dominion both in heaven and earth; who had been declared in a numerous synod to be pure from all sin, and exempt from all judgment. [81](#) When the chair of St. Peter was disputed by Symmachus and Laurence, they appeared at his summons before the tribunal of an Arian monarch, and he confirmed the election of the most worthy or the most obsequious candidate. At the end of his life, in a moment of jealousy and resentment, he prevented the choice of the Romans, by nominating a pope in the palace of Ravenna. The danger and furious

contests of a schism were mildly restrained, and the last decree of the senate was enacted to extinguish, if it were possible, the scandalous venality of the papal elections. [82](#)

- 76 [\(return\)](#)
[See the life of St. Caesarius in Baronius, (A.D. 508, No. 12, 13, 14.) The king presented him with 300 gold solidi, and a discus of silver of the weight of sixty pounds.]
- 77 [\(return\)](#)
[Ennodius in Vit. St. Epiphanii, in Sirmond, Op. tom. i. p. 1672—1690. Theodoric bestowed some important favors on this bishop, whom he used as a counsellor in peace and war.]
- 78 [\(return\)](#)
[Devotissimus ac si Catholicus, (Anonym. Vales. p. 720;) yet his offering was no more than two silver candlesticks (cerostrata) of the weight of seventy pounds, far inferior to the gold and gems of Constantinople and France, (Anastasius in Vit. Pont. in Hormisda, p. 34, edit. Paris.)]
- 79 [\(return\)](#)
[The tolerating system of his reign (Ennodius, p. 1612. Anonym. Vales. p. 719. Procop. Goth. l. i. c. 1, l. ii. c. 6) may be studied in the Epistles of Cassiodorus, under the following heads: bishops, (Var. i. 9, vii. 15, 24, xi. 23;) immunities, (i. 26, ii. 29, 30;) church lands (iv. 17, 20;) sanctuaries, (ii. 11, iii. 47;) church plate, (xii. 20;) discipline, (iv. 44;) which prove, at the same time, that he was the head of the church as well as of the state. * Note: He recommended the same toleration to the emperor Justin.—M.]
- 80 [\(return\)](#)
[We may reject a foolish tale of his beheading a Catholic deacon who turned Arian, (Theodor. Lector. No. 17.) Why is Theodoric surnamed Afer? From Vafer? (Vales. ad loc.) A light conjecture.]
- 81 [\(return\)](#)
[Ennodius, p. 1621, 1622, 1636, 1638. His libel was approved and registered (synodaliter) by a Roman council, (Baronius, A.D. 503, No. 6, Franciscus Pagi in Breviar. Pont. Rom. tom. i. p. 242.)]
- 82 [\(return\)](#)
[See Cassiodorus, (Var. viii. 15, ix. 15, 16,) Anastasius, (in Symmacho, p. 31,) and the xviith Annotation of Mascou. Baronius, Pagi, and most of the Catholic doctors, confess, with an angry growl, this Gothic usurpation.]

I have descanted with pleasure on the fortunate condition of Italy; but our fancy must not hastily conceive that the golden age of the poets, a race of men without vice or misery, was realized under the Gothic conquest. The fair prospect was sometimes overcast with clouds; the wisdom of Theodoric might be deceived, his power might be resisted and the declining age of the monarch was sullied with popular hatred and patrician blood. In the first insolence of victory, he had been tempted to deprive the whole party of Odoacer of the civil and even the natural rights of society; [83](#) a tax unseasonably imposed after the calamities of war, would have crushed the rising agriculture of Liguria; a rigid preemption of corn, which was intended for the public relief, must have aggravated the distress of Campania. These dangerous projects were defeated by the virtue and eloquence of Epiphanius and Boethius, who, in the presence of Theodoric himself, successfully pleaded the cause of the people: [84](#) but if the royal ear was open to the voice of truth, a saint and a philosopher are not always to be found at the ear of kings.

The privileges of rank, or office, or favor, were too frequently abused by Italian fraud and Gothic violence, and the avarice of the king's nephew was publicly exposed, at first by the usurpation, and afterwards by the restitution of the estates which he had unjustly extorted from his Tuscan neighbors. Two hundred thousand Barbarians, formidable even to their master, were seated in the heart of Italy; they indignantly supported the restraints of peace and discipline; the disorders of their march were always felt and sometimes compensated; and where it was dangerous to punish, it might be prudent to dissemble, the sallies of their native fierceness. When the indulgence of Theodoric had remitted two thirds of the Ligurian tribute, he condescended to explain the difficulties of his situation, and to lament the heavy though inevitable burdens which he imposed on his subjects for their own defence. [85](#) These ungrateful subjects could never be cordially reconciled to the origin, the religion, or even the virtues of the Gothic conqueror; past calamities were forgotten, and the sense or suspicion of injuries was rendered still more exquisite by the present felicity of the times.

83

[\(return\)](#)

[He disabled them—alicentia testandi; and all Italy mourned—lamentabili justitio. I wish to believe, that these penalties were enacted against the rebels who had violated their oath of allegiance; but the testimony of Ennodius (p. 1675-1678) is the more weighty, as he lived and died under the reign of Theodoric.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[Ennodius, in Vit. Epiphan. p. 1589, 1690. Boethius de Consolatione Philosophiae, l. i. pros. iv. p. 45, 46, 47. Respect, but weigh the passions of the saint and the senator; and fortify and alleviate their complaints by the various hints of Cassiodorus, (ii. 8, iv. 36, viii. 5.)]

[Immanium expensarum pondus...pro ipsorum salute, &c.; yet these are no more than words.]

Even the religious toleration which Theodoric had the glory of introducing into the Christian world, was painful and offensive to the orthodox zeal of the Italians. They respected the armed heresy of the Goths; but their pious rage was safely pointed against the rich and defenceless Jews, who had formed their establishments at Naples, Rome, Ravenna, Milan, and Genoa, for the benefit of trade, and under the sanction of the laws. [86](#) Their persons were insulted, their effects were pillaged, and their synagogues were burned by the mad populace of Ravenna and Rome, inflamed, as it should seem, by the most frivolous or extravagant pretences. The government which could neglect, would have deserved such an outrage. A legal inquiry was instantly directed; and as the authors of the tumult had escaped in the crowd, the whole community was condemned to repair the damage; and the obstinate bigots, who refused their contributions, were whipped through the streets by the hand of the executioner. [8611](#) This simple act of justice exasperated the discontent of the Catholics, who applauded the merit and patience of these holy confessors. Three hundred pulpits deplored the persecution of the church; and if the chapel of St. Stephen at Verona was demolished by the command of Theodoric, it is probable that some miracle hostile to his name and dignity had been performed on that sacred theatre. At the close of a glorious life, the king of Italy discovered that he had excited the hatred of a people whose happiness he had so assiduously labored to promote; and his mind was soured by indignation, jealousy, and the bitterness of unrequited love. The Gothic conqueror condescended to disarm the unwarlike natives of Italy, interdicting all weapons of offence, and excepting only a small knife for domestic use. The deliverer of Rome was accused of conspiring with the vilest informers against the lives of senators whom he suspected of a secret and treasonable correspondence with the Byzantine court. [87](#) After the death of Anastasius, the diadem had been placed on the head of a feeble old man; but the powers of government were assumed by his nephew Justinian, who already meditated the extirpation of heresy, and the conquest of Italy and Africa. A rigorous law, which was published at Constantinople, to reduce the Arians by the dread of punishment within the pale of the church, awakened the just resentment of Theodoric, who claimed for his distressed brethren of the East the same indulgence which he had so long granted to the Catholics of his dominions. [8711](#) At his stern command, the Roman pontiff, with four illustrious senators, embarked on an embassy, of which he must have alike dreaded the failure or the success. The singular veneration shown to the first pope who had visited Constantinople was punished as a crime by his jealous monarch; the artful or peremptory refusal of the Byzantine court might excuse an equal, and would provoke a larger, measure of retaliation; and a mandate was prepared in Italy, to prohibit, after a stated day, the exercise of the Catholic worship. By the bigotry of his subjects and enemies, the most tolerant of princes was driven to the brink of persecution; and the life

of Theodoric was too long, since he lived to condemn the virtue of Boethius and Symmachus. [88](#)

- 86 [\(return\)](#)
[The Jews were settled at Naples, (Procopius, Goth. l. i. c. 8,) at Genoa, (Var. ii. 28, iv. 33,) Milan, (v. 37,) Rome, (iv. 43.) See likewise Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, tom. viii. c. 7, p. 254.]
- 8611 [\(return\)](#)
[See History of the Jews vol. iii. p. 217.—M.]
- 87 [\(return\)](#)
[Rex avidus communis exitii, &c., (Boethius, l. i. p. 59:) rex colum Romanis tendebat, (Anonym. Vales. p. 723.) These are hard words: they speak the passions of the Italians and those (I fear) of Theodoric himself.]
- 8711 [\(return\)](#)
[Gibbon should not have omitted the golden words of Theodoric in a letter which he addressed to Justin: That to pretend to a dominion over the conscience is to usurp the prerogative of God; that by the nature of things the power of sovereigns is confined to external government; that they have no right of punishment but over those who disturb the public peace, of which they are the guardians; that the most dangerous heresy is that of a sovereign who separates from himself a part of his subjects because they believe not according to his belief. Compare Le Beau, vol viii. p. 68.—M]
- 88 [\(return\)](#)
[I have labored to extract a rational narrative from the dark, concise, and various hints of the Valesian Fragment, (p. 722, 723, 724,) Theophanes, (p. 145,) Anastasius, (in Johanne, p. 35,) and the Hist Miscella, (p. 103, edit. Muratori.) A gentle pressure and paraphrase of their words is no violence. Consult likewise Muratori (Annali d' Italia, tom. iv. p. 471-478,) with the Annals and Breviary (tom. i. p. 259—263) of the two Pagis, the uncle and the nephew.]

The senator Boethius [89](#) is the last of the Romans whom Cato or Tully could have acknowledged for their countryman. As a wealthy orphan, he inherited the patrimony and honors of the Anician family, a name ambitiously assumed by the kings and emperors of the age; and the appellation of Manlius asserted his genuine or fabulous descent from a race of consuls and dictators, who had repulsed the Gauls from the Capitol, and sacrificed their sons to the discipline of the republic. In the youth of Boethius the studies of Rome were not totally abandoned; a Virgil [90](#) is now extant, corrected by the hand of a consul; and the professors of grammar, rhetoric, and

jurisprudence, were maintained in their privileges and pensions by the liberality of the Goths. But the erudition of the Latin language was insufficient to satiate his ardent curiosity: and Boethius is said to have employed eighteen laborious years in the schools of Athens, [91](#) which were supported by the zeal, the learning, and the diligence of Proclus and his disciples. The reason and piety of their Roman pupil were fortunately saved from the contagion of mystery and magic, which polluted the groves of the academy; but he imbibed the spirit, and imitated the method, of his dead and living masters, who attempted to reconcile the strong and subtle sense of Aristotle with the devout contemplation and sublime fancy of Plato. After his return to Rome, and his marriage with the daughter of his friend, the patrician Symmachus, Boethius still continued, in a palace of ivory and marble, to prosecute the same studies. [92](#) The church was edified by his profound defence of the orthodox creed against the Arian, the Eutychian, and the Nestorian heresies; and the Catholic unity was explained or exposed in a formal treatise by the indifference of three distinct though consubstantial persons. For the benefit of his Latin readers, his genius submitted to teach the first elements of the arts and sciences of Greece. The geometry of Euclid, the music of Pythagoras, the arithmetic of Nicomachus, the mechanics of Archimedes, the astronomy of Ptolemy, the theology of Plato, and the logic of Aristotle, with the commentary of Porphyry, were translated and illustrated by the indefatigable pen of the Roman senator. And he alone was esteemed capable of describing the wonders of art, a sun-dial, a water-clock, or a sphere which represented the motions of the planets. From these abstruse speculations, Boethius stooped, or, to speak more truly, he rose to the social duties of public and private life: the indigent were relieved by his liberality; and his eloquence, which flattery might compare to the voice of Demosthenes or Cicero, was uniformly exerted in the cause of innocence and humanity. Such conspicuous merit was felt and rewarded by a discerning prince: the dignity of Boethius was adorned with the titles of consul and patrician, and his talents were usefully employed in the important station of master of the offices. Notwithstanding the equal claims of the East and West, his two sons were created, in their tender youth, the consuls of the same year. [93](#) On the memorable day of their inauguration, they proceeded in solemn pomp from their palace to the forum amidst the applause of the senate and people; and their joyful father, the true consul of Rome, after pronouncing an oration in the praise of his royal benefactor, distributed a triumphal largess in the games of the circus. Prosperous in his fame and fortunes, in his public honors and private alliances, in the cultivation of science and the consciousness of virtue, Boethius might have been styled happy, if that precarious epithet could be safely applied before the last term of the life of man.

[Le Clerc has composed a critical and philosophical life of Anicius Manlius Severinus Boetius, (Bibliot. Choisie, tom. xvi. p. 168—275;) and both Tiraboschi (tom. iii.) and Fabricius (Bibliot Latin.) may be usefully consulted. The date

of his birth may be placed about the year 470, and his death in 524, in a premature old age, (Consol. Phil. Metrica. i. p. 5.)]

90 [\(return\)](#)

[For the age and value of this Ms., now in the Medicean library at Florence, see the Cenotaphia Pisana (p. 430-447) of Cardinal Noris.]

91 [\(return\)](#)

[The Athenian studies of Boethius are doubtful, (Baronius, A.D. 510, No. 3, from a spurious tract, De Disciplina Scholarum,) and the term of eighteen years is doubtless too long: but the simple fact of a visit to Athens is justified by much internal evidence, (Brucker, Hist. Crit. Philosoph. tom. iii. p. 524—527,) and by an expression (though vague and ambiguous) of his friend Cassiodorus, (Var. i. 45,) “longe positas Athenas intrioisti.”]

92 [\(return\)](#)

[Bibliothecae comptos ebore ac vitro * parietes, &c., (Consol. Phil. l. i. pros. v. p. 74.) The Epistles of Ennodius (vi. 6, vii. 13, viii. 1 31, 37, 40) and Cassiodorus (Var. i. 39, iv. 6, ix. 21) afford many proofs of the high reputation which he enjoyed in his own times. It is true, that the bishop of Pavia wanted to purchase of him an old house at Milan, and praise might be tendered and accepted in part of payment. * Note: Gibbon translated vitro, marble; under the impression, no doubt that glass was unknown.—M.]

93 [\(return\)](#)

[Pagi, Muratori, &c., are agreed that Boethius himself was consul in the year 510, his two sons in 522, and in 487, perhaps, his father. A desire of ascribing the last of these consulships to the philosopher had perplexed the chronology of his life. In his honors, alliances, children, he celebrates his own felicity—his past felicity, (p. 109 110)]

A philosopher, liberal of his wealth and parsimonious of his time, might be insensible to the common allurements of ambition, the thirst of gold and employment. And some credit may be due to the asseveration of Boethius, that he had reluctantly obeyed the divine Plato, who enjoins every virtuous citizen to rescue the state from the usurpation of vice and ignorance. For the integrity of his public conduct he appeals to the memory of his country. His authority had restrained the pride and oppression of the royal officers, and his eloquence had delivered Paulianus from the dogs of the palace. He had always pitied, and often relieved, the distress of the provincials, whose fortunes were exhausted by public and private rapine; and Boethius alone had courage to oppose the tyranny of the Barbarians, elated by conquest, excited by avarice, and, as he complains,

encouraged by impunity. In these honorable contests his spirit soared above the consideration of danger, and perhaps of prudence; and we may learn from the example of Cato, that a character of pure and inflexible virtue is the most apt to be misled by prejudice, to be heated by enthusiasm, and to confound private enmities with public justice. The disciple of Plato might exaggerate the infirmities of nature, and the imperfections of society; and the mildest form of a Gothic kingdom, even the weight of allegiance and gratitude, must be insupportable to the free spirit of a Roman patriot. But the favor and fidelity of Boethius declined in just proportion with the public happiness; and an unworthy colleague was imposed to divide and control the power of the master of the offices. In the last gloomy season of Theodoric, he indignantly felt that he was a slave; but as his master had only power over his life, he stood without arms and without fear against the face of an angry Barbarian, who had been provoked to believe that the safety of the senate was incompatible with his own. The senator Albinus was accused and already convicted on the presumption of hoping, as it was said, the liberty of Rome. “If Albinus be criminal,” exclaimed the orator, “the senate and myself are all guilty of the same crime. If we are innocent, Albinus is equally entitled to the protection of the laws.” These laws might not have punished the simple and barren wish of an unattainable blessing; but they would have shown less indulgence to the rash confession of Boethius, that, had he known of a conspiracy, the tyrant never should. [94](#) The advocate of Albinus was soon involved in the danger and perhaps the guilt of his client; their signature (which they denied as a forgery) was affixed to the original address, inviting the emperor to deliver Italy from the Goths; and three witnesses of honorable rank, perhaps of infamous reputation, attested the treasonable designs of the Roman patrician. [95](#) Yet his innocence must be presumed, since he was deprived by Theodoric of the means of justification, and rigorously confined in the tower of Pavia, while the senate, at the distance of five hundred miles, pronounced a sentence of confiscation and death against the most illustrious of its members. At the command of the Barbarians, the occult science of a philosopher was stigmatized with the names of sacrilege and magic. [96](#) A devout and dutiful attachment to the senate was condemned as criminal by the trembling voices of the senators themselves; and their ingratitude deserved the wish or prediction of Boethius, that, after him, none should be found guilty of the same offence. [97](#)

94

[\(return\)](#)

[Si ego scissem tu nescisses. Beothius adopts this answer (l. i. pros. 4, p. 53) of Julius Canus, whose philosophic death is described by Seneca, (*De Tranquillitate Animi*, c. 14.)]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[The characters of his two delators, Basilius (*Var. ii. 10, 11, iv. 22*) and Opilio, (*v. 41, viii. 16,*) are illustrated, not much to their honor, in the *Epistles* of Cassiodorus, which likewise mention Decoratus,

(v. 31,) the worthless colleague of Beothius, (l. iii. pros. 4, p. 193.)]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[A severe inquiry was instituted into the crime of magic, (Var. iv 22, 23, ix. 18;) and it was believed that many necromancers had escaped by making their jailers mad: for mad I should read drunk.]

97

[\(return\)](#)

[Boethius had composed his own Apology, (p. 53,) perhaps more interesting than his Consolation. We must be content with the general view of his honors, principles, persecution, &c., (l. i. pros. 4, p. 42—62,) which may be compared with the short and weighty words of the Valesian Fragment, (p. 723.) An anonymous writer (Sinner, Catalog. Mss. Bibliot. Bern. tom. i. p. 287) charges him home with honorable and patriotic treason.]

While Boethius, oppressed with fetters, expected each moment the sentence or the stroke of death, he composed, in the tower of Pavia, the Consolation of Philosophy; a golden volume not unworthy of the leisure of Plato or Tully, but which claims incomparable merit from the barbarism of the times and the situation of the author. The celestial guide, whom he had so long invoked at Rome and Athens, now condescended to illumine his dungeon, to revive his courage, and to pour into his wounds her salutary balm. She taught him to compare his long prosperity and his recent distress, and to conceive new hopes from the inconstancy of fortune. Reason had informed him of the precarious condition of her gifts; experience had satisfied him of their real value; he had enjoyed them without guilt; he might resign them without a sigh, and calmly disdain the impotent malice of his enemies, who had left him happiness, since they had left him virtue. From the earth, Boethius ascended to heaven in search of the Supreme Good; explored the metaphysical labyrinth of chance and destiny, of prescience and free will, of time and eternity; and generously attempted to reconcile the perfect attributes of the Deity with the apparent disorders of his moral and physical government. Such topics of consolation so obvious, so vague, or so abstruse, are ineffectual to subdue the feelings of human nature. Yet the sense of misfortune may be diverted by the labor of thought; and the sage who could artfully combine in the same work the various riches of philosophy, poetry, and eloquence, must already have possessed the intrepid calmness which he affected to seek. Suspense, the worst of evils, was at length determined by the ministers of death, who executed, and perhaps exceeded, the inhuman mandate of Theodoric. A strong cord was fastened round the head of Boethius, and forcibly tightened, till his eyes almost started from their sockets; and some mercy may be discovered in the milder torture of beating him with clubs till he expired. [98](#) But his genius survived to diffuse a ray of knowledge over the darkest ages of the Latin world; the writings of the philosopher were translated by the most glorious of the English kings, [99](#) and the third emperor of the name of Otho removed to a more honorable tomb

the bones of a Catholic saint, who, from his Arian persecutors, had acquired the honors of martyrdom, and the fame of miracles. [100](#) In the last hours of Boethius, he derived some comfort from the safety of his two sons, of his wife, and of his father-in-law, the venerable Symmachus. But the grief of Symmachus was indiscreet, and perhaps disrespectful: he had presumed to lament, he might dare to revenge, the death of an injured friend. He was dragged in chains from Rome to the palace of Ravenna; and the suspicions of Theodoric could only be appeased by the blood of an innocent and aged senator. [101](#)

98 [\(return\)](#)

[He was executed in Agro Calventiano, (Calvenzano, between Marignano and Pavia,) Anonym. Vales. p. 723, by order of Eusebius, count of Ticinum or Pavia. This place of confinement is styled the baptistery, an edifice and name peculiar to cathedrals. It is claimed by the perpetual tradition of the church of Pavia. The tower of Boethius subsisted till the year 1584, and the draught is yet preserved, (Tiraboschi, tom. iii. p. 47, 48.)]

99 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Biographia Britannica, Alfred, tom. i. p. 80, 2d edition. The work is still more honorable if performed under the learned eye of Alfred by his foreign and domestic doctors. For the reputation of Boethius in the middle ages, consult Brucker, (Hist. Crit. Philosoph. tom. iii. p. 565, 566.)]

100 [\(return\)](#)

[The inscription on his new tomb was composed by the preceptor of Otho III., the learned Pope Sylvester II., who, like Boethius himself, was styled a magician by the ignorance of the times. The Catholic martyr had carried his head in his hands a considerable way, (Baronius, A.D. 526, No. 17, 18;) and yet on a similar tale, a lady of my acquaintance once observed, “La distance n’y fait rien; il n’y a que lo remier pas qui coute.” Note: Madame du Deffand. This witticism referred to the miracle of St. Denis.—G.]

101 [\(return\)](#)

[Boethius applauds the virtues of his father-in-law, (l. i. pros. 4, p. 59, l. ii. pros. 4, p. 118.) Procopius, (Goth. l. i. c. i.,) the Valesian Fragment, (p. 724,) and the Historia Miscella, (l. xv. p. 105,) agree in praising the superior innocence or sanctity of Symmachus; and in the estimation of the legend, the guilt of his murder is equal to the imprisonment of a pope.]

Humanity will be disposed to encourage any report which testifies the jurisdiction of conscience and the remorse of kings; and philosophy is not ignorant that the most horrid spectres are sometimes created by the powers of a disordered fancy, and the weakness of a distempered body. After a life of virtue and glory, Theodoric was now descending with shame and guilt into the grave; his mind was humbled by the contrast of the past, and justly alarmed by the invisible terrors of futurity. One evening, as it is related, when the head of a large fish was served on the royal table, [102](#) he suddenly exclaimed, that he beheld the angry countenance of Symmachus, his eyes glaring fury and revenge, and his mouth armed with long sharp teeth, which threatened to devour him. The monarch instantly retired to his chamber, and, as he lay, trembling with aguish cold, under a weight of bed-clothes, he expressed, in broken murmurs to his physician Elpidius, his deep repentance for the murders of Boethius and Symmachus. [103](#) His malady increased, and after a dysentery which continued three days, he expired in the palace of Ravenna, in the thirty-third, or, if we compute from the invasion of Italy, in the thirty-seventh year of his reign. Conscious of his approaching end, he divided his treasures and provinces between his two grandsons, and fixed the Rhone as their common boundary. [104](#) Amalaric was restored to the throne of Spain. Italy, with all the conquests of the Ostrogoths, was bequeathed to Athalaric; whose age did not exceed ten years, but who was cherished as the last male offspring of the line of Amali, by the short-lived marriage of his mother Amalasuntha with a royal fugitive of the same blood. [105](#) In the presence of the dying monarch, the Gothic chiefs and Italian magistrates mutually engaged their faith and loyalty to the young prince, and to his guardian mother; and received, in the same awful moment, his last salutary advice, to maintain the laws, to love the senate and people of Rome, and to cultivate with decent reverence the friendship of the emperor. [106](#) The monument of Theodoric was erected by his daughter Amalasuntha, in a conspicuous situation, which commanded the city of Ravenna, the harbor, and the adjacent coast. A chapel of a circular form, thirty feet in diameter, is crowned by a dome of one entire piece of granite: from the centre of the dome four columns arose, which supported, in a vase of porphyry, the remains of the Gothic king, surrounded by the brazen statues of the twelve apostles. [107](#) His spirit, after some previous expiation, might have been permitted to mingle with the benefactors of mankind, if an Italian hermit had not been witness, in a vision, to the damnation of Theodoric, [108](#) whose soul was plunged, by the ministers of divine vengeance, into the volcano of Lipari, one of the flaming mouths of the infernal world. [109](#)

[In the fanciful eloquence of Cassiodorus, the variety of sea and river fish are an evidence of extensive dominion; and those of the Rhine, of Sicily, and of the Danube, were served on the table of Theodoric, (Var. xii. 14.) The monstrous turbot of Domitian (Juvenal Satir. iii. 39) had been caught on the shores of the Adriatic.]

- 103 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius, Goth. l. i. c. 1. But he might have informed us, whether he had received this curious anecdote from common report or from the mouth of the royal physician.]
- 104 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius, Goth. l. i. c. 1, 2, 12, 13. This partition had been directed by Theodoric, though it was not executed till after his death, Regni hereditatem superstes reliquit, (Isidor. Chron. p. 721, edit. Grot.)]
- 105 [\(return\)](#)
[Berimund, the third in descent from Hermanric, king of the Ostrogoths, had retired into Spain, where he lived and died in obscurity, (Jornandes, c. 33, p. 202, edit. Muratori.) See the discovery, nuptials, and death of his grandson Eutharic, (c. 58, p. 220.) His Roman games might render him popular, (Cassiodor. in Chron.,) but Eutharic was asper in religione, (Anonym. Vales. p. 723.)]
- 106 [\(return\)](#)
[See the counsels of Theodoric, and the professions of his successor, in Procopius, (Goth. l. i. c. 1, 2,) Jornandes, (c. 59, p. 220, 221,) and Cassiodorus, (Var. viii. 1—7.) These epistles are the triumph of his ministerial eloquence.]
- 107 [\(return\)](#)
[Anonym. Vales. p. 724. Agnellus de Vitis. Pont. Raven. in Muratori Script. Rerum Ital. tom. ii. P. i. p. 67. Alberti Descrittione d' Italia, p. 311. * Note: The Mausoleum of Theodoric, now Sante Maria della Rotonda, is engraved in D'Agincourt, Histoire de l'Art, p xviii. of the Architectural Prints.—M]
- 108 [\(return\)](#)
[This legend is related by Gregory I., (Dialog. iv. 36,) and approved by Baronius, (A.D. 526, No. 28;) and both the pope and cardinal are grave doctors, sufficient to establish a probable opinion.]
- 109 [\(return\)](#)
[Theodoric himself, or rather Cassiodorus, had described in tragic strains the volcanos of Lipari (Cluver. Sicilia, p. 406—410) and Vesuvius, (v 50.)]

Chapter XL: Reign Of Justinian.—Part I.

Elevation Of Justin The Elder.—Reign Of Justinian.—I. The Empress Theodora.—II. Factions Of The Circus, And Sedition Of Constantinople.—III. Trade And Manufacture Of Silk.—IV. Finances And Taxes.—V. Edifices Of Justinian.—Church Of St. Sophia.—Fortifications And Frontiers Of The Eastern Empire.—Abolition Of The Schools Of Athens, And The Consulship Of Rome.

The emperor Justinian was born [1](#) near the ruins of Sardica, (the modern Sophia,) of an obscure race [2](#) of Barbarians, [3](#) the inhabitants of a wild and desolate country, to which the names of Dardania, of Dacia, and of Bulgaria, have been successively applied. His elevation was prepared by the adventurous spirit of his uncle Justin, who, with two other peasants of the same village, deserted, for the profession of arms, the more useful employment of husbandmen or shepherds. [4](#) On foot, with a scanty provision of biscuit in their knapsacks, the three youths followed the high road of Constantinople, and were soon enrolled, for their strength and stature, among the guards of the emperor Leo. Under the two succeeding reigns, the fortunate peasant emerged to wealth and honors; and his escape from some dangers which threatened his life was afterwards ascribed to the guardian angel who watches over the fate of kings. His long and laudable service in the Isaurian and Persian wars would not have preserved from oblivion the name of Justin; yet they might warrant the military promotion, which in the course of fifty years he gradually obtained; the rank of tribune, of count, and of general; the dignity of senator, and the command of the guards, who obeyed him as their chief, at the important crisis when the emperor Anastasius was removed from the world. The powerful kinsmen whom he had raised and enriched were excluded from the throne; and the eunuch Amantius, who reigned in the palace, had secretly resolved to fix the diadem on the head of the most obsequious of his creatures. A liberal donative, to conciliate the suffrage of the guards, was intrusted for that purpose in the hands of their commander. But these weighty arguments were treacherously employed by Justin in his own favor; and as no competitor presumed to appear, the Dacian peasant was invested with the purple by the unanimous consent of the soldiers, who knew him to be brave and gentle, of the clergy and people, who believed him to be orthodox, and of the provincials, who yielded a blind and implicit submission to the will of the capital. The elder Justin, as he is distinguished from another emperor of the same family and name, ascended the Byzantine throne at the age of sixty-eight years; and, had he been left to his own guidance, every moment of a nine years' reign must have exposed to his subjects the impropriety of their choice. His ignorance was similar to that of Theodoric; and it is remarkable that in an age not destitute of learning, two contemporary monarchs had never been instructed in the knowledge of the alphabet. [411](#) But the genius of Justin was far inferior to that of the Gothic king: the experience of a soldier had not qualified him for the government of an empire; and though personally brave, the consciousness

of his own weakness was naturally attended with doubt, distrust, and political apprehension. But the official business of the state was diligently and faithfully transacted by the quaestor Proclus; [5](#) and the aged emperor adopted the talents and ambition of his nephew Justinian, an aspiring youth, whom his uncle had drawn from the rustic solitude of Dacia, and educated at Constantinople, as the heir of his private fortune, and at length of the Eastern empire.

1 [\(return\)](#)

[There is some difficulty in the date of his birth (Ludewig in Vit. Justiniani, p. 125;) none in the place—the district Bederiana—the village Tauresium, which he afterwards decorated with his name and splendor, (D’Anville, Hist. de l’Acad. &c., tom. xxxi. p. 287—292.)]

2 [\(return\)](#)

[The names of these Dardanian peasants are Gothic, and almost English: Justinian is a translation of uprauda, (upright;) his father Sabatius (in Graeco-barbarous language stipes) was styled in his village Istock, (Stock;) his mother Bigleniza was softened into Vigilantia.]

3 [\(return\)](#)

[Ludewig (p. 127—135) attempts to justify the Anician name of Justinian and Theodora, and to connect them with a family from which the house of Austria has been derived.]

4 [\(return\)](#)

[See the anecdotes of Procopius, (c. 6,) with the notes of N. Alemannus. The satirist would not have sunk, in the vague and decent appellation of Zonaras. Yet why are those names disgraceful?—and what German baron would not be proud to descend from the Eumaeus of the Odyssey! Note: It is whimsical enough that, in our own days, we should have, even in jest, a claimant to lineal descent from the godlike swineherd not in the person of a German baron, but in that of a professor of the Ionian University. Constantine Koliades, or some malicious wit under this name, has written a tall folio to prove Ulysses to be Homer, and himself the descendant, the heir (?), of the Eumaeus of the Odyssey.—M]

411 [\(return\)](#)

[St. Martin questions the fact in both cases. The ignorance of Justin rests on the secret history of Procopius, vol. viii. p. 8. St. Martin’s notes on Le Beau.—M]

5 [\(return\)](#)

[His virtues are praised by Procopius, (Persic. l. i.

c. 11.) The quaestor Proclus was the friend of Justinian, and the enemy of every other adoption.]

Since the eunuch Amantius had been defrauded of his money, it became necessary to deprive him of his life. The task was easily accomplished by the charge of a real or fictitious conspiracy; and the judges were informed, as an accumulation of guilt, that he was secretly addicted to the Manichaeian heresy. [6](#) Amantius lost his head; three of his companions, the first domestics of the palace, were punished either with death or exile; and their unfortunate candidate for the purple was cast into a deep dungeon, overwhelmed with stones, and ignominiously thrown, without burial, into the sea. The ruin of Vitalian was a work of more difficulty and danger. That Gothic chief had rendered himself popular by the civil war which he boldly waged against Anastasius for the defence of the orthodox faith, and after the conclusion of an advantageous treaty, he still remained in the neighborhood of Constantinople at the head of a formidable and victorious army of Barbarians. By the frail security of oaths, he was tempted to relinquish this advantageous situation, and to trust his person within the walls of a city, whose inhabitants, particularly the blue faction, were artfully incensed against him by the remembrance even of his pious hostilities. The emperor and his nephew embraced him as the faithful and worthy champion of the church and state; and gratefully adorned their favorite with the titles of consul and general; but in the seventh month of his consulship, Vitalian was stabbed with seventeen wounds at the royal banquet; [7](#) and Justinian, who inherited the spoil, was accused as the assassin of a spiritual brother, to whom he had recently pledged his faith in the participation of the Christian mysteries. [8](#) After the fall of his rival, he was promoted, without any claim of military service, to the office of master-general of the Eastern armies, whom it was his duty to lead into the field against the public enemy. But, in the pursuit of fame, Justinian might have lost his present dominion over the age and weakness of his uncle; and instead of acquiring by Scythian or Persian trophies the applause of his countrymen, [9](#) the prudent warrior solicited their favor in the churches, the circus, and the senate, of Constantinople. The Catholics were attached to the nephew of Justin, who, between the Nestorian and Eutychian heresies, trod the narrow path of inflexible and intolerant orthodoxy. [10](#) In the first days of the new reign, he prompted and gratified the popular enthusiasm against the memory of the deceased emperor. After a schism of thirty-four years, he reconciled the proud and angry spirit of the Roman pontiff, and spread among the Latins a favorable report of his pious respect for the apostolic see. The thrones of the East were filled with Catholic bishops, devoted to his interest, the clergy and the monks were gained by his liberality, and the people were taught to pray for their future sovereign, the hope and pillar of the true religion. The magnificence of Justinian was displayed in the superior pomp of his public spectacles, an object not less sacred and important in the eyes of the multitude than the creed of Nice or Chalcedon: the expense of his consulship was esteemed at two hundred and twenty-eight thousand pieces of gold; twenty lions, and thirty leopards, were produced at the same time in the

amphitheatre, and a numerous train of horses, with their rich trappings, was bestowed as an extraordinary gift on the victorious charioteers of the circus. While he indulged the people of Constantinople, and received the addresses of foreign kings, the nephew of Justin assiduously cultivated the friendship of the senate. That venerable name seemed to qualify its members to declare the sense of the nation, and to regulate the succession of the Imperial throne: the feeble Anastasius had permitted the vigor of government to degenerate into the form or substance of an aristocracy; and the military officers who had obtained the senatorial rank were followed by their domestic guards, a band of veterans, whose arms or acclamations might fix in a tumultuous moment the diadem of the East. The treasures of the state were lavished to procure the voices of the senators, and their unanimous wish, that he would be pleased to adopt Justinian for his colleague, was communicated to the emperor. But this request, which too clearly admonished him of his approaching end, was unwelcome to the jealous temper of an aged monarch, desirous to retain the power which he was incapable of exercising; and Justin, holding his purple with both his hands, advised them to prefer, since an election was so profitable, some older candidate. Notwithstanding this reproach, the senate proceeded to decorate Justinian with the royal epithet of nobilissimus; and their decree was ratified by the affection or the fears of his uncle. After some time the languor of mind and body, to which he was reduced by an incurable wound in his thigh, indispensably required the aid of a guardian. He summoned the patriarch and senators; and in their presence solemnly placed the diadem on the head of his nephew, who was conducted from the palace to the circus, and saluted by the loud and joyful applause of the people. The life of Justin was prolonged about four months; but from the instant of this ceremony, he was considered as dead to the empire, which acknowledged Justinian, in the forty-fifth year of his age, for the lawful sovereign of the East. [11](#)

6

[\(return\)](#)

[Manichæan signifies Eutychian. Hear the furious acclamations of Constantinople and Tyre, the former no more than six days after the decease of Anastasius. They produced, the latter applauded, the eunuch's death, (Baronius, A.D. 518, P. ii. No. 15. Fleury, Hist Eccles. tom. vii. p. 200, 205, from the Councils, tom. v. p. 182, 207.)]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[His power, character, and intentions, are perfectly explained by the court de Buat, (tom. ix. p. 54—81.) He was great-grandson of Aspar, hereditary prince in the Lesser Scythia, and count of the Gothic foederati of Thrace. The Bessi, whom he could influence, are the minor Goths of Jornandes, (c. 51.)]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Justiniani patricii factione dicitur interfectus fuisse, (Victor Tu nunensis, Chron. in Thesaur.

Temp. Scaliger, P. ii. p. 7.) Procopius (Anecd. c. 7) styles him a tyrant, but acknowledges something which is well explained by Alemannus.]

9 [\(return\)](#)

[In his earliest youth (plane adolescens) he had passed some time as a hostage with Theodoric. For this curious fact, Alemannus (ad Procop. Anecd. c. 9, p. 34, of the first edition) quotes a Ms. history of Justinian, by his preceptor Theophilus. Ludewig (p. 143) wishes to make him a soldier.]

10 [\(return\)](#)

[The ecclesiastical history of Justinian will be shown hereafter. See Baronius, A.D. 518—521, and the copious article Justinianas in the index to the viith volume of his Annals.]

11 [\(return\)](#)

[The reign of the elder Justin may be found in the three Chronicles of Marcellinus, Victor, and John Malala, (tom. ii. p. 130—150,) the last of whom (in spite of Hody, Prolegom. No. 14, 39, edit. Oxon.) lived soon after Justinian, (Jortin's Remarks, &c., vol. iv p. 383:) in the Ecclesiastical History of Evagrius, (l. iv. c. 1, 2, 3, 9,) and the Excerpta of Theodorus Lector, (No. 37,) and in Cedrenus, (p. 362—366,) and Zonaras, (l. xiv. p. 58—61,) who may pass for an original. * Note: Dindorf, in his preface to the new edition of Malala, p. vi., concurs with this opinion of Gibbon, which was also that of Reiske, as to the age of the chronicler.—M.]

From his elevation to his death, Justinian governed the Roman empire thirty-eight years, seven months, and thirteen days.

The events of his reign, which excite our curious attention by their number, variety, and importance, are diligently related by the secretary of Belisarius, a rhetorician, whom eloquence had promoted to the rank of senator and præfect of Constantinople. According to the vicissitudes of courage or servitude, of favor or disgrace, Procopius [12](#) successively composed the history, the panegyric, and the satire of his own times. The eight books of the Persian, Vandalic, and Gothic wars, [13](#) which are continued in the five books of Agathias, deserve our esteem as a laborious and successful imitation of the Attic, or at least of the Asiatic, writers of ancient Greece. His facts are collected from the personal experience and free conversation of a soldier, a statesman, and a traveller; his style continually aspires, and often attains, to the merit of strength and elegance; his reflections, more especially in the speeches, which he too frequently inserts, contain a rich fund of political knowledge; and the historian, excited by the generous ambition of pleasing and instructing posterity, appears to disdain the prejudices of the people, and the flattery of courts. The writings of Procopius [14](#) were read and applauded by his contemporaries: [15](#) but, although he respectfully laid them

at the foot of the throne, the pride of Justinian must have been wounded by the praise of a hero, who perpetually eclipses the glory of his inactive sovereign. The conscious dignity of independence was subdued by the hopes and fears of a slave; and the secretary of Belisarius labored for pardon and reward in the six books of the Imperial edifices. He had dexterously chosen a subject of apparent splendor, in which he could loudly celebrate the genius, the magnificence, and the piety of a prince, who, both as a conqueror and legislator, had surpassed the puerile virtues of Themistocles and Cyrus. [16](#) Disappointment might urge the flatterer to secret revenge; and the first glance of favor might again tempt him to suspend and suppress a libel, [17](#) in which the Roman Cyrus is degraded into an odious and contemptible tyrant, in which both the emperor and his consort Theodora are seriously represented as two daemons, who had assumed a human form for the destruction of mankind. [18](#) Such base inconsistency must doubtless sully the reputation, and detract from the credit, of Procopius: yet, after the venom of his malignity has been suffered to exhale, the residue of the anecdotes, even the most disgraceful facts, some of which had been tenderly hinted in his public history, are established by their internal evidence, or the authentic monuments of the times. [19](#) [1911](#) From these various materials, I shall now proceed to describe the reign of Justinian, which will deserve and occupy an ample space. The present chapter will explain the elevation and character of Theodora, the factions of the circus, and the peaceful administration of the sovereign of the East. In the three succeeding chapters, I shall relate the wars of Justinian, which achieved the conquest of Africa and Italy; and I shall follow the victories of Belisarius and Narses, without disguising the vanity of their triumphs, or the hostile virtue of the Persian and Gothic heroes. The series of this and the following volume will embrace the jurisprudence and theology of the emperor; the controversies and sects which still divide the Oriental church; the reformation of the Roman law which is obeyed or respected by the nations of modern Europe.

12

[\(return\)](#)

[See the characters of Procopius and Agathias in La Mothe le Vayer, (tom. viii. p. 144—174,) Vossius, (de Historicis Graecis, l. ii. c. 22,) and Fabricius, (Bibliot. Graec. l. v. c. 5, tom. vi. p. 248—278.) Their religion, an honorable problem, betrays occasional conformity, with a secret attachment to Paganism and Philosophy.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[In the seven first books, two Persic, two Vandalic, and three Gothic, Procopius has borrowed from Appian the division of provinces and wars: the viiith book, though it bears the name of Gothic, is a miscellaneous and general supplement down to the spring of the year 553, from whence it is continued by Agathias till 559, (Pagi, Critica, A.D. 579, No. 5.)]

[The literary fate of Procopius has been somewhat unlucky.

1. His book *de Bello Gothico* were stolen by Leonard Aretin, and published (Fulgini, 1470, Venet. 1471, apud Janson. Mattaire, *Annal Typograph.* tom. i. edit. posterior, p. 290, 304, 279, 299,) in his own name, (see Vossius *de Hist. Lat.* l. iii. c. 5, and the feeble defence of the Venice *Giornale de Letterati*, tom. xix. p. 207.)
2. His works were mutilated by the first Latin translators, Christopher Persona, (*Giornale*, tom. xix. p. 340—348,) and Raphael de Volaterra, (Huet, *de Claris Interpretibus*, p. 166,) who did not even consult the Ms. of the Vatican library, of which they were præfects, (Aleman. in *Praefat Anecd.*)
3. The Greek text was not printed till 1607, by Hoeschellius of Augsburg, (*Dictionnaire de Bayle*, tom. ii. p. 782.)
4. The Paris edition was imperfectly executed by Claude Maltret, a Jesuit of Toulouse, (in 1663,) far distant from the Louvre press and the Vatican Ms., from which, however, he obtained some supplements. His promised commentaries, &c., have never appeared. The *Agathias* of Leyden (1594) has been wisely reprinted by the Paris editor, with the Latin version of Bonaventura Vulcanius, a learned interpreter, (Huet, p. 176.)

* Note: Procopius forms a part of the new Byzantine collection under the superintendence of Dindorf.—M.]

[*Agathias* in *Praefat.* p. 7, 8, l. iv. p. 137. Evagrius, l. iv. c. 12. See likewise Photius, *cod. lxxiii.* p. 65.]

[Says, he, *Praefat. ad l. de Edificiis* is no more than a pun! In these five books, Procopius affects a Christian as well as a courtly style.]

[Procopius discloses himself, (*Praefat. ad Anecd.* c. 1, 2, 5,) and the anecdotes are reckoned as the ninth book by Suidas, (tom. iii. p. 186, edit. Kuster.) The silence of Evagrius is a poor objection. Baronius (A.D. 548, No. 24) regrets the loss of this secret history: it was then in the Vatican library, in his own custody, and was first published sixteen years after his death, with the learned, but partial notes of Nicholas Alemannus, (Lugd. 1623.)]

- 18 [\(return\)](#)
[Justinian an ass—the perfect likeness of Domitian—Anecdota. c. 8.—Theodora’s lovers driven from her bed by rival daemons—her marriage foretold with a great daemon—a monk saw the prince of the daemons, instead of Justinian, on the throne—the servants who watched beheld a face without features, a body walking without a head, &c., &c. Procopius declares his own and his friends’ belief in these diabolical stories, (c. 12.)]
- 19 [\(return\)](#)
[Montesquieu (*Considerations sur la Grandeur et la Decadence des Romains*, c. xx.) gives credit to these anecdotes, as connected, 1. with the weakness of the empire, and, 2. with the instability of Justinian’s laws.]
- 1911 [\(return\)](#)
[The *Anecdota* of Procopius, compared with the former works of the same author, appear to me the basest and most disgraceful work in literature. The wars, which he has described in the former volumes as glorious or necessary, are become unprofitable and wanton massacres; the buildings which he celebrated, as raised to the immortal honor of the great emperor, and his admirable queen, either as magnificent embellishments of the city, or useful fortifications for the defence of the frontier, are become works of vain prodigality and useless ostentation. I doubt whether Gibbon has made sufficient allowance for the “malignity” of the *Anecdota*; at all events, the extreme and disgusting profligacy of Theodora’s early life rests entirely on this virulent libel—M.]

I. In the exercise of supreme power, the first act of Justinian was to divide it with the woman whom he loved, the famous Theodora, [20](#) whose strange elevation cannot be applauded as the triumph of female virtue. Under the reign of Anastasius, the care of the wild beasts maintained by the green faction at Constantinople was intrusted to Acacius, a native of the Isle of Cyprus, who, from his employment, was surnamed the master of the bears. This honorable office was given after his death to another candidate, notwithstanding the diligence of his widow, who had already provided a husband and a successor. Acacius had left three daughters, Comito, [21](#) Theodora, and Anastasia, the eldest of whom did not then exceed the age of seven years. On a solemn festival, these helpless orphans were sent by their distressed and indignant mother, in the garb of suppliants, into the midst of the theatre: the green faction received them with contempt, the blues with compassion; and this difference, which sunk deep into the mind of Theodora, was felt long afterwards in the administration of the empire. As they improved in age and beauty, the three sisters were successively devoted to the public

and private pleasures of the Byzantine people: and Theodora, after following Comito on the stage, in the dress of a slave, with a stool on her head, was at length permitted to exercise her independent talents. She neither danced, nor sung, nor played on the flute; her skill was confined to the pantomime arts; she excelled in buffoon characters, and as often as the comedian swelled her cheeks, and complained with a ridiculous tone and gesture of the blows that were inflicted, the whole theatre of Constantinople resounded with laughter and applause. The beauty of Theodora [22](#) was the subject of more flattering praise, and the source of more exquisite delight. Her features were delicate and regular; her complexion, though somewhat pale, was tinged with a natural color; every sensation was instantly expressed by the vivacity of her eyes; her easy motions displayed the graces of a small but elegant figure; and either love or adulation might proclaim, that painting and poetry were incapable of delineating the matchless excellence of her form. But this form was degraded by the facility with which it was exposed to the public eye, and prostituted to licentious desire. Her venal charms were abandoned to a promiscuous crowd of citizens and strangers of every rank, and of every profession: the fortunate lover who had been promised a night of enjoyment, was often driven from her bed by a stronger or more wealthy favorite; and when she passed through the streets, her presence was avoided by all who wished to escape either the scandal or the temptation. The satirical historian has not blushed [23](#) to describe the naked scenes which Theodora was not ashamed to exhibit in the theatre. [24](#) After exhausting the arts of sensual pleasure, [25](#) she most ungratefully murmured against the parsimony of Nature; [26](#) but her murmurs, her pleasures, and her arts, must be veiled in the obscurity of a learned language. After reigning for some time, the delight and contempt of the capital, she condescended to accompany Ecebolus, a native of Tyre, who had obtained the government of the African Pentapolis. But this union was frail and transient; Ecebolus soon rejected an expensive or faithless concubine; she was reduced at Alexandria to extreme distress; and in her laborious return to Constantinople, every city of the East admired and enjoyed the fair Cyprian, whose merit appeared to justify her descent from the peculiar island of Venus. The vague commerce of Theodora, and the most detestable precautions, preserved her from the danger which she feared; yet once, and once only, she became a mother. The infant was saved and educated in Arabia, by his father, who imparted to him on his death-bed, that he was the son of an empress. Filled with ambitious hopes, the unsuspecting youth immediately hastened to the palace of Constantinople, and was admitted to the presence of his mother. As he was never more seen, even after the decease of Theodora, she deserves the foul imputation of extinguishing with his life a secret so offensive to her Imperial virtue. [2611](#)

- 21 [\(return\)](#)
[Comito was afterwards married to Sittas, duke of Armenia, the father, perhaps, at least she might be the mother, of the empress Sophia. Two nephews of Theodora may be the sons of Anastasia, (Aleman. p. 30, 31.)]
- 22 [\(return\)](#)
[Her statue was raised at Constantinople, on a porphyry column. See Procopius, (de Edif. l. i. c. 11,) who gives her portrait in the Anecdotes, (c. 10.) Aleman. (p. 47) produces one from a Mosaic at Ravenna, loaded with pearls and jewels, and yet handsome.]
- 23 [\(return\)](#)
[A fragment of the Anecdotes, (c. 9,) somewhat too naked, was suppressed by Alemannus, though extant in the Vatican Ms.; nor has the defect been supplied in the Paris or Venice editions. La Mothe le Vayer (tom. viii. p. 155) gave the first hint of this curious and genuine passage, (Jortin's Remarks, vol. iv. p. 366,) which he had received from Rome, and it has been since published in the Menagiana (tom. iii. p. 254—259) with a Latin version.]
- 24 [\(return\)](#)
[After the mention of a narrow girdle, (as none could appear stark naked in the theatre,) Procopius thus proceeds. I have heard that a learned prelate, now deceased, was fond of quoting this passage in conversation.]
- 25 [\(return\)](#)
[Theodora surpassed the Crispa of Ausonius, (Epigram lxxi.,) who imitated the capitalis luxus of the females of Nola. See Quintilian Institut. viii. 6, and Torrentius ad Horat. Sermon. l. i. sat. 2, v. 101. At a memorable supper, thirty slaves waited round the table ten young men feasted with Theodora. Her charity was universal. Et lassata viris, necdum satiata, recessit.]
- 26 [\(return\)](#)
[She wished for a fourth altar, on which she might pour libations to the god of love.]
- 2611 [\(return\)](#)
[Gibbon should have remembered the axiom which he quotes in another piece, scelera ostendi oportet dum puniantur abscondi flagitia.—M.]

In the most abject state of her fortune, and reputation, some vision, either of sleep or of fancy, had whispered to Theodora the pleasing assurance that she was destined to become the spouse of a potent monarch. Conscious of her approaching greatness, she

returned from Paphlagonia to Constantinople; assumed, like a skilful actress, a more decent character; relieved her poverty by the laudable industry of spinning wool; and affected a life of chastity and solitude in a small house, which she afterwards changed into a magnificent temple. [27](#) Her beauty, assisted by art or accident, soon attracted, captivated, and fixed, the patrician Justinian, who already reigned with absolute sway under the name of his uncle. Perhaps she contrived to enhance the value of a gift which she had so often lavished on the meanest of mankind; perhaps she inflamed, at first by modest delays, and at last by sensual allurements, the desires of a lover, who, from nature or devotion, was addicted to long vigils and abstemious diet. When his first transports had subsided, she still maintained the same ascendant over his mind, by the more solid merit of temper and understanding. Justinian delighted to ennoble and enrich the object of his affection; the treasures of the East were poured at her feet, and the nephew of Justin was determined, perhaps by religious scruples, to bestow on his concubine the sacred and legal character of a wife. But the laws of Rome expressly prohibited the marriage of a senator with any female who had been dishonored by a servile origin or theatrical profession: the empress Lupicina, or Euphemia, a Barbarian of rustic manners, but of irreproachable virtue, refused to accept a prostitute for her niece; and even Vigilantia, the superstitious mother of Justinian, though she acknowledged the wit and beauty of Theodora, was seriously apprehensive, lest the levity and arrogance of that artful paramour might corrupt the piety and happiness of her son. These obstacles were removed by the inflexible constancy of Justinian. He patiently expected the death of the empress; he despised the tears of his mother, who soon sunk under the weight of her affliction; and a law was promulgated in the name of the emperor Justin, which abolished the rigid jurisprudence of antiquity. A glorious repentance (the words of the edict) was left open for the unhappy females who had prostituted their persons on the theatre, and they were permitted to contract a legal union with the most illustrious of the Romans. [28](#) This indulgence was speedily followed by the solemn nuptials of Justinian and Theodora; her dignity was gradually exalted with that of her lover, and, as soon as Justin had invested his nephew with the purple, the patriarch of Constantinople placed the diadem on the heads of the emperor and empress of the East. But the usual honors which the severity of Roman manners had allowed to the wives of princes, could not satisfy either the ambition of Theodora or the fondness of Justinian. He seated her on the throne as an equal and independent colleague in the sovereignty of the empire, and an oath of allegiance was imposed on the governors of the provinces in the joint names of Justinian and Theodora. [29](#) The Eastern world fell prostrate before the genius and fortune of the daughter of Acacius. The prostitute who, in the presence of innumerable spectators, had polluted the theatre of Constantinople, was adored as a queen in the same city, by grave magistrates, orthodox bishops, victorious generals, and captive monarchs. [30](#)

argues sensibly that Theodora would not have immortalized a brothel: but I apply this fact to her second and chaster residence at Constantinople.]

28

[\(return\)](#)

[See the old law in Justinian's Code, (l. v. tit. v. leg. 7, tit. xxvii. leg. 1,) under the years 336 and 454. The new edict (about the year 521 or 522, Aleman. p. 38, 96) very awkwardly repeals no more than the clause of mulieres scenicoe, libertinae, tabernariae. See the novels 89 and 117, and a Greek rescript from Justinian to the bishops, (Aleman. p. 41.)]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[I swear by the Father, &c., by the Virgin Mary, by the four Gospels, quae in manibus teneo, and by the Holy Archangels Michael and Gabriel, puram conscientiam germanumque servitium me servaturum, sacratissimis DDNN. Justiniano et Theodoraе conjugī ejus, (Novell. viii. tit. 3.) Would the oath have been binding in favor of the widow? Communes tituli et triumphī, &c., (Aleman. p. 47, 48.)]

30

[\(return\)](#)

["Let greatness own her, and she's mean no more," &c. Without Warburton's critical telescope, I should never have seen, in this general picture of triumphant vice, any personal allusion to Theodora.]

Chapter XL: Reign Of Justinian.—Part II.

Those who believe that the female mind is totally depraved by the loss of chastity, will eagerly listen to all the invectives of private envy, or popular resentment which have dissembled the virtues of Theodora, exaggerated her vices, and condemned with rigor the venal or voluntary sins of the youthful harlot. From a motive of shame, or contempt, she often declined the servile homage of the multitude, escaped from the odious light of the capital, and passed the greatest part of the year in the palaces and gardens which were pleasantly seated on the sea-coast of the Propontis and the Bosphorus. Her private hours were devoted to the prudent as well as grateful care of her beauty, the luxury of the bath and table, and the long slumber of the evening and the morning. Her secret apartments were occupied by the favorite women and eunuchs, whose interests and passions she indulged at the expense of justice; the most illustrious personages of the state were crowded into a dark and sultry antechamber, and when at last, after tedious attendance, they were admitted to kiss the feet of Theodora, they experienced, as her humor might suggest, the silent arrogance of an empress, or the capricious levity of a comedian. Her rapacious avarice to accumulate an immense

treasure, may be excused by the apprehension of her husband's death, which could leave no alternative between ruin and the throne; and fear as well as ambition might exasperate Theodora against two generals, who, during the malady of the emperor, had rashly declared that they were not disposed to acquiesce in the choice of the capital. But the reproach of cruelty, so repugnant even to her softer vices, has left an indelible stain on the memory of Theodora. Her numerous spies observed, and zealously reported, every action, or word, or look, injurious to their royal mistress. Whomsoever they accused were cast into her peculiar prisons, [31](#) inaccessible to the inquiries of justice; and it was rumored, that the torture of the rack, or scourge, had been inflicted in the presence of the female tyrant, insensible to the voice of prayer or of pity. [32](#) Some of these unhappy victims perished in deep, unwholesome dungeons, while others were permitted, after the loss of their limbs, their reason, or their fortunes, to appear in the world, the living monuments of her vengeance, which was commonly extended to the children of those whom she had suspected or injured. The senator or bishop, whose death or exile Theodora had pronounced, was delivered to a trusty messenger, and his diligence was quickened by a menace from her own mouth. "If you fail in the execution of my commands, I swear by Him who liveth forever, that your skin shall be flayed from your body." [33](#)

31

[\(return\)](#)

[Her prisons, a labyrinth, a Tartarus, (Anecd. c. 4,) were under the palace. Darkness is propitious to cruelty, but it is likewise favorable to calumny and fiction.]

32

[\(return\)](#)

[A more jocular whipping was inflicted on Saturninus, for presuming to say that his wife, a favorite of the empress, had not been found. (Anecd. c. 17.)]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[Per viventem in saecula excoriari te faciam. Anastasius de Vitis Pont. Roman. in Vigilio, p. 40.]

If the creed of Theodora had not been tainted with heresy, her exemplary devotion might have atoned, in the opinion of her contemporaries, for pride, avarice, and cruelty. But, if she employed her influence to assuage the intolerant fury of the emperor, the present age will allow some merit to her religion, and much indulgence to her speculative errors. [34](#) The name of Theodora was introduced, with equal honor, in all the pious and charitable foundations of Justinian; and the most benevolent institution of his reign may be ascribed to the sympathy of the empress for her less fortunate sisters, who had been seduced or compelled to embrace the trade of prostitution. A palace, on the Asiatic side of the Bosphorus, was converted into a stately and spacious monastery, and a liberal maintenance was assigned to five hundred women, who had been collected from the streets and brothels of Constantinople. In this safe and holy retreat, they were devoted to perpetual confinement; and the despair of some, who threw themselves

headlong into the sea, was lost in the gratitude of the penitents, who had been delivered from sin and misery by their generous benefactress. [35](#) The prudence of Theodora is celebrated by Justinian himself; and his laws are attributed to the sage counsels of his most reverend wife whom he had received as the gift of the Deity. [36](#) Her courage was displayed amidst the tumult of the people and the terrors of the court. Her chastity, from the moment of her union with Justinian, is founded on the silence of her implacable enemies; and although the daughter of Acacius might be satiated with love, yet some applause is due to the firmness of a mind which could sacrifice pleasure and habit to the stronger sense either of duty or interest. The wishes and prayers of Theodora could never obtain the blessing of a lawful son, and she buried an infant daughter, the sole offspring of her marriage. [37](#) Notwithstanding this disappointment, her dominion was permanent and absolute; she preserved, by art or merit, the affections of Justinian; and their seeming dissensions were always fatal to the courtiers who believed them to be sincere. Perhaps her health had been impaired by the licentiousness of her youth; but it was always delicate, and she was directed by her physicians to use the Pythian warm baths. In this journey, the empress was followed by the Praetorian præfect, the great treasurer, several counts and patricians, and a splendid train of four thousand attendants: the highways were repaired at her approach; a palace was erected for her reception; and as she passed through Bithynia, she distributed liberal alms to the churches, the monasteries, and the hospitals, that they might implore Heaven for the restoration of her health. [38](#) At length, in the twenty-fourth year of her marriage, and the twenty-second of her reign, she was consumed by a cancer; [39](#) and the irreparable loss was deplored by her husband, who, in the room of a theatrical prostitute, might have selected the purest and most noble virgin of the East. [40](#)

34 [\(return\)](#)

[Ludewig, p. 161—166. I give him credit for the charitable attempt, although he hath not much charity in his temper.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare the anecdotes (c. 17) with the Edifices (l. i. c. 9)—how differently may the same fact be stated! John Malala (tom. ii. p. 174, 175) observes, that on this, or a similar occasion, she released and clothed the girls whom she had purchased from the stews at five aurei apiece.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[Novel. viii. 1. An allusion to Theodora. Her enemies read the name Daemonodora, (Aleman. p. 66.)]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[St. Sabas refused to pray for a son of Theodora, lest he should prove a heretic worse than Anastasius himself, (Cyril in Vit. St. Sabae, apud Aleman. p. 70, 109.)]

- 38 [\(return\)](#)
[See John Malala, tom. ii. p. 174. Theophanes, p. 158. Procopius de Edific. l. v. c. 3.]
- 39 [\(return\)](#)
[Theodora Chalcedonensis synodi inimica canceris plaga toto corpore perfusa vitam prodigiose finivit, (Victor Tununensis in Chron.) On such occasions, an orthodox mind is steeled against pity. Alemannus (p. 12, 13) understands of Theophanes as civil language, which does not imply either piety or repentance; yet two years after her death, St. Theodora is celebrated by Paul Silentarius, (in proem. v. 58—62.)]
- 40 [\(return\)](#)
[As she persecuted the popes, and rejected a council, Baronius exhausts the names of Eve, Dalila, Herodias, &c.; after which he has recourse to his infernal dictionary: civis inferni—alumna daemonum—satanico agitata spiritu-oestro percita diabolico, &c., &c., (A.D. 548, No. 24.)]

II. A material difference may be observed in the games of antiquity: the most eminent of the Greeks were actors, the Romans were merely spectators. The Olympic stadium was open to wealth, merit, and ambition; and if the candidates could depend on their personal skill and activity, they might pursue the footsteps of Diomedes and Menelaus, and conduct their own horses in the rapid career. [41](#) Ten, twenty, forty chariots were allowed to start at the same instant; a crown of leaves was the reward of the victor; and his fame, with that of his family and country, was chanted in lyric strains more durable than monuments of brass and marble. But a senator, or even a citizen, conscious of his dignity, would have blushed to expose his person, or his horses, in the circus of Rome. The games were exhibited at the expense of the republic, the magistrates, or the emperors: but the reins were abandoned to servile hands; and if the profits of a favorite charioteer sometimes exceeded those of an advocate, they must be considered as the effects of popular extravagance, and the high wages of a disgraceful profession. The race, in its first institution, was a simple contest of two chariots, whose drivers were distinguished by white and red liveries: two additional colors, a light green, and a caerulean blue, were afterwards introduced; and as the races were repeated twenty-five times, one hundred chariots contributed in the same day to the pomp of the circus. The four factions soon acquired a legal establishment, and a mysterious origin, and their fanciful colors were derived from the various appearances of nature in the four seasons of the year; the red dogstar of summer, the snows of winter, the deep shades of autumn, and the cheerful verdure of the spring. [42](#) Another interpretation preferred the elements to the seasons, and the struggle of the green and blue was supposed to represent the conflict of the earth and sea. Their respective victories announced either a plentiful harvest or a prosperous navigation, and the hostility of the husbandmen and mariners

was somewhat less absurd than the blind ardor of the Roman people, who devoted their lives and fortunes to the color which they had espoused. Such folly was disdained and indulged by the wisest princes; but the names of Caligula, Nero, Vitellius, Verus, Commodus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus, were enrolled in the blue or green factions of the circus; they frequented their stables, applauded their favorites, chastised their antagonists, and deserved the esteem of the populace, by the natural or affected imitation of their manners. The bloody and tumultuous contest continued to disturb the public festivity, till the last age of the spectacles of Rome; and Theodoric, from a motive of justice or affection, interposed his authority to protect the greens against the violence of a consul and a patrician, who were passionately addicted to the blue faction of the circus. [43](#)

41 [\(return\)](#)

[Read and feel the xxiid book of the Iliad, a living picture of manners, passions, and the whole form and spirit of the chariot race West's Dissertation on the Olympic Games (sect. xii.—xvii.) affords much curious and authentic information.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[The four colors, albati, russati, prasini, veneti, represent the four seasons, according to Cassiodorus, (Var. iii. 51,) who lavishes much wit and eloquence on this theatrical mystery. Of these colors, the three first may be fairly translated white, red, and green. Venetus is explained by coeruleus, a word various and vague: it is properly the sky reflected in the sea; but custom and convenience may allow blue as an equivalent, (Robert. Stephan. sub voce. Spence's Polymetis, p. 228.)]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[See Onuphrius Panvinius de Ludis Circensibus, l. i. c. 10, 11; the xviith Annotation on Mascou's History of the Germans; and Aleman ad c. vii.]

Constantinople adopted the follies, though not the virtues, of ancient Rome; and the same factions which had agitated the circus, raged with redoubled fury in the hippodrome. Under the reign of Anastasius, this popular frenzy was inflamed by religious zeal; and the greens, who had treacherously concealed stones and daggers under baskets of fruit, massacred, at a solemn festival, three thousand of their blue adversaries. [44](#) From this capital, the pestilence was diffused into the provinces and cities of the East, and the sportive distinction of two colors produced two strong and irreconcilable factions, which shook the foundations of a feeble government. [45](#) The popular dissensions, founded on the most serious interest, or holy pretence, have scarcely equalled the obstinacy of this wanton discord, which invaded the peace of families, divided friends and brothers, and tempted the female sex, though seldom seen in the circus, to espouse the inclinations of their lovers, or to contradict the wishes of

their husbands. Every law, either human or divine, was trampled under foot, and as long as the party was successful, its deluded followers appeared careless of private distress or public calamity. The license, without the freedom, of democracy, was revived at Antioch and Constantinople, and the support of a faction became necessary to every candidate for civil or ecclesiastical honors. A secret attachment to the family or sect of Anastasius was imputed to the greens; the blues were zealously devoted to the cause of orthodoxy and Justinian, [46](#) and their grateful patron protected, above five years, the disorders of a faction, whose seasonable tumults overawed the palace, the senate, and the capitals of the East. Insolent with royal favor, the blues affected to strike terror by a peculiar and Barbaric dress, the long hair of the Huns, their close sleeves and ample garments, a lofty step, and a sonorous voice. In the day they concealed their two-edged poniards, but in the night they boldly assembled in arms, and in numerous bands, prepared for every act of violence and rapine. Their adversaries of the green faction, or even inoffensive citizens, were stripped and often murdered by these nocturnal robbers, and it became dangerous to wear any gold buttons or girdles, or to appear at a late hour in the streets of a peaceful capital. A daring spirit, rising with impunity, proceeded to violate the safeguard of private houses; and fire was employed to facilitate the attack, or to conceal the crimes of these factious rioters. No place was safe or sacred from their depredations; to gratify either avarice or revenge, they profusely spilt the blood of the innocent; churches and altars were polluted by atrocious murders; and it was the boast of the assassins, that their dexterity could always inflict a mortal wound with a single stroke of their dagger. The dissolute youth of Constantinople adopted the blue livery of disorder; the laws were silent, and the bonds of society were relaxed: creditors were compelled to resign their obligations; judges to reverse their sentence; masters to enfranchise their slaves; fathers to supply the extravagance of their children; noble matrons were prostituted to the lust of their servants; beautiful boys were torn from the arms of their parents; and wives, unless they preferred a voluntary death, were ravished in the presence of their husbands. [47](#) The despair of the greens, who were persecuted by their enemies, and deserted by the magistrates, assumed the privilege of defence, perhaps of retaliation; but those who survived the combat were dragged to execution, and the unhappy fugitives, escaping to woods and caverns, preyed without mercy on the society from whence they were expelled. Those ministers of justice who had courage to punish the crimes, and to brave the resentment, of the blues, became the victims of their indiscreet zeal; a præfect of Constantinople fled for refuge to the holy sepulchre, a count of the East was ignominiously whipped, and a governor of Cilicia was hanged, by the order of Theodora, on the tomb of two assassins whom he had condemned for the murder of his groom, and a daring attack upon his own life. [48](#) An aspiring candidate may be tempted to build his greatness on the public confusion, but it is the interest as well as duty of a sovereign to maintain the authority of the laws. The first edict of Justinian, which was often repeated, and sometimes executed, announced his firm resolution to support the innocent, and to chastise the guilty, of every

denomination and color. Yet the balance of justice was still inclined in favor of the blue faction, by the secret affection, the habits, and the fears of the emperor; his equity, after an apparent struggle, submitted, without reluctance, to the implacable passions of Theodora, and the empress never forgot, or forgave, the injuries of the comedian. At the accession of the younger Justin, the proclamation of equal and rigorous justice indirectly condemned the partiality of the former reign. “Ye blues, Justinian is no more! ye greens, he is still alive!” [49](#)

44 [\(return\)](#)

[Marcellin. in Chron. p. 47. Instead of the vulgar word *venata* he uses the more exquisite terms of *coerulea* and *coerealis*. Baronius (A.D. 501, No. 4, 5, 6) is satisfied that the blues were orthodox; but Tillemont is angry at the supposition, and will not allow any martyrs in a playhouse, (Hist. des Emp. tom. vi. p. 554.)]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[See Procopius, (Persic. l. i. c. 24.) In describing the vices of the factions and of the government, the public, is not more favorable than the secret, historian. Aleman. (p. 26) has quoted a fine passage from Gregory Nazianzen, which proves the inveteracy of the evil.]

46 [\(return\)](#)

[The partiality of Justinian for the blues (Anecd. c. 7) is attested by Evagrius, (Hist. Eccles. l. iv. c. 32,) John Malala, (tom ii p. 138, 139,) especially for Antioch; and Theophanes, (p. 142.)]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[A wife, (says Procopius,) who was seized and almost ravished by a blue-coat, threw herself into the Bosphorus. The bishops of the second Syria (Aleman. p. 26) deplore a similar suicide, the guilt or glory of female chastity, and name the heroine.]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[The doubtful credit of Procopius (Anecd. c. 17) is supported by the less partial Evagrius, who confirms the fact, and specifies the names. The tragic fate of the præfect of Constantinople is related by John Malala, (tom. ii. p. 139.)]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[See John Malala, (tom. ii. p. 147;) yet he owns that Justinian was attached to the blues. The seeming discord of the emperor and Theodora is, perhaps, viewed with too much jealousy and refinement by Procopius, (Anecd. c. 10.) See Aleman. Praefat. p. 6.]

A sedition, which almost laid Constantinople in ashes, was excited by the mutual hatred and momentary reconciliation of the two factions. In the fifth year of his reign, Justinian celebrated the festival of the ides of January; the games were incessantly disturbed by the clamorous discontent of the greens: till the twenty-second race, the emperor maintained his silent gravity; at length, yielding to his impatience, he condescended to hold, in abrupt sentences, and by the voice of a crier, the most singular dialogue [50](#) that ever passed between a prince and his subjects. Their first complaints were respectful and modest; they accused the subordinate ministers of oppression, and proclaimed their wishes for the long life and victory of the emperor. "Be patient and attentive, ye insolent railers!" exclaimed Justinian; "be mute, ye Jews, Samaritans, and Manichaeans!" The greens still attempted to awaken his compassion. "We are poor, we are innocent, we are injured, we dare not pass through the streets: a general persecution is exercised against our name and color. Let us die, O emperor! but let us die by your command, and for your service!" But the repetition of partial and passionate invectives degraded, in their eyes, the majesty of the purple; they renounced allegiance to the prince who refused justice to his people; lamented that the father of Justinian had been born; and branded his son with the opprobrious names of a homicide, an ass, and a perjured tyrant. "Do you despise your lives?" cried the indignant monarch: the blues rose with fury from their seats; their hostile clamors thundered in the hippodrome; and their adversaries, deserting the unequal contest spread terror and despair through the streets of Constantinople. At this dangerous moment, seven notorious assassins of both factions, who had been condemned by the præfect, were carried round the city, and afterwards transported to the place of execution in the suburb of Pera. Four were immediately beheaded; a fifth was hanged: but when the same punishment was inflicted on the remaining two, the rope broke, they fell alive to the ground, the populace applauded their escape, and the monks of St. Conon, issuing from the neighboring convent, conveyed them in a boat to the sanctuary of the church. [51](#) As one of these criminals was of the blue, and the other of the green livery, the two factions were equally provoked by the cruelty of their oppressor, or the ingratitude of their patron; and a short truce was concluded till they had delivered their prisoners and satisfied their revenge. The palace of the præfect, who withstood the seditious torrent, was instantly burnt, his officers and guards were massacred, the prisons were forced open, and freedom was restored to those who could only use it for the public destruction. A military force, which had been despatched to the aid of the civil magistrate, was fiercely encountered by an armed multitude, whose numbers and boldness continually increased; and the Heruli, the wildest Barbarians in the service of the empire, overturned the priests and their relics, which, from a pious motive, had been rashly interposed to separate the bloody conflict. The tumult was exasperated by this sacrilege, the people fought with enthusiasm in the cause of God; the women, from the roofs and windows, showered stones on the heads of the soldiers, who darted fire brands against the houses; and the various flames, which had been kindled by the hands of citizens and strangers, spread

without control over the face of the city. The conflagration involved the cathedral of St. Sophia, the baths of Zeuxippus, a part of the palace, from the first entrance to the altar of Mars, and the long portico from the palace to the forum of Constantine: a large hospital, with the sick patients, was consumed; many churches and stately edifices were destroyed and an immense treasure of gold and silver was either melted or lost. From such scenes of horror and distress, the wise and wealthy citizens escaped over the Bosphorus to the Asiatic side; and during five days Constantinople was abandoned to the factions, whose watchword, Nika, vanquish! has given a name to this memorable sedition. [52](#)

- 50 [\(return\)](#)
[This dialogue, which Theophanes has preserved, exhibits the popular language, as well as the manners, of Constantinople, in the sixth century. Their Greek is mingled with many strange and barbarous words, for which Ducange cannot always find a meaning or etymology.]
- 51 [\(return\)](#)
[See this church and monastery in Ducange, C. P. Christiana, l. iv p 182.]
- 52 [\(return\)](#)
[The history of the Nika sedition is extracted from Marcellinus, (in Chron.,) Procopius, (Persic. l. i. c. 26,) John Malala, (tom. ii. p. 213—218,) Chron. Paschal., (p. 336—340,) Theophanes, (Chronograph. p. 154—158) and Zonaras, (l. xiv. p. 61—63.)]

As long as the factions were divided, the triumphant blues, and desponding greens, appeared to behold with the same indifference the disorders of the state. They agreed to censure the corrupt management of justice and the finance; and the two responsible ministers, the artful Tribonian, and the rapacious John of Cappadocia, were loudly arraigned as the authors of the public misery. The peaceful murmurs of the people would have been disregarded: they were heard with respect when the city was in flames; the quaestor, and the praefect, were instantly removed, and their offices were filled by two senators of blameless integrity. After this popular concession, Justinian proceeded to the hippodrome to confess his own errors, and to accept the repentance of his grateful subjects; but they distrusted his assurances, though solemnly pronounced in the presence of the holy Gospels; and the emperor, alarmed by their distrust, retreated with precipitation to the strong fortress of the palace. The obstinacy of the tumult was now imputed to a secret and ambitious conspiracy, and a suspicion was entertained, that the insurgents, more especially the green faction, had been supplied with arms and money by Hypatius and Pompey, two patricians, who could neither forget with honor, nor remember with safety, that they were the nephews of the emperor Anastasius. Capriciously trusted, disgraced, and pardoned, by the jealous levity of the monarch, they had appeared as loyal servants before the throne; and, during five days of the

tumult, they were detained as important hostages; till at length, the fears of Justinian prevailing over his prudence, he viewed the two brothers in the light of spies, perhaps of assassins, and sternly commanded them to depart from the palace. After a fruitless representation, that obedience might lead to involuntary treason, they retired to their houses, and in the morning of the sixth day, Hypatius was surrounded and seized by the people, who, regardless of his virtuous resistance, and the tears of his wife, transported their favorite to the forum of Constantine, and instead of a diadem, placed a rich collar on his head. If the usurper, who afterwards pleaded the merit of his delay, had complied with the advice of his senate, and urged the fury of the multitude, their first irresistible effort might have oppressed or expelled his trembling competitor. The Byzantine palace enjoyed a free communication with the sea; vessels lay ready at the garden stairs; and a secret resolution was already formed, to convey the emperor with his family and treasures to a safe retreat, at some distance from the capital.

Justinian was lost, if the prostitute whom he raised from the theatre had not renounced the timidity, as well as the virtues, of her sex. In the midst of a council, where Belisarius was present, Theodora alone displayed the spirit of a hero; and she alone, without apprehending his future hatred, could save the emperor from the imminent danger, and his unworthy fears. "If flight," said the consort of Justinian, "were the only means of safety, yet I should disdain to fly. Death is the condition of our birth; but they who have reigned should never survive the loss of dignity and dominion. I implore Heaven, that I may never be seen, not a day, without my diadem and purple; that I may no longer behold the light, when I cease to be saluted with the name of queen. If you resolve, O Caesar! to fly, you have treasures; behold the sea, you have ships; but tremble lest the desire of life should expose you to wretched exile and ignominious death. For my own part, I adhere to the maxim of antiquity, that the throne is a glorious sepulchre." The firmness of a woman restored the courage to deliberate and act, and courage soon discovers the resources of the most desperate situation. It was an easy and a decisive measure to revive the animosity of the factions; the blues were astonished at their own guilt and folly, that a trifling injury should provoke them to conspire with their implacable enemies against a gracious and liberal benefactor; they again proclaimed the majesty of Justinian; and the greens, with their upstart emperor, were left alone in the hippodrome. The fidelity of the guards was doubtful; but the military force of Justinian consisted in three thousand veterans, who had been trained to valor and discipline in the Persian and Illyrian wars.

Under the command of Belisarius and Mundus, they silently marched in two divisions from the palace, forced their obscure way through narrow passages, expiring flames, and falling edifices, and burst open at the same moment the two opposite gates of the hippodrome. In this narrow space, the disorderly and affrighted crowd was incapable of resisting on either side a firm and regular attack; the blues signaled the fury of their repentance; and it is computed, that above thirty thousand persons were slain in the merciless and promiscuous carnage of the day. Hypatius was dragged from his throne,

and conducted, with his brother Pompey, to the feet of the emperor: they implored his clemency; but their crime was manifest, their innocence uncertain, and Justinian had been too much terrified to forgive. The next morning the two nephews of Anastasius, with eighteen illustrious accomplices, of patrician or consular rank, were privately executed by the soldiers; their bodies were thrown into the sea, their palaces razed, and their fortunes confiscated. The hippodrome itself was condemned, during several years, to a mournful silence: with the restoration of the games, the same disorders revived; and the blue and green factions continued to afflict the reign of Justinian, and to disturb the tranquility of the Eastern empire. [53](#)

53

[\(return\)](#)

[Marcellinus says in general terms, innumeris populis in circotrucidatis. Procopius numbers 30,000 victims: and the 35,000 of Theophanes are swelled to 40,000 by the more recent Zonaras. Such is the usual progress of exaggeration.]

III. That empire, after Rome was barbarous, still embraced the nations whom she had conquered beyond the Adriatic, and as far as the frontiers of Aethiopia and Persia. Justinian reigned over sixty-four provinces, and nine hundred and thirty-five cities; [54](#) his dominions were blessed by nature with the advantages of soil, situation, and climate: and the improvements of human art had been perpetually diffused along the coast of the Mediterranean and the banks of the Nile from ancient Troy to the Egyptian Thebes. Abraham [55](#) had been relieved by the well-known plenty of Egypt; the same country, a small and populous tract, was still capable of exporting, each year, two hundred and sixty thousand quarters of wheat for the use of Constantinople; [56](#) and the capital of Justinian was supplied with the manufactures of Sidon, fifteen centuries after they had been celebrated in the poems of Homer. [57](#) The annual powers of vegetation, instead of being exhausted by two thousand harvests, were renewed and invigorated by skilful husbandry, rich manure, and seasonable repose. The breed of domestic animals was infinitely multiplied. Plantations, buildings, and the instruments of labor and luxury, which are more durable than the term of human life, were accumulated by the care of successive generations. Tradition preserved, and experience simplified, the humble practice of the arts: society was enriched by the division of labor and the facility of exchange; and every Roman was lodged, clothed, and subsisted, by the industry of a thousand hands. The invention of the loom and distaff has been piously ascribed to the gods. In every age, a variety of animal and vegetable productions, hair, skins, wool, flax, cotton, and at length silk, have been skilfully manufactured to hide or adorn the human body; they were stained with an infusion of permanent colors; and the pencil was successfully employed to improve the labors of the loom. In the choice of those colors [58](#) which imitate the beauties of nature, the freedom of taste and fashion was indulged; but the deep purple [59](#) which the Phœnicians extracted from a shell-fish, was restrained to the sacred person and palace of the emperor; and the penalties of

treason were denounced against the ambitious subjects who dared to usurp the prerogative of the throne. [60](#)

54 [\(return\)](#)

[Hierocles, a contemporary of Justinian, composed his (*Itineraria*, p. 631,) review of the eastern provinces and cities, before the year 535, (Wesseling, in *Praefat.* and *Not. ad p.* 623, &c.)]

55 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Book of Genesis (xii. 10) and the administration of Joseph. The annals of the Greeks and Hebrews agree in the early arts and plenty of Egypt: but this antiquity supposes a long series of improvement; and Warburton, who is almost stifled by the Hebrew calls aloud for the Samaritan, Chronology, (*Divine Legation*, vol. iii. p. 29, &c.)

* Note: The recent extraordinary discoveries in Egyptian antiquities strongly confirm the high notion of the early Egyptian civilization, and imperatively demand a longer period for their development. As to the common Hebrew chronology, as far as such a subject is capable of demonstration, it appears to me to have been framed, with a particular view, by the Jews of Tiberias. It was not the chronology of the Samaritans, not that of the LXX., not that of Josephus, not that of St. Paul.—M.]

56 [\(return\)](#)

[Eight millions of Roman modii, besides a contribution of 80,000 aurei for the expenses of water-carriage, from which the subject was graciously excused. See the 13th Edict of Justinian: the numbers are checked and verified by the agreement of the Greek and Latin texts.]

57 [\(return\)](#)

[Homer's *Iliad*, vi. 289. These veils, were the work of the Sidonian women. But this passage is more honorable to the manufactures than to the navigation of Phoenicia, from whence they had been imported to Troy in Phrygian bottoms.]

58 [\(return\)](#)

[See in Ovid (*de Arte Amandi*, iii. 269, &c.) a poetical list of twelve colors borrowed from flowers, the elements, &c. But it is almost impossible to discriminate by words all the nice and various shades both of art and nature.]

59 [\(return\)](#)

[By the discovery of cochineal, &c., we far surpass the colors of antiquity. Their royal purple had a strong smell, and a dark cast as deep as bull's

blood—obscuritas rubens, (says Cassiodorus, Var. 1, 2,) nigredo sanguinea. The president Goguet (Origine des Loix et des Arts, part ii. l. ii. c. 2, p. 184—215) will amuse and satisfy the reader. I doubt whether his book, especially in England, is as well known as it deserves to be.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[Historical proofs of this jealousy have been occasionally introduced, and many more might have been added; but the arbitrary acts of despotism were justified by the sober and general declarations of law, (Codex Theodosian. l. x. tit. 21, leg. 3. Codex Justinian. l. xi. tit. 8, leg. 5.) An inglorious permission, and necessary restriction, was applied to the mince, the female dancers, (Cod. Theodos. l. xv. tit. 7, leg. 11.)]

Chapter XL: Reign Of Justinian.—Part III.

I need not explain that silk [61](#) is originally spun from the bowels of a caterpillar, and that it composes the golden tomb, from whence a worm emerges in the form of a butterfly. Till the reign of Justinian, the silk-worm who feed on the leaves of the white mulberry-tree were confined to China; those of the pine, the oak, and the ash, were common in the forests both of Asia and Europe; but as their education is more difficult, and their produce more uncertain, they were generally neglected, except in the little island of Ceos, near the coast of Attica. A thin gauze was procured from their webs, and this Cean manufacture, the invention of a woman, for female use, was long admired both in the East and at Rome. Whatever suspicions may be raised by the garments of the Medes and Assyrians, Virgil is the most ancient writer, who expressly mentions the soft wool which was combed from the trees of the Seres or Chinese; [62](#) and this natural error, less marvellous than the truth, was slowly corrected by the knowledge of a valuable insect, the first artificer of the luxury of nations. That rare and elegant luxury was censured, in the reign of Tiberius, by the gravest of the Romans; and Pliny, in affected though forcible language, has condemned the thirst of gain, which explores the last confines of the earth, for the pernicious purpose of exposing to the public eye naked draperies and transparent matrons. [63](#) [6311](#) A dress which showed the turn of the limbs, and color of the skin, might gratify vanity, or provoke desire; the silks which had been closely woven in China were sometimes unravelled by the Phœnician women, and the precious materials were multiplied by a looser texture, and the intermixture of linen threads. [64](#) Two hundred years after the age of Pliny, the use of pure, or even of mixed silks, was confined to the female sex, till the opulent citizens of Rome and the provinces were insensibly familiarized with the example of Elagabalus, the first who, by this effeminate habit, had sullied the dignity of an emperor and a man. Aurelian complained,

that a pound of silk was sold at Rome for twelve ounces of gold; but the supply increased with the demand, and the price diminished with the supply. If accident or monopoly sometimes raised the value even above the standard of Aurelian, the manufacturers of Tyre and Berytus were sometimes compelled, by the operation of the same causes, to content themselves with a ninth part of that extravagant rate. [65](#) A law was thought necessary to discriminate the dress of comedians from that of senators; and of the silk exported from its native country the far greater part was consumed by the subjects of Justinian. They were still more intimately acquainted with a shell-fish of the Mediterranean, surnamed the silk-worm of the sea: the fine wool or hair by which the mother-of-pearl affixes itself to the rock is now manufactured for curiosity rather than use; and a robe obtained from the same singular materials was the gift of the Roman emperor to the satraps of Armenia. [66](#)

61

[\(return\)](#)

[In the history of insects (far more wonderful than Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) the silk-worm holds a conspicuous place. The bombyx of the Isle of Ceos, as described by Pliny, (*Hist. Natur.* xi. 26, 27, with the notes of the two learned Jesuits, Hardouin and Brotier,) may be illustrated by a similar species in China, (*Memoires sur les Chinois*, tom. ii. p. 575—598;) but our silk-worm, as well as the white mulberry-tree, were unknown to Theophrastus and Pliny.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[*Georgic.* ii. 121. *Serica quando venerint in usum planissime non acio: suspicor tamen in Julii Caesaris aevo, nam ante non invenio*, says Justus Lipsius, (*Excursus i. ad Tacit. Annal.* ii. 32.) See Dion Cassius, (*l.* xliii. p. 358, edit. Reimar,) and Pausanias, (*l.* vi. p. 519,) the first who describes, however strangely, the Seric insect.]

63

[\(return\)](#)

[*Tam longinquo orbe petitur, ut in publico matrona transluceat...ut denudet foeminas vestis*, (*Plin.* vi. 20, xi. 21.) Varro and Publius Syrus had already played on the *Toga vitrea*, *ventus textilis*, and *nebula linen*, (*Horat. Sermon.* i. 2, 101, with the notes of Torrentius and Dacier.)]

6311

[\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon must have written transparent draperies and naked matrons. Through sometimes affected, he is never inaccurate.—M.]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[On the texture, colors, names, and use of the silk, half silk, and liuen garments of antiquity, see the profound, diffuse, and obscure researches of the great Salmasius, (*in Hist. August.* p. 127, 309, 310,

339, 341, 342, 344, 388—391, 395, 513,) who was ignorant of the most common trades of Dijon or Leyden.]

65

[\(return\)](#)

[Flavius Vopiscus in Aurelian. c. 45, in Hist. August. p. 224. See Salmasius ad Hist. Aug. p. 392, and Plinian. Exercitat. in Solinum, p. 694, 695. The Anecdotes of Procopius (c. 25) state a partial and imperfect rate of the price of silk in the time of Justinian.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius de Edit. l. iii. c. 1. These pinnes de mer are found near Smyrna, Sicily, Corsica, and Minorca; and a pair of gloves of their silk was presented to Pope Benedict XIV.]

A valuable merchandise of small bulk is capable of defraying the expense of land-carriage; and the caravans traversed the whole latitude of Asia in two hundred and forty-three days from the Chinese Ocean to the sea-coast of Syria. Silk was immediately delivered to the Romans by the Persian merchants, [67](#) who frequented the fairs of Armenia and Nisibis; but this trade, which in the intervals of truce was oppressed by avarice and jealousy, was totally interrupted by the long wars of the rival monarchies. The great king might proudly number Sogdiana, and even Serica, among the provinces of his empire; but his real dominion was bounded by the Oxus and his useful intercourse with the Sogdoites, beyond the river, depended on the pleasure of their conquerors, the white Huns, and the Turks, who successively reigned over that industrious people. Yet the most savage dominion has not extirpated the seeds of agriculture and commerce, in a region which is celebrated as one of the four gardens of Asia; the cities of Samarcand and Bochara are advantageously seated for the exchange of its various productions; and their merchants purchased from the Chinese, [68](#) the raw or manufactured silk which they transported into Persia for the use of the Roman empire. In the vain capital of China, the Sogdian caravans were entertained as the suppliant embassies of tributary kingdoms, and if they returned in safety, the bold adventure was rewarded with exorbitant gain. But the difficult and perilous march from Samarcand to the first town of Shensi, could not be performed in less than sixty, eighty, or one hundred days: as soon as they had passed the Jaxartes they entered the desert; and the wandering hordes, unless they are restrained by armies and garrisons, have always considered the citizen and the traveller as the objects of lawful rapine. To escape the Tartar robbers, and the tyrants of Persia, the silk caravans explored a more southern road; they traversed the mountains of Thibet, descended the streams of the Ganges or the Indus, and patiently expected, in the ports of Guzerat and Malabar, the annual fleets of the West. [69](#) But the dangers of the desert were found less intolerable than toil, hunger, and the loss of time; the attempt was seldom renewed, and the only European who has passed that unfrequented way, applauds his own diligence, that, in nine months after his departure

from Pekin, he reached the mouth of the Indus. The ocean, however, was open to the free communication of mankind. From the great river to the tropic of Cancer, the provinces of China were subdued and civilized by the emperors of the North; they were filled about the time of the Christian aera with cities and men, mulberry-trees and their precious inhabitants; and if the Chinese, with the knowledge of the compass, had possessed the genius of the Greeks or Phœnicians, they might have spread their discoveries over the southern hemisphere. I am not qualified to examine, and I am not disposed to believe, their distant voyages to the Persian Gulf, or the Cape of Good Hope; but their ancestors might equal the labors and success of the present race, and the sphere of their navigation might extend from the Isles of Japan to the Straits of Malacca, the pillars, if we may apply that name, of an Oriental Hercules. [70](#) Without losing sight of land, they might sail along the coast to the extreme promontory of Achin, which is annually visited by ten or twelve ships laden with the productions, the manufactures, and even the artificers of China; the Island of Sumatra and the opposite peninsula are faintly delineated [71](#) as the regions of gold and silver; and the trading cities named in the geography of Ptolemy may indicate, that this wealth was not solely derived from the mines. The direct interval between Sumatra and Ceylon is about three hundred leagues: the Chinese and Indian navigators were conducted by the flight of birds and periodical winds; and the ocean might be securely traversed in square-built ships, which, instead of iron, were sewed together with the strong thread of the cocoanut. Ceylon, Serendib, or Taprobana, was divided between two hostile princes; one of whom possessed the mountains, the elephants, and the luminous carbuncle, and the other enjoyed the more solid riches of domestic industry, foreign trade, and the capacious harbor of Trinquemale, which received and dismissed the fleets of the East and West. In this hospitable isle, at an equal distance (as it was computed) from their respective countries, the silk merchants of China, who had collected in their voyages aloes, cloves, nutmeg, and sandal wood, maintained a free and beneficial commerce with the inhabitants of the Persian Gulf. The subjects of the great king exalted, without a rival, his power and magnificence: and the Roman, who confounded their vanity by comparing his paltry coin with a gold medal of the emperor Anastasius, had sailed to Ceylon, in an Aethiopian ship, as a simple passenger. [72](#)

67

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, Persic. l. i. c. 20, l. ii. c. 25; Gothic. l. iv. c. 17. Menander in Excerpt. Legat. p. 107. Of the Parthian or Persian empire, Isidore of Charax (in Stathmis Parthicis, p. 7, 8, in Hudson, Geograph. Minor. tom. ii.) has marked the roads, and Ammianus Marcellinus (l. xxiii. c. 6, p. 400) has enumerated the provinces. * Note: See St. Martin, Mem. sur l'Armenie, vol. ii. p. 41.—M.]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[The blind admiration of the Jesuits confounds the different periods of the Chinese history. They are

more critically distinguished by M. de Guignes, (Hist. des Huns, tom. i. part i. in the Tables, part ii. in the Geography. Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxxii. xxxvi. xlii. xliii.,) who discovers the gradual progress of the truth of the annals and the extent of the monarchy, till the Christian aera. He has searched, with a curious eye, the connections of the Chinese with the nations of the West; but these connections are slight, casual, and obscure; nor did the Romans entertain a suspicion that the Seres or Sinae possessed an empire not inferior to their own. * Note: An abstract of the various opinions of the learned modern writers, Gosselin, Mannert, Lelewel, Malte-Brun, Heeren, and La Treille, on the Serica and the Thinae of the ancients, may be found in the new edition of Malte-Brun, vol. vi. p. 368, 382.—M.]

69 [\(return\)](#)

[The roads from China to Persia and Hindostan may be investigated in the relations of Hackluyt and Thevenot, the ambassadors of Sharokh, Anthony Jenkinson, the Pere Greuber, &c. See likewise Hanway's Travels, vol. i. p. 345—357. A communication through Thibet has been lately explored by the English sovereigns of Bengal.]

70 [\(return\)](#)

[For the Chinese navigation to Malacca and Achin, perhaps to Ceylon, see Renaudot, (on the two Mahometan Travellers, p. 8—11, 13—17, 141—157;) Dampier, (vol. ii. p. 136;) the Hist. Philosophique des deux Indes, (tom. i. p. 98,) and Hist. Generale des Voyages, (tom. vi. p. 201.)]

71 [\(return\)](#)

[The knowledge, or rather ignorance, of Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy, Arrian, Marcian, &c., of the countries eastward of Cape Comorin, is finely illustrated by D'Anville, (Antiquite Geographique de l'Inde, especially p. 161—198.) Our geography of India is improved by commerce and conquest; and has been illustrated by the excellent maps and memoirs of Major Rennel. If he extends the sphere of his inquiries with the same critical knowledge and sagacity, he will succeed, and may surpass, the first of modern geographers.]

72 [\(return\)](#)

[The Taprobane of Pliny, (vi. 24,) Solinus, (c. 53,) and Salmas. Pliniana Exercitat., (p. 781, 782,) and most of the ancients, who often confound the islands of Ceylon and Sumatra, is more clearly described by Cosmas Indicopleustes; yet even the

Christian topographer has exaggerated its dimensions. His information on the Indian and Chinese trade is rare and curious, (l. ii. p. 138, l. xi. p. 337, 338, edit. Montfaucon.)]

As silk became of indispensable use, the emperor Justinian saw with concern that the Persians had occupied by land and sea the monopoly of this important supply, and that the wealth of his subjects was continually drained by a nation of enemies and idolaters. An active government would have restored the trade of Egypt and the navigation of the Red Sea, which had decayed with the prosperity of the empire; and the Roman vessels might have sailed, for the purchase of silk, to the ports of Ceylon, of Malacca, or even of China. Justinian embraced a more humble expedient, and solicited the aid of his Christian allies, the Aethiopians of Abyssinia, who had recently acquired the arts of navigation, the spirit of trade, and the seaport of Adulis, [73](#) [7311](#) still decorated with the trophies of a Grecian conqueror. Along the African coast, they penetrated to the equator in search of gold, emeralds, and aromatics; but they wisely declined an unequal competition, in which they must be always prevented by the vicinity of the Persians to the markets of India; and the emperor submitted to the disappointment, till his wishes were gratified by an unexpected event. The gospel had been preached to the Indians: a bishop already governed the Christians of St. Thomas on the pepper-coast of Malabar; a church was planted in Ceylon, and the missionaries pursued the footsteps of commerce to the extremities of Asia. [74](#) Two Persian monks had long resided in China, perhaps in the royal city of Nankin, the seat of a monarch addicted to foreign superstitions, and who actually received an embassy from the Isle of Ceylon. Amidst their pious occupations, they viewed with a curious eye the common dress of the Chinese, the manufactures of silk, and the myriads of silk-worms, whose education (either on trees or in houses) had once been considered as the labor of queens. [75](#) They soon discovered that it was impracticable to transport the short-lived insect, but that in the eggs a numerous progeny might be preserved and multiplied in a distant climate. Religion or interest had more power over the Persian monks than the love of their country: after a long journey, they arrived at Constantinople, imparted their project to the emperor, and were liberally encouraged by the gifts and promises of Justinian. To the historians of that prince, a campaign at the foot of Mount Caucasus has seemed more deserving of a minute relation than the labors of these missionaries of commerce, who again entered China, deceived a jealous people by concealing the eggs of the silk-worm in a hollow cane, and returned in triumph with the spoils of the East. Under their direction, the eggs were hatched at the proper season by the artificial heat of dung; the worms were fed with mulberry leaves; they lived and labored in a foreign climate; a sufficient number of butterflies was saved to propagate the race, and trees were planted to supply the nourishment of the rising generations. Experience and reflection corrected the errors of a new attempt, and the Sogdoite ambassadors acknowledged, in the succeeding reign, that the Romans were not inferior to the natives of China in the education of the insects, and the manufactures of silk, [76](#) in which both China and

Constantinople have been surpassed by the industry of modern Europe. I am not insensible of the benefits of elegant luxury; yet I reflect with some pain, that if the importers of silk had introduced the art of printing, already practised by the Chinese, the comedies of Menander and the entire decads of Livy would have been perpetuated in the editions of the sixth century.

A larger view of the globe might at least have promoted the improvement of speculative science, but the Christian geography was forcibly extracted from texts of Scripture, and the study of nature was the surest symptom of an unbelieving mind. The orthodox faith confined the habitable world to one temperate zone, and represented the earth as an oblong surface, four hundred days' journey in length, two hundred in breadth, encompassed by the ocean, and covered by the solid crystal of the firmament. [77](#)

73

[\(return\)](#)

[See Procopius, Persic. (l. ii. c. 20.) Cosmas affords some interesting knowledge of the port and inscription of Adulis, (Topograph. Christ. l. ii. p. 138, 140—143,) and of the trade of the Axumites along the African coast of Barbaria or Zingi, (p. 138, 139,) and as far as Taprobane, (l. xi. p. 339.)]

7311

[\(return\)](#)

[Mr. Salt obtained information of considerable ruins of an ancient town near Zulla, called Azoole, which answers to the position of Adulis. Mr. Salt was prevented by illness, Mr. Stuart, whom he sent, by the jealousy of the natives, from investigating these ruins: of their existence there seems no doubt. Salt's 2d Journey, p. 452.—M.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Christian missions in India, in Cosmas, (l. iii. p. 178, 179, l. xi. p. 337,) and consult Asseman. Bibliot. Orient. (tom. iv. p. 413—548.)]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[The invention, manufacture, and general use of silk in China, may be seen in Duhalde, (Description Generale de la Chine, tom. ii. p. 165, 205—223.) The province of Chekian is the most renowned both for quantity and quality.]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, (l. viii. Gothic. iv. c. 17. Theophanes Byzant. apud Phot. Cod. lxxxiv. p. 38. Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 69. Pagi tom. ii. p. 602) assigns to the year 552 this memorable importation. Menander (in Excerpt. Legat. p. 107) mentions the admiration of the Sogdoites; and Theophylact Simocatta (l. vii. c. 9) darkly represents the two rival kingdoms in (China) the country of silk.]

[Cosmas, surnamed Indicopleustes, or the Indian navigator, performed his voyage about the year 522, and composed at Alexandria, between 535, and 547, *Christian Topography*, (Montfaucon, *Praefat.* c. i.,) in which he refutes the impious opinion, that the earth is a globe; and Photius had read this work, (*Cod.* xxxvi. p. 9, 10,) which displays the prejudices of a monk, with the knowledge of a merchant; the most valuable part has been given in French and in Greek by Melchisedec Thevenot, (*Relations Curieuses*, part i.,) and the whole is since published in a splendid edition by Pere Montfaucon, (*Nova Collectio Patrum*, Paris, 1707, 2 vols. in fol., tom. ii. p. 113—346.) But the editor, a theologian, might blush at not discovering the Nestorian heresy of Cosmas, which has been detected by La Croz (*Christianisme des Indes*, tom. i. p. 40—56.)]

IV. The subjects of Justinian were dissatisfied with the times, and with the government. Europe was overrun by the Barbarians, and Asia by the monks: the poverty of the West discouraged the trade and manufactures of the East: the produce of labor was consumed by the unprofitable servants of the church, the state, and the army; and a rapid decrease was felt in the fixed and circulating capitals which constitute the national wealth. The public distress had been alleviated by the economy of Anastasius, and that prudent emperor accumulated an immense treasure, while he delivered his people from the most odious or oppressive taxes. [7711](#) Their gratitude universally applauded the abolition of the gold of affliction, a personal tribute on the industry of the poor, [78](#) but more intolerable, as it should seem, in the form than in the substance, since the flourishing city of Edessa paid only one hundred and forty pounds of gold, which was collected in four years from ten thousand artificers. [79](#) Yet such was the parsimony which supported this liberal disposition, that, in a reign of twenty-seven years, Anastasius saved, from his annual revenue, the enormous sum of thirteen millions sterling, or three hundred and twenty thousand pounds of gold. [80](#) His example was neglected, and his treasure was abused, by the nephew of Justin. The riches of Justinian were speedily exhausted by alms and buildings, by ambitious wars, and ignominious treaties. His revenues were found inadequate to his expenses. Every art was tried to extort from the people the gold and silver which he scattered with a lavish hand from Persia to France: [81](#) his reign was marked by the vicissitudes or rather by the combat, of rapaciousness and avarice, of splendor and poverty; he lived with the reputation of hidden treasures, [82](#) and bequeathed to his successor the payment of his debts. [83](#) Such a character has been justly accused by the voice of the people and of posterity: but public discontent is credulous; private malice is bold; and a lover of truth will peruse with a suspicious eye the instructive anecdotes of Procopius. The secret historian represents only the vices of Justinian, and those vices are darkened by his malevolent

pencil. Ambiguous actions are imputed to the worst motives; error is confounded with guilt, accident with design, and laws with abuses; the partial injustice of a moment is dexterously applied as the general maxim of a reign of thirty-two years; the emperor alone is made responsible for the faults of his officers, the disorders of the times, and the corruption of his subjects; and even the calamities of nature, plagues, earthquakes, and inundations, are imputed to the prince of the daemons, who had mischievously assumed the form of Justinian. [84](#)

7711

[\(return\)](#)

[See the character of Anastasius in Joannes Lydus de Magistratibus, iii. c. 45, 46, p. 230—232. His economy is there said to have degenerated into parsimony. He is accused of having taken away the levying of taxes and payment of the troops from the municipal authorities, (the decurionate) in the Eastern cities, and intrusted it to an extortionate officer named Mannus. But he admits that the imperial revenue was enormously increased by this measure. A statue of iron had been erected to Anastasius in the Hippodrome, on which appeared one morning this pasquinade. This epigram is also found in the Anthology. Jacobs, vol. iv. p. 114 with some better readings. This iron statue meetly do we place
To thee, world-wasting king, than brass more base;
For all the death, the penury, famine, woe,
That from thy wide-destroying avarice flow,
This fell Charybdis, Scylla, near to thee, This fierce devouring Anastasius, see;
And tremble, Scylla! on thee, too, his greed, Coining thy brazen deity, may feed.
But Lydus, with no uncommon inconsistency in such writers, proceeds to paint the character of Anastasius as endowed with almost every virtue, not excepting the utmost liberality. He was only prevented by death from relieving his subjects altogether from the capitation tax, which he greatly diminished.—M.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[Evagrius (l. ii. c. 39, 40) is minute and grateful, but angry with Zosimus for calumniating the great Constantine. In collecting all the bonds and records of the tax, the humanity of Anastasius was diligent and artful: fathers were sometimes compelled to prostitute their daughters, (Zosim. Hist. l. ii. c. 38, p. 165, 166, Lipsiae, 1784.) Timotheus of Gaza chose such an event for the subject of a tragedy, (Suidas, tom. iii. p. 475,) which contributed to the abolition of the tax, (Cedrenus, p. 35.)—a happy instance (if it be true) of the use of the theatre.]

- 79 [\(return\)](#)
[See Josua Stylites, in the Bibliotheca Orientalis of Asseman, (tom. p. 268.) This capitation tax is slightly mentioned in the Chronicle of Edessa.]
- 80 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius (Anecdot. c. 19) fixes this sum from the report of the treasurers themselves. Tiberias had vicies ter millies; but far different was his empire from that of Anastasius.]
- 81 [\(return\)](#)
[Evagrius, (l. iv. c. 30,) in the next generation, was moderate and well informed; and Zonaras, (l. xiv. c. 61,) in the xiith century, had read with care, and thought without prejudice; yet their colors are almost as black as those of the anecdotes.]
- 82 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius (Anecdot. c. 30) relates the idle conjectures of the times. The death of Justinian, says the secret historian, will expose his wealth or poverty.]
- 83 [\(return\)](#)
[See Corippus de Laudibus Justini Aug. l. ii. 260, &c., 384, &c “Plurima sunt vivo nimium neglecta parenti, Unde tot exhaustus contraxit debita fiscus.” Centenaries of gold were brought by strong men into the Hippodrome, “Debita persolvit, genitoris cauta recepit.”]
- 84 [\(return\)](#)
[The Anecdotes (c. 11—14, 18, 20—30) supply many facts and more complaints. * Note: The work of Lydus de Magistratibus (published by Hase at Paris, 1812, and reprinted in the new edition of the Byzantine Historians,) was written during the reign of Justinian. This work of Lydus throws no great light on the earlier history of the Roman magistracy, but gives some curious details of the changes and retrenchments in the offices of state, which took place at this time. The personal history of the author, with the account of his early and rapid advancement, and the emoluments of the posts which he successively held, with the bitter disappointment which he expresses, at finding himself, at the height of his ambition, in an unpaid place, is an excellent illustration of this statement. Gibbon has before, c. iv. n. 45, and c. xvii. n. 112, traced the progress of a Roman citizen to the highest honors of the state under the empire; the steps by which Lydus reached his humbler eminence may likewise throw light on the civil service at this period. He was first received into the office of the

Praetorian præfect; became a notary in that office, and made in one year 1000 golden solidi, and that without extortion. His place and the influence of his relatives obtained him a wife with 400 pounds of gold for her dowry. He became chief chartularius, with an annual stipend of twenty-four solidi, and considerable emoluments for all the various services which he performed. He rose to an Augustalis, and finally to the dignity of Corniculus, the highest, and at one time the most lucrative office in the department. But the Praetorian præfect had gradually been deprived of his powers and his honors. He lost the superintendence of the supply and manufacture of arms; the uncontrolled charge of the public posts; the levying of the troops; the command of the army in war when the emperors ceased nominally to command in person, but really through the Praetorian præfect; that of the household troops, which fell to the magister aulae. At length the office was so completely stripped of its power, as to be virtually abolished, (see de Magist. l. iii. c. 40, p. 220, &c.) This diminution of the office of the præfect destroyed the emoluments of his subordinate officers, and Lydus not only drew no revenue from his dignity, but expended upon it all the gains of his former services. Lydus gravely refers this calamitous, and, as he considers it, fatal degradation of the Praetorian office to the alteration in the style of the official documents from Latin to Greek; and refers to a prophecy of a certain Fonteius, which connected the ruin of the Roman empire with its abandonment of its language. Lydus chiefly owed his promotion to his knowledge of Latin!—M.]

After this precaution, I shall briefly relate the anecdotes of avarice and rapine under the following heads: I. Justinian was so profuse that he could not be liberal. The civil and military officers, when they were admitted into the service of the palace, obtained an humble rank and a moderate stipend; they ascended by seniority to a station of affluence and repose; the annual pensions, of which the most honorable class was abolished by Justinian, amounted to four hundred thousand pounds; and this domestic economy was deplored by the venal or indigent courtiers as the last outrage on the majesty of the empire. The posts, the salaries of physicians, and the nocturnal illuminations, were objects of more general concern; and the cities might justly complain, that he usurped the municipal revenues which had been appropriated to these useful institutions. Even the soldiers were injured; and such was the decay of military spirit, that they were injured with impunity. The emperor refused, at the return of each fifth year, the customary donative of five pieces of gold, reduced his veterans to beg

their bread, and suffered unpaid armies to melt away in the wars of Italy and Persia. II. The humanity of his predecessors had always remitted, in some auspicious circumstance of their reign, the arrears of the public tribute, and they dexterously assumed the merit of resigning those claims which it was impracticable to enforce. “Justinian, in the space of thirty-two years, has never granted a similar indulgence; and many of his subjects have renounced the possession of those lands whose value is insufficient to satisfy the demands of the treasury. To the cities which had suffered by hostile inroads Anastasius promised a general exemption of seven years: the provinces of Justinian have been ravaged by the Persians and Arabs, the Huns and Sclavonians; but his vain and ridiculous dispensation of a single year has been confined to those places which were actually taken by the enemy.” Such is the language of the secret historian, who expressly denies that any indulgence was granted to Palestine after the revolt of the Samaritans; a false and odious charge, confuted by the authentic record which attests a relief of thirteen centenaries of gold (fifty-two thousand pounds) obtained for that desolate province by the intercession of St. Sabas. [85](#) III. Procopius has not condescended to explain the system of taxation, which fell like a hail-storm upon the land, like a devouring pestilence on its inhabitants: but we should become the accomplices of his malignity, if we imputed to Justinian alone the ancient though rigorous principle, that a whole district should be condemned to sustain the partial loss of the persons or property of individuals. The Annona, or supply of corn for the use of the army and capital, was a grievous and arbitrary exaction, which exceeded, perhaps in a tenfold proportion, the ability of the farmer; and his distress was aggravated by the partial injustice of weights and measures, and the expense and labor of distant carriage. In a time of scarcity, an extraordinary requisition was made to the adjacent provinces of Thrace, Bithynia, and Phrygia: but the proprietors, after a wearisome journey and perilous navigation, received so inadequate a compensation, that they would have chosen the alternative of delivering both the corn and price at the doors of their granaries. These precautions might indicate a tender solicitude for the welfare of the capital; yet Constantinople did not escape the rapacious despotism of Justinian. Till his reign, the Straits of the Bosphorus and Hellespont were open to the freedom of trade, and nothing was prohibited except the exportation of arms for the service of the Barbarians. At each of these gates of the city, a praetor was stationed, the minister of Imperial avarice; heavy customs were imposed on the vessels and their merchandise; the oppression was retaliated on the helpless consumer; the poor were afflicted by the artificial scarcity, and exorbitant price of the market; and a people, accustomed to depend on the liberality of their prince, might sometimes complain of the deficiency of water and bread. [86](#) The aerial tribute, without a name, a law, or a definite object, was an annual gift of one hundred and twenty thousand pounds, which the emperor accepted from his Praetorian praefect; and the means of payment were abandoned to the discretion of that powerful magistrate.

IV. Even such a tax was less intolerable than the privilege of monopolies, [8611](#) which checked the fair competition of industry, and, for the sake of a small and dishonest gain, imposed an arbitrary burden on the wants and luxury of the subject. “As soon” (I transcribe the Anecdotes) “as the exclusive sale of silk was usurped by the Imperial treasurer, a whole people, the manufacturers of Tyre and Berytus, was reduced to extreme misery, and either perished with hunger, or fled to the hostile dominions of Persia.” A province might suffer by the decay of its manufactures, but in this example of silk, Procopius has partially overlooked the inestimable and lasting benefit which the empire received from the curiosity of Justinian. His addition of one seventh to the ordinary price of copper money may be interpreted with the same candor; and the alteration, which might be wise, appears to have been innocent; since he neither alloyed the purity, nor enhanced the value, of the gold coin, [87](#) the legal measure of public and private payments. V. The ample jurisdiction required by the farmers of the revenue to accomplish their engagements might be placed in an odious light, as if they had purchased from the emperor the lives and fortunes of their fellow-citizens. And a more direct sale of honors and offices was transacted in the palace, with the permission, or at least with the connivance, of Justinian and Theodora. The claims of merit, even those of favor, were disregarded, and it was almost reasonable to expect, that the bold adventurer, who had undertaken the trade of a magistrate, should find a rich compensation for infamy, labor, danger, the debts which he had contracted, and the heavy interest which he paid. A sense of the disgrace and mischief of this venal practice, at length awakened the slumbering virtue of Justinian; and he attempted, by the sanction of oaths [88](#) and penalties, to guard the integrity of his government: but at the end of a year of perjury, his rigorous edict was suspended, and corruption licentiously abused her triumph over the impotence of the laws. VI. The testament of Eulalius, count of the domestics, declared the emperor his sole heir, on condition, however, that he should discharge his debts and legacies, allow to his three daughters a decent maintenance, and bestow each of them in marriage, with a portion of ten pounds of gold. But the splendid fortune of Eulalius had been consumed by fire, and the inventory of his goods did not exceed the trifling sum of five hundred and sixty-four pieces of gold. A similar instance, in Grecian history, admonished the emperor of the honorable part prescribed for his imitation. He checked the selfish murmurs of the treasury, applauded the confidence of his friend, discharged the legacies and debts, educated the three virgins under the eye of the empress Theodora, and doubled the marriage portion which had satisfied the tenderness of their father. [89](#) The humanity of a prince (for princes cannot be generous) is entitled to some praise; yet even in this act of virtue we may discover the inveterate custom of supplanting the legal or natural heirs, which Procopius imputes to the reign of Justinian. His charge is supported by eminent names and scandalous examples; neither widows nor orphans were spared; and the art of soliciting, or extorting, or supposing testaments, was beneficially practised by the agents of the palace. This base and mischievous tyranny invades the security of private life; and the monarch who has

indulged an appetite for gain, will soon be tempted to anticipate the moment of succession, to interpret wealth as an evidence of guilt, and to proceed, from the claim of inheritance, to the power of confiscation. VII. Among the forms of rapine, a philosopher may be permitted to name the conversion of Pagan or heretical riches to the use of the faithful; but in the time of Justinian this holy plunder was condemned by the sectaries alone, who became the victims of his orthodox avarice. [90](#)

85 [\(return\)](#)

[One to Scythopolis, capital of the second Palestine, and twelve for the rest of the province. Aleman. (p. 59) honestly produces this fact from a Ms. life of St. Sabas, by his disciple Cyril, in the Vatican Library, and since published by Cotelerius.]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[John Malala (tom. ii. p. 232) mentions the want of bread, and Zonaras (l. xiv. p. 63) the leaden pipes, which Justinian, or his servants, stole from the aqueducts.]

8611 [\(return\)](#)

[Hullman (Geschichte des Byzantinischen Handels. p. 15) shows that the despotism of the government was aggravated by the unchecked rapacity of the officers. This state monopoly, even of corn, wine, and oil, was to force at the time of the first crusade.—M.]

87 [\(return\)](#)

[For an aureus, one sixth of an ounce of gold, instead of 210, he gave no more than 180 folles, or ounces of copper. A disproportion of the mint, below the market price, must have soon produced a scarcity of small money. In England twelve pence in copper would sell for no more than seven pence, (Smith's Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations, vol. i. p. 49.) For Justinian's gold coin, see Evagrius, (l. iv. c. 30.)]

88 [\(return\)](#)

[The oath is conceived in the most formidable words, (Novell. viii. tit. 3.) The defaulters imprecate on themselves, quicquid haben: telorum armamentaria coeli: the part of Judas, the leprosy of Gieza, the tremor of Cain, &c., besides all temporal pains.]

89 [\(return\)](#)

[A similar or more generous act of friendship is related by Lucian of Eudamidas of Corinth, (in Toxare, c. 22, 23, tom. ii. p. 530,) and the story has produced an ingenious, though feeble, comedy of Fontenelle.]

Chapter XL: Reign Of Justinian.—Part IV.

Dishonor might be ultimately reflected on the character of Justinian; but much of the guilt, and still more of the profit, was intercepted by the ministers, who were seldom promoted for their virtues, and not always selected for their talents. [91](#) The merits of Tribonian the quaestor will hereafter be weighed in the reformation of the Roman law; but the economy of the East was subordinate to the Praetorian praefect, and Procopius has justified his anecdotes by the portrait which he exposes in his public history, of the notorious vices of John of Cappadocia. [92](#)

[921](#) His knowledge was not borrowed from the schools, [93](#) and his style was scarcely legible; but he excelled in the powers of native genius, to suggest the wisest counsels, and to find expedients in the most desperate situations. The corruption of his heart was equal to the vigor of his understanding. Although he was suspected of magic and Pagan superstition, he appeared insensible to the fear of God or the reproaches of man; and his aspiring fortune was raised on the death of thousands, the poverty of millions, the ruins of cities, and the desolation of provinces. From the dawn of light to the moment of dinner, he assiduously labored to enrich his master and himself at the expense of the Roman world; the remainder of the day was spent in sensual and obscene pleasures, [931](#) and the silent hours of the night were interrupted by the perpetual dread of the justice of an assassin. His abilities, perhaps his vices, recommended him to the lasting friendship of Justinian: the emperor yielded with reluctance to the fury of the people; his victory was displayed by the immediate restoration of their enemy; and they felt above ten years, under his oppressive administration, that he was stimulated by revenge, rather than instructed by misfortune. Their murmurs served only to fortify the resolution of Justinian; but the praefect, in the insolence of favor, provoked the resentment of Theodora, disdained a power before which every knee was bent, and attempted to sow the seeds of discord between the emperor and his beloved consort. Even Theodora herself was constrained to dissemble, to wait a favorable moment, and, by an artful conspiracy, to render John of Coppadocia the accomplice of his own destruction. [932](#) At a time when Belisarius, unless he had been a hero, must have shown himself a rebel, his wife Antonina, who enjoyed the secret confidence of the empress, communicated his feigned discontent to Euphemia, the daughter of the praefect; the credulous virgin imparted to her father the dangerous project, and John, who might have known the value of oaths and promises, was tempted to accept a nocturnal, and almost treasonable, interview with the wife of Belisarius. An ambuscade of guards and eunuchs had been posted by the command of Theodora; they rushed with drawn swords to seize or to punish the guilty minister: he was saved by the fidelity of his attendants; but instead of appealing to a gracious sovereign, who had privately warned him of his

danger, he pusillanimously fled to the sanctuary of the church. The favorite of Justinian was sacrificed to conjugal tenderness or domestic tranquility; the conversion of a præfect into a priest extinguished his ambitious hopes: but the friendship of the emperor alleviated his disgrace, and he retained in the mild exile of Cyzicus an ample portion of his riches. Such imperfect revenge could not satisfy the unrelenting hatred of Theodora; the murder of his old enemy, the bishop of Cyzicus, afforded a decent pretence; and John of Cappadocia, whose actions had deserved a thousand deaths, was at last condemned for a crime of which he was innocent. A great minister, who had been invested with the honors of consul and patrician, was ignominiously scourged like the vilest of malefactors; a tattered cloak was the sole remnant of his fortunes; he was transported in a bark to the place of his banishment at Antinopolis in Upper Egypt, and the præfect of the East begged his bread through the cities which had trembled at his name. During an exile of seven years, his life was protracted and threatened by the ingenious cruelty of Theodora; and when her death permitted the emperor to recall a servant whom he had abandoned with regret, the ambition of John of Cappadocia was reduced to the humble duties of the sacerdotal profession. His successors convinced the subjects of Justinian, that the arts of oppression might still be improved by experience and industry; the frauds of a Syrian banker were introduced into the administration of the finances; and the example of the præfect was diligently copied by the quaestor, the public and private treasurer, the governors of provinces, and the principal magistrates of the Eastern empire. [94](#)

91

[\(return\)](#)

[One of these, Anatolius, perished in an earthquake—doubtless a judgment! The complaints and clamors of the people in Agathias (l. v. p. 146, 147) are almost an echo of the anecdote. The aliena pecunia reddenda of Corippus (l. ii. 381, &c.,) is not very honorable to Justinian's memory.]

92

[\(return\)](#)

[See the history and character of John of Cappadocia in Procopius. (Persic, l. i. c. 35, 25, l. ii. c. 30. Vandal. l. i. c. 13. Anecdote. c. 2, 17, 22.) The agreement of the history and anecdotes is a mortal wound to the reputation of the præfect.]

921

[\(return\)](#)

[This view, particularly of the cruelty of John of Cappadocia, is confirmed by the testimony of Joannes Lydus, who was in the office of the præfect, and eye-witness of the tortures inflicted by his command on the miserable debtors, or supposed debtors, of the state. He mentions one horrible instance of a respectable old man, with whom he was personally acquainted, who, being suspected of possessing money, was hung up by the hands till he

was dead. Lydus de Magist. lib. iii. c. 57, p. 254.—
M.]

93 [\(return\)](#)

[A forcible expression.]

931 [\(return\)](#)

[Joannes Lydus is diffuse on this subject, lib. iii. c. 65, p. 268. But the indignant virtue of Lydus seems greatly stimulated by the loss of his official fees, which he ascribes to the innovations of the minister.—M.]

932 [\(return\)](#)

[According to Lydus, Theodora disclosed the crimes and unpopularity of the minister to Justinian, but the emperor had not the courage to remove, and was unable to replace, a servant, under whom his finances seemed to prosper. He attributes the sedition and conflagration to the popular resentment against the tyranny of John, lib. iii. c 70, p. 278. Unfortunately there is a large gap in his work just at this period.—M.]

94 [\(return\)](#)

[The chronology of Procopius is loose and obscure; but with the aid of Pagi I can discern that John was appointed Praetorian præfect of the East in the year 530—that he was removed in January, 532—restored before June, 533—banished in 541—and recalled between June, 548, and April 1, 549. Aleman. (p. 96, 97) gives the list of his ten successors—a rapid series in a part of a single reign.

* Note: Lydus gives a high character of Phocas, his successor tom. iii. c. 78 p. 288.—M.]

V. The edifices of Justinian were cemented with the blood and treasure of his people; but those stately structures appeared to announce the prosperity of the empire, and actually displayed the skill of their architects. Both the theory and practice of the arts which depend on mathematical science and mechanical power, were cultivated under the patronage of the emperors; the fame of Archimedes was rivalled by Proclus and Anthemius; and if their miracles had been related by intelligent spectators, they might now enlarge the speculations, instead of exciting the distrust, of philosophers. A tradition has prevailed, that the Roman fleet was reduced to ashes in the port of Syracuse, by the burning-glasses of Archimedes; [95](#) and it is asserted, that a similar expedient was employed by Proclus to destroy the Gothic vessels in the harbor of Constantinople, and to protect his benefactor Anastasius against the bold enterprise of Vitalian. [96](#) A machine was fixed on the walls of the city, consisting of a hexagon mirror of polished brass, with many smaller and movable polygons to receive and reflect the rays of the meridian sun; and a consuming flame was darted, to the distance, perhaps of two hundred feet. [97](#) The truth of these two extraordinary facts is invalidated

by the silence of the most authentic historians; and the use of burning-glasses was never adopted in the attack or defence of places. [98](#) Yet the admirable experiments of a French philosopher [99](#) have demonstrated the possibility of such a mirror; and, since it is possible, I am more disposed to attribute the art to the greatest mathematicians of antiquity, than to give the merit of the fiction to the idle fancy of a monk or a sophist. According to another story, Proclus applied sulphur to the destruction of the Gothic fleet; [100](#) in a modern imagination, the name of sulphur is instantly connected with the suspicion of gunpowder, and that suspicion is propagated by the secret arts of his disciple Anthemius. [101](#) A citizen of Tralles in Asia had five sons, who were all distinguished in their respective professions by merit and success. Olympius excelled in the knowledge and practice of the Roman jurisprudence. Dioscorus and Alexander became learned physicians; but the skill of the former was exercised for the benefit of his fellow-citizens, while his more ambitious brother acquired wealth and reputation at Rome. The fame of Metrodorus the grammarian, and of Anthemius the mathematician and architect, reached the ears of the emperor Justinian, who invited them to Constantinople; and while the one instructed the rising generation in the schools of eloquence, the other filled the capital and provinces with more lasting monuments of his art. In a trifling dispute relative to the walls or windows of their contiguous houses, he had been vanquished by the eloquence of his neighbor Zeno; but the orator was defeated in his turn by the master of mechanics, whose malicious, though harmless, stratagems are darkly represented by the ignorance of Agathias. In a lower room, Anthemius arranged several vessels or caldrons of water, each of them covered by the wide bottom of a leathern tube, which rose to a narrow top, and was artificially conveyed among the joists and rafters of the adjacent building. A fire was kindled beneath the caldron; the steam of the boiling water ascended through the tubes; the house was shaken by the efforts of imprisoned air, and its trembling inhabitants might wonder that the city was unconscious of the earthquake which they had felt. At another time, the friends of Zeno, as they sat at table, were dazzled by the intolerable light which flashed in their eyes from the reflecting mirrors of Anthemius; they were astonished by the noise which he produced from the collision of certain minute and sonorous particles; and the orator declared in tragic style to the senate, that a mere mortal must yield to the power of an antagonist, who shook the earth with the trident of Neptune, and imitated the thunder and lightning of Jove himself. The genius of Anthemius, and his colleague Isidore the Milesian, was excited and employed by a prince, whose taste for architecture had degenerated into a mischievous and costly passion. His favorite architects submitted their designs and difficulties to Justinian, and discreetly confessed how much their laborious meditations were surpassed by the intuitive knowledge of celestial inspiration of an emperor, whose views were always directed to the benefit of his people, the glory of his reign, and the salvation of his soul. [102](#)

81, edit. Basil.) in the second century. A thousand years afterwards, it is positively affirmed by Zonaras, (l. ix. p. 424,) on the faith of Dion Cassius, Tzetzes, (Chiliad ii. 119, &c.,) Eustathius, (ad Iliad. E. p. 338,) and the scholiast of Lucian. See Fabricius, (Bibliot. Graec. l. iii. c. 22, tom. ii. p. 551, 552,) to whom I am more or less indebted for several of these quotations.]

96 [\(return\)](#)
[Zonaras (l. xi. c. p. 55) affirms the fact, without quoting any evidence.]

97 [\(return\)](#)
[Tzetzes describes the artifice of these burning-glasses, which he had read, perhaps, with no learned eyes, in a mathematical treatise of Anthemius. That treatise has been lately published, translated, and illustrated, by M. Dupuys, a scholar and a mathematician, (Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom xlii p. 392—451.)]

98 [\(return\)](#)
[In the siege of Syracuse, by the silence of Polybius, Plutarch, Livy; in the siege of Constantinople, by that of Marcellinus and all the contemporaries of the sixth century.]

99 [\(return\)](#)
[Without any previous knowledge of Tzetzes or Anthemius, the immortal Buffon imagined and executed a set of burning-glasses, with which he could inflame planks at the distance of 200 feet, (Supplement a l'Hist. Naturelle, tom. i. 399—483, quarto edition.) What miracles would not his genius have performed for the public service, with royal expense, and in the strong sun of Constantinople or Syracuse?]

100 [\(return\)](#)
[John Malala (tom. ii. p. 120—124) relates the fact; but he seems to confound the names or persons of Proclus and Marinus.]

101 [\(return\)](#)
[Agathias, l. v. p. 149—152. The merit of Anthemius as an architect is loudly praised by Procopius (de Edif. l. i. c. 1) and Paulus Silentarius, (part i. 134, &c.)]

102 [\(return\)](#)
[See Procopius, (de Edificiis, l. i. c. 1, 2, l. ii. c. 3.) He relates a coincidence of dreams, which supposes some fraud in Justinian or his architect. They both saw, in a vision, the same plan for stopping an inundation at Dara. A stone quarry near Jerusalem

was revealed to the emperor, (l. v. c. 6:) an angel
was tricked into the perpetual custody of St. Sophia,
(Anonym. de Antiq. C. P. l. iv. p. 70.)]

The principal church, which was dedicated by the founder of Constantinople to St. Sophia, or the eternal wisdom, had been twice destroyed by fire; after the exile of John Chrysostom, and during the Nika of the blue and green factions. No sooner did the tumult subside, than the Christian populace deplored their sacrilegious rashness; but they might have rejoiced in the calamity, had they foreseen the glory of the new temple, which at the end of forty days was strenuously undertaken by the piety of Justinian. [103](#) The ruins were cleared away, a more spacious plan was described, and as it required the consent of some proprietors of ground, they obtained the most exorbitant terms from the eager desires and timorous conscience of the monarch. Anthemius formed the design, and his genius directed the hands of ten thousand workmen, whose payment in pieces of fine silver was never delayed beyond the evening. The emperor himself, clad in a linen tunic, surveyed each day their rapid progress, and encouraged their diligence by his familiarity, his zeal, and his rewards. The new Cathedral of St. Sophia was consecrated by the patriarch, five years, eleven months, and ten days from the first foundation; and in the midst of the solemn festival Justinian exclaimed with devout vanity, “Glory be to God, who hath thought me worthy to accomplish so great a work; I have vanquished thee, O Solomon!” [104](#) But the pride of the Roman Solomon, before twenty years had elapsed, was humbled by an earthquake, which overthrew the eastern part of the dome. Its splendor was again restored by the perseverance of the same prince; and in the thirty-sixth year of his reign, Justinian celebrated the second dedication of a temple which remains, after twelve centuries, a stately monument of his fame. The architecture of St. Sophia, which is now converted into the principal mosque, has been imitated by the Turkish sultans, and that venerable pile continues to excite the fond admiration of the Greeks, and the more rational curiosity of European travellers. The eye of the spectator is disappointed by an irregular prospect of half-domes and shelving roofs: the western front, the principal approach, is destitute of simplicity and magnificence; and the scale of dimensions has been much surpassed by several of the Latin cathedrals. But the architect who first erected an *aerial* cupola, is entitled to the praise of bold design and skilful execution. The dome of St. Sophia, illuminated by four-and-twenty windows, is formed with so small a curve, that the depth is equal only to one sixth of its diameter; the measure of that diameter is one hundred and fifteen feet, and the lofty centre, where a crescent has supplanted the cross, rises to the perpendicular height of one hundred and eighty feet above the pavement. The circle which encompasses the dome, lightly reposes on four strong arches, and their weight is firmly supported by four massy piles, whose strength is assisted, on the northern and southern sides, by four columns of Egyptian granite.

A Greek cross, inscribed in a quadrangle, represents the form of the edifice; the exact breadth is two hundred and forty-three feet, and two hundred and sixty-nine may be

assigned for the extreme length from the sanctuary in the east, to the nine western doors, which open into the vestibule, and from thence into the narthex or exterior portico. That portico was the humble station of the penitents. The nave or body of the church was filled by the congregation of the faithful; but the two sexes were prudently distinguished, and the upper and lower galleries were allotted for the more private devotion of the women. Beyond the northern and southern piles, a balustrade, terminated on either side by the thrones of the emperor and the patriarch, divided the nave from the choir; and the space, as far as the steps of the altar, was occupied by the clergy and singers. The altar itself, a name which insensibly became familiar to Christian ears, was placed in the eastern recess, artificially built in the form of a demi-cylinder; and this sanctuary communicated by several doors with the sacristy, the vestry, the baptistery, and the contiguous buildings, subservient either to the pomp of worship, or the private use of the ecclesiastical ministers. The memory of past calamities inspired Justinian with a wise resolution, that no wood, except for the doors, should be admitted into the new edifice; and the choice of the materials was applied to the strength, the lightness, or the splendor of the respective parts. The solid piles which contained the cupola were composed of huge blocks of freestone, hewn into squares and triangles, fortified by circles of iron, and firmly cemented by the infusion of lead and quicklime: but the weight of the cupola was diminished by the levity of its substance, which consists either of pumice-stone that floats in the water, or of bricks from the Isle of Rhodes, five times less ponderous than the ordinary sort. The whole frame of the edifice was constructed of brick; but those base materials were concealed by a crust of marble; and the inside of St. Sophia, the cupola, the two larger, and the six smaller, semi-domes, the walls, the hundred columns, and the pavement, delight even the eyes of Barbarians, with a rich and variegated picture. A poet, [105](#) who beheld the primitive lustre of St. Sophia, enumerates the colors, the shades, and the spots of ten or twelve marbles, jaspers, and porphyries, which nature had profusely diversified, and which were blended and contrasted as it were by a skilful painter. The triumph of Christ was adorned with the last spoils of Paganism, but the greater part of these costly stones was extracted from the quarries of Asia Minor, the isles and continent of Greece, Egypt, Africa, and Gaul. Eight columns of porphyry, which Aurelian had placed in the temple of the sun, were offered by the piety of a Roman matron; eight others of green marble were presented by the ambitious zeal of the magistrates of Ephesus: both are admirable by their size and beauty, but every order of architecture disclaims their fantastic capital. A variety of ornaments and figures was curiously expressed in mosaic; and the images of Christ, of the Virgin, of saints, and of angels, which have been defaced by Turkish fanaticism, were dangerously exposed to the superstition of the Greeks. According to the sanctity of each object, the precious metals were distributed in thin leaves or in solid masses. The balustrade of the choir, the capitals of the pillars, the ornaments of the doors and galleries, were of gilt bronze; the spectator was dazzled by the glittering aspect of the cupola; the sanctuary contained forty thousand pounds weight of silver;

and the holy vases and vestments of the altar were of the purest gold, enriched with inestimable gems. Before the structure of the church had arisen two cubits above the ground, forty-five thousand two hundred pounds were already consumed; and the whole expense amounted to three hundred and twenty thousand: each reader, according to the measure of his belief, may estimate their value either in gold or silver; but the sum of one million sterling is the result of the lowest computation. A magnificent temple is a laudable monument of national taste and religion; and the enthusiast who entered the dome of St. Sophia might be tempted to suppose that it was the residence, or even the workmanship, of the Deity. Yet how dull is the artifice, how insignificant is the labor, if it be compared with the formation of the vilest insect that crawls upon the surface of the temple!

103

[\(return\)](#)

[Among the crowd of ancients and moderns who have celebrated the edifice of St. Sophia, I shall distinguish and follow, 1. Four original spectators and historians: Procopius, (*de Edific.* l. i. c. 1,) Agathias, (l. v. p. 152, 153,) Paul Silentarius, (in a poem of 1026 hexameters, and *calcem Annae Commen. Alexiad.*) and Evagrius, (l. iv. c. 31.) 2. Two legendary Greeks of a later period: George Codinus, (*de Origin. C. P.* p. 64-74,) and the anonymous writer of Banduri, (*Imp. Orient. tom. i.* l. iv. p. 65—80.) 3. The great Byzantine antiquarian. Ducange, (*Comment. ad Paul Silentiar.* p. 525—598, and *C. P. Christ.* l. iii. p. 5—78.) 4. Two French travellers—the one, Peter Gyllius, (*de Topograph. C. P.* l. ii. c. 3, 4,) in the xvith; the other, Grelot, (*Voyage de C. P.* p. 95—164, Paris, 1680, in 4to:) he has given plans, prospects, and inside views of St. Sophia; and his plans, though on a smaller scale, appear more correct than those of Ducange. I have adopted and reduced the measures of Grelot: but as no Christian can now ascend the dome, the height is borrowed from Evagrius, compared with Gyllius, Greaves, and the Oriental Geographer.]

104

[\(return\)](#)

[Solomon's temple was surrounded with courts, porticos, &c.; but the proper structure of the house of God was no more (if we take the Egyptian or Hebrew cubic at 22 inches) than 55 feet in height, 36 $\frac{2}{3}$ in breadth, and 110 in length—a small parish church, says Prideaux, (*Connection*, vol. i. p. 144, folio;) but few sanctuaries could be valued at four or five millions sterling! * Note *: *Hist of Jews*, vol i p 257.—M]

105

[\(return\)](#)

[Paul Silentarius, in dark and poetic language,

describes the various stones and marbles that were employed in the edifice of St. Sophia, (P. ii. p. 129, 133, &c., &c.):

1. The Carystian—pale, with iron veins.
2. The Phrygian—of two sorts, both of a rosy hue; the one with a white shade, the other purple, with silver flowers.
3. The Porphyry of Egypt—with small stars.
4. The green marble of Laconia.
5. The Carian—from Mount Iassiss, with oblique veins, white and red. 6. The Lydian—pale, with a red flower.
7. The African, or Mauritanian—of a gold or saffron hue. 8. The Celtic—black, with white veins.
9. The Bosphoric—white, with black edges. Besides the Proconnesian which formed the pavement; the Thessalian, Molossian, &c., which are less distinctly painted.]

So minute a description of an edifice which time has respected, may attest the truth, and excuse the relation, of the innumerable works, both in the capital and provinces, which Justinian constructed on a smaller scale and less durable foundations. [106](#) In Constantinople alone and the adjacent suburbs, he dedicated twenty-five churches to the honor of Christ, the Virgin, and the saints: most of these churches were decorated with marble and gold; and their various situation was skilfully chosen in a populous square, or a pleasant grove; on the margin of the sea-shore, or on some lofty eminence which overlooked the continents of Europe and Asia. The church of the Holy Apostles at Constantinople, and that of St. John at Ephesus, appear to have been framed on the same model: their domes aspired to imitate the cupolas of St. Sophia; but the altar was more judiciously placed under the centre of the dome, at the junction of four stately porticos, which more accurately expressed the figure of the Greek cross. The Virgin of Jerusalem might exult in the temple erected by her Imperial votary on a most ungrateful spot, which afforded neither ground nor materials to the architect. A level was formed by raising part of a deep valley to the height of the mountain. The stones of a neighboring quarry were hewn into regular forms; each block was fixed on a peculiar carriage, drawn by forty of the strongest oxen, and the roads were widened for the passage of such enormous weights. Lebanon furnished her loftiest cedars for the timbers of the church; and the seasonable discovery of a vein of red marble supplied its beautiful columns, two of which, the supporters of the exterior portico, were esteemed the largest in the world. The pious munificence of the emperor was diffused over the Holy Land; and if reason should condemn the monasteries of both sexes which were built or restored by Justinian, yet charity must applaud the wells which he sunk, and the hospitals which he founded, for the relief of the weary pilgrims. The schismatical temper of Egypt was ill entitled to the royal bounty; but in Syria and Africa, some

remedies were applied to the disasters of wars and earthquakes, and both Carthage and Antioch, emerging from their ruins, might revere the name of their gracious benefactor. [107](#) Almost every saint in the calendar acquired the honors of a temple; almost every city of the empire obtained the solid advantages of bridges, hospitals, and aqueducts; but the severe liberality of the monarch disdained to indulge his subjects in the popular luxury of baths and theatres. While Justinian labored for the public service, he was not unmindful of his own dignity and ease. The Byzantine palace, which had been damaged by the conflagration, was restored with new magnificence; and some notion may be conceived of the whole edifice, by the vestibule or hall, which, from the doors perhaps, or the roof, was surnamed chalice, or the brazen. The dome of a spacious quadrangle was supported by massy pillars; the pavement and walls were incrustured with many-colored marbles—the emerald green of Laconia, the fiery red, and the white Phrygian stone, intersected with veins of a sea-green hue: the mosaic paintings of the dome and sides represented the glories of the African and Italian triumphs. On the Asiatic shore of the Propontis, at a small distance to the east of Chalcedon, the costly palace and gardens of Heraeum [108](#) were prepared for the summer residence of Justinian, and more especially of Theodora. The poets of the age have celebrated the rare alliance of nature and art, the harmony of the nymphs of the groves, the fountains, and the waves: yet the crowd of attendants who followed the court complained of their inconvenient lodgings, [109](#) and the nymphs were too often alarmed by the famous Porphyrio, a whale of ten cubits in breadth, and thirty in length, who was stranded at the mouth of the River Sangaris, after he had infested more than half a century the seas of Constantinople. [110](#)

106

[\(return\)](#)

[The six books of the Edifices of Procopius are thus distributed the first is confined to Constantinople: the second includes Mesopotamia and Syria the third, Armenia and the Euxine; the fourth, Europe; the fifth, Asia Minor and Palestine; the sixth, Egypt and Africa. Italy is forgot by the emperor or the historian, who published this work of adulation before the date (A.D. 555) of its final conquest.]

107

[\(return\)](#)

[Justinian once gave forty-five centenaries of gold (180,000 L.) for the repairs of Antioch after the earthquake, (John Malala, tom. ii p 146—149.)]

108

[\(return\)](#)

[For the Heraeum, the palace of Theodora, see Gyllius, (de Bosphoro Thracio, l. iii. c. xi.,) Aleman. (Not. ad. Anec. p. 80, 81, who quotes several epigrams of the Anthology,) and Ducange, (C. P. Christ. l. iv. c. 13, p. 175, 176.)]

109

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare, in the Edifices, (l. i. c. 11,) and in the Anecdotes, (c. 8, 15.) the different styles of

adulation and malevolence: stripped of the paint, or cleansed from the dirt, the object appears to be the same.]

110

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, l. viii. 29; most probably a stranger and wanderer, as the Mediterranean does not breed whales. Balaenae quoque in nostra maria penetrant, (Plin. Hist. Natur. ix. 2.) Between the polar circle and the tropic, the cetaceous animals of the ocean grow to the length of 50, 80, or 100 feet, (Hist. des Voyages, tom. xv. p. 289. Pennant's British Zoology, vol. iii. p. 35.)]

The fortifications of Europe and Asia were multiplied by Justinian; but the repetition of those timid and fruitless precautions exposes, to a philosophic eye, the debility of the empire. [111](#) From Belgrade to the Euxine, from the conflux of the Save to the mouth of the Danube, a chain of above fourscore fortified places was extended along the banks of the great river. Single watch-towers were changed into spacious citadels; vacant walls, which the engineers contracted or enlarged according to the nature of the ground, were filled with colonies or garrisons; a strong fortress defended the ruins of Trajan's bridge, [112](#) and several military stations affected to spread beyond the Danube the pride of the Roman name. But that name was divested of its terrors; the Barbarians, in their annual inroads, passed, and contemptuously repassed, before these useless bulwarks; and the inhabitants of the frontier, instead of reposing under the shadow of the general defence, were compelled to guard, with incessant vigilance, their separate habitations. The solitude of ancient cities, was replenished; the new foundations of Justinian acquired, perhaps too hastily, the epithets of impregnable and populous; and the auspicious place of his own nativity attracted the grateful reverence of the vainest of princes. Under the name of Justiniana prima, the obscure village of Tauresium became the seat of an archbishop and a præfect, whose jurisdiction extended over seven warlike provinces of Illyricum; [113](#) and the corrupt appellation of Giustendil still indicates, about twenty miles to the south of Sophia, the residence of a Turkish sanjak. [114](#) For the use of the emperor's countryman, a cathedral, a place, and an aqueduct, were speedily constructed; the public and private edifices were adapted to the greatness of a royal city; and the strength of the walls resisted, during the lifetime of Justinian, the unskilful assaults of the Huns and Sclavonians. Their progress was sometimes retarded, and their hopes of rapine were disappointed, by the innumerable castles which, in the provinces of Dacia, Epirus, Thessaly, Macedonia, and Thrace, appeared to cover the whole face of the country. Six hundred of these forts were built or repaired by the emperor; but it seems reasonable to believe, that the far greater part consisted only of a stone or brick tower, in the midst of a square or circular area, which was surrounded by a wall and ditch, and afforded in a moment of danger some protection to the peasants and cattle of the neighboring villages. [115](#) Yet these military works, which exhausted the public treasure, could not remove the just apprehensions of Justinian and his

European subjects. The warm baths of Anchialus in Thrace were rendered as safe as they were salutary; but the rich pastures of Thessalonica were foraged by the Scythian cavalry; the delicious vale of Tempe, three hundred miles from the Danube, was continually alarmed by the sound of war; [116](#) and no unfortified spot, however distant or solitary, could securely enjoy the blessings of peace. The Straits of Thermopylae, which seemed to protect, but which had so often betrayed, the safety of Greece, were diligently strengthened by the labors of Justinian. From the edge of the sea-shore, through the forests and valleys, and as far as the summit of the Thessalian mountains, a strong wall was continued, which occupied every practicable entrance. Instead of a hasty crowd of peasants, a garrison of two thousand soldiers was stationed along the rampart; granaries of corn and reservoirs of water were provided for their use; and by a precaution that inspired the cowardice which it foresaw, convenient fortresses were erected for their retreat. The walls of Corinth, overthrown by an earthquake, and the mouldering bulwarks of Athens and Plataea, were carefully restored; the Barbarians were discouraged by the prospect of successive and painful sieges: and the naked cities of Peloponnesus were covered by the fortifications of the Isthmus of Corinth. At the extremity of Europe, another peninsula, the Thracian Chersonesus, runs three days' journey into the sea, to form, with the adjacent shores of Asia, the Straits of the Hellespont. The intervals between eleven populous towns were filled by lofty woods, fair pastures, and arable lands; and the isthmus, of thirty seven stadia or furlongs, had been fortified by a Spartan general nine hundred years before the reign of Justinian. [117](#) In an age of freedom and valor, the slightest rampart may prevent a surprise; and Procopius appears insensible of the superiority of ancient times, while he praises the solid construction and double parapet of a wall, whose long arms stretched on either side into the sea; but whose strength was deemed insufficient to guard the Chersonesus, if each city, and particularly Gallipoli and Sestus, had not been secured by their peculiar fortifications. The long wall, as it was emphatically styled, was a work as disgraceful in the object, as it was respectable in the execution. The riches of a capital diffuse themselves over the neighboring country, and the territory of Constantinople a paradise of nature, was adorned with the luxurious gardens and villas of the senators and opulent citizens. But their wealth served only to attract the bold and rapacious Barbarians; the noblest of the Romans, in the bosom of peaceful indolence, were led away into Scythian captivity, and their sovereign might view from his palace the hostile flames which were insolently spread to the gates of the Imperial city. At the distance only of forty miles, Anastasius was constrained to establish a last frontier; his long wall, of sixty miles from the Propontis to the Euxine, proclaimed the impotence of his arms; and as the danger became more imminent, new fortifications were added by the indefatigable prudence of Justinian. [118](#)

France in the time of the Norman inroads—never so weak as when every village was fortified.]

112 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius affirms (l. iv. c. 6) that the Danube was stopped by the ruins of the bridge. Had Apollodorus, the architect, left a description of his own work, the fabulous wonders of Dion Cassius (l. lxxviii. p. 1129) would have been corrected by the genuine picture Trajan's bridge consisted of twenty or twenty-two stone piles with wooden arches; the river is shallow, the current gentle, and the whole interval no more than 443 (Reimer ad Dion. from Marsigli) or 517 toises, (D'Anville, *Geographie Ancienne*, tom. i. p. 305.)]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[Of the two Dacias, *Mediterranea* and *Ripensis*, *Dardania*, *Pravalitana*, the second *Maesia*, and the second *Macedonia*. See Justinian (*Novell. xi.*) who speaks of his castles beyond the Danube, and on *omnes semper bellicis sudoribus inhaerentes*.]

114 [\(return\)](#)

[See D'Anville, (*Memoires de l'Academie, &c.*, tom. xxxi p. 280, 299,) Rycaut, (*Present State of the Turkish Empire*, p. 97, 316,) Max sigli, (*Stato Militare del Imperio Ottomano*, p. 130.) The sanjak of Giustendil is one of the twenty under the beglerbeg of Rurselis, and his district maintains 48 zaims and 588 timariots.]

115 [\(return\)](#)

[These fortifications may be compared to the castles in Mingrelia (Chardin, *Voyages en Perse*, tom. i. p. 60, 131)—a natural picture.]

116 [\(return\)](#)

[The valley of Tempe is situate along the River Peneus, between the hills of Ossa and Olympus: it is only five miles long, and in some places no more than 120 feet in breadth. Its verdant beauties are elegantly described by Pliny, (*Hist. Natur. l. iv. 15.*) and more diffusely by Aelian, (*Hist. Var. l. iii. c. i.*)]

117 [\(return\)](#)

[Xenophon *Hellenic. l. iii. c. 2.* After a long and tedious conversation with the Byzantine declaimers, how refreshing is the truth, the simplicity, the elegance of an Attic writer!]

118 [\(return\)](#)

[See the long wall in Evagarius, (l. iv. c. 38.) This whole article is drawn from the fourth book of the *Edifices*, except *Anchialus*, (l. iii. c. 7.)]

Asia Minor, after the submission of the Isaurians, [119](#) remained without enemies and without fortifications. Those bold savages, who had disdained to be the subjects of Gallienus, persisted two hundred and thirty years in a life of independence and rapine. The most successful princes respected the strength of the mountains and the despair of the natives; their fierce spirit was sometimes soothed with gifts, and sometimes restrained by terror; and a military count, with three legions, fixed his permanent and ignominious station in the heart of the Roman provinces. [120](#) But no sooner was the vigilance of power relaxed or diverted, than the light-armed squadrons descended from the hills, and invaded the peaceful plenty of Asia. Although the Isaurians were not remarkable for stature or bravery, want rendered them bold, and experience made them skilful in the exercise of predatory war. They advanced with secrecy and speed to the attack of villages and defenceless towns; their flying parties have sometimes touched the Hellespont, the Euxine, and the gates of Tarsus, Antioch, or Damascus; [121](#) and the spoil was lodged in their inaccessible mountains, before the Roman troops had received their orders, or the distant province had computed its loss. The guilt of rebellion and robbery excluded them from the rights of national enemies; and the magistrates were instructed, by an edict, that the trial or punishment of an Isaurian, even on the festival of Easter, was a meritorious act of justice and piety. [122](#) If the captives were condemned to domestic slavery, they maintained, with their sword or dagger, the private quarrel of their masters; and it was found expedient for the public tranquillity to prohibit the service of such dangerous retainers. When their countryman Tarcalissaeus or Zeno ascended the throne, he invited a faithful and formidable band of Isaurians, who insulted the court and city, and were rewarded by an annual tribute of five thousand pounds of gold. But the hopes of fortune depopulated the mountains, luxury enervated the hardiness of their minds and bodies, and in proportion as they mixed with mankind, they became less qualified for the enjoyment of poor and solitary freedom. After the death of Zeno, his successor Anastasius suppressed their pensions, exposed their persons to the revenge of the people, banished them from Constantinople, and prepared to sustain a war, which left only the alternative of victory or servitude. A brother of the last emperor usurped the title of Augustus; his cause was powerfully supported by the arms, the treasures, and the magazines, collected by Zeno; and the native Isaurians must have formed the smallest portion of the hundred and fifty thousand Barbarians under his standard, which was sanctified, for the first time, by the presence of a fighting bishop. Their disorderly numbers were vanquished in the plains of Phrygia by the valor and discipline of the Goths; but a war of six years almost exhausted the courage of the emperor. [123](#) The Isaurians retired to their mountains; their fortresses were successively besieged and ruined; their communication with the sea was intercepted; the bravest of their leaders died in arms; the surviving chiefs, before their execution, were dragged in chains through the hippodrome; a colony of their youth was transplanted into Thrace, and the remnant of the people submitted to the Roman government. Yet some generations elapsed before their minds were reduced to the level

of slavery. The populous villages of Mount Taurus were filled with horsemen and archers: they resisted the imposition of tributes, but they recruited the armies of Justinian; and his civil magistrates, the proconsul of Cappadocia, the count of Isauria, and the praetors of Lycaonia and Pisidia, were invested with military power to restrain the licentious practice of rapes and assassinations. [124](#)

119 [\(return\)](#)

[Turn back to vol. i. p. 328. In the course of this History, I have sometimes mentioned, and much oftener slighted, the hasty inroads of the Isaurians, which were not attended with any consequences.]

120 [\(return\)](#)

[Trebellius Pollio in Hist. August. p. 107, who lived under Diocletian, or Constantine. See likewise Pancirolus ad Notit. Imp. Orient c. 115, 141. See Cod. Theodos. l. ix. tit. 35, leg. 37, with a copious collective Annotation of Godefroy, tom. iii. p. 256, 257.]

121 [\(return\)](#)

[See the full and wide extent of their inroads in Philostorgius (Hist. Eccles. l. xi. c. 8,) with Godefroy's learned Dissertations.]

122 [\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Justinian. l. ix. tit. 12, leg. 10. The punishments are severs—a fine of a hundred pounds of gold, degradation, and even death. The public peace might afford a pretence, but Zeno was desirous of monopolizing the valor and service of the Isaurians.]

123 [\(return\)](#)

[The Isaurian war and the triumph of Anastasius are briefly and darkly represented by John Malala, (tom. ii. p. 106, 107,) Evagrius, (l. iii. c. 35,) Theophanes, (p. 118—120,) and the Chronicle of Marcellinus.]

124 [\(return\)](#)

[Fortes ea regio (says Justinian) viros habet, nec in ullo differt ab Isauria, though Procopius (Persic. l. i. c. 18) marks an essential difference between their military character; yet in former times the Lycaonians and Pisidians had defended their liberty against the great king, Xenophon. (Anabasis, l. iii. c. 2.) Justinian introduces some false and ridiculous erudition of the ancient empire of the Pisidians, and of Lycaon, who, after visiting Rome, (long before Aeenas,) gave a name and people to Lycaoni, (Novell. 24, 25, 27, 30.)]

Chapter XL: Reign Of Justinian.—Part V.

If we extend our view from the tropic to the mouth of the Tanais, we may observe, on one hand, the precautions of Justinian to curb the savages of Aethiopia, [125](#) and on the other, the long walls which he constructed in Crimaea for the protection of his friendly Goths, a colony of three thousand shepherds and warriors. [126](#) From that peninsula to Trebizond, the eastern curve of the Euxine was secured by forts, by alliance, or by religion; and the possession of Lazica, the Colchos of ancient, the Mingrelia of modern, geography, soon became the object of an important war. Trebizond, in after-times the seat of a romantic empire, was indebted to the liberality of Justinian for a church, an aqueduct, and a castle, whose ditches are hewn in the solid rock. From that maritime city, frontier line of five hundred miles may be drawn to the fortress of Circesium, the last Roman station on the Euphrates. [127](#) Above Trebizond immediately, and five days' journey to the south, the country rises into dark forests and craggy mountains, as savage though not so lofty as the Alps and the Pyrenees. In this rigorous climate, [128](#) where the snows seldom melt, the fruits are tardy and tasteless, even honey is poisonous: the most industrious tillage would be confined to some pleasant valleys; and the pastoral tribes obtained a scanty sustenance from the flesh and milk of their cattle. The Chalybians [129](#) derived their name and temper from the iron quality of the soil; and, since the days of Cyrus, they might produce, under the various appellations of Chaldæans and Zanians, an uninterrupted prescription of war and rapine. Under the reign of Justinian, they acknowledged the god and the emperor of the Romans, and seven fortresses were built in the most accessible passages, to exclude the ambition of the Persian monarch. [130](#) The principal source of the Euphrates descends from the Chalybian mountains, and seems to flow towards the west and the Euxine: bending to the south-west, the river passes under the walls of Satala and Melitene (which were restored by Justinian as the bulwarks of the Lesser Armenia,) and gradually approaches the Mediterranean Sea; till at length, repelled by Mount Taurus, [131](#) the Euphrates inclines its long and flexible course to the south-east and the Gulf of Persia. Among the Roman cities beyond the Euphrates, we distinguish two recent foundations, which were named from Theodosius, and the relics of the martyrs; and two capitals, Amida and Edessa, which are celebrated in the history of every age. Their strength was proportioned by Justinian to the danger of their situation. A ditch and palisade might be sufficient to resist the artless force of the cavalry of Scythia; but more elaborate works were required to sustain a regular siege against the arms and treasures of the great king. His skilful engineers understood the methods of conducting deep mines, and of raising platforms to the level of the rampart: he shook the strongest battlements with his military engines, and sometimes advanced to the assault with a line of movable turrets on the backs of elephants. In the great cities of the East, the disadvantage of space, perhaps of position, was compensated by the zeal of the people, who seconded the garrison in the defence of their country and religion; and the fabulous promise of the

Son of God, that Edessa should never be taken, filled the citizens with valiant confidence, and chilled the besiegers with doubt and dismay. [132](#) The subordinate towns of Armenia and Mesopotamia were diligently strengthened, and the posts which appeared to have any command of ground or water were occupied by numerous forts, substantially built of stone, or more hastily erected with the obvious materials of earth and brick. The eye of Justinian investigated every spot; and his cruel precautions might attract the war into some lonely vale, whose peaceful natives, connected by trade and marriage, were ignorant of national discord and the quarrels of princes. Westward of the Euphrates, a sandy desert extends above six hundred miles to the Red Sea. Nature had interposed a vacant solitude between the ambition of two rival empires; the Arabians, till Mahomet arose, were formidable only as robbers; and in the proud security of peace the fortifications of Syria were neglected on the most vulnerable side.

125

[\(return\)](#)

[See Procopius, Persic. l. i. c. 19. The altar of national concern, of annual sacrifice and oaths, which Diocletian had created in the Isla of Elephantine, was demolished by Justinian with less policy than]

126

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius de Edificiis, l. iii. c. 7. Hist. l. viii. c. 3, 4. These unambitious Goths had refused to follow the standard of Theodoric. As late as the xvth and xvith century, the name and nation might be discovered between Caffa and the Straits of Azoph, (D’Anville, Memoires de l’academie, tom. xxx. p. 240.) They well deserved the curiosity of Busbequius, (p. 321-326;) but seem to have vanished in the more recent account of the Missions du Levant, (tom. i.,) Tott, Peysonnnel, &c.]

127

[\(return\)](#)

[For the geography and architecture of this Armenian border, see the Persian Wars and Edifices (l. ii. c. 4-7, l. iii. c. 2—7) of Procopius.]

128

[\(return\)](#)

[The country is described by Tournefort, (Voyage au Levant, tom. iii. lettre xvii. xviii.) That skilful botanist soon discovered the plant that infects the honey, (Plin. xxi. 44, 45:) he observes, that the soldiers of Lucullus might indeed be astonished at the cold, since, even in the plain of Erzerum, snow sometimes falls in June, and the harvest is seldom finished before September. The hills of Armenia are below the fortieth degree of latitude; but in the mountainous country which I inhabit, it is well known that an ascent of some hours carries the traveller from the climate of Languedoc to that of Norway; and a general theory has been introduced,

that, under the line, an elevation of 2400 toises is equivalent to the cold of the polar circle, (Remond, *Observations sur les Voyages de Coxe dans la Suisse*, tom. ii. p. 104.)]

129 [\(return\)](#)

[The identity or proximity of the Chalybians, or Chaldaeana may be investigated in Strabo, (l. xii. p. 825, 826,) Cellarius, (*Geograph. Antiq.* tom. ii. p. 202—204,) and Freret, (*Mem. de Academie*, tom. iv. p. 594) Xenophon supposes, in his romance, (*Cyropaed* l. iii.,) the same Barbarians, against whom he had fought in his retreat, (*Anabasis*, l. iv.)]

130 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, *Persic.* l. i. c. 15. *De Edific.* l. iii. c. 6.]

131 [\(return\)](#)

[Ni Taurus obstet in nostra maria venturus, (Pomponius Mela, iii. 8.) Pliny, a poet as well as a naturalist, (v. 20,) personifies the river and mountain, and describes their combat. See the course of the Tigris and Euphrates in the excellent treatise of D’Anville.]

132 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius (*Persic.* l. ii. c. 12) tells the story with the tone, half sceptical, half superstitious, of Herodotus. The promise was not in the primitive lie of Eusebius, but dates at least from the year 400; and a third lie, the Veronica, was soon raised on the two former, (Evagrius, l. iv. c. 27.) As Edessa has been taken, Tillemont must disclaim the promise, (*Mem. Eccles.* tom. i. p. 362, 383, 617.)]

But the national enmity, at least the effects of that enmity, had been suspended by a truce, which continued above fourscore years. An ambassador from the emperor Zeno accompanied the rash and unfortunate Perozes, [1321](#) in his expedition against the Nepthalites, [1322](#) or white Huns, whose conquests had been stretched from the Caspian to the heart of India, whose throne was enriched with emeralds, [133](#) and whose cavalry was supported by a line of two thousand elephants. [134](#) The Persians [1341](#) were twice circumvented, in a situation which made valor useless and flight impossible; and the double victory of the Huns was achieved by military stratagem. They dismissed their royal captive after he had submitted to adore the majesty of a Barbarian; and the humiliation was poorly evaded by the casuistical subtlety of the Magi, who instructed Perozes to direct his attention to the rising sun. [1342](#) The indignant successor of Cyrus forgot his danger and his gratitude; he renewed the attack with headstrong fury, and lost both his army and his life. [135](#) The death of Perozes abandoned Persia to her foreign and domestic enemies; [1351](#) and twelve years of confusion elapsed before his son Cabades, or Kobad, could embrace any designs of ambition or revenge. The unkind parsimony of Anastasius was the motive or pretence of a Roman war; [136](#) the Huns and

Arabs marched under the Persian standard, and the fortifications of Armenia and Mesopotamia were, at that time, in a ruinous or imperfect condition. The emperor returned his thanks to the governor and people of Martyropolis for the prompt surrender of a city which could not be successfully defended, and the conflagration of Theodosiopolis might justify the conduct of their prudent neighbors. Amida sustained a long and destructive siege: at the end of three months the loss of fifty thousand of the soldiers of Cabades was not balanced by any prospect of success, and it was in vain that the Magi deduced a flattering prediction from the indecency of the women [1361](#) on the ramparts, who had revealed their most secret charms to the eyes of the assailants. At length, in a silent night, they ascended the most accessible tower, which was guarded only by some monks, oppressed, after the duties of a festival, with sleep and wine. Scaling-ladders were applied at the dawn of day; the presence of Cabades, his stern command, and his drawn sword, compelled the Persians to vanquish; and before it was sheathed, fourscore thousand of the inhabitants had expiated the blood of their companions. After the siege of Amida, the war continued three years, and the unhappy frontier tasted the full measure of its calamities. The gold of Anastasius was offered too late, the number of his troops was defeated by the number of their generals; the country was stripped of its inhabitants, and both the living and the dead were abandoned to the wild beasts of the desert. The resistance of Edessa, and the deficiency of spoil, inclined the mind of Cabades to peace: he sold his conquests for an exorbitant price; and the same line, though marked with slaughter and devastation, still separated the two empires. To avert the repetition of the same evils, Anastasius resolved to found a new colony, so strong, that it should defy the power of the Persian, so far advanced towards Assyria, that its stationary troops might defend the province by the menace or operation of offensive war. For this purpose, the town of Dara, [137](#) fourteen miles from Nisibis, and four days' journey from the Tigris, was peopled and adorned; the hasty works of Anastasius were improved by the perseverance of Justinian; and, without insisting on places less important, the fortifications of Dara may represent the military architecture of the age. The city was surrounded with two walls, and the interval between them, of fifty paces, afforded a retreat to the cattle of the besieged. The inner wall was a monument of strength and beauty: it measured sixty feet from the ground, and the height of the towers was one hundred feet; the loopholes, from whence an enemy might be annoyed with missile weapons, were small, but numerous; the soldiers were planted along the rampart, under the shelter of double galleries, and a third platform, spacious and secure, was raised on the summit of the towers. The exterior wall appears to have been less lofty, but more solid; and each tower was protected by a quadrangular bulwark. A hard, rocky soil resisted the tools of the miners, and on the south-east, where the ground was more tractable, their approach was retarded by a new work, which advanced in the shape of a half-moon. The double and treble ditches were filled with a stream of water; and in the management of the river, the most skilful labor was employed to supply the inhabitants, to distress the besiegers, and to prevent the

mischiefs of a natural or artificial inundation. Dara continued more than sixty years to fulfil the wishes of its founders, and to provoke the jealousy of the Persians, who incessantly complained, that this impregnable fortress had been constructed in manifest violation of the treaty of peace between the two empires. [1371](#)

1321 [\(return\)](#)

[Firouz the Conqueror—unfortunately so named. See St. Martin, vol. vi. p. 439.—M.]

1322 [\(return\)](#)

[Rather Hephthalites.—M.]

133 [\(return\)](#)

[They were purchased from the merchants of Adulis who traded to India, (Cosmas, Topograph. Christ. l. xi. p. 339;) yet, in the estimate of precious stones, the Scythian emerald was the first, the Bactrian the second, the Aethiopian only the third, (Hill's Theophrastus, p. 61, &c., 92.) The production, mines, &c., of emeralds, are involved in darkness; and it is doubtful whether we possess any of the twelve sorts known to the ancients, (Goguet, Origine des Loix, &c., part ii. l. ii. c. 2, art. 3.) In this war the Huns got, or at least Perozes lost, the finest pearl in the world, of which Procopius relates a ridiculous fable.]

134 [\(return\)](#)

[The Indo-Scythae continued to reign from the time of Augustus (Dionys. Perieget. 1088, with the Commentary of Eustathius, in Hudson, Geograph. Minor. tom. iv.) to that of the elder Justin, (Cosmas, Topograph. Christ. l. xi. p. 338, 339.) On their origin and conquests, see D'Anville, (sur l'Inde, p. 18, 45, &c., 69, 85, 89.) In the second century they were masters of Larice or Guzerat.]

1341 [\(return\)](#)

[According to the Persian historians, he was misled by guides who used the old stratagem of Zopyrus. Malcolm, vol. i. p. 101.—M.]

1342 [\(return\)](#)

[In the Ms. Chronicle of Tabary, it is said that the Moubedan Mobed, or Grand Pontiff, opposed with all his influence the violation of the treaty. St. Martin, vol. vii. p. 254.—M.]

135 [\(return\)](#)

[See the fate of Phirouz, or Perozes, and its consequences, in Procopius, (Persic. l. i. c. 3—6,) who may be compared with the fragments of Oriental history, (D'Herbelot, Bibliot. Orient. p. 351, and Texeira, History of Persia, translated or abridged by Stephens, l. i. c. 32, p. 132—138.) The

chronology is ably ascertained by Asseman. (Bibliot. Orient. tom. iii. p. 396—427.)]

1351 [\(return\)](#)

[When Firoze advanced, Khoosh-Nuaz (the king of the Huns) presented on the point of a lance the treaty to which he had sworn, and exhorted him yet to desist before he destroyed his fame forever. Malcolm, vol. i. p. 103.—M.]

136 [\(return\)](#)

[The Persian war, under the reigns of Anastasius and Justin, may be collected from Procopius, (Persic. l. i. c. 7, 8, 9,) Theophanes, (in Chronograph. p. 124—127,) Evagrius, (l. iii. c. 37,) Marcellinus, (in Chron. p. 47,) and Josue Stylites, (apud Asseman. tom. i. p. 272—281.)]

1361 [\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon should have written “some prostitutes.” Proc Pers. vol. 1 p. 7.—M.]

137 [\(return\)](#)

[The description of Dara is amply and correctly given by Procopius, (Persic. l. i. c. 10, l. ii. c. 13. De Edific. l. ii. c. 1, 2, 3, l. iii. c. 5.) See the situation in D’Anville, (l’Euphrate et le Tigre, p. 53, 54, 55,) though he seems to double the interval between Dara and Nisibis.]

1371 [\(return\)](#)

[The situation (of Dara) does not appear to give it strength, as it must have been commanded on three sides by the mountains, but opening on the south towards the plains of Mesopotamia. The foundation of the walls and towers, built of large hewn stone, may be traced across the valley, and over a number of low rocky hills which branch out from the foot of Mount Masius. The circumference I conceive to be nearly two miles and a half; and a small stream, which flows through the middle of the place, has induced several Koordish and Armenian families to fix their residence within the ruins. Besides the walls and towers, the remains of many other buildings attest the former grandeur of Dara; a considerable part of the space within the walls is arched and vaulted underneath, and in one place we perceived a large cavern, supported by four ponderous columns, somewhat resembling the great cistern of Constantinople. In the centre of the village are the ruins of a palace (probably that mentioned by Procopius) or church, one hundred paces in length, and sixty in breadth. The foundations, which are quite entire, consist of a prodigious number of subterraneous vaulted

chambers, entered by a narrow passage forty paces in length. The gate is still standing; a considerable part of the wall has bid defiance to time, &c. M Donald Kinneir's Journey, p. 438.—M]

Between the Euxine and the Caspian, the countries of Colchos, Iberia, and Albania, are intersected in every direction by the branches of Mount Caucasus; and the two principal gates, or passes, from north to south, have been frequently confounded in the geography both of the ancients and moderns. The name of Caspian or Albanian gates is properly applied to Derbend, [138](#) which occupies a short declivity between the mountains and the sea: the city, if we give credit to local tradition, had been founded by the Greeks; and this dangerous entrance was fortified by the kings of Persia with a mole, double walls, and doors of iron. The Iberian gates [139](#) [1391](#) are formed by a narrow passage of six miles in Mount Caucasus, which opens from the northern side of Iberia, or Georgia, into the plain that reaches to the Tanais and the Volga. A fortress, designed by Alexander perhaps, or one of his successors, to command that important pass, had descended by right of conquest or inheritance to a prince of the Huns, who offered it for a moderate price to the emperor; but while Anastasius paused, while he timorously computed the cost and the distance, a more vigilant rival interposed, and Cabades forcibly occupied the Straits of Caucasus. The Albanian and Iberian gates excluded the horsemen of Scythia from the shortest and most practicable roads, and the whole front of the mountains was covered by the rampart of Gog and Magog, the long wall which has excited the curiosity of an Arabian caliph [140](#) and a Russian conqueror. [141](#) According to a recent description, huge stones, seven feet thick, and twenty-one feet in length or height, are artificially joined without iron or cement, to compose a wall, which runs above three hundred miles from the shores of Derbend, over the hills, and through the valleys of Daghestan and Georgia.

Without a vision, such a work might be undertaken by the policy of Cabades; without a miracle, it might be accomplished by his son, so formidable to the Romans, under the name of Chosroes; so dear to the Orientals, under the appellation of Nushirwan. The Persian monarch held in his hand the keys both of peace and war; but he stipulated, in every treaty, that Justinian should contribute to the expense of a common barrier, which equally protected the two empires from the inroads of the Scythians. [142](#)

138

[\(return\)](#)

[For the city and pass of Derbend, see D'Herbelot, (Bibliot. Orient. p. 157, 291, 807,) Petit de la Croix. (Hist. de Gengiscan, l. iv. c. 9,) Histoire Genealogique des Tatars, (tom. i. p. 120,) Olearius, (Voyage en Perse, p. 1039—1041,) and Corneille le Bruyn, (Voyages, tom. i. p. 146, 147:) his view may be compared with the plan of Olearius, who judges the wall to be of shells and gravel hardened by time.]

- 139 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius, though with some confusion, always denominates them Caspian, (Persic. l. i. c. 10.) The pass is now styled Tatar-topa, the Tartar-gates, (D'Anville, Geographie Ancienne, tom. ii. p. 119, 120.)]
- 1391 [\(return\)](#)
[Malte-Brun. tom. viii. p. 12, makes three passes: 1. The central, which leads from Mosdok to Teflis. 2. The Albanian, more inland than the Derbend Pass. 3. The Derbend—the Caspian Gates. But the narrative of Col. Monteith, in the Journal of the Geographical Society of London. vol. iii. p. i. p. 39, clearly shows that there are but two passes between the Black Sea and the Caspian; the central, the Caucasian, or, as Col. Monteith calls it, the Caspian Gates, and the pass of Derbend, though it is practicable to turn this position (of Derbend) by a road a few miles distant through the mountains, p. 40.—M.]
- 140 [\(return\)](#)
[The imaginary rampart of Gog and Magog, which was seriously explored and believed by a caliph of the ninth century, appears to be derived from the gates of Mount Caucasus, and a vague report of the wall of China, (Geograph. Nubiensis, p. 267-270. Memoires de l'Academie, tom. xxxi. p. 210—219.)]
- 141 [\(return\)](#)
[See a learned dissertation of Baier, de muro Caucaseo, in Comment. Acad. Petropol. ann. 1726, tom. i. p. 425-463; but it is destitute of a map or plan. When the czar Peter I. became master of Derbend in the year 1722, the measure of the wall was found to be 3285 Russian orgyioe, or fathom, each of seven feet English; in the whole somewhat more than four miles in length.]
- 142 [\(return\)](#)
[See the fortifications and treaties of Chosroes, or Nushirwan, in Procopius (Persic. l. i. c. 16, 22, l. ii.) and D'Herbelot, (p. 682.)] VII. Justinian suppressed the schools of Athens and the consulship of Rome, which had given so many sages and heroes to mankind. Both these institutions had long since degenerated from their primitive glory; yet some reproach may be justly inflicted on the avarice and jealousy of a prince, by whose hand such venerable ruins were destroyed.

Athens, after her Persian triumphs, adopted the philosophy of Ionia and the rhetoric of Sicily; and these studies became the patrimony of a city, whose inhabitants, about thirty thousand males, condensed, within the period of a single life, the genius of ages and millions. Our sense of the dignity of human nature is exalted by the simple recollection, that Isocrates [143](#) was the companion of Plato and Xenophon; that he assisted, perhaps with the historian Thucydides, at the first representation of the Oedipus of Sophocles and the Iphigenia of Euripides; and that his pupils Aeschines and Demosthenes contended for the crown of patriotism in the presence of Aristotle, the master of Theophrastus, who taught at Athens with the founders of the Stoic and Epicurean sects. [144](#) The ingenuous youth of Attica enjoyed the benefits of their domestic education, which was communicated without envy to the rival cities. Two thousand disciples heard the lessons of Theophrastus; [145](#) the schools of rhetoric must have been still more populous than those of philosophy; and a rapid succession of students diffused the fame of their teachers as far as the utmost limits of the Grecian language and name. Those limits were enlarged by the victories of Alexander; the arts of Athens survived her freedom and dominion; and the Greek colonies which the Macedonians planted in Egypt, and scattered over Asia, undertook long and frequent pilgrimages to worship the Muses in their favorite temple on the banks of the Ilissus. The Latin conquerors respectfully listened to the instructions of their subjects and captives; the names of Cicero and Horace were enrolled in the schools of Athens; and after the perfect settlement of the Roman empire, the natives of Italy, of Africa, and of Britain, conversed in the groves of the academy with their fellow-students of the East. The studies of philosophy and eloquence are congenial to a popular state, which encourages the freedom of inquiry, and submits only to the force of persuasion. In the republics of Greece and Rome, the art of speaking was the powerful engine of patriotism or ambition; and the schools of rhetoric poured forth a colony of statesmen and legislators. When the liberty of public debate was suppressed, the orator, in the honorable profession of an advocate, might plead the cause of innocence and justice; he might abuse his talents in the more profitable trade of panegyric; and the same precepts continued to dictate the fanciful declamations of the sophist, and the chaster beauties of historical composition. The systems which professed to unfold the nature of God, of man, and of the universe, entertained the curiosity of the philosophic student; and according to the temper of his mind, he might doubt with the Sceptics, or decide with the Stoics, sublimely speculate with Plato, or severely argue with Aristotle. The pride of the adverse sects had fixed an unattainable term of moral happiness and perfection; but the race was glorious and salutary; the disciples of Zeno, and even those of Epicurus, were taught both to act and to suffer; and the death of Petronius was not less effectual than that of Seneca, to humble a tyrant by the discovery of his impotence. The light of science could not indeed be confined within the walls of Athens. Her incomparable writers address themselves to the human race; the living masters emigrated to Italy and Asia; Berytus, in later times, was devoted to the study of the law;

astronomy and physic were cultivated in the musaeum of Alexandria; but the Attic schools of rhetoric and philosophy maintained their superior reputation from the Peloponnesian war to the reign of Justinian. Athens, though situate in a barren soil, possessed a pure air, a free navigation, and the monuments of ancient art. That sacred retirement was seldom disturbed by the business of trade or government; and the last of the Athenians were distinguished by their lively wit, the purity of their taste and language, their social manners, and some traces, at least in discourse, of the magnanimity of their fathers. In the suburbs of the city, the academy of the Platonists, the lycaenum of the Peripatetics, the portico of the Stoics, and the garden of the Epicureans, were planted with trees and decorated with statues; and the philosophers, instead of being immured in a cloister, delivered their instructions in spacious and pleasant walks, which, at different hours, were consecrated to the exercises of the mind and body. The genius of the founders still lived in those venerable seats; the ambition of succeeding to the masters of human reason excited a generous emulation; and the merit of the candidates was determined, on each vacancy, by the free voices of an enlightened people. The Athenian professors were paid by their disciples: according to their mutual wants and abilities, the price appears to have varied; and Isocrates himself, who derides the avarice of the sophists, required, in his school of rhetoric, about thirty pounds from each of his hundred pupils. The wages of industry are just and honorable, yet the same Isocrates shed tears at the first receipt of a stipend: the Stoic might blush when he was hired to preach the contempt of money; and I should be sorry to discover that Aristotle or Plato so far degenerated from the example of Socrates, as to exchange knowledge for gold. But some property of lands and houses was settled by the permission of the laws, and the legacies of deceased friends, on the philosophic chairs of Athens. Epicurus bequeathed to his disciples the gardens which he had purchased for eighty minae or two hundred and fifty pounds, with a fund sufficient for their frugal subsistence and monthly festivals; [146](#) and the patrimony of Plato afforded an annual rent, which, in eight centuries, was gradually increased from three to one thousand pieces of gold. [147](#) The schools of Athens were protected by the wisest and most virtuous of the Roman princes. The library, which Hadrian founded, was placed in a portico adorned with pictures, statues, and a roof of alabaster, and supported by one hundred columns of Phrygian marble. The public salaries were assigned by the generous spirit of the Antonines; and each professor of politics, of rhetoric, of the Platonic, the Peripatetic, the Stoic, and the Epicurean philosophy, received an annual stipend of ten thousand drachmae, or more than three hundred pounds sterling. [148](#) After the death of Marcus, these liberal donations, and the privileges attached to the thrones of science, were abolished and revived, diminished and enlarged; but some vestige of royal bounty may be found under the successors of Constantine; and their arbitrary choice of an unworthy candidate might tempt the philosophers of Athens to regret the days of independence and poverty. [149](#) It is remarkable, that the impartial favor of the Antonines was bestowed on the four adverse sects of philosophy, which they considered

as equally useful, or at least, as equally innocent. Socrates had formerly been the glory and the reproach of his country; and the first lessons of Epicurus so strangely scandalized the pious ears of the Athenians, that by his exile, and that of his antagonists, they silenced all vain disputes concerning the nature of the gods. But in the ensuing year they recalled the hasty decree, restored the liberty of the schools, and were convinced by the experience of ages, that the moral character of philosophers is not affected by the diversity of their theological speculations. [150](#)

143 [\(return\)](#)

[The life of Isocrates extends from Olymp. lxxxvi. 1. to cx. 3, (ante Christ. 436—438.) See Dionys. Halicarn. tom. ii. p. 149, 150, edit. Hudson. Plutarch (sive anonymus) in Vit. X. Oratorum, p. 1538—1543, edit. H. Steph. Phot. cod. cclix. p. 1453.]

144 [\(return\)](#)

[The schools of Athens are copiously though concisely represented in the Fortuna Attica of Meursius, (c. viii. p. 59—73, in tom. i. Opp.) For the state and arts of the city, see the first book of Pausanias, and a small tract of Dicaearchus, in the second volume of Hudson's Geographers, who wrote about Olymp. cxvii. (Dodwell's Dissertia sect. 4.)]

145 [\(return\)](#)

[Diogen Laert. de Vit. Philosoph. l. v. segm. 37, p. 289.]

146 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Testament of Epicurus in Diogen. Laert. l. x. segm. 16—20, p. 611, 612. A single epistle (ad Familiares, xiii. 1.) displays the injustice of the Areopagus, the fidelity of the Epicureans, the dexterous politeness of Cicero, and the mixture of contempt and esteem with which the Roman senators considered the philosophy and philosophers of Greece.]

147 [\(return\)](#)

[Damascius, in Vit. Isidor. apud Photium, cod. ccxlii. p. 1054.]

148 [\(return\)](#)

[See Lucian (in Eunuch. tom. ii. p. 350—359, edit. Reitz,) Philostratus (in Vit. Sophist. l. ii. c. 2,) and Dion Cassius, or Xiphilin, (lxxi. p. 1195,) with their editors Du Soul, Olearius, and Reimar, and, above all, Salmasius, (ad Hist. August. p. 72.) A judicious philosopher (Smith's Wealth of Nations, vol. ii. p. 340—374) prefers the free contributions of the students to a fixed stipend for the professor.]

149

[\(return\)](#)

[Brucker, Hist. Crit. Philosoph. tom. ii. p. 310, &c.]

150

[\(return\)](#)

[The birth of Epicurus is fixed to the year 342 before Christ, (Bayle,) Olympiad cix. 3; and he opened his school at Athens, Olmp. cxviii. 3, 306 years before the same aera. This intolerant law (Athenaeus, l. xiii. p. 610. Diogen. Laertius, l. v. s. 38. p. 290. Julius Pollux, ix. 5) was enacted in the same or the succeeding year, (Sigonius, Opp. tom. v. p. 62. Menagius ad Diogen. Laert. p. 204. Corsini, Fasti Attici, tom. iv. p. 67, 68.) Theophrastus chief of the Peripatetics, and disciple of Aristotle, was involved in the same exile.]

The Gothic arms were less fatal to the schools of Athens than the establishment of a new religion, whose ministers superseded the exercise of reason, resolved every question by an article of faith, and condemned the infidel or sceptic to eternal flames. In many a volume of laborious controversy, they exposed the weakness of the understanding and the corruption of the heart, insulted human nature in the sages of antiquity, and proscribed the spirit of philosophical inquiry, so repugnant to the doctrine, or at least to the temper, of an humble believer. The surviving sects of the Platonists, whom Plato would have blushed to acknowledge, extravagantly mingled a sublime theory with the practice of superstition and magic; and as they remained alone in the midst of a Christian world, they indulged a secret rancor against the government of the church and state, whose severity was still suspended over their heads. About a century after the reign of Julian, [151](#) Proclus [152](#) was permitted to teach in the philosophic chair of the academy; and such was his industry, that he frequently, in the same day, pronounced five lessons, and composed seven hundred lines. His sagacious mind explored the deepest questions of morals and metaphysics, and he ventured to urge eighteen arguments against the Christian doctrine of the creation of the world. But in the intervals of study, he personally conversed with Pan, Aesculapius, and Minerva, in whose mysteries he was secretly initiated, and whose prostrate statues he adored; in the devout persuasion that the philosopher, who is a citizen of the universe, should be the priest of its various deities. An eclipse of the sun announced his approaching end; and his life, with that of his scholar Isidore, [153](#) compiled by two of their most learned disciples, exhibits a deplorable picture of the second childhood of human reason. Yet the golden chain, as it was fondly styled, of the Platonic succession, continued forty-four years from the death of Proclus to the edict of Justinian, [154](#) which imposed a perpetual silence on the schools of Athens, and excited the grief and indignation of the few remaining votaries of Grecian science and superstition. Seven friends and philosophers, Diogenes and Hermias, Eulalius and Priscian, Damascius, Isidore, and Simplicius, who dissented from the religion of their sovereign, embraced the resolution of seeking in a foreign land the freedom which was denied in their native country. They

had heard, and they credulously believed, that the republic of Plato was realized in the despotic government of Persia, and that a patriot king reigned ever the happiest and most virtuous of nations. They were soon astonished by the natural discovery, that Persia resembled the other countries of the globe; that Chosroes, who affected the name of a philosopher, was vain, cruel, and ambitious; that bigotry, and a spirit of intolerance, prevailed among the Magi; that the nobles were haughty, the courtiers servile, and the magistrates unjust; that the guilty sometimes escaped, and that the innocent were often oppressed. The disappointment of the philosophers provoked them to overlook the real virtues of the Persians; and they were scandalized, more deeply perhaps than became their profession, with the plurality of wives and concubines, the incestuous marriages, and the custom of exposing dead bodies to the dogs and vultures, instead of hiding them in the earth, or consuming them with fire. Their repentance was expressed by a precipitate return, and they loudly declared that they had rather die on the borders of the empire, than enjoy the wealth and favor of the Barbarian. From this journey, however, they derived a benefit which reflects the purest lustre on the character of Chosroes. He required, that the seven sages who had visited the court of Persia should be exempted from the penal laws which Justinian enacted against his Pagan subjects; and this privilege, expressly stipulated in a treaty of peace, was guarded by the vigilance of a powerful mediator. [155](#) Simplicius and his companions ended their lives in peace and obscurity; and as they left no disciples, they terminate the long list of Grecian philosophers, who may be justly praised, notwithstanding their defects, as the wisest and most virtuous of their contemporaries. The writings of Simplicius are now extant. His physical and metaphysical commentaries on Aristotle have passed away with the fashion of the times; but his moral interpretation of Epictetus is preserved in the library of nations, as a classic book, most excellently adapted to direct the will, to purify the heart, and to confirm the understanding, by a just confidence in the nature both of God and man.

151 [\(return\)](#)

[This is no fanciful aera: the Pagans reckoned their calamities from the reign of their hero. Proclus, whose nativity is marked by his horoscope, (A.D. 412, February 8, at C. P.,) died 124 years, A.D. 485, (Marin. in Vita Procli, c. 36.)]

152 [\(return\)](#)

[The life of Proclus, by Marinus, was published by Fabricius (Hamburg, 1700, et ad calcem Bibliot. Latin. Lond. 1703.) See Sidas, (tom. iii. p. 185, 186,) Fabricius, (Bibliot. Graec. l. v. c. 26 p. 449—552,) and Brucker, (Hist. Crit. Philosoph. tom. ii. p. 319—326)]

153 [\(return\)](#)

[The life of Isidore was composed by Damascius, (apud Photium, sod. ccxlii. p. 1028—1076.) See the

last age of the Pagan philosophers, in Brucker, (tom. ii. p. 341—351.)]

154

[\(return\)](#)

[The suppression of the schools of Athens is recorded by John Malala, (tom. ii. p. 187, sub Decio Cos. Sol.,) and an anonymous Chronicle in the Vatican library, (apud Aleman. p. 106.)]

155

[\(return\)](#)

[Agathias (l. ii. p. 69, 70, 71) relates this curious story Chosroes ascended the throne in the year 531, and made his first peace with the Romans in the beginning of 533—a date most compatible with his young fame and the old age of Isidore, (Asseman. Bibliot. Orient. tom. iii. p. 404. Pagi, tom. ii. p. 543, 550.)]

About the same time that Pythagoras first invented the appellation of philosopher, liberty and the consulship were founded at Rome by the elder Brutus. The revolutions of the consular office, which may be viewed in the successive lights of a substance, a shadow, and a name, have been occasionally mentioned in the present History. The first magistrates of the republic had been chosen by the people, to exercise, in the senate and in the camp, the powers of peace and war, which were afterwards translated to the emperors. But the tradition of ancient dignity was long revered by the Romans and Barbarians. A Gothic historian applauds the consulship of Theodoric as the height of all temporal glory and greatness; [156](#) the king of Italy himself congratulated those annual favorites of fortune who, without the cares, enjoyed the splendor of the throne; and at the end of a thousand years, two consuls were created by the sovereigns of Rome and Constantinople, for the sole purpose of giving a date to the year, and a festival to the people. But the expenses of this festival, in which the wealthy and the vain aspired to surpass their predecessors, insensibly arose to the enormous sum of fourscore thousand pounds; the wisest senators declined a useless honor, which involved the certain ruin of their families, and to this reluctance I should impute the frequent chasms in the last age of the consular Fasti. The predecessors of Justinian had assisted from the public treasures the dignity of the less opulent candidates; the avarice of that prince preferred the cheaper and more convenient method of advice and regulation. [157](#) Seven processions or spectacles were the number to which his edict confined the horse and chariot races, the athletic sports, the music, and pantomimes of the theatre, and the hunting of wild beasts; and small pieces of silver were discreetly substituted to the gold medals, which had always excited tumult and drunkenness, when they were scattered with a profuse hand among the populace. Notwithstanding these precautions, and his own example, the succession of consuls finally ceased in the thirteenth year of Justinian, whose despotic temper might be gratified by the silent extinction of a title which admonished the Romans of their ancient freedom. [158](#) Yet the annual consulship still lived in the minds of the people; they fondly expected its speedy restoration; they

applauded the gracious condescension of successive princes, by whom it was assumed in the first year of their reign; and three centuries elapsed, after the death of Justinian, before that obsolete dignity, which had been suppressed by custom, could be abolished by law. [159](#) The imperfect mode of distinguishing each year by the name of a magistrate, was usefully supplied by the date of a permanent aera: the creation of the world, according to the Septuagint version, was adopted by the Greeks; [160](#) and the Latins, since the age of Charlemagne, have computed their time from the birth of Christ. [161](#)

- 156 [\(return\)](#)
[Cassiodor. Variarum Epist. vi. 1. Jornandes, c. 57, p. 696, dit. Grot. Quod summum bonum primumque in mundo decus dicitur.]
- 157 [\(return\)](#)
[See the regulations of Justinian, (Novell. cv.,) dated at Constantinople, July 5, and addressed to Strategius, treasurer of the empire.]
- 158 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius, in Anecd. c. 26. Aleman. p. 106. In the xviiith year after the consulship of Basilus, according to the reckoning of Marcellinus, Victor, Marius, &c., the secret history was composed, and, in the eyes of Procopius, the consulship was finally abolished.]
- 159 [\(return\)](#)
[By Leo, the philosopher, (Novell. xciv. A.D. 886-911.) See Pagi (Dissertat. Hypatica, p. 325—362) and Ducange, (Gloss, Graec p. 1635, 1636.) Even the title was vilified: consulatus codicilli.. vilescent, says the emperor himself.]
- 160 [\(return\)](#)
[According to Julius Africanus, &c., the world was created the first of September, 5508 years, three months, and twenty-five days before the birth of Christ. (See Pezron, Antiquite des Temps defendue, p. 20—28.) And this aera has been used by the Greeks, the Oriental Christians, and even by the Russians, till the reign of Peter I The period, however arbitrary, is clear and convenient. Of the 7296 years which are supposed to elapse since the creation, we shall find 3000 of ignorance and darkness; 2000 either fabulous or doubtful; 1000 of ancient history, commencing with the Persian empire, and the Republics of Rome and Athens; 1000 from the fall of the Roman empire in the West to the discovery of America; and the remaining 296 will almost complete three centuries of the modern state of Europe and mankind. I regret this chronology, so far preferable to our double and

perplexed method of counting backwards and forwards the years before and after the Christian era.]

161

[\(return\)](#)

[The aera of the world has prevailed in the East since the vith general council, (A.D. 681.) In the West, the Christian aera was first invented in the vith century: it was propagated in the viiiith by the authority and writings of venerable Bede; but it was not till the xth that the use became legal and popular. See l'Art de Veriner les Dates, Dissert. Preliminaire, p. iii. xii. Dictionnaire Diplomatique, tom. i. p. 329—337; the works of a laborious society of Benedictine monks.]

Chapter XLI: Conquests Of Justinian, Character Of Balisarius.—Part I.

Conquests Of Justinian In The West.—Character And First Campaigns Of Belisarius—He Invades And Subdues The Vandal Kingdom Of Africa—His Triumph.—The Gothic War.—He Recovers Sicily, Naples, And Rome.—Siege Of Rome By The Goths.—Their Retreat And Losses.—Surrender Of Ravenna.—Glory Of Belisarius.—His Domestic Shame And Misfortunes.

When Justinian ascended the throne, about fifty years after the fall of the Western empire, the kingdoms of the Goths and Vandals had obtained a solid, and, as it might seem, a legal establishment both in Europe and Africa. The titles, which Roman victory had inscribed, were erased with equal justice by the sword of the Barbarians; and their successful rapine derived a more venerable sanction from time, from treaties, and from the oaths of fidelity, already repeated by a second or third generation of obedient subjects. Experience and Christianity had refuted the superstitious hope, that Rome was founded by the gods to reign forever over the nations of the earth. But the proud claim of perpetual and indefeasible dominion, which her soldiers could no longer maintain, was firmly asserted by her statesmen and lawyers, whose opinions have been sometimes revived and propagated in the modern schools of jurisprudence. After Rome herself had been stripped of the Imperial purple, the princes of Constantinople assumed the sole and sacred sceptre of the monarchy; demanded, as their rightful inheritance, the provinces which had been subdued by the consuls, or possessed by the Caesars; and feebly aspired to deliver their faithful subjects of the West from the usurpation of heretics and Barbarians. The execution of this splendid design was in some degree reserved for Justinian. During the five first years of his reign, he reluctantly waged a

costly and unprofitable war against the Persians; till his pride submitted to his ambition, and he purchased at the price of four hundred and forty thousand pounds sterling, the benefit of a precarious truce, which, in the language of both nations, was dignified with the appellation of the endless peace. The safety of the East enabled the emperor to employ his forces against the Vandals; and the internal state of Africa afforded an honorable motive, and promised a powerful support, to the Roman arms. [1](#)

1

[\(return\)](#)

[The complete series of the Vandal war is related by Procopius in a regular and elegant narrative, (l. i. c. 9—25, l. ii. c. 1—13,) and happy would be my lot, could I always tread in the footsteps of such a guide. From the entire and diligent perusal of the Greek text, I have a right to pronounce that the Latin and French versions of Grotius and Cousin may not be implicitly trusted; yet the president Cousin has been often praised, and Hugo Grotius was the first scholar of a learned age.]

According to the testament of the founder, the African kingdom had lineally descended to Hilderic, the eldest of the Vandal princes. A mild disposition inclined the son of a tyrant, the grandson of a conqueror, to prefer the counsels of clemency and peace; and his accession was marked by the salutary edict, which restored two hundred bishops to their churches, and allowed the free profession of the Athanasian creed. [2](#) But the Catholics accepted, with cold and transient gratitude, a favor so inadequate to their pretensions, and the virtues of Hilderic offended the prejudices of his countrymen. The Arian clergy presumed to insinuate that he had renounced the faith, and the soldiers more loudly complained that he had degenerated from the courage, of his ancestors. His ambassadors were suspected of a secret and disgraceful negotiation in the Byzantine court; and his general, the Achilles, [3](#) as he was named, of the Vandals, lost a battle against the naked and disorderly Moors. The public discontent was exasperated by Gelimer, whose age, descent, and military fame, gave him an apparent title to the succession: he assumed, with the consent of the nation, the reins of government; and his unfortunate sovereign sunk without a struggle from the throne to a dungeon, where he was strictly guarded with a faithful counsellor, and his unpopular nephew the Achilles of the Vandals. But the indulgence which Hilderic had shown to his Catholic subjects had powerfully recommended him to the favor of Justinian, who, for the benefit of his own sect, could acknowledge the use and justice of religious toleration: their alliance, while the nephew of Justin remained in a private station, was cemented by the mutual exchange of gifts and letters; and the emperor Justinian asserted the cause of royalty and friendship. In two successive embassies, he admonished the usurper to repent of his treason, or to abstain, at least, from any further violence which might provoke the displeasure of God and of the Romans; to reverence the laws of kindred and succession, and to suffer an infirm old man peaceably to end his days, either on the throne of Carthage or in the palace of Constantinople. The passions, or even the

prudence, of Gelimer compelled him to reject these requests, which were urged in the haughty tone of menace and command; and he justified his ambition in a language rarely spoken in the Byzantine court, by alleging the right of a free people to remove or punish their chief magistrate, who had failed in the execution of the kingly office.

After this fruitless expostulation, the captive monarch was more rigorously treated, his nephew was deprived of his eyes, and the cruel Vandal, confident in his strength and distance, derided the vain threats and slow preparations of the emperor of the East. Justinian resolved to deliver or revenge his friend, Gelimer to maintain his usurpation; and the war was preceded, according to the practice of civilized nations, by the most solemn protestations, that each party was sincerely desirous of peace.

2

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ruinart, Hist. Persecut. Vandal. c. xii. p. 589. His best evidence is drawn from the life of St. Fulgentius, composed by one of his disciples, transcribed in a great measure in the annals of Baronius, and printed in several great collections, (Catalog. Bibliot. Bnavianae, tom. i. vol. ii. p. 1258.)]

3

[\(return\)](#)

[For what quality of the mind or body? For speed, or beauty, or valor?—In what language did the Vandals read Homer?—Did he speak German?—The Latins had four versions, (Fabric. tom. i. l. ii. c. 8, p. 297:) yet, in spite of the praises of Seneca, (Consol. c. 26,) they appear to have been more successful in imitating than in translating the Greek poets. But the name of Achilles might be famous and popular even among the illiterate Barbarians.]

The report of an African war was grateful only to the vain and idle populace of Constantinople, whose poverty exempted them from tribute, and whose cowardice was seldom exposed to military service. But the wiser citizens, who judged of the future by the past, revolved in their memory the immense loss, both of men and money, which the empire had sustained in the expedition of Basiliscus. The troops, which, after five laborious campaigns, had been recalled from the Persian frontier, dreaded the sea, the climate, and the arms of an unknown enemy. The ministers of the finances computed, as far as they might compute, the demands of an African war; the taxes which must be found and levied to supply those insatiate demands; and the danger, lest their own lives, or at least their lucrative employments, should be made responsible for the deficiency of the supply. Inspired by such selfish motives, (for we may not suspect him of any zeal for the public good,) John of Cappadocia ventured to oppose in full council the inclinations of his master. He confessed, that a victory of such importance could not be too dearly purchased; but he represented in a grave discourse the certain difficulties and the uncertain event. “You undertake,” said the præfect, “to besiege Carthage: by land, the distance is not less than one hundred and forty days’ journey; on the sea, a whole

year [4](#) must elapse before you can receive any intelligence from your fleet. If Africa should be reduced, it cannot be preserved without the additional conquest of Sicily and Italy. Success will impose the obligations of new labors; a single misfortune will attract the Barbarians into the heart of your exhausted empire.” Justinian felt the weight of this salutary advice; he was confounded by the unwonted freedom of an obsequious servant; and the design of the war would perhaps have been relinquished, if his courage had not been revived by a voice which silenced the doubts of profane reason. “I have seen a vision,” cried an artful or fanatic bishop of the East. “It is the will of Heaven, O emperor! that you should not abandon your holy enterprise for the deliverance of the African church. The God of battles will march before your standard, and disperse your enemies, who are the enemies of his Son.” The emperor, might be tempted, and his counsellors were constrained, to give credit to this seasonable revelation: but they derived more rational hope from the revolt, which the adherents of Hilderic or Athanasius had already excited on the borders of the Vandal monarchy. Pudentius, an African subject, had privately signified his loyal intentions, and a small military aid restored the province of Tripoli to the obedience of the Romans. The government of Sardinia had been intrusted to Godas, a valiant Barbarian: he suspended the payment of tribute, disclaimed his allegiance to the usurper, and gave audience to the emissaries of Justinian, who found him master of that fruitful island, at the head of his guards, and proudly invested with the ensigns of royalty. The forces of the Vandals were diminished by discord and suspicion; the Roman armies were animated by the spirit of Belisarius; one of those heroic names which are familiar to every age and to every nation.

4

[\(return\)](#)

[A year—absurd exaggeration! The conquest of Africa may be dated A. D 533, September 14. It is celebrated by Justinian in the preface to his Institutes, which were published November 21 of the same year. Including the voyage and return, such a computation might be truly applied to our Indian empire.]

The Africanus of new Rome was born, and perhaps educated, among the Thracian peasants, [5](#) without any of those advantages which had formed the virtues of the elder and younger Scipio; a noble origin, liberal studies, and the emulation of a free state.

The silence of a loquacious secretary may be admitted, to prove that the youth of Belisarius could not afford any subject of praise: he served, most assuredly with valor and reputation, among the private guards of Justinian; and when his patron became emperor, the domestic was promoted to military command. After a bold inroad into Persarmenia, in which his glory was shared by a colleague, and his progress was checked by an enemy, Belisarius repaired to the important station of Dara, where he first accepted the service of Procopius, the faithful companion, and diligent historian, of his exploits. [6](#) The Mirranes of Persia advanced, with forty thousand of her best troops, to raze the fortifications of Dara; and signified the day and the hour on which

the citizens should prepare a bath for his refreshment, after the toils of victory. He encountered an adversary equal to himself, by the new title of General of the East; his superior in the science of war, but much inferior in the number and quality of his troops, which amounted only to twenty-five thousand Romans and strangers, relaxed in their discipline, and humbled by recent disasters. As the level plain of Dara refused all shelter to stratagem and ambush, Belisarius protected his front with a deep trench, which was prolonged at first in perpendicular, and afterwards in parallel, lines, to cover the wings of cavalry advantageously posted to command the flanks and rear of the enemy. When the Roman centre was shaken, their well-timed and rapid charge decided the conflict: the standard of Persia fell; the immortals fled; the infantry threw away their bucklers, and eight thousand of the vanquished were left on the field of battle. In the next campaign, Syria was invaded on the side of the desert; and Belisarius, with twenty thousand men, hastened from Dara to the relief of the province. During the whole summer, the designs of the enemy were baffled by his skilful dispositions: he pressed their retreat, occupied each night their camp of the preceding day, and would have secured a bloodless victory, if he could have resisted the impatience of his own troops. Their valiant promise was faintly supported in the hour of battle; the right wing was exposed by the treacherous or cowardly desertion of the Christian Arabs; the Huns, a veteran band of eight hundred warriors, were oppressed by superior numbers; the flight of the Isaurians was intercepted; but the Roman infantry stood firm on the left; for Belisarius himself, dismounting from his horse, showed them that intrepid despair was their only safety. [611](#) They turned their backs to the Euphrates, and their faces to the enemy: innumerable arrows glanced without effect from the compact and shelving order of their bucklers; an impenetrable line of pikes was opposed to the repeated assaults of the Persian cavalry; and after a resistance of many hours, the remaining troops were skilfully embarked under the shadow of the night. The Persian commander retired with disorder and disgrace, to answer a strict account of the lives of so many soldiers, which he had consumed in a barren victory. But the fame of Belisarius was not sullied by a defeat, in which he alone had saved his army from the consequences of their own rashness: the approach of peace relieved him from the guard of the eastern frontier, and his conduct in the sedition of Constantinople amply discharged his obligations to the emperor. When the African war became the topic of popular discourse and secret deliberation, each of the Roman generals was apprehensive, rather than ambitious, of the dangerous honor; but as soon as Justinian had declared his preference of superior merit, their envy was rekindled by the unanimous applause which was given to the choice of Belisarius. The temper of the Byzantine court may encourage a suspicion, that the hero was darkly assisted by the intrigues of his wife, the fair and subtle Antonina, who alternately enjoyed the confidence, and incurred the hatred, of the empress Theodora.

The birth of Antonina was ignoble; she descended from a family of charioteers; and her chastity has been stained with the foulest reproach. Yet she reigned with long and

absolute power over the mind of her illustrious husband; and if Antonina disdained the merit of conjugal fidelity, she expressed a manly friendship to Belisarius, whom she accompanied with undaunted resolution in all the hardships and dangers of a military life. [7](#)

5 [\(return\)](#)

[(Procop. Vandal. l. i. c. 11.) Aleman, (Not. ad Anecd. p. 5,) an Italian, could easily reject the German vanity of Giphanius and Velserus, who wished to claim the hero; but his Germania, a metropolis of Thrace, I cannot find in any civil or ecclesiastical lists of the provinces and cities. Note *: M. von Hammer (in a review of Lord Mahon's Life of Belisarius in the Vienna Jahrbucher) shows that the name of Belisarius is a Slavonic word, Beli-tzar, the White Prince, and that the place of his birth was a village of Illvria, which still bears the name of Germany.—M.]

6 [\(return\)](#)

[The two first Persian campaigns of Belisarius are fairly and copiously related by his secretary, (Persic. l. i. c. 12—18.)]

611 [\(return\)](#)

[The battle was fought on Easter Sunday, April 19, not at the end of the summer. The date is supplied from John Malala by Lord Mabon p. 47.—M.]

7 [\(return\)](#)

[See the birth and character of Antonina, in the Anecdotes, c. 1. and the notes of Alemannus, p. 3.]

The preparations for the African war were not unworthy of the last contest between Rome and Carthage. The pride and flower of the army consisted of the guards of Belisarius, who, according to the pernicious indulgence of the times, devoted themselves, by a particular oath of fidelity, to the service of their patrons. Their strength and stature, for which they had been curiously selected, the goodness of their horses and armor, and the assiduous practice of all the exercises of war, enabled them to act whatever their courage might prompt; and their courage was exalted by the social honor of their rank, and the personal ambition of favor and fortune. Four hundred of the bravest of the Heruli marched under the banner of the faithful and active Pharas; their untractable valor was more highly prized than the tame submission of the Greeks and Syrians; and of such importance was it deemed to procure a reenforcement of six hundred Massagetae, or Huns, that they were allured by fraud and deceit to engage in a naval expedition. Five thousand horse and ten thousand foot were embarked at Constantinople, for the conquest of Africa; but the infantry, for the most part levied in Thrace and Isauria, yielded to the more prevailing use and reputation of the cavalry; and the Scythian bow was the weapon on which the armies of Rome were now reduced to place their principal dependence. From a laudable desire to assert the dignity of his

theme, Procopius defends the soldiers of his own time against the morose critics, who confined that respectable name to the heavy-armed warriors of antiquity, and maliciously observed, that the word archer is introduced by Homer⁸ as a term of contempt. “Such contempt might perhaps be due to the naked youths who appeared on foot in the fields of Troy, and lurking behind a tombstone, or the shield of a friend, drew the bow-string to their breast, ⁹ and dismissed a feeble and lifeless arrow. But our archers (pursues the historian) are mounted on horses, which they manage with admirable skill; their head and shoulders are protected by a casque or buckler; they wear greaves of iron on their legs, and their bodies are guarded by a coat of mail. On their right side hangs a quiver, a sword on their left, and their hand is accustomed to wield a lance or javelin in closer combat. Their bows are strong and weighty; they shoot in every possible direction, advancing, retreating, to the front, to the rear, or to either flank; and as they are taught to draw the bow-string not to the breast, but to the right ear, firm indeed must be the armor that can resist the rapid violence of their shaft.” Five hundred transports, navigated by twenty thousand mariners of Egypt, Cilicia, and Ionia, were collected in the harbor of Constantinople. The smallest of these vessels may be computed at thirty, the largest at five hundred, tons; and the fair average will supply an allowance, liberal, but not profuse, of about one hundred thousand tons, ¹⁰ for the reception of thirty-five thousand soldiers and sailors, of five thousand horses, of arms, engines, and military stores, and of a sufficient stock of water and provisions for a voyage, perhaps, of three months. The proud galleys, which in former ages swept the Mediterranean with so many hundred oars, had long since disappeared; and the fleet of Justinian was escorted only by ninety-two light brigantines, covered from the missile weapons of the enemy, and rowed by two thousand of the brave and robust youth of Constantinople. Twenty-two generals are named, most of whom were afterwards distinguished in the wars of Africa and Italy: but the supreme command, both by land and sea, was delegated to Belisarius alone, with a boundless power of acting according to his discretion, as if the emperor himself were present. The separation of the naval and military professions is at once the effect and the cause of the modern improvements in the science of navigation and maritime war.

8

[\(return\)](#)

[See the preface of Procopius. The enemies of archery might quote the reproaches of Diomedes (Iliad. Delta. 385, &c.) and the *permittere vulnera ventis* of Lucan, (viii. 384:) yet the Romans could not despise the arrows of the Parthians; and in the siege of Troy, Pandarus, Paris, and Teucer, pierced those haughty warriors who insulted them as women or children.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[(Iliad. Delta. 123.) How concise—how just—how beautiful is the whole picture! I see the attitudes of the archer—I hear the twanging of the bow.]

[The text appears to allow for the largest vessels 50,000 medimni, or 3000 tons, (since the medimnus weighed 160 Roman, or 120 avoirdupois, pounds.) I have given a more rational interpretation, by supposing that the Attic style of Procopius conceals the legal and popular modius, a sixth part of the medimnus, (Hooper's Ancient Measures, p. 152, &c.) A contrary and indeed a stranger mistake has crept into an oration of Dinarchus, (contra Demosthenem, in Reiske Orator. Graec tom iv. P. ii. p. 34.) By reducing the number of ships from 500 to 50, and translating by mines, or pounds, Cousin has generously allowed 500 tons for the whole of the Imperial fleet! Did he never think?]

In the seventh year of the reign of Justinian, and about the time of the summer solstice, the whole fleet of six hundred ships was ranged in martial pomp before the gardens of the palace. The patriarch pronounced his benediction, the emperor signified his last commands, the general's trumpet gave the signal of departure, and every heart, according to its fears or wishes, explored, with anxious curiosity, the omens of misfortune and success. The first halt was made at Perinthus or Heraclea, where Belisarius waited five days to receive some Thracian horses, a military gift of his sovereign. From thence the fleet pursued their course through the midst of the Propontis; but as they struggled to pass the Straits of the Hellespont, an unfavorable wind detained them four days at Abydus, where the general exhibited a memorable lesson of firmness and severity. Two of the Huns, who in a drunken quarrel had slain one of their fellow-soldiers, were instantly shown to the army suspended on a lofty gibbet. The national indignity was resented by their countrymen, who disclaimed the servile laws of the empire, and asserted the free privilege of Scythia, where a small fine was allowed to expiate the hasty sallies of intemperance and anger. Their complaints were specious, their clamors were loud, and the Romans were not averse to the example of disorder and impunity. But the rising sedition was appeased by the authority and eloquence of the general: and he represented to the assembled troops the obligation of justice, the importance of discipline, the rewards of piety and virtue, and the unpardonable guilt of murder, which, in his apprehension, was aggravated rather than excused by the vice of intoxication. [11](#) In the navigation from the Hellespont to Peloponnesus, which the Greeks, after the siege of Troy, had performed in four days, [12](#) the fleet of Belisarius was guided in their course by his master-galley, conspicuous in the day by the redness of the sails, and in the night by the torches blazing from the mast head. It was the duty of the pilots, as they steered between the islands, and turned the Capes of Malea and Taenarium, to preserve the just order and regular intervals of such a multitude of ships: as the wind was fair and moderate, their labors were not unsuccessful, and the troops were safely disembarked at Methone on the Messenian coast, to repose themselves for a while after the fatigues of the sea. In this

place they experienced how avarice, invested with authority, may sport with the lives of thousands which are bravely exposed for the public service. According to military practice, the bread or biscuit of the Romans was twice prepared in the oven, and the diminution of one fourth was cheerfully allowed for the loss of weight. To gain this miserable profit, and to save the expense of wood, the præfect John of Cappadocia had given orders that the flour should be slightly baked by the same fire which warmed the baths of Constantinople; and when the sacks were opened, a soft and mouldy paste was distributed to the army. Such unwholesome food, assisted by the heat of the climate and season, soon produced an epidemical disease, which swept away five hundred soldiers. Their health was restored by the diligence of Belisarius, who provided fresh bread at Methone, and boldly expressed his just and humane indignation; the emperor heard his complaint; the general was praised but the minister was not punished. From the port of Methone, the pilots steered along the western coast of Peloponnesus, as far as the Isle of Zacynthus, or Zante, before they undertook the voyage (in their eyes a most arduous voyage) of one hundred leagues over the Ionian Sea. As the fleet was surprised by a calm, sixteen days were consumed in the slow navigation; and even the general would have suffered the intolerable hardship of thirst, if the ingenuity of Antonina had not preserved the water in glass bottles, which she buried deep in the sand in a part of the ship impervious to the rays of the sun. At length the harbor of Caucana, [13](#) on the southern side of Sicily, afforded a secure and hospitable shelter. The Gothic officers who governed the island in the name of the daughter and grandson of Theodoric, obeyed their imprudent orders, to receive the troops of Justinian like friends and allies: provisions were liberally supplied, the cavalry was remounted, [14](#) and Procopius soon returned from Syracuse with correct information of the state and designs of the Vandals. His intelligence determined Belisarius to hasten his operations, and his wise impatience was seconded by the winds. The fleet lost sight of Sicily, passed before the Isle of Malta, discovered the capes of Africa, ran along the coast with a strong gale from the north-east, and finally cast anchor at the promontory of Caput Vada, about five days' journey to the south of Carthage. [15](#)

11

[\(return\)](#)

[I have read of a Greek legislator, who inflicted a double penalty on the crimes committed in a state of intoxication; but it seems agreed that this was rather a political than a moral law.]

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Or even in three days, since they anchored the first evening in the neighboring isle of Tenedos: the second day they sailed to Lesbos the third to the promontory of Euboea, and on the fourth they reached Argos, (Homer, *Odyss.* P. 130—183. Wood's *Essay on Homer*, p. 40—46.) A pirate sailed from the Hellespont to the seaport of Sparta in three days, (Xenophon. *Hellen.* l. ii. c. l.)]

- 13 [\(return\)](#)
[Caucana, near Camarina, is at least 50 miles (350 or 400 stadia) from Syracuse, (Cluver. Sicilia Antiqua, p. 191.) * Note *: Lord Mahon. (Life of Belisarius, p.88) suggests some valid reasons for reading Catana, the ancient name of Catania.—M.]
- 14 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius, Gothic. l. i. c. 3. Tibi tollit hinnitum apta quadrigis equa, in the Sicilian pastures of Grosphus, (Horat. Carm. ii. 16.) Acragas.... magnanimum quondam generator equorum, (Virg. Aeneid. iii. 704.) Thero's horses, whose victories are immortalized by Pindar, were bred in this country.]
- 15 [\(return\)](#)
[The Caput Vada of Procopius (where Justinian afterwards founded a city—De Edific.l. vi. c. 6) is the promontory of Ammon in Strabo, the Brachodes of Ptolemy, the Capaudia of the moderns, a long narrow slip that runs into the sea, (Shaw's Travels, p. 111.)]

If Gelimer had been informed of the approach of the enemy, he must have delayed the conquest of Sardinia for the immediate defence of his person and kingdom. A detachment of five thousand soldiers, and one hundred and twenty galleys, would have joined the remaining forces of the Vandals; and the descendant of Genseric might have surprised and oppressed a fleet of deep laden transports, incapable of action, and of light brigantines that seemed only qualified for flight. Belisarius had secretly trembled when he overheard his soldiers, in the passage, emboldening each other to confess their apprehensions: if they were once on shore, they hoped to maintain the honor of their arms; but if they should be attacked at sea, they did not blush to acknowledge that they wanted courage to contend at the same time with the winds, the waves, and the Barbarians. [16](#) The knowledge of their sentiments decided Belisarius to seize the first opportunity of landing them on the coast of Africa; and he prudently rejected, in a council of war, the proposal of sailing with the fleet and army into the port of Carthage. [1611](#) Three months after their departure from Constantinople, the men and horses, the arms and military stores, were safely disembarked, and five soldiers were left as a guard on board each of the ships, which were disposed in the form of a semicircle. The remainder of the troops occupied a camp on the sea-shore, which they fortified, according to ancient discipline, with a ditch and rampart; and the discovery of a source of fresh water, while it allayed the thirst, excited the superstitious confidence, of the Romans. The next morning, some of the neighboring gardens were pillaged; and Belisarius, after chastising the offenders, embraced the slight occasion, but the decisive moment, of inculcating the maxims of justice, moderation, and genuine policy. “When I first accepted the commission of subduing Africa, I depended much less,” said the general, “on the numbers, or even the bravery of my troops, than on the friendly

disposition of the natives, and their immortal hatred to the Vandals. You alone can deprive me of this hope; if you continue to extort by rapine what might be purchased for a little money, such acts of violence will reconcile these implacable enemies, and unite them in a just and holy league against the invaders of their country.” These exhortations were enforced by a rigid discipline, of which the soldiers themselves soon felt and praised the salutary effects. The inhabitants, instead of deserting their houses, or hiding their corn, supplied the Romans with a fair and liberal market: the civil officers of the province continued to exercise their functions in the name of Justinian: and the clergy, from motives of conscience and interest, assiduously labored to promote the cause of a Catholic emperor. The small town of Sullecte, [17](#) one day’s journey from the camp, had the honor of being foremost to open her gates, and to resume her ancient allegiance: the larger cities of Leptis and Adrumetum imitated the example of loyalty as soon as Belisarius appeared; and he advanced without opposition as far as Grasse, a palace of the Vandal kings, at the distance of fifty miles from Carthage. The weary Romans indulged themselves in the refreshment of shady groves, cool fountains, and delicious fruits; and the preference which Procopius allows to these gardens over any that he had seen, either in the East or West, may be ascribed either to the taste, or the fatigue, of the historian. In three generations, prosperity and a warm climate had dissolved the hardy virtue of the Vandals, who insensibly became the most luxurious of mankind. In their villas and gardens, which might deserve the Persian name of Paradise, [18](#) they enjoyed a cool and elegant repose; and, after the daily use of the bath, the Barbarians were seated at a table profusely spread with the delicacies of the land and sea. Their silken robes loosely flowing, after the fashion of the Medes, were embroidered with gold; love and hunting were the labors of their life, and their vacant hours were amused by pantomimes, chariot-races, and the music and dances of the theatre.

16 [\(return\)](#)
[A centurion of Mark Antony expressed, though in a more manly train, the same dislike to the sea and to naval combats, (Plutarch in Antonio, p. 1730, edit. Hen. Steph.)]

1611 [\(return\)](#)
[Rather into the present Lake of Tunis. Lord Mahon, p. 92.—M.]

17 [\(return\)](#)
[Sullecte is perhaps the Turris Hannibalis, an old building, now as large as the Tower of London. The march of Belisarius to Leptis. Adrumetum, &c., is illustrated by the campaign of Caesar, (Hirtius, de Bello Africano, with the Analyse of Guichardt,) and Shaw’s Travels (p. 105—113) in the same country.]

18 [\(return\)](#)
[The paradises, a name and fashion adopted from Persia, may be represented by the royal garden of

Ispahan, (*Voyage d'Olearius*, p. 774.) See, in the Greek romances, their most perfect model, (*Longus. Pastoral. l. iv. p. 99—101 Achilles Tatius. l. i. p. 22, 23.*)]

In a march of ten or twelve days, the vigilance of Belisarius was constantly awake and active against his unseen enemies, by whom, in every place, and at every hour, he might be suddenly attacked. An officer of confidence and merit, John the Armenian, led the vanguard of three hundred horse; six hundred Massagetae covered at a certain distance the left flank; and the whole fleet, steering along the coast, seldom lost sight of the army, which moved each day about twelve miles, and lodged in the evening in strong camps, or in friendly towns. The near approach of the Romans to Carthage filled the mind of Gelimer with anxiety and terror. He prudently wished to protract the war till his brother, with his veteran troops, should return from the conquest of Sardinia; and he now lamented the rash policy of his ancestors, who, by destroying the fortifications of Africa, had left him only the dangerous resource of risking a battle in the neighborhood of his capital. The Vandal conquerors, from their original number of fifty thousand, were multiplied, without including their women and children, to one hundred and sixty thousand fighting men: [1811](#) and such forces, animated with valor and union, might have crushed, at their first landing, the feeble and exhausted bands of the Roman general. But the friends of the captive king were more inclined to accept the invitations, than to resist the progress, of Belisarius; and many a proud Barbarian disguised his aversion to war under the more specious name of his hatred to the usurper. Yet the authority and promises of Gelimer collected a formidable army, and his plans were concerted with some degree of military skill. An order was despatched to his brother Ammatas, to collect all the forces of Carthage, and to encounter the van of the Roman army at the distance of ten miles from the city: his nephew Gibamund, with two thousand horse, was destined to attack their left, when the monarch himself, who silently followed, should charge their rear, in a situation which excluded them from the aid or even the view of their fleet. But the rashness of Ammatas was fatal to himself and his country. He anticipated the hour of the attack, outstripped his tardy followers, and was pierced with a mortal wound, after he had slain with his own hand twelve of his boldest antagonists. His Vandals fled to Carthage; the highway, almost ten miles, was strewn with dead bodies; and it seemed incredible that such multitudes could be slaughtered by the swords of three hundred Romans. The nephew of Gelimer was defeated, after a slight combat, by the six hundred Massagetae: they did not equal the third part of his numbers; but each Scythian was fired by the example of his chief, who gloriously exercised the privilege of his family, by riding, foremost and alone, to shoot the first arrow against the enemy. In the mean while, Gelimer himself, ignorant of the event, and misguided by the windings of the hills, inadvertently passed the Roman army, and reached the scene of action where Ammatas had fallen. He wept the fate of his brother and of Carthage, charged with irresistible fury the advancing squadrons, and might have pursued, and perhaps decided, the victory, if he had not wasted those

inestimable moments in the discharge of a vain, though pious, duty to the dead. While his spirit was broken by this mournful office, he heard the trumpet of Belisarius, who, leaving Antonina and his infantry in the camp, pressed forwards with his guards and the remainder of the cavalry to rally his flying troops, and to restore the fortune of the day. Much room could not be found, in this disorderly battle, for the talents of a general; but the king fled before the hero; and the Vandals, accustomed only to a Moorish enemy, were incapable of withstanding the arms and discipline of the Romans. Gelimer retired with hasty steps towards the desert of Numidia: but he had soon the consolation of learning that his private orders for the execution of Hilderic and his captive friends had been faithfully obeyed. The tyrant's revenge was useful only to his enemies. The death of a lawful prince excited the compassion of his people; his life might have perplexed the victorious Romans; and the lieutenant of Justinian, by a crime of which he was innocent, was relieved from the painful alternative of forfeiting his honor or relinquishing his conquests.

1811

[\(return\)](#)

[80,000. Hist. Arc. c. 18. Gibbon has been misled by the translation. See Lord ov. p. 99.—M.]

Chapter XLI: Conquests Of Justinian, Character Of Balisarius.—Part II.

As soon as the tumult had subsided, the several parts of the army informed each other of the accidents of the day; and Belisarius pitched his camp on the field of victory, to which the tenth mile-stone from Carthage had applied the Latin appellation of Decimus. From a wise suspicion of the stratagems and resources of the Vandals, he marched the next day in order of battle, halted in the evening before the gates of Carthage, and allowed a night of repose, that he might not, in darkness and disorder, expose the city to the license of the soldiers, or the soldiers themselves to the secret ambush of the city. But as the fears of Belisarius were the result of calm and intrepid reason, he was soon satisfied that he might confide, without danger, in the peaceful and friendly aspect of the capital. Carthage blazed with innumerable torches, the signals of the public joy; the chain was removed that guarded the entrance of the port; the gates were thrown open, and the people, with acclamations of gratitude, hailed and invited their Roman deliverers. The defeat of the Vandals, and the freedom of Africa, were announced to the city on the eve of St. Cyprian, when the churches were already adorned and illuminated for the festival of the martyr whom three centuries of superstition had almost raised to a local deity. The Arians, conscious that their reign had expired, resigned the temple to the Catholics, who rescued their saint from profane hands, performed the holy rites, and loudly proclaimed the creed of Athanasius and Justinian. One awful hour reversed the fortunes of the contending parties. The suppliant Vandals, who had so lately indulged the vices of conquerors, sought an humble refuge in the sanctuary of the church; while

the merchants of the East were delivered from the deepest dungeon of the palace by their affrighted keeper, who implored the protection of his captives, and showed them, through an aperture in the wall, the sails of the Roman fleet. After their separation from the army, the naval commanders had proceeded with slow caution along the coast till they reached the Hermaean promontory, and obtained the first intelligence of the victory of Belisarius. Faithful to his instructions, they would have cast anchor about twenty miles from Carthage, if the more skilful seamen had not represented the perils of the shore, and the signs of an impending tempest. Still ignorant of the revolution, they declined, however, the rash attempt of forcing the chain of the port; and the adjacent harbor and suburb of Mandracium were insulted only by the rapine of a private officer, who disobeyed and deserted his leaders. But the Imperial fleet, advancing with a fair wind, steered through the narrow entrance of the Goletta, and occupied, in the deep and capacious lake of Tunis, a secure station about five miles from the capital. [19](#) No sooner was Belisarius informed of their arrival, than he despatched orders that the greatest part of the mariners should be immediately landed to join the triumph, and to swell the apparent numbers, of the Romans. Before he allowed them to enter the gates of Carthage, he exhorted them, in a discourse worthy of himself and the occasion, not to disgrace the glory of their arms; and to remember that the Vandals had been the tyrants, but that they were the deliverers, of the Africans, who must now be respected as the voluntary and affectionate subjects of their common sovereign. The Romans marched through the streets in close ranks prepared for battle if an enemy had appeared: the strict order maintained by the general imprinted on their minds the duty of obedience; and in an age in which custom and impunity almost sanctified the abuse of conquest, the genius of one man repressed the passions of a victorious army. The voice of menace and complaint was silent; the trade of Carthage was not interrupted; while Africa changed her master and her government, the shops continued open and busy; and the soldiers, after sufficient guards had been posted, modestly departed to the houses which were allotted for their reception. Belisarius fixed his residence in the palace; seated himself on the throne of Genseric; accepted and distributed the Barbaric spoil; granted their lives to the suppliant Vandals; and labored to repair the damage which the suburb of Mandracium had sustained in the preceding night. At supper he entertained his principal officers with the form and magnificence of a royal banquet. [20](#) The victor was respectfully served by the captive officers of the household; and in the moments of festivity, when the impartial spectators applauded the fortune and merit of Belisarius, his envious flatterers secretly shed their venom on every word and gesture which might alarm the suspicions of a jealous monarch. One day was given to these pompous scenes, which may not be despised as useless, if they attracted the popular veneration; but the active mind of Belisarius, which in the pride of victory could suppose a defeat, had already resolved that the Roman empire in Africa should not depend on the chance of arms, or the favor of the people. The fortifications of Carthage [2011](#) had alone been exempted from the general proscription; but in the reign of ninety-five years they were

suffered to decay by the thoughtless and indolent Vandals. A wiser conqueror restored, with incredible despatch, the walls and ditches of the city. His liberality encouraged the workmen; the soldiers, the mariners, and the citizens, vied with each other in the salutary labor; and Gelimer, who had feared to trust his person in an open town, beheld with astonishment and despair, the rising strength of an impregnable fortress.

19

[\(return\)](#)

[The neighborhood of Carthage, the sea, the land, and the rivers, are changed almost as much as the works of man. The isthmus, or neck of the city, is now confounded with the continent; the harbor is a dry plain; and the lake, or stagnum, no more than a morass, with six or seven feet water in the mid-channel. See D’Anville, (*Geographie Ancienne*, tom. iii. p. 82,) Shaw, (*Travels*, p. 77—84,) Marmol, (*Description de l’Afrique*, tom. ii. p. 465,) and Thuanus, (lviii. 12, tom. iii. p. 334.)]

20

[\(return\)](#)

[From Delphi, the name of Delphicum was given, both in Greek and Latin, to a tripod; and by an easy analogy, the same appellation was extended at Rome, Constantinople, and Carthage, to the royal banquetting room, (Procopius, *Vandal.* l. i. c. 21. Ducange, *Gloss, Graec.* p. 277., ad *Alexiad.* p. 412.)]

2011

[\(return\)](#)

[And a few others. Procopius states in his work *De Edi Sciis.* l. vi. vol i. p. 5.—M]

That unfortunate monarch, after the loss of his capital, applied himself to collect the remains of an army scattered, rather than destroyed, by the preceding battle; and the hopes of pillage attracted some Moorish bands to the standard of Gelimer. He encamped in the fields of Bulla, four days’ journey from Carthage; insulted the capital, which he deprived of the use of an aqueduct; proposed a high reward for the head of every Roman; affected to spare the persons and property of his African subjects, and secretly negotiated with the Arian sectaries and the confederate Huns. Under these circumstances, the conquest of Sardinia served only to aggravate his distress: he reflected, with the deepest anguish, that he had wasted, in that useless enterprise, five thousand of his bravest troops; and he read, with grief and shame, the victorious letters of his brother Zano, [2012](#) who expressed a sanguine confidence that the king, after the example of their ancestors, had already chastised the rashness of the Roman invader. “Alas! my brother,” replied Gelimer, “Heaven has declared against our unhappy nation. While you have subdued Sardinia, we have lost Africa. No sooner did Belisarius appear with a handful of soldiers, than courage and prosperity deserted the cause of the Vandals. Your nephew Gibamund, your brother Ammatas, have been betrayed to death by the cowardice of their followers. Our horses, our ships, Carthage itself, and all Africa, are in the power of the enemy. Yet the Vandals still prefer an ignominious

repose, at the expense of their wives and children, their wealth and liberty. Nothing now remains, except the fields of Bulla, and the hope of your valor. Abandon Sardinia; fly to our relief; restore our empire, or perish by our side.” On the receipt of this epistle, Zano imparted his grief to the principal Vandals; but the intelligence was prudently concealed from the natives of the island. The troops embarked in one hundred and twenty galleys at the port of Caghari, cast anchor the third day on the confines of Mauritania, and hastily pursued their march to join the royal standard in the camp of Bulla. Mournful was the interview: the two brothers embraced; they wept in silence; no questions were asked of the Sardinian victory; no inquiries were made of the African misfortunes: they saw before their eyes the whole extent of their calamities; and the absence of their wives and children afforded a melancholy proof that either death or captivity had been their lot. The languid spirit of the Vandals was at length awakened and united by the entreaties of their king, the example of Zano, and the instant danger which threatened their monarchy and religion. The military strength of the nation advanced to battle; and such was the rapid increase, that before their army reached Tricameron, about twenty miles from Carthage, they might boast, perhaps with some exaggeration, that they surpassed, in a tenfold proportion, the diminutive powers of the Romans. But these powers were under the command of Belisarius; and, as he was conscious of their superior merit, he permitted the Barbarians to surprise him at an unseasonable hour. The Romans were instantly under arms; a rivulet covered their front; the cavalry formed the first line, which Belisarius supported in the centre, at the head of five hundred guards; the infantry, at some distance, was posted in the second line; and the vigilance of the general watched the separate station and ambiguous faith of the Massagetae, who secretly reserved their aid for the conquerors. The historian has inserted, and the reader may easily supply, the speeches [21](#) of the commanders, who, by arguments the most apposite to their situation, inculcated the importance of victory, and the contempt of life. Zano, with the troops which had followed him to the conquest of Sardinia, was placed in the centre; and the throne of Genseric might have stood, if the multitude of Vandals had imitated their intrepid resolution. Casting away their lances and missile weapons, they drew their swords, and expected the charge: the Roman cavalry thrice passed the rivulet; they were thrice repulsed; and the conflict was firmly maintained, till Zano fell, and the standard of Belisarius was displayed. Gelimer retreated to his camp; the Huns joined the pursuit; and the victors despoiled the bodies of the slain. Yet no more than fifty Romans, and eight hundred Vandals were found on the field of battle; so inconsiderable was the carnage of a day, which extinguished a nation, and transferred the empire of Africa. In the evening Belisarius led his infantry to the attack of the camp; and the pusillanimous flight of Gelimer exposed the vanity of his recent declarations, that to the vanquished, death was a relief, life a burden, and infamy the only object of terror. His departure was secret; but as soon as the Vandals discovered that their king had deserted them, they hastily dispersed, anxious only for their personal safety, and careless of every object that is dear or valuable to mankind.

The Romans entered the camp without resistance; and the wildest scenes of disorder were veiled in the darkness and confusion of the night. Every Barbarian who met their swords was inhumanly massacred; their widows and daughters, as rich heirs, or beautiful concubines, were embraced by the licentious soldiers; and avarice itself was almost satiated with the treasures of gold and silver, the accumulated fruits of conquest or economy in a long period of prosperity and peace. In this frantic search, the troops, even of Belisarius, forgot their caution and respect. Intoxicated with lust and rapine, they explored, in small parties, or alone, the adjacent fields, the woods, the rocks, and the caverns, that might possibly conceal any desirable prize: laden with booty, they deserted their ranks, and wandered without a guide, on the high road to Carthage; and if the flying enemies had dared to return, very few of the conquerors would have escaped. Deeply sensible of the disgrace and danger, Belisarius passed an apprehensive night on the field of victory: at the dawn of day, he planted his standard on a hill, recalled his guardians and veterans, and gradually restored the modesty and obedience of the camp. It was equally the concern of the Roman general to subdue the hostile, and to save the prostrate, Barbarian; and the suppliant Vandals, who could be found only in churches, were protected by his authority, disarmed, and separately confined, that they might neither disturb the public peace, nor become the victims of popular revenge. After despatching a light detachment to tread the footsteps of Gelimer, he advanced, with his whole army, about ten days' march, as far as Hippo Regius, which no longer possessed the relics of St. Augustin. [22](#) The season, and the certain intelligence that the Vandal had fled to an inaccessible country of the Moors, determined Belisarius to relinquish the vain pursuit, and to fix his winter quarters at Carthage. From thence he despatched his principal lieutenant, to inform the emperor, that in the space of three months he had achieved the conquest of Africa.

2012 [\(return\)](#)
[Gibbon had forgotten that the bearer of the “victorious letters of his brother” had sailed into the port of Carthage; and that the letters had fallen into the hands of the Romans. Proc. Vandal. l. i. c. 23.—M.]

21 [\(return\)](#)
[These orations always express the sense of the times, and sometimes of the actors. I have condensed that sense, and thrown away declamation.]

22 [\(return\)](#)
[The relics of St. Augustin were carried by the African bishops to their Sardinian exile, (A.D. 500;) and it was believed, in the viiith century, that Liutprand, king of the Lombards, transported them (A.D. 721) from Sardinia to Pavia. In the year 1695, the Augustan friars of that city found a brick arch, marble coffin, silver case, silk wrapper, bones,

blood, &c., and perhaps an inscription of Agostino in Gothic letters. But this useful discovery has been disputed by reason and jealousy, (Baronius, *Annal.* A.D. 725, No. 2-9. Tillemont, *Mem. Eccles.* tom. xiii. p. 944. Montfaucon, *Diarium Ital.* p. 26-30. Muratori, *Antiq. Ital. Medii Aevi*, tom. v. dissert. lviii. p. 9, who had composed a separate treatise before the decree of the bishop of Pavia, and Pope Benedict XIII.)]

Belisarius spoke the language of truth. The surviving Vandals yielded, without resistance, their arms and their freedom; the neighborhood of Carthage submitted to his presence; and the more distant provinces were successively subdued by the report of his victory. Tripoli was confirmed in her voluntary allegiance; Sardinia and Corsica surrendered to an officer, who carried, instead of a sword, the head of the valiant Zano; and the Isles of Majorca, Minorca, and Yvica consented to remain an humble appendage of the African kingdom. Caesarea, a royal city, which in looser geography may be confounded with the modern Algiers, was situate thirty days' march to the westward of Carthage: by land, the road was infested by the Moors; but the sea was open, and the Romans were now masters of the sea. An active and discreet tribune sailed as far as the Straits, where he occupied Septem or Ceuta, [23](#) which rises opposite to Gibraltar on the African coast; that remote place was afterwards adorned and fortified by Justinian; and he seems to have indulged the vain ambition of extending his empire to the columns of Hercules. He received the messengers of victory at the time when he was preparing to publish the Pandects of the Roman laws; and the devout or jealous emperor celebrated the divine goodness, and confessed, in silence, the merit of his successful general. [24](#) Impatient to abolish the temporal and spiritual tyranny of the Vandals, he proceeded, without delay, to the full establishment of the Catholic church. Her jurisdiction, wealth, and immunities, perhaps the most essential part of episcopal religion, were restored and amplified with a liberal hand; the Arian worship was suppressed; the Donatist meetings were proscribed; [25](#) and the synod of Carthage, by the voice of two hundred and seventeen bishops, [26](#) applauded the just measure of pious retaliation. On such an occasion, it may not be presumed, that many orthodox prelates were absent; but the comparative smallness of their number, which in ancient councils had been twice or even thrice multiplied, most clearly indicates the decay both of the church and state. While Justinian approved himself the defender of the faith, he entertained an ambitious hope, that his victorious lieutenant would speedily enlarge the narrow limits of his dominion to the space which they occupied before the invasion of the Moors and Vandals; and Belisarius was instructed to establish five dukes or commanders in the convenient stations of Tripoli, Leptis, Cirta, Caesarea, and Sardinia, and to compute the military force of palatines or borderers that might be sufficient for the defence of Africa. The kingdom of the Vandals was not unworthy of the presence of a Praetorian praefect; and four consulars, three presidents, were appointed to administer the seven provinces under his civil jurisdiction. The number of their

subordinate officers, clerks, messengers, or assistants, was minutely expressed; three hundred and ninety-six for the præfect himself, fifty for each of his vicegerents; and the rigid definition of their fees and salaries was more effectual to confirm the right than to prevent the abuse. These magistrates might be oppressive, but they were not idle; and the subtile questions of justice and revenue were infinitely propagated under the new government, which professed to revive the freedom and equity of the Roman republic. The conqueror was solicitous to extract a prompt and plentiful supply from his African subjects; and he allowed them to claim, even in the third degree, and from the collateral line, the houses and lands of which their families had been unjustly despoiled by the Vandals. After the departure of Belisarius, who acted by a high and special commission, no ordinary provision was made for a master-general of the forces; but the office of Praetorian præfect was intrusted to a soldier; the civil and military powers were united, according to the practice of Justinian, in the chief governor; and the representative of the emperor in Africa, as well as in Italy, was soon distinguished by the appellation of Exarch. [27](#)

- 23 [\(return\)](#)
 [The expression of Procopius (de Edific. l. vi. c. 7.) Ceuta, which has been defaced by the Portuguese, flourished in nobles and palaces, in agriculture and manufactures, under the more prosperous reign of the Arabs, (l'Afrique de Marmai, tom. ii. p. 236.)]
- 24 [\(return\)](#)
 [See the second and third preambles to the Digest, or Pandects, promulgated A.D. 533, December 16. To the titles of Vandalicus and Africanus, Justinian, or rather Belisarius, had acquired a just claim; Gothicus was premature, and Francicus false, and offensive to a great nation.]
- 25 [\(return\)](#)
 [See the original acts in Baronius, (A.D. 535, No. 21—54.) The emperor applauds his own clemency to the heretics, cum sufficiat eis vivere.]
- 26 [\(return\)](#)
 [Dupin (Geograph. Sacra Africana, p. lix. ad Optat. Milav.) observes and bewails this episcopal decay. In the more prosperous age of the church, he had noticed 690 bishoprics; but however minute were the dioceses, it is not probable that they all existed at the same time.]
- 27 [\(return\)](#)
 [The African laws of Justinian are illustrated by his German biographer, (Cod. l. i. tit. 27. Novell. 36, 37, 131. Vit. Justinian, p. 349—377.)]

Yet the conquest of Africa was imperfect till her former sovereign was delivered, either alive or dead, into the hands of the Romans. Doubtful of the event, Gelimer had

given secret orders that a part of his treasure should be transported to Spain, where he hoped to find a secure refuge at the court of the king of the Visigoths. But these intentions were disappointed by accident, treachery, and the indefatigable pursuit of his enemies, who intercepted his flight from the sea-shore, and chased the unfortunate monarch, with some faithful followers, to the inaccessible mountain of Papua, [28](#) in the inland country of Numidia. He was immediately besieged by Pharas, an officer whose truth and sobriety were the more applauded, as such qualities could seldom be found among the Heruli, the most corrupt of the Barbarian tribes. To his vigilance Belisarius had intrusted this important charge and, after a bold attempt to scale the mountain, in which he lost a hundred and ten soldiers, Pharas expected, during a winter siege, the operation of distress and famine on the mind of the Vandal king. From the softest habits of pleasure, from the unbounded command of industry and wealth, he was reduced to share the poverty of the Moors, [29](#) supportable only to themselves by their ignorance of a happier condition. In their rude hovels, of mud and hurdles, which confined the smoke and excluded the light, they promiscuously slept on the ground, perhaps on a sheep-skin, with their wives, their children, and their cattle. Sordid and scanty were their garments; the use of bread and wine was unknown; and their oaten or barley cakes, imperfectly baked in the ashes, were devoured almost in a crude state, by the hungry savages. The health of Gelimer must have sunk under these strange and unwonted hardships, from whatsoever cause they had been endured; but his actual misery was imbibited by the recollection of past greatness, the daily insolence of his protectors, and the just apprehension, that the light and venal Moors might be tempted to betray the rights of hospitality. The knowledge of his situation dictated the humane and friendly epistle of Pharas. "Like yourself," said the chief of the Heruli, "I am an illiterate Barbarian, but I speak the language of plain sense and an honest heart. Why will you persist in hopeless obstinacy? Why will you ruin yourself, your family, and nation? The love of freedom and abhorrence of slavery? Alas! my dearest Gelimer, are you not already the worst of slaves, the slave of the vile nation of the Moors? Would it not be preferable to sustain at Constantinople a life of poverty and servitude, rather than to reign the undoubted monarch of the mountain of Papua? Do you think it a disgrace to be the subject of Justinian? Belisarius is his subject; and we ourselves, whose birth is not inferior to your own, are not ashamed of our obedience to the Roman emperor. That generous prince will grant you a rich inheritance of lands, a place in the senate, and the dignity of patrician: such are his gracious intentions, and you may depend with full assurance on the word of Belisarius. So long as Heaven has condemned us to suffer, patience is a virtue; but if we reject the proffered deliverance, it degenerates into blind and stupid despair." "I am not insensible" replied the king of the Vandals, "how kind and rational is your advice. But I cannot persuade myself to become the slave of an unjust enemy, who has deserved my implacable hatred. Him I had never injured either by word or deed: yet he has sent against me, I know not from whence, a certain Belisarius, who has cast me headlong from the throne into his abyss of misery. Justinian

is a man; he is a prince; does he not dread for himself a similar reverse of fortune? I can write no more: my grief oppresses me. Send me, I beseech you, my dear Pharas, send me, a lyre, [30](#) a sponge, and a loaf of bread.” From the Vandal messenger, Pharas was informed of the motives of this singular request. It was long since the king of Africa had tasted bread; a defluxion had fallen on his eyes, the effect of fatigue or incessant weeping; and he wished to solace the melancholy hours, by singing to the lyre the sad story of his own misfortunes. The humanity of Pharas was moved; he sent the three extraordinary gifts; but even his humanity prompted him to redouble the vigilance of his guard, that he might sooner compel his prisoner to embrace a resolution advantageous to the Romans, but salutary to himself. The obstinacy of Gelimer at length yielded to reason and necessity; the solemn assurances of safety and honorable treatment were ratified in the emperor’s name, by the ambassador of Belisarius; and the king of the Vandals descended from the mountain. The first public interview was in one of the suburbs of Carthage; and when the royal captive accosted his conqueror, he burst into a fit of laughter. The crowd might naturally believe, that extreme grief had deprived Gelimer of his senses: but in this mournful state, unseasonable mirth insinuated to more intelligent observers, that the vain and transitory scenes of human greatness are unworthy of a serious thought. [31](#)

28

[\(return\)](#)

[Mount Papua is placed by D’Anville (tom. iii. p. 92, and Tabul. Imp. Rom. Occident.) near Hippo Regius and the sea; yet this situation ill agrees with the long pursuit beyond Hippo, and the words of Procopius, (l. ii.c.4,). * Note: Compare Lord Mahon, 120. conceive Gibbon to be right—M.]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[Shaw (Travels, p. 220) most accurately represents the manners of the Bedoweens and Kabyles, the last of whom, by their language, are the remnant of the Moors; yet how changed—how civilized are these modern savages!—provisions are plenty among them and bread is common.]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[By Procopius it is styled a lyre; perhaps harp would have been more national. The instruments of music are thus distinguished by Venantius Fortunatus:— Romanusque lyra tibi plaudat, Barbarus harpa.]

31

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodotus elegantly describes the strange effects of grief in another royal captive, Psammetichus of Egypt, who wept at the lesser and was silent at the greatest of his calamities, (l. iii. c. 14.) In the interview of Paulus Aemilius and Perses, Belisarius might study his part; but it is probable that he never

read either Livy or Plutarch; and it is certain that his generosity did not need a tutor.]

Their contempt was soon justified by a new example of a vulgar truth; that flattery adheres to power, and envy to superior merit. The chiefs of the Roman army presumed to think themselves the rivals of a hero. Their private despatches maliciously affirmed, that the conqueror of Africa, strong in his reputation and the public love, conspired to seat himself on the throne of the Vandals. Justinian listened with too patient an ear; and his silence was the result of jealousy rather than of confidence. An honorable alternative, of remaining in the province, or of returning to the capital, was indeed submitted to the discretion of Belisarius; but he wisely concluded, from intercepted letters and the knowledge of his sovereign's temper, that he must either resign his head, erect his standard, or confound his enemies by his presence and submission. Innocence and courage decided his choice; his guards, captives, and treasures, were diligently embarked; and so prosperous was the navigation, that his arrival at Constantinople preceded any certain account of his departure from the port of Carthage. Such unsuspecting loyalty removed the apprehensions of Justinian; envy was silenced and inflamed by the public gratitude; and the third Africanus obtained the honors of a triumph, a ceremony which the city of Constantine had never seen, and which ancient Rome, since the reign of Tiberius, had reserved for the auspicious arms of the Caesars.³² From the palace of Belisarius, the procession was conducted through the principal streets to the hippodrome; and this memorable day seemed to avenge the injuries of Genseric, and to expiate the shame of the Romans. The wealth of nations was displayed, the trophies of martial or effeminate luxury; rich armor, golden thrones, and the chariots of state which had been used by the Vandal queen; the massy furniture of the royal banquet, the splendor of precious stones, the elegant forms of statues and vases, the more substantial treasure of gold, and the holy vessels of the Jewish temple, which after their long peregrination were respectfully deposited in the Christian church of Jerusalem. A long train of the noblest Vandals reluctantly exposed their lofty stature and manly countenance. Gelimer slowly advanced: he was clad in a purple robe, and still maintained the majesty of a king. Not a tear escaped from his eyes, not a sigh was heard; but his pride or piety derived some secret consolation from the words of Solomon, ³³ which he repeatedly pronounced, Vanity! vanity! all is vanity! Instead of ascending a triumphal car drawn by four horses or elephants, the modest conqueror marched on foot at the head of his brave companions; his prudence might decline an honor too conspicuous for a subject; and his magnanimity might justly disdain what had been so often sullied by the vilest of tyrants. The glorious procession entered the gate of the hippodrome; was saluted by the acclamations of the senate and people; and halted before the throne where Justinian and Theodora were seated to receive homage of the captive monarch and the victorious hero. They both performed the customary adoration; and falling prostrate on the ground, respectfully touched the footstool of a prince who had not unsheathed his sword, and of a prostitute who had danced on the theatre; some

gentle violence was used to bend the stubborn spirit of the grandson of Genseric; and however trained to servitude, the genius of Belisarius must have secretly rebelled. He was immediately declared consul for the ensuing year, and the day of his inauguration resembled the pomp of a second triumph: his curule chair was borne aloft on the shoulders of captive Vandals; and the spoils of war, gold cups, and rich girdles, were profusely scattered among the populace.

32

[\(return\)](#)

[After the title of imperator had lost the old military sense, and the Roman auspices were abolished by Christianity, (see La Bleterie, *Mem. de l'Academie*, tom. xxi. p. 302—332,) a triumph might be given with less inconsistency to a private general.]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[If the Ecclesiastes be truly a work of Solomon, and not, like Prior's poem, a pious and moral composition of more recent times, in his name, and on the subject of his repentance. The latter is the opinion of the learned and free-spirited Grotius, (*Opp. Theolog.* tom. i. p. 258;) and indeed the Ecclesiastes and Proverbs display a larger compass of thought and experience than seem to belong either to a Jew or a king. * Note: Rosenmüller, arguing from the difference of style from that of the greater part of the book of Proverbs, and from its nearer approximation to the Aramaic dialect than any book of the Old Testament, assigns the Ecclesiastes to some period between Nehemiah and Alexander the Great. *Schol. in Vet. Test.* ix. *Proemium ad Eccles.* p. 19.—M.]

But the purest reward of Belisarius was in the faithful execution of a treaty for which his honor had been pledged to the king of the Vandals. The religious scruples of Gelimer, who adhered to the Arian heresy, were incompatible with the dignity of senator or patrician: but he received from the emperor an ample estate in the province of Galatia, where the abdicated monarch retired, with his family and friends, to a life of peace, of affluence, and perhaps of content.³⁴ The daughters of Hilderic were entertained with the respectful tenderness due to their age and misfortune; and Justinian and Theodora accepted the honor of educating and enriching the female descendants of the great Theodosius. The bravest of the Vandal youth were distributed into five squadrons of cavalry, which adopted the name of their benefactor, and supported in the Persian wars the glory of their ancestors. But these rare exceptions, the reward of birth or valor, are insufficient to explain the fate of a nation, whose numbers before a short and bloodless war, amounted to more than six hundred thousand persons. After the exile of their king and nobles, the servile crowd might purchase their safety by abjuring their character, religion, and language; and their degenerate posterity would be insensibly mingled with the common herd of African subjects. Yet even in the present age, and in

the heart of the Moorish tribes, a curious traveller has discovered the white complexion and long flaxen hair of a northern race;³⁵ and it was formerly believed, that the boldest of the Vandals fled beyond the power, or even the knowledge, of the Romans, to enjoy their solitary freedom on the shores of the Atlantic Ocean.³⁶ Africa had been their empire, it became their prison; nor could they entertain a hope, or even a wish, of returning to the banks of the Elbe, where their brethren, of a spirit less adventurous, still wandered in their native forests. It was impossible for cowards to surmount the barriers of unknown seas and hostile Barbarians; it was impossible for brave men to expose their nakedness and defeat before the eyes of their countrymen, to describe the kingdoms which they had lost, and to claim a share of the humble inheritance, which, in a happier hour, they had almost unanimously renounced.³⁷ In the country between the Elbe and the Oder, several populous villages of Lusatia are inhabited by the Vandals: they still preserve their language, their customs, and the purity of their blood; support, with some impatience, the Saxon or Prussian yoke; and serve, with secret and voluntary allegiance, the descendant of their ancient kings, who in his garb and present fortune is confounded with the meanest of his vassals.³⁸ The name and situation of this unhappy people might indicate their descent from one common stock with the conquerors of Africa. But the use of a Sclavonian dialect more clearly represent them as the last remnant of the new colonies, who succeeded to the genuine Vandals, already scattered or destroyed in the age of Procopius.³⁹

34 [\(return\)](#)

[In the Bélisaire of Marmontel, the king and the conqueror of Africa meet, sup, and converse, without recollecting each other. It is surely a fault of that romance, that not only the hero, but all to whom he had been so conspicuously known, appear to have lost their eyes or their memory.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[Shaw, p. 59. Yet since Procopius (l. ii. c. 13) speaks of a people of Mount Atlas, as already distinguished by white bodies and yellow hair, the phenomenon (which is likewise visible in the Andes of Peru, Buffon, tom. iii p. 504), may naturally be ascribed to the elevation of the ground and the temperature of the air.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[The geographer of Ravenna (l. iii. c. xi. pp. 129, 130, 131, Paris, 1688) describes the Mauritania *Gaditana* (opposite to Cadiz) ubi gens Vandalorum, a Belisario devicta in Africâ, fugit, et nunquam comparuit.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[A single voice had protested, and Genseric dismissed, without a formal answer, the Vandals of Germany: but those of Africa derided his prudence,

and affected to despise the poverty of their forests
(Procopius, Vandal. l. i. c. 22)]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[From the mouth of the great elector (in 1687) Tollius describes the secret royalty and rebellious spirit of the Vandals of Brandenburg. who could muster five or six thousand soldiers who had procured some cannon, &c. (Itinerar. Hungar. p. 42, apud Dubos. Hist, de la Monarchie Française, tom. i. pp. 182, 183.) The veracity, not of the elector, but of Tollius himself, may justly be suspected. * Note: The Wendish population of Brandenburg are now better known, but the Wends are clearly of the Slavonian race; the Vandals most probably Teutonic, and nearly allied to the Goths.—M.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius (l i. c. 22) was in total darkness—οὐτε μνήμη τις οὐτε ὄνομα ἐξ ἐμε σωζέται. Under the reign of Dagobert (A.D. 630) the Slavonian tribes of the Sorbi and Venedi already bordered on Thuringia (Mascou Hist. of the Germans, xv. 3, 4, 5).]

If Belisarius had been tempted to hesitate in his allegiance, he might have urged, even against the emperor himself, the indispensable duty of saving Africa from an enemy more barbarous than the Vandals. The origin of the Moors is involved in darkness; they were ignorant of the use of letters.[40](#) Their limits cannot be precisely defined; a boundless continent was open to the Libyan shepherds; the change of seasons and pastures regulated their motions; and their rude huts and slender furniture were transported with the same ease as their arms, their families, and their cattle, which consisted of sheep, oxen, and camels.[41](#) During the vigor of the Roman power, they observed a respectful distance from Carthage and the sea-shore: under the feeble reign of the Vandals, they invaded the cities of Numidia, occupied the sea-coast from Tangier to Cæsarea, and pitched their camps, with impunity, in the fertile province of Byzacium. The formidable strength and artful conduct of Belisarius secured the neutrality of the Moorish princes, whose vanity aspired to receive, in the emperor's name, the ensigns of their regal dignity.[42](#) They were astonished by the rapid event, and trembled in the presence of their conqueror. But his approaching departure soon relieved the apprehensions of a savage and superstitious people; the number of their wives allowed them to disregard the safety of their infant hostages; and when the Roman general hoisted sail in the port of Carthage, he heard the cries, and almost beheld the flames, of the desolated province. Yet he persisted in his resolution, and leaving only a part of his guards to reënforce the feeble garrisons, he intrusted the command of Africa to the eunuch Solomon,[43](#) who proved himself not unworthy to be the successor of Belisarius. In the first invasion, some detachments, with two officers of merit, were surprised and intercepted; but Solomon speedily assembled his troops, marched from Carthage into

the heart of the country, and in two great battles destroyed sixty thousand of the Barbarians. The Moors depended on their multitude, their swiftness, and their inaccessible mountains; and the aspect and smell of their camels are said to have produced some confusion in the Roman cavalry.⁴⁴ But as soon as they were commanded to dismount, they derided this contemptible obstacle: as soon as the columns ascended the hills, the naked and disorderly crowd was dazzled by glittering arms and regular evolutions; and the menace of their female prophets was repeatedly fulfilled, that the Moors should be discomfited by a *beardless* antagonist. The victorious eunuch advanced thirteen days journey from Carthage, to besiege Mount Aurasius,⁴⁵ the citadel, and at the same time the garden, of Numidia. That range of hills, a branch of the great Atlas, contains, within a circumference of one hundred and twenty miles, a rare variety of soil and climate; the intermediate valleys and elevated plains abound with rich pastures, perpetual streams, and fruits of a delicious taste and uncommon magnitude. This fair solitude is decorated with the ruins of Lambesa, a Roman city, once the seat of a legion, and the residence of forty thousand inhabitants. The Ionic temple of Æsculapius is encompassed with Moorish huts; and the cattle now graze in the midst of an amphitheatre, under the shade of Corinthian columns. A sharp perpendicular rock rises above the level of the mountain, where the African princes deposited their wives and treasure; and a proverb is familiar to the Arabs, that the man may eat fire who dares to attack the craggy cliffs and inhospitable natives of Mount Aurasius. This hardy enterprise was twice attempted by the eunuch Solomon: from the first, he retreated with some disgrace; and in the second, his patience and provisions were almost exhausted; and he must again have retired, if he had not yielded to the impetuous courage of his troops, who audaciously scaled, to the astonishment of the Moors, the mountain, the hostile camp, and the summit of the Geminian rock. A citadel was erected to secure this important conquest, and to remind the Barbarians of their defeat; and as Solomon pursued his march to the west, the long-lost province of Mauritanian Sitifi was again annexed to the Roman empire. The Moorish war continued several years after the departure of Belisarius; but the laurels which he resigned to a faithful lieutenant may be justly ascribed to his own triumph.

[Sallust represents the Moors as a remnant of the army of Heracles (de Bell. Jugurth. c. 21), and Procopius (Vandal. l. ii. c. 10), as the posterity of the Cananæans who fled from the robber Joshua, (ληστής) He quotes two columns, with a Phœnician inscription. I believe in the columns—I doubt the inscription—and I reject the pedigree. * Note: It has been supposed that Procopius is the only, or at least the most ancient author who has spoken of this strange inscription, of which one may be tempted to attribute the invention to Procopius himself. Yet it is mentioned in the Armenian history of Moses of Chorene, (l. i. c. 18,) who lived and wrote more than

a century before Procopius. This is sufficient to show that an earlier date must be assigned to this tradition. The same inscription is mentioned by Suidas, (sub voc. Χανάαν), no doubt from Procopius. According to most of the Arabian writers, who adopted a nearly similar tradition, the indigenes of Northern Africa were the people of Palestine expelled by David, who passed into Africa, under the guidance of Goliath, whom they call Djalout. It is impossible to admit traditions which bear a character so fabulous. St. Martin, t. xi. p. 324.—Unless my memory greatly deceives me, I have read in the works of Lightfoot a similar Jewish tradition; but I have mislaid the reference, and cannot recover the passage.—M.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[Virgil (Georgic. iii. 339) and Pomponius Mela (i. 8) describe the wandering life of the African shepherds, similar to that of the Arabs and Tartars; and Shaw (p. 222) is the best commentator on the poet and the geographer.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[The customary gifts were a sceptre, a crown or cap, a white cloak, a figured tunic and shoes, all adorned with gold and silver; nor were these precious metals less acceptable in the shape of coin, (Procop. Vandal. l. i. c. 25).]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[See the African government and warfare of Solomon, in Procopius (Vandal. l. ii. c. 10, 11, 12, 13, 19, 20). He was recalled, and again restored; and his last victory dates in the xiiiith year of Justinian (A.D. 539). An accident in his childhood had rendered him a eunuch (l. l. c. 11); the other Roman generals were amply furnished with beards πώγωνος ἐμπιπλάμενοι (l. ii. c. 8).]

44 [\(return\)](#)

[This natural antipathy of the horse for the camel is affirmed by the ancients (Xenophon. Cyropæd. l. vi. p. 488, l. vii. pp. 483, 492, edit. Hutchinson. Polyæn. Stratagem, vii. 6, Plin. Hist. Nat. viii. 26, Ælian, de Natur. Annal. l. iii. c. 7); but it is disproved by daily experience, and derided by the best judges, the Orientals (Voyage d'Olearius, p. 553).]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius is the first who describes Mount Aurasius (Vandal. l. ii. c. 13. De Edific. l. vi. c. 7). He may be compared with Leo Africanus (dell'

Africa, parte v., in Ramusio, tom. i. fol. 77, recto).
Marmol (tom. ii. p. 430), and Shaw (pp. 56-59).]

The experience of past faults, which may sometimes correct the mature age of an individual, is seldom profitable to the successive generations of mankind. The nations of antiquity, careless of each other's safety, were separately vanquished and enslaved by the Romans. This awful lesson might have instructed the Barbarians of the West to oppose, with timely counsels and confederate arms, the unbounded ambition of Justinian. Yet the same error was repeated, the same consequences were felt, and the Goths, both of Italy and Spain, insensible of their approaching danger, beheld with indifference, and even with joy, the rapid downfall of the Vandals. After the failure of the royal line, Theudes, a valiant and powerful chief, ascended the throne of Spain, which he had formerly administered in the name of Theodoric and his infant grandson. Under his command, the Visigoths besieged the fortress of Ceuta on the African coast: but, while they spent the Sabbath day in peace and devotion, the pious security of their camp was invaded by a sally from the town; and the king himself, with some difficulty and danger, escaped from the hands of a sacrilegious enemy.⁴⁶ It was not long before his pride and resentment were gratified by a suppliant embassy from the unfortunate Gelimer, who implored, in his distress, the aid of the Spanish monarch. But instead of sacrificing these unworthy passions to the dictates of generosity and prudence, Theudes amused the ambassadors till he was secretly informed of the loss of Carthage, and then dismissed them with obscure and contemptuous advice, to seek in their native country a true knowledge of the state of the Vandals.⁴⁷ The long continuance of the Italian war delayed the punishment of the Visigoths; and the eyes of Theudes were closed before they tasted the fruits of his mistaken policy. After his death, the sceptre of Spain was disputed by a civil war. The weaker candidate solicited the protection of Justinian, and ambitiously subscribed a treaty of alliance, which deeply wounded the independence and happiness of his country. Several cities, both on the ocean and the Mediterranean, were ceded to the Roman troops, who afterwards refused to evacuate those pledges, as it should seem, either of safety or payment; and as they were fortified by perpetual supplies from Africa, they maintained their impregnable stations, for the mischievous purpose of inflaming the civil and religious factions of the Barbarians. Seventy years elapsed before this painful thorn could be extirpated from the bosom of the monarchy; and as long as the emperors retained any share of these remote and useless possessions, their vanity might number Spain in the list of their provinces, and the successors of Alaric in the rank of their vassals.⁴⁸

[Isidor. Chron. p. 722, edit. Grot. Mariana, Hist. Hispan. l. v. c. 8, p. 173. Yet, according to Isidore, the siege of Ceuta, and the death of Theudes, happened, A. Æ. H. 586—A.D. 548; and the place was defended, not by the Vandals, but by the Romans.]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius. Vandal. l. i, c. 24.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[See the original Chronicle of Isidore, and the vth and vith books of the History of Spain by Mariana. The Romans were finally expelled by Suintila, king of the Visigoths (A.D. 621–620), after their reunion to the Catholic church.]

The error of the Goths who reigned in Italy was less excusable than that of their Spanish brethren, and their punishment was still more immediate and terrible. From a motive of private revenge, they enabled their most dangerous enemy to destroy their most valuable ally. A sister of the great Theodoric had been given in marriage to Thrasimond, the African king:[49](#) on this occasion, the fortress of Lilybæum[50](#) in Sicily was resigned to the Vandals; and the princess Amalafrida was attended by a martial train of one thousand nobles, and five thousand Gothic soldiers, who signalized their valor in the Moorish wars. Their merit was overrated by themselves, and perhaps neglected by the Vandals; they viewed the country with envy, and the conquerors with disdain; but their real or fictitious conspiracy was prevented by a massacre; the Goths were oppressed, and the captivity of Amalafrida was soon followed by her secret and suspicious death. The eloquent pen of Cassiodorus was employed to reproach the Vandal court with the cruel violation of every social and public duty; but the vengeance which he threatened in the name of his sovereign might be derided with impunity, as long as Africa was protected by the sea, and the Goths were destitute of a navy. In the blind impotence of grief and indignation, they joyfully saluted the approach of the Romans, entertained the fleet of Belisarius in the ports of Sicily, and were speedily delighted or alarmed by the surprising intelligence, that their revenge was executed beyond the measure of their hopes, or perhaps of their wishes. To their friendship the emperor was indebted for the kingdom of Africa, and the Goths might reasonably think, that they were entitled to resume the possession of a barren rock, so recently separated as a nuptial gift from the island of Sicily. They were soon undeceived by the haughty mandate of Belisarius, which excited their tardy and unavailing repentance. “The city and promontory of Lilybæum,” said the Roman general, “belonged to the Vandals, and I claim them by the right of conquest. Your submission may deserve the favor of the emperor; your obstinacy will provoke his displeasure, and must kindle a war, that can terminate only in your utter ruin. If you compel us to take up arms, we shall contend, not to regain the possession of a single city, but to deprive you of all the provinces which you unjustly withhold from their lawful sovereign.” A nation of two hundred thousand soldiers might have smiled at the vain menace of Justinian and his lieutenant: but a spirit of discord and disaffection prevailed in Italy, and the Goths supported, with reluctance, the indignity of a female reign.[51](#)

49

[\(return\)](#)

[See the marriage and fate of Amalafrida in Procopius (Vandal. l. i. c. 8, 9), and in Cassiodorus

(Var. ix. 1) the expostulation of her royal brother.
Compare likewise the Chronicle of Victor
Tunnunensis.]

50 [\(return\)](#)

[Lilybæum was built by the Carthaginians, Olymp.
xcv. 4; and in the first Punic war, a strong situation,
and excellent harbor, rendered that place an
important object to both nations.]

51 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare the different passages of Procopius
(Vandal. l. ii. c. 5, Gothic, l. i c. 3).]

The birth of Amalasontha, the regent and queen of Italy,[52](#) united the two most illustrious families of the Barbarians. Her mother, the sister of Clovis, was descended from the long-haired kings of the *Merovingian* race;[53](#) and the regal succession of the *Amali* was illustrated in the eleventh generation, by her father, the great Theodoric, whose merit might have ennobled a plebeian origin. The sex of his daughter excluded her from the Gothic throne; but his vigilant tenderness for his family and his people discovered the last heir of the royal line, whose ancestors had taken refuge in Spain; and the fortunate Eutharic was suddenly exalted to the rank of a consul and a prince. He enjoyed only a short time the charms of Amalasontha, and the hopes of the succession; and his widow, after the death of her husband and father, was left the guardian of her son Athalaric, and the kingdom of Italy. At the age of about twenty-eight years, the endowments of her mind and person had attained their perfect maturity. Her beauty, which, in the apprehension of Theodora herself, might have disputed the conquest of an emperor, was animated by manly sense, activity, and resolution. Education and experience had cultivated her talents; her philosophic studies were exempt from vanity; and, though she expressed herself with equal elegance and ease in the Greek, the Latin, and the Gothic tongue, the daughter of Theodoric maintained in her counsels a discreet and impenetrable silence. By a faithful imitation of the virtues, she revived the prosperity, of his reign; while she strove, with pious care, to expiate the faults, and to obliterate the darker memory of his declining age. The children of Boethius and Symmachus were restored to their paternal inheritance; her extreme lenity never consented to inflict any corporal or pecuniary penalties on her Roman subjects; and she generously despised the clamors of the Goths, who, at the end of forty years, still considered the people of Italy as their slaves or their enemies. Her salutary measures were directed by the wisdom, and celebrated by the eloquence, of Cassiodorus; she solicited and deserved the friendship of the emperor; and the kingdoms of Europe respected, both in peace and war, the majesty of the Gothic throne. But the future happiness of the queen and of Italy depended on the education of her son; who was destined, by his birth, to support the different and almost incompatible characters of the chief of a Barbarian camp, and the first magistrate of a civilized nation. From the age of ten years,[54](#) Athalaric was diligently instructed in the arts and sciences, either useful or ornamental for a Roman prince; and three venerable Goths were chosen

to instil the principles of honor and virtue into the mind of their young king. But the pupil who is insensible of the benefits, must abhor the restraints, of education; and the solicitude of the queen, which affection rendered anxious and severe, offended the untractable nature of her son and his subjects. On a solemn festival, when the Goths were assembled in the palace of Ravenna, the royal youth escaped from his mother's apartment, and, with tears of pride and anger, complained of a blow which his stubborn disobedience had provoked her to inflict. The Barbarians resented the indignity which had been offered to their king; accused the regent of conspiring against his life and crown; and imperiously demanded, that the grandson of Theodoric should be rescued from the dastardly discipline of women and pedants, and educated, like a valiant Goth, in the society of his equals and the glorious ignorance of his ancestors. To this rude clamor, importunately urged as the voice of the nation, Amalasontha was compelled to yield her reason, and the dearest wishes of her heart. The king of Italy was abandoned to wine, to women, and to rustic sports; and the indiscreet contempt of the ungrateful youth betrayed the mischievous designs of his favorites and her enemies. Encompassed with domestic foes, she entered into a secret negotiation with the emperor Justinian; obtained the assurance of a friendly reception, and had actually deposited at Dyrachium, in Epirus, a treasure of forty thousand pounds of gold. Happy would it have been for her fame and safety, if she had calmly retired from barbarous faction to the peace and splendor of Constantinople. But the mind of Amalasontha was inflamed by ambition and revenge; and while her ships lay at anchor in the port, she waited for the success of a crime which her passions excused or applauded as an act of justice. Three of the most dangerous malcontents had been separately removed under the pretence of trust and command, to the frontiers of Italy: they were assassinated by her private emissaries; and the blood of these noble Goths rendered the queen-mother absolute in the court of Ravenna, and justly odious to a free people. But if she had lamented the disorders of her son she soon wept his irreparable loss; and the death of Athalaric, who, at the age of sixteen, was consumed by premature intemperance, left her destitute of any firm support or legal authority. Instead of submitting to the laws of her country which held as a fundamental maxim, that the succession could never pass from the lance to the distaff, the daughter of Theodoric conceived the impracticable design of sharing, with one of her cousins, the regal title, and of reserving in her own hands the substance of supreme power. He received the proposal with profound respect and affected gratitude; and the eloquent Cassiodorus announced to the senate and the emperor, that Amalasontha and Theodatus had ascended the throne of Italy. His birth (for his mother was the sister of Theodoric) might be considered as an imperfect title; and the choice of Amalasontha was more strongly directed by her contempt of his avarice and pusillanimity which had deprived him of the love of the Italians, and the esteem of the Barbarians. But Theodatus was exasperated by the contempt which he deserved: her justice had repressed and reproached the oppression which he exercised against his Tuscan neighbors; and the principal Goths, united by common guilt and resentment,

conspired to instigate his slow and timid disposition. The letters of congratulation were scarcely despatched before the queen of Italy was imprisoned in a small island of the Lake of Bolsena,[55](#) where, after a short confinement, she was strangled in the bath, by the order, or with the connivance of the new king, who instructed his turbulent subjects to shed the blood of their sovereigns.

52

[\(return\)](#)

[For the reign and character of Amalasontha, see Procopius (Gothic, l. i. c. 2, 3, 4, and Anecd. c. 16, with the Notes of Alemannus), Cassiodorus (Var. viii. ix. x. and xi, 1), and Jornandes (De Rebus Geticis, c. 59, and De Successione Regnorum. in Muratori, tom. i, p. 24).]

53

[\(return\)](#)

[The marriage of Theodoric with Audefleda, the sister of Clovis, may be placed in the year 495, soon after the conquest of Italy (De Buat, Hist. des Peuples, tom. ix. p. 213). The nuptials of Eutharic and Amalasontha were celebrated in 515 (Cassiodor. in Chron. p. 453).]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[At the death of Theodoric, his grandson Athalaric is described by Procopius as a boy about eight years old—ὀκτὼ γεγονὼς ἔτη. Cassiodorus, with authority and reason, adds two years to his age—infantulum adhuc vix decennem.]

55

[\(return\)](#)

[The lake, from the neighboring towns of Etruria, was styled either Vulsiniensis (now of Bolsena) or Tarquiniensis. It is surrounded with white rocks, and stored with fish and wild-fowl. The younger Pliny (Epist. ii. 96) celebrates two woody islands that floated on its waters: if a fable, how credulous the ancients! if a fact, how careless the moderns! Yet, since Pliny, the island may have been fixed by new and gradual accessions.]

Justinian beheld with joy the dissensions of the Goths; and the mediation of an ally concealed and promoted the ambitious views of the conqueror. His ambassadors, in their public audience, demanded the fortress of Lilybæum, ten Barbarian fugitives, and a just compensation for the pillage of a small town on the Illyrian borders; but they secretly negotiated with Theodatus to betray the province of Tuscany, and tempted Amalasontha to extricate herself from danger and perplexity, by a free surrender of the kingdom of Italy. A false and servile epistle was subscribed, by the reluctant hand of the captive queen: but the confession of the Roman senators, who were sent to Constantinople, revealed the truth of her deplorable situation; and Justinian, by the voice of a new ambassador, most powerfully interceded for her life and liberty.[55a](#) Yet the secret instructions of the same minister were adapted to serve the cruel jealousy of

Theodora, who dreaded the presence and superior charms of a rival: he prompted, with artful and ambiguous hints, the execution of a crime so useful to the Romans;[56](#) received the intelligence of her death with grief and indignation, and denounced, in his master's name, immortal war against the perfidious assassin. In Italy, as well as in Africa, the guilt of a usurper appeared to justify the arms of Justinian; but the forces which he prepared, were insufficient for the subversion of a mighty kingdom, if their feeble numbers had not been multiplied by the name, the spirit, and the conduct, of a hero. A chosen troop of guards, who served on horseback, and were armed with lances and bucklers, attended the person of Belisarius; his cavalry was composed of two hundred Huns, three hundred Moors, and four thousand *confederates*, and the infantry consisted of only three thousand Isaurians. Steering the same course as in his former expedition, the Roman consul cast anchor before Catana in Sicily, to survey the strength of the island, and to decide whether he should attempt the conquest, or peaceably pursue his voyage for the African coast. He found a fruitful land and a friendly people. Notwithstanding the decay of agriculture, Sicily still supplied the granaries of Rome: the farmers were graciously exempted from the oppression of military quarters; and the Goths, who trusted the defence of the island to the inhabitants, had some reason to complain, that their confidence was ungratefully betrayed. Instead of soliciting and expecting the aid of the king of Italy, they yielded to the first summons a cheerful obedience; and this province, the first fruits of the Punic war, was again, after a long separation, united to the Roman empire.[57](#) The Gothic garrison of Palermo, which alone attempted to resist, was reduced, after a short siege, by a singular stratagem. Belisarius introduced his ships into the deepest recess of the harbor; their boats were laboriously hoisted with ropes and pulleys to the top-mast head, and he filled them with archers, who, from that superior station, commanded the ramparts of the city. After this easy, though successful campaign, the conqueror entered Syracuse in triumph, at the head of his victorious bands, distributing gold medals to the people, on the day which so gloriously terminated the year of the consulship. He passed the winter season in the palace of ancient kings, amidst the ruins of a Grecian colony, which once extended to a circumference of two-and-twenty miles:[58](#) but in the spring, about the festival of Easter, the prosecution of his designs was interrupted by a dangerous revolt of the African forces. Carthage was saved by the presence of Belisarius, who suddenly landed with a thousand guards.[58a](#) Two thousand soldiers of doubtful faith returned to the standard of their old commander: and he marched, without hesitation, above fifty miles, to seek an enemy whom he affected to pity and despise. Eight thousand rebels trembled at his approach; they were routed at the first onset, by the dexterity of their master: and this ignoble victory would have restored the peace of Africa, if the conqueror had not been hastily recalled to Sicily, to appease a sedition which was kindled during his absence in his own camp.[59](#) Disorder and disobedience were the common malady of the times; the genius to command, and the virtue to obey, resided only in the mind of Belisarius.

- 55a [\(return\)](#)
[Amalasontha was not alive when this new ambassador, Peter of Thessalonica, arrived in Italy: he could not then secretly contribute to her death. “But (says M. de Sainte Croix) it is not beyond probability that Theodora had entered into some criminal intrigue with Gundelina: for that wife of Theodatus wrote to implore her protection, reminding her of the confidence which she and her husband had always placed in her former promises.” See on Amalasontha and the authors of her death an excellent dissertation of M. de Sainte Croix in the Archives Littéraires published by M. Vaudenbourg, No. 50, t. xvii. p. 216.—G.]
- 56 [\(return\)](#)
[Yet Procopius discredits his own evidence (Anecdot. c. 16) by confessing that in his public history he had not spoken the truth. See the epistles from Queen Gundelina to the Empress Theodora (Var. x. 20, 21, 23, and observe a suspicious word, *de illâ personâ*, &c.), with the elaborate Commentary of Buat (tom. x. pp. 177–185).]
- 57 [\(return\)](#)
[For the conquest of Sicily, compare the narrative of Procopius with the complaints of Totila (Gothic. l. i. c. 5. l. iii. c. 16). The Gothic queen had lately relieved that thankless island (Var. ix. 10, 11).]
- 58 [\(return\)](#)
[The ancient magnitude and splendor of the five quarters of Syracuse are delineated by Cicero (in Verrem. actio ii. l. iv. c. 52, 53), Strabo (l. vi. p. 415), and D’Orville Sicula (tom. ii. pp. 174–202). The new city, restored by Augustus, shrunk towards the island.]
- 58a [\(return\)](#)
[A hundred (there was no room on board for more). Gibbon has again been misled by Cousin’s translation. Lord Mahon, p. 157—M.]
- 59 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius (Vandal. l. ii. c. 14, 15) so clearly relates the return of Belirarius into Sicily (p. 146, edit. Hoeschelii), that I am astonished at the strange misapprehension and reproaches of a learned critic (Œuvres de la Mothe le Vayer, tom. viii. pp. 162, 163).]

Chapter XLI: Conquests Of Justinian, Character Of Balisarius.—Part III.

Although Theodatus descended from a race of heroes, he was ignorant of the art, and averse to the dangers, of war. Although he had studied the writings of Plato and Tully, philosophy was incapable of purifying his mind from the basest passions, avarice and fear. He had purchased a sceptre by ingratitude and murder: at the first menace of an enemy, he degraded his own majesty and that of a nation, which already disdained their unworthy sovereign. Astonished by the recent example of Gelimer, he saw himself dragged in chains through the streets of Constantinople: the terrors which Belisarius inspired were heightened by the eloquence of Peter, the Byzantine ambassador; and that bold and subtle advocate persuaded him to sign a treaty, too ignominious to become the foundation of a lasting peace. It was stipulated, that in the acclamations of the Roman people, the name of the emperor should be always proclaimed before that of the Gothic king; and that as often as the statue of Theodatus was erected in brass on marble, the divine image of Justinian should be placed on its right hand. Instead of conferring, the king of Italy was reduced to solicit, the honors of the senate; and the consent of the emperor was made indispensable before he could execute, against a priest or senator, the sentence either of death or confiscation. The feeble monarch resigned the possession of Sicily; offered, as the annual mark of his dependence, a crown of gold of the weight of three hundred pounds; and promised to supply, at the requisition of his sovereign, three thousand Gothic auxiliaries, for the service of the empire. Satisfied with these extraordinary concessions, the successful agent of Justinian hastened his journey to Constantinople; but no sooner had he reached the Alban villa, [60](#) than he was recalled by the anxiety of Theodatus; and the dialogue which passed between the king and the ambassador deserves to be represented in its original simplicity. “Are you of opinion that the emperor will ratify this treaty? Perhaps. If he refuses, what consequence will ensue? War. Will such a war, be just or reasonable? Most assuredly: every to his character. What is your meaning? You are a philosopher—Justinian is emperor of the Romans: it would all become the disciple of Plato to shed the blood of thousands in his private quarrel: the successor of Augustus should vindicate his rights, and recover by arms the ancient provinces of his empire.” This reasoning might not convince, but it was sufficient to alarm and subdue the weakness of Theodatus; and he soon descended to his last offer, that for the poor equivalent of a pension of forty-eight thousand pounds sterling, he would resign the kingdom of the Goths and Italians, and spend the remainder of his days in the innocent pleasures of philosophy and agriculture.

Both treaties were intrusted to the hands of the ambassador, on the frail security of an oath not to produce the second till the first had been positively rejected. The event may be easily foreseen: Justinian required and accepted the abdication of the Gothic king. His indefatigable agent returned from Constantinople to Ravenna, with ample instructions; and a fair epistle, which praised the wisdom and generosity of the royal

philosopher, granted his pension, with the assurance of such honors as a subject and a Catholic might enjoy; and wisely referred the final execution of the treaty to the presence and authority of Belisarius. But in the interval of suspense, two Roman generals, who had entered the province of Dalmatia, were defeated and slain by the Gothic troops. From blind and abject despair, Theodatus capriciously rose to groundless and fatal presumption, [61](#) and dared to receive, with menace and contempt, the ambassador of Justinian; who claimed his promise, solicited the allegiance of his subjects, and boldly asserted the inviolable privilege of his own character. The march of Belisarius dispelled this visionary pride; and as the first campaign [62](#) was employed in the reduction of Sicily, the invasion of Italy is applied by Procopius to the second year of the Gothic war. [63](#)

60

[\(return\)](#)

[The ancient Alba was ruined in the first age of Rome. On the same spot, or at least in the neighborhood, successively arose. 1. The villa of Pompey, &c.; 2. A camp of the Praetorian cohorts; 3. The modern episcopal city of Albanum or Albano. (Procop. Goth. l. ii. c. 4 Oluver. Ital. Antiq tom. ii. p. 914.)]

61

[\(return\)](#)

[A Sibylline oracle was ready to pronounce—*Africa capta munitus cum nato peribit*; a sentence of portentous ambiguity, (Gothic. l. i. c. 7,) which has been published in unknown characters by Opsopaeus, an editor of the oracles. The Pere Maltret has promised a commentary; but all his promises have been vain and fruitless.]

62

[\(return\)](#)

[In his chronology, imitated, in some degree, from Thucydides, Procopius begins each spring the years of Justinian and of the Gothic war; and his first aera coincides with the first of April, 535, and not 536, according to the Annals of Baronius, (Pagi, Crit. tom. ii. p. 555, who is followed by Muratori and the editors of Sigonius.) Yet, in some passages, we are at a loss to reconcile the dates of Procopius with himself, and with the Chronicle of Marcellinus.]

63

[\(return\)](#)

[The series of the first Gothic war is represented by Procopius (l. i. c. 5—29, l. ii. c. 1—30, l. iii. c. 1) till the captivity of Vitigas. With the aid of Sigonius (Opp. tom. i. de Imp. Occident. l. xvii. xviii.) and Muratori, (Annali d'Italia, tom. v.,) I have gleaned some few additional facts.]

After Belisarius had left sufficient garrisons in Palermo and Syracuse, he embarked his troops at Messina, and landed them, without resistance, on the opposite shores of

Rhegium. A Gothic prince, who had married the daughter of Theodatus, was stationed with an army to guard the entrance of Italy; but he imitated, without scruple, the example of a sovereign faithless to his public and private duties. The perfidious Ebermor deserted with his followers to the Roman camp, and was dismissed to enjoy the servile honors of the Byzantine court. [64](#) From Rhegium to Naples, the fleet and army of Belisarius, almost always in view of each other, advanced near three hundred miles along the sea-coast. The people of Bruttium, Lucania, and Campania, who abhorred the name and religion of the Goths, embraced the specious excuse, that their ruined walls were incapable of defence: the soldiers paid a just equivalent for a plentiful market; and curiosity alone interrupted the peaceful occupations of the husbandman or artificer. Naples, which has swelled to a great and populous capital, long cherished the language and manners of a Grecian colony; [65](#) and the choice of Virgil had ennobled this elegant retreat, which attracted the lovers of repose and study, from the noise, the smoke, and the laborious opulence of Rome. [66](#) As soon as the place was invested by sea and land, Belisarius gave audience to the deputies of the people, who exhorted him to disregard a conquest unworthy of his arms, to seek the Gothic king in a field of battle, and, after his victory, to claim, as the sovereign of Rome, the allegiance of the dependent cities. “When I treat with my enemies,” replied the Roman chief, with a haughty smile, “I am more accustomed to give than to receive counsel; but I hold in one hand inevitable ruin, and in the other peace and freedom, such as Sicily now enjoys.” The impatience of delay urged him to grant the most liberal terms; his honor secured their performance: but Naples was divided into two factions; and the Greek democracy was inflamed by their orators, who, with much spirit and some truth, represented to the multitude that the Goths would punish their defection, and that Belisarius himself must esteem their loyalty and valor. Their deliberations, however, were not perfectly free: the city was commanded by eight hundred Barbarians, whose wives and children were detained at Ravenna as the pledge of their fidelity; and even the Jews, who were rich and numerous, resisted, with desperate enthusiasm, the intolerant laws of Justinian. In a much later period, the circumference of Naples [67](#) measured only two thousand three hundred and sixty three paces: [68](#) the fortifications were defended by precipices or the sea; when the aqueducts were intercepted, a supply of water might be drawn from wells and fountains; and the stock of provisions was sufficient to consume the patience of the besiegers. At the end of twenty days, that of Belisarius was almost exhausted, and he had reconciled himself to the disgrace of abandoning the siege, that he might march, before the winter season, against Rome and the Gothic king. But his anxiety was relieved by the bold curiosity of an Isaurian, who explored the dry channel of an aqueduct, and secretly reported, that a passage might be perforated to introduce a file of armed soldiers into the heart of the city. When the work had been silently executed, the humane general risked the discovery of his secret by a last and fruitless admonition of the impending danger. In the darkness of the night, four hundred Romans entered the aqueduct, raised themselves by a rope, which they fastened to an olive-tree, into the

house or garden of a solitary matron, sounded their trumpets, surprised the sentinels, and gave admittance to their companions, who on all sides scaled the walls, and burst open the gates of the city. Every crime which is punished by social justice was practised as the rights of war; the Huns were distinguished by cruelty and sacrilege, and Belisarius alone appeared in the streets and churches of Naples to moderate the calamities which he predicted. “The gold and silver,” he repeatedly exclaimed, “are the just rewards of your valor. But spare the inhabitants; they are Christians, they are suppliants, they are now your fellow-subjects. Restore the children to their parents, the wives to their husbands; and show them by your generosity of what friends they have obstinately deprived themselves.” The city was saved by the virtue and authority of its conqueror; [69](#) and when the Neapolitans returned to their houses, they found some consolation in the secret enjoyment of their hidden treasures. The Barbarian garrison enlisted in the service of the emperor; Apulia and Calabria, delivered from the odious presence of the Goths, acknowledged his dominion; and the tusks of the Calydonian boar, which were still shown at Beneventum, are curiously described by the historian of Belisarius. [70](#)

64 [\(return\)](#)
[Jornandes, de Rebus Geticis, c. 60, p. 702, edit. Grot., and tom. i. p. 221. Muratori, de Success, Regn. p. 241.]

65 [\(return\)](#)
[Nero (says Tacitus, Annal. xv. 35) Neapolim quasi Graecam urbem delegit. One hundred and fifty years afterwards, in the time of Septimius Severus, the Hellenism of the Neapolitans is praised by Philostratus. (Icon. l. i. p. 763, edit. Olear.)]

66 [\(return\)](#)
[The otium of Naples is praised by the Roman poets, by Virgil, Horace, Silius Italicus, and Statius, (Cluver. Ital. Ant. l. iv. p. 1149, 1150.) In an elegant epistles, (Sylv. l. iii. 5, p. 94—98, edit. Markland,) Statius undertakes the difficult task of drawing his wife from the pleasures of Rome to that calm retreat.]

67 [\(return\)](#)
[This measure was taken by Roger I., after the conquest of Naples, (A.D. 1139,) which he made the capital of his new kingdom, (Giannone, Istoria Civile, tom. ii. p. 169.) That city, the third in Christian Europe, is now at least twelve miles in circumference, (Jul. Caesar. Capaccii Hist. Neapol. l. i. p. 47,) and contains more inhabitants (350,000) in a given space, than any other spot in the known world.]

68 [\(return\)](#)
[Not geometrical, but common, paces or steps, of

22 French inches, (D' Anville, Mesures Itineraires, p. 7, 8.) The 2363 do not take an English mile.]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[Belisarius was reproved by Pope Silverius for the massacre. He repeopled Naples, and imported colonies of African captives into Sicily, Calabria, and Apulia, (Hist. Miscell. l. xvi. in Muratori, tom. i. p. 106, 107.)]

70

[\(return\)](#)

[Beneventum was built by Diomede, the nephew of Meleager (Cluver. tom. ii. p. 1195, 1196.) The Calydonian hunt is a picture of savage life, (Ovid, Metamorph. l. viii.) Thirty or forty heroes were leagued against a hog: the brutes (not the hog) quarrelled with lady for the head.]

The faithful soldiers and citizens of Naples had expected their deliverance from a prince, who remained the inactive and almost indifferent spectator of their ruin. Theodatus secured his person within the walls of Rome, whilst his cavalry advanced forty miles on the Appian way, and encamped in the Pomptine marshes; which, by a canal of nineteen miles in length, had been recently drained and converted into excellent pastures. [71](#) But the principal forces of the Goths were dispersed in Dalmatia, Venetia, and Gaul; and the feeble mind of their king was confounded by the unsuccessful event of a divination, which seemed to presage the downfall of his empire. [72](#) The most abject slaves have arraigned the guilt or weakness of an unfortunate master. The character of Theodatus was rigorously scrutinized by a free and idle camp of Barbarians, conscious of their privilege and power: he was declared unworthy of his race, his nation, and his throne; and their general Vitiges, whose valor had been signalized in the Illyrian war, was raised with unanimous applause on the bucklers of his companions. On the first rumor, the abdicated monarch fled from the justice of his country; but he was pursued by private revenge. A Goth, whom he had injured in his love, overtook Theodatus on the Flaminian way, and, regardless of his unmanly cries, slaughtered him, as he lay, prostrate on the ground, like a victim (says the historian) at the foot of the altar. The choice of the people is the best and purest title to reign over them; yet such is the prejudice of every age, that Vitiges impatiently wished to return to Ravenna, where he might seize, with the reluctant hand of the daughter of Amalasontha, some faint shadow of hereditary right. A national council was immediately held, and the new monarch reconciled the impatient spirit of the Barbarians to a measure of disgrace, which the misconduct of his predecessor rendered wise and indispensable. The Goths consented to retreat in the presence of a victorious enemy; to delay till the next spring the operations of offensive war; to summon their scattered forces; to relinquish their distant possessions, and to trust even Rome itself to the faith of its inhabitants. Leuderis, an ancient warrior, was left in the capital with four thousand soldiers; a feeble garrison, which might have seconded the zeal, though it was incapable of opposing the wishes,

of the Romans. But a momentary enthusiasm of religion and patriotism was kindled in their minds. They furiously exclaimed, that the apostolic throne should no longer be profaned by the triumph or toleration of Arianism; that the tombs of the Caesars should no longer be trampled by the savages of the North; and, without reflecting, that Italy must sink into a province of Constantinople, they fondly hailed the restoration of a Roman emperor as a new aera of freedom and prosperity. The deputies of the pope and clergy, of the senate and people, invited the lieutenant of Justinian to accept their voluntary allegiance, and to enter the city, whose gates would be thrown open for his reception. As soon as Belisarius had fortified his new conquests, Naples and Cumae, he advanced about twenty miles to the banks of the Vulturnus, contemplated the decayed grandeur of Capua, and halted at the separation of the Latin and Appian ways. The work of the censor, after the incessant use of nine centuries, still preserved its primaeval beauty, and not a flaw could be discovered in the large polished stones, of which that solid, though narrow road, was so firmly compacted. [73](#) Belisarius, however, preferred the Latin way, which, at a distance from the sea and the marshes, skirted in a space of one hundred and twenty miles along the foot of the mountains. His enemies had disappeared: when he made his entrance through the Asinarian gate, the garrison departed without molestation along the Flaminian way; and the city, after sixty years' servitude, was delivered from the yoke of the Barbarians. Leuderis alone, from a motive of pride or discontent, refused to accompany the fugitives; and the Gothic chief, himself a trophy of the victory, was sent with the keys of Rome to the throne of the emperor Justinian. [74](#)

71

[\(return\)](#)

[The Decennovium is strangely confounded by Cluverius (tom. ii. p. 1007) with the River Ufens. It was in truth a canal of nineteen miles, from Forum Appii to Terracina, on which Horace embarked in the night. The Decennovium, which is mentioned by Lucan, Dion Cassius, and Cassiodorus, has been sufficiently ruined, restored, and obliterated, (D'Anville, *Anayse de l'Italie*, p. 185, &c.)]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[A Jew, gratified his contempt and hatred for all the Christians, by enclosing three bands, each of ten hogs, and discriminated by the names of Goths, Greeks, and Romans. Of the first, almost all were found dead; almost all the second were alive: of the third, half died, and the rest lost their bristles. No unsuitable emblem of the event]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Bergier (*Hist. des Grands Chemins des Romains*, tom. i. p. 221-228, 440-444) examines the structure and materials, while D'Anville (*Analyse d'Italie*, p. 200—123) defines the geographical line.]

[Of the first recovery of Rome, the year (536) is certain, from the series of events, rather than from the corrupt, or interpolated, text of Procopius. The month (December) is ascertained by Evagrius, (l. iv. v. 19;) and the day (the tenth) may be admitted on the slight evidence of Nicephorus Callistus, (l. xvii. c. 13.) For this accurate chronology, we are indebted to the diligence and judgment of Pagi, (tom. ii. p. 659, 560.) Note: Compare Maltret's note, in the edition of Dindorf the ninth is the day, according to his reading,—M.]

The first days, which coincided with the old Saturnalia, were devoted to mutual congratulation and the public joy; and the Catholics prepared to celebrate, without a rival, the approaching festival of the nativity of Christ. In the familiar conversation of a hero, the Romans acquired some notion of the virtues which history ascribed to their ancestors; they were edified by the apparent respect of Belisarius for the successor of St. Peter, and his rigid discipline secured in the midst of war the blessings of tranquillity and justice. They applauded the rapid success of his arms, which overran the adjacent country, as far as Narni, Perusia, and Spoleto; but they trembled, the senate, the clergy, and the unwarlike people, as soon as they understood that he had resolved, and would speedily be reduced, to sustain a siege against the powers of the Gothic monarchy. The designs of Vitiges were executed, during the winter season, with diligence and effect. From their rustic habitations, from their distant garrisons, the Goths assembled at Ravenna for the defence of their country; and such were their numbers, that, after an army had been detached for the relief of Dalmatia, one hundred and fifty thousand fighting men marched under the royal standard. According to the degrees of rank or merit, the Gothic king distributed arms and horses, rich gifts, and liberal promises; he moved along the Flaminian way, declined the useless sieges of Perusia and Spoleto, respected the impregnable rock of Narni, and arrived within two miles of Rome at the foot of the Milvian bridge. The narrow passage was fortified with a tower, and Belisarius had computed the value of the twenty days which must be lost in the construction of another bridge. But the consternation of the soldiers of the tower, who either fled or deserted, disappointed his hopes, and betrayed his person into the most imminent danger. At the head of one thousand horse, the Roman general sallied from the Flaminian gate to mark the ground of an advantageous position, and to survey the camp of the Barbarians; but while he still believed them on the other side of the Tyber, he was suddenly encompassed and assaulted by their numerous squadrons. The fate of Italy depended on his life; and the deserters pointed to the conspicuous horse a bay, [75](#) with a white face, which he rode on that memorable day. "Aim at the bay horse," was the universal cry. Every bow was bent, every javelin was directed, against that fatal object, and the command was repeated and obeyed by thousands who were ignorant of its real motive. The bolder Barbarians advanced to the more honorable

combat of swords and spears; and the praise of an enemy has graced the fall of Visandus, the standard-bearer, [76](#) who maintained his foremost station, till he was pierced with thirteen wounds, perhaps by the hand of Belisarius himself. The Roman general was strong, active, and dexterous; on every side he discharged his weighty and mortal strokes: his faithful guards imitated his valor, and defended his person; and the Goths, after the loss of a thousand men, fled before the arms of a hero. They were rashly pursued to their camp; and the Romans, oppressed by multitudes, made a gradual, and at length a precipitate retreat to the gates of the city: the gates were shut against the fugitives; and the public terror was increased, by the report that Belisarius was slain. His countenance was indeed disfigured by sweat, dust, and blood; his voice was hoarse, his strength was almost exhausted; but his unconquerable spirit still remained; he imparted that spirit to his desponding companions; and their last desperate charge was felt by the flying Barbarians, as if a new army, vigorous and entire, had been poured from the city. The Flaminian gate was thrown open to a real triumph; but it was not before Belisarius had visited every post, and provided for the public safety, that he could be persuaded, by his wife and friends, to taste the needful refreshments of food and sleep. In the more improved state of the art of war, a general is seldom required, or even permitted to display the personal prowess of a soldier; and the example of Belisarius may be added to the rare examples of Henry IV., of Pyrrhus, and of Alexander.

75

[\(return\)](#)

[A horse of a bay or red color was styled by the Greeks, balan by the Barbarians, and spadix by the Romans. *Honesti spadices*, says Virgil, (*Georgic. l. iii. 72*, with the Observations of Martin and Heyne.) It signifies a branch of the palm-tree, whose name is synonymous to red, (*Aulus Gellius, ii. 26.*)]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[I interpret it, not as a proper, name, but an office, standard-bearer, from *bandum*, (*vexillum*,) a Barbaric word adopted by the Greeks and Romans, (*Paul Diacon. l. i. c. 20, p. 760. Grot. Nomina Hethica, p. 575. Ducange, Gloss. Latin. tom. i. p. 539, 540.*)]

After this first and unsuccessful trial of their enemies, the whole army of the Goths passed the Tyber, and formed the siege of the city, which continued above a year, till their final departure. Whatever fancy may conceive, the severe compass of the geographer defines the circumference of Rome within a line of twelve miles and three hundred and forty-five paces; and that circumference, except in the Vatican, has invariably been the same from the triumph of Aurelian to the peaceful but obscure reign of the modern popes. [77](#) But in the day of her greatness, the space within her walls was crowded with habitations and inhabitants; and the populous suburbs, that stretched along the public roads, were darted like so many rays from one common centre. Adversity swept away these extraneous ornaments, and left naked and desolate a

considerable part even of the seven hills. Yet Rome in its present state could send into the field about thirty thousand males of a military age; [78](#) and, notwithstanding the want of discipline and exercise, the far greater part, inured to the hardships of poverty, might be capable of bearing arms for the defence of their country and religion. The prudence of Belisarius did not neglect this important resource. His soldiers were relieved by the zeal and diligence of the people, who watched while they slept, and labored while they reposed: he accepted the voluntary service of the bravest and most indigent of the Roman youth; and the companies of townsmen sometimes represented, in a vacant post, the presence of the troops which had been drawn away to more essential duties. But his just confidence was placed in the veterans who had fought under his banner in the Persian and African wars; and although that gallant band was reduced to five thousand men, he undertook, with such contemptible numbers, to defend a circle of twelve miles, against an army of one hundred and fifty thousand Barbarians. In the walls of Rome, which Belisarius constructed or restored, the materials of ancient architecture may be discerned; [79](#) and the whole fortification was completed, except in a chasm still extant between the Pincian and Flaminian gates, which the prejudices of the Goths and Romans left under the effectual guard of St. Peter the apostle. [80](#)

77

[\(return\)](#)

[M. D’Anville has given, in the Memoirs of the Academy for the year 1756, (tom. xxx. p. 198—236,) a plan of Rome on a smaller scale, but far more accurate than that which he had delineated in 1738 for Rollin’s history. Experience had improved his knowledge and instead of Rossi’s topography, he used the new and excellent map of Nolli. Pliny’s old measure of thirteen must be reduced to eight miles. It is easier to alter a text, than to remove hills or buildings. * Note: Compare Gibbon, ch. xi. note 43, and xxxi. 67, and ch. lxxi. “It is quite clear,” observes Sir J. Hobhouse, “that all these measurements differ, (in the first and second it is 21, in the text 12 and 345 paces, in the last 10,) yet it is equally clear that the historian avers that they are all the same.” The present extent, 12 3/4 nearly agrees with the second statement of Gibbon. Sir J. Hobhouse also observes that the walls were enlarged by Constantine; but there can be no doubt that the circuit has been much changed. Illust. of Ch. Harold, p. 180.—M.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[In the year 1709, Labat (*Voyages en Italie*, tom. iii. p. 218) reckoned 138,568 Christian souls, besides 8000 or 10,000 Jews—without souls? In the year 1763, the numbers exceeded 160,000.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[The accurate eye of Nardini (*Roma Antica*, l. i. c.

viii. p. 31) could distinguish the tumultuarie opere di Belisario.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[The fissure and leaning in the upper part of the wall, which Procopius observed, (Goth. l. i. c. 13,) is visible to the present hour, (Douat. Roma Vetus, l. i. c. 17, p. 53, 54.)]

The battlements or bastions were shaped in sharp angles; a ditch, broad and deep, protected the foot of the rampart; and the archers on the rampart were assisted by military engines; the balistri, a powerful cross-bow, which darted short but massy arrows; the onagri, or wild asses, which, on the principle of a sling, threw stones and bullets of an enormous size. [81](#) A chain was drawn across the Tyber; the arches of the aqueducts were made impervious, and the mole or sepulchre of Hadrian [82](#) was converted, for the first time, to the uses of a citadel. That venerable structure, which contained the ashes of the Antonines, was a circular turret rising from a quadrangular basis; it was covered with the white marble of Paros, and decorated by the statues of gods and heroes; and the lover of the arts must read with a sigh, that the works of Praxiteles or Lysippus were torn from their lofty pedestals, and hurled into the ditch on the heads of the besiegers. [83](#) To each of his lieutenants Belisarius assigned the defence of a gate, with the wise and peremptory instruction, that, whatever might be the alarm, they should steadily adhere to their respective posts, and trust their general for the safety of Rome. The formidable host of the Goths was insufficient to embrace the ample measure of the city, of the fourteen gates, seven only were invested from the Proenestine to the Flaminian way; and Vitiges divided his troops into six camps, each of which was fortified with a ditch and rampart. On the Tuscan side of the river, a seventh encampment was formed in the field or circus of the Vatican, for the important purpose of commanding the Milvian bridge and the course of the Tyber; but they approached with devotion the adjacent church of St. Peter; and the threshold of the holy apostles was respected during the siege by a Christian enemy. In the ages of victory, as often as the senate decreed some distant conquest, the consul denounced hostilities, by unbarring, in solemn pomp, the gates of the temple of Janus. [84](#) Domestic war now rendered the admonition superfluous, and the ceremony was superseded by the establishment of a new religion. But the brazen temple of Janus was left standing in the forum; of a size sufficient only to contain the statue of the god, five cubits in height, of a human form, but with two faces directed to the east and west. The double gates were likewise of brass; and a fruitless effort to turn them on their rusty hinges revealed the scandalous secret that some Romans were still attached to the superstition of their ancestors.

81

[\(return\)](#)

[Lipsius (Opp. tom. iii. Poliorcet, l. iii.) was ignorant of this clear and conspicuous passage of Procopius, (Goth. l. i. c. 21.) The engine was named the wild ass, a calcitrando, (Hen. Steph. Thesaur.

Linguae Graec. tom. ii. p. 1340, 1341, tom. iii. p. 877.) I have seen an ingenious model, contrived and executed by General Melville, which imitates or surpasses the art of antiquity.]

82

[\(return\)](#)

[The description of this mausoleum, or mole, in Procopius, (l. i. c. 25.) is the first and best. The height above the walls. On Nolli's great plan, the sides measure 260 English feet. * Note: Donatus and Nardini suppose that Hadrian's tomb was fortified by Honorius; it was united to the wall by men of old, (Procop in loc.) Gibbon has mistaken the breadth for the height above the walls Hobhouse, *Illust. of Childe Harold*, p. 302.—M.]

83

[\(return\)](#)

[Praxiteles excelled in Fauns, and that of Athens was his own masterpiece. Rome now contains about thirty of the same character. When the ditch of St. Angelo was cleansed under Urban VIII., the workmen found the sleeping Faun of the Barberini palace; but a leg, a thigh, and the right arm, had been broken from that beautiful statue, (Winkelman, *Hist. de l'Art*, tom. ii. p. 52, 53, tom iii. p. 265.)]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius has given the best description of the temple of Janus a national deity of Latium, (Heyne, *Excurs. v. ad l. vii. Aeneid.*) It was once a gate in the primitive city of Romulus and Numa, (Nardini, p. 13, 256, 329.) Virgil has described the ancient rite like a poet and an antiquarian.]

Eighteen days were employed by the besiegers, to provide all the instruments of attack which antiquity had invented. Fascines were prepared to fill the ditches, scaling-ladders to ascend the walls. The largest trees of the forest supplied the timbers of four battering-rams: their heads were armed with iron; they were suspended by ropes, and each of them was worked by the labor of fifty men. The lofty wooden turrets moved on wheels or rollers, and formed a spacious platform of the level of the rampart. On the morning of the nineteenth day, a general attack was made from the Praenestine gate to the Vatican: seven Gothic columns, with their military engines, advanced to the assault; and the Romans, who lined the ramparts, listened with doubt and anxiety to the cheerful assurances of their commander. As soon as the enemy approached the ditch, Belisarius himself drew the first arrow; and such was his strength and dexterity, that he transfixed the foremost of the Barbarian leaders.

A shout of applause and victory was reechoed along the wall. He drew a second arrow, and the stroke was followed with the same success and the same acclamation. The Roman general then gave the word, that the archers should aim at the teams of

oxen; they were instantly covered with mortal wounds; the towers which they drew remained useless and immovable, and a single moment disconcerted the laborious projects of the king of the Goths. After this disappointment, Vitiges still continued, or feigned to continue, the assault of the Salarian gate, that he might divert the attention of his adversary, while his principal forces more strenuously attacked the Praenestine gate and the sepulchre of Hadrian, at the distance of three miles from each other. Near the former, the double walls of the Vivarium [85](#) were low or broken; the fortifications of the latter were feebly guarded: the vigor of the Goths was excited by the hope of victory and spoil; and if a single post had given way, the Romans, and Rome itself, were irrecoverably lost. This perilous day was the most glorious in the life of Belisarius. Amidst tumult and dismay, the whole plan of the attack and defence was distinctly present to his mind; he observed the changes of each instant, weighed every possible advantage, transported his person to the scenes of danger, and communicated his spirit in calm and decisive orders. The contest was fiercely maintained from the morning to the evening; the Goths were repulsed on all sides; and each Roman might boast that he had vanquished thirty Barbarians, if the strange disproportion of numbers were not counterbalanced by the merit of one man. Thirty thousand Goths, according to the confession of their own chiefs, perished in this bloody action; and the multitude of the wounded was equal to that of the slain. When they advanced to the assault, their close disorder suffered not a javelin to fall without effect; and as they retired, the populace of the city joined the pursuit, and slaughtered, with impunity, the backs of their flying enemies. Belisarius instantly sallied from the gates; and while the soldiers chanted his name and victory, the hostile engines of war were reduced to ashes. Such was the loss and consternation of the Goths, that, from this day, the siege of Rome degenerated into a tedious and indolent blockade; and they were incessantly harassed by the Roman general, who, in frequent skirmishes, destroyed above five thousand of their bravest troops. Their cavalry was unpractised in the use of the bow; their archers served on foot; and this divided force was incapable of contending with their adversaries, whose lances and arrows, at a distance, or at hand, were alike formidable. The consummate skill of Belisarius embraced the favorable opportunities; and as he chose the ground and the moment, as he pressed the charge or sounded the retreat, [86](#) the squadrons which he detached were seldom unsuccessful. These partial advantages diffused an impatient ardor among the soldiers and people, who began to feel the hardships of a siege, and to disregard the dangers of a general engagement. Each plebeian conceived himself to be a hero, and the infantry, who, since the decay of discipline, were rejected from the line of battle, aspired to the ancient honors of the Roman legion. Belisarius praised the spirit of his troops, condemned their presumption, yielded to their clamors, and prepared the remedies of a defeat, the possibility of which he alone had courage to suspect. In the quarter of the Vatican, the Romans prevailed; and if the irreparable moments had not been wasted in the pillage of the camp, they might have occupied the Milvian bridge, and charged in the rear of the Gothic host. On the other side of the Tyber, Belisarius

advanced from the Pincian and Salarian gates. But his army, four thousand soldiers perhaps, was lost in a spacious plain; they were encompassed and oppressed by fresh multitudes, who continually relieved the broken ranks of the Barbarians. The valiant leaders of the infantry were unskilled to conquer; they died: the retreat (a hasty retreat) was covered by the prudence of the general, and the victors started back with affright from the formidable aspect of an armed rampart. The reputation of Belisarius was unsullied by a defeat; and the vain confidence of the Goths was not less serviceable to his designs than the repentance and modesty of the Roman troops.

85

[\(return\)](#)

[Vivarium was an angle in the new wall enclosed for wild beasts, (Procopius, Goth. l. i. c. 23.) The spot is still visible in Nardini (l iv. c. 2, p. 159, 160,) and Nolli's great plan of Rome.]

86

[\(return\)](#)

[For the Roman trumpet, and its various notes, consult Lipsius de Militia Romana, (Opp. tom. iii. l. iv. Dialog. x. p. 125-129.) A mode of distinguishing the charge by the horse-trumpet of solid brass, and the retreat by the foot-trumpet of leather and light wood, was recommended by Procopius, and adopted by Belisarius.]

Chapter XLI: Conquests Of Justinian, Character Of Balisarius.—Part IV.

From the moment that Belisarius had determined to sustain a siege, his assiduous care provided Rome against the danger of famine, more dreadful than the Gothic arms. An extraordinary supply of corn was imported from Sicily: the harvests of Campania and Tuscany were forcibly swept for the use of the city; and the rights of private property were infringed by the strong plea of the public safety. It might easily be foreseen that the enemy would intercept the aqueducts; and the cessation of the water-mills was the first inconvenience, which was speedily removed by mooring large vessels, and fixing mill-stones in the current of the river. The stream was soon embarrassed by the trunks of trees, and polluted with dead bodies; yet so effectual were the precautions of the Roman general, that the waters of the Tyber still continued to give motion to the mills and drink to the inhabitants: the more distant quarters were supplied from domestic wells; and a besieged city might support, without impatience, the privation of her public baths. A large portion of Rome, from the Praenestine gate to the church of St. Paul, was never invested by the Goths; their excursions were restrained by the activity of the Moorish troops: the navigation of the Tyber, and the Latin, Appian, and Ostian ways, were left free and unmolested for the introduction of corn and cattle, or the retreat of the inhabitants, who sought refuge in Campania or Sicily. Anxious to relieve himself

from a useless and devouring multitude, Belisarius issued his peremptory orders for the instant departure of the women, the children, and slaves; required his soldiers to dismiss their male and female attendants, and regulated their allowance that one moiety should be given in provisions, and the other in money. His foresight was justified by the increase of the public distress, as soon as the Goths had occupied two important posts in the neighborhood of Rome. By the loss of the port, or, as it is now called, the city of Porto, he was deprived of the country on the right of the Tyber, and the best communication with the sea; and he reflected, with grief and anger, that three hundred men, could he have spared such a feeble band, might have defended its impregnable works. Seven miles from the capital, between the Appian and the Latin ways, two principal aqueducts crossing, and again crossing each other: enclosed within their solid and lofty arches a fortified space, [87](#) where Vitiges established a camp of seven thousand Goths to intercept the convoy of Sicily and Campania. The granaries of Rome were insensibly exhausted, the adjacent country had been wasted with fire and sword; such scanty supplies as might yet be obtained by hasty excursions were the reward of valor, and the purchase of wealth: the forage of the horses, and the bread of the soldiers, never failed: but in the last months of the siege, the people were exposed to the miseries of scarcity, unwholesome food, [88](#) and contagious disorders. Belisarius saw and pitied their sufferings; but he had foreseen, and he watched the decay of their loyalty, and the progress of their discontent. Adversity had awakened the Romans from the dreams of grandeur and freedom, and taught them the humiliating lesson, that it was of small moment to their real happiness, whether the name of their master was derived from the Gothic or the Latin language. The lieutenant of Justinian listened to their just complaints, but he rejected with disdain the idea of flight or capitulation; repressed their clamorous impatience for battle; amused them with the prospect of a sure and speedy relief; and secured himself and the city from the effects of their despair or treachery. Twice in each month he changed the station of the officers to whom the custody of the gates was committed: the various precautions of patrols, watch words, lights, and music, were repeatedly employed to discover whatever passed on the ramparts; out-guards were posted beyond the ditch, and the trusty vigilance of dogs supplied the more doubtful fidelity of mankind. A letter was intercepted, which assured the king of the Goths that the Asinarian gate, adjoining to the Lateran church, should be secretly opened to his troops. On the proof or suspicion of treason, several senators were banished, and the pope Sylverius was summoned to attend the representative of his sovereign, at his head-quarters in the Pincian palace. [89](#) The ecclesiastics, who followed their bishop, were detained in the first or second apartment, [90](#) and he alone was admitted to the presence of Belisarius. The conqueror of Rome and Carthage was modestly seated at the feet of Antonina, who reclined on a stately couch: the general was silent, but the voice of reproach and menace issued from the mouth of his imperious wife. Accused by credible witnesses, and the evidence of his own subscription, the successor of St. Peter was despoiled of his pontifical ornaments, clad in the mean habit

of a monk, and embarked, without delay, for a distant exile in the East. [9011](#) At the emperor's command, the clergy of Rome proceeded to the choice of a new bishop; and after a solemn invocation of the Holy Ghost, elected the deacon Vigilius, who had purchased the papal throne by a bribe of two hundred pounds of gold. The profit, and consequently the guilt, of this simony, was imputed to Belisarius: but the hero obeyed the orders of his wife; Antonina served the passions of the empress; and Theodora lavished her treasures, in the vain hope of obtaining a pontiff hostile or indifferent to the council of Chalcedon. [91](#)

87 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius (Goth. l. ii. c. 3) has forgot to name these aqueducts nor can such a double intersection, at such a distance from Rome, be clearly ascertained from the writings of Frontinus, Fabretti, and Eschinard, de Aquis and de Agro Romano, or from the local maps of Lameti and Cingolani. Seven or eight miles from the city, (50 stadia,) on the road to Albano, between the Latin and Appian ways, I discern the remains of an aqueduct, (probably the Septimian,) a series (630 paces) of arches twenty-five feet high.]

88 [\(return\)](#)

[They made sausages of mule's flesh; unwholesome, if the animals had died of the plague. Otherwise, the famous Bologna sausages are said to be made of ass flesh, (Voyages de Labat, tom. ii. p. 218.)]

89 [\(return\)](#)

[The name of the palace, the hill, and the adjoining gate, were all derived from the senator Pincius. Some recent vestiges of temples and churches are now smoothed in the garden of the Minims of the Trinita del Monte, (Nardini, l. iv. c. 7, p. 196. Eschinard, p. 209, 210, the old plan of Buffalino, and the great plan of Nolli.) Belisarius had fixed his station between the Pincian and Salarian gates, (Procop. Goth. l. i. c. 15.)]

90 [\(return\)](#)

[From the mention of the primum et secundum velum, it should seem that Belisarius, even in a siege, represented the emperor, and maintained the proud ceremonial of the Byzantine palace.]

9011 [\(return\)](#)

[De Beau, as a good Catholic, makes the Pope the victim of a dark intrigue. Lord Mahon, (p. 225.) with whom I concur, summed up against him.—M.]

91 [\(return\)](#)

[Of this act of sacrilege, Procopius (Goth. l. i. c.

25) is a dry and reluctant witness. The narratives of Liberatus (Breviarium, c. 22) and Anastasius (de Vit. Pont. p. 39) are characteristic, but passionate. Hear the execrations of Cardinal Baronius, (A.D. 536, No. 123 A.D. 538, No. 4—20:) *portentum, facinus omni execratione dignum.*]

The epistle of Belisarius to the emperor announced his victory, his danger, and his resolution. “According to your commands, we have entered the dominions of the Goths, and reduced to your obedience Sicily, Campania, and the city of Rome; but the loss of these conquests will be more disgraceful than their acquisition was glorious. Hitherto we have successfully fought against the multitudes of the Barbarians, but their multitudes may finally prevail. Victory is the gift of Providence, but the reputation of kings and generals depends on the success or the failure of their designs. Permit me to speak with freedom: if you wish that we should live, send us subsistence; if you desire that we should conquer, send us arms, horses, and men. The Romans have received us as friends and deliverers: but in our present distress, they will be either betrayed by their confidence, or we shall be oppressed by their treachery and hatred. For myself, my life is consecrated to your service: it is yours to reflect, whether my death in this situation will contribute to the glory and prosperity of your reign.” Perhaps that reign would have been equally prosperous if the peaceful master of the East had abstained from the conquest of Africa and Italy: but as Justinian was ambitious of fame, he made some efforts (they were feeble and languid) to support and rescue his victorious general. A reenforcement of sixteen hundred Sclavonians and Huns was led by Martin and Valerian; and as they reposed during the winter season in the harbors of Greece, the strength of the men and horses was not impaired by the fatigues of a sea-voyage; and they distinguished their valor in the first sally against the besiegers. About the time of the summer solstice, Euthalius landed at Terracina with large sums of money for the payment of the troops: he cautiously proceeded along the Appian way, and this convoy entered Rome through the gate Capena, [92](#) while Belisarius, on the other side, diverted the attention of the Goths by a vigorous and successful skirmish. These seasonable aids, the use and reputation of which were dexterously managed by the Roman general, revived the courage, or at least the hopes, of the soldiers and people. The historian Procopius was despatched with an important commission to collect the troops and provisions which Campania could furnish, or Constantinople had sent; and the secretary of Belisarius was soon followed by Antonina herself, [93](#) who boldly traversed the posts of the enemy, and returned with the Oriental succors to the relief of her husband and the besieged city. A fleet of three thousand Isaurians cast anchor in the Bay of Naples and afterwards at Ostia. Above two thousand horse, of whom a part were Thracians, landed at Tarentum; and, after the junction of five hundred soldiers of Campania, and a train of wagons laden with wine and flour, they directed their march on the Appian way, from Capua to the neighborhood of Rome. The forces that arrived by land and sea were united at the mouth of the Tyber. Antonina convened a council of war: it was resolved

to surmount, with sails and oars, the adverse stream of the river; and the Goths were apprehensive of disturbing, by any rash hostilities, the negotiation to which Belisarius had craftily listened. They credulously believed that they saw no more than the vanguard of a fleet and army, which already covered the Ionian Sea and the plains of Campania; and the illusion was supported by the haughty language of the Roman general, when he gave audience to the ambassadors of Vitiges. After a specious discourse to vindicate the justice of his cause, they declared, that, for the sake of peace, they were disposed to renounce the possession of Sicily. “The emperor is not less generous,” replied his lieutenant, with a disdainful smile, “in return for a gift which you no longer possess: he presents you with an ancient province of the empire; he resigns to the Goths the sovereignty of the British island.” Belisarius rejected with equal firmness and contempt the offer of a tribute; but he allowed the Gothic ambassadors to seek their fate from the mouth of Justinian himself; and consented, with seeming reluctance, to a truce of three months, from the winter solstice to the equinox of spring. Prudence might not safely trust either the oaths or hostages of the Barbarians, and the conscious superiority of the Roman chief was expressed in the distribution of his troops. As soon as fear or hunger compelled the Goths to evacuate Alba, Porto, and Centumcellae, their place was instantly supplied; the garrisons of Narni, Spoleto, and Perusia, were reenforced, and the seven camps of the besiegers were gradually encompassed with the calamities of a siege. The prayers and pilgrimage of Datius, bishop of Milan, were not without effect; and he obtained one thousand Thracians and Isaurians, to assist the revolt of Liguria against her Arian tyrant. At the same time, John the Sanguinary, [94](#) the nephew of Vitalian, was detached with two thousand chosen horse, first to Alba, on the Fucine Lake, and afterwards to the frontiers of Picenum, on the Hadriatic Sea. “In the province,” said Belisarius, “the Goths have deposited their families and treasures, without a guard or the suspicion of danger. Doubtless they will violate the truce: let them feel your presence, before they hear of your motions. Spare the Italians; suffer not any fortified places to remain hostile in your rear; and faithfully reserve the spoil for an equal and common partition. It would not be reasonable,” he added with a laugh, “that whilst we are toiling to the destruction of the drones, our more fortunate brethren should rifle and enjoy the honey.”

92

[\(return\)](#)

[The old Capena was removed by Aurelian to, or near, the modern gate of St. Sebastian, (see Nolli’s plan.) That memorable spot has been consecrated by the Egerian grove, the memory of Numa two umphal arches, the sepulchres of the Scipios, Metelli, &c.]

93

[\(return\)](#)

[The expression of Procopius has an invidious cast, (Goth. l. ii. c. 4.) Yet he is speaking of a woman.]

[Anastasius (p. 40) has preserved this epithet of Sanguinarius which might do honor to a tiger.]

The whole nation of the Ostrogoths had been assembled for the attack, and was almost entirely consumed in the siege of Rome. If any credit be due to an intelligent spectator, one third at least of their enormous host was destroyed, in frequent and bloody combats under the walls of the city. The bad fame and pernicious qualities of the summer air might already be imputed to the decay of agriculture and population; and the evils of famine and pestilence were aggravated by their own licentiousness, and the unfriendly disposition of the country. While Vitiges struggled with his fortune, while he hesitated between shame and ruin, his retreat was hastened by domestic alarms. The king of the Goths was informed by trembling messengers, that John the Sanguinary spread the devastations of war from the Apennine to the Hadriatic; that the rich spoils and innumerable captives of Picenum were lodged in the fortifications of Rimini; and that this formidable chief had defeated his uncle, insulted his capital, and seduced, by secret correspondence, the fidelity of his wife, the imperious daughter of Amalasontha. Yet, before he retired, Vitiges made a last effort, either to storm or to surprise the city. A secret passage was discovered in one of the aqueducts; two citizens of the Vatican were tempted by bribes to intoxicate the guards of the Aurelian gate; an attack was meditated on the walls beyond the Tyber, in a place which was not fortified with towers; and the Barbarians advanced, with torches and scaling-ladders, to the assault of the Pincian gate. But every attempt was defeated by the intrepid vigilance of Belisarius and his band of veterans, who, in the most perilous moments, did not regret the absence of their companions; and the Goths, alike destitute of hope and subsistence, clamorously urged their departure before the truce should expire, and the Roman cavalry should again be united. One year and nine days after the commencement of the siege, an army, so lately strong and triumphant, burnt their tents, and tumultuously repassed the Milvian bridge. They repassed not with impunity: their thronging multitudes, oppressed in a narrow passage, were driven headlong into the Tyber, by their own fears and the pursuit of the enemy; and the Roman general, sallying from the Pincian gate, inflicted a severe and disgraceful wound on their retreat. The slow length of a sickly and desponding host was heavily dragged along the Flaminian way; from whence the Barbarians were sometimes compelled to deviate, lest they should encounter the hostile garrisons that guarded the high road to Rimini and Ravenna. Yet so powerful was this flying army, that Vitiges spared ten thousand men for the defence of the cities which he was most solicitous to preserve, and detached his nephew Uraias, with an adequate force, for the chastisement of rebellious Milan. At the head of his principal army, he besieged Rimini, only thirty-three miles distant from the Gothic capital. A feeble rampart, and a shallow ditch, were maintained by the skill and valor of John the Sanguinary, who shared the danger and fatigue of the meanest soldier, and emulated, on a theatre less illustrious, the military virtues of his great commander. The towers and battering-engines of the Barbarians were rendered useless; their attacks were repulsed; and the tedious blockade, which

reduced the garrison to the last extremity of hunger, afforded time for the union and march of the Roman forces. A fleet, which had surprised Ancona, sailed along the coast of the Hadriatic, to the relief of the besieged city. The eunuch Narses landed in Picenum with two thousand Heruli and five thousand of the bravest troops of the East. The rock of the Apennine was forced; ten thousand veterans moved round the foot of the mountains, under the command of Belisarius himself; and a new army, whose encampment blazed with innumerable lights, appeared to advance along the Flaminian way. Overwhelmed with astonishment and despair, the Goths abandoned the siege of Rimini, their tents, their standards, and their leaders; and Vitiges, who gave or followed the example of flight, never halted till he found a shelter within the walls and morasses of Ravenna. To these walls, and to some fortresses destitute of any mutual support, the Gothic monarchy was now reduced. The provinces of Italy had embraced the party of the emperor and his army, gradually recruited to the number of twenty thousand men, must have achieved an easy and rapid conquest, if their invincible powers had not been weakened by the discord of the Roman chiefs. Before the end of the siege, an act of blood, ambiguous and indiscreet, sullied the fair fame of Belisarius. Presidius, a loyal Italian, as he fled from Ravenna to Rome, was rudely stopped by Constantine, the military governor of Spoleto, and despoiled, even in a church, of two daggers richly inlaid with gold and precious stones. As soon as the public danger had subsided, Presidius complained of the loss and injury: his complaint was heard, but the order of restitution was disobeyed by the pride and avarice of the offender. Exasperated by the delay, Presidius boldly arrested the general's horse as he passed through the forum; and, with the spirit of a citizen, demanded the common benefit of the Roman laws. The honor of Belisarius was engaged; he summoned a council; claimed the obedience of his subordinate officer; and was provoked, by an insolent reply, to call hastily for the presence of his guards. Constantine, viewing their entrance as the signal of death, drew his sword, and rushed on the general, who nimbly eluded the stroke, and was protected by his friends; while the desperate assassin was disarmed, dragged into a neighboring chamber, and executed, or rather murdered, by the guards, at the arbitrary command of Belisarius. [95](#) In this hasty act of violence, the guilt of Constantine was no longer remembered; the despair and death of that valiant officer were secretly imputed to the revenge of Antonina; and each of his colleagues, conscious of the same rapine, was apprehensive of the same fate. The fear of a common enemy suspended the effects of their envy and discontent; but in the confidence of approaching victory, they instigated a powerful rival to oppose the conqueror of Rome and Africa. From the domestic service of the palace, and the administration of the private revenue, Narses the eunuch was suddenly exalted to the head of an army; and the spirit of a hero, who afterwards equalled the merit and glory of Belisarius, served only to perplex the operations of the Gothic war. To his prudent counsels, the relief of Rimini was ascribed by the leaders of the discontented faction, who exhorted Narses to assume an independent and separate command. The epistle of Justinian had indeed enjoined his obedience to the general;

but the dangerous exception, “as far as may be advantageous to the public service,” reserved some freedom of judgment to the discreet favorite, who had so lately departed from the sacred and familiar conversation of his sovereign. In the exercise of this doubtful right, the eunuch perpetually dissented from the opinions of Belisarius; and, after yielding with reluctance to the siege of Urbino, he deserted his colleague in the night, and marched away to the conquest of the Aemilian province. The fierce and formidable bands of the Heruli were attached to the person of Narses; [96](#) ten thousand Romans and confederates were persuaded to march under his banners; every malcontent embraced the fair opportunity of revenging his private or imaginary wrongs; and the remaining troops of Belisarius were divided and dispersed from the garrisons of Sicily to the shores of the Hadriatic. His skill and perseverance overcame every obstacle: Urbino was taken, the sieges of Faesulae Orvieto, and Auximum, were undertaken and vigorously prosecuted; and the eunuch Narses was at length recalled to the domestic cares of the palace. All dissensions were healed, and all opposition was subdued, by the temperate authority of the Roman general, to whom his enemies could not refuse their esteem; and Belisarius inculcated the salutary lesson that the forces of the state should compose one body, and be animated by one soul. But in the interval of discord, the Goths were permitted to breathe; an important season was lost, Milan was destroyed, and the northern provinces of Italy were afflicted by an inundation of the Franks.

95

[\(return\)](#)

[This transaction is related in the public history (Goth. l. ii. c. 8) with candor or caution; in the Anecdotes (c. 7) with malevolence or freedom; but Marcellinus, or rather his continuator, (in Chron.,) casts a shade of premeditated assassination over the death of Constantine. He had performed good service at Rome and Spoleto, (Procop. Goth l. i. c. 7, 14;) but Alemannus confounds him with a Constantianus comes stabuli.]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[They refused to serve after his departure; sold their captives and cattle to the Goths; and swore never to fight against them. Procopius introduces a curious digression on the manners and adventures of this wandering nation, a part of whom finally emigrated to Thule or Scandinavia. (Goth. l. ii. c. 14, 15.)]

When Justinian first meditated the conquest of Italy, he sent ambassadors to the kings of the Franks, and adjured them, by the common ties of alliance and religion, to join in the holy enterprise against the Arians. The Goths, as their wants were more urgent, employed a more effectual mode of persuasion, and vainly strove, by the gift of lands and money, to purchase the friendship, or at least the neutrality, of a light and perfidious nation.[97](#) But the arms of Belisarius, and the revolt of the Italians, had no sooner shaken the Gothic monarchy, than Theodebert of Austrasia, the most powerful and warlike of the Merovingian kings, was persuaded to succor their distress by an indirect and

seasonable aid. Without expecting the consent of their sovereign, ten thousand Burgundians, his recent subjects, descended from the Alps, and joined the troops which Vitiges had sent to chastise the revolt of Milan. After an obstinate siege, the capital of Liguria was reduced by famine; but no capitulation could be obtained, except for the safe retreat of the Roman garrison. Datius, the orthodox bishop, who had seduced his countrymen to rebellion [98](#) and ruin, escaped to the luxury and honors of the Byzantine court; [99](#) but the clergy, perhaps the Arian clergy, were slaughtered at the foot of their own altars by the defenders of the Catholic faith. Three hundred thousand males were reported to be slain; [100](#) the female sex, and the more precious spoil, was resigned to the Burgundians; and the houses, or at least the walls, of Milan, were levelled with the ground. The Goths, in their last moments, were revenged by the destruction of a city, second only to Rome in size and opulence, in the splendor of its buildings, or the number of its inhabitants; and Belisarius sympathized alone in the fate of his deserted and devoted friends. Encouraged by this successful inroad, Theodebert himself, in the ensuing spring, invaded the plains of Italy with an army of one hundred thousand Barbarians. [101](#) The king, and some chosen followers, were mounted on horseback, and armed with lances; the infantry, without bows or spears, were satisfied with a shield, a sword, and a double-edged battle-axe, which, in their hands, became a deadly and unerring weapon. Italy trembled at the march of the Franks; and both the Gothic prince and the Roman general, alike ignorant of their designs, solicited, with hope and terror, the friendship of these dangerous allies. Till he had secured the passage of the Po on the bridge of Pavia, the grandson of Clovis dissembled his intentions, which he at length declared, by assaulting, almost at the same instant, the hostile camps of the Romans and Goths. Instead of uniting their arms, they fled with equal precipitation; and the fertile, though desolate provinces of Liguria and Aemilia, were abandoned to a licentious host of Barbarians, whose rage was not mitigated by any thoughts of settlement or conquest. Among the cities which they ruined, Genoa, not yet constructed of marble, is particularly enumerated; and the deaths of thousands, according to the regular practice of war, appear to have excited less horror than some idolatrous sacrifices of women and children, which were performed with impunity in the camp of the most Christian king. If it were not a melancholy truth, that the first and most cruel sufferings must be the lot of the innocent and helpless, history might exult in the misery of the conquerors, who, in the midst of riches, were left destitute of bread or wine, reduced to drink the waters of the Po, and to feed on the flesh of distempered cattle. The dysentery swept away one third of their army; and the clamors of his subjects, who were impatient to pass the Alps, disposed Theodebert to listen with respect to the mild exhortations of Belisarius. The memory of this inglorious and destructive warfare was perpetuated on the medals of Gaul; and Justinian, without unsheathing his sword, assumed the title of conqueror of the Franks. The Merovingian prince was offended by the vanity of the emperor; he affected to pity the fallen fortunes of the Goths; and his insidious offer of a federal union was fortified by the promise or menace of descending from the Alps at the head of five

hundred thousand men. His plans of conquest were boundless, and perhaps chimerical. The king of Austrasia threatened to chastise Justinian, and to march to the gates of Constantinople: [102](#) he was overthrown and slain [103](#) by a wild bull, [104](#) as he hunted in the Belgic or German forests.

97 [\(return\)](#)

[This national reproach of perfidy (Procop. Goth. l. ii. c. 25) offends the ear of La Mothe le Vayer, (tom. viii. p. 163—165,) who criticizes, as if he had not read, the Greek historian.]

98 [\(return\)](#)

[Baronius applauds his treason, and justifies the Catholic bishops—*qui ne sub heretico principe degant omnem lapidem movent*—a useful caution. The more rational Muratori (Annali d'Italia, tom. v. p. 54) hints at the guilt of perjury, and blames at least the imprudence of Datius.]

99 [\(return\)](#)

[St. Datius was more successful against devils than against Barbarians. He travelled with a numerons retinue, and occupied at Corinth a large house. (Baronius, A.D. 538, No. 89, A.D. 539, No. 20.)]

100 [\(return\)](#)

[(Compare Procopius, Goth. l. ii. c. 7, 21.) Yet such population is incredible; and the second or third city of Italy need not repine if we only decimate the numbers of the present text Both Milan and Genoa revived in less than thirty years, (Paul Diacon de Gestis Langobard. l. ii. c. 38.) Note: Procopius says distinctly that Milan was the second city of the West. Which did Gibbon suppose could compete with it, Ravenna or Naples; the next page he calls it the second.—M.]

101 [\(return\)](#)

[Besides Procopius, perhaps too Roman, see the Chronicles of Marius and Marcellinus, Jornandes, (in Success. Regn. in Muratori, tom. i. p. 241,) and Gregory of Tours, (l. iii. c. 32, in tom. ii. of the Historians of France.) Gregory supposes a defeat of Belisarius, who, in Aimoin, (de Gestis Franc. l. ii. c. 23, in tom. iii. p. 59,) is slain by the Franks.]

102 [\(return\)](#)

[Agathias, l. i. p. 14, 15. Could he have seduced or subdued the Gepidae or Lombards of Pannonia, the Greek historian is confident that he must have been destroyed in Thrace.]

103 [\(return\)](#)

[The king pointed his spear—the bull overturned a tree on his head—he expired the same day. Such is

the story of Agathias; but the original historians of France (tom. ii. p. 202, 403, 558, 667) impute his death to a fever.]

104

[\(return\)](#)

[Without losing myself in a labyrinth of species and names—the aurochs, urus, bisons, bubalus, bonasus, buffalo, &c., (Buffon. Hist. Nat. tom. xi., and Supplement, tom. iii. vi.,) it is certain, that in the sixth century a large wild species of horned cattle was hunted in the great forests of the Vosges in Lorraine, and the Ardennes, (Greg. Turon. tom. ii. l. x. c. 10, p. 369.)]

Chapter XLI: Conquests Of Justinian, Character Of Balisarius.—Part V.

As soon as Belisarius was delivered from his foreign and domestic enemies, he seriously applied his forces to the final reduction of Italy. In the siege of Osimo, the general was nearly transpierced with an arrow, if the mortal stroke had not been intercepted by one of his guards, who lost, in that pious office, the use of his hand. The Goths of Osimo, [1041](#) four thousand warriors, with those of Faesulae and the Cottian Alps, were among the last who maintained their independence; and their gallant resistance, which almost tired the patience, deserved the esteem, of the conqueror. His prudence refused to subscribe the safe conduct which they asked, to join their brethren of Ravenna; but they saved, by an honorable capitulation, one moiety at least of their wealth, with the free alternative of retiring peaceably to their estates, or enlisting to serve the emperor in his Persian wars. The multitudes which yet adhered to the standard of Vitiges far surpassed the number of the Roman troops; but neither prayers nor defiance, nor the extreme danger of his most faithful subjects, could tempt the Gothic king beyond the fortifications of Ravenna. These fortifications were, indeed, impregnable to the assaults of art or violence; and when Belisarius invested the capital, he was soon convinced that famine only could tame the stubborn spirit of the Barbarians. The sea, the land, and the channels of the Po, were guarded by the vigilance of the Roman general; and his morality extended the rights of war to the practice of poisoning the waters, [105](#) and secretly firing the granaries [106](#) of a besieged city. [107](#) While he pressed the blockade of Ravenna, he was surprised by the arrival of two ambassadors from Constantinople, with a treaty of peace, which Justinian had imprudently signed, without deigning to consult the author of his victory. By this disgraceful and precarious agreement, Italy and the Gothic treasure were divided, and the provinces beyond the Po were left with the regal title to the successor of Theodoric. The ambassadors were eager to accomplish their salutary commission; the captive Vitiges accepted, with transport, the unexpected offer of a crown; honor was less

prevalent among the Goths, than the want and appetite of food; and the Roman chiefs, who murmured at the continuance of the war, professed implicit submission to the commands of the emperor. If Belisarius had possessed only the courage of a soldier, the laurel would have been snatched from his hand by timid and envious counsels; but in this decisive moment, he resolved, with the magnanimity of a statesman, to sustain alone the danger and merit of generous disobedience. Each of his officers gave a written opinion that the siege of Ravenna was impracticable and hopeless: the general then rejected the treaty of partition, and declared his own resolution of leading Vitiges in chains to the feet of Justinian. The Goths retired with doubt and dismay: this peremptory refusal deprived them of the only signature which they could trust, and filled their minds with a just apprehension, that a sagacious enemy had discovered the full extent of their deplorable state. They compared the fame and fortune of Belisarius with the weakness of their ill-fated king; and the comparison suggested an extraordinary project, to which Vitiges, with apparent resignation, was compelled to acquiesce. Partition would ruin the strength, exile would disgrace the honor, of the nation; but they offered their arms, their treasures, and the fortifications of Ravenna, if Belisarius would disclaim the authority of a master, accept the choice of the Goths, and assume, as he had deserved, the kingdom of Italy. If the false lustre of a diadem could have tempted the loyalty of a faithful subject, his prudence must have foreseen the inconstancy of the Barbarians, and his rational ambition would prefer the safe and honorable station of a Roman general. Even the patience and seeming satisfaction with which he entertained a proposal of treason, might be susceptible of a malignant interpretation. But the lieutenant of Justinian was conscious of his own rectitude; he entered into a dark and crooked path, as it might lead to the voluntary submission of the Goths; and his dexterous policy persuaded them that he was disposed to comply with their wishes, without engaging an oath or a promise for the performance of a treaty which he secretly abhorred. The day of the surrender of Ravenna was stipulated by the Gothic ambassadors: a fleet, laden with provisions, sailed as a welcome guest into the deepest recess of the harbor: the gates were opened to the fancied king of Italy; and Belisarius, without meeting an enemy, triumphantly marched through the streets of an impregnable city. [108](#) The Romans were astonished by their success; the multitudes of tall and robust Barbarians were confounded by the image of their own patience and the masculine females, spitting in the faces of their sons and husbands, most bitterly reproached them for betraying their dominion and freedom to these pygmies of the south, contemptible in their numbers, diminutive in their stature. Before the Goths could recover from the first surprise, and claim the accomplishment of their doubtful hopes, the victor established his power in Ravenna, beyond the danger of repentance and revolt.

1041

[\(return\)](#)

[Auximum, p. 175.—M.]

105

[\(return\)](#)

[In the siege of Auximum, he first labored to demolish an old aqueduct, and then cast into the

stream, 1. dead bodies; 2. mischievous herbs; and 3. quicklime. (says Procopius, l. ii. c. 27) Yet both words are used as synonymous in Galen, Dioscorides, and Lucian, (Hen. Steph. Thesaur. Ling. Graec. tom. iii. p. 748.)]

106 [\(return\)](#)

[The Goths suspected Mathasuinthas as an accomplice in the mischief, which perhaps was occasioned by accidental lightning.]

107 [\(return\)](#)

[In strict philosophy, a limitation of the rights of war seems to imply nonsense and contradiction. Grotius himself is lost in an idle distinction between the jus naturae and the jus gentium, between poison and infection. He balances in one scale the passages of Homer (Odys. A 259, &c.) and Florus, (l. ii. c. 20, No. 7, ult. ;) and in the other, the examples of Solon (Pausanias, l. x. c. 37) and Belisarius. See his great work De Jure Belli et Pacis, (l. iii. c. 4, s. 15, 16, 17, and in Barbeyrac's version, tom. ii. p. 257, &c.) Yet I can understand the benefit and validity of an agreement, tacit or express, mutually to abstain from certain modes of hostility. See the Amphictyonic oath in Aeschines, de falsa Legatione.]

108 [\(return\)](#)

[Ravenna was taken, not in the year 540, but in the latter end of 539; and Pagi (tom. ii. p. 569) is rectified by Muratori. (Annali d'Italia, tom. v. p. 62,) who proves from an original act on papyrus, (Antiquit. Italiae Medii Aevi, tom. ii. dissert. xxxii. p. 999—1007,) Maffei, (Istoria Diplomat. p. 155-160,) that before the third of January, 540, peace and free correspondence were restored between Ravenna and Faenza.] Vitiges, who perhaps had attempted to escape, was honorably guarded in his palace; [109](#) the flower of the Gothic youth was selected for the service of the emperor; the remainder of the people was dismissed to their peaceful habitations in the southern provinces; and a colony of Italians was invited to replenish the depopulated city. The submission of the capital was imitated in the towns and villages of Italy, which had not been subdued, or even visited, by the Romans; and the independent Goths, who remained in arms at Pavia and Verona, were ambitious only to become the subjects of Belisarius. But his inflexible loyalty rejected, except as the substitute of Justinian, their oaths of allegiance; and he was

not offended by the reproach of their deputies, that he rather chose to be a slave than a king.

109

[\(return\)](#)

[He was seized by John the Sanguinary, but an oath or sacrament was pledged for his safety in the Basilica Julii, (Hist. Miscell. l. xvii. in Muratori, tom. i. p. 107.) Anastasius (in Vit. Pont. p. 40) gives a dark but probable account. Montfaucon is quoted by Mascou (Hist. of the Germans, xii. 21) for a votive shield representing the captivity of Vitiges and now in the collection of Signor Landi at Rome.]

After the second victory of Belisarius, envy again whispered, Justinian listened, and the hero was recalled. "The remnant of the Gothic war was no longer worthy of his presence: a gracious sovereign was impatient to reward his services, and to consult his wisdom; and he alone was capable of defending the East against the innumerable armies of Persia." Belisarius understood the suspicion, accepted the excuse, embarked at Ravenna his spoils and trophies; and proved, by his ready obedience, that such an abrupt removal from the government of Italy was not less unjust than it might have been indiscreet. The emperor received with honorable courtesy both Vitiges and his more noble consort; and as the king of the Goths conformed to the Athanasian faith, he obtained, with a rich inheritance of land in Asia, the rank of senator and patrician.[110](#) Every spectator admired, without peril, the strength and stature of the young Barbarians: they adored the majesty of the throne, and promised to shed their blood in the service of their benefactor. Justinian deposited in the Byzantine palace the treasures of the Gothic monarchy. A flattering senate was sometime admitted to gaze on the magnificent spectacle; but it was enviously secluded from the public view: and the conqueror of Italy renounced, without a murmur, perhaps without a sigh, the well-earned honors of a second triumph. His glory was indeed exalted above all external pomp; and the faint and hollow praises of the court were supplied, even in a servile age, by the respect and admiration of his country. Whenever he appeared in the streets and public places of Constantinople, Belisarius attracted and satisfied the eyes of the people. His lofty stature and majestic countenance fulfilled their expectations of a hero; the meanest of his fellow-citizens were emboldened by his gentle and gracious demeanor; and the martial train which attended his footsteps left his person more accessible than in a day of battle. Seven thousand horsemen, matchless for beauty and valor, were maintained in the service, and at the private expense, of the general. [111](#) Their prowess was always conspicuous in single combats, or in the foremost ranks; and both parties confessed that in the siege of Rome, the guards of Belisarius had alone vanquished the Barbarian host. Their numbers were continually augmented by the bravest and most faithful of the enemy; and his fortunate captives, the Vandals, the Moors, and the Goths, emulated the attachment of his domestic followers. By the union of liberality and justice, he acquired the love of the soldiers, without alienating the affections of the people. The sick and wounded were relieved with medicines and money; and still more

efficaciously, by the healing visits and smiles of their commander. The loss of a weapon or a horse was instantly repaired, and each deed of valor was rewarded by the rich and honorable gifts of a bracelet or a collar, which were rendered more precious by the judgment of Belisarius. He was endeared to the husbandmen by the peace and plenty which they enjoyed under the shadow of his standard. Instead of being injured, the country was enriched by the march of the Roman armies; and such was the rigid discipline of their camp, that not an apple was gathered from the tree, not a path could be traced in the fields of corn. Belisarius was chaste and sober. In the license of a military life, none could boast that they had seen him intoxicated with wine: the most beautiful captives of Gothic or Vandal race were offered to his embraces; but he turned aside from their charms, and the husband of Antonina was never suspected of violating the laws of conjugal fidelity. The spectator and historian of his exploits has observed, that amidst the perils of war, he was daring without rashness, prudent without fear, slow or rapid according to the exigencies of the moment; that in the deepest distress he was animated by real or apparent hope, but that he was modest and humble in the most prosperous fortune. By these virtues, he equalled or excelled the ancient masters of the military art. Victory, by sea and land, attended his arms. He subdued Africa, Italy, and the adjacent islands; led away captives the successors of Genseric and Theodoric; filled Constantinople with the spoils of their palaces; and in the space of six years recovered half the provinces of the Western empire. In his fame and merit, in wealth and power, he remained without a rival, the first of the Roman subjects; the voice of envy could only magnify his dangerous importance; and the emperor might applaud his own discerning spirit, which had discovered and raised the genius of Belisarius.

110

[\(return\)](#)

[Vitiges lived two years at Constantinople, and imperatoris in affectû *convictus* (or *conjunctus*) rebus excessit humanis. His widow *Mathasuenta*, the wife and mother of the patricians, the elder and younger Germanus, united the streams of Anician and Amali blood, (Jornandes, c. 60, p. 221, in Muratori, tom. i.)]

111

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, Goth. l. iii. c. 1. Aimoin, a French monk of the xith century, who had obtained, and has disfigured, some authentic information of Belisarius, mentions, in his name, 12,000, *pueri* or slaves—quos propriis alimus stipendiis—besides 18,000 soldiers, (Historians of France, tom. iii. De Gestis Franc. l. ii. c. 6, p. 48.)]

It was the custom of the Roman triumphs, that a slave should be placed behind the chariot to remind the conqueror of the instability of fortune, and the infirmities of human nature. Procopius, in his Anecdotes, has assumed that servile and ungrateful office. The generous reader may cast away the libel, but the evidence of facts will adhere to his memory; and he will reluctantly confess, that the fame, and even the virtue,

of Belisarius, were polluted by the lust and cruelty of his wife; and that hero deserved an appellation which may not drop from the pen of the decent historian. The mother of Antonina [112](#) was a theatrical prostitute, and both her father and grandfather exercised, at Thessalonica and Constantinople, the vile, though lucrative, profession of charioteers. In the various situations of their fortune she became the companion, the enemy, the servant, and the favorite of the empress Theodora: these loose and ambitious females had been connected by similar pleasures; they were separated by the jealousy of vice, and at length reconciled by the partnership of guilt. Before her marriage with Belisarius, Antonina had one husband and many lovers: Photius, the son of her former nuptials, was of an age to distinguish himself at the siege of Naples; and it was not till the autumn of her age and beauty [113](#) that she indulged a scandalous attachment to a Thracian youth. Theodosius had been educated in the Eunomian heresy; the African voyage was consecrated by the baptism and auspicious name of the first soldier who embarked; and the proselyte was adopted into the family of his spiritual parents, [114](#) Belisarius and Antonina. Before they touched the shores of Africa, this holy kindred degenerated into sensual love: and as Antonina soon overleaped the bounds of modesty and caution, the Roman general was alone ignorant of his own dishonor. During their residence at Carthage, he surprised the two lovers in a subterraneous chamber, solitary, warm, and almost naked. Anger flashed from his eyes. "With the help of this young man," said the unblushing Antonina, "I was secreting our most precious effects from the knowledge of Justinian." The youth resumed his garments, and the pious husband consented to disbelieve the evidence of his own senses. From this pleasing and perhaps voluntary delusion, Belisarius was awakened at Syracuse, by the officious information of Macedonia; and that female attendant, after requiring an oath for her security, produced two chamberlains, who, like herself, had often beheld the adulteries of Antonina. A hasty flight into Asia saved Theodosius from the justice of an injured husband, who had signified to one of his guards the order of his death; but the tears of Antonina, and her artful seductions, assured the credulous hero of her innocence: and he stooped, against his faith and judgment, to abandon those imprudent friends, who had presumed to accuse or doubt the chastity of his wife. The revenge of a guilty woman is implacable and bloody: the unfortunate Macedonia, with the two witnesses, were secretly arrested by the minister of her cruelty; their tongues were cut out, their bodies were hacked into small pieces, and their remains were cast into the Sea of Syracuse. A rash though judicious saying of Constantine, "I would sooner have punished the adulteress than the boy," was deeply remembered by Antonina; and two years afterwards, when despair had armed that officer against his general, her sanguinary advice decided and hastened his execution. Even the indignation of Photius was not forgiven by his mother; the exile of her son prepared the recall of her lover; and Theodosius condescended to accept the pressing and humble invitation of the conqueror of Italy. In the absolute direction of his household, and in the important commissions of peace and war, [115](#) the favorite youth most rapidly

acquired a fortune of four hundred thousand pounds sterling; and after their return to Constantinople, the passion of Antonina, at least, continued ardent and unabated. But fear, devotion, and lassitude perhaps, inspired Theodosius with more serious thoughts. He dreaded the busy scandal of the capital, and the indiscreet fondness of the wife of Belisarius; escaped from her embraces, and retiring to Ephesus, shaved his head, and took refuge in the sanctuary of a monastic life. The despair of the new Ariadne could scarcely have been excused by the death of her husband. She wept, she tore her hair, she filled the palace with her cries; “she had lost the dearest of friends, a tender, a faithful, a laborious friend!” But her warm entreaties, fortified by the prayers of Belisarius, were insufficient to draw the holy monk from the solitude of Ephesus. It was not till the general moved forward for the Persian war, that Theodosius could be tempted to return to Constantinople; and the short interval before the departure of Antonina herself was boldly devoted to love and pleasure.

112 [\(return\)](#)

[The diligence of Alemannus could add but little to the four first and most curious chapters of the Anecdotes. Of these strange Anecdotes, a part may be true, because probable—and a part true, because improbable. Procopius must have known the former, and the latter he could scarcely invent. Note: The malice of court scandal is proverbially inventive; and of such scandal the “Anecdota” may be an embellished record.—M.]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius intimates (Anecd. c. 4) that when Belisarius returned to Italy, (A.D. 543,) Antonina was sixty years of age. A forced, but more polite construction, which refers that date to the moment when he was writing, (A.D. 559,) would be compatible with the manhood of Photius, (Gothic. l. i. c. 10) in 536.]

114 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare the Vandalic War (l. i. c. 12) with the Anecdotes (c. i.) and Alemannus, (p. 2, 3.) This mode of baptismal adoption was revived by Leo the philosopher.]

115 [\(return\)](#)

[In November, 537, Photius arrested the pope, (Liberat. Brev. c. 22. Pagi, tom. ii. p. 562) About the end of 539, Belisarius sent Theodosius on an important and lucrative commission to Ravenna, (Goth. l. ii. c. 18.)]

A philosopher may pity and forgive the infirmities of female nature, from which he receives no real injury: but contemptible is the husband who feels, and yet endures, his own infamy in that of his wife. Antonina pursued her son with implacable hatred; and the gallant Photius [116](#) was exposed to her secret persecutions in the camp beyond the

Tigris. Enraged by his own wrongs, and by the dishonor of his blood, he cast away in his turn the sentiments of nature, and revealed to Belisarius the turpitude of a woman who had violated all the duties of a mother and a wife. From the surprise and indignation of the Roman general, his former credulity appears to have been sincere: he embraced the knees of the son of Antonina, adjured him to remember his obligations rather than his birth, and confirmed at the altar their holy vows of revenge and mutual defence. The dominion of Antonina was impaired by absence; and when she met her husband, on his return from the Persian confines, Belisarius, in his first and transient emotions, confined her person, and threatened her life. Photius was more resolved to punish, and less prompt to pardon: he flew to Ephesus; extorted from a trusty eunuch of his mother the full confession of her guilt; arrested Theodosius and his treasures in the church of St. John the Apostle, and concealed his captives, whose execution was only delayed, in a secure and sequestered fortress of Cilicia. Such a daring outrage against public justice could not pass with impunity; and the cause of Antonina was espoused by the empress, whose favor she had deserved by the recent services of the disgrace of a præfect, and the exile and murder of a pope. At the end of the campaign, Belisarius was recalled; he complied, as usual, with the Imperial mandate. His mind was not prepared for rebellion: his obedience, however adverse to the dictates of honor, was consonant to the wishes of his heart; and when he embraced his wife, at the command, and perhaps in the presence, of the empress, the tender husband was disposed to forgive or to be forgiven. The bounty of Theodora reserved for her companion a more precious favor. "I have found," she said, "my dearest patrician, a pearl of inestimable value; it has not yet been viewed by any mortal eye; but the sight and the possession of this jewel are destined for my friend." [1161](#) As soon as the curiosity and impatience of Antonina were kindled, the door of a bed-chamber was thrown open, and she beheld her lover, whom the diligence of the eunuchs had discovered in his secret prison. Her silent wonder burst into passionate exclamations of gratitude and joy, and she named Theodora her queen, her benefactress, and her savior. The monk of Ephesus was nourished in the palace with luxury and ambition; but instead of assuming, as he was promised, the command of the Roman armies, Theodosius expired in the first fatigues of an amorous interview. [1162](#) The grief of Antonina could only be assuaged by the sufferings of her son. A youth of consular rank, and a sickly constitution, was punished, without a trial, like a malefactor and a slave: yet such was the constancy of his mind, that Photius sustained the tortures of the scourge and the rack, [1163](#) without violating the faith which he had sworn to Belisarius. After this fruitless cruelty, the son of Antonina, while his mother feasted with the empress, was buried in her subterraneous prisons, which admitted not the distinction of night and day. He twice escaped to the most venerable sanctuaries of Constantinople, the churches of St. Sophia, and of the Virgin: but his tyrants were insensible of religion as of pity; and the helpless youth, amidst the clamors of the clergy and people, was twice dragged from the altar to the dungeon. His third attempt was more successful. At the end of three years, the prophet Zachariah, or some

mortal friend, indicated the means of an escape: he eluded the spies and guards of the empress, reached the holy sepulchre of Jerusalem, embraced the profession of a monk; and the abbot Photius was employed, after the death of Justinian, to reconcile and regulate the churches of Egypt. The son of Antonina suffered all that an enemy can inflict: her patient husband imposed on himself the more exquisite misery of violating his promise and deserting his friend.

116 [\(return\)](#)
[Theophanes (Chronograph. p. 204) styles him Photinus, the son-in-law of Belisarius; and he is copied by the Historia Miscella and Anastasius.]

1161 [\(return\)](#)
[This and much of the private scandal in the “Anecdota” is liable to serious doubt. Who reported all these private conversations, and how did they reach the ears of Procopius?—M.]

1162 [\(return\)](#)
[This is a strange misrepresentation—he died of a dysentery; nor does it appear that it was immediately after this scene. Antonina proposed to raise him to the generalship of the army. Procop. Anecd. p. 14. The sudden change from the abstemious diet of a monk to the luxury of the court is a much more probable cause of his death.—M.]

1163 [\(return\)](#)
[The expression of Procopius does not appear to me to mean this kind of torture. Ibid.—M.]

In the succeeding campaign, Belisarius was again sent against the Persians: he saved the East, but he offended Theodora, and perhaps the emperor himself. The malady of Justinian had countenanced the rumor of his death; and the Roman general, on the supposition of that probable event spoke the free language of a citizen and a soldier. His colleague Buzes, who concurred in the same sentiments, lost his rank, his liberty, and his health, by the persecution of the empress: but the disgrace of Belisarius was alleviated by the dignity of his own character, and the influence of his wife, who might wish to humble, but could not desire to ruin, the partner of her fortunes. Even his removal was colored by the assurance, that the sinking state of Italy would be retrieved by the single presence of its conqueror.

But no sooner had he returned, alone and defenceless, than a hostile commission was sent to the East, to seize his treasures and criminate his actions; the guards and veterans, who followed his private banner, were distributed among the chiefs of the army, and even the eunuchs presumed to cast lots for the partition of his martial domestics. When he passed with a small and sordid retinue through the streets of Constantinople, his forlorn appearance excited the amazement and compassion of the people. Justinian and Theodora received him with cold ingratitude; the servile crowd, with insolence and contempt; and in the evening he retired with trembling steps to his deserted palace. An

indisposition, feigned or real, had confined Antonina to her apartment; and she walked disdainfully silent in the adjacent portico, while Belisarius threw himself on his bed, and expected, in an agony of grief and terror, the death which he had so often braved under the walls of Rome. Long after sunset a messenger was announced from the empress: he opened, with anxious curiosity, the letter which contained the sentence of his fate. “You cannot be ignorant how much you have deserved my displeasure. I am not insensible of the services of Antonina. To her merits and intercession I have granted your life, and permit you to retain a part of your treasures, which might be justly forfeited to the state. Let your gratitude, where it is due, be displayed, not in words, but in your future behavior.” I know not how to believe or to relate the transports with which the hero is said to have received this ignominious pardon. He fell prostrate before his wife, he kissed the feet of his savior, and he devoutly promised to live the grateful and submissive slave of Antonina. A fine of one hundred and twenty thousand pounds sterling was levied on the fortunes of Belisarius; and with the office of count, or master of the royal stables, he accepted the conduct of the Italian war. At his departure from Constantinople, his friends, and even the public, were persuaded that as soon as he regained his freedom, he would renounce his dissimulation, and that his wife, Theodora, and perhaps the emperor himself, would be sacrificed to the just revenge of a virtuous rebel. Their hopes were deceived; and the unconquerable patience and loyalty of Belisarius appear either below or above the character of a man. [117](#)

117

[\(return\)](#)

[The continuator of the Chronicle of Marcellinus gives, in a few decent words, the substance of the Anecdotes: Belisarius de Oriente evocatus, in offensam periculumque incurrens grave, et invidiæ subeacens rursus remittitur in Italiam, (p. 54.)]

Chapter XLII: State Of The Barbaric World.—Part I.

State Of The Barbaric World.—Establishment Of The Lombards On the Danube.—Tribes And Inroads Of The Slavonians.—Origin, Empire, And Embassies Of The Turks.—The Flight Of The Avars.—Chosroes I, Or Nushirvan, King Of Persia.—His Prosperous Reign And Wars With The Romans.—The Colchian Or Lazic War.—The Æthiopians.

Our estimate of personal merit, is relative to the common faculties of mankind. The aspiring efforts of genius, or virtue, either in active or speculative life, are measured, not so much by their real elevation, as by the height to which they ascend above the level of their age and country; and the same stature, which in a people of giants would pass unnoticed, must appear conspicuous in a race of pygmies. Leonidas, and his three hundred companions, devoted their lives at Thermopylae; but the education of the

infant, the boy, and the man, had prepared, and almost insured, this memorable sacrifice; and each Spartan would approve, rather than admire, an act of duty, of which himself and eight thousand of his fellow-citizens were equally capable. [1](#) The great Pompey might inscribe on his trophies, that he had defeated in battle two millions of enemies, and reduced fifteen hundred cities from the Lake Maeotis to the Red Sea: [2](#) but the fortune of Rome flew before his eagles; the nations were oppressed by their own fears, and the invincible legions which he commanded, had been formed by the habits of conquest and the discipline of ages. In this view, the character of Belisarius may be deservedly placed above the heroes of the ancient republics. His imperfections flowed from the contagion of the times; his virtues were his own, the free gift of nature or reflection; he raised himself without a master or a rival; and so inadequate were the arms committed to his hand, that his sole advantage was derived from the pride and presumption of his adversaries. Under his command, the subjects of Justinian often deserved to be called Romans: but the unwarlike appellation of Greeks was imposed as a term of reproach by the haughty Goths; who affected to blush, that they must dispute the kingdom of Italy with a nation of tragedians, pantomimes, and pirates. [3](#) The climate of Asia has indeed been found less congenial than that of Europe to military spirit: those populous countries were enervated by luxury, despotism, and superstition; and the monks were more expensive and more numerous than the soldiers of the East. The regular force of the empire had once amounted to six hundred and forty-five thousand men: it was reduced, in the time of Justinian, to one hundred and fifty thousand; and this number, large as it may seem, was thinly scattered over the sea and land; in Spain and Italy, in Africa and Egypt, on the banks of the Danube, the coast of the Euxine, and the frontiers of Persia. The citizen was exhausted, yet the soldier was unpaid; his poverty was mischievously soothed by the privilege of rapine and indolence; and the tardy payments were detained and intercepted by the fraud of those agents who usurp, without courage or danger, the emoluments of war. Public and private distress recruited the armies of the state; but in the field, and still more in the presence of the enemy, their numbers were always defective. The want of national spirit was supplied by the precarious faith and disorderly service of Barbarian mercenaries.

Even military honor, which has often survived the loss of virtue and freedom, was almost totally extinct. The generals, who were multiplied beyond the example of former times, labored only to prevent the success, or to sully the reputation of their colleagues; and they had been taught by experience, that if merit sometimes provoked the jealousy, error, or even guilt, would obtain the indulgence, of a gracious emperor. [4](#) In such an age, the triumphs of Belisarius, and afterwards of Narses, shine with incomparable lustre; but they are encompassed with the darkest shades of disgrace and calamity. While the lieutenant of Justinian subdued the kingdoms of the Goths and Vandals, the emperor, [5](#) timid, though ambitious, balanced the forces of the Barbarians, fomented their divisions by flattery and falsehood, and invited by his patience and liberality the repetition of injuries. [6](#) The keys of Carthage, Rome, and Ravenna, were presented to

their conqueror, while Antioch was destroyed by the Persians, and Justinian trembled for the safety of Constantinople.

- 1 [\(return\)](#)
[It will be a pleasure, not a task, to read Herodotus, (l. vii. c. 104, 134, p. 550, 615.) The conversation of Xerxes and Demaratus at Thermopylae is one of the most interesting and moral scenes in history. It was the torture of the royal Spartan to behold, with anguish and remorse, the virtue of his country.]
- 2 [\(return\)](#)
[See this proud inscription in Pliny, (Hist. Natur. vii. 27.) Few men have more exquisitely tasted of glory and disgrace; nor could Juvenal (Satir. x.) produce a more striking example of the vicissitudes of fortune, and the vanity of human wishes.]
- 3 [\(return\)](#)
[This last epithet of Procopius is too nobly translated by pirates; naval thieves is the proper word; strippers of garments, either for injury or insult, (Demosthenes contra Conon Reiske, Orator, Graec. tom. ii. p. 1264.)]
- 4 [\(return\)](#)
[See the third and fourth books of the Gothic War: the writer of the Anecdotes cannot aggravate these abuses.]
- 5 [\(return\)](#)
[Agathias, l. v. p. 157, 158. He confines this weakness of the emperor and the empire to the old age of Justinian; but alas! he was never young.]
- 6 [\(return\)](#)
[This mischievous policy, which Procopius (Anecdot. c. 19) imputes to the emperor, is revealed in his epistle to a Scythian prince, who was capable of understanding it.]

Even the Gothic victories of Belisarius were prejudicial to the state, since they abolished the important barrier of the Upper Danube, which had been so faithfully guarded by Theodoric and his daughter. For the defence of Italy, the Goths evacuated Pannonia and Noricum, which they left in a peaceful and flourishing condition: the sovereignty was claimed by the emperor of the Romans; the actual possession was abandoned to the boldness of the first invader. On the opposite banks of the Danube, the plains of Upper Hungary and the Transylvanian hills were possessed, since the death of Attila, by the tribes of the Gepidae, who respected the Gothic arms, and despised, not indeed the gold of the Romans, but the secret motive of their annual subsidies. The vacant fortifications of the river were instantly occupied by these Barbarians; their standards were planted on the walls of Sirmium and Belgrade; and the ironical tone of their apology aggravated this insult on the majesty of the empire. “So extensive, O

Caesar, are your dominions, so numerous are your cities, that you are continually seeking for nations to whom, either in peace or in war, you may relinquish these useless possessions. The Gepidae are your brave and faithful allies; and if they have anticipated your gifts, they have shown a just confidence in your bounty.” Their presumption was excused by the mode of revenge which Justinian embraced. Instead of asserting the rights of a sovereign for the protection of his subjects, the emperor invited a strange people to invade and possess the Roman provinces between the Danube and the Alps and the ambition of the Gepidae was checked by the rising power and fame of the Lombards. [7](#) This corrupt appellation has been diffused in the thirteenth century by the merchants and bankers, the Italian posterity of these savage warriors: but the original name of Langobards is expressive only of the peculiar length and fashion of their beards. I am not disposed either to question or to justify their Scandinavian origin; [8](#) nor to pursue the migrations of the Lombards through unknown regions and marvellous adventures. About the time of Augustus and Trajan, a ray of historic light breaks on the darkness of their antiquities, and they are discovered, for the first time, between the Elbe and the Oder. Fierce, beyond the example of the Germans, they delighted to propagate the tremendous belief, that their heads were formed like the heads of dogs, and that they drank the blood of their enemies, whom they vanquished in battle. The smallness of their numbers was recruited by the adoption of their bravest slaves; and alone, amidst their powerful neighbors, they defended by arms their high-spirited independence. In the tempests of the north, which overwhelmed so many names and nations, this little bark of the Lombards still floated on the surface: they gradually descended towards the south and the Danube, and, at the end of four hundred years, they again appear with their ancient valor and renown. Their manners were not less ferocious. The assassination of a royal guest was executed in the presence, and by the command, of the king’s daughter, who had been provoked by some words of insult, and disappointed by his diminutive stature; and a tribute, the price of blood, was imposed on the Lombards, by his brother the king of the Heruli. Adversity revived a sense of moderation and justice, and the insolence of conquest was chastised by the signal defeat and irreparable dispersion of the Heruli, who were seated in the southern provinces of Poland. [9](#) The victories of the Lombards recommended them to the friendship of the emperors; and at the solicitations of Justinian, they passed the Danube, to reduce, according to their treaty, the cities of Noricum and the fortresses of Pannonia. But the spirit of rapine soon tempted them beyond these ample limits; they wandered along the coast of the Hadriatic as far as Dyrrachium, and presumed, with familiar rudeness to enter the towns and houses of their Roman allies, and to seize the captives who had escaped from their audacious hands. These acts of hostility, the sallies, as it might be pretended, of some loose adventurers, were disowned by the nation, and excused by the emperor; but the arms of the Lombards were more seriously engaged by a contest of thirty years, which was terminated only by the extirpation of the Gepidae. The hostile nations often pleaded their cause before the throne of Constantinople; and the crafty

Justinian, to whom the Barbarians were almost equally odious, pronounced a partial and ambiguous sentence, and dexterously protracted the war by slow and ineffectual succors. Their strength was formidable, since the Lombards, who sent into the field several myriads of soldiers, still claimed, as the weaker side, the protection of the Romans. Their spirit was intrepid; yet such is the uncertainty of courage, that the two armies were suddenly struck with a panic; they fled from each other, and the rival kings remained with their guards in the midst of an empty plain. A short truce was obtained; but their mutual resentment again kindled; and the remembrance of their shame rendered the next encounter more desperate and bloody. Forty thousand of the Barbarians perished in the decisive battle, which broke the power of the Gepidae, transferred the fears and wishes of Justinian, and first displayed the character of Alboin, the youthful prince of the Lombards, and the future conqueror of Italy. [10](#)

7

[\(return\)](#)

[Gens Germana feritate ferocior, says Velleius Paterculus of the Lombards, (ii. 106.) Langobardos paucitas nobilitat. Plurimis ac valentissimis nationibus cincti non per obsequium, sed praeliis et perilitando, tuti sunt, (Tacit. de Moribus German. c. 40.) See likewise Strabo, (l. viii. p. 446.) The best geographers place them beyond the Elbe, in the bishopric of Magdeburgh and the middle march of Brandenburg; and their situation will agree with the patriotic remark of the count de Hertzberg, that most of the Barbarian conquerors issued from the same countries which still produce the armies of Prussia. * Note: See Malte Brun, vol. i. p 402.—M]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[The Scandinavian origin of the Goths and Lombards, as stated by Paul Warnefrid, surnamed the deacon, is attacked by Cluverius, (Germania, Antiq. l. iii. c. 26, p. 102, &c.,) a native of Prussia, and defended by Grotius, (Prolegom. ad Hist. Goth. p. 28, &c.,) the Swedish Ambassador.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[Two facts in the narrative of Paul Diaconus (l. i. c. 20) are expressive of national manners: 1. Dum ad tabulam luderet—while he played at draughts. 2. Camporum viridantia lina. The cultivation of flax supposes property, commerce, agriculture, and manufactures]

10

[\(return\)](#)

[I have used, without undertaking to reconcile, the facts in Procopius, (Goth. l. ii. c. 14, l. iii. c. 33, 34, l. iv. c. 18, 25,) Paul Diaconus, (de Gestis Langobard, l. i. c. 1-23, in Muratori, Script. Rerum Italicarum, tom. i. p. 405-419,) and Jornandes, (de Success. Regnorum, p. 242.) The patient reader

may draw some light from Mascou (Hist. of the Germans, and Annotat. xxiii.) and De Buat, (Hist. des Peuples, &c., tom. ix. x. xi.)]

The wild people who dwelt or wandered in the plains of Russia, Lithuania, and Poland, might be reduced, in the age of Justinian, under the two great families of the Bulgarians [11](#) and the Sclavonians. According to the Greek writers, the former, who touched the Euxine and the Lake Maeotis, derived from the Huns their name or descent; and it is needless to renew the simple and well-known picture of Tartar manners. They were bold and dexterous archers, who drank the milk, and feasted on the flesh, of their fleet and indefatigable horses; whose flocks and herds followed, or rather guided, the motions of their roving camps; to whose inroads no country was remote or impervious, and who were practised in flight, though incapable of fear. The nation was divided into two powerful and hostile tribes, who pursued each other with fraternal hatred. They eagerly disputed the friendship, or rather the gifts, of the emperor; and the distinctions which nature had fixed between the faithful dog and the rapacious wolf was applied by an ambassador who received only verbal instructions from the mouth of his illiterate prince. [12](#) The Bulgarians, of whatsoever species, were equally attracted by Roman wealth: they assumed a vague dominion over the Sclavonian name, and their rapid marches could only be stopped by the Baltic Sea, or the extreme cold and poverty of the north. But the same race of Sclavonians appears to have maintained, in every age, the possession of the same countries. Their numerous tribes, however distant or adverse, used one common language (it was harsh and irregular), and were known by the resemblance of their form, which deviated from the swarthy Tartar, and approached without attaining the lofty stature and fair complexion of the German. Four thousand six hundred villages [13](#) were scattered over the provinces of Russia and Poland, and their huts were hastily built of rough timber, in a country deficient both in stone and iron. Erected, or rather concealed, in the depth of forests, on the banks of rivers, or the edges of morasses, we may not perhaps, without flattery, compare them to the architecture of the beaver; which they resembled in a double issue, to the land and water, for the escape of the savage inhabitant, an animal less cleanly, less diligent, and less social, than that marvellous quadruped. The fertility of the soil, rather than the labor of the natives, supplied the rustic plenty of the Sclavonians. Their sheep and horned cattle were large and numerous, and the fields which they sowed with millet or panic [14](#) afforded, in place of bread, a coarse and less nutritive food. The incessant rapine of their neighbors compelled them to bury this treasure in the earth; but on the appearance of a stranger, it was freely imparted by a people, whose unfavorable character is qualified by the epithets of chaste, patient, and hospitable. As their supreme god, they adored an invisible master of the thunder. The rivers and the nymphs obtained their subordinate honors, and the popular worship was expressed in vows and sacrifice. The Sclavonians disdained to obey a despot, a prince, or even a magistrate; but their experience was too narrow, their passions too headstrong, to compose a system of equal law or general defence. Some voluntary respect was yielded to age and valor; but each

tribe or village existed as a separate republic, and all must be persuaded where none could be compelled. They fought on foot, almost naked, and except an unwieldy shield, without any defensive armor; their weapons of offence were a bow, a quiver of small poisoned arrows, and a long rope, which they dexterously threw from a distance, and entangled their enemy in a running noose. In the field, the Sclavonian infantry was dangerous by their speed, agility, and hardiness: they swam, they dived, they remained under water, drawing their breath through a hollow cane; and a river or lake was often the scene of their unsuspected ambuscade. But these were the achievements of spies or stragglers; the military art was unknown to the Sclavonians; their name was obscure, and their conquests were inglorious. [15](#)

11

[\(return\)](#)

[I adopt the appellation of Bulgarians from Ennodius, (in Panegyri. Theodorici, Opp. Sirmond, tom. i. p. 1598, 1599,) Jornandes, (de Rebus Geticis, c. 5, p. 194, et de Regn. Successione, p. 242,) Theophanes, (p. 185,) and the Chronicles of Cassiodorus and Marcellinus. The name of Huns is too vague; the tribes of the Cutturgurians and Utturgurians are too minute and too harsh. * Note: The Bulgarians are first mentioned among the writers of the West in the Panegyric on Theodoric by Ennodius, Bishop of Pavia. Though they perhaps took part in the conquests of the Huns, they did not advance to the Danube till after the dismemberment of that monarchy on the death of Attila. But the Bulgarians are mentioned much earlier by the Armenian writers. Above 600 years before Christ, a tribe of Bulgarians, driven from their native possessions beyond the Caspian, occupied a part of Armenia, north of the Araxes. They were of the Finnish race; part of the nation, in the fifth century, moved westward, and reached the modern Bulgaria; part remained along the Volga, which is called Etel, Etil, or Athil, in all the Tartar languages, but from the Bulgarians, the Volga. The power of the eastern Bulgarians was broken by Batou, son of Tchingiz Khan; that of the western will appear in the course of the history. From St. Martin, vol. vii p. 141. Malte-Brun, on the contrary, conceives that the Bulgarians took their name from the river. According to the Byzantine historians they were a branch of the Ougres, (Thunmann, Hist. of the People to the East of Europe,) but they have more resemblance to the Turks. Their first country, Great Bulgaria, was washed by the Volga. Some remains of their capital are still shown near Kasan. They afterwards dwelt in Kuban, and finally on the Danube, where they subdued (about the year 500)

the Slavo-Servians established on the Lower Danube. Conquered in their turn by the Avars, they freed themselves from that yoke in 635; their empire then comprised the Cutturgurians, the remains of the Huns established on the Palus Maeotis. The Danubian Bulgaria, a dismemberment of this vast state, was long formidable to the Byzantine empire. Malte-Brun, *Prec. de Geog Univ.* vol. i. p. 419.—M. —According to Shafarik, the Danubian Bulgaria was peopled by a Slavo Bulgarian race. The Slavish population was conquered by the Bulgarian (of Uralian and Finnish descent,) and incorporated with them. This mingled race are the Bulgarians bordering on the Byzantine empire. Shafarik, ii 152, et seq.—M. 1845]

12 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, (Goth. l. iv. c. 19.) His verbal message (he owns him self an illiterate Barbarian) is delivered as an epistle. The style is savage, figurative, and original.]

13 [\(return\)](#)

[This sum is the result of a particular list, in a curious Ms. fragment of the year 550, found in the library of Milan. The obscure geography of the times provokes and exercises the patience of the count de Buat, (tom. xi. p. 69—189.) The French minister often loses himself in a wilderness which requires a Saxon and Polish guide.]

14 [\(return\)](#)

[Panicum, milium. See Columella, l. ii. c. 9, p. 430, edit. Gesner. Plin. *Hist. Natur.* xviii. 24, 25. The Samaritans made a pap of millet, mingled with mare's milk or blood. In the wealth of modern husbandry, our millet feeds poultry, and not heroes. See the dictionaries of Bomare and Miller.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[For the name and nation, the situation and manners, of the Sclavonians, see the original evidence of the vith century, in Procopius, (Goth. l. ii. c. 26, l. iii. c. 14,) and the emperor Mauritius or Maurice (*Stratagemat.* l. ii. c. 5, apud Mascon *Annotat.* xxxi.) The stratagems of Maurice have been printed only, as I understand, at the end of Scheffer's edition of Arrian's *Tactics*, at Upsal, 1664, (Fabric. *Bibliot. Graec.* l. iv. c. 8, tom. iii. p. 278,) a scarce, and hitherto, to me, an inaccessible book.]

I have marked the faint and general outline of the Sclavonians and Bulgarians, without attempting to define their intermediate boundaries, which were not accurately

known or respected by the Barbarians themselves. Their importance was measured by their vicinity to the empire; and the level country of Moldavia and Wallachia was occupied by the Antes, [16](#) a Sclavonian tribe, which swelled the titles of Justinian with an epithet of conquest. [17](#) Against the Antes he erected the fortifications of the Lower Danube; and labored to secure the alliance of a people seated in the direct channel of northern inundation, an interval of two hundred miles between the mountains of Transylvania and the Euxine Sea. But the Antes wanted power and inclination to stem the fury of the torrent; and the light-armed Sclavonians, from a hundred tribes, pursued with almost equal speed the footsteps of the Bulgarian horse. The payment of one piece of gold for each soldier procured a safe and easy retreat through the country of the Gepidae, who commanded the passage of the Upper Danube. [18](#) The hopes or fears of the Barbarians; their intense union or discord; the accident of a frozen or shallow stream; the prospect of harvest or vintage; the prosperity or distress of the Romans; were the causes which produced the uniform repetition of annual visits, [19](#) tedious in the narrative, and destructive in the event. The same year, and possibly the same month, in which Ravenna surrendered, was marked by an invasion of the Huns or Bulgarians, so dreadful, that it almost effaced the memory of their past inroads. They spread from the suburbs of Constantinople to the Ionian Gulf, destroyed thirty-two cities or castles, erased Potidaea, which Athens had built, and Philip had besieged, and repassed the Danube, dragging at their horses' heels one hundred and twenty thousand of the subjects of Justinian. In a subsequent inroad they pierced the wall of the Thracian Chersonesus, extirpated the habitations and the inhabitants, boldly traversed the Hellespont, and returned to their companions, laden with the spoils of Asia. Another party, which seemed a multitude in the eyes of the Romans, penetrated, without opposition, from the Straits of Thermopylae to the Isthmus of Corinth; and the last ruin of Greece has appeared an object too minute for the attention of history. The works which the emperor raised for the protection, but at the expense of his subjects, served only to disclose the weakness of some neglected part; and the walls, which by flattery had been deemed impregnable, were either deserted by the garrison, or scaled by the Barbarians. Three thousand Sclavonians, who insolently divided themselves into two bands, discovered the weakness and misery of a triumphant reign. They passed the Danube and the Hebrus, vanquished the Roman generals who dared to oppose their progress, and plundered, with impunity, the cities of Illyricum and Thrace, each of which had arms and numbers to overwhelm their contemptible assailants. Whatever praise the boldness of the Sclavonians may deserve, it is sullied by the wanton and deliberate cruelty which they are accused of exercising on their prisoners. Without distinction of rank, or age, or sex, the captives were impaled or flayed alive, or suspended between four posts, and beaten with clubs till they expired, or enclosed in some spacious building, and left to perish in the flames with the spoil and cattle which might impede the march of these savage victors. [20](#) Perhaps a more impartial narrative would reduce the number, and qualify the nature, of these horrid acts; and they might sometimes be excused by the

cruel laws of retaliation. In the siege of Topirus, [21](#) whose obstinate defence had enraged the Sclavonians, they massacred fifteen thousand males; but they spared the women and children; the most valuable captives were always reserved for labor or ransom; the servitude was not rigorous, and the terms of their deliverance were speedy and moderate. But the subject, or the historian of Justinian, exhaled his just indignation in the language of complaint and reproach; and Procopius has confidently affirmed, that in a reign of thirty-two years, each annual inroad of the Barbarians consumed two hundred thousand of the inhabitants of the Roman empire. The entire population of Turkish Europe, which nearly corresponds with the provinces of Justinian, would perhaps be incapable of supplying six millions of persons, the result of this incredible estimate. [22](#)

- 16 [\(return\)](#)
[Antes corum fortissimi.... Taysis qui rapidus et vorticosus in Histri fluentia furens devolvitur, (Jornandes, c. 5, p. 194, edit. Murator. Procopius, Goth. l. iii. c. 14, et de Edific. l. iv. c. 7.) Yet the same Procopius mentions the Goths and Huns as neighbors to the Danube, (de Edific. l. v. c. 1.)]
- 17 [\(return\)](#)
[The national title of Anticus, in the laws and inscriptions of Justinian, was adopted by his successors, and is justified by the pious Ludewig (in Vit. Justinian. p. 515.) It had strangely puzzled the civilians of the middle age.]
- 18 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius, Goth. l. iv. c. 25.]
- 19 [\(return\)](#)
[An inroad of the Huns is connected, by Procopius, with a comet perhaps that of 531, (Persic. l. ii. c. 4.) Agathias (l. v. p. 154, 155) borrows from his predecessors some early facts.]
- 20 [\(return\)](#)
[The cruelties of the Sclavonians are related or magnified by Procopius, (Goth. l. iii. c. 29, 38.) For their mild and liberal behavior to their prisoners, we may appeal to the authority, somewhat more recent of the emperor Maurice, (Stratagem. l. ii. c. 5.)]
- 21 [\(return\)](#)
[Topirus was situate near Philippi in Thrace, or Macedonia, opposite to the Isle of Thasos, twelve days' journey from Constantinople (Cellarius, tom. i. p. 676, 846.)]
- 22 [\(return\)](#)
[According to the malevolent testimony of the Anecdotes, (c. 18,) these inroads had reduced the provinces south of the Danube to the state of a Scythian wilderness.]

In the midst of these obscure calamities, Europe felt the shock of revolution, which first revealed to the world the name and nation of the Turks. [2211](#) Like Romulus, the founder [2212](#) of that martial people was suckled by a she-wolf, who afterwards made him the father of a numerous progeny; and the representation of that animal in the banners of the Turks preserved the memory, or rather suggested the idea, of a fable, which was invented, without any mutual intercourse, by the shepherds of Latium and those of Scythia. At the equal distance of two thousand miles from the Caspian, the Icy, the Chinese, and the Bengal Seas, a ridge of mountains is conspicuous, the centre, and perhaps the summit, of Asia; which, in the language of different nations, has been styled Imaus, and Caf, [23](#) and Altai, and the Golden Mountains, [2311](#) and the Girdle of the Earth. The sides of the hills were productive of minerals; and the iron forges, [24](#) for the purpose of war, were exercised by the Turks, the most despised portion of the slaves of the great khan of the Geougen. But their servitude could only last till a leader, bold and eloquent, should arise to persuade his countrymen that the same arms which they forged for their masters, might become, in their own hands, the instruments of freedom and victory. They sallied from the mountains; [25](#) a sceptre was the reward of his advice; and the annual ceremony, in which a piece of iron was heated in the fire, and a smith's hammer [2511](#) was successively handled by the prince and his nobles, recorded for ages the humble profession and rational pride of the Turkish nation. Bertezena, [2512](#) their first leader, signalized their valor and his own in successful combats against the neighboring tribes; but when he presumed to ask in marriage the daughter of the great khan, the insolent demand of a slave and a mechanic was contemptuously rejected. The disgrace was expiated by a more noble alliance with a princess of China; and the decisive battle which almost extirpated the nation of the Geougen, established in Tartary the new and more powerful empire of the Turks. [2513](#) They reigned over the north; but they confessed the vanity of conquest, by their faithful attachment to the mountain of their fathers. The royal encampment seldom lost sight of Mount Altai, from whence the River Irtysh descends to water the rich pastures of the Calmucks, [26](#) which nourish the largest sheep and oxen in the world. The soil is fruitful, and the climate mild and temperate: the happy region was ignorant of earthquake and pestilence; the emperor's throne was turned towards the East, and a golden wolf on the top of a spear seemed to guard the entrance of his tent. One of the successors of Bertezena was tempted by the luxury and superstition of China; but his design of building cities and temples was defeated by the simple wisdom of a Barbarian counsellor. "The Turks," he said, "are not equal in number to one hundredth part of the inhabitants of China. If we balance their power, and elude their armies, it is because we wander without any fixed habitations in the exercise of war and hunting. Are we strong? we advance and conquer: are we feeble? we retire and are concealed. Should the Turks confine themselves within the walls of cities, the loss of a battle would be the destruction of their empire. The bonzes preach only patience, humility, and the renunciation of the world. Such, O king! is not the religion of heroes." They entertained, with less reluctance, the doctrines of

Zoroaster; but the greatest part of the nation acquiesced, without inquiry, in the opinions, or rather in the practice, of their ancestors. The honors of sacrifice were reserved for the supreme deity; they acknowledged, in rude hymns, their obligations to the air, the fire, the water, and the earth; and their priests derived some profit from the art of divination. Their unwritten laws were rigorous and impartial: theft was punished with a tenfold restitution; adultery, treason, and murder, with death; and no chastisement could be inflicted too severe for the rare and inextinguishable guilt of cowardice. As the subject nations marched under the standard of the Turks, their cavalry, both men and horses, were proudly computed by millions; one of their effective armies consisted of four hundred thousand soldiers, and in less than fifty years they were connected in peace and war with the Romans, the Persians, and the Chinese. In their northern limits, some vestige may be discovered of the form and situation of Kamptchatka, of a people of hunters and fishermen, whose sledges were drawn by dogs, and whose habitations were buried in the earth. The Turks were ignorant of astronomy; but the observation taken by some learned Chinese, with a gnomon of eight feet, fixes the royal camp in the latitude of forty-nine degrees, and marks their extreme progress within three, or at least ten degrees, of the polar circle. [27](#) Among their southern conquests the most splendid was that of the Nephthalites, or white Huns, a polite and warlike people, who possessed the commercial cities of Bochara and Samarcand, who had vanquished the Persian monarch, and carried their victorious arms along the banks, and perhaps to the mouth, of the Indus. On the side of the West, the Turkish cavalry advanced to the Lake Maeotis. They passed that lake on the ice. The khan who dwelt at the foot of Mount Altai issued his commands for the siege of Bosphorus, [28](#) a city the voluntary subject of Rome, and whose princes had formerly been the friends of Athens. [29](#) To the east, the Turks invaded China, as often as the vigor of the government was relaxed: and I am taught to read in the history of the times, that they mowed down their patient enemies like hemp or grass; and that the mandarins applauded the wisdom of an emperor who repulsed these Barbarians with golden lances. This extent of savage empire compelled the Turkish monarch to establish three subordinate princes of his own blood, who soon forgot their gratitude and allegiance. The conquerors were enervated by luxury, which is always fatal except to an industrious people; the policy of China solicited the vanquished nations to resume their independence and the power of the Turks was limited to a period of two hundred years. The revival of their name and dominion in the southern countries of Asia are the events of a later age; and the dynasties, which succeeded to their native realms, may sleep in oblivion; since their history bears no relation to the decline and fall of the Roman empire. [30](#)

2211

[\(return\)](#)

[It must be remembered that the name of Turks is extended to a whole family of the Asiatic races, and not confined to the Assena, or Turks of the Altai.—
M.]

- 2212 [\(return\)](#)
[Assena (the wolf) was the name of this chief. Klaproth, *Tabl. Hist. de l'Asie* p. 114.—M.]
- 23 [\(return\)](#)
[From Caf to Caf; which a more rational geography would interpret, from Imaus, perhaps, to Mount Atlas. According to the religious philosophy of the Mahometans, the basis of Mount Caf is an emerald, whose reflection produces the azure of the sky. The mountain is endowed with a sensitive action in its roots or nerves; and their vibration, at the command of God, is the cause of earthquakes. (D'Herbelot, p. 230, 231.)]
- 2311 [\(return\)](#)
[Altai, i. e. Altun Tagh, the Golden Mountain. Von Hammer *Osman Geschichte*, vol. i. p. 2.—M.]
- 24 [\(return\)](#)
[The Siberian iron is the best and most plentiful in the world; and in the southern parts, above sixty mines are now worked by the industry of the Russians, (Strahlenberg, *Hist. of Siberia*, p. 342, 387. *Voyage en Sibirie*, par l'Abbe Chappe d'Auteroche, p. 603—608, edit in 12mo. Amsterdam. 1770.) The Turks offered iron for sale; yet the Roman ambassadors, with strange obstinacy, persisted in believing that it was all a trick, and that their country produced none, (Menander in *Excerpt. Leg.* p. 152.)]
- 25 [\(return\)](#)
[Of Irgana-kon, (Abulghazi Khan, *Hist. Genealogique des Tatars*, P ii. c. 5, p. 71—77, c. 15, p. 155.) The tradition of the Moguls, of the 450 years which they passed in the mountains, agrees with the Chinese periods of the history of the Huns and Turks, (De Guignes, tom. i. part ii. p. 376,) and the twenty generations, from their restoration to Zingis.]
- 2511 [\(return\)](#)
[The Mongol Temugin is also, though erroneously, explained by Rubruquis, a smith. Schmidt, p 876.—M.]
- 2512 [\(return\)](#)
[There appears the same confusion here. Bertezena (Berte-Scheno) is claimed as the founder of the Mongol race. The name means the gray (blauliche) wolf. In fact, the same tradition of the origin from a wolf seems common to the Mongols and the Turks. The Mongol Berte-Scheno, of the very curious Mongol History, published and translated by M.

Schmidt of Petersburg, is brought from Thibet. M. Schmidt considers this tradition of the Thibetane descent of the royal race of the Mongols to be much earlier than their conversion to Lamaism, yet it seems very suspicious. See Klaproth, *Tabl. de l'Asie*, p. 159. The Turkish Bertezena is called Thou-men by Klaproth, p. 115. In 552, Thou-men took the title of Kha-Khan, and was called Il Khan.—M.]

2513 [\(return\)](#)

[Great Bucharia is called Turkistan: see Hammer, 2. It includes all the last steppes at the foot of the Altai. The name is the same with that of the Turan of Persian poetic legend.—M.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[The country of the Turks, now of the Calmucks, is well described in the *Genealogical History*, p. 521—562. The curious notes of the French translator are enlarged and digested in the second volume of the English version.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[Visdelou, p. 141, 151. The fact, though it strictly belongs to a subordinate and successive tribe, may be introduced here.]

28 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, *Persic.* l. i. c. 12, l. ii. c. 3. Peyssonel, *Observations sur les Peuples Barbares*, p. 99, 100, defines the distance between Caffa and the old Bosphorus at xvi. long Tartar leagues.]

29 [\(return\)](#)

[See, in a *Memoire* of M. de Boze, (*Mem. de l'Academie des Inscriptions*, tom. vi. p. 549—565,) the ancient kings and medals of the Cimmerian Bosphorus; and the gratitude of Athens, in the *Oration of Demosthenes against Leptines*, (in *Reiske, Orator. Graec.* tom. i. p. 466, 187.)]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[For the origin and revolutions of the first Turkish empire, the Chinese details are borrowed from De Guignes (*Hist. des Huns*, tom. P. ii. p. 367—462) and Visdelou, (*Supplement a la Bibliotheque Orient. d'Herbelot*, p. 82—114.) The Greek or Roman hints are gathered in Menander (p. 108—164) and Theophylact Simocatta, (l. vii. c. 7, 8.)]

Chapter XLII: State Of The Barbaric World.—Part II.

In the rapid career of conquest, the Turks attacked and subdued the nation of the Ogors or Varchonites [3011](#) on the banks of the River Til, which derived the epithet of Black from its dark water or gloomy forests. [31](#) The khan of the Ogors was slain with three hundred thousand of his subjects, and their bodies were scattered over the space of four days' journey: their surviving countrymen acknowledged the strength and mercy of the Turks; and a small portion, about twenty thousand warriors, preferred exile to servitude. They followed the well-known road of the Volga, cherished the error of the nations who confounded them with the Avars, and spread the terror of that false though famous appellation, which had not, however, saved its lawful proprietors from the yoke of the Turks. [32](#) After a long and victorious march, the new Avars arrived at the foot of Mount Caucasus, in the country of the Alani [33](#) and Circassians, where they first heard of the splendor and weakness of the Roman empire. They humbly requested their confederate, the prince of the Alani, to lead them to this source of riches; and their ambassador, with the permission of the governor of Lazica, was transported by the Euxine Sea to Constantinople. The whole city was poured forth to behold with curiosity and terror the aspect of a strange people: their long hair, which hung in tresses down their backs, was gracefully bound with ribbons, but the rest of their habit appeared to imitate the fashion of the Huns. When they were admitted to the audience of Justinian, Candish, the first of the ambassadors, addressed the Roman emperor in these terms: "You see before you, O mighty prince, the representatives of the strongest and most populous of nations, the invincible, the irresistible Avars. We are willing to devote ourselves to your service: we are able to vanquish and destroy all the enemies who now disturb your repose. But we expect, as the price of our alliance, as the reward of our valor, precious gifts, annual subsidies, and fruitful possessions." At the time of this embassy, Justinian had reigned above thirty, he had lived above seventy-five years: his mind, as well as his body, was feeble and languid; and the conqueror of Africa and Italy, careless of the permanent interest of his people, aspired only to end his days in the bosom even of inglorious peace. In a studied oration, he imparted to the senate his resolution to dissemble the insult, and to purchase the friendship of the Avars; and the whole senate, like the mandarins of China, applauded the incomparable wisdom and foresight of their sovereign. The instruments of luxury were immediately prepared to captivate the Barbarians; silken garments, soft and splendid beds, and chains and collars incrustated with gold. The ambassadors, content with such liberal reception, departed from Constantinople, and Valentin, one of the emperor's guards, was sent with a similar character to their camp at the foot of Mount Caucasus. As their destruction or their success must be alike advantageous to the empire, he persuaded them to invade the enemies of Rome; and they were easily tempted, by gifts and promises, to gratify their ruling inclinations. These fugitives, who fled before the Turkish arms, passed the Tanais and Borysthenes, and boldly advanced into the heart of Poland and Germany, violating the law of nations, and abusing the rights of victory. Before ten years had elapsed, their camps were seated on the Danube and the Elbe, many Bulgarian and Sclavonian names

were obliterated from the earth, and the remainder of their tribes are found, as tributaries and vassals, under the standard of the Avars. The chagan, the peculiar title of their king, still affected to cultivate the friendship of the emperor; and Justinian entertained some thoughts of fixing them in Pannonia, to balance the prevailing power of the Lombards. But the virtue or treachery of an Avar betrayed the secret enmity and ambitious designs of their countrymen; and they loudly complained of the timid, though jealous policy, of detaining their ambassadors, and denying the arms which they had been allowed to purchase in the capital of the empire. [34](#)

3011

[\(return\)](#)

[The Ogors or Varchonites, from Var. a river, (obviously connected with the name Avar,) must not be confounded with the Ugours, the eastern Turks, (v. Hammer, *Osmanische Geschichte*, vol. i. p. 3,) who speak a language the parent of the more modern Turkish dialects. Compare Klaproth, page 121. They are the ancestors of the Usbeck Turks. These Ogors were of the same Finnish race with the Huns; and the 20,000 families which fled towards the west, after the Turkish invasion, were of the same race with those which remained to the east of the Volga, the true Avars of Theophy fact.—M.]

31

[\(return\)](#)

[The River Til, or Tula, according to the geography of De Guignes, (tom. i. part ii. p. lviii. and 352,) is a small, though grateful, stream of the desert, that falls into the Orhon, Selinga, &c. See Bell, *Journey from Petersburg to Pekin*, (vol. ii. p. 124;) yet his own description of the Keat, down which he sailed into the Oby, represents the name and attributes of the black river, (p. 139.) * Note: M. Klaproth, (*Tableaux Historiques de l'Asie*, p. 274) supposes this river to be an eastern affluent of the Volga, the Kama, which, from the color of its waters, might be called black. M. Abel Remusat (*Recherchea sur les Langues Tartares*, vol. i. p. 320) and M. St. Martin (vol. ix. p. 373) consider it the Volga, which is called Atel or Etel by all the Turkish tribes. It is called Attilas by Menander, and Etilia by the monk Ruysbreek (1253.) See Klaproth, *Tabl. Hist.* p. 247. This geography is much more clear and simple than that adopted by Gibbon from De Guignes, or suggested from Bell.—M.]

32

[\(return\)](#)

[Theophylact, l. vii. c. 7, 8. And yet his true Avars are invisible even to the eyes of M. de Guignes; and what can be more illustrious than the false? The right of the fugitive Ogors to that national

appellation is confessed by the Turks themselves,
(Menander, p. 108.)]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[The Alani are still found in the Genealogical History of the Tartars, (p. 617,) and in D'Anville's maps. They opposed the march of the generals of Zingis round the Caspian Sea, and were overthrown in a great battle, (Hist. de Gengiscan, l. iv. c. 9, p. 447.)]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[The embassies and first conquests of the Avars may be read in Menander, (Excerpt. Legat. p. 99, 100, 101, 154, 155,) Theophanes, (p. 196,) the Historia Miscella, (l. xvi. p. 109,) and Gregory of Tours, (L iv. c. 23, 29, in the Historians of France, tom. ii. p. 214, 217.)]

Perhaps the apparent change in the dispositions of the emperors may be ascribed to the embassy which was received from the conquerors of the Avars. [35](#) The immense distance which eluded their arms could not extinguish their resentment: the Turkish ambassadors pursued the footsteps of the vanquished to the Jaik, the Volga, Mount Caucasus, the Euxine and Constantinople, and at length appeared before the successor of Constantine, to request that he would not espouse the cause of rebels and fugitives. Even commerce had some share in this remarkable negotiation: and the Sogdoites, who were now the tributaries of the Turks, embraced the fair occasion of opening, by the north of the Caspian, a new road for the importation of Chinese silk into the Roman empire. The Persian, who preferred the navigation of Ceylon, had stopped the caravans of Bochara and Samarcand: their silk was contemptuously burnt: some Turkish ambassadors died in Persia, with a suspicion of poison; and the great khan permitted his faithful vassal Maniach, the prince of the Sogdoites, to propose, at the Byzantine court, a treaty of alliance against their common enemies. Their splendid apparel and rich presents, the fruit of Oriental luxury, distinguished Maniach and his colleagues from the rude savages of the North: their letters, in the Scythian character and language, announced a people who had attained the rudiments of science: [36](#) they enumerated the conquests, they offered the friendship and military aid of the Turks; and their sincerity was attested by direful imprecations (if they were guilty of falsehood) against their own head, and the head of Disabul their master. The Greek prince entertained with hospitable regard the ambassadors of a remote and powerful monarch: the sight of silk-worms and looms disappointed the hopes of the Sogdoites; the emperor renounced, or seemed to renounce, the fugitive Avars, but he accepted the alliance of the Turks; and the ratification of the treaty was carried by a Roman minister to the foot of Mount Altai. Under the successors of Justinian, the friendship of the two nations was cultivated by frequent and cordial intercourse; the most favored vassals were permitted to imitate the example of the great khan, and one hundred and six Turks, who, on various occasions, had visited Constantinople, departed at the same time for their native country. The

duration and length of the journey from the Byzantine court to Mount Altai are not specified: it might have been difficult to mark a road through the nameless deserts, the mountains, rivers, and morasses of Tartary; but a curious account has been preserved of the reception of the Roman ambassadors at the royal camp. After they had been purified with fire and incense, according to a rite still practised under the sons of Zingis, [3611](#) they were introduced to the presence of Disabul. In a valley of the Golden Mountain, they found the great khan in his tent, seated in a chair with wheels, to which a horse might be occasionally harnessed. As soon as they had delivered their presents, which were received by the proper officers, they exposed, in a florid oration, the wishes of the Roman emperor, that victory might attend the arms of the Turks, that their reign might be long and prosperous, and that a strict alliance, without envy or deceit, might forever be maintained between the two most powerful nations of the earth. The answer of Disabul corresponded with these friendly professions, and the ambassadors were seated by his side, at a banquet which lasted the greatest part of the day: the tent was surrounded with silk hangings, and a Tartar liquor was served on the table, which possessed at least the intoxicating qualities of wine. The entertainment of the succeeding day was more sumptuous; the silk hangings of the second tent were embroidered in various figures; and the royal seat, the cups, and the vases, were of gold. A third pavilion was supported by columns of gilt wood; a bed of pure and massy gold was raised on four peacocks of the same metal: and before the entrance of the tent, dishes, basins, and statues of solid silver, and admirable art, were ostentatiously piled in wagons, the monuments of valor rather than of industry. When Disabul led his armies against the frontiers of Persia, his Roman allies followed many days the march of the Turkish camp, nor were they dismissed till they had enjoyed their precedency over the envoy of the great king, whose loud and intemperate clamors interrupted the silence of the royal banquet. The power and ambition of Chosroes cemented the union of the Turks and Romans, who touched his dominions on either side: but those distant nations, regardless of each other, consulted the dictates of interest, without recollecting the obligations of oaths and treaties. While the successor of Disabul celebrated his father's obsequies, he was saluted by the ambassadors of the emperor Tiberius, who proposed an invasion of Persia, and sustained, with firmness, the angry and perhaps the just reproaches of that haughty Barbarian. "You see my ten fingers," said the great khan, and he applied them to his mouth. "You Romans speak with as many tongues, but they are tongues of deceit and perjury. To me you hold one language, to my subjects another; and the nations are successively deluded by your perfidious eloquence. You precipitate your allies into war and danger, you enjoy their labors, and you neglect your benefactors. Hasten your return, inform your master that a Turk is incapable of uttering or forgiving falsehood, and that he shall speedily meet the punishment which he deserves. While he solicits my friendship with flattering and hollow words, he is sunk to a confederate of my fugitive Varchonites. If I condescend to march against those contemptible slaves, they will tremble at the sound of our whips; they will be trampled,

like a nest of ants, under the feet of my innumerable cavalry. I am not ignorant of the road which they have followed to invade your empire; nor can I be deceived by the vain pretence, that Mount Caucasus is the impregnable barrier of the Romans. I know the course of the Niester, the Danube, and the Hebrus; the most warlike nations have yielded to the arms of the Turks; and from the rising to the setting sun, the earth is my inheritance.” Notwithstanding this menace, a sense of mutual advantage soon renewed the alliance of the Turks and Romans: but the pride of the great khan survived his resentment; and when he announced an important conquest to his friend the emperor Maurice, he styled himself the master of the seven races, and the lord of the seven climates of the world. [37](#)

35

[\(return\)](#)

[Theophanes, (Chron. p. 204,) and the Hist. Miscella, (l. xvi. p. 110,) as understood by De Guignes, (tom. i. part ii. p. 354,) appear to speak of a Turkish embassy to Justinian himself; but that of Maniach, in the fourth year of his successor Justin, is positively the first that reached Constantinople, (Menander p. 108.)]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[The Russians have found characters, rude hieroglyphics, on the Irtysh and Yenisei, on medals, tombs, idols, rocks, obelisks, &c., (Strahlenberg, Hist. of Siberia, p. 324, 346, 406, 429.) Dr. Hyde (de Religione Veterum Persarum, p. 521, &c.) has given two alphabets of Thibet and of the Eygours. I have long harbored a suspicion, that all the Scythian, and some, perhaps much, of the Indian science, was derived from the Greeks of Bactriana. * Note: Modern discoveries give no confirmation to this suspicion. The character of Indian science, as well as of their literature and mythology, indicates an original source. Grecian art may have occasionally found its way into India. One or two of the sculptures in Col. Tod’s account of the Jain temples, if correct, show a finer outline, and purer sense of beauty, than appears native to India, where the monstrous always predominated over simple nature.—M.]

3611

[\(return\)](#)

[This rite is so curious, that I have subjoined the description of it:— When these (the exorcisers, the Shamans) approached Zemarchus, they took all our baggage and placed it in the centre. Then, kindling a fire with branches of frankincense, lowly murmuring certain barbarous words in the Scythian language, beating on a kind of bell (a gong) and a drum, they passed over the baggage the leaves of the frankincense, crackling with the fire, and at the

same time themselves becoming frantic, and violently leaping about, seemed to exorcise the evil spirits. Having thus as they thought, averted all evil, they led Zemarchus himself through the fire. Menander, in Niebuhr's Bryant. Hist. p. 381. Compare Carpini's Travels. The princes of the race of Zingis Khan condescended to receive the ambassadors of the king of France, at the end of the 13th century without their submitting to this humiliating rite. See Correspondence published by Abel Remusat, Nouv. Mem. de l'Acad des Inscript. vol. vii. On the embassy of Zemarchus, compare Klaproth, Tableaux de l'Asie p. 116.—M.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[All the details of these Turkish and Roman embassies, so curious in the history of human manners, are drawn from the extracts of Menander, (p. 106—110, 151—154, 161-164,) in which we often regret the want of order and connection.]

Disputes have often arisen between the sovereigns of Asia for the title of king of the world; while the contest has proved that it could not belong to either of the competitors. The kingdom of the Turks was bounded by the Oxus or Gihon; and Touran was separated by that great river from the rival monarchy of Iran, or Persia, which in a smaller compass contained perhaps a larger measure of power and population. The Persians, who alternately invaded and repulsed the Turks and the Romans, were still ruled by the house of Sassan, which ascended the throne three hundred years before the accession of Justinian. His contemporary, Cabades, or Kobad, had been successful in war against the emperor Anastasius; but the reign of that prince was distracted by civil and religious troubles. A prisoner in the hands of his subjects, an exile among the enemies of Persia, he recovered his liberty by prostituting the honor of his wife, and regained his kingdom with the dangerous and mercenary aid of the Barbarians, who had slain his father. His nobles were suspicious that Kobad never forgave the authors of his expulsion, or even those of his restoration. The people was deluded and inflamed by the fanaticism of Mazdak, [38](#) who asserted the community of women, [39](#) and the equality of mankind, whilst he appropriated the richest lands and most beautiful females to the use of his sectaries. The view of these disorders, which had been fomented by his laws and example, [40](#) embittered the declining age of the Persian monarch; and his fears were increased by the consciousness of his design to reverse the natural and customary order of succession, in favor of his third and most favored son, so famous under the names of Chosroes and Nushirvan. To render the youth more illustrious in the eyes of the nations, Kobad was desirous that he should be adopted by the emperor Justin: [4011](#) the hope of peace inclined the Byzantine court to accept this singular proposal; and Chosroes might have acquired a specious claim to the inheritance of his Roman parent. But the future mischief was diverted by the advice of the quaestor Proclus: a difficulty was started,

whether the adoption should be performed as a civil or military rite; [41](#) the treaty was abruptly dissolved; and the sense of this indignity sunk deep into the mind of Chosroes, who had already advanced to the Tigris on his road to Constantinople. His father did not long survive the disappointment of his wishes: the testament of their deceased sovereign was read in the assembly of the nobles; and a powerful faction, prepared for the event, and regardless of the priority of age, exalted Chosroes to the throne of Persia. He filled that throne during a prosperous period of forty-eight years; [42](#) and the Justice of Nushirvan is celebrated as the theme of immortal praise by the nations of the East.

38

[\(return\)](#)

[See D'Herbelot, (Bibliot. Orient. p. 568, 929;) Hyde, (de Religione Vet. Persarum, c. 21, p. 290, 291;) Pocock, (Specimen Hist. Arab. p. 70, 71;) Eutychius, (Annal. tom. ii. p. 176;) Texeira, (in Stevens, Hist. of Persia, l. i. c. 34.) * Note: Mazdak was an Archimagus, born, according to Mirkhond, (translated by De Sacy, p. 353, and Malcolm, vol. i. p. 104,) at Istakhar or Persepolis, according to an inedited and anonymous history, (the Modjmal-alte-warikh in the Royal Library at Paris, quoted by St. Martin, vol. vii. p. 322) at Wischapour in Chorasán: his father's name was Bamdadam. He announces himself as a reformer of Zoroastrianism, and carried the doctrine of the two principles to a much greater height. He preached the absolute indifference of human action, perfect equality of rank, community of property and of women, marriages between the nearest kindred; he interdicted the use of animal food, proscribed the killing of animals for food, enforced a vegetable diet. See St. Martin, vol. vii. p. 322. Malcolm, vol. i. p. 104. Mirkhond translated by De Sacy. It is remarkable that the doctrine of Mazdak spread into the West. Two inscriptions found in Cyrene, in 1823, and explained by M. Gesenius, and by M. Hamaker of Leyden, prove clearly that his doctrines had been eagerly embraced by the remains of the ancient Gnostics; and Mazdak was enrolled with Thoth, Saturn, Zoroaster, Pythagoras, Epicurus, John, and Christ, as the teachers of true Gnostic wisdom. See St. Martin, vol. vii. p. 338. Gesenius de Inscriptione Phoenicio-Graeca in Cyrenaica nuper reperta, Halle, 1825. Hamaker, Lettre a M. Raoul Rochette, Leyden, 1825.—M.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[The fame of the new law for the community of women was soon propagated in Syria (Asseman. Bibliot. Orient. tom. iii. p. 402) and Greece, (Procop. Persic. l. i. c. 5.)]

- 40 [\(return\)](#)
[He offered his own wife and sister to the prophet; but the prayers of Nushirvan saved his mother, and the indignant monarch never forgave the humiliation to which his filial piety had stooped: pedes tuos deosculatus (said he to Mazdak,) cujus foetor adhuc nares occupat, (Pocock, Specimen Hist. Arab. p. 71.)]
- 4011 [\(return\)](#)
[St. Martin questions this adoption: he urges its improbability; and supposes that Procopius, perverting some popular traditions, or the remembrance of some fruitless negotiations which took place at that time, has mistaken, for a treaty of adoption some treaty of guaranty or protection for the purpose of insuring the crown, after the death of Kobad, to his favorite son Chosroes, vol. viii. p. 32. Yet the Greek historians seem unanimous as to the proposal: the Persians might be expected to maintain silence on such a subject.—M.]
- 41 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius, Persic. l. i. c. 11. Was not Proclus over-wise? Was not the danger imaginary?—The excuse, at least, was injurious to a nation not ignorant of letters. Whether any mode of adoption was practised in Persia, I much doubt.]
- 42 [\(return\)](#)
[From Procopius and Agathias, Pagi (tom. ii. p. 543, 626) has proved that Chosroes Nushirvan ascended the throne in the fifth year of Justinian, (A.D. 531, April 1.—A.D. 532, April 1.) But the true chronology, which harmonizes with the Greeks and Orientals, is ascertained by John Malala, (tom. ii. 211.) Cabades, or Kobad, after a reign of forty-three years and two months, sickened the 8th, and died the 13th of September, A.D. 531, aged eighty-two years. According to the annals of Eutychius, Nushirvan reigned forty seven years and six months; and his death must consequently be placed in March, A.D. 579.]

But the justice of kings is understood by themselves, and even by their subjects, with an ample indulgence for the gratification of passion and interest. The virtue of Chosroes was that of a conqueror, who, in the measures of peace and war, is excited by ambition, and restrained by prudence; who confounds the greatness with the happiness of a nation, and calmly devotes the lives of thousands to the fame, or even the amusement, of a single man. In his domestic administration, the just Nushirvan would merit in our feelings the appellation of a tyrant. His two elder brothers had been deprived of their fair expectations of the diadem: their future life, between the supreme rank and the

condition of subjects, was anxious to themselves and formidable to their master: fear as well as revenge might tempt them to rebel: the slightest evidence of a conspiracy satisfied the author of their wrongs; and the repose of Chosroes was secured by the death of these unhappy princes, with their families and adherents. One guiltless youth was saved and dismissed by the compassion of a veteran general; and this act of humanity, which was revealed by his son, overbalanced the merit of reducing twelve nations to the obedience of Persia. The zeal and prudence of Mebodes had fixed the diadem on the head of Chosroes himself; but he delayed to attend the royal summons, till he had performed the duties of a military review: he was instantly commanded to repair to the iron tripod, which stood before the gate of the palace, [43](#) where it was death to relieve or approach the victim; and Mebodes languished several days before his sentence was pronounced, by the inflexible pride and calm ingratitude of the son of Kobad. But the people, more especially in the East, is disposed to forgive, and even to applaud, the cruelty which strikes at the loftiest heads; at the slaves of ambition, whose voluntary choice has exposed them to live in the smiles, and to perish by the frown, of a capricious monarch. In the execution of the laws which he had no temptation to violate; in the punishment of crimes which attacked his own dignity, as well as the happiness of individuals; Nushirvan, or Chosroes, deserved the appellation of just. His government was firm, rigorous, and impartial. It was the first labor of his reign to abolish the dangerous theory of common or equal possessions: the lands and women which the sectaries of Mazdak has usurped were restored to their lawful owners; and the temperate [4311](#) chastisement of the fanatics or impostors confirmed the domestic rights of society. Instead of listening with blind confidence to a favorite minister, he established four viziers over the four great provinces of his empire, Assyria, Media, Persia, and Bactriana. In the choice of judges, præfects, and counsellors, he strove to remove the mask which is always worn in the presence of kings: he wished to substitute the natural order of talents for the accidental distinctions of birth and fortune; he professed, in specious language, his intention to prefer those men who carried the poor in their bosoms, and to banish corruption from the seat of justice, as dogs were excluded from the temples of the Magi. The code of laws of the first Artaxerxes was revived and published as the rule of the magistrates; but the assurance of speedy punishment was the best security of their virtue. Their behavior was inspected by a thousand eyes, their words were overheard by a thousand ears, the secret or public agents of the throne; and the provinces, from the Indian to the Arabian confines, were enlightened by the frequent visits of a sovereign, who affected to emulate his celestial brother in his rapid and salutary career. Education and agriculture he viewed as the two objects most deserving of his care. In every city of Persia orphans, and the children of the poor, were maintained and instructed at the public expense; the daughters were given in marriage to the richest citizens of their own rank, and the sons, according to their different talents, were employed in mechanic trades, or promoted to more honorable service. The deserted villages were relieved by his bounty; to the peasants and farmers who were found

incapable of cultivating their lands, he distributed cattle, seed, and the instruments of husbandry; and the rare and inestimable treasure of fresh water was parsimoniously managed, and skilfully dispersed over the arid territory of Persia. [44](#) The prosperity of that kingdom was the effect and evidence of his virtues; his vices are those of Oriental despotism; but in the long competition between Chosroes and Justinian, the advantage both of merit and fortune is almost always on the side of the Barbarian. [45](#)

43 [\(return\)](#)
[Procopius, Persic. l. i. c. 23. Brisson, de Regn. Pers. p. 494. The gate of the palace of Ispahan is, or was, the fatal scene of disgrace or death, (Chardin, Voyage en Perse, tom. iv. p. 312, 313.)]

4311 [\(return\)](#)
[This is a strange term. Nushirvan employed a stratagem similar to that of Jehu, 2 Kings, x. 18—28, to separate the followers of Mazdak from the rest of his subjects, and with a body of his troops cut them all in pieces. The Greek writers concur with the Persian in this representation of Nushirvan's temperate conduct. Theophanes, p. 146. Mirkhond. p. 362. Eutychius, Ann. vol. ii. p. 179. Abulfeda, in an unedited part, consulted by St. Martin as well as in a passage formerly cited. Le Beau vol. viii. p. 38. Malcolm vol I p. 109.—M.]

44 [\(return\)](#)
[In Persia, the prince of the waters is an officer of state. The number of wells and subterraneous channels is much diminished, and with it the fertility of the soil: 400 wells have been recently lost near Tauris, and 42,000 were once reckoned in the province of Khorasan (Chardin, tom. iii. p. 99, 100. Tavernier, tom. i. p. 416.)]

45 [\(return\)](#)
[The character and government of Nushirvan is represented some times in the words of D'Herbelot, (Bibliot. Orient. p. 680, &c., from Khondemir,) Eutychius, (Annal. tom. ii. p. 179, 180,—very rich,) Abulpharagius, (Dynast. vii. p. 94, 95,—very poor,) Tarikh Schikard, (p. 144—150,) Texeira, (in Stevens, l. i. c. 35,) Asseman, (Bibliot Orient. tom. iii. p. 404-410,) and the Abbe Fourmont, (Hist. de l'Acad. des Inscriptions, tom. vii. p. 325—334,) who has translated a spurious or genuine testament of Nushirvan.]

To the praise of justice Nushirvan united the reputation of knowledge; and the seven Greek philosophers, who visited his court, were invited and deceived by the strange assurance, that a disciple of Plato was seated on the Persian throne. Did they expect, that a prince, strenuously exercised in the toils of war and government, should agitate,

with dexterity like their own, the abstruse and profound questions which amused the leisure of the schools of Athens? Could they hope that the precepts of philosophy should direct the life, and control the passions, of a despot, whose infancy had been taught to consider his absolute and fluctuating will as the only rule of moral obligation? [46](#) The studies of Chosroes were ostentatious and superficial: but his example awakened the curiosity of an ingenious people, and the light of science was diffused over the dominions of Persia. [47](#) At Gondi Sapor, in the neighborhood of the royal city of Susa, an academy of physic was founded, which insensibly became a liberal school of poetry, philosophy, and rhetoric. [48](#) The annals of the monarchy [49](#) were composed; and while recent and authentic history might afford some useful lessons both to the prince and people, the darkness of the first ages was embellished by the giants, the dragons, and the fabulous heroes of Oriental romance. [50](#) Every learned or confident stranger was enriched by the bounty, and flattered by the conversation, of the monarch: he nobly rewarded a Greek physician, [51](#) by the deliverance of three thousand captives; and the sophists, who contended for his favor, were exasperated by the wealth and insolence of Uranius, their more successful rival. Nushirvan believed, or at least respected, the religion of the Magi; and some traces of persecution may be discovered in his reign. [52](#) Yet he allowed himself freely to compare the tenets of the various sects; and the theological disputes, in which he frequently presided, diminished the authority of the priest, and enlightened the minds of the people. At his command, the most celebrated writers of Greece and India were translated into the Persian language; a smooth and elegant idiom, recommended by Mahomet to the use of paradise; though it is branded with the epithets of savage and unmusical, by the ignorance and presumption of Agathias. [53](#) Yet the Greek historian might reasonably wonder that it should be found possible to execute an entire version of Plato and Aristotle in a foreign dialect, which had not been framed to express the spirit of freedom and the subtilties of philosophic disquisition. And, if the reason of the Stagyrte might be equally dark, or equally intelligible in every tongue, the dramatic art and verbal argumentation of the disciple of Socrates, [54](#) appear to be indissolubly mingled with the grace and perfection of his Attic style. In the search of universal knowledge, Nushirvan was informed, that the moral and political fables of Pilpay, an ancient Brachman, were preserved with jealous reverence among the treasures of the kings of India. The physician Perozes was secretly despatched to the banks of the Ganges, with instructions to procure, at any price, the communication of this valuable work. His dexterity obtained a transcript, his learned diligence accomplished the translation; and the fables of Pilpay [55](#) were read and admired in the assembly of Nushirvan and his nobles. The Indian original, and the Persian copy, have long since disappeared; but this venerable monument has been saved by the curiosity of the Arabian caliphs, revived in the modern Persic, the Turkish, the Syriac, the Hebrew, and the Greek idioms, and transfused through successive versions into the modern languages of Europe. In their present form, the peculiar character, the manners and religion of the Hindoos, are completely obliterated; and the intrinsic merit

of the fables of Pilpay is far inferior to the concise elegance of Phaedrus, and the native graces of La Fontaine. Fifteen moral and political sentences are illustrated in a series of apologues: but the composition is intricate, the narrative prolix, and the precept obvious and barren. Yet the Brachman may assume the merit of inventing a pleasing fiction, which adorns the nakedness of truth, and alleviates, perhaps, to a royal ear, the harshness of instruction. With a similar design, to admonish kings that they are strong only in the strength of their subjects, the same Indians invented the game of chess, which was likewise introduced into Persia under the reign of Nushirvan. [56](#)

46 [\(return\)](#)

[A thousand years before his birth, the judges of Persia had given a solemn opinion, (Herodot. l. iii. c. 31, p. 210, edit. Wesseling.) Nor had this constitutional maxim been neglected as a useless and barren theory.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[On the literary state of Persia, the Greek versions, philosophers, sophists, the learning or ignorance of Chosroes, Agathias (l. ii. c. 66—71) displays much information and strong prejudices.]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[Asseman. Bibliot. Orient. tom. iv. p. DCCXLV. vi. vii.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[The Shah Nameh, or Book of Kings, is perhaps the original record of history which was translated into Greek by the interpreter Sergius, (Agathias, l. v. p. 141,) preserved after the Mahometan conquest, and versified in the year 994, by the national poet Ferdoussi. See D'Anquetil (Mem. de l'Academie, tom. xxxi. p. 379) and Sir William Jones, (Hist. of Nadir Shah, p. 161.)]

50 [\(return\)](#)

[In the fifth century, the name of Restom, or Rostam, a hero who equalled the strength of twelve elephants, was familiar to the Armenians, (Moses Chorenensis, Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 7, p. 96, edit. Whiston.) In the beginning of the seventh, the Persian Romance of Rostam and Isfendiar was applauded at Mecca, (Sale's Koran, c. xxxi. p. 335.) Yet this exposition of ludicrum novae historiae is not given by Maracci, (Refutat. Alcoran. p. 544—548.)]

51 [\(return\)](#)

[Procop. (Goth. l. iv. c. 10.) Kobad had a favorite Greek physician, Stephen of Edessa, (Persic. l. ii. c. 26.) The practice was ancient; and Herodotus

relates the adventures of Democedes of Crotona, (l. iii p. 125—137.)]

52 [\(return\)](#)

[See Pagi, tom. ii. p. 626. In one of the treaties an honorable article was inserted for the toleration and burial of the Catholics, (Menander, in Excerpt. Legat. p. 142.) Nushizad, a son of Nushirvan, was a Christian, a rebel, and—a martyr? (D’Herbelot, p. 681.)]

53 [\(return\)](#)

[On the Persian language, and its three dialects, consult D’Anquetil (p. 339—343) and Jones, (p. 153—185:) is the character which Agathias (l. ii. p. 66) ascribes to an idiom renowned in the East for poetical softness.]

54 [\(return\)](#)

[Agathias specifies the Gorgias, Phaedon, Parmenides, and Timaeus. Renaudot (Fabricius, Bibliot. Graec. tom. xii. p. 246—261) does not mention this Barbaric version of Aristotle.]

55 [\(return\)](#)

[Of these fables, I have seen three copies in three different languages: 1. In Greek, translated by Simeon Seth (A.D. 1100) from the Arabic, and published by Starck at Berlin in 1697, in 12mo. 2. In Latin, a version from the Greek Sapientia Indorum, inserted by Pere Poussin at the end of his edition of Pachymer, (p. 547—620, edit. Roman.) 3. In French, from the Turkish, dedicated, in 1540, to Sultan Soliman Contes et Fables Indiennes de Bidpai et de Lokman, par Mm. Galland et Cardonne, Paris, 1778, 3 vols. in 12mo. Mr. Warton (History of English Poetry, vol. i. p. 129—131) takes a larger scope. * Note: The oldest Indian collection extant is the Pancha-tantra, (the five collections,) analyzed by Mr. Wilson in the Transactions of the Royal Asiat. Soc. It was translated into Persian by Barsuyah, the physician of Nushirvan, under the name of the Fables of Bidpai, (Vidyapriya, the Friend of Knowledge, or, as the Oriental writers understand it, the Friend of Medicine.) It was translated into Arabic by Abdolla Ibn Mokaffa, under the name of Kalila and Dimnah. From the Arabic it passed into the European languages. Compare Wilson, in Trans. As. Soc. i. 52. dohlen, das alte Indien, ii. p. 386. Silvestre de Sacy, Memoire sur Kalila vs Dimnah.—M.]

56 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Historia Shahiludii of Dr. Hyde, (Syntagm. Dissertat. tom. ii. p. 61—69.)]

Chapter XLII: State Of The Barbaric World.—Part III.

The son of Kobad found his kingdom involved in a war with the successor of Constantine; and the anxiety of his domestic situation inclined him to grant the suspension of arms, which Justinian was impatient to purchase. Chosroes saw the Roman ambassadors at his feet. He accepted eleven thousand pounds of gold, as the price of an endless or indefinite peace: [57](#) some mutual exchanges were regulated; the Persian assumed the guard of the gates of Caucasus, and the demolition of Dara was suspended, on condition that it should never be made the residence of the general of the East. This interval of repose had been solicited, and was diligently improved, by the ambition of the emperor: his African conquests were the first fruits of the Persian treaty; and the avarice of Chosroes was soothed by a large portion of the spoils of Carthage, which his ambassadors required in a tone of pleasantry and under the color of friendship. [58](#) But the trophies of Belisarius disturbed the slumbers of the great king; and he heard with astonishment, envy, and fear, that Sicily, Italy, and Rome itself, had been reduced, in three rapid campaigns, to the obedience of Justinian. Unpractised in the art of violating treaties, he secretly excited his bold and subtle vassal Almondar. That prince of the Saracens, who resided at Hira, [59](#) had not been included in the general peace, and still waged an obscure war against his rival Arethas, the chief of the tribe of Gassan, and confederate of the empire. The subject of their dispute was an extensive sheep-walk in the desert to the south of Palmyra. An immemorial tribute for the license of pasture appeared to attest the rights of Almondar, while the Gassanite appealed to the Latin name of strata, a paved road, as an unquestionable evidence of the sovereignty and labors of the Romans. [60](#) The two monarchs supported the cause of their respective vassals; and the Persian Arab, without expecting the event of a slow and doubtful arbitration, enriched his flying camp with the spoil and captives of Syria. Instead of repelling the arms, Justinian attempted to seduce the fidelity of Almondar, while he called from the extremities of the earth the nations of Aethiopia and Scythia to invade the dominions of his rival. But the aid of such allies was distant and precarious, and the discovery of this hostile correspondence justified the complaints of the Goths and Armenians, who implored, almost at the same time, the protection of Chosroes. The descendants of Arsaces, who were still numerous in Armenia, had been provoked to assert the last relics of national freedom and hereditary rank; and the ambassadors of Vitiges had secretly traversed the empire to expose the instant, and almost inevitable, danger of the kingdom of Italy. Their representations were uniform, weighty, and effectual. “We stand before your throne, the advocates of your interest as well as of our own. The ambitious and faithless Justinian aspires to be the sole master of the world. Since the endless peace, which betrayed the common freedom of mankind, that prince, your ally in words, your enemy in actions, has alike insulted his friends and foes, and has filled the earth with blood and confusion. Has he not violated the privileges of Armenia, the independence of Colchos, and the wild liberty of the Tzanian

mountains? Has he not usurped, with equal avidity, the city of Bosphorus on the frozen Maeotis, and the vale of palm-trees on the shores of the Red Sea? The Moors, the Vandals, the Goths, have been successively oppressed, and each nation has calmly remained the spectator of their neighbor's ruin. Embrace, O king! the favorable moment; the East is left without defence, while the armies of Justinian and his renowned general are detained in the distant regions of the West. If you hesitate or delay, Belisarius and his victorious troops will soon return from the Tyber to the Tigris, and Persia may enjoy the wretched consolation of being the last devoured.” [61](#) By such arguments, Chosroes was easily persuaded to imitate the example which he condemned: but the Persian, ambitious of military fame, disdained the inactive warfare of a rival, who issued his sanguinary commands from the secure station of the Byzantine palace.

57 [\(return\)](#)

[The endless peace (Procopius, Persic. l. i. c. 21) was concluded or ratified in the vith year, and iiid consulship, of Justinian, (A.D. 533, between January 1 and April 1. Pagi, tom. ii. p. 550.) Marcellinus, in his Chronicle, uses the style of Medes and Persians.]

58 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, Persic. l. i. c. 26.]

59 [\(return\)](#)

[Almondar, king of Hira, was deposed by Kobad, and restored by Nushirvan. His mother, from her beauty, was surnamed Celestial Water, an appellation which became hereditary, and was extended for a more noble cause (liberality in famine) to the Arab princes of Syria, (Pocock, Specimen Hist. Arab. p. 69, 70.)]

60 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, Persic. l. ii. c. 1. We are ignorant of the origin and object of this strata, a paved road of ten days' journey from Auranitis to Babylonia. (See a Latin note in Delisle's Map Imp. Orient.) Wesseling and D'Anville are silent.]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[I have blended, in a short speech, the two orations of the Arsacides of Armenia and the Gothic ambassadors. Procopius, in his public history, feels, and makes us feel, that Justinian was the true author of the war, (Persic. l. ii. c. 2, 3.)]

Whatever might be the provocations of Chosroes, he abused the confidence of treaties; and the just reproaches of dissimulation and falsehood could only be concealed by the lustre of his victories. [62](#) The Persian army, which had been assembled in the plains of Babylon, prudently declined the strong cities of Mesopotamia, and followed the western bank of the Euphrates, till the small, though populous, town of

Dura [6211](#) presumed to arrest the progress of the great king. The gates of Dura, by treachery and surprise, were burst open; and as soon as Chosroes had stained his cimeter with the blood of the inhabitants, he dismissed the ambassador of Justinian to inform his master in what place he had left the enemy of the Romans. The conqueror still affected the praise of humanity and justice; and as he beheld a noble matron with her infant rudely dragged along the ground, he sighed, he wept, and implored the divine justice to punish the author of these calamities. Yet the herd of twelve thousand captives was ransomed for two hundred pounds of gold; the neighboring bishop of Sergiopolis pledged his faith for the payment: and in the subsequent year the unfeeling avarice of Chosroes exacted the penalty of an obligation which it was generous to contract and impossible to discharge. He advanced into the heart of Syria: but a feeble enemy, who vanished at his approach, disappointed him of the honor of victory; and as he could not hope to establish his dominion, the Persian king displayed in this inroad the mean and rapacious vices of a robber. Hierapolis, Berrhaea or Aleppo, Apamea and Chalcis, were successively besieged: they redeemed their safety by a ransom of gold or silver, proportioned to their respective strength and opulence; and their new master enforced, without observing, the terms of capitulation. Educated in the religion of the Magi, he exercised, without remorse, the lucrative trade of sacrilege; and, after stripping of its gold and gems a piece of the true cross, he generously restored the naked relic to the devotion of the Christians of Apamea. No more than fourteen years had elapsed since Antioch was ruined by an earthquake; [6212](#) but the queen of the East, the new Theopolis, had been raised from the ground by the liberality of Justinian; and the increasing greatness of the buildings and the people already erased the memory of this recent disaster. On one side, the city was defended by the mountain, on the other by the River Orontes; but the most accessible part was commanded by a superior eminence: the proper remedies were rejected, from the despicable fear of discovering its weakness to the enemy; and Germanus, the emperor's nephew, refused to trust his person and dignity within the walls of a besieged city. The people of Antioch had inherited the vain and satirical genius of their ancestors: they were elated by a sudden reenforcement of six thousand soldiers; they disdained the offers of an easy capitulation and their intemperate clamors insulted from the ramparts the majesty of the great king. Under his eye the Persian myriads mounted with scaling-ladders to the assault; the Roman mercenaries fled through the opposite gate of Daphne; and the generous assistance of the youth of Antioch served only to aggravate the miseries of their country. As Chosroes, attended by the ambassadors of Justinian, was descending from the mountain, he affected, in a plaintive voice, to deplore the obstinacy and ruin of that unhappy people; but the slaughter still raged with unrelenting fury; and the city, at the command of a Barbarian, was delivered to the flames. The cathedral of Antioch was indeed preserved by the avarice, not the piety, of the conqueror: a more honorable exemption was granted to the church of St. Julian, and the quarter of the town where the ambassadors resided; some distant streets were saved by the shifting of the wind, and

the walls still subsisted to protect, and soon to betray, their new inhabitants. Fanaticism had defaced the ornaments of Daphne, but Chosroes breathed a purer air amidst her groves and fountains; and some idolaters in his train might sacrifice with impunity to the nymphs of that elegant retreat. Eighteen miles below Antioch, the River Orontes falls into the Mediterranean. The haughty Persian visited the term of his conquests; and, after bathing alone in the sea, he offered a solemn sacrifice of thanksgiving to the sun, or rather to the Creator of the sun, whom the Magi adored. If this act of superstition offended the prejudices of the Syrians, they were pleased by the courteous and even eager attention with which he assisted at the games of the circus; and as Chosroes had heard that the blue faction was espoused by the emperor, his peremptory command secured the victory of the green charioteer. From the discipline of his camp the people derived more solid consolation; and they interceded in vain for the life of a soldier who had too faithfully copied the rapine of the just Nushirvan. At length, fatigued, though unsatiated, with the spoil of Syria, [6213](#) he slowly moved to the Euphrates, formed a temporary bridge in the neighborhood of Barbalissus, and defined the space of three days for the entire passage of his numerous host. After his return, he founded, at the distance of one day's journey from the palace of Ctesiphon, a new city, which perpetuated the joint names of Chosroes and of Antioch. The Syrian captives recognized the form and situation of their native abodes: baths and a stately circus were constructed for their use; and a colony of musicians and charioteers revived in Assyria the pleasures of a Greek capital. By the munificence of the royal founder, a liberal allowance was assigned to these fortunate exiles; and they enjoyed the singular privilege of bestowing freedom on the slaves whom they acknowledged as their kinsmen. Palestine, and the holy wealth of Jerusalem, were the next objects that attracted the ambition, or rather the avarice, of Chosroes. Constantinople, and the palace of the Caesars, no longer appeared impregnable or remote; and his aspiring fancy already covered Asia Minor with the troops, and the Black Sea with the navies, of Persia.

62

[\(return\)](#)

[The invasion of Syria, the ruin of Antioch, &c., are related in a full and regular series by Procopius, (Persic. l. ii. c. 5—14.) Small collateral aid can be drawn from the Orientals: yet not they, but D'Herbelot himself, (p. 680,) should blush when he blames them for making Justinian and Nushirvan contemporaries. On the geography of the seat of war, D'Anville (*l'Euphrate et le Tigre*) is sufficient and satisfactory.]

6211

[\(return\)](#)

[It is Sura in Procopius. Is it a misprint in Gibbon?—M.]

6212

[\(return\)](#)

[Joannes Lydus attributes the easy capture of Antioch to the want of fortifications which had not

been restored since the earthquake, l. iii. c. 54. p. 246.—M.]

6213

[\(return\)](#)

[Lydus asserts that he carried away all the statues, pictures, and marbles which adorned the city, l. iii. c. 54, p. 246.—M.]

These hopes might have been realized, if the conqueror of Italy had not been seasonably recalled to the defence of the East. [63](#) While Chosroes pursued his ambitious designs on the coast of the Euxine, Belisarius, at the head of an army without pay or discipline, encamped beyond the Euphrates, within six miles of Nisibis. He meditated, by a skilful operation, to draw the Persians from their impregnable citadel, and improving his advantage in the field, either to intercept their retreat, or perhaps to enter the gates with the flying Barbarians. He advanced one day's journey on the territories of Persia, reduced the fortress of Sisaurane, and sent the governor, with eight hundred chosen horsemen, to serve the emperor in his Italian wars. He detached Arethas and his Arabs, supported by twelve hundred Romans, to pass the Tigris, and to ravage the harvests of Assyria, a fruitful province, long exempt from the calamities of war. But the plans of Belisarius were disconcerted by the untractable spirit of Arethas, who neither returned to the camp, nor sent any intelligence of his motions. The Roman general was fixed in anxious expectation to the same spot; the time of action elapsed, the ardent sun of Mesopotamia inflamed with fevors the blood of his European soldiers; and the stationary troops and officers of Syria affected to tremble for the safety of their defenceless cities. Yet this diversion had already succeeded in forcing Chosroes to return with loss and precipitation; and if the skill of Belisarius had been seconded by discipline and valor, his success might have satisfied the sanguine wishes of the public, who required at his hands the conquest of Ctesiphon, and the deliverance of the captives of Antioch. At the end of the campaign, he was recalled to Constantinople by an ungrateful court, but the dangers of the ensuing spring restored his confidence and command; and the hero, almost alone, was despatched, with the speed of post-horses, to repel, by his name and presence, the invasion of Syria. He found the Roman generals, among whom was a nephew of Justinian, imprisoned by their fears in the fortifications of Hierapolis. But instead of listening to their timid counsels, Belisarius commanded them to follow him to Europus, where he had resolved to collect his forces, and to execute whatever God should inspire him to achieve against the enemy. His firm attitude on the banks of the Euphrates restrained Chosroes from advancing towards Palestine; and he received with art and dignity the ambassadors, or rather spies, of the Persian monarch. The plain between Hierapolis and the river was covered with the squadrons of cavalry, six thousand hunters, tall and robust, who pursued their game without the apprehension of an enemy. On the opposite bank the ambassadors descried a thousand Armenian horse, who appeared to guard the passage of the Euphrates. The tent of Belisarius was of the coarsest linen, the simple equipage of a warrior who disdained the luxury of the East. Around his tent, the nations who marched under his

standard were arranged with skilful confusion. The Thracians and Illyrians were posted in the front, the Heruli and Goths in the centre; the prospect was closed by the Moors and Vandals, and their loose array seemed to multiply their numbers. Their dress was light and active; one soldier carried a whip, another a sword, a third a bow, a fourth, perhaps, a battle axe, and the whole picture exhibited the intrepidity of the troops and the vigilance of the general. Chosroes was deluded by the address, and awed by the genius, of the lieutenant of Justinian. Conscious of the merit, and ignorant of the force, of his antagonist, he dreaded a decisive battle in a distant country, from whence not a Persian might return to relate the melancholy tale. The great king hastened to repass the Euphrates; and Belisarius pressed his retreat, by affecting to oppose a measure so salutary to the empire, and which could scarcely have been prevented by an army of a hundred thousand men. Envy might suggest to ignorance and pride, that the public enemy had been suffered to escape: but the African and Gothic triumphs are less glorious than this safe and bloodless victory, in which neither fortune, nor the valor of the soldiers, can subtract any part of the general's renown. The second removal of Belisarius from the Persian to the Italian war revealed the extent of his personal merit, which had corrected or supplied the want of discipline and courage. Fifteen generals, without concert or skill, led through the mountains of Armenia an army of thirty thousand Romans, inattentive to their signals, their ranks, and their ensigns. Four thousand Persians, intrenched in the camp of Dubis, vanquished, almost without a combat, this disorderly multitude; their useless arms were scattered along the road, and their horses sunk under the fatigue of their rapid flight. But the Arabs of the Roman party prevailed over their brethren; the Armenians returned to their allegiance; the cities of Dara and Edessa resisted a sudden assault and a regular siege, and the calamities of war were suspended by those of pestilence. A tacit or formal agreement between the two sovereigns protected the tranquillity of the Eastern frontier; and the arms of Chosroes were confined to the Colchian or Lazic war, which has been too minutely described by the historians of the times. [64](#)

63

[\(return\)](#)

[In the public history of Procopius, (Persic. l. ii. c. 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28;) and, with some slight exceptions, we may reasonably shut our ears against the malevolent whisper of the Anecdotes, (c. 2, 3, with the Notes, as usual, of Alemannus.)]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[The Lazic war, the contest of Rome and Persia on the Phasis, is tediously spun through many a page of Procopius (Persic. l. ii. c. 15, 17, 28, 29, 30.) Gothic. (l. iv. c. 7—16) and Agathias, (l. ii. iii. and iv. p. 55—132, 141.)]

The extreme length of the Euxine Sea [65](#) from Constantinople to the mouth of the Phasis, may be computed as a voyage of nine days, and a measure of seven hundred

miles. From the Iberian Caucasus, the most lofty and craggy mountains of Asia, that river descends with such oblique vehemence, that in a short space it is traversed by one hundred and twenty bridges. Nor does the stream become placid and navigable, till it reaches the town of Sarapana, five days' journey from the Cyrus, which flows from the same hills, but in a contrary direction to the Caspian Lake. The proximity of these rivers has suggested the practice, or at least the idea, of wafting the precious merchandise of India down the Oxus, over the Caspian, up the Cyrus, and with the current of the Phasis into the Euxine and Mediterranean Seas. As it successively collects the streams of the plain of Colchos, the Phasis moves with diminished speed, though accumulated weight. At the mouth it is sixty fathom deep, and half a league broad, but a small woody island is interposed in the midst of the channel; the water, so soon as it has deposited an earthy or metallic sediment, floats on the surface of the waves, and is no longer susceptible of corruption. In a course of one hundred miles, forty of which are navigable for large vessels, the Phasis divides the celebrated region of Colchos, [66](#) or Mingrelia, [67](#) which, on three sides, is fortified by the Iberian and Armenian mountains, and whose maritime coast extends about two hundred miles from the neighborhood of Trebizond to Dioscurias and the confines of Circassia. Both the soil and climate are relaxed by excessive moisture: twenty-eight rivers, besides the Phasis and his dependent streams, convey their waters to the sea; and the hollowness of the ground appears to indicate the subterraneous channels between the Euxine and the Caspian. In the fields where wheat or barley is sown, the earth is too soft to sustain the action of the plough; but the gom, a small grain, not unlike the millet or coriander seed, supplies the ordinary food of the people; and the use of bread is confined to the prince and his nobles. Yet the vintage is more plentiful than the harvest; and the bulk of the stems, as well as the quality of the wine, display the unassisted powers of nature. The same powers continually tend to overshadow the face of the country with thick forests; the timber of the hills, and the flax of the plains, contribute to the abundance of naval stores; the wild and tame animals, the horse, the ox, and the hog, are remarkably prolific, and the name of the pheasant is expressive of his native habitation on the banks of the Phasis. The gold mines to the south of Trebizond, which are still worked with sufficient profit, were a subject of national dispute between Justinian and Chosroes; and it is not unreasonable to believe, that a vein of precious metal may be equally diffused through the circle of the hills, although these secret treasures are neglected by the laziness, or concealed by the prudence, of the Mingrelians. The waters, impregnated with particles of gold, are carefully strained through sheep-skins or fleeces; but this expedient, the groundwork perhaps of a marvellous fable, affords a faint image of the wealth extracted from a virgin earth by the power and industry of ancient kings. Their silver palaces and golden chambers surpass our belief; but the fame of their riches is said to have excited the enterprising avarice of the Argonauts. [68](#) Tradition has affirmed, with some color of reason, that Egypt planted on the Phasis a learned and polite colony, [69](#) which manufactured linen, built navies, and invented geographical maps. The ingenuity of the

moderns has peopled, with flourishing cities and nations, the isthmus between the Euxine and the Caspian; [70](#) and a lively writer, observing the resemblance of climate, and, in his apprehension, of trade, has not hesitated to pronounce Colchos the Holland of antiquity. [71](#)

65

[\(return\)](#)

[The Periplus, or circumnavigation of the Euxine Sea, was described in Latin by Sallust, and in Greek by Arrian: I. The former work, which no longer exists, has been restored by the singular diligence of M. de Brosses, first president of the parliament of Dijon, (Hist. de la Republique Romaine, tom. ii. l. iii. p. 199—298,) who ventures to assume the character of the Roman historian. His description of the Euxine is ingeniously formed of all the fragments of the original, and of all the Greeks and Latins whom Sallust might copy, or by whom he might be copied; and the merit of the execution atones for the whimsical design. 2. The Periplus of Arrian is addressed to the emperor Hadrian, (in Geograph. Minor. Hudson, tom. i.,) and contains whatever the governor of Pontus had seen from Trebizond to Dioscurias; whatever he had heard from Dioscurias to the Danube; and whatever he knew from the Danube to Trebizond.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[Besides the many occasional hints from the poets, historians &c., of antiquity, we may consult the geographical descriptions of Colchos, by Strabo (l. xi. p. 760—765) and Pliny, (Hist. Natur. vi. 5, 19, &c.)]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[I shall quote, and have used, three modern descriptions of Mingrelia and the adjacent countries. 1. Of the Pere Archangeli Lamberti, (Relations de Thevenot, part i. p. 31-52, with a map,) who has all the knowledge and prejudices of a missionary. 2. Of Chardia, (Voyages en Perse, tom. i. p. 54, 68-168.) His observations are judicious and his own adventures in the country are still more instructive than his observations. 3. Of Peyssonel, (Observations sur les Peuples Barbares, p. 49, 50, 51, 58 62, 64, 65, 71, &c., and a more recent treatise, Sur le Commerce de la Mer Noire, tom. ii. p. 1—53.) He had long resided at Caffa, as consul of France; and his erudition is less valuable than his experience.]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[Pliny, Hist. Natur. l. xxxiii. 15. The gold and silver mines of Colchos attracted the Argonauts, (Strab. l.

i. p. 77.) The sagacious Chardin could find no gold in mines, rivers, or elsewhere. Yet a Mingrelian lost his hand and foot for showing some specimens at Constantinople of native gold]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[Herodot. l. ii. c. 104, 105, p. 150, 151. Diodor. Sicul. l. i. p. 33, edit. Wesseling. Dionys. Perieget. 689, and Eustath. ad loc. Schoast ad Apollonium Argonaut. l. iv. 282-291.]

70

[\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu, Esprit des Loix, l. xxi. c. 6. L'Isthme... couvero de villes et nations qui ne sont plus.]

71

[\(return\)](#)

[Bougainville, Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxvi. p. 33, on the African voyage of Hanno and the commerce of antiquity.]

But the riches of Colchos shine only through the darkness of conjecture or tradition; and its genuine history presents a uniform scene of rudeness and poverty. If one hundred and thirty languages were spoken in the market of Dioscurias, [72](#) they were the imperfect idioms of so many savage tribes or families, sequestered from each other in the valleys of Mount Caucasus; and their separation, which diminished the importance, must have multiplied the number, of their rustic capitals. In the present state of Mingrelia, a village is an assemblage of huts within a wooden fence; the fortresses are seated in the depths of forests; the princely town of Cyta, or Cotatis, consists of two hundred houses, and a stone edifice appertains only to the magnificence of kings. Twelve ships from Constantinople, and about sixty barks, laden with the fruits of industry, annually cast anchor on the coast; and the list of Colchian exports is much increased, since the natives had only slaves and hides to offer in exchange for the corn and salt which they purchased from the subjects of Justinian. Not a vestige can be found of the art, the knowledge, or the navigation, of the ancient Colchians: few Greeks desired or dared to pursue the footsteps of the Argonauts; and even the marks of an Egyptian colony are lost on a nearer approach. The rite of circumcision is practised only by the Mahometans of the Euxine; and the curled hair and swarthy complexion of Africa no longer disfigure the most perfect of the human race. It is in the adjacent climates of Georgia, Mingrelia, and Circassia, that nature has placed, at least to our eyes, the model of beauty in the shape of the limbs, the color of the skin, the symmetry of the features, and the expression of the countenance. [73](#) According to the destination of the two sexes, the men seemed formed for action, the women for love; and the perpetual supply of females from Mount Caucasus has purified the blood, and improved the breed, of the southern nations of Asia. The proper district of Mingrelia, a portion only of the ancient Colchos, has long sustained an exportation of twelve thousand slaves. The number of prisoners or criminals would be inadequate to the annual demand; but the common people are in a state of servitude to their lords; the exercise of fraud or rapine is

unpunished in a lawless community; and the market is continually replenished by the abuse of civil and paternal authority. Such a trade, [74](#) which reduces the human species to the level of cattle, may tend to encourage marriage and population, since the multitude of children enriches their sordid and inhuman parent. But this source of impure wealth must inevitably poison the national manners, obliterate the sense of honor and virtue, and almost extinguish the instincts of nature: the Christians of Georgia and Mingrelia are the most dissolute of mankind; and their children, who, in a tender age, are sold into foreign slavery, have already learned to imitate the rapine of the father and the prostitution of the mother. Yet, amidst the rudest ignorance, the untaught natives discover a singular dexterity both of mind and hand; and although the want of union and discipline exposes them to their more powerful neighbors, a bold and intrepid spirit has animated the Colchians of every age. In the host of Xerxes, they served on foot; and their arms were a dagger or a javelin, a wooden casque, and a buckler of raw hides. But in their own country the use of cavalry has more generally prevailed: the meanest of the peasants disdained to walk; the martial nobles are possessed, perhaps, of two hundred horses; and above five thousand are numbered in the train of the prince of Mingrelia. The Colchian government has been always a pure and hereditary kingdom; and the authority of the sovereign is only restrained by the turbulence of his subjects. Whenever they were obedient, he could lead a numerous army into the field; but some faith is requisite to believe, that the single tribe of the Suanians as composed of two hundred thousand soldiers, or that the population of Mingrelia now amounts to four millions of inhabitants. [75](#)

72

[\(return\)](#)

[A Greek historian, Timosthenes, had affirmed, in eam ccc. nationes dissimilibus linguis descendere; and the modest Pliny is content to add, et postea a nostris cxxx. interpretibus negotia ibi gesta, (vi. 5) But the words nunc deserta cover a multitude of past fictions.]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Buffon (Hist. Nat. tom. iii. p. 433—437) collects the unanimous suffrage of naturalists and travellers. If, in the time of Herodotus, they were, (and he had observed them with care,) this precious fact is an example of the influence of climate on a foreign colony.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[The Mingrelian ambassador arrived at Constantinople with two hundred persons; but he ate (sold) them day by day, till his retinue was diminished to a secretary and two valets, (Tavernier, tom. i. p. 365.) To purchase his mistress, a Mingrelian gentleman sold twelve priests and his wife to the Turks, (Chardin, tom. i. p. 66.)]

[Strabo, l. xi. p. 765. Lamberti, Relation de la Mingrelie. Yet we must avoid the contrary extreme of Chardin, who allows no more than 20,000 inhabitants to supply an annual exportation of 12,000 slaves; an absurdity unworthy of that judicious traveller.]

Chapter XLII: State Of The Barbaric World.—Part IV.

It was the boast of the Colchians, that their ancestors had checked the victories of Sesostris; and the defeat of the Egyptian is less incredible than his successful progress as far as the foot of Mount Caucasus. They sunk without any memorable effort, under the arms of Cyrus; followed in distant wars the standard of the great king, and presented him every fifth year with one hundred boys, and as many virgins, the fairest produce of the land. [76](#) Yet he accepted this gift like the gold and ebony of India, the frankincense of the Arabs, or the negroes and ivory of Aethiopia: the Colchians were not subject to the dominion of a satrap, and they continued to enjoy the name as well as substance of national independence. [77](#) After the fall of the Persian empire, Mithridates, king of Pontus, added Colchos to the wide circle of his dominions on the Euxine; and when the natives presumed to request that his son might reign over them, he bound the ambitious youth in chains of gold, and delegated a servant in his place. In pursuit of Mithridates, the Romans advanced to the banks of the Phasis, and their galleys ascended the river till they reached the camp of Pompey and his legions. [78](#) But the senate, and afterwards the emperors, disdained to reduce that distant and useless conquest into the form of a province. The family of a Greek rhetorician was permitted to reign in Colchos and the adjacent kingdoms from the time of Mark Antony to that of Nero; and after the race of Polemo [79](#) was extinct, the eastern Pontus, which preserved his name, extended no farther than the neighborhood of Trebizond. Beyond these limits the fortifications of Hyssus, of Apsarus, of the Phasis, of Dioscurias or Sebastopolis, and of Pityus, were guarded by sufficient detachments of horse and foot; and six princes of Colchos received their diadems from the lieutenants of Caesar. One of these lieutenants, the eloquent and philosophic Arrian, surveyed, and has described, the Euxine coast, under the reign of Hadrian. The garrison which he reviewed at the mouth of the Phasis consisted of four hundred chosen legionaries; the brick walls and towers, the double ditch, and the military engines on the rampart, rendered this place inaccessible to the Barbarians: but the new suburbs which had been built by the merchants and veterans, required, in the opinion of Arrian, some external defence. [80](#) As the strength of the empire was gradually impaired, the Romans stationed on the Phasis were neither withdrawn nor expelled; and the tribe of the Lazi, [81](#) whose posterity speak a foreign dialect, and inhabit the sea coast of Trebizond, imposed their name and dominion on the ancient kingdom of Colchos. Their independence was soon invaded by a formidable

neighbor, who had acquired, by arms and treaties, the sovereignty of Iberia. The dependent king of Lazica received his sceptre at the hands of the Persian monarch, and the successors of Constantine acquiesced in this injurious claim, which was proudly urged as a right of immemorial prescription. In the beginning of the sixth century, their influence was restored by the introduction of Christianity, which the Mingrelians still profess with becoming zeal, without understanding the doctrines, or observing the precepts, of their religion. After the decease of his father, Zathus was exalted to the regal dignity by the favor of the great king; but the pious youth abhorred the ceremonies of the Magi, and sought, in the palace of Constantinople, an orthodox baptism, a noble wife, and the alliance of the emperor Justin. The king of Lazica was solemnly invested with the diadem, and his cloak and tunic of white silk, with a gold border, displayed, in rich embroidery, the figure of his new patron; who soothed the jealousy of the Persian court, and excused the revolt of Colchos, by the venerable names of hospitality and religion. The common interest of both empires imposed on the Colchians the duty of guarding the passes of Mount Caucasus, where a wall of sixty miles is now defended by the monthly service of the musketeers of Mingrelia. [82](#)

76 [\(return\)](#)
[Herodot. l. iii. c. 97. See, in l. vii. c. 79, their arms and service in the expedition of Xerxes against Greece.]

77 [\(return\)](#)
[Xenophon, who had encountered the Colchians in his retreat, (Anabasis, l. iv. p. 320, 343, 348, edit. Hutchinson; and Foster's Dissertation, p. liii.—lviii., in Spelman's English version, vol. ii.,) styled them. Before the conquest of Mithridates, they are named by Appian, (de Bell. Mithridatico, c. 15, tom. i. p. 661, of the last and best edition, by John Schweighaeuser. Lipsae, 1785 8 vols. largo octavo.)]

78 [\(return\)](#)
[The conquest of Colchos by Mithridates and Pompey is marked by Appian (de Bell. Mithridat.) and Plutarch, (in Vit. Pomp.)]

79 [\(return\)](#)
[We may trace the rise and fall of the family of Polemo, in Strabo, (l. xi. p. 755, l. xii. p. 867,) Dion Cassius, or Xiphilin, (p. 588, 593, 601, 719, 754, 915, 946, edit. Reimar,) Suetonius, (in Neron. c. 18, in Vespasian, c. 8,) Eutropius, (vii. 14,) Josephus, (Antiq. Judaic. l. xx. c. 7, p. 970, edit. Havercamp,) and Eusebius, (Chron. with Scaliger, Animadvers. p. 196.)]

80 [\(return\)](#)
[In the time of Procopius, there were no Roman forts on the Phasis. Pityus and Sebastopolis were

evacuated on the rumor of the Persians, (Goth. l. iv. c. 4;) but the latter was afterwards restored by Justinian, (de Edif. l. iv. c. 7.)]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[In the time of Pliny, Arrian, and Ptolemy, the Lazi were a particular tribe on the northern skirts of Colchos, (Cellarius, Geograph. Antiq. tom. ii. p. 222.) In the age of Justinian, they spread, or at least reigned, over the whole country. At present, they have migrated along the coast towards Trebizond, and compose a rude sea-faring people, with a peculiar language, (Chardin, p. 149. Peyssonel p. 64.)]

82

[\(return\)](#)

[John Malala, Chron. tom. ii. p. 134—137 Theophanes, p. 144. Hist. Miscell. l. xv. p. 103. The fact is authentic, but the date seems too recent. In speaking of their Persian alliance, the Lazi contemporaries of Justinian employ the most obsolete words, &c. Could they belong to a connection which had not been dissolved above twenty years?]

But this honorable connection was soon corrupted by the avarice and ambition of the Romans. Degraded from the rank of allies, the Lazi were incessantly reminded, by words and actions, of their dependent state. At the distance of a day's journey beyond the Apsarus, they beheld the rising fortress of Petra, [83](#) which commanded the maritime country to the south of the Phasis. Instead of being protected by the valor, Colchos was insulted by the licentiousness, of foreign mercenaries; the benefits of commerce were converted into base and vexatious monopoly; and Gubazes, the native prince, was reduced to a pageant of royalty, by the superior influence of the officers of Justinian. Disappointed in their expectations of Christian virtue, the indignant Lazi reposed some confidence in the justice of an unbeliever. After a private assurance that their ambassadors should not be delivered to the Romans, they publicly solicited the friendship and aid of Chosroes. The sagacious monarch instantly discerned the use and importance of Colchos; and meditated a plan of conquest, which was renewed at the end of a thousand years by Shah Abbas, the wisest and most powerful of his successors. [84](#) His ambition was fired by the hope of launching a Persian navy from the Phasis, of commanding the trade and navigation of the Euxine Sea, of desolating the coast of Pontus and Bithynia, of distressing, perhaps of attacking, Constantinople, and of persuading the Barbarians of Europe to second his arms and counsels against the common enemy of mankind.

Under the pretence of a Scythian war, he silently led his troops to the frontiers of Iberia; the Colchian guides were prepared to conduct them through the woods and along the precipices of Mount Caucasus; and a narrow path was laboriously formed into a safe and spacious highway, for the march of cavalry, and even of elephants. Gubazes

laid his person and diadem at the feet of the king of Persia; his Colchians imitated the submission of their prince; and after the walls of Petra had been shaken, the Roman garrison prevented, by a capitulation, the impending fury of the last assault. But the Lazi soon discovered, that their impatience had urged them to choose an evil more intolerable than the calamities which they strove to escape. The monopoly of salt and corn was effectually removed by the loss of those valuable commodities. The authority of a Roman legislator, was succeeded by the pride of an Oriental despot, who beheld, with equal disdain, the slaves whom he had exalted, and the kings whom he had humbled before the footstool of his throne. The adoration of fire was introduced into Colchos by the zeal of the Magi: their intolerant spirit provoked the fervor of a Christian people; and the prejudice of nature or education was wounded by the impious practice of exposing the dead bodies of their parents, on the summit of a lofty tower, to the crows and vultures of the air. [85](#) Conscious of the increasing hatred, which retarded the execution of his great designs, the just Nashirvan had secretly given orders to assassinate the king of the Lazi, to transplant the people into some distant land, and to fix a faithful and warlike colony on the banks of the Phasis. The watchful jealousy of the Colchians foresaw and averted the approaching ruin. Their repentance was accepted at Constantinople by the prudence, rather than clemency, of Justinian; and he commanded Dagisteus, with seven thousand Romans, and one thousand of the Zani, [8511](#) to expel the Persians from the coast of the Euxine.

83

[\(return\)](#)

[The sole vestige of Petra subsists in the writings of Procopius and Agathias. Most of the towns and castles of Lazica may be found by comparing their names and position with the map of Mingrelia, in Lamberti.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[See the amusing letters of Pietro della Valle, the Roman traveler, (Viaggi, tom. ii. 207, 209, 213, 215, 266, 286, 300, tom. iii. p. 54, 127.) In the years 1618, 1619, and 1620, he conversed with Shah Abbas, and strongly encouraged a design which might have united Persia and Europe against their common enemy the Turk.]

85

[\(return\)](#)

[See Herodotus, (l. i. c. 140, p. 69,) who speaks with diffidence, Larcher, (tom. i. p. 399—401, Notes sur Herodote,) Procopius, (Persic. l. i. c. 11,) and Agathias, (l. ii. p. 61, 62.) This practice, agreeable to the Zendavesta, (Hyde, de Relig. Pers. c. 34, p. 414—421,) demonstrates that the burial of the Persian kings, (Xenophon, Cyropaed. l. viii. p. 658,) is a Greek fiction, and that their tombs could be no more than cenotaphs.]

[These seem the same people called Suanians, p.
328.—M.]

The siege of Petra, which the Roman general, with the aid of the Lazi, immediately undertook, is one of the most remarkable actions of the age. The city was seated on a craggy rock, which hung over the sea, and communicated by a steep and narrow path with the land. Since the approach was difficult, the attack might be deemed impossible: the Persian conqueror had strengthened the fortifications of Justinian; and the places least inaccessible were covered by additional bulwarks. In this important fortress, the vigilance of Chosroes had deposited a magazine of offensive and defensive arms, sufficient for five times the number, not only of the garrison, but of the besiegers themselves. The stock of flour and salt provisions was adequate to the consumption of five years; the want of wine was supplied by vinegar; and of grain from whence a strong liquor was extracted, and a triple aqueduct eluded the diligence, and even the suspicions, of the enemy. But the firmest defence of Petra was placed in the valor of fifteen hundred Persians, who resisted the assaults of the Romans, whilst, in a softer vein of earth, a mine was secretly perforated. The wall, supported by slender and temporary props, hung tottering in the air; but Dagisteus delayed the attack till he had secured a specific recompense; and the town was relieved before the return of his messenger from Constantinople. The Persian garrison was reduced to four hundred men, of whom no more than fifty were exempt from sickness or wounds; yet such had been their inflexible perseverance, that they concealed their losses from the enemy, by enduring, without a murmur, the sight and putrefying stench of the dead bodies of their eleven hundred companions. After their deliverance, the breaches were hastily stopped with sand-bags; the mine was replenished with earth; a new wall was erected on a frame of substantial timber; and a fresh garrison of three thousand men was stationed at Petra to sustain the labors of a second siege. The operations, both of the attack and defence, were conducted with skilful obstinacy; and each party derived useful lessons from the experience of their past faults. A battering-ram was invented, of light construction and powerful effect: it was transported and worked by the hands of forty soldiers; and as the stones were loosened by its repeated strokes, they were torn with long iron hooks from the wall. From those walls, a shower of darts was incessantly poured on the heads of the assailants; but they were most dangerously annoyed by a fiery composition of sulphur and bitumen, which in Colchos might with some propriety be named the oil of Medea. Of six thousand Romans who mounted the scaling-ladders, their general Bessas was the first, a gallant veteran of seventy years of age: the courage of their leader, his fall, and extreme danger, animated the irresistible effort of his troops; and their prevailing numbers oppressed the strength, without subduing the spirit, of the Persian garrison. The fate of these valiant men deserves to be more distinctly noticed. Seven hundred had perished in the siege, two thousand three hundred survived to defend the breach. One thousand and seventy were destroyed with fire and sword in the last assault; and if seven hundred and thirty were made prisoners, only eighteen among them were

found without the marks of honorable wounds. The remaining five hundred escaped into the citadel, which they maintained without any hopes of relief, rejecting the fairest terms of capitulation and service, till they were lost in the flames. They died in obedience to the commands of their prince; and such examples of loyalty and valor might excite their countrymen to deeds of equal despair and more prosperous event. The instant demolition of the works of Petra confessed the astonishment and apprehension of the conqueror. A Spartan would have praised and pitied the virtue of these heroic slaves; but the tedious warfare and alternate success of the Roman and Persian arms cannot detain the attention of posterity at the foot of Mount Caucasus. The advantages obtained by the troops of Justinian were more frequent and splendid; but the forces of the great king were continually supplied, till they amounted to eight elephants and seventy thousand men, including twelve thousand Scythian allies, and above three thousand Dilemites, who descended by their free choice from the hills of Hyrcania, and were equally formidable in close or in distant combat. The siege of Archaeopolis, a name imposed or corrupted by the Greeks, was raised with some loss and precipitation; but the Persians occupied the passes of Iberia: Colchos was enslaved by their forts and garrisons; they devoured the scanty sustenance of the people; and the prince of the Lazi fled into the mountains. In the Roman camp, faith and discipline were unknown; and the independent leaders, who were invested with equal power, disputed with each other the preeminence of vice and corruption. The Persians followed, without a murmur, the commands of a single chief, who implicitly obeyed the instructions of their supreme lord. Their general was distinguished among the heroes of the East by his wisdom in council, and his valor in the field. The advanced age of Mermeroes, and the lameness of both his feet, could not diminish the activity of his mind, or even of his body; and, whilst he was carried in a litter in the front of battle, he inspired terror to the enemy, and a just confidence to the troops, who, under his banners, were always successful. After his death, the command devolved to Nacoragan, a proud satrap, who, in a conference with the Imperial chiefs, had presumed to declare that he disposed of victory as absolutely as of the ring on his finger. Such presumption was the natural cause and forerunner of a shameful defeat. The Romans had been gradually repulsed to the edge of the sea-shore; and their last camp, on the ruins of the Grecian colony of Phasis, was defended on all sides by strong intrenchments, the river, the Euxine, and a fleet of galleys. Despair united their counsels and invigorated their arms: they withstood the assault of the Persians and the flight of Nacoragan preceded or followed the slaughter of ten thousand of his bravest soldiers. He escaped from the Romans to fall into the hands of an unforgiving master who severely chastised the error of his own choice: the unfortunate general was flayed alive, and his skin, stuffed into the human form, was exposed on a mountain; a dreadful warning to those who might hereafter be intrusted with the fame and fortune of Persia. [86](#) Yet the prudence of Chosroes insensibly relinquished the prosecution of the Colchian war, in the just persuasion, that it is impossible to reduce, or, at least, to hold a distant country against the wishes and

efforts of its inhabitants. The fidelity of Gubazes sustained the most rigorous trials. He patiently endured the hardships of a savage life, and rejected with disdain, the specious temptations of the Persian court. [8611](#) The king of the Lazi had been educated in the Christian religion; his mother was the daughter of a senator; during his youth he had served ten years a silentary of the Byzantine palace, [87](#) and the arrears of an unpaid salary were a motive of attachment as well as of complaint. But the long continuance of his sufferings extorted from him a naked representation of the truth; and truth was an unpardonable libel on the lieutenants of Justinian, who, amidst the delays of a ruinous war, had spared his enemies and trampled on his allies. Their malicious information persuaded the emperor that his faithless vassal already meditated a second defection: an order was surprised to send him prisoner to Constantinople; a treacherous clause was inserted, that he might be lawfully killed in case of resistance; and Gubazes, without arms, or suspicion of danger, was stabbed in the security of a friendly interview. In the first moments of rage and despair, the Colchians would have sacrificed their country and religion to the gratification of revenge. But the authority and eloquence of the wiser few obtained a salutary pause: the victory of the Phasis restored the terror of the Roman arms, and the emperor was solicitous to absolve his own name from the imputation of so foul a murder. A judge of senatorial rank was commissioned to inquire into the conduct and death of the king of the Lazi. He ascended a stately tribunal, encompassed by the ministers of justice and punishment: in the presence of both nations, this extraordinary cause was pleaded, according to the forms of civil jurisprudence, and some satisfaction was granted to an injured people, by the sentence and execution of the meaner criminals. [88](#)

86 [\(return\)](#)

[The punishment of flaying alive could not be introduced into Persia by Sapor, (Brisson, de Regn. Pers. l. ii. p. 578,) nor could it be copied from the foolish tale of Marsyas, the Phrygian piper, most foolishly quoted as a precedent by Agathias, (l. iv. p. 132, 133.)]

8611 [\(return\)](#)

[According to Agathias, the death of Gubazos preceded the defeat of Nacoragan. The trial took place after the battle.—M.]

87 [\(return\)](#)

[In the palace of Constantinople there were thirty silentaries, who were styled hastati, ante fores cubiculi, an honorable title which conferred the rank, without imposing the duties, of a senator, (Cod. Theodos. l. vi. tit. 23. Gothofred. Comment. tom. ii. p. 129.)]

88 [\(return\)](#)

[On these judicial orations, Agathias (l. iii. p. 81-89, l. iv. p. 108—119) lavishes eighteen or twenty pages of false and florid rhetoric. His ignorance or

carelessness overlooks the strongest argument against the king of Lazica—his former revolt. *
Note: The Orations in the third book of Agathias are not judicial, nor delivered before the Roman tribunal: it is a deliberative debate among the Colchians on the expediency of adhering to the Roman, or embracing the Persian alliance.—M.]

In peace, the king of Persia continually sought the pretences of a rupture: but no sooner had he taken up arms, than he expressed his desire of a safe and honorable treaty. During the fiercest hostilities, the two monarchs entertained a deceitful negotiation; and such was the superiority of Chosroes, that whilst he treated the Roman ministers with insolence and contempt, he obtained the most unprecedented honors for his own ambassadors at the Imperial court. The successor of Cyrus assumed the majesty of the Eastern sun, and graciously permitted his younger brother Justinian to reign over the West, with the pale and reflected splendor of the moon. This gigantic style was supported by the pomp and eloquence of Isdigune, one of the royal chamberlains. His wife and daughters, with a train of eunuchs and camels, attended the march of the ambassador: two satraps with golden diadems were numbered among his followers: he was guarded by five hundred horse, the most valiant of the Persians; and the Roman governor of Dara wisely refused to admit more than twenty of this martial and hostile caravan. When Isdigune had saluted the emperor, and delivered his presents, he passed ten months at Constantinople without discussing any serious affairs. Instead of being confined to his palace, and receiving food and water from the hands of his keepers, the Persian ambassador, without spies or guards, was allowed to visit the capital; and the freedom of conversation and trade enjoyed by his domestics, offended the prejudices of an age which rigorously practised the law of nations, without confidence or courtesy. [89](#) By an unexampled indulgence, his interpreter, a servant below the notice of a Roman magistrate, was seated, at the table of Justinian, by the side of his master: and one thousand pounds of gold might be assigned for the expense of his journey and entertainment. Yet the repeated labors of Isdigune could procure only a partial and imperfect truce, which was always purchased with the treasures, and renewed at the solicitation, of the Byzantine court. Many years of fruitless desolation elapsed before Justinian and Chosroes were compelled, by mutual lassitude, to consult the repose of their declining age. At a conference held on the frontier, each party, without expecting to gain credit, displayed the power, the justice, and the pacific intentions, of their respective sovereigns; but necessity and interest dictated the treaty of peace, which was concluded for a term of fifty years, diligently composed in the Greek and Persian languages, and attested by the seals of twelve interpreters. The liberty of commerce and religion was fixed and defined; the allies of the emperor and the great king were included in the same benefits and obligations; and the most scrupulous precautions were provided to prevent or determine the accidental disputes that might arise on the confines of two hostile nations. After twenty years of destructive though feeble war, the limits

still remained without alteration; and Chosroes was persuaded to renounce his dangerous claim to the possession or sovereignty of Colchos and its dependent states. Rich in the accumulated treasures of the East, he extorted from the Romans an annual payment of thirty thousand pieces of gold; and the smallness of the sum revealed the disgrace of a tribute in its naked deformity. In a previous debate, the chariot of Sesostris, and the wheel of fortune, were applied by one of the ministers of Justinian, who observed that the reduction of Antioch, and some Syrian cities, had elevated beyond measure the vain and ambitious spirit of the Barbarian. “You are mistaken,” replied the modest Persian: “the king of kings, the lord of mankind, looks down with contempt on such petty acquisitions; and of the ten nations, vanquished by his invincible arms, he esteems the Romans as the least formidable.” [90](#) According to the Orientals, the empire of Nushirvan extended from Ferganah, in Transoxiana, to Yemen or Arabia Faelix. He subdued the rebels of Hyrcania, reduced the provinces of Cabul and Zablestan on the banks of the Indus, broke the power of the Euthalites, terminated by an honorable treaty the Turkish war, and admitted the daughter of the great khan into the number of his lawful wives. Victorious and respected among the princes of Asia, he gave audience, in his palace of Madain, or Ctesiphon, to the ambassadors of the world. Their gifts or tributes, arms, rich garments, gems, slaves or aromatics, were humbly presented at the foot of his throne; and he condescended to accept from the king of India ten quintals of the wood of aloes, a maid seven cubits in height, and a carpet softer than silk, the skin, as it was reported, of an extraordinary serpent. [91](#)

89

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius represents the practice of the Gothic court of Ravenna (Goth. l. i. c. 7;) and foreign ambassadors have been treated with the same jealousy and rigor in Turkey, (Busbequius, epist. iii. p. 149, 242, &c.,) Russia, (Voyage D’Olearius,) and China, (Narrative of A. de Lange, in Bell’s Travels, vol. ii. p. 189—311.)]

90

[\(return\)](#)

[The negotiations and treaties between Justinian and Chosroes are copiously explained by Procopius, (Persie, l. ii. c. 10, 13, 26, 27, 28. Gothic. l. ii. c. 11, 15,) Agathias, (l. iv. p. 141, 142,) and Menander, (in Excerpt. Legat. p. 132—147.) Consult Barbeyrac, Hist. des Anciens Traites, tom. ii. p. 154, 181—184, 193—200.]

91

[\(return\)](#)

[D’Herbelot, Bibliot. Orient. p. 680, 681, 294, 295.]

Justinian had been reproached for his alliance with the Aethiopians, as if he attempted to introduce a people of savage negroes into the system of civilized society. But the friends of the Roman empire, the Axumites, or Abyssinians, may be always distinguished from the original natives of Africa. [92](#) The hand of nature has flattened

the noses of the negroes, covered their heads with shaggy wool, and tinged their skin with inherent and indelible blackness. But the olive complexion of the Abyssinians, their hair, shape, and features, distinctly mark them as a colony of Arabs; and this descent is confirmed by the resemblance of language and manners the report of an ancient emigration, and the narrow interval between the shores of the Red Sea. Christianity had raised that nation above the level of African barbarism: [93](#) their intercourse with Egypt, and the successors of Constantine, [94](#) had communicated the rudiments of the arts and sciences; their vessels traded to the Isle of Ceylon, [95](#) and seven kingdoms obeyed the Negus or supreme prince of Abyssinia. The independence of the Homerites, [9511](#) who reigned in the rich and happy Arabia, was first violated by an Aethiopian conqueror: he drew his hereditary claim from the queen of Sheba, [96](#) and his ambition was sanctified by religious zeal. The Jews, powerful and active in exile, had seduced the mind of Dunaan, prince of the Homerites. They urged him to retaliate the persecution inflicted by the Imperial laws on their unfortunate brethren: some Roman merchants were injuriously treated; and several Christians of Negra [97](#) were honored with the crown of martyrdom. [98](#) The churches of Arabia implored the protection of the Abyssinian monarch. The Negus passed the Red Sea with a fleet and army, deprived the Jewish proselyte of his kingdom and life, and extinguished a race of princes, who had ruled above two thousand years the sequestered region of myrrh and frankincense. The conqueror immediately announced the victory of the gospel, requested an orthodox patriarch, and so warmly professed his friendship to the Roman empire, that Justinian was flattered by the hope of diverting the silk trade through the channel of Abyssinia, and of exciting the forces of Arabia against the Persian king. Nonnosus, descended from a family of ambassadors, was named by the emperor to execute this important commission. He wisely declined the shorter, but more dangerous, road, through the sandy deserts of Nubia; ascended the Nile, embarked on the Red Sea, and safely landed at the African port of Adulis. From Adulis to the royal city of Axume is no more than fifty leagues, in a direct line; but the winding passes of the mountains detained the ambassador fifteen days; and as he traversed the forests, he saw, and vaguely computed, about five thousand wild elephants. The capital, according to his report, was large and populous; and the village of Axume is still conspicuous by the regal coronations, by the ruins of a Christian temple, and by sixteen or seventeen obelisks inscribed with Grecian characters. [99](#) But the Negus [9911](#) gave audience in the open field, seated on a lofty chariot, which was drawn by four elephants, superbly caparisoned, and surrounded by his nobles and musicians. He was clad in a linen garment and cap, holding in his hand two javelins and a light shield; and, although his nakedness was imperfectly covered, he displayed the Barbaric pomp of gold chains, collars, and bracelets, richly adorned with pearls and precious stones. The ambassador of Justinian knelt; the Negus raised him from the ground, embraced Nonnosus, kissed the seal, perused the letter, accepted the Roman alliance, and, brandishing his weapons, denounced implacable war against the worshipers of fire. But the proposal of the silk

trade was eluded; and notwithstanding the assurances, and perhaps the wishes, of the Abyssinians, these hostile menaces evaporated without effect. The Homerites were unwilling to abandon their aromatic groves, to explore a sandy desert, and to encounter, after all their fatigues, a formidable nation from whom they had never received any personal injuries. Instead of enlarging his conquests, the king of Aethiopia was incapable of defending his possessions. Abrahah, [9912](#) the slave of a Roman merchant of Adulis, assumed the sceptre of the Homerites; the troops of Africa were seduced by the luxury of the climate; and Justinian solicited the friendship of the usurper, who honored with a slight tribute the supremacy of his prince. After a long series of prosperity, the power of Abrahah was overthrown before the gates of Mecca; and his children were despoiled by the Persian conqueror; and the Aethiopians were finally expelled from the continent of Asia. This narrative of obscure and remote events is not foreign to the decline and fall of the Roman empire. If a Christian power had been maintained in Arabia, Mahomet must have been crushed in his cradle, and Abyssinia would have prevented a revolution which has changed the civil and religious state of the world. [100](#) [1001](#)

92

[\(return\)](#)

[See Buffon, *Hist. Naturelle*, tom. iii. p. 449. This Arab cast of features and complexion, which has continued 3400 years (*Ludolph. Hist. et Comment. Aethiopic.* l. i. c. 4) in the colony of Abyssinia, will justify the suspicion, that race, as well as climate, must have contributed to form the negroes of the adjacent and similar regions. * Note: Mr. Salt (*Travels*, vol. ii. p. 458) considers them to be distinct from the Arabs—"in feature, color, habit, and manners."—M.]

93

[\(return\)](#)

[The Portuguese missionaries, Alvarez, (*Ramusio*, tom. i. fol. 204, rect. 274, vers.) Bermudez, (*Purchas's Pilgrims*, vol. ii. l. v. c. 7, p. 1149—1188,) Lobo, (*Relation, &c.*, par M. le Grand, with xv. Dissertations, Paris, 1728,) and Tellez (*Relations de Thevenot*, part iv.) could only relate of modern Abyssinia what they had seen or invented. The erudition of Ludolphus, (*Hist. Aethiopica*, Francofurt, 1681. *Commentarius*, 1691. Appendix, 1694,) in twenty-five languages, could add little concerning its ancient history. Yet the fame of Caled, or Ellisthaeus, the conqueror of Yemen, is celebrated in national songs and legends.]

94

[\(return\)](#)

[The negotiations of Justinian with the Axumites, or Aethiopians, are recorded by Procopius (*Persic.* l. i. c. 19, 20) and John Malala, (tom. ii. p. 163—

165, 193—196.) The historian of Antioch quotes the original narrative of the ambassador Nonnosus, of which Photius (Bibliot. Cod. iii.) has preserved a curious extract.]

95 [\(return\)](#)

[The trade of the Axumites to the coast of India and Africa, and the Isle of Ceylon, is curiously represented by Cosmas Indicopleustes, (Topograph. Christian. l. ii. p. 132, 138, 139, 140, l. xi. p. 338, 339.)]

9511 [\(return\)](#)

[It appears by the important inscription discovered by Mr. Salt at Axoum, and from a law of Constantius, (16th Jan. 356, inserted in the Theodosian Code, l. 12, c. 12,) that in the middle of the fourth century of our era the princes of the Axumites joined to their titles that of king of the Homerites. The conquests which they made over the Arabs in the sixth century were only a restoration of the ancient order of things. St. Martin vol. viii. p. 46—M.]

96 [\(return\)](#)

[Ludolph. Hist. et Comment. Aethiop. l. ii. c. 3.]

97 [\(return\)](#)

[The city of Negra, or Nagʿran, in Yemen, is surrounded with palm-trees, and stands in the high road between Saana, the capital, and Mecca; from the former ten, from the latter twenty days' journey of a caravan of camels, (Abulfeda, Descript. Arabiae, p. 52.)]

98 [\(return\)](#)

[The martyrdom of St. Arethas, prince of Negra, and his three hundred and forty companions, is embellished in the legends of Metaphrastes and Nicephorus Callistus, copied by Baronius, (A. D 522, No. 22—66, A.D. 523, No. 16—29,) and refuted with obscure diligence, by Basnage, (Hist. des Juifs, tom. viii. l. xii. c. ii. p. 333—348,) who investigates the state of the Jews in Arabia and Aethiopia. * Note: According to Johannsen, (Hist. Yemanae, Praef. p. 89,) Dunaan (Ds Nowas) massacred 20,000 Christians, and threw them into a pit, where they were burned. They are called in the Koran the companions of the pit (socii foveae.)—M.]

99 [\(return\)](#)

[Alvarez (in Ramusio, tom. i. fol. 219, vers. 221, vers.) saw the flourishing state of Axume in the year 1520—luogomolto buono e grande. It was ruined in

the same century by the Turkish invasion. No more than 100 houses remain; but the memory of its past greatness is preserved by the regal coronation, (Ludolph. Hist. et Comment. l. ii. c. 11.) * Note: Lord Valentia's and Mr. Salt's Travels give a high notion of the ruins of Axum.—M.]

9911 [\(return\)](#)

[The Negus is differently called Elesbaan, Elesboas, Elisthaeus, probably the same name, or rather appellation. See St. Martin, vol. viii. p. 49.—M.]

9912 [\(return\)](#)

[According to the Arabian authorities, (Johannsen, Hist. Yemanae, p. 94, Bonn, 1828,) Abrahah was an Abyssinian, the rival of Ariathus, the brother of the Abyssinian king: he surprised and slew Ariathus, and by his craft appeased the resentment of Nadjash, the Abyssinian king. Abrahah was a Christian; he built a magnificent church at Sana, and dissuaded his subjects from their accustomed pilgrimages to Mecca. The church was defiled, it was supposed, by the Koreishites, and Abrahah took up arms to revenge himself on the temple at Mecca. He was repelled by miracle: his elephant would not advance, but knelt down before the sacred place; Abrahah fled, discomfited and mortally wounded, to Sana—M.]

100 [\(return\)](#)

[The revolutions of Yemen in the sixth century must be collected from Procopius, (Persic. l. i. c. 19, 20,) Theophanes Byzant., (apud Phot. cod. lxxiii. p. 80,) St. Theophanes, (in Chronograph. p. 144, 145, 188, 189, 206, 207, who is full of strange blunders,) Pocock, (Specimen Hist. Arab. p. 62, 65,) D'Herbelot, (Bibliot. Orientale, p. 12, 477,) and Sale's Preliminary Discourse and Koran, (c. 105.) The revolt of Abrahah is mentioned by Procopius; and his fall, though clouded with miracles, is an historical fact. Note: To the authors who have illustrated the obscure history of the Jewish and Abyssinian kingdoms in Homeritis may be added Schultens, Hist. Joctanidarum; Walch, Historia rerum in Homerite gestarum, in the 4th vol. of the Gottingen Transactions; Salt's Travels, vol. ii. p. 446, &c.: Sylvestre de Sacy, vol. i. Acad. des Inscript. Jost, Geschichte der Israeliter; Johannsen, Hist. Yemanae; St. Martin's notes to Le Beau, t. vii p. 42.—M.]

1001 [\(return\)](#)

[A period of sixty-seven years is assigned by most

of the Arabian authorities to the Abyssinian
kingdoms in Homeritis.—M.]

Chapter XLIII: Last Victory And Death Of Belisarius, Death Of Justinian.—Part I.

Rebellions Of Africa.—Restoration Of The Gothic Kingdom By
Totila.—Loss And Recovery Of Rome.—Final Conquest Of
Italy By Narses.—Extinction Of The Ostrogoths.—Defeat Of
The Franks And Alemanni.—Last Victory, Disgrace, And Death
Of Belisarius.—Death And Character Of Justinian.—Comet,
Earthquakes, And Plague.

The review of the nations from the Danube to the Nile has exposed, on every side, the weakness of the Romans; and our wonder is reasonably excited that they should presume to enlarge an empire whose ancient limits they were incapable of defending. But the wars, the conquests, and the triumphs of Justinian, are the feeble and pernicious efforts of old age, which exhaust the remains of strength, and accelerate the decay of the powers of life. He exulted in the glorious act of restoring Africa and Italy to the republic; but the calamities which followed the departure of Belisarius betrayed the impotence of the conqueror, and accomplished the ruin of those unfortunate countries.

From his new acquisitions, Justinian expected that his avarice, as well as pride, should be richly gratified. A rapacious minister of the finances closely pursued the footsteps of Belisarius; and as the old registers of tribute had been burnt by the Vandals, he indulged his fancy in a liberal calculation and arbitrary assessment of the wealth of Africa. [1](#) The increase of taxes, which were drawn away by a distant sovereign, and a general resumption of the patrimony or crown lands, soon dispelled the intoxication of the public joy: but the emperor was insensible to the modest complaints of the people, till he was awakened and alarmed by the clamors of military discontent. Many of the Roman soldiers had married the widows and daughters of the Vandals. As their own, by the double right of conquest and inheritance, they claimed the estates which Genseric had assigned to his victorious troops. They heard with disdain the cold and selfish representations of their officers, that the liberality of Justinian had raised them from a savage or servile condition; that they were already enriched by the spoils of Africa, the treasure, the slaves, and the movables of the vanquished Barbarians; and that the ancient and lawful patrimony of the emperors would be applied only to the support of that government on which their own safety and reward must ultimately depend. The mutiny was secretly inflamed by a thousand soldiers, for the most part Heruli, who had imbibed the doctrines, and were instigated by the clergy, of the Arian sect; and the cause of perjury and rebellion was sanctified by the dispensing powers of fanaticism. The Arians deplored the ruin of their church, triumphant above a century in Africa; and they were

justly provoked by the laws of the conqueror, which interdicted the baptism of their children, and the exercise of all religious worship. Of the Vandals chosen by Belisarius, the far greater part, in the honors of the Eastern service, forgot their country and religion. But a generous band of four hundred obliged the mariners, when they were in sight of the Isle of Lesbos, to alter their course: they touched on Peloponnesus, ran ashore on a desert coast of Africa, and boldly erected, on Mount Aurasius, the standard of independence and revolt. While the troops of the provinces disclaimed the commands of their superiors, a conspiracy was formed at Carthage against the life of Solomon, who filled with honor the place of Belisarius; and the Arians had piously resolved to sacrifice the tyrant at the foot of the altar, during the awful mysteries of the festival of Easter. Fear or remorse restrained the daggers of the assassins, but the patience of Solomon emboldened their discontent; and, at the end of ten days, a furious sedition was kindled in the Circus, which desolated Africa above ten years. The pillage of the city, and the indiscriminate slaughter of its inhabitants, were suspended only by darkness, sleep, and intoxication: the governor, with seven companions, among whom was the historian Procopius, escaped to Sicily: two thirds of the army were involved in the guilt of treason; and eight thousand insurgents, assembling in the field of Bulla, elected Stoza for their chief, a private soldier, who possessed in a superior degree the virtues of a rebel. Under the mask of freedom, his eloquence could lead, or at least impel, the passions of his equals. He raised himself to a level with Belisarius, and the nephew of the emperor, by daring to encounter them in the field; and the victorious generals were compelled to acknowledge that Stoza deserved a purer cause, and a more legitimate command. Vanquished in battle, he dexterously employed the arts of negotiation; a Roman army was seduced from their allegiance, and the chiefs who had trusted to his faithless promise were murdered by his order in a church of Numidia. When every resource, either of force or perfidy, was exhausted, Stoza, with some desperate Vandals, retired to the wilds of Mauritania, obtained the daughter of a Barbarian prince, and eluded the pursuit of his enemies, by the report of his death. The personal weight of Belisarius, the rank, the spirit, and the temper, of Germanus, the emperor's nephew, and the vigor and success of the second administration of the eunuch Solomon, restored the modesty of the camp, and maintained for a while the tranquillity of Africa. But the vices of the Byzantine court were felt in that distant province; the troops complained that they were neither paid nor relieved, and as soon as the public disorders were sufficiently mature, Stoza was again alive, in arms, and at the gates of Carthage. He fell in a single combat, but he smiled in the agonies of death, when he was informed that his own javelin had reached the heart of his antagonist. [1001](#) The example of Stoza, and the assurance that a fortunate soldier had been the first king, encouraged the ambition of Gontharis, and he promised, by a private treaty, to divide Africa with the Moors, if, with their dangerous aid, he should ascend the throne of Carthage. The feeble Areobindus, unskilled in the affairs of peace and war, was raised, by his marriage with the niece of Justinian, to the office of exarch. He was suddenly oppressed by a

sedition of the guards, and his abject supplications, which provoked the contempt, could not move the pity, of the inexorable tyrant. After a reign of thirty days, Gontharis himself was stabbed at a banquet by the hand of Artaban; [1002](#) and it is singular enough, that an Armenian prince, of the royal family of Arsaces, should reestablish at Carthage the authority of the Roman empire. In the conspiracy which unsheathed the dagger of Brutus against the life of Caesar, every circumstance is curious and important to the eyes of posterity; but the guilt or merit of these loyal or rebellious assassins could interest only the contemporaries of Procopius, who, by their hopes and fears, their friendship or resentment, were personally engaged in the revolutions of Africa. [2](#)

1 [\(return\)](#)

[For the troubles of Africa, I neither have nor desire another guide than Procopius, whose eye contemplated the image, and whose ear collected the reports, of the memorable events of his own times. In the second book of the Vandalic war he relates the revolt of Stoza, (c. 14—24,) the return of Belisarius, (c. 15,) the victory of Germanus, (c. 16, 17, 18,) the second administration of Solomon, (c. 19, 20, 21,) the government of Sergius, (c. 22, 23,) of Areobindus, (c. 24,) the tyranny and death of Gontharis, (c. 25, 26, 27, 28;) nor can I discern any symptoms of flattery or malevolence in his various portraits.]

1001 [\(return\)](#)

[Corippus gives a different account of the death of Stoza; he was transfixed by an arrow from the hand of John, (not the hero of his poem) who broke desperately through the victorious troops of the enemy. Stoza repented, says the poet, of his treasonous rebellion, and anticipated—another Cataline—eternal torments as his punishment.

Reddam, improba, pœnas Quas merui. Furiis socius
Catilina cruentis Exagitatus adest. Video jam
Tartara, fundo Flammarumque globos, et clara
incendia volvi.
—Johannidos, book iv. line 211.

All the other authorities confirm Gibbon's account of the death of John by the hand of Stoza. This poem of Corippus, unknown to Gibbon, was first published by Mazzuchelli during the present century, and is reprinted in the new edition of the Byzantine writers.—M]

1002 [\(return\)](#)

[This murder was prompted to the Armenian (according to Corippus) by Athanasius, (then præfect of Africa.)

Hunc placidus canâ gravitate coegit
Innumera mactare virum.—Corripus, vol. iv. p.
237—M.]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Yet I must not refuse him the merit of painting, in lively colors, the murder of Gontharis. One of the assassins uttered a sentiment not unworthy of a Roman patriot: “If I fail,” said Artasires, “in the first stroke, kill me on the spot, lest the rack should extort a discovery of my accomplices.”]

That country was rapidly sinking into the state of barbarism from whence it had been raised by the Phœnician colonies and Roman laws; and every step of intestine discord was marked by some deplorable victory of savage man over civilized society. The Moors, [3](#) though ignorant of justice, were impatient of oppression: their vagrant life and boundless wilderness disappointed the arms, and eluded the chains, of a conqueror; and experience had shown, that neither oaths nor obligations could secure the fidelity of their attachment. The victory of Mount Auras had awed them into momentary submission; but if they respected the character of Solomon, they hated and despised the pride and luxury of his two nephews, Cyrus and Sergius, on whom their uncle had imprudently bestowed the provincial governments of Tripoli and Pentapolis. A Moorish tribe encamped under the walls of Leptis, to renew their alliance, and receive from the governor the customary gifts. Fourscore of their deputies were introduced as friends into the city; but on the dark suspicion of a conspiracy, they were massacred at the table of Sergius, and the clamor of arms and revenge was reechoed through the valleys of Mount Atlas from both the Syrtes to the Atlantic Ocean. A personal injury, the unjust execution or murder of his brother, rendered Antalas the enemy of the Romans. The defeat of the Vandals had formerly signalized his valor; the rudiments of justice and prudence were still more conspicuous in a Moor; and while he laid Adrumetum in ashes, he calmly admonished the emperor that the peace of Africa might be secured by the recall of Solomon and his unworthy nephews. The exarch led forth his troops from Carthage: but, at the distance of six days’ journey, in the neighborhood of Tebeste, [4](#) he was astonished by the superior numbers and fierce aspect of the Barbarians. He proposed a treaty; solicited a reconciliation; and offered to bind himself by the most solemn oaths. “By what oaths can he bind himself?” interrupted the indignant Moors. “Will he swear by the Gospels, the divine books of the Christians? It was on those books that the faith of his nephew Sergius was pledged to eighty of our innocent and unfortunate brethren. Before we trust them a second time, let us try their efficacy in the chastisement of perjury and the vindication of their own honor.” Their honor was vindicated in the field of Tebeste, by the death of Solomon, and the total loss of his army. [411](#) The arrival of fresh troops and more skilful commanders soon checked the insolence of the Moors: seventeen of their princes were slain in the same battle; and the doubtful and transient submission of their tribes was celebrated with lavish applause by

the people of Constantinople. Successive inroads had reduced the province of Africa to one third of the measure of Italy; yet the Roman emperors continued to reign above a century over Carthage and the fruitful coast of the Mediterranean. But the victories and the losses of Justinian were alike pernicious to mankind; and such was the desolation of Africa, that in many parts a stranger might wander whole days without meeting the face either of a friend or an enemy. The nation of the Vandals had disappeared: they once amounted to a hundred and sixty thousand warriors, without including the children, the women, or the slaves. Their numbers were infinitely surpassed by the number of the Moorish families extirpated in a relentless war; and the same destruction was retaliated on the Romans and their allies, who perished by the climate, their mutual quarrels, and the rage of the Barbarians. When Procopius first landed, he admired the populousness of the cities and country, strenuously exercised in the labors of commerce and agriculture. In less than twenty years, that busy scene was converted into a silent solitude; the wealthy citizens escaped to Sicily and Constantinople; and the secret historian has confidently affirmed, that five millions of Africans were consumed by the wars and government of the emperor Justinian. [5](#)

3

[\(return\)](#)

[The Moorish wars are occasionally introduced into the narrative of Procopius, (Vandal. l. ii. c. 19—23, 25, 27, 28. Gothic. l. iv. c. 17;) and Theophanes adds some prosperous and adverse events in the last years of Justinian.]

4

[\(return\)](#)

[Now Tibesh, in the kingdom of Algiers. It is watered by a river, the Sujerass, which falls into the Mejerda, (Bagradas.) Tibesh is still remarkable for its walls of large stones, (like the Coliseum of Rome,) a fountain, and a grove of walnut-trees: the country is fruitful, and the neighboring Bereberes are warlike. It appears from an inscription, that, under the reign of Adrian, the road from Carthage to Tebeste was constructed by the third legion, (Marmol, Description de l’Afrique, tom. ii. p. 442, 443. Shaw’s Travels, p. 64, 65, 66.)]

411

[\(return\)](#)

[Corripus (Johannidos lib. iii. 417—441) describes the defeat and death of Solomon.—M.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, Anecdot. c. 18. The series of the African history attests this melancholy truth.]

The jealousy of the Byzantine court had not permitted Belisarius to achieve the conquest of Italy; and his abrupt departure revived the courage of the Goths, [6](#) who respected his genius, his virtue, and even the laudable motive which had urged the servant of Justinian to deceive and reject them. They had lost their king (an inconsiderable loss,) their capital, their treasures, the provinces from Sicily to the Alps,

and the military force of two hundred thousand Barbarians, magnificently equipped with horses and arms. Yet all was not lost, as long as Pavia was defended by one thousand Goths, inspired by a sense of honor, the love of freedom, and the memory of their past greatness. The supreme command was unanimously offered to the brave Uraias; and it was in his eyes alone that the disgrace of his uncle Vitiges could appear as a reason of exclusion. His voice inclined the election in favor of Hildibald, whose personal merit was recommended by the vain hope that his kinsman Theudes, the Spanish monarch, would support the common interest of the Gothic nation. The success of his arms in Liguria and Venetia seemed to justify their choice; but he soon declared to the world that he was incapable of forgiving or commanding his benefactor. The consort of Hildibald was deeply wounded by the beauty, the riches, and the pride, of the wife of Uraias; and the death of that virtuous patriot excited the indignation of a free people. A bold assassin executed their sentence by striking off the head of Hildibald in the midst of a banquet; the Rugians, a foreign tribe, assumed the privilege of election: and Totila, [611](#) the nephew of the late king, was tempted, by revenge, to deliver himself and the garrison of Trevigo into the hands of the Romans.

But the gallant and accomplished youth was easily persuaded to prefer the Gothic throne before the service of Justinian; and as soon as the palace of Pavia had been purified from the Rugian usurper, he reviewed the national force of five thousand soldiers, and generously undertook the restoration of the kingdom of Italy.

6

[\(return\)](#)

[In the second (c. 30) and third books, (c. 1—40,) Procopius continues the history of the Gothic war from the fifth to the fifteenth year of Justinian. As the events are less interesting than in the former period, he allots only half the space to double the time. Jornandes, and the Chronicle of Marcellinus, afford some collateral hints Sigonius, Pagi, Muratori, Mascou, and De Buat, are useful, and have been used.]

611

[\(return\)](#)

[His real name, as appears by medals, was Baduilla, or Badiula. Totila signifies immortal: tod (in German) is death. Todilas, deathless. Compare St Martin, vol. ix. p. 37.—M.]

The successors of Belisarius, eleven generals of equal rank, neglected to crush the feeble and disunited Goths, till they were roused to action by the progress of Totila and the reproaches of Justinian. The gates of Verona were secretly opened to Artabazus, at the head of one hundred Persians in the service of the empire. The Goths fled from the city. At the distance of sixty furlongs the Roman generals halted to regulate the division of the spoil. While they disputed, the enemy discovered the real number of the victors: the Persians were instantly overpowered, and it was by leaping from the wall that Artabazus preserved a life which he lost in a few days by the lance of a Barbarian, who

had defied him to single combat. Twenty thousand Romans encountered the forces of Totila, near Faenza, and on the hills of Mugello, of the Florentine territory. The ardor of freedmen, who fought to regain their country, was opposed to the languid temper of mercenary troops, who were even destitute of the merits of strong and well-disciplined servitude. On the first attack, they abandoned their ensigns, threw down their arms, and dispersed on all sides with an active speed, which abated the loss, whilst it aggravated the shame, of their defeat. The king of the Goths, who blushed for the baseness of his enemies, pursued with rapid steps the path of honor and victory. Totila passed the Po, [6112](#) traversed the Apennine, suspended the important conquest of Ravenna, Florence, and Rome, and marched through the heart of Italy, to form the siege or rather the blockade, of Naples. The Roman chiefs, imprisoned in their respective cities, and accusing each other of the common disgrace, did not presume to disturb his enterprise. But the emperor, alarmed by the distress and danger of his Italian conquests, despatched to the relief of Naples a fleet of galleys and a body of Thracian and Armenian soldiers. They landed in Sicily, which yielded its copious stores of provisions; but the delays of the new commander, an unwarlike magistrate, protracted the sufferings of the besieged; and the succors, which he dropped with a timid and tardy hand, were successively intercepted by the armed vessels stationed by Totila in the Bay of Naples. The principal officer of the Romans was dragged, with a rope round his neck, to the foot of the wall, from whence, with a trembling voice, he exhorted the citizens to implore, like himself, the mercy of the conqueror. They requested a truce, with a promise of surrendering the city, if no effectual relief should appear at the end of thirty days. Instead of one month, the audacious Barbarian granted them three, in the just confidence that famine would anticipate the term of their capitulation. After the reduction of Naples and Cumae, the provinces of Lucania, Apulia, and Calabria, submitted to the king of the Goths. Totila led his army to the gates of Rome, pitched his camp at Tibur, or Tivoli, within twenty miles of the capital, and calmly exhorted the senate and people to compare the tyranny of the Greeks with the blessings of the Gothic reign.

6112

[\(return\)](#)

[This is not quite correct: he had crossed the Po
before the battle of Faenza.—M.]

The rapid success of Totila may be partly ascribed to the revolution which three years' experience had produced in the sentiments of the Italians. At the command, or at least in the name, of a Catholic emperor, the pope, [7](#) their spiritual father, had been torn from the Roman church, and either starved or murdered on a desolate island. [8](#) The virtues of Belisarius were replaced by the various or uniform vices of eleven chiefs, at Rome, Ravenna, Florence, Perugia, Spoleto, &c., who abused their authority for the indulgence of lust or avarice. The improvement of the revenue was committed to Alexander, a subtle scribe, long practised in the fraud and oppression of the Byzantine schools, and whose name of Psalliction, the scissors, [9](#) was drawn from the dexterous artifice with which he reduced the size without defacing the figure, of the gold coin.

Instead of expecting the restoration of peace and industry, he imposed a heavy assessment on the fortunes of the Italians. Yet his present or future demands were less odious than a prosecution of arbitrary rigor against the persons and property of all those who, under the Gothic kings, had been concerned in the receipt and expenditure of the public money. The subjects of Justinian, who escaped these partial vexations, were oppressed by the irregular maintenance of the soldiers, whom Alexander defrauded and despised; and their hasty sallies in quest of wealth, or subsistence, provoked the inhabitants of the country to await or implore their deliverance from the virtues of a Barbarian. Totila [10](#) was chaste and temperate; and none were deceived, either friends or enemies, who depended on his faith or his clemency. To the husbandmen of Italy the Gothic king issued a welcome proclamation, enjoining them to pursue their important labors, and to rest assured, that, on the payment of the ordinary taxes, they should be defended by his valor and discipline from the injuries of war. The strong towns he successively attacked; and as soon as they had yielded to his arms, he demolished the fortifications, to save the people from the calamities of a future siege, to deprive the Romans of the arts of defence, and to decide the tedious quarrel of the two nations, by an equal and honorable conflict in the field of battle. The Roman captives and deserters were tempted to enlist in the service of a liberal and courteous adversary; the slaves were attracted by the firm and faithful promise, that they should never be delivered to their masters; and from the thousand warriors of Pavia, a new people, under the same appellation of Goths, was insensibly formed in the camp of Totila. He sincerely accomplished the articles of capitulation, without seeking or accepting any sinister advantage from ambiguous expressions or unforeseen events: the garrison of Naples had stipulated that they should be transported by sea; the obstinacy of the winds prevented their voyage, but they were generously supplied with horses, provisions, and a safe-conduct to the gates of Rome. The wives of the senators, who had been surprised in the villas of Campania, were restored, without a ransom, to their husbands; the violation of female chastity was inexorably chastised with death; and in the salutary regulation of the edict of the famished Neapolitans, the conqueror assumed the office of a humane and attentive physician. The virtues of Totila are equally laudable, whether they proceeded from true policy, religious principle, or the instinct of humanity: he often harangued his troops; and it was his constant theme, that national vice and ruin are inseparably connected; that victory is the fruit of moral as well as military virtue; and that the prince, and even the people, are responsible for the crimes which they neglect to punish.

[Sylverius, bishop of Rome, was first transported to Patara, in Lycia, and at length starved (*sub eorum custodia inedia confectus*) in the Isle of Palmaria, A.D. 538, June 20, (*Liberat. in Breviar. c. 22. Anastasius, in Sylverio. Baronius, A.D. 540, No. 2, 3. Pagi, in Vit. Pont. tom. i. p. 285, 286.*) Procopius

(Anecd. c. 1) accuses only the empress and Antonina.]

8 [\(return\)](#)

[Palmaria, a small island, opposite to Terracina and the coast of the Volsci, (Cluver. Ital. Antiq. l. iii. c. 7, p. 1014.)]

9 [\(return\)](#)

[As the Logothete Alexander, and most of his civil and military colleagues, were either disgraced or despised, the ink of the Anecdotes (c. 4, 5, 18) is scarcely blacker than that of the Gothic History (l. iii. c. 1, 3, 4, 9, 20, 21, &c.)]

10 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius (l. iii. c. 2, 8, &c.,) does ample and willing justice to the merit of Totila. The Roman historians, from Sallust and Tacitus were happy to forget the vices of their countrymen in the contemplation of Barbaric virtue.]

The return of Belisarius to save the country which he had subdued, was pressed with equal vehemence by his friends and enemies; and the Gothic war was imposed as a trust or an exile on the veteran commander. A hero on the banks of the Euphrates, a slave in the palace of Constantinople, he accepted with reluctance the painful task of supporting his own reputation, and retrieving the faults of his successors. The sea was open to the Romans: the ships and soldiers were assembled at Salona, near the palace of Diocletian: he refreshed and reviewed his troops at Pola in Istria, coasted round the head of the Adriatic, entered the port of Ravenna, and despatched orders rather than supplies to the subordinate cities. His first public oration was addressed to the Goths and Romans, in the name of the emperor, who had suspended for a while the conquest of Persia, and listened to the prayers of his Italian subjects. He gently touched on the causes and the authors of the recent disasters; striving to remove the fear of punishment for the past, and the hope of impunity for the future, and laboring, with more zeal than success, to unite all the members of his government in a firm league of affection and obedience. Justinian, his gracious master, was inclined to pardon and reward; and it was their interest, as well as duty, to reclaim their deluded brethren, who had been seduced by the arts of the usurper. Not a man was tempted to desert the standard of the Gothic king. Belisarius soon discovered, that he was sent to remain the idle and impotent spectator of the glory of a young Barbarian; and his own epistle exhibits a genuine and lively picture of the distress of a noble mind. “Most excellent prince, we are arrived in Italy, destitute of all the necessary implements of war, men, horses, arms, and money. In our late circuit through the villages of Thrace and Illyricum, we have collected, with extreme difficulty, about four thousand recruits, naked, and unskilled in the use of weapons and the exercises of the camp. The soldiers already stationed in the province are discontented, fearful, and dismayed; at the sound of an enemy, they dismiss their horses, and cast their arms on the ground. No taxes can be raised, since Italy is in the

hands of the Barbarians; the failure of payment has deprived us of the right of command, or even of admonition. Be assured, dread Sir, that the greater part of your troops have already deserted to the Goths. If the war could be achieved by the presence of Belisarius alone, your wishes are satisfied; Belisarius is in the midst of Italy. But if you desire to conquer, far other preparations are requisite: without a military force, the title of general is an empty name. It would be expedient to restore to my service my own veteran and domestic guards. Before I can take the field, I must receive an adequate supply of light and heavy armed troops; and it is only with ready money that you can procure the indispensable aid of a powerful body of the cavalry of the Huns.” [11](#) An officer in whom Belisarius confided was sent from Ravenna to hasten and conduct the succors; but the message was neglected, and the messenger was detained at Constantinople by an advantageous marriage. After his patience had been exhausted by delay and disappointment, the Roman general repassed the Adriatic, and expected at Dyrrachium the arrival of the troops, which were slowly assembled among the subjects and allies of the empire. His powers were still inadequate to the deliverance of Rome, which was closely besieged by the Gothic king. The Appian way, a march of forty days, was covered by the Barbarians; and as the prudence of Belisarius declined a battle, he preferred the safe and speedy navigation of five days from the coast of Epirus to the mouth of the Tyber.

11

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, l. iii. c. 12. The soul of a hero is deeply impressed on the letter; nor can we confound such genuine and original acts with the elaborate and often empty speeches of the Byzantine historians]

After reducing, by force, or treaty, the towns of inferior note in the midland provinces of Italy, Totila proceeded, not to assault, but to encompass and starve, the ancient capital. Rome was afflicted by the avarice, and guarded by the valor, of Bessas, a veteran chief of Gothic extraction, who filled, with a garrison of three thousand soldiers, the spacious circle of her venerable walls. From the distress of the people he extracted a profitable trade, and secretly rejoiced in the continuance of the siege. It was for his use that the granaries had been replenished: the charity of Pope Vigilius had purchased and embarked an ample supply of Sicilian corn; but the vessels which escaped the Barbarians were seized by a rapacious governor, who imparted a scanty sustenance to the soldiers, and sold the remainder to the wealthy Romans. The medimnus, or fifth part of the quarter of wheat, was exchanged for seven pieces of gold; fifty pieces were given for an ox, a rare and accidental prize; the progress of famine enhanced this exorbitant value, and the mercenaries were tempted to deprive themselves of the allowance which was scarcely sufficient for the support of life. A tasteless and unwholesome mixture, in which the bran thrice exceeded the quantity of flour, appeased the hunger of the poor; they were gradually reduced to feed on dead horses, dogs, cats, and mice, and eagerly to snatch the grass, and even the nettles, which grew among the ruins of the city. A crowd of spectres, pale and emaciated, their bodies oppressed with disease, and their

minds with despair, surrounded the palace of the governor, urged, with unavailing truth, that it was the duty of a master to maintain his slaves, and humbly requested that he would provide for their subsistence, to permit their flight, or command their immediate execution. Bessas replied, with unfeeling tranquillity, that it was impossible to feed, unsafe to dismiss, and unlawful to kill, the subjects of the emperor. Yet the example of a private citizen might have shown his countrymen that a tyrant cannot withhold the privilege of death. Pierced by the cries of five children, who vainly called on their father for bread, he ordered them to follow his steps, advanced with calm and silent despair to one of the bridges of the Tyber, and, covering his face, threw himself headlong into the stream, in the presence of his family and the Roman people. To the rich and pusillammous, Bessas [12](#) sold the permission of departure; but the greatest part of the fugitives expired on the public highways, or were intercepted by the flying parties of Barbarians. In the mean while, the artful governor soothed the discontent, and revived the hopes of the Romans, by the vague reports of the fleets and armies which were hastening to their relief from the extremities of the East. They derived more rational comfort from the assurance that Belisarius had landed at the port; and, without numbering his forces, they firmly relied on the humanity, the courage, and the skill of their great deliverer.

12

[\(return\)](#)

[The avarice of Bessas is not dissembled by Procopius, (l. iii. c. 17, 20.) He expiated the loss of Rome by the glorious conquest of Petraea, (Goth. l. iv. c. 12;) but the same vices followed him from the Tyber to the Phasis, (c. 13;) and the historian is equally true to the merits and defects of his character. The chastisement which the author of the romance of Belisaire has inflicted on the oppressor of Rome is more agreeable to justice than to history.]

Chapter XLIII: Last Victory And Death Of Belisarius, Death OF Justinian.—Part II.

The foresight of Totila had raised obstacles worthy of such an antagonist. Ninety furlongs below the city, in the narrowest part of the river, he joined the two banks by strong and solid timbers in the form of a bridge, on which he erected two lofty towers, manned by the bravest of his Goths, and profusely stored with missile weapons and engines of offence. The approach of the bridge and towers was covered by a strong and massy chain of iron; and the chain, at either end, on the opposite sides of the Tyber, was defended by a numerous and chosen detachment of archers. But the enterprise of forcing these barriers, and relieving the capital, displays a shining example of the boldness and conduct of Belisarius. His cavalry advanced from the port along the public road, to awe

the motions, and distract the attention of the enemy. His infantry and provisions were distributed in two hundred large boats; and each boat was shielded by a high rampart of thick planks, pierced with many small holes for the discharge of missile weapons. In the front, two large vessels were linked together to sustain a floating castle, which commanded the towers of the bridge, and contained a magazine of fire, sulphur, and bitumen. The whole fleet, which the general led in person, was laboriously moved against the current of the river. The chain yielded to their weight, and the enemies who guarded the banks were either slain or scattered. As soon as they touched the principal barrier, the fire-ship was instantly grappled to the bridge; one of the towers, with two hundred Goths, was consumed by the flames; the assailants shouted victory; and Rome was saved, if the wisdom of Belisarius had not been defeated by the misconduct of his officers. He had previously sent orders to Bessas to second his operations by a timely sally from the town; and he had fixed his lieutenant, Isaac, by a peremptory command, to the station of the port. But avarice rendered Bessas immovable; while the youthful ardor of Isaac delivered him into the hands of a superior enemy. The exaggerated rumor of his defeat was hastily carried to the ears of Belisarius: he paused; betrayed in that single moment of his life some emotions of surprise and perplexity; and reluctantly sounded a retreat to save his wife Antonina, his treasures, and the only harbor which he possessed on the Tuscan coast. The vexation of his mind produced an ardent and almost mortal fever; and Rome was left without protection to the mercy or indignation of Totila. The continuance of hostilities had embittered the national hatred: the Arian clergy was ignominiously driven from Rome; Pelagius, the archdeacon, returned without success from an embassy to the Gothic camp; and a Sicilian bishop, the envoy or nuncio of the pope, was deprived of both his hands, for daring to utter falsehoods in the service of the church and state.

Famine had relaxed the strength and discipline of the garrison of Rome. They could derive no effectual service from a dying people; and the inhuman avarice of the merchant at length absorbed the vigilance of the governor. Four Isaurian sentinels, while their companions slept, and their officers were absent, descended by a rope from the wall, and secretly proposed to the Gothic king to introduce his troops into the city. The offer was entertained with coldness and suspicion; they returned in safety; they twice repeated their visit; the place was twice examined; the conspiracy was known and disregarded; and no sooner had Totila consented to the attempt, than they unbarred the Asinarian gate, and gave admittance to the Goths. Till the dawn of day, they halted in order of battle, apprehensive of treachery or ambush; but the troops of Bessas, with their leader, had already escaped; and when the king was pressed to disturb their retreat, he prudently replied, that no sight could be more grateful than that of a flying enemy. The patricians, who were still possessed of horses, Decius, Basilius, &c. accompanied the governor; their brethren, among whom Olybrius, Orestes, and Maximus, are named by the historian, took refuge in the church of St. Peter: but the assertion, that only five hundred persons remained in the capital, inspires some doubt of the fidelity either of

his narrative or of his text. As soon as daylight had displayed the entire victory of the Goths, their monarch devoutly visited the tomb of the prince of the apostles; but while he prayed at the altar, twenty-five soldiers, and sixty citizens, were put to the sword in the vestibule of the temple. The archdeacon Pelagius [13](#) stood before him, with the Gospels in his hand. "O Lord, be merciful to your servant." "Pelagius," said Totila, with an insulting smile, "your pride now condescends to become a suppliant." "I am a suppliant," replied the prudent archdeacon; "God has now made us your subjects, and as your subjects, we are entitled to your clemency." At his humble prayer, the lives of the Romans were spared; and the chastity of the maids and matrons was preserved inviolate from the passions of the hungry soldiers.

But they were rewarded by the freedom of pillage, after the most precious spoils had been reserved for the royal treasury. The houses of the senators were plentifully stored with gold and silver; and the avarice of Bessas had labored with so much guilt and shame for the benefit of the conqueror. In this revolution, the sons and daughters of Roman consuls tasted the misery which they had spurned or relieved, wandered in tattered garments through the streets of the city and begged their bread, perhaps without success, before the gates of their hereditary mansions. The riches of Rusticana, the daughter of Symmachus and widow of Boethius, had been generously devoted to alleviate the calamities of famine. But the Barbarians were exasperated by the report, that she had prompted the people to overthrow the statues of the great Theodoric; and the life of that venerable matron would have been sacrificed to his memory, if Totila had not respected her birth, her virtues, and even the pious motive of her revenge. The next day he pronounced two orations, to congratulate and admonish his victorious Goths, and to reproach the senate, as the vilest of slaves, with their perjury, folly, and ingratitude; sternly declaring, that their estates and honors were justly forfeited to the companions of his arms. Yet he consented to forgive their revolt; and the senators repaid his clemency by despatching circular letters to their tenants and vassals in the provinces of Italy, strictly to enjoin them to desert the standard of the Greeks, to cultivate their lands in peace, and to learn from their masters the duty of obedience to a Gothic sovereign. Against the city which had so long delayed the course of his victories, he appeared inexorable: one third of the walls, in different parts, were demolished by his command; fire and engines prepared to consume or subvert the most stately works of antiquity; and the world was astonished by the fatal decree, that Rome should be changed into a pasture for cattle. The firm and temperate remonstrance of Belisarius suspended the execution; he warned the Barbarian not to sully his fame by the destruction of those monuments which were the glory of the dead, and the delight of the living; and Totila was persuaded, by the advice of an enemy, to preserve Rome as the ornament of his kingdom, or the fairest pledge of peace and reconciliation. When he had signified to the ambassadors of Belisarius his intention of sparing the city, he stationed an army at the distance of one hundred and twenty furlongs, to observe the motions of the Roman general. With the remainder of his forces he marched into

Lucania and Apulia, and occupied on the summit of Mount Garganus [14](#) one of the camps of Hannibal. [15](#) The senators were dragged in his train, and afterwards confined in the fortresses of Campania: the citizens, with their wives and children, were dispersed in exile; and during forty days Rome was abandoned to desolate and dreary solitude. [16](#)

13

[\(return\)](#)

[During the long exile, and after the death of Vigilius, the Roman church was governed, at first by the archdeacon, and at length (A. D 655) by the pope Pelagius, who was not thought guiltless of the sufferings of his predecessor. See the original lives of the popes under the name of Anastasius, (Muratori, Script. Rer. Italicarum, tom. iii. P. i. p. 130, 131,) who relates several curious incidents of the sieges of Rome and the wars of Italy.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[Mount Garganus, now Monte St. Angelo, in the kingdom of Naples, runs three hundred stadia into the Adriatic Sea, (Strab.—vi. p. 436,) and in the darker ages was illustrated by the apparition, miracles, and church, of St. Michael the archangel. Horace, a native of Apulia or Lucania, had seen the elms and oaks of Garganus laboring and bellowing with the north wind that blew on that lofty coast, (Carm. ii. 9, Epist. ii. i. 201.)]

15

[\(return\)](#)

[I cannot ascertain this particular camp of Hannibal; but the Punic quarters were long and often in the neighborhood of Arpi, (T. Liv. xxii. 9, 12, xxiv. 3, &c.)]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[Totila.... Romam ingreditur.... ac evertit muros, domos aliquantas igni comburens, ac omnes Romanorum res in praedam ac cepit, hos ipsos Romanos in Campaniam captivos abduxit. Postquam devastationem, xl. autamp lius dies, Roma fuit ita desolata, ut nemo ibi hominum, nisi (nulloe?) bestiae morarentur, (Marcellin. in Chron. p. 54.)]

The loss of Rome was speedily retrieved by an action, to which, according to the event, the public opinion would apply the names of rashness or heroism. After the departure of Totila, the Roman general sallied from the port at the head of a thousand horse, cut in pieces the enemy who opposed his progress, and visited with pity and reverence the vacant space of the eternal city. Resolved to maintain a station so conspicuous in the eyes of mankind, he summoned the greatest part of his troops to the standard which he erected on the Capitol: the old inhabitants were recalled by the love of their country and the hopes of food; and the keys of Rome were sent a second time to the emperor Justinian. The walls, as far as they had been demolished by the Goths,

were repaired with rude and dissimilar materials; the ditch was restored; iron spikes [17](#) were profusely scattered in the highways to annoy the feet of the horses; and as new gates could not suddenly be procured, the entrance was guarded by a Spartan rampart of his bravest soldiers. At the expiration of twenty-five days, Totila returned by hasty marches from Apulia to avenge the injury and disgrace. Belisarius expected his approach. The Goths were thrice repulsed in three general assaults; they lost the flower of their troops; the royal standard had almost fallen into the hands of the enemy, and the fame of Totila sunk, as it had risen, with the fortune of his arms. Whatever skill and courage could achieve, had been performed by the Roman general: it remained only that Justinian should terminate, by a strong and seasonable effort, the war which he had ambitiously undertaken. The indolence, perhaps the impotence, of a prince who despised his enemies, and envied his servants, protracted the calamities of Italy. After a long silence, Belisarius was commanded to leave a sufficient garrison at Rome, and to transport himself into the province of Lucania, whose inhabitants, inflamed by Catholic zeal, had cast away the yoke of their Arian conquerors. In this ignoble warfare, the hero, invincible against the power of the Barbarians, was basely vanquished by the delay, the disobedience, and the cowardice of his own officers. He reposed in his winter quarters of Crotona, in the full assurance, that the two passes of the Lucanian hills were guarded by his cavalry. They were betrayed by treachery or weakness; and the rapid march of the Goths scarcely allowed time for the escape of Belisarius to the coast of Sicily. At length a fleet and army were assembled for the relief of Ruscianum, or Rossano, [18](#) a fortress sixty furlongs from the ruins of Sybaris, where the nobles of Lucania had taken refuge. In the first attempt, the Roman forces were dissipated by a storm. In the second, they approached the shore; but they saw the hills covered with archers, the landing-place defended by a line of spears, and the king of the Goths impatient for battle. The conqueror of Italy retired with a sigh, and continued to languish, inglorious and inactive, till Antonina, who had been sent to Constantinople to solicit succors, obtained, after the death of the empress, the permission of his return.

17

[\(return\)](#)

[The tribuli are small engines with four spikes, one fixed in the ground, the three others erect or adverse, (Procopius, Gothic. l. iii. c. 24. Just. Lipsius, Poliorcetic. l. v. c. 3.) The metaphor was borrowed from the tribuli, (land-caltrops,) an herb with a prickly fruit, common in Italy. (Martin, ad Virgil. Georgic. i. 153 vol. ii. p. 33.)]

18

[\(return\)](#)

[Ruscia, the navale Thuriorum, was transferred to the distance of sixty stadia to Ruscianum, Rossano, an archbishopric without suffragans. The republic of Sybaris is now the estate of the duke of Corigliano. (Riedesel, Travels into Magna Graecia and Sicily, p. 166—171.)]

The five last campaigns of Belisarius might abate the envy of his competitors, whose eyes had been dazzled and wounded by the blaze of his former glory. Instead of delivering Italy from the Goths, he had wandered like a fugitive along the coast, without daring to march into the country, or to accept the bold and repeated challenge of Totila. Yet, in the judgment of the few who could discriminate counsels from events, and compare the instruments with the execution, he appeared a more consummate master of the art of war, than in the season of his prosperity, when he presented two captive kings before the throne of Justinian. The valor of Belisarius was not chilled by age: his prudence was matured by experience; but the moral virtues of humanity and justice seem to have yielded to the hard necessity of the times. The parsimony or poverty of the emperor compelled him to deviate from the rule of conduct which had deserved the love and confidence of the Italians. The war was maintained by the oppression of Ravenna, Sicily, and all the faithful subjects of the empire; and the rigorous prosecution of Herodian provoked that injured or guilty officer to deliver Spoleto into the hands of the enemy. The avarice of Antonina, which had been some times diverted by love, now reigned without a rival in her breast. Belisarius himself had always understood, that riches, in a corrupt age, are the support and ornament of personal merit. And it cannot be presumed that he should stain his honor for the public service, without applying a part of the spoil to his private emolument. The hero had escaped the sword of the Barbarians. But the dagger of conspiracy [19](#) awaited his return. In the midst of wealth and honors, Artaban, who had chastised the African tyrant, complained of the ingratitude of courts. He aspired to Praejecta, the emperor's niece, who wished to reward her deliverer; but the impediment of his previous marriage was asserted by the piety of Theodora. The pride of royal descent was irritated by flattery; and the service in which he gloried had proved him capable of bold and sanguinary deeds. The death of Justinian was resolved, but the conspirators delayed the execution till they could surprise Belisarius disarmed, and naked, in the palace of Constantinople. Not a hope could be entertained of shaking his long-tried fidelity; and they justly dreaded the revenge, or rather the justice, of the veteran general, who might speedily assemble an army in Thrace to punish the assassins, and perhaps to enjoy the fruits of their crime. Delay afforded time for rash communications and honest confessions: Artaban and his accomplices were condemned by the senate, but the extreme clemency of Justinian detained them in the gentle confinement of the palace, till he pardoned their flagitious attempt against his throne and life. If the emperor forgave his enemies, he must cordially embrace a friend whose victories were alone remembered, and who was endeared to his prince by the recent circumstances of their common danger. Belisarius reposed from his toils, in the high station of general of the East and count of the domestics; and the older consuls and patricians respectfully yielded the precedence of rank to the peerless merit of the first of the Romans. [20](#) The first of the Romans still submitted to be the slave of his wife; but the servitude of habit and affection became less disgraceful when the death of Theodora had removed the baser influence of fear. Joannina, their daughter,

and the sole heiress of their fortunes, was betrothed to Anastasius, the grandson, or rather the nephew, of the empress, [21](#) whose kind interposition forwarded the consummation of their youthful loves. But the power of Theodora expired, the parents of Joannina returned, and her honor, perhaps her happiness, were sacrificed to the revenge of an unfeeling mother, who dissolved the imperfect nuptials before they had been ratified by the ceremonies of the church. [22](#)

19 [\(return\)](#)

[This conspiracy is related by Procopius (Gothic. l. iii. c. 31, 32) with such freedom and candor, that the liberty of the Anecdotes gives him nothing to add.]

20 [\(return\)](#)

[The honors of Belisarius are gladly commemorated by his secretary, (Procop. Goth. l. iii. c. 35, l. iv. c. 21.) This title is ill translated, at least in this instance, by *præfectus prætorio*; and to a military character, *magister militum* is more proper and applicable, (Ducange, Gloss. Graec. p. 1458, 1459.)]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[Alemannus, (ad Hist. Arcanum, p. 68,) Ducange, (Familiae Byzant. p. 98,) and Heineccius, (Hist. Juris Civilis, p. 434,) all three represent Anastasius as the son of the daughter of Theodora; and their opinion firmly reposes on the unambiguous testimony of Procopius, (Anecd. c. 4, 5,—twice repeated.) And yet I will remark, 1. That in the year 547, Theodora could scarcely have a grandson of the age of puberty; 2. That we are totally ignorant of this daughter and her husband; and, 3. That Theodora concealed her bastards, and that her grandson by Justinian would have been heir apparent of the empire.]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[The sins of the hero in Italy and after his return, are manifested, and most probably swelled, by the author of the Anecdotes, (c. 4, 5.) The designs of Antonina were favored by the fluctuating jurisprudence of Justinian. On the law of marriage and divorce, that emperor was *trocho versatilior*, (Heineccius, Element Juris Civil. ad Ordinem Pandect. P. iv. No. 233.)]

Before the departure of Belisarius, Perugia was besieged, and few cities were impregnable to the Gothic arms. Ravenna, Ancona, and Crotona, still resisted the Barbarians; and when Totila asked in marriage one of the daughters of France, he was stung by the just reproach that the king of Italy was unworthy of his title till it was acknowledged by the Roman people. Three thousand of the bravest soldiers had been left to defend the capital. On the suspicion of a monopoly, they massacred the governor,

and announced to Justinian, by a deputation of the clergy, that unless their offence was pardoned, and their arrears were satisfied, they should instantly accept the tempting offers of Totila. But the officer who succeeded to the command (his name was Diogenes) deserved their esteem and confidence; and the Goths, instead of finding an easy conquest, encountered a vigorous resistance from the soldiers and people, who patiently endured the loss of the port and of all maritime supplies. The siege of Rome would perhaps have been raised, if the liberality of Totila to the Isaurians had not encouraged some of their venal countrymen to copy the example of treason. In a dark night, while the Gothic trumpets sounded on another side, they silently opened the gate of St. Paul: the Barbarians rushed into the city; and the flying garrison was intercepted before they could reach the harbor of Centumcellae. A soldier trained in the school of Belisarius, Paul of Cilicia, retired with four hundred men to the mole of Hadrian. They repelled the Goths; but they felt the approach of famine; and their aversion to the taste of horse-flesh confirmed their resolution to risk the event of a desperate and decisive sally. But their spirit insensibly stooped to the offers of capitulation; they retrieved their arrears of pay, and preserved their arms and horses, by enlisting in the service of Totila; their chiefs, who pleaded a laudable attachment to their wives and children in the East, were dismissed with honor; and above four hundred enemies, who had taken refuge in the sanctuaries, were saved by the clemency of the victor. He no longer entertained a wish of destroying the edifices of Rome, [23](#) which he now respected as the seat of the Gothic kingdom: the senate and people were restored to their country; the means of subsistence were liberally provided; and Totila, in the robe of peace, exhibited the equestrian games of the circus. Whilst he amused the eyes of the multitude, four hundred vessels were prepared for the embarkation of his troops. The cities of Rhegium and Tarentum were reduced: he passed into Sicily, the object of his implacable resentment; and the island was stripped of its gold and silver, of the fruits of the earth, and of an infinite number of horses, sheep, and oxen. Sardinia and Corsica obeyed the fortune of Italy; and the sea-coast of Greece was visited by a fleet of three hundred galleys. [24](#) The Goths were landed in Corcyra and the ancient continent of Epirus; they advanced as far as Nicopolis, the trophy of Augustus, and Dodona, [25](#) once famous by the oracle of Jove. In every step of his victories, the wise Barbarian repeated to Justinian the desire of peace, applauded the concord of their predecessors, and offered to employ the Gothic arms in the service of the empire.

[The Romans were still attached to the monuments of their ancestors; and according to Procopius, (Goth. l. iv. c. 22,) the gallery of Aeneas, of a single rank of oars, 25 feet in breadth, 120 in length, was preserved entire in the navalia, near Monte Testaceo, at the foot of the Aventine, (Nardini, Roma Antica, l. vii. c. 9, p. 466. Donatus, Rom Antiqua, l. iv. c. 13, p. 334) But all antiquity is ignorant of relic.]

24

[\(return\)](#)

[In these seas Procopius searched without success for the Isle of Calypso. He was shown, at Phaeacia, or Cocyra, the petrified ship of Ulysses, (Odyss. xiii. 163;) but he found it a recent fabric of many stones, dedicated by a merchant to Jupiter Cassius, (l. iv. c. 22.) Eustathius had supposed it to be the fanciful likeness of a rock.]

25

[\(return\)](#)

[M. D'Anville (Memoires de l'Acad. tom. xxxii. p. 513—528) illustrates the Gulf of Ambracia; but he cannot ascertain the situation of Dodona. A country in sight of Italy is less known than the wilds of America. Note: On the site of Dodona compare Walpole's Travels in the East, vol. ii. p. 473; Col. Leake's Northern Greece, vol. iv. p. 163; and a dissertation by the present bishop of Lichfield (Dr. Butler) in the appendix to Hughes's Travels, vol. i. p. 511.—M.]

Justinian was deaf to the voice of peace: but he neglected the prosecution of war; and the indolence of his temper disappointed, in some degree, the obstinacy of his passions. From this salutary slumber the emperor was awakened by the pope Vigilius and the patrician Cethegus, who appeared before his throne, and adjured him, in the name of God and the people, to resume the conquest and deliverance of Italy. In the choice of the generals, caprice, as well as judgment, was shown. A fleet and army sailed for the relief of Sicily, under the conduct of Liberius; but his youth [2511](#) and want of experience were afterwards discovered, and before he touched the shores of the island he was overtaken by his successor. In the place of Liberius, the conspirator Artaban was raised from a prison to military honors; in the pious presumption, that gratitude would animate his valor and fortify his allegiance. Belisarius reposed in the shade of his laurels, but the command of the principal army was reserved for Germanus, [26](#) the emperor's nephew, whose rank and merit had been long depressed by the jealousy of the court. Theodora had injured him in the rights of a private citizen, the marriage of his children, and the testament of his brother; and although his conduct was pure and blameless, Justinian was displeased that he should be thought worthy of the confidence of the malcontents. The life of Germanus was a lesson of implicit obedience: he nobly refused to prostitute his name and character in the factions of the circus: the gravity of his manners was tempered by innocent cheerfulness; and his riches were lent without interest to indigent or deserving friends. His valor had formerly triumphed over the Slavonians of the Danube and the rebels of Africa: the first report of his promotion revived the hopes of the Italians; and he was privately assured, that a crowd of Roman deserters would abandon, on his approach, the standard of Totila. His second marriage with Malasontha, the granddaughter of Theodoric endeared Germanus to the Goths themselves; and they marched with reluctance against the father of a royal infant the

last offspring of the line of Amali. [27](#) A splendid allowance was assigned by the emperor: the general contributed his private fortune: his two sons were popular and active and he surpassed, in the promptitude and success of his levies the expectation of mankind. He was permitted to select some squadrons of Thracian cavalry: the veterans, as well as the youth of Constantinople and Europe, engaged their voluntary service; and as far as the heart of Germany, his fame and liberality attracted the aid of the Barbarians. [2711](#) The Romans advanced to Sardica; an army of Sclavonians fled before their march; but within two days of their final departure, the designs of Germanus were terminated by his malady and death. Yet the impulse which he had given to the Italian war still continued to act with energy and effect. The maritime towns Ancona, Crotona, Centumcellae, resisted the assaults of Totila. Sicily was reduced by the zeal of Artaban, and the Gothic navy was defeated near the coast of the Adriatic. The two fleets were almost equal, forty-seven to fifty galleys: the victory was decided by the knowledge and dexterity of the Greeks; but the ships were so closely grappled, that only twelve of the Goths escaped from this unfortunate conflict. They affected to depreciate an element in which they were unskilled; but their own experience confirmed the truth of a maxim, that the master of the sea will always acquire the dominion of the land. [28](#)

2511 [\(return\)](#)

[This is a singular mistake. Gibbon must have hastily caught at his inexperience, and concluded that it must have been from youth. Lord Mahon has pointed out this error, p. 401. I should add that in the last 4to. edition, corrected by Gibbon, it stands “want of youth and experience;”—but Gibbon can scarcely have intended such a phrase.—M.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[See the acts of Germanus in the public (Vandal. l. ii, c. 16, 17, 18 Goth. l. iii. c. 31, 32) and private history, (Anecd. c. 5,) and those of his son Justin, in Agathias, (l. iv. p. 130, 131.) Notwithstanding an ambiguous expression of Jornandes, fratri suo, Alemannus has proved that he was the son of the emperor’s brother.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[Conjuncta Aniciorum gens cum Amala stirpe spem adhuc utii usque generis promittit, (Jornandes, c. 60, p. 703.) He wrote at Ravenna before the death of Totila]

2711 [\(return\)](#)

[See note 31, p. 268.—M.]

28 [\(return\)](#)

[The third book of Procopius is terminated by the death of Germanus, (Add. l. iv. c. 23, 24, 25, 26.)]

After the loss of Germanus, the nations were provoked to smile, by the strange intelligence, that the command of the Roman armies was given to a eunuch. But the

eunuch Narses [29](#) is ranked among the few who have rescued that unhappy name from the contempt and hatred of mankind. A feeble, diminutive body concealed the soul of a statesman and a warrior. His youth had been employed in the management of the loom and distaff, in the cares of the household, and the service of female luxury; but while his hands were busy, he secretly exercised the faculties of a vigorous and discerning mind. A stranger to the schools and the camp, he studied in the palace to dissemble, to flatter, and to persuade; and as soon as he approached the person of the emperor, Justinian listened with surprise and pleasure to the manly counsels of his chamberlain and private treasurer. [30](#) The talents of Narses were tried and improved in frequent embassies: he led an army into Italy, acquired a practical knowledge of the war and the country, and presumed to strive with the genius of Belisarius. Twelve years after his return, the eunuch was chosen to achieve the conquest which had been left imperfect by the first of the Roman generals. Instead of being dazzled by vanity or emulation, he seriously declared that, unless he were armed with an adequate force, he would never consent to risk his own glory and that of his sovereign. Justinian granted to the favorite what he might have denied to the hero: the Gothic war was rekindled from its ashes, and the preparations were not unworthy of the ancient majesty of the empire. The key of the public treasure was put into his hand, to collect magazines, to levy soldiers, to purchase arms and horses, to discharge the arrears of pay, and to tempt the fidelity of the fugitives and deserters. The troops of Germanus were still in arms; they halted at Salona in the expectation of a new leader; and legions of subjects and allies were created by the well-known liberality of the eunuch Narses. The king of the Lombards [31](#) satisfied or surpassed the obligations of a treaty, by lending two thousand two hundred of his bravest warriors, [3111](#) who were followed by three thousand of their martial attendants. Three thousand Heruli fought on horseback under Philemuth, their native chief; and the noble Aratus, who adopted the manners and discipline of Rome, conducted a band of veterans of the same nation. Dagistheus was released from prison to command the Huns; and Kobad, the grandson and nephew of the great king, was conspicuous by the regal tiara at the head of his faithful Persians, who had devoted themselves to the fortunes of their prince. [32](#) Absolute in the exercise of his authority, more absolute in the affection of his troops, Narses led a numerous and gallant army from Philippopolis to Salona, from whence he coasted the eastern side of the Adriatic as far as the confines of Italy. His progress was checked. The East could not supply vessels capable of transporting such multitudes of men and horses. The Franks, who, in the general confusion, had usurped the greater part of the Venetian province, refused a free passage to the friends of the Lombards. The station of Verona was occupied by Teias, with the flower of the Gothic forces; and that skilful commander had overspread the adjacent country with the fall of woods and the inundation of waters. [33](#) In this perplexity, an officer of experience proposed a measure, secure by the appearance of rashness; that the Roman army should cautiously advance along the seashore, while the fleet preceded their march, and successively cast a bridge of boats over the mouths of

the rivers, the Timavus, the Brenta, the Adige, and the Po, that fall into the Adriatic to the north of Ravenna. Nine days he reposed in the city, collected the fragments of the Italian army, and marching towards Rimini to meet the defiance of an insulting enemy.

29 [\(return\)](#)

[Procopius relates the whole series of this second Gothic war and the victory of Narses, (l. iv. c. 21, 26—35.) A splendid scene. Among the six subjects of epic poetry which Tasso revolved in his mind, he hesitated between the conquests of Italy by Belisarius and by Narses, (Hayley's Works, vol. iv. p. 70.)]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[The country of Narses is unknown, since he must not be confounded with the Persarmenian. Procopius styles him (see Goth. l. ii. c. 13); Paul Warnefrid, (l. ii. c. 3, p. 776,) Chartularius: Marcellinus adds the name of Cubicularius. In an inscription on the Salarian bridge he is entitled Ex-consul, Ex-praepositus, Cubiculi Patricius, (Mascou, Hist. of the Germans, (l. xiii. c. 25.) The law of Theodosius against ennuchs was obsolete or abolished, Annotation xx.,) but the foolish prophecy of the Romans subsisted in full vigor, (Procop. l. iv. c. 21.) * Note: Lord Mahon supposes them both to have been Persarmenians. Note, p. 256.—M.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[Paul Warnefrid, the Lombard, records with complacency the succor, service, and honorable dismissal of his countrymen—reipublicae Romanae adversus aemulos adjutores fuerant, (l. ii. c. i. p. 774, edit. Grot.) I am surprised that Alboin, their martial king, did not lead his subjects in person. * Note: The Lombards were still at war with the Gepidae. See Procop. Goth. lib. iv. p. 25.—M.]

3111 [\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon has blindly followed the translation of Maltretus: Bis mille ducentos—while the original Greek says expressly something else, (Goth. lib. iv. c. 26.) In like manner, (p. 266,) he draws volunteers from Germany, on the authority of Cousin, who, in one place, has mistaken Germanus for Germania. Yet only a few pages further we find Gibbon loudly condemning the French and Latin readers of Procopius. Lord Mahon, p. 403. The first of these errors remains uncorrected in the new edition of the Byzantines.—M.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[He was, if not an impostor, the son of the blind

Zames, saved by compassion, and educated in the Byzantine court by the various motives of policy, pride, and generosity, (Procop. Persic. l. i. c. 23.)]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[In the time of Augustus, and in the middle ages, the whole waste from Aquileia to Ravenna was covered with woods, lakes, and morasses. Man has subdued nature, and the land has been cultivated since the waters are confined and embanked. See the learned researches of Muratori, (*Antiquitat. Italiae Medii Aevi. tom. i. dissert xxi. p. 253, 254.*) from Vitruvius, Strabo, Herodian, old charters, and local knowledge.]

Chapter XLIII: Last Victory And Death Of Belisarius, Death Of Justinian.—Part III.

The prudence of Narses impelled him to speedy and decisive action. His powers were the last effort of the state; the cost of each day accumulated the enormous account; and the nations, untrained to discipline or fatigue, might be rashly provoked to turn their arms against each other, or against their benefactor. The same considerations might have tempered the ardor of Totila. But he was conscious that the clergy and people of Italy aspired to a second revolution: he felt or suspected the rapid progress of treason; and he resolved to risk the Gothic kingdom on the chance of a day, in which the valiant would be animated by instant danger and the disaffected might be awed by mutual ignorance. In his march from Ravenna, the Roman general chastised the garrison of Rimini, traversed in a direct line the hills of Urbino, and reentered the Flaminian way, nine miles beyond the perforated rock, an obstacle of art and nature which might have stopped or retarded his progress. [34](#) The Goths were assembled in the neighborhood of Rome, they advanced without delay to seek a superior enemy, and the two armies approached each other at the distance of one hundred furlongs, between Tagina [35](#) and the sepulchres of the Gauls. [36](#) The haughty message of Narses was an offer, not of peace, but of pardon. The answer of the Gothic king declared his resolution to die or conquer. “What day,” said the messenger, “will you fix for the combat?” “The eighth day,” replied Totila; but early the next morning he attempted to surprise a foe, suspicious of deceit, and prepared for battle. Ten thousand Heruli and Lombards, of approved valor and doubtful faith, were placed in the centre. Each of the wings was composed of eight thousand Romans; the right was guarded by the cavalry of the Huns, the left was covered by fifteen hundred chosen horse, destined, according to the emergencies of action, to sustain the retreat of their friends, or to encompass the flank of the enemy. From his proper station at the head of the right wing, the eunuch rode along the line, expressing by his voice and countenance the assurance of victory;

exciting the soldiers of the emperor to punish the guilt and madness of a band of robbers; and exposing to their view gold chains, collars, and bracelets, the rewards of military virtue. From the event of a single combat they drew an omen of success; and they beheld with pleasure the courage of fifty archers, who maintained a small eminence against three successive attacks of the Gothic cavalry. At the distance only of two bow-shots, the armies spent the morning in dreadful suspense, and the Romans tasted some necessary food, without unloosing the cuirass from their breast, or the bridle from their horses. Narses awaited the charge; and it was delayed by Totila till he had received his last succors of two thousand Goths. While he consumed the hours in fruitless treaty, the king exhibited in a narrow space the strength and agility of a warrior. His armor was enchased with gold; his purple banner floated with the wind: he cast his lance into the air; caught it with the right hand; shifted it to the left; threw himself backwards; recovered his seat; and managed a fiery steed in all the paces and evolutions of the equestrian school. As soon as the succors had arrived, he retired to his tent, assumed the dress and arms of a private soldier, and gave the signal of a battle. The first line of cavalry advanced with more courage than discretion, and left behind them the infantry of the second line. They were soon engaged between the horns of a crescent, into which the adverse wings had been insensibly curved, and were saluted from either side by the volleys of four thousand archers. Their ardor, and even their distress, drove them forwards to a close and unequal conflict, in which they could only use their lances against an enemy equally skilled in all the instruments of war. A generous emulation inspired the Romans and their Barbarian allies; and Narses, who calmly viewed and directed their efforts, doubted to whom he should adjudge the prize of superior bravery. The Gothic cavalry was astonished and disordered, pressed and broken; and the line of infantry, instead of presenting their spears, or opening their intervals, were trampled under the feet of the flying horse. Six thousand of the Goths were slaughtered without mercy in the field of Tagina. Their prince, with five attendants, was overtaken by Asbad, of the race of the Gepidae. “Spare the king of Italy,” [3611](#) cried a loyal voice, and Asbad struck his lance through the body of Totila. The blow was instantly revenged by the faithful Goths: they transported their dying monarch seven miles beyond the scene of his disgrace; and his last moments were not imbittered by the presence of an enemy. Compassion afforded him the shelter of an obscure tomb; but the Romans were not satisfied of their victory, till they beheld the corpse of the Gothic king. His hat, enriched with gems, and his bloody robe, were presented to Justinian by the messengers of triumph. [37](#)

[The Flaminian way, as it is corrected from the Itineraries, and the best modern maps, by D’Anville, (*Analyse de l’Italie*, p. 147—162,) may be thus stated: Rome to Narni, 51 Roman miles; Terni, 57; Spoleto, 75; Foligno, 88; Nocera, 103; Cagli, 142; Intercisa, 157; Fossombrone, 160; Fano, 176; Pesaro, 184; Rimini, 208—about 189 English

miles. He takes no notice of the death of Totila; but West selling (*Itinerar.* p. 614) exchanges, for the field of Taginas, the unknown appellation of Ptanias, eight miles from Nocera.]

35 [\(return\)](#)

[Taginae, or rather Tadinæ, is mentioned by Pliny; but the bishopric of that obscure town, a mile from Gualdo, in the plain, was united, in the year 1007, with that of Nocera. The signs of antiquity are preserved in the local appellations, Fossato, the camp; Capraia, Caprea; Bastia, Busta Gallorum. See Cluverius, (*Italia Antiqua*, l. ii. c. 6, p. 615, 616, 617,) Lucas Holstenius, (*Annotat. ad Cluver.* p. 85, 86,) Guazzesi, (*Dissertat.* p. 177—217, a professed inquiry,) and the maps of the ecclesiastical state and the march of Ancona, by Le Maire and Magini.]

36 [\(return\)](#)

[The battle was fought in the year of Rome 458; and the consul Decius, by devoting his own life, assured the triumph of his country and his colleague Fabius, (*T. Liv.* x. 28, 29.) Procopius ascribes to Camillus the victory of the Busta Gallorum; and his error is branded by Cluverius with the national reproach of *Graecorum nugamenta*.]

3611 [\(return\)](#)

[“Dog, wilt thou strike thy Lord?” was the more characteristic exclamation of the Gothic youth. *Procop. lib. iv.* p. 32.—M.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[Theophanes, *Chron.* p. 193. *Hist. Miscell.* l. xvi. p. 108.]

As soon as Narses had paid his devotions to the Author of victory, and the blessed Virgin, his peculiar patroness, [38](#) he praised, rewarded, and dismissed the Lombards. The villages had been reduced to ashes by these valiant savages; they ravished matrons and virgins on the altar; their retreat was diligently watched by a strong detachment of regular forces, who prevented a repetition of the like disorders. The victorious eunuch pursued his march through Tuscany, accepted the submission of the Goths, heard the acclamations, and often the complaints, of the Italians, and encompassed the walls of Rome with the remainder of his formidable host. Round the wide circumference, Narses assigned to himself, and to each of his lieutenants, a real or a feigned attack, while he silently marked the place of easy and unguarded entrance. Neither the fortifications of Hadrian’s mole, nor of the port, could long delay the progress of the conqueror; and Justinian once more received the keys of Rome, which, under his reign, had been five times taken and recovered. [39](#) But the deliverance of Rome was the last calamity of the Roman people. The Barbarian allies of Narses too frequently confounded the privileges of peace and war. The despair of the flying Goths found some consolation in sanguinary

revenge; and three hundred youths of the noblest families, who had been sent as hostages beyond the Po, were inhumanly slain by the successor of Totila. The fate of the senate suggests an awful lesson of the vicissitude of human affairs. Of the senators whom Totila had banished from their country, some were rescued by an officer of Belisarius, and transported from Campania to Sicily; while others were too guilty to confide in the clemency of Justinian, or too poor to provide horses for their escape to the sea-shore. Their brethren languished five years in a state of indigence and exile: the victory of Narses revived their hopes; but their premature return to the metropolis was prevented by the furious Goths; and all the fortresses of Campania were stained with patrician [40](#) blood. After a period of thirteen centuries, the institution of Romulus expired; and if the nobles of Rome still assumed the title of senators, few subsequent traces can be discovered of a public council, or constitutional order. Ascend six hundred years, and contemplate the kings of the earth soliciting an audience, as the slaves or freedmen of the Roman senate! [41](#)

38 [\(return\)](#)

[Evagrius, l. iv. c. 24. The inspiration of the Virgin revealed to Narses the day, and the word, of battle, (Paul Diacon. l. ii. c. 3, p. 776)]

39 [\(return\)](#)

[(Procop. Goth. lib. iv. p. 33.) In the year 536 by Belisarius, in 546 by Totila, in 547 by Belisarius, in 549 by Totila, and in 552 by Narses. Maltretus had inadvertently translated sextum; a mistake which he afterwards retracts; out the mischief was done; and Cousin, with a train of French and Latin readers, have fallen into the snare.]

40 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare two passages of Procopius, (l. iii. c. 26, l. iv. c. 24,) which, with some collateral hints from Marcellinus and Jornandes, illustrate the state of the expiring senate.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[See, in the example of Prusias, as it is delivered in the fragments of Polybius, (Excerpt. Legat. xcvi. p. 927, 928,) a curious picture of a royal slave.]

The Gothic war was yet alive. The bravest of the nation retired beyond the Po; and Teias was unanimously chosen to succeed and revenge their departed hero. The new king immediately sent ambassadors to implore, or rather to purchase, the aid of the Franks, and nobly lavished, for the public safety, the riches which had been deposited in the palace of Pavia. The residue of the royal treasure was guarded by his brother Aligern, at Cumaea, in Campania; but the strong castle which Totila had fortified was closely besieged by the arms of Narses. From the Alps to the foot of Mount Vesuvius, the Gothic king, by rapid and secret marches, advanced to the relief of his brother, eluded the vigilance of the Roman chiefs, and pitched his camp on the banks of the

Sarnus or Draco, [42](#) which flows from Nuceria into the Bay of Naples. The river separated the two armies: sixty days were consumed in distant and fruitless combats, and Teias maintained this important post till he was deserted by his fleet and the hope of subsistence. With reluctant steps he ascended the Lactarian mount, where the physicians of Rome, since the time of Galen, had sent their patients for the benefit of the air and the milk. [43](#) But the Goths soon embraced a more generous resolution: to descend the hill, to dismiss their horses, and to die in arms, and in the possession of freedom. The king marched at their head, bearing in his right hand a lance, and an ample buckler in his left: with the one he struck dead the foremost of the assailants; with the other he received the weapons which every hand was ambitious to aim against his life. After a combat of many hours, his left arm was fatigued by the weight of twelve javelins which hung from his shield. Without moving from his ground, or suspending his blows, the hero called aloud on his attendants for a fresh buckler; but in the moment while his side was uncovered, it was pierced by a mortal dart. He fell; and his head, exalted on a spear, proclaimed to the nations that the Gothic kingdom was no more. But the example of his death served only to animate the companions who had sworn to perish with their leader. They fought till darkness descended on the earth. They reposed on their arms. The combat was renewed with the return of light, and maintained with unabated vigor till the evening of the second day. The repose of a second night, the want of water, and the loss of their bravest champions, determined the surviving Goths to accept the fair capitulation which the prudence of Narses was inclined to propose. They embraced the alternative of residing in Italy, as the subjects and soldiers of Justinian, or departing with a portion of their private wealth, in search of some independent country. [44](#) Yet the oath of fidelity or exile was alike rejected by one thousand Goths, who broke away before the treaty was signed, and boldly effected their retreat to the walls of Pavia. The spirit, as well as the situation, of Aligern prompted him to imitate rather than to bewail his brother: a strong and dexterous archer, he transpierced with a single arrow the armor and breast of his antagonist; and his military conduct defended Cumae [45](#) above a year against the forces of the Romans.

Their industry had scooped the Sibyl's cave [46](#) into a prodigious mine; combustible materials were introduced to consume the temporary props: the wall and the gate of Cumae sunk into the cavern, but the ruins formed a deep and inaccessible precipice. On the fragment of a rock Aligern stood alone and unshaken, till he calmly surveyed the hopeless condition of his country, and judged it more honorable to be the friend of Narses, than the slave of the Franks. After the death of Teias, the Roman general separated his troops to reduce the cities of Italy; Lucca sustained a long and vigorous siege: and such was the humanity or the prudence of Narses, that the repeated perfidy of the inhabitants could not provoke him to exact the forfeit lives of their hostages. These hostages were dismissed in safety; and their grateful zeal at length subdued the obstinacy of their countrymen. [47](#)

- 42 [\(return\)](#)
[The item of Procopius (Goth. l. iv. c. 35) is evidently the Sarnus. The text is accused or altered by the rash violence of Cluverius (l. iv. c. 3. p. 1156:) but Camillo Pellegrini of Naples (Discorsi sopra la Campania Felice, p. 330, 331) has proved from old records, that as early as the year 822 that river was called the Dracontio, or Draconcello.]
- 43 [\(return\)](#)
[Galen (de Method. Medendi, l. v. apud Cluver. l. iv. c. 3, p. 1159, 1160) describes the lofty site, pure air, and rich milk, of Mount Lactarius, whose medicinal benefits were equally known and sought in the time of Symmachus (l. vi. epist. 18) and Cassiodorus, (Var. xi. 10.) Nothing is now left except the name of the town of Lettere.]
- 44 [\(return\)](#)
[Buat (tom. xi. p. 2, &c.) conveys to his favorite Bavaria this remnant of Goths, who by others are buried in the mountains of Uri, or restored to their native isle of Gothland, (Mascou, Annot. xxi.)]
- 45 [\(return\)](#)
[I leave Scaliger (Animadvers. in Euseb. p. 59) and Salmasius (Exercitat. Plinian. p. 51, 52) to quarrel about the origin of Cumae, the oldest of the Greek colonies in Italy, (Strab. l. v. p. 372, Velleius Paterculus, l. i. c. 4,) already vacant in Juvenal's time, (Satir. iii.,) and now in ruins.]
- 46 [\(return\)](#)
[Agathias (l. i. c. 21) settles the Sibyl's cave under the wall of Cumae: he agrees with Servius, (ad l. vi. Aeneid.;) nor can I perceive why their opinion should be rejected by Heyne, the excellent editor of Virgil, (tom. ii. p. 650, 651.) In urbe media secreta religio! But Cumae was not yet built; and the lines (l. vi. 96, 97) would become ridiculous, if Aeneas were actually in a Greek city.]
- 47 [\(return\)](#)
[There is some difficulty in connecting the 35th chapter of the fourth book of the Gothic war of Procopius with the first book of the history of Agathias. We must now relinquish the statesman and soldier, to attend the footsteps of a poet and rhetorician, (l. i. p. 11, l. ii. p. 51, edit. Lonvre.)]

Before Lucca had surrendered, Italy was overwhelmed by a new deluge of Barbarians. A feeble youth, the grandson of Clovis, reigned over the Austrasians or oriental Franks. The guardians of Theodebald entertained with coldness and reluctance the magnificent promises of the Gothic ambassadors. But the spirit of a martial people

outstripped the timid counsels of the court: two brothers, Lothaire and Buccelin, [48](#) the dukes of the Alemanni, stood forth as the leaders of the Italian war; and seventy-five thousand Germans descended in the autumn from the Rhaetian Alps into the plain of Milan. The vanguard of the Roman army was stationed near the Po, under the conduct of Fulcaris, a bold Herulian, who rashly conceived that personal bravery was the sole duty and merit of a commander. As he marched without order or precaution along the Aemilian way, an ambushade of Franks suddenly rose from the amphitheatre of Parma; his troops were surprised and routed; but their leader refused to fly; declaring to the last moment, that death was less terrible than the angry countenance of Narses. [4811](#) The death of Fulcaris, and the retreat of the surviving chiefs, decided the fluctuating and rebellious temper of the Goths; they flew to the standard of their deliverers, and admitted them into the cities which still resisted the arms of the Roman general. The conqueror of Italy opened a free passage to the irresistible torrent of Barbarians. They passed under the walls of Cesena, and answered by threats and reproaches the advice of Aligern, [4812](#) that the Gothic treasures could no longer repay the labor of an invasion. Two thousand Franks were destroyed by the skill and valor of Narses himself, who sailed from Rimini at the head of three hundred horse, to chastise the licentious rapine of their march. On the confines of Samnium the two brothers divided their forces. With the right wing, Buccelin assumed the spoil of Campania, Lucania, and Bruttium; with the left, Lothaire accepted the plunder of Apulia and Calabria. They followed the coast of the Mediterranean and the Adriatic, as far as Rhegium and Otranto, and the extreme lands of Italy were the term of their destructive progress. The Franks, who were Christians and Catholics, contented themselves with simple pillage and occasional murder. But the churches which their piety had spared, were stripped by the sacrilegious hands of the Alamanni, who sacrificed horses' heads to their native deities of the woods and rivers; [49](#) they melted or profaned the consecrated vessels, and the ruins of shrines and altars were stained with the blood of the faithful. Buccelin was actuated by ambition, and Lothaire by avarice. The former aspired to restore the Gothic kingdom; the latter, after a promise to his brother of speedy succors, returned by the same road to deposit his treasure beyond the Alps. The strength of their armies was already wasted by the change of climate and contagion of disease: the Germans revelled in the vintage of Italy; and their own intemperance avenged, in some degree, the miseries of a defenceless people. [4911](#)

48

[\(return\)](#)

[Among the fabulous exploits of Buccelin, he discomfited and slew Belisarius, subdued Italy and Sicily, &c. See in the Historians of France, Gregory of Tours, (tom. ii. l. iii. c. 32, p. 203,) and Aimoin, (tom. iii. l. ii. de Gestis Francorum, c. 23, p. 59.)]

4811

[\(return\)](#)

[.... Agathius.]

- 4812 [\(return\)](#)
[Aligern, after the surrender of Cumae, had been sent to Cesent by Narses. Agathias.—M.]
- 49 [\(return\)](#)
[Agathias notices their superstition in a philosophic tone, (l. i. p. 18.) At Zug, in Switzerland, idolatry still prevailed in the year 613: St. Columban and St. Gaul were the apostles of that rude country; and the latter founded a hermitage, which has swelled into an ecclesiastical principality and a populous city, the seat of freedom and commerce.]
- 4911 [\(return\)](#)
[A body of Lothaire's troops was defeated near Fano, some were driven down precipices into the sea, others fled to the camp; many prisoners seized the opportunity of making their escape; and the Barbarians lost most of their booty in their precipitate retreat. Agathias.—M.]

At the entrance of the spring, the Imperial troops, who had guarded the cities, assembled, to the number of eighteen thousand men, in the neighborhood of Rome. Their winter hours had not been consumed in idleness. By the command, and after the example, of Narses, they repeated each day their military exercise on foot and on horseback, accustomed their ear to obey the sound of the trumpet, and practised the steps and evolutions of the Pyrrhic dance. From the Straits of Sicily, Buccelin, with thirty thousand Franks and Alamanni, slowly moved towards Capua, occupied with a wooden tower the bridge of Casilinum, covered his right by the stream of the Vulturnus, and secured the rest of his encampment by a rampart of sharp stakes, and a circle of wagons, whose wheels were buried in the earth. He impatiently expected the return of Lothaire; ignorant, alas! that his brother could never return, and that the chief and his army had been swept away by a strange disease [50](#) on the banks of the Lake Benacus, between Trent and Verona. The banners of Narses soon approached the Vulturnus, and the eyes of Italy were anxiously fixed on the event of this final contest. Perhaps the talents of the Roman general were most conspicuous in the calm operations which precede the tumult of a battle. His skilful movements intercepted the subsistence of the Barbarian, deprived him of the advantage of the bridge and river, and in the choice of the ground and moment of action reduced him to comply with the inclination of his enemy. On the morning of the important day, when the ranks were already formed, a servant, for some trivial fault, was killed by his master, one of the leaders of the Heruli. The justice or passion of Narses was awakened: he summoned the offender to his presence, and without listening to his excuses, gave the signal to the minister of death. If the cruel master had not infringed the laws of his nation, this arbitrary execution was not less unjust than it appears to have been imprudent. The Heruli felt the indignity; they halted: but the Roman general, without soothing their rage, or expecting their resolution, called aloud, as the trumpets sounded, that unless they hastened to occupy

their place, they would lose the honor of the victory. His troops were disposed [51](#) in a long front, the cavalry on the wings; in the centre, the heavy-armed foot; the archers and slingers in the rear. The Germans advanced in a sharp-pointed column, of the form of a triangle or solid wedge. They pierced the feeble centre of Narses, who received them with a smile into the fatal snare, and directed his wings of cavalry insensibly to wheel on their flanks and encompass their rear. The host of the Franks and Alamanni consisted of infantry: a sword and buckler hung by their side; and they used, as their weapons of offence, a weighty hatchet and a hooked javelin, which were only formidable in close combat, or at a short distance. The flower of the Roman archers, on horseback, and in complete armor, skirmished without peril round this immovable phalanx; supplied by active speed the deficiency of number; and aimed their arrows against a crowd of Barbarians, who, instead of a cuirass and helmet, were covered by a loose garment of fur or linen. They paused, they trembled, their ranks were confounded, and in the decisive moment the Heruli, preferring glory to revenge, charged with rapid violence the head of the column. Their leader, Sinbal, and Aligern, the Gothic prince, deserved the prize of superior valor; and their example excited the victorious troops to achieve with swords and spears the destruction of the enemy. Buccelin, and the greatest part of his army, perished on the field of battle, in the waters of the Vulturnus, or by the hands of the enraged peasants: but it may seem incredible, that a victory, [52](#) which no more than five of the Alamanni survived, could be purchased with the loss of fourscore Romans. Seven thousand Goths, the relics of the war, defended the fortress of Campsa till the ensuing spring; and every messenger of Narses announced the reduction of the Italian cities, whose names were corrupted by the ignorance or vanity of the Greeks. [53](#) After the battle of Casilinum, Narses entered the capital; the arms and treasures of the Goths, the Franks, and the Alamanni, were displayed; his soldiers, with garlands in their hands, chanted the praises of the conqueror; and Rome, for the last time, beheld the semblance of a triumph.

50 [\(return\)](#)

[See the death of Lothaire in Agathias (l. ii. p. 38) and Paul Warnefrid, surnamed Diaconus, (l. ii. c. 3, 775.) The Greek makes him rave and tear his flesh. He had plundered churches.]

51 [\(return\)](#)

[Pere Daniel (Hist. de la Milice Francoise, tom. i. p. 17—21) has exhibited a fanciful representation of this battle, somewhat in the manner of the Chevalier Folard, the once famous editor of Polybius, who fashioned to his own habits and opinions all the military operations of antiquity.]

52 [\(return\)](#)

[Agathias (l. ii. p. 47) has produced a Greek epigram of six lines on this victory of Narses, which a favorably compared to the battles of Marathon and Plataea. The chief difference is indeed in their

consequences—so trivial in the former instance—
so permanent and glorious in the latter. Note: Not
in the epigram, but in the previous observations—
M.]

53

[\(return\)](#)

[The Beroia and Brincas of Theophanes or his
transcriber (p. 201) must be read or understood
Verona and Brixia.]

After a reign of sixty years, the throne of the Gothic kings was filled by the exarchs of Ravenna, the representatives in peace and war of the emperor of the Romans. Their jurisdiction was soon reduced to the limits of a narrow province: but Narses himself, the first and most powerful of the exarchs, administered above fifteen years the entire kingdom of Italy. Like Belisarius, he had deserved the honors of envy, calumny, and disgrace: but the favorite eunuch still enjoyed the confidence of Justinian; or the leader of a victorious army awed and repressed the ingratitude of a timid court. Yet it was not by weak and mischievous indulgence that Narses secured the attachment of his troops. Forgetful of the past, and regardless of the future, they abused the present hour of prosperity and peace. The cities of Italy resounded with the noise of drinking and dancing; the spoils of victory were wasted in sensual pleasures; and nothing (says Agathias) remained unless to exchange their shields and helmets for the soft lute and the capacious hoghead. [54](#) In a manly oration, not unworthy of a Roman censor, the eunuch reproved these disorderly vices, which sullied their fame, and endangered their safety. The soldiers blushed and obeyed; discipline was confirmed; the fortifications were restored; a duke was stationed for the defence and military command of each of the principal cities; [55](#) and the eye of Narses pervaded the ample prospect from Calabria to the Alps. The remains of the Gothic nation evacuated the country, or mingled with the people; the Franks, instead of revenging the death of Buccelin, abandoned, without a struggle, their Italian conquests; and the rebellious Sinbal, chief of the Heruli, was subdued, taken and hung on a lofty gallows by the inflexible justice of the exarch. [56](#) The civil state of Italy, after the agitation of a long tempest, was fixed by a pragmatic sanction, which the emperor promulgated at the request of the pope. Justinian introduced his own jurisprudence into the schools and tribunals of the West; he ratified the acts of Theodoric and his immediate successors, but every deed was rescinded and abolished which force had extorted, or fear had subscribed, under the usurpation of Totila. A moderate theory was framed to reconcile the rights of property with the safety of prescription, the claims of the state with the poverty of the people, and the pardon of offences with the interest of virtue and order of society. Under the exarchs of Ravenna, Rome was degraded to the second rank. Yet the senators were gratified by the permission of visiting their estates in Italy, and of approaching, without obstacle, the throne of Constantinople: the regulation of weights and measures was delegated to the pope and senate; and the salaries of lawyers and physicians, of orators and grammarians, were destined to preserve, or rekindle, the light of science in the ancient capital.

Justinian might dictate benevolent edicts, [57](#) and Narses might second his wishes by the restoration of cities, and more especially of churches. But the power of kings is most effectual to destroy; and the twenty years of the Gothic war had consummated the distress and depopulation of Italy. As early as the fourth campaign, under the discipline of Belisarius himself, fifty thousand laborers died of hunger [58](#) in the narrow region of Picenum; [59](#) and a strict interpretation of the evidence of Procopius would swell the loss of Italy above the total sum of her present inhabitants. [60](#)

54 [\(return\)](#)

[(Agathias, l. ii. p. 48.) In the first scene of Richard III. our English poet has beautifully enlarged on this idea, for which, however, he was not indebted to the Byzantine historian.]

55 [\(return\)](#)

[Maffei has proved, (Verona Illustrata. P. i. l. x. p. 257, 289,) against the common opinion, that the dukes of Italy were instituted before the conquest of the Lombards, by Narses himself. In the Pragmatic Sanction, (No. 23,) Justinian restrains the judices militares.]

56 [\(return\)](#)

[See Paulus Diaconus, liii. c. 2, p. 776. Menander in (Excerpt Legat. p. 133) mentions some risings in Italy by the Franks, and Theophanes (p. 201) hints at some Gothic rebellions.]

57 [\(return\)](#)

[The Pragmatic Sanction of Justinian, which restores and regulates the civil state of Italy, consists of xxvii. articles: it is dated August 15, A.D. 554; is addressed to Narses, V. J. Praepositus Sacri Cubiculi, and to Antiochus, Praefectus Praetorio Italiae; and has been preserved by Julian Antecessor, and in the Corpus Juris Civilis, after the novels and edicts of Justinian, Justin, and Tiberius.]

58 [\(return\)](#)

[A still greater number was consumed by famine in the southern provinces, without the Ionian Gulf. Acorns were used in the place of bread. Procopius had seen a deserted orphan suckled by a she-goat. Seventeen passengers were lodged, murdered, and eaten, by two women, who were detected and slain by the eighteenth, &c. * Note: Denina considers that greater evil was inflicted upon Italy by the Urociian conquest than by any other invasion. Reveluz. d' Italia, t. i. l. v. p. 247.—M.]

59 [\(return\)](#)

[Quinta regio Piceni est; quondam uberrimae multitudinis, ccclx. millia Picentium in fidem P. R. venire, (Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 18.) In the time of

Vespasian, this ancient population was already diminished.]

60

[\(return\)](#)

[Perhaps fifteen or sixteen millions. Procopius (Anecd. c. 18) computes that Africa lost five millions, that Italy was thrice as extensive, and that the depopulation was in a larger proportion. But his reckoning is inflamed by passion, and clouded with uncertainty.]

I desire to believe, but I dare not affirm, that Belisarius sincerely rejoiced in the triumph of Narses. Yet the consciousness of his own exploits might teach him to esteem without jealousy the merit of a rival; and the repose of the aged warrior was crowned by a last victory, which saved the emperor and the capital. The Barbarians, who annually visited the provinces of Europe, were less discouraged by some accidental defeats, than they were excited by the double hope of spoil and of subsidy. In the thirty-second winter of Justinian's reign, the Danube was deeply frozen: Zabergan led the cavalry of the Bulgarians, and his standard was followed by a promiscuous multitude of Sclavonians. [6011](#) The savage chief passed, without opposition, the river and the mountains, spread his troops over Macedonia and Thrace, and advanced with no more than seven thousand horse to the long wall, which should have defended the territory of Constantinople. But the works of man are impotent against the assaults of nature: a recent earthquake had shaken the foundations of the wall; and the forces of the empire were employed on the distant frontiers of Italy, Africa, and Persia. The seven schools, [61](#) or companies of the guards or domestic troops, had been augmented to the number of five thousand five hundred men, whose ordinary station was in the peaceful cities of Asia. But the places of the brave Armenians were insensibly supplied by lazy citizens, who purchased an exemption from the duties of civil life, without being exposed to the dangers of military service. Of such soldiers, few could be tempted to sally from the gates; and none could be persuaded to remain in the field, unless they wanted strength and speed to escape from the Bulgarians. The report of the fugitives exaggerated the numbers and fierceness of an enemy, who had polluted holy virgins, and abandoned new-born infants to the dogs and vultures; a crowd of rustics, imploring food and protection, increased the consternation of the city, and the tents of Zabergan were pitched at the distance of twenty miles, [62](#) on the banks of a small river, which encircles Melanthias, and afterwards falls into the Propontis. [63](#) Justinian trembled: and those who had only seen the emperor in his old age, were pleased to suppose, that he had lost the alacrity and vigor of his youth. By his command the vessels of gold and silver were removed from the churches in the neighborhood, and even the suburbs, of Constantinople; the ramparts were lined with trembling spectators; the golden gate was crowded with useless generals and tribunes, and the senate shared the fatigues and the apprehensions of the populace.

6011

[\(return\)](#)

[Zabergan was king of the Cutrigours, a tribe of

Huns, who were neither Bulgarians nor Slavonians. St. Martin, vol. ix. p. 408—420.—M]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[In the decay of these military schools, the satire of Procopius (Anecd. c. 24, Aleman. p. 102, 103) is confirmed and illustrated by Agathias, (l. v. p. 159,) who cannot be rejected as a hostile witness.]

62 [\(return\)](#)

[The distance from Constantinople to Melanthias, Villa Caesariana, (Ammian. Marcellin. xxx. 11,) is variously fixed at 102 or 140 stadia, (Suidas, tom. ii. p. 522, 523. Agathias, l. v. p. 158,) or xviii. or xix. miles, (Itineraria, p. 138, 230, 323, 332, and Wesseling's Observations.) The first xii. miles, as far as Rhegium, were paved by Justinian, who built a bridge over a morass or gullet between a lake and the sea, (Procop. de Edif. l. iv. c. 8.)]

63 [\(return\)](#)

[The Atyras, (Pompon. Mela, l. ii. c. 2, p. 169, edit. Voss.) At the river's mouth, a town or castle of the same name was fortified by Justinian, (Procop. de Edif. l. iv. c. 2. Itinerar. p. 570, and Wesseling.)]

But the eyes of the prince and people were directed to a feeble veteran, who was compelled by the public danger to resume the armor in which he had entered Carthage and defended Rome. The horses of the royal stables, of private citizens, and even of the circus, were hastily collected; the emulation of the old and young was roused by the name of Belisarius, and his first encampment was in the presence of a victorious enemy. His prudence, and the labor of the friendly peasants, secured, with a ditch and rampart, the repose of the night; innumerable fires, and clouds of dust, were artfully contrived to magnify the opinion of his strength; his soldiers suddenly passed from despondency to presumption; and, while ten thousand voices demanded the battle, Belisarius dissembled his knowledge, that in the hour of trial he must depend on the firmness of three hundred veterans. The next morning the Bulgarian cavalry advanced to the charge. But they heard the shouts of multitudes, they beheld the arms and discipline of the front; they were assaulted on the flanks by two ambuscades which rose from the woods; their foremost warriors fell by the hand of the aged hero and his guards; and the swiftness of their evolutions was rendered useless by the close attack and rapid pursuit of the Romans. In this action (so speedy was their flight) the Bulgarians lost only four hundred horse; but Constantinople was saved; and Zabergan, who felt the hand of a master, withdrew to a respectful distance. But his friends were numerous in the councils of the emperor, and Belisarius obeyed with reluctance the commands of envy and Justinian, which forbade him to achieve the deliverance of his country. On his return to the city, the people, still conscious of their danger, accompanied his triumph with acclamations of joy and gratitude, which were imputed as a crime to the victorious general. But when he entered the palace, the courtiers were silent, and the emperor, after a cold and

thankless embrace, dismissed him to mingle with the train of slaves. Yet so deep was the impression of his glory on the minds of men, that Justinian, in the seventy-seventh year of his age, was encouraged to advance near forty miles from the capital, and to inspect in person the restoration of the long wall. The Bulgarians wasted the summer in the plains of Thrace; but they were inclined to peace by the failure of their rash attempts on Greece and the Chersonesus. A menace of killing their prisoners quickened the payment of heavy ransoms; and the departure of Zabergan was hastened by the report, that double-prowed vessels were built on the Danube to intercept his passage. The danger was soon forgotten; and a vain question, whether their sovereign had shown more wisdom or weakness, amused the idleness of the city. [64](#)

64

[\(return\)](#)

[The Bulgarian war, and the last victory of Belisarius, are imperfectly represented in the prolix declamation of Agathias. (l. 5, p. 154-174,) and the dry Chronicle of Theophanes, (p. 197 198.)]

Chapter XLIII: Last Victory And Death Of Belisarius, Death Of Justinian.—Part IV.

About two years after the last victory of Belisarius, the emperor returned from a Thracian journey of health, or business, or devotion. Justinian was afflicted by a pain in his head; and his private entry countenanced the rumor of his death. Before the third hour of the day, the bakers' shops were plundered of their bread, the houses were shut, and every citizen, with hope or terror, prepared for the impending tumult. The senators themselves, fearful and suspicious, were convened at the ninth hour; and the præfect received their commands to visit every quarter of the city, and proclaim a general illumination for the recovery of the emperor's health. The ferment subsided; but every accident betrayed the impotence of the government, and the factious temper of the people: the guards were disposed to mutiny as often as their quarters were changed, or their pay was withheld: the frequent calamities of fires and earthquakes afforded the opportunities of disorder; the disputes of the blues and greens, of the orthodox and heretics, degenerated into bloody battles; and, in the presence of the Persian ambassador, Justinian blushed for himself and for his subjects. Capricious pardon and arbitrary punishment imbittered the irksomeness and discontent of a long reign: a conspiracy was formed in the palace; and, unless we are deceived by the names of Marcellus and Sergius, the most virtuous and the most profligate of the courtiers were associated in the same designs. They had fixed the time of the execution; their rank gave them access to the royal banquet; and their black slaves [65](#) were stationed in the vestibule and porticos, to announce the death of the tyrant, and to excite a sedition in the capital. But the indiscretion of an accomplice saved the poor remnant of the days of Justinian. The conspirators were detected and seized, with daggers hidden under their

garments: Marcellus died by his own hand, and Sergius was dragged from the sanctuary. [66](#) Pressed by remorse, or tempted by the hopes of safety, he accused two officers of the household of Belisarius; and torture forced them to declare that they had acted according to the secret instructions of their patron. [67](#) Posterity will not hastily believe that a hero who, in the vigor of life, had disdained the fairest offers of ambition and revenge, should stoop to the murder of his prince, whom he could not long expect to survive. His followers were impatient to fly; but flight must have been supported by rebellion, and he had lived enough for nature and for glory. Belisarius appeared before the council with less fear than indignation: after forty years' service, the emperor had prejudged his guilt; and injustice was sanctified by the presence and authority of the patriarch. The life of Belisarius was graciously spared; but his fortunes were sequestered, and, from December to July, he was guarded as a prisoner in his own palace. At length his innocence was acknowledged; his freedom and honor were restored; and death, which might be hastened by resentment and grief, removed him from the world in about eight months after his deliverance. The name of Belisarius can never die but instead of the funeral, the monuments, the statues, so justly due to his memory, I only read, that his treasures, the spoil of the Goths and Vandals, were immediately confiscated by the emperor. Some decent portion was reserved, however for the use of his widow: and as Antonina had much to repent, she devoted the last remains of her life and fortune to the foundation of a convent. Such is the simple and genuine narrative of the fall of Belisarius and the ingratitude of Justinian. [68](#) That he was deprived of his eyes, and reduced by envy to beg his bread, [6811](#) "Give a penny to Belisarius the general!" is a fiction of later times, [69](#) which has obtained credit, or rather favor, as a strange example of the vicissitudes of fortune. [70](#)

65

[\(return\)](#)

[They could scarcely be real Indians; and the Aethiopians, sometimes known by that name, were never used by the ancients as guards or followers: they were the trifling, though costly objects of female and royal luxury, (Terent. Eunuch. act. i. scene ii Sueton. in August. c. 83, with a good note of Casaubon, in Caligula, c. 57.)]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[The Sergius (Vandal. l. ii. c. 21, 22, Anecd. c. 5) and Marcellus (Goth. l. iii. c. 32) are mentioned by Procopius. See Theophanes, p. 197, 201. * Note: Some words, "the acts of," or "the crimes of," appear to have false from the text. The omission is in all the editions I have consulted.—M.]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[Alemannus, (p. quotes an old Byzantian Ms., which has been printed in the Imperium Orientale of Banduri.)]

68 [\(return\)](#)
[Of the disgrace and restoration of Belisarius, the genuine original record is preserved in the Fragment of John Malala (tom. ii. p. 234—243) and the exact Chronicle of Theophanes, (p. 194—204.) Cedrenus (Compend. p. 387, 388) and Zonaras (tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 69) seem to hesitate between the obsolete truth and the growing falsehood.]

6811 [\(return\)](#)
[Le Beau, following Allemannus, conceives that Belisarius was confounded with John of Cappadocia, who was thus reduced to beggary, (vol. ix. p. 58, 449.) Lord Mahon has, with considerable learning, and on the authority of a yet unquoted writer of the eleventh century, endeavored to reestablish the old tradition. I cannot acknowledge that I have been convinced, and am inclined to subscribe to the theory of Le Beau.—M.]

69 [\(return\)](#)
[The source of this idle fable may be derived from a miscellaneous work of the xiith century, the Chiliads of John Tzetzes, a monk, (Basil. 1546, ad calcem Lycophront. Colon. Allobrog. 1614, in Corp. Poet. Graec.) He relates the blindness and beggary of Belisarius in ten vulgar or political verses, (Chiliad iii. No. 88, 339—348, in Corp. Poet. Graec. tom. ii. p. 311.) This moral or romantic tale was imported into Italy with the language and manuscripts of Greece; repeated before the end of the xvth century by Crinitus, Pontanus, and Volaterranus, attacked by Alciat, for the honor of the law; and defended by Baronius, (A.D. 561, No. 2, &c.,) for the honor of the church. Yet Tzetzes himself had read in other chronicles, that Belisarius did not lose his sight, and that he recovered his fame and fortunes. * Note: I know not where Gibbon found Tzetzes to be a monk; I suppose he considered his bad verses a proof of his monachism. Compare to Gerbelius in Kiesling's edition of Tzetzes.—M.]

70 [\(return\)](#)
[The statue in the villa Borghese at Rome, in a sitting posture, with an open hand, which is vulgarly given to Belisarius, may be ascribed with more dignity to Augustus in the act of propitiating Nemesis, (Winckelman, Hist. de l'Art, tom. iii. p. 266.) Ex nocturno visu etiam stipem, quotannis, die certo, emendicabat a populo, cavana manum asses porrigentibus praebens, (Sueton. in August. c. 91,

with an excellent note of Casaubon.) * Note: Lord Mahon abandons the statue, as altogether irreconcilable with the state of the arts at this period, (p. 472.)—M.]

If the emperor could rejoice in the death of Belisarius, he enjoyed the base satisfaction only eight months, the last period of a reign of thirty-eight years, and a life of eighty-three years. It would be difficult to trace the character of a prince who is not the most conspicuous object of his own times: but the confessions of an enemy may be received as the safest evidence of his virtues. The resemblance of Justinian to the bust of Domitian, is maliciously urged; [71](#) with the acknowledgment, however, of a well-proportioned figure, a ruddy complexion, and a pleasing countenance. The emperor was easy of access, patient of hearing, courteous and affable in discourse, and a master of the angry passions which rage with such destructive violence in the breast of a despot. Procopius praises his temper, to reproach him with calm and deliberate cruelty: but in the conspiracies which attacked his authority and person, a more candid judge will approve the justice, or admire the clemency, of Justinian. He excelled in the private virtues of chastity and temperance: but the impartial love of beauty would have been less mischievous than his conjugal tenderness for Theodora; and his abstemious diet was regulated, not by the prudence of a philosopher, but the superstition of a monk. His repasts were short and frugal: on solemn fasts, he contented himself with water and vegetables; and such was his strength, as well as fervor, that he frequently passed two days, and as many nights, without tasting any food. The measure of his sleep was not less rigorous: after the repose of a single hour, the body was awakened by the soul, and, to the astonishment of his chamberlain, Justinian walked or studied till the morning light. Such restless application prolonged his time for the acquisition of knowledge [72](#) and the despatch of business; and he might seriously deserve the reproach of confounding, by minute and preposterous diligence, the general order of his administration. The emperor professed himself a musician and architect, a poet and philosopher, a lawyer and theologian; and if he failed in the enterprise of reconciling the Christian sects, the review of the Roman jurisprudence is a noble monument of his spirit and industry. In the government of the empire, he was less wise, or less successful: the age was unfortunate; the people was oppressed and discontented; Theodora abused her power; a succession of bad ministers disgraced his judgment; and Justinian was neither beloved in his life, nor regretted at his death. The love of fame was deeply implanted in his breast, but he condescended to the poor ambition of titles, honors, and contemporary praise; and while he labored to fix the admiration, he forfeited the esteem and affection, of the Romans.

The design of the African and Italian wars was boldly conceived and executed; and his penetration discovered the talents of Belisarius in the camp, of Narses in the palace. But the name of the emperor is eclipsed by the names of his victorious generals; and Belisarius still lives, to upbraid the envy and ingratitude of his sovereign. The partial favor of mankind applauds the genius of a conqueror, who leads and directs his subjects

in the exercise of arms. The characters of Philip the Second and of Justinian are distinguished by the cold ambition which delights in war, and declines the dangers of the field. Yet a colossal statue of bronze represented the emperor on horseback, preparing to march against the Persians in the habit and armor of Achilles. In the great square before the church of St. Sophia, this monument was raised on a brass column and a stone pedestal of seven steps; and the pillar of Theodosius, which weighed seven thousand four hundred pounds of silver, was removed from the same place by the avarice and vanity of Justinian. Future princes were more just or indulgent to his memory; the elder Andronicus, in the beginning of the fourteenth century, repaired and beautified his equestrian statue: since the fall of the empire it has been melted into cannon by the victorious Turks. [73](#)

71

[\(return\)](#)

[The rubor of Domitian is stigmatized, quaintly enough, by the pen of Tacitus, (in Vit. Agric. c. 45;) and has been likewise noticed by the younger Pliny, (Panegy. c. 48,) and Suetonius, (in Domitian, c. 18, and Casaubon ad locum.) Procopius (Anecd. c. 8) foolishly believes that only one bust of Domitian had reached the sixth century.]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[The studies and science of Justinian are attested by the confession (Anecd. c. 8, 13) still more than by the praises (Gothic. l. iii. c. 31, de Edific. l. i. Proem. c. 7) of Procopius. Consult the copious index of Alemannus, and read the life of Justinian by Ludewig, (p. 135—142.)]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[See in the C. P. Christiana of Ducange (l. i. c. 24, No. 1) a chain of original testimonies, from Procopius in the sixth, to Gyllius in the seventh century.]

I shall conclude this chapter with the comets, the earthquakes, and the plague, which astonished or afflicted the age of Justinian. I. In the fifth year of his reign, and in the month of September, a comet [74](#) was seen during twenty days in the western quarter of the heavens, and which shot its rays into the north. Eight years afterwards, while the sun was in Capricorn, another comet appeared to follow in the Sagittary; the size was gradually increasing; the head was in the east, the tail in the west, and it remained visible above forty days. The nations, who gazed with astonishment, expected wars and calamities from their baleful influence; and these expectations were abundantly fulfilled. The astronomers dissembled their ignorance of the nature of these blazing stars, which they affected to represent as the floating meteors of the air; and few among them embraced the simple notion of Seneca and the Chaldeans, that they are only planets of a longer period and more eccentric motion. [75](#) Time and science have

justified the conjectures and predictions of the Roman sage: the telescope has opened new worlds to the eyes of astronomers; [76](#) and, in the narrow space of history and fable, one and the same comet is already found to have revisited the earth in seven equal revolutions of five hundred and seventy-five years. The first, [77](#) which ascends beyond the Christian aera one thousand seven hundred and sixty-seven years, is coeval with Ogyges, the father of Grecian antiquity. And this appearance explains the tradition which Varro has preserved, that under his reign the planet Venus changed her color, size, figure, and course; a prodigy without example either in past or succeeding ages. [78](#) The second visit, in the year eleven hundred and ninety-three, is darkly implied in the fable of Electra, the seventh of the Pleiads, who have been reduced to six since the time of the Trojan war. That nymph, the wife of Dardanus, was unable to support the ruin of her country: she abandoned the dances of her sister orbs, fled from the zodiac to the north pole, and obtained, from her dishevelled locks, the name of the comet. The third period expires in the year six hundred and eighteen, a date that exactly agrees with the tremendous comet of the Sibyl, and perhaps of Pliny, which arose in the West two generations before the reign of Cyrus. The fourth apparition, forty-four years before the birth of Christ, is of all others the most splendid and important. After the death of Caesar, a long-haired star was conspicuous to Rome and to the nations, during the games which were exhibited by young Octavian in honor of Venus and his uncle. The vulgar opinion, that it conveyed to heaven the divine soul of the dictator, was cherished and consecrated by the piety of a statesman; while his secret superstition referred the comet to the glory of his own times. [79](#) The fifth visit has been already ascribed to the fifth year of Justinian, which coincides with the five hundred and thirty-first of the Christian aera. And it may deserve notice, that in this, as in the preceding instance, the comet was followed, though at a longer interval, by a remarkable paleness of the sun. The sixth return, in the year eleven hundred and six, is recorded by the chronicles of Europe and China: and in the first fervor of the crusades, the Christians and the Mahometans might surmise, with equal reason, that it portended the destruction of the Infidels. The seventh phenomenon, of one thousand six hundred and eighty, was presented to the eyes of an enlightened age. [80](#) The philosophy of Bayle dispelled a prejudice which Milton's muse had so recently adorned, that the comet, "from its horrid hair shakes pestilence and war." [81](#) Its road in the heavens was observed with exquisite skill by Flamstead and Cassini: and the mathematical science of Bernoulli, Newton [8111](#), and Halley, investigated the laws of its revolutions. At the eighth period, in the year two thousand three hundred and fifty-five, their calculations may perhaps be verified by the astronomers of some future capital in the Siberian or American wilderness.

[The first comet is mentioned by John Malala (tom. ii. p. 190, 219) and Theophanes, (p. 154;) the second by Procopius, (Persic. l. ii. 4.) Yet I strongly suspect their identity. The paleness of the sun sum

Vandal. (l. ii. c. 14) is applied by Theophanes (p. 158) to a different year. Note: See Lydus de Ostentis, particularly c 15, in which the author begins to show the signification of comets according to the part of the heavens in which they appear, and what fortunes they prognosticate to the Roman empire and their Persian enemies. The chapter, however, is imperfect. (Edit. Neibuhr, p. 290.)—M.]

75 [\(return\)](#)

[Seneca's viith book of Natural Questions displays, in the theory of comets, a philosophic mind. Yet should we not too candidly confound a vague prediction, a venient tempus, &c., with the merit of real discoveries.]

76 [\(return\)](#)

[Astronomers may study Newton and Halley. I draw my humble science from the article Comete, in the French Encyclopedie, by M. d'Alembert.]

77 [\(return\)](#)

[Whiston, the honest, pious, visionary Whiston, had fancied for the aera of Noah's flood (2242 years before Christ) a prior apparition of the same comet which drowned the earth with its tail.]

78 [\(return\)](#)

[A Dissertation of Freret (Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. x. p. 357-377) affords a happy union of philosophy and erudition. The phenomenon in the time of Ogyges was preserved by Varro, (Apud Augustin. de Civitate Dei, xxi. 8,) who quotes Castor, Dion of Naples, and Adastrus of Cyzicus—nobiles mathematici. The two subsequent periods are preserved by the Greek mythologists and the spurious books of Sibylline verses.]

79 [\(return\)](#)

[Pliny (Hist. Nat. ii. 23) has transcribed the original memorial of Augustus. Mairan, in his most ingenious letters to the P. Parennin, missionary in China, removes the games and the comet of September, from the year 44 to the year 43, before the Christian aera; but I am not totally subdued by the criticism of the astronomer, (Opuscules, p. 275)]

80 [\(return\)](#)

[This last comet was visible in the month of December, 1680. Bayle, who began his Pensees sur la Comete in January, 1681, (Oeuvres, tom. iii.,) was forced to argue that a supernatural comet would

have confirmed the ancients in their idolatry. Bernoulli (see his Eloge, in Fontenelle, tom. v. p. 99) was forced to allow that the tail though not the head, was a sign of the wrath of God.]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[Paradise Lost was published in the year 1667; and the famous lines (l. ii. 708, &c.) which startled the licenser, may allude to the recent comet of 1664, observed by Cassini at Rome in the presence of Queen Christina, (Fontenelle, in his Eloge, tom. v. p. 338.) Had Charles II. betrayed any symptoms of curiosity or fear?]

8111

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare Pingre, Histoire des Cometes.—M.]

II. The near approach of a comet may injure or destroy the globe which we inhabit; but the changes on its surface have been hitherto produced by the action of volcanoes and earthquakes. [82](#) The nature of the soil may indicate the countries most exposed to these formidable concussions, since they are caused by subterraneous fires, and such fires are kindled by the union and fermentation of iron and sulphur. But their times and effects appear to lie beyond the reach of human curiosity; and the philosopher will discreetly abstain from the prediction of earthquakes, till he has counted the drops of water that silently filtrate on the inflammable mineral, and measured the caverns which increase by resistance the explosion of the imprisoned air. Without assigning the cause, history will distinguish the periods in which these calamitous events have been rare or frequent, and will observe, that this fever of the earth raged with uncommon violence during the reign of Justinian. [83](#) Each year is marked by the repetition of earthquakes, of such duration, that Constantinople has been shaken above forty days; of such extent, that the shock has been communicated to the whole surface of the globe, or at least of the Roman empire. An impulsive or vibratory motion was felt: enormous chasms were opened, huge and heavy bodies were discharged into the air, the sea alternately advanced and retreated beyond its ordinary bounds, and a mountain was torn from Libanus, [84](#) and cast into the waves, where it protected, as a mole, the new harbor of Botrys [85](#) in Phoenicia. The stroke that agitates an ant-hill may crush the insect-myrriads in the dust; yet truth must extort confession that man has industriously labored for his own destruction. The institution of great cities, which include a nation within the limits of a wall, almost realizes the wish of Caligula, that the Roman people had but one neck. Two hundred and fifty thousand persons are said to have perished in the earthquake of Antioch, whose domestic multitudes were swelled by the conflux of strangers to the festival of the Ascension. The loss of Berytus [86](#) was of smaller account, but of much greater value. That city, on the coast of Phoenicia, was illustrated by the study of the civil law, which opened the surest road to wealth and dignity: the schools of Berytus were filled with the rising spirits of the age, and many a youth was lost in the earthquake, who might have lived to be the scourge or the guardian of his country. In

these disasters, the architect becomes the enemy of mankind. The hut of a savage, or the tent of an Arab, may be thrown down without injury to the inhabitant; and the Peruvians had reason to deride the folly of their Spanish conquerors, who with so much cost and labor erected their own sepulchres. The rich marbles of a patrician are dashed on his own head: a whole people is buried under the ruins of public and private edifices, and the conflagration is kindled and propagated by the innumerable fires which are necessary for the subsistence and manufactures of a great city. Instead of the mutual sympathy which might comfort and assist the distressed, they dreadfully experience the vices and passions which are released from the fear of punishment: the tottering houses are pillaged by intrepid avarice; revenge embraces the moment, and selects the victim; and the earth often swallows the assassin, or the ravisher, in the consummation of their crimes. Superstition involves the present danger with invisible terrors; and if the image of death may sometimes be subservient to the virtue or repentance of individuals, an affrighted people is more forcibly moved to expect the end of the world, or to deprecate with servile homage the wrath of an avenging Deity.

82 [\(return\)](#)

[For the cause of earthquakes, see Buffon, (tom. i. p. 502—536 Supplement a l’Hist. Naturelle, tom. v. p. 382-390, edition in 4to., Valmont de Bomare, Dictionnaire d’Histoire Naturelle, Tremblemen de Terre, Pyrites,) Watson, (Chemical Essays, tom. i. p. 181—209.)]

83 [\(return\)](#)

[The earthquakes that shook the Roman world in the reign of Justinian are described or mentioned by Procopius, (Goth. l. iv. c. 25 Anecd. c. 18,) Agathias, (l. ii. p. 52, 53, 54, l. v. p. 145-152,) John Malala, (Chron. tom. ii. p. 140-146, 176, 177, 183, 193, 220, 229, 231, 233, 234,) and Theophanes, (p. 151, 183, 189, 191-196.) * Note *: Compare Daubeney on Earthquakes, and Lyell’s Geology, vol. ii. p. 161 et seq.—M]

84 [\(return\)](#)

[An abrupt height, a perpendicular cape, between Aradus and Botrys (Polyb. l. v. p. 411. Pompon. Mela, l. i. c. 12, p. 87, cum Isaac. Voss. Observat. Maundrell, Journey, p. 32, 33. Pocock’s Description, vol. ii. p. 99.)]

85 [\(return\)](#)

[Botrys was founded (ann. ante Christ. 935—903) by Ithobal, king of Tyre, (Marsham, Canon. Chron. p. 387, 388.) Its poor representative, the village of Patrone, is now destitute of a harbor.]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[The university, splendor, and ruin of Berytus are celebrated by Heineccius (p. 351—356) as an

essential part of the history of the Roman law. It was overthrown in the xxvth year of Justinian, A. D 551, July 9, (Theophanes, p. 192;) but Agathias (l. ii. p. 51, 52) suspends the earthquake till he has achieved the Italian war.]

III. Aethiopia and Egypt have been stigmatized, in every age, as the original source and seminary of the plague. [87](#) In a damp, hot, stagnating air, this African fever is generated from the putrefaction of animal substances, and especially from the swarms of locusts, not less destructive to mankind in their death than in their lives. The fatal disease which depopulated the earth in the time of Justinian and his successors, [88](#) first appeared in the neighborhood of Pelusium, between the Serbonian bog and the eastern channel of the Nile. From thence, tracing as it were a double path, it spread to the East, over Syria, Persia, and the Indies, and penetrated to the West, along the coast of Africa, and over the continent of Europe. In the spring of the second year, Constantinople, during three or four months, was visited by the pestilence; and Procopius, who observed its progress and symptoms with the eyes of a physician, [89](#) has emulated the skill and diligence of Thucydides in the description of the plague of Athens. [90](#) The infection was sometimes announced by the visions of a distempered fancy, and the victim despaired as soon as he had heard the menace and felt the stroke of an invisible spectre. But the greater number, in their beds, in the streets, in their usual occupation, were surprised by a slight fever; so slight, indeed, that neither the pulse nor the color of the patient gave any signs of the approaching danger. The same, the next, or the succeeding day, it was declared by the swelling of the glands, particularly those of the groin, of the armpits, and under the ear; and when these buboes or tumors were opened, they were found to contain a coal, or black substance, of the size of a lentil. If they came to a just swelling and suppuration, the patient was saved by this kind and natural discharge of the morbid humor. But if they continued hard and dry, a mortification quickly ensued, and the fifth day was commonly the term of his life. The fever was often accompanied with lethargy or delirium; the bodies of the sick were covered with black pustules or carbuncles, the symptoms of immediate death; and in the constitutions too feeble to produce an irruption, the vomiting of blood was followed by a mortification of the bowels. To pregnant women the plague was generally mortal: yet one infant was drawn alive from his dead mother, and three mothers survived the loss of their infected foetus. Youth was the most perilous season; and the female sex was less susceptible than the male: but every rank and profession was attacked with indiscriminate rage, and many of those who escaped were deprived of the use of their speech, without being secure from a return of the disorder. [91](#) The physicians of Constantinople were zealous and skilful; but their art was baffled by the various symptoms and pertinacious vehemence of the disease: the same remedies were productive of contrary effects, and the event capriciously disappointed their prognostics of death or recovery. The order of funerals, and the right of sepulchres, were confounded: those who were left without friends or servants, lay unburied in the streets, or in their desolate houses; and a magistrate was

authorized to collect the promiscuous heaps of dead bodies, to transport them by land or water, and to inter them in deep pits beyond the precincts of the city. Their own danger, and the prospect of public distress, awakened some remorse in the minds of the most vicious of mankind: the confidence of health again revived their passions and habits; but philosophy must disdain the observation of Procopius, that the lives of such men were guarded by the peculiar favor of fortune or Providence. He forgot, or perhaps he secretly recollected, that the plague had touched the person of Justinian himself; but the abstemious diet of the emperor may suggest, as in the case of Socrates, a more rational and honorable cause for his recovery. [92](#) During his sickness, the public consternation was expressed in the habits of the citizens; and their idleness and despondence occasioned a general scarcity in the capital of the East.

87 [\(return\)](#)
[I have read with pleasure Mead's short, but elegant, treatise concerning Pestilential Disorders, the viiiith edition, London, 1722.]

88 [\(return\)](#)
[The great plague which raged in 542 and the following years (Pagi, Critica, tom. ii. p. 518) must be traced in Procopius, (Persic. l. ii. c. 22, 23,) Agathias, (l. v. p. 153, 154,) Evagrius, (l. iv. c. 29,) Paul Diaconus, (l. ii. c. iv. p. 776, 777,) Gregory of Tours, (tom. ii. l. iv. c. 5, p 205,) who styles it Lues Inguinaria, and the Chronicles of Victor Tunnunensis, (p. 9, in Thesaur. Temporum,) of Marcellinus, (p. 54,) and of Theophanes, (p. 153.)]

89 [\(return\)](#)
[Dr. Friend (Hist. Medicin. in Opp. p. 416—420, Lond. 1733) is satisfied that Procopius must have studied physic, from his knowledge and use of the technical words. Yet many words that are now scientific were common and popular in the Greek idiom.]

90 [\(return\)](#)
[See Thucydides, l. ii. c. 47—54, p. 127—133, edit. Duker, and the poetical description of the same plague by Lucretius. (l. vi. 1136—1284.) I was indebted to Dr. Hunter for an elaborate commentary on this part of Thucydides, a quarto of 600 pages, (Venet. 1603, apud Juntas,) which was pronounced in St. Mark's Library by Fabius Paullinus Utinensis, a physician and philosopher.]

91 [\(return\)](#)
[Thucydides (c. 51) affirms, that the infection could only be once taken; but Evagrius, who had family experience of the plague, observes, that some persons, who had escaped the first, sunk under the second attack; and this repetition is

confirmed by Fabius Paullinus, (p. 588.) I observe, that on this head physicians are divided; and the nature and operation of the disease may not always be similar.]

92

[\(return\)](#)

[It was thus that Socrates had been saved by his temperance, in the plague of Athens, (Aul. Gellius, Noct. Attic. ii. 1.) Dr. Mead accounts for the peculiar salubrity of religious houses, by the two advantages of seclusion and abstinence, (p. 18, 19.)]

Contagion is the inseparable symptom of the plague; which, by mutual respiration, is transfused from the infected persons to the lungs and stomach of those who approach them. While philosophers believe and tremble, it is singular, that the existence of a real danger should have been denied by a people most prone to vain and imaginary terrors. [93](#) Yet the fellow-citizens of Procopius were satisfied, by some short and partial experience, that the infection could not be gained by the closest conversation: [94](#) and this persuasion might support the assiduity of friends or physicians in the care of the sick, whom inhuman prudence would have condemned to solitude and despair. But the fatal security, like the predestination of the Turks, must have aided the progress of the contagion; and those salutary precautions to which Europe is indebted for her safety, were unknown to the government of Justinian. No restraints were imposed on the free and frequent intercourse of the Roman provinces: from Persia to France, the nations were mingled and infected by wars and emigrations; and the pestilential odor which lurks for years in a bale of cotton was imported, by the abuse of trade, into the most distant regions. The mode of its propagation is explained by the remark of Procopius himself, that it always spread from the sea-coast to the inland country: the most sequestered islands and mountains were successively visited; the places which had escaped the fury of its first passage were alone exposed to the contagion of the ensuing year. The winds might diffuse that subtle venom; but unless the atmosphere be previously disposed for its reception, the plague would soon expire in the cold or temperate climates of the earth. Such was the universal corruption of the air, that the pestilence which burst forth in the fifteenth year of Justinian was not checked or alleviated by any difference of the seasons. In time, its first malignity was abated and dispersed; the disease alternately languished and revived; but it was not till the end of a calamitous period of fifty-two years, that mankind recovered their health, or the air resumed its pure and salubrious quality.

No facts have been preserved to sustain an account, or even a conjecture, of the numbers that perished in this extraordinary mortality. I only find, that during three months, five, and at length ten, thousand persons died each day at Constantinople; that many cities of the East were left vacant, and that in several districts of Italy the harvest and the vintage withered on the ground. The triple scourge of war, pestilence, and famine, afflicted the subjects of Justinian; and his reign is disgraced by the visible

decrease of the human species, which has never been repaired in some of the fairest countries of the globe. [95](#)

93

[\(return\)](#)

[Mead proves that the plague is contagious from Thucydides, Lactetius, Aristotle, Galen, and common experience, (p. 10—20;) and he refutes (Preface, p. 2—13) the contrary opinion of the French physicians who visited Marseilles in the year 1720. Yet these were the recent and enlightened spectators of a plague which, in a few months, swept away 50,000 inhabitants (sur le Peste de Marseille, Paris, 1786) of a city that, in the present hour of prosperity and trade contains no more then 90,000 souls, (Necker, sur les Finances, tom. i. p. 231.)]

94

[\(return\)](#)

[The strong assertions of Procopius are overthrown by the subsequent experience of Evagrius.]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[After some figures of rhetoric, the sands of the sea, &c., Procopius (Anecd. c. 18) attempts a more definite account; that it had been exterminated under the reign of the Imperial demon. The expression is obscure in grammar and arithmetic and a literal interpretation would produce several millions of millions Alemannus (p. 80) and Cousin (tom. iii. p. 178) translate this passage, “two hundred millions:” but I am ignorant of their motives. The remaining myriad of myriads, would furnish one hundred millions, a number not wholly inadmissible.]

Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part I.

Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—The Laws Of The Kings—
The Twelve Of The Decemvirs.—The Laws Of The People.—
The Decrees Of The Senate.—The Edicts Of The Magistrates
And Emperors—Authority Of The Civilians.—Code, Pandects,
Novels, And Institutes Of Justinian:—I. Rights Of Persons.—II.
Rights Of Things.—III. Private Injuries And Actions.—IV.
Crimes And Punishments.

Note: In the notes to this important chapter, which is received as the text-book on Civil Law in some of the foreign universities, I have consulted,

I. the newly-discovered Institutes of Gaius, (*Gaii Institutiones*, ed. Goeschen, Berlin, 1824,) with some other fragments of the Roman law, (*Codicis Theodosiani Fragmenta inedita*, ab Amadeo Peyron. Turin, 1824.)

II. The History of the Roman Law, by Professor Hugo, in the French translation of M. Jourdan. Paris, 1825.

III. Savigny, *Geschichte des Römischen Rechts im Mittelalter*, 6 bande, Heidelberg, 1815.

IV. Walther, *Römische Rechts-Geschichte*, Bonn. 1834. But I am particularly indebted to an edition of the French translation of this chapter, with additional notes, by one of the most learned civilians of Europe, Professor Warnkönig, published at Liege, 1821. I have inserted almost the whole of these notes, which are distinguished by the letter W.—M. The vain titles of the victories of Justinian are crumbled into dust; but the name of the legislator is inscribed on a fair and everlasting monument. Under his reign, and by his care, the civil jurisprudence was digested in the immortal works of the Code, the Pandects, and the Institutes: [1](#) the public reason of the Romans has been silently or studiously transfused into the domestic institutions of Europe, [2](#), and the laws of Justinian still command the respect or obedience of independent nations. Wise or fortunate is the prince who connects his own reputation with the honor or interest of a perpetual order of men. The defence of their founder is the first cause, which in every age has exercised the zeal and industry of the civilians. They piously commemorate his virtues; dissemble or deny his failings; and fiercely chastise the guilt or folly of the rebels, who presume to sully the majesty of the purple. The idolatry of love has provoked, as it usually happens, the rancor of opposition; the character of Justinian has been exposed to the blind vehemence of flattery and invective; and the injustice of a sect (the Anti-Tribonians,) has refused all praise and merit to the prince, his ministers, and his laws. [3](#) Attached to no party, interested only for the truth and candor of history, and directed by the most temperate and skilful guides, [4](#) I enter with just diffidence on the subject of civil law, which has exhausted so many learned lives, and clothed the walls of such spacious libraries. In a single, if possible in a short, chapter, I shall trace the Roman jurisprudence from Romulus to Justinian, [5](#) appreciate the labors of that emperor, and pause to contemplate the principles of a science so important to the peace and happiness of society. The laws of a nation form the most instructive portion of its history; and although I have devoted myself to write the annals of a declining monarchy, I shall embrace the occasion to breathe the pure and invigorating air of the republic.

[The civilians of the darker ages have established an absurd and incomprehensible mode of quotation, which is supported by authority and custom. In their references to the Code, the Pandects, and the Institutes, they mention the number, not of the book, but only of the law; and content themselves with reciting the first words of the title to which it

belongs; and of these titles there are more than a thousand. Ludewig (*Vit. Justiniani*, p. 268) wishes to shake off this pendant yoke; and I have dared to adopt the simple and rational method of numbering the book, the title, and the law. Note: The example of Gibbon has been followed by M Hugo and other civilians.—M]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Germany, Bohemia, Hungary, Poland, and Scotland, have received them as common law or reason; in France, Italy, &c., they possess a direct or indirect influence; and they were respected in England, from Stephen to Edward I. our national Justinian, (*Duck. de Usu et Auctoritate Juris Civilis*, l. ii. c. 1, 8—15. Heineccius, *Hist. Juris Germanici*, c. 3, 4, No. 55-124, and the legal historians of each country.) * Note: Although the restoration of the Roman law, introduced by the revival of this study in Italy, is one of the most important branches of history, it had been treated but imperfectly when Gibbon wrote his work. That of Arthur Duck is but an insignificant performance. But the researches of the learned have thrown much light upon the matter. The Sarti, the Tiraboschi, the Fantuzzi, the Savioli, had made some very interesting inquiries; but it was reserved for M. de Savigny, in a work entitled “The History of the Roman Law during the Middle Ages,” to cast the strongest right on this part of history. He demonstrates incontestably the preservation of the Roman law from Justinian to the time of the Glossators, who by their indefatigable zeal, propagated the study of the Roman jurisprudence in all the countries of Europe. It is much to be desired that the author should continue this interesting work, and that the learned should engage in the inquiry in what manner the Roman law introduced itself into their respective countries, and the authority which it progressively acquired. For Belgium, there exists, on this subject, (proposed by the Academy of Brussels in 1781,) a Collection of Memoirs, printed at Brussels in 4to., 1783, among which should be distinguished those of M. de Berg. M. Berriat Saint Prix has given us hopes of the speedy appearance of a work in which he will discuss this question, especially in relation to France. M. Spangenberg, in his Introduction to the Study of the Corpus Juris Civilis Hanover, 1817, 1 vol. 8vo. p. 86, 116, gives us a general sketch of the history of the Roman law in different parts of Europe. We cannot avoid mentioning an

elementary work by M. Hugo, in which he treats of the History of the Roman Law from Justinian to the present Time, 2d edit. Berlin 1818 W.]

3

[\(return\)](#)

[Francis Hottoman, a learned and acute lawyer of the xvith century, wished to mortify Cujacius, and to please the Chancellor de l'Hopital. His Anti-Tribonianus (which I have never been able to procure) was published in French in 1609; and his sect was propagated in Germany, (Heineccius, Op. tom. iii. sylloge iii. p. 171—183.) * Note: Though there have always been many detractors of the Roman law, no sect of Anti-Tribonians has ever existed under that name, as Gibbon seems to suppose.—W.]

4

[\(return\)](#)

[At the head of these guides I shall respectfully place the learned and perspicuous Heineccius, a German professor, who died at Halle in the year 1741, (see his Eloge in the Nouvelle Bibliotheque Germanique, tom. ii. p. 51—64.) His ample works have been collected in eight volumes in 4to. Geneva, 1743-1748. The treatises which I have separately used are, 1. Historia Juris Romani et Germanici, Lugd. Batav. 1740, in 8 vo. 2. Syntagma Antiquitatum Romanam Jurisprudentiam illustrantium, 2 vols. in 8 vo. Traject. ad Rhenum. 3. Elementa Juris Civilis secundum Ordinem Institutionum, Lugd. Bat. 1751, in 8 vo. 4. Elementa J. C. secundum Ordinem Pandectarum Traject. 1772, in 8vo. 2 vols. * Note: Our author, who was not a lawyer, was necessarily obliged to content himself with following the opinions of those writers who were then of the greatest authority; but as Heineccius, notwithstanding his high reputation for the study of the Roman law, knew nothing of the subject on which he treated, but what he had learned from the compilations of various authors, it happened that, in following the sometimes rash opinions of these guides, Gibbon has fallen into many errors, which we shall endeavor in succession to correct. The work of Bach on the History of the Roman Jurisprudence, with which Gibbon was not acquainted, is far superior to that of Heineccius and since that time we have new obligations to the modern historic civilians, whose indefatigable researches have greatly enlarged the sphere of our knowledge in this important branch of history. We want a pen like that of Gibbon to give to the more accurate notions which we have acquired since his

time, the brilliancy, the vigor, and the animation which Gibbon has bestowed on the opinions of Heineccius and his contemporaries.—W]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[Our original text is a fragment de Origine Juris (Pandect. l. i. tit. ii.) of Pomponius, a Roman lawyer, who lived under the Antonines, (Heinecc. tom. iii. syl. iii. p. 66—126.) It has been abridged, and probably corrupted, by Tribonian, and since restored by Bynkershoek (Opp. tom. i. p. 279—304.)]

The primitive government of Rome [6](#) was composed, with some political skill, of an elective king, a council of nobles, and a general assembly of the people. War and religion were administered by the supreme magistrate; and he alone proposed the laws, which were debated in the senate, and finally ratified or rejected by a majority of votes in the thirty curiae or parishes of the city. Romulus, Numa, and Servius Tullius, are celebrated as the most ancient legislators; and each of them claims his peculiar part in the threefold division of jurisprudence. [7](#) The laws of marriage, the education of children, and the authority of parents, which may seem to draw their origin from nature itself, are ascribed to the untutored wisdom of Romulus. The law of nations and of religious worship, which Numa introduced, was derived from his nocturnal converse with the nymph Egeria. The civil law is attributed to the experience of Servius: he balanced the rights and fortunes of the seven classes of citizens; and guarded, by fifty new regulations, the observance of contracts and the punishment of crimes. The state, which he had inclined towards a democracy, was changed by the last Tarquin into a lawless despotism; and when the kingly office was abolished, the patricians engrossed the benefits of freedom. The royal laws became odious or obsolete; the mysterious deposit was silently preserved by the priests and nobles; and at the end of sixty years, the citizens of Rome still complained that they were ruled by the arbitrary sentence of the magistrates. Yet the positive institutions of the kings had blended themselves with the public and private manners of the city, some fragments of that venerable jurisprudence [8](#) were compiled by the diligence of antiquarians, [9](#) and above twenty texts still speak the rudeness of the Pelasgic idiom of the Latins. [10](#)

6

[\(return\)](#)

[The constitutional history of the kings of Rome may be studied in the first book of Livy, and more copiously in Dionysius Halicarnassensis, (l. li. p. 80—96, 119—130, l. iv. p. 198—220,) who sometimes betrays the character of a rhetorician and a Greek. * Note: M. Warnkonig refers to the work of Beaufort, on the Uncertainty of the Five First Ages of the Roman History, with which Gibbon was probably acquainted, to Niebuhr, and to the less known volume of Wachsmuth, “Aeltere Geschichte des Rom. Staats.” To these I would add A. W.

Schlegel's Review of Niebuhr, and my friend Dr. Arnold's recently published volume, of which the chapter on the Law of the XII. Tables appears to me one of the most valuable, if not the most valuable, chapter.—M.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[This threefold division of the law was applied to the three Roman kings by Justus Lipsius, (Opp. tom. iv. p. 279;) is adopted by Gravina, (Origines Juris Civilis, p. 28, edit. Lips. 1737:) and is reluctantly admitted by Mascou, his German editor. * Note: Whoever is acquainted with the real notions of the Romans on the *jus naturale, gentium et civile*, cannot but disapprove of this explanation which has no relation to them, and might be taken for a pleasantry. It is certainly unnecessary to increase the confusion which already prevails among modern writers on the true sense of these ideas. Hugo.—W]

8

[\(return\)](#)

[The most ancient Code or Digest was styled *Jus Papirianum*, from the first compiler, Papirius, who flourished somewhat before or after the *Regifugium*, (Pandect. l. i. tit. ii.) The best judicial critics, even Bynkershoek (tom. i. p. 284, 285) and Heineccius, (Hist. J. C. R. l. i. c. 16, 17, and Opp. tom. iii. sylloge iv. p. 1—8,) give credit to this tale of Pomponius, without sufficiently adverting to the value and rarity of such a monument of the third century, of the illiterate city. I much suspect that the Caius Papirius, the Pontifex Maximus, who revived the laws of Numa (Dionys. Hal. l. iii. p. 171) left only an oral tradition; and that the *Jus Papirianum* of Granius Flaccus (Pandect. l. L. tit. xvi. leg. 144) was not a commentary, but an original work, compiled in the time of Caesar, (Censorin. de Die Natali, l. iii. p. 13, Duker de Latinitate J. C. p. 154.) Note: Niebuhr considers the *Jus Papirianum*, adduced by Verrius Flaccus, to be of undoubted authenticity. Rom. Geschichte, l. 257.—M. Compare this with the work of M. Hugo.—W.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[A pompous, though feeble attempt to restore the original, is made in the *Histoire de la Jurisprudence Romaine* of Terasson, p. 22—72, Paris, 1750, in folio; a work of more promise than performance.]

10

[\(return\)](#)

[In the year 1444, seven or eight tables of brass were dug up between Cortona and Gubio. A part of these (for the rest is Etruscan) represents the

primitive state of the Pelasgic letters and language, which are ascribed by Herodotus to that district of Italy, (l. i. c. 56, 57, 58;) though this difficult passage may be explained of a Crestona in Thrace, (Notes de Larcher, tom. i. p. 256—261.) The savage dialect of the Eugubine tables has exercised, and may still elude, the divination of criticism; but the root is undoubtedly Latin, of the same age and character as the Saliare Carmen, which, in the time of Horace, none could understand. The Roman idiom, by an infusion of Doric and Aeolic Greek, was gradually ripened into the style of the xii. tables, of the Duillian column, of Ennius, of Terence, and of Cicero, (Gruter. Inscript. tom. i. p. cxlii. Scipion Maffei, Istorica Diplomatica, p. 241—258. Bibliothéque Italique, tom. iii. p. 30—41, 174—205. tom. xiv. p. 1—52.) * Note: The Eugubine Tables have exercised the ingenuity of the Italian and German critics; it seems admitted (O. Muller, die Etrusker, ii. 313) that they are Tuscan. See the works of Lanzi, Passeri, Dempster, and O. Muller.—M]

I shall not repeat the well-known story of the Decemvirs, [11](#) who sullied by their actions the honor of inscribing on brass, or wood, or ivory, the Twelve Tables of the Roman laws. [12](#) They were dictated by the rigid and jealous spirit of an aristocracy, which had yielded with reluctance to the just demands of the people. But the substance of the Twelve Tables was adapted to the state of the city; and the Romans had emerged from Barbarism, since they were capable of studying and embracing the institutions of their more enlightened neighbors. [1211](#) A wise Ephesian was driven by envy from his native country: before he could reach the shores of Latium, he had observed the various forms of human nature and civil society: he imparted his knowledge to the legislators of Rome, and a statue was erected in the forum to the perpetual memory of Hermodorus. [13](#) The names and divisions of the copper money, the sole coin of the infant state, were of Dorian origin: [14](#) the harvests of Campania and Sicily relieved the wants of a people whose agriculture was often interrupted by war and faction; and since the trade was established, [15](#) the deputies who sailed from the Tyber might return from the same harbors with a more precious cargo of political wisdom. The colonies of Great Greece had transported and improved the arts of their mother country. Cumae and Rhegium, Crotona and Tarentum, Agrigentum and Syracuse, were in the rank of the most flourishing cities. The disciples of Pythagoras applied philosophy to the use of government; the unwritten laws of Charondas accepted the aid of poetry and music, [16](#) and Zaleucus framed the republic of the Locrians, which stood without alteration above two hundred years. [17](#) From a similar motive of national pride, both Livy and Dionysius are willing to believe, that the deputies of Rome visited Athens under the wise and splendid administration of Pericles; and the laws of Solon were

transfused into the twelve tables. If such an embassy had indeed been received from the Barbarians of Hesperia, the Roman name would have been familiar to the Greeks before the reign of Alexander; [18](#) and the faintest evidence would have been explored and celebrated by the curiosity of succeeding times. But the Athenian monuments are silent; nor will it seem credible that the patricians should undertake a long and perilous navigation to copy the purest model of democracy. In the comparison of the tables of Solon with those of the Decemvirs, some casual resemblance may be found; some rules which nature and reason have revealed to every society; some proofs of a common descent from Egypt or Phoenicia. [19](#) But in all the great lines of public and private jurisprudence, the legislators of Rome and Athens appear to be strangers or adverse at each other.

11 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare Livy (l. iii. c. 31—59) with Dionysius Halicarnassensis, (l. x. p. 644—xi. p. 691.) How concise and animated is the Roman—how prolix and lifeless the Greek! Yet he has admirably judged the masters, and defined the rules, of historical composition.]

12 [\(return\)](#)

[From the historians, Heineccius (Hist. J. R. l. i. No. 26) maintains that the twelve tables were of brass—aereas; in the text of Pomponius we read eboreas; for which Scaliger has substituted roboreas, (Bynkershoek, p. 286.) Wood, brass, and ivory, might be successively employed. Note: Compare Niebuhr, vol. ii. p. 349, &c.—M.]

1211 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare Niebuhr, 355, note 720.—M. It is a most important question whether the twelve tables in fact include laws imported from Greece. The negative opinion maintained by our author, is now almost universally adopted, particularly by Mm. Niebuhr, Hugo, and others. See my Institutiones Juris Romani privati Leodii, 1819, p. 311, 312.—W. Dr. Arnold, p. 255, seems to incline to the opposite opinion. Compare some just and sensible observations in the Appendix to Mr. Travers Twiss's Epitome of Niebuhr, p. 347, Oxford, 1836.—M.]

13 [\(return\)](#)

[His exile is mentioned by Cicero, (Tusculan. Quaestion. v. 36; his statue by Pliny, (Hist. Nat. xxxiv. 11.) The letter, dream, and prophecy of Heraclitus, are alike spurious, (Epistolae Graec. Divers. p. 337.) * Note: Compare Niebuhr, ii. 209.—M. See the Mem de l'Academ. des Inscript. xxii. p. 48. It would be difficult to disprove, that a

certain Hermodorus had some share in framing the Laws of the Twelve Tables. Pomponius even says that this Hermodorus was the author of the last two tables. Pliny calls him the Interpreter of the Decemvirs, which may lead us to suppose that he labored with them in drawing up that law. But it is astonishing that in his Dissertation, (*De Hermodoro vero XII. Tabularum Auctore*, *Annales Academiae Groninganae anni 1817, 1818*,) M. Gratama has ventured to advance two propositions entirely devoid of proof: “Decem priores tabulas ab ipsis Romanis non esse profectas, tota confirma Decemviratus Historia,” et “Hermodorum legum decemviralium certi nominis auctorem esse, qui eas composuerit suis ordinibus, disposuerit, suaque fecerit auctoritate, ut a decemviris reciperentur.” This truly was an age in which the Roman Patricians would allow their laws to be dictated by a foreign Exile! Mr. Gratama does not attempt to prove the authenticity of the supposititious letter of Heraclitus. He contents himself with expressing his astonishment that M. Bonamy (as well as Gibbon) will be receive it as genuine.—W.]

14 [\(return\)](#)

[This intricate subject of the Sicilian and Roman money, is ably discussed by Dr. Bentley, (*Dissertation on the Epistles of Phalaris*, p. 427—479,) whose powers in this controversy were called forth by honor and resentment.]

15 [\(return\)](#)

[The Romans, or their allies, sailed as far as the fair promontory of Africa, (*Polyb. l. iii. p. 177*, edit. Casaubon, in folio.) Their voyages to Cumae, &c., are noticed by Livy and Dionysius.]

16 [\(return\)](#)

[This circumstance would alone prove the antiquity of Charondas, the legislator of Rhegium and Catana, who, by a strange error of Diodorus Siculus (tom. i. l. xii. p. 485—492) is celebrated long afterwards as the author of the policy of Thurium.]

17 [\(return\)](#)

[Zaleucus, whose existence has been rashly attacked, had the merit and glory of converting a band of outlaws (the Locrians) into the most virtuous and orderly of the Greek republics. (See two Memoirs of the Baron de St. Croix, *sur la Legislation de la Grande Grece Mem. de l'Academie*, tom. xlii. p. 276—333.) But the laws of Zaleucus and Charondas, which imposed on Diodorus and Stobaeus, are the spurious

composition of a Pythagorean sophist, whose fraud has been detected by the critical sagacity of Bentley, p. 335—377.]

18

[\(return\)](#)

[I seize the opportunity of tracing the progress of this national intercourse 1. Herodotus and Thucydides (A. U. C. 300—350) appear ignorant of the name and existence of Rome, (Joseph. contra Appion tom. ii. l. i. c. 12, p. 444, edit. Havercamp.) 2. Theopompus (A. U. C. 400, Plin. iii. 9) mentions the invasion of the Gauls, which is noticed in looser terms by Heraclides Ponticus, (Plutarch in Camillo, p. 292, edit. H. Stephan.) 3. The real or fabulous embassy of the Romans to Alexander (A. U. C. 430) is attested by Clitarchus, (Plin. iii. 9,) by Aristus and Asclepiades, (Arrian. l. vii. p. 294, 295,) and by Memnon of Heraclea, (apud Photium, cod. ccxxiv. p. 725,) though tacitly denied by Livy. 4. Theophrastus (A. U. C. 440) primus externorum aliqua de Romanis diligentius scripsit, (Plin. iii. 9.) 5. Lycophron (A. U. C. 480—500) scattered the first seed of a Trojan colony and the fable of the Aeneid, (Cassandra, 1226—1280.) A bold prediction before the end of the first Punic war! * Note: Compare Niebuhr throughout. Niebuhr has written a dissertation (Kleine Schriften, i. p. 438,) arguing from this prediction, and on the other conclusive grounds, that the Lycophron, the author of the Cassandra, is not the Alexandrian poet. He had been anticipated in this sagacious criticism, as he afterwards discovered, by a writer of no less distinction than Charles James Fox.—Letters to Wakefield. And likewise by the author of the extraordinary translation of this poem, that most promising scholar, Lord Royston. See the Remains of Lord Royston, by the Rev. Henry Pepys, London, 1838.]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[The tenth table, de modo sepulturae, was borrowed from Solon, (Cicero de Legibus, ii. 23—26:) the furtem per lancem et licium conceptum, is derived by Heineccius from the manners of Athens, (Antiquitat. Rom. tom. ii. p. 167—175.) The right of killing a nocturnal thief was declared by Moses, Solon, and the Decemvirs, (Exodus xxii. 3. Demosthenes contra Timocratem, tom. i. p. 736, edit. Reiske. Macrob. Saturnalia, l. i. c. 4. Collatio Legum Mosaicarum et Romanatum, tit. vii. No. i. p. 218, edit. Cannegieter.) *Note: Are not the same

points of similarity discovered in the legislation of
all actions in the infancy of their civilization?—W.]

Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part II.

Whatever might be the origin or the merit of the twelve tables, [20](#) they obtained among the Romans that blind and partial reverence which the lawyers of every country delight to bestow on their municipal institutions. The study is recommended by Cicero [21](#) as equally pleasant and instructive. “They amuse the mind by the remembrance of old words and the portrait of ancient manners; they inculcate the soundest principles of government and morals; and I am not afraid to affirm, that the brief composition of the Decemvirs surpasses in genuine value the libraries of Grecian philosophy. How admirable,” says Tully, with honest or affected prejudice, “is the wisdom of our ancestors! We alone are the masters of civil prudence, and our superiority is the more conspicuous, if we deign to cast our eyes on the rude and almost ridiculous jurisprudence of Draco, of Solon, and of Lycurgus.” The twelve tables were committed to the memory of the young and the meditation of the old; they were transcribed and illustrated with learned diligence; they had escaped the flames of the Gauls, they subsisted in the age of Justinian, and their subsequent loss has been imperfectly restored by the labors of modern critics. [22](#) But although these venerable monuments were considered as the rule of right and the fountain of justice, [23](#) they were overwhelmed by the weight and variety of new laws, which, at the end of five centuries, became a grievance more intolerable than the vices of the city. [24](#) Three thousand brass plates, the acts of the senate of the people, were deposited in the Capitol: [25](#) and some of the acts, as the Julian law against extortion, surpassed the number of a hundred chapters. [26](#) The Decemvirs had neglected to import the sanction of Zaleucus, which so long maintained the integrity of his republic. A Locrian, who proposed any new law, stood forth in the assembly of the people with a cord round his neck, and if the law was rejected, the innovator was instantly strangled.

20 [\(return\)](#)

[It is the praise of Diodorus, (tom. i. l. xii. p. 494,) which may be fairly translated by the *eleganti atque absoluta brevitare verborum* of Aulus Gellius, (Noct. Attic. xxi. 1.)]

21 [\(return\)](#)

[Listen to Cicero (de Legibus, ii. 23) and his representative Crassus, (de Oratore, i. 43, 44.)]

22 [\(return\)](#)

[See Heineccius, (Hist. J. R. No. 29—33.) I have followed the restoration of the xii. tables by Gravina (Origines J. C. p. 280—307) and Terrasson, (Hist. de la Jurisprudence Romaine, p. 94—205.) Note: The wish expressed by Warnkonig, that the text and

the conjectural emendations on the fragments of the xii. tables should be submitted to rigid criticism, has been fulfilled by Dirksen, Uebersicht der bisherigen Versuche Leipzig Kritik und Herstellung des Textes der Zwölf-Tafel-Fragmente, Leipzig, 1824.—M.]

23 [\(return\)](#)

[Finis aequi juris, (Tacit. Annal. iii. 27.) Fons omnis publici et privati juris, (T. Liv. iii. 34.) * Note: From the context of the phrase in Tacitus, “Nam secutae leges etsi aliquando in maleficos ex delicto; saepius tamen dissensione ordinum * * * latae sunt,” it is clear that Gibbon has rendered this sentence incorrectly. Hugo, Hist. p. 62.—M.]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[De principiis juris, et quibus modis ad hanc multitudinem infinitam ac varietatem legum perventum sit altius disseram, (Tacit. Annal. iii. 25.) This deep disquisition fills only two pages, but they are the pages of Tacitus. With equal sense, but with less energy, Livy (iii. 34) had complained, in hoc immenso aliarum super alias acervatarum legum cumulo, &c.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Suetonius in Vespasiano, c. 8.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Cicero ad Familiares, viii. 8.]

The Decemvirs had been named, and their tables were approved, by an assembly of the centuries, in which riches preponderated against numbers. To the first class of Romans, the proprietors of one hundred thousand pounds of copper, [27](#) ninety-eight votes were assigned, and only ninety-five were left for the six inferior classes, distributed according to their substance by the artful policy of Servius. But the tribunes soon established a more specious and popular maxim, that every citizen has an equal right to enact the laws which he is bound to obey. Instead of the centuries, they convened the tribes; and the patricians, after an impotent struggle, submitted to the decrees of an assembly, in which their votes were confounded with those of the meanest plebeians. Yet as long as the tribes successively passed over narrow bridges [28](#) and gave their voices aloud, the conduct of each citizen was exposed to the eyes and ears of his friends and countrymen. The insolvent debtor consulted the wishes of his creditor; the client would have blushed to oppose the views of his patron; the general was followed by his veterans, and the aspect of a grave magistrate was a living lesson to the multitude. A new method of secret ballot abolished the influence of fear and shame, of honor and interest, and the abuse of freedom accelerated the progress of anarchy and despotism. [29](#) The Romans had aspired to be equal; they were levelled by the equality of servitude; and the dictates of Augustus were patiently ratified by the formal consent

of the tribes or centuries. Once, and once only, he experienced a sincere and strenuous opposition. His subjects had resigned all political liberty; they defended the freedom of domestic life. A law which enforced the obligation, and strengthened the bonds of marriage, was clamorously rejected; Propertius, in the arms of Delia, applauded the victory of licentious love; and the project of reform was suspended till a new and more tractable generation had arisen in the world. [30](#) Such an example was not necessary to instruct a prudent usurper of the mischief of popular assemblies; and their abolition, which Augustus had silently prepared, was accomplished without resistance, and almost without notice, on the accession of his successor. [31](#) Sixty thousand plebeian legislators, whom numbers made formidable, and poverty secure, were supplanted by six hundred senators, who held their honors, their fortunes, and their lives, by the clemency of the emperor. The loss of executive power was alleviated by the gift of legislative authority; and Ulpian might assert, after the practice of two hundred years, that the decrees of the senate obtained the force and validity of laws. In the times of freedom, the resolves of the people had often been dictated by the passion or error of the moment: the Cornelian, Pompeian, and Julian laws were adapted by a single hand to the prevailing disorders; but the senate, under the reign of the Caesars, was composed of magistrates and lawyers, and in questions of private jurisprudence, the integrity of their judgment was seldom perverted by fear or interest. [32](#)

[Dionysius, with Arbuthnot, and most of the moderns, (except Eisenschmidt de Ponderibus, &c., p. 137—140,) represent the 100,000 asses by 10,000 Attic drachmae, or somewhat more than 300 pounds sterling. But their calculation can apply only to the latter times, when the as was diminished to 1-24th of its ancient weight: nor can I believe that in the first ages, however destitute of the precious metals, a single ounce of silver could have been exchanged for seventy pounds of copper or brass. A more simple and rational method is to value the copper itself according to the present rate, and, after comparing the mint and the market price, the Roman and avoirdupois weight, the primitive as or Roman pound of copper may be appreciated at one English shilling, and the 100,000 asses of the first class amounted to 5000 pounds sterling. It will appear from the same reckoning, that an ox was sold at Rome for five pounds, a sheep for ten shillings, and a quarter of wheat for one pound ten shillings, (Festus, p. 330, edit. Dacier. Plin. Hist. Natur. xviii. 4:) nor do I see any reason to reject these consequences, which moderate our ideas of the poverty of the first Romans. * Note: Compare Niebuhr, English translation, vol. i. p. 448, &c.—M.]

- 28 [\(return\)](#)
[Consult the common writers on the Roman Comitia, especially Sigonius and Beaufort. Spanheim (*de Praestantia et Usu Numismatum*, tom. ii. dissert. x. p. 192, 193) shows, on a curious medal, the Cista, Pontes, Septa, Diribitor, &c.]
- 29 [\(return\)](#)
[Cicero (*de Legibus*, iii. 16, 17, 18) debates this constitutional question, and assigns to his brother Quintus the most unpopular side.]
- 30 [\(return\)](#)
[Prae tumultu recusantium perferre non potuit, (Sueton. in August. c. 34.) See Propertius, l. ii. eleg. 6. Heineccius, in a separate history, has exhausted the whole subject of the Julian and Papian Poppaeian laws, (*Opp. tom. vii. P. i. p. 1—479.*)]
- 31 [\(return\)](#)
[Tacit. *Annal.* i. 15. Lipsius, *Excursus E.* in Tacitum. Note: This error of Gibbon has been long detected. The senate, under Tiberius did indeed elect the magistrates, who before that emperor were elected in the comitia. But we find laws enacted by the people during his reign, and that of Claudius. For example; the Julia-Norbana, Vellea, and Claudia de tutela foeminarum. Compare the *Hist. du Droit Romain*, by M. Hugo, vol. ii. p. 55, 57. The comitia ceased imperceptibly as the republic gradually expired.—W.]
- 32 [\(return\)](#)
[Non ambigitur senatum jus facere posse, is the decision of Ulpian, (l. xvi. ad Edict. in Pandect. l. i. tit. iii. leg. 9.) Pomponius taxes the comitia of the people as a turba hominum, (Pandect. l. i. tit. ii. leg. 9.) * Note: The author adopts the opinion, that under the emperors alone the senate had a share in the legislative power. They had nevertheless participated in it under the Republic, since senatus-consulta relating to civil rights have been preserved, which are much earlier than the reigns of Augustus or Tiberius. It is true that, under the emperors, the senate exercised this right more frequently, and that the assemblies of the people had become much more rare, though in law they were still permitted, in the time of Ulpian. (See the fragments of Ulpian.) Bach has clearly demonstrated that the senate had the same power in the time of the Republic. It is natural that the senatus-consulta should have been more frequent under the emperors, because they employed those means of flattering the pride of the senators, by granting them the right of deliberating

on all affairs which did not intrench on the Imperial power. Compare the discussions of M. Hugo, vol. i. p. 284, et seq.—W.]

The silence or ambiguity of the laws was supplied by the occasional edicts [3211](#) of those magistrates who were invested with the honors of the state. [33](#) This ancient prerogative of the Roman kings was transferred, in their respective offices, to the consuls and dictators, the censors and praetors; and a similar right was assumed by the tribunes of the people, the ediles, and the proconsuls. At Rome, and in the provinces, the duties of the subject, and the intentions of the governor, were proclaimed; and the civil jurisprudence was reformed by the annual edicts of the supreme judge, the praetor of the city. [3311](#) As soon as he ascended his tribunal, he announced by the voice of the crier, and afterwards inscribed on a white wall, the rules which he proposed to follow in the decision of doubtful cases, and the relief which his equity would afford from the precise rigor of ancient statutes. A principle of discretion more congenial to monarchy was introduced into the republic: the art of respecting the name, and eluding the efficacy, of the laws, was improved by successive praetors; subtleties and fictions were invented to defeat the plainest meaning of the Decemvirs, and where the end was salutary, the means were frequently absurd. The secret or probable wish of the dead was suffered to prevail over the order of succession and the forms of testaments; and the claimant, who was excluded from the character of heir, accepted with equal pleasure from an indulgent praetor the possession of the goods of his late kinsman or benefactor. In the redress of private wrongs, compensations and fines were substituted to the obsolete rigor of the Twelve Tables; time and space were annihilated by fanciful suppositions; and the plea of youth, or fraud, or violence, annulled the obligation, or excused the performance, of an inconvenient contract. A jurisdiction thus vague and arbitrary was exposed to the most dangerous abuse: the substance, as well as the form, of justice were often sacrificed to the prejudices of virtue, the bias of laudable affection, and the grosser seductions of interest or resentment. But the errors or vices of each praetor expired with his annual office; such maxims alone as had been approved by reason and practice were copied by succeeding judges; the rule of proceeding was defined by the solution of new cases; and the temptations of injustice were removed by the Cornelian law, which compelled the praetor of the year to adhere to the spirit and letter of his first proclamation. [34](#) It was reserved for the curiosity and learning of Adrian, to accomplish the design which had been conceived by the genius of Caesar; and the praetorship of Salvius Julian, an eminent lawyer, was immortalized by the composition of the Perpetual Edict. This well-digested code was ratified by the emperor and the senate; the long divorce of law and equity was at length reconciled; and, instead of the Twelve Tables, the perpetual edict was fixed as the invariable standard of civil jurisprudence. [35](#)

de Magistratibus, p. 32, edit. Hase. The Praetorian praefect was to the emperor what the master of the horse was to the dictator under the Republic. He was the delegate, therefore, of the full Imperial authority; and no appeal could be made or exception taken against his edicts. I had not observed this passage, when the third volume, where it would have been more appropriately placed, passed through the press.—M]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[The *jus honorarium* of the praetors and other magistrates is strictly defined in the Latin text to the Institutes, (l. i. tit. ii. No. 7,) and more loosely explained in the Greek paraphrase of Theophilus, (p. 33—38, edit. Reitz,) who drops the important word *honorarium*. * Note: The author here follows the opinion of Heineccius, who, according to the idea of his master Thomasius, was unwilling to suppose that magistrates exercising a judicial could share in the legislative power. For this reason he represents the edicts of the praetors as absurd. (See his work, *Historia Juris Romani*, 69, 74.) But Heineccius had altogether a false notion of this important institution of the Romans, to which we owe in a great degree the perfection of their jurisprudence. Heineccius, therefore, in his own days had many opponents of his system, among others the celebrated Ritter, professor at Wittemberg, who contested it in notes appended to the work of Heineccius, and retained in all subsequent editions of that book. After Ritter, the learned Bach undertook to vindicate the edicts of the praetors in his *Historia Jurisprud. Rom.* edit. 6, p. 218, 224. But it remained for a civilian of our own days to throw light on the spirit and true character of this institution. M. Hugo has completely demonstrated that the praetorian edicts furnished the salutary means of perpetually harmonizing the legislation with the spirit of the times. The praetors were the true organs of public opinion. It was not according to their caprice that they framed their regulations, but according to the manners and to the opinions of the great civil lawyers of their day. We know from Cicero himself, that it was esteemed a great honor among the Romans to publish an edict, well conceived and well drawn. The most distinguished lawyers of Rome were invited by the praetor to assist in framing this annual law, which, according to its principle, was only a declaration which the praetor

made to the public, to announce the manner in which he would judge, and to guard against every charge of partiality. Those who had reason to fear his opinions might delay their cause till the following year. The praetor was responsible for all the faults which he committed. The tribunes could lodge an accusation against the praetor who issued a partial edict. He was bound strictly to follow and to observe the regulations published by him at the commencement of his year of office, according to the Cornelian law, by which these edicts were called perpetual, and he could make no change in a regulation once published. The praetor was obliged to submit to his own edict, and to judge his own affairs according to its provisions. These magistrates had no power of departing from the fundamental laws, or the laws of the Twelve Tables. The people held them in such consideration, that they rarely enacted laws contrary to their provisions; but as some provisions were found inefficient, others opposed to the manners of the people, and to the spirit of subsequent ages, the praetors, still maintaining respect for the laws, endeavored to bring them into accordance with the necessities of the existing time, by such fictions as best suited the nature of the case. In what legislation do we not find these fictions, which even yet exist, absurd and ridiculous as they are, among the ancient laws of modern nations? These always variable edicts at length comprehended the whole of the Roman legislature, and became the subject of the commentaries of the most celebrated lawyers. They must therefore be considered as the basis of all the Roman jurisprudence comprehended in the Digest of Justinian. —It is in this sense that M. Schrader has written on this important institution, proposing it for imitation as far as may be consistent with our manners, and agreeable to our political institutions, in order to avoid immature legislation becoming a permanent evil. See the History of the Roman Law by M. Hugo, vol. i. p. 296, &c., vol. ii. p. 30, et seq., 78. et seq., and the note in my elementary book on the Industries, p. 313. With regard to the works best suited to give information on the framing and the form of these edicts, see Haubold, *Institutiones Literariae*, tom. i. p. 321, 368. All that Heineccius says about the usurpation of the right of making these edicts by the praetors is false, and contrary to all historical testimony. A multitude of authorities proves that the magistrates were under an obligation to publish these edicts.—W. —With the utmost

deference for these excellent civilians, I cannot but consider this confusion of the judicial and legislative authority as a very perilous constitutional precedent. It might answer among a people so singularly trained as the Romans were by habit and national character in reverence for legal institutions, so as to be an aristocracy, if not a people, of legislators; but in most nations the investiture of a magistrate in such authority, leaving to his sole judgment the lawyers he might consult, and the view of public opinion which he might take, would be a very insufficient guaranty for right legislation.—M.]

3311

[\(return\)](#)

[Compare throughout the brief but admirable sketch of the progress and growth of the Roman jurisprudence, the necessary operation of the *jus gentium*, when Rome became the sovereign of nations, upon the *jus civile* of the citizens of Rome, in the first chapter of Savigny. *Geschichte des Römischen Rechts im Mittelalter*.—M.]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[Dion Cassius (tom. i. l. xxxvi. p. 100) fixes the perpetual edicts in the year of Rome, 686. Their institution, however, is ascribed to the year 585 in the *Acta Diurna*, which have been published from the papers of Ludovicus Vives. Their authenticity is supported or allowed by Pighius, (*Annal. Rom.* tom. ii. p. 377, 378,) Graevius, (*ad Sueton.* p. 778,) Dodwell, (*Praelection.* Cambden, p. 665,) and Heineccius: but a single word, *Scutum Cimbricum*, detects the forgery, (*Moyle's Works*, vol. i. p. 303.)]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[The history of edicts is composed, and the text of the perpetual edict is restored, by the master-hand of Heineccius, (*Opp.* tom. vii. P. ii. p. 1—564;) in whose researches I might safely acquiesce. In the Academy of Inscriptions, M. Bouchaud has given a series of memoirs to this interesting subject of law and literature. * Note: This restoration was only the commencement of a work found among the papers of Heineccius, and published after his death.—G. —Note: Gibbon has here fallen into an error, with Heineccius, and almost the whole literary world, concerning the real meaning of what is called the perpetual edict of Hadrian. Since the Cornelian law, the edicts were perpetual, but only in this sense, that the praetor could not change them during the year of his magistracy. And although it

appears that under Hadrian, the civilian Julianus made, or assisted in making, a complete collection of the edicts, (which certainly had been done likewise before Hadrian, for example, by Ofilius, qui diligenter edictum composuit,) we have no sufficient proof to admit the common opinion, that the Praetorian edict was declared perpetually unalterable by Hadrian. The writers on law subsequent to Hadrian (and among the rest Pomponius, in his Summary of the Roman Jurisprudence) speak of the edict as it existed in the time of Cicero. They would not certainly have passed over in silence so remarkable a change in the most important source of the civil law. M. Hugo has conclusively shown that the various passages in authors, like Eutropius, are not sufficient to establish the opinion introduced by Heineccius. Compare Hugo, vol. ii. p. 78. A new proof of this is found in the Institutes of Gaius, who, in the first books of his work, expresses himself in the same manner, without mentioning any change made by Hadrian. Nevertheless, if it had taken place, he must have noticed it, as he does l. i. 8, the responsa prudentum, on the occasion of a rescript of Hadrian. There is no lacuna in the text. Why then should Gaius maintain silence concerning an innovation so much more important than that of which he speaks? After all, this question becomes of slight interest, since, in fact, we find no change in the perpetual edict inserted in the Digest, from the time of Hadrian to the end of that epoch, except that made by Julian, (compare Hugo, l. c.) The latter lawyers appear to follow, in their commentaries, the same texts as their predecessors. It is natural to suppose, that, after the labors of so many men distinguished in jurisprudence, the framing of the edict must have attained such perfection that it would have been difficult to have made any innovation. We nowhere find that the jurists of the Pandects disputed concerning the words, or the drawing up of the edict. What difference would, in fact, result from this with regard to our codes, and our modern legislation? Compare the learned Dissertation of M. Biener, *De Salvii Juliani meritis in Edictum Praetorium recte aestimandis*. Lipsae, 1809, 4to.—W.]

From Augustus to Trajan, the modest Caesars were content to promulgate their edicts in the various characters of a Roman magistrate; [3511](#) and, in the decrees of the senate, the epistles and orations of the prince were respectfully inserted. Adrian [36](#) appears to have been the first who assumed, without disguise, the plenitude of legislative power.

And this innovation, so agreeable to his active mind, was countenanced by the patience of the times, and his long absence from the seat of government. The same policy was embraced by succeeding monarchs, and, according to the harsh metaphor of Tertullian, “the gloomy and intricate forest of ancient laws was cleared away by the axe of royal mandates and constitutions.” [37](#) During four centuries, from Adrian to Justinian the public and private jurisprudence was moulded by the will of the sovereign; and few institutions, either human or divine, were permitted to stand on their former basis. The origin of Imperial legislation was concealed by the darkness of ages and the terrors of armed despotism; and a double fiction was propagated by the servility, or perhaps the ignorance, of the civilians, who basked in the sunshine of the Roman and Byzantine courts. 1. To the prayer of the ancient Caesars, the people or the senate had sometimes granted a personal exemption from the obligation and penalty of particular statutes; and each indulgence was an act of jurisdiction exercised by the republic over the first of her citizens. His humble privilege was at length transformed into the prerogative of a tyrant; and the Latin expression of “released from the laws” [38](#) was supposed to exalt the emperor above all human restraints, and to leave his conscience and reason as the sacred measure of his conduct. 2. A similar dependence was implied in the decrees of the senate, which, in every reign, defined the titles and powers of an elective magistrate. But it was not before the ideas, and even the language, of the Romans had been corrupted, that a royal law, [39](#) and an irrevocable gift of the people, were created by the fancy of Ulpian, or more probably of Tribonian himself; [40](#) and the origin of Imperial power, though false in fact, and slavish in its consequence, was supported on a principle of freedom and justice. “The pleasure of the emperor has the vigor and effect of law, since the Roman people, by the royal law, have transferred to their prince the full extent of their own power and sovereignty.” [41](#) The will of a single man, of a child perhaps, was allowed to prevail over the wisdom of ages and the inclinations of millions; and the degenerate Greeks were proud to declare, that in his hands alone the arbitrary exercise of legislation could be safely deposited. “What interest or passion,” exclaims Theophilus in the court of Justinian, “can reach the calm and sublime elevation of the monarch? He is already master of the lives and fortunes of his subjects; and those who have incurred his displeasure are already numbered with the dead.” [42](#) Disdaining the language of flattery, the historian may confess, that in questions of private jurisprudence, the absolute sovereign of a great empire can seldom be influenced by any personal considerations. Virtue, or even reason, will suggest to his impartial mind, that he is the guardian of peace and equity, and that the interest of society is inseparably connected with his own. Under the weakest and most vicious reign, the seat of justice was filled by the wisdom and integrity of Papinian and Ulpian; [43](#) and the purest materials of the Code and Pandects are inscribed with the names of Caracalla and his ministers. [44](#) The tyrant of Rome was sometimes the benefactor of the provinces. A dagger terminated the crimes of Domitian; but the prudence of Nerva confirmed his acts, which, in the joy of their deliverance, had been rescinded by an indignant

senate. [45](#) Yet in the rescripts, [46](#) replies to the consultations of the magistrates, the wisest of princes might be deceived by a partial exposition of the case. And this abuse, which placed their hasty decisions on the same level with mature and deliberate acts of legislation, was ineffectually condemned by the sense and example of Trajan. The rescripts of the emperor, his grants and decrees, his edicts and pragmatic sanctions, were subscribed in purple ink, [47](#) and transmitted to the provinces as general or special laws, which the magistrates were bound to execute, and the people to obey. But as their number continually multiplied, the rule of obedience became each day more doubtful and obscure, till the will of the sovereign was fixed and ascertained in the Gregorian, the Hermogenian, and the Theodosian codes. [4711](#) The two first, of which some fragments have escaped, were framed by two private lawyers, to preserve the constitutions of the Pagan emperors from Adrian to Constantine. The third, which is still extant, was digested in sixteen books by the order of the younger Theodosius to consecrate the laws of the Christian princes from Constantine to his own reign. But the three codes obtained an equal authority in the tribunals; and any act which was not included in the sacred deposit might be disregarded by the judge as epurious or obsolete. [48](#)

3511

[\(return\)](#)

[It is an important question in what manner the emperors were invested with this legislative power. The newly discovered Gaius distinctly states that it was in virtue of a law—*Nec unquam dubitatum est, quin id legis vicem obtineat, cum ipse imperator per legem imperium accipiat*. But it is still uncertain whether this was a general law, passed on the transition of the government from a republican to a monarchical form, or a law passed on the accession of each emperor. Compare Hugo, *Hist. du Droit Romain*, (French translation,) vol. ii. p. 8.—M.]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[His laws are the first in the code. See Dodwell, (*Praelect. Cambden*, p. 319—340,) who wanders from the subject in confused reading and feeble paradox. * Note: This is again an error which Gibbon shares with Heineccius, and the generality of authors. It arises from having mistaken the insignificant edict of Hadrian, inserted in the Code of Justinian, (lib. vi, tit. xxiii. c. 11,) for the first *constitutio principis*, without attending to the fact, that the Pandects contain so many constitutions of the emperors, from Julius Caesar, (see l. i. Digest 29, l) M. Hugo justly observes, that the *acta* of Sylla, approved by the senate, were the same thing with the constitutions of those who after him usurped the sovereign power. Moreover, we find that Pliny, and other ancient authors, report a

multitude of rescripts of the emperors from the time of Augustus. See Hugo, *Hist. du Droit Romain*, vol. ii. p. 24-27.—W.]

37 [\(return\)](#)

[Totam illam veterem et squalentem sylvam legum novis principalium rescriptorum et edictorum securibus truncatis et caeditis; (Apologet. c. 4, p. 50, edit. Havercamp.) He proceeds to praise the recent firmness of Severus, who repealed the useless or pernicious laws, without any regard to their age or authority.]

38 [\(return\)](#)

[The constitutional style of Legibus Solutus is misinterpreted by the art or ignorance of Dion Cassius, (tom. i. l. liii. p. 713.) On this occasion, his editor, Reimer, joins the universal censure which freedom and criticism have pronounced against that slavish historian.]

39 [\(return\)](#)

[The word (Lex Regia) was still more recent than the thing. The slaves of Commodus or Caracalla would have started at the name of royalty. Note: Yet a century before, Domitian was called not only by Martial but even in public documents, Dominus et Deus Noster. Sueton. Domit. cap. 13. Hugo.—W.]

40 [\(return\)](#)

[See Gravina (Opp. p. 501—512) and Beaufort, (*Republique Romaine*, tom. i. p. 255—274.) He has made a proper use of two dissertations by John Frederic Gronovius and Noodt, both translated, with valuable notes, by Barbeyrac, 2 vols. in 12mo. 1731.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[Institut. l. i. tit. ii. No. 6. Pandect. l. i. tit. iv. leg. 1. Cod. Justinian, l. i. tit. xvii. leg. 1, No. 7. In his *Antiquities and Elements*, Heineccius has amply treated de constitutionibus principum, which are illustrated by Godefroy (Comment. ad Cod. Theodos. l. i. tit. i. ii. iii.) and Gravina, (p. 87—90.) —Note: Gaius asserts that the Imperial edict or rescript has and always had, the force of law, because the Imperial authority rests upon law. Constitutio principis est, quod imperator decreto vel edicto, vel epistola constituit, nee unquam dubitatum, quin id legis, vicem obtineat, cum ipse imperator per legem imperium accipiat. Gaius, 6 Instit. i. 2.—M.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[Theophilus, in *Paraphras. Graec. Institut.* p. 33,

34, edit. Reitz For his person, time, writings, see the Theophilus of J. H. Mylius, Excurs. iii. p. 1034—1073.]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[There is more envy than reason in the complaint of Macrinus (Jul. Capitolin. c. 13:) Nefas esse leges videri Commodi et Caracalla at hominum imperitorum voluntates. Commodus was made a Divus by Severus, (Dodwell, Praelect. viii. p. 324, 325.) Yet he occurs only twice in the Pandects.]

44 [\(return\)](#)

[Of Antoninus Caracalla alone 200 constitutions are extant in the Code, and with his father 160. These two princes are quoted fifty times in the Pandects, and eight in the Institutes, (Terasson, p. 265.)]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[Plin. Secund. Epistol. x. 66. Sueton. in Domitian. c. 23.]

46 [\(return\)](#)

[It was a maxim of Constantine, contra jus rescripta non valeant, (Cod. Theodos. l. i. tit. ii. leg. 1.) The emperors reluctantly allow some scrutiny into the law and the fact, some delay, petition, &c.; but these insufficient remedies are too much in the discretion and at the peril of the judge.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[A compound of vermilion and cinnabar, which marks the Imperial diplomas from Leo I. (A.D. 470) to the fall of the Greek empire, (Bibliothèque Raisonnée de la Diplomatie, tom. i. p. 504—515 Lami, de Eruditione Apostolorum, tom. ii. p. 720-726.)]

4711 [\(return\)](#)

[Savigny states the following as the authorities for the Roman law at the commencement of the fifth century:— 1. The writings of the jurists, according to the regulations of the Constitution of Valentinian III., first promulgated in the West, but by its admission into the Theodosian Code established likewise in the East. (This Constitution established the authority of the five great jurists, Papinian, Paulus, Caius, Ulpian, and Modestinus as interpreters of the ancient law. * * * In case of difference of opinion among these five, a majority decided the case; where they were equal, the opinion of Papinian, where he was silent, the judge; but see p. 40, and Hugo, vol. ii. p. 89.) 2. The Gregorian and Hermogenian Collection of the

Imperial Rescripts. 3. The Code of Theodosius II.
4. The particular Novellae, as additions and
Supplements to this Code Savigny. vol. i. p 10.—
M.]

48

[\(return\)](#)

[Schulting, *Jurisprudentia Ante-Justiniana*, p.
681-718. Cujacius assigned to Gregory the reigns
from Hadrian to Gallienus. and the continuation to
his fellow-laborer Hermogenes. This general
division may be just, but they often trespassed on
each other's ground]

Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part III.

Among savage nations, the want of letters is imperfectly supplied by the use of visible signs, which awaken attention, and perpetuate the remembrance of any public or private transaction. The jurisprudence of the first Romans exhibited the scenes of a pantomime; the words were adapted to the gestures, and the slightest error or neglect in the forms of proceeding was sufficient to annul the substance of the fairest claim. The communion of the marriage-life was denoted by the necessary elements of fire and water; [49](#) and the divorced wife resigned the bunch of keys, by the delivery of which she had been invested with the government of the family. The manumission of a son, or a slave, was performed by turning him round with a gentle blow on the cheek; a work was prohibited by the casting of a stone; prescription was interrupted by the breaking of a branch; the clinched fist was the symbol of a pledge or deposit; the right hand was the gift of faith and confidence. The indenture of covenants was a broken straw; weights and scales were introduced into every payment, and the heir who accepted a testament was sometimes obliged to snap his fingers, to cast away his garments, and to leap or dance with real or affected transport. [50](#) If a citizen pursued any stolen goods into a neighbor's house, he concealed his nakedness with a linen towel, and hid his face with a mask or basin, lest he should encounter the eyes of a virgin or a matron. [51](#) In a civil action the plaintiff touched the ear of his witness, seized his reluctant adversary by the neck, and implored, in solemn lamentation, the aid of his fellow-citizens. The two competitors grasped each other's hand as if they stood prepared for combat before the tribunal of the praetor; he commanded them to produce the object of the dispute; they went, they returned with measured steps, and a clod of earth was cast at his feet to represent the field for which they contended. This occult science of the words and actions of law was the inheritance of the pontiffs and patricians. Like the Chaldean astrologers, they announced to their clients the days of business and repose; these important trifles were interwoven with the religion of Numa; and after the publication of the Twelve Tables, the Roman people was still enslaved by the ignorance of judicial proceedings. The treachery of some plebeian officers at length revealed the profitable mystery: in a more

enlightened age, the legal actions were derided and observed; and the same antiquity which sanctified the practice, obliterated the use and meaning of this primitive language. [52](#)

49

[\(return\)](#)

[Scaevola, most probably Q. Cervidius Scaevola; the master of Papinian considers this acceptance of fire and water as the essence of marriage, (Pandect. l. xxiv. tit. 1, leg. 66. See Heineccius, Hist. J. R. No. 317.)]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[Cicero (de Officiis, iii. 19) may state an ideal case, but St. Am brose (de Officiis, iii. 2,) appeals to the practice of his own times, which he understood as a lawyer and a magistrate, (Schulting ad Ulpian, Fragment. tit. xxii. No. 28, p. 643, 644.) * Note: In this passage the author has endeavored to collect all the examples of judicial formularies which he could find. That which he adduces as the form of *cretio haereditatis* is absolutely false. It is sufficient to glance at the passage in Cicero which he cites, to see that it has no relation to it. The author appeals to the opinion of Schulting, who, in the passage quoted, himself protests against the ridiculous and absurd interpretation of the passage in Cicero, and observes that Graevius had already well explained the real sense. See in Gaius the form of *cretio haereditatis* Inst. l. ii. p. 166.—W.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[The *furtum lance licioque conceptum* was no longer understood in the time of the Antonines, (Aulus Gellius, xvi. 10.) The Attic derivation of Heineccius, (Antiquitat. Rom. l. iv. tit. i. No. 13—21) is supported by the evidence of Aristophanes, his scholiast, and Pollux. * Note: Nothing more is known of this ceremony; nevertheless we find that already in his own days Gaius turned it into ridicule. He says, (lib. iii. et p. 192, Sections 293,) *prohibiti actio quadrupli ex edicto praetoris introducta est; lex autem eo nomine nullam poenam constituit. Hoc solum praecepit, ut qui quaerere velit, nudus quaerat, linteo cinctus, lancem habens; qui si quid invenerit. jubet id lex furtum manifestum esse. Quid sit autem linteum? quaesitum est. Sed verius est consuti genus esse, quo necessariae partes tegerentur. Quare lex tota ridicula est. Nam qui vestitum quaerere prohibet, is et nudum quaerere prohibiturus est; eo magis, quod invenerit ibi imponat, neutrum eorum procedit, si id quod quaeratur, ejus magnitudinis aut naturae sit ut neque*

subjici, neque ibi imponi possit. Certe non dubitatur, cujuscunque materiae sit ea lanx, satis legi fieri. We see moreover, from this passage, that the basin, as most authors, resting on the authority of Festus, have supposed, was not used to cover the figure.—W. Gibbon says the face, though equally inaccurately. This passage of Gaius, I must observe, as well as others in M. Warnkonig's work, is very inaccurately printed.—M.]

52

[\(return\)](#)

[In his Oration for Murena, (c. 9—13,) Cicero turns into ridicule the forms and mysteries of the civilians, which are represented with more candor by Aulus Gellius, (Noct. Attic. xx. 10,) Gravina, (Opp. p. 265, 266, 267,) and Heineccius, (Antiquitat. l. iv. tit. vi.) * Note: Gibbon had conceived opinions too decided against the forms of procedure in use among the Romans. Yet it is on these solemn forms that the certainty of laws has been founded among all nations. Those of the Romans were very intimately allied with the ancient religion, and must of necessity have disappeared as Rome attained a higher degree of civilization. Have not modern nations, even the most civilized, overloaded their laws with a thousand forms, often absurd, almost always trivial? How many examples are afforded by the English law! See, on the nature of these forms, the work of M. de Savigny on the Vocation of our Age for Legislation and Jurisprudence, Heidelberg, 1814, p. 9, 10.—W. This work of M. Savigny has been translated into English by Mr. Hayward.—M.]

A more liberal art was cultivated, however, by the sages of Rome, who, in a stricter sense, may be considered as the authors of the civil law. The alteration of the idiom and manners of the Romans rendered the style of the Twelve Tables less familiar to each rising generation, and the doubtful passages were imperfectly explained by the study of legal antiquarians. To define the ambiguities, to circumscribe the latitude, to apply the principles, to extend the consequences, to reconcile the real or apparent contradictions, was a much nobler and more important task; and the province of legislation was silently invaded by the expounders of ancient statutes. Their subtle interpretations concurred with the equity of the praetor, to reform the tyranny of the darker ages: however strange or intricate the means, it was the aim of artificial jurisprudence to restore the simple dictates of nature and reason, and the skill of private citizens was usefully employed to undermine the public institutions of their country. [521](#) The revolution of almost one thousand years, from the Twelve Tables to the reign of Justinian, may be divided into three periods, almost equal in duration, and distinguished from each other by the mode of instruction and the character of the civilians. [53](#) Pride and ignorance contributed,

during the first period, to confine within narrow limits the science of the Roman law. On the public days of market or assembly, the masters of the art were seen walking in the forum ready to impart the needful advice to the meanest of their fellow-citizens, from whose votes, on a future occasion, they might solicit a grateful return. As their years and honors increased, they seated themselves at home on a chair or throne, to expect with patient gravity the visits of their clients, who at the dawn of day, from the town and country, began to thunder at their door. The duties of social life, and the incidents of judicial proceeding, were the ordinary subject of these consultations, and the verbal or written opinion of the juris-consults was framed according to the rules of prudence and law. The youths of their own order and family were permitted to listen; their children enjoyed the benefit of more private lessons, and the Mucian race was long renowned for the hereditary knowledge of the civil law. The second period, the learned and splendid age of jurisprudence, may be extended from the birth of Cicero to the reign of Severus Alexander. A system was formed, schools were instituted, books were composed, and both the living and the dead became subservient to the instruction of the student. The tripartite of Aelius Paetus, surnamed Catus, or the Cunning, was preserved as the oldest work of Jurisprudence. Cato the censor derived some additional fame from his legal studies, and those of his son: the kindred appellation of Mucius Scaevola was illustrated by three sages of the law; but the perfection of the science was ascribed to Servius Sulpicius, their disciple, and the friend of Tully; and the long succession, which shone with equal lustre under the republic and under the Caesars, is finally closed by the respectable characters of Papinian, of Paul, and of Ulpian. Their names, and the various titles of their productions, have been minutely preserved, and the example of Labeo may suggest some idea of their diligence and fecundity. That eminent lawyer of the Augustan age divided the year between the city and country, between business and composition; and four hundred books are enumerated as the fruit of his retirement. Of the collection of his rival Capito, the two hundred and fifty-ninth book is expressly quoted; and few teachers could deliver their opinions in less than a century of volumes. In the third period, between the reigns of Alexander and Justinian, the oracles of jurisprudence were almost mute. The measure of curiosity had been filled: the throne was occupied by tyrants and Barbarians, the active spirits were diverted by religious disputes, and the professors of Rome, Constantinople, and Berytus, were humbly content to repeat the lessons of their more enlightened predecessors. From the slow advances and rapid decay of these legal studies, it may be inferred, that they require a state of peace and refinement. From the multitude of voluminous civilians who fill the intermediate space, it is evident that such studies may be pursued, and such works may be performed, with a common share of judgment, experience, and industry. The genius of Cicero and Virgil was more sensibly felt, as each revolving age had been found incapable of producing a similar or a second: but the most eminent teachers of the law were assured of leaving disciples equal or superior to themselves in merit and reputation.

521 [\(return\)](#)
[Compare, on the *Responsa Prudentum*,
Warnkonig, *Histoire Externe du Droit Romain*
Bruxelles, 1836, p. 122.—M.]

53 [\(return\)](#)
[The series of the civil lawyers is deduced by
Pomponius, (*de Origine Juris Pandect.* l. i. tit. ii.)
The moderns have discussed, with learning and
criticism, this branch of literary history; and among
these I have chiefly been guided by Gravina (p.
41—79) and Heineccius, (*Hist. J. R.* No. 113-351.)
Cicero, more especially in his books *de Oratore*, *de*
Claris Oratoribus, *de Legibus*, and the *Clavie*
Ciceroniana of Ernesti (under the names of Mucius,
&c.) afford much genuine and pleasing
information. Horace often alludes to the morning
labors of the civilians, (*Serm.* l. i. 10, *Epist.* l. i.
103, &c)

Agricolam laudat juris legumque peritus
Sub galli cantum, consultor ubi ostia pulsat.

Romæ dulce diu fuit et solemne, reclusâ
Mane domo vigilare, clienti promere jura.

* Note: It is particularly in this division of the history of the
Roman jurisprudence into epochs, that Gibbon
displays his profound knowledge of the laws of this
people. M. Hugo, adopting this division, prefaced
these three periods with the history of the times
anterior to the Law of the Twelve Tables, which are,
as it were, the infancy of the Roman law.—W]

The jurisprudence which had been grossly adapted to the wants of the first Romans, was polished and improved in the seventh century of the city, by the alliance of Grecian philosophy. The Scaevolas had been taught by use and experience; but Servius Sulpicius [5311](#) was the first civilian who established his art on a certain and general theory. [54](#) For the discernment of truth and falsehood he applied, as an infallible rule, the logic of Aristotle and the stoics, reduced particular cases to general principles, and diffused over the shapeless mass the light of order and eloquence. Cicero, his contemporary and friend, declined the reputation of a professed lawyer; but the jurisprudence of his country was adorned by his incomparable genius, which converts into gold every object that it touches. After the example of Plato, he composed a republic; and, for the use of his republic, a treatise of laws; in which he labors to deduce from a celestial origin the wisdom and justice of the Roman constitution. The whole universe, according to his sublime hypothesis, forms one immense commonwealth: gods and men, who participate of the same essence, are members of the same community; reason prescribes the law of nature and nations; and all positive institutions,

however modified by accident or custom, are drawn from the rule of right, which the Deity has inscribed on every virtuous mind. From these philosophical mysteries, he mildly excludes the sceptics who refuse to believe, and the epicureans who are unwilling to act. The latter disdain the care of the republic: he advises them to slumber in their shady gardens. But he humbly entreats that the new academy would be silent, since her bold objections would too soon destroy the fair and well ordered structure of his lofty system. [55](#) Plato, Aristotle, and Zeno, he represents as the only teachers who arm and instruct a citizen for the duties of social life. Of these, the armor of the stoics [56](#) was found to be of the firmest temper; and it was chiefly worn, both for use and ornament, in the schools of jurisprudence. From the portico, the Roman civilians learned to live, to reason, and to die: but they imbibed in some degree the prejudices of the sect; the love of paradox, the pertinacious habits of dispute, and a minute attachment to words and verbal distinctions. The superiority of form to matter was introduced to ascertain the right of property: and the equality of crimes is countenanced by an opinion of Trebatius, [57](#) that he who touches the ear, touches the whole body; and that he who steals from a heap of corn, or a hogshhead of wine, is guilty of the entire theft. [58](#)

5311

[\(return\)](#)

[M. Hugo thinks that the ingenious system of the Institutes adopted by a great number of the ancient lawyers, and by Justinian himself, dates from Severus Sulpicius. *Hist du Droit Romain*, vol.iii.p. 119.—W.]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[Crassus, or rather Cicero himself, proposes (*de Oratore*, i. 41, 42) an idea of the art or science of jurisprudence, which the eloquent, but illiterate, Antonius (i. 58) affects to deride. It was partly executed by Servius Sulpicius, (*in Bruto*, c. 41,) whose praises are elegantly varied in the classic Latinity of the Roman Gravina, (p. 60.)]

55

[\(return\)](#)

[*Perturbatricem autem omnium harum rerum academiam, hanc ab Arcesila et Carneade recentem, exoremus ut sileat, nam si invaserit in haec, quae satis scite instructa et composita videantur, nimis edet ruinas, quam quidem ego placare cupio, submovere non audeo.* (*de Legibus*, i. 13.) From this passage alone, Bentley (*Remarks on Free-thinking*, p. 250) might have learned how firmly Cicero believed in the specious doctrines which he has adorned.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[The stoic philosophy was first taught at Rome by Panaetius, the friend of the younger Scipio, (see his life in the *Mem. de l'Academis des Inscriptions*, tom. x. p. 75—89.)]

[As he is quoted by Ulpian, (leg.40, 40, ad Sabinum in Pandect. l. xlvii. tit. ii. leg. 21.) Yet Trebatius, after he was a leading civilian, *que qui familiam duxit*, became an epicurean, (Cicero ad Fam. vii. 5.) Perhaps he was not constant or sincere in his new sect. * Note: Gibbon had entirely misunderstood this phrase of Cicero. It was only since his time that the real meaning of the author was apprehended. Cicero, in enumerating the qualifications of Trebatius, says, *Accedit etiam, quod familiam ducit in jure civili, singularis memoria, summa scientia*, which means that Trebatius possessed a still further most important qualification for a student of civil law, a remarkable memory, &c. This explanation, already conjectured by G. Menage, *Amaenit. Juris Civilis*, c. 14, is found in the dictionary of Scheller, v. *Familia*, and in the *History of the Roman Law* by M. Hugo. Many authors have asserted, without any proof sufficient to warrant the conjecture, that Trebatius was of the school of Epicurus—W.]

[See Gravina (p. 45—51) and the ineffectual cavils of Mascou. Heineccius (*Hist. J. R.* No. 125) quotes and approves a dissertation of Everard Otto, *de Stoica Jurisconsultorum Philosophia*.]

Arms, eloquence, and the study of the civil law, promoted a citizen to the honors of the Roman state; and the three professions were sometimes more conspicuous by their union in the same character. In the composition of the edict, a learned praetor gave a sanction and preference to his private sentiments; the opinion of a censor, or a counsel, was entertained with respect; and a doubtful interpretation of the laws might be supported by the virtues or triumphs of the civilian. The patrician arts were long protected by the veil of mystery; and in more enlightened times, the freedom of inquiry established the general principles of jurisprudence. Subtile and intricate cases were elucidated by the disputes of the forum: rules, axioms, and definitions, [59](#) were admitted as the genuine dictates of reason; and the consent of the legal professors was interwoven into the practice of the tribunals. But these interpreters could neither enact nor execute the laws of the republic; and the judges might disregard the authority of the Scaevolae themselves, which was often overthrown by the eloquence or sophistry of an ingenious pleader. [60](#) Augustus and Tiberius were the first to adopt, as a useful engine, the science of the civilians; and their servile labors accommodated the old system to the spirit and views of despotism. Under the fair pretence of securing the dignity of the art, the privilege of subscribing legal and valid opinions was confined to the sages of senatorian or equestrian rank, who had been previously approved by the judgment of the prince; and this monopoly prevailed, till Adrian restored the freedom of the profession to every citizen conscious of his abilities and knowledge. The discretion of

the praetor was now governed by the lessons of his teachers; the judges were enjoined to obey the comment as well as the text of the law; and the use of codicils was a memorable innovation, which Augustus ratified by the advice of the civilians. [61](#) [6111](#)

59 [\(return\)](#)

[We have heard of the Catonian rule, the Aquilian stipulation, and the Manilian forms, of 211 maxims, and of 247 definitions, (Pandect. l. i. tit. xvi. xvii.)]

60 [\(return\)](#)

[Read Cicero, l. i. de Oratore, Topica, pro Murena.]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[See Pomponius, (de Origine Juris Pandect. l. i. tit. ii. leg. 2, No 47,) Heineccius, (ad Institut. l. i. tit. ii. No. 8, l. ii. tit. xxv. in Element et Antiquitat.,) and Gravina, (p. 41—45.) Yet the monopoly of Augustus, a harsh measure, would appear with some softening in contemporary evidence; and it was probably veiled by a decree of the senate]

6111 [\(return\)](#)

[The author here follows the then generally received opinion of Heineccius. The proofs which appear to confirm it are l. 2 47, D. I. 2, and 8. Instit. I. 2. The first of these passages speaks expressly of a privilege granted to certain lawyers, until the time of Adrian, publice respondendi jus ante Augusti tempora non dabatur. Primus Divus ut major juris auctoritas haberetur, constituit, ut ex auctoritate ejus responderent. The passage of the Institutes speaks of the different opinions of those, quibus est permissum jura condere. It is true that the first of these passages does not say that the opinion of these privileged lawyers had the force of a law for the judges. For this reason M. Hugo altogether rejects the opinion adopted by Heineccius, by Bach, and in general by all the writers who preceded him. He conceives that the 8 of the Institutes referred to the constitution of Valentinian III., which regulated the respective authority to be ascribed to the different writings of the great civilians. But we have now the following passage in the Institutes of Gaius: Responsa prudentum sunt sententiae et opiniones eorum, quibus permissum est jura condere; quorum omnium si in unum sententiae concurrunt, id quod ita sentiunt, legis vicem obtinet, si vero dissentiunt, judici licet, quam velit sententiam sequi, idque rescripto Divi Hadrian significatur. I do not know, how in opposition to this passage, the opinion of M. Hugo can be maintained. We must add to this the passage quoted from Pomponius and from such strong proofs, it seems incontestable that the

emperors had granted some kind of privilege to certain civilians, quibus permissum erat jura condere. Their opinion had sometimes the force of law, legis vicem. M. Hugo, endeavoring to reconcile this phrase with his system, gives it a forced interpretation, which quite alters the sense; he supposes that the passage contains no more than what is evident of itself, that the authority of the civilians was to be respected, thus making a privilege of that which was free to all the world. It appears to me almost indisputable, that the emperors had sanctioned certain provisions relative to the authority of these civilians, consulted by the judges. But how far was their advice to be respected? This is a question which it is impossible to answer precisely, from the want of historic evidence. Is it not possible that the emperors established an authority to be consulted by the judges? and in this case this authority must have emanated from certain civilians named for this purpose by the emperors. See Hugo, l. c. Moreover, may not the passage of Suetonius, in the Life of Caligula, where he says that the emperor would no longer permit the civilians to give their advice, mean that Caligula entertained the design of suppressing this institution? See on this passage the Themis, vol. xi. p. 17, 36. Our author not being acquainted with the opinions opposed to Heineccius has not gone to the bottom of the subject.—W.]

The most absolute mandate could only require that the judges should agree with the civilians, if the civilians agreed among themselves. But positive institutions are often the result of custom and prejudice; laws and language are ambiguous and arbitrary; where reason is incapable of pronouncing, the love of argument is inflamed by the envy of rivals, the vanity of masters, the blind attachment of their disciples; and the Roman jurisprudence was divided by the once famous sects of the Proculians and Sabinians. [62](#) Two sages of the law, Ateius Capito and Antistius Labeo, [63](#) adorned the peace of the Augustan age; the former distinguished by the favor of his sovereign; the latter more illustrious by his contempt of that favor, and his stern though harmless opposition to the tyrant of Rome. Their legal studies were influenced by the various colors of their temper and principles. Labeo was attached to the form of the old republic; his rival embraced the more profitable substance of the rising monarchy. But the disposition of a courtier is tame and submissive; and Capito seldom presumed to deviate from the sentiments, or at least from the words, of his predecessors; while the bold republican pursued his independent ideas without fear of paradox or innovations. The freedom of Labeo was enslaved, however, by the rigor of his own conclusions, and he decided, according to the letter of the law, the same questions which his indulgent

competitor resolved with a latitude of equity more suitable to the common sense and feelings of mankind. If a fair exchange had been substituted to the payment of money, Capito still considered the transaction as a legal sale; [64](#) and he consulted nature for the age of puberty, without confining his definition to the precise period of twelve or fourteen years. [65](#) This opposition of sentiments was propagated in the writings and lessons of the two founders; the schools of Capito and Labeo maintained their inveterate conflict from the age of Augustus to that of Adrian; [66](#) and the two sects derived their appellations from Sabinus and Proculus, their most celebrated teachers. The names of Cassians and Pegasians were likewise applied to the same parties; but, by a strange reverse, the popular cause was in the hands of Pegasus, [67](#) a timid slave of Domitian, while the favorite of the Caesars was represented by Cassius, [68](#) who gloried in his descent from the patriot assassin. By the perpetual edict, the controversies of the sects were in a great measure determined. For that important work, the emperor Adrian preferred the chief of the Sabinians: the friends of monarchy prevailed; but the moderation of Salvius Julian insensibly reconciled the victors and the vanquished. Like the contemporary philosophers, the lawyers of the age of the Antonines disclaimed the authority of a master, and adopted from every system the most probable doctrines. [69](#) But their writings would have been less voluminous, had their choice been more unanimous. The conscience of the judge was perplexed by the number and weight of discordant testimonies, and every sentence that his passion or interest might pronounce was justified by the sanction of some venerable name. An indulgent edict of the younger Theodosius excused him from the labor of comparing and weighing their arguments. Five civilians, Caius, Papinian, Paul, Ulpian, and Modestinus, were established as the oracles of jurisprudence: a majority was decisive: but if their opinions were equally divided, a casting vote was ascribed to the superior wisdom of Papinian. [70](#)

62

[\(return\)](#)

[I have perused the *Diatrise* of Gotfridus Mascovius, the learned Mascou, de *Sectis Jurisconsultorum*, (Lipsiae, 1728, in 12mo., p. 276,) a learned treatise on a narrow and barren ground.]

63

[\(return\)](#)

[See the character of Antistius Labeo in Tacitus, (*Annal.* iii. 75,) and in an epistle of Ateius Capito, (*Aul. Gellius*, xiii. 12,) who accuses his rival of *libertas nimia et vecors*. Yet Horace would not have lashed a virtuous and respectable senator; and I must adopt the emendation of Bentley, who reads *Labieno insanior*, (*Serm.* I. iii. 82.) See Mascou, de *Sectis*, (c. i. p. 1—24.)]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[Justinian (*Institut.* l. iii. tit. 23, and Theophil. *Vers. Graec.* p. 677, 680) has commemorated this weighty dispute, and the verses of Homer that were

alleged on either side as legal authorities. It was decided by Paul, (leg. 33, ad Edict. in Pandect. l. xviii. tit. i. leg. 1,) since, in a simple exchange, the buyer could not be discriminated from the seller.]

65

[\(return\)](#)

[This controversy was likewise given for the Proculians, to supersede the indecency of a search, and to comply with the aphorism of Hippocrates, who was attached to the septenary number of two weeks of years, or 700 of days, (Institut. l. i. tit. xxii.) Plutarch and the Stoics (de Placit. Philosoph. l. v. c. 24) assign a more natural reason. Fourteen years is the age. See the vestigia of the sects in Mascou, c. ix. p. 145—276.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[The series and conclusion of the sects are described by Mascou, (c. ii.—vii. p. 24—120;) and it would be almost ridiculous to praise his equal justice to these obsolete sects. * Note: The work of Gaius, subsequent to the time of Adrian, furnishes us with some information on this subject. The disputes which rose between these two sects appear to have been very numerous. Gaius avows himself a disciple of Sabinus and of Caius. Compare Hugo, vol. ii. p. 106.—W.]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[At the first summons he flies to the turbot-council; yet Juvenal (Satir. iv. 75—81) styles the præfect or bailiff of Rome sanctissimus legum interpres. From his science, says the old scholiast, he was called, not a man, but a book. He derived the singular name of Pegasus from the galley which his father commanded.]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[Tacit. Annal. xvii. 7. Sueton. in Nerone, c. xxxvii.]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[Mascou, de Sectis, c. viii. p. 120—144 de Herciscundis, a legal term which was applied to these eclectic lawyers: herciscere is synonymous to dividere. * Note: This word has never existed. Cujacius is the author of it, who read me words terris condi in Servius ad Virg. herciscundi, to which he gave an erroneous interpretation.—W.]

70

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Theodosian Code, l. i. tit. iv. with Godefroy's Commentary, tom. i. p. 30—35. [! This decree might give occasion to Jesuitical disputes like those in the Lettres Provinciales, whether a Judge was obliged to follow the opinion of

Papinian, or of a majority, against his judgment, against his conscience, &c. Yet a legislator might give that opinion, however false, the validity, not of truth, but of law. Note: We possess (since 1824) some interesting information as to the framing of the Theodosian Code, and its ratification at Rome, in the year 438. M. Closius, now professor at Dorpat in Russia, and M. Peyron, member of the Academy of Turin, have discovered, the one at Milan, the other at Turin, a great part of the five first books of the Code which were wanting, and besides this, the reports (*gesta*) of the sitting of the senate at Rome, in which the Code was published, in the year after the marriage of Valentinian III. Among these pieces are the constitutions which nominate commissioners for the formation of the Code; and though there are many points of considerable obscurity in these documents, they communicate many facts relative to this legislation. 1. That Theodosius designed a great reform in the legislation; to add to the Gregorian and Hermogenian codes all the new constitutions from Constantine to his own day; and to frame a second code for common use with extracts from the three codes, and from the works of the civil lawyers. All laws either abrogated or fallen into disuse were to be noted under their proper heads. 2. An Ordinance was issued in 429 to form a commission for this purpose of nine persons, of which Antiochus, as quaestor and praefectus, was president. A second commission of sixteen members was issued in 435 under the same president. 3. A code, which we possess under the name of Codex Theodosianus, was finished in 438, published in the East, in an ordinance addressed to the Praetorian praefect, Florentinus, and intended to be published in the West. 4. Before it was published in the West, Valentinian submitted it to the senate. There is a report of the proceedings of the senate, which closed with loud acclamations and gratulations.— From Warnkonig, *Histoire du Droit Romain*, p. 169—Wenck has published this work, *Codicis Theodosiani libri priores*. Leipzig, 1825.—M.] * Note *: Closius of Tübingen communicated to M. Warnkonig the two following constitutions of the emperor Constantine, which he discovered in the Ambrosian library at Milan:— 1. Imper. Constantinus Aug. ad Maximum Praef. Praetorio. Perpetuas prudentum contentiones eruere cupientes, Ulpiani ac Pauli, in Papinianum notas, qui dum ingenii laudem sectantur, non tam

corrigere eum quam depravere maluerunt, aboleri praecepimus. Dat. III. Kalend. Octob. Const. Cons. et Crispi, (321.) Idem. Aug. ad Maximum Praef Praet. Universa, quae scriptura Pauli continentur, recepta auctoritate firmanda runt, et omni veneratione celebranda. Ideoque sententiarum libros plepissima luce et perfectissima elocutione et justissima juris ratione succinctos in judiciis prolatos valere minimie dubitatur. Dat. V. Kalend. Oct. Trovia Coust. et Max. Coss. (327.)—W]

Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part IV.

When Justinian ascended the throne, the reformation of the Roman jurisprudence was an arduous but indispensable task. In the space of ten centuries, the infinite variety of laws and legal opinions had filled many thousand volumes, which no fortune could purchase and no capacity could digest. Books could not easily be found; and the judges, poor in the midst of riches, were reduced to the exercise of their illiterate discretion. The subjects of the Greek provinces were ignorant of the language that disposed of their lives and properties; and the barbarous dialect of the Latins was imperfectly studied in the academies of Berytus and Constantinople. As an Illyrian soldier, that idiom was familiar to the infancy of Justinian; his youth had been instructed by the lessons of jurisprudence, and his Imperial choice selected the most learned civilians of the East, to labor with their sovereign in the work of reformation. [71](#) The theory of professors was assisted by the practice of advocates, and the experience of magistrates; and the whole undertaking was animated by the spirit of Tribonian. [72](#) This extraordinary man, the object of so much praise and censure, was a native of Side in Pamphylia; and his genius, like that of Bacon, embraced, as his own, all the business and knowledge of the age. Tribonian composed, both in prose and verse, on a strange diversity of curious and abstruse subjects: [73](#) a double panegyric of Justinian and the life of the philosopher Theodotus; the nature of happiness and the duties of government; Homer's catalogue and the four-and-twenty sorts of metre; the astronomical canon of Ptolemy; the changes of the months; the houses of the planets; and the harmonic system of the world. To the literature of Greece he added the use of the Latin tongue; the Roman civilians were deposited in his library and in his mind; and he most assiduously cultivated those arts which opened the road of wealth and preferment. From the bar of the Praetorian praefects, he raised himself to the honors of quaestor, of consul, and of master of the offices: the council of Justinian listened to his eloquence and wisdom; and envy was mitigated by the gentleness and affability of his manners. The reproaches of impiety and avarice have stained the virtue or the reputation of Tribonian. In a bigoted and persecuting court, the principal minister was accused of a secret aversion to the Christian faith, and was supposed to entertain the sentiments of an Atheist and a Pagan,

which have been imputed, inconsistently enough, to the last philosophers of Greece. His avarice was more clearly proved and more sensibly felt. If he were swayed by gifts in the administration of justice, the example of Bacon will again occur; nor can the merit of Tribonian atone for his baseness, if he degraded the sanctity of his profession; and if laws were every day enacted, modified, or repealed, for the base consideration of his private emolument. In the sedition of Constantinople, his removal was granted to the clamors, perhaps to the just indignation, of the people: but the quaestor was speedily restored, and, till the hour of his death, he possessed, above twenty years, the favor and confidence of the emperor. His passive and dutiful submission had been honored with the praise of Justinian himself, whose vanity was incapable of discerning how often that submission degenerated into the grossest adulation. Tribonian adored the virtues of his gracious master: the earth was unworthy of such a prince; and he affected a pious fear, that Justinian, like Elijah or Romulus, would be snatched into the air, and translated alive to the mansions of celestial glory. [74](#)

71

[\(return\)](#)

[For the legal labors of Justinian, I have studied the Preface to the Institutes; the 1st, 2d, and 3d Prefaces to the Pandects; the 1st and 2d Preface to the Code; and the Code itself, (l. i. tit. xvii. de Veteri Jure enucleando.) After these original testimonies, I have consulted, among the moderns, Heineccius, (Hist. J. R. No. 383—404,) Terasson. (Hist. de la Jurisprudence Romaine, p. 295—356,) Gravina, (Opp. p. 93-100,) and Ludewig, in his Life of Justinian, (p.19—123, 318-321; for the Code and Novels, p. 209—261; for the Digest or Pandects, p. 262—317.)]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[For the character of Tribonian, see the testimonies of Procopius, (Persic. l. i. c. 23, 24. Anecd. c. 13, 20,) and Suidas, (tom. iii. p. 501, edit. Kuster.) Ludewig (in Vit. Justinian, p. 175—209) works hard, very hard, to whitewash—the blackamoor.]

73

[\(return\)](#)

[I apply the two passages of Suidas to the same man; every circumstance so exactly tallies. Yet the lawyers appear ignorant; and Fabricius is inclined to separate the two characters, (Bibliot. Grae. tom. i. p. 341, ii. p. 518, iii. p. 418, xii. p. 346, 353, 474.)]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[This story is related by Hesychius, (de Viris Illustribus,) Procopius, (Anecd. c. 13,) and Suidas, (tom. iii. p. 501.) Such flattery is incredible! —Nihil est quod credere de se Non possit, cum laudatur Diis aequa potestas. Fontenelle (tom. i. p. 32—39) has ridiculed the impudence of the modest Virgil. But the same Fontenelle places his king

above the divine Augustus; and the sage Boileau has not blushed to say, “Le destin a ses yeux n’oseroit balancer” Yet neither Augustus nor Louis XIV. were fools.]

If Caesar had achieved the reformation of the Roman law, his creative genius, enlightened by reflection and study, would have given to the world a pure and original system of jurisprudence. Whatever flattery might suggest, the emperor of the East was afraid to establish his private judgment as the standard of equity: in the possession of legislative power, he borrowed the aid of time and opinion; and his laborious compilations are guarded by the sages and legislature of past times. Instead of a statue cast in a simple mould by the hand of an artist, the works of Justinian represent a tessellated pavement of antique and costly, but too often of incoherent, fragments. In the first year of his reign, he directed the faithful Tribonian, and nine learned associates, to revise the ordinances of his predecessors, as they were contained, since the time of Adrian, in the Gregorian Hermogenian, and Theodosian codes; to purge the errors and contradictions, to retrench whatever was obsolete or superfluous, and to select the wise and salutary laws best adapted to the practice of the tribunals and the use of his subjects. The work was accomplished in fourteen months; and the twelve books or tables, which the new decemvirs produced, might be designed to imitate the labors of their Roman predecessors. The new Code of Justinian was honored with his name, and confirmed by his royal signature: authentic transcripts were multiplied by the pens of notaries and scribes; they were transmitted to the magistrates of the European, the Asiatic, and afterwards the African provinces; and the law of the empire was proclaimed on solemn festivals at the doors of churches. A more arduous operation was still behind—to extract the spirit of jurisprudence from the decisions and conjectures, the questions and disputes, of the Roman civilians. Seventeen lawyers, with Tribonian at their head, were appointed by the emperor to exercise an absolute jurisdiction over the works of their predecessors. If they had obeyed his commands in ten years, Justinian would have been satisfied with their diligence; and the rapid composition of the Digest of Pandects, [75](#) in three years, will deserve praise or censure, according to the merit of the execution. From the library of Tribonian, they chose forty, the most eminent civilians of former times: [76](#) two thousand treatises were comprised in an abridgment of fifty books; and it has been carefully recorded, that three millions of lines or sentences, [77](#) were reduced, in this abstract, to the moderate number of one hundred and fifty thousand. The edition of this great work was delayed a month after that of the Institutes; and it seemed reasonable that the elements should precede the digest of the Roman law. As soon as the emperor had approved their labors, he ratified, by his legislative power, the speculations of these private citizens: their commentaries, on the twelve tables, the perpetual edict, the laws of the people, and the decrees of the senate, succeeded to the authority of the text; and the text was abandoned, as a useless, though venerable, relic of antiquity. The Code, the Pandects, and the Institutes, were declared to be the legitimate system of civil jurisprudence; they alone were admitted into the tribunals,

and they alone were taught in the academies of Rome, Constantinople, and Berytus. Justinian addressed to the senate and provinces his eternal oracles; and his pride, under the mask of piety, ascribed the consummation of this great design to the support and inspiration of the Deity.

75

[\(return\)](#)

[General receivers was a common title of the Greek miscellanies, (Plin. Praefat. ad Hist. Natur.) The Digesta of Scaevola, Marcellinus, Celsus, were already familiar to the civilians: but Justinian was in the wrong when he used the two appellations as synonymous. Is the word Pandects Greek or Latin—masculine or feminine? The diligent Brenckman will not presume to decide these momentous controversies, (Hist. Pandect. Florentine. p. 200—304.) Note: The word was formerly in common use. See the preface is Aulus Gellius—W]

76

[\(return\)](#)

[Angelus Politianus (l. v. Epist. ult.) reckons thirty-seven (p. 192—200) civilians quoted in the Pandects—a learned, and for his times, an extraordinary list. The Greek index to the Pandects enumerates thirty-nine, and forty are produced by the indefatigable Fabricius, (Bibliot. Graec. tom. iii. p. 488—502.) Antoninus Augustus (de Nominibus Propriis Pandect. apud Ludewig, p. 283) is said to have added fifty-four names; but they must be vague or second-hand references.]

77

[\(return\)](#)

[The item of the ancient Mss. may be strictly defined as sentences or periods of a complete sense, which, on the breadth of the parchment rolls or volumes, composed as many lines of unequal length. The number in each book served as a check on the errors of the scribes, (Ludewig, p. 211—215; and his original author Suicer. Thesaur. Ecclesiast. tom. i. p 1021-1036).]

Since the emperor declined the fame and envy of original composition, we can only require, at his hands, method, choice, and fidelity, the humble, though indispensable, virtues of a compiler. Among the various combinations of ideas, it is difficult to assign any reasonable preference; but as the order of Justinian is different in his three works, it is possible that all may be wrong; and it is certain that two cannot be right. In the selection of ancient laws, he seems to have viewed his predecessors without jealousy, and with equal regard: the series could not ascend above the reign of Adrian, and the narrow distinction of Paganism and Christianity, introduced by the superstition of Theodosius, had been abolished by the consent of mankind. But the jurisprudence of the Pandects is circumscribed within a period of a hundred years, from the perpetual

edict to the death of Severus Alexander: the civilians who lived under the first Caesars are seldom permitted to speak, and only three names can be attributed to the age of the republic. The favorite of Justinian (it has been fiercely urged) was fearful of encountering the light of freedom and the gravity of Roman sages.

Tribonian condemned to oblivion the genuine and native wisdom of Cato, the Scaevolus, and Sulpicius; while he invoked spirits more congenial to his own, the Syrians, Greeks, and Africans, who flocked to the Imperial court to study Latin as a foreign tongue, and jurisprudence as a lucrative profession. But the ministers of Justinian, [78](#) were instructed to labor, not for the curiosity of antiquarians, but for the immediate benefit of his subjects. It was their duty to select the useful and practical parts of the Roman law; and the writings of the old republicans, however curious or excellent, were no longer suited to the new system of manners, religion, and government. Perhaps, if the preceptors and friends of Cicero were still alive, our candor would acknowledge, that, except in purity of language, [79](#) their intrinsic merit was excelled by the school of Papinian and Ulpian. The science of the laws is the slow growth of time and experience, and the advantage both of method and materials, is naturally assumed by the most recent authors. The civilians of the reign of the Antonines had studied the works of their predecessors: their philosophic spirit had mitigated the rigor of antiquity, simplified the forms of proceeding, and emerged from the jealousy and prejudice of the rival sects. The choice of the authorities that compose the Pandects depended on the judgment of Tribonian: but the power of his sovereign could not absolve him from the sacred obligations of truth and fidelity. As the legislator of the empire, Justinian might repeal the acts of the Antonines, or condemn, as seditious, the free principles, which were maintained by the last of the Roman lawyers. [80](#) But the existence of past facts is placed beyond the reach of despotism; and the emperor was guilty of fraud and forgery, when he corrupted the integrity of their text, inscribed with their venerable names the words and ideas of his servile reign, [81](#) and suppressed, by the hand of power, the pure and authentic copies of their sentiments. The changes and interpolations of Tribonian and his colleagues are excused by the pretence of uniformity: but their cares have been insufficient, and the antinomies, or contradictions of the Code and Pandects, still exercise the patience and subtilty of modern civilians. [82](#)

78

[\(return\)](#)

[An ingenious and learned oration of Schultingius (Jurisprudentia Ante-Justiniana, p. 883—907) justifies the choice of Tribonian, against the passionate charges of Francis Hottoman and his sectaries.]

79

[\(return\)](#)

[Strip away the crust of Tribonian, and allow for the use of technical words, and the Latin of the Pandects will be found not unworthy of the silver age. It has been vehemently attacked by Laurentius Valla, a fastidious grammarian of the xvth century,

and by his apologist Floridus Sabinus. It has been defended by Alciat, and a name less advocate, (most probably James Capellus.) Their various treatises are collected by Duker, (*Opuscula de Latinitate veterum Jurisconsultorum*, Lugd. Bat. 1721, in 12mo.) Note: Gibbon is mistaken with regard to Valla, who, though he inveighs against the barbarous style of the civilians of his own day, lavishes the highest praise on the admirable purity of the language of the ancient writers on civil law. (M. Warnkonig quotes a long passage of Valla in justification of this observation.) Since his time, this truth has been recognized by men of the highest eminence, such as Erasmus, David Hume and Runkhenius.—W.]

80 [\(return\)](#)

[*Nomina quidem veteribus servavimus, legum autem veritatem nostram fecimus. Itaque siquid erat in illis seditiosum, multa autem talia erant ibi reposita, hoc decum est et definitum, et in perspicuum finem deducta est quaeque lex*, (Cod. Justinian. l. i. tit. xvii. leg. 3, No 10.) A frank confession! * Note: *Seditiosum*, in the language of Justinian, means not seditious, but discounted.—W.]

81 [\(return\)](#)

[The number of these emblemata (a polite name for forgeries) is much reduced by Bynkershoek, (in the four last books of his *Observations*,) who poorly maintains the right of Justinian and the duty of Tribonian.]

82 [\(return\)](#)

[The antinomies, or opposite laws of the Code and Pandects, are sometimes the cause, and often the excuse, of the glorious uncertainty of the civil law, which so often affords what Montaigne calls “Questions pour l’Ami.” See a fine passage of Franciscus Balduinus in Justinian, (l. ii. p. 259, &c., apud Ludewig, p. 305, 306.)]

A rumor devoid of evidence has been propagated by the enemies of Justinian; that the jurisprudence of ancient Rome was reduced to ashes by the author of the Pandects, from the vain persuasion, that it was now either false or superfluous. Without usurping an office so invidious, the emperor might safely commit to ignorance and time the accomplishments of this destructive wish. Before the invention of printing and paper, the labor and the materials of writing could be purchased only by the rich; and it may reasonably be computed, that the price of books was a hundred fold their present value. [83](#) Copies were slowly multiplied and cautiously renewed: the hopes of profit tempted the sacrilegious scribes to erase the characters of antiquity, [8311](#) and

Sophocles or Tacitus were obliged to resign the parchment to missals, homilies, and the golden legend. [84](#) If such was the fate of the most beautiful compositions of genius, what stability could be expected for the dull and barren works of an obsolete science? The books of jurisprudence were interesting to few, and entertaining to none: their value was connected with present use, and they sunk forever as soon as that use was superseded by the innovations of fashion, superior merit, or public authority. In the age of peace and learning, between Cicero and the last of the Antonines, many losses had been already sustained, and some luminaries of the school, or forum, were known only to the curious by tradition and report. Three hundred and sixty years of disorder and decay accelerated the progress of oblivion; and it may fairly be presumed, that of the writings, which Justinian is accused of neglecting, many were no longer to be found in the libraries of the East. [85](#) The copies of Papinian, or Ulpian, which the reformer had proscribed, were deemed unworthy of future notice: the Twelve Tables and praetorian edicts insensibly vanished, and the monuments of ancient Rome were neglected or destroyed by the envy and ignorance of the Greeks. Even the Pandects themselves have escaped with difficulty and danger from the common shipwreck, and criticism has pronounced that all the editions and manuscripts of the West are derived from one original. [86](#) It was transcribed at Constantinople in the beginning of the seventh century, [87](#) was successively transported by the accidents of war and commerce to Amalphi, [88](#) Pisa, [89](#) and Florence, [90](#) and is now deposited as a sacred relic [91](#) in the ancient palace of the republic. [92](#)

83

[\(return\)](#)

[When Faust, or Faustus, sold at Paris his first printed Bibles as manuscripts, the price of a parchment copy was reduced from four or five hundred to sixty, fifty, and forty crowns. The public was at first pleased with the cheapness, and at length provoked by the discovery of the fraud, (Mataire, Annal. Typograph. tom. i. p. 12; first edit.)]

8311

[\(return\)](#)

[Among the works which have been recovered, by the persevering and successful endeavors of M. Mai and his followers to trace the imperfectly erased characters of the ancient writers on these Palimpsests, Gibbon at this period of his labors would have hailed with delight the recovery of the Institutes of Gaius, and the fragments of the Theodosian Code, published by M Keyron of Turin.—M.]

84

[\(return\)](#)

[This execrable practice prevailed from the viiith, and more especially from the xiith, century, when it became almost universal (Montfaucon, in the Memoires de l'Academie, tom. vi. p. 606, &c.

Bibliothèque Raisonnée de la Diplomatique, tom. i. p. 176.)]

85

[\(return\)](#)

[Pomponius (Pandect. l. i. tit. ii. leg. 2) observes, that of the three founders of the civil law, Mucius, Brutus, and Manilius, extant volumina, scripta Manilii monumenta; that of some old republican lawyers, haec versantur eorum scripta inter manus hominum. Eight of the Augustan sages were reduced to a compendium: of Cascellius, scripta non extant sed unus liber, &c.; of Trebatius, minus frequentatur; of Tubero, libri parum grati sunt. Many quotations in the Pandects are derived from books which Tribonian never saw; and in the long period from the viith to the xiiiith century of Rome, the apparent reading of the moderns successively depends on the knowledge and veracity of their predecessors.]

86

[\(return\)](#)

[All, in several instances, repeat the errors of the scribe and the transpositions of some leaves in the Florentine Pandects. This fact, if it be true, is decisive. Yet the Pandects are quoted by Ivo of Chartres, (who died in 1117,) by Theobald, archbishop of Canterbury, and by Vacarius, our first professor, in the year 1140, (Selden ad Fletam, c. 7, tom. ii. p. 1080—1085.) Have our British Mss. of the Pandects been collated?]

87

[\(return\)](#)

[See the description of this original in Brenckman, (Hist. Pandect. Florent. l. i. c. 2, 3, p. 4—17, and l. ii.) Politian, an enthusiast, revered it as the authentic standard of Justinian himself, (p. 407, 408;) but this paradox is refuted by the abbreviations of the Florentine Ms. (l. ii. c. 3, p. 117-130.) It is composed of two quarto volumes, with large margins, on a thin parchment, and the Latin characters betray the band of a Greek scribe.]

88

[\(return\)](#)

[Brenckman, at the end of his history, has inserted two dissertations on the republic of Amalphi, and the Pisan war in the year 1135, &c.]

89

[\(return\)](#)

[The discovery of the Pandects at Amalphi (A. D 1137) is first noticed (in 1501) by Ludovicus Bologninus, (Brenckman, l. i. c. 11, p. 73, 74, l. iv. c. 2, p. 417—425,) on the faith of a Pisan chronicle, (p. 409, 410,) without a name or a date. The whole story, though unknown to the xiith century, embellished by ignorant ages, and suspected by

rigid criticism, is not, however, destitute of much internal probability, (l. i. c. 4—8, p. 17—50.) The Liber Pandectarum of Pisa was undoubtedly consulted in the xivth century by the great Bartolus, (p. 406, 407. See l. i. c. 9, p. 50—62.) Note: Savigny (vol. iii. p. 83, 89) examines and rejects the whole story. See likewise Hallam vol. iii. p. 514.—M.]

90 [\(return\)](#)
[Pisa was taken by the Florentines in the year 1406; and in 1411 the Pandects were transported to the capital. These events are authentic and famous.]

91 [\(return\)](#)
[They were new bound in purple, deposited in a rich casket, and shown to curious travellers by the monks and magistrates bareheaded, and with lighted tapers, (Brenckman, l. i. c. 10, 11, 12, p. 62—93.)]

92 [\(return\)](#)
[After the collations of Politian, Bologninus, and Antoninus Augustinus, and the splendid edition of the Pandects by Taurellus, (in 1551,) Henry Brenckman, a Dutchman, undertook a pilgrimage to Florence, where he employed several years in the study of a single manuscript. His Historia Pandectarum Florentinorum, (Utrecht, 1722, in 4to.,) though a monument of industry, is a small portion of his original design.]

It is the first care of a reformer to prevent any future reformation. To maintain the text of the Pandects, the Institutes, and the Code, the use of ciphers and abbreviations was rigorously proscribed; and as Justinian recollected, that the perpetual edict had been buried under the weight of commentators, he denounced the punishment of forgery against the rash civilians who should presume to interpret or pervert the will of their sovereign. The scholars of Accursius, of Bartolus, of Cujacius, should blush for their accumulated guilt, unless they dare to dispute his right of binding the authority of his successors, and the native freedom of the mind. But the emperor was unable to fix his own inconstancy; and, while he boasted of renewing the exchange of Diomede, of transmuting brass into gold, [93](#) discovered the necessity of purifying his gold from the mixture of baser alloy. Six years had not elapsed from the publication of the Code, before he condemned the imperfect attempt, by a new and more accurate edition of the same work; which he enriched with two hundred of his own laws, and fifty decisions of the darkest and most intricate points of jurisprudence. Every year, or, according to Procopius, each day, of his long reign, was marked by some legal innovation. Many of his acts were rescinded by himself; many were rejected by his successors; many have been obliterated by time; but the number of sixteen Edicts, and one hundred and sixty-eight Novels, [94](#) has been admitted into the authentic body of the civil jurisprudence.

In the opinion of a philosopher superior to the prejudices of his profession, these incessant, and, for the most part, trifling alterations, can be only explained by the venal spirit of a prince, who sold without shame his judgments and his laws. [95](#) The charge of the secret historian is indeed explicit and vehement; but the sole instance, which he produces, may be ascribed to the devotion as well as to the avarice of Justinian. A wealthy bigot had bequeathed his inheritance to the church of Emesa; and its value was enhanced by the dexterity of an artist, who subscribed confessions of debt and promises of payment with the names of the richest Syrians. They pleaded the established prescription of thirty or forty years; but their defence was overruled by a retrospective edict, which extended the claims of the church to the term of a century; an edict so pregnant with injustice and disorder, that, after serving this occasional purpose, it was prudently abolished in the same reign. [96](#) If candor will acquit the emperor himself, and transfer the corruption to his wife and favorites, the suspicion of so foul a vice must still degrade the majesty of his laws; and the advocates of Justinian may acknowledge, that such levity, whatsoever be the motive, is unworthy of a legislator and a man.

93

[\(return\)](#)

[Apud Homerum patrem omnis virtutis, (1st Praefat. ad Pandect.) A line of Milton or Tasso would surprise us in an act of parliament. Quae omnia obtinere sancimus in omne aevum. Of the first Code, he says, (2d Praefat.,) in aeternum valitutum. Man and forever!]

94

[\(return\)](#)

[Novellae is a classic adjective, but a barbarous substantive, (Ludewig, p. 245.) Justinian never collected them himself; the nine collations, the legal standard of modern tribunals, consist of ninety-eight Novels; but the number was increased by the diligence of Julian, Haloander, and Contius, (Ludewig, p. 249, 258 Aleman. Not in Anecdote. p. 98.)]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu, Considerations sur la Grandeur et la Decadence des Romains, c. 20, tom. iii. p. 501, in 4to. On this occasion he throws aside the gown and cap of a President a Mortier.]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[Procopius, Anecdote. c. 28. A similar privilege was granted to the church of Rome, (Novel. ix.) For the general repeal of these mischievous indulgences, see Novel. cxi. and Edict. v.]

Monarchs seldom condescend to become the preceptors of their subjects; and some praise is due to Justinian, by whose command an ample system was reduced to a short and elementary treatise. Among the various institutes of the Roman law, [97](#) those of Caius [98](#) were the most popular in the East and West; and their use may be considered

as an evidence of their merit. They were selected by the Imperial delegates, Tribonian, Theophilus, and Dorotheus; and the freedom and purity of the Antonines was incrustated with the coarser materials of a degenerate age. The same volume which introduced the youth of Rome, Constantinople, and Berytus, to the gradual study of the Code and Pandects, is still precious to the historian, the philosopher, and the magistrate. The Institutes of Justinian are divided into four books: they proceed, with no contemptible method, from, I. Persons, to, II. Things, and from things, to, III. Actions; and the article IV., of Private Wrongs, is terminated by the principles of Criminal Law. [9811](#)

97

[\(return\)](#)

[Lactantius, in his Institutes of Christianity, an elegant and specious work, proposes to imitate the title and method of the civilians. Quidam prudentes et arbitri aequitatis Institutiones Civilis Juris compositas ediderunt, (Institut. Divin. l. i. c. 1.) Such as Ulpian, Paul, Florentinus, Marcian.]

98

[\(return\)](#)

[The emperor Justinian calls him suum, though he died before the end of the second century. His Institutes are quoted by Servius, Boethius, Priscian, &c.; and the Epitome by Arrian is still extant. (See the Prolegomena and notes to the edition of Schulting, in the Jurisprudentia Ante-Justiniana, Lugd. Bat. 1717. Heineccius, Hist. J R No. 313. Ludewig, in Vit. Just. p. 199.)]

9811

[\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon, dividing the Institutes into four parts, considers the appendix of the criminal law in the last title as a fourth part.—W.]

Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part V.

The distinction of ranks and persons is the firmest basis of a mixed and limited government. In France, the remains of liberty are kept alive by the spirit, the honors, and even the prejudices, of fifty thousand nobles. [99](#) Two hundred families [9911](#) supply, in lineal descent, the second branch of English legislature, which maintains, between the king and commons, the balance of the constitution. A gradation of patricians and plebeians, of strangers and subjects, has supported the aristocracy of Genoa, Venice, and ancient Rome. The perfect equality of men is the point in which the extremes of democracy and despotism are confounded; since the majesty of the prince or people would be offended, if any heads were exalted above the level of their fellow-slaves or fellow-citizens. In the decline of the Roman empire, the proud distinctions of the republic were gradually abolished, and the reason or instinct of Justinian completed the simple form of an absolute monarchy. The emperor could not eradicate the popular reverence which always waits on the possession of hereditary wealth, or the memory of

famous ancestors. He delighted to honor, with titles and emoluments, his generals, magistrates, and senators; and his precarious indulgence communicated some rays of their glory to the persons of their wives and children. But in the eye of the law, all Roman citizens were equal, and all subjects of the empire were citizens of Rome. That inestimable character was degraded to an obsolete and empty name. The voice of a Roman could no longer enact his laws, or create the annual ministers of his power: his constitutional rights might have checked the arbitrary will of a master: and the bold adventurer from Germany or Arabia was admitted, with equal favor, to the civil and military command, which the citizen alone had been once entitled to assume over the conquests of his fathers. The first Caesars had scrupulously guarded the distinction of ingenuous and servile birth, which was decided by the condition of the mother; and the candor of the laws was satisfied, if her freedom could be ascertained, during a single moment, between the conception and the delivery. The slaves, who were liberated by a generous master, immediately entered into the middle class of libertines or freedmen; but they could never be enfranchised from the duties of obedience and gratitude; whatever were the fruits of their industry, their patron and his family inherited the third part; or even the whole of their fortune, if they died without children and without a testament. Justinian respected the rights of patrons; but his indulgence removed the badge of disgrace from the two inferior orders of freedmen; whoever ceased to be a slave, obtained, without reserve or delay, the station of a citizen; and at length the dignity of an ingenuous birth, which nature had refused, was created, or supposed, by the omnipotence of the emperor. Whatever restraints of age, or forms, or numbers, had been formerly introduced to check the abuse of manumissions, and the too rapid increase of vile and indigent Romans, he finally abolished; and the spirit of his laws promoted the extinction of domestic servitude. Yet the eastern provinces were filled, in the time of Justinian, with multitudes of slaves, either born or purchased for the use of their masters; and the price, from ten to seventy pieces of gold, was determined by their age, their strength, and their education. [100](#) But the hardships of this dependent state were continually diminished by the influence of government and religion: and the pride of a subject was no longer elated by his absolute dominion over the life and happiness of his bondsman. [101](#)

99

[\(return\)](#)

[See the Annales Politiques de l'Abbe de St. Pierre, tom. i. p. 25 who dates in the year 1735. The most ancient families claim the immemorial possession of arms and fiefs. Since the Crusades, some, the most truly respectable, have been created by the king, for merit and services. The recent and vulgar crowd is derived from the multitude of venal offices without trust or dignity, which continually ennoble the wealthy plebeians.]

9911

[\(return\)](#)

[Since the time of Gibbon, the House of Peers has

been more than doubled: it is above 400, exclusive of the spiritual peers—a wise policy to increase the patrician order in proportion to the general increase of the nation.—M.]

100

[\(return\)](#)

[If the option of a slave was bequeathed to several legatees, they drew lots, and the losers were entitled to their share of his value; ten pieces of gold for a common servant or maid under ten years: if above that age, twenty; if they knew a trade, thirty; notaries or writers, fifty; midwives or physicians, sixty; eunuchs under ten years, thirty pieces; above, fifty; if tradesmen, seventy, (Cod. l. vi. tit. xliii. leg. 3.) These legal prices are generally below those of the market.]

101

[\(return\)](#)

[For the state of slaves and freedmen, see Institutes, l. i. tit. iii.—viii. l. ii. tit. ix. l. iii. tit. viii. ix. Pandects or Digest, l. i. tit. v. vi. l. xxxviii. tit. i.—iv., and the whole of the xlth book. Code, l. vi. tit. iv. v. l. vii. tit. i.—xxiii. Be it henceforward understood that, with the original text of the Institutes and Pandects, the correspondent articles in the Antiquities and Elements of Heineccius are implicitly quoted; and with the xxvii. first books of the Pandects, the learned and rational Commentaries of Gerard Noodt, (Opera, tom. ii. p. 1—590, the end. Lugd. Bat. 1724.)]

The law of nature instructs most animals to cherish and educate their infant progeny. The law of reason inculcates to the human species the returns of filial piety. But the exclusive, absolute, and perpetual dominion of the father over his children, is peculiar to the Roman jurisprudence, [102](#) and seems to be coeval with the foundation of the city. [103](#) The paternal power was instituted or confirmed by Romulus himself; and, after the practice of three centuries, it was inscribed on the fourth table of the Decemvirs. In the forum, the senate, or the camp, the adult son of a Roman citizen enjoyed the public and private rights of a person: in his father's house he was a mere thing; [1031](#) confounded by the laws with the movables, the cattle, and the slaves, whom the capricious master might alienate or destroy, without being responsible to any earthly tribunal. The hand which bestowed the daily sustenance might resume the voluntary gift, and whatever was acquired by the labor or fortune of the son was immediately lost in the property of the father. His stolen goods (his oxen or his children) might be recovered by the same action of theft; [104](#) and if either had been guilty of a trespass, it was in his own option to compensate the damage, or resign to the injured party the obnoxious animal. At the call of indigence or avarice, the master of a family could dispose of his children or his slaves. But the condition of the slave was far more advantageous, since he regained, by the first manumission, his alienated freedom: the

son was again restored to his unnatural father; he might be condemned to servitude a second and a third time, and it was not till after the third sale and deliverance, [105](#) that he was enfranchised from the domestic power which had been so repeatedly abused. According to his discretion, a father might chastise the real or imaginary faults of his children, by stripes, by imprisonment, by exile, by sending them to the country to work in chains among the meanest of his servants. The majesty of a parent was armed with the power of life and death; [106](#) and the examples of such bloody executions, which were sometimes praised and never punished, may be traced in the annals of Rome beyond the times of Pompey and Augustus. Neither age, nor rank, nor the consular office, nor the honors of a triumph, could exempt the most illustrious citizen from the bonds of filial subjection: [107](#) his own descendants were included in the family of their common ancestor; and the claims of adoption were not less sacred or less rigorous than those of nature. Without fear, though not without danger of abuse, the Roman legislators had reposed an unbounded confidence in the sentiments of paternal love; and the oppression was tempered by the assurance that each generation must succeed in its turn to the awful dignity of parent and master.

102

[\(return\)](#)

[See the patria potestas in the Institutes, (l. i. tit. ix.,) the Pandects, (l. i. tit. vi. vii.,) and the Code, (l. viii. tit. xlvii. xlviii. xlix.) Jus potestatis quod in liberos habemus proprium est civium Romanorum. Nulli enim alii sunt homines, qui talem in liberos habeant potestatem qualem nos habemus. * Note: The newly-discovered Institutes of Gaius name one nation in which the same power was vested in the parent. Nec me praeterit Galatarum gentem credere, in potestate parentum liberos esse. Gaii Instit. edit. 1824, p. 257.—M.]

103

[\(return\)](#)

[Dionysius Hal. l. ii. p. 94, 95. Gravina (Opp. p. 286) produces the words of the xii. tables. Papinian (in Collatione Legum Roman et Mosaicarum, tit. iv. p. 204) styles this patria potestas, lex regia: Ulpian (ad Sabin. l. xxvi. in Pandect. l. i. tit. vi. leg. 8) says, jus potestatis moribus receptum; and furiosus filium in potestate habebit How sacred—or rather, how absurd! * Note: All this is in strict accordance with the Roman character.—W.]

1031

[\(return\)](#)

[This parental power was strictly confined to the Roman citizen. The foreigner, or he who had only jus Latii, did not possess it. If a Roman citizen unknowingly married a Latin or a foreign wife, he did not possess this power over his son, because the son, following the legal condition of the mother, was not a Roman citizen. A man, however, alleging

sufficient cause for his ignorance, might raise both mother and child to the rights of citizenship. Gaius. p. 30.—M.]

104 [\(return\)](#)

[Pandect. l. xlvii. tit. ii. leg. 14, No. 13, leg. 38, No. 1. Such was the decision of Ulpian and Paul.]

105 [\(return\)](#)

[The trina mancipatio is most clearly defined by Ulpian, (Fragment. x. p. 591, 592, edit. Schulting;) and best illustrated in the Antiquities of Heineccius. * Note: The son of a family sold by his father did not become in every respect a slave, he was statu liber; that is to say, on paying the price for which he was sold, he became entirely free. See Hugo, Hist. Section 61—W.]

106 [\(return\)](#)

[By Justinian, the old law, the jus necis of the Roman father (Institut. l. iv. tit. ix. No. 7) is reported and reprobated. Some legal vestiges are left in the Pandects (l. xliii. tit. xxix. leg. 3, No. 4) and the Collatio Legum Romanarum et Mosaicarum, (tit. ii. No. 3, p. 189.)]

107 [\(return\)](#)

[Except on public occasions, and in the actual exercise of his office. In publicis locis atque muneribus, atque actionibus patrum, jura cum filiorum qui in magistratu sunt potestatibus collata interquiescere paullulum et connivere, &c., (Aul. Gellius, Noctes Atticae, ii. 2.) The Lessons of the philosopher Taurus were justified by the old and memorable example of Fabius; and we may contemplate the same story in the style of Livy (xxiv. 44) and the homely idiom of Claudius Quadrigarius the annalist.]

The first limitation of paternal power is ascribed to the justice and humanity of Numa; and the maid who, with his father's consent, had espoused a freeman, was protected from the disgrace of becoming the wife of a slave. In the first ages, when the city was pressed, and often famished, by her Latin and Tuscan neighbors, the sale of children might be a frequent practice; but as a Roman could not legally purchase the liberty of his fellow-citizen, the market must gradually fail, and the trade would be destroyed by the conquests of the republic. An imperfect right of property was at length communicated to sons; and the threefold distinction of profectitious, adventitious, and professional was ascertained by the jurisprudence of the Code and Pandects. [108](#) Of all that proceeded from the father, he imparted only the use, and reserved the absolute dominion; yet if his goods were sold, the filial portion was excepted, by a favorable interpretation, from the demands of the creditors. In whatever accrued by marriage, gift, or collateral succession, the property was secured to the son; but the father, unless he

had been specially excluded, enjoyed the usufruct during his life. As a just and prudent reward of military virtue, the spoils of the enemy were acquired, possessed, and bequeathed by the soldier alone; and the fair analogy was extended to the emoluments of any liberal profession, the salary of public service, and the sacred liberality of the emperor or empress. The life of a citizen was less exposed than his fortune to the abuse of paternal power. Yet his life might be adverse to the interest or passions of an unworthy father: the same crimes that flowed from the corruption, were more sensibly felt by the humanity, of the Augustan age; and the cruel Erixo, who whipped his son till he expired, was saved by the emperor from the just fury of the multitude. [109](#) The Roman father, from the license of servile dominion, was reduced to the gravity and moderation of a judge. The presence and opinion of Augustus confirmed the sentence of exile pronounced against an intentional parricide by the domestic tribunal of Arius. Adrian transported to an island the jealous parent, who, like a robber, had seized the opportunity of hunting, to assassinate a youth, the incestuous lover of his step-mother. [110](#) A private jurisdiction is repugnant to the spirit of monarchy; the parent was again reduced from a judge to an accuser; and the magistrates were enjoined by Severus Alexander to hear his complaints and execute his sentence. He could no longer take the life of a son without incurring the guilt and punishment of murder; and the pains of parricide, from which he had been excepted by the Pompeian law, were finally inflicted by the justice of Constantine. [111](#) The same protection was due to every period of existence; and reason must applaud the humanity of Paulus, for imputing the crime of murder to the father who strangles, or starves, or abandons his new-born infant; or exposes him in a public place to find the mercy which he himself had denied. But the exposition of children was the prevailing and stubborn vice of antiquity: it was sometimes prescribed, often permitted, almost always practised with impunity, by the nations who never entertained the Roman ideas of paternal power; and the dramatic poets, who appeal to the human heart, represent with indifference a popular custom which was palliated by the motives of economy and compassion. [112](#) If the father could subdue his own feelings, he might escape, though not the censure, at least the chastisement, of the laws; and the Roman empire was stained with the blood of infants, till such murders were included, by Valentinian and his colleagues, in the letter and spirit of the Cornelian law. The lessons of jurisprudence [113](#) and Christianity had been insufficient to eradicate this inhuman practice, till their gentle influence was fortified by the terrors of capital punishment. [114](#)

108

[\(return\)](#)

[See the gradual enlargement and security of the filial peculium in the Institutes, (l. ii. tit. ix.,) the Pandects, (l. xv. tit. i. l. xli. tit. i.,) and the Code, (l. iv. tit. xxvi. xxvii.)]

109

[\(return\)](#)

[The examples of Erixo and Arius are related by Seneca, (de Clementia, i. 14, 15,) the former with horror, the latter with applause.]

- 110 [\(return\)](#)
 [Quod latronis magis quam patris jure eum interfecit, nam patria potestas in pietate debet non in atrocitate consistere, (Marcian. Institut. l. xix. in Pandect. l. xlviii. tit. ix. leg.5.)]
- 111 [\(return\)](#)
 [The Pompeian and Cornelian laws de sicariis and parricidis are repeated, or rather abridged, with the last supplements of Alexander Severus, Constantine, and Valentinian, in the Pandects (l. xlviii. tit. viii ix,) and Code, (l. ix. tit. xvi. xvii.) See likewise the Theodosian Code, (l. ix. tit. xiv. xv.,) with Godefroy's Commentary, (tom. iii. p. 84—113) who pours a flood of ancient and modern learning over these penal laws.]
- 112 [\(return\)](#)
 [When the Chremes of Terence reproaches his wife for not obeying his orders and exposing their infant, he speaks like a father and a master, and silences the scruples of a foolish woman. See Apuleius, (Metamorph. l. x. p. 337, edit. Delphin.)]
- 113 [\(return\)](#)
 [The opinion of the lawyers, and the discretion of the magistrates, had introduced, in the time of Tacitus, some legal restraints, which might support his contrast of the boni mores of the Germans to the bonae leges alibi—that is to say, at Rome, (de Moribus Germanorum, c. 19.) Tertullian (ad Nationes, l. i. c. 15) refutes his own charges, and those of his brethren, against the heathen jurisprudence.]
- 114 [\(return\)](#)
 [The wise and humane sentence of the civilian Paul (l. ii. Sententiarum in Pandect, l. xxv. tit. iii. leg. 4) is represented as a mere moral precept by Gerard Noodt, (Opp. tom. i. in Julius Paulus, p. 567—558, and Amica Responsio, p. 591-606,) who maintains the opinion of Justus Lipsius, (Opp. tom. ii. p. 409, ad Belgas. cent. i. epist. 85,) and as a positive binding law by Bynkershoek, (de Jure occidendi Liberos, Opp. tom. i. p. 318—340. Curae Secundae, p. 391—427.) In a learned out angry controversy, the two friends deviated into the opposite extremes.]

Experience has proved, that savages are the tyrants of the female sex, and that the condition of women is usually softened by the refinements of social life. In the hope of a robust progeny, Lycurgus had delayed the season of marriage: it was fixed by Numa at the tender age of twelve years, that the Roman husband might educate to his will a

pure and obedient virgin. [115](#) According to the custom of antiquity, he bought his bride of her parents, and she fulfilled the coemption by purchasing, with three pieces of copper, a just introduction to his house and household deities. A sacrifice of fruits was offered by the pontiffs in the presence of ten witnesses; the contracting parties were seated on the same sheep-skin; they tasted a salt cake of far or rice; and this confarreation, [116](#) which denoted the ancient food of Italy, served as an emblem of their mystic union of mind and body. But this union on the side of the woman was rigorous and unequal; and she renounced the name and worship of her father's house, to embrace a new servitude, decorated only by the title of adoption, a fiction of the law, neither rational nor elegant, bestowed on the mother of a family [117](#) (her proper appellation) the strange characters of sister to her own children, and of daughter to her husband or master, who was invested with the plenitude of paternal power. By his judgment or caprice her behavior was approved, or censured, or chastised; he exercised the jurisdiction of life and death; and it was allowed, that in the cases of adultery or drunkenness, [118](#) the sentence might be properly inflicted. She acquired and inherited for the sole profit of her lord; and so clearly was woman defined, not as a person, but as a thing, that, if the original title were deficient, she might be claimed, like other movables, by the use and possession of an entire year. The inclination of the Roman husband discharged or withheld the conjugal debt, so scrupulously exacted by the Athenian and Jewish laws: [119](#) but as polygamy was unknown, he could never admit to his bed a fairer or a more favored partner.

115 [\(return\)](#)
[Dionys. Hal. l. ii. p. 92, 93. Plutarch, in Numa, p. 140-141.]

116 [\(return\)](#)
[Among the winter frumenta, the triticum, or bearded wheat; the siligo, or the unbarbed; the far, adorea, oryza, whose description perfectly tallies with the rice of Spain and Italy. I adopt this identity on the credit of M. Pauton in his useful and laborious Metrologie, (p. 517—529.)]

117 [\(return\)](#)
[Aulus Gellius (Noctes Atticae, xviii. 6) gives a ridiculous definition of Aelius Melissus, Matrona, quae semel materfamilias quae saepius peperit, as porcetra and scropha in the sow kind. He then adds the genuine meaning, quae in matrimonium vel in manum convenerat.]

118 [\(return\)](#)
[It was enough to have tasted wine, or to have stolen the key of the cellar, (Plin. Hist. Nat. xiv. 14.)]

119 [\(return\)](#)
[Solon requires three payments per month. By the Misna, a daily debt was imposed on an idle,

vigorous, young husband; twice a week on a citizen; once on a peasant; once in thirty days on a camel-driver; once in six months on a seaman. But the student or doctor was free from tribute; and no wife, if she received a weekly sustenance, could sue for a divorce; for one week a vow of abstinence was allowed. Polygamy divided, without multiplying, the duties of the husband, (Selden, *Uxor Ebraica*, l. iii. c 6, in his works, vol ii. p. 717—720.))]

After the Punic triumphs, the matrons of Rome aspired to the common benefits of a free and opulent republic: their wishes were gratified by the indulgence of fathers and lovers, and their ambition was unsuccessfully resisted by the gravity of Cato the Censor. [120](#) They declined the solemnities of the old nuptials; defeated the annual prescription by an absence of three days; and, without losing their name or independence, subscribed the liberal and definite terms of a marriage contract. Of their private fortunes, they communicated the use, and secured the property: the estates of a wife could neither be alienated nor mortgaged by a prodigal husband; their mutual gifts were prohibited by the jealousy of the laws; and the misconduct of either party might afford, under another name, a future subject for an action of theft. To this loose and voluntary compact, religious and civil rights were no longer essential; and, between persons of a similar rank, the apparent community of life was allowed as sufficient evidence of their nuptials. The dignity of marriage was restored by the Christians, who derived all spiritual grace from the prayers of the faithful and the benediction of the priest or bishop. The origin, validity, and duties of the holy institution were regulated by the tradition of the synagogue, the precepts of the gospel, and the canons of general or provincial synods; [121](#) and the conscience of the Christians was awed by the decrees and censures of their ecclesiastical rulers. Yet the magistrates of Justinian were not subject to the authority of the church: the emperor consulted the unbelieving civilians of antiquity, and the choice of matrimonial laws in the Code and Pandects, is directed by the earthly motives of justice, policy, and the natural freedom of both sexes. [122](#)

120

[\(return\)](#)

[On the Oppian law we may hear the mitigating speech of Vaerius Flaccus, and the severe censorial oration of the elder Cato, (Liv. xxxiv. 1—8.) But we shall rather hear the polished historian of the eighth, than the rough orators of the sixth, century of Rome. The principles, and even the style, of Cato are more accurately preserved by Aulus Gellius, (x. 23.)]

121

[\(return\)](#)

[For the system of Jewish and Catholic matrimony, see Selden, (*Uxor Ebraica*, Opp. vol. ii. p. 529—860,) Bingham, (*Christian Antiquities*, l. xxii.,) and Chardon, (*Hist. des Sacremens*, tom. vi.)]

122

[\(return\)](#)

[The civil laws of marriage are exposed in the

Institutes, (l. i. tit. x.,) the Pandects, (l. xxiii. xxiv. xxv.,) and the Code, (l. v.,) but as the title *de ritu nuptiarum* is yet imperfect, we are obliged to explore the fragments of Ulpian (tit. ix. p. 590, 591,) and the *Collatio Legum Mosaicarum*, (tit. xvi. p. 790, 791,) with the notes of Pithaeus and Schulting. They find in the Commentary of Servius (on the 1st Georgia and the 4th Aeneid) two curious passages.]

Besides the agreement of the parties, the essence of every rational contract, the Roman marriage required the previous approbation of the parents. A father might be forced by some recent laws to supply the wants of a mature daughter; but even his insanity was not gradually allowed to supersede the necessity of his consent. The causes of the dissolution of matrimony have varied among the Romans; [123](#) but the most solemn sacrament, the *confarreation* itself, might always be done away by rites of a contrary tendency. In the first ages, the father of a family might sell his children, and his wife was reckoned in the number of his children: the domestic judge might pronounce the death of the offender, or his mercy might expel her from his bed and house; but the slavery of the wretched female was hopeless and perpetual, unless he asserted for his own convenience the manly prerogative of divorce. [1231](#) The warmest applause has been lavished on the virtue of the Romans, who abstained from the exercise of this tempting privilege above five hundred years: [124](#) but the same fact evinces the unequal terms of a connection in which the slave was unable to renounce her tyrant, and the tyrant was unwilling to relinquish his slave. When the Roman matrons became the equal and voluntary companions of their lords, a new jurisprudence was introduced, that marriage, like other partnerships, might be dissolved by the abdication of one of the associates. In three centuries of prosperity and corruption, this principle was enlarged to frequent practice and pernicious abuse.

Passion, interest, or caprice, suggested daily motives for the dissolution of marriage; a word, a sign, a message, a letter, the mandate of a freedman, declared the separation; the most tender of human connections was degraded to a transient society of profit or pleasure. According to the various conditions of life, both sexes alternately felt the disgrace and injury: an inconstant spouse transferred her wealth to a new family, abandoning a numerous, perhaps a spurious, progeny to the paternal authority and care of her late husband; a beautiful virgin might be dismissed to the world, old, indigent, and friendless; but the reluctance of the Romans, when they were pressed to marriage by Augustus, sufficiently marks, that the prevailing institutions were least favorable to the males. A specious theory is confuted by this free and perfect experiment, which demonstrates, that the liberty of divorce does not contribute to happiness and virtue. The facility of separation would destroy all mutual confidence, and inflame every trifling dispute: the minute difference between a husband and a stranger, which might so easily be removed, might still more easily be forgotten; and the matron, who in five

years can submit to the embraces of eight husbands, must cease to reverence the chastity of her own person. [125](#)

123

[\(return\)](#)

[According to Plutarch, (p. 57,) Romulus allowed only three grounds of a divorce—drunkenness, adultery, and false keys. Otherwise, the husband who abused his supremacy forfeited half his goods to the wife, and half to the goddess Ceres, and offered a sacrifice (with the remainder?) to the terrestrial deities. This strange law was either imaginary or transient.]

1231

[\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu relates and explains this fact in a different marnes *Esprit des Loix*, l. xvi. c. 16.—G.]

124

[\(return\)](#)

[In the year of Rome 523, Spurius Carvilius Ruga repudiated a fair, a good, but a barren, wife, (Dionysius Hal. l. ii. p. 93. Plutarch, in Numa, p. 141; Valerius Maximus, l. ii. c. 1; Aulus Gellius, iv. 3.) He was questioned by the censors, and hated by the people; but his divorce stood unimpeached in law.]

125

[\(return\)](#)

[—*Sic fiunt octo mariti Quinque per autumnos.* Juvenal, *Satir.* vi. 20.—A rapid succession, which may yet be credible, as well as the *non consulum numero, sed maritorum annos suos computant*, of Seneca, (*de Beneficiis*, iii. 16.) Jerom saw at Rome a triumphant husband bury his twenty-first wife, who had interred twenty-two of his less sturdy predecessors, (*Opp. tom. i. p. 90, ad Gerontiam.*) But the ten husbands in a month of the poet Martial, is an extravagant hyperbole, (l. 71. epigram 7.)]

Insufficient remedies followed with distant and tardy steps the rapid progress of the evil. The ancient worship of the Romans afforded a peculiar goddess to hear and reconcile the complaints of a married life; but her epithet of *Viriplaca*, [126](#) the appeaser of husbands, too clearly indicates on which side submission and repentance were always expected. Every act of a citizen was subject to the judgment of the censors; the first who used the privilege of divorce assigned, at their command, the motives of his conduct; [127](#) and a senator was expelled for dismissing his virgin spouse without the knowledge or advice of his friends. Whenever an action was instituted for the recovery of a marriage portion, the proetor, as the guardian of equity, examined the cause and the characters, and gently inclined the scale in favor of the guiltless and injured party. Augustus, who united the powers of both magistrates, adopted their different modes of repressing or chastising the license of divorce. [128](#) The presence of seven Roman witnesses was required for the validity of this solemn and deliberate act: if any adequate

provocation had been given by the husband, instead of the delay of two years, he was compelled to refund immediately, or in the space of six months; but if he could arraign the manners of his wife, her guilt or levity was expiated by the loss of the sixth or eighth part of her marriage portion. The Christian princes were the first who specified the just causes of a private divorce; their institutions, from Constantine to Justinian, appear to fluctuate between the custom of the empire and the wishes of the church, [129](#) and the author of the Novels too frequently reforms the jurisprudence of the Code and Pandects. In the most rigorous laws, a wife was condemned to support a gamester, a drunkard, or a libertine, unless he were guilty of homicide, poison, or sacrilege, in which cases the marriage, as it should seem, might have been dissolved by the hand of the executioner. But the sacred right of the husband was invariably maintained, to deliver his name and family from the disgrace of adultery: the list of mortal sins, either male or female, was curtailed and enlarged by successive regulations, and the obstacles of incurable impotence, long absence, and monastic profession, were allowed to rescind the matrimonial obligation. Whoever transgressed the permission of the law, was subject to various and heavy penalties. The woman was stripped of her wealth and ornaments, without excepting the bodkin of her hair: if the man introduced a new bride into his bed, her fortune might be lawfully seized by the vengeance of his exiled wife. Forfeiture was sometimes commuted to a fine; the fine was sometimes aggravated by transportation to an island, or imprisonment in a monastery; the injured party was released from the bonds of marriage; but the offender, during life, or a term of years, was disabled from the repetition of nuptials. The successor of Justinian yielded to the prayers of his unhappy subjects, and restored the liberty of divorce by mutual consent: the civilians were unanimous, [130](#) the theologians were divided, [131](#) and the ambiguous word, which contains the precept of Christ, is flexible to any interpretation that the wisdom of a legislator can demand.

126 [\(return\)](#)
[Sacellum Viriplacae, (Valerius Maximus, l. ii. c. 1,) in the Palatine region, appears in the time of Theodosius, in the description of Rome by Publius Victor.]

127 [\(return\)](#)
[Valerius Maximus, l. ii. c. 9. With some propriety he judges divorce more criminal than celibacy: illo namque conjugalia sacre spreta tantum, hoc etiam injuriose tractata.]

128 [\(return\)](#)
[See the laws of Augustus and his successors, in Heineccius, ad Legem Papiam-Poppaeam, c. 19, in Opp. tom. vi. P. i. p. 323—333.]

129 [\(return\)](#)
[Aliae sunt leges Caesarum, aliae Christi; aliud Papinianus, aliud Paulus nocter praecipit, (Jerom.

tom. i. p. 198. Selden, *Uxor Ebraica* l. iii. c. 31 p. 847—853.))]

130

[\(return\)](#)

[The Institutes are silent; but we may consult the Codes of Theodosius (l. iii. tit. xvi., with Godefroy's Commentary, tom. i. p. 310—315) and Justinian, (l. v. tit. xvii.,) the Pandects (l. xxiv. tit. ii.) and the Novels, (xxii. cxvii. cxxvii. cxxxiv. cxl.) Justinian fluctuated to the last between civil and ecclesiastical law.]

131

[\(return\)](#)

[In pure Greek, it is not a common word; nor can the proper meaning, fornication, be strictly applied to matrimonial sin. In a figurative sense, how far, and to what offences, may it be extended? Did Christ speak the Rabbinical or Syriac tongue? Of what original word is the translation? How variously is that Greek word translated in the versions ancient and modern! There are two (Mark, x. 11, Luke, xvi. 18) to one (Matthew, xix. 9) that such ground of divorce was not excepted by Jesus. Some critics have presumed to think, by an evasive answer, he avoided the giving offence either to the school of Sammai or to that of Hillel, (Selden, *Uxor Ebraica*, l. iii. c. 18—22, 28, 31.) * Note: But these had nothing to do with the question of a divorce made by judicial authority.—Hugo.]

The freedom of love and marriage was restrained among the Romans by natural and civil impediments. An instinct, almost innate and universal, appears to prohibit the incestuous commerce [132](#) of parents and children in the infinite series of ascending and descending generations. Concerning the oblique and collateral branches, nature is indifferent, reason mute, and custom various and arbitrary. In Egypt, the marriage of brothers and sisters was admitted without scruple or exception: a Spartan might espouse the daughter of his father, an Athenian, that of his mother; and the nuptials of an uncle with his niece were applauded at Athens as a happy union of the dearest relations. The profane lawgivers of Rome were never tempted by interest or superstition to multiply the forbidden degrees: but they inflexibly condemned the marriage of sisters and brothers, hesitated whether first cousins should be touched by the same interdict; revered the parental character of aunts and uncles, [1321](#) and treated affinity and adoption as a just imitation of the ties of blood. According to the proud maxims of the republic, a legal marriage could only be contracted by free citizens; an honorable, at least an ingenuous birth, was required for the spouse of a senator: but the blood of kings could never mingle in legitimate nuptials with the blood of a Roman; and the name of Stranger degraded Cleopatra and Berenice, [133](#) to live the concubines of Mark Antony and Titus. [134](#) This appellation, indeed, so injurious to the majesty, cannot without indulgence be applied to the manners, of these Oriental queens. A concubine, in the

strict sense of the civilians, was a woman of servile or plebeian extraction, the sole and faithful companion of a Roman citizen, who continued in a state of celibacy. Her modest station, below the honors of a wife, above the infamy of a prostitute, was acknowledged and approved by the laws: from the age of Augustus to the tenth century, the use of this secondary marriage prevailed both in the West and East; and the humble virtues of a concubine were often preferred to the pomp and insolence of a noble matron. In this connection, the two Antonines, the best of princes and of men, enjoyed the comforts of domestic love: the example was imitated by many citizens impatient of celibacy, but regardless of their families. If at any time they desired to legitimate their natural children, the conversion was instantly performed by the celebration of their nuptials with a partner whose faithfulness and fidelity they had already tried. [1341](#) By this epithet of natural, the offspring of the concubine were distinguished from the spurious brood of adultery, prostitution, and incest, to whom Justinian reluctantly grants the necessary aliments of life; and these natural children alone were capable of succeeding to a sixth part of the inheritance of their reputed father. According to the rigor of law, bastards were entitled only to the name and condition of their mother, from whom they might derive the character of a slave, a stranger, or a citizen. The outcasts of every family were adopted without reproach as the children of the state. [135](#) [1351](#)

132

[\(return\)](#)

[The principles of the Roman jurisprudence are exposed by Justinian, (Institut. t. i. tit. x.;) and the laws and manners of the different nations of antiquity concerning forbidden degrees, &c., are copiously explained by Dr. Taylor in his Elements of Civil Law, (p. 108, 314—339,) a work of amusing, though various reading; but which cannot be praised for philosophical precision.]

1321

[\(return\)](#)

[According to the earlier law, (Gaii Instit. p. 27,) a man might marry his niece on the brother's, not on the sister's, side. The emperor Claudius set the example of the former. In the Institutes, this distinction was abolished and both declared illegal.—M.]

133

[\(return\)](#)

[When her father Agrippa died, (A.D. 44,) Berenice was sixteen years of age, (Joseph. tom. i. Antiquit. Judaic. l. xix. c. 9, p. 952, edit. Havercamp.) She was therefore above fifty years old when Titus (A.D. 79) invitatus invitam invisit. This date would not have adorned the tragedy or pastoral of the tender Racine.]

134

[\(return\)](#)

[The Aegyptia conjux of Virgil (Aeneid, viii. 688) seems to be numbered among the monsters who

warred with Mark Antony against Augustus, the senate, and the gods of Italy.]

1341 [\(return\)](#)

[The Edict of Constantine first conferred this right; for Augustus had prohibited the taking as a concubine a woman who might be taken as a wife; and if marriage took place afterwards, this marriage made no change in the rights of the children born before it; recourse was then had to adoption, properly called arrogation.—G.]

135 [\(return\)](#)

[The humble but legal rights of concubines and natural children are stated in the Institutes, (l. i. tit. x.,) the Pandects, (l. i. tit. vii.,) the Code, (l. v. tit. xxv.,) and the Novels, (lxxiv. lxxxix.) The researches of Heineccius and Giannone, (ad Legem Juliam et Papiam-Poppaeam, c. iv. p. 164-175. Opere Posthume, p. 108—158) illustrate this interesting and domestic subject.]

1351 [\(return\)](#)

[See, however, the two fragments of laws in the newly discovered extracts from the Theodosian Code, published by M. A. Peyron, at Turin. By the first law of Constantine, the legitimate offspring could alone inherit; where there were no near legitimate relatives, the inheritance went to the fiscus. The son of a certain Licinianus, who had inherited his father's property under the supposition that he was legitimate, and had been promoted to a place of dignity, was to be degraded, his property confiscated, himself punished with stripes and imprisonment. By the second, all persons, even of the highest rank, senators, perfectissimi, decemvirs, were to be declared infamous, and out of the protection of the Roman law, if born ex ancilla, vel ancillae filia, vel liberta, vel libertae filia, sive Romana facta, seu Latina, vel scaenicae filia, vel ex tabernaria, vel ex tabernariae filia, vel humili vel abjecta, vel lenonis, aut arenarii filia, vel quae mercimoniis publicis praefuit. Whatever a fond father had conferred on such children was revoked, and either restored to the legitimate children, or confiscated to the state; the mothers, who were guilty of thus poisoning the minds of the fathers, were to be put to the torture (tormentis subici jubemus.) The unfortunate son of Licinianus, it appears from this second law, having fled, had been taken, and was ordered to be kept in chains to work in the Gynaecium at Carthage. Cod. Theodor ab. A. Person, 87—90.—M.]

Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part VI.

The relation of guardian and ward, or in Roman words of tutor and pupil, which covers so many titles of the Institutes and Pandects, [136](#) is of a very simple and uniform nature. The person and property of an orphan must always be trusted to the custody of some discreet friend. If the deceased father had not signified his choice, the agnats, or paternal kindred of the nearest degree, were compelled to act as the natural guardians: the Athenians were apprehensive of exposing the infant to the power of those most interested in his death; but an axiom of Roman jurisprudence has pronounced, that the charge of tutelage should constantly attend the emolument of succession. If the choice of the father, and the line of consanguinity, afforded no efficient guardian, the failure was supplied by the nomination of the praetor of the city, or the president of the province. But the person whom they named to this public office might be legally excused by insanity or blindness, by ignorance or inability, by previous enmity or adverse interest, by the number of children or guardianships with which he was already burdened, and by the immunities which were granted to the useful labors of magistrates, lawyers, physicians, and professors. Till the infant could speak, and think, he was represented by the tutor, whose authority was finally determined by the age of puberty. Without his consent, no act of the pupil could bind himself to his own prejudice, though it might oblige others for his personal benefit. It is needless to observe, that the tutor often gave security, and always rendered an account, and that the want of diligence or integrity exposed him to a civil and almost criminal action for the violation of his sacred trust. The age of puberty had been rashly fixed by the civilians at fourteen; [1361](#) but as the faculties of the mind ripen more slowly than those of the body, a curator was interposed to guard the fortunes of a Roman youth from his own inexperience and headstrong passions. Such a trustee had been first instituted by the praetor, to save a family from the blind havoc of a prodigal or madman; and the minor was compelled, by the laws, to solicit the same protection, to give validity to his acts till he accomplished the full period of twenty-five years. Women were condemned to the perpetual tutelage of parents, husbands, or guardians; a sex created to please and obey was never supposed to have attained the age of reason and experience. Such, at least, was the stern and haughty spirit of the ancient law, which had been insensibly mollified before the time of Justinian.

136

[\(return\)](#)

[See the article of guardians and wards in the Institutes, (l. i. tit. xiii.—xxvi.,) the Pandects, (l. xxvi. xxvii.,) and the Code, (l. v. tit. xxviii.—lxx.)]

1361

[\(return\)](#)

[Gibbon accuses the civilians of having “rashly fixed the age of puberty at twelve or fourteen years.” It was not so; before Justinian, no law existed on this subject. Ulpian relates the discussions which took place on this point among

the different sects of civilians. See the Institutes, l. i. tit. 22, and the fragments of Ulpian. Nor was the curatorship obligatory for all minors.—W.]

II. The original right of property can only be justified by the accident or merit of prior occupancy; and on this foundation it is wisely established by the philosophy of the civilians. [137](#) The savage who hollows a tree, inserts a sharp stone into a wooden handle, or applies a string to an elastic branch, becomes in a state of nature the just proprietor of the canoe, the bow, or the hatchet. The materials were common to all, the new form, the produce of his time and simple industry, belongs solely to himself. His hungry brethren cannot, without a sense of their own injustice, extort from the hunter the game of the forest overtaken or slain by his personal strength and dexterity. If his provident care preserves and multiplies the tame animals, whose nature is tractable to the arts of education, he acquires a perpetual title to the use and service of their numerous progeny, which derives its existence from him alone. If he encloses and cultivates a field for their sustenance and his own, a barren waste is converted into a fertile soil; the seed, the manure, the labor, create a new value, and the rewards of harvest are painfully earned by the fatigues of the revolving year. In the successive states of society, the hunter, the shepherd, the husbandman, may defend their possessions by two reasons which forcibly appeal to the feelings of the human mind: that whatever they enjoy is the fruit of their own industry; and that every man who envies their felicity, may purchase similar acquisitions by the exercise of similar diligence. Such, in truth, may be the freedom and plenty of a small colony cast on a fruitful island. But the colony multiplies, while the space still continues the same; the common rights, the equal inheritance of mankind, are engrossed by the bold and crafty; each field and forest is circumscribed by the landmarks of a jealous master; and it is the peculiar praise of the Roman jurisprudence, that it asserts the claim of the first occupant to the wild animals of the earth, the air, and the waters. In the progress from primitive equity to final injustice, the steps are silent, the shades are almost imperceptible, and the absolute monopoly is guarded by positive laws and artificial reason. The active, insatiate principle of self-love can alone supply the arts of life and the wages of industry; and as soon as civil government and exclusive property have been introduced, they become necessary to the existence of the human race. Except in the singular institutions of Sparta, the wisest legislators have disapproved an agrarian law as a false and dangerous innovation. Among the Romans, the enormous disproportion of wealth surmounted the ideal restraints of a doubtful tradition, and an obsolete statute; a tradition that the poorest follower of Romulus had been endowed with the perpetual inheritance of two jugera; [138](#) a statute which confined the richest citizen to the measure of five hundred jugera, or three hundred and twelve acres of land. The original territory of Rome consisted only of some miles of wood and meadow along the banks of the Tyber; and domestic exchange could add nothing to the national stock. But the goods of an alien or enemy were lawfully exposed to the first hostile occupier; the city was enriched by the profitable trade of war; and the blood of her sons was the only price

that was paid for the Volscian sheep, the slaves of Briton, or the gems and gold of Asiatic kingdoms. In the language of ancient jurisprudence, which was corrupted and forgotten before the age of Justinian, these spoils were distinguished by the name of *manceps* or *manicipium*, taken with the hand; and whenever they were sold or emancipated, the purchaser required some assurance that they had been the property of an enemy, and not of a fellow-citizen. [139](#) A citizen could only forfeit his rights by apparent dereliction, and such dereliction of a valuable interest could not easily be presumed. Yet, according to the Twelve Tables, a prescription of one year for movables, and of two years for immovables, abolished the claim of the ancient master, if the actual possessor had acquired them by a fair transaction from the person whom he believed to be the lawful proprietor. [140](#) Such conscientious injustice, without any mixture of fraud or force could seldom injure the members of a small republic; but the various periods of three, of ten, or of twenty years, determined by Justinian, are more suitable to the latitude of a great empire. It is only in the term of prescription that the distinction of real and personal fortune has been remarked by the civilians; and their general idea of property is that of simple, uniform, and absolute dominion. The subordinate exceptions of use, of usufruct, [141](#) of servitude, [142](#) imposed for the benefit of a neighbor on lands and houses, are abundantly explained by the professors of jurisprudence. The claims of property, as far as they are altered by the mixture, the division, or the transformation of substances, are investigated with metaphysical subtilty by the same civilians.

137 [\(return\)](#)

[Institut. l. ii. tit i. ii. Compare the pure and precise reasoning of Caius and Heineccius (l. ii. tit. i. p. 69-91) with the loose prolixity of Theophilus, (p. 207—265.) The opinions of Ulpian are preserved in the Pandects, (l. i. tit. viii. leg. 41, No. 1.)]

138 [\(return\)](#)

[The heredium of the first Romans is defined by Varro, (de Re Rustica, l. i. c. ii. p. 141, c. x. p. 160, 161, edit. Gesner,) and clouded by Pliny's declamation, (Hist. Natur. xviii. 2.) A just and learned comment is given in the Administration des Terres chez les Romains, (p. 12—66.) Note: On the duo jugera, compare Niebuhr, vol. i. p. 337.—M.]

139 [\(return\)](#)

[The *res mancipi* is explained from faint and remote lights by Ulpian (Fragment. tit. xviii. p. 618, 619) and Bynkershoek, (Opp tom. i. p. 306—315.) The definition is somewhat arbitrary; and as none except myself have assigned a reason, I am diffident of my own.]

140 [\(return\)](#)

[From this short prescription, Hume (Essays, vol. i. p. 423) infers that there could not then be more order and settlement in Italy than now amongst the

Tartars. By the civilian of his adversary Wallace, he is reproached, and not without reason, for overlooking the conditions, (Institut. l. ii. tit. vi.) *

Note: Gibbon acknowledges, in the former note, the obscurity of his views with regard to the *res mancipi*. The interpreters, who preceded him, are not agreed on this point, one of the most difficult in the ancient Roman law. The conclusions of Hume, of which the author here speaks, are grounded on false assumptions. Gibbon had conceived very inaccurate notions of Property among the Romans, and those of many authors in the present day are not less erroneous. We think it right, in this place, to develop the system of property among the Romans, as the result of the study of the extant original authorities on the ancient law, and as it has been demonstrated, recognized, and adopted by the most learned expositors of the Roman law. Besides the authorities formerly known, such as the Fragments of Ulpian, t. xix. and t. i. 16. Theoph. Paraph. i. 5, 4, may be consulted the Institutes of Gaius, i. 54, and ii. 40, et seq. The Roman laws protected all property acquired in a lawful manner. They imposed on those who had invaded it, the obligation of making restitution and reparation of all damage caused by that invasion; they punished it moreover, in many cases, by a pecuniary fine. But they did not always grant a recovery against the third person, who had become bona fide possessed of the property. He who had obtained possession of a thing belonging to another, knowing nothing of the prior rights of that person, maintained the possession. The law had expressly determined those cases, in which it permitted property to be reclaimed from an innocent possessor. In these cases possession had the characters of absolute proprietorship, called *mancipium*, *jus Quiritium*. To possess this right, it was not sufficient to have entered into possession of the thing in any manner; the acquisition was bound to have that character of publicity, which was given by the observation of solemn forms, prescribed by the laws, or the uninterrupted exercise of proprietorship during a certain time: the Roman citizen alone could acquire this proprietorship. Every other kind of possession, which might be named imperfect proprietorship, was called "*in bonis habere*." It was not till after the time of Cicero that the general name of *Dominium* was given to all proprietorship. It was then the publicity which constituted the distinctive character of absolute dominion. This publicity was grounded

on the mode of acquisition, which the moderns have called Civil, (*Modi acquirendi Civiles.*) These modes of acquisition were, 1. Mancipium or mancipatio, which was nothing but the solemn delivering over of the thing in the presence of a determinate number of witnesses and a public officer; it was from this probably that proprietorship was named, 2. In jure cessio, which was a solemn delivering over before the praetor. 3. Adjudicatio, made by a judge, in a case of partition. 4. Lex, which comprehended modes of acquiring in particular cases determined by law; probably the law of the xii. tables; for instance, the sub corona emptio and the legatum. 5. Usna, called afterwards usucapio, and by the moderns prescription. This was only a year for movables; two years for things not movable. Its primary object was altogether different from that of prescription in the present day. It was originally introduced in order to transform the simple possession of a thing (in bonis habere) into Roman proprietorship. The public and uninterrupted possession of a thing, enjoyed for the space of one or two years, was sufficient to make known to the inhabitants of the city of Rome to whom the thing belonged. This last mode of acquisition completed the system of civil acquisitions. by legalizing. as it were, every other kind of acquisition which was not conferred, from the commencement, by the Jus Quiritium. V. Ulpian. *Fragm.* i. 16. Gaius, ii. 14. We believe, according to Gaius, 43, that this usucaption was extended to the case where a thing had been acquired from a person not the real proprietor; and that according to the time prescribed, it gave to the possessor the Roman proprietorship. But this does not appear to have been the original design of this Institution. *Caeterum etiam earum rerum usucapio nobis competit, quae non a domino nobis tradita fuerint, si modo eas bona fide acceperimus* Gaius, l ii. 43. As to things of smaller value, or those which it was difficult to distinguish from each other, the solemnities of which we speak were not requisite to obtain legal proprietorship. In this case simple delivery was sufficient. In proportion to the aggrandizement of the Republic, this latter principle became more important from the increase of the commerce and wealth of the state. It was necessary to know what were those things of which absolute property might be acquired by simple delivery, and what, on the contrary, those, the acquisition of which must be sanctioned by these

solemnities. This question was necessarily to be decided by a general rule; and it is this rule which establishes the distinction between *res Mancipi* and *nec Mancipi*, a distinction about which the opinions of modern civilians differ so much that there are above ten conflicting systems on the subject. The system which accords best with a sound interpretation of the Roman laws, is that proposed by M. Trekel of Hamburg, and still further developed by M. Hugo, who has extracted it in the Magazine of Civil Law, vol. ii. p. 7. This is the system now almost universally adopted. *Res Mancipi* (by contraction for *Mancipii*) were things of which the absolute property (*Jus Quiritium*) might be acquired only by the solemnities mentioned above, at least by that of *Mancipation*, which was, without doubt, the most easy and the most usual. Gaius, ii. 25. As for other things, the acquisition of which was not subject to these forms, in order to confer absolute right, they were called *res nec Mancipi*. See Ulpian, *Fragm.* xix. 1. 3, 7. Ulpian and Varro enumerate the different kinds of *res Mancipi*. Their enumerations do not quite agree; and various methods of reconciling them have been attempted. The authority of Ulpian, however, who wrote as a civilian, ought to have the greater weight on this subject. But why are these things alone *res Mancipi*? This is one of the questions which have been most frequently agitated, and on which the opinions of civilians are most divided. M. Hugo has resolved it in the most natural and satisfactory manner. "All things which were easily known individually, which were of great value, with which the Romans were acquainted, and which they highly appreciated, were *res Mancipi*. Of old *Mancipation* or some other solemn form was required for the acquisition of these things, an account of their importance. *Mancipation* served to prove their acquisition, because they were easily distinguished one from the other." On this great historical discussion consult the Magazine of Civil Law by M. Hugo, vol. ii. p. 37, 38; the dissertation of M. J. M. Zachariae, *de Rebus Mancipi et nec Mancipi Conjecturae*, p. 11. Lipsiae, 1807; the History of Civil Law by M. Hugo; and my *Institutiones Juris Romani Privati* p. 108, 110. As a general rule, it may be said that all things are *res nec Mancipi*; the *res Mancipi* are the exception to this principle. The praetors changed the system of property by allowing a person, who had a thing in *bonis*, the right to recover before the prescribed

term of usucaption had conferred absolute proprietorship. (Pauliana in rem actio.) Justinian went still further, in times when there was no longer any distinction between a Roman citizen and a stranger. He granted the right of recovering all things which had been acquired, whether by what were called civil or natural modes of acquisition, Cod. l. vii. t. 25, 31. And he so altered the theory of Gaius in his Institutes, ii. 1, that no trace remains of the doctrine taught by that civilian.—W.]

141 [\(return\)](#)

[See the Institutes (l. i. tit. iv. v.) and the Pandects, (l. vii.) Noodt has composed a learned and distinct treatise de Usufructu, (Opp. tom. i. p. 387—478.)]

142 [\(return\)](#)

[The questions de Servitutibus are discussed in the Institutes (l. ii. tit. iii.) and Pandects, (l. viii.) Cicero (pro Murena, c. 9) and Lactantius (Institut. Divin. l. i. c. i.) affect to laugh at the insignificant doctrine, de aqua de pluvia arcenda, &c. Yet it might be of frequent use among litigious neighbors, both in town and country.]

The personal title of the first proprietor must be determined by his death: but the possession, without any appearance of change, is peaceably continued in his children, the associates of his toil, and the partners of his wealth. This natural inheritance has been protected by the legislators of every climate and age, and the father is encouraged to persevere in slow and distant improvements, by the tender hope, that a long posterity will enjoy the fruits of his labor. The principle of hereditary succession is universal; but the order has been variously established by convenience or caprice, by the spirit of national institutions, or by some partial example which was originally decided by fraud or violence. The jurisprudence of the Romans appear to have deviated from the inequality of nature much less than the Jewish, [143](#) the Athenian, [144](#) or the English institutions. [145](#) On the death of a citizen, all his descendants, unless they were already freed from his paternal power, were called to the inheritance of his possessions. The insolent prerogative of primogeniture was unknown; the two sexes were placed on a just level; all the sons and daughters were entitled to an equal portion of the patrimonial estate; and if any of the sons had been intercepted by a premature death, his person was represented, and his share was divided, by his surviving children. On the failure of the direct line, the right of succession must diverge to the collateral branches. The degrees of kindred [146](#) are numbered by the civilians, ascending from the last possessor to a common parent, and descending from the common parent to the next heir: my father stands in the first degree, my brother in the second, his children in the third, and the remainder of the series may be conceived by a fancy, or pictured in a genealogical table. In this computation, a distinction was made, essential to the laws and even the constitution of Rome; the agnats, or persons connected by a line of males, were called,

as they stood in the nearest degree, to an equal partition; but a female was incapable of transmitting any legal claims; and the cognats of every rank, without excepting the dear relation of a mother and a son, were disinherited by the Twelve Tables, as strangers and aliens. Among the Romans agens or lineage was united by a common name and domestic rites; the various cognomens or surnames of Scipio, or Marcellus, distinguished from each other the subordinate branches or families of the Cornelian or Claudian race: the default of the agnats, of the same surname, was supplied by the larger denomination of gentiles; and the vigilance of the laws maintained, in the same name, the perpetual descent of religion and property. A similar principle dictated the Voconian law, [147](#) which abolished the right of female inheritance. As long as virgins were given or sold in marriage, the adoption of the wife extinguished the hopes of the daughter. But the equal succession of independent matrons supported their pride and luxury, and might transport into a foreign house the riches of their fathers.

While the maxims of Cato [148](#) were revered, they tended to perpetuate in each family a just and virtuous mediocrity: till female blandishments insensibly triumphed; and every salutary restraint was lost in the dissolute greatness of the republic. The rigor of the decemvirs was tempered by the equity of the praetors. Their edicts restored and emancipated posthumous children to the rights of nature; and upon the failure of the agnats, they preferred the blood of the cognats to the name of the gentiles whose title and character were insensibly covered with oblivion. The reciprocal inheritance of mothers and sons was established in the Tertullian and Orphitian decrees by the humanity of the senate. A new and more impartial order was introduced by the Novels of Justinian, who affected to revive the jurisprudence of the Twelve Tables. The lines of masculine and female kindred were confounded: the descending, ascending, and collateral series was accurately defined; and each degree, according to the proximity of blood and affection, succeeded to the vacant possessions of a Roman citizen. [149](#)

143 [\(return\)](#)

[Among the patriarchs, the first-born enjoyed a mystic and spiritual primogeniture, (Genesis, xxv. 31.) In the land of Canaan, he was entitled to a double portion of inheritance, (Deuteronomy, xxi. 17, with Le Clerc's judicious Commentary.)]

144 [\(return\)](#)

[At Athens, the sons were equal; but the poor daughters were endowed at the discretion of their brothers. See the pleadings of Isaeus, (in the viith volume of the Greek Orators,) illustrated by the version and comment of Sir William Jones, a scholar, a lawyer, and a man of genius.]

145 [\(return\)](#)

[In England, the eldest son also inherits all the land; a law, says the orthodox Judge Blackstone, (Commentaries on the Laws of England, vol. ii. p. 215,) unjust only in the opinion of younger

brothers. It may be of some political use in sharpening their industry.]

146 [\(return\)](#)

[Blackstone's Tables (vol. ii. p. 202) represent and compare the decrees of the civil with those of the canon and common law. A separate tract of Julius Paulus, *de gradibus et affinibus*, is inserted or abridged in the Pandects, (l. xxxviii. tit. x.) In the viiith degrees he computes (No. 18) 1024 persons.]

147 [\(return\)](#)

[The Voconian law was enacted in the year of Rome 584. The younger Scipio, who was then 17 years of age, (Frenshemius, *Supplement. Livian.* xlv. 40,) found an occasion of exercising his generosity to his mother, sisters, &c. (Polybius, tom. ii. l. xxxi. p. 1453—1464, edit Gronov., a domestic witness.)]

148 [\(return\)](#)

[*Legem Voconiam* (Ernesti, *Clavis Ciceroniana*) magna voce bonis lateribus (at lxv. years of age) suasissem, says old Cato, (*de Senectute*, c. 5,) Aulus Gellius (vii. 13, xvii. 6) has saved some passages.]

149 [\(return\)](#)

[See the law of succession in the Institutes of Caius, (l. ii. tit. viii. p. 130—144,) and Justinian, (l. iii. tit. i.—vi., with the Greek version of Theophilus, p. 515-575, 588—600,) the Pandects, (l. xxxviii. tit. vi.—xvii.,) the Code, (l. vi. tit. lv.—lx.,) and the Novels, (cxviii.)]

The order of succession is regulated by nature, or at least by the general and permanent reason of the lawgiver: but this order is frequently violated by the arbitrary and partial wills, which prolong the dominion of the testator beyond the grave. [150](#) In the simple state of society, this last use or abuse of the right of property is seldom indulged: it was introduced at Athens by the laws of Solon; and the private testaments of the father of a family are authorized by the Twelve Tables. Before the time of the decemvirs, [151](#) a Roman citizen exposed his wishes and motives to the assembly of the thirty curiae or parishes, and the general law of inheritance was suspended by an occasional act of the legislature. After the permission of the decemvirs, each private lawgiver promulgated his verbal or written testament in the presence of five citizens, who represented the five classes of the Roman people; a sixth witness attested their concurrence; a seventh weighed the copper money, which was paid by an imaginary purchaser; and the estate was emancipated by a fictitious sale and immediate release. This singular ceremony, [152](#) which excited the wonder of the Greeks, was still practised in the age of Severus; but the praetors had already approved a more simple testament, for which they required the seals and signatures of seven witnesses, free from all legal exception, and purposely summoned for the execution of that important act. A domestic

monarch, who reigned over the lives and fortunes of his children, might distribute their respective shares according to the degrees of their merit or his affection; his arbitrary displeasure chastised an unworthy son by the loss of his inheritance, and the mortifying preference of a stranger. But the experience of unnatural parents recommended some limitations of their testamentary powers. A son, or, by the laws of Justinian, even a daughter, could no longer be disinherited by their silence: they were compelled to name the criminal, and to specify the offence; and the justice of the emperor enumerated the sole causes that could justify such a violation of the first principles of nature and society. [153](#) Unless a legitimate portion, a fourth part, had been reserved for the children, they were entitled to institute an action or complaint of inofficious testament; to suppose that their father's understanding was impaired by sickness or age; and respectfully to appeal from his rigorous sentence to the deliberate wisdom of the magistrate. In the Roman jurisprudence, an essential distinction was admitted between the inheritance and the legacies. The heirs who succeeded to the entire unity, or to any of the twelve fractions of the substance of the testator, represented his civil and religious character, asserted his rights, fulfilled his obligations, and discharged the gifts of friendship or liberality, which his last will had bequeathed under the name of legacies. But as the imprudence or prodigality of a dying man might exhaust the inheritance, and leave only risk and labor to his successor, he was empowered to retain the Falcidian portion; to deduct, before the payment of the legacies, a clear fourth for his own emolument. A reasonable time was allowed to examine the proportion between the debts and the estate, to decide whether he should accept or refuse the testament; and if he used the benefit of an inventory, the demands of the creditors could not exceed the valuation of the effects. The last will of a citizen might be altered during his life, or rescinded after his death: the persons whom he named might die before him, or reject the inheritance, or be exposed to some legal disqualification. In the contemplation of these events, he was permitted to substitute second and third heirs, to replace each other according to the order of the testament; and the incapacity of a madman or an infant to bequeath his property might be supplied by a similar substitution. [154](#) But the power of the testator expired with the acceptance of the testament: each Roman of mature age and discretion acquired the absolute dominion of his inheritance, and the simplicity of the civil law was never clouded by the long and intricate entails which confine the happiness and freedom of unborn generations.

[That succession was the rule, testament the exception, is proved by Taylor, (Elements of Civil Law, p. 519-527,) a learned, rambling, spirited writer. In the iid and iiid books, the method of the Institutes is doubtless preposterous; and the Chancellor Daguesseau (Oeuvres, tom. i. p. 275) wishes his countryman Domat in the place of Tribonian. Yet covenants before successions is not surely the natural order of civil laws.]

- 151 [\(return\)](#)
[Prior examples of testaments are perhaps fabulous. At Athens a childless father only could make a will, (Plutarch, in Solone, tom. i. p. 164. See Isaeus and Jones.)]
- 152 [\(return\)](#)
[The testament of Augustus is specified by Suetonius, (in August, c. 101, in Neron. c. 4,) who may be studied as a code of Roman antiquities. Plutarch (Opuscul. tom. ii. p. 976) is surprised. The language of Ulpian (Fragment. tit. xx. p. 627, edit. Schulting) is almost too exclusive—solum in usu est.]
- 153 [\(return\)](#)
[Justinian (Novell. cxv. No. 3, 4) enumerates only the public and private crimes, for which a son might likewise disinherit his father. Note: Gibbon has singular notions on the provisions of Novell. cxv. 3, 4, which probably he did not clearly understand.—W]
- 154 [\(return\)](#)
[The substitutions of fidei-commissaires of the modern civil law is a feudal idea grafted on the Roman jurisprudence, and bears scarcely any resemblance to the ancient fidei-commissa, (Institutions du Droit Francois, tom. i. p. 347-383. Denissart, Decisions de Jurisprudence, tom. iv. p. 577-604.) They were stretched to the fourth degree by an abuse of the clixth Novel; a partial, perplexed, declamatory law.]

Conquest and the formalities of law established the use of codicils. If a Roman was surprised by death in a remote province of the empire, he addressed a short epistle to his legitimate or testamentary heir; who fulfilled with honor, or neglected with impunity, this last request, which the judges before the age of Augustus were not authorized to enforce. A codicil might be expressed in any mode, or in any language; but the subscription of five witnesses must declare that it was the genuine composition of the author. His intention, however laudable, was sometimes illegal; and the invention of fidei-commissa, or trusts, arose from the struggle between natural justice and positive jurisprudence. A stranger of Greece or Africa might be the friend or benefactor of a childless Roman, but none, except a fellow-citizen, could act as his heir. The Voconian law, which abolished female succession, restrained the legacy or inheritance of a woman to the sum of one hundred thousand sesterces; [155](#) and an only daughter was condemned almost as an alien in her father's house. The zeal of friendship, and parental affection, suggested a liberal artifice: a qualified citizen was named in the testament, with a prayer or injunction that he would restore the inheritance to the person for whom it was truly intended. Various was the conduct of the trustees in this painful situation:

they had sworn to observe the laws of their country, but honor prompted them to violate their oath; and if they preferred their interest under the mask of patriotism, they forfeited the esteem of every virtuous mind. The declaration of Augustus relieved their doubts, gave a legal sanction to confidential testaments and codicils, and gently unravelled the forms and restraints of the republican jurisprudence. [156](#) But as the new practice of trusts degenerated into some abuse, the trustee was enabled, by the Trebellian and Pegasian decrees, to reserve one fourth of the estate, or to transfer on the head of the real heir all the debts and actions of the succession. The interpretation of testaments was strict and literal; but the language of trusts and codicils was delivered from the minute and technical accuracy of the civilians. [157](#)

155 [\(return\)](#)
[Dion Cassius (tom. ii. l. lvi. p. 814, with Reimar's Notes) specifies in Greek money the sum of 25,000 drachms.]

156 [\(return\)](#)
[The revolutions of the Roman laws of inheritance are finely, though sometimes fancifully, deduced by Montesquieu, (*Esprit des Loix*, l. xxvii.)]

157 [\(return\)](#)
[Of the civil jurisprudence of successions, testaments, codicils, legacies, and trusts, the principles are ascertained in the Institutes of Caius, (l. ii. tit. ii.—ix. p. 91—144,) Justinian, (l. ii. tit. x.—xxv.,) and Theophilus, (p. 328—514;) and the immense detail occupies twelve books (xxviii.—xxxix.) of the Pandects.] III. The general duties of mankind are imposed by their public and private relations: but their specific obligations to each other can only be the effect of, 1. a promise, 2. a benefit, or 3. an injury: and when these obligations are ratified by law, the interested party may compel the performance by a judicial action. On this principle, the civilians of every country have erected a similar jurisprudence, the fair conclusion of universal reason and justice. [158](#)

158 [\(return\)](#)
[The Institutes of Caius, (l. ii. tit. ix. x. p. 144—214,) of Justinian, (l. iii. tit. xiv.—xxx. l. iv. tit. i.—vi.,) and of Theophilus, (p. 616—837,) distinguish four sorts of obligations—aut re, aut verbis, aut literis aut consensu: but I confess myself partial to my own division. Note: It is not at all applicable to the Roman system of contracts, even if I were allowed to be good.—M.]

Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part VII.

1. The goddess of faith (of human and social faith) was worshipped, not only in her temples, but in the lives of the Romans; and if that nation was deficient in the more amiable qualities of benevolence and generosity, they astonished the Greeks by their sincere and simple performance of the most burdensome engagements. [159](#) Yet among the same people, according to the rigid maxims of the patricians and decemvirs, a naked pact, a promise, or even an oath, did not create any civil obligation, unless it was confirmed by the legal form of a stipulation. Whatever might be the etymology of the Latin word, it conveyed the idea of a firm and irrevocable contract, which was always expressed in the mode of a question and answer. Do you promise to pay me one hundred pieces of gold? was the solemn interrogation of Seius. I do promise, was the reply of Sempronius. The friends of Sempronius, who answered for his ability and inclination, might be separately sued at the option of Seius; and the benefit of partition, or order of reciprocal actions, insensibly deviated from the strict theory of stipulation. The most cautious and deliberate consent was justly required to sustain the validity of a gratuitous promise; and the citizen who might have obtained a legal security, incurred the suspicion of fraud, and paid the forfeit of his neglect. But the ingenuity of the civilians successfully labored to convert simple engagements into the form of solemn stipulations. The praetors, as the guardians of social faith, admitted every rational evidence of a voluntary and deliberate act, which in their tribunal produced an equitable obligation, and for which they gave an action and a remedy. [160](#)

159

[\(return\)](#)

[How much is the cool, rational evidence of Polybius (l. vi. p. 693, l. xxxi. p. 1459, 1460) superior to vague, indiscriminate applause—*omnium maxime et praecipue fidem coluit*, (A. Gellius, xx. l.)]

160

[\(return\)](#)

[The *Jus Praetorium de Pactis et Transactionibus* is a separate and satisfactory treatise of Gerard Noodt, (Opp. tom. i. p. 483—564.) And I will here observe, that the universities of Holland and Brandenburg, in the beginning of the present century, appear to have studied the civil law on the most just and liberal principles. * Note: Simple agreements (*pacta*) formed as valid an obligation as a solemn contract. Only an action, or the right to a direct judicial prosecution, was not permitted in every case of compact. In all other respects, the judge was bound to maintain an agreement made by *pactum*. The stipulation was a form common to every kind of agreement, by which the right of action was given to this.—W.]

2. The obligations of the second class, as they were contracted by the delivery of a thing, are marked by the civilians with the epithet of real. [161](#) A grateful return is due to the author of a benefit; and whoever is intrusted with the property of another, has

bound himself to the sacred duty of restitution. In the case of a friendly loan, the merit of generosity is on the side of the lender only; in a deposit, on the side of the receiver; but in a pledge, and the rest of the selfish commerce of ordinary life, the benefit is compensated by an equivalent, and the obligation to restore is variously modified by the nature of the transaction. The Latin language very happily expresses the fundamental difference between the commodatum and the mutuum, which our poverty is reduced to confound under the vague and common appellation of a loan. In the former, the borrower was obliged to restore the same individual thing with which he had been accommodated for the temporary supply of his wants; in the latter, it was destined for his use and consumption, and he discharged this mutual engagement, by substituting the same specific value according to a just estimation of number, of weight, and of measure. In the contract of sale, the absolute dominion is transferred to the purchaser, and he repays the benefit with an adequate sum of gold or silver, the price and universal standard of all earthly possessions. The obligation of another contract, that of location, is of a more complicated kind. Lands or houses, labor or talents, may be hired for a definite term; at the expiration of the time, the thing itself must be restored to the owner, with an additional reward for the beneficial occupation and employment. In these lucrative contracts, to which may be added those of partnership and commissions, the civilians sometimes imagine the delivery of the object, and sometimes presume the consent of the parties. The substantial pledge has been refined into the invisible rights of a mortgage or hypotheca; and the agreement of sale, for a certain price, imputes, from that moment, the chances of gain or loss to the account of the purchaser. It may be fairly supposed, that every man will obey the dictates of his interest; and if he accepts the benefit, he is obliged to sustain the expense, of the transaction. In this boundless subject, the historian will observe the location of land and money, the rent of the one and the interest of the other, as they materially affect the prosperity of agriculture and commerce. The landlord was often obliged to advance the stock and instruments of husbandry, and to content himself with a partition of the fruits. If the feeble tenant was oppressed by accident, contagion, or hostile violence, he claimed a proportionable relief from the equity of the laws: five years were the customary term, and no solid or costly improvements could be expected from a farmer, who, at each moment might be ejected by the sale of the estate. [162](#) Usury, [163](#) the inveterate grievance of the city, had been discouraged by the Twelve Tables, [164](#) and abolished by the clamors of the people. It was revived by their wants and idleness, tolerated by the discretion of the praetors, and finally determined by the Code of Justinian. Persons of illustrious rank were confined to the moderate profit of four per cent.; six was pronounced to be the ordinary and legal standard of interest; eight was allowed for the convenience of manufactures and merchants; twelve was granted to nautical insurance, which the wiser ancients had not attempted to define; but, except in this perilous adventure, the practice of exorbitant usury was severely restrained. [165](#) The most simple interest was condemned by the clergy of the East and

West; [166](#) but the sense of mutual benefit, which had triumphed over the law of the republic, has resisted with equal firmness the decrees of the church, and even the prejudices of mankind. [167](#)

161 [\(return\)](#)

[The nice and various subject of contracts by consent is spread over four books (xvii.—xx.) of the Pandects, and is one of the parts best deserving of the attention of an English student. * Note: This is erroneously called “benefits.” Gibbon enumerates various kinds of contracts, of which some alone are properly called benefits.—W.]

162 [\(return\)](#)

[The covenants of rent are defined in the Pandects (l. xix.) and the Code, (l. iv. tit. lxxv.) The quinquennium, or term of five years, appears to have been a custom rather than a law; but in France all leases of land were determined in nine years. This limitation was removed only in the year 1775, (Encyclopedie Methodique, tom. i. de la Jurisprudence, p. 668, 669;) and I am sorry to observe that it yet prevails in the beautiful and happy country where I am permitted to reside.]

163 [\(return\)](#)

[I might implicitly acquiesce in the sense and learning of the three books of G. Noodt, de fœnore et usuris. (Opp. tom. i. p. 175—268.) The interpretation of the asses or centesimæ usuræ at twelve, the unciariæ at one per cent., is maintained by the best critics and civilians: Noodt, (l. ii. c. 2, p. 207,) Gravina, (Opp. p. 205, &c., 210,) Heineccius, (Antiquitat. ad Institut. l. iii. tit. xv.,) Montesquieu, (Esprit des Loix, l. xxii. c. 22, tom. ii. p. 36). Defense de l’Esprit des Loix, (tom. iii. p. 478, &c.,) and above all, John Frederic Gronovius (de Pecunia Veteri, l. iii. c. 13, p. 213—227,) and his three Antexegeses, (p. 455—655), the founder, or at least the champion, of this probable opinion; which is, however, perplexed with some difficulties.]

164 [\(return\)](#)

[Primo xii. Tabulis sancitum est ne quis unciario fœnore amplius exerceret, (Tacit. Annal. vi. 16.) Pour peu (says Montesquieu, Esprit des Loix, l. xxii. 22) qu’on soit versé dans l’histoire de Rome, on verra qu’une pareille loi ne devoit pas être l’ouvrage des décemvirs. Was Tacitus ignorant—or stupid? But the wiser and more virtuous patricians might sacrifice their avarice to their ambition, and might attempt to check the odious practice by such interest as no lender would accept, and such

penalties as no debtor would incur. * Note: The real nature of the *foenus unciarium* has been proved; it amounted in a year of twelve months to ten per cent. See, in the Magazine for Civil Law, by M. Hugo, vol. v. p. 180, 184, an article of M. Schrader, following up the conjectures of Niebuhr, *Hist. Rom.* tom. ii. p. 431.—W. Compare a very clear account of this question in the appendix to Mr. Travers Twiss's *Epitome of Niebuhr*, vol. ii. p. 257.—M.]

165 [\(return\)](#)

[Justinian has not condescended to give usury a place in his *Institutes*; but the necessary rules and restrictions are inserted in the *Pandects* (l. xxii. tit. i. ii.) and the *Code*, (l. iv. tit. xxxii. xxxiii.)]

166 [\(return\)](#)

[The Fathers are unanimous, (Barbeyrac, *Morale des Peres*, p. 144. &c. :) Cyprian, Lactantius, Basil, Chrysostom, (see his frivolous arguments in Noodt, l. i. c. 7, p. 188,) Gregory of Nyssa, Ambrose, Jerom, Augustin, and a host of councils and casuists.]

167 [\(return\)](#)

[Cato, Seneca, Plutarch, have loudly condemned the practice or abuse of usury. According to the etymology of *foenus*, the principal is supposed to generate the interest: a breed of barren metal, exclaims Shakespeare—and the stage is the echo of the public voice.]

3. Nature and society impose the strict obligation of repairing an injury; and the sufferer by private injustice acquires a personal right and a legitimate action. If the property of another be intrusted to our care, the requisite degree of care may rise and fall according to the benefit which we derive from such temporary possession; we are seldom made responsible for inevitable accident, but the consequences of a voluntary fault must always be imputed to the author. [168](#) A Roman pursued and recovered his stolen goods by a civil action of theft; they might pass through a succession of pure and innocent hands, but nothing less than a prescription of thirty years could extinguish his original claim. They were restored by the sentence of the praetor, and the injury was compensated by double, or threefold, or even quadruple damages, as the deed had been perpetrated by secret fraud or open rapine, as the robber had been surprised in the fact, or detected by a subsequent research. The Aquilian law [169](#) defended the living property of a citizen, his slaves and cattle, from the stroke of malice or negligence: the highest price was allowed that could be ascribed to the domestic animal at any moment of the year preceding his death; a similar latitude of thirty days was granted on the destruction of any other valuable effects. A personal injury is blunted or sharpened by the manners of the times and the sensibility of the individual: the pain or the disgrace of a word or blow cannot easily be appreciated by a pecuniary equivalent. The rude

jurisprudence of the decemvirs had confounded all hasty insults, which did not amount to the fracture of a limb, by condemning the aggressor to the common penalty of twenty-five asses. But the same denomination of money was reduced, in three centuries, from a pound to the weight of half an ounce: and the insolence of a wealthy Roman indulged himself in the cheap amusement of breaking and satisfying the law of the twelve tables. Veratius ran through the streets striking on the face the inoffensive passengers, and his attendant purse-bearer immediately silenced their clamors by the legal tender of twenty-five pieces of copper, about the value of one shilling. [170](#) The equity of the praetors examined and estimated the distinct merits of each particular complaint. In the adjudication of civil damages, the magistrate assumed a right to consider the various circumstances of time and place, of age and dignity, which may aggravate the shame and sufferings of the injured person; but if he admitted the idea of a fine, a punishment, an example, he invaded the province, though, perhaps, he supplied the defects, of the criminal law.

168 [\(return\)](#)

Sir William Jones has given an ingenious and rational Essay on the law of Bailment, (London, 1781, p. 127, in 8vo.) He is perhaps the only lawyer equally conversant with the year-books of Westminster, the Commentaries of Ulpian, the Attic pleadings of Isaeus, and the sentences of Arabian and Persian cadhis.]

169 [\(return\)](#)

[Noodt (Opp. tom. i. p. 137—172) has composed a separate treatise, ad Legem Aquilian, (Pandect. l. ix. tit. ii.)]

170 [\(return\)](#)

[Aulus Gellius (Noct. Attic. xx. i.) borrowed this story from the Commentaries of Q. Labeo on the xii. tables.]

The execution of the Alban dictator, who was dismembered by eight horses, is represented by Livy as the first and the first instance of Roman cruelty in the punishment of the most atrocious crimes. [171](#) But this act of justice, or revenge, was inflicted on a foreign enemy in the heat of victory, and at the command of a single man. The twelve tables afford a more decisive proof of the national spirit, since they were framed by the wisest of the senate, and accepted by the free voices of the people; yet these laws, like the statutes of Draco, [172](#) are written in characters of blood. [173](#) They approve the inhuman and unequal principle of retaliation; and the forfeit of an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, a limb for a limb, is rigorously exacted, unless the offender can redeem his pardon by a fine of three hundred pounds of copper. The decemvirs distributed with much liberality the slighter chastisements of flagellation and servitude; and nine crimes of a very different complexion are adjudged worthy of death.

1. Any act of treason against the state, or of correspondence with the public enemy. The mode of execution was painful and ignominious: the head of the degenerate Roman was shrouded in a veil, his hands were tied behind his back, and after he had been scourged by the lictor, he was suspended in the midst of the forum on a cross, or inauspicious tree.

2. Nocturnal meetings in the city; whatever might be the pretence, of pleasure, or religion, or the public good.

3. The murder of a citizen; for which the common feelings of mankind demand the blood of the murderer. Poison is still more odious than the sword or dagger; and we are surprised to discover, in two flagitious events, how early such subtle wickedness had infected the simplicity of the republic, and the chaste virtues of the Roman matrons. [174](#) The parricide, who violated the duties of nature and gratitude, was cast into the river or the sea, enclosed in a sack; and a cock, a viper, a dog, and a monkey, were successively added, as the most suitable companions. [175](#) Italy produces no monkeys; but the want could never be felt, till the middle of the sixth century first revealed the guilt of a parricide. [176](#)

4. The malice of an incendiary. After the previous ceremony of whipping, he himself was delivered to the flames; and in this example alone our reason is tempted to applaud the justice of retaliation.

5. Judicial perjury. The corrupt or malicious witness was thrown headlong from the Tarpeian rock, to expiate his falsehood, which was rendered still more fatal by the severity of the penal laws, and the deficiency of written evidence.

6. The corruption of a judge, who accepted bribes to pronounce an iniquitous sentence.

7. Libels and satires, whose rude strains sometimes disturbed the peace of an illiterate city. The author was beaten with clubs, a worthy chastisement, but it is not certain that he was left to expire under the blows of the executioner. [177](#)

8. The nocturnal mischief of damaging or destroying a neighbor's corn. The criminal was suspended as a grateful victim to Ceres. But the sylvan deities were less implacable, and the extirpation of a more valuable tree was compensated by the moderate fine of twenty-five pounds of copper.

9. Magical incantations; which had power, in the opinion of the Latin shepherds, to exhaust the strength of an enemy, to extinguish his life, and to remove from their seats his deep-rooted plantations.

The cruelty of the twelve tables against insolvent debtors still remains to be told; and I shall dare to prefer the literal sense of antiquity to the specious refinements of modern criticism. [178](#) [1781](#) After the judicial proof or confession of the debt, thirty days of grace were allowed before a Roman was delivered into the power of his fellow-citizen. In this private prison, twelve ounces of rice were his daily food; he might be bound with a chain of fifteen pounds weight; and his misery was thrice exposed in the market place,

to solicit the compassion of his friends and countrymen. At the expiration of sixty days, the debt was discharged by the loss of liberty or life; the insolvent debtor was either put to death, or sold in foreign slavery beyond the Tyber: but, if several creditors were alike obstinate and unrelenting, they might legally dismember his body, and satiate their revenge by this horrid partition. The advocates for this savage law have insisted, that it must strongly operate in deterring idleness and fraud from contracting debts which they were unable to discharge; but experience would dissipate this salutary terror, by proving that no creditor could be found to exact this unprofitable penalty of life or limb. As the manners of Rome were insensibly polished, the criminal code of the decemvirs was abolished by the humanity of accusers, witnesses, and judges; and impunity became the consequence of immoderate rigor. The Porcian and Valerian laws prohibited the magistrates from inflicting on a free citizen any capital, or even corporal, punishment; and the obsolete statutes of blood were artfully, and perhaps truly, ascribed to the spirit, not of patrician, but of regal, tyranny.

171 [\(return\)](#)

[The narrative of Livy (i. 28) is weighty and solemn. At tu, Albane, maneres, is a harsh reflection, unworthy of Virgil's humanity, (Aeneid, viii. 643.) Heyne, with his usual good taste, observes that the subject was too horrid for the shield of Aencas, (tom. iii. p. 229.)]

172 [\(return\)](#)

[The age of Draco (Olympiad xxxix. 1) is fixed by Sir John Marsham (Canon Chronicus, p. 593—596) and Corsini, (Fasti Attici, tom. iii. p. 62.) For his laws, see the writers on the government of Athens, Sigonius, Meursius, Potter, &c.]

173 [\(return\)](#)

[The viith, de delictis, of the xii. tables is delineated by Gravina, (Opp. p. 292, 293, with a commentary, p. 214—230.) Aulus Gellius (xx. 1) and the Collatio Legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum afford much original information.]

174 [\(return\)](#)

[Livy mentions two remarkable and flagitious aeras, of 3000 persons accused, and of 190 noble matrons convicted, of the crime of poisoning, (xl. 43, viii. 18.) Mr. Hume discriminates the ages of private and public virtue, (Essays, vol. i. p. 22, 23.) I would rather say that such ebullitions of mischief (as in France in the year 1680) are accidents and prodigies which leave no marks on the manners of a nation.]

175 [\(return\)](#)

[The xii. tables and Cicero (pro Roscio Amerino, c. 25, 26) are content with the sack; Seneca

(Excerpt. Controvers. v 4) adorns it with serpents; Juvenal pities the guiltless monkey (*innoxia simia*—156.) Adrian (*apud Dositheum Magistrum*, l. iii. c. p. 874—876, with Schulting's Note,) Modestinus, (*Pandect. xlviii. tit. ix. leg. 9.*) Constantine, (*Cod. l. ix. tit. xvii.*) and Justinian, (*Institut. l. iv. tit. xviii.*) enumerate all the companions of the parricide. But this fanciful execution was simplified in practice. *Hodie tamen viv exuruntur vel ad bestias dantur*, (*Paul. Sentent. Recept. l. v. tit. xxiv p. 512*, edit. Schulting.)]

176 [\(return\)](#)

[The first parricide at Rome was L. Ostius, after the second Punic war, (*Plutarch, in Romulo, tom. i. p. 54.*) During the Cimbric, P. Malleolus was guilty of the first matricide, (*Liv. Epitom. l. lxxviii.*)]

177 [\(return\)](#)

[Horace talks of the *formidine fustis*, (*l. ii. epist. ii. 154.*) but Cicero (*de Republica, l. iv. apud Augustin. de Civitat. Dei, ix. 6*, in *Fragment. Philosoph. tom. iii. p. 393*, edit. Olivet) affirms that the decemvirs made libels a capital offence: *cum perpaucas res capite sanxisent—perpaucus!*]

178 [\(return\)](#)

[Bynkershoek (*Observat. Juris Rom. l. i. c. 1*, in *Opp. tom. i. p. 9, 10, 11*) labors to prove that the creditors divided not the body, but the price, of the insolvent debtor. Yet his interpretation is one perpetual harsh metaphor; nor can he surmount the Roman authorities of Quintilian, Caecilius, Favonius, and Tertullian. See Aulus Gellius, *Noct. Attic. xxi.*]

1781 [\(return\)](#)

[Hugo (*Histoire du Droit Romain, tom. i. p. 234*) concurs with Gibbon See Niebuhr, vol. ii. p. 313.—M.]

In the absence of penal laws, and the insufficiency of civil actions, the peace and justice of the city were imperfectly maintained by the private jurisdiction of the citizens. The malefactors who replenish our jails are the outcasts of society, and the crimes for which they suffer may be commonly ascribed to ignorance, poverty, and brutal appetite. For the perpetration of similar enormities, a vile plebeian might claim and abuse the sacred character of a member of the republic: but, on the proof or suspicion of guilt, the slave, or the stranger, was nailed to a cross; and this strict and summary justice might be exercised without restraint over the greatest part of the populace of Rome.

Each family contained a domestic tribunal, which was not confined, like that of the praetor, to the cognizance of external actions: virtuous principles and habits were inculcated by the discipline of education; and the Roman father was accountable to the

state for the manners of his children, since he disposed, without appeal, of their life, their liberty, and their inheritance. In some pressing emergencies, the citizen was authorized to avenge his private or public wrongs. The consent of the Jewish, the Athenian, and the Roman laws approved the slaughter of the nocturnal thief; though in open daylight a robber could not be slain without some previous evidence of danger and complaint. Whoever surprised an adulterer in his nuptial bed might freely exercise his revenge; [179](#) the most bloody and wanton outrage was excused by the provocation; [180](#) nor was it before the reign of Augustus that the husband was reduced to weigh the rank of the offender, or that the parent was condemned to sacrifice his daughter with her guilty seducer. After the expulsion of the kings, the ambitious Roman, who should dare to assume their title or imitate their tyranny, was devoted to the infernal gods: each of his fellow-citizens was armed with the sword of justice; and the act of Brutus, however repugnant to gratitude or prudence, had been already sanctified by the judgment of his country. [181](#) The barbarous practice of wearing arms in the midst of peace, [182](#) and the bloody maxims of honor, were unknown to the Romans; and, during the two purest ages, from the establishment of equal freedom to the end of the Punic wars, the city was never disturbed by sedition, and rarely polluted with atrocious crimes. The failure of penal laws was more sensibly felt, when every vice was inflamed by faction at home and dominion abroad. In the time of Cicero, each private citizen enjoyed the privilege of anarchy; each minister of the republic was exalted to the temptations of regal power, and their virtues are entitled to the warmest praise, as the spontaneous fruits of nature or philosophy. After a triennial indulgence of lust, rapine, and cruelty, Verres, the tyrant of Sicily, could only be sued for the pecuniary restitution of three hundred thousand pounds sterling; and such was the temper of the laws, the judges, and perhaps the accuser himself, [183](#) that, on refunding a thirteenth part of his plunder, Verres could retire to an easy and luxurious exile. [184](#)

179

[\(return\)](#)

[The first speech of Lysias (Reiske, Orator. Graec. tom. v. p. 2—48) is in defence of a husband who had killed the adulterer. The rights of husbands and fathers at Rome and Athens are discussed with much learning by Dr. Taylor, (Lectiones Lysiacae, c. xi. in Reiske, tom. vi. p. 301—308.)]

180

[\(return\)](#)

[See Casaubon ad Athenaeum, l. i. c. 5, p. 19. Percurrent raphanique mugilesque, (Catull. p. 41, 42, edit. Vossian.) Hunc mugilis intrat, (Juvenal. Satir. x. 317.) Hunc perminxere calones, (Horat. l. i. Satir. ii. 44.) Familiae stuprandum dedit.. fraudi non fuit, (Val. Maxim. l. vi. c. 1, No. 13.)]

181

[\(return\)](#)

[This law is noticed by Livy (ii. 8) and Plutarch, (in Publiccla, tom. i. p. 187,) and it fully justifies the public opinion on the death of Caesar which

Suetonius could publish under the Imperial government. *Jure caesus existimatur*, (in *Julio*, c. 76.) Read the letters that passed between Cicero and Matius a few months after the ides of March (ad *Fam.* xi. 27, 28.)]

182 [\(return\)](#)

[Thucyd. i. i. c. 6 The historian who considers this circumstance as the test of civilization, would disdain the barbarism of a European court]

183 [\(return\)](#)

[He first rated at millies (800,000 L.) the damages of Sicily, (*Divinatio* in *Caecilium*, c. 5,) which he afterwards reduced to quadringenties, (320,000 L.—1 *Actio* in *Verrem*, c. 18,) and was finally content with tricies, (24,000l L.) Plutarch (in *Ciceron.* tom. iii. p. 1584) has not dissembled the popular suspicion and report.]

184 [\(return\)](#)

[Verres lived near thirty years after his trial, till the second triumvirate, when he was proscribed by the taste of Mark Antony for the sake of his Corinthian plate, (*Plin. Hist. Natur.* xxxiv. 3.)]

The first imperfect attempt to restore the proportion of crimes and punishments was made by the dictator Sylla, who, in the midst of his sanguinary triumph, aspired to restrain the license, rather than to oppress the liberty, of the Romans. He gloried in the arbitrary proscription of four thousand seven hundred citizens. [185](#) But, in the character of a legislator, he respected the prejudices of the times; and, instead of pronouncing a sentence of death against the robber or assassin, the general who betrayed an army, or the magistrate who ruined a province, Sylla was content to aggravate the pecuniary damages by the penalty of exile, or, in more constitutional language, by the interdiction of fire and water. The Cornelian, and afterwards the Pompeian and Julian, laws introduced a new system of criminal jurisprudence; [186](#) and the emperors, from Augustus to Justinian, disguised their increasing rigor under the names of the original authors. But the invention and frequent use of extraordinary pains proceeded from the desire to extend and conceal the progress of despotism. In the condemnation of illustrious Romans, the senate was always prepared to confound, at the will of their masters, the judicial and legislative powers. It was the duty of the governors to maintain the peace of their province, by the arbitrary and rigid administration of justice; the freedom of the city evaporated in the extent of empire, and the Spanish malefactor, who claimed the privilege of a Roman, was elevated by the command of Galba on a fairer and more lofty cross. [187](#) Occasional rescripts issued from the throne to decide the questions which, by their novelty or importance, appeared to surpass the authority and discernment of a proconsul. Transportation and beheading were reserved for honorable persons; meaner criminals were either hanged, or burnt, or buried in the mines, or exposed to the wild beasts of the amphitheatre. Armed robbers were pursued and

extirpated as the enemies of society; the driving away horses or cattle was made a capital offence; [188](#) but simple theft was uniformly considered as a mere civil and private injury. The degrees of guilt, and the modes of punishment, were too often determined by the discretion of the rulers, and the subject was left in ignorance of the legal danger which he might incur by every action of his life.

185 [\(return\)](#)

[Such is the number assigned by Valer'us Maximus, (l. ix. c. 2, No. 1,) Florus (iv. 21) distinguishes 2000 senators and knights. Appian (de Bell. Civil. l. i. c. 95, tom. ii. p. 133, edit. Schweighauser) more accurately computes forty victims of the senatorian rank, and 1600 of the equestrian census or order.]

186 [\(return\)](#)

[For the penal laws (Leges Corneliae, Pompeiae, Julae, of Sylla, Pompey, and the Caesars) see the sentences of Paulus, (l. iv. tit. xviii.—xxx. p. 497—528, edit. Schulting,) the Gregorian Code, (Fragment. l. xix. p. 705, 706, in Schulting,) the Collatio Legum Mosaicarum et Romanarum, (tit. i.—xv.,) the Theodosian Code, (l. ix.,) the Code of Justinian, (l. ix.,) the Pandects, (xlviii.,) the Institutes, (l. iv. tit. xviii.,) and the Greek version of Theophilus, (p. 917—926.)]

187 [\(return\)](#)

[It was a guardian who had poisoned his ward. The crime was atrocious: yet the punishment is reckoned by Suetonius (c. 9) among the acts in which Galba showed himself acer, vehemens, et in delictis coercendis immodicus.]

188 [\(return\)](#)

[The abactores or abigeatores, who drove one horse, or two mares or oxen, or five hogs, or ten goats, were subject to capital punishment, (Paul, Sentent. Recept. l. iv. tit. xviii. p. 497, 498.) Hadrian, (ad Concil. Baeticae,) most severe where the offence was most frequent, condemns the criminals, ad gladium, ludi damnationem, (Ulpian, de Officio Proconsulis, l. viii. in Collatione Legum Mosaic. et Rom. tit. xi p. 235.)]

A sin, a vice, a crime, are the objects of theology, ethics, and jurisprudence. Whenever their judgments agree, they corroborate each other; but, as often as they differ, a prudent legislator appreciates the guilt and punishment according to the measure of social injury. On this principle, the most daring attack on the life and property of a private citizen is judged less atrocious than the crime of treason or rebellion, which invades the majesty of the republic: the obsequious civilians unanimously pronounced, that the republic is contained in the person of its chief; and

the edge of the Julian law was sharpened by the incessant diligence of the emperors. The licentious commerce of the sexes may be tolerated as an impulse of nature, or forbidden as a source of disorder and corruption; but the fame, the fortunes, the family of the husband, are seriously injured by the adultery of the wife. The wisdom of Augustus, after curbing the freedom of revenge, applied to this domestic offence the animadversion of the laws: and the guilty parties, after the payment of heavy forfeitures and fines, were condemned to long or perpetual exile in two separate islands. [189](#) Religion pronounces an equal censure against the infidelity of the husband; but, as it is not accompanied by the same civil effects, the wife was never permitted to vindicate her wrongs; [190](#) and the distinction of simple or double adultery, so familiar and so important in the canon law, is unknown to the jurisprudence of the Code and the Pandects. I touch with reluctance, and despatch with impatience, a more odious vice, of which modesty rejects the name, and nature abominates the idea. The primitive Romans were infected by the example of the Etruscans [191](#) and Greeks: [192](#) and in the mad abuse of prosperity and power, every pleasure that is innocent was deemed insipid; and the Scatinian law, [193](#) which had been extorted by an act of violence, was insensibly abolished by the lapse of time and the multitude of criminals. By this law, the rape, perhaps the seduction, of an ingenuous youth, was compensated, as a personal injury, by the poor damages of ten thousand sesterces, or fourscore pounds; the ravisher might be slain by the resistance or revenge of chastity; and I wish to believe, that at Rome, as in Athens, the voluntary and effeminate deserter of his sex was degraded from the honors and the rights of a citizen. [194](#) But the practice of vice was not discouraged by the severity of opinion: the indelible stain of manhood was confounded with the more venial transgressions of fornication and adultery, nor was the licentious lover exposed to the same dishonor which he impressed on the male or female partner of his guilt. From Catullus to Juvenal, [195](#) the poets accuse and celebrate the degeneracy of the times; and the reformation of manners was feebly attempted by the reason and authority of the civilians till the most virtuous of the Caesars proscribed the sin against nature as a crime against society. [196](#)

189

[\(return\)](#)

[Till the publication of the Julius Paulus of Schulting, (l. ii. tit. xxvi. p. 317—323,) it was affirmed and believed that the Julian laws punished adultery with death; and the mistake arose from the fraud or error of Tribonian. Yet Lipsius had suspected the truth from the narratives of Tacitus, (Annal. ii. 50, iii. 24, iv. 42,) and even from the practice of Augustus, who distinguished the treasonable frailties of his female kindred.]

190

[\(return\)](#)

[In cases of adultery, Severus confined to the husband the right of public accusation, (Cod. Justinian, l. ix. tit. ix. leg. 1.) Nor is this privilege

unjust—so different are the effects of male or female infidelity.]

191 [\(return\)](#)

[Timon (l. i.) and Theopompus (l. xliii. apud Athenaeum, l. xii. p. 517) describe the luxury and lust of the Etruscans. About the same period (A. U. C. 445) the Roman youth studied in Etruria, (liv. ix. 36.)]

192 [\(return\)](#)

[The Persians had been corrupted in the same school, (Herodot. l. i. c. 135.) A curious dissertation might be formed on the introduction of paederasty after the time of Homer, its progress among the Greeks of Asia and Europe, the vehemence of their passions, and the thin device of virtue and friendship which amused the philosophers of Athens. But scelera ostendi oportet dum puniuntur, abscondi flagitia.]

193 [\(return\)](#)

[The name, the date, and the provisions of this law are equally doubtful, (Gravina, Opp. p. 432, 433. Heineccius, Hist. Jur. Rom. No. 108. Ernesti, Clav. Ciceron. in Indice Legum.) But I will observe that the nefanda Venus of the honest German is styled aversa by the more polite Italian.]

194 [\(return\)](#)

[See the oration of Aeschines against the catamite Timarchus, (in Reiske, Orator. Graec. tom. iii. p. 21—184.)]

195 [\(return\)](#)

[A crowd of disgraceful passages will force themselves on the memory of the classic reader: I will only remind him of the cool declaration of Ovid:— Odi concubitus qui non utrumque resolvant. Hoc est quod puerum tangar amore minus.]

196 [\(return\)](#)

[Aelius Lampridius, in Vit. Heliogabal. in Hist. August p. 112 Aurelius Victor, in Philippo, Codex Theodos. l. ix. tit. vii. leg. 7, and Godefroy's Commentary, tom. iii. p. 63. Theodosius abolished the subterraneous brothels of Rome, in which the prostitution of both sexes was acted with impunity.]

Chapter XLIV: Idea Of The Roman Jurisprudence.—Part VIII.

A new spirit of legislation, respectable even in its error, arose in the empire with the religion of Constantine. [197](#) The laws of Moses were received as the divine original of justice, and the Christian princes adapted their penal statutes to the degrees of moral and religious turpitude. Adultery was first declared to be a capital offence: the frailty of the sexes was assimilated to poison or assassination, to sorcery or parricide; the same penalties were inflicted on the passive and active guilt of paederasty; and all criminals of free or servile condition were either drowned or beheaded, or cast alive into the avenging flames. The adulterers were spared by the common sympathy of mankind; but the lovers of their own sex were pursued by general and pious indignation: the impure manners of Greece still prevailed in the cities of Asia, and every vice was fomented by the celibacy of the monks and clergy. Justinian relaxed the punishment at least of female infidelity: the guilty spouse was only condemned to solitude and penance, and at the end of two years she might be recalled to the arms of a forgiving husband. But the same emperor declared himself the implacable enemy of unmanly lust, and the cruelty of his persecution can scarcely be excused by the purity of his motives. [198](#) In defiance of every principle of justice, he stretched to past as well as future offences the operations of his edicts, with the previous allowance of a short respite for confession and pardon. A painful death was inflicted by the amputation of the sinful instrument, or the insertion of sharp reeds into the pores and tubes of most exquisite sensibility; and Justinian defended the propriety of the execution, since the criminals would have lost their hands, had they been convicted of sacrilege. In this state of disgrace and agony, two bishops, Isaiah of Rhodes and Alexander of Diospolis, were dragged through the streets of Constantinople, while their brethren were admonished, by the voice of a crier, to observe this awful lesson, and not to pollute the sanctity of their character. Perhaps these prelates were innocent. A sentence of death and infamy was often founded on the slight and suspicious evidence of a child or a servant: the guilt of the green faction, of the rich, and of the enemies of Theodora, was presumed by the judges, and paederasty became the crime of those to whom no crime could be imputed. A French philosopher [199](#) has dared to remark that whatever is secret must be doubtful, and that our natural horror of vice may be abused as an engine of tyranny. But the favorable persuasion of the same writer, that a legislator may confide in the taste and reason of mankind, is impeached by the unwelcome discovery of the antiquity and extent of the disease. [200](#)

197

[\(return\)](#)

[See the laws of Constantine and his successors against adultery, sodomy &c., in the Theodosian, (l. ix. tit. vii. leg. 7, l. xi. tit. xxxvi leg. 1, 4) and Justinian Codes, (l. ix. tit. ix. leg. 30, 31.) These princes speak the language of passion as well as of justice, and fraudulently ascribe their own severity to the first Caesars.]

198

[\(return\)](#)

[Justinian, Novel. lxxvii. cxxxiv. cxli. Procopius in

Anecdot. c. 11, 16, with the notes of Alemannus. Theophanes, p. 151. Cedrenus. p. 688. Zonaras, l. xiv. p. 64.]

199 [\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu, *Esprit des Loix*, l. xii. c. 6. That eloquent philosopher conciliates the rights of liberty and of nature, which should never be placed in opposition to each other.]

200 [\(return\)](#)

[For the corruption of Palestine, 2000 years before the Christian aera, see the history and laws of Moses. Ancient Gaul is stigmatized by Diodorus Siculus, (tom. i. l. v. p. 356,) China by the Mahometar and Christian travellers, (Ancient Relations of India and China, p. 34 translated by Renaudot, and his bitter critic the Pere Premare, *Lettres Edifiantes*, tom. xix. p. 435,) and native America by the Spanish historians, (Garcilasso de la Vega, l. iii. c. 13, Rycaut's translation; and *Dictionnaire de Bayle*, tom. iii. p. 88.) I believe, and hope, that the negroes, in their own country, were exempt from this moral pestilence.]

The free citizens of Athens and Rome enjoyed, in all criminal cases, the invaluable privilege of being tried by their country. [201](#) 1. The administration of justice is the most ancient office of a prince: it was exercised by the Roman kings, and abused by Tarquin; who alone, without law or council, pronounced his arbitrary judgments. The first consuls succeeded to this regal prerogative; but the sacred right of appeal soon abolished the jurisdiction of the magistrates, and all public causes were decided by the supreme tribunal of the people. But a wild democracy, superior to the forms, too often disdains the essential principles, of justice: the pride of despotism was envenomed by plebeian envy, and the heroes of Athens might sometimes applaud the happiness of the Persian, whose fate depended on the caprice of a single tyrant. Some salutary restraints, imposed by the people or their own passions, were at once the cause and effect of the gravity and temperance of the Romans. The right of accusation was confined to the magistrates.

A vote of the thirty five tribes could inflict a fine; but the cognizance of all capital crimes was reserved by a fundamental law to the assembly of the centuries, in which the weight of influence and property was sure to preponderate. Repeated proclamations and adjournments were interposed, to allow time for prejudice and resentment to subside: the whole proceeding might be annulled by a seasonable omen, or the opposition of a tribune; and such popular trials were commonly less formidable to innocence than they were favorable to guilt. But this union of the judicial and legislative powers left it doubtful whether the accused party was pardoned or acquitted; and, in the defence of an illustrious client, the orators of Rome and Athens address their arguments to the policy and benevolence, as well as to the justice, of their sovereign. 2. The task

of convening the citizens for the trial of each offender became more difficult, as the citizens and the offenders continually multiplied; and the ready expedient was adopted of delegating the jurisdiction of the people to the ordinary magistrates, or to extraordinary inquisitors. In the first ages these questions were rare and occasional. In the beginning of the seventh century of Rome they were made perpetual: four praetors were annually empowered to sit in judgment on the state offences of treason, extortion, peculation, and bribery; and Sylla added new praetors and new questions for those crimes which more directly injure the safety of individuals. By these inquisitors the trial was prepared and directed; but they could only pronounce the sentence of the majority of judges, who with some truth, and more prejudice, have been compared to the English juries. [202](#) To discharge this important, though burdensome office, an annual list of ancient and respectable citizens was formed by the praetor. After many constitutional struggles, they were chosen in equal numbers from the senate, the equestrian order, and the people; four hundred and fifty were appointed for single questions; and the various rolls or decuries of judges must have contained the names of some thousand Romans, who represented the judicial authority of the state. In each particular cause, a sufficient number was drawn from the urn; their integrity was guarded by an oath; the mode of ballot secured their independence; the suspicion of partiality was removed by the mutual challenges of the accuser and defendant; and the judges of Milo, by the retrenchment of fifteen on each side, were reduced to fifty-one voices or tablets, of acquittal, of condemnation, or of favorable doubt. [203](#) 3. In his civil jurisdiction, the praetor of the city was truly a judge, and almost a legislator; but, as soon as he had prescribed the action of law, he often referred to a delegate the determination of the fact. With the increase of legal proceedings, the tribunal of the centumvirs, in which he presided, acquired more weight and reputation. But whether he acted alone, or with the advice of his council, the most absolute powers might be trusted to a magistrate who was annually chosen by the votes of the people. The rules and precautions of freedom have required some explanation; the order of despotism is simple and inanimate. Before the age of Justinian, or perhaps of Diocletian, the decuries of Roman judges had sunk to an empty title: the humble advice of the assessors might be accepted or despised; and in each tribunal the civil and criminal jurisdiction was administered by a single magistrate, who was raised and disgraced by the will of the emperor.

[The important subject of the public questions and judgments at Rome, is explained with much learning, and in a classic style, by Charles Sigonius, (l. iii. de Judiciis, in Opp. tom. iii. p. 679—864;) and a good abridgment may be found in the *Republique Romaine* of Beaufort, (tom. ii. l. v. p. 1—121.) Those who wish for more abstruse law may study Noodt, (*de Jurisdictione et Imperio Libri duo*, tom. i. p. 93—134,) Heineccius, (*ad Pandect.*

l. i. et ii. ad Institut. l. iv. tit. xvii Element. ad Antiquitat.) and Gravina (Opp. 230—251.)]

202 [\(return\)](#)

[The office, both at Rome and in England, must be considered as an occasional duty, and not a magistracy, or profession. But the obligation of a unanimous verdict is peculiar to our laws, which condemn the jurymen to undergo the torture from whence they have exempted the criminal.]

203 [\(return\)](#)

[We are indebted for this interesting fact to a fragment of Asconius Pedianus, who flourished under the reign of Tiberius. The loss of his Commentaries on the Orations of Cicero has deprived us of a valuable fund of historical and legal knowledge.]

A Roman accused of any capital crime might prevent the sentence of the law by voluntary exile, or death. Till his guilt had been legally proved, his innocence was presumed, and his person was free: till the votes of the last century had been counted and declared, he might peaceably secede to any of the allied cities of Italy, or Greece, or Asia. [204](#) His fame and fortunes were preserved, at least to his children, by this civil death; and he might still be happy in every rational and sensual enjoyment, if a mind accustomed to the ambitious tumult of Rome could support the uniformity and silence of Rhodes or Athens. A bolder effort was required to escape from the tyranny of the Caesars; but this effort was rendered familiar by the maxims of the stoics, the example of the bravest Romans, and the legal encouragements of suicide. The bodies of condemned criminals were exposed to public ignominy, and their children, a more serious evil, were reduced to poverty by the confiscation of their fortunes. But, if the victims of Tiberius and Nero anticipated the decree of the prince or senate, their courage and despatch were recompensed by the applause of the public, the decent honors of burial, and the validity of their testaments. [205](#) The exquisite avarice and cruelty of Domitian appear to have deprived the unfortunate of this last consolation, and it was still denied even by the clemency of the Antonines. A voluntary death, which, in the case of a capital offence, intervened between the accusation and the sentence, was admitted as a confession of guilt, and the spoils of the deceased were seized by the inhuman claims of the treasury. [206](#) Yet the civilians have always respected the natural right of a citizen to dispose of his life; and the posthumous disgrace invented by Tarquin, [207](#) to check the despair of his subjects, was never revived or imitated by succeeding tyrants. The powers of this world have indeed lost their dominion over him who is resolved on death; and his arm can only be restrained by the religious apprehension of a future state. Suicides are enumerated by Virgil among the unfortunate, rather than the guilty; [208](#) and the poetical fables of the infernal shades could not seriously influence the faith or practice of mankind. But the precepts of the gospel, or the church, have at length imposed a pious servitude on the minds of

Christians, and condemn them to expect, without a murmur, the last stroke of disease or the executioner.

- 204 [\(return\)](#)
[Footnote 204: Polyb. l. vi. p. 643. The extension of the empire and city of Rome obliged the exile to seek a more distant place of retirement.]
- 205 [\(return\)](#)
[Qui de se statuebant, humabanta corpora, manebant testamenta; pretium festinandi. Tacit. Annal. vi. 25, with the Notes of Lipsius.]
- 206 [\(return\)](#)
[Julius Paulus, (Sentent. Recept. l. v. tit. xii. p. 476,) the Pandects, (xlvi. tit. xxi.,) the Code, (l. ix. tit. l.,) Bynkershoek, (tom. i. p. 59, Observat. J. C. R. iv. 4,) and Montesquieu, (Esprit des Loix, l. xxix. c. ix.,) define the civil limitations of the liberty and privileges of suicide. The criminal penalties are the production of a later and darker age.]
- 207 [\(return\)](#)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxvi. 24. When he fatigued his subjects in building the Capitol, many of the laborers were provoked to despatch themselves: he nailed their dead bodies to crosses.]
- 208 [\(return\)](#)
[The sole resemblance of a violent and premature death has engaged Virgil (Aeneid, vi. 434—439) to confound suicides with infants, lovers, and persons unjustly condemned. Heyne, the best of his editors, is at a loss to deduce the idea, or ascertain the jurisprudence, of the Roman poet.]

The penal statutes form a very small proportion of the sixty-two books of the Code and Pandects; and in all judicial proceedings, the life or death of a citizen is determined with less caution or delay than the most ordinary question of covenant or inheritance. This singular distinction, though something may be allowed for the urgent necessity of defending the peace of society, is derived from the nature of criminal and civil jurisprudence. Our duties to the state are simple and uniform: the law by which he is condemned is inscribed not only on brass or marble, but on the conscience of the offender, and his guilt is commonly proved by the testimony of a single fact. But our relations to each other are various and infinite; our obligations are created, annulled, and modified, by injuries, benefits, and promises; and the interpretation of voluntary contracts and testaments, which are often dictated by fraud or ignorance, affords a long and laborious exercise to the sagacity of the judge. The business of life is multiplied by the extent of commerce and dominion, and the residence of the parties in the distant provinces of an empire is productive of doubt, delay, and inevitable appeals from the local to the supreme magistrate. Justinian, the Greek emperor of Constantinople and the

East, was the legal successor of the Latin shepherd who had planted a colony on the banks of the Tyber. In a period of thirteen hundred years, the laws had reluctantly followed the changes of government and manners; and the laudable desire of conciliating ancient names with recent institutions destroyed the harmony, and swelled the magnitude, of the obscure and irregular system. The laws which excuse, on any occasions, the ignorance of their subjects, confess their own imperfections: the civil jurisprudence, as it was abridged by Justinian, still continued a mysterious science, and a profitable trade, and the innate perplexity of the study was involved in tenfold darkness by the private industry of the practitioners. The expense of the pursuit sometimes exceeded the value of the prize, and the fairest rights were abandoned by the poverty or prudence of the claimants. Such costly justice might tend to abate the spirit of litigation, but the unequal pressure serves only to increase the influence of the rich, and to aggravate the misery of the poor. By these dilatory and expensive proceedings, the wealthy pleader obtains a more certain advantage than he could hope from the accidental corruption of his judge. The experience of an abuse, from which our own age and country are not perfectly exempt, may sometimes provoke a generous indignation, and extort the hasty wish of exchanging our elaborate jurisprudence for the simple and summary decrees of a Turkish cadhi. Our calmer reflection will suggest, that such forms and delays are necessary to guard the person and property of the citizen; that the discretion of the judge is the first engine of tyranny; and that the laws of a free people should foresee and determine every question that may probably arise in the exercise of power and the transactions of industry. But the government of Justinian united the evils of liberty and servitude; and the Romans were oppressed at the same time by the multiplicity of their laws and the arbitrary will of their master.

Chapter XLV: State Of Italy Under The Lombards.—Part I.

Reign Of The Younger Justin.—Embassy Of The Avars.—Their Settlement On The Danube.—Conquest Of Italy By The Lombards.—Adoption And Reign Of Tiberius.—Of Maurice.—State Of Italy Under The Lombards And The Exarchs.—Of Ravenna.—Distress Of Rome.—Character And Pontificate Of Gregory The First.

During the last years of Justinian, his infirm mind was devoted to heavenly contemplation, and he neglected the business of the lower world. His subjects were impatient of the long continuance of his life and reign: yet all who were capable of reflection apprehended the moment of his death, which might involve the capital in tumult, and the empire in civil war. Seven nephews [1](#) of the childless monarch, the sons or grandsons of his brother and sister, had been educated in the splendor of a princely fortune; they had been shown in high commands to the provinces and armies; their

characters were known, their followers were zealous, and, as the jealousy of age postponed the declaration of a successor, they might expect with equal hopes the inheritance of their uncle. He expired in his palace, after a reign of thirty-eight years; and the decisive opportunity was embraced by the friends of Justin, the son of Vigilantia. [2](#) At the hour of midnight, his domestics were awakened by an importunate crowd, who thundered at his door, and obtained admittance by revealing themselves to be the principal members of the senate. These welcome deputies announced the recent and momentous secret of the emperor's decease; reported, or perhaps invented, his dying choice of the best beloved and most deserving of his nephews, and conjured Justin to prevent the disorders of the multitude, if they should perceive, with the return of light, that they were left without a master. After composing his countenance to surprise, sorrow, and decent modesty, Justin, by the advice of his wife Sophia, submitted to the authority of the senate. He was conducted with speed and silence to the palace; the guards saluted their new sovereign; and the martial and religious rites of his coronation were diligently accomplished. By the hands of the proper officers he was invested with the Imperial garments, the red buskins, white tunic, and purple robe.

A fortunate soldier, whom he instantly promoted to the rank of tribune, encircled his neck with a military collar; four robust youths exalted him on a shield; he stood firm and erect to receive the adoration of his subjects; and their choice was sanctified by the benediction of the patriarch, who imposed the diadem on the head of an orthodox prince. The hippodrome was already filled with innumerable multitudes; and no sooner did the emperor appear on his throne, than the voices of the blue and the green factions were confounded in the same loyal acclamations. In the speeches which Justin addressed to the senate and people, he promised to correct the abuses which had disgraced the age of his predecessor, displayed the maxims of a just and beneficent government, and declared that, on the approaching calends of January, [3](#) he would revive in his own person the name and liberty of a Roman consul. The immediate discharge of his uncle's debts exhibited a solid pledge of his faith and generosity: a train of porters, laden with bags of gold, advanced into the midst of the hippodrome, and the hopeless creditors of Justinian accepted this equitable payment as a voluntary gift. Before the end of three years, his example was imitated and surpassed by the empress Sophia, who delivered many indigent citizens from the weight of debt and usury: an act of benevolence the best entitled to gratitude, since it relieves the most intolerable distress; but in which the bounty of a prince is the most liable to be abused by the claims of prodigality and fraud. [4](#)

[See the family of Justin and Justinian in the *Familiae Byzantine* of Ducange, p. 89—101. The devout civilians, Ludewig (in *Vit. Justinian.* p. 131) and Heineccius (*Hist. Juris. Roman.* p. 374) have since illustrated the genealogy of their favorite prince.]

- 2 [\(return\)](#)
[In the story of Justin's elevation I have translated into simple and concise prose the eight hundred verses of the two first books of Corippus, de Laudibus Justini Appendix Hist. Byzant. p. 401—416 Rome 1777.]
- 3 [\(return\)](#)
[It is surprising how Pagi (Critica. in Annal. Baron. tom. ii. p 639) could be tempted by any chronicles to contradict the plain and decisive text of Corippus, (vicina dona, l. ii. 354, vicina dies, l. iv. 1,) and to postpone, till A.D. 567, the consulship of Justin.]
- 4 [\(return\)](#)
[Theophan. Chronograph. p. 205. Whenever Cedrenus or Zonaras are mere transcribers, it is superfluous to allege their testimony.]

On the seventh day of his reign, Justin gave audience to the ambassadors of the Avars, and the scene was decorated to impress the Barbarians with astonishment, veneration, and terror. From the palace gate, the spacious courts and long porticos were lined with the lofty crests and gilt bucklers of the guards, who presented their spears and axes with more confidence than they would have shown in a field of battle. The officers who exercised the power, or attended the person, of the prince, were attired in their richest habits, and arranged according to the military and civil order of the hierarchy. When the veil of the sanctuary was withdrawn, the ambassadors beheld the emperor of the East on his throne, beneath a canopy, or dome, which was supported by four columns, and crowned with a winged figure of Victory. In the first emotions of surprise, they submitted to the servile adoration of the Byzantine court; but as soon as they rose from the ground, Targetius, the chief of the embassy, expressed the freedom and pride of a Barbarian. He extolled, by the tongue of his interpreter, the greatness of the chagan, by whose clemency the kingdoms of the South were permitted to exist, whose victorious subjects had traversed the frozen rivers of Scythia, and who now covered the banks of the Danube with innumerable tents. The late emperor had cultivated, with annual and costly gifts, the friendship of a grateful monarch, and the enemies of Rome had respected the allies of the Avars. The same prudence would instruct the nephew of Justinian to imitate the liberality of his uncle, and to purchase the blessings of peace from an invincible people, who delighted and excelled in the exercise of war. The reply of the emperor was delivered in the same strain of haughty defiance, and he derived his confidence from the God of the Christians, the ancient glory of Rome, and the recent triumphs of Justinian. "The empire," said he, "abounds with men and horses, and arms sufficient to defend our frontiers, and to chastise the Barbarians. You offer aid, you threaten hostilities: we despise your enmity and your aid. The conquerors of the Avars solicit our alliance; shall we dread their fugitives and exiles? [5](#) The bounty of our uncle was granted to your misery, to your humble prayers. From us you shall receive a more important obligation, the knowledge of your own weakness. Retire from our presence;

the lives of ambassadors are safe; and, if you return to implore our pardon, perhaps you will taste of our benevolence.” [6](#) On the report of his ambassadors, the chagan was awed by the apparent firmness of a Roman emperor of whose character and resources he was ignorant. Instead of executing his threats against the Eastern empire, he marched into the poor and savage countries of Germany, which were subject to the dominion of the Franks. After two doubtful battles, he consented to retire, and the Austrasian king relieved the distress of his camp with an immediate supply of corn and cattle. [7](#) Such repeated disappointments had chilled the spirit of the Avars, and their power would have dissolved away in the Sarmatian desert, if the alliance of Alboin, king of the Lombards, had not given a new object to their arms, and a lasting settlement to their wearied fortunes.

5

[\(return\)](#)

[Corippus, l. iii. 390. The unquestionable sense relates to the Turks, the conquerors of the Avars; but the word scultor has no apparent meaning, and the sole Ms. of Corippus, from whence the first edition (1581, apud Plantin) was printed, is no longer visible. The last editor, Foggini of Rome, has inserted the conjectural emendation of soldan: but the proofs of Ducange, (Joinville, Dissert. xvi. p. 238—240,) for the early use of this title among the Turks and Persians, are weak or ambiguous. And I must incline to the authority of D’Herbelot, (Bibliotheque Orient. p. 825,) who ascribes the word to the Arabic and Chaldaean tongues, and the date to the beginning of the xith century, when it was bestowed by the khalif of Bagdad on Mahmud, prince of Gazna, and conqueror of India.]

6

[\(return\)](#)

[For these characteristic speeches, compare the verse of Corippus (l. iii. 251—401) with the prose of Menander, (Excerpt. Legation. p 102, 103.) Their diversity proves that they did not copy each other their resemblance, that they drew from a common original.]

7

[\(return\)](#)

[For the Austrasian war, see Menander (Excerpt. Legat. p. 110,) Gregory of Tours, (Hist. Franc. l. iv. c 29,) and Paul the deacon, (de Gest. Langobard. l. ii. c. 10.)]

While Alboin served under his father’s standard, he encountered in battle, and transpierced with his lance, the rival prince of the Gepidae. The Lombards, who applauded such early prowess, requested his father, with unanimous acclamations, that the heroic youth, who had shared the dangers of the field, might be admitted to the feast of victory. “You are not unmindful,” replied the inflexible Audoin, “of the wise customs of our ancestors. Whatever may be his merit, a prince is incapable of sitting at table

with his father till he has received his arms from a foreign and royal hand.” Alboin bowed with reverence to the institutions of his country, selected forty companions, and boldly visited the court of Turisund, king of the Gepidae, who embraced and entertained, according to the laws of hospitality, the murderer of his son. At the banquet, whilst Alboin occupied the seat of the youth whom he had slain, a tender remembrance arose in the mind of Turisund. “How dear is that place! how hateful is that person!” were the words that escaped, with a sigh, from the indignant father. His grief exasperated the national resentment of the Gepidae; and Cunimund, his surviving son, was provoked by wine, or fraternal affection, to the desire of vengeance. “The Lombards,” said the rude Barbarian, “resemble, in figure and in smell, the mares of our Sarmatian plains.” And this insult was a coarse allusion to the white bands which enveloped their legs. “Add another resemblance,” replied an audacious Lombard; “you have felt how strongly they kick. Visit the plain of Asfield, and seek for the bones of thy brother: they are mingled with those of the vilest animals.” The Gepidae, a nation of warriors, started from their seats, and the fearless Alboin, with his forty companions, laid their hands on their swords. The tumult was appeased by the venerable interposition of Turisund. He saved his own honor, and the life of his guest; and, after the solemn rites of investiture, dismissed the stranger in the bloody arms of his son; the gift of a weeping parent. Alboin returned in triumph; and the Lombards, who celebrated his matchless intrepidity, were compelled to praise the virtues of an enemy. [8](#) In this extraordinary visit he had probably seen the daughter of Cunimund, who soon after ascended the throne of the Gepidae. Her name was Rosamond, an appellation expressive of female beauty, and which our own history or romance has consecrated to amorous tales. The king of the Lombards (the father of Alboin no longer lived) was contracted to the granddaughter of Clovis; but the restraints of faith and policy soon yielded to the hope of possessing the fair Rosamond, and of insulting her family and nation. The arts of persuasion were tried without success; and the impatient lover, by force and stratagem, obtained the object of his desires. War was the consequence which he foresaw and solicited; but the Lombards could not long withstand the furious assault of the Gepidae, who were sustained by a Roman army. And, as the offer of marriage was rejected with contempt, Alboin was compelled to relinquish his prey, and to partake of the disgrace which he had inflicted on the house of Cunimund. [9](#)

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Paul Warnefrid, the deacon of Friuli, de Gest. Langobard. l. i. c. 23, 24. His pictures of national manners, though rudely sketched are more lively and faithful than those of Bede, or Gregory of Tours]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[The story is told by an impostor, (Theophylact. Simocat. l. vi. c. 10;) but he had art enough to build his fictions on public and notorious facts.]

When a public quarrel is envenomed by private injuries, a blow that is not mortal or decisive can be productive only of a short truce, which allows the unsuccessful combatant to sharpen his arms for a new encounter. The strength of Alboin had been found unequal to the gratification of his love, ambition, and revenge: he condescended to implore the formidable aid of the chagan; and the arguments that he employed are expressive of the art and policy of the Barbarians. In the attack of the Gepidae, he had been prompted by the just desire of extirpating a people whom their alliance with the Roman empire had rendered the common enemies of the nations, and the personal adversaries of the chagan. If the forces of the Avars and the Lombards should unite in this glorious quarrel, the victory was secure, and the reward inestimable: the Danube, the Hebrus, Italy, and Constantinople, would be exposed, without a barrier, to their invincible arms. But, if they hesitated or delayed to prevent the malice of the Romans, the same spirit which had insulted would pursue the Avars to the extremity of the earth. These specious reasons were heard by the chagan with coldness and disdain: he detained the Lombard ambassadors in his camp, protracted the negotiation, and by turns alleged his want of inclination, or his want of ability, to undertake this important enterprise. At length he signified the ultimate price of his alliance, that the Lombards should immediately present him with a tithe of their cattle; that the spoils and captives should be equally divided; but that the lands of the Gepidae should become the sole patrimony of the Avars. Such hard conditions were eagerly accepted by the passions of Alboin; and, as the Romans were dissatisfied with the ingratitude and perfidy of the Gepidae, Justin abandoned that incorrigible people to their fate, and remained the tranquil spectator of this unequal conflict. The despair of Cunimund was active and dangerous. He was informed that the Avars had entered his confines; but, on the strong assurance that, after the defeat of the Lombards, these foreign invaders would easily be repelled, he rushed forwards to encounter the implacable enemy of his name and family. But the courage of the Gepidae could secure them no more than an honorable death. The bravest of the nation fell in the field of battle; the king of the Lombards contemplated with delight the head of Cunimund; and his skull was fashioned into a cup to satiate the hatred of the conqueror, or, perhaps, to comply with the savage custom of his country. [10](#) After this victory, no further obstacle could impede the progress of the confederates, and they faithfully executed the terms of their agreement. [11](#) The fair countries of Walachia, Moldavia, Transylvania, and the other parts of Hungary beyond the Danube, were occupied, without resistance, by a new colony of Scythians; and the Dacian empire of the chagans subsisted with splendor above two hundred and thirty years. The nation of the Gepidae was dissolved; but, in the distribution of the captives, the slaves of the Avars were less fortunate than the companions of the Lombards, whose generosity adopted a valiant foe, and whose freedom was incompatible with cool and deliberate tyranny. One moiety of the spoil introduced into the camp of Alboin more wealth than a Barbarian could readily compute. The fair Rosamond was persuaded, or compelled, to acknowledge the rights of her victorious lover; and the daughter of

Cunimund appeared to forgive those crimes which might be imputed to her own irresistible charms.

10

[\(return\)](#)

[It appears from Strabo, Pliny, and Ammianus Marcellinus, that the same practice was common among the Scythian tribes, (Muratori, *Scriptores Rer. Italic.* tom. i. p. 424.) The scalps of North America are likewise trophies of valor. The skull of Cunimund was preserved above two hundred years among the Lombards; and Paul himself was one of the guests to whom Duke Ratchis exhibited this cup on a high festival, (l. ii. c. 28.)]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[Paul, l. i. c. 27. Menander, in *Excerpt Legat.* p. 110, 111.]

The destruction of a mighty kingdom established the fame of Alboin. In the days of Charlemagne, the Bavarians, the Saxons, and the other tribes of the Teutonic language, still repeated the songs which described the heroic virtues, the valor, liberality, and fortune of the king of the Lombards. [12](#) But his ambition was yet unsatisfied; and the conqueror of the Gepidae turned his eyes from the Danube to the richer banks of the Po, and the Tyber. Fifteen years had not elapsed, since his subjects, the confederates of Narses, had visited the pleasant climate of Italy: the mountains, the rivers, the highways, were familiar to their memory: the report of their success, perhaps the view of their spoils, had kindled in the rising generation the flame of emulation and enterprise. Their hopes were encouraged by the spirit and eloquence of Alboin: and it is affirmed, that he spoke to their senses, by producing at the royal feast, the fairest and most exquisite fruits that grew spontaneously in the garden of the world. No sooner had he erected his standard, than the native strength of the Lombard was multiplied by the adventurous youth of Germany and Scythia. The robust peasantry of Noricum and Pannonia had resumed the manners of Barbarians; and the names of the Gepidae, Bulgarians, Sarmatians, and Bavarians, may be distinctly traced in the provinces of Italy. [13](#) Of the Saxons, the old allies of the Lombards, twenty thousand warriors, with their wives and children, accepted the invitation of Alboin. Their bravery contributed to his success; but the accession or the absence of their numbers was not sensibly felt in the magnitude of his host. Every mode of religion was freely practised by its respective votaries. The king of the Lombards had been educated in the Arian heresy; but the Catholics, in their public worship, were allowed to pray for his conversion; while the more stubborn Barbarians sacrificed a she-goat, or perhaps a captive, to the gods of their fathers. [14](#) The Lombards, and their confederates, were united by their common attachment to a chief, who excelled in all the virtues and vices of a savage hero; and the vigilance of Alboin provided an ample magazine of offensive and defensive arms for the use of the expedition. The portable wealth of the Lombards attended the march: their lands they cheerfully relinquished to the Avars, on the solemn promise, which was

made and accepted without a smile, that if they failed in the conquest of Italy, these voluntary exiles should be reinstated in their former possessions.

12

[\(return\)](#)

[Ut hactenus etiam tam apud Bajoariorum gentem, quam et Saxum, sed et alios ejusdem linguae homines..... in eorum carminibus celebretur. Paul, l. i. c. 27. He died A.D. 799, (Muratori, in Praefat. tom. i. p. 397.) These German songs, some of which might be as old as Tacitus, (de Moribus Germ. c. 2,) were compiled and transcribed by Charlemagne. Barbara et antiquissima carmina, quibus veterum regum actus et bella canebantur scripsit memoriaeque mandavit, (Eginard, in Vit. Carol. Magn. c. 29, p. 130, 131.) The poems, which Goldast commends, (Animadvers. ad Eginard. p. 207,) appear to be recent and contemptible romances.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[The other nations are rehearsed by Paul, (l. ii. c. 6, 26,) Muratori (Antichita Italiane, tom. i. dissert. i. p. 4) has discovered the village of the Bavarians, three miles from Modena.]

14

[\(return\)](#)

[Gregory the Roman (Dialog. l. i. iii. c. 27, 28, apud Baron. Annal Eccles. A.D. 579, No. 10) supposes that they likewise adored this she-goat. I know but of one religion in which the god and the victim are the same.]

They might have failed, if Narses had been the antagonist of the Lombards; and the veteran warriors, the associates of his Gothic victory, would have encountered with reluctance an enemy whom they dreaded and esteemed. But the weakness of the Byzantine court was subservient to the Barbarian cause; and it was for the ruin of Italy, that the emperor once listened to the complaints of his subjects. The virtues of Narses were stained with avarice; and, in his provincial reign of fifteen years, he accumulated a treasure of gold and silver which surpassed the modesty of a private fortune. His government was oppressive or unpopular, and the general discontent was expressed with freedom by the deputies of Rome. Before the throne of Justinian they boldly declared, that their Gothic servitude had been more tolerable than the despotism of a Greek eunuch; and that, unless their tyrant were instantly removed, they would consult their own happiness in the choice of a master. The apprehension of a revolt was urged by the voice of envy and detraction, which had so recently triumphed over the merit of Belisarius. A new exarch, Longinus, was appointed to supersede the conqueror of Italy, and the base motives of his recall were revealed in the insulting mandate of the empress Sophia, "that he should leave to men the exercise of arms, and return to his proper station among the maidens of the palace, where a distaff should be again placed in the

hand of the eunuch.” “I will spin her such a thread as she shall not easily unravel!” is said to have been the reply which indignation and conscious virtue extorted from the hero. Instead of attending, a slave and a victim, at the gate of the Byzantine palace, he retired to Naples, from whence (if any credit is due to the belief of the times) Narses invited the Lombards to chastise the ingratitude of the prince and people. [15](#) But the passions of the people are furious and changeable, and the Romans soon recollected the merits, or dreaded the resentment, of their victorious general. By the mediation of the pope, who undertook a special pilgrimage to Naples, their repentance was accepted; and Narses, assuming a milder aspect and a more dutiful language, consented to fix his residence in the Capitol. His death, [16](#) though in the extreme period of old age, was unseasonable and premature, since his genius alone could have repaired the last and fatal error of his life. The reality, or the suspicion, of a conspiracy disarmed and disunited the Italians. The soldiers resented the disgrace, and bewailed the loss, of their general. They were ignorant of their new exarch; and Longinus was himself ignorant of the state of the army and the province. In the preceding years Italy had been desolated by pestilence and famine, and a disaffected people ascribed the calamities of nature to the guilt or folly of their rulers. [17](#)

15

[\(return\)](#)

[The charge of the deacon against Narses (l. ii. c. 5) may be groundless; but the weak apology of the Cardinal (Baron. Annal Eccles. A.D. 567, No. 8—12) is rejected by the best critics—Pagi (tom. ii. p. 639, 640,) Muratori, (Annali d’ Italia, tom. v. p. 160—163,) and the last editors, Horatius Blancus, (Script. Rerum Italic. tom. i. p. 427, 428,) and Philip Argelatus, (Sigon. Opera, tom. ii. p. 11, 12.) The Narses who assisted at the coronation of Justin (Corippus, l. iii. 221) is clearly understood to be a different person.]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[The death of Narses is mentioned by Paul, l. ii. c. 11. Anastas. in Vit. Johan. iii. p. 43. Agnellus, Liber Pontifical. Raven. in Script. Rer. Italicarum, tom. ii. part i. p. 114, 124. Yet I cannot believe with Agnellus that Narses was ninety-five years of age. Is it probable that all his exploits were performed at fourscore?]

17

[\(return\)](#)

[The designs of Narses and of the Lombards for the invasion of Italy are exposed in the last chapter of the first book, and the seven last chapters of the second book, of Paul the deacon.]

Whatever might be the grounds of his security, Alboin neither expected nor encountered a Roman army in the field. He ascended the Julian Alps, and looked down with contempt and desire on the fruitful plains to which his victory communicated the

perpetual appellation of Lombardy. A faithful chieftain, and a select band, were stationed at Forum Julii, the modern Friuli, to guard the passes of the mountains. The Lombards respected the strength of Pavia, and listened to the prayers of the Trevisans: their slow and heavy multitudes proceeded to occupy the palace and city of Verona; and Milan, now rising from her ashes, was invested by the powers of Alboin five months after his departure from Pannonia. Terror preceded his march: he found every where, or he left, a dreary solitude; and the pusillanimous Italians presumed, without a trial, that the stranger was invincible. Escaping to lakes, or rocks, or morasses, the affrighted crowds concealed some fragments of their wealth, and delayed the moment of their servitude. Paulinus, the patriarch of Aquileia, removed his treasures, sacred and profane, to the Isle of Grado, [18](#) and his successors were adopted by the infant republic of Venice, which was continually enriched by the public calamities. Honoratus, who filled the chair of St. Ambrose, had credulously accepted the faithless offers of a capitulation; and the archbishop, with the clergy and nobles of Milan, were driven by the perfidy of Alboin to seek a refuge in the less accessible ramparts of Genoa. Along the maritime coast, the courage of the inhabitants was supported by the facility of supply, the hopes of relief, and the power of escape; but from the Trentine hills to the gates of Ravenna and Rome the inland regions of Italy became, without a battle or a siege, the lasting patrimony of the Lombards. The submission of the people invited the Barbarian to assume the character of a lawful sovereign, and the helpless exarch was confined to the office of announcing to the emperor Justin the rapid and irretrievable loss of his provinces and cities. [19](#) One city, which had been diligently fortified by the Goths, resisted the arms of a new invader; and while Italy was subdued by the flying detachments of the Lombards, the royal camp was fixed above three years before the western gate of Ticinum, or Pavia. The same courage which obtains the esteem of a civilized enemy provokes the fury of a savage, and the impatient besieger had bound himself by a tremendous oath, that age, and sex, and dignity, should be confounded in a general massacre. The aid of famine at length enabled him to execute his bloody vow; but, as Alboin entered the gate, his horse stumbled, fell, and could not be raised from the ground. One of his attendants was prompted by compassion, or piety, to interpret this miraculous sign of the wrath of Heaven: the conqueror paused and relented; he sheathed his sword, and peacefully reposing himself in the palace of Theodoric, proclaimed to the trembling multitude that they should live and obey. Delighted with the situation of a city which was endeared to his pride by the difficulty of the purchase, the prince of the Lombards disdained the ancient glories of Milan; and Pavia, during some ages, was respected as the capital of the kingdom of Italy. [20](#)

[Which from this translation was called New Aquileia, (Chron. Venet. p. 3.) The patriarch of Grado soon became the first citizen of the republic, (p. 9, &c.,) but his seat was not removed to Venice till the year 1450. He is now decorated with titles

and honors; but the genius of the church has bowed to that of the state, and the government of a Catholic city is strictly Presbyterian. Thomassin, *Discipline de l'Eglise*, tom. i. p. 156, 157, 161—165. Amelot de la Houssaye, *Gouvernement de Venise*, tom. i. p. 256—261.]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Paul has given a description of Italy, as it was then divided into eighteen regions, (l. ii. c. 14—24.) The *Dissertatio Chorographica de Italia Medii Aevi*, by Father Beretti, a Benedictine monk, and regius professor at Pavia, has been usefully consulted.]

20

[\(return\)](#)

[For the conquest of Italy, see the original materials of Paul, (l. p. 7—10, 12, 14, 25, 26, 27,) the eloquent narrative of Sigonius, (tom. il. de *Regno Italiae*, l. i. p. 13—19,) and the correct and critical review el Muratori, (*Annali d' Italia*, tom. v. p. 164—180.))]

The reign of the founder was splendid and transient; and, before he could regulate his new conquests, Alboin fell a sacrifice to domestic treason and female revenge. In a palace near Verona, which had not been erected for the Barbarians, he feasted the companions of his arms; intoxication was the reward of valor, and the king himself was tempted by appetite, or vanity, to exceed the ordinary measure of his intemperance. After draining many capacious bowls of Rhaetian or Falernian wine, he called for the skull of Cunimund, the noblest and most precious ornament of his sideboard. The cup of victory was accepted with horrid applause by the circle of the Lombard chiefs. “Fill it again with wine,” exclaimed the inhuman conqueror, “fill it to the brim: carry this goblet to the queen, and request in my name that she would rejoice with her father.” In an agony of grief and rage, Rosamond had strength to utter, “Let the will of my lord be obeyed!” and, touching it with her lips, pronounced a silent imprecation, that the insult should be washed away in the blood of Alboin. Some indulgence might be due to the resentment of a daughter, if she had not already violated the duties of a wife. Implacable in her enmity, or inconstant in her love, the queen of Italy had stooped from the throne to the arms of a subject, and Helmichis, the king’s armor-bearer, was the secret minister of her pleasure and revenge. Against the proposal of the murder, he could no longer urge the scruples of fidelity or gratitude; but Helmichis trembled when he revolved the danger as well as the guilt, when he recollected the matchless strength and intrepidity of a warrior whom he had so often attended in the field of battle. He pressed and obtained, that one of the bravest champions of the Lombards should be associated to the enterprise; but no more than a promise of secrecy could be drawn from the gallant Peredeus, and the mode of seduction employed by Rosamond betrays her shameless insensibility both to honor and love. She supplied the place of one of her female attendants who was beloved by Peredeus, and contrived some excuse for darkness and

silence, till she could inform her companion that he had enjoyed the queen of the Lombards, and that his own death, or the death of Alboin, must be the consequence of such treasonable adultery. In this alternative he chose rather to be the accomplice than the victim of Rosamond, [21](#) whose undaunted spirit was incapable of fear or remorse. She expected and soon found a favorable moment, when the king, oppressed with wine, had retired from the table to his afternoon slumbers. His faithless spouse was anxious for his health and repose: the gates of the palace were shut, the arms removed, the attendants dismissed, and Rosamond, after lulling him to rest by her tender caresses, unbolted the chamber door, and urged the reluctant conspirators to the instant execution of the deed. On the first alarm, the warrior started from his couch: his sword, which he attempted to draw, had been fastened to the scabbard by the hand of Rosamond; and a small stool, his only weapon, could not long protect him from the spears of the assassins. The daughter of Cunimund smiled in his fall: his body was buried under the staircase of the palace; and the grateful posterity of the Lombards revered the tomb and the memory of their victorious leader.

21

[\(return\)](#)

[The classical reader will recollect the wife and murder of Candaules, so agreeably told in the first book of Herodotus. The choice of Gyges, may serve as the excuse of Peredeus; and this soft insinuation of an odious idea has been imitated by the best writers of antiquity, (Graevius, ad Ciceron. Orat. pro Miloue c. 10)]

Chapter XLV: State Of Italy Under The Lombards.—Part II.

The ambitious Rosamond aspired to reign in the name of her lover; the city and palace of Verona were awed by her power; and a faithful band of her native Gepidae was prepared to applaud the revenge, and to second the wishes, of their sovereign. But the Lombard chiefs, who fled in the first moments of consternation and disorder, had resumed their courage and collected their powers; and the nation, instead of submitting to her reign, demanded, with unanimous cries, that justice should be executed on the guilty spouse and the murderers of their king. She sought a refuge among the enemies of her country; and a criminal who deserved the abhorrence of mankind was protected by the selfish policy of the exarch. With her daughter, the heiress of the Lombard throne, her two lovers, her trusty Gepidae, and the spoils of the palace of Verona, Rosamond descended the Adige and the Po, and was transported by a Greek vessel to the safe harbor of Ravenna. Longinus beheld with delight the charms and the treasures of the widow of Alboin: her situation and her past conduct might justify the most licentious proposals; and she readily listened to the passion of a minister, who, even in the decline of the empire, was respected as the equal of kings. The death of a jealous lover was an easy and grateful sacrifice; and, as Helmichis issued from the bath, he received the

deadly potion from the hand of his mistress. The taste of the liquor, its speedy operation, and his experience of the character of Rosamond, convinced him that he was poisoned: he pointed his dagger to her breast, compelled her to drain the remainder of the cup, and expired in a few minutes, with the consolation that she could not survive to enjoy the fruits of her wickedness. The daughter of Alboin and Rosamond, with the richest spoils of the Lombards, was embarked for Constantinople: the surprising strength of Peredeus amused and terrified the Imperial court: [2111](#) his blindness and revenge exhibited an imperfect copy of the adventures of Samson. By the free suffrage of the nation, in the assembly of Pavia, Clepho, one of their noblest chiefs, was elected as the successor of Alboin. Before the end of eighteen months, the throne was polluted by a second murder: Clepho was stabbed by the hand of a domestic; the regal office was suspended above ten years during the minority of his son Autharis; and Italy was divided and oppressed by a ducal aristocracy of thirty tyrants. [22](#)

2111

[\(return\)](#)

[He killed a lion. His eyes were put out by the timid Justin. Peredeus requesting an interview, Justin substituted two patricians, whom the blinded Barbarian stabbed to the heart with two concealed daggers. See Le Beau, vol. x. p. 99.—M.]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[See the history of Paul, l. ii. c. 28—32. I have borrowed some interesting circumstances from the Liber Pontificalis of Agnellus, in Script. Rer. Ital. tom. ii. p. 124. Of all chronological guides, Muratori is the safest.]

When the nephew of Justinian ascended the throne, he proclaimed a new aera of happiness and glory. The annals of the second Justin [23](#) are marked with disgrace abroad and misery at home. In the West, the Roman empire was afflicted by the loss of Italy, the desolation of Africa, and the conquests of the Persians. Injustice prevailed both in the capital and the provinces: the rich trembled for their property, the poor for their safety, the ordinary magistrates were ignorant or venal, the occasional remedies appear to have been arbitrary and violent, and the complaints of the people could no longer be silenced by the splendid names of a legislator and a conqueror. The opinion which imputes to the prince all the calamities of his times may be countenanced by the historian as a serious truth or a salutary prejudice. Yet a candid suspicion will arise, that the sentiments of Justin were pure and benevolent, and that he might have filled his station without reproach, if the faculties of his mind had not been impaired by disease, which deprived the emperor of the use of his feet, and confined him to the palace, a stranger to the complaints of the people and the vices of the government. The tardy knowledge of his own impotence determined him to lay down the weight of the diadem; and, in the choice of a worthy substitute, he showed some symptoms of a discerning and even magnanimous spirit. The only son of Justin and Sophia died in his infancy; their daughter Arabia was the wife of Baduarius, [24](#) superintendent of the palace, and

afterwards commander of the Italian armies, who vainly aspired to confirm the rights of marriage by those of adoption. While the empire appeared an object of desire, Justin was accustomed to behold with jealousy and hatred his brothers and cousins, the rivals of his hopes; nor could he depend on the gratitude of those who would accept the purple as a restitution, rather than a gift. Of these competitors, one had been removed by exile, and afterwards by death; and the emperor himself had inflicted such cruel insults on another, that he must either dread his resentment or despise his patience. This domestic animosity was refined into a generous resolution of seeking a successor, not in his family, but in the republic; and the artful Sophia recommended Tiberius, [25](#) his faithful captain of the guards, whose virtues and fortune the emperor might cherish as the fruit of his judicious choice. The ceremony of his elevation to the rank of Caesar, or Augustus, was performed in the portico of the palace, in the presence of the patriarch and the senate. Justin collected the remaining strength of his mind and body; but the popular belief that his speech was inspired by the Deity betrays a very humble opinion both of the man and of the times. [26](#) “You behold,” said the emperor, “the ensigns of supreme power. You are about to receive them, not from my hand, but from the hand of God. Honor them, and from them you will derive honor. Respect the empress your mother: you are now her son; before, you were her servant. Delight not in blood; abstain from revenge; avoid those actions by which I have incurred the public hatred; and consult the experience, rather than the example, of your predecessor. As a man, I have sinned; as a sinner, even in this life, I have been severely punished: but these servants, (and he pointed to his ministers,) who have abused my confidence, and inflamed my passions, will appear with me before the tribunal of Christ. I have been dazzled by the splendor of the diadem: be thou wise and modest; remember what you have been, remember what you are. You see around us your slaves, and your children: with the authority, assume the tenderness, of a parent. Love your people like yourself; cultivate the affections, maintain the discipline, of the army; protect the fortunes of the rich, relieve the necessities of the poor.” [27](#) The assembly, in silence and in tears, applauded the counsels, and sympathized with the repentance, of their prince the patriarch rehearsed the prayers of the church; Tiberius received the diadem on his knees; and Justin, who in his abdication appeared most worthy to reign, addressed the new monarch in the following words: “If you consent, I live; if you command, I die: may the God of heaven and earth infuse into your heart whatever I have neglected or forgotten.” The four last years of the emperor Justin were passed in tranquil obscurity: his conscience was no longer tormented by the remembrance of those duties which he was incapable of discharging; and his choice was justified by the filial reverence and gratitude of Tiberius.

Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 70-72; Cedrenus, in Compend. p. 388—392.]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[Dispositorque novus sacrae Baduarius aulae. Successor soceri mox factus Cura-palati.—Cerippus. Baduarius is enumerated among the descendants and allies of the house of Justinian. A family of noble Venetians (Casa Badoero) built churches and gave dukes to the republic as early as the ninth century; and, if their descent be admitted, no kings in Europe can produce a pedigree so ancient and illustrious. Ducange, Fam. Byzantin, p. 99 Amelot de la Houssaye, Gouvernement de Venise, tom. ii. p. 555.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[The praise bestowed on princes before their elevation is the purest and most weighty. Corippus has celebrated Tiberius at the time of the accession of Justin, (l. i. 212—222.) Yet even a captain of the guards might attract the flattery of an African exile.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Evagrius (l. v. c. 13) has added the reproach to his ministers He applies this speech to the ceremony when Tiberius was invested with the rank of Caesar. The loose expression, rather than the positive error, of Theophanes, &c., has delayed it to his Augustan investitura immediately before the death of Justin.]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[Theophylact Simocatta (l. iii. c. 11) declares that he shall give to posterity the speech of Justin as it was pronounced, without attempting to correct the imperfections of language or rhetoric. Perhaps the vain sophist would have been incapable of producing such sentiments.]

Among the virtues of Tiberius, [28](#) his beauty (he was one of the tallest and most comely of the Romans) might introduce him to the favor of Sophia; and the widow of Justin was persuaded, that she should preserve her station and influence under the reign of a second and more youthful husband. But, if the ambitious candidate had been tempted to flatter and dissemble, it was no longer in his power to fulfil her expectations, or his own promise. The factions of the hippodrome demanded, with some impatience, the name of their new empress: both the people and Sophia were astonished by the proclamation of Anastasia, the secret, though lawful, wife of the emperor Tiberius. Whatever could alleviate the disappointment of Sophia, Imperial honors, a stately palace, a numerous household, was liberally bestowed by the piety of her adopted son; on solemn occasions he attended and consulted the widow of his benefactor; but her ambition disdained the vain semblance of royalty, and the respectful appellation of mother served to exasperate, rather than appease, the rage of an injured woman. While

she accepted, and repaid with a courtly smile, the fair expressions of regard and confidence, a secret alliance was concluded between the dowager empress and her ancient enemies; and Justinian, the son of Germanus, was employed as the instrument of her revenge. The pride of the reigning house supported, with reluctance, the dominion of a stranger: the youth was deservedly popular; his name, after the death of Justin, had been mentioned by a tumultuous faction; and his own submissive offer of his head with a treasure of sixty thousand pounds, might be interpreted as an evidence of guilt, or at least of fear. Justinian received a free pardon, and the command of the eastern army. The Persian monarch fled before his arms; and the acclamations which accompanied his triumph declared him worthy of the purple. His artful patroness had chosen the month of the vintage, while the emperor, in a rural solitude, was permitted to enjoy the pleasures of a subject. On the first intelligence of her designs, he returned to Constantinople, and the conspiracy was suppressed by his presence and firmness. From the pomp and honors which she had abused, Sophia was reduced to a modest allowance: Tiberius dismissed her train, intercepted her correspondence, and committed to a faithful guard the custody of her person. But the services of Justinian were not considered by that excellent prince as an aggravation of his offences: after a mild reproof, his treason and ingratitude were forgiven; and it was commonly believed, that the emperor entertained some thoughts of contracting a double alliance with the rival of his throne. The voice of an angel (such a fable was propagated) might reveal to the emperor, that he should always triumph over his domestic foes; but Tiberius derived a firmer assurance from the innocence and generosity of his own mind.

[For the character and reign of Tiberius, see Evagrius, l v. c. 13. Theophylact, l. iii. c. 12, &c. Theophanes, in Chron. p. 20—213. Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 72. Cedrenus, p. 392. Paul Warnefrid, de Gestis Langobard. l. iii. c. 11, 12. The deacon of Forum Juli appears to have possessed some curious and authentic facts.]

With the odious name of Tiberius, he assumed the more popular appellation of Constantine, and imitated the purer virtues of the Antonines. After recording the vice or folly of so many Roman princes, it is pleasing to repose, for a moment, on a character conspicuous by the qualities of humanity, justice, temperance, and fortitude; to contemplate a sovereign affable in his palace, pious in the church, impartial on the seat of judgment, and victorious, at least by his generals, in the Persian war. The most glorious trophy of his victory consisted in a multitude of captives, whom Tiberius entertained, redeemed, and dismissed to their native homes with the charitable spirit of a Christian hero. The merit or misfortunes of his own subjects had a dearer claim to his beneficence, and he measured his bounty not so much by their expectations as by his own dignity. This maxim, however dangerous in a trustee of the public wealth, was balanced by a principle of humanity and justice, which taught him to abhor, as of the

basest alloy, the gold that was extracted from the tears of the people. For their relief, as often as they had suffered by natural or hostile calamities, he was impatient to remit the arrears of the past, or the demands of future taxes: he sternly rejected the servile offerings of his ministers, which were compensated by tenfold oppression; and the wise and equitable laws of Tiberius excited the praise and regret of succeeding times. Constantinople believed that the emperor had discovered a treasure: but his genuine treasure consisted in the practice of liberal economy, and the contempt of all vain and superfluous expense. The Romans of the East would have been happy, if the best gift of Heaven, a patriot king, had been confirmed as a proper and permanent blessing. But in less than four years after the death of Justin, his worthy successor sunk into a mortal disease, which left him only sufficient time to restore the diadem, according to the tenure by which he held it, to the most deserving of his fellow-citizens. He selected Maurice from the crowd, a judgment more precious than the purple itself: the patriarch and senate were summoned to the bed of the dying prince: he bestowed his daughter and the empire; and his last advice was solemnly delivered by the voice of the quaestor. Tiberius expressed his hope that the virtues of his son and successor would erect the noblest mausoleum to his memory. His memory was embalmed by the public affliction; but the most sincere grief evaporates in the tumult of a new reign, and the eyes and acclamations of mankind were speedily directed to the rising sun. The emperor Maurice derived his origin from ancient Rome; [29](#) but his immediate parents were settled at Arabissus in Cappadocia, and their singular felicity preserved them alive to behold and partake the fortune of their august son. The youth of Maurice was spent in the profession of arms: Tiberius promoted him to the command of a new and favorite legion of twelve thousand confederates; his valor and conduct were signalized in the Persian war; and he returned to Constantinople to accept, as his just reward, the inheritance of the empire. Maurice ascended the throne at the mature age of forty-three years; and he reigned above twenty years over the East and over himself; [30](#) expelling from his mind the wild democracy of passions, and establishing (according to the quaint expression of Evagrius) a perfect aristocracy of reason and virtue. Some suspicion will degrade the testimony of a subject, though he protests that his secret praise should never reach the ear of his sovereign, [31](#) and some failings seem to place the character of Maurice below the purer merit of his predecessor. His cold and reserved demeanor might be imputed to arrogance; his justice was not always exempt from cruelty, nor his clemency from weakness; and his rigid economy too often exposed him to the reproach of avarice. But the rational wishes of an absolute monarch must tend to the happiness of his people. Maurice was endowed with sense and courage to promote that happiness, and his administration was directed by the principles and example of Tiberius. The pusillanimity of the Greeks had introduced so complete a separation between the offices of king and of general, that a private soldier, who had deserved and obtained the purple, seldom or never appeared at the head of his armies. Yet the emperor Maurice enjoyed the glory of restoring the Persian monarch to his throne; his lieutenants waged a

doubtful war against the Avars of the Danube; and he cast an eye of pity, of ineffectual pity, on the abject and distressful state of his Italian provinces.

29

[\(return\)](#)

[It is therefore singular enough that Paul (l. iii. c. 15) should distinguish him as the first Greek emperor—*primus ex Graecorum genere in Imperio constitutus*. His immediate predecessors had indeed been born in the Latin provinces of Europe: and a various reading, in *Graecorum Imperio*, would apply the expression to the empire rather than the prince.]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[Consult, for the character and reign of Maurice, the fifth and sixth books of Evagrius, particularly l. vi. c. 1; the eight books of his prolix and florid history by Theophylact Simocatta; Theophanes, p. 213, &c.; Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 73; Cedrenus, p. 394.]

31

[\(return\)](#)

[Evagrius composed his history in the twelfth year of Maurice; and he had been so wisely indiscreet that the emperor knew and rewarded his favorable opinion, (l. vi. c. 24.)]

From Italy the emperors were incessantly tormented by tales of misery and demands of succor, which extorted the humiliating confession of their own weakness. The expiring dignity of Rome was only marked by the freedom and energy of her complaints: “If you are incapable,” she said, “of delivering us from the sword of the Lombards, save us at least from the calamity of famine.” Tiberius forgave the reproach, and relieved the distress: a supply of corn was transported from Egypt to the Tyber; and the Roman people, invoking the name, not of Camillus, but of St. Peter repulsed the Barbarians from their walls. But the relief was accidental, the danger was perpetual and pressing; and the clergy and senate, collecting the remains of their ancient opulence, a sum of three thousand pounds of gold, despatched the patrician Pamphronius to lay their gifts and their complaints at the foot of the Byzantine throne. The attention of the court, and the forces of the East, were diverted by the Persian war: but the justice of Tiberius applied the subsidy to the defence of the city; and he dismissed the patrician with his best advice, either to bribe the Lombard chiefs, or to purchase the aid of the kings of France. Notwithstanding this weak invention, Italy was still afflicted, Rome was again besieged, and the suburb of Classe, only three miles from Ravenna, was pillaged and occupied by the troops of a simple duke of Spoleto. Maurice gave audience to a second deputation of priests and senators: the duties and the menaces of religion were forcibly urged in the letters of the Roman pontiff; and his nuncio, the deacon Gregory, was alike qualified to solicit the powers either of heaven or of the earth.

The emperor adopted, with stronger effect, the measures of his predecessor: some formidable chiefs were persuaded to embrace the friendship of the Romans; and one of them, a mild and faithful Barbarian, lived and died in the service of the exarchs: the passes of the Alps were delivered to the Franks; and the pope encouraged them to violate, without scruple, their oaths and engagements to the misbelievers. Childebert, the great-grandson of Clovis, was persuaded to invade Italy by the payment of fifty thousand pieces; but, as he had viewed with delight some Byzantine coin of the weight of one pound of gold, the king of Austrasia might stipulate, that the gift should be rendered more worthy of his acceptance, by a proper mixture of these respectable medals. The dukes of the Lombards had provoked by frequent inroads their powerful neighbors of Gaul. As soon as they were apprehensive of a just retaliation, they renounced their feeble and disorderly independence: the advantages of real government, union, secrecy, and vigor, were unanimously confessed; and Autharis, the son of Clepho, had already attained the strength and reputation of a warrior. Under the standard of their new king, the conquerors of Italy withstood three successive invasions, one of which was led by Childebert himself, the last of the Merovingian race who descended from the Alps. The first expedition was defeated by the jealous animosity of the Franks and Alemanni. In the second they were vanquished in a bloody battle, with more loss and dishonor than they had sustained since the foundation of their monarchy. Impatient for revenge, they returned a third time with accumulated force, and Autharis yielded to the fury of the torrent. The troops and treasures of the Lombards were distributed in the walled towns between the Alps and the Apennine. A nation, less sensible of danger than of fatigue and delay, soon murmured against the folly of their twenty commanders; and the hot vapors of an Italian sun infected with disease those tramontane bodies which had already suffered the vicissitudes of intemperance and famine. The powers that were inadequate to the conquest, were more than sufficient for the desolation, of the country; nor could the trembling natives distinguish between their enemies and their deliverers. If the junction of the Merovingian and Imperial forces had been effected in the neighborhood of Milan, perhaps they might have subverted the throne of the Lombards; but the Franks expected six days the signal of a flaming village, and the arms of the Greeks were idly employed in the reduction of Modena and Parma, which were torn from them after the retreat of their transalpine allies. The victorious Autharis asserted his claim to the dominion of Italy. At the foot of the Rhaetian Alps, he subdued the resistance, and rifled the hidden treasures, of a sequestered island in the Lake of Comum. At the extreme point of the Calabria, he touched with his spear a column on the sea-shore of Rhegium, [32](#) proclaiming that ancient landmark to stand the immovable boundary of his kingdom. [33](#)

Lucas Holsten. Annotat. ad Cluver. p. 301.
Wesseling, Itinerar. p. 106.]

33

[\(return\)](#)

[The Greek historians afford some faint hints of the wars of Italy (Menander, in Excerpt. Legat. p. 124, 126. Theophylact, l. iii. c. 4.) The Latins are more satisfactory; and especially Paul Warnefrid, (l. iii. c. 13—34,) who had read the more ancient histories of Secundus and Gregory of Tours. Baronius produces some letters of the popes, &c.; and the times are measured by the accurate scale of Pagi and Muratori.]

During a period of two hundred years, Italy was unequally divided between the kingdom of the Lombards and the exarchate of Ravenna. The offices and professions, which the jealousy of Constantine had separated, were united by the indulgence of Justinian; and eighteen successive exarchs were invested, in the decline of the empire, with the full remains of civil, of military, and even of ecclesiastical, power. Their immediate jurisdiction, which was afterwards consecrated as the patrimony of St. Peter, extended over the modern Romagna, the marshes or valleys of Ferrara and Commachio, [34](#) five maritime cities from Rimini to Ancona, and a second inland Pentapolis, between the Adriatic coast and the hills of the Apennine. Three subordinate provinces, of Rome, of Venice, and of Naples, which were divided by hostile lands from the palace of Ravenna, acknowledged, both in peace and war, the supremacy of the exarch. The duchy of Rome appears to have included the Tuscan, Sabine, and Latin conquests, of the first four hundred years of the city, and the limits may be distinctly traced along the coast, from Civita Vecchia to Terracina, and with the course of the Tyber from Ameria and Narni to the port of Ostia. The numerous islands from Grado to Chiozza composed the infant dominion of Venice: but the more accessible towns on the Continent were overthrown by the Lombards, who beheld with impotent fury a new capital rising from the waves. The power of the dukes of Naples was circumscribed by the bay and the adjacent isles, by the hostile territory of Capua, and by the Roman colony of Amalphi, [35](#) whose industrious citizens, by the invention of the mariner's compass, have unveiled the face of the globe. The three islands of Sardinia, Corsica, and Sicily, still adhered to the empire; and the acquisition of the farther Calabria removed the landmark of Autharis from the shore of Rhegium to the Isthmus of Consentia. In Sardinia, the savage mountaineers preserved the liberty and religion of their ancestors; and the husbandmen of Sicily were chained to their rich and cultivated soil. Rome was oppressed by the iron sceptre of the exarchs, and a Greek, perhaps a eunuch, insulted with impunity the ruins of the Capitol. But Naples soon acquired the privilege of electing her own dukes: [36](#) the independence of Amalphi was the fruit of commerce; and the voluntary attachment of Venice was finally ennobled by an equal alliance with the Eastern empire. On the map of Italy, the measure of the exarchate occupies a very inadequate space, but it included an ample proportion of wealth,

industry, and population. The most faithful and valuable subjects escaped from the Barbarian yoke; and the banners of Pavia and Verona, of Milan and Padua, were displayed in their respective quarters by the new inhabitants of Ravenna. The remainder of Italy was possessed by the Lombards; and from Pavia, the royal seat, their kingdom was extended to the east, the north, and the west, as far as the confines of the Avars, the Bavarians, and the Franks of Austrasia and Burgundy. In the language of modern geography, it is now represented by the Terra Firma of the Venetian republic, Tyrol, the Milanese, Piedmont, the coast of Genoa, Mantua, Parma, and Modena, the grand duchy of Tuscany, and a large portion of the ecclesiastical state from Perugia to the Adriatic. The dukes, and at length the princes, of Beneventum, survived the monarchy, and propagated the name of the Lombards. From Capua to Tarentum, they reigned near five hundred years over the greatest part of the present kingdom of Naples. [37](#)

34

[\(return\)](#)

[The papal advocates, Zacagni and Fontanini, might justly claim the valley or morass of Commachio as a part of the exarchate. But the ambition of including Modena, Reggio, Parma, and Placentia, has darkened a geographical question somewhat doubtful and obscure Even Muratori, as the servant of the house of Este, is not free from partiality and prejudice.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[See Brenckman, Dissert. Ima de Republica Amalphitana, p. 1—42, ad calcem Hist. Pandect. Florent.]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[Gregor. Magn. l. iii. epist. 23, 25.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[I have described the state of Italy from the excellent Dissertation of Beretti. Giannone (Istoria Civile, tom. i. p. 374—387) has followed the learned Camillo Pellegrini in the geography of the kingdom of Naples. After the loss of the true Calabria, the vanity of the Greeks substituted that name instead of the more ignoble appellation of Bruttium; and the change appears to have taken place before the time of Charlemagne, (Eginard, p. 75.)]

In comparing the proportion of the victorious and the vanquished people, the change of language will afford the most probably inference. According to this standard, it will appear, that the Lombards of Italy, and the Visigoths of Spain, were less numerous than the Franks or Burgundians; and the conquerors of Gaul must yield, in their turn, to the multitude of Saxons and Angles who almost eradicated the idioms of Britain. The modern Italian has been insensibly formed by the mixture of nations: the awkwardness of the Barbarians in the nice management of declensions and conjugations reduced them

to the use of articles and auxiliary verbs; and many new ideas have been expressed by Teutonic appellations. Yet the principal stock of technical and familiar words is found to be of Latin derivation; [38](#) and, if we were sufficiently conversant with the obsolete, the rustic, and the municipal dialects of ancient Italy, we should trace the origin of many terms which might, perhaps, be rejected by the classic purity of Rome. A numerous army constitutes but a small nation, and the powers of the Lombards were soon diminished by the retreat of twenty thousand Saxons, who scorned a dependent situation, and returned, after many bold and perilous adventures, to their native country. [39](#) The camp of Alboin was of formidable extent, but the extent of a camp would be easily circumscribed within the limits of a city; and its martial inhabitants must be thinly scattered over the face of a large country. When Alboin descended from the Alps, he invested his nephew, the first duke of Friuli, with the command of the province and the people: but the prudent Gisulf would have declined the dangerous office, unless he had been permitted to choose, among the nobles of the Lombards, a sufficient number of families [40](#) to form a perpetual colony of soldiers and subjects. In the progress of conquest, the same option could not be granted to the dukes of Brescia or Bergamo, or Pavia or Turin, of Spoleto or Beneventum; but each of these, and each of their colleagues, settled in his appointed district with a band of followers who resorted to his standard in war and his tribunal in peace. Their attachment was free and honorable: resigning the gifts and benefits which they had accepted, they might emigrate with their families into the jurisdiction of another duke; but their absence from the kingdom was punished with death, as a crime of military desertion. [41](#) The posterity of the first conquerors struck a deeper root into the soil, which, by every motive of interest and honor, they were bound to defend. A Lombard was born the soldier of his king and his duke; and the civil assemblies of the nation displayed the banners, and assumed the appellation, of a regular army. Of this army, the pay and the rewards were drawn from the conquered provinces; and the distribution, which was not effected till after the death of Alboin, is disgraced by the foul marks of injustice and rapine. Many of the most wealthy Italians were slain or banished; the remainder were divided among the strangers, and a tributary obligation was imposed (under the name of hospitality) of paying to the Lombards a third part of the fruits of the earth. Within less than seventy years, this artificial system was abolished by a more simple and solid tenure. [42](#) Either the Roman landlord was expelled by his strong and insolent guest, or the annual payment, a third of the produce, was exchanged by a more equitable transaction for an adequate proportion of landed property. Under these foreign masters, the business of agriculture, in the cultivation of corn, wines, and olives, was exercised with degenerate skill and industry by the labor of the slaves and natives. But the occupations of a pastoral life were more pleasing to the idleness of the Barbarian. In the rich meadows of Venetia, they restored and improved the breed of horses, for which that province had once been illustrious; [43](#) and the Italians beheld with astonishment a foreign race of oxen or buffaloes. [44](#) The depopulation of Lombardy, and the increase of forests, afforded an

ample range for the pleasures of the chase. [45](#) That marvellous art which teaches the birds of the air to acknowledge the voice, and execute the commands, of their master, had been unknown to the ingenuity of the Greeks and Romans. [46](#) Scandinavia and Scythia produce the boldest and most tractable falcons: [47](#) they were tamed and educated by the roving inhabitants, always on horseback and in the field. This favorite amusement of our ancestors was introduced by the Barbarians into the Roman provinces; and the laws of Italy esteemed the sword and the hawk as of equal dignity and importance in the hands of a noble Lombard. [48](#)

38 [\(return\)](#)

[Maffei (Verona Illustrata, part i. p. 310—321) and Muratori (Antichita Italiane, tom. ii. Dissertazione xxxii. xxxiii. p. 71—365) have asserted the native claims of the Italian idiom; the former with enthusiasm, the latter with discretion; both with learning, ingenuity, and truth. Note: Compare the admirable sketch of the degeneracy of the Latin language and the formation of the Italian in Hallam, Middle Ages, vol. iii. p. 317 329.—M.]

39 [\(return\)](#)

[Paul, de Gest. Langobard. l. iii. c. 5, 6, 7.]

40 [\(return\)](#)

[Paul, l. ii. c. 9. He calls these families or generations by the Teutonic name of Faras, which is likewise used in the Lombard laws. The humble deacon was not insensible of the nobility of his own race. See l. iv. c. 39.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[Compare No. 3 and 177 of the Laws of Rotharis.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[Paul, l. ii. c. 31, 32, l. iii. c. 16. The Laws of Rotharis, promulgated A.D. 643, do not contain the smallest vestige of this payment of thirds; but they preserve many curious circumstances of the state of Italy and the manners of the Lombards.]

43 [\(return\)](#)

[The studs of Dionysius of Syracuse, and his frequent victories in the Olympic games, had diffused among the Greeks the fame of the Venetian horses; but the breed was extinct in the time of Strabo, (l. v. p. 325.) Gisulf obtained from his uncle *generosarum equarum greges*. Paul, l. ii. c. 9. The Lombards afterwards introduced *caballi sylvatici*—wild horses. Paul, l. iv. c. 11.]

44 [\(return\)](#)

[Tunc (A.D. 596) *primum, bubali in Italiam delati Italiae populis miracula fuere*, (Paul Warnefrid, l. iv. c. 11.) The buffaloes, whose native climate

appears to be Africa and India, are unknown to Europe, except in Italy, where they are numerous and useful. The ancients were ignorant of these animals, unless Aristotle (*Hist. Anim.* l. ii. c. 1, p. 58, Paris, 1783) has described them as the wild oxen of Arachosia. See Buffon, *Hist. Naturelle*, tom. xi. and Supplement, tom. vi. *Hist. Generale des Voyages*, tom. i. p. 7, 481, ii. 105, iii. 291, iv. 234, 461, v. 193, vi. 491, viii. 400, x. 666. Pennant's *Quadrupedes*, p. 24. *Dictionnaire d'Hist. Naturelle*, par Valmont de Bomare, tom. ii. p. 74. Yet I must not conceal the suspicion that Paul, by a vulgar error, may have applied the name of bubalus to the aurochs, or wild bull, of ancient Germany.]

45 [\(return\)](#)

[Consult the xxist Dissertation of Muratori.]

46 [\(return\)](#)

[Their ignorance is proved by the silence even of those who professedly treat of the arts of hunting and the history of animals. Aristotle, (*Hist. Animal.* l. ix. c. 36, tom. i. p. 586, and the Notes of his last editor, M. Camus, tom. ii. p. 314,) Pliny, (*Hist. Natur.* l. x. c. 10,) Aelian (*de Natur. Animal.* l. ii. c. 42,) and perhaps Homer, (*Odyss.* xxii. 302-306,) describe with astonishment a tacit league and common chase between the hawks and the Thracian fowlers.]

47 [\(return\)](#)

[Particularly the gerfaut, or gyrfalcon, of the size of a small eagle. See the animated description of M. de Buffon, *Hist. Naturelle*, tom. xvi. p. 239, &c.]

48 [\(return\)](#)

[*Script. Rerum Italicarum*, tom. i. part ii. p. 129. This is the xvth law of the emperor Lewis the Pious. His father Charlemagne had falconers in his household as well as huntsmen, (*Memoires sur l'ancienne Chevalerie*, par M. de St. Palaye, tom. iii. p. 175.) I observe in the laws of Rotharis a more early mention of the art of hawking, (No. 322;) and in Gaul, in the fifth century, it is celebrated by Sidonius Apollinaris among the talents of Avitus, (202—207.) * Note: See Beckman, *Hist. of Inventions*, vol. i. p. 319—M.]

Chapter XLV: State Of Italy Under The Lombards.—Part III.

So rapid was the influence of climate and example, that the Lombards of the fourth generation surveyed with curiosity and affright the portraits of their savage

forefathers. [49](#) Their heads were shaven behind, but the shaggy locks hung over their eyes and mouth, and a long beard represented the name and character of the nation. Their dress consisted of loose linen garments, after the fashion of the Anglo-Saxons, which were decorated, in their opinion, with broad stripes or variegated colors. The legs and feet were clothed in long hose, and open sandals; and even in the security of peace a trusty sword was constantly girt to their side. Yet this strange apparel, and horrid aspect, often concealed a gentle and generous disposition; and as soon as the rage of battle had subsided, the captives and subjects were sometimes surprised by the humanity of the victor. The vices of the Lombards were the effect of passion, of ignorance, of intoxication; their virtues are the more laudable, as they were not affected by the hypocrisy of social manners, nor imposed by the rigid constraint of laws and education. I should not be apprehensive of deviating from my subject, if it were in my power to delineate the private life of the conquerors of Italy; and I shall relate with pleasure the adventurous gallantry of Autharis, which breathes the true spirit of chivalry and romance. [50](#) After the loss of his promised bride, a Merovingian princess, he sought in marriage the daughter of the king of Bavaria; and Garribald accepted the alliance of the Italian monarch. Impatient of the slow progress of negotiation, the ardent lover escaped from his palace, and visited the court of Bavaria in the train of his own embassy. At the public audience, the unknown stranger advanced to the throne, and informed Garribald that the ambassador was indeed the minister of state, but that he alone was the friend of Autharis, who had trusted him with the delicate commission of making a faithful report of the charms of his spouse. Theudelinda was summoned to undergo this important examination; and, after a pause of silent rapture, he hailed her as the queen of Italy, and humbly requested that, according to the custom of the nation, she would present a cup of wine to the first of her new subjects. By the command of her father she obeyed: Autharis received the cup in his turn, and, in restoring it to the princess, he secretly touched her hand, and drew his own finger over his face and lips. In the evening, Theudelinda imparted to her nurse the indiscreet familiarity of the stranger, and was comforted by the assurance, that such boldness could proceed only from the king her husband, who, by his beauty and courage, appeared worthy of her love. The ambassadors were dismissed: no sooner did they reach the confines of Italy than Autharis, raising himself on his horse, darted his battle-axe against a tree with incomparable strength and dexterity. “Such,” said he to the astonished Bavarians, “such are the strokes of the king of the Lombards.” On the approach of a French army, Garribald and his daughter took refuge in the dominions of their ally; and the marriage was consummated in the palace of Verona. At the end of one year, it was dissolved by the death of Autharis: but the virtues of Theudelinda [51](#) had endeared her to the nation, and she was permitted to bestow, with her hand, the sceptre of the Italian kingdom.

pectore barba fuit. The portraits of the old Lombards might still be seen in the palace of Monza, twelve miles from Milan, which had been founded or restored by Queen Theudelinda, (l. iv. 22, 23.) See Muratori, tom. i. disserta, xxiii. p. 300.]

50

[\(return\)](#)

[The story of Autharis and Theudelinda is related by Paul, l. iii. 29, 34; and any fragment of Bavarian antiquity excites the indefatigable diligence of the count de Buat, Hist. des Peuples de l'Europe, tom. xi. p. 595—635, tom. xii. p. 1-53.]

51

[\(return\)](#)

[Giannone (Istoria Civile de Napoli, tom. i. p. 263) has justly censured the impertinence of Boccaccio, (Gio. iii. Novel. 2,) who, without right, or truth, or pretence, has given the pious queen Theudelinda to the arms of a muleteer.]

From this fact, as well as from similar events, [52](#) it is certain that the Lombards possessed freedom to elect their sovereign, and sense to decline the frequent use of that dangerous privilege. The public revenue arose from the produce of land and the profits of justice. When the independent dukes agreed that Autharis should ascend the throne of his father, they endowed the regal office with a fair moiety of their respective domains. The proudest nobles aspired to the honors of servitude near the person of their prince: he rewarded the fidelity of his vassals by the precarious gift of pensions and benefices; and atoned for the injuries of war by the rich foundation of monasteries and churches. In peace a judge, a leader in war, he never usurped the powers of a sole and absolute legislator. The king of Italy convened the national assemblies in the palace, or more probably in the fields, of Pavia: his great council was composed of the persons most eminent by their birth and dignities; but the validity, as well as the execution, of their decrees depended on the approbation of the faithful people, the fortunate army of the Lombards. About fourscore years after the conquest of Italy, their traditional customs were transcribed in Teutonic Latin, [53](#) and ratified by the consent of the prince and people: some new regulations were introduced, more suitable to their present condition; the example of Rotharis was imitated by the wisest of his successors; and the laws of the Lombards have been esteemed the least imperfect of the Barbaric codes. [54](#) Secure by their courage in the possession of liberty, these rude and hasty legislators were incapable of balancing the powers of the constitution, or of discussing the nice theory of political government. Such crimes as threatened the life of the sovereign, or the safety of the state, were adjudged worthy of death; but their attention was principally confined to the defence of the person and property of the subject. According to the strange jurisprudence of the times, the guilt of blood might be redeemed by a fine; yet the high price of nine hundred pieces of gold declares a just sense of the value of a simple citizen. Less atrocious injuries, a wound, a fracture, a blow, an opprobrious word, were measured with scrupulous and almost ridiculous

diligence; and the prudence of the legislator encouraged the ignoble practice of bartering honor and revenge for a pecuniary compensation. The ignorance of the Lombards in the state of Paganism or Christianity gave implicit credit to the malice and mischief of witchcraft, but the judges of the seventeenth century might have been instructed and confounded by the wisdom of Rotharis, who derides the absurd superstition, and protects the wretched victims of popular or judicial cruelty. [55](#) The same spirit of a legislator, superior to his age and country, may be ascribed to Luitprand, who condemns, while he tolerates, the impious and inveterate abuse of duels, [56](#) observing, from his own experience, that the juster cause had often been oppressed by successful violence. Whatever merit may be discovered in the laws of the Lombards, they are the genuine fruit of the reason of the Barbarians, who never admitted the bishops of Italy to a seat in their legislative councils. But the succession of their kings is marked with virtue and ability; the troubled series of their annals is adorned with fair intervals of peace, order, and domestic happiness; and the Italians enjoyed a milder and more equitable government, than any of the other kingdoms which had been founded on the ruins of the Western empire. [57](#)

52

[\(return\)](#)

[Paul, l. iii. c. 16. The first dissertations of Muratori, and the first volume of Giannone's history, may be consulted for the state of the kingdom of Italy.]

53

[\(return\)](#)

[The most accurate edition of the Laws of the Lombards is to be found in the *Scriptores Rerum Italicarum*, tom. i. part ii. p. 1—181, collated from the most ancient Mss. and illustrated by the critical notes of Muratori.]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[Montesquieu, *Esprit des Loix*, l. xxviii. c. 1. Les loix des Bourguignons sont assez judicieuses; celles de Rotharis et des autres princes Lombards le sont encore plus.]

55

[\(return\)](#)

[See *Leges Rotharis*, No. 379, p. 47. Striga is used as the name of a witch. It is of the purest classic origin, (*Horat. epod. v. 20. Petron. c. 134;*) and from the words of Petronius, (*quae striges comederunt nervos tuos?*) it may be inferred that the prejudice was of Italian rather than Barbaric extraction.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[*Quia incerti sumus de judicio Dei, et multos audivimus per pugnam sine justa causa suam causam perdere. Sed propter consuetudinom gentem nostram Langobardorum legem impiam vetare non possumus. See p. 74, No. 65, of the Laws of Luitprand, promulgated A.D. 724.*]

[Read the history of Paul Warnefrid; particularly l. iii. c. 16. Baronius rejects the praise, which appears to contradict the invectives of Pope Gregory the Great; but Muratori (*Annali d' Italia*, tom. v. p. 217) presumes to insinuate that the saint may have magnified the faults of Arians and enemies.]

Amidst the arms of the Lombards, and under the despotism of the Greeks, we again inquire into the fate of Rome, [58](#) which had reached, about the close of the sixth century, the lowest period of her depression. By the removal of the seat of empire, and the successive loss of the provinces, the sources of public and private opulence were exhausted: the lofty tree, under whose shade the nations of the earth had reposed, was deprived of its leaves and branches, and the sapless trunk was left to wither on the ground. The ministers of command, and the messengers of victory, no longer met on the Appian or Flaminian way; and the hostile approach of the Lombards was often felt, and continually feared. The inhabitants of a potent and peaceful capital, who visit without an anxious thought the garden of the adjacent country, will faintly picture in their fancy the distress of the Romans: they shut or opened their gates with a trembling hand, beheld from the walls the flames of their houses, and heard the lamentations of their brethren, who were coupled together like dogs, and dragged away into distant slavery beyond the sea and the mountains. Such incessant alarms must annihilate the pleasures and interrupt the labors of a rural life; and the Campagna of Rome was speedily reduced to the state of a dreary wilderness, in which the land is barren, the waters are impure, and the air is infectious. Curiosity and ambition no longer attracted the nations to the capital of the world: but, if chance or necessity directed the steps of a wandering stranger, he contemplated with horror the vacancy and solitude of the city, and might be tempted to ask, Where is the senate, and where are the people? In a season of excessive rains, the Tyber swelled above its banks, and rushed with irresistible violence into the valleys of the seven hills. A pestilential disease arose from the stagnation of the deluge, and so rapid was the contagion, that fourscore persons expired in an hour in the midst of a solemn procession, which implored the mercy of Heaven. [59](#) A society in which marriage is encouraged and industry prevails soon repairs the accidental losses of pestilence and war: but, as the far greater part of the Romans was condemned to hopeless indigence and celibacy, the depopulation was constant and visible, and the gloomy enthusiasts might expect the approaching failure of the human race. [60](#) Yet the number of citizens still exceeded the measure of subsistence: their precarious food was supplied from the harvests of Sicily or Egypt; and the frequent repetition of famine betrays the inattention of the emperor to a distant province. The edifices of Rome were exposed to the same ruin and decay: the mouldering fabrics were easily overthrown by inundations, tempests, and earthquakes: and the monks, who had occupied the most advantageous stations, exulted in their base triumph over the ruins of antiquity. [61](#) It is commonly believed, that Pope Gregory the

First attacked the temples and mutilated the statues of the city; that, by the command of the Barbarian, the Palatine library was reduced to ashes, and that the history of Livy was the peculiar mark of his absurd and mischievous fanaticism. The writings of Gregory himself reveal his implacable aversion to the monuments of classic genius; and he points his severest censure against the profane learning of a bishop, who taught the art of grammar, studied the Latin poets, and pronounced with the same voice the praises of Jupiter and those of Christ. But the evidence of his destructive rage is doubtful and recent: the Temple of Peace, or the theatre of Marcellus, have been demolished by the slow operation of ages, and a formal proscription would have multiplied the copies of Virgil and Livy in the countries which were not subject to the ecclesiastical dictator. [62](#)

58 [\(return\)](#)

[The passages of the homilies of Gregory, which represent the miserable state of the city and country, are transcribed in the Annals of Baronius, A.D. 590, No. 16, A.D. 595, No. 2, &c., &c.]

59 [\(return\)](#)

[The inundation and plague were reported by a deacon, whom his bishop, Gregory of Tours, had despatched to Rome for some relics The ingenious messenger embellished his tale and the river with a great dragon and a train of little serpents, (Greg. Turon. l. x. c. 1.)]

60 [\(return\)](#)

[Gregory of Rome (Dialog. l. ii. c. 15) relates a memorable prediction of St. Benedict. Roma a Gentilibus non exterminabitur sed tempestatibus, coruscis turbinibus ac terrae motu in semetipsa marcescet. Such a prophecy melts into true history, and becomes the evidence of the fact after which it was invented.]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[Quia in uno se ore cum Jovis laudibus, Christi laudes non capiunt, et quam grave nefandumque sit episcopis canere quod nec laico religioso conveniat, ipse considera, (l. ix. ep. 4.) The writings of Gregory himself attest his innocence of any classic taste or literature]

62 [\(return\)](#)

[Bayle, (Dictionnaire Critique, tom. ii. 598, 569,) in a very good article of Gregoire I., has quoted, for the buildings and statues, Platina in Gregorio I.; for the Palatine library, John of Salisbury, (de Nugis Curialium, l. ii. c. 26;) and for Livy, Antoninus of Florence: the oldest of the three lived in the xiith century.]

Like Thebes, or Babylon, or Carthage, the names of Rome might have been erased from the earth, if the city had not been animated by a vital principle, which again

restored her to honor and dominion. A vague tradition was embraced, that two Jewish teachers, a tent-maker and a fisherman, had formerly been executed in the circus of Nero, and at the end of five hundred years, their genuine or fictitious relics were adored as the Palladium of Christian Rome. The pilgrims of the East and West resorted to the holy threshold; but the shrines of the apostles were guarded by miracles and invisible terrors; and it was not without fear that the pious Catholic approached the object of his worship. It was fatal to touch, it was dangerous to behold, the bodies of the saints; and those who, from the purest motives, presumed to disturb the repose of the sanctuary, were affrighted by visions, or punished with sudden death. The unreasonable request of an empress, who wished to deprive the Romans of their sacred treasure, the head of St. Paul, was rejected with the deepest abhorrence; and the pope asserted, most probably with truth, that a linen which had been sanctified in the neighborhood of his body, or the filings of his chain, which it was sometimes easy and sometimes impossible to obtain, possessed an equal degree of miraculous virtue. [63](#) But the power as well as virtue of the apostles resided with living energy in the breast of their successors; and the chair of St. Peter was filled under the reign of Maurice by the first and greatest of the name of Gregory. [64](#) His grandfather Felix had himself been pope, and as the bishops were already bound by the laws of celibacy, his consecration must have been preceded by the death of his wife. The parents of Gregory, Sylvia, and Gordian, were the noblest of the senate, and the most pious of the church of Rome; his female relations were numbered among the saints and virgins; and his own figure, with those of his father and mother, were represented near three hundred years in a family portrait, [65](#) which he offered to the monastery of St. Andrew. The design and coloring of this picture afford an honorable testimony that the art of painting was cultivated by the Italians of the sixth century; but the most abject ideas must be entertained of their taste and learning, since the epistles of Gregory, his sermons, and his dialogues, are the work of a man who was second in erudition to none of his contemporaries: [66](#) his birth and abilities had raised him to the office of præfect of the city, and he enjoyed the merit of renouncing the pomps and vanities of this world. His ample patrimony was dedicated to the foundation of seven monasteries, [67](#) one in Rome, [68](#) and six in Sicily; and it was the wish of Gregory that he might be unknown in this life, and glorious only in the next. Yet his devotion (and it might be sincere) pursued the path which would have been chosen by a crafty and ambitious statesman. The talents of Gregory, and the splendor which accompanied his retreat, rendered him dear and useful to the church; and implicit obedience has always been inculcated as the first duty of a monk. As soon as he had received the character of deacon, Gregory was sent to reside at the Byzantine court, the nuncio or minister of the apostolic see; and he boldly assumed, in the name of St. Peter, a tone of independent dignity, which would have been criminal and dangerous in the most illustrious layman of the empire. He returned to Rome with a just increase of reputation, and, after a short exercise of the monastic virtues, he was dragged from the cloister to the papal throne, by the unanimous voice of the clergy, the senate, and the

people. He alone resisted, or seemed to resist, his own elevation; and his humble petition, that Maurice would be pleased to reject the choice of the Romans, could only serve to exalt his character in the eyes of the emperor and the public. When the fatal mandate was proclaimed, Gregory solicited the aid of some friendly merchants to convey him in a basket beyond the gates of Rome, and modestly concealed himself some days among the woods and mountains, till his retreat was discovered, as it is said, by a celestial light.

63

[\(return\)](#)

[Gregor. l. iii. epist. 24, edict. 12, &c. From the epistles of Gregory, and the viiith volume of the Annals of Baronius, the pious reader may collect the particles of holy iron which were inserted in keys or crosses of gold, and distributed in Britain, Gaul, Spain, Africa, Constantinople, and Egypt. The pontifical smith who handled the file must have understood the miracles which it was in his own power to operate or withhold; a circumstance which abates the superstition of Gregory at the expense of his veracity.]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[Besides the epistles of Gregory himself, which are methodized by Dupin, (Bibliothèque Eccles. tom. v. p. 103—126,) we have three lives of the pope; the two first written in the viiith and ixth centuries, (de Triplici Vita St. Greg. Preface to the ivth volume of the Benedictine edition,) by the deacons Paul (p. 1—18) and John, (p. 19—188,) and containing much original, though doubtful, evidence; the third, a long and labored compilation by the Benedictine editors, (p. 199—305.) The annals of Baronius are a copious but partial history. His papal prejudices are tempered by the good sense of Fleury, (Hist. Eccles. tom. viii.,) and his chronology has been rectified by the criticism of Pagi and Muratori.]

65

[\(return\)](#)

[John the deacon has described them like an eye-witness, (l. iv. c. 83, 84;) and his description is illustrated by Angelo Rocca, a Roman antiquary, (St. Greg. Opera, tom. iv. p. 312—326;) who observes that some mosaics of the popes of the viiith century are still preserved in the old churches of Rome, (p. 321—323) The same walls which represented Gregory's family are now decorated with the martyrdom of St. Andrew, the noble contest of Dominichino and Guido.]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[*Disciplinis vero liberalibus, hoc est grammatica, rhetorica, dialectica ita apuero est institutus, ut*

quamvis eo tempore florerent adhuc Romæ studia
literarum, tamen nulli in urbe ipsa secundus
putaretur. Paul. Diacon. in Vit. St. Gregor. c. 2.]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[The Benedictines (Vit. Greg. l. i. p. 205—208)
labor to reduce the monasteries of Gregory within
the rule of their own order; but, as the question is
confessed to be doubtful, it is clear that these
powerful monks are in the wrong. See Butler's
Lives of the Saints, vol. iii. p. 145; a work of merit:
the sense and learning belong to the author—his
prejudices are those of his profession.]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[Monasterium Gregorianum in ejusdem Beati
Gregorii aedibus ad clivum Scauri prope ecclesiam
SS. Johannis et Pauli in honorem St. Andreae,
(John, in Vit. Greg. l. i. c. 6. Greg. l. vii. epist. 13.)
This house and monastery were situate on the side
of the Caelian hill which fronts the Palatine; they
are now occupied by the Camaldoli: San Gregorio
triumphs, and St. Andrew has retired to a small
chapel Nardini, Roma Antica, l. iii. c. 6, p. 100.
Descrizione di Roma, tom. i. p. 442—446.]

The pontificate of Gregory the Great, which lasted thirteen years, six months, and ten days, is one of the most edifying periods of the history of the church. His virtues, and even his faults, a singular mixture of simplicity and cunning, of pride and humility, of sense and superstition, were happily suited to his station and to the temper of the times. In his rival, the patriarch of Constantinople, he condemned the anti-Christian title of universal bishop, which the successor of St. Peter was too haughty to concede, and too feeble to assume; and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Gregory was confined to the triple character of Bishop of Rome, Primate of Italy, and Apostle of the West. He frequently ascended the pulpit, and kindled, by his rude, though pathetic, eloquence, the congenial passions of his audience: the language of the Jewish prophets was interpreted and applied; and the minds of a people, depressed by their present calamities, were directed to the hopes and fears of the invisible world. His precepts and example defined the model of the Roman liturgy; [69](#) the distribution of the parishes, the calendar of the festivals, the order of processions, the service of the priests and deacons, the variety and change of sacerdotal garments. Till the last days of his life, he officiated in the canon of the mass, which continued above three hours: the Gregorian chant [70](#) has preserved the vocal and instrumental music of the theatre, and the rough voices of the Barbarians attempted to imitate the melody of the Roman school. [71](#) Experience had shown him the efficacy of these solemn and pompous rites, to soothe the distress, to confirm the faith, to mitigate the fierceness, and to dispel the dark enthusiasm of the vulgar, and he readily forgave their tendency to promote the reign of priesthood and superstition. The bishops of Italy and the adjacent islands acknowledged the Roman pontiff as their

special metropolitan. Even the existence, the union, or the translation of episcopal seats was decided by his absolute discretion: and his successful inroads into the provinces of Greece, of Spain, and of Gaul, might countenance the more lofty pretensions of succeeding popes. He interposed to prevent the abuses of popular elections; his jealous care maintained the purity of faith and discipline; and the apostolic shepherd assiduously watched over the faith and discipline of the subordinate pastors. Under his reign, the Arians of Italy and Spain were reconciled to the Catholic church, and the conquest of Britain reflects less glory on the name of Caesar, than on that of Gregory the First. Instead of six legions, forty monks were embarked for that distant island, and the pontiff lamented the austere duties which forbade him to partake the perils of their spiritual warfare. In less than two years, he could announce to the archbishop of Alexandria, that they had baptized the king of Kent with ten thousand of his Anglo-Saxons, and that the Roman missionaries, like those of the primitive church, were armed only with spiritual and supernatural powers. The credulity or the prudence of Gregory was always disposed to confirm the truths of religion by the evidence of ghosts, miracles, and resurrections; [72](#) and posterity has paid to his memory the same tribute which he freely granted to the virtue of his own or the preceding generation. The celestial honors have been liberally bestowed by the authority of the popes, but Gregory is the last of their own order whom they have presumed to inscribe in the calendar of saints.

69 [\(return\)](#)
 [The Lord's Prayer consists of half a dozen lines; the Sacramentarius and Antiphonarius of Gregory fill 880 folio pages, (tom. iii. p. i. p. 1—880;) yet these only constitute a part of the Ordo Romanus, which Mabillon has illustrated and Fleury has abridged, (Hist. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 139—152.)]

70 [\(return\)](#)
 [I learn from the Abbe Dobos, (Reflexions sur la Poesie et la Peinture, tom. iii. p. 174, 175,) that the simplicity of the Ambrosian chant was confined to four modes, while the more perfect harmony of the Gregorian comprised the eight modes or fifteen chords of the ancient music. He observes (p. 332) that the connoisseurs admire the preface and many passages of the Gregorian office.]

71 [\(return\)](#)
 [John the deacon (in Vit. Greg. l. ii. c. 7) expresses the early contempt of the Italians for tramontane singing. Alpina scilicet corpora vocum suarum tonitruis altisone perstreptentia, susceptae modulationis dulcedinem proprie non resultant: quia bibuli gutturis barbara feritas dum inflexionibus et repercussionibus mitem nititur edere cantilenam, naturali quodam fragore, quasi

plaustra per gradus confuse sonantia, rigidas voces jactat, &c. In the time of Charlemagne, the Franks, though with some reluctance, admitted the justice of the reproach. Muratori, Dissert. xxv.]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[A French critic (Petrus Gussanvillus, Opera, tom. ii. p. 105—112) has vindicated the right of Gregory to the entire nonsense of the Dialogues. Dupin (tom. v. p. 138) does not think that any one will vouch for the truth of all these miracles: I should like to know how many of them he believed himself.]

Their temporal power insensibly arose from the calamities of the times: and the Roman bishops, who have deluged Europe and Asia with blood, were compelled to reign as the ministers of charity and peace. I. The church of Rome, as it has been formerly observed, was endowed with ample possessions in Italy, Sicily, and the more distant provinces; and her agents, who were commonly sub-deacons, had acquired a civil, and even criminal, jurisdiction over their tenants and husbandmen. The successor of St. Peter administered his patrimony with the temper of a vigilant and moderate landlord; [73](#) and the epistles of Gregory are filled with salutary instructions to abstain from doubtful or vexatious lawsuits; to preserve the integrity of weights and measures; to grant every reasonable delay; and to reduce the capitation of the slaves of the glebe, who purchased the right of marriage by the payment of an arbitrary fine. [74](#) The rent or the produce of these estates was transported to the mouth of the Tyber, at the risk and expense of the pope: in the use of wealth he acted like a faithful steward of the church and the poor, and liberally applied to their wants the inexhaustible resources of abstinence and order. The voluminous account of his receipts and disbursements was kept above three hundred years in the Lateran, as the model of Christian economy. On the four great festivals, he divided their quarterly allowance to the clergy, to his domestics, to the monasteries, the churches, the places of burial, the almshouses, and the hospitals of Rome, and the rest of the diocese. On the first day of every month, he distributed to the poor, according to the season, their stated portion of corn, wine, cheese, vegetables, oil, fish, fresh provisions, clothes, and money; and his treasurers were continually summoned to satisfy, in his name, the extraordinary demands of indigence and merit. The instant distress of the sick and helpless, of strangers and pilgrims, was relieved by the bounty of each day, and of every hour; nor would the pontiff indulge himself in a frugal repast, till he had sent the dishes from his own table to some objects deserving of his compassion. The misery of the times had reduced the nobles and matrons of Rome to accept, without a blush, the benevolence of the church: three thousand virgins received their food and raiment from the hand of their benefactor; and many bishops of Italy escaped from the Barbarians to the hospitable threshold of the Vatican. Gregory might justly be styled the Father of his Country; and such was the extreme sensibility of his conscience, that, for the death of a beggar who had perished in the streets, he interdicted himself during several days from the exercise of sacerdotal

functions. II. The misfortunes of Rome involved the apostolical pastor in the business of peace and war; and it might be doubtful to himself, whether piety or ambition prompted him to supply the place of his absent sovereign. Gregory awakened the emperor from a long slumber; exposed the guilt or incapacity of the exarch and his inferior ministers; complained that the veterans were withdrawn from Rome for the defence of Spoleto; encouraged the Italians to guard their cities and altars; and condescended, in the crisis of danger, to name the tribunes, and to direct the operations, of the provincial troops. But the martial spirit of the pope was checked by the scruples of humanity and religion: the imposition of tribute, though it was employed in the Italian war, he freely condemned as odious and oppressive; whilst he protected, against the Imperial edicts, the pious cowardice of the soldiers who deserted a military for a monastic life. If we may credit his own declarations, it would have been easy for Gregory to exterminate the Lombards by their domestic factions, without leaving a king, a duke, or a count, to save that unfortunate nation from the vengeance of their foes. As a Christian bishop, he preferred the salutary offices of peace; his mediation appeased the tumult of arms: but he was too conscious of the arts of the Greeks, and the passions of the Lombards, to engage his sacred promise for the observance of the truce. Disappointed in the hope of a general and lasting treaty, he presumed to save his country without the consent of the emperor or the exarch. The sword of the enemy was suspended over Rome; it was averted by the mild eloquence and seasonable gifts of the pontiff, who commanded the respect of heretics and Barbarians. The merits of Gregory were treated by the Byzantine court with reproach and insult; but in the attachment of a grateful people, he found the purest reward of a citizen, and the best right of a sovereign. [75](#)

73

[\(return\)](#)

[Baronius is unwilling to expatiate on the care of the patrimonies, lest he should betray that they consisted not of kingdoms, but farms. The French writers, the Benedictine editors, (tom. iv. l. iii. p. 272, &c.) and Fleury, (tom. viii. p. 29, &c.) are not afraid of entering into these humble, though useful, details; and the humanity of Fleury dwells on the social virtues of Gregory.]

74

[\(return\)](#)

[I much suspect that this pecuniary fine on the marriages of villains produced the famous, and often fabulous right, *de cuissage*, *de marquette*, &c. With the consent of her husband, a handsome bride might commute the payment in the arms of a young landlord, and the mutual favor might afford a precedent of local rather than legal tyranny]

75

[\(return\)](#)

[The temporal reign of Gregory I. is ably exposed by Sigonius in the first book, *de Regno Italiae*. See his works, tom. ii. p. 44—75]

Chapter XLVI: Troubles In Persia.—Part I.

Revolutions On Persia After The Death Of Chosroes On Nushirvan.—His Son Hormouz, A Tyrant, Is Deposed.—Usurpation Of Baharam.—Flight And Restoration Of Chosroes II.—His Gratitude To The Romans.—The Chagan Of The Avars.—Revolt Of The Army Against Maurice.—His Death.—Tyranny Of Phocas.—Elevation Of Heraclius.—The Persian War.—Chosroes Subdues Syria, Egypt, And Asia Minor.—Siege Of Constantinople By The Persians And Avars.—Persian Expeditions.—Victories And Triumph Of Heraclius.

The conflict of Rome and Persia was prolonged from the death of Craesus to the reign of Heraclius. An experience of seven hundred years might convince the rival nations of the impossibility of maintaining their conquests beyond the fatal limits of the Tigris and Euphrates. Yet the emulation of Trajan and Julian was awakened by the trophies of Alexander, and the sovereigns of Persia indulged the ambitious hope of restoring the empire of Cyrus. ¹ Such extraordinary efforts of power and courage will always command the attention of posterity; but the events by which the fate of nations is not materially changed, leave a faint impression on the page of history, and the patience of the reader would be exhausted by the repetition of the same hostilities, undertaken without cause, prosecuted without glory, and terminated without effect. The arts of negotiation, unknown to the simple greatness of the senate and the Caesars, were assiduously cultivated by the Byzantine princes; and the memorials of their perpetual embassies ² repeat, with the same uniform prolixity, the language of falsehood and declamation, the insolence of the Barbarians, and the servile temper of the tributary Greeks. Lamenting the barren superfluity of materials, I have studied to compress the narrative of these uninteresting transactions: but the just Nushirvan is still applauded as the model of Oriental kings, and the ambition of his grandson Chosroes prepared the revolution of the East, which was speedily accomplished by the arms and the religion of the successors of Mahomet.

1

[\(return\)](#)

[Missis qui... reposcerent... veteres Persarum ac Macedonum terminos, seque invasurum possessa Cyro et post Alexandro, per vaniloquentiam ac minas jaciebat. Tacit. Annal. vi. 31. Such was the language of the Arsacides. I have repeatedly marked the lofty claims of the Sassanians.]

2

[\(return\)](#)

[See the embassies of Menander, extracted and preserved in the tenth century by the order of Constantine Porphyrogenitus.]

In the useless altercations, that precede and justify the quarrels of princes, the Greeks and the Barbarians accused each other of violating the peace which had been concluded between the two empires about four years before the death of Justinian. The sovereign of Persia and India aspired to reduce under his obedience the province of Yemen or Arabia [3](#) Felix; the distant land of myrrh and frankincense, which had escaped, rather than opposed, the conquerors of the East. After the defeat of Abrahah under the walls of Mecca, the discord of his sons and brothers gave an easy entrance to the Persians: they chased the strangers of Abyssinia beyond the Red Sea; and a native prince of the ancient Homerites was restored to the throne as the vassal or viceroy of the great Nushirvan. [4](#) But the nephew of Justinian declared his resolution to avenge the injuries of his Christian ally the prince of Abyssinia, as they suggested a decent pretence to discontinue the annual tribute, which was poorly disguised by the name of pension. The churches of Persarmenia were oppressed by the intolerant spirit of the Magi; [411](#) they secretly invoked the protector of the Christians, and, after the pious murder of their satraps, the rebels were avowed and supported as the brethren and subjects of the Roman emperor. The complaints of Nushirvan were disregarded by the Byzantine court; Justin yielded to the importunities of the Turks, who offered an alliance against the common enemy; and the Persian monarchy was threatened at the same instant by the united forces of Europe, of Aethiopia, and of Scythia. At the age of fourscore the sovereign of the East would perhaps have chosen the peaceful enjoyment of his glory and greatness; but as soon as war became inevitable, he took the field with the alacrity of youth, whilst the aggressor trembled in the palace of Constantinople. Nushirvan, or Chosroes, conducted in person the siege of Dara; and although that important fortress had been left destitute of troops and magazines, the valor of the inhabitants resisted above five months the archers, the elephants, and the military engines of the Great King. In the mean while his general Adarman advanced from Babylon, traversed the desert, passed the Euphrates, insulted the suburbs of Antioch, reduced to ashes the city of Apamea, and laid the spoils of Syria at the feet of his master, whose perseverance in the midst of winter at length subverted the bulwark of the East. But these losses, which astonished the provinces and the court, produced a salutary effect in the repentance and abdication of the emperor Justin: a new spirit arose in the Byzantine councils; and a truce of three years was obtained by the prudence of Tiberius. That seasonable interval was employed in the preparations of war; and the voice of rumor proclaimed to the world, that from the distant countries of the Alps and the Rhine, from Scythia, Maesia, Pannonia, Illyricum, and Isauria, the strength of the Imperial cavalry was reenforced with one hundred and fifty thousand soldiers. Yet the king of Persia, without fear, or without faith, resolved to prevent the attack of the enemy; again passed the Euphrates, and dismissing the ambassadors of Tiberius, arrogantly commanded them to await his arrival at Caesarea, the metropolis of the Cappadocian provinces. The two armies encountered each other in the battle of Melitene: [412](#) the Barbarians, who darkened the air with a cloud of arrows, prolonged their line, and extended their wings across the

plain; while the Romans, in deep and solid bodies, expected to prevail in closer action, by the weight of their swords and lances. A Scythian chief, who commanded their right wing, suddenly turned the flank of the enemy, attacked their rear-guard in the presence of Chosroes, penetrated to the midst of the camp, pillaged the royal tent, profaned the eternal fire, loaded a train of camels with the spoils of Asia, cut his way through the Persian host, and returned with songs of victory to his friends, who had consumed the day in single combats, or ineffectual skirmishes. The darkness of the night, and the separation of the Romans, afforded the Persian monarch an opportunity of revenge; and one of their camps was swept away by a rapid and impetuous assault. But the review of his loss, and the consciousness of his danger, determined Chosroes to a speedy retreat: he burnt, in his passage, the vacant town of Melitene; and, without consulting the safety of his troops, boldly swam the Euphrates on the back of an elephant. After this unsuccessful campaign, the want of magazines, and perhaps some inroad of the Turks, obliged him to disband or divide his forces; the Romans were left masters of the field, and their general Justinian, advancing to the relief of the Persarmenian rebels, erected his standard on the banks of the Araxes. The great Pompey had formerly halted within three days' march of the Caspian: [5](#) that inland sea was explored, for the first time, by a hostile fleet, [6](#) and seventy thousand captives were transplanted from Hyrcania to the Isle of Cyprus. On the return of spring, Justinian descended into the fertile plains of Assyria; the flames of war approached the residence of Nushirvan; the indignant monarch sunk into the grave; and his last edict restrained his successors from exposing their person in battle against the Romans. [611](#) Yet the memory of this transient affront was lost in the glories of a long reign; and his formidable enemies, after indulging their dream of conquest, again solicited a short respite from the calamities of war. [7](#)

[The general independence of the Arabs, which cannot be admitted without many limitations, is blindly asserted in a separate dissertation of the authors of the Universal History, vol. xx. p. 196—250. A perpetual miracle is supposed to have guarded the prophecy in favor of the posterity of Ishmael; and these learned bigots are not afraid to risk the truth of Christianity on this frail and slippery foundation. * Note: It certainly appears difficult to extract a prediction of the perpetual independence of the Arabs from the text in Genesis, which would have received an ample fulfilment during centuries of uninvaded freedom. But the disputants appear to forget the inseparable connection in the prediction between the wild, the Bedoween habits of the Ismaelites, with their national independence. The stationary and civilized descendant of Ismael forfeited, as it were, his birthright, and ceased to be a genuine son of the “wild man” The phrase, “dwelling in the presence

of his brethren,” is interpreted by Rosenmüller (in loc.) and others, according to the Hebrew geography, “to the East” of his brethren, the legitimate race of Abraham—M.]

4

[\(return\)](#)

[D’Herbelot, *Biblioth. Orient.* p. 477. Pocock, *Specimen Hist. Arabum*, p. 64, 65. Father Pagi (*Critica*, tom. ii. p. 646) has proved that, after ten years’ peace, the Persian war, which continued twenty years, was renewed A.D. 571. Mahomet was born A.D. 569, in the year of the elephant, or the defeat of Abrahah, (Gagnier, *Vie de Mahomet*, tom. i. p. 89, 90, 98;) and this account allows two years for the conquest of Yemen. * Note: Abrahah, according to some accounts, was succeeded by his son Taksoum, who reigned seventeen years; his brother Mascouh, who was slain in battle against the Persians, twelve. But this chronology is irreconcilable with the Arabian conquests of Nushirvan the Great. Either Seif, or his son Maadi Karb, was the native prince placed on the throne by the Persians. St. Martin, vol. x. p. 78. See likewise Johannsen, *Hist. Yemanae*.—M.]

411

[\(return\)](#)

[Persarmenia was long maintained in peace by the tolerant administration of Mejej, prince of the Gnounians. On his death he was succeeded by a persecutor, a Persian, named Ten-Schahpour, who attempted to propagate Zoroastrianism by violence. Nushirvan, on an appeal to the throne by the Armenian clergy, replaced Ten-Schahpour, in 552, by Veschnas-Vahram. The new marzban, or governor, was instructed to repress the bigoted Magi in their persecutions of the Armenians, but the Persian converts to Christianity were still exposed to cruel sufferings. The most distinguished of them, Izdbouzid, was crucified at Dovin in the presence of a vast multitude. The fame of this martyr spread to the West. Menander, the historian, not only, as appears by a fragment published by Mai, related this event in his history, but, according to M. St. Martin, wrote a tragedy on the subject. This, however, is an unwarrantable inference from the phrase which merely means that he related the tragic event in his history. An epigram on the same subject, preserved in the *Anthology*, Jacob’s *Anth. Palat.* i. 27, belongs to the historian. Yet Armenia remained in peace under the government of Veschnas-Vahram and his successor Varazdat. The tyranny of his successor Surena led to the

insurrection under Vartan, the Mamigonian, who revenged the death of his brother on the marzban Surena, surprised Dovin, and put to the sword the governor, the soldiers, and the Magians. From St. Martin, vol x. p. 79—89.—M.]

412 [\(return\)](#)

[Malathiah. It was in the lesser Armenia.—M.]

5 [\(return\)](#)

[He had vanquished the Albanians, who brought into the field 12,000 horse and 60,000 foot; but he dreaded the multitude of venomous reptiles, whose existence may admit of some doubt, as well as that of the neighboring Amazons. Plutarch, in Pompeio, tom. ii. p. 1165, 1166.]

6 [\(return\)](#)

[In the history of the world I can only perceive two navies on the Caspian: 1. Of the Macedonians, when Patrocles, the admiral of the kings of Syria, Seleucus and Antiochus, descended most probably the River Oxus, from the confines of India, (Plin. Hist. Natur. vi. 21.) 2. Of the Russians, when Peter the First conducted a fleet and army from the neighborhood of Moscow to the coast of Persia, (Bell's Travels, vol. ii. p. 325—352.) He justly observes, that such martial pomp had never been displayed on the Volga.]

611 [\(return\)](#)

[This circumstance rests on the statements of Evagrius and Theophylaci Simocatta. They are not of sufficient authority to establish a fact so improbable. St. Martin, vol. x. p. 140.—M.]

7 [\(return\)](#)

[For these Persian wars and treaties, see Menander, in Excerpt. Legat. p. 113—125. Theophanes Byzant. apud Photium, cod. lxiv p. 77, 80, 81. Evagrius, l. v. c. 7—15. Theophylact, l. iii. c. 9—16 Agathias, l. iv. p. 140.]

The throne of Chosroes Nushirvan was filled by Hormouz, or Hormisdas, the eldest or the most favored of his sons. With the kingdoms of Persia and India, he inherited the reputation and example of his father, the service, in every rank, of his wise and valiant officers, and a general system of administration, harmonized by time and political wisdom to promote the happiness of the prince and people. But the royal youth enjoyed a still more valuable blessing, the friendship of a sage who had presided over his education, and who always preferred the honor to the interest of his pupil, his interest to his inclination. In a dispute with the Greek and Indian philosophers, Buzurg [8](#) had once maintained, that the most grievous misfortune of life is old age without the remembrance of virtue; and our candor will presume that the same principle compelled

him, during three years, to direct the councils of the Persian empire. His zeal was rewarded by the gratitude and docility of Hormouz, who acknowledged himself more indebted to his preceptor than to his parent: but when age and labor had impaired the strength, and perhaps the faculties, of this prudent counsellor, he retired from court, and abandoned the youthful monarch to his own passions and those of his favorites. By the fatal vicissitude of human affairs, the same scenes were renewed at Ctesiphon, which had been exhibited at Rome after the death of Marcus Antoninus. The ministers of flattery and corruption, who had been banished by his father, were recalled and cherished by the son; the disgrace and exile of the friends of Nushirvan established their tyranny; and virtue was driven by degrees from the mind of Hormouz, from his palace, and from the government of the state. The faithful agents, the eyes and ears of the king, informed him of the progress of disorder, that the provincial governors flew to their prey with the fierceness of lions and eagles, and that their rapine and injustice would teach the most loyal of his subjects to abhor the name and authority of their sovereign. The sincerity of this advice was punished with death; the murmurs of the cities were despised, their tumults were quelled by military execution: the intermediate powers between the throne and the people were abolished; and the childish vanity of Hormouz, who affected the daily use of the tiara, was fond of declaring, that he alone would be the judge as well as the master of his kingdom.

In every word, and in every action, the son of Nushirvan degenerated from the virtues of his father. His avarice defrauded the troops; his jealous caprice degraded the satraps; the palace, the tribunals, the waters of the Tigris, were stained with the blood of the innocent, and the tyrant exulted in the sufferings and execution of thirteen thousand victims. As the excuse of his cruelty, he sometimes condescended to observe, that the fears of the Persians would be productive of hatred, and that their hatred must terminate in rebellion but he forgot that his own guilt and folly had inspired the sentiments which he deplored, and prepared the event which he so justly apprehended. Exasperated by long and hopeless oppression, the provinces of Babylon, Susa, and Carmania, erected the standard of revolt; and the princes of Arabia, India, and Scythia, refused the customary tribute to the unworthy successor of Nushirvan. The arms of the Romans, in slow sieges and frequent inroads, afflicted the frontiers of Mesopotamia and Assyria: one of their generals professed himself the disciple of Scipio; and the soldiers were animated by a miraculous image of Christ, whose mild aspect should never have been displayed in the front of battle. [9](#) At the same time, the eastern provinces of Persia were invaded by the great khan, who passed the Oxus at the head of three or four hundred thousand Turks. The imprudent Hormouz accepted their perfidious and formidable aid; the cities of Khorassan or Bactriana were commanded to open their gates; the march of the Barbarians towards the mountains of Hyrcania revealed the correspondence of the Turkish and Roman arms; and their union must have subverted the throne of the house of Sassan.

8

[\(return\)](#)

[Buzurg Mihir may be considered, in his character and station, as the Seneca of the East; but his virtues, and perhaps his faults, are less known than those of the Roman, who appears to have been much more loquacious. The Persian sage was the person who imported from India the game of chess and the fables of Pilpay. Such has been the fame of his wisdom and virtues, that the Christians claim him as a believer in the gospel; and the Mahometans revere Buzurg as a premature Mussulman. D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. 218.]

9

[\(return\)](#)

[See the imitation of Scipio in Theophylact, l. i. c. 14; the image of Christ, l. ii. c. 3. Hereafter I shall speak more amply of the Christian images—I had almost said idols. This, if I am not mistaken, is the oldest of divine manufacture; but in the next thousand years, many others issued from the same workshop.]

Persia had been lost by a king; it was saved by a hero. After his revolt, Varanes or Bahram is stigmatized by the son of Hormouz as an ungrateful slave; the proud and ambiguous reproach of despotism, since he was truly descended from the ancient princes of Rei, [10](#) one of the seven families whose splendid, as well as substantial, prerogatives exalted them above the heads of the Persian nobility. [11](#) At the siege of Dara, the valor of Bahram was signalized under the eyes of Nushirvan, and both the father and son successively promoted him to the command of armies, the government of Media, and the superintendence of the palace. The popular prediction which marked him as the deliverer of Persia, might be inspired by his past victories and extraordinary figure: the epithet Giubin [1111](#) is expressive of the quality of dry wood: he had the strength and stature of a giant; and his savage countenance was fancifully compared to that of a wild cat. While the nation trembled, while Hormouz disguised his terror by the name of suspicion, and his servants concealed their disloyalty under the mask of fear, Bahram alone displayed his undaunted courage and apparent fidelity: and as soon as he found that no more than twelve thousand soldiers would follow him against the enemy; he prudently declared, that to this fatal number Heaven had reserved the honors of the triumph. [1112](#) The steep and narrow descent of the Pule Rudbar, [12](#) or Hyrcanian rock, is the only pass through which an army can penetrate into the territory of Rei and the plains of Media. From the commanding heights, a band of resolute men might overwhelm with stones and darts the myriads of the Turkish host: their emperor and his son were transpierced with arrows; and the fugitives were left, without counsel or provisions, to the revenge of an injured people. The patriotism of the Persian general was stimulated by his affection for the city of his forefathers: in the hour of victory, every peasant became a soldier, and every soldier a hero; and their ardor was kindled by the gorgeous spectacle of beds, and thrones, and tables of massy gold, the spoils of

Asia, and the luxury of the hostile camp. A prince of a less malignant temper could not easily have forgiven his benefactor; and the secret hatred of Hormouz was envenomed by a malicious report, that Bahram had privately retained the most precious fruits of his Turkish victory. But the approach of a Roman army on the side of the Araxes compelled the implacable tyrant to smile and to applaud; and the toils of Bahram were rewarded with the permission of encountering a new enemy, by their skill and discipline more formidable than a Scythian multitude. Elated by his recent success, he despatched a herald with a bold defiance to the camp of the Romans, requesting them to fix a day of battle, and to choose whether they would pass the river themselves, or allow a free passage to the arms of the great king. The lieutenant of the emperor Maurice preferred the safer alternative; and this local circumstance, which would have enhanced the victory of the Persians, rendered their defeat more bloody and their escape more difficult. But the loss of his subjects, and the danger of his kingdom, were overbalanced in the mind of Hormouz by the disgrace of his personal enemy; and no sooner had Bahram collected and reviewed his forces, than he received from a royal messenger the insulting gift of a distaff, a spinning-wheel, and a complete suit of female apparel. Obedient to the will of his sovereign he showed himself to the soldiers in this unworthy disguise: they resented his ignominy and their own; a shout of rebellion ran through the ranks; and the general accepted their oath of fidelity and vows of revenge. A second messenger, who had been commanded to bring the rebel in chains, was trampled under the feet of an elephant, and manifestos were diligently circulated, exhorting the Persians to assert their freedom against an odious and contemptible tyrant. The defection was rapid and universal; his loyal slaves were sacrificed to the public fury; the troops deserted to the standard of Bahram; and the provinces again saluted the deliverer of his country.

10

[\(return\)](#)

[Ragae, or Rei, is mentioned in the Apocryphal book of Tobit as already flourishing, 700 years before Christ, under the Assyrian empire. Under the foreign names of Europus and Arsacia, this city, 500 stadia to the south of the Caspian gates, was successively embellished by the Macedonians and Parthians, (Strabo, l. xi. p. 796.) Its grandeur and populousness in the ixth century are exaggerated beyond the bounds of credibility; but Rei has been since ruined by wars and the unwholesomeness of the air. Chardin, Voyage en Perse, tom. i. p. 279, 280. D'Herbelot, Biblioth. Oriental. p. 714.]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[Theophylact. l. iii. c. 18. The story of the seven Persians is told in the third book of Herodotus; and their noble descendants are often mentioned, especially in the fragments of Ctesias. Yet the independence of Otanes (Herodot. l. iii. c. 83, 84) is hostile to the spirit of despotism, and it may not

seem probable that the seven families could survive the revolutions of eleven hundred years. They might, however, be represented by the seven ministers, (Brisson, de Regno Persico, l. i. p. 190;) and some Persian nobles, like the kings of Pontus (Polyb l. v. p. 540) and Cappadocia, (Diodor. Sicul. l. xxxi. tom. ii. p. 517,) might claim their descent from the bold companions of Darius.]

1111 [\(return\)](#)

[He is generally called Baharam Choubeen, Baharam, the stick-like, probably from his appearance. Malcolm, vol. i. p. 120.—M.]

1112 [\(return\)](#)

[The Persian historians say, that Hormouz entreated his general to increase his numbers; but Baharam replied, that experience had taught him that it was the quality, not the number of soldiers, which gave success. * * * No man in his army was under forty years, and none above fifty. Malcolm, vol. i. p. 121—M.]

12 [\(return\)](#)

[See an accurate description of this mountain by Olearius, (Voyage en Perse, p. 997, 998,) who ascended it with much difficulty and danger in his return from Ispahan to the Caspian Sea.]

As the passes were faithfully guarded, Hormouz could only compute the number of his enemies by the testimony of a guilty conscience, and the daily defection of those who, in the hour of his distress, avenged their wrongs, or forgot their obligations. He proudly displayed the ensigns of royalty; but the city and palace of Modain had already escaped from the hand of the tyrant. Among the victims of his cruelty, Bindoes, a Sassanian prince, had been cast into a dungeon; his fetters were broken by the zeal and courage of a brother; and he stood before the king at the head of those trusty guards, who had been chosen as the ministers of his confinement, and perhaps of his death. Alarmed by the hasty intrusion and bold reproaches of the captive, Hormouz looked round, but in vain, for advice or assistance; discovered that his strength consisted in the obedience of others; and patiently yielded to the single arm of Bindoes, who dragged him from the throne to the same dungeon in which he himself had been so lately confined. At the first tumult, Chosroes, the eldest of the sons of Hormouz, escaped from the city; he was persuaded to return by the pressing and friendly invitation of Bindoes, who promised to seat him on his father's throne, and who expected to reign under the name of an inexperienced youth. In the just assurance, that his accomplices could neither forgive nor hope to be forgiven, and that every Persian might be trusted as the judge and enemy of the tyrant, he instituted a public trial without a precedent and without a copy in the annals of the East. The son of Nushirvan, who had requested to plead in his own defence, was introduced as a criminal into the full assembly of the

nobles and satraps. [13](#) He was heard with decent attention as long as he expatiated on the advantages of order and obedience, the danger of innovation, and the inevitable discord of those who had encouraged each other to trample on their lawful and hereditary sovereign. By a pathetic appeal to their humanity, he extorted that pity which is seldom refused to the fallen fortunes of a king; and while they beheld the abject posture and squalid appearance of the prisoner, his tears, his chains, and the marks of ignominious stripes, it was impossible to forget how recently they had adored the divine splendor of his diadem and purple. But an angry murmur arose in the assembly as soon as he presumed to vindicate his conduct, and to applaud the victories of his reign. He defined the duties of a king, and the Persian nobles listened with a smile of contempt; they were fired with indignation when he dared to vilify the character of Chosroes; and by the indiscreet offer of resigning the sceptre to the second of his sons, he subscribed his own condemnation, and sacrificed the life of his own innocent favorite. The mangled bodies of the boy and his mother were exposed to the people; the eyes of Hormouz were pierced with a hot needle; and the punishment of the father was succeeded by the coronation of his eldest son. Chosroes had ascended the throne without guilt, and his piety strove to alleviate the misery of the abdicated monarch; from the dungeon he removed Hormouz to an apartment of the palace, supplied with liberality the consolations of sensual enjoyment, and patiently endured the furious sallies of his resentment and despair. He might despise the resentment of a blind and unpopular tyrant, but the tiara was trembling on his head, till he could subvert the power, or acquire the friendship, of the great Bahram, who sternly denied the justice of a revolution, in which himself and his soldiers, the true representatives of Persia, had never been consulted. The offer of a general amnesty, and of the second rank in his kingdom, was answered by an epistle from Bahram, friend of the gods, conqueror of men, and enemy of tyrants, the satrap of satraps, general of the Persian armies, and a prince adorned with the title of eleven virtues. [14](#) He commands Chosroes, the son of Hormouz, to shun the example and fate of his father, to confine the traitors who had been released from their chains, to deposit in some holy place the diadem which he had usurped, and to accept from his gracious benefactor the pardon of his faults and the government of a province. The rebel might not be proud, and the king most assuredly was not humble; but the one was conscious of his strength, the other was sensible of his weakness; and even the modest language of his reply still left room for treaty and reconciliation. Chosroes led into the field the slaves of the palace and the populace of the capital: they beheld with terror the banners of a veteran army; they were encompassed and surprised by the evolutions of the general; and the satraps who had deposed Hormouz, received the punishment of their revolt, or expiated their first treason by a second and more criminal act of disloyalty. The life and liberty of Chosroes were saved, but he was reduced to the necessity of imploring aid or refuge in some foreign land; and the implacable Bindoes, anxious to secure an unquestionable title, hastily returned to the palace, and ended, with a bowstring, the wretched existence of the son of Nushirvan. [15](#)

- 13 [\(return\)](#)
[The Orientals suppose that Bahram convened this assembly and proclaimed Chosroes; but Theophylact is, in this instance, more distinct and credible. * Note: Yet Theophylact seems to have seized the opportunity to indulge his propensity for writing orations; and the orations read rather like those of a Grecian sophist than of an Eastern assembly.—M.]
- 14 [\(return\)](#)
[See the words of Theophylact, l. iv. c. 7., &c. In answer, Chosroes styles himself in genuine Oriental bombast.]
- 15 [\(return\)](#)
[Theophylact (l. iv. c. 7) imputes the death of Hormouz to his son, by whose command he was beaten to death with clubs. I have followed the milder account of Khondemir and Eutychius, and shall always be content with the slightest evidence to extenuate the crime of parricide. Note: Malcolm concurs in ascribing his death to Bundawee, (Bindoes,) vol. i. p. 123. The Eastern writers generally impute the crime to the uncle St. Martin, vol. x. p. 300.—M.]

While Chosroes despatched the preparations of his retreat, he deliberated with his remaining friends, [16](#) whether he should lurk in the valleys of Mount Caucasus, or fly to the tents of the Turks, or solicit the protection of the emperor. The long emulation of the successors of Artaxerxes and Constantine increased his reluctance to appear as a suppliant in a rival court; but he weighed the forces of the Romans, and prudently considered that the neighborhood of Syria would render his escape more easy and their succors more effectual. Attended only by his concubines, and a troop of thirty guards, he secretly departed from the capital, followed the banks of the Euphrates, traversed the desert, and halted at the distance of ten miles from Circesium. About the third watch of the night, the Roman præfect was informed of his approach, and he introduced the royal stranger to the fortress at the dawn of day. From thence the king of Persia was conducted to the more honorable residence of Hierapolis; and Maurice dissembled his pride, and displayed his benevolence, at the reception of the letters and ambassadors of the grandson of Nushirvan. They humbly represented the vicissitudes of fortune and the common interest of princes, exaggerated the ingratitude of Bahram, the agent of the evil principle, and urged, with specious argument, that it was for the advantage of the Romans themselves to support the two monarchies which balance the world, the two great luminaries by whose salutary influence it is vivified and adorned. The anxiety of Chosroes was soon relieved by the assurance, that the emperor had espoused the cause of justice and royalty; but Maurice prudently declined the expense and delay of his useless visit to Constantinople. In the name of his generous benefactor, a rich diadem

was presented to the fugitive prince, with an inestimable gift of jewels and gold; a powerful army was assembled on the frontiers of Syria and Armenia, under the command of the valiant and faithful Narses, [17](#) and this general, of his own nation, and his own choice, was directed to pass the Tigris, and never to sheathe his sword till he had restored Chosroes to the throne of his ancestors. [1711](#) The enterprise, however splendid, was less arduous than it might appear. Persia had already repented of her fatal rashness, which betrayed the heir of the house of Sassan to the ambition of a rebellious subject: and the bold refusal of the Magi to consecrate his usurpation, compelled Bahram to assume the sceptre, regardless of the laws and prejudices of the nation. The palace was soon distracted with conspiracy, the city with tumult, the provinces with insurrection; and the cruel execution of the guilty and the suspected served to irritate rather than subdue the public discontent. No sooner did the grandson of Nushirvan display his own and the Roman banners beyond the Tigris, than he was joined, each day, by the increasing multitudes of the nobility and people; and as he advanced, he received from every side the grateful offerings of the keys of his cities and the heads of his enemies. As soon as Modain was freed from the presence of the usurper, the loyal inhabitants obeyed the first summons of Mebodes at the head of only two thousand horse, and Chosroes accepted the sacred and precious ornaments of the palace as the pledge of their truth and the presage of his approaching success. After the junction of the Imperial troops, which Bahram vainly struggled to prevent, the contest was decided by two battles on the banks of the Zab, and the confines of Media. The Romans, with the faithful subjects of Persia, amounted to sixty thousand, while the whole force of the usurper did not exceed forty thousand men: the two generals signalized their valor and ability; but the victory was finally determined by the prevalence of numbers and discipline. With the remnant of a broken army, Bahram fled towards the eastern provinces of the Oxus: the enmity of Persia reconciled him to the Turks; but his days were shortened by poison, perhaps the most incurable of poisons; the stings of remorse and despair, and the bitter remembrance of lost glory. Yet the modern Persians still commemorate the exploits of Bahram; and some excellent laws have prolonged the duration of his troubled and transitory reign.

16

[\(return\)](#)

[After the battle of Pharsalia, the Pompey of Lucan (l. viii. 256—455) holds a similar debate. He was himself desirous of seeking the Parthians: but his companions abhorred the unnatural alliance and the adverse prejudices might operate as forcibly on Chosroes and his companions, who could describe, with the same vehemence, the contrast of laws, religion, and manners, between the East and West.]

17

[\(return\)](#)

[In this age there were three warriors of the name of Narses, who have been often confounded, (Pagi, Critica, tom. ii. p. 640:) 1. A Persarmenian, the

brother of Isaac and Armatius, who, after a successful action against Belisarius, deserted from his Persian sovereign, and afterwards served in the Italian war.—2. The eunuch who conquered Italy.—3. The restorer of Chosroes, who is celebrated in the poem of Corippus (l. iii. 220—327) as *excelsus super omnia vertico agmina.... habitu modestus.... morum probitate placens, virtute verendus; fulmineus, cautus, vigilans, &c.*]

1711

[\(return\)](#)

[The Armenians adhered to Chosroes. St. Martin, vol. x. p. 312.—M. —According to Mivkhond and the Oriental writers, Bahram received the daughter of the Khakan in marriage, and commanded a body of Turks in an invasion of Persia. Some say that he was assassinated; Malcolm adopts the opinion that he was poisoned. His sister Gourdieh, the companion of his flight, is celebrated in the Shah Nameh. She was afterwards one of the wives of Chosroes. St. Martin. vol. x. p. 331.—M.]

The restoration of Chosroes was celebrated with feasts and executions; and the music of the royal banquet was often disturbed by the groans of dying or mutilated criminals. A general pardon might have diffused comfort and tranquillity through a country which had been shaken by the late revolutions; yet, before the sanguinary temper of Chosroes is blamed, we should learn whether the Persians had not been accustomed either to dread the rigor, or to despise the weakness, of their sovereign. The revolt of Bahram, and the conspiracy of the satraps, were impartially punished by the revenge or justice of the conqueror; the merits of Bindoes himself could not purify his hand from the guilt of royal blood: and the son of Hormouz was desirous to assert his own innocence, and to vindicate the sanctity of kings. During the vigor of the Roman power, several princes were seated on the throne of Persia by the arms and the authority of the first Caesars. But their new subjects were soon disgusted with the vices or virtues which they had imbibed in a foreign land; the instability of their dominion gave birth to a vulgar observation, that the choice of Rome was solicited and rejected with equal ardor by the capricious levity of Oriental slaves. But the glory of Maurice was conspicuous in the long and fortunate reign of his son and his ally. A band of a thousand Romans, who continued to guard the person of Chosroes, proclaimed his confidence in the fidelity of the strangers; his growing strength enabled him to dismiss this unpopular aid, but he steadily professed the same gratitude and reverence to his adopted father; and till the death of Maurice, the peace and alliance of the two empires were faithfully maintained. [18](#) Yet the mercenary friendship of the Roman prince had been purchased with costly and important gifts; the strong cities of Martyropolis and Dara [1811](#) were restored, and the Persarmenians became the willing subjects of an empire, whose eastern limit was extended, beyond the example of former times, as far as the banks of the Araxes, and the neighborhood of the Caspian. A pious hope was indulged, that the

church as well as the state might triumph in this revolution: but if Chosroes had sincerely listened to the Christian bishops, the impression was erased by the zeal and eloquence of the Magi: if he was armed with philosophic indifference, he accommodated his belief, or rather his professions, to the various circumstances of an exile and a sovereign. The imaginary conversion of the king of Persia was reduced to a local and superstitious veneration for Sergius, [19](#) one of the saints of Antioch, who heard his prayers and appeared to him in dreams; he enriched the shrine with offerings of gold and silver, and ascribed to this invisible patron the success of his arms, and the pregnancy of Sira, a devout Christian and the best beloved of his wives. [20](#) The beauty of Sira, or Schirin, [21](#) her wit, her musical talents, are still famous in the history, or rather in the romances, of the East: her own name is expressive, in the Persian tongue, of sweetness and grace; and the epithet of Parviz alludes to the charms of her royal lover. Yet Sira never shared the passions which she inspired, and the bliss of Chosroes was tortured by a jealous doubt, that while he possessed her person, she had bestowed her affections on a meaner favorite. [22](#)

18

[\(return\)](#)

[Experimentis cognitum est Barbaros malle Roma petere reges quam habere. These experiments are admirably represented in the invitation and expulsion of Vonones, (Annal. ii. 1—3,) Tiridates, (Annal. vi. 32-44,) and Meherdates, (Annal. xi. 10, xii. 10-14.) The eye of Tacitus seems to have transpierced the camp of the Parthians and the walls of the harem.]

1811

[\(return\)](#)

[Concerning Nisibis, see St. Martin and his Armenian authorities, vol. x p. 332, and Memoires sur l'Armenie, tom. i. p. 25.—M.]

19

[\(return\)](#)

[Sergius and his companion Bacchus, who are said to have suffered in the persecution of Maximian, obtained divine honor in France, Italy, Constantinople, and the East. Their tomb at Rasaphe was famous for miracles, and that Syrian town acquired the more honorable name of Sergiopolis. Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. v. p. 481—496. Butler's Saints, vol. x. p. 155.]

20

[\(return\)](#)

[Evagrius (l. vi. c. 21) and Theophylact (l. v. c. 13, 14) have preserved the original letters of Chosroes, written in Greek, signed with his own hand, and afterwards inscribed on crosses and tables of gold, which were deposited in the church of Sergiopolis. They had been sent to the bishop of Antioch, as primate of Syria. * Note: St. Martin thinks that they were first written in Syriac, and then translated into

the bad Greek in which they appear, vol. x. p. 334.—M.]

21

[\(return\)](#)

[The Greeks only describe her as a Roman by birth, a Christian by religion: but she is represented as the daughter of the emperor Maurice in the Persian and Turkish romances which celebrate the love of Khosrou for Schirin, of Schirin for Ferhad, the most beautiful youth of the East, D'Herbelot, Biblioth. Orient. p. 789, 997, 998. * Note: Compare M. von Hammer's preface to, and poem of, Schirin in which he gives an account of the various Persian poems, of which he has endeavored to extract the essence in his own work.—M.]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[The whole series of the tyranny of Hormouz, the revolt of Bahram, and the flight and restoration of Chosroes, is related by two contemporary Greeks—more concisely by Evagrius, (l. vi. c. 16, 17, 18, 19,) and most diffusely by Theophylact Simocatta, (l. iii. c. 6—18, l. iv. c. 1—16, l. v. c. 1-15:) succeeding compilers, Zonaras and Cedrenus, can only transcribe and abridge. The Christian Arabs, Eutychius (Annal. tom. ii. p. 200—208) and Abulpharagius (Dynast. p. 96—98) appear to have consulted some particular memoirs. The great Persian historians of the xvth century, Mirkhond and Khondemir, are only known to me by the imperfect extracts of Schikard, (Tarikh, p. 150—155,) Texeira, or rather Stevens, (Hist. of Persia, p. 182—186,) a Turkish Ms. translated by the Abbe Fourmount, (Hist. de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. vii. p. 325—334,) and D'Herbelot, (aux mots Hormouz, p. 457—459. Bahram, p. 174. Khosrou Parviz, p. 996.) Were I perfectly satisfied of their authority, I could wish these Oriental materials had been more copious.]

Chapter XLVI: Troubles In Persia.—Part II.

While the majesty of the Roman name was revived in the East, the prospect of Europe is less pleasing and less glorious. By the departure of the Lombards, and the ruin of the Gepidae, the balance of power was destroyed on the Danube; and the Avars spread their permanent dominion from the foot of the Alps to the sea-coast of the Euxine. The reign of Baian is the brightest aera of their monarchy; their chagan, who occupied the rustic palace of Attila, appears to have imitated his character and policy; [23](#) but as the same scenes were repeated in a smaller circle, a minute representation of the copy would be

devoid of the greatness and novelty of the original. The pride of the second Justin, of Tiberius, and Maurice, was humbled by a proud Barbarian, more prompt to inflict, than exposed to suffer, the injuries of war; and as often as Asia was threatened by the Persian arms, Europe was oppressed by the dangerous inroads, or costly friendship, of the Avars. When the Roman envoys approached the presence of the chagan, they were commanded to wait at the door of his tent, till, at the end perhaps of ten or twelve days, he condescended to admit them. If the substance or the style of their message was offensive to his ear, he insulted, with real or affected fury, their own dignity, and that of their prince; their baggage was plundered, and their lives were only saved by the promise of a richer present and a more respectful address. But his sacred ambassadors enjoyed and abused an unbounded license in the midst of Constantinople: they urged, with importunate clamors, the increase of tribute, or the restitution of captives and deserters: and the majesty of the empire was almost equally degraded by a base compliance, or by the false and fearful excuses with which they eluded such insolent demands. The chagan had never seen an elephant; and his curiosity was excited by the strange, and perhaps fabulous, portrait of that wonderful animal. At his command, one of the largest elephants of the Imperial stables was equipped with stately caparisons, and conducted by a numerous train to the royal village in the plains of Hungary. He surveyed the enormous beast with surprise, with disgust, and possibly with terror; and smiled at the vain industry of the Romans, who, in search of such useless rarities, could explore the limits of the land and sea. He wished, at the expense of the emperor, to repose in a golden bed. The wealth of Constantinople, and the skilful diligence of her artists, were instantly devoted to the gratification of his caprice; but when the work was finished, he rejected with scorn a present so unworthy the majesty of a great king. [24](#) These were the casual sallies of his pride; but the avarice of the chagan was a more steady and tractable passion: a rich and regular supply of silk apparel, furniture, and plate, introduced the rudiments of art and luxury among the tents of the Scythians; their appetite was stimulated by the pepper and cinnamon of India; [25](#) the annual subsidy or tribute was raised from fourscore to one hundred and twenty thousand pieces of gold; and after each hostile interruption, the payment of the arrears, with exorbitant interest, was always made the first condition of the new treaty. In the language of a Barbarian, without guile, the prince of the Avars affected to complain of the insincerity of the Greeks; [26](#) yet he was not inferior to the most civilized nations in the refinement of dissimulation and perfidy. As the successor of the Lombards, the chagan asserted his claim to the important city of Sirmium, the ancient bulwark of the Illyrian provinces. [27](#) The plains of the Lower Hungary were covered with the Avar horse and a fleet of large boats was built in the Hercynian wood, to descend the Danube, and to transport into the Save the materials of a bridge. But as the strong garrison of Singidunum, which commanded the conflux of the two rivers, might have stopped their passage and baffled his designs, he dispelled their apprehensions by a solemn oath that his views were not hostile to the empire. He swore by his sword, the symbol of the god

of war, that he did not, as the enemy of Rome, construct a bridge upon the Save. "If I violate my oath," pursued the intrepid Baian, "may I myself, and the last of my nation, perish by the sword! May the heavens, and fire, the deity of the heavens, fall upon our heads! May the forests and mountains bury us in their ruins! and the Save returning, against the laws of nature, to his source, overwhelm us in his angry waters!" After this barbarous imprecation, he calmly inquired, what oath was most sacred and venerable among the Christians, what guilt or perjury it was most dangerous to incur. The bishop of Singidunum presented the gospel, which the chagan received with devout reverence. "I swear," said he, "by the God who has spoken in this holy book, that I have neither falsehood on my tongue, nor treachery in my heart." As soon as he rose from his knees, he accelerated the labor of the bridge, and despatched an envoy to proclaim what he no longer wished to conceal. "Inform the emperor," said the perfidious Baian, "that Sirmium is invested on every side. Advise his prudence to withdraw the citizens and their effects, and to resign a city which it is now impossible to relieve or defend." Without the hope of relief, the defence of Sirmium was prolonged above three years: the walls were still untouched; but famine was enclosed within the walls, till a merciful capitulation allowed the escape of the naked and hungry inhabitants. Singidunum, at the distance of fifty miles, experienced a more cruel fate: the buildings were razed, and the vanquished people was condemned to servitude and exile. Yet the ruins of Sirmium are no longer visible; the advantageous situation of Singidunum soon attracted a new colony of Scлавonians, and the conflux of the Save and Danube is still guarded by the fortifications of Belgrade, or the White City, so often and so obstinately disputed by the Christian and Turkish arms. [28](#) From Belgrade to the walls of Constantinople a line may be measured of six hundred miles: that line was marked with flames and with blood; the horses of the Avars were alternately bathed in the Euxine and the Adriatic; and the Roman pontiff, alarmed by the approach of a more savage enemy, [29](#) was reduced to cherish the Lombards, as the protectors of Italy. The despair of a captive, whom his country refused to ransom, disclosed to the Avars the invention and practice of military engines. [30](#) But in the first attempts they were rudely framed, and awkwardly managed; and the resistance of Diocletianopolis and Beraea, of Philippopolis and Adrianople, soon exhausted the skill and patience of the besiegers. The warfare of Baian was that of a Tartar; yet his mind was susceptible of a humane and generous sentiment: he spared Anchialus, whose salutary waters had restored the health of the best beloved of his wives; and the Romans confessed, that their starving army was fed and dismissed by the liberality of a foe. His empire extended over Hungary, Poland, and Prussia, from the mouth of the Danube to that of the Oder; [31](#) and his new subjects were divided and transplanted by the jealous policy of the conqueror. [32](#) The eastern regions of Germany, which had been left vacant by the emigration of the Vandals, were replenished with Scлавonian colonists; the same tribes are discovered in the neighborhood of the Adriatic and of the Baltic, and with the name of Baian himself, the Illyrian cities of Neyss and Lissa are again found in the heart of Silesia. In the disposition both of his troops and

provinces the chagan exposed the vassals, whose lives he disregarded, [33](#) to the first assault; and the swords of the enemy were blunted before they encountered the native valor of the Avars.

23 [\(return\)](#)

[A general idea of the pride and power of the chagan may be taken from Menander (Excerpt. Legat. p. 118, &c.) and Theophylact, (l. i. c. 3, l. vii. c. 15,) whose eight books are much more honorable to the Avar than to the Roman prince. The predecessors of Baian had tasted the liberality of Rome, and he survived the reign of Maurice, (Buat, Hist. des Peuples Barbares, tom. xi. p. 545.) The chagan who invaded Italy, A.D. 611, (Muratori, Annali, tom. v. p. 305,) was then invenili aetate florentem, (Paul Warnefrid, de Gest. Langobard. l v c 38,) the son, perhaps, or the grandson, of Baian.]

24 [\(return\)](#)

[Theophylact, l. i. c. 5, 6.]

25 [\(return\)](#)

[Even in the field, the chagan delighted in the use of these aromatics. He solicited, as a gift, and received. Theophylact, l. vii. c. 13. The Europeans of the ruder ages consumed more spices in their meat and drink than is compatible with the delicacy of a modern palate. Vie Privee des Francois, tom. ii. p. 162, 163.]

26 [\(return\)](#)

[Theophylact, l. vi. c. 6, l. vii. c. 15. The Greek historian confesses the truth and justice of his reproach]

27 [\(return\)](#)

[Menander (in Excerpt. Legat. p. 126—132, 174, 175) describes the perjury of Baian and the surrender of Sirmium. We have lost his account of the siege, which is commended by Theophylact, l. i. c. 3. * Note: Compare throughout Schlozer Nordische Geschichte, p. 362—373—M.]

28 [\(return\)](#)

[See D’Anville, in the Memoires de l’Acad. des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii. p. 412—443. The Slavonic name of Belgrade is mentioned in the xth century by Constantine Porphyrogenitus: the Latin appellation of Alba Croeca is used by the Franks in the beginning of the ixth, (p. 414.)]

29 [\(return\)](#)

[Baron. Annal. Eccles. A. B. 600, No. 1. Paul Warnefrid (l. iv. c. 38) relates their irruption into Friuli, and (c. 39) the captivity of his ancestors,

about A.D. 632. The Sclavi traversed the Adriatic cum multitudine navium, and made a descent in the territory of Sipontum, (c. 47.)]

30 [\(return\)](#)

[Even the helepolis, or movable turret. Theophylact, l. ii. 16, 17.]

31 [\(return\)](#)

[The arms and alliances of the chagan reached to the neighborhood of a western sea, fifteen months' journey from Constantinople. The emperor Maurice conversed with some itinerant harpers from that remote country, and only seems to have mistaken a trade for a nation Theophylact, l. vi. c. 2.]

32 [\(return\)](#)

[This is one of the most probable and luminous conjectures of the learned count de Buat, (Hist. des Peuples Barbares, tom. xi. p. 546—568.) The Tzechi and Serbi are found together near Mount Caucasus, in Illyricum, and on the lower Elbe. Even the wildest traditions of the Bohemians, &c., afford some color to his hypothesis.]

33 [\(return\)](#)

[See Fredegarius, in the Historians of France, tom. ii. p. 432. Baian did not conceal his proud insensibility.]

The Persian alliance restored the troops of the East to the defence of Europe: and Maurice, who had supported ten years the insolence of the chagan, declared his resolution to march in person against the Barbarians. In the space of two centuries, none of the successors of Theodosius had appeared in the field: their lives were supinely spent in the palace of Constantinople; and the Greeks could no longer understand, that the name of emperor, in its primitive sense, denoted the chief of the armies of the republic. The martial ardor of Maurice was opposed by the grave flattery of the senate, the timid superstition of the patriarch, and the tears of the empress Constantina; and they all conjured him to devolve on some meaner general the fatigues and perils of a Scythian campaign. Deaf to their advice and entreaty, the emperor boldly advanced [34](#) seven miles from the capital; the sacred ensign of the cross was displayed in the front; and Maurice reviewed, with conscious pride, the arms and numbers of the veterans who had fought and conquered beyond the Tigris. Anchialus was the last term of his progress by sea and land; he solicited, without success, a miraculous answer to his nocturnal prayers; his mind was confounded by the death of a favorite horse, the encounter of a wild boar, a storm of wind and rain, and the birth of a monstrous child; and he forgot that the best of omens is to unsheathe our sword in the defence of our country. [35](#) Under the pretence of receiving the ambassadors of Persia, the emperor returned to Constantinople, exchanged the thoughts of war for those of devotion, and disappointed the public hope by his absence and the choice of his lieutenants. The blind

partiality of fraternal love might excuse the promotion of his brother Peter, who fled with equal disgrace from the Barbarians, from his own soldiers and from the inhabitants of a Roman city. That city, if we may credit the resemblance of name and character, was the famous Azimuntium, [36](#) which had alone repelled the tempest of Attila. The example of her warlike youth was propagated to succeeding generations; and they obtained, from the first or the second Justin, an honorable privilege, that their valor should be always reserved for the defence of their native country. The brother of Maurice attempted to violate this privilege, and to mingle a patriot band with the mercenaries of his camp; they retired to the church, he was not awed by the sanctity of the place; the people rose in their cause, the gates were shut, the ramparts were manned; and the cowardice of Peter was found equal to his arrogance and injustice. The military fame of Commentiolus [37](#) is the object of satire or comedy rather than of serious history, since he was even deficient in the vile and vulgar qualification of personal courage. His solemn councils, strange evolutions, and secret orders, always supplied an apology for flight or delay. If he marched against the enemy, the pleasant valleys of Mount Haemus opposed an insuperable barrier; but in his retreat, he explored, with fearless curiosity, the most difficult and obsolete paths, which had almost escaped the memory of the oldest native. The only blood which he lost was drawn, in a real or affected malady, by the lancet of a surgeon; and his health, which felt with exquisite sensibility the approach of the Barbarians, was uniformly restored by the repose and safety of the winter season. A prince who could promote and support this unworthy favorite must derive no glory from the accidental merit of his colleague Priscus. [38](#) In five successive battles, which seem to have been conducted with skill and resolution, seventeen thousand two hundred Barbarians were made prisoners: near sixty thousand, with four sons of the chagan, were slain: the Roman general surprised a peaceful district of the Gepidae, who slept under the protection of the Avars; and his last trophies were erected on the banks of the Danube and the Teyss. Since the death of Trajan the arms of the empire had not penetrated so deeply into the old Dacia: yet the success of Priscus was transient and barren; and he was soon recalled by the apprehension that Baian, with dauntless spirit and recruited forces, was preparing to avenge his defeat under the walls of Constantinople. [39](#)

34

[\(return\)](#)

[See the march and return of Maurice, in Theophylact, l. v. c. 16 l. vi. c. 1, 2, 3. If he were a writer of taste or genius, we might suspect him of an elegant irony: but Theophylact is surely harmless.]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[Iliad, xii. 243. This noble verse, which unites the spirit of a hero with the reason of a sage, may prove that Homer was in every light superior to his age and country.]

- 36 [\(return\)](#)
[Theophylact, l. vii. c. 3. On the evidence of this fact, which had not occurred to my memory, the candid reader will correct and excuse a note in Chapter XXXIV., note 86 of this History, which hastens the decay of Asimus, or Azimuntium; another century of patriotism and valor is cheaply purchased by such a confession.]
- 37 [\(return\)](#)
[See the shameful conduct of Commentiolus, in Theophylact, l. ii. c. 10—15, l. vii. c. 13, 14, l. viii. c. 2, 4.]
- 38 [\(return\)](#)
[See the exploits of Priscus, l. viii. c. 23.]
- 39 [\(return\)](#)
[The general detail of the war against the Avars may be traced in the first, second, sixth, seventh, and eighth books of the history of the emperor Maurice, by Theophylact Simocatta. As he wrote in the reign of Heraclius, he had no temptation to flatter; but his want of judgment renders him diffuse in trifles, and concise in the most interesting facts.]

The theory of war was not more familiar to the camps of Caesar and Trajan, than to those of Justinian and Maurice. [40](#) The iron of Tuscany or Pontus still received the keenest temper from the skill of the Byzantine workmen. The magazines were plentifully stored with every species of offensive and defensive arms. In the construction and use of ships, engines, and fortifications, the Barbarians admired the superior ingenuity of a people whom they had so often vanquished in the field. The science of tactics, the order, evolutions, and stratagems of antiquity, was transcribed and studied in the books of the Greeks and Romans. But the solitude or degeneracy of the provinces could no longer supply a race of men to handle those weapons, to guard those walls, to navigate those ships, and to reduce the theory of war into bold and successful practice. The genius of Belisarius and Narses had been formed without a master, and expired without a disciple. Neither honor, nor patriotism, nor generous superstition, could animate the lifeless bodies of slaves and strangers, who had succeeded to the honors of the legions: it was in the camp alone that the emperor should have exercised a despotic command; it was only in the camps that his authority was disobeyed and insulted: he appeased and inflamed with gold the licentiousness of the troops; but their vices were inherent, their victories were accidental, and their costly maintenance exhausted the substance of a state which they were unable to defend. After a long and pernicious indulgence, the cure of this inveterate evil was undertaken by Maurice; but the rash attempt, which drew destruction on his own head, tended only to aggravate the disease. A reformer should be exempt from the suspicion of interest, and he must possess the confidence and esteem of those whom he proposes to reclaim. The troops of Maurice might listen to the voice of a victorious leader; they disdained the

admonitions of statesmen and sophists; and, when they received an edict which deducted from their pay the price of their arms and clothing, they execrated the avarice of a prince insensible of the dangers and fatigues from which he had escaped.

The camps both of Asia and Europe were agitated with frequent and furious seditions; [41](#) the enraged soldiers of Edessa pursued with reproaches, with threats, with wounds, their trembling generals; they overturned the statues of the emperor, cast stones against the miraculous image of Christ, and either rejected the yoke of all civil and military laws, or instituted a dangerous model of voluntary subordination. The monarch, always distant and often deceived, was incapable of yielding or persisting, according to the exigence of the moment. But the fear of a general revolt induced him too readily to accept any act of valor, or any expression of loyalty, as an atonement for the popular offence; the new reform was abolished as hastily as it had been announced, and the troops, instead of punishment and restraint, were agreeably surprised by a gracious proclamation of immunities and rewards. But the soldiers accepted without gratitude the tardy and reluctant gifts of the emperor: their insolence was elated by the discovery of his weakness and their own strength; and their mutual hatred was inflamed beyond the desire of forgiveness or the hope of reconciliation. The historians of the times adopt the vulgar suspicion, that Maurice conspired to destroy the troops whom he had labored to reform; the misconduct and favor of Commentiolus are imputed to this malevolent design; and every age must condemn the inhumanity of avarice [42](#) of a prince, who, by the trifling ransom of six thousand pieces of gold, might have prevented the massacre of twelve thousand prisoners in the hands of the chagan. In the just fervor of indignation, an order was signified to the army of the Danube, that they should spare the magazines of the province, and establish their winter quarters in the hostile country of the Avars. The measure of their grievances was full: they pronounced Maurice unworthy to reign, expelled or slaughtered his faithful adherents, and, under the command of Phocas, a simple centurion, returned by hasty marches to the neighborhood of Constantinople. After a long series of legal succession, the military disorders of the third century were again revived; yet such was the novelty of the enterprise, that the insurgents were awed by their own rashness. They hesitated to invest their favorite with the vacant purple; and, while they rejected all treaty with Maurice himself, they held a friendly correspondence with his son Theodosius, and with Germanus, the father-in-law of the royal youth. So obscure had been the former condition of Phocas, that the emperor was ignorant of the name and character of his rival; but as soon as he learned, that the centurion, though bold in sedition, was timid in the face of danger, “Alas!” cried the desponding prince, “if he is a coward, he will surely be a murderer.”

Graeca, l. iv. c. 8, tom. iii. p. 278,) who promises to speak more fully of his work in its proper place.]

41 [\(return\)](#)

[See the mutinies under the reign of Maurice, in Theophylact l iii c. 1—4, vi. c. 7, 8, 10, l. vii. c. 1 l. viii. c. 6, &c.]

42 [\(return\)](#)

[Theophylact and Theophanes seem ignorant of the conspiracy and avarice of Maurice. These charges, so unfavorable to the memory of that emperor, are first mentioned by the author of the Paschal Chronicle, (p. 379, 280;) from whence Zonaras (tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 77, 78) has transcribed them. Cedrenus (p. 399) has followed another computation of the ransom.]

Yet if Constantinople had been firm and faithful, the murderer might have spent his fury against the walls; and the rebel army would have been gradually consumed or reconciled by the prudence of the emperor. In the games of the Circus, which he repeated with unusual pomp, Maurice disguised, with smiles of confidence, the anxiety of his heart, condescended to solicit the applause of the factions, and flattered their pride by accepting from their respective tribunes a list of nine hundred blues and fifteen hundred greens, whom he affected to esteem as the solid pillars of his throne Their treacherous or languid support betrayed his weakness and hastened his fall: the green faction were the secret accomplices of the rebels, and the blues recommended lenity and moderation in a contest with their Roman brethren. The rigid and parsimonious virtues of Maurice had long since alienated the hearts of his subjects: as he walked barefoot in a religious procession, he was rudely assaulted with stones, and his guards were compelled to present their iron maces in the defence of his person. A fanatic monk ran through the streets with a drawn sword, denouncing against him the wrath and the sentence of God; and a vile plebeian, who represented his countenance and apparel, was seated on an ass, and pursued by the imprecations of the multitude. [43](#) The emperor suspected the popularity of Germanus with the soldiers and citizens: he feared, he threatened, but he delayed to strike; the patrician fled to the sanctuary of the church; the people rose in his defence, the walls were deserted by the guards, and the lawless city was abandoned to the flames and rapine of a nocturnal tumult. In a small bark, the unfortunate Maurice, with his wife and nine children, escaped to the Asiatic shore; but the violence of the wind compelled him to land at the church of St. Autonomus, [44](#) near Chalcedon, from whence he despatched Theodosius, he eldest son, to implore the gratitude and friendship of the Persian monarch. For himself, he refused to fly: his body was tortured with sciatic pains, [45](#) his mind was enfeebled by superstition; he patiently awaited the event of the revolution, and addressed a fervent and public prayer to the Almighty, that the punishment of his sins might be inflicted in this world rather than in a future life. After the abdication of Maurice, the two factions disputed the choice of an

emperor; but the favorite of the blues was rejected by the jealousy of their antagonists, and Germanus himself was hurried along by the crowds who rushed to the palace of Hebdomon, seven miles from the city, to adore the majesty of Phocas the centurion. A modest wish of resigning the purple to the rank and merit of Germanus was opposed by his resolution, more obstinate and equally sincere; the senate and clergy obeyed his summons; and, as soon as the patriarch was assured of his orthodox belief, he consecrated the successful usurper in the church of St. John the Baptist. On the third day, amidst the acclamations of a thoughtless people, Phocas made his public entry in a chariot drawn by four white horses: the revolt of the troops was rewarded by a lavish donative; and the new sovereign, after visiting the palace, beheld from his throne the games of the hippodrome. In a dispute of precedence between the two factions, his partial judgment inclined in favor of the greens. “Remember that Maurice is still alive,” resounded from the opposite side; and the indiscreet clamor of the blues admonished and stimulated the cruelty of the tyrant. The ministers of death were despatched to Chalcedon: they dragged the emperor from his sanctuary; and the five sons of Maurice were successively murdered before the eyes of their agonizing parent. At each stroke, which he felt in his heart, he found strength to rehearse a pious ejaculation: “Thou art just, O Lord! and thy judgments are righteous.” And such, in the last moments, was his rigid attachment to truth and justice, that he revealed to the soldiers the pious falsehood of a nurse who presented her own child in the place of a royal infant. [46](#) The tragic scene was finally closed by the execution of the emperor himself, in the twentieth year of his reign, and the sixty-third of his age. The bodies of the father and his five sons were cast into the sea; their heads were exposed at Constantinople to the insults or pity of the multitude; and it was not till some signs of putrefaction had appeared, that Phocas connived at the private burial of these venerable remains. In that grave, the faults and errors of Maurice were kindly interred. His fate alone was remembered; and at the end of twenty years, in the recital of the history of Theophylact, the mournful tale was interrupted by the tears of the audience. [47](#)

43

[\(return\)](#)

[In their clamors against Maurice, the people of Constantinople branded him with the name of Marcionite or Marcionist; a heresy (says Theophylact, l. viii. c. 9). Did they only cast out a vague reproach—or had the emperor really listened to some obscure teacher of those ancient Gnostics?]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[The church of St. Autonomous (whom I have not the honor to know) was 150 stadia from Constantinople, (Theophylact, l. viii. c. 9.) The port of Eutropius, where Maurice and his children were murdered, is described by Gyllius (de Bosphoro Thracio, l. iii. c. xi.) as one of the two harbors of Chalcedon.]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[The inhabitants of Constantinople were generally subject; and Theophylact insinuates, (l. viii. c. 9,) that if it were consistent with the rules of history, he could assign the medical cause. Yet such a digression would not have been more impertinent than his inquiry (l. vii. c. 16, 17) into the annual inundations of the Nile, and all the opinions of the Greek philosophers on that subject.]

46

[\(return\)](#)

[From this generous attempt, Corneille has deduced the intricate web of his tragedy of Heraclius, which requires more than one representation to be clearly understood, (Corneille de Voltaire, tom. v. p. 300;) and which, after an interval of some years, is said to have puzzled the author himself, (Anecdotes Dramatiques, tom. i. p. 422.)]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[The revolt of Phocas and death of Maurice are told by Theophylact Simocatta, (l. viii. c. 7—12,) the Paschal Chronicle, (p. 379, 380,) Theophanes, (Chronograph. p. 238-244,) Zonaras, (tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 77—80,) and Cedrenus, (p. 399—404.)]

Such tears must have flowed in secret, and such compassion would have been criminal, under the reign of Phocas, who was peaceably acknowledged in the provinces of the East and West. The images of the emperor and his wife Leontia were exposed in the Lateran to the veneration of the clergy and senate of Rome, and afterwards deposited in the palace of the Caesars, between those of Constantine and Theodosius. As a subject and a Christian, it was the duty of Gregory to acquiesce in the established government; but the joyful applause with which he salutes the fortune of the assassin, has sullied, with indelible disgrace, the character of the saint. The successor of the apostles might have inculcated with decent firmness the guilt of blood, and the necessity of repentance; he is content to celebrate the deliverance of the people and the fall of the oppressor; to rejoice that the piety and benignity of Phocas have been raised by Providence to the Imperial throne; to pray that his hands may be strengthened against all his enemies; and to express a wish, perhaps a prophecy, that, after a long and triumphant reign, he may be transferred from a temporal to an everlasting kingdom. [48](#) I have already traced the steps of a revolution so pleasing, in Gregory's opinion, both to heaven and earth; and Phocas does not appear less hateful in the exercise than in the acquisition of power. The pencil of an impartial historian has delineated the portrait of a monster: [49](#) his diminutive and deformed person, the closeness of his shaggy eyebrows, his red hair, his beardless chin, and his cheek disfigured and discolored by a formidable scar. Ignorant of letters, of laws, and even of arms, he indulged in the supreme rank a more ample privilege of lust and drunkenness; and his brutal pleasures were either injurious to his

subjects or disgraceful to himself. Without assuming the office of a prince, he renounced the profession of a soldier; and the reign of Phocas afflicted Europe with ignominious peace, and Asia with desolating war. His savage temper was inflamed by passion, hardened by fear, and exasperated by resistance or reproach. The flight of Theodosius to the Persian court had been intercepted by a rapid pursuit, or a deceitful message: he was beheaded at Nice, and the last hours of the young prince were soothed by the comforts of religion and the consciousness of innocence. Yet his phantom disturbed the repose of the usurper: a whisper was circulated through the East, that the son of Maurice was still alive: the people expected their avenger, and the widow and daughters of the late emperor would have adopted as their son and brother the vilest of mankind. In the massacre of the Imperial family, [50](#) the mercy, or rather the discretion, of Phocas had spared these unhappy females, and they were decently confined to a private house. But the spirit of the empress Constantina, still mindful of her father, her husband, and her sons, aspired to freedom and revenge. At the dead of night, she escaped to the sanctuary of St. Sophia; but her tears, and the gold of her associate Germanus, were insufficient to provoke an insurrection. Her life was forfeited to revenge, and even to justice: but the patriarch obtained and pledged an oath for her safety: a monastery was allotted for her prison, and the widow of Maurice accepted and abused the lenity of his assassin. The discovery or the suspicion of a second conspiracy, dissolved the engagements, and rekindled the fury, of Phocas. A matron who commanded the respect and pity of mankind, the daughter, wife, and mother of emperors, was tortured like the vilest malefactor, to force a confession of her designs and associates; and the empress Constantina, with her three innocent daughters, was beheaded at Chalcedon, on the same ground which had been stained with the blood of her husband and five sons. After such an example, it would be superfluous to enumerate the names and sufferings of meaner victims. Their condemnation was seldom preceded by the forms of trial, and their punishment was embittered by the refinements of cruelty: their eyes were pierced, their tongues were torn from the root, the hands and feet were amputated; some expired under the lash, others in the flames; others again were transfixed with arrows; and a simple speedy death was mercy which they could rarely obtain. The hippodrome, the sacred asylum of the pleasures and the liberty of the Romans, was polluted with heads and limbs, and mangled bodies; and the companions of Phocas were the most sensible, that neither his favor, nor their services, could protect them from a tyrant, the worthy rival of the Caligulas and Domitians of the first age of the empire. [51](#)

[Gregor. I. xi. epist. 38, indict. vi. Benignitatem vestrae pietatis ad Imperiale fastigium pervenisse gaudemus. Laetentur coeli et exultet terra, et de vestris benignis actibus universae republicae populus nunc usque vehementer afflictus hilarescat, &c. This base flattery, the topic of Protestant invective, is justly censured by the philosopher

Bayle, (Dictionnaire Critique, Gregoire I. Not. H. tom. ii. p. 597 598.) Cardinal Baronius justifies the pope at the expense of the fallen emperor.]

49 [\(return\)](#)

[The images of Phocas were destroyed; but even the malice of his enemies would suffer one copy of such a portrait or caricature (Cedrenus, p. 404) to escape the flames.]

50 [\(return\)](#)

[The family of Maurice is represented by Ducange, (Familiae Byzantinae, p. 106, 107, 108;) his eldest son Theodosius had been crowned emperor, when he was no more than four years and a half old, and he is always joined with his father in the salutations of Gregory. With the Christian daughters, Anastasia and Theocteste, I am surprised to find the Pagan name of Cleopatra.]

51 [\(return\)](#)

[Some of the cruelties of Phocas are marked by Theophylact, l. viii. c. 13, 14, 15. George of Pisidia, the poet of Heraclius, styles him (Bell. Avaricum, p. 46, Rome, 1777). The latter epithet is just—but the corrupter of life was easily vanquished.]

Chapter XLVI: Troubles In Persia.—Part III.

A daughter of Phocas, his only child, was given in marriage to the patrician Crispus, [52](#) and the royal images of the bride and bridegroom were indiscreetly placed in the circus, by the side of the emperor. The father must desire that his posterity should inherit the fruit of his crimes, but the monarch was offended by this premature and popular association: the tribunes of the green faction, who accused the officious error of their sculptors, were condemned to instant death: their lives were granted to the prayers of the people; but Crispus might reasonably doubt, whether a jealous usurper could forget and pardon his involuntary competition. The green faction was alienated by the ingratitude of Phocas and the loss of their privileges; every province of the empire was ripe for rebellion; and Heraclius, exarch of Africa, persisted above two years in refusing all tribute and obedience to the centurion who disgraced the throne of Constantinople. By the secret emissaries of Crispus and the senate, the independent exarch was solicited to save and to govern his country; but his ambition was chilled by age, and he resigned the dangerous enterprise to his son Heraclius, and to Nicetas, the son of Gregory, his friend and lieutenant. The powers of Africa were armed by the two adventurous youths; they agreed that the one should navigate the fleet from Carthage to Constantinople, that the other should lead an army through Egypt and Asia, and that the Imperial purple should be the reward of diligence and success. A faint rumor of their

undertaking was conveyed to the ears of Phocas, and the wife and mother of the younger Heraclius were secured as the hostages of his faith: but the treacherous heart of Crispus extenuated the distant peril, the means of defence were neglected or delayed, and the tyrant supinely slept till the African navy cast anchor in the Hellespont. Their standard was joined at Abidus by the fugitives and exiles who thirsted for revenge; the ships of Heraclius, whose lofty masts were adorned with the holy symbols of religion, [53](#) steered their triumphant course through the Propontis; and Phocas beheld from the windows of the palace his approaching and inevitable fate. The green faction was tempted, by gifts and promises, to oppose a feeble and fruitless resistance to the landing of the Africans: but the people, and even the guards, were determined by the well-timed defection of Crispus; and the tyrant was seized by a private enemy, who boldly invaded the solitude of the palace. Stripped of the diadem and purple, clothed in a vile habit, and loaded with chains, he was transported in a small boat to the Imperial galley of Heraclius, who reproached him with the crimes of his abominable reign. “Wilt thou govern better?” were the last words of the despair of Phocas. After suffering each variety of insult and torture, his head was severed from his body, the mangled trunk was cast into the flames, and the same treatment was inflicted on the statues of the vain usurper, and the seditious banner of the green faction. The voice of the clergy, the senate, and the people, invited Heraclius to ascend the throne which he had purified from guilt and ignominy; after some graceful hesitation, he yielded to their entreaties. His coronation was accompanied by that of his wife Eudoxia; and their posterity, till the fourth generation, continued to reign over the empire of the East. The voyage of Heraclius had been easy and prosperous; the tedious march of Nicetas was not accomplished before the decision of the contest: but he submitted without a murmur to the fortune of his friend, and his laudable intentions were rewarded with an equestrian statue, and a daughter of the emperor. It was more difficult to trust the fidelity of Crispus, whose recent services were recompensed by the command of the Cappadocian army. His arrogance soon provoked, and seemed to excuse, the ingratitude of his new sovereign. In the presence of the senate, the son-in-law of Phocas was condemned to embrace the monastic life; and the sentence was justified by the weighty observation of Heraclius, that the man who had betrayed his father could never be faithful to his friend. [54](#)

52

[\(return\)](#)

[In the writers, and in the copies of those writers, there is such hesitation between the names of Priscus and Crispus, (Ducange, *Fam Byzant.* p. 111,) that I have been tempted to identify the son-in-law of Phocas with the hero five times victorious over the Avars.]

53

[\(return\)](#)

[According to Theophanes. Cedrenus adds, which Heraclius bore as a banner in the first Persian expedition. See George Pisid. *Acroas* L 140. The manufacture seems to have flourished; but Foggini,

the Roman editor, (p. 26,) is at a loss to determine whether this picture was an original or a copy.]

54

[\(return\)](#)

[See the tyranny of Phocas and the elevation of Heraclius, in Chron. Paschal. p. 380—383. Theophanes, p. 242-250. Nicephorus, p. 3—7. Cedrenus, p. 404—407. Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 80—82.]

Even after his death the republic was afflicted by the crimes of Phocas, which armed with a pious cause the most formidable of her enemies. According to the friendly and equal forms of the Byzantine and Persian courts, he announced his exaltation to the throne; and his ambassador Lilius, who had presented him with the heads of Maurice and his sons, was the best qualified to describe the circumstances of the tragic scene. [55](#) However it might be varnished by fiction or sophistry, Chosroes turned with horror from the assassin, imprisoned the pretended envoy, disclaimed the usurper, and declared himself the avenger of his father and benefactor. The sentiments of grief and resentment, which humanity would feel, and honor would dictate, promoted on this occasion the interest of the Persian king; and his interest was powerfully magnified by the national and religious prejudices of the Magi and satraps. In a strain of artful adulation, which assumed the language of freedom, they presumed to censure the excess of his gratitude and friendship for the Greeks; a nation with whom it was dangerous to conclude either peace or alliance; whose superstition was devoid of truth and justice, and who must be incapable of any virtue, since they could perpetrate the most atrocious of crimes, the impious murder of their sovereign. [56](#) For the crime of an ambitious centurion, the nation which he oppressed was chastised with the calamities of war; and the same calamities, at the end of twenty years, were retaliated and redoubled on the heads of the Persians. [57](#) The general who had restored Chosroes to the throne still commanded in the East; and the name of Narses was the formidable sound with which the Assyrian mothers were accustomed to terrify their infants. It is not improbable, that a native subject of Persia should encourage his master and his friend to deliver and possess the provinces of Asia. It is still more probable, that Chosroes should animate his troops by the assurance that the sword which they dreaded the most would remain in its scabbard, or be drawn in their favor. The hero could not depend on the faith of a tyrant; and the tyrant was conscious how little he deserved the obedience of a hero. Narses was removed from his military command; he reared an independent standard at Hierapolis, in Syria: he was betrayed by fallacious promises, and burnt alive in the market-place of Constantinople. Deprived of the only chief whom they could fear or esteem, the bands which he had led to victory were twice broken by the cavalry, trampled by the elephants, and pierced by the arrows of the Barbarians; and a great number of the captives were beheaded on the field of battle by the sentence of the victor, who might justly condemn these seditious mercenaries as the authors or accomplices of the death of Maurice. Under the reign of Phocas, the fortifications of Merdin, Dara,

Amida, and Edessa, were successively besieged, reduced, and destroyed, by the Persian monarch: he passed the Euphrates, occupied the Syrian cities, Hierapolis, Chalcis, and Berrhaea or Aleppo, and soon encompassed the walls of Antioch with his irresistible arms. The rapid tide of success discloses the decay of the empire, the incapacity of Phocas, and the disaffection of his subjects; and Chosroes provided a decent apology for their submission or revolt, by an impostor, who attended his camp as the son of Maurice [58](#) and the lawful heir of the monarchy.

55

[\(return\)](#)

[Theophylact, l. viii. c. 15. The life of Maurice was composed about the year 628 (l. viii. c. 13) by Theophylact Simocatta, ex-præfect, a native of Egypt. Photius, who gives an ample extract of the work, (cod. lxxv. p. 81—100,) gently reproves the affectation and allegory of the style. His preface is a dialogue between Philosophy and History; they seat themselves under a plane-tree, and the latter touches her lyre.]

56

[\(return\)](#)

[Christianis nec pactum esse, nec fidem nec foedus quod si ulla illis fides fuisset, regem suum non occidissent. Eutych. Annales tom. ii. p. 211, vers. Pocock.]

57

[\(return\)](#)

[We must now, for some ages, take our leave of contemporary historians, and descend, if it be a descent, from the affectation of rhetoric to the rude simplicity of chronicles and abridgments. Those of Theophanes (Chronograph. p. 244—279) and Nicephorus (p. 3—16) supply a regular, but imperfect, series of the Persian war; and for any additional facts I quote my special authorities. Theophanes, a courtier who became a monk, was born A.D. 748; Nicephorus patriarch of Constantinople, who died A.D. 829, was somewhat younger: they both suffered in the cause of images Hankius, de Scriptoribus Byzantinis, p. 200-246.]

58

[\(return\)](#)

[The Persian historians have been themselves deceived: but Theophanes (p. 244) accuses Chosroes of the fraud and falsehood; and Eutychius believes (Annal. tom. ii. p. 212) that the son of Maurice, who was saved from the assassins, lived and died a monk on Mount Sinai.]

The first intelligence from the East which Heraclius received, [59](#) was that of the loss of Antioch; but the aged metropolis, so often overturned by earthquakes, and pillaged by the enemy, could supply but a small and languid stream of treasure and blood. The Persians were equally successful, and more fortunate, in the sack of Caesarea, the

capital of Cappadocia; and as they advanced beyond the ramparts of the frontier, the boundary of ancient war, they found a less obstinate resistance and a more plentiful harvest. The pleasant vale of Damascus has been adorned in every age with a royal city: her obscure felicity has hitherto escaped the historian of the Roman empire: but Chosroes reposed his troops in the paradise of Damascus before he ascended the hills of Libanus, or invaded the cities of the Phœnician coast. The conquest of Jerusalem, [60](#) which had been meditated by Nushirvan, was achieved by the zeal and avarice of his grandson; the ruin of the proudest monument of Christianity was vehemently urged by the intolerant spirit of the Magi; and he could enlist for this holy warfare with an army of six-and-twenty thousand Jews, whose furious bigotry might compensate, in some degree, for the want of valor and discipline. [6011](#) After the reduction of Galilee, and the region beyond the Jordan, whose resistance appears to have delayed the fate of the capital, Jerusalem itself was taken by assault. The sepulchre of Christ, and the stately churches of Helena and Constantine, were consumed, or at least damaged, by the flames; the devout offerings of three hundred years were rifled in one sacrilegious day; the Patriarch Zachariah, and the true cross, were transported into Persia; and the massacre of ninety thousand Christians is imputed to the Jews and Arabs, who swelled the disorder of the Persian march. The fugitives of Palestine were entertained at Alexandria by the charity of John the Archbishop, who is distinguished among a crowd of saints by the epithet of almsgiver: [61](#) and the revenues of the church, with a treasure of three hundred thousand pounds, were restored to the true proprietors, the poor of every country and every denomination. But Egypt itself, the only province which had been exempt, since the time of Diocletian, from foreign and domestic war, was again subdued by the successors of Cyrus. Pelusium, the key of that impervious country, was surprised by the cavalry of the Persians: they passed, with impunity, the innumerable channels of the Delta, and explored the long valley of the Nile, from the pyramids of Memphis to the confines of Aethiopia. Alexandria might have been relieved by a naval force, but the archbishop and the præfect embarked for Cyprus; and Chosroes entered the second city of the empire, which still preserved a wealthy remnant of industry and commerce. His western trophy was erected, not on the walls of Carthage, [62](#) but in the neighborhood of Tripoli; the Greek colonies of Cyrene were finally extirpated; and the conqueror, treading in the footsteps of Alexander, returned in triumph through the sands of the Libyan desert. In the same campaign, another army advanced from the Euphrates to the Thracian Bosphorus; Chalcedon surrendered after a long siege, and a Persian camp was maintained above ten years in the presence of Constantinople. The sea-coast of Pontus, the city of Ancyra, and the Isle of Rhodes, are enumerated among the last conquests of the great king; and if Chosroes had possessed any maritime power, his boundless ambition would have spread slavery and desolation over the provinces of Europe.

of Heraclius, whom he brings not from Carthage, but Salonica, with a fleet laden with vegetables for the relief of Constantinople, (Annal. tom. ii. p. 223, 224.) The other Christians of the East, Barhebraeus, (apud Asseman, Bibliothec. Oriental. tom. iii. p. 412, 413,) Elmacin, (Hist. Saracen. p. 13—16,) Abulpharagius, (Dynast. p. 98, 99,) are more sincere and accurate. The years of the Persian war are disposed in the chronology of Pagi.]

60 [\(return\)](#)

[On the conquest of Jerusalem, an event so interesting to the church, see the Annals of Eutychius, (tom. ii. p. 212—223,) and the lamentations of the monk Antiochus, (apud Baronium, Annal. Eccles. A.D. 614, No. 16—26,) whose one hundred and twenty-nine homilies are still extant, if what no one reads may be said to be extant.]

6011 [\(return\)](#)

[See Hist. of Jews, vol. iii. p. 240.—M.]

61 [\(return\)](#)

[The life of this worthy saint is composed by Leontius, a contemporary bishop; and I find in Baronius (Annal. Eccles. A.D. 610, No. 10, &c.) and Fleury (tom. viii. p. 235-242) sufficient extracts of this edifying work.]

62 [\(return\)](#)

[The error of Baronius, and many others who have carried the arms of Chosroes to Carthage instead of Chalcedon, is founded on the near resemblance of the Greek words, in the text of Theophanes, &c., which have been sometimes confounded by transcribers, and sometimes by critics.]

From the long-disputed banks of the Tigris and Euphrates, the reign of the grandson of Nushirvan was suddenly extended to the Hellespont and the Nile, the ancient limits of the Persian monarchy. But the provinces, which had been fashioned by the habits of six hundred years to the virtues and vices of the Roman government, supported with reluctance the yoke of the Barbarians. The idea of a republic was kept alive by the institutions, or at least by the writings, of the Greeks and Romans, and the subjects of Heraclius had been educated to pronounce the words of liberty and law. But it has always been the pride and policy of Oriental princes to display the titles and attributes of their omnipotence; to upbraid a nation of slaves with their true name and abject condition, and to enforce, by cruel and insolent threats, the rigor of their absolute commands. The Christians of the East were scandalized by the worship of fire, and the impious doctrine of the two principles: the Magi were not less intolerant than the bishops; and the martyrdom of some native Persians, who had deserted the religion of

Zoroaster, [63](#) was conceived to be the prelude of a fierce and general persecution. By the oppressive laws of Justinian, the adversaries of the church were made the enemies of the state; the alliance of the Jews, Nestorians, and Jacobites, had contributed to the success of Chosroes, and his partial favor to the sectaries provoked the hatred and fears of the Catholic clergy. Conscious of their fear and hatred, the Persian conqueror governed his new subjects with an iron sceptre; and, as if he suspected the stability of his dominion, he exhausted their wealth by exorbitant tributes and licentious rapine despoiled or demolished the temples of the East; and transported to his hereditary realms the gold, the silver, the precious marbles, the arts, and the artists of the Asiatic cities. In the obscure picture of the calamities of the empire, [64](#) it is not easy to discern the figure of Chosroes himself, to separate his actions from those of his lieutenants, or to ascertain his personal merit in the general blaze of glory and magnificence. He enjoyed with ostentation the fruits of victory, and frequently retired from the hardships of war to the luxury of the palace. But in the space of twenty-four years, he was deterred by superstition or resentment from approaching the gates of Ctesiphon: and his favorite residence of Artemita, or Dastagerd, was situate beyond the Tigris, about sixty miles to the north of the capital. [65](#) The adjacent pastures were covered with flocks and herds: the paradise or park was replenished with pheasants, peacocks, ostriches, roebucks, and wild boars, and the noble game of lions and tigers was sometimes turned loose for the bolder pleasures of the chase. Nine hundred and sixty elephants were maintained for the use or splendor of the great king: his tents and baggage were carried into the field by twelve thousand great camels and eight thousand of a smaller size; [66](#) and the royal stables were filled with six thousand mules and horses, among whom the names of Shebdiz and Barid are renowned for their speed or beauty. [6611](#) Six thousand guards successively mounted before the palace gate; the service of the interior apartments was performed by twelve thousand slaves, and in the number of three thousand virgins, the fairest of Asia, some happy concubine might console her master for the age or the indifference of Sira.

The various treasures of gold, silver, gems, silks, and aromatics, were deposited in a hundred subterraneous vaults and the chamber Badaverd denoted the accidental gift of the winds which had wafted the spoils of Heraclius into one of the Syrian harbors of his rival. The vice of flattery, and perhaps of fiction, is not ashamed to compute the thirty thousand rich hangings that adorned the walls; the forty thousand columns of silver, or more probably of marble, and plated wood, that supported the roof; and the thousand globes of gold suspended in the dome, to imitate the motions of the planets and the constellations of the zodiac. [67](#) While the Persian monarch contemplated the wonders of his art and power, he received an epistle from an obscure citizen of Mecca, inviting him to acknowledge Mahomet as the apostle of God. He rejected the invitation, and tore the epistle. "It is thus," exclaimed the Arabian prophet, "that God will tear the kingdom, and reject the supplications of Chosroes." [68](#) [6811](#) Placed on the verge of the two great empires of the East, Mahomet observed with secret joy the progress of their mutual

destruction; and in the midst of the Persian triumphs, he ventured to foretell, that before many years should elapse, victory should again return to the banners of the Romans. [69](#)

63

[\(return\)](#)

[The genuine acts of St. Anastasius are published in those of the with general council, from whence Baronius (*Annal. Eccles. A.D. 614, 626, 627*) and Butler (*Lives of the Saints, vol. i. p. 242—248*) have taken their accounts. The holy martyr deserted from the Persian to the Roman army, became a monk at Jerusalem, and insulted the worship of the Magi, which was then established at Caesarea in Palestine.]

64

[\(return\)](#)

[Abulpharagius, *Dynast. p. 99. Elmacin, Hist. Saracen. p. 14.*]

65

[\(return\)](#)

[D'Anville, *Mem. de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxxii. p. 568—571.*]

66

[\(return\)](#)

[The difference between the two races consists in one or two humps; the dromedary has only one; the size of the proper camel is larger; the country he comes from, Turkistan or Bactriana; the dromedary is confined to Arabia and Africa. Buffon, *Hist. Naturelle, tom. xi. p. 211, &c. Aristot. Hist. Animal. tom. i. l. ii. c. 1, tom. ii. p. 185.*]

6611

[\(return\)](#)

[The ruins of these scenes of Khoosroo's magnificence have been visited by Sir R. K. Porter. At the ruins of Tokht i Bostan, he saw a gorgeous picture of a hunt, singularly illustrative of this passage. *Travels, vol. ii. p. 204. Kisra Shirene, which he afterwards examined, appears to have been the palace of Dastagerd. Vol. ii. p. 173—175.—M.*]

67

[\(return\)](#)

[Theophanes, *Chronograph. p. 268. D'Herbelot, Bibliotheque Orientale, p. 997. The Greeks describe the decay, the Persians the splendor, of Dastagerd; but the former speak from the modest witness of the eye, the latter from the vague report of the ear.*]

68

[\(return\)](#)

[The historians of Mahomet, Abulfeda (in *Vit. Mohammed, p. 92, 93*) and Gagnier, (*Vie de Mahomet, tom. ii. p. 247.*) date this embassy in the viith year of the Hegira, which commences A.D. 628, May 11. Their chronology is erroneous, since Chosroes died in the month of February of the same

year, (Pagi, Critica, tom. ii. p. 779.) The count de Boulainvilliers (Vie de Mahomed, p. 327, 328) places this embassy about A.D. 615, soon after the conquest of Palestine. Yet Mahomet would scarcely have ventured so soon on so bold a step.]

6811

[\(return\)](#)

[Khoosroo Purveez was encamped on the banks of the Karasoo River when he received the letter of Mahomed. He tore the letter and threw it into the Karasoo. For this action, the moderate author of the Zeenut-ul-Tuarikh calls him a wretch, and rejoices in all his subsequent misfortunes. These impressions still exist. I remarked to a Persian, when encamped near the Karasoo, in 1800, that the banks were very high, which must make it difficult to apply its waters to irrigation. "It once fertilized the whole country," said the zealous Mahomedan, "but its channel sunk with honor from its banks, when that madman, Khoosroo, threw our holy Prophet's letter into its stream; which has ever since been accursed and useless." Malcolm's Persia, vol. i. p. 126—M.]

69

[\(return\)](#)

[See the xxxth chapter of the Koran, entitled the Greeks. Our honest and learned translator, Sale, (p. 330, 331,) fairly states this conjecture, guess, wager, of Mahomet; but Boulainvilliers, (p. 329—344,) with wicked intentions, labors to establish this evident prophecy of a future event, which must, in his opinion, embarrass the Christian polemics.]

At the time when this prediction is said to have been delivered, no prophecy could be more distant from its accomplishment, since the first twelve years of Heraclius announced the approaching dissolution of the empire. If the motives of Chosroes had been pure and honorable, he must have ended the quarrel with the death of Phocas, and he would have embraced, as his best ally, the fortunate African who had so generously avenged the injuries of his benefactor Maurice. The prosecution of the war revealed the true character of the Barbarian; and the suppliant embassies of Heraclius to beseech his clemency, that he would spare the innocent, accept a tribute, and give peace to the world, were rejected with contemptuous silence or insolent menace. Syria, Egypt, and the provinces of Asia, were subdued by the Persian arms, while Europe, from the confines of Istria to the long wall of Thrace, was oppressed by the Avars, unsatiated with the blood and rapine of the Italian war. They had coolly massacred their male captives in the sacred field of Pannonia; the women and children were reduced to servitude, and the noblest virgins were abandoned to the promiscuous lust of the Barbarians. The amorous matron who opened the gates of Friuli passed a short night in the arms of her royal lover; the next evening, Romilda was condemned to the embraces

of twelve Avars, and the third day the Lombard princess was impaled in the sight of the camp, while the chagan observed with a cruel smile, that such a husband was the fit recompense of her lewdness and perfidy. [70](#) By these implacable enemies, Heraclius, on either side, was insulted and besieged: and the Roman empire was reduced to the walls of Constantinople, with the remnant of Greece, Italy, and Africa, and some maritime cities, from Tyre to Trebizond, of the Asiatic coast. After the loss of Egypt, the capital was afflicted by famine and pestilence; and the emperor, incapable of resistance, and hopeless of relief, had resolved to transfer his person and government to the more secure residence of Carthage. His ships were already laden with the treasures of the palace; but his flight was arrested by the patriarch, who armed the powers of religion in the defence of his country; led Heraclius to the altar of St. Sophia, and extorted a solemn oath, that he would live and die with the people whom God had intrusted to his care. The chagan was encamped in the plains of Thrace; but he dissembled his perfidious designs, and solicited an interview with the emperor near the town of Heraclea. Their reconciliation was celebrated with equestrian games; the senate and people, in their gayest apparel, resorted to the festival of peace; and the Avars beheld, with envy and desire, the spectacle of Roman luxury. On a sudden the hippodrome was encompassed by the Scythian cavalry, who had pressed their secret and nocturnal march: the tremendous sound of the chagan's whip gave the signal of the assault, and Heraclius, wrapping his diadem round his arm, was saved with extreme hazard, by the fleetness of his horse. So rapid was the pursuit, that the Avars almost entered the golden gate of Constantinople with the flying crowds: [71](#) but the plunder of the suburbs rewarded their treason, and they transported beyond the Danube two hundred and seventy thousand captives. On the shore of Chalcedon, the emperor held a safer conference with a more honorable foe, who, before Heraclius descended from his galley, saluted with reverence and pity the majesty of the purple. The friendly offer of Sain, the Persian general, to conduct an embassy to the presence of the great king, was accepted with the warmest gratitude, and the prayer for pardon and peace was humbly presented by the Praetorian præfect, the præfect of the city, and one of the first ecclesiastics of the patriarchal church. [72](#) But the lieutenant of Chosroes had fatally mistaken the intentions of his master. "It was not an embassy," said the tyrant of Asia, "it was the person of Heraclius, bound in chains, that he should have brought to the foot of my throne. I will never give peace to the emperor of Rome, till he had abjured his crucified God, and embraced the worship of the sun." Sain was flayed alive, according to the inhuman practice of his country; and the separate and rigorous confinement of the ambassadors violated the law of nations, and the faith of an express stipulation. Yet the experience of six years at length persuaded the Persian monarch to renounce the conquest of Constantinople, and to specify the annual tribute or ransom of the Roman empire; a thousand talents of gold, a thousand talents of silver, a thousand silk robes, a thousand horses, and a thousand virgins. Heraclius subscribed these ignominious terms;

but the time and space which he obtained to collect such treasures from the poverty of the East, was industriously employed in the preparations of a bold and desperate attack.

70

[\(return\)](#)

[Footnote 70: Paul Warnefrid, de Gestis Langobardorum, l. iv. c. 38, 42. Muratori, Annali d'Italia, tom. v. p. 305, &c.]

71

[\(return\)](#)

[The Paschal Chronicle, which sometimes introduces fragments of history into a barren list of names and dates, gives the best account of the treason of the Avars, p. 389, 390. The number of captives is added by Nicephorus.]

72

[\(return\)](#)

[Some original pieces, such as the speech or letter of the Roman ambassadors, (p. 386—388,) likewise constitute the merit of the Paschal Chronicle, which was composed, perhaps at Alexandria, under the reign of Heraclius.]

Of the characters conspicuous in history, that of Heraclius is one of the most extraordinary and inconsistent. In the first and last years of a long reign, the emperor appears to be the slave of sloth, of pleasure, or of superstition, the careless and impotent spectator of the public calamities. But the languid mists of the morning and evening are separated by the brightness of the meridian sun; the Arcadius of the palace arose the Caesar of the camp; and the honor of Rome and Heraclius was gloriously retrieved by the exploits and trophies of six adventurous campaigns. It was the duty of the Byzantine historians to have revealed the causes of his slumber and vigilance. At this distance we can only conjecture, that he was endowed with more personal courage than political resolution; that he was detained by the charms, and perhaps the arts, of his niece Martina, with whom, after the death of Eudocia, he contracted an incestuous marriage; [73](#) and that he yielded to the base advice of the counsellors, who urged, as a fundamental law, that the life of the emperor should never be exposed in the field. [74](#) Perhaps he was awakened by the last insolent demand of the Persian conqueror; but at the moment when Heraclius assumed the spirit of a hero, the only hopes of the Romans were drawn from the vicissitudes of fortune, which might threaten the proud prosperity of Chosroes, and must be favorable to those who had attained the lowest period of depression. [75](#) To provide for the expenses of war, was the first care of the emperor; and for the purpose of collecting the tribute, he was allowed to solicit the benevolence of the eastern provinces. But the revenue no longer flowed in the usual channels; the credit of an arbitrary prince is annihilated by his power; and the courage of Heraclius was first displayed in daring to borrow the consecrated wealth of churches, under the solemn vow of restoring, with usury, whatever he had been compelled to employ in the service of religion and the empire. The clergy themselves appear to have sympathized with the public distress; and the discreet patriarch of Alexandria, without

admitting the precedent of sacrilege, assisted his sovereign by the miraculous or seasonable revelation of a secret treasure. [76](#) Of the soldiers who had conspired with Phocas, only two were found to have survived the stroke of time and of the Barbarians; [77](#) the loss, even of these seditious veterans, was imperfectly supplied by the new levies of Heraclius, and the gold of the sanctuary united, in the same camp, the names, and arms, and languages of the East and West. He would have been content with the neutrality of the Avars; and his friendly entreaty, that the chagan would act, not as the enemy, but as the guardian, of the empire, was accompanied with a more persuasive donative of two hundred thousand pieces of gold. Two days after the festival of Easter, the emperor, exchanging his purple for the simple garb of a penitent and warrior, [78](#) gave the signal of his departure. To the faith of the people Heraclius recommended his children; the civil and military powers were vested in the most deserving hands, and the discretion of the patriarch and senate was authorized to save or surrender the city, if they should be oppressed in his absence by the superior forces of the enemy.

[73](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Nicephorus, (p. 10, 11,) is happy to observe, that of two sons, its incestuous fruit, the elder was marked by Providence with a stiff neck, the younger with the loss of hearing.]

[74](#) [\(return\)](#)

[George of Pisidia, (Acroas. i. 112—125, p. 5,) who states the opinions, acquits the pusillanimous counsellors of any sinister views. Would he have excused the proud and contemptuous admonition of Crispus?]

[75](#) [\(return\)](#)

[George Pisid. Acroas. i. 51, &c. p: 4. The Orientals are not less fond of remarking this strange vicissitude; and I remember some story of Khosrou Parviz, not very unlike the ring of Polycrates of Samos.]

[76](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Baronius gravely relates this discovery, or rather transmutation, of barrels, not of honey, but of gold, (Annal. Eccles. A.D. 620, No. 3, &c.) Yet the loan was arbitrary, since it was collected by soldiers, who were ordered to leave the patriarch of Alexandria no more than one hundred pounds of gold. Nicephorus, (p. 11,) two hundred years afterwards, speaks with ill humor of this contribution, which the church of Constantinople might still feel.]

[77](#) [\(return\)](#)

[Theophylact Symocatta, l. viii. c. 12. This circumstance need not excite our surprise. The

muster-roll of a regiment, even in time of peace, is renewed in less than twenty or twenty-five years.]

78

[\(return\)](#)

[He changed his purple for black, buckskins, and dyed them red in the blood of the Persians, (Georg. Pisid. Acroas. iii. 118, 121, 122 See the notes of Foggini, p. 35.)]

The neighboring heights of Chalcedon were covered with tents and arms: but if the new levies of Heraclius had been rashly led to the attack, the victory of the Persians in the sight of Constantinople might have been the last day of the Roman empire. As imprudent would it have been to advance into the provinces of Asia, leaving their innumerable cavalry to intercept his convoys, and continually to hang on the lassitude and disorder of his rear. But the Greeks were still masters of the sea; a fleet of galleys, transports, and store-ships, was assembled in the harbor; the Barbarians consented to embark; a steady wind carried them through the Hellespont the western and southern coast of Asia Minor lay on their left hand; the spirit of their chief was first displayed in a storm, and even the eunuchs of his train were excited to suffer and to work by the example of their master. He landed his troops on the confines of Syria and Cilicia, in the Gulf of Scanderoon, where the coast suddenly turns to the south; [79](#) and his discernment was expressed in the choice of this important post. [80](#) From all sides, the scattered garrisons of the maritime cities and the mountains might repair with speed and safety to his Imperial standard. The natural fortifications of Cilicia protected, and even concealed, the camp of Heraclius, which was pitched near Issus, on the same ground where Alexander had vanquished the host of Darius. The angle which the emperor occupied was deeply indented into a vast semicircle of the Asiatic, Armenian, and Syrian provinces; and to whatsoever point of the circumference he should direct his attack, it was easy for him to dissemble his own motions, and to prevent those of the enemy. In the camp of Issus, the Roman general reformed the sloth and disorder of the veterans, and educated the new recruits in the knowledge and practice of military virtue. Unfolding the miraculous image of Christ, he urged them to revenge the holy altars which had been profaned by the worshippers of fire; addressing them by the endearing appellations of sons and brethren, he deplored the public and private wrongs of the republic. The subjects of a monarch were persuaded that they fought in the cause of freedom; and a similar enthusiasm was communicated to the foreign mercenaries, who must have viewed with equal indifference the interest of Rome and of Persia. Heraclius himself, with the skill and patience of a centurion, inculcated the lessons of the school of tactics, and the soldiers were assiduously trained in the use of their weapons, and the exercises and evolutions of the field. The cavalry and infantry in light or heavy armor were divided into two parties; the trumpets were fixed in the centre, and their signals directed the march, the charge, the retreat or pursuit; the direct or oblique order, the deep or extended phalanx; to represent in fictitious combat the operations of genuine war. Whatever hardships the emperor imposed on the troops, he inflicted with equal

severity on himself; their labor, their diet, their sleep, were measured by the inflexible rules of discipline; and, without despising the enemy, they were taught to repose an implicit confidence in their own valor and the wisdom of their leader. Cilicia was soon encompassed with the Persian arms; but their cavalry hesitated to enter the defiles of Mount Taurus, till they were circumvented by the evolutions of Heraclius, who insensibly gained their rear, whilst he appeared to present his front in order of battle. By a false motion, which seemed to threaten Armenia, he drew them, against their wishes, to a general action. They were tempted by the artful disorder of his camp; but when they advanced to combat, the ground, the sun, and the expectation of both armies, were unpropitious to the Barbarians; the Romans successfully repeated their tactics in a field of battle, [81](#) and the event of the day declared to the world, that the Persians were not invincible, and that a hero was invested with the purple. Strong in victory and fame, Heraclius boldly ascended the heights of Mount Taurus, directed his march through the plains of Cappadocia, and established his troops, for the winter season, in safe and plentiful quarters on the banks of the River Halys. [82](#) His soul was superior to the vanity of entertaining Constantinople with an imperfect triumph; but the presence of the emperor was indispensably required to soothe the restless and rapacious spirit of the Avars.

79

[\(return\)](#)

[George of Pisidia, (Acroas. ii. 10, p. 8) has fixed this important point of the Syrian and Cilician gates. They are elegantly described by Xenophon, who marched through them a thousand years before. A narrow pass of three stadia between steep, high rocks, and the Mediterranean, was closed at each end by strong gates, impregnable to the land, accessible by sea, (Anabasis, l. i. p. 35, 36, with Hutchinson's Geographical Dissertation, p. vi.) The gates were thirty-five parasangs, or leagues, from Tarsus, (Anabasis, l. i. p. 33, 34,) and eight or ten from Antioch. Compare Itinerar. Wesseling, p. 580, 581. Schultens, Index Geograph. ad calcem Vit. Saladin. p. 9. Voyage en Turquie et en Perse, par M. Otter, tom. i. p. 78, 79.]

80

[\(return\)](#)

[Heraclius might write to a friend in the modest words of Cicero: "Castra habuimus ea ipsa quae contra Darium habuerat apud Issum Alexander, imperator haud paulo melior quam aut tu aut ego." Ad Atticum, v. 20. Issus, a rich and flourishing city in the time of Xenophon, was ruined by the prosperity of Alexandria or Scanderoon, on the other side of the bay.]

81

[\(return\)](#)

[Foggini (Annotat. p. 31) suspects that the Persians were deceived by the of Aelian, (Tactic. c. 48,) an

intricate spiral motion of the army. He observes (p. 28) that the military descriptions of George of Pisidia are transcribed in the Tactics of the emperor Leo.]

82

[\(return\)](#)

[George of Pisidia, an eye-witness, (Acroas. ii. 122, &c.,) described in three acroaseis, or cantos, the first expedition of Heraclius. The poem has been lately (1777) published at Rome; but such vague and declamatory praise is far from corresponding with the sanguine hopes of Pagi, D'Anville, &c.]

Since the days of Scipio and Hannibal, no bolder enterprise has been attempted than that which Heraclius achieved for the deliverance of the empire. [83](#) He permitted the Persians to oppress for a while the provinces, and to insult with impunity the capital of the East; while the Roman emperor explored his perilous way through the Black Sea, [84](#) and the mountains of Armenia, penetrated into the heart of Persia, [85](#) and recalled the armies of the great king to the defence of their bleeding country. With a select band of five thousand soldiers, Heraclius sailed from Constantinople to Trebizond; assembled his forces which had wintered in the Pontic regions; and, from the mouth of the Phasis to the Caspian Sea, encouraged his subjects and allies to march with the successor of Constantine under the faithful and victorious banner of the cross. When the legions of Lucullus and Pompey first passed the Euphrates, they blushed at their easy victory over the natives of Armenia. But the long experience of war had hardened the minds and bodies of that effeminate people; their zeal and bravery were approved in the service of a declining empire; they abhorred and feared the usurpation of the house of Sassan, and the memory of persecution envenomed their pious hatred of the enemies of Christ. The limits of Armenia, as it had been ceded to the emperor Maurice, extended as far as the Araxes: the river submitted to the indignity of a bridge, [86](#) and Heraclius, in the footsteps of Mark Antony, advanced towards the city of Tauris or Gandzaca, [87](#) the ancient and modern capital of one of the provinces of Media. At the head of forty thousand men, Chosroes himself had returned from some distant expedition to oppose the progress of the Roman arms; but he retreated on the approach of Heraclius, declining the generous alternative of peace or of battle. Instead of half a million of inhabitants, which have been ascribed to Tauris under the reign of the Sophys, the city contained no more than three thousand houses; but the value of the royal treasures was enhanced by a tradition, that they were the spoils of Croesus, which had been transported by Cyrus from the citadel of Sardes. The rapid conquests of Heraclius were suspended only by the winter season; a motive of prudence, or superstition, [88](#) determined his retreat into the province of Albania, along the shores of the Caspian; and his tents were most probably pitched in the plains of Mogan, [89](#) the favorite encampment of Oriental princes. In the course of this successful inroad, he signalized the zeal and revenge of a Christian emperor: at his command, the soldiers extinguished the fire, and destroyed the temples, of the Magi; the statues of Chosroes,

who aspired to divine honors, were abandoned to the flames; and the ruins of Thebarma or Ormia, [90](#) which had given birth to Zoroaster himself, made some atonement for the injuries of the holy sepulchre. A purer spirit of religion was shown in the relief and deliverance of fifty thousand captives. Heraclius was rewarded by their tears and grateful acclamations; but this wise measure, which spread the fame of his benevolence, diffused the murmurs of the Persians against the pride and obstinacy of their own sovereign.

83 [\(return\)](#)

[Footnote 83: Theophanes (p. 256) carries Heraclius swiftly into Armenia. Nicephorus, (p. 11,) though he confounds the two expeditions, defines the province of Lazica. Eutychius (Annal. tom. ii. p. 231) has given the 5000 men, with the more probable station of Trebizond.]

84 [\(return\)](#)

[From Constantinople to Trebizond, with a fair wind, four or five days; from thence to Erzerom, five; to Erivan, twelve; to Taurus, ten; in all, thirty-two. Such is the Itinerary of Tavernier, (Voyages, tom. i. p. 12—56,) who was perfectly conversant with the roads of Asia. Tournefort, who travelled with a pacha, spent ten or twelve days between Trebizond and Erzerom, (Voyage du Levant, tom. iii. lettre xviii.;) and Chardin (Voyages, tom. i. p. 249—254) gives the more correct distance of fifty-three parasangs, each of 5000 paces, (what paces?) between Erivan and Tauris.]

85 [\(return\)](#)

[The expedition of Heraclius into Persia is finely illustrated by M. D’Anville, (Memoires de l’Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii. p. 559—573.) He discovers the situation of Gandzaca, Thebarma, Dastagerd, &c., with admirable skill and learning; but the obscure campaign of 624 he passes over in silence.]

86 [\(return\)](#)

[Et pontem indignatus Araxes.—Virgil, Aeneid, viii. 728. The River Araxes is noisy, rapid, vehement, and, with the melting of the snows, irresistible: the strongest and most massy bridges are swept away by the current; and its indignation is attested by the ruins of many arches near the old town of Zulfa. Voyages de Chardin, tom. i. p. 252.]

87 [\(return\)](#)

[Chardin, tom. i. p. 255—259. With the Orientals, (D’Herbelot, Biblioth. Orient. p. 834,) he ascribes the foundation of Tauris, or Tebris, to Zobeide, the wife of the famous Khalif Haroun Alrashid; but it

appears to have been more ancient; and the names of Gandzaca, Gazaca, Gaza, are expressive of the royal treasure. The number of 550,000 inhabitants is reduced by Chardin from 1,100,000, the popular estimate.]

88 [\(return\)](#)

[He opened the gospel, and applied or interpreted the first casual passage to the name and situation of Albania. Theophanes, p. 258.]

89 [\(return\)](#)

[The heath of Mogan, between the Cyrus and the Araxes, is sixty parasangs in length and twenty in breadth, (Olearius, p. 1023, 1024,) abounding in waters and fruitful pastures, (Hist. de Nadir Shah, translated by Mr. Jones from a Persian Ms., part ii. p. 2, 3.) See the encampments of Timur, (Hist. par Sherefeddin Ali, l. v. c. 37, l. vi. c. 13,) and the coronation of Nadir Shah, (Hist. Persanne, p. 3—13 and the English Life by Mr. Jones, p. 64, 65.)]

90 [\(return\)](#)

[Thebarma and Ormia, near the Lake Spauta, are proved to be the same city by D’Anville, (Memoires de l’Academie, tom. xxviii. p. 564, 565.) It is honored as the birthplace of Zoroaster, according to the Persians, (Schultens, Index Geograph. p. 48;) and their tradition is fortified by M. Perron d’Anquetil, (Mem. de l’Acad. des Inscript. tom. xxxi. p. 375,) with some texts from his, or their, Zendavesta. * Note: D’Anville (Mem. de l’Acad. des Inscript. tom. xxxii. p. 560) labored to prove the identity of these two cities; but according to M. St. Martin, vol. xi. p. 97, not with perfect success. Ourmiah. called Ariema in the ancient Pehlvi books, is considered, both by the followers of Zoroaster and by the Mahometans, as his birthplace. It is situated in the southern part of Aderbidjan.—M.]

Chapter XLVI: Troubles In Persia.—Part IV.

Amidst the glories of the succeeding campaign, Heraclius is almost lost to our eyes, and to those of the Byzantine historians. [91](#) From the spacious and fruitful plains of Albania, the emperor appears to follow the chain of Hyrcanian Mountains, to descend into the province of Media or Irak, and to carry his victorious arms as far as the royal cities of Casbin and Ispahan, which had never been approached by a Roman conqueror. Alarmed by the danger of his kingdom, the powers of Chosroes were already recalled from the Nile and the Bosphorus, and three formidable armies surrounded, in a distant

and hostile land, the camp of the emperor. The Colchian allies prepared to desert his standard; and the fears of the bravest veterans were expressed, rather than concealed, by their desponding silence. “Be not terrified,” said the intrepid Heraclius, “by the multitude of your foes. With the aid of Heaven, one Roman may triumph over a thousand Barbarians. But if we devote our lives for the salvation of our brethren, we shall obtain the crown of martyrdom, and our immortal reward will be liberally paid by God and posterity.” These magnanimous sentiments were supported by the vigor of his actions. He repelled the threefold attack of the Persians, improved the divisions of their chiefs, and, by a well-concerted train of marches, retreats, and successful actions, finally chased them from the field into the fortified cities of Media and Assyria. In the severity of the winter season, Sarbaraza deemed himself secure in the walls of Salban: he was surprised by the activity of Heraclius, who divided his troops, and performed a laborious march in the silence of the night. The flat roofs of the houses were defended with useless valor against the darts and torches of the Romans: the satraps and nobles of Persia, with their wives and children, and the flower of their martial youth, were either slain or made prisoners. The general escaped by a precipitate flight, but his golden armor was the prize of the conqueror; and the soldiers of Heraclius enjoyed the wealth and repose which they had so nobly deserved. On the return of spring, the emperor traversed in seven days the mountains of Curdistan, and passed without resistance the rapid stream of the Tigris. Oppressed by the weight of their spoils and captives, the Roman army halted under the walls of Amida; and Heraclius informed the senate of Constantinople of his safety and success, which they had already felt by the retreat of the besiegers. The bridges of the Euphrates were destroyed by the Persians; but as soon as the emperor had discovered a ford, they hastily retired to defend the banks of the Sarus, [92](#) in Cilicia. That river, an impetuous torrent, was about three hundred feet broad; the bridge was fortified with strong turrets; and the banks were lined with Barbarian archers. After a bloody conflict, which continued till the evening, the Romans prevailed in the assault; and a Persian of gigantic size was slain and thrown into the Sarus by the hand of the emperor himself. The enemies were dispersed and dismayed; Heraclius pursued his march to Sebaste in Cappadocia; and at the expiration of three years, the same coast of the Euxine applauded his return from a long and victorious expedition. [93](#)

91

[\(return\)](#)

[I cannot find, and (what is much more,) M. D’Anville does not attempt to seek, the Salban, Tarantum, territory of the Huns, &c., mentioned by Theophanes, (p. 260-262.) Eutychius, (Annal. tom. ii. p. 231, 232,) an insufficient author, names Asphahan; and Casbin is most probably the city of Sapor. Ispahan is twenty-four days’ journey from Tauris, and Casbin half way between, them (Voyages de Tavernier, tom. i. p. 63—82.)]

92

[\(return\)](#)

[At ten parasangs from Tarsus, the army of the

younger Cyrus passed the Sarus, three plethra in breadth: the Pyramus, a stadium in breadth, ran five parasangs farther to the east, (Xenophon, *Anabasis*. l. i. p. 33, 34.) Note: Now the Sihan.—M.]

93

[\(return\)](#)

[George of Pisidia (Bell. Abaricum, 246—265, p. 49) celebrates with truth the persevering courage of the three campaigns against the Persians.]

Instead of skirmishing on the frontier, the two monarchs who disputed the empire of the East aimed their desperate strokes at the heart of their rival. The military force of Persia was wasted by the marches and combats of twenty years, and many of the veterans, who had survived the perils of the sword and the climate, were still detained in the fortresses of Egypt and Syria. But the revenge and ambition of Chosroes exhausted his kingdom; and the new levies of subjects, strangers, and slaves, were divided into three formidable bodies. [94](#) The first army of fifty thousand men, illustrious by the ornament and title of the golden spears, was destined to march against Heraclius; the second was stationed to prevent his junction with the troops of his brother Theodorus; and the third was commanded to besiege Constantinople, and to second the operations of the chagan, with whom the Persian king had ratified a treaty of alliance and partition. Sarbar, the general of the third army, penetrated through the provinces of Asia to the well-known camp of Chalcedon, and amused himself with the destruction of the sacred and profane buildings of the Asiatic suburbs, while he impatiently waited the arrival of his Scythian friends on the opposite side of the Bosphorus. On the twenty-ninth of June, thirty thousand Barbarians, the vanguard of the Avars, forced the long wall, and drove into the capital a promiscuous crowd of peasants, citizens, and soldiers. Fourscore thousand [95](#) of his native subjects, and of the vassal tribes of Gepidae, Russians, Bulgarians, and Sclavonians, advanced under the standard of the chagan; a month was spent in marches and negotiations, but the whole city was invested on the thirty-first of July, from the suburbs of Pera and Galata to the Blachernae and seven towers; and the inhabitants descried with terror the flaming signals of the European and Asiatic shores. In the mean while, the magistrates of Constantinople repeatedly strove to purchase the retreat of the chagan; but their deputies were rejected and insulted; and he suffered the patricians to stand before his throne, while the Persian envoys, in silk robes, were seated by his side. “You see,” said the haughty Barbarian, “the proofs of my perfect union with the great king; and his lieutenant is ready to send into my camp a select band of three thousand warriors. Presume no longer to tempt your master with a partial and inadequate ransom: your wealth and your city are the only presents worthy of my acceptance. For yourselves, I shall permit you to depart, each with an undergarment and a shirt; and, at my entreaty, my friend Sarbar will not refuse a passage through his lines. Your absent prince, even now a captive or a fugitive, has left Constantinople to its fate; nor can you escape the arms of the Avars and Persians, unless you could soar into the air like birds, unless like fishes you could dive into the

waves.” [96](#) During ten successive days, the capital was assaulted by the Avars, who had made some progress in the science of attack; they advanced to sap or batter the wall, under the cover of the impenetrable tortoise; their engines discharged a perpetual volley of stones and darts; and twelve lofty towers of wood exalted the combatants to the height of the neighboring ramparts.

But the senate and people were animated by the spirit of Heraclius, who had detached to their relief a body of twelve thousand cuirassiers; the powers of fire and mechanics were used with superior art and success in the defence of Constantinople; and the galleys, with two and three ranks of oars, commanded the Bosphorus, and rendered the Persians the idle spectators of the defeat of their allies. The Avars were repulsed; a fleet of Sclavonian canoes was destroyed in the harbor; the vassals of the chagan threatened to desert, his provisions were exhausted, and after burning his engines, he gave the signal of a slow and formidable retreat. The devotion of the Romans ascribed this signal deliverance to the Virgin Mary; but the mother of Christ would surely have condemned their inhuman murder of the Persian envoys, who were entitled to the rights of humanity, if they were not protected by the laws of nations. [97](#)

94

[\(return\)](#)

[Petavius (Annotationes ad Nicephorum, p. 62, 63, 64) discriminates the names and actions of five Persian generals who were successively sent against Heraclius.]

95

[\(return\)](#)

[This number of eight myriads is specified by George of Pisidia, (Bell. Abar. 219.) The poet (50—88) clearly indicates that the old chagan lived till the reign of Heraclius, and that his son and successor was born of a foreign mother. Yet Foggini (Annotat. p. 57) has given another interpretation to this passage.]

96

[\(return\)](#)

[A bird, a frog, a mouse, and five arrows, had been the present of the Scythian king to Darius, (Herodot. l. iv. c. 131, 132.) Substituez une lettre a ces signes (says Rousseau, with much good taste) plus elle sera menacante moins elle effrayera; ce ne sera qu’une fanfarronade dont Darius n’eut fait que rire, (Emile, tom. iii. p. 146.) Yet I much question whether the senate and people of Constantinople laughed at this message of the chagan.]

97

[\(return\)](#)

[The Paschal Chronicle (p. 392—397) gives a minute and authentic narrative of the siege and deliverance of Constantinople Theophanes (p. 264) adds some circumstances; and a faint light may be obtained from the smoke of George of Pisidia, who

has composed a poem (de Bello Abarico, p. 45—54) to commemorate this auspicious event.]

After the division of his army, Heraclius prudently retired to the banks of the Phasis, from whence he maintained a defensive war against the fifty thousand gold spears of Persia. His anxiety was relieved by the deliverance of Constantinople; his hopes were confirmed by a victory of his brother Theodorus; and to the hostile league of Chosroes with the Avars, the Roman emperor opposed the useful and honorable alliance of the Turks. At his liberal invitation, the horde of Chozars [98](#) transported their tents from the plains of the Volga to the mountains of Georgia; Heraclius received them in the neighborhood of Teflis, and the khan with his nobles dismounted from their horses, if we may credit the Greeks, and fell prostrate on the ground, to adore the purple of the Caesars. Such voluntary homage and important aid were entitled to the warmest acknowledgments; and the emperor, taking off his own diadem, placed it on the head of the Turkish prince, whom he saluted with a tender embrace and the appellation of son. After a sumptuous banquet, he presented Ziebel with the plate and ornaments, the gold, the gems, and the silk, which had been used at the Imperial table, and, with his own hand, distributed rich jewels and ear-rings to his new allies. In a secret interview, he produced the portrait of his daughter Eudocia, [99](#) condescended to flatter the Barbarian with the promise of a fair and august bride; obtained an immediate succor of forty thousand horse, and negotiated a strong diversion of the Turkish arms on the side of the Oxus. [100](#) The Persians, in their turn, retreated with precipitation; in the camp of Edessa, Heraclius reviewed an army of seventy thousand Romans and strangers; and some months were successfully employed in the recovery of the cities of Syria, Mesopotamia and Armenia, whose fortifications had been imperfectly restored. Sarbar still maintained the important station of Chalcedon; but the jealousy of Chosroes, or the artifice of Heraclius, soon alienated the mind of that powerful satrap from the service of his king and country. A messenger was intercepted with a real or fictitious mandate to the cadarigan, or second in command, directing him to send, without delay, to the throne, the head of a guilty or unfortunate general. The despatches were transmitted to Sarbar himself; and as soon as he read the sentence of his own death, he dexterously inserted the names of four hundred officers, assembled a military council, and asked the cadarigan whether he was prepared to execute the commands of their tyrant. The Persians unanimously declared, that Chosroes had forfeited the sceptre; a separate treaty was concluded with the government of Constantinople; and if some considerations of honor or policy restrained Sarbar from joining the standard of Heraclius, the emperor was assured that he might prosecute, without interruption, his designs of victory and peace.

[The power of the Chozars prevailed in the viith, viiith, and ixth centuries. They were known to the Greeks, the Arabs, and under the name of Kosa, to the Chinese themselves. De Guignes, Hist. des

Huns, tom. ii. part ii. p. 507—509. * Note: Moses of Chorene speaks of an invasion of Armenia by the Khazars in the second century, l. ii. c. 62. M. St. Martin suspects them to be the same with the Hunnish nation of the Acatires or Agazzires. They are called by the Greek historians Eastern Turks; like the Madjars and other Hunnish or Finnish tribes, they had probably received some admixture from the genuine Turkish races. Ibn. Hankal (Oriental Geography) says that their language was like the Bulgarian, and considers them a people of Finnish or Hunnish race. Klaproth, *Tabl. Hist.* p. 268-273. Abel Remusat, *Rech. sur les Langues Tartares*, tom. i. p. 315, 316. St. Martin, vol. xi. p. 115.—M]

99

[\(return\)](#)

[Epiphania, or Eudocia, the only daughter of Heraclius and his first wife Eudocia, was born at Constantinople on the 7th of July, A.D. 611, baptized the 15th of August, and crowned (in the oratory of St. Stephen in the palace) the 4th of October of the same year. At this time she was about fifteen. Eudocia was afterwards sent to her Turkish husband, but the news of his death stopped her journey, and prevented the consummation, (Ducange, *Familiae Byzantin.* p. 118.)]

100

[\(return\)](#)

[Elmcain (*Hist. Saracen.* p. 13—16) gives some curious and probable facts; but his numbers are rather too high—300,000 Romans assembled at Edessa—500,000 Persians killed at Nineveh. The abatement of a cipher is scarcely enough to restore his sanity]

Deprived of his firmest support, and doubtful of the fidelity of his subjects, the greatness of Chosroes was still conspicuous in its ruins. The number of five hundred thousand may be interpreted as an Oriental metaphor, to describe the men and arms, the horses and elephants, that covered Media and Assyria against the invasion of Heraclius. Yet the Romans boldly advanced from the Araxes to the Tigris, and the timid prudence of Rhazates was content to follow them by forced marches through a desolate country, till he received a peremptory mandate to risk the fate of Persia in a decisive battle. Eastward of the Tigris, at the end of the bridge of Mosul, the great Nineveh had formerly been erected: [101](#) the city, and even the ruins of the city, had long since disappeared; [102](#) the vacant space afforded a spacious field for the operations of the two armies. But these operations are neglected by the Byzantine historians, and, like the authors of epic poetry and romance, they ascribe the victory, not to the military conduct, but to the personal valor, of their favorite hero. On this memorable day, Heraclius, on his horse Phallas, surpassed the bravest of his warriors: his lip was pierced

with a spear; the steed was wounded in the thigh; but he carried his master safe and victorious through the triple phalanx of the Barbarians. In the heat of the action, three valiant chiefs were successively slain by the sword and lance of the emperor: among these was Rhazates himself; he fell like a soldier, but the sight of his head scattered grief and despair through the fainting ranks of the Persians. His armor of pure and massy gold, the shield of one hundred and twenty plates, the sword and belt, the saddle and cuirass, adorned the triumph of Heraclius; and if he had not been faithful to Christ and his mother, the champion of Rome might have offered the fourth opime spoils to the Jupiter of the Capitol. [103](#) In the battle of Nineveh, which was fiercely fought from daybreak to the eleventh hour, twenty-eight standards, besides those which might be broken or torn, were taken from the Persians; the greatest part of their army was cut in pieces, and the victors, concealing their own loss, passed the night on the field. They acknowledged, that on this occasion it was less difficult to kill than to discomfit the soldiers of Chosroes; amidst the bodies of their friends, no more than two bow-shot from the enemy the remnant of the Persian cavalry stood firm till the seventh hour of the night; about the eighth hour they retired to their unrifled camp, collected their baggage, and dispersed on all sides, from the want of orders rather than of resolution. The diligence of Heraclius was not less admirable in the use of victory; by a march of forty-eight miles in four-and-twenty hours, his vanguard occupied the bridges of the great and the lesser Zab; and the cities and palaces of Assyria were open for the first time to the Romans. By a just gradation of magnificent scenes, they penetrated to the royal seat of Dastagerd, [1031](#) and, though much of the treasure had been removed, and much had been expended, the remaining wealth appears to have exceeded their hopes, and even to have satiated their avarice. Whatever could not be easily transported, they consumed with fire, that Chosroes might feel the anguish of those wounds which he had so often inflicted on the provinces of the empire: and justice might allow the excuse, if the desolation had been confined to the works of regal luxury, if national hatred, military license, and religious zeal, had not wasted with equal rage the habitations and the temples of the guiltless subject. The recovery of three hundred Roman standards, and the deliverance of the numerous captives of Edessa and Alexandria, reflect a purer glory on the arms of Heraclius. From the palace of Dastagerd, he pursued his march within a few miles of Modain or Ctesiphon, till he was stopped, on the banks of the Arba, by the difficulty of the passage, the rigor of the season, and perhaps the fame of an impregnable capital. The return of the emperor is marked by the modern name of the city of Sherhzour: he fortunately passed Mount Zara, before the snow, which fell incessantly thirty-four days; and the citizens of Gandzca, or Tauris, were compelled to entertain the soldiers and their horses with a hospitable reception. [104](#)

described by the prophet as incapable of discerning their right hand from their left, may afford about 700,000 persons of all ages for the inhabitants of that ancient capital, (Goguet, *Origines des Loix*, &c., tom. iii. part i. p. 92, 93,) which ceased to exist 600 years before Christ. The western suburb still subsisted, and is mentioned under the name of Mosul in the first age of the Arabian khalifs.]

102 [\(return\)](#)

[Niebuhr (*Voyage en Arabie*, &c., tom. ii. p. 286) passed over Nineveh without perceiving it. He mistook for a ridge of hills the old rampart of brick or earth. It is said to have been 100 feet high, flanked with 1500 towers, each of the height of 200 feet.]

103 [\(return\)](#)

[*Rex regia arma fero* (says Romulus, in the first consecration).... *bina postea* (continues Livy, i. 10) *inter tot bella, opima parta sunt spolia, adeo rara ejus fortuna decoris*. If Varro (*apud Pomp Festum*, p. 306, edit. Dacier) could justify his liberality in granting the opime spoils even to a common soldier who had slain the king or general of the enemy, the honor would have been much more cheap and common]

1031 [\(return\)](#)

[Macdonald Kinneir places Dastagerd at Kasr e Shirin, the palace of Sira on the banks of the Diala between Holwan and Kanabee. *Kinnets Geograph. Mem.* p. 306.—M.]

104 [\(return\)](#)

[In describing this last expedition of Heraclius, the facts, the places, and the dates of Theophanes (p. 265—271) are so accurate and authentic, that he must have followed the original letters of the emperor, of which the Paschal Chronicle has preserved (p. 398—402) a very curious specimen.]

When the ambition of Chosroes was reduced to the defence of his hereditary kingdom, the love of glory, or even the sense of shame, should have urged him to meet his rival in the field. In the battle of Nineveh, his courage might have taught the Persians to vanquish, or he might have fallen with honor by the lance of a Roman emperor. The successor of Cyrus chose rather, at a secure distance, to expect the event, to assemble the relics of the defeat, and to retire, by measured steps, before the march of Heraclius, till he beheld with a sigh the once loved mansions of Dastagerd. Both his friends and enemies were persuaded, that it was the intention of Chosroes to bury himself under the ruins of the city and palace: and as both might have been equally adverse to his flight, the monarch of Asia, with Sira, [1041](#) and three concubines, escaped through a hole in

the wall nine days before the arrival of the Romans. The slow and stately procession in which he showed himself to the prostrate crowd, was changed to a rapid and secret journey; and the first evening he lodged in the cottage of a peasant, whose humble door would scarcely give admittance to the great king. [105](#) His superstition was subdued by fear: on the third day, he entered with joy the fortifications of Ctesiphon; yet he still doubted of his safety till he had opposed the River Tigris to the pursuit of the Romans. The discovery of his flight agitated with terror and tumult the palace, the city, and the camp of Dastagerd: the satraps hesitated whether they had most to fear from their sovereign or the enemy; and the females of the harem were astonished and pleased by the sight of mankind, till the jealous husband of three thousand wives again confined them to a more distant castle. At his command, the army of Dastagerd retreated to a new camp: the front was covered by the Arba, and a line of two hundred elephants; the troops of the more distant provinces successively arrived, and the vilest domestics of the king and satraps were enrolled for the last defence of the throne. It was still in the power of Chosroes to obtain a reasonable peace; and he was repeatedly pressed by the messengers of Heraclius to spare the blood of his subjects, and to relieve a humane conqueror from the painful duty of carrying fire and sword through the fairest countries of Asia. But the pride of the Persian had not yet sunk to the level of his fortune; he derived a momentary confidence from the retreat of the emperor; he wept with impotent rage over the ruins of his Assyrian palaces, and disregarded too long the rising murmurs of the nation, who complained that their lives and fortunes were sacrificed to the obstinacy of an old man. That unhappy old man was himself tortured with the sharpest pains both of mind and body; and, in the consciousness of his approaching end, he resolved to fix the tiara on the head of Merdaza, the most favored of his sons. But the will of Chosroes was no longer revered, and Siroes, [1051](#) who gloried in the rank and merit of his mother Sira, had conspired with the malcontents to assert and anticipate the rights of primogeniture. [106](#) Twenty-two satraps (they styled themselves patriots) were tempted by the wealth and honors of a new reign: to the soldiers, the heir of Chosroes promised an increase of pay; to the Christians, the free exercise of their religion; to the captives, liberty and rewards; and to the nation, instant peace and the reduction of taxes. It was determined by the conspirators, that Siroes, with the ensigns of royalty, should appear in the camp; and if the enterprise should fail, his escape was contrived to the Imperial court. But the new monarch was saluted with unanimous acclamations; the flight of Chosroes (yet where could he have fled?) was rudely arrested, eighteen sons were massacred [1061](#) before his face, and he was thrown into a dungeon, where he expired on the fifth day. The Greeks and modern Persians minutely describe how Chosroes was insulted, and famished, and tortured, by the command of an inhuman son, who so far surpassed the example of his father: but at the time of his death, what tongue would relate the story of the parricide? what eye could penetrate into the tower of darkness? According to the faith and mercy of his Christian enemies, he sunk without hope into a still deeper abyss; [107](#) and it will not be denied, that tyrants of every age

and sect are the best entitled to such infernal abodes. The glory of the house of Sassan ended with the life of Chosroes: his unnatural son enjoyed only eight months the fruit of his crimes: and in the space of four years, the regal title was assumed by nine candidates, who disputed, with the sword or dagger, the fragments of an exhausted monarchy. Every province, and each city of Persia, was the scene of independence, of discord, and of blood; and the state of anarchy prevailed about eight years longer, [1071](#) till the factions were silenced and united under the common yoke of the Arabian caliphs. [108](#)

1041 [\(return\)](#)

[The Schirin of Persian poetry. The love of Chosru and Schirin rivals in Persian romance that of Joseph with Zuleika the wife of Potiphar, of Solomon with the queen of Sheba, and that of Mejnoun and Leila. The number of Persian poems on the subject may be seen in M. von Hammer's preface to his poem of Schirin.—M]

105 [\(return\)](#)

[The words of Theophanes are remarkable. Young princes who discover a propensity to war should repeatedly transcribe and translate such salutary texts.]

1051 [\(return\)](#)

[His name was Kabad (as appears from an official letter in the Paschal Chronicle, p. 402.) St. Martin considers the name Siroes, Schirquieh of Schirwey, derived from the word schir, royal. St. Martin, xi. 153.—M.]

106 [\(return\)](#)

[The authentic narrative of the fall of Chosroes is contained in the letter of Heraclius (Chron. Paschal. p. 398) and the history of Theophanes, (p. 271.)]

1061 [\(return\)](#)

[According to Le Beau, this massacre was perpetrated at Mahuza in Babylonia, not in the presence of Chosroes. The Syrian historian, Thomas of Maraga, gives Chosroes twenty-four sons; Mirkhond, (translated by De Sacy,) fifteen; the inedited Modjmel-alte-warikh, agreeing with Gibbon, eighteen, with their names. Le Beau and St. Martin, xi. 146.—M.]

107 [\(return\)](#)

[On the first rumor of the death of Chosroes, an Heracliad in two cantos was instantly published at Constantinople by George of Pisidia, (p. 97—105.) A priest and a poet might very properly exult in the damnation of the public enemy but such mean revenge is unworthy of a king and a conqueror; and

I am sorry to find so much black superstition in the letter of Heraclius: he almost applauds the parricide of Siroes as an act of piety and justice. * Note: The Mahometans show no more charity towards the memory of Chosroes or Khoosroo Purveez. All his reverses are ascribed to the just indignation of God, upon a monarch who had dared, with impious and accursed hands, to tear the letter of the Holy Prophet Mahomed. Compare note, p. 231.—M.]

1071 [\(return\)](#)

[Yet Gibbon himself places the flight and death of Yesdegird III., the last king of Persia, in 651. The famous era of Yesdegird dates from his accession, June 16 632.—M.]

108 [\(return\)](#)

[The best Oriental accounts of this last period of the Sassanian kings are found in Eutychius, (Annal. tom. ii. p. 251—256,) who dissembles the parricide of Siroes, D'Herbelot (Bibliotheque Orientale, p. 789,) and Assemani, (Bibliothec. Oriental. tom. iii. p. 415—420.)]

As soon as the mountains became passable, the emperor received the welcome news of the success of the conspiracy, the death of Chosroes, and the elevation of his eldest son to the throne of Persia. The authors of the revolution, eager to display their merits in the court or camp of Tauris, preceded the ambassadors of Siroes, who delivered the letters of their master to his brother the emperor of the Romans. [109](#) In the language of the usurpers of every age, he imputes his own crimes to the Deity, and, without degrading his equal majesty, he offers to reconcile the long discord of the two nations, by a treaty of peace and alliance more durable than brass or iron. The conditions of the treaty were easily defined and faithfully executed. In the recovery of the standards and prisoners which had fallen into the hands of the Persians, the emperor imitated the example of Augustus: their care of the national dignity was celebrated by the poets of the times, but the decay of genius may be measured by the distance between Horace and George of Pisidia: the subjects and brethren of Heraclius were redeemed from persecution, slavery, and exile; but, instead of the Roman eagles, the true wood of the holy cross was restored to the importunate demands of the successor of Constantine. The victor was not ambitious of enlarging the weakness of the empire; the son of Chosroes abandoned without regret the conquests of his father; the Persians who evacuated the cities of Syria and Egypt were honorably conducted to the frontier, and a war which had wounded the vitals of the two monarchies, produced no change in their external and relative situation. The return of Heraclius from Tauris to Constantinople was a perpetual triumph; and after the exploits of six glorious campaigns, he peaceably enjoyed the Sabbath of his toils. After a long impatience, the senate, the clergy, and the people, went forth to meet their hero, with tears and acclamations, with olive branches and innumerable lamps; he entered the capital in a chariot drawn by four elephants; and

as soon as the emperor could disengage himself from the tumult of public joy, he tasted more genuine satisfaction in the embraces of his mother and his son. [110](#)

109

[\(return\)](#)

[The letter of Siroes in the Paschal Chronicle (p. 402) unfortunately ends before he proceeds to business. The treaty appears in its execution in the histories of Theophanes and Nicephorus. * Note: M. Mai. Script. Vet. Nova Collectio, vol. i. P. 2, p. 223, has added some lines, but no clear sense can be made out of the fragment.—M.]

110

[\(return\)](#)

[The burden of Corneille's song, "Montrez Heraclius au peuple qui l'attend," is much better suited to the present occasion. See his triumph in Theophanes (p. 272, 273) and Nicephorus, (p. 15, 16.) The life of the mother and tenderness of the son are attested by George of Pisidia, (Bell. Abar. 255, &c., p. 49.) The metaphor of the Sabbath is used somewhat profanely by these Byzantine Christians.]

The succeeding year was illustrated by a triumph of a very different kind, the restitution of the true cross to the holy sepulchre. Heraclius performed in person the pilgrimage of Jerusalem, the identity of the relic was verified by the discreet patriarch, [111](#) and this august ceremony has been commemorated by the annual festival of the exaltation of the cross. Before the emperor presumed to tread the consecrated ground, he was instructed to strip himself of the diadem and purple, the pomp and vanity of the world: but in the judgment of his clergy, the persecution of the Jews was more easily reconciled with the precepts of the gospel. [1113](#) He again ascended his throne to receive the congratulations of the ambassadors of France and India: and the fame of Moses, Alexander, and Hercules, [112](#) was eclipsed in the popular estimation, by the superior merit and glory of the great Heraclius. Yet the deliverer of the East was indigent and feeble. Of the Persian spoils, the most valuable portion had been expended in the war, distributed to the soldiers, or buried, by an unlucky tempest, in the waves of the Euxine. The conscience of the emperor was oppressed by the obligation of restoring the wealth of the clergy, which he had borrowed for their own defence: a perpetual fund was required to satisfy these inexorable creditors; the provinces, already wasted by the arms and avarice of the Persians, were compelled to a second payment of the same taxes; and the arrears of a simple citizen, the treasurer of Damascus, were commuted to a fine of one hundred thousand pieces of gold. The loss of two hundred thousand soldiers [113](#) who had fallen by the sword, was of less fatal importance than the decay of arts, agriculture, and population, in this long and destructive war: and although a victorious army had been formed under the standard of Heraclius, the unnatural effort appears to have exhausted rather than exercised their strength. While the emperor triumphed at Constantinople or Jerusalem, an obscure town on the confines of Syria

was pillaged by the Saracens, and they cut in pieces some troops who advanced to its relief; an ordinary and trifling occurrence, had it not been the prelude of a mighty revolution. These robbers were the apostles of Mahomet; their fanatic valor had emerged from the desert; and in the last eight years of his reign, Heraclius lost to the Arabs the same provinces which he had rescued from the Persians.

111 [\(return\)](#)

[See Baronius, (Annal. Eccles. A.D. 628, No. 1-4,) Eutychius, (Annal. tom. ii. p. 240—248,) Nicephorus, (Brev. p. 15.) The seals of the case had never been broken; and this preservation of the cross is ascribed (under God) to the devotion of Queen Sira.]

1113 [\(return\)](#)

[If the clergy imposed upon the kneeling and penitent emperor the persecution of the Jews, it must be acknowledge that provocation was not wanting; for how many of them had been eye-witnesses of, perhaps sufferers in, the horrible atrocities committed on the capture of the city! Yet we have no authentic account of great severities exercised by Heraclius. The law of Hadrian was reenacted, which prohibited the Jews from approaching within three miles of the city—a law, which, in the present exasperated state of the Christians, might be a measure of security of mercy, rather than of oppression. Milman, Hist. of the Jews, iii. 242.—M.]

112 [\(return\)](#)

[George of Pisidia, Acroas. iii. de Expedit. contra Persas, 415, &c., and Heracleid. Acroas. i. 65—138. I neglect the meaner parallels of Daniel, Timotheus, &c.; Chosroes and the chagan were of course compared to Belshazzar, Pharaoh, the old serpent, &c.]

113 [\(return\)](#)

[Suidas (in Excerpt. Hist. Byzant. p. 46) gives this number; but either the Persian must be read for the Isaurian war, or this passage does not belong to the emperor Heraclius.]

Chapter XLVII: Ecclesiastical Discord.—Part I.

Theological History Of The Doctrine Of The Incarnation.—The Human And Divine Nature Of Christ.—Enmity Of The Patriarchs Of Alexandria And Constantinople.—St. Cyril And Nestorius. —Third General Council Of Ephesus.—Heresy Of

Eutyches.—Fourth General Council Of Chalcedon.—Civil And Ecclesiastical Discord.—Intolerance Of Justinian.—The Three Chapters.—The Monothelite Controversy.—State Of The Oriental Sects:—I. The Nestorians.—II. The Jacobites.—III. The Maronites.—IV. The Armenians.—V. The Copts And Abyssinians.

After the extinction of paganism, the Christians in peace and piety might have enjoyed their solitary triumph. But the principle of discord was alive in their bosom, and they were more solicitous to explore the nature, than to practice the laws, of their founder. I have already observed, that the disputes of the Trinity were succeeded by those of the Incarnation; alike scandalous to the church, alike pernicious to the state, still more minute in their origin, still more durable in their effects.

It is my design to comprise in the present chapter a religious war of two hundred and fifty years, to represent the ecclesiastical and political schism of the Oriental sects, and to introduce their clamorous or sanguinary contests, by a modest inquiry into the doctrines of the primitive church. [1](#)

1

[\(return\)](#)

[By what means shall I authenticate this previous inquiry, which I have studied to circumscribe and compress?—If I persist in supporting each fact or reflection by its proper and special evidence, every line would demand a string of testimonies, and every note would swell to a critical dissertation. But the numberless passages of antiquity which I have seen with my own eyes, are compiled, digested and illustrated by Petavius and Le Clerc, by Beausobre and Mosheim. I shall be content to fortify my narrative by the names and characters of these respectable guides; and in the contemplation of a minute or remote object, I am not ashamed to borrow the aid of the strongest glasses: 1. The *Dogmata Theologica* of Petavius are a work of incredible labor and compass; the volumes which relate solely to the Incarnation (two folios, vth and vith, of 837 pages) are divided into xvi. books—the first of history, the remainder of controversy and doctrine. The Jesuit's learning is copious and correct; his Latinity is pure, his method clear, his argument profound and well connected; but he is the slave of the fathers, the scourge of heretics, and the enemy of truth and candor, as often as they are inimical to the Catholic cause. 2. The Arminian Le Clerc, who has composed in a quarto volume (Amsterdam, 1716) the ecclesiastical history of the two first centuries, was free both in his temper and situation; his sense is clear, but his thoughts are

narrow; he reduces the reason or folly of ages to the standard of his private judgment, and his impartiality is sometimes quickened, and sometimes tainted by his opposition to the fathers. See the heretics (Cerinthians, lxxx. Ebionites, ciii. Carpocratians, cxx. Valentinians, cxxi. Basilidians, cxxiii. Marcionites, cxli., &c.) under their proper dates. 3. *The Histoire Critique du Manichisme* (Amsterdam, 1734, 1739, in two vols. in 4to., with a posthumous dissertation sur les Nazarenes, Lausanne, 1745) of M. de Beausobre is a treasure of ancient philosophy and theology. The learned historian spins with incomparable art the systematic thread of opinion, and transforms himself by turns into the person of a saint, a sage, or a heretic. Yet his refinement is sometimes excessive; he betrays an amiable partiality in favor of the weaker side, and, while he guards against calumny, he does not allow sufficient scope for superstition and fanaticism. A copious table of contents will direct the reader to any point that he wishes to examine. 4. Less profound than Petavius, less independent than Le Clerc, less ingenious than Beausobre, the historian Mosheim is full, rational, correct, and moderate. In his learned work, *De Rebus Christianis ante Constantinum* (Helmstadt 1753, in 4to.,) see the Nazarenes and Ebionites, p. 172—179, 328—332. The Gnostics in general, p. 179, &c. Cerinthus, p. 196—202. Basilides, p. 352—361. Carpocrates, p. 363—367. Valentinus, p. 371—389. Marcion, p. 404—410. The Manichaeans, p. 829-837, &c.]

I. A laudable regard for the honor of the first proselyte has countenanced the belief, the hope, the wish, that the Ebionites, or at least the Nazarenes, were distinguished only by their obstinate perseverance in the practice of the Mosaic rites.

Their churches have disappeared, their books are obliterated: their obscure freedom might allow a latitude of faith, and the softness of their infant creed would be variously moulded by the zeal or prudence of three hundred years. Yet the most charitable criticism must refuse these sectaries any knowledge of the pure and proper divinity of Christ. Educated in the school of Jewish prophecy and prejudice, they had never been taught to elevate their hopes above a human and temporal Messiah. [2](#) If they had courage to hail their king when he appeared in a plebeian garb, their grosser apprehensions were incapable of discerning their God, who had studiously disguised his celestial character under the name and person of a mortal. [3](#) The familiar companions of Jesus of Nazareth conversed with their friend and countryman, who, in all the actions of rational and animal life, appeared of the same species with themselves. His progress from infancy to youth and manhood was marked by a regular increase in

stature and wisdom; and after a painful agony of mind and body, he expired on the cross. He lived and died for the service of mankind: but the life and death of Socrates had likewise been devoted to the cause of religion and justice; and although the stoic or the hero may disdain the humble virtues of Jesus, the tears which he shed over his friend and country may be esteemed the purest evidence of his humanity. The miracles of the gospel could not astonish a people who held with intrepid faith the more splendid prodigies of the Mosaic law. The prophets of ancient days had cured diseases, raised the dead, divided the sea, stopped the sun, and ascended to heaven in a fiery chariot. And the metaphorical style of the Hebrews might ascribe to a saint and martyr the adoptive title of Son of God.

2

[\(return\)](#)

[Jew Tryphon, (Justin. Dialog. p. 207) in the name of his countrymen, and the modern Jews, the few who divert their thoughts from money to religion, still hold the same language, and allege the literal sense of the prophets. * Note: See on this passage Bp. Kaye, Justin Martyr, p. 25.—M. Note: Most of the modern writers, who have closely examined this subject, and who will not be suspected of any theological bias, Rosenmüller on Isaiah ix. 5, and on Psalm xlv. 7, and Bertholdt, Christologia Judaeorum, c. xx., rightly ascribe much higher notions of the Messiah to the Jews. In fact, the dispute seems to rest on the notion that there was a definite and authorized notion of the Messiah, among the Jews, whereas it was probably so vague, as to admit every shade of difference, from the vulgar expectation of a mere temporal king, to the philosophic notion of an emanation from the Deity.—M.]

3

[\(return\)](#)

[Chrysostom (Basnage, Hist. des Juifs, tom. v. c. 9, p. 183) and Athanasius (Petav. Dogmat. Theolog. tom. v. l. i. c. 2, p. 3) are obliged to confess that the Divinity of Christ is rarely mentioned by himself or his apostles.]

Yet in the insufficient creed of the Nazarenes and the Ebionites, a distinction is faintly noticed between the heretics, who confounded the generation of Christ in the common order of nature, and the less guilty schismatics, who revered the virginity of his mother, and excluded the aid of an earthly father. The incredulity of the former was countenanced by the visible circumstances of his birth, the legal marriage of the reputed parents, Joseph and Mary, and his lineal claim to the kingdom of David and the inheritance of Judah. But the secret and authentic history has been recorded in several copies of the Gospel according to St. Matthew, [4](#) which these sectaries long preserved in the original Hebrew, [5](#) as the sole evidence of their faith. The natural suspicions of

the husband, conscious of his own chastity, were dispelled by the assurance (in a dream) that his wife was pregnant of the Holy Ghost: and as this distant and domestic prodigy could not fall under the personal observation of the historian, he must have listened to the same voice which dictated to Isaiah the future conception of a virgin. The son of a virgin, generated by the ineffable operation of the Holy Spirit, was a creature without example or resemblance, superior in every attribute of mind and body to the children of Adam. Since the introduction of the Greek or Chaldean philosophy, [6](#) the Jews [7](#) were persuaded of the preexistence, transmigration, and immortality of souls; and providence was justified by a supposition, that they were confined in their earthly prisons to expiate the stains which they had contracted in a former state. [8](#) But the degrees of purity and corruption are almost immeasurable. It might be fairly presumed, that the most sublime and virtuous of human spirits was infused into the offspring of Mary and the Holy Ghost; [9](#) that his abasement was the result of his voluntary choice; and that the object of his mission was, to purify, not his own, but the sins of the world. On his return to his native skies, he received the immense reward of his obedience; the everlasting kingdom of the Messiah, which had been darkly foretold by the prophets, under the carnal images of peace, of conquest, and of dominion. Omnipotence could enlarge the human faculties of Christ to the extend of is celestial office. In the language of antiquity, the title of God has not been severely confined to the first parent, and his incomparable minister, his only-begotten son, might claim, without presumption, the religious, though secondary, worship of a subject of a subject world.

4

[\(return\)](#)

[The two first chapters of St. Matthew did not exist in the Ebionite copies, (Epiphan. Haeres. xxx. 13;) and the miraculous conception is one of the last articles which Dr. Priestley has curtailed from his scanty creed. * Note: The distinct allusion to the facts related in the two first chapters of the Gospel, in a work evidently written about the end of the reign of Nero, the Ascensio Isaiae, edited by Archbishop Lawrence, seems convincing evidence that they are integral parts of the authentic Christian history.—M.]

5

[\(return\)](#)

[It is probable enough that the first of the Gospels for the use of the Jewish converts was composed in the Hebrew or Syriac idiom: the fact is attested by a chain of fathers—Papias, Irenaeus, Origen, Jerom, &c. It is devoutly believed by the Catholics, and admitted by Casaubon, Grotius, and Isaac Vossius, among the Protestant critics. But this Hebrew Gospel of St. Matthew is most unaccountably lost; and we may accuse the diligence or fidelity of the primitive churches, who have preferred the unauthorized version of some

nameless Greek. Erasmus and his followers, who respect our Greek text as the original Gospel, deprive themselves of the evidence which declares it to be the work of an apostle. See Simon, *Hist. Critique, &c.*, tom. iii. c. 5—9, p. 47—101, and the *Prolegomena* of Mill and Wetstein to the New Testament. * Note: Surely the extinction of the Judaeo-Christian community related from Mosheim by Gibbon himself (c. xv.) accounts both simply and naturally for the loss of a composition, which had become of no use—nor does it follow that the Greek Gospel of St. Matthew is unauthorized.—M.]

6 [\(return\)](#)

[The metaphysics of the soul are disengaged by Cicero (*Tusculan.* l. i.) and Maximus of Tyre (*Dissertat.* xvi.) from the intricacies of dialogue, which sometimes amuse, and often perplex, the readers of the *Phoedrus*, the *Phoedon*, and the *Laws* of Plato.]

7 [\(return\)](#)

[The disciples of Jesus were persuaded that a man might have sinned before he was born, (*John*, ix. 2,) and the Pharisees held the transmigration of virtuous souls, (*Joseph. de Bell. Judaico*, l. ii. c. 7;) and a modern Rabbi is modestly assured, that *Hermes*, *Pythagoras*, *Plato*, &c., derived their metaphysics from his illustrious countrymen.]

8 [\(return\)](#)

[Four different opinions have been entertained concerning the origin of human souls: 1. That they are eternal and divine. 2. That they were created in a separate state of existence, before their union with the body. 3. That they have been propagated from the original stock of Adam, who contained in himself the mental as well as the corporeal seed of his posterity. 4. That each soul is occasionally created and embodied in the moment of conception.—The last of these sentiments appears to have prevailed among the moderns; and our spiritual history is grown less sublime, without becoming more intelligible.]

9 [\(return\)](#)

[It was one of the fifteen heresies imputed to Origen, and denied by his apologist, (*Photius, Bibliothec. cod.* cxvii. p. 296.) Some of the Rabbis attribute one and the same soul to the persons of Adam, David, and the Messiah.]

II. The seeds of the faith, which had slowly arisen in the rocky and ungrateful soil of Judea, were transplanted, in full maturity, to the happier climes of the Gentiles; and the strangers of Rome or Asia, who never beheld the manhood, were the more readily disposed to embrace the divinity, of Christ. The polytheist and the philosopher, the Greek and the Barbarian, were alike accustomed to conceive a long succession, an infinite chain of angels or daemons, or deities, or aeons, or emanations, issuing from the throne of light. Nor could it seem strange or incredible, that the first of these aeons, the Logos, or Word of God, of the same substance with the Father, should descend upon earth, to deliver the human race from vice and error, and to conduct them in the paths of life and immortality. But the prevailing doctrine of the eternity and inherent pravity of matter infected the primitive churches of the East. Many among the Gentile proselytes refused to believe that a celestial spirit, an undivided portion of the first essence, had been personally united with a mass of impure and contaminated flesh; and, in their zeal for the divinity, they piously abjured the humanity, of Christ. While his blood was still recent on Mount Calvary, [10](#) the Docetes, a numerous and learned sect of Asiatics, invented the phantastic system, which was afterwards propagated by the Marcionites, the Manichaeans, and the various names of the Gnostic heresy. [11](#) They denied the truth and authenticity of the Gospels, as far as they relate the conception of Mary, the birth of Christ, and the thirty years that preceded the exercise of his ministry. He first appeared on the banks of the Jordan in the form of perfect manhood; but it was a form only, and not a substance; a human figure created by the hand of Omnipotence to imitate the faculties and actions of a man, and to impose a perpetual illusion on the senses of his friends and enemies. Articulate sounds vibrated on the ears of the disciples; but the image which was impressed on their optic nerve eluded the more stubborn evidence of the touch; and they enjoyed the spiritual, not the corporeal, presence of the Son of God. The rage of the Jews was idly wasted against an impassive phantom; and the mystic scenes of the passion and death, the resurrection and ascension, of Christ were represented on the theatre of Jerusalem for the benefit of mankind. If it were urged, that such ideal mimicry, such incessant deception, was unworthy of the God of truth, the Docetes agreed with too many of their orthodox brethren in the justification of pious falsehood. In the system of the Gnostics, the Jehovah of Israel, the Creator of this lower world, was a rebellious, or at least an ignorant, spirit. The Son of God descended upon earth to abolish his temple and his law; and, for the accomplishment of this salutary end, he dexterously transferred to his own person the hope and prediction of a temporal Messiah.

[Apostolis adhuc in seculo superstitibus, apud Judaeam Christi sanguine recente, Phantasma domini corpus asserebatur. Hieronym, advers. Lucifer. c. 8. The epistle of Ignatius to the Smyrnaeans, and even the Gospel according to St. John, are levelled against the growing error of the

Docetes, who had obtained too much credit in the world, (1 John, iv. 1—5.)]

11

[\(return\)](#)

[About the year 200 of the Christian aera, Irenaeus and Hippolytus efuted the thirty-two sects, which had multiplied to fourscore in the time of Epiphanius, (Phot. Biblioth. cod. cxx. cxxi. cxxii.) The five books of Irenaeus exist only in barbarous Latin; but the original might perhaps be found in some monastery of Greece.]

One of the most subtile disputants of the Manichaeian school has pressed the danger and indecency of supposing, that the God of the Christians, in the state of a human foetus, emerged at the end of nine months from a female womb. The pious horror of his antagonists provoked them to disclaim all sensual circumstances of conception and delivery; to maintain that the divinity passed through Mary like a sunbeam through a plate of glass; and to assert, that the seal of her virginity remained unbroken even at the moment when she became the mother of Christ. But the rashness of these concessions has encouraged a milder sentiment of those of the Docetes, who taught, not that Christ was a phantom, but that he was clothed with an impassible and incorruptible body. Such, indeed, in the more orthodox system, he has acquired since his resurrection, and such he must have always possessed, if it were capable of pervading, without resistance or injury, the density of intermediate matter. Devoid of its most essential properties, it might be exempt from the attributes and infirmities of the flesh. A foetus that could increase from an invisible point to its full maturity; a child that could attain the stature of perfect manhood without deriving any nourishment from the ordinary sources, might continue to exist without repairing a daily waste by a daily supply of external matter. Jesus might share the repasts of his disciples without being subject to the calls of thirst or hunger; and his virgin purity was never sullied by the involuntary stains of sensual concupiscence. Of a body thus singularly constituted, a question would arise, by what means, and of what materials, it was originally framed; and our sounder theology is startled by an answer which was not peculiar to the Gnostics, that both the form and the substance proceeded from the divine essence. The idea of pure and absolute spirit is a refinement of modern philosophy: the incorporeal essence, ascribed by the ancients to human souls, celestial beings, and even the Deity himself, does not exclude the notion of extended space; and their imagination was satisfied with a subtile nature of air, or fire, or aether, incomparably more perfect than the grossness of the material world. If we define the place, we must describe the figure, of the Deity. Our experience, perhaps our vanity, represents the powers of reason and virtue under a human form. The Anthropomorphites, who swarmed among the monks of Egypt and the Catholics of Africa, could produce the express declaration of Scripture, that man was made after the image of his Creator. [12](#) The venerable Serapion, one of the saints of the Nitrian deserts, relinquished, with many a tear, his darling prejudice; and bewailed, like an infant, his

unlucky conversion, which had stolen away his God, and left his mind without any visible object of faith or devotion. [13](#)

12

[\(return\)](#)

[The pilgrim Cassian, who visited Egypt in the beginning of the vth century, observes and laments the reign of anthropomorphism among the monks, who were not conscious that they embraced the system of Epicurus, (Cicero, de Nat. Deorum, i. 18, 34.) Ab universo propemodum genere monachorum, qui per totam provinciam Egyptum morabantur, pro simplicitatis errore susceptum est, ut e contrarie memoratum pontificem (Theophilus) velut haeresi gravissima depravatum, pars maxima seniorum ab universo fraternitatis corpore decerneret detestandum, (Cassian, Collation. x. 2.) As long as St. Augustin remained a Manichaean, he was scandalized by the anthropomorphism of the vulgar Catholics.]

13

[\(return\)](#)

[Ita est in oratione senex mente confusus, eo quod illam imaginem Deitatis, quam proponere sibi in oratione consueverat, aboleri de suo corde sentiret, ut in amarissimos fletus, crebrosque singultus repente prorumpens, in terram prostratus, cum ejulatu validissimo proclamaret; "Heu me miserum! tulerunt a me Deum meum, et quem nunc teneam non habeo, vel quem adorem, aut interpellam am nescio." Cassian, Collat. x. 2.]

III. Such were the fleeting shadows of the Docetes. A more substantial, though less simple, hypothesis, was contrived by Cerinthus of Asia, [14](#) who dared to oppose the last of the apostles. Placed on the confines of the Jewish and Gentile world, he labored to reconcile the Gnostic with the Ebionite, by confessing in the same Messiah the supernatural union of a man and a God; and this mystic doctrine was adopted with many fanciful improvements by Carpocrates, Basilides, and Valentine, [15](#) the heretics of the Egyptian school. In their eyes, Jesus of Nazareth was a mere mortal, the legitimate son of Joseph and Mary: but he was the best and wisest of the human race, selected as the worthy instrument to restore upon earth the worship of the true and supreme Deity. When he was baptized in the Jordan, the Christ, the first of the aeons, the Son of God himself, descended on Jesus in the form of a dove, to inhabit his mind, and direct his actions during the allotted period of his ministry. When the Messiah was delivered into the hands of the Jews, the Christ, an immortal and impassible being, forsook his earthly tabernacle, flew back to the pleroma or world of spirits, and left the solitary Jesus to suffer, to complain, and to expire. But the justice and generosity of such a desertion are strongly questionable; and the fate of an innocent martyr, at first impelled, and at length abandoned, by his divine companion, might provoke the pity and indignation of the

profane. Their murmurs were variously silenced by the sectaries who espoused and modified the double system of Cerinthus. It was alleged, that when Jesus was nailed to the cross, he was endowed with a miraculous apathy of mind and body, which rendered him insensible of his apparent sufferings. It was affirmed, that these momentary, though real, pangs would be abundantly repaid by the temporal reign of a thousand years reserved for the Messiah in his kingdom of the new Jerusalem. It was insinuated, that if he suffered, he deserved to suffer; that human nature is never absolutely perfect; and that the cross and passion might serve to expiate the venial transgressions of the son of Joseph, before his mysterious union with the Son of God. [16](#)

14

[\(return\)](#)

[St. John and Cerinthus (A.D. 80. Cleric. Hist. Eccles. p. 493) accidentally met in the public bath of Ephesus; but the apostle fled from the heretic, lest the building should tumble on their heads. This foolish story, reprobated by Dr. Middleton, (Miscellaneous Works, vol. ii.,) is related, however, by Irenaeus, (iii. 3,) on the evidence of Polycarp, and was probably suited to the time and residence of Cerinthus. The obsolete, yet probably the true, reading of 1 John, iv. 3 alludes to the double nature of that primitive heretic. * Note: Griesbach asserts that all the Greek Mss., all the translators, and all the Greek fathers, support the common reading.—Nov. Test. in loc.—M]

15

[\(return\)](#)

[The Valentinians embraced a complex, and almost incoherent, system. 1. Both Christ and Jesus were aeons, though of different degrees; the one acting as the rational soul, the other as the divine spirit of the Savior. 2. At the time of the passion, they both retired, and left only a sensitive soul and a human body. 3. Even that body was aethereal, and perhaps apparent.—Such are the laborious conclusions of Mosheim. But I much doubt whether the Latin translator understood Irenaeus, and whether Irenaeus and the Valentinians understood themselves.]

16

[\(return\)](#)

[The heretics abused the passionate exclamation of “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Rousseau, who has drawn an eloquent, but indecent, parallel between Christ and Socrates, forgets that not a word of impatience or despair escaped from the mouth of the dying philosopher. In the Messiah, such sentiments could be only apparent; and such ill-sounding words were properly explained as the application of a psalm and prophecy.]

IV. All those who believe the immateriality of the soul, a specious and noble tenet, must confess, from their present experience, the incomprehensible union of mind and matter. A similar union is not inconsistent with a much higher, or even with the highest, degree of mental faculties; and the incarnation of an aeon or archangel, the most perfect of created spirits, does not involve any positive contradiction or absurdity. In the age of religious freedom, which was determined by the council of Nice, the dignity of Christ was measured by private judgment according to the indefinite rule of Scripture, or reason, or tradition. But when his pure and proper divinity had been established on the ruins of Arianism, the faith of the Catholics trembled on the edge of a precipice where it was impossible to recede, dangerous to stand, dreadful to fall and the manifold inconveniences of their creed were aggravated by the sublime character of their theology. They hesitated to pronounce; that God himself, the second person of an equal and consubstantial trinity, was manifested in the flesh; [17](#) that a being who pervades the universe, had been confined in the womb of Mary; that his eternal duration had been marked by the days, and months, and years of human existence; that the Almighty had been scourged and crucified; that his impassible essence had felt pain and anguish; that his omniscience was not exempt from ignorance; and that the source of life and immortality expired on Mount Calvary. These alarming consequences were affirmed with unblushing simplicity by Apollinaris, [18](#) bishop of Laodicea, and one of the luminaries of the church. The son of a learned grammarian, he was skilled in all the sciences of Greece; eloquence, erudition, and philosophy, conspicuous in the volumes of Apollinaris, were humbly devoted to the service of religion. The worthy friend of Athanasius, the worthy antagonist of Julian, he bravely wrestled with the Arians and Polytheists, and though he affected the rigor of geometrical demonstration, his commentaries revealed the literal and allegorical sense of the Scriptures. A mystery, which had long floated in the looseness of popular belief, was defined by his perverse diligence in a technical form; and he first proclaimed the memorable words, “One incarnate nature of Christ,” which are still reechoed with hostile clamors in the churches of Asia, Egypt, and Aethiopia. He taught that the Godhead was united or mingled with the body of a man; and that the Logos, the eternal wisdom, supplied in the flesh the place and office of a human soul. Yet as the profound doctor had been terrified at his own rashness, Apollinaris was heard to mutter some faint accents of excuse and explanation. He acquiesced in the old distinction of the Greek philosophers between the rational and sensitive soul of man; that he might reserve the Logos for intellectual functions, and employ the subordinate human principle in the meaner actions of animal life.

With the moderate Docetes, he revered Mary as the spiritual, rather than as the carnal, mother of Christ, whose body either came from heaven, impassible and incorruptible, or was absorbed, and as it were transformed, into the essence of the Deity. The system of Apollinaris was strenuously encountered by the Asiatic and Syrian divines whose schools are honored by the names of Basil, Gregory and Chrysostom, and tainted by

those of Diodorus, Theodore, and Nestorius. But the person of the aged bishop of Laedicea, his character and dignity, remained inviolate; and his rivals, since we may not suspect them of the weakness of toleration, were astonished, perhaps, by the novelty of the argument, and diffident of the final sentence of the Catholic church. Her judgment at length inclined in their favor; the heresy of Apollinaris was condemned, and the separate congregations of his disciples were proscribed by the Imperial laws. But his principles were secretly entertained in the monasteries of Egypt, and his enemies felt the hatred of Theophilus and Cyril, the successive patriarchs of Alexandria.

17

[\(return\)](#)

[This strong expression might be justified by the language of St. Paul, (1 Tim. iii. 16;) but we are deceived by our modern Bibles. The word which was altered to God at Constantinople in the beginning of the vith century: the true reading, which is visible in the Latin and Syriac versions, still exists in the reasoning of the Greek, as well as of the Latin fathers; and this fraud, with that of the three witnesses of St. John, is admirably detected by Sir Isaac Newton. (See his two letters translated by M. de Missy, in the Journal Britannique, tom. xv. p. 148—190, 351—390.) I have weighed the arguments, and may yield to the authority of the first of philosophers, who was deeply skilled in critical and theological studies. Note: It should be Griesbach in loc. The weight of authority is so much against the common reading in both these points, that they are no longer urged by prudent controversialists. Would Gibbon's deference for the first of philosophers have extended to all his theological conclusions?—M.]

18

[\(return\)](#)

[For Apollinaris and his sect, see Socrates, l. ii. c. 46, l. iii. c. 16 Sazomen, l. v. c. 18, l. vi. c. 25, 27. Theodoret, l. v. 3, 10, 11. Tillemont, Memoires Ecclesiastiques, tom. vii. p. 602—638. Not. p. 789—794, in 4to. Venise, 1732. The contemporary saint always mentions the bishop of Laodicea as a friend and brother. The style of the more recent historians is harsh and hostile: yet Philostorgius compares him (l. viii. c. 11-15) to Basil and Gregory.]

V. The grovelling Ebionite, and the fantastic Docetes, were rejected and forgotten: the recent zeal against the errors of Apollinaris reduced the Catholics to a seeming agreement with the double nature of Cerinthus. But instead of a temporary and occasional alliance, they established, and we still embrace, the substantial, indissoluble, and everlasting union of a perfect God with a perfect man, of the second person of the trinity with a reasonable soul and human flesh. In the beginning of the fifth century, the

unity of the two natures was the prevailing doctrine of the church. On all sides, it was confessed, that the mode of their coexistence could neither be represented by our ideas, nor expressed by our language. Yet a secret and incurable discord was cherished, between those who were most apprehensive of confounding, and those who were most fearful of separating, the divinity, and the humanity, of Christ. Impelled by religious frenzy, they fled with adverse haste from the error which they mutually deemed most destructive of truth and salvation. On either hand they were anxious to guard, they were jealous to defend, the union and the distinction of the two natures, and to invent such forms of speech, such symbols of doctrine, as were least susceptible of doubt or ambiguity. The poverty of ideas and language tempted them to ransack art and nature for every possible comparison, and each comparison misled their fancy in the explanation of an incomparable mystery. In the polemic microscope, an atom is enlarged to a monster, and each party was skilful to exaggerate the absurd or impious conclusions that might be extorted from the principles of their adversaries. To escape from each other, they wandered through many a dark and devious thicket, till they were astonished by the horrid phantoms of Cerinthus and Apollinaris, who guarded the opposite issues of the theological labyrinth. As soon as they beheld the twilight of sense and heresy, they started, measured back their steps, and were again involved in the gloom of impenetrable orthodoxy. To purge themselves from the guilt or reproach of damnable error, they disavowed their consequences, explained their principles, excused their indiscretions, and unanimously pronounced the sounds of concord and faith. Yet a latent and almost invisible spark still lurked among the embers of controversy: by the breath of prejudice and passion, it was quickly kindled to a mighty flame, and the verbal disputes [19](#) of the Oriental sects have shaken the pillars of the church and state.

19

[\(return\)](#)

[I appeal to the confession of two Oriental prelates, Gregory Abulpharagius the Jacobite primate of the East, and Elias the Nestorian metropolitan of Damascus, (see Asseman, Bibliothec. Oriental. tom. ii. p. 291, tom. iii. p. 514, &c.,) that the Melchites, Jacobites, Nestorians, &c., agree in the doctrine, and differ only in the expression. Our most learned and rational divines—Basnage, Le Clerc, Beausobre, La Croze, Mosheim, Jablonski—are inclined to favor this charitable judgment; but the zeal of Petavius is loud and angry, and the moderation of Dupin is conveyed in a whisper.]

The name of Cyril of Alexandria is famous in controversial story, and the title of saint is a mark that his opinions and his party have finally prevailed. In the house of his uncle, the archbishop Theophilus, he imbibed the orthodox lessons of zeal and dominion, and five years of his youth were profitably spent in the adjacent monasteries of Nitria. Under the tuition of the abbot Serapion, he applied himself to ecclesiastical studies, with such indefatigable ardor, that in the course of one sleepless night, he has perused the four

Gospels, the Catholic Epistles, and the Epistle to the Romans. Origen he detested; but the writings of Clemens and Dionysius, of Athanasius and Basil, were continually in his hands: by the theory and practice of dispute, his faith was confirmed and his wit was sharpened; he extended round his cell the cobwebs of scholastic theology, and meditated the works of allegory and metaphysics, whose remains, in seven verbose folios, now peaceably slumber by the side of their rivals. [20](#) Cyril prayed and fasted in the desert, but his thoughts (it is the reproach of a friend) [21](#) were still fixed on the world; and the call of Theophilus, who summoned him to the tumult of cities and synods, was too readily obeyed by the aspiring hermit. With the approbation of his uncle, he assumed the office, and acquired the fame, of a popular preacher. His comely person adorned the pulpit; the harmony of his voice resounded in the cathedral; his friends were stationed to lead or second the applause of the congregation; [22](#) and the hasty notes of the scribes preserved his discourses, which in their effect, though not in their composition, might be compared with those of the Athenian orators. The death of Theophilus expanded and realized the hopes of his nephew. The clergy of Alexandria was divided; the soldiers and their general supported the claims of the archdeacon; but a resistless multitude, with voices and with hands, asserted the cause of their favorite; and after a period of thirty-nine years, Cyril was seated on the throne of Athanasius. [23](#)

20

[\(return\)](#)

[La Croze (Hist. du Christianisme des Indes, tom. i. p. 24) avows his contempt for the genius and writings of Cyril. De tous les ouvrages des anciens, il y en a peu qu'on lise avec moins d'utilite: and Dupin, (Bibliotheque Ecclesiastique, tom. iv. p. 42—52,) in words of respect, teaches us to despise them.]

21

[\(return\)](#)

[Of Isidore of Pelusium, (l. i. epist. 25, p. 8.) As the letter is not of the most creditable sort, Tillemont, less sincere than the Bollandists, affects a doubt whether this Cyril is the nephew of Theophilus, (Mem. Eccles. tom. xiv. p. 268.)]

22

[\(return\)](#)

[A grammarian is named by Socrates (l. vii. c. 13).]

23

[\(return\)](#)

[See the youth and promotion of Cyril, in Socrates, (l. vii. c. 7) and Renaudot, (Hist. Patriarchs. Alexandrin. p. 106, 108.) The Abbe Renaudot drew his materials from the Arabic history of Severus, bishop of Hermopolis Magma, or Ashmunein, in the xth century, who can never be trusted, unless our assent is extorted by the internal evidence of facts.]

Chapter XLVII: Ecclesiastical Discord.—Part II.

The prize was not unworthy of his ambition. At a distance from the court, and at the head of an immense capital, the patriarch, as he was now styled, of Alexandria had gradually usurped the state and authority of a civil magistrate. The public and private charities of the city were blindly obeyed by his numerous and fanatic parabolani, [24](#) familiarized in their daily office with scenes of death; and the præfects of Egypt were awed or provoked by the temporal power of these Christian pontiffs. Ardent in the prosecution of heresy, Cyril auspiciously opened his reign by oppressing the Novatians, the most innocent and harmless of the sectaries. The interdiction of their religious worship appeared in his eyes a just and meritorious act; and he confiscated their holy vessels, without apprehending the guilt of sacrilege. The toleration, and even the privileges of the Jews, who had multiplied to the number of forty thousand, were secured by the laws of the Caesars and Ptolemies, and a long prescription of seven hundred years since the foundation of Alexandria. Without any legal sentence, without any royal mandate, the patriarch, at the dawn of day, led a seditious multitude to the attack of the synagogues. Unarmed and unprepared, the Jews were incapable of resistance; their houses of prayer were levelled with the ground, and the episcopal warrior, after rewarding his troops with the plunder of their goods, expelled from the city the remnant of the unbelieving nation. Perhaps he might plead the insolence of their prosperity, and their deadly hatred of the Christians, whose blood they had recently shed in a malicious or accidental tumult.

Such crimes would have deserved the animadversion of the magistrate; but in this promiscuous outrage, the innocent were confounded with the guilty, and Alexandria was impoverished by the loss of a wealthy and industrious colony. The zeal of Cyril exposed him to the penalties of the Julian law; but in a feeble government and a superstitious age, he was secure of impunity, and even of praise. Orestes complained; but his just complaints were too quickly forgotten by the ministers of Theodosius, and too deeply remembered by a priest who affected to pardon, and continued to hate, the præfect of Egypt. As he passed through the streets, his chariot was assaulted by a band of five hundred of the Nitrian monks; his guards fled from the wild beasts of the desert; his protestations that he was a Christian and a Catholic were answered by a volley of stones, and the face of Orestes was covered with blood. The loyal citizens of Alexandria hastened to his rescue; he instantly satisfied his justice and revenge against the monk by whose hand he had been wounded, and Ammonius expired under the rod of the lictor. At the command of Cyril his body was raised from the ground, and transported, in solemn procession, to the cathedral; the name of Ammonius was changed to that of Thaumasius the wonderful; his tomb was decorated with the trophies of martyrdom, and the patriarch ascended the pulpit to celebrate the magnanimity of an assassin and a rebel. Such honors might incite the faithful to combat and die under the banners of the saint; and he soon prompted, or accepted, the sacrifice of a virgin, who professed the

religion of the Greeks, and cultivated the friendship of Orestes. Hypatia, the daughter of Theon the mathematician, [25](#) was initiated in her father's studies; her learned comments have elucidated the geometry of Apollonius and Diophantus, and she publicly taught, both at Athens and Alexandria, the philosophy of Plato and Aristotle. In the bloom of beauty, and in the maturity of wisdom, the modest maid refused her lovers and instructed her disciples; the persons most illustrious for their rank or merit were impatient to visit the female philosopher; and Cyril beheld, with a jealous eye, the gorgeous train of horses and slaves who crowded the door of her academy. A rumor was spread among the Christians, that the daughter of Theon was the only obstacle to the reconciliation of the præfect and the archbishop; and that obstacle was speedily removed. On a fatal day, in the holy season of Lent, Hypatia was torn from her chariot, stripped naked, dragged to the church, and inhumanly butchered by the hands of Peter the reader, and a troop of savage and merciless fanatics: her flesh was scraped from her bones with sharp cyster shells, [26](#) and her quivering limbs were delivered to the flames. The just progress of inquiry and punishment was stopped by seasonable gifts; but the murder of Hypatia has imprinted an indelible stain on the character and religion of Cyril of Alexandria. [27](#)

24

[\(return\)](#)

[The Parabolani of Alexandria were a charitable corporation, instituted during the plague of Gallienus, to visit the sick and to bury the dead. They gradually enlarged, abused, and sold the privileges of their order. Their outrageous conduct during the reign of Cyril provoked the emperor to deprive the patriarch of their nomination, and to restrain their number to five or six hundred. But these restraints were transient and ineffectual. See the Theodosian Code, l. xvi. tit. ii. and Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xiv. p. 276—278.]

25

[\(return\)](#)

[For Theon and his daughter Hypatia. see Fabricius, Bibliothec. tom. viii. p. 210, 211. Her article in the Lexicon of Suidas is curious and original. Hesychius (Meursii Opera, tom. vii. p. 295, 296) observes, that he was persecuted; and an epigram in the Greek Anthology (l. i. c. 76, p. 159, edit. Brodaeii) celebrates her knowledge and eloquence. She is honorably mentioned (Epist. 10, 15 16, 33—80, 124, 135, 153) by her friend and disciple the philosophic bishop Synesius.]

26

[\(return\)](#)

[Oyster shells were plentifully strewed on the sea-beach before the Caesareum. I may therefore prefer the literal sense, without rejecting the metaphorical version of tegulae, tiles, which is used by M. de

Valois ignorant, and the assassins were probably regardless, whether their victim was yet alive.]

27

[\(return\)](#)

[These exploits of St. Cyril are recorded by Socrates, (l. vii. c. 13, 14, 15;) and the most reluctant bigotry is compelled to copy an historian who coolly styles the murderers of Hypatia. At the mention of that injured name, I am pleased to observe a blush even on the cheek of Baronius, (A.D. 415, No. 48.)]

Superstition, perhaps, would more gently expiate the blood of a virgin, than the banishment of a saint; and Cyril had accompanied his uncle to the iniquitous synod of the Oak. When the memory of Chrysostom was restored and consecrated, the nephew of Theophilus, at the head of a dying faction, still maintained the justice of his sentence; nor was it till after a tedious delay and an obstinate resistance, that he yielded to the consent of the Catholic world. [28](#) His enmity to the Byzantine pontiffs [29](#) was a sense of interest, not a sally of passion: he envied their fortunate station in the sunshine of the Imperial court; and he dreaded their upstart ambition. which oppressed the metropolitans of Europe and Asia, invaded the provinces of Antioch and Alexandria, and measured their diocese by the limits of the empire. The long moderation of Atticus, the mild usurper of the throne of Chrysostom, suspended the animosities of the Eastern patriarchs; but Cyril was at length awakened by the exaltation of a rival more worthy of his esteem and hatred. After the short and troubled reign of Sisinnius, bishop of Constantinople, the factions of the clergy and people were appeased by the choice of the emperor, who, on this occasion, consulted the voice of fame, and invited the merit of a stranger.

Nestorius, [30](#) native of Germanicia, and a monk of Antioch, was recommended by the austerity of his life, and the eloquence of his sermons; but the first homily which he preached before the devout Theodosius betrayed the acrimony and impatience of his zeal. “Give me, O Caesar!” he exclaimed, “give me the earth purged of heretics, and I will give you in exchange the kingdom of heaven. Exterminate with me the heretics; and with you I will exterminate the Persians.” On the fifth day as if the treaty had been already signed, the patriarch of Constantinople discovered, surprised, and attacked a secret conventicle of the Arians: they preferred death to submission; the flames that were kindled by their despair, soon spread to the neighboring houses, and the triumph of Nestorius was clouded by the name of incendiary. On either side of the Hellespont his episcopal vigor imposed a rigid formulary of faith and discipline; a chronological error concerning the festival of Easter was punished as an offence against the church and state. Lydia and Caria, Sardes and Miletus, were purified with the blood of the obstinate Quartodecimans; and the edict of the emperor, or rather of the patriarch, enumerates three-and-twenty degrees and denominations in the guilt and punishment of heresy. [31](#) But the sword of persecution which Nestorius so furiously wielded was soon

turned against his own breast. Religion was the pretence; but, in the judgment of a contemporary saint, ambition was the genuine motive of episcopal warfare. [32](#)

28

[\(return\)](#)

[He was deaf to the entreaties of Atticus of Constantinople, and of Isidore of Pelusium, and yielded only (if we may believe Nicephorus, l. xiv. c. 18) to the personal intercession of the Virgin. Yet in his last years he still muttered that John Chrysostom had been justly condemned, (Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. xiv. p. 278—282. Baronius Annal. Eccles. A.D. 412, No. 46—64.)]

29

[\(return\)](#)

[See their characters in the history of Socrates, (l. vii. c. 25—28;) their power and pretensions, in the huge compilation of Thomassin, (Discipline de l'Eglise, tom. i. p. 80-91.)]

30

[\(return\)](#)

[His elevation and conduct are described by Socrates, (l. vii. c. 29 31;) and Marcellinus seems to have applied the eloquentiae satis, sapientiae parum, of Sallust.]

31

[\(return\)](#)

[Cod. Theodos. l. xvi. tit. v. leg. 65, with the illustrations of Baronius, (A.D. 428, No. 25, &c.) Godefroy, (ad locum,) and Pagi, Critica, (tom. ii. p. 208.)]

32

[\(return\)](#)

[Isidore of Pelusium, (l. iv. Epist. 57.) His words are strong and scandalous. Isidore is a saint, but he never became a bishop; and I half suspect that the pride of Diogenes trampled on the pride of Plato.]

In the Syrian school, Nestorius had been taught to abhor the confusion of the two natures, and nicely to discriminate the humanity of his master Christ from the divinity of the Lord Jesus. [33](#) The Blessed Virgin he revered as the mother of Christ, but his ears were offended with the rash and recent title of mother of God, [34](#) which had been insensibly adopted since the origin of the Arian controversy. From the pulpit of Constantinople, a friend of the patriarch, and afterwards the patriarch himself, repeatedly preached against the use, or the abuse, of a word [35](#) unknown to the apostles, unauthorized by the church, and which could only tend to alarm the timorous, to mislead the simple, to amuse the profane, and to justify, by a seeming resemblance, the old genealogy of Olympus. [36](#) In his calmer moments Nestorius confessed, that it might be tolerated or excused by the union of the two natures, and the communication of their idioms: [37](#) but he was exasperated, by contradiction, to disclaim the worship of a newborn, an infant Deity, to draw his inadequate similes from the conjugal or civil partnerships of life, and to describe the manhood of Christ as the robe, the instrument,

the tabernacle of his Godhead. At these blasphemous sounds, the pillars of the sanctuary were shaken. The unsuccessful competitors of Nestorius indulged their pious or personal resentment, the Byzantine clergy was secretly displeased with the intrusion of a stranger: whatever is superstitious or absurd, might claim the protection of the monks; and the people were interested in the glory of their virgin patroness. [38](#) The sermons of the archbishop, and the service of the altar, were disturbed by seditious clamor; his authority and doctrine were renounced by separate congregations; every wind scattered round the empire the leaves of controversy; and the voice of the combatants on a sonorous theatre reechoed in the cells of Palestine and Egypt. It was the duty of Cyril to enlighten the zeal and ignorance of his innumerable monks: in the school of Alexandria, he had imbibed and professed the incarnation of one nature; and the successor of Athanasius consulted his pride and ambition, when he rose in arms against another Arius, more formidable and more guilty, on the second throne of the hierarchy. After a short correspondence, in which the rival prelates disguised their hatred in the hollow language of respect and charity, the patriarch of Alexandria denounced to the prince and people, to the East and to the West, the damnable errors of the Byzantine pontiff. From the East, more especially from Antioch, he obtained the ambiguous counsels of toleration and silence, which were addressed to both parties while they favored the cause of Nestorius. But the Vatican received with open arms the messengers of Egypt. The vanity of Celestine was flattered by the appeal; and the partial version of a monk decided the faith of the pope, who with his Latin clergy was ignorant of the language, the arts, and the theology of the Greeks. At the head of an Italian synod, Celestine weighed the merits of the cause, approved the creed of Cyril, condemned the sentiments and person of Nestorius, degraded the heretic from his episcopal dignity, allowed a respite of ten days for recantation and penance, and delegated to his enemy the execution of this rash and illegal sentence. But the patriarch of Alexandria, while he darted the thunders of a god, exposed the errors and passions of a mortal; and his twelve anathemas [39](#) still torture the orthodox slaves, who adore the memory of a saint, without forfeiting their allegiance to the synod of Chalcedon. These bold assertions are indelibly tinged with the colors of the Apollinarian heresy; but the serious, and perhaps the sincere professions of Nestorius have satisfied the wiser and less partial theologians of the present times. [40](#)

33

[\(return\)](#)

[La Croze (*Christianisme des Indes*, tom. i. p. 44-53. *Thesaurus Epistolicus*, La Crozianus, tom. iii. p. 276—280) has detected the use, which, in the ivth, vth, and vith centuries, discriminates the school of Diodorus of Tarsus and his Nestorian disciples.]

34

[\(return\)](#)

[Deipara; as in zoology we familiarly speak of oviparous and viviparous animals. It is not easy to fix the invention of this word, which La Croze (*Christianisme des Indes*, tom. i. p. 16) ascribes to

Eusebius of Caesarea and the Arians. The orthodox testimonies are produced by Cyril and Petavius, (Dogmat. Theolog. tom. v. l. v. c. 15, p. 254, &c. ;) but the veracity of the saint is questionable, and the epithet so easily slides from the margin to the text of a Catholic Ms]

35

[\(return\)](#)

[Basnage, in his Histoire de l'Eglise, a work of controversy, (tom l. p. 505,) justifies the mother, by the blood, of God, (Acts, xx. 28, with Mill's various readings.) But the Greek Mss. are far from unanimous; and the primitive style of the blood of Christ is preserved in the Syriac version, even in those copies which were used by the Christians of St. Thomas on the coast of Malabar, (La Croze, Christianisme des Indes, tom. i. p. 347.) The jealousy of the Nestorians and Monophysites has guarded the purity of their text.]

36

[\(return\)](#)

[The Pagans of Egypt already laughed at the new Cybele of the Christians, (Isidor. l. i. epist. 54;) a letter was forged in the name of Hypatia, to ridicule the theology of her assassin, (Synodicon, c. 216, in iv. tom. Concil. p. 484.) In the article of Nestorius, Bayle has scattered some loose philosophy on the worship of the Virgin Mary.]

37

[\(return\)](#)

[The item of the Greeks, a mutual loan or transfer of the idioms or properties of each nature to the other—of infinity to man, passibility to God, &c. Twelve rules on this nicest of subjects compose the Theological Grammar of Petavius, (Dogmata Theolog. tom. v. l. iv. c. 14, 15, p 209, &c.)]

38

[\(return\)](#)

[See Ducange, C. P. Christiana, l. i. p. 30, &c.]

39

[\(return\)](#)

[Concil. tom. iii. p. 943. They have never been directly approved by the church, (Tillemont. Mem. Eccles. tom. xiv. p. 368—372.) I almost pity the agony of rage and sophistry with which Petavius seems to be agitated in the vith book of his Dogmata Theologica]

40

[\(return\)](#)

[Such as the rational Basnage (ad tom. i. Variar. Lection. Canisine in Praefat. c. 2, p. 11—23) and La Croze, the universal scholar, (Christianisme des Indes, tom. i. p. 16—20. De l'Ethiopie, p. 26, 27. The saur. Epist. p. 176, &c., 283, 285.) His free sentence is confirmed by that of his friends

Jablonski (Thesaur. Epist. tom. i. p. 193—201) and Mosheim, (idem. p. 304, Nestorium crimine caruisse est et mea sententia;) and three more respectable judges will not easily be found. Asseman, a learned and modest slave, can hardly discern (Bibliothec. Orient. tom. iv. p. 190—224) the guilt and error of the Nestorians.]

Yet neither the emperor nor the primate of the East were disposed to obey the mandate of an Italian priest; and a synod of the Catholic, or rather of the Greek church, was unanimously demanded as the sole remedy that could appease or decide this ecclesiastical quarrel. [41](#) Ephesus, on all sides accessible by sea and land, was chosen for the place, the festival of Pentecost for the day, of the meeting; a writ of summons was despatched to each metropolitan, and a guard was stationed to protect and confine the fathers till they should settle the mysteries of heaven, and the faith of the earth. Nestorius appeared not as a criminal, but as a judge; he depended on the weight rather than the number of his prelates, and his sturdy slaves from the baths of Zeuxippus were armed for every service of injury or defence. But his adversary Cyril was more powerful in the weapons both of the flesh and of the spirit. Disobedient to the letter, or at least to the meaning, of the royal summons, he was attended by fifty Egyptian bishops, who expected from their patriarch's nod the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. He had contracted an intimate alliance with Memnon, bishop of Ephesus. The despotic primate of Asia disposed of the ready succors of thirty or forty episcopal votes: a crowd of peasants, the slaves of the church, was poured into the city to support with blows and clamors a metaphysical argument; and the people zealously asserted the honor of the Virgin, whose body reposed within the walls of Ephesus. [42](#) The fleet which had transported Cyril from Alexandria was laden with the riches of Egypt; and he disembarked a numerous body of mariners, slaves, and fanatics, enlisted with blind obedience under the banner of St. Mark and the mother of God. The fathers, and even the guards, of the council were awed by this martial array; the adversaries of Cyril and Mary were insulted in the streets, or threatened in their houses; his eloquence and liberality made a daily increase in the number of his adherents; and the Egyptian soon computed that he might command the attendance and the voices of two hundred bishops. [43](#) But the author of the twelve anathemas foresaw and dreaded the opposition of John of Antioch, who, with a small, but respectable, train of metropolitans and divines, was advancing by slow journeys from the distant capital of the East. Impatient of a delay, which he stigmatized as voluntary and culpable, [44](#) Cyril announced the opening of the synod sixteen days after the festival of Pentecost. Nestorius, who depended on the near approach of his Eastern friends, persisted, like his predecessor Chrysostom, to disclaim the jurisdiction, and to disobey the summons, of his enemies: they hastened his trial, and his accuser presided in the seat of judgment. Sixty-eight bishops, twenty-two of metropolitan rank, defended his cause by a modest and temperate protest: they were excluded from the councils of their brethren. Candidian, in the emperor's name, requested a delay of four

days; the profane magistrate was driven with outrage and insult from the assembly of the saints. The whole of this momentous transaction was crowded into the compass of a summer's day: the bishops delivered their separate opinions; but the uniformity of style reveals the influence or the hand of a master, who has been accused of corrupting the public evidence of their acts and subscriptions. [45](#) Without a dissenting voice, they recognized in the epistles of Cyril the Nicene creed and the doctrine of the fathers: but the partial extracts from the letters and homilies of Nestorius were interrupted by curses and anathemas: and the heretic was degraded from his episcopal and ecclesiastical dignity. The sentence, maliciously inscribed to the new Judas, was affixed and proclaimed in the streets of Ephesus: the weary prelates, as they issued from the church of the mother of God, were saluted as her champions; and her victory was celebrated by the illuminations, the songs, and the tumult of the night.

41

[\(return\)](#)

[The origin and progress of the Nestorian controversy, till the synod of Ephesus, may be found in Socrates, (l. vii. c. 32,) Evagrius, (l. i. c. 1, 2,) Liberatus, (Brev. c. 1—4,) the original Acts, (Concil. tom. iii. p. 551—991, edit. Venice, 1728,) the Annals of Baronius and Pagi, and the faithful collections of Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. xiv p. 283—377.)]

42

[\(return\)](#)

[The Christians of the four first centuries were ignorant of the death and burial of Mary. The tradition of Ephesus is affirmed by the synod, (Concil. tom. iii. p. 1102;) yet it has been superseded by the claim of Jerusalem; and her empty sepulchre, as it was shown to the pilgrims, produced the fable of her resurrection and assumption, in which the Greek and Latin churches have piously acquiesced. See Baronius (Annal. Eccles. A.D. 48, No. 6, &c.) and Tillemont, (Mem. Eccles. tom. i. p. 467—477.)]

43

[\(return\)](#)

[The Acts of Chalcedon (Concil. tom. iv. p. 1405, 1408) exhibit a lively picture of the blind, obstinate servitude of the bishops of Egypt to their patriarch.]

44

[\(return\)](#)

[Civil or ecclesiastical business detained the bishops at Antioch till the 18th of May. Ephesus was at the distance of thirty days' journey; and ten days more may be fairly allowed for accidents and repose. The march of Xenophon over the same ground enumerates above 260 parasangs or leagues; and this measure might be illustrated from ancient and modern itineraries, if I knew how to compare the speed of an army, a synod, and a caravan. John

of Antioch is reluctantly acquitted by Tillemont himself, (Mem. Eccles. tom. xiv. p. 386—389.)]

45

[\(return\)](#)

[Evagrius, l. i. c. 7. The same imputation was urged by Count Irenaeus, (tom. iii. p. 1249;) and the orthodox critics do not find it an easy task to defend the purity of the Greek or Latin copies of the Acts.]

On the fifth day, the triumph was clouded by the arrival and indignation of the Eastern bishops. In a chamber of the inn, before he had wiped the dust from his shoes, John of Antioch gave audience to Candidian, the Imperial minister; who related his ineffectual efforts to prevent or to annul the hasty violence of the Egyptian. With equal haste and violence, the Oriental synod of fifty bishops degraded Cyril and Memnon from their episcopal honors, condemned, in the twelve anathemas, the purest venom of the Apollinarian heresy, and described the Alexandrian primate as a monster, born and educated for the destruction of the church. [46](#) His throne was distant and inaccessible; but they instantly resolved to bestow on the flock of Ephesus the blessing of a faithful shepherd. By the vigilance of Memnon, the churches were shut against them, and a strong garrison was thrown into the cathedral. The troops, under the command of Candidian, advanced to the assault; the outguards were routed and put to the sword, but the place was impregnable: the besiegers retired; their retreat was pursued by a vigorous sally; they lost their horses, and many of their soldiers were dangerously wounded with clubs and stones. Ephesus, the city of the Virgin, was defiled with rage and clamor, with sedition and blood; the rival synods darted anathemas and excommunications from their spiritual engines; and the court of Theodosius was perplexed by the adverse and contradictory narratives of the Syrian and Egyptian factions. During a busy period of three months, the emperor tried every method, except the most effectual means of indifference and contempt, to reconcile this theological quarrel. He attempted to remove or intimidate the leaders by a common sentence, of acquittal or condemnation; he invested his representatives at Ephesus with ample power and military force; he summoned from either party eight chosen deputies to a free and candid conference in the neighborhood of the capital, far from the contagion of popular frenzy. But the Orientals refused to yield, and the Catholics, proud of their numbers and of their Latin allies, rejected all terms of union or toleration. The patience of the meek Theodosius was provoked; and he dissolved in anger this episcopal tumult, which at the distance of thirteen centuries assumes the venerable aspect of the third oecumenical council. [47](#) “God is my witness,” said the pious prince, “that I am not the author of this confusion. His providence will discern and punish the guilty. Return to your provinces, and may your private virtues repair the mischief and scandal of your meeting.” They returned to their provinces; but the same passions which had distracted the synod of Ephesus were diffused over the Eastern world. After three obstinate and equal campaigns, John of Antioch and Cyril of Alexandria condescended to explain and

embrace: but their seeming reunion must be imputed rather to prudence than to reason, to the mutual lassitude rather than to the Christian charity of the patriarchs.

46

[\(return\)](#)

[After the coalition of John and Cyril these invectives were mutually forgotten. The style of declamation must never be confounded with the genuine sense which respectable enemies entertain of each other's merit, (Concil tom. iii. p. 1244.)]

47

[\(return\)](#)

[See the acts of the synod of Ephesus in the original Greek, and a Latin version almost contemporary, (Concil. tom. iii. p. 991—1339, with the Synodicon adversus Tragoediam Irenaei, tom. iv. p. 235—497,) the Ecclesiastical Histories of Socrates (l. vii. c. 34) and Evagrius, (l. i. c. 3, 4, 5,) and the Breviary of Liberatus, (in Concil. tom. vi. p. 419—459, c. 5,