ally in the empire for many ages after the conversion of Constantine to the religion of Christ. It was not indeed completely abolished even in the reign of Justinian ; and in many countries which had once been provinces of the empire, it continued long after the empire itself had fallen to pieces.

Amongst the ancient Germans, it was not uncommon for an ardent gamester to lose his personal liberty by a throw of the dice. This was indeed a strong proof of savage man­ners ; but the general condition of slaves among those barbarians seems to have been much better than among the polished Greeks and Romans. In Germany the slaves were generally attached to the soil, and only employed in tend­ing cattle, and carrying on the business of agriculture ; for the menial offices of every great man’s house were perform­ed by his wife and children. Such slaves were seldom beaten, or chained, or imprisoned. Sometimes indeed they were killed by their masters in a fit of sudden passion ; but none were considered as materials of commerce, except those who had originally been freemen, and lost their freedom by play.

Such is the account which Tacitus@@1 gives of slavery amongst the ancient Germans. The Anglo-Saxons, how­ever, after they were settled in this island, seem not to have carried on that traffic so honourably. By a statute of Al­fred the Great,@@2 the purchase of a man, a horse, or an ox, without a voucher to warrant the sale, was strictly forbidden. That law was, doubtless, enacted to prevent the stealing of men and cattle ; but it shows us that so late as the ninth or tenth century a man, when fairly purchased, was, in Eng­land, as much the property of the buyer as the horse on which he rode, or the ox which dragged his plough. In the same country, now so nobly tenacious of freedom and the rights of man, a species of slavery similar to that which prevailed amongst the ancient Germans, subsisted even to the end of the sixteenth century. This appears from a commission issued by Queen Elizabeth in 1574, for inquir­ing into the lands and goods of all her bond-men, and bond-women, in the counties of Cornwall, Devon, Somerset, and Gloucester, in order to compound with them for their manu­mission, that they might enjoy their lands and goods as free­men. In Scotland there certainly existed an order of slaves, or bond-men, who tilled the ground, were attached to the soil, and with it w,ere transferable from one proprie­tor to another, at a period so late as the thirteenth century : but when or how those villeins, as they were usually called, obtained their freedom, is a question not yet completely solved. Colliers and salters were, in the same country, in a state little removed from slavery, till near the end of the eighteenth century, when they were manumitted by the Bri­tish legislature, and restored to the rights of freemen and citi­zens. Before that period the sons of colliers could follow no business but that of their fathers ; nor were they at liberty to seek employment in any other mines than those to which they were attached by birth, without the consent of the lord of the manor, who, if he had no use for their services himself, transferred them by a written deed to some neighbouring proprietor.

That the savage nations of Africa were at any period of history exempted from this opprobrium of our nature, which spread over all the rest of the world, the enlightened reader will not suppose. It is indeed in that vast country that slavery has in every age appeared in its ugliest form. We have already observed, that about the era of the Tro­jan war, a commerce in slaves was carried on between Phoenicia and Libya ; and the Carthaginians, who were a colony of Phoenicians, and revered the customs, manners, and religion of their parent state, undoubtedly continued

the Tyrian traffic in human flesh with the inland tribes of Africa.

With the ancient state of the other African nations we arc but very little acquainted. The Numidiane, Maurita­nians, Getulians, and Garamantes, are indeed mentioned by the Roman historians, who give us ample details of the battles which they fought in attempting to preserve their national independence ; but we have no particular account of their different manners and customs in that age when Rome was disputing with Carthage the sovereignty of the world. All the African states of which we know any thing, were in alliance with one or the other of those rival republics ; and as the people of those states appear to have been less enlightened than either the Romans or the Carthaginians, we cannot suppose that they had purer morals, or a greater regard for the sacred rights of man, than the powerful na­tions by whom they were either protected or oppressed. They would, indeed, insensibly adopt their customs ; and the ready market which Marius found for the prisoners taken in the town of Capsa, although Sallust acknowledges@@3 that the sale was contrary to the laws of war, shows that slavery was then no strange thing to the Numidians. It seems indeed to have prevailed through all Africa from the very first peopling of that unexplored country ; and we doubt if in any age of the world the unhappy negro was absolutely secure of his per­sonal freedom, or even of not being sold to a foreign trader.

It has been often said, that the practice of making slaves of the negroes is of a very modern date ; that it owes its origin to the incursions of the Portuguese on the western coast of Africa; and that, but for the cunning or cruelty of Europeans, it would not now exist, and would never have existed. It is quite certain, however, that the negroes themselves, like all other savage tribes, have from ancient times enslaved their prisoners ; and the establishment of a trade by foreigners in African slaves, may at an early pe­riod have tempted them, in some quarters, to make captives expressly for the purpose of selling them. But Christians were not the first tempters. It has been proved, that from the coast of Guinea a great trade in slaves was carried on by the Arabs some hundreds of years before the Portuguese embarked in that traffic. Even the wandering Arabs of the desert, who never had any friendly correspondence with the Christians of Europe, have from time immemorial been serv­ed by negro slaves. In all probability, indeed, these tribes have, without interruption, continued the practice of slavery from the days of their great ancestor Ishmael ; and it seems evident, that none of the European nations had ever seen a woolly-headed negro till the year 1100, when the crusaders fell in with a small party of them near the town of Hebron in Judæa, and were so struck with the novelty of tlheir ap­pearance, that the army burst into a general fit of laughter.@@4 Long before the crusades, however, we know with certainty : that the natives of Guinea had been exposed to sale in foreign countries. In 651 the Mohammedan Arabs of Egypt so harassed the king of Nubia or Ethiopia, who was a Christian, that he agreed to send them annually, by way : of tribute, a vast number of Nubian or Ethiopian slaves into Egypt. Such a tribute as this at that time, we are told, was more agreeable to the khalif than any other, as the Arabs then made no small account of these slaves.@@5

On the beginning of this commerce, or the dreadful cruelty with which it has been carried on to the present . day, it is impossible to reflect without horror ; but there is more consolation, however small, in knowing that its original authors were not Europeans. The purchase of Guinea blacks for slaves by foreign nations, commenced ages before the Portuguese had laid that country open to the intercourse of Europe. Even after they had made many incursions into

@@@1 De Mor. Germ. 24, 25.

@@@2 Wilkins’ Collection of Laws from Ethelbert to Henry III.

@@@s De Bello Jugurth. cap. 91.

@@@« Malmsbury, fol. p. 83.

@@@5 Modern Universal History, vol. i. p. 525.