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6 volumes

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Commentator: Rev. H. H. Milman

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History Of The Decline And Fall Of The Roman Empire

Edward Gibbon, Esq.

With notes by the Rev. H. H. Milman

Complete Contents

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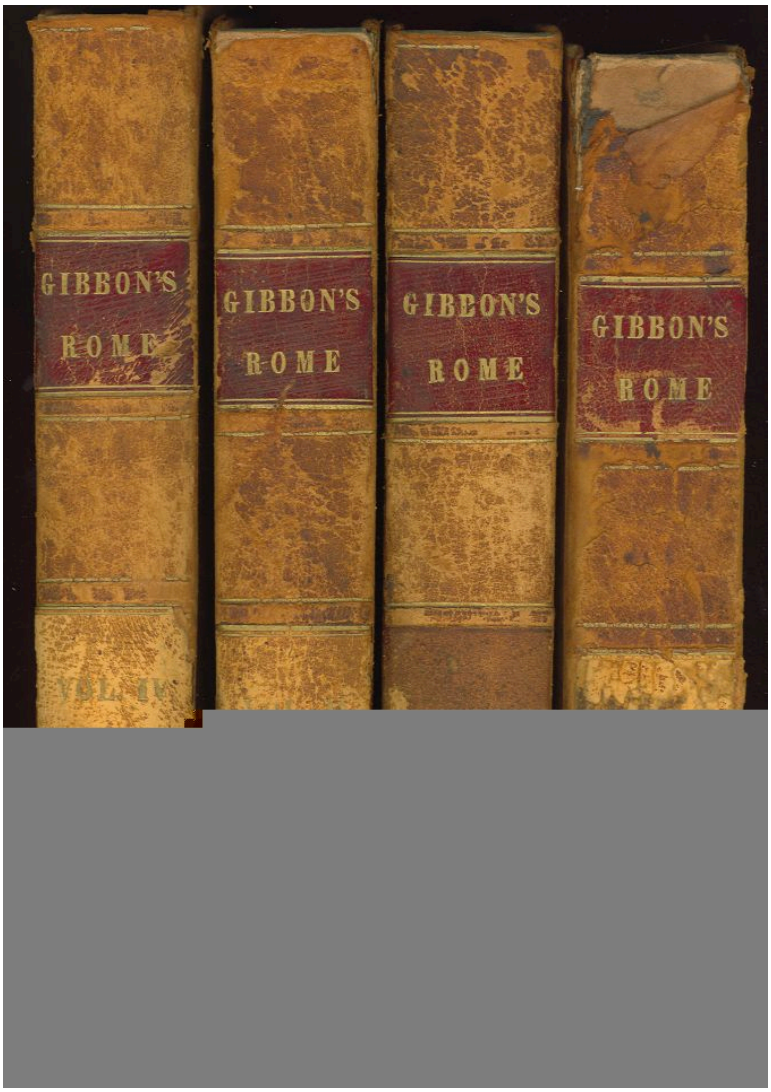
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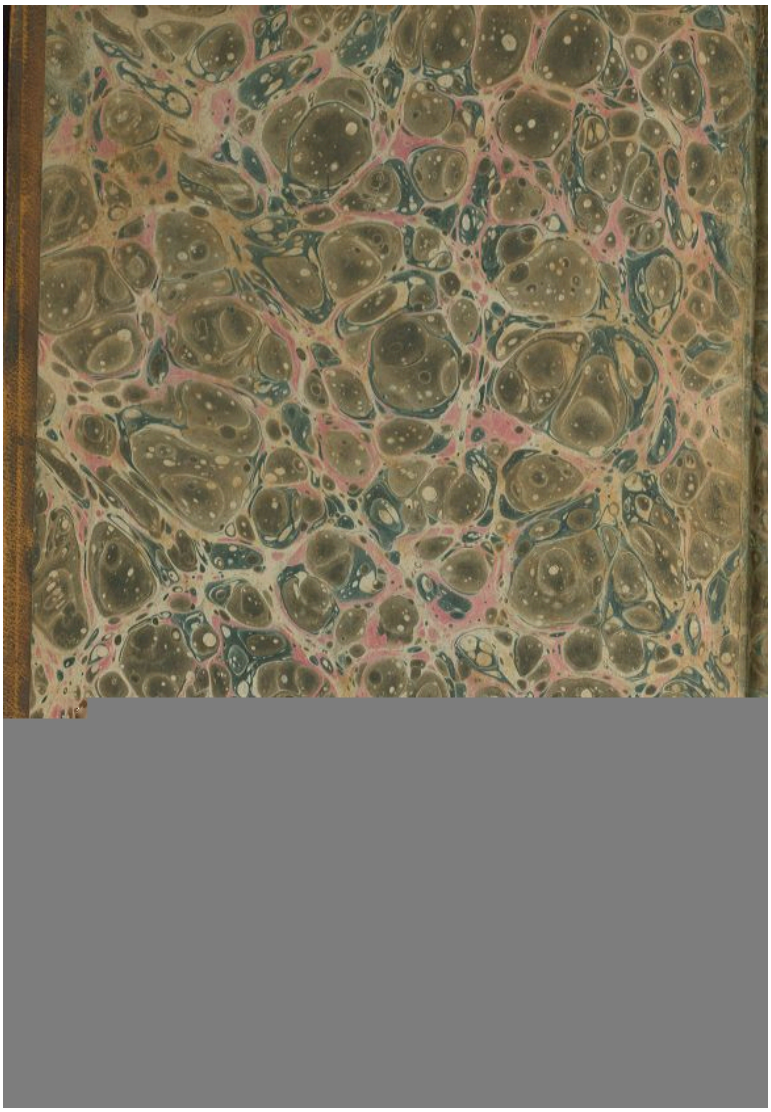

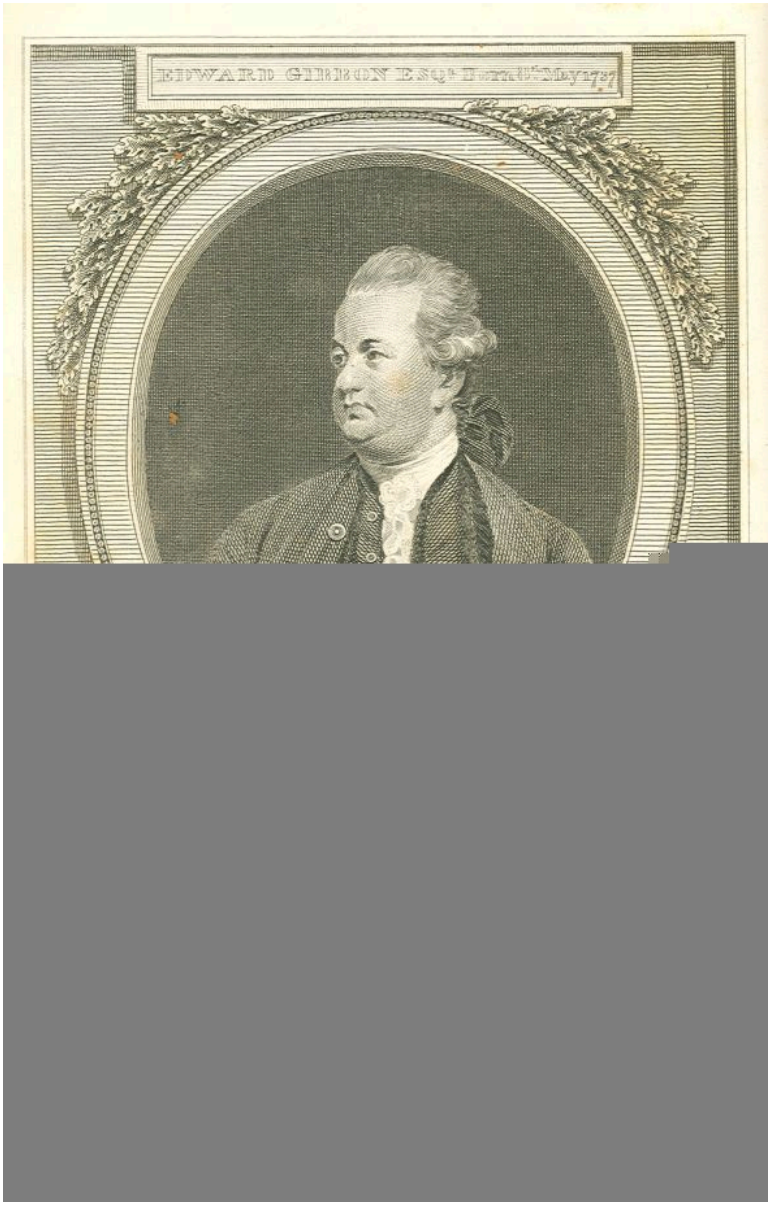
EDWARD GIBBON ESQ.

Harper's Edition, with Copperplate Engravings.

THE

HISTORY

OF THE

DECLINE AND FALL

OF

THE ROMAN EMPIRE.

BY EDWARD GIBBON, ESQ.

---H AMERICAN FROM THE LAST LONDON EDITION

COMPLETE IN FOUR VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

NEW-YORK:
PUBLISHED BY HARPER & BROTHERS,
NO. 82 CLIFF-STREET.
1836.

MAPS OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Western Empire

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Eastern Empire

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HISTORY OF THE DECLINE AND FALL OF THE ROMAN EMPIRE

Edward Gibbon, Esq.

With notes by the Rev. H. H. Milman

Vol. 1

1782 (Written), 1845 (Revised)

Introduction

Preface By The Editor.

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

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

101 (return)

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

"The gradual decline of the most extraordinary dominion which has ever invaded and oppressed the world; the fall of that immense empire, erected on the ruins of so many kingdoms, republics, and states both barbarous and civilized; and forming in its turn, by its dismemberment, a multitude of states, republics, and kingdoms; the annihilation of the religion of Greece and Rome; the birth and the progress of the two new religions which have shared the most beautiful regions of the earth; the decrepitude of the ancient world, the spectacle of its expiring glory and degenerate manners; the infancy of the modern world, the picture of its first progress, of the new direction given to the mind and character of man —such a subject must necessarily fix the attention and excite the interest of men, who cannot behold with indifference those memorable epochs, during which, in the fine language of Corneille—

'Un grand destin commence, un grand destin s'achève.'"

This extent and harmony of design is unquestionably that which distinguishes the work of Gibbon from all other great historical compositions. He has first bridged the abyss between ancient and modern times, and connected together the two great worlds of history. The great advantage which the classical historians possess over those of modern times is in unity of plan, of course greatly facilitated by the narrower sphere to which their researches were confined. Except Herodotus, the great historians of Greece—we exclude the more modern compilers, like Diodorus Siculus—limited themselves to a single period, or at 'east to the contracted sphere of Grecian affairs. As far as the Barbarians trespassed

within the Grecian boundary, or were necessarily mingled up with Grecian politics, they were admitted into the pale of Grecian history; but to Thucydides and to Xenophon, excepting in the Persian inroad of the latter, Greece was the world. Natural unity confined their narrative almost to chronological order, the episodes were of rare occurrence and extremely brief. To the Roman historians the course was equally clear and defined. Rome was their centre of unity; and the uniformity with which the circle of the Roman dominion spread around, the regularity with which their civil polity expanded, forced, as it were, upon the Roman historian that plan which Polybius announces as the subject of his history, the means and the manner by which the whole world became subject to the Roman sway. How different the complicated politics of the European kingdoms! Every national history, to be complete, must, in a certain sense, be the history of Europe; there is no knowing to how remote a quarter it may be necessary to trace our most domestic events; from a country, how apparently disconnected, may originate the impulse which gives its direction to the whole course of affairs.

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

> —"A dark
> Illimitable ocean, without bound,
> Without dimension, where length, breadth, and height,
> And time, and place, are lost: where eldest Night
> And Chaos, ancestors of Nature, hold
> Eternal anarchy, amidst the noise
> Of endless wars, and by confusion stand."

We feel that the unity and harmony of narrative, which shall comprehend this period of social disorganization, must be ascribed entirely to the skill and luminous disposition of the historian. It is in this sublime Gothic architecture of his work, in which the boundless range, the infinite variety, the, at first sight, incongruous gorgeousness of the separate parts, nevertheless are all subordinate to one main and predominant idea, that Gibbon is unrivalled. We cannot but admire the manner in which he masses his materials, and arranges his facts in successive groups, not according to chronological order, but to their moral or political connection; the distinctness with which he marks his periods of gradually increasing decay; and the skill with which, though advancing on separate parallels of history, he shows the common tendency of the slower or more rapid religious or civil innovations. However these principles of composition may demand more than ordinary attention on the part of the reader, they can alone impress upon the memory the real course, and the relative importance of the events. Whoever would justly appreciate the superiority of Gibbon's lucid arrangement, should attempt to make his way through the regular but wearisome annals of Tillemont, or even the less ponderous volumes of Le Beau. Both these writers adhere, almost entirely, to chronological order; the consequence is, that we are twenty times called upon to break off, and resume the thread of six or eight wars in different parts of the empire; to suspend the operations of a military expedition for a court intrigue; to hurry away from a siege to a

council; and the same page places us in the middle of a campaign against the barbarians, and in the depths of the Monophysite controversy. In Gibbon it is not always easy to bear in mind the exact dates but the course of events is ever clear and distinct; like a skilful general, though his troops advance from the most remote and opposite quarters, they are constantly bearing down and concentrating themselves on one point—that which is still occupied by the name, and by the waning power of Rome. Whether he traces the progress of hostile religions, or leads from the shores of the Baltic, or the verge of the Chinese empire, the successive hosts of barbarians—though one wave has hardly burst and discharged itself, before another swells up and approaches—all is made to flow in the same direction, and the impression which each makes upon the tottering fabric of the Roman greatness, connects their distant movements, and measures the relative importance assigned to them in the panoramic history. The more peaceful and didactic episodes on the development of the Roman law, or even on the details of ecclesiastical history, interpose themselves as resting-places or divisions between the periods of barbaric invasion. In short, though distracted first by the two capitals, and afterwards by the formal partition of the empire, the extraordinary felicity of arrangement maintains an order and a regular progression. As our horizon expands to reveal to us the gathering tempests which are forming far beyond the boundaries of the civilized world—as we follow their successive approach to the trembling frontier—the compressed and receding line is still distinctly visible; though gradually dismembered and the broken fragments assuming the form of regular states and kingdoms, the real relation of those kingdoms to the empire is maintained and defined; and even when the Roman dominion has shrunk into little more than the province of Thrace—when the name of Rome, confined, in Italy, to the walls of the city—yet it is still the memory, the shade of the Roman greatness, which extends over the wide sphere into which the historian expands his later narrative; the whole blends into the unity, and is manifestly essential to the double catastrophe of his tragic drama.

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

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

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

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

"After a first rapid perusal, which allowed me to feel nothing but the interest of a narrative, always animated, and, notwithstanding its extent and the variety of objects which it makes to pass before the view, always perspicuous, I entered upon a minute examination of the details of which it was composed; and the opinion which I then formed was, I confess, singularly severe. I discovered, in certain chapters, errors which appeared to me sufficiently important and numerous to make me believe that they had been written with extreme negligence; in others, I was struck with a certain tinge of partiality and prejudice, which imparted to the exposition of the facts that want of truth and justice, which the English express by their happy term *misrepresentation*. Some imperfect (*tronquées*) quotations; some passages, omitted unintentionally or designedly cast a suspicion on the honesty (*bonne foi*) of the author; and his violation of the first law of history—increased to my eye by the prolonged attention with which I occupied myself with every phrase, every note, every reflection—caused me to form upon the whole work, a judgment far too rigorous. After having finished my labors, I allowed some time to elapse before I reviewed the whole. A second attentive and regular perusal of the entire work, of the notes of the author, and of those which I had thought it right to subjoin, showed me how much I had exaggerated the importance of the reproaches which Gibbon really deserved; I was struck with the same errors, the same partiality on certain subjects; but I had been far from doing adequate justice to the immensity of his researches, the variety of his knowledge, and above all, to that truly philosophical discrimination (*justesse d'esprit*) which judges the past as it would judge the present; which does not permit itself to be blinded by the clouds which time gathers around the dead, and which prevent us from seeing that, under the toga, as under the modern dress, in the senate as in our councils, men were what they still are, and that events took place eighteen centuries ago, as they take place in our days. I then felt that his book, in spite of its faults, will always be a noble work—and that we may correct his errors and combat his prejudices, without ceasing to admit that few men have combined, if we are not to say in so high a degree, at least in a manner so complete, and so well regulated, the necessary qualifications for a writer of history."

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

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

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

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

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

But on this subject some preliminary caution is necessary, lest that should be expected from a new edition, which it is impossible that it should completely accomplish. We must first be prepared with the only sound preservative against the false impression likely to be produced by the perusal of Gibbon; and we must see clearly the real cause of that false impression. The former of these cautions will be briefly suggested in its proper place, but it may be as well to state it, here, somewhat more at length. The art of Gibbon, or at least the unfair impression produced by his two memorable chapters, consists in his confounding together, in one indistinguishable mass, the *origin* and *apostolic* propagation of the new religion, with its *later* progress. No argument for the divine authority of Christianity has been urged with greater force, or traced with higher eloquence, than that deduced from its primary development, explicable on no other hypothesis than a heavenly origin, and from its rapid extension

through great part of the Roman empire. But this argument—one, when confined within reasonable limits, of unanswerable force—becomes more feeble and disputable in proportion as it recedes from the birthplace, as it were, of the religion. The further Christianity advanced, the more causes purely human were enlisted in its favor; nor can it be doubted that those developed with such artful exclusiveness by Gibbon did concur most essentially to its establishment. It is in the Christian dispensation, as in the material world. In both it is as the great First Cause, that the Deity is most undeniably manifest. When once launched in regular motion upon the bosom of space, and endowed with all their properties and relations of weight and mutual attraction, the heavenly bodies appear to pursue their courses according to secondary laws, which account for all their sublime regularity. So Christianity proclaims its Divine Author chiefly in its first origin and development. When it had once received its impulse from above—when it had once been infused into the minds of its first teachers —when it had gained full possession of the reason and affections of the favored few—it *might be*—and to the Protestant, the rationa Christian, it is impossible to define *when* it really *was*—left to make its way by its native force, under the ordinary secret agencies of all-ruling Providence. The main question, the *divine origin of the religion*, was dexterously eluded, or speciously conceded by Gibbon; his plan enabled him to commence his account, in most parts, *below the apostolic times;* and it was only by the strength of the dark coloring with which he brought out the failings and the follies of the succeeding ages, that a shadow of doubt and suspicion was thrown back upon the primitive period of Christianity.

"The theologian," says Gibbon, "may indulge the pleasing task of describing religion as she descended from heaven, arrayed in her native purity; a more melancholy duty is imposed upon the historian:—he must discover the inevitable mixture of error and corruption which she contracted in a long residence upon earth among a weak and degenerate race of beings." Divest this passage of the latent sarcasm betrayed by the subsequent tone of the whole disquisition, and it might commence a Christian history written in the most Christian spirit of candor. But as the historian, by seeming to respect, yet by dexterously confounding the limits of the sacred land, contrived to insinuate that it was an Utopia which had no existence but in the imagination of the theologian—as he *suggested* rather than affirmed that the days of Christian purity were a kind of poetic golden age;—so the theologian, by venturing too far into the domain of the historian, has been perpetually obliged to contest points on which he had little chance of victory—to deny facts established on unshaken evidence—and thence, to retire, if not with the shame of defeat, yet with but doubtful and imperfect success. Paley, with his intuitive sagacity, saw through the difficulty of answering Gibbon by the ordinary arts of controversy; his emphatic sentence, "Who can refute a sneer?" contains as much truth as point. But full and pregnant as this phrase is, it is not quite the whole truth; it is the tone in which the progress of Christianity is traced, in *comparison* with the rest of the splendid and prodigally ornamented work, which is the radical defect in the "Decline and Fall." Christianity alone receives no embellishment from the magic of Gibbon's language; his imagination is dead to its moral dignity; it is kept down by a general zone of jealous disparagement, or neutralized by a painfully elaborate exposition of its darker and degenerate periods. There are occasions, indeed, when its pure and exalted humanity, when its manifestly beneficial influence, can compel even him, as it were, to fairness, and kindle his unguarded eloquence to its usual fervor; but, in general, he soon relapses into a frigid apathy; *affects* an ostentatiously severe impartiality; notes all the faults of Christians in every age with bitter and almost malignant sarcasm; reluctantly, and with exception and reservation, admits their claim to admiration. This inextricable bias appears even to influence his manner of composition. While all the other

assailants of the Roman empire, whether warlike or religious, the Goth, the Hun, the Arab, the Tartar, Alaric and Attila, Mahomet, and Zengis, and Tamerlane, are each introduced upon the scene almost with dramatic animation—their progress related in a full, complete, and unbroken narrative—the triumph of Christianity alone takes the form of a cold and critical disquisition. The successes of barbarous energy and brute force call forth all the consummate skill of composition; while the moral triumphs of Christian benevolence—the tranquil heroism of endurance, the blameless purity, the contempt of guilty fame and of honors destructive to the human race, which, had they assumed the proud name of philosophy, would have been blazoned in his brightest words, because they own religion as their principle—sink into narrow asceticism. The *glories* of Christianity, in short, touch on no chord in the heart of the writer; his imagination remains unkindled; his words, though they maintain their stately and measured march, have become cool, argumentative, and inanimate. Who would obscure one hue of that gorgeous coloring in which Gibbon has invested the dying forms of Paganism, or darken one paragraph in his splendid view of the rise and progress of Mahometanism? But who would not have wished that the same equal justice had been done to Christianity; that its real character and deeply penetrating influence had been traced with the same philosophical sagacity, and represented with more sober, as would become its quiet course, and perhaps less picturesque, but still with lively and attractive, descriptiveness? He might have thrown aside, with the same scorn, the mass of ecclesiastical fiction which envelops the early history of the church, stripped off the legendary romance, and brought out the facts in their primitive nakedness and simplicity—if he had but allowed those facts the benefit of the glowing eloquence which he denied to them alone. He might have annihilated the whole fabric of post-apostolic miracles, if he had left uninjured by sarcastic insinuation those of the New Testament; he might have cashiered, with Dodwell, the whole host of martyrs, which owe their existence to the prodigal invention of later days, had he but bestowed fair room, and dwelt with his ordinary energy on the sufferings of the genuine witnesses to the truth of Christianity, the Polycarps, or the martyrs of Vienne. And indeed, if, after all, the view of the early progress of Christianity be melancholy and humiliating we must beware lest we charge the whole of this on the infidelity of the historian. It is idle, it is disingenuous, to deny or to dissemble the early depravations of Christianity, its gradual but rapid departure from its primitive simplicity and purity, still more, from its spirit of universal love. It may be no unsalutary lesson to the Christian world, that this silent, this unavoidable, perhaps, yet fatal change shall have been drawn by an impartial, or even an hostile hand. The Christianity of every age may take warning, lest by its own narrow views, its want of wisdom, and its want of charity, it give the same advantage to the future unfriendly historian, and disparage the cause of true religion.

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

The work originated in the editor's habit of noting on the margin of his copy of Gibbon references to such authors as had discovered errors, or thrown new light on the subjects treated by Gibbon. These had grown to

some extent, and seemed to him likely to be of use to others. The annotations of M. Guizot also appeared to him worthy of being better known to the English public than they were likely to be, as appended to the French translation.

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

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

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

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

102 (return)

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

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

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

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

The editor would further observe, that with regard to some other objectionable passages, which do not involve misstatement or inaccuracy,

he has intentionally abstained from directing particular attention towards them by any special protest.

The editor's notes are marked M.

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

June, 1845.

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

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

Preface Of The Author.

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

1 (return)

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

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

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

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

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

As I have ventured, perhaps too hastily, to commit to the press a work which in every sense of the word, deserves the epithet of imperfect. I consider myself as contracting an engagement to finish, most probably in a second volume, 2a the first of these memorable periods; and to deliver to the Public the complete History of the Decline and Fall of Rome, from the age of the Antonines to the subversion of the Western Empire. With regard to the subsequent periods, though I may entertain some hopes, I dare not presume to give any assurances. The execution of the extensive

plan which I have described, would connect the ancient and modern history of the world; but it would require many years of health, of leisure, and of perseverance.

2a (return)

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

BENTINCK STREET, *February* 1, 1776.

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

BENTINCK STREET, *March* 1, 1781.

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

BENTINCK STREET, *March* 1, 1782.

3 (return)

[The first six volumes of the octavo edition.]

Preface To The First Volume.

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

At present I shall content myself with a single observation.

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

Preface To The Fourth Volume Of The Original Quarto Edition.

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

It was my first intention to have collected, under one view, the numerous authors, of every age and language, from whom I have derived the materials of this history; and I am still convinced that the apparent ostentation would be more than compensated by real use. If I have renounced this idea, if I have declined an undertaking which had obtained the approbation of a master-artist,4 my excuse may be found in the extreme difficulty of assigning a proper measure to such a catalogue. A naked list of names and editions would not be satisfactory either to myself or my readers: the characters of the principal Authors of the Roman and Byzantine History have been occasionally connected with the events which they describe; a more copious and critical inquiry might indeed deserve, but it would demand, an elaborate volume, which might swell by degrees into a general library of historical writers. For the present, I shall content myself with renewing my serious protestation, that I have always endeavored to draw from the fountain-head; that my curiosity, as well as a sense of duty, has always urged me to study the originals; and that, if they have sometimes eluded my search, I have carefully marked the secondary evidence, on whose faith a passage or a fact were reduced to depend.

4 (return)
[See Dr. Robertson's Preface to his History of America.]

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

In a remote solitude, vanity may still whisper in my ear, that my readers, perhaps, may inquire whether, in the conclusion of the present

work, I am now taking an everlasting farewell. They shall hear all that I know myself, and all that I could reveal to the most intimate friend. The motives of action or silence are now equally balanced; nor can I pronounce, in my most secret thoughts, on which side the scale will preponderate. I cannot dissemble that six quartos must have tried, and may have exhausted, the indulgence of the Public; that, in the repetition of similar attempts, a successful Author has much more to lose than he can hope to gain; that I am now descending into the vale of years; and that the most respectable of my countrymen, the men whom I aspire to imitate, have resigned the pen of history about the same period of their lives. Yet I consider that the annals of ancient and modern times may afford many rich and interesting subjects; that I am still possessed of health and leisure; that by the practice of writing, some skill and facility must be acquired; and that, in the ardent pursuit of truth and knowledge, I am not conscious of decay. To an active mind, indolence is more painful than labor; and the first months of my liberty will be occupied and amused in the excursions of curiosity and taste. By such temptations, I have been sometimes seduced from the rigid duty even of a pleasing and voluntary task: but my time will now be my own; and in the use or abuse of independence, I shall no longer fear my own reproaches or those of my friends. I am fairly entitled to a year of jubilee: next summer and the following winter will rapidly pass away; and experience only can determine whether I shall still prefer the freedom and variety of study to the design and composition of a regular work, which animates, while it confines, the daily application of the Author.

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

DOWNING STREET, *May* 1, 1788.

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

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

Introduction.

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

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

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

1 (return)

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

His generals, in the early part of his reign, attempted the reduction of Ethiopia and Arabia Felix. They marched near a thousand miles to the

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

2c (return)

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

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

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

3a (return)

[By the slaughter of Varus and his three legions. See the first book of the Annals of Tacitus. Sueton. in August. c. 23, and Velleius Paterculus,

l. ii. c. 117, &c. Augustus did not receive the melancholy news with all the temper and firmness that might have been expected from his character.]

4a (return)

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

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

5 (return)

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

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

6 (return)

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

7 (return)

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

8 (return)

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

9 (return)

[The Irish writers, jealous of their national honor, are extremely provoked on this occasion, both with Tacitus and with Agricola.]

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

10 (return)

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

London, 1754, 4to.—W. See likewise a good note on the Roman wall in Lingard's History of England, vol. i. p. 40, 4to edit—M.]

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

12 (return)
[See Appian (in Procem.) and the uniform imagery of Ossian's Poems, which, according to every hypothesis, were composed by a native Caledonian.]

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

13 (return)
[See Pliny's Panegyric, which seems founded on facts.]

14 (return)
[Dion Cassius, l. lxvii.]

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

16 (return)
[Plin. Epist. viii. 9.]

17 (return)
[Dion Cassius, l. lxviii. p. 1123, 1131. Julian in Cæsaribus Eutropius, viii. 2, 6. Aurelius Victor in Epitome.]

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

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

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

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

21 (return)
[Dion Cassius, l. lxviii.; and the Abbreviators.]

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

It was an ancient tradition, that when the Capitol was founded by one of the Roman kings, the god Terminus (who presided over boundaries, and was represented, according to the fashion of that age, by a large stone) alone, among all the inferior deities, refused to yield his place to Jupiter himself. A favorable inference was drawn from his obstinacy, which was interpreted by the augurs as a sure presage that the boundaries of the Roman power would never recede. 22 During many ages, the prediction, as it is usual, contributed to its own accomplishment. But though Terminus had resisted the Majesty of Jupiter, he submitted to the authority of the emperor Hadrian. 23 The resignation of all the eastern conquests of Trajan was the first measure of his reign. He restored to the Parthians the election of an independent sovereign; withdrew the Roman garrisons from the provinces of Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria; and, in compliance with the precept of Augustus, once more established the Euphrates as the frontier of the empire. 24 Censure, which arraigns the public actions and the private motives of princes, has ascribed to envy, a conduct which might be attributed to the prudence and moderation of Hadrian. The various character of that emperor, capable, by turns, of the meanest and the most generous sentiments, may afford some color to the suspicion. It was, however, scarcely in his power to place the superiority of his predecessor in a more conspicuous light, than by thus confessing himself unequal to the task of defending the conquests of Trajan.

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

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

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

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

Careless of the difference of seasons and of climates, he marched on foot, and bare-headed, over the snows of Caledonia, and the sultry plains of the Upper Egypt; nor was there a province of the empire which, in the course of his reign, was not honored with the presence of the monarch. 25 But the tranquil life of Antoninus Pius was spent in the bosom of Italy, and, during the twenty-three years that he directed the public

administration, the longest journeys of that amiable prince extended no farther than from his palace in Rome to the retirement of his Lanuvian villa. 26

25 (return)

[Dion, l. lxix. p. 1158. Hist. August. p. 5, 8. If all our historians were lost, medals, inscriptions, and other monuments, would be sufficient to record the travels of Hadrian. Note: The journeys of Hadrian are traced in a note on Solvet's translation of Hegewisch, Essai sur l'Epoque de Histoire Romaine la plus heureuse pour Genre Humain Paris, 1834, p. 123.—M.]

26 (return)

[See the Augustan History and the Epitomes.]

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

27 (return)

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

28 (return)

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

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

29 (return)

[Dion, l. lxxi. Hist. August. in Marco. The

Parthian victories gave birth to a crowd of contemptible historians, whose memory has been rescued from oblivion and exposed to ridicule, in a very lively piece of criticism of Lucian.]

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

30 (return)

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

31 (return)

[Cæsar formed his legion Alauda of Gauls and strangers; but it was during the license of civil war; and after the victory, he gave them the freedom of the city for their reward.]

32 (return)

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

That public virtue, which among the ancients was denominated patriotism, is derived from a strong sense of our own interest in the preservation and prosperity of the free government of which we are members. Such a sentiment, which had rendered the legions of the republic almost invincible, could make but a very feeble impression on the mercenary servants of a despotic prince; and it became necessary to supply that defect by other motives, of a different, but not less forcible nature—honor and religion. The peasant, or mechanic, imbibed the useful prejudice that he was advanced to the more dignified profession of arms, in which his rank and reputation would depend on his own valor; and that,

although the prowess of a private soldier must often escape the notice of fame, his own behavior might sometimes confer glory or disgrace on the company, the legion, or even the army, to whose honors he was associated. On his first entrance into the service, an oath was administered to him with every circumstance of solemnity. He promised never to desert his standard, to submit his own will to the commands of his leaders, and to sacrifice his life for the safety of the emperor and the empire. 33 The attachment of the Roman troops to their standards was inspired by the united influence of religion and of honor. The golden eagle, which glittered in the front of the legion, was the object of their fondest devotion; nor was it esteemed less impious than it was ignominious, to abandon that sacred ensign in the hour of danger. 34 These motives, which derived their strength from the imagination, were enforced by fears and hopes of a more substantial kind. Regular pay, occasional donatives, and a stated recompense, after the appointed time of service, alleviated the hardships of the military life, 35 whilst, on the other hand, it was impossible for cowardice or disobedience to escape the severest punishment. The centurions were authorized to chastise with blows, the generals had a right to punish with death; and it was an inflexible maxim of Roman discipline, that a good soldier should dread his officers far more than the enemy. From such laudable arts did the valor of the Imperial troops receive a degree of firmness and docility unattainable by the impetuous and irregular passions of barbarians.

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

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

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

And yet so sensible were the Romans of the imperfection of valor without skill and practice, that, in their language, the name of an army was borrowed from the word which signified exercise. 36 Military exercises were the important and unremitted object of their discipline. The recruits and young soldiers were constantly trained, both in the morning and in the evening, nor was age or knowledge allowed to excuse the veterans from the daily repetition of what they had completely learnt. Large sheds were erected in the winter-quarters of the troops, that their useful labors might not receive any interruption from the most tempestuous weather; and it was carefully observed, that the arms destined to this imitation of war, should be of double the weight which was required in real action. 37 It is not the purpose of this work to enter into any minute description of the Roman exercises. We shall only

remark, that they comprehended whatever could add strength to the body, activity to the limbs, or grace to the motions. The soldiers were diligently instructed to march, to run, to leap, to swim, to carry heavy burdens, to handle every species of arms that was used either for offence or for defence, either in distant engagement or in a closer onset; to form a variety of evolutions; and to move to the sound of flutes in the Pyrrhic or martial dance. 38 In the midst of peace, the Roman troops familiarized themselves with the practice of war; and it is prettily remarked by an ancient historian who had fought against them, that the effusion of blood was the only circumstance which distinguished a field of battle from a field of exercise. 39 It was the policy of the ablest generals, and even of the emperors themselves, to encourage these military studies by their presence and example; and we are informed that Hadrian, as well as Trajan, frequently condescended to instruct the unexperienced soldiers, to reward the diligent, and sometimes to dispute with them the prize of superior strength or dexterity. 40 Under the reigns of those princes, the science of tactics was cultivated with success; and as long as the empire retained any vigor, their military instructions were respected as the most perfect model of Roman discipline.

36 (return)
[*Exercitus ab exercitando*, Varro de Lingua Latina, l. iv. Cicero in Tusculan. l. ii. 37. 15. There is room for a very interesting work, which should lay open the connection between the languages and manners of nations. * Note I am not aware of the existence, at present, of such a work; but the profound observations of the late William von Humboldt, in the introduction to his posthumously published Essay on the Language of the Island of Java, (uber die Kawi-sprache, Berlin, 1836,) may cause regret that this task was not completed by that accomplished and universal scholar.—M.]

37 (return)
[Vegatius, l. ii. and the rest of his first book.]

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

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

40 (return)
[Plin. Panegyr. c. 13. Life of Hadrian, in the Augustan History.]

Nine centuries of war had gradually introduced into the service many alterations and improvements. The legions, as they are described by Polybius, 41 in the time of the Punic wars, differed very materially from those which achieved the victories of Cæsar, or defended the monarchy of Hadrian and the Antonines. The constitution of the Imperial legion may be described in a few words. 42 The heavy-armed infantry, which composed its principal strength, 43 was divided into ten cohorts, and fifty-five companies, under the orders of a correspondent number of tribunes and centurions. The first cohort, which always claimed the post of honor and the custody of the eagle, was formed of eleven hundred and five soldiers, the most approved for valor and fidelity. The remaining nine

cohorts consisted each of five hundred and fifty-five; and the whole body of legionary infantry amounted to six thousand one hundred men. Their arms were uniform, and admirably adapted to the nature of their service: an open helmet, with a lofty crest; a breastplate, or coat of mail; greaves on their legs, and an ample buckler on their left arm. The buckler was of an oblong and concave figure, four feet in length, and two and a half in breadth, framed of a light wood, covered with a bull's hide, and strongly guarded with plates of brass. Besides a lighter spear, the legionary soldier grasped in his right hand the formidable *pilum*, a ponderous javelin, whose utmost length was about six feet, and which was terminated by a massy triangular point of steel of eighteen inches. 44 This instrument was indeed much inferior to our modern fire-arms; since it was exhausted by a single discharge, at the distance of only ten or twelve paces. Yet when it was launched by a firm and skilful hand, there was not any cavalry that durst venture within its reach, nor any shield or corselet that could sustain the impetuosity of its weight. As soon as the Roman had darted his *pilum*, he drew his sword, and rushed forwards to close with the enemy. His sword was a short well-tempered Spanish blade, that carried a double edge, and was alike suited to the purpose of striking or of pushing; but the soldier was always instructed to prefer the latter use of his weapon, as his own body remained less exposed, whilst he inflicted a more dangerous wound on his adversary. 45 The legion was usually drawn up eight deep; and the regular distance of three feet was left between the files as well as ranks. 46 A body of troops, habituated to preserve this open order, in a long front and a rapid charge, found themselves prepared to execute every disposition which the circumstances of war, or the skill of their leader, might suggest. The soldier possessed a free space for his arms and motions, and sufficient intervals were allowed, through which seasonable reinforcements might be introduced to the relief of the exhausted combatants. 47 The tactics of the Greeks and Macedonians were formed on very different principles. The strength of the phalanx depended on sixteen ranks of long pikes, wedged together in the closest array. 48 But it was soon discovered by reflection, as well as by the event, that the strength of the phalanx was unable to contend with the activity of the legion. 49

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

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

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

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

45 (return)
[For the legionary arms, see Lipsius de Militia

Romana, l. iii. c. 2—7.]

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

47 (return)
[M. Guichard, Memoires Militaires, tom. i. c. 4, and Nouveaux Memoires, tom. i. p. 293—311, has treated the subject like a scholar and an officer.]

48 (return)
[See Arrian's Tactics. With the true partiality of a Greek, Arrian rather chose to describe the phalanx, of which he had read, than the legions which he had commanded.]

49 (return)
[Polyb. l. xvii. (xviii. 9.)]

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

50 (return)
[Veget. de Re Militari, l. ii. c. 6. His positive testimony, which might be supported by circumstantial evidence, ought surely to silence those critics who refuse the Imperial legion its proper body of cavalry. Note: See also Joseph. B. J. iii. vi. 2.—M.]

51 (return)
[See Livy almost throughout, particularly xlii. 61.]

52 (return)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiii. 2. The true sense of that very curious passage was first discovered and illustrated by M. de Beaufort, Republique Romaine, l. ii. c. 2.]

53 (return)
[As in the instance of Horace and Agricola. This appears to have been a defect in the Roman discipline; which Hadrian endeavored to remedy by ascertaining the legal age of a tribune. * Note:

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

54 (return)

[See Arrian's Tactics.]

The safety and honor of the empire was principally intrusted to the legions, but the policy of Rome condescended to adopt every useful instrument of war. Considerable levies were regularly made among the provincials, who had not yet deserved the honorable distinction of Romans. Many dependent princes and communities, dispersed round the frontiers, were permitted, for a while, to hold their freedom and security by the tenure of military service. 55 Even select troops of hostile barbarians were frequently compelled or persuaded to consume their

dangerous valor in remote climates, and for the benefit of the state. 56 All these were included under the general name of auxiliaries; and howsoever they might vary according to the difference of times and circumstances, their numbers were seldom much inferior to those of the legions themselves. 57 Among the auxiliaries, the bravest and most faithful bands were placed under the command of præfects and centurions, and severely trained in the arts of Roman discipline; but the far greater part retained those arms, to which the nature of their country, or their early habits of life, more peculiarly adapted them. By this institution, each legion, to whom a certain proportion of auxiliaries was allotted, contained within itself every species of lighter troops, and of missile weapons; and was capable of encountering every nation, with the advantages of its respective arms and discipline. 58 Nor was the legion destitute of what, in modern language, would be styled a train of artillery. It consisted in ten military engines of the largest, and fifty-five of a smaller size; but all of which, either in an oblique or horizontal manner, discharged stones and darts with irresistible violence. 59

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

60 (return)

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

61 (return)

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

Whenever the trumpet gave the signal of departure, the camp was almost instantly broke up, and the troops fell into their ranks without delay or confusion. Besides their arms, which the legionaries scarcely considered as an encumbrance, they were laden with their kitchen furniture, the instruments of fortification, and the provision of many days. 62 Under this weight, which would oppress the delicacy of a modern soldier, they were trained by a regular step to advance, in about six hours, near twenty miles. 63 On the appearance of an enemy, they threw aside their baggage, and by easy and rapid evolutions converted the column of march into an order of battle. 64 The slingers and archers skirmished in the front; the auxiliaries formed the first line, and were seconded or sustained by the strength of the legions; the cavalry covered the flanks, and the military engines were placed in the rear.

62 (return)

[Cicero in Tusculan. ii. 37, [15.]—Joseph. de Bell. Jud. l. iii. 5, Frontinus, iv. 1.]

63 (return)

[Vegetius, i. 9. See Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxv. p. 187.]

64 (return)

[See those evolutions admirably well explained

by M. Guichard Nouveaux Memoires, tom. i. p. 141—234.]

Such were the arts of war, by which the Roman emperors defended their extensive conquests, and preserved a military spirit, at a time when every other virtue was oppressed by luxury and despotism. If, in the consideration of their armies, we pass from their discipline to their numbers, we shall not find it easy to define them with any tolerable accuracy. We may compute, however, that the legion, which was itself a body of six thousand eight hundred and thirty-one Romans, might, with its attendant auxiliaries, amount to about twelve thousand five hundred men. The peace establishment of Hadrian and his successors was composed of no less than thirty of these formidable brigades; and most probably formed a standing force of three hundred and seventy-five thousand men. Instead of being confined within the walls of fortified cities, which the Romans considered as the refuge of weakness or pusillanimity, the legions were encamped on the banks of the great rivers, and along the frontiers of the barbarians. As their stations, for the most part, remained fixed and permanent, we may venture to describe the distribution of the troops. Three legions were sufficient for Britain. The principal strength lay upon the Rhine and Danube, and consisted of sixteen legions, in the following proportions: two in the Lower, and three in the Upper Germany; one in Rhætia, one in Noricum, four in Pannonia, three in Mæsia, and two in Dacia. The defence of the Euphrates was intrusted to eight legions, six of whom were planted in Syria, and the other two in Cappadocia. With regard to Egypt, Africa, and Spain, as they were far removed from any important scene of war, a single legion maintained the domestic tranquillity of each of those great provinces. Even Italy was not left destitute of a military force. Above twenty thousand chosen soldiers, distinguished by the titles of City Cohorts and Prætorian Guards, watched over the safety of the monarch and the capital. As the authors of almost every revolution that distracted the empire, the Prætorians will, very soon, and very loudly, demand our attention; but, in their arms and institutions, we cannot find any circumstance which discriminated them from the legions, unless it were a more splendid appearance, and a less rigid discipline. 65

65 (return)

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

The navy maintained by the emperors might seem inadequate to their greatness; but it was fully sufficient for every useful purpose of government. The ambition of the Romans was confined to the land; nor was that warlike people ever actuated by the enterprising spirit which had prompted the navigators of Tyre, of Carthage, and even of Marseilles, to enlarge the bounds of the world, and to explore the most remote coasts of the ocean. To the Romans the ocean remained an object of terror rather than of curiosity; 66 the whole extent of the Mediterranean, after the destruction of Carthage, and the extirpation of the pirates, was included within their provinces. The policy of the emperors was directed only to preserve the peaceful dominion of that sea, and to protect the commerce of their subjects. With these moderate views, Augustus stationed two permanent fleets in the most convenient ports of Italy, the one at Ravenna, on the Adriatic, the other at Misenum, in the Bay of Naples. Experience seems at length to have convinced the ancients, that as soon as their galleys exceeded two, or at the most three ranks of oars, they were suited rather for vain pomp than for real service. Augustus himself, in the victory of Actium, had seen the superiority of his own light frigates (they were

called Liburnians) over the lofty but unwieldy castles of his rival. 67 Of these Liburnians he composed the two fleets of Ravenna and Misenum, destined to command, the one the eastern, the other the western division of the Mediterranean; and to each of the squadrons he attached a body of several thousand marines. Besides these two ports, which may be considered as the principal seats of the Roman navy, a very considerable force was stationed at Frejus, on the coast of Provence, and the Euxine was guarded by forty ships, and three thousand soldiers. To all these we add the fleet which preserved the communication between Gaul and Britain, and a great number of vessels constantly maintained on the Rhine and Danube, to harass the country, or to intercept the passage of the barbarians. 68 If we review this general state of the Imperial forces; of the cavalry as well as infantry; of the legions, the auxiliaries, the guards, and the navy; the most liberal computation will not allow us to fix the entire establishment by sea and by land at more than four hundred and fifty thousand men: a military power, which, however formidable it may seem, was equalled by a monarch of the last century, whose kingdom was confined within a single province of the Roman empire. 69

66 (return)
[The Romans tried to disguise, by the pretence of religious awe their ignorance and terror. See Tacit. Germania, c. 34.]

67 (return)
[Plutarch, in Marc. Anton. [c. 67.] And yet, if we may credit Orosius, these monstrous castles were no more than ten feet above the water, vi. 19.]

68 (return)
[See Lipsius, de Magnitud. Rom. l. i. c. 5. The sixteen last chapters of Vegetius relate to naval affairs.]

69 (return)
[Voltaire, Siecle de Louis XIV. c. 29. It must, however, be remembered, that France still feels that extraordinary effort.]

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

70 (return)
[See Strabo, l. ii. It is natural enough to suppose, that Arragon is derived from Tarraconensis, and

several moderns who have written in Latin use those words as synonymous. It is, however, certain, that the Arragon, a little stream which falls from the Pyrenees into the Ebro, first gave its name to a country, and gradually to a kingdom. See d'Anville, Geographie du Moyen Age, p. 181.]

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

71 (return)

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

72 (return)

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

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

73 (return)

[Whittaker's History of Manchester, vol. i. c. 3.] Before the Roman conquest, the country which is now called Lombardy, was not considered as a part of Italy. It had been occupied by a powerful colony of Gauls, who, settling themselves along

the banks of the Po, from Piedmont to Romagna, carried their arms and diffused their name from the Alps to the Apennine.

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

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

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

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

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

The European provinces of Rome were protected by the course of the Rhine and the Danube. The latter of those mighty streams, which rises at the distance of only thirty miles from the former, flows above thirteen hundred miles, for the most part to the south-east, collects the tribute of sixty navigable rivers, and is, at length, through six mouths, received into the Euxine, which appears scarcely equal to such an accession of waters. 78 The provinces of the Danube soon acquired the general appellation of Illyricum, or the Illyrian frontier, 79 and were esteemed the most warlike of the empire; but they deserve to be more particularly considered under the names of Rhætia, Noricum, Pannonia, Dalmatia, Dacia, Mæsia, Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece.

78 (return)
[Tournefort, Voyages en Grece et Asie Mineure, lettre xviii.]

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

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

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

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

80 (return)

[A Venetian traveller, the Abbate Fortis, has lately given us some account of those very obscure countries. But the geography and antiquities of the western Illyricum can be expected only from the munificence of the emperor, its sovereign.]

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

81 (return)

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

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

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

Such was the state of Europe under the Roman emperors. The provinces of Asia, without excepting the transient conquests of Trajan, are all comprehended within the limits of the Turkish power. But, instead of following the arbitrary divisions of despotism and ignorance, it will be safer for us, as well as more agreeable, to observe the indelible characters of nature. The name of Asia Minor is attributed with some propriety to the peninsula, which, confined betwixt the Euxine and the Mediterranean, advances from the Euphrates towards Europe. The most extensive and flourishing district, westward of Mount Taurus and the River Halys, was dignified by the Romans with the exclusive title of Asia. The jurisdiction of that province extended over the ancient monarchies of Troy, Lydia, and Phrygia, the maritime countries of the Pamphylians, Lycians, and Carians, and the Grecian colonies of Ionia, which equalled in arts, though not in arms, the glory of their parent. The kingdoms of Bithynia and Pontus possessed the northern side of the peninsula from Constantinople to Trebizond. On the opposite side, the province of Cilicia was terminated by the mountains of Syria: the inland country, separated from the Roman Asia by the River Halys, and from Armenia by the Euphrates, had once formed the independent kingdom of Cappadocia. In this place we may observe, that the northern shores of the Euxine, beyond Trebizond in Asia, and beyond the Danube in Europe, acknowledged the sovereignty of the emperors, and received at their hands either tributary princes or Roman garrisons. Budzak, Crim Tartary, Circassia, and Mingrelia, are the modern appellations of those savage countries. 82

82 (return)

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

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

821 (return)

[This comparison is exaggerated, with the intention, no doubt, of attacking the authority of the Bible, which boasts of the fertility of Palestine. Gibbon's only authorities were that of Strabo (l. xvi. 1104) and the present state of the

country. But Strabo only speaks of the neighborhood of Jerusalem, which he calls barren and arid to the extent of sixty stadia round the city: in other parts he gives a favorable testimony to the fertility of many parts of Palestine: thus he says, “Near Jericho there is a grove of palms, and a country of a hundred stadia, full of springs, and well peopled.” Moreover, Strabo had never seen Palestine; he spoke only after reports, which may be as inaccurate as those according to which he has composed that description of Germany, in which Gluverius has detected so many errors. (Gluv. Germ. iii. 1.) Finally, his testimony is contradicted and refuted by that of other ancient authors, and by medals. Tacitus says, in speaking of Palestine, “The inhabitants are healthy and robust; the rains moderate; the soil fertile.” (Hist. v. 6.) Ammianus Macellinus says also, “The last of the Syrias is Palestine, a country of considerable extent, abounding in clean and well-cultivated land, and containing some fine cities, none of which yields to the other; but, as it were, being on a parallel, are rivals.”—xiv. 8. See also the historian Josephus, Hist. vi. 1. Procopius of Cæserea, who lived in the sixth century, says that Chosroes, king of Persia, had a great desire to make himself master of Palestine, *on account of its* extraordinary fertility, its opulence, and the great number of its inhabitants. The Saracens thought the same, and were afraid that Omar. when he went to Jerusalem, charmed with the fertility of the soil and the purity of the air, would never return to Medina. (Ockley, Hist. of Sarac. i. 232.) The importance attached by the Romans to the conquest of Palestine, and the obstacles they encountered, prove also the richness and population of the country. Vespasian and Titus caused medals to be struck with trophies, in which Palestine is represented by a female under a palm-tree, to signify the richness of he country, with this legend: *Judæa capta*. Other medals also indicate this fertility; for instance, that of Herod holding a bunch of grapes, and that of the young Agrippa displaying fruit. As to the present state of he country, one perceives that it is not fair to draw any inference against its ancient fertility: the disasters through which it has passed, the government to which it is subject, the disposition of the inhabitants, explain sufficiently the wild and uncultivated appearance of the land, where, nevertheless, fertile and cultivated districts are still found, according to the testimony of travellers; among others, of Shaw, Maundrel, La Rocque, &c.—G. The Abbé Guénée, in his *Lettres de quelques Juifs à Mons. de Voltaire*, has exhausted the subject of the fertility of Palestine; for Voltaire had likewise indulged in sarcasm on this subject. Gibbon was assailed on this point, not, indeed, by Mr. Davis, who, he slyly insinuates, was prevented by his patriotism as a Welshman from resenting the comparison with Wales, but by

other writers. In his Vindication, he first established the correctness of his measurement of Palestine, which he estimates as 7600 square English miles, while Wales is about 7011. As to fertility, he proceeds in the following dexterously composed and splendid passage: “The emperor Frederick II., the enemy and the victim of the clergy, is accused of saying, after his return from his crusade, that the God of the Jews would have despised his promised land, if he had once seen the fruitful realms of Sicily and Naples.” (See Giannone, Istor. Civ. del R. di Napoli, ii. 245.) This raillery, which malice has, perhaps, falsely imputed to Frederick, is inconsistent with truth and piety; yet it must be confessed that the soil of Palestine does not contain that inexhaustible, and, as it were, spontaneous principle of fertility, which, under the most unfavorable circumstances, has covered with rich harvests the banks of the Nile, the fields of Sicily, or the plains of Poland. The Jordan is the only navigable river of Palestine: a considerable part of the narrow space is occupied, or rather lost, in the *Dead Sea* whose horrid aspect inspires every sensation of disgust, and countenances every tale of horror. The districts which border on Arabia partake of the sandy quality of the adjacent desert. The face of the country, except the sea-coast, and the valley of the Jordan, is covered with mountains, which appear, for the most part, as naked and barren rocks; and in the neighborhood of Jerusalem, there is a real scarcity of the two elements of earth and water. (See Maundrel’s Travels, p. 65, and Reland’s Palestin. i. 238, 395.) These disadvantages, which now operate in their fullest extent, were formerly corrected by the labors of a numerous people, and the active protection of a wise government. The hills were clothed with rich beds of artificial mould, the rain was collected in vast cisterns, a supply of fresh water was conveyed by pipes and aqueducts to the dry lands. The breed of cattle was encouraged in those parts which were not adapted for tillage, and almost every spot was compelled to yield some production for the use of the inhabitants.

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

But Gibbon has here eluded the question about the land “flowing with milk and honey.” He is describing Judæa only, without comprehending Galilee, or the rich pastures beyond the Jordan, even now proverbial for their flocks and herds. (See Burckhardt’s Travels, and Hist of Jews, i. 178.) The following is believed to be a fair statement: “The extraordinary fertility of the whole country must be taken into the account. No part was waste; very little was occupied by unprofitable wood; the more fertile hills were cultivated in artificial terraces, others were hung with orchards of fruit trees the more rocky and barren

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

83 (return)

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

84 (return)

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

The geographers of antiquity have frequently hesitated to what portion of the globe they should ascribe Egypt. 85 By its situation that celebrated kingdom is included within the immense peninsula of Africa; but it is accessible only on the side of Asia, whose revolutions, in almost every period of history, Egypt has humbly obeyed. A Roman præfect was seated on the splendid throne of the Ptolemies; and the iron sceptre of the Mamelukes is now in the hands of a Turkish pacha. The Nile flows down the country, above five hundred miles from the tropic of Cancer to the Mediterranean, and marks on either side the extent of fertility by the measure of its inundations. Cyrene, situate towards the west, and along the sea-coast, was first a Greek colony, afterwards a province of Egypt, and is now lost in the desert of Barca. 851

85 (return)

[Ptolemy and Strabo, with the modern geographers, fix the Isthmus of Suez as the boundary of Asia and Africa. Dionysius, Mela, Pliny, Sallust, Hirtius, and Solinus, have

preferred for that purpose the western branch of the Nile, or even the great Catabathmus, or descent, which last would assign to Asia, not only Egypt, but part of Libya.]

851 (return)

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

From Cyrene to the ocean, the coast of Africa extends above fifteen hundred miles; yet so closely is it pressed between the Mediterranean and the Sahara, or sandy desert, that its breadth seldom exceeds fourscore or a hundred miles. The eastern division was considered by the Romans as the more peculiar and proper province of Africa. Till the arrival of the Phœnician colonies, that fertile country was inhabited by the Libyans, the most savage of mankind. Under the immediate jurisdiction of Carthage, it became the centre of commerce and empire; but the republic of Carthage is now degenerated into the feeble and disorderly states of Tripoli and Tunis. The military government of Algiers oppresses the wide extent of Numidia, as it was once united under Massinissa and Jugurtha; but in the time of Augustus, the limits of Numidia were contracted; and, at least, two thirds of the country acquiesced in the name of Mauritania, with the epithet of Cæsariensis. The genuine Mauritania, or country of the Moors, which, from the ancient city of Tingi, or Tangier, was distinguished by the appellation of Tingitana, is represented by the modern kingdom of Fez. Salle, on the Ocean, so infamous at present for its piratical depredations, was noticed by the Romans, as the extreme object of their power, and almost of their geography. A city of their foundation may still be discovered near Mequinez, the residence of the barbarian whom we condescend to style the Emperor of Morocco; but it does not appear, that his more southern dominions, Morocco itself, and Segelmessa, were ever comprehended within the Roman province. The western parts of Africa are intersected by the branches of Mount Atlas, a name so idly celebrated by the fancy of poets; 86 but which is now diffused over the immense ocean that rolls between the ancient and the new continent. 87

86 (return)

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

87 (return)

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

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

871 (return)
[Minorca was lost to Great Britain in 1782. Ann. Register for that year.—M.]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

It is not alone by the rapidity, or extent of conquest, that we should estimate the greatness of Rome. The sovereign of the Russian deserts commands a larger portion of the globe. In the seventh summer after his passage of the Hellespont, Alexander erected the Macedonian trophies on the banks of the Hyphasis. 1 Within less than a century, the irresistible Zingis, and the Mogul princes of his race, spread their cruel devastations and transient empire from the Sea of China, to the confines of Egypt and Germany. 2 But the firm edifice of Roman power was raised and preserved by the wisdom of ages. The obedient provinces of Trajan and the Antonines were united by laws, and adorned by arts. They might occasionally suffer from the partial abuse of delegated authority; but the general principle of government was wise, simple, and beneficent. They enjoyed the religion of their ancestors, whilst in civil honors and advantages they were exalted, by just degrees, to an equality with their conquerors.

1 (return)

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

2 (return)

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

I. The policy of the emperors and the senate, as far as it concerned religion, was happily seconded by the reflections of the enlightened, and by the habits of the superstitious, part of their subjects. The various modes of worship, which prevailed in the Roman world, were all considered by the people, as equally true; by the philosopher, as equally false; and by the

magistrate, as equally useful. And thus toleration produced not only mutual indulgence, but even religious concord.

The superstition of the people was not imbittered by any mixture of theological rancor; nor was it confined by the chains of any speculative system. The devout polytheist, though fondly attached to his national rites, admitted with implicit faith the different religions of the earth. 3 Fear, gratitude, and curiosity, a dream or an omen, a singular disorder, or a distant journey, perpetually disposed him to multiply the articles of his belief, and to enlarge the list of his protectors. The thin texture of the Pagan mythology was interwoven with various but not discordant materials. As soon as it was allowed that sages and heroes, who had lived or who had died for the benefit of their country, were exalted to a state of power and immortality, it was universally confessed, that they deserved, if not the adoration, at least the reverence, of all mankind. The deities of a thousand groves and a thousand streams possessed, in peace, their local and respective influence; nor could the Romans who deprecated the wrath of the Tiber, deride the Egyptian who presented his offering to the beneficent genius of the Nile. The visible powers of nature, the planets, and the elements were the same throughout the universe. The invisible governors of the moral world were inevitably cast in a similar mould of fiction and allegory. Every virtue, and even vice, acquired its divine representative; every art and profession its patron, whose attributes, in the most distant ages and countries, were uniformly derived from the character of their peculiar votaries. A republic of gods of such opposite tempers and interests required, in every system, the moderating hand of a supreme magistrate, who, by the progress of knowledge and flattery, was gradually invested with the sublime perfections of an Eternal Parent, and an Omnipotent Monarch. 4 Such was the mild spirit of antiquity, that the nations were less attentive to the difference, than to the resemblance, of their religious worship. The Greek, the Roman, and the Barbarian, as they met before their respective altars, easily persuaded themselves, that under various names, and with various ceremonies, they adored the same deities. 5 The elegant mythology of Homer gave a beautiful, and almost a regular form, to the polytheism of the ancient world.

3 (return)

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

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

4 (return)

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

5 (return)

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

The philosophers of Greece deduced their morals from the nature of man, rather than from that of God. They meditated, however, on the Divine Nature, as a very curious and important speculation; and in the profound inquiry, they displayed the strength and weakness of the human understanding. 6 Of the four most celebrated schools, the Stoics and the Platonists endeavored to reconcile the jaring interests of reason and piety. They have left us the most sublime proofs of the existence and perfections of the first cause; but, as it was impossible for them to conceive the creation of matter, the workman in the Stoic philosophy was not sufficiently distinguished from the work; whilst, on the contrary, the spiritual God of Plato and his disciples resembled an idea, rather than a substance. The opinions of the Academics and Epicureans were of a less religious cast; but whilst the modest science of the former induced them to doubt, the positive ignorance of the latter urged them to deny, the providence of a Supreme Ruler. The spirit of inquiry, prompted by emulation, and supported by freedom, had divided the public teachers of philosophy into a variety of contending sects; but the ingenious youth, who, from every part, resorted to Athens, and the other seats of learning in the Roman empire, were alike instructed in every school to reject and to despise the religion of the multitude. How, indeed, was it possible that a philosopher should accept, as divine truths, the idle tales of the poets, and the incoherent traditions of antiquity; or that he should adore, as gods, those imperfect beings whom he must have despised, as men? Against such unworthy adversaries, Cicero condescended to employ the arms of reason and eloquence; but the satire of Lucian was a much more adequate, as well as more efficacious, weapon. We may be well assured, that a

writer, conversant with the world, would never have ventured to expose the gods of his country to public ridicule, had they not already been the objects of secret contempt among the polished and enlightened orders of society. 7

6 (return)

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

7 (return)

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

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

8 (return)

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

It is not easy to conceive from what motives a spirit of persecution could introduce itself into the Roman councils. The magistrates could not be actuated by a blind, though honest bigotry, since the magistrates were themselves philosophers; and the schools of Athens had given laws to the senate. They could not be impelled by ambition or avarice, as the temporal and ecclesiastical powers were united in the same hands. The pontiffs were chosen among the most illustrious of the senators; and the office of Supreme Pontiff was constantly exercised by the emperors themselves. They knew and valued the advantages of religion, as it is connected with civil government. They encouraged the public festivals which humanize the manners of the people. They managed the arts of divination as a convenient instrument of policy; and they respected, as the firmest bond of society, the useful persuasion, that, either in this or in a future life, the crime of perjury is most assuredly punished by the avenging gods. 9 But whilst they acknowledged the general advantages of religion, they were convinced that the various modes of worship contributed alike to the same salutary purposes; and that, in every country, the form of superstition, which had received the sanction of time and experience, was the best adapted to the climate, and to its inhabitants. Avarice and taste very frequently despoiled the vanquished nations of the elegant statues of their gods, and the rich ornaments of their temples; 10 but, in the exercise of the religion which they derived from their ancestors, they uniformly experienced the indulgence, and even protection, of the Roman conquerors. The province of Gaul seems, and indeed only seems, an exception to this universal toleration. Under the

specious pretext of abolishing human sacrifices, the emperors Tiberius and Claudius suppressed the dangerous power of the Druids: 11 but the priests themselves, their gods and their altars, subsisted in peaceful obscurity till the final destruction of Paganism. 12

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

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

11 (return)
[Seuton. in Claud.—Plin. Hist. Nat. xxx. 1.]

12 (return)
[Pelloutier, Histoire des Celtes, tom. vi. p. 230—252.]

Rome, the capital of a great monarchy, was incessantly filled with subjects and strangers from every part of the world, 13 who all introduced and enjoyed the favorite superstitions of their native country. 14 Every city in the empire was justified in maintaining the purity of its ancient ceremonies; and the Roman senate, using the common privilege, sometimes interposed, to check this inundation of foreign rites. 141 The Egyptian superstition, of all the most contemptible and abject, was frequently prohibited: the temples of Serapis and Isis demolished, and their worshippers banished from Rome and Italy. 15 But the zeal of fanaticism prevailed over the cold and feeble efforts of policy. The exiles returned, the proselytes multiplied, the temples were restored with increasing splendor, and Isis and Serapis at length assumed their place among the Roman Deities. 151 16 Nor was this indulgence a departure from the old maxims of government. In the purest ages of the commonwealth, Cybele and Æsculapius had been invited by solemn embassies; 17 and it was customary to tempt the protectors of besieged cities, by the promise of more distinguished honors than they possessed in their native country. 18 Rome gradually became the common temple of her subjects; and the freedom of the city was bestowed on all the gods of mankind. 19

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

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

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

exercised a very pernicious influence on the manners, and even on the constitution.—W.]

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

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

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

17 (return)
[See Livy, l. xi. [Suppl.] and xxix.]

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

19 (return)
[Minutius Fælix in Octavio, p. 54. Arnobius, l. vi. p. 115.]

II. The narrow policy of preserving, without any foreign mixture, the pure blood of the ancient citizens, had checked the fortune, and hastened the ruin, of Athens and Sparta. The aspiring genius of Rome sacrificed vanity to ambition, and deemed it more prudent, as well as honorable, to adopt virtue and merit for her own wheresoever they were found, among slaves or strangers, enemies or barbarians. 20 During the most flourishing æra of the Athenian commonwealth, the number of citizens gradually decreased from about thirty 21 to twenty-one thousand. 22 If, on the contrary, we study the growth of the Roman republic, we may discover, that, notwithstanding the incessant demands of wars and colonies, the citizens, who, in the first census of Servius Tullius, amounted to no more than eighty-three thousand, were multiplied, before the commencement of the social war, to the number of four hundred and sixty-three thousand

men, able to bear arms in the service of their country. 23 When the allies of Rome claimed an equal share of honors and privileges, the senate indeed preferred the chance of arms to an ignominious concession. The Samnites and the Lucanians paid the severe penalty of their rashness; but the rest of the Italian states, as they successively returned to their duty, were admitted into the bosom of the republic, 24 and soon contributed to the ruin of public freedom. Under a democratical government, the citizens exercise the powers of sovereignty; and those powers will be first abused, and afterwards lost, if they are committed to an unwieldy multitude. But when the popular assemblies had been suppressed by the administration of the emperors, the conquerors were distinguished from the vanquished nations, only as the first and most honorable order of subjects; and their increase, however rapid, was no longer exposed to the same dangers. Yet the wisest princes, who adopted the maxims of Augustus, guarded with the strictest care the dignity of the Roman name, and diffused the freedom of the city with a prudent liberality. 25

20 (return)

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

21 (return)

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

22 (return)

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

23 (return)

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

24 (return)

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

25 (return)

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

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

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

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

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

27 (return)
[The first part of the Verona Illustrata of the Marquis Maffei gives the clearest and most comprehensive view of the state of Italy under the Cæsars. * Note: Compare Denina, Revol. d' Italia, l. ii. c. 6, p. 100, 4 to edit.]

The provinces of the empire (as they have been described in the preceding chapter) were destitute of any public force, or constitutional freedom. In Etruria, in Greece, 28 and in Gaul, 29 it was the first care of the senate to dissolve those dangerous confederacies, which taught mankind that, as the Roman arms prevailed by division, they might be

resisted by union. Those princes, whom the ostentation of gratitude or generosity permitted for a while to hold a precarious sceptre, were dismissed from their thrones, as soon as they had performed their appointed task of fashioning to the yoke the vanquished nations. The free states and cities which had embraced the cause of Rome were rewarded with a nominal alliance, and insensibly sunk into real servitude. The public authority was everywhere exercised by the ministers of the senate and of the emperors, and that authority was absolute, and without control. 291 But the same salutary maxims of government, which had secured the peace and obedience of Italy were extended to the most distant conquests. A nation of Romans was gradually formed in the provinces, by the double expedient of introducing colonies, and of admitting the most faithful and deserving of the provincials to the freedom of Rome.

28 (return)

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

29 (return)

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

291 (return)

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

"Wheresoever the Roman conquers, he inhabits," is a very just observation of Seneca, 30 confirmed by history and experience. The natives of Italy, allured by pleasure or by interest, hastened to enjoy the advantages of victory; and we may remark, that, about forty years after the reduction of Asia, eighty thousand Romans were massacred in one day, by the cruel orders of Mithridates. 31 These voluntary exiles were engaged, for the most part, in the occupations of commerce, agriculture, and the farm of the revenue. But after the legions were rendered permanent by the emperors, the provinces were peopled by a race of soldiers; and the veterans, whether they received the reward of their service in land or in money, usually settled with their families in the country, where they had honorably spent their youth. Throughout the empire, but more particularly in the western parts, the most fertile districts, and the most convenient situations, were reserved for the establishment of colonies; some of which were of a civil, and others of a military nature. In their manners and internal policy, the colonies formed a perfect representation of their great parent; and they were soon endeared to the natives by the ties of friendship and alliance, they effectually diffused a reverence for the Roman name, and a desire, which was seldom disappointed, of sharing, in due time, its honors and advantages. 32 The municipal cities insensibly equalled the rank and splendor of the colonies; and in the reign of Hadrian, it was disputed which was the preferable condition, of those societies which had issued from, or those which had been received into, the bosom of Rome. 33 The right of Latium, as it was

called, 331 conferred on the cities to which it had been granted, a more partial favor. The magistrates only, at the expiration of their office, assumed the quality of Roman citizens; but as those offices were annual, in a few years they circulated round the principal families. 34 Those of the provincials who were permitted to bear arms in the legions; 35 those who exercised any civil employment; all, in a word, who performed any public service, or displayed any personal talents, were rewarded with a present, whose value was continually diminished by the increasing liberality of the emperors. Yet even, in the age of the Antonines, when the freedom of the city had been bestowed on the greater number of their subjects, it was still accompanied with very solid advantages. The bulk of the people acquired, with that title, the benefit of the Roman laws, particularly in the interesting articles of marriage, testaments, and inheritances; and the road of fortune was open to those whose pretensions were seconded by favor or merit. The grandsons of the Gauls, who had besieged Julius Cæsar in Alesia, commanded legions, governed provinces, and were admitted into the senate of Rome. 36 Their ambition, instead of disturbing the tranquillity of the state, was intimately connected with its safety and greatness.

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

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

32 (return)
[Twenty-five colonies were settled in Spain, (see Plin. Hist. Nat. iii. 3, 4; iv. 35;) and nine in Britain, of which London, Colchester, Lincoln, Chester, Gloucester, and Bath still remain considerable cities. (See Richard of Cirencester, p. 36, and Whittaker's History of Manchester, l. i. c. 3.)]

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

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

34 (return)
[Spanheim, Orbis Roman. c. 8, p. 62.]

35 (return)
[Aristid. in Romæ Encomio. tom. i. p. 218, edit. Jebb.]

36 (return)
[Tacit. Annal. xi. 23, 24. Hist. iv. 74.]

So sensible were the Romans of the influence of language over national manners, that it was their most serious care to extend, with the progress of their arms, the use of the Latin tongue. 37 The ancient dialects of Italy, the Sabine, the Etruscan, and the Venetian, sunk into oblivion; but in the

provinces, the east was less docile than the west to the voice of its victorious preceptors. This obvious difference marked the two portions of the empire with a distinction of colors, which, though it was in some degree concealed during the meridian splendor of prosperity, became gradually more visible, as the shades of night descended upon the Roman world. The western countries were civilized by the same hands which subdued them. As soon as the barbarians were reconciled to obedience, their minds were open to any new impressions of knowledge and politeness. The language of Virgil and Cicero, though with some inevitable mixture of corruption, was so universally adopted in Africa, Spain, Gaul, Britain, and Pannonia, 38 that the faint traces of the Punic or Celtic idioms were preserved only in the mountains, or among the peasants. 39 Education and study insensibly inspired the natives of those countries with the sentiments of Romans; and Italy gave fashions, as well as laws, to her Latin provincials. They solicited with more ardor, and obtained with more facility, the freedom and honors of the state; supported the national dignity in letters 40 and in arms; and at length, in the person of Trajan, produced an emperor whom the Scipios would not have disowned for their countryman. The situation of the Greeks was very different from that of the barbarians. The former had been long since civilized and corrupted. They had too much taste to relinquish their language, and too much vanity to adopt any foreign institutions. Still preserving the prejudices, after they had lost the virtues, of their ancestors, they affected to despise the unpolished manners of the Roman conquerors, whilst they were compelled to respect their superior wisdom and power. 41 Nor was the influence of the Grecian language and sentiments confined to the narrow limits of that once celebrated country. Their empire, by the progress of colonies and conquest, had been diffused from the Adriatic to the Euphrates and the Nile. Asia was covered with Greek cities, and the long reign of the Macedonian kings had introduced a silent revolution into Syria and Egypt. In their pompous courts, those princes united the elegance of Athens with the luxury of the East, and the example of the court was imitated, at an humble distance, by the higher ranks of their subjects. Such was the general division of the Roman empire into the Latin and Greek languages. To these we may add a third distinction for the body of the natives in Syria, and especially in Egypt, the use of their ancient dialects, by secluding them from the commerce of mankind, checked the improvements of those barbarians. 42 The slothful effeminacy of the former exposed them to the contempt, the sullen ferociousness of the latter excited the aversion, of the conquerors. 43 Those nations had submitted to the Roman power, but they seldom desired or deserved the freedom of the city: and it was remarked, that more than two hundred and thirty years elapsed after the ruin of the Ptolemies, before an Egyptian was admitted into the senate of Rome. 44

37 (return)

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

38 (return)

[Apuleius and Augustin will answer for Africa; Strabo for Spain and Gaul; Tacitus, in the life of Agricola, for Britain; and Velleius Paterculus, for Pannonia. To them we may add the language of the Inscriptions. * Note: Mr. Hallam contests this assertion as regards Britain. “Nor did the Romans ever establish their language—I know not whether they wished to do so—in this island, as we perceive by that stubborn British tongue which has survived two conquests.” In his note, Mr. Hallam examines the passage from Tacitus

(Agric. xxi.) to which Gibbon refers. It merely asserts the progress of Latin studies among the higher orders. (Midd. Ages, iii. 314.) Probably it was a kind of court language, and that of public affairs and prevailed in the Roman colonies.—M.]

39 (return)
[The Celtic was preserved in the mountains of Wales, Cornwall, and Armorica. We may observe, that Apuleius reproaches an African youth, who lived among the populace, with the use of the Punic; whilst he had almost forgot Greek, and neither could nor would speak Latin, (Apolog. p. 596.) The greater part of St. Austin's congregations were strangers to the Punic.]

40 (return)
[Spain alone produced Columella, the Senecas, Lucan, Martial, and Quintilian.]

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

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

43 (return)
[See Juvenal, Sat. iii. and xv. Ammian. Marcellin. xxii. 16.]

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

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

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

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

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

451 (return)

[It was this which rendered the wars so sanguinary, and the battles so obstinate. The immortal Robertson, in an excellent discourse on the state of the world at the period of the establishment of Christianity, has traced a picture of the melancholy effects of slavery, in which we find all the depth of his views and the strength of his mind. I shall oppose successively some passages to the reflections of Gibbon. The reader will see, not without interest, the truths which Gibbon appears to have mistaken or voluntarily neglected, developed by one of the best of modern historians. It is important to call them to mind here, in order to establish the facts and their consequences with accuracy. I shall more than once have occasion to employ, for this purpose, the discourse of Robertson. “Captives taken in war were, in all probability, the first persons subjected to perpetual servitude; and, when the necessities or luxury of mankind increased the demand for slaves, every new war recruited their number, by reducing the vanquished to that wretched condition. Hence proceeded the fierce and desperate spirit with which wars were carried on among ancient nations. While chains and slavery were the certain lot of the conquered, battles were fought, and towns defended with a rage and obstinacy which nothing but horror at such a fate could have inspired; but, putting an end to the cruel institution of slavery,

Christianity extended its mild influences to the practice of war, and that barbarous art, softened by its humane spirit, ceased to be so destructive. Secure, in every event, of personal liberty, the resistance of the vanquished became less obstinate, and the triumph of the victor less cruel. Thus humanity was introduced into the exercise of war, with which it appears to be almost incompatible; and it is to the merciful maxims of Christianity, much more than to any other cause, that we must ascribe the little ferocity and bloodshed which accompany modern victories."—G.]

46 (return)

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

47 (return)

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

471 (return)

[The following is the example: we shall see whether the word "severe" is here in its place. "At the time in which L. Domitius was prætor in Sicily, a slave killed a wild boar of extraordinary size. The prætor, struck by the dexterity and courage of the man, desired to see him. The poor wretch, highly gratified with the distinction, came to present himself before the prætor, in hopes, no doubt, of praise and reward; but Domitius, on learning that he had only a javelin to attack and kill the boar, ordered him to be instantly crucified, under the barbarous pretext that the law prohibited the use of this weapon, as of all others, to slaves." Perhaps the cruelty of Domitius is less astonishing than the indifference with which the Roman orator relates this circumstance, which affects him so little that he thus expresses himself: "Durum hoc fortasse videatur, neque ego in ullam partem disputo." "This may appear harsh, nor do I give any opinion on the subject." And it is the same orator who exclaims in the same oration, "Facinus est cruciare civem Romanum; scelus verberare; prope parricidium necare: quid dicam in crucem tollere?" "It is a crime to imprison a Roman citizen; wickedness to scourge; next to parricide to put to death, what shall I call it to crucify?"

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

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

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

I have retained the whole of M. Guizot's note, though, in his zeal for the invaluable blessings of freedom and Christianity, he has done Gibbon injustice. The condition of the slaves was undoubtedly improved under the emperors. What a great authority has said, "The condition of a slave is better under an arbitrary than under a free government," (Smith's Wealth of Nations, iv. 7,) is, I believe, supported by the history of all ages and nations. The protecting edicts of Hadrian and the Antonines are historical facts, and can as little be attributed to the influence of Christianity, as the milder language of heathen writers, of Seneca, (particularly Ep. 47,) of Pliny, and of Plutarch. The latter influence of Christianity is admitted by

Gibbon himself. The subject of Roman slavery has recently been investigated with great diligence in a very modest but valuable volume, by Wm. Blair, Esq., Edin. 1833. May we be permitted, while on the subject, to refer to the most splendid passage extant of Mr. Pitt's eloquence, the description of the Roman slave-dealer. on the shores of Britain, condemning the island to irreclaimable barbarism, as a perpetual and prolific nursery of slaves? Speeches, vol. ii. p. 80.

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

48 (return)

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

481 (return)

[An active slave-trade, which was carried on in many quarters, particularly the Euxine, the eastern provinces, the coast of Africa, and British must be taken into the account. Blair, 23—32.—M.]

482 (return)

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

49 (return)

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

50 (return)

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

Hope, the best comfort of our imperfect condition, was not denied to the Roman slave; and if he had any opportunity of rendering himself either useful or agreeable, he might very naturally expect that the diligence and fidelity of a few years would be rewarded with the inestimable gift of freedom. The benevolence of the master was so frequently prompted by the meaner suggestions of vanity and avarice, that the laws found it more necessary to restrain than to encourage a profuse and undistinguishing liberality, which might degenerate into a very dangerous abuse. 51 It was a maxim of ancient jurisprudence, that a slave had not any country of his own; he acquired with his liberty an admission into the political society of which his patron was a member. The consequences of this maxim would have prostituted the privileges of the

Roman city to a mean and promiscuous multitude. Some seasonable exceptions were therefore provided; and the honorable distinction was confined to such slaves only as, for just causes, and with the approbation of the magistrate, should receive a solemn and legal manumission. Even these chosen freedmen obtained no more than the private rights of citizens, and were rigorously excluded from civil or military honors. Whatever might be the merit or fortune of their sons, *they* likewise were esteemed unworthy of a seat in the senate; nor were the traces of a servile origin allowed to be completely obliterated till the third or fourth generation. 52 Without destroying the distinction of ranks, a distant prospect of freedom and honors was presented, even to those whom pride and prejudice almost disdained to number among the human species.

51 (return)

[See another Dissertation of M. de Burigny, in the xxxviith volume, on the Roman freedmen.]

52 (return)

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

53 (return)

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

54 (return)

[See Pliny (Hist. Natur. l. xxxiii.) and Athenæus

(Deipnosophist. l. vi. p. 272.) The latter boldly asserts, that he knew very many Romans who possessed, not for use, but ostentation, ten and even twenty thousand slaves.]

55 (return)
[In Paris there are not more than 43,000 domestics of every sort, and not a twelfth part of the inhabitants. Messange, Recherches sui la Population, p. 186.]

56 (return)
[A learned slave sold for many hundred pounds sterling: Atticus always bred and taught them himself. Cornel. Nepos in Vit. c. 13, [on the prices of slaves. Blair, 149.]—M.]

57 (return)
[Many of the Roman physicians were slaves. See Dr. Middleton's Dissertation and Defence.]

58 (return)
[Their ranks and offices are very copiously enumerated by Pignorius de Servis.]

59 (return)
[Tacit. Annal. xiv. 43. They were all executed for not preventing their master's murder. * Note: The remarkable speech of Cassius shows the proud feelings of the Roman aristocracy on this subject. —M]

60 (return)
[Apuleius in Apolog. p. 548. edit. Delphin]

61 (return)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xxxiii. 47.]

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

611] (return)
[According to Robertson, there were twice as many slaves as free citizens.—G. Mr. Blair (p. 15) estimates three slaves to one freeman, between the conquest of Greece, B.C. 146, and the reign of Alexander Severus, A. D. 222, 235. The proportion was probably larger in Italy than in the provinces.—M. On the other hand, Zumpt, in his Dissertation quoted below, (p. 86,) asserts it to be a gross error in Gibbon to reckon the number of slaves equal to that of the free population. The luxury and magnificence of the great, (he observes,) at the commencement of the

empire, must not be taken as the groundwork of calculations for the whole Roman world. “The agricultural laborer, and the artisan, in Spain, Gaul, Britain, Syria, and Egypt, maintained himself, as in the present day, by his own labor and that of his household, without possessing a single slave.” The latter part of my note was intended to suggest this consideration. Yet so completely was slavery rooted in the social system, both in the east and the west, that in the great diffusion of wealth at this time, every one, I doubt not, who could afford a domestic slave, kept one; and generally, the number of slaves was in proportion to the wealth. I do not believe that the cultivation of the soil by slaves was confined to Italy; the holders of large estates in the provinces would probably, either from choice or necessity, adopt the same mode of cultivation. The latifundia, says Pliny, had ruined Italy, and had begun to ruin the provinces. Slaves were no doubt employed in agricultural labor to a great extent in Sicily, and were the estates of those six enormous landholders who were said to have possessed the whole province of Africa, cultivated altogether by free coloni? Whatever may have been the case in the rural districts, in the towns and cities the household duties were almost entirely discharged by slaves, and vast numbers belonged to the public establishments. I do not, however, differ so far from Zumpt, and from M. Dureau de la Malle, as to adopt the higher and bolder estimate of Robertson and Mr. Blair, rather than the more cautious suggestions of Gibbon. I would reduce rather than increase the proportion of the slave population. The very ingenious and elaborate calculations of the French writer, by which he deduces the amount of the population from the produce and consumption of corn in Italy, appear to me neither precise nor satisfactory bases for such complicated political arithmetic. I am least satisfied with his views as to the population of the city of Rome; but this point will be more fitly reserved for a note on the thirty-first chapter of Gibbon. The work, however, of M. Dureau de la Malle is very curious and full on some of the minuter points of Roman statistics.—M. 1845.]

62 (return)

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

recent English publication, gives the following details:—

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

Since the publication of my first annotated edition of Gibbon, the subject of the population of the Roman empire has been investigated by two writers of great industry and learning; Mons. Dureau de la Malle, in his Economie Politique des Romains, liv. ii. c. 1. to 8, and M. Zumpt, in a dissertation printed in the Transactions of the Berlin Academy, 1840. M. Dureau de la Malle confines his inquiry almost entirely to the city of Rome, and Roman Italy. Zumpt examines at greater length the axiom, which he supposes to have been assumed by Gibbon as unquestionable, “that Italy and the Roman world was never so populous as in the time of the Antonines.” Though this probably was Gibbon’s opinion, he has not stated it so peremptorily as asserted by Mr. Zumpt. It had before been expressly laid down by Hume, and his statement was controverted by Wallace and by Malthus. Gibbon says (p. 84) that there is no reason to believe the country (of Italy) less populous in the age of the Antonines, than in that of Romulus; and Zumpt acknowledges that we have no satisfactory knowledge of the state of Italy at that early age. Zumpt, in my opinion with some reason, takes the period just before the first Punic war, as that in which Roman Italy (all south of the Rubicon) was most populous. From that time, the numbers began to diminish, at first from the enormous waste of life out of the free population in the foreign, and afterwards in the civil wars; from the cultivation of the soil by slaves; towards the close of the republic, from the repugnance to marriage, which resisted alike the dread of legal punishment and the offer of legal immunity and privilege; and from the depravity of manners, which interfered with the procreation, the birth, and the rearing of children. The arguments and the authorities of Zumpt are equally conclusive as to the decline of population in Greece. Still the details, which he himself adduces as to the prosperity and populousness of Asia Minor, and the whole of the Roman East, with the advancement of the European provinces, especially Gaul, Spain, and Britain, in civilization, and therefore in populousness, (for I have no confidence in the vast numbers sometimes assigned to the barbarous inhabitants of these countries,) may, I think, fairly compensate for any deduction to be made from

Gibbon's general estimate on account of Greece and Italy. Gibbon himself acknowledges his own estimate to be vague and conjectural; and I may venture to recommend the dissertation of Zumpt as deserving respectful consideration.—M 1815.]

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

Domestic peace and union were the natural consequences of the moderate and comprehensive policy embraced by the Romans. If we turn our eyes towards the monarchies of Asia, we shall behold despotism in the centre, and weakness in the extremities; the collection of the revenue, or the administration of justice, enforced by the presence of an army; hostile barbarians established in the heart of the country, hereditary satraps usurping the dominion of the provinces, and subjects inclined to rebellion, though incapable of freedom. But the obedience of the Roman world was uniform, voluntary, and permanent. The vanquished nations, blended into one great people, resigned the hope, nay, even the wish, of resuming their independence, and scarcely considered their own existence as distinct from the existence of Rome. The established authority of the emperors pervaded without an effort the wide extent of their dominions, and was exercised with the same facility on the banks of the Thames, or of the Nile, as on those of the Tyber. The legions were destined to serve against the public enemy, and the civil magistrate seldom required the aid of a military force. 63 In this state of general security, the leisure, as well as opulence, both of the prince and people, were devoted to improve and to adorn the Roman empire.

63 (return)

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

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

It is natural to suppose that the greatest number, as well as the most considerable of the Roman edifices, were raised by the emperors, who possessed so unbounded a command both of men and money. Augustus was accustomed to boast that he had found his capital of brick, and that he had left it of marble. 64 The strict economy of Vespasian was the source of his magnificence. The works of Trajan bear the stamp of his genius. The public monuments with which Hadrian adorned every province of the empire, were executed not only by his orders, but under his immediate inspection. He was himself an artist; and he loved the arts, as they conduced to the glory of the monarch. They were encouraged by the Antonines, as they contributed to the happiness of the people. But if the emperors were the first, they were not the only architects of their dominions. Their example was universally imitated by their principal subjects, who were not afraid of declaring to the world that they had spirit to conceive, and wealth to accomplish, the noblest undertakings. Scarcely had the proud structure of the Coliseum been dedicated at Rome, before the edifices, of a smaller scale indeed, but of the same design and materials, were erected for the use, and at the expense, of the cities of

Capua and Verona. 65 The inscription of the stupendous bridge of Alcantara attests that it was thrown over the Tagus by the contribution of a few Lusitanian communities. When Pliny was intrusted with the government of Bithynia and Pontus, provinces by no means the richest or most considerable of the empire, he found the cities within his jurisdiction striving with each other in every useful and ornamental work, that might deserve the curiosity of strangers, or the gratitude of their citizens. It was the duty of the proconsul to supply their deficiencies, to direct their taste, and sometimes to moderate their emulation. 66 The opulent senators of Rome and the provinces esteemed it an honor, and almost an obligation, to adorn the splendor of their age and country; and the influence of fashion very frequently supplied the want of taste or generosity. Among a crowd of these private benefactors, we may select Herodes Atticus, an Athenian citizen, who lived in the age of the Antonines. Whatever might be the motive of his conduct, his magnificence would have been worthy of the greatest kings.

64 (return)

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

65 (return)

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

66 (return)

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

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

hundred thousand pounds,) for the construction of a new aqueduct. But in the execution of the work, the charge amounted to more than double the estimate, and the officers of the revenue began to murmur, till the generous Atticus silenced their complaints, by requesting that he might be permitted to take upon himself the whole additional expense. 68

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

68 (return)
[Philostrat. in Vit. Sophist. l. ii. p. 548.]

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

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

69 (return)
[Aulus Gellius, in Noct. Attic. i. 2, ix. 2, xviii. 10, xix. 12. Phil ostrat. p. 564.]

691 (return)
[The Odeum served for the rehearsal of new comedies as well as tragedies; they were read or repeated, before representation, without music or decorations, &c. No piece could be represented in the theatre if it had not been previously approved by judges for this purpose. The king of Cappadocia who restored the Odeum, which had been burnt by Sylla, was Araobarzanes. See Martini, Dissertation on the Odeons of the Ancients, Leipsic. 1767, p. 10—91.—W.]

70 (return)
[See Philostrat. l. ii. p. 548, 560. Pausanias, l. i. and vii. 10. The life of Herodes, in the xxxth

volume of the Memoirs of the Academy of Inscriptions.]

In the commonwealths of Athens and Rome, the modest simplicity of private houses announced the equal condition of freedom; whilst the sovereignty of the people was represented in the majestic edifices designed to the public use; 71 nor was this republican spirit totally extinguished by the introduction of wealth and monarchy. It was in works of national honor and benefit, that the most virtuous of the emperors affected to display their magnificence. The golden palace of Nero excited a just indignation, but the vast extent of ground which had been usurped by his selfish luxury was more nobly filled under the succeeding reigns by the Coliseum, the baths of Titus, the Claudian portico, and the temples dedicated to the goddess of Peace, and to the genius of Rome. 72 These monuments of architecture, the property of the Roman people, were adorned with the most beautiful productions of Grecian painting and sculpture; and in the temple of Peace, a very curious library was open to the curiosity of the learned. 721 At a small distance from thence was situated the Forum of Trajan. It was surrounded by a lofty portico, in the form of a quadrangle, into which four triumphal arches opened a noble and spacious entrance: in the centre arose a column of marble, whose height, of one hundred and ten feet, denoted the elevation of the hill that had been cut away. This column, which still subsists in its ancient beauty, exhibited an exact representation of the Dacian victories of its founder. The veteran soldier contemplated the story of his own campaigns, and by an easy illusion of national vanity, the peaceful citizen associated himself to the honors of the triumph. All the other quarters of the capital, and all the provinces of the empire, were embellished by the same liberal spirit of public magnificence, and were filled with amphitheatres, theatres, temples, porticoes, triumphal arches, baths and aqueducts, all variously conducive to the health, the devotion, and the pleasures of the meanest citizen. The last mentioned of those edifices deserve our peculiar attention. The boldness of the enterprise, the solidity of the execution, and the uses to which they were subservient, rank the aqueducts among the noblest monuments of Roman genius and power. The aqueducts of the capital claim a just preeminence; but the curious traveller, who, without the light of history, should examine those of Spoleto, of Metz, or of Segovia, would very naturally conclude that those provincial towns had formerly been the residence of some potent monarch. The solitudes of Asia and Africa were once covered with flourishing cities, whose populousness, and even whose existence, was derived from such artificial supplies of a perennial stream of fresh water. 73

71 (return)

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

72 (return)

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

721 (return)

[The Emperor Vespasian, who had caused the Temple of Peace to be built, transported to it the greatest part of the pictures, statues, and other works of art which had escaped the civil tumults.

It was there that every day the artists and the learned of Rome assembled; and it is on the site of this temple that a multitude of antiques have been dug up. See notes of Reimar on Dion Cassius, lxvi. c. 15, p. 1083.—W.]

73 (return)

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

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

I. *Ancient* Italy is said to have contained eleven hundred and ninety-seven cities; and for whatsoever æra of antiquity the expression might be intended, 74 there is not any reason to believe the country less populous in the age of the Antonines, than in that of Romulus. The petty states of Latium were contained within the metropolis of the empire, by whose superior influence they had been attracted. 741 Those parts of Italy which have so long languished under the lazy tyranny of priests and viceroys, had been afflicted only by the more tolerable calamities of war; and the first symptoms of decay which *they* experienced, were amply compensated by the rapid improvements of the Cisalpine Gaul. The splendor of Verona may be traced in its remains: yet Verona was less celebrated than Aquileia or Padua, Milan or Ravenna. II. The spirit of improvement had passed the Alps, and been felt even in the woods of Britain, which were gradually cleared away to open a free space for convenient and elegant habitations. York was the seat of government; London was already enriched by commerce; and Bath was celebrated for the salutary effects of its medicinal waters. Gaul could boast of her twelve hundred cities; 75 and though, in the northern parts, many of them, without excepting Paris itself, were little more than the rude and imperfect townships of a rising people, the southern provinces imitated the wealth and elegance of Italy. 76 Many were the cities of Gaul, Marseilles, Arles, Nismes, Narbonne, Thoulouse, Bourdeaux, Autun, Vienna, Lyons, Langres, and Treves, whose ancient condition might sustain an equal, and perhaps advantageous comparison with their present state. With regard to Spain, that country flourished as a province, and has declined as a kingdom. Exhausted by the abuse of her strength, by America, and by superstition, her pride might possibly be confounded, if we required such a list of three hundred and sixty cities, as Pliny has exhibited under the reign of Vespasian. 77 III. Three hundred African cities had once acknowledged the authority of Carthage, 78 nor is it likely that their numbers diminished under the administration of the emperors: Carthage itself rose with new splendor from its ashes; and that capital, as well as Capua and Corinth, soon recovered all the advantages which can be separated from independent sovereignty. IV. The provinces of the East present the contrast of Roman magnificence with Turkish barbarism. The ruins of antiquity scattered over uncultivated fields, and ascribed, by ignorance, to the power of magic, scarcely afford a shelter to the oppressed peasant or wandering Arab. Under the reign of the Cæsars, the proper Asia alone contained five hundred populous cities, 79 enriched with all the gifts of nature, and adorned with all the refinements of art. Eleven cities of Asia had once disputed the honor of dedicating a temple of Tiberius, and their respective merits were examined by the senate. 80 Four of them were immediately rejected as unequal to the burden; and among these was Laodicea, whose splendor is still displayed in its ruins.

81 Laodicea collected a very considerable revenue from its flocks of sheep, celebrated for the fineness of their wool, and had received, a little before the contest, a legacy of above four hundred thousand pounds by the testament of a generous citizen. 82 If such was the poverty of Laodicea, what must have been the wealth of those cities, whose claim appeared preferable, and particularly of Pergamus, of Smyrna, and of Ephesus, who so long disputed with each other the titular primacy of Asia? 83 The capitals of Syria and Egypt held a still superior rank in the empire; Antioch and Alexandria looked down with disdain on a crowd of dependent cities, 84 and yielded, with reluctance, to the majesty of Rome itself.

74 (return)
[Ælian. Hist. Var. lib. ix. c. 16. He lived in the time of Alexander Severus. See Fabricius, Biblioth. Græca, l. iv. c. 21.]

741 (return)
[This may in some degree account for the difficulty started by Livy, as to the incredibly numerous armies raised by the small states around Rome where, in his time, a scanty stock of free soldiers among a larger population of Roman slaves broke the solitude. Vix seminario exiguo militum relicto servitia Romana ab solitudine vindicant, Liv. vi. vii. Compare Appian Bel Civ. i. 7.—M. subst. for G.]

75 (return)
[Joseph. de Bell. Jud. ii. 16. The number, however, is mentioned, and should be received with a degree of latitude. Note: Without doubt no reliance can be placed on this passage of Josephus. The historian makes Agrippa give advice to the Jews, as to the power of the Romans; and the speech is full of declamation which can furnish no conclusions to history. While enumerating the nations subject to the Romans, he speaks of the Gauls as submitting to 1200 soldiers, (which is false, as there were eight legions in Gaul, Tac. iv. 5,) while there are nearly twelve hundred cities.—G. Josephus (infra) places these eight legions on the Rhine, as Tacitus does.—M.]

76 (return)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 5.]

77 (return)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. iii. 3, 4, iv. 35. The list seems authentic and accurate; the division of the provinces, and the different condition of the cities, are minutely distinguished.]

78 (return)
[Strabon. Geograph. l. xvii. p. 1189.]

79 (return)
[Joseph. de Bell. Jud. ii. 16. Philostrat. in Vit. Sophist. l. ii. p. 548, edit. Olear.]

80 (return)
[Tacit. Annal. iv. 55. I have taken some pains in consulting and comparing modern travellers, with regard to the fate of those eleven cities of Asia. Seven or eight are totally destroyed: Hypæpe, Tralles, Laodicea, Hium, Halicarnassus, Miletus, Ephesus, and we may add Sardes. Of the remaining three, Pergamus is a straggling

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

81 (return)

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

82 (return)

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

83 (return)

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

84 (return)

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

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

All these cities were connected with each other, and with the capital, by the public highways, which, issuing from the Forum of Rome, traversed Italy, pervaded the provinces, and were terminated only by the frontiers of the empire. If we carefully trace the distance from the wall of Antoninus to Rome, and from thence to Jerusalem, it will be found that the great chain of communication, from the north-west to the south-east point of the empire, was drawn out to the length of four thousand and eighty Roman miles. 85 The public roads were accurately divided by mile-stones, and ran in a direct line from one city to another, with very little respect for the obstacles either of nature or private property. Mountains were perforated, and bold arches thrown over the broadest and most rapid streams. 86 The middle part of the road was raised into a terrace which commanded the adjacent country, consisted of several strata of sand, gravel, and cement, and was paved with large stones, or, in some places near the capital, with granite. 87 Such was the solid construction of the Roman highways, whose firmness has not entirely yielded to the effort of fifteen centuries. They united the subjects of the most distant provinces by an easy and familiar intercourse; but their primary object had been to facilitate the marches of the legions; nor was any country considered as completely subdued, till it had been rendered, in all its parts, pervious to the arms and authority of the conqueror. The advantage of receiving the earliest intelligence, and of conveying their orders with celerity, induced the emperors to establish, throughout their extensive dominions, the regular institution of posts. 88 Houses were everywhere erected at the distance only of five or six miles; each of them was constantly provided with forty horses, and by the help of these relays, it was easy to travel a hundred miles in a day along the Roman roads. 89 891 The use of posts was allowed to those who claimed it by an Imperial mandate; but though originally intended for the public service, it was sometimes indulged to the business or conveniency of private citizens. 90 Nor was the communication of the Roman empire less free and open by sea than it was by land. The provinces surrounded and enclosed the Mediterranean: and Italy, in the shape of an immense promontory, advanced into the midst of that great lake. The coasts of Italy are, in general, destitute of safe harbors; but human industry had corrected the deficiencies of nature; and the artificial port of Ostia, in particular, situate at the mouth of the Tyber, and formed by the emperor Claudius, was a useful monument of Roman greatness. 91 From this port, which was only sixteen miles from the capital, a favorable breeze frequently carried vessels in seven days to the columns of Hercules, and in nine or ten, to Alexandria in Egypt. 92

85 (return)

[The following Itinerary may serve to convey some idea of the direction of the road, and of the distance between the principal towns. I. From the wall of Antoninus to York, 222 Roman miles. II. London, 227. III. Rhutupiæ or Sandwich, 67. IV. The navigation to Boulogne, 45. V. Rheims, 174. VI. Lyons, 330. VII. Milan, 324. VIII. Rome, 426. IX. Brundusium, 360. X. The navigation to Dyrrachium, 40. XI. Byzantium, 711. XII. Ancyra, 283. XIII. Tarsus, 301. XIV. Antioch,

141. XV. Tyre, 252. XVI. Jerusalem, 168. In all 4080 Roman, or 3740 English miles. See the Itineraries published by Wesseling, his annotations; Gale and Stukeley for Britain, and M. d'Anville for Gaul and Italy.]

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

87 (return)
[Bergier, Histoire des grands Chemins de l'Empire Romain, l. ii. c. l. l—28.]

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

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

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

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

91 (return)
[Bergier, Hist. des grands Chemins, l. iv. c. 49.]

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

Whatever evils either reason or declamation have imputed to extensive empire, the power of Rome was attended with some beneficial consequences to mankind; and the same freedom of intercourse which extended the vices, diffused likewise the improvements, of social life. In

the more remote ages of antiquity, the world was unequally divided. The East was in the immemorial possession of arts and luxury; whilst the West was inhabited by rude and warlike barbarians, who either disdained agriculture, or to whom it was totally unknown. Under the protection of an established government, the productions of happier climates, and the industry of more civilized nations, were gradually introduced into the western countries of Europe; and the natives were encouraged, by an open and profitable commerce, to multiply the former, as well as to improve the latter. It would be almost impossible to enumerate all the articles, either of the animal or the vegetable reign, which were successively imported into Europe from Asia and Egypt: 93 but it will not be unworthy of the dignity, and much less of the utility, of an historical work, slightly to touch on a few of the principal heads. 1. Almost all the flowers, the herbs, and the fruits, that grow in our European gardens, are of foreign extraction, which, in many cases, is betrayed even by their names: the apple was a native of Italy, and when the Romans had tasted the richer flavor of the apricot, the peach, the pomegranate, the citron, and the orange, they contented themselves with applying to all these new fruits the common denomination of apple, discriminating them from each other by the additional epithet of their country. 2. In the time of Homer, the vine grew wild in the island of Sicily, and most probably in the adjacent continent; but it was not improved by the skill, nor did it afford a liquor grateful to the taste, of the savage inhabitants. 94 A thousand years afterwards, Italy could boast, that of the fourscore most generous and celebrated wines, more than two thirds were produced from her soil. 95 The blessing was soon communicated to the Narbonnese province of Gaul; but so intense was the cold to the north of the Cevennes, that, in the time of Strabo, it was thought impossible to ripen the grapes in those parts of Gaul. 96 This difficulty, however, was gradually vanquished; and there is some reason to believe, that the vineyards of Burgundy are as old as the age of the Antonines. 97 3. The olive, in the western world, followed the progress of peace, of which it was considered as the symbol. Two centuries after the foundation of Rome, both Italy and Africa were strangers to that useful plant: it was naturalized in those countries; and at length carried into the heart of Spain and Gaul. The timid errors of the ancients, that it required a certain degree of heat, and could only flourish in the neighborhood of the sea, were insensibly exploded by industry and experience. 4. The cultivation of flax was transported from Egypt to Gaul, and enriched the whole country, however it might impoverish the particular lands on which it was sown. 99 5. The use of artificial grasses became familiar to the farmers both of Italy and the provinces, particularly the Lucerne, which derived its name and origin from Media. 100 The assured supply of wholesome and plentiful food for the cattle during winter, multiplied the number of the docks and herds, which in their turn contributed to the fertility of the soil. To all these improvements may be added an assiduous attention to mines and fisheries, which, by employing a multitude of laborious hands, serve to increase the pleasures of the rich and the subsistence of the poor. The elegant treatise of Columella describes the advanced state of the Spanish husbandry under the reign of Tiberius; and it may be observed, that those famines, which so frequently afflicted the infant republic, were seldom or never experienced by the extensive empire of Rome. The accidental scarcity, in any single province, was immediately relieved by the plenty of its more fortunate neighbors.

93 (return)

[It is not improbable that the Greeks and Phœnicians introduced some new arts and productions into the neighborhood of Marseilles and Gades.]

94 (return)
[See Homer, Odyss. l. ix. v. 358.]

95 (return)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xiv.]

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

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

99 (return)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xix.]

100 (return)
[See the agreeable Essays on Agriculture by Mr. Harte, in which he has collected all that the ancients and moderns have said of Lucerne.]

Agriculture is the foundation of manufactures; since the productions of nature are the materials of art. Under the Roman empire, the labor of an industrious and ingenious people was variously, but incessantly, employed in the service of the rich. In their dress, their table, their houses, and their furniture, the favorites of fortune united every refinement of conveniency, of elegance, and of splendor, whatever could soothe their pride or gratify their sensuality. Such refinements, under the odious name of luxury, have been severely arraigned by the moralists of every age; and it might perhaps be more conducive to the virtue, as well as happiness, of mankind, if all possessed the necessaries, and none the superfluities, of

life. But in the present imperfect condition of society, luxury, though it may proceed from vice or folly, seems to be the only means that can correct the unequal distribution of property. The diligent mechanic, and the skilful artist, who have obtained no share in the division of the earth, receive a voluntary tax from the possessors of land; and the latter are prompted, by a sense of interest, to improve those estates, with whose produce they may purchase additional pleasures. This operation, the particular effects of which are felt in every society, acted with much more diffusive energy in the Roman world. The provinces would soon have been exhausted of their wealth, if the manufactures and commerce of luxury had not insensibly restored to the industrious subjects the sums which were exacted from them by the arms and authority of Rome. As long as the circulation was confined within the bounds of the empire, it impressed the political machine with a new degree of activity, and its consequences, sometimes beneficial, could never become pernicious.

But it is no easy task to confine luxury within the limits of an empire. The most remote countries of the ancient world were ransacked to supply the pomp and delicacy of Rome. The forests of Scythia afforded some valuable furs. Amber was brought over land from the shores of the Baltic to the Danube; and the barbarians were astonished at the price which they received in exchange for so useless a commodity. 101 There was a considerable demand for Babylonian carpets, and other manufactures of the East; but the most important and unpopular branch of foreign trade was carried on with Arabia and India. Every year, about the time of the summer solstice, a fleet of a hundred and twenty vessels sailed from Myos-hormos, a port of Egypt, on the Red Sea. By the periodical assistance of the monsoons, they traversed the ocean in about forty days. The coast of Malabar, or the island of Ceylon, 102 was the usual term of their navigation, and it was in those markets that the merchants from the more remote countries of Asia expected their arrival. The return of the fleet of Egypt was fixed to the months of December or January; and as soon as their rich cargo had been transported on the backs of camels, from the Red Sea to the Nile, and had descended that river as far as Alexandria, it was poured, without delay, into the capital of the empire. 103 The objects of oriental traffic were splendid and trifling; silk, a pound of which was esteemed not inferior in value to a pound of gold; 104 precious stones, among which the pearl claimed the first rank after the diamond; 105 and a variety of aromatics, that were consumed in religious worship and the pomp of funerals. The labor and risk of the voyage was rewarded with almost incredible profit; but the profit was made upon Roman subjects, and a few individuals were enriched at the expense of the public. As the natives of Arabia and India were contented with the productions and manufactures of their own country, silver, on the side of the Romans, was the principal, if not the only 1051 instrument of commerce. It was a complaint worthy of the gravity of the senate, that, in the purchase of female ornaments, the wealth of the state was irrecoverably given away to foreign and hostile nations. 106 The annual loss is computed, by a writer of an inquisitive but censorious temper, at upwards of eight hundred thousand pounds sterling. 107 Such was the style of discontent, brooding over the dark prospect of approaching poverty. And yet, if we compare the proportion between gold and silver, as it stood in the time of Pliny, and as it was fixed in the reign of Constantine, we shall discover within that period a very considerable increase. 108 There is not the least reason to suppose that gold was become more scarce; it is therefore evident that silver was grown more common; that whatever might be the amount of the Indian and Arabian exports, they were far from exhausting the wealth of the Roman world; and that the produce of the mines abundantly supplied the demands of commerce.

101 (return)

[Tacit. Germania, c. 45. Plin. Hist. Nat. xxxvii.

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

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

103 (return)
[Plin. Hist. Natur. l. vi. Strabo, l. xvii.]

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

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

1051 (return)
[Certainly not the only one. The Indians were not so contented with regard to foreign productions. Arrian has a long list of European wares, which they received in exchange for their own; Italian and other wines, brass, tin, lead, coral, chrysolith, storax, glass, dresses of one or many colors, zones, &c. See Periplus Maris Erythræi in Hudson, Geogr. Min. i. p. 27.—W. The German translator observes that Gibbon has confined the use of aromatics to religious worship and funerals. His error seems the omission of other spices, of which the Romans must have consumed great quantities in their cookery. Wenck, however, admits that silver was the chief article of exchange.—M. In 1787, a peasant (near Nellore in the Carnatic) struck, in digging, on the remains of a Hindu temple; he found, also, a pot which contained Roman coins and medals of the second century, mostly Trajans, Adrians, and Faustinas, all of gold, many of them fresh and beautiful, others defaced or perforated, as if they had been worn as ornaments. (Asiatic Researches, ii. 19.)—M.]

106 (return)
[Tacit. Annal. iii. 53. In a speech of Tiberius.]

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

108 (return)
[The proportion, which was 1 to 10, and 12 1/2, rose to 14 2/5, the legal regulation of Constantine. See Arbuthnot's Tables of ancient Coins, c. 5.]

Notwithstanding the propensity of mankind to exalt the past, and to depreciate the present, the tranquil and prosperous state of the empire was warmly felt, and honestly confessed, by the provincials as well as

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

109 (return)

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

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

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

feelings in their native tongue, had already occupied every place of honor. The name of Poet was almost forgotten; that of Orator was usurped by the sophists. A cloud of critics, of compilers, of commentators, darkened the face of learning, and the decline of genius was soon followed by the corruption of taste.

110 (return)

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

1101 (return)

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

The sublime Longinus, who, in somewhat a later period, and in the court of a Syrian queen, preserved the spirit of ancient Athens, observes and laments this degeneracy of his contemporaries, which debased their sentiments, enervated their courage, and depressed their talents. "In the same manner," says he, "as some children always remain pygmies, whose infant limbs have been too closely confined, thus our tender minds, fettered by the prejudices and habits of a just servitude, are unable to expand themselves, or to attain that well-proportioned greatness which we admire in the ancients; who, living under a popular government, wrote with the same freedom as they acted." 111 This diminutive stature of mankind, if we pursue the metaphor, was daily sinking below the old standard, and the Roman world was indeed peopled by a race of pygmies; when the fierce giants of the north broke in, and mended the puny breed. They restored a manly spirit of freedom; and after the revolution of ten centuries, freedom became the happy parent of taste and science.

111 (return)

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

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

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

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

101 (return)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

3 (return)
[Dion Cassius, l. liii. p. 693. Suetonius in August. c. 35.]

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

4 (return)

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

It would require the pen of Tacitus (if Tacitus had assisted at this assembly) to describe the various emotions of the senate, those that were suppressed, and those that were affected. It was dangerous to trust the sincerity of Augustus; to seem to distrust it was still more dangerous. The respective advantages of monarchy and a republic have often divided speculative inquirers; the present greatness of the Roman state, the corruption of manners, and the license of the soldiers, supplied new arguments to the advocates of monarchy; and these general views of government were again warped by the hopes and fears of each individual. Amidst this confusion of sentiments, the answer of the senate was unanimous and decisive. They refused to accept the resignation of Augustus; they conjured him not to desert the republic, which he had saved. After a decent resistance, the crafty tyrant submitted to the orders of the senate; and consented to receive the government of the provinces, and the general command of the Roman armies, under the well-known names of PROCONSUL and IMPERATOR. 5 But he would receive them only for ten years. Even before the expiration of that period, he hope that the wounds of civil discord would be completely healed, and that the republic, restored to its pristine health and vigor, would no longer require the dangerous interposition of so extraordinary a magistrate. The memory of this comedy, repeated several times during the life of Augustus, was preserved to the last ages of the empire, by the peculiar pomp with which the perpetual monarchs of Rome always solemnized the tenth years of their reign. 6

5 (return)

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

6 (return)

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

Without any violation of the principles of the constitution, the general of the Roman armies might receive and exercise an authority almost despotic over the soldiers, the enemies, and the subjects of the republic. With regard to the soldiers, the jealousy of freedom had, even from the earliest ages of Rome, given way to the hopes of conquest, and a just sense of military discipline. The dictator, or consul, had a right to command the service of the Roman youth; and to punish an obstinate or cowardly disobedience by the most severe and ignominious penalties, by striking the offender out of the list of citizens, by confiscating his property, and by selling his person into slavery. 7 The most sacred rights of freedom, confirmed by the Porcian and Sempronian laws, were suspended by the military engagement. In his camp the general exercised an absolute power of life and death; his jurisdiction was not confined by any forms of trial, or rules of proceeding, and the execution of the sentence was immediate and without appeal. 8 The choice of the enemies of Rome was regularly decided by the legislative authority. The most important resolutions of peace and war were seriously debated in the senate, and solemnly ratified by the people. But when the arms of the legions were carried to a great distance from Italy, the general assumed the liberty of directing them against whatever people, and in whatever

manner, they judged most advantageous for the public service. It was from the success, not from the justice, of their enterprises, that they expected the honors of a triumph. In the use of victory, especially after they were no longer controlled by the commissioners of the senate, they exercised the most unbounded despotism. When Pompey commanded in the East, he rewarded his soldiers and allies, dethroned princes, divided kingdoms, founded colonies, and distributed the treasures of Mithridates. On his return to Rome, he obtained, by a single act of the senate and people, the universal ratification of all his proceedings. 9 Such was the power over the soldiers, and over the enemies of Rome, which was either granted to, or assumed by, the generals of the republic. They were, at the same time, the governors, or rather monarchs, of the conquered provinces, united the civil with the military character, administered justice as well as the finances, and exercised both the executive and legislative power of the state.

7 (return)
[Livy Epitom. l. xiv. [c. 27.] Valer. Maxim. vi. 3.]

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

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

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

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

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

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

105 (return)

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

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

Although Augustus considered a military force as the firmest foundation, he wisely rejected it, as a very odious instrument of government. It was more agreeable to his temper, as well as to his policy, to reign under the venerable names of ancient magistracy, and artfully to collect, in his own person, all the scattered rays of civil jurisdiction. With this view, he permitted the senate to confer upon him, for his life, the powers of the consular 11 and tribunitian offices, 12 which were, in the same manner, continued to all his successors. The consuls had succeeded to the kings of Rome, and represented the dignity of the state. They superintended the ceremonies of religion, levied and commanded the legions, gave audience to foreign ambassadors, and presided in the

assemblies both of the senate and people. The general control of the finances was intrusted to their care; and though they seldom had leisure to administer justice in person, they were considered as the supreme guardians of law, equity, and the public peace. Such was their ordinary jurisdiction; but whenever the senate empowered the first magistrate to consult the safety of the commonwealth, he was raised by that decree above the laws, and exercised, in the defence of liberty, a temporary despotism. 13 The character of the tribunes was, in every respect, different from that of the consuls. The appearance of the former was modest and humble; but their persons were sacred and inviolable. Their force was suited rather for opposition than for action. They were instituted to defend the oppressed, to pardon offences, to arraign the enemies of the people, and, when they judged it necessary, to stop, by a single word, the whole machine of government. As long as the republic subsisted, the dangerous influence, which either the consul or the tribune might derive from their respective jurisdiction, was diminished by several important restrictions. Their authority expired with the year in which they were elected; the former office was divided between two, the latter among ten persons; and, as both in their private and public interest they were averse to each other, their mutual conflicts contributed, for the most part, to strengthen rather than to destroy the balance of the constitution. 131 But when the consular and tribunitian powers were united, when they were vested for life in a single person, when the general of the army was, at the same time, the minister of the senate and the representative of the Roman people, it was impossible to resist the exercise, nor was it easy to define the limits, of his imperial prerogative.

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

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

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

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

To these accumulated honors, the policy of Augustus soon added the splendid as well as important dignities of supreme pontiff, and of censor. By the former he acquired the management of the religion, and by the

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

14 (return)

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

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

15 (return)

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

tribuneship was an office or a name, (Plin. Epist. i. 23.)]

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

17 (return)
[Quoties Magistratuum Comitiis interesset. Tribus cum candidatis suis circunbat: supplicabatque more solemni. Ferebat et ipse suffragium in tribubus, ut unus e populo. Suetonius in August c. 56.]

18 (return)
[Tum primum Comitia e campo ad patres translata sunt. Tacit. Annal. i. 15. The word primum seems to allude to some faint and unsuccessful efforts which were made towards restoring them to the people. Note: The emperor Caligula made the attempt: he rest red the Comitia to the people, but, in a short time, took them away again. Suet. in Caio. c. 16. Dion. lix. 9, 20. Nevertheless, at the time of Dion, they preserved still the form of the Comitia. Dion. lviii. 20.—W.]

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

19 (return)

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

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

20 (return)

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

The deification of the emperors 21 is the only instance in which they departed from their accustomed prudence and modesty. The Asiatic Greeks were the first inventors, the successors of Alexander the first objects, of this servile and impious mode of adulation. 211 It was easily transferred from the kings to the governors of Asia; and the Roman magistrates very frequently were adored as provincial deities, with the pomp of altars and temples, of festivals and sacrifices. 22 It was natural that the emperors should not refuse what the proconsuls had accepted; and the divine honors which both the one and the other received from the provinces, attested rather the despotism than the servitude of Rome. But the conquerors soon imitated the vanquished nations in the arts of flattery; and the imperious spirit of the first Cæsar too easily consented to assume, during his lifetime, a place among the tutelar deities of Rome. The milder temper of his successor declined so dangerous an ambition, which was never afterwards revived, except by the madness of Caligula and Domitian. Augustus permitted indeed some of the provincial cities to erect temples to his honor, on condition that they should associate the worship of Rome with that of the sovereign; he tolerated private superstition, of which he might be the object; 23 but he contented himself with being revered by the senate and the people in his human character, and wisely left to his successor the care of his public deification. A regular custom was introduced, that on the decease of every emperor who had neither lived nor died like a tyrant, the senate by a solemn decree should place him in the number of the gods: and the ceremonies of his apotheosis were blended with those of his funeral. 231 This legal, and, as it should seem, injudicious profanation, so abhorrent to our stricter principles, was received with a very faint murmur, 24 by the easy nature of Polytheism;

but it was received as an institution, not of religion, but of policy. We should disgrace the virtues of the Antonines by comparing them with the vices of Hercules or Jupiter. Even the characters of Cæsar or Augustus were far superior to those of the popular deities. But it was the misfortune of the former to live in an enlightened age, and their actions were too faithfully recorded to admit of such a mixture of fable and mystery, as the devotion of the vulgar requires. As soon as their divinity was established by law, it sunk into oblivion, without contributing either to their own fame, or to the dignity of succeeding princes.

21 (return)

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

211 (return)

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

22 (return)

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

23 (return)

[Jurandasque tuum per nomen ponimus aras, says Horace to the emperor himself, and Horace was well acquainted with the court of Augustus. Note: The good princes were not those who alone obtained the honors of an apotheosis: it was conferred on many tyrants. See an excellent treatise of Schæpflin, de Consecratione Imperatorum Romanorum, in his Commentationes historicæ et criticæ. Bale, 1741, p. 184.—W.]

231 (return)

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

24 (return)

[See Cicero in Philippic. i. 6. Julian in Cæsaribus. Inque Deum templis jurabit Roma

per umbras, is the indignant expression of Lucan; but it is a patriotic rather than a devout indignation.]

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

241 (return)

[Octavius was not of an obscure family, but of a considerable one of the equestrian order. His father, C. Octavius, who possessed great property, had been prætor, governor of Macedonia, adorned with the title of Imperator, and was on the point of becoming consul when he died. His mother Attia, was daughter of M. Attius Balbus, who had also been prætor. M. Anthony reproached Octavius with having been born in Aricia, which, nevertheless, was a considerable municipal city: he was vigorously refuted by Cicero. Philip. iii. c. 6.—W. Gibbon probably meant that the family had but recently emerged into notice.—M.]

25 (return)

[Dion. Cassius, l. liii. p. 710, with the curious Annotations of Reimar.]

251 (return)

[The princes who by their birth or their adoption belonged to the family of the Cæsars, took the name of Cæsar. After the death of Nero, this name designated the Imperial dignity itself, and afterwards the appointed successor. The time at which it was employed in the latter sense, cannot be fixed with certainty. Bach (Hist. Jurisprud. Rom. 304) affirms from Tacitus, H. i. 15, and Suetonius, Galba, 17, that Galba conferred on Piso Lucinianus the title of Cæsar, and from that time the term had this meaning: but these two historians simply say that he appointed Piso his

successor, and do not mention the word Cæsar. Aurelius Victor (in Traj. 348, ed. Artzen) says that Hadrian first received this title on his adoption; but as the adoption of Hadrian is still doubtful, and besides this, as Trajan, on his death-bed, was not likely to have created a new title for his successor, it is more probable that Ælius Verus was the first who was called Cæsar when adopted by Hadrian. Spart. in Ælio Vero, 102.—W.]

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

The tender respect of Augustus for a free constitution which he had destroyed, can only be explained by an attentive consideration of the character of that subtle tyrant. A cool head, an unfeeling heart, and a cowardly disposition, prompted him at the age of nineteen to assume the mask of hypocrisy, which he never afterwards laid aside. With the same hand, and probably with the same temper, he signed the proscription of Cicero, and the pardon of Cinna. His virtues, and even his vices, were artificial; and according to the various dictates of his interest, he was at first the enemy, and at last the father, of the Roman world. 26 When he framed the artful system of the Imperial authority, his moderation was inspired by his fears. He wished to deceive the people by an image of civil liberty, and the armies by an image of civil government.

26 (return)

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

I. The death of Cæsar was ever before his eyes. He had lavished wealth and honors on his adherents; but the most favored friends of his uncle were in the number of the conspirators. The fidelity of the legions might defend his authority against open rebellion; but their vigilance could not secure his person from the dagger of a determined republican; and the Romans, who revered the memory of Brutus, 27 would applaud the imitation of his virtue. Cæsar had provoked his fate, as much as by the ostentation of his power, as by his power itself. The consul or the tribune might have reigned in peace. The title of king had armed the Romans against his life. Augustus was sensible that mankind is governed by names; nor was he deceived in his expectation, that the senate and people would submit to slavery, provided they were respectfully assured that they still enjoyed their ancient freedom. A feeble senate and enervated people cheerfully acquiesced in the pleasing illusion, as long as it was supported by the virtue, or even by the prudence, of the successors of Augustus. It was a motive of self-preservation, not a principle of liberty, that animated the conspirators against Caligula, Nero, and Domitian. They attacked the person of the tyrant, without aiming their blow at the authority of the emperor.

27 (return)

> [Two centuries after the establishment of monarchy, the emperor Marcus Antoninus recommends the character of Brutus as a perfect model of Roman virtue. * Note: In a very ingenious essay, Gibbon has ventured to call in question the preeminent virtue of Brutus. Misc Works, iv. 95.—M.]

There appears, indeed, *one* memorable occasion, in which the senate, after seventy years of patience, made an ineffectual attempt to re-assume its long-forgotten rights. When the throne was vacant by the murder of Caligula, the consuls convoked that assembly in the Capitol, condemned the memory of the Cæsars, gave the watchword *liberty* to the few cohorts who faintly adhered to their standard, and during eight-and-forty hours acted as the independent chiefs of a free commonwealth. But while they deliberated, the prætorian guards had resolved. The stupid Claudius, brother of Germanicus, was already in their camp, invested with the Imperial purple, and prepared to support his election by arms. The dream of liberty was at an end; and the senate awoke to all the horrors of inevitable servitude. Deserted by the people, and threatened by a military force, that feeble assembly was compelled to ratify the choice of the prætorians, and to embrace the benefit of an amnesty, which Claudius had the prudence to offer, and the generosity to observe. 28

28 (return)

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

II. The insolence of the armies inspired Augustus with fears of a still more alarming nature. The despair of the citizens could only attempt, what the power of the soldiers was, at any time, able to execute. How precarious was his own authority over men whom he had taught to violate every social duty! He had heard their seditious clamors; he dreaded their calmer moments of reflection. One revolution had been purchased by immense rewards; but a second revolution might double those rewards. The troops professed the fondest attachment to the house of Cæsar; but the attachments of the multitude are capricious and inconstant. Augustus summoned to his aid whatever remained in those fierce minds of Roman prejudices; enforced the rigor of discipline by the sanction of law; and, interposing the majesty of the senate between the emperor and the army, boldly claimed their allegiance, as the first magistrate of the republic.

During a long period of two hundred and twenty years from the establishment of this artful system to the death of Commodus, the dangers inherent to a military government were, in a great measure, suspended. The soldiers were seldom roused to that fatal sense of their own strength, and of the weakness of the civil authority, which was, before and afterwards, productive of such dreadful calamities. Caligula and Domitian were assassinated in their palace by their own domestics: 281 the convulsions which agitated Rome on the death of the former, were confined to the walls of the city. But Nero involved the whole empire in his ruin. In the space of eighteen months, four princes perished by the sword; and the Roman world was shaken by the fury of the contending armies. Excepting only this short, though violent eruption of military license, the two centuries from Augustus 29 to Commodus passed away unstained with civil blood, and undisturbed by revolutions. The emperor was elected by *the authority of the senate*, and *the consent of the soldiers*. 30 The legions respected their oath of fidelity; and it requires a minute inspection of the Roman annals to discover three inconsiderable rebellions, which were all suppressed in a few months, and without even the hazard of a battle. 31

281 (return)

[Caligula perished by a conspiracy formed by the officers of the prætorian troops, and Domitian would not, perhaps, have been assassinated without the participation of the two chiefs of that guard in his death.—W.]

29 (return)
[Augustus restored the ancient severity of discipline. After the civil wars, he dropped the endearing name of Fellow-Soldiers, and called them only Soldiers, (Sueton. in August. c. 25.) See the use Tiberius made of the Senate in the mutiny of the Pannonian legions, (Tacit. Annal. i.)]

30 (return)
[These words seem to have been the constitutional language. See Tacit. Annal. xiii. 4. * Note: This panegyric on the soldiery is rather too liberal. Claudius was obliged to purchase their consent to his coronation: the presents which he made, and those which the prætorians received on other occasions, considerably embarrassed the finances. Moreover, this formidable guard favored, in general, the cruelties of the tyrants. The distant revolts were more frequent than Gibbon thinks: already, under Tiberius, the legions of Germany would have seditiously constrained Germanicus to assume the Imperial purple. On the revolt of Claudius Civilis, under Vespasian, the legions of Gaul murdered their general, and offered their assistance to the Gauls who were in insurrection. Julius Sabinus made himself be proclaimed emperor, &c. The wars, the merit, and the severe discipline of Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines, established, for some time, a greater degree of subordination.—W]

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

In elective monarchies, the vacancy of the throne is a moment big with danger and mischief. The Roman emperors, desirous to spare the legions that interval of suspense, and the temptation of an irregular choice, invested their designed successor with so large a share of present power, as should enable him, after their decease, to assume the remainder, without suffering the empire to perceive the change of masters. Thus Augustus, after all his fairer prospects had been snatched from him by untimely deaths, rested his last hopes on Tiberius, obtained for his adopted son the censorial and tribunitian powers, and dictated a law, by which the future prince was invested with an authority equal to his own, over the provinces and the armies. 32 Thus Vespasian subdued the generous mind of his eldest son. Titus was adored by the eastern legions, which, under his command, had recently achieved the conquest of Judæa. His power was dreaded, and, as his virtues were clouded by the intemperance of youth, his designs were suspected. Instead of listening to such unworthy suspicions, the prudent monarch associated Titus to the full powers of the Imperial dignity; and the grateful son ever approved himself the humble and faithful minister of so indulgent a father. 33

32 (return)
[Velleius Paterculus, l. ii. c. 121. Sueton. in Tiber. c. 26.]

33 (return)
[Sueton. in Tit. c. 6. Plin. in Præfat. Hist. Natur.]

The good sense of Vespasian engaged him indeed to embrace every measure that might confirm his recent and precarious elevation. The military oath, and the fidelity of the troops, had been consecrated, by the habits of a hundred years, to the name and family of the Cæsars; and although that family had been continued only by the fictitious rite of adoption, the Romans still revered, in the person of Nero, the grandson of Germanicus, and the lineal successor of Augustus. It was not without reluctance and remorse, that the prætorian guards had been persuaded to abandon the cause of the tyrant. 34 The rapid downfall of Galba, Otho, and Vitellus, taught the armies to consider the emperors as the creatures of *their* will, and the instruments of *their* license. The birth of Vespasian was mean: his grandfather had been a private soldier, his father a petty officer of the revenue; 35 his own merit had raised him, in an advanced age, to the empire; but his merit was rather useful than shining, and his virtues were disgraced by a strict and even sordid parsimony. Such a prince consulted his true interest by the association of a son, whose more splendid and amiable character might turn the public attention from the obscure origin, to the future glories, of the Flavian house. Under the mild administration of Titus, the Roman world enjoyed a transient felicity, and his beloved memory served to protect, above fifteen years, the vices of his brother Domitian.

34 (return)
[This idea is frequently and strongly inculcated by Tacitus. See Hist. i. 5, 16, ii. 76.]

35 (return)
[The emperor Vespasian, with his usual good sense, laughed at the genealogists, who deduced his family from Flavius, the founder of Reate, (his native country,) and one of the companions of Hercules Suet in Vespasian, c. 12.]

Nerva had scarcely accepted the purple from the assassins of Domitian, before he discovered that his feeble age was unable to stem the torrent of public disorders, which had multiplied under the long tyranny of his predecessor. His mild disposition was respected by the good; but the degenerate Romans required a more vigorous character, whose justice should strike terror into the guilty. Though he had several relations, he fixed his choice on a stranger. He adopted Trajan, then about forty years of age, and who commanded a powerful army in the Lower Germany; and immediately, by a decree of the senate, declared him his colleague and successor in the empire. 36 It is sincerely to be lamented, that whilst we are fatigued with the disgustful relation of Nero's crimes and follies, we are reduced to collect the actions of Trajan from the glimmerings of an abridgment, or the doubtful light of a panegyric. There remains, however, one panegyric far removed beyond the suspicion of flattery. Above two hundred and fifty years after the death of Trajan, the senate, in pouring out the customary acclamations on the accession of a new emperor, wished that he might surpass the felicity of Augustus, and the virtue of Trajan. 37

36 (return)
[Dion, l. lxviii. p. 1121. Plin. Secund. in Panegyric.]

37 (return)
[Felicior Augusto, Melior Trajano. Eutrop. viii. 5.]

We may readily believe, that the father of his country hesitated whether he ought to intrust the various and doubtful character of his kinsman Hadrian with sovereign power. In his last moments the arts of the empress Plotina either fixed the irresolution of Trajan, or boldly supposed a fictitious adoption; 38 the truth of which could not be safely disputed, and Hadrian was peaceably acknowledged as his lawful successor. Under his reign, as has been already mentioned, the empire flourished in peace and prosperity. He encouraged the arts, reformed the laws, asserted military discipline, and visited all his provinces in person. His vast and active genius was equally suited to the most enlarged views, and the minute details of civil policy. But the ruling passions of his soul were curiosity and vanity. As they prevailed, and as they were attracted by different objects, Hadrian was, by turns, an excellent prince, a ridiculous sophist, and a jealous tyrant. The general tenor of his conduct deserved praise for its equity and moderation. Yet in the first days of his reign, he put to death four consular senators, his personal enemies, and men who had been judged worthy of empire; and the tediousness of a painful illness rendered him, at last, peevish and cruel. The senate doubted whether they should pronounce him a god or a tyrant; and the honors decreed to his memory were granted to the prayers of the pious Antoninus. 39

38 (return)

[Dion (l. lxix. p. 1249) affirms the whole to have been a fiction, on the authority of his father, who, being governor of the province where Trajan died, had very good opportunities of sifting this mysterious transaction. Yet Dodwell (Prælect. Camden. xvii.) has maintained that Hadrian was called to the certain hope of the empire, during the lifetime of Trajan.]

39 (return)

[Dion, (l. lxx. p. 1171.) Aurel. Victor.]

The caprice of Hadrian influenced his choice of a successor.

After revolving in his mind several men of distinguished merit, whom he esteemed and hated, he adopted Ælius Verus a gay and voluptuous nobleman, recommended by uncommon beauty to the lover of Antinous. 40 But whilst Hadrian was delighting himself with his own applause, and the acclamations of the soldiers, whose consent had been secured by an immense donative, the new Cæsar 41 was ravished from his embraces by an untimely death. He left only one son. Hadrian commended the boy to the gratitude of the Antonines. He was adopted by Pius; and, on the accession of Marcus, was invested with an equal share of sovereign power. Among the many vices of this younger Verus, he possessed one virtue; a dutiful reverence for his wiser colleague, to whom he willingly abandoned the ruder cares of empire. The philosophic emperor dissembled his follies, lamented his early death, and cast a decent veil over his memory.

40 (return)

[The deification of Antinous, his medals, his statues, temples, city, oracles, and constellation, are well known, and still dishonor the memory of Hadrian. Yet we may remark, that of the first fifteen emperors, Claudius was the only one whose taste in love was entirely correct. For the honors of Antinous, see Spanheim, Commentaire sui les Cæsars de Julien, p. 80.]

41 (return)

[Hist. August. p. 13. Aurelius Victor in Epitom.]

As soon as Hadrian's passion was either gratified or disappointed, he resolved to deserve the thanks of posterity, by placing the most exalted merit on the Roman throne. His discerning eye easily discovered a senator

about fifty years of age, blameless in all the offices of life; and a youth of about seventeen, whose riper years opened a fair prospect of every virtue: the elder of these was declared the son and successor of Hadrian, on condition, however, that he himself should immediately adopt the younger. The two Antonines (for it is of them that we are now speaking,) governed the Roman world forty-two years, with the same invariable spirit of wisdom and virtue. Although Pius had two sons, 42 he preferred the welfare of Rome to the interest of his family, gave his daughter Faustina, in marriage to young Marcus, obtained from the senate the tribunitian and proconsular powers, and, with a noble disdain, or rather ignorance of jealousy, associated him to all the labors of government. Marcus, on the other hand, revered the character of his benefactor, loved him as a parent, obeyed him as his sovereign, 43 and, after he was no more, regulated his own administration by the example and maxims of his predecessor. Their united reigns are possibly the only period of history in which the happiness of a great people was the sole object of government.

42 (return)

> [Without the help of medals and inscriptions, we should be ignorant of this fact, so honorable to the memory of Pius. Note: Gibbon attributes to Antoninus Pius a merit which he either did not possess, or was not in a situation to display.
>
> 1. He was adopted only on the condition that he would adopt, in his turn, Marcus Aurelius and L. Verus.
>
> 2. His two sons died children, and one of them, M. Galerius, alone, appears to have survived, for a few years, his father's coronation. Gibbon is also mistaken when he says (note 42) that "without the help of medals and inscriptions, we should be ignorant that Antoninus had two sons." Capitolinus says expressly, (c. 1,) Filii mares duo, duæ-fœminæ; we only owe their names to the medals. Pagi. Cont. Baron, i. 33, edit Paris.—W.]

43 (return)

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

Titus Antoninus Pius has been justly denominated a second Numa. The same love of religion, justice, and peace, was the distinguishing characteristic of both princes. But the situation of the latter opened a much larger field for the exercise of those virtues. Numa could only prevent a few neighboring villages from plundering each other's harvests. Antoninus diffused order and tranquillity over the greatest part of the earth. His reign is marked by the rare advantage of furnishing very few materials for history; which is, indeed, little more than the register of the crimes, follies, and misfortunes of mankind. In private life, he was an amiable, as well as a good man. The native simplicity of his virtue was a stranger to vanity or affectation. He enjoyed with moderation the conveniences of his fortune, and the innocent pleasures of society; 44 and the benevolence of his soul displayed itself in a cheerful serenity of temper.

44 (return)

> [He was fond of the theatre, and not insensible to the charms of the fair sex. Marcus Antoninus, i. 16. Hist. August. p. 20, 21. Julian in Cæsar.]

The virtue of Marcus Aurelius Antoninus was of severer and more laborious kind. 45 It was the well-earned harvest of many a learned conference, of many a patient lecture, and many a midnight lucubration. At the age of twelve years he embraced the rigid system of the Stoics, which taught him to submit his body to his mind, his passions to his reason; to consider virtue as the only good, vice as the only evil, all things

external as things indifferent. 46 His meditations, composed in the tumult of the camp, are still extant; and he even condescended to give lessons of philosophy, in a more public manner than was perhaps consistent with the modesty of sage, or the dignity of an emperor. 47 But his life was the noblest commentary on the precepts of Zeno. He was severe to himself, indulgent to the imperfections of others, just and beneficent to all mankind. He regretted that Avidius Cassius, who excited a rebellion in Syria, had disappointed him, by a voluntary death, 471 of the pleasure of converting an enemy into a friend;; and he justified the sincerity of that sentiment, by moderating the zeal of the senate against the adherents of the traitor. 48 War he detested, as the disgrace and calamity of human nature; 481 but when the necessity of a just defence called upon him to take up arms, he readily exposed his person to eight winter campaigns, on the frozen banks of the Danube, the severity of which was at last fatal to the weakness of his constitution. His memory was revered by a grateful posterity, and above a century after his death, many persons preserved the image of Marcus Antoninus among those of their household gods. 49

45 (return)

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

46 (return)

[Tacitus has characterized, in a few words, the principles of the portico: Doctores sapientiæ secutus est, qui sola bona quæ honesta, main tantum quæ turpia; potentiam, nobilitatem, æteraque extra... bonis neque malis adnumerant. Tacit. Hist. iv. 5.]

47 (return)

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

471 (return)

[Cassius was murdered by his own partisans. Vulcat. Gallic. in Cassio, c. 7. Dion, lxxi. c. 27. —W.]

48 (return)

[Dion, l. lxxi. p. 1190. Hist. August. in Avid. Cassio. Note: See one of the newly discovered passages of Dion Cassius. Marcus wrote to the senate, who urged the execution of the partisans of Cassius, in these words: “I entreat and beseech you to preserve my reign unstained by senatorial blood. None of your order must perish either by your desire or mine.” Mai. Fragm. Vatican. ii. p. 224.—M.]

481 (return)

[Marcus would not accept the services of any of the barbarian allies who crowded to his standard

in the war against Avidius Cassius. “Barbarians,” he said, with wise but vain sagacity, “must not become acquainted with the dissensions of the Roman people.” Mai. Fragm Vatican l. 224.—M.]

49 (return)

[Hist. August. in Marc. Antonin. c. 18.]

If a man were called to fix the period in the history of the world, during which the condition of the human race was most happy and prosperous, he would, without hesitation, name that which elapsed from the death of Domitian to the accession of Commodus. The vast extent of the Roman empire was governed by absolute power, under the guidance of virtue and wisdom. The armies were restrained by the firm but gentle hand of four successive emperors, whose characters and authority commanded involuntary respect. The forms of the civil administration were carefully preserved by Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the Antonines, who delighted in the image of liberty, and were pleased with considering themselves as the accountable ministers of the laws. Such princes deserved the honor of restoring the republic, had the Romans of their days been capable of enjoying a rational freedom.

The labors of these monarchs were overpaid by the immense reward that inseparably waited on their success; by the honest pride of virtue, and by the exquisite delight of beholding the general happiness of which they were the authors. A just but melancholy reflection imbittered, however, the noblest of human enjoyments. They must often have recollected the instability of a happiness which depended on the character of single man. The fatal moment was perhaps approaching, when some licentious youth, or some jealous tyrant, would abuse, to the destruction, that absolute power, which they had exerted for the benefit of their people. The ideal restraints of the senate and the laws might serve to display the virtues, but could never correct the vices, of the emperor. The military force was a blind and irresistible instrument of oppression; and the corruption of Roman manners would always supply flatterers eager to applaud, and ministers prepared to serve, the fear or the avarice, the lust or the cruelty, of their master. These gloomy apprehensions had been already justified by the experience of the Romans. The annals of the emperors exhibit a strong and various picture of human nature, which we should vainly seek among the mixed and doubtful characters of modern history. In the conduct of those monarchs we may trace the utmost lines of vice and virtue; the most exalted perfection, and the meanest degeneracy of our own species. The golden age of Trajan and the Antonines had been preceded by an age of iron. It is almost superfluous to enumerate the unworthy successors of Augustus. Their unparalleled vices, and the splendid theatre on which they were acted, have saved them from oblivion. The dark, unrelenting Tiberius, the furious Caligula, the feeble Claudius, the profligate and cruel Nero, the beastly Vitellius, 50 and the timid, inhuman Domitian, are condemned to everlasting infamy. During fourscore years (excepting only the short and doubtful respite of Vespasian’s reign) 51 Rome groaned beneath an unremitting tyranny, which exterminated the ancient families of the republic, and was fatal to almost every virtue and every talent that arose in that unhappy period.

50 (return)

[Vitellius consumed in mere eating at least six millions of our money in about seven months. It is not easy to express his vices with dignity, or even decency. Tacitus fairly calls him a hog, but it is by substituting for a coarse word a very fine image. “At Vitellius, umbraculis hortorum abditus, ut ignava animalia, quibus si cibum suggeras, jacent torpentque, præterita, instantia,

futura, pari oblivione dimiserat. Atque illum nemore Aricino desidem et marcentum," &c. Tacit. Hist. iii. 36, ii. 95. Sueton. in Vitell. c. 13. Dion. Cassius, l xv. p. 1062.]

51 (return)
[The execution of Helvidius Priscus, and of the virtuous Eponina, disgraced the reign of Vespasian.]

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

I. When Persia was governed by the descendants of Sefi, a race of princes whose wanton cruelty often stained their divan, their table, and their bed, with the blood of their favorites, there is a saying recorded of a young nobleman, that he never departed from the sultan's presence, without satisfying himself whether his head was still on his shoulders. The experience of every day might almost justify the scepticism of Rustan. 52 Yet the fatal sword, suspended above him by a single thread, seems not to have disturbed the slumbers, or interrupted the tranquillity, of the Persian. The monarch's frown, he well knew, could level him with the dust; but the stroke of lightning or apoplexy might be equally fatal; and it was the part of a wise man to forget the inevitable calamities of human life in the enjoyment of the fleeting hour. He was dignified with the appellation of the king's slave; had, perhaps, been purchased from obscure parents, in a country which he had never known; and was trained up from his infancy in the severe discipline of the seraglio. 53 His name, his wealth, his honors, were the gift of a master, who might, without injustice, resume what he had bestowed. Rustan's knowledge, if he possessed any, could only serve to confirm his habits by prejudices. His language afforded not words for any form of government, except absolute monarchy. The history of the East informed him, that such had ever been the condition of mankind. 54 The Koran, and the interpreters of that divine book, inculcated to him, that the sultan was the descendant of the prophet, and the vicegerent of heaven; that patience was the first virtue of a Mussulman, and unlimited obedience the great duty of a subject.

52 (return)
[Voyage de Chardin en Perse, vol. iii. p. 293.]

53 (return)
[The practice of raising slaves to the great offices of state is still more common among the Turks than among the Persians. The miserable countries of Georgia and Circassia supply rulers to the greatest part of the East.]

54 (return)
[Chardin says, that European travellers have diffused among the Persians some ideas of the freedom and mildness of our governments. They have done them a very ill office.]

The minds of the Romans were very differently prepared for slavery. Oppressed beneath the weight of their own corruption and of military violence, they for a long while preserved the sentiments, or at least the ideas, of their free-born ancestors. The education of Helvidius and Thrasea, of Tacitus and Pliny, was the same as that of Cato and Cicero. From Grecian philosophy, they had imbibed the justest and most liberal notions of the dignity of human nature, and the origin of civil society. The

history of their own country had taught them to revere a free, a virtuous, and a victorious commonwealth; to abhor the successful crimes of Cæsar and Augustus; and inwardly to despise those tyrants whom they adored with the most abject flattery. As magistrates and senators they were admitted into the great council, which had once dictated laws to the earth, whose authority was so often prostituted to the vilest purposes of tyranny. Tiberius, and those emperors who adopted his maxims, attempted to disguise their murders by the formalities of justice, and perhaps enjoyed a secret pleasure in rendering the senate their accomplice as well as their victim. By this assembly, the last of the Romans were condemned for imaginary crimes and real virtues. Their infamous accusers assumed the language of independent patriots, who arraigned a dangerous citizen before the tribunal of his country; and the public service was rewarded by riches and honors. 55 The servile judges professed to assert the majesty of the commonwealth, violated in the person of its first magistrate, 56 whose clemency they most applauded when they trembled the most at his inexorable and impending cruelty. 57 The tyrant beheld their baseness with just contempt, and encountered their secret sentiments of detestation with sincere and avowed hatred for the whole body of the senate.

55 (return)

[They alleged the example of Scipio and Cato, (Tacit. Annal. iii. 66.) Marcellus Epirus and Crispus Vibius had acquired two millions and a half under Nero. Their wealth, which aggravated their crimes, protected them under Vespasian. See Tacit. Hist. iv. 43. Dialog. de Orator. c. 8. For one accusation, Regulus, the just object of Pliny's satire, received from the senate the consular ornaments, and a present of sixty thousand pounds.]

56 (return)

[The crime of majesty was formerly a treasonable offence against the Roman people. As tribunes of the people, Augustus and Tiberius applied tit to their own persons, and extended it to an infinite latitude. Note: It was Tiberius, not Augustus, who first took in this sense the words crimen læsæ majestatis. Bachii Trajanus, 27. — W.]

57 (return)

[After the virtuous and unfortunate widow of Germanicus had been put to death, Tiberius received the thanks of the senate for his clemency. she had not been publicly strangled; nor was the body drawn with a hook to the Gemoniæ, where those of common male factors were exposed. See Tacit. Annal. vi. 25. Sueton. in Tiberio c. 53.]

II. The division of Europe into a number of independent states, connected, however, with each other by the general resemblance of religion, language, and manners, is productive of the most beneficial consequences to the liberty of mankind. A modern tyrant, who should find no resistance either in his own breast, or in his people, would soon experience a gentle restraint from the example of his equals, the dread of present censure, the advice of his allies, and the apprehension of his enemies. The object of his displeasure, escaping from the narrow limits of his dominions, would easily obtain, in a happier climate, a secure refuge, a new fortune adequate to his merit, the freedom of complaint, and perhaps the means of revenge. But the empire of the Romans filled the world, and when the empire fell into the hands of a single person, the world became a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. The slave of

Imperial despotism, whether he was condemned to drag his gilded chain in rome and the senate, or to were out a life of exile on the barren rock of Seriphus, or the frozen bank of the Danube, expected his fate in silent despair. 58 To resist was fatal, and it was impossible to fly. On every side he was encompassed with a vast extent of sea and land, which he could never hope to traverse without being discovered, seized, and restored to his irritated master. Beyond the frontiers, his anxious view could discover nothing, except the ocean, inhospitable deserts, hostile tribes of barbarians, of fierce manners and unknown language, or dependent kings, who would gladly purchase the emperor's protection by the sacrifice of an obnoxious fugitive. 59 "Wherever you are," said Cicero to the exiled Marcellus, "remember that you are equally within the power of the conqueror." 60

58 (return)

[Seriphus was a small rocky island in the Ægean Sea, the inhabitants of which were despised for their ignorance and obscurity. The place of Ovid's exile is well known, by his just, but unmanly lamentations. It should seem, that he only received an order to leave rome in so many days, and to transport himself to Tomi. Guards and jailers were unnecessary.]

59 (return)

[Under Tiberius, a Roman knight attempted to fly to the Parthians. He was stopped in the straits of Sicily; but so little danger did there appear in the example, that the most jealous of tyrants disdained to punish it. Tacit. Annal. vi. 14.]

60 (return)

[Cicero ad Familiares, iv. 7.]

Chapter IV: The Cruelty, Follies And Murder Of Commodus.—Part I.

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

The mildness of Marcus, which the rigid discipline of the Stoics was unable to eradicate, formed, at the same time, the most amiable, and the only defective part of his character. His excellent understanding was often deceived by the unsuspecting goodness of his heart. Artful men, who study the passions of princes, and conceal their own, approached his person in the disguise of philosophic sanctity, and acquired riches and honors by affecting to despise them. 1 His excessive indulgence to his brother, 105 his wife, and his son, exceeded the bounds of private virtue, and became a public injury, by the example and consequences of their vices.

1 (return)
[See the complaints of Avidius Cassius, Hist. August. p. 45. These are, it is true, the complaints of faction; but even faction exaggerates, rather than invents.]

105 (return)
[His brother by adoption, and his colleague, L. Verus. Marcus Aurelius had no other brother.—W.]

Faustina, the daughter of Pius and the wife of Marcus, has been as much celebrated for her gallantries as for her beauty. The grave simplicity of the philosopher was ill calculated to engage her wanton levity, or to fix that unbounded passion for variety, which often discovered personal merit in the meanest of mankind. 2 The Cupid of the ancients was, in general, a very sensual deity; and the amours of an empress, as they exact on her side the plainest advances, are seldom susceptible of much sentimental delicacy. Marcus was the only man in the empire who seemed ignorant or insensible of the irregularities of Faustina; which, according to the prejudices of every age, reflected some disgrace on the injured husband. He promoted several of her lovers to posts of honor and profit, 3 and during a connection of thirty years, invariably gave her proofs of the most tender confidence, and of a respect which ended not with her life. In his Meditations, he thanks the gods, who had bestowed on him a wife so faithful, so gentle, and of such a wonderful simplicity of manners. 4 The obsequious senate, at his earnest request, declared her a goddess. She was represented in her temples, with the attributes of Juno, Venus, and Ceres; and it was decreed, that, on the day of their nuptials, the youth of either sex should pay their vows before the altar of their chaste patroness. 5

2 (return)
[Faustinam satis constat apud Cajetam conditiones sibi et nauticas et gladiatorias, elegisse. Hist. August. p. 30. Lampridius explains the sort of merit which Faustina chose, and the conditions which she exacted. Hist. August. p. 102.]

3 (return)
[Hist. August. p. 34.]

4 (return)

[Meditat. l. i. The world has laughed at the credulity of Marcus but Madam Dacier assures us, (and we may credit a lady,) that the husband will always be deceived, if the wife condescends to dissemble.]

5 (return)

[Footnote 5: Dion Cassius, l. lxxi. [c. 31,] p. 1195. Hist. August. p. 33. Commentaire de Spanheim sur les Cæsars de Julien, p. 289. The deification of Faustina is the only defect which Julian's criticism is able to discover in the all-accomplished character of Marcus.]

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

Most of the crimes which disturb the internal peace of society, are produced by the restraints which the necessary but unequal laws of property have imposed on the appetites of mankind, by confining to a few the possession of those objects that are coveted by many. Of all our passions and appetites, the love of power is of the most imperious and unsociable nature, since the pride of one man requires the submission of the multitude. In the tumult of civil discord, the laws of society lose their force, and their place is seldom supplied by those of humanity. The ardor of contention, the pride of victory, the despair of success, the memory of past injuries, and the fear of future dangers, all contribute to inflame the mind, and to silence the voice of pity. From such motives almost every page of history has been stained with civil blood; but these motives will not account for the unprovoked cruelties of Commodus, who had nothing to wish and every thing to enjoy. The beloved son of Marcus succeeded to his father, amidst the acclamations of the senate and armies; 6 and when he ascended the throne, the happy youth saw round him neither competitor to remove, nor enemies to punish. In this calm, elevated station, it was surely natural that he should prefer the love of mankind to their detestation, the mild glories of his five predecessors to the ignominious fate of Nero and Domitian.

6 (return)

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

Yet Commodus was not, as he has been represented, a tiger born with an insatiate thirst of human blood, and capable, from his infancy, of the most inhuman actions. 7 Nature had formed him of a weak rather than a wicked disposition. His simplicity and timidity rendered him the slave of

his attendants, who gradually corrupted his mind. His cruelty, which at first obeyed the dictates of others, degenerated into habit, and at length became the ruling passion of his soul. 8

7 (return)
[Hist. August. p. 46.]

8 (return)
[Dion Cassius, l. lxxii. p. 1203.]

Upon the death of his father, Commodus found himself embarrassed with the command of a great army, and the conduct of a difficult war against the Quadi and Marcomanni. 9 The servile and profligate youths whom Marcus had banished, soon regained their station and influence about the new emperor. They exaggerated the hardships and dangers of a campaign in the wild countries beyond the Danube; and they assured the indolent prince that the terror of his name, and the arms of his lieutenants, would be sufficient to complete the conquest of the dismayed barbarians, or to impose such conditions as were more advantageous than any conquest. By a dexterous application to his sensual appetites, they compared the tranquillity, the splendor, the refined pleasures of Rome, with the tumult of a Pannonian camp, which afforded neither leisure nor materials for luxury. 10 Commodus listened to the pleasing advice; but whilst he hesitated between his own inclination and the awe which he still retained for his father's counsellors, the summer insensibly elapsed, and his triumphal entry into the capital was deferred till the autumn. His graceful person, 11 popular address, and imagined virtues, attracted the public favor; the honorable peace which he had recently granted to the barbarians, diffused a universal joy; 12 his impatience to revisit Rome was fondly ascribed to the love of his country; and his dissolute course of amusements was faintly condemned in a prince of nineteen years of age.

9 (return)
[According to Tertullian, (Apolog. c. 25,) he died at Sirmium. But the situation of Vindobona, or Vienna, where both the Victors place his death, is better adapted to the operations of the war against the Marcomanni and Quadi.]

10 (return)
[Herodian, l. i. p. 12.]

11 (return)
[Herodian, l. i. p. 16.]

12 (return)
[This universal joy is well described (from the medals as well as historians) by Mr. Wotton, Hist. of Rome, p. 192, 193.] During the three first years of his reign, the forms, and even the spirit, of the old administration, were maintained by those faithful counsellors, to whom Marcus had recommended his son, and for whose wisdom and integrity Commodus still entertained a reluctant esteem. The young prince and his profligate favorites revelled in all the license of sovereign power; but his hands were yet unstained with blood; and he had even displayed a generosity of sentiment, which might perhaps have ripened into solid virtue. 13 A fatal incident decided his fluctuating character.

13 (return)
[Manilius, the confidential secretary of Avidius Cassius, was discovered after he had lain concealed several years. The emperor nobly relieved the public anxiety by refusing to see

him, and burning his papers without opening them. Dion Cassius, l. lxxii. p. 1209.]

One evening, as the emperor was returning to the palace, through a dark and narrow portico in the amphitheatre, 14 an assassin, who waited his passage, rushed upon him with a drawn sword, loudly exclaiming, "*The senate sends you this*." The menace prevented the deed; the assassin was seized by the guards, and immediately revealed the authors of the conspiracy. It had been formed, not in the state, but within the walls of the palace. Lucilla, the emperor's sister, and widow of Lucius Verus, impatient of the second rank, and jealous of the reigning empress, had armed the murderer against her brother's life. She had not ventured to communicate the black design to her second husband, Claudius Pompeiarus, a senator of distinguished merit and unshaken loyalty; but among the crowd of her lovers (for she imitated the manners of Faustina) she found men of desperate fortunes and wild ambition, who were prepared to serve her more violent, as well as her tender passions. The conspirators experienced the rigor of justice, and the abandoned princess was punished, first with exile, and afterwards with death. 15

14 (return)
[See Maffei degli Amphitheatri, p. 126.]

15 (return)
[Dion, l. lxxi. p. 1205 Herodian, l. i. p. 16 Hist. August p. 46.]

But the words of the assassin sunk deep into the mind of Commodus, and left an indelible impression of fear and hatred against the whole body of the senate. 151 Those whom he had dreaded as importunate ministers, he now suspected as secret enemies. The Delators, a race of men discouraged, and almost extinguished, under the former reigns, again became formidable, as soon as they discovered that the emperor was desirous of finding disaffection and treason in the senate. That assembly, whom Marcus had ever considered as the great council of the nation, was composed of the most distinguished of the Romans; and distinction of every kind soon became criminal. The possession of wealth stimulated the diligence of the informers; rigid virtue implied a tacit censure of the irregularities of Commodus; important services implied a dangerous superiority of merit; and the friendship of the father always insured the aversion of the son. Suspicion was equivalent to proof; trial to condemnation. The execution of a considerable senator was attended with the death of all who might lament or revenge his fate; and when Commodus had once tasted human blood, he became incapable of pity or remorse.

151 (return)
[The conspirators were senators, even the assassin himself. Herod. 81.—G.]

Of these innocent victims of tyranny, none died more lamented than the two brothers of the Quintilian family, Maximus and Condianus; whose fraternal love has saved their names from oblivion, and endeared their memory to posterity. Their studies and their occupations, their pursuits and their pleasures, were still the same. In the enjoyment of a great estate, they never admitted the idea of a separate interest: some fragments are now extant of a treatise which they composed in common; 152 and in every action of life it was observed that their two bodies were animated by one soul. The Antonines, who valued their virtues, and delighted in their union, raised them, in the same year, to the consulship; and Marcus afterwards intrusted to their joint care the civil administration of Greece, and a great military command, in which they obtained a signal victory over the Germans. The kind cruelty of Commodus united them in death. 16

152 (return)

[This work was on agriculture, and is often quoted by later writers. See P. Needham, Proleg. ad Geoponic. Camb. 1704.—W.]

16 (return)

[In a note upon the Augustan History, Casaubon has collected a number of particulars concerning these celebrated brothers. See p. 96 of his learned commentary.]

The tyrant's rage, after having shed the noblest blood of the senate, at length recoiled on the principal instrument of his cruelty. Whilst Commodus was immersed in blood and luxury, he devolved the detail of the public business on Perennis, a servile and ambitious minister, who had obtained his post by the murder of his predecessor, but who possessed a considerable share of vigor and ability. By acts of extortion, and the forfeited estates of the nobles sacrificed to his avarice, he had accumulated an immense treasure. The Prætorian guards were under his immediate command; and his son, who already discovered a military genius, was at the head of the Illyrian legions. Perennis aspired to the empire; or what, in the eyes of Commodus, amounted to the same crime, he was capable of aspiring to it, had he not been prevented, surprised, and put to death. The fall of a minister is a very trifling incident in the general history of the empire; but it was hastened by an extraordinary circumstance, which proved how much the nerves of discipline were already relaxed. The legions of Britain, discontented with the administration of Perennis, formed a deputation of fifteen hundred select men, with instructions to march to Rome, and lay their complaints before the emperor. These military petitioners, by their own determined behaviour, by inflaming the divisions of the guards, by exaggerating the strength of the British army, and by alarming the fears of Commodus, exacted and obtained the minister's death, as the only redress of their grievances. 17 This presumption of a distant army, and their discovery of the weakness of government, was a sure presage of the most dreadful convulsions.

17 (return)

[Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1210. Herodian, l. i. p. 22. Hist. August. p. 48. Dion gives a much less odious character of Perennis, than the other historians. His moderation is almost a pledge of his veracity. Note: Gibbon praises Dion for the moderation with which he speaks of Perennis: he follows, nevertheless, in his own narrative, Herodian and Lampridius. Dion speaks of Perennis not only with moderation, but with admiration; he represents him as a great man, virtuous in his life, and blameless in his death: perhaps he may be suspected of partiality; but it is singular that Gibbon, having adopted, from Herodian and Lampridius, their judgment on this minister, follows Dion's improbable account of his death. What likelihood, in fact, that fifteen hundred men should have traversed Gaul and Italy, and have arrived at Rome without any understanding with the Prætorians, or without detection or opposition from Perennis, the Prætorian præfect? Gibbon, foreseeing, perhaps, this difficulty, has added, that the military deputation inflamed the divisions of the guards; but Dion says expressly that they did not reach Rome, but that the emperor went out to meet them: he even reproaches him for not having

opposed them with the guards, who were superior in number. Herodian relates that Commodus, having learned, from a soldier, the ambitious designs of Perennis and his son, caused them to be attacked and massacred by night.—G. from W. Dion's narrative is remarkably circumstantial, and his authority higher than either of the other writers. He hints that Cleander, a new favorite, had already undermined the influence of Perennis.—M.]

The negligence of the public administration was betrayed, soon afterwards, by a new disorder, which arose from the smallest beginnings. A spirit of desertion began to prevail among the troops: and the deserters, instead of seeking their safety in flight or concealment, infested the highways. Maternus, a private soldier, of a daring boldness above his station, collected these bands of robbers into a little army, set open the prisons, invited the slaves to assert their freedom, and plundered with impunity the rich and defenceless cities of Gaul and Spain. The governors of the provinces, who had long been the spectators, and perhaps the partners, of his depredations, were, at length, roused from their supine indolence by the threatening commands of the emperor. Maternus found that he was encompassed, and foresaw that he must be overpowered. A great effort of despair was his last resource. He ordered his followers to disperse, to pass the Alps in small parties and various disguises, and to assemble at Rome, during the licentious tumult of the festival of Cybele. 18 To murder Commodus, and to ascend the vacant throne, was the ambition of no vulgar robber. His measures were so ably concerted that his concealed troops already filled the streets of Rome. The envy of an accomplice discovered and ruined this singular enterprise, in a moment when it was ripe for execution. 19

18 (return)

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

19 (return)

[Herodian, l. i. p. 23, 23.]

Suspicious princes often promote the last of mankind, from a vain persuasion, that those who have no dependence, except on their favor, will have no attachment, except to the person of their benefactor. Cleander, the successor of Perennis, was a Phrygian by birth; of a nation over whose stubborn, but servile temper, blows only could prevail. 20 He had been sent from his native country to Rome, in the capacity of a slave. As a slave he entered the Imperial palace, rendered himself useful to his master's passions, and rapidly ascended to the most exalted station which a subject could enjoy. His influence over the mind of Commodus was much greater than that of his predecessor; for Cleander was devoid of any ability or virtue which could inspire the emperor with envy or distrust. Avarice was the reigning passion of his soul, and the great principle of his administration. The rank of Consul, of Patrician, of Senator, was exposed to public sale; and it would have been considered as disaffection, if any one had refused to purchase these empty and disgraceful honors with the greatest part of his fortune. 21 In the lucrative provincial employments, the minister shared with the governor the spoils of the people. The

execution of the laws was penal and arbitrary. A wealthy criminal might obtain, not only the reversal of the sentence by which he was justly condemned, but might likewise inflict whatever punishment he pleased on the accuser, the witnesses, and the judge.

20 (return)
[Cicero pro Flacco, c. 27.]

21 (return)
[One of these dear-bought promotions occasioned a current... that Julius Solon was banished into the senate.]

By these means, Cleander, in the space of three years, had accumulated more wealth than had ever yet been possessed by any freedman. 22 Commodus was perfectly satisfied with the magnificent presents which the artful courtier laid at his feet in the most seasonable moments. To divert the public envy, Cleander, under the emperor's name, erected baths, porticos, and places of exercise, for the use of the people. 23 He flattered himself that the Romans, dazzled and amused by this apparent liberality, would be less affected by the bloody scenes which were daily exhibited; that they would forget the death of Byrrhus, a senator to whose superior merit the late emperor had granted one of his daughters; and that they would forgive the execution of Arrius Antoninus, the last representative of the name and virtues of the Antonines. The former, with more integrity than prudence, had attempted to disclose, to his brother-in-law, the true character of Cleander. An equitable sentence pronounced by the latter, when proconsul of Asia, against a worthless creature of the favorite, proved fatal to him. 24 After the fall of Perennis, the terrors of Commodus had, for a short time, assumed the appearance of a return to virtue. He repealed the most odious of his acts; loaded his memory with the public execration, and ascribed to the pernicious counsels of that wicked minister all the errors of his inexperienced youth. But his repentance lasted only thirty days; and, under Cleander's tyranny, the administration of Perennis was often regretted.

22 (return)
[Dion (l. lxxii. p. 12, 13) observes, that no freedman had possessed riches equal to those of Cleander. The fortune of Pallas amounted, however, to upwards of five and twenty hundred thousand pounds; Ter millies.]

23 (return)
[Dion, l. lxxii. p. 12, 13. Herodian, l. i. p. 29. Hist. August. p. 52. These baths were situated near the Porta Capena. See Nardini Roma Antica, p. 79.]

24 (return)
[Hist. August. p. 79.]

Chapter IV: The Cruelty, Follies And Murder Of Commodus.—Part II.

Pestilence and famine contributed to fill up the measure of the calamities of Rome. 25 The first could be only imputed to the just indignation of the gods; but a monopoly of corn, supported by the riches and power of the minister, was considered as the immediate cause of the second. The popular discontent, after it had long circulated in whispers, broke out in the assembled circus. The people quitted their favorite amusements for the more delicious pleasure of revenge, rushed in crowds towards a palace in the suburbs, one of the emperor's retirements, and demanded, with angry clamors, the head of the public enemy. Cleander, who commanded the Prætorian guards, 26 ordered a body of cavalry to sally forth, and disperse the seditious multitude. The multitude fled with precipitation towards the city; several were slain, and many more were trampled to death; but when the cavalry entered the streets, their pursuit was checked by a shower of stones and darts from the roofs and windows of the houses. The foot guards, 27 who had been long jealous of the prerogatives and insolence of the Prætorian cavalry, embraced the party of the people. The tumult became a regular engagement, and threatened a general massacre. The Prætorians, at length, gave way, oppressed with numbers; and the tide of popular fury returned with redoubled violence against the gates of the palace, where Commodus lay, dissolved in luxury, and alone unconscious of the civil war. It was death to approach his person with the unwelcome news. He would have perished in this supine security, had not two women, his eldest sister Fadilla, and Marcia, the most favored of his concubines, ventured to break into his presence. Bathed in tears, and with dishevelled hair, they threw themselves at his feet; and with all the pressing eloquence of fear, discovered to the affrighted emperor the crimes of the minister, the rage of the people, and the impending ruin, which, in a few minutes, would burst over his palace and person. Commodus started from his dream of pleasure, and commanded that the head of Cleander should be thrown out to the people. The desired spectacle instantly appeased the tumult; and the son of Marcus might even yet have regained the affection and confidence of his subjects. 28

25 (return)

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

26 (return)

[Tuneque primum tres præfecti prætorio fuere: inter quos libertinus. From some remains of modesty, Cleander declined the title, whilst he assumed the powers, of Prætorian præfect. As the other freedmen were styled, from their several departments, a rationibus, ab epistolis, Cleander called himself a pugione, as intrusted with the defence of his master's person. Salmasius and Casaubon seem to have talked very idly upon this passage. * Note: M. Guizot denies that Lampridius means Cleander as præfect a pugione. The Libertinus seems to me to mean him.—M.]

27 (return)

[Herodian, l. i. p. 31. It is doubtful whether he means the Prætorian infantry, or the cohortes urbanæ, a body of six thousand men, but whose rank and discipline were not equal to their numbers. Neither Tillemont nor Wotton choose to decide this question.]

28 (return)

[Dion Cassius, l. lxxii. p. 1215. Herodian, l. i. p. 32. Hist. August. p. 48.]

But every sentiment of virtue and humanity was extinct in the mind of Commodus. Whilst he thus abandoned the reins of empire to these unworthy favorites, he valued nothing in sovereign power, except the unbounded license of indulging his sensual appetites. His hours were spent in a seraglio of three hundred beautiful women, and as many boys, of every rank, and of every province; and, wherever the arts of seduction proved ineffectual, the brutal lover had recourse to violence. The ancient historians 29 have expatiated on these abandoned scenes of prostitution, which scorned every restraint of nature or modesty; but it would not be easy to translate their too faithful descriptions into the decency of modern language. The intervals of lust were filled up with the basest amusements. The influence of a polite age, and the labor of an attentive education, had never been able to infuse into his rude and brutish mind the least tincture of learning; and he was the first of the Roman emperors totally devoid of taste for the pleasures of the understanding. Nero himself excelled, or affected to excel, in the elegant arts of music and poetry: nor should we despise his pursuits, had he not converted the pleasing relaxation of a leisure hour into the serious business and ambition of his life. But Commodus, from his earliest infancy, discovered an aversion to whatever was rational or liberal, and a fond attachment to the amusements of the populace; the sports of the circus and amphitheatre, the combats of gladiators, and the hunting of wild beasts. The masters in every branch of learning, whom Marcus provided for his son, were heard with inattention and disgust; whilst the Moors and Parthians, who taught him to dart the javelin and to shoot with the bow, found a disciple who delighted in his application, and soon equalled the most skilful of his instructors in the steadiness of the eye and the dexterity of the hand.

29 (return)

[Sororibus suis constupratis. Ipsas concubinas suas sub oculis...stuprari jubebat. Nec irruentium in se juvenum carebat infamia, omni parte corporis atque ore in sexum utrumque pollutus. Hist. Aug. p. 47.]

The servile crowd, whose fortune depended on their master's vices, applauded these ignoble pursuits. The perfidious voice of flattery reminded him, that by exploits of the same nature, by the defeat of the Nemæan lion, and the slaughter of the wild boar of Erymanthus, the Grecian Hercules had acquired a place among the gods, and an immortal memory among men. They only forgot to observe, that, in the first ages of society, when the fiercer animals often dispute with man the possession of an unsettled country, a successful war against those savages is one of the most innocent and beneficial labors of heroism. In the civilized state of the Roman empire, the wild beasts had long since retired from the face of man, and the neighborhood of populous cities. To surprise them in their solitary haunts, and to transport them to Rome, that they might be slain in pomp by the hand of an emperor, was an enterprise equally ridiculous for the prince and oppressive for the people. 30 Ignorant of these distinctions, Commodus eagerly embraced the glorious resemblance, and styled himself (as we still read on his medals31) the *Roman Hercules*. 311 The club and the lion's hide were placed by the side of the throne, amongst the

ensigns of sovereignty; and statues were erected, in which Commodus was represented in the character, and with the attributes, of the god, whose valor and dexterity he endeavored to emulate in the daily course of his ferocious amusements. 32

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

31 (return)
[Spanheim de Numismat. Dissertat. xii. tom. ii. p. 493.]

311 (return)
[Commodus placed his own head on the colossal statue of Hercules with the inscription, Lucius Commodus Hercules. The wits of Rome, according to a new fragment of Dion, published an epigram, of which, like many other ancient jests, the point is not very clear. It seems to be a protest of the god against being confounded with the emperor. Mai Fragm. Vatican. ii. 225.—M.]

32 (return)
[Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1216. Hist. August. p. 49.]

Elated with these praises, which gradually extinguished the innate sense of shame, Commodus resolved to exhibit before the eyes of the Roman people those exercises, which till then he had decently confined within the walls of his palace, and to the presence of a few favorites. On the appointed day, the various motives of flattery, fear, and curiosity, attracted to the amphitheatre an innumerable multitude of spectators; and some degree of applause was deservedly bestowed on the uncommon skill of the Imperial performer. Whether he aimed at the head or heart of the animal, the wound was alike certain and mortal. With arrows whose point was shaped into the form of crescent, Commodus often intercepted the rapid career, and cut asunder the long, bony neck of the ostrich. 33 A panther was let loose; and the archer waited till he had leaped upon a trembling malefactor. In the same instant the shaft flew, the beast dropped dead, and the man remained unhurt. The dens of the amphitheatre disgorged at once a hundred lions: a hundred darts from the unerring hand of Commodus laid them dead as they run raging round the *Arena*. Neither the huge bulk of the elephant, nor the scaly hide of the rhinoceros, could defend them from his stroke. Æthiopia and India yielded their most extraordinary productions; and several animals were slain in the amphitheatre, which had been seen only in the representations of art, or perhaps of fancy. 34 In all these exhibitions, the securest precautions were used to protect the person of the Roman Hercules from the desperate spring of any savage, who might possibly disregard the dignity of the emperor and the sanctity of the god. 35

33 (return)
[The ostrich's neck is three feet long, and composed of seventeen vertebræ. See Buffon, Hist. Naturelle.]

34 (return)
[Commodus killed a camelopardalis or Giraffe,

(Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1211,) the tallest, the most gentle, and the most useless of the large quadrupeds. This singular animal, a native only of the interior parts of Africa, has not been seen in Europe since the revival of letters; and though M. de Buffon (Hist. Naturelle, tom. xiii.) has endeavored to describe, he has not ventured to delineate, the Giraffe. * Note: The naturalists of our days have been more fortunate. London probably now contains more specimens of this animal than have been seen in Europe since the fall of the Roman empire, unless in the pleasure gardens of the emperor Frederic II., in Sicily, which possessed several. Frederic's collections of wild beasts were exhibited, for the popular amusement, in many parts of Italy. Raumer, Geschichte der Hohenstaufen, v. iii. p. 571. Gibbon, moreover, is mistaken; as a giraffe was presented to Lorenzo de Medici, either by the sultan of Egypt or the king of Tunis. Contemporary authorities are quoted in the old work, Gesner de Quadrupedibum p. 162.—M.]

35 (return)

[Herodian, l. i. p. 37. Hist. August. p. 50.]

But the meanest of the populace were affected with shame and indignation when they beheld their sovereign enter the lists as a gladiator, and glory in a profession which the laws and manners of the Romans had branded with the justest note of infamy. 36 He chose the habit and arms of the *Secutor*, whose combat with the *Retiarius* formed one of the most lively scenes in the bloody sports of the amphitheatre. The *Secutor* was armed with a helmet, sword, and buckler; his naked antagonist had only a large net and a trident; with the one he endeavored to entangle, with the other to despatch his enemy. If he missed the first throw, he was obliged to fly from the pursuit of the *Secutor*, till he had prepared his net for a second cast. 37 The emperor fought in this character seven hundred and thirty-five several times. These glorious achievements were carefully recorded in the public acts of the empire; and that he might omit no circumstance of infamy, he received from the common fund of gladiators a stipend so exorbitant that it became a new and most ignominious tax upon the Roman people. 38 It may be easily supposed, that in these engagements the master of the world was always successful; in the amphitheatre, his victories were not often sanguinary; but when he exercised his skill in the school of gladiators, or his own palace, his wretched antagonists were frequently honored with a mortal wound from the hand of Commodus, and obliged to seal their flattery with their blood. 39 He now disdained the appellation of Hercules. The name of Paulus, a celebrated Secutor, was the only one which delighted his ear. It was inscribed on his colossal statues, and repeated in the redoubled acclamations 40 of the mournful and applauding senate. 41 Claudius Pompeianus, the virtuous husband of Lucilla, was the only senator who asserted the honor of his rank. As a father, he permitted his sons to consult their safety by attending the amphitheatre. As a Roman, he declared, that his own life was in the emperor's hands, but that he would never behold the son of Marcus prostituting his person and dignity. Notwithstanding his manly resolution Pompeianus escaped the resentment of the tyrant, and, with his honor, had the good fortune to preserve his life. 42

36 (return)

[The virtuous and even the wise princes forbade the senators and knights to embrace this scandalous profession, under pain of infamy, or, what was more dreaded by those profligate

wretches, of exile. The tyrants allured them to dishonor by threats and rewards. Nero once produced in the arena forty senators and sixty knights. See Lipsius, Saturnalia, l. ii. c. 2. He has happily corrected a passage of Suetonius in Nerone, c. 12.]

37 (return)
[Lipsius, l. ii. c. 7, 8. Juvenal, in the eighth satire, gives a picturesque description of this combat.]

38 (return)
[Hist. August. p. 50. Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1220. He received, for each time, decies, about 8000l. sterling.]

39 (return)
[Victor tells us, that Commodus only allowed his antagonists a...weapon, dreading most probably the consequences of their despair.]

40 (return)
[Footnote 40: They were obliged to repeat, six hundred and twenty-six times, Paolus first of the Secutors, &c.]

41 (return)
[Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1221. He speaks of his own baseness and danger.]

42 (return)
[He mixed, however, some prudence with his courage, and passed the greatest part of his time in a country retirement; alleging his advanced age, and the weakness of his eyes. “I never saw him in the senate,” says Dion, “except during the short reign of Pertinax.” All his infirmities had suddenly left him, and they returned as suddenly upon the murder of that excellent prince. Dion, l. lxxiii. p. 1227.]

Commodus had now attained the summit of vice and infamy. Amidst the acclamations of a flattering court, he was unable to disguise from himself, that he had deserved the contempt and hatred of every man of sense and virtue in his empire. His ferocious spirit was irritated by the consciousness of that hatred, by the envy of every kind of merit, by the just apprehension of danger, and by the habit of slaughter, which he contracted in his daily amusements. History has preserved a long list of consular senators sacrificed to his wanton suspicion, which sought out, with peculiar anxiety, those unfortunate persons connected, however remotely, with the family of the Antonines, without sparing even the ministers of his crimes or pleasures. 43 His cruelty proved at last fatal to himself. He had shed with impunity the noblest blood of Rome: he perished as soon as he was dreaded by his own domestics. Marcia, his favorite concubine, Eclectus, his chamberlain, and Lætus, his Prætorian præfect, alarmed by the fate of their companions and predecessors, resolved to prevent the destruction which every hour hung over their heads, either from the mad caprice of the tyrant, 431 or the sudden indignation of the people. Marcia seized the occasion of presenting a draught of wine to her lover, after he had fatigued himself with hunting some wild beasts. Commodus retired to sleep; but whilst he was laboring with the effects of poison and drunkenness, a robust youth, by profession a wrestler, entered his chamber, and strangled him without resistance. The body was secretly conveyed out of the palace, before the least suspicion was entertained in the city, or even in the court, of the emperor’s death. Such was the fate of the son of Marcus, and so easy was it to destroy a

hated tyrant, who, by the artificial powers of government, had oppressed, during thirteen years, so many millions of subjects, each of whom was equal to their master in personal strength and personal abilities. 44

43 (return)

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

431 (return)

[Commodus had already resolved to massacre them the following night they determined o anticipate his design. Herod. i. 17.—W.]

44 (return)

[Dion, l. lxxii. p. 1222. Herodian, l. i. p. 43. Hist. August. p. 52.]

The measures of the conspirators were conducted with the deliberate coolness and celerity which the greatness of the occasion required. They resolved instantly to fill the vacant throne with an emperor whose character would justify and maintain the action that had been committed. They fixed on Pertinax, præfect of the city, an ancient senator of consular rank, whose conspicuous merit had broke through the obscurity of his birth, and raised him to the first honors of the state. He had successively governed most of the provinces of the empire; and in all his great employments, military as well as civil, he had uniformly distinguished himself by the firmness, the prudence, and the integrity of his conduct. 45 He now remained almost alone of the friends and ministers of Marcus; and when, at a late hour of the night, he was awakened with the news, that the chamberlain and the præfect were at his door, he received them with intrepid resignation, and desired they would execute their master's orders. Instead of death, they offered him the throne of the Roman world. During some moments he distrusted their intentions and assurances. Convinced at length of the death of Commodus, he accepted the purple with a sincere reluctance, the natural effect of his knowledge both of the duties and of the dangers of the supreme rank. 46

45 (return)

[Pertinax was a native of Alba Pompeia, in Piedmont, and son of a timber merchant. The order of his employments (it is marked by Capitolinus) well deserves to be set down, as expressive of the form of government and manners of the age. 1. He was a centurion. 2. Præfect of a cohort in Syria, in the Parthian war, and in Britain. 3. He obtained an Ala, or squadron of horse, in Mæsia. 4. He was commissary of provisions on the Æmilian way. 5. He commanded the fleet upon the Rhine. 6. He was procurator of Dacia, with a salary of about 1600l. a year. 7. He commanded the veterans of a legion. 8. He obtained the rank of senator. 9. Of prætor. 10. With the command of the first legion in Rhætia and Noricum. 11. He was consul about the year 175. 12. He attended Marcus into the East. 13. He commanded an army on the Danube. 14. He was consular legate of Mæsia. 15. Of Dacia. 16. Of Syria. 17. Of Britain. 18. He had the care of the public provisions at Rome. 19. He was proconsul of Africa. 20. Præfect of the city. Herodian (l. i. p. 48) does justice to his disinterested spirit; but Capitolinus, who collected every popular rumor, charges him with

a great fortune acquired by bribery and corruption.]

46 (return)
[Julian, in the Cæsars, taxes him with being accessory to the death of Commodus.]

Lætus conducted without delay his new emperor to the camp of the Prætorians, diffusing at the same time through the city a seasonable report that Commodus died suddenly of an apoplexy; and that the virtuous Pertinax had *already* succeeded to the throne. The guards were rather surprised than pleased with the suspicious death of a prince, whose indulgence and liberality they alone had experienced; but the emergency of the occasion, the authority of their præfect, the reputation of Pertinax, and the clamors of the people, obliged them to stifle their secret discontents, to accept the donative promised by the new emperor, to swear allegiance to him, and with joyful acclamations and laurels in their hands to conduct him to the senate house, that the military consent might be ratified by the civil authority. This important night was now far spent; with the dawn of day, and the commencement of the new year, the senators expected a summons to attend an ignominious ceremony. 461 In spite of all remonstrances, even of those of his creatures who yet preserved any regard for prudence or decency, Commodus had resolved to pass the night in the gladiators' school, and from thence to take possession of the consulship, in the habit and with the attendance of that infamous crew. On a sudden, before the break of day, the senate was called together in the temple of Concord, to meet the guards, and to ratify the election of a new emperor. For a few minutes they sat in silent suspense, doubtful of their unexpected deliverance, and suspicious of the cruel artifices of Commodus: but when at length they were assured that the tyrant was no more, they resigned themselves to all the transports of joy and indignation. Pertinax, who modestly represented the meanness of his extraction, and pointed out several noble senators more deserving than himself of the empire, was constrained by their dutiful violence to ascend the throne, and received all the titles of Imperial power, confirmed by the most sincere vows of fidelity. The memory of Commodus was branded with eternal infamy. The names of tyrant, of gladiator, of public enemy resounded in every corner of the house. They decreed in tumultuous votes, 462 that his honors should be reversed, his titles erased from the public monuments, his statues thrown down, his body dragged with a hook into the stripping room of the gladiators, to satiate the public fury; and they expressed some indignation against those officious servants who had already presumed to screen his remains from the justice of the senate. But Pertinax could not refuse those last rites to the memory of Marcus, and the tears of his first protector Claudius Pompeianus, who lamented the cruel fate of his brother-in-law, and lamented still more that he had deserved it. 47

461 (return)
[The senate always assembled at the beginning of the year, on the night of the 1st January, (see Savaron on Sid. Apoll. viii. 6,) and this happened the present year, as usual, without any particular order.—G from W.]

462 (return)
[What Gibbon improperly calls, both here and in the note, tumultuous decrees, were no more than the applauses and acclamations which recur so often in the history of the emperors. The custom passed from the theatre to the forum, from the forum to the senate. Applauses on the adoption of the Imperial decrees were first introduced under Trajan. (Plin. jun. Panegyr. 75.) One

senator read the form of the decree, and all the rest answered by acclamations, accompanied with a kind of chant or rhythm. These were some of the acclamations addressed to Pertinax, and against the memory of Commodus. Hosti patriæ honores detrahantur. Parricidæ honores detrahantur. Ut salvi simus, Jupiter, optime, maxime, serva nobis Pertinacem. This custom prevailed not only in the councils of state, but in all the meetings of the senate. However inconsistent it may appear with the solemnity of a religious assembly, the early Christians adopted and introduced it into their synods, notwithstanding the opposition of some of the Fathers, particularly of St. Chrysostom. See the Coll. of Franc. Bern. Ferrarius de veterum acclamatione in Grævii Thesaur. Antiq. Rom. i. 6.—W. This note is rather hypercritical, as regards Gibbon, but appears to be worthy of preservation.—M.]

47 (return)

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

These effusions of impotent rage against a dead emperor, whom the senate had flattered when alive with the most abject servility, betrayed a just but ungenerous spirit of revenge.

The legality of these decrees was, however, supported by the principles of the Imperial constitution. To censure, to depose, or to punish with death, the first magistrate of the republic, who had abused his delegated trust, was the ancient and undoubted prerogative of the Roman senate; 48 but the feeble assembly was obliged to content itself with inflicting on a fallen tyrant that public justice, from which, during his life and reign, he had been shielded by the strong arm of military despotism. 481

48 (return)

[The senate condemned Nero to be put to death more majorum. Sueton. c. 49.]