

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.

[Footnote 26: As Octavianus advanced to the banquet of the Caesars, 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, (Caesars, 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 Caesar 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. Caesar 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.

[Footnote 27: 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 Caesars, 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 praetorian 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 praetorians, and to embrace the benefit of an amnesty, which Claudius had the prudence to offer, and the generosity to observe. [28]

[See The Capitol: When the throne was vacant by the murder of Caligula, the consuls convoked that assembly in the Capitol.]

[Footnote 28: 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 Caesar; 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]

[Footnote 281: Caligula perished by a conspiracy formed by the officers of the praetorian troops, and Domitian would not, perhaps, have been assassinated without the participation of the two chiefs of that guard in his death.--W.]

[Footnote 29: 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.)]

[Footnote 30: 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 praetorians 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]

[Footnote 31: 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 Judaea. 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]

[Footnote 32: Velleius Paterculus, 1. ii. c. 121. Sueton. in Tiber. c. 26.]

[Footnote 33: Sueton. in Tit. c. 6. Plin. in Praefat. 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 Caesars; 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 praetorian 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.

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

[Footnote 35: 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]

[Footnote 36: Dion, l. lxxviii. p. 1121. Plin. Secund. in Panegyric.]

[Footnote 37: Felicio 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]

[Footnote 38: Dion (l. lxxix. p. 1249) affirms the whole to have been a fiction, on the authority of his father, who, being governor of the province where Trajan died, had very good opportunities of sifting this mysterious transaction. Yet Dodwell (Praelect. Camden. xvii.) has maintained that Hadrian was called to the certain hope of the empire, during the lifetime of Trajan.]

[Footnote 39: 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 Aelius 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 Caesar [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.

[Footnote 40: 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 Caesars de Julien*, p. 80.]

[Footnote 41: *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, clameless 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.

[Footnote 42: 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, duae-foeminae; we only owe their names to the medals. Pagi. Cont. Baron, i. 33, edit Paris.--W.]

[Footnote 43: 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.

[Footnote 44: He was fond of the theatre, and not insensible to the charms of the fair sex. Marcus Antoninus, i. 16. Hist. August. p. 20, 21. Julian in Caesar.]

The 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]

[Footnote 45: 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 Caesar might probably be a coward, or Tully a fool. Wit and valor are qualifications more easily ascertained than humanity or the love of justice.]

[Footnote 46: Tacitus has characterized, in a few words, the principles of the portico: *Doctores sapientiae secutus est, qui sola bona quae honesta, main tantum quae turpia; potentiam, nobilitatem, aeteraque extra... bonis neque malis adnumerant.* Tacit. Hist. iv. 5.]

[Footnote 47: 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.]

[Footnote 471: Cassius was murdered by his own partisans. Vulcat. Gallic. in Cassio, c. 7. Dion, lxxi. c. 27.--W.]

[Footnote 48: 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.]

[Footnote 481: 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 1. 224.--M.]

[Footnote 49: 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.

[Footnote 50: 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, praeterita, 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.]

[Footnote 51: 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.

[Footnote 52: Voyage de Chardin en Perse, vol. iii. p. 293.]

[Footnote 53: 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.]

[Footnote 54: 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 Caesar 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.

[Footnote 55: 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.]

[Footnote 56: The crime of majesty was formerly a treasonable offence against the Roman people. As tribunes of the people, Augustus and Tiberius applied it to their own persons, and extended it to an infinite latitude. Note: It was Tiberius, not Augustus, who first took in this sense the words *crimen laesae majestatis*. *Bachii Trajanus*, 27. --W.]

[Footnote 57: 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 *Gemoniae*, 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, he would become a safe and dreary prison for his enemies. The slave of Imperial despotism, whether he was condemned to drag his gilded chain in Rome and the Senate, or to wear out a life of exile on the barren rock of Seriphus, or the frozen 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]

[Footnote 58: Seriphus was a small rocky island in the Aegean 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.]

[Footnote 59: 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.]

[Footnote 60: Cicero ad Familiares, iv. 7.]