

Chapter VI: Death Of Severus, Tyranny Of Caracalla, Usurpation Of Marcinus.--
Part IV.

The lenity of the emperor confirmed the insolence of the troops; the legions imitated the example of the guards, and defended their prerogative of licentiousness with the same furious obstinacy. The administration of Alexander was an unavailing struggle against the corruption of his age. In Illyricum, in Mauritania, in Armenia, in Mesopotamia, in Germany, fresh mutinies perpetually broke out; his officers were murdered, his authority was insulted, and his life at last sacrificed to the fierce discontents of the army. [76] One particular fact well deserves to be recorded, as it illustrates the manners of the troops, and exhibits a singular instance of their return to a sense of duty and obedience. Whilst the emperor lay at Antioch, in his Persian expedition, the particulars of which we shall hereafter relate, the punishment of some soldiers, who had been discovered in the baths of women, excited a sedition in the legion to which they belonged. Alexander ascended his tribunal, and with a modest firmness represented to the armed multitude the absolute necessity, as well as his inflexible resolution, of correcting the vices introduced by his impure predecessor, and of maintaining the discipline, which could not be relaxed without the ruin of the Roman name and empire. Their clamors interrupted his mild expostulation. "Reserve your shout," said the undaunted emperor, "till you take the field against the Persians, the Germans, and the Sarmatians. Be silent in the presence of your sovereign and benefactor, who bestows upon you the corn, the clothing, and the

money of the provinces. Be silent, or I shall no longer style you soldiers, but citizens, [77] if those indeed who disclaim the laws of Rome deserve to be ranked among the meanest of the people." His menaces inflamed the fury of the legion, and their brandished arms already threatened his person. "Your courage," resumed the intrepid Alexander, "would be more nobly displayed in the field of battle; me you may destroy, you cannot intimidate; and the severe justice of the republic would punish your crime and revenge my death." The legion still persisted in clamorous sedition, when the emperor pronounced, with a cud voice, the decisive sentence, "Citizens! lay down your arms, and depart in peace to your respective habitations." The tempest was instantly appeased: the soldiers, filled with grief and shame, silently confessed the justice of their punishment, and the power of discipline, yielded up their arms and military ensigns, and retired in confusion, not to their camp, but to the several inns of the city. Alexander enjoyed, during thirty days, the edifying spectacle of their repentance; nor did he restore them to their former rank in the army, till he had punished with death those tribunes whose connivance had occasioned the mutiny. The grateful legion served the emperor whilst living, and revenged him when dead. [78]

[Footnote 76: Annot. Reimar. ad Dion Cassius, l. lxxx. p. 1369.]

[Footnote 77: Julius Caesar had appeased a sedition with the same word, Quirites; which, thus opposed to soldiers, was used in a sense of contempt, and reduced the offenders to the less honorable condition of

mere citizens. Tacit. Annal. i. 43.]

[Footnote 78: Hist. August. p. 132.]

The resolutions of the multitude generally depend on a moment; and the caprice of passion might equally determine the seditious legion to lay down their arms at the emperor's feet, or to plunge them into his breast. Perhaps, if this singular transaction had been investigated by the penetration of a philosopher, we should discover the secret causes which on that occasion authorized the boldness of the prince, and commanded the obedience of the troops; and perhaps, if it had been related by a judicious historian, we should find this action, worthy of Caesar himself, reduced nearer to the level of probability and the common standard of the character of Alexander Severus. The abilities of that amiable prince seem to have been inadequate to the difficulties of his situation, the firmness of his conduct inferior to the purity of his intentions. His virtues, as well as the vices of Elagabalus, contracted a tincture of weakness and effeminacy from the soft climate of Syria, of which he was a native; though he blushed at his foreign origin, and listened with a vain complacency to the flattering genealogists, who derived his race from the ancient stock of Roman nobility. [79] The pride and avarice of his mother cast a shade on the glories of his reign; and by exacting from his riper years the same dutiful obedience which she had justly claimed from his unexperienced youth, Mamaea exposed to public ridicule both her son's character and her own. [80] The fatigues of the Persian war irritated the military discontent; the unsuccessful

event [801] degraded the reputation of the emperor as a general, and even as a soldier. Every cause prepared, and every circumstance hastened, a revolution, which distracted the Roman empire with a long series of intestine calamities.

[Footnote 79: From the Metelli. Hist. August. p. 119. The choice was judicious. In one short period of twelve years, the Metelli could reckon seven consulships and five triumphs. See Velleius Paterculus, ii. 11, and the Fasti.]

[Footnote 80: The life of Alexander, in the Augustan History, is the mere idea of a perfect prince, an awkward imitation of the Cyropaedia. The account of his reign, as given by Herodian, is rational and moderate, consistent with the general history of the age; and, in some of the most invidious particulars, confirmed by the decisive fragments of Dion. Yet from a very paltry prejudice, the greater number of our modern writers abuse Herodian, and copy the Augustan History. See Mess de Tillemont and Wotton. From the opposite prejudice, the emperor Julian (in Caesarib. p. 315) dwells with a visible satisfaction on the effeminate weakness of the Syrian, and the ridiculous avarice of his mother.]

[Footnote 801: Historians are divided as to the success of the campaign against the Persians; Herodian alone speaks of defeat. Lampridius, Eutropius, Victor, and others, say that it was very glorious to Alexander; that he beat Artaxerxes in a great battle, and repelled him

from the frontiers of the empire. This much is certain, that Alexander, on his return to Rome, (Lamp. Hist. Aug. c. 56, 133, 134,) received the honors of a triumph, and that he said, in his oration to the people. Quirites, vicimus Persas, milites divites reduximus, vobis congiarium pollicemur, cras ludos circenses Persicos donabimus. Alexander, says Eckhel, had too much modesty and wisdom to permit himself to receive honors which ought only to be the reward of victory, if he had not deserved them; he would have contented himself with dissembling his losses. Eckhel, Doct. Num. vet. vii. 276. The medals represent him as in triumph; one, among others, displays him crowned by Victory between two rivers, the Euphrates and the Tigris. P. M. TR. P. xii. Cos. iii. PP. Imperator paludatus D. hastam. S. parazonium, stat inter duos fluvios humi jacentes, et ab accedente retro Victoria coronatur. Ae. max. mod. (Mus. Reg. Gall.) Although Gibbon treats this question more in detail when he speaks of the Persian monarchy, I have thought fit to place here what contradicts his opinion.--G]

The dissolute tyranny of Commodus, the civil wars occasioned by his death, and the new maxims of policy introduced by the house of Severus, had all contributed to increase the dangerous power of the army, and to obliterate the faint image of laws and liberty that was still impressed on the minds of the Romans. The internal change, which undermined the foundations of the empire, we have endeavored to explain with some degree of order and perspicuity. The personal characters of the emperors, their victories, laws, follies, and fortunes, can interest us no farther than as they are connected with the general history of the

Decline and Fall of the monarchy. Our constant attention to that great object will not suffer us to overlook a most important edict of Antoninus Caracalla, which communicated to all the free inhabitants of the empire the name and privileges of Roman citizens. His unbounded liberality flowed not, however, from the sentiments of a generous mind; it was the sordid result of avarice, and will naturally be illustrated by some observations on the finances of that state, from the victorious ages of the commonwealth to the reign of Alexander Severus. The siege of Veii in Tuscany, the first considerable enterprise of the Romans, was protracted to the tenth year, much less by the strength of the place than by the unskillfulness of the besiegers. The unaccustomed hardships of so many winter campaigns, at the distance of near twenty miles from home, [81] required more than common encouragements; and the senate wisely prevented the clamors of the people, by the institution of a regular pay for the soldiers, which was levied by a general tribute, assessed according to an equitable proportion on the property of the citizens. [82] During more than two hundred years after the conquest of Veii, the victories of the republic added less to the wealth than to the power of Rome. The states of Italy paid their tribute in military service only, and the vast force, both by sea and land, which was exerted in the Punic wars, was maintained at the expense of the Romans themselves. That high-spirited people (such is often the generous enthusiasm of freedom) cheerfully submitted to the most excessive but voluntary burdens, in the just confidence that they should speedily enjoy the rich harvest of their labors. Their expectations were not disappointed. In the course of a few years, the riches of Syracuse, of

Carthage, of Macedonia, and of Asia, were brought in triumph to Rome. The treasures of Perseus alone amounted to near two millions sterling, and the Roman people, the sovereign of so many nations, was forever delivered from the weight of taxes. [83] The increasing revenue of the provinces was found sufficient to defray the ordinary establishment of war and government, and the superfluous mass of gold and silver was deposited in the temple of Saturn, and reserved for any unforeseen emergency of the state. [84]

[Footnote 81: According to the more accurate Dionysius, the city itself was only a hundred stadia, or twelve miles and a half, from Rome, though some out-posts might be advanced farther on the side of Etruria. Nardini, in a professed treatise, has combated the popular opinion and the authority of two popes, and has removed Veii from Civita Castellana, to a little spot called Isola, in the midway between Rome and the Lake Bracianno. * Note: See the interesting account of the site and ruins of Veii in Sir W Gell's topography of Rome and its Vicinity. v. ii. p. 303.--M.]

[Footnote 82: See the 4th and 5th books of Livy. In the Roman census, property, power, and taxation were commensurate with each other.]

[Footnote 83: Plin. Hist. Natur. 1. xxxiii. c. 3. Cicero de Offic. ii. 22. Plutarch, P. Aemil. p. 275.]

[Footnote 84: See a fine description of this accumulated wealth of ages

in Phars. l. iii. v. 155, &c.]

History has never, perhaps, suffered a greater or more irreparable injury than in the loss of the curious register [841] bequeathed by Augustus to the senate, in which that experienced prince so accurately balanced the revenues and expenses of the Roman empire. [85] Deprived of this clear and comprehensive estimate, we are reduced to collect a few imperfect hints from such of the ancients as have accidentally turned aside from the splendid to the more useful parts of history. We are informed that, by the conquests of Pompey, the tributes of Asia were raised from fifty to one hundred and thirty-five millions of drachms; or about four millions and a half sterling. [86] [861] Under the last and most indolent of the Ptolemies, the revenue of Egypt is said to have amounted to twelve thousand five hundred talents; a sum equivalent to more than two millions and a half of our money, but which was afterwards considerably improved by the more exact economy of the Romans, and the increase of the trade of Aethiopia and India. [87] Gaul was enriched by rapine, as Egypt was by commerce, and the tributes of those two great provinces have been compared as nearly equal to each other in value. [88] The ten thousand Euboic or Phoenician talents, about four millions sterling, [89] which vanquished Carthage was condemned to pay within the term of fifty years, were a slight acknowledgment of the superiority of Rome, [90] and cannot bear the least proportion with the taxes afterwards raised both on the lands and on the persons of the inhabitants, when the fertile coast of Africa was reduced into a province. [91]

[Footnote 841: See *Rationarium imperii*. Compare besides Tacitus, Suet. Aug. c. ult. Dion, p. 832. Other emperors kept and published similar registers. See a dissertation of Dr. Wolle, *de Rationario imperii Rom.* Leipsig, 1773. The last book of Appian also contained the statistics of the Roman empire, but it is lost.--W.]

[Footnote 85: Tacit. in *Annal.* i. ll. It seems to have existed in the time of Appian.]

[Footnote 86: Plutarch, in *Pompeio*, p. 642.]

[Footnote 861: Wenck contests the accuracy of Gibbon's version of Plutarch, and supposes that Pompey only raised the revenue from 50,000,000 to 85,000,000 of drachms; but the text of Plutarch seems clearly to mean that his conquests added 85,000,000 to the ordinary revenue. Wenck adds, "Plutarch says in another part, that Antony made Asia pay, at one time, 200,000 talents, that is to say, 38,875,000 L. sterling." But Appian explains this by saying that it was the revenue of ten years, which brings the annual revenue, at the time of Antony, to 3,875,000 L. sterling.--M.]

[Footnote 87: Strabo, l. xvii. p. 798.]

[Footnote 88: Velleius Paterculus, l. ii. c. 39. He seems to give the preference to the revenue of Gaul.]

[Footnote 89: The Euboic, the Phoenician, and the Alexandrian talents were double in weight to the Attic. See Hooper on ancient weights and measures, p. iv. c. 5. It is very probable that the same talent was carried from Tyre to Carthage.]

[Footnote 90: Polyb. 1. xv. c. 2.]

[Footnote 91: Appian in Punicis, p. 84.]

Spain, by a very singular fatality, was the Peru and Mexico of the old world. The discovery of the rich western continent by the Phoenicians, and the oppression of the simple natives, who were compelled to labor in their own mines for the benefit of strangers, form an exact type of the more recent history of Spanish America. [92] The Phoenicians were acquainted only with the sea-coast of Spain; avarice, as well as ambition, carried the arms of Rome and Carthage into the heart of the country, and almost every part of the soil was found pregnant with copper, silver, and gold. [921] Mention is made of a mine near Carthagena which yielded every day twenty-five thousand drachmns of silver, or about three hundred thousand pounds a year. [93] Twenty thousand pound weight of gold was annually received from the provinces of Asturia, Gallicia, and Lusitania. [94]

[Footnote 92: Diodorus Siculus, 1. 5. Oadiz was built by the Phoenicians a little more than a thousand years before Christ. See Vell. Pa ter. i.2.]

[Footnote 921: Compare Heeren's Researches vol. i. part ii. p.]

[Footnote 93: Strabo, l. iii. p. 148.]

[Footnote 94: Plin. Hist. Natur. l. xxxiii. c. 3. He mentions likewise a silver mine in Dalmatia, that yielded every day fifty pounds to the state.] We want both leisure and materials to pursue this curious inquiry through the many potent states that were annihilated in the Roman empire. Some notion, however, may be formed of the revenue of the provinces where considerable wealth had been deposited by nature, or collected by man, if we observe the severe attention that was directed to the abodes of solitude and sterility. Augustus once received a petition from the inhabitants of Gyarus, humbly praying that they might be relieved from one third of their excessive impositions. Their whole tax amounted indeed to no more than one hundred and fifty drachms, or about five pounds: but Gyarus was a little island, or rather a rock, of the Aegean Sea, destitute of fresh water and every necessary of life, and inhabited only by a few wretched fishermen. [95]

[Footnote 95: Strabo, l. x. p. 485. Tacit. Annal. iu. 69, and iv. 30. See Tournefort (Voyages au Levant, Lettre viii.) a very lively picture of the actual misery of Gyarus.]

From the faint glimmerings of such doubtful and scattered lights, we should be inclined to believe, 1st, That (with every fair allowance for

the differences of times and circumstances) the general income of the Roman provinces could seldom amount to less than fifteen or twenty millions of our money; [96] and, 2dly, That so ample a revenue must have been fully adequate to all the expenses of the moderate government instituted by Augustus, whose court was the modest family of a private senator, and whose military establishment was calculated for the defence of the frontiers, without any aspiring views of conquest, or any serious apprehension of a foreign invasion.

[Footnote 96: Lipsius de magnitudine Romana (l. ii. c. 3) computes the revenue at one hundred and fifty millions of gold crowns; but his whole book, though learned and ingenious, betrays a very heated imagination. Note: If Justus Lipsius has exaggerated the revenue of the Roman empire Gibbon, on the other hand, has underrated it. He fixes it at fifteen or twenty millions of our money. But if we take only, on a moderate calculation, the taxes in the provinces which he has already cited, they will amount, considering the augmentations made by Augustus, to nearly that sum. There remain also the provinces of Italy, of Rhaetia, of Noricum, Pannonia, and Greece, &c., &c. Let us pay attention, besides, to the prodigious expenditure of some emperors, (Suet. Vesp. 16;) we shall see that such a revenue could not be sufficient. The authors of the Universal History, part xii., assign forty millions sterling as the sum to about which the public revenue might amount.--G. from W.]

Notwithstanding the seeming probability of both these conclusions, the latter of them at least is positively disowned by the language

and conduct of Augustus. It is not easy to determine whether, on this occasion, he acted as the common father of the Roman world, or as the oppressor of liberty; whether he wished to relieve the provinces, or to impoverish the senate and the equestrian order. But no sooner had he assumed the reins of government, than he frequently intimated the insufficiency of the tributes, and the necessity of throwing an equitable proportion of the public burden upon Rome and Italy. [961] In the prosecution of this unpopular design, he advanced, however, by cautious and well-weighed steps. The introduction of customs was followed by the establishment of an excise, and the scheme of taxation was completed by an artful assessment on the real and personal property of the Roman citizens, who had been exempted from any kind of contribution above a century and a half.

[Footnote 961: It is not astonishing that Augustus held this language. The senate declared also under Nero, that the state could not exist without the imposts as well augmented as founded by Augustus. Tac. Ann. xiii. 50. After the abolition of the different tributes paid by Italy, an abolition which took place A. U. 646, 694, and 695, the state derived no revenues from that great country, but the twentieth part of the manumissions, (*vicesima manumissionum*,) and Ciero laments this in many places, particularly in his epistles to ii. 15.--G. from W.]

I. In a great empire like that of Rome, a natural balance of money must have gradually established itself. It has been already observed, that as

the wealth of the provinces was attracted to the capital by the strong hand of conquest and power, so a considerable part of it was restored to the industrious provinces by the gentle influence of commerce and arts. In the reign of Augustus and his successors, duties were imposed on every kind of merchandise, which through a thousand channels flowed to the great centre of opulence and luxury; and in whatsoever manner the law was expressed, it was the Roman purchaser, and not the provincial merchant, who paid the tax. [97] The rate of the customs varied from the eighth to the fortieth part of the value of the commodity; and we have a right to suppose that the variation was directed by the unalterable maxims of policy; that a higher duty was fixed on the articles of luxury than on those of necessity, and that the productions raised or manufactured by the labor of the subjects of the empire were treated with more indulgence than was shown to the pernicious, or at least the unpopular commerce of Arabia and India. [98] There is still extant a long but imperfect catalogue of eastern commodities, which about the time of Alexander Severus were subject to the payment of duties; cinnamon, myrrh, pepper, ginger, and the whole tribe of aromatics a great variety of precious stones, among which the diamond was the most remarkable for its price, and the emerald for its beauty; [99] Parthian and Babylonian leather, cottons, silks, both raw and manufactured, ebony ivory, and eunuchs. [100] We may observe that the use and value of those effeminate slaves gradually rose with the decline of the empire.

[Footnote 97: Tacit. Annal. xiii. 31. * Note: The customs (portoria) existed in the times of the ancient kings of Rome. They were suppressed

in Italy, A. U. 694, by the Praetor, Cecilius Matellus Nepos. Augustus only reestablished them. See note above.--W.]

[Footnote 98: See Pliny, (Hist. Natur. l. vi. c. 23, lxii. c. 18.) His observation that the Indian commodities were sold at Rome at a hundred times their original price, may give us some notion of the produce of the customs, since that original price amounted to more than eight hundred thousand pounds.]

[Footnote 99: The ancients were unacquainted with the art of cutting diamonds.]

[Footnote 100: M. Bouchaud, in his treatise de l'Impot chez les Romains, has transcribed this catalogue from the Digest, and attempts to illustrate it by a very prolix commentary. * Note: In the Pandects, l. 39, t. 14, de Publican. Compare Cicero in Verrem. c. 72--74.--W.]

II. The excise, introduced by Augustus after the civil wars, was extremely moderate, but it was general. It seldom exceeded one per cent.; but it comprehended whatever was sold in the markets or by public auction, from the most considerable purchases of lands and houses, to those minute objects which can only derive a value from their infinite multitude and daily consumption. Such a tax, as it affects the body of the people, has ever been the occasion of clamor and discontent. An emperor well acquainted with the wants and resources of the state was

obliged to declare, by a public edict, that the support of the army depended in a great measure on the produce of the excise. [101]

[Footnote 101: Tacit. Annal. i. 78. Two years afterwards, the reduction of the poor kingdom of Cappadocia gave Tiberius a pretence for diminishing the excise of one half, but the relief was of very short duration.]

III. When Augustus resolved to establish a permanent military force for the defence of his government against foreign and domestic enemies, he instituted a peculiar treasury for the pay of the soldiers, the rewards of the veterans, and the extra-ordinary expenses of war. The ample revenue of the excise, though peculiarly appropriated to those uses, was found inadequate. To supply the deficiency, the emperor suggested a new tax of five per cent. on all legacies and inheritances. But the nobles of Rome were more tenacious of property than of freedom. Their indignant murmurs were received by Augustus with his usual temper. He candidly referred the whole business to the senate, and exhorted them to provide for the public service by some other expedient of a less odious nature. They were divided and perplexed. He insinuated to them, that their obstinacy would oblige him to propose a general land tax and capitation. They acquiesced in silence. [102]. The new imposition on legacies and inheritances was, however, mitigated by some restrictions. It did not take place unless the object was of a certain value, most probably of fifty or a hundred pieces of gold; [103] nor could it be exacted from the nearest of kin on the father's side. [104] When the

rights of nature and poverty were thus secured, it seemed reasonable, that a stranger, or a distant relation, who acquired an unexpected accession of fortune, should cheerfully resign a twentieth part of it, for the benefit of the state. [105]

[Footnote 102: Dion Cassius, l. lv. p. 794, l. lvi. p. 825. Note: Dion neither mentions this proposition nor the capitation. He only says that the emperor imposed a tax upon landed property, and sent every where men employed to make a survey, without fixing how much, and for how much each was to pay. The senators then preferred giving the tax on legacies and inheritances.--W.]

[Footnote 103: The sum is only fixed by conjecture.]

[Footnote 104: As the Roman law subsisted for many ages, the Cognati, or relations on the mother's side, were not called to the succession. This harsh institution was gradually undermined by humanity, and finally abolished by Justinian.]

[Footnote 105: Plin. Panegyric. c. 37.]

Such a tax, plentiful as it must prove in every wealthy community, was most happily suited to the situation of the Romans, who could frame their arbitrary wills, according to the dictates of reason or caprice, without any restraint from the modern fetters of entails and settlements. From various causes, the partiality of paternal affection

often lost its influence over the stern patriots of the commonwealth, and the dissolute nobles of the empire; and if the father bequeathed to his son the fourth part of his estate, he removed all ground of legal complaint. [106] But a rich childish old man was a domestic tyrant, and his power increased with his years and infirmities. A servile crowd, in which he frequently reckoned praetors and consuls, courted his smiles, pampered his avarice, applauded his follies, served his passions, and waited with impatience for his death. The arts of attendance and flattery were formed into a most lucrative science; those who professed it acquired a peculiar appellation; and the whole city, according to the lively descriptions of satire, was divided between two parties, the hunters and their game. [107] Yet, while so many unjust and extravagant wills were every day dictated by cunning and subscribed by folly, a few were the result of rational esteem and virtuous gratitude. Cicero, who had so often defended the lives and fortunes of his fellow-citizens, was rewarded with legacies to the amount of a hundred and seventy thousand pounds; [108] nor do the friends of the younger Pliny seem to have been less generous to that amiable orator. [109] Whatever was the motive of the testator, the treasury claimed, without distinction, the twentieth part of his estate: and in the course of two or three generations, the whole property of the subject must have gradually passed through the coffers of the state.

[Footnote 106: See Heineccius in the *Antiquit. Juris Romani*, l. ii.]

[Footnote 107: *Horat.* l. ii. *Sat.* v. *Potron.* c. 116, &c. *Plin.* l. ii.]

Epist. 20.]

[Footnote 108: Cicero in Philip. ii. c. 16.]

[Footnote 109: See his epistles. Every such will gave him an occasion of displaying his reverence to the dead, and his justice to the living. He reconciled both in his behavior to a son who had been disinherited by his mother, (v.l.)]

In the first and golden years of the reign of Nero, that prince, from a desire of popularity, and perhaps from a blind impulse of benevolence, conceived a wish of abolishing the oppression of the customs and excise. The wisest senators applauded his magnanimity: but they diverted him from the execution of a design which would have dissolved the strength and resources of the republic. [110] Had it indeed been possible to realize this dream of fancy, such princes as Trajan and the Antonines would surely have embraced with ardor the glorious opportunity of conferring so signal an obligation on mankind. Satisfied, however, with alleviating the public burden, they attempted not to remove it. The mildness and precision of their laws ascertained the rule and measure of taxation, and protected the subject of every rank against arbitrary interpretations, antiquated claims, and the insolent vexation of the farmers of the revenue. [111] For it is somewhat singular, that, in every age, the best and wisest of the Roman governors persevered in this pernicious method of collecting the principal branches at least of the excise and customs. [112]

[Footnote 110: Tacit. Annal. xiii. 50. Esprit des Loix, l. xii. c. 19.]

[Footnote 111: See Pliny's Panegyric, the Augustan History, and Burman de Vectigal. passim.]

[Footnote 112: The tributes (properly so called) were not farmed; since the good princes often remitted many millions of arrears.]

The sentiments, and, indeed, the situation, of Caracalla were very different from those of the Antonines. Inattentive, or rather averse, to the welfare of his people, he found himself under the necessity of gratifying the insatiate avarice which he had excited in the army. Of the several impositions introduced by Augustus, the twentieth on inheritances and legacies was the most fruitful, as well as the most comprehensive. As its influence was not confined to Rome or Italy, the produce continually increased with the gradual extension of the Roman City. The new citizens, though charged, on equal terms, [113] with the payment of new taxes, which had not affected them as subjects, derived an ample compensation from the rank they obtained, the privileges they acquired, and the fair prospect of honors and fortune that was thrown open to their ambition. But the favor which implied a distinction was lost in the prodigality of Caracalla, and the reluctant provincials were compelled to assume the vain title, and the real obligations, of Roman citizens. [1131] Nor was the rapacious son of Severus contented with such a measure of taxation as had appeared sufficient to his moderate

predecessors. Instead of a twentieth, he exacted a tenth of all legacies and inheritances; and during his reign (for the ancient proportion was restored after his death) he crushed alike every part of the empire under the weight of his iron sceptre. [114]

[Footnote 113: The situation of the new citizens is minutely described by Pliny, (Panegyric, c. 37, 38, 39). Trajan published a law very much in their favor.]

[Footnote 1131: Gibbon has adopted the opinion of Spanheim and of Burman, which attributes to Caracalla this edict, which gave the right of the city to all the inhabitants of the provinces. This opinion may be disputed. Several passages of Spartianus, of Aurelius Victor, and of Aristides, attribute this edict to Marc. Aurelius. See a learned essay, entitled Joh. P. Mahneri Comm. de Marc. Aur. Antonino Constitutionis de Civitate Universo Orbi Romano data auctore. Halae, 1772, 8vo. It appears that Marc. Aurelius made some modifications of this edict, which released the provincials from some of the charges imposed by the right of the city, and deprived them of some of the advantages which it conferred. Caracalla annulled these modifications.--W.]

[Footnote 114: Dion, l. lxxvii. p. 1295.]

When all the provincials became liable to the peculiar impositions of Roman citizens, they seemed to acquire a legal exemption from the tributes which they had paid in their former condition of subjects. Such

were not the maxims of government adopted by Caracalla and his pretended son. The old as well as the new taxes were, at the same time, levied in the provinces. It was reserved for the virtue of Alexander to relieve them in a great measure from this intolerable grievance, by reducing the tributes to a thirteenth part of the sum exacted at the time of his accession. [115] It is impossible to conjecture the motive that engaged him to spare so trifling a remnant of the public evil; but the noxious weed, which had not been totally eradicated, again sprang up with the most luxuriant growth, and in the succeeding age darkened the Roman world with its deadly shade. In the course of this history, we shall be too often summoned to explain the land tax, the capitation, and the heavy contributions of corn, wine, oil, and meat, which were exacted from the provinces for the use of the court, the army, and the capital.

[Footnote 115: He who paid ten aurei, the usual tribute, was charged with no more than the third part of an aureus, and proportional pieces of gold were coined by Alexander's order. Hist. August. p. 127, with the commentary of Salmasius.]

As long as Rome and Italy were respected as the centre of government, a national spirit was preserved by the ancient, and insensibly imbibed by the adopted, citizens. The principal commands of the army were filled by men who had received a liberal education, were well instructed in the advantages of laws and letters, and who had risen, by equal steps, through the regular succession of civil and military honors. [116] To their influence and example we may partly ascribe the modest obedience

of the legions during the two first centuries of the Imperial history.

[Footnote 116: See the lives of Agricola, Vespasian, Trajan, Severus, and his three competitors; and indeed of all the eminent men of those times. But when the last enclosure of the Roman constitution was trampled down by Caracalla, the separation of professions gradually succeeded to the distinction of ranks. The more polished citizens of the internal provinces were alone qualified to act as lawyers and magistrates. The rougher trade of arms was abandoned to the peasants and barbarians of the frontiers, who knew no country but their camp, no science but that of war no civil laws, and scarcely those of military discipline. With bloody hands, savage manners, and desperate resolutions, they sometimes guarded, but much oftener subverted, the throne of the emperors.]