

Chapter VIII: State Of Persion And Restoration Of The Monarchy.--Part II.

The theology of Zoroaster was darkly comprehended by foreigners, and even by the far greater number of his disciples; but the most careless observers were struck with the philosophic simplicity of the Persian worship. "That people," said Herodotus, [12] "rejects the use of temples, of altars, and of statues, and smiles at the folly of those nations who imagine that the gods are sprung from, or bear any affinity with, the human nature. The tops of the highest mountains are the places chosen for sacrifices. Hymns and prayers are the principal worship; the Supreme God, who fills the wide circle of heaven, is the object to whom they are addressed." Yet, at the same time, in the true spirit of a polytheist, he accuseth them of adoring Earth, Water, Fire, the Winds, and the Sun and Moon. But the Persians of every age have denied the charge, and explained the equivocal conduct, which might appear to give a color to it. The elements, and more particularly Fire, Light, and the Sun, whom they called Mithra, [1201] were the objects of their religious reverence, because they considered them as the purest symbols, the noblest productions, and the most powerful agents of the Divine Power and Nature. [13]

[Footnote 12: Herodotus, l. i. c. 131. But Dr. Prideaux thinks, with reason, that the use of temples was afterwards permitted in the Magian religion. Note: The Pyraea, or fire temples of the Zoroastrians, (observes Kleuker, Persica, p. 16,) were only to be found in Media or Aderbidjan, provinces into which Herodotus did not

penetrate.--M.]

[Footnote 1201: Among the Persians Mithra is not the Sun: Anquetil has contested and triumphantly refuted the opinion of those who confound them, and it is evidently contrary to the text of the Zendavesta. Mithra is the first of the genii, or jzeds, created by Ormuzd; it is he who watches over all nature. Hence arose the misapprehension of some of the Greeks, who have said that Mithra was the summus deus of the Persians: he has a thousand ears and ten thousand eyes. The Chaldeans appear to have assigned him a higher rank than the Persians. It is he who bestows upon the earth the light of the sun. The sun, named Khor, (brightness,) is thus an inferior genius, who, with many other genii, bears a part in the functions of Mithra. These assistant genii to another genius are called his kamkars; but in the Zendavesta they are never confounded. On the days sacred to a particular genius, the Persian ought to recite, not only the prayers addressed to him, but those also which are addressed to his kamkars; thus the hymn or iescht of Mithra is recited on the day of the sun, (Khor,) and vice versa. It is probably this which has sometimes caused them to be confounded; but Anquetil had himself exposed this error, which Kleuker, and all who have studied the Zendavesta, have noticed. See viii. Diss. of Anquetil. Kleuker's Anhang, part iii. p. 132.--G. M. Guizot is unquestionably right, according to the pure and original doctrine of the Zend. The Mithriac worship, which was so extensively propagated in the West, and in which Mithra and the sun were perpetually confounded, seems to have been formed from a fusion of Zoroastrianism and Chaldaism, or the Syrian worship of the sun. An

excellent abstract of the question, with references to the works of the chief modern writers on his curious subject, De Sacy, Kleuker, Von Hammer, &c., may be found in De Guigniaut's translation of Kreuzer. Relig. d'Antiquite, notes viii. ix. to book ii. vol. i. 2d part, page 728.--M.]

[Footnote 13: Hyde de Relig. Pers. c. 8. Notwithstanding all their distinctions and protestations, which seem sincere enough, their tyrants, the Mahometans, have constantly stigmatized them as idolatrous worshippers of the fire.]

Every mode of religion, to make a deep and lasting impression on the human mind, must exercise our obedience, by enjoining practices of devotion, for which we can assign no reason; and must acquire our esteem, by inculcating moral duties analogous to the dictates of our own hearts. The religion of Zoroaster was abundantly provided with the former and possessed a sufficient portion of the latter. At the age of puberty, the faithful Persian was invested with a mysterious girdle, the badge of the divine protection; and from that moment all the actions of his life, even the most indifferent, or the most necessary, were sanctified by their peculiar prayers, ejaculations, or genuflections; the omission of which, under any circumstances, was a grievous sin, not inferior in guilt to the violation of the moral duties. The moral duties, however, of justice, mercy, liberality, &c., were in their turn required of the disciple of Zoroaster, who wished to escape the persecution of Ahriman, and to live with Ormusd in a blissful eternity,

where the degree of felicity will be exactly proportioned to the degree of virtue and piety. [14]

[Footnote 14: See the Sadder, the smallest part of which consists of moral precepts. The ceremonies enjoined are infinite and trifling. Fifteen genuflections, prayers, &c., were required whenever the devout Persian cut his nails or made water; or as often as he put on the sacred girdle Sadder, Art. 14, 50, 60. * Note: Zoroaster exacted much less ceremonial observance, than at a later period, the priests of his doctrines. This is the progress of all religions the worship, simple in its origin, is gradually overloaded with minute superstitions. The maxim of the Zendavesta, on the relative merit of sowing the earth and of prayers, quoted below by Gibbon, proves that Zoroaster did not attach too much importance to these observances. Thus it is not from the Zendavesta that Gibbon derives the proof of his allegation, but from the Sadder, a much later work.--G]

But there are some remarkable instances in which Zoroaster lays aside the prophet, assumes the legislator, and discovers a liberal concern for private and public happiness, seldom to be found among the grovelling or visionary schemes of superstition. Fasting and celibacy, the common means of purchasing the divine favor, he condemns with abhorrence, as a criminal rejection of the best gifts of Providence. The saint, in the Magian religion, is obliged to beget children, to plant useful trees, to destroy noxious animals, to convey water to the dry lands of Persia, and to work out his salvation by pursuing all the labors of agriculture.

[1401] We may quote from the Zendavesta a wise and benevolent maxim, which compensates for many an absurdity. "He who sows the ground with care and diligence acquires a greater stock of religious merit than he could gain by the repetition of ten thousand prayers." [15] In the spring of every year a festival was celebrated, destined to represent the primitive equality, and the present connection, of mankind. The stately kings of Persia, exchanging their vain pomp for more genuine greatness, freely mingled with the humblest but most useful of their subjects. On that day the husbandmen were admitted, without distinction, to the table of the king and his satraps. The monarch accepted their petitions, inquired into their grievances, and conversed with them on the most equal terms. "From your labors," was he accustomed to say, (and to say with truth, if not with sincerity,) "from your labors we receive our subsistence; you derive your tranquillity from our vigilance: since, therefore, we are mutually necessary to each other, let us live together like brothers in concord and love." [16] Such a festival must indeed have degenerated, in a wealthy and despotic empire, into a theatrical representation; but it was at least a comedy well worthy of a royal audience, and which might sometimes imprint a salutary lesson on the mind of a young prince.

[Footnote 1401: See, on Zoroaster's encouragement of agriculture, the ingenious remarks of Heeren, *Ideen*, vol. i. p. 449, &c., and Rhode, *Heilige Sage*, p. 517--M.]

[Footnote 15: *Zendavesta*, tom. i. p. 224, and *Precis du Systeme de Zoroastre*, tom. iii.]

[Footnote 16: Hyde de Religione Persarum, c. 19.]

Had Zoroaster, in all his institutions, invariably supported this exalted character, his name would deserve a place with those of Numa and Confucius, and his system would be justly entitled to all the applause, which it has pleased some of our divines, and even some of our philosophers, to bestow on it. But in that motley composition, dictated by reason and passion, by enthusiasm and by selfish motives, some useful and sublime truths were disgraced by a mixture of the most abject and dangerous superstition. The Magi, or sacerdotal order, were extremely numerous, since, as we have already seen, fourscore thousand of them were convened in a general council. Their forces were multiplied by discipline. A regular hierarchy was diffused through all the provinces of Persia; and the Archimagus, who resided at Balch, was respected as the visible head of the church, and the lawful successor of Zoroaster.

[17] The property of the Magi was very considerable. Besides the less invidious possession of a large tract of the most fertile lands of Media, [18] they levied a general tax on the fortunes and the industry of the Persians. [19] "Though your good works," says the interested prophet, "exceed in number the leaves of the trees, the drops of rain, the stars in the heaven, or the sands on the sea-shore, they will all be unprofitable to you, unless they are accepted by the destour, or priest. To obtain the acceptation of this guide to salvation, you must faithfully pay him tithes of all you possess, of your goods, of your lands, and of your money. If the destour be satisfied, your soul will

escape hell tortures; you will secure praise in this world and happiness in the next. For the destours are the teachers of religion; they know all things, and they deliver all men." [20] [201]

[Footnote 17: Hyde de Religione Persarum, c. 28. Both Hyde and Prideaux affect to apply to the Magian the terms consecrated to the Christian hierarchy.]

[Footnote 18: Ammian. Marcellin. xxiii. 6. He informs us (as far as we may credit him) of two curious particulars: 1. That the Magi derived some of their most secret doctrines from the Indian Brachmans; and 2. That they were a tribe, or family, as well as order.]

[Footnote 19: The divine institution of tithes exhibits a singular instance of conformity between the law of Zoroaster and that of Moses. Those who cannot otherwise account for it, may suppose, if they please that the Magi of the latter times inserted so useful an interpolation into the writings of their prophet.]

[Footnote 20: Sadder, Art. viii.]

[Footnote 201: The passage quoted by Gibbon is not taken from the writings of Zoroaster, but from the Sadder, a work, as has been before said, much later than the books which form the Zendavesta. and written by a Magus for popular use; what it contains, therefore, cannot be attributed to Zoroaster. It is remarkable that Gibbon should fall into this error, for

Hyde himself does not ascribe the Sadder to Zoroaster; he remarks that it is written in verse, while Zoroaster always wrote in prose. Hyde, i. p. 27. Whatever may be the case as to the latter assertion, for which there appears little foundation, it is unquestionable that the Sadder is of much later date. The Abbe Foucher does not even believe it to be an extract from the works of Zoroaster. See his Diss. before quoted. Mem. de l'Acad. des Ins. t. xxvii.--G. Perhaps it is rash to speak of any part of the Zendavesta as the writing of Zoroaster, though it may be a genuine representation of his. As to the Sadder, Hyde (in Praef.) considered it not above 200 years old. It is manifestly post-Mahometan. See Art. xxv. on fasting.--M.]

These convenient maxims of reverence and implicit were doubtless imprinted with care on the tender minds of youth; since the Magi were the masters of education in Persia, and to their hands the children even of the royal family were intrusted. [21] The Persian priests, who were of a speculative genius, preserved and investigated the secrets of Oriental philosophy; and acquired, either by superior knowledge, or superior art, the reputation of being well versed in some occult sciences, which have derived their appellation from the Magi. [22] Those of more active dispositions mixed with the world in courts and cities; and it is observed, that the administration of Artaxerxes was in a great measure directed by the counsels of the sacerdotal order, whose dignity, either from policy or devotion, that prince restored to its ancient splendor. [23]

[Footnote 21: Plato in Alcibiad.]

[Footnote 22: Pliny (Hist. Natur. l. xxx. c. 1) observes, that magic held mankind by the triple chain of religion, of physic, and of astronomy.]

[Footnote 23: Agathias, l. iv. p. 134.]

The first counsel of the Magi was agreeable to the unsociable genius of their faith, [24] to the practice of ancient kings, [25] and even to the example of their legislator, who had a victim to a religious war, excited by his own intolerant zeal. [26] By an edict of Artaxerxes, the exercise of every worship, except that of Zoroaster, was severely prohibited. The temples of the Parthians, and the statues of their deified monarchs, were thrown down with ignominy. [27] The sword of Aristotle (such was the name given by the Orientals to the polytheism and philosophy of the Greeks) was easily broken; [28] the flames of persecution soon reached the more stubborn Jews and Christians; [29] nor did they spare the heretics of their own nation and religion. The majesty of Ormusd, who was jealous of a rival, was seconded by the despotism of Artaxerxes, who could not suffer a rebel; and the schismatics within his vast empire were soon reduced to the inconsiderable number of eighty thousand. [30] [301] This spirit of persecution reflects dishonor on the religion of Zoroaster; but as it was not productive of any civil commotion, it served to strengthen the new monarchy, by uniting all the various inhabitants of Persia in the

bands of religious zeal. [302]

[Footnote 24: Mr. Hume, in the Natural History of Religion, sagaciously remarks, that the most refined and philosophic sects are constantly the most intolerant. * Note: Hume's comparison is rather between theism and polytheism. In India, in Greece, and in modern Europe, philosophic religion has looked down with contemptuous toleration on the superstitions of the vulgar.--M.]

[Footnote 25: Cicero de Legibus, ii. 10. Xerxes, by the advice of the Magi, destroyed the temples of Greece.]

[Footnote 26: Hyde de Relig. Persar. c. 23, 24. D'Herbelot, Bibliotheque Orientale, Zurdusht. Life of Zoroaster in tom. ii. of the Zendavesta.]

[Footnote 27: Compare Moses of Chorene, l. ii. c. 74, with Ammian. Marcel lin. xxiii. 6. Hereafter I shall make use of these passages.]

[Footnote 28: Rabbi Abraham, in the Tarikh Schickard, p. 108, 109.]

[Footnote 29: Basnage, Histoire des Juifs, l. viii. c. 3. Sozomen, l. ii. c. 1 Manes, who suffered an ignominious death, may be deemed a Magian as well as a Christian heretic.]

[Footnote 30: Hyde de Religione Persar. c. 21.]

[Footnote 301: It is incorrect to attribute these persecutions to Artaxerxes. The Jews were held in honor by him, and their schools flourished during his reign. Compare Jost, *Geschichte der Israeliter*, b. xv. 5, with Basnage. Sapor was forced by the people to temporary severities; but their real persecution did not begin till the reigns of Yezdigerd and Kobad. *Hist. of Jews*, iii. 236. According to Sozomen, i. viii., Sapor first persecuted the Christians. Manes was put to death by Varanes the First, A. D. 277. Beausobre, *Hist. de Man.* i. 209.--M.]

[Footnote 302: In the testament of Ardischer in Ferdusi, the poet assigns these sentiments to the dying king, as he addresses his son: Never forget that as a king, you are at once the protector of religion and of your country. Consider the altar and the throne as inseparable; they must always sustain each other. *Malcolm's Persia.* i. 74--M]

II. Artaxerxes, by his valor and conduct, had wrested the sceptre of the East from the ancient royal family of Parthia. There still remained the more difficult task of establishing, throughout the vast extent of Persia, a uniform and vigorous administration. The weak indulgence of the Arsacides had resigned to their sons and brothers the principal provinces, and the greatest offices of the kingdom in the nature of hereditary possessions. The vitaxoe, or eighteen most powerful satraps, were permitted to assume the regal title; and the vain pride of the monarch was delighted with a nominal dominion over so many vassal kings.

Even tribes of barbarians in their mountains, and the Greek cities of Upper Asia, [31] within their walls, scarcely acknowledged, or seldom obeyed. any superior; and the Parthian empire exhibited, under other names, a lively image of the feudal system [32] which has since prevailed in Europe. But the active victor, at the head of a numerous and disciplined army, visited in person every province of Persia. The defeat of the boldest rebels, and the reduction of the strongest fortifications, [33] diffused the terror of his arms, and prepared the way for the peaceful reception of his authority. An obstinate resistance was fatal to the chiefs; but their followers were treated with lenity. [34] A cheerful submission was rewarded with honors and riches, but the prudent Artaxerxes suffering no person except himself to assume the title of king, abolished every intermediate power between the throne and the people. His kingdom, nearly equal in extent to modern Persia, was, on every side, bounded by the sea, or by great rivers; by the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Araxes, the Oxus, and the Indus, by the Caspian Sea, and the Gulf of Persia. [35] That country was computed to contain, in the last century, five hundred and fifty-four cities, sixty thousand villages, and about forty millions of souls. [36] If we compare the administration of the house of Sassan with that of the house of Sefi, the political influence of the Magian with that of the Mahometan religion, we shall probably infer, that the kingdom of Artaxerxes contained at least as great a number of cities, villages, and inhabitants. But it must likewise be confessed, that in every age the want of harbors on the sea-coast, and the scarcity of fresh water in the inland provinces, have been very unfavorable to the commerce and

agriculture of the Persians; who, in the calculation of their numbers, seem to have indulged one of the nearest, though most common, artifices of national vanity.

[Footnote 31: These colonies were extremely numerous. Seleucus Nicator founded thirty-nine cities, all named from himself, or some of his relations, (see Appian in Syriac. p. 124.) The aera of Seleucus (still in use among the eastern Christians) appears as late as the year 508, of Christ 196, on the medals of the Greek cities within the Parthian empire. See Moyle's works, vol. i. p. 273, &c., and M. Freret, Mem. de l'Academie, tom. xix.]

[Footnote 32: The modern Persians distinguish that period as the dynasty of the kings of the nations. See Plin. Hist. Nat. vi. 25.]

[Footnote 33: Euty chius (tom. i. p. 367, 371, 375) relates the siege of the island of Mesene in the Tigris, with some circumstances not unlike the story of Nysus and Scylla.]

[Footnote 34: Agathias, ii. 64, [and iv. p. 260.] The princes of Segestan defended their independence during many years. As romances generally transport to an ancient period the events of their own time, it is not impossible that the fabulous exploits of Rustan, Prince of Segestan, many have been grafted on this real history.]

[Footnote 35: We can scarcely attribute to the Persian monarchy the

sea-coast of Gedrosia or Macran, which extends along the Indian Ocean from Cape Jask (the promontory Capella) to Cape Goadel. In the time of Alexander, and probably many ages afterwards, it was thinly inhabited by a savage people of Ichthyophagi, or Fishermen, who knew no arts, who acknowledged no master, and who were divided by inhospitable deserts from the rest of the world. (See Arrian de Reb. Indicis.) In the twelfth century, the little town of Taiz (supposed by M. d'Anville to be the Teza of Ptolemy) was peopled and enriched by the resort of the Arabian merchants. (See Geographia Nubiens, p. 58, and d'Anville, Geographie Ancienne, tom. ii. p. 283.) In the last age, the whole country was divided between three princes, one Mahometan and two Idolaters, who maintained their independence against the successors of Shah Abbas. (Voyages de Tavernier, part i. l. v. p. 635.)]

[Footnote 36: Chardin, tom. iii c 1 2, 3.]

As soon as the ambitious mind of Artaxerxes had triumphed over the resistance of his vassals, he began to threaten the neighboring states, who, during the long slumber of his predecessors, had insulted Persia with impunity. He obtained some easy victories over the wild Scythians and the effeminate Indians; but the Romans were an enemy, who, by their past injuries and present power, deserved the utmost efforts of his arms. A forty years' tranquillity, the fruit of valor and moderation, had succeeded the victories of Trajan. During the period that elapsed from the accession of Marcus to the reign of Alexander, the Roman and the Parthian empires were twice engaged in war; and although the whole

strength of the Arsacides contended with a part only of the forces of Rome, the event was most commonly in favor of the latter. Macrinus, indeed, prompted by his precarious situation and pusillanimous temper, purchased a peace at the expense of near two millions of our money; [37] but the generals of Marcus, the emperor Severus, and his son, erected many trophies in Armenia, Mesopotamia, and Assyria. Among their exploits, the imperfect relation of which would have unseasonably interrupted the more important series of domestic revolutions, we shall only mention the repeated calamities of the two great cities of Seleucia and Ctesiphon.

[Footnote 37: Dion, l. xxviii. p. 1335.]

Seleucia, on the western bank of the Tigris, about forty-five miles to the north of ancient Babylon, was the capital of the Macedonian conquests in Upper Asia. [38] Many ages after the fall of their empire, Seleucia retained the genuine characters of a Grecian colony, arts, military virtue, and the love of freedom. The independent republic was governed by a senate of three hundred nobles; the people consisted of six hundred thousand citizens; the walls were strong, and as long as concord prevailed among the several orders of the state, they viewed with contempt the power of the Parthian: but the madness of faction was sometimes provoked to implore the dangerous aid of the common enemy, who was posted almost at the gates of the colony. [39] The Parthian monarchs, like the Mogul sovereigns of Hindostan, delighted in the pastoral life of their Scythian ancestors; and the Imperial camp was frequently

pitched in the plain of Ctesiphon, on the eastern bank of the Tigris, at the distance of only three miles from Seleucia. [40] The innumerable attendants on luxury and despotism resorted to the court, and the little village of Ctesiphon insensibly swelled into a great city. [41] Under the reign of Marcus, the Roman generals penetrated as far as Ctesiphon and Seleucia. They were received as friends by the Greek colony; they attacked as enemies the seat of the Parthian kings; yet both cities experienced the same treatment. The sack and conflagration of Seleucia, with the massacre of three hundred thousand of the inhabitants, tarnished the glory of the Roman triumph. [42] Seleucia, already exhausted by the neighborhood of a too powerful rival, sunk under the fatal blow; but Ctesiphon, in about thirty-three years, had sufficiently recovered its strength to maintain an obstinate siege against the emperor Severus. The city was, however, taken by assault; the king, who defended it in person, escaped with precipitation; a hundred thousand captives, and a rich booty, rewarded the fatigues of the Roman soldiers. [43] Notwithstanding these misfortunes, Ctesiphon succeeded to Babylon and to Seleucia, as one of the great capitals of the East. In summer, the monarch of Persia enjoyed at Ecbatana the cool breezes of the mountains of Media; but the mildness of the climate engaged him to prefer Ctesiphon for his winter residence.

[Footnote 38: For the precise situation of Babylon, Seleucia, Ctesiphon, Moian, and Bagdad, cities often confounded with each other, see an excellent Geographical Tract of M. d'Anville, in Mem. de l'Academie, tom. xxx.]

[Footnote 39: Tacit. Annal. xi. 42. Plin. Hist. Nat. vi. 26.]

[Footnote 40: This may be inferred from Strabo, l. xvi. p. 743.]

[Footnote 41: That most curious traveller, Bernier, who followed the camp of Aurengzebe from Delhi to Cashmir, describes with great accuracy the immense moving city. The guard of cavalry consisted of 35,000 men, that of infantry of 10,000. It was computed that the camp contained 150,000 horses, mules, and elephants; 50,000 camels, 50,000 oxen, and between 300,000 and 400,000 persons. Almost all Delhi followed the court, whose magnificence supported its industry.]

[Footnote 42: Dion, l. lxxi. p. 1178. Hist. August. p. 38. Eutrop. viii. 10 Euseb. in Chronic. Quadratus (quoted in the Augustan History) attempted to vindicate the Romans by alleging that the citizens of Seleucia had first violated their faith.]

[Footnote 43: Dion, l. lxxv. p. 1263. Herodian, l. iii. p. 120. Hist. August. p. 70.]

From these successful inroads the Romans derived no real or lasting benefit; nor did they attempt to preserve such distant conquests, separated from the provinces of the empire by a large tract of intermediate desert. The reduction of the kingdom of Osrhoene was an

acquisition of less splendor indeed, but of a far more solid advantage. That little state occupied the northern and most fertile part of Mesopotamia, between the Euphrates and the Tigris. Edessa, its capital, was situated about twenty miles beyond the former of those rivers; and the inhabitants, since the time of Alexander, were a mixed race of Greeks, Arabs, Syrians, and Armenians. [44] The feeble sovereigns of Osrhoene, placed on the dangerous verge of two contending empires, were attached from inclination to the Parthian cause; but the superior power of Rome exacted from them a reluctant homage, which is still attested by their medals. After the conclusion of the Parthian war under Marcus, it was judged prudent to secure some substantia, pledges of their doubtful fidelity. Forts were constructed in several parts of the country, and a Roman garrison was fixed in the strong town of Nisibis. During the troubles that followed the death of Commodus, the princes of Osrhoene attempted to shake off the yoke; but the stern policy of Severus confirmed their dependence, [45] and the perfidy of Caracalla completed the easy conquest. Abgarus, the last king of Edessa, was sent in chains to Rome, his dominions reduced into a province, and his capital dignified with the rank of colony; and thus the Romans, about ten years before the fall of the Parthian monarchy, obtained a firm and permanent establishment beyond the Euphrates. [46]

[Footnote 44: The polished citizens of Antioch called those of Edessa mixed barbarians. It was, however, some praise, that of the three dialects of the Syriac, the purest and most elegant (the Aramaean) was spoken at Edessa. This remark M. Bayer (Hist. Edess. p 5) has borrowed

from George of Malatia, a Syrian writer.]

[Footnote 45: Dion, l. lxxv. p. 1248, 1249, 1250. M. Bayer has neglected to use this most important passage.]

[Footnote 46: This kingdom, from Osrhoes, who gave a new name to the country, to the last Abgarus, had lasted 353 years. See the learned work of M. Bayer, *Historia Osrhoena et Edessena*.]

Prudence as well as glory might have justified a war on the side of Artaxerxes, had his views been confined to the defence or acquisition of a useful frontier. but the ambitious Persian openly avowed a far more extensive design of conquest; and he thought himself able to support his lofty pretensions by the arms of reason as well as by those of power. Cyrus, he alleged, had first subdued, and his successors had for a long time possessed, the whole extent of Asia, as far as the Propontis and the Aegean Sea; the provinces of Caria and Ionia, under their empire, had been governed by Persian satraps, and all Egypt, to the confines of Aethiopia, had acknowledged their sovereignty. [47] Their rights had been suspended, but not destroyed, by a long usurpation; and as soon as he received the Persian diadem, which birth and successful valor had placed upon his head, the first great duty of his station called upon him to restore the ancient limits and splendor of the monarchy. The Great King, therefore, (such was the haughty style of his embassies to the emperor Alexander,) commanded the Romans instantly to depart from all the provinces of his ancestors, and, yielding to the Persians the empire of

Asia, to content themselves with the undisturbed possession of Europe. This haughty mandate was delivered by four hundred of the tallest and most beautiful of the Persians; who, by their fine horses, splendid arms, and rich apparel, displayed the pride and greatness of their master. [48] Such an embassy was much less an offer of negotiation than a declaration of war. Both Alexander Severus and Artaxerxes, collecting the military force of the Roman and Persian monarchies, resolved in this important contest to lead their armies in person.

[Footnote 47: Xenophon, in the preface to the *Cyropaedia*, gives a clear and magnificent idea of the extent of the empire of Cyrus. Herodotus (l. iii. c. 79, &c.) enters into a curious and particular description of the twenty great Satrapies into which the Persian empire was divided by Darius Hystaspes.]

[Footnote 48: Herodian, vi. 209, 212.]

If we credit what should seem the most authentic of all records, an oration, still extant, and delivered by the emperor himself to the senate, we must allow that the victory of Alexander Severus was not inferior to any of those formerly obtained over the Persians by the son of Philip. The army of the Great King consisted of one hundred and twenty thousand horse, clothed in complete armor of steel; of seven hundred elephants, with towers filled with archers on their backs, and of eighteen hundred chariots armed with scythes. This formidable host, the like of which is not to be found in eastern history, and has

scarcely been imagined in eastern romance, [49] was discomfited in a great battle, in which the Roman Alexander proved himself an intrepid soldier and a skilful general. The Great King fled before his valor; an immense booty, and the conquest of Mesopotamia, were the immediate fruits of this signal victory. Such are the circumstances of this ostentatious and improbable relation, dictated, as it too plainly appears, by the vanity of the monarch, adorned by the unblushing servility of his flatterers, and received without contradiction by a distant and obsequious senate. [50] Far from being inclined to believe that the arms of Alexander obtained any memorable advantage over the Persians, we are induced to suspect that all this blaze of imaginary glory was designed to conceal some real disgrace.

[Footnote 49: There were two hundred scythed chariots at the battle of Arbela, in the host of Darius. In the vast army of Tigranes, which was vanquished by Lucullus, seventeen thousand horse only were completely armed. Antiochus brought fifty-four elephants into the field against the Romans: by his frequent wars and negotiations with the princes of India, he had once collected a hundred and fifty of those great animals; but it may be questioned whether the most powerful monarch of Hindostan ever formed a line of battle of seven hundred elephants. Instead of three or four thousand elephants, which the Great Mogul was supposed to possess, Tavernier (*Voyages*, part ii. l. i. p. 198) discovered, by a more accurate inquiry, that he had only five hundred for his baggage, and eighty or ninety for the service of war. The Greeks have varied with regard to the number which Porus brought into the field; but Quintus

Curtius, (viii. 13,) in this instance judicious and moderate, is contented with eighty-five elephants, distinguished by their size and strength. In Siam, where these animals are the most numerous and the most esteemed, eighteen elephants are allowed as a sufficient proportion for each of the nine brigades into which a just army is divided. The whole number, of one hundred and sixty-two elephants of war, may sometimes be doubled. Hist. des Voyages, tom. ix. p. 260. * Note: Compare Gibbon's note 10 to ch. lvii--M.]

[Footnote 50: Hist. August. p. 133. * Note: See M. Guizot's note, p. 267. According to the Persian authorities Ardeschir extended his conquests to the Euphrates. Malcolm i. 71.--M.]

Our suspicions are confirmed by the authority of a contemporary historian, who mentions the virtues of Alexander with respect, and his faults with candor. He describes the judicious plan which had been formed for the conduct of the war. Three Roman armies were destined to invade Persia at the same time, and by different roads. But the operations of the campaign, though wisely concerted, were not executed either with ability or success. The first of these armies, as soon as it had entered the marshy plains of Babylon, towards the artificial conflux of the Euphrates and the Tigris, [51] was encompassed by the superior numbers, and destroyed by the arrows of the enemy. The alliance of Chosroes, king of Armenia, [52] and the long tract of mountainous country, in which the Persian cavalry was of little service, opened a secure entrance into the heart of Media, to the second of the Roman

armies. These brave troops laid waste the adjacent provinces, and by several successful actions against Artaxerxes, gave a faint color to the emperor's vanity. But the retreat of this victorious army was imprudent, or at least unfortunate. In repassing the mountains, great numbers of soldiers perished by the badness of the roads, and the severity of the winter season. It had been resolved, that whilst these two great detachments penetrated into the opposite extremes of the Persian dominions, the main body, under the command of Alexander himself, should support their attack, by invading the centre of the kingdom. But the unexperienced youth, influenced by his mother's counsels, and perhaps by his own fears, deserted the bravest troops, and the fairest prospect of victory; and after consuming in Mesopotamia an inactive and inglorious summer, he led back to Antioch an army diminished by sickness, and provoked by disappointment. The behavior of Artaxerxes had been very different. Flying with rapidity from the hills of Media to the marshes of the Euphrates, he had everywhere opposed the invaders in person; and in either fortune had united with the ablest conduct the most undaunted resolution. But in several obstinate engagements against the veteran legions of Rome, the Persian monarch had lost the flower of his troops. Even his victories had weakened his power. The favorable opportunities of the absence of Alexander, and of the confusions that followed that emperor's death, presented themselves in vain to his ambition. Instead of expelling the Romans, as he pretended, from the continent of Asia, he found himself unable to wrest from their hands the little province of Mesopotamia. [53]

[Footnote 51: M. de Tillemont has already observed, that Herodian's geography is somewhat confused.]

[Footnote 52: Moses of Chorene (Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 71) illustrates this invasion of Media, by asserting that Chosroes, king of Armenia, defeated Artaxerxes, and pursued him to the confines of India. The exploits of Chosroes have been magnified; and he acted as a dependent ally to the Romans.]

[Footnote 53: For the account of this war, see Herodian, l. vi. p. 209, 212. The old abbreviators and modern compilers have blindly followed the Augustan History.]

The reign of Artaxerxes, which, from the last defeat of the Parthians, lasted only fourteen years, forms a memorable aera in the history of the East, and even in that of Rome. His character seems to have been marked by those bold and commanding features, that generally distinguish the princes who conquer, from those who inherit an empire. Till the last period of the Persian monarchy, his code of laws was respected as the groundwork of their civil and religious policy. [54] Several of his sayings are preserved. One of them in particular discovers a deep insight into the constitution of government. "The authority of the prince," said Artaxerxes, "must be defended by a military force; that force can only be maintained by taxes; all taxes must, at last, fall upon agriculture; and agriculture can never flourish except under the protection of justice and moderation." [55] Artaxerxes bequeathed his new

empire, and his ambitious designs against the Romans, to Sapor, a son not unworthy of his great father; but those designs were too extensive for the power of Persia, and served only to involve both nations in a long series of destructive wars and reciprocal calamities.

[Footnote 54: Euty chius, tom. ii. p. 180, vers. Pocock. The great Chosroes Noushirwan sent the code of Artaxerxes to all his satraps, as the invariable rule of their conduct.]

[Footnote 55: D'Herbelot, Bibliotheque Orientale, au mot Ardshir. We may observe, that after an ancient period of fables, and a long interval of darkness, the modern histories of Persia begin to assume an air of truth with the dynasty of Sassanides. Compare Malcolm, i. 79.--M.]

The Persians, long since civilized and corrupted, were very far from possessing the martial independence, and the intrepid hardiness, both of mind and body, which have rendered the northern barbarians masters of the world. The science of war, that constituted the more rational force of Greece and Rome, as it now does of Europe, never made any considerable progress in the East. Those disciplined evolutions which harmonize and animate a confused multitude, were unknown to the Persians. They were equally unskilled in the arts of constructing, besieging, or defending regular fortifications. They trusted more to their numbers than to their courage; more to their courage than to their discipline. The infantry was a half-armed, spiritless crowd of peasants,

levied in haste by the allurements of plunder, and as easily dispersed by a victory as by a defeat. The monarch and his nobles transported into the camp the pride and luxury of the seraglio. Their military operations were impeded by a useless train of women, eunuchs, horses, and camels; and in the midst of a successful campaign, the Persian host was often separated or destroyed by an unexpected famine. [56]

[Footnote 56: Herodian, l. vi. p. 214. Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xxiii.

c. 6. Some differences may be observed between the two historians, the natural effects of the changes produced by a century and a half.]

But the nobles of Persia, in the bosom of luxury and despotism, preserved a strong sense of personal gallantry and national honor. From the age of seven years they were taught to speak truth, to shoot with the bow, and to ride; and it was universally confessed, that in the two last of these arts, they had made a more than common proficiency. [57] The most distinguished youth were educated under the monarch's eye, practised their exercises in the gate of his palace, and were severely trained up to the habits of temperance and obedience, in their long and laborious parties of hunting. In every province, the satrap maintained a like school of military virtue. The Persian nobles (so natural is the idea of feudal tenures) received from the king's bounty lands and houses, on the condition of their service in war. They were ready on the first summons to mount on horseback, with a martial and splendid train of followers, and to join the numerous bodies of guards, who were carefully selected from among the most robust slaves, and the bravest

adventures of Asia. These armies, both of light and of heavy cavalry, equally formidable by the impetuosity of their charge and the rapidity of their motions, threatened, as an impending cloud, the eastern provinces of the declining empire of Rome. [58]

[Footnote 57: The Persians are still the most skilful horsemen, and their horses the finest in the East.]

[Footnote 58: From Herodotus, Xenophon, Herodian, Ammianus, Chardin, &c., I have extracted such probable accounts of the Persian nobility, as seem either common to every age, or particular to that of the Sassanides.]