

Chapter XI: Reign Of Claudius, Defeat Of The Goths.--Part III.

After a successful expedition against the Gothic plunderers of Asia, the Palmyrenian prince returned to the city of Emesa in Syria. Invincible in war, he was there cut off by domestic treason, and his favorite amusement of hunting was the cause, or at least the occasion, of his death. [56] His nephew Maeonius presumed to dart his javelin before that of his uncle; and though admonished of his error, repeated the same insolence. As a monarch, and as a sportsman, Odenathus was provoked, took away his horse, a mark of ignominy among the barbarians, and chastised the rash youth by a short confinement. The offence was soon forgot, but the punishment was remembered; and Maeonius, with a few daring associates, assassinated his uncle in the midst of a great entertainment. Herod, the son of Odenathus, though not of Zenobia, a young man of a soft and effeminate temper, [57] was killed with his father. But Maeonius obtained only the pleasure of revenge by this bloody deed. He had scarcely time to assume the title of Augustus, before he was sacrificed by Zenobia to the memory of her husband. [58]

[Footnote 56: Hist. August. p. 192, 193. Zosimus, l. i. p. 36. Zonaras, l. xii p. 633. The last is clear and probable, the others confused and inconsistent. The text of Syncellus, if not corrupt, is absolute nonsense.]

[Footnote 57: Odenathus and Zenobia often sent him, from the spoils of the enemy, presents of gems and toys, which he received with

infinite delight.]

[Footnote 58: Some very unjust suspicions have been cast on Zenobia, as if she was accessory to her husband's death.]

With the assistance of his most faithful friends, she immediately filled the vacant throne, and governed with manly counsels Palmyra, Syria, and the East, above five years. By the death of Odenathus, that authority was at an end which the senate had granted him only as a personal distinction; but his martial widow, disdainng both the senate and Gallienus, obliged one of the Roman generals, who was sent against her, to retreat into Europe, with the loss of his army and his reputation.

[59] Instead of the little passions which so frequently perplex a female reign, the steady administration of Zenobia was guided by the most judicious maxims of policy. If it was expedient to pardon, she could calm her resentment; if it was necessary to punish, she could impose silence on the voice of pity. Her strict economy was accused of avarice; yet on every proper occasion she appeared magnificent and liberal. The neighboring states of Arabia, Armenia, and Persia, dreaded her enmity, and solicited her alliance. To the dominions of Odenathus, which extended from the Euphrates to the frontiers of Bithynia, his widow added the inheritance of her ancestors, the populous and fertile kingdom of Egypt. [60] [601] The emperor Claudius acknowledged her merit, and was content, that, while he pursued the Gothic war, she should assert the dignity of the empire in the East. [61] The conduct, however, of Zenobia, was attended with some ambiguity; not is it unlikely that she had

conceived the design of erecting an independent and hostile monarchy. She blended with the popular manners of Roman princes the stately pomp of the courts of Asia, and exacted from her subjects the same adoration that was paid to the successor of Cyrus. She bestowed on her three sons [61] a Latin education, and often showed them to the troops adorned with the Imperial purple. For herself she reserved the diadem, with the splendid but doubtful title of Queen of the East.

[Footnote 59: Hist. August. p. 180, 181.]

[Footnote 60: See, in Hist. August. p. 198, Aurelian's testimony to her merit; and for the conquest of Egypt, Zosimus, l. i. p. 39, 40.]

[Footnote 601: This seems very doubtful. Claudius, during all his reign, is represented as emperor on the medals of Alexandria, which are very numerous. If Zenobia possessed any power in Egypt, it could only have been at the beginning of the reign of Aurelian. The same circumstance throws great improbability on her conquests in Galatia. Perhaps Zenobia administered Egypt in the name of Claudius, and emboldened by the death of that prince, subjected it to her own power.--G.]

[Footnote 61: Timolaus, Herennianus, and Vaballathus. It is supposed that the two former were already dead before the war. On the last, Aurelian bestowed a small province of Armenia, with the title of King; several of his medals are still extant. See Tillemont, tom. 3, p. 1190.]

When Aurelian passed over into Asia, against an adversary whose sex alone could render her an object of contempt, his presence restored obedience to the province of Bithynia, already shaken by the arms and intrigues of Zenobia. [62] Advancing at the head of his legions, he accepted the submission of Ancyra, and was admitted into Tyana, after an obstinate siege, by the help of a perfidious citizen. The generous though fierce temper of Aurelian abandoned the traitor to the rage of the soldiers; a superstitious reverence induced him to treat with lenity the countrymen of Apollonius the philosopher. [63] Antioch was deserted on his approach, till the emperor, by his salutary edicts, recalled the fugitives, and granted a general pardon to all, who, from necessity rather than choice, had been engaged in the service of the Palmyrenian Queen. The unexpected mildness of such a conduct reconciled the minds of the Syrians, and as far as the gates of Emesa, the wishes of the people seconded the terror of his arms. [64]

[Footnote 62: Zosimus, l. i. p. 44.]

[Footnote 63: Vopiscus (in Hist. August. p. 217) gives us an authentic letter and a doubtful vision, of Aurelian. Apollonius of Tyana was born about the same time as Jesus Christ. His life (that of the former) is related in so fabulous a manner by his disciples, that we are at a loss to discover whether he was a sage, an impostor, or a fanatic.]

[Footnote 64: Zosimus, l. i. p. 46.]

Zenobia would have ill deserved her reputation, had she indolently permitted the emperor of the West to approach within a hundred miles of her capital. The fate of the East was decided in two great battles; so similar in almost every circumstance, that we can scarcely distinguish them from each other, except by observing that the first was fought near Antioch, [65] and the second near Emesa. [66] In both the queen of Palmyra animated the armies by her presence, and devolved the execution of her orders on Zabdas, who had already signalized his military talents by the conquest of Egypt. The numerous forces of Zenobia consisted for the most part of light archers, and of heavy cavalry clothed in complete steel. The Moorish and Illyrian horse of Aurelian were unable to sustain the ponderous charge of their antagonists. They fled in real or affected disorder, engaged the Palmyrenians in a laborious pursuit, harassed them by a desultory combat, and at length discomfited this impenetrable but unwieldy body of cavalry. The light infantry, in the mean time, when they had exhausted their quivers, remaining without protection against a closer onset, exposed their naked sides to the swords of the legions. Aurelian had chosen these veteran troops, who were usually stationed on the Upper Danube, and whose valor had been severely tried in the Alemannic war. [67] After the defeat of Emesa, Zenobia found it impossible to collect a third army. As far as the frontier of Egypt, the nations subject to her empire had joined the standard of the conqueror, who detached Probus, the bravest of his generals, to possess himself of the Egyptian provinces. Palmyra was the last resource of the widow of Odenathus. She retired within the walls of her capital, made every preparation for a vigorous resistance, and declared, with the

intrepidity of a heroine, that the last moment of her reign and of her life should be the same.

[Footnote 65: At a place called Immae. Eutropius, Sextus Rufus, and Jerome, mention only this first battle.]

[Footnote 66: Vopiscus (in Hist. August. p. 217) mentions only the second.]

[Footnote 67: Zosimus, l. i. p. 44--48. His account of the two battles is clear and circumstantial.]

Amid the barren deserts of Arabia, a few cultivated spots rise like islands out of the sandy ocean. Even the name of Tadmor, or Palmyra, by its signification in the Syriac as well as in the Latin language, denoted the multitude of palm-trees which afforded shade and verdure to that temperate region. The air was pure, and the soil, watered by some invaluable springs, was capable of producing fruits as well as corn. A place possessed of such singular advantages, and situated at a convenient distance [68] between the Gulf of Persia and the Mediterranean, was soon frequented by the caravans which conveyed to the nations of Europe a considerable part of the rich commodities of India. Palmyra insensibly increased into an opulent and independent city, and connecting the Roman and the Parthian monarchies by the mutual benefits of commerce, was suffered to observe an humble neutrality, till at length, after the victories of Trajan, the little republic sunk into the

bosom of Rome, and flourished more than one hundred and fifty years in the subordinate though honorable rank of a colony. It was during that peaceful period, if we may judge from a few remaining inscriptions, that the wealthy Palmyrenians constructed those temples, palaces, and porticos of Grecian architecture, whose ruins, scattered over an extent of several miles, have deserved the curiosity of our travellers. The elevation of Odenathus and Zenobia appeared to reflect new splendor on their country, and Palmyra, for a while, stood forth the rival of Rome: but the competition was fatal, and ages of prosperity were sacrificed to a moment of glory. [69]

[Footnote 68: It was five hundred and thirty-seven miles from Seleucia, and two hundred and three from the nearest coast of Syria, according to the reckoning of Pliny, who, in a few words, (Hist. Natur. v. 21,) gives an excellent description of Palmyra. * Note: Talmor, or Palmyra, was probably at a very early period the connecting link between the commerce of Tyre and Babylon. Heeren, Ideen, v. i. p. ii. p. 125. Tadmor was probably built by Solomon as a commercial station. Hist. of Jews, v. p. 271--M.]

[Footnote 69: Some English travellers from Aleppo discovered the ruins of Palmyra about the end of the last century. Our curiosity has since been gratified in a more splendid manner by Messieurs Wood and Dawkins. For the history of Palmyra, we may consult the masterly dissertation of Dr. Halley in the Philosophical Transactions: Lowthorp's Abridgment, vol. iii. p. 518.]

In his march over the sandy desert between Emesa and Palmyra, the emperor Aurelian was perpetually harassed by the Arabs; nor could he always defend his army, and especially his baggage, from those flying troops of active and daring robbers, who watched the moment of surprise, and eluded the slow pursuit of the legions. The siege of Palmyra was an object far more difficult and important, and the emperor, who, with incessant vigor, pressed the attacks in person, was himself wounded with a dart. "The Roman people," says Aurelian, in an original letter, "speak with contempt of the war which I am waging against a woman. They are ignorant both of the character and of the power of Zenobia. It is impossible to enumerate her warlike preparations, of stones, of arrows, and of every species of missile weapons. Every part of the walls is provided with two or three balistoe and artificial fires are thrown from her military engines. The fear of punishment has armed her with a desperate courage. Yet still I trust in the protecting deities of Rome, who have hitherto been favorable to all my undertakings." [70] Doubtful, however, of the protection of the gods, and of the event of the siege, Aurelian judged it more prudent to offer terms of an advantageous capitulation; to the queen, a splendid retreat; to the citizens, their ancient privileges. His proposals were obstinately rejected, and the refusal was accompanied with insult.

[Footnote 70: Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 218.]

The firmness of Zenobia was supported by the hope, that in a very short

time famine would compel the Roman army to repass the desert; and by the reasonable expectation that the kings of the East, and particularly the Persian monarch, would arm in the defence of their most natural ally. But fortune, and the perseverance of Aurelian, overcame every obstacle. The death of Sapor, which happened about this time, [71] distracted the councils of Persia, and the inconsiderable succors that attempted to relieve Palmyra, were easily intercepted either by the arms or the liberality of the emperor. From every part of Syria, a regular succession of convoys safely arrived in the camp, which was increased by the return of Probus with his victorious troops from the conquest of Egypt. It was then that Zenobia resolved to fly. She mounted the fleetest of her dromedaries, [72] and had already reached the banks of the Euphrates, about sixty miles from Palmyra, when she was overtaken by the pursuit of Aurelian's light horse, seized, and brought back a captive to the feet of the emperor. Her capital soon afterwards surrendered, and was treated with unexpected lenity. The arms, horses, and camels, with an immense treasure of gold, silver, silk, and precious stones, were all delivered to the conqueror, who, leaving only a garrison of six hundred archers, returned to Emesa, and employed some time in the distribution of rewards and punishments at the end of so memorable a war, which restored to the obedience of Rome those provinces that had renounced their allegiance since the captivity of Valerian.

[Footnote 71: From a very doubtful chronology I have endeavored to extract the most probable date.]

[Footnote 72: Hist. August. p. 218. Zosimus, l. i. p. 50. Though the camel is a heavy beast of burden, the dromedary, which is either of the same or of a kindred species, is used by the natives of Asia and Africa on all occasions which require celerity. The Arabs affirm, that he will run over as much ground in one day as their fleetest horses can perform in eight or ten. See Buffon, Hist. Naturelle, tom. xi. p. 222, and Shaw's Travels p. 167]

When the Syrian queen was brought into the presence of Aurelian, he sternly asked her, How she had presumed to rise in arms against the emperors of Rome! The answer of Zenobia was a prudent mixture of respect and firmness. "Because I disdained to consider as Roman emperors an Aureolus or a Gallienus. You alone I acknowledge as my conqueror and my sovereign." [73] But as female fortitude is commonly artificial, so it is seldom steady or consistent. The courage of Zenobia deserted her in the hour of trial; she trembled at the angry clamors of the soldiers, who called aloud for her immediate execution, forgot the generous despair of Cleopatra, which she had proposed as her model, and ignominiously purchased life by the sacrifice of her fame and her friends. It was to their counsels, which governed the weakness of her sex, that she imputed the guilt of her obstinate resistance; it was on their heads that she directed the vengeance of the cruel Aurelian. The fame of Longinus, who was included among the numerous and perhaps innocent victims of her fear, will survive that of the queen who betrayed, or the tyrant who condemned him. Genius and learning were incapable of moving a fierce unlettered soldier, but they had served to

elevate and harmonize the soul of Longinus. Without uttering a complaint, he calmly followed the executioner, pitying his unhappy mistress, and bestowing comfort on his afflicted friends. [74]

[Footnote 73: Pollio in Hist. August. p. 199.]

[Footnote 74: Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 219. Zosimus, l. i. p. 51.]

Returning from the conquest of the East, Aurelian had already crossed the Straits which divided Europe from Asia, when he was provoked by the intelligence that the Palmyrenians had massacred the governor and garrison which he had left among them, and again erected the standard of revolt. Without a moment's deliberation, he once more turned his face towards Syria. Antioch was alarmed by his rapid approach, and the helpless city of Palmyra felt the irresistible weight of his resentment. We have a letter of Aurelian himself, in which he acknowledges, [75] that old men, women, children, and peasants, had been involved in that dreadful execution, which should have been confined to armed rebellion; and although his principal concern seems directed to the reestablishment of a temple of the Sun, he discovers some pity for the remnant of the Palmyrenians, to whom he grants the permission of rebuilding and inhabiting their city. But it is easier to destroy than to restore. The seat of commerce, of arts, and of Zenobia, gradually sunk into an obscure town, a trifling fortress, and at length a miserable village. The present citizens of Palmyra, consisting of thirty or forty families, have erected their mud cottages within the spacious court of a

magnificent temple.

[Footnote 75: Hist. August. p. 219.]

Another and a last labor still awaited the indefatigable Aurelian; to suppress a dangerous though obscure rebel, who, during the revolt of Palmyra, had arisen on the banks of the Nile. Firmus, the friend and ally, as he proudly styled himself, of Odenathus and Zenobia, was no more than a wealthy merchant of Egypt. In the course of his trade to India, he had formed very intimate connections with the Saracens and the Blemmyes, whose situation on either coast of the Red Sea gave them an easy introduction into the Upper Egypt. The Egyptians he inflamed with the hope of freedom, and, at the head of their furious multitude, broke into the city of Alexandria, where he assumed the Imperial purple, coined money, published edicts, and raised an army, which, as he vainly boasted, he was capable of maintaining from the sole profits of his paper trade. Such troops were a feeble defence against the approach of Aurelian; and it seems almost unnecessary to relate, that Firmus was routed, taken, tortured, and put to death. [76] Aurelian might now congratulate the senate, the people, and himself, that in little more than three years, he had restored universal peace and order to the Roman world.

[Footnote 76: See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 220, 242. As an instance of luxury, it is observed, that he had glass windows. He was remarkable for his strength and appetite, his courage and dexterity.

From the letter of Aurelian, we may justly infer, that Firmus was the last of the rebels, and consequently that Tetricus was already suppressed.]

Since the foundation of Rome, no general had more nobly deserved a triumph than Aurelian; nor was a triumph ever celebrated with superior pride and magnificence. [77] The pomp was opened by twenty elephants, four royal tigers, and above two hundred of the most curious animals from every climate of the North, the East, and the South. They were followed by sixteen hundred gladiators, devoted to the cruel amusement of the amphitheatre. The wealth of Asia, the arms and ensigns of so many conquered nations, and the magnificent plate and wardrobe of the Syrian queen, were disposed in exact symmetry or artful disorder. The ambassadors of the most remote parts of the earth, of Aethiopia, Arabia, Persia, Bactriana, India, and China, all remarkable by their rich or singular dresses, displayed the fame and power of the Roman emperor, who exposed likewise to the public view the presents that he had received, and particularly a great number of crowns of gold, the offerings of grateful cities.

The victories of Aurelian were attested by the long train of captives who reluctantly attended his triumph, Goths, Vandals, Sarmatians, Alemanni, Franks, Gauls, Syrians, and Egyptians. Each people was distinguished by its peculiar inscription, and the title of Amazons was bestowed on ten martial heroines of the Gothie nation who had been taken in arms. [78] But every eye, disregarding the crowd of captives, was

fixed on the emperor Tetricus and the queen of the East. The former, as well as his son, whom he had created Augustus, was dressed in Gallic trousers, [79] a saffron tunic, and a robe of purple. The beautiful figure of Zenobia was confined by fetters of gold; a slave supported the gold chain which encircled her neck, and she almost fainted under the intolerable weight of jewels. She preceded on foot the magnificent chariot, in which she once hoped to enter the gates of Rome. It was followed by two other chariots, still more sumptuous, of Odenathus and of the Persian monarch. The triumphal car of Aurelian (it had formerly been used by a Gothic king) was drawn, on this memorable occasion, either by four stags or by four elephants. [80] The most illustrious of the senate, the people, and the army closed the solemn procession. Unfeigned joy, wonder, and gratitude, swelled the acclamations of the multitude; but the satisfaction of the senate was clouded by the appearance of Tetricus; nor could they suppress a rising murmur, that the haughty emperor should thus expose to public ignominy the person of a Roman and a magistrate. [81]

[Footnote 77: See the triumph of Aurelian, described by Vopiscus. He relates the particulars with his usual minuteness; and, on this occasion, they happen to be interesting. Hist. August. p. 220.]

[Footnote 78: Among barbarous nations, women have often combated by the side of their husbands. But it is almost impossible that a society of Amazons should ever have existed either in the old or new world. *

Note: Klaproth's theory on the origin of such traditions is at least

recommended by its ingenuity. The males of a tribe having gone out on a marauding expedition, and having been cut off to a man, the females may have endeavored, for a time, to maintain their independence in their camp village, till their children grew up. Travels, ch. xxx. Eng. Trans--M.]

[Footnote 79: The use of braccoe, breeches, or trousers, was still considered in Italy as a Gallic and barbarian fashion. The Romans, however, had made great advances towards it. To encircle the legs and thighs with fascioe, or bands, was understood, in the time of Pompey and Horace, to be a proof of ill health or effeminacy. In the age of Trajan, the custom was confined to the rich and luxurious. It gradually was adopted by the meanest of the people. See a very curious note of Casaubon, ad Sueton. in August. c. 82.]

[Footnote 80: Most probably the former; the latter seen on the medals of Aurelian, only denote (according to the learned Cardinal Norris) an oriental victory.]

[Footnote 81: The expression of Calphurnius, (Eclog. i. 50) *Nullos decet captiva triumphos*, as applied to Rome, contains a very manifest allusion and censure.]

But however, in the treatment of his unfortunate rivals, Aurelian might indulge his pride, he behaved towards them with a generous clemency, which was seldom exercised by the ancient conquerors. Princes who,

without success, had defended their throne or freedom, were frequently strangled in prison, as soon as the triumphal pomp ascended the Capitol. These usurpers, whom their defeat had convicted of the crime of treason, were permitted to spend their lives in affluence and honorable repose.

The emperor presented Zenobia with an elegant villa at Tibur, or Tivoli, about twenty miles from the capital; the Syrian queen insensibly sunk into a Roman matron, her daughters married into noble families, and her race was not yet extinct in the fifth century. [82] Tetricus and his son were reinstated in their rank and fortunes. They erected on the Caelian hill a magnificent palace, and as soon as it was finished, invited Aurelian to supper. On his entrance, he was agreeably surprised with a picture which represented their singular history. They were delineated offering to the emperor a civic crown and the sceptre of Gaul, and again receiving at his hands the ornaments of the senatorial dignity. The father was afterwards invested with the government of Lucania, [83] and Aurelian, who soon admitted the abdicated monarch to his friendship and conversation, familiarly asked him, Whether it were not more desirable to administer a province of Italy, than to reign beyond the Alps. The son long continued a respectable member of the senate; nor was there any one of the Roman nobility more esteemed by Aurelian, as well as by his successors. [84]

[Footnote 82: Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 199. Hieronym. in Chron. Prosper in Chron. Baronius supposes that Zenobius, bishop of Florence in the time of St. Ambrose, was of her family.]

[Footnote 83: Vopisc. in Hist. August. p. 222. Eutropius, ix. 13. Victor Junior. But Pollio, in Hist. August. p. 196, says, that Tetricus was made corrector of all Italy.]

[Footnote 84: Hist. August. p. 197.]

So long and so various was the pomp of Aurelian's triumph, that although it opened with the dawn of day, the slow majesty of the procession ascended not the Capitol before the ninth hour; and it was already dark when the emperor returned to the palace. The festival was protracted by theatrical representations, the games of the circus, the hunting of wild beasts, combats of gladiators, and naval engagements. Liberal donatives were distributed to the army and people, and several institutions, agreeable or beneficial to the city, contributed to perpetuate the glory of Aurelian. A considerable portion of his oriental spoils was consecrated to the gods of Rome; the Capitol, and every other temple, glittered with the offerings of his ostentatious piety; and the temple of the Sun alone received above fifteen thousand pounds of gold. [85] This last was a magnificent structure, erected by the emperor on the side of the Quirinal hill, and dedicated, soon after the triumph, to that deity whom Aurelian adored as the parent of his life and fortunes. His mother had been an inferior priestess in a chapel of the Sun; a peculiar devotion to the god of Light was a sentiment which the fortunate peasant imbibed in his infancy; and every step of his elevation, every victory of his reign, fortified superstition by

gratitude. [86]

[Footnote 85: Vopiscus in *Hist. August.* 222. Zosimus, l. i. p. 56. He placed in it the images of Belus and of the Sun, which he had brought from Palmyra. It was dedicated in the fourth year of his reign, (Euseb in *Chron.*,) but was most assuredly begun immediately on his accession.]

[Footnote 86: See, in the *Augustan History*, p. 210, the omens of his fortune. His devotion to the Sun appears in his letters, on his medals, and is mentioned in the *Caesars of Julian*. *Commentaire de Spanheim*, p. 109.]

The arms of Aurelian had vanquished the foreign and domestic foes of the republic. We are assured, that, by his salutary rigor, crimes and factions, mischievous arts and pernicious connivance, the luxurious growth of a feeble and oppressive government, were eradicated throughout the Roman world. [87] But if we attentively reflect how much swifter is the progress of corruption than its cure, and if we remember that the years abandoned to public disorders exceeded the months allotted to the martial reign of Aurelian, we must confess that a few short intervals of peace were insufficient for the arduous work of reformation. Even his attempt to restore the integrity of the coin was opposed by a formidable insurrection. The emperor's vexation breaks out in one of his private letters. "Surely," says he, "the gods have decreed that my life should be a perpetual warfare. A sedition within the walls has just now given birth to a very serious civil war. The workmen of the mint, at the

instigation of Felicissimus, a slave to whom I had intrusted an employment in the finances, have risen in rebellion. They are at length suppressed; but seven thousand of my soldiers have been slain in the contest, of those troops whose ordinary station is in Dacia, and the camps along the Danube." [88] Other writers, who confirm the same fact, add likewise, that it happened soon after Aurelian's triumph; that the decisive engagement was fought on the Caelian hill; that the workmen of the mint had adulterated the coin; and that the emperor restored the public credit, by delivering out good money in exchange for the bad, which the people was commanded to bring into the treasury. [89]

[Footnote 87: Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 221.]

[Footnote 88: Hist. August. p. 222. Aurelian calls these soldiers Hiberi Riporiences Castriani, and Dacisci.]

[Footnote 89: Zosimus, l. i. p. 56. Eutropius, ix. 14. Aurel Victor.]

We might content ourselves with relating this extraordinary transaction, but we cannot dissemble how much in its present form it appears to us inconsistent and incredible. The debasement of the coin is indeed well suited to the administration of Gallienus; nor is it unlikely that the instruments of the corruption might dread the inflexible justice of Aurelian. But the guilt, as well as the profit, must have been confined to a very few; nor is it easy to conceive by what arts they could arm a people whom they had injured, against a monarch whom they had betrayed.

We might naturally expect that such miscreants should have shared the public detestation with the informers and the other ministers of oppression; and that the reformation of the coin should have been an action equally popular with the destruction of those obsolete accounts, which by the emperor's order were burnt in the forum of Trajan. [90] In an age when the principles of commerce were so imperfectly understood, the most desirable end might perhaps be effected by harsh and injudicious means; but a temporary grievance of such a nature can scarcely excite and support a serious civil war. The repetition of intolerable taxes, imposed either on the land or on the necessaries of life, may at last provoke those who will not, or who cannot, relinquish their country. But the case is far otherwise in every operation which, by whatsoever expedients, restores the just value of money. The transient evil is soon obliterated by the permanent benefit, the loss is divided among multitudes; and if a few wealthy individuals experience a sensible diminution of treasure, with their riches, they at the same time lose the degree of weight and importance which they derived from the possession of them. However Aurelian might choose to disguise the real cause of the insurrection, his reformation of the coin could furnish only a faint pretence to a party already powerful and discontented. Rome, though deprived of freedom, was distracted by faction. The people, towards whom the emperor, himself a plebeian, always expressed a peculiar fondness, lived in perpetual dissension with the senate, the equestrian order, and the Praetorian guards. [91] Nothing less than the firm though secret conspiracy of those orders, of the authority of the first, the wealth of the second, and the arms of the

third, could have displayed a strength capable of contending in battle with the veteran legions of the Danube, which, under the conduct of a martial sovereign, had achieved the conquest of the West and of the East.

[Footnote 90: Hist. August. p. 222. Aurel Victor.]

[Footnote 91: It already raged before Aurelian's return from Egypt. See Vipiscus, who quotes an original letter. Hist. August. p. 244.]

Whatever was the cause or the object of this rebellion, imputed with so little probability to the workmen of the mint, Aurelian used his victory with unrelenting rigor. [92] He was naturally of a severe disposition. A peasant and a soldier, his nerves yielded not easily to the impressions of sympathy, and he could sustain without emotion the sight of tortures and death. Trained from his earliest youth in the exercise of arms, he set too small a value on the life of a citizen, chastised by military execution the slightest offences, and transferred the stern discipline of the camp into the civil administration of the laws. His love of justice often became a blind and furious passion and whenever he deemed his own or the public safety endangered, he disregarded the rules of evidence, and the proportion of punishments. The unprovoked rebellion with which the Romans rewarded his services, exasperated his haughty spirit. The noblest families of the capital were involved in the guilt or suspicion of this dark conspiracy. A nasty spirit of revenge urged the bloody prosecution, and it proved fatal to one of the nephews of the

emperor. The the executioners (if we may use the expression of a contemporary poet) were fatigued, the prisons were crowded, and the unhappy senate lamented the death or absence of its most illustrious members. [93] Nor was the pride of Aurelian less offensive to that assembly than his cruelty. Ignorant or impatient of the restraints of civil institutions, he disdained to hold his power by any other title than that of the sword, and governed by right of conquest an empire which he had saved and subdued. [94]

[Footnote 92: Vopiscus in Hist. August p. 222. The two Victors. Eutropius ix. 14. Zosimus (l. i. p. 43) mentions only three senators, and placed their death before the eastern war.]

[Footnote 93: Nulla catenati feralis pompa senatus Carnificum lassabit opus; nec carcere pleno Infelix raros numerabit curia Patres. Calphurn. Eclog. i. 60.]

[Footnote 94: According to the younger Victor, he sometimes wore the diadem, Deus and Dominus appear on his medals.]

It was observed by one of the most sagacious of the Roman princes, that the talents of his predecessor Aurelian were better suited to the command of an army, than to the government of an empire. [95] Conscious of the character in which nature and experience had enabled him to excel, he again took the field a few months after his triumph. It was expedient to exercise the restless temper of the legions in some foreign

war, and the Persian monarch, exulting in the shame of Valerian, still braved with impunity the offended majesty of Rome. At the head of an army, less formidable by its numbers than by its discipline and valor, the emperor advanced as far as the Straits which divide Europe from Asia. He there experienced that the most absolute power is a weak defence against the effects of despair. He had threatened one of his secretaries who was accused of extortion; and it was known that he seldom threatened in vain. The last hope which remained for the criminal, was to involve some of the principal officers of the army in his danger, or at least in his fears. Artfully counterfeiting his master's hand, he showed them, in a long and bloody list, their own names devoted to death. Without suspecting or examining the fraud, they resolved to secure their lives by the murder of the emperor. On his march, between Byzantium and Heraclea, Aurelian was suddenly attacked by the conspirators, whose stations gave them a right to surround his person, and after a short resistance, fell by the hand of Mucapor, a general whom he had always loved and trusted. He died regretted by the army, detested by the senate, but universally acknowledged as a warlike and fortunate prince, the useful, though severe reformer of a degenerate state. [96]

[Footnote 95: It was the observation of Diocletian. See Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 224.]

[Footnote 96: Vopiscus in Hist. August. p. 221. Zosimus, l. i. p. 57. Eutrop ix. 15. The two Victors.]