When the Roman princes had lost sight of the senate and of their ancient capital, they easily forgot the origin and nature of their legal power. The civil offices of consul, of proconsul, of censor, and of tribune, by the union of which it had been formed, betrayed to the people its republican extraction. Those modest titles were laid aside; [97] and if they still distinguished their high station by the appellation of Emperor, or Imperator, that word was understood in a new and more dignified sense, and no longer denoted the general of the Roman armies, but the sovereign of the Roman world. The name of Emperor, which was at first of a military nature, was associated with another of a more servile kind. The epithet of Dominus, or Lord, in its primitive signification, was expressive, not of the authority of a prince over his subjects, or of a commander over his soldiers, but of the despotic power of a master over his domestic slaves. [98] Viewing it in that odious light, it had been rejected with abhorrence by the first Caesars. Their resistance insensibly became more feeble, and the name less odious; till at length the style of our Lord and Emperor was not only bestowed by flattery, but was regularly admitted into the laws and public monuments. Such lofty epithets were sufficient to elate and satisfy the most excessive vanity; and if the successors of Diocletian still declined the title of King, it seems to have been the effect not so much of their moderation as of their delicacy. Wherever the Latin tongue was in use, (and it was the language of government throughout the empire,) the Imperial title, as it was peculiar to themselves, conveyed a more

respectable idea than the name of king, which they must have shared with a hundred barbarian chieftains; or which, at the best, they could derive only from Romulus, or from Tarquin. But the sentiments of the East were very different from those of the West. From the earliest period of history, the sovereigns of Asia had been celebrated in the Greek language by the title of Basileus, or King; and since it was considered as the first distinction among men, it was soon employed by the servile provincials of the East, in their humble addresses to the Roman throne. [99] Even the attributes, or at least the titles, of the Divinity, were usurped by Diocletian and Maximian, who transmitted them to a succession of Christian emperors. [100] Such extravagant compliments, however, soon lose their impiety by losing their meaning; and when the ear is once accustomed to the sound, they are heard with indifference, as vague though excessive professions of respect.

[Footnote 97: See the 12th dissertation in Spanheim's excellent work de Usu Numismatum. From medals, inscriptions, and historians, he examines every title separately, and traces it from Augustus to the moment of its disappearing.]

[Footnote 98: Pliny (in Panegyr. c. 3, 55, &c.) speaks of Dominus with execration, as synonymous to Tyrant, and opposite to Prince. And the same Pliny regularly gives that title (in the tenth book of the epistles) to his friend rather than master, the virtuous Trajan. This strange contradiction puzzles the commentators, who think, and the translators, who can write.]

[Footnote 99: Synesius de Regno, edit. Petav. p. 15. I am indebted for this quotation to the Abbe de la Bleterie.]

[Footnote 100: Soe Vandale de Consecratione, p. 354, &c. It was customary for the emperors to mention (in the preamble of laws) their numen, sacreo majesty, divine oracles, &c. According to Tillemont, Gregory Nazianzen complains most bitterly of the profanation, especially when it was practised by an Arian emperor. * Note: In the time of the republic, says Hegewisch, when the consuls, the praetors, and the other magistrates appeared in public, to perform the functions of their office, their dignity was announced both by the symbols which use had consecrated, and the brilliant cortege by which they were accompanied. But this dignity belonged to the office, not to the individual; this pomp belonged to the magistrate, not to the man. * * The consul, followed, in the comitia, by all the senate, the praetors, the quaestors, the aediles, the lictors, the apparitors, and the heralds, on reentering his house, was served only by freedmen and by his slaves. The first emperors went no further. Tiberius had, for his personal attendance, only a moderate number of slaves, and a few freedmen. (Tacit. Ann. iv. 7.) But in proportion as the republican forms disappeared, one after another, the inclination of the emperors to environ themselves with personal pomp, displayed itself more and more. ** The magnificence and the ceremonial of the East were entirely introduced by Diocletian, and were consecrated by Constantine to the Imperial use. Thenceforth the palace, the court, the table, all the

personal attendance, distinguished the emperor from his subjects, still more than his superior dignity. The organization which Diocletian gave to his new court, attached less honor and distinction to rank than to services performed towards the members of the Imperial family. Hegewisch, Essai, Hist. sur les Finances Romains. Few historians have characterized, in a more philosophic manner, the influence of a new institution.--G.----It is singular that the son of a slave reduced the haughty aristocracy of Home to the offices of servitude.--M.]

From the time of Augustus to that of Diocletian, the Roman princes, conversing in a familiar manner among their fellow-citizens, were saluted only with the same respect that was usually paid to senators and magistrates. Their principal distinction was the Imperial or military robe of purple; whilst the senatorial garment was marked by a broad, and the equestrian by a narrow, band or stripe of the same honorable color. The pride, or rather the policy, of Diocletian, engaged that artful prince to introduce the stately magnificence of the court of Persia. [101] He ventured to assume the diadem, an ornament detested by the Romans as the odious ensign of royalty, and the use of which had been considered as the most desperate act of the madness of Caligula. It was no more than a broad white fillet set with pearls, which encircled the emperor's head. The sumptuous robes of Diocletian and his successors were of silk and gold; and it is remarked with indignation, that even their shoes were studded with the most precious gems. The access to their sacred person was every day rendered more difficult by the institution of new forms and ceremonies. The avenues of the palace were

strictly guarded by the various schools, as they began to be called, of domestic officers. The interior apartments were intrusted to the jealous vigilance of the eunuchs, the increase of whose numbers and influence was the most infallible symptom of the progress of despotism. When a subject was at length admitted to the Imperial presence, he was obliged, whatever might be his rank, to fall prostrate on the ground, and to adore, according to the eastern fashion, the divinity of his lord and master. [102] Diocletian was a man of sense, who, in the course of private as well as public life, had formed a just estimate both of himself and of mankind: nor is it easy to conceive, that in substituting the manners of Persia to those of Rome, he was seriously actuated by so mean a principle as that of vanity. He flattered himself, that an ostentation of splendor and luxury would subdue the imagination of the multitude; that the monarch would be less exposed to the rude license of the people and the soldiers, as his person was secluded from the public view; and that habits of submission would insensibly be productive of sentiments of veneration. Like the modesty affected by Augustus, the state maintained by Diocletian was a theatrical representation; but it must be confessed, that of the two comedies, the former was of a much more liberal and manly character than the latter. It was the aim of the one to disguise, and the object of the other to display, the unbounded power which the emperors possessed over the Roman world.

[Footnote 101: See Spanheim de Usu Numismat. Dissert. xii.]

[Footnote 102: Aurelius Victor. Eutropius, ix. 26. It appears by the

Panegyrists, that the Romans were soon reconciled to the name and ceremony of adoration.]

Ostentation was the first principle of the new system instituted by Diocletian. The second was division. He divided the empire, the provinces, and every branch of the civil as well as military administration. He multiplied the wheels of the machine of government, and rendered its operations less rapid, but more secure. Whatever advantages and whatever defects might attend these innovations, they must be ascribed in a very great degree to the first inventor; but as the new frame of policy was gradually improved and completed by succeeding princes, it will be more satisfactory to delay the consideration of it till the season of its full maturity and perfection. [103] Reserving, therefore, for the reign of Constantine a more exact picture of the new empire, we shall content ourselves with describing the principal and decisive outline, as it was traced by the hand of Diocletian. He had associated three colleagues in the exercise of the supreme power; and as he was convinced that the abilities of a single man were inadequate to the public defence, he considered the joint administration of four princes not as a temporary expedient, but as a fundamental law of the constitution. It was his intention, that the two elder princes should be distinguished by the use of the diadem, and the title of Augusti; that, as affection or esteem might direct their choice, they should regularly call to their assistance two subordinate colleagues; and that the Coesars, rising in their turn to the first rank, should supply an uninterrupted succession of emperors. The empire

was divided into four parts. The East and Italy were the most honorable, the Danube and the Rhine the most laborious stations. The former claimed the presence of the Augusti, the latter were intrusted to the administration of the Coesars. The strength of the legions was in the hands of the four partners of sovereignty, and the despair of successively vanquishing four formidable rivals might intimidate the ambition of an aspiring general. In their civil government, the emperors were supposed to exercise the undivided power of the monarch, and their edicts, inscribed with their joint names, were received in all the provinces, as promulgated by their mutual councils and authority. Notwithstanding these precautions, the political union of the Roman world was gradually dissolved, and a principle of division was introduced, which, in the course of a few years, occasioned the perpetual separation of the Eastern and Western Empires.

[Footnote 103: The innovations introduced by Diocletian are chiefly deduced, 1st, from some very strong passages in Lactantius; and, 2dly, from the new and various offices which, in the Theodosian code, appear already established in the beginning of the reign of Constantine.]

The system of Diocletian was accompanied with another very material disadvantage, which cannot even at present be totally overlooked; a more expensive establishment, and consequently an increase of taxes, and the oppression of the people. Instead of a modest family of slaves and freedmen, such as had contented the simple greatness of Augustus and Trajan, three or four magnificent courts were established in the various

parts of the empire, and as many Roman kings contended with each other and with the Persian monarch for the vain superiority of pomp and luxury. The number of ministers, of magistrates, of officers, and of servants, who filled the different departments of the state, was multiplied beyond the example of former times; and (if we may borrow the warm expression of a contemporary) "when the proportion of those who received, exceeded the proportion of those who contributed, the provinces were oppressed by the weight of tributes." [104] From this period to the extinction of the empire, it would be easy to deduce an uninterrupted series of clamors and complaints. According to his religion and situation, each writer chooses either Diocletian, or Constantine, or Valens, or Theodosius, for the object of his invectives; but they unanimously agree in representing the burden of the public impositions, and particularly the land tax and capitation, as the intolerable and increasing grievance of their own times. From such a concurrence, an impartial historian, who is obliged to extract truth from satire, as well as from panegyric, will be inclined to divide the blame among the princes whom they accuse, and to ascribe their exactions much less to their personal vices, than to the uniform system of their administration. [1041] The emperor Diocletian was indeed the author of that system; but during his reign, the growing evil was confined within the bounds of modesty and discretion, and he deserves the reproach of establishing pernicious precedents, rather than of exercising actual oppression. [105] It may be added, that his revenues were managed with prudent economy; and that after all the current expenses were discharged, there still remained in the Imperial treasury an ample

provision either for judicious liberality or for any emergency of the state.

[Footnote 104: Lactant. de M. P. c. 7.]

[Footnote 1041: The most curious document which has come to light since the publication of Gibbon's History, is the edict of Diocletian, published from an inscription found at Eskihissar, (Stratoniccia,) by Col. Leake. This inscription was first copied by Sherard, afterwards much more completely by Mr. Bankes. It is confirmed and illustrated by a more imperfect copy of the same edict, found in the Levant by a gentleman of Aix, and brought to this country by M. Vescovali. This edict was issued in the name of the four Caesars, Diocletian, Maximian, Constantius, and Galerius. It fixed a maximum of prices throughout the empire, for all the necessaries and commodities of life. The preamble insists, with great vehemence on the extortion and inhumanity of the venders and merchants. Quis enim adeo obtunisi (obtusi) pectores (is) et a sensu inhumanitatis extorris est qui ignorare potest immo non senserit in venalibus rebus quaevel in mercimoniis aguntur vel diurna urbium conversatione tractantur, in tantum se licen liam defusisse, ut effraenata libido rapien--rum copia nec annorum ubertatibus mitigaretur. The edict, as Col. Leake clearly shows, was issued A. C. 303. Among the articles of which the maximum value is assessed, are oil, salt, honey, butchers' meat, poultry, game, fish, vegetables, fruit the wages of laborers and artisans, schoolmasters and skins, boots and shoes, harness, timber, corn, wine, and beer, (zythus.) The depreciation in the

value of money, or the rise in the price of commodities, had been so great during the past century, that butchers' meat, which, in the second century of the empire, was in Rome about two denaril the pound, was now fixed at a maximum of eight. Col. Leake supposes the average price could not be less than four: at the same time the maximum of the wages of the agricultural laborers was twenty-five. The whole edict is, perhaps, the most gigantic effort of a blind though well-intentioned despotism, to control that which is, and ought to be, beyond the regulation of the government. See an Edict of Diocletian, by Col. Leake, London, 1826. Col. Leake has not observed that this Edict is expressly named in the treatise de Mort. Persecut. ch. vii. Idem cum variis iniquitatibus immensam faceret caritatem, legem pretiis rerum venalium statuere conatus.--M]

[Footnote 105: Indicta lex nova quae sane illorum temporum modestia tolerabilis, in perniciem processit. Aurel. Victor., who has treated the character of Diocletian with good sense, though in bad Latin.]

It was in the twenty first year of his reign that Diocletian executed his memorable resolution of abdicating the empire; an action more naturally to have been expected from the elder or the younger Antoninus, than from a prince who had never practised the lessons of philosophy either in the attainment or in the use of supreme power. Diocletian acquired the glory of giving to the world the first example of a resignation, [106] which has not been very frequently imitated by succeeding monarchs. The parallel of Charles the Fifth, however, will

naturally offer itself to our mind, not only since the eloquence of a modern historian has rendered that name so familiar to an English reader, but from the very striking resemblance between the characters of the two emperors, whose political abilities were superior to their military genius, and whose specious virtues were much less the effect of nature than of art. The abdication of Charles appears to have been hastened by the vicissitude of fortune; and the disappointment of his favorite schemes urged him to relinquish a power which he found inadequate to his ambition. But the reign of Diocletian had flowed with a tide of uninterrupted success; nor was it till after he had vanquished all his enemies, and accomplished all his designs, that he seems to have entertained any serious thoughts of resigning the empire. Neither Charles nor Diocletian were arrived at a very advanced period of life; since the one was only fifty-five, and the other was no more than fifty-nine years of age; but the active life of those princes, their wars and journeys, the cares of royalty, and their application to business, had already impaired their constitution, and brought on the infirmities of a premature old age. [107]

[Footnote 106: Solus omnium post conditum Romanum Imperium, qui extanto fastigio sponte ad privatae vitae statum civilitatemque remearet, Eutrop. ix. 28.]

[Footnote 107: The particulars of the journey and illness are taken from Laclantius, c. 17, who may sometimes be admitted as an evidence of public facts, though very seldom of private anecdotes.]

Notwithstanding the severity of a very cold and rainy winter, Diocletian left Italy soon after the ceremony of his triumph, and began his progress towards the East round the circuit of the Illyrian provinces. From the inclemency of the weather, and the fatigue of the journey, he soon contracted a slow illness; and though he made easy marches, and was generally carried in a close litter, his disorder, before he arrived at Nicomedia, about the end of the summer, was become very serious and alarming. During the whole winter he was confined to his palace: his danger inspired a general and unaffected concern; but the people could only judge of the various alterations of his health, from the joy or consternation which they discovered in the countenances and behavior of his attendants. The rumor of his death was for some time universally believed, and it was supposed to be concealed with a view to prevent the troubles that might have happened during the absence of the Caesar Galerius. At length, however, on the first of March, Diocletian once more appeared in public, but so pale and emaciated, that he could scarcely have been recognized by those to whom his person was the most familiar. It was time to put an end to the painful struggle, which he had sustained during more than a year, between the care of his health and that of his dignity. The former required indulgence and relaxation, the latter compelled him to direct, from the bed of sickness, the administration of a great empire. He resolved to pass the remainder of his days in honorable repose, to place his glory beyond the reach of fortune, and to relinquish the theatre of the world to his younger and more active associates. [108]

[Footnote 108: Aurelius Victor ascribes the abdication, which had been so variously accounted for, to two causes: 1st, Diocletian's contempt of ambition; and 2dly, His apprehension of impending troubles. One of the panegyrists (vi. 9) mentions the age and infirmities of Diocletian as a very natural reason for his retirement. * Note: Constantine (Orat. ad Sanct. c. 401) more than insinuated that derangement of mind, connected with the conflagration of the palace at Nicomedia by lightning, was the cause of his abdication. But Heinichen. in a very sensible note on this passage in Eusebius, while he admits that his long illness might produce a temporary depression of spirits, triumphantly appeals to the philosophical conduct of Diocletian in his retreat, and the influence which he still retained on public affairs.--M.]

The ceremony of his abdication was performed in a spacious plain, about three miles from Nicomedia. The emperor ascended a lofty throne, and in a speech, full of reason and dignity, declared his intention, both to the people and to the soldiers who were assembled on this extraordinary occasion. As soon as he had divested himself of his purple, he withdrew from the gazing multitude; and traversing the city in a covered chariot, proceeded, without delay, to the favorite retirement which he had chosen in his native country of Dalmatia. On the same day, which was the first of May, [109] Maximian, as it had been previously concerted, made his resignation of the Imperial dignity at Milan.

Even in the splendor of the Roman triumph, Diocletian had meditated

his design of abdicating the government. As he wished to secure the obedience of Maximian, he exacted from him either a general assurance that he would submit his actions to the authority of his benefactor, or a particular promise that he would descend from the throne, whenever he should receive the advice and the example. This engagement, though it was confirmed by the solemnity of an oath before the altar of the Capitoline Jupiter, [110] would have proved a feeble restraint on the fierce temper of Maximian, whose passion was the love of power, and who neither desired present tranquility nor future reputation. But he yielded, however reluctantly, to the ascendant which his wiser colleague had acquired over him, and retired, immediately after his abdication, to a villa in Lucania, where it was almost impossible that such an impatient spirit could find any lasting tranquility.

[Footnote 109: The difficulties as well as mistakes attending the dates both of the year and of the day of Diocletian's abdication are perfectly cleared up by Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p 525, note 19, and by Pagi ad annum.]

[Footnote 110: See Panegyr. Veter. vi. 9. The oration was pronounced after Maximian had resumed the purple.]

Diocletian, who, from a servile origin, had raised himself to the throne, passed the nine last years of his life in a private condition. Reason had dictated, and content seems to have accompanied, his retreat, in which he enjoyed, for a long time, the respect of those princes to

whom he had resigned the possession of the world. [111] It is seldom that minds long exercised in business have formed the habits of conversing with themselves, and in the loss of power they principally regret the want of occupation. The amusements of letters and of devotion, which afford so many resources in solitude, were incapable of fixing the attention of Diocletian; but he had preserved, or at least he soon recovered, a taste for the most innocent as well as natural pleasures, and his leisure hours were sufficiently employed in building, planting, and gardening. His answer to Maximian is deservedly celebrated. He was solicited by that restless old man to reassume the reins of government, and the Imperial purple. He rejected the temptation with a smile of pity, calmly observing, that if he could show Maximian the cabbages which he had planted with his own hands at Salona, he should no longer be urged to relinquish the enjoyment of happiness for the pursuit of power. [112] In his conversations with his friends, he frequently acknowledged, that of all arts, the most difficult was the art of reigning; and he expressed himself on that favorite topic with a degree of warmth which could be the result only of experience. "How often," was he accustomed to say, "is it the interest of four or five ministers to combine together to deceive their sovereign! Secluded from mankind by his exalted dignity, the truth is concealed from his knowledge; he can see only with their eyes, he hears nothing but their misrepresentations. He confers the most important offices upon vice and weakness, and disgraces the most virtuous and deserving among his subjects. By such infamous arts," added Diocletian, "the best and wisest princes are sold to the venal corruption of their courtiers." [113] A just estimate of

greatness, and the assurance of immortal fame, improve our relish for the pleasures of retirement; but the Roman emperor had filled too important a character in the world, to enjoy without alloy the comforts and security of a private condition. It was impossible that he could remain ignorant of the troubles which afflicted the empire after his abdication. It was impossible that he could be indifferent to their consequences. Fear, sorrow, and discontent, sometimes pursued him into the solitude of Salona. His tenderness, or at least his pride, was deeply wounded by the misfortunes of his wife and daughter; and the last moments of Diocletian were imbittered by some affronts, which Licinius and Constantine might have spared the father of so many emperors, and the first author of their own fortune. A report, though of a very doubtful nature, has reached our times, that he prudently withdrew himself from their power by a voluntary death. [114]

[Footnote 111: Eumenius pays him a very fine compliment: "At enim divinum illum virum, qui primus imperium et participavit et posuit, consilii et fact isui non poenitet; nec amisisse se putat quod sponte transcripsit. Felix beatusque vere quem vestra, tantorum principum, colunt privatum." Panegyr. Vet. vii. 15.]

[Footnote 112: We are obliged to the younger Victor for this celebrated item. Eutropius mentions the thing in a more general manner.]

[Footnote 113: Hist. August. p. 223, 224. Vopiscus had learned this conversation from his father.]

[Footnote 114: The younger Victor slightly mentions the report. But as Diocletian had disobliged a powerful and successful party, his memory has been loaded with every crime and misfortune. It has been affirmed that he died raving mad, that he was condemned as a criminal by the Roman senate, &c.]

Before we dismiss the consideration of the life and character of Diocletian, we may, for a moment, direct our view to the place of his retirement. Salona, a principal city of his native province of Dalmatia, was near two hundred Roman miles (according to the measurement of the public highways) from Aquileia and the confines of Italy, and about two hundred and seventy from Sirmium, the usual residence of the emperors whenever they visited the Illyrian frontier. [115] A miserable village still preserves the name of Salona; but so late as the sixteenth century, the remains of a theatre, and a confused prospect of broken arches and marble columns, continued to attest its ancient splendor. [116] About six or seven miles from the city, Diocletian constructed a magnificent palace, and we may infer, from the greatness of the work, how long he had meditated his design of abdicating the empire. The choice of a spot which united all that could contribute either to health or to luxury, did not require the partiality of a native. "The soil was dry and fertile, the air is pure and wholesome, and though extremely hot during the summer months, this country seldom feels those sultry and noxious winds, to which the coasts of Istria and some parts of Italy are exposed. The views from the palace are no less beautiful than the soil

and climate were inviting. Towards the west lies the fertile shore that stretches along the Adriatic, in which a number of small islands are scattered in such a manner, as to give this part of the sea the appearance of a great lake. On the north side lies the bay, which led to the ancient city of Salona; and the country beyond it, appearing in sight, forms a proper contrast to that more extensive prospect of water, which the Adriatic presents both to the south and to the east. Towards the north, the view is terminated by high and irregular mountains, situated at a proper distance, and in many places covered with villages, woods, and vineyards." [117]

[Footnote 115: See the Itiner. p. 269, 272, edit. Wessel.]

[Footnote 116: The Abate Fortis, in his Viaggio in Dalmazia, p. 43, (printed at Venice in the year 1774, in two small volumes in quarto,) quotes a Ms account of the antiquities of Salona, composed by Giambattista Giustiniani about the middle of the xvith century.]

[Footnote 117: Adam's Antiquities of Diocletian's Palace at Spalatro, p. 6. We may add a circumstance or two from the Abate Fortis: the little stream of the Hyader, mentioned by Lucan, produces most exquisite trout, which a sagacious writer, perhaps a monk, supposes to have been one of the principal reasons that determined Diocletian in the choice of his retirement. Fortis, p. 45. The same author (p. 38) observes, that a taste for agriculture is reviving at Spalatro; and that an experimental farm has lately been established near the city, by a society of

gentlemen.]

Though Constantine, from a very obvious prejudice, affects to mention the palace of Diocletian with contempt, [118] yet one of their successors, who could only see it in a neglected and mutilated state, celebrates its magnificence in terms of the highest admiration. [119] It covered an extent of ground consisting of between nine and ten English acres. The form was quadrangular, flanked with sixteen towers. Two of the sides were near six hundred, and the other two near seven hundred feet in length. The whole was constructed of a beautiful freestone, extracted from the neighboring quarries of Trau, or Tragutium, and very little inferior to marble itself. Four streets, intersecting each other at right angles, divided the several parts of this great edifice, and the approach to the principal apartment was from a very stately entrance, which is still denominated the Golden Gate. The approach was terminated by a peristylium of granite columns, on one side of which we discover the square temple of Aesculapius, on the other the octagon temple of Jupiter. The latter of those deities Diocletian revered as the patron of his fortunes, the former as the protector of his health.
By comparing the present remains with the precepts of Vitruvius, the several parts of the building, the baths, bed-chamber, the atrium, the basilica, and the Cyzicene, Corinthian, and Egyptian halls have been described with some degree of precision, or at least of probability. Their forms were various, their proportions just; but they all were attended with two imperfections, very repugnant to our modern notions of taste and conveniency. These stately rooms had neither windows nor

chimneys. They were lighted from the top, (for the building seems to have consisted of no more than one story,) and they received their heat by the help of pipes that were conveyed along the walls. The range of principal apartments was protected towards the south-west by a portico five hundred and seventeen feet long, which must have formed a very noble and delightful walk, when the beauties of painting and sculpture were added to those of the prospect.

[Footnote 118: Constantin. Orat. ad Coetum Sanct. c. 25. In this sermon, the emperor, or the bishop who composed it for him, affects to relate the miserable end of all the persecutors of the church.]

[Footnote 119: Constantin. Porphyr. de Statu Imper. p. 86.]

Had this magnificent edifice remained in a solitary country, it would have been exposed to the ravages of time; but it might, perhaps, have escaped the rapacious industry of man. The village of Aspalathus, [120] and, long afterwards, the provincial town of Spalatro, have grown out of its ruins. The Golden Gate now opens into the market-place. St. John the Baptist has usurped the honors of Aesculapius; and the temple of Jupiter, under the protection of the Virgin, is converted into the cathedral church.

For this account of Diocletian's palace we are principally indebted to an ingenious artist of our own time and country, whom a very liberal curiosity carried into the heart of Dalmatia. [121] But there is room

to suspect that the elegance of his designs and engraving has somewhat flattered the objects which it was their purpose to represent. We are informed by a more recent and very judicious traveller, that the awful ruins of Spalatro are not less expressive of the decline of the art than of the greatness of the Roman empire in the time of Diocletian. [122] If such was indeed the state of architecture, we must naturally believe that painting and sculpture had experienced a still more sensible decay. The practice of architecture is directed by a few general and even mechanical rules. But sculpture, and above all, painting, propose to themselves the imitation not only of the forms of nature, but of the characters and passions of the human soul. In those sublime arts, the dexterity of the hand is of little avail, unless it is animated by fancy, and guided by the most correct taste and observation.

[Footnote 120: D'Anville, Geographie Ancienne, tom. i. p. 162.]

[Footnote 121: Messieurs Adam and Clerisseau, attended by two draughtsmen visited Spalatro in the month of July, 1757. The magnificent work which their journey produced was published in London seven years afterwards.]

[Footnote 122: I shall quote the words of the Abate Fortis. "E'bastevolmente agli amatori dell' Architettura, e dell' Antichita, l'opera del Signor Adams, che a donato molto a que' superbi vestigi coll'abituale eleganza del suo toccalapis e del bulino. In generale la rozzezza del scalpello, e'l cattivo gusto del secolo vi gareggiano colla

magnificenz del fabricato." See Viaggio in Dalmazia, p. 40.]

It is almost unnecessary to remark, that the civil distractions of the empire, the license of the soldiers, the inroads of the barbarians, and the progress of despotism, had proved very unfavorable to genius, and even to learning. The succession of Illyrian princes restored the empire without restoring the sciences. Their military education was not calculated to inspire them with the love of letters; and even the mind of Diocletian, however active and capacious in business, was totally uninformed by study or speculation. The professions of law and physic are of such common use and certain profit, that they will always secure a sufficient number of practitioners, endowed with a reasonable degree of abilities and knowledge; but it does not appear that the students in those two faculties appeal to any celebrated masters who have flourished within that period. The voice of poetry was silent. History was reduced to dry and confused abridgments, alike destitute of amusement and instruction. A languid and affected eloquence was still retained in the pay and service of the emperors, who encouraged not any arts except those which contributed to the gratification of their pride, or the defence of their power. [123]

[Footnote 123: The orator Eumenius was secretary to the emperors Maximian and Constantius, and Professor of Rhetoric in the college of Autun. His salary was six hundred thousand sesterces, which, according to the lowest computation of that age, must have exceeded three thousand pounds a year. He generously requested the permission of employing it in

rebuilding the college. See his Oration De Restaurandis Scholis; which, though not exempt from vanity, may atone for his panegyrics.]

The declining age of learning and of mankind is marked, however, by the rise and rapid progress of the new Platonists. The school of Alexandria silenced those of Athens; and the ancient sects enrolled themselves under the banners of the more fashionable teachers, who recommended their system by the novelty of their method, and the austerity of their manners. Several of these masters, Ammonius, Plotinus, Amelius, and Porphyry, [124] were men of profound thought and intense application; but by mistaking the true object of philosophy, their labors contributed much less to improve than to corrupt the human understanding. The knowledge that is suited to our situation and powers, the whole compass of moral, natural, and mathematical science, was neglected by the new Platonists; whilst they exhausted their strength in the verbal disputes of metaphysics, attempted to explore the secrets of the invisible world, and studied to reconcile Aristotle with Plato, on subjects of which both these philosophers were as ignorant as the rest of mankind. Consuming their reason in these deep but unsubstantial meditations, their minds were exposed to illusions of fancy. They flattered themselves that they possessed the secret of disengaging the soul from its corporal prison; claimed a familiar intercourse with demons and spirits; and, by a very singular revolution, converted the study of philosophy into that of magic. The ancient sages had derided the popular superstition; after disguising its extravagance by the thin pretence of allegory, the disciples of Plotinus and Porphyry became its most zealous defenders.

As they agreed with the Christians in a few mysterious points of faith, they attacked the remainder of their theological system with all the fury of civil war. The new Platonists would scarcely deserve a place in the history of science, but in that of the church the mention of them will very frequently occur.

[Footnote 124: Porphyry died about the time of Diocletian's abdication. The life of his master Plotinus, which he composed, will give us the most complete idea of the genius of the sect, and the manners of its professors. This very curious piece is inserted in Fabricius Bibliotheca Graeca tom. iv. p. 88--148.]