

## Chapter XL: Reign Of Justinian.--Part III.

I need not explain that silk [61] is originally spun from the bowels of a caterpillar, and that it composes the golden tomb, from whence a worm emerges in the form of a butterfly. Till the reign of Justinian, the silk-worm who feed on the leaves of the white mulberry-tree were confined to China; those of the pine, the oak, and the ash, were common in the forests both of Asia and Europe; but as their education is more difficult, and their produce more uncertain, they were generally neglected, except in the little island of Ceos, near the coast of Attica. A thin gauze was procured from their webs, and this Cean manufacture, the invention of a woman, for female use, was long admired both in the East and at Rome. Whatever suspicions may be raised by the garments of the Medes and Assyrians, Virgil is the most ancient writer, who expressly mentions the soft wool which was combed from the trees of the Seres or Chinese; [62] and this natural error, less marvellous than the truth, was slowly corrected by the knowledge of a valuable insect, the first artificer of the luxury of nations. That rare and elegant luxury was censured, in the reign of Tiberius, by the gravest of the Romans; and Pliny, in affected though forcible language, has condemned the thirst of gain, which explores the last confines of the earth, for the pernicious purpose of exposing to the public eye naked draperies and transparent matrons. [63] [6311] A dress which showed the turn of the limbs, and color of the skin, might gratify vanity, or provoke desire; the silks which had been closely woven in China were sometimes unravelled by the Phoenician women, and the precious materials were

multiplied by a looser texture, and the intermixture of linen threads.

[64] Two hundred years after the age of Pliny, the use of pure, or even of mixed silks, was confined to the female sex, till the opulent citizens of Rome and the provinces were insensibly familiarized with the example of Elagabalus, the first who, by this effeminate habit, had sullied the dignity of an emperor and a man. Aurelian complained, that a pound of silk was sold at Rome for twelve ounces of gold; but the supply increased with the demand, and the price diminished with the supply. If accident or monopoly sometimes raised the value even above the standard of Aurelian, the manufacturers of Tyre and Berytus were sometimes compelled, by the operation of the same causes, to content themselves with a ninth part of that extravagant rate. [65] A law was thought necessary to discriminate the dress of comedians from that of senators; and of the silk exported from its native country the far greater part was consumed by the subjects of Justinian. They were still more intimately acquainted with a shell-fish of the Mediterranean, surnamed the silk-worm of the sea: the fine wool or hair by which the mother-of-pearl affixes itself to the rock is now manufactured for curiosity rather than use; and a robe obtained from the same singular materials was the gift of the Roman emperor to the satraps of Armenia.

[66]

[Footnote 61: In the history of insects (far more wonderful than Ovid's *Metamorphoses*) the silk-worm holds a conspicuous place. The bombyx of the Isle of Ceos, as described by Pliny, (*Hist. Natur.* xi. 26, 27, with the notes of the two learned Jesuits, Hardouin and Brotier,) may be

illustrated by a similar species in China, (Memoires sur les Chinois, tom. ii. p. 575--598;) but our silk-worm, as well as the white mulberry-tree, were unknown to Theophrastus and Pliny.]

[Footnote 62: Georgic. ii. 121. *Serica quando venerint in usum planissime non acio: suspicor tamen in Julii Caesaris aevo, nam ante non inenio*, says Justus Lipsius, (Excursus i. ad Tacit. Annal. ii. 32.) See Dion Cassius, (l. xliii. p. 358, edit. Reimar,) and Pausanius, (l. vi. p. 519,) the first who describes, however strangely, the Seric insect.]

[Footnote 63: *Tam longinquo orbe petitur, ut in publico matrona transluceat...ut denudet foeminas vestis*, (Plin. vi. 20, xi. 21.) Varro and Publius Syrus had already played on the *Toga vitrea, ventus texilis*, and *nebula linen*, (Horat. Sermon. i. 2, 101, with the notes of Torrentius and Dacier.)]

[Footnote 6311: Gibbon must have written transparent draperies and naked matrons. Through sometimes affected, he is never inaccurate.--M.]

[Footnote 64: On the texture, colors, names, and use of the silk, half silk, and linen garments of antiquity, see the profound, diffuse, and obscure researches of the great Salmasius, (in *Hist. August.* p. 127, 309, 310, 339, 341, 342, 344, 388--391, 395, 513,) who was ignorant of the most common trades of Dijon or Leyden.]

[Footnote 65: Flavius Vopiscus in Aurelian. c. 45, in *Hist. August.*

p. 224. See Salmasius ad Hist. Aug. p. 392, and Plinian. Exercitat. in Solinum, p. 694, 695. The Anecdotes of Procopius (c. 25) state a partial and imperfect rate of the price of silk in the time of Justinian.]

[Footnote 66: Procopius de Edit. l. iii. c. 1. These pinnes de mer are found near Smyrna, Sicily, Corsica, and Minorca; and a pair of gloves of their silk was presented to Pope Benedict XIV.]

A valuable merchandise of small bulk is capable of defraying the expense of land-carriage; and the caravans traversed the whole latitude of Asia in two hundred and forty-three days from the Chinese Ocean to the sea-coast of Syria. Silk was immediately delivered to the Romans by the Persian merchants, [67] who frequented the fairs of Armenia and Nisibis; but this trade, which in the intervals of truce was oppressed by avarice and jealousy, was totally interrupted by the long wars of the rival monarchies. The great king might proudly number Sogdiana, and even Serica, among the provinces of his empire; but his real dominion was bounded by the Oxus and his useful intercourse with the Sogdoites, beyond the river, depended on the pleasure of their conquerors, the white Huns, and the Turks, who successively reigned over that industrious people. Yet the most savage dominion has not extirpated the seeds of agriculture and commerce, in a region which is celebrated as one of the four gardens of Asia; the cities of Samarcand and Bochara are advantageously seated for the exchange of its various productions; and their merchants purchased from the Chinese, [68] the raw or manufactured silk which they transported into Persia for the use of the Roman empire.

In the vain capital of China, the Sogdian caravans were entertained as the suppliant embassies of tributary kingdoms, and if they returned in safety, the bold adventure was rewarded with exorbitant gain. But the difficult and perilous march from Samarcand to the first town of Shensi, could not be performed in less than sixty, eighty, or one hundred days: as soon as they had passed the Jaxartes they entered the desert; and the wandering hordes, unless they are restrained by armies and garrisons, have always considered the citizen and the traveller as the objects of lawful rapine. To escape the Tartar robbers, and the tyrants of Persia, the silk caravans explored a more southern road; they traversed the mountains of Thibet, descended the streams of the Ganges or the Indus, and patiently expected, in the ports of Guzerat and Malabar, the annual fleets of the West. [69] But the dangers of the desert were found less intolerable than toil, hunger, and the loss of time; the attempt was seldom renewed, and the only European who has passed that unfrequented way, applauds his own diligence, that, in nine months after his departure from Peking, he reached the mouth of the Indus. The ocean, however, was open to the free communication of mankind. From the great river to the tropic of Cancer, the provinces of China were subdued and civilized by the emperors of the North; they were filled about the time of the Christian aera with cities and men, mulberry-trees and their precious inhabitants; and if the Chinese, with the knowledge of the compass, had possessed the genius of the Greeks or Phoenicians, they might have spread their discoveries over the southern hemisphere. I am not qualified to examine, and I am not disposed to believe, their distant voyages to the Persian Gulf, or the Cape of Good Hope; but their

ancestors might equal the labors and success of the present race, and the sphere of their navigation might extend from the Isles of Japan to the Straits of Malacca, the pillars, if we may apply that name, of an Oriental Hercules. [70] Without losing sight of land, they might sail along the coast to the extreme promontory of Achin, which is annually visited by ten or twelve ships laden with the productions, the manufactures, and even the artificers of China; the Island of Sumatra and the opposite peninsula are faintly delineated [71] as the regions of gold and silver; and the trading cities named in the geography of Ptolemy may indicate, that this wealth was not solely derived from the mines. The direct interval between Sumatra and Ceylon is about three hundred leagues: the Chinese and Indian navigators were conducted by the flight of birds and periodical winds; and the ocean might be securely traversed in square-built ships, which, instead of iron, were sewed together with the strong thread of the cocoanut. Ceylon, Serendib, or Taprobana, was divided between two hostile princes; one of whom possessed the mountains, the elephants, and the luminous carbuncle, and the other enjoyed the more solid riches of domestic industry, foreign trade, and the capacious harbor of Trinquemale, which received and dismissed the fleets of the East and West. In this hospitable isle, at an equal distance (as it was computed) from their respective countries, the silk merchants of China, who had collected in their voyages aloes, cloves, nutmeg, and sandal wood, maintained a free and beneficial commerce with the inhabitants of the Persian Gulf. The subjects of the great king exalted, without a rival, his power and magnificence: and the Roman, who confounded their vanity by comparing his paltry coin with

a gold medal of the emperor Anastasius, had sailed to Ceylon, in an Aethiopian ship, as a simple passenger. [72]

[Footnote 67: Procopius, Persic. l. i. c. 20, l. ii. c. 25; Gothic.

l. iv. c. 17. Menander in Excerpt. Legat. p. 107. Of the Parthian or Persian empire, Isidore of Charax (in Stathmis Parthicis, p. 7, 8, in Hudson, Geograph. Minor. tom. ii.) has marked the roads, and Ammianus Marcellinus (l. xxiii. c. 6, p. 400) has enumerated the provinces. \*

Note: See St. Martin, Mem. sur l'Armenie, vol. ii. p. 41.--M.]

[Footnote 68: The blind admiration of the Jesuits confounds the different periods of the Chinese history. They are more critically distinguished by M. de Guignes, (Hist. des Huns, tom. i. part i. in the Tables, part ii. in the Geography. Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxxii. xxxvi. xlii. xliii.,) who discovers the gradual progress of the truth of the annals and the extent of the monarchy, till the Christian aera. He has searched, with a curious eye, the connections of the Chinese with the nations of the West; but these connections are slight, casual, and obscure; nor did the Romans entertain a suspicion that the Seres or Sinae possessed an empire not inferior to their own. \* Note: An abstract of the various opinions of the learned modern writers, Gosselin, Mannert, Lelewel, Malte-Brun, Heeren, and La Treille, on the Serica and the Thinae of the ancients, may be found in the new edition of Malte-Brun, vol. vi. p. 368, 382.--M.]

[Footnote 69: The roads from China to Persia and Hindostan may be investigated in the relations of Hackluyt and Thevenot, the ambassadors of Sharokh, Anthony Jenkinson, the Pere Greuber, &c. See likewise Hanway's Travels, vol. i. p. 345--357. A communication through Thibet has been lately explored by the English sovereigns of Bengal.]

[Footnote 70: For the Chinese navigation to Malacca and Achin, perhaps to Ceylon, see Renaudot, (on the two Mahometan Travellers, p. 8--11, 13--17, 141--157;) Dampier, (vol. ii. p. 136;) the Hist. Philosophique des deux Indes, (tom. i. p. 98,) and Hist. Generale des Voyages, (tom. vi. p. 201.)]

[Footnote 71: The knowledge, or rather ignorance, of Strabo, Pliny, Ptolemy, Arrian, Marcian, &c., of the countries eastward of Cape Comorin, is finely illustrated by D'Anville, (Antiquite Geographique de l'Inde, especially p. 161--198.) Our geography of India is improved by commerce and conquest; and has been illustrated by the excellent maps and memoirs of Major Rennel. If he extends the sphere of his inquiries with the same critical knowledge and sagacity, he will succeed, and may surpass, the first of modern geographers.]

[Footnote 72: The Taprobane of Pliny, (vi. 24,) Solinus, (c. 53,) and Salmas. Plinianae Exercitat., (p. 781, 782,) and most of the ancients, who often confound the islands of Ceylon and Sumatra, is more clearly described by Cosmas Indicopleustes; yet even the Christian topographer has exaggerated its dimensions. His information on the Indian and



Chinese trade is rare and curious, (l. ii. p. 138, l. xi. p. 337, 338, edit. Montfaucon.)]

As silk became of indispensable use, the emperor Justinian saw with concern that the Persians had occupied by land and sea the monopoly of this important supply, and that the wealth of his subjects was continually drained by a nation of enemies and idolaters. An active government would have restored the trade of Egypt and the navigation of the Red Sea, which had decayed with the prosperity of the empire; and the Roman vessels might have sailed, for the purchase of silk, to the ports of Ceylon, of Malacca, or even of China. Justinian embraced a more humble expedient, and solicited the aid of his Christian allies, the Aethiopians of Abyssinia, who had recently acquired the arts of navigation, the spirit of trade, and the seaport of Adulis, [73] [7311] still decorated with the trophies of a Grecian conqueror. Along the African coast, they penetrated to the equator in search of gold, emeralds, and aromatics; but they wisely declined an unequal competition, in which they must be always prevented by the vicinity of the Persians to the markets of India; and the emperor submitted to the disappointment, till his wishes were gratified by an unexpected event. The gospel had been preached to the Indians: a bishop already governed the Christians of St. Thomas on the pepper-coast of Malabar; a church was planted in Ceylon, and the missionaries pursued the footsteps of commerce to the extremities of Asia. [74] Two Persian monks had long resided in China, perhaps in the royal city of Nankin, the seat of a monarch addicted to foreign superstitions, and who actually received an

embassy from the Isle of Ceylon. Amidst their pious occupations, they viewed with a curious eye the common dress of the Chinese, the manufactures of silk, and the myriads of silk-worms, whose education (either on trees or in houses) had once been considered as the labor of queens. [75] They soon discovered that it was impracticable to transport the short-lived insect, but that in the eggs a numerous progeny might be preserved and multiplied in a distant climate. Religion or interest had more power over the Persian monks than the love of their country: after a long journey, they arrived at Constantinople, imparted their project to the emperor, and were liberally encouraged by the gifts and promises of Justinian. To the historians of that prince, a campaign at the foot of Mount Caucasus has seemed more deserving of a minute relation than the labors of these missionaries of commerce, who again entered China, deceived a jealous people by concealing the eggs of the silk-worm in a hollow cane, and returned in triumph with the spoils of the East. Under their direction, the eggs were hatched at the proper season by the artificial heat of dung; the worms were fed with mulberry leaves; they lived and labored in a foreign climate; a sufficient number of butterflies was saved to propagate the race, and trees were planted to supply the nourishment of the rising generations. Experience and reflection corrected the errors of a new attempt, and the Sogdoite ambassadors acknowledged, in the succeeding reign, that the Romans were not inferior to the natives of China in the education of the insects, and the manufactures of silk, [76] in which both China and Constantinople have been surpassed by the industry of modern Europe. I am not insensible of the benefits of elegant luxury; yet I reflect

with some pain, that if the importers of silk had introduced the art of printing, already practised by the Chinese, the comedies of Menander and the entire decads of Livy would have been perpetuated in the editions of the sixth century.

A larger view of the globe might at least have promoted the improvement of speculative science, but the Christian geography was forcibly extracted from texts of Scripture, and the study of nature was the surest symptom of an unbelieving mind. The orthodox faith confined the habitable world to one temperate zone, and represented the earth as an oblong surface, four hundred days' journey in length, two hundred in breadth, encompassed by the ocean, and covered by the solid crystal of the firmament. [77]

[Footnote 73: See Procopius, *Persic.* (l. ii. c. 20.) Cosmas affords some interesting knowledge of the port and inscription of Adulis, (*Topograph. Christ.* l. ii. p. 138, 140--143,) and of the trade of the Axumites along the African coast of Barbaria or Zingi, (p. 138, 139,) and as far as Taprobane, (l. xi. p. 339.)]

[Footnote 7311: Mr. Salt obtained information of considerable ruins of an ancient town near Zulla, called Azoole, which answers to the position of Adulis. Mr. Salt was prevented by illness, Mr. Stuart, whom he sent, by the jealousy of the natives, from investigating these ruins: of their existence there seems no doubt. *Salt's 2d Journey*, p. 452.--M.]

[Footnote 74: See the Christian missions in India, in Cosmas, (l. iii. p. 178, 179, l. xi. p. 337,) and consult Asseman. Bibliot. Orient. (tom. iv. p. 413--548.)]

[Footnote 75: The invention, manufacture, and general use of silk in China, may be seen in Duhalde, (Description Generale de la Chine, tom. ii. p. 165, 205--223.) The province of Chekian is the most renowned both for quantity and quality.]

[Footnote 76: Procopius, (l. viii. Gothic. iv. c. 17. Theophanes Byzant. apud Phot. Cod. lxxxiv. p. 38. Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 69. Pagi tom. ii. p. 602) assigns to the year 552 this memorable importation. Menander (in Excerpt. Legat. p. 107) mentions the admiration of the Sogdoites; and Theophylact Simocatta (l. vii. c. 9) darkly represents the two rival kingdoms in (China) the country of silk.]

[Footnote 77: Cosmas, surnamed Indicopleustes, or the Indian navigator, performed his voyage about the year 522, and composed at Alexandria, between 535, and 547, Christian Topography, (Montfaucon, Praefat. c. i.,) in which he refutes the impious opinion, that the earth is a globe; and Photius had read this work, (Cod. xxxvi. p. 9, 10,) which displays the prejudices of a monk, with the knowledge of a merchant; the most valuable part has been given in French and in Greek by Melchisedec Thevenot, (Relations Curieuses, part i.,) and the whole is since published in a splendid edition by Pere Montfaucon, (Nova Collectio Patrum, Paris, 1707, 2 vols. in fol., tom. ii. p. 113--346.) But the

editor, a theologian, might blush at not discovering the Nestorian heresy of Cosmas, which has been detected by La Croz (*Christianisme des Indes*, tom. i. p. 40--56.)]

IV. The subjects of Justinian were dissatisfied with the times, and with the government. Europe was overrun by the Barbarians, and Asia by the monks: the poverty of the West discouraged the trade and manufactures of the East: the produce of labor was consumed by the unprofitable servants of the church, the state, and the army; and a rapid decrease was felt in the fixed and circulating capitals which constitute the national wealth. The public distress had been alleviated by the economy of Anastasius, and that prudent emperor accumulated an immense treasure, while he delivered his people from the most odious or oppressive taxes. [77] Their gratitude universally applauded the abolition of the gold of affliction, a personal tribute on the industry of the poor, [78] but more intolerable, as it should seem, in the form than in the substance, since the flourishing city of Edessa paid only one hundred and forty pounds of gold, which was collected in four years from ten thousand artificers. [79] Yet such was the parsimony which supported this liberal disposition, that, in a reign of twenty-seven years, Anastasius saved, from his annual revenue, the enormous sum of thirteen millions sterling, or three hundred and twenty thousand pounds of gold. [80] His example was neglected, and his treasure was abused, by the nephew of Justin. The riches of Justinian were speedily exhausted by alms and buildings, by ambitious wars, and ignominious treaties. His revenues were found inadequate to his expenses. Every art was tried to extort from the

people the gold and silver which he scattered with a lavish hand from Persia to France: [81] his reign was marked by the vicissitudes or rather by the combat, of rapaciousness and avarice, of splendor and poverty; he lived with the reputation of hidden treasures, [82] and bequeathed to his successor the payment of his debts. [83] Such a character has been justly accused by the voice of the people and of posterity: but public discontent is credulous; private malice is bold; and a lover of truth will peruse with a suspicious eye the instructive anecdotes of Procopius. The secret historian represents only the vices of Justinian, and those vices are darkened by his malevolent pencil. Ambiguous actions are imputed to the worst motives; error is confounded with guilt, accident with design, and laws with abuses; the partial injustice of a moment is dexterously applied as the general maxim of a reign of thirty-two years; the emperor alone is made responsible for the faults of his officers, the disorders of the times, and the corruption of his subjects; and even the calamities of nature, plagues, earthquakes, and inundations, are imputed to the prince of the daemons, who had mischievously assumed the form of Justinian. [84]

[Footnote 7711: See the character of Anastasius in Joannes Lydus de Magistratibus, iii. c. 45, 46, p. 230--232. His economy is there said to have degenerated into parsimony. He is accused of having taken away the levying of taxes and payment of the troops from the municipal authorities, (the decurionate) in the Eastern cities, and intrusted it to an extortionate officer named Mannus. But he admits that the imperial revenue was enormously increased by this measure. A statue of iron had

been erected to Anastasius in the Hippodrome, on which appeared one morning this pasquinade. This epigram is also found in the Anthology. Jacobs, vol. iv. p. 114 with some better readings. This iron statue meetly do we place To thee, world-wasting king, than brass more base; For all the death, the penury, famine, woe, That from thy wide-destroying avarice flow, This fell Charybdis, Scylla, near to thee, This fierce devouring Anastasius, see; And tremble, Scylla! on thee, too, his greed, Coining thy brazen deity, may feed. But Lydus, with no uncommon inconsistency in such writers, proceeds to paint the character of Anastasius as endowed with almost every virtue, not excepting the utmost liberality. He was only prevented by death from relieving his subjects altogether from the capitation tax, which he greatly diminished.--M.]

[Footnote 78: Evagrius (l. ii. c. 39, 40) is minute and grateful, but angry with Zosimus for calumniating the great Constantine. In collecting all the bonds and records of the tax, the humanity of Anastasius was diligent and artful: fathers were sometimes compelled to prostitute their daughters, (Zosim. Hist. l. ii. c. 38, p. 165, 166, Lipsiae, 1784.) Timotheus of Gaza chose such an event for the subject of a tragedy, (Suidas, tom. iii. p. 475,) which contributed to the abolition of the tax, (Cedrenus, p. 35,)--a happy instance (if it be true) of the use of the theatre.]

[Footnote 79: See Josua Stylites, in the Bibliotheca Orientalis of Asseman, (tom. p. 268.) This capitation tax is slightly mentioned in the

Chronicle of Edessa.]

[Footnote 80: Procopius (Anecdot. c. 19) fixes this sum from the report of the treasurers themselves. Tiberias had vicies ter millies; but far different was his empire from that of Anastasius.]

[Footnote 81: Evagrius, (l. iv. c. 30,) in the next generation, was moderate and well informed; and Zonaras, (l. xiv. c. 61,) in the xiith century, had read with care, and thought without prejudice; yet their colors are almost as black as those of the anecdotes.]

[Footnote 82: Procopius (Anecdot. c. 30) relates the idle conjectures of the times. The death of Justinian, says the secret historian, will expose his wealth or poverty.]

[Footnote 83: See Corippus de Laudibus Justini Aug. l. ii. 260, &c., 384, &c "Plurima sunt vivo nimium neglecta parenti, Unde tot exhaustus contraxit debita fiscus." Centenaries of gold were brought by strong men into the Hippodrome, "Debita persolvit, genitoris cauta recepit."]

[Footnote 84: The Anecdotes (c. 11--14, 18, 20--30) supply many facts and more complaints. \* Note: The work of Lydus de Magistratibus (published by Hase at Paris, 1812, and reprinted in the new edition of the Byzantine Historians,) was written during the reign of Justinian. This work of Lydus throws no great light on the earlier history of the Roman magistracy, but gives some curious details of the changes and



retrenchments in the offices of state, which took place at this time. The personal history of the author, with the account of his early and rapid advancement, and the emoluments of the posts which he successively held, with the bitter disappointment which he expresses, at finding himself, at the height of his ambition, in an unpaid place, is an excellent illustration of this statement. Gibbon has before, c. iv. n. 45, and c. xvii. n. 112, traced the progress of a Roman citizen to the highest honors of the state under the empire; the steps by which Lydus reached his humbler eminence may likewise throw light on the civil service at this period. He was first received into the office of the Praetorian praefect; became a notary in that office, and made in one year 1000 golden solidi, and that without extortion. His place and the influence of his relatives obtained him a wife with 400 pounds of gold for her dowry. He became chief chartularius, with an annual stipend of twenty-four solidi, and considerable emoluments for all the various services which he performed. He rose to an Augustalis, and finally to the dignity of Corniculus, the highest, and at one time the most lucrative office in the department. But the Praetorian praefect had gradually been deprived of his powers and his honors. He lost the superintendence of the supply and manufacture of arms; the uncontrolled charge of the public posts; the levying of the troops; the command of the army in war when the emperors ceased nominally to command in person, but really through the Praetorian praefect; that of the household troops, which fell to the magister aulae. At length the office was so completely stripped of its power, as to be virtually abolished, (see de Magist. l. iii. c. 40, p. 220, &c.) This diminution of the office of the

praefect destroyed the emoluments of his subordinate officers, and Lydus not only drew no revenue from his dignity, but expended upon it all the gains of his former services. Lydus gravely refers this calamitous, and, as he considers it, fatal degradation of the Praetorian office to the alteration in the style of the official documents from Latin to Greek; and refers to a prophecy of a certain Fonteius, which connected the ruin of the Roman empire with its abandonment of its language. Lydus chiefly owed his promotion to his knowledge of Latin!--M.]

After this precaution, I shall briefly relate the anecdotes of avarice and rapine under the following heads: I. Justinian was so profuse that he could not be liberal. The civil and military officers, when they were admitted into the service of the palace, obtained an humble rank and a moderate stipend; they ascended by seniority to a station of affluence and repose; the annual pensions, of which the most honorable class was abolished by Justinian, amounted to four hundred thousand pounds; and this domestic economy was deplored by the venal or indigent courtiers as the last outrage on the majesty of the empire. The posts, the salaries of physicians, and the nocturnal illuminations, were objects of more general concern; and the cities might justly complain, that he usurped the municipal revenues which had been appropriated to these useful institutions. Even the soldiers were injured; and such was the decay of military spirit, that they were injured with impunity. The emperor refused, at the return of each fifth year, the customary donative of five pieces of gold, reduced his veterans to beg their bread, and suffered unpaid armies to melt away in the wars of Italy and Persia. II.

The humanity of his predecessors had always remitted, in some auspicious circumstance of their reign, the arrears of the public tribute, and they dexterously assumed the merit of resigning those claims which it was impracticable to enforce. "Justinian, in the space of thirty-two years, has never granted a similar indulgence; and many of his subjects have renounced the possession of those lands whose value is insufficient to satisfy the demands of the treasury. To the cities which had suffered by hostile inroads Anastasius promised a general exemption of seven years: the provinces of Justinian have been ravaged by the Persians and Arabs, the Huns and Sclavonians; but his vain and ridiculous dispensation of a single year has been confined to those places which were actually taken by the enemy." Such is the language of the secret historian, who expressly denies that any indulgence was granted to Palestine after the revolt of the Samaritans; a false and odious charge, confuted by the authentic record which attests a relief of thirteen centenaries of gold (fifty-two thousand pounds) obtained for that desolate province by the intercession of St. Sabas. [85] III. Procopius has not condescended to explain the system of taxation, which fell like a hail-storm upon the land, like a devouring pestilence on its inhabitants: but we should become the accomplices of his malignity, if we imputed to Justinian alone the ancient though rigorous principle, that a whole district should be condemned to sustain the partial loss of the persons or property of individuals. The Annona, or supply of corn for the use of the army and capital, was a grievous and arbitrary exaction, which exceeded, perhaps in a tenfold proportion, the ability of the farmer; and his distress was aggravated by the partial injustice of weights and

measures, and the expense and labor of distant carriage. In a time of scarcity, an extraordinary requisition was made to the adjacent provinces of Thrace, Bithynia, and Phrygia: but the proprietors, after a wearisome journey and perilous navigation, received so inadequate a compensation, that they would have chosen the alternative of delivering both the corn and price at the doors of their granaries. These precautions might indicate a tender solicitude for the welfare of the capital; yet Constantinople did not escape the rapacious despotism of Justinian. Till his reign, the Straits of the Bosphorus and Hellespont were open to the freedom of trade, and nothing was prohibited except the exportation of arms for the service of the Barbarians. At each of these gates of the city, a praetor was stationed, the minister of Imperial avarice; heavy customs were imposed on the vessels and their merchandise; the oppression was retaliated on the helpless consumer; the poor were afflicted by the artificial scarcity, and exorbitant price of the market; and a people, accustomed to depend on the liberality of their prince, might sometimes complain of the deficiency of water and bread. [86] The aerial tribute, without a name, a law, or a definite object, was an annual gift of one hundred and twenty thousand pounds, which the emperor accepted from his Praetorian praefect; and the means of payment were abandoned to the discretion of that powerful magistrate.

IV. Even such a tax was less intolerable than the privilege of monopolies, [8611] which checked the fair competition of industry, and, for the sake of a small and dishonest gain, imposed an arbitrary burden on the wants and luxury of the subject. "As soon" (I transcribe the

Anecdotes) "as the exclusive sale of silk was usurped by the Imperial treasurer, a whole people, the manufacturers of Tyre and Berytus, was reduced to extreme misery, and either perished with hunger, or fled to the hostile dominions of Persia." A province might suffer by the decay of its manufactures, but in this example of silk, Procopius has partially overlooked the inestimable and lasting benefit which the empire received from the curiosity of Justinian. His addition of one seventh to the ordinary price of copper money may be interpreted with the same candor; and the alteration, which might be wise, appears to have been innocent; since he neither alloyed the purity, nor enhanced the value, of the gold coin, [87] the legal measure of public and private payments. V. The ample jurisdiction required by the farmers of the revenue to accomplish their engagements might be placed in an odious light, as if they had purchased from the emperor the lives and fortunes of their fellow-citizens. And a more direct sale of honors and offices was transacted in the palace, with the permission, or at least with the connivance, of Justinian and Theodora. The claims of merit, even those of favor, were disregarded, and it was almost reasonable to expect, that the bold adventurer, who had undertaken the trade of a magistrate, should find a rich compensation for infamy, labor, danger, the debts which he had contracted, and the heavy interest which he paid. A sense of the disgrace and mischief of this venal practice, at length awakened the slumbering virtue of Justinian; and he attempted, by the sanction of oaths [88] and penalties, to guard the integrity of his government: but at the end of a year of perjury, his rigorous edict was suspended, and corruption licentiously abused her triumph over the impotence of the

laws. VI. The testament of Eulalius, count of the domestics, declared the emperor his sole heir, on condition, however, that he should discharge his debts and legacies, allow to his three daughters a decent maintenance, and bestow each of them in marriage, with a portion of ten pounds of gold. But the splendid fortune of Eulalius had been consumed by fire, and the inventory of his goods did not exceed the trifling sum of five hundred and sixty-four pieces of gold. A similar instance, in Grecian history, admonished the emperor of the honorable part prescribed for his imitation. He checked the selfish murmurs of the treasury, applauded the confidence of his friend, discharged the legacies and debts, educated the three virgins under the eye of the empress Theodora, and doubled the marriage portion which had satisfied the tenderness of their father. [89] The humanity of a prince (for princes cannot be generous) is entitled to some praise; yet even in this act of virtue we may discover the inveterate custom of supplanting the legal or natural heirs, which Procopius imputes to the reign of Justinian. His charge is supported by eminent names and scandalous examples; neither widows nor orphans were spared; and the art of soliciting, or extorting, or supposing testaments, was beneficially practised by the agents of the palace. This base and mischievous tyranny invades the security of private life; and the monarch who has indulged an appetite for gain, will soon be tempted to anticipate the moment of succession, to interpret wealth as an evidence of guilt, and to proceed, from the claim of inheritance, to the power of confiscation. VII. Among the forms of rapine, a philosopher may be permitted to name the conversion of Pagan or heretical riches to the use of the faithful; but in the time of

Justinian this holy plunder was condemned by the sectaries alone, who became the victims of his orthodox avarice. [90]

[Footnote 85: One to Scythopolis, capital of the second Palestine, and twelve for the rest of the province. Aleman. (p. 59) honestly produces this fact from a Ms. life of St. Sabas, by his disciple Cyril, in the Vatican Library, and since published by Cotelerius.]

[Footnote 86: John Malala (tom. ii. p. 232) mentions the want of bread, and Zonaras (l. xiv. p. 63) the leaden pipes, which Justinian, or his servants, stole from the aqueducts.]

[Footnote 8611: Hullman (Geschichte des Byzantinischen Handels. p. 15) shows that the despotism of the government was aggravated by the unchecked rapacity of the officers. This state monopoly, even of corn, wine, and oil, was to force at the time of the first crusade.--M.]

[Footnote 87: For an aureus, one sixth of an ounce of gold, instead of 210, he gave no more than 180 folles, or ounces of copper. A disproportion of the mint, below the market price, must have soon produced a scarcity of small money. In England twelve pence in copper would sell for no more than seven pence, (Smith's Inquiry into the Wealth of Nations, vol. i. p. 49.) For Justinian's gold coin, see Evagrius, (l. iv. c. 30.)]

[Footnote 88: The oath is conceived in the most formidable words,

(Novell. viii. tit. 3.) The defaulters imprecate on themselves, quicquid haben: telorum armamentaria coeli: the part of Judas, the leprosy of Gieza, the tremor of Cain, &c., besides all temporal pains.]

[Footnote 89: A similar or more generous act of friendship is related by Lucian of Eudamidas of Corinth, (in Toxare, c. 22, 23, tom. ii. p. 530,) and the story has produced an ingenious, though feeble, comedy of Fontenelle.]

[Footnote 90: John Malala, tom. ii. p. 101, 102, 103.]