

Chapter XLII: State Of The Barbaric World.--Part III.

The son of Kobad found his kingdom involved in a war with the successor of Constantine; and the anxiety of his domestic situation inclined him to grant the suspension of arms, which Justinian was impatient to purchase. Chosroes saw the Roman ambassadors at his feet. He accepted eleven thousand pounds of gold, as the price of an endless or indefinite peace: [57] some mutual exchanges were regulated; the Persian assumed the guard of the gates of Caucasus, and the demolition of Dara was suspended, on condition that it should never be made the residence of the general of the East. This interval of repose had been solicited, and was diligently improved, by the ambition of the emperor: his African conquests were the first fruits of the Persian treaty; and the avarice of Chosroes was soothed by a large portion of the spoils of Carthage, which his ambassadors required in a tone of pleasantry and under the color of friendship. [58] But the trophies of Belisarius disturbed the slumbers of the great king; and he heard with astonishment, envy, and fear, that Sicily, Italy, and Rome itself, had been reduced, in three rapid campaigns, to the obedience of Justinian. Unpractised in the art of violating treaties, he secretly excited his bold and subtle vassal Almondar. That prince of the Saracens, who resided at Hira, [59] had not been included in the general peace, and still waged an obscure war against his rival Arethas, the chief of the tribe of Gassan, and confederate of the empire. The subject of their dispute was an extensive sheep-walk in the desert to the south of Palmyra. An immemorial tribute for the license of pasture appeared to attest the rights of Almondar,

while the Gassanite appealed to the Latin name of strata, a paved road, as an unquestionable evidence of the sovereignty and labors of the Romans. [60] The two monarchs supported the cause of their respective vassals; and the Persian Arab, without expecting the event of a slow and doubtful arbitration, enriched his flying camp with the spoil and captives of Syria. Instead of repelling the arms, Justinian attempted to seduce the fidelity of Almondar, while he called from the extremities of the earth the nations of Aethiopia and Scythia to invade the dominions of his rival. But the aid of such allies was distant and precarious, and the discovery of this hostile correspondence justified the complaints of the Goths and Armenians, who implored, almost at the same time, the protection of Chosroes. The descendants of Arsaces, who were still numerous in Armenia, had been provoked to assert the last relics of national freedom and hereditary rank; and the ambassadors of Vitiges had secretly traversed the empire to expose the instant, and almost inevitable, danger of the kingdom of Italy. Their representations were uniform, weighty, and effectual. "We stand before your throne, the advocates of your interest as well as of our own. The ambitious and faithless Justinian aspires to be the sole master of the world. Since the endless peace, which betrayed the common freedom of mankind, that prince, your ally in words, your enemy in actions, has alike insulted his friends and foes, and has filled the earth with blood and confusion. Has he not violated the privileges of Armenia, the independence of Colchos, and the wild liberty of the Tzanian mountains? Has he not usurped, with equal avidity, the city of Bosphorus on the frozen Maeotis, and the vale of palm-trees on the shores of the Red Sea? The

Moors, the Vandals, the Goths, have been successively oppressed, and each nation has calmly remained the spectator of their neighbor's ruin. Embrace, O king! the favorable moment; the East is left without defence, while the armies of Justinian and his renowned general are detained in the distant regions of the West. If you hesitate or delay, Belisarius and his victorious troops will soon return from the Tyber to the Tigris, and Persia may enjoy the wretched consolation of being the last devoured." [61] By such arguments, Chosroes was easily persuaded to imitate the example which he condemned: but the Persian, ambitious of military fame, disdained the inactive warfare of a rival, who issued his sanguinary commands from the secure station of the Byzantine palace.

[Footnote 57: The endless peace (Procopius, Persic. 1. i. c. 21)

was concluded or ratified in the vith year, and iiii consulship, of Justinian, (A.D. 533, between January 1 and April 1. Pagi, tom. ii. p. 550.) Marcellinus, in his Chronicle, uses the style of Medes and Persians.]

[Footnote 58: Procopius, Persic. 1. i. c. 26.]

[Footnote 59: Almondar, king of Hira, was deposed by Kobad, and restored by Nushirvan. His mother, from her beauty, was surnamed Celestial Water, an appellation which became hereditary, and was extended for a more noble cause (liberality in famine) to the Arab princes of Syria, (Pocock, Specimen Hist. Arab. p. 69, 70.)]

[Footnote 60: Procopius, Persic. 1. ii. c. 1. We are ignorant of the

origin and object of this strata, a paved road of ten days' journey from Auranitis to Babylonia. (See a Latin note in Delisle's *Map Imp. Orient.*) Wesseling and D'Anville are silent.]

[Footnote 61: I have blended, in a short speech, the two orations of the Arsacides of Armenia and the Gothic ambassadors. Procopius, in his public history, feels, and makes us feel, that Justinian was the true author of the war, (*Persic. 1. ii. c. 2, 3.*)]

Whatever might be the provocations of Chosroes, he abused the confidence of treaties; and the just reproaches of dissimulation and falsehood could only be concealed by the lustre of his victories. [62] The Persian army, which had been assembled in the plains of Babylon, prudently declined the strong cities of Mesopotamia, and followed the western bank of the Euphrates, till the small, though populous, town of Dura [6211] presumed to arrest the progress of the great king. The gates of Dura, by treachery and surprise, were burst open; and as soon as Chosroes had stained his cimeter with the blood of the inhabitants, he dismissed the ambassador of Justinian to inform his master in what place he had left the enemy of the Romans. The conqueror still affected the praise of humanity and justice; and as he beheld a noble matron with her infant rudely dragged along the ground, he sighed, he wept, and implored the divine justice to punish the author of these calamities. Yet the herd of twelve thousand captives was ransomed for two hundred pounds of gold; the neighboring bishop of Sergiopolis pledged his faith for the payment: and in the subsequent year the unfeeling avarice of Chosroes exacted

the penalty of an obligation which it was generous to contract and impossible to discharge. He advanced into the heart of Syria: but a feeble enemy, who vanished at his approach, disappointed him of the honor of victory; and as he could not hope to establish his dominion, the Persian king displayed in this inroad the mean and rapacious vices of a robber. Hierapolis, Berrhaea or Aleppo, Apamea and Chalcis, were successively besieged: they redeemed their safety by a ransom of gold or silver, proportioned to their respective strength and opulence; and their new master enforced, without observing, the terms of capitulation. Educated in the religion of the Magi, he exercised, without remorse, the lucrative trade of sacrilege; and, after stripping of its gold and gems a piece of the true cross, he generously restored the naked relic to the devotion of the Christians of Apamea. No more than fourteen years had elapsed since Antioch was ruined by an earthquake; [6212] but the queen of the East, the new Theopolis, had been raised from the ground by the liberality of Justinian; and the increasing greatness of the buildings and the people already erased the memory of this recent disaster. On one side, the city was defended by the mountain, on the other by the River Orontes; but the most accessible part was commanded by a superior eminence: the proper remedies were rejected, from the despicable fear of discovering its weakness to the enemy; and Germanus, the emperor's nephew, refused to trust his person and dignity within the walls of a besieged city. The people of Antioch had inherited the vain and satirical genius of their ancestors: they were elated by a sudden reinforcement of six thousand soldiers; they disdained the offers of an easy capitulation and their intemperate clamors insulted from the

ramparts the majesty of the great king. Under his eye the Persian myriads mounted with scaling-ladders to the assault; the Roman mercenaries fled through the opposite gate of Daphne; and the generous assistance of the youth of Antioch served only to aggravate the miseries of their country. As Chosroes, attended by the ambassadors of Justinian, was descending from the mountain, he affected, in a plaintive voice, to deplore the obstinacy and ruin of that unhappy people; but the slaughter still raged with unrelenting fury; and the city, at the command of a Barbarian, was delivered to the flames. The cathedral of Antioch was indeed preserved by the avarice, not the piety, of the conqueror: a more honorable exemption was granted to the church of St. Julian, and the quarter of the town where the ambassadors resided; some distant streets were saved by the shifting of the wind, and the walls still subsisted to protect, and soon to betray, their new inhabitants. Fanaticism had defaced the ornaments of Daphne, but Chosroes breathed a purer air amidst her groves and fountains; and some idolaters in his train might sacrifice with impunity to the nymphs of that elegant retreat. Eighteen miles below Antioch, the River Orontes falls into the Mediterranean. The haughty Persian visited the term of his conquests; and, after bathing alone in the sea, he offered a solemn sacrifice of thanksgiving to the sun, or rather to the Creator of the sun, whom the Magi adored. If this act of superstition offended the prejudices of the Syrians, they were pleased by the courteous and even eager attention with which he assisted at the games of the circus; and as Chosroes had heard that the blue faction was espoused by the emperor, his peremptory command secured the victory of the green charioteer. From the discipline of his camp the

people derived more solid consolation; and they interceded in vain for the life of a soldier who had too faithfully copied the rapine of the just Nushirvan. At length, fatigued, though unsatiated, with the spoil of Syria, [6213] he slowly moved to the Euphrates, formed a temporary bridge in the neighborhood of Barbalissus, and defined the space of three days for the entire passage of his numerous host. After his return, he founded, at the distance of one day's journey from the palace of Ctesiphon, a new city, which perpetuated the joint names of Chosroes and of Antioch. The Syrian captives recognized the form and situation of their native abodes: baths and a stately circus were constructed for their use; and a colony of musicians and charioteers revived in Assyria the pleasures of a Greek capital. By the munificence of the royal founder, a liberal allowance was assigned to these fortunate exiles; and they enjoyed the singular privilege of bestowing freedom on the slaves whom they acknowledged as their kinsmen. Palestine, and the holy wealth of Jerusalem, were the next objects that attracted the ambition, or rather the avarice, of Chosroes. Constantinople, and the palace of the Caesars, no longer appeared impregnable or remote; and his aspiring fancy already covered Asia Minor with the troops, and the Black Sea with the navies, of Persia.

[Footnote 62: The invasion of Syria, the ruin of Antioch, &c., are related in a full and regular series by Procopius, (*Persic. l. ii. c. 5--14.*) Small collateral aid can be drawn from the Orientals: yet not they, but D'Herbelot himself, (p. 680,) should blush when he blames them for making Justinian and Nushirvan contemporaries. On the geography of

the seat of war, D'Anville (l'Euphrate et le Tigre) is sufficient and satisfactory.]

[Footnote 6211: It is Sura in Procopius. Is it a misprint in Gibbon?--M.]

[Footnote 6212: Joannes Lydus attributes the easy capture of Antioch to the want of fortifications which had not been restored since the earthquake, l. iii. c. 54. p. 246.--M.]

[Footnote 6213: Lydus asserts that he carried away all the statues, pictures, and marbles which adorned the city, l. iii. c. 54, p. 246.--M.]

These hopes might have been realized, if the conqueror of Italy had not been seasonably recalled to the defence of the East. [63] While Chosroes pursued his ambitious designs on the coast of the Euxine, Belisarius, at the head of an army without pay or discipline, encamped beyond the Euphrates, within six miles of Nisibis. He meditated, by a skilful operation, to draw the Persians from their impregnable citadel, and improving his advantage in the field, either to intercept their retreat, or perhaps to enter the gates with the flying Barbarians. He advanced one day's journey on the territories of Persia, reduced the fortress of Sisaurane, and sent the governor, with eight hundred chosen horsemen, to serve the emperor in his Italian wars. He detached Arethas and his Arabs, supported by twelve hundred Romans, to pass the Tigris, and to

ravage the harvests of Assyria, a fruitful province, long exempt from the calamities of war. But the plans of Belisarius were disconcerted by the untractable spirit of Arethas, who neither returned to the camp, nor sent any intelligence of his motions. The Roman general was fixed in anxious expectation to the same spot; the time of action elapsed, the ardent sun of Mesopotamia inflamed with fevors the blood of his European soldiers; and the stationary troops and officers of Syria affected to tremble for the safety of their defenceless cities. Yet this diversion had already succeeded in forcing Chosroes to return with loss and precipitation; and if the skill of Belisarius had been seconded by discipline and valor, his success might have satisfied the sanguine wishes of the public, who required at his hands the conquest of Ctesiphon, and the deliverance of the captives of Antioch. At the end of the campaign, he was recalled to Constantinople by an ungrateful court, but the dangers of the ensuing spring restored his confidence and command; and the hero, almost alone, was despatched, with the speed of post-horses, to repel, by his name and presence, the invasion of Syria. He found the Roman generals, among whom was a nephew of Justinian, imprisoned by their fears in the fortifications of Hierapolis. But instead of listening to their timid counsels, Belisarius commanded them to follow him to Europus, where he had resolved to collect his forces, and to execute whatever God should inspire him to achieve against the enemy. His firm attitude on the banks of the Euphrates restrained Chosroes from advancing towards Palestine; and he received with art and dignity the ambassadors, or rather spies, of the Persian monarch. The plain between Hierapolis and the river was covered with the squadrons of

cavalry, six thousand hunters, tall and robust, who pursued their game without the apprehension of an enemy. On the opposite bank the ambassadors descried a thousand Armenian horse, who appeared to guard the passage of the Euphrates. The tent of Belisarius was of the coarsest linen, the simple equipage of a warrior who disdained the luxury of the East. Around his tent, the nations who marched under his standard were arranged with skilful confusion. The Thracians and Illyrians were posted in the front, the Heruli and Goths in the centre; the prospect was closed by the Moors and Vandals, and their loose array seemed to multiply their numbers. Their dress was light and active; one soldier carried a whip, another a sword, a third a bow, a fourth, perhaps, a battle axe, and the whole picture exhibited the intrepidity of the troops and the vigilance of the general. Chosroes was deluded by the address, and awed by the genius, of the lieutenant of Justinian. Conscious of the merit, and ignorant of the force, of his antagonist, he dreaded a decisive battle in a distant country, from whence not a Persian might return to relate the melancholy tale. The great king hastened to repass the Euphrates; and Belisarius pressed his retreat, by affecting to oppose a measure so salutary to the empire, and which could scarcely have been prevented by an army of a hundred thousand men. Envy might suggest to ignorance and pride, that the public enemy had been suffered to escape: but the African and Gothic triumphs are less glorious than this safe and bloodless victory, in which neither fortune, nor the valor of the soldiers, can subtract any part of the general's renown. The second removal of Belisarius from the Persian to the Italian war revealed the extent of his personal merit, which had corrected or

supplied the want of discipline and courage. Fifteen generals, without concert or skill, led through the mountains of Armenia an army of thirty thousand Romans, inattentive to their signals, their ranks, and their ensigns. Four thousand Persians, intrenched in the camp of Dubis, vanquished, almost without a combat, this disorderly multitude; their useless arms were scattered along the road, and their horses sunk under the fatigue of their rapid flight. But the Arabs of the Roman party prevailed over their brethren; the Armenians returned to their allegiance; the cities of Dara and Edessa resisted a sudden assault and a regular siege, and the calamities of war were suspended by those of pestilence. A tacit or formal agreement between the two sovereigns protected the tranquillity of the Eastern frontier; and the arms of Chosroes were confined to the Colchian or Lazic war, which has been too minutely described by the historians of the times. [64]

[Footnote 63: In the public history of Procopius, (Persic. 1. ii. c. 16, 18, 19, 20, 21, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28;) and, with some slight exceptions, we may reasonably shut our ears against the malevolent whisper of the Anecdotes, (c. 2, 3, with the Notes, as usual, of Alemannus.)]

[Footnote 64: The Lazic war, the contest of Rome and Persia on the Phasis, is tediously spun through many a page of Procopius (Persic. 1. ii. c. 15, 17, 28, 29, 30.) Gothic. (l. iv. c. 7--16) and Agathias, (l. ii. iii. and iv. p. 55--132, 141.)]

The extreme length of the Euxine Sea [65] from Constantinople to the

mouth of the Phasis, may be computed as a voyage of nine days, and a measure of seven hundred miles. From the Iberian Caucasus, the most lofty and craggy mountains of Asia, that river descends with such oblique vehemence, that in a short space it is traversed by one hundred and twenty bridges. Nor does the stream become placid and navigable, till it reaches the town of Sarapana, five days' journey from the Cyrus, which flows from the same hills, but in a contrary direction to the Caspian Lake. The proximity of these rivers has suggested the practice, or at least the idea, of wafting the precious merchandise of India down the Oxus, over the Caspian, up the Cyrus, and with the current of the Phasis into the Euxine and Mediterranean Seas. As it successively collects the streams of the plain of Colchos, the Phasis moves with diminished speed, though accumulated weight. At the mouth it is sixty fathom deep, and half a league broad, but a small woody island is interposed in the midst of the channel; the water, so soon as it has deposited an earthy or metallic sediment, floats on the surface of the waves, and is no longer susceptible of corruption. In a course of one hundred miles, forty of which are navigable for large vessels, the Phasis divides the celebrated region of Colchos, [66] or Mingrelia, [67] which, on three sides, is fortified by the Iberian and Armenian mountains, and whose maritime coast extends about two hundred miles from the neighborhood of Trebizond to Dioscurias and the confines of Circassia. Both the soil and climate are relaxed by excessive moisture: twenty-eight rivers, besides the Phasis and his dependent streams, convey their waters to the sea; and the hollowness of the ground appears to indicate the subterraneous channels between the Euxine and the

Caspian. In the fields where wheat or barley is sown, the earth is too soft to sustain the action of the plough; but the gom, a small grain, not unlike the millet or coriander seed, supplies the ordinary food of the people; and the use of bread is confined to the prince and his nobles. Yet the vintage is more plentiful than the harvest; and the bulk of the stems, as well as the quality of the wine, display the unassisted powers of nature. The same powers continually tend to overshadow the face of the country with thick forests; the timber of the hills, and the flax of the plains, contribute to the abundance of naval stores; the wild and tame animals, the horse, the ox, and the hog, are remarkably prolific, and the name of the pheasant is expressive of his native habitation on the banks of the Phasis. The gold mines to the south of Trebizond, which are still worked with sufficient profit, were a subject of national dispute between Justinian and Chosroes; and it is not unreasonable to believe, that a vein of precious metal may be equally diffused through the circle of the hills, although these secret treasures are neglected by the laziness, or concealed by the prudence, of the Mingrelians. The waters, impregnated with particles of gold, are carefully strained through sheep-skins or fleeces; but this expedient, the groundwork perhaps of a marvellous fable, affords a faint image of the wealth extracted from a virgin earth by the power and industry of ancient kings. Their silver palaces and golden chambers surpass our belief; but the fame of their riches is said to have excited the enterprising avarice of the Argonauts. [68] Tradition has affirmed, with some color of reason, that Egypt planted on the Phasis a learned and polite colony, [69] which manufactured linen, built navies, and invented

geographical maps. The ingenuity of the moderns has peopled, with flourishing cities and nations, the isthmus between the Euxine and the Caspian; [70] and a lively writer, observing the resemblance of climate, and, in his apprehension, of trade, has not hesitated to pronounce Colchos the Holland of antiquity. [71]

[Footnote 65: The Periplus, or circumnavigation of the Euxine Sea, was described in Latin by Sallust, and in Greek by Arrian: I. The former work, which no longer exists, has been restored by the singular diligence of M. de Brosset, first president of the parliament of Dijon, (Hist. de la Republique Romaine, tom. ii. l. iii. p. 199--298,) who ventures to assume the character of the Roman historian. His description of the Euxine is ingeniously formed of all the fragments of the original, and of all the Greeks and Latins whom Sallust might copy, or by whom he might be copied; and the merit of the execution atones for the whimsical design. 2. The Periplus of Arrian is addressed to the emperor Hadrian, (in Geograph. Minor. Hudson, tom. i.,) and contains whatever the governor of Pontus had seen from Trebizond to Dioscurias; whatever he had heard from Dioscurias to the Danube; and whatever he knew from the Danube to Trebizond.]

[Footnote 66: Besides the many occasional hints from the poets, historians &c., of antiquity, we may consult the geographical descriptions of Colchos, by Strabo (l. xi. p. 760--765) and Pliny, (Hist. Natur. vi. 5, 19, &c.)]

[Footnote 67: I shall quote, and have used, three modern descriptions of Mingrelia and the adjacent countries. 1. Of the Pere Archangeli Lamberti, (*Relations de Thevenot*, part i. p. 31-52, with a map,) who has all the knowledge and prejudices of a missionary. 2. Of Chardia, (*Voyages en Perse*, tom. i. p. 54, 68-168.) His observations are judicious and his own adventures in the country are still more instructive than his observations. 3. Of Peyssonel, (*Observations sur les Peuples Barbares*, p. 49, 50, 51, 58 62, 64, 65, 71, &c., and a more recent treatise, *Sur le Commerce de la Mer Noire*, tom. ii. p. 1--53.) He had long resided at Caffa, as consul of France; and his erudition is less valuable than his experience.]

[Footnote 68: Pliny, *Hist. Natur.* 1. xxxiii. 15. The gold and silver mines of Colchos attracted the Argonauts, (*Strab.* 1. i. p. 77.) The sagacious Chardin could find no gold in mines, rivers, or elsewhere. Yet a Mingrelian lost his hand and foot for showing some specimens at Constantinople of native gold]

[Footnote 69: Herodot. 1. ii. c. 104, 105, p. 150, 151. Diodor. Sicul. 1. i. p. 33, edit. Wesseling. Dionys. Perieget. 689, and Eustath. ad loc. Schoast ad Apollonium Argonaut. 1. iv. 282-291.]

[Footnote 70: Montesquieu, *Esprit des Loix*, 1. xxi. c. 6. L'Isthme... couvero de villes et nations qui ne sont plus.]

[Footnote 71: Bougainville, *Memoires de l'Academie des Inscriptions*,

tom. xxvi. p. 33, on the African voyage of Hanno and the commerce of antiquity.]

But the riches of Colchos shine only through the darkness of conjecture or tradition; and its genuine history presents a uniform scene of rudeness and poverty. If one hundred and thirty languages were spoken in the market of Dioscurias, [72] they were the imperfect idioms of so many savage tribes or families, sequestered from each other in the valleys of Mount Caucasus; and their separation, which diminished the importance, must have multiplied the number, of their rustic capitals. In the present state of Mingrelia, a village is an assemblage of huts within a wooden fence; the fortresses are seated in the depths of forests; the princely town of Cyta, or Cotatis, consists of two hundred houses, and a stone edifice appertains only to the magnificence of kings. Twelve ships from Constantinople, and about sixty barks, laden with the fruits of industry, annually cast anchor on the coast; and the list of Colchian exports is much increased, since the natives had only slaves and hides to offer in exchange for the corn and salt which they purchased from the subjects of Justinian. Not a vestige can be found of the art, the knowledge, or the navigation, of the ancient Colchians: few Greeks desired or dared to pursue the footsteps of the Argonauts; and even the marks of an Egyptian colony are lost on a nearer approach. The rite of circumcision is practised only by the Mahometans of the Euxine; and the curled hair and swarthy complexion of Africa no longer disfigure the most perfect of the human race. It is in the adjacent climates of Georgia, Mingrelia, and Circassia, that nature has placed, at least to

our eyes, the model of beauty in the shape of the limbs, the color of the skin, the symmetry of the features, and the expression of the countenance. [73] According to the destination of the two sexes, the men seemed formed for action, the women for love; and the perpetual supply of females from Mount Caucasus has purified the blood, and improved the breed, of the southern nations of Asia. The proper district of Mingrelia, a portion only of the ancient Colchos, has long sustained an exportation of twelve thousand slaves. The number of prisoners or criminals would be inadequate to the annual demand; but the common people are in a state of servitude to their lords; the exercise of fraud or rapine is unpunished in a lawless community; and the market is continually replenished by the abuse of civil and paternal authority. Such a trade, [74] which reduces the human species to the level of cattle, may tend to encourage marriage and population, since the multitude of children enriches their sordid and inhuman parent. But this source of impure wealth must inevitably poison the national manners, obliterate the sense of honor and virtue, and almost extinguish the instincts of nature: the Christians of Georgia and Mingrelia are the most dissolute of mankind; and their children, who, in a tender age, are sold into foreign slavery, have already learned to imitate the rapine of the father and the prostitution of the mother. Yet, amidst the rudest ignorance, the untaught natives discover a singular dexterity both of mind and hand; and although the want of union and discipline exposes them to their more powerful neighbors, a bold and intrepid spirit has animated the Colchians of every age. In the host of Xerxes, they served on foot; and their arms were a dagger or a javelin, a wooden casque, and

a buckler of raw hides. But in their own country the use of cavalry has more generally prevailed: the meanest of the peasants disdained to walk; the martial nobles are possessed, perhaps, of two hundred horses; and above five thousand are numbered in the train of the prince of Mingrelia. The Colchian government has been always a pure and hereditary kingdom; and the authority of the sovereign is only restrained by the turbulence of his subjects. Whenever they were obedient, he could lead a numerous army into the field; but some faith is requisite to believe, that the single tribe of the Suanians as composed of two hundred thousand soldiers, or that the population of Mingrelia now amounts to four millions of inhabitants. [75]

[Footnote 72: A Greek historian, Timosthenes, had affirmed, in eam
ccc. nationes dissimilibus linguis descendere; and the modest Pliny
is content to add, et postea a nostris cxxx. interpretibus negotia ibi
gesta, (vi. 5) But the words nunc deserta cover a multitude of past
fictions.]

[Footnote 73: Buffon (Hist. Nat. tom. iii. p. 433--437) collects the
unanimous suffrage of naturalists and travellers. If, in the time
of Herodotus, they were, (and he had observed them with care,) this
precious fact is an example of the influence of climate on a foreign
colony.]

[Footnote 74: The Mingrelian ambassador arrived at Constantinople with
two hundred persons; but he ate (sold) them day by day, till his retinue

was diminished to a secretary and two valets, (Tavernier, tom. i. p. 365.) To purchase his mistress, a Mingrelian gentleman sold twelve priests and his wife to the Turks, (Chardin, tom. i. p. 66.)]

[Footnote 75: Strabo, l. xi. p. 765. Lamberti, Relation de la Mingrelie. Yet we must avoid the contrary extreme of Chardin, who allows no more than 20,000 inhabitants to supply an annual exportation of 12,000 slaves; an absurdity unworthy of that judicious traveller.]