

Chapter XLV: State Of Italy Under The Lombards.--Part III.

So rapid was the influence of climate and example, that the Lombards of the fourth generation surveyed with curiosity and affright the portraits of their savage forefathers. [49] Their heads were shaven behind, but the shaggy locks hung over their eyes and mouth, and a long beard represented the name and character of the nation. Their dress consisted of loose linen garments, after the fashion of the Anglo-Saxons, which were decorated, in their opinion, with broad stripes or variegated colors. The legs and feet were clothed in long hose, and open sandals; and even in the security of peace a trusty sword was constantly girt to their side. Yet this strange apparel, and horrid aspect, often concealed a gentle and generous disposition; and as soon as the rage of battle had subsided, the captives and subjects were sometimes surprised by the humanity of the victor. The vices of the Lombards were the effect of passion, of ignorance, of intoxication; their virtues are the more laudable, as they were not affected by the hypocrisy of social manners, nor imposed by the rigid constraint of laws and education. I should not be apprehensive of deviating from my subject, if it were in my power to delineate the private life of the conquerors of Italy; and I shall relate with pleasure the adventurous gallantry of Autharis, which breathes the true spirit of chivalry and romance. [50] After the loss of his promised bride, a Merovingian princess, he sought in marriage the daughter of the king of Bavaria; and Garribald accepted the alliance of the Italian monarch. Impatient of the slow progress of negotiation, the ardent lover escaped from his palace, and visited the court of Bavaria

in the train of his own embassy. At the public audience, the unknown stranger advanced to the throne, and informed Garribald that the ambassador was indeed the minister of state, but that he alone was the friend of Autharis, who had trusted him with the delicate commission of making a faithful report of the charms of his spouse. Theudelinda was summoned to undergo this important examination; and, after a pause of silent rapture, he hailed her as the queen of Italy, and humbly requested that, according to the custom of the nation, she would present a cup of wine to the first of her new subjects. By the command of her father she obeyed: Autharis received the cup in his turn, and, in restoring it to the princess, he secretly touched her hand, and drew his own finger over his face and lips. In the evening, Theudelinda imparted to her nurse the indiscreet familiarity of the stranger, and was comforted by the assurance, that such boldness could proceed only from the king her husband, who, by his beauty and courage, appeared worthy of her love. The ambassadors were dismissed: no sooner did they reach the confines of Italy than Autharis, raising himself on his horse, darted his battle-axe against a tree with incomparable strength and dexterity. "Such," said he to the astonished Bavarians, "such are the strokes of the king of the Lombards." On the approach of a French army, Garribald and his daughter took refuge in the dominions of their ally; and the marriage was consummated in the palace of Verona. At the end of one year, it was dissolved by the death of Autharis: but the virtues of Theudelinda [51] had endeared her to the nation, and she was permitted to bestow, with her hand, the sceptre of the Italian kingdom.

[Footnote 49: The epitaph of Droctulf (Paul, l. iii. c. 19) may be applied to many of his countrymen:-- *Terribilis visu facies, sed corda benignus Longaque robusto pectore barba fuit.* The portraits of the old Lombards might still be seen in the palace of Monza, twelve miles from Milan, which had been founded or restored by Queen Theudelinda, (l. iv. 22, 23.) See Muratori, tom. i. disserta, xxiii. p. 300.]

[Footnote 50: The story of Autharis and Theudelinda is related by Paul, l. iii. 29, 34; and any fragment of Bavarian antiquity excites the indefatigable diligence of the count de Buat, *Hist. des Peuples de l'Europe*, ton. xi. p. 595--635, tom. xii. p. 1-53.]

[Footnote 51: Giannone (*Istoria Civile de Napoli*, tom. i. p. 263) has justly censured the impertinence of Boccaccio, (Gio. iii. Novel. 2,) who, without right, or truth, or pretence, has given the pious queen Theudelinda to the arms of a muleteer.]

From this fact, as well as from similar events, [52] it is certain that the Lombards possessed freedom to elect their sovereign, and sense to decline the frequent use of that dangerous privilege. The public revenue arose from the produce of land and the profits of justice. When the independent dukes agreed that Autharis should ascend the throne of his father, they endowed the regal office with a fair moiety of their respective domains. The proudest nobles aspired to the honors of servitude near the person of their prince: he rewarded the fidelity of his vassals by the precarious gift of pensions and benefices; and

atoned for the injuries of war by the rich foundation of monasteries and churches. In peace a judge, a leader in war, he never usurped the powers of a sole and absolute legislator. The king of Italy convened the national assemblies in the palace, or more probably in the fields, of Pavia: his great council was composed of the persons most eminent by their birth and dignities; but the validity, as well as the execution, of their decrees depended on the approbation of the faithful people, the fortunate army of the Lombards. About fourscore years after the conquest of Italy, their traditional customs were transcribed in Teutonic Latin, [53] and ratified by the consent of the prince and people: some new regulations were introduced, more suitable to their present condition; the example of Rotharis was imitated by the wisest of his successors; and the laws of the Lombards have been esteemed the least imperfect of the Barbaric codes. [54] Secure by their courage in the possession of liberty, these rude and hasty legislators were incapable of balancing the powers of the constitution, or of discussing the nice theory of political government. Such crimes as threatened the life of the sovereign, or the safety of the state, were adjudged worthy of death; but their attention was principally confined to the defence of the person and property of the subject. According to the strange jurisprudence of the times, the guilt of blood might be redeemed by a fine; yet the high price of nine hundred pieces of gold declares a just sense of the value of a simple citizen. Less atrocious injuries, a wound, a fracture, a blow, an opprobrious word, were measured with scrupulous and almost ridiculous diligence; and the prudence of the legislator encouraged the ignoble practice of bartering honor and

revenge for a pecuniary compensation. The ignorance of the Lombards in the state of Paganism or Christianity gave implicit credit to the malice and mischief of witchcraft, but the judges of the seventeenth century might have been instructed and confounded by the wisdom of Rotharis, who derides the absurd superstition, and protects the wretched victims of popular or judicial cruelty. [55] The same spirit of a legislator, superior to his age and country, may be ascribed to Luitprand, who condemns, while he tolerates, the impious and inveterate abuse of duels, [56] observing, from his own experience, that the juster cause had often been oppressed by successful violence. Whatever merit may be discovered in the laws of the Lombards, they are the genuine fruit of the reason of the Barbarians, who never admitted the bishops of Italy to a seat in their legislative councils. But the succession of their kings is marked with virtue and ability; the troubled series of their annals is adorned with fair intervals of peace, order, and domestic happiness; and the Italians enjoyed a milder and more equitable government, than any of the other kingdoms which had been founded on the ruins of the Western empire. [57]

[Footnote 52: Paul, l. iii. c. 16. The first dissertations of Muratori, and the first volume of Giannone's history, may be consulted for the state of the kingdom of Italy.]

[Footnote 53: The most accurate edition of the Laws of the Lombards is to be found in the *Scriptores Rerum Italicarum*, tom. i. part ii. p. 1--181, collated from the most ancient Mss. and illustrated by the

critical notes of Muratori.]

[Footnote 54: Montesquieu, *Esprit des Loix*, l. xxviii. c. 1. Les loix des Bourguignons sont assez judicieuses; celles de Rotharis et des autres princes Lombards le sont encore plus.]

[Footnote 55: See *Leges Rotharis*, No. 379, p. 47. Striga is used as the name of a witch. It is of the purest classic origin, (Horat. *epod.* v. 20. Petron. c. 134;) and from the words of Petronius, (quae striges comederunt nervos tuos?) it may be inferred that the prejudice was of Italian rather than Barbaric extraction.]

[Footnote 56: Quia incerti sumus de judicio Dei, et multos audivimus per pugnam sine justa causa suam causam perdere. Sed propter consuetudinom gentem nostram Langobardorum legem impiam vetare non possumus. See p. 74, No. 65, of the *Laws of Luitprand*, promulgated A.D. 724.]

[Footnote 57: Read the history of Paul Warnefrid; particularly l. iii. c. 16. Baronius rejects the praise, which appears to contradict the invectives of Pope Gregory the Great; but Muratori (*Annali d' Italia*, tom. v. p. 217) presumes to insinuate that the saint may have magnified the faults of Arians and enemies.]

Amidst the arms of the Lombards, and under the despotism of the Greeks, we again inquire into the fate of Rome, [58] which had reached, about the close of the sixth century, the lowest period of her depression.

By the removal of the seat of empire, and the successive loss of the provinces, the sources of public and private opulence were exhausted: the lofty tree, under whose shade the nations of the earth had reposed, was deprived of its leaves and branches, and the sapless trunk was left to wither on the ground. The ministers of command, and the messengers of victory, no longer met on the Appian or Flaminian way; and the hostile approach of the Lombards was often felt, and continually feared. The inhabitants of a potent and peaceful capital, who visit without an anxious thought the garden of the adjacent country, will faintly picture in their fancy the distress of the Romans: they shut or opened their gates with a trembling hand, beheld from the walls the flames of their houses, and heard the lamentations of their brethren, who were coupled together like dogs, and dragged away into distant slavery beyond the sea and the mountains. Such incessant alarms must annihilate the pleasures and interrupt the labors of a rural life; and the Campagna of Rome was speedily reduced to the state of a dreary wilderness, in which the land is barren, the waters are impure, and the air is infectious. Curiosity and ambition no longer attracted the nations to the capital of the world: but, if chance or necessity directed the steps of a wandering stranger, he contemplated with horror the vacancy and solitude of the city, and might be tempted to ask, Where is the senate, and where are the people? In a season of excessive rains, the Tyber swelled above its banks, and rushed with irresistible violence into the valleys of the seven hills. A pestilential disease arose from the stagnation of the deluge, and so rapid was the contagion, that fourscore persons expired in an hour in the midst of a solemn procession, which implored the mercy

of Heaven. [59] A society in which marriage is encouraged and industry prevails soon repairs the accidental losses of pestilence and war: but, as the far greater part of the Romans was condemned to hopeless indigence and celibacy, the depopulation was constant and visible, and the gloomy enthusiasts might expect the approaching failure of the human race. [60] Yet the number of citizens still exceeded the measure of subsistence: their precarious food was supplied from the harvests of Sicily or Egypt; and the frequent repetition of famine betrays the inattention of the emperor to a distant province. The edifices of Rome were exposed to the same ruin and decay: the mouldering fabrics were easily overthrown by inundations, tempests, and earthquakes: and the monks, who had occupied the most advantageous stations, exulted in their base triumph over the ruins of antiquity. [61] It is commonly believed, that Pope Gregory the First attacked the temples and mutilated the statues of the city; that, by the command of the Barbarian, the Palatine library was reduced to ashes, and that the history of Livy was the peculiar mark of his absurd and mischievous fanaticism. The writings of Gregory himself reveal his implacable aversion to the monuments of classic genius; and he points his severest censure against the profane learning of a bishop, who taught the art of grammar, studied the Latin poets, and pronounced with the same voice the praises of Jupiter and those of Christ. But the evidence of his destructive rage is doubtful and recent: the Temple of Peace, or the theatre of Marcellus, have been demolished by the slow operation of ages, and a formal proscription would have multiplied the copies of Virgil and Livy in the countries which were not subject to the ecclesiastical dictator. [62]

[Footnote 58: The passages of the homilies of Gregory, which represent the miserable state of the city and country, are transcribed in the Annals of Baronius, A.D. 590, No. 16, A.D. 595, No. 2, &c., &c.]

[Footnote 59: The inundation and plague were reported by a deacon, whom his bishop, Gregory of Tours, had despatched to Rome for some relics. The ingenious messenger embellished his tale and the river with a great dragon and a train of little serpents, (Greg. Turon. l. x. c. 1.)]

[Footnote 60: Gregory of Rome (Dialog. l. ii. c. 15) relates a memorable prediction of St. Benedict. Roma a Gentilibus non exterminabitur sed tempestatibus, coruscis turbinibus ac terrae motu in semetipsa marcescet. Such a prophecy melts into true history, and becomes the evidence of the fact after which it was invented.]

[Footnote 61: Quia in uno se ore cum Jovis laudibus, Christi laudes non capiunt, et quam grave nefandumque sit episcopis canere quod nec laico religioso conveniat, ipse considera, (l. ix. ep. 4.) The writings of Gregory himself attest his innocence of any classic taste or literature]

[Footnote 62: Bayle, (Dictionnaire Critique, tom. ii. 598, 569,) in a very good article of Gregoire I., has quoted, for the buildings and statues, Platina in Gregorio I.; for the Palatine library, John of Salisbury, (de Nugis Curialium, l. ii. c. 26;) and for Livy, Antoninus of Florence: the oldest of the three lived in the xiith century.]

Like Thebes, or Babylon, or Carthage, the names of Rome might have been erased from the earth, if the city had not been animated by a vital principle, which again restored her to honor and dominion. A vague tradition was embraced, that two Jewish teachers, a tent-maker and a fisherman, had formerly been executed in the circus of Nero, and at the end of five hundred years, their genuine or fictitious relics were adored as the Palladium of Christian Rome. The pilgrims of the East and West resorted to the holy threshold; but the shrines of the apostles were guarded by miracles and invisible terrors; and it was not without fear that the pious Catholic approached the object of his worship. It was fatal to touch, it was dangerous to behold, the bodies of the saints; and those who, from the purest motives, presumed to disturb the repose of the sanctuary, were affrighted by visions, or punished with sudden death. The unreasonable request of an empress, who wished to deprive the Romans of their sacred treasure, the head of St. Paul, was rejected with the deepest abhorrence; and the pope asserted, most probably with truth, that a linen which had been sanctified in the neighborhood of his body, or the filings of his chain, which it was sometimes easy and sometimes impossible to obtain, possessed an equal degree of miraculous virtue. [63] But the power as well as virtue of the apostles resided with living energy in the breast of their successors; and the chair of St. Peter was filled under the reign of Maurice by the first and greatest of the name of Gregory. [64] His grandfather Felix had himself been pope, and as the bishops were already bound by the laws of celibacy, his consecration must have been preceded by the death of

his wife. The parents of Gregory, Sylvia, and Gordian, were the noblest of the senate, and the most pious of the church of Rome; his female relations were numbered among the saints and virgins; and his own figure, with those of his father and mother, were represented near three hundred years in a family portrait, [65] which he offered to the monastery of St. Andrew. The design and coloring of this picture afford an honorable testimony that the art of painting was cultivated by the Italians of the sixth century; but the most abject ideas must be entertained of their taste and learning, since the epistles of Gregory, his sermons, and his dialogues, are the work of a man who was second in erudition to none of his contemporaries: [66] his birth and abilities had raised him to the office of praefect of the city, and he enjoyed the merit of renouncing the pomps and vanities of this world. His ample patrimony was dedicated to the foundation of seven monasteries, [67] one in Rome, [68] and six in Sicily; and it was the wish of Gregory that he might be unknown in this life, and glorious only in the next. Yet his devotion (and it might be sincere) pursued the path which would have been chosen by a crafty and ambitious statesman. The talents of Gregory, and the splendor which accompanied his retreat, rendered him dear and useful to the church; and implicit obedience has always been inculcated as the first duty of a monk. As soon as he had received the character of deacon, Gregory was sent to reside at the Byzantine court, the nuncio or minister of the apostolic see; and he boldly assumed, in the name of St. Peter, a tone of independent dignity, which would have been criminal and dangerous in the most illustrious layman of the empire. He returned to Rome with a just increase of reputation, and, after a short exercise

of the monastic virtues, he was dragged from the cloister to the papal throne, by the unanimous voice of the clergy, the senate, and the people. He alone resisted, or seemed to resist, his own elevation; and his humble petition, that Maurice would be pleased to reject the choice of the Romans, could only serve to exalt his character in the eyes of the emperor and the public. When the fatal mandate was proclaimed, Gregory solicited the aid of some friendly merchants to convey him in a basket beyond the gates of Rome, and modestly concealed himself some days among the woods and mountains, till his retreat was discovered, as it is said, by a celestial light. [Footnote 63: Gregor. 1. iii. epist. 24, edict. 12, &c. From the epistles of Gregory, and the viiith volume of the Annals of Baronius, the pious reader may collect the particles of holy iron which were inserted in keys or crosses of gold, and distributed in Britain, Gaul, Spain, Africa, Constantinople, and Egypt. The pontifical smith who handled the file must have understood the miracles which it was in his own power to operate or withhold; a circumstance which abates the superstition of Gregory at the expense of his veracity.]

[Footnote 64: Besides the epistles of Gregory himself, which are methodized by Dupin, (Bibliotheque Eccles. tom. v. p. 103--126,) we have three lives of the pope; the two first written in the viiith and ixth centuries, (de Triplici Vita St. Greg. Preface to the ivth volume of the Benedictine edition,) by the deacons Paul (p. 1--18) and John, (p. 19--188,) and containing much original, though doubtful, evidence; the third, a long and labored compilation by the Benedictine editors, (p.

199--305.) The annals of Baronius are a copious but partial history. His papal prejudices are tempered by the good sense of Fleury, (Hist. Eccles. tom. viii.,) and his chronology has been rectified by the criticism of Pagi and Muratori.]

[Footnote 65: John the deacon has described them like an eye-witness, (l. iv. c. 83, 84;) and his description is illustrated by Angelo Rocca, a Roman antiquary, (St. Greg. Opera, tom. iv. p. 312--326;) who observes that some mosaics of the popes of the viith century are still preserved in the old churches of Rome, (p. 321--323) The same walls which represented Gregory's family are now decorated with the martyrdom of St. Andrew, the noble contest of Dominichino and Guido.]

[Footnote 66: *Disciplinis vero liberalibus, hoc est grammatica, rhetorica, dialectica ita apuero est institutus, ut quamvis eo tempore florerent adhuc Romae studia literarum, tamen nulli in urbe ipsa secundus putaretur.* Paul. Diacon. in Vit. St. Gregor. c. 2.]

[Footnote 67: The Benedictines (Vit. Greg. l. i. p. 205--208) labor to reduce the monasteries of Gregory within the rule of their own order; but, as the question is confessed to be doubtful, it is clear that these powerful monks are in the wrong. See Butler's Lives of the Saints, vol. iii. p. 145; a work of merit: the sense and learning belong to the author--his prejudices are those of his profession.]

[Footnote 68: *Monasterium Gregorianum in ejusdem Beati Gregorii aedibus*

ad clivum Scauri prope ecclesiam SS. Johannis et Pauli in honorem St. Andreae, (John, in Vit. Greg. 1. i. c. 6. Greg. 1. vii. epist. 13.) This house and monastery were situate on the side of the Caelian hill which fronts the Palatine; they are now occupied by the Camaldoli: San Gregorio triumphs, and St. Andrew has retired to a small chapel Nardini, Roma Antica, l. iii. c. 6, p. 100. Descrizione di Roma, tom. i. p. 442--446.]

The pontificate of Gregory the Great, which lasted thirteen years, six months, and ten days, is one of the most edifying periods of the history of the church. His virtues, and even his faults, a singular mixture of simplicity and cunning, of pride and humility, of sense and superstition, were happily suited to his station and to the temper of the times. In his rival, the patriarch of Constantinople, he condemned the anti-Christian title of universal bishop, which the successor of St. Peter was too haughty to concede, and too feeble to assume; and the ecclesiastical jurisdiction of Gregory was confined to the triple character of Bishop of Rome, Primate of Italy, and Apostle of the West. He frequently ascended the pulpit, and kindled, by his rude, though pathetic, eloquence, the congenial passions of his audience: the language of the Jewish prophets was interpreted and applied; and the minds of a people, depressed by their present calamities, were directed to the hopes and fears of the invisible world. His precepts and example defined the model of the Roman liturgy; [69] the distribution of the parishes, the calendar of the festivals, the order of processions, the service of the priests and deacons, the variety and change of sacerdotal

garments. Till the last days of his life, he officiated in the canon of the mass, which continued above three hours: the Gregorian chant [70] has preserved the vocal and instrumental music of the theatre, and the rough voices of the Barbarians attempted to imitate the melody of the Roman school. [71] Experience had shown him the efficacy of these solemn and pompous rites, to soothe the distress, to confirm the faith, to mitigate the fierceness, and to dispel the dark enthusiasm of the vulgar, and he readily forgave their tendency to promote the reign of priesthood and superstition. The bishops of Italy and the adjacent islands acknowledged the Roman pontiff as their special metropolitan. Even the existence, the union, or the translation of episcopal seats was decided by his absolute discretion: and his successful inroads into the provinces of Greece, of Spain, and of Gaul, might countenance the more lofty pretensions of succeeding popes. He interposed to prevent the abuses of popular elections; his jealous care maintained the purity of faith and discipline; and the apostolic shepherd assiduously watched over the faith and discipline of the subordinate pastors. Under his reign, the Arians of Italy and Spain were reconciled to the Catholic church, and the conquest of Britain reflects less glory on the name of Caesar, than on that of Gregory the First. Instead of six legions, forty monks were embarked for that distant island, and the pontiff lamented the austere duties which forbade him to partake the perils of their spiritual warfare. In less than two years, he could announce to the archbishop of Alexandria, that they had baptized the king of Kent with ten thousand of his Anglo-Saxons, and that the Roman missionaries, like those of the primitive church, were armed only with spiritual and

supernatural powers. The credulity or the prudence of Gregory was always disposed to confirm the truths of religion by the evidence of ghosts, miracles, and resurrections; [72] and posterity has paid to his memory the same tribute which he freely granted to the virtue of his own or the preceding generation. The celestial honors have been liberally bestowed by the authority of the popes, but Gregory is the last of their own order whom they have presumed to inscribe in the calendar of saints.

[Footnote 69: The Lord's Prayer consists of half a dozen lines; the Sacramentarius and Antiphonarius of Gregory fill 880 folio pages, (tom. iii. p. i. p. 1--880;) yet these only constitute a part of the Ordo Romanus, which Mabillon has illustrated and Fleury has abridged, (Hist. Eccles. tom. viii. p. 139--152.)]

[Footnote 70: I learn from the Abbe Dobos, (Reflexions sur la Poesie et la Peinture, tom. iii. p. 174, 175,) that the simplicity of the Ambrosian chant was confined to four modes, while the more perfect harmony of the Gregorian comprised the eight modes or fifteen chords of the ancient music. He observes (p. 332) that the connoisseurs admire the preface and many passages of the Gregorian office.]

[Footnote 71: John the deacon (in Vit. Greg. 1. ii. c. 7) expresses the early contempt of the Italians for tramontane singing. *Alpina scilicet corpora vocum suarum tonitruis altisone perstreptentia, susceptae modulationis dulcedinem proprie non resultant: quia bibuli gutturis barbara feritas dum inflexionibus et repercussionibus mitem nititur*

edere cantilenam, naturali quodam fragore, quasi plaustra per gradus confuse sonantia, rigidas voces jactat, &c. In the time of Charlemagne, the Franks, though with some reluctance, admitted the justice of the reproach. Muratori, Dissert. xxv.]

[Footnote 72: A French critic (Petrus Gussanvillus, Opera, tom. ii. p. 105--112) has vindicated the right of Gregory to the entire nonsense of the Dialogues. Dupin (tom. v. p. 138) does not think that any one will vouch for the truth of all these miracles: I should like to know how many of them he believed himself.]

Their temporal power insensibly arose from the calamities of the times: and the Roman bishops, who have deluged Europe and Asia with blood, were compelled to reign as the ministers of charity and peace. I. The church of Rome, as it has been formerly observed, was endowed with ample possessions in Italy, Sicily, and the more distant provinces; and her agents, who were commonly sub-deacons, had acquired a civil, and even criminal, jurisdiction over their tenants and husbandmen. The successor of St. Peter administered his patrimony with the temper of a vigilant and moderate landlord; [73] and the epistles of Gregory are filled with salutary instructions to abstain from doubtful or vexatious lawsuits; to preserve the integrity of weights and measures; to grant every reasonable delay; and to reduce the capitation of the slaves of the glebe, who purchased the right of marriage by the payment of an arbitrary fine. [74] The rent or the produce of these estates was transported to the mouth of the Tyber, at the risk and expense of the

pope: in the use of wealth he acted like a faithful steward of the church and the poor, and liberally applied to their wants the inexhaustible resources of abstinence and order. The voluminous account of his receipts and disbursements was kept above three hundred years in the Lateran, as the model of Christian economy. On the four great festivals, he divided their quarterly allowance to the clergy, to his domestics, to the monasteries, the churches, the places of burial, the almshouses, and the hospitals of Rome, and the rest of the diocese. On the first day of every month, he distributed to the poor, according to the season, their stated portion of corn, wine, cheese, vegetables, oil, fish, fresh provisions, clothes, and money; and his treasurers were continually summoned to satisfy, in his name, the extraordinary demands of indigence and merit. The instant distress of the sick and helpless, of strangers and pilgrims, was relieved by the bounty of each day, and of every hour; nor would the pontiff indulge himself in a frugal repast, till he had sent the dishes from his own table to some objects deserving of his compassion. The misery of the times had reduced the nobles and matrons of Rome to accept, without a blush, the benevolence of the church: three thousand virgins received their food and raiment from the hand of their benefactor; and many bishops of Italy escaped from the Barbarians to the hospitable threshold of the Vatican. Gregory might justly be styled the Father of his Country; and such was the extreme sensibility of his conscience, that, for the death of a beggar who had perished in the streets, he interdicted himself during several days from the exercise of sacerdotal functions. II. The misfortunes of Rome involved the apostolical pastor in the business of peace and war; and it

might be doubtful to himself, whether piety or ambition prompted him to supply the place of his absent sovereign. Gregory awakened the emperor from a long slumber; exposed the guilt or incapacity of the exarch and his inferior ministers; complained that the veterans were withdrawn from Rome for the defence of Spoleto; encouraged the Italians to guard their cities and altars; and condescended, in the crisis of danger, to name the tribunes, and to direct the operations, of the provincial troops. But the martial spirit of the pope was checked by the scruples of humanity and religion: the imposition of tribute, though it was employed in the Italian war, he freely condemned as odious and oppressive; whilst he protected, against the Imperial edicts, the pious cowardice of the soldiers who deserted a military for a monastic life. If we may credit his own declarations, it would have been easy for Gregory to exterminate the Lombards by their domestic factions, without leaving a king, a duke, or a count, to save that unfortunate nation from the vengeance of their foes. As a Christian bishop, he preferred the salutary offices of peace; his mediation appeased the tumult of arms: but he was too conscious of the arts of the Greeks, and the passions of the Lombards, to engage his sacred promise for the observance of the truce. Disappointed in the hope of a general and lasting treaty, he presumed to save his country without the consent of the emperor or the exarch. The sword of the enemy was suspended over Rome; it was averted by the mild eloquence and seasonable gifts of the pontiff, who commanded the respect of heretics and Barbarians. The merits of Gregory were treated by the Byzantine court with reproach and insult; but in the attachment of a grateful people, he found the purest reward of a citizen, and the best right of a sovereign.

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[Footnote 73: Baronius is unwilling to expatiate on the care of the patrimonies, lest he should betray that they consisted not of kingdoms, but farms. The French writers, the Benedictine editors, (tom. iv. l. iii. p. 272, &c.,) and Fleury, (tom. viii. p. 29, &c.,) are not afraid of entering into these humble, though useful, details; and the humanity of Fleury dwells on the social virtues of Gregory.]

[Footnote 74: I much suspect that this pecuniary fine on the marriages of villains produced the famous, and often fabulous right, de cuissage, de marquette, &c. With the consent of her husband, a handsome bride might commute the payment in the arms of a young landlord, and the mutual favor might afford a precedent of local rather than legal tyranny]

[Footnote 75: The temporal reign of Gregory I. is ably exposed by Sigonius in the first book, de Regno Italiae. See his works, tom. ii. p. 44--75]