

Chapter XLVI: Troubles In Persia.--Part II.

While the majesty of the Roman name was revived in the East, the prospect of Europe is less pleasing and less glorious. By the departure of the Lombards, and the ruin of the Gepidae, the balance of power was destroyed on the Danube; and the Avars spread their permanent dominion from the foot of the Alps to the sea-coast of the Euxine. The reign of Baian is the brightest aera of their monarchy; their chagan, who occupied the rustic palace of Attila, appears to have imitated his character and policy; [23] but as the same scenes were repeated in a smaller circle, a minute representation of the copy would be devoid of the greatness and novelty of the original. The pride of the second Justin, of Tiberius, and Maurice, was humbled by a proud Barbarian, more prompt to inflict, than exposed to suffer, the injuries of war; and as often as Asia was threatened by the Persian arms, Europe was oppressed by the dangerous inroads, or costly friendship, of the Avars. When the Roman envoys approached the presence of the chagan, they were commanded to wait at the door of his tent, till, at the end perhaps of ten or twelve days, he condescended to admit them. If the substance or the style of their message was offensive to his ear, he insulted, with real or affected fury, their own dignity, and that of their prince; their baggage was plundered, and their lives were only saved by the promise of a richer present and a more respectful address. But his sacred ambassadors enjoyed and abused an unbounded license in the midst of Constantinople: they urged, with importunate clamors, the increase of tribute, or the restitution of captives and deserters: and the majesty

of the empire was almost equally degraded by a base compliance, or by the false and fearful excuses with which they eluded such insolent demands. The chagan had never seen an elephant; and his curiosity was excited by the strange, and perhaps fabulous, portrait of that wonderful animal. At his command, one of the largest elephants of the Imperial stables was equipped with stately caparisons, and conducted by a numerous train to the royal village in the plains of Hungary. He surveyed the enormous beast with surprise, with disgust, and possibly with terror; and smiled at the vain industry of the Romans, who, in search of such useless rarities, could explore the limits of the land and sea. He wished, at the expense of the emperor, to repose in a golden bed. The wealth of Constantinople, and the skilful diligence of her artists, were instantly devoted to the gratification of his caprice; but when the work was finished, he rejected with scorn a present so unworthy the majesty of a great king. [24] These were the casual sallies of his pride; but the avarice of the chagan was a more steady and tractable passion: a rich and regular supply of silk apparel, furniture, and plate, introduced the rudiments of art and luxury among the tents of the Scythians; their appetite was stimulated by the pepper and cinnamon of India; [25] the annual subsidy or tribute was raised from fourscore to one hundred and twenty thousand pieces of gold; and after each hostile interruption, the payment of the arrears, with exorbitant interest, was always made the first condition of the new treaty. In the language of a Barbarian, without guile, the prince of the Avars affected to complain of the insincerity of the Greeks; [26] yet he was not inferior to the most civilized nations in the refinement of dissimulation and perfidy.

As the successor of the Lombards, the chagan asserted his claim to the important city of Sirmium, the ancient bulwark of the Illyrian provinces. [27] The plains of the Lower Hungary were covered with the Avar horse and a fleet of large boats was built in the Hercynian wood, to descend the Danube, and to transport into the Save the materials of a bridge. But as the strong garrison of Singidunum, which commanded the conflux of the two rivers, might have stopped their passage and baffled his designs, he dispelled their apprehensions by a solemn oath that his views were not hostile to the empire. He swore by his sword, the symbol of the god of war, that he did not, as the enemy of Rome, construct a bridge upon the Save. "If I violate my oath," pursued the intrepid Baian, "may I myself, and the last of my nation, perish by the sword! May the heavens, and fire, the deity of the heavens, fall upon our heads! May the forests and mountains bury us in their ruins! and the Save returning, against the laws of nature, to his source, overwhelm us in his angry waters!" After this barbarous imprecation, he calmly inquired, what oath was most sacred and venerable among the Christians, what guilt or perjury it was most dangerous to incur. The bishop of Singidunum presented the gospel, which the chagan received with devout reverence. "I swear," said he, "by the God who has spoken in this holy book, that I have neither falsehood on my tongue, nor treachery in my heart." As soon as he rose from his knees, he accelerated the labor of the bridge, and despatched an envoy to proclaim what he no longer wished to conceal. "Inform the emperor," said the perfidious Baian, "that Sirmium is invested on every side. Advise his prudence to withdraw the citizens and their effects, and to resign a city which it is now

impossible to relieve or defend." Without the hope of relief, the defence of Sirmium was prolonged above three years: the walls were still untouched; but famine was enclosed within the walls, till a merciful capitulation allowed the escape of the naked and hungry inhabitants. Singidunum, at the distance of fifty miles, experienced a more cruel fate: the buildings were razed, and the vanquished people was condemned to servitude and exile. Yet the ruins of Sirmium are no longer visible; the advantageous situation of Singidunum soon attracted a new colony of Sclavonians, and the conflux of the Save and Danube is still guarded by the fortifications of Belgrade, or the White City, so often and so obstinately disputed by the Christian and Turkish arms. [28] From Belgrade to the walls of Constantinople a line may be measured of six hundred miles: that line was marked with flames and with blood; the horses of the Avars were alternately bathed in the Euxine and the Adriatic; and the Roman pontiff, alarmed by the approach of a more savage enemy, [29] was reduced to cherish the Lombards, as the protectors of Italy. The despair of a captive, whom his country refused to ransom, disclosed to the Avars the invention and practice of military engines. [30] But in the first attempts they were rudely framed, and awkwardly managed; and the resistance of Diocletianopolis and Beraea, of Philippopolis and Adrianople, soon exhausted the skill and patience of the besiegers. The warfare of Baian was that of a Tartar; yet his mind was susceptible of a humane and generous sentiment: he spared Anchialus, whose salutary waters had restored the health of the best beloved of his wives; and the Romans confessed, that their starving army was fed and dismissed by the liberality of a foe. His empire extended over Hungary,

Poland, and Prussia, from the mouth of the Danube to that of the Oder; [31] and his new subjects were divided and transplanted by the jealous policy of the conqueror. [32] The eastern regions of Germany, which had been left vacant by the emigration of the Vandals, were replenished with Slavonian colonists; the same tribes are discovered in the neighborhood of the Adriatic and of the Baltic, and with the name of Baian himself, the Illyrian cities of Neyss and Lissa are again found in the heart of Silesia. In the disposition both of his troops and provinces the chagan exposed the vassals, whose lives he disregarded, [33] to the first assault; and the swords of the enemy were blunted before they encountered the native valor of the Avars.

[Footnote 23: A general idea of the pride and power of the chagan may be taken from Menander (Excerpt. Legat. p. 118, &c.) and Theophylact, (l. i. c. 3, l. vii. c. 15,) whose eight books are much more honorable to the Avar than to the Roman prince. The predecessors of Baian had tasted the liberality of Rome, and he survived the reign of Maurice, (Buat, Hist. des Peuples Barbares, tom. xi. p. 545.) The chagan who invaded Italy, A.D. 611, (Muratori, Annali, tom. v. p. 305,) was then invenili aetate florentem, (Paul Warnefrid, de Gest. Langobard. l v c 38,) the son, perhaps, or the grandson, of Baian.]

[Footnote 24: Theophylact, l. i. c. 5, 6.]

[Footnote 25: Even in the field, the chagan delighted in the use of these aromatics. He solicited, as a gift, and received. Theophylact,

l. vii. c. 13. The Europeans of the ruder ages consumed more spices in their meat and drink than is compatible with the delicacy of a modern palate. *Vie Privee des Francois*, tom. ii. p. 162, 163.]

[Footnote 26: Theophylact, l. vi. c. 6, l. vii. c. 15. The Greek historian confesses the truth and justice of his reproach]

[Footnote 27: Menander (in *Excerpt. Legat.* p. 126--132, 174, 175) describes the perjury of Baian and the surrender of Sirmium. We have lost his account of the siege, which is commended by Theophylact, l. i. c. 3. \* Note: Compare throughout Schlozer *Nordische Geschichte*, p. 362--373--M.]

[Footnote 28: See D'Anville, in the *Memoires de l'Acad. des Inscriptions*, tom. xxviii. p. 412--443. The Slavonic name of Belgrade is mentioned in the xth century by Constantine Porphyrogenitus: the Latin appellation of Alba Croeca is used by the Franks in the beginning of the ixth, (p. 414.)]

[Footnote 29: *Baron. Annal. Eccles. A. B. 600*, No. 1. Paul Warnefrid (l. iv. c. 38) relates their irruption into Friuli, and (c. 39) the captivity of his ancestors, about A.D. 632. The Sclavi traversed the Adriatic cum multitudine navium, and made a descent in the territory of Sipontum, (c. 47.)]

[Footnote 30: Even the helepolis, or movable turret. Theophylact, l. ii.

16, 17.]

[Footnote 31: The arms and alliances of the chagan reached to the neighborhood of a western sea, fifteen months' journey from Constantinople. The emperor Maurice conversed with some itinerant harpers from that remote country, and only seems to have mistaken a trade for a nation Theophylact, l. vi. c. 2.]

[Footnote 32: This is one of the most probable and luminous conjectures of the learned count de Buat, (*Hist. des Peuples Barbares*, tom. xi. p. 546--568.) The Tzechi and Serbi are found together near Mount Caucasus, in Illyricum, and on the lower Elbe. Even the wildest traditions of the Bohemians, &c., afford some color to his hypothesis.]

[Footnote 33: See Fredegarius, in the *Historians of France*, tom. ii. p. 432. Baian did not conceal his proud insensibility.]

The Persian alliance restored the troops of the East to the defence of Europe: and Maurice, who had supported ten years the insolence of the chagan, declared his resolution to march in person against the Barbarians. In the space of two centuries, none of the successors of Theodosius had appeared in the field: their lives were supinely spent in the palace of Constantinople; and the Greeks could no longer understand, that the name of emperor, in its primitive sense, denoted the chief of the armies of the republic. The martial ardor of Maurice was opposed by the grave flattery of the senate, the timid superstition of the

patriarch, and the tears of the empress Constantina; and they all conjured him to devolve on some meaner general the fatigues and perils of a Scythian campaign. Deaf to their advice and entreaty, the emperor boldly advanced [34] seven miles from the capital; the sacred ensign of the cross was displayed in the front; and Maurice reviewed, with conscious pride, the arms and numbers of the veterans who had fought and conquered beyond the Tigris. Anchialus was the last term of his progress by sea and land; he solicited, without success, a miraculous answer to his nocturnal prayers; his mind was confounded by the death of a favorite horse, the encounter of a wild boar, a storm of wind and rain, and the birth of a monstrous child; and he forgot that the best of omens is to unsheathe our sword in the defence of our country. [35] Under the pretence of receiving the ambassadors of Persia, the emperor returned to Constantinople, exchanged the thoughts of war for those of devotion, and disappointed the public hope by his absence and the choice of his lieutenants. The blind partiality of fraternal love might excuse the promotion of his brother Peter, who fled with equal disgrace from the Barbarians, from his own soldiers and from the inhabitants of a Roman city. That city, if we may credit the resemblance of name and character, was the famous Azimuntium, [36] which had alone repelled the tempest of Attila. The example of her warlike youth was propagated to succeeding generations; and they obtained, from the first or the second Justin, an honorable privilege, that their valor should be always reserved for the defence of their native country. The brother of Maurice attempted to violate this privilege, and to mingle a patriot band with the mercenaries of his camp; they retired to the church, he was not awed



by the sanctity of the place; the people rose in their cause, the gates were shut, the ramparts were manned; and the cowardice of Peter was found equal to his arrogance and injustice. The military fame of Commentiolus [37] is the object of satire or comedy rather than of serious history, since he was even deficient in the vile and vulgar qualification of personal courage. His solemn councils, strange evolutions, and secret orders, always supplied an apology for flight or delay. If he marched against the enemy, the pleasant valleys of Mount Haemus opposed an insuperable barrier; but in his retreat, he explored, with fearless curiosity, the most difficult and obsolete paths, which had almost escaped the memory of the oldest native. The only blood which he lost was drawn, in a real or affected malady, by the lancet of a surgeon; and his health, which felt with exquisite sensibility the approach of the Barbarians, was uniformly restored by the repose and safety of the winter season. A prince who could promote and support this unworthy favorite must derive no glory from the accidental merit of his colleague Priscus. [38] In five successive battles, which seem to have been conducted with skill and resolution, seventeen thousand two hundred Barbarians were made prisoners: near sixty thousand, with four sons of the chagan, were slain: the Roman general surprised a peaceful district of the Gepidae, who slept under the protection of the Avars; and his last trophies were erected on the banks of the Danube and the Teyss. Since the death of Trajan the arms of the empire had not penetrated so deeply into the old Dacia: yet the success of Priscus was transient and barren; and he was soon recalled by the apprehension that Baian, with dauntless spirit and recruited forces, was preparing to avenge his

defeat under the walls of Constantinople. [39]

[Footnote 34: See the march and return of Maurice, in Theophylact, 1. v. c. 16 l. vi. c. 1, 2, 3. If he were a writer of taste or genius, we might suspect him of an elegant irony: but Theophylact is surely harmless.]

[Footnote 35: Iliad, xii. 243. This noble verse, which unites the spirit of a hero with the reason of a sage, may prove that Homer was in every light superior to his age and country.]

[Footnote 36: Theophylact, 1. vii. c. 3. On the evidence of this fact, which had not occurred to my memory, the candid reader will correct and excuse a note in Chapter XXXIV., note 86 of this History, which hastens the decay of Asimus, or Azimuntium; another century of patriotism and valor is cheaply purchased by such a confession.]

[Footnote 37: See the shameful conduct of Commentiolus, in Theophylact, 1. ii. c. 10--15, 1. vii. c. 13, 14, 1. viii. c. 2, 4.]

[Footnote 38: See the exploits of Priscus, 1. viii. c. 23.]

[Footnote 39: The general detail of the war against the Avars may be traced in the first, second, sixth, seventh, and eighth books of the history of the emperor Maurice, by Theophylact Simocatta. As he wrote in the reign of Heraclius, he had no temptation to flatter; but his want

of judgment renders him diffuse in trifles, and concise in the most interesting facts.]

The theory of war was not more familiar to the camps of Caesar and Trajan, than to those of Justinian and Maurice. [40] The iron of Tuscany or Pontus still received the keenest temper from the skill of the Byzantine workmen. The magazines were plentifully stored with every species of offensive and defensive arms. In the construction and use of ships, engines, and fortifications, the Barbarians admired the superior ingenuity of a people whom they had so often vanquished in the field. The science of tactics, the order, evolutions, and stratagems of antiquity, was transcribed and studied in the books of the Greeks and Romans. But the solitude or degeneracy of the provinces could no longer supply a race of men to handle those weapons, to guard those walls, to navigate those ships, and to reduce the theory of war into bold and successful practice. The genius of Belisarius and Narses had been formed without a master, and expired without a disciple. Neither honor, nor patriotism, nor generous superstition, could animate the lifeless bodies of slaves and strangers, who had succeeded to the honors of the legions: it was in the camp alone that the emperor should have exercised a despotic command; it was only in the camps that his authority was disobeyed and insulted: he appeased and inflamed with gold the licentiousness of the troops; but their vices were inherent, their victories were accidental, and their costly maintenance exhausted the substance of a state which they were unable to defend. After a long and pernicious indulgence, the cure of this inveterate evil was undertaken

by Maurice; but the rash attempt, which drew destruction on his own head, tended only to aggravate the disease. A reformer should be exempt from the suspicion of interest, and he must possess the confidence and esteem of those whom he proposes to reclaim. The troops of Maurice might listen to the voice of a victorious leader; they disdained the admonitions of statesmen and sophists; and, when they received an edict which deducted from their pay the price of their arms and clothing, they execrated the avarice of a prince insensible of the dangers and fatigues from which he had escaped.

The camps both of Asia and Europe were agitated with frequent and furious seditions; [41] the enraged soldiers of Edessa pursued with reproaches, with threats, with wounds, their trembling generals; they overturned the statues of the emperor, cast stones against the miraculous image of Christ, and either rejected the yoke of all civil and military laws, or instituted a dangerous model of voluntary subordination. The monarch, always distant and often deceived, was incapable of yielding or persisting, according to the exigence of the moment. But the fear of a general revolt induced him too readily to accept any act of valor, or any expression of loyalty, as an atonement for the popular offence; the new reform was abolished as hastily as it had been announced, and the troops, instead of punishment and restraint, were agreeably surprised by a gracious proclamation of immunities and rewards. But the soldiers accepted without gratitude the tardy and reluctant gifts of the emperor: their insolence was elated by the discovery of his weakness and their own strength; and their mutual

hatred was inflamed beyond the desire of forgiveness or the hope of reconciliation. The historians of the times adopt the vulgar suspicion, that Maurice conspired to destroy the troops whom he had labored to reform; the misconduct and favor of Commentiolus are imputed to this malevolent design; and every age must condemn the inhumanity of avarice [42] of a prince, who, by the trifling ransom of six thousand pieces of gold, might have prevented the massacre of twelve thousand prisoners in the hands of the chagan. In the just fervor of indignation, an order was signified to the army of the Danube, that they should spare the magazines of the province, and establish their winter quarters in the hostile country of the Avars. The measure of their grievances was full: they pronounced Maurice unworthy to reign, expelled or slaughtered his faithful adherents, and, under the command of Phocas, a simple centurion, returned by hasty marches to the neighborhood of Constantinople. After a long series of legal succession, the military disorders of the third century were again revived; yet such was the novelty of the enterprise, that the insurgents were awed by their own rashness. They hesitated to invest their favorite with the vacant purple; and, while they rejected all treaty with Maurice himself, they held a friendly correspondence with his son Theodosius, and with Germanus, the father-in-law of the royal youth. So obscure had been the former condition of Phocas, that the emperor was ignorant of the name and character of his rival; but as soon as he learned, that the centurion, though bold in sedition, was timid in the face of danger, "Alas!" cried the desponding prince, "if he is a coward, he will surely be a murderer."

[Footnote 40: Maurice himself composed xii books on the military art, which are still extant, and have been published (Upsal, 1664) by John Schaeffer, at the end of the Tactics of Arrian, (Fabricius, Bibliot Graeca, l. iv. c. 8, tom. iii. p. 278,) who promises to speak more fully of his work in its proper place.]

[Footnote 41: See the mutinies under the reign of Maurice, in Theophylact l iii c. 1--4, .vi. c. 7, 8, 10, l. vii. c. 1 l. viii. c. 6, &c.]

[Footnote 42: Theophylact and Theophanes seem ignorant of the conspiracy and avarice of Maurice. These charges, so unfavorable to the memory of that emperor, are first mentioned by the author of the Paschal Chronicle, (p. 379, 280;) from whence Zonaras (tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 77, 78) has transcribed them. Cedrenus (p. 399) has followed another computation of the ransom.]

Yet if Constantinople had been firm and faithful, the murderer might have spent his fury against the walls; and the rebel army would have been gradually consumed or reconciled by the prudence of the emperor. In the games of the Circus, which he repeated with unusual pomp, Maurice disguised, with smiles of confidence, the anxiety of his heart, condescended to solicit the applause of the factions, and flattered their pride by accepting from their respective tribunes a list of nine hundred blues and fifteen hundred greens, whom he affected to esteem

as the solid pillars of his throne Their treacherous or languid support betrayed his weakness and hastened his fall: the green faction were the secret accomplices of the rebels, and the blues recommended lenity and moderation in a contest with their Roman brethren The rigid and parsimonious virtues of Maurice had long since alienated the hearts of his subjects: as he walked barefoot in a religious procession, he was rudely assaulted with stones, and his guards were compelled to present their iron maces in the defence of his person. A fanatic monk ran through the streets with a drawn sword, denouncing against him the wrath and the sentence of God; and a vile plebeian, who represented his countenance and apparel, was seated on an ass, and pursued by the imprecations of the multitude. [43] The emperor suspected the popularity of Germanus with the soldiers and citizens: he feared, he threatened, but he delayed to strike; the patrician fled to the sanctuary of the church; the people rose in his defence, the walls were deserted by the guards, and the lawless city was abandoned to the flames and rapine of a nocturnal tumult. In a small bark, the unfortunate Maurice, with his wife and nine children, escaped to the Asiatic shore; but the violence of the wind compelled him to land at the church of St. Autonomus, [44] near Chalcedon, from whence he despatched Theodosius, he eldest son, to implore the gratitude and friendship of the Persian monarch. For himself, he refused to fly: his body was tortured with sciatic pains, [45] his mind was enfeebled by superstition; he patiently awaited the event of the revolution, and addressed a fervent and public prayer to the Almighty, that the punishment of his sins might be inflicted in this world rather than in a future life. After the abdication of Maurice, the

two factions disputed the choice of an emperor; but the favorite of the blues was rejected by the jealousy of their antagonists, and Germanus himself was hurried along by the crowds who rushed to the palace of Hebdomon, seven miles from the city, to adore the majesty of Phocas the centurion. A modest wish of resigning the purple to the rank and merit of Germanus was opposed by his resolution, more obstinate and equally sincere; the senate and clergy obeyed his summons; and, as soon as the patriarch was assured of his orthodox belief, he consecrated the successful usurper in the church of St. John the Baptist. On the third day, amidst the acclamations of a thoughtless people, Phocas made his public entry in a chariot drawn by four white horses: the revolt of the troops was rewarded by a lavish donative; and the new sovereign, after visiting the palace, beheld from his throne the games of the hippodrome. In a dispute of precedency between the two factions, his partial judgment inclined in favor of the greens. "Remember that Maurice is still alive," resounded from the opposite side; and the indiscreet clamor of the blues admonished and stimulated the cruelty of the tyrant. The ministers of death were despatched to Chalcedon: they dragged the emperor from his sanctuary; and the five sons of Maurice were successively murdered before the eyes of their agonizing parent. At each stroke, which he felt in his heart, he found strength to rehearse a pious ejaculation: "Thou art just, O Lord! and thy judgments are righteous." And such, in the last moments, was his rigid attachment to truth and justice, that he revealed to the soldiers the pious falsehood of a nurse who presented her own child in the place of a royal infant. [46] The tragic scene was finally closed by the execution of the emperor



himself, in the twentieth year of his reign, and the sixty-third of his age. The bodies of the father and his five sons were cast into the sea; their heads were exposed at Constantinople to the insults or pity of the multitude; and it was not till some signs of putrefaction had appeared, that Phocas connived at the private burial of these venerable remains. In that grave, the faults and errors of Maurice were kindly interred. His fate alone was remembered; and at the end of twenty years, in the recital of the history of Theophylact, the mournful tale was interrupted by the tears of the audience. [47]

[Footnote 43: In their clamors against Maurice, the people of Constantinople branded him with the name of Marcionite or Marcionist; a heresy (says Theophylact, l. viii. c. 9). Did they only cast out a vague reproach--or had the emperor really listened to some obscure teacher of those ancient Gnostics?]

[Footnote 44: The church of St. Autonomous (whom I have not the honor to know) was 150 stadia from Constantinople, (Theophylact, l. viii. c. 9.) The port of Eutropius, where Maurice and his children were murdered, is described by Gyllius (de Bosphoro Thracio, l. iii. c. xi.) as one of the two harbors of Chalcedon.]

[Footnote 45: The inhabitants of Constantinople were generally subject; and Theophylact insinuates, (l. viii. c. 9,) that if it were consistent with the rules of history, he could assign the medical cause. Yet such a digression would not have been more impertinent than his inquiry (l.

vii. c. 16, 17) into the annual inundations of the Nile, and all the opinions of the Greek philosophers on that subject.]

[Footnote 46: From this generous attempt, Corneille has deduced the intricate web of his tragedy of *Heraclius*, which requires more than one representation to be clearly understood, (*Corneille de Voltaire*, tom. v. p. 300;) and which, after an interval of some years, is said to have puzzled the author himself, (*Anecdotes Dramatiques*, tom. i. p. 422.)]

[Footnote 47: The revolt of Phocas and death of Maurice are told by Theophylact Simocatta, (l. viii. c. 7--12,) the Paschal Chronicle, (p. 379, 380,) Theophanes, (*Chronograph.* p. 238-244,) Zonaras, (tom. ii. l. xiv. p. 77--80,) and Cedrenus, (p. 399--404.)]

Such tears must have flowed in secret, and such compassion would have been criminal, under the reign of Phocas, who was peaceably acknowledged in the provinces of the East and West. The images of the emperor and his wife Leontia were exposed in the Lateran to the veneration of the clergy and senate of Rome, and afterwards deposited in the palace of the Caesars, between those of Constantine and Theodosius. As a subject and a Christian, it was the duty of Gregory to acquiesce in the established government; but the joyful applause with which he salutes the fortune of the assassin, has sullied, with indelible disgrace, the character of the saint. The successor of the apostles might have inculcated with decent firmness the guilt of blood, and the necessity of repentance; he is content to celebrate the deliverance of the people and the fall of the

oppressor; to rejoice that the piety and benignity of Phocas have been raised by Providence to the Imperial throne; to pray that his hands may be strengthened against all his enemies; and to express a wish, perhaps a prophecy, that, after a long and triumphant reign, he may be transferred from a temporal to an everlasting kingdom. [48] I have already traced the steps of a revolution so pleasing, in Gregory's opinion, both to heaven and earth; and Phocas does not appear less hateful in the exercise than in the acquisition of power. The pencil of an impartial historian has delineated the portrait of a monster: [49] his diminutive and deformed person, the closeness of his shaggy eyebrows, his red hair, his beardless chin, and his cheek disfigured and discolored by a formidable scar. Ignorant of letters, of laws, and even of arms, he indulged in the supreme rank a more ample privilege of lust and drunkenness; and his brutal pleasures were either injurious to his subjects or disgraceful to himself. Without assuming the office of a prince, he renounced the profession of a soldier; and the reign of Phocas afflicted Europe with ignominious peace, and Asia with desolating war. His savage temper was inflamed by passion, hardened by fear, and exasperated by resistance of reproach. The flight of Theodosius to the Persian court had been intercepted by a rapid pursuit, or a deceitful message: he was beheaded at Nice, and the last hours of the young prince were soothed by the comforts of religion and the consciousness of innocence. Yet his phantom disturbed the repose of the usurper: a whisper was circulated through the East, that the son of Maurice was still alive: the people expected their avenger, and the widow and daughters of the late emperor would have adopted as their son and

brother the vilest of mankind. In the massacre of the Imperial family, [50] the mercy, or rather the discretion, of Phocas had spared these unhappy females, and they were decently confined to a private house. But the spirit of the empress Constantina, still mindful of her father, her husband, and her sons, aspired to freedom and revenge. At the dead of night, she escaped to the sanctuary of St. Sophia; but her tears, and the gold of her associate Germanus, were insufficient to provoke an insurrection. Her life was forfeited to revenge, and even to justice: but the patriarch obtained and pledged an oath for her safety: a monastery was allotted for her prison, and the widow of Maurice accepted and abused the lenity of his assassin. The discovery or the suspicion of a second conspiracy, dissolved the engagements, and rekindled the fury, of Phocas. A matron who commanded the respect and pity of mankind, the daughter, wife, and mother of emperors, was tortured like the vilest malefactor, to force a confession of her designs and associates; and the empress Constantina, with her three innocent daughters, was beheaded at Chalcedon, on the same ground which had been stained with the blood of her husband and five sons. After such an example, it would be superfluous to enumerate the names and sufferings of meaner victims. Their condemnation was seldom preceded by the forms of trial, and their punishment was embittered by the refinements of cruelty: their eyes were pierced, their tongues were torn from the root, the hands and feet were amputated; some expired under the lash, others in the flames; others again were transfixed with arrows; and a simple speedy death was mercy which they could rarely obtain. The hippodrome, the sacred asylum of the pleasures and the liberty of the Romans, was polluted with heads and

limbs, and mangled bodies; and the companions of Phocas were the most sensible, that neither his favor, nor their services, could protect them from a tyrant, the worthy rival of the Caligulas and Domitians of the first age of the empire. [51]

[Footnote 48: Gregor. l. xi. epist. 38, indict. vi. Benignitatem vestrae pietatis ad Imperiale fastigium pervenisse gaudemus. Laetentur coeli et exultet terra, et de vestris benignis actibus universae republicae populus nunc usque vehementer afflictus hilarescat, &c. This base flattery, the topic of Protestant invective, is justly censured by the philosopher Bayle, (Dictionnaire Critique, Gregoire I. Not. H. tom. ii. p. 597 598.) Cardinal Baronius justifies the pope at the expense of the fallen emperor.]

[Footnote 49: The images of Phocas were destroyed; but even the malice of his enemies would suffer one copy of such a portrait or caricature (Cedrenus, p. 404) to escape the flames.]

[Footnote 50: The family of Maurice is represented by Ducange, (Familiae Byzantinae, p. 106, 107, 108;) his eldest son Theodosius had been crowned emperor, when he was no more than four years and a half old, and he is always joined with his father in the salutations of Gregory. With the Christian daughters, Anastasia and Theocteste, I am surprised to find the Pagan name of Cleopatra.]

[Footnote 51: Some of the cruelties of Phocas are marked by Theophylact,

1. viii. c. 13, 14, 15. George of Pisidia, the poet of Heraclius, styles him (Bell. Avaricum, p. 46, Rome, 1777). The latter epithet is just--but the corrupter of life was easily vanquished.]