

Chapter LXII: Greek Emperors Of Nice And Constantinople.--Part I.

The Greek Emperors Of Nice And Constantinople.--Elevation
And Reign Of Michael Palæologus.--His False Union With The
Pope And The Latin Church.--Hostile Designs Of Charles Of
Anjou.--Revolt Of Sicily.--War Of The Catalans In Asia And
Greece.--Revolutions And Present State Of Athens.

The loss of Constantinople restored a momentary vigor to the Greeks. From their palaces, the princes and nobles were driven into the field; and the fragments of the falling monarchy were grasped by the hands of the most vigorous or the most skilful candidates. In the long and barren pages of the Byzantine annals, [1] it would not be an easy task to equal the two characters of Theodore Lascaris and John Ducas Vataces, [2] who replanted and upheld the Roman standard at Nice in Bithynia. The difference of their virtues was happily suited to the diversity of their situation. In his first efforts, the fugitive Lascaris commanded only three cities and two thousand soldiers: his reign was the season of generous and active despair: in every military operation he staked his life and crown; and his enemies of the Hellespont and the Mæander, were surprised by his celerity and subdued by his boldness. A victorious reign of eighteen years expanded the principality of Nice to the magnitude of an empire. The throne of his successor and son-in-law Vataces was founded on a more solid basis, a larger scope, and more plentiful resources; and it was the temper, as well as the interest, of Vataces to calculate the risk, to expect the moment, and to insure the

success, of his ambitious designs. In the decline of the Latins, I have briefly exposed the progress of the Greeks; the prudent and gradual advances of a conqueror, who, in a reign of thirty-three years, rescued the provinces from national and foreign usurpers, till he pressed on all sides the Imperial city, a leafless and sapless trunk, which must fall at the first stroke of the axe. But his interior and peaceful administration is still more deserving of notice and praise. [3] The calamities of the times had wasted the numbers and the substance of the Greeks; the motives and the means of agriculture were extirpated; and the most fertile lands were left without cultivation or inhabitants. A portion of this vacant property was occupied and improved by the command, and for the benefit, of the emperor: a powerful hand and a vigilant eye supplied and surpassed, by a skilful management, the minute diligence of a private farmer: the royal domain became the garden and granary of Asia; and without impoverishing the people, the sovereign acquired a fund of innocent and productive wealth. According to the nature of the soil, his lands were sown with corn or planted with vines; the pastures were filled with horses and oxen, with sheep and hogs; and when Vataces presented to the empress a crown of diamonds and pearls, he informed her, with a smile, that this precious ornament arose from the sale of the eggs of his innumerable poultry. The produce of his domain was applied to the maintenance of his palace and hospitals, the calls of dignity and benevolence: the lesson was still more useful than the revenue: the plough was restored to its ancient security and honor; and the nobles were taught to seek a sure and independent revenue from their estates, instead of adorning their splendid beggary by the oppression of

the people, or (what is almost the same) by the favors of the court. The superfluous stock of corn and cattle was eagerly purchased by the Turks, with whom Vataces preserved a strict and sincere alliance; but he discouraged the importation of foreign manufactures, the costly silks of the East, and the curious labors of the Italian looms. "The demands of nature and necessity," was he accustomed to say, "are indispensable; but the influence of fashion may rise and sink at the breath of a monarch;" and both his precept and example recommended simplicity of manners and the use of domestic industry. The education of youth and the revival of learning were the most serious objects of his care; and, without deciding the precedence, he pronounced with truth, that a prince and a philosopher [4] are the two most eminent characters of human society. His first wife was Irene, the daughter of Theodore Lascaris, a woman more illustrious by her personal merit, the milder virtues of her sex, than by the blood of the Angeli and Comneni that flowed in her veins, and transmitted the inheritance of the empire. After her death he was contracted to Anne, or Constance, a natural daughter of the emperor Frederic [499] the Second; but as the bride had not attained the years of puberty, Vataces placed in his solitary bed an Italian damsel of her train; and his amorous weakness bestowed on the concubine the honors, though not the title, of a lawful empress. His frailty was censured as a flagitious and damnable sin by the monks; and their rude invectives exercised and displayed the patience of the royal lover. A philosophic age may excuse a single vice, which was redeemed by a crowd of virtues; and in the review of his faults, and the more intemperate passions of Lascaris, the judgment of their contemporaries was softened by gratitude

to the second founders of the empire. [5] The slaves of the Latins, without law or peace, applauded the happiness of their brethren who had resumed their national freedom; and Vataces employed the laudable policy of convincing the Greeks of every dominion that it was their interest to be enrolled in the number of his subjects.

[Footnote 1: For the reigns of the Nicene emperors, more especially of John Vataces and his son, their minister, George Acropolita, is the only genuine contemporary; but George Pachymer returned to Constantinople with the Greeks at the age of nineteen, (Hanckius de Script. Byzant. c. 33, 34, p. 564--578. Fabric. Bibliot. Græc. tom. vi. p. 448--460.) Yet the history of Nicephorus Gregoras, though of the xivth century, is a valuable narrative from the taking of Constantinople by the Latins.]

[Footnote 2: Nicephorus Gregoras (l. ii. c. 1) distinguishes between the *oxeia ormh* of Lascaris, and the *eustageia* of Vataces. The two portraits are in a very good style.]

[Footnote 3: Pachymer, l. i. c. 23, 24. Nic. Greg. l. ii. c. 6. The reader of the Byzantines must observe how rarely we are indulged with such precious details.]

[Footnote 4: *Monoï gar apantwn anqrwpwn onomastotatoi basileuV kai jilosojoV*, (Greg. Acropol. c. 32.) The emperor, in a familiar conversation, examined and encouraged the studies of his future *logothete*.]

[Footnote 499: Sister of Manfred, afterwards king of Naples. Nic. Greg. p. 45.--M.]

[Footnote 5: Compare Acropolita, (c. 18, 52,) and the two first books of Nicephorus Gregoras.]

A strong shade of degeneracy is visible between John Vataces and his son Theodore; between the founder who sustained the weight, and the heir who enjoyed the splendor, of the Imperial crown. [6] Yet the character of Theodore was not devoid of energy; he had been educated in the school of his father, in the exercise of war and hunting; Constantinople was yet spared; but in the three years of a short reign, he thrice led his armies into the heart of Bulgaria. His virtues were sullied by a choleric and suspicious temper: the first of these may be ascribed to the ignorance of control; and the second might naturally arise from a dark and imperfect view of the corruption of mankind. On a march in Bulgaria, he consulted on a question of policy his principal ministers; and the Greek logothete, George Acropolita, presumed to offend him by the declaration of a free and honest opinion. The emperor half unsheathed his cimeter; but his more deliberate rage reserved Acropolita for a baser punishment. One of the first officers of the empire was ordered to dismount, stripped of his robes, and extended on the ground in the presence of the prince and army. In this posture he was chastised with so many and such heavy blows from the clubs of two guards or executioners, that when Theodore commanded them to cease, the great

logothete was scarcely able to rise and crawl away to his tent. After a seclusion of some days, he was recalled by a peremptory mandate to his seat in council; and so dead were the Greeks to the sense of honor and shame, that it is from the narrative of the sufferer himself that we acquire the knowledge of his disgrace. [7] The cruelty of the emperor was exasperated by the pangs of sickness, the approach of a premature end, and the suspicion of poison and magic. The lives and fortunes, the eyes and limbs, of his kinsmen and nobles, were sacrificed to each sally of passion; and before he died, the son of Vataces might deserve from the people, or at least from the court, the appellation of tyrant. A matron of the family of the Palæologi had provoked his anger by refusing to bestow her beautiful daughter on the vile plebeian who was recommended by his caprice. Without regard to her birth or age, her body, as high as the neck, was enclosed in a sack with several cats, who were pricked with pins to irritate their fury against their unfortunate fellow-captive. In his last hours the emperor testified a wish to forgive and be forgiven, a just anxiety for the fate of John his son and successor, who, at the age of eight years, was condemned to the dangers of a long minority. His last choice intrusted the office of guardian to the sanctity of the patriarch Arsenius, and to the courage of George Muzalon, the great domestic, who was equally distinguished by the royal favor and the public hatred. Since their connection with the Latins, the names and privileges of hereditary rank had insinuated themselves into the Greek monarchy; and the noble families [8] were provoked by the elevation of a worthless favorite, to whose influence they imputed the errors and calamities of the late reign. In the first council, after

the emperor's death, Muzalon, from a lofty throne, pronounced a labored apology of his conduct and intentions: his modesty was subdued by a unanimous assurance of esteem and fidelity; and his most inveterate enemies were the loudest to salute him as the guardian and savior of the Romans. Eight days were sufficient to prepare the execution of the conspiracy. On the ninth, the obsequies of the deceased monarch were solemnized in the cathedral of Magnesia, [9] an Asiatic city, where he expired, on the banks of the Hermus, and at the foot of Mount Sipylus. The holy rites were interrupted by a sedition of the guards; Muzalon, his brothers, and his adherents, were massacred at the foot of the altar; and the absent patriarch was associated with a new colleague, with Michael Palæologus, the most illustrious, in birth and merit, of the Greek nobles. [10]

[Footnote 6: A Persian saying, that Cyrus was the father and Darius the master, of his subjects, was applied to Vataces and his son. But Pachymer (l. i. c. 23) has mistaken the mild Darius for the cruel Cambyses, despot or tyrant of his people. By the institution of taxes, Darius had incurred the less odious, but more contemptible, name of KaphloV, merchant or broker, (Herodotus, iii. 89.)]

[Footnote 7: Acropolita (c. 63) seems to admire his own firmness in sustaining a beating, and not returning to council till he was called. He relates the exploits of Theodore, and his own services, from c. 53 to c. 74 of his history. See the third book of Nicephorus Gregoras.]

[Footnote 8: Pachymer (l. i. c. 21) names and discriminates fifteen or twenty Greek families, kai osoi alloi, oiV h megalogenhV seira kai crush sugkekrothto. Does he mean, by this decoration, a figurative or a real golden chain? Perhaps, both.]

[Footnote 9: The old geographers, with Cellarius and D'Anville, and our travellers, particularly Pocock and Chandler, will teach us to distinguish the two Magnesias of Asia Minor, of the Mæander and of Sipylus. The latter, our present object, is still flourishing for a Turkish city, and lies eight hours, or leagues, to the north-east of Smyrna, (Tournefort, Voyage du Levant, tom. iii. lettre xxii. p. 365--370. Chandler's Travels into Asia Minor, p. 267.)]

[Footnote 10: See Acropolita, (c. 75, 76, &c.,) who lived too near the times; Pachymer, (l. i. c. 13--25,) Gregoras, (l. iii. c. 3, 4, 5.)]

Of those who are proud of their ancestors, the far greater part must be content with local or domestic renown; and few there are who dare trust the memorials of their family to the public annals of their country. As early as the middle of the eleventh century, the noble race of the Palæologi [11] stands high and conspicuous in the Byzantine history: it was the valiant George Palæologus who placed the father of the Comneni on the throne; and his kinsmen or descendants continue, in each generation, to lead the armies and councils of the state. The purple was not dishonored by their alliance, and had the law of succession, and female succession, been strictly observed, the wife of Theodore Lascaris

must have yielded to her elder sister, the mother of Michael Palæologus, who afterwards raised his family to the throne. In his person, the splendor of birth was dignified by the merit of the soldier and statesman: in his early youth he was promoted to the office of constable or commander of the French mercenaries; the private expense of a day never exceeded three pieces of gold; but his ambition was rapacious and profuse; and his gifts were doubled by the graces of his conversation and manners. The love of the soldiers and people excited the jealousy of the court, and Michael thrice escaped from the dangers in which he was involved by his own imprudence or that of his friends.

I. Under the reign of Justice and Vataces, a dispute arose [12] between two officers, one of whom accused the other of maintaining the hereditary right of the Palæologi The cause was decided, according to the new jurisprudence of the Latins, by single combat; the defendant was overthrown; but he persisted in declaring that himself alone was guilty; and that he had uttered these rash or treasonable speeches without the approbation or knowledge of his patron Yet a cloud of suspicion hung over the innocence of the constable; he was still pursued by the whispers of malevolence; and a subtle courtier, the archbishop of Philadelphia, urged him to accept the judgment of God in the fiery proof of the ordeal. [13] Three days before the trial, the patient's arm was enclosed in a bag, and secured by the royal signet; and it was incumbent on him to bear a red-hot ball of iron three times from the altar to the rails of the sanctuary, without artifice and without injury. Palæologus eluded the dangerous experiment with sense and pleasantry. "I am a soldier," said he, "and will boldly enter the lists with my accusers;

but a layman, a sinner like myself, is not endowed with the gift of miracles. Your piety, most holy prelate, may deserve the interposition of Heaven, and from your hands I will receive the fiery globe, the pledge of my innocence." The archbishop started; the emperor smiled; and the absolution or pardon of Michael was approved by new rewards and new services. II. In the succeeding reign, as he held the government of Nice, he was secretly informed, that the mind of the absent prince was poisoned with jealousy; and that death, or blindness, would be his final reward. Instead of awaiting the return and sentence of Theodore, the constable, with some followers, escaped from the city and the empire; and though he was plundered by the Turkmans of the desert, he found a hospitable refuge in the court of the sultan. In the ambiguous state of an exile, Michael reconciled the duties of gratitude and loyalty: drawing his sword against the Tartars; admonishing the garrisons of the Roman limit; and promoting, by his influence, the restoration of peace, in which his pardon and recall were honorably included. III. While he guarded the West against the despot of Epirus, Michael was again suspected and condemned in the palace; and such was his loyalty or weakness, that he submitted to be led in chains above six hundred miles from Durazzo to Nice. The civility of the messenger alleviated his disgrace; the emperor's sickness dispelled his danger; and the last breath of Theodore, which recommended his infant son, at once acknowledged the innocence and the power of Palæologus.

[Footnote 11: The pedigree of Palæologus is explained by Ducange, (Fam. Byzant. p. 230, &c.): the events of his private life are related

by Pachymer (l. i. c. 7--12) and Gregoras (l. ii. 8, l. iii. 2, 4, l. iv. 1) with visible favor to the father of the reigning dynasty.]

[Footnote 12: Acropolita (c. 50) relates the circumstances of this curious adventure, which seem to have escaped the more recent writers.]

[Footnote 13: Pachymer, (l. i. c. 12,) who speaks with proper contempt of this barbarous trial, affirms, that he had seen in his youth many person who had sustained, without injury, the fiery ordeal. As a Greek, he is credulous; but the ingenuity of the Greeks might furnish some remedies of art or fraud against their own superstition, or that of their tyrant.]

But his innocence had been too unworthily treated, and his power was too strongly felt, to curb an aspiring subject in the fair field that was opened to his ambition. [14] In the council, after the death of Theodore, he was the first to pronounce, and the first to violate, the oath of allegiance to Muzalon; and so dexterous was his conduct, that he reaped the benefit, without incurring the guilt, or at least the reproach, of the subsequent massacre. In the choice of a regent, he balanced the interests and passions of the candidates; turned their envy and hatred from himself against each other, and forced every competitor to own, that after his own claims, those of Palæologus were best entitled to the preference. Under the title of great duke, he accepted or assumed, during a long minority, the active powers of government; the patriarch was a venerable name; and the factious nobles were seduced, or

oppressed, by the ascendant of his genius. The fruits of the economy of Vataces were deposited in a strong castle on the banks of the Hermus, in the custody of the faithful Varangians: the constable retained his command or influence over the foreign troops; he employed the guards to possess the treasure, and the treasure to corrupt the guards; and whatsoever might be the abuse of the public money, his character was above the suspicion of private avarice. By himself, or by his emissaries, he strove to persuade every rank of subjects, that their own prosperity would rise in just proportion to the establishment of his authority. The weight of taxes was suspended, the perpetual theme of popular complaint; and he prohibited the trials by the ordeal and judicial combat. These Barbaric institutions were already abolished or undermined in France [15] and England; [16] and the appeal to the sword offended the sense of a civilized, [17] and the temper of an unwarlike, people. For the future maintenance of their wives and children, the veterans were grateful: the priests and the philosophers applauded his ardent zeal for the advancement of religion and learning; and his vague promise of rewarding merit was applied by every candidate to his own hopes. Conscious of the influence of the clergy, Michael successfully labored to secure the suffrage of that powerful order. Their expensive journey from Nice to Magnesia, afforded a decent and ample pretence: the leading prelates were tempted by the liberality of his nocturnal visits; and the incorruptible patriarch was flattered by the homage of his new colleague, who led his mule by the bridle into the town, and removed to a respectful distance the importunity of the crowd. Without renouncing his title by royal descent, Palæologus encouraged a free discussion into

the advantages of elective monarchy; and his adherents asked, with the insolence of triumph, what patient would trust his health, or what merchant would abandon his vessel, to the hereditary skill of a physician or a pilot? The youth of the emperor, and the impending dangers of a minority, required the support of a mature and experienced guardian; of an associate raised above the envy of his equals, and invested with the name and prerogatives of royalty. For the interest of the prince and people, without any selfish views for himself or his family, the great duke consented to guard and instruct the son of Theodore; but he sighed for the happy moment when he might restore to his firmer hands the administration of his patrimony, and enjoy the blessings of a private station. He was first invested with the title and prerogatives of despot, which bestowed the purple ornaments and the second place in the Roman monarchy. It was afterwards agreed that John and Michael should be proclaimed as joint emperors, and raised on the buckler, but that the preeminence should be reserved for the birthright of the former. A mutual league of amity was pledged between the royal partners; and in case of a rupture, the subjects were bound, by their oath of allegiance, to declare themselves against the aggressor; an ambiguous name, the seed of discord and civil war. Palæologus was content; but, on the day of the coronation, and in the cathedral of Nice, his zealous adherents most vehemently urged the just priority of his age and merit. The unseasonable dispute was eluded by postponing to a more convenient opportunity the coronation of John Lascaris; and he walked with a slight diadem in the train of his guardian, who alone received the Imperial crown from the hands of the patriarch. It was

not without extreme reluctance that Arsenius abandoned the cause of his pupil; out the Varangians brandished their battle-axes; a sign of assent was extorted from the trembling youth; and some voices were heard, that the life of a child should no longer impede the settlement of the nation. A full harvest of honors and employments was distributed among his friends by the grateful Palæologus. In his own family he created a despot and two sebastocrators; Alexius Strategopulus was decorated with the title of Cæsar; and that veteran commander soon repaid the obligation, by restoring Constantinople to the Greek emperor.

[Footnote 14: Without comparing Pachymer to Thucydides or Tacitus, I will praise his narrative, (l. i. c. 13--32, l. ii. c. 1--9,) which pursues the ascent of Palæologus with eloquence, perspicuity, and tolerable freedom. Acropolita is more cautious, and Gregoras more concise.]

[Footnote 15: The judicial combat was abolished by St. Louis in his own territories; and his example and authority were at length prevalent in France, (Esprit des Loix, l. xxviii. c. 29.)]

[Footnote 16: In civil cases Henry II. gave an option to the defendant: Glanville prefers the proof by evidence; and that by judicial combat is reprobated in the Fleta. Yet the trial by battle has never been abrogated in the English law, and it was ordered by the judges as late as the beginning of the last century. * Note : And even demanded in the present.--M.]

[Footnote 17: Yet an ingenious friend has urged to me in mitigation of this practice, 1. That in nations emerging from barbarism, it moderates the license of private war and arbitrary revenge. 2. That it is less absurd than the trials by the ordeal, or boiling water, or the cross, which it has contributed to abolish. 3. That it served at least as a test of personal courage; a quality so seldom united with a base disposition, that the danger of a trial might be some check to a malicious prosecutor, and a useful barrier against injustice supported by power. The gallant and unfortunate earl of Surrey might probably have escaped his unmerited fate, had not his demand of the combat against his accuser been overruled.]

It was in the second year of his reign, while he resided in the palace and gardens of Nymphæum, [18] near Smyrna, that the first messenger arrived at the dead of night; and the stupendous intelligence was imparted to Michael, after he had been gently waked by the tender precaution of his sister Eulogia. The man was unknown or obscure; he produced no letters from the victorious Cæsar; nor could it easily be credited, after the defeat of Vataces and the recent failure of Palæologus himself, that the capital had been surprised by a detachment of eight hundred soldiers. As a hostage, the doubtful author was confined, with the assurance of death or an ample recompense; and the court was left some hours in the anxiety of hope and fear, till the messengers of Alexius arrived with the authentic intelligence, and displayed the trophies of the conquest, the sword and sceptre, [19] the

buskins and bonnet, [20] of the usurper Baldwin, which he had dropped in his precipitate flight. A general assembly of the bishops, senators, and nobles, was immediately convened, and never perhaps was an event received with more heartfelt and universal joy. In a studied oration, the new sovereign of Constantinople congratulated his own and the public fortune. "There was a time," said he, "a far distant time, when the Roman empire extended to the Adriatic, the Tigris, and the confines of Æthiopia. After the loss of the provinces, our capital itself, in these last and calamitous days, has been wrested from our hands by the Barbarians of the West. From the lowest ebb, the tide of prosperity has again returned in our favor; but our prosperity was that of fugitives and exiles: and when we were asked, which was the country of the Romans, we indicated with a blush the climate of the globe, and the quarter of the heavens. The divine Providence has now restored to our arms the city of Constantine, the sacred seat of religion and empire; and it will depend on our valor and conduct to render this important acquisition the pledge and omen of future victories." So eager was the impatience of the prince and people, that Michael made his triumphal entry into Constantinople only twenty days after the expulsion of the Latins. The golden gate was thrown open at his approach; the devout conqueror dismounted from his horse; and a miraculous image of Mary the Conductress was borne before him, that the divine Virgin in person might appear to conduct him to the temple of her Son, the cathedral of St. Sophia. But after the first transport of devotion and pride, he sighed at the dreary prospect of solitude and ruin. The palace was defiled with smoke and dirt, and the gross intemperance of the Franks; whole streets

had been consumed by fire, or were decayed by the injuries of time; the sacred and profane edifices were stripped of their ornaments: and, as if they were conscious of their approaching exile, the industry of the Latins had been confined to the work of pillage and destruction. Trade had expired under the pressure of anarchy and distress, and the numbers of inhabitants had decreased with the opulence of the city. It was the first care of the Greek monarch to reinstate the nobles in the palaces of their fathers; and the houses or the ground which they occupied were restored to the families that could exhibit a legal right of inheritance. But the far greater part was extinct or lost; the vacant property had devolved to the lord; he re-peopled Constantinople by a liberal invitation to the provinces; and the brave volunteers were seated in the capital which had been recovered by their arms. The French barons and the principal families had retired with their emperor; but the patient and humble crowd of Latins was attached to the country, and indifferent to the change of masters. Instead of banishing the factories of the Pisans, Venetians, and Genoese, the prudent conqueror accepted their oaths of allegiance, encouraged their industry, confirmed their privileges, and allowed them to live under the jurisdiction of their proper magistrates. Of these nations, the Pisans and Venetians preserved their respective quarters in the city; but the services and power of the Genoese deserved at the same time the gratitude and the jealousy of the Greeks. Their independent colony was first planted at the seaport town of Heraclea in Thrace. They were speedily recalled, and settled in the exclusive possession of the suburb of Galata, an advantageous post, in which they revived the commerce, and insulted the majesty, of the

Byzantine empire. [21]

[Footnote 18: The site of Nymphæum is not clearly defined in ancient or modern geography. But from the last hours of Vataces, (Acropolita, c. 52,) it is evident the palace and gardens of his favorite residence were in the neighborhood of Smyrna. Nymphæum might be loosely placed in Lydia, (Gregoras, l. vi. 6.)]

[Footnote 19: This sceptre, the emblem of justice and power, was a long staff, such as was used by the heroes in Homer. By the latter Greeks it was named Dicanice, and the Imperial sceptre was distinguished as usual by the red or purple color.]

[Footnote 20: Acropolita affirms (c. 87,) that this "Onnet" was after the French fashion; but from the ruby at the point or summit, Ducange (Hist. de C. P. l. v. c. 28, 29) believes that it was the high-crowned hat of the Greeks. Could Acropolita mistake the dress of his own court?]

[Footnote 21: See Pachymer, (l. ii. c. 28--33,) Acropolita, (c. 88,) Nicephorus Gregoras, (l. iv. 7,) and for the treatment of the subject Latins, Ducange, (l. v. c. 30, 31.)]

The recovery of Constantinople was celebrated as the æra of a new empire: the conqueror, alone, and by the right of the sword, renewed his coronation in the church of St. Sophia; and the name and honors of John Lascaris, his pupil and lawful sovereign, were insensibly abolished. But

his claims still lived in the minds of the people; and the royal youth must speedily attain the years of manhood and ambition. By fear or conscience, Palæologus was restrained from dipping his hands in innocent and royal blood; but the anxiety of a usurper and a parent urged him to secure his throne by one of those imperfect crimes so familiar to the modern Greeks. The loss of sight incapacitated the young prince for the active business of the world; instead of the brutal violence of tearing out his eyes, the visual nerve was destroyed by the intense glare of a red-hot basin, [22] and John Lascaris was removed to a distant castle, where he spent many years in privacy and oblivion. Such cool and deliberate guilt may seem incompatible with remorse; but if Michael could trust the mercy of Heaven, he was not inaccessible to the reproaches and vengeance of mankind, which he had provoked by cruelty and treason. His cruelty imposed on a servile court the duties of applause or silence; but the clergy had a right to speak in the name of their invisible Master; and their holy legions were led by a prelate, whose character was above the temptations of hope or fear. After a short abdication of his dignity, Arsenius [23] had consented to ascend the ecclesiastical throne of Constantinople, and to preside in the restoration of the church. His pious simplicity was long deceived by the arts of Palæologus; and his patience and submission might soothe the usurper, and protect the safety of the young prince. On the news of his inhuman treatment, the patriarch unsheathed the spiritual sword; and superstition, on this occasion, was enlisted in the cause of humanity and justice. In a synod of bishops, who were stimulated by the example of his zeal, the patriarch pronounced a sentence of excommunication;

though his prudence still repeated the name of Michael in the public prayers. The Eastern prelates had not adopted the dangerous maxims of ancient Rome; nor did they presume to enforce their censures, by deposing princes, or absolving nations from their oaths of allegiance. But the Christian, who had been separated from God and the church, became an object of horror; and, in a turbulent and fanatic capital, that horror might arm the hand of an assassin, or inflame a sedition of the people. Palæologus felt his danger, confessed his guilt, and deprecated his judge: the act was irretrievable; the prize was obtained; and the most rigorous penance, which he solicited, would have raised the sinner to the reputation of a saint. The unrelenting patriarch refused to announce any means of atonement or any hopes of mercy; and condescended only to pronounce, that for so great a crime, great indeed must be the satisfaction. "Do you require," said Michael, "that I should abdicate the empire?" and at these words, he offered, or seemed to offer, the sword of state. Arsenius eagerly grasped this pledge of sovereignty; but when he perceived that the emperor was unwilling to purchase absolution at so dear a rate, he indignantly escaped to his cell, and left the royal sinner kneeling and weeping before the door.

[24]

[Footnote 22: This milder invention for extinguishing the sight was tried by the philosopher Democritus on himself, when he sought to withdraw his mind from the visible world: a foolish story! The word *abacinare*, in Latin and Italian, has furnished Ducange (*Gloss. Lat.*) with an opportunity to review the various modes of blinding: the more

violent were scooping, burning with an iron, or hot vinegar, and binding the head with a strong cord till the eyes burst from their sockets.

Ingenious tyrants!]

[Footnote 23: See the first retreat and restoration of Arsenius, in Pachymer (l. ii. c. 15, l. iii. c. 1, 2) and Nicephorus Gregoras, (l. iii. c. 1, l. iv. c. 1.) Posterity justly accused the ajeleia and raqumia of Arsenius the virtues of a hermit, the vices of a minister, (l. xii. c. 2.)]

[Footnote 24: The crime and excommunication of Michael are fairly told by Pachymer (l. iii. c. 10, 14, 19, &c.) and Gregoras, (l. iv. c. 4.) His confession and penance restored their freedom.]