

These general observations may be separately applied to the amphitheatre of Titus, which has obtained the name of the Coliseum, [49] either from its magnitude, or from Nero's colossal statue; an edifice, had it been left to time and nature, which might perhaps have claimed an eternal duration. The curious antiquaries, who have computed the numbers and seats, are disposed to believe, that above the upper row of stone steps the amphitheatre was encircled and elevated with several stages of wooden galleries, which were repeatedly consumed by fire, and restored by the emperors. Whatever was precious, or portable, or profane, the statues of gods and heroes, and the costly ornaments of sculpture which were cast in brass, or overspread with leaves of silver and gold, became the first prey of conquest or fanaticism, of the avarice of the Barbarians or the Christians. In the massy stones of the Coliseum, many holes are discerned; and the two most probable conjectures represent the various accidents of its decay. These stones were connected by solid links of brass or iron, nor had the eye of rapine overlooked the value of the baser metals; [50] the vacant space was converted into a fair or market; the artisans of the Coliseum are mentioned in an ancient survey; and the chasms were perforated or enlarged to receive the poles that supported the shops or tents of the mechanic trades. [51] Reduced to its naked majesty, the Flavian amphitheatre was contemplated with awe and admiration by the pilgrims of the North; and their rude enthusiasm broke forth in a sublime proverbial expression, which is recorded in the eighth century, in the fragments of the venerable Bede: "As long as the

Coliseum stands, Rome shall stand; when the Coliseum falls, Rome will fall; when Rome falls, the world will fall." [52] In the modern system of war, a situation commanded by three hills would not be chosen for a fortress; but the strength of the walls and arches could resist the engines of assault; a numerous garrison might be lodged in the enclosure; and while one faction occupied the Vatican and the Capitol, the other was intrenched in the Lateran and the Coliseum. [53]

[Footnote 49: The fourth part of the Verona Illustrata of the marquis Maffei professedly treats of amphitheatres, particularly those of Rome and Verona, of their dimensions, wooden galleries, &c. It is from magnitude that he derives the name of Colosseum, or Coliseum; since the same appellation was applied to the amphitheatre of Capua, without the aid of a colossal statue; since that of Nero was erected in the court (in atrio) of his palace, and not in the Coliseum, (P. iv. p. 15--19, l. i. c. 4.)]

[Footnote 50: Joseph Maria Suarés, a learned bishop, and the author of a history of Præneste, has composed a separate dissertation on the seven or eight probable causes of these holes, which has been since reprinted in the Roman Thesaurus of Sallengre. Montfaucon (Diarium, p. 233) pronounces the rapine of the Barbarians to be the unam germanamque causam foraminum. * Note: The improbability of this theory is shown by Bunsen, vol. i. p. 239.--M.]

[Footnote 51: Donatus, Roma Vetus et Nova, p. 285.

Note: Gibbon has followed Donatus, who supposes that a silk manufactory was established in the xiith century in the Coliseum. The Bandonarii, or Bandererii, were the officers who carried the standards of their school before the pope. Hobhouse, p. 269.--M.]

[Footnote 52: *Quamdiu stabit Colyseus, stabit et Roma; quando cadet Colyseus, cadet Roma; quando cadet Roma, cadet et mundus*, (Beda in *Excerptis seu Collectaneis apud Ducange Glossar. Med. et Infimæ Latinitatis*, tom. ii. p. 407, edit. Basil.) This saying must be ascribed to the Anglo-Saxon pilgrims who visited Rome before the year 735 the æra of Bede's death; for I do not believe that our venerable monk ever passed the sea.]

[Footnote 53: I cannot recover, in Muratori's original *Lives of the Popes*, (*Script Rerum Italicarum*, tom. iii. P. i.,) the passage that attests this hostile partition, which must be applied to the end of the xiith or the beginning of the xiith century. * Note: "The division is mentioned in *Vit. Innocent. Pap. II. ex Cardinale Aragonio*, (*Script. Rer. Ital.* vol. iii. P. i. p. 435,) and Gibbon might have found frequent other records of it at other dates." Hobhouse's *Illustrations of Childe Harold*. p. 130.--M.]

The abolition at Rome of the ancient games must be understood with some latitude; and the carnival sports, of the Testacean mount and the Circus Agonalis, [54] were regulated by the law [55] or custom of the city. The senator presided with dignity and pomp to adjudge and distribute the

prizes, the gold ring, or the pallium, [56] as it was styled, of cloth or silk. A tribute on the Jews supplied the annual expense; [57] and the races, on foot, on horseback, or in chariots, were ennobled by a tilt and tournament of seventy-two of the Roman youth. In the year one thousand three hundred and thirty-two, a bull-feast, after the fashion of the Moors and Spaniards, was celebrated in the Coliseum itself; and the living manners are painted in a diary of the times. [58] A convenient order of benches was restored; and a general proclamation, as far as Rimini and Ravenna, invited the nobles to exercise their skill and courage in this perilous adventure. The Roman ladies were marshalled in three squadrons, and seated in three balconies, which, on this day, the third of September, were lined with scarlet cloth. The fair Jacova di Rovere led the matrons from beyond the Tyber, a pure and native race, who still represent the features and character of antiquity. The remainder of the city was divided as usual between the Colonna and Ursini: the two factions were proud of the number and beauty of their female bands: the charms of Savella Ursini are mentioned with praise; and the Colonna regretted the absence of the youngest of their house, who had sprained her ankle in the garden of Nero's tower. The lots of the champions were drawn by an old and respectable citizen; and they descended into the arena, or pit, to encounter the wild bulls, on foot as it should seem, with a single spear. Amidst the crowd, our annalist has selected the names, colors, and devices, of twenty of the most conspicuous knights. Several of the names are the most illustrious of Rome and the ecclesiastical state: Malatesta, Polenta, della Valle, Cafarello, Savelli, Capoccio, Conti, Annibaldi, Altieri, Corsi: the

colors were adapted to their taste and situation; the devices are expressive of hope or despair, and breathe the spirit of gallantry and arms. "I am alone, like the youngest of the Horatii," the confidence of an intrepid stranger: "I live disconsolate," a weeping widower: "I burn under the ashes," a discreet lover: "I adore Lavinia, or Lucretia," the ambiguous declaration of a modern passion: "My faith is as pure," the motto of a white livery: "Who is stronger than myself?" of a lion's hide: "If am drowned in blood, what a pleasant death!" the wish of ferocious courage. The pride or prudence of the Ursini restrained them from the field, which was occupied by three of their hereditary rivals, whose inscriptions denoted the lofty greatness of the Colonna name: "Though sad, I am strong:" "Strong as I am great:" "If I fall," addressing himself to the spectators, "you fall with me;"--intimating (says the contemporary writer) that while the other families were the subjects of the Vatican, they alone were the supporters of the Capitol. The combats of the amphitheatre were dangerous and bloody. Every champion successively encountered a wild bull; and the victory may be ascribed to the quadrupeds, since no more than eleven were left on the field, with the loss of nine wounded and eighteen killed on the side of their adversaries. Some of the noblest families might mourn, but the pomp of the funerals, in the churches of St. John Lateran and St. Maria Maggiore, afforded a second holiday to the people. Doubtless it was not in such conflicts that the blood of the Romans should have been shed; yet, in blaming their rashness, we are compelled to applaud their gallantry; and the noble volunteers, who display their magnificence, and risk their lives, under the balconies of the fair, excite a more

generous sympathy than the thousands of captives and malefactors who were reluctantly dragged to the scene of slaughter. [59]

[Footnote 54: Although the structure of the circus Agonalis be destroyed, it still retains its form and name, (Agona, Nagona, Navona;) and the interior space affords a sufficient level for the purpose of racing. But the Monte Testaceo, that strange pile of broken pottery, seems only adapted for the annual practice of hurling from top to bottom some wagon-loads of live hogs for the diversion of the populace, (Statuta Urbis Romæ, p. 186.)]

[Footnote 55: See the Statuta Urbis Romæ, l. iii. c. 87, 88, 89, p. 185, 186. I have already given an idea of this municipal code. The races of Nagona and Monte Testaceo are likewise mentioned in the Diary of Peter Antonius from 1404 to 1417, (Muratori, Script. Rerum Italicarum, tom. xxiv. p. 1124.)]

[Footnote 56: The Pallium, which Menage so foolishly derives from Palmarius, is an easy extension of the idea and the words, from the robe or cloak, to the materials, and from thence to their application as a prize, (Muratori, dissert. xxxiii.)]

[Footnote 57: For these expenses, the Jews of Rome paid each year 1130 florins, of which the odd thirty represented the pieces of silver for which Judas had betrayed his Master to their ancestors. There was a foot-race of Jewish as well as of Christian youths, (Statuta Urbis,

ibidem.)]

[Footnote 58: This extraordinary bull-feast in the Coliseum is described, from tradition rather than memory, by Ludovico Buonconte Monaldesco, on the most ancient fragments of Roman annals, (Muratori, *Script Rerum Italicarum*, tom. xii. p. 535, 536;) and however fanciful they may seem, they are deeply marked with the colors of truth and nature.]

[Footnote 59: Muratori has given a separate dissertation (the xxixth) to the games of the Italians in the Middle Ages.]

This use of the amphitheatre was a rare, perhaps a singular, festival: the demand for the materials was a daily and continual want which the citizens could gratify without restraint or remorse. In the fourteenth century, a scandalous act of concord secured to both factions the privilege of extracting stones from the free and common quarry of the Coliseum; [60] and Poggius laments, that the greater part of these stones had been burnt to lime by the folly of the Romans. [61] To check this abuse, and to prevent the nocturnal crimes that might be perpetrated in the vast and gloomy recess, Eugenius the Fourth surrounded it with a wall; and, by a charter long extant, granted both the ground and edifice to the monks of an adjacent convent. [62] After his death, the wall was overthrown in a tumult of the people; and had they themselves respected the noblest monument of their fathers, they might have justified the resolve that it should never be degraded to private property. The inside

was damaged: but in the middle of the sixteenth century, an æra of taste and learning, the exterior circumference of one thousand six hundred and twelve feet was still entire and inviolate; a triple elevation of fourscore arches, which rose to the height of one hundred and eight feet. Of the present ruin, the nephews of Paul the Third are the guilty agents; and every traveller who views the Farnese palace may curse the sacrilege and luxury of these upstart princes. [63] A similar reproach is applied to the Barberini; and the repetition of injury might be dreaded from every reign, till the Coliseum was placed under the safeguard of religion by the most liberal of the pontiffs, Benedict the Fourteenth, who consecrated a spot which persecution and fable had stained with the blood of so many Christian martyrs. [64]

[Footnote 60: In a concise but instructive memoir, the abbé Barthelemy (*Mémoires de l'Académie des Inscriptions*, tom. xxviii. p. 585) has mentioned this agreement of the factions of the xivth century de Tiburtino faciendo in the Coliseum, from an original act in the archives of Rome.]

[Footnote 61: Coliseum.... ob stultitiam Romanorum majori ex parte ad calcem deletum, says the indignant Poggius, (p. 17:) but his expression too strong for the present age, must be very tenderly applied to the xvth century.]

[Footnote 62: Of the Olivetan monks. Montfaucon (p. 142) affirms this fact from the memorials of Flaminius Vacca, (No. 72.) They still hoped

on some future occasion, to revive and vindicate their grant.]

[Footnote 63: After measuring the *priscus amphitheatricus gyrus*, Montfaucon (p. 142) only adds that it was entire under Paul III.; *tacendo clamat*. Muratori (*Annali d'Italia*, tom. xiv. p. 371) more freely reports the guilt of the Farnese pope, and the indignation of the Roman people. Against the nephews of Urban VIII. I have no other evidence than the vulgar saying, "*Quod non fecerunt Barbari, fecere Barberini*," which was perhaps suggested by the resemblance of the words.]

[Footnote 64: As an antiquarian and a priest, Montfaucon thus deprecates the ruin of the Coliseum: *Quòd si non suo pte merito atque pulchritudine dignum fuisset quod improbas arceret manus, indigna res utique in locum tot martyrum cruore sacrum tantopere sævitum esse.*]

When Petrarch first gratified his eyes with a view of those monuments, whose scattered fragments so far surpass the most eloquent descriptions, he was astonished at the supine indifference [65] of the Romans themselves; [66] he was humbled rather than elated by the discovery, that, except his friend Rienzi, and one of the Colonna, a stranger of the Rhône was more conversant with these antiquities than the nobles and natives of the metropolis. [67] The ignorance and credulity of the Romans are elaborately displayed in the old survey of the city which was composed about the beginning of the thirteenth century; and, without dwelling on the manifold errors of name and place, the legend of the Capitol [68] may provoke a smile of contempt and indignation. "The

Capitol," says the anonymous writer, "is so named as being the head of the world; where the consuls and senators formerly resided for the government of the city and the globe. The strong and lofty walls were covered with glass and gold, and crowned with a roof of the richest and most curious carving. Below the citadel stood a palace, of gold for the greatest part, decorated with precious stones, and whose value might be esteemed at one third of the world itself. The statues of all the provinces were arranged in order, each with a small bell suspended from its neck; and such was the contrivance of art magic, [69] that if the province rebelled against Rome, the statue turned round to that quarter of the heavens, the bell rang, the prophet of the Capitol repeated the prodigy, and the senate was admonished of the impending danger." A second example, of less importance, though of equal absurdity, may be drawn from the two marble horses, led by two naked youths, who have since been transported from the baths of Constantine to the Quirinal hill. The groundless application of the names of Phidias and Praxiteles may perhaps be excused; but these Grecian sculptors should not have been removed above four hundred years from the age of Pericles to that of Tiberius; they should not have been transferred into two philosophers or magicians, whose nakedness was the symbol of truth or knowledge, who revealed to the emperor his most secret actions; and, after refusing all pecuniary recompense, solicited the honor of leaving this eternal monument of themselves. [70] Thus awake to the power of magic, the Romans were insensible to the beauties of art: no more than five statues were visible to the eyes of Poggius; and of the multitudes which chance or design had buried under the ruins, the resurrection was fortunately

delayed till a safer and more enlightened age. [71] The Nile which now adorns the Vatican, had been explored by some laborers in digging a vineyard near the temple, or convent, of the Minerva; but the impatient proprietor, who was tormented by some visits of curiosity, restored the unprofitable marble to its former grave. [72] The discovery of a statue of Pompey, ten feet in length, was the occasion of a lawsuit. It had been found under a partition wall: the equitable judge had pronounced, that the head should be separated from the body to satisfy the claims of the contiguous owners; and the sentence would have been executed, if the intercession of a cardinal, and the liberality of a pope, had not rescued the Roman hero from the hands of his barbarous countrymen. [73]

[Footnote 65: Yet the statutes of Rome (l. iii. c. 81, p. 182) impose a fine of 500 aurei on whosoever shall demolish any ancient edifice, ne ruinis civitas deformetur, et ut antiqua ædificia decorem urbis perpetuo representent.]

[Footnote 66: In his first visit to Rome (A.D. 1337. See Mémoires sur Pétrarque, tom. i. p. 322, &c.) Petrarch is struck mute miraculo rerum tantarum, et stuporis mole obrutus.... Præsentia vero, mirum dictû nihil imminuit: vere major fuit Roma majoresque sunt reliquiæ quam rebar. Jam non orbem ab hâc urbe domitum, sed tam sero domitum, miror, (Opp. p. 605, Familiares, ii. 14, Joanni Columnæ.)]

[Footnote 67: He excepts and praises the rare knowledge of John Colonna. Qui enim hodie magis ignari rerum Romanarum, quam Romani cives!

Invitus dico, nusquam minus Roma cognoscitur quam Romæ.]

[Footnote 68: After the description of the Capitol, he adds, statuæ erant quot sunt mundi provinciæ; et habebat quælibet tintinnabulum ad collum. Et erant ita per magicam artem dispositæ, ut quando aliqua regio Romano Imperio rebellis erat, statim imago illius provinciæ vertebat se contra illam; unde tintinnabulum resonabat quod pendebat ad collum; tuncque vates Capitolii qui erant custodes senatui, &c. He mentions an example of the Saxons and Suevi, who, after they had been subdued by Agrippa, again rebelled: tintinnabulum sonuit; sacerdos qui erat in speculo in hebdomada senatoribus nuntiavit: Agrippa marched back and reduced the--Persians, (Anonym. in Montfaucon, p. 297, 298.)]

[Footnote 69: The same writer affirms, that Virgil captus a Romanis invisibiliter exiit, ivitque Neapolim. A Roman magician, in the xith century, is introduced by William of Malmsbury, (de Gestis Regum Anglorum, l. ii. p. 86;) and in the time of Flaminius Vacca (No. 81, 103) it was the vulgar belief that the strangers (the Goths) invoked the dæmons for the discovery of hidden treasures.]

[Footnote 70: Anonym. p. 289. Montfaucon (p. 191) justly observes, that if Alexander be represented, these statues cannot be the work of Phidias (Olympiad lxxxiii.) or Praxiteles, (Olympiad civ.) who lived before that conqueror (Plin. Hist. Natur. xxxiv. 19.)]

[Footnote 71: William of Malmsbury (l. ii. p. 86, 87) relates a

marvellous discovery (A.D. 1046) of Pallas the son of Evander, who had been slain by Turnus; the perpetual light in his sepulchre, a Latin epitaph, the corpse, yet entire, of a young giant, the enormous wound in his breast, (*pectus perforat ingens*,) &c. If this fable rests on the slightest foundation, we may pity the bodies, as well as the statues, that were exposed to the air in a barbarous age.]

[Footnote 72: *Prope porticum Minervæ, statua est recubantis, cujus caput integrâ effigie tantæ magnitudinis, ut signa omnia excedat. Quidam ad plantandas arbores scrobes faciens detexit. Ad hoc visendum cum plures in dies magis concurrerent, strepitum adeuentium fastidiumque pertæsus, horti patronus congestâ humo textit, (Poggius de Varietate Fortunæ, p. 12.)*]

[Footnote 73: See the Memorials of Flaminius Vacca, No. 57, p. 11, 12, at the end of the *Roma Antica* of Nardini, (1704, in 4to.)]

But the clouds of barbarism were gradually dispelled; and the peaceful authority of Martin the Fifth and his successors restored the ornaments of the city as well as the order of the ecclesiastical state. The improvements of Rome, since the fifteenth century, have not been the spontaneous produce of freedom and industry. The first and most natural root of a great city is the labor and populousness of the adjacent country, which supplies the materials of subsistence, of manufactures, and of foreign trade. But the greater part of the Campagna of Rome is reduced to a dreary and desolate wilderness: the overgrown estates of

the princes and the clergy are cultivated by the lazy hands of indigent and hopeless vassals; and the scanty harvests are confined or exported for the benefit of a monopoly. A second and more artificial cause of the growth of a metropolis is the residence of a monarch, the expense of a luxurious court, and the tributes of dependent provinces. Those provinces and tributes had been lost in the fall of the empire; and if some streams of the silver of Peru and the gold of Brazil have been attracted by the Vatican, the revenues of the cardinals, the fees of office, the oblations of pilgrims and clients, and the remnant of ecclesiastical taxes, afford a poor and precarious supply, which maintains, however, the idleness of the court and city. The population of Rome, far below the measure of the great capitals of Europe, does not exceed one hundred and seventy thousand inhabitants; [74] and within the spacious enclosure of the walls, the largest portion of the seven hills is overspread with vineyards and ruins. The beauty and splendor of the modern city may be ascribed to the abuses of the government, to the influence of superstition. Each reign (the exceptions are rare) has been marked by the rapid elevation of a new family, enriched by the childish pontiff at the expense of the church and country. The palaces of these fortunate nephews are the most costly monuments of elegance and servitude: the perfect arts of architecture, sculpture, and painting, have been prostituted in their service; and their galleries and gardens are decorated with the most precious works of antiquity, which taste or vanity has prompted them to collect. The ecclesiastical revenues were more decently employed by the popes themselves in the pomp of the Catholic worship; but it is superfluous to enumerate their pious

foundations of altars, chapels, and churches, since these lesser stars are eclipsed by the sun of the Vatican, by the dome of St. Peter, the most glorious structure that ever has been applied to the use of religion. The fame of Julius the Second, Leo the Tenth, and Sixtus the Fifth, is accompanied by the superior merit of Bramante and Fontana, of Raphael and Michael Angelo; and the same munificence which had been displayed in palaces and temples was directed with equal zeal to revive and emulate the labors of antiquity. Prostrate obelisks were raised from the ground, and erected in the most conspicuous places; of the eleven aqueducts of the Cæsars and consuls, three were restored; the artificial rivers were conducted over a long series of old, or of new arches, to discharge into marble basins a flood of salubrious and refreshing waters: and the spectator, impatient to ascend the steps of St. Peter's, is detained by a column of Egyptian granite, which rises between two lofty and perpetual fountains, to the height of one hundred and twenty feet. The map, the description, the monuments of ancient Rome, have been elucidated by the diligence of the antiquarian and the student: [75] and the footsteps of heroes, the relics, not of superstition, but of empire, are devoutly visited by a new race of pilgrims from the remote, and once savage countries of the North.

[Footnote 74: In the year 1709, the inhabitants of Rome (without including eight or ten thousand Jews,) amounted to 138,568 souls, (Labat *Voyages en Espagne et en Italie*, tom. iii. p. 217, 218.) In 1740, they had increased to 146,080; and in 1765, I left them, without the Jews 161,899. I am ignorant whether they have since continued in a

progressive state.]

[Footnote 75: The Père Montfaucon distributes his own observations into twenty days; he should have styled them weeks, or months, of his visits to the different parts of the city, (*Diarium Italicum*, c. 8--20, p. 104--301.) That learned Benedictine reviews the topographers of ancient Rome; the first efforts of Blondus, Fulvius, Martianus, and Faunus, the superior labors of Pyrrhus Ligorius, had his learning been equal to his labors; the writings of Onuphrius Panvinius, *qui omnes obscuravit*, and the recent but imperfect books of Donatus and Nardini. Yet Montfaucon still sighs for a more complete plan and description of the old city, which must be attained by the three following methods: 1. The measurement of the space and intervals of the ruins. 2. The study of inscriptions, and the places where they were found. 3. The investigation of all the acts, charters, diaries of the middle ages, which name any spot or building of Rome. The laborious work, such as Montfaucon desired, must be promoted by princely or public munificence: but the great modern plan of Nolli (A.D. 1748) would furnish a solid and accurate basis for the ancient topography of Rome.]

Of these pilgrims, and of every reader, the attention will be excited by a History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire; the greatest, perhaps, and most awful scene in the history of mankind. The various causes and progressive effects are connected with many of the events most interesting in human annals: the artful policy of the Cæsars, who long maintained the name and image of a free republic; the disorders of

military despotism; the rise, establishment, and sects of Christianity; the foundation of Constantinople; the division of the monarchy; the invasion and settlements of the Barbarians of Germany and Scythia; the institutions of the civil law; the character and religion of Mahomet; the temporal sovereignty of the popes; the restoration and decay of the Western empire of Charlemagne; the crusades of the Latins in the East: the conquests of the Saracens and Turks; the ruin of the Greek empire; the state and revolutions of Rome in the middle age. The historian may applaud the importance and variety of his subject; but while he is conscious of his own imperfections, he must often accuse the deficiency of his materials. It was among the ruins of the Capitol that I first conceived the idea of a work which has amused and exercised near twenty years of my life, and which, however inadequate to my own wishes, I finally delivered to the curiosity and candor of the public.

Lausanne, June 27 1787