

THE
HISTORY
OF
MODERN EUROPE:

286
WITH AN ACCOUNT OF THE
DECLINE AND FALL 1716

OF
THE ROMAN EMPIRE;
AND
A View of the Progress of Society,
FROM
THE RISE OF THE MODERN KINGDOMS
TO THE
Peace of Paris in 1763.

IN
A SERIES OF LETTERS FROM
A NOBLEMAN TO HIS SON.

IN FIVE VOLUMES.

A NEW EDITION,
STUDIOUSLY REVISED AND CAREFULLY CORRECTED.

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TO

HIS GRACE

1716

FRANCIS, DUKE OF BEDFORD,

THIS

IMPROVED EDITION

OF THE

HISTORY OF MODERN EUROPE.

IS

RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED

BY

HIS GRACE'S

MOST HUMBLE AND OBEDIENT SERVANT,

WILLIAM RUSSELL.

Gray's Inn,
May 29, 1786.



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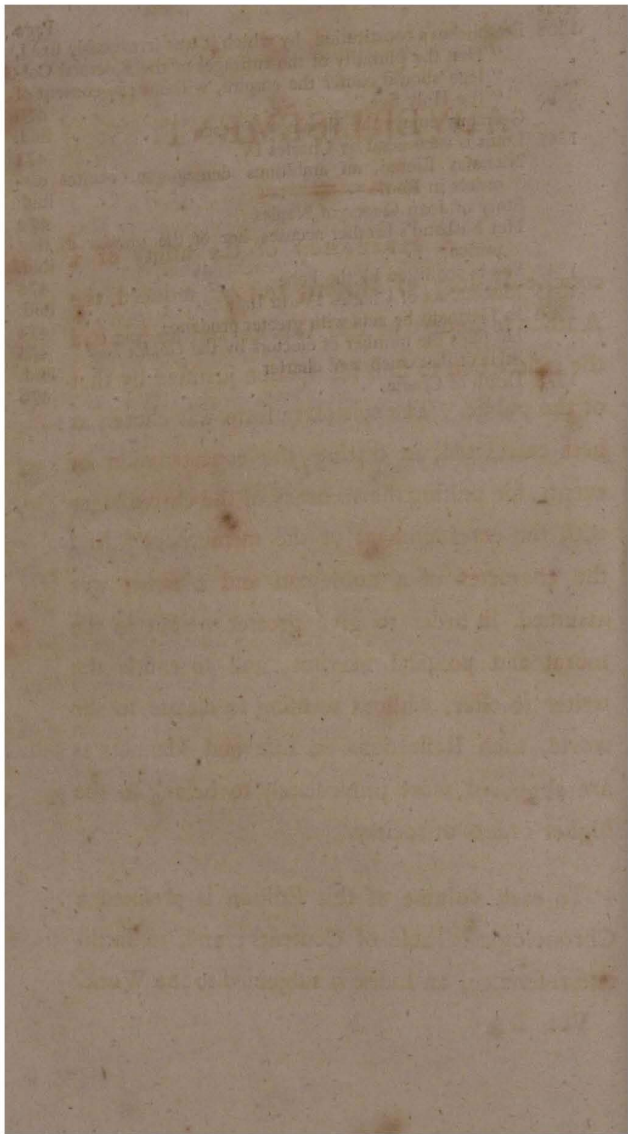
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ADVERTISEMENT.

A PERSUASION of the utility of a concise History of Modern Europe induced the Author to undertake this Work: and he has had the satisfaction to find his opinion justified by that of the public. The epistolary form was chosen as best calculated, in tracing the concatenation of events, for uniting the accuracy of the chronologer with the entertainment of the memorialist: And the character of a nobleman and a father was assumed, in order to give greater weight to the moral and political maxims, and to entitle the writer to offer, without seeming to dictate to the world, such Reflections on Life and Manners as are supposed more immediately to belong to the higher orders of society.

To each volume of this Edition is prefixed a Chronological Table of Contents; and, to facilitate reference, an Index is subjoined to the Work.



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THE
HISTORY
OF
MODERN EUROPE.

PART I.

FROM THE RISE OF THE MODERN KINGDOMS TO THE
PEACE OF WESTPHALIA, IN 1648.

LETTER I.

*Of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, and the Settlement
of the Barbarians.*

YOU have already, my dear Philip, finished your course of Ancient History, under your preceptor: in the elements of Modern History I myself will undertake to instruct you. The establishment of the present European nations; the origin of our laws, manners, and customs; the progress of society, of arts, and of letters; demand your particular attention, and were ill committed to the disquisitions of a mere scholar.

Europe is the theatre on which the human character has appeared to the greatest advantage, and where society has attained its most perfect form, both in ancient and modern times. Its history will therefore furnish us with every thing worthy of observation in the study of men or of kingdoms. I shall, however, direct your eye occasionally to the

other parts of the globe, that you may have a general idea of the state of the universe. But, before I proceed to the history of Modern Europe, it will be proper to say a few words concerning its ancient inhabitants, and its situation at the settlement of the present nations.

The inhabitants of ancient Europe may be divided into three classes, Greeks, Romans, and Barbarians; under which last term we usually comprehend all those nations to whom the two former were pleased to apply it, because they had made less progress in the arts of civilisation. With the Greek and Roman story you are well acquainted. I shall, therefore, only remind you, that the Greeks, the most polished people of antiquity, inhabited the maritime parts of the country now known by the name of European Turkey; that, when corrupted, they were subdued by the Romans; and that the conquerors then turned their arms against the Gauls, Germans, and other barbarians, whom they in a great measure reduced to subjection, by their superiority in the art of war, but not with the same facility with which they had overcome the voluptuous nations of Asia. A single battle did not decide the fate of a kingdom. Those brave and independent people, though often defeated, resumed their arms with fresh valour, and defended with obstinate courage their possessions and their liberties. But, after a variety of struggles, in which many of them perished in the field, and many were carried into slavery, a miserable remnant submitted to the Romans; while others fled to their mountains for freedom, or took refuge in the inaccessible corners of the North. There, defended by lakes and rivers, the indignant barbarians lived, until time had ripened among their enemies the seeds of destruction. Then, rushing forth, like an impetuous flood, and sweeping every thing before them, they took vengeance on the murderers of mankind; overturned the vast fabric of the Roman empire, the work and the wonder of ages; established on its ruins new governments and new manners; and ac-

complished the most signal revolution in the history of nations¹.

Here we must pause, that we may consider the moral and political causes of this great event, and its influence on the state of society.

As soon as the Romans had subdued a particular territory, they prepared to civilise it. They transferred into each of the conquered countries their laws, manners, arts, sciences, and literature. And some have thought these a sufficient compensation for the loss of liberty and independence. But you, my dear Philip, will judge very differently, I hope, whatever veneration you may have for the Roman name.

Good laws are essential to good government, arts and sciences to the prosperity of a nation, and learning and politeness to the perfection of the human character. But these, in order to exalt a people, must be the result of the natural progress of civilisation, not of any adventitious ferment or external violence. The fruits of summer are ripened in winter by art; but the course of the seasons is necessary to give them their proper flavour, their regular size, and their natural taste. The spontaneous produce of the forest, though somewhat harsh, is preferable to what is raised by such forced culture: and the native dignity, the unsophisticated manners, and rude virtues of the barbarian, are superior to all that can be taught to the slave. When mankind are obliged to look up to a master for honour and consequence, to flatter his foibles, and to fear his frown, cunning takes place of wisdom, and treachery of fortitude; the mind loses its vigour, the heart its generosity; and man, in being polished, is only debased.

¹ It was long fashionable with modern writers, especially those of a classical turn, to rail against their rude ancestors, and lament the fall of the Roman empire as a great misfortune to the human race. This mistake seems to have arisen from an admiration of ancient literature, and an imperfect knowledge of history; from not sufficiently distinguishing between the extinction of Roman liberty, and the destruction of Roman despotism.

This truth was never, perhaps, more strikingly exemplified than in the history of the Roman empire. The degrading influence of its dominion, more than any other circumstance, hastened its dissolution; for, although the conquered nations were by such means more easily kept in subjection, they became unable to resist a foreign enemy, and might be considered as decayed members of the body politic, which increased its size without increasing its strength. An appearance of prosperity, indeed, succeeded to the havoc of war; the ruined cities were rebuilt, and new ones founded; population flourished; civilisation advanced; the arts were cultivated: but the martial and independent spirit of the people of the northern provinces was so totally extinct in a few centuries, that, instead of preferring death to slavery, like so many of their illustrious ancestors, they patiently submitted to any contribution which a rapacious governor was pleased to levy; and the descendants of those gallant warriors who had disputed the field with the Roman legions under Cæsar and Germanicus, were unable to oppose the desultory inroads of a troop of undisciplined barbarians. They were almost incapable of either thinking or acting for themselves. Hence all the countries, which had been subjected to the Roman yoke, fell a prey to the first invader, after the retreat of the imperial forces.

Many other causes contributed to the dissolution of the Roman empire, beside the debility occasioned by its unwieldy corpulence.

Rome owed her dominion as much to the manners as to the arms of her citizens². Their dignity of sentiment,

² "Think not," said the younger Cato to the Roman senate, "it was merely by force of arms that our forefathers raised this republic from a low condition to its present greatness;—no! but by things of a very different nature—industry and discipline at home, moderation and justice abroad, a disinterested spirit in council, unblinded by passion, and unbiassed by pleasure." Sallust. *Bell. Catilin.*

their love of liberty and of their country, their passion for glory, their perseverance in toils, their contempt of danger and of death, their obedience to the laws, and, above all, their civil constitution and military discipline, had extended and cemented the conquests of the Romans. The very usurpations of that sovereign people (for I speak of the times of the republic) were covered with a certain majesty, which rendered even tyranny respectable. But their government carried in its bosom the seeds of destruction. The continual jealousy between the patricians and plebeians, the senate and the people, without any balancing power, made the ruin of the republic inevitable, as soon as the manners were relaxed : and a relaxation of manners was necessarily produced by the pillage of Greece and the conquest of Asia³, by the contagious refinements of the one, and the influx of wealth from the other.

The fall of Carthage, and the expulsion of the Gauls from Italy, though seemingly the two most fortunate events in the Roman history, contributed also to a change of manners, and to the extinction of Roman liberty. While Carthage subsisted, the attention of all parties was carried toward that rival state ; to defend themselves, or annoy their enemies, was the only care of the Romans ; and, as long as the Gauls had possessions in the neighbourhood of Rome, her citizens were united by the sense of common danger ; but no sooner were their fears from abroad removed, than the people began to be altogether ungovernable. Ambitious men took advantage of their licentiousness ; party clashed with party. A master became necessary, in order to terminate the horrors of civil war, as well as to give union and vigour

³ It was in the delicious climate and pleasurable groves of Asia (says Sallust) that the Roman soldiers first learned to abandon themselves to wine and women—to admire pictures, statues, and vases of curious workmanship—and to spare nothing civil or sacred in the prosecution of their rapacious aims. *Bell. Catilin.*

to the state. Interest and vanity made courtiers; force or fear, slaves. The people were disarmed by the jealousy of despotism, and corrupted by the example of an abandoned court. Effeminacy, debauchery, profligacy, and every atrocious vice, were common upon the throne.

A new source of ruin disclosed itself. Some disputed successions having convinced the troops that the sovereignty was in their hands, they thenceforth sold it to the highest bidder. Sporting with the lives of their princes, as formerly with the laws of the republic, they created emperors only to extort money from them, and afterwards massacred them, in order to extort like sums from their successors. Emperors were opposed to emperors, and armies disputed the pretensions of armies. With obedience discipline was lost. Wise princes endeavoured, but in vain, to restore it: their zeal to maintain the ancient military regulations only exposed them to the fury of the soldiery; the very name of discipline was a signal for revolt. The armies of Rome did not now consist of free-men who had voluntarily chosen a military life, or who, in obedience to the laws, served for a term of years; but of mercenaries collected from the provinces, or barbarians bribed into the service, as more able to undergo the fatigues of war. Her soldiers were no longer citizens armed in defence of their country: they were its oppressors; they were licensed robbers, insatiably eager for pillage.

To prevent the continual treasons of the soldiery, particularly of the prætorian bands, the emperors associated with themselves, in the supreme power, their sons, their brothers, or such persons as they could trust; and every emperor elected a Cæsar, or successor. They likewise subdivided, and consequently diminished, the power of the prætorian præfects, who were the grand-vizirs of their time, appointing four instead of two. By these means the imperial seat was rendered more secure: the emperors were per-

mitted to die in their beds; manners were softened, and less blood was shed by ferocity; but the state was wasted by an enormous expense, and a new species of oppression took place, no less disgraceful to humanity than the former massacres. The tyranny was transferred from the soldiery to the prince; the cause and the mode were changed, but the effect was the same. Shut up within the walls of a palace, surrounded by flatterers and women, and sunk in the softness of Eastern luxury, those masters of empire governed in secret by the dark and subtle artifices of despotism. Iniquitous judgements, under the form of justice, seemed only to set death at a distance, in order to make life more miserable, and existence more precarious. Nothing was said, all was insinuated: every man of high reputation was accused; and the warrior and the politician daily saw themselves at the mercy of sycophants, who had neither ability to serve the state themselves, nor generosity to suffer others to serve it with honour¹.

The removal of the imperial court to Constantinople, to say nothing of the subsequent division of the empire into Eastern and Western, was a new blow to the grandeur of Rome, and likewise to its security: for the veteran legions, that guarded the banks of the Danube and the Rhine, were also removed to the East, in order to guard another frontier; and Italy, robbed of its wealth and inhabitants, sunk into a state of the most annihilating languor. Changed into a garden by an Asiatic pomp, and crowded with villas, now deserted by their voluptuous owners, this once fertile country was unable to maintain itself; and, when the crops of Sicily and Africa failed, the people breathed nothing but sedition.

The discontents occasioned by the removal of the imperial court, were heightened by those of religion. Christianity had long been making progress in the empire: it now

¹ See Montesquieu's *Considérations sur les Causes de la Grandeur des Romains, et de leur Décadence*, chap. xv. xvi. xvii., and the authors there cited, especially Tacitus, Ammianus Marcellinus, and Zosimus.

ascended the throne of the Cæsars. As the Christians had formerly been persecuted, they, in their turn, became persecutors. The gods of Rome were publicly insulted, their statues were broken, their votaries were harassed. Penal statutes were enacted against the ancient worship: the punishment of death was denounced against the sacrifices formerly ordained by law: the altar of Victory was overturned, the cross was exalted in its stead, and displayed in place of that triumphant eagle under which the world had been conquered⁵. The most dreadful hates and animosities arose. The Pagans accused the Christians of all their misfortunes: they rejoiced in the midst of the greatest calamities, as if the gods had come in person to take vengeance on the destroyers of their altars; while the Christians affirmed, that the remains of Paganism alone had drawn down the wrath of Omnipotence. Both parties were more occupied about their religious disputes than the common safety; and, to complete the miseries of the unhappy people, the Christians became divided among themselves. New sects sprang up; new disputes took place; new jealousies and antipathies raged; and the same punishments were denounced against Heretics and Pagans. An universal bigotry debased the minds of men. In a grand assembly of the provinces, it was proposed, that, as there were three persons in the Trinity, there should be three emperors. Sieges were raised, and cities lost, for the sake of a piece of rotten wood, or withered bone, supposed to have belonged to some saint or martyr.

⁵ Four respectable deputations were successively voted to the imperial court, representing the grievances of the priesthood and the senate, and soliciting the restoration of the altar of Victory. The conduct of this important business was entrusted to Symmachus, a noble and eloquent orator, who thus makes Rome herself plead before the imperial tribunal, in favour of the ancient worship: "These rites have repelled Hannibal from the city, and the Gauls from the Capitol. Were my grey hairs reserved for such intolerable disgrace? I am ignorant of the new system that I am required to adopt; but I am well assured, that the correction of old age is always an ungrateful and invidious office." Symmach. lib. x. epist. 54.

The effeminacy of the age mingled itself with this infatuation; and generals, more weak than humane, sat down to mourn the calamities of war, when they should intrepidly have led on their troops to battle⁶.

The character of the people with whom the Romans had to contend, was the reverse of their own. Those Barbarians, as they were called, breathed nothing but war. Their martial spirit was yet in its vigour. They sought a milder climate, and lands more fertile than their forests and mountains: the sword was their right; and they exercised it without remorse, as the right of nature. Barbarous they surely were, but they were superior to the people whom they attacked, in virtue as well as in valour. Simple and severe in their manners, they were unacquainted with the name of luxury; any thing was sufficient for their extreme frugality. Hardened by exercise and toil, their bodies seemed inaccessible to disease or pain: they sported with danger, and met death with expressions of joy. They were, at the same time, remarkable for their regard to the sanctity of the marriage bed, their generous hospitality, their detestation of treachery and falsehood. They possessed many maxims of civil wisdom, and wanted only the culture of reason to conduct them to the true principles of social life⁷.

What could the divided, effeminate, and now dastardly Romans, oppose to such a people? Nothing but fear and folly; or, what was still more ignominious, treachery. Soon convinced that the combat was unequal, they attempted to appease the invaders by money: but that peace could not

⁶ Montesq. *Considerat.* &c. chap. xviii—xxii. See also Gibbon's *Hist. of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, vol. iii.—vi., and the authors there quoted.

⁷ Tacit. *de Moribus Germ.*—Jornand. *de Reb. Get.*—"As in polished societies," says Ammianus Marcellinus, speaking of the Huns, "ease and tranquillity are courted, they delight in war and dangers. He who falls in battle is reckoned happy; while they who die of old age or disease are deemed infamous." *Hist. lib. xxxi.*

be of long continuance which put those who sold it in a better condition to sell another. Force is seldom just. These voluntary contributions were changed into a tribute, which was demanded as a right; and war was denounced when it was refused, or fell short of the customary sum. Tributes were multiplied upon tributes, till the empire was drained of its treasure. Another expedient was then adopted: large bodies of the Barbarians were taken into pay, and opposed to other Barbarians. This mode of defence, so contrary to the practice of the first Romans, answered for the moment, but terminated in ruin: those auxiliaries proved the most dangerous enemies to the empire. Already acquainted with the luxuries, the wealth, and the weakness of the Romans, they turned their arms against their masters, inviting their countrymen to come and share with them in the spoils of a people unworthy of so many accommodations. They had likewise become acquainted with what little military skill yet remained among the Romans; and that, superadded to their natural intrepidity, rendered them irresistible. A third expedient, yet more unworthy of the Roman name, was practised:—assassination was employed by the emperors against those princes or leaders whose arms they feared; it was even concealed beneath the mask of friendship, and perpetrated under the roof of hospitality—in the convivial hour, and at the festive board⁸!

This diabolical practice, the want of faith, and other unmanly vices of the Romans, not only account for the subversion of their empire, but also for many of the cruelties of the conquerors. Inflamed with the passion of revenge, no less than with the thirst of conquest and the lust of plunder, the inflexible and high-spirited, though naturally generous, Barbarians, were equally deaf to the offers of treaty and the voice of supplication. Where-ever they marched, their route was marked with blood. The most

⁸ Montesquieu and Gibbon, *ubi sup.*

fertile and populous provinces were converted into deserts. Italy was often pillaged; and the metropolis itself did not escape the licentiousness of barbarous outrage. New invaders, from regions more remote and barbarous, drove out or exterminated the former colonists; and Europe was successively ravaged, till the countries which had poured forth their myriads were drained of people, and the sword of slaughter was tired of destroying.

The overwhelming progress of the Barbarians soon diffused its powerful effects over Europe. In the course of the fifth century, the Visigoths took possession of Spain; the Franks, of Gaul; the Saxons, of the Roman provinces in South-Britain; the Huns, of Pannonia; the Ostrogoths, of Italy and the adjacent provinces. New governments, laws, languages; new manners, customs, dresses; new names of men and of countries, prevailed; and an almost total change took place in the state of Europe⁹.

How far this change ought to be lamented is not now a point of great dispute. The human species was reduced to such a degree of debasement by the pressure of Roman despotism, that we cannot be displeased at any means, however violent, which removed or lightened the load. But we cannot help lamenting at the same time, that this revolution was the work of nations so little enlightened by science or polished by civilisation; for the Roman laws, though corrupted, were in general the best that human wisdom had framed; and the Roman arts and literature, though they had greatly declined, were still superior to any thing found

⁹ A similar change was soon to occur in the state of Asia, a considerable part of which was still subject to the emperors of Constantinople. These princes, though gradually robbed of their Asiatic provinces by the followers of Mohammed, continued to preserve in the East (as we shall have occasion to see) an image of Roman greatness, long after Rome had been sacked by the Barbarians, and the Roman dominion finally extinguished in the West. The Roman provinces in Africa were already overrun by the Vandals, who had spread desolation with fire and sword.

among rude nations, or which those who spurned them produced for many ages.

The contempt of the Barbarians for the Roman improvements must not, however, be ascribed wholly to their ignorance, nor the suddenness of the revolution to their desolating fury; the manners of the conquered must come in for a share. Had the Romans not been in the lowest state of national degeneracy, they might surely have civilised their conquerors; had they retained any of the virtues of men among them, they might have continued under the government of their own laws. Many of the Gothic leaders were endowed with great abilities, and some were acquainted both with the policy and literature of the Romans; but they were justly afraid of the contagious influence of Roman example; and therefore avoided every thing allied to that name, whether hurtful or beneficial¹⁰. They erected a cottage in the neighbourhood of a palace, breaking down the stately building, and burying in its ruins the finest works of human ingenuity: they ate out of vessels of wood, and made the vanquished be served in vessels of silver; they hunted the boar on the voluptuous parterre, the trim garden, and expensive pleasure-ground, where effeminacy was wont to saunter, or indolence to loll; and they pastured their herds where they might have raised a luxuriant harvest. They prohibited their children from acquiring a knowledge of literature, and of all the elegant arts; because they concluded, from the dastardly behaviour of the Romans, that learning tends to enervate the mind, and that he who has trembled under the rod of a pedagogue will never dare to meet a sword with an undaunted eye¹¹.

¹⁰ "When we would brand an enemy," says an enlightened barbarian, "with disgraceful and contumelious appellations, we call him a *Roman*; a name which comprehends whatever is base, cowardly, avaricious, luxurious—in a word, falsehood, and all other vices." Luitprand. *Legat.* ap. Murat. vol. ii.

¹¹ Procop. *Bell. Goth.* lib. i.

Upon the same principles they rejected the Roman jurisprudence. It reserved nothing to the vengeance of man : they therefore, not unphilosophically, thought that it would rob him of his active powers. Nor could they conceive how the person injured could rest satisfied, but by pouring out his fury upon the author of the injustice. Hence arose all those judicial combats, and private wars, which for many ages desolated Europe.

In what manner light sprang from this darkness, order from this confusion, and taste from this barbarism, we shall have occasion to observe in the course of the history. We shall find that genius and magnificence displayed themselves in a new mode, which prevailed for a time, and was exploded ; that the sons at length idolised that literature which their fathers had proscribed, and wept over the ruins of those sculptures, paintings, buildings, which they could not restore ; digging from dunghills, and the dust of ages, the models of their future imitation, and enervating themselves with the same arts which had enervated the Romans.

In the mean time we must take a view of the system of policy and legislation established by the Barbarians.

LETTER II.

*Of the System of Policy and Legislation established by the Barbarians
in the Provinces of the Roman Empire.*

THE ancient Germans, Scandinavians, and other nations of Europe, had a certain degree of conformity in their government, manners, and opinions. The same leading character was also observable among the Goths and Vandals who dismembered the Roman empire. Alike distinguished by a love of war and of liberty, by a persuasion that force

only constitutes right, and that victory is an infallible proof of justice, they were equally bold in attacking their enemies, and in resisting the absolute domination of any one man. They were free, even in a state of submission. Their primitive government was a kind of military democracy, under a general or chieftain, who had commonly the title of King. Matters of little consequence were determined by the principal men; but the whole community assembled to deliberate on national objects. The authority of their kings or generals, who owed their eminence entirely to their military talents, and held it by no other claim, was extremely limited: it consisted rather in the privilege of advising, than in the power of commanding. Every individual was at liberty to choose whether he would engage in any warlike enterprise. They therefore followed the chieftain who led them forth in quest of new settlements, from inclination, not control¹—as volunteers who offered to accompany him, not as soldiers whom he could order to march; and they considered their conquests as common property, in which all had a right to share, as all had contributed to procure them; nor was any obligation whatever entailed on the possessors of lands thus acquired. Every one was the lord of his own little territory.

Some new arrangements, however, became expedient when these conquerors had settled in the Roman provinces, where their acquisitions were to be maintained not only against the ancient inhabitants, but also against the inroads of new invaders. They then saw the necessity of forming a closer union, and of relinquishing some of their private rights for public safety. They continued, therefore, to acknowledge the general who had led them to victory: he was considered as the head of the colony; he had the largest portion of the conquered lands; while every warrior, on receiving a share

¹ Tacit. *de Moribus German.* cap. xi.—xlvi.—Amm. Marcel. lib. xxxi.—*Pris. Rhet.* ap. Byz. Script. vol. i.

according to his military rank, tacitly bound himself to appear against the enemies of the community².

This new division of property, and the obligations consequent upon it, gave rise to a species of government distinguished by the name of the FEUDAL SYSTEM. The idea of a feudal kingdom was borrowed from that of a military establishment. The victorious army, cantoned out in the country which it had seised, continued arranged under its proper officers, who were ordered to hold themselves in readiness to assemble whenever occasion should require their united operations or counsels.

But this system of policy, apparently so well calculated for national defence or conquest, did not sufficiently provide for the interior order and tranquillity of the state. The bond of political union was feeble; the sources of dissension were many; and corruption was interwoven with the very frame of the constitution. The new partition of the conquered lands, which were chiefly swallowed up by the great officers, gave the few a dangerous ascendancy over the many. The king or general, by his superior allotment, had it amply in his power to reward past services, or attach new followers for the purpose of future wars. With this view he parceled out his lands; binding those, on whom he bestowed them, to attend him in all his military enterprises, under the penalty of forfeiture. The nobles, or great officers, followed his example, annexing the same conditions to their benefices or grants of land, and appearing at the head of their numerous vassals, like so many independent princes, whenever their pride was wounded or their property injured. They disputed the claims of the sovereign; they withdrew their attendance, or turned their arms against him³. A strong barrier was thus formed against a general despotism in the state; but the nobles themselves, by means of their warlike retainers, were the tyrants of every inferior

² Du Cange, *Gloss. voc. Miles et Alodis.*

³ Montesquieu, *L'Esprit des Loix*, liv. xxx. xxxi.

district, holding the people in servitude, and preventing any regular administration of justice, every one claiming that prerogative within his own domain. Nor was this the only privilege usurped by those haughty chieftains: they also extorted from the crown the right of coining money in their own name, and of carrying on war against their private enemies⁴.

In consequence of these encroachments on the royal prerogative, the powerful vassals of the crown obtained grants during life, and afterwards others including their heirs, of such lands as they had originally enjoyed only during pleasure; and they appropriated to themselves titles of honour, as well as offices of power and of trust, which became hereditary in many families. The ties which connected the principal members of the constitution with its head were dissolved: almost all ideas of political subjection were lost, and little appearance of feudal subordination remained. The nobility openly aspired at independence: they scorned to consider themselves as subjects; and a kingdom, considerable in name and extent, was often a mere shadow of monarchy, and really consisted of as many separate principalities as it contained baronies. A variety of feuds and jealousies subsisted among the barons, and gave rise to very frequent wars. Hence every country in Europe, wasted or kept in continual alarm by these internal hostilities, was filled with castles and places of strength, in order to protect the inhabitants from the fury of their fellow-subjects.

Kingdoms so divided, and torn by domestic broils, were little capable of any foreign effort. The wars of Europe, therefore, during several centuries, as we shall have occasion to see, resembled more the wild and desultory incursions of pirates, or banditti, than the regular and concerted operations of national force. Happily, however, for posterity, the state of every kingdom was nearly the same; otherwise

⁴ Montesquieu, *ubi supra*.—Robertson's *Introd. Hist. Charles V.*—Hume's *Hist. Eng.* Append. ii.

all must have fallen a prey to one ; the independent spirit of the North might have been extinguished for ever : and the present harmonious system of European policy, which so gloriously struggled from the chaos of anarchy, would have sunk in eternal night.

The particular manner in which the Barbarians conducted their judicial proceedings, when they first settled in the provinces of the Roman empire, cannot now be ascertained : but their form of government, their manners, and a variety of other circumstances, lead us to believe that it was nearly the same with that which prevailed in their original countries ; where the authority of the magistrate was so limited, and the independence of individuals so great, that they seldom admitted any umpire but the sword⁵.

Our most ancient historical records justify this opinion : they represent the exercise of justice in all the kingdoms of Europe, and the ideas of men with respect to equity, as little different from those which prevail in a state of nature, and deform the first stages of society in every country. Resentment was almost the sole motive for prosecuting crimes ; and the gratification of that passion, more than any view to the prosperity and good order of society, was the end, and also the rule in punishing them. He that suffered the wrong was the only person who had a right to pursue the aggressor—to demand or remit the punishment : and he might accept a compensation for any offence, how heinous soever. The prosecution of criminals in the name and by the authority of the community, in order to deter others from violating the laws, now justly deemed the great object of legislation, was a maxim of jurisprudence then little understood in theory, and still less regarded in practice. The civil and criminal judges could, in most cases, do no more than appoint the lists, and leave the parties to decide their cause by the sword. Fierce and haughty nobles, un-

⁵ Ferguson's *Essay on Civil Society*, part ii.

friendly to the restraints of law, considered it as infamous to give up to another the right of determining what reparation they should accept, or with what vengeance they should rest satisfied: they scorned to appeal to any tribunal but their own right-arm. And if men of inferior condition sometimes submitted to award or arbitration, it was only to that of the leader whose courage they respected, and whom in the field they had been accustomed to obey⁶. Hence every chieftain became the judge of his tribe in peace, as well as its general in war.—Of the pernicious effects of this power upon government and manners, and the absurd modes of trial established before its abolition, we shall have frequent occasion to take notice in the history of the modern kingdoms.

The feudal system, however, with all its imperfections, and the disorders to which it gave birth, was by no means so debasing to humanity as the uniform pressure of Roman despotism. Very different from that dead calm which accompanies peaceful slavery, and in which every faculty of the soul sinks into a kind of somnolency, it kept the minds of men in continual ferment, and their hearts in agitation. If animosities were keen, friendships also were warm. The commonalty were unfortunately degraded to the condition of slaves; but the nobility were exalted to the rank of princes. The gentry were their associates: and the king, without the form of compact, was in reality but chief magistrate, or head of the community, and could literally do NO WRONG; or none, at least, with impunity.

⁶ This subject has been finely illustrated by Dr. Robertson (Introd. *Hist. Charles V.*), and by the president Montesquieu (*L'Esprit des Loix*, liv. xviii.—xxxi.), who has written a philosophical commentary on the *Laws of the Barbarians*. It has also been treated, with much learning and ingenuity, by Dr. Stuart in his *View of Society*, and by Mr. Gibbon in his *History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*, chap. xxxviii.

LETTER III.

*Of the Rise of the French Monarchy, and its Progress under the
Kings of the First Race.*

IN history, as in all other sciences, it is necessary to affix certain limits to our inquiries, if we would proceed with certainty; and, where utility more than curiosity is our object, we must even contract these boundaries. We must not only confine ourselves to those periods where truth can be ascertained, but to those events chiefly which were followed by some civil or political consequence, which produced some alteration in the government or the manners of a people; and, even of such events, we should be more particularly attentive to those which continue to operate upon our present civil or political system.

In these few words, my dear son, to avoid egotism, I have indirectly given you an account of the manner in which I mean to conduct that *History of Modern Europe* which is intended for your instruction. The first epochs of modern, as well as ancient history, are involved in fable; and the transactions of the immediately succeeding periods are handed down to us in barren chronicles, which convey no idea of the characters of the agents, and consequently are destitute alike of instruction and amusement; while the events of later ages are related with a copiousness so profuse and undistinguishing, that a selection becomes absolutely necessary for such as are unwilling to employ a long course of years in acquiring a knowledge of past transactions. And, as I would rather have you acquainted with one living than with ten dead statesmen or heroes, I shall be as concise in my narration as is consistent with perspicuity, and as select in my matter as information will allow; yet always taking care to omit no anecdote which can throw light on the history of

the human heart, nor any circumstance that marks the progress of civil society.

Modern History is of little importance before the time of Charle-magne: and a late celebrated writer has fixed upon the coronation of that prince at Rome, in the year 800, as the proper æra of its commencement. But for the sake of order, as well as to gratify the natural desire of becoming acquainted with the origin of nations, I shall give you a short sketch of the state of Modern Europe previous to that æra.

The French monarchy first claims our notice; not only on account of its antiquity, but because of its early and continued importance. The Roman power in Gaul had long been declining, when the Franks, a nation of Gothic descent, crossed the Rhine, with views of conquest and settlement. They are said to have founded a kingdom on the Gallic frontiers, under Pharamond: but of the acts of this prince we have no certain knowledge, and even his existence has been doubted. With regard to the reign of Clodion there is less doubt; and he appears to have extended his dominion to the banks of the Somme. Dying in the year 448, he was succeeded by Merovée, who had a share in the great victory obtained over Attila the Hun, on the plains of Châlons. Childeric, though a debauched prince, acquired new territories; and his son Clovis established that kingdom to which he gave the name of *France*, or the *Land of Free Men*.—How ill applied in later times!

Clovis, in early life, displayed both valour and prudence. His age did not exceed nineteen years when he crushed the efforts of Syagrius, his Roman competitor; and various circumstances conspired to his farther aggrandisement. The Gauls hated the dominion of the Romans, and were strongly attached to Christianity: Clovis gained on their piety, by favouring their bishops: and his marriage with Clotilda, a Christian princess, induced them to hope that he would speedily embrace their religion. The attachment of his

countrymen to their ancient worship was the sole objection: the pious exhortations of the queen had some effect; and the king, having vanquished the Allemanni at Tolbiac, near Cologne, after an obstinate engagement, politically ascribed that victory to the God of Clotilda, whom he said he had invoked at the time of the battle, under a promise of becoming a Christian, if his exertions should be crowned with success. He was accordingly baptised by St. Remigius, bishop of Rheims; and almost the whole French nation followed his example¹. A. D. 496.

This was a grand circumstance in favour of Clovis; and he did not fail to take advantage of it. The Gauls were zealous Catholics; but the Arian creed was followed by the Visigoths, who occupied the country between the Loire and the Pyrenées, and also by the Burgundians, who had seised some of the eastern and southern provinces of the Gallic continent. Clotilda herself was a Catholic, though, being a Burgundian, she had been nursed in the bosom of Arianism; and Clovis overflowed with zeal for her faith, when he found that it would second his ambitious views. Under colour of religion, he made war upon Alaric, king of the Visigoths: the Gallic clergy favoured his pretensions; and the battle of Vouillé, in which that prince was vanquished and slain, added to the kingdom of France a considerable territory to the southward of the Loire². A. D. 507.

But Clovis, instead of enjoying his good fortune with dig-

¹ *Gest. Franc.* cap. xv.—Greg. Turon. lib. ii. cap. 31. Of the miracles said to have been wrought on the conversion of Clovis, the author of this work says nothing, as he would not wish to foster pious credulity; but the lovers of the marvellous will find sufficient food for their passion in Hincmar (*Vit. St. Remig.*). It may not, however, be improper to observe, that Clovis, when warmed with the eloquence of the bishop of Rheims, in describing the passion and death of Christ, started up, and, seising his spear, violently exclaimed, "Had I been there with my valiant Franks, I would have redressed his wrongs!" Fredegarii *Epitom.* cap. xxi.

² Greg. Tur. lib. ii. cap. 37.

nity, disgraced the latter part of his reign by perfidies and cruelties toward the princes of his house, whom he extirpated. He died at the age of forty-five years, after endeavouring to atone for his crimes by building and endowing churches and monasteries, and assembling a council at Orléans for the regulation of church-discipline³.

The death of Clovis was a severe blow to the grandeur of the French monarchy. He left four sons, who
 Nov. 511. divided his extensive dominions among them. Thierry, the eldest, had the largest share; he was king of Austrasia, which not only comprehended the north-eastern part of France, but included the German conquests of Clovis: Metz was his capital. Clodomir was king of Orléans, Chilbert of Paris, and Clotaire of Soissons. This division of the empire of the Franks, into four independent kingdoms, not only weakened its force, but gave rise to endless broils. The brothers became enemies whenever their interests jarred; and the most dreadful barbarities were the consequence of their dissensions.

The experience of these evils, however, did not prevent a similar division from taking place after the death of Clotaire, the sole successor of his brothers and nephews. His four sons divided the four kingdoms by lot⁴. That of

A.D. 561. Paris fell to Caribert; Soissons to Chilperic; Austrasia to Sigebert; and Orléans to Gontran, in whose lot was also included the Burgundian realm, which had been conquered by the united forces of Chilbert and Clotaire. This new division was followed by consequences still more fatal than the former. Two queens, who might rather be called furies than women, sacrificed every thing to their bloody ambition—Brunechilda, or Brunehaud, princess of Spain, wife to Sigebert, and Fredegonda, first concubine and afterwards wife to Chilperic. Their mutual hatred,

³ Id. Auct. lib. ii. cap. 40—43.

⁴ Id. lib. iv. cap. 22.—*Gest. Franc.*
 cap. xxix.

conjoined with their influence over their husbands, produced a series of crimes, equally ruinous to the royal family and the people.

After the murder of a multitude of princes, and many years of civil war, carried on with the most vindictive spirit, and accompanied with every form of treachery and cruelty, Clotaire II., son of Chilperic and Fredegonda, was left sole king of France⁵. He re-established A.D. 613. tranquillity, and gained the hearts of his people by his justice and generosity: and he attached the nobles to him by augmenting their consequence. He committed the government of the provinces of Austrasia and Burgundy to the Mayors of the Palace, as they were called; a kind of viceroys, who, daily acquiring power, at last made their way to the throne.

The vices of Dagobert, the son of Clotaire; the taxes with which he loaded the people, to furnish his debauches, or to atone for them, according to the custom of those times, by pious profusions, weakened the royal authority, at the same time that they debased it. His two sons, Sigebert II. and Clovis II., were only the founders of monasteries. They were ciphers in their kingdoms; the mayors were the actual sovereigns.

On the death of Sigebert, Grimoald, mayor of Austrasia, placed his own son upon the throne of that kingdom. A.D. 654.

The usurper was deposed; but the seducing example remained as a lure to future ambition. The succeeding princes were as weak as their predecessors; and Pepin d'Heristal, duke of Austrasia, governed France for twenty-eight years, under the title of mayor, with great prudence and fortitude. The kings were no more than decorated pageants, occasionally shown to the people. The appellation of *fainéans*, which was given to them, aptly expresses their stupid inactivity.

⁵ Fredeg. cap. xliii.

After the death of Pepin—who, by restoring national assemblies (which the despotism of former mayors had abolished), by turning the restless impetuosity of the French against foreign enemies, and other wise measures, had quietly enjoyed the supreme power—his authority passed into the hands of his widow Plectrude, whose grandson, yet an infant, was created mayor. So high was the veneration of the French for the memory of that great man!—But the government of a woman was ill suited to those turbulent times, though the insignificant kings were content to live under the guardianship of a child. Charles Martel, natural son of Pepin, was suspected of ambitious views by Plectrude, and imprisoned. He found means, however, to make his escape, and was received by the Austrasians as their deliverer. His superior talents soon exalted him to the same degree of power which his father had enjoyed, and he was no less worthy of it. By a signal victory, obtained near Tours in 733, he saved France from the sword of the Saracens, who had already subjected Spain; and he kept all the neighbouring nations in awe by his wise and vigorous administration; yet he would not assume any higher appellation than that of Duke of France, conscious that the title of King could add nothing to his power. But his son Pepin, less modest or more vain, assumed the sovereignty in name as well as reality, excluding for ever the descendants of Clovis, or the Merovingian race, from the throne of France⁶.

The circumstances of that revolution I shall soon have occasion to relate. At present we must take a view of the other states of Europe.

⁶ Adon. Chron.—*Annal. Metens.*

LETTER IV.

Of the Affairs of Spain under the Dominion of the Visigoths, and under the Moors, till the Reign of Abdarrahan.

SPAIN, my dear Philip, next merits your attention, as the second great kingdom on this side of the Alps. Soon after the Visigoths had founded their monarchy in that Roman province, already over-run by the Vandals and the Suevi, the clergy became possessed of more A. D. 467. power than the prince. So early was the tyranny of the church in Spain! / Almost all causes, both civil and ecclesiastical, were referred to the bishops: they even decided in their councils the most weighty affairs of the nation. With the nobles, among whom they held the first rank, they often disposed of the crown, which was more elective than hereditary¹. The kingdom was one theatre of revolutions and crimes. / The number of kings assassinated fills the soul with horror. The Barbarians, after their establishment, contracted new vices: their ferocity became bloody. What crimes did not bigotry alone produce!

In order to make you fully sensible of this, as well as inform you of all that is necessary to be known in the history of the Visigoths in Spain, I need only mention the principal reigns.

Leovigild, who died in 586, and who is so much celebrated for his victories over the Suevi, whom he entirely subdued, put to death his son Hermenegild, because he had embraced the Catholic faith, he himself being an Arian. Recared, however, his other son and successor, abjured Arianism. The Arians were persecuted in their turn. The spirit of persecution daily increased. Sisebut, a prince in other respects wise, and whose valour dispossessed the Greek em-

¹ Geddes' *Tracts*, vol. ii. See also Saavedra, *Corona Gothica*.

perors of what territory they had continued to hold on the Spanish coasts, obliged the Jews, on pain of death, A. D. 612. to receive baptism. In the reign of this monarch the empire of the Visigoths was at its height, comprehending not only Spain, but also some neighbouring provinces of Gaul, and part of Mauritania. Chintila, a subsequent king, banished all the Jews; and, in an assembly of divines, convoked during his reign, it was declared that no prince should ascend the Spanish throne without swearing to enforce all the laws enacted against that unfortunate people. Under the reign of Recesuint, the election of kings was reserved by a council to the bishops, and to the palatines, or principal officers of the crown.—Thus the Spanish nobility lost one of their most essential rights.

Wamba, who defeated the Saracens in an attempt upon Spain, was deprived of the crown, because he had A. D. 680. been clothed in the habit of a *penitent*, while labouring under the influence of poison, administered by the ambitious Erviga! This stroke of priestcraft, the first of the kind that we observe in history, shows at a distance what might be expected from clerical finesse. A council adjudged the throne to Erviga; and another council, holden during his reign, prohibited the kings, under penalty of damnation, from marrying a king's widow. This canon is a sufficient proof of the spirit of legislation which at that time prevailed in Spain. The debauchery, cruelty, and impiety of Witiza, whose wickedness knew no bounds, occasioned a civil war in 710. Roderic, or Roderigue, dethroned this prince, and was himself dethroned by a people whom nothing could withstand².

The Mohammedan religion was already established in many countries. Mohammed, who erected at Mecca a spiritual and temporal monarchy, had died in 632; and his countrymen, the Arabs or Saracens, soon after over-ran

² Ferreras, *Hist. Hisp.* vol. ii.——Mariana *de Rebus Hispania*, lib. vi.——Greg. Turon. lib. vi.

great part of Asia, and all that part of Africa which was under the Roman dominion. Animated by the most violent spirit of fanaticism, their valour was altogether irresistible. The Koran promised heaven and eternal sensuality to such as fell in battle, and the conquerors always tendered liberty and protection to those who embraced their superstition. They threatened the whole world with subjection. Count Julian, whose daughter king Roderic had dishonoured, invited them, it is said, to land in Spain. Nor can this circumstance be deemed improbable, if we consider the character of the times, revolutions being then more frequently occasioned by the private vices of princes than by any other cause.

The Saracens, already masters of Mauritania, now Barbary (a name which the lawless ferocity of their descendants gave to that country, as it gave to them the name of Maures or Moors), made a descent upon Spain; and, by the decisive battle of Xeres, put an end to the empire of the Visigoths³. Mousa, viceroy of Africa under the khalif Walid, came over to finish the conquest. According to the prudent policy of the Mohammedans (the only enthusiasts who ever united the spirit of toleration with a zeal for making proselytes), he offered the inhabitants their religion and laws, on condition that they should pay to him the same subsidy which they had paid to their former sovereigns; and such as embraced the religion of the conquerors were entitled to all their privileges. Most cities submitted without resistance to the bold invader: others he reduced by force, burning and pillaging them. Oppas, archbishop of Seville, and uncle to the children of Witiza, traitorously joined the Saracens, and sacrificed his country and his religion to his hatred against Roderic. But Pelagius, a prince of the royal blood, remained firm in his faith and duty; and, when he could no longer keep the field against the Infidels, he retired to the mountains of Asturias, followed

³ Rod. Tolet. *Hist. Arab.*—*Hist. de l'Afrique et de l'Espagne, sous la Domination des Arabes, par Cardonne, tome i.*

by a number of faithful adherents. There he
 A. D. 717. founded a Christian kingdom, which he defended
 by his valour, and transmitted to his posterity⁴.

Unwilling to confine their ambition within the limits of the Pyrenées, the conquerors of Spain invaded France. Though baffled, they renewed their irruptions; and their leader Abdarrahan penetrated to the banks of the Loire. Charles Martel, as you have already seen, put a stop to their career by a memorable battle; and, if we believe the historians of those times, they lost in this action above three hundred thousand men. But such exaggerations are fit only for romance.

Spain was at first very miserable under the dominion of the Moors. The governors, being dependent on the viceroy of Africa, who allowed them to continue but a short time in their government, were more busy in fleecing the Spanish nation, than in the administration of justice or the preservation of good order. Civil wars arose among the Moslems themselves; and the khalifs or successors of the pseudo-prophet, who had made Damascus the seat of their court, were unable to quell those disorders. The competitions for the khalifate, as might be expected, even favoured the views of the rebels. At length that august dignity, which included both the highest regal and sacerdotal eminence, passed from the family of the Ommiades to that of the Abassides. This revolution, which was bloody,
 A. D. 750. gave birth to another, truly advantageous to Spain, but injurious to the Christian faith.

Abdarrahman, called also Al-Mansour, a prince of the blood royal, who escaped in the massacre of the Ommiades, founded in Spain an independent king-
 A. D. 757. dom, consisting of all those provinces which had been subject to the khalifs⁵. He fixed his residence at Cordova, which became the seat of the arts, of magnificence,

⁴ Mariana, lib. vi. et vii.—Ferreras, vol. ii

⁵ Abulfeda's *Moslem Annals*.

and of pleasure. Without persecuting the Christians, he was able, by his artful policy, almost to extinguish Christianity in his dominions, by depriving the bishops of their dioceses, by reserving all honours and offices for the followers of his prophet, and by promoting intermarriages between the Christians and the Moslems. No prince in Europe, of that age, was equal to Abdarrahan in wisdom, nor did any people surpass the Arabs, in whatever tends to the aggrandisement of the human soul. Lately enemies to the sciences, they now cultivated them with success, and enjoyed a considerable share both of learning and politeness, while the rest of mankind were sunk in ignorance and barbarism.

I shall afterward have occasion to be more particular on this subject. In the mean time, we must take a survey of Italy, the Grecian empire, and France, from the time of Charles Martel to that of Charle-magne.

LETTER V.

Of the Dominion of the Ostrogoths in Italy, and the Affairs of the Lombards, till the reign of Luitprand.

ITALY experienced a variety of fortunes after it lost its ancient masters, before it fell into the hands of Charle-magne.

A. D. 476. It was first conquered by the Heruli, a people from the extremity of the Euxine or Black Sea, who held it only a short time, being expelled by the Ostrogoths under

A. D. 493. Theodoric. Several of the Ostro-Gothic kings of

Italy were princes of great prudence and humanity. They allowed the Italians (or Romans, as they still affected to be called) to retain their possessions, their laws, their religion, their own government, and their own magistrates,

reserving only to the Goths the principal military employments. They acknowledged the emperors of Constantinople as their superiors in rank, but not in jurisdiction. Ravenna was the seat of their court, and in real magnificence vied with ancient Rome, as their equitable administration did with the reigns of Trajan and Antoninus¹. They were at last subdued by Belisarius and Narses, the generals of Justinian, who, having recovered Africa from the Vandals, had the pleasure of uniting Italy A. D. 553. once more to the Eastern or Greek empire.

Soon after the extinction of the Ostro-Gothic realm, a great part of Italy was seized by Alboin, king of the Lombards or Longobards, a Gothic nation. He A. D. 568. and his successors made Pavia the place of their residence. The government of Italy was now considerably changed. Alboin established the feudal policy in those countries which he had conquered, settling the principal officers of his army, with the ducal title, in the chief cities of every province. A similar kind of government prevailed in that part of Italy which remained subject to the emperors of Constantinople; the exarch or supreme governor, who resided at Ravenna, appointing the dukes or chief magistrates of the other cities, and removing them at pleasure. Even Rome itself was governed by a duke, the very name of the senate and consuls being abolished.

Alboin was one of the greatest princes of his time, and no less skilled in the science of reigning than in the art of war; but he was slain by the treachery A. D. 572. of his wife Rosamond, before he had leisure to perfect

¹ Procop. *Bell. Goth.*—Cassiodor. lib. viii.—The lenity of the Ostrogoths, on their settling in Italy, may be attributed to two causes—partly to that polish which their manners may be supposed to have received during their intercourse with the Romans, whom they had long served as auxiliaries against the Huns and other barbarous nations; partly to the character of Theodoric the Gothic conqueror, who, having been educated at Constantinople, and initiated in all the learning of the times, retained ever after a just admiration of the Roman laws and arts.

the government of his kingdom. Clephis, his successor, was an able, but a barbarous prince. His cruelties gave the Lombards such a disgust to regal power, that they resolved, after his death, to change their form of government; and for the space of twelve years they chose no other king, but lived subject to their dukes. These dukes had hitherto acknowledged the royal authority; but, when the kingly power was abolished, each duke became sovereign of his own city and the neighbouring district².

The Lombards, during that interregnum, extended their conquests in Italy. But, when they were threatened by foreign enemies, they were sensible of the expediency of restoring their ancient form of government, and committing the management of the war to a single person. For this purpose the heads of the nation assembled, and with one voice called Autharis, the son of Clephis, to the throne. This prince perfected that form of ^{A D. 586.} government which had been introduced by Alboin. Perceiving that the dukes, who had ruled their several districts like independent princes for so many years, were unwilling to part with their authority, he allowed them to continue in their governments, but reserved to himself the supreme jurisdiction. He obliged them to contribute a part of their revenues toward the support of his royal dignity, and take an oath that they would assist him to the utmost of their power in time of war³. After settling the government of his kingdom, he enacted several salutary laws for the preservation of tranquillity and good order. He was the first of the Lombard kings who embraced Christianity, and many of his subjects followed his example; but, as he leaned to the Arian system, like most of the barbarian conquerors, whose simple minds could not comprehend the mysteries of the Trinity and incarnation, many disputes arose between the Arian and Catholic bishops; for the Ro-

² Paul. Diac. *de Gestis Longob.* lib. ii.

³ Paul. Diac. lib. iii.

mans, or native Italians, were then as zealous Catholics as they are at this day.

Liberty of conscience, however, was allowed under all the Lombard kings; and Rotharis, who surpassed all his predecessors in wisdom and valour, was so moderate in his principles, and so indulgent to his people, that during his reign most cities of Italy had two bishops, one Catholic, and the other Arian. He was the first prince who gave written laws to the Lombards. He summoned A. D. 643. at Pavia a general diet of the nobles; and such regulations as they approved he ordered to be digested into a code, and observed over all his dominions. His military talents were not inferior to his civil merits. He greatly extended the limits of his kingdom, and was so successful over the imperial forces, that no future hostilities passed between the exarchs and the kings of the Lombards, till the reign of Luitprand.

But the eastern emperor Constans, before that time, landed in Italy with a considerable army, in the hope of expelling the Lombards and re-uniting their king- A. D. 663. dom to his dominions. He at first gained some inconsiderable advantages; but his army was afterward totally routed by Romuald, duke of Benevento, whose father Grimoald had been elected king of the Lombards.

Grimoald was a prudent prince, and in all respects worthy of the dignity to which he had been raised. As soon as he was free from the alarms of war, he applied him- A. D. 668. self wholly to the arts of peace. He reformed the laws of Rotharis, to which the Italians as well as the Lombards now appealed from choice. Influenced by the arguments of John, bishop of Bergamo, he renounced the tenets of Arius. His successors following his example, Arianism was at length relinquished by the whole nation of the Lombards⁴.

⁴ Paul. Diac. lib. v.

Luitprand gave strong proofs of his wisdom and valour from the moment he ascended the throne : but his courage sometimes bordered on rashness. Being A. D. 712. informed that two of his attendants had conspired against his life, and only waited an opportunity of executing their intent, he, in a private conference, upbraided them with their guilt. Moved by such heroic firmness, they threw themselves at his feet, as wretches unworthy of mercy. The king, however, thought otherwise : he not only pardoned them, but received them into favour and confidence. Having thus won his domestic enemies by kindness, and strengthened his interests abroad by marrying the daughter of the duke of the Boiarii, Luitprand applied himself, in imitation of his two illustrious predecessors, Rotharis and Grimoald, to the formation of new laws. In one of these, his sagacity appears highly conspicuous. He blames “the ridiculous custom of trials by duel, in which we would force God to manifest his justice according to the caprice of men ;” adding, that “he has only tolerated the abuse, because the Lombards are so much attached to it ⁵.”

But Luitprand's great qualities were in some measure shaded by his boundless ambition. Not satisfied with the extensive dominions left him by his predecessors, he formed the intention of making himself sole master of Italy ; and an opportunity soon offered for attempting the execution of that enterprise.

Leo the Isaurian, then emperor of Constantinople, where theological disputes had long mingled with affairs of state, and where casuists were more common upon the throne than politicians, piously prohibited the worship of A. D. 726. images ; ordering all the statues to be broken in pieces, and the paintings in the churches to be pulled down and burned. The populace, whose devotion did not extend beyond such objects—and the monks and secular priests, interested in supporting the mummary—were so highly

⁵ *Leges Longob. in Codice Lindenbrog.*

provoked at this innovation, that they publicly revolted in many places. The emperor, however, took care to have his edict put in force in the East; and he commanded the exarch of Ravenna, and his other officers in the West, to see it as punctually obeyed in their governments. In obedience to that injunction, the exarch began to pull down the images in the churches and public places at Ravenna; a conduct which incensed the superstitious multitude to such a degree, that they openly declared they would rather renounce their allegiance to the emperor than the worship of images. They considered him as an abominable heretic, whom it was lawful to resist by force, and took arms for that purpose⁶.

Luitprand, judging this the proper season to put his ambitious project in execution, quickly assembled his forces, and unexpectedly appeared before Ravenna; not doubting that the reduction of that important place would be speedily followed by the conquest of all the imperial dominions in Italy. The exarch, though not fully prepared for such an assault, defended the city with great courage; but, finding that he could not long withstand so great a force, and despairing of relief, he privately retired. Luitprand, informed of this, made a vigorous attack, took the city by storm, and gave it up to be plundered by his soldiers, who found in it an immense booty, as it had been successively the seat of the western emperors, of the Gothic kings, and of the exarchs. Alarmed at the fate of Ravenna, most of the other cities in the exarchate surrendered without resistance⁷. Luitprand seemed, therefore, in a fair way to become master of all Italy. But that conquest neither he nor any of his successors could ever complete; and the attempt proved fatal to the kingdom of the Lombards.

⁶ Meimb. *Hist. Iconoclast.*

⁷ Paul. Diac. lib. vi.

LETTER VI.

Of the Pope's temporal Power, and the Affairs of Italy in general, the Empire of Constantinople, and the Kingdom of France, from the Time of Charles Martel to that of Charle-magne.

THOUGH Rome was now governed by a duke, who depended on the exarch of Ravenna, the pope, or bishop, had the chief authority in that city. He was yet less conspicuous by his power than the respect which religion inspired for his see, and the confidence which was reposed in his character. St. Gregory, who died in 604, had negotiated with princes upon matters of state, and his successors divided their attention between clerical and political pursuits. To free themselves from the dominion of the Greek emperors, without falling a prey to the kings of Italy, was the great object of these ambitious prelates. In order to accomplish this important purpose, they employed with success both religion and intrigue; and at last established a spiritual and temporal monarchy, which of all human institutions, perhaps, most merits the attention of man, whether we consider its nature, its progress, or its prodigious consequences.

Gregory II. had offended the emperor Leo, by opposing his edict against the worship of images: but he was more afraid of the growing power of the Lombards than of the emperor's threats; he therefore resolved to check the career of Luitprand. The only prince in Italy, to whom he could have recourse, was Ursus, duke of Venice, the Venetians making already no contemptible figure. Not less alarmed than Gregory at the progress of so powerful a neighbour, Ursus and the Venetians promised to assist the exarch (who had fled to them for protection) with the whole strength of the republic. They accordingly fitted out a considerable fleet, while the exarch conducted an army by land, and retook Ravenna before Luitprand could march to its relief.

As Ravenna had been chiefly recovered by the interposition of Gregory, he hoped to be able to prevail on the emperor to revoke his edict against the worship of images in the West. Leo, however, sensible that the pope had been influenced on that occasion merely by his own interest, was only more provoked at his obstinacy, and resolved that the edict should be obeyed even in Rome itself. He even ordered the exarch Paul to procure the assassination of the pope, or send him in chains to Constantinople. But Gregory, far from being intimidated by the emperor's threats, solemnly excommunicated the exarch for attempting to put the imperial edict in execution, exhorting all the Italian cities to continue stedfast in the catholic faith. Luitprand, though highly incensed against Gregory, assisted him in his distress; and the populace, rising at Ravenna, murdered the exarch, and made great slaughter of the Iconoclasts, or image-breakers. The duke of Naples shared the same fate with Paul; and, as Leo still required that his favourite edict should be enforced at Rome, the people of that city, at the instigation of Gregory, withdrew their allegiance from the Greek emperor¹. Such was the rise of the pope's temporal power.

Informed of this revolt, and not doubting who was the author of it, the emperor levied a powerful army, to chastise the rebels and take vengeance on the pope. Gregory, alarmed at these warlike preparations, looked round for some power on which he might depend for protection. The Lombards were possessed of sufficient force; but they were too near neighbours to be trusted: the Venetians, though zealous catholics, could not resist with effect the strength of the empire; and the Spanish peninsula was under the yoke of the Saracens. The French seemed the only people to whom it was advisable to apply for aid, as they were at once able to oppose the emperor,

¹ Anastas. *Vit. Greg. II.*—Meimb. *Hist. Iconoclast.*

and enemies to his edict. France was then governed by Charles Martel, the greatest commander of his age, to whom Gregory sent a solemn embassy, entreating him to defend the Romans and the church against the attempts of Leo. The ambassadors were received with extraordinary marks of honour : a treaty was concluded²; and the French, A. D. 731. glad to get any concern in the affairs of Italy, became the protectors of the church.

In the mean time considerable alterations were made by death. Gregory II. did not live to see his negotiation with France finished. He was succeeded by Gregory III.; and, ten years after, Leo was followed on the imperial throne by his son Constantine Copronymus, who not only renewed his father's edict against the worship of images, but prohibited the invocation of saints. This new edict confirmed the Romans in the resolution they had taken of separating themselves entirely from the empire; more especially as, being now under the protection of France, they had nothing to fear from Constantinople. They accordingly drove out of their city such of the imperial officers as had hitherto been suffered to continue in it, and thus abolished the very shadow of subjection to the emperor. Soon after Leo, died A. D. 741. Charles Martel, and also Gregory III. The next pope was Zachary, an active and enterprising prelate, who, immediately after his election, visited Luitprand, and obtained the restitution of the towns which had been yielded to that prince as a ransom for Rome, when it was in danger of falling into his hands³.

Luitprand henceforth relinquished all ambitious A. D. 743. thoughts, dying in peace with the church and with men. Rachis, his successor, confirmed the treaty with the pope; but, being afterwards inflamed with a thirst of conquest, he invaded the Roman dukedom, and laid siege to Perugia. Trusting to the influence of persuasion, A. D. 750. Zachary repaired to the camp of Rachis, and so

² Sigon. *Reg. Ital.*

³ Paul. Diac. lib. vi.

forcibly represented to him the punishment reserved for those who unjustly invade the property of others, that the king not only raised the siege, but, being completely subdued by the eloquence of the pontiff, resigned his crown, and retired to the monastery of Monte Cassino, prostrating himself first at Zachary's feet, and taking the habit of St. Benedict⁴.

While affairs were in this situation in Italy, Pepin, son of Charles Martel, governed France in the character of mayor, under Childeric III. ; and, being probably acquainted with the sentiments of his holiness, proposed to Zachary a case of conscience, which had not hitherto been submitted to the bishop of Rome. He desired to know, whether a prince incapable of governing, or a minister who ably supported the weight of royal authority, ought to have the title of king. Zachary decided in favour of the minister ; and the French clergy encouraged the pretensions of Pepin, because he had restored the lands of which Charles Martel had robbed them. The nobles respected him, because he was powerful and brave ; and the people despised the sluggard kings, whom they scarcely knew by name. The judgement of the pope, therefore, silenced every scruple. Childeric was deposed ; or, more properly, degraded, for he could never be said to reign. He was shut up in a monastery. A. D. 752.

Pepin was raised to the throne ; and Boniface, archbishop of Mentz, the famous apostle of the Germans, anointed him solemnly at Soissons⁵.

This ceremony of anointing, borrowed from the Jews, and hitherto unknown to the French nation, or only used at the baptism of Clovis, seemed to bestow on the king a kind of divine character : and so far it was useful, by inspiring respect. But, as ignorance abuses all things, the bishops soon imagined that they could confer royalty by anointing princes—an opinion which was followed by many pernicious consequences. The Eastern emperors had long been crowned

⁴ Paul. Diac. lib. vi.

⁵ Sigon. *Reg. Ital.*

the patriarchs of Constantinople: the popes, in like manner, crowned the emperors of the West. Crowning and anointing were deemed necessary to sovereignty. A pious ceremony, it was imagined or pretended, gave the church a power of disposing of kingdoms.

These observations, my dear Philip, you will find frequent occasion to apply. I offer them here, in order to awaken your attention. We must see things in their causes, to reason distinctly on their effects.

Success soon attended the crafty policy of the popes: the new king of France repaid their favour with interest. Astulphus, king of the Lombards, less piously inclined than his brother Rachis, thought only of conquest. In imitation of Luitprand, he resolved to make himself master of all Italy; and, while the emperor was engaged in a war with the Saracens and Bulgarians, and in a still more hot and dangerous war against images, the Lombards invaded the exarchate, took Ravenna, and subdued the whole province. A. D. 753.

Ambition is only increased by accession of dominion. Astulphus no sooner saw himself master of Ravenna and its territory, than he began to lay claim to the Roman dukedom, and to Rome itself. He urged the right of conquest. This, he alleged, entitled him to the same power over that city and its dukedom which the emperors, and also the exarchs, their viceroys, had formerly enjoyed, as he was now in possession of the whole exarchate. To enforce his demand, he led an army towards Rome, reducing many cities in its neighbourhood, and threatening to put the inhabitants to the sword, if they should refuse to acknowledge him as their sovereign. Stephen III., then pope, no less alarmed at the approach of so powerful a prince than at the severity of his message, endeavoured to appease him by a solemn embassy. But presents, prayers, and entreaties, were employed in vain; Astulphus wished to govern Rome.

Stephen now resolved to solicit the aid of France. Pepin,

mindful of his obligations to Zachary, and now firmly seated on the throne of Clovis, readily promised his assistance, and sent two ambassadors to conduct the pope to Paris. Astulphus permitted him to pass; and a treaty, favourable to the see of Rome, was concluded. Pepin and his two sons, on this occasion, received from Stephen the honors of holy unction, and a grant of the title of Patrician⁶. Pepin endeavoured, before he commenced his expedition, to persuade Astulphus to restore what he had conquered, and thus prevent the effusion of Christian blood. But, finding the king of the Lombards deaf to his entreaties, he crossed the Alps, and advanced to Pavia. Astulphus now, convinced of his danger, sued for peace, and obtained it, on condition that he should deliver up to the pope, not to the emperor, all the places which he had taken. He consented; but, instead of fulfilling his engagements, no sooner did he hear of the departure of Pepin, than he again rushed into the Roman territory, took several cities, and laid siege to the capital.

In this extremity, Stephen had recourse to his protector the king of France, writing to him those remarkable letters which are still extant, and in which he artfully introduces St. Peter, to whom the donation of the exarchate had been made in the late treaty, conjuring Pepin, his two sons, and the states of France, to come to his relief; promising them all good things, both in this world and the next, in case of compliance, and denouncing damnation as the consequence of a refusal⁷. Pepin, much affected by this eloquence, wild as it may seem, crossed the Alps a second time; and Astulphus again took refuge in Pavia.

The emperor, informed of the treaty, remonstrated by his ambassadors against it, and offered to pay the expenses of the war. But Pepin replied, that the exarchate lately belonged to the Lombards, who had acquired it by right of arms, as the Romans had originally done; and that the right of the

⁶ Leonis Ostiensis *Hist.* lib. i.

⁷ Anastas. *Vit. Steph.* III.

Lombards was now in him, so that he could dispose of that territory as he thought proper. He had bestowed it, he said, on St. Peter, that the catholic faith might be preserved in its purity, free from the damnable heresies of the Greeks; and all the money in the world, he added, should never make him revoke that gift, which he was determined to maintain to the church with the last drop of his blood. In consequence of this resolution, the ambassadors were dismissed, without being suffered to reply. Pepin pressed the siege of Pavia; and Astulphus, finding himself unable to hold out, promised to fulfil the former agreement, giving hostages as a pledge of his fidelity, and putting the pope immediately in possession of Comachio, a place of great importance at that time.

Before Pepin returned to France he renewed his donation to St. Peter, yielding to Stephen and his successors the exarchate; *Æmilia*, now *Romagna*, and *Pentapolis*, A.D. 756. now *Marca d'Ancona*, to be possessed by them for ever; the kings of France, as patricians or protectors of the Roman people, retaining only an ideal superiority, which was soon forgotten^s. Thus was the sceptre added to the keys, the sovereignty to the priesthood; and thus were the popes enriched with the spoils of the Lombard kings and the Roman emperors.

Astulphus, soon after he had ratified his treaty with France, was killed by accident, when he was preparing to recover his conquests. Pepin continued to extend his sway and his renown; and, after having imposed tribute on the Saxons and Slavonians, having exacted an oath of fidelity from the duke of Bavaria, and annexed Aquitaine to his crown, he Sept. 768. died in the fifty-fourth year of his age, equally respected at home and abroad. He never affected absolute

^s The nature of Pepin's donation has been disputed, and some writers have even denied that such a grant ever occurred; but, on comparing authorities, and observing the scope of history, the matter seems to have been nearly as represented in the text. The impertinences of Voltaire on this subject, under the form of reasoning, are too contemptible to deserve notice.

power, but referred all matters of importance to the national assemblies, of which he was the oracle. By the consent of the nobles, he divided his kingdom between his sons Charles and Carloman.

The reign of Charles, known by the name of Charlemagne or Charles the Great, introduces a new æra, and will furnish the subject of a future Letter. In the mean time, we must trace the settlement of other Barbarians, and the rise of another great kingdom.

LETTER VII.

Of Britain, from the Time when it was relinquished by the Romans, to the End of the Saxon Heptarchy.

THE affairs of our own island, my dear son, now claim your attention. It was ultimately evacuated by the Romans about the year 420, after they had been masters of the southern and most fertile part of it above three centuries.

Never, perhaps, was the debasing influence of despotism so fully displayed as in its effect on our ancient countrymen. No people were ever more brave, none more jealous of liberty, than the Britons. With ordinary weapons, and little knowledge of military discipline, they struggled long with the Roman power, and were only subdued at last in consequence of their want of union. But, after a long course of tranquil submission, when the exigencies of the empire obliged the Romans to recall their legions from this island, and resign to the inhabitants their native rights, the degenerate South-Britons were incapable of prizing the gift. Conscious of their inability to protect themselves against their northern neighbours, and wanting resolution to attempt it,

they would gladly have lived in security and slavery¹. They, therefore, repeatedly had recourse to their conquerors: and the Romans, beside occasionally sending over a legion to the aid of the Britons, assisted them in repairing the rampart of Antoninus, which extended between the friths of Forth and Clyde. This wall was deemed by the Romans a necessary barrier against the Scots and Picts.

Much time has been spent in investigating the origin of the Scots and Picts, and warm disputes have arisen on the subject². It is unnecessary to trouble you with a detail of the various opinions of historians and antiquaries on these points. I was once inclined to think that the Picts were the descendants of those South-Britons who, at different times, fled to the northward from Roman violence; but, on more attentive reflexion and inquiry, I am convinced, by the express authority of Bede, and by other considerations, that they were Scandinavian emigrants, who passed from Norway into the country now called Scotland, long before the Romans visited this island, and were not of the Celtic, but of the Gothic race. With regard to the Scots, I am disposed to admit the assertion that they came from Ireland, and formed a settlement in North-Britain about the middle of the third century, and that, in the fifth, their descendants were compelled, by the fierce hostilities of the Picts, to take refuge in the sister island, till an opportunity offered itself for a renewal of colonisation.

The Picts no sooner heard of the final departure of the

¹ *Gild. Hist.*—Bede's *Hist. Eccles. Gentis Anglorum*, lib. i. Mr. Gibbon, whose historical scepticism is as well known as his theological incredulity, has attempted to controvert the degeneracy of the Britons under the Roman government. But facts will speak for themselves: these he has not been able to destroy. The Britons, who fled before their naked and barbarous neighbours, were surely inferior to those that intrepidly contended with the Roman legions, under Julius Cæsar and other great commanders.

² See Macpherson's *Introd. Hist. of Brit. Origin, &c. of the Caledonians*, Whitaker's *Hist. of Manchester*, *Genuine Hist. Brit.* and Hume's *Hist. of England*, vol. i. note A.

Romans than they considered the whole British island as their own. One party crossed the frith of Forth, in boats made of leather, while another attacked with fury the Roman wall, which the Britons soon abandoned, fleeing like timorous deer, and leaving their country a prey to the enemy. The Picts made dreadful havoc of the fugitives; and, meeting with no opposition, they ravaged the southern parts of the island with fire and sword. Famine followed with all its horrid train; and the mischiefs of pestilence were added.

When the South-Britons had long been harassed with these irruptions, they once more had recourse to Rome.

A. D. 448. They wrote to Aëtius, then consul for the third time, that memorable letter (entitled *The Groans of the Britons*) which paints their unhappy condition as strongly as it is possible for words: "We know not," said they, "even which way to flee. Chased by the Barbarians "to the sea, and forced back by the sea upon the Barbarians, "we have only the choice of two deaths; for we must either "perish by the sword, or be swallowed up by the waves³." What answer they received is uncertain; but it is well known that they obtained no assistance, Rome being then threatened by Attila, the most terrible enemy that ever invaded the empire.

The Britons, however, amidst all their calamities, had one consolation: they had embraced Christianity; a religion which, above all others, teaches the endurance of misfortunes—which encourages its votaries to triumph in adversity, and inspires the soul with joy in the hour of affliction. Many of them fled over to Gaul, and settled in the province of Armorica, to which they gave the name of Brittany, or Bretagne. Some of them submitted to the Picts; while others, collecting courage from despair, sallied from their woods and caves upon the secure and roving invaders, cut many of them to pieces, and obliged the rest to retire into

³ Gild. Hist.——Bedæ Hist.

their own country. But, the enemy threatening to return with superior forces, the distressed Britons, by the advice of Vortigern (who then possessed the principal authority among them), called the Saxons to their assistance, by a solemn deputation ⁴.

The Saxons, like all the ancient German tribes, were a free, brave, independent people. They had arrived at that degree of civilisation in which the mind has acquired sufficient force for enterprise, and seems to derive energy from the unimpaired vigour of the body. A nation, taken collectively, is never perhaps capable of such great achievements as in this state of half-civilisation. The Saxons had spread themselves over an extensive tract of country; and, when the Britons implored their aid, they were masters not only of Holstein, Westphalia, Saxony, East and West Friseland, but also of Holland and Zealand. They readily complied with the request of Vortigern; and, having fitted out three large transports, about fifteen hundred of them put to sea under the command of the enterprising brothers, Hengist and Horsa. These chieftains landed in the isle of Thanet, which was assigned to them as a possession; A. D. 449. and a league was formed between them and the British prince ⁵. Soon after their arrival, they marched against the northern ravagers, who had made a new irruption, and advanced as far as Stamford. Unable to withstand the steady valour of the Saxons, the Picts were routed with great slaughter; and the Britons, felicitating themselves on an expedient by which they had freed their country from so cruel an ene-

⁴ Bed. lib. i.—Gul. Malmesburiens. *de Gestis Regum Anglorum*, lib. i.

⁵ See Gildas and Bede; also *the Saxon Chronicle*, p. 13.—Mr. Gibbon, on the authority of Nennius, gives a different account of this affair. He represents Hengist and Horsa as two fugitive adventurers, who, in a piratical cruise, were taken into the pay of the British prince. But I can see no reason for adopting such an opinion; for not only the circumstances favour the common mode of telling the story, but the authority of the venerable Bede is surely superior to that of the fabulous Nennius.

my, hoped thenceforth to enjoy security under the protection of their warlike auxiliaries.

But mankind, in the possession of present good, are apt to overlook the prospect of future evil. The Britons did not foresee that their deliverers were to be their conquerors; though it must have been evident to any disinterested observer, that the day of subjection was nigh. The reflexions of Hengist and Horsa, after their late victory, were very different from those of the Britons. They considered with what ease they might subdue an indolent and degenerate people, and sent to their countrymen intelligence of the fertility and opulence of South-Britain, inviting them to come and share in the spoils of the country⁶.

The invitation was readily accepted. Seventeen vessels soon arrived with five thousand men, who, joined to those already in the island, formed a considerable army⁷. Though now justly alarmed at the number of their allies, the Britons sought security and relief only in passive submission; and even that unmanly expedient soon failed them. The Saxons pulled off the mask: they complained that the promised subsidies were ill paid, and demanded larger supplies of corn and other provisions. These being refused, as exorbitant, they formed an alliance with the Picts, and proceeded to open hostilities against the people whom they had come over to protect.

The Britons were at last under the necessity of taking arms; and, having deposed Vortigern, who had rendered himself odious by his vices, and the unfortunate issue of his rash counsels, they put themselves under the command of his son Vortimer. Many battles were fought between the Saxons and Britons with various success, but chiefly to the advantage of the former; and, in one of these conflicts, Horsa was slain. The sole command now devolved upon

⁶ *Ann. Beverl.* p. 49.

⁷ Had Hengist and Horsa been mere exiles, they would not soon have found so many followers.

Hengist; who, reinforced with fresh adventurers from Germany, furiously ravaged the territories of the Britons. Anxious to spread the terror of his arms, he massacred multitudes of all ranks, of both sexes, and all ages⁸. The description is too horrible to read; and, for the honor of humanity, I am willing to suppose it to be partly untrue.

Of the unhappy Britons who escaped the general slaughter, some took refuge among rocks and mountains; many perished by hunger; and many, forsaking their asylum, preserved their lives at the expense of their liberty. Others, crossing the sea, sought shelter among their countrymen in Armorica. Those who remained at home suffered every species of misery: they were not only robbed of all temporal, but spiritual benefits⁹. In this extremity, a British and a Christian hero appeared. Arthur, prince of the Silures (supposed by some to have been the same with Ambrosius), revived the expiring valour of his countrymen. He defeated the Saxons in several engagements, particularly in the famous battle of Badon-hill, which procured the Britons many years of tranquillity. But, the success

A. D. 520.

of Hengist and his followers having excited the ambition of other German tribes, successive swarms poured upon the Britons, who ultimately found themselves unequal

A. D. 585.

to the contest, and therefore retired into Cornwall, Wales, and Cumberland, where they formed independent principalities¹⁰.

The Saxons and Angles, or Anglo-Saxons¹¹ (for they are mentioned under both these denominations), were now absolute masters of the greater part of South-Britain, which

⁸ Bed. lib. i.—Gild. sec. xxiv.—Usserii *Antiq.* p. 226.

⁹ Bede, Gildas, Usher, ubi sup.

¹⁰ Gul. Malmesb. lib. i.—H. Huntingd. lib. ii.—*Cbron. Sax.* p. 20.

¹¹ The Saxons and Angles were originally distinct tribes; but, at the time of their landing in Britain, they were so much incorporated, as to pass sometimes under the one name, sometimes under the other. Hence arose the compound name of Anglo-Saxons. The Jutes had also a considerable share in the conquest of South-Britain.

had changed not only its inhabitants, but its language, customs, and political institutions. History affords examples of few conquests more bloody, and few revolutions so violent as that which was effected by the Saxons. In the course of their long war with the Britons, they established seven kingdoms, namely, those of Kent, Sussex, Essex, Wessex, Mercia, East-Anglia, and Northumberland. These realms formed what is commonly called the Saxon Heptarchy¹².

While the Saxons were contending with the Britons for dominion, their several princes, leagued against the common enemy, preserved an union of counsels and interests. But, after the wretched natives were shut up in their barren mountains, and the conquerors had nothing to fear from them, the bond of alliance was in a great measure dissolved among the princes of the heptarchy; and, although one prince seems still to have assumed, or to have been allowed, some ascendant over the rest, his authority was so limited, that each state acted as if entirely independent. Jealousies and dissensions arose among the Saxon chiefs, and these were followed by perpetual wars; which, in Milton's opinion, are no more worthy of a particular narration, than the combats of kites or crows. And, independent of so great an authority, which however it would be presumption to slight, it may be safely affirmed, that the barren records transmitted to us, and the continued barbarities of the times, render it impossible for the most eloquent and discerning writer to make this portion of our history either instructive or entertaining. It will therefore be sufficient for me to observe, that, after a variety of inferior revolutions, A.D. 827. the seven kingdoms were united by the valour and policy of Egbert, king of Wessex¹³. His dominions were

¹² The extent of each kingdom is of too little importance now to deserve a particular description.

¹³ Wessex, or the kingdom of the West-Saxons, extended over the counties of Hants, Dorset, Devon, Somerset, Wilts, and Berks.

nearly of the same extent with the territory now called ENGLAND; a name which was given to the empire of the Saxons in Britain at the union of the heptarchy, or, as some suppose, soon after the erection of the seventh kingdom.

The Anglo-Saxons, long before the time of Egbert, had been converted to Christianity by the preaching of Augustine, a Roman monk, and the zeal of Bertha, daughter of Caribert king of Paris, and wife to Ethelbert king of Kent; but, as they received that doctrine through the polluted channels of the church of Rome, though it opened an intercourse with the more polished states of Europe, it had not hitherto been very effectual either in purifying their minds, or in softening their manners. The grossest ignorance and superstition prevailed among them. Reverences to saints and reliques seemed to supplant the worship of the Supreme Being; donations to the church were supposed to atone for every violation of the laws of society; and monastic observances were more esteemed than moral virtues. Even the military virtues so habitual to the Saxons fell into neglect. The nobles themselves began to prefer the indolence and security of the cloister to the toils and tumults of war; and the crown, impoverished by continual benefactions to the church, had no rewards for the encouragement of valour.

This corrupt species of Christianity was attended with another train of inconveniences, proceeding from a superstitious attachment to the see of Rome. The Britons had conducted all ecclesiastical affairs by their own synods and councils, acknowledging no subordination to the Roman pontiff; but the Saxons, having received their religion through the medium of Italian monks, were taught to consider Rome as the capital of their faith. Pilgrimages to that city were accordingly represented as the most meritorious acts of devotion; and not only noblemen and ladies of rank undertook this tedious journey, but kings themselves, re-

signing their crowns, implored a safe passport to heaven at the foot of St. Peter's chair, and exchanged the purple for the sackcloth¹⁴.

But England, even in those times of British darkness, gave birth to some men equal at least to any of the age in which they lived. Offa, king of Mercia, was thought worthy of the friendship of Charle-magne, the greatest prince that Europe had produced for many centuries; and Alcuin, an English clergyman, had the honour of instructing that illustrious monarch in the sciences, at a time when he was surrounded by all the literati of Christendom.

Having mentioned Charle-magne, I think it necessary to observe, that I shall finish the history of that great conqueror and legislator before I treat of the reign of Egbert, the first English monarch—a prince who was educated in the court and in the armies of the new emperor of the West. Meanwhile, my dear Philip, I must say a few words of the government, laws, and manners, which prevailed among the Saxons after their settlement in Britain.

14. Bed. lib. i. ii.—Spelm. *Conc.*

LETTER VIII.

Of the Government and Laws of the Anglo-Saxons.

IF the Saxons, on their settlement in this island, had established the same form of government with the other Gothic nations that seized the provinces of the Roman empire, this letter would have been in a great measure unnecessary; but, as they rather exterminated than subdued the natives, and were under few apprehensions from foreign

enemies, they had no occasion to subject themselves to feudal services. They therefore retained entire their civil and military institutions: they transplanted into this island those principles of liberty and independence which they had so highly cherished at home, which had been transmitted to them from their ancestors, and which still continue to flourish among their descendants. Their original constitution was a kind of military democracy, in which the protection of the state was the voluntary care of its members, as every free man had a share in the government; and conquest was the interest of all, as all partook of the acquisitions. Their king, or chief, was only the first citizen of the community: his authority depended, as did his station, principally on his personal qualities. The succession was neither elective nor hereditary. A son, who inherited his father's virtues and talents, was sure to succeed to his sway; but, if he happened to be weak or profligate, or was a minor, the next in blood, or the person of the greatest eminence in the state, generally procured an elevation to the throne.

We owe to the masterly pen of Tacitus this account of the primitive government of the Saxons. Unfortunately the Saxon Annals are too imperfect to enable us to delineate exactly the prerogatives of the kings, and the privileges of the people, after the settlement which was effected in Britain. The government might be somewhat different in the different kingdoms of the heptarchy, and might also undergo several changes before the Norman conquest; but of those changes we are in a great measure ignorant. We only know, that at all times, and in all the kingdoms, there was a national council, a Wittena-Gemot, or Assembly of the Wise Men, whose consent was necessary to the enactment of laws, and to give sanction to the measures of public administration. But, who the constituent members of that assembly were, has not hitherto been determined with certainty. The most probable conjecture seems to be, that it consisted

of the nobility, the dignified clergy, and all possessors of a certain portion of land¹.

The Saxons were divided into three orders of men; the noble, the free, and the servile. The nobles were called *thanes*, and were of two kinds, the principal and the inferior thanes. The latter seem to have had some dependence on the former, as the former had on the king; but of what nature is uncertain. The lower freemen among the Saxons were denominated *ceorles*, and were chiefly employed in husbandry; whence a husbandman and *ceorle* became synonymous terms. They farmed the lands of the nobility, or higher orders, and appear to have been removable at pleasure. But the slaves, or villains, were by much the most numerous class in the community; and, being the property of their masters, were incapable of holding any property themselves. They were of two kinds: household slaves, after the manner of the ancients; and rustic slaves, who were sold or transferred, like cattle, with the soil. The long wars between the Saxons and Britons, and afterwards between the different princes of the heptarchy, seem to have been the cause of the disproportionate number of these unhappy men: for prisoners taken in battle were reduced to slavery by the laws of war, and were entirely at the disposal of their masters².

The higher nobility and dignified clergy among the Anglo-Saxons possessed a criminal jurisdiction within their own territories, and could punish without appeal such as they judged worthy of death. This was a dangerous privilege, and liable to the greatest abuse. But, although the Anglo-Saxon government seems at last to have become in some measure aristocratical, there were still considerable remains of the ancient democracy. All the freeholders assembled twice

¹ At first, five hides were deemed a sufficient qualification; but the required amount gradually rose to forty.

² L. Edg. sec. xiv. apud Spelm. *Conc.* vol. i.—*Preface to Brady's Hist.*

a year in the county-court, or *shire-gemot*, to receive appeals from the inferior courts—a practice well calculated for the preservation of general liberty, and for restraining the exorbitant power of the nobles. In these courts were decided all causes ecclesiastical as well as civil, the bishop and the alderman, or earl, presiding over them. The case was determined by a majority of voices, without much pleading, formality, or delay; the bishop and earl having no farther authority than to keep order among the freeholders, and offer advice³. Though it should be granted, therefore, that the wittena-gemot was composed entirely of the greater thanes and dignified clergy, yet in a government where few taxes were imposed by the legislature, and few statutes enacted—where the nation was less governed by laws than by customs, which allowed much latitude of interpretation—the county courts where all the freeholders were admitted, and which regulated the daily occurrences of life, formed a wide basis for freedom.

The criminal laws of the Anglo-Saxons, as of most barbarous nations, were far from being severe; a compensation in money being deemed sufficient for murder of any species, and for the lives of persons of any rank, including the king and the primate, whose head, by the laws of Kent, was estimated at a higher rate than that of the king. The prices of all kinds of wounds were also settled: and he who was detected in adultery with his neighbour's wife, was ordered, by the laws of Ethelbert, to pay him a fine, and buy him another wife. The punishments for robbery were various, but none of them capital. If any person could trace his stolen cattle into another's ground, the owner of the ground was obliged to show their tracks out of it, or pay the value of the cattle⁴.

But, if the punishments for crimes among the Anglo-Saxons were remarkable, their pretended proofs were no less so. When any controversy about a fact was too intricate

³ Hickes' *Dissert.* Epist. ii—viii.

⁴ *Anglo-Saxon Laws*, published by Wilkins.

for the ignorant judges to unravel, they had recourse to what they called the judgement of God, or, in other words, to chance. Their modes of consulting that blind divinity were various; but the most common was the ordeal. This method of trial was practised either by boiling water or red-hot iron. The water, or iron, was consecrated by prayers, masses, fastings, and exorcisms; after which the person accused either took up with his bare hand a stone sunk in the water to a certain depth, or carried the iron to a particular distance. The hand was immediately wrapped up, and the covering sealed for three days; and if, on examining it, there appeared no marks of burning or scalding, the person accused was pronounced innocent; if otherwise, he was declared guilty⁵. The same kinds of proof, or others equally extravagant, prevailed among all the nations of the continent; and money, in like manner, was everywhere the atonement for guilt, both in a civil and ecclesiastical sense.

⁵ Spelman, in Verb. *Ordeal*.

LETTER IX.

Of the Reign of Charle-magne, or Charles the Great, King of France, and Emperor of the West.

CHARLES and Carloman, the successors of Pepin in the French monarchy, were men of very different dispositions. Charles was open and generous, Carloman dark and suspicious: it was therefore happy for mankind that Carloman died soon after his father, as intestine wars might have continually resulted from the opposite tempers and interfering interests of the brothers. Now alone at the head of a powerful kingdom, the great and ambitious genius of Charles soon gave birth to projects which will render his

A.D. 770.

name immortal. A prosperous reign of forty-five years, abounding with military enterprises, political institutions, and literary foundations, offers to our view, in the midst of barbarism, a spectacle worthy of more polished ages.

But, before I proceed to the history of this illustrious reign, I must say a few words of the state of Germany at that time.

Germany was formerly possessed by a number of free and independent nations, who bravely defended their liberties against the Romans, and were never totally subjected by them. On the decline of the Roman empire, many of those nations left their country, and founded empires or principalities in other parts; so that Germany, at the accession of Charle-magne to the crown of France, was principally occupied by the Saxons. Of their government I have already spoken. They were still Pagans. What was then considered as their territory comprehended a vast tract of country, extending from Bohemia to the Baltic and the German ocean. This spacious empire was governed by many independent princes, and inhabited by various tribes, who had become tributary to the French crown. But, whenever the throne of France was vacated by death, or when the kings were engaged either in foreign or domestic wars, the Saxon princes threw off their allegiance, and entered the French territories¹. Charles had occasion to quell one of these revolts immediately after the death of his brother; and the work was but imperfectly executed, when his arms were wanted in another quarter.

The two brothers are said to have married two daughters of Didier or Desiderius, king of the Lombards; but this point is doubtful with regard to Carloman. Charles had divorced his consort, under pretence that she was incapable of bearing children, and married Hildegarda, a Suabian princess. Bertha, the widow of Carloman, not thinking

¹ Eginhardi *Vit. Car. Mag.*

herself and her children safe in France after the death of her husband, retired into Italy, and implored the protection of Desiderius, who received her with joy. Highly incensed against Charles for divorcing his daughter, he hoped by means of these refugees to raise such disturbances in France as might both gratify his revenge, and prevent the French monarch from intermeddling in the affairs of Italy. In this hope he was encouraged by his intimacy with pope Adrian

A. D. 772. I. to whom he proposed the crowning and anointing of Carloman's two sons. But Adrian, though disposed to oblige him, refused to comply with the request, as he apprehended that by such conduct he might incur the displeasure of Charles, the natural ally of the church, and the only prince capable of protecting him against his ambitious enemies. Enraged at the refusal, Desiderius ravaged the papal territories, or, as they were called, the *Patrimony of St. Peter*, and threatened to besiege Rome itself. To avert the pressing danger, Adrian privately sent ambassadors to Charle-magne, not only entreating his aid, but inviting him to the conquest of Italy, his friendship for Desiderius being now converted into the most rancorous hatred. The French monarch, who only waited an opportunity to revenge himself on that prince for keeping his nephews, and still more for wishing to crown them, received the pope's invitation with great satisfaction. He immediately left Germany, after a hasty accommodation with the Saxons, and collected such an army as evidently showed that his object was nothing less than the extinction of the kingdom of the Lombards².

Desiderius now put himself at the head of a great army, and sent troops to guard the passes of the Alps. But Charle-magne, apprised of this precaution, sent a detachment under experienced guides to cross the mountains by a different route. The French completed their march; and, falling unexpectedly upon the Lombards who guarded the passes,

² Sigon. *Reg. Ital.*—Anast. *Vit. Hadriani*.

struck them with such terror, that they fled in the utmost confusion. Charles now entered Italy A.D. 773. unmolested, and marched in quest of Desiderius. Unable to keep the field, the king of the Lombards retired to his capital; sending his son Adalgisus, as well as Bertha and her two sons, to Verona.

As soon as Charle-magne understood that Desiderius had taken shelter in Pavia, he assembled his whole army, and laid siege to that city, resolving not to withdraw his forces till it should have submitted; but, as the Lombards made a gallant defence, he changed the siege into a blockade, and marched with part of his troops to invest Verona. Adalgisus defended the place, for a time, with great bravery; but, when he was reduced to extremities, he secretly withdrew, and fled to Constantinople, where he was cordially received by the emperor. Verona now surrendered to Charles, who, having seised Bertha and her sons, sent them under a strong guard into France. What afterwards became of them, history has not informed us. It is much to be feared, however, that their fate was little to the honour of the conqueror. Humanity was not the characteristic of those times.

The siege of Pavia was renewed, and pushed with fresh vigour; but, before the reduction of the town, Charles repaired to Rome. The pope received his deliverer A.D. 774. in the most pompous manner, the magistrates and judges walking before him with their banners, and the clergy repeating, "Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord!" After Charles had satisfied his curiosity, and confirmed the donation which his father had made to St. Peter, he returned to the camp before Pavia. The Lombards continued to defend that city with obstinate valour; but, a plague breaking out among the besieged, the unfortunate Desiderius was obliged at last to surrender his capital, and deliver up himself, his wife, and his children, to Charles,

who sent them all into France, where they either died a violent death, or languished out their days in obscurity³.

Thus ended the kingdom of the Lombards in Italy, after it had subsisted two hundred and six years. They are represented by the monkish historians as a cruel and barbarous people, because they opposed the ambitious views of the popes; but the salutary laws which they left behind them, and which devouring time has still spared, are convincing proofs of their justice, humanity, and wisdom.

Of the state of Italy, at that time, it is proper that I should give you a sketch. It was then shared by the Venetians, the Lombards, the pope, and the emperor of the East. The Venetians had become very considerable by their trade to the Levant, and bore no small sway in the affairs of Italy, though they had a very small portion of territory on the continent. The pope was master of the exarchate and Pentapolis: the dukedom of Naples, and some cities in the two Calabrian provinces, were ruled by the emperor of the East. The other parts of Italy belonged to the Lombards; namely, the dukedoms of Friuli, Spoleto, and Benevento, together with the provinces of Liguria, Venetia, Tuscany, and the Alpes Cottiae, which were properly called the kingdom of the Lombards. These Charles claimed by right of conquest, and caused himself, in imitation of their princes, to be crowned king of Italy, with an iron crown, which is still preserved in the little town of Monza.

The conqueror thought it necessary to settle the government of his new kingdom, before he left Italy; and, after consulting with the pope, he agreed that the people should be permitted to live under their former laws, and that all things should remain as established by his predecessors. Accordingly he allowed the dukes of Friuli, Spoleto, and Benevento, the same authority which they had enjoyed under the Lombard kings. He also permitted the other dukes to hold

³ Leonis Ostiens. *Hist.*

their dukedoms, contenting himself with an oath of allegiance, which he obliged them, as well as the three great dukes, to take annually. It was conceived in these words: "I promise, without fraud or deceit, to be faithful to my sovereign Charles, and his sons, as long as I live: and I swear, by these holy Gospels, that I will be faithful to him, as a vassal to his lord and sovereign; neither will I divulge any thing which, in virtue of my allegiance, he shall commit to me." He never transferred a dukedom from one family to another, unless when the duke broke his oath, or died without male issue. This translation from one to another was called *investiture*; and hence it came, that fiefs were not granted but by investiture⁴.

Charles committed the boundaries of his new kingdom, and the territory of cities, to the care of counts, who were invested with great authority. These boundaries were called *Marches*, and those who had the care of them were styled Counts of the Marches, or Marquises; whence the title of Marquis had its rise. He also occasionally sent commissaries, who were entrusted with higher powers, and examined the conduct of the counts, whose province it was to administer justice over all his dominions.

That Italy might retain at least some shadow of liberty, he convoked, as often as he returned to that country, a general assembly of the bishops, abbots, and barons, in order to settle affairs of national importance. The Lombards had but one order in their councils, that of the barons; but, as the French had two (the clergy and nobility), he added, in Italy, the order of ecclesiastics to that of the nobles⁵.

The affairs of Italy being thus settled, Charles returned to France, and marched immediately against the Saxons, who had again revolted during his absence. A. D. 775. But a detail of his wars with that barbarous though brave

⁴ Sigon. *Reg. Ital.*

⁵ Sigon.

people, which continued during the greater part of his reign, can afford little pleasure to a humanised mind. I shall therefore only observe, that, after a number of battles gallantly fought, and many cruelties committed on both sides, the Saxons were totally subjected, and Germany became part of the empire of Charle-magne. A desire of converting the Saxons to Christianity seems to have been one of the principal motives for prosecuting this conquest; and, as they were no less tenacious of their religion than of their liberty, persecution marched in the train of war, and stained with blood the fetters of slavery.

Witikingd, so deservedly celebrated by his nation, was the most eminent Saxon general during these hostilities. He frequently roused the drooping valour of his countrymen, and revived in their hearts the love of liberty and independence. They requited his gallant exertions with zeal and attachment, for which, however, they severely suffered. After an unsuccessful revolt, when they went to make submission to Charle-magne, he ordered four thousand five hundred of their principal men to be massacred, because they refused to deliver up their general⁶. An equal instance of severity is scarcely to be found in the history of mankind; especially if we consider, that the Saxons were not the natural subjects of Charles, but an independent people struggling for freedom. Witikingd at last submitted, and embraced Christianity, continuing ever after faithful to his engagements. But he could never inspire his associates with the same docile sentiments: they were continually revolting; and submitting, that they might have it in their power to revolt again. On the final reduction of their country, the more resolute spirits retired into the northernmost parts of Europe, carrying with them their vindictive hatred to the dominion and the religion of France.

On the subject of religion it may here be observed, that

⁶ Eginhardi *Annal.*

Charle-magne justly considered the mild doctrines of Christianity as the best means of taming a savage people : but he erred in supposing that force would ever make Christians. His Capitulars or ordinances for the Saxons were almost as barbarous as their manners. He obliged them, under pain of death, to receive baptism ; he condemned to the severest punishments the breakers of Lent ; in a word, he everywhere substituted force for persuasion. Instead therefore of blaming the obstinacy of these barbarians, we ought to be filled with horror at the cruel bigotry of the conqueror.

Almost every year of the reign of Charles was signalised by some military expedition, though very different from those of our times. War was then carried on without any settled plan of operations. The troops were neither regularly disciplined nor paid. Every nobleman led forth his vassals, who were only obliged to serve for a certain time ; so that there was a kind of necessity of concluding the war with the campaign. The army was dissolved on the approach of winter, and assembled in the next season, if necessary. Hence we are enabled to account for some circumstances which would otherwise appear inexplicable, in the reign of this great prince.

Besides the Lombards and Saxons, whom he conquered, Charles vanquished in several engagements the Abares or Huns, plundered their capital, and penetrated as far as Raab on the Danube. He likewise made an expedition into Spain, and carried his arms to the banks of the Ebro⁷.

Abdarrahman, the Moorish king, whom I have already mentioned, still reigned with lustre at Cordova. A superb mosque, now the cathedral of that city, six hundred feet in length, and two hundred and fifty in breadth, supported by three hundred and sixty-five columns of alabaster, jasper, and black marble, continues to manifest the grandeur of this monarch. No other people but the Arabs could then either

have conceived or executed such a work. The little Christian king of the Asturias had prudently sued for peace from Abdarrahan; but some of the Moorish governors, having revolted from that prince, offered to acknowledge Charlemagne as their sovereign. Willing to extend his empire

on that side, Charles crossed the Pyrenées with all
A.D. 778.

expedition, took Pampeluna and Saragossa, and re-established the Moorish governors under his protection. In re-passing the mountains, his rear-guard was defeated by the duke of Gascony, at Roncevaux⁸. Here fell the famous Roland, so much celebrated in romance, and represented as nephew to Charlemagne; though history only tells us that he commanded on the frontiers of Bretagne.

Charles, though engaged in so many wars, was far from neglecting the arts of peace, the happiness of his subjects, or the cultivation of his own mind. Government, manners, religion, and letters, were his constant pursuits. He frequently convened the national assemblies, for regulating the affairs both of church and state. In these assemblies he proposed such laws as he considered to be of public benefit, and allowed the same liberty to others; but of this liberty, indeed, it would have been difficult to deprive the French nobles, who had been accustomed, from the foundation of the monarchy, to share the legislation with their sovereign. His attention extended even to the most distant corner of his empire, and to all ranks of men. Sensible how much mankind in general reverence old customs, and those constitutions under which they have lived from their youth, he permitted the inhabitants of all the countries that he conquered to retain their own laws, making only such alterations as he judged absolutely necessary for the good of the community. He manifested a particular regard for the common people, and studied their ease and advantage. This benevolence of mind, which can never be sufficiently admired, was both

⁸ Eginhardi *Annal.*

more necessary and more meritorious in those times, as the commonalty were then in a state of almost universal oppression, and were scarcely thought to be entitled to the sympathies of humanity. The same love of mankind led him to repair and form public roads; to build bridges, where necessary; to make rivers navigable, for the purposes of commerce; and to project that grand canal, which would have opened a communication between the German Ocean and the Black Sea, by uniting the Danube and the Rhine⁹. This illustrious project failed in the execution, for want of those machines which art has since constructed. But the greatness of the conception, and the honour of having attempted it, were beyond the power of contingencies; and posterity has done justice to the memory of Charles, by considering him, on account of that and his other public-spirited plans, as one of those few conquerors who did not merely desolate the earth; as a hero truly worthy of the name, who sought to unite his own glory with the welfare of his species.

This great prince was no less amiable in private life than illustrious in his public character. He was an affectionate father, a fond husband, and a generous friend. His house was a model of œconomy, and his person of simplicity and true grandeur. "For shame!" said he to some of his nobles, who were more finely dressed than the occasion required; "learn to dress like men, and let the world judge of your rank by your merit, not your habit. Leave silks and finery to women, or reserve them for those days of pomp and ceremony when robes are worn for show, not use." On some occasions he himself appeared in imperial magnificence, and freely indulged in every luxury; but in general his dress was plain, and his table frugal. His only excess was in the pleasure of the sexes; and this he sometimes carried to such a height as to endanger his very athletic constitution, he

⁹ Egin. *Vit. Car. Mag.*

being almost seven feet high, and proportionably strong. He had his set hours for study, which he seldom omitted, either in the camp or the court; and, notwithstanding his continual wars, and unremitted attention to the affairs of a great empire, he found leisure to collect the old French poems and historical ballads, with a view to illustrate the history of the monarchy. The loss of this collection is much to be lamented, and could never have happened if every one had been as well acquainted with its importance as Charles. But he was the phoenix of his age; and, though not altogether free from its prejudices, his liberal and comprehensive mind, which examined every thing, and yet found time for all things, would have done honour to the most enlightened period. He was fond of the company of learned men, and assembled them from all parts of Europe, forming in his palace a kind of academy, of which he condescended to become a member. He also established schools, in the cathedrals and principal abbeys, for teaching writing, arithmetic, grammar, and church music¹⁰; certainly no very elevated sciences, yet considerable at a time when many dignified ecclesiastics could not subscribe the canons of those councils in which they sat as members, and when it was deemed a sufficient qualification for a priest to be able to read the Gospels and understand the Lord's Prayer¹¹.

Alcuin, our learned countryman, was the companion and particular favourite of Charle-magne, and was at the head of his Royal Academy. A circumstance so much to the honour of this island should not be omitted by a British historian. Three rich abbeys were the reward of the learning and talents of Alcuin. This benevolence has been thought to border on profusion; but in that age of darkness, when even an enthusiastic zeal for learning was a virtue, no encouragement could be too great for the illuminators of the human mind.

¹⁰ Egin. *Vit. Car. Mag.*

¹¹ Reg. Bruniens. apud Bruck. *Hist. Philos.*

Had the religious enthusiasm of this monarch been attended with no worse consequences than his literary ardour, his piety would have been as deservedly admired as his taste. But a blind zeal for the propagation of Christianity, which extinguished his natural feelings, made him guilty of severities that shock humanity; and a superstitious attachment to the see of Rome, which mingled itself with his policy, led him to engage in theological disputes and quibbles unworthy of his character. Only the honours which his father and himself owed to the popes, can render him in any degree excusable. But, although the theological part of Charles's character is by no means the brightest, it merits your attention, as it serves to show the prejudices of the age, the littlenesses of a great man, and the great effects that frequently proceed from little causes.

As Charle-magne was equally a friend to religion and letters, and as any learning which yet remained among mankind, in our quarter of the globe, was monopolised by the clergy, it is not surprising that they obtained strong marks of his favour. Even the payment of tithes, then considered as a grievous oppression, but which he ordered as a compensation for the lands with-holden from the church; and the consequence which he gave to church-men, by admitting them into the national assemblies, and associating them with the counts in the administration of justice; appear less extravagant than his sitting in councils merely ecclesiastical, assembled about the most frivolous points of a vain theology. But, like some princes of later times, Charles seems to have been strongly desirous of being considered not only as the protector, but as the head of the church; and, from the imposing effect of his power and munificence, this usurpation was overlooked, notwithstanding the height which the papal dignity had then attained. We accordingly find him seated on a throne in the council of Frankfort, with one of the pope's legates on each hand, and three hundred bishops waiting his nod.

A. D. 794.

The purpose of that council was to examine the doctrine of two Spanish bishops, who, in order to refute the accusation of polytheism, brought against the Christians by the Jews and Mohammedans, maintained that Jesus Christ was the son of God only by adoption. The king opened the assembly himself, and proposed the condemnation of this heresy. The council decided conformably to his will: and in a letter to the churches of Spain, in consequence of that decision, Charles expressed himself in these remarkable words: "You entreat me to judge of myself: I have done so: I have assisted as an auditor, and an arbiter, in an assembly of bishops: we have examined, and, by the grace of God, we have settled, what must be believed!" Neither Constantine nor any other of the Greek emperors, so jealous of their theological prerogative, ever used a more positive language.

Charle-magne went still farther in the question of images. Leo IV., the son of Constantine Copronymus, as zealous an image-breaker as his father, had banished his wife Irenè, because she hid images beneath her pillow. This devout and ambitious princess coming afterwards to the government, during the minority of her son Constantine Porphyrogeneta, with whom she was associated in the empire, re-established that worship which she loved, from policy no less than piety. The second council of Nice accordingly decreed, that we ought to render to images an *honorary* worship, but not a real *adoration*, which is due to God alone. Unfortunately however, the translation of the acts of this council, which pope Adrian sent into France, was so incorrect, that the sense of the article relating to images was entirely perverted, running thus: "I receive and honour images according to that adoration which I pay to the Trinity." Charles was so much incensed at this impiety, that he composed, with the aid of the clergy, what are called the *Caroline Books*, in which the council of Nice is treated with the utmost contempt and abuse. He sent those

books to Adrian, desiring him to excommunicate the empress and her son. The pope prudently excused himself on the score of images, making Charles sensible of the mistake upon which he had proceeded; but he insinuated at the same time, that he would declare Irenè and Constantine heretics, unless they should restore certain lands which had belonged to the church; artfully hinting at certain projects which he had formed for the *exaltation* of the Romish church and the French monarchy¹². The exaltation of the monarchy was approaching, though Adrian did not live to be the instrument of it.

Leo III., who succeeded Adrian in the papacy, sent to Charle-magne the standard of Rome, requesting him to send some person to receive the oath of fidelity from the Romans¹³; a most flattering instance of submission, as well as a proof that the sovereignty of Rome, at that time, belonged to the kings of France. Three years after, Pascal and Campule, two relatives of the late pope, not only offered themselves as accusers of Leo, but attacked him in the public streets, and severely wounded him. He made his escape by the assistance of some friends; and the duke of Spoleto, general of the French forces, sent him under an escort to Charle-magne. The king received him with great respect, sent him back with a numerous retinue, and went soon after to Italy to do him justice.

At Rome, Charles passed six days in private conferences with the pope; after which he convoked the bishops and nobles, to examine the accusation brought against the pontiff. "The apostolic see," exclaimed the bishops, "cannot be judged by man!" Leo, however, spoke to the accusation: he said that the king came to *know the cause*; and, no proof appearing against him, he purged himself by oath¹⁴.

The trial of a pope was doubtless an uncommon scene;

¹² *Elémens d'Hist. Gén.* par M. l'Abbé Millot, par. II. tome

¹³ *Egin. Vit. Car. Mag.*

¹⁴ *Anast. Vit. Leon.*

but one soon followed yet more extraordinary. On Christmas-day, as the king assisted at mass in St. Peter's church, in the midst of the ecclesiastical ceremonies, and while he was on his knees before the altar, the supreme pontiff advanced, and put an imperial crown upon his head. As soon as the people perceived it, they cried "Long life and victory to Charles Augustus, crowned by the hand of God!" — "Long live the great and pious emperor of the Romans!" The pope then conducted him to a magnificent throne, which had been prepared for the occasion; and, as soon as he was seated, paid him those honours which his predecessors had been accustomed to pay to the Roman emperors, declaring, that, instead of bearing the title of Patrician, he should henceforth be styled Emperor and Augustus. Leo now presented him with the imperial mantle; with which being invested, Charles returned amidst the acclamations of the multitude to his palace¹⁵.

The pope had surely no right to proclaim an emperor: but Charles was worthy of the imperial ensigns; and, although he cannot properly be ranked among the successors of Augustus, he is justly considered as the founder of the New Empire of the West.

Charle-magne was no sooner proclaimed emperor than his title was generally acknowledged; and he received several embassies, which must have given him high satisfaction, as they did equal honour to the prince and the man. Irenè, the most artful and ambitious woman of her time, who had deposed her son that she might reign alone, proposed marriage to the new emperor. This proposal was made with a view of securing her Italian dominions, which she was informed Charles intended to seize; and the matrimonial treaty was actually concluded, when Nicephorus, the patrician, conspired against her, banished her to the isle of Lesbos, and ascended the imperial throne. By a treaty be-

¹⁵ Anast.—Egin. *Ann.*

tween Charles and this prince, the limits of the two empires were settled; and Calabria, Sicily, the coast of Naples, Dalmatia, and Venice, were to continue under the dominion of the Greek emperor¹⁶. This treaty proves that the Venetians were not yet altogether independent; but they aspired at independence, and soon deservedly obtained it. A.D. 802.

The renown of Charles extended even into Asia. He kept a correspondence with the famous Haroun Al-Rashid, one of those khalifs who contributed most to enlighten and polish the Arabs. This prince valued the friendship of Charle-magne above that of all other potentates; as a proof of which, he complimented him with an embassy soon after he was proclaimed emperor, and ceded to him—if not the lordship of Jerusalem, as some authors affirm—at least the holy places in that city, whither devotion already led a great number of Christians. Among the presents which the ambassadors of Al-Rashid brought into France was a striking clock, the first ever seen in that kingdom; for, notwithstanding the efforts of Charle-magne to enlighten his nation, his subjects were not equal to those of Haroun in knowledge, or in the arts, either liberal or mechanical. The Arabs might then have been preceptors to all Europe.

I must here say a few words of this surprising phenomenon.

The Abassides, having ascended the throne of Mohammed, transferred the seat of empire from Damascus to Cufa, and afterwards to Bagdad. Thither the khalif Al-Mansour attracted the arts and sciences. The Greeks had furnished ideas and communicated taste to their barbarous conquerors—a species of triumph reserved for civilised nations, even in a state of servitude. Al-Mohdi, successor of Al-Mansour, cultivated these precious seeds; and Al-Rashid, who was the son of Al-Mohdi, augmented their

¹⁶ Egin. *Vit. Car. Mag.*—Theoph. *Chronographia*.

fecundity by his knowledge and attention, being equally liberal and enlightened. Under Al-Mamoun, Al-Motasem, Al-Wathek, and their immediate successors, the sciences flourished still more ; but, at length, dissensions and civil wars robbed the Arabs, in their turn, of the fruits of genius and the lights of learning, which are almost inseparable from public tranquillity.

In all nations the same revolutions are produced nearly by the same causes. Nothing merits your attention more in the study of history.

One of the principal causes of the fall of empires has ever been, but more especially in modern times, the error of dividing the same monarchy among different princes. The custom prevailed before the time of Charlemagne : he followed it by a testamentary division of his dominions among his three sons, Charles, Pepin, and Louis. The particulars of this division are of little consequence, as only Louis survived his father. It is necessary, however, to observe, that the Italian provinces had been assigned to Pepin ; a donation which was confirmed to his son Bernard, with the title of King of Italy, and proved the ruin of that prince, as well as the cause of much disturbance to the empire.

In the mean time, the emperor was threatened by a new enemy, and the most formidable he had ever encountered. The Normans, as the French call them, or the inhabitants of the great northern peninsula of Europe (of whom I shall afterwards more particularly treat), had long harassed the coasts of his extensive dominions with their robberies and piracies ; and, notwithstanding the wise measures of Charles, who created a powerful marine, and took every other precaution against their ravages, they not only continued their depredations, but made a formal descent in Friseland, under Godfrey the Dane. Charles assembled all his forces in the neighbourhood of the Rhine, and was preparing for a decisive battle, which might

perhaps have terminated the empire of the Franks, as Godfrey was not inferior to the emperor either in valour or military skill, and had a numerous body of fearless adventurers under his command. But the issue of this battle was prevented by the death of that prince, who was assassinated by one of his followers. His forces were immediately re-embarked; and a peace was afterwards concluded with his nephew.

The satisfaction which Charles must have received from this deliverance, and the general tranquillity which he now enjoyed, were more than balanced by his domestic misfortunes. He lost his favourite daughter Rotrude, and two of his sons. Soon after the death of his son Charles, A.D. 813. he associated Louis with him in the empire. The ceremony was very solemn. As if this great man had foreseen the usurpations of the church, he placed the imperial crown upon the altar, and ordered the prince to put it on his own head¹⁷; intimating thereby, that he held it only of God.

The emperor died at Aix-la-Chapelle, his usual residence, in the seventy-second year of his age, and the forty-sixth of his reign. Jan. 814. The glory of the French empire seemed to expire with him. He possessed all France, the greater part of Germany, a part of Spain, the Low Countries, and the continent of Italy as far as Benevento. But, to govern such an extent of territory, a monarch must be endowed with the genius of a Charle-magne.

¹⁷ Theogani *Vit. Ludovici Pii.*

LETTER X.

Of the Empire of Charle-magne and the Church, from the Accession of Louis the Debonnaire to the Death of Charles the Bald.

THE history of Europe, for several ages after the death of Charle-magne, is little more than a catalogue of crimes, and a register of the debasing effects of ignorance and superstition. His empire soon experienced the same fate with that of Alexander. It had quickly attained its height; and yet, while animated by the superior genius of Charles, it possessed a surprising degree of strength and harmony. But these not being natural to the feudal system, the discordant elements began to separate under his son Louis the Debonnaire (so called on account of the gentleness of his manners); and that vast body, no longer informed by the same spirit, was in a short time entirely dismembered.

Louis, though a prince of some abilities, was unable to support so great a weight of empire: and his piety and parental fondness, however amiable in themselves, enfeebled a character already too weak, and an authority never respected. He rendered himself odious to the clergy by attempting to reform certain abuses, without foreseeing that this powerful body would not pay the same submission which had been given to the superior capacity of his father. More religious than politic, he spent less time in settling the affairs of his empire than those of his soul, not considering that true religion consists in fulfilling the duties of our station, and that the practices of the cloister are improperly associated with the functions of the throne. But his greatest error was occasioned by his paternal affection, and a blind imitation of his father's example, in dividing his dominions

among his children. Three years after his accession to the throne, he admitted his eldest son A.D. 817. Lothaire to a participation of the French and German territories, declared Pepin king of Aquitaine, and created Louis king of Bavaria¹.

Bernard, king of Italy, was offended at this division. He thought his right to the empire superior to the claim of Lothaire, as his father Pepin was elder brother to Louis. The primate of Milan and the bishop of Cremona encouraging his pretensions, he revolted, and levied war against his uncle, in contempt of the imperial authority, to which his crown was subject. Louis acted on this occasion with greater vigour than either his friends or his enemies expected: he immediately raised a powerful army, and was preparing to cross the Alps, when Bernard was abandoned by his troops. That unfortunate prince was made prisoner, and condemned to lose his head; but his uncle, by a singular kind of lenity, mitigated the sentence to A.D. 818. the loss of his eyes. He died three days after the punishment was inflicted; and Louis, to prevent future troubles, ordered three natural sons of Charlemagne to be shut up in a convent².

In consequence of these rigours, the emperor was seised with keen remorse; accusing himself of the murder of his nephew, and of tyrannic cruelty to his brothers, inhumanly secluded from the world. He was encouraged by the monks in this melancholy humour; which at last grew to such a height, that he impeached himself in an assembly of the states, and begged the bishops to enjoin him public penance³. The clergy, now sensible of his weakness, set no bounds to their usurpations. The popes thought they might do any thing under so pious a prince: they did not wait for the emperor's confirmation of their election, but immediately assumed the tiara, and were guilty of other ir-

¹ Nithard. *de Dissensionibus Filiorum Ludovici Pii.*

² *Vit. Lud. Pii.*

³ *Vit. Lud. Pii.*

regularities. The bishops exalted themselves above the throne, and the whole fraternity of the church claimed an exemption from all civil jurisdiction. Even the monks, while they pretended to renounce the world, seemed to aspire to the government of it.

Louis, by the advice of his ministers, who were desirous of diverting him from his monastic habits, had married a second wife, who was distinguished both by her mental and personal qualities. This princess brought him

A.D. 824.

a son, afterwards known by the name of Charles the Bald, whose birth was the occasion of much joy, but proved the cause of many sorrows. She pressed her husband to put Charles on a footing with his other children, by a new division of his dominions. Lothaire, sensible of the wishes of his indulgent father, and prevailed on by the entreaties of this fond mother, consented to resign a

A.D. 829.

part of his territories to Charles. But he soon repented of his too easy concession; and the three brothers, by a remarkable association, joined in a rebellion against their father⁴.

These disorders were fostered by Walla, abbot of Corbie, a monk of high birth, who had formerly been in the confidence of Louis, but was now in disgrace. He declaimed against the court, and against the empress in particular, accusing her of an adulterous commerce with count Bernard, the prime minister. His schemes succeed-

A.D. 830.

ed. The emperor was abandoned by his army, and made prisoner, with his wife Judith, and her son Charles. The empress was shut up in a cloister, and Louis himself would have been obliged to take the monastic habit, had it not been supposed that he would make a voluntary resignation of his crown. He had the courage, however, to insist on the rectitude of his intentions, while he acknowledged his errors, and promised to act with greater circum-

⁴ Nithard. *de Dissens. Fil. Lud. Pii.*

spection in future. The nobility pitied their humbled sovereign; and by the intrigues of the monk Gondebaud, who sowed dissensions among the brothers, Louis was restored to his dignity, and seemingly reconciled with his family⁵.

The first use that the emperor made of his liberty was to recall his consort to court, though not without the permission of the pope, as she had formally taken the veil. Bernard was also recalled, and Walla banished; yet Louis did not long enjoy either peace or tranquillity. The monk Gondebaud thought he had a right to be prime minister, as the reward of his services: and, as women generally repay flattery with favour, they as generally reserve vengeance for insult; the empress brought her animosities to court with her. Walla's friends were persecuted, and Lothaire was deprived of the A.D. 832. title of emperor, that the succession might be reserved for young Charles. The three brothers now formed a new league against their father⁶. Count Bernard, dissatisfied with his master's conduct, joined the rebels; and Gregory IV., then pope, went to France in the army of Lothaire, under pretence of accommodating matters, but really with an intention of employing against the emperor that power which he derived from him, being pleased with the opportunity of asserting the supremacy and independence of the holy see.

The presence of the pope, in those days of superstition, was of itself sufficient to determine the fate of Louis. After a deceitful negotiation, and an interview with Gregory on the part of Lothaire, the unfortunate emperor found himself at the mercy of his rebellious sons. He was deposed in a tumultuous assembly, and A.D. 833. Lothaire was proclaimed in his stead⁷. After that infamous transaction the pope returned to Rome.

⁵ Vit. Lud. Pii.

⁶ Nithard, de Dissens. Fil. Lud. Pii.

⁷ Vit. Lud. Pii.

In order to give permanency to this revolution, as well as to apologise for their own conduct, the bishops of Lothaire's faction had recourse to an artifice like that which had been used for the degradation of king Wamba in Spain. "A penitent," said they, "is incapable of all civil offices; a royal penitent must therefore be incapable of reigning; let us subject Louis to a perpetual penance, and he can never re-ascend the throne." He was accordingly arraigned in the assembly of the states, by Ebbo, archbishop of Rheims (who had been raised by his bounty from the condition of a slave), and condemned to do penance for life⁸.

Louis was then prisoner in a monastery at Soissons; and, being much intimidated, he patiently submitted to a ceremony no less solemn than debasing. He prostrated himself on a hair-cloth, which was spread before the altar, and owned himself guilty of the charges brought against him, in the presence of many bishops, canons, and monks; Lothaire being also present, in order to enjoy the sight of his father's humiliation. But this acknowledgement was not deemed sufficient: he was obliged to read aloud a written confession, in which he was made to accuse himself of sacrilege and murder, and to number among his crimes the marching of troops in Lent, calling an assembly on Holy-Thursday, and taking arms to defend himself against his rebellious children!—for superstition can transform into crimes the most innocent and even the most necessary actions. After having finished his confession, this unhappy prince, by order of the ungrateful archbishop, laid aside his sword and belt, divested himself of the royal robes, put on the penitential sackcloth, and had a cell assigned to him.

But the feelings of nature, and the voice of humanity, prevailed over the prejudices of the age, and the policy of

⁸ *Vit. Lud. Pii.*

the clergy. Lothaire became an object of general abhorrence, and his father of compassion : his two brothers united against him, in behalf of that father whom they had contributed to humble. The nobility returned to their obedience : they paid homage to Louis, as their lawful sovereign ; and the ambitious Lothaire was obliged to crave mercy, in the sight of the whole army, at the feet of a parent, and an emperor, whom he had lately insulted in the habit of a penitent⁹. He received it, and was permitted to retain the kingdom of Italy, which he had enjoyed from the time of Bernard's death. A. D. 834.

Louis immediately demanded absolution (such was his weakness!), and, in a general assembly at Thionville, he was formally restored to his dignity. He might now have ended his days in peace, but for the intrigues of Judith, who, still ambitious of the aggrandisement of her son, again entered into a negotiation with Lothaire, in consequence of the death of his brother Pepin. An assembly was convoked at Worms, to which he was invited. A. D. 839. His father received him kindly; the empress loaded him with caresses. The kingdom of Neustria¹⁰ had lately been added to the dominions of her son; and her present object was, to engage Lothaire in a scheme by which Charles should also become possessed of Aquitaine, at the expense of Pepin's children. Lothaire assented to what he was not in a condition to dispute. But Louis, king of Bavaria, though not injured by this new division of the empire, was so much incensed at its supposed injustice, that he assembled the whole force of his dominions. His father marched against him, but became suddenly indisposed; and, an eclipse of the sun happening at the same time, the superstitious old man had the vanity to think that Heaven had taken the trouble to foretell to mankind the death of a prince whose very virtues seemed almost to dishonour the throne, and

⁹ Nithard, *de Dissens. Fil. Lud. Pii.*

¹⁰ The north-western part of France, including Paris, was so called.

who ought never to have stirred beyond the walls of a cloister. He therefore repeatedly received the communion, and scarcely took any other nourishment, till his piety fulfilled the prediction which his folly had suggested ¹¹.

Louis died near Mentz, in the sixty-fourth year of
June 840.

his age, and the twenty-seventh of his reign. He left a crown, a sword, and a very rich sceptre, to Lothaire, by which it was supposed he also left him the empire, on condition that he should fulfil his engagements to Judith and Charles. The bishop of Metz, observing that he had left nothing to his son Louis, then in arms against him, reminded him that forgiveness at least was his duty. "Yes, I forgive him!" cried the dying prince with great emotion; "but tell him from me, that he ought to seek forgiveness of God, for bringing my grey hairs in sorrow to the grave."

A bad son, my dear Philip, cannot be expected to make a good brother; for the natural feelings in the second relation are necessarily weaker than in the first: you will not, therefore, be surprised to find the sons of Louis the Debonnaire armed against each other. No sooner was Lothaire informed of his father's death than he considered himself as emperor in the most extensive sense of the word, and resolved to make himself master of the whole imperial dominions, regardless of his engagements in favour of Charles the Bald, or the right of his brother Louis to the kingdom of Bavaria. And he seemed likely to attain the object of his ambition. He was a prince of great subtlety and address, could wear the complexion of the times, and was possessed of an extensive territory, beside the title of emperor, which was still much respected: he therefore assured himself of success against his brothers; Charles being only a youth of seventeen, under the tuition of his mother, and Louis a prince of no high reputation. He was deceived, however, in his conjectures. These two princes, united by

¹¹ *Vit. Lud. Pii.*

a sense of common interest, gave him battle at Fontenai, in Burgundy, where fraternal hatred appeared in all its horrors. Few engagements have been so bloody, if (as it is said) 100,000 men fell on the spot. Lothaire and his nephew Pepin (who had joined him to assert his right to the crown of Aquitaine) were totally defeated¹². Pepin fled to Aquitaine, and his uncle towards Italy, abandoning France to the victorious army.

June 25, 841.

Nothing now remained for Louis and Charles but to secure their conquests. For this purpose they applied to the clergy; and with hopes the more flattering, as Lothaire, in order to raise troops with greater expedition, had promised the Saxons the liberty of renouncing Christianity, or, in other words, liberty of conscience, the very idea of which was abhorred by the church of Rome. Several bishops assembled at Aix-la-Chapelle; and, after examining the misconduct of the emperor, asked the two princes, whether they chose to follow his example, or govern according to the laws of God. Their answer may easily be imagined. "Receive then the kingdom by the divine authority," added the prelates: "we exhort you, we command you to receive it"¹³.

This command would have taken effect in its most comprehensive meaning, if Lothaire had respected it as much as his brothers. But that artful prince, by means of his indulgence to the Saxons, and other politic expedients, was enabled to procure a new army. He again became formidable. The two victorious princes, therefore, thought it adviseable to negotiate with him. By a new treaty of division, he was left in possession of the kingdom of Italy, with the imperial dignity, and the countries situated between the Rhône and the Alps, the Meuse and the Rhine. Charles retained Neustria and Aquitaine; and Louis, afterwards

¹² Nithard. *de Dissens. Fil. Lud. Pii.*

¹³ Nithard.—*Annal. Met. vii.*

styled the German, had all the provinces on the other side of the Rhine, and some cities on this side of it ¹⁴.

The extinction of the civil war made but one evil less in the empire of Charle-magne, ravaged in different parts by the Normans, and by the Saracens, who pillaged Italy. The turbulent independence of the nobles, accustomed during the last reign to despise the prince and the laws—the discontents of the clergy—and the ambitious projects of both—were the sources of new troubles. Every thing threatened the most fatal revolutions; every thing tended to anarchy.

To lessen these evils, the three brothers entered into an association, the effect of weakness more than affection, by which the enemies of one were to be considered as the enemies of all (so low was the empire of the great Charles!);

A.D. 851. and, in an assembly at Mersen on the Meuse, they settled certain constitutions relative to the succession, and other public matters. By these it was established, that the children of the reigning prince, whether of age or under age, should succeed to his dominions, and owe nothing to the other princes of the monarchy but the respect due to the ties of blood ¹⁵—a regulation well calculated to prevent civil wars, though it proved ineffectual in those disorderly times. But other constitutions of the same assembly tended to enfeeble the royal authority, which had already too much need of support. They imported, that the crown vassals should no longer be obliged to follow the king, unless in general wars, occasioned by foreign invasions: and that every free man should be at liberty to choose, whether he would be the vassal of the king or of a subject. The first of these regulations increased the independence of the crown vassals, and the second their power, by augmenting the number of their retainers; for many persons chose

¹⁴ Nithard.

¹⁵ *Annal. Bertinian.*

rather to depend upon some neighbouring nobleman, whose immediate protection they might claim (at a time when protection was necessary, independent of the laws), than on the sovereign, whose attention they had less reason to expect, and whose aid was more distant or doubtful.

Lothaire, some years after, took the habit of a monk, that, according to the language of those times, he might atone for his crimes, and, though he had lived a tyrant, die a saint. In this pious disguise he expired before he had worn it for a week. He had divided his dominions among his three sons; and, by virtue of the treaty of Mersen, they quietly succeeded to their allot-^{Sept. 855.}ments. Louis had Italy, with the title of emperor: Lothaire ruled over that country which from him received the appellation of the kingdom of Lotharingia, a more extensive territory than the subsequent Lorrain: Charles became king of Provence, and also governed the district since called Dauphiné, as well as a part of Burgundy. Unnecessarily increasing the number of kings, Charles the Bald, the uncle of these princes, declared his infant son king of Aquitaine¹⁶.

Thus was the empire of Charle-magne weakened by subdivisions, till it became, to use the language of Shakspeare, only "a stage to feed contention on." Foreign invasions conspired with civil dissensions to spread terror and disorder in every quarter, but more especially through the dominions of Charles the Bald—a prince as weak as his father, and restless as his mother. The Normans carried fire and sword into the heart of his kingdom, to Rouen, and even to the gates of Paris. Young Pepin, son of the last king of Aquitaine, joined the invaders, and ravaged that country over which he had been born to reign. Nomenoge, duke of Bretagne, usurped the title of king, which Charles was obliged to confirm to his son Herispée, by whom he had

¹⁶ *Annal. Fuldens.*

been totally defeated. The spirit of revolt became every day more general. Some factious nobles invited Louis the German to usurp his brother's kingdom. He came at the head of a powerful army, and received the homage of the principal nobility. Venilon, archbishop of Sens, and other prelates of the party of Louis, at the same time declared that Charles had forfeited his dignity by mal-administration, and crowned his brother¹⁷.

Charles, however, recovered his kingdom as quickly as he had lost it. The prelates who were his friends excommunicated those who had dethroned him; which brought the rebels into contempt and even abhorrence. Louis sent back his army into Germany, that he might not give umbrage to the French, and he was afterwards obliged to take the same route himself. Charles no sooner appeared than he was universally acknowledged; his restoration did not cost a single blow. The most terrible anathemas were now denounced against Louis by the French clergy, unless he should submit to the rigours of the church; and he was weak enough to reply, that he must first consult the bishops of his own kingdom¹⁸.

The weakness of Charles the Bald was still more extraordinary. Having assembled a council to judge the traitor Venilon, he presented a memorial against him, in which is the following singular passage: "I ought not to have been *deposed*, or at least not before I had been *judged* by the *bishops*, who gave me the *royal authority*! I have always *submitted* to their *correction*, and am ready now to *submit* to it!" Venilon escaped punishment by making his peace with the prince: and the bishops of the council bound themselves by a canon to remain united, "for the *correction* of *kings*, the *nobility*, and the *people*"¹⁹.

Various circumstances show, that the clergy now aspired

¹⁷ *Annal. Bertiniani*.—*Concil. Gal.* vol. ii.

¹⁸ *Annal. Bertin.*

¹⁹ *Concil. Gal.* vol. ii.—*Hist. Eccles. par Fleury.*

to the right of disposing of crowns, which they founded on the custom of anointing kings. They employed fictions and ophisms to render themselves independent: they refused the oath of fealty, "because sacred hands could not, without abomination, submit to hands impure"²⁰! One usurpation led to another; abuse constituted right—a quibble appeared a divine law. Ignorance sanctified every thing; and we may safely conclude, from the abject language of Charles, in publicly acknowledging the right of the bishops to depose him, and other examples of a similar nature, that the usurpations of the clergy were in a great measure occasioned by the slavish superstition of the laity, equally blind, wicked, and devout.

The zeal of the bishops to establish their independence was favourable to the projects of the court of Rome. Sergius II. had taken possession of the apostolic see, in 844, without the approbation of Lothaire, then emperor; who, incensed at such an insult, sent his son Louis to Rome with troops and prelates. The pope, having conducted the prince to St. Peter's gate, said to him, "I permit you to enter, if your intentions are good; if not, I will not suffer you to enter!" and the French soldiers being guilty of some irregularities, he actually ordered the gates to be shut. Lothaire complained; Sergius was cited to appear before a council; he appeared, and justified himself in the eye of the priesthood²¹. Leo IV., celebrated for the courage with which he defended Rome against the Saracens, and Benedict III., elected in spite of the emperor, lived in peace with royalty; but Nicholas I., more bold than any of his predecessors, made himself the judge of kings and of bishops, and realised the chimera of lying decretals.

Before I adduce any instances of the spirit of pope Nicholas, I will take cursory notice of the story of a female who is said to have filled the papal chair between the pontificates of

²⁰ *Hist. de l'Eglise Gallie.*

²¹ *Cencil. Gal. vol. ii.—Fleury, Hist. Eccles.*

Leo and Benedict. It has been affirmed, that a woman of English extraction, but of German birth, studied at Rome for some years in the disguise of a man; and, having acquired the reputation of an able theologian, was unanimously elected supreme pontiff, in the year 855; that she governed the church above a twelvemonth; but, having been criminally connected with one of her domestics, felt the pains of child-birth in a public procession, and died soon after she had been delivered. This story does not appear to have been mentioned before the lapse of four centuries from the period to which it is assigned. It was obviously fabricated with a view of exposing the Romanists to ridicule and odium; and it is disbelieved by every man of candour and judgement.

A grand occasion offered in France for Nicholas to exercise that authority which he attributed to himself.

A.D. 860. Lothaire, king of Lorrain, divorced his wife Theutberge on a charge of incest. She was cleared by the trial of boiling water, but afterwards convicted by her own confession—if an involuntary acknowledgement, the effect of violence and fear, can be called conviction. A council at Aix-la-Chapelle authorised Lothaire to espouse Waldrade, a young lady whom he had seduced. The guilty individuals were equally desirous of this marriage; but the pope, affecting to be shocked at the criminal amour, endeavoured to force the king to take back his first wife. For this purpose he ordered the

A.D. 863. bishops to hold a council at Metz with his legates, and to cite and judge Lothaire. They confirmed the divorce, contrary to the expectations of the pontiff—a decree which so much enraged him, that he deposed the bishops of Treves and Cologne, who had been appointed to present to him the acts of the council. These prelates complained to the emperor Louis II. He went immediately to Rome, displayed his authority, and seemed determined to repress the papal power. But he was seised with an indisposi-

tion, and also with superstitious fears; and he retired, after having approved the conduct of Nicholas, who became still more imperious. Lothaire offered to justify himself in person before the pope; but his holiness insisted that Waldrade should first be dismissed; and a legate threatened the king with immediate excommunication, if he continued in disobedience. The intimidated prince now submitted: he recalled Theutberge, and even consented that the legate should lead Waldrade in triumph to Rome. She set out on that mortifying journey, but escaped by the way; and, in a short time, resumed her place both as mistress and queen. The unfortunate Theutberge, sinking beneath the weight of persecution and neglect, at last desired to be separated from Lothaire, protesting that her marriage was void, and that Waldrade's was legitimate. But nothing could move the inflexible Nicholas: he continued obstinate²¹.

We may consider this pope as the forerunner of Gregory VII.; and, in the same circumstances, he would probably have carried his ambition to the same height. The bishops of Treves and Cologne accused him, in an invective, of making himself *emperor* of the whole world; and that expression, though somewhat strained, was not altogether without foundation. He asserted his dominion over the French clergy, by re-establishing Rothade of Soissons, who had been deposed by a provincial council; and he received appeals from all ecclesiastics dissatisfied with their bishops. By these means he accustomed the people to acknowledge a supreme tribunal at a distance from their own country, and consequently a foreign sway. He gave orders for the succession to the kingdom of Provence, which Charles the Bald disputed with the emperor Louis, brother to the deceased king. "Let no one prevent the emperor," said he, in a letter on that subject, "from governing the kingdoms which he holds in virtue of a succession confirmed by the

“holy see, and by the crown which the sovereign pontiff
“has set upon his head.”

Nicholas died in 867; but his principles had taken such deep root, that Adrian II., his successor, though more moderate, and desirous of peace, thought his condescension great in permitting the king of Lorrain to come to Rome, in order to justify himself, or do penance. Charles
A. D. 868. the Bald and Louis the German waited with impatience for the excommunication of their nephew, being persuaded that they should then have a right to seize his dominions. Thus the blind ambition of princes favoured the exercise of a power, which they ought to have foreseen might be turned against themselves; which afterwards became the scourge of royalty, and made every crowned head tremble.

Lothaire, while at Rome, employed all possible means to soften the pope: he received the communion from his hand, after having sworn that he had avoided all criminal commerce with Waldrade, since the prohibition of Nicholas, and never would have any in future. He soon after died at Placentia. His death was considered as a just vengeance, as a mark of the divine displeasure against perjury; and it rendered the proof by the eucharist still more important.

The emperor Louis II. ought legally to have succeeded to the dominions of the deceased king; but he being at that time employed in expelling the Saracens, who had invaded Italy, and consequently not in a condition to assert his right by arms, Charles the Bald seized the succession, and retained it notwithstanding the remonstrances of the pope. “The
“arms which God has put into our hand,” said Adrian,
“are prepared for his defence²³!” Charles was more afraid of the arms of his brother the German, with whom he found it necessary to share the kingdom, though the nobility and clergy of Lorrain had voluntarily submitted to him.

²³ *Epist. Adriani.*

The pope still continued his remonstrances in favour of the emperor, hoping at least to obtain something for him ; but they were disregarded by the French king, who had now thrown off much of his piety, and answered in a spirited manner by the famous Hincmar, archbishop of Rheims. This bold and independent prelate desired the pope to call to mind that respect and submission which the ancient pontiffs had always paid to princes, and to reflect that his dignity gave him no right over the government of kingdoms ; that he could not be at the same time pope and king ; that the choice of a sovereign belongs to the people ; that anathemas ill applied have no effect upon the soul ; and that *free* men are not to be enslaved by a bishop of Rome²⁴.

Adrian affected to despise these arguments, and continued for some time his menaces, both against Hincmar and the king ; but, finding them ineffectual, he changed his tone, and wrote several flattering letters to Charles, promising him the empire on the death of his nephew, then in a languishing condition. This project in favour of the French king was executed under John VIII., Adrian's successor. The emperor dying without male heirs, Louis the German A.D. 875. claimed the succession, and the imperial dignity, as elder brother to Charles : but the pope preferred the claim of the latter for political reasons, which, with the court of Rome, never fail to take place of equity. Louis seemed approaching to his end, and had three sons, among whom his dominions would be divided. Charles was a younger man, and had only one son ; he therefore appeared the most proper person to choose as a protector. He crossed the Alps at the head of his army, and accordingly received the imperial crown as a *present* from the pope ; but nearly in the same manner that many presents of the like kind are obtained in our days, by paying a considerable sum for it.