

a few centuries before, had plundered the temple of Delphi. The apology was admitted, and Manlius was decreed the honor of a triumph for having avenged this horrible sacrilege. Justin, the historian, informs us of a similar instance. The Romans engaging along with the Acarnanians, against the people of Ætolia, had no other excuse to allege for their interference in this quarrel, than that the Acarnanians had performed a signal act of friendship to their ancestors about a thousand years before—which was, that they had joined the other Grecian states *in sending troops to the siege of Troy!*

In the last ages of the commonwealth, the generals who commanded in those military expeditions, from a selfish and ambitious policy, studied to increase this prevailing depravity. They allowed their soldiers to plunder with impunity, and countenanced every species of dissoluteness of manners, in order to gain the affection of the troops. "Lucius Sylla," says Sallust, "that he might gain the attachment of his army, entirely corrupted their ancient simplicity of manners." It was under him, in his Asiatic expeditions, that the Roman soldiers first became addicted to debauchery and drinking. There also they learned an affectation of taste for paintings and for statues; a taste which in them led to private theft, to public rapine, and even to sacrilege. The vanquished nations had nothing to expect from such conquerors, but to be stripped and plundered of all they possessed.

The shocking corruption of which Jugurtha made the experiment upon all the ranks of the state—the facility which he found in screening himself from the punishment of his atrocious crimes, first by bribing the Roman senate, and afterwards by corrupting the generals who were sent against him—are scarcely credible to those who have been accustomed to consider the Romans, in the early times of the republic, as an heroic, a free, and a virtuous people. But the Romans were now weary of calm and rational happiness; their virtues were an incumbrance; and they saw no value in their liberty, but in so far as they could make money by the sale of it. Some few, who yet possessed a remnant of virtue, either from motives of personal safety, or perhaps ashamed to live in such society, voluntarily banished themselves from their country. The scenes that followed under Sylla, Cinna, and the two triumvirates, were the last struggles which terminate a violent and mortal disease.

That the extinction of the liberties of the Roman people, and the downfall of the commonwealth, were owing to the corruption of the Roman manners, there cannot be the smallest doubt; nor is it difficult to point out in a few words the causes of that corruption. The extent of the Roman dominions towards the end of the republic proved fatal to its virtues. While confined within the bounds of Italy, every Roman soldier, accustomed to a life of hardship, of frugality and of industry, placed his chief happiness

in contributing in war to the preservation of his country, and in peace to the maintenance of his family by honest labor. A state of this kind, which knows no intervals of ease or of indolence, is a certain preservative of good morals, and a sure antidote against every species of corruption. But the conquest of Italy paved the way for the reduction of foreign nations; for an immense acquisition of territory—a flood of wealth—and an acquaintance with the manners, the luxuries, and the vices of the nations whom they subdued. The Roman generals, instead of returning as formerly, after a successful war, to the labors of the field, the occupations of industry, and a life of temperance and frugality, were now the governors of kingdoms and of provinces. In these they lived with the splendor of sovereign princes, and returning after the period of their command, to Rome, brought with them immense treasures, which they had accumulated by every species of rapine and oppression. Their importance at home was now signalized by a desire of obtaining dominion over their country similar to that which they had exercised in their province. Utterly impatient of the restraints of a subject, they could be satisfied with nothing less than sovereignty. The armies they had commanded abroad, debauched by the plunder of kingdoms, and attached by selfish interest to the men who had countenanced and indulged them in rapine, were completely disposed to support them in all their schemes of ambition. It was now only necessary to secure the favor of the people of Rome, which the increasing taste for luxury presented an easy method of obtaining. Games and shows were exhibited at the most enormous expense, and festivals prepared for the populace, with every refinement of luxurious magnificence; and the Roman people, in the emphatic words of Juvenal,

— "duas tantum res anxius optat,
Panem et Circenses,"

(that is, anxious only for food and games,) easily abandoned their liberty to the man who went the farthest in indulging them in their sensual gratifications. Rivals in the same path of ambition divided this worthless populace into parties. "The public assemblies," as M. Montesquieu has well remarked, "were now so many conspiracies against the state, and a tumultuous crowd of seditious wretches were dignified with the title of *comitia*. The authority of the people and their laws were, in these times of universal anarchy, no more than a chimera." With a people thus fated to destruction, in a government thus irretrievably destroyed by the decay of those springs which once supported it, it was a matter of very little consequence by the hands of what particular individuals it was finally extinguished. We have seen who were the active instruments in that dissolution, and the measures by which they accomplished it, and it is needless here to recapitulate them

From a consideration of the rise and fall of the states of Greece and Rome, a political question has arisen, which in this place it is of some importance to examine, and which the preceding observations, I believe, may, in a great measure, assist us in solving.

There is no maxim more common among the political writers, nor any which is generally received with less hesitation, than this, that the constitution of every empire, like that of the human body, has necessarily its successive periods of growth, maturity, decline, and extinction. The fate of all the ancient nations whose annals are recorded in history has led to the adopting of this as an axiom, for which, independent of experience, it is not very easy to assign a reasonable foundation.

All conclusions from analogy should be cautiously weighed. The mind of man, pleasing itself with its own sagacity in discovering relations not obvious to a common observer, has a great propensity, in comparing facts, to reduce them to general laws; and from the coincidence and even resemblance of a few striking particulars, is apt very hastily to conclude that a perfect analogy holds between them. This mode of reasoning is extremely fallacious, and is never more to be suspected than when an analogy is attempted to be drawn from physical truths to moral ones.

The human body, we know, contains within itself the principles of decay. It undergoes a perpetual change from time. The bodily organs, at first weak and imperfect, attain gradually to their perfect strength. At this period they cannot be arrested, but are subject to a decline equally perceptible with their progress to perfection. But this is not the case with the body politic. The springs of its life do not necessarily undergo a perpetual change from time; nor is it subject to the influence of any principle of corruption which may not be checked and even eradicated by wholesome laws. "If," says the eloquent Rousseau, "Sparta and Rome have gone to destruction, what government or constitution can hope for perpetuity?" True, it may be answered, Sparta and Rome *have* gone to destruction; but was this the effect of a law of nature, or does it follow that since these two states, excellent indeed in many respects in their constitution, are now extinct, all others must exhibit a similar progress? From the history of ancient nations, it is not difficult for a reader of discernment to discover and point out the principle of corruption which has led to their dissolution; and a good politician can see what remedy could have been effectual to check or to eradicate the evil. Sparta enjoyed a longer period of prosperous duration than any other state of antiquity. So long as her original constitution remained inviolate, which was for the period of several centuries, the Lacedæmonians were a virtuous, a happy, and a respectable people. Frugality, we know, was the soul of Lycurgus's establishment. The luxurious disposition of a single citizen introduced the poison of corruption. Lysander, whose military talents raised

his country to a superiority over all the Grecian states, sent home, after the conquest of Athens, the wealth of that luxurious republic to Lacedæmon. It was debated in the senate whether it should be received: the best and wisest of that order, considered it as a most dangerous breach of the institutions of their legislator; but others were dazzled with the lustre of that gold, with which they were, till now, unacquainted, and the influence of Lysander prevailed for its reception. It was decreed to receive the money for the use of the state, while it was at the same time declared a capital crime for any of it to be found in the possession of a private citizen—a weak resolution, which in effect was consecrating, and making respectable in the eyes of the citizens, that very thing of which it was necessary to forbid them to aspire at the possession.

Thus did corruption begin its first attack upon the constitution of Lycurgus. But was this corruption a necessary or an unavoidable evil? Was Sparta come to that period, when a Lysander *must* of necessity have arisen, whose disposition was adverse to the spirit of her constitution, and whose influence was sufficiently powerful to effect that breach of her fundamental laws? A single voice in the senate, perhaps, decided the fate of that illustrious commonwealth. Had there been one other virtuous man, whose negative would have caused the rejection of that pernicious measure, Sparta might have continued to exist for ages, frugal, warlike, virtuous, and uncorrupted. Or again, even supposing corruption once introduced, was it utterly impossible to find a remedy for the disease? Might not a second Lycurgus have arisen, who could check that evil in its infancy against which the first was able so well to guard?

The beginning of the corruption of the Roman state, we have seen, may be dated from the time that the territory was extended beyond the bounds of Italy. The fatal effects of enlarging the empire were certainly not foreseen; or we must conclude that the same parties, who were so jealous of the smallest attacks upon the liberty of the people, would have been doubly anxious to have guarded against measures which led, though remotely, to the extinction of all liberty and the overthrow of the constitution; and had the effect of these measures been foreseen, a few wise and virtuous politicians might have prevented this being adopted. This, at least, we may say, that if, by a fundamental law of the state, the Roman empire had been confined to Italy, and it had been a capital crime for any Roman citizen to have proposed to carry the arms of the republic beyond the limits of that country, the republic might have preserved its constitution inviolate for many ages beyond the period of its actual duration.

Several ingenious men have exercised their talents in framing the plan of such a political constitution as should best promote the happiness of the citizens, while it possessed the greatest possible stability. We lay out of the question such ideal governments as

the republic of Plato, the Utopia of More, and some modern theories no less chimerical, because they proceed upon the basis of amending the nature of man, and eradicating all his evil passions. The systems of Harrington, however, in his "Oceana," and of Mr. Hume in his "Idea of a perfect Commonwealth," have been considered as more worthy of the attention of mankind, as resting upon the basis of human nature such as it is, and without assuming for their foundation any wonderful improvement either of the moral or intellectual nature of our species. Yet in so far as either of these systems has been partially introduced into practice, we have very little reason to subscribe to any eulogium upon their merits. Harrington, who wrote his "Oceana," during a period of the commonwealth of England, was so intoxicated with that newly erected system of government, as agreeing in many respects with his own theory, that he boldly ventured to pronounce it impossible that monarchy should ever be re-established in England. Yet his book was scarcely published, when the nation, weary to death of an experiment which, under the mask of freedom, had loaded them with tenfold tyranny, unanimously recurred to their ancient monarchical constitution.

With respect to Mr. Hume's "Idea of a perfect Commonwealth," it were, perhaps, not difficult to show that, instead of simplifying the machine of government, it renders it so complicated, that it would be impossible for it to proceed either with that regularity or despatch which is often most essential to the mass of public measures. If, for example, in Mr. Hume's senate of one hundred members, there should be only ten dissentient voices to the passing of a law, that law is to be sent back to be debated and canvassed by no less than 11,000 county representatives. In the same manner, if there should be but five of the one hundred senators who approve of a law, while ninety-five disapprove of it, those five have a right to summon the 11,000 county representatives, and take their sense of the matter. It surely requires little political judgment to pronounce that such a constitution is utterly unfit for the regulation of an extended or populous empire; yet Great Britain is the subject upon which he supposes in theory that the experiment is to be tried. God forbid it ever should! Had this experiment been proposed in reality, Mr. Hume himself would have been the first man to have resisted it. His genuine sentiments of such experiments he has given in the words of sound sense and wisdom. "It is not with forms of government," says he, "as with other artificial contrivances, where an old engine may be rejected if we can discover another more accurate or commodious, or where trials may be safely made, even though the success be doubtful. An established government has an infinite advantage by that very circumstance of its being established; the bulk of mankind being governed by authority, not reason, and never attributing authority to any thing that has not the recom-

mendation of antiquity. To tamper, therefore, in this affair," says he, "and to try experiments, merely upon the credit of supposed argument and philosophy, can never be the part of a wise magistrate, who will bear a reverence to what carries the marks of age: though he may attempt some improvements for the public good, yet he will adjust his innovations as much as possible to the ancient fabric, and preserve entire the chief pillars and supports of the constitution."

Time, which brings improvement to every science, has undoubtedly contributed much to the advancement of political knowledge. Among the chief advantages derived from the art of printing is that of fixing and perpetuating all human attainments in science, which, before that invention, either perished with their authors, or if preserved by writing, were sparingly communicated even in the country which produced them, seldom reached beyond it, and were often in the course of a few generations irretrievably lost. By the art of printing, the opinions of some of the greatest of the ancient philosophers and politicians, and, what is much more valuable, the great outlines of the history of the most remarkable states of antiquity, their laws, their manners, and customs, are now committed to perpetual records, open to all nations, and familiar to the knowledge of every individual who has enjoyed the most ordinary education.

It is from this knowledge of the accumulated experience of ages, that not only men, but nations, may derive the most important lessons. History will inform us, that some nations have enjoyed, during the course of many ages, an unvarying and uninterrupted prosperity; while others have been destined to a short, unfortunate, and despicable mediocrity. History will inform us, that the greatest empires which have hitherto existed on the earth are now sunk into oblivion; that Persia, Egypt, Greece, Macedonia, and Rome, have fallen themselves, like the petty states which they overwhelmed in their conquest. But while we contemplate their changes of fortune, their prosperity, their disgraces, their revolutions, and their final catastrophe, must these vicissitudes be considered only as the effect of a blind fatality? Can they furnish us with no other conclusion than that every human institution must yield to the hand of time, against which neither wisdom nor virtue can ultimately afford a defence? No, certainly: every nation of antiquity has met with that fate which either its own political institutions, or the operation of foreign circumstances, must necessarily have induced. "Accustom your mind," said the excellent Phocion to Aristias, "to discern in the prosperity of nations that recompense which the Author of Nature has affixed to the practice of virtue; and in their adversity, the chastisement which he has thought proper to bestow on vice." No state ever ceased to be prosperous, but in consequence of having departed from those institutions to which she owed her prosperity.

The ancient political writers, in speaking on the best form of a political establishment, held this as a great *desideratum*, that a government should possess within itself a power of periodical reformation; a capacity of reforming from time to time all abuses; of checking every overgrowth of power in any one branch of the body politic; and, at short intervals of time, winding up, as it were, the springs of the machine, and bringing the constitution back to its first principles. To the want of this power of periodical reformation in the ancient constitutions, which was ineffectually endeavored to be supplied by such contrivances as the *ostracism* and *petalism*, we may in a great measure attribute their decline and extinction; for in these governments, when the balance was once destroyed by an increase of power in any one branch, the evil grew worse from day to day, and at length, was utterly irremediable, unless by a revolution or entire change of the political system. Happily for us Britons, that which was a desideratum in the ancient governments is with us realized; that power of reforming all abuses, and even of making alterations and amendments as time and circumstances require, which is perfectly agreeable to the spirit of our constitution, has given us an unspeakable advantage, both over all the states of antiquity, and over every other government among the moderns. But let us not abuse this advantage, or convert what is a wholesome remedy into a poison. There are seasons when political reforms are safe, expedient, and desirable; there are others when none but the most rash empiric would prescribe their application. If the minds of a people are violently agitated by political enthusiasm, kindled by the example of other nations actually in a state of revolution,—if that class of the people who derive their subsistence from bodily labor and industry are artfully rendered discontented with their situation, inflamed by pictures of imaginary grievances, and stimulated by delusive representations of immunities to be acquired, and blessings to be obtained, by new political systems, in which they themselves are to be legislators and governors,—if there should be a time when the common people are taught to believe that a subordination of ranks and conditions is contrary to the laws of God and nature, and that the inequality they perceive in the possessions of the rich and poor is a proof of the diseased state of the body politic,—if such should be the delusions of the community, which the traitorous designs of others aim at rendering general; in such a crisis it cannot be the part of true patriotism to attempt the reform or amendment even of confessed imperfections. The hazard of the experiment at such a time is apparent to all rational and reflecting men. It is *then* we feel it our *duty* to resist *all* attempts at innovation—to cherish with gratitude the blessings we enjoy, and quietly await a more favorable opportunity of gently and easily removing our small imperfections—trivial, indeed, when balanced against that high measure of political happiness of which the community at large is possessed.

BOOK THE FIFTH.

CHAPTER I.

Fate of the Roman Republic decided by the Battle of Actium—Reign of Augustus—Birth of our Saviour JESUS CHRIST—Tiberius—Crucifixion of our Saviour—Caligula—Claudius—Nero—Galba—Otho—Vitellius—Vespasian—Titus—Domitian—Nerva—Trajan—Adrian.

THE battle of Actium decided, as we have above seen, the fate of the Roman republic; and Octavius, now hailed by the splendid title of Augustus, was master of the Roman empire. We have seen this singular person raise himself to the highest summit of power, without a tincture of those manly and heroic virtues which generally distinguish the authors of important revolutions. Those fortunate circumstances which concurred to promote his elevation; the adoption by Julius Cæsar, the weakness of Lepidus, the infatuation of Mark Antony, the treachery of Cleopatra, and, perhaps, more than all, his own insinuating flattery and duplicity of conduct—were shortly hinted at as the great instruments in the good fortune of Augustus.

Possessing that sagacity which enabled him to discern distinctly what species of character would please the people, he had, in addition to this, all that versatility of genius which enabled him to assume it; and so successfully did he follow out this idea, that to those unacquainted with the former conduct of the man, nothing was now discernible but the qualities which were indicative of goodness, and virtue, and munificence. The fate of Cæsar warned him of the insecurity of an usurped dominion; and we shall see him, whilst he studiously imitated the clemency of his great predecessor, affect a much greater degree of respect for the pretended rights of that degraded people whom he ruled at the same time with the most absolute authority. He had not yet returned from Egypt when, at Rome, they had already decreed him every honor both human and divine. The title of Imperator was conferred on him for life. His colleague, Sextus Apuleius, along with the whole senate, took a solemn oath to obey the emperor's decrees; and it was determined that he should hold the consulate so long as he