

In the second century of the Christian Era, the empire of Rome comprehended the fairest part of the earth, and the most civilized portion of mankind. The frontiers of that extensive monarchy were guarded by ancient renown and disciplined valor. The gentle but powerful influence of laws and manners had gradually cemented the union of the provinces. Their peaceful inhabitants enjoyed and abused the advantages of wealth and luxury. The image of a free constitution was preserved with decent reverence: the Roman senate appeared to possess the sovereign authority, and devolved on the emperors all the executive powers of government. During a happy period of more than fourscore years, the public administration was conducted by the virtue and abilities of *Quo* Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines. It is the design *usquetan-* of this, and of the two succeeding chapters, to describe the *dem abutere*, prosperous condition of their empire; and after wards, *Catilina, patientia* from the death of Marcus Antoninus, to deduce the *nostra? quam diu etiam* most important circumstances of its decline *furor iste tuus nos eludet?* and fall; a revolution which will ever be re- *quem ad finem sese effrenata* membered, and is still felt by the *iactabit audacia? Nihilne te nocturnum* nations of the earth. The princi- *praesidium Palati, nihil urbis vigiliae, nihil* pal conquests of the Romans were *timor populi, nihil concursus bonorum omnium, ni-* achieved under the republic; and *hil hic munitissimus habendi senatus locus,* the emperors, for the most part, were *nihil horum ora voltusque moverunt?* satisfied with preserving those domin- *Patere tua consilia non sentis, con-* ions which had been acquired by the policy *strictam iam horum omnium* of the senate, the active emulations of the *scientia teneri coniura-* consuls, and the martial enthusiasm of the people. *tionem tuam non* The seven first centuries were filled with a rapid suc- *vides? Quid* cession of triumphs; but it was reserved for Augustus to re- *proxima,* linquish the ambitious design of subduing the whole earth, and *quid* to introduce a spirit of moderation into the public councils. Inclined to peace by his temper and situation, it was easy for him to discover that Rome, in her present exalted situation, had much less to hope than to fear from the chance of arms; and that, in the prosecution of remote wars, the undertaking became every day more difficult, the event more doubtful, and the possession more precarious, and less beneficial. The experience of Augustus added weight to these salutary reflections, and effectually convinced him that, by the prudent vigor of his counsels, it would be easy to secure every concession which the safety or the dignity of Rome might require from the most formidable barbarians. Instead of exposing his person and his legions to

the arrows of the Parthians, he obtained, by an honorable treaty, the restitution of the standards and prisoners which had been taken in the defeat of Crassus. His generals, in the early part of his reign, attempted the reduction of Ethiopia and Arabia Felix. They marched near a thousand miles to the south of the tropic; but the heat of the climate soon repelled the invaders, and protected the un-warlike natives of those sequestered regions. The northern countries of Europe scarcely deserved the expense and labor of conquest. The forests and morasses of Germany were filled with a hardy race of barbarians, who despised life when it was separated from freedom; and though, on the first attack, they seemed to yield to the weight of the Roman *super-* power, they soon, by a signal act of despair, regained their inde- *rior* pence, and reminded Augustus of the vicissitude of for- *nocte egeris*, tune. On the death of that emperor, his testament was *ubi fueris, quos con-* publicly read in the senate. He bequeathed, as a *vocaveris, quid consilii* valuable legacy to his successors, the advice *ceperis, quem nostrum igno-* of confining the empire within those limits *rare arbitraris? O tempora, o mores!* which nature seemed to have placed as its permanent bulwarks and boundaries: on the west, the Atlantic Ocean; the Rhine and Danube on the north; the Euphrates on the east; and towards the south, the sandy deserts of Arabia and Africa.