



Engraved by J. O'Hell from an Original Picture painted by the Author

London. Sold at the Sign of the Sun in Pall Mall. by W. Sturton, S.T. & Co. B.

THE
H I S T O R Y
OF THE
DECLINE AND FALL
OF THE
R O M A N E M P I R E.

By EDWARD GIBBON, Esq;

VOLUME THE FIRST.

A NEW EDITION.

L O N D O N :

PRINTED FOR W. STRAHAN; AND T. CADELL, IN THE STRAND.

MDCCLXXXII.

P R E F A C E.

IT is not my intention to detain the reader by expatiating on the variety, or the importance of the subject, which I have undertaken to treat; since the merit of the choice would serve to render the weakness of the execution still more apparent, and still less excusable. But as I have presumed to lay before the Public a *first* volume only of the History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire, it will perhaps be expected, that I should explain, in a few words, the nature and limits of my general plan.

The memorable series of revolutions, which, in the course of about thirteen centuries, gradually undermined, and at length destroyed, the solid fabric of Roman greatness, may, with some propriety, be divided into the three following periods.

I. The first of these periods may be traced from the age of Trajan and the Antonines, when the Ro-

THE
H I S T O R Y
OF THE
DECLINE AND FALL
OF THE
R O M A N E M P I R E.

CHAP. I.

*The Extent and Military Force of the Empire in the Age
of the Antonines.*

IN the second century of the Christian Æra, 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 valour. 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 Nerva, Trajan, Hadrian, and the two Antonines. It is the design of this, and of the two succeeding chapters, to describe the prosperous condition of their empire; and afterwards, from the death of Marcus

CHAP.
I.
Introduction.

A. D. 98—
130.

VOL. I.

B

Antoninus,