

perly call their own, it seems, in some particulars to be of little consequence under what government they live.

Besides, there was a certain law of nations, or a settled opinion, which prevailed in all the republics of Greece and Italy, and ascribed the character of a virtuous man to the person who should assassinate any one who had usurped the sovereign power. Rome had been extremely fond of this notion, ever since the expulsion of her kings; the law was very express; the examples had a general approbation; the republic put a sword into the hand of every citizen, constituted him their magistrate for a few moments, and acknowledged him for their defender.

Brutus (*a*) was bold enough to tell his friends that, should his own father return from the grave, he would sacrifice him to the public good, with as little remorse as he stabbed Caesar; and though by the continuance of tyranny, this surprizing spirit of liberty had gradually lost its vigor, yet the conspiracies, at the beginning of Augustus's reign, were perpetually reviving.

The ancient Romans were animated by a predominant love for their country, which, acting by a variation from the common ideas of crimes and virtues, was only attentive to its own dictates, and in the fervours of its operation, entirely disregarded friends and citizens, fathers and benefactors. Virtue seemed to have forgotten her own precepts with a resolution to surpass herself, and when an action seemed too severe to be immediately considered with approbation, she soon caused it to be admired as divine.

(*a*) See the letter of Brutus in the collection of Cicero's letters.