

who presumed to wear them, and it was criminal to be either habited in purple, or to keep it in a wardrobe; but when a man had once the resolution to appear in that dress, the multitude immediately flocked after him, because their respect was more attached to the apparel than the person.

Ambition received greater provocatives still, from the surprizing insatiation of those times; and there was hardly a man of any considerable consequence who could not accommodate to himself some prediction that promised him the empire.

As the indispositions of the mind are generally incurable (*a*), judicial astrology and the art of pointing out futurity by objects seen in a basin of water, succeeded among the Christians, to the solemn imposture of divination by the entrails of victims or the flight of birds, which had been abolished with paganism its parent; and vain promises became the motives to most of the rash actions of particular persons, and constituted the wisdom of the councils of princes.

The calamities of the empire daily increasing, it was natural to impute ill success in war and dishonourable treaties in peace to the injudicious conduct of those at the helm.

One revolution was now pregnant with another, and the effect itself became a cause: and as the Greeks had seen such a succession of different families on the throne, they were not devoted to any; and since fortune had created so many emperors out of all classes of people, no birth was so obscure, and no merit so inconsiderable as to be destitute of hope.

(*a*) See the life of Andronicus Comnenus, compiled by Nicetas.