

as a new nomination. From 1730 to 1741 the two reigning princes interchanged thrones in this way three times. They acquired the throne by gold, and they could only keep it by gold. All depended upon how much they were able to squeeze out of the country. The princes soon became past masters in the art of spoliation. They put taxes upon chimneys (*funarit*), and the starving peasants pulled their cottages down and went to live in mountain caves; they taxed the animals (*vacarit*), and the peasants preferred to kill the few beasts they possessed. But this did not always help them much, for we are told that the Prince Constantin Mavrocordato, having prescribed a tax on domestic animals at a time when an epidemic had broken out amongst them, ordered the tax to be levied on the carcases. 'The administrative régime during the Phanariote period was, in general, little else than organized brigandage,' says Xenopol.¹ In fact the Phanariote rule was instinct with corruption, luxury, and intrigue. Though individually some of them may not deserve blame, yet considering what the Phanariotes took out of the country, what they introduced into it, and to what extent they prevented its development, their era was the most calamitous in Rumanian history.

The war of 1768 between Russia and Turkey gave the former Power a vague protectorate over the Rumanian provinces. In 1774 Austria acquired from the Turks by false promises the northern part of Moldavia, the pleasant land of *Bucovina*. During the new conflict between Turkey and Russia, the Russian armies occupied and battered upon the Rumanian provinces for six years. Though they had again to abandon their intention of making the Danube the southern boundary of their

¹ Xenopol, *op. cit.*, ii. 308.