

CHAPTER XLI. NEW HOPE FOR THE EMPIRE: THE AGE OF DIOCLETIAN AND CONSTANTINE

“Diocletian inaugurated . . . the period of the Partnership Emperor. Himself borne to power by something not very unlike a mutiny of the troops on the Persian frontier, he nevertheless represented and gave voice to the passionate longing of the world that the age of mutinies might cease. With this intention he remodelled the internal constitution of the state and moulded it into a bureaucracy so strong, so stable, so wisely organised, that it subsisted virtually the same for more than a thousand years, and by its endurance prolonged for many ages the duration of the Byzantine Empire.”

— HODGKIN

DIOCLETIAN APPOINTS MAXIMIAN CO-REGENT

FROM what we know of Diocletian, he had aspired to the throne long before his accession, and maintained the power he had won by military force. Soon after the death of Carinus, he appointed his colleague Maximian as cæsar or assistant in the government (286), either because the latter had been initiated into his ambitious plans, or perhaps because Diocletian, on account of the almost uninterrupted war carried on in the remote parts of the kingdom, saw the necessity of a divided rule and of a second seat of government in the neighbourhood of the threatened provinces. Maximian, whom the emperor shortly afterwards invested with the title of augustus and charged with the government of the West of the empire, generally lived in Augusta Trevirorum (Trèves) or in the town of Arelate (Arles) in the south of France; whilst Diocletian raised Nicomedia in Bithynia to be the capital of the East, and, as often as circumstances allowed, took up his residence there.

Maximian was, like Diocletian, a good general and a brave soldier, but differed from him essentially in his want of education and refinement. As he felt the superiority of Diocletian and was led by him, the results of a divided government were not very perceptible in the first years. At first Diocletian was principally engaged in war with the Persians, who had again invaded the kingdom; Maximian found sufficient occupation for his martial activity in Gaul and Britain. In the first-named country, Maximian had at the very beginning to suppress a terrible insurrection of the peasants, occasioned by the internal condition of the province. In Gaul, even in Cæsar's time, the same oppressive conditions existed amongst the inhabitants, which afterwards were to be found in all the states of Europe during the Middle Ages, and these conditions became still more burdensome under the Roman Empire.

[286-293 A.D.]

The entire nation was split up into three classes: a landed nobility which had usurped the government; a clergy who formed a caste and compelled the poor to contribute to their maintenance and comfort; and the townspeople and peasants who, as the two other classes managed to avoid public burdens, had to meet all the expenses of the administration unaided and were also exposed to the harshest despotism and exaction. Want and misery finally drove the peasants to despair, and under the name of Bagaudæ, or banditti, they began an insurrection, which may be placed on a level with the most terrible peasant wars which find a place in history. They assembled and gathered round them all manner of slaves and rabble, and roamed about in great hordes, ravaging and plundering. Soon all the roads were unsafe, commerce ceased, and even the large towns were destroyed or pillaged by the enraged hordes. Maximian had to wage a regular war with the Bagaudæ, and cut down whole troops of them. In this manner he restored peace, but only for a short time; for the cause of the misery of the unfortunate peasants was not removed, and the insurrection and devastations of the Bagaudæ lasted until the fall of the Roman dominion in Gaul.

Maximian had to hasten the suppression of internal disturbances for he needed his army to fight the barbarians. At that time the Franks and Saxons, who lived on the North Sea, and had learned shipbuilding from the Romans, began their piratical expeditions into Gaul and Britain, whilst their predatory excursions continued on land. In order to meet this new evil, Maximian prepared a fleet for the guarding of the channel, and gave it into the hands of a capable seaman, the Netherlander Carausius. The latter made use of the command entrusted to him to make friends for himself in Britain by means of the booty seized from the barbarians, to excite the troops there to rebellion and set up himself as emperor. Maximian marched against him, failed in his enterprise, and had to concede to the usurper the title he had assumed, as well as the government of Britain (289). Carausius remained in undisturbed possession of the island, until one of his generals, Allectus, murdered him and seized the government (293).

THE FOURFOLD DIVISION OF POWER

The situation of the empire in the East was also very critical. Diocletian not only had to make war against the Persians but also to fight the people of the Danube; and as in Britain, a usurper also arose in Egypt, Achilleus by name. This state of affairs compelled the emperor Diocletian to alter the entire organisation of the empire (292). He consulted his colleague Maximian about this important step, but in taking it showed not the slightest regard for the Roman senate, which he never thought worthy of attention. In his new organisation, Diocletian endeavoured to further the prompt introduction of necessary measures and thereby to anticipate all disturbances and insurrections, and carried still further the division of the imperial power begun at the appointment of Maximian. But as he was not in the least inclined to lessen his own authority, he only appointed as his co-rulers men on whose respect and obedience he could rely.

The change which he undertook to introduce into the government of the empire was therefore entirely based on his personal relations with his co-rulers. For this reason alone it could not possibly have been of any duration, even if it had not stood in direct opposition to the prejudices of the Romans [which latter, indeed, now had but slight influence]. The newly

[292-297 A.D.]

chosen co-rulers were the generals Galerius and Constantius Chlorus. They received the title of Cæsar, and were thus in outward rank both subordinate to the two augusti, Diocletian and Maximian. Constantius was assigned to Maximian and received the government of Spain, Gaul, and Britain, whilst Maximian took Italy and Africa under his immediate superintendence; Galerius was entrusted with the administration of Thrace, Illyricum, and Greece and appointed to be coadjutor to Diocletian, who retained the East for himself. Each of the four regents had therefore his appointed provinces to govern, and his appointed boundaries to defend: yet each could deal with the affairs of government and lead the troops in the provinces of the others; also the commands of either of the four emperors held good in all provinces, and generally all four regents were considered as one.

Four courts, four imperial armies, and a fourfold military government were necessarily very oppressive for the empire. Unfortunately, in consequence of this new organisation, the number of officials was also considerably increased and the divisions of the provinces multiplied, so that not only the entire administration proceeded with much delay and difficulty, but for the first time its despotic character was much felt even in the smallest districts and towns. All this must have been the more oppressive, as Diocletian permanently introduced Eastern forms of government. Until his time the outward appearance of the emperor, his position with regard to the nation and the court, had only had a passing air of orientalism, but with Diocletian this character of the government was firmly established for all time to come. The ordering of the court and the official hierarchy were, so to speak, established by law, the relations between the classes from thenceforth formed, as it were, the soul of the state, and the head of the empire was outwardly separated from the nation by a great gulf. From Diocletian the white bandeau or diadem, borrowed from the East, became the distinctive sign of the ruler, whilst formerly the purple raiment had been the sole sign. Diocletian and his next successor, besides this, introduced the remaining oriental regal ornaments. [The emperor Aurelian had, indeed, set them the example here.]

Now came the gloomy period when honour and consideration, power and influence, were entirely dependent on the court, when the services rendered to the person of the emperor were considered before all other services, when all patriotism and all effort for the general good disappeared. As is the case in the East up to the present time, everything became the ruler's property, the court and the officials consumed all private wealth, and soon none could attain to distinctions and wealth but the servants of the court and the officials.

Out of the four regents, three were equally brave, but equally harsh and cruel; Constantius Chlorus alone was of a milder disposition, and distinguished by birth, education, and culture. The latter was now commissioned to reunite Britain with the empire. He did not find the task easy, and was only able to accomplish it after some years. Besides this, Constantius, as well as the three other emperors, had to fight against barbarians and insurgents. A war with Persia was most honourable for the Roman Empire; like nearly all Parthian wars since Nero's time, it was caused by the succession to the Armenian throne. Diocletian had placed a Roman protégé in Armenia as king. The latter banished the Persian king Narses I, and the result was a war (294), the conduct of which Diocletian and Galerius undertook together. The latter, by his carelessness, brought on himself a terrible defeat in the same region where Crassus had once been annihilated. He afterwards

obliterated the disgrace by a brilliant victory, and obliged the Persians to make a peace, by which they not only relinquished several provinces on the Tigris but for the first time had to renounce all claim to Mesopotamia. Diocletian secured the newly acquired lands of the eastern border by erecting considerable fortifications. He now stood at the height of his fortune.¹ Meanwhile Maximian had subdued the warlike Quinquegentiani which had been spreading terror in Africa.

DIOCLETIAN PERSECUTES THE CHRISTIANS

Soon after the end of the Persian War, Diocletian ordered a persecution of the Christians (303), the harshness of which would be incomprehensible in such a sagacious ruler if we did not know, from other actions, how jealously he watched his authority. Every act of disobedience, every attempt at rebellion, he punished with inexorable severity and cruelty, often in a paroxysm of rage giving orders which had the most fatal results. For instance, in Egypt, after the defeat of the usurper Achilleus, he exterminated all the latter's adherents and destroyed entire towns, the inhabitants of which had shown themselves insubordinate. When a certain Eugenius had set himself up as emperor in Syria, he caused the inhabitants of Antioch to expiate this presumption by suffering revolting cruelties, although they had helped to suppress the insurrection and had killed the rebel.

Diocletian's persecution of the Christians at first only struck at the Christians in the army. Latterly, whenever they had to witness a heathen sacrifice they had fastened the sign of the cross to their helmets, so as to prevent the raising of the devil, which, according to their belief, took place at the inspection of the entrails of the victim; they thereby roused the anger of one of the high priests, and he incited the emperor against them. Nevertheless Diocletian did not yet determine on cruel measures, as he was wise and thoughtful enough to perceive that the new sect could not be rooted out, on account of its wide diffusion, and that to persecute it would occasion dangerous disturbances throughout the kingdom. On this account he would not have determined on a general persecution had not Galerius, who was passionately attached to the mystical fantasies of the Phrygian worship, drawn him into it by every sort of intrigue. Even then his orders were directed less against the persons of the Christians than against their religion and against the acknowledgment of their congregation as a body.

The Christians were to fill no public offices, and not to seek justice before the tribunals; their churches were to be closed or pulled down, crosses and pictures of Christ were not allowed. This ordinance was publicly posted up in Nicomedia, where Diocletian and Galerius were. A man of great distinction among the Christians tore it down in full daylight with loud mockery, and it was only then that Diocletian, who, as soon as he thought his imperial dignity touched, became terribly cruel, gave free scope to a cruel persecution of individuals. His rage was further increased by a fire in the imperial palace, which, as it seems not unjustly, was attributed to the Christians. The execution of the imperial orders was left to the soldiers and the populace, and a number of Christians suffered death. These extreme measures were restricted to the East, to Africa, and to the south of Europe.

[¹ Diocletian's administrative system was efficient; but the multitude of officials and the expenses of the four imperial courts weighed heavily upon the people. The arrangement for the succession was also defective. Nevertheless Diocletian added strength to the empire and gave it a new lease of life.]

[303-306 A.D.]

ABDICATION OF DIOCLETIAN AND MAXIMIAN; THE TWO NEW CÆSARS

Soon after the beginning of this persecution Diocletian fell ill, and his illness, which lasted almost a year, became so dangerous that the news of his death was repeatedly spread. When he recovered, traces of a weakening of intellect often showed themselves, and made it impossible for him to continue to conduct the business of administration. Therefore in May, 305, he laid down the government, and at the same time Maximian did likewise, Galerius having previously extorted from him a promise to abdicate.

The two cæsars, Galerius and Constantius Chlorus, were then acclaimed as emperors. The former immediately named two new cæsars without consulting his co-rulers, but in so doing paid no heed to either Maximian's son Maxentius, or the son of Constantius, afterwards the emperor Constantine the Great. It is probable that his own father did not deem the former worthy to ascend the throne; the latter had already distinguished himself in the field, and possessed the favour of Diocletian, but he was also friendly towards the Christians, and seemed dangerous to Galerius. The new cæsars were rough officers, undistinguished by any superiority of merit. One of them, Severus, received the government of Africa and Italy; the other, Maximinus, was invested with Syria and Egypt.

Diocletian and Maximian, in abdicating, secured themselves in the possession of considerable property and peculiar revenues. Maximian could not accustom himself to the tranquillity of private life and seized the first opportunity to resume the purple. Diocletian on the contrary returned to his own country, Dalmatia, and lived there until his death (313) as a private person at Salona. On his property in the vicinity of the present Spalatro, he occupied himself with gardening and with the erection of enormous buildings, the remains of which show us that archi-

tecture had entirely lost its noble character, and that attempts were made to supply the place of the taste of the olden times by elaboration and splendour.

Constantius Chlorus, whose health had long been failing, died a year after the abdication of Diocletian (306). Before his death he had earnestly commended his son Constantine to the army, and as soon as Constantius was dead it proclaimed his son emperor. Galerius was at first in great anxiety, but was satisfied when Constantine agreed to content himself with the title of Cæsar, granting Severus, as the elder man, the honours of an augustus or emperor. Constantine was the son of Helena, a woman of humble origin. Constantius had divorced her by command of the emperors Diocletian and Maximian in 292, in order to marry Theodora.



DIOCLETIAN

(From a bust in the Vatican)

STRIFE AMONG THE RULERS

In the autumn of the same year, the relations of the rulers of the empire again changed. Galerius and Severus, by their oppressive measures, had roused the anger of the citizens and soldiers of Rome. They rebelled and proclaimed Maxentius, the son of Maximian, emperor.^b

Zosimus declares that Maxentius incited the rebellion, moved thereto by jealousy of Constantine, a quite plausible supposition. "When Constantine's effigy according to custom was exhibited at Rome," he says, "Maxentius, the son of Maximian, could not endure the sight of Constantine's good fortune, who was the son of a harlot, while himself, who was the son of so great an emperor, remained at home in indolence, and his father's empire was enjoyed by others. He therefore associated with himself in the enterprise Marcellianus and Marcellus, two military tribunes, and Lucianus, who distributed the swine's flesh with which the people of Rome were provided by the treasury, and the court-guards called prætoriani. By them he was promoted to the imperial throne, having promised liberally to reward all that assisted him in it. For this purpose they first murdered Abellius, because he, being prefect of the city, opposed their enterprise.

"When Galerius learned this," Zosimus continues, "he sent Severus Cæsar against Maxentius with an army. But while he advanced from Milan with several legions of Moors, Maxentius corrupted his troops with money, and even the prefect of the court, Anullinus, and thereby conquered him with great ease. On which Severus fled to Ravenna, which is a strong and populous city, provided with necessaries sufficient for himself and soldiers. When Maximian¹ knew this, he was doubtless greatly concerned for his son Maxentius, and therefore, leaving Lucania where he then was, he went to Ravenna. Finding that Severus could not by any means be forced out of this city, it being well fortified and stored with provisions, he deluded him with false oaths, and persuaded him to go to Rome. But on his way thither, coming to a place called the Three Tabernæ, he was taken by a stratagem of Maxentius. [Hoping to save his life, he renounced the dignity of emperor; notwithstanding which he was] immediately executed. Galerius could not patiently endure these injuries done to Severus, and therefore resolved to go from the east to Rome, and to punish Maxentius as he deserved. On his arrival in Italy, he found the soldiers about him so treacherous, that he returned into the east without fighting a battle."^d

On the retreat from Italy, after this unsuccessful foray, Galerius allowed his army to commit the most horrible outrages and thereby gained the deadly hatred of all the inhabitants of the peninsula. Meanwhile, Maximian had gone to Gaul to ally himself with Constantine against Galerius. He married his daughter Fausta to the young cæsar and invested him with the title of Augustus, but did not attain his special object, as Constantine did not consider it wise to allow himself to be drawn into open war with Galerius. Soon after this, Maximian quarrelled with his own son, again tried without success to win over Constantine, and then formed the strange resolve, to betake himself to Galerius.

The latter had long thought of naming his old friend and comrade, Licinius, as augustus, and had just dragged Diocletian from his retirement and induced him to journey to Pannonia, to help celebrate the promotion of

[¹ Maximian had renounced the purple reluctantly at the bidding of Diocletian, and had probably never been content to remain in retirement. His attempted resumption of authority was ultimately to cost him his life, as we shall see.]

[307-311 A.D.]

Licinius in the most brilliant manner. He also made use of Maximian's unexpected appearance, and so Licinius was proclaimed augustus in the presence of three emperors (307).

As Maximian found no help in Galerius, he immediately afterwards resigned the purple for the second time. From Pannonia he returned to his son-in-law in Gaul, who received him in a friendly manner, and during his absence on a campaign against the Germans intrusted him with a share in the government. Maximian, who was manifestly suffering from senility, formed the ridiculous idea of using this opportunity to overthrow his son-in-law and forcibly supersede him, although naturally neither the country of Gaul, now almost entirely Christian, nor the troops of Constantine, can have been in the least disposed to prefer him to their former master. When Maximian really made this foolish attempt, he was easily vanquished by Constantine and taken prisoner. Two years later, when he had made an attempt on the life of Constantine, the latter had him strangled (310).

Of the six emperors, Maximian, Galerius, Maximin, Maxentius, Constantine, and Licinius, only one had thus passed away; but another had already arisen in Africa and had established himself in possession of the government. This was Alexander, a wretched old man who had himself proclaimed emperor by the troops. He maintained his position for three years, and was then in 311 overthrown and killed by Maxentius, who sent a skilled general and a picked army against him. Galerius died at about the same time. Maximin and Licinius divided his dominions among them. Now only four emperors ruled the empire: Maximin, Licinius, Maxentius, and Constantine; but there was no thought of friendly relations among them.

It remained therefore for the one among them who possessed the most ability, strength, and skill to overthrow the others and to gain undivided sway. This could only be successfully effected by Constantine, whose dignified, judicious, and moderate demeanour deserves our greatest admiration. The crucial point, that which must finally determine the issue of the struggle between the emperors, was the relation of each individual ruler to the Christians. In all parts of the realm the latter formed a very considerable number, they were very closely united amongst themselves, their hierarchies and synods had remained unweakened; whilst not only had the old system of government long been undermined, but also the adherents to the old religion had been divided by a crowd of different opinions and views, and were neither held together by an inward nor an external hierarchical union. Whoever therefore had the Christians in the empire on his side must sooner or later carry the victory over his co-rulers.

Galerius perceived this shortly before his death, and had therefore issued an edict in his own name and those of his colleagues, by which the persecution of the Christians ordered by Diocletian was arrested, and the bloody strife so often begun between the state and the church forever ended (311). Even Maxentius seems to have felt it; for he had scarcely become master in Rome before he assured the Christians of toleration. But his entire conduct towards them contradicted the mild terms of the edict; the Christians could rely on him just as little as the pagans.

CONSTANTINE WARS WITH MAXENTIUS

Of the other emperors, only Constantine seemed to be sincerely attached to the Christians. For a long time he remained a pagan, but continually

showed himself friendly towards the Christians; and they were powerfully supported by the most influential ladies of the court. These were his wife Fausta, her mother Eutropia, but especially the mother of Constantine, Helena, who became celebrated by her great zeal for the teaching of the cross. Besides the good will of the Christians, Constantine had the great advantage that from the beginning he alone exhibited a care for law and order, whilst all his fellow-emperors showed only military violence and despotic will. Moreover he alone seemed to be satisfied with his share of the empire; the three other emperors, on the contrary, sought with utter recklessness to extend their provinces at the expense of their co-rulers.

The first whom the sagacious Constantine defeated was Maxentius, who from his speedy victory over Alexander had manifestly conceived too high an idea of his power, and in his arrogance decided to attack Constantine. That he was not in the least to be compared to him and that it was foolhardy to seek a quarrel with him, is shown by one glance at the lives of the two emperors. Maxentius had never found himself at the head of an army in real warfare; he had continually enjoyed his pleasures in idle tranquillity, and on account of his tyranny and cruelty he was loved by no one, save by his guards and a small number of other troops whom he enriched by robbing the citizens. Constantine's life, on the contrary, had been one of constant exertion and discipline. He had served with distinction, first under Diocletian, and then under his father Constantius, and had afterwards long contended against the Frankish peoples on the Rhine. The result of the war between the two emperors could not therefore be doubtful.^b

Zosimus gives an interesting account of the struggle, with certain embellishments that do not detract from the accuracy of his main narrative. "Constantine," he tells us, "had raised an army amongst the barbarians, Germans, and Celts, whom he had conquered, and likewise drawn a force out of Britain, amounting in the whole to ninety thousand foot and eight thousand horse. He marched from the Alps into Italy, passing those towns that surrendered without doing them any damage, but taking by storm those which resisted. While he was making this progress, Maxentius had collected a much stronger army, consisting of eighty thousand Romans and Italians, all the Tuscans on the sea coast, forty thousand men from Carthage, besides what the Sicilians sent him; his whole force amounting to one hundred and seventy thousand foot and eighteen thousand horse.

"Both being thus prepared, Maxentius threw a bridge over the Tiber [the Milvian bridge], which was not of one entire piece but divided into two parts, the centre of the bridge being made to fasten with irons, which might be drawn out upon occasion. He gave orders to the workmen that, as soon as they saw the army of Constantine upon the juncture of the bridge, they should draw out the iron fastenings, that the enemy who stood upon it might fall into the river.

"Constantine, advancing with his army to Rome, encamped in a field before the city, which was broad and therefore convenient for cavalry. Maxentius in the meantime shut himself up within the walls and sacrificed to the gods, and, moreover, consulted the Sibylline oracles concerning the event of the war. Finding a prediction that, whoever designed any harm to the Romans should die a miserable death, he applied it to himself, because he withstood those that came against Rome, and wished to take it. His application indeed proved just. For when Maxentius drew out his army before the city, and was marching over the bridge that he himself had constructed, an infinite number of owls flew down and covered the wall.



CONSTANTINE'S DEFEAT OF MAXENTIUS

(From a cartoon by Raphael)

[313 A.D.]

“When Constantine saw this, he ordered his men to stand to their arms. And the two armies being drawn up opposite to each other, Constantine sent his cavalry against that of the enemy, whom they charged with such impetuosity that they threw them into disorder. The signal being given to the infantry, they likewise marched in good order towards the enemy. A furious battle having commenced, the Romans themselves, and their foreign allies, were unwilling to risk their lives, as they wished for deliverance from the bitter tyranny with which they were burdened, though the other troops were slain in great numbers, being either trod to death by the horse or killed by the foot.

“As long as the cavalry kept their ground, Maxentius retained some hopes, but when they gave way, he fled with the rest over the bridge into the city. The beams not being strong enough to bear so great a weight, they broke, and Maxentius, with the others, was carried with the stream down the river. [The date of the battle was October 27, 313.]

“When the news of this victory was reported in the city,” Zosimus concludes, “none dared to show any joy for what had happened, because many thought it was an unfounded report. But when the head of Maxentius was brought upon a spear, their fear and dejection were changed to joy and pleasure. On this occasion Constantine punished very few, and they were only some few of the nearest friends of Maxentius, but he abolished the prætorian troops, and destroyed the fortress in which they used to reside.”^d

Before the decisive battle, Constantine had tried to win over the enthusiasm of the Christians in his own and his adversaries' army to his cause, and therefore the sign of the cross was made the principal ensign of the Roman army. The report was spread that a shining cross with this inscription, “By this sign thou shalt conquer,” had appeared to him in the sky, and that in the following night, Christ himself had commanded him in a dream to make the sign of the cross his standard against the enemy. On the day before the battle, the cross and the monogram of the redeemer appeared on the imperial standard, which from thenceforth bore the name of Labarum; and afterwards Constantine publicly announced that he had seen the cross in the sky, and had conquered his enemy by the direct aid of God.

After his victory over Maxentius the character of Constantine changed, and his subsequent proceedings often stand in opposition to the principles which he publicly acknowledged. He went over to Christianity, although in prudent fashion, not formally nor irrevocably, and for this the Christian priests permitted and forgave him everything. The miserable senate, which for a long time had ceased to be a governmental institution and to be consulted in affairs of state, declared him the first of the three emperors of the realm, and in this manner he passed naturally to the idea of undivided sway. Although he made the cross the imperial standard, he took part in the heathen sacrifices, allowed himself to consult soothsayers, and bore the title of a high priest of the old religion as before. Moreover he postponed the rite of baptism until his death-bed, that he might pass, according to the teaching of the priests at his court, into the next life washed clean from all sin.

From Rome Constantine went to Milan,¹ where he met Licinius and gave him his sister Constantia in marriage. Then he went to his province of Gaul, to repulse the German tribes which had again invaded the country; but Licinius hastened to meet the emperor Maximian, who was trying to

[¹ The city bore the Latin name of Mediolanum. Maximian had made it the capital of his division of the empire.]

[313-314 A.D.]

wrest from him his share of the empire, and had already seized the towns of Byzantium and Heraclea, or Perinthus.

To the south of Hadrianopolis there was a decisive battle between the two emperors. Licinius won it, and tradition has also attributed his victory to a divine miracle, although the victor was in no way inclined towards Christianity. It is said that an angel appeared to Licinius and taught him a prayer, which on his awakening he immediately caused to be written out and distributed to the soldiers. This prayer was sung before the beginning of the battle and helped them to victory (313). Maximin fled; on the way he took poison, which brought on a severe illness of which he died after great tortures: With terrible harshness and cruelty Licinius proceeded against the relations and friends of Maximin. They were all put to death without mercy and the widow and daughter of Diocletian, as well as the sons of Galerius and Severus, perished as sacrifices to the wanton brutality of Licinius.^b

STRUGGLE BETWEEN CONSTANTINE AND LICINIUS

The Roman world was now divided between Constantine and Licinius, the former of whom was master of the West, and the latter of the East. It might perhaps have been expected that the conquerors, fatigued with civil war and connected by a private as well as a public alliance, would have renounced, or at least would have suspended, any further designs of ambition; and yet a year had scarcely elapsed after the death of Maximin, before the victorious emperors turned their arms against each other. The genius, the success, and the aspiring temper of Constantine may seem to mark him out as the aggressor; but the perfidious character of Licinius justifies the most unfavourable suspicions, and by the faint light which history reflects on this transaction, we may discover a conspiracy fomented by his arts against the authority of his colleague.¹

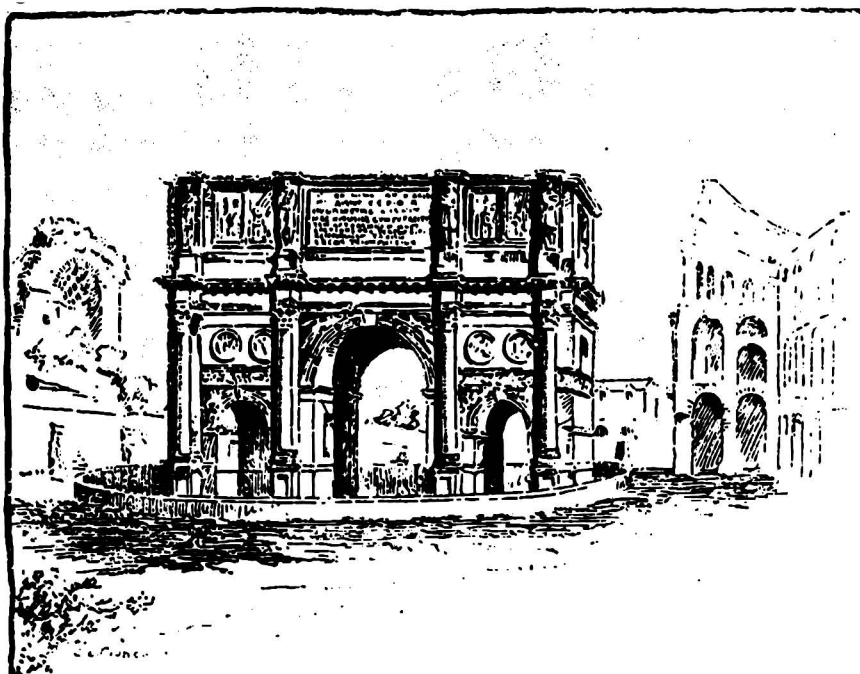
Constantine had lately given his sister Anastasia in marriage to Bassianus, a man of a considerable family and fortune, and had elevated his new kinsman to the rank of cæsar. According to the system of government instituted by Diocletian, Italy and perhaps Africa were designed for his departments in the empire. But the performance of the promised favour was either attended with so much delay, or accompanied with so many unequal conditions, that the fidelity of Bassianus was alienated rather than secured by the honourable distinction which he had obtained. His nomination had been ratified by the consent of Licinius; and that artful prince, by the means of his emissaries, soon contrived to enter into a secret and dangerous correspondence with the new cæsar, to irritate his discontent, and to urge him to the rash enterprise of extorting by violence what he might in vain solicit from the justice of Constantine. But the vigilant emperor discovered the conspiracy before it was ripe for execution; and after solemnly renouncing the alliance of Bassianus, despoiled him of the purple, and inflicted the deserved punishment on his treason and ingratitude. The haughty refusal of Licinius, when he was required to deliver up the criminals who had taken refuge in his dominions, confirmed the suspicions already enter-

[¹ Zosimus,^d however, takes a different view. He says: "The empire having thus devolved on Constantine and Licinius, they soon quarrelled; not because Licinius gave any cause for it, but that Constantine, in his usual manner, was unfaithful to his agreement, by endeavouring to alienate from Licinius some nations that belonged to his dominions. By this means an open rupture ensued and both prepared for war." But Zosimus is always hostile to Constantine, and this prejudice must not be overlooked.]

[314 A.D.]

tained of his perfidy ; and the indignities offered at *Æmona*, on the frontiers of Italy, to the statues of Constantine, became the signal of discord between the two princes.

The first battle was fought near *Cibalis*, a city of Pannonia, situated on the river *Savus*, about fifty miles from *Sirmium*. From the inconsiderable forces which in this important contest two such powerful monarchs brought into the field, it may be inferred that the one was suddenly provoked, and that the other was unexpectedly surprised. The emperor of the West had only twenty thousand and the sovereign of the East no more than five-and-thirty thousand men. The inferiority of number was, however, compensated by the advantage of the ground. Constantine had taken post in a defile about half a mile in breadth, between a steep hill and a deep morass, and in that situation he steadily expected and repulsed the first attack of the enemy. He pursued his success, and advanced into the plain. But the



ARCH OF CONSTANTINE, ROME

veteran legions of Illyricum rallied under the standard of a leader who had been trained to arms in the school of Probus and Diocletian. The missile weapons on both sides were soon exhausted ; the two armies, with equal valour, rushed to a closer engagement of swords and spears, and the doubtful contest had already lasted from the dawn of the day to a late hour of the evening, when the right wing, which Constantine led in person, made a vigorous and decisive charge. The judicious retreat of Licinius saved the remainder of his troops from a total defeat ; but when he computed his loss, which amounted to more than twenty thousand men, he thought it unsafe to pass the night in the presence of an active and victorious enemy. Abandoning his camp and magazines, he marched away with secrecy and diligence at the head of the greatest part of his cavalry, and was soon removed beyond the danger of a pursuit. His diligence preserved his wife, his son, and his treasures, which he had deposited at *Sirmium*.¹ Licinius passed through that city, and breaking down the bridge on the *Savus*, hastened to collect

[¹ *Sirmium* was the capital of the Pannonian division of the empire.]

a new army in Dacia and Thrace. In his flight he bestowed the precarious title of Cæsar on Valens, his general of the Illyrian frontier.¹

The plain of Mardia in Thrace was the theatre of a second battle, no less obstinate and bloody than the former. The troops on both sides displayed the same valour and discipline; and the victory was once more decided by the superior abilities of Constantine.^c Licinius drew up his army [says Zosimus] in order of battle, extending from a mountain which is above the town two hundred stadia, as far as the junction of another river with the Hebrus; thus the armies continued opposite to each other for several days. Constantine, observing where the river was least broad, concerted this plan. He ordered his men to bring trees from the mountain, and to tie ropes around them, as if he intended to throw a bridge over the river for the passage of his army. By this stratagem he deluded the enemy, and, ascending a hill on which were thick woods sufficient to conceal any that were in them, he planted there five thousand archers and eight hundred horse. Having done this, he crossed the Hebrus at the narrowest place, and so surprised the enemy that many fled with all their speed, while others, who were amazed at his unexpected approach, were struck with wonder at his coming over so suddenly. In the meantime, the rest of his army crossed the river in security, and a great slaughter commenced. Nearly thirty thousand fell; and about sunset Constantine took their camp, while Licinius, with all the forces he could muster, hastened through Thrace to his ships.^d

The loss of two battles reduced the fierce spirit of Licinius to sue for peace. His ambassador Mistrrianus was admitted to the audience of Constantine; he expatiated on the common topics of moderation and humanity, which are so familiar to the eloquence of the vanquished; represented, in the most insinuating language, that the event of the war was still doubtful, whilst its inevitable calamities were alike pernicious to both the contending parties; and declared, that he was authorised to propose a lasting and honourable peace in the name of the two emperors, his masters. Constantine received the mention of Valens with indignation and contempt.

“It was not for such a purpose,” he sternly replied, “that we have advanced from the shores of the western ocean in an uninterrupted course of combats and victories, that, after rejecting an ungrateful kinsman, we should accept for our colleague a contemptible slave. The abdication of Valens is the first article of the treaty.” It was necessary to accept this humiliating condition; the unhappy Valens, after a few days’ reign, was deprived of the purple and of his life. As soon as this obstacle was removed, the tranquillity of the Roman world was easily restored. The successive defeats of Licinius had ruined his forces, but they had displayed his courage and abilities. His situation was almost desperate, but the efforts of despair are sometimes formidable; and the good sense of Constantine preferred a great and certain advantage to a third trial of the chance of arms. He consented to leave his rival, or, as he again styled Licinius, his friend and brother, in the possession of Thrace, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt; but the provinces of Pannonia, Dalmatia, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece were yielded to the Western Empire; and the dominions of Constantine now extended from the confines of Caledonia to the extremity of Peloponnesus. It was stipulated by the same treaty that three royal youths, the sons of the emperors, should be called to the hopes of the succession. Crispus and the young Constantine were soon afterwards declared cæsars in the West, while the younger Licinius was

¹ Zosimus *d* (1. 2, pp. 90, 91) gives a particular account of this battle; but the descriptions of Zosimus are rhetorical rather than military.

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subsequent marriage the honour of their family, they were themselves punished by exile and confiscation. The slaves, whether male or female, who were convicted of having been accessory to the rape or seduction, were burned alive, or put to death by the ingenious torture of pouring down their throats a quantity of melted lead.

As the crime was of a public kind, the accusation was permitted even to strangers. The commencement of the action was not limited to any term of years, and the consequences of the sentence were extended to the innocent offspring of such an irregular union. But whenever the offence inspires less horror than the punishment, the rigour of penal law is obliged to give way to the common feelings of mankind. The most odious parts of this edict were softened or repealed in the subsequent reigns; and even Constantine himself very frequently alleviated, by partial acts of mercy, the stern temper of his general institutions. Such, indeed, was the singular humour of that emperor, who showed himself as indulgent and even remiss in the execution of his laws, as he was severe and even cruel in the enacting of them. It is scarcely possible to observe a more decisive symptom of weakness, either in the character of the prince or in the constitution of the government.

The civil administration was sometimes interrupted by the military defence of the empire. Crispus, a youth of the most amiable character, who had received with the title of Cæsar the command of the Rhine, distinguished himself by his conduct in several victories over the Franks and Alamanni, and taught the barbarians of that frontier to dread the eldest son of Constantine and the grandson of Constantius. The emperor himself had assumed the more difficult and important province of the Danube. The Goths, who in the time of Claudius and Aurelian had felt the weight of the Roman arms, respected the power of the empire, even in the midst of its intestine divisions. But the strength of that warlike nation was now restored by a peace of near fifty years; a new generation had arisen, who no longer remembered the misfortunes of ancient days: the Sarmatians of the lake Mæotis followed the Gothic standard, either as subjects or as allies, and their united force was poured upon the countries of Illyricum. Campona, Margus, and Bononia¹ appear to have been the scenes of several memorable sieges and battles; and though Constantine encountered a very obstinate resistance, he prevailed at length in the contest, and the Goths were compelled to purchase an ignominious retreat, by restoring the booty and prisoners they had taken. Nor was this advantage sufficient to satisfy the indignation of the emperor. He resolved to chastise, as well as to repulse, the insolent barbarians who had dared to invade the territories of Rome.

At the head of his legions he passed over the Danube, after repairing the bridge which had been constructed by Trajan, penetrated into the strongest recesses of Dacia, and when he had inflicted a severe revenge, condescended to give peace to the suppliant Goths on condition that, as often as they were required, they should supply his armies with a body of forty thousand soldiers. Exploits like these were no doubt honourable to Constantine, and beneficial to the state; but it may surely be questioned, whether they can justify the exaggerated assertion of Eusebius that all Scythia, as far as the extremity of the north, divided as it was into so many names and nations of the most various and savage manners, had been added by his victorious arms to the Roman Empire.

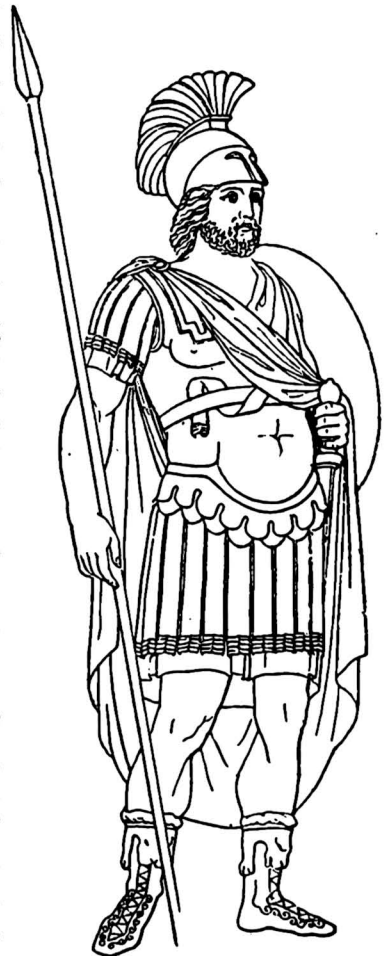
¹ The first of these places is now Old Buda, in Hungary; the second, Hastolatz; and the third, Biddin, or Widden, in Mœsia on the Danube. — GUIZOT.

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CONSTANTINE AND LICINIUS AGAIN AT WAR

In this exalted state of glory it was impossible that Constantine should any longer endure a partner in the empire. Confiding in the superiority of his genius and military power, he determined, without any previous injury, to exert them for the destruction of Licinius, whose advanced age and unpopular vices seemed to offer a very easy conquest. But the old emperor, awakened by the approaching danger, deceived the expectations of his friends, as well as of his enemies. Calling forth that spirit and those abilities by which he had deserved the friendship of Galerius and the imperial purple, he prepared himself for the contest, collected the forces of the East, and soon filled the plains of Hadrianopolis with his troops, and the straits of the Hellespont with his fleet. The army consisted of 150,000 foot and 15,000 horse; and as the cavalry was drawn, for the most part, from Phrygia and Cappadocia, we may conceive a more favourable opinion of the beauty of the horses than of the courage and dexterity of their riders. The fleet was composed of 350 galleys of three ranks of oars. A hundred and thirty of these were furnished by Egypt and the adjacent coast of Africa. A hundred and ten sailed from the ports of Phœnicia and the isle of Cyprus; and the maritime countries of Bithynia, Ionia, and Caria were likewise obliged to provide 110 galleys. The troops of Constantine were ordered to rendezvous at Thessalonica; they amounted to above 120,000 horse and foot. The emperor was satisfied with their martial appearance, and his army contained more soldiers, though fewer men, than that of his eastern competitor.

The legions of Constantine were levied in the warlike provinces of Europe; action had confirmed their discipline, victory had elevated their hopes, and there were among them a great number of veterans who, after seventeen glorious campaigns under the same leader, prepared themselves to deserve an honourable dismissal by a last effort of their valour. But the naval preparations of Constantine were in every respect much inferior to those of Licinius. The maritime cities of Greece sent their respective quotas of men and ships to the celebrated harbour of Piræus, and their united forces consisted of no more than two hundred small vessels—a very feeble armament, if it is compared with those formidable fleets which were equipped and maintained by the republic of Athens during the Peloponnesian War. Since Italy was no longer the seat of government, the naval establishments of Misenum and Ravenna had been gradually neglected; and as the shipping and mariners of the empire were supported by commerce rather than by war, it was natural that they should the most abound in the industrious provinces of Egypt and Asia. It is only surprising that the eastern emperor, who possessed so great a superiority at sea, should have neglected the opportunity of carrying an offensive war into the centre of his rival's dominions.



ROMAN GENERAL
(From the Arch of Constantine)

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Instead of embracing such an active resolution, which might have changed the whole face of the war, the prudent Licinius expected the approach of his rival in a camp near Hadrianopolis, which he had fortified with an anxious care that betrayed his apprehension of the event. Constantine directed his march from Thessalonica towards that part of Thrace, till he found himself stopped by the broad and rapid stream of the Hebrus, and discovered the numerous army of Licinius, which filled the steep ascent of the hill, from the river to the city of Hadrianopolis. Many days were spent in doubtful and distant skirmishes; but at length the obstacles of the passages and of the attack were removed by the intrepid conduct of Constantine. In this place we might relate a wonderful exploit of Constantine, which, though it can scarcely be paralleled either in poetry or romance, is celebrated, not by a venal orator devoted to his fortune, but by an historian, the partial enemy of his fame. We are assured that the valiant emperor threw himself into the river Hebrus, accompanied only by twelve horsemen, and that by the effort or terror of his invincible arm he broke, slaughtered, and put to flight a host of a hundred and fifty thousand men.

The credulity of Zosimus prevailed so strongly over his passion that, among the events of the memorable battle of Hadrianopolis, he seems to have selected and embellished not the most important but the most marvellous. The valour and danger of Constantine are attested by a slight wound, which he received in the thigh; but it may be discovered, even from an imperfect narration, and perhaps a corrupted text, that the victory was obtained no less by the conduct of the general than by the courage of the hero; that a body of five thousand archers marched round to occupy a thick wood in the rear of the enemy, whose attention was diverted by the construction of a bridge, and that Licinius, perplexed by so many artful evolutions, was reluctantly drawn from his advantageous post to combat on equal ground in the plain. The contest was no longer equal. His confused multitude of new levies was easily vanquished by the experienced veterans of the West. Thirty-four thousand men are reported to have been slain. The fortified camp of Licinius was taken by assault the evening of the battle; the greater part of the fugitives, who had retired to the mountains, surrendered themselves the next day to the discretion of the conqueror; and his rival, who could no longer keep the field, confined himself within the walls of Byzantium.

Constantine besieges Byzantium

The siege of Byzantium, which was immediately undertaken by Constantine, was attended with great labour and uncertainty. In the late civil wars, the fortifications of that place, so justly considered as the key of Europe and Asia, had been repaired and strengthened; and as long as Licinius remained master of the sea, the garrison was much less exposed to the danger of famine than the army of the besiegers. The naval commanders of Constantine were summoned to his camp, and received his positive orders to force the passage of the Hellespont, as the fleet of Licinius, instead of seeking and destroying their feeble enemy, continued inactive in those narrow straits where its superiority of numbers was of little use or advantage. Crispus, the emperor's eldest son, was intrusted with the execution of this daring enterprise, which he performed with so much courage and success that he deserved the esteem, and most probably excited the jealousy, of his father. The engagement lasted two days; and in the evening of the first, the contending fleets, after a considerable and mutual

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loss, retired to their respective harbours of Europe and Asia. The second day, about noon, a strong south wind sprang up, which carried the vessels of Crispus against the enemy; and as the casual advantage was improved by his skilful intrepidity, he soon obtained a complete victory. A hundred and thirty vessels were destroyed, five thousand men were slain, and Aman-dus, the admiral of the Asiatic fleet, escaped with the utmost difficulty to the shores of Chalcedon. As soon as the Hellespont was open, a plentiful convoy of provisions flowed into the camp of Constantine, who had already advanced the operations of the siege. He constructed artificial mounds of earth of an equal height with the ramparts of Byzantium. The lofty towers which were erected on that foundation galled the besieged with large stones and darts from the military engines, and the battering-rams had shaken the walls in several places. If Licinius persisted much longer in the defence, he exposed himself to be involved in the ruin of the place. Before he was surrounded he prudently removed his person and treasures to Chalcedon, in Asia; and as he was always desirous of associating companions to the hopes and dangers of his fortune, he now bestowed the title of Cæsar on Martinianus, who exercised one of the most important offices of the empire.

Such were still the resources, and such the abilities of Licinius, that, after so many successive defeats, he collected in Bithynia a new army of fifty or sixty thousand men, while the activity of Constantine was employed in the siege of Byzantium. The vigilant emperor did not, however, neglect the last struggles of his antagonist. A considerable part of his victorious army was transported over the Bosphorus in small vessels, and the decisive engagement was fought soon after the landing, on the heights of Chrysopolis, or, as it is now called, Scutari. The troops of Licinius, though they were lately raised, ill armed, and worse disciplined, made head against their conquerors with fruitless but desperate valour, till a total defeat, and the slaughter of five-and-twenty thousand men, irretrievably determined the fate of their leader. He retired to Nicomedia, rather with the view of gaining some time for negotiation than with the hope of any effectual defence. Constantia, his wife and the sister of Constantine, interceded with her brother in favour of her husband, and obtained from his policy rather than from his compassion a solemn promise, confirmed by an oath, that after the sacrifice of Martinianus and the resignation of the purple, Licinius himself should be permitted to pass the remainder of his life in peace and affluence. The behaviour of Constantia, and her relation to the contending parties, naturally recall the remembrance of that virtuous matron who was the sister of Augustus, and the wife of Antony. But the temper of mankind was altered; and it was no longer esteemed infamous for a Roman to survive his honour and independence. Licinius solicited and accepted the pardon of his offences, laid himself and his purple at the feet of his lord and master, was raised from the ground with insulting pity, was admitted the same day to the imperial banquet, and soon afterward was sent away to Thessalonica, which had been chosen for the place of his confinement.

His confinement was soon terminated by death; and it is doubtful whether a tumult of the soldiers, or a decree of the senate, was suggested as a motive for his execution. According to the rules of tyranny he was accused of forming a conspiracy, and of holding a treasonable correspondence with the barbarians; but as he was never convicted either by his own conduct or by any legal evidence, we may perhaps be allowed, from his weakness, to presume his innocence.

The memory of Licinius was branded with infamy, his statues were thrown down, and by a hasty edict, of such mischievous tendency that it was almost immediately corrected, all his laws and all the judicial proceedings of his reign were at once abolished. By this victory of Constantine, the Roman world was again united under the authority of one emperor, thirty-seven years after Diocletian had divided his power and provinces with his associate Maximian.

CONSTANTINE, SOLE RULER, FOUNDS CONSTANTINOPLE

The successive steps of the elevation of Constantine, from his first assuming the purple at York to the resignation of Licinius at Nicomedia, have been related with some minuteness and precision, not only as the events are in themselves both interesting and important, but still more as they contributed to the decline of the empire by the expense of blood and treasure, and by the perpetual increase as well of the taxes as of the military establishment. The foundation of Constantinople and the establishment of the Christian religion were the immediate and memorable consequences of this revolution.

But the prospect of beauty, of safety, and of wealth, united in a single spot, was sufficient to justify the choice of Constantine. But as some decent mixture of prodigy and fable has, in every age, been supposed to reflect a becoming majesty on the origin of great cities, the emperor was desirous of ascribing his resolution not so much to the uncertain counsels of human policy as to the infallible and eternal decrees of divine wisdom. In one of his laws he has been careful to instruct posterity that, in obedience to the commands of God, he laid the everlasting foundations of Constantinople; and though he has not condescended to relate in what manner the celestial inspiration was communicated to his mind, the defect of his modest silence has been liberally supplied by the ingenuity of succeeding writers, who describe the nocturnal vision which appeared to the fancy of Constantine, as he slept within the walls of Byzantium. The tutelar genius of the city, a venerable matron sinking under the weight of years and infirmities, was suddenly transformed into a blooming maid, whom his own hands adorned with all the symbols of imperial greatness. The monarch awoke, interpreted the auspicious omen and obeyed, without hesitation, the will of heaven. The day which gave birth to a city or colony was celebrated by the Romans with such ceremonies as had been ordained by a generous superstition; and though Constantine might omit some rites which savoured too strongly of their pagan origin, yet he was anxious to leave a deep impression of hope and respect on the minds of the spectators. On foot, with a lance in his hand, the emperor himself led the solemn procession, and directed the line which was traced as the boundary of the destined capital; till the growing circumference was observed with astonishment by the assistants, who at length ventured to observe that he had already exceeded the most ample measure of a great city. "I shall still advance," replied Constantine, "till he, the invisible guide, who marches before me, thinks proper to stop." Without presuming to investigate the nature or motives of this extraordinary conductor, we shall content ourselves with the more humble task of describing the extent and limits of Constantinople.

In the actual state of the city, the palace and gardens of the seraglio occupy the eastern promontory, the first of the seven hills, and cover about

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150 acres of our own measure. The seat of Turkish jealousy and despotism is erected on the foundations of a Grecian republic ; but it may be supposed that the Byzantines were tempted by the conveniency of the harbour to extend their habitations on that side beyond the modern limits of the seraglio. The new walls of Constantine stretched from the port to the Propontis across the enlarged breadth of the triangle, at the distance of fifteen stadia from the ancient fortification ; and with the city of Byzantium they enclosed five of the seven hills which, to the eyes of those who approach Constantinople, appear to rise above each other in beautiful order. About a century after the death of the founder, the new buildings, extending on one side up the harbour and on the other along the Propontis, already covered the narrow ridge of the sixth and the broad summit of the seventh hill. The necessity of protecting those suburbs from the incessant inroads of the barbarians engaged the younger Theodosius to surround his capital with an adequate and permanent enclosure of walls. From the eastern promontory to the golden gate, the extreme length of Constantinople was about three Roman miles ; the circumference measured between ten and eleven ; and the surface might be computed as equal to about two thousand English acres.

It is impossible to justify the vain and credulous exaggerations of modern travellers, who sometimes stretch the limits of Constantinople over the adjacent villages of the European, and even of the Asiatic coast. But the suburbs of Pera and Galata, though situate beyond the harbour, may deserve to be considered as a part of the city, and this addition may perhaps authorise the measure of a Byzantine historian, who assigns sixteen Greek (about fourteen Roman) miles for the circumference of his native city. Such an extent may seem not unworthy of an imperial residence. Yet Constantinople must yield to Babylon and Thebes, to ancient Rome, to London, and even to Paris.

The master of the Roman world, who aspired to erect an eternal monument of the glories of his reign, could employ in the prosecution of that great work the wealth, the labour, and all that yet remained of the genius of obedient millions. Some estimate may be formed of the expense bestowed with imperial liberality on the foundation of Constantinople, by the allowance of about £2,500,000 sterling for the construction of the walls, the porticoes, and the aqueducts. The forests that overshadowed the shores of the Euxine, and the celebrated quarries of white marble in the little island of Proconnesus, supplied an inexhaustible stock of materials ready to be conveyed, by the convenience of a short water-carriage, to the harbour of Byzantium. A multitude of labourers and artificers urged the conclusion of the work with incessant toil ; but the impatience of Constantine soon discovered that, in the decline of the arts, the skill as well as numbers of his architects bore a very unequal proportion to the greatness of his designs. The magistrates of the most distant provinces were therefore directed to institute schools, to appoint professors, and by the hopes of rewards



A PLEBEIAN
(Based on Vecellio)

and privileges to engage in the study and practice of architecture a sufficient number of ingenious youths who had received a liberal education. The buildings of the new city were executed by such artificers as the reign of Constantine could afford; but they were decorated by the hands of the most celebrated masters of the age of Pericles and Alexander. To revive the genius of Phidias and Lysippus surpassed indeed the power of a Roman emperor, but the immortal productions which they had bequeathed to posterity were exposed without defence to the rapacious vanity of a despot. By his commands the cities of Greece and Asia were despoiled of their most valuable ornaments. The trophies of memorable wars, the objects of religious veneration, the most finished statues of the gods and heroes, of the sages and poets, of ancient times, contributed to the splendid triumph of Constantinople; and gave occasion to the remark of the historian Cedrenus, who observes with much enthusiasm that nothing seemed wanting except the souls of the illustrious men whom those admirable monuments were intended to represent. But it is not in the city of Constantine, nor in the declining period of an empire, when the human mind was depressed by civil and religious slavery, that we should seek for the souls of Homer and of Demosthenes.

During the siege of Byzantium, the conqueror had pitched his tent on the commanding eminence of the second hill. To perpetuate the memory of his success, he chose the same advantageous position for the principal forum, which appears to have been of a circular, or rather elliptical form. The two opposite entrances formed triumphal arches; the porticoes, which enclosed it on every side, were filled with statues; and the centre of the forum was occupied by a lofty column, of which a mutilated fragment is now degraded by the appellation of "the burnt pillar." This column was erected on a pedestal of white marble twenty feet high, and was composed of ten pieces of porphyry, each of which measured about ten feet in height and about thirty-three in circumference. On the summit of the pillar, above 120 feet from the ground, stood the colossal statue of Apollo. It was of bronze, had been transported either from Athens or from a town of Phrygia, and was supposed to be the work of Phidias. The artist had represented the god of day, or, as it was afterwards interpreted, the emperor Constantine himself, with a sceptre in his right hand, the globe of the world in his left, and a crown of rays glittering on his head. The Circus, or Hippodrome, was a stately building, about four hundred paces in length and one hundred in breadth. The space between the two *metæ*, or goals, was filled with statues and obelisks; and we may still remark a very singular fragment of antiquity—the bodies of three serpents, twisted into one pillar of brass. Their triple heads had once supported the golden tripod which, after the defeat of Xerxes, was consecrated in the temple of Delphi by the victorious Greeks. The beauty of the Hippodrome has been long since defaced by the rude hands of the Turkish conquerors; but under the similar appellation of Atmeidan, it still serves a place of exercise for their horses.

From the throne, whence the emperor viewed the Circensian games, a winding staircase descended to the palace—a magnificent edifice, which scarcely yielded to the residence of Rome itself, and which, together with the dependent courts, gardens, and porticoes, covered a considerable extent of ground upon the banks of the Propontis, between the Hippodrome and the church of St. Sophia. We might likewise celebrate the baths, which still retained the name of Zeuxippus after they had been enriched, by the munificence of Constantine, with lofty columns, various marbles, and above threescore statues of bronze. But we should deviate

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from the design of this history if we attempted minutely to describe the different buildings or quarters of the city. It may be sufficient to observe that whatever could adorn the dignity of a great capital, or contribute to the benefit or pleasure of its numerous inhabitants, was contained within the walls of Constantinople. A particular description, composed about a century after its foundation, enumerates a capitol or school of learning, a circus, two theatres, eight public and 153 private baths, fifty-two porticoes, five granaries, eight aqueducts or reservoirs of water, four spacious halls for the meetings of the senate or courts of justice, fourteen churches, fourteen palaces, and 4388 houses which, for their size or beauty, deserved to be distinguished from the multitude of plebeian habitations.

THE OLD METROPOLIS AND THE NEW: ROME AND CONSTANTINOPLE

The populousness of this favoured city was the next and most serious object of the attention of its founder. In the dark ages which succeeded the translation of the empire, the remote and the immediate consequences of that memorable event were strangely confounded by the vanity of the Greeks and the credulity of the Latins. It was asserted and believed that all the noble families of Rome, the senate, and the equestrian order, with their innumerable attendants, had followed their emperor to the banks of the Propontis; that a spurious race of strangers and plebeians was left to possess the solitude of the ancient capital, and that the lands of Italy, long since converted into gardens, were at once deprived of cultivation and inhabitants. In the course of this history such exaggerations will be reduced to their just value. Yet, since the growth of Constantinople cannot be ascribed to the general increase of mankind and of industry, it must be admitted that this artificial colony was raised at the expense of the ancient cities of the empire. Many opulent senators of Rome and of the eastern provinces were probably invited by Constantine to adopt for their country the fortunate spot which he had chosen for his own residence. The invitations of a master are scarcely to be distinguished from commands; and the liberality of the emperor obtained a ready and cheerful obedience. He bestowed on his favourites the palaces which he had built in the several quarters of the city, assigned them lands and pensions for the support of their dignity, and alienated the demesnes of Pontus and Asia to grant the hereditary estates by the easy tenure of maintaining a house in the capital. But these encouragements and obligations soon became superfluous, and were gradually abolished. Wherever the seat of government is fixed, a considerable part of the public revenue will be expended by the prince himself, by his ministers, by the officers of justice, and by the domestics of the palace. The most wealthy of the provincials will be attracted by the powerful motives of interest and duty, of amusement and curiosity. A third and more numerous class of inhabitants will insensibly be formed, of servants, of artificers, and of merchants, who derive their subsistence from their own labour, and from the wants or luxury of the superior ranks. In less than a century Constantinople disputed with Rome itself the pre-eminence of riches and numbers. New piles of buildings, crowded together with too little regard to health or convenience, scarcely allowed the intervals of narrow streets for the perpetual throng of men, of horses, and of carriages. The allotted space of ground was insufficient to contain the increasing people; and the additional foundations, which, on

either side, were advanced into the sea, might alone have composed a very considerable city.

The frequent and regular distributions of wine and oil, of corn or bread, of money or provisions, had almost exempted the poorest citizens of Rome from the necessity of labour. The magnificence of the first Cæsars was in some measure imitated by the founder of Constantinople; but his liberality, however it might excite the applause of the people, has incurred the censure of posterity. A nation of legislators and conquerors might assert its claim to the harvest of Africa, which had been purchased with its blood; and it was artfully contrived by Augustus that in the enjoyment of plenty the Romans should lose the memory of freedom. But the prodigality of Constantine could not be excused by any consideration either of public or private interest; and the annual tribute of corn imposed upon Egypt for the benefit of his new capital was applied to feed a lazy and indolent populace, at the expense of the husbandmen of an industrious province. Some other regulations of this emperor are less liable to blame, but they are less deserving of notice. He divided Constantinople into fourteen regions or quarters, dignified the public council with the appellation of senate, communicated to the citizens the privileges of Italy, and bestowed on the rising city the title of Colony, the first and most favoured daughter of ancient Rome. The venerable parent still maintained the legal and acknowledged supremacy, which was due to her age, to her dignity, and to the remembrance of her former greatness.

As Constantine urged the process of the work with the impatience of a lover, the walls, the porticoes, and the principal edifices were completed in a few years, or, according to another account, in a few months; but this extraordinary diligence should excite less admiration, since many of the buildings were finished in so hasty and imperfect a manner that, under the succeeding reign, they were preserved with difficulty from impending ruin. But while they displayed the vigour and freshness of youth, the founder prepared to celebrate the dedication of his city. The games and largesses which crowned the pomp of this memorable festival may easily be supposed; but there is one circumstance of a more singular and permanent nature, which ought not entirely to be overlooked. As often as the birthday of the city returned, the statue of Constantine, framed by his order, of gilt wood, and bearing in his right hand a small image of the genius of the place, was erected on a triumphal car. The guards, carrying white tapers, and clothed in their richest apparel, accompanied the solemn procession as it moved through the Hippodrome. When it was opposite to the throne of the reigning emperor, he rose from his seat, and with a grateful reverence adored the memory of his predecessor. At the festival of dedication an edict, engraved on a column of marble, bestowed the title of Second or New Rome on the city of Constantine. But the name of Constantinople has prevailed over that honourable epithet, and after the revolution of fifteen centuries still perpetuates the fame of the author.

CHARACTER OF CONSTANTINE THE GREAT

The character of the prince who removed the seat of empire, and introduced such important changes into the civil and religious constitution of his country, has fixed the attention and divided the opinions of mankind. By the grateful zeal of the Christians, the deliverer of the church has been decorated with every attribute of a hero, even of a saint; while the discontent

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of the vanquished party has compared Constantine to the most abhorred of those tyrants who by their vice and weakness, dishonoured the imperial purple.

The same passions have in some degree been perpetuated to succeeding generations, and the character of Constantine is considered, even in the present age, as an object either of satire or of panegyric. By the impartial union of those defects which are confessed by his warmest admirers, and of those virtues which are acknowledged by his most implacable enemies, we might hope to delineate a just portrait of that extraordinary man, which the truth and candour of history should adopt without a blush. But it would soon appear that the vain attempt to blend such discordant colours, and to reconcile such inconsistent qualities, must produce a figure monstrous rather than human, unless it is viewed in its proper and distinct lights by a careful separation of the different periods of the reign of Constantine.

The person, as well as the mind, of Constantine had been enriched by nature with her choicest endowments. His stature was lofty, his countenance majestic, his deportment graceful; his strength and activity were displayed in every manly exercise, and from his earliest youth to a very advanced season of life he preserved the vigour of his constitution by a strict adher-



ROMAN GLASSWARE

ence to the domestic virtues of chastity and temperance. He delighted in the social intercourse of familiar conversation; and though he might sometimes indulge his disposition to raillery with less reserve than was required by the severe dignity of his station, the courtesy and liberality of his manners gained the hearts of all who approached him. The sincerity of his friendship has been suspected; yet he showed, on some occasions, that he was not incapable of a warm and lasting attachment. The disadvantage of a deficient education had not prevented him from forming a just estimate of the value of learning; and the arts and sciences derived some encouragement from the munificent protection of Constantine. In the despatch of business, his diligence was indefatigable; and the active powers of his mind were almost continually exercised in reading, writing, or meditating, in giving audience to ambassadors, and in examining the complaints of his subjects. Even those who censured the propriety of his measures were compelled to acknowledge that he possessed magnanimity to conceive and patience to execute the most arduous designs, without being checked either by the prejudices of education or by the clamours of the multitude. In the field, he infused his own intrepid spirit into the troops, whom he conducted with the talents of a consummate general; and to his abilities, rather than to his fortune, we may ascribe the

signal victories which he obtained over the foreign and domestic foes of the Republic.

He loved glory, as the reward, perhaps even as the motive, of his labours. The boundless ambition which, from the moment of his accepting the purple at York, appears as the ruling passion of his soul, may be justified by the dangers of his own situation, by the character of his rivals, by the consciousness of superior merit, and by the prospect that his success would enable him to restore peace and order to the distracted empire. In his civil wars against Maxentius and Licinius, he had engaged on his side the inclinations of the people, who compared the undissembled vices of those tyrants with the spirit of wisdom and justice which seemed to direct the general tenor of the administration of Constantine.

Had Constantine fallen on the banks of the Tiber, or even in the plains of Hadrianopolis, such is the character which, with few exceptions, he might have transmitted to posterity. But the conclusion of his reign (according to the moderate and indeed tender sentence of a writer of the same age) degraded him from the rank which he had acquired among the most deserving of the Roman princes. In the life of Augustus, we behold the tyrant of the republic converted, almost by imperceptible degrees, into the father of his country and of human kind. In that of Constantine we may contemplate a hero who had so long inspired his subjects with love and his enemies with terror degenerating into a cruel and dissolute monarch, corrupted by his fortune, or raised by conquest above the necessity of dissimulation. The general peace which he maintained during the last fourteen years of his reign was a period of apparent splendour rather than of real prosperity; and the old age of Constantine was disgraced by the opposite yet reconcilable vices of rapaciousness and prodigality. The accumulated treasures found in the palaces of Maxentius and Licinius were lavishly consumed; the various innovations introduced by the conqueror were attended with an increasing expense; the cost of his buildings, his court, and his festivals required an immediate and plentiful supply; and the oppression of the people was the only fund which could support the magnificence of the sovereign. His unworthy favourites, enriched by the boundless liberality of their master, usurped with impunity the privilege of rapine and corruption.

A secret but universal decay was felt in every part of the public administration; the emperor himself, though he still retained the obedience, gradually lost the esteem of his subjects. The dress and manners which, towards the decline of life, he chose to affect, served only to degrade him in the eyes of mankind. The Asiatic pomp, which had been adopted by the pride of Diocletian, assumed an air of softness and effeminacy in the person of Constantine. He is represented with false hair of various colours, laboriously arranged by the skilful artists of the times; a diadem of a new and more expensive fashion; a profusion of gems and pearls, of collars and bracelets, and a variegated flowing robe of silk, most curiously embroidered with flowers of gold. In such apparel, scarcely to be excused by the youth and folly of Elagabalus, we are at a loss to discover the wisdom of an aged monarch and the simplicity of a Roman veteran. A mind thus relaxed by prosperity and indulgence was incapable of rising to that magnanimity which disdains suspicion and dares to forgive. The deaths of Maximian and Licinius may perhaps be justified by the maxims of policy as they are taught in the schools of tyrants; but an impartial narrative of the executions, or rather murders, which sullied the declining age of Constantine, will suggest to our most candid thoughts the idea of a prince who could sacrifice without reluctance the

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laws of justice and the feelings of nature to the dictates either of his passions or of his interest.

The same fortune which so invariably followed the standard of Constantine seemed to secure the hopes and comforts of his domestic life. Those among his predecessors who had enjoyed the longest and most prosperous reigns, Augustus, Trajan, and Diocletian, had been disappointed of posterity; and the frequent revolutions had never allowed sufficient time for any imperial family to grow up and multiply under the shade of the purple. But the royalty of the Flavian line, which had been first ennobled by the Gothic Claudius, descended through several generations; and Constantine himself derived from his royal father the hereditary honours which he transmitted to his children. The emperor had been twice married. Minervina, the obscure but lawful object of his youthful attachment, had left him only one son, who was called Crispus. By Fausta, the daughter of Maximian, he had three daughters and three sons, known by the kindred names of Constantine, Constantius, and Constans. The unambitious brothers of the great Constantine, Julius Constantius, Dalmatius, and Hannibalianus, were permitted to enjoy the most honourable rank and the most affluent fortune that could be consistent with a private station. The youngest of the three lived without a name, and died without posterity. His two elder brothers obtained in marriage the daughters of wealthy senators, and propagated new branches of the imperial race. Gallus and Julian afterwards became the most illustrious of the children of Julius Constantius, the patrician. The two sons of Dalmatius, who had been decorated with the vain title of censor, were named Dalmatius and Hannibalianus. The two sisters of the great Constantine, Anastasia and Eutropia, were bestowed on Optatus and Nepotianus, two senators of noble birth and of consular dignity. His third sister, Constantia, was distinguished by her pre-eminence of greatness and of misery. She remained the widow of the vanquished Licinius; and it was by her entreaties that an innocent boy, the offspring of their marriage, preserved for some time his life, the title of Cæsar, and a precarious hope of the succession. Besides the females and the allies of the Flavian house, ten or twelve males, to whom the language of modern courts would apply the title of princes of the blood, seemed, according to the order of their birth, to be destined either to inherit or to support the throne of Constantine. But in less than thirty years, this numerous and increasing family was reduced to the persons of Constantius and Julian, who alone had survived a series of crimes and calamities such as the tragic poets have deplored in the devoted lines of Pelops and of Cadmus.

CONSTANTINE AND CRISPUS

Crispus, the eldest son of Constantine, and the presumptive heir of the empire, is represented by impartial historians as an amiable and accomplished youth. The care of his education, or at least of his studies, was intrusted to Lactantius, the most eloquent of the Christians; a preceptor admirably qualified to form the taste and to excite the virtues of his illustrious disciple. At the age of seventeen Crispus was invested with the title of Cæsar and the administration of the Gallic provinces, where the inroads of the Germans gave him an early occasion of signalling his military prowess. In the civil war which broke out soon afterwards the father and son divided their powers; the latter displayed great valour in forcing the

straits of the Hellespont, despite the superior fleet of Licinius. This naval victory contributed to determine the event of the war; and the names of Constantine and of Crispus were united in the joyful acclamations of their eastern subjects, who loudly proclaimed that the world had been subdued, and was now governed by an emperor endowed with every virtue; and by his illustrious son, a prince beloved of heaven, and the lively image of his father's perfections. The public favour, which seldom accompanies old age, diffused its lustre over the youth of Crispus. He deserved the esteem and he engaged the affections of the court, the army, and the people. The experienced merit of a reigning monarch is acknowledged by his subjects with reluctance, and frequently denied with partial and discontented murmurs; while, from the opening virtues of his successor, they fondly conceive the most unbounded hopes of private as well as public felicity.

This dangerous popularity soon excited the attention of Constantine, who, both as a father and as a king, was impatient of an equal. Instead of attempting to secure the allegiance of his son by the generous ties of confidence and gratitude, he resolved to prevent the mischiefs which might be apprehended from dissatisfied ambition. Crispus soon had reason to complain that while his infant brother Constantius was sent, with the title of Cæsar, to reign over his peculiar department of the Gallic provinces, he, a prince of mature years, who had performed such recent and signal services, instead of being raised to the superior rank of augustus, was confined almost a prisoner to his father's court; and exposed, without power or defence, to every calumny which the malice of his enemies could suggest. Under such painful circumstances, the royal youth might not always be able to compose his behaviour or suppress his discontent; and we may be assured that he was encompassed by a train of indiscreet or perfidious followers, who assiduously studied to inflame and who were perhaps instructed to betray the unguarded warmth of his resentment. An edict of Constantine, published about this time, manifestly indicates his real or affected suspicions that a secret conspiracy had been formed against his person and government. By all the allurements of honours and rewards, he invites informers of every degree to accuse without exception his magistrates or ministers, his friends or his most intimate favourites, protesting with a solemn asseveration that he himself will listen to the charge, that he himself will revenge his injuries; and concluding with a prayer, which discovers some apprehension of danger, that the providence of the supreme Being may still continue to protect the safety of the emperor and of the empire.

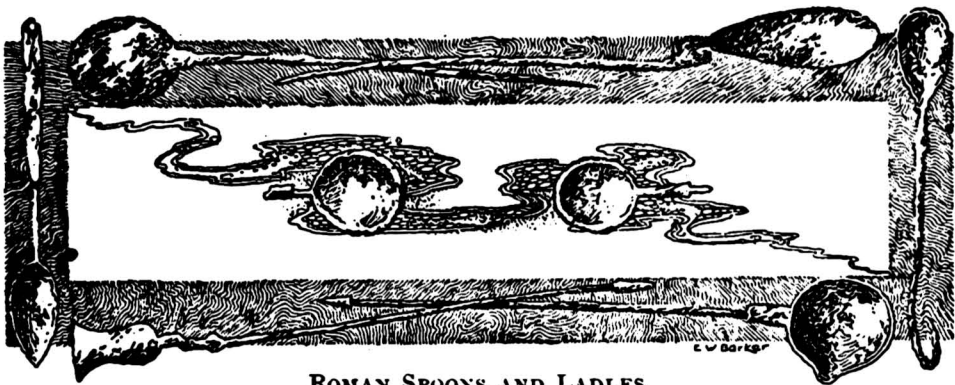
The informers who complied with so liberal an invitation were sufficiently versed in the arts of courts to select the friends and adherents of Crispus as the guilty persons; nor is there any reason to distrust the veracity of the emperor, who had promised an ample measure of revenge and punishment. The policy of Constantine maintained, however, the same appearances of regard and confidence towards a son whom he began to consider as his most irreconcilable enemy. Medals were struck with the customary vows for the long and auspicious reign of the young cæsar; and as the people, who were not admitted into the secrets of the palace, still loved his virtues and respected his dignity, a poet, who solicits his recall from exile, adores with equal devotion the majesty of the father and that of the son.

The time was now arrived for celebrating the august ceremony of the twentieth year of the reign of Constantine; and the emperor, for that purpose, removed his court from Nicomedia to Rome, where the most splendid preparations had been made for his reception. Every eye and every tongue

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affected to express its sense of the general happiness, and the veil of ceremony and dissimulation was drawn for a while over the darkest designs of revenge and murder. In the midst of the festival, the unfortunate Crispus was apprehended by order of the emperor, who laid aside the tenderness of a father, without assuming the equity of a judge. The examination was short and private; and, as it was thought decent to conceal the fate of the young prince from the eyes of the Roman people, he was sent under a strong guard to Pola, in Istria, where soon afterwards he was put to death, either by the hand of the executioner, or by the more gentle operation of poison.

The cæsar Licinius, a youth of amiable manners, was involved in the ruin of Crispus; the stern jealousy of Constantine was unmoved by the prayers and tears of his favourite sister, pleading for the life of a son whose rank was his only crime, and whose loss she did not long survive. The story of these unhappy princes, the nature and evidence of their guilt, the forms of their trial, and the circumstances of their death were buried in mysterious obscurity; and the courtly bishop who has celebrated in an elaborate work the virtues and piety of his hero observes a prudent silence on the subject of these tragic events. Such haughty contempt for the opinion of mankind, whilst it



ROMAN SPOONS AND LADLES

imprints an indelible stain on the memory of Constantine, must remind us of the very different behaviour of one of the greatest monarchs of a later age. The czar Peter, in the full possession of despotic power, submitted to the judgment of Russia, of Europe, and of posterity the reasons which had compelled him to subscribe the condemnation of a criminal, or at least of a degenerate son.

The innocence of Crispus was so universally acknowledged that the modern Greeks, who adore the memory of their founder, are reduced to palliate the guilt of parricide, which the common feelings of human nature forbade them to justify. They pretend that, as soon as the afflicted father discovered the falsehood of the accusation by which his credulity had been so fatally misled, he published to the world his repentance and remorse; that he mourned forty days, during which he abstained from the use of the bath and all the ordinary comforts of life; and that, for the lasting instruction of posterity, he erected a golden statue of Crispus, with this memorable inscription: "To my son, whom I unjustly condemned." A tale so moral and so interesting would deserve to be supported by less exceptional authority; but if we consult the more ancient and authentic writers, they will inform us that the repentance of Constantine was manifested only in acts of blood and revenge; and that he atoned for the murder of an innocent son by the execution, perhaps, of a guilty wife. They ascribe the

misfortunes of Crispus to the arts of his stepmother Fausta, whose implacable hatred, or whose disappointed love, renewed in the palace of Constantine the ancient tragedy of Hippolytus and of Phædra. Like the daughter of Minos, the daughter of Maximian accused her son-in-law of an incestuous attempt on the chastity of his father's wife; and easily obtained, from the jealousy of the emperor, a sentence of death against a young prince whom she considered with reason as the most formidable rival of her own children. But Helena, the aged mother of Constantine, lamented and revenged the untimely fate of her grandson Crispus; nor was it long before a real or pretended discovery was made that Fausta herself entertained a criminal connection with a slave belonging to the imperial stables. Her condemnation and punishment were the instant consequences of the charge; and the adulteress was suffocated by the steam of a bath, which for that purpose had been heated to an extraordinary degree. By some it will perhaps be thought that the remembrance of a conjugal union of twenty years, and the honour of their common offspring, the destined heirs of the throne, might have softened the obdurate heart of Constantine, and persuaded him to suffer his wife, however guilty she might appear, to expiate her offences in a solitary prison. But it seems a superfluous labour to weigh the propriety, unless we could ascertain the truth, of this singular event which is attended with some circumstances of doubt and perplexity.

THE HEIRS OF CONSTANTINE

Those who have attacked and those who have defended the character of Constantine, have alike disregarded two very remarkable passages of two orations pronounced under the succeeding reign. The former celebrates the virtues, the beauty, and the fortune of the empress Fausta, the daughter, wife, sister, and mother of so many princes. The latter asserts, in explicit terms, that the mother of the younger Constantine, who was slain three years after his father's death, survived to weep over the fate of her son. Notwithstanding the positive testimony of several writers of the pagan as well as of the Christian religion, there may still remain some reason to believe, or at least to suspect, that Fausta escaped the blind and suspicious cruelty of her husband. The deaths of a son and of a nephew, with the execution of a great number of respectable, and perhaps innocent friends, who were involved in their fall, may be sufficient, however, to justify the discontent of the Roman people, and to explain the satirical verses affixed to the palace gate, comparing the splendid and bloody reigns of Constantine and Nero.

By the death of Crispus, the inheritance of the empire seemed to devolve on the three sons of Fausta, who have been already mentioned under the names of Constantine, of Constantius, and of Constans. These young princes were successively invested with the title of Cæsar; and the dates of their promotion may be referred to the tenth, the twentieth, and the thirtieth years of the reign of their father. This conduct, though it tended to multiply the future masters of the Roman world, might be excused by the partiality of paternal affection; but it is not easy to understand the motives of the emperor when he endangered the safety both of his family and of his people, by the unnecessary elevation of his two nephews, Dalmatius and Hannibalianus. The former was raised, by the title of Cæsar, to an equality with his cousins. In favour of the latter, Constantine invented the new and singular appellation of "nobilissimus" to which he annexed the flattering

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distinction of a robe of purple and gold. But of the whole series of Roman princes in any age of the empire, Hannibalianus alone was distinguished by the title of king, a name which the subjects of Tiberius would have detested as the profane and cruel insult of capricious tyranny. The use of such a title, even as it appears under the reign of Constantine, is a strange and unconnected fact, which can scarcely be admitted on the joint authority of imperial medals and contemporary writers.

The whole empire was deeply interested in the education of these five youths, the acknowledged successors of Constantine. The exercises of the body prepared them for the fatigues of war and the duties of active life. Those who occasionally mention the education or talents of Constantius allow that he excelled in the gymnastic arts of leaping and running; that he was a dexterous archer, a skilful horseman, and a master of all the different weapons used in the service either of the cavalry or of the infantry. The same assiduous cultivation was bestowed, though not perhaps with equal success, to improve the minds of the other sons and the nephews of Constantine. The most celebrated professors of the Christian faith, of the Grecian philosophy, and of the Roman jurisprudence were invited by the liberality of the emperor, who reserved for himself the important task of instructing the royal youths in the science of government and the knowledge of mankind. But the genius of Constantine himself had been formed by adversity and experience. In the free intercourse of private life and amidst the dangers of the court of Galerius, he had learned to command his own passions, to encounter those of his equals, and to depend for his present safety and future greatness on the prudence and firmness of his conduct. His destined successors had the misfortune of being born and educated in the imperial purple. Incessantly surrounded by a train of flatterers, they passed their youth in the enjoyment of luxury and the expectation of a throne; nor would the dignity of their rank permit them to descend from that elevated station from whence the various characters of human nature appear to wear a smooth and uniform aspect.

The indulgence of Constantine admitted them, at a very tender age, to share the administration of the empire; and they studied the art of reigning at the expense of the people intrusted to their care. The younger Constantine was appointed to hold his court in Gaul; and his brother Constantius exchanged that department, the ancient patrimony of their father, for the more opulent, but less martial, countries of the east. Italy, the western Illyricum, and Africa were accustomed to revere Constans, the third of his sons, as the representative of the great Constantine. He fixed Dalmatius on the Gothic frontier, to which he annexed the government of Thrace, Macedonia, and Greece. The city of Cæsarea was chosen for the residence of Hannibalianus; and the provinces of Pontus, Cappadocia, and the lesser Armenia were destined to form the extent of his new kingdom. For each of these princes a suitable establishment was provided. A just proportion of guards, of legions, and of auxiliaries was allotted for their respective dignity and defence. The ministers and generals who were placed about their persons were such as Constantine could trust to assist, and even to control, these youthful sovereigns in the exercise of their delegated power. As they advanced in years and experience the limits of their authority were insensibly enlarged: but the emperor always reserved for himself the title of Augustus; and while he showed the cæsars to the armies and provinces, he maintained every part of the empire in equal obedience to its supreme head. The tranquillity of the last fourteen years of his reign was scarcely

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interrupted by the contemptible insurrection of a camel-driver in the island of Cyprus, or by the active part which the policy of Constantine engaged him to assume in the wars of the Goths and Sarmatians.

THE AGED CONSTANTINE AND THE SARMATIANS

Among the different branches of the human race, the Sarmatians form a very remarkable shade, as they seem to unite the manners of the Asiatic barbarians with the figure and complexion of the ancient inhabitants of Europe. According to the various accidents of peace and war, of alliance or conquest, the Sarmatians were sometimes confined to the banks of the Tanais; and they sometimes spread themselves over the immense plains which lie between the Vistula and the Volga. The care of their numerous flocks and herds, the pursuit of game, and the exercise of war, or rather of rapine, directed the vagrant motions of the Sarmatians. The movable camps or cities, the ordinary residence of their wives and children, consisted only of large wagons drawn by oxen, and covered in the form of tents. The military strength of the nation was composed of cavalry; and the custom of the warriors, to lead in their hand one or two spare horses, enabled them to advance and to retreat with a rapid diligence, which surprised the security and eluded the pursuit of a distant enemy. Their poverty of iron prompted their rude industry to invent a sort of cuirass, which was capable of resisting a sword or javelin, though it was formed only of horses' hoofs, cut into thin and polished slices, carefully laid over each other in the manner of scales or feathers, and strongly sewed upon an undergarment of coarse linen. The offensive arms of the Sarmatians were short daggers, long lances, and a weighty bow with a quiver of arrows. They were reduced to the necessity of employing fish bones for the points of their weapons; but the custom of dipping them in a venomous liquor, that poisoned the wounds which they inflicted, is alone sufficient to prove the most savage manners; since a people impressed with a sense of humanity would have abhorred so cruel a practice, and a nation skilled in the arts of war would have disdained so impotent a resource. Whenever these barbarians issued from their deserts in quest of prey, their shaggy beards, uncombed locks, the furs with which they were covered from head to foot, and their fierce countenances, which seemed to express the innate cruelty of their minds, inspired the more civilised provincials of Rome with horror and dismay.

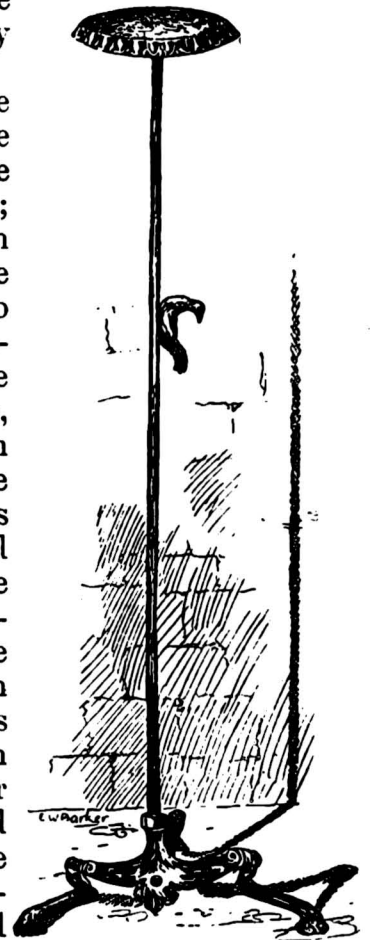
The tender Ovid, after a youth spent in the enjoyment of fame and luxury, was condemned to a hopeless exile on the frozen banks of the Danube, where he was exposed, almost without defence, to the fury of these monsters of the desert, with whose stern spirits he feared that his gentle shade might hereafter be confounded. In his pathetic but sometimes unmanly lamentations, he describes in the most lively colours the dress and manners, the arms and inroads, of the Getæ and Sarmatians, who were associated for the purposes of destruction; and from the accounts of history there is some reason to believe that these Sarmatians were the Iazyges, one of the most numerous and warlike tribes of the nation. The allurement of plenty engaged them to seek a permanent establishment on the frontiers of the empire. Soon after the reign of Augustus, they obliged the Dacians, who subsisted by fishing on the banks of the river Theiss or Tibiscus, to retire into the hilly country, and to abandon to the victorious Sarmatians the fertile plains of Upper Hungary, which are bounded by the course of the Danube and the

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semicircular enclosure of the Carpathian Mountains. In this advantageous position they watched or suspended the moment of attack, as they were provoked by injuries or appeased by presents; they gradually acquired the skill of using more dangerous weapons; and although the Sarmatians did not illustrate their name by any memorable exploits, they occasionally assisted their eastern and western neighbours, the Goths and the Germans, with a formidable body of cavalry. They lived under the irregular aristocracy of their chieftains; but after they had received into their bosom the fugitive Vandals, who yielded to the pressure of the Gothic power, they seem to have chosen a king from that nation, and from the illustrious race of the Astingi, who had formerly dwelt on the shores of the Northern Ocean.

This motive of enmity must have inflamed the subjects of contention which perpetually arise on the confines of warlike and independent nations. The Vandal princes were stimulated by fear and revenge; the Gothic king aspired to extend their dominion from the Euxine to the frontiers of Germany; and the waters of the Marus, a small river which falls into the Theiss, were stained with the blood of the contending barbarians. After some experience of the superior strength and number of their adversaries, the Sarmatians implored the protection of the Roman monarch, who beheld with pleasure the discord of the nations but who was justly alarmed by the progress of the Gothic arms. As soon as Constantine had declared himself in favour of the weaker party, the haughty Araric, king of the Goths, instead of expecting the attack of the legions, boldly passed the Danube, and spread terror and devastation through the province of Mœsia. To oppose the inroad of this destroying host, the aged emperor took the field in person; but on this occasion either his conduct or his fortune betrayed the glory which he had acquired in so many foreign and domestic wars. He had the mortification of seeing his troops fly before an inconsiderable detachment of the barbarians, who pursued them to the edge of their fortified camp and obliged him to consult his safety by a precipitate and ignominious retreat. The event of a second and more successful action retrieved the honour of the Roman name; and the powers of art and discipline prevailed, after an obstinate contest, over the efforts of irregular valour. The broken army of the Goths abandoned the field of battle, the wasted province, and the passage of the Danube; and although the eldest of the sons of Constantine was permitted to supply the place of his father, the merit of the victory, which diffused universal joy, was ascribed to the auspicious counsels of the emperor himself.

He contributed at least to improve this advantage by his negotiations with the free and warlike people of Chersonesus, whose capital, situated on the western coast of the Tauric or Crimæan peninsula, still retained some vestiges of a Grecian colony, and was governed by a perpetual magistrate, assisted by a council of senators, emphatically styled the fathers of the city. The Chersonites were animated against the Goths by the memory of the wars



ROMAN CANDALABRUM

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which, in the preceding century, they had maintained with unequal forces against the invaders of their country. They were connected with the Romans by the mutual benefits of commerce, as they were supplied from the provinces of Asia with corn and manufactures, which they purchased with their own productions, salt, wax, and hides. Obedient to the requisition of Constantine, they prepared, under the conduct of their magistrate Diogenes, a considerable army, of which the principal strength consisted in crossbows and military chariots. The speedy march and intrepid attack of the Chersonites, by diverting the attention of the Goths, assisted the operations of the imperial generals.

The Goths, vanquished on every side, were driven into the mountains, where in the course of a severe campaign about a hundred thousand were computed to have perished by cold and hunger. Peace was at length granted to their humble supplications; the eldest son of Araric was accepted as the most valuable hostage; and Constantine endeavoured to convince their chiefs, by a liberal distribution of honours and rewards, how far the friendship of the Romans was preferable to their enmity. The expressions of his gratitude towards the faithful Chersonites, the emperor was still more magnificent. The pride of the nation was gratified by the splendid and almost royal decorations bestowed on their magistrate and his successors. A perpetual exemption from all duties was stipulated for their vessels which traded to the ports of the Black Sea. A regular subsidy was promised of iron, corn, oil, and every supply which could be useful either in peace or war. But it was thought that the Sarmatians were sufficiently rewarded by their deliverance from impending ruin; and the emperor, perhaps with too strict an economy, deducted some part of the expenses of the war from the customary gratifications which were allowed to that turbulent nation.

Exasperated by this apparent neglect the Sarmatians soon forgot, with the levity of barbarians, the services which they had so lately received, and the dangers which still threatened their safety. Their inroads on the territory of the empire provoked the indignation of Constantine to leave them to their fate, and he no longer opposed the ambition of Geberic, a renowned warrior, who had recently ascended the Gothic throne. Wisumar, the Vandal king, whilst alone and unassisted he defended his dominions with undaunted courage, was vanquished and slain in a decisive battle, which swept away the flower of the Sarmatian youth. The remainder of the nation embraced the desperate expedient of arming their slaves, a hardy race of hunters and herdsmen, by whose tumultuary aid they revenged their defeat and expelled the invader from their confines. But they soon discovered that they had exchanged a foreign for a domestic enemy, more dangerous and more implacable. Enraged by their former servitude, elated by their present glory, the slaves, under the name of Limigantes, claimed and usurped the possession of the country which they had saved. Their masters, unable to withstand the ungoverned fury of the populace, preferred the hardships of exile to the tyranny of their servants. Some of the fugitive Sarmatians solicited a less ignominious dependence under the hostile standard of the Goths. A more numerous band retired beyond the Carpathian Mountains, among the Quadi, their German allies, and were easily admitted to share a superfluous waste of uncultivated land. But the far greater part of the distressed nation turned their eyes towards the fruitful provinces of Rome. Imploring the protection and forgiveness of the emperor, they solemnly promised, as subjects in peace and as soldiers in war, the most inviolable fidelity to the empire which should graciously receive them into its bosom. According to the

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maxims adopted by Probus and his successors, the offers of this barbarian colony were eagerly accepted; and a competent portion of lands in the provinces of Pannonia, Thrace, Macedonia, and Italy were immediately assigned for the habitation and subsistence of three hundred thousand Sarmatians.

LAST DAYS OF CONSTANTINE

By chastising the pride of the Goths, and by accepting the homage of a suppliant nation, Constantine asserted the majesty of the Roman Empire; and the ambassadors of Ethiopia, Persia, and the most remote countries of India congratulated the peace and prosperity of his government. If he reckoned among the favours of fortune the death of his eldest son, of his nephew, and perhaps of his wife, he enjoyed an uninterrupted flow of private as well as public felicity, till the thirtieth year of his reign; a period which none of his predecessors, since Augustus, had been permitted to celebrate. Constantine survived that solemn festival about ten months; and, at the mature age of sixty-four, after a short illness, he ended his memorable life at the palace of Aquyriion, in the suburbs of Nicomedia, whither he had retired for the benefit of the air and with the hope of recruiting his exhausted strength by the use of the warm baths. The excessive demonstrations of grief, or at least of mourning, surpassed whatever had been practised on any former occasion. Notwithstanding the claims of the senate and people of ancient Rome, the corpse of the deceased emperor, according to his last request, was transported to the city which was destined to preserve the name and memory of its founder. The body of Constantine, adorned with the vain symbols of greatness, the purple and diadem, was deposited on a golden bed in one of the apartments of the palace, which for that purpose had been splendidly furnished and illuminated. The forms of the court were strictly maintained. Every day, at the appointed hours, the principal officers of the state, the army, and the household, approaching the person of their sovereign with bended knees and a composed countenance, offered their respectful homage as seriously as if he had been still alive. From motives of policy this theatrical representation was for some time continued; nor could flattery neglect the opportunity of remarking that Constantine alone, by the peculiar indulgence of heaven, had reigned after his death.^c

