

CHAPTER XVIII

Character of Constantine — Gothic War — Death of Constantine — Division of the Empire among his three Sons — Persian War — Tragic Deaths of Constantine the Younger and Constans — Usurpation of Magnentius — Civil War — Victory of Constantius

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, and even of a saint; while the discontent 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.¹ But it would soon appear that the vain attempt to blend such discordant colours, and

¹ On ne se trompera point sur Constantin, en croyant tout le mal qu'en dit Eusèbe, et tout le bien qu'en dit Zosime. Fleury, Hist. Ecclésiastique, t. iii. p. 233. Eusebius and Zosimus form indeed the two extremes of flattery and invective. The intermediate shades are expressed by those writers whose character or situation variously tempered the influence of their religious zeal.

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 adherence 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 shewed, on some occasions, that he was not incapable of a warm and lasting attachment. The disadvantage of an illiterate 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 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.²

Had Constantine fallen on the banks of the Tiber, or even in the plains of Hadrianople, such is the character which, with a 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.³ 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,

² The virtues of Constantine are collected for the most part from Eutropius and the younger Victor, two sincere Pagans, who wrote after the extinction of his family. Even Zosimus and the *emperor* Julian acknowledge his personal courage and military achievements.

³ See Eutropius, x. 6. In primo Imperii tempore optimis principibus, ultimo mediis comparandus. From the ancient Greek version of Pænius (edit. Havercamp. p. 697), I am inclined to suspect that Eutropius had originally written *vix* mediis; and that the offensive monosyllable was dropped by the wilful inadvertency of transcribers. Aurelius Victor [Epit. 41] expresses the general opinion by a vulgar and indeed obscure proverb: *Trachala* decem annis præstantissimus; duodecim sequentibus *latro*; decem novissimis *pupillus* ob immodicas profusiones.

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.⁴ His unworthy favourites, enriched by the boundless liberality of their master, usurped with impunity the privilege of rapine and corruption.⁵ A secret but universal decay was felt in every part of the public administration, and 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,

⁴ Julian. Orat. i. p. 8 [9, ed. Hertl.], in a flattering discourse pronounced before the son of Constantine; and Cæsares, p. 335. Zosimus, p. 114, 115 [ii. 38]. The stately buildings of Constantinople, &c., may be quoted as a lasting and unexceptionable proof of the profuseness of their founder.

⁵ The impartial Ammianus deserves all our confidence. Proximorum fauces aperuit primus omnium Constantinus. L. xvi. c. 8. Eusebius himself confesses the abuse (Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 29, 54); and some of the Imperial laws feebly point out the remedy. See above, p. 129-130 of this volume.

we are at a loss to discover the wisdom of an aged monarch and the simplicity of a Roman veteran.⁶ 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 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,⁷ had left him only one son, who was called Crispus.

⁶ Julian, in the *Cæsars*, attempts to ridicule his uncle. His suspicious testimony is confirmed however by the learned Spanheim, with the authority of medals (see *Commentaire*, p. 156, 299, 397, 459). Eusebius (*Orat.* c. 5) alleges that Constantine dressed for the public, not for himself. Were this admitted, the vainest coxcomb could never want an excuse.

⁷ Zosimus [ii. 20] and Zonaras [13, 2] agree in representing Minervina as the concubine of Constantine; but Ducange has very gallantly rescued her character, by producing a decisive passage from one of the panegyrics: "Ab ipso fine pueritiæ te [ilico] matrimonii legibus dedisti [tradidisti]." *Incert. Pan.* vi. § 4. [The reference is probably to an early (and childless) marriage of Constantine, not to Minervina, who was doubtless his concubine. Cp. Seeck, *Gesch. des Untergangs der ant. Welt*, i. p. 442. It has been

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,⁸ 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 *ensor*, 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.

doubted whether the three younger sons were the children of Fausta; Zosimus denies it (ii. 39). We have to accept the fact that the first eight years of the marriage were fruitless, Constantine being born in 315-16 if Julian's statement is true, Or. i. 10, p. 25. Mommsen thinks they may have been adopted by Fausta: C.I.L. 10, 678.]

⁸ Ducange (*Familiæ Byzantinæ*, p. 44) bestows on him, after Zonaras, the name of Constantine; a name somewhat unlikely, as it was already occupied by the elder brother. That of Hannibalianus is mentioned in the Paschal Chronicle, and is approved by Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 527. [The correct form of the second brother's name is Delmatius.]

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.

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 entrusted 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 signalising his military prowess. In the civil war which broke out soon afterwards, the father and son divided their powers; and this history has already celebrated the valour as well as conduct displayed by the latter in forcing the straits of the Hellespont, so obstinately defended by 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

* Jerom. in Chron. The poverty of Lactantius may be applied either to the praise of the disinterested philosopher or to the shame of the unfeeling patron. See Tillemont, *Mém. Ecclésiast.* tom. vi. part i. p. 345. Dupin, *Bibliothèque Ecclésiast.* tom. i. p. 205. Lardner's *Credibility of the Gospel History*, part ii. vol. vii. p. 66.

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.¹⁰

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,¹¹ *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

¹⁰ Euseb. Hist. Ecclesiast. l. x. c. 9. Eutropius (x. 6) styles him "egregium virum"; and Julian (Orat. i.) very plainly alludes to the exploits of Crispus in the civil war. See Spanheim, Comment. p. 92.

¹¹ Compare Idatius and the Paschal Chronicle with Ammianus, l. xiv. c. 5. The year in which Constantius was created Cæsar seems to be more accurately fixed by the two chronologists; but the historian who lived in his court could not be ignorant of the *day* of the anniversary. [The day is Nov. 8; so Idatius, confirmed by the Fasti of Philocalus, C.I.L. i. p. 379. Ammian's *Oct.* is a slip for *Nov.*] For the appointment of the new Cæsar to the provinces of Gaul, see Julian. Orat. i. p. 12; Godefroy, Chronol. Legum, p. 26; and Blondel de la Primauté de l'Eglise, p. 1183. [Idatius gives 324 A.D., Chron. Pasch. 325 A.D. The right year is in Jerome, Chron. 323 A.D. Cp. Stobbe, *Philologus*, 32, p. 85.]

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.¹²

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;¹³ 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.¹⁴ 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

¹² Cod. Theod. l. ix. tit. iv. [leg. 1, 4]. Godefroy suspected the secret motives of this law. Comment. tom. iii. p. 9. [But it is very doubtful whether such secret motives, and not rather flagrant abuses, led to this edict.]

¹³ Ducange, *Fam. Byzant.* p. 28. Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 610.

¹⁴ His name was Porphyrius Optatianus. The date of his panegyric, written according to the taste of the age in vile acrostics, is settled by Scaliger ad Euseb. p. 250. Tillemont, tom. iv. p. 607 [cp. p. 221], and Fabricius, *Biblioth. Latin.* l. iv. c. 1. [Clinton gives the date as 325 A.D. Jerome, *Chron.*, enters it under 329 A.D.]

tongue affected to express their 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.¹⁶ 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;¹⁶ 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.¹⁷ The Cæsar Licinius, a youth of amiable manners, was involved in the ruin of Crispus;¹⁸ and 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

¹⁶ Zosim. l. ii. p. 103 [29]. Godefroy, Chronol. Legum, p. 28.

¹⁶ *Axpron*, without a trial, is the strong, and most probably the just, expression of Suidas. The elder Victor, who wrote under the next reign, speaks with becoming caution. "Natū grandior incertum quā causā patris iudicio occidisset." If we consult the succeeding writers, Eutropius, the younger Victor, Orosius, Jerom, Zosimus, Philostorgius, and Gregory of Tours, their knowledge will appear gradually to increase, as their means of information must have diminished; a circumstance which frequently occurs in historical disquisition. [See Appendix 9.]

¹⁷ Ammianus (l. xiv. c. 11) uses the general expression of *peremptum*. Codinus (p. 34 [63, ed. Bonn]) beheads the young prince; but Sidonius Apollinaris (Epistol. v. 8), for the sake perhaps of an antithesis to Fausta's *warm* bath, chooses to administer a draught of *cold* poison. [All critics are agreed as to the date, 326, though Chron. Alex. gives 325. The true causes of the tragedy are enveloped in a tantalising veil of obscurity. It may be noted that the name of Crispus was often erased on inscriptions; cp. C.I.L. 10, 517, &c.]

¹⁸ Sorosis filium, commodæ indolis juvenem. Eutropius, x. 6 [date, see Jerome, Chron.]. May I not be permitted to conjecture that Crispus had married Helena, the daughter of the emperor Licinius, and that on the happy delivery of the princess, in the year 322, a general pardon was granted by Constantine? [So Seeck.] See Ducange, Fam. Byzant. p. 47, and the law (l. ix. tit. xxxviii. [leg. 1]) of the Theodosian Code, which has so much embarrassed the interpreters. Godefroy, tom. iii. p. 267. [As to the younger Licinius, cp. Appendix 9.]

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.¹⁹ Such haughty contempt for the opinion of mankind, whilst it imprints an indelible stain on the memory of Constantine, must remind us of the very different behaviour of one of the greatest monarchs of the present 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 to the condemnation of a criminal, or at least of a degenerate, son.²⁰

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 a 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.**²¹ A tale so moral and so interesting would deserve to be sup-

¹⁹ See the *Life of Constantine*, particularly l. ii. c. 19, 20. Two hundred and fifty years afterwards, Evagrius (l. iii. c. 41) deduced from the silence of Eusebius a vain argument against the reality of the fact.

²⁰ *Histoire de Pierre le Grand*, par Voltaire, part ii. c. x.

²¹ In order to prove that the statue was erected by Constantine, and afterwards concealed by the malice of the Arians, Codinus very readily creates (p. 34) two witnesses, Hippolytus and the younger Herodotus, to whose imaginary histories he appeals with unblushing confidence.

ported by less exceptionable 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 step-mother Fausta, whose implacable hatred, or whose disappointed love, renewed in the palace of Constantine the ancient tragedy of Hippolytus and of Phædra.²² 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.²³ 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.²⁴ By some it will perhaps be thought, that

²² Zosimus (l. ii. p. 103 [29]) may be considered as our original. The ingenuity of the moderns, assisted by a few hints from the ancients, has illustrated and improved his obscure and imperfect narrative. [For Seeck's view, see Appendix 9.]

²³ Philostorgius, l. ii. c. 4. Zosimus (l. ii. p. 104, 116 [29; 39]) imputes to Constantine the death of two wives: of the innocent Fausta, and of an adulteress who was the mother of his three successors. According to Jerom, three or four years elapsed between the death of Crispus and that of Fausta. The elder Victor is prudently silent. [Thus Jerome's date would be c. 329 A.D. Greg. of Tours, H.F. i. 36, suggests 326 (so Tillemont, iv. p. 224). Clinton decides for 327.]

²⁴ If Fausta was put to death, it is reasonable to believe that the private apartments of the palace were the scene of her execution. The orator Chrysostom indulges his fancy by exposing the naked empress on a desert mountain, to be devoured by wild beasts.

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. 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.²⁶ 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.²⁸ 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,²⁷ who were involved in their fall, may be sufficient, however, to justify the discontent of the Roman people, and to explain the satirical

²⁶ Julian. Orat. i. [p. 10, ed. Hertl.]. He seems to call her the mother of Crispus. She might assume that title by adoption. At least, she was not considered as his mortal enemy. Julian compares the fortune [not the fate] of Fausta with that of Parysatis, the Persian queen. A Roman would have more naturally recollected the second Agrippina: —

Et moi, qui sur le trône ai suivi mes ancêtres:
Moi, fille, femme, sœur et mère de vos maîtres.

²⁸ Monod. in Constantin. Jun. c. 4, ad Calcem. Eutrop. edit. Havercamp. The orator styles her the most divine and pious of queens. [Ranke, *Weltgeschichte*, iii. 521, accepts the evidence of this document and rejects the execution of Fausta. But the *Monodia* has nothing to do with Constantine; see vol. ii. Appendix 10.]

²⁷ Interfecit numerosos amicos. Eutrop. x. 6.

verses affixed to the palace-gate, comparing the splendid and bloody reigns of Constantine and Nero.²⁸

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.²⁹ 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*;³⁰ to which he annexed the flattering 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

²⁸ Saturni aurea sæcula quis requirat?
Sunt hæc gemmea, sed Neroniana.

—Sidon. Apollinar. v. 8.

It is somewhat singular, that these satirical lines should be attributed, not to an obscure libeller, or a disappointed patriot, but to Ablavius [Ablabius], prime minister and favourite of the emperor. We may now perceive that the imprecations of the Roman people were dictated by humanity, as well as by superstition. Zosim. l. ii. p. 105 [29 ad fin., 30 ad in.].

²⁹ Euseb. Orat. in Constantin. c. 3. These dates are sufficiently correct to justify the orator. [The right dates are 317, 323, 333, respectively.]

³⁰ Zosim. l. ii. p. 117 [c. 39]. Under the predecessors of Constantine, *Nobilissimus* was a vague epithet rather than a legal and determined title. [Dalmatius is named on coins: nob. Cæs. and princ. iuventutis, Cohen, 6.]

scarcely be admitted on the joint authority of Imperial medals and contemporary writers.³¹

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.³² The same assiduous cultivation was bestowed, though not perhaps with equal success, to improve the minds of the sons and nephews of Constantine.³³ 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

³¹ *Adstruunt nummi veteres ac singulares.* Spanheim de Usu Numismat. Dissertat. xii. vol. ii. p. 357 [cp. Eckhel, 8, p. 174]. Ammianus speaks of this Roman king (l. xiv. c. 1) and Valesius ad loc. The Valesian fragment styles him King of kings; and the Paschal Chronicle (p. 286 [p. 532, ed. Bonn]), by employing the word 'Ρῆγα, acquires the weight of Latin evidence. Pontic and Armenian regions were assigned to him in 335 A.D. with the title of *rex regum*. He was thus to be a vassal king, subordinate to the emperors. Observe that 'Ρῆγα (not βασιλέα) is used of him in the Paschal Chronicle. Mommsen guesses that Bosporus (in the Chersonesus) was included in this kingdom, from the fact that the last coin of Bosporus dates from 335 A.D. (Röm. Ges. v. 289).]

³² His dexterity in martial exercise is celebrated by Julian (Orat. i. p. 11 [12], Orat. ii. p. 53 [67], and allowed by Ammianus (l. xxi. c. 16).

³³ Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 51. Julian. Orat. i. p. 11-16, with Spanheim's elaborate Commentary. Libanius, Orat. iii. p. 109 [ed. Paris, 1627]. Constantius studied with laudable diligence; but the dulness of his fancy prevented him from succeeding in the art of poetry, or even of rhetoric.

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 personal conduct. His destined successors had the misfortune of being born and educated in the Imperial purple. Incessantly surrounded with 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 entrusted 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 shewed the *Cæsars* to the armies and provinces, he maintained every part of the empire in equal obedience to its supreme

head.³⁴ The tranquillity of the last fourteen years of his reign was scarcely interrupted by the contemptible insurrection of a camel-driver in the island of Cyprus,³⁵ or by the active part which the policy of Constantine engaged him to assume in the wars of the Goths and 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.³⁶ 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 waggons, drawn by oxen and covered in the form of tents. The military strength of the nation was composed of cavalry; and the custom of their 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.³⁷

³⁴ Eusebius ([*Vita C.*] l. iv. c. 51, 52), with a design of exalting the authority and glory of Constantine, affirms that he divided the Roman empire as a private citizen might have divided his patrimony. His distribution of the provinces may be collected from Eutropius, the two Victors, and the Valesian fragment. [On this division see Appendix 10.]

³⁵ Calocerus, the obscure leader of this rebellion, or rather tumult, was apprehended and burnt alive in the market-place of Tarsus, by the vigilance of Dalmatius. See the elder Victor, the chronicle of Jerom, and the doubtful traditions of Theophanes and Cedrenus.

³⁶ Cellarius has collected the opinions of the ancients concerning the European and Asiatic Sarmatia; and M. d'Anville has applied them to modern geography with the skill and accuracy which always distinguishes that excellent writer.

³⁷ Ammian. l. xvii. c. 12. The Sarmatian horses were castrated, to prevent the mischievous accidents which might happen from the noisy and ungovernable passions of the males.

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 under-garment of coarse linen.⁸⁸ 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.⁸⁹ 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 an 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

⁸⁸ Pausanias, l. i. p. 50, edit. Kuhn [c. 21]. That inquisitive traveller had carefully examined a Sarmatian cuirass, which was preserved in the temple of Æsculapius at Athens.

⁸⁹ *Aspicis et mitti sub adunco toxica ferro,
Et telum causas mortis habere duas.*

—Ovid. *ex Ponto*, l. iv. ep. 7, ver. 7.

See in the *Recherches sur les Américains*, tom. ii. p. 236-271, a very curious dissertation on poisoned darts. The venom was commonly extracted from the vegetable reign; but that employed by the Scythians appears to have been drawn from the viper and a mixture of human blood. The use of poisoned arms, which has been spread over both worlds, never preserved a savage tribe from the arms of a disciplined enemy.

hereafter be confounded. In his pathetic, but sometimes unmanly, lamentations,⁴⁰ 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 Jazygæ, one of the most numerous and warlike tribes of the nation. The allurements 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 the Upper Hungary, which are bounded by the course of the Danube and the semi-circular enclosure of the Carpathian mountains.⁴¹ 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;⁴² but, after they had received

⁴⁰ The nine books of Poetical Epistles, which Ovid composed during the seven first years of his melancholy exile, possess, besides the merit of elegance, a double value. They exhibit a picture of the human mind under very singular circumstances; and they contain many curious observations, which no Roman, except Ovid, could have an opportunity of making. Every circumstance which tends to illustrate the history of the Barbarians has been drawn together by the very accurate Count de Buat. *Hist. Ancienne des Peuples de l'Europe*, tom. iv. c. xvi. p. 286-317. [For Sarmatians cp. Appendix 11.]

⁴¹ The Sarmatians [*? leg. Sarmatian*] Jazygæ were settled on the banks of the Pathissus or Tibiscus, when Pliny, in the year 79, published his *Natural History*. See l. iv. c. 25. In the time of Strabo and Ovid, sixty or seventy years before, they appear to have inhabited beyond the Getæ, along the coast of the Euxine.

⁴² *Principes Sarmatarum Jazygum penes quos civitatis regimen . . . plebem quoque et vim equitum quâ solâ valent offerebant.* Tacit. *Hist.* iii. 5. This offer was made in the civil war between Vitellius and Vespasian.

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.⁴³

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 kings aspired to extend their dominion from the Euxine to the frontiers of Germany: and the waters of the Maros, 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 Mæsia. 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.⁴⁴ The event of a second and more successful action retrieved the honour of the Roman name;

⁴³ This hypothesis of a Vandal king reigning over Sarmatian subjects seems necessary to reconcile the Goth Jornandes with the Greek and Latin historians of Constantine. It may be observed that Isidore, who lived in Spain under the dominion of the Goths, gives them for enemies, not the Vandals, but the Sarmatians. See his Chronicle in Grotius, p. 709.

⁴⁴ [There seems to be no evidence for this defeat of Constantine. It is a curious error of Gibbon.]

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,⁴⁵ whose capital, situate 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 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 only 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

⁴⁵ I may stand in need of some apology for having used, without scruple, the authority of Constantine Porphyrogenitus, in all that relates to the wars and negotiations of the Chersonites. I am aware that he was a Greek of the tenth century, and that his accounts of ancient history are frequently confused and fabulous. But on this occasion his narrative is, for the most part, consistent and probable; nor is there much difficulty in conceiving that an emperor might have access to some secret archives, which had escaped the diligence of meaner historians. For the situation and history of Cherson, see Peyssonel des Peuples barbares qui ont habité les Bords du Danube, c. xvi. p. 84-90. [Const. Porph., de Adm. Imp. c. 53. See St. Martin (note on Lebeau, i. 326), who points out that Gibbon has confounded the city of Cherson, to which Constantine Porph. refers, with the whole peninsula. He is also mistaken in describing the Stephanephoros (who was annually elected) as a perpetual magistrate. Milman calls attention to St. Martin's note.]

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, above an 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. In 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 of 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.⁴⁶

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 un-

⁴⁶ [This is a misconception. No such "deduction" is mentioned in the sources.]

assisted 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 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.⁴⁷

⁴⁷ The Gothic and Sarmatian wars are related in so broken and imperfect a manner that I have been obliged to compare the following writers, who mutually supply, correct, and illustrate each other. Those who will take the same trouble, may acquire a right of criticising my narrative. *Ammianus*, l. xvii. c. 12. *Anonym. Valesian.* p. 715. *Eutropius*, x. 7. *Sextus Rufus de Provinciis*, c. 26. *Julian. Orat.* i. p. 9, and *Spanheim, Comment.*

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 Æthiopia, Persia, and the most remote countries of India congratulated the peace and prosperity of his government.⁴⁹ 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 Aquyrion, 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

p. 94. Hieronym. in Chron. Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 6. Socrates, l. i. c. 18. Sozomen, l. i. c. 8. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 108 [c. 21]. Jornandes de Reb. Geticis, c. 22. Isidorus in Chron. p. 709; in Hist. Gothorum Grotii. Constantin. Porphyrogenitus de administrat. Imperii. c. 53, p. 208, edit. Meursii. [Add John of Antioch, fr. 171 (Müller, F.H.G. 4). It has been conjectured by Böcking that the Sarmatian settlements in Ausonius *Mosella* 819 were made at this time. Sarmatic games were instituted (C.I.L. i. 407) and Constantine is called Sarmaticus in inscriptions. See Henzen, 5576; Eckhel, 8, 87, 101, 107.]

⁴⁹ Eusebius (in Vit. Const. l. iv. c. 50) remarks three circumstances relative to these Indians. 1. They came from the shores of the Eastern ocean; a description which might be applied to the coast of China or Coromandel. 2. They presented shining gems and unknown animals. 3. They protested their kings had erected statues to represent the supreme majesty of Constantine.

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.⁴⁰

But this reign could subsist only in empty pageantry; and it was soon discovered that the will of the most absolute monarch is seldom obeyed, when his subjects have no longer anything to hope from his favour, or to dread from his resentment. The same ministers and generals who bowed with such reverential awe before the inanimate corpse of their deceased sovereign were engaged in secret consultations to exclude his two nephews, Dalmatius and Hannibalianus, from the share which he had assigned them in the succession of the empire. We are too imperfectly acquainted with the court of Constantine to form any judgment of the real motives which influenced the leaders of the conspiracy; unless we should suppose that they were actuated by a spirit of jealousy and revenge against the prefect Ablavius, a proud favourite, who had long directed the counsels and abused the confidence of the late emperor. The arguments by which they solicited the concurrence of the soldiers and people are of a more obvious nature: and they

⁴⁰ *Funus relatum in urbem sui nominis, quod sane P. R. ægerrime tulit.* Aurelius Victor (Cæs. 41). Constantine had prepared for himself a stately tomb in the church of the Holy Apostles. Euseb. l. iv. c. 60. The best, and indeed almost the only, account of the sickness, death, and funeral of Constantine is contained in the fourth book of his Life, by Eusebius. [The Cæsars did not become Augusti till 9th September, and the dead emperor nominally reigned in the four intervening months.]

might with decency, as well as truth, insist on the superior rank of the children of Constantine, the danger of multiplying the number of sovereigns, and the impending mischiefs which threatened the republic, from the discord of so many rival princes, who were not connected by the tender sympathy of fraternal affection. The intrigue was conducted with zeal and secrecy till a loud and unanimous declaration was procured from the troops that they would suffer none except the sons of their lamented monarch to reign over the Roman empire.⁵⁰ The younger Dalmatius, who was united with his collateral relations by the ties of friendship and interest, is allowed to have inherited a considerable share of the abilities of the great Constantine; but, on this occasion, he does not appear to have concerted any measures for supporting, by arms, the just claims which himself and his royal brother derived from the liberality of their uncle.⁵¹ Astonished and overwhelmed by the tide of popular fury, they seem to have remained, without the power of flight or of resistance, in the hands of their implacable enemies. Their fate was suspended till the arrival of Constantius, the second, and perhaps the most favoured, of the sons of Constantine.

The voice of the dying emperor had recommended the care of his funeral to the piety of Constantius; and that prince, by the vicinity of his Eastern station, could easily prevent the diligence of his brothers, who resided in their distant government of Italy and Gaul. As soon as he had taken possession of the palace of Constantinople, his first care was to remove the apprehensions of his kinsmen by a solemn oath, which he

⁵⁰ Eusebius (l. iv. c. 6) terminates his narrative by this loyal declaration of the troops, and avoids all the invidious circumstances of the subsequent massacre.

⁵¹ The character of Dalmatius is advantageously, though concisely, drawn by Eutropius (x. 9). Dalmatius Cæsar prosperrimâ indole, neque patruo absimilis, *haud multo* post oppressus est factione militari. As both Jerom and the Alexandrian Chronicle mention the third year of the Cæsar, which did not commence till the 18th or 24th of September, A.D. 337, it is certain that these military factions continued above four months.

pledged for their security. His next employment was to find some specious pretence which might release his conscience from the obligation of an imprudent promise. The arts of fraud were made subservient to the designs of cruelty; and a manifest forgery was attested by a person of the most sacred character. From the hands of the bishop of Nicomedia, Constantius received a fatal scroll affirmed to be the genuine testament of his father; in which the emperor expressed his suspicions that he had been poisoned by his brother; and conjured his sons to revenge his death, and to consult their own safety by the punishment of the guilty.⁵² Whatever reasons might have been alleged by these unfortunate princes to defend their life and honour against so incredible an accusation, they were silenced by the furious clamours of the soldiers, who declared themselves at once their enemies, their judges, and their executioners. The spirit, and even the forms, of legal proceedings were repeatedly violated in a promiscuous massacre; which involved the two uncles of Constantius, seven of his cousins, of whom Dalmatius and Hannibalianus were the most illustrious, the patrician Optatus, who had married a sister of the late emperor, and the prefect Ablavius, whose power and riches had inspired him with some hopes of obtaining the purple. If it were necessary to aggravate the horrors of this bloody scene, we might add that Constantius himself had espoused the daughter of his uncle Julius, and that he had bestowed his sister in marriage on his cousin Hannibalianus. These alliances, which the policy of Constantine, regardless of the public⁵³ prejudice, had

⁵² I have related this singular anecdote on the authority of Philostorgius, l. ii. c. 16. But, if such a pretext was ever used by Constantine and his adherents, it was laid aside with contempt, as soon as it had served their immediate purpose. Athanasius (tom. i. p. 856) mentions the oath which Constantius had taken for the security of his kinsmen. [The story is very doubtful.]

⁵³ *Conjugia sobrinarum diu ignorata, tempore addito percrebuisse.* Tac. Ann. xii. 6, and Lipsius ad loc. The repeal of the ancient law, and the practice of five hundred years, were insufficient to eradicate the prejudices of the Romans; who still considered the marriages of cousins-german as a species

formed between the several branches of the Imperial house, served only to convince mankind that these princes were as cold to the endearments of conjugal affection, as they were insensible to the ties of consanguinity and the moving entreaties of youth and innocence. Of so numerous a family Gallus and Julian alone, the two youngest children of Julius Constantius, were saved from the hands of the assassins, till their rage, satiated with slaughter, had in some measure subsided. The emperor Constantius, who, in the absence of his brothers, was the most obnoxious to guilt and reproach, discovered, on some future occasions, a faint and transient remorse for those cruelties, which the perfidious counsels of his ministers and the irresistible violence of the troops had extorted from his unexperienced youth.⁶⁴

The massacre of the Flavian race was succeeded by a new division of the provinces; which was ratified in a personal interview of the three brothers. Constantine, the eldest of the Cæsars, obtained, with a certain pre-eminence of rank, the possession of the new capital, which bore his own name and that of his father. Thrace and the countries of the East were allotted for the patrimony of Constantius; and Constans was

of imperfect incest (Augustin de Civitate Dei, xv. 6); and Julian, whose mind was biassed by superstition and resentment, stigmatises these unnatural alliances between his own cousins with the opprobrious epithet of γάμων τε οὐ γάμων (Orat. vii. p. 228 [296]). The jurisprudence of the canons has since revived and enforced this prohibition, without being able to introduce it either into the civil or the common law of Europe. See on the subject of these marriages, Taylor's Civil Law, p. 331; Brouer, de Jure Connub. l. ii. c. 12; Hericourt, des Loix Ecclésiastiques, part iii. c. 5; Fleury, Institutions du Droit Canonique, tom. i. p. 331. Paris, 1767; and Fra Paolo, Istoria del Concilio Trident. l. viii.

⁶⁴ Julian (ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 270 [i. p. 348, ed. Hertl.]) charges his cousin Constantius with the whole guilt of a massacre from which he himself so narrowly escaped. His assertion is confirmed by Athanasius, who, for reasons of a very different nature, was not less an enemy of Constantius (tom. i. p. 856 [ad. mon. 69]). Zosimus joins in the same accusation. But the three abbreviators, Eutropius and the Victors, use very qualifying expressions; "sinente potius quam jubente;" "incertum quo suasore;" "vi militum." [But Julian also says Constantius acted under compulsion; cp. Or. i. p. 19.]

acknowledged as the lawful sovereign of Italy, Africa, and the Western Illyricum. The armies submitted to their hereditary right; and they condescended, after some delay, to accept from the Roman senate the title of *Augustus*. When they first assumed the reins of government, the eldest of these princes was twenty-one, the second twenty, and the third only seventeen, years of age.⁵⁵

While the martial nations of Europe followed the standards of his brothers, Constantius, at the head of the effeminate troops of Asia, was left to sustain the weight of the Persian war. At the decease of Constantine, the throne of the East was filled by Sapor, son of Hormouz or Hormisdas, and grandson of Narses, who, after the victory of Galerius, had humbly confessed the superiority of the Roman power. Although Sapor was in the thirtieth year of his long reign, he was still in the vigour of youth, as the date of his accession, by a very strange fatality, had preceded that of his birth. The wife of Hormouz remained pregnant at the time of her husband's death; and the uncertainty of the sex, as well as of the event, excited the ambitious hopes of the princes of the house of Sassan. The apprehensions of civil war were at length removed by the positive assurance of the Magi that the widow of Hormouz had conceived, and would safely produce, a son. Obedient to the voice of superstition, the Persians prepared, without delay, the ceremony of his coronation. A royal bed, on which the queen lay in state, was exhibited in the midst of the palace; the diadem was placed on the spot which might be supposed to conceal the future heir of Artaxerxes, and the prostrate Satraps adored the majesty of their invisible and insensible sovereign.⁵⁶

⁵⁵ Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 69. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 117 [39]. Idat. in Chron. See two notes of Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 1086-1091 [p. 666-668]. The reign of the eldest brother at Constantinople is noticed only in the Alexandrian Chronicle. [But see Appendix 10.]

⁵⁶ Agathias, who lived in the sixth century, is the author of this story (l. iv. p. 135, edit. Louvre [p. 262, ed. Bonn]). He derived his information from some extracts of the Persian Chronicles, obtained and translated by the interpreter Sergius, during his embassy at that court. The coronation of the mother of

If any credit can be given to this marvellous tale, which seems however to be countenanced by the manners of the people and by the extraordinary duration of his reign, we must admire not only the fortune, but the genius, of Sapor. In the soft sequestered education of a Persian harem, the royal youth could discover the importance of exercising the vigour of his mind and body; and, by his personal merit, deserved a throne, on which he had been seated while he was yet unconscious of the duties and temptations of absolute power. His minority was exposed to the almost inevitable calamities of domestic discord; his capital was surprised and plundered by Thair, a powerful king of Yemen, or Arabia; and the majesty of the royal family was degraded by the captivity of a princess, the sister of the deceased king. But, as soon as Sapor attained the age of manhood, the presumptuous Thair, his nation, and his country fell beneath the first effort of the young warrior; who used his victory with so judicious a mixture of rigour and clemency that he obtained from the fears and gratitude of the Arabs the title of *Dhoulacnaf*, or protector of the nation.⁵⁷

The ambition of the Persian, to whom his enemies ascribe the virtues of a soldier and a statesman, was animated by the desire of revenging the disgrace of his fathers, and of wresting from the hands of the Romans the five provinces beyond the Tigris. The military fame of Constantine, and the real or apparent strength of his government, suspended the attack; and, while the hostile conduct of Sapor provoked the resentment, his artful negotiations amused the patience, of the Imperial court. The death of Constantine was the signal of war,⁵⁸ and the actual condition of the Syrian and Armenian

Sapor is likewise mentioned by Schikard (*Tarikh*. p. 116) and d'Herbelot (*Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. 763). [Tabari does not mention the ceremony; Nöldeke, 51-2.]

⁵⁷ D'Herbelot, *Bibliothèque Orientale*, p. 764.

⁵⁸ Sextus Rufus (c. 26), who on this occasion is no contemptible authority, affirms that the Persians sued in vain for peace, and that Constantine was preparing to march against them: yet the superior weight of the testimony of Eusebius obliges us to admit the preliminaries, if not the ratification, of the

frontier seemed to encourage the Persians by the prospect of a rich spoil and an easy conquest. The example of the massacres of the palace diffused a spirit of licentiousness and sedition among the troops of the East, who were no longer restrained by their habits of obedience to a veteran commander. By the prudence of Constantius, who, from the interview with his brothers in Pannonia, immediately hastened to the banks of the Euphrates, the legions were gradually restored to a sense of duty and discipline; but the season of anarchy had permitted Sapor to form the siege of Nisibis, and to occupy several of the most important fortresses of Mesopotamia.⁶⁹ In Armenia, the renowned Tiridates had long enjoyed the peace and glory which he deserved by his valour and fidelity to the cause of Rome. The firm alliance which he maintained with Constantine was productive of spiritual as well as of temporal benefits: by the conversion of Tiridates, the character of a saint was applied to that of a hero, the Christian faith was preached and established from the Euphrates to the shores of the Caspian, and Armenia was attached to the empire by the double ties of policy and of religion. But, as many of the Armenian nobles still refused to abandon the plurality of their gods and of their wives, the public tranquillity was disturbed by a discontented faction, which insulted the feeble age of their sovereign, and impatiently expected the hour of his death. He died at length after a reign of fifty-six years, and the fortune of the Armenian monarchy expired with Tiridates. His lawful heir was driven into exile, the Christian priests were either murdered or expelled from their churches, the barbarous tribes of Albania were

treaty. See Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 420. [An important feature in connection with these wars is Sapor's persecution of the Christians in his dominion. See Ruinart, *Acta sinc.* p. 584 *sqq.*, and Görres, *Das Christenthum im Sassanidenreiche*, in *Zeitschr. f. wiss. Theol.*, vol. 31, 1888, p. 449 *sqq.*]

⁶⁹ Julian. *Orat.* i. p. 20 [p. 24, ed. Hertl. From some successes gained possibly in the campaign of this year Constantius won the title of *Adiabenicus Maximus*. C.I.L. 3, 3705].

solicited to descend from their mountains; and two of the most powerful governors, usurping the ensigns or the powers of royalty, implored the assistance of Sapor, and opened the gates of their cities to the Persian garrisons. The Christian party, under the guidance of the Archbishop of Artaxata, the immediate successor of St. Gregory the Illuminator, had recourse to the piety of Constantius. After the troubles had continued about three years, Antiochus, one of the officers of the household, executed with success the Imperial commission of restoring Chosroes, the son of Tiridates, to the throne of his fathers, of distributing honours and rewards among the faithful servants of the house of Arsaces, and of proclaiming a general amnesty, which was accepted by the greater part of the rebellious Satraps. But the Romans derived more honour than advantage from this revolution. Chosroes was a prince of a puny stature, and a pusillanimous spirit. Unequal to the fatigues of war, averse to the society of mankind, he withdrew from his capital to a retired palace, which he built on the banks of the river Eleutherus, and in the centre of a shady grove; where he consumed his vacant hours in the rural sports of hunting and hawking. To secure this inglorious ease, he submitted to the conditions of peace which Sapor condescended to impose; the payment of an annual tribute, and the restitution of the fertile province of Atropatene, which the courage of Tiridates and the victorious arms of Galerius had annexed to the Armenian monarchy.⁶⁰

During the long period of the reign of Constantius, the provinces of the East were afflicted by the calamities of the Persian war. The irregular incursions of the light troops alternately

⁶⁰ Julian. Orat. i. p. 20, 21 [24, 25]. Moses of Chorene, l. ii. c. 89, l. iii. c. 1-9, p. 226-240. The perfect agreement between the vague hints of the contemporary orator and the circumstantial narrative of the national historian gives light to the former and weight to the latter. For the credit of Moses it may be likewise observed that the name of Antiochus is found a few years before in a civil office of inferior dignity. See Godefroy, Cod. Theod. tom. vi. p. 350. [For the Armenian affairs see Appendix 13.]

spread terror and devastation beyond the Tigris and beyond the Euphrates, from the gates of Ctesiphon to those of Antioch; and this active service was performed by the Arabs of the desert, who were divided in their interest and affections; some of their independent chiefs being enlisted in the party of Sapor, whilst others had engaged their doubtful fidelity to the emperor.⁶¹ The more grave and important operations of the war were conducted with equal vigour; and the armies of Rome and Persia encountered each other in nine bloody fields, in two of which Constantius himself commanded in person.⁶² The event of the day was most commonly adverse to the Romans, but in the battle of Singara⁶³ their imprudent valour had almost achieved a signal and decisive victory. The stationary troops of Singara retired on the approach of Sapor, who passed the Tigris over three bridges, and occupied near the village of Hilleh an advantageous camp, which, by the labour of his numerous pioneers, he surrounded in one day with a deep ditch and a lofty rampart. His formidable host,

⁶¹ Ammianus (xiv. 4) gives a lively description of the wandering and predatory life of the Saracens, who stretched from the confines of Assyria to the cataracts of the Nile. It appears from the adventures of Malchus, which Jerom has related in so entertaining a manner, that the high road between Berœa and Edessa was infested by these robbers. See Hieronym. tom. i. p. 256.

⁶² We shall take from Eutropius the general idea of the war (x. 10). *A Persis enim multa et gravia perpressus, sæpe captis oppidis, obsessis urbibus, cæsis exercitibus, nullumque ei contra Saporem prosperum prælium fuit, nisi quod apud Singaram, &c.* This honest account is confirmed by the hints of Ammianus, Rufus, and Jerom. The two first orations of Julian and the third oration of Libanius exhibit a more flattering picture; but the recantation of both those orators, after the death of Constantius, while it restores us to the possession of the truth, degrades their own character, and that of the emperor. The commentary of Spanheim on the first oration of Julian is profusely learned. See likewise the judicious observations of Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 656. [Julian puts the campaign about six years before the revolt of Magnentius, that would be 344 (Or. i. p. 32, *ἔκτον που μάλιστα μετὰ τὸν πόλεμον ἔτος*). See Appendix 12.]

⁶³ [Singara, now called Sinjâr, is situated due west of Nineveh (Môsîl), and about the same distance—a geographical degree, roughly—east of the river Chaboras. See map in Sachau's *Reise in Syrien und Mesopotamien*, 1883, and p. 327 *sqq.*; or Mr. Le Strange's map in *Journal of Asiatic Soc.*, Jan., 1895.]

when it was drawn out in order of battle, covered the banks of the river, the adjacent heights, and the whole extent of a plain of above twelve miles, which separated the two armies. Both were alike impatient to engage; but the Barbarians, after a slight resistance, fled in disorder; unable to resist, or desirous to weary, the strength of the heavy legions, who, fainting with heat and thirst, pursued them across the plain, and cut in pieces a line of cavalry, clothed in complete armour, which had been posted before the gates of the camp to protect their retreat. Constantius, who was hurried along in the pursuit, attempted, without effect, to restrain the ardour of his troops, by representing to them the dangers of the approaching night and the certainty of completing their success with the return of day. As they depended much more on their own valour than on the experience or the abilities of their chief, they silenced by their clamours his timid remonstrances; and rushing with fury to the charge filled up the ditch, broke down the rampart, and dispersed themselves through the tents, to recruit their exhausted strength and to enjoy the rich harvest of their labours. But the prudent Sapor had watched the moment of victory. His army, of which the greater part, securely posted on the heights, had been spectators of the action, advanced in silence, and under the shadow of the night; and his Persian archers, guided by the illumination of the camp, poured a shower of arrows on a disarmed and licentious crowd. The sincerity of history⁶⁴ declares that the Romans were vanquished with a dreadful slaughter, and that the flying remnant of the legions was exposed to the most intolerable hardships. Even the tenderness of panegyric, confessing that the glory of the emperor was sullied by the disobedience of his soldiers, chooses to draw a veil over the circumstances of this melancholy retreat. Yet one of those venal orators, so jealous of the fame of Con-

⁶⁴ *Acerrimâ nocturnâ concertatione pugnatum est, nostrorum copiis ingenti strage confossis.* Ammian. xviii. 5. See likewise Eutropius, x. 10, and S. Rufus [Festus], c. 27.

stantius, relates with amazing coolness an act of such incredible cruelty, as, in the judgment of posterity, must imprint a far deeper stain on the honour of the Imperial name. The son of Sapor, the heir of his crown, had been made a captive in the Persian camp. The unhappy youth, who might have excited the compassion of the most savage enemy, was scourged, tortured, and publicly executed by the inhuman Romans.⁶⁵

Whatever advantages might attend the arms of Sapor in the field, though nine repeated victories diffused among the nations the fame of his valour and conduct, he could not hope to succeed in the execution of his designs, while the fortified towns of Mesopotamia, and, above all, the strong and ancient city of Nisibis, remained in the possession of the Romans. In the space of twelve years, Nisibis, which, since the time of Lucullus, had been deservedly esteemed the bulwark of the East, sustained three memorable sieges against the power of Sapor, and the disappointed monarch, after urging his attacks above sixty, eighty, and an hundred days, was thrice repulsed with loss and ignominy.⁶⁶ This last and populous city was situate about two days' journey from the Tigris, in the midst of a pleasant and fertile plain at the foot of Mount Masius. A treble enclosure of brick walls was defended by a deep ditch;⁶⁷ and the intrepid assistance of Count Lucilianus and

⁶⁵ Libanius, *Orat.* iii. p. 133, with Julian. *Orat.* i. p. 24 [29-30], and Spanheim's *Commentary*, p. 179.

⁶⁶ See Julian. *Orat.* i. p. 27 [29], *Orat.* ii. p. 62 [79], &c., with the *Commentary* of Spanheim (p. 188-202), who illustrates the circumstances, and ascertains the time, of the three sieges of Nisibis. Their dates are likewise examined by Tillemont (*Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 668, 671, 674). Something is added from Zosimus, l. iii. p. 151 [8], and the *Alexandrine Chronicle*, p. 290.

⁶⁷ Sallust, *Fragment.* lxxxiv. edit. Brosses, and Plutarch in *Lucull.* tom. iii. p. 184. Nisibis is now reduced to one hundred and fifty houses; the marshy lands produce rice, and the fertile meadows as far as Mosul and the Tigris are covered with the ruins of towns and villages. See Niebuhr, *Voyages*, tom. ii. p. 300-309. [Compare Sachau's description (*op. cit.* p. 391): "200 poor huts built chiefly of mud and straw," most of them inhabited by Jews.]

his garrison was seconded by the desperate courage of the people. The citizens of Nisibis were animated by the exhortations of their bishop,⁶⁸ enured to arms by the presence of danger, and convinced of the intentions of Sapor to plant a Persian colony in their room and to lead them away into distant and barbarous captivity. The event of the two former sieges elated their confidence, and exasperated the haughty spirit of the Great King, who advanced a third time towards Nisibis, at the head of the united forces of Persia and India. The ordinary machines invented to batter or undermine the walls were rendered ineffectual by the superior skill of the Romans; and many days had vainly elapsed, when Sapor embraced a resolution, worthy of an Eastern monarch, who believed that the elements themselves were subject to his power. At the stated season of the melting of the snows in Armenia, the river Mygdonius, which divides the plain and the city of Nisibis, forms, like the Nile,⁶⁹ an inundation over the adjacent country. By the labour of the Persians, the course of the river was stopped below the town, and the waters were confined on every side by solid mounds of earth. On this artificial lake, a fleet of armed vessels, filled with soldiers and with engines which discharged stones of five hundred pounds' weight, advanced in order of battle, and engaged, almost upon a level, the troops which defended

⁶⁸ The miracles which Theodoret (l. ii. c. 30) ascribes to St. James, Bishop of Edessa, were at least performed in a worthy cause, the defence of his country. He appeared on the walls under the figure of the Roman emperor, and sent an army of gnats to sting the trunks of the elephants, and to discomfit the host of the new Senacherib.

⁶⁹ Julian. Orat. i. p. 27. Though Niebuhr (tom. ii. p. 307) allows a very considerable swell to the Mygdonius, over which he saw a bridge of *twelve* arches; it is difficult, however, to understand this parallel of a trifling rivulet with a mighty river. There are many circumstances obscure, and almost unintelligible, in the description of these stupendous water-works. [The river (now called Jaghjagha) is split into three arms where the bridge spans it. Sachu, who describes the bridge as old but in tolerably good condition, saw the river very full (*viel und reissend fließendes Wasser*, p. 390).]

the ramparts. The irresistible force of the waters was alternately fatal to the contending parties, till at length a portion of the walls, unable to sustain the accumulated pressure, gave way at once, and exposed an ample breach of one hundred and fifty feet. The Persians were instantly driven to the assault, and the fate of Nisibis depended on the event of the day. The heavy-armed cavalry, who led the van of a deep column, were embarrassed in the mud, and great numbers were drowned in the unseen holes which had been filled by the rushing waters. The elephants, made furious by their wounds, increased the disorder, and trampled down thousands of the Persian archers. The Great King, who, from an exalted throne, beheld the misfortunes of his arms, sounded, with reluctant indignation, the signal of the retreat, and suspended for some hours the prosecution of the attack. But the vigilant citizens improved the opportunity of the night; and the return of day discovered a new wall of six feet in height, rising every moment to fill up the interval of the breach. Notwithstanding the disappointment of his hopes, and the loss of more than twenty thousand men, Sapor still pressed the reduction of Nisibis, with an obstinate firmness which could have yielded only to the necessity of defending the eastern provinces of Persia against a formidable invasion of the Massagetæ.⁷⁰ Alarmed by this intelligence, he hastily relinquished the siege, and marched with rapid diligence from the banks of the Tigris to those of the Oxus. The danger and difficulties of the Scythian war engaged him soon afterwards to conclude, or at least to observe, a truce with the Roman emperor, which was equally grateful to both princes; as Constantius himself, after the deaths of his two brothers, was involved, by the revolutions of the West, in a civil contest, which

⁷⁰ We are obliged to Zonaras (tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 11 [7]) for this invasion of the Massagetæ, which is perfectly consistent with the general series of events, to which we are darkly led by the broken history of Ammianus. [In memory of the brave resistance and the raising of the siege of Nisibis, Constantius founded "Persian Games" in May 350. See Corp. Ins. Lat. i. p. 393.]

required and seemed to exceed the most vigorous exertion of his undivided strength.

After the partition of the empire three years had scarcely elapsed, before the sons of Constantine seemed impatient to convince mankind that they were incapable of contenting themselves with the dominions which they were unqualified to govern. The eldest of those princes soon complained that he was defrauded of his just proportion of the spoils of their murdered kinsmen; and, though he might yield to the superior guilt and merit of Constantius, he exacted from Constans the cession of the African provinces, as an equivalent for the rich countries of Macedonia and Greece, which his brother had acquired by the death of Dalmatius. The want of sincerity which Constantine experienced in a tedious and fruitless negotiation exasperated the fierceness of his temper; and he eagerly listened to those favourites who suggested to him that his honour, as well as his interest, was concerned in the prosecution of the quarrel. At the head of a tumultuary band, suited for rapine rather than for conquest, he suddenly broke into the dominions of Constans, by the way of the Julian Alps, and the country round Aquileia felt the first effects of his resentment. The measures of Constans, who then resided in Dacia, were directed with more prudence and ability. On the news of his brother's invasion, he despatched a select and disciplined body of his Illyrian troops, proposing to follow them in person with the remainder of his forces. But the conduct of his lieutenants soon terminated the unnatural contest. By the artful appearances of flight, Constantine was betrayed into an ambuscade, which had been concealed in a wood, where the rash youth, with a few attendants, was surprised, surrounded, and slain. His body, after it had been found in the obscure stream of the Elsa, obtained the honours of an Imperial sepulchre; but his provinces transferred their allegiance to the conqueror, who, refusing to admit his elder brother Constantius to any share in these new acquisitions,

maintained the undisputed possession of more than two-thirds of the Roman empire.⁷¹

The fate of Constans himself was delayed about ten years longer, and the revenge of his brother's death was reserved for the more ignoble hand of a domestic traitor. The pernicious tendency of the system introduced by Constantine was displayed in the feeble administration of his sons; who, by their vices and weakness, soon lost the esteem and affections of their people. The pride assumed by Constans, from the unmerited success of his arms, was rendered more contemptible by his want of abilities and application. His fond partiality towards some German captives, distinguished only by the charms of youth, was an object of scandal to the people;⁷² and Magnentius, an ambitious soldier, who was himself of barbarian extraction, was encouraged by the public discontent to assert the honour of the Roman name.⁷³ The chosen bands

⁷¹ The causes and the events of this civil war are related with much perplexity and contradiction. I have chiefly followed Zonaras, and the younger Victor. The monody (ad calcem Eutrop. edit. Havercamp [but cp. App. 10]) pronounced on the death of Constantine, might have been very instructive; but prudence and false taste engaged the orator to involve himself in vague declamation. [Eutropius and others make Constantine invade his brother's land without reason or provocation (Zosimus, ii. 41, states that Constans sent soldiers to murder Constantine). The dissatisfaction of Constantine at the territorial division, given as the cause of the quarrel by Victor, Epit. 41, and Zosimus, and adopted by Gibbon, may be right. Schiller thinks it was a "Kompetenzkonflikt," Constantine claiming a sort of primacy over his brothers, and supports his view by certain coins, which suggest that Constantine held an isolated position among the Augusti (ii. 241).]

⁷² Quarum (*gentium*) obsides pretio quæsitos pueros venustiores, quod cultius habuerat, libidine hujusmodi arsisse *pro certo* habetur [Cæs. 41]. Had not the depraved tastes of Constans been publicly avowed, the elder Victor, who held a considerable office in his brother's reign, would not have asserted it in such positive terms.

⁷³ Julian. Orat. i. and ii. Zosim. l. ii. p. 134 [42]. Victor in Epitome. There is reason to believe that [Fl. Magnus] Magnentius was born in one of those Barbarian Colonies which Constantius Chlorus had established in Gaul (see this History, vol. ii. p. 159-160). His behaviour may remind us of the patriot Earl of Leicester, the famous Simon de Montfort, who could persuade the good people of England that he, a Frenchman by birth, had taken arms to deliver them from foreign favourites.

of Jovians and Herculians, who acknowledged Magnentius as their leader, maintained the most respectable and important station in the Imperial camp. The friendship of Marcellinus, count of the sacred largesses, supplied with a liberal hand the means of seduction. The soldiers were convinced, by the most specious arguments, that the republic summoned them to break the bonds of hereditary servitude and, by the choice of an active and vigilant prince, to reward the same virtues which had raised the ancestors of the degenerate Constans from a private condition to the throne of the world. As soon as the conspiracy was ripe for execution, Marcellinus, under the pretence of celebrating his son's birthday, gave a splendid entertainment to the *illustrious* and *honourable* persons of the court of Gaul, which then resided in the city of Autun. The intemperance of the feast was artfully protracted till a very late hour of the night; and the unsuspecting guests were tempted to indulge themselves in a dangerous and guilty freedom of conversation. On a sudden the doors were thrown open, and Magnentius, who had retired for a few moments, returned into the apartment, invested with the diadem and purple. The conspirators instantly saluted him with the titles of Augustus and Emperor. The surprise, the terror, the intoxication, the ambitious hopes, and the mutual ignorance of the rest of the assembly prompted them to join their voices to the general acclamation. The guards hastened to take the oath of fidelity; the gates of the town were shut; and, before the dawn of day, Magnentius became master of the troops and treasure of the palace and city of Autun. By his secrecy and diligence he entertained some hopes of surprising the person of Constans, who was pursuing in the adjacent forest his favourite amusement of hunting, or perhaps some pleasures of a more private and criminal nature. The rapid progress of fame allowed him, however, an instant for flight, though the desertion of his soldiers and subjects deprived him of the power of resistance. Before he could reach a seaport in Spain, where he intended to embark, he was

overtaken near Helena,⁷⁴ at the foot of the Pyrenees, by a party of light cavalry, whose chief, regardless of the sanctity of a temple, executed his commission by the murder of the son of Constantine.⁷⁵

As soon as the death of Constans had decided this easy but important revolution, the example of the court of Autun was imitated by the provinces of the West. The authority of Magnentius was acknowledged through the whole extent of the two great prefectures of Gaul and Italy;⁷⁶ and the usurper prepared, by every act of oppression, to collect a treasure, which might discharge the obligation of an immense donative and supply the expenses of a civil war. The martial countries of Illyricum, from the Danube to the extremity of Greece, had long obeyed the government of Vetranio, an aged general, beloved for the simplicity of his manners, and who had acquired some reputation by his experience and services in war.⁷⁷ Attached, by habit, by duty, and by gratitude, to the house of Constantine, he immediately gave the strongest assurances to

⁷⁴ This ancient city had once flourished under the name of Illiberis (Pomponius Mela, ii. 5). The munificence of Constantine gave it new splendour, and his mother's name. Helena (it is still called Elne) became the seat of a bishop, who long afterwards transferred his residence to Perpignan, the capital of modern Rousillon. See d'Anville, *Notice de l'Ancienne Gaule*, p. 380; Longuerue, *Description de la France*, p. 223, and the *Marca Hispanica*, l. i. c. 2.

⁷⁵ Zosimus, l. ii. p. 119, 120 [42]; Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 13 [6], and the *Abbreviators*.

⁷⁶ [This fact is confirmed in detail by inscriptions: see list in Schiller, ii. 249. In religion, Magnentius was probably a pagan; he permitted pagan sacrifices. But he professed to be a Christian of Nicene views, sought the support of Athanasius, and issued coins with the anti-Arian symbol $\Delta \rho \Omega$.]

⁷⁷ Eutropius (x. 10) describes Vetranio with more temper, and probably with more truth, than either of the two Victors. Vetranio was born of obscure parents in the wildest parts of Mæsia; and so much had his education been neglected that, after his elevation, he studied the alphabet. [For the part played by Constantina see *Chron. Pasch.* i. 539, 540. The coins seem to support the hypothesis that Vetranio was loyal; see next note. Vetranio coins with *Concordia militum*, and *Virtus Augustorum*, are referred by Schiller to an understanding between Vetranio and Constantius.]

the only surviving son of his late master that he would expose, with unshaken fidelity, his person and his troops, to inflict a just revenge on the traitors of Gaul. But the legions of Vetrico were seduced rather than provoked by the example of rebellion; their leader soon betrayed a want of firmness, or a want of sincerity; and his ambition derived a specious pretence from the approbation of the princess Constantina. That cruel and aspiring woman, who had obtained from the great Constantine her father the rank of *Augusta*, placed the diadem with her own hands on the head of the Illyrian general; and seemed to expect from his victory the accomplishment of those unbounded hopes of which she had been disappointed by the death of her husband Hannibalianus. Perhaps it was without the consent of Constantina that the new emperor formed a necessary, though dishonourable, alliance with the usurper of the West, whose purple was so recently stained with her brother's blood.⁷⁸

The intelligence of these important events, which so deeply affected the honour and safety of the Imperial house, recalled the arms of Constantius from the inglorious prosecution of the Persian war. He recommended the care of the East to his lieutenants, and afterwards to his cousin Gallus, whom he raised from a prison to a throne; and marched towards Europe, with a mind agitated by the conflict of hope and fear, of grief and indignation. On his arrival at Heraclea in Thrace, the emperor gave audience to the ambassadors of Magnentius and Vetrico. The first author of the conspiracy, Marcellinus, who in some measure had bestowed the purple on his new master, boldly ac-

⁷⁸ The doubtful, fluctuating conduct of Vetrico is described by Julian in his first oration [p. 32 *sqq.*, ed. Hertl.] and accurately explained by Spanheim, who discusses the situation and behaviour of Constantina. [Schiller (ii. 250 *sqq.*) discusses the conduct of Vetrico and concludes that he was loyal throughout to the house of Constantine; that he assumed the purple lest a true rebel should be proclaimed; and that the dramatic scene of his repentance and resignation was prearranged between himself and Constantius.]

cepted this dangerous commission; and his three colleagues were selected from the illustrious personages of the state and army. These deputies were instructed to soothe the resentment, and to alarm the fears, of Constantius. They were empowered to offer him the friendship and alliance of the Western princes, to cement their union by a double marriage; of Constantius with the daughter of Magnentius, and of Magnentius himself with the ambitious Constantina; and to acknowledge in the treaty the pre-eminence of rank, which might justly be claimed by the emperor of the East. Should pride and mistaken piety urge him to refuse these equitable conditions, the ambassadors were ordered to expatiate on the inevitable ruin which must attend his rashness, if he ventured to provoke the sovereigns of the West to exert their superior strength and to employ against him that valour, those abilities, and those legions, to which the house of Constantine had been indebted for so many triumphs. Such propositions and such arguments appeared to deserve the most serious attention; the answer of Constantius was deferred till the next day; and, as he had reflected on the importance of justifying a civil war in the opinion of the people, he thus addressed his council, who listened with real or affected credulity: "Last night," said he, "after I retired to rest, the shade of the great Constantine, embracing the corpse of my murdered brother, rose before my eyes; his well-known voice awakened me to revenge, forbade me to despair of the republic, and assured me of the success and immortal glory which would crown the justice of my arms." The authority of such a vision, or rather of the prince who alleged it, silenced every doubt, and excluded all negotiation. The ignominious terms of peace were rejected with disdain. One of the ambassadors of the tyrant was dismissed with the haughty answer of Constantius; his colleagues, as unworthy of the privileges of the law of nations, were put in irons; and

the contending powers prepared to wage an implacable war.⁷⁹

Such was the conduct, and such perhaps was the duty, of the brother of Constans towards the perfidious usurper of Gaul. The situation and character of Vetrico admitted of milder measures; and the policy of the Eastern emperor was directed to disunite his antagonists, and to separate the forces of Illyricum from the cause of rebellion. It was an easy task to deceive the frankness and simplicity of Vetrico, who, fluctuating some time between the opposite views of honour and interest, displayed to the world the insincerity of his temper, and was insensibly engaged in the snares of an artful negotiation. Constantius acknowledged him as a legitimate and equal colleague in the empire, on condition that he would renounce his disgraceful alliance with Magnentius and appoint a place of interview on the frontiers of their respective provinces, where they might pledge their friendship by mutual vows of fidelity and regulate by common consent the future operations of the civil war. In consequence of this agreement, Vetrico advanced to the city of Sardica,⁸⁰ at the head of twenty thousand horse and of a more numerous body of infantry; a power so far superior to the forces of Constantius that the Illyrian emperor appeared to command the life and fortunes of his rival, who, depending on the success of his private negotiations, had seduced the troops, and undermined the throne, of Vetrico. The chiefs, who had secretly embraced the party of Constantius, prepared in his favour a public spectacle, calculated to discover and inflame the passions of the multitude.⁸¹

⁷⁹ See Peter the Patrician, in the *Excerpta Legationum*, p. 27.

⁸⁰ Zonaras, t. ii. l. xiii. p. 16 [c. 7]. The position of Sardica, near the modern city of Sophia, appears better suited to this interview than the situation of either Naissus or Sirmium, where it is placed by Jerom, Socrates, and Sozomen.

⁸¹ See the two first orations of Julian, particularly p. 31; and Zosimus, l. ii.

The united armies were commanded to assemble in a large plain near the city. In the centre, according to the rules of ancient discipline, a military tribunal, or rather scaffold, was erected, from whence the emperors were accustomed, on solemn and important occasions, to harangue the troops. The well-ordered ranks of Romans and Barbarians, with drawn swords or with erected spears, the squadrons of cavalry and the cohorts of infantry, distinguished by the variety of their arms and ensigns, formed an immense circle round the tribunal; and the attentive silence which they preserved was sometimes interrupted by loud bursts of clamour or of applause. In the presence of this formidable assembly, the two emperors were called upon to explain the situation of public affairs: the precedence of rank was yielded to the royal birth of Constantius; and, though he was indifferently skilled in the arts of rhetoric, he acquitted himself, under these difficult circumstances, with firmness, dexterity, and eloquence. The first part of his oration seemed to be pointed only against the tyrant of Gaul; but, while he tragically lamented the cruel murder of Constans, he insinuated that none, except a brother, could claim a right to the succession of his brother. He displayed, with some complacency, the glories of his Imperial race; and recalled to the memory of the troops the valour, the triumphs, the liberality of the great Constantine, to whose sons they had engaged their allegiance by an oath of fidelity, which the ingratitude of his most favoured servants had tempted them to violate. The officers, who surrounded the tribunal and were instructed to act their parts in this extraordinary scene, confessed the irresistible power of reason and eloquence by saluting the emperor Constantius as their lawful sovereign. The

p. 122 [c. 44]. The distinct narrative of the historian serves to illustrate the diffuse, but vague, descriptions of the orator. [Cp. also *Them. Orat.* 3, p. 45 C, and 4, p. 56 B. — *Libanius, Vita*, p. 58, Reiske. — *Ammian*, 21, 8, 1.]

contagion of loyalty and repentance was communicated from rank to rank; till the plain of Sardica resounded with the universal acclamation of "Away with these upstart usurpers! Long life and victory to the son of Constantine! Under his banners alone we will fight and conquer." The shout of thousands, their menacing gestures, the fierce clashing of their arms, astonished and subdued the courage of Vetranio, who stood, amidst the defection of his followers, in anxious and silent suspense. Instead of embracing the last refuge of generous despair, he tamely submitted to his fate; and taking the diadem from his head, in view of both armies, fell prostrate at the feet of his conqueror. Constantius used his victory with prudence and moderation; and raising from the ground the aged suppliant, whom he affected to style by the endearing name of Father, he gave him his hand to descend from the throne. The city of Prusa was assigned for the exile or retirement of the abdicated monarch, who lived six years in the enjoyment of ease and affluence. He often expressed his grateful sense of the goodness of Constantius, and, with a very amiable simplicity, advised his benefactor to resign the sceptre of the world, and to seek for content (where alone it could be found) in the peaceful obscurity of a private condition.⁸²

The behaviour of Constantius on this memorable occasion was celebrated with some appearance of justice; and his courtiers compared the studied orations which a Pericles or a Demosthenes addressed to the populace of Athens with the victorious eloquence which had persuaded an armed multitude to desert and depose the object of their partial choice.⁸³ The approaching contest with Mag-

⁸² The younger Victor assigns to his exile the emphatical appellation of "Voluptarium otium." Socrates (l. ii. c. 28) is the voucher for the correspondence with the emperor, which would seem to prove that Vetranio was, indeed, *prope ad stultitiam simplicissimus*.

⁸³ *Eum Constantius . . . facundiæ vi dejectum Imperio in privatum*

mentius was of a more serious and bloody kind. The tyrant advanced by rapid marches to encounter Constantius, at the head of a numerous army, composed of Gauls and Spaniards, of Franks and Saxons; of those provincials who supplied the strength of the legions, and of those Barbarians who were dreaded as the most formidable enemies of the republic. The fertile plains⁸⁴ of the Lower Pannonia, between the Drave, the Save, and the Danube, presented a spacious theatre; and the operations of the civil war were protracted during the summer months by the skill or timidity of the combatants.⁸⁵ Constantius had declared his intention of deciding the quarrel in the fields of Cibalis, a name that would animate his troops by the remembrance of the victory which, on the same auspicious ground, had been obtained by the arms of his father Constantine. Yet, by the impregnable fortifications with which the emperor encompassed his camp, he appeared to decline, rather than to invite, a general engagement. It was the object of Magnentius to tempt or to compel his adversary to relinquish this advantageous position; and he employed, with that view, the various marches, evolutions, and stratagems, which the knowledge of the art of war could suggest to an experienced officer. He carried by assault the important town of Siscia; made an attack on the city of Sirmium, which lay in the rear of the Imperial

otium removit. Quæ gloria post natum Imperium soli processit eloquio clementiâque, &c. Aurelius Victor, Julian, and Themistius (*Orat.* iii. and iv.) adorn this exploit with all the artificial and gaudy colouring of their rhetoric.

⁸⁴ Busbequius (p. 112) traversed the Lower Hungary and Sclavonia at a time when they were reduced almost to a desert by the reciprocal hostilities of the Turks and Christians. Yet he mentions with admiration the unconquerable fertility of the soil; and observes that the height of the grass was sufficient to conceal a loaded waggon from his sight. See likewise Browne's *Travels*, in Harris's Collection, vol. ii. p. 762, &c.

⁸⁵ Zosimus gives a very large account of the war and the negotiation (l. ii. p. 123-130 [c. 45-49]). But, as he neither shews himself a soldier nor a politician, his narrative must be weighed with attention, and received with caution.

camp; attempted to force a passage over the Save into the eastern provinces of Illyricum; and cut in pieces a numerous detachment, which he had allured into the narrow passes of Adarne. During the greater part of the summer, the tyrant of Gaul shewed himself master of the field. The troops of Constantius were harassed and dispirited; his reputation declined in the eye of the world; and his pride condescended to solicit a treaty of peace, which would have resigned to the assassin of Constans the sovereignty of the provinces beyond the Alps. These offers were enforced by the eloquence of Philip, the Imperial ambassador; and the council as well as the army of Magnentius were disposed to accept them. But the haughty usurper, careless of the remonstrances of his friends, gave orders that Philip should be detained as a captive, or at least as a hostage; while he despatched an officer to reproach Constantius with the weakness of his reign, and to insult him by the promise of a pardon, if he would instantly abdicate the purple. "That he should confide in the justice of his cause and the protection of an avenging Deity," was the only answer which honour permitted the emperor to return. But he was so sensible of the difficulties of his situation that he no longer dared to retaliate the indignity which had been offered to his representative. The negotiation of Philip was not, however, ineffectual, since he determined Sylvanus, the Frank, a general of merit and reputation, to desert with a considerable body of cavalry, a few days before the battle of Mursa.

The city of Mursa, or Essek, celebrated in modern times for a bridge of boats five miles in length over the river Drave and the adjacent morasses,⁸⁰ has been always considered as

⁸⁰ This remarkable bridge, which is flanked with towers, and supported on large wooden piles, was constructed, A. D. 1566, by Sultan Soliman, to facilitate the march of his armies into Hungary. See Browne's Travels, and Busching's System of Geography, vol. ii. p. 90.

a place of importance in the wars of Hungary. Magnentius, directing his march towards Mursa, set fire to the gates, and, by a sudden assault, had almost scaled the walls of the town. The vigilance of the garrison extinguished the flames; the approach of Constantius left him no time to continue the operations of the siege; and the emperor soon removed the only obstacle that could embarrass his motions, by forcing a body of troops which had taken post in an adjoining amphitheatre. The field of battle round Mursa was a naked and level plain: on this ground the army of Constantius formed, with the Drave on their right; while their left, either from the nature of their disposition or from the superiority of their cavalry, extended far beyond the right flank of Magnentius.⁸⁷ The troops on both sides remained under arms in anxious expectation during the greatest part of the morning; and the son of Constantine, after animating his soldiers by an eloquent speech, retired into a church at some distance from the field of battle, and committed to his generals the conduct of this decisive day.⁸⁸ They deserved his confidence by the valour and military skill which they exerted. They wisely began the action upon the left; and, advancing their whole wing of cavalry in an oblique line, they suddenly wheeled it on the right flank of the enemy, which was unprepared to resist the impetuosity of their charge. But the Romans of the West soon rallied, by the habits of discipline; and the Barbarians of Germany supported the renown of their national bravery. The engagement soon became general; was maintained

⁸⁷ This position, and the subsequent evolutions, are clearly, though concisely, described by Julian. *Orat.* i. p. 36 [p. 44, ed. Hertl.].

⁸⁸ Sulpicius Severus, l. ii. p. 405 [ed. Lugd. Bat. 1647; c. 38]. The emperor passed the day in prayer with Valens, the Arian bishop of Mursa, who gained his confidence by announcing the success of the battle. M. de Tillemont (*Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 1110) very properly remarks the silence of Julian with regard to the personal prowess of Constantius in the battle of Mursa. The silence of flattery is sometimes equal to the most positive and authentic evidence.

with various and singular turns of fortune; and scarcely ended with the darkness of the night. The signal victory which Constantius obtained is attributed to the arms of his cavalry. His cuirassiers are described as so many massy statues of steel, glittering with their scaly armour, and breaking with their ponderous lances the firm array of the Gallic legions. As soon as the legions gave way, the lighter and more active squadrons of the second line rode sword in hand into the intervals, and completed the disorder. In the meanwhile, the huge bodies of the Germans were exposed almost naked to the dexterity of the oriental archers; and whole troops of those Barbarians were urged by anguish and despair to precipitate themselves into the broad and rapid stream of the Drave.⁸⁹ The number of the slain was computed at fifty-four thousand men, and the slaughter of the conquerors was more considerable than that of the vanquished;⁹⁰ a circumstance which proves the obstinacy of the contest, and justifies the observation of an ancient writer that the forces of the empire were consumed in the fatal battle of Mursa, by the loss of a veteran army, sufficient to defend the frontiers or to add new triumphs to the glory of Rome.⁹¹ Notwithstanding the invectives of a

⁸⁹ Julian Orat. i. p. 36 37 [45, 46, ed. Hertl.]; and Orat. ii. p. 59, 60. Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 17 [8]. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 130-133 [49-52]. The last of these celebrates the dexterity of the archer Menelaus, who could discharge three arrows at the same time; an advantage which, according to his apprehension of military affairs, materially contributed to the victory of Constantius.

⁹⁰ According to Zonaras, Constantius, out of 80,000 men, lost 30,000, and Magnentius lost 24,000 out of 36,000. The other articles of this account seem probable and authentic, but the numbers of the tyrant's army must have been mistaken, either by the author or his transcribers. Magnentius had collected the whole force of the West, Romans and Barbarians, into one formidable body, which cannot fairly be estimated at less than 100,000 men. Julian. Orat. i. p. 34, 35 [75, 76].

⁹¹ *Ingentes R. I. vires eâ dimicatione consumptæ sunt, ad quælibet bella externa idoneæ, quæ multum triumphorum possent securitatisque conferre.* Eutropius, x. 13. The younger Victor expresses himself to the same effect. [Cp. Sulpicius Severus, Chron. 2, 38.]

servile orator, there is not the least reason to believe that the tyrant deserted his own standard in the beginning of the engagement. He seems to have displayed the virtues of a general and of a soldier till the day was irrecoverably lost, and his camp in the possession of the enemy. Magnentius then consulted his safety, and, throwing away the Imperial ornaments, escaped with some difficulty from the pursuit of the light horse, who incessantly followed his rapid flight from the banks of the Drave to the foot of the Julian Alps.⁹⁷

The approach of winter supplied the indolence of Constantius with specious reasons for deferring the prosecution of the war till the ensuing spring. Magnentius had fixed his residence in the city of Aquileia, and shewed a seeming resolution to dispute the passage of the mountains and morasses which fortified the confines of the Venetian province. The surprisal of a castle in the Alps by the secret march of the Imperialists could scarcely have determined him to relinquish the possession of Italy, if the inclinations of the people had supported the cause of their tyrant.⁹⁸ But the memory of the cruelties exercised by his ministers, after the unsuccessful revolt of Nepotian, had left a deep impression of horror and resentment on the minds of the Romans. That rash youth, the son of the princess Eutropia, and the nephew of Constantine, had seen with indignation the sceptre of the West usurped by a perfidious Barbarian. Arming a desperate troop of slaves and gladiators, he overpowered the feeble guard of the domestic tranquillity of Rome, received the homage of the senate, and,

⁹⁷ On this occasion, we must prefer the unsuspected testimony of Zosimus and Zonaras to the flattering assertions of Julian. The younger Victor paints the character of Magnentius in a singular light: "Sermonis acer animi tumidi, et immodice timidus; artifex tamen ad occultandam audaciæ specie formidinem." Is it most likely that in the battle of Mursa his behaviour was governed by nature or by art? I should incline for the latter.

⁹⁸ Julian. Orat. i. p. 38, 39 [48, 49]. In that place, however, as well as in Oration ii. p. 97 [124], he insinuates the general disposition of the senate, the people, and the soldiers of Italy, towards the party of the emperor.

assuming the title of Augustus, precariously reigned during a tumult of twenty-eight days. The march of some regular forces put an end to his ambitious hopes: the rebellion was extinguished in the blood of Nepotian, of his mother Eutropia, and of his adherents; and the proscription was extended to all who had contracted a fatal alliance with the name and family of Constantine.⁶⁴ But, as soon as Constantius, after the battle of Mursa, became master of the sea-coast of Dalmatia, a band of noble exiles, who had ventured to equip a fleet in some harbour of the Adriatic, sought protection and revenge in his victorious camp. By their secret intelligence with their countrymen, Rome and the Italian cities were persuaded to display the banners of Constantius on their walls. The grateful veterans, enriched by the liberality of the father, signalled their gratitude and loyalty to the son. The cavalry, the legions, and the auxiliaries of Italy renewed their oath of allegiance to Constantius; and the usurper, alarmed by the general desertion, was compelled, with the remains of his faithful troops, to retire beyond the Alps into the provinces of Gaul. The detachments, however, which were ordered either to press or to intercept the flight of Magnentius, conducted themselves with the usual imprudence of success; and allowed him, in the plains of Pavia, an opportunity of turning on his pursuers and of gratifying his despair by the carnage of a useless victory.⁶⁵

The pride of Magnentius was reduced, by repeated mis-

⁶⁴ The elder Victor describes in a pathetic manner the miserable condition of Rome: "Cujus stolidum ingenium adeo P. R. patribusque exitio fuit, uti passim domus, fora, viæ, templaque, cruore, cadaveribusque opplerentur bustorum modo." Athanasius (tom. i. p. 677) deplores the fate of several illustrious victims, and Julian (Orat. ii. p. 58 [74]) execrates the cruelty of Marcellinus, the implacable enemy of the house of Constantine. [June is given as the date in Idatius and Chron. Pasch.; but Rossi argues for July; Rev. Arch. 6, 375.]

⁶⁵ Zosim. l. ii. p. 133 [52]. Victor in Epitome. The panegyrists of Constantius, with their usual candour, forget to mention this accidental defeat.

fortunes, to sue, and to sue in vain, for peace. He first despatched a senator, in whose abilities he confided, and afterwards several bishops, whose holy character might obtain a more favourable audience, with the offer of resigning the purple, and the promise of devoting the remainder of his life to the service of the emperor. But Constantius, though he granted fair terms of pardon and reconciliation to all who abandoned the standard of rebellion,⁹⁶ avowed his inflexible resolution to inflict a just punishment on the crimes of an assassin, whom he prepared to overwhelm on every side by the effort of his victorious arms. An Imperial fleet acquired the easy possession of Africa and Spain, confirmed the wavering faith of the Moorish nations, and landed a considerable force, which passed the Pyrenees, and advanced towards Lyons, the last and fatal station of Magnentius.⁹⁷ The temper of the tyrant, which was never inclined to clemency, was urged by distress to exercise every act of oppression which could extort an immediate supply from the cities of Gaul.⁹⁸ Their patience was at length exhausted; and Treves, the seat of Prætorian government, gave the signal of revolt by shutting her gates against Decentius, who had been raised by his brother to the rank either of Cæsar or of Augustus.⁹⁹ From Treves, Decentius was obliged to retire to Sens,

⁹⁶ Zonaras, tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 17. Julian, in several places of the two orations, expatiates on the clemency of Constantius to the rebels.

⁹⁷ Zosim. l. ii. p. 133 [ib.]. Julian. Orat. i. p. 40 [50]; ii. p. 74 [95].

⁹⁸ Ammian. xv. 6. Zosim. l. ii. p. 133. Julian, who (Orat. i. p. 40) inveighs against the cruel effects of the tyrant's despair, mentions (Orat. i. p. 34) the oppressive edicts which were dictated by his necessities, or by his avarice. His subjects were compelled to purchase the Imperial demesnes; a doubtful and dangerous species of property, which, in case of a revolution, might be imputed to them as a treasonable usurpation.

⁹⁹ The medals of Magnentius celebrate the victories of the *two* Augusti, and of the Cæsar. The Cæsar was another brother, named Desiderius. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 757. [Decentius was only Cæsar. The *two* Augusti (*Augustorum*) on the coins are Magnentius and Constantius. Magnentius posed as the colleague of Constantius.]

where he was soon surrounded by an army of Germans, whom the pernicious arts of Constantius had introduced into the civil dissensions of Rome.¹⁰⁰ In the meantime the Imperial troops forced the passages of the Cottian Alps, and in the bloody combat of Mount Seleucus irrevocably fixed the title of Rebels on the party of Magnentius.¹⁰¹ He was unable to bring another army into the field; the fidelity of his guards was corrupted: and, when he appeared in public to animate them by his exhortations, he was saluted with an unanimous shout of "Long live the emperor Constantius!" The tyrant, who perceived that they were preparing to deserve pardon and rewards by the sacrifice of the most obnoxious criminal, prevented their design by falling on his sword;¹⁰² a death more easy and more honourable than he could hope to obtain from the hands of an enemy, whose revenge would have been coloured with the specious pretence of justice and fraternal piety. The example of suicide was imitated by Decentius, who strangled himself on the news of his brother's death. The author of the conspiracy, Marcellinus, had long since disappeared in the battle of Mursa,¹⁰³ and the public tran-

¹⁰⁰ Julian. Orat. i. p. 40, ii. p. 74, with Spanheim, p. 263. His Commentary illustrates the transactions of this civil war. Mons Seleuci was a small place in the Cottian Alps, a few miles distant from Vapincum, or Gap, an episcopal city of Dauphiné. See d'Anville, Notice de la Gaule, p. 464; and Longuerue, Description de la France, p. 327.

¹⁰¹ Zosimus, l. ii. p. 134 [52]. Liban. Orat. x. p. 268, 269. The latter most vehemently arraigns this cruel and selfish policy of Constantius.

¹⁰² Julian. Orat. i. p. 40. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 134 [53]. Socrates, l. ii. c. 32. Sozomen, l. iv. c. 7. The younger Victor describes his death with some horrid circumstances: *Transfosso latere, ut erat vasti corporis, vulnere naribusque et ore cruorem effundens, expiravit.* If we can give credit to Zonaras, the tyrant, before he expired, had the pleasure of murdering with his own hands his mother and his brother Desiderius. [The date 11th Aug. must be accepted from Idatius. Gibbon took 10th Aug. from Chron. Pasch., which gives the wrong year, 354.]

¹⁰³ Julian (Orat. i. p. 58, 59) seems at a loss to determine whether he inflicted on himself the punishment of his crimes, whether he was drowned in the Drave, or whether he was carried by the avenging demons from the field of battle to his destined place of eternal tortures.

quillity was confirmed by the execution of the surviving leaders of a guilty and unsuccessful faction. A severe inquisition was extended over all who, either from choice or from compulsion, had been involved in the cause of rebellion. Paul, surnamed Catena, from his superior skill in the judicial exercise of tyranny, was sent to explore the latent remains of the conspiracy in the remote province of Britain. The honest indignation expressed by Martin, vice-prefect of the island, was interpreted as an evidence of his own guilt; and the governor was urged to the necessity of turning against his breast the sword with which he had been provoked to wound the Imperial minister. The most innocent subjects of the West were exposed to exile and confiscation, to death and torture; and, as the timid are always cruel, the mind of Constantius was inaccessible to mercy.¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Ammian. xiv. 5; xxi. 16. [Several inscriptions are extant celebrating the victory of Constantius; *e.g.*, C.I.L. 6, 1158: *restitutor urbis Romæ atque orbis et extincor pestiferæ tyrannidis*. Magnentius had been described as *liberator orbis terrarum*, &c. Cod. Theod. 15, 14, 5, and 9, 38, 2, annul all the acts of the tyrant.]