

## CHAPTER XIII

### The Reign of Diocletian and his three Associates, Maximian, Galerius, and Constantius—Re-establishment of Order—The Persian War, Victory, and Triumph—The New Form of Administration—Abdication and Retirement of Diocletian and Maximian

#### *AD 285: Diocletian's Character*

As the reign (AD 285) of Diocletian was more illustrious than that of any of his predecessors, so was his birth more abject and obscure. The strong claims of merit and of violence had frequently superseded the ideal prerogatives of nobility; but a distinct line of separation was hitherto preserved between the free and the servile part of mankind. The parents of Diocletian had been slaves in the house of Annulinus, a Roman senator; nor was he himself distinguished by any other name than that which he derived from a small town in Dalmatia, from which his mother deduced her origin.<sup>1</sup> It is, however, probable that his father obtained the freedom of the family, and that he soon acquired an office of scribe, which was commonly exercised by persons of his condition.<sup>2</sup> Favorable oracles, or rather the consciousness of superior merit, prompted his aspiring son to pursue the profession of arms and the hopes of fortune; and it would be extremely curious to observe the gradation of arts and accidents which enabled him in the end to fulfil those oracles and to display that merit to the world. Diocletian was successively promoted to the government of Maesia, the honors of the consulship, and the important command of the guards of the palace. He distinguished his abilities in the Persian war; and, after the death of Numerian, the slave, by the confession and judgment of his rivals, was declared the most worthy of the Imperial throne. The malice of religious zeal, while it arraigns the savage fierceness of his colleague Maximian, has affected to cast suspicious on the personal courage of the emperor Diocletian.<sup>3</sup> It would not be easy to persuade us of the cowardice of a soldier of fortune who acquired and preserved the esteem of the legions, as well as the favor of so many warlike princes. Yet even slander is sagacious enough to discover and to attack the most vulnerable part. The valor of Diocletian was never found inadequate to his duty or to the occasion; but he appears not to have possessed the daring and generous spirit of a hero who courts danger and fame, disdains artifice, and boldly challenges the allegiance of his equals. His abilities were useful rather than splendid; a vigorous mind, improved by the experience and study of mankind; dexterity and application in business; a judicious mixture of liberality and economy, of mildness and rigor; profound deception under the disguise of military frankness; steadiness to pursue his ends; flexibility to vary his means; and, above all, the great art of submitting his own passions, as well as those of others, to the interest of his ambition, and of coloring his ambition with the most specious pretences of justice and public utility. Like Augustus, Diocletian may be considered as the founder of a new empire. Like the adopted son of Caesar, he was distinguished as a statesman rather than as a warrior; nor did either of those princes employ force, whenever their purpose would be effected by policy.

Diocletian's victory was remarkable for its singular mildness. A people accustomed to applaud the clemency of the conqueror, if the usual punishments of death, exile, and confiscation were inflicted

<sup>1</sup> Eutrop. ix. 19. Victor in Epitom. The town seems to have been properly called Doclia, from a small tribe of Illyrians (*Cellarius, Geograph. Antiqua*, v. i. p. 393); and the original name of the fortunate slave was probably Docles; he first lengthened it to the Grecian harmony of Diodes, and at length to the Roman majesty of Dioclotianus. He likewise assumed the Patrician name of Valerius, and it is usually given him by Aurelius Victor.

<sup>2</sup> Dacier on the sixth satire of the second book of Horace. Cornel. Nepos, in Vit. Eumen. c. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Lactantius (or whoever was the author of the little treatise *De Mortibus Persecutorum*) accuses Diocletian of timidity in two places, c. 7, 8. Latin text omitted.

with any degree of temper and equity, beheld, with the most pleasing astonishment, a civil war, the flames of which were extinguished in the field of battle. Diocletian received into his confidence Aristobulus, the principal minister of the house of Carus, respected the lives, the fortunes, and the dignity of his adversaries, and even continued in their respective stations the greater number of the servants of Carinus.<sup>4</sup> It is not improbable that motives of prudence might assist the humanity of the artful Dalmatian; of these servants, many had purchased his favor by secret treachery; in others, he esteemed their grateful fidelity to an unfortunate master. The discerning judgments of Aurelian, Probus, and Carus had filled the several departments of the state and army with officers of approved merit, whose removal would have injured the public service without promoting the interest of the successor. Such a conduct, however, displayed to the Roman world the fairest prospect of the new reign, and the emperor affected to confirm this favorable prepossession by declaring that, among all the virtues of his predecessors, he was the most ambitious of imitating the humane philosophy of Marcus Antoninus.<sup>5</sup>

#### *AD 286: Maximian's Character*

The first considerable action of his reign seemed to evince his sincerity as well as his moderation. After the example of Marcus, he gave himself (AD 286, April 1) a colleague in the person of Maximian, on whom he bestowed at first the title of Caesar, and afterward that of Augustus.<sup>6</sup> But the motives of his conduct, as well as the object of his choice, were of a very different nature from those of his admired predecessor. By investing a luxurious youth with the honors of the purple, Marcus had discharged a debt of private gratitude, at the expense, indeed, of the happiness of the state. By associating a friend and a fellow-soldier to the labors of government, Diocletian, in a time of public danger, provided for the defense both of the East and West. Maximian was born a peasant, and, like Aurelian, in the territory of Sirmium. Ignorant of letters,<sup>7</sup> careless of laws, the rusticity of his appearance and manners still betrayed in the most elevated fortune the meanness of his extraction. War was the only art which he professed. In a long course of service he had distinguished himself on every frontier of the empire; and though his military talents were formed to obey rather than to command, though, perhaps, he never attained the skill of a consummate general, he was capable, by his valor, constancy, and experience, of executing the most arduous undertakings. Nor were the vices of Maximian less useful to his benefactor. Insensible to pity, and fearless of consequences, he was the ready instrument of every act of cruelty which the policy of that artful prince might at once suggest and disclaim. As soon as a bloody sacrifice had been offered to prudence or to revenge, Diocletian, by his seasonable intercession, saved the remaining few whom he had never designed to punish, gently censured the severity of his stern colleague, and enjoyed the comparison of a golden and an iron age, which was universally applied to their opposite maxims of government. Notwithstanding the difference of their characters, the two emperors maintained, on the throne, that friendship which they had contracted in a private station. The haughty turbulent spirit of Maximian, so fatal afterward to himself

<sup>4</sup> In this tribute, Aurelius Victor seems to convey a just, though indirect, censure of the cruelty of Constantius. It appears from the *Fasti* that Aristobulus remained prefect of the city, and that he ended with Diocletian the consulship which he had commenced with Carinus.

<sup>5</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>6</sup> The question of the time when Maximian received the honors of Caesar and Augustus has divided modern critics, and given occasion to a great deal of learned wrangling. I have followed M. de Tillemont (*Histoire des Empereurs*, v. iv. pp. 500—505), who has weighed the several reasons and difficulties with his scrupulous accuracy.

<sup>7</sup> In an oration delivered before him (*Panegy. Vet.* ii. 8), Mamertinus expresses a doubt whether his hero, in imitating the conduct of Hannibal and Scipio, had ever heard of their names. From thence we may fairly infer that Maximian was more desirous of being considered as a soldier than as a man of letters; and it is in this manner that we can often translate the language of flattery into that of truth.

and to the public peace, was accustomed to respect the genius of Diocletian, and confessed the ascendant of reason over brutal violence.<sup>8</sup> From a motive either of pride or superstition, the two emperors assumed the titles, the one of Jovius, the other of Herculus. While the motion of the world (such was the language of their venal orators) was maintained by the all-seeing wisdom of Jupiter, the invincible arm of Hercules purged the earth from monsters and tyrants.<sup>9</sup>

*AD 292: Character of the Two Caesars, Galerius and Constantius*

But even the omnipotence of Jovius and Herculus was insufficient to sustain the weight of the public administration. The prudence of Diocletian discovered that the empire, assailed on every side by the barbarians, required on every side the presence of a great army, and of an emperor. With this view he resolved once more to divide (AD 292, March 1) his unwieldy power, and with the inferior title of Caesars, to confer on two generals of approved merit an equal share of the sovereign authority.<sup>10</sup> Galerius, surnamed Armentarius, from his original profession of a herdsman, and Constantius, who from his pale complexion, had acquired the name of Chlorus,<sup>11</sup> were the two persons invested with the second honors of the Imperial purple. In describing the country, extraction, and manners of Herculus, we have already delineated those of Galerius, who was often, and not improperly, styled the younger Maximian, though, in many instances both of virtue and ability, he appears to have possessed a manifest superiority over the elder. The birth of Constantius was less obscure than that of his colleagues. Eutropius, his father, was one of the most considerable nobles of Dardania, and his mother was the niece of the emperor Clandius.<sup>12</sup> Although the youth of Constantius had been spent in arms, he was endowed with a mild and amiable disposition, and the popular voice had long since acknowledged him worthy of the rank which he at last attained. To strengthen the bonds of political by those of domestic union, each of the emperors assumed the character of a father to one of the Caesars, Diocletian to Galerius, and Maximian to Constantius; and each obliging them to repudiate their former wives, bestowed his daughter in marriage on his adopted son.<sup>13</sup> These four princes distributed among themselves the wide extent of the Roman empire. The defense of Gaul, Spain,<sup>14</sup> and Britain, was entrusted to Constantius. Galerius was stationed on the banks of the Danube, as the safeguard of the Illyrian provinces. Italy and Africa were considered as the department of Maximian; and for his peculiar portion, Diocletian reserved Thrace, Egypt, and the rich countries of Asia. Every one was sovereign within his own jurisdiction; but their united authority extended over the whole monarchy, and each of them was prepared to assist his colleagues with his counsels or presence. The Caesars, in their exalted rank, revered the majesty of the emperors, and the three younger princes invariably acknowledged, by their gratitude and obedience, the common parent of their fortunes. The suspicious

<sup>8</sup> Lactantius de M. P. c. 8. Aurelius Victor. As, among the Panegyrics, we find orations pronounced in praise of Maximian, and others which flatter his adversaries at his expense, we derive some knowledge from the contrast.

<sup>9</sup> Second and third Panegyrics, particularly iii. 3, 10, 14, but it would be tedious to copy the diffuse and affected expressions of their false eloquence. With regard to the titles, consult Aurel Victor, Lactantius de M. P. c. 52. *Spanheim de Usu Numismatum*, etc. Dissertat. xii 8.

<sup>10</sup> Aurelius Victor in Epitome. Eutrop. ix. 12. Lactant. de M. P. c. 8. *Hieronymus in Chron.*

<sup>11</sup> It is only among the modern Greeks that Tillemont can discover his name of Chlorus. Any remarkable degree of paleness seems inconsistent with the rubor mentioned in Panegyric. v. 19.

<sup>12</sup> Julian, the grandson of Constantius, boasts that his family was derived from the warlike Maesians. Misopogon, p. 348. The Dardanians dwelt on the edge of Maesia.

<sup>13</sup> Galerius married Valeria, the daughter of Diocletian; if we speak with strictness, Theodora, the wife of Constantius, was daughter only to the wife of Maximian. *Spanheim Dissertat.* xi. 2.

<sup>14</sup> This division agrees with that of the four prefectures; yet there is some reason to doubt whether Spain was not a province of Maximian.. Tillemont, v. lv. p. 517.

jealousy of power found not any place among them; and the singular happiness of their union has been compared to a chorus of music, whose harmony was regulated and maintained by the skilful hand of the first artist.<sup>15</sup>

### *Harmony of the Four Princes*

This important measure was not carried into execution till about six years after the association of Maximian, and that interval of time had not been destitute of memorable incidents. But we have preferred, for the sake of clarity, first to describe the more perfect form of Diocletian's government, and afterward to relate the actions of his reign, following rather the natural order of the events, than the dates of a very doubtful chronology.

### *Series of Events; State of the Peasants In Gaul*

Maximian's first exploit (AD 287), though it is mentioned in a few words by our imperfect writers, deserves, from its singularity, to be recorded in a history of human manners. He suppressed the peasants of Gaul, who were called *Bagaudae*,<sup>16</sup> had risen in a general insurrection; very similar to those, which in the 14<sup>th</sup> Century successively afflicted both France and England.<sup>17</sup> It should seem that very many of those institutions, referred by an easy solution to the feudal system, are derived from the Celtic barbarians. When Caesar subdued the Gauls that great nation was already divided into three orders of men: the clergy, nobility, and common people. The first governed by superstition, the second by arms, but the third and last was not of any weight or account in their public councils. It was very natural for the plebeians, oppressed by debt, or apprehensive of injuries, to implore the protection of some powerful chief who acquired over their persons and property the same absolute rights as, among the Greeks and Romans, a master exercised over his slaves.<sup>18</sup> The greater part of the nation was gradually reduced into a state of servitude; compelled to perpetual labor on the estates of the Gallic nobles, and confined to the soil, either by the real weight of fetters, or by the no less cruel and forcible restraints of the laws. During the long series of troubles which agitated Gaul from the reign of Gallienus to that of Diocletian, the condition of these servile peasants was peculiarly miserable; and they experienced at once the complicated tyranny of their masters, barbarians, soldiers, and officers of the revenue.<sup>19</sup>

### *Gaul's Rebellion and Chastisement*

Their patience was at last provoked into despair. On every side they rose in multitudes, armed with rustic weapons, and with irresistible fury. The plowman became a foot soldier, the shepherd mounted on horseback, the deserted villages and open towns were abandoned to the flames, and the ravages of the peasants equaled those of the fiercest barbarians. (Panegy. Vet. ii. 4; Aurelius Victor) They asserted the natural rights of men, but they asserted those rights with the most savage cruelty. The Gallic nobles, justly dreading their revenge, either took refuge in the fortified cities, or fled from the wild scene of anarchy. The peasants reigned without control; and two of their most daring leaders had the folly and

<sup>15</sup> Julian In Caesarib. P. 315. Spanheim's notes to the French translation, p. 122

<sup>16</sup> The general name of *Bagaudae* (signifying *rebels*) continued till the 5<sup>th</sup> Century in Gaul. Some critics derive it from a Celtic word *Bagad*, a tumultuous assembly. Scaliger ad Euseb. *Du Cange Glossar*.

<sup>17</sup> *Chronique de Proissart*, vol 1. c. 182, li. 73—79. The naiveté of his story is lost in our best modern writers.

<sup>18</sup> Caesar de Bell. Gallie. vi. 18. Orgetorix, the Helvetian, could arm 10,000 slaves for his defense.

<sup>19</sup> Their oppression and misery are acknowledged by Eumenius (Panegy. vi. 8), *Gallias afferatus injuriis*.

rashness to assume the Imperial ornaments.<sup>20</sup> Their power soon expired at the approach of the legions. The strength of union and discipline obtained an easy victory over a licentious and divided multitude. A severe retaliation was inflicted on the peasants who were found in arms: the affrighted remnant returned to their respective habitations, and their unsuccessful effort for freedom served only to confirm their slavery. So strong and uniform is the current of popular passions, that we might almost venture, from very scanty materials, to relate the particulars of this war; but we are not disposed to believe that the principal leaders Aelianus and Amandus were Christians,<sup>21</sup> or to insinuate that the rebellion, as it happened in the time of Luther, was occasioned by the abuse of those benevolent principles of Christianity which inculcate the natural freedom of mankind.

#### *AD 287: Revolt of Carausius in Britain*

Maximian had no sooner recovered Gaul from the hands of the peasants than (AD 287) he lost Britain by the usurpation of Carausius. Ever since the rash but successful enterprise of the Franks under the reign of Probus, their daring countrymen had constructed squadrons of light brigantines, in which they incessantly ravaged the provinces adjacent to the ocean.<sup>22</sup> To repel their desultory incursions, it was found necessary to create a naval power; and the judicious measure was prosecuted with prudence and vigor. Gessoriacum, or Boulogne, in the straits of the British Channel, was chosen by the emperor for the station of the Roman fleet; and the command of it was entrusted to Carausius, a Menapiian of the lowest caste,<sup>23</sup> but who had long signalized his skill as a pilot and his valor as a soldier. The integrity of the new admiral corresponded not with his abilities. When the German pirates sailed from their own harbors, he connived at their passage, but he diligently intercepted their return, and appropriated to his own use an ample share of the spoil which they had acquired. The wealth of Carausius was, on this occasion, very justly considered as an evidence of his guilt; and Maximian had already given orders for his death. But the crafty Menapiian foresaw and prevented the severity of the emperor. By his liberality he had attached to his fortunes the fleet which he commanded, and secured the barbarians in his interest. From the port of Boulogne he sailed over to Britain, persuaded the legion, and the auxiliaries which guarded that island, to embrace his party, and boldly assuming, with the Imperial purple, the title of Augustus, defied the justice and the arms of his Injured sovereign.<sup>24</sup>

#### *Britain's Importance*

When Britain was thus dismembered from the empire, its importance was sensibly felt, and its loss sincerely lamented. The Romans celebrated, and perhaps magnified, the extent of that noble island, provided on every side with convenient harbors; the temperature of the climate, and the fertility of the soil, alike adapted for the production of corn or of vines; the valuable minerals with which it abounded; its rich pastures covered with innumerable flocks, and its woods free from wild beasts or venomous serpents. Above all, they regretted the large amount of the revenue of Britain, while they confessed that

<sup>20</sup> Eilianus and Amandus. We have medals coined by them. Goltzius In Thea. B.. A. pp. 117, 121.

<sup>21</sup> The fact rests indeed on very slight authority, a Life of St. Babolinus, which is probably of the 7<sup>th</sup> Century. *Duchesne Scriptores Rer. Francicar.* v. i. p. 662.

<sup>22</sup> Aurelius Victor calls them Germans. Eutropius (ix. 21) gives them the name of Saxons. But Eutropius lived in the ensuing century, and seems to use the language of his own times.

<sup>23</sup> The three expressions of Eutropius, Aurelius Victor, and Eumenius, "villissime natus," (born hairy) "Bataviae alumnus," (local boy) and "Menapiae civis," (hillbilly) give us a very doubtful account of the birth of Carausius. Dr. Stukely, however (Hist. of Carausius, p. 62), chooses to make him a native of St. David's, and a prince of the blood royal of Britain. The former idea he had found in Richard of Cirencester, p. 44.

<sup>24</sup> Panegyric. v. 12. Britain at this time was secure, and slightly guarded.

such a province well deserved to become the seat of an independent monarchy.<sup>25</sup> During the space of seven years it was possessed by Carausius; and fortune continued propitious to a rebellion supported with courage and ability. The British emperor defended the frontiers of his dominions against the Caledonians of the North, invited, from the continent, a great number of skilful artists, and displayed, on a variety of coins that are still extant, his taste and opulence. Born on the confines of the Franks, he courted the friendship of that formidable people by the flattering imitation of their dress and manners. The bravest of their youth he enlisted among his land or sea forces; and in return for their useful alliance he communicated to the barbarians the dangerous knowledge of military and naval arts. Carausius still preserved the possession of Boulogne and the adjacent country. His fleets rode triumphant in the Channel, commanded the mouths of the Seine and of the Rhine, ravaged the coasts of the ocean, and diffused beyond the columns of Hercules the terror of his name. Under his command Britain, destined in a future age to obtain the empire of the sea, already assumed its natural and respectable station of a maritime power.<sup>26</sup>

#### *Power of Carausius; AD 289: Acknowledged By Other Emperors*

By seizing the fleet of Boulogne, Carausius had deprived his master of the means of pursuit and revenge. And when, after a vast expense of time and labor, a new armament was launched into the water,<sup>27</sup> the Imperial troops, unaccustomed to that element, were easily baffled and defeated by the veteran sailors of the usurper. This disappointed effort was soon productive of a treaty of peace. Diocletian and his colleague, who justly dreaded the enterprising spirit of Carausius, resigned to him the sovereignty of Britain, and (AD 289) reluctantly admitted their deceitful servant to a participation of the Imperial honors.<sup>28</sup> But the adoption of the two Caesars restored new vigor to the Roman arms; and while the Rhine was guarded by the presence of Maximian, his brave associate Constantius assumed the conduct of the British war. His first enterprise was against the important place of Boulogne. A stupendous mole, raised across the entrance of the harbor, intercepted all hopes of relief. The town surrendered (AD 292) after an obstinate defense; and a considerable part of the naval strength of Carausius fell into the hands of the besiegers. During the three years which Constantius employed in preparing a fleet adequate to the conquest of Britain, he secured the coast of Gaul, invaded the country of the Franks, and deprived the usurper of the assistance of those powerful allies.

#### *AD 294: Carausius' Death*

Before the preparations were finished, Constantius received the intelligence of the tyrant's death (AD 294), and it was considered as a sure presage of the approaching victory. The servants of

<sup>25</sup> Panegy. Vet. v. 11, vii. 9. The orator Eumenius wished to exalt the glory of the hero (Constantius) with the importance of the conquest. Notwithstanding our laudable partiality for our native country, it is difficult to conceive that, in the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> Century, England deserved all these commendations. A century and a half before it hardly paid its own establishment. *Appian In Procem.*

<sup>26</sup> As a great number of medals of Carausius are still preserved, he is become a very favorite object of antiquarian curiosity, and every circumstance of his life and actions has been investigated with sagacious accuracy. Dr. Stukely in particular has devoted a large volume to the British emperor. I have used his materials, and rejected most of his fanciful conjectures.

<sup>27</sup> When Mamertinus pronounced his first panegyric, the naval preparations of Maximian were completed; and the orator presaged an assured victory. His silence in the second Panegyric might alone inform us that the expedition had not succeeded.

<sup>28</sup> Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, and the medals (Pax Augg.) inform us of this temporary reconciliation; though I will not presume (as Dr. Stukely has done, *Medallic History of Carausius*, p. 86, etc.) to insert the identical articles of the treaty.

Carausius imitated the example of treason, which he had given. He was murdered by his first minister Aleotus, and the assassin succeeded to his power and to his danger. But he possessed not equal abilities either to exercise the one, or to repel the other. He beheld, with anxious terror, the opposite shores of the continent, already filled with arms, with troops, and with vessels; for Constantius had very prudently divided his forces, that he might likewise divide the attention and resistance of the enemy. The attack was (AD 296) at length made by the principal squadron, which, under the command of the prefect Asciepiodatus, an officer of distinguished merit, had been assembled in the mouth of the Seine. So imperfect in those times was the art of navigation that orators have celebrated the daring courage of the Romans, who ventured to set sail with a side wind, and on a stormy clay. The weather proved favorable to their enterprise. Under the cover of a thick fog, they escaped the fleet of Alectus, which had been stationed off the Isle of Wight to receive them, landed in safety on some part of the western coast, and convinced the Britons that a superiority of naval strength will not always protect their country from a foreign invasion. Asciepiodatus had no sooner disembarked the Imperial troops than he set fire to his ships; and, as the expedition proved fortunate, his heroic conduct was universally admired. The usurper had posted himself near London, to expect the formidable attack of Constantius, who commanded in person the fleet of Boulogne; but the descent of a new enemy required his immediate presence in the West. He performed this long march in so precipitate a manner that he encountered the whole force of the prefect with a small body of harassed and disheartened troops. The engagement was soon terminated by the total defeat and death of Alectus; a single battle, as it has often happened, decided the fate of this great Wand; and when Constantius landed on the shores of Kent he found them covered with obedient subjects. Their acclamations were loud and unanimous; and the virtues of the conqueror may induce us to believe that they sincerely rejoiced in a revolution which, after a separation of 10 years, restored Britain to the body of the Roman empire.<sup>29</sup>

*AD 296: Britain's Recovery By Constantius; Defense of the Frontiers; Fortifications; Barbarian Dissension*

Britain had none but domestic enemies to dread; and so long as the governors preserved their fidelity, and the troops their discipline, the incursions of the naked savages of Scotland or Ireland could never materially affect the safety of the province. The peace of the continent, and the defense of the principal rivers which bounded the empire, were objects of far greater difficulty and importance. The policy of Diocletian, which inspired the councils of his associates, provided for the public tranquillity, by encouraging a spirit of dissension among the barbarians, and by strengthening the fortifications of the Roman limit. In the East he fixed a line of camps from Egypt to the Persian dominions, and, for every camp, he instituted an adequate number of stationary troops, commanded by their respective officers, and supplied with every kind of arms, from the new arsenals which he had formed at Antioch, Emesa, and Damascus. (John Malela, in Chron. Antiochen, v. i. pp. 408, 409) Nor was the precaution of the emperor less watchful against the well-known valor of the barbarians of Europe. From the mouth of the Rhine to that of the Danube, the ancient camps, towns, and citadels were diligently re-established, and, in the most exposed places, new ones were skillfully constructed; the strictest vigilance was introduced among the garrisons of the frontier, and every expedient was practiced that could render the long chain of fortifications firm and impenetrable.<sup>30</sup> A barrier so respectable was seldom violated, and the barbarians often turned against each other their disappointed rage. The Goths, the Vandals, the Gepida, the Burgundians, the Alemanni, wasted each other's strength by destructive hostilities, and

<sup>29</sup> With regard to the recovery of Britain, we obtain a few hints from Aurelius Victor and Eutropius.

<sup>30</sup> Zosim. i. i. p. 3. That partial historian seems to celebrate the vigilance of Diocletian, with a design of exposing the negligence of Constantine. (Latin quote omitted.)

whosoever vanquished, they vanquished the enemies of Rome. The subjects of Diocletian enjoyed the bloody spectacle, and congratulated each other that the mischief of civil war were now experienced only by the barbarians.<sup>31</sup>

### *Conduct of the Emperors*

Notwithstanding the policy of Diocletian, it was impossible to maintain an equal and undisturbed tranquillity during a reign of 20 years, and along a frontier of many hundred miles. Sometimes the barbarians suspended their domestic animosities, and the relaxed vigilance of the garrisons sometimes gave a passage to their strength or dexterity. Whenever the provinces were invaded, Diocletian conducted himself with that calm dignity which he always affected or possessed; reserved his presence for such occasions as were worthy of his interposition, never exposed his person or reputation to any unnecessary danger, insured his success by every means that prudence could suggest, and displayed with ostentation the consequences of his victory. In wars of a more difficult nature, and more doubtful event, he employed the rough valor of Maximian, and that faithful soldier was content to ascribe his own victories to the wise counsels and auspicious influence of his benefactor. But, after the adoption of the two Caesars, the emperors themselves retiring to a less laborious scene of action, devolved on their adopted sons the defense of the Danube and of the Rhine. The vigilant Galerius was never reduced to the necessity of vanquishing an army of barbarians on the Roman territory.<sup>32</sup> The brave and active Constantius delivered Gaul from a very furious inroad of the Alemanni; and his victories of Langres and Vindonissa appear to have been actions of considerable danger and merit. As he traversed the open country with a feeble guard, he was encompassed on a sudden by the superior multitude of the enemy. He retreated with difficulty toward Langres; but, in the general consternation, the citizens refused to open their gates, and the wounded prince was drawn up the wall by the means of a rope. But on the news of his distress, the Roman troops hastened from all sides to his relief, and before the evening he had satisfied his honor and revenge by the slaughter of 6,000 Alemanni.<sup>33</sup> From the monuments of those times, the obscure traces of several other victories over the barbarians of Sarmatia and Germany might possibly be collected; but the tedious search would not be rewarded either with amusement or with instruction.

### *Valor of the Caesars*

The conduct which the emperor Probus had adopted in the disposal of the vanquished was imitated by Diocletian and his associates. The captive barbarians, exchanging death for slavery, were distributed among the provincials, and assigned to those districts (in Gaul, the territories of Amiens, Beauvais, Cambay, Treves, Langres, and Troyes, are particularly specified. Panegy. Vet. vii. 21) which had been depopulated by the calamities of war. They were usefully employed as shepherds and husbandmen, but were denied the exercise of arms, except when it was found expedient to enroll them in the military service. Nor did the emperors refuse the property of lands, with a less servile tenure, to such of the barbarians as solicited the protection of Rome. They granted a settlement to several colonies of the Carpi, the Bastarwe, and the Sarmatians; and, by a dangerous indulgence, permitted them in some measure to retain their national manners and independence.<sup>34</sup> Among the provincials, it was a subject of

<sup>31</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>32</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>33</sup> In the Greek text of Eusebius, we read 6,000, a number which I have preferred to the 60,000 of Jerome, Orosius, Eutropius, and his Greek translator Peanius.

<sup>34</sup> There was a settlement of the Sarmatians in the neighborhood of Treves, which seems to have been deserted by those

flattering exultation that the barbarian, so lately an object of terror, now cultivated their lands, drove their cattle to the neighboring fair, and contributed by his labor to the public plenty. They congratulated their masters on the powerful accession of subjects and soldiers; but they forgot to observe that multitudes of secret enemies, insolent from favor or desperate from oppression, were introduced into the heart of the empire.<sup>35</sup>

*Wars of Africa and Egypt; AD 296: Diocletian's Conduct in Egypt*

While the Caesars exercised their valor on the banks of the Rhine and Danube, the presence of the emperors was required on the southern confines of the Roman world. From the Nile to Mount Atlas Africa was in arms. A confederacy of five Moorish nations issued from their deserts to invade the peaceful provinces.<sup>36</sup> Julian had assumed the purple at Carthage.<sup>37</sup> Achilleus at Alexandria, and even the Blemmyes, renewed or rather continued their incursions into the Upper Egypt. Scarcely any circumstances have been preserved of the exploits of Maximian in the western parts of Africa; but it appears by the event that the progress of his arms was rapid and decisive, that he vanquished the fiercest barbarians of Mauritania, and that he removed them from the mountains, whose inaccessible strength had inspired their inhabitants with a lawless confidence, and habituated them to a life of rapine and violence.<sup>38</sup> Diocletian, on his side (AD 296), opened the campaign in Egypt by the siege of Alexandria, cut off the aqueducts which conveyed the waters of the Nile into every quarter of that immense city,<sup>39</sup> and rendering his camp impregnable to the sallies of the besieged multitude, he pushed his reiterated attacks with caution and vigor. After a siege of eight months, Alexandria, wasted by the sword and by fire, implored the clemency of the conqueror; but it experienced the full extent of his severity. Many thousands of the citizens perished in a promiscuous slaughter, and there were few obnoxious persons in Egypt who escaped a sentence either of death, or at least of exile.<sup>40</sup> The fate of Eusiris and of Coptos was still more melancholy than that of Alexandria; those proud cities, the former distinguished by its antiquity, the latter enriched by the passage of the Indian trade, were utterly destroyed by the arms and by the severe order of Diocletian.<sup>41</sup> The character of the Egyptian nation, insensible to kindness, but extremely susceptible of fear, could alone justify this excessive rigor. Alexandria's seditious had often affected the tranquillity and subsistence of Rome itself. Since the usurpation of Firinus, the province of Upper Egypt, incessantly relapsing into rebellion, had embraced the alliance of the savages of Ethiopia. The number of the Blemmyes, scattered between the island of Meroe and the Red Sea, was very inconsiderable, their disposition was peaceful, their weapons crude and inoffensive.<sup>42</sup> Yet in the public disorders, these barbarians, whom antiquity, shocked with the deformity of their figure, had almost excluded from the human species, presumed to rank themselves among the enemies of Rome.<sup>43</sup> Such had been the unworthy allies of the Egyptians; and while the

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lazy Barbarians. Latin text omitted.

<sup>35</sup> See the rhetorical exultation of Eumenius. Panegy. vii. 9.

<sup>36</sup> Scaliger (*Animadvers. ad Euseb.* p. 243) decides in his usual manner that the *Quinque gentiani*, or five African nations, were the five great cities, the *Pentapolis* of the inoffensive province of Cyrene.

<sup>37</sup> After his defeat, Julian stabbed himself with a dagger, and immediately leaped into the flames. Victor in *Epitome*.

<sup>38</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>39</sup> Description of Alexandria, in Hirtius de Bel. Alexandrian, c. 5.

<sup>40</sup> Eutrop. xi. 24. Orosius, vii. 25. John Malela in (*Jhron. Antioch.* pp. 409, 410. Yet Eumenius assures us that Egypt was pacified by the clemency of Diocletian.

<sup>41</sup> Eusebius (*In Chron.*) places their destruction several years sooner, and at a time when Egypt itself was in a state of rebellion against the Romans.

<sup>42</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>43</sup> Latin text omitted.

attention of the state was engaged in more serious wars, their vexatious inroads might again harass the repose of the province. With a view of opposing to the Blemmyes a suitable adversary, Diocletian persuaded the Nobatae or people of Nubia to remove from their ancient habitations in the deserts of Libya, and resigned to them an extensive but unprofitable territory above Syene and the cataracts of the Nile, with the stipulation that they should ever respect and guard the frontier of the empire. The treaty long subsisted; and, till the establishment of Christianity, it was annually ratified by a solemn sacrifice in the Isle of Elephantine, in which the Romans, as well as the barbarians, adored the same visible or invisible powers of the universe. (Procopius de Bell. Persic. 1. 1. c. 19)

### *Diocletian's Suppression of Books and Arts of Alchemy*

At the same time that Diocletian chastised the past crimes of the Egyptians he provided for their future safety and happiness by many wise regulations which were confirmed and enforced under the succeeding reigns.<sup>44</sup> One very remarkable edict which he published, instead of being condemned as the effect of jealous tyranny, deserves to be applauded as an act of prudence and humanity. He caused a diligent inquiry to be made “for all the ancient books which treated of the admirable art of making gold and silver, and without pity committed them to the flames; apprehensive, as we are assured, lest the opulence of the Egyptians should inspire them with confidence to rebel against the empire.” But if Diocletian had been convinced of the reality of that valuable art, far from extinguishing the memory, he would have converted the operation of it to the benefit of the public revenue. It is much more likely that his good sense discovered to him the folly of such magnificent pretensions, and that he was desirous of preserving the reason and fortunes of his subjects from the mischievous pursuit. It may be remarked that these ancient books, so liberally ascribed to Pythagoras, Solomon, or Hermes, were the pious frauds of more recent adepts. The Greeks were inattentive either to the use or to the abuse of chemistry. In that immense register, where Pliny has deposited the discoveries, the arts,<sup>45</sup> and the errors of mankind, there is not the least mention of the transmutation of metals; and the persecution of Diocletian is the first authentic event in the history of alchemy. The conquest of Egypt by the Arabs diffused that vain science over the globe. Congenial to the avarice of the human heart, it was studied in both China and Europe, with equal eagerness and success. The darkness of the Middle Ages insured a favorable reception to every tale of wonder, and the revival of learning gave new vigor to hope and suggested more specious arts of deception. Philosophy, with the aid of experience, has at length banished the study of alchemy; and the present age, however desirous of riches, is content to seek them by the humbler means of commerce and industry.<sup>46</sup>

### *The Persian War*

The reduction of Egypt was immediately followed by the Persian war. It was reserved for the reign of Diocletian to vanquish that powerful nation, and to extort a confession from the successors of Artaxerxes of the superior majesty of the Roman empire.

### *AD 282: Tiridates the Armenian*

We have observed, under the reign of Valerian, that Armenia was subdued by the deception and

<sup>44</sup> He fixed the public allowance of corn for the people of Alexandria at 2,000,000 of *medimni*; about 400,000 quarters. Chron. Pascbal. p. 276. Procop. Hist. Arcan. c. 26.

<sup>45</sup> John Antioch in Excerpt. Valesian. p. 834. Suidas in Diocletian.

<sup>46</sup> History and confutation of alchemy, in the works of that philosophical compiler, La Motte le Vayer, v. I. pp. 327—353.

arms of the Persians, and that, after the assassination of Chosroes, his son Tiridates, the infant heir of the monarchy, was saved by the fidelity of his friends, and educated under the protection of the emperors. Tiridates derived from his exile such advantages as he could never have obtained on the throne of Armenia; the early knowledge of adversity, mankind, and Roman discipline. He signalized his youth by deeds of valor, and displayed a matchless dexterity, as well as strength, in every martial exercise, and even in the less honorable contests of the Olympian games.<sup>47</sup> Those qualities were more nobly exerted in the defense of his benefactor Licinius.<sup>48</sup> That officer, in the sedition (AD 282) which occasioned the death of Probus, was exposed to the most imminent danger, and the enraged soldiers were forcing their way into his tent, when they were checked by the single arm of the Armenian prince. The gratitude of Tiridates contributed soon afterward to his restoration. Licinius was in every station the friend and companion of Galerius, and the merit of Galerius, long before he was raised to the dignity of Caesar, had been known and esteemed by Diocletian. In the third year of that emperor's reign, Tiridates was invested with the kingdom of Armenia. The justice of the measure was not less evident than its expediency. It was time to rescue from the usurpation of the Persian monarch an important territory, which, since the reign of Nero, had been always granted, under the protection of the empire, to a younger branch of the house of Arsaces. (62<sup>nd</sup> and 63<sup>rd</sup> books of Dion Cassius)

*AD 286: State of the Country; Story of Mamgo*

When Tiridates appeared (AD 286) on the frontiers of Armenia, he was received with an unfeigned transport of joy and loyalty. For 26 years, the country had experienced the real and imaginary hardships of a foreign yoke. The Persian monarchs adorned their new conquest with magnificent buildings; but those monuments had been erected at the expense of the people, and were abhorred as badges of slavery. The apprehension of a revolt had inspired the most rigorous precautions: oppression had been aggravated by insult, and the consciousness of the public hatred had been productive of every measure that could render it still more implacable. We have already remarked the intolerant spirit of the Magian religion. The statues of the deified kings of Armenia, and the sacred images of the sun and moon, were broke in pieces by the zeal of the conqueror; and the perpetual fire of Ormuzd was kindled and preserved upon an altar erected on the summit of Mount Bagavan.<sup>49</sup> It was natural that a people, exasperated by so many injuries, should arm with zeal in the cause of their independence, their religion, and their hereditary sovereign. The torrent bore down every obstacle, and the Persian garrisons retreated before its fury. The nobles of Armenia flew to the standard of Tiridates, all alleging their past merit, offering their future service, and soliciting from the new king those honors and rewards from which they had been excluded with disdain under the foreign government.<sup>50</sup> The command of the army was bestowed on Artavasdes, whose father had saved the infancy of Tiridates, and whose family had been massacred for that generous action. The brother of Artavasdes obtained the government of a province. One of the first military dignities was conferred on the satrap Otas, a man of singular

<sup>47</sup> Education and strength of Tiridates in the Armenian History of Moses of Chorene, 1. ii. c. 76. He could seize two wild bulls by the horns, and break them off with his hands.

<sup>48</sup> If we give credit to the younger Victor, who supposes that in the year 323 Licinius was only 60 years old, he could scarcely be the same person as the patron of Tiridates; but we know from much better authority (Euseb. Hist. Eccl. 1. x. c. 8) that Licinius was at that time in the last period of old age; 16 years before, he is represented with gray hairs, and as the contemporary of Galerius. Lactant. c. 32. Licinius was probably born about the year 250.

<sup>49</sup> Moses of Chorene, Hist. Armen. 1. ii. e. 74. The statues had been erected by Valarsaces, who reigned in Armenia about 130 years before Christ, and was the first king of the family of Arsaces (Moses list. Armen. 1. ii. 2, 3). The deification of the Arsacides is mentioned by Justin (xii. 5) and by Ammianus Marcellinus (xxiii. 6).

<sup>50</sup> The Armenian nobility was numerous and powerful. Moses mentions many families which were distinguished under the reign of Valarsaces (1. ii 7), and which still subsisted in his own time, about the middle of the 5<sup>th</sup> Century.

temperance and fortitude, who presented to the king his sister and a considerable treasure, both of which, in a sequestered fortress, Otas had preserved from violation. Among the Armenian nobles appeared an ally whose fortunes are too remarkable to pass unnoticed. His name was Mamgo, his origin was Scythian, and the horde which acknowledged his authority had encamped a very few years before on the skirts of the Chinese empire,<sup>51</sup> which at that time extended as far as the neighborhood of Sogdiana.<sup>52</sup> Having incurred the displeasure of his master, Mamgo, with his followers, retired to the banks of the Oxus, and implored the protection of Sapor. The emperor of China claimed the fugitive, and, alleged the rights of sovereignty. The Persian monarch pleaded the laws of hospitality, and with some difficulty avoided a war, by the promise that he would banish Mamgo to the uttermost parts of the West; a punishment, as he described it, not less dreadful than death itself. Armenia was chosen for the place of exile, and a large district was assigned to the Scythian horde, on which they might feed their flocks and herds, and remove their encampment from one place to another according to the different seasons of the year. They were employed to repel the invasion of Tiridates; but their leader, after weighing the obligations and injuries which he had received from the Persian monarch, resolved to abandon his party. The Armenian prince, who was well acquainted with the merit as well as power of Mamgo, treated him with distinguished respect; and, by admitting him into his confidence, acquired a brave and faithful servant, who very effectively contributed to his restoration. (Hist. Armen. 1. ii. c. 81)

### *The Persians Recover Armenia*

For a while fortune appeared to favor the enterprising valor of Tiridates. He not only expelled the enemies of his family and country from the whole extent of Armenia, but in the prosecution of his revenge he carried his arms, or at least his incursions, into the heart of Assyria. The historian who has preserved the name of Tiridates from oblivion celebrates, with a degree of national enthusiasm, his personal prowess; and, in the true spirit of eastern romance, describes the giants and the elephants that fell beneath his invincible arm. It is from other information that we discover the distracted state of the Persian monarchy, to which the king of Armenia was indebted for some part of his advantages. The throne was disputed by the ambition of contending brothers; and Hormuz, after exerting without success the strength of his own party, had recourse to the dangerous assistance of the barbarians who inhabited the banks of the Caspian Sea.<sup>53</sup> The civil war was, however, soon terminated, either by a victory or by a reconciliation; and Narses, who was universally acknowledged as king of Persia, directed his whole force against the foreign enemy. The contest then became too unequal; nor was the valor of the hero able to withstand the power of the monarch. Tiridates, a second time expelled from the throne of Armenia, once more took refuge in the court of the emperors. Narses soon re-established his authority over the revolted province; and loudly complaining of the protection afforded by the Romans to rebels and fugitives, aspired to the conquest of the East.<sup>54</sup>

<sup>51</sup> In the Armenian History (l. ii. 78). as well as in the Geography (p. 367) China is called Zenia, or Zenastan. It is characterized by the production of silk, by the opulence of the natives, and by their love of peace, above all the other nations of the earth.

<sup>52</sup> Vou-ti, the first emperor of the 7<sup>th</sup> dynasty, who then reigned in China, had political transactions with Fergana, a province of Sogdiana, and is said to have received a Roman embassy (Historie des Huns, v. I. p. 38). In those ages the Chinese kept a garrison at Kashgar, and one of their generals, about the time of Trajan, marched as far as the Caspian Sea. With regard to the intercourse between China and the western countries, a curious memoir of M de Guignes may be consulted, in the Academie des Inscriptions, uxii. p. 355.

<sup>53</sup> Latin text omitted. The Saccae were a nation of wandering Scythians, who encamped toward the sources of the Oxus and the Jaxartes. The Gelli were the inhabitants of Ghilan along the Caspian Sea, and who so long, under the name of Dilemites, infested the Persian monarchy. D'Herbelot, Biblioth. Orient.

<sup>54</sup> Moses of Chorene takes no notice of this second revolution, which I have been obliged to collect from a passage of

### *War Between the Persians and Romans; Defeat of Galerius*

Neither prudence nor honor could permit the emperors to forsake the cause of the Armenian king, and it was resolved to exert the force of the empire in the Persian war. Diocletian (A.D. 296), with the calm dignity which he constantly assumed, fixed his own station in the city of Antioch, from whence he prepared and directed the military operations.<sup>55</sup> The conduct of the legions was entrusted to the intrepid valor of Galerius, who, for that important purpose, was removed from the banks of the Danube to those of the Euphrates. The armies soon encountered each other in the plains of Mesopotamia, and two battles were fought with various and doubtful success. The third engagement, however, was of a more decisive nature. The Roman army received a total overthrow, which is attributed to the rashness of Galerius, who, with an inconsiderable body of troops, attacked the innumerable host of the Persians.<sup>56</sup> But the consideration of the country that was the scene of action may suggest another reason for his defeat. The same ground on which Galerius was vanquished had been rendered memorable by the death of Crassus, and the slaughter of 10 legions. It was a plain of more than 60 miles, which extended from the hills of Carrhae to the Euphrates; a smooth and barren surface of sandy desert, without a hillock, tree, or spring of fresh water.<sup>57</sup> The steady infantry of the Romans, fainting with heat and thirst, could neither hope for victory if they preserved their ranks, nor break their ranks without exposing themselves to the most imminent danger. In this situation they were gradually encompassed by the superior numbers, harassed by the rapid evolutions, and destroyed by the arrows, of the barbarian cavalry. The king of Armenia had signalized his valor in the battle, and acquired personal glory by the public misfortune. He was pursued as far as the Euphrates; his horse was wounded, and it appeared impossible for him to escape the victorious enemy. In this extremity Tiridates embraced the only refuge which he saw before him: he dismounted and plunged into the stream. His armor was heavy, the river very deep, and at those parts at least half a mile in breadth;<sup>58</sup> yet such was his strength and dexterity that he reached in safety the opposite bank.<sup>59</sup> With regard to the Roman general we are ignorant of the circumstances of his escape; but when he returned to Antioch, Diocletian received him, not with the tenderness of a friend and colleague, but with the indignation of an offended sovereign. The haughtiest of men, clothed in his purple, but humbled by the sense of his fault and misfortune, was obliged to follow the emperor's chariot more than a mile on foot, and to exhibit, before the whole court, the spectacle of his disgrace.<sup>60</sup>

### *AD 297: Second Campaign of Galerius; His Victory*

As soon as Diocletian had indulged his private resentment, and asserted the majesty of supreme power, he yielded to the submissive entreaties of the Caesar, and permitted him (AD 297) to retrieve his

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Ammianus Marcellius (l. xxiii. 5). Lactantius speaks of the ambition of Narses. Latin text omitted.

<sup>55</sup> We may readily believe that Lactantius ascribes to cowardice the conduct of Diocletian. In his oration, Julian says that he remained with all the forces of the empire; a very hyperbolic expression.

<sup>56</sup> Our five abbreviators, Eutropius, Festus, the two Victors, and Orosius all relate the last and great battle; but Orosius is the only one who speaks of the two former.

<sup>57</sup> The nature of the country is finely described by Plutarch, in the Life of Crassus, and by Xenophon, in the first book of the Anabasis.

<sup>58</sup> Foster's Dissertation in the second volume of the translation of the Anabasis, by Spelman; which I will venture to recommend as one of the best versions extant.

<sup>59</sup> Hist. Armen. l. ii. c. 16. I have transferred this exploit of Tiridates from an imaginary defeat to the real one of Galerius.

<sup>60</sup> Ammian. Marcellin. l. xiv. The mile, in the hands of Eutropius (ix. 24), Pestus (c. 25), and Orosius (vii. 25), easily increased to several miles.

own honor as well as that of the Roman arms. In the room of the peaceful troops of Asia, which had most probably served in the first expedition, a second army was drawn from the veterans and new levies of the Illyrian frontier, and a considerable body of Gothic auxiliaries were taken into the Imperial pay. (Aurel. Victor. *Jornandes de Rebus Geticis*, c. 21) At the head of a chosen army of 25,000 men, Galerius again passed the Euphrates; but, instead of exposing his legions in the open plains of Mesopotamia, he advanced through the mountains of Armenia, where he found the inhabitants devoted to his cause, and the country as favorable to the operations of infantry as it was inconvenient for the motions of cavalry.<sup>61</sup> Adversity had confirmed the Roman discipline, while the barbarians, elated by success, had become so negligent and remiss that, in the moment when they least expected it, they were surprised by the active conduct of Galerius, who, attended only by two horsemen, had with his own eyes secretly examined the state and position of their camp. A surprise, especially in the night-time, was for the most part fatal to a Persian army. "Their horses were tied, and generally shackled, to prevent their running away; and if an alarm happened, a Persian had his housing to fix, his horse to bridle, and his corselet to put on, before he could mount."<sup>62</sup> On this occasion, the impetuous attack of Galerius spread disorder and dismay over the camp of the barbarians. A slight resistance was followed by a dreadful carnage, and, in the general confusion, the wounded monarch (for Narses commanded his armies in person) fled toward the deserts of Media. His sumptuous tents, and those of his satraps, afforded an immense booty to the conqueror; and an indent is mentioned, which proves the rustic but martial ignorance of the legions in the elegant superfluities of life. A bag of shining leather filled with pearls fell into the hands of a private soldier; he carefully preserved the bag, but he threw away its contents, judging that whatever was of no use could not possibly be of any value.<sup>63</sup> The principal loss of Narses was of a much more affecting nature. Several of his wives, his sisters, and children, who had attended the army, were made captives in the defeat. But though the character of Galerius had in general very little affinity with that of Alexander, he imitated, after his victory, the amiable behavior of the Macedonian toward the family of Darius. The wives and children of Narses were protected from violence and rapine, conveyed to a place of safety, and, treated with every mark of respect and tenderness that was due from a generous enemy to their age, their sex, and their royal dignity.<sup>64</sup>

#### *Negotiations for Peace; Diocletian's Moderation*

While the East anxiously expected the decision of this great contest, the emperor Diocletian, having assembled in Syria a strong army of observation, displayed from a distance the resources of the Roman power, and reserved himself for any future emergency of the war. On the intelligence of the victory, he condescended to advance toward the frontier, with a view of moderating, by his presence and counsels, the pride of Galerius. The interview of the Roman princes at Nisibis was accompanied with every expression of respect on one side and of esteem on the other. It was in that city that they soon afterward gave audience to the ambassador of the Great King.<sup>65</sup> The power, or at least the spirit of Narses, had been broken by his last defeat; and he considered an immediate peace as the only means that could stop the progress of the Roman arms. He dispatched Apharban, a servant who possessed his favor and confidence, with a commission to negotiate a treaty, or rather to receive whatever conditions the

<sup>61</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>62</sup> Xenophon's *Anabasis*, 1. iii. For that reason the Persian cavalry encamped sixty stadia (almost 7 miles) from the enemy.

<sup>63</sup> The story is told by Ammianus, 1. xxii. Instead of *saccum* (sack, bag) some read *scutum* (shield).

<sup>64</sup> The Persians confessed the Roman superiority in morals as well as in arms. Eutrop. ix. 25. But this respect and gratitude of enemies is very seldom to be found in their own accounts.

<sup>65</sup> The account of the negotiation is taken from the fragments of Peter the Patrician, in the *Excerpta Legationum*, published in the Byzantine Collection. Peter lived under Justinian; but it is very evident, by the nature of his materials, that they are drawn from the most authentic and respectable writers.

conqueror should impose. Apherban opened the conference by expressing his master's gratitude for the generous treatment of his family, and by soliciting the liberty of those illustrious captives. He celebrated the valor of Galerius, without degrading the reputation of Narses, and thought it no dishonor to confess the superiority of the victorious Caesar, over a monarch who had surpassed in glory all the princes of his race. Notwithstanding the justice of the Persian cause, he was empowered to submit the present differences to the decision of the emperors themselves; convinced as he was that, in the midst of prosperity, they would not be unmindful of the vicissitudes of fortune. Apherban concluded his discourse, in the style of eastern allegory, by observing that the Roman and Persian monarchies were the two eyes of the world which would remain imperfect and mutilated, if either of them should be put out.

"It well becomes the Persians," replied Galerius, with a transport of fury, which seemed to convulse his whole frame, "it well becomes the Persians to expatiate on the vicissitudes of fortune, and calmly to read us lectures on the virtues of moderation. Let them remember their own moderation toward the unhappy Valerian. They vanquished him by fraud, they treated him with indignity. They detained him till the last moment of his life in shameful captivity, and after his death they exposed his body to perpetual ignominy." Softening, however, his tone, Galerius insinuated to the ambassador that it had never been the practice of the Romans to trample on a prostrate enemy; and that, on this occasion, they should consult their own dignity rather than the Persian merit. He dismissed Apherban with a hope that Narses would soon be informed on what conditions he might obtain, from the clemency of the emperors, a lasting peace, and the restoration of his wives and children. In this conference we may discover the fierce passions of Galerius as well as his deference to the superior wisdom and authority of Diocletian. The ambition of the former grasped at the conquest of the East, and had proposed to reduce Persia into the state of a province. The prudence of the latter, who adhered to the moderate policy of Augustus and the Antonines, embraced the favorable opportunity of terminating a successful war by an honorable and advantageous peace.<sup>66</sup>

In pursuance of their promise, the emperors soon afterward appointed Sicorius Probus, one of their secretaries, to acquaint the Persian court with their final resolution. As the minister of peace, he was received with every mark of politeness and friendship; but under the pretence of allowing him the necessary repose after so long a journey, the audience of Probus was deferred from day to day; and he attended the slow motions of the king, till at length he was admitted to his presence, near the river Asprudus in Mediae. The secret motive of Narses in this delay had been to collect such a military force as might enable him, though sincerely desirous of peace, to negotiate with the greater weight and dignity. Three persons only assisted at this important conference, the minister Apherban, the prefect of the guards, and an officer who had commanded on the Armenian frontier.<sup>67</sup> The first condition proposed by the ambassador is not at present of a very intelligible nature; that the city of Nisibis might be established for the place of mutual exchange, or, as we should formerly have termed it, for the staple of trade between the two empires. There is no difficulty in conceiving the intention of the Roman princes to improve their revenue by some restraints upon commerce; but as Nisibis was situated within their own dominions, and as they were masters both of the imports and exports, it should seem that such restraints were the objects of an internal law, rather than of a foreign treaty. To render them more effectual, some stipulations were probably required on the side of the king of Persia, which appeared so very repugnant either to his interest or to his dignity that Narses could not be persuaded to subscribe them. As this was the only article to which he refused his consent, it was no longer insisted on; and the emperors either suffered the trade to flow in its natural channels, or contented themselves with such

<sup>66</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>67</sup> He had been governor of Sumium (Pet. Patricius in Excerpt. Legat. P.30). This province seems to be mentioned by Moses of Chorene (Geograph. P. 360), and lay to the east of Mount Ararat.

restrictions as it depended on their own authority to establish.

*Articles of the Treaty; the Aboras Fixed As the Limits Between the Empires*

As soon as this difficulty was removed, a solemn peace was concluded and ratified between the two nations. The conditions of a treaty so glorious to the empire, and so necessary to Persia, may deserve a more peculiar attention, as the history of Rome presents very few transactions of a similar nature; most of her wars having either been terminated by absolute conquest, or waged against barbarians ignorant of the use of letters.

- I. The Aboras, or, as it is called by Xenophon, the Araxes, was fixed as the boundary between the two monarchies.<sup>68</sup> That river, which rose near the Tigris, was increased, a few miles below Nisibis, by the little stream of the Mygdonius, passed under the walls of Singara, and fell into the Euphrates at Circesium, a frontier town, which, by the care of Diocletian, was very strongly fortified. (Procopius de Edificiis, I. ii. c. 6) Mesopotamia, the object of so many wars, was ceded to the empire; and the Persians, by this treaty, renounced all pretensions to that great province.
- II. They relinquished to the Romans five provinces beyond the Tigris.<sup>69</sup> Their situation formed a very useful barrier, and their natural strength was soon improved by art and military skill. Four of these, to the north of the river, were districts of obscure fame and inconsiderable extent: Intiline, Zabdicene, Arzanene, and Moxoene. But on the east of the Tigris, the empire acquired the large and mountainous territory of Carduene, the ancient seat of the Carduchians, who preserved for many ages their manly freedom in the heart of the despotic monarchies of Asia. The ten thousand Greeks traversed their country, after a painful march, or rather engagement, of seven days; and it is confessed by their leader, in his incomparable relation of the retreat, that they suffered more from the arrows of the Carduchians than from the power of the Great King.<sup>70</sup> Their posterity, the Curds, with very little alteration either of name or manners, acknowledged the nominal sovereignty of the Turkish sultan.
- III. It is almost needless to observe that Tiridates, the faithful ally of Rome, was restored to the throne of his fathers, and that the rights of the Imperial supremacy were fully asserted and secured. The limits of Armenia were extended as far as the fortress of Sintha in Media, and this increase of dominion was not so much an act of liberality as of justice. Of the provinces already mentioned beyond the Tigris, the four first had been dismembered by the Parthians from the crown of Armenia;<sup>71</sup> and when the Romans acquired the possession of them, they stipulated, at the expense of the usurpers, an ample compensation, which invested their ally with the extensive and fertile country of Atropatene. Its principal city, in the same situation

<sup>68</sup> By an error of the geographer Ptolemy the position of Singara is removed from the Aboras to the Tigris, which may have produced the mistake of Peter, in assigning the latter river for the boundary, instead of the former. The line of the Roman frontier traversed, but never followed, the course of the Tigris.

<sup>69</sup> Three of the provinces, Zabdicene, Arzanene, and Carduene are allowed on all sides. But instead of the other two, Peter (in Excerpt. Leg. p. 30) asserts Rehimene and Sophene. I have preferred Ammianus (1. xxv. 7), because it might be proved that Sophene was never in the hands of the Persians, either before the reign of Diocletian, or after that of Jovian. For want of correct maps, like those of M. d'Anville, almost all the moderns, with Tillemont and Valesius at their head, have imagined that it was in respect to Persia, and not to Rome, that the five provinces were situate beyond the Tigris.

<sup>70</sup> Xenophon's Anabasis, I iv. Their bows were three cubits (54") in length, their arrows two (36"); they rolled down stones that were each a wagonload. The Greeks found a great many villages in that crude country.

<sup>71</sup> According to Eutropius (vi. 9, as the text is represented by the best MSS.), the city of Tigranocerta was in Arxanene. The names and situation of the other three may be faintly traced.

perhaps as the modern Tauris, was frequently honored with the residence of Tindates; and as it sometimes bore the name of Ecbatana, he imitated, in the buildings and fortifications, the splendid capital of the Medes.<sup>72</sup>

- IV. The country of Iberia was barren, its inhabitants crude and savage. But they were accustomed to the use of arms, and they separated from the empire barbarians much fiercer and more formidable than themselves. The narrow defiles of Mount Caucasus were in their hands, and it was in their choice either to admit or to exclude the wandering tribes of Sarmatia, whenever a rapacious spirit urged them to penetrate into the richer climates of the South.<sup>73</sup> The nomination of the kings of Iberia, which was resigned by the Persian monarch to the emperors, contributed to the strength and security of the Roman power in Asia.<sup>74</sup> The East enjoyed a profound tranquillity for 40 years; and the treaty between the rival monarchies was strictly observed till the death of Tiridates; when a new generation, animated with different views and different passions, succeeded to the government of the world; and the grandson of Narses undertook a long and memorable war against the princes of the house of Constantine.

#### *AD 303: Triumph of Diocletian and Maximian*

The arduous work of rescuing the distressed empire from tyrants and barbarians had now been completely achieved by a succession of Illyrian peasants. As soon as Diocletian entered into the 20<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, he celebrated (AD 303, Nov. 20) that memorable era, as well as the success of his arms, by the pomp of a Roman triumph.<sup>75</sup> Maximian, the equal partner of his power, was his only companion in the glory of that day. The two Caesars had fought and conquered, but the merit of their exploits was ascribed, according to the rigor of ancient maxims, to the auspicious influence of their fathers and emperors.<sup>76</sup> The triumph of Diocletian and Maximian was less magnificent perhaps than those of Aurelian and Probus, but it was dignified by several circumstances of superior fame and good fortune. Africa and Britain, the Rhine, the Danube, and the Nile, furnished their respective trophies; but the most distinguished ornament was of a more singular nature, a Persian victory followed by an important conquest. The representations of rivers, mountains, and provinces, were carried before the Imperial car. The images of the captive wives, the sisters, and the children of the Great King, afforded a new and grateful spectacle to the vanity of the people.<sup>77</sup> In the eyes of posterity this triumph is remarkable, by a distinction of a less honorable kind. It was the last that Rome ever beheld. Soon after this period, the emperors ceased to vanquish, and Rome ceased to be the capital of the empire.

#### *Long Absence of the Emperors From Rome; Their Residences At Milan and Nicodemia*

The spot on which Rome was founded. had been consecrated by ancient ceremonies and imaginary miracles. The presence of some god, or the memory of some hero, seemed to animate every part of the

<sup>72</sup> Compare Herodotus, l i. c. 97, with Moses Choronens. Hist. Armen. 1. li. c. 84, and the map of Armenia given by his editors.

<sup>73</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>74</sup> Peter Patricius (in Excerpt. Leg. p. 30) is the only writer who mentions the Iberian article of the treaty.

<sup>75</sup> Euseb. in Chron. Pagi ad annum. Till the discovery of the treatise *De Mortibus Persecutorum*, it was not certain that the triumph and the Vincenalia were celebrated at the same time.

<sup>76</sup> At the time of the Vincenalia, Galerius seems to have kept his station on the Danube. Lactant. de M. P. c. 38.

<sup>77</sup> Eutropius (ix. 27) mentions them as a part of the triumph. As the persons had been restored to Narses, nothing more than their images could be exhibited.

city, and the empire of the world had been promised to the Capitol.<sup>78</sup> The native Romans felt and confessed the power of this agreeable illusion. It was derived from their ancestors, had grown up with their earliest habits of life, and was protected, in some measure, by the opinion of political utility. The form and the seat of government were intimately blended together, nor was it esteemed possible to transport the one without destroying the other.<sup>79</sup> But the sovereignty of the capital was gradually annihilated in the extent of conquest; the provinces rose to the same level, and the vanquished nations acquired the name and privileges, without imbibing the partial affections, of Romans. During a long period, however, the remains of the ancient constitution, and the influence of custom, preserved the dignity of Rome. The emperors, though perhaps of African or Illyrian extraction, respected their adopted country, as the seat of their power, and the center of their extensive dominions. The emergencies of war very frequently required their presence on the frontiers; but Diocletian and Maximian were the first Roman princes who fixed, in time of peace, their ordinary residence in the provinces; and their conduct, however it might be suggested by private motives, was justified by very specious considerations of policy. The court of the emperor of the West was, for the most part, established at Milan, whose situation, at the foot of the Alps, appeared far more convenient than that of Rome for the important purpose of watching the motions of the barbarians of Germany. Milan soon assumed the splendor of an imperial city. The houses are described as numerous and well built; the manners of the people as polished and liberal. A circus, theatre, mint, palace, and baths, which bore the name of their founder Maximian; porticoes adorned with statues, and a double circumference of walls, contributed to the beauty of the new capital; nor did it seem oppressed even by the proximity of Rome.<sup>80</sup> To rival the majesty of Rome was the ambition likewise of Diocletian, who employed his leisure, and the wealth of the East, in the embellishment of Nicomedia, a city placed on the verge of Europe and Asia, almost at an equal distance between the Danube and the Euphrates. By the taste of the monarch, and at the expense of the people, Nicomedia acquired, in the space of a few years, a degree of magnificence which might appear to have required the labor of ages, and became inferior only to Rome, Alexandria, and Antioch, in extent or population. (Lactant. de M. P., c. 17; Libanius, Orat. viii. p. 203) The life of Diocletian and Maximian was a life of action, and a considerable portion of it was spent in camps, or in their long and frequent marches; but whenever the public business allowed them any relaxation, they seem to have retired with pleasure to their favorite residences of Nicomedia and Milan. Till Diocletian, in the 20<sup>th</sup> year of his reign, celebrated his Roman triumph, it is extremely doubtful whether he ever visited the ancient capital of the empire. Even on that memorable occasion his stay did not exceed 2 months. Disgusted with the licentious familiarity of the people, he quit Rome with precipitation 13 days before it was expected that he should have appeared in the senate, invested with the ensigns of the consular dignity.<sup>81</sup>

### *Debasement of Rome and Her Senate; New Bodies of Guards—Jovians and Herculians*

The dislike expressed by Diocletian toward Rome and Roman freedom was not the effect of momentary caprice, but the result of the most artful policy. That artful prince had framed a new system

<sup>78</sup> Livy gives us a speech of Camillus on that subject (v. 51—6), full of eloquence and sensibility, in opposition to a design of removing the seat of government from Rome to the neighboring city of Veii.

<sup>79</sup> Julius Caesar was reproached with the intention of removing the empire to Ilium or Alexandria. Sueton. in Caesar. c. 79. According to the ingenious conjecture of Le Fevre and Dacier, the third ode of the third book of Horace was intended to divert Augustus from the execution of a similar design.

<sup>80</sup> Aurelius Victor likewise mentions the buildings erected by Maximian at Carthage, probably during the Moorish war. We shall insert some verses of Ausonius de Clar. Urb. v. (Latin text omitted)

<sup>81</sup> Lactant. de M. P. c. 17. On a similar occasion Ammianus mentions the *dicacitas plebis* (citizens' ridicule), as not very agreeable to an Imperial ear (1. xvi. c. 10).

of Imperial government, which was afterward completed by the family of Constantine; and as the image of the old constitution was religiously preserved in the senate, he resolved to deprive that order of its small remains of power and consideration. We may recollect, about 8 years before the elevation of Diocletian, the transient greatness and the ambitious hopes of the Roman senate. As long as that enthusiasm prevailed, many of the nobles imprudently displayed their zeal in the cause of freedom; and after the successors of Probus had withdrawn their countenance from the republican party, the senators were unable to disguise their impotent resentment. As the sovereign of Italy, Maximian was entrusted with the care of extinguishing this troublesome, rather than dangerous, spirit, and the task was perfectly suited to his cruel temper. The most illustrious members of the senate, whom Diocletian always affected to esteem, were involved, by his colleague, in the accusation of imaginary plots; and the possession of an elegant villa, or a well-cultivated estate, was interpreted as a convincing evidence of guilt.<sup>82</sup> The camp of the Pretorians, which had so long oppressed, began to protect the majesty of Rome; and as those haughty troops were conscious of the decline of their power, they were naturally disposed to unite their strength with the authority of the senate. By the prudent measures of Diocletian, the numbers of the Pretorians were insensibly reduced, their privileges abolished,<sup>83</sup> and their place supplied by two faithful legions of Illyricum, who, under the new titles of Jovians and Herculians, were appointed to perform the service of the Imperial guards.<sup>84</sup> But the most fatal though secret wound which the senate received from the hands of Diocletian and Maximian was inflicted by the inevitable operation of their absence. As long as the emperors resided at Rome, that assembly might be oppressed, but it could scarcely be neglected. The successors of Augustus exercised the power of dictating whatever laws their wisdom or caprice might suggest; but those laws were ratified by the sanction of the senate. The model of ancient freedom was preserved in its deliberations and decrees; and wise princes, who respected the prejudices of the Roman people, were in some measure obliged to assume the language and behavior suitable to the general and first magistrate of the republic. In the armies and in the provinces they displayed the dignity of monarchs; and when they fixed their residence at a distance from the capital, they forever laid aside the dissimulation which Augustus had recommended to his successors. In the exercise of the legislative as well as the executive power, the sovereign advised with his ministers, instead of consulting the great council of the nation. The name of the senate was mentioned with honor till the last period of the empire; the vanity of its members was still flattered with honorary distinctions (Theodosian Code, 1. vi. tit. ii. with Godefroy's commentary); but the assembly which had so long been the source, and so long the instrument of power, was respectfully suffered to sink into oblivion. The senate of Rome, losing all connection with the Imperial court and the actual constitution, was left a venerable but useless monument of antiquity on the Capitoline hill.

#### *Civil Magistrates Laid Aside; Imperial Dignity and Titles*

When the Roman princes had lost sight of the senate and of their ancient capital, they easily forgot the origin and nature of their legal power. The civil offices of consul, proconsul, censor, and tribune, by the union of which it had been formed, betrayed to the people its republican extraction. Those modest titles were laid aside;<sup>85</sup> and if they still distinguished their high station by the title of Emperor, or

<sup>82</sup> Lactantius accuses Maximian of destroying *fictis criminationibus lumina senatus* (fabricated evidence against the senate) (De M. P. c. 8). Aurelius Victor speaks very doubtfully of the faith of Diocletian toward his friends.

<sup>83</sup> (Latin text omitted) Lactantius attributes to Galerius the prosecution of the same plan (c. 26).

<sup>84</sup> They were old corps stationed in Illyricum; and, according to the ancient establishment, they each consisted of 6,000 men. They had acquired much reputation by the use of the *plumbatae*, (darts loaded with lead). Each soldier carried five of these, which he darted from a considerable distance, with great strength and dexterity. Vegetius, i. 17.

<sup>85</sup> Twelfth dissertation in Spanheim's excellent work *de Usu Numismatum*. From medals, inscriptions, and historians, he examines every title separately, and traces it from Augustus to the moment of its disappearing.

*Imperator*, that word was understood in a new and more dignified sense, and no longer denoted the general of the Roman armies, but the sovereign of the Roman world. The name *Emperor*, which was at first of a military nature, was associated with another of a more servile kind. The epithet of *Dominus*, or *Lord*, in its primitive signification, was expressive, not of the authority of a prince over his subjects, or of a commander over his soldiers, but of the despotic power of a master over his domestic slaves.<sup>86</sup> Viewing it in that odious light, it had been rejected with abhorrence by the first Caesars.. Their resistance insensibly became more feeble, and the name less odious; till at length the style. of our Lord and Emperor was not only bestowed by flattery, but was regularly admitted into the laws and public monuments. Such lofty epithets were sufficient to elate and satisfy the most excessive vanity; and if the successors of Diocletian still declined the title of King, it seems to have been the effect not so much of their moderation as of their delicacy. Wherever the Latin tongue was in use (and it was the language of government throughout the empire), the Imperial title, as it was peculiar to themselves, conveyed a more respectable idea than the name of King, which they must have shared with a hundred barbarian chieftains; or which, at the best, they could derive only from Romulus or from Tarquin. But the sentiments of the East were very different from those of the West. From the earliest period of history, the sovereigns of Asia had been celebrated in the Greek language by the title of *Basileus*, or King; and since it was considered as the first distinction among men, it was soon employed by the servile provincials of the East, in their humble addresses to the Roman throne.<sup>87</sup> Even the attributes, or at least the titles of God were usurped by Diocletian and Maximian, who transmitted them to a succession of Christian emperors.<sup>88</sup> Such extravagant compliments, however, soon lose their impiety by losing their meaning; and when the ear is once accustomed to the sound, they are heard with indifference as vague though excessive professions of respect.

#### *Diocletian Assumes the Diadem and Introduces the Persian Ceremonial*

From the time of Augustus to that of Diocletian, the Roman princes, conversing in a familiar manner among their fellow-citizens, were saluted only with the same respect that was usually paid to senators and magistrates. Their principal distinction was the Imperial or military robe of purple; while the senatorial garment was marked by a broad, and the equestrian by a narrow, band or stripe of the same honorable color. The pride, or rather the policy of Diocletian, engaged that artful prince to introduce the stately magnificence of the court of Persia. (Spanheim *de Usu Numismat.* Dissertat. xii) He ventured to assume the diadem, an ornament detested by the Romans as the odious ensign of royalty, and the use of which had been considered as the most desperate act of the madness of Caligula. It was no more than a broad white fillet set with pearls, which encircled the emperor's head. The sumptuous robes of Diocletian and his successors were of silk and gold; and it is remarked with indignation that even their shoes were studded with the most precious gems. The access to their sacred person was every day rendered more difficult, by the institution of new forms and ceremonies. The avenues of the palace were strictly guarded by the various schools of domestic officers, as they began to be called. The interior apartments were entrusted to the jealous vigilance of the eunuchs; the increase of whose numbers and influence was the most infallible symptom of the progress of despotism. When a

<sup>86</sup> Pliny (in Panegy. c. 3, 55, etc.) speaks of *Dominus* with loathing, as synonymous to *Tyrant*, and opposite to *Prince*. And the same Pliny regularly gives that title (in the 10<sup>th</sup> book of the epistles) to his friend rather than master, the virtuous Trajan. This strange contradiction puzzles the commentators who think, and the translators who can write.

<sup>87</sup> Synesius do Rogue, Edit. Petav. p. ill. I am indebted for this quotation to the Abbé de la Bletterie.

<sup>88</sup> Vendale de Consecratione, p. 354, etc. It was customary for the emperors to mention (in the preamble of laws) their *numen*, *sacred majesty*, *divine oracles*, etc. According to Tillemont, Gregory of Nazianzon complains most bitterly of the profanation, especially when it was practiced by an Arian emperor.

subject was at length admitted to the Imperial presence, he was obliged, whatever might be his rank, to fall prostrate on the ground, and to adore, according to the eastern fashion, the divinity of his lord and master.<sup>89</sup> Diocletian was a man of sense, who, in the course of private as well as public life, had formed a just estimate both of himself and of mankind. Nor is it easy to conceive that, in substituting the manners of Persia to those of Rome, he was seriously actuated by so mean a principle as that of vanity. He flattered himself that an ostentation of splendor and luxury would subdue the imagination of the multitude; that the monarch would be less exposed to the crude license of the people and the soldiers, as his person was secluded from the public view; and that habits of submission would insensibly be productive of sentiments of veneration. Like the modesty affected by Augustus, the state maintained by Diocletian was a theatrical representation; but it must be confessed that of the two comedies the former was of a much more liberal and manly character than the latter. It was the aim of the one to disguise and the object of the other to display the unbounded power which the emperors possessed over the Roman world.

### *Two Augusti and Two Caesars*

Ostentation was the first principle of the new system instituted by Diocletian. The second was division. He divided the empire, the provinces, and every branch of the civil as well as military administration. He multiplied the wheels of the machine of government, and rendered its operations less rapid but more secure. Whatever advantages and whatever defects might attend these innovations, they must be ascribed in a very great degree to the first inventor; but as the new frame of policy was gradually improved and completed by succeeding princes, it will be more satisfactory to delay the consideration of it till the season of its full maturity and perfection.<sup>90</sup> Reserving, therefore, for the reign of Constantine a more exact picture of the new empire, we shall content ourselves with describing the principal and decisive outline, as it was traced by the hand of Diocletian. He had associated three colleagues in the exercise of the supreme power; and as he was convinced that the abilities of a single man were inadequate to the public defense, he considered the joint administration of four princes not as a temporary expedient but as a fundamental law of the constitution. It was his intention that the two elder princes should be distinguished by the use of the diadem, and the title of *Augusti*: that, as affection or esteem might direct their choice, they should regularly call to their assistance two subordinate colleagues; and that the *Caesars*, rising in their turn to the first rank, should supply an uninterrupted succession of emperors. The empire was divided into four parts. The East and Italy were the most honorable, the Danube and the Rhine the most laborious stations. The former claimed the presence of the *Augusti*, the latter were entrusted to the administration of the *Caesars*. The strength of the legions was in the bands of the four partners of sovereignty, and the despair of successively vanquishing four formidable rivals might intimidate the ambition of an aspiring general. In their civil government, the emperors were supposed to exercise the undivided power of the monarch, and their edicts, inscribed with their joint names, were received in all the provinces as promulgated by their mutual councils and authority. Notwithstanding these precautions, the political union of the Roman world was gradually dissolved, and a principle of division was introduced, which, in the course of a few years, occasioned the perpetual separation of the eastern and western empires.

<sup>89</sup> Aurelius Victor. Eutropius li. 26. It appears by the Panegyrist that the Romans were soon reconciled to the name and ceremony of adoration.

<sup>90</sup> The innovations introduced by Diocletian are chiefly deduced, first, from some very strong passages in Lactantius; and, secondly, from the new and various offices, which, in the Theodosian code, appear *already* established hi the beginning of the reign of Constantine.

## *Increase of Taxes*

Diocletian's system was accompanied with another very material disadvantage, which cannot even at present be totally overlooked; a more expensive establishment, and consequently an increase of taxes and the oppression of the people. Instead of a modest family of slaves and freedmen, such as had contented the simple greatness of Augustus and Trajan, three or four magnificent courts were established in the various parts of the empire, and as many Roman kings contended with each other and with the Persian monarch for the vain superiority of pomp and luxury. The number of ministers, of magistrates, of officers, and of servants, who filled the different departments of the state, was multiplied beyond the example of former times; and (if we may borrow the warm expression of a contemporary) "when the proportion of those who received exceeded the proportion of those who contributed the provinces were oppressed by the weight of tribute." (Lacant. de M. P. c. 7) From this period to the extinction of the empire, it would be easy to deduce an uninterrupted series of clamors and complaints. According to his religion and situation, each writer chooses either Diocletian, or Constantine, or Valens, or Theodosius, for the object of his invectives; but they unanimously agree in representing the burden of the public impositions, and particularly the land-tax and capitation, as the intolerable and increasing grievance of their own times. From such a concurrence, an impartial historian, who is obliged to extract truth from satire, as well as from panegyric, will be inclined to divide the blame among the princes whom they accuse, and to ascribe their exactions much less to their personal vices than to the uniform system of their administration. The emperor Diocletian was indeed the author of that system; but during his reign the growing evil was confined within the bounds of modesty and discretion, and he deserves the reproach of establishing pernicious precedents rather than of exercising actual oppression.<sup>91</sup> It may be added, that his revenues were managed with prudent economy; and that, after all the current expenses were discharged, there still remained in the Imperial treasury an ample provision either for judicious liberality or for any emergency of the state.

## *AD 305: Diocletian's and Maximian's Abdication*

It was in the 21<sup>st</sup> year of his reign that Diocletian executed his memorable resolution of abdicating the empire; an action more naturally to have been expected from the elder or the younger Antoninus than from a prince who had never practiced the lessons of philosophy either in the attainment or in the use of supreme power. Diocletian acquired the glory of giving to the world the first example of a resignation,<sup>92</sup> which has not been very frequently imitated by succeeding monarchs. The parallel of Charles V, however, will naturally offer itself to our mind, not only since the eloquence of a modern historian has rendered that name so familiar to an English reader, but from the very striking resemblance between the characters of the two emperors, whose political abilities were superior to their military genius, and whose specious virtues were much less the effect of nature than of art. The abdication of Charles appears to have been hastened by the vicissitude of fortune; and the disappointment of his favorite schemes urged him to relinquish a power which he found inadequate to his ambition. But the reign of Diocletian had flowed with a tide of uninterrupted success; nor was it till after he had vanquished all his enemies, and accomplished all his designs, that he seems to have entertained any serious thoughts of resigning the empire. Neither Charles nor Diocletian were arrived at a very advanced period of life; since the one was only 55, and the other was no more than 59 years of age, but the active life of those princes, their wars and journeys, the cares of royalty, and their application to business, had already impaired their constitution, and brought on the infirmities of a

<sup>91</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>92</sup> Latin text omitted.

premature old age.<sup>93</sup>

### *Diocletian's Long Illness*

Notwithstanding the severity of a very cold and rainy winter, Diocletian (AD 304) left Italy soon after the ceremony of his triumph, and began his progress toward the East round the circuit of the Illyrian provinces. From the inclemency of the weather, and the fatigue of the journey, he soon contracted a slow illness; and though he made easy marches, and was generally carried in a close litter, his disorder, before he arrived at Nicomedia about the end of the summer, had become very serious and alarming. During the whole winter he was confined to his palace; his danger inspired a general and unaffected concern; but the people could only judge of the various alterations of his health, from the joy or consternation which they discovered in the countenances and behavior of his attendants. The rumor of his death was for some time universally believed, and it was supposed to be concealed with a view to prevent the troubles that might have happened during the absence of the Caesar Galerius. At length, however, on the first of March, Diocletian once more appeared in public, but so pale and emaciated that he could scarcely have been recognized by those to whom his person was the most familiar. It was time to put an end to the painful struggle which he had sustained during more than a year between the care of his health and that of his dignity. The former required indulgence and relaxation, the latter compelled him to direct from the bed of sickness the administration of a great empire. He resolved to pass the remainder of his days in honorable repose, to place his glory beyond the reach of fortune, and to relinquish the theatre of the world to his younger and more active associates.<sup>94</sup>

### *Diocletian's Prudence; Maximian's Compliance*

The ceremony of his abdication was performed in a spacious plain, about three miles from Nicomedia. The emperor (AD 305, May 1) ascended a lofty throne, and in a speech full of reason and dignity declared his intention both to the people and to the soldiers who were assembled on this extraordinary occasion. As soon as he had divested himself of the purple he withdrew from the gazing multitude; and traversing the city in a covered chariot, proceeded without delay to the favorite retirement which he had chosen in his native country of Dalmatia. On the same day,<sup>95</sup> Maximian, as it had been previously concerted, made his resignation of the Imperial dignity at Milan. Even in the splendor of the Roman triumph, Diocletian had meditated his design of abdicating the government. As he wished to secure the obedience of Maximian, he exacted from him either a general assurance that he would submit his actions to the authority of his benefactor, or a particular promise that he would descend from the throne whenever he should receive the advice and the example. This engagement, though it was confirmed by the solemnity of an oath before the altar of the Capitoline Jupiter,<sup>96</sup> would have proved a feeble restraint on the fierce temper of Maximian, whose passion was the love of power, and who neither desired present tranquillity nor future reputation. But he yielded, however reluctantly, to the ascendant which his wiser colleague had acquired over him, and retired immediately after his

<sup>93</sup> The particulars of the journey and illness are taken from Lactantius (c. 17), who may *sometimes* be admitted as an evidence of public facts, though very seldom of private anecdotes.

<sup>94</sup> Aurelius Victor ascribes the abdication, which had been so variously accounted for, to two causes. (1) Diocletian's contempt of ambition; (2) his apprehension of impending troubles. One of the panegyrists (vi. 9) mentions the age and infirmities of Diocletian as a very natural reason for his retirement.

<sup>95</sup> The difficulties as well as mistakes attending the dates both of the year and of the day of Diocletian's abdication are perfectly cleared up by Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, iv. p. 525. Note 19, and by Pagi *ad annum*.

<sup>96</sup> *Panegy. Veter.* vi, 9. The oration was pronounced after Maximian had reassumed the purple.

abdication to a villa in Lucania, where it was almost impossible that such an impatient spirit could find any lasting tranquillity.

### *Diocletian's Retirement At Salona; His Philosophy; Death*

Diocletian, who from a servile origin had raised himself to the throne, passed the last nine years of his life in a private condition. Reason had dictated and content seems to have accompanied his retreat, in which he enjoyed for a long time the respect of those princes to whom he had resigned the possession of the world.<sup>97</sup> It is seldom that minds, long exercised in business, have formed any habits of conversing with themselves, and in the loss of power they principally regret the want of occupation. The amusements of letters and of devotion, which afford so many resources in solitude, were incapable of holding Diocletian's attention; but he had preserved, or at least he soon recovered, a taste for the most innocent as well as natural pleasures, and his leisure hours were sufficiently employed in building, planting, and gardening. His answer to Maximian is deservedly celebrated. He was solicited by that restless old man to reassume the reins of government, and the Imperial purple. He rejected the temptation with a smile of pity, calmly observing that if he could show Maximian the cabbages which he had planted with his own hands at Salona, he should no longer be urged to relinquish the enjoyment of happiness for the pursuit of power.<sup>98</sup> In his conversations with his friends he frequently acknowledged that of all arts the most difficult was the art of reigning; and he expressed himself on that favorite topic with a degree of warmth which could be the result only of experience. "How often," was he accustomed to say, "is it the interest of four or five ministers to combine together to deceive their sovereign! Secluded from mankind by his exalted dignity, the truth is concealed from his knowledge; he can see only with their eyes, he hears nothing but their misrepresentations. He confers the most important offices upon vice and weakness, and disgraces the most virtuous and deserving among his subjects. By such infamous arts," added Diocletian, "the best and wisest princes are sold to the venal corruption of their courtiers."<sup>99</sup> A just estimate of greatness, and the assurance of immortal fame, improve our relish for the pleasures of retirement; but the Roman emperor had filled too important a character in the world to enjoy without alloy the comforts and security of a private condition. It was impossible that he could remain ignorant of the troubles which afflicted the empire after his abdication. It was impossible that he could be indifferent to their consequences. Fear, sorrow, and discontent sometimes pursued him into the solitude of Salona. His tenderness, or at least his pride, was deeply wounded by the misfortunes of his wife and daughter; and the last moments of Diocletian were embittered by some affronts, which Licinius and Constantine might have spared the father of so many emperors, and the first author of their own fortune. A report, though of a very doubtful nature, has reached our times, that (AD 313) he prudently withdrew himself from their power by a voluntary death.<sup>100</sup>

### *Description of Salona and Diocletian's Palace*

Before we dismiss the consideration of the life and character of Diocletian, we may for a moment

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<sup>97</sup> Latin text omitted.

<sup>98</sup> We are obliged to the younger Victor for this celebrated one-liner. Eutropius mentions the thing in a more general manner.

<sup>99</sup> Hist. August. pp. 223, 224. Vopiscus had learned this conversation from his father.

<sup>100</sup> The younger Victor slightly mentions the report. But as Diocletian had disobliged a powerful and successful party, his memory has been loaded with every crime and misfortune. It has been affirmed that he died raving mad, that he was condemned as a criminal by the Roman senate, etc.

direct our view to the place of his retirement. Salona, a principal city of his native province of Dalmatia, was nearly 200 Roman miles (according to the measurement of the public highways) from Aquileia and the confines of Italy, and about 270 from Sirmium, the usual residence of the emperors whenever they visited the Illyrian frontier. (Itiner. pp. 269, 272, Edit. Wessel) A miserable village still preserves the name of Salona; but so late as the 16<sup>th</sup> century, the remains of a theatre, and a confused prospect of broken arches and marble columns, continued to attest its ancient splendor.<sup>101</sup> About six or seven miles from the city, Diocletian constructed a magnificent palace, and we may infer from the greatness of the work how long he had meditated his design of abdicating the empire. The choice of a spot which united all that could contribute either to health or to luxury did not require the partiality of a native.

“The soil was dry and fertile, the air is pure and wholesome, and though extremely hot during the summer months, this country seldom feels those sultry and noxious winds to which the coasts of Istria and some parts of Italy are exposed. The views from the palace are no less beautiful than the soil and climate were inviting. Toward the west lies the fertile shore that stretches along the Adriatic, in which a number of small islands are scattered in such a manner, as to give this part of the sea the appearance of a great lake. On the north side lies the bay which led to the ancient city of Salons; and the country beyond it, appearing in sight, forms a proper contrast to that more extensive prospect of water which the Adriatic presents both to the south and to the east. Toward the north the view is terminated by high and Irregular mountains, situated at a proper distance, and in many places covered with villages, woods, and vineyards.”<sup>102</sup>

Though Constantine, from a very obvious prejudice affects to mention the palace of Diocletian with contempt,<sup>103</sup> yet one of their successors, who could only see it in a neglected and mutilated state, celebrates its magnificence in terms of the highest admiration. (Constantin. Porphyr. de Statu Imper. p. 86) It covered an extent of ground consisting of between nine and ten English acres. The form was quadrangular, flanked with 16 towers. Two of the sides were nearly 600 feet long, and the other two almost 700 feet in length. The whole was constructed of a beautiful free-stone, extracted from the neighboring quarries of Trau or Tragutum, and very little inferior to marble itself. Four streets, intersecting each other at right angles, divided the several parts of this great edifice, and the approach to the principal apartment was from a very stately entrance, which is still called the Golden Gate. The approach was terminated by a colonnade of granite columns, on one side of which we discover the square temple of Aesculapius, on the other the octagon temple of Jupiter. The latter of those deities Diocletian revered as the patron of his fortunes, the former as the protector of his health. By comparing the present remains with the precepts of Vitruvius, the several parts of the building, the baths, bedchamber, the atrium, the basilica, and the Cyzicene, Corinthian, and Egyptian halls, have been described with some degree of precision, or at least of probability. Their forms were various, their proportions just, but they were all attended with two imperfections, very repugnant to our modern notions of taste and convenience. These stately rooms had neither windows nor chimneys. They were lighted from the top (for the building seems to have consisted of no more than one story), and they

<sup>101</sup> The Abate Fortis, in his *Viaggio in Dalmazia*, p. 43 (printed at Venice in the year 1174, in two small volumes in quarto), quotes a MS. account of the antiquities of Salona, composed by Giambattista Giustiniani about the middle of the 16<sup>th</sup> century.

<sup>102</sup> Adams's *Antiquities of Diocletian's palace at Spalatro*, p. 6. We may add a circumstance or two from the Abate Portis: the little stream of the Hyader, mentioned by Lucan, produces most exquisite trout, which a sagacious writer, perhaps a monk, supposes to have been one of 'the principal reasons that determined Diocletian in the choice of his retirement. Fortis, p. 45. The same author (p. 38) observes that a taste for agriculture is reviving at Spalatro; and that an experimental farm has lately been established near the city by a society of Gentlemen.

<sup>103</sup> Constantin. Orat. ad Ocutum Sanct. c. 25. In this sermon, the emperor, or the bishop who composed it for him, affects to relate the miserable end of all the persecutors of the church.

received their heat by the help of pipes that were conveyed along the walls. The range of principal apartments was protected toward the southwest by a portico of five hundred and seventeen feet long, which must have formed a very noble and delightful walk, when the beauties of painting and sculpture were added to those of the prospect.

Had this magnificent edifice remained in a solitary country, it would have been exposed to the ravages of time; but it might, perhaps, have escaped the rapacious industry of man. The village of Aspalathus (D'Anville, *Geo. Anc.*, i. p. 162), and long afterward the provincial town of Spalatro, have grown out of its ruins. The golden gate now opens into the marketplace. St. John the Baptist has usurped the honors of Aesculapius: and the temple of Jupiter, under the protection of the Virgin, is converted into the Cathedral Church. For this account of Diocletian's palace, we are principally indebted to an ingenious artist of our own time and country, whom a very liberal curiosity carried into the heart of Dalmatia.<sup>104</sup> But there is room to suspect that the elegance of his designs and engraving has somewhat flattered the objects which it was their purpose to represent. We are informed by a more recent and very judicious traveler that the awful ruins of Spalatro are not less expressive of the decline of the arts than of the greatness of the Roman empire in the time of Diocletian.<sup>105</sup> If such was indeed the state of architecture, we must naturally believe that painting and sculpture had experienced a still more sensible decay. The practice of architecture is directed by a few general and even mechanical rules. But sculpture, and, above all, painting, propose to themselves the imitation not only of the forms of nature, but of the characters and passions of the human soul. In those sublime arts, the dexterity of the hand is of little avail, unless it is animated by fancy, and guided by the most correct taste and observation.

### *Decline of the Arts and Letters*

It is almost unnecessary to remark that the civil distractions of the empire, the license of the soldiers, the inroads of the barbarians, and the progress of despotism, had proved very unfavorable to genius, and even to learning. The succession of Illyrian princes restored the empire, without restoring the sciences. Their military education was not calculated to inspire them with the love of letters; and even the mind of Diocletian, however active and capricious in business, was totally uninformed by study or speculation. The professions of law and physic are of such common use and certain profit that they will always secure a sufficient number of practitioners, endowed with a reasonable degree of abilities and knowledge; but it does not appear that the students in those two faculties appeal to any celebrated masters who have flourished within that period, The voice of poetry was silent. History was reduced to dry and confused abridgments, alike destitute of amusement and instruction. A languid and affected eloquence was still retained in the pay and service of the emperors, who encouraged not any arts except those which contributed to the gratification of their pride, or the defense of their power.<sup>106</sup>

### *The New Platonists*

The declining age of learning and of mankind is marked, however, by the rise and rapid progress of the new Platonists. The school of Alexandria silenced those of Athens; and the ancient sects enrolled

<sup>104</sup> Messieurs Adam and Cierisseau, attended by two draftsmen, visited Spalatro in the month of July, 1757. The magnificent work which their journey produced was published in London seven years afterward.

<sup>105</sup> Italian text omitted.

<sup>106</sup> The orator Eumenius was secretary to the emperors Maximian and Constantius, and Professor of Rhetoric in the college of Autun. His salary was 600,000 *sesterces*, which, according to the lowest computation of that age, must have exceeded £3,000 a year. He generously requested the permission of employing it in rebuilding the college. Oration De reslaurandis scholis; which, though not exempt from vanity, may atone for his panegyrics.

themselves under the banners of the more fashionable teachers, who recommended their system by the novelty of their method, and the austerity of their manners. Several of these masters, Ammonius, Plotinus, Amelius, and Porphyry,<sup>107</sup> were men of profound thought and intense application; but by mistaking the true object of philosophy, their labors contributed much less to improve than to corrupt the human understanding. The knowledge that is suited to our situation and powers, the whole compass of moral, natural, and mathematical science, was neglected by the new Platonists; while they exhausted their strength in the verbal disputes of metaphysics, attempted to explore the secrets of the invisible world, and studied to reconcile Aristotle with Plato, on subjects of which both these philosophers were as ignorant as the rest of mankind. Consuming their reason in these deep but unsubstantial meditations, their minds were exposed to illusions of fancy. They flattered themselves that they possessed the secret of disengaging the soul from its corporeal prison; claimed a familiar intercourse with demons and spirits; and, by a very singular revolution, converted the study of philosophy into that of magic. The ancient sages had derided the popular superstition; after disguising its extravagance by the thin pretence of allegory, the disciples of Plotinus and Porphyry became its most zealous defenders. As they agreed with the Christians in a few mysterious points of faith, they attacked the remainder of their theological system with all the fury of civil war. The new Platonists would scarcely deserve a place in the history of science, but in that of the church the mention of them will very frequently occur.

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<sup>107</sup> Porphyry died about the time of Diocletian's abdication. The Life of his master Plotinus, which he composed, will give us the most complete idea of the genius of the sect, and the manners of its professors. This very curious piece is inserted in Fabsicius, Bibliotheca Grmca, Fr. pp. 88—148.