

CHAPTER XIV

Troubles after the Abdication of Diocletian—Death of Constantius—Elevation of Constantine and Maxentius—Six Emperors at the same Time—Death of Maximian, and Galerius—Victories of Constantine over Maxentius and Licinius—Reunion of the Empire under Constantine

AD 305—323: Period of Civil Wars and Confusion

The balance of power established by Diocletian subsisted no longer than while it was sustained by the firm and dexterous hand of the founder. It required such a fortunate mixture of different tempers and abilities as could scarcely be found or even expected a second time: two emperors without jealousy, two Caesars without ambition, and the same general interest invariably pursued by four independent princes. The abdication of Diocletian and Maximian was succeeded by 18 years (AD 305—323) of discord and confusion. The empire was afflicted by five civil wars; and the remainder of the time was not so much a state of tranquillity as a suspension of arms between several hostile monarchs who, viewing each other with an eye of fear and hatred, strove to increase their respective forces at the expense of their subjects.

Character and Situation of Constantius

As soon as Diocletian and Maximian had resigned the purple, their station, according to the rules of the new constitution, was filled by the two Caesars, Constantius and Galerius, who immediately assumed the title of Augustus.¹ The honors of seniority and precedence were allowed to the former of those princes, and he continued, under a new appellation, to administer his ancient department of Gaul, Spain, and Britain. The government of those ample provinces was sufficient to exercise his talents and to satisfy his ambition. Clemency, temperance, and moderation, distinguished the amiable character of Constantius, and his fortunate subjects had frequently occasion to compare the virtues of their sovereign with the passions of Maximian, and even with the arts of Diocletian.² Instead of imitating their eastern pride and magnificence, Constantius preserved the modesty of a Roman prince. He declared, with unaffected sincerity, that his most valued treasure was in the hearts of his people, and that, whenever the dignity of the throne, or the danger of the state, required any extraordinary supply, he could depend with confidence on their gratitude and liberality.³ The provincials of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, sensible of his worth, and of their own happiness, reflected with anxiety on the declining health of the emperor Constantius, and the tender age of his numerous family, the issue of his second marriage with Maximian's daughter.

Character and Situation of Galerius

The stern temper of Galerius was cast in a very different mold; and while he commanded the esteem of his subjects, he seldom condescended to solicit their affections. His fame in arms, and,

¹ M. de Montesquieu (*Consid. sur la Grand. et la Decadence des Romains*, c. 17) supposes, on the authority of Orosius and Eusebius, that, on this occasion, the empire, for the first time, was really divided into two parts. It is difficult, however, to discover in what respect the plan of Galerius differed from that of Diocletian.

² Latin text omitted.

³ He carried this maxim so far that, whenever he entertained his guests, he was obliged to borrow a service of plate.

above all, the success of the Persian war, had elated his haughty mind, which was naturally impatient of a superior, or even of an equal. If it were possible to rely on the partial testimony of an injudicious writer, we might ascribe the abdication of Diocletian to the menaces of Galerius, and relate the particulars of a private conversation between the two princes, in which the former discovered as much pusillanimity as the latter displayed ingratitude and arrogance.⁴ But these obscure anecdotes are sufficiently refuted by an impartial view of the character and conduct of Diocletian. Whatever might otherwise have been his intentions, if he had apprehended any danger from the violence of Galerius, his good sense would have instructed him to prevent the ignominious contest; and, as he had held the scepter with glory, he would have resigned it without disgrace.

The Two Caesars—Maximin and Severus

After the elevation of Constantius and Galerius to the rank of *Augusti*, two new Caesars were required to supply their place, and to complete the system of the Imperial government. Diocletian was sincerely desirous of withdrawing himself from the world; he considered Galerius, who had married his daughter, as the firmest support of his family and of the empire; and he consented, without reluctance, that his successor should assume the merit as well as the envy of the important nomination. It was fixed without consulting the interest or inclination of the princes of the West. Each of them had a son who was arrived at the age of manhood, and who might have been deemed the most natural candidates for the vacant honor. But the impotent resentment of Maximian was no longer to be dreaded; and the moderate Constantius, though he might despise the dangers, was humanely apprehensive of the calamities of civil war. The two persons whom Galerius promoted to the rank of Caesar were much better suited to serve the views of his ambition; and their principal recommendation seems to have consisted in the want of merit or personal consequence. The first of these was Daza, or, as he was afterward called, Maximin, whose mother was the sister of Galerius. The inexperienced youth still betrayed by his manners and language his rustic education, when, to his own astonishment as well as that of the world, he was invested by Diocletian with the purple, exalted to the dignity of Caesar, and entrusted with the sovereign command of Egypt and Syria.⁵ At the same time, Severus, a faithful servant, addicted to pleasure, but not incapable of business, was sent to Milan to receive from the reluctant hands of Maximian the Cesarean ornaments, and the possession of Italy and Africa.⁶ According to the forms of the constitution, Severus acknowledged the supremacy of the western emperor; but he was absolutely devoted to the commands of his benefactor Galerius, who, reserving to himself the intermediate countries from the confines of Italy to those of Syria, firmly established his power over three-fourths of the monarchy. In the full confidence that the approaching death of Constantius would leave him sole master of the Roman world, we are assured that he had arranged in his mind a long succession of future princes, and that he meditated his own retreat from public life, after he should have accomplished a glorious reign of about twenty years.⁷

⁴ Lactantius, c. 18. Were the particulars of this conference more consistent with truth and decency, we might still ask how they came to the knowledge of an obscure rhetorician? But there are many historians who put us in mind of the admirable saying of the great Condé to Cardinal de Retz: "These flirtations make us speak and act as they made themselves at home at our place."

⁵ Latin text omitted.

⁶ His diligence and fidelity are acknowledged even by Lactantius, c. 18.

⁷ These schemes, however, rest only on the very doubtful authority of Lactantius, c. 20.

Ambition of Galerius Disappointed

But in less than 18 months, two unexpected revolutions overturned the ambitious schemes of Galerius. The hopes of uniting the western provinces to his empire were disappointed by the elevation of Constantine, while Italy and Africa were lost by the successful revolt of Maxentius.

Education and Escape of Constantine

- I. Constantine's fame has rendered posterity attentive to the most minute circumstances of his life and actions. The place of his birth (AD 274), as well as the condition of his mother Helena, have been the subject not only of literary but of national disputes. Notwithstanding the recent tradition, which assigns for her father a British king, we are obliged to confess that Helena was the daughter of an inn keeper;⁸ but at the same time we may defend the legality of her marriage against those who have represented her as the concubine of Constantius.⁹ The great Constantine was most probably born at Naissus, in Dacia;¹⁰ and it is not surprising that in a family and province distinguished only by the profession of arms, the youth should discover very little inclination to improve his mind by the acquisition of knowledge.¹¹ He was about eighteen years of age when his father (AD 292) was promoted to the rank of Caesar; but that fortunate event was attended with his mother's divorce; and the splendor of an Imperial alliance reduced the son of Helena to a state of disgrace and humiliation. Instead of following Constantius in the West, he remained in the service of Diocletian, signalized his valor in the wars of Egypt and Persia, and gradually rose to the honorable station of a tribune of the first order. Constantine was tall and majestic; he was dexterous in all his exercises, intrepid in war, affable in peace; in his whole conduct, the active spirit of youth was tempered by habitual prudence; and while his mind was engrossed by ambition, he appeared cold and insensible to the allurements of pleasure. The favor of the people and soldiers, who had named him as a worthy

⁸ This tradition, unknown to Constantine's contemporaries, was invented in the darkness of monasteries, was embellished by Jeffrey of Monmouth and the writers of the 12th Century, has been defended by our antiquarians of the last age, and is seriously related in the ponderous history of England, compiled by Mr. Carte (I. p. 147). He transports, however, the kingdom of Coil, the imaginary father of Helena, from Essex to the wall of Antoninus.

⁹ Eutropius (x. 2) expresses, in a few words, the real truth, and the occasion of the error, "yet the marriage was obscure." Zosimus (I. ii. p. 78) eagerly seized the most unfavorable report, and is followed by Orosius (vii. 25), whose authority is oddly enough overlooked by the indefatigable but partial Tillemont. By insisting on the divorce of Helena, Diocletian acknowledged her marriage.

¹⁰ There are three opinions with regard to the place of Constantine's birth. 1. Our English antiquarians were used to dwell with rapture on the words of his panegyrist: "in lower Britain princes rose up." But this celebrated passage may be referred with as much propriety to the accession as to the activity of Constantine. 2. Some of the modern Greeks have ascribed the honor of his birth to Drepanum, a town on the Gulf of Nicomedia (Cellarius, ii. p. 174), which Constantine dignified with the name of Helenopolis, and Justinian adorned with many splendid buildings (Procop. de Aedificiis, v. 2). It is indeed probable enough that Helena's father kept an inn at Drepanum; and that Constantius might lodge there when he returned from a Persian embassy in the reign of Aurelian. But in the wandering life of a soldier, the place of his marriage, and the places where his children are born, have very little connection with each other. 3. The claim of Naissus is supported by the anonymous writer, published at the end of Ammianus, p. 710, and who in general copied very good materials; and it is confirmed by Julius Firmicius (de Astrologia I. 1. c. 4), who flourished under the reign of Constantine himself. Some objections have been raised against the integrity of the text, and the application of the passage of Firmicius but the former is established by the best MSS. The latter is very ably defended by Lipsius de Magnitudine Romana, I. iv. c. 11, et Supplement.

¹¹ Latin text omitted.

candidate for the rank of Caesar, served only to exasperate the jealousy of Galerius; and though prudence might restrain him from exercising any open violence, an absolute monarch is seldom at a loss how to execute a sure and secret revenge.¹² Every hour increased Constantine's danger and the anxiety of his father, who, by repeated letters, expressed the warmest desire of embracing his son. For some time the policy of Galerius supplied him with delays and excuses, but it was impossible long to refuse so natural a request of his associate, without maintaining his refusal by arms. The permission of the journey was reluctantly granted, and whatever precautions the emperor might have taken to intercept a return, the consequences of which he, with so much reason, apprehended, they were effectively disappointed by Constantine's incredible diligence.¹³ Leaving the palace of Nicomedia in the night, he traveled post through Bithynia, Thrace, Dacia, Pannonia, Italy, and Gaul, and, amid the joyful acclamations of the people, reached the port of Boulogne, in the very moment when his father was preparing to embark for Britain.¹⁴

AD 306: Death of Constantius; Elevation of Constantine

The British expedition, and an easy victory over the barbarians of Caledonia, were the last exploits of the reign of Constantius. He ended his life (AD 306, July 25) in the Imperial palace of York, 15 months after he had received the title of Augustus, and almost 14½ after he had been promoted to the rank of Caesar. His death was immediately succeeded by the elevation of Constantine. The ideas of inheritance and succession are so very familiar that the generality of mankind consider them as founded, not only in reason, but in nature itself. Our imagination readily transfers the same principles from private property to public dominion; and whenever a virtuous father leaves behind him a son whose merit seems to justify the esteem or even the hopes of the people, the joint influence of prejudice and of affection operates with irresistible weight. The flower of the western armies had followed Constantius into Britain, and the national troops were reinforced by a numerous body of Alemanni, who obeyed the orders of Crocus, one of their hereditary chieftains.¹⁵ The opinion of their own importance, and the assurance that Britain, Gaul, and Spain would acquiesce in their nomination, were diligently indoctrinated to the legions by the adherents of Constantine. The soldiers were asked whether they could hesitate a moment between the honor of placing at their head the worthy son of their beloved emperor, and the ignominy of tamely expecting the arrival of some obscure stranger, on whom it might please the sovereign of Asia to bestow the armies and provinces of the West. It was insinuated to them that gratitude and liberality held a distinguished place among Constantine's virtues; nor did that artful prince show himself to the

¹² Galerius, or perhaps his own courage, exposed him to single combat with a Sarmatian (Anonym. p. 710) and with a monstrous lion. Praxagoras apud Phocium. p. 63. Praxagoras, a contemporary Athenian philosopher, had written a Life of Constantine, in two books, which are now lost.

¹³ Zosimus. 1. ii pp. 78, 79. Lactantius, c. 24. The former tells a very foolish story, that Constantine caused all the post-horses which he had used to be hamstringed. Such a bloody execution, without preventing a pursuit, would have scattered suspicions, and might have stopped his journey.

¹⁴ Anonym. p. 710. Panegy. Veter. vii. 4. But Zosimus, 1. ii. p. 79, Eusebius, de Vit. Constant. 1. i. c. 21, and Lactantius, c. 24, suppose, with less accuracy, that he found his father on his deathbed.

¹⁵ Victor Junior, c. 41. This is perhaps the first instance of a barbarian king who assisted the Roman army with an independent body of his own subjects. The practice grew familiar and at last became fatal.

troops till they were prepared to salute him with the names of Augustus and Emperor. The throne was the object of his desires; and had he been less actuated by ambition, it was his only means of safety. He was well acquainted with the character and sentiments of Galerius, and sufficiently apprised that if he wished to live he must determine to reign. The decent and even obstinate resistance which he chose to affect¹⁶ was contrived to justify his usurpation; nor did he yield to the acclamations of the army till he had provided the proper materials for a letter which he immediately dispatched to the emperor of the East. Constantine informed him of the melancholy event of his father's death, modestly asserted his natural claim to the succession, and respectfully lamented that the affectionate violence of his troops had not permitted him to solicit the Imperial purple in the regular and constitutional manner. The first emotions of Galerius were those of surprise, disappointment, and rage; and as he could seldom restrain his passions, he loudly threatened that he would commit to the flames both the letter and the messenger. But his resentment insensibly subsided; and when he recollected the doubtful chance of war, when he had weighed the character and strength of his adversary, he consented to embrace the honorable accommodation which the prudence of Constantine had left open to him. Without either condemning or ratifying the choice of the British army, Galerius accepted the son of his deceased colleague as the sovereign of the provinces beyond the Alps; but he gave him only the title of Caesar, and the fourth rank among the Roman princes, while he conferred the vacant place of Augustus on his favorite Severus. The apparent harmony of the empire was still preserved, and Constantine, who already possessed the substance, expected, without impatience, an opportunity of obtaining the honors, of supreme power.¹⁷

Constantine's Brothers and Sisters

Constantius had six children by his second marriage, three girls and three boys. Their Imperial descent might have solicited a preference over the inferior extraction of the son of Helena. But Constantine was in the thirty-second year of his age, in the full vigor both of mind and body, at the time when the eldest of his brothers could not possibly be more than thirteen years old. His claim of superior merit had been allowed and ratified by the dying emperor.¹⁸ In his last moments, Constantius bequeathed to his eldest son the care of the safety as well as greatness of the family; conjuring him to assume both the authority and the sentiments of a father with regard to the children of Theodora. Their liberal education, advantageous marriages, the secure dignity of their lives, and the first honors of the state with which they were invested, attest the fraternal affection of Constantine; and as those princes possessed a mild and grateful disposition, they submitted without reluctance to the superiority of his genius and fortune.¹⁹

¹⁶ His panegyrist Eumenius (vii. 8) ventures to affirm, in the presence of Constantine, that he put spurs to his horse, and tried, but in vain, to escape from the hands of his soldiers.

¹⁷ Lactantius, c. 25. Eumenius (vii. 8) gives a rhetorical turn to the whole transaction.

¹⁸ Constantine's choice, by his dying father, which is warranted by reason, and insinuated by Eumenius, seems to be confirmed by the most unexceptionable authority, the concurring evidence of Lactantius (c. 24) Libanius (Oration i.); Eusebius (in Fit. Constantin. I. i. c. 18, 21) and Julian (Oration i.).

¹⁹ Of Constantine's three sisters, Constantia married the emperor Licinius, Anastasia the Caesar Bassianus, and Eutropia the consul Nepotianus. The three brothers were Dalmatius, Julius Constantius, and Annibalianus, of whom

Discontent of the Romans

- II. The ambitious spirit of Galerius was scarcely reconciled to the disappointment of his views upon the Gallic provinces, before the unexpected loss of Italy wounded his pride as well as power in a still more sensible part. The long absence of the emperors had filled Rome with discontent and indignation; and the people gradually discovered that the preference given to Nicomedia and Milan was not to be ascribed to the particular inclination of Diocletian, but to the permanent form of government which he had instituted. It was in vain that, a few months after his abdication, his successors dedicated, under his name, those magnificent baths whose ruins still supply the ground as well as the materials for so many churches and convents.²⁰ The tranquillity of those elegant recesses of ease and luxury was disturbed by the impatient murmurs of the Romans; and a report was insensibly circulated that the sums expended in erecting those buildings would soon be required at their hands. About that time the avarice of Galerius, or perhaps the exigencies of the state, had induced him to make a very strict and rigorous inquisition into the property of his subjects, for the purpose of a general taxation, both on their lands and on their persons. A very minute survey appears to have been taken of their real estates; and wherever there was the slightest suspicion of concealment, torture was very freely employed to obtain a sincere declaration of their personal wealth. (Lactantius, c. 26, 31) The privileges which had exalted Italy above the rank of the provinces were no longer regarded: and the officers of the revenue already began to number the Roman people, and to settle the proportion of the new taxes. Even when the spirit of freedom had been utterly extinguished, the tamest subjects have sometimes ventured to resist an unprecedented invasion of their property; but on this occasion the injury was aggravated by the insult, and the sense of private interest was quickened by that of national honor. The conquest of Macedonia, as we have already observed, had delivered the Roman people from the weight of personal taxes. Though they had experienced every form of despotism, they had now enjoyed that exemption nearly 500 years, nor could they patiently brook the insolence of an Illyrian peasant, who, from his distant residence in Asia, presumed to number Rome among the tributary cities of his empire. The rising fury of the people was encouraged by the authority, or at least the connivance, of the senate; and the feeble remains of the Pretorian guards, who had reason to apprehend their own dissolution, embraced so honorable a pretence and declared their readiness to draw their swords in the service of their oppressed country. It was the wish, and it soon became the hope, of every citizen that, after expelling from Italy their foreign tyrants, they should elect a prince who, by the place of his residence, and by his maxims of government, might once more deserve the title of Roman emperor. The name, as well as the situation, of Maxentius, determined in his favor the popular enthusiasm.

we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.

²⁰ Gruter Inscip. p. 178. The six princes are all mentioned, Diocletian and Maximian as the senior Augusti and fathers of the emperors. They jointly dedicate for the use of their own Romans this magnificent edifice. The architects have delineated the ruins of these Thermae and the antiquarians, particularly Donatus and Nardini, have ascertained the ground which they covered. One of the great rooms that is now the Carthusian church; and even one of the porter's lodges is sufficient to form another church, which belongs to the Feuillans.

Maxentius Declared Emperor at Rome; Maximian Reassumes the Purple

Maxentius was the son of the emperor Maximian, and he had married the daughter of Galerius. His birth and alliance seemed to offer him the fairest promise of succeeding to the empire; but his vices and incapacity procured him the same exclusion from the dignity of Caesar which Constantine had deserved by a dangerous superiority of merit. The policy of Galerius preferred such associates as would never disgrace the choice, nor dispute the commands, of their benefactor. An obscure stranger was therefore raised to the throne of Italy, and the son of the late emperor of the West was left to enjoy the luxury of a private fortune in a villa a few miles distant from the capital. The gloomy passions of his soul, shame, vexation, and rage, were inflamed by envy on the news of Constantine's success; but the hopes of Maxentius revived with the public discontent, and he was easily persuaded to unite his personal injury and pretensions with the cause of the Roman people. Two Pretorian tribunes and a commissary of provisions undertook the management of the conspiracy; and as every order of men was actuated by the same spirit, the immediate event was neither doubtful nor difficult. The prefect of the city, and a few magistrates, who maintained their fidelity to Severus, were massacred by the guards; and Maxentius, invested with the Imperial ornaments, was (AD 306, Oct. 28) acknowledged by the applauding senate and people as the protector of the Roman freedom and dignity. It is uncertain whether Maximian was previously acquainted with the conspiracy; but as soon as the standard of rebellion was erected at Rome, the old emperor broke from the retirement where the authority of Diocletian had condemned him to pass a life of melancholy solitude, and concealed his returning ambition under the disguise of paternal tenderness. At the request of his son and of the senate, he condescended to reassume the purple. His ancient dignity, his experience, and his fame in arms, added strength as well as reputation to the party of Maxentius.²¹

AD 307: Defeat and Death of Severus

According to the advice, or rather the orders, of his colleague, the emperor Severus immediately hastened to Rome, in the full confidence that, by his unexpected celerity, he should easily suppress the tumult of a peaceful populace, commanded by a licentious youth. But he found on his arrival the gates of the city shut against him, the walls filled with men and arms, an experienced general at the head of the rebels, and his own troops without spirit or affection. A large body of Moors deserted to the enemy, allured by the promise of a large donation; and, if it be true that they had been levied by Maximian in his African war, preferring the natural feelings of gratitude to the artificial ties of allegiance. Anulinus, the Pretorian prefect, declared himself in favor of Maxentius, and drew after him the most considerable part of the troops, accustomed to obey his commands. Rome, according to the expression of an orator, recalled her armies; and the unfortunate Severus, destitute of force and of counsel, retired, or rather fled, with precipitation to Ravenna. Here he might for some time have been safe. The fortifications of Ravenna were able to resist the attempts, and the morasses that surrounded the town were sufficient to prevent the approach, of the Italian army. The sea, which Severus commanded with a powerful fleet, secured him an inexhaustible supply of provisions, and gave a free entrance to the legions which, on the return of spring, would advance to his assistance from Illyricum and the East. Maximian, who conducted the siege in person, was soon convinced that he might waste his time and his army in

²¹ The sixth Panegyric represents the conduct of Maximian in the most favorable light; and the ambiguous expression of Aurelius Victor, "*retractante diu*," (further delay) may signify either that he contrived, or that he opposed, the conspiracy Zosimus, 1. ii. p. 79, and Lactantius, c. 26.

the fruitless enterprise, and that he had nothing to hope either from force or famine. With an art more suitable to the character of Diocletian than to his own, he directed his attack not so much against the walls of Ravenna as against the mind of Severus. The treachery which he had experienced disposed that unhappy prince to distrust the most sincere of his friends and adherents. Maximian's emissaries easily persuaded his credulity that a conspiracy was formed to betray the town, and prevailed upon his fears not to expose himself to the discretion of an irritated conqueror, but to accept the faith of an honorable capitulation. He was at first received with humanity, and treated with respect. Maximian conducted the captive emperor to Rome, and gave him the most solemn assurances that he had secured his life by the resignation of the purple. But Severus could obtain only an easy death and an Imperial funeral. When the sentence was signified to him (AD 307, Feb.), the manner of executing it was left to his own choice; he preferred the favorite mode of the ancients, that of opening his veins: and as soon as he expired, his body was carried to the sepulchre which had been constructed for the family of Gallienus.²²

Maximian Gives His Daughter Fausta to Constantine

Though the characters of Constantine and Maxentius had very little affinity with each other, their situation and interest were the same; and prudence seemed to require that they should unite their forces against the common enemy. Notwithstanding the superiority of his age and dignity, the indefatigable Maximian passed the Alps, and courting a personal interview with the sovereign of Gaul, carried with him his daughter Fausta as the pledge of the new alliance. The marriage was (AD 307, March 31) celebrated at Arles with every circumstance of magnificence; and the ancient colleague of Diocletian, who again asserted his claim to the western empire, conferred on his son-in-law and ally the title of Augustus. By consenting to receive that honor from Maximian, Constantine seemed to embrace the cause of Rome and of the senate; but his professions were ambiguous, and his assistance slow and ineffectual. He considered with attention the approaching contest between the masters of Italy and the emperor of the East, and was prepared to consult his own safety or ambition in the event of the war.²³

Galerius Invades Italy; His Retreat

The importance of the occasion called for the presence and abilities of Galerius. At the head of a powerful army collected from Illyricum and the East, he entered Italy, resolved to revenge the death of Severus, and to chastise the rebellious Romans; or, as he expressed his intentions, in the furious language of a barbarian, to extirpate the senate and to destroy the people by the sword. But the skill of Maximian had concerted a prudent system of defense. The invader found every place hostile, fortified, and inaccessible; and though he forced his way as far as Narni, within 60 miles of Rome, his dominion in Italy was confined to the narrow limits of his camp. Sensible of the increasing difficulties of his enterprise, the haughty Galerius made the first advances toward a reconciliation, and dispatched two of his most considerable officers to tempt the Roman princes by the offer of a conference and the declaration of his paternal regard for Maxentius, who might obtain much more from his liberality than he could hope from the

²² The circumstances of this war, and the death of Severus, are very doubtfully and variously told in our ancient fragments (Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, iv. part p. 551). I have endeavored to extract from them a consistent and probable narration.

²³ The sixth Panegyric was pronounced to celebrate the elevation of Constantine: but the prudent orator avoids the mention either of Galerius or of Maxentius. He introduces only one slight allusion to the actual troubles, and to the majesty of Rome.

doubtful chance of war.²⁴ The offers of Galerius were rejected with firmness, his perfidious friendship refused with contempt, and it was not long before he discovered that, unless he provided for his safety by a timely retreat, he had some reason to apprehend the fate of Severus. The wealth which the Romans defended against his rapacious tyranny they freely contributed for his destruction. The name of Maximian, the popular arts of his son, the secret distribution of large sums and the promise of still more liberal rewards, checked the ardor and corrupted the fidelity of the Illyrian legions; and when Galerius at length gave the signal of the retreat, it was with some difficulty that he could prevail on his veterans not to desert a banner which had so often conducted them to victory and honor. A contemporary writer assigns two other causes for the failure of the expedition; but they are both of such a nature that a cautious historian will scarcely venture to adopt them. We are told that Galerius, who had formed a very imperfect notion of the greatness of Rome by the cities of the East with which he was acquainted, found his forces inadequate to the siege of that immense capital. But the extent of a city serves only to render it more accessible to the enemy; Rome had long since been accustomed to submit on the approach of a conqueror; nor could the temporary enthusiasm of the people have long contended against the discipline and valor of the legions. We are likewise informed that the legions themselves were struck with horror and remorse, and that those pious sons of the republic refused to violate the sanctity of their venerable parent.²⁵ But when we recollect with how much ease, in the more ancient civil wars, the zeal of party, and the habits of military obedience, had converted the native citizens of Rome into her most implacable enemies, we shall be inclined to distrust this extreme delicacy of strangers and barbarians who had never beheld Italy till they entered it in a hostile manner. Had they not been restrained by motives of a more interested nature, they would probably have answered Galerius in the words of Caesar's veterans: "If our general wishes to lead us to the banks of the Tiber, we are prepared to trace out his camp. Whatsoever walls he has determined to level with the ground, our hands are ready to work the engines: nor shall we hesitate, should the name of the devoted city be Rome itself." These are indeed the expressions of a poet; but of a poet who has been distinguished and even censured for his strict adherence to the truth of history.²⁶

The legions of Galerius exhibit a very melancholy proof of their disposition, by the ravages which they committed in their retreat. They murdered, ravished, plundered, and drove away the flocks and herds of the Italians. They burned the villages through which they passed, and they endeavored to destroy the country which it had not been in their power to subdue. During the whole march, Maxentius hung on their rear, but he very prudently declined a general engagement with those brave and desperate veterans. His father had undertaken a second journey into Gaul, with the hope of persuading Constantine, who had assembled an army on the frontier, to join the pursuit and to complete the victory. But the actions of Constantine were guided by reason and not by resentment. He persisted in the wise resolution of maintaining a balance of power in the divided empire, and he no longer hated Galerius, when that aspiring prince had ceased to be an object of terror.²⁷

²⁴ With regard to this negotiation, see the fragments of an anonymous Historian, published by Valesius at the end of his edition of Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 711. These fragments have furnished us with several curious, and, as it should seem, authentic anecdotes.

²⁵ Latin text omitted.

²⁶ Latin text omitted.

²⁷ Lactantius, c. 27. Zosim. 1. ii. p. 82. The latter insinuates that Constantine, in his interview with Maximian, had promised to declare war against Galerius.

Elevation of Licinius and Maximin; AD 308: Six Emperors

The mind of Galerius was the most susceptible of the sterner passions, but it was not, however, incapable of a sincere and lasting friendship. Licinius, whose manners as well as character were not unlike his own, seems to have engaged both his affection and esteem. Their intimacy had commenced in the happier period perhaps of their youth and obscurity. It had been cemented by the freedom and dangers of a military life; they had advanced, almost by equal steps, through the successive honors of the service; and as soon as Galerius was invested with the Imperial dignity, he seems to have conceived the design of raising his companion to the same rank with himself. During the short period of his prosperity, he considered the rank of Caesar as unworthy of the age and merit of Licinius, and rather chose to reserve for him the place of Constantius and the empire of the West. While the emperor was employed in the Italian war, he entrusted his friend with the defense of the Danube; and immediately after his return from that unfortunate expedition, he (AD 307, Nov. 11) invested Licinius with the vacant purple of Severus, resigning to his immediate command the provinces of Illyricum.²⁸ The news of his promotion was no sooner carried into the East, than Maximin, who governed, or rather oppressed, the countries of Egypt and Syria, betrayed his envy and discontent, disdained the inferior name of Caesar, and, notwithstanding the prayers as well as arguments of Galerius, exacted (AD 308), almost by violence, the equal title of Augustus.²⁹ For the first, and indeed for the last time, the Roman world was administered by six emperors. In the West, Constantine and Maxentius affected to reverence their father Maximian. In the East, Licinius and Maximin honored with more real consideration their benefactor Galerius. The opposition of interest, and the memory of a recent war, divided the empire into two great hostile powers; but their mutual fears produced an apparent tranquility, and even a feigned reconciliation, till the death of the elder princes, of Maximian, and more particularly of Galerius, gave a new direction to the views and passions of their surviving associates.

Misfortunes of Maximian; AD 310: His Death

When Maximian had reluctantly abdicated the empire, the venal orators of the times applauded his philosophic moderation. When his ambition excited, or at least encouraged, a civil war, they returned thanks to his generous patriotism, and gently censured that love of ease and retirement which had withdrawn him from the public service.³⁰ But it was impossible that minds like those of Maximian and his son could long possess in harmony an undivided power. Maxentius considered himself as the legal sovereign of Italy, elected by the Roman senate and people; nor would he endure the control of his father, who arrogantly declared that by his name and abilities the rash youth had been established on the throne. The cause was solemnly pleaded before the Pretorian guards, and those troops, who dreaded the severity of the old emperor, espoused the party of Maxentius.³¹ The life and freedom of Maximian were however respected,

²⁸ M. de Tillemont (*Hist. des Empereurs*, vi. part i. p. 559) has proved that Licinius, without passing through the intermediate rank of Caesar, was declared Augustus, after the return of Galerius from Italy.

²⁹ Lactantius, c. 32. When Galerius declared Licinius Augustus with himself, he tried to satisfy his younger associates, by inventing for Constantine and Maximin (not Maxentius, Baluze, p. 81) the new title of sons of the Augusti. But when Maximin acquainted him that he had been saluted Augustus by the army, Galerius was obliged to acknowledge him, as well as Constantine, as equal associates in the Imperial dignity.

³⁰ Latin text omitted.

³¹ Lactantius, c. 28. Zosim. L ii. p. 82. A report was spread that Maxentius was the son of some obscure Syrian, and had been substituted by the wife of Maximian as her own child. Aurelius Victor, Anonym. Valesian, and Panegyri.

and he retired from Italy into Illyricum, affecting to lament his past conduct and secretly contriving new mischief. But Galerius, who was well acquainted with his character, soon obliged him to leave his dominions, and the last refuge of the disappointed Maximian was the court of his son-in-law Constantine.³² He was received with respect by that artful prince, and with the appearance of filial tenderness by the empress Fausta. That he might remove every suspicion, he resigned the Imperial purple a second time,³³ professing himself at length convinced of the vanity of greatness and ambition. Had he persevered in this resolution, he might have ended his life with less dignity indeed than in his first retirement, yet, however, with comfort and reputation. But the near prospect of a throne brought back to his remembrance the state from whence he was fallen, and he resolved, by a desperate effort, either to reign or perish. An incursion of the Franks had summoned Constantine, with a part of his army, to the banks of the Rhine; the remainder of the troops were stationed in the southern provinces of Gaul, which lay exposed to the enterprises of the Italian emperor, and a considerable treasure was deposited in the city of Aries. Maximian either craftily invented, or hastily credited, a vain report of the death of Constantine. Without hesitation he ascended the throne, seized the treasure, and, scattering it with his accustomed profusion among the soldiers, endeavored to awake in their minds the memory of his ancient dignity and exploits. Before he could establish his authority, or finish the negotiation which he appears to have entered into with his son Maxentius, the celerity of Constantine defeated all his hopes. On the first news of his deceit and ingratitude that prince returned by rapid marches from the Rhine to the Saone, embarked on the last-mentioned river at Chalons, and at Lyons trusting himself to the rapidity of the Rhone arrived at the gates of Arles with a military force which it was impossible for Maximian to resist, and which scarcely permitted him to take refuge in the neighboring city of Marseilles. The narrow neck of land which joined that place to the continent was fortified against the besiegers, while the sea was open, either for the escape of Maximian, or for the succors of Maxentius, if the latter should choose to disguise his invasion of Gaul under the honorable pretence of defending a distressed, or, as he might allege, an injured father. Apprehensive of the fatal consequences of delay, Constantine gave orders for an immediate assault; but the scaling ladders were found too short for the height of the walls, and Marseilles might have sustained as long a siege as it formerly did against the arms of Caesar, if the garrison, conscious either of their fault or of their danger, had not purchased their pardon by delivering up the city and the person of Maximian. A secret but irrevocable sentence of death was pronounced against the usurper; he obtained only the same favor which he had indulged to Severus, and it was published to the world that, oppressed by the remorse of his repeated crimes, he (AD 310, Feb.) strangled himself with his own hands. After he had lost the assistance and disdained the moderate counsels of Diocletian, the second period of his active life was a series of public calamities and personal mortification, which were terminated, in about three years, by an ignominious death. He deserved his fate; but we should find more reason to applaud the humanity of Constantine if he had spared an old man, the benefactor of his father and the father of his wife. During the whole of this melancholy transaction, it appears that Fausta sacrificed the sentiments of nature to her conjugal duties.³⁴

Vet. ix. 3, 4.

³² Latin text omitted.

³³ Lactantius, c. 29. Yet after the resignation of the purple, Constantine still continued to Maximian the pomp and honors of the Imperial dignity; and on all public occasions gave the right-hand place to his father-in-law. Panegy. Vet. vii. 11.

³⁴ Zosim. I. ii. p. 82. Eumenius in Panegy. Vet. vii. 16—21. The latter of these has undoubtedly represented the whole affair in the most favorable light for his sovereign. Yet even from this partial narrative we may conclude that the repeated clemency of Constantine, and the reiterated treasons of Maximian, as they are described by Lactantius

AD 311: Death of Galerius

The last years of Galerius were less shameful and unfortunate; and though he had filled with more glory the subordinate station of Caesar than the superior rank of Augustus, he preserved, till the moment of his death (AD 311, May), the first place among the princes of the Roman world. He survived his retreat from Italy about four years; and wisely relinquishing his views of universal empire, he devoted the remainder of his life to the enjoyment of pleasure, and to the execution of some works of public utility, among which we may distinguish the discharging into the Danube the superfluous waters of the lake Pelso, and the cutting down the immense forests that encompassed it; an operation worthy of a monarch, since it gave an extensive country to the agriculture of his Pannonian subjects.³⁵ His death was occasioned by a very painful and lingering disorder. His body, swelled by an intemperate course of life to an unwieldy corpulence, was covered with ulcers and devoured by innumerable swarms of those insects who have given their name to a most loathsome disease.³⁶ He had no sooner expired in his palace of Nicomedia than the two emperors, who were indebted for their purple to his favor, began to collect their forces, with the intention either of disputing or of dividing the dominions which he had left without a master. They were persuaded, however, to desist from the former design and to agree in the latter. The provinces of Asia fell to the share of Maximin, and those of Europe augmented the portion of Licinius. The Hellespont and the Thracian Bosphorus formed their mutual boundary, and the banks of those narrow seas, which flowed in the midst of the Roman world, were covered with soldiers, with arms, and with fortifications. The deaths of Maximian and of Galerius reduced the number of emperors to four. The sense of their true interest soon connected Licinius and Constantine; a secret alliance was concluded between Maximin and Maxentius, and their unhappy subjects expected with terror the bloody consequences of their inevitable dissension, which were no longer restrained by the fear or the respect which they had entertained for Galerius.³⁷

AD 306—312: Constantine's Administration in Gaul

Among so many crimes and misfortunes occasioned by the passions of the Roman princes, there is some pleasure in discovering a single action which may be ascribed to their virtue. In the 6th year of his reign, Constantine visited the city of Autun and generously remitted the arrears of tribute, reducing at the same time the proportion of their assessment from 25 to 18,000 heads, subject to the real and personal tax.³⁸ Yet even this indulgence affords the most unquestionable proof of the public misery. This tax was so extremely oppressive, either in itself or in the mode of collecting it, that while the revenue was increased by extortion, it was diminished by despair.

(c. 29, 30), and copied by the moderns, are destitute of any historical foundation.

³⁵ Aurelius Victor, c. 40. But that lake was situated in the Upper Pannonia, near the borders of Noricum; and the province of Valeria (a name which the wife of Galerius gave to the drained country) undoubtedly lay between the Drave and the Danube (Sextus Rufus, c. 9). I should therefore suspect that Victor has confounded the lake Pelso with the Volocean marshes, or, as they are now called, the lake Sabaton. It is placed in the heart of Valeria, and its present extent is not less than twelve Hungarian miles (about seventy English) in length and two in breadth. Severini Pannonia, l. i. c. 9.

³⁶ Lactantius (de M. P. c. 33) and Eusebius (l. viii. c. 16) describe the symptoms and progress of his disorder with singular accuracy and apparent pleasure.

³⁷ Eusebius, l. ix. 6, 10. Lactantius, e. 36. Zosimus is less exact, and evidently confounds Maximian with Maximin.

³⁸ Eighth Pasegyr. in which Eumenius displays, in the presence of Constantine, the misery and the gratitude of the city of Autun.

A considerable part of the territory of Autun was left uncultivated; and great numbers of the provincials rather chose to live as exiles and outlaws than to support the weight of civil society. It is but too probable that the bountiful emperor relieved, by a partial act of liberality, one among the many evils which he had caused by his general maxims of administration. But even those maxims were less the effect of choice than of necessity. And if we except the death of Maximian, the reign (AD 306—312) of Constantine in Gaul seems to have been the most innocent and even virtuous period of his life. The provinces were protected by his presence from the inroads of the barbarians, who either dreaded or experienced his active valor. After a signal victory over the Franks and Alemanni, several of their princes were exposed by his order to the wild beasts in the amphitheater of Treves, and the people seem to have enjoyed the spectacle without discovering, in such a treatment of royal captives, anything that was repugnant to the laws of nations or of humanity.³⁹

Tyranny of Maxentius in Italy and Africa

Constantine's virtues were rendered more illustrious by the vices of Maxentius. While the Gallic provinces enjoyed as much happiness as the condition of the times was capable of receiving, Italy and Africa groaned under the dominion of a tyrant as contemptible as he was odious. The zeal of flattery and faction has indeed too frequently sacrificed the reputation of the vanquished to the glory of their successful rivals; but even those writers who have revealed with the most freedom and pleasure the faults of Constantine unanimously confess that Maxentius was cruel, rapacious, and profligate.⁴⁰ He had the good fortune to suppress a slight rebellion in Africa. The governor and a few adherents had been guilty; the province suffered for their crime. The flourishing cities of Cirtha and Carthage, and the whole extent of that fertile country, were wasted by fire and sword. The abuse of victory was followed by the abuse of law and justice. A formidable army of sycophants and accusers invaded Africa; the rich and the noble were easily convicted of a connection with the rebels; and those among them who experienced the emperor's clemency were only punished by the confiscation of their estates. (Zosimus, 1. ii. pp. 83—85; Aurelius Victor) So signal a victory was celebrated by a magnificent triumph, and Maxentius exposed to the eyes of the people the spoils and captives of a Roman province. The state of the capital was no less deserving of compassion than that of Africa. The wealth of Rome supplied an inexhaustible fund for his vain and prodigal expenses, and the ministers of his revenue were skilled in the arts of rapine. It was under his reign that the method of exacting a free gift from the senators was first invented; and as the sum was insensibly increased, the pretences of levying it—a victory, birth, marriage, or Imperial consulship—were proportionally multiplied.⁴¹ Maxentius had imbibed the same implacable aversion to the senate which had characterized most of the former tyrants of Rome: nor was it possible for his ungrateful temper to forgive the generous fidelity which had raised him to the throne and supported him against all his enemies. The lives of the senators were exposed to his jealous suspicions, the dishonor of their wives and daughters heightened the gratification of his sensual passions. It may be presumed that an Imperial lover was seldom reduced to sigh in vain; but whenever persuasion proved ineffectual, he had recourse to violence; and there remains one memorable example of a noble matron who

³⁹ Eutropius, x. 3. Panegy. Veter. vii. 10, 11, 12. A great number of the French youth were likewise exposed to the same cruel and ignominious death.

⁴⁰ Julian excludes Maxentius from the banquet of the Caesars with abhorrence and contempt; and Zosimus (I. ii. p. 85) accuses him of every kind of cruelty and profligacy.

⁴¹ Latin text omitted.

preserved her chastity by a voluntary death.⁴² The soldiers were the only order of men whom he appeared to respect or studied to please. He filled Rome and Italy with armed troops, connived at their tumults, suffered them with impunity to plunder, and even to massacre, the defenseless people;⁴³ and indulging them in the same licentiousness which their emperor enjoyed, Maxentius often bestowed on his military favorites the splendid villa or the beautiful wife of a senator. A prince of such a character, alike incapable of governing either in peace or in war, might purchase the support, but he could never obtain the esteem of the army. Yet his pride was equal to his other vices. While he passed his indolent life either within the walls of his palace or in the neighboring gardens of Sallust, he was repeatedly heard to declare that he alone was emperor, and that the other princes were no more than his lieutenants, on whom he had devolved the defense of the frontier provinces, that he might enjoy without interruption the elegant luxury of the capital Rome, which had so long regretted the absence, lamented, during the six years of his reign, the presence of her sovereign.⁴⁴

AD 312: Civil War Between Constantine and Maxentius

Though Constantine might view the conduct of Maxentius with abhorrence and the situation of the Romans with compassion, we have no reason to presume that he would have taken up arms to punish the one or to relieve the other. But the tyrant of Italy (AD 312) rashly ventured to provoke a formidable enemy, whose ambition had been hitherto restrained by considerations of prudence rather than by principles of justice.⁴⁵ After the death of Maximian, his titles, according to the established custom, had been erased, and his statues thrown down with ignominy. His son, who had persecuted and deserted him when alive, affected to display the most pious regard for his memory, and gave orders that a similar treatment should be immediately inflicted on all the statues that had been erected in Italy and Africa to Constantine's honor. That wise prince, who sincerely wished to decline a war, with the difficulty and importance of which he was sufficiently acquainted, at first concealed the insult, and sought for redress by the milder expedients of negotiation, till he was convinced that the hostile and ambitious designs of the Italian emperor made it necessary for him to arm in his own defense. Maxentius, who openly avowed his pretensions to the whole monarchy of the West, had already prepared a very considerable force to invade the Gallio provinces on the side of Rhaetia; and though he could not expect any assistance from Licinius, he was flattered with the hope that the legions of Illyricum, allured by his presence and promises, would desert the standard of that prince, and unanimously declare themselves his soldiers and subjects. (Zosimus, 1. ii. pp. 84, 85; Nazarius in Panegy. x. 7—13) Constantine no longer hesitated. He had deliberated with caution, he acted with vigor. He gave a private audience to the ambassadors, who, in the name of the senate and people, conjured him to deliver Rome from a detested tyrant; and, without regarding the timid remonstrance of his

⁴² Panegy. Vet. ix. 3. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. viii. 14, et in Vit. Constant. 1. 33, 34. Rufinus. c. 1,1. The virtuous matron, who stabbed herself to escape the violence of Maxentius, was a Christian, wife to the prefect of the city, and her name was Sophronia.

⁴³ See more particular, though somewhat different, accounts of a tumult and massacre, which happened at Rome, in Eusebius (1. viii. c. 14) and in Zosimus (1. ii. p. 84).

⁴⁴ Panegyrics (ix. 14), a lively description of the indolence and vain pride of Maxentius. In another place, the orator observes that the riches which Rome had accumulated in a period of 1,060 years were lavished by the tyrant on his mercenary bands.

⁴⁵ After the victory of Constantine, it was universally allowed that the motive of delivering the republic from a detested tyrant would, at any time, have justified his expedition into Italy. Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. 1. i. c. 26. Panegy. Vet. ix. 2.

council, he resolved to prevent the enemy, and to carry the war into the heart of Italy.⁴⁶

The enterprise was as full of danger as of glory; and the unsuccessful event of two former invasions was sufficient to inspire the most serious apprehensions. The veteran troops who revered the name of Maximian had embraced in both those wars the party of his son, and were now restrained by a sense of honor, as well as of interest, from entertaining an idea of a second desertion. Maxentius, who considered the Pretorian guards as the firmest defense of his throne, had increased them to their ancient establishment; and they composed, including the rest of the Italians who were enlisted into his service, a formidable body of 80,000 men. Forty thousand Moors and Carthaginians had been raised since the reduction of Africa. Even Sicily furnished its proportion of troops; and the armies of Maxentius amounted to 170,000 foot, and 18,000 horse. The wealth of Italy supplied the expenses of the war; and the adjacent provinces were exhausted, to form immense magazines of corn and every other kind of provisions. The whole force of Constantine consisted of ninety thousand foot and eight thousand horse;⁴⁷ and as the defense of the Rhine required an extraordinary attention during the absence of the emperor, it was not in his power to employ above half his troops in the Italian expedition, unless he sacrificed the public safety to his private quarrel.⁴⁸ At the head of about forty thousand soldiers, he marched to encounter an enemy whose numbers were at least four times superior to his own. But the armies of Rome, placed at a secure distance from danger, were enervated by indulgence and luxury. Habituated to the baths and theatres of Rome, they took the field with reluctance, and were chiefly composed of veterans who had almost forgotten, or of new levies who had never acquired, the use of arms and the practice of war. The hardy legions of Gaul had long defended the frontiers of the empire against the barbarians of the North; and in the performance of that laborious service their valor was exercised and their discipline confirmed. There appeared the same difference between the leaders as between the armies. Caprice or flattery had tempted Maxentius with the hopes of conquest; but these aspiring hopes soon gave way to the habits of pleasure and the consciousness of his inexperience. The intrepid mind of Constantine had been trained from his earliest youth to war, to action, and to military command.

Battle of Turin

When Hannibal marched from Gaul into Italy he was obliged, first, to discover, and then to open, a way over mountains and through savage nations that had never yielded a passage to a regular army.⁴⁹ The Alps were then guarded by nature, they are now fortified by art. Citadels,

⁴⁶ Panegy. Vet. ix. 2. The embassy of the Romans is mentioned only by Zonaras (l. xiii.) and by Cedrenus (in Compend. Hist. p. 270); but those modern Greeks had the opportunity of consulting many writers which have since been lost, among which we may reckon the Life of Constantine by Praxagoras. Photius (p. 63) has made a short extract from that historical work.

⁴⁷ Zosimus (l. ii. p. 86) has given us this curious account of the forces on both sides. He makes no mention of any naval armaments, though we are assured (Panegy. Vet. ix. 25) that the war was carried on by sea as well as by land; and that the fleet of Constantine took possession of Sardinia, Corsica, and the parts of Italy.

⁴⁸ Panegy. Vet. ix. 3. It is not surprising that the orator should diminish the numbers with which his sovereign achieved the conquest of Italy; but it appears somewhat singular that he should esteem the tyrant's army at no more than 100,000 men.

⁴⁹ The three principal passages of the Alps between Gaul and Italy are those of Mount St. Bernard, Mount Cenis, and Mount Genevre. Tradition, and a resemblance of names (*Alpes Penninae*), had assigned the first of these for the march of Hannibal (Simler de Alpibus). The Chevalier de Folard (Polybe, tom. iv.) and M. d'Anville have led him over Mount Genevre. But notwithstanding the authority of an experienced officer and a learned geographer, the pretensions of Mount Cenis are supported in a specious, not to say a convincing, manner by M. Grosley. Observations sur l'Italie, tom. i. p. 40, etc.

constructed with no less skill than labor and expense, command every avenue into the plain, and on that side render Italy almost inaccessible to the enemies of the king of Sardinia.⁵⁰ But in the course of the intermediate period, the generals who have attempted the passage have seldom experienced any difficulty or resistance. In the age of Constantine, the peasants of the mountains wore civilized and obedient subjects; the country was plentifully stocked with provisions, and the stupendous highways which the Romans had carried over the Alps opened several communications between Gaul and Italy.⁵¹ Constantine preferred the road of the Cottian Alps, or, as it is now called, of Mount Cenis, and led his troops with such active diligence that he descended into the plain of Piedmont before the court of Maxentius had received any certain intelligence of his departure from the banks of the Rhine. The city of Susa, however, which is situated at the foot of Mount Cenis, was surrounded with walls, and provided with a garrison sufficiently numerous to check the progress of an invader; but the impatience of Constantine's troops disdained the tedious forms of a siege. The same day that they appeared before Susa they applied fire to the gates and ladders to the walls; and mounting to the assault amid a shower of stones and arrows, they entered the place sword in hand, and cut in pieces the greater part of the garrison. The flames were extinguished by the care of Constantine, and the remains of Susa preserved from total destruction. About forty miles from thence a more severe contest awaited him. A numerous army of Italians was assembled under the lieutenants of Maxentius in the plains of Turin. Its principal strength consisted in a species of heavy cavalry, which the Romans, since the decline of their discipline, had borrowed from the nations of the East. The horses, as well as the men, were clothed in complete armor, the joints of which were artfully adapted to the motions of their bodies. The aspect of this cavalry was formidable, their weight almost irresistible; and as, on this occasion, their generals had drawn them up in a compact column or wedge, with a sharp point and with spreading flanks, they flattered themselves that they should easily break and trample down the army of Constantine. They might perhaps have succeeded in their design had not their experienced adversary embraced the same method of defense which in similar circumstances had been practiced by Aurelian. Constantine's skilful evolutions divided and baffled this massy column of cavalry. The troops of Maxentius fled in confusion toward Turin; and as the gates of the city were shut against them, very few escaped the sword of the victorious pursuers. By this important service, Turin deserved to experience the clemency and even favor of the conqueror. He made his entry into the imperial palace of Milan, and almost all the cities of Italy between the Alps and the Po not only acknowledged the power, but embraced Constantine's party with zeal.⁵²

Siege and Battle of Verona

From Milan to Rome, the Aemilian and Flaminian highways offered an easy march of about 400 miles; but though Constantine was impatient to encounter the tyrant, he prudently directed his operations against another army of Italians, who, by their strength and position, might either oppose his progress, or, in case of a misfortune, might intercept his retreat. Ruricius Pompeianus, a general distinguished by his valor and ability, had under his command the city of Verona, and all the troops that were stationed in the province of Venetia. As soon as he was informed that Constantine was advancing toward him, he detached a large body of cavalry, which was defeated

⁵⁰ La Brunette near Suse, Demont, Exiles, Fenestreiles, Coni, etc.

⁵¹ Ammian. Marcellin. xv. 10. His description of the roads over the Alps is clear, lively, and accurate.

⁵² Zosimus as well as Eusebius hasten from the passage of the Alps to the decisive action near Rome. We must apply to the two Panegyrics for the intermediate actions of Constantine.

in an engagement near Brescia, and pursued by the Gallic legions as far as the gates of Verona. The necessity, the importance, and the difficulties of the siege of Verona, immediately presented themselves to the sagacious mind of Constantine.⁵³ The city was accessible only by a narrow peninsula toward the west, as the other three sides were surrounded by the Adige, a rapid river which covered the province of Venetia, from whence the besieged derived an inexhaustible supply of men and provisions. It was not without great difficulty, and after several fruitless attempts, that Constantine found means to pass the river at some distance above the city, and in a place where the torrent was less violent. He then encompassed Verona with strong lines, pushed his attacks with prudent vigor, and repelled a desperate sally of Pompeianus. That intrepid general, when he had used every means of defense that the strength of the place or that of the garrison could afford, secretly escaped from Verona, anxious not for his own but for the public safety. With indefatigable diligence he soon collected an army sufficient either to meet Constantine in the field, or to attack him if he obstinately remained within his lines. The emperor, attentive to the motions, and informed of the approach, of so formidable an enemy, left a part of his legions to continue the operations of the siege, while, at the head of those troops on whose valor and fidelity he more particularly depended, he advanced in person to engage the general of Maxentius. The army of Gaul was drawn up in two lines, according to the usual practice of war; but their experienced leader, perceiving that the numbers of the Italians far exceeded his own, suddenly changed his disposition, and reducing the second, extended the front of his first line to a just proportion with that of the enemy. Such evolutions, which only veteran troops can execute without confusion in a moment of danger, commonly prove decisive; but as this engagement began toward the close of the day, and was contested with great obstinacy during the whole night, there was less room for the conduct of the generals than for the courage of the soldiers. The return of light displayed the victory of Constantine, and a field of carnage covered with many thousands of the vanquished Italians. Their general Pompeianus was found among the slain; Verona immediately surrendered at discretion, and the garrison was made prisoners of war.⁵⁴ When the officers of the victorious army congratulated their master on this important success, they ventured to add some respectful complaints, of such a nature, however, as the most jealous monarchs will listen to without displeasure. They represented to Constantine, that, not contented with performing all the duties of a commander, he had exposed his own person with an excess of valor which almost degenerated into rashness; and they conjured him for the future to pay more regard to the preservation of a life in which the safety of Rome and of the empire was involved. (Panegy. Vet. ix. 10)

Fears of Maxentius

While Constantine signalized his conduct and valor in the field, the sovereign of Italy appeared insensible of the calamities and danger of a civil war which raged in the heart of his dominions. Pleasure was still the only business of Maxentius. Concealing, or at least attempting to conceal, from the public knowledge the misfortunes of his arms,⁵⁵ he indulged himself in a vain confidence which deferred the remedies of the approaching evil without deferring the evil

⁵³ The Marquis Maffei has examined the siege and battle of Verona with that degree of attention and accuracy which was due to a memorable action that happened in his native country. The fortifications of that city, constructed by Gallienus, were less extensive than the modern walls, and the amphitheater was not included within their circumference. *Verona Illustrata*, part i. pp. 142, 150.

⁵⁴ They wanted chains for so great a multitude of captives; and the whole council was at a loss; but the wise conqueror thought of converting their swords into handcuffs for the vanquished. *Panegy. Vet. ix. 11.*

⁵⁵ Latin text omitted

itself.⁵⁶ The rapid progress of Constantine⁵⁷ was scarcely sufficient to awaken him from this fatal security; he flattered himself that his well-known liberality, and the majesty of the Roman name, which had already delivered him from two invasions, would dissipate with the same facility the rebellious army of Gaul. The officers of experience and ability who had served under the banners of Maximian, were at length compelled to inform his effeminate son of the imminent danger to which he was reduced; and, with a freedom that at once surprised and convinced him, to urge the necessity of preventing his ruin, by a vigorous exertion of his remaining power. The resources of Maxentius both of men and money, were still considerable. The Pretorian guards felt how strongly their own interest and safety were connected with his cause; and a third army was soon collected, more numerous than those which had been lost in the battles of Turin and Verona. It was far from the intention of the emperor to lead his troops in person. A stranger to the exercises of war, he trembled at the apprehension of so dangerous a contest; and as fear is commonly superstitious, he listened with melancholy attention to the rumors of omens and presages which seemed to menace his life and empire. Shame at length supplied the place of courage, and forced him to take the field. He was unable to sustain the contempt of the Roman people. The circus resounded with their indignant clamors, and they tumultuously besieged the gates of the palace, reproaching the cowardice of their indolent sovereign, and celebrating the heroic spirit of Constantine. (Panegy. Vet. xi. 18; Lactantius, c. 44) Before Maxentius left Rome, he consulted the Sibylline books. The guardians of these ancient oracles were as well versed in the arts of this world as they were ignorant of the secrets of fate; and they returned him a very prudent answer, which might adapt itself to the event, and secure their reputation whatever should be the chance of arms.⁵⁸

Victory of Constantine Near Rome

The haste of Constantine's march has been compared to the rapid conquest of Italy by the first of the Caesars; nor is the flattering parallel repugnant to the truth of history, since no more than 58 days elapsed between the surrender of Verona (AD 312, Oct. 28) and the final decision of the war. Constantine had always apprehended that the tyrant would consult the dictates of fear, and perhaps of prudence; and that, instead of risking his last hopes in a general engagement, he would shut himself up within the walls of Rome. His ample magazines secured him against the danger of famine; and as the situation of Constantine admitted not of delay, he might have been reduced to the sad necessity of destroying with fire and sword the Imperial city, the noblest reward of his victory, and the deliverance of which had been the motive, or rather indeed the pretence, of the civil war.⁵⁹ It was with equal surprise and pleasure that (AD 312, Oct. 28), on his arrival at a place called Saxa Rubra, about nine miles from Rome,⁶⁰ he discovered the army of Maxentius prepared to give him battle.⁶¹ Their long front filled a very spacious plain, and their

⁵⁶ Latin text omitted.

⁵⁷ The Marquis Maffei has made it extremely probable that Constantine was still at Verona, the 1st of Sept., AD 312, and that the memorable era of the battle was dated from his conquest of the Cisalpine Gaul.

⁵⁸ The vanquished prince became of course the enemy of Rome.

⁵⁹ Panegy. Vet. ix. 16, x. 27. The former of these orators magnifies the hoards of corn which Maxentius had collected from Africa and the Islands. And yet, if there is any truth in the scarcity mentioned by Eusebius (in Vit. Constantin. l i. c. 36) the Imperial granaries must have been open only to the soldiers.

⁶⁰ Saxa Rubra was in the neighborhood of the Cremera, a trifling rivulet, illustrated by the valor and glorious death of the 300 Fabii.

⁶¹ The post which Maxentius had taken, with the Tiber in his rear, is very clearly described by the two Panegyrist, ix. 16, a. 28.

deep array reached to the banks of the Tiber, which covered their rear and forbade their retreat. We are informed, and we may believe, that Constantine disposed his troops with consummate skill, and that he chose for himself the post of honor and danger. Distinguished by the splendor of his arms, he charged in person the cavalry of his rival; and his irresistible attack determined the fortune of the day. The cavalry of Maxentius was principally composed either of unwieldy armor-clad soldiers, or light Moors and Numidians. They yielded to the vigor of the Gallic horse, which possessed more activity than the one, more firmness than the other. The defeat of the two wings left the infantry without any protection on its flanks, and the undisciplined Italians fled without reluctance from the standard of a tyrant whom they had always hated, and whom they no longer feared. The Pretorians, conscious that their offenses were beyond the reach of mercy, were animated by revenge and despair. Notwithstanding their repeated efforts, those brave veterans were unable to recover the victory: they obtained, however, an honorable death; and it was observed that their bodies covered the same ground which had been occupied by their ranks.⁶² The confusion then became general, and the dismayed troops of Maxentius, pursued by an implacable enemy, rushed by thousands into the deep and rapid stream of the Tiber. The emperor himself attempted to escape back into the city over the Milvian bridge, but the crowds which pressed together through that narrow passage forced him into the river, where he was immediately drowned by the weight of his armor.⁶³ His body, which had sunk very deep into the mud, was found with some difficulty the next day. The sight of his head, when it was exposed to the eyes of the people, convinced them of their deliverance, and admonished them to receive, with acclamations of loyalty and gratitude, the fortunate Constantine, who thus achieved by his valor and ability the most splendid enterprise of his life.⁶⁴

His Conduct At Rome

In the use of victory, Constantine neither deserved the praise of clemency, nor incurred the censure of immoderate rigor.⁶⁵ He inflicted the same treatment to which a defeat would have exposed his own person and family, put to death the two sons of the tyrant, and carefully extirpated his whole race. The most distinguished adherents of Maxentius must have expected to share his fate, as they had shared his prosperity and his crimes; but when the Roman people loudly demanded a greater number of victims, the conqueror resisted, with firmness and humanity, those servile clamors which were dictated by flattery as well as by resentment. Informers were punished and discouraged; the innocent who had suffered under the late tyranny were recalled from exile and restored to their estates. A general act of oblivion quieted the minds and settled the property of the people, both in Italy and in Africa.⁶⁶ The first time that Constantine

⁶² Latin text omitted.

⁶³ A very idle rumor soon prevailed that Maxentius, who had not taken any precaution for his own retreat, had contrived a very artful snare to destroy the army of the pursuers; but that the wooden bridge which was to have been loosened on the approach of Constantine, unluckily broke down under the weight of the flying Italians. M. de Tillemont (*Hist. des Empereurs*, iv. part i. p. 576) very seriously examines whether, in contradiction to common sense, the testimony of Eusebius and Zosimus ought to prevail over the silence of Lactantius, Nazarius, and the anonymous but contemporary orator who composed the ninth Panegyric.

⁶⁴ Zosimus, l ii. pp. 86—88, and the two Panegyrics, the former of which was pronounced a few months afterward, afford the clearest notion of this great battle. Lactantius, Eusebius, and even the Epitomes, supply several useful hints.

⁶⁵ Zosimus, the enemy of Constantine, allows (l ii. p. 88) that only a few of the friends of Maxentius were put to death. The other orator (*Panegyric. Vet.* ix. 20, 21) contents himself with observing that Constantine, when he entered Rome, did not imitate the cruel massacres of Cinna, Marina, or Sylla.

⁶⁶ See the two Panegyrics, and the laws of this and the ensuing year, in the Theodosian Code.

honored the senate with his presence, he recapitulated his own services and exploits in a modest oration, assured that illustrious order of his sincere regard, and promised to re-establish its ancient dignity and privileges. The grateful senate repaid these unmeaning professions by the empty titles of honor which it was yet in their power to bestow; and without presuming to ratify the authority of Constantine, they passed a decree to assign him the first rank among the three Augusti who governed the Roman world.⁶⁷ Games and festivals were instituted to preserve the fame of his victory, and several edifices raised at the expense of Maxentius were dedicated to the honor of his successful rival. The triumphal arch of Constantine still remains a melancholy proof of the decline of the arts, and a singular testimony of the lowest vanity. As it was not possible to find in the capital of the empire a sculptor who was capable of adorning that public monument, the arch of Trajan, without any respect either for his memory or for the rules of propriety, was stripped of its most elegant figures. The difference of times and persons, of actions and characters, was totally disregarded. The Parthian captives appear prostrate at the feet of a prince who never carried his arms beyond the Euphrates; and curious antiquarians can still discover the head of Trajan on the trophies of Constantine. The new ornaments which it was necessary to introduce between the vacancies of ancient sculpture are executed in the crudest and most unskillful manner.⁶⁸

The final abolition of the Pretorian guards was a measure of prudence as well as of revenge. Those haughty troops, whose numbers and privileges had been restored, and even augmented, by Maxentius, were forever suppressed by Constantine. Their fortified camp was destroyed, and the few Pretorians who had escaped the fury of the sword were dispersed among the legions, and banished to the frontiers of the empire, where they might be serviceable without again becoming dangerous.⁶⁹ By suppressing the troops which were usually stationed in Rome, Constantine gave the fatal blow to the dignity of the senate and people, and the disarmed capital was exposed without protection to the insults or neglect of its distant master. We may observe that in this last effort to preserve their expiring freedom, the Romans, from the apprehension of a tribute, had raised Maxentius to the throne. He exacted that tribute from the senate under the name of a free gift. They implored the assistance of Constantine. He vanquished the tyrant, and converted the free gift into a perpetual tax. The senators, according to the declaration which was required of their property, were divided into several classes. The most opulent paid annually eight pounds of gold, the next class paid four, the last two, and those whose poverty might have claimed an exemption, were assessed however at seven pieces of gold. Besides the regular members of the senate, their sons, their descendants, and even their relations, enjoyed the vain privileges, and supported the heavy burdens of the senatorial order; nor will it any longer excite our surprise that Constantine should be attentive to increase the number of persons who were included under so useful a description.⁷⁰ After the defeat of Maxentius, the victorious emperor passed no more than two or three months in Rome, which he visited twice during the remainder of his life, to celebrate the solemn festivals of the tenth and of the twentieth years of his reign. Constantine was almost perpetually in motion to exercise the legions or to inspect the state of the provinces.

⁶⁷ Panegyr. Vet. ix. 20. Lactantius, c. 44. Maximin, who was Caesar, claimed, with some show of reason, the first rank among the Augustii.

⁶⁸ With regard to the theft of Trajan's trophies, consult Flaminus Vacca, apud Moutfaucon, *Diarium Italiæ*, p. 280, and *l'Antiquité Expliquée* of the latter, tom. iv. p. 171.

⁶⁹ Aurelius Victor. Zosimus (l. ii. p. 89) mentions this fact as a historian; and it is very pompously celebrated in the ninth Panegyric.

⁷⁰ The word *pigneris* might almost seem maliciously chosen. Concerning the senatorial tax, see Zosimus, l. ii. p. 115, the second title of the sixth book of the Theodosian Code, with Godefroy's Commentary, and *Mem. de l'Acad. des Inscript.* xxviii. p. 726.

Treves, Milan, Aquileia, Sirmium, Naissus, and Thessalonica, were the occasional places of his residence, till he founded a New Rome on the confines of Europe and Asia.⁷¹

AD 313: Alliance With Licinius; War Between Maximin and Licinius; Maximin's Defeat

Before Constantine marched into Italy he had secured the friendship, or at least the neutrality, of Licinius, the Illyrian emperor. He had promised his sister Constantia in marriage to that prince; but the celebration of the nuptials was deferred till after the conclusion of the war, and the interview (AD 313, Mar.) of the two emperors at Milan, which was arranged for that purpose, appeared to cement the union of their families and interests.⁷² In the midst of the public festivity they were suddenly obliged to take leave of each other. An inroad of the Franks summoned Constantine to the Rhine, and the hostile approach of the sovereign of Asia demanded the immediate presence of Licinius. Maximin had been the secret ally of Maxentius, and, without being discouraged by his fate, he resolved to try the fortune of a civil war. He moved (AD 313) out of Syria toward the frontiers of Bithynia in the depth of winter. The season was severe and tempestuous; great numbers of men as well as horses perished in the snow; and as the roads were broken up by incessant rains, he was obliged to leave behind him a considerable part of the heavy baggage, which was unable to follow the rapidity of his forced marches. By this extraordinary effort of diligence, he arrived, with a harassed but formidable army, on the banks of the Thracian Bosphorus, before the lieutenants of Licinius were apprised of his hostile intentions. Byzantium surrendered to the power of Maximin, after a siege of 11 days. He was detained for some days under the walls of Heraclea; and he had no sooner taken possession of that city than he was alarmed by the intelligence that Licinius had pitched his camp at the distance of only 18 miles. After a fruitless negotiation, in which the two princes attempted to seduce the fidelity of each other's adherents, they (April 30) had recourse to arms. The emperor of the East commanded a disciplined and veteran army of more than 70,000 men, and Licinius, who had collected about 30,000 Illyrians, was at first oppressed by the superiority of numbers. His military skill and the firmness of his troops restored the day, and obtained a decisive victory. The incredible speed which Maximin exerted in his flight is much more celebrated than his prowess in the battle. Twenty-four hours afterward he was seen, pale, trembling, and without his Imperial ornaments, at Nicomedia, 160 miles from the place of his defeat. The wealth of Asia was yet unexhausted; and though the flower of his veterans had fallen in the late action, he had still power, if he could obtain time, to draw very numerous levies from Syria and Egypt. But he survived his misfortune only 3 or 4 months. His death, which happened at Tarsus, was variously ascribed to despair, poison, and divine justice. As Maximin was alike destitute of abilities and of virtue, he was lamented neither by the people nor by the soldiers. The provinces of the East, delivered from the terrors of civil war, cheerfully acknowledged the authority of Licinius.⁷³

⁷¹ From the Theodosian Code, we may now begin to trace the motions of the emperors; but the dates both of time and place have frequently been altered by the carelessness of transcribers.

⁷² Zosimus (l. ii. p. 89) observes that, before the war, Constantine's sister had been betrothed to Licinius. According to the younger Victor, Diocletian was invited to the nuptials; but having ventured to plead his age and infirmities, he received a second letter filled with reproaches for his supposed partiality to the cause of Maxentius and Maximin.

⁷³ Zosimus mentions the defeat and death of Maximin as ordinary events; but Lactantius expatiates on them (c. 45-50), ascribing them to the miraculous interposition of Heaven.

Unfortunate Fate of the Empress Valeria and Her Mother

The vanquished emperor left behind him two children, a boy of about eight, and a girl of about seven years old. Their inoffensive age might have excited compassion; but the compassion of Licinius was a very feeble resource, nor did it restrain him from extinguishing the name and memory of his adversary. The death of Severianus will admit of less excuse, as it was dictated neither by revenge nor by policy. The conqueror had never received any injury from the father of that unhappy youth, and the short and obscure reign of Severus in a distant part of the empire was already forgotten. But the execution of Candidianus was an act of the blackest cruelty and ingratitude. He was the natural son of Galerius, the friend and benefactor of Licinius. The prudent father had judged him too young to sustain the weight of a diadem; but he hoped that, under the protection of princes who were indebted to his favor for the Imperial purple, Candidianus might pass a secure and honorable life. He was now advancing toward the 20th year of his age, and the royalty of his birth, though unsupported either by merit or ambition, was sufficient to exasperate the jealous mind of Licinius.⁷⁴ To these innocent and illustrious victims of his tyranny we must add the wife and daughter of the emperor Diocletian. When that prince conferred on Galerius the title of Caesar, he had given him in marriage his daughter Valeria, whose melancholy adventures might furnish a very singular subject for tragedy. She had fulfilled and even surpassed the duties of a wife. As she had not any children herself, she condescended to adopt the illegitimate son of her husband, and invariably displayed toward the unhappy Candidianus the tenderness and anxiety of a real mother. After the death of Galerius, her ample possessions provoked the avarice, and her personal attractions excited the desires, of his successor Maximin. He had a wife still alive, but divorce was permitted by the Roman law, and the fierce passions of the tyrant demanded an immediate gratification. The answer of Valeria was such as became the daughter and widow of emperors; but it was tempered by the prudence which her defenseless condition compelled her to observe. She represented to the persons whom Maximin had employed on this occasion, “that even if honor could permit a woman of her character and dignity to entertain a thought of second nuptials, decency at least must forbid her to listen to his addresses at a time when the ashes of her husband and his benefactor were still warm; and while the sorrows of her mind were still expressed by her mourning garments. She ventured to declare that she could place very little confidence in the professions of a man whose cruel inconstancy was capable of repudiating a faithful and affectionate wife.” (Lactantius, c. 39) On this repulse the love of Maximin was converted into fury, and as witnesses and judges were always at his disposal, it was easy for him to cover his fury with an appearance of legal proceedings, and to assault the reputation as well as the happiness of Valeria. Her estates were confiscated, her eunuchs and domestics devoted to the most inhuman tortures, and several innocent and respectable matrons, who were honored with her friendship, suffered death on a false accusation of adultery. The empress herself, together with her mother Prisca, was condemned to exile; and as they were ignominiously hurried from place to place before they were confined to a sequestered village in the deserts of Syria, they exposed their shame and distress to the provinces of the East, which, during 30 years, had respected their august dignity. Diocletian made several ineffectual efforts to alleviate the misfortunes of his daughter; and, as the last return that he expected for the Imperial purple which he had conferred upon Maximin, he entreated that Valeria might be permitted to share his retirement of Salona, and to close the eyes

⁷⁴ Lactantius, c. 50. Aurelius Victor touches on the different conduct of Licinius and Constantine in the use of victory.

of her afflicted father.⁷⁵ He entreated, but, as he could no longer threaten, his prayers were received with coldness and disdain; and Maximin's pride was gratified in treating Diocletian as a suppliant and his daughter as a criminal. Maximin's death seemed to assure the empresses of a favorable alteration in their fortune. The public disorders relaxed the vigilance of their guard, and they easily found means to escape from the place of their exile, and to repair, though with some precaution, and in disguise, to the court of Licinius. His behavior, in the first days of his reign, and the honorable reception which he gave to young Candidianus, inspired Valeria with a secret satisfaction, both on her own account, and on that of her adopted son. But these grateful prospects were soon succeeded by horror and astonishment, and the bloody executions which stained the palace of Nicomedia sufficiently convinced her that the throne of Maximin was filled by a tyrant more inhuman than himself. Valeria consulted her safety by a hasty flight, and, still accompanied by her mother Prisca, they wandered more than 15 months⁷⁶ through the provinces, concealed in the disguise of plebeian habits. They were at length discovered at Thessalonica; and as the sentence of their death was already pronounced, they were immediately beheaded and their bodies thrown into the sea. The people gazed on the melancholy spectacle; but their grief and indignation were suppressed by the terrors of a military guard. Such was the unworthy fate of the wife and daughter of Diocletian. We lament their misfortunes, we cannot discover their crimes, and whatever idea we may justly entertain of the cruelty of Licinius, it remains a matter of surprise that he was not contented with some more secret and decent method of revenge.

First Civil War Between Constantine and Licinius

The Roman world was now (AD 314) divided between Constantine and Licinius, the former of whom was master of the West, and the latter of the East. It might perhaps have been expected that the conquerors, fatigued with civil war, and connected by a private as well as public alliance, would have renounced, or at least would have suspended, any further designs of ambition. And yet a year had scarcely elapsed after the death of Maximin before the victorious emperors turned their arms against each other. The genius, success, and aspiring temper of Constantine may seem to mark him out as the aggressor; but the treacherous character of Licinius justifies the most unfavorable suspicions, and by the faint light which history reflects on this transaction,⁷⁷ we may discover a conspiracy fomented by his arts against the authority of his colleague. Constantine had lately given his sister Anastasia in marriage to Bassianus, a man of a considerable family and fortune, and had elevated his new kinsman to the rank of Caesar. According to the system of government instituted by Diocletian, Italy, and perhaps Africa, were designed for his department in the empire. But the performance of the promised favor was either attended with so much delay, or accompanied with so many unequal conditions, that the fidelity of Bassianus was alienated rather than secured by the honorable distinction which he had obtained. His nomination had been ratified by the consent of Licinius, and that artful prince, by the means of his emissaries, soon contrived to enter into a secret and dangerous correspondence with the new Caesar, to irritate his discontents, and to urge him to the rash enterprise of extorting by violence

⁷⁵ Diocletian at last sent (someone) to intercede in favor of his daughter (Lactantius, c. 41). We are not sufficiently acquainted with the history of these times to point out the person who was employed.

⁷⁶ There is some doubt whether we should compute the 15 months from the moment of her exile, or from that of her escape. The expression of *pervagata* seems to denote the latter; but in that case we must suppose that the treatise of Lactantius was written after the first civil war between Licinius and Constantine. Cuper, p. 254.

⁷⁷ The curious reader, who consults the Valesian Fragment, p. 713, will perhaps accuse me of giving a bold and licentious paraphrase; but if he considers it with attention, he will acknowledge that my interpretation is probable and consistent.

what he might in vain solicit from the justice of Constantine. But the vigilant emperor discovered the conspiracy before it was ripe for execution; and, after solemnly renouncing the alliance of Bassianus, despoiled him of the purple, and inflicted the deserved punishment on his treason and ingratitude. The haughty refusal of Licinius, when he was required to deliver up the criminals, who had taken refuge in his dominions, confirmed the suspicions already entertained of his treachery; and the indignities offered at Aemona, on the frontiers of Italy, to the statues or Constantine, became the signal of discord between the two princes.⁷⁸

AD 314: Battle of Cibalis

The first battle was fought (AD 315, Oct. 8) near Cibalis, a city of Pannonia, situated on the river Save, about 50 miles above Sirmium.⁷⁹ From the inconsiderable forces which in this important contest two such powerful monarchs brought into the field, it may be inferred that the one was suddenly provoked, and that the other was unexpectedly surprised. The emperor of the West had only 20,000, and the sovereign of the East no more than 35,000 men. The inferiority of number was, however, compensated by the advantage of the ground. Constantine had taken post in a defile about half a mile in breadth, between a steep hill and a deep morass, and in that situation he steadily expected and repulsed the first attack of the enemy. He pursued his success and advanced into the plain. But the veteran legions of Illyricum rallied under the standard of a leader who had been trained to arms in the school of Probus and Diocletian. The missile weapons on both sides were soon exhausted; the two armies, with equal valor, rushed to a closer engagement of swords and spears, and the doubtful contest had already lasted from the dawn of the day to a late hour of the evening, when the right wing, which Constantine led in person, made a vigorous and decisive charge. The judicious retreat of Licinius saved the remainder of his troops from a total defeat; but when he computed his loss, which amounted to more than 20,000 men, he thought it unsafe to pass the night in the presence of an active and victorious enemy. Abandoning his camp and magazines, he marched away with secrecy and diligence at the head of the greater part of his cavalry, and was soon removed beyond the danger of a pursuit. His diligence preserved his wife, his son, and his treasures, which he had deposited at Sirmium. Licinius passed through that city, and breaking down the bridge on the Save, hastened to collect a new army in Dacia and Thrace. In his flight he bestowed the precarious title of Caesar on Valens, his general of the Illyrian frontier.⁸⁰

Battle of Mardia

The plain of Mardia in Thrace was the theatre of a second battle no less obstinate and bloody than the former. The troops on both sides displayed the same valor and discipline; and the victory was once more decided by the superior abilities of Constantine, who directed a body of 5,000 men to gain an advantageous height, from whence, during the heat of the action, they

⁷⁸ The situation of Aemona, or, as it is now called, Laybach, in Carniola (d'Anville Geographic Ancienne, i. p. 187), may suggest a conjecture. As it lay to the northeast of the Julian Alps, that important territory became a natural object of dispute between the sovereigns of Italy and of Illyricum.

⁷⁹ Cibalis or Cibalae (whose name is still preserved in the obscure ruins of Swilei) was situated about 50 miles from Sirmium, the capital of Illyricum, and about 100 from Taurunum, or Belgrade, and the conflux of the Danube and the Save. The Roman garrisons and cities on those rivers are finely illustrated by M. d'Anville, a memoir inserted in l'Acad. des Inscript. xxviii.

⁸⁰ Zosimus (1. ii. pp. 90, 91) gives a very particular account of this battle; but the descriptions of Zosimus are rhetorical rather than military.

attacked the rear of the enemy and made a very considerable slaughter. The troops of Licinius, however, presenting a double front, still maintained their ground till the approach of night put an end to the combat and secured their retreat toward the mountains of Macedonia.⁸¹ The loss of two battles, and of his bravest veterans, reduced the fierce spirit of Licinius to sue for peace. His ambassador Mistrrianus was admitted to the audience of Constantine; he expatiated on the common topics of moderation and humanity, which are so familiar to the eloquence of the vanquished; represented, in the most insinuating language, that the event of the war was still doubtful, while its inevitable calamities were alike pernicious to both the contending parties; and declared that he was authorized to propose a lasting and honorable peace in the name of the two emperors his masters. Constantine received the mention of Valens with indignation and contempt. "It was not for such a purpose," he sternly replied, "that we have advanced from the shores of the western ocean in an uninterrupted course of combats and victories, that, after rejecting an ungrateful kinsman, we should accept for our colleague a contemptible slave. The abdication of Valens is the first article of the treaty."⁸² It was necessary to accept this humiliating condition, and the unhappy Valens, after a reign of a few days, was deprived of the purple and of his life. As soon as this obstacle was removed, the tranquillity of the Roman world was easily restored. The successive defeats of Licinius had ruined his forces, but they had displayed his courage and abilities. His situation was almost desperate, but the efforts of despair are sometimes formidable; and the good sense of Constantine preferred a great and certain advantage to a third trial of the chance of arms. He consented to leave his rival, or, as he again styled Licinius, his friend and brother, in the possession of Thrace, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt; but the provinces of Pannonia, Dalmatia, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece, were yielded to the western empire, and the dominions of Constantine now extended from the confines of Caledonia to the extremity of Peloponnesus. It was stipulated by the same treaty that three royal youths, the sons of the emperors, should be called to the hopes of the succession. Crispus and the young Constantine were soon afterward declared Caesars in the West, while the younger Licinius was invested with the same dignity in the East. In this double proportion of honors, the conqueror asserted the superiority of his arms and power.⁸³

AD 315—323: General Peace and Laws of Constantine

The reconciliation of Constantine and Licinius, though it was embittered by resentment and jealousy, by the remembrance of recent injuries, and by the apprehension of future dangers, maintained, however, more than 8 years (AD 315—323), the tranquillity of the Roman world. As a very regular series of the Imperial laws commences about this period, it would not be difficult to transcribe the civil regulations which employed Constantine's leisure. But the most important of his institutions are intimately connected with the new system of policy and religion, which

⁸¹ Zosimus, 1. ii. pp. 92, 93. Anonym. Valesian. p. 713. The Epitomes furnish some circumstances; but they frequently confound the two wars between Licinius and Constantine.

⁸² Petrus Patricius in Excerpt. Legat. p. 27. If it should be thought that *gambros* signifies more properly a son-in-law, we might conjecture that Constantine, assuming the name as well as the duties of a father, had adopted his younger brothers and sisters, the children of Theodora. But in the best authors *gambros* sometimes signifies a husband, sometimes a father-in-law, and sometimes & kinsman in general. Spanheim Observat. ad Julian. Orat. i. p. 72.

⁸³ Zosimus. 1. ii. p. 93. Anonym. Valesian. p. 713. Eutropius, x. 5. Aurelius Victor. Euseb. in Chron. Sozomen, 1. 1. c. 2. Four of these writers affirm that the promotion of the Caesars was an article of the treaty. It is, however, certain that the younger Constantine and Licinius were not yet born; and it is highly probable that the promotion was made March 1, AD 311. The treaty had probably stipulated that two Caesars might be created by the western, and one only by the eastern emperor; but each of them reserved to himself the choice of the persons.

was not perfectly established till the last and peaceful years of his reign. There are many of his laws which, as far as they concern the rights and property of individuals, and the practice of the bar, are more properly referred to the private than to the public jurisprudence of the empire; and he published many edicts of so local and temporary a nature that they would ill deserve the notice of a general history. Two laws, however, may be selected from the crowd; the one for its importance, the other for its singularity; the former for its remarkable benevolence, the latter for its excessive severity.

1. The horrid practice, so familiar to the ancients, of exposing or murdering their new-born infants, had become every day more frequent in the provinces, and especially in Italy. It was the effect of distress; and the distress was principally occasioned by the intolerable burden of taxes, and by the vexatious as well as cruel prosecutions of the officers of the revenue against their insolvent debtors. The less opulent or less industrious part of mankind, instead of rejoicing in an increase of family, deemed it an act of paternal tenderness to release their children from the impending miseries of a life which they themselves were unable to support. The humanity of Constantine, moved, perhaps, by some recent and extraordinary instances of despair, engaged him to address an edict to all the cities of Italy, and afterward of Africa, directing immediate and sufficient relief to be given to those parents who should produce, before the magistrates, the children whom their own poverty would not allow them to educate. But the promise was too liberal, and the provision too vague, to effect any general or permanent benefit.⁸⁴ The law, though it may merit some praise, served rather to display than to alleviate the public distress. It still remains an authentic monument to contradict and confound those venal orators who were too well satisfied with their own situation to discover either vice or misery under the government of a generous sovereign.⁸⁵
2. Constantine's laws against rape were dictated with very little indulgence; since the description of that crime was applied not only to the brutal violence which compelled, but even to seduction which might persuade an unmarried woman, under the age of 25, to leave the house of her parents. "The ravisher was punished with death; and as if death was inadequate to the enormity of his guilt, he was either burned alive, or torn in pieces by wild beasts in the amphitheater. The virgin's declaration that she had been carried away with her own consent, instead of saving her lover, exposed her to share his fate. The duty of a public prosecution was entrusted to the parents of the unfortunate maid; and if prevailed on to repair by marriage the honor of their family, they were themselves punished by exile and confiscation. The slaves, whether male or female, who were convicted of having been accessory, were burned alive, or put to death by pouring down their throats a quantity of melted lead. As the crime was of a public kind, the accusation was permitted even to strangers. The commencement of the action was not limited to any term of years, and the consequences of the sentence were extended to the innocent offspring of such an irregular union."⁸⁶ But whenever the offence inspires less horror than the punishment, the rigor of penal law is obliged to give way to the common feelings of mankind. The most odious parts of this edict were softened or repealed in the subsequent

⁸⁴ Codex Theodosian, l. xi. tit. 27, iv. p. 188, with Godofroy's observations, l. v. tin 7—8.

⁸⁵ Latin text omitted.

⁸⁶ Edict of Constantine, addressed to the Roman people, in the Theodosian Code, l. ix. tit. 24. tom. iii. p. 189.

reigns;⁸⁷ and even Constantine himself very frequently alleviated, by partial acts of mercy, the stern temper of his general institutions. Such, indeed, was the singular humor of that emperor, who showed himself as indulgent, and even remiss, in the execution of his laws, as he was severe, and even cruel, in the enacting of them. It is scarcely possible to observe a more decisive symptom of weakness, either in the character of the prince or in the constitution of the government.⁸⁸

AD 322: The Gothic War

The civil administration was sometimes interrupted by the military defense of the empire. Crispus (AD 322), a youth of the most amiable character, who had received with the title of Caesar the command of the Rhine, distinguished his conduct, as well as valor, in several victories over the Franks and Alemanni; and taught the barbarians of that frontier to dread the eldest son of Constantine, and the grandson of Constantius.⁸⁹ The emperor himself had assumed the more difficult and important province of the Danube. The Goths, who in the time of Claudius and Aurelian had felt the weight of the Roman arms, respected the power of the empire, even in the midst of its intestine divisions. But the strength of that warlike nation was now restored by a peace of almost 50 years; a new generation had arisen, who no longer remembered the misfortunes of ancient days; the Sarmatians of the Lake Moeotis followed the Gothic standard either as subjects or as allies, and their united force was poured upon the countries of Illyricum. Campona, Margus, and Bononia, appear to have been the scenes of several memorable sieges and battles;⁹⁰ and though Constantine encountered a very obstinate resistance, he prevailed at length in the contest, and the Goths were compelled to purchase an ignominious retreat, by restoring the booty and prisoners which they had taken. Nor was this advantage sufficient to satisfy the indignation of the emperor. He resolved to chastise as well as to repulse the insolent barbarians who had dared to invade the territories of Rome. At the head of his legions he passed the Danube, after repairing the bridge which had been constructed by Trajan, penetrated into the strongest recesses of Dacia,⁹¹ and when he had inflicted a severe revenge, condescended to give peace to the suppliant Goths, on condition that, as often as they were required, they should supply his armies with a body of 40,000 soldiers.⁹² Exploits like these were no doubt honorable to Constantine, and beneficial to the state; but it may surely be questioned whether they can justify the exaggerated assertion of Eusebius, that ALL SCYTHIA, as far as the extremity of the North, divided as it was into so many names and nations of the most various and savage manners, had been added by his victorious arms to the Roman empire.⁹³

⁸⁷ Latin text omitted.

⁸⁸ Eusebius (in *Vita Constant.* 1. iii. c. 1) chooses to affirm that, in the reign of his hero, the sword of justice hung idle in the hands of the magistrates. Eusebius himself (1. iv. c. 29, 54) and the Theodosian Code will inform us that this excessive lenity was not, owing to the want either of atrocious criminals or of penal laws.

⁸⁹ Nazarius in *Panegy.* Vet. x. The victory of Crispus over the Alemanni is expressed on some medals.

⁹⁰ Zosimus, i. ii. pp. 93, 94; though the narrative of that historian is neither clear nor consistent. The *Panegyric of Optatianus* (c. 23) mentions the alliance of the Sarmatians with the Carpi and Getas, and points out the several fields of battle. It is supposed that the Sarmatian games, celebrated in the month of November, derived their origin from the success of this war.

⁹¹ In the *Caesars of Julian* (p. 329. *Commentaire de Spanheim*, p. 252) Constantine boasts that he had recovered the province (Dacia) which Trajan had subdued. But it is insinuated by Silenus that the conquests of Constantine were like the gardens of Adonis, which fade and wither almost the moment they appear.

⁹² *Jornandes de Rebus Geticis*, c. 21. I know not whether we may entirely depend on his authority. Such an alliance has a very recent air, and scarcely is suited to the maxims of the beginning of the 4th Century.

⁹³ Eusebius in *Vit. Constantin.* 1. 1. c. 8. This passage, however, is taken from a general declamation on the

AD 323: The Second Civil War;

In this exalted state of glory it was impossible that Constantine should any longer endure a partner in the empire. Confiding in the superiority of his genius and military power, he determined (AD 323), without any previous injury, to exert them for the destruction of Licinius, whose advanced age and unpopular vices seemed to offer a very easy conquest.⁹⁴ But the old emperor, awakened by the approaching danger, deceived the expectations of his friends as well as of his enemies. Calling forth that spirit and those abilities by which he had deserved the friendship of Galerius and the Imperial purple, he prepared himself for the contest, collected the forces of the East, and soon filled the plains of Adrianople with his troops, and the Straits of the Hellespont with his fleet. The army consisted of 150,000 foot and 15,000 horse; and as the cavalry was drawn, for the most part, from Phrygia and Cappadocia, we may conceive a more favorable opinion of the beauty of the horses than of the courage and dexterity of their riders. The fleet was composed of 350 galleys of three ranks of oars. A hundred and thirty of these were furnished by Egypt and the adjacent coast of Africa. A hundred and ten sailed from the port of Phoenicia and the Isle of Cyprus; and the maritime countries of Bithynia, Ionia, and Caria, were likewise obliged to provide 110 galleys. The troops of Constantine were ordered to rendezvous at Thessalonica; they amounted to above 120,000 horse and foot. (Zosimus, 1. ii. pp. 94, 95) Their emperor was satisfied with their martial appearance, and his army contained more soldiers, though fewer men, than that of his eastern competitor. Constantine's legions were levied in the warlike provinces of Europe; action had confirmed their discipline, victory had elevated their hopes, and there were among them a great number of veterans, who, after 17 glorious campaigns under the same leader, prepared themselves to deserve an honorable defeat by a last effort of their valor.⁹⁵ But the naval preparations of Constantine were in every respect much inferior to those of Licinius. The maritime cities of Greece sent their respective quotas of men and ships to the celebrated harbor of Pirteus, and their united forces consisted of no more than 200 small vessels: a very feeble armament, if it is compared with those formidable fleets which were equipped and maintained by the republic of Athens during the Peloponnesian war.⁹⁶ Since Italy was no longer the seat of government, the naval establishments of Misenum and Ravenna had been gradually neglected; and as the shipping and mariners of the empire were supported by commerce rather than by war, it was natural that they should the most abound in the industrious provinces of Egypt and Asia. It is only surprising that the eastern emperor, who possessed so great a superiority at sea, should have neglected the opportunity of carrying an offensive war into the center of his rival's dominions.

Battle of Hadrianople

Instead of embracing such an active resolution, which might have changed the whole face of the war, the prudent Licinius expected the approach of his rival in a camp near Adrianople,

greatness of Constantine, and not from any particular account of the Gothic war.

⁹⁴ Latin text omitted.

⁹⁵ Constantine was very attentive to the privileges and comforts of his fellow-veterans (Conveterani), as he now began to style them. Theodosian Code, I vii. tit. 20, ii. pp. 419, 429.

⁹⁶ While the Athenians maintained the empire of the sea, their fleet consisted of three, and afterward of four hundred galleys of three ranks of oars, all completely equipped and ready for immediate service. The arsenal in the port of Pirinus had cost the republic 1,000 talents, about £216,000. Thucydides de Bel. Peloponu. 1. ii. c. 13, and Meursius de Fortuna Attica, c. 19.

which he had fortified with an anxious care that betrayed his apprehension of the event. Constantine directed his march from Thessalonica toward that part of Thrace, till he (AD 323, July 3) found himself stopped by the broad and rapid stream of the Hebrus, and discovered the numerous army of Licinius, which filled the steep ascent of the hill, from the river to the city of Adrianople. Many days were spent in doubtful and distant skirmishes; but at length the obstacles of the passage and of the attack were removed by the intrepid conduct of Constantine. In this place we might relate a wonderful exploit of Constantine, which, though it can scarcely be paralleled either in poetry or romance, is celebrated, not by a venal orator devoted to his fortune, but by a historian, the partial enemy of his fame. We are assured that the valiant emperor threw himself into the river Hebrus, accompanied only by 12 horsemen, and that by the effort or terror of his invincible arm, he broke, slaughtered, and put to flight a host of 150,000 men. The credulity of Zosimus prevailed so strongly over his passion, that among the events of the memorable battle of Adrianople he seems to have selected and embellished, not the most important, but the most marvelous. The valor and danger of Constantine are attested by a slight wound which he received in the thigh, but it may be discovered even from an imperfect narration, and perhaps a corrupted text, that the victory was obtained no less by the conduct of the general than by the courage of the hero; that a body of 5,000 archers marched round to occupy a thick wood in the rear of the enemy, whose attention was diverted by the construction of a bridge, and that Licinius, perplexed by so many artful evolutions, was reluctantly drawn from his advantageous post to combat on equal ground in the plain. The contest was no longer equal. His confused multitude of new levies was easily vanquished by the experienced veterans of the West. Thirty-four thousand men are reported to have been slain. The fortified camp of Licinius was taken by assault the evening of the battle; the greater part of the fugitives, who had retired to the mountains, surrendered themselves the next day to the discretion of the conqueror; and his rival, who could no longer keep the field, confined himself within the walls of Byzantium.⁹⁷

Siege of Byzantium; Naval Victory of Crispus

The siege of Byzantium, which was immediately undertaken by Constantine, was attended with great labor and uncertainty. In the late civil wars, the fortifications of that place, so justly considered as the key of Europe and Asia, had been repaired and strengthened; and as long as Licinius remained master of the sea, the garrison was much less exposed to the danger of famine than the army of the besiegers. The naval commanders of Constantine were summoned to his camp, and received his positive orders to force the passage of the Hellespont, as the fleet of Licinius, instead of seeking and destroying their feeble enemy, continued inactive in those narrow straits where its superiority of numbers was of little use or advantage. Crispus, the emperor's eldest son, was entrusted with the execution of this daring enterprise, which he performed with so much courage and success that he deserved the esteem, and most probably excited the jealousy, of his father. The engagement lasted two days, and in the evening of the first the contending fleets, after a considerable and mutual loss, retired into their respective harbors of Europe and Asia. The second day about noon a strong south wind⁹⁸ sprang up, which carried the vessels of Crispus against the enemy, and as the casual advantage was improved by

⁹⁷ Latin text omitted.

⁹⁸ Zosimus, l. ii. pp. 97, 98. The current always sets out of the Hellespont; and when it is assisted by a north wind, no vessel can attempt the passage. A south wind renders the force of the current almost imperceptible. Tournefort's Voyage au Levant, Let. xi.

his skilful intrepidity, he soon obtained a complete victory. A hundred and thirty vessels were destroyed, 5,000 men were slain, and Amandus, the admiral of the Asiatic fleet, escaped with the utmost difficulty to the shores of Chalcedon. As soon as the Hellespont was open, a plentiful convoy of provisions flowed into the camp of Constantine, who had already advanced the operations of the siege. He constructed artificial mounds of earth of an equal height with the ramparts of Byzantium. The lofty towers which were erected on that foundation galled the besieged with large stones and darts from the military engines, and the battering-rams had shaken the walls in several places. If Licinius persisted much longer in the defense, he exposed himself to be involved in the ruin of the place. Before he was surrounded he prudently removed his person and treasures to Chalcedon in Asia; and as he was always desirous of associating companions to the hopes and dangers of his fortune, he now bestowed the title of Caesar on Martinianus, who exercised one of the most important offices of the empire.⁹⁹

Battle of Chrysopolis

Such were still the resources, and such the abilities, of Licinius, that, after so many successive defeats, he collected in Bithynia a new army of 50 or 60,000 men, while Constantine's activity was employed in the siege of Byzantium. The vigilant emperor did not however neglect the last struggles of his antagonist. A considerable part of his victorious army was transported over the Bosphorus in small vessels, and the decisive engagement was fought soon after their landing on the heights of Chrysopolis, or, as it is now called, Scutari. The troops of Licinius, though they were lately raised, ill armed, and worse disciplined, made head against their conquerors with fruitless but desperate valor, till a total defeat, and the slaughter of 25,000 men, irretrievably determined the fate of their leader.¹⁰⁰ He retired to Nicomedia, rather with the view of gaining some time for negotiation, than with the hope of any effectual defense. Constantia, his wife and the sister of Constantine, interceded with her brother in favor of her husband, and obtained, from his policy rather than from his compassion, a solemn promise, confirmed by an oath, that after the sacrifice of Martinianus, and the resignation of the purple, Licinius himself should be permitted to pass the remainder of his life in peace and affluence. The behavior of Constantia, and her relation to the contending parties, naturally recalls the remembrance of that virtuous matron who was the sister of Augustus and the wife of Antony. But the temper of mankind was altered, and it was no longer esteemed infamous for a Roman to survive his honor and independence.

Submission and Death of Licinius

Licinius solicited and accepted the pardon of his offences, laid himself and his purple at the feet of his lord and master, was raised from the ground with insulting pity, was admitted the same day to the Imperial banquet, and soon afterward was sent away to Thessalonica, which had been chosen for the place of his confinement.¹⁰¹ His confinement was soon terminated by death, and it is doubtful whether a tumult of the soldiers or a decree of the senate was suggested as a motive for his execution. According to the rules of tyranny, he was accused of forming a

⁹⁹ Aurelius Victor. Zosimus, 1. ii. p. 98. According to the latter, Martinianus was Magister Officiorum (he uses the Latin title in Greek). Some medals seem to intimate that during his short reign he received the title of Augustus.

¹⁰⁰ Eusebius (in Vita Constantin. 1. ii. c. 16, 17) ascribes this decisive victory to the pious prayers of the emperor. The Valesian fragment (p. 714) mentions a body of Gothic auxiliaries, under their chief Aliquaca, who adhered to the party of Licinius.

¹⁰¹ Zosimus, 1. ii. p. 102. Victor Junior in epitome. Anonym. Valesian. p. 714.

conspiracy and of holding a treasonable correspondence with the barbarians; but as he was never convicted, either by his own conduct or by any legal evidence, we may perhaps be allowed, from his weakness, to presume his innocence.¹⁰² The memory of Licinius was branded with infamy, his statues were thrown down, and, by a hasty edict of such mischievous tendency that it was almost immediately corrected, all his laws, and all the judicial proceedings of his reign, were at once abolished.¹⁰³ By this victory of Constantine (AD 324), the Roman world was again united under the authority of one emperor, 37 years after Diocletian had divided his power and provinces with his associate Maximian.

AD 324: Reunion of the Empire

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

[Back](#)

[Next](#)

¹⁰² Eutropius, x. 6, and his evidence is confirmed by Jerome (in Chronic.) as well as by Zosimus, l ii. p. 102. The Valesian writer is the only one who mentions the soldiers, and it is Zonaras alone who calls in the assistance of the senate. Eusebius prudently slides over this delicate transaction. But Sozomen, a century afterward, ventures to assert the treasonable practices of Licinius.

¹⁰³ Theodosian Code, l. 15, tit. 15, v. pp. 404, 405. These edicts of Constantine betray a degree of passion and precipitancy very unbecoming of the character of a lawgiver.