

viduals of rank were put to death on the evidence of informers, and on the most vague and general suspicions. The cruelty of the emperor became excessive. Rome cried out against him as a second Nero, and the populace openly insulted him.

Whether it was the disgust he conceived at this decided change in the minds of the Romans, or solely an ambitious and unsettled disposition which led to his design of altering the seat of empire, it is not easy to determine. He fixed his eyes, however, on Byzantium, to which he gave the name of Constantinople. He erected there the most superb structures, and in order to people his new city, he made a law by which no Asiatic should have the right of disposing of his estate by testament, unless he possessed a dwelling-house in Constantinople. Those, again, who resided there were gratified by a variety of alluring privileges; and by means of these he drew the poorer inhabitants from Rome, whilst the richer voluntarily followed the prince and his court. The grandes brought with them their slaves, and Rome in a few years became almost depopulated. Italy was also greatly exhausted of her inhabitants, and Constantinople swelled at once to the most overgrown dimensions. When the empire was thus divided, all riches naturally centered in the new capital. At this period, the German mines were unknown, those of Italy and Gaul were inconsiderable, as were also those of Spain. Italy was now a waste of desolated gardens. It had no pecuniary supplies from commerce, and being still subjected to the same taxes as when it was the seat of empire, its miserable situation may be easily conceived.

After thus weakening or rather annihilating the ancient capital of the empire, Constantine drew off from the frontiers the legions which were stationed on the banks of the large rivers, and distributed them into the provinces. This measure had two most pernicious effects. It left the frontiers to the mercy of the barbarous nations, and enervated the troops by the effeminate pleasures of the great cities. Luxury, which, in all its different shapes, pervaded even the extremities of the empire, reigned absolute in the centre. Constantine himself in every thing affected the Asiatic splendor and ceremonial. He wore the diadem, and assumed a number of high-sounding, empty titles; his amusements were at once costly and effeminate; his festivals and public spectacles most profusely luxurious. Towards the conclusion of his reign, the Goths, making another invasion, were repulsed and defeated, but by imprudently raising many of them to offices of dignity, he gave to these barbarians a kind of footing in the Roman empire.

Sapor II., king of Persia, having made an inroad upon Mesopotamia, Constantine marched against him. He repulsed the Persian troops, but after the victory fell sick at Nicomedia, and there died at the age of sixty-three, and in the thirtieth year of his reign. His character cannot easily be drawn with impartiality. Talents and ability in no common degree he certainly possessed

but as to the other points of his character, the professed pictures of historians are so extremely contradictory, that neither Pagan nor Christian writers deserve to be in any degree relied on. By the one class he is held forth as a shining example of universal virtue; by the other he is represented as a Proteus in every variety of vice. "We may," says the Abbé Fleury, "form an impartial judgment of the character of this emperor, by believing all the faults ascribed to him by the Bishop Eusebius, and all the good spoken of him by Zosimus."\*

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### CHAPTER III.

Change in the System of Policy and Government introduced by Constantine—Pretorian Prefects—Proconsuls—Counts and Dukes—Taxes—Free Gifts—Seat of Empire translated to Constantinople—Division of the Empire—Julian—His artful Hostility to Christianity—Jovian—Valentinian—Irruptions of the Goths—Of the Huns—Valens—Gratian—Theodosius—Valentinian the Second.

THERE were circumstances which rendered the reign of Constantine a remarkable epoch in the history of the Roman empire; and, as it is of consequence that we should become acquainted with that new system of policy and government which at this time was introduced, and which was so materially different from that constitution with which we have hitherto been acquainted, a few observations upon this subject may neither be impertinent nor uninteresting; more especially as they are connected with those internal causes which were now silently undermining the Roman power.

The distinctions of personal merit, so conspicuous under the republican form of government, were gradually weakening from the time that the imperial dignity arose, and now were almost totally obliterated. In their room was substituted a rigid subordination of rank and office, which went through all the departments of the state. Every rank was fixed, its dignity was displayed in a variety of trifling ceremonies; and, as Mr. Gibbon has remarked, in his favorite metaphoric style, "At this time the system of the Roman government might, by a philosophic observer, have been mistaken for a splendid theatre filled with players of every

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\* Hist. Eccl., tome iii. p. 233.

character and degree, who repeated the language and imitated the manners of the emperor, their original model."

The epithet *Illustrious*, which belonged only to the highest ranks of the state, was conferred upon four distinct classes of officers and magistrates: 1. The Consuls and Patricians; 2. The Pretorian Prefects of Rome and Constantinople; 3. The Masters General of the Cavalry and Infantry; and 4. The Seven Ministers of the Palace who exercised their sacred functions about the person of the emperor.

The ancient consuls were chosen by the suffrages of the people, and, during the government of the first emperors, by the real or apparent suffrage of the senate; but from the reign of Diocletian, they were created by the sole authority of the emperor. A magnificent festival was held at their inauguration; and their names and portraits, on tables of ivory, were dispersed to all the provinces and cities of the empire; but they had not a shadow of power—they no longer presided in the councils of the state, nor executed the resolutions of peace or war; and their names served for nothing more than to give the legal date of the year.

The ancient patrician families had been long since extinguished, and every dignity and distinction which arose from birth had been gradually obliterated, from the time that the offices of state had become common to the plebeians. The latter emperors preserved indeed the title of patricians, but it was now a personal and not an hereditary distinction. It was bestowed generally on their favorites as a title of honor, or upon ministers and magistrates who had grown old in office.

The authority of the pretorian prefects was very different from such nominal and inefficient dignities. From the time that the pretorian bands were suppressed by Constantine, these haughty officers, who had been little less than the masters of the empire, were now reduced to the station of useful and obedient ministers. They had lost all military command; but they became the civil magistrates of the provinces. The empire was divided under four governors. The prefect of the East had a jurisdiction from the Nile to the banks of the river Phasis in Colchis, and from the mountains of Thrace to the frontiers of Persia. The prefect of Illyrium, or Illyria, governed the provinces of Pannonia, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece. The prefect of Italy superintended not only that country, but Rhætia, as far as the banks of the Danube, the Mediterranean islands, and the opposite coast of Africa. The prefect of the Gauls governed these provinces, and likewise Spain and Britain. These officers had the supreme administration of justice and of the finances. They watched over the conduct of the provincial magistrates, removed the negligent, and inflicted punishments on the guilty. An appeal was competent to them from all the inferior jurisdictions, and Constantine disallowed any appeal from their sentences to himself.

The cities of Rome and Constantinople were exempted from the authority of the pretorian prefects. They had each their own prefect, who was the supreme magistrate of the city. They were presidents of the city, and all municipal authority was derived from them alone. They had the superintendence of the police, the care of the port, the aqueducts, the common sewers, the distribution of the public allowance of corn and provision. A perfect equality was established between these dignities and the four pretorian prefects.

Such were the magistrates who formed the first class in the state, which was termed *Illustres*. Inferior to these, were those magistrates who were termed *Spectabiles*. Such were the proconsuls of Asia, Achaia, and Africa, and the military Counts and Dukes (*Comites* and *Duces*) or generals of the Imperial armies.

The third class of the magistrates, inferior to the two former, had the denomination of *Clarissimi*. This class consisted of the governors of the provinces, who were entrusted, under the authority of the prefects or their deputies, with the administration of justice and the management of the finances in their respective districts.

The supreme jurisdiction exercised by the pretorian prefects over the armies of the empire was afterwards transferred to eight Masters-General of the cavalry and infantry. Under their orders, thirty-five military commanders were stationed in the provinces. These were distinguished by the titles of Counts and Dukes, and they received each, besides their pay, an allowance sufficient to maintain 190 servants, and 158 horses. They had no concern in the administration of justice or of the revenue; but they exercised a command over the troops independent of the authority of the magistrates. This necessarily created a divided interest, which relaxed the vigor of the state. The civil and the military magistrates could have no good understanding, and a source of dissension was thus established, which had the most pernicious consequences.

Of the seven Ministers of the Palace, who were likewise entitled to the rank of *Illustrious*, the first was the *Præpositus*, or Prefect of the Bedchamber, an eunuch whose duty was to perform all the menial services about the emperor; but whose office was at the same time esteemed so honorable as to rank before the proconsuls of Greece or Asia—a strong mark of the corruption of manners. The second of the ministers entitled to the same rank was the Master of the Offices, who had the principal administration of public affairs—a sort of Secretary of State, having subordinate to him a great many other secretaries, who had each their different department. The third was the *Quæstor*. In some respects his office resembled that of a modern *chancellor*: he was the mouth of the emperor in pronouncing his edicts, and he prepared the form and style of the imperial laws. The fourth was

the Count of the *Sacred Largesses*, or the treasurer-general of the revenue, under whom were twenty-nine provincial receivers. His jurisdiction extended over the mines, over the mint, and even over the public treasuries. He likewise directed all the linen and woollen manufactures. Linen, it must be observed, though not anciently in use among the Romans, had become a common wear for the women even in the time of the elder Pliny. The fifth minister of the palace was the Count or Treasurer of the Private Estate, whose office was to administer that revenue of the emperor which arose from his domain or territorial property, which he had in most of the provinces, and from the confiscations and forfeitures. The sixth and seventh were the two Counts of the Domestics, who commanded those bands of cavalry and infantry which guarded the emperor's person. The number of these troops amounted to 3,500 men.

The intercourse between the court and provinces was maintained by the construction of roads, and by the institution of *Posts*; but these establishments paved the way for a most intolerable abuse. Some hundred agents, who were afterwards increased to some thousands, were employed, under the jurisdiction of the masters of the offices, to announce the names of the annual consuls, and to report the edicts of the emperor through all the provinces. These people were, in fact, nothing else but the spies of government—who were encouraged, by rewards, to communicate from time to time all sorts of intelligence from the remote corners of the empire to its chief seat; to watch the progress of all treasonable designs, and discover such persons as they should find harboring any symptom of disaffection; they were consequently the objects of terror and of consummate hatred: circumstances which prevented their employment from being ever accepted, unless by men of bad character and desperate fortune, who exercised without scruple the most unjust and insolent oppression.

Every institution was now calculated to support the fabric of despotism. The use of torture, from which, in the happier days of the Roman government, every one who enjoyed the privileges of a citizen was exempted, began now to be employed without regard to this distinction; in place of which a few special exemptions were granted by the emperor in favor of those of the rank of *illustres*, of bishops and professors of the liberal arts, soldiers, municipal officers, and children under the age of puberty; but these exceptions sanctified the use of torture in all other cases.

To these grievances may be added the oppressive taxes. The word *indiction*, which serves to ascertain the chronology of the middle ages, was derived from the practice of the emperor's signing with his own hand an edict prescribing the annual measure of the tribute to be levied, and the term allowed for payment of it. The measure or quantity was ascertained by a *census*, or survey, made by persons appointed for that purpose, through all the

provinces, who measured the lands, took account of their nature, whether arable, pasture, wood, or vineyard, and made an estimate of their medium value, from an average produce of five years. The numbers of slaves and of cattle were likewise reported, and the proprietors were examined on their oath as to the true state of their affairs. Part of the tribute specified by the indiction was paid in money, and part in the produce of the lands; and so exorbitant were these taxes, that the husbandmen found it their interest to let their fields lie uncultivated, as the burdens increased in a greater proportion to the produce than their profits. Hence the agriculture of the Roman provinces was almost ruined, and population, which keeps pace with plenty, gradually diminished.

But not only were the proprietors of land borne down by the weight of their taxes: the burden was equally severe on all classes of the citizens. Every branch of commercial industry paid its rated tribute. All the objects of merchandise, whether of home growth or of importation, all the products of arts and manufactures, were highly taxed; and as the tribute on land was made effectual by the seizure of personal property, that on personal property was enforced by corporal punishments. The cruel treatment of the insolvent debtors of the state, which, under some of the former emperors, had reached the height of barbarity, was, however, mitigated by an edict of Constantine, in which he disclaims the use of racks and scourges for the punishment of debtors, and allots a spacious prison for their confinement.

To these supplies of the imperial revenue must be added those donations, called *Free Gifts*, from the several cities and provinces of the monarchy, which it was customary to bestow as often as the emperor announced his accession, his consulship, the birth of a son, the creation of a Cæsar, a victory over the barbarians, or any other event of great importance. These, which were now presents of money, came in place of the ancient offerings of crowns of gold made by the cities of Italy to a victorious general. The free gift of the senate of Rome, upon such occasions as we have mentioned, amounted to 1600 pounds weight of gold, (about £64,000 sterling,) and the other cities of the empire, we may suppose, paid in proportion.

But none of the institutions of Constantine were so fatal to the empire as those which he introduced into the military discipline. A distinction was established between the troops which were stationed in the remote provinces, and those which remained in the heart of the empire; the latter were termed *Palatines*, by way of superiority, and enjoyed a much higher pay, which enabled them, except in time of war, to indulge themselves in idleness, indolence, and every species of luxury. The former, termed *the Borderers*—who, in fact, had the care of the empire, and were exposed to perpetual dangers—had a very small allowance of pay, with the mortification of feeling themselves held of inferior

consideration, and thus were, in fact, nothing else than the slaves of a despot. Constantine likewise, from the timid policy of securing against mutinies and insurrections among the troops—which were extremely formidable while the legion contained its ancient number of 5,000, 6,000, or even 8,000 or 9,000 men—reduced the number of men in the legion to 1,000 or to 1,500; so that each of these weakened bodies, awed by the sense of its own imbecility, could now attempt no conspiracy that was formidable. The whole body of the army was likewise debased by the intermixture of the barbarian nations, the Scythians, Goths, and Germans, who henceforth bore a very great proportion in each of the legions.

Such was the state of the Roman empire at the time of the translation of its seat from Rome to Constantinople. An authority, vigorously despotic, preserved, as yet, the union of this immense mass, which was laboring internally with the seeds of corruption and dissolution. In the capital of the empire, the Roman name owed its chief lustre now to pomp and magnificence—a poor substitute for that real dignity, derived, in former times, from its heroic and patriotic virtues.

Constantine, with a very destructive policy, had divided the empire among no less than five princes; three of them his sons, and two nephews. Constantius, the youngest and most ambitious of the sons, soon got rid of the nephews. They were massacred by the soldiers, along with many others of his relations, and several of the principal courtiers. The brothers quarrelled among themselves; the two elder, Constans and Constantinus, took up arms, and the latter falling in battle, Constans became sole master of the Western empire. This, however, he did not long enjoy, being soon after assassinated by Magnentius, a German.

Constantius was now possessed of undivided legal authority, but had a formidable rival in Magnentius, whose party was much increased, for while the emperor indolently occupied himself in theological controversies, his best troops had sided with the usurper. Constantius made a dastardly offer of peace, which Magnentius rejected, and an engagement followed, which decided the fate of the empire. Constantius was successful, though he had not dared to take the field in person, but waited the event of the battle in a neighboring church. Magnentius took refuge in Gaul, where, being surrounded by the imperial legions, he, in a transport of despair, murdered his mother and several of his relations, and then stabbed himself with his own hand.

Two nephews of Constantine had escaped that massacre of his kindred by which Constantius had secured to himself an undivided empire: these were Gallus and Julian. The former, Constantius honored with the dignity of Cæsar, and appointed the city of Antioch for his residence, where for a short time he ruled the eastern provinces with a violent and tyrannical authority. Constantius, governed at that time by the eunuch Eusebius, was persuaded

that Gallus, by his enormities, had rendered himself unworthy of the dignity to which he had raised him. He sent an order for Gallus to repair to the imperial court, then at Milan, which that prince did not dare to disobey. He was instantly deprived of his guards, hurried to prison, and beheaded like the meanest malefactor.

A variety of civil broils, mutinies of the troops against their generals, had weakened the force of the armies, and left the western frontier to the mercy of the barbarians. The Franks, Saxons, and Alemanni ravaged the Gauls, and destroyed forty-five cities on the banks of the Rhine. Pannonia and Mœsia were laid waste by the Sarmatians, while the Persians made dreadful incursions upon the eastern empire. Constantius was wholly occupied with his religious controversies; but was fortunately prevailed on by his emissary to take one measure most conducive to the general safety, which was to confer on his cousin Julian the title and dignity of Cæsar.

This prince, had he appeared in any other era than that in which two opposite religions were contending for pre-eminence, would have shone as a very illustrious character. He possessed many heroic qualities, and his mind was formed by nature to promote the greatness and the happiness of an empire. He had completed his studies at Constantinople and at Athens. In the latter city, the conversation of the Platonic philosophers had given him a strong distaste for the doctrines of Christianity, in which he had been educated; and what, unfortunately riveted his aversion, was the example of his cousin, Constantius.

Constantius named Julian *Cæsar* at the age of twenty-three, and appointed him governor of Gaul; but with few troops, little money, and a very limited command; accountable to a set of veteran officers, whom the emperor appointed for his counsellors. Under all these disadvantages he soon showed distinguished abilities.

In the first year of his government he studied the art of war at Vienna, applied himself with ardor to the discipline of his troops, and partook himself, with his soldiers, of every fatigue to which the meanest were subjected. Two important objects were thus obtained—a well-regulated army, and a devoted affection of the troops to the person of their commander. With these advantages he soon signalized his military talents. He drove the barbarians out of Gaul, and carried the terror of his arms beyond the limits of the frontier. Constantius, in his conclave of bishops, arrogated to himself the honor of these victories, and was employed in holding ecclesiastical councils, while Sapor, the Persian, with a formidable army, broke in upon Mesopotamia. Julian was now become an object of jealousy to him: with a view of disarming him, he ordered him to send the best of his troops to Constantinople, to serve against the Persians; by which means so incon-

siderable a handful would remain with their commander, that the barbarians, with ease and impunity, could have regained what they had lost.

Julian prepared to obey, but the army took an opposite measure; they proclaimed him emperor, and forced him, apparently unwilling, to accept the purple.\* He still preserved the show of allegiance, and wrote to Constantius, informing him of the proceedings of the army, and of the impossibility of removing them from the province without their commander. Constantius, with amazing folly, only repeated his orders in a more peremptory style; and Julian, congratulating himself that every scruple of honor was satisfied, openly shook off his submission, and took the field to maintain his right to the empire. He marched with rapidity into Greece. Italy was his own, and every thing submitted to his arms. Constantius escaped the ignominy that awaited him, by dying at this juncture of a fever in Cilicia.

Julian was now acknowledged through the whole empire. He began his reign by the reformation of a variety of civil abuses in the different departments of the state, abolishing superfluous offices, and striking at the root of luxury by sumptuary laws. He now gave a loose to his hatred against Christianity, but attacked that religion by a policy far more pernicious than open persecution. He began by reforming the Pagan theology; and artfully attending to the great difference between that and the Christian religion, which, to the purest doctrines of faith, joined the most excellent system of morality, he endeavored to give Paganism that morality which it wanted, thence confessing the excellence of Christianity by adopting its sublimest precepts. He drew up himself a plan of conduct for the priests, recommending to them a purity of life and uncorrupted integrity; thus to enforce by their example the doctrines which they sought to inculcate.† Certain modern

\* The circumstances attending this event are extremely well painted by Mr. Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. 22.

† The 49th, 62d, and 63d Epistles of Julian, and a separate fragment on the same subject, give a very strong picture of his zeal for pagan reformation. "The exercise of the sacred functions," says Julian, "requires an immaculate purity both of mind and body; and even when the priest is dismissed from the temple to the occupations of common life, it is incumbent on him to excel in decency and virtue the rest of his fellow citizens. He should never be seen in theatres or taverns. His conversation should be chaste, his diet temperate, his friends of honorable reputation. His studies should be suited to the sanctity of his profession. Licentious tales or comedies, or satires, must be banished from his library, which ought solely to consist of historical and philosophical writings; of history which is founded in truth, and of philosophy which is connected with religion. The impious orations of the Epicureans and Sceptics deserve his abhorrence and contempt; but he should diligently study the systems of Pythagoras, of Plato, and of the Stoics, which unanimously teach that there are gods; that the world is governed by their providence; that their goodness is the source of every temporal blessing; and that they have prepared for the human soul a future state of reward or punishment."

writers, unfriendly to our religion, have enlarged, with much apparent satisfaction, on the great clemency and moderation which Julian showed in his treatment of the Christians—affecting not to perceive that this seeming clemency and moderation was the most artful and the most dangerous policy that could have then been employed against them; for let us observe how Julian conducted himself. He forbade the persecution of the Christians, whom he represented as deluded men, the objects of compassion, not of punishment; but declared, at the same time, that their *frenzy* incapacitated them from all employments, civil or military. Their law, he said, prohibited all quarrels and dissensions; it was not, therefore, necessary that they should have the benefit of courts of justice to decide their differences. He prohibited them from teaching or learning grammar, rhetoric, or philosophy. These, he said, were pagan sciences, treated of by authors whose principles the Christians were taught to abhor, and whose books contained tenets which must shock the pure morality of their religion. It is easy to perceive that this artful and insidious mode of attack was, in reality, much more destructive than the most sanguinary persecution.

This conduct of Julian would seem to argue a disposition at least entirely free from any tincture of superstition, and careless of all religion; but, in fact, Julian was, as a pagan, blinded by the most bigoted superstition. His belief in omens was ridiculous; his sacrifices were so numerous, that cattle were wanting to supply him with victims.\* The expense of these religious rites became burdensome to the state, and was universally complained of.† He was even accused of the horrid abomination of human sacrifices. His enthusiasm and fanaticism, acknowledged even by his greatest panegyrists, "almost degrade him to the level of an Egyptian monk."—"Notwithstanding his own modest silence upon the subject, (says Mr. Gibbon,) we may learn from his faithful friend, the orator Libanius, that he lived in a perpetual intercourse with the gods and goddesses; that they descended upon earth to enjoy the conversation of their favorite hero; that they gently interrupted his slumbers by touching his hand or his hair; that they warned him of any impending danger, and conducted him by their infalli-

\* Ammianus, though a pagan himself, and an admirer of the character of Julian, justly censures this part of his conduct:—"Hostiarum tamen sanguine plurimo aras crebritate nimia perfundebat, tauros aliquoties immolando centenos, et innumeros varii pecoris greges, avesque candidas terra quæsitas et mari." And he describes the soldiers rioting upon the flesh of the sacrifices, and daily gorging themselves with those dainties and with strong liquors, so that they were frequently carried to their quarters on the shoulders of the passengers. The enjoyment of such freedoms would very soon convert the army to the religion of their sovereign. Vid. Ammian. l. xxii. c. 12.

† Ammianus compares him in this respect to Marcus Cæsar, to whom the cattle were feigned to have made this ludicrous complaint:—"The white oxen to Marcus Cæsar; if you conquer, we are undone."