

reposing in his tent, murdered him, set fire to the curtains, and burned his body in the flames of his own pavilion. The story was sent to Rome that the tent was struck by lightning, an indication that the gods wished the army to abandon the Persian enterprise and return to Rome.

CHAPTER XXI.

DIVISIONS OF THE EMPIRE.

FROM A. D. 283 TO A. D. 330.

CARINUS AND NUMERIAN.—ANECDOTE OF DIOCLETIAN.—HIS ACCESSION.—SAGACIOUS ARRANGEMENTS.—THE FOUR EMPERORS.—WARS OF THE BARBARIANS.—THE TWO NEW CAPITALS, MILAN AND NICOMEDIA.—DECADENCE OF ROME.—ABDICATION OF DIOCLETIAN.—HIS RETIREMENT AND DEATH.—CONSTANTIUS AND CONSTANTINE.—THE OVERTHROW OF MAXENTIUS, MAXIMIN, AND LICINIUS.—CONSTANTINE SOLE EMPEROR.—TRIUMPH OF CHRISTIANITY OVER PERSECUTION.—CONSTANTINE ADOPTS CHRISTIANITY.—BYZANTIUM CHANGED TO CONSTANTINOPLE.—THE GROWTH AND SPLENDOR OF THE CITY.

THE army appointed the two sons of Carus to the imperial dignity. One of these, Carinus, was in Gaul. The other, Numerian, had accompanied his father to Persia. The soldiers, weary of the distant war, insisted on being led back to Italy. Numerian, sick and suffering severely from inflammation of the eyes, was compelled to yield to the demands of the troops. The army, by slow marches, retraced its steps, eight months being occupied in reaching the Bosphorus. Numerian was conveyed in a litter, shut up from the light, and he issued his daily orders through his minister, Aper. He at length died, and Aper, concealing his death, continued, from the imperial pavilion, to proclaim mandates to the army in the name of the invisible sovereign. They had already reached the Bosphorus, when the suspicions of the army were excited, and the soldiers, breaking into the regal tent, discovered the embalmed body of the emperor. Aper, accused of his murder, was seized and brought before a military tribunal. At the same time, with unanimous voice, the army chose Diocletian emperor, who was in command of the guard. Diocletian

was born a slave—the child of slaves owned by a Roman senator. Having attained his freedom, he had worked his way to the highest posts in the army. Aper was brought before him for trial. This first act of his reign developed the promptness, the energy, and the despotism of Diocletian. As the accused was led in chains to the tribunal, Diocletian, looking upon him sternly and asking for no proof, said :

“This man is the murderer of Numerian.”

Drawing his sword he plunged it into the prisoner's heart, and all the army applauded the deed. Carinus, the brother and colleague of Numerian was at Rome, rioting in the utmost voluptuousness of dissolute pleasures. Alarmed by the announcement of the election of Diocletian, he summoned an army and marched to meet him. The two rival emperors, at the head of their legions, confronted each other near Margus, a city of Mœsia, on the lower Danube. In the heat of the battle a general of his own army, whose wife Carinus had seduced, watching his opportunity, with one blow of his massive sword, struck the despicable emperor down in bloody death.

Diocletian was now sole sovereign. Assassination was the doom which seemed to await every emperor. The first measure of Diocletian was sagaciously adopted as a protection against this peril. He appointed as his colleague on the throne, Maximian, a general of most heroic bravery, but a man of lowly birth and exceedingly uncultivated in mind, and unpolished in manners. Both of these emperors assumed the title of Augustus, the highest title recognized in Rome. They had been intimate friends in private life, companions in many bloody battles, and they now devoted their energies to the support of each other on the throne, each conscious that the fall of one would only accelerate the ruin of the other. In this partnership Diocletian was the head, Maximian the sword; they even assumed corresponding titles, the one that of Jupiter, the other Hercules.

As an additional precaution, each of these emperors chose a successor, to be associated with him in the government, with the more humble title of Cæsar. Galerius was the associate and appointed successor of Diocletian, and Constantius of Maximian. To strengthen the bonds of this union, each of these heirs to the throne were required to repudiate his former wife, and marry a daughter of the Augustus whose successor he was to be. There were thus four princes on the throne, bound together by the closest ties, and they divided the administration of the Roman empire between them. Gaul, Spain, and Britain were assigned to Constantius; the Danubian provinces and Illyria were entrusted to Galerius. Maximian took charge of Italy and Africa, while Diocletian assumed the sovereignty of Greece, Egypt, and Asia. Each one was undisputed sovereign in his own realms; while unitedly they administered the general interests of the whole empire. Several years were occupied in maturing this plan.

But the world seemed to have conspired against the Roman empire. The Britons rose in successful rebellion, and through many a fierce battle maintained, for a time, their independence. Barbaric tribes seemed to blacken the shores of the Rhine and the Danube in their incessant incursions of devastation and plunder. Africa was in arms from the Nile to Mount Atlas,—the Moorish nations issuing, with irrepressible ferocity, from their pathless deserts. And Persia was roused to new and herculean efforts to humble the hereditary enemy by whom she had so often been chastised.

Maximian, who was regarded as the emperor of the west, selected Milan for his capital, it being more conveniently situated at the foot of the Alps, for him to watch the motion of the barbarians on the Danube and the Rhine. Milan thus rose rapidly to the splendor of an imperial city.

Diocletian chose for his residence Nicomedia, in Bithynia, on the Asiatic coast of the sea of Marmora, and he endeavored even to eclipse the grandeur of Rome, in the oriental mag-

nificence with which he embellished his Asiatic capital. The two subordinate emperors, who were *Cæsar* only, not *Augustus*, were practically governors of provinces and generals of the armies.

A large portion of the imperial life, both of Diocletian and Maximian, was spent in camps. Rome was hardly known to them. In the brief respites from war they retired to their palaces in Nicomedia and Milan. Indeed, it is said that Diocletian never visited Rome, until in the twentieth year of his reign, he repaired to the ancient capital to celebrate, with gorgeous triumph, a great victory over the Persians. Diocletian ambitiously surrounded himself with all the stately magnificence of the Persian court. He robed himself in the most sumptuous garments of silk and gold, and wore a diadem set with pearls, an ornament which Rome had hitherto detested as luxurious and effeminate. Even his shoes were studded with precious gems. Eunuchs guarded the interior of the palace. All who were admitted to the presence of the emperor were obliged to prostrate themselves before him, and to address him with the titles of the Divinity. These innovations were introduced, not for the gratification of vanity, but as a protection from the rude license of the people, which exposed the sovereign to assassination.

Guided by the same principle, Diocletian multiplied the agents of the government, by greatly dividing every branch of the civil and military administration. Diocletian was, so to speak, the supreme emperor. He had selected Maximian to be associated with him as Augustus, and had also chosen Constantius and Galerius as subordinate emperors, with the title of *Cæsar*, to succeed to the imperial purple. The *mind* of Diocletian was the primal element in the administration. He intended this arrangement to be perpetual,—two elder princes wearing the diadem as Augustus, two younger, as *Cæsar*, aiding in the administration and prepared to succeed. Such an array of power would discourage any aspiring gen-

eral, who otherwise, by assassination, might hope to attain the crown. To support this splendor and to meet the expenses of the incessant wars with the barbarians, from whom no plunder could be obtained, by way of reprisal, he burdened the state with taxation which doomed the laboring classes to the most abject poverty.

In the twenty-first year of his reign, Diocletian, then fifty-nine years of age, abdicated the empire. He was led to this by long and severe illness, which so enfeebled him that he was quite unable to sustain the toils and cares of government. Weary of conducting the administration from a bed of sickness and pain, he resolved to seek retirement and repose. About three miles from the city of Nicomedia there is a spacious plain, which the emperor selected for the ceremony of his abdication. A lofty throne was erected, upon which Diocletian, pale and emaciated, in a dignified speech, announced to the immense multitude he had assembled there, his resignation of the diadem. Then laying aside the imperial vestments, he entered a closed chariot, and repaired to a rural retreat he had selected at Salona, in his native province of Dalmatia, on the Grecian shore of the Adriatic sea. On the same day, which was May 1, A. D. 305, Maximian, by previous concert, also abdicated at Milan. He was constrained to this act by the ascendancy which the imperial mind of Diocletian had obtained over him. Maximian, in vigorous health and martial in his tastes, found retirement very irksome, and urged his weary and more philosophic colleague to resume the reins of government. Diocletian replied:

“Could you but see the fine cabbages in my garden, which I have planted and raised with my own hands, you would not ask me to relinquish such happiness for the pursuit of power.”

But, notwithstanding Diocletian's memorable speech about the cabbages, all the appliances of opulence and splendor surrounded him in his retreat. He had selected the spot with an eye of an artist; and when in possession of the revenues

of the Roman empire, he devoted many years in rearing an imperial castle, suitable for one who had been accustomed, for nearly a quarter of a century, to more than oriental magnificence. From the portico of the palace, a view was spread out of wonderful beauty, combining the most extensive panorama of mountains and valleys, while a bay creeping in from the Adriatic sea, studded with picturesque islands, presented the aspect of a secluded and tranquil lake. But even here, in this most lovely of earthly retreats, man's doom of sorrow pursued the emperor; and domestic griefs of the most afflictive character, blighted the bloom of his arbors and parterres, and darkened his saloons.

Ten acres were covered by this palace, which was constructed of free-stone, and flanked with sixteen towers. The principal entrance was denominated the golden gate, and gorgeous temples were reared in honor of the pagan gods, Æsculapius and Jupiter, whom Diocletian ostentatiously adored. The most exquisite ornaments of painting and sculpture embellished the architectural structure, the saloons, and the grounds. The death of Diocletian is shrouded in mystery. It is simply known that the most oppressive gloom and remorse shadowed his declining years; but whether his death was caused by poison, which he prepared for himself, or which was administered by another, or whether he fell a victim to disease, can now never be known.

The two Cæsars, Constantius and Galerius, now became Augusti, and were invested with the imperial insignia. The division of the empire into the east and the west became still more marked; the morning sun rising upon the oriental provinces of Galerius, and its evening rays falling upon the occidental realms of Constantius. Two new Cæsars were now needed to occupy the place of those who had ascended to the imperial government. Galerius chose his nephew, a rustic youth, to whom he entrusted the government of Egypt and

Syria. Constantine, the son of Constantius, was appointed as the associate and successor of his father.

A revolt in Britain called for the presence of Constantius. His son accompanied him. Here Constantius was taken sick, and died fifteen months after he had received the title of Augustus. Constantine immediately succeeded him. Galerius did not cheerfully acquiesce in this arrangement, but Constantine, at the head of the army of Britain was too powerful to be opposed. Constantine was then thirty-two years of age. Italy had thus far been elevated in rank and privileges above the remote provinces of the empire; and the Roman *citizens*, for five hundred years, had been exempted from taxation, the burdens of state being borne by the subjugated nations. But the exigences of the impoverished empire were now such that Galerius, from his palace in Nicomedia, issued orders for numbering, even the proud citizens of Rome itself, and taxing them with all the rest.

Maximian, who had been exceedingly restless in the retreat to which his reluctant abdication had consigned him, hoped to take advantage of the disaffection in Rome to grasp the scepter again, notwithstanding the efforts of Galerius to place Severus, one of his partisans, in power there. Maximian and Severus soon met on the field of battle, and the latter being vanquished, was doomed to die, being allowed merely to choose the manner of his death. He opened his veins, and quietly passed away. Maximian had previously given his daughter in marriage to Constantine, hoping thus to secure his coöperation. Leaving his son Maxentius as acting emperor in Rome, he set out for Britain, to meet Constantine.

Galerius, enraged, gathered an army, and marched upon Italy to avenge the death of Severus, and to chastise the rebellious Romans.

"I will extirpate," he exclaimed in his wrath, "both the senate and the people, by the sword."

Constantine was in Britain, but Maximian was a foe not

easily to be vanquished. Galerius fought his way slowly to within sixty miles of Rome; but, hedged in on all sides, he could advance no farther. His perils hourly increasing, with extreme mortification he was compelled to order a retreat. Burning with rage, Galerius commenced his backward march, inflicting every conceivable outrage upon the Italian people. His soldiers plundered, ravished, murdered. Flocks and herds were driven away, cities and villages burned, and the country reduced to a smoldering desert. Galerius invested Licinius and Maximin with imperial powers, the one in Illyricum, and the other in Egypt, and thus there were now six emperors, each claiming the equal title of Augustus.

Maximian was now on his way to Britain, to the court of Constantine, to arrange a coalition. Constantine was suddenly summoned to the Rhine, by an incursion of the Franks. Maximian, at Arles, near the mouth of the Rhone in Gaul, where much treasure had been accumulated, took advantage of the absence of Constantine to endeavor to excite a mutiny in his own favor. With wonderful celerity Constantine turned upon him, pursued him to Marseilles, took him captive, and allowed him the same privilege which he had allowed to Severus—to choose his mode of death. The old emperor, who was father of the wife of Constantine, opened his veins, and sank into the tomb.

Galerius, retired from his unsuccessful campaign in Italy to his palaces in Nicomedia, where he indulged unrestrained, for four years, in that licentiousness and debauchery common to nearly all the Roman emperors. He became bloated and corpulent. Ulcers broke out over his whole body, and at length he died, a loathsome mass of corruption. He had ferociously persecuted the Christians during his whole reign, and by them his awful death was regarded as a Divine visitation. As soon as his death was announced, Maximin and Licinius divided his empire between them, the former taking the Asiatic, and the latter the European portion.

There were now four emperors regarding each other with a strong spirit of rivalry. Constantine in Britain and Gaul; Maxentius in Italy; Licinius in Macedonia and Greece; and Maximin in Asia. Constantine was renowned for his gentlemanly character, and his humane spirit; and yet, after a great victory over the Franks and the Alemani, he entertained the people of Treves by throwing the captive princes into the amphitheater, to be torn to pieces by wild beasts; and so barbarous were the times, that this act was not then deemed inconsistent with generosity and mercy.

Maxentius, in Rome, was one of the most odious of tyrants. The Christians suffered fearfully under his reign, and history has preserved the name of one noble Christian matron, Sophronia, wife of the prefect of the city, who, to escape the violence of Maxentius, plunged a dagger into her own heart. The tyrant filled Rome with troops, and purchased their favor by indulging them in the most unbounded license. With Rome for his capital, he assumed to be sole emperor, regarding the other emperors as his subordinates. Open collision soon arose between Maxentius and Constantine. Maxentius had under his command a very formidable force, amounting to one hundred and seventy thousand foot, and eighteen thousand horse. Constantine, at the head of but forty thousand troops, marched to attack him. Constantine, however, was well assured of the secret sympathy in his behalf, both of the senate, and the people of Rome.

Marching from Gaul, Constantine crossed the great Alpine barrier by what is now called the pass of Mount Cenis, and had descended into the plains of Piedmont, before Maxentius had received tidings of his departure from Gaul. He took Suza by storm. Sweeping resistlessly along, Turin and Milan, after fierce battles, fell into his hands. He was now within four hundred miles of Rome, and a magnificent road, through a rich country, invited his march.

His number of prisoners became so great, that chains were