

needed to shackle them; and a vast number of smiths were employed in hammering the swords of the vanquished into fetters. With wonderful celerity he pressed forward, surmounting all opposition, until he arrived at a place called Saxa Rubra, within nine miles of Rome, where he found Maxentius intrenched in great force. His army, in long array, reached even to the banks of the Tiber. The defeat of Maxentius was entire, and the carnage of his troops awful. Maxentius himself, in attempting to escape across the Milvian bridge, was crowded into the river, and, from the weight of his armor, instantly sank to the bottom. His body, the next day, was dragged from the mud, and, being decapitated, the ghastly head was exposed to the rejoicing people.

Constantine, thus decisively victorious, entered the city in triumph. The pliant senate gathered around him in homage, and assigned him the first rank among the three remaining *Augusti*, then sharing the dominion of the world. Games were instituted, and a triumphal arch was reared to his honor, which still remains. Rome was fallen so low that the arch of Trajan was shamefully despoiled of its ornaments, that they might be transferred to the arch of Constantine. Constantine suppressed the Pretorian guard forever, and utterly destroyed their camp. He remained two months in Rome, consolidating his power. He also negotiated an alliance with Licinius, the Illyrian emperor, conferring upon him his sister Constantia in marriage.

Maximin, in Asia, alarmed by this coalition of the two European emperors, in dead of winter marched from the heart of Syria, crossed the Thracian Bosphorus, captured Byzantium, now Constantinople, after a siege of eleven days, and met Licinius, at the head of seventy thousand troops, near Heraclea, about fifty miles west of Byzantium. In a terrible battle the army of Maximin was almost annihilated, and the Syrian monarch, pale with rage and despair, fled with such celerity, that in twenty-four hours he entered Nicomedia, one

hundred and sixty miles from the field of battle. There he soon died, whether from despair, or poison which his own hand had mingled, is not known. There were now two emperors left, Constantine and Licinius. The provinces of the East accepted Licinius, and thus the Roman empire became again divided into the eastern and the western. Maximin left two children; a son eight years of age, and a daughter seven. Licinius, with Roman mercilessness, put them both to death. All the other relatives, who could in any possible way endanger the sway of Licinius, were also, with the most relentless cruelty, consigned to the executioner.

Hardly a year now elapsed ere Constantine and Licinius turned their arms against each other. Licinius was tyrannical and perfidious; Constantine insatiately aspiring. Sirmium, on the river Save, not far from its confluence with the Danube, was the capital of the vast province of Illyricum. On the banks of the Save, fifty miles above Sirmium, at Cibalis, the two emperors met in hostile array. It was the eighth of October, A. D. 315. The battle raged from dawn till dark; and then Licinius, leaving twenty thousand of his men dead upon the field, in the night retreated, abandoning his camp and all his magazines. Constantine pursued. Licinius, accumulating recruits as he fled, again made a stand on the plain of Mardia, in Thrace. Again they fought from the earliest ray of the morning until night darkened the field. Again Licinius was worsted, and he continued his flight toward the mountains of Macedonia. He now sued for peace. Constantine consented to leave him in command of Thrace, Asia Minor, Syria, and Egypt, but wrested from him Illyricum, Dalmatia, Dacia, Macedonia, and Greece, which were all attached to the western empire. Thrace was the only foothold which Licinius held in Europe.

Affairs thus remained in comparative tranquillity for about eight years, during which time Constantine devoted himself very assiduously to the government of his vast empire.

Constantine, with his empire firmly established, and his armies thoroughly disciplined, was no longer disposed to endure a partner in the empire, and he found no difficulty in "picking a quarrel" with Licinius, now infirm with age, dissolute, tyrannical, and execrated. But the old man developed unexpected and amazing energy. He speedily assembled, on the fields of Thrace, an army of one hundred and fifty thousand foot, and fifteen thousand horse. The straits of the Bosphorus and the Hellespont were filled with his fleet, consisting of three hundred and fifty galleys of three banks of oars.

Constantine rendezvoused his army of one hundred and twenty thousand horse and foot, in the highest discipline, at Thessalonica, in Macedonia. In the celebrated harbor of Piræus he had a fleet of two hundred transports. Licinius intrenched himself at Adrianople, in the heart of Thrace, about two hundred miles northeast from Thessalonica, and awaited the attack of his foe. They soon met. The disciplined legions of Constantine trampled the eastern legions of Licinius in the dust, and in a few hours thirty-four thousand of the soldiers of Licinius were silent in death. The remainder fled wildly. The fortified camp fell into the hands of the victor, and Licinius, putting spurs to his horse, hardly looked behind him till he found himself within the walls of Byzantium.

The siege of the city was immediately commenced. It had been fortified with the utmost skill which the military art of that day could suggest, and the wealth of an empire could execute. After a long and cruel siege the city capitulated. One final battle was fought on the Asiatic shore, near the heights of Scutari, and Licinius fled to Nicomedia without an army and powerless. His wife, Constantia, sister of Constantine, pleaded so earnestly with her brother for her husband, that the conqueror, after subjecting Licinius to the most humiliating acts of homage, allowed him to retire to a retreat of powerlessness, but of luxury, in Thessalonica. Here he was soon

accused of meditating treason, and was put to death. Thus was the Roman empire again united under one emperor, and Constantine remained sole monarch of what was then called the world.

Constantine now adopted the memorable resolve to establish Christianity on a stable foundation as the honored religion of the empire. The doctrines and precepts of our Saviour had thoroughly undermined the old pagan superstitions, and, notwithstanding the most bloody persecutions, Christianity had at length attained such supremacy that, by an imperial decree, the banners of the cross were unfurled over the ruined temples of Greece and Rome.

During the first two centuries Christianity spread over the whole region between the Euphrates and the Ionian sea, and flourishing churches were established in all the principal cities. Under nearly all the emperors the Christians were persecuted, sometimes legally, sometimes illegally, now with blind, frantic, indiscriminate fury, and now under the semblance of moderation and calm judicial process. All conceivable forms of terror were brought to operate against them. They were driven into exile, torn to pieces by wild beasts, beheaded on the block, and burnt at the stake. Several of the emperors exerted all the power with which the scepter invested them, for the utter extermination of the Christians. Historians have generally enumerated ten persecutions of peculiar malignity.

The city of Rome had been gradually losing its ascendancy, and Diocletian had reared Nicomedia into a capital almost rivaling Rome in opulence and splendor. Constantine, the child of camps, and whose life had been spent almost wholly in the remote provinces of the empire, had no especial attachment for the imperial city, and he was ambitious of rearing a new capital, occupying a more central spot in his vast empire, and which should also bear and immortalize his name. With sagacity which has never been questioned, he selected for this

purpose Byzantium, and gave it the name of Constantinople, or the city of Constantine.

The imperial city, enjoying the most salubrious clime, surrounded by realms of inexhaustible fertility, occupying an eminence which commanded an extensive view of the shores of Europe and of Asia; with the Bosphorus on the north, and the Dardanelles on the south, fortified gates which no foe could penetrate, with a harbor spacious, and perfectly secure, and with the approaches on the side of the continent easy of defense, presented to the sagacious Constantine a site for the metropolis of universal dominion, all unrivaled. The wealth, energy, and artistic genius of the whole Roman empire were immediately called into requisition, to enlarge and beautify the new metropolis. The boundaries of the city were marked out, fourteen miles in circumference. It is said that a sum amounting to twelve millions of dollars, was expended in walls and public improvements. The forests which then frowned almost unbroken along the shores of the Euxine, and a fine quarry of white marble in a neighboring island, afforded an inexhaustible supply of materials.

The imperial palace, rivaling that of Rome, in its courts, gardens, porticos, and baths, covered many acres. The ancient cities of the empire, including even Rome itself, were despoiled of their most noble families, to add luster to the new metropolis. Magnificent mansions were reared for them, and wide domains assigned for the support of their dignity; and though Constantinople never fully equaled Rome in population, dignity, and splendor, it soon became without dispute the second city in the world.

CHAPTER XXII.

THE EMPIRE DISMEMBERED.

FROM A. D. 330 TO A. D. 375.

CONSTANTINE THE GREAT.—DIVERSITY OF VIEWS RESPECTING HIM.—THE TRAGEDY OF CRISPUS AND FAUSTA.—DEATH OF CONSTANTINE.—TRIPLE DIVISION OF THE EMPIRE.—TRIUMPH OF CONSTANTINE OVER HIS BROTHERS.—STRUGGLE WITH MAGNENTIUS.—FATAL BATTLE OF MURSA.—FATE OF GALLUS.—ACCESSION AND APOSTACY OF JULIAN.—HIS SCHOLARLY CHARACTER.—DEVELOPMENTS OF ENERGY.—HIS WAR IN GAUL.—SELECTION OF PARIS FOR HIS CAPITAL.—HIS MELANCHOLY DEATH.—RETREAT OF THE ARMY.—CHOICE OF VALENTINIAN.—VALENS HIS ASSOCIATE.—ACCUMULATING WARS.—DEATH OF VALENTINIAN.

NO man has ever been more warmly applauded, or more venomously condemned than Constantine, surnamed the Great. And though fifteen centuries have passed away since he disappeared from life's busy arena, his character is still the subject of the most bitter denunciation, and of the most lofty panegyric.

By nature Constantine was enriched with the choicest endowments. In person he was majestic and graceful, with features of the finest mold. Either from natural felicity of temperament, or from his own powers of self-restraint, during all his reign he preserved, to a wonderful degree, the virtues of chastity and temperance. In mental capacity he was both acute and comprehensive, having gathered from books and travel a vast fund of information. He possessed great capabilities of endurance, physical and intellectual. In the field he displayed alike the bravery of the soldier, and the talents of the general. Fully conscious of his superior abilities, with boundless resources at his command, and warmly sustained by the popular voice, he commenced and pursued a career to which we with difficulty find a parallel.