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DAMAGE BOOK

SELECTIONS FROM
Gibbon's Decline and Fall
of the Roman Empire

BY

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WITH ILLUSTRATIONS

BOOK II

BYZANTIUM AND THE NEAR EAST

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EDWARD GIBBON

*The other, deep and slow, exhausting thought,
And living wisdom with each studious year,
In meditation dwell, with learning wrought,
And shaped his weapon with an edge severe,
Sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer ;
The lord of irony—that master-spell,
Which stung his foes to wrath which grew from fear,
And doomed him to the zealots' ready hell,
Which answers to all doubts so eloquently well.*

CHILDE HAROLD.

EDWARD GIBBON AND HIS WORK

I

EDWARD GIBBON was born at Putney in 1737. His father was a spendthrift country gentleman, who squandered the family estates: he appears, however, to have been an indulgent and well-meaning parent, as his son speaks of him in terms of consistent affection. Gibbon's childhood was passed in chronic illness, which prevented him from ever attending school regularly, though he spent two useless years at Westminster. He grew up a studious, solitary child, spending the time which other lads wasted over their Latin Grammars in devouring old histories in odd corners of his father's library. "I was immersed in the passage of the Goths over the Danube, when the summons of the dinner-bell reluctantly dragged me from my intellectual feast." "Before I was sixteen I had exhausted all that could be learnt in English of the Arabs and Persians, the Tartars and Turks." His mind was "a curious mixture of erudition that might have puzzled a doctor, and ignorance of which a schoolboy would have been ashamed." Going up to Magdalen at the age of fifteen, he found Oxford at its lowest abyss of idleness and ignorance, and the only event of his residence there was his unexpected conversion to the Catholic Church. His outraged parent promptly banished him to Lausanne under the care of M. Pavilliard, a Swiss Minister of Religion, and eighteen months of exile in the bleak atmosphere of Swiss Calvinism quickly destroyed in him not merely his Catholic beliefs but all vestiges of religious faith.¹ The Swiss sojourn resulted in Gibbon learning French, so well

that he came to speak and write it with the same ease, as his mother-tongue; and it was at this time that he met the beautiful Suzanne Curchod. This was the solitary romance of Gibbon's life; once again the outraged parent interposed his veto, and Gibbon "sighed as a lover, and obeyed as a son." *La belle Curchod* consoled herself with Necker, the famous French financier, by whom she became the mother of the notorious Madame de Stael. It is pleasant to record that she and the historian eventually became lifelong and devoted friends.

On his return to England, Gibbon joined the Hampshire militia. The work was distasteful and the company in which he found himself uncongenial, but "the discipline and evolutions of a modern battle gave me a clearer notion of the phalanx and the legion, and the captain of the Hampshire grenadiers was not useless to the historian of the Roman Empire." Demobilized at the Peace of Paris, Gibbon began seriously to contemplate a great historical work. Various schemes floated before his vision, only to be rejected. But the call came when he reached Rome. It can only be told in his own words. "My temper is not very susceptible of enthusiasm, and the enthusiasm which I do not feel I have ever scorned to affect. But at the distance of twenty-five years I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the Eternal City. After a sleepless night, I trod with a lofty step the ruins of the Forum. Each memorable spot where Romulus stood, or Tully spoke, or Cæsar fell, was at once present to my eye, and several days of intoxication were lost and enjoyed before I could descend to a cool and minute examination." "It was at Rome, on the 15th October, 1764, as I sat musing amid the ruins of the Capitol, while the barefooted friars were singing vespers in the temple of Jupiter, that the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind."

After his father's death in 1770. Gibbon settled in London,

ie a popular member of the literary circles of the day. A writer of the time compares and contrasts him with his great contemporary. "The learned Gibbon" says George Colman, "was a curious counterbalance to the learned (may I not say the less learned) Johnson. Their manners and tastes, both in writing and conversation, were as different as their habiliments. On the day I first sat down with Johnson in his rusty-brown suit and his black worsted stockings, Gibbon was placed opposite to me in a suit of flowered velvet with a bag and sword. Each had his measured phraseology, and Johnson's famous parallel between Dryden and Pope might be loosely parodied in reference to himself and Gibbon. Johnson's style was grand, and Gibbon's elegant; the stateliness of the former was sometimes pedantic, and the latter was occasionally finical. Johnson marched to kettledrums and trumpets, Gibbon moved to flutes and hautboys. Johnson hewed passages through the Alps, while Gibbon levelled walks through parks and gardens.¹ . . . The great historian was light and playful, suiting his matter to the capacity of the boy: but it was done *more suo*—still his mannerism prevailed, still he tapped his snuff-box, still he smirked and smiled, and rounded his periods with the same air of good-breeding, as if he were conversing with men. His mouth, mellifluous as Plato's, was a round hole nearly in the centre of his visage."

His person looked so funnily obese
As if a Pagod, growing large as man,
Had rashly wandered off its chimney piece,
To visit a Chinese upon a far.
Such his exterior, curious 'twas to scan!
And oft he rapped his snuff-box, cocked his snout,
And ere his polished periods he began,
Bent forwards stretching his forefinger out
And talked in phrase as round as he was roundabout.

Meanwhile, he was working hard at his great task, devoting his mornings from seven o'clock to study, and the evenings

¹Boswell calls Gibbon "an ugly, affected, disgusting fellow, who poisons our club to me."

to Society. Slowly the great scheme unrolled itself in his mind. "At the outset all was dark and doubtful; even the title of the work, the true æra of the decline and fall of the empire, the limits of the Introduction, the division of the chapters, and the order of the narrative, and I was often tempted to cast away the labour of seven years. The style of an author should be the image of his mind, but the choice and command of language is the fruit of exercise. Many experiments were made before I could hit the middle tone between a dull chronicle and a rhetorical declamation; three times did I compare the first Chapter, twice the second and third, before I was tolerably satisfied with their effect." The last two chapters required three successive revisals, and the first volume occupied three years in all.

It was during this period that Gibbon (chiefly, one fears, for mercenary reasons,) was induced to enter Parliament. One morning, at half-past seven, "as he was destroying an army of barbarians," a messenger arrived with an invitation to him to sit for the borough of Liskeard. Gibbon regarded politics with cynical indifference, and never opened his mouth in the House. Even the rebellion of the American Colonies left him unmoved. "The great speakers filled him with despair, the bad ones with terror." He accepted from Lord North a post on the Board of Trade, and this sinecure enabled him to work in comfort. In 1776, the first volume came out. Its success was immediate. "The first impression was exhausted in a few days; a second and third edition were scarcely adequate to the demand; the bookseller's property was twice invaded by the pirates of Dublin; the book was on every table, and almost on every toilette." Robertson, Walpole, and his old friends the Neckers, hastened to offer their congratulations. Paris was as enthusiastic as London. "Whether I consider the dignity of your style," wrote Hume, "the depth of your matter or the extensiveness of your learning, I must regard the work as equally the object of esteem."

* In 1781 two more quartos appeared, and two years later, Gibbon left London to stay with his friend Deyverdun at Lausanne in order to finish his task in unbroken calm amid the vine-trellises and orange trees of that delectable spot. For four years he never went ten miles out of Lausanne. His industry was prodigious. The fifth volume was completed in twenty-one months, and the sixth in a year. And so the great work, the greatest, perhaps, ever undertaken by a single writer, was finished. "On the day, or rather the night, of the 27th of June, 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve I wrote the last lines of the last page in a summerhouse in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a berceau, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and perhaps the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future fate of my history, the life of the historian must be short and precarious." He went straight to London with his precious burden, and on May 8th, 1788, the last three volumes saw the light. His life-work was finished.

Gibbon's closing years were clouded by the loss of many old and valued friends. In 1789 Deyverdun was taken. He still, however, enjoyed the society, at Lausanne, of the Neckers and of Lord and Lady Sheffield. In 1793, news of the death of Lady Sheffield caused him to return to England, and he himself died of dropsy at Sheffield Place on January 7th, 1794, in the fifty-sixth year of his age.

II

THE *Decline and Fall* is the greatest historical work in the English language, and one of the greatest in all literature. Two features differentiate it from other works of the same kind, the vastness of the design, and the masterly manner in which it is coordinated. The story of the decline of the Roman Empire is the most stupendous catastrophe in history. The Empire under Augustus and his immediate successors included almost the entire civilized world, and gave to its millions of subjects blessings never enjoyed before,—a uniform legal code, equality of treatment, freedom of action and belief, and safety of person and property. Inside this fabric grew up another organization, despised and neglected at first, the Christian Church, forming a state within a state, which, when the huge structure collapsed under the combined influences of internal decay and external pressure, tamed its rude conquerors and moulded them into fresh nations and kingdoms. It is the story of the death and rebirth, not merely of an Empire, but of civilization itself.

And Gibbon handles the theme in a manner worthy of itself. It did not come to him all at once. Originally he intended to confine himself to the Eternal City; by insensible degrees he was led to include, first Constantinople, then Persia, and finally the Mahommedan world. Yet he manipulates this huge and unwieldy mass of material with almost epic power. The vast panorama unfolds itself before the reader's eyes, perfectly proportioned and arranged. It marches on, someone has remarked, with the steady and measured tramp of the Roman legion; or, to vary the simile, it has been compared to "a magnificent Roman aqueduct, spanning over the chasm which separates the ancient from the modern world." Another point which impresses us is the extraordinary degree in which Gibbon combines literary excellence and grasp of his subject with accuracy of detail. Few subjects become

obsolete so quickly as history, yet modern research, with all its probing into original sources, has merely served to confirm the accuracy in all substantial points of the *Decline and Fall*. In his regard, not merely for literary authorities, but for coins, inscriptions and archæological evidence, Gibbon was a century before his time. And it must be remembered that he had no predecessor in his work, and his authorities were not historians like Thucydides and Livy and Tacitus, or orators like Demosthenes and Cicero, but the barbarous and almost unreadable jargon of Ammianus Macellinus and the debased Greek of the Byzantine age. To extract from this dross the gold of his matchless narrative was in itself a work of genius.

Perhaps the most serious charge that has been brought against Gibbon is that of *superficiality*. He sees only the outside of things, it has been said. His Roman Empire consists only of Emperors and generals and great statesmen; the everyday life of the people, and the social and economic conditions, receive but little attention. Yet they played a decisive part in the great catastrophe which it is his business to chronicle. In the same way, he speaks of the overthrow of the Empire by the barbarians, forgetting that the Empire had already been "barbarized" for centuries, and that the real struggle was between two rival parties of barbarians, one within the Empire and one without it. Gibbon is, moreover, responsible for the popular but erroneous view of the Byzantine Empire as frivolous and degenerate, whereas it was in reality a bulwark of civilization, and the guardian of the ancient classical learning until the West became sufficiently civilized to receive it and profit by it.

Another charge brought against Gibbon is his anti-Christian bias,—“sapping a solemn creed with solemn sneer,” in the words of Byron. Gibbon's attitude towards Christianity is that of the eighteenth century deist, and he has the typical eighteenth century distrust of enthusiasm and enthusiasts, Julian and Mahomet no less than the

Christian martyrs and hermits. The fall of the Empire is in his mind indissolubly linked with "the triumph of barbarism and religion." "Europe was overrun by barbarians, and Asia by monks." He refuses to recognize that the death of the old order was the birth of the new, and that Christianity merely hastened the process. The difference between Gibbon and Milman is that the former is always looking backward and the latter forward. Gibbon ascribes the rise of Christianity, or rather, attempts to explain it away, on purely natural grounds, and his own view is scarcely concealed in his statement that "the various modes of worship that prevailed in the Roman world were considered by the people as equally true, by the philosophers as equally false, and the magistrates as equally useful." His own creed was doubtless that of his hero Genghis Khan, "whose first and only article of faith was the existence of One God, the author of all good, Who fills by His presence the Heavens and the Earth which He has created by His power." Gibbon's dislike of what he considers to be fanaticism led, no doubt, to such violations of good taste as his callous remark about "the annual consumption of one hundred and fifty martyrs" in the Neronian persecution, which provoked Porson's vicious retort that "Gibbon's humanity never sleeps save when women are being ravished or Christians violated." On the other hand, Gibbon never speaks with disrespect of the Founder of Christianity or His teaching. His famous discussion of the Incarnation in the forty-seventh chapter is a model of theological argument, and earned from no less an authority than Cardinal Newman the opinion that Gibbon is "the only Church historian worthy of the name who has written in English."

The merits of Gibbon's style have been the object of much controversy, tinged, it is to be feared, by some of the theological and political odium aroused by his work. With his stately, Latinized periods, he could scarcely hope to be a *persona grata* with the new Romantic School, and

Lamb, with quite unwonted bitterness, classes the *Decline and Fall* among the *biblia abiblia*, and speaks contemptuously of "cursed Gibbonian fine writing." His aim was to acquire a "middle tone between a dull chronicle and a rhetorical declamation," and he only achieved his object by patient effort. "It has always been my practice to cast a long paragraph in a single mould, to try it in my ear, to deposit it in my memory, but to suspend the action of my pen, till I had given the last polish to my work." The result is admirably adapted to the end in view. Gibbon's style has exactly the massive grandeur, the stateliness and restraint which his subject demands. Indeed, his chief defect is that his grandeur tends to become monotonous: he speaks with the same solemnity of a Byzantine Emperor and a barbarian chieftain. He lacks the lighter touch. He is at his best in his vivid descriptive narratives,—Rome in the fifth century, Constantinople under Justinian, Arabia at the time of the birth of Mahomet, the rise and fall of Zenobia, the death of Julian. As a typical example of his style, let us select for analysis a sentence like the following:—

"The early Christian was encompassed with infernal snares in every convivial entertainment, as often as his friends, invoking the hospitable deities, poured out libations to each other's happiness. When the bride, struggling with well-affected reluctance, was forced in hymeneal pomp over the threshold of her new habitation, or when the sad procession of the dead slowly moved towards the funeral pile, the Christian on these interesting occasions was compelled to desert the persons who were dearest to him, rather than contract the guilt inherent in these impious ceremonies."

Here nearly all the leading characteristics of Gibbon's style are exemplified, his irony, his sparkling wit, his Latinisms, and above all, what Professor Saintsbury calls "the peculiar roll of sentence; conducted throughout with a wave-like movement, and ending with a sound so arranged

as to echo over the interval of sense and breadth till the next is well on its way."

"That Gibbon should ever be replaced," said Freeman, "seems impossible. That wonderful man monopolized, so to speak, the historical genius and the historical learning of a whole generation, and has left little of either for his contemporaries. . . . Whatever else is read, Gibbon must be read too."

BOOK II

BYZANTIUM AND THE NEAR EAST

BOOK II

BYZANTIUM AND THE NEAR EAST

CHAPTER I

ZENOBIA

(A.D. 266—272)

[INTRODUCTION.—The story of the meteoric reign of the beautiful Zenobia is one of the most romantic incidents in *The Decline and Fall*. Palmyra, Solomon's Tadmor in the Wilderness, situated in an oasis of the Syrian desert, 150 miles N.E. of Damascus and five days' journey from the Euphrates, had been from immemorial times a town of vast wealth, since here converge the great trade-routes from the Phœnician ports, the Persian Gulf and Arabia. During the long struggle between Rome and Parthia, Palmyra, the buffer-state, rose to the position of Mistress of the East, and later, her semi-Romanized Arab prince Odenathus was made Dux Orientis in order to check the rising power of the Sassanians (A.D. 262). Taking advantage of the weakness of the Empire, he gradually annexed Asia Minor and Arabia. His widow Zenobia went further, and occupied Egypt in the name of her young son. This was too much for Rome. The Emperor Aurelian invaded Palmyra, and after a series of battles the capital capitulated. Zenobia and her son were sent in honourable captivity to Rome where she became a Roman matron, but her ministers, including Longinus, the author of the celebrated treatise *On the Sublime*, were executed. The ruins of the temple of Baalbek still excite the admiration of the traveller.]

AURELIAN had no sooner secured the person and provinces of Tetricus, than he turned his arms against Zenobia, the celebrated queen of Palmyra and the East. Modern Europe has produced several illustrious women who have sustained with glory the weight of empire; nor is our own age destitute of such distinguished characters. But if we except the doubtful achievements of Semiramis, Zenobia is perhaps the only female whose superior genius broke through the servile indolence imposed on her sex by the climate and manners of Asia. She claimed her descent

from the Macedonian kings of Egypt, equalled in beauty her ancestor Cleopatra, and far surpassed that princess in chastity and valour. Zenobia was esteemed the most lovely as well as the most heroic of her sex. She was of dark complexion (for in speaking of a lady these trifles become important). Her teeth were of a pearly whiteness, and her large black eyes sparkled with uncommon fire, tempered by the most attractive sweetness. Her voice was strong and harmonious. Her manly understanding was strengthened and adorned by study. She was not ignorant of the Latin tongue, but possessed in equal perfection the Greek, the Syriac, and the Egyptian languages. She had drawn up for her own use an epitome of oriental history, and familiarly compared the beauties of Homer and Plato under the tuition of the sublime Longinus.

This accomplished woman gave her hand to Odenathus, who from a private station raised himself to the dominion of the East. She soon became the friend and companion of a hero. In the intervals of war, Odenathus passionately delighted in the exercise of hunting; he pursued with ardour the wild beasts of the desert, lions, panthers, and bears; and the ardour of Zenobia in that dangerous amusement was not inferior to his own. She had inured her constitution to fatigue, disdained the use of a covered carriage, generally appeared on horseback in a military habit, and sometimes marched several miles on foot at the head of the troops. The success of Odenathus was in a great measure ascribed to her incomparable prudence and fortitude. Their splendid victories over the Great King, whom they twice pursued as far as the gates of Ctesiphon, laid the foundations of their united fame and power. The armies which they commanded, and the provinces which they had saved, acknowledged not any other sovereigns than their invincible chiefs. The senate and people of Rome revered a stranger who had avenged their captive emperor, and even the insensible son of Valerian accepted Odenathus for his legitimate colleague.

After a successful expedition against the Gothic plunderers of Asia, the Palmyrenian prince returned to the city of Emesa in Syria. Invincible in war, he was there cut off by domestic treason, and his favourite amusement of hunting was the cause, or at least the occasion, of his death. His nephew, Mæonius, presumed to dart his javelin before that of his uncle ; and, though admonished of his error, repeated the same insolence. As a monarch and as a sportsman, Odenathus was provoked : took away his horse, a mark of ignominy among the barbarians, and chastised the rash youth by a short confinement. The offence was soon forgot, but the punishment was remembered ; and Mæonius, with a few daring associates, assassinated his uncle in the midst of a great entertainment. Herod, the son of Odenathus, though not of Zenobia, a young man of a soft and effeminate temper, was killed with his father. But Mæonius obtained only the pleasure of revenge by this bloody deed. He had scarcely time to assume the title of Augustus, before he was sacrificed by Zenobia to the memory of her husband.

With the assistance of his most faithful friends, she immediately filled the vacant throne, and governed with manly counsels Palmyra, Syria, and the East for five years. By the death of Odenathus, that authority was at an end which the senate had granted him only as a personal distinction ; but his martial widow, disdaining both the senate and Gallienus, obliged one of the Roman generals, who was sent against her, to retreat into Europe, with the loss of his army and his reputation. Instead of the little passions which so frequently perplex a female reign, the steady administration of Zenobia was guided by the most judicious maxims of policy. If it was expedient to pardon, she could calm her resentment ; if it was necessary to punish, she could impose silence on the voice of pity. Her strict economy was accused of avarice ; yet on every proper occasion she appeared magnificent and liberal. The neighbouring states of Arabia, Armenia, and Persia, dreaded

her enmity, and solicited her alliance. To the dominion of Odenathus, which extended from the Euphrates to the frontiers of Bithynia, his widow added the inheritance of her ancestors, the populous and fertile kingdom of Egypt. The emperor Claudius acknowledged her merit, and was content that, while *he* pursued the Gothic war, *she* should assert the dignity of the empire in the East. The conduct however, of Zenobia was attended with some ambiguity, nor is it unlikely that she had conceived the design of erecting an independent and hostile monarchy. She blended with the popular manners of Roman princes the stately pomp of the courts of Asia, and exacted from her subjects the same adoration that was paid to the successors of Cyrus. She bestowed on her three sons a Latin education, and often showed them to the troops adorned with the Imperial purple. For herself she reserved the diadem with the splendid but doubtful title of Queen of the East.

When Aurelian passed over into Asia, against an adversary whose sex alone could render her an object of contempt, his presence restored obedience to the province of Bithynia, already shaken by the arms and intrigues of Zenobia. Advancing at the head of his legions, he accepted the submission of Ancyra, and was admitted into Tyan after an obstinate siege, by the help of a perfidious citizen. The generous though fierce temper of Aurelian abandoned the traitor to the rage of the soldiers: a superstitious reverence induced him to treat with lenity the countrymen of Apollonius the philosopher. Antioch was deserted at his approach, till the emperor, by his salutary edicts, called the fugitives, and granted a general pardon to all who, from necessity rather than choice, had been engaged in the service of the Palmyrenian queen. The unexpected mildness of such a conduct reconciled the minds of the Syrians, and, as far as the gates of Emesa, the wishes of the people seconded the terror of his arms.

Zenobia would have ill deserved her reputation, had she indolently permitted the emperor of the West to approach

within a hundred miles of her capital. The fate of the East was decided in two great battles; so similar in almost every circumstance that we can scarcely distinguish them from each other, except by observing that the first was fought near Antioch, and the second near Emesa. In both, the queen of Palmyra animated the armies by her presence, and devolved the execution of her orders on Zabdas, who had already signalized his military talents by the conquest of Egypt. The numerous forces of Zenobia consisted for the most part of light archers, and of heavy cavalry clothed in complete steel. The Moorish and Illyrian horse of Aurelian were unable to sustain the ponderous charge of their antagonists. They fled in real or affected disorder, engaged the Palmyrenians in a laborious pursuit, harassed them by a desultory combat, and at length discomfited this impenetrable but unwieldy body of cavalry. The light infantry, in the meantime, when they had exhausted their quivers, remaining without protection against a closer onset, exposed their naked sides to the swords of the legions. Aurelian had chosen these veteran troops, who were usually stationed on the Upper Danube, and whose valour had been severely tried in the Alemannic war. After the defeat of Emesa, Zenobia found it impossible to collect a third army. As far as the frontier of Egypt, the nations subject to her empire had joined the standard of the conqueror, who detached Probus, the bravest of his generals, to possess himself of the Egyptian provinces. Palmyra was the last resource of the widow of Odenathus. She retired within the walls of her capital, made every preparation for a vigorous resistance, and declared, with the intrepidity of a heroine, that the last moment of her reign and of her life should be the same.

Amid the barren deserts of Arabia, a few cultivated spots rise like islands out of the sandy ocean. Even the name of Tadmor, or Palmyra, by its signification in the Syriac as well as in the Latin language, denoted the multitude of,

palm trees which afforded shade and verdure to that temperate region. The air was pure, and the soil, watered by some invaluable springs, was capable of producing fruits as well as corn. A place possessed of such singular advantages, and situated at a convenient distance, between the Gulf of Persia and the Mediterranean, was soon frequented by the caravans which conveyed to the nations of Europe a considerable part of the rich commodities of India.



Photo · Bonjils.

PALMYRA: TEMPLE OF THE SUN

Palmyra insensibly increased into an opulent and independent city, and, connecting the Roman and the Parthian monarchies by the mutual benefits of commerce, was suffered to observe an humble neutrality, till at length, after the victories of Trajan, the little republic sunk into the bosom of Rome, and flourished more than one hundred and fifty years in the subordinate though honourable rank

judge from a few remaining inscriptions, that the wealthy Palmyrenians constructed those temples, palaces, and porticos of Grecian architecture, whose ruins, scattered over an extent of several miles, have deserved the curiosity of our travellers. The elevation of Odenathus and Zenobia appeared to reflect new splendour on their country, and Palmyra for a while stood forth the rival of Rome: but the competition was fatal, and the ages of prosperity were sacrificed to a moment of glory.

In his march over the sandy desert, between Emesa and Palmyra, the Emperor Aurelian was perpetually harassed by the Arabs; nor could he always defend his army, and especially his baggage, from these flying troops of active and daring robbers, who watched the moment of surprise, and eluded the slow pursuit of the legions. The siege of Palmyra was an object far more difficult and important, and the emperor, who with incessant vigour pressed the attacks in person, was himself wounded with a dart. "The Roman people," says Aurelian, in an original letter, "speak with contempt of the war which I am waging against a woman. They are ignorant both of the character and of the power of Zenobia. It is impossible to enumerate her warlike preparations, of stones, of arrows, and of every species of missile weapons. Every part of the walls is provided with two or three *balistæ*, and artificial fires are thrown from her military engines. The fear of punishment has armed her with a desperate courage. Yet still I trust in the protecting deities of Rome, who have hitherto been favourable to all my undertakings." Doubtful, however, of the protection of the gods, and of the event of the siege, Aurelian judged it more prudent to offer terms of an advantageous capitulation: to the queen, a splendid retreat; to the citizens, their ancient privileges. His proposals were obstinately rejected, and the refusal was accompanied with insult.

The firmness of Zenobia was supported by the hope that in a very short time famine would compel the Roman army

to repossess the desert ; and by the reasonable expectation that the kings of the East, and particularly the Persian monarch, would arm in the defence of their most naturally. But fortune and the perseverance of Aurelian overcame every obstacle. The death of Sapor, which happened about this time, distracted the councils of Persia, and the inconsiderable succours that attempted to relieve Palmyra were easily intercepted either by the arms or the liberality of the emperor. From every part of Syria, a regular succession of convoys safely arrived in the camp, which was increased by the return of Probus with his victorious troops from the conquest of Egypt. It was then that Zenobia resolved to fly. She mounted the fleetest of her dromedaries, and had already reached the banks of the Euphrates about sixty miles from Palmyra, when she was overtaken by the pursuit of Aurelian's light horse, seized, and brought back a captive to the feet of the emperor. Her capital subsequently surrendered, and was treated with unexpected lenity. The arms, horses, and camels, with an immense treasure of gold, silver, silk, and precious stones, were delivered to the conqueror, who, leaving only a garrison of six hundred archers, returned to Emesa, and employed some time in the distribution of rewards and punishments at the end of so memorable a war, which restored to the obedience of Rome those provinces that had renounced their allegiance since the captivity of Valerian.

When the Syrian queen was brought into the presence of Aurelian, he sternly asked her, How she had presumed to rise in arms against the emperors of Rome ? The answer of Zenobia was a prudent mixture of respect and firmness. " Because I disdained to consider as Roman emperors Aureolus or a Gallienus. You alone I acknowledge as conqueror and my sovereign." But, as female fortitude is commonly artificial, so it is seldom steady or consistent. The courage of Zenobia deserted her in the hour of trial ; she trembled at the angry clamours of the soldiers, and called aloud for her immediate execution, forgot the gener-

and on the appointed day appeared to the number of about eighty thousand. But as the debates of so tumultuous an assembly could not have been directed by the authority of reason, or influenced by the art of policy, the Persian synod was reduced, by successive operations, to forty thousand, to four thousand, to four hundred, to forty, and at last to seven Magi, the most respected for their learning and piety. One of these, Erdaviraph, a young but holy prelate, received from the hands of his brethren three cups of soporiferous wine. He drank them off, and instantly fell into a long and profound sleep. As soon as he waked, he related to the king and to the believing multitude his journey to Heaven, and his intimate conferences with the Deity. Every doubt was silenced by this supernatural evidence ; and the articles of the faith of Zoroaster were fixed with equal authority and precision. A short delineation of that celebrated system will be found useful, not only to display the character of the Persian nation, but to illustrate many of their most important transactions, both in peace and war, with the Roman empire.

The great and fundamental article of the system was the celebrated doctrine of the two principles ; a bold and injudicious attempt of Eastern philosophy to reconcile the existence of moral and physical evil with the attributes of a beneficent Creator and Governor of the world. The first and original Being, in whom, or by whom, the universe exists, is denominated in the writings of Zoroaster, *Time without bounds* ; but it must be confessed that this infinite substance seems rather a metaphysical abstraction of the mind than a real object endowed with self-consciousness, or possessed of moral perfections. From either the blind or the intelligent operation of this infinite Time, which bears but too near an affinity with the Chaos of the Greeks, the two secondary but active principles of the universe were from all eternity produced, Ormusd and Ahriman, each of them possessed of the powers of creation, but each disposed, by his invariable nature, to exercise them with different

designs. The principle of good is eternally absorbed in light : the principle of evil eternally buried in darkness. The wise benevolence of Ormusd formed man capable of virtue, and abundantly provided his fair habitation with the materials of happiness. By his vigilant providence, the motion of the planets, the order of the seasons, and the temperate mixture of the elements are preserved. But the malice of Ahriman has long since pierced *Ormusd's egg* ; or, in other words, has violated the harmony of his works. Since that fatal eruption, the most minute particles of good and evil are intimately intermingled and agitated together ; the rankest poisons spring up amidst the most salutary plants ; deluges, earthquakes, and conflagrations attest the conflict of Nature ; and the little world of man is perpetually shaken by vice and misfortune. Whilst the rest of human kind are led away captives in the chains of their **infernal** enemy, the faithful Persian alone reserves his religious adoration for his friend and protector Ormusd, and fights under his banner of light, in the full confidence that he shall, in the last day, share the glory of his triumph. At that decisive period the enlightened wisdom of goodness will render the power of Ormusd superior to the furious malice of his rival. Ahriman and his followers, disarmed and subdued, will sink into their native darkness ; and virtue will maintain the eternal peace and harmony of the universe.

The theology of Zoroaster was darkly comprehended by foreigners, and even by the far greater number of his disciples ; but the most careless observers were struck with the philosophic simplicity of the Persian worship. " That people," says Herodotus, " rejects the use of temples, of altars, and of statues, and smiles at the folly of those nations, who imagine that the gods are sprung from, or bear any affinity with, the human nature. The tops of the highest mountains are the places chosen for sacrifices. Hymns and prayers are the principal worship : the Supreme God

they are addressed." Yet, at the same time, in the true spirit of a polytheist, he accuses them of adoring Earth, Water, Fire, the Winds, and the Sun and Moon. But the Persians of every age have denied the charge, and explained the equivocal conduct which might appear to give a colour to it. The elements, and more particularly Fire, Light, and the Sun, whom they called Mithra, were the objects of their religious reverence, because they considered them as the purest symbols, the noblest productions, and the most powerful agents of the Divine Power and Nature.

Every mode of religion, to make a deep and lasting impression on the human mind, must exercise our obedience by enjoining practices of devotion, for which we can assign no reason; and must acquire our esteem, by inculcating moral duties analogous to the dictates of our own hearts. The religion of Zoroaster was abundantly provided with the former, and possessed a sufficient portion of the latter. At the age of puberty the faithful Persian was invested with a mysterious girdle, the badge of the divine protection; and from that moment all the actions of his life, even the most indifferent or the most necessary, were sanctified by their peculiar prayers, ejaculations, or genuflexions; the omission of which, under any circumstances, was a grievous sin, not inferior in guilt to the violation of the moral duties. The moral duties, however, of justice, mercy, liberality, etc., were in their turn required of the disciple of Zoroaster, who wished to escape the persecution of Ahriman, and to live with Ormusd in a blissful eternity, where the degree of felicity will be exactly proportioned to the degree of virtue and piety.

But there are some remarkable instances in which Zoroaster lays aside the prophet, assumes the legislator, and discovers a liberal concern for private and public happiness, seldom to be found among the grovelling or visionary schemes of superstition. Fasting and celibacy, the common means of purchasing the divine favour, he condemns with abhorrence, as a criminal rejection of the best gifts of provi-

dence. The saint, in the Magian religion, is obliged to beget children, to plant useful trees, to destroy noxious animals, to convey water to the dry lands of Persia, and to work out his salvation by pursuing all the labours of agriculture. We may quote from the Zend Avesta a wise and benevolent maxim, which compensates for many an absurdity. "He who sows the ground with care and diligence acquires a greater stock of religious merit than he could gain by the repetition of ten thousand prayers." In the spring of every year a festival was celebrated, destined to represent the primitive equality, and the present connexion, of mankind. The stately kings of Persia, exchanging their vain pomp for more genuine greatness, freely mingled with the humblest but most useful of their subjects. On that day the husbandmen were admitted, without distinction, to the table of the king and his satraps. The monarch accepted their petitions, inquired into their grievances, and conversed with them on the most equal terms. "From your labours," was he accustomed to say (and to say with truth, if not with sincerity), "from your labours we receive our subsistence; you derive your tranquillity from our vigilance. Since, therefore, we are mutually necessary to each other, let us live together like brothers in concord and love." Such a festival must indeed have degenerated, in a wealthy and despotic empire, into a theatrical representation; but it was at least a comedy well worthy of a royal audience, and which might sometimes imprint a salutary lesson on the mind of a young prince.

Had Zoroaster, in all his institutions, invariably supported this exalted character, his name would deserve a place with those of Numa and Confucius, and his system would be justly entitled to all the applause which it has pleased some of our divines, and even some of our philosophers, to bestow on it. But in that motley composition, dictated by reason and passion, by enthusiasm and by selfish motives, some useful and sublime truths were disgraced by a mixture of the most abject and dangerous superstition. The Magi, or

sacerdotal order, were extremely numerous, since, as we have already seen, fourscore thousand of them were convened in a general council. Their forces were multiplied by discipline. A regular hierarchy was diffused through all the provinces of Persia; and the Archimagus, who resided at Balch, was respected as the visible head of the church, and the lawful successor of Zoroaster. The property of the Magi was very considerable. Besides the less invidious possession of a large tract of the most fertile lands of Media, they levied a general tax on the fortunes and the industry of the Persians. "Though your good works," says the interested prophet, "exceed in number the leaves of the trees, the drops of rain, the stars in the heaven, or the sands on the sea-shore, they will all be unprofitable to you, unless they are accepted by the *destour*, or priest. To obtain the acceptance of this guide to salvation, you must faithfully pay him *tithes* of all you possess, of your goods, of your lands, and of your money. If the *destour* be satisfied, your soul will escape hell tortures; you will secure praise in this world and happiness in the next. For the *destours* are the teachers of religion; they know all things, and they deliver all men."

These convenient maxims of reverence and implicit faith were doubtless imprinted with care on the tender minds of youth; since the Magi were the masters of education in Persia, and to their hands the children even of the royal family were intrusted. The Persian priests, who were of a speculative genius, preserved and investigated the secrets of Oriental philosophy; and acquired, either by superior knowledge or superior art, the reputation of being well versed in some occult sciences, which have derived their appellation from the Magi. Those of more active dispositions mixed with the world in courts and cities; and it is observed that the administration of Artaxerxes was in a great measure directed by the counsels of the sacerdotal order, whose dignity, either from policy or devotion, that prince restored to its ancient splendour.

The first counsel of the Magi was agreeable to the unsociable genius of their faith, to the practice of ancient kings, and even to the example of their legislator, who had fallen a victim to a religious war excited by his own intolerant zeal. By an edict of Artaxerxes, the exercise of every worship, except that of Zoroaster, was severely prohibited. The temples of the Parthians, and the statues of their deified monarchs, were thrown down with ignominy. The sword of Aristotle (such was the name given by the Orientals to the polytheism and philosophy of the Greeks) was easily broken: the flames of persecution soon reached the more stubborn Jews and Christians; nor did they spare the heretics of their own nation and religion. The majesty of Ormusd, who was jealous of a rival, was seconded by the despotism of Artaxerxes, who could not suffer a rebel; and the schismatics within his vast empire were soon reduced to the inconsiderable number of eighty thousand. This spirit of persecution reflects dishonour on the religion of Zoroaster; but, as it was not productive of any civil commotion, it served to strengthen the new monarchy by uniting all the various inhabitants of Persia in the bands of religious zeal.

II. Artaxerxes, by his valour and conduct, had wrested the sceptre of the East from the ancient royal family of Parthia. There still remained the more difficult task of establishing, throughout the vast extent of Persia, a uniform and vigorous administration. The weak indulgence of the Arsacides had resigned to their sons and brothers the principal provinces and the greatest offices of the kingdom, in the nature of hereditary possessions. The *vitaxæ*, or eighteen most powerful satraps, were permitted to assume the regal title, and the vain pride of the monarch was delighted with a nominal dominion over so many vassal kings. Even tribes of barbarians in their mountains, and the Greek cities of Upper Asia, within their walls, scarcely acknowledged, or seldom obeyed, any superior; and the Parthian empire exhibited, under other names, a lively

image of the feudal system which has since prevailed in Europe. But the active victor, at the head of a numerous and disciplined army, visited in person every province of Persia. The defeat of the boldest rebels and the reduction of the strongest fortifications diffused the terror of his arms and prepared the way for the peaceful reception of his authority. An obstinate resistance was fatal to the chiefs ; but their followers were treated with lenity. A cheerful submission was rewarded with honours and riches ; but the prudent Artaxerxes, suffering no person except himself to assume the title of king, abolished every intermediate power between the throne and the people. His kingdom, nearly equal in extent to modern Persia, was, on every side, bounded by the sea or by great rivers,—by the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Araxes, the Oxus, and the Indus ; by the Caspian Sea and the Gulf of Persia. That country was computed to contain, in the last century, five hundred and fifty-four cities, sixty thousand villages, and about forty millions of souls. If we compare the administration of the house of Sassan with that of the house of Sesi, the political influence of the Magian with that of the Mahometan religion, we shall probably infer that the kingdom of Artaxerxes contained at least as great a number of cities, villages, and inhabitants. But it must likewise be confessed that in every age the want of harbours on the sea coast, and the scarcity of fresh water in the inland provinces, have been very unfavourable to the commerce and agriculture of the Persians ; who, in the calculation of their numbers, seem to have indulged one of the meanest, though most common, artifices of national vanity.

II

Khosrau the Great

Disputes have often arisen between the sovereigns of Asia, for the title of king of the world ; while the contest has proved that it could not belong to either of the competitors. The kingdom of the Turks was bounded by the

Oxus or Gihon ; and *Touran* was separated by that great river from the rival monarchy of *Iran*, or Persia, which, in a smaller compass, contained perhaps a larger measure of power and population. The Persians, who alternately invaded and repulsed the Turks and the Romans, were still ruled by the house of Sassan, which ascended the throne three hundred years before the accession of Justinian. His contemporary, Cabades, or Kobad, had been successful in war against the emperor Anastasius ; but the reign of that prince was distracted by civil and religious troubles. A prisoner in the hands of his subjects ; an exile among the enemies of Persia ; he recovered his liberty by prostituting the honour of his wife, and regained his kingdom with the dangerous and mercenary aid of the Barbarians who had slain his father. His nobles were suspicious that Kobad never forgave the authors of his expulsion, or even those of his restoration. The people were deluded and inflamed by the fanaticism of Mazdak, who asserted the community of women and the equality of mankind, whilst he appropriated the richest lands and most beautiful females to the use of his sectaries. The view of these disorders, which had been fomented by his laws and example, embittered the declining age of the Persian monarch ; and his fears were increased by the consciousness of his design to reverse the natural and customary order of succession, in favour of his third and most favoured son, so famous under the names of Chosroes and Nushirvan. To render the youth more illustrious in the eyes of the nations, Kobad was desirous that he should be adopted by the emperor Justin ; the hope of peace inclined the Byzantine court to accept this singular proposal ; and Chosroes might have acquired a specious claim to the inheritance of his Roman parent. But the future mischief was diverted by the advice of the quæstor Proclus : a difficulty was started, whether the adoption should be performed as a civil or military rite ; the treaty was abruptly dissolved ; and the sense of this indignity sunk deep into the mind of Chosroes,

who had already advanced to the Tigris on his road to Constantinople. His father did not long survive the disappointment of his wishes ; the testament of their deceased sovereign was read in the assembly of the nobles ; and a powerful faction, prepared for the event and regardless of the priority of age, exalted Chosroes to the throne of Persia. He filled that throne during a prosperous period of forty-eight years ; and the JUSTICE of Nushirvan is celebrated as the theme of immortal praise by the nations of the East.

But the justice of kings is understood by themselves, and even by their subjects, with an ample indulgence for the gratification of passion and interest. The virtue of Chosroes was that of a conqueror, who, in the measures of peace and war, is excited by ambition and restrained by prudence ; who confounds the greatness with the happiness of a nation, and calmly devotes the lives of thousands to the fame, or even the amusement, of a single man. In his domestic administration, the just Nushirvan would merit, in our feelings, the appellation of a tyrant. His two elder brothers had been deprived of their fair expectations of the diadem ; their future life, between the supreme rank and the condition of subjects, was anxious to themselves and formidable to their master ; fear as well as revenge might tempt them to rebel ; the slightest evidence of a conspiracy satisfied the author of their wrongs ; and the repose of Chosroes was secured by the death of these unhappy princes, with their families and adherents. One guiltless youth was saved and dismissed by the compassion of a veteran general ; and this act of humanity, which was revealed by his son, overbalanced the merit of reducing twelve nations to the obedience of Persia. The zeal and prudence of Mebodes had fixed the diadem on the head of Chosroes himself ; but he delayed to attend the royal summons, till he had performed the duties of a military review : he was instantly commanded to repair to the iron tripod, which stood before the gate of the palace, where it

was death to relieve or approach the victim ; and *Artaxerxes* languished several days before his sentence was pronounced, by the inflexible pride and calm ingratitude of the son of Kobad. But the people, more especially in the East, is disposed to forgive, and even to applaud, the cruelty which strikes at the loftiest heads ; at the slaves of ambition, whose voluntary choice has exposed them to live in the smiles, and to perish by the frown, of a capricious monarch. In the execution of the laws which he had no temptation to violate ; in the punishment of crimes which attacked his own dignity, as well as the happiness of individuals ; Nushirvan, or Chosroes, deserved the appellation of *just*. His government was firm, rigorous, and impartial. It was the first labour of his reign to abolish the dangerous theory of common or equal possessions ; the lands and women which the sectaries of Mazdak had usurped were restored to their lawful owners ; and the temperate chastisement of the fanatics or imposters confirmed the domestic rights of society. Instead of listening with blind confidence to a favourite minister, he established four viziers over the four great provinces of his empire, Assyria, Media, Persia, and Bactriana. In the choice of judges, præfects, and counsellors, he strove to remove the mask which is always worn in the presence of kings ; he wished to substitute the natural order of talents for the accidental distinctions of birth and fortune ; he professed, in specious language, his intention to prefer those men who carried the poor in their bosoms, and to banish corruption from the seat of justice, as dogs were excluded from the temples of the Magi. The code of laws of the first Artaxerxes was revived and published as the rule of the magistrates ; but the assurance of speedy punishment was the best security of their virtue. Their behaviour was inspected by a thousand eyes, their words were overheard by a thousand ears, the secret or public agents of the throne ; and the provinces, from the Indian to the Arabian confines, were enlightened by the frequent visits of a sovereign who affected to emulate his

celestial brother in his rapid and salutary career. Education and agriculture he viewed as the two objects most deserving of his care. In every city of Persia, orphans and the children of the poor were maintained and instructed at the public expense; the daughters were given in marriage to the richest citizens of their own rank, and the sons, according to their different talents, were employed in mechanic trades or promoted to more honourable service. The deserted villages were relieved by his bounty; to the peasants and farmers who were found incapable of cultivating their lands, he distributed cattle, seed, and the instruments of husbandry; and the rare and inestimable treasure of fresh water was parsimoniously managed and skilfully dispersed over the arid territory of Persia. The prosperity of that kingdom was the effect and the evidence of his virtues; his vices are those of Oriental despotism; but in the long competition between Chosroes and Justinian the advantage both of merit and fortune is almost always on the side of the Barbarian.

To the praise of justice Nushirvan united the reputation of knowledge; and the seven Greek philosophers, who visited his court, were invited and deceived by the strange assurance that a disciple of Plato was seated on the Persian throne. Did they expect that a prince, strenuously exercised in the toils of war and government, should agitate, with dexterity like their own, the abstruse and profound question which amused the leisure of the schools of Athens? Could they hope that the precepts of philosophy should direct the life, and control the passions, of a despot whose infancy had been taught to consider *his* absolute and fluctuating will as the only rule of moral obligation? The studies of Chosroes were ostentatious and superficial, but his example awakened the curiosity of an ingenious people, and the light of science was diffused over the dominions of Persia. At Gondi Sapor, in the neighbourhood of the royal city of Susa, an academy of physic was founded, which insensibly became a liberal school of poetry, philosophy,

and rhetoric. The annals of the monarchy were composed ; and, while recent and authentic history might afford some useful lessons both to the prince and people, the darkness of the first ages was embellished by the giants, the dragons, and the fabulous heroes of Oriental romance. Every learned or confident stranger was enriched by the bounty, and flattered by the conversation, of the monarch : he nobly rewarded a Greek physician, by the deliverance of three thousand captives ; and the sophists who contended for his favour, were exasperated by the wealth and insolence of Uranius, their more successful rival. Nushirvan believed, or at least respected, the religion of the Magi ; and some traces of persecution may be discovered in his reign. Yet he allowed himself freely to compare the tenets of the various sects ; and the theological disputes in which he frequently presided diminished the authority of the priest and enlightened the minds of the people. At his command, the most celebrated writers of Greece and India were translated into the Persian language : a smooth and elegant idiom, recommended by Mahomet to the use of paradise though it is branded with the epithets of savage and unmusical by the ignorance and presumption of Agathias. Yet the Greek historian might reasonably wonder that it should be found possible to execute an entire version of Plato and Aristotle in a foreign dialect, which had not been framed to express the spirit of freedom and the subtleties of philosophic disquisition. And, if the reason of the Stagyrte might be equally dark or equally intelligible in every tongue, the dramatic art and verbal argumentation of the disciple of Socrates appear to be indissolubly mingled with the grace and perfection of his Attic style. In the search of universal knowledge, Nushirvan was informed that the moral and political fables of Pilpay, an ancient Brachman, were preserved with jealous reverence among the treasures of the kings of India. The physician Perozes was secretly dispatched to the banks of the Ganges, with instructions to procure, at any price,

the communication of this valuable work. His dexterity obtained a transcript, his learned diligence accomplished the translation; and the fables of Pilpay were read and admired in the assembly of Nushirvan and his nobles. The Indian original and the Persian copy have long since disappeared; but this venerable monument has been saved by the curiosity of the Arabian caliphs, revived in the modern Persic, the Turkish, the Syriac, the Hebrew, and the Greek idioms, and transfused through successive versions into the modern languages of Europe. In their present form the peculiar character, the manners and religion of the Hindoos, are completely obliterated; and the intrinsic merit of the fables of Pilpay is far inferior to the concise elegance of Phædrus and the native graces of La Fontaine. Fifteen moral and political sentences are illustrated in a series of apologues; but the composition is intricate, the narrative prolix, and the precept obvious and barren. Yet the Brachman may assume the merit of *inventing* a pleasing fiction, which adorns the nakedness of truth, and alleviates, perhaps, to a royal ear the harshness of instruction. With a similar design to admonish kings that they are strong only in the strength of their subjects, the same Indians invented the game of chess, which was likewise introduced into Persia under the reign of Nushirvan.

CHAPTER III

THE BATTLE OF THE MILVIAN BRIDGE

(A.D. 312)

[INTRODUCTION.—After the death of Diocletian, a series of wars took place, until finally Constantine the Great defeated his rival Maxentius in a great battle at the Milvian Bridge. Constantine perfected the administrative system of Diocletian and converted the government into a vast and complicated bureaucracy. Seeing that Rome was exposed to barbarian attacks, he removed his capital to Constantinople or New Rome, the magnificent city which he caused to be built on the Golden Horn, on the site of the old Greek colony of Byzantium. Constantine was the first emperor officially to recognize the Christian religion.]

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 rashly ventured to provoke a formidable enemy, whose ambition had been hitherto restrained by considerations of prudence, rather than by principles of justice. 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 the honour of Constantine. That wise prince, who sincerely wished to decline a war, with the difficulty and importance of which he was sufficiently acquainted, at first dissembled 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 defence. Maxentius, who openly avowed his pretensions to the whole monarchy of the West, had already prepared a very considerable force to invade the Gallic provinces on the side of Rhætia, and, though he could not expect any assistance from Licinius, he was flattered with the hope that the legions of Illyricum, allured by his presents and promises, would desert the standard of that prince, and unanimously declare themselves his soldiers and subjects. Constantine no longer hesitated. He had deliberated with caution, he acted with vigour. 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 remonstrances of his council, he resolved to prevent the enemy, and to carry the war into the heart of Italy.

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 honour, as well as of interest, from entertaining an idea of a second desertion. Maxentius, who considered the Prætorian guards as the firmest defence 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 fourscore thousand men. Forty thousand Moors and Carthaginians had been raised since the reduction of Africa. Even Sicily furnished its proportion of troops; and the army of Maxentius amounted to one hundred and seventy thousand foot and eighteen thousand 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 ; and, as the defence of the Ruine requir an extraordinary attention during the absnce of t emperor, it was not in his power to employ above half l troops in the Italian expedition, unless he sacrificed t public safety to his private quarrel. At the head of abo forty thousand soldiers, he marched to encounter an ener whose numbers were at least four times superior to his ow But the armies of Rome, placed at a secure distance fro danger, were enervated by indulgence and luxury. Hal tuated to the baths and theatres of Rome, they took t field with reluctance, and were chiefly composed of vetera who had almost forgotten, or of new levies who had nev acquired, the use of arms and the practice of war. T hardy legions of Gaul had long defended the frontiers the empire against the barbarians of the North ; and the performance of that laborious service their valour w exercised and their discipline confirmed. There appear the same difference between the leaders as between t armies. Caprice or flattery had tempted Maxentius wi the hopes of conquest ; but these aspiring hopes soon ga way to the habits of pleasure and the consciousness of l inexperience. The intrepid mind of Constantine had be trained from his earliest youth to war, to action, and military command.

When Hannibal marched from Gaul into Italy, he w obliged, first to discover, and then to open, a way ov mountains, and through savage nations, that had nev yielded a passage to a regular army. The Alps were th guarded by nature, they are now fortified by'art. Citade constructed with no less skill than labour and expen command every avenue into the plain, and on that si render Italy almost inaccessible to the enemies of the Ki of Sardinia. But in the course of the intermediate perio the generals who have attempted the passage have seld experienced any difficulty or resistance. In the age Constantine, the peasants of the mountains were civiliz and obedient subjects ; the country was plentifully stock

with provisions, and the stupendous highways which the Romans had carried over the Alps opened several communications between Gaul and Italy. 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 amidst a shower of stones and arrows, they entered the place sword in hand, and cut in pieces the greatest 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 lieutenant 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 armour, 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 defence which in similar circumstances had been practised by Aurelian. The skilful evolutions of Constantine divided and baffled this massy

column of cavalry. The troops of Maxentius fled in confusion towards 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 favour 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 with zeal, the party of Constantine.

From Milan to Rome, the Æmilian and Flaminian highways offered an easy march of about four hundred 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 valour 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 towards him, he detached a large body of cavalry, which was defeated 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. The city was accessible only by a narrow peninsula towards 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 vigour, and repelled a desperate sally of Pompeianus. That intrepid general, when he had used every means of defence 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, whilst, at the head of those troops on whose valour 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 towards 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. 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 valour 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.

While Constantine signalized his conduct and valour 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, he indulged himself in vain confidence which deferred the remedies of the approaching evil, without deferring the evil itself. The rapid progress of Constantine 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 Prætorian 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 rumours 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 clamours, and they tumultuously besieged the gates of the palace, reproaching the pusillanimity of their indolent sovereign, and celebrating the heroic spirit of Constantine.

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.

The celerity of Constantine's march has been compared to the rapid conquest of Italy by the first of the Cæsars; nor is the flattering parallel repugnant to the truth of history, since no more than fifty-eight days elapsed between the surrender of Verona and the final decision of the war. Constantine had always apprehended that the tyrant would obey 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. It was with equal surprise and pleasure that, on his arrival at a place called Saxa Rubra, about nine miles from Rome, he discovered the army of Maxentius prepared to give him battle. Their long front filled a very spacious plain, and their 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 honour and danger. Distinguished by the splendour 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 cuirassiers or of light Moors and Numidians. They yielded to the vigour 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 Prætorians, conscious that their offences 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 honourable death ; and it was observed that their bodies covered the same ground which had been occupied by their ranks. 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 armour. 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 valour and ability the most splendid enterprise of his life.

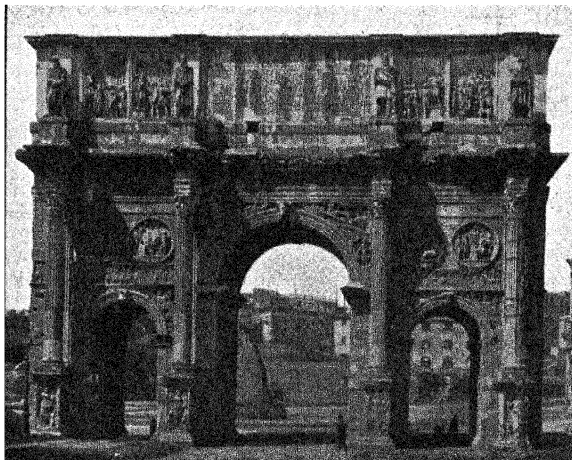


Photo: Anderson.

ARCH OF CONSTANTINE

*Built by Constantine the Great in celebration of his victory
over Maxentius at the Milvian Bridge in 312 A.D.*

CHAPTER IV

THE FOUNDATION OF CONSTANTINOPLE

(A.D. 330)

THE unfortunate Licinius was the last rival who opposed the greatness, and the last captive who adorned the triumph of Constantine. After a tranquil and prosperous reign, the conqueror bequeathed to his family the inheritance of the Roman empire : a new capital, a new policy, and a new religion ; and the innovations which he established have been embraced and consecrated by succeeding generations. The age of the great Constantine and his sons is filled with important events ; but the historian must be oppressed by their number and variety, unless he diligently separates from each other the scenes which are connected only by the order of time. He will describe the political institutions that gave strength and stability to the empire, before he proceeds to relate the wars and revolutions which hastened its decline. He will adopt the division, unknown to the ancients, of civil and ecclesiastical affairs : the victory of the Christians and their intestine discord will supply copious and distinct materials both for edification and for scandal.

After the defeat and abdication of Licinius, his victorious rival proceeded to lay the foundations of a city destined to reign in future times the mistress of the East, and to survive the empire and religion of Constantine. The motives, whether of pride or of policy, which first induced Diocletian to withdraw himself from the ancient seat of government, had acquired additional weight by the example of his successors and the habits of forty years. Rome was insensibly confounded with the dependent kingdoms which

had once acknowledged her supremacy ; and the country of the Cæsars was viewed with cold indifference by a martial prince, born in the neighbourhood of the Danube, educated in the courts and armies of Asia, and invested with the purple by the legions of Britain. The Italians, who had received Constantine as their deliverer, submissively obeyed the edicts which he sometimes condescended to address to the senate and people of Rome ; but they were seldom honoured with the presence of their new sovereign. During the vigour of his age, Constantine, according to the various exigencies of peace and war, moved with slow dignity, or with active diligence, along the frontiers of his extensive dominions ; and was always prepared to take the field either against a foreign or a domestic enemy. But, as he gradually reached the summit of prosperity and the decline of life, he began to meditate the design of fixing in a more permanent station the strength as well as majesty of the throne. In the choice of an advantageous situation, he preferred the confines of Europe and Asia ; to curb, with a powerful arm, the barbarians who dwelt between the Danube and the Tanais ; to watch with an eye of jealousy the conduct of the Persian monarch, who indignantly supported the yoke of an ignominious treaty. With these views Diocletian had selected and embellished the residence of Nicomedia : but the memory of Diocletian was justly abhorred by the protector of the church ; and Constantine was not insensible to the ambition of founding a city which might perpetuate the glory of his own name. During the late operations of the war against Licinius, he had sufficient opportunity to contemplate, both as a soldier and as a statesman, the incomparable position of Byzantium ; and to observe how strongly it was guarded by nature against an hostile attack, whilst it was accessible on every side to the benefits of commercial intercourse. Many ages before Constantine, one of the most judicious historians of antiquity had described the advantages of a situation, from whence a feeble colony of Greeks derived the command, of

the sea and the honours of a flourishing and independent republic.

If we survey Byzantium in the extent which it acquired with the august name of Constantinople, the figure of the Imperial city may be represented under that of an unequal triangle. The obtuse point, which advances towards the east and the shores of Asia, meets and repels the waves of the Thracian Bosphorus. The northern side of the city is bounded by the harbour; and the southern is washed by the Propontis, or sea of Marmara. The basis of the triangle is opposed to the west, and terminates the continent of Europe. But the admirable form and division of the circumjacent land and water cannot, without a more ample explanation, be clearly or sufficiently understood.

The winding channel through which the waters of the Euxine flow with a rapid and incessant course towards the Mediterranean received the appellation of Bosphorus, a name not less celebrated in the history than in the fables of antiquity. A crowd of temples and of votive altars, profusely scattered along its steep and woody banks, attested the unskilfulness, the terrors, and the devotion of the Grecian navigators, who, after the example of the Argonauts, explored the dangers of the inhospitable Euxine. On these banks tradition long preserved the memory of the palace of Phineus, infested by the obscene harpies; and of the sylvan reign of Amycus, who defied the son of Leda to the combat of the Cestus. The straits of the Bosphorus are terminated by the Cyanean rocks, which, according to the description of the poets, had once floated on the face of the waters, and were destined by the gods to protect the entrance of the Euxine against the eye of profane curiosity. From the Cyanean rocks to the point and harbour of Byzantium, the winding length of the Bosphorus extends about sixteen miles, and its most ordinary breadth may be computed at about one mile and a half. The *new* castles of Europe and Asia are constructed, on either continent, upon the foundations of two celebrated

temples, of Serapis and of Jupiter Urius. The old castles, a work of the Greek emperors, command the narrowest part of the channel, in a place where the opposite banks advance within five hundred paces of each other. These fortresses were restored and strengthened by Mahomet the Second, when he meditated the siege of Constantinople: but the Turkish conqueror was most probably ignorant that, near two thousand years before his reign, Darius had chosen the same situation to connect the two continents by a bridge of boats. At a small distance from the old castles we discover the little town of Chrysopolis, or Scutari, which may almost be considered as the Asiatic suburb of Constantinople. The Bosphorus, as it begins to open into the Propontis, passes between Byzantium and Chalcedon. The latter of those cities was built by the Greeks, a few years before the former; and the blindness of its founders, who overlooked the superior advantages of the opposite coast, has been stigmatized by a proverbial expression of contempt.

The harbour of Constantinople, which may be considered as an arm of the Bosphorus, obtained, in a very remote period, the denomination of the *Golden Horn*. The curve which it describes might be compared to the horn of a stag, or, as it should seem, with more propriety, to that of an ox. The epithet of *golden* was expressive of the riches which every wind wafted from the most distant countries into the secure and capacious port of Constantinople. The river Lycus, formed by the conflux of two little streams, pours into the harbour a perpetual supply of fresh water, which serves to cleanse the bottom and to invite the periodical shoals of fish to seek their retreat in that convenient recess. As the vicissitudes of tides are scarcely felt in those seas, the constant depth of the harbour allows goods to be landed on the quays without the assistance of boats; and it has been observed that in many places the largest vessels may rest their prows against the houses, while their sterns are floating in the water. From the mouth of the Lycus to that of the harbour this arm of

the Bosphorus is more than seven miles in length. The entrance is about five hundred yards broad, and a strong chain could be occasionally drawn across it, to guard the port and city from the attack of an hostile navy.

Between the Bosphorus and the Hellespont, the shores of Europe and Asia receding on either side inclose the sea of Marmara, which was known to the ancients by the denomination of Propontis. The navigation from the issue of the Bosphorus to the entrance of the Hellespont is about one hundred and twenty miles. Those who steer their westward course through the middle of the Propontis may at once descry the high lands of Thrace and Bithynia, and never lose sight of the lofty summit of Mount Olympus, covered with eternal snows. They leave on the left a deep gulf, at the bottom of which Nicomedia was seated, the imperial residence of Diocletian ; and they pass the small islands of Cyicus and Proconnesus before they cast anchor at Gallipoli ; where the sea, which separates Asia from Europe, is again contracted into a narrow channel.

The geographers who, with the most skilful accuracy, have surveyed the form and extent of the Hellespont, assign about sixty miles for the winding course, and about three miles for the ordinary breadth of those celebrated straits. But the narrowest part of the channel is found to the northward of the old Turkish castles between the cities of Sestus and Abydus. It was here that the adventurous Leander braved the passage of the flood for the possession of his mistress. It was here likewise, in a place where the distance between the opposite banks cannot exceed five hundred paces, that Xerxes imposed a stupendous bridge of boats, for the purpose of transporting into Europe an hundred and seventy myriads of barbarians. A sea contracted within such narrow limits may seem but ill to deserve the singular epithet of *broad*, which Homer, as well as Orpheus, has frequently bestowed on the Hellespont. But our ideas of greatness are of a relative nature : the traveller, and especially the poet, who sailed along the

Hellespont, who pursued the windings of the stream, and contemplated the rural scenery, which appeared on every side to terminate the prospect, insensibly lost the remembrance of the sea ; and his fancy painted those celebrated straits with all the attributes of a mighty river flowing with a swift current, in the midst of a woody and inland country, and at length, through a wide mouth, discharging itself into the Ægean or Archipelago. Ancient Troy, seated on an eminence at the foot of Mount Ida, overlooked the mouth of the Hellespont, which scarcely received an accession of waters from the tribute of those immortal rivulets Simois and Scamander. The Grecian camp had stretched twelve miles along the shore from the Sigæan to the Rhœtean promontory ; and the flanks of the army were guarded by the bravest chiefs who fought under the banners of Agamemnon. The first of those promontories was occupied by Achilles with his invincible Myrmidons, and the dauntless Ajax pitched his tents on the other. After Ajax had fallen a sacrifice to his disappointed pride and to the ingratitude of the Greeks, his sepulchre was erected on the ground where he had defended the navy against the rage of Jove and of Hector ; and the citizens of the rising town of Rhœteum celebrated his memory with divine honours. Before Constantine gave a just preference to the situation of Byzantium, he had conceived the design of erecting the seat of empire on this celebrated spot, from whence the Romans derived their fabulous origin. The extensive plain which lies below ancient Troy, towards the Rhœtean promontory and the tomb of Ajax, was first chosen for his new capital ; and, though the undertaking was soon relinquished, the stately remains of unfinished walls and towers attracted the notice of all who sailed through the straits of the Hellespont.

We are at present qualified to view the advantageous position of Constantinople ; which appears to have been formed by Nature for the centre and capital of a great monarchy. Situated in the forty-first degree of latitude,

the imperial city commanded, from her seven hills the opposite shores of Europe and Asia ; the climate was healthy and temperate, the soil fertile, the harbour secure and capacious ; and the approach on the side of the continent was of small extent and easy defence. The Bosphorus and Hellespont may be considered as the two gates of Constantinople ; and the prince who possessed those important passages could always shut them against a naval enemy and open them to the fleets of commerce. The preservation of the eastern provinces may, in some degree, be ascribed to the policy of Constantine, as the barbarians of the Euxine, who in the preceding age had poured their armaments into the heart of the Mediterranean, soon desisted from the exercise of piracy, and despaired of forcing this insurmountable barrier. When the gates of the Hellespont and Bosphorus were shut, the capital still enjoyed, within their spacious inclosure, every production which could supply the wants, or gratify the luxury, of its numerous inhabitants. The sea-coast of Thrace and Bithynia, which languish under the weight of Turkish oppression, still exhibits a rich prospect of vineyards, of gardens, and of plentiful harvests ; and the Propontis has ever been renowned for an inexhaustible store of the most exquisite fish, that are taken in their stated seasons without skill and almost without labour. But, when the passages of the Straits were thrown open for trade, they alternately admitted the natural and artificial riches of the north and south, of the Euxine, and of the Mediterranean. Whatever rude commodities were collected in the forests of Germany and Scythia, as far as the sources of the Tanais and the Borysthenes ; whatsoever was manufactured by the skill of Europe or Asia ; the corn of Egypt, and the gems and spices of the farthest India, were brought by the varying winds into the port of Constantinople, which, for many ages, attracted the commerce of the ancient world.

The prospect of beauty, of safety, and of wealth, united

in a single spot, was sufficient to justify the choice of Constantine. But, as some decent mixture of prodigy and fable has, in every age, been supposed to reflect a becoming majesty on the origin of great cities, the emperor was desirous of ascribing his resolution, not so much to the uncertain counsels of human policy, as to the infallible and eternal decrees of divine wisdom. In one of his laws he has been careful to instruct posterity that, in obedience to the commands of God, he laid the everlasting foundations of Constantinople: and, though he has not condescended to relate in what manner the celestial inspiration was communicated to his mind, the defect of his modest silence has been liberally supplied by the ingenuity of succeeding writers, who describe the nocturnal vision which appeared to the fancy of Constantine, as he slept within the walls of Byzantium. The tutelar genius of the city, a venerable matron sinking under the weight of years and infirmities, was suddenly transformed into a blooming maid, whom his own hands adorned with all the symbols of imperial greatness. The monarch awoke, interpreted the auspicious omen, and obeyed, without hesitation, the will of heaven. The day which gave birth to a city or colony was celebrated by the Romans with such ceremonies as had been ordained by a generous superstition; and, though Constantine might omit some rights which savoured too strongly of their Pagan origin, yet he was anxious to leave a deep impression of hope and respect on the minds of the spectators. On foot, with a lance in his hand, the emperor himself led the solemn procession; and directed the line which was traced as the boundary of the destined capital; till the growing circumference was observed with astonishment by the assistants, who, at length, ventured to observe that he had already exceeded the most ample measure of a great city. "I shall still advance," replied Constantine, "till he, the invisible guide who marches before me, thinks proper to stop." Without presuming to investigate the nature or motives of this extraordinary conductor, we shall content

ourselves with the more humble task of describing the extent and limits of Constantinople.

CHAPTER V

JULIAN

(A.D. 331—363)

[INTRODUCTION.—The Emperor Julian, the nephew of Constantine the Great, sickened by the cruel massacre of his kinsfolk, abjured Christianity and returned to the beliefs of his forefathers. He served his military apprenticeship in Germany, where he gained a brilliant reputation, and in 361, with the full approbation of the legions, he succeeded to the purple. His all-too-brief reign was distinguished by enlightened reforms. Two years later, he died of a wound received in a skirmish with the Persians. The silly story that he exclaimed *Vixisti Galilæe* with his dying breath is a late invention. Julian, the last of the pagans, was a true “philosopher-king” of the type of Marcus Aurelius.]

I

The Death of Julian

WHILE Julian struggled with the almost insuperable difficulties of his situation, the silent hours of the night were still devoted to study and contemplation. Whenever he closed his eyes in short and interrupted slumbers, his mind was agitated with painful anxiety; nor can it be thought surprising that the Genius of the empire should once more appear before him, covering with a funeral veil his head and his horn of abundance, and slowly retiring from the Imperial tent. The monarch started from his couch, and stepping forth, to refresh his wearied spirits with the coolness of the midnight air, he beheld a fiery meteor, which shot athwart the sky, and suddenly vanished. Julian was convinced that he had seen the menacing countenance of the god of war; the council which he summoned, of Tuscan haruspices, unanimously pronounced that he should abstain

from action : but, on this occasion, necessity and reason were more prevalent than superstition ; and the trumpets sounded at the break of day. The army marched through a hilly country ; and the hills had been secretly occupied by the Persians. Julian led the van, with the skill and attention of a consummate general ; he was alarmed by the intelligence that his rear was suddenly attacked. The heat of the weather had tempted him to lay aside his cuirass ; but he snatched a shield from one of his attendants, and hastened, with a sufficient reinforcement, to the relief of the rear-guard. A similar danger recalled the intrepid prince to the defence of the front ; and, as he galloped between the columns, the centre of the left was attacked and almost overpowered, by a furious charge of the Persian cavalry and elephants. This huge body was soon defeated, by the well-timed evolution of the light infantry, who aimed their weapons, with dexterity and effect, against the backs of the horsemen and the legs of the elephants. The Barbarians fled ; and Julian, who was foremost in every danger, animated the pursuit with his voice and gestures. His trembling guards, scattered and oppressed by the disorderly throng of friends and enemies, reminded their fearless sovereign that he was without armour ; and conjured him to decline the fall of the impending ruin. As they exclaimed, a cloud of darts and arrows was discharged from the flying squadrons ; and a javelin, after razing the skin of his arm, transpierced the ribs, and fixed in the inferior part of the liver. Julian attempted to draw the deadly weapon from his side ; but his fingers were cut by the sharpness of the steel, and he fell senseless from his horse. His guards flew to his relief ; and the wounded emperor was gently raised from the ground, and conveyed out of the tumult of the battle into an adjacent tent. The report of the melancholy event passed from rank to rank ; but the grief of the Romans inspired them with invincible valour and the desire of revenge. The bloody and obstinate conflict was maintained by the two armies, till they were

separated by the total darkness of the night. The Persians derived some honour from the advantage which they obtained against the left wing, where Anatolius, master of the offices, was slain, and the præfect Sallust very narrowly escaped. But the event of the day was adverse to the Barbarians. They abandoned the field, their two generals, Meranes and Nohordates, fifty nobles or satraps, and a multitude of their bravest soldiers : and the success of the Romans, if Julian had survived, might have been improved into a decisive and useful victory.

The first words that Julian uttered, after his recovery from the fainting fit into which he had been thrown by loss of blood, were expressive of his martial spirit. He called for his horse and arms, and was impatient to rush into the battle. His remaining strength was exhausted by the painful effort ; and the surgeons who examined his wound discovered the symptoms of approaching death. He employed the awful moments with the firm temper of a hero and a sage ; the philosophers who had accompanied him in this fatal expedition compared the tent of Julian with the prison of Socrates ; and the spectators, whom duty, or friendship, or curiosity, had assembled around his couch, listened with respectful grief to the funeral oration of their dying emperor. " Friends and fellow-soldiers, the seasonable period of my departure is now arrived, and I discharge, with the cheerfulness of a ready debtor, the demands of nature. I have learned from philosophy, how much the soul is more excellent than the body ; and that the separation of the nobler substance should be the subject of joy, rather than of affliction. I have learned from religion, that an early death has often been the reward of piety ; and I accept, as a favour of the gods, the mortal stroke that secures me from the danger of disgracing a character, which has hitherto been supported by virtue and fortitude. I die without remorse, as I have lived without guilt ! I am pleased to reflect on the innocence of my private life ; and I can affirm, with confidence, that

the supreme authority, that emanation of the Divine Power, has been preserved in my hands pure and immaculate. Detesting the corrupt and destructive maxims of despotism, I have considered the happiness of the people as the end of government. Submitting my actions to the laws of prudence, of justice, and of moderation, I have trusted the event to the care of Providence. Peace was the object of my counsels, as long as peace was consistent with the public welfare ; but, when the imperious voice of my country summoned me to arms, I exposed my person to the dangers of war, with the clear foreknowledge (which I had acquired from the art of divination) that I was destined to fall by the sword. I now offer my tribute of gratitude to the Eternal Being, who has not suffered me to perish by the cruelty of a tyrant, by the secret dagger of conspiracy, or by the slow tortures of lingering disease. He has given me, in the midst of an honourable career, a splendid and glorious departure from this world ; and I hold it equally absurd, equally base, to solicit, or to decline, the stroke of fate.—Thus much I have attempted to say ; but my strength fails me, and I feel the approach of death.—I shall cautiously refrain from any word that may tend to influence your suffrages in the election of an emperor. My choice might be imprudent, or injudicious ; and, if it should not be ratified by the consent of the army, it might be fatal to the person whom I should recommend. I shall only, as a good citizen, express my hopes that the Romans may be blessed with the government of a virtuous sovereign." After this discourse, which Julian pronounced in a firm and gentle tone of voice, he distributed, by a military testament, the remains of his private fortune ; and, making some enquiry why Anatolius was not present, he understood, from the answer of Sallust, that Anatolius was killed ; and bewailed, with amiable inconsistency, the loss of his friend. At the same time he reproved the immoderate grief of the spectators ; and conjured them not to disgrace, by unmanly tears, the fate of a prince who

in a few moments would be united with heaven, and with the stars. • The spectators were silent ; and Julian entered into a metaphysical argument with the philosophers Priscus and Maximus, on the nature of the soul. The efforts which he made, of mind as well as body, most probably hastened his death. His wound began to bleed with fresh violence ; his respiration was embarrassed by the swelling of the veins : he called for a draught of cold water, and, as soon as he had drunk it, expired without pain, about the hour of midnight. Such was the end of that extraordinary man, in the thirty-second year of his age, after a reign of one year and about eight months from the death of Constantius. In his last moments he displayed, perhaps with some ostentation, the love of virtue and of fame which had been the ruling passions of his life.

II

His Character

The numerous army of spies, of agents, and informers, enlisted by Constantius to secure the repose of one man and to interrupt that of millions, was immediately disbanded by his generous successor. Julian was slow in his suspicions and gentle in his punishments ; and his contempt of treason was the result of judgment, of vanity, and of courage. Conscious of superior merit, he was persuaded that few amongst his subjects would dare to meet him in the field, to attempt his life, or even to seat themselves on his vacant throne. The philosopher could excuse the hasty sallies of discontent ; and the hero could despise the ambitious projects which surpassed the fortune or the abilities of the rash conspirators. A citizen of Ancyra had prepared for his own use a purple garment ; and this indiscreet action, which, under the reign of Constantius, would have been considered as a capital offence, was reported to Julian by the officious importunity of a private enemy. The monarch, after making some inquiry into the rank and character of his

rival, dispatched the informer with a present of a pair of purple slippers, to complete the magnificence of his Imperial habit. A more dangerous conspiracy was formed by ten of the domestic guards, who had resolved to assassinate Julian in the field of exercise near Antioch. Their intemperance revealed their guilt; and they were conducted in chains to the presence of their injured sovereign, who, after a lively representation of the wickedness and folly of their enterprise, instead of a death of torture, which they deserved and expected, pronounced a sentence of exile against the two principal offenders. The only instance in which Julian seemed to depart from his accustomed clemency was the execution of a rash youth, who, with a feeble hand, had aspired to seize the reins of empire. But that youth was the son of Marcellus, the general of cavalry, who in the first campaign of the Gallic war had deserted the standard of the Cæsar and the republic. Without appearing to indulge his personal resentment, Julian might easily confound the crime of the son and of the father: but he was reconciled by the distress of Marcellus, and the liberality of the emperor endeavoured to heal the wound which had been inflicted by the hand of justice.

Julian was not insensible of the advantages of freedom. From his studies he had imbibed the spirit of ancient sages and heroes; his life and fortunes had depended on the caprice of a tyrant; and, when he ascended the throne, his pride was sometimes mortified by the reflection that the slaves who would not dare to censure his defects were not worthy to applaud his virtues. He sincerely abhorred the system of Oriental despotism which Diocletian, Constantine, and the patient habits of fourscore years had established in the empire. A motive of superstition prevented the execution of the design which Julian had frequently meditated, of relieving his head from the weight of a costly diadem: but he absolutely refused the title of *Dominus* or *Lord*, a word which was grown so familiar to the ears of the Romans that they no longer remembered its

servile and humiliating origin. The office, or rather the name, of consul, was cherished by a prince who contemplated with reverence the ruins of the republic ; and the same behaviour which had been assumed by the prudence of Augustus was adopted by Julian from choice and inclination. On the calends of January, at break of day, the new consuls, Mamertinus and Nevitta, hastened to the palace to salute the emperor. As soon as he was informed of their approach, he leaped from his throne, eagerly advanced to meet them, and compelled the blushing magistrates to receive the demonstrations of his affected humility. From the palace they proceeded to the senate. The emperor, on foot, marched before their litters ; and the gazing multitude admired the image of ancient times, or secretly blamed a conduct which, in their eyes, degraded the majesty of the purple. But the behaviour of Julian was uniformly supported. During the games of the Circus, he had, imprudently or designedly, performed the manumission of a slave in the presence of the consul. The moment he was reminded that he had trespassed on the jurisdiction of *another* magistrate, he condemned himself to pay a fine of ten pounds of gold ; and embraced this public occasion of declaring to the world that he was a subject, like the rest of his fellow-citizens, to the laws, and even to the forms, of the republic. The spirit of his administration, and his regard for the place of his nativity, induced Julian to confer on the senate of Constantinople, the same honours, privileges, and authority, which were still enjoyed by the senate of ancient Rome. A legal fiction was introduced, and gradually established, that one half of the national council had migrated into the East : and the despotic successors of Julian, accepting the title of Senators, acknowledged themselves the members of a respectable body, which was permitted to represent the majesty of the Roman name. From Constantinople, the attention of the monarch was extended to the municipal senates of the provinces. He abolished, by repeated edicts, the unjust

and pernicious exemptions which had withdrawn so many idle citizens from the service of their country, and by imposing an equal distribution of public duties he restored the strength, the splendour, or, according to the glowing expression of Libanius, the soul of the expiring cities of his empire. The venerable age of Greece excited the most tender compassion in the mind of Julian; which kindled into rapture when he recollected the gods, the heroes, and the men, superior to heroes and to gods, who had bequeathed to the latest posterity the monuments of their genius or the example of their virtues. He relieved the distress, and restored the beauty, of the cities of Epirus and Peloponnesus. Athens acknowledged him for her benefactor; Argos, for her deliverer. The pride of Corinth, again rising from her ruins with the honours of a Roman colony, exacted a tribute from the adjacent republics, for the purpose of defraying the games of the Isthmus, which were celebrated in the amphitheatre with the hunting of bears and panthers. From this tribute the cities of Elis, of Delphi, and of Argos, which had inherited from their remote ancestors the sacred office of perpetuating the Olympic, the Pythian, and the Nemean games, claimed a just exemption. The immunity of Elis and Delphi was respected by the Corinthians; but the poverty of Argos tempted the insolence of oppression; and the feeble complaints of its deputies were silenced by the decree of a provincial magistrate, who seems to have consulted only the interest of the capital in which he resided. Seven years after this sentence, Julian allowed the cause to be referred to a superior tribunal; and his eloquence was interposed, most probably with success, in the defence of a city which had been the royal seat of Agamemnon, and had given to Macedonia a race of kings and conquerors.

‡ The laborious administration of military and civil affairs, which were multiplied in proportion to the extent of the empire, exercised the abilities of Julian; but he frequently assumed the two characters of Orator and of Judge, which

are almost nown to the modern sovereigns of Europe. The arts of persuasion, so diligently cultivated by the first Cæsars, were neglected by the military ignorance, and Asiatic pride, of their successors ; and, if they condescended to harangue the soldiers, whom they feared, they treated with silent disdain the senators, whom they despised. The assemblies of the senate, which Constantius had avoided, were considered by Julian as the place where he could exhibit, with the most propriety, the maxims of a republican and the talents of a rhetorician. He alternately practised, as in a school of declamation, the several modes of praise, of censure, of exhortation ; and his friend Libanius has remarked that the study of Homer taught him to imitate the simple, concise style of Menelaus, the copiousness of Nestor, whose words descended like the flakes of a winter's snow, or the pathetic and forcible eloquence of Ulysses. The functions of a judge, which are sometimes incompatible with those of a prince, were exercised by Julian, not only as a duty, but as an amusement : and, although he might have trusted the integrity and discernment of his Prætorian præfects, he often placed himself by their side on the seat of judgment. The acute penetration of his mind was agreeably occupied in detecting and defeating the chicanery of the advocates, who laboured to disguise the truth of facts and to pervert the sense of the laws. He sometimes forgot the gravity of his station, asked indiscreet or unseasonable questions, and betrayed, by the loudness of his voice and the agitation of his body, the earnest vehemence with which he maintained his opinion against the judges, the advocates, and their clients. But his knowledge of his own temper prompted him to encourage, and even to solicit, the reproof of his friends and ministers ; and, whenever they ventured to oppose the irregular sallies of his passions, the spectators could observe the shame, as well as the gratitude, of their monarch. The decrees of Julian were almost always founded on the principles of justice ; and he had the firmness to resist the two most dangerous temptations which

assault the tribunal of a sovereign under the specious forms of compassion and equity. He decided the merits of the cause without weighing the circumstances of the parties ; and the poor, whom he wished to relieve, were condemned to satisfy the just demands of a noble and wealthy adversary. He carefully distinguished the judge from the legislator ; and, though he meditated a necessary reformation of the Roman jurisprudence, he pronounced sentence according to the strict and literal interpretation of those laws which the magistrates were bound to execute and the subjects to obey.

The generality of princes, if they were stripped of their purple and cast naked into the world, would immediately sink to the lowest rank of society, without a hope of emerging from their obscurity. But the personal merit of Julian was, in some measure, independent of his fortune. Whatever had been his choice of life, by the force of intrepid courage, lively wit, and intense application, he would have obtained, or at least he would have deserved, the highest honours of his profession ; and Julian might have raised himself to the rank of minister, or general, of the state in which he was born a private citizen. If the jealous caprice of power had disappointed his expectations ; if he had prudently declined the paths of greatness, the employment of the same talents in studious solitude would have placed, beyond the reach of kings, his present happiness and his immortal fame. When we inspect, with minute or perhaps malevolent attention, the portrait of Julian, something seems wanting to the grace and perfection of the whole figure. His genius was less powerful and sublime than that of Cæsar ; nor did he possess the consummate prudence of Augustus. The virtues of Trajan appear more steady and natural, and the philosophy of Marcus is more simple and consistent. Yet Julian sustained adversity with firmness, and prosperity with moderation. After an interval of one hundred and twenty years from the death of Alexander Severus, the Romans beheld an emperor who

made no distinction between his duties and his pleasures ; who laboured to relieve the distress, and to revive the spirit, of his subjects ; and who endeavoured always to connect authority with merit, and happiness with virtue. Even faction, and religious faction, was constrained to acknowledge the superiority of his genius, in peace as well as in war ; and to confess, with a sigh, that the apostate Julian was a lover of his country, and that he deserved the empire of the world.

CHAPTER VI

JUSTINIAN

(A.D. 527—565)

[INTRODUCTION.—Justinian was the greatest of the Byzantine emperors. Aided by his general Belisarius, he drove back the various enemies threatening the frontiers of the empire,—the Danubian tribes in the North, and the Persians under Chosroes I in the East. In the West, Belisarius overthrew the Vandal kingdom of Carthage, and then turned his attention to Italy. He defeated the Ostrogoths, but owing to the jealousy of Justinian, his work was left to his rival Narses to complete. Rome was captured, and Italy became a Byzantine province. At home, Justinian was not less successful. He stamped out the ridiculous factions, arising out of the rivalries of the Circus, which had deluged Constantinople in blood. He built the magnificent cathedral of Saint Sophia, one of the noblest monuments of Christendom. He rooted out, alas, the last remnants of the philosophical schools at Athens. But his greatest achievement was the compilation of the *Corpus Juris*, or Digest of Roman Law which is the cornerstone of modern European Jurisprudence.]

I

The Circus and its Factions

A MATERIAL difference may be observed in the games of antiquity: the most eminent of the Greeks were actors, the Romans were merely spectators. The Olympic stadium was open to wealth, merit, and ambition; and, if the candidates could depend on their personal skill and activity, they might pursue the footsteps of Diomedes and Menelaus, and conduct their own horses in the rapid career. Ten, twenty, forty, chariots were allowed to start at the same instant; a crown of leaves was the reward of the victor;

chaunted in lyric strains more durable than monuments of brass and marble. But a senator, or even a citizen, conscious of his dignity, would have blushed to expose his person or his horses in the circus of Rome. The games were exhibited at the expense of the republic, the magistrates, or the emperors : but the reins were abandoned to servile hands ; and, if the profits of a favourite charioteer sometimes exceeded those of an advocate, they must be considered as the effects of popular extravagance, and the high wages of a disgraceful profession. The race, in its first institution, was a simple contest of two chariots, whose drivers were distinguished by *white* and *red* liveries ; two additional colours, a light *green* and a *cærulean blue*, were afterwards introduced ; and, as the races were repeated twenty-five times, one hundred chariots contributed in the same day to the pomp of the circus. The four *factions* soon acquired a legal establishment, and a mysterious origin ; and their fanciful colours were derived from the various appearances of nature in the four seasons of the year : the red dog-star of summer, the snows of winter, the deep shades of autumn, and the cheerful verdure of the spring. Another interpretation preferred the elements to the seasons, and the struggle of the green and blue was supposed to represent the conflict of the earth and sea. Their respective victories announced either a plentiful harvest or a prosperous navigation, and the hostility of the husbandmen and mariners was somewhat less absurd than the blind ardour of the Roman people, who devoted their lives and fortunes to the colour which they had espoused. Such folly was disdained and indulged in by the wisest princes ; but the names of Caligula, Nero, Vitellius, Verus, Commodus, Caracalla, and Elagabalus, were enrolled in the blue or green factions of the circus ; they frequented their stables, applauded their favourites, chastised their antagonists, and deserved the esteem of the populace by the natural or affected imitation of their manners. The bloody and tumultuous contest continued to disturb the

public festivity till the last age of the spectacles of Rome', and Theodoric, from a motive of justice or affection, interposed his authority to protect the greens against the violence of a consul and a patrician, who were passionately addicted to the blue faction of the circus.

Constantinople adopted the follies, though not the virtues, of ancient Rome ; and the same factions which had agitated the circus raged with redoubled fury in the hippodrome. Under the reign of Anastasius, this popular frenzy was inflamed by religious zeal ; and the greens, who had treacherously concealed stones and daggers under baskets of fruit, massacred, at a solemn festival, three thousand of their blue adversaries. From the capital, this pestilence was diffused into the provinces and cities of the East, and the sportive distinction of two colours produced two strong and irreconcilable factions, which shook the foundations of a feeble government. The popular dissensions, founded on the most serious interest, or holy pretence, have scarcely equalled the obstinacy of this wanton discord, which invaded the peace of families, divided friends and brothers, and tempted the female sex, though seldom seen in the circus, to espouse the inclinations of their lovers or to contradict the wishes of their husbands. Every law, either human or divine, was trampled under foot, and, as long as the party was successful, its deluded followers appeared careless of private distress or public calamity. The licence, without the freedom, of democracy was revived at Antioch and Constantinople, and the support of a faction became necessary to every candidate for civil or ecclesiastical honours. A secret attachment to the family or sect of Anastasius was imputed to the greens ; the blues were zealously devoted to the cause of orthodoxy and Justinian, and their grateful patron protected, above five years, the disorders of a faction, whose seasonable tumults overawed the palace, the senate, and the capitals of the East. Insolent with royal favour, the blues affected to strike terror by a peculiar and Barbaric dress, the long hair of the Huns,

their close sleeves and ample garments, a lofty step, and a sonorous voice. In the day they concealed their two-edged poniards, but in the night they boldly assembled in arms and in numerous bands, prepared for every act of violence and rapine. Their adversaries of the green faction, or even inoffensive citizens, were stripped and often murdered by these nocturnal robbers, and it became dangerous to wear any gold buttons or girdles, or to appear at a late hour in the streets of a peaceful capital. A daring spirit, rising with impunity, proceeded to violate the safeguard of private houses ; and fire was employed to facilitate the attack, or to conceal the crimes, of these factious rioters. No place was safe or sacred from their depredations ; to gratify either avarice or revenge, they profusely spilt the blood of the innocent ; churches and altars were polluted by atrocious murders ; and it was the boast of the assassins that their dexterity could always inflict a mortal wound with a single stroke of their dagger. The dissolute youth of Constantinople adopted the blue livery of disorder ; the laws were silent, and the bonds of society were relaxed ; creditors were compelled to resign their obligations ; judges to reverse their sentence ; masters to enfranchise their slaves ; fathers to supply the extravagance of their children ; noble matrons were prostituted to the lust of their servants ; beautiful boys were torn from the arms of their parents ; and wives, unless they preferred a voluntary death, were ravished in the presence of their husbands. The despair of the greens, who were persecuted by their enemies, and deserted by the magistrate, assumed the privilege of defence, perhaps of retaliation ; but those who survived the combat were dragged to execution, and the unhappy fugitives, escaping to woods and caverns, preyed without mercy on the society from whence they were expelled. Those ministers of justice who had courage to punish the crimes, and to brave the resentment of the blues became the victims of their indiscreet zeal ; a præfect of Constantinople fled for refuge to the holy sepulchre, a

count of the East was ignominiously whipped, and a governor of Cilicia was hanged, by the order of Theodora, on the tomb of two assassins, whom he had condemned for the murder of his groom and a daring attack upon his own life. An aspiring candidate may be tempted to build his greatness on the public confusion, but it is the interest as well as the duty of a sovereign to maintain the authority of the laws. The first edict of Justinian, which was often repeated and sometimes executed, announced his firm resolution to support the innocent and to chastise the guilty of every denomination and *colour*. Yet the balance of justice was still inclined in favour of the blue faction, by the secret affection, the habits, and the fears of the emperor ; his equity, after an apparent struggle, submitted, without reluctance, to the implacable passions of Theodora, and the empress never forgot, or forgave, the injuries of the comedian. At the accession of the younger Justin, the proclamation of equal and rigorous justice indirectly condemned the partiality of the former reign. " Ye blues, Justinian is no more ! ye greens, he is still alive ! "

A sedition, which almost laid Constantinople in ashes, was excited by the mutual hatred and momentary reconciliation of the two factions. In the fifth year of his reign, Justinian celebrated the festival of the ides of January : the games were incessantly disturbed by the clamorous discontent of the greens ; till the twenty-second race, the emperor maintained his silent gravity ; at length, yielding to his impatience, he condescended to hold, in abrupt sentences, and by the voice of a cryer, the most singular dialogue that ever passed between a prince and his subjects. Their first complaints were respectful and modest ; they accused the subordinate ministers of oppression, and proclaimed their wishes for the long life and victory of the emperor. " Bè patient and attentive, ye insolent railers ! " exclaimed Justinian ; " be mute, ye Jews, Samaritans, and Manichæans ! " The greens still attempted to awaken his compassion. " We are poor, we are innocent, we are

injured, we dare not pass through the streets : a general persecution is exercised against our name and colour. Let us die, O emperor ! but let us die by your command, and for your service ! ” But the repetition of partial and passionate invectives degraded, in their eyes, the majesty of the purple ; they renounced allegiance to the prince who refused justice to his people ; lamented that the father of Justinian had been born ; and branded his son with the opprobrious names of an homicide, an ass, and a perjured tyrant. “ Do you despise your lives ? ” cried the indignant monarch : the blues rose with fury from their seats ; their hostile clamours thundered in the hippodrome ; and their adversaries, deserting the unequal contest, spread terror and despair through the streets of Constantinople. At this dangerous moment, seven notorious assassins of both factions, who had been condemned by the præfect, were carried round the city, and afterwards transported to the place of execution in the suburb of Pera. Four were immediately beheaded ; a fifth was hanged ; but when the same punishment was inflicted on the remaining two, the rope broke, they fell alive to the ground, the populace applauded their escape, and the monks of St. Conon, issuing from the neighbouring convent, conveyed them in a boat to the sanctuary of the church. As one of these criminals was of the blue, and the other of the green, livery, the two factions were equally provoked by the cruelty of their oppressor, or the ingratitude of their patron ; and a short truce was concluded, till they had delivered their prisoners and satisfied their revenge. The palace of the præfect, who withstood the seditious torrent, was instantly burnt, his officers and guards were massacred, the prisons were forced open, and freedom was restored to those who could only use it for the public destruction. A military force, which had been dispatched to the aid of the civil magistrate, was fiercely encountered by an armed multitude, whose numbers and boldness continually increased ; and the Heruli, the wildest Barbarians in the service of the

empire, overturned the priests and their relics, which, from a pious motive, had been rashly interposed to separate the bloody conflict. The tumult was exasperated by this sacrilege, the people fought with enthusiasm in the cause of God ; the women, from the roofs and windows, showered stones on the heads of the soldiers, who darted firebrands against the houses ; and the various flames, which had been kindled by the hands of citizens and strangers, spread without control over the face of the city. The conflagration involved the cathedral of St. Sophia, the baths of Zeuxippus, a part of the palace, from the first entrance to the altar of Mars, and the long portico from the palace to the forum of Constantine ; a large hospital, with the sick patients, was consumed ; many churches and stately edifices were destroyed, and an immense treasure of gold and silver was either melted or lost. From such scenes of horror and distress, the wise and wealthy citizens escaped over the Bosphorus to the Asiatic side ; and during five days Constantinople was abandoned to the factions, whose watchword, *NIKA, vanquish !* has given a name to this memorable sedition.

As long as the factions were divided, the triumphant blues and desponding greens appeared to behold with the same indifference the disorders of the state. They agreed to censure the corrupt management of justice and the finance ; and the two responsible ministers, the artful Tribonian and the rapacious John of Cappadocia, were loudly arraigned as the authors of the public misery. The peaceful murmurs of the people would have been disregarded : they were heard with respect when the city was in flames ; the quæstor and the præfect were instantly removed, and their offices were filled by two senators of blameless integrity. After this popular concession, Justinian proceeded to the hippodrome to confess his own errors and to accept the repentance of his grateful subjects ; but they distrusted his assurances, though solemnly pronounced in the presence of the holy gospels ; and the emperor, alarmed by their distrust,

retreated with precipitation to the strong fortress of the palace. The obstinacy of the tumult was now imputed to a secret and ambitious conspiracy, and a suspicion was entertained that the insurgents, more especially the green faction, had been supplied with arms and money by Hypatius and Pompey, two patricians, who could neither forget with honour, nor remember with safety, that they were the nephews of the emperor Anastasius. Capriciously trusted, disgraced, and pardoned, by the jealous levity of the monarch, they had appeared as loyal servants before the throne ; and, during five days of the tumult, they were detained as important hostages ; till at length, the fears of Justinian prevailing over his prudence, he viewed the two brothers in the light of spies, perhaps of assassins, and sternly commanded them to depart from the palace. After a fruitless representation that obedience might lead to involuntary treason, they retired to their houses, and in the morning of the sixth day Hypatius was surrounded and seized by the people, who, regardless of his virtuous resistance and the tears of his wife, transported their favourite to the forum of Constantine, and, instead of a diadem, placed a rich collar on his head. If the usurper, who afterwards pleaded the merit of his delay, had complied with the advice of his senate, and urged the fury of the multitude, their first irresistible effort might have oppressed or expelled his trembling competitor. The Byzantine palace enjoyed a free communication with the sea ; vessels lay ready at the garden stairs ; and a secret resolution was already formed to convey the emperor with his family and treasures to a safe retreat, at some distance from the capital.

Justinian was lost, if the prostitute whom he raised from the theatre had not renounced the timidity, as well as the virtues, of her sex. In the midst of a council, where Belisarius was present, Theodora alone displayed the spirit of an hero : and she alone, without apprehending his future hatred, could save the emperor from the imminent danger and his unworthy fears. " If flight," said the consort of

Justinian, "were the only means of safety, yet I should disdain to fly. Death is the condition of our birth; but they who have reigned should never survive the loss of dignity and dominion. I implore heaven that I may never be seen, not a day, without my diadem and purple; that I may no longer behold the light, when I cease to be saluted with the name of queen. If you resolve, O Cæsar! to fly, you have treasures; behold the sea, you have ships; but tremble lest the desire of life should expose you to wretched exile and ignominious death. For my own part, I adhere to the maxim of antiquity, that the throne is a glorious sepulchre." The firmness of a woman restored the courage to deliberate and act, and courage soon discovers the resources of the most desperate situation. It was an easy and a decisive measure to revive the animosity of the factions; the blue were astonished at their own guilt and folly, that a trifling injury should provoke them to conspire with their implacable enemies against a gracious and liberal benefactor; they again proclaimed the majesty of Justinian, and the greens, with their upstart emperor, were left alone in the hippodrome. The fidelity of the guards was doubtful; but the military force of Justinian consisted in three thousand veterans, who had been trained to valour and discipline in the Persian and Illyrian wars. Under the command of Belisarius and Mundus, they silently marched in two divisions from the palace, forced their obscure way through narrow passages, expiring flames, and falling edifices, and burst open at the same moment the two opposite gates of the hippodrome. In this narrow space, the disorderly and affrighted crowd was incapable of resisting on either side a firm and regular attack; the blues signalized the fury of their repentance; and it is computed that above thirty thousand persons were slain in the merciless and promiscuous carnage of the day. Hypatius was dragged from his throne, and conducted with his brother Pompey to the feet of the emperor; they implored his clemency; but their crime was mani-

rest, their innocence uncertain, and Justinian had been too much terrified to forgive. The next morning the two nephews of Anastasius, with eighteen *illustrious* accomplices of patrician or consular rank, were privately executed by the soldiers; their bodies were thrown into the sea, their palaces razed, and their fortunes confiscated. The hippodrome itself was condemned during several years to a mournful silence; with the restoration of the games, the same disorders revived; and the blue and green factions continued to afflict the reign of Justinian, and to disturb the tranquillity of the Eastern empire.

II

The Schools of Philosophy at Athens

Athens, after her Persian triumphs, adopted the philosophy of Ionia and the rhetoric of Sicily; and these studies became the patrimony of a city whose inhabitants, about thirty thousand males, condensed, within the period of a single life, the genius of ages and millions. Our sense of the dignity of human nature is exalted by the simple recollection that Isocrates was the companion of Plato and Xenophon; that he assisted, perhaps with the historian Thucydides, at the first representations of the Oedipus of Sophocles and the Iphigenia of Euripides; and that his pupils Æschines and Demosthenes contended for the crown of patriotism in the presence of Aristotle, the master of Theophrastus, who taught at Athens with the founders of the Stoic and Epicurean sects. The ingenuous youth of Attica enjoyed the benefits of their domestic education, which was communicated without envy to the rival cities. Two thousand disciples heard the lessons of Theophrastus; the schools of rhetoric must have been still more populous than those of philosophy; and a rapid succession of students diffused the fame of their teachers as far as the utmost limits of the Grecian language and name. Those limits were enlarged by the victories of Alexander; the arts of

Athens survived her freedom and dominion ; and the Greek colonies which the Macedonians planted in Egypt, and scattered over Asia, undertook long and frequent pilgrimages to worship the Muses in their favourite temple on the banks of the Ilissus. The Latin conquerors respectfully listened to the instructions of their subjects and captives ; the names of Cicero and Horace were enrolled in the schools of Athens ; and, after the perfect settlement of the Roman empire, the natives of Italy, of Africa, and of Britain, conversed in the groves of the academy with their fellow-students of the East. The studies of philosophy and eloquence are congenial to a popular state, which encourages the freedom of inquiry and submits only to the force of persuasion. In the republics of Greece and Rome, the art of speaking was the powerful engine of patriotism or ambition ; and the schools of rhetoric poured forth a colony of statesmen and legislators. When the liberty of public debate was suppressed, the orator, in the honourable profession of an advocate, might plead the cause of innocence and justice ; he might abuse his talents in the more profitable trade of panegyric ; and the same precepts continued to dictate the fanciful declamations of the sophist and the chaster beauties of historical composition. The systems which professed to unfold the nature of God, of man, and of the universe, entertained the curiosity of the philosophic student ; and, according to the temper of his mind, he might doubt with the sceptics or decide with the stoics, sublimely speculate with Plato or severely argue with Aristotle. The pride of the adverse sects had fixed an unattainable term of moral happiness and perfection ; but the race was glorious and salutary ; the disciples of Zeno, and even those of Epicurus, were taught both to act and to suffer ; and the death of Petronius was not less effectual than that of Seneca to humble a tyrant by the discovery of his impotence. The light of science could not indeed be confined within the walls of Athens. Her incomparable writers address themselves to the human race ;

*he living masters emigrated to Italy and Asia ; Berytus, in later times, was devoted to the study of the law ; astronomy and physic were cultivated in the museum of Alexandria ; but the Attic schools of rhetoric and philosophy maintained their superior reputation from the Peloponnesian war to the reign of Justinian. Athens, though situate in a barren soil, possessed a pure air, a free navigation, and the monuments of ancient art. That sacred retirement was seldom disturbed by the business of trade or government ; and the last of the Athenians were distinguished by their lively wit, the purity of their taste and language, their social manners, and some traces, at least in discourse, of the magnanimity of their fathers. In the suburbs of the city, the *academy* of the Platonists, the *lyceum* of the Peripatetics, the *portico* of the Stoics, and the *garden* of the Epicureans, were planted with trees and decorated with statues ; and the philosophers, instead of being immured in a cloister, delivered their instructions in spacious and pleasant walks, which at different hours were consecrated to the exercises of the mind and body. The genius of the founders still lived in those venerable seats ; the ambition of succeeding to the masters of human reason excited a generous emulation ; and the merit of the candidates was determined, on each vacancy, by the free voices of an enlightened people. The Athenian professors were paid by their disciples ; according to their mutual wants and abilities, the price appears to have varied from a mina to a talent ; and Isocrates himself, who derides the avarice of the sophists, required in his school of rhetoric about thirty pounds from each of his hundred pupils. The wages of industry are just and honourable, yet the same Isocrates shed tears at the first receipt of a stipend ; the Stoic might blush when he was hired to preach the contempt of money ; and I should be sorry to discover that Aristotle or Plato so far degenerated from the example of Socrates, as to exchange knowledge for gold. But some property of lands and houses was settled by the permission of the laws, and

the legacies of deceased friends, on the philosophic chair of Athens. Epicurus bequeathed to his disciples the gardens which he had purchased for eighty minæ or two hundred and fifty pounds, with a fund sufficient for their frugal subsistence and monthly festivals; and the patrimony of Plato afforded an annual rent, which, in eight centuries, was gradually increased from three to one thousand pieces of gold. The schools of Athens were protected by the wisest and most virtuous of the Roman princes. The library which Hadrian founded was placed in a portico adorned with pictures, statues, and a roof of alabaster, and supported by one hundred columns of Phrygian marble. The public salaries were assigned by the generous spirit of the Antonines; and each professor, of politics, of rhetoric, of the Platonic, the Peripatetic, the Stoic, and the Epicurean philosophy, received an annual stipend of ten thousand drachmæ, or more than three hundred pounds sterling. After the death of Marcus, these liberal donations, and the privileges attached to the *thrones* of science, were abolished and revived, diminished and enlarged; but some vestige of royal bounty may be found under the successors of Constantine; and their arbitrary choice of an unworthy candidate might tempt the philosophers of Athens to regret the days of independence and poverty. It is remarkable that the impartial favour of the Antonines was bestowed on the four adverse sects of philosophy, which they considered as equally useful, or at least as equally innocent. Socrates had formerly been the glory and the reproach of his country; and the first lessons of Epicurus so strangely scandalised the pious ears of the Athenians that by his exile, and that of his antagonists, they silenced all vain disputes concerning the nature of the gods. But in the ensuing year they recalled the hasty decree, restored the liberty of the schools, and were convinced, by the experience of ages, that the moral character of philosophers is not affected by the diversity of their theological speculations.

The Gothic arms were less fatal to the schools of Athens

than the establishment of a new religion, whose ministers superseded the exercise of reason, resolved every question by an article of faith, and condemned the infidel or sceptic to eternal flames. In many a volume of laborious controversy, they exposed the weakness of the understanding and the corruption of the heart, insulted human nature in the sages of antiquity, and proscribed the spirit of philosophical inquiry, so repugnant to the doctrine, or at least to the temper, of an humble believer. The surviving sect of the Platonists, whom Plato would have blushed to acknowledge, extravagantly mingled a sublime theory with the practice of superstition and magic; and, as they remained alone in the midst of a Christian world, they indulged a secret rancour against the government of the church and state, whose severity was still suspended over their heads. About a century after the reign of Julian, Proclus was permitted to teach in the philosophic chair of the academy, and such was his industry that he frequently, in the same day, pronounced five lessons and composed seven hundred lines. His sagacious mind explored the deepest questions of morals and metaphysics, and he ventured to urge eighteen arguments against the Christian doctrine of the creation of the world. But in the intervals of study he *personally* conversed with Pan, Æsculapius, and Minerva, in whose mysteries he was secretly initiated, and whose prostrate statues he adored; in the devout persuasion that the philosopher, who is a citizen of the universe, should be the priest of its various deities. An eclipse of the sun announced his approaching end; and his life, with that of his scholar Isidore, compiled by two of their most learned disciples, exhibits a deplorable picture of the second childhood of human reason. Yet the golden chain, as it was fondly styled, of the Platonic succession, continued forty-four years from the death of Proclus to the edict of Justinian, which imposed a perpetual silence on the schools of Athens, and excited the grief and indignation of the few remaining votaries of Grecian science and superstition. Seven friends

and philosophers, Diogenes and Hermias, Eulalius and Priscian, Damascius, Isidore, and Simplicius, who dissented from the religion of their sovereign, embraced the resolution of seeking, in a foreign land, the freedom which was denied in their native country. They had heard, and they credulously believed, that the republic of Plato was realized in the despotic government of Persia, and that a patriotic king reigned over the happiest and most virtuous of nations. They were soon astonished by the natural discovery that Persia resembled the other countries of the globe; that Chosroes, who affected the name of a philosopher, was vain, cruel, and ambitious, that bigotry, and a spirit of intolerance, prevailed among the Magi; that the nobles were haughty, the courtiers servile, and the magistrates unjust; that the guilty sometimes escaped, and that the innocent were often oppressed. The disappointment of the philosophers provoked them to overlook the real virtues of the Persians; and they were scandalized, more deeply perhaps than became their profession, with the plurality of wives and concubines, the incestuous marriages, and the custom of exposing dead bodies to the dogs and vultures, instead of hiding them in the earth or consuming them with fire. Their repentance was expressed by a precipitate return, and they loudly declared that they had rather die on the borders of the empire than enjoy the wealth and favour of the Barbarian. From this journey, however, they derived a benefit which reflects the purest lustre on the character of Chosroes. He required that the seven sages who had visited the court of Persia should be exempted from the penal laws which Justinian enacted against his Pagan subjects; and this privilege, expressly stipulated in a treaty of peace, was guarded by the vigilance of a powerful mediator. Simplicius and his companions ended their lives in peace and obscurity; and, as they left no disciples, they terminate the long list of Grecian philosophers, who may be justly praised, notwithstanding their defects, as the wisest and most virtuous of their contem-

poraries. The writings of Simplicius are now extant. His physical and metaphysical commentaries on Aristotle have passed away with the fashion of the times ; but his moral interpretation of Epictetus is preserved in the library of nations, as a classic book, most excellently adapted to direct the will, to purify the heart, and to confirm the understanding, by a just confidence in the nature both of God and man.

III

The Origin of Roman' Law

Whatever might be the origin or the merit of the twelve tables, they obtained among the Romans that blind and partial reverence which the lawyers of every country delight to bestow on their municipal institutions. The study is recommended by Cicero as equally pleasant and instructive. " They amuse the mind by the remembrance of old words and the portrait of ancient manners ; they inculcate the soundest principles of government and morals ; and I am not afraid to affirm that the brief composition of the Decemvirs surpasses in genuine value the libraries of Grecian philosophy. How admirable," says Tully, with honest or affected prejudice, " is the wisdom of our ancestors ! We alone are the masters of civil prudence, and our superiority is the more conspicuous, if we deign to cast our eyes on the rude and almost ridiculous jurisprudence of Dracon, of Solon, and of Lycurgus." The Twelve Tables were committed to the memory of the young and the meditation of the old ; they were transcribed and illustrated with learned diligence ; they had escaped the flames of the Gauls, they subsisted in the age of Justinian, and their subsequent loss has been imperfectly restored by the labours of modern critics. But, although these venerable monuments were considered as the rule of right and the fountain of justice, they were overwhelmed by the weight and variety of new laws, which, at the end of five centuries, became a grievance more intolerable than the vices of the city. Three thousand

brass plates, the acts of the senate and people, were deposited in the Capitol ; and some of the acts, as the Julian law against extortion, surpassed the number of an hundred chapters. The Decemvirs had neglected to import the sanction of Zaleucus, which so long maintained the integrity of his republic. A Locrian who proposed any new law stood forth in the assembly of the people with a cord round his neck, and, if the law was rejected, the innovator was instantly strangled.

The Decemvirs had been named, and their tables were approved, by an assembly of the *centuries*, in which riches preponderated against numbers. To the first class of Romans, the proprietors of one hundred thousand pounds of copper, ninety-eight votes were assigned, and only ninety-five were left for the six inferior classes, distributed according to their substance by the artful policy of Servius. But the tribunes soon established a more specious and popular maxim, that every citizen has an equal right to enact the laws which he is bound to obey. Instead of the *centuries*, they convened the *tribes* ; and the patricians, after an impotent struggle, submitted to the decrees of an assembly in which their votes were confounded with those of the meanest plebeians. Yet, as long as the tribes successively passed over narrow *bridges*, and gave their voices aloud, the conduct of each citizen was exposed to the eyes and ears of his friends and countrymen. The insolvent debtor consulted the wishes of his creditor ; the client would have blushed to oppose the views of his patron ; the general was followed by his veterans ; and the aspect of a grave magistrate was a living lesson to the multitude. A new method of secret ballot abolished the influence of fear and shame, of honour and interest, and the abuse of freedom accelerated the progress of anarchy and despotism. The Romans had aspired to be equal ; they were levelled by the equality of servitude ; and the dictates of Augustus were patiently ratified by the formal consent of the tribes or centuries. Once, and once only, he experienced a sincere and strenuous

opposition. His subjects had resigned all political liberty ; they defended the freedom of domestic life. A law which enforced the obligation, and strengthened the bonds, of marriage, was clamorously rejected ; Propertius, in the arms of Delia, applauded the victory of licentious love ; and the project of reform was suspended till a new and more tractable generation had arisen in the world. Such an example was not necessary to instruct a prudent usurper of the mischief of popular assemblies ; and their abolition, which Augustus had silently prepared, was accomplished without resistance, and almost without notice, on the accession of his successor. Sixty thousand plebeian legislators, whom numbers made formidable and poverty secure, were supplanted by six hundred senators, who held their honours, their fortunes, and their lives by the clemency of the emperor. The loss of executive power was alleviated by the gift of legislative authority ; and Ulpian might assert, after the practice of two hundred years, that the decrees of the senate obtained the force and validity of laws. In the times of freedom, the resolves of the people had often been dictated by the passion or error of the moment ; the Cornelian, Pompeian, and Julian laws were adapted by a single hand to the prevailing disorders ; but the senate, under the reign of the Cæsars, was composed of magistrates and lawyers, and in questions of private jurisprudence the integrity of their judgment was seldom perverted by fear or interest.

The silence or ambiguity of the laws was supplied by the occasional EDICTS of those magistrates who were invested with the *honours* of the state. This ancient prerogative of the Roman kings was transferred, in the respective offices, to the consuls and dictators, the censors and prætors ; and a similar right was assumed by the tribunes of the people, the ædiles, and the proconsuls. At Rome and in the provinces, the duties of the subject and the intentions of the governor were proclaimed ; and the civil jurisprudence was reformed by the annual edicts of the supreme judge, the

prætor of the city. As soon as he ascended his tribunal, he announced by the voice of the crier, and afterwards inscribed on a white wall, the rules which he proposed to follow in the decision of doubtful cases, and the relief which his equity would afford from the precise rigour of ancient statutes. A principle of discretion more congenial to monarchy was introduced into the republic; the art of respecting the name, and eluding the efficacy, of the laws was improved by successive prætors; subtleties and fictions were invented to defeat the plainest meaning of the Decemvirs; and, where the end was salutary, the means were frequently absurd. The secret or probable wish of the dead was suffered to prevail over the order of succession and the forms of testaments; and the claimant, who was excluded from the character of heir, accepted with equal pleasure from an indulgent prætor the possession of the goods of his late kinsman or benefactor. In the redress of private wrongs, compensations and fines were substituted to the obsolete rigour of the Twelve Tables; time and space were annihilated by fanciful suppositions; and the plea of youth, or fraud, or violence, annulled the obligation, or excused the performance, of an inconvenient contract. A jurisdiction thus vague and arbitrary was exposed to the most dangerous abuse: the substance, as well as the form of justice, were often sacrificed to the prejudices of virtue, the bias of laudable affection, and the grosser seductions of interest or resentment. But the errors or vices of each prætor expired with his annual office; such maxims alone as had been approved by reason and practice were copied by succeeding judges; the rule of proceeding was defined by the solution of new cases; and the temptations of injustice were removed by the Cornelian law, which compelled the prætor of the year to adhere to the letter and spirit of his first proclamation. It was reserved for the curiosity and learning of Hadrian to accomplish the design which had been conceived by the genius of Cæsar; and the prætorship of Salvius Julian, an eminent lawyer,

was immortalized by the composition of the PERPETUAL EDICT. This well-digested code was ratified by the emperor and the senate; the long divorce of law and equity was at length reconciled; and, instead of the Twelve Tables, the Perpetual Edict was fixed as the invariable standard of civil jurisprudence.

From Augustus to Trajan, the modest Cæsars were content to promulgate their edicts in the various characters of a Roman magistrate; and, in the decrees of the senate, the *epistles* and *orations* of the prince were respectfully inserted. Hadrian appears to have been the first who assumed, without disguise, the plenitude of legislative power. And this innovation, so agreeable to his active mind, was countenanced by the patience of the times and his long absence from the seat of government. The same policy was embraced by succeeding monarchs, and, according to the harsh metaphor of Tertullian, "the gloomy and intricate forest of ancient laws was cleared away by the axe of royal mandates and *constitutions*." During four centuries, from Hadrian to Justinian, the public and private jurisprudence was moulded by the will of the sovereign; and few institutions, either human or divine, were permitted to stand on their former basis. The origin of Imperial legislation was concealed by the darkness of ages and the terrors of armed despotism; and a double fiction was propagated by the servility, or perhaps the ignorance, of the civilians who basked in the sunshine of the Roman and Byzantine courts. I. To the prayer of the ancient Cæsars, the people or the senate had sometimes granted a personal exemption from the obligation and penalty of particular statutes; and each indulgence was an act of jurisdiction exercised by the republic over the first of her citizens. His humble privilege was at length transformed into the prerogative of a tyrant; and the Latin expression of "released from the laws," was supposed to exalt the emperor above *all* human restraints, and to leave his conscience and reason as the sacred measure of his conduct.

2. A similar dependence was implied in the decrees of the senate, which, in every reign, defined the titles and powers of an elective magistrate. But it was not before the ideas, and even the language, of the Romans had been corrupted, that a *royal* law, and an irrevocable gift of the people, were created by the fancy of Ulpian, or more probably of Tribonian himself; and the origin of Imperial power, though false in fact and slavish in its consequence, was supported on a principle of freedom and justice. "The pleasure of the emperor has the vigour and effect of law, since the Roman people by the royal law have transferred to their prince the full extent of their own power and sovereignty." The will of a single man, of a child perhaps, was allowed to prevail over the wisdom of ages and the inclinations of millions; and the degenerate Greeks were proud to declare that in his hands alone the arbitrary exercise of legislation could be safely deposited. "What interest or passion" exclaims Theophilus in the court of Justinian, "can reach the calm and sublime elevation of the monarch? he is already master of the lives and fortunes of his subjects; and those who have incurred his displeasure are already numbered with the dead." Disdaining the language of flattery, the historian may confess that, in questions of private jurisprudence, the absolute sovereign of a great empire can seldom be influenced by any personal considerations. Virtue, or even reason, will suggest to his impartial mind that he is the guardian of peace and equity, and that the interest of society is inseparably connected with his own. Under the weakest and most vicious reign, the seat of justice was filled by the wisdom and integrity of Papinian and Ulpian; and the purest materials of the Code and Pandects are inscribed with the names of Caracalla and his ministers. The tyrant of Rome was sometimes the benefactor of the provinces. A dagger terminated the crimes of Domitian; but the prudence of Nerva confirmed his

to the consultations of the magistrates, the wisest of princes might be deceived by a partial exposition of the case. And this abuse, which placed their hasty decisions on the same level with mature and deliberate acts of legislation, was ineffectually condemned by the sense and example of Trajan. The *rescripts* of the emperor, his *grants* and *decrees*, his *edicts* and *pragmatic sanctions*, were subscribed in purple ink, and transmitted to the provinces as general or special laws, which the magistrates were bound to execute, and the people to obey. But, as their number continually multiplied, the rule of obedience became each day more doubtful and obscure, till the will of the sovereign was fixed and ascertained in the Gregorian, the Hermogenian, and the Theodosian codes. The two first, of which some fragments have escaped, were framed by two private lawyers, to preserve the constitution of the Pagan emperors from Hadrian to Constantine. The third, which is still extant, was digested in sixteen books by the order of the younger Theodosius, to consecrate the laws of the Christian princes from Constantine to his own reign. But the three codes obtained an equal authority in the tribunals; and any act which was not included in the sacred deposit might be disregarded by the judge as spurious or obsolete.

Among savage nations, the want of letters is imperfectly supplied by the use of visible signs, which awaken attention, and perpetuate the remembrance of any public or private transaction. The jurisprudence of the first Romans exhibited the scenes of a pantomime; the words were adapted to the gestures, and the slightest error or neglect in the *forms* of proceeding was sufficient to annul the *substance* of the fairest claim. The communion of the marriage-life was denoted by the necessary elements of fire and water; and the divorced wife resigned the bunch of keys, by the delivery of which she had been invested with the government of the family. The manumission of a son, or a slave, was performed by turning him round with a gentle blow on the cheek; a work was prohibited by the casting of a

stone ; prescription was interrupted by the breaking of a branch ; the clenched fist was the symbol of a pledge or deposit ; the right hand was the gift of faith and confidence. The indenture of covenants was a broken straw ; weights and scales were introduced into every payment ; and the heir who accepted a testament was sometimes obliged to snap his fingers, to cast away his garments, and to leap and dance with real or affected transport. If a citizen pursued any stolen goods into a neighbour's house, he concealed his nakedness with a linen towel, and hid his face with a mask or bason, lest he should encounter the eyes of a virgin or a matron. In a civil action, the plaintiff touched the ear of the witness, seized his reluctant adversary by the neck, and implored, in solemn lamentation, the aid of his fellow-citizens. The two competitors grasped each other's hand as if they stood prepared for combat before the tribunal of the prætor : he commanded them to produce the object of dispute ; they went, they returned with measured steps, and a clod of earth was cast at his feet to represent the field for which they contended. This occult science of the words and actions of law was the inheritance of the pontiffs and patricians. Like the Chaldean astrologers, they announced to their clients the day of business and repose ; these important trifles were interwoven with the religion of Numa ; and, after the publication of the Twelve Tables, the Roman people was still enslaved by the ignorance of judicial proceedings. The treachery of some plebeian officers at length revealed the profitable mystery ; in a more enlightened age, the legal actions were derided and observed ; and the same antiquity which sanctified the practice, obliterated the use and meaning, of this primitive language.

A more liberal art was cultivated, however, by the sages of Rome, who, in a stricter sense, may be considered as the authors of the civil law. The alteration of the idiom and manners of the Romans rendered the style of the Twelve Tables less familiar to each rising generation, and the doubt-

ful passages were imperfectly explained by the study of legal antiquarians. To define the ambiguities, to circumscribe the latitude, to apply the principles, to extend the consequences, to reconcile the real or apparent contradictions, was a much nobler and more important task; and the province of legislation was silently invaded by the expounders of ancient statutes. Their subtle interpretations concurred with the equity of the prætor to reform the tyranny of the darker ages: however strange or intricate the means, it was the aim of artificial jurisprudence to restore the simple dictates of nature and reason, and the skill of private citizens was usefully employed to undermine the public institutions of their country. The revolution of almost one thousand years, from the Twelve Tables to the reign of Justinian, may be divided into three periods almost equal in duration, and distinguished from each other by the mode of instruction and the character of the civilians. Pride and ignorance contributed, during the first period, to confine within narrow limits, the science of the Roman law. On the public days of market or assembly, the masters of the art were seen walking in the forum, ready to impart the needful advice to the meanest of their fellow-citizens, from whose votes, on a future occasion, they might solicit a grateful return. As their years and honours increased, they seated themselves at home on a chair or throne, to expect with patient gravity the visits of their clients, who at the dawn of day, from the town and country, began to thunder at their door. The duties of social life and the incidents of judicial proceeding were the ordinary subject of these consultations, and the verbal or written opinion of the *jurisconsults* was framed according to the rules of prudence and law. The youths of their own order and family were permitted to listen; their children enjoyed the benefit of more private lessons; and the Mucian race was long renowned for the hereditary knowledge of the civil law. The second period, the learned and splendid age of jurisprudence, may be extended from the birth of Cicero

to the reign of Alexander Severus. A system was formed, schools were instituted, books were composed, and both the living and the dead became subservient to the instruction of the student. The *tripartite* of Ælius Pætus, surnamed Catus, or the Cunning, was preserved as the oldest work of jurisprudence. Cato the censor derived some additional fame from his legal studies, and those of his son; the kindred appellation of Mucius Scævola was illustrated by three sages of the law; but the perfection of the science was ascribed to Servius Sulpicius their disciple, and the friend of Tully; and the long succession, which shone with equal lustre under the republic and under the Cæsars, is finally closed by the respectable characters of Papinian, of Paul, and of Ulpian. Their names, and the various titles of their productions, have been minutely preserved, and the example of Labeo may suggest some idea of their diligence and fecundity. That eminent lawyer of the Augustan age, divided the year between the city and country, between business and composition; and four hundred books are enumerated as the fruit of his retirement. Of the collections of his rival Capito, the two hundred and fifty-ninth book is expressly quoted; and few teachers could deliver their opinions in less than a century of volumes. In the third period, between the reigns of Alexander and Justinian, the oracles of jurisprudence were almost mute. The measure of curiosity had been filled; the throne was occupied by tyrants and Barbarians; the active spirits were diverted by religious disputes; and the professors of Rome, Constantinople, and Berytus, were humbly content to repeat the lessons of their more enlightened predecessors. From the slow advances and rapid decay of these legal studies, it may be inferred that they require a state of peace and refinement. From the multitude of voluminous civilians who fill the intermediate space, it is evident that such studies may be pursued, and such works may be performed, with a common share of judgment, experience, and industry. The genius of Cicero and Virgil was more

sensibly felt, as each revolving age had been found incapable of producing a similar or a second ; but the most eminent teachers of the law were assured of leaving disciples equal or superior to themselves in merit and reputation.

IV

Death and Character of Belisarius and Justinian

The Barbarians who annually visited the provinces of Europe were less discouraged by some accidental defeats than they were excited by the double hope of spoil and of subsidy. In the thirty-second winter of Justinian's reign, the Danube was deeply frozen : Zabergan led the cavalry of the Bulgarians, and his standard was followed by a promiscuous multitude of Slavonians. The savage chief passed, without opposition, the river and the mountains, spread his troops over Macedonia and Thrace, and advanced with no more than seven thousand horse to the long walls which should have defended the territory of Constantinople. But the works of man are impotent against the assaults of nature : a recent earthquake had shaken the foundations of the wall ; and the forces of the empire were employed on the distant frontiers of Italy, Africa, and Persia. The seven *schools*, or companies, of the guards or domestic troops had been augmented to the number of five thousand five hundred men, whose ordinary station was in the peaceful cities of Asia. But the places of the brave Armenians were insensibly supplied by lazy citizens, who purchased an exemption from the duties of civil life, without being exposed to the dangers of military service. Of such soldiers, few could be tempted to sally from the gates ; and none could be persuaded to remain in the field, unless they wanted strength and speed to escape from the Bulgarians. The report of the fugitives exaggerated the numbers and fierceness of an enemy who had polluted holy virgins and abandoned new-born infants to the dogs and vultures ; a crowd of rustics, imploring food and protection, increased the

consternation of the city ; and the tents of Zabergaan were pitched at the distance of twenty miles, on the banks of a small river, which encircles Melanthias, and afterwards falls into the Propontis. Justinian trembled ; and those who had only seen the emperor in his old age were pleased to suppose that he had *lost* the alacrity and vigour of his youth. By his command the vessels of gold and silver were removed from the churches in the neighbourhood, and even the suburbs, of Constantinople ; the ramparts were lined with trembling spectators ; the golden gate was crowded with useless generals and tribunes, and the senate shared the fatigues and the apprehensions of the populace.

But the eyes of the prince and people were directed to a feeble veteran, who was compelled by the public danger to resume the armour in which he had entered Carthage and defended Rome. The horses of the royal stables, of private citizens, and even of the circus, were hastily collected ; the emulation of the old and young was roused by the name of Belisarius, and his first encampment was in the presence of a victorious enemy. His prudence, and the labour of the friendly peasants, secured, with a ditch and rampart, the repose of the night ; innumerable fires and clouds of dust were artfully contrived to magnify the opinion of his strength ; his soldiers suddenly passed from despondency to presumption ; and, while ten thousand voices demanded battle, Belisarius dissembled his knowledge that in the hour of trial he must depend on the firmness of three hundred veterans. The next morning the Bulgarian cavalry advanced to the charge. But they heard the shouts of multitudes, they beheld the arms and discipline of the front ; they were assaulted on the flanks by two ambuscades which rose from the woods ; their foremost warriors fell by the hand of the aged hero and his guards ; and the swiftness of their evolutions was rendered useless by the close attack and rapid pursuit of the Romans. In this action (so speedy was their flight) the Bulgarians lost only

four hundred horse ; but Constantinople was saved ; and Zabergan, who felt the hand of a master, withdrew to a respectful distance. But his friends were numerous in the council of the emperor, and Belisarius obeyed with reluctance the commands of envy and Justinian, which forbade him to achieve the deliverance of his country. On his return to the city, the people, still conscious of their danger, accompanied his triumph with acclamations of joy and gratitude, which were imputed as a crime to the victorious general. But, when he entered the palace, the courtiers were silent, and the emperor, after a cold and thankless embrace, dismissed him to mingle with the train of slaves. Yet so deep was the impression of his glory on the minds of men that Justinian, in the seventy-seventh year of his age, was encouraged to advance near forty miles from the capital, and to inspect in person the restoration of the long wall. The Bulgarians wasted the summer in the plains of Thrace ; but they were inclined to peace by the failure of their rash attempts on Greece and the Chersonesus. A menace of killing their prisoners quickened the payment of heavy ransoms ; and the departure of Zabergan was hastened by the report that double-prowed vessels were built on the Danube to intercept his passage. The danger was soon forgotten ; and a vain question, whether their sovereign had shewn more wisdom or weakness, amused the idleness of the city.

About two years after the last victory of Belisarius, the emperor returned from a Thracian journey of health, or business, or devotion. Justinian was afflicted by a pain in his head ; and his private entry countenanced the rumour of his death. Before the third hour of the day, the bakers' shops were plundered of their bread, the houses were shut, and every citizen, with hope or terror, prepared for the impending tumult. The senators themselves, fearful and suspicious, were convened at the ninth hour ; and the præfect received their commands to visit every quarter of the city, and proclaim a general illumination

for the recovery of the emperor's health. The ferment subsided ; but every accident betrayed the impotence of the government and the factious temper of the people ; the guards were disposed to mutiny as often as their quarters were changed or their pay withheld ; the frequent calamities of fires and earthquakes afforded the opportunities of disorder ; the disputes of the blues and greens, of the orthodox and heretics, degenerated into bloody battles ; and in the presence of the Persian ambassador Justinian blushed for himself and for his subjects. Capricious pardon and arbitrary punishment embittered the irksomeness and discontent of a long reign ; a conspiracy was formed in the palace ; and, unless we are deceived by the names of Marcellus and Sergius, the most virtuous and the most profligate of the courtiers were associated in the same designs. They had fixed the time of the execution ; their rank gave them access to the royal banquet ; and their black slaves were stationed in the vestibule and porticos, to announce the death of the tyrant and to excite a sedition in the capital. But the indiscretion of an accomplice saved the poor remnant of the days of Justinian. The conspirators were detected and seized, with daggers hidden under their garments : Marcellus died by his own hand, and Sergius was dragged from the sanctuary. Pressed by remorse or tempted by the hopes of safety, he accused two officers of the household of Belisarius ; and torture forced them to declare that they had acted according to the secret instructions of their patron. Posterity will not hastily believe that an hero, who, in the vigour of life, had disdained the fairest offers of ambition and revenge, should stoop to the murder of his prince, whom he could not long expect to survive. His followers were impatient to fly ; but flight must have been supported by rebellion, and he had lived enough for nature and for glory. Belisarius appeared before the council with less fear than indignation ; after forty years' service, the emperor had prejudged his guilt ; and injustice was sanctified by the presence and authority of the

patriarch. The life of Belisarius was graciously spared ; but his fortunes were sequestered, and from December to July he was guarded as a prisoner in his own palace. At length his innocence was acknowledged ; his freedom and honours were restored ; and death, which might be hastened by resentment and grief, removed him from the world about eight months after his deliverance. The name of Belisarius can never die ; but, instead of the funeral, the monuments, the statues, so justly due to his memory, I only read that his treasures, the spoils of the Goths and Vandals, were immediately confiscated by the emperor. Some decent portion was reserved, however, for the use of his widow ; and, as Antonina had much to repent, she devoted the last remains of her life and fortune to the foundation of a convent. Such is the simple and genuine narrative of the fall of Belisarius and the ingratitude of Justinian. That he was deprived of his eyes, and reduced by envy to beg his bread, " Give a penny to Belisarius the general ! " is a fiction of later times, which has obtained credit, or rather favour, as a strange example of the vicissitudes of fortune.

If the emperor could rejoice in the death of Belisarius, he enjoyed the base satisfaction only eight months, the last period of a reign of thirty-eight and a life of eighty-three years. It would be difficult to trace the character of a prince who is not the most conspicuous object of his own times ; but the confessions of an enemy may be received as the safest evidence of his virtues. The resemblance of Justinian to the bust of Domitian is maliciously urged ; with the acknowledgment, however, of a well-proportioned figure, a ruddy complexion, and a pleasing countenance. The emperor was easy of access, patient of hearing, courteous and affable in discourse, and a master of the angry passions which rage with such destructive violence in the breast of a despot. Procopius praises his temper, to reproach him with calm and deliberate cruelty ; but, in the conspiracies which attacked his authority and person, a more candid

judge will approve the justice or admire the clemency of Justinian. He excelled in the private virtues of chastity and temperance ; but the impartial love of beauty would have been less mischievous than his conjugal tenderness for Theodora ; and his abstemious diet was regulated, not by the prudence of a philosopher, but the superstition of a monk. His repasts were short and frugal : on solemn fasts



Photo: Alinari.

JUSTINIAN AND HIS OFFICERS

he contented himself with water and vegetables ; and such was his strength, as well as fervour, that he frequently passed two days and as many nights without tasting any food. The measure of his sleep was not less rigorous : after the repose of a single hour, the body was awakened by the soul,

application prolonged his time for the acquisition of knowledge and the dispatch of business ; and he might seriously deserve the reproach of confounding, by minute and preposterous diligence, the general order of his administration. The emperor professed himself a musician and architect, a poet and philosopher, a lawyer and theologian ; and, if he failed in the enterprise of reconciling the Christian sects, the review of the Roman jurisprudence is a noble monument of his spirit and industry. In the government of the empire, he was less wise or less successful ; the age was unfortunate ; the people was oppressed and discontented ; Theodora abused her power ; a succession of bad ministers disgraced his judgment ; and Justinian was neither beloved in his life nor regretted at his death. The love of fame was deeply implanted in his breast, but he condescended to the poor ambition of titles, honours, and contemporary praise ; and, while he laboured to fix the admiration, he forfeited the esteem and affection, of the Romans. The design of the African and Italian wars was boldly conceived and executed ; and his penetration discovered the talents of Belisarius in the camp, of Narses in the palace. But the name of the emperor is eclipsed by the names of his victorious generals ; and Belisarius still lives, to upbraid the envy and ingratitude of his sovereign. The partial favour of mankind applauds the genius of a conqueror, who leads and directs his subjects in the exercise of arms. The characters of Philip the Second and of Justinian are distinguished by the cold ambition which delights in war and declines the dangers of the field. • Yet a colossal statue of bronze represented the emperor on horseback, preparing to march against the Persians in the habit and armour of Achilles. In the great square before the church of St. Sophia, this monument was raised on a brass column and a stone pedestal of seven steps ; and the pillar of Theodosius, which weighed seven thousand four hundred pounds of silver, was removed from the same place by the avarice and vanity of Justinian. Future princes were most just,

CHAPTER VII

The Fall of Constantinople

(A.D. 1453)

[INTRODUCTION.—The history of Constantinople is practically a record of its sieges. The Huns, the Persians, the Arabs, the Russians, and finally the Turks, were for ever knocking at the gates of the inviolable fortress, but only thrice were they opened to invaders. After the fall of Alexandria, Constantinople became the great *entrepot* of commerce between Europe and Asia, and her strategical position at the mouth of the Black Sea gave her unique advantages in this respect. The capture of Constantinople by the Turks is the climax of the great drama of the eternal struggle between East and West, which has been enacted through the ages on the shores of the Sea of Marmora, from the Iliad to the Great War of 1914. It marks an epoch in the world's history: it scattered Greek learning among the Latin races, and so indirectly stimulated the great intellectual movements known as the Renaissance and Reformation. In his narration of this tragic event, Gibbon rises nobly to the height of his great argument, and the narrative is fully worthy of the theme.]

DURING the siege of Constantinople, the words of peace and capitulation had been sometimes pronounced; and several embassies had passed between the camp and the city. The Greek emperor was humbled by adversity; and would have yielded to any terms compatible with religion and royalty. The Turkish sultan was desirous of sparing the blood of his soldiers; still more desirous of securing for his own use the Byzantine treasures; and he accomplished a sacred duty in presenting to the *Gabours* the choice of circumcision, of tribute, or of death. The avarice of Mahomet might have been satisfied with an annual sum of one hundred thousand ducats; but his ambition grasped the capital of the East; to the prince he offered a rich equivalent, to

or indulgent to *his* memory ; the elder Andronicus, in the beginning of the fourteenth century, repaired and beautified his equestrian statue ; since the fall of the empire, it has been melted into cannon by the victorious Turks.

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the people a free toleration or a safe departure : but, after some fruitless treaty, he declared his resolution of finding either a throne or a grave under the walls of Constantinople. A sense of honour and the fear of universal reproach forbade Palæologus to resign the city into the hands of the Ottomans ; and he determined to abide the last extremities of war. Several days were employed by the sultan in the preparations of the assault ; and a respite was granted by his favourite science of astrology, which had fixed on the twenty-ninth of May as the fortunate and fatal hour. On the evening of the twenty-seventh, he issued his final orders ; assembled in his presence the military chiefs ; and dispersed his heralds through the camp to proclaim the duty and the motives of the perilous enterprise. Fear is the first principle of a despotic government ; and his menaces were expressed in the Oriental style, that the fugitives and deserters, had they the wings of a bird, should not escape from his inexorable justice. The greatest part of his bashaws and Janizaries were the offspring of Christian parents ; but the glories of the Turkish name were perpetuated by successive adoption ; and, in the gradual change of individuals, the spirit of a legion, a regiment, or an *oda* is kept alive by imitation and discipline. In this holy warfare, the Moslems were exhorted to purify their minds with prayer, their bodies with seven absolutions ; and to abstain from food till the close of the ensuing day. A crowd of dervishes visited the tents, to instil the desire of martyrdom, and the assurance of spending an immortal youth amidst the rivers and gardens of paradise and in the embraces of the black-eyed virgins. Yet Mahomet principally trusted to the efficacy of temporal and visible rewards. A double pay was promised to the victorious troops : “ The city and the buildings,” said Mahomet, “ are mine ; but I resign to your valour the captives and the spoil, the treasures of gold and beauty ; be rich and be happy. Many are the provinces of my empire : the intrepid soldier who first ascends the walls of Constantinople

shall be rewarded with the government of the fairest and most wealthy ; and my gratitude shall accumulate his honours and fortunes above the measure of his own hopes." Such various and potent motives diffused among the Turks a general ardour, regardless of life and impatient for action ; the camp re-echoed with the Moslem shouts of " God is God, there is but one God, and Mahomet is the apostle of God " ; and the sea and land, from Galata to the seven towers, were illuminated by the blaze of their nocturnal fires.

Far different was the state of the Christians ; who, with loud and impotent complaints, deplored the guilt, or the punishment of their sins. The celestial image of the Virgin had been exposed in solemn procession ; but their divine patroness was deaf to their entreaties : they accused the obstinacy of the emperor for refusing a timely surrender ; anticipated the horrors of their fate ; and sighed for the repose and security of Turkish servitude. The noblest of the Greeks, and the bravest of the allies, were summoned to the palace, to prepare them, on the evening of the twenty-eighth, for the duties and dangers of the general assault. The last speech of Palæologus was the funeral oration of the Roman Empire : he promised, he conjured, and he vainly attempted to infuse the hope which was extinguished in his own mind. In this world all was comfortless and gloomy ; and neither the gospel nor the church have proposed any conspicuous recompense to the heroes who fall in the service of their country. But the example of their prince and the confinement of a siege had armed these warriors with the courage of despair ; and the pathetic scene is described by the feelings of the historian Phranza, who was himself present at this mournful assembly. They wept, they embraced ; regardless of their families and fortunes, they devoted their lives ; and each commander, departing to his station, maintained all night a vigilant and anxious watch on the rampart. The emperor, and some

in a few hours was to be converted into a mosque ; and devoutly received, with tears and prayers, the sacrament of the holy communion. He reposed some moments in the palace, which resounded with cries and lamentations ; solicited the pardon of all whom he might have injured ; and mounted on horseback to visit the guards and explore the motions of the enemy. The distress and fall of the last Constantine are more glorious than the long prosperity of the Byzantine Cæsars.

In the confusion of darkness an assailant may sometimes succeed ; but, in this great and general attack, the military judgment and astrological knowledge of Mahomet advised him to expect the morning, the memorable twenty-ninth of May, in the fourteen hundred and fifty-third year of the Christian æra. The preceding night had been strenuously employed : the troops, the cannon, and the fascines were advanced to the edge of the ditch, which, in many parts, presented a smooth and level passage to the breach ; and his fourscore galleys almost touched, with the prows and their scaling-ladders, the less defensible walls of the harbour. Under pain of death, silence was enjoined ; but the physical laws of motion and sound are not obedient to discipline or fear ; each individual might suppress his voice and measure his footsteps ; but the march and labour of thousands must inevitably produce a strange confusion of dissonant clamours, which reached the ears of the watch men of the towers. At daybreak, without the customary signal of the morning-gun, the Turks assaulted the city by sea and land ; and the similitude of a twined or twisted thread has been applied to the closeness and continuity of their line of attack. . The foremost ranks consisted of the refuse of the host, a voluntary crowd, who fought without order or command ; of the feebleness of age or childhood, of peasants and vagrants, and of all who had joined the camp in the blind hope of plunder and martyrdom. The common impulse drove them onwards to the wall ; the most audacious to climb were instantly precipitated ;

and not a quart, not a bullet of the Christians was idly wasted on the accumulated throng. But their strength and ammunition were exhausted in this laborious defence the ditch was filled with the bodies of the slain; they supported the footsteps of their companions; and of this



MAHOMET II

(From Gibbon's History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire. Edited by J. B. Bury (Methuen & Co., Ltd.) By kind permission of Mr. Henry Oppenheimer).

devoted vanguard the death was more serviceable than the life. Under their respective bashaws and sanjaks, the troops of Anatolia and Romania were successively led to the charge: their progress was various and doubtful; but, after a conflict of two hours, the Greeks still maintained

and improved their advantage ; and the voice of the emperor was heard, encouraging his soldiers to achieve, by a last effort, the deliverance of their country. In that fatal moment, the Janizaries arose, fresh, vigorous, and invincible. The sultan himself on horseback, with an iron mace in his hand, was the spectator and judge of their valour ; he was surrounded by ten thousand of his domestic troops, whom he reserved for the decisive occasion ; and the tide of battle was directed and impelled by his voice and eye. His numerous ministers of justice were posted behind the line, to urge, to restrain, and to punish ; and, if danger was in the front, shame and inevitable death were in the rear of the fugitives. The cries of fear and of pain were drowned in the martial music of drums, trumpets, and attaballs ; and experience has proved that the mechanical operation of sounds, by quickening the circulation of the blood and spirits, will act on the human machine more forcibly than the eloquence of reason and honour. From the lines, the galleys, and the bridge, the Ottoman artillery thundered on all sides ; and the camp and city, the Greeks and the Turks, were involved in a cloud of smoke, which could only be dispelled by the final deliverance or destruction of the Roman empire. The single combats of the heroes of history or fable amuse our fancy and engage our affections ; the skilful evolutions of war may inform the mind, and prove a necessary though pernicious science. But, in the uniform and odious pictures of a general assault, all is blood, and horror, and confusion ; nor shall I strive, at the distance of three centuries and a thousand miles, to delineate a scene of which there could be no spectators, and of which the actors themselves were incapable of forming any just or adequate idea.

The immediate loss of Constantinople may be ascribed to the bullet, or arrow, which pierced the gauntlet of John Justiniani. The sight of his blood, and the exquisite pain, appalled the courage of the chief, whose arms and counsel were the firmest rampart of the city. As he withdrew from

his station in quest of a surgeon, his flight was perceived and stopped by the indefatigable emperor. "Your wound," exclaimed Palæologus, "is slight; the danger is pressing; your presence is necessary; and whither will you retire?" "I will retire," said the trembling Genoese, "by the same road which God has opened to the Turks;" and at these words he hastily passed through one of the breaches of the inner wall. By this pusillanimous act, he stained the honours of a military life; and the few days which he survived in Galata, or the isle of Chios, were embittered by his own and the public reproach. His example was imitated by the greatest part of the Latin auxiliaries, and the defence began to slacken when the attack was pressed with redoubled vigour. The number of the Ottomans was fifty, perhaps an hundred, times superior to that of the Christians; the double walls were reduced by the cannon to an heap of ruins; in a circuit of several miles, some places must be found more easy of access or more feebly guarded; and, if the besiegers could penetrate in a single point, the whole city was irrecoverably lost. The first who deserved the sultan's reward was Hassan, the Janizary, of gigantic stature and strength. With his scymetar in one hand and his buckler in the other, he ascended the outward fortification; of the thirty Janizaries, who were emulous of his valour, eighteen perished in the bold adventure. Hassan and his twelve companions had reached the summit: the giant was precipitated from the rampart; he rose on one knee, and was again oppressed by a shower of darts and stones. But his success had proved that the achievement was possible: the walls and towers were instantly covered with a swarm of Turks; and the Greeks, now driven from the vantage-ground, were overwhelmed by increasing multitudes. Amidst these multitudes, the emperor, who accomplished all the duties of a general and a soldier, was long seen, and finally lost. The nobles who fought round his person sustained, till their last breath, the honourable names of Palæologus and Cantacuzene: his mournful ex-

clamation was heard, " Cannot there be found a Christian to cut off my head ? " and his last fear was that of falling alive into the hands of the infidels. The prudent despair of Constantine cast away the purple ; amidst the tumult, he fell by an unknown hand, and his body was buried under a mountain of the slain. After his death, resistance and order were no more ; the Greeks fled towards the city ; and many were pressed and stifled in the narrow pass of the gate of St. Romanus. The victorious Turks rushed through the breaches of the inner wall ; and, as they advanced into the streets, they were soon joined by their brethren, who had forced the gate Phenar on the side of the harbour. In the first heat of the pursuit about two thousand Christians were put to the sword ; but avarice soon prevailed over cruelty ; and the victors acknowledged that they should immediately have given quarter, if the valour of the emperor and his chosen bands had not prepared them for a similar opposition in every part of the capital. It was thus, after a siege of fifty-three days, that Constantinople, which had defied the power of Chosroes, the Chagan, and the caliphs, was irretrievably subdued by the arms of Mahomet the Second. Her empire only had been subverted by the Latins ; her religion was trampled in the dust by the Moslem conquerors.

The tidings of misfortune fly with rapid wing ; yet such was the extent of Constantinople that the more distant quarters might prolong, some moments, the happy ignorance of their ruin. But in the general consternation, in the feelings of selfish or social anxiety, in the tumult and thunder of the assault, a *sleepless* night and morning must have elapsed ; nor can I believe that many Grecian ladies were awakened by the Janizaries from a sound and tranquil slumber. On the assurance of the public calamity, the houses and convents were instantly deserted ; and the trembling inhabitants flocked together in the streets, like an herd of timid animals, as if accumulated weakness could be productive of strength, or in the vain hope that amid

the crowd, each individual might be safe and invisible. From every part of the capital, they flowed into the church of St. Sophia : in the space of an hour, the sanctuary, the choir, the nave, the upper and lower galleries, were filled with the multitudes of fathers and husbands, of women and children, of priests, monks, and religious virgins ; the doors were barred on the inside, and they sought protection from the sacred dome which they had so lately abhorred as a profane and polluted edifice. Their confidence was founded on the prophecy of an enthusiast or imposter, that one day the Turks would enter Constantinople, and pursue the Romans as far as the column of Constantine in the square before St. Sophia ; but that this would be the term of their calamities ; that an angel would descend from heaven, with a sword in his hand, and would deliver the empire, with that celestial weapon, to a poor man seated at the foot of the column. " Take this sword," would he say, " and avenge the people of the Lord." At these animating words, the Turks would instantly fly, and the victorious Romans would drive them from the West, and from all Anatolia, as far as the frontiers of Persia. It is on this occasion that Ducas, with some fancy and much truth, upbraids the discord and obstinacy of the Greeks. " Had that angel appeared," exclaims the historian, " had he offered to exterminate your foes if you would consent to the union of the church, even then, in that fatal moment, you would have rejected your safety or have deceived your God."

While they expected the descent of the tardy angel, the doors were broken with axes ; and, as the Turks encountered no resistance, their bloodless hands were employed in selecting and securing the multitude of their prisoners. Youth, beauty, and the appearance of wealth attracted their choice ; and the right of property was decided among themselves by a prior seizure, by personal strength, and by the authority of command. In the space of an hour, the male captives were bound with cords, the females with their veils and

girdles. The senators were linked with their slaves ; the prelates with the porters of the church ; and young men of a plebeian class with noble maids, whose faces had been invisible to the sun and their nearest kindred. In this common captivity, the ranks of society were confounded ; the ties of nature were cut asunder ; and the inexorable soldier was careless of the father's groans, the tears of the mother, and the lamentations of the children. The loudest in their wailings were the nuns, who were torn from the altar with naked bosoms, outstretched hands, and dishevelled hair ; and we should piously believe that few could be tempted to prefer the vigils of the harem to those of the monastery. Of these unfortunate Greeks, of these domestic animals, whole strings were rudely driven through the streets ; and, as the conquerors were eager to return for more prey, their trembling pace was quickened with menaces and blows. At the same hour, a similar rapine was exercised in all the churches and monasteries, in all the palaces and habitations of the capital ; nor could any palace, however sacred or sequestered, protect the persons or the property of the Greeks. Above sixty thousand of this devoted people were transported from the city to the camp and fleet ; exchanged or sold according to the caprice or interest of their masters, and dispersed in remote servitude through the provinces of the Ottoman empire. Among these we may notice some remarkable characters. The historian Phranza, first chamberlain and principal secretary, was involved with his family in the common lot. After suffering four months the hardships of slavery, he recovered his freedom ; in the ensuing winter he ventured to Hadrianople, and ransomed his wife from the *mir bashi*, or master of horse ; but his two children, in the flower of youth and beauty, had been seized for the use of Mahomet himself. The daughter of Phranza died in the seraglio, perhaps a virgin ; his son, in the fifteenth year of his age, preferred death to infamy, and was stabbed by the hand of the royal lover. A deed thus inhuman cannot surely be

expiated by the taste and liberality with which he released a Grecian matron and her two daughters, on receiving a Latin ode from Philelphus, who had chosen a wife in that noble family. The pride or cruelty of Mahomet would have been most sensibly gratified by the capture of a Roman legate ; but the dexterity of Cardinal Isidore eluded the search, and he escaped from Galata in a plebeian habit.

The chain and entrance of the outward harbour was still occupied by the Italian ships of merchandise and war. They had signalised their valour in the siege ; they embraced the moment of retreat, while the Turkish mariners were dissipated in the pillage of the city. When they hoisted sail, the beach was covered with a suppliant and lamentable crowd ; but the means of transportation were scanty ; the Venetians and Genoese selected their countrymen ; and, notwithstanding the fairest promises of the sultan, the inhabitants of Galata evacuated their houses and embarked with their most precious effects.

In the fall and the sack of great cities, an historian is condemned to repeat the tale of uniform calamity ; the same effects must be produced by the same passions ; and, when those passions may be indulged without control, small, alas ! is the difference between civilised and savage man. Amidst the vague exclamations of bigotry and hatred, the Turks are not accused of a wanton or immoderate effusion of Christian blood ; but, according to their maxims (the maxims of antiquity), the lives of the vanquished were forfeited ; and the legitimate reward of the conqueror was derived from the service, the sale, or the ransom, of his captives of both sexes. The wealth of Constantinople had been granted by the sultan to his victorious troops ; and the rapine of an hour is more productive than the industry of years. But, as no regular division was attempted of the spoil, the respective shares were not determined by merit ; and the rewards of valour were stolen away by the followers of the camp, who had declined the toil and danger of the battle. The narrative of their depredations could

not afford either amusement or instruction ; the total amount, in the last poverty of the empire, has been valued at four millions of ducats ; and of this sum a small part was the property of the Venetians, the Genoese, the Florentines, and the merchants of Ancona. Of these foreigners, the stock was improved in quick and perpetual circulation ; but the riches of the Greeks were displayed in the idle ostentation of palaces and wardrobes, or deeply buried in treasures of ingots and old coin, lest it should be demanded at their hands for the defence of their country. The profanation and plunder of the monasteries and churches excited the most tragic complaints. The dome of St. Sophia itself, the earthly heaven, the second firmament, the vehicle of the cherubim, the throne of the glory of God, was despoiled of the oblations of ages ; and the gold and silver, the pearls and jewels, the vases and sacerdotal ornaments, were most wickedly converted to the service of mankind. After the divine images had been stripped of all that could be valuable to a profane eye, the canvas, or the wood, was torn, or broken, or burnt, or trod under foot, or applied, in the stables or the kitchen, to the vilest uses. The example of sacrilege was imitated, however, from the Latin conquerors of Constantinople ; and the treatment which Christ, the Virgin, and the saints had sustained from the guilty Catholic might be inflicted by the zealous Musulman on the monuments of idolatry. Perhaps, instead of joining the public clamour, a philosopher will observe that in the decline of the arts the workmanship could not be more valuable than the work, and that a fresh supply of visions and miracles would speedily be renewed by the craft of the priest and the credulity of the people. He will more seriously deplore the loss of the Byzantine libraries, which were destroyed or scattered in the general confusion : one hundred and twenty thousand manuscripts are said to have disappeared ; ten volumes might be purchased for a single ducat ; and the same ignominious price, too high perhaps for a shelf of theology, included the whole

works of Aristotle and Homer, the noblest productions of the science and literature of ancient Greece. We may reflect with pleasure that an inestimable portion of our classic treasures was safely deposited in Italy; and that the mechanics of a German town had invented an art which derides the havoc of time and barbarism.

From the first hour of the memorable twenty-ninth of May, disorder and rapine prevailed in Constantinople till the eighth hour of the same day; when the sultan himself passed in triumph through the gate of St. Romanus. He was attended by his vizirs, bashaws, and guards, each of whom (says a Byzantine historian) was robust as Hercules; dexterous as Apollo, and equal in battle to any ten of the race of ordinary mortals. The conqueror gazed with satisfaction and wonder on the strange though splendid appearance of the domes and palaces, so dissimilar from the style of Oriental architecture. In the hippodrome or *atmeidan*, his eye was attracted by the twisted column of the three serpents; and, as a trial of his strength, he shattered with his iron mace or battle-axe the under-jaw of one of these monsters, which in the eye of the Turks were the idols or talismans of the city. At the principal door of St. Sophia, he alighted from his horse and entered the dome; and such was his jealous regard for that monument of his glory that, on observing a zealous Musulman in the act of breaking the marble pavement, he admonished him with his scymetar that, if the spoil and captives were granted to the soldiers, the public and private building had been reserved for the prince. By his command the metropolis of the Eastern church was transformed into a mosque: the rich and portable instruments of superstition had been removed; the crosses were thrown down; and the walls, which were covered with images and mosaics, were washed and purified and restored to a state of naked simplicity. On the same day, or on the ensuing Friday the *muezin* or crier ascended the most lofty turret. an

God and his prophet ; the imam preached ; and Mahomet the Second performed the *namaz* of prayer and thanksgiving on the great altar, where the Christian mysteries had so lately been celebrated before the last of the Cæsars. From St. Sophia he proceeded to the august but desolate mansion of an hundred successors of the great Constantine ; but which, in a few hours, had been stripped of the pomp of royalty. A melancholy reflection on the vicissitudes of human greatness forced itself on his mind ; and he repeated an elegant distich of Persian poetry, “ The spider has wove his web in the imperial palace ; and the owl hath sung her watch-song on the towers of Afrasiab.”

Yet his mind was not satisfied, nor did the victory seem complete, till he was informed of the fate of Constantine ; whether he had escaped, or been made prisoner, or had fallen in the battle. Two Janizaries claimed the honour and reward of his death : the body, under a heap of slain, was discovered by the golden eagles embroidered on his shoes ; the Greeks acknowledged with tears the head of their late emperor ; and, after exposing the bloody trophy, Mahomet bestowed on his rival the honours of a decent funeral. After his decease, Lucas Notaras, great duke, and first minister of the empire, was the most important prisoner. When he offered his person and his treasures at the foot of the throne, “ And why,” said the indignant sultan, “ did you not employ these treasures in the defence of your prince and country ? ” “ They were yours,” answered the slave ; “ God had reserved them for your hands.” “ If he reserved them for me,” replied the despot, “ how have you presumed to withhold them so long by a fruitless and fatal resistance ? ” The great duke alleged the obstinacy of the strangers, and some secret encouragement from the Turkish vizir ; and from this perilous interview he was at length dismissed with the assurance of pardon and protection. Mahomet condescended to visit his wife, a venerable princess, oppressed with sickness and grief ; and his consolation for her misfortunes was in the

most tender strain of humanity and filial reverence. A similar clemency was extended to the principal officers of state, of whom several were ransomed at his expense ; and during some days he declared himself the friend and father of the vanquished people. But the scene was soon changed ; and before his departure the hippodrome streamed with the blood of his noblest captives. His perfidious cruelty is execrated by the Christians. They adorn with the colours of heroic martyrdom the execution of the great duke and his two sons ; and his death is ascribed to the generous refusal of delivering his children to the tyrant's lust. Yet a Byzantine historian has dropt an unguarded word of conspiracy, deliverance, and Italian succour : such treason may be glorious ; but the rebel who bravely ventures has justly forfeited his life ; nor should we blame a conqueror for destroying the enemies whom he can no longer trust. On the eighteenth of June, the victorious sultan returned to Hadrianople ; and smiled at the base and hollow embassies of the Christian princes, who viewed their approaching ruin in the fall of the Eastern empire.

SELECTIONS FROM
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