

Chapter VII: Tyranny Of Maximin, Rebellion, Civil Wars, Death Of Maximin.--Part II.

The virtues and the reputation of the new emperors justified the most sanguine hopes of the Romans. The various nature of their talents seemed to appropriate to each his peculiar department of peace and war, without leaving room for jealous emulation. Balbinus was an admired orator, a poet of distinguished fame, and a wise magistrate, who had exercised with innocence and applause the civil jurisdiction in almost all the interior provinces of the empire. His birth was noble, [28] his fortune affluent, his manners liberal and affable. In him the love of pleasure was corrected by a sense of dignity, nor had the habits of ease deprived him of a capacity for business. The mind of Maximus was formed in a rougher mould. By his valor and abilities he had raised himself from the meanest origin to the first employments of the state and army. His victories over the Sarmatians and the Germans, the austerity of his life, and the rigid impartiality of his justice, while he was a Praefect of the city, commanded the esteem of a people whose affections were engaged in favor of the more amiable Balbinus. The two colleagues had both been consuls, (Balbinus had twice enjoyed that honorable office,) both had been named among the twenty lieutenants of the senate; and since the one was sixty and the other seventy-four years old, [29] they had both attained the full maturity of age and experience.

[Footnote 28: He was descended from Cornelius Balbus, a noble Spaniard, and the adopted son of Theophanes, the Greek historian. Balbus obtained

the freedom of Rome by the favor of Pompey, and preserved it by the eloquence of Cicero. (See Orat. pro Cornel. Balbo.) The friendship of Caesar, (to whom he rendered the most important secret services in the civil war) raised him to the consulship and the pontificate, honors never yet possessed by a stranger. The nephew of this Balbus triumphed over the Garamantes. See Dictionnaire de Bayle, au mot Balbus, where he distinguishes the several persons of that name, and rectifies, with his usual accuracy, the mistakes of former writers concerning them.]

[Footnote 29: Zonaras, l. xii. p. 622. But little dependence is to be had on the authority of a modern Greek, so grossly ignorant of the history of the third century, that he creates several imaginary emperors, and confounds those who really existed.]

After the senate had conferred on Maximus and Balbinus an equal portion of the consular and tribunitian powers, the title of Fathers of their country, and the joint office of Supreme Pontiff, they ascended to the Capitol to return thanks to the gods, protectors of Rome. [30] The solemn rites of sacrifice were disturbed by a sedition of the people. The licentious multitude neither loved the rigid Maximus, nor did they sufficiently fear the mild and humane Balbinus. Their increasing numbers surrounded the temple of Jupiter; with obstinate clamors they asserted their inherent right of consenting to the election of their sovereign; and demanded, with an apparent moderation, that, besides the two emperors, chosen by the senate, a third should be added of the family of the Gordians, as a just return of gratitude to those princes who had

sacrificed their lives for the republic. At the head of the city-guards, and the youth of the equestrian order, Maximus and Balbinus attempted to cut their way through the seditious multitude. The multitude, armed with sticks and stones, drove them back into the Capitol. It is prudent to yield when the contest, whatever may be the issue of it, must be fatal to both parties. A boy, only thirteen years of age, the grandson of the elder, and nephew [301] of the younger Gordian, was produced to the people, invested with the ornaments and title of Caesar. The tumult was appeased by this easy condescension; and the two emperors, as soon as they had been peaceably acknowledged in Rome, prepared to defend Italy against the common enemy.

[Footnote 30: Herodian, l. vii. p. 256, supposes that the senate was at first convoked in the Capitol, and is very eloquent on the occasion. The Augustar History p. 116, seems much more authentic.]

[Footnote 301: According to some, the son.--G.]

Whilst in Rome and Africa, revolutions succeeded each other with such amazing rapidity, that the mind of Maximin was agitated by the most furious passions. He is said to have received the news of the rebellion of the Gordians, and of the decree of the senate against him, not with the temper of a man, but the rage of a wild beast; which, as it could not discharge itself on the distant senate, threatened the life of his son, of his friends, and of all who ventured to approach his person. The grateful intelligence of the death of the Gordians was quickly followed

by the assurance that the senate, laying aside all hopes of pardon or accommodation, had substituted in their room two emperors, with whose merit he could not be unacquainted. Revenge was the only consolation left to Maximin, and revenge could only be obtained by arms. The strength of the legions had been assembled by Alexander from all parts of the empire. Three successful campaigns against the Germans and the Sarmatians, had raised their fame, confirmed their discipline, and even increased their numbers, by filling the ranks with the flower of the barbarian youth. The life of Maximin had been spent in war, and the candid severity of history cannot refuse him the valor of a soldier, or even the abilities of an experienced general. [31] It might naturally be expected, that a prince of such a character, instead of suffering the rebellion to gain stability by delay, should immediately have marched from the banks of the Danube to those of the Tyber, and that his victorious army, instigated by contempt for the senate, and eager to gather the spoils of Italy, should have burned with impatience to finish the easy and lucrative conquest. Yet as far as we can trust to the obscure chronology of that period, [32] it appears that the operations of some foreign war deferred the Italian expedition till the ensuing spring. From the prudent conduct of Maximin, we may learn that the savage features of his character have been exaggerated by the pencil of party, that his passions, however impetuous, submitted to the force of reason, and that the barbarian possessed something of the generous spirit of Sylla, who subdued the enemies of Rome before he suffered himself to revenge his private injuries. [33]

[Footnote 31: In Herodian, l. vii. p. 249, and in the Augustan History, we have three several orations of Maximin to his army, on the rebellion of Africa and Rome: M. de Tillemont has very justly observed that they neither agree with each other nor with truth. *Histoire des Empereurs*, tom. iii. p. 799.]

[Footnote 32: The carelessness of the writers of that age, leaves us in a singular perplexity. 1. We know that Maximus and Balbinus were killed during the Capitoline games. Herodian, l. viii. p. 285. The authority of Censorinus (*de Die Natali*, c. 18) enables us to fix those games with certainty to the year 238, but leaves us in ignorance of the month or day. 2. The election of Gordian by the senate is fixed with equal certainty to the 27th of May; but we are at a loss to discover whether it was in the same or the preceding year. Tillemont and Muratori, who maintain the two opposite opinions, bring into the field a desultory troop of authorities, conjectures and probabilities. The one seems to draw out, the other to contract the series of events between those periods, more than can be well reconciled to reason and history. Yet it is necessary to choose between them. Note: Eckhel has more recently treated these chronological questions with a perspicuity which gives great probability to his conclusions. Setting aside all the historians, whose contradictions are irreconcilable, he has only consulted the medals, and has arranged the events before us in the following order:-- Maximin, A. U. 990, after having conquered the Germans, reenters Pannonia, establishes his winter quarters at Sirmium, and prepares himself to make war against the people of the North.

In the year 991, in the cal ends of January, commences his fourth tribunate. The Gordians are chosen emperors in Africa, probably at the beginning of the month of March. The senate confirms this election with joy, and declares Maximin the enemy of Rome. Five days after he had heard of this revolt, Maximin sets out from Sirmium on his march to Italy. These events took place about the beginning of April; a little after, the Gordians are slain in Africa by Capellianus, procurator of Mauritania. The senate, in its alarm, names as emperors Balbus and Maximus Pupianus, and intrusts the latter with the war against Maximin. Maximin is stopped on his road near Aquileia, by the want of provisions, and by the melting of the snows: he begins the siege of Aquileia at the end of April. Pupianus assembles his army at Ravenna. Maximin and his son are assassinated by the soldiers enraged at the resistance of Aquileia: and this was probably in the middle of May. Pupianus returns to Rome, and assumes the government with Balbinus; they are assassinated towards the end of July Gordian the younger ascends the throne. Eckhel de Doct. Vol vii 295.--G.]

[Footnote 33: Velleius Paterculus, l. ii. c. 24. The president de Montesquieu (in his dialogue between Sylla and Eucrates) expresses the sentiments of the dictator in a spirited, and even a sublime manner.]

When the troops of Maximin, advancing in excellent order, arrived at the foot of the Julian Alps, they were terrified by the silence and desolation that reigned on the frontiers of Italy. The villages and open towns had been abandoned on their approach by the inhabitants, the

cattle was driven away, the provisions removed or destroyed, the bridges broken down, nor was any thing left which could afford either shelter or subsistence to an invader. Such had been the wise orders of the generals of the senate: whose design was to protract the war, to ruin the army of Maximin by the slow operation of famine, and to consume his strength in the sieges of the principal cities of Italy, which they had plentifully stored with men and provisions from the deserted country. Aquileia received and withstood the first shock of the invasion. The streams that issue from the head of the Hadriatic Gulf, swelled by the melting of the winter snows, [34] opposed an unexpected obstacle to the arms of Maximin. At length, on a singular bridge, constructed with art and difficulty, of large hogsheads, he transported his army to the opposite bank, rooted up the beautiful vineyards in the neighborhood of Aquileia, demolished the suburbs, and employed the timber of the buildings in the engines and towers, with which on every side he attacked the city. The walls, fallen to decay during the security of a long peace, had been hastily repaired on this sudden emergency: but the firmest defence of Aquileia consisted in the constancy of the citizens; all ranks of whom, instead of being dismayed, were animated by the extreme danger, and their knowledge of the tyrant's unrelenting temper. Their courage was supported and directed by Crispinus and Menophilus, two of the twenty lieutenants of the senate, who, with a small body of regular troops, had thrown themselves into the besieged place. The army of Maximin was repulsed in repeated attacks, his machines destroyed by showers of artificial fire; and the generous enthusiasm of the Aquileians was exalted into a confidence of success, by the opinion that Belenus, their tutelar deity,

combated in person in the defence of his distressed worshippers. [35]

[Footnote 34: Muratori (*Annali d' Italia*, tom. ii. p. 294) thinks the melting of the snows suits better with the months of June or July, than with those of February. The opinion of a man who passed his life between the Alps and the Apennines, is undoubtedly of great weight; yet I observe, 1. That the long winter, of which Muratori takes advantage, is to be found only in the Latin version, and not in the Greek text of Herodian. 2. That the vicissitudes of suns and rains, to which the soldiers of Maximin were exposed, (*Herodian*, l. viii. p. 277,) denote the spring rather than the summer. We may observe, likewise, that these several streams, as they melted into one, composed the Timavus, so poetically (in every sense of the word) described by Virgil. They are about twelve miles to the east of Aquileia. See Cluver. *Italia Antiqua*, tom. i. p. 189, &c.]

[Footnote 35: *Herodian*, l. viii. p. 272. The Celtic deity was supposed to be Apollo, and received under that name the thanks of the senate. A temple was likewise built to Venus the Bald, in honor of the women of Aquileia, who had given up their hair to make ropes for the military engines.]

The emperor Maximus, who had advanced as far as Ravenna, to secure that important place, and to hasten the military preparations, beheld the event of the war in the more faithful mirror of reason and policy. He was too sensible, that a single town could not resist the persevering

efforts of a great army; and he dreaded, lest the enemy, tired with the obstinate resistance of Aquileia, should on a sudden relinquish the fruitless siege, and march directly towards Rome. The fate of the empire and the cause of freedom must then be committed to the chance of a battle; and what arms could he oppose to the veteran legions of the Rhine and Danube? Some troops newly levied among the generous but enervated youth of Italy; and a body of German auxiliaries, on whose firmness, in the hour of trial, it was dangerous to depend. In the midst of these just alarms, the stroke of domestic conspiracy punished the crimes of Maximin, and delivered Rome and the senate from the calamities that would surely have attended the victory of an enraged barbarian.

The people of Aquileia had scarcely experienced any of the common miseries of a siege; their magazines were plentifully supplied, and several fountains within the walls assured them of an inexhaustible resource of fresh water. The soldiers of Maximin were, on the contrary, exposed to the inclemency of the season, the contagion of disease, and the horrors of famine. The open country was ruined, the rivers filled with the slain, and polluted with blood. A spirit of despair and disaffection began to diffuse itself among the troops; and as they were cut off from all intelligence, they easily believed that the whole empire had embraced the cause of the senate, and that they were left as devoted victims to perish under the impregnable walls of Aquileia. The fierce temper of the tyrant was exasperated by disappointments, which he imputed to the cowardice of his army; and his wanton and ill-timed cruelty, instead of striking terror, inspired hatred, and a just desire

of revenge. A party of Praetorian guards, who trembled for their wives and children in the camp of Alba, near Rome, executed the sentence of the senate.

Maximin, abandoned by his guards, was slain in his tent, with his son, (whom he had associated to the honors of the purple,) Anulinus the praefect, and the principal ministers of his tyranny. [36] The sight of their heads, borne on the point of spears, convinced the citizens of Aquileia that the siege was at an end; the gates of the city were thrown open, a liberal market was provided for the hungry troops of Maximin, and the whole army joined in solemn protestations of fidelity to the senate and the people of Rome, and to their lawful emperors Maximus and Balbinus. Such was the deserved fate of a brutal savage, destitute, as he has generally been represented, of every sentiment that distinguishes a civilized, or even a human being. The body was suited to the soul. The stature of Maximin exceeded the measure of eight feet, and circumstances almost incredible are related of his matchless strength and appetite. [37] Had he lived in a less enlightened age, tradition and poetry might well have described him as one of those monstrous giants, whose supernatural power was constantly exerted for the destruction of mankind.

[Footnote 36: Herodian, l. viii. p. 279. Hist. August. p. 146. The duration of Maximin's reign has not been defined with much accuracy, except by Eutropius, who allows him three years and a few days, (l. ix. 1;) we may depend on the integrity of the text, as the Latin original is

checked by the Greek version of Paeanius.]

[Footnote 37: Eight Roman feet and one third, which are equal to above eight English feet, as the two measures are to each other in the proportion of 967 to 1000. See Graves's discourse on the Roman foot. We are told that Maximin could drink in a day an amphora (or about seven gallons) of wine, and eat thirty or forty pounds of meat. He could move a loaded wagon, break a horse's leg with his fist, crumble stones in his hand, and tear up small trees by the roots. See his life in the Augustan History.]

It is easier to conceive than to describe the universal joy of the Roman world on the fall of the tyrant, the news of which is said to have been carried in four days from Aquileia to Rome. The return of Maximus was a triumphal procession; his colleague and young Gordian went out to meet him, and the three princes made their entry into the capital, attended by the ambassadors of almost all the cities of Italy, saluted with the splendid offerings of gratitude and superstition, and received with the unfeigned acclamations of the senate and people, who persuaded themselves that a golden age would succeed to an age of iron. [38] The conduct of the two emperors corresponded with these expectations. They administered justice in person; and the rigor of the one was tempered by the other's clemency. The oppressive taxes with which Maximin had loaded the rights of inheritance and succession, were repealed, or at least moderated. Discipline was revived, and with the advice of the senate many wise laws were enacted by their imperial ministers, who endeavored

to restore a civil constitution on the ruins of military tyranny. "What reward may we expect for delivering Rome from a monster?" was the question asked by Maximus, in a moment of freedom and confidence.

Balbinus answered it without hesitation--"The love of the senate, of the people, and of all mankind." "Alas!" replied his more penetrating colleague--"alas! I dread the hatred of the soldiers, and the fatal effects of their resentment." [39] His apprehensions were but too well justified by the event.

[Footnote 38: See the congratulatory letter of Claudius Julianus, the consul to the two emperors, in the Augustan History.]

[Footnote 39: Hist. August. p. 171.]

Whilst Maximus was preparing to defend Italy against the common foe, Balbinus, who remained at Rome, had been engaged in scenes of blood and intestine discord. Distrust and jealousy reigned in the senate; and even in the temples where they assembled, every senator carried either open or concealed arms. In the midst of their deliberations, two veterans of the guards, actuated either by curiosity or a sinister motive, audaciously thrust themselves into the house, and advanced by degrees beyond the altar of Victory. Gallicanus, a consular, and Maecenas, a Praetorian senator, viewed with indignation their insolent intrusion: drawing their daggers, they laid the spies (for such they deemed them) dead at the foot of the altar, and then, advancing to the door of the

senate, imprudently exhorted the multitude to massacre the Praetorians, as the secret adherents of the tyrant. Those who escaped the first fury of the tumult took refuge in the camp, which they defended with superior advantage against the reiterated attacks of the people, assisted by the numerous bands of gladiators, the property of opulent nobles. The civil war lasted many days, with infinite loss and confusion on both sides. When the pipes were broken that supplied the camp with water, the Praetorians were reduced to intolerable distress; but in their turn they made desperate sallies into the city, set fire to a great number of houses, and filled the streets with the blood of the inhabitants. The emperor Balbinus attempted, by ineffectual edicts and precarious truces, to reconcile the factions at Rome. But their animosity, though smothered for a while, burnt with redoubled violence. The soldiers, detesting the senate and the people, despised the weakness of a prince, who wanted either the spirit or the power to command the obedience of his subjects.

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[Footnote 40: Herodian, l. viii. p. 258.]

After the tyrant's death, his formidable army had acknowledged, from necessity rather than from choice, the authority of Maximus, who transported himself without delay to the camp before Aquileia. As soon as he had received their oath of fidelity, he addressed them in terms full of mildness and moderation; lamented, rather than arraigned the wild disorders of the times, and assured the soldiers, that of all their past conduct the senate would remember only their generous desertion of

the tyrant, and their voluntary return to their duty. Maximus enforced his exhortations by a liberal donative, purified the camp by a solemn sacrifice of expiation, and then dismissed the legions to their several provinces, impressed, as he hoped, with a lively sense of gratitude and obedience. [41] But nothing could reconcile the haughty spirit of the Praetorians. They attended the emperors on the memorable day of their public entry into Rome; but amidst the general acclamations, the sullen, dejected countenance of the guards sufficiently declared that they considered themselves as the object, rather than the partners, of the triumph. When the whole body was united in their camp, those who had served under Maximin, and those who had remained at Rome, insensibly communicated to each other their complaints and apprehensions. The emperors chosen by the army had perished with ignominy; those elected by the senate were seated on the throne. [42] The long discord between the civil and military powers was decided by a war, in which the former had obtained a complete victory. The soldiers must now learn a new doctrine of submission to the senate; and whatever clemency was affected by that politic assembly, they dreaded a slow revenge, colored by the name of discipline, and justified by fair pretences of the public good. But their fate was still in their own hands; and if they had courage to despise the vain terrors of an impotent republic, it was easy to convince the world, that those who were masters of the arms, were masters of the authority, of the state.

[Footnote 41: Herodian, l. viii. p. 213.]

[Footnote 42: The observation had been made imprudently enough in the acclamations of the senate, and with regard to the soldiers it carried the appearance of a wanton insult. Hist. August. p. 170.]

When the senate elected two princes, it is probable that, besides the declared reason of providing for the various emergencies of peace and war, they were actuated by the secret desire of weakening by division the despotism of the supreme magistrate. Their policy was effectual, but it proved fatal both to their emperors and to themselves. The jealousy of power was soon exasperated by the difference of character. Maximus despised Balbinus as a luxurious noble, and was in his turn disdained by his colleague as an obscure soldier. Their silent discord was understood rather than seen; [43] but the mutual consciousness prevented them from uniting in any vigorous measures of defence against their common enemies of the Praetorian camp. The whole city was employed in the Capitoline games, and the emperors were left almost alone in the palace. On a sudden, they were alarmed by the approach of a troop of desperate assassins. Ignorant of each other's situation or designs, (for they already occupied very distant apartments,) afraid to give or to receive assistance, they wasted the important moments in idle debates and fruitless recriminations. The arrival of the guards put an end to the vain strife. They seized on these emperors of the senate, for such they called them with malicious contempt, stripped them of their garments, and dragged them in insolent triumph through the streets of Rome, with the design of inflicting a slow and cruel death on these unfortunate princes. The fear of a rescue from the faithful Germans of the Imperial

guards, shortened their tortures; and their bodies, mangled with a thousand wounds, were left exposed to the insults or to the pity of the populace. [44]

[Footnote 43: *Discordiae tacitae, et quae intelligerentur potius quam viderentur.* Hist. August. p. 170. This well-chosen expression is probably stolen from some better writer.]

[Footnote 44: Herodian, l. viii. p. 287, 288.]

In the space of a few months, six princes had been cut off by the sword. Gordian, who had already received the title of Caesar, was the only person that occurred to the soldiers as proper to fill the vacant throne. [45] They carried him to the camp, and unanimously saluted him Augustus and Emperor. His name was dear to the senate and people; his tender age promised a long impunity of military license; and the submission of Rome and the provinces to the choice of the Praetorian guards, saved the republic, at the expense indeed of its freedom and dignity, from the horrors of a new civil war in the heart of the capital. [46]

[Footnote 45: *Quia non alius erat in praesenti,* is the expression of the Augustan History.]

[Footnote 46: Quintus Curtius (l. x. c. 9,) pays an elegant compliment to the emperor of the day, for having, by his happy accession,

extinguished so many firebrands, sheathed so many swords, and put an end to the evils of a divided government. After weighing with attention every word of the passage, I am of opinion, that it suits better with the elevation of Gordian, than with any other period of the Roman history. In that case, it may serve to decide the age of Quintus Curtius. Those who place him under the first Caesars, argue from the purity of his style but are embarrassed by the silence of Quintilian, in his accurate list of Roman historians. * Note: This conjecture of Gibbon is without foundation. Many passages in the work of Quintus Curtius clearly place him at an earlier period. Thus, in speaking of the Parthians, he says, *Hinc in Parthicum perventum est, tunc ignobilem gentem: nunc caput omnium qui post Euphratem et Tigrim amnes siti Rubro mari terminantur.* The Parthian empire had this extent only in the first age of the vulgar aera: to that age, therefore, must be assigned the date of Quintus Curtius. Although the critics (says M. de Sainte Croix) have multiplied conjectures on this subject, most of them have ended by adopting the opinion which places Quintus Curtius under the reign of Claudius. See Just. Lips. ad Ann. Tac. ii. 20. Michel le Tellier Praef. in Curt. Tillemont Hist. des Emp. i. p. 251. Du Bos Reflections sur la Poesie, 2d Partie. Tiraboschi Storia della, Lett. Ital. ii. 149. Examen. crit. des Historiens d'Alexandre, 2d ed. p. 104, 849, 850.--G.

----This interminable question seems as much perplexed as ever. The first argument of M. Guizot is a strong one, except that Parthian is often used by later writers for Persian. Cunzius, in his preface to an edition published at Helmstadt, (1802,) maintains the opinion of Bagnolo, which assigns Q. Curtius to the time of Constantine the Great. Schmieder,

in his edit. Gotting. 1803, sums up in this sentence, aetatem Curtii ignorari pala mest.--M.]

As the third Gordian was only nineteen years of age at the time of his death, the history of his life, were it known to us with greater accuracy than it really is, would contain little more than the account of his education, and the conduct of the ministers, who by turns abused or guided the simplicity of his unexperienced youth. Immediately after his accession, he fell into the hands of his mother's eunuchs, that pernicious vermin of the East, who, since the days of Elagabalus, had infested the Roman palace. By the artful conspiracy of these wretches, an impenetrable veil was drawn between an innocent prince and his oppressed subjects, the virtuous disposition of Gordian was deceived, and the honors of the empire sold without his knowledge, though in a very public manner, to the most worthless of mankind. We are ignorant by what fortunate accident the emperor escaped from this ignominious slavery, and devolved his confidence on a minister, whose wise counsels had no object except the glory of his sovereign and the happiness of the people. It should seem that love and learning introduced Misitheus to the favor of Gordian. The young prince married the daughter of his master of rhetoric, and promoted his father-in-law to the first offices of the empire. Two admirable letters that passed between them are still extant. The minister, with the conscious dignity of virtue, congratulates Gordian that he is delivered from the tyranny of the eunuchs, [47] and still more that he is sensible of his deliverance. The emperor acknowledges, with an amiable confusion, the errors of his past

conduct; and laments, with singular propriety, the misfortune of a monarch, from whom a venal tribe of courtiers perpetually labor to conceal the truth. [48]

[Footnote 47: Hist. August. p. 161. From some hints in the two letters, I should expect that the eunuchs were not expelled the palace without some degree of gentle violence, and that the young Gordian rather approved of, than consented to, their disgrace.]

[Footnote 48: Duxit uxorem filiam Misithei, quem causa eloquentiae dignum parentela sua putavit; et praefectum statim fecit; post quod, non puerile jam et contemptibile videbatur imperium.]

The life of Misitheus had been spent in the profession of letters, not of arms; yet such was the versatile genius of that great man, that, when he was appointed Praetorian Praefect, he discharged the military duties of his place with vigor and ability. The Persians had invaded Mesopotamia, and threatened Antioch. By the persuasion of his father-in-law, the young emperor quitted the luxury of Rome, opened, for the last time recorded in history, the temple of Janus, and marched in person into the East. On his approach, with a great army, the Persians withdrew their garrisons from the cities which they had already taken, and retired from the Euphrates to the Tigris. Gordian enjoyed the pleasure of announcing to the senate the first success of his arms, which he ascribed, with a becoming modesty and gratitude, to the wisdom of his father and Praefect. During the whole expedition, Misitheus

watched over the safety and discipline of the army; whilst he prevented their dangerous murmurs by maintaining a regular plenty in the camp, and by establishing ample magazines of vinegar, bacon, straw, barley, and wheat in all the cities of the frontier. [49] But the prosperity of Gordian expired with Misitheus, who died of a flux, not without very strong suspicions of poison. Philip, his successor in the praefecture, was an Arab by birth, and consequently, in the earlier part of his life, a robber by profession. His rise from so obscure a station to the first dignities of the empire, seems to prove that he was a bold and able leader. But his boldness prompted him to aspire to the throne, and his abilities were employed to supplant, not to serve, his indulgent master. The minds of the soldiers were irritated by an artificial scarcity, created by his contrivance in the camp; and the distress of the army was attributed to the youth and incapacity of the prince. It is not in our power to trace the successive steps of the secret conspiracy and open sedition, which were at length fatal to Gordian. A sepulchral monument was erected to his memory on the spot [50] where he was killed, near the conflux of the Euphrates with the little river Aboras. [51] The fortunate Philip, raised to the empire by the votes of the soldiers, found a ready obedience from the senate and the provinces. [52]

[Footnote 49: Hist. August. p. 162. Aurelius Victor. Porphyrius in Vit Plotin. ap. Fabricium, Biblioth. Graec. l. iv. c. 36. The philosopher Plotinus accompanied the army, prompted by the love of knowledge, and by the hope of penetrating as far as India.]

[Footnote 50: About twenty miles from the little town of Circesium, on the frontier of the two empires. * Note: Now Kerkesia; placed in the angle formed by the juncture of the Chaboras, or al Khabour, with the Euphrates. This situation appeared advantageous to Diocletian, that he raised fortifications to make it the butt wark of the empire on the side of Mesopotamia. D'Anville. Geog. Anc. ii. 196.--G. It is the Carchemish of the Old Testament, 2 Chron. xxxv. 20. 1er. xlvi. 2.--M.]

[Footnote 51: The inscription (which contained a very singular pun) was erased by the order of Licinius, who claimed some degree of relationship to Philip, (Hist. August. p. 166;) but the tumulus, or mound of earth which formed the sepulchre, still subsisted in the time of Julian. See Ammian Marcellin. xxiii. 5.]

[Footnote 52: Aurelius Victor. Eutrop. ix. 2. Orosius, vii. 20. Ammianus Marcellinus, xxiii. 5. Zosimus, l. i. p. 19. Philip, who was a native of Bostra, was about forty years of age. * Note: Now Bosra. It was once the metropolis of a province named Arabia, and the chief city of Auranitis, of which the name is preserved in Beled Hauran, the limits of which meet the desert. D'Anville. Geog. Anc. ii. 188. According to Victor, (in Caesar.,) Philip was a native of Tracbonitis another province of Arabia.--G.]

We cannot forbear transcribing the ingenious, though somewhat fanciful description, which a celebrated writer of our own times has traced of the military government of the Roman empire. What in that age was

called the Roman empire, was only an irregular republic, not unlike the aristocracy [53] of Algiers, [54] where the militia, possessed of the sovereignty, creates and deposes a magistrate, who is styled a Dey. Perhaps, indeed, it may be laid down as a general rule, that a military government is, in some respects, more republican than monarchical. Nor can it be said that the soldiers only partook of the government by their disobedience and rebellions. The speeches made to them by the emperors, were they not at length of the same nature as those formerly pronounced to the people by the consuls and the tribunes? And although the armies had no regular place or forms of assembly; though their debates were short, their action sudden, and their resolves seldom the result of cool reflection, did they not dispose, with absolute sway, of the public fortune? What was the emperor, except the minister of a violent government, elected for the private benefit of the soldiers?

[Footnote 53: Can the epithet of Aristocracy be applied, with any propriety, to the government of Algiers? Every military government floats between two extremes of absolute monarchy and wild democracy.]

[Footnote 54: The military republic of the Mamelukes in Egypt would have afforded M. de Montesquieu (see *Considerations sur la Grandeur et la Decadence des Romains*, c. 16) a juster and more noble parallel.]

"When the army had elected Philip, who was Praetorian praefect to the third Gordian, the latter demanded that he might remain sole emperor; he was unable to obtain it. He requested that the power might be equally

divided between them; the army would not listen to his speech. He consented to be degraded to the rank of Caesar; the favor was refused him. He desired, at least, he might be appointed Praetorian praefect; his prayer was rejected. Finally, he pleaded for his life. The army, in these several judgments, exercised the supreme magistracy." According to the historian, whose doubtful narrative the President De Montesquieu has adopted, Philip, who, during the whole transaction, had preserved a sullen silence, was inclined to spare the innocent life of his benefactor; till, recollecting that his innocence might excite a dangerous compassion in the Roman world, he commanded, without regard to his suppliant cries, that he should be seized, stripped, and led away to instant death. After a moment's pause, the inhuman sentence was executed. [55]

[Footnote 55: The Augustan History (p. 163, 164) cannot, in this instance, be reconciled with itself or with probability. How could Philip condemn his predecessor, and yet consecrate his memory? How could he order his public execution, and yet, in his letters to the senate, exculpate himself from the guilt of his death? Philip, though an ambitious usurper, was by no means a mad tyrant. Some chronological difficulties have likewise been discovered by the nice eyes of Tillemont and Muratori, in this supposed association of Philip to the empire. * Note: Wenck endeavors to reconcile these discrepancies. He supposes that Gordian was led away, and died a natural death in prison. This is directly contrary to the statement of Capitolinus and of Zosimus, whom he adduces in support of his theory. He is more successful in

his precedents of usurpers deifying the victims of their ambition. Sit
divus, dummodo non sit vivus.--M.]