

Chapter XIV: Six Emperors At The Same Time, Reunion Of The Empire.--Part I.

Troubles After The Abdication Of Diocletian.--Death Of Constantius.--Elevation Of Constantine And Maxen Tius.--Six Emperors At The Same Time.--Death Of Maximian And Galerius.--Victories Of Constantine Over Maxentius And Licinus.--Reunion Of The Empire Under The Authority Of Constantine.

The balance of power established by Diocletian subsisted no longer than while it was sustained by the firm and dexterous hand of the founder. It required such a fortunate mixture of different tempers and abilities, as could scarcely be found or even expected a second time; two emperors without jealousy, two Caesars without ambition, and the same general interest invariably pursued by four independent princes. The abdication of Diocletian and Maximian was succeeded by eighteen years of discord and confusion. The empire was afflicted by five civil wars; and the remainder of the time was not so much a state of tranquillity as a suspension of arms between several hostile monarchs, who, viewing each other with an eye of fear and hatred, strove to increase their respective forces at the expense of their subjects.

As soon as Diocletian and Maximian had resigned the purple, their station, according to the rules of the new constitution, was filled by the two Caesars, Constantius and Galerius, who immediately assumed the title of Augustus. [1]

[Footnote 1: M. de Montesquieu (*Considerations sur la Grandeur et La Decadence des Romains*, c. 17) supposes, on the authority of Orosius and Eusebius, that, on this occasion, the empire, for the first time, was really divided into two parts. It is difficult, however, to discover in what respect the plan of Galerius differed from that of Diocletian.]

The honors of seniority and precedence were allowed to the former of those princes, and he continued under a new appellation to administer his ancient department of Gaul, Spain, and Britain.

The government of those ample provinces was sufficient to exercise his talents and to satisfy his ambition. Clemency, temperance, and moderation, distinguished the amiable character of Constantius, and his fortunate subjects had frequently occasion to compare the virtues of their sovereign with the passions of Maximian, and even with the arts of Diocletian. [2] Instead of imitating their eastern pride and magnificence, Constantius preserved the modesty of a Roman prince. He declared, with unaffected sincerity, that his most valued treasure was in the hearts of his people, and that, whenever the dignity of the throne, or the danger of the state, required any extraordinary supply, he could depend with confidence on their gratitude and liberality. [3] The provincials of Gaul, Spain, and Britain, sensible of his worth, and of their own happiness, reflected with anxiety on the declining health of the emperor Constantius, and the tender age of his numerous family, the issue of his second marriage with the daughter of Maximian.

[Footnote 2: Hic non modo amabilis, sed etiam venerabilis Gallis fuit; praecipue quod Diocletiani suspectam prudentiam, et Maximiani sanguinariam violentiam imperio ejus evaserant. Eutrop. Breviar. x. i.]

[Footnote 3: Divitiis Provincialium (mel. provinciarum) ac privatorum studens, fisci commoda non admodum affectans; ducensque melius publicas opes a privatis haberi, quam intra unum claustrum reservari. Id. ibid. He carried this maxim so far, that whenever he gave an entertainment, he was obliged to borrow a service of plate.]

The stern temper of Galerius was cast in a very different mould; and while he commanded the esteem of his subjects, he seldom condescended to solicit their affections. His fame in arms, and, above all, the success of the Persian war, had elated his haughty mind, which was naturally impatient of a superior, or even of an equal. If it were possible to rely on the partial testimony of an injudicious writer, we might ascribe the abdication of Diocletian to the menaces of Galerius, and relate the particulars of a private conversation between the two princes, in which the former discovered as much pusillanimity as the latter displayed ingratitude and arrogance. [4] But these obscure anecdotes are sufficiently refuted by an impartial view of the character and conduct of Diocletian. Whatever might otherwise have been his intentions, if he had apprehended any danger from the violence of Galerius, his good sense would have instructed him to prevent the ignominious contest; and as he had held the sceptre with glory, he would have resigned it without

disgrace.

[Footnote 4: Lactantius de Mort. Persecutor. c. 18. Were the particulars of this conference more consistent with truth and decency, we might still ask how they came to the knowledge of an obscure rhetorician. But there are many historians who put us in mind of the admirable saying of the great Conde to Cardinal de Retz: "Ces coquins nous font parler et agir, comme ils auroient fait eux-memes a notre place." * Note: This attack upon Lactantius is unfounded. Lactantius was so far from having been an obscure rhetorician, that he had taught rhetoric publicly, and with the greatest success, first in Africa, and afterwards in Nicomedia. His reputation obtained him the esteem of Constantine, who invited him to his court, and intrusted to him the education of his son Crispus. The facts which he relates took place during his own time; he cannot be accused of dishonesty or imposture. Satis me vixisse arbitrabor et officium hominis implese si labor meus aliquos homines, ab erroribus iberatos, ad iter coeleste direxerit. De Opif. Dei, cap. 20. The eloquence of Lactantius has caused him to be called the Christian Cicero. Annon Gent.--G. ----Yet no unprejudiced person can read this coarse and particular private conversation of the two emperors, without assenting to the justice of Gibbon's severe sentence. But the authorship of the treatise is by no means certain. The fame of Lactantius for eloquence as well as for truth, would suffer no loss if it should be adjudged to some more "obscure rhetorician." Manso, in his Leben Constantins des Grossen, concurs on this point with Gibbon Beylage, iv. --M.]

After the elevation of Constantius and Galerius to the rank of Augusti, two new Coesars were required to supply their place, and to complete the system of the Imperial government. Diocletian, was sincerely desirous of withdrawing himself from the world; he considered Galerius, who had married his daughter, as the firmest support of his family and of the empire; and he consented, without reluctance, that his successor should assume the merit as well as the envy of the important nomination. It was fixed without consulting the interest or inclination of the princes of the West. Each of them had a son who was arrived at the age of manhood, and who might have been deemed the most natural candidates for the vacant honor. But the impotent resentment of Maximian was no longer to be dreaded; and the moderate Constantius, though he might despise the dangers, was humanely apprehensive of the calamities, of civil war. The two persons whom Galerius promoted to the rank of Caesar, were much better suited to serve the views of his ambition; and their principal recommendation seems to have consisted in the want of merit or personal consequence. The first of these was Daza, or, as he was afterwards called, Maximin, whose mother was the sister of Galerius. The unexperienced youth still betrayed, by his manners and language, his rustic education, when, to his own astonishment, as well as that of the world, he was invested by Diocletian with the purple, exalted to the dignity of Caesar, and intrusted with the sovereign command of Egypt and Syria. [5] At the same time, Severus, a faithful servant, addicted to pleasure, but not incapable of business, was sent to Milan, to receive, from the reluctant hands of Maximian, the Caesarian ornaments, and

the possession of Italy and Africa. According to the forms of the constitution, Severus acknowledged the supremacy of the western emperor; but he was absolutely devoted to the commands of his benefactor Galerius, who, reserving to himself the intermediate countries from the confines of Italy to those of Syria, firmly established his power over three fourths of the monarchy. In the full confidence that the approaching death of Constantius would leave him sole master of the Roman world, we are assured that he had arranged in his mind a long succession of future princes, and that he meditated his own retreat from public life, after he should have accomplished a glorious reign of about twenty years. [7]

[Footnote 5: *Sublatus nuper a pecoribus et silvis* (says Lactantius de M. P. c. 19) *statim Scutarius, continuo Protector, mox Tribunus, postridie Caesar, accepit Orientem.* Aurelius Victor is too liberal in giving him the whole portion of Diocletian.]

[Footnote 6: His diligence and fidelity are acknowledged even by Lactantius, de M. P. c. 18.]

[Footnote 7: These schemes, however, rest only on the very doubtful authority of Lactantius de M. P. c. 20.]

But within less than eighteen months, two unexpected revolutions overturned the ambitious schemes of Galerius. The hopes of uniting the western provinces to his empire were disappointed by the elevation of

Constantine, whilst Italy and Africa were lost by the successful revolt of Maxentius.

I. The fame of Constantine has rendered posterity attentive to the most minute circumstances of his life and actions. The place of his birth, as well as the condition of his mother Helena, have been the subject, not only of literary, but of national disputes. Notwithstanding the recent tradition, which assigns for her father a British king, [8] we are obliged to confess, that Helena was the daughter of an innkeeper; but at the same time, we may defend the legality of her marriage, against those who have represented her as the concubine of Constantius. [9] The great Constantine was most probably born at Naissus, in Dacia; [10] and it is not surprising that, in a family and province distinguished only by the profession of arms, the youth should discover very little inclination to improve his mind by the acquisition of knowledge. [11] He was about eighteen years of age when his father was promoted to the rank of Caesar; but that fortunate event was attended with his mother's divorce; and the splendor of an Imperial alliance reduced the son of Helena to a state of disgrace and humiliation. Instead of following Constantius in the West, he remained in the service of Diocletian, signalized his valor in the wars of Egypt and Persia, and gradually rose to the honorable station of a tribune of the first order. The figure of Constantine was tall and majestic; he was dexterous in all his exercises, intrepid in war, affable in peace; in his whole conduct, the active spirit of youth was tempered by habitual prudence; and while his mind was engrossed

by ambition, he appeared cold and insensible to the allurements of pleasure. The favor of the people and soldiers, who had named him as a worthy candidate for the rank of Caesar, served only to exasperate the jealousy of Galerius; and though prudence might restrain him from exercising any open violence, an absolute monarch is seldom at a loss now to execute a sure and secret revenge. [12] Every hour increased the danger of Constantine, and the anxiety of his father, who, by repeated letters, expressed the warmest desire of embracing his son. For some time the policy of Galerius supplied him with delays and excuses; but it was impossible long to refuse so natural a request of his associate, without maintaining his refusal by arms. The permission of the journey was reluctantly granted, and whatever precautions the emperor might have taken to intercept a return, the consequences of which he, with so much reason, apprehended, they were effectually disappointed by the incredible diligence of Constantine. [13] Leaving the palace of Nicomedia in the night, he travelled post through Bithynia, Thrace, Dacia, Pannonia, Italy, and Gaul, and, amidst the joyful acclamations of the people, reached the port of Boulogne in the very moment when his father was preparing to embark for Britain. [14]

[Footnote 8: This tradition, unknown to the contemporaries of Constantine was invented in the darkness of monestaries, was embellished by Jeffrey of Monmouth, and the writers of the xiith century, has been defended by our antiquarians of the last age, and is seriously related in the ponderous History of England, compiled by Mr. Carte, (vol. i. p. 147.) He transports, however, the kingdom of Coil, the imaginary father

of Helena, from Essex to the wall of Antoninus.]

[Footnote 9: Eutropius (x. 2) expresses, in a few words, the real truth, and the occasion of the error "ex obscuriori matrimonio ejus filius." Zosimus (l. ii. p. 78) eagerly seized the most unfavorable report, and is followed by Orosius, (vii. 25,) whose authority is oddly enough overlooked by the indefatigable, but partial Tillemont. By insisting on the divorce of Helena, Diocletian acknowledged her marriage.]

[Footnote 10: There are three opinions with regard to the place of Constantine's birth. 1. Our English antiquarians were used to dwell with rapture on the words of his panegyrist, "Britannias illic oriendo nobiles fecisti." But this celebrated passage may be referred with as much propriety to the accession, as to the nativity of Constantine. 2. Some of the modern Greeks have ascribed the honor of his birth to Drepanum, a town on the Gulf of Nicomedia, (Cellarius, tom. ii. p. 174,) which Constantine dignified with the name of Helenopolis, and Justinian adorned with many splendid buildings, (Procop. de Edificiis, v. 2.) It is indeed probable enough, that Helena's father kept an inn at Drepanum, and that Constantius might lodge there when he returned from a Persian embassy, in the reign of Aurelian. But in the wandering life of a soldier, the place of his marriage, and the places where his children are born, have very little connection with each other. 3. The claim of Naissus is supported by the anonymous writer, published at the end of Ammianus, p. 710, and who in general copied very good materials; and it is confirmed by Julius Firmicus, (de Astrologia, l. i. c. 4,) who

flourished under the reign of Constantine himself. Some objections have been raised against the integrity of the text, and the application of the passage of Firmicus but the former is established by the best Mss., and the latter is very ably defended by Lipsius de Magnitudine Romana, l. iv. c. 11, et Supplement.]

[Footnote 11: Literis minus instructus. Anonym. ad Ammian. p. 710.]

[Footnote 12: Galerius, or perhaps his own courage, exposed him to single combat with a Sarmatian, (Anonym. p. 710,) and with a monstrous lion. See Praxagoras apud Photium, p. 63. Praxagoras, an Athenian philosopher, had written a life of Constantine in two books, which are now lost. He was a contemporary.]

[Footnote 13: Zosimus, l. ii. p. 78, 79. Lactantius de M. P. c. 24. The former tells a very foolish story, that Constantine caused all the post-horses which he had used to be hamstrung. Such a bloody execution, without preventing a pursuit, would have scattered suspicions, and might have stopped his journey. * Note: Zosimus is not the only writer who tells this story. The younger Victor confirms it. Ad frustrandos insequentes, publica jumenta, quaque iter ageret, interficiens. Aurelius Victor de Caesar says the same thing, G. as also the Anonymus Valesii.--M. ----Manso, (Leben Constantins,) p. 18, observes that the story has been exaggerated; he took this precaution during the first stage of his journey.--M.]

[Footnote 14: Anonym. p. 710. Panegy. Veter. vii. 4. But Zosimus, l. ii. p. 79, Eusebius de Vit. Constant. l. i. c. 21, and Lactantius de M. P. c. 24. suppose, with less accuracy, that he found his father on his death-bed.]

The British expedition, and an easy victory over the barbarians of Caledonia, were the last exploits of the reign of Constantius. He ended his life in the Imperial palace of York, fifteen months after he had received the title of Augustus, and almost fourteen years and a half after he had been promoted to the rank of Caesar. His death was immediately succeeded by the elevation of Constantine. The ideas of inheritance and succession are so very familiar, that the generality of mankind consider them as founded, not only in reason, but in nature itself. Our imagination readily transfers the same principles from private property to public dominion: and whenever a virtuous father leaves behind him a son whose merit seems to justify the esteem, or even the hopes, of the people, the joint influence of prejudice and of affection operates with irresistible weight. The flower of the western armies had followed Constantius into Britain, and the national troops were reenforced by a numerous body of Alemanni, who obeyed the orders of Crocus, one of their hereditary chieftains. [15] The opinion of their own importance, and the assurance that Britain, Gaul, and Spain would acquiesce in their nomination, were diligently inculcated to the legions by the adherents of Constantine. The soldiers were asked, whether they could hesitate a moment between the honor of placing at their head the worthy son of their beloved emperor, and the ignominy of tamely

expecting the arrival of some obscure stranger, on whom it might please the sovereign of Asia to bestow the armies and provinces of the West. It was insinuated to them, that gratitude and liberality held a distinguished place among the virtues of Constantine; nor did that artful prince show himself to the troops, till they were prepared to salute him with the names of Augustus and Emperor. The throne was the object of his desires; and had he been less actuated by ambition, it was his only means of safety. He was well acquainted with the character and sentiments of Galerius, and sufficiently apprised, that if he wished to live he must determine to reign. The decent and even obstinate resistance which he chose to affect, [16] was contrived to justify his usurpation; nor did he yield to the acclamations of the army, till he had provided the proper materials for a letter, which he immediately despatched to the emperor of the East. Constantine informed him of the melancholy event of his father's death, modestly asserted his natural claim to the succession, and respectfully lamented, that the affectionate violence of his troops had not permitted him to solicit the Imperial purple in the regular and constitutional manner. The first emotions of Galerius were those of surprise, disappointment, and rage; and as he could seldom restrain his passions, he loudly threatened, that he would commit to the flames both the letter and the messenger. But his resentment insensibly subsided; and when he recollected the doubtful chance of war, when he had weighed the character and strength of his adversary, he consented to embrace the honorable accommodation which the prudence of Constantine had left open to him. Without either condemning or ratifying the choice of the British army, Galerius accepted the son

of his deceased colleague as the sovereign of the provinces beyond the Alps; but he gave him only the title of Caesar, and the fourth rank among the Roman princes, whilst he conferred the vacant place of Augustus on his favorite Severus. The apparent harmony of the empire was still preserved, and Constantine, who already possessed the substance, expected, without impatience, an opportunity of obtaining the honors, of supreme power. [17]

[Footnote 15: *Cunctis qui aderant, annitentibus, sed praecipue Croco (alii Eroco) [Erich?] Alamannorum Rege, auxilii gratia Constantium comitato, imperium capit. Victor Junior, c. 41. This is perhaps the first instance of a barbarian king, who assisted the Roman arms with an independent body of his own subjects. The practice grew familiar and at last became fatal.*]

[Footnote 16: His panegyrist Eumenius (vii. 8) ventures to affirm in the presence of Constantine, that he put spurs to his horse, and tried, but in vain, to escape from the hands of his soldiers.]

[Footnote 17: Lactantius de M. P. c. 25. Eumenius (vii. 8.) gives a rhetorical turn to the whole transaction.]

The children of Constantius by his second marriage were six in number, three of either sex, and whose Imperial descent might have solicited a preference over the meaner extraction of the son of Helena. But Constantine was in the thirty-second year of his age, in the full vigor

both of mind and body, at the time when the eldest of his brothers could not possibly be more than thirteen years old. His claim of superior merit had been allowed and ratified by the dying emperor. [18] In his last moments Constantius bequeathed to his eldest son the care of the safety as well as greatness of the family; conjuring him to assume both the authority and the sentiments of a father with regard to the children of Theodora. Their liberal education, advantageous marriages, the secure dignity of their lives, and the first honors of the state with which they were invested, attest the fraternal affection of Constantine; and as those princes possessed a mild and grateful disposition, they submitted without reluctance to the superiority of his genius and fortune. [19]

[Footnote 18: The choice of Constantine, by his dying father, which is warranted by reason, and insinuated by Eumenius, seems to be confirmed by the most unexceptionable authority, the concurring evidence of Lactantius (de M. P. c. 24) and of Libanius, (Oratio i.,) of Eusebius (in Vit. Constantin. l. i. c. 18, 21) and of Julian, (Oratio i)]

[Footnote 19: Of the three sisters of Constantine, Constantia married the emperor Licinius, Anastasia the Caesar Bassianus, and Eutropia the consul Nepotianus. The three brothers were, Dalmatius, Julius Constantius, and Annibalianus, of whom we shall have occasion to speak hereafter.]

II. The ambitious spirit of Galerius was scarcely reconciled to the disappointment of his views upon the Gallic provinces, before the unexpected loss of Italy wounded his pride as well as power in a still more sensible part. The long absence of the emperors had filled Rome with discontent and indignation; and the people gradually discovered, that the preference given to Nicomedia and Milan was not to be ascribed to the particular inclination of Diocletian, but to the permanent form of government which he had instituted. It was in vain that, a few months after his abdication, his successors dedicated, under his name, those magnificent baths, whose ruins still supply the ground as well as the materials for so many churches and convents. [20] The tranquility of those elegant recesses of ease and luxury was disturbed by the impatient murmurs of the Romans, and a report was insensibly circulated, that the sums expended in erecting those buildings would soon be required at their hands. About that time the avarice of Galerius, or perhaps the exigencies of the state, had induced him to make a very strict and rigorous inquisition into the property of his subjects, for the purpose of a general taxation, both on their lands and on their persons. A very minute survey appears to have been taken of their real estates; and wherever there was the slightest suspicion of concealment, torture was very freely employed to obtain a sincere declaration of their personal wealth. [21] The privileges which had exalted Italy above the rank of the provinces were no longer regarded: [211] and the officers of the revenue already began to number the Roman people, and to settle the proportion of the new taxes. Even when the spirit of freedom had been utterly extinguished, the tamest subjects have sometimes ventured to resist

an unprecedented invasion of their property; but on this occasion the injury was aggravated by the insult, and the sense of private interest was quickened by that of national honor. The conquest of Macedonia, as we have already observed, had delivered the Roman people from the weight of personal taxes.

Though they had experienced every form of despotism, they had now enjoyed that exemption near five hundred years; nor could they patiently brook the insolence of an Illyrian peasant, who, from his distant residence in Asia, presumed to number Rome among the tributary cities of his empire. The rising fury of the people was encouraged by the authority, or at least the connivance, of the senate; and the feeble remains of the Praetorian guards, who had reason to apprehend their own dissolution, embraced so honorable a pretence, and declared their readiness to draw their swords in the service of their oppressed country. It was the wish, and it soon became the hope, of every citizen, that after expelling from Italy their foreign tyrants, they should elect a prince who, by the place of his residence, and by his maxims of government, might once more deserve the title of Roman emperor. The name, as well as the situation, of Maxentius determined in his favor the popular enthusiasm.

[Footnote 20: See Gruter. Inscip. p. 178. The six princes are all mentioned, Diocletian and Maximian as the senior Augusti, and fathers of the emperors. They jointly dedicate, for the use of their own Romans, this magnificent edifice. The architects have delineated the ruins of

these Thermoe, and the antiquarians, particularly Donatus and Nardini, have ascertained the ground which they covered. One of the great rooms is now the Carthusian church; and even one of the porter's lodges is sufficient to form another church, which belongs to the Feuillans.]

[Footnote 21: See Lactantius de M. P. c. 26, 31.]

[Footnote 211: Savigny, in his memoir on Roman taxation, (Mem. Berl. Academ. 1822, 1823, p. 5,) dates from this period the abolition of the Jus Italicum. He quotes a remarkable passage of Aurelius Victor. Hinc denique parti Italiae invec tum tributorum ingens malum. Aur. Vict. c. 39. It was a necessary consequence of the division of the empire: it became impossible to maintain a second court and executive, and leave so large and fruitful a part of the territory exempt from contribution.--M.]

Maxentius was the son of the emperor Maximian, and he had married the daughter of Galerius. His birth and alliance seemed to offer him the fairest promise of succeeding to the empire; but his vices and incapacity procured him the same exclusion from the dignity of Caesar, which Constantine had deserved by a dangerous superiority of merit. The policy of Galerius preferred such associates as would never disgrace the choice, nor dispute the commands, of their benefactor. An obscure stranger was therefore raised to the throne of Italy, and the son of the late emperor of the West was left to enjoy the luxury of a private fortune in a villa a few miles distant from the capital. The gloomy

passions of his soul, shame, vexation, and rage, were inflamed by envy on the news of Constantine's success; but the hopes of Maxentius revived with the public discontent, and he was easily persuaded to unite his personal injury and pretensions with the cause of the Roman people. Two Praetorian tribunes and a commissary of provisions undertook the management of the conspiracy; and as every order of men was actuated by the same spirit, the immediate event was neither doubtful nor difficult. The praefect of the city, and a few magistrates, who maintained their fidelity to Severus, were massacred by the guards; and Maxentius, invested with the Imperial ornaments, was acknowledged by the applauding senate and people as the protector of the Roman freedom and dignity. It is uncertain whether Maximian was previously acquainted with the conspiracy; but as soon as the standard of rebellion was erected at Rome, the old emperor broke from the retirement where the authority of Diocletian had condemned him to pass a life of melancholy and solitude, and concealed his returning ambition under the disguise of paternal tenderness. At the request of his son and of the senate, he condescended to reassume the purple. His ancient dignity, his experience, and his fame in arms, added strength as well as reputation to the party of Maxentius. [22]

[Footnote 22: The sixth Panegyric represents the conduct of Maximian in the most favorable light, and the ambiguous expression of Aurelius Victor, "retractante diu," may signify either that he contrived, or that he opposed, the conspiracy. See Zosimus, l. ii. p. 79, and Lactantius de M. P. c. 26.]

According to the advice, or rather the orders, of his colleague, the emperor Severus immediately hastened to Rome, in the full confidence, that, by his unexpected celerity, he should easily suppress the tumult of an unwarlike populace, commanded by a licentious youth. But he found on his arrival the gates of the city shut against him, the walls filled with men and arms, an experienced general at the head of the rebels, and his own troops without spirit or affection. A large body of Moors deserted to the enemy, allured by the promise of a large donative; and, if it be true that they had been levied by Maximian in his African war, preferring the natural feelings of gratitude to the artificial ties of allegiance. Anulinus, the Praetorian praefect, declared himself in favor of Maxentius, and drew after him the most considerable part of the troops, accustomed to obey his commands.

Rome, according to the expression of an orator, recalled her armies; and the unfortunate Severus, destitute of force and of counsel, retired, or rather fled, with precipitation, to Ravenna.

Here he might for some time have been safe. The fortifications of Ravenna were able to resist the attempts, and the morasses that surrounded the town, were sufficient to prevent the approach, of the Italian army. The sea, which Severus commanded with a powerful fleet, secured him an inexhaustible supply of provisions, and gave a free entrance to the legions, which, on the return of spring, would advance to his assistance from Illyricum and the East. Maximian, who conducted

the siege in person, was soon convinced that he might waste his time and his army in the fruitless enterprise, and that he had nothing to hope either from force or famine. With an art more suitable to the character of Diocletian than to his own, he directed his attack, not so much against the walls of Ravenna, as against the mind of Severus. The treachery which he had experienced disposed that unhappy prince to distrust the most sincere of his friends and adherents. The emissaries of Maximian easily persuaded his credulity, that a conspiracy was formed to betray the town, and prevailed upon his fears not to expose himself to the discretion of an irritated conqueror, but to accept the faith of an honorable capitulation. He was at first received with humanity and treated with respect. Maximian conducted the captive emperor to Rome, and gave him the most solemn assurances that he had secured his life by the resignation of the purple. But Severus, could obtain only an easy death and an Imperial funeral. When the sentence was signified to him, the manner of executing it was left to his own choice; he preferred the favorite mode of the ancients, that of opening his veins; and as soon as he expired, his body was carried to the sepulchre which had been constructed for the family of Gallienus. [23]

[Footnote 23: The circumstances of this war, and the death of Severus, are very doubtfully and variously told in our ancient fragments, (see Tillemont, *Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. part i. p. 555.) I have endeavored to extract from them a consistent and probable narration.

* Note: Manso justly observes that two totally different narratives might be formed, almost upon equal authority. *Beylage*, iv.--M.]