

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

Though the characters of Constantine and Maxentius had very little affinity with each other, their situation and interest were the same; and prudence seemed to require that they should unite their forces against the common enemy. Notwithstanding the superiority of his age and dignity, the indefatigable Maximian passed the Alps, and, courting a personal interview with the sovereign of Gaul, carried with him his daughter Fausta as the pledge of the new alliance. The marriage was celebrated at Arles with every circumstance of magnificence; and the ancient colleague of Diocletian, who again asserted his claim to the Western empire, conferred on his son-in-law and ally the title of Augustus. By consenting to receive that honor from Maximian, Constantine seemed to embrace the cause of Rome and of the senate; but his professions were ambiguous, and his assistance slow and ineffectual. He considered with attention the approaching contest between the masters of Italy and the emperor of the East, and was prepared to consult his own safety or ambition in the event of the war. [24]

[Footnote 24: The sixth Panegyric was pronounced to celebrate the elevation of Constantine; but the prudent orator avoids the mention either of Galerius or of Maxentius. He introduces only one slight allusion to the actual troubles, and to the majesty of Rome. \*

Note: Compare Manso, *Beilage*, iv. p. 302. Gibbon's account is at least as probable as that of his critic.--M.]

The importance of the occasion called for the presence and abilities of Galerius. At the head of a powerful army, collected from Illyricum and the East, he entered Italy, resolved to revenge the death of Severus, and to chastise the rebellions Romans; or, as he expressed his intentions, in the furious language of a barbarian, to extirpate the senate, and to destroy the people by the sword. But the skill of Maximian had concerted a prudent system of defence. The invader found every place hostile, fortified, and inaccessible; and though he forced his way as far as Narni, within sixty miles of Rome, his dominion in Italy was confined to the narrow limits of his camp. Sensible of the increasing difficulties of his enterprise, the haughty Galerius made the first advances towards a reconciliation, and despatched two of his most considerable officers to tempt the Roman princes by the offer of a conference, and the declaration of his paternal regard for Maxentius, who might obtain much more from his liberality than he could hope from the doubtful chance of war. [25] The offers of Galerius were rejected with firmness, his perfidious friendship refused with contempt, and it was not long before he discovered, that, unless he provided for his safety by a timely retreat, he had some reason to apprehend the fate of Severus. The wealth which the Romans defended against his rapacious tyranny, they freely contributed for his destruction. The name of Maximian, the popular arts of his son, the secret distribution of large sums, and the promise of still more liberal rewards, checked the ardor and corrupted the fidelity of the Illyrian legions; and when Galerius at length gave the signal of the retreat, it was with some difficulty that he could prevail on his veterans not to desert a banner which had so

often conducted them to victory and honor. A contemporary writer assigns two other causes for the failure of the expedition; but they are both of such a nature, that a cautious historian will scarcely venture to adopt them. We are told that Galerius, who had formed a very imperfect notion of the greatness of Rome by the cities of the East with which he was acquainted, found his forces inadequate to the siege of that immense capital.

But the extent of a city serves only to render it more accessible to the enemy: Rome had long since been accustomed to submit on the approach of a conqueror; nor could the temporary enthusiasm of the people have long contended against the discipline and valor of the legions. We are likewise informed that the legions themselves were struck with horror and remorse, and that those pious sons of the republic refused to violate the sanctity of their venerable parent. [26] But when we recollect with how much ease, in the more ancient civil wars, the zeal of party and the habits of military obedience had converted the native citizens of Rome into her most implacable enemies, we shall be inclined to distrust this extreme delicacy of strangers and barbarians, who had never beheld Italy till they entered it in a hostile manner. Had they not been restrained by motives of a more interested nature, they would probably have answered Galerius in the words of Caesar's veterans: "If our general wishes to lead us to the banks of the Tyber, we are prepared to trace out his camp. Whatsoever walls he has determined to level with the ground, our hands are ready to work the engines: nor shall we hesitate, should the name of the devoted city be Rome itself." These

are indeed the expressions of a poet; but of a poet who has been distinguished, and even censured, for his strict adherence to the truth of history. [27]

[Footnote 25: With regard to this negotiation, see the fragments of an anonymous historian, published by Valesius at the end of his edition of Ammianus Marcellinus, p. 711. These fragments have furnished with several curious, and, as it should seem, authentic anecdotes.]

[Footnote 26: Lactantius de M. P. c. 28. The former of these reasons is probably taken from Virgil's Shepherd: "Illam \* \* \* ego huic nostra similem, Meliboeae, putavi," &c. Lactantius delights in these poetical illusions.]

[Footnote 27: *Castra super Tusci si ponere Tybridis undas; (jubeus) Hesperios audax veniam metator in agros. Tu quoscunque voles in planum effundere muros, His aries actus disperget saxa lacertis; Illa licet penitus tolli quam jusseris urbem Roma sit.* Lucan. Pharsal. i. 381.]

The legions of Galerius exhibited a very melancholy proof of their disposition, by the ravages which they committed in their retreat. They murdered, they ravished, they plundered, they drove away the flocks and herds of the Italians; they burnt the villages through which they passed, and they endeavored to destroy the country which it had not been in their power to subdue. During the whole march, Maxentius hung on their rear, but he very prudently declined a general engagement with

those brave and desperate veterans. His father had undertaken a second journey into Gaul, with the hope of persuading Constantine, who had assembled an army on the frontier, to join in the pursuit, and to complete the victory. But the actions of Constantine were guided by reason, and not by resentment. He persisted in the wise resolution of maintaining a balance of power in the divided empire, and he no longer hated Galerius, when that aspiring prince had ceased to be an object of terror. [28]

[Footnote 28: Lactantius de M. P. c. 27. Zosim. 1. ii. p. 82. The latter, that Constantine, in his interview with Maximian, had promised to declare war against Galerius.]

The mind of Galerius was the most susceptible of the sterner passions, but it was not, however, incapable of a sincere and lasting friendship. Licinius, whose manners as well as character, were not unlike his own, seems to have engaged both his affection and esteem. Their intimacy had commenced in the happier period perhaps of their youth and obscurity. It had been cemented by the freedom and dangers of a military life; they had advanced almost by equal steps through the successive honors of the service; and as soon as Galerius was invested with the Imperial dignity, he seems to have conceived the design of raising his companion to the same rank with himself. During the short period of his prosperity, he considered the rank of Caesar as unworthy of the age and merit of Licinius, and rather chose to reserve for him the place of Constantius, and the empire of the West. While the emperor was employed in the

Italian war, he intrusted his friend with the defence of the Danube; and immediately after his return from that unfortunate expedition, he invested Licinius with the vacant purple of Severus, resigning to his immediate command the provinces of Illyricum. [29] The news of his promotion was no sooner carried into the East, than Maximin, who governed, or rather oppressed, the countries of Egypt and Syria, betrayed his envy and discontent, disdained the inferior name of Caesar, and, notwithstanding the prayers as well as arguments of Galerius, exacted, almost by violence, the equal title of Augustus. [30] For the first, and indeed for the last time, the Roman world was administered by six emperors. In the West, Constantine and Maxentius affected to reverence their father Maximian. In the East, Licinius and Maximin honored with more real consideration their benefactor Galerius. The opposition of interest, and the memory of a recent war, divided the empire into two great hostile powers; but their mutual fears produced an apparent tranquillity, and even a feigned reconciliation, till the death of the elder princes, of Maximian, and more particularly of Galerius, gave a new direction to the views and passions of their surviving associates.

[Footnote 29: M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. part i. p. 559) has proved that Licinius, without passing through the intermediate rank of Caesar, was declared Augustus, the 11th of November, A. D. 307, after the return of Galerius from Italy.]

[Footnote 30: Lactantius de M. P. c. 32. When Galerius declared Licinius

Augustus with himself, he tried to satisfy his younger associates, by inventing for Constantine and Maximin (not Maxentius; see Baluze, p. 81) the new title of sons of the Augusti. But when Maximin acquainted him that he had been saluted Augustus by the army, Galerius was obliged to acknowledge him as well as Constantine, as equal associates in the Imperial dignity.]

When Maximian had reluctantly abdicated the empire, the venal orators of the times applauded his philosophic moderation. When his ambition excited, or at least encouraged, a civil war, they returned thanks to his generous patriotism, and gently censured that love of ease and retirement which had withdrawn him from the public service. [31] But it was impossible that minds like those of Maximian and his son could long possess in harmony an undivided power. Maxentius considered himself as the legal sovereign of Italy, elected by the Roman senate and people; nor would he endure the control of his father, who arrogantly declared that by his name and abilities the rash youth had been established on the throne. The cause was solemnly pleaded before the Praetorian guards; and those troops, who dreaded the severity of the old emperor, espoused the party of Maxentius. [32] The life and freedom of Maximian were, however, respected, and he retired from Italy into Illyricum, affecting to lament his past conduct, and secretly contriving new mischiefs. But Galerius, who was well acquainted with his character, soon obliged him to leave his dominions, and the last refuge of the disappointed Maximian was the court of his son-in-law Constantine. [33] He was received with respect by that artful prince, and with the appearance of filial

tenderness by the empress Fausta. That he might remove every suspicion, he resigned the Imperial purple a second time, [34] professing himself at length convinced of the vanity of greatness and ambition. Had he persevered in this resolution, he might have ended his life with less dignity, indeed, than in his first retirement, yet, however, with comfort and reputation. But the near prospect of a throne brought back to his remembrance the state from whence he was fallen, and he resolved, by a desperate effort either to reign or to perish. An incursion of the Franks had summoned Constantine, with a part of his army, to the banks of the Rhine; the remainder of the troops were stationed in the southern provinces of Gaul, which lay exposed to the enterprises of the Italian emperor, and a considerable treasure was deposited in the city of Arles. Maximian either craftily invented, or easily credited, a vain report of the death of Constantine. Without hesitation he ascended the throne, seized the treasure, and scattering it with his accustomed profusion among the soldiers, endeavored to awake in their minds the memory of his ancient dignity and exploits. Before he could establish his authority, or finish the negotiation which he appears to have entered into with his son Maxentius, the celerity of Constantine defeated all his hopes. On the first news of his perfidy and ingratitude, that prince returned by rapid marches from the Rhine to the Saone, embarked on the last mentioned river at Chalons, and at Lyons trusting himself to the rapidity of the Rhone, arrived at the gates of Arles, with a military force which it was impossible for Maximian to resist, and which scarcely permitted him to take refuge in the neighboring city of Marseilles. The narrow neck of land which joined that place to the continent was



fortified against the besiegers, whilst the sea was open, either for the escape of Maximian, or for the succor of Maxentius, if the latter should choose to disguise his invasion of Gaul under the honorable pretence of defending a distressed, or, as he might allege, an injured father.

Apprehensive of the fatal consequences of delay, Constantine gave orders for an immediate assault; but the scaling-ladders were found too short for the height of the walls, and Marseilles might have sustained as long a siege as it formerly did against the arms of Caesar, if the garrison, conscious either of their fault or of their danger, had not purchased their pardon by delivering up the city and the person of Maximian. A secret but irrevocable sentence of death was pronounced against the usurper; he obtained only the same favor which he had indulged to Severus, and it was published to the world, that, oppressed by the remorse of his repeated crimes, he strangled himself with his own hands. After he had lost the assistance, and disdained the moderate counsels of Diocletian, the second period of his active life was a series of public calamities and personal mortifications, which were terminated, in about three years, by an ignominious death. He deserved his fate; but we should find more reason to applaud the humanity of Constantine, if he had spared an old man, the benefactor of his father, and the father of his wife. During the whole of this melancholy transaction, it appears that Fausta sacrificed the sentiments of nature to her conjugal duties.

[35]

[Footnote 31: See Panegy. Vet. vi. 9. Audi doloris nostri liberam vocem, &c. The whole passage is imagined with artful flattery, and

expressed with an easy flow of eloquence.]

[Footnote 32: Lactantius de M. P. c. 28. Zosim. 1. ii. p. 82. A report was spread, that Maxentius was the son of some obscure Syrian, and had been substituted by the wife of Maximian as her own child. See Aurelius Victor, Anonym. Valesian, and Panegy. Vet. ix. 3, 4.]

[Footnote 33: Ab urbe pulsum, ab Italia fugatum, ab Illyrico repudiatum, provinciis, tuis copiis, tuo palatio recepisti. Eumen. in Panegy. Vet. vii. 14.]

[Footnote 34: Lactantius de M. P. c. 29. Yet, after the resignation of the purple, Constantine still continued to Maximian the pomp and honors of the Imperial dignity; and on all public occasions gave the right hand place to his father-in-law. Panegy. Vet. viii. 15.]

[Footnote 35: Zosim. 1. ii. p. 82. Eumenius in Panegy. Vet. vii. 16--21. The latter of these has undoubtedly represented the whole affair in the most favorable light for his sovereign. Yet even from this partial narrative we may conclude, that the repeated clemency of Constantine, and the reiterated treasons of Maximian, as they are described by Lactantius, (de M. P. c. 29, 30,) and copied by the moderns, are destitute of any historical foundation. Note: Yet some pagan authors relate and confirm them. Aurelius Victor speaking of Maximin, says, cumque specie officii, dolis compositis, Constantinum generum tentaret acerbe, jure tamen interierat. Aur. Vict. de Caesar l.

p. 623. Eutropius also says, *inde ad Gallias profectus est (Maximianus) composito tamquam a filio esset expulsus, ut Constantino genero jungeretur: moliens tamen Constantinum, reperta occasione, interficere, dedit justissimo exitu.* Eutrop. x. p. 661. (Anon. Gent.)--G. ----

These writers hardly confirm more than Gibbon admits; he denies the repeated clemency of Constantine, and the reiterated treasons of Maximian Compare Manso, p. 302.--M.]

The last years of Galerius were less shameful and unfortunate; and though he had filled with more glory the subordinate station of Caesar than the superior rank of Augustus, he preserved, till the moment of his death, the first place among the princes of the Roman world. He survived his retreat from Italy about four years; and wisely relinquishing his views of universal empire, he devoted the remainder of his life to the enjoyment of pleasure, and to the execution of some works of public utility, among which we may distinguish the discharging into the Danube the superfluous waters of the Lake Pelso, and the cutting down the immense forests that encompassed it; an operation worthy of a monarch, since it gave an extensive country to the agriculture of his Pannonian subjects. [36] His death was occasioned by a very painful and lingering disorder. His body, swelled by an intemperate course of life to an unwieldy corpulence, was covered with ulcers, and devoured by innumerable swarms of those insects which have given their name to a most loathsome disease; [37] but as Galerius had offended a very zealous and powerful party among his subjects, his sufferings, instead of exciting their compassion, have been celebrated as the visible effects

of divine justice. [38] He had no sooner expired in his palace of Nicomedia, than the two emperors who were indebted for their purple to his favors, began to collect their forces, with the intention either of disputing, or of dividing, the dominions which he had left without a master. They were persuaded, however, to desist from the former design, and to agree in the latter. The provinces of Asia fell to the share of Maximin, and those of Europe augmented the portion of Licinius. The Hellespont and the Thracian Bosphorus formed their mutual boundary, and the banks of those narrow seas, which flowed in the midst of the Roman world, were covered with soldiers, with arms, and with fortifications. The deaths of Maximian and of Galerius reduced the number of emperors to four. The sense of their true interest soon connected Licinius and Constantine; a secret alliance was concluded between Maximin and Maxentius, and their unhappy subjects expected with terror the bloody consequences of their inevitable dissensions, which were no longer restrained by the fear or the respect which they had entertained for Galerius. [39]

[Footnote 36: Aurelius Victor, c. 40. But that lake was situated on the upper Pannonia, near the borders of Noricum; and the province of Valeria (a name which the wife of Galerius gave to the drained country) undoubtedly lay between the Drave and the Danube, (Sextus Rufus, c. 9.) I should therefore suspect that Victor has confounded the Lake Pelso with the Volocean marshes, or, as they are now called, the Lake Sabaton. It is placed in the heart of Valeria, and its present extent is not less than twelve Hungarian miles (about seventy English) in length, and two

in breadth. See Severini Pannonia, l. i. c.

9.]

[Footnote 37: Lactantius (de M. P. c. 33) and Eusebius (l. viii. c. 16) describe the symptoms and progress of his disorder with singular accuracy and apparent pleasure.]

[Footnote 38: If any (like the late Dr. Jortin, Remarks on Ecclesiastical History, vol. ii. p. 307--356) still delight in recording the wonderful deaths of the persecutors, I would recommend to their perusal an admirable passage of Grotius (Hist. l. vii. p. 332) concerning the last illness of Philip II. of Spain.]

[Footnote 39: See Eusebius, l. ix. 6, 10. Lactantius de M. P. c. 36. Zosimus is less exact, and evidently confounds Maximian with Maximin.]

Among so many crimes and misfortunes, occasioned by the passions of the Roman princes, there is some pleasure in discovering a single action which may be ascribed to their virtue. In the sixth year of his reign, Constantine visited the city of Autun, and generously remitted the arrears of tribute, reducing at the same time the proportion of their assessment from twenty-five to eighteen thousand heads, subject to the real and personal capitation. [40] Yet even this indulgence affords the most unquestionable proof of the public misery. This tax was so extremely oppressive, either in itself or in the mode of collecting it, that whilst the revenue was increased by extortion, it was diminished

by despair: a considerable part of the territory of Autun was left uncultivated; and great numbers of the provincials rather chose to live as exiles and outlaws, than to support the weight of civil society. It is but too probable, that the bountiful emperor relieved, by a partial act of liberality, one among the many evils which he had caused by his general maxims of administration. But even those maxims were less the effect of choice than of necessity. And if we except the death of Maximian, the reign of Constantine in Gaul seems to have been the most innocent and even virtuous period of his life.

The provinces were protected by his presence from the inroads of the barbarians, who either dreaded or experienced his active valor. After a signal victory over the Franks and Alemanni, several of their princes were exposed by his order to the wild beasts in the amphitheatre of Treves, and the people seem to have enjoyed the spectacle, without discovering, in such a treatment of royal captives, any thing that was repugnant to the laws of nations or of humanity. [41]

[Footnote 40: See the viiiith Panegyrr., in which Eumenius displays, in the presence of Constantine, the misery and the gratitude of the city of Autun.]

[Footnote 41: Eutropius, x. 3. Panegyrr. Veter. vii. 10, 11, 12.

A great number of the French youth were likewise exposed to the same cruel and ignominious death.]

[Footnote 41: Yet the panegyric assumes something of an apologetic tone. Te vero Constantine, quantumlibet oderint hoses, dum perhorrescant. Haec est enim vera virtus, ut non ament et quiescant. The orator appeals to the ancient ideal of the republic.--M.]

The virtues of Constantine were rendered more illustrious by the vices of Maxentius. Whilst the Gallic provinces enjoyed as much happiness as the condition of the times was capable of receiving, Italy and Africa groaned under the dominion of a tyrant, as contemptible as he was odious. The zeal of flattery and faction has indeed too frequently sacrificed the reputation of the vanquished to the glory of their successful rivals; but even those writers who have revealed, with the most freedom and pleasure, the faults of Constantine, unanimously confess that Maxentius was cruel, rapacious, and profligate. [42] He had the good fortune to suppress a slight rebellion in Africa. The governor and a few adherents had been guilty; the province suffered for their crime. The flourishing cities of Cirtha and Carthage, and the whole extent of that fertile country, were wasted by fire and sword. The abuse of victory was followed by the abuse of law and justice. A formidable army of sycophants and delators invaded Africa; the rich and the noble were easily convicted of a connection with the rebels; and those among them who experienced the emperor's clemency, were only punished by the confiscation of their estates. [43] So signal a victory was celebrated by a magnificent triumph, and Maxentius exposed to the eyes of the people the spoils and captives of a Roman province. The state of the capital was no less deserving of compassion than that of Africa. The wealth of

Rome supplied an inexhaustible fund for his vain and prodigal expenses, and the ministers of his revenue were skilled in the arts of rapine. It was under his reign that the method of exacting a free gift from the senators was first invented; and as the sum was insensibly increased, the pretences of levying it, a victory, a birth, a marriage, or an imperial consulship, were proportionably multiplied. [44] Maxentius had imbibed the same implacable aversion to the senate, which had characterized most of the former tyrants of Rome; nor was it possible for his ungrateful temper to forgive the generous fidelity which had raised him to the throne, and supported him against all his enemies. The lives of the senators were exposed to his jealous suspicions, the dishonor of their wives and daughters heightened the gratification of his sensual passions. [45] It may be presumed, that an Imperial lover was seldom reduced to sigh in vain; but whenever persuasion proved ineffectual, he had recourse to violence; and there remains one memorable example of a noble matron, who preserved her chastity by a voluntary death. The soldiers were the only order of men whom he appeared to respect, or studied to please. He filled Rome and Italy with armed troops, connived at their tumults, suffered them with impunity to plunder, and even to massacre, the defenceless people; [46] and indulging them in the same licentiousness which their emperor enjoyed, Maxentius often bestowed on his military favorites the splendid villa, or the beautiful wife, of a senator. A prince of such a character, alike incapable of governing, either in peace or in war, might purchase the support, but he could never obtain the esteem, of the army. Yet his pride was equal to his other vices. Whilst he passed his indolent life



either within the walls of his palace, or in the neighboring gardens of Sallust, he was repeatedly heard to declare, that he alone was emperor, and that the other princes were no more than his lieutenants, on whom he had devolved the defence of the frontier provinces, that he might enjoy without interruption the elegant luxury of the capital. Rome, which had so long regretted the absence, lamented, during the six years of his reign, the presence of her sovereign. [47]

[Footnote 42: Julian excludes Maxentius from the banquet of the Caesars with abhorrence and contempt; and Zosimus (l. ii. p. 85) accuses him of every kind of cruelty and profligacy.]

[Footnote 43: Zosimus, l. ii. p. 83--85. Aurelius Victor.]

[Footnote 44: The passage of Aurelius Victor should be read in the following manner: *Primus instituto pessimo, munerum specie, Patres Oratores que pecuniam conferre prodigenti sibi cogeret.*]

[Footnote 45: *Panegyri. Vet. ix. 3. Euseb. Hist Eccles. viii. 14, et in Vit. Constant i. 33, 34. Rufinus, c. 17.* The virtuous matron who stabbed herself to escape the violence of Maxentius, was a Christian, wife to the praefect of the city, and her name was Sophronia. It still remains a question among the casuists, whether, on such occasions, suicide is justifiable.]

[Footnote 46: *Praetorianis caedem vulgi quondam annueret,* is the vague

expression of Aurelius Victor. See more particular, though somewhat different, accounts of a tumult and massacre which happened at Rome, in Eusebius, (l. viii. c. 14,) and in Zosimus, (l. ii. p. 84.)]

[Footnote 47: See, in the Panegyrics, (ix. 14,) a lively description of the indolence and vain pride of Maxentius. In another place the orator observes that the riches which Rome had accumulated in a period of 1060 years, were lavished by the tyrant on his mercenary bands; *redemptis ad civile latrocinium manibus in gesserat.*]

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. [48] 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, effected 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 honor 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

expedient 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 Rhaetia; 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. [49] Constantine no longer hesitated. He had deliberated with caution, he acted with vigor. 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. [50]

[Footnote 48: After the victory of Constantine, it was universally allowed, that the motive of delivering the republic from a detested tyrant, would, at any time, have justified his expedition into Italy. Euseb in Vi'. Constantin. l. i. c. 26. Panegy. Vet. ix. 2.]

[Footnote 49: Zosimus, l. ii. p. 84, 85. Nazarius in Panegy. x. 7--13.]

[Footnote 50: See Panegy. Vet. ix. 2. Omnibus fere tuis Comitibus et Ducibus non solum tacite mussantibus, sed etiam aperte timentibus; contra consilia hominum, contra Haruspicum monita, ipse per temet liberandae arbis tempus venisse sentires. The embassy of the Romans is

mentioned only by Zonaras, (l. xiii.,) and by Cedrenus, (in Compend. Hist. p. 370;) but those modern Greeks had the opportunity of consulting many writers which have since been lost, among which we may reckon the life of Constantine by Praxagoras. Photius (p. 63) has made a short extract from that historical work.]

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 honor, as well as of interest, from entertaining an idea of a second desertion. Maxentius, who considered the Praetorian 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 armies 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; [51] and as the defence of the Rhine required an extraordinary attention during the absence of the emperor, it was not

in his power to employ above half his troops in the Italian expedition, unless he sacrificed the public safety to his private quarrel. [52] At the head of about forty thousand soldiers he marched to encounter an enemy whose numbers were at least four times superior to his own. But the armies of Rome, placed at a secure distance from danger, were enervated by indulgence and luxury. Habituated to the baths and theatres of Rome, they took the field with reluctance, and were chiefly composed of veterans who had almost forgotten, or of new levies who had never acquired, the use of arms and the practice of war. The hardy legions of Gaul had long defended the frontiers of the empire against the barbarians of the North; and in the performance of that laborious service, their valor was exercised and their discipline confirmed. There appeared the same difference between the leaders as between the armies. Caprice or flattery had tempted Maxentius with the hopes of conquest; but these aspiring hopes soon gave way to the habits of pleasure and the consciousness of his inexperience. The intrepid mind of Constantine had been trained from his earliest youth to war, to action, and to military command.

[Footnote 51: Zosimus (l. ii. p. 86) has given us this curious account of the forces on both sides. He makes no mention of any naval armaments, though we are assured (Panegy. Vet. ix. 25) that the war was carried on by sea as well as by land; and that the fleet of Constantine took possession of Sardinia, Corsica, and the ports of Italy.]

[Footnote 52: Panegy. Vet. ix. 3. It is not surprising that the orator

should diminish the numbers with which his sovereign achieved the conquest of Italy; but it appears somewhat singular that he should esteem the tyrant's army at no more than 100,000 men.]