

Chapter XVIII: Character Of Constantine And His Sons.--Part III.

The voice of the dying emperor had recommended the care of his funeral to the piety of Constantius; and that prince, by the vicinity of his eastern station, could easily prevent the diligence of his brothers, who resided in their distant government of Italy and Gaul. As soon as he had taken possession of the palace of Constantinople, his first care was to remove the apprehensions of his kinsmen, by a solemn oath which he pledged for their security. His next employment was to find some specious pretence which might release his conscience from the obligation of an imprudent promise. The arts of fraud were made subservient to the designs of cruelty; and a manifest forgery was attested by a person of the most sacred character. From the hands of the Bishop of Nicomedia, Constantius received a fatal scroll, affirmed to be the genuine testament of his father; in which the emperor expressed his suspicions that he had been poisoned by his brothers; and conjured his sons to revenge his death, and to consult their own safety, by the punishment of the guilty. [50] Whatever reasons might have been alleged by these unfortunate princes to defend their life and honor against so incredible an accusation, they were silenced by the furious clamors of the soldiers, who declared themselves, at once, their enemies, their judges, and their executioners. The spirit, and even the forms of legal proceedings were repeatedly violated in a promiscuous massacre; which involved the two uncles of Constantius, seven of his cousins, of whom Dalmatius and Hannibalianus were the most illustrious, the Patrician Optatus, who had married a sister of the late emperor, and the Praefect

Ablavius, whose power and riches had inspired him with some hopes of obtaining the purple. If it were necessary to aggravate the horrors of this bloody scene, we might add, that Constantius himself had espoused the daughter of his uncle Julius, and that he had bestowed his sister in marriage on his cousin Hannibalianus. These alliances, which the policy of Constantine, regardless of the public prejudice, [51] had formed between the several branches of the Imperial house, served only to convince mankind, that these princes were as cold to the endearments of conjugal affection, as they were insensible to the ties of consanguinity, and the moving entreaties of youth and innocence. Of so numerous a family, Gallus and Julian alone, the two youngest children of Julius Constantius, were saved from the hands of the assassins, till their rage, satiated with slaughter, had in some measure subsided. The emperor Constantius, who, in the absence of his brothers, was the most obnoxious to guilt and reproach, discovered, on some future occasions, a faint and transient remorse for those cruelties which the perfidious counsels of his ministers, and the irresistible violence of the troops, had extorted from his unexperienced youth. [52]

[Footnote 50: I have related this singular anecdote on the authority of Philostorgius, l. ii. c. 16. But if such a pretext was ever used by Constantius and his adherents, it was laid aside with contempt, as soon as it served their immediate purpose. Athanasius (tom. i. p. 856) mention the oath which Constantius had taken for the security of his kinsmen. ---The authority of Philostorgius is so suspicious, as not to be sufficient to establish this fact, which Gibbon has inserted in his

history as certain, while in the note he appears to doubt it.--G.]

[Footnote 51: *Conjugia sobrinarum diu ignorata, tempore addito percrebuisse. Tacit. Annal. xii. 6, and Lipsius ad loc.* The repeal of the ancient law, and the practice of five hundred years, were insufficient to eradicate the prejudices of the Romans, who still considered the marriages of cousins-german as a species of imperfect incest. (Augustin de *Civitate Dei*, xv. 6;) and Julian, whose mind was biased by superstition and resentment, stigmatizes these unnatural alliances between his own cousins with the opprobrious epithet (*Orat. vii. p. 228.*). The jurisprudence of the canons has since received and enforced this prohibition, without being able to introduce it either into the civil or the common law of Europe. See on the subject of these marriages, Taylor's *Civil Law*, p. 331. Brouer de *Jure Connub. 1. ii. c. 12.* Hericourt des *Loix Ecclesiastiques*, part iii. c. 5. Fleury, *Institutions du Droit Canonique*, tom. i. p. 331. Paris, 1767, and Fra Paolo, *Istoria del Concilio Trident*, l. viii.]

[Footnote 52: Julian (*ad S. P. Q. Athen. p. 270*) charges his cousin Constantius with the whole guilt of a massacre, from which he himself so narrowly escaped. His assertion is confirmed by Athanasius, who, for reasons of a very different nature, was not less an enemy of Constantius, (tom. i. p. 856.) Zosimus joins in the same accusation. But the three abbreviators, Eutropius and the Victors, use very qualifying expressions: "sinente potius quam jubente;" "incertum quo suasore;" "vi militum."]

The massacre of the Flavian race was succeeded by a new division of the provinces; which was ratified in a personal interview of the three brothers. Constantine, the eldest of the Caesars, obtained, with a certain preeminence of rank, the possession of the new capital, which bore his own name and that of his father. Thrace, and the countries of the East, were allotted for the patrimony of Constantius; and Constantine was acknowledged as the lawful sovereign of Italy, Africa, and the Western Illyricum. The armies submitted to their hereditary right; and they condescended, after some delay, to accept from the Roman senate the title of Augustus. When they first assumed the reins of government, the eldest of these princes was twenty-one, the second twenty, and the third only seventeen, years of age. [53]

[Footnote 53: Euseb. in Vit. Constantin. l. iv. c. 69. Zosimus, l. ii. p. 117. Idat. in Chron. See two notes of Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 1086-1091. The reign of the eldest brother at Constantinople is noticed only in the Alexandrian Chronicle.]

While the martial nations of Europe followed the standards of his brothers, Constantius, at the head of the effeminate troops of Asia, was left to sustain the weight of the Persian war. At the decease of Constantine, the throne of the East was filled by Sapor, son of Hormouz, or Hormisdas, and grandson of Narses, who, after the victory of Galerius, had humbly confessed the superiority of the Roman power. Although Sapor was in the thirtieth year of his long reign, he was still

in the vigor of youth, as the date of his accession, by a very strange fatality, had preceded that of his birth. The wife of Hormouz remained pregnant at the time of her husband's death; and the uncertainty of the sex, as well as of the event, excited the ambitious hopes of the princes of the house of Sassan. The apprehensions of civil war were at length removed, by the positive assurance of the Magi, that the widow of Hormouz had conceived, and would safely produce a son. Obedient to the voice of superstition, the Persians prepared, without delay, the ceremony of his coronation.

A royal bed, on which the queen lay in state, was exhibited in the midst of the palace; the diadem was placed on the spot, which might be supposed to conceal the future heir of Artaxerxes, and the prostrate satraps adored the majesty of their invisible and insensible sovereign.

[54] If any credit can be given to this marvellous tale, which seems, however, to be countenanced by the manners of the people, and by the extraordinary duration of his reign, we must admire not only the fortune, but the genius, of Sapor. In the soft, sequestered education of a Persian harem, the royal youth could discover the importance of exercising the vigor of his mind and body; and, by his personal merit, deserved a throne, on which he had been seated, while he was yet unconscious of the duties and temptations of absolute power. His minority was exposed to the almost inevitable calamities of domestic discord; his capital was surprised and plundered by Thair, a powerful king of Yemen, or Arabia; and the majesty of the royal family was degraded by the captivity of a princess, the sister of the deceased

king. But as soon as Sapor attained the age of manhood, the presumptuous Thair, his nation, and his country, fell beneath the first effort of the young warrior; who used his victory with so judicious a mixture of rigor and clemency, that he obtained from the fears and gratitude of the Arabs the title of Dhoulacnaf, or protector of the nation. [55] [55a]

[Footnote 54: Agathias, who lived in the sixth century, is the author of this story, (l. iv. p. 135, edit. Louvre.) He derived his information from some extracts of the Persian Chronicles, obtained and translated by the interpreter Sergius, during his embassy at that country. The coronation of the mother of Sapor is likewise mentioned by Snikard, (Tarikh. p. 116,) and D'Herbelot (Bibliotheque Orientale, p. 703.)

---The author of the Zenut-ul-Tarikh states, that the lady herself affirmed her belief of this from the extraordinary liveliness of the infant, and its lying on the right side. Those who are sage on such subjects must determine what right she had to be positive from these symptoms. Malcolm, Hist. of Persia, i 83.--M.]

[Footnote 55: D'Herbelot, Bibliotheque Orientale, p. 764.]

[Footnote 55a: Gibbon, according to Sir J. Malcolm, has greatly mistaken the derivation of this name; it means Zoolaktaf, the Lord of the Shoulders, from his directing the shoulders of his captives to be pierced and then dislocated by a string passed through them. Eastern authors are agreed with respect to the origin of this title. Malcolm, i. 84. Gibbon took his derivation from D'Herbelot, who gives both, the

latter on the authority of the Leb. Tarikh.--M.]

The ambition of the Persian, to whom his enemies ascribe the virtues of a soldier and a statesman, was animated by the desire of revenging the disgrace of his fathers, and of wresting from the hands of the Romans the five provinces beyond the Tigris. The military fame of Constantine, and the real or apparent strength of his government, suspended the attack; and while the hostile conduct of Sapor provoked the resentment, his artful negotiations amused the patience of the Imperial court.

The death of Constantine was the signal of war, [56] and the actual condition of the Syrian and Armenian frontier seemed to encourage the Persians by the prospect of a rich spoil and an easy conquest.

The example of the massacres of the palace diffused a spirit of licentiousness and sedition among the troops of the East, who were no longer restrained by their habits of obedience to a veteran commander. By the prudence of Constantius, who, from the interview with his brothers in Pannonia, immediately hastened to the banks of the Euphrates, the legions were gradually restored to a sense of duty and discipline; but the season of anarchy had permitted Sapor to form the siege of Nisibis, and to occupy several of the most important fortresses of Mesopotamia. [57] In Armenia, the renowned Tiridates had long enjoyed the peace and glory which he deserved by his valor and fidelity to the cause of Rome. [57a] The firm alliance which he maintained with Constantine was productive of spiritual as well as of temporal benefits; by the conversion of Tiridates, the character of a saint was applied to that of a hero, the Christian faith was preached

and established from the Euphrates to the shores of the Caspian, and Armenia was attached to the empire by the double ties of policy and religion. But as many of the Armenian nobles still refused to abandon the plurality of their gods and of their wives, the public tranquillity was disturbed by a discontented faction, which insulted the feeble age of their sovereign, and impatiently expected the hour of his death. He died at length after a reign of fifty-six years, and the fortune of the Armenian monarchy expired with Tiridates. His lawful heir was driven into exile, the Christian priests were either murdered or expelled from their churches, the barbarous tribes of Albania were solicited to descend from their mountains; and two of the most powerful governors, usurping the ensigns or the powers of royalty, implored the assistance of Sapor, and opened the gates of their cities to the Persian garrisons. The Christian party, under the guidance of the Archbishop of Artaxata, the immediate successor of St. Gregory the Illuminator, had recourse to the piety of Constantius. After the troubles had continued about three years, Antiochus, one of the officers of the household, executed with success the Imperial commission of restoring Chosroes, [57b] the son of Tiridates, to the throne of his fathers, of distributing honors and rewards among the faithful servants of the house of Arsaces, and of proclaiming a general amnesty, which was accepted by the greater part of the rebellious satraps. But the Romans derived more honor than advantage from this revolution. Chosroes was a prince of a puny stature and a pusillanimous spirit. Unequal to the fatigues of war, averse to the society of mankind, he withdrew from his capital to a retired palace, which he built on the banks of the River Eleutherus, and in the centre

of a shady grove; where he consumed his vacant hours in the rural sports of hunting and hawking. To secure this inglorious ease, he submitted to the conditions of peace which Sapor condescended to impose; the payment of an annual tribute, and the restitution of the fertile province of Atropatene, which the courage of Tiridates, and the victorious arms of Galerius, had annexed to the Armenian monarchy. [58] [58a]

[Footnote 56: Sextus Rufus, (c. 26,) who on this occasion is no contemptible authority, affirms, that the Persians sued in vain for peace, and that Constantine was preparing to march against them: yet the superior weight of the testimony of Eusebius obliges us to admit the preliminaries, if not the ratification, of the treaty. See Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 420. ----Constantine had endeavored to allay the fury of the prosecutions, which, at the instigation of the Magi and the Jews, Sapor had commenced against the Christians. Euseb Vit. Hist. Theod. i. 25. Sozom. ii. c. 8, 15.--M.]

[Footnote 57: Julian. Orat. i. p. 20.]

[Footnote 57a: Tiridates had sustained a war against Maximin. caused by the hatred of the latter against Christianity. Armenia was the first nation which embraced Christianity. About the year 276 it was the religion of the king, the nobles, and the people of Armenia. From St. Martin, Supplement to Le Beau, v. i. p. 78.----Compare Preface to History of Vartan by Professor Neumann, p ix.--M.]

[Footnote 57b: Chosroes was restored probably by Licinius, between 314 and 319. There was an Antiochus who was praefectus vigilum at Rome, as appears from the Theodosian Code, (l. iii. de inf. his quae sub ty.) in 326, and from a fragment of the same work published by M. Amedee Peyron, in 319. He may before this have been sent into Armenia. St. M. p. 407.

[Is it not more probable that Antiochus was an officer in the service of the Caesar who ruled in the East?--M.] Chosroes was succeeded in the year 322 by his son Diran. Diran was a weak prince, and in the sixteenth year of his reign. A. D. 337. was betrayed into the power of the Persians by the treachery of his chamberlain and the Persian governor of Atropatene or Aderbidjan. He was blinded: his wife and his son Arsaces shared his captivity, but the princes and nobles of Armenia claimed the protection of Rome; and this was the cause of Constantine's declaration of war against the Persians.--The king of Persia attempted to make himself master of Armenia; but the brave resistance of the people, the advance of Constantius, and a defeat which his army suffered at Oskha in Armenia, and the failure before Nisibis, forced Shahpour to submit to terms of peace. Varaz-Shahpour, the perfidious governor of Atropatene, was flayed alive; Diran and his son were released from captivity; Diran refused to ascend the throne, and retired to an obscure retreat: his son Arsaces was crowned king of Armenia. Arsaces pursued a vacillating policy between the influence of Rome and Persia, and the war recommenced in the year 345. At least, that was the period of the expedition of Constantius to the East. See St. Martin, additions to Le Beau, i. 442. The Persians have made an extraordinary romance out of the history of Shahpour, who went as a spy to Constantinople, was taken, harnessed like

a horse, and carried to witness the devastation of his kingdom. Malcolm.
84--M.]

[Footnote 58: Julian. Orat. i. p. 20, 21. Moses of Chorene, l. ii. c. 89, l. iii. c. 1--9, p. 226--240. The perfect agreement between the vague hints of the contemporary orator, and the circumstantial narrative of the national historian, gives light to the former, and weight to the latter. For the credit of Moses, it may be likewise observed, that the name of Antiochus is found a few years before in a civil office of inferior dignity. See Godefroy, Cod. Theod. tom. vi. p. 350.]

[Footnote 58a: Gibbon has endeavored, in his History, to make use of the information furnished by Moses of Chorene, the only Armenian historian then translated into Latin. Gibbon has not perceived all the chronological difficulties which occur in the narrative of that writer. He has not thought of all the critical discussions which his text ought to undergo before it can be combined with the relations of the western writers. From want of this attention, Gibbon has made the facts which he has drawn from this source more erroneous than they are in the original. This judgment applies to all which the English historian has derived from the Armenian author. I have made the History of Moses a subject of particular attention; and it is with confidence that I offer the results, which I insert here, and which will appear in the course of my notes. In order to form a judgment of the difference which exists between me and Gibbon, I will content myself with remarking, that throughout he has committed an anachronism of thirty years, from whence

it follows, that he assigns to the reign of Constantius many events which took place during that of Constantine. He could not, therefore, discern the true connection which exists between the Roman history and that of Armenia, or form a correct notion of the reasons which induced Constantine, at the close of his life, to make war upon the Persians, or of the motives which detained Constantius so long in the East; he does not even mention them. St. Martin, note on Le Beau, i. 406. I have inserted M. St. Martin's observations, but I must add, that the chronology which he proposes, is not generally received by Armenian scholars, not, I believe, by Professor Neumann.--M.]

During the long period of the reign of Constantius, the provinces of the East were afflicted by the calamities of the Persian war. [58c] The irregular incursions of the light troops alternately spread terror and devastation beyond the Tigris and beyond the Euphrates, from the gates of Ctesiphon to those of Antioch; and this active service was performed by the Arabs of the desert, who were divided in their interest and affections; some of their independent chiefs being enlisted in the party of Sapor, whilst others had engaged their doubtful fidelity to the emperor. [59] The more grave and important operations of the war were conducted with equal vigor; and the armies of Rome and Persia encountered each other in nine bloody fields, in two of which Constantius himself commanded in person. [60] The event of the day was most commonly adverse to the Romans, but in the battle of Singara, their imprudent valor had almost achieved a signal and decisive victory. The stationary troops of Singara [60a] retired on the approach of Sapor, who

passed the Tigris over three bridges, and occupied near the village of Hilleh an advantageous camp, which, by the labor of his numerous pioneers, he surrounded in one day with a deep ditch and a lofty rampart. His formidable host, when it was drawn out in order of battle, covered the banks of the river, the adjacent heights, and the whole extent of a plain of above twelve miles, which separated the two armies. Both were alike impatient to engage; but the Barbarians, after a slight resistance, fled in disorder; unable to resist, or desirous to weary, the strength of the heavy legions, who, fainting with heat and thirst, pursued them across the plain, and cut in pieces a line of cavalry, clothed in complete armor, which had been posted before the gates of the camp to protect their retreat. Constantius, who was hurried along in the pursuit, attempted, without effect, to restrain the ardor of his troops, by representing to them the dangers of the approaching night, and the certainty of completing their success with the return of day. As they depended much more on their own valor than on the experience or the abilities of their chief, they silenced by their clamors his timid remonstrances; and rushing with fury to the charge, filled up the ditch, broke down the rampart, and dispersed themselves through the tents to recruit their exhausted strength, and to enjoy the rich harvest of their labors. But the prudent Sapor had watched the moment of victory. His army, of which the greater part, securely posted on the heights, had been spectators of the action, advanced in silence, and under the shadow of the night; and his Persian archers, guided by the illumination of the camp, poured a shower of arrows on a disarmed and licentious crowd. The sincerity of history [61] declares, that the Romans were vanquished with

a dreadful slaughter, and that the flying remnant of the legions was exposed to the most intolerable hardships. Even the tenderness of panegyric, confessing that the glory of the emperor was sullied by the disobedience of his soldiers, chooses to draw a veil over the circumstances of this melancholy retreat. Yet one of those venal orators, so jealous of the fame of Constantius, relates, with amazing coolness, an act of such incredible cruelty, as, in the judgment of posterity, must imprint a far deeper stain on the honor of the Imperial name. The son of Sapor, the heir of his crown, had been made a captive in the Persian camp. The unhappy youth, who might have excited the compassion of the most savage enemy, was scourged, tortured, and publicly executed by the inhuman Romans. [62]

[Footnote 58c: It was during this war that a bold flatterer (whose name is unknown) published the Itineraries of Alexander and Trajan, in order to direct the victorious Constantius in the footsteps of those great conquerors of the East. The former of these has been published for the first time by M. Angelo Mai (Milan, 1817, reprinted at Frankfort, 1818.) It adds so little to our knowledge of Alexander's campaigns, that it only excites our regret that it is not the Itinerary of Trajan, of whose eastern victories we have no distinct record--M]

[Footnote 59: Ammianus (xiv. 4) gives a lively description of the wandering and predatory life of the Saracens, who stretched from the confines of Assyria to the cataracts of the Nile. It appears from the adventures of Malchus, which Jerom has related in so entertaining a

manner, that the high road between Beraea and Edessa was infested by these robbers. See Hieronym. tom. i. p. 256.]

[Footnote 60: We shall take from Eutropius the general idea of the war. A Persis enim multa et gravia perpessus, saepe captis, oppidis, obsessis urbibus, caesis exercitibus, nullumque ei contra Saporem prosperum praelium fuit, nisi quod apud Singaram, &c. This honest account is confirmed by the hints of Ammianus, Rufus, and Jerom. The two first orations of Julian, and the third oration of Libanius, exhibit a more flattering picture; but the recantation of both those orators, after the death of Constantius, while it restores us to the possession of the truth, degrades their own character, and that of the emperor. The Commentary of Spanheim on the first oration of Julian is profusely learned. See likewise the judicious observations of Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 656.]

[Footnote 60a: Now Sinjar, or the River Claboras.--M.]

[Footnote 61: Acerrima nocturna concertatione pugnatum est, nostrorum copiis ngenti strage confossis. Ammian. xviii. 5. See likewise Eutropius, x. 10, and S. Rufus, c. 27. ----The Persian historians, or romancers, do not mention the battle of Singara, but make the captive Shahpour escape, defeat, and take prisoner, the Roman emperor. The Roman captives were forced to repair all the ravages they had committed, even to replanting the smallest trees. Malcolm. i. 82.--M.]

[Footnote 62: Libanius, Orat. iii. p. 133, with Julian. Orat. i. p. 24, and Spanneism's Commentary, p. 179.]

Whatever advantages might attend the arms of Sapor in the field, though nine repeated victories diffused among the nations the fame of his valor and conduct, he could not hope to succeed in the execution of his designs, while the fortified towns of Mesopotamia, and, above all, the strong and ancient city of Nisibis, remained in the possession of the Romans. In the space of twelve years, Nisibis, which, since the time of Lucullus, had been deservedly esteemed the bulwark of the East, sustained three memorable sieges against the power of Sapor; and the disappointed monarch, after urging his attacks above sixty, eighty, and a hundred days, was thrice repulsed with loss and ignominy. [63] This large and populous city was situate about two days' journey from the Tigris, in the midst of a pleasant and fertile plain at the foot of Mount Masius. A treble enclosure of brick walls was defended by a deep ditch; [64] and the intrepid resistance of Count Lucilianus, and his garrison, was seconded by the desperate courage of the people. The citizens of Nisibis were animated by the exhortations of their bishop, [65] inured to arms by the presence of danger, and convinced of the intentions of Sapor to plant a Persian colony in their room, and to lead them away into distant and barbarous captivity. The event of the two former sieges elated their confidence, and exasperated the haughty spirit of the Great King, who advanced a third time towards Nisibis, at the head of the united forces of Persia and India. The ordinary machines, invented to batter or undermine the walls, were rendered

ineffectual by the superior skill of the Romans; and many days had vainly elapsed, when Sapor embraced a resolution worthy of an eastern monarch, who believed that the elements themselves were subject to his power. At the stated season of the melting of the snows in Armenia, the River Mygdonius, which divides the plain and the city of Nisibis, forms, like the Nile, [66] an inundation over the adjacent country. By the labor of the Persians, the course of the river was stopped below the town, and the waters were confined on every side by solid mounds of earth. On this artificial lake, a fleet of armed vessels filled with soldiers, and with engines which discharged stones of five hundred pounds weight, advanced in order of battle, and engaged, almost upon a level, the troops which defended the ramparts. [66a] The irresistible force of the waters was alternately fatal to the contending parties, till at length a portion of the walls, unable to sustain the accumulated pressure, gave way at once, and exposed an ample breach of one hundred and fifty feet. The Persians were instantly driven to the assault, and the fate of Nisibis depended on the event of the day. The heavy-armed cavalry, who led the van of a deep column, were embarrassed in the mud, and great numbers were drowned in the unseen holes which had been filled by the rushing waters. The elephants, made furious by their wounds, increased the disorder, and trampled down thousands of the Persian archers. The Great King, who, from an exalted throne, beheld the misfortunes of his arms, sounded, with reluctant indignation, the signal of the retreat, and suspended for some hours the prosecution of the attack. But the vigilant citizens improved the opportunity of the night; and the return of day discovered a new wall of six feet in

height, rising every moment to fill up the interval of the breach. Notwithstanding the disappointment of his hopes, and the loss of more than twenty thousand men, Sapor still pressed the reduction of Nisibis, with an obstinate firmness, which could have yielded only to the necessity of defending the eastern provinces of Persia against a formidable invasion of the Massagetae. [67] Alarmed by this intelligence, he hastily relinquished the siege, and marched with rapid diligence from the banks of the Tigris to those of the Oxus. The danger and difficulties of the Scythian war engaged him soon afterwards to conclude, or at least to observe, a truce with the Roman emperor, which was equally grateful to both princes; as Constantius himself, after the death of his two brothers, was involved, by the revolutions of the West, in a civil contest, which required and seemed to exceed the most vigorous exertion of his undivided strength.

[Footnote 63: See Julian. Orat. i. p. 27, Orat. ii. p. 62, &c., with the Commentary of Spanheim, (p. 188-202,) who illustrates the circumstances, and ascertains the time of the three sieges of Nisibis. Their dates are likewise examined by Tillemont, (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 668, 671, 674.) Something is added from Zosimus, l. iii. p. 151, and the Alexandrine Chronicle, p. 290.]

[Footnote 64: Sallust. Fragment. lxxxiv. edit. Brosses, and Plutarch in Lucull. tom. iii. p. 184. Nisibis is now reduced to one hundred and fifty houses: the marshy lands produce rice, and the fertile meadows, as far as Mosul and the Tigris, are covered with the ruins of towns and

allages. See Niebuhr, Voyages, tom. ii. p. 300-309.]

[Footnote 65: The miracles which Theodoret (l. ii. c. 30) ascribes to St. James, Bishop of Edessa, were at least performed in a worthy cause, the defence of his country. He appeared on the walls under the figure of the Roman emperor, and sent an army of gnats to sting the trunks of the elephants, and to discomfit the host of the new Sennacherib.]

[Footnote 66: Julian. Orat. i. p. 27. Though Niebuhr (tom. ii. p. 307) allows a very considerable swell to the Mygdonius, over which he saw a bridge of twelve arches: it is difficult, however, to understand this parallel of a trifling rivulet with a mighty river. There are many circumstances obscure, and almost unintelligible, in the description of these stupendous water-works.]

[Footnote 66a: Macdonald Kinnier observes on these floating batteries, "As the elevation of place is considerably above the level of the country in its immediate vicinity, and the Mygdonius is a very insignificant stream, it is difficult to imagine how this work could have been accomplished, even with the wonderful resources which the king must have had at his disposal" Geographical Memoir. p. 262.--M.]

[Footnote 67: We are obliged to Zonaras (tom. ii. l. xiii. p. 11) for this invasion of the Massagetæ, which is perfectly consistent with the general series of events to which we are darkly led by the broken history of Ammianus.]

After the partition of the empire, three years had scarcely elapsed before the sons of Constantine seemed impatient to convince mankind that they were incapable of contenting themselves with the dominions which they were unqualified to govern. The eldest of those princes soon complained, that he was defrauded of his just proportion of the spoils of their murdered kinsmen; and though he might yield to the superior guilt and merit of Constantius, he exacted from Constans the cession of the African provinces, as an equivalent for the rich countries of Macedonia and Greece, which his brother had acquired by the death of Dalmatius. The want of sincerity, which Constantine experienced in a tedious and fruitless negotiation, exasperated the fierceness of his temper; and he eagerly listened to those favorites, who suggested to him that his honor, as well as his interest, was concerned in the prosecution of the quarrel. At the head of a tumultuary band, suited for rapine rather than for conquest, he suddenly broke onto the dominions of Constans, by the way of the Julian Alps, and the country round Aquileia felt the first effects of his resentment. The measures of Constans, who then resided in Dacia, were directed with more prudence and ability. On the news of his brother's invasion, he detached a select and disciplined body of his Illyrian troops, proposing to follow them in person, with the remainder of his forces. But the conduct of his lieutenants soon terminated the unnatural contest.

By the artful appearances of flight, Constantine was betrayed into an ambuscade, which had been concealed in a wood, where the rash youth,

with a few attendants, was surprised, surrounded, and slain. His body, after it had been found in the obscure stream of the Elsa, obtained the honors of an Imperial sepulchre; but his provinces transferred their allegiance to the conqueror, who, refusing to admit his elder brother Constantius to any share in these new acquisitions, maintained the undisputed possession of more than two thirds of the Roman empire. [68]

[Footnote 68: The causes and the events of this civil war are related with much perplexity and contradiction. I have chiefly followed Zonaras and the younger Victor. The monody (ad Calcem Eutrop. edit. Havercamp.) pronounced on the death of Constantine, might have been very instructive; but prudence and false taste engaged the orator to involve himself in vague declamation.]