

Chapter XIX: Constantius Sole Emperor.--Part I.

Constantius Sole Emperor.--Elevation And Death Of Gallus.--
Danger And Elevation Of Julian.--Sarmatian And Persian
Wars.--Victories Of Julian In Gaul.

The divided provinces of the empire were again united by the victory of Constantius; but as that feeble prince was destitute of personal merit, either in peace or war; as he feared his generals, and distrusted his ministers; the triumph of his arms served only to establish the reign of the eunuchs over the Roman world. Those unhappy beings, the ancient production of Oriental jealousy and despotism, [1] were introduced into Greece and Rome by the contagion of Asiatic luxury. [2] Their progress was rapid; and the eunuchs, who, in the time of Augustus, had been abhorred, as the monstrous retinue of an Egyptian queen, [3] were gradually admitted into the families of matrons, of senators, and of the emperors themselves. [4] Restrained by the severe edicts of Domitian and Nerva, cherished by the pride of Diocletian, reduced to an humble station by the prudence of Constantine, [6] they multiplied in the palaces of his degenerate sons, and insensibly acquired the knowledge, and at length the direction, of the secret councils of Constantius. The aversion and contempt which mankind had so uniformly entertained for that imperfect species, appears to have degraded their character, and to have rendered them almost as incapable as they were supposed to be, of conceiving any generous sentiment, or of performing any worthy action. [7] But the eunuchs were skilled in the arts of flattery and intrigue;

and they alternately governed the mind of Constantius by his fears, his indolence, and his vanity. [8] Whilst he viewed in a deceitful mirror the fair appearance of public prosperity, he supinely permitted them to intercept the complaints of the injured provinces, to accumulate immense treasures by the sale of justice and of honors; to disgrace the most important dignities, by the promotion of those who had purchased at their hands the powers of oppression, [9] and to gratify their resentment against the few independent spirits, who arrogantly refused to solicit the protection of slaves. Of these slaves the most distinguished was the chamberlain Eusebius, who ruled the monarch and the palace with such absolute sway, that Constantius, according to the sarcasm of an impartial historian, possessed some credit with this haughty favorite. [10] By his artful suggestions, the emperor was persuaded to subscribe the condemnation of the unfortunate Gallus, and to add a new crime to the long list of unnatural murders which pollute the honor of the house of Constantine.

[Footnote 1: Ammianus (l. xiv. c. 6) imputes the first practice of castration to the cruel ingenuity of Semiramis, who is supposed to have reigned above nineteen hundred years before Christ. The use of eunuchs is of high antiquity, both in Asia and Egypt. They are mentioned in the law of Moses, Deuteron. xxxiii. 1. See Goguet, *Origines des Loix*, &c., Part i. l. i. c. 3.]

[Footnote 2: *Eunuchum dixti velle te; Quia solae utuntur his reginae*--Terent. *Eunuch.* act i. scene 2. This play is translated from

Meander, and the original must have appeared soon after the eastern conquests of Alexander.]

[Footnote 3: Miles.... spadonibus Servire rugosis potest. Horat. Carm. v. 9, and Dacier ad loc. By the word spado, the Romans very forcibly expressed their abhorrence of this mutilated condition. The Greek appellation of eunuchs, which insensibly prevailed, had a milder sound, and a more ambiguous sense.]

[Footnote 4: We need only mention Posides, a freedman and eunuch of Claudius, in whose favor the emperor prostituted some of the most honorable rewards of military valor. See Sueton. in Claudio, c. 28. Posides employed a great part of his wealth in building.

Ut Spado vincebat Capitolia Nostra

Posides.

Juvenal. Sat. xiv.]

[Footnote 5: Castrari mares vetuit. Sueton. in Domitian. c. 7. See Dion Cassius, l. lxxvii. p. 1107, l. lxxviii. p. 1119.]

[Footnote 6: There is a passage in the Augustan History, p. 137, in which Lampridius, whilst he praises Alexander Severus and Constantine for restraining the tyranny of the eunuchs, deplors the mischiefs which they occasioned in other reigns. Huc accedit quod eunuchos nec in consiliis nec in ministeriis habuit; qui soli principes perdunt, dum

eos more gentium aut regum Persarum volunt vivere; qui a populo etiam amicissimum semovent; qui internuntii sunt, aliud quam respondetur, referentes; claudentes principem suum, et agentes ante omnia ne quid sciat.]

[Footnote 7: Xenophon (Cyropaedia, l. viii. p. 540) has stated the specious reasons which engaged Cyrus to intrust his person to the guard of eunuchs. He had observed in animals, that although the practice of castration might tame their ungovernable fierceness, it did not diminish their strength or spirit; and he persuaded himself, that those who were separated from the rest of human kind, would be more firmly attached to the person of their benefactor. But a long experience has contradicted the judgment of Cyrus. Some particular instances may occur of eunuchs distinguished by their fidelity, their valor, and their abilities; but if we examine the general history of Persia, India, and China, we shall find that the power of the eunuchs has uniformly marked the decline and fall of every dynasty.]

[Footnote 8: See Ammianus Marcellinus, l. xxi. c. 16, l. xxii. c. 4. The whole tenor of his impartial history serves to justify the invectives of Mamertinus, of Libanius, and of Julian himself, who have insulted the vices of the court of Constantius.]

[Footnote 9: Aurelius Victor censures the negligence of his sovereign in choosing the governors of the provinces, and the generals of the army, and concludes his history with a very bold observation, as it is much

more dangerous under a feeble reign to attack the ministers than the master himself. "Uti verum absolvam brevi, ut Imperatore ipso clarius ita apparitorum plerisque magis atrox nihil."]

[Footnote 10: Apud quem (si vere dici debeat) multum Constantius potuit. Ammian. l. xviii. c. 4.]

When the two nephews of Constantine, Gallus and Julian, were saved from the fury of the soldiers, the former was about twelve, and the latter about six, years of age; and, as the eldest was thought to be of a sickly constitution, they obtained with the less difficulty a precarious and dependent life, from the affected pity of Constantius, who was sensible that the execution of these helpless orphans would have been esteemed, by all mankind, an act of the most deliberate cruelty. [11] Different cities of Ionia and Bithynia were assigned for the places of their exile and education; but as soon as their growing years excited the jealousy of the emperor, he judged it more prudent to secure those unhappy youths in the strong castle of Macellum, near Caesarea. The treatment which they experienced during a six years' confinement, was partly such as they could hope from a careful guardian, and partly such as they might dread from a suspicious tyrant. [12] Their prison was an ancient palace, the residence of the kings of Cappadocia; the situation was pleasant, the buildings of stately, the enclosure spacious. They pursued their studies, and practised their exercises, under the tuition of the most skilful masters; and the numerous household appointed to attend, or rather to guard, the nephews of Constantine, was not unworthy

of the dignity of their birth. But they could not disguise to themselves that they were deprived of fortune, of freedom, and of safety; secluded from the society of all whom they could trust or esteem, and condemned to pass their melancholy hours in the company of slaves devoted to the commands of a tyrant who had already injured them beyond the hope of reconciliation. At length, however, the emergencies of the state compelled the emperor, or rather his eunuchs, to invest Gallus, in the twenty-fifth year of his age, with the title of Caesar, and to cement this political connection by his marriage with the princess Constantina. After a formal interview, in which the two princes mutually engaged their faith never to undertake any thing to the prejudice of each other, they repaired without delay to their respective stations. Constantius continued his march towards the West, and Gallus fixed his residence at Antioch; from whence, with a delegated authority, he administered the five great dioceses of the eastern praefecture. [13] In this fortunate change, the new Caesar was not unmindful of his brother Julian, who obtained the honors of his rank, the appearances of liberty, and the restitution of an ample patrimony. [14]

[Footnote 11: Gregory Nazianzen (Orat. iii. p. 90) reproaches the apostate with his ingratitude towards Mark, bishop of Arethusa, who had contributed to save his life; and we learn, though from a less respectable authority, (Tillemont, Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 916,) that Julian was concealed in the sanctuary of a church. * Note: Gallus and Julian were not sons of the same mother. Their father, Julius Constantius, had had Gallus by his first wife, named Galla: Julian

was the son of Basilina, whom he had espoused in a second marriage.

Tillemont. Hist. des Emp. Vie de Constantin. art. 3.--G.]

[Footnote 12: The most authentic account of the education and adventures of Julian is contained in the epistle or manifesto which he himself addressed to the senate and people of Athens. Libanius, (Orat. Parentalis,) on the side of the Pagans, and Socrates, (l. iii. c. 1,) on that of the Christians, have preserved several interesting circumstances.]

[Footnote 13: For the promotion of Gallus, see Idatius, Zosimus, and the two Victors. According to Philostorgius, (l. iv. c. 1,) Theophilus, an Arian bishop, was the witness, and, as it were, the guarantee of this solemn engagement. He supported that character with generous firmness; but M. de Tillemont (Hist. des Empereurs, tom. iv. p. 1120) thinks it very improbable that a heretic should have possessed such virtue.]

[Footnote 14: Julian was at first permitted to pursue his studies at Constantinople, but the reputation which he acquired soon excited the jealousy of Constantius; and the young prince was advised to withdraw himself to the less conspicuous scenes of Bithynia and Ionia.]

The writers the most indulgent to the memory of Gallus, and even Julian himself, though he wished to cast a veil over the frailties of his brother, are obliged to confess that the Caesar was incapable of reigning. Transported from a prison to a throne, he possessed neither

genius nor application, nor docility to compensate for the want of knowledge and experience. A temper naturally morose and violent, instead of being corrected, was soured by solitude and adversity; the remembrance of what he had endured disposed him to retaliation rather than to sympathy; and the ungoverned sallies of his rage were often fatal to those who approached his person, or were subject to his power. [15] Constantina, his wife, is described, not as a woman, but as one of the infernal furies tormented with an insatiate thirst of human blood. [16] Instead of employing her influence to insinuate the mild counsels of prudence and humanity, she exasperated the fierce passions of her husband; and as she retained the vanity, though she had renounced, the gentleness of her sex, a pearl necklace was esteemed an equivalent price for the murder of an innocent and virtuous nobleman. [17] The cruelty of Gallus was sometimes displayed in the undissembled violence of popular or military executions; and was sometimes disguised by the abuse of law, and the forms of judicial proceedings. The private houses of Antioch, and the places of public resort, were besieged by spies and informers; and the Caesar himself, concealed in a plebeian habit, very frequently condescended to assume that odious character. Every apartment of the palace was adorned with the instruments of death and torture, and a general consternation was diffused through the capital of Syria. The prince of the East, as if he had been conscious how much he had to fear, and how little he deserved to reign, selected for the objects of his resentment the provincials accused of some imaginary treason, and his own courtiers, whom with more reason he suspected of incensing, by their secret correspondence, the timid and suspicious mind of Constantius.

But he forgot that he was depriving himself of his only support, the affection of the people; whilst he furnished the malice of his enemies with the arms of truth, and afforded the emperor the fairest pretence of exacting the forfeit of his purple, and of his life. [18]

[Footnote 15: See Julian. ad S. P. Q. A. p. 271. Jerom. in Chron. Aurelius Victor, Eutropius, x. 14. I shall copy the words of Eutropius, who wrote his abridgment about fifteen years after the death of Gallus, when there was no longer any motive either to flatter or to depreciate his character. "Multis incivilibus gestis Gallus Caesar.... vir natura ferox et ad tyrannidem pronior, si suo jure imperare licuisset."]

[Footnote 16: Megaera quidem mortalis, inflammatrix saevientis assidua, humani cruoris avida, &c. Ammian. Marcellin. l. xiv. c. 1. The sincerity of Ammianus would not suffer him to misrepresent facts or characters, but his love of ambitious ornaments frequently betrayed him into an unnatural vehemence of expression.]

[Footnote 17: His name was Clematius of Alexandria, and his only crime was a refusal to gratify the desires of his mother-in-law; who solicited his death, because she had been disappointed of his love. Ammian. xiv. c. i.]

[Footnote 18: See in Ammianus (l. xiv. c. 1, 7) a very ample detail of the cruelties of Gallus. His brother Julian (p. 272) insinuates, that a secret conspiracy had been formed against him; and Zosimus names (l. ii.

p. 135) the persons engaged in it; a minister of considerable rank, and two obscure agents, who were resolved to make their fortune.]

As long as the civil war suspended the fate of the Roman world, Constantius dissembled his knowledge of the weak and cruel administration to which his choice had subjected the East; and the discovery of some assassins, secretly despatched to Antioch by the tyrant of Gaul, was employed to convince the public, that the emperor and the Caesar were united by the same interest, and pursued by the same enemies. [19] But when the victory was decided in favor of Constantius, his dependent colleague became less useful and less formidable. Every circumstance of his conduct was severely and suspiciously examined, and it was privately resolved, either to deprive Gallus of the purple, or at least to remove him from the indolent luxury of Asia to the hardships and dangers of a German war. The death of Theophilus, consular of the province of Syria, who in a time of scarcity had been massacred by the people of Antioch, with the connivance, and almost at the instigation, of Gallus, was justly resented, not only as an act of wanton cruelty, but as a dangerous insult on the supreme majesty of Constantius. Two ministers of illustrious rank, Domitian the Oriental praefect, and Montius, quaestor of the palace, were empowered by a special commission [19a] to visit and reform the state of the East. They were instructed to behave towards Gallus with moderation and respect, and, by the gentlest arts of persuasion, to engage him to comply with the invitation of his brother and colleague. The rashness of the praefect disappointed these prudent measures, and hastened his own ruin, as well as that of his

enemy. On his arrival at Antioch, Domitian passed disdainfully before the gates of the palace, and alleging a slight pretence of indisposition, continued several days in sullen retirement, to prepare an inflammatory memorial, which he transmitted to the Imperial court. Yielding at length to the pressing solicitations of Gallus, the praefect condescended to take his seat in council; but his first step was to signify a concise and haughty mandate, importing that the Caesar should immediately repair to Italy, and threatening that he himself would punish his delay or hesitation, by suspending the usual allowance of his household. The nephew and daughter of Constantine, who could ill brook the insolence of a subject, expressed their resentment by instantly delivering Domitian to the custody of a guard. The quarrel still admitted of some terms of accommodation. They were rendered impracticable by the imprudent behavior of Montius, a statesman whose arts and experience were frequently betrayed by the levity of his disposition. [20] The quaestor reproached Gallus in a haughty language, that a prince who was scarcely authorized to remove a municipal magistrate, should presume to imprison a Praetorian praefect; convoked a meeting of the civil and military officers; and required them, in the name of their sovereign, to defend the person and dignity of his representatives. By this rash declaration of war, the impatient temper of Gallus was provoked to embrace the most desperate counsels. He ordered his guards to stand to their arms, assembled the populace of Antioch, and recommended to their zeal the care of his safety and revenge. His commands were too fatally obeyed. They rudely seized the praefect and the quaestor, and tying their legs together with ropes,

they dragged them through the streets of the city, inflicted a thousand insults and a thousand wounds on these unhappy victims, and at last precipitated their mangled and lifeless bodies into the stream of the Orontes. [21]

[Footnote 19: Zonaras, l. xiii. tom. ii. p. 17, 18. The assassins had seduced a great number of legionaries; but their designs were discovered and revealed by an old woman in whose cottage they lodged.]

[Footnote 19a: The commission seems to have been granted to Domitian alone. Montius interfered to support his authority. Amm. Marc. loc. cit.--M]

[Footnote 20: In the present text of Ammianus, we read *Asper, quidem, sed ad lenitatem propensior*; which forms a sentence of contradictory nonsense. With the aid of an old manuscript, Valesius has rectified the first of these corruptions, and we perceive a ray of light in the substitution of the word *vafer*. If we venture to change *lenitatem* into *lexitatem*, this alteration of a single letter will render the whole passage clear and consistent.]

[Footnote 21: Instead of being obliged to collect scattered and imperfect hints from various sources, we now enter into the full stream of the history of Ammianus, and need only refer to the seventh and ninth chapters of his fourteenth book. Philostorgius, however, (l. iii. c. 28) though partial to Gallus, should not be entirely overlooked.]

After such a deed, whatever might have been the designs of Gallus, it was only in a field of battle that he could assert his innocence with any hope of success. But the mind of that prince was formed of an equal mixture of violence and weakness. Instead of assuming the title of Augustus, instead of employing in his defence the troops and treasures of the East, he suffered himself to be deceived by the affected tranquillity of Constantius, who, leaving him the vain pageantry of a court, imperceptibly recalled the veteran legions from the provinces of Asia. But as it still appeared dangerous to arrest Gallus in his capital, the slow and safer arts of dissimulation were practised with success. The frequent and pressing epistles of Constantius were filled with professions of confidence and friendship; exhorting the Caesar to discharge the duties of his high station, to relieve his colleague from a part of the public cares, and to assist the West by his presence, his counsels, and his arms. After so many reciprocal injuries, Gallus had reason to fear and to distrust. But he had neglected the opportunities of flight and of resistance; he was seduced by the flattering assurances of the tribune Scudilo, who, under the semblance of a rough soldier, disguised the most artful insinuation; and he depended on the credit of his wife Constantina, till the unseasonable death of that princess completed the ruin in which he had been involved by her impetuous passions. [22]

[Footnote 22: She had preceded her husband, but died of a fever on the road at a little place in Bithynia, called Coenum Gallicanum.]