

Chapter XXIV: The Retreat And Death Of Julian.--Part I.

Residence Of Julian At Antioch.--His Successful Expedition Against The Persians.--Passage Of The Tigris--The Retreat And Death Of Julian.--Election Of Jovian.--He Saves The Roman Army By A Disgraceful Treaty. The philosophical fable which Julian composed under the name of the Caesars, [1] is one of the most agreeable and instructive productions of ancient wit. [2] During the freedom and equality of the days of the Saturnalia, Romulus prepared a feast for the deities of Olympus, who had adopted him as a worthy associate, and for the Roman princes, who had reigned over his martial people, and the vanquished nations of the earth. The immortals were placed in just order on their thrones of state, and the table of the Caesars was spread below the Moon in the upper region of the air. The tyrants, who would have disgraced the society of gods and men, were thrown headlong, by the inexorable Nemesis, into the Tartarean abyss. The rest of the Caesars successively advanced to their seats; and as they passed, the vices, the defects, the blemishes of their respective characters, were maliciously noticed by old Silenus, a laughing moralist, who disguised the wisdom of a philosopher under the mask of a Bacchanal. [3] As soon as the feast was ended, the voice of Mercury proclaimed the will of Jupiter, that a celestial crown should be the reward of superior merit. Julius Caesar, Augustus, Trajan, and Marcus Antoninus, were selected as the most illustrious candidates; the effeminate Constantine [4] was not excluded from this honorable competition, and the great Alexander was invited to dispute the prize of glory with the Roman heroes. Each of the candidates

was allowed to display the merit of his own exploits; but, in the judgment of the gods, the modest silence of Marcus pleaded more powerfully than the elaborate orations of his haughty rivals. When the judges of this awful contest proceeded to examine the heart, and to scrutinize the springs of action, the superiority of the Imperial Stoic appeared still more decisive and conspicuous. [5] Alexander and Caesar, Augustus, Trajan, and Constantine, acknowledged, with a blush, that fame, or power, or pleasure had been the important object of their labors: but the gods themselves beheld, with reverence and love, a virtuous mortal, who had practised on the throne the lessons of philosophy; and who, in a state of human imperfection, had aspired to imitate the moral attributes of the Deity. The value of this agreeable composition (the Caesars of Julian) is enhanced by the rank of the author. A prince, who delineates, with freedom, the vices and virtues of his predecessors, subscribes, in every line, the censure or approbation of his own conduct.

[Footnote 1: See this fable or satire, p. 306-336 of the Leipsig edition of Julian's works. The French version of the learned Ezekiel Spanheim (Paris, 1683) is coarse, languid, and correct; and his notes, proofs, illustrations, &c., are piled on each other till they form a mass of 557 close-printed quarto pages. The Abbe' de la Bleterie (*Vie de Jovien*, tom. i. p. 241-393) has more happily expressed the spirit, as well as the sense, of the original, which he illustrates with some concise and curious notes.]

[Footnote 2: Spanheim (in his preface) has most learnedly discussed the etymology, origin, resemblance, and disagreement of the Greek satyrs, a dramatic piece, which was acted after the tragedy; and the Latin satires, (from Saturra,) a miscellaneous composition, either in prose or verse. But the Caesars of Julian are of such an original cast, that the critic is perplexed to which class he should ascribe them. * Note: See also Casaubon de Satira, with Rambach's observations.--M.]

[Footnote 3: This mixed character of Silenus is finely painted in the sixth eclogue of Virgil.]

[Footnote 4: Every impartial reader must perceive and condemn the partiality of Julian against his uncle Constantine, and the Christian religion. On this occasion, the interpreters are compelled, by a most sacred interest, to renounce their allegiance, and to desert the cause of their author.]

[Footnote 5: Julian was secretly inclined to prefer a Greek to a Roman. But when he seriously compared a hero with a philosopher, he was sensible that mankind had much greater obligations to Socrates than to Alexander, (Orat. ad Themistium, p. 264.)]

In the cool moments of reflection, Julian preferred the useful and benevolent virtues of Antoninus; but his ambitious spirit was inflamed by the glory of Alexander; and he solicited, with equal ardor, the esteem of the wise, and the applause of the multitude. In the season of

life when the powers of the mind and body enjoy the most active vigor, the emperor who was instructed by the experience, and animated by the success, of the German war, resolved to signalize his reign by some more splendid and memorable achievement. The ambassadors of the East, from the continent of India, and the Isle of Ceylon, [6] had respectfully saluted the Roman purple. [7] The nations of the West esteemed and dreaded the personal virtues of Julian, both in peace and war. He despised the trophies of a Gothic victory, and was satisfied that the rapacious Barbarians of the Danube would be restrained from any future violation of the faith of treaties by the terror of his name, and the additional fortifications with which he strengthened the Thracian and Illyrian frontiers. The successor of Cyrus and Artaxerxes was the only rival whom he deemed worthy of his arms; and he resolved, by the final conquest of Persia, to chastise the naughty nation which had so long resisted and insulted the majesty of Rome. [9] As soon as the Persian monarch was informed that the throne of Constantius was filled by a prince of a very different character, he condescended to make some artful, or perhaps sincere, overtures towards a negotiation of peace. But the pride of Sapor was astonished by the firmness of Julian; who sternly declared, that he would never consent to hold a peaceful conference among the flames and ruins of the cities of Mesopotamia; and who added, with a smile of contempt, that it was needless to treat by ambassadors, as he himself had determined to visit speedily the court of Persia. The impatience of the emperor urged the diligence of the military preparations. The generals were named; and Julian, marching from Constantinople through the provinces of Asia Minor, arrived at

Antioch about eight months after the death of his predecessor. His ardent desire to march into the heart of Persia, was checked by the indispensable duty of regulating the state of the empire; by his zeal to revive the worship of the gods; and by the advice of his wisest friends; who represented the necessity of allowing the salutary interval of winter quarters, to restore the exhausted strength of the legions of Gaul, and the discipline and spirit of the Eastern troops. Julian was persuaded to fix, till the ensuing spring, his residence at Antioch, among a people maliciously disposed to deride the haste, and to censure the delays, of their sovereign. [10]

[Footnote 6: *Inde nationibus Indicis certatim cum aonis optimates mittentibus.... ab usque Divis et Serendivis. Ammian. xx. 7.*

This island, to which the names of Taprobana, Serendib, and Ceylon, have been successively applied, manifests how imperfectly the seas and lands to the east of Cape Comorin were known to the Romans. 1. Under the reign of Claudius, a freedman, who farmed the customs of the Red Sea, was accidentally driven by the winds upon this strange and undiscovered coast: he conversed six months with the natives; and the king of Ceylon, who heard, for the first time, of the power and justice of Rome, was persuaded to send an embassy to the emperor. (Plin. Hist. Nat. vi. 24.) 2. The geographers (and even Ptolemy) have magnified, above fifteen times, the real size of this new world, which they extended as far as the equator, and the neighborhood of China. * Note: The name of *Divagens* or *Divorum regio*, according to the probable conjecture of M. Letronne, (*Trois Mem. Acad. p. 127,*) was applied by the ancients to the

whole eastern coast of the Indian Peninsula, from Ceylon to the Canges. The name may be traced in Devipatnam, Devidan, Devicotta, Divinely, the point of Divy.----M. Letronne, p.121, considers the freedman with his embassy from Ceylon to have been an impostor.--M.]

[Footnote 7: These embassies had been sent to Constantius. Ammianus, who unwarily deviates into gross flattery, must have forgotten the length of the way, and the short duration of the reign of Julian.]

[Footnote 8: Gothos saepe fallaces et perfidos; hostes quaerere se meliores aiebat: illis enim sufficere mercatores Galatas per quos ubique sine conditionis discrimine venundantur. (Ammian. xxii. 7.) Within less than fifteen years, these Gothic slaves threatened and subdued their masters.]

[Footnote 9: Alexander reminds his rival Caesar, who depreciated the fame and merit of an Asiatic victory, that Crassus and Antony had felt the Persian arrows; and that the Romans, in a war of three hundred years, had not yet subdued the single province of Mesopotamia or Assyria, (Caesares, p. 324.)]

[Footnote 10: The design of the Persian war is declared by Ammianus, (xxii. 7, 12,) Libanius, (Orat. Parent. c. 79, 80, p. 305, 306,) Zosimus, (l. iii. p. 158,) and Socrates, (l. iii. c. 19.)]

If Julian had flattered himself, that his personal connection with the

capital of the East would be productive of mutual satisfaction to the prince and people, he made a very false estimate of his own character, and of the manners of Antioch. [11] The warmth of the climate disposed the natives to the most intemperate enjoyment of tranquillity and opulence; and the lively licentiousness of the Greeks was blended with the hereditary softness of the Syrians. Fashion was the only law, pleasure the only pursuit, and the splendor of dress and furniture was the only distinction of the citizens of Antioch. The arts of luxury were honored; the serious and manly virtues were the subject of ridicule; and the contempt for female modesty and reverent age announced the universal corruption of the capital of the East. The love of spectacles was the taste, or rather passion, of the Syrians; the most skilful artists were procured from the adjacent cities; [12] a considerable share of the revenue was devoted to the public amusements; and the magnificence of the games of the theatre and circus was considered as the happiness and as the glory of Antioch. The rustic manners of a prince who disdained such glory, and was insensible of such happiness, soon disgusted the delicacy of his subjects; and the effeminate Orientals could neither imitate, nor admire, the severe simplicity which Julian always maintained, and sometimes affected. The days of festivity, consecrated, by ancient custom, to the honor of the gods, were the only occasions in which Julian relaxed his philosophic severity; and those festivals were the only days in which the Syrians of Antioch could reject the allurements of pleasure. The majority of the people supported the glory of the Christian name, which had been first invented by their ancestors: [13] they contended themselves with disobeying the moral precepts, but

they were scrupulously attached to the speculative doctrines of their religion. The church of Antioch was distracted by heresy and schism; but the Arians and the Athanasians, the followers of Meletius and those of Paulinus, [14] were actuated by the same pious hatred of their common adversary.

[Footnote 11: The Satire of Julian, and the Homilies of St. Chrysostom, exhibit the same picture of Antioch. The miniature which the Abbe de la Bleterie has copied from thence, (Vie de Julian, p. 332,) is elegant and correct.]

[Footnote 12: Laodicea furnished charioteers; Tyre and Berytus, comedians; Caesarea, pantomimes; Heliopolis, singers; Gaza, gladiators, Ascalon, wrestlers; and Castabala, rope-dancers. See the Expositio totius Mundi, p. 6, in the third tome of Hudson's Minor Geographers.]

[Footnote 13: The people of Antioch ingenuously professed their attachment to the Chi, (Christ,) and the Kappa, (Constantius.) Julian in Misopogon, p. 357.]

[Footnote 14: The schism of Antioch, which lasted eighty-five years, (A. D. 330-415,) was inflamed, while Julian resided in that city, by the indiscreet ordination of Paulinus. See Tillemont, Mem. Eccles. tom. iii. p. 803 of the quarto edition, (Paris, 1701, &c,) which henceforward I shall quote.]

The strongest prejudice was entertained against the character of an apostate, the enemy and successor of a prince who had engaged the affections of a very numerous sect; and the removal of St. Babylas excited an implacable opposition to the person of Julian. His subjects complained, with superstitious indignation, that famine had pursued the emperor's steps from Constantinople to Antioch; and the discontent of a hungry people was exasperated by the injudicious attempt to relieve their distress. The inclemency of the season had affected the harvests of Syria; and the price of bread, [15] in the markets of Antioch, had naturally risen in proportion to the scarcity of corn. But the fair and reasonable proportion was soon violated by the rapacious arts of monopoly. In this unequal contest, in which the produce of the land is claimed by one party as his exclusive property, is used by another as a lucrative object of trade, and is required by a third for the daily and necessary support of life, all the profits of the intermediate agents are accumulated on the head of the defenceless customers. The hardships of their situation were exaggerated and increased by their own impatience and anxiety; and the apprehension of a scarcity gradually produced the appearances of a famine. When the luxurious citizens of Antioch complained of the high price of poultry and fish, Julian publicly declared, that a frugal city ought to be satisfied with a regular supply of wine, oil, and bread; but he acknowledged, that it was the duty of a sovereign to provide for the subsistence of his people. With this salutary view, the emperor ventured on a very dangerous and doubtful step, of fixing, by legal authority, the value of corn. He enacted, that, in a time of scarcity, it should be sold at a price which

had seldom been known in the most plentiful years; and that his own example might strengthen his laws, he sent into the market four hundred and twenty-two thousand modii, or measures, which were drawn by his order from the granaries of Hierapolis, of Chalcis, and even of Egypt. The consequences might have been foreseen, and were soon felt. The Imperial wheat was purchased by the rich merchants; the proprietors of land, or of corn, withheld from the city the accustomed supply; and the small quantities that appeared in the market were secretly sold at an advanced and illegal price. Julian still continued to applaud his own policy, treated the complaints of the people as a vain and ungrateful murmur, and convinced Antioch that he had inherited the obstinacy, though not the cruelty, of his brother Gallus. [16] The remonstrances of the municipal senate served only to exasperate his inflexible mind. He was persuaded, perhaps with truth, that the senators of Antioch who possessed lands, or were concerned in trade, had themselves contributed to the calamities of their country; and he imputed the disrespectful boldness which they assumed, to the sense, not of public duty, but of private interest. The whole body, consisting of two hundred of the most noble and wealthy citizens, were sent, under a guard, from the palace to the prison; and though they were permitted, before the close of evening, to return to their respective houses, [17] the emperor himself could not obtain the forgiveness which he had so easily granted. The same grievances were still the subject of the same complaints, which were industriously circulated by the wit and levity of the Syrian Greeks. During the licentious days of the Saturnalia, the streets of the city resounded with insolent songs, which derided the laws, the religion,

the personal conduct, and even the beard, of the emperor; the spirit of Antioch was manifested by the connivance of the magistrates, and the applause of the multitude. [18] The disciple of Socrates was too deeply affected by these popular insults; but the monarch, endowed with a quick sensibility, and possessed of absolute power, refused his passions the gratification of revenge. A tyrant might have proscribed, without distinction, the lives and fortunes of the citizens of Antioch; and the unwarlike Syrians must have patiently submitted to the lust, the rapaciousness and the cruelty, of the faithful legions of Gaul. A milder sentence might have deprived the capital of the East of its honors and privileges; and the courtiers, perhaps the subjects, of Julian, would have applauded an act of justice, which asserted the dignity of the supreme magistrate of the republic. [19] But instead of abusing, or exerting, the authority of the state, to revenge his personal injuries, Julian contented himself with an inoffensive mode of retaliation, which it would be in the power of few princes to employ. He had been insulted by satires and libels; in his turn, he composed, under the title of the Enemy of the Beard, an ironical confession of his own faults, and a severe satire on the licentious and effeminate manners of Antioch. This Imperial reply was publicly exposed before the gates of the palace; and the Misopogon [20] still remains a singular monument of the resentment, the wit, the humanity, and the indiscretion of Julian. Though he affected to laugh, he could not forgive. [21] His contempt was expressed, and his revenge might be gratified, by the nomination of a governor [22] worthy only of such subjects; and the emperor, forever renouncing the ungrateful city, proclaimed his resolution to pass the

ensuing winter at Tarsus in Cilicia. [23]

[Footnote 15: Julian states three different proportions, of five, ten, or fifteen medii of wheat for one piece of gold, according to the degrees of plenty and scarcity, (in Misopogon, p. 369.) From this fact, and from some collateral examples, I conclude, that under the successors of Constantine, the moderate price of wheat was about thirty-two shillings the English quarter, which is equal to the average price of the sixty-four first years of the present century. See Arbuthnot's Tables of Coins, Weights, and Measures, p. 88, 89. Plin. Hist. Natur. xviii. 12. Mem. de l'Academie des Inscriptions, tom. xxviii. p. 718-721. Smith's Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations, vol. i. p 246. This last I am proud to quote as the work of a sage and a friend.]

[Footnote 16: Nunquam a proposito declinabat, Galli similis fratris, licet incruentus. Ammian. xxii. 14. The ignorance of the most enlightened princes may claim some excuse; but we cannot be satisfied with Julian's own defence, (in Misopogon, p. 363, 369,) or the elaborate apology of Libanius, (Orat. Parental c. xcvi. p. 321.)]

[Footnote 17: Their short and easy confinement is gently touched by Libanius, (Orat. Parental. c. xcvi. p. 322, 323.)]

[Footnote 18: Libanius, (ad Antiochenos de Imperatoris ira, c. 17, 18, 19, in Fabricius, Bibliot. Graec. tom. vii. p. 221-223,) like a skilful

advocate, severely censures the folly of the people, who suffered for the crime of a few obscure and drunken wretches.]

[Footnote 19: Libanius (ad Antiochen. c. vii. p. 213) reminds Antioch of the recent chastisement of Caesarea; and even Julian (in Misopogon, p. 355) insinuates how severely Tarentum had expiated the insult to the Roman ambassadors.]

[Footnote 20: On the subject of the Misopogon, see Ammianus, (xxii. 14,) Libanius, (Orat. Parentalis, c. xcix. p. 323,) Gregory Nazianzen, (Orat. iv. p. 133) and the Chronicle of Antioch, by John Malala, (tom. ii. p. 15, 16.) I have essential obligations to the translation and notes of the Abbe de la Bleterie, (Vie de Jovien, tom. ii. p. 1-138.)]

[Footnote 21: Ammianus very justly remarks, *Coactus dissimulare pro tempore ira sufflabatur interna*. The elaborate irony of Julian at length bursts forth into serious and direct invective.]

[Footnote 22: *Ipse autem Antiochiam egressurus, Heliopoliten quendam Alexandrum Syriacae jurisdictioni praefecit, turbulentum et saevum; dicebatque non illum meruisse, sed Antiochensibus avaris et contumeliosis hujusmodi judicem convenire*. Ammian. xxiii. 2. Libanius, (Epist. 722, p. 346, 347,) who confesses to Julian himself, that he had shared the general discontent, pretends that Alexander was a useful, though harsh, reformer of the manners and religion of Antioch.]

[Footnote 23: Julian, in Misopogon, p. 364. Ammian. xxiii. 2, and Valesius, ad loc. Libanius, in a professed oration, invites him to return to his loyal and penitent city of Antioch.]

Yet Antioch possessed one citizen, whose genius and virtues might atone, in the opinion of Julian, for the vice and folly of his country. The sophist Libanius was born in the capital of the East; he publicly professed the arts of rhetoric and declamation at Nice, Nicomedia, Constantinople, Athens, and, during the remainder of his life, at Antioch. His school was assiduously frequented by the Grecian youth; his disciples, who sometimes exceeded the number of eighty, celebrated their incomparable master; and the jealousy of his rivals, who persecuted him from one city to another, confirmed the favorable opinion which Libanius ostentatiously displayed of his superior merit. The preceptors of Julian had extorted a rash but solemn assurance, that he would never attend the lectures of their adversary: the curiosity of the royal youth was checked and inflamed: he secretly procured the writings of this dangerous sophist, and gradually surpassed, in the perfect imitation of his style, the most laborious of his domestic pupils. [24] When Julian ascended the throne, he declared his impatience to embrace and reward the Syrian sophist, who had preserved, in a degenerate age, the Grecian purity of taste, of manners, and of religion. The emperor's prepossession was increased and justified by the discreet pride of his favorite. Instead of pressing, with the foremost of the crowd, into the palace of Constantinople, Libanius calmly expected his arrival at Antioch; withdrew from court on the first symptoms of coldness and

indifference; required a formal invitation for each visit; and taught his sovereign an important lesson, that he might command the obedience of a subject, but that he must deserve the attachment of a friend. The sophists of every age, despising, or affecting to despise, the accidental distinctions of birth and fortune, [25] reserve their esteem for the superior qualities of the mind, with which they themselves are so plentifully endowed. Julian might disdain the acclamations of a venal court, who adored the Imperial purple; but he was deeply flattered by the praise, the admonition, the freedom, and the envy of an independent philosopher, who refused his favors, loved his person, celebrated his fame, and protected his memory. The voluminous writings of Libanius still exist; for the most part, they are the vain and idle compositions of an orator, who cultivated the science of words; the productions of a recluse student, whose mind, regardless of his contemporaries, was incessantly fixed on the Trojan war and the Athenian commonwealth. Yet the sophist of Antioch sometimes descended from this imaginary elevation; he entertained a various and elaborate correspondence; [26] he praised the virtues of his own times; he boldly arraigned the abuse of public and private life; and he eloquently pleaded the cause of Antioch against the just resentment of Julian and Theodosius. It is the common calamity of old age, [27] to lose whatever might have rendered it desirable; but Libanius experienced the peculiar misfortune of surviving the religion and the sciences, to which he had consecrated his genius. The friend of Julian was an indignant spectator of the triumph of Christianity; and his bigotry, which darkened the prospect of the visible world, did not inspire Libanius with any lively hopes of

celestial glory and happiness. [28]

[Footnote 24: Libanius, *Orat. Parent.* c. vii. p. 230, 231.]

[Footnote 25: Eunapius reports, that Libanius refused the honorary rank of Praetorian praefect, as less illustrious than the title of Sophist, (in *Vit. Sophist.* p. 135.) The critics have observed a similar sentiment in one of the epistles (xviii. edit. Wolf) of Libanius himself.]

[Footnote 26: Near two thousand of his letters--a mode of composition in which Libanius was thought to excel--are still extant, and already published. The critics may praise their subtle and elegant brevity; yet Dr. Bentley (*Dissertation upon Phalaris*, p. 48) might justly, though quaintly observe, that "you feel, by the emptiness and deadness of them, that you converse with some dreaming pedant, with his elbow on his desk."]

[Footnote 27: His birth is assigned to the year 314. He mentions the seventy-sixth year of his age, (A. D. 390,) and seems to allude to some events of a still later date.]

[Footnote 28: Libanius has composed the vain, prolix, but curious narrative of his own life, (tom. ii. p. 1-84, edit. Morell,) of which Eunapius (p. 130-135) has left a concise and unfavorable account. Among the moderns, Tillemont, (*Hist. des Empereurs*, tom. iv. p. 571-576,) Fabricius, (*Bibliot. Graec.* tom. vii. p. 376-414,) and Lardner, (*Heathen*

Testimonies, tom. iv. p. 127-163,) have illustrated the character and writings of this famous sophist.]